Tools and Data Sources that Define Rural

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture

Economic Research Service for research and policy.


- People: Demographic data from the American Community Survey, including age, race and ethnicity, migration and immigration, education, household size and family composition. Data have been added on veterans, including service period, education, unemployment, income, and demographic characteristics.

- Jobs: Economic data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other sources, including information on employment trends, unemployment, industrial composition, and household income.

- Agriculture: Indicators from the latest Census of Agriculture, including number and size of farms, operator characteristics, off-farm income, and government payments.

- County classifications: The rural-urban continuum, economic dependence, persistent poverty, population loss, and other ERS county codes."

Data for Rural Analysis ERS produces and maintains a number of data sets that are used by policymakers and researchers to identify and describe rural and urban areas.
http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/data-for-rural-analysis.aspx(link is external)


Rural Development for Individuals looking to purchase a home.

This is an Interactive map that "is used to determine eligibility for certain USDA home loan programs and the USDA Satellite Grant Program. In order to be eligible for many USDA loans, household income must meet certain
guidelines. Also, the home to be purchased or served must be located in an eligible rural area as defined by USDA.

2. U.S. Census Bureau

- American Fact Finder: http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml (link is external)


Define Rural for Health Programs

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration

- Defining the Rural Population http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/aboutus/definition.html (link is external)

2. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Rural Health

What is Rural? http://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/about/rural-veterans.asp (link is external)

“At this time, the Department of Veterans Affairs utilizes the US Census Bureau’s definition for “Urban”, “Rural” and “Highly Rural”.

- Urban Area. Census Bureau-defined urbanized area, which is any block or block group having a population density of at least 1000 people per square mile
- Rural Area: Any non-urban or non-highly rural area.
- Highly Rural Area: An area having < 7 civilians per square mile”


4. Am I Rural? Rural Assistance Center: https://www.raconline.org/am-i-rural (link is external)