



Rural Proofing Guide

for policy development and service delivery planning

Rural proofing is:

- + Building a rural lens into the full cycle of your policy development, implementation and service delivery.
- + Supporting strong and vibrant rural communities.
- + Working for social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in rural areas.

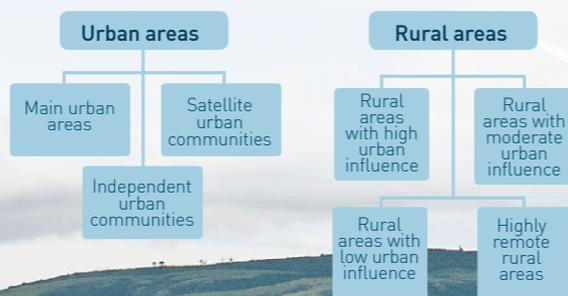


Who is the rural community?

Statistics New Zealand (SNZ) currently defines rural areas as “rural settlements” of 200 to 1000 residents, with at least one community or public building, and “other rural areas”, which include land used for agricultural, forestry or conservation purposes with fewer than 200 residents.

SNZ also has an experimental classification, designed to show the social and economic diversity of populations, based on the degree of urban influence on an area. The rural categories in this are:

- » rural areas with high urban influence (e.g. communities surrounding main urban areas and with a high proportion of commuters to urban);
- » rural areas with moderate urban influence (e.g. areas with a moderate proportion of the employed population who commute to urban areas);
- » rural areas with low urban influence (e.g. moderate to intensive farming areas);
- » highly rural/remote areas (e.g. hill and high country farming areas, and conservation areas).



Why rural-proof?

Rural communities are an essential part of New Zealand’s economy, society, culture and environment. Our largest export producer, rural communities are also stewards of New Zealand’s biodiversity, landscapes and resources, and fundamental to the tourism sector.

While the diversity of New Zealand is also found in rural areas, our rural communities have different structures and drivers. This means the impact and outcomes of policy initiatives and new programmes, can be different to that of urban centres.

Challenges our rural communities face

- » Low population densities and longer travel distances may mean extra effort and resources are required for education, health service access and community activities.
- » Service and compliance costs may be increased by limited telecommunications and transport infrastructure. These may also stifle innovation and reduce opportunities.
- » Isolation, exacerbated by fewer permanent residents, an aging population, and young people leaving.
- » Regulatory, market and environmental changes can disproportionately affect rural communities.
- » A minority of urban residents have worked in or know people in the primary industries.



Minister for Rural Communities Damien O’Connor

“Our rural communities are an intrinsic part of New Zealand.

No matter where we live, New Zealanders deserve access to essential services, resilient infrastructure, and good information that is well communicated.

This allows everybody an equitable opportunity to a high quality of life, access to social and economic opportunities, and ability to reach their potential and thrive.

This guide helps analysts and agencies cast a rural-proofing lens over policies throughout their development, from inception to implementation and review.”

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Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure that this information is accurate, the Ministry for Primary Industries does not accept any responsibility or liability for error of fact, omission, interpretation or opinion that may be present, nor for the consequences of any decision based on this information.

Points for rural-proofing your policy

1 Confirm your policy objectives and various stakeholders and audiences
Rural proofing is most effective when considered early and throughout policy development and implementation.

2 Identify benefits and implications for the rural community such as:

Infrastructure: telecommunications and transport

Consider how your policy:

Positively or negatively affects the availability, quality or cost of accessing internet/cell networks?
Helps or hinders rural people's movements?
Is more expensive/difficult to provide in rural areas?
Has engagement which lets people easily receive information, join in consultation, and give feedback?

Health, education and other services

Consider how your policy:

Affects the availability, quality or cost of accessing services in rural areas?
Is more expensive/difficult to provide in rural areas?
Recognises the cumulative effects of government policies on the rural community?
Seeks to deliver equity in health outcomes, including for those living rurally?

Encompasses broad demographics: Māori, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, minority groups?
Allows for travel times and distances to make accessing the service manageable?
Recognises the health and safety implications of isolation from emergency services?



Ease of doing business/cost of compliance

Will rural people or businesses find it more costly or difficult to comply?
Are the same compliance standards applicable and salient to rural and urban areas?



Communication

Have you tapped into regional knowledge and contacts from different rural organisations?
Do you have a communication plan for reaching ALL your target audiences, and encouraging and using input and feedback?

3 Seek advice from relevant rural contacts and organisations

- » Treasury for best practice impact analysis: treasury.govt.nz
- » Ministry for Primary Industries: 0800 00 83 33
- » Federated Farmers: 0800 327 646
- » Rural Women New Zealand: 0800 256 467
- » Rural Support Trust National Council: waikato.rst@gmail.com
- » DairyNZ: 0800 4 324 7969
- » Beef+Lamb New Zealand: 0800 733 466
- » Horticulture NZ: 0508 467 869
- » Māori Women's Welfare League: 04 595 1475
- » Te Tumu Paeroa (The Māori Trustee)
- » Federation of Māori Authorities
- » New Zealand Veterinary Association
- » Local and district councils
- » Local Hapū/Marae
- » Statistics New Zealand: 0508 525 525
- » Regional Economic Activity web tool: <http://webrear.mbie.govt.nz/summary/new-zealand>
- » more on mpi.govt.nz

4 Assess the implications

Are they significantly different for the rural community compared to urban?
What other delivery models might work?

5 Consider mitigation measures

Consultation, engagement and information

- » Tap into rural contacts.
- » Hold consultation meetings and hui in rural areas, taking into account seasonal activities and priorities, and travel times.
- » Have easy-to-understand printed copies of documents targeted to relevant demographics and languages.
- » Recognise infrastructure time delays such as rural post.
- » Don't rely on people looking up information on the internet.
- » Use local people and rural media to communicate.
- » Look for synergies with other government consultations and policies.

Access to services

- » Consider options to manage higher delivery cost per capita and the costs that are constant regardless of scale.
- » Target funding to assist or encourage provision in rural areas, and deliver equitable access to services for rural people.
- » Where private sector provision is tendered, allow time for local or innovative solutions for rural issues to be included.
- » Share resources or staff across agencies.

Infrastructure

- » Consider if there is a need to subsidise transport services (school buses, emergency helicopters, transport assistance to healthcare).
- » Mobile services to rural areas.
- » Facilitate shared use of facilities.
- » Contractually require delivery in isolated rural areas.
- » Provide exemptions or concessions where appropriate for rural areas.
- » Enable alternative delivery methods to improve accessibility (phone, email, apps).
- » Encourage combined servicing of several providers.

6 Make adjustments

Adjust your policy, consultation process and implementation plans to enable successful rural coverage and uptake.
Continue to apply rural-proofing considerations as you develop and implement further.



7 Keep parties updated

Including stakeholders, relevant departments, and Ministers, of approved policies, mitigations, benefits, and unresolved implications.

