

Exploring Strategies to Improve Health and Equity in Rural Communities

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for Rural Health Analysis

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Project Background and Community Experiences



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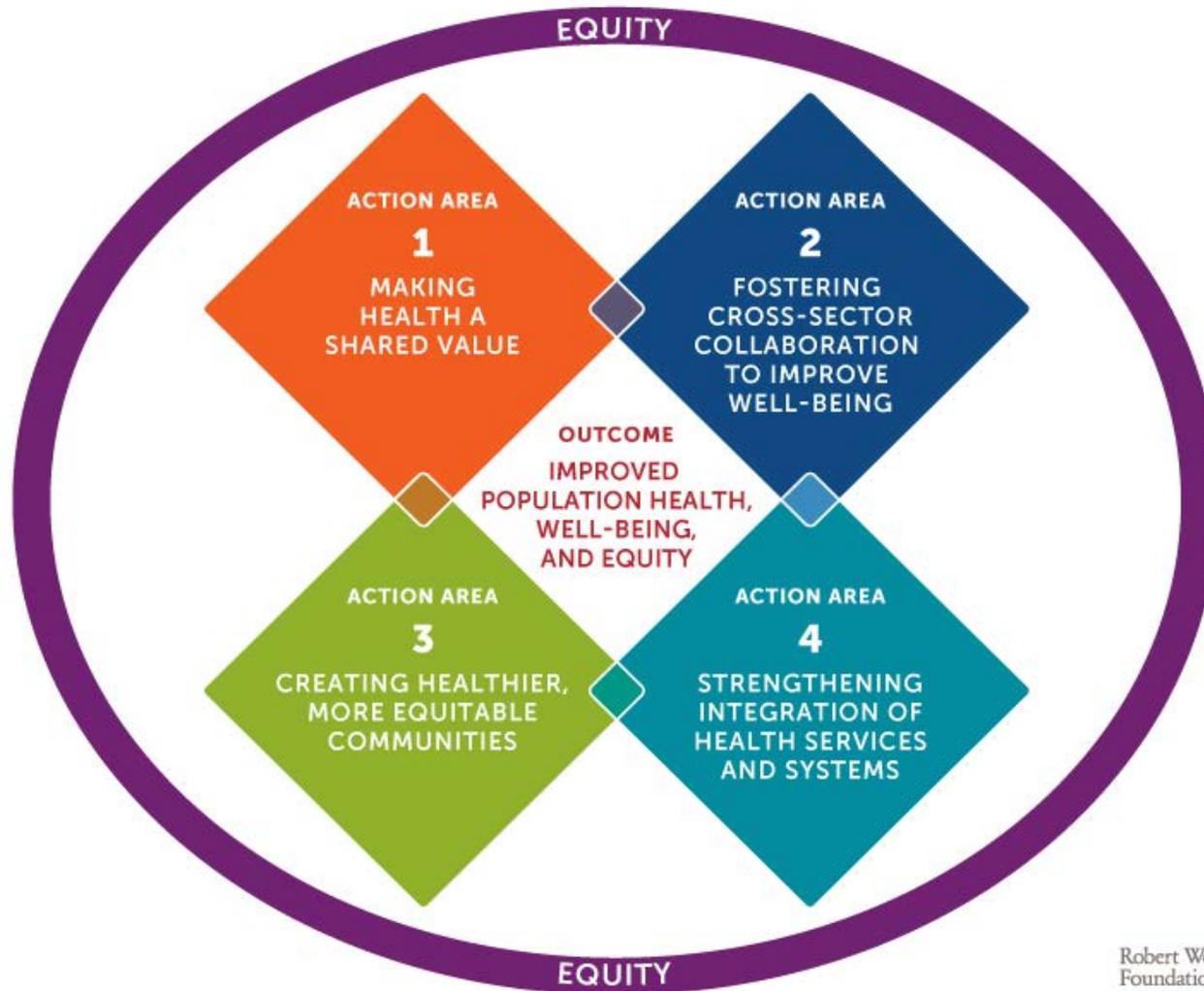
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Project Purpose

- Conduct formative research to identify strengths, assets, and strategies that will accelerate and improve health and well-being in rural communities.
- Identify factors and cross-sector partners that can influence health and well-being within rural communities, including why barriers have not been overcome in the past.
- Identify opportunities for action and a set of recommendations for diverse rural stakeholders and funders.

RWJF Culture of Health Action Framework





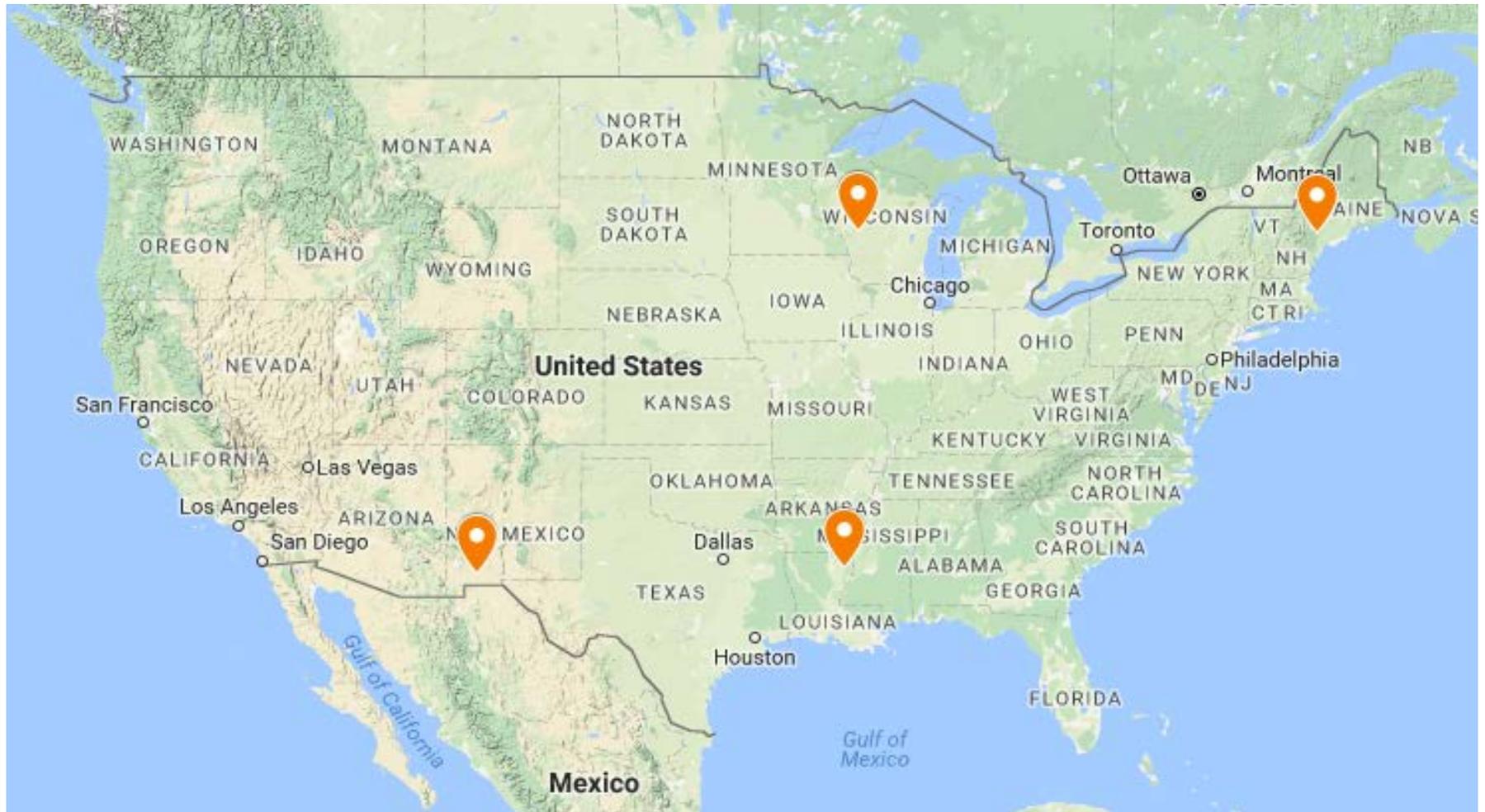
Contextual Factors: Political environment, policies, history

Cross-Sector Strategies

Sample of Sectors Represented

- Economic Development
- Education
- Media
- Aging
- Healthcare
- Mental Health
- Transportation
- Housing
- Public Health
- Cooperative Extension
- Environmental Health/Utilities
- Youth Development
- Physical Activity
- Local Philanthropy
- Food Systems
- Churches
- Community Development
- Veterans
- Early Childhood

Regional Community Forums



Forum #1: U.S. Mexico Border

Issue

- High priority on at-risk youth development, improving education system, and economic development

Assets

- Community mobilization, eagerness to solve problems, natural collaboration

Partners

- City government, public schools, volunteer community members

Strategy

- Mentorship program between at-risk youth and community member with weekly visits until graduation

Outcome

- Goals include relationship building, retaining youth in the community, preparing youth for graduation and workforce



Forum #2: Delta

Issue

- Little to no community capacity or collaborative efforts to improve health and well-being

Assets

- Federal funding, leadership, close community ties

Partners

- Local university, local government, healthcare, business, faith-based organizations

Strategy

- Community encouragers in 21 parishes to organize community needs assessments, bring together a coalition, and mobilize local project

Outcome

- Community implementation capacity, leadership development
- Regional efforts

Forum #3: Northeast

Issue

- Oxford County ranked lowest overall in the 2010 County Health Rankings
- Wasteful competition and redundancy of community health efforts

Assets

- Leadership, collective efficacy
- Local hospital, local funders, health coalition, regional healthcare system

Partners

- Mental health services, Community Development Financial Institution, Non-profit collaborative, Art, Public Health, Youth Development, Trails, etc.

Strategy

- Developed the Oxford County Wellness Collaborative in 2012
- Steering committee and five workgroups centered around priorities

Outcome

- Strategic alignment of goals and backbone organization for improving health
- Increased access to resources, community events, and local health data

Forum #4: Upper Midwest

Issue

- High rates of drug use in the community
- Theft of opioids from homes

Assets

- Interconnectedness of people, groups and organizations
- Collaborative nature

Partners

- Community health collaborative, Real estate agents, homeowners

Strategy

- Provide lock boxes to homeowners to lock up medicine during open houses

Outcome

- Decreased access to opioids

Preliminary Recommendations and Opportunities for Action



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Preliminary Set of Recommendations

- Continued Foundation Learning
- Strengthening Community Implementation Capacity
- Identifying and Growing Rural Leaders
- Community Development/Economic Development
- Building the Rural Evidence Base
- Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration
- Enhancing Community-Level Evaluation and Measurement
- Co-Funding and Utilizing Regional/Local Intermediaries
- Implementing “Rural-Centric” Health Interventions
- Rural Specific Communications and Messaging
- Fostering Learning Across Communities

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Strengthening Community Implementation Capacity

- Building capacity among individuals and organizations is community infrastructure that stays within the community after grant funding has ended.
- Work with local and regional partners to enhance skills that directly impact efforts to improve community well-being, including:
 - grant writing,
 - evaluation,
 - identifying, documenting and disseminating best practices,
 - qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis,
 - strategic network building,
 - community organizing,
 - and meeting facilitation

Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Cross-Sector Community Network Grant program
- Encourage associations and organizations at all levels (national, regional, local) to support work of other sectors.
- Align cross-sector groups and programs working to achieve related goals by supporting backbone organizations, network organizations, or staff members to serve as a unifying body, identify synergies across sectors, and share collaboration best practices.

Co-Funding and Utilizing Regional/Local Intermediaries

- Utilize existing regional and local funders, universities, non-profits, etc. to support rural communities. They tend to have a better understanding of local culture and barriers that need to be overcome.
- Co-fund with regional, state and local funders who have a pulse on community needs, have experience working in the area, and can manage smaller amounts of money.
- Partner with regional, state, and local organizations to develop and administer grant programs and other support.

Discussion

- How would you develop and implement these recommendations in your state or region?
 - What would be the role of a national funder?
- What additional recommendations do you have to 1) strengthen community capacity, 2) foster cross-sector collaboration, and 3) co-fund and utilize regional/local intermediaries?
- Provide specific examples of strategies that have worked to strengthen rural communities in your state or region.

Thank you!

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