

Approaches to rural proofing: a review



AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND MARINE

Approaches to rural proofing: a review



Isle of Skye, Scotland. Credit: iStock

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Highlights

Why was the research needed?

This report outlines the findings of a high-level review of international approaches to rural proofing, to support work to develop a rural policy approach in Scotland.

Rural proofing can be defined as ‘reviewing policies through a rural lens, to make these policies fit for purpose for those who live and work in rural areas.’¹

In Scotland, around a fifth (17%) of the population live in rural areas.² The Scottish Government has taken a rural mainstreaming approach since the introduction of the [National Performance Framework](#). In 2023, the Scottish Government made a commitment to apply a rural lens to all ongoing policies, and to publish a Rural Delivery Plan by 2026.³

What did we do?

We reviewed policy documents and guidance from nine countries, focusing on documents that are available in English, readily accessible online and published within the last 5 years. Each of the case studies includes, where available: the definition of rural proofing used; a summary of the approach and accompanying guidance; and links to specific tools, for example questionnaires.

Whilst this report also references a number of relevant and recent reports on this topic, it did not involve a systematic review of academic literature.

What did we learn?

- A number of countries have developed their own approaches to rural proofing, however this process has been critiqued for being a ‘tick box’ exercise, and there is a wider lack of evidence and reporting on its impact;
- In some places, the rural proofing process appears to have been simplified since its introduction, with a number of countries stating that the level of work required by policy makers should be proportionate to the potential scale and significance of the relevant policy in rural areas;
- Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that policies work as intended in rural areas is important, as is considering appropriate mechanisms to gather feedback, ensure openness and scrutiny;

¹ [Rural proofing - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#) European Union europa.eu “What is rural proofing?” (site accessed May 2024)

² [Rural Scotland Data Dashboard \(Scottish Government, 2023\)](#)

³ [Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership - A fresh start - gov.scot.](#)

- It is important that rural stakeholders are kept informed about the purpose and value of the rural proofing process.

How should rural proofing guidance be designed?

- Guidance documents should begin with a clear definition of what rural proofing means in the given context, and an explanation of its aims and purpose;
- Guidance documents should also include a statement of the relevant organisation or government's wider commitment to, or a vision for, rural areas;
- Guidance and tools should be written from a rural perspective, avoiding terms such as 'remote' or language that ties into an implication that rural areas lack what urban areas have;
- Practical advice on stakeholder engagement in rural areas should be given;
- A summary of key rural data and information should be included to give a 'picture' of rural areas, for example in terms of health, transport or education;
- A visual diagram or flow-chart of the rural proofing process should be provided;
- The review or approval process should be clearly explained, and any further expectations in terms of the provision of monitoring and evaluation data;
- A number (e.g. 3-4) of case studies should be given as practical examples;
- Questionnaires should be written in Plain English, with a short list of prompts (for example, questions to ask, key principles or stages to follow);
- Guidance and tools should be tested with potential user groups, particularly those less familiar with rural issues, who can provide helpful feedback on the accessibility of the documents and how long the process takes.

What happens now?

The findings and recommendations outlined in this report will inform work to develop an approach to rural policy for use by policy makers in Scotland.

Context

Rural proofing can be defined as ‘reviewing policies through a rural lens, to make these policies fit for purpose for those who live and work in rural areas.’⁴

This short report has a practical focus on approaches taken by other countries to rural proofing, their definition of this process, and the guidance they have provided to policy makers to carry it out.

This report can be read alongside a range of extensive work on this topic by rural academics in Scotland and elsewhere, including Dr Jane Atterton at Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), a leading academic in this field, with relevant publications including:

- [The Future of Rural Policy in Scotland](#) (2018)
- [Analytical overview of rural proofing approaches and lessons learned](#) (2020)
- [A Framework of Rural Proofing Actions](#) (2022)

Chapter 2 of this report summarises key points from a number of recent and relevant reports, including on the effectiveness of rural proofing and recommendations in terms of its implementation. A full list of references can be found at the end of this report.

In wider terms, a range of previous and ongoing research into rural policy development, and the challenges and opportunities faced by Scotland’s rural and island communities, has been funded by the Scottish Government through its Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Strategic Research Programme.⁵

⁴ [Rural proofing - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#) European Union europa.eu “What is rural proofing?” (site accessed May 2024)

⁵ For information on the current programme, see: [Strategic Research Programme 2022 to 2027 - Environment, natural resources and agriculture: overview - gov.scot.](#)

Acronyms

DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland)
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (England)
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
EU	European Union
ICIA	Island Communities Impact Assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RESAS	Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services
RIAS	Regional Impact Assessment Statement
RNIA	Rural Needs Impact Assessment
SG	Scottish Government
SRUC	Scotland's Rural College

1. Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a high-level review of international approaches to rural proofing, to support work to develop a rural policy approach for Scotland.

The methods included: a review of policy documents and guidance from other countries that were available in English, readily accessible online and published in the last 5 years; and a review of a small number of relevant and recent reports on this topic produced for the Scottish Government and European Commission.

This report outlines the findings of a high-level review of international approaches to rural proofing, to support work to develop a rural policy approach for Scotland.

The European Union [defines rural proofing](#) as:

‘reviewing policies through a rural lens, to make these policies fit for purpose for those who live and work in rural areas. In practice, it considers, for policies in the making, the actual and potential, positive or negative, direct and indirect impacts and implications on rural jobs, development prospects, social well-being, equal opportunities for all and the environmental quality of rural areas and communities.’⁶

Firstly, this review outlines key points from recent work on the effectiveness of rural proofing, wider rural proofing work across [Europe](#), and critiques of the process. It then summarises rural proofing approaches within nine countries:

1. [Northern Ireland](#)
2. [England](#)
3. [Wales](#)
4. [Spain](#)
5. [Finland](#)
6. [New Zealand](#)
7. [Canada](#)
8. [Australia](#)
9. [Korea](#)

The majority of these countries have developed tools such as a checklist or questionnaire for policy makers to complete as part of their rural proofing process, and in some cases these have been revised over time.

⁶ [Rural proofing - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#) European Union europa.eu “What is rural proofing?” (site accessed May 2024)_

The proportion of the population that lives in rural areas in these nine countries ranges from below a fifth (15%) to over a third (37%), compared to 17% of the population of Scotland. Their approaches are summarised in [Tables 1-9](#).

Methods

The case-study summaries are based on a high-level review of policy documents and guidance available in English by Scottish Government researchers, readily accessible online and published within the last 5 years. Each of the case studies includes, where available:

- The definition of rural proofing used;
- A summary of the approach taken and accompanying guidance;
- Links to specific tools, for example questionnaires.

This summary also references several recent and relevant research reports on the topic of rural proofing. It should be noted that this review was not systematic. It focuses on a number of key reports and references wider pieces of work that have previously been carried out. The methods did not involve a wider evidence review of academic literature.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this review is not comprehensive as it focuses on one group of countries. Further international examples can be found in the studies referenced. Lastly, we did not contact policy makers in the countries included to discuss the tools reviewed here.

A list of references is included at the end of this report. These references and further resources should be referred to for a more detailed discussion of rural proofing and wider debates around this topic.

2. Rural proofing

This chapter summarises the main findings of this review in terms of the effectiveness of rural proofing, and wider recommendations made in recent publications in terms of its implementation and evaluation.

It then sets out nine case studies of international approaches to rural proofing:

1. Northern Ireland; 2. England; 3. Wales; 4. Spain; 5. Finland; 6. New Zealand; 7. Canada; 8. Australia and 9. Korea.

Effectiveness of rural proofing

The examples from other countries summarised in this review suggest that the following aspects are key to the effective ‘rural proofing’ of policies:

- An agreed ‘rural’ definition⁷
- Clear guidance and language
- Openness about the process
- Well-designed templates, for example questionnaires
- Effective use of available urban-rural data
- Engagement with rural stakeholders at an early stage
- Clear roles and responsibilities⁸
- Internal procedures, for example rural proofing ‘champions’
- Effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Wider recommendations

The authors of [A Framework of Rural Proofing Actions](#) (Atterton et al. 2022) recommend the following in terms of rural proofing:

- Templates and accompanying guidance need to be clear, straightforward and flexible to be used across departments, at regional and local levels;
- Accompanying guidance should set out key steps in the process, including roles and responsibilities, intended outcomes and impacts;
- Policy-makers should be mindful of the diversity of rural areas;
- A robust and up-to-date rural evidence base should be available;

⁷ For a discussion of the wider issues in defining ‘rural’ as part of the rural proofing process, see Atterton et al. (2024).

⁸ This background paper, [Rural Proofing Actions at different levels](#), includes a helpful table on responsibilities at different levels in addressing rural proofing actions, from national to regional to local.

- The lead Rural Proofing body should provide support to policy colleagues, generate and collate evidence, and encourage other departments and national statistical agencies to use rural-urban identifiers on their datasets;
- ‘Good practice’ examples should be provided for policy-makers to follow.

Approaches to rural proofing taken by other countries and practical challenges are reviewed in detail in a 2019 report commissioned by the Scottish Government, titled [Learning Lessons from early Islands Communities Impact Assessments](#). As the authors note, ‘There is a balance to be struck between making the process overly burdensome for policymakers but ensuring that it is robust and meaningful’.

Reflecting the points above, this 2019 report makes the following recommendations for Islands Communities Impact Assessments,⁹ which are also relevant here:

- A detailed and clear guidance document alongside the template, which includes contextual or background information and signposting to where more information and further support is available;
- Clear definitions of key terminology used;
- Examples of best practice Islands Communities Impact Assessments;
- Signposting to key stakeholders, and guidance on the extent of consultation required during the process, and how this should be undertaken.

Several countries, including Northern Ireland and England, have stated that the amount of work done by policy makers as part of the rural proofing process, or level of analysis undertaken, should be proportionate to the scale and significance of potential impacts of interventions for rural areas.

In several places, including Wales and Northern Ireland, the rural proofing process appears to have been simplified and re-designed since its introduction, for example with a shorter form for policy makers to complete.

Lastly, it has been noted that a policy approach that works in one country cannot simply be ‘transferred’ and adopted in another.¹⁰ As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has noted, rural proofing is not ‘straightforward’: it is ‘complex, “hard-to-get-right” and requires substantial place-based sensitivity and understanding.’¹¹ This review has focused on practical tools used as part of the rural proofing process in a range of countries.

⁹ See: [Island communities impact assessments: guidance and toolkit - gov.scot](#).

¹⁰ Atterton, J. European Network for Rural Development Thematic Group, Background document: [Analytical overview of rural proofing approaches and lessons learned](#).

¹¹ Bryce, B-A. (2022) Rural and Regional Development Unit, Centre for Entrepreneurship, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Cities, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): [Rural Proofing: OECD lessons learned](#)

European approaches

In its [Long Term Vision for Rural Areas](#) the European Commission, part of the executive of the European Union, made a series of commitments for rural areas including the creation of an [EU Rural Action Plan](#), a [Rural Pact](#) and associated community. The Rural Action Plan contains 30 actions organised by the four pillars of the rural vision (stronger, connected, resilient, prosperous). As part of the vision, the Commission committed to put in place a rural proofing mechanism through a rural lens to assess the impact of major EU legislative initiatives on rural areas.

The European Union regards rural proofing as reviewing policies through a rural lens, to make them fit for purpose for those who live and work in rural areas. In practice, it considers potential impacts on rural jobs, development prospects, social wellbeing, equal opportunities and environmental quality of life. At EU level there are [guidelines and tools to support the rural proofing process](#).

When adopting the rural vision, the European Commission committed to put in place a rural proofing mechanism as part of the “Better regulation” agenda, to assess the impact of major European Union legislative initiatives on rural areas.

The European network for rural development ran a [Thematic Group on Rural Proofing](#) at national, regional and local levels to analyse past experience and build a framework for rural proofing. In its final paper, [A Framework of Rural Proofing Actions](#) (2022), the group set out six actions:

1. Clear statement of strong and real political will and commitment
2. Establish a positive, shared vision of rural areas and clarity about the role of rural proofing in achieving this
3. Establish clear and coordinated roles and responsibilities
4. Develop a clear template and guidance and robust accompanying evidence
5. Establish clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The Commission has also set up a [Rural Observatory](#) to improve data collection and dissemination related to EU rural areas; an important source of information for rural proofing. The site contains information on the rural classifications used in different Member States, a tool which enables the user to find out information about specific places, trends data to compare changes over time, and thematic analyses.¹²

¹² Source: Atterton et al. (2024).

Terminology

In exploring the terminology used as part of this process, 'rural proofing' was found to be a widely accepted term. The majority of the countries included in this report use this phrase, both in explaining the process and titling documents. For example, Wales has a 'Rural Proofing Checklist' and New Zealand has a 'Rural Proofing Policies Checklist'. Finland has a 'Rural impact assessment guide'; another common phrase. In Scotland, the Scottish Government refers to 'Island-Proofing' in the context of the Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) process.¹³

As outlined above, the European Union defines rural proofing as 'reviewing policies through a rural lens'. The title of the Scottish Government's 'Rural Lens Toolkit' therefore reflects wider terminology in this context.

The wider academic work referenced in this report largely discusses terminology in reference to the practical importance of defining what is meant by 'rural'. The extent to which the countries referenced in this report have gathered stakeholder views on the phrase 'rural proofing' was not clear from this review.

Critiques of rural proofing

Questionnaires or checklists used in other countries as part of the rural proofing process have been critiqued for being 'tick box' exercises (Atterton, 2019). There have been calls from stakeholders, for example in England, for more transparency around rural proofing and how it has been carried out. In many contexts, there appears to be a lack of evidence and reporting on its impact.

As the European Network for Rural Development's Thematic Group note in their [2022 report](#), in some countries where rural proofing has been implemented, an annual report is presented to Parliament to give an update on the impacts of the process and how well it is being implemented. This 'helps keep rural areas and issues at the forefront of political debates and provides an opportunity for Parliamentary scrutiny of the process and its outcomes' (European Network for Rural Development's Thematic Group, 2022).

As Atterton and other academic co-authors note in a 2024 report,¹⁴ the assumption that rural areas are lacking something and are lagging behind is sometimes associated with the term rural proofing.

¹³ For example, see: ['Island-Proofing' your work - Introducing Island Communities Impact Assessments \(ICIA\) - gov.scot](#).

¹⁴ Final report of the SEFARI Specialist Advisory Group on the Rural Lens. [Informing Scotland's Rural Delivery Plan and Rural Lens: Evidence, Indicators and Evaluation | SEFARI](#). More information on the group is available here: [Informing Scotland's Rural Delivery Plan and Rural Lens | SEFARI](#)

Lastly, the terms 'rural lens' and 'rural proofing' are often used inter-changeably.

The following sections set out nine international approaches to rural proofing, focusing on practical tools developed for use by policy makers.

2.1 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, where over a third (36%) of the population live in rural areas, rural proofing is required as part of a range of impact assessments.



Northern Ireland. Credit: iStock

In Northern Ireland, over a third (36%) of the population live in rural areas.¹⁵

Rural proofing has been required since 2002 and is part of a range of impact assessments. Guidance and training is provided to policy makers.

In 2005 the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) commissioned “A Study of Rural Policy”. This reported that rural proofing in Northern Ireland had not been able to effectively influence decision making, and also revealed concerns about the difficulties of the process.

In 2015 the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development introduced legislation to the Northern Ireland Assembly to put rural proofing on statutory footing, and in 2016 the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) was passed making Northern Ireland the only country or region to have legislated for rural proofing (Atterton, 2020).

¹⁵ Based on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2020 mid-year estimates. Source: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs [Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2023](#).

Definition of rural proofing

“Rural proofing is part of the policy making process and rigorously scrutinises proposed policies. It should ensure fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities.”¹⁶

Approach

Following the 2005 report, the Northern Ireland rural proofing process was simplified and re-designed to ensure a more robust application and better integration of rural issues at the start of the policy making process.

A new Rural Issues Statement pro-forma was developed, but is not a ‘tick box’ exercise. Policy makers in Northern Ireland now complete a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA).

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs published updated guidance on completing an RNIA including a checklist for public authorities in 2018.

The Rural Needs Impact Assessment template can be found here: [A guide to the Rural Needs Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016 for Public Authorities \(revised\) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Key points are:

- Rural proofing must be done at the outset of policy development
- If policy makers consider that the policy could have direct or indirect impacts on rural areas, they must gather evidence to further explore these impacts
- Policy makers are strongly advised to contact rural stakeholders to discuss initial policy ideas in order to identify any potential rural disparities early on

¹⁶ NI Government, 2015 - [Thinking Rural: The essential guide to rural proofing | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Further work: Sally Shortall and Erin Sherry’s research on rural proofing: [Rural Proofing in Northern Ireland - Overview and Recommendations](#)

Box 1. Rural Needs Impact Assessment Template (Northern Ireland)

Step 1: Define the issue

Key questions to consider: What are the objectives of the strategy, policy, plan or service? What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas? How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan? What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?

Step 2: Understand the situation

Key questions to consider: What is the current situation in rural areas? What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas? If the relevant information is not available, can this be sourced? Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy? Are there existing design features or mitigations in place to take account of rural needs?

Step 3: Develop and appraise options

Key questions to consider: Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas? If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated? Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas? What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?

Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

Key questions to consider: Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas? Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms? What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes? Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions? Are different solutions required in different areas?

Step 5: Implementation and Monitoring

Key questions to consider: Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor? How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas? Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?

Step 6: Evaluation and Review

Key questions to consider: What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service? Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process? How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

The template finishes with requiring a signature from the person undertaking the Assessment and an approver.

Source: [Learning Lessons from early Islands Communities Impact Assessments, Scotland's Rural College \(SRUC\)](#)

2.2 England

In England, where around a fifth (17%) of the population live in rural areas, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs oversees the rural proofing of all policies.



Lake District, England. Credit: iStock

In England, around a fifth (17%) of the population live in rural areas.¹⁷

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) oversees rural proofing across government on all policies.¹⁸ Strategic governance of rural proofing is provided by the Rural Affairs Board, which meets regularly to discuss issues affecting rural areas.

In 2019, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to ‘rural proofing’ all policies and Defra has since published two annual reports in 2021 and 2022 on rural proofing: [Rural Proofing in England 2020](#) and [Delivering for rural England](#).

¹⁷ Source: [Statistical Digest of Rural England Population - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁸ [Rural Proofing Report 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Definition of rural proofing

“Rural proofing aims to understand the intended outcomes of government policy intervention in a rural context and to ensure fair and equitable policy outcomes for rural areas.”¹⁹

Approach

Defra has produced [practical guidance on rural proofing](#) (2022) to help policy makers assess the impacts of their policies on rural areas. Alongside this, Defra analysts maintain and develop an evidence base. Tools include the [Statistical Digest of Rural England](#) which provides a range of statistical analysis on issues affecting rural England and the differences and similarities between rural and urban areas and the [Rural-Urban Classification](#) which differentiates between rural and urban areas, for a range of geographies.

In its [2022 guidance](#), Defra states that policy makers and analysts should consider the potential impacts and differences for rural areas in their analysis at an early stage where possible. This analysis should be collaborative, and could be ‘included in business cases, Impact Assessments or other forms of internal or external analysis’.

This guidance sets out a **four-stage** process:

1. What are the direct or indirect impacts of the policy on rural areas?
2. What is the scale of these impacts?
3. What actions can you take to tailor your policy to work best in rural areas?
4. What effect has your policy had on rural areas and how can it be further adapted?

The guidance includes a list of stakeholders with an interest in rural areas. In the report [Rural proofing in England 2020](#), Defra states that rural proofing should begin with the use of area-based data to identify social, economic and environmental differences that need to be accounted for in the policy, and by engaging with rural stakeholders and their networks to gather evidence and test proposals. It sets out these guiding principles:

- Involve rural stakeholders as partners early in the policy development process and maintain a dialogue throughout – it should not just be a one-off engagement.

¹⁹ [Rural proofing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- Share as much information as possible, including about policy objectives, costing assumptions, approaches to efficiency and the scope for change.
- Engage with both national and local stakeholders: a place-based approach is often more appropriate as rural areas can differ significantly from one another.

England's Rural proofing checklist: actions to take²⁰

- Allow for higher rural unit delivery costs in funding formulae or allocations.
- Look at alternative means of providing and accessing the services in rural areas, e.g. through community involvement.
- Reduce the need to travel by using outreach, mobile services or localised delivery.
- Consider better integration or improvement of transport links.
- Allow local delivery bodies flexibility to find the best local solution(s); avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach.
- Use the rural networks and meeting points that exist, for example post offices, village halls, parish notice boards.
- Ensure the needs of smaller businesses are specifically addressed.
- Use small area based data to identify social, economic and environmental differences that need to be accounted for in the policy
- Engage with rural stakeholders and their networks so you can gather evidence and test your proposals

Critiques of this approach

Defra's initial implementation of rural proofing has been critiqued for being slow, incomplete and inconsistent (see [Atterton 2008](#); [Shortall and Alston 2016](#)). It has also received mixed responses from stakeholders, for example:

- In its response to the 2021 report, the Rural Coalition acknowledged the progress made by Defra in its rural proofing policies, for example in developing its rural evidence base, supporting rural academic research, and engaging with rural stakeholders, but critiqued its focus on national policies, where it is hard to ‘point to anything about their design or implementation that adjusts for rural needs or mitigates for rural circumstances’.²¹

²⁰ Source: Defra's [2022 guidance](#)

²¹ [Rural Proofing in England 2020 report: Rural Coalition comments](#)

2.3 Wales

In Wales, where around a third (35%) of the population live in rural areas, policy makers carry out a Rural Proofing Impact Assessment.



Tenby Harbour, Wales. Credit: iStock

In Wales, around a third (35%) of the population live in rural areas.²²

Welsh policy makers carry out a Rural Proofing Impact Assessment by completing a [Rural Proofing checklist](#), to enable them ‘to consider the needs, desires of people, communities and businesses in rural Wales.’

Once the questionnaire is completed, policy makers are asked to list their main objectives to make their policy relevant and practical in a rural setting. After completing the form a review date is set and policy makers are asked to fill in a short monitoring form to allow the impact of rural proofing to be monitored.

²² Source: [A profile of Rural Health in Wales \(Wales Centre for Health, 2007\)](#)

Approach

The **Rural Proofing checklist** in Wales contains the following questions:

- Stakeholders - What contact have you had with rural stakeholders? Please briefly describe any events targeted at rural stakeholders.
- Access - Will access be an issue for rural people? (Rural people may have to travel long distances to access services).
- Needs of Rural People - Has the policy taken account of rural needs, e.g. older population, lack of affordable housing, language requirements?
- Impact on Services - Will the policy lead to the creation of new services (positive impacts) or the closure of existing services (negative impacts)?
- How do you plan to overcome or mitigate any negative impacts?
- Rural Places-Land - Does your policy require the purchase or use of land?
- Have you considered rural dimensions such as land value, availability or restrictive designation?
- Terrain - Will your policy work in areas of difficult terrain, e.g. narrow roads, steep mountains?
- Rural Business - Is your policy relevant to SMEs or Micro Businesses?
- Access to Support - Does your policy expect business to be able to access support? (This may be in the form of advice, training, finance etc.)
- Infrastructure - Does your policy depend on infrastructure such as good road/rail connections or fast broadband speeds?
- Other Issues - Did any other issues come up as a result of the engagement with stakeholders mentioned in Q1 or any other consultation?

Published examples can be found [here](#) and [here](#). A more recent [example](#) from 2022 suggests an even more simplified approach, with a focus on positive impacts, negative impacts and the Welsh language in rural communities.

The current form has 10 questions – an [earlier version](#) had 15 questions so the tool appears to have been simplified since its introduction.

2.4 Spain

In Spain, where around a fifth (19%) of the population live in rural areas, the government has adopted a new law on the evaluation of public policies that includes a rural proofing mechanism.



La Rioja, Spain. Credit: iStock

In Spain, around a fifth (19%) of the population live in rural areas.²³

In 2022, the Spanish congress adopted a new law on the evaluation of public policies that includes a [‘rural proofing mechanism’](#). The objective of the law is to promote a real culture of evaluation by streamlining the analysis of measures and public policies, which is part of the measures included under the Spanish recovery, transformation and resilience plan.

The need to address demographic challenges including depopulation was one element included before the adoption of the law, and has been included within the evaluation criteria. An additional provision has been added that reflects the government’s impetus for the implementation of the ‘rural guarantee mechanism’. Other variables, such as employment, social justice, gender perspective,

²³ Source: [Rural population \(% of total population\) - Spain | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

intergenerational balance, digital transformation, social and environmental sustainability among others will also be taken into account.

Approach

In Spain, a participatory approach was taken to develop a model for rural proofing through the G100 [Rural Proofing project](#) which launched in 2021. This was a gender-balanced group of 100 people from across Spain, and from different backgrounds (farmers, academics, politicians, entrepreneurs, activists, civil servants). It had 14 Working Groups, an open terms of reference and took a participatory approach.

The G100 produced 70 specific proposals in 2022. It aimed to enhance rural proofing by creating a mechanism to review sectoral policies from a rural perspective, taking into account their possible impacts on the development, growth, employment, social well-being and environment in rural areas.

In its final report, [Ruralizar las leyes. Una cuestión de justicia](#), the group made these recommendations:

1. A Spanish “Rural proofing” must be framed and participate in the process of EU Rural Proofing/Vision Rural Areas, territorial impact assessment and Better Regulation.
2. The experience of other countries indicates the need to create a Spanish rural proofing mechanism that reflects the political culture and institutional Spanish, and not simply the mimetic translation of other models and political culture.
3. When establishing a Rural proofing mechanism, it is necessary to decide if the approach is sectoral, or horizontal, reflecting the multiple impacts of public policies and regulations in the rural world.²⁴

²⁴ [EU funds are fungible: potential and feasibility of change in Cohesion Policy post 2020 \(europa.eu\)](#)

2.5 Finland

In Finland, where almost a third (28%) of the population live permanently in rural areas, a Rural Impact Assessment process has been introduced.



Kimito island, Finland. Credit: iStock

In Finland, almost a third (28%) of the population live permanently in rural areas.²⁵ Finland began developing its rural proofing approach in 2007, and the country now has a Rural Impact Assessment process. This has since been applied at local and regional level on a voluntary basis. The method relies on checklists, workshops, geospatial data and questionnaires. The process is coordinated by the Rural Policy Council with the participation of stakeholders from all sectors.

The main strengths of this approach are its adaptability, awareness of rural issues, improved cooperation between actors and enhanced place-based policy. Given its voluntary nature, the uptake of the method is not high as the process is resource-demanding and it is not prioritised among other impact assessments.²⁶

²⁵ Source: [Rural proofing - Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö \(mmm.fi\)](https://www.mmm.fi/)

²⁶ Source: [1st meeting of the Thematic Group on Rural Proofing: Highlights Report | The European Network for Rural Development \(ENRD\) \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu/enrd/)

Finland's guidelines for rural proofing include general guidance on the proofing and more extensive detailed instructions. The guidelines are intended to be used for the assessment of the impacts of legislative proposals that are being drafted on a certain rural area or rural areas in general. The guidelines were drawn up in a cross-sectoral working group appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The [Rural Impact Assessment guide](#) note that 'Rural areas function differently from cities in many respects, and so decisions, programmes and also regulations have different effects in rural and urban areas'.²⁷

Approach

The rural proofing guidelines provide information on:

- the background of the mechanism (Chapter 1)
- the countryside as an area to be assessed (Chapter 2)
- examples of topics to be assessed (Chapter 3)
- tools for the assessment (Chapter 4)
- key cooperation partners and useful sources of information (Chapter 5)

The Finnish Government has a [rural proofing check-list](#). It asks policy makers if the proposal may have impacts on:

- the living conditions, health, well-being, everyday safety and security of people living in rural areas
- livelihoods (which livelihoods) and/or the economic structure or the prerequisites for business activities in rural areas
- the national security of supply
- the prerequisites for finding employment, the income of people living in rural areas or the forms of working
- the availability and stability of employees, and functioning of the labour market in rural areas
- on smooth running of everyday life and the equal and unimpeded access to and accessibility of services (e.g., health and social services, basic education, education and training, transport) in rural areas
- transport connections, travel chains or the conditions for mobility in rural areas?
- the environment, landscape and/or culture in rural areas

²⁷ Full document not available in English.

- the realisation of democracy, fundamental rights and equality between individuals and regions, activities in associations, inclusion and communality and/or social capital in rural areas
- any other economic impacts, such as impacts on the economy and/or vitality of rural areas
- other topics e.g., between different types of impacts

If yes, a more thorough impact assessment should be carried out (participative workshop, questionnaire, geospatial data-analysis).

2.6 New Zealand

In New Zealand, where 13% of the population live in rural communities, a commitment to rural proofing was introduced in 2018.



East Auckland, New Zealand. Credit: iStock

In New Zealand, over a tenth (13%) of the population live in rural communities,²⁸ and a commitment to rural proofing was introduced in 2018. The government has since produced guidance for policy makers in this area, which has been updated since this review was first written.²⁹

This guidance notes that many rural communities share challenges associated with their small population, remoteness, distance from services, likely dependence on the primary industries for employment, and that face challenges such as: long travel distances, social isolation, attracting and retaining staff, provision of infrastructure, land-use change and a changing climate.

²⁸ Source: [Rural population \(% of total population\) - New Zealand | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SH.SV.SMVS?locations=NZ)

²⁹ [Making policies that work for rural communities | NZ Government \(mpi.govt.nz\)](https://www.mpi.govt.nz/making-policies-that-work-for-rural-communities/)

Definition of rural proofing

'The Government's rural communities portfolio recognises the importance of rural communities. The rural communities work programme aims to help rural people to:

- have a higher quality of life
- have access to social and economic opportunities
- be just as able to reach their potential as urban New Zealanders

Rural proofing aims to help achieve this. It's about taking challenges faced by the rural sector into account when designing and implementing policies.'

This updated wording on the New Zealand Government's website suggests a more community-led approach, and a greater emphasis on wellbeing.

Previously, the New Zealand government website stated that rural proofing meant 'understanding the unique aspects of rural communities; identifying the impacts of policies on them and ensuring the policy outcomes are fair and equitable'.

Approach

The New Zealand Government has produced a [Rural Proofing Policies Checklist](#). This has been updated from an earlier version, the [Rural Proofing Impact Assessment Checklist](#), and is now more user-friendly, with a series of steps and questions to address.

In addition, they have produced a [Rural Proofing tool for policy practitioners](#). This interactive learning module takes users through the steps of the process, and helps to ensure they 'consider the unique needs of rural communities when developing policies'.

The tool is 'designed for anyone in a decision-making role who needs to know more about rural proofing – what it is, why it's needed, and how it's done'. The module takes users through a 7-step process for effective rural proofing, including:

- identifying policy objectives and rural stakeholders
- analysing the effects on rural communities
- engaging with rural stakeholders
- identifying ways to mitigate any negative impacts.

Also see: [Common issues to consider when rural proofing](#)

2.7 Canada

In Canada, where just under a fifth (18%) of the population live in a rural area, a Rural Lens policy tool was created in 1998 in line with the announcement of the Canadian Rural Partnership.



New Brunswick, Canada. Credit: iStock

In Canada, just under a fifth (18%) of the population live in a rural area.³⁰

A 'Rural Lens' policy tool was created in 1998 in line with the announcement of the Canadian Rural Partnership. It was designed to be applied by policy makers at an early stage in policy development. Guidance was provided by a Rural Lens Unit.

Definition of rural proofing

'An element of the Canadian Rural Partnership, a tool to help you factor the needs of rural and remote Canadians into new policies, programs and regulations.'

³⁰ [Population growth in Canada's rural areas, 2016 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-263-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)

Approach

The Canadian Government has published a [guide to using the rural lens](#). It sets out the following stages:³¹

1. Concept - define the initiative
2. Environmental scan and impact assessment
3. People and organisations involved
4. Development and design
5. Communications
6. Validation and consultations
7. Refine initiative and identify resources
8. Approval
9. Deliver programme
10. Monitor and evaluate programme

The guide also includes the following questions for policy makers:

- How is the initiative relevant to rural and remote Canada?
- Is the impact specific to a selected rural or remote environment or region?
- Have the most likely positive and negative effects on rural Canadians been identified and, where relevant, addressed?
- Is the initiative designed to respond to the priorities identified by rural Canadians?
- Have rural Canadians been consulted during the development or modification of the initiative?
- How is the benefit to rural Canadians maximised (e.g. cooperation with other partners, development of local solutions to local challenges, flexibility for decision making, etc.)? (OECD, 2006).

More recently, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has developed its own Rural Lens tool and published guidance in 2019, to ensure that 'rural concerns and priorities are considered fully in policy- and decision-making processes.'³²

This guidance asks readers to consider the following questions:

1. Will the decision or proposed policy direction directly impact (positively or negatively) the economic, demographic and/or social circumstances of communities, stakeholders and/or citizens within or across rural regions? If yes, how?

³¹ See p.37-8: [Learning Lessons from early ICIAs: Final Report - sruc.ac.uk](#)

³² [Rural-Lens.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

2. Will the decision or proposed policy direction indirectly impact (positively or negatively) the economic, demographic and/or social circumstances of communities, stakeholders and/or citizens within or across rural regions? If yes, how?
3. Will the decision or policy being considered disproportionately affect smaller or remote rural communities (as compared to larger ones)? If so, how?

Criticism

There was an initial lack of evidence to suggest that many departments applied the Lens in the early stages of policy development (see Atterton, 2019; Hall and Gibson, 2016).

2.8 Australia

In Australia, where just under a third (28%) of the population live in rural areas, a Regional Impact Assessment Statement policy has been developed.



Catherine hill bay coastal town, Australia Credit: iStock

In Australia, just under a third (28%) of the population live in rural and remote areas.³³ South Australia was the first state to integrate rural proofing into the policy making process. The South Australian Government introduced the Regional Impact Assessment Statement (RIAS) policy to support government agencies in considering the likely impact on regional areas of any government decision.

The policy requires government agencies to prepare and publish a Regional Impact Assessment Statement before implementing significant changes to existing, or introducing new, government services or initiatives in regional areas.

³³ Source: [Rural and remote health - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://www.aihw.gov.au)

Definition of rural proofing

The Regional Impact Assessment Statement policy is based on the principles of:

- community and stakeholder consultation for open, accountable and responsible decision-making
- transparency of administration
- reasonable equity in accessing government services and facilities

Approach

The Regional Impact Assessment Statement has 12 stages, including:

1. Title of the initiative
2. Issue to be addressed
3. Region(s) impacted by the proposal
4. Stakeholders affected by the proposed initiative
5. Stakeholders consulted
6. Consultation
7. Summary of Impacts and Analysis
 - 7.1 Economic Factors
 - 7.2 Social Factors
 - 7.3 Environmental Factors
 - 7.4 Equity Factors
8. Mitigation
9. Coordination

Further information: [Rural proofing, National Rural Health Alliance \(ruralhealth.org.au\)](http://ruralhealth.org.au)

2.9 Korea

In Korea, where around a fifth (19%) of the population live in rural areas, the importance of rural proofing was set out in 2009.



Ganghwa island, Korea. Credit: iStock

In Korea, around a fifth (19%) of the population live in rural areas.³⁴

These areas face demographic challenges, including an aging population and wider depopulation. In response, the Korean Government is placing new emphasis on service delivery in rural areas, and investing in transport and connectivity.³⁵

Korea's rural development is largely driven by two inter-ministerial oversight committees, the Presidential Committee for Balanced National Development and the Prime Minister's Committee for Quality of Life. Together these two committees oversee a range of initiatives in support of economic development and to support the well-being of rural people, with the committee on Balanced National Development driving much of the economic agenda in these regions while the

³⁴ Source: [Rural population \(% of total population\) - Korea, Rep. | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/SH.UV.CD?locations=KE)

³⁵ See Moon-Soo Jung, 2021: [Institutional Framework and Prospects of the Quality of Rural Life Policy in Korea | FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform](#)

quality of life committee concentrates on service delivery and well-being in fishing and farming communities.³⁶

Definition of rural proofing

In a 2021 study, Moon-Soo Jung outlines how the Korea Government has implemented the 'Quality of Rural Life policy', which takes a place-based approach, and has a focus on stakeholder partnerships and local delivery. This policy includes assessment and evaluation of achievements compared to the goals of each ministry's policies, and an analysis of the policy feedback process, including improvement of policy implementation capabilities through policy monitoring.

Rural proofing is carried out to improve policy by evaluating how significantly the policies promoted by the government have an impact on the quality of rural life. Plans, policies and projects established by ministries and local governments that are highly relevant to the improvement of the quality of life of rural residents are selected.

The importance of rural proofing was set out in Korea's 2nd master plan in 2009, and several attempts were made through an academic approach in 2014. But it was not institutionally settled (Moon-Soo Jung, 2021).

Approach

A 'Rural Proofing Operation Guideline' was enacted and published in 2020, and specific implementation procedures were established.

A committee selects policies for rural proofing, which are then evaluated in terms of their economic, social and environmental impacts. In 2021, rural proofing was carried out through two themes:

1. Improvement of commuter conditions for rural students
2. Urban and rural transportation system

³⁶ Source: [OECD, 2021 'Perspectives on Decentralisation and Rural-Urban Linkages in Korea' Chapter 3](#)

Three stages of Rural proofing evaluation stages in Korea³⁷

Stage	Activity
<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Current status of Rural Area and Policy Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demographic and geographic characteristics of rural areas ▪ Policy purpose, content and budget
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Policy Performance Evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistency between policy goals and means ▪ In / Output / Effect analysis ▪ Comparison of Urban and Rural policy performance
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Policy limitations and directions for improvement</p>	

³⁷ Source: Moon-Soo Jung, 2021.

Conclusions

This report has outlined the findings of a high-level review of international approaches to rural proofing, focusing on publicly available guidance and practical tools. It has also summarised key points from several recent reports on rural proofing in terms of its effectiveness and implementation. This research was carried out to inform work to develop a rural approach for policy makers in Scotland. The Scottish Government has committed to publishing a Rural Delivery Plan by 2026, and to apply a rural lens approach to all ongoing policies.

Main findings

This report has outlined the findings of a high-level review of international approaches to rural proofing, focusing on publicly available guidance and practical tools. It has also summarised key points from several recent reports on rural proofing in terms of its effectiveness and implementation.

The main findings are as follows:

- A number of countries have developed their own approaches to rural proofing, however this process has been critiqued for being a ‘tick box’ exercise, and there is a wider lack of evidence and reporting on its impact;
- In some places, the rural proofing process appears to have been simplified since its introduction, with a number of countries stating that the level of work required by policy makers should be proportionate to the potential scale and significance of the relevant policy in rural areas;
- Developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure Government policy works as intended in rural areas is important, as is considering appropriate mechanisms to gather feedback, ensure openness and scrutiny;
- It is important that rural stakeholders are kept informed about the purpose and value of the rural proofing process

Whilst this report indicates the diversity of approaches to rural proofing taken in other countries, in part shaped by particular issues faced by rural and island communities in each country, a number of common themes emerge.

In all of the examples examined here, there is a focus on building policy makers’ understanding of the need to deliver policy differently in rural areas, to capture the potential impacts of policies and identify actions to address this. Shared issues in different international contexts which shape the impacts of policies in rural areas include rural depopulation and challenges in service delivery.

Whilst some countries have created shorter templates for policy makers to complete, others have published detailed guidance and developed an evidence base, including statistics, to support the process. In some contexts, rural proofing is voluntary, whereas in others it is a requirement.

A further common theme across all examples is the difficulty of designing a straightforward process, ensuring that it is followed consistently, and able to effectively influence decision making, alongside taking a successful approach to engaging with stakeholders and evaluating the process in a robust way. A key learning is the need to have an adaptable and responsive process.

Recommendations

Based on the examples and wider literature reviewed here, a number of practical recommendations can be made in terms of the development, design and monitoring of a rural proofing process:

- Guidance documents should begin with a clear definition of what rural proofing means in the given context, and an explanation of its aims and purpose;
- Guidance documents should also include a statement of the relevant organisation or government's wider commitment to, or a vision for, rural areas;
- Guidance and tools should be written from a rural perspective, avoiding terms such as 'remote' or the implication that rural areas are 'behind' or lack what urban areas have;
- Practical advice on stakeholder engagement in rural areas should be given;
- A summary of key rural data and information should be included to give a 'picture' of rural areas, for example in terms of health, transport or education;
- A visual diagram or flow-chart of the rural proofing process should be provided;
- The review or approval process should be clearly explained, and any further expectations in terms of the provision of monitoring and evaluation data;
- A number (e.g. 3-4) of case studies should be given as practical examples;
- Questionnaires should be written in Plain English, with a short list of prompts (for example, questions to ask, key principles or stages to follow);
- Guidance and tools should be tested with potential user groups, particularly those less familiar with rural issues, who can provide helpful feedback on the accessibility of the documents and how long the process takes.

The findings of this review will be used to support work to develop a rural policy approach in Scotland.

Table 1. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Northern Ireland**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
37%	<p>Thinking Rural: The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing</p> <p>Key Rural Issues 2021.pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire / checklist • Stakeholder engagement • Rural proofing has been required since 2002 and is part of a range of impact assessments • Policy makers expected to complete a Rural Issues Statement pro-forma using the guidance • Those carrying out rural proofing are advised to have a clear definition of ‘rural’ • Advised to contact rural stakeholders to discuss initial policy ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the rural specific impacts of the policy? Are there any potential indirect impacts? • Are there any potential local impacts that will differ from the regional impact? • Is there a need for pre-consultation with rural stakeholders to get better insight into potential rural impacts? • Is there a need for actions to mitigate against impacts in rural areas? • If you screen out rural proofing, what is your reason? • Have the consultation responses identified any potentially different impacts in terms of rural areas/communities? • Can you demonstrate how you have targeted and fully engaged with rural stakeholders during consultation? • Have you any rural specific indicators that have been set to monitor and your policy implementation?

Table 2. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **England**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
17%	<p>Rural proofing in England 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p> <p>Rural proofing: Practical guidance to assess impacts of policies</p> <p>Response from the Rural Coalition</p> <p>Rural proofing for health toolkit – Rural England</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement • Use of available rural data • In 2019, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to ‘rural proofing’ all policies and a yearly report from Defra • Each department has a nominated ‘rural proofing lead’ and a wider network to share best practice and champion rural proofing in policy development. • The use of area-based data to identify social, economic and environmental differences Engaging with rural stakeholders and their networks to gather evidence and test proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the intended outcomes for rural areas? • How might outcomes differ between rural and urban areas? • How are the outcomes to be delivered in rural areas? • What are the potential issues and challenges? • How might the situation vary between different types of rural area? • What are the target populations and how might they be affected or disadvantaged? • In the case of funding, are rurality or sparsity taken into account? • What are the dependencies, if any, with the responsibilities of other departments? • Which bodies could be involved in delivering the outcomes in rural areas? • What evidence is needed?

Table 3. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Wales**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
35%	Rural proofing checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire / checklist • Stakeholder engagement • Policy makers complete a Rural Proofing tool Also asked to complete a short monitoring form to collect data on the impact of rural proofing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What contact have you had with rural stakeholders? • Will access be an issue for rural people? • Has the policy taken account of rural needs, e.g. older population, lack of affordable housing, language requirements? • Will the policy lead to the creation of new services • (positive impacts) or the closure of existing services (negative impacts)? • How do you plan to overcome or mitigate any negative impacts? • Does your policy require the purchase or use of land? Have you considered rural dimensions such as land value, availability or restrictive designation? • Will your policy work in areas of difficult terrain, e.g. narrow roads, steep mountains? • Is your policy relevant to SMEs or Micro Businesses? Does your policy expect business to be able to access support? • Does your policy depend on infrastructure such as good road/rail connections or fast broadband speeds? • Did any other issues come up as a result of the engagement with stakeholders mentioned in Q1 or any other consultation?

Table 4. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Spain**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
19%	G100 Rural Proofing project Introduction of a 'rural proofing mechanism' in 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open participation method • First nationwide exercise on rural proofing to develop a rural guarantee mechanism • G100 group has 100 members, open participation and consultation • Spain a EU test case for policies against rural depopulation 	N/A – no tools publicly available.

Table 5. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Finland**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
28%	<p>Rural Impact Assessment process</p> <p>Rural impact assessment guide for law drafters Presentation on the rural proofing approach and check-list.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural proofing approach developed since 2007 • Rural proofing since applied at local and regional level on a voluntary basis • Checklists, workshops, geospatial data and questionnaires. 	<p>Does the proposal have impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the living conditions, health, well-being, everyday safety and security of people living in rural areas? • livelihoods and/or the economic structure or the prerequisites for business activities in rural areas? • the national security of supply? • the prerequisites for finding employment, the income of people living in rural areas or the forms of working? • the availability and stability of employees, and functioning of the labour market in rural areas? • on smooth running of everyday life and the equal and unimpeded access to and accessibility of services (e.g., health and social services, basic education, education and training, transport) in rural areas? • transport connections, travel chains or the conditions for mobility in rural areas? • the environment, landscape and/or culture in rural areas? • the realisation of democracy, fundamental rights and equality between individuals and regions? activities in associations, inclusion and communality and/or social capital in rural areas? • any other economic impacts, such as impacts on the economy and/or vitality of rural areas? • other topics e.g., between different types of impacts?

Table 6. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **New Zealand**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
15%	Rural Proofing Policies Checklist Rural Proofing tool for policy practitioners Common issues to consider when rural proofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural impact assessment • Stakeholder consultation • Commitment to rural proofing introduced in 2018. • The government has produced guidance and a Rural Proofing Impact Assessment Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm your policy objectives and various stakeholders and audiences. • Identify benefits and implications for the rural community • Seek advice from relevant rural contacts and organisations • Assess the implications • Consider mitigation measures • Make adjustments • Keep parties updated

Table 7. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Canada**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
18%	What do you see when you look through the rural lens? : guide to using the rural lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural impact assessment Stakeholder consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the initiative relevant to rural and remote Canada? Is the impact specific to a selected rural or remote environment or region? Have the most likely positive and negative effects on rural Canadians been identified and, where relevant, addressed? Is the initiative designed to respond to the priorities identified by rural Canadians? Have rural Canadians been consulted during the development or modification of the initiative? How is the benefit to rural Canadians maximised (e.g. cooperation with other partners, Development of local solutions to local challenges, flexibility for decision making, etc.)?

Table 8. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Australia**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
28%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South Australian Government has introduced the Regional Impact Assessment Statement Policy • Regional impact assessment • Stakeholder consultation 	<p>The Regional Impact Assessment Statement has 12 stages, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of the initiative • Issue to be addressed • Region(s) impacted by the proposal • Stakeholders affected by the proposed initiative • Stakeholders consulted • Consultation • Summary of Impacts and Analysis • Mitigation • Coordination

Table 9. Summary of approaches to rural proofing: **Korea**

Percentage (%) of population that live in rural areas	Guidance / documents	Approach – key points for policy makers	Rural proofing – example questions
19%		Emphasis on stakeholder partnerships and local delivery	A 'Rural Proofing Operation Guideline' was published in 2020 (not available in English).

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[Rural Proofing Actions at different levels: Key considerations](#)

[Analytical overview of rural proofing approaches and lessons learned: background paper](#)

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