



Regional Solutions for Rural and Urban Challenges

Insights #5

Recommendations for State Governments

This *Insights* brief is one of a series produced as part of the *Regional Solutions for Rural and Urban Challenges* project led by LOCUS Impact Investing with funding support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The project explores the possibility that regional collaboration and solution-seeking can be an effective way of improving social and economic opportunity and health for all people and places within a region. We asked this question: Under what conditions are regional collaboration and solution-seeking approaches most effective in improving social and economic outcomes? We saw this as a counterpoint to the prevailing narrative of growing divisions between rural and urban populations along economic, social, cultural, and political lines.

To advance and support effective regional collaboration:

1. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National League of Cities should, with the intention of making specific recommendations to Congress and state legislatures, review the history and lessons from regional solutions to rural and urban challenges, specifically:
 - Intentional efforts, whether legislative or administrative, to encourage, support or advance regional collaboration across the state
 - Statewide actions that have resulted in regional collaborations as a mechanism for meeting new regulatory requirements, realizing administrative savings, etc.
 - If and how states have effectively provided financial operating support for planning, coordination, analysis, and collaboration by regional development organizations or other regional entities
 - If and how states have provided venues for sharing best practices and ideas, training, and cross-sector collaboration at the regional level.
2. Governors can be particularly influential in pursuing and supporting regional collaboration. They, and their cabinet colleagues, can:
 - Use the power of the bully pulpit to emphasize the mutual benefits and equity potential of enhanced urban-rural connections. This means talking about interdependence with consistency, especially in cities and suburban areas where there is often a lower level of awareness about rural places and cities' dependence on their rural regions for water, energy, and food.
 - Can call on agencies that have a hand in creating and supporting dynamic, sustainable, inclusive communities to review their own internal policies and programs to gauge whether they spur

and support or inhibit collaboration between rural and urban areas and across political boundaries. For example, states might find that they prompt communities to compete against one another for certain pots of funding where it may be possible to incentivize collaboration via joint applications from multiple towns or a region.

3. States can invest in building data and analytical tools and systems that provide city planners, town managers, county commissioners and others involved in land use planning and decisions to more appropriately gauge the long-term value of not-developing land and natural resources such as water and forests. These platforms could be built and housed at state demographers' offices or within public university systems or a state agency; what is most important is that the data and systems are user-friendly and designed to be accessible and available (at no or very low cost) to local planners and decision makers.

Please visit <https://locusimpactinvesting.org/what-we-do/rural-work/regional-solutions/introduction/regional-solutions.html> to see all the materials produced for the *Regional Solutions for Rural and Urban Challenges* project.

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