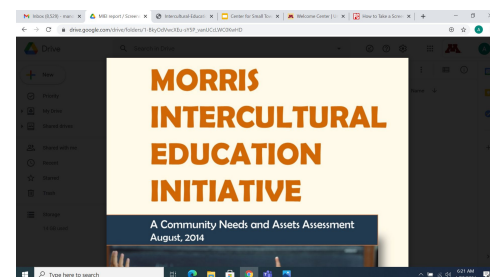


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UMN Morris: Native American-serving non-tribal institution located in West Central MN; first-year class is 42% BIPOC.

Center for Small Towns: Works to connect UMN Morris assets (faculty expertise, student time, other resources) and community assets to meet community needs in small towns, focused on towns of 10,000 or fewer.

Morris Intercultural Education Initiative: focused on addressing educational and civic barriers faced by new immigrants through ongoing assessment and partnerships. In process of expanding beyond Morris area.



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Key questions:

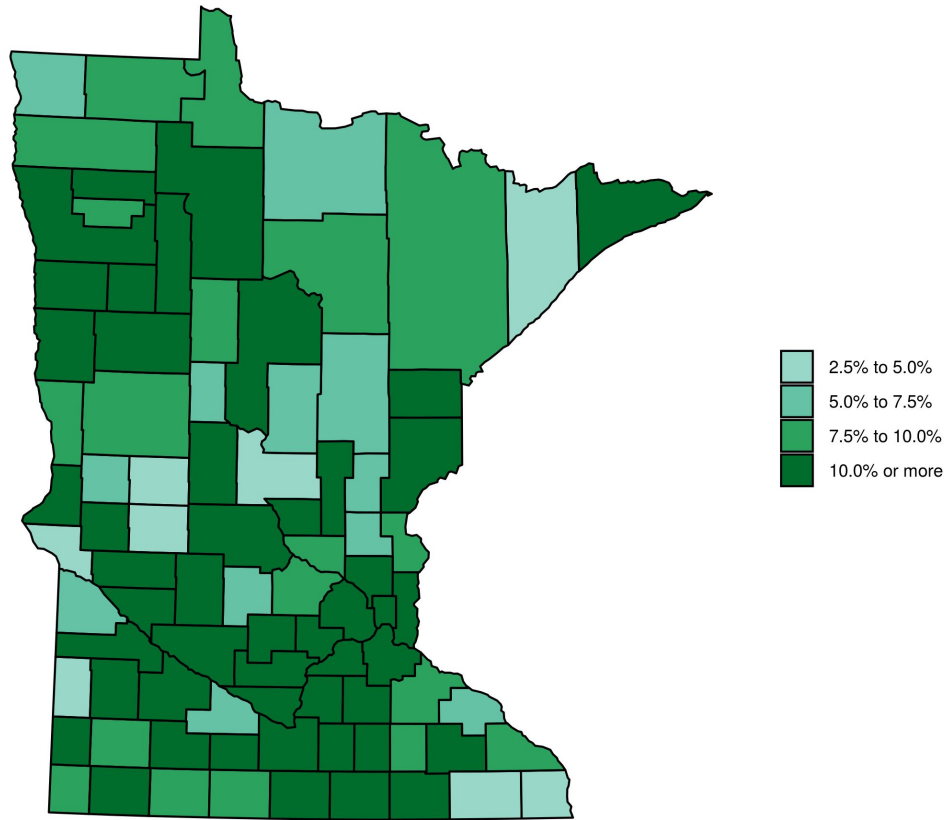
Is racial justice an important issue in small towns?

How might capital investments in small towns be applied equitably?



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Race and ethnicity as percentage of population, 2018



U.S. Census Bureau - Population Estimates

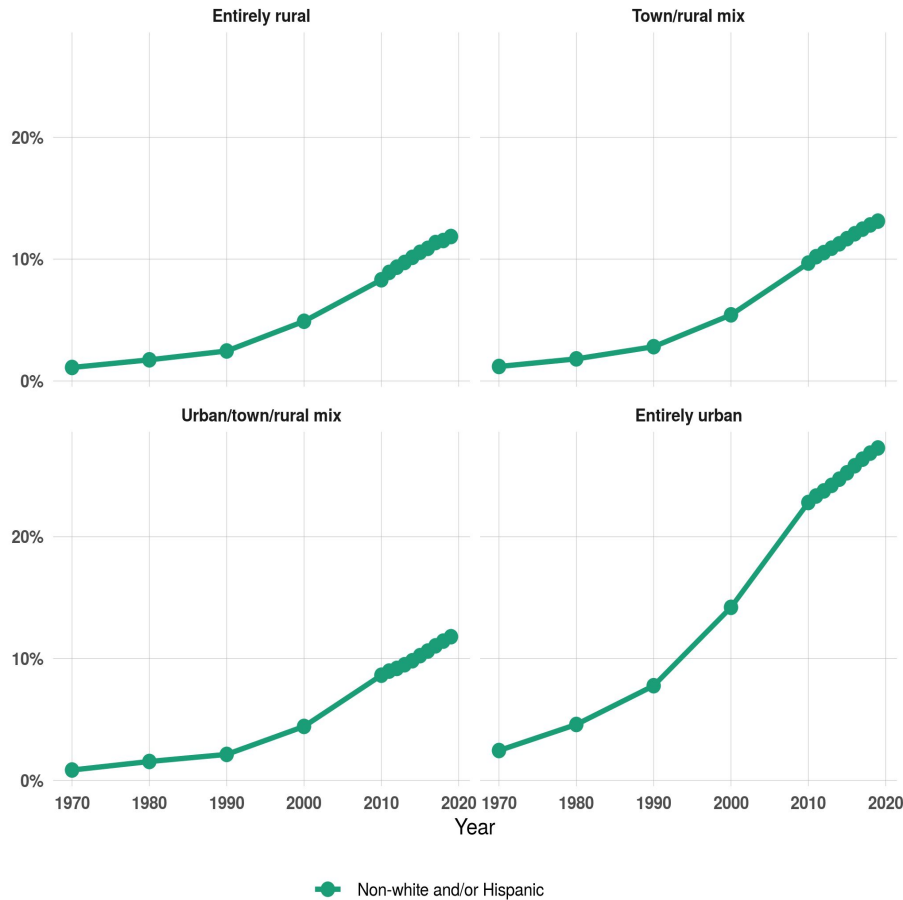
Darkest green = 10% or higher BIPOC

Chart courtesy of Center for Rural Policy and Development



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Percent of the population by race and ethnicity



U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census & Population Estimates

Percentage of population identifying as BIPOC in rural (top left) and town/rural mix (top right) has increased significantly in last 50 years, a trend projected to continue.

Chart courtesy of Center for Rural Policy and Development



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Yes, racial justice is important in rural communities, because...

*In **all rural counties** experiencing growth, that growth is due to an increase in the number of BIPOC people.

- *New immigrants (mostly)

- *People starting over in a new, cheaper, safer place to live (new trend)

***4 of every 10** Latinx people in MN live in rural areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

***15,000 families** with school-aged children in **rural MN** speak **117 different languages** (MN Dept of Education).



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But, the context is different!

That means equity in
general--and equity in capital
investments--look different, too.



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How do we know what BIPOC people living in rural MN need/want in terms of infrastructure/public works?

*Needs/experiences vary based on culture, ethnicity, race, religion, social class, job status, immigration status, age, family status, reason for living in rural community...and many other factors.

*Few nonpartisan, thorough studies focused on this question.



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Assessment Challenges

- *Gaining trust
- *Cultural + linguistic barriers to gathering input.
- *Perceived pressure from employers not to “make waves.”
- *Fewer cultural centers or clearly identified cultural leaders.



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Assessment Considerations: Leaders in Small Towns

- *Deploy regional resources to conduct community-based research.
- *Make the time to build and grow relationships.
- *Invest in translation and interpretation services and ESL classes aimed at encouraging participation in public life.
- *Actively work toward BIPOC running for office, joining community committees, participating in civic life.



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Assessment Considerations: Capital Investment Committee

- *Discourage tokenism
- *Encourage relationship building, then research
- *Research demographics of each community seeking funding
- *Seek input from marginalized people during tours



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Public Infrastructure

- *Sustainable technologies: interest/desire to support among rural BIPOC
- *Drinking and waste water systems: improvements help everyone.
- *Rural roads: used most by agricultural workers.
- *Outdoor recreation (and soccer fields!): cited in nearly every conversation.



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Work

- *Empty storefronts
- *Entrepreneurship, particularly businesses catering to BIPOC
- *Access to culturally responsive information about starting a new business



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Work

- *Few opportunities for advancement in large-scale agricultural businesses, but difficult to transition.

- *Trend: farmland turning over with no family member to continue.

- *Need for food hubs to connect emerging farmers to larger markets.

- *Start up support



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Housing

- *Rental market challenges
- *Pros and cons of businesses recruiting new immigrants providing their own
- *Home loan access



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Transportation

- *Lack of public transportation to and from Twin Cities/Rochester/between small communities
- *Accessibility of existing public transportation
- *Driver's license access
- *Car loans
- *Ride sharing not always safe/ideal



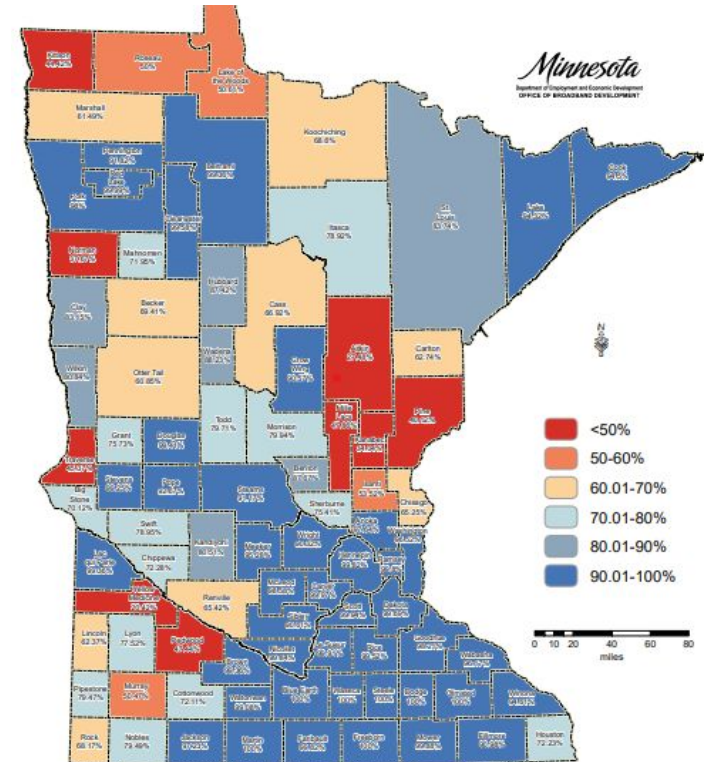
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Access to Internet

*Availability of broadband

*Ability to pay for internet connection in home--estimated 40% of rural residents can't (MN Compass)

*Access to devices



(Map courtesy of DEED Office of Broadband Development)



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Education

- *More space: school renovation completely dependent on community support
- *Dedicated, private spaces for cultural liaisons
- *Small classroom spaces for small group/individual work (ESL, etc).
- *Buildings/signs that reflect cultures/languages represented in the school



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Higher Education

*Invest in higher education institutions that are dedicated to providing culturally inclusive education and have a track record for supporting and graduating BIPOC students.

*Involve BIPOC students in capital investment visits.

*Utilize regional higher ed institutions as bridges and resources.



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Healthcare and Human Services

- *Spaces and signs that reflect town's demographics
- *Spaces conducive to in-person interpretation, private meetings
- *Access to virtual services



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Takeaways For Capital Investment Committee

- *Sound needs and assets assessment takes time, relationship-building, expertise, and money. Rural communities need help to do it well. (Tokenism does not equal good assessment).
- *Deciding which projects to fund should not depend solely on how many people will use the project. Address projected growth and demographic changes.
- *Provide culturally and linguistically responsive training/support for building coalitions and putting proposals together.



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Intersecting Takeaways (beyond your purview)

- *Invest in community translation and interpretation in rural communities in every sector
- *Invest in cultural liaison positions--and not just at schools
- *Invest in efforts that encourage civic engagement among rural BIPOC



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Intersecting Takeaways (beyond your purview)

- *Invest in intercultural education/cultural agility trainings for community leaders and frontline workers in all sectors that focus on rural contexts.
- *Invest in efforts that encourage cross-cultural understanding and engagement.
- *Speak out clearly against (intentional, explicit) bigotry



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