

Data Sources for Rural Development Priorities

This document supplements information found on the USDA Rural Development priorities web page, available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points>. While not intended to replace formal program application materials, our goal is to help Rural Development customers better understand the RD application process. Additional questions can be addressed by state-based program staff (a list of state offices is available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/state-offices>). If you have questions about the data used in determining Rural Development priority points, please email RD.Innovation.Data@usda.gov

Creating More and Better Markets

Economic Impact Indicators from Dashboard include:

- COVID-19 confirmed cases (per 10,000 population, using data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (available at this link: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>))
- Distressed Communities Index (DCI) – available at this link: <https://eig.org/dci>
- Job Loss Projections (using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) – the Race / Ethnicity Composition and English Proficiency component (available at this link: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>)
- The DCI is comprised of seven publicly-available metrics that evaluate a number of socioeconomic measures of a community's economic well-being. However, there is an overlap in the data between the DCI and SVI socioeconomic indicators. In an effort to not overly weight these factors, we included only those SVI components not captured in the DCI.
- Distressed Communities Look-Up Map (available at this link: <https://ruraldevelopment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=06a26a91d074426d944d22715a90311e>)

Geography level: County

Note: U.S. Territories can obtain points by using **local data** regarding how COVID-19 has impacted the proposed project area.

Advancing Racial Justice, Place-Based Equity, and Opportunity

Uses the CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI):

https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/fact_sheet/fact_sheet.html

The SVI helps identify communities vulnerable to inequity. The degree to which a community exhibits certain social conditions – such as high poverty, low percentage of vehicle access, or crowded households – may affect that community's ability to prevent human suffering and financial loss in the event of disaster.

Together, these factors describe a community's social vulnerability. The SVI ranks each census tract on 15 social factors and groups them into four related themes. These themes include:

- Socioeconomic Status: Population below poverty line, number of unemployed residents, household income, and population with no high school diploma
- Household Composition: Population ages 65 or older, ages 17 or younger, residents with a disability, and single-parent households
- Minority Status and Language: Population part of a racial or ethnic minority that speaks English "less than well"
- Housing and Transportation: Multiunit structures, mobile homes, overcrowded housing, no access to a vehicle, and institutional group quarters

Census tract rankings are based on percentiles. Percentile ranking values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater vulnerability. Census tracts with a score of .75 or higher are considered vulnerable. The higher the score, the more vulnerable the community. Using the SVI as the sole measure for this priority is appropriate, as it gives priority to communities vulnerable to inequity anywhere within RD's areas of eligibility.

Geography level: Census Tract

Note: U.S. Territories can obtain points by using **local data** to demonstrate the social vulnerability of the proposed project area.

Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Both quantitative and qualitative factors influence points assignment.

Quantitative: The proposed project is located in – or serves – coal, oil and gas, and power plant communities whose economic well-being ranks in the most distressed tier of the Distressed Communities Index (available at this link: <https://eig.org/dci>).

- **Energy Community List:** This is in alignment with Executive Order 14008 "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" and the Initial Report to the President on Empowering Workers Through Revitalizing Energy Communities (available at this link: <https://netl.doe.gov/IWGInitialReport>)
- The **Distressed Communities Index** provides a score ranging from 1 – 100 for every community at the zip code level. The most distressed tier of DCI are communities with a score greater than 80.
- The above criteria are used to create the list of qualified communities. (For example: Distressed Communities with a score above 80, with a high concentration of fossil fuel-employment counties) will be posted to the RD website.

Geography level: Zip code

Note: U.S. Territories can obtain points for the quantitative factor by using **local data** to demonstrate that the proposed project area has a high concentration of fossil fuel-employment. The Distressed Communities Index designates all U.S. Territories as Distressed Communities.

Qualitative: Use narrative responses to questions to demonstrate how proposed climate-impact projects improve the livelihoods of community residents and meet pollution mitigation or clean energy goals.

- How will this climate-impact project improve the livelihoods of rural residents?
- Does the project contribute to climate-impact goals?

Examples of projects that may be supportive of climate-impact goals:

- **Energy efficiency in commercial and residential buildings:** Building materials, HVAC, building automation systems, demand response, smart meters, lighting, software
- **Pollution Mitigation:** Abandoned infrastructure; brownfield redevelopment
- **Circular economy:** Waste reduction, waste-to-energy, bioplastics, recycling
- Climate-smart agricultural and forestry practices
- **Electric power:** Long-duration energy storage, demand response, renewable generation (solar, wind, hydro, biofuels), Distributed Energy Resource (DER) integration, transmission and distribution infrastructure
- Water treatment and conservation
- Industrial decarbonization of heavy industries
- **Transportation:** Technologies that promote electrification (EV charging, new EV models, battery improvements, Hydrogen fuel cells, and so on.) or improve efficiency of passenger or freight transport
- Training and workforce development in industries supportive of pollution mitigation objectives

For additional information, please refer to Rural Development Priorities resources available online at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/priority-points> or contact the Rural Development Innovation Center Data Analytics team at RD.Innovation.Data@usda.gov.

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