

APPENDIX 1: DEFINING LOCAL

Throughout these modules, you are asked to define local. It is tempting to want a universal definition of “local” or “nearby.” But the meaning of local varies considerably from place to place and from purpose to purpose. It implies geographical, social, and economic connection. Local implies that the people who live there have a shared sense of place. In some instances, county is an acceptable proxy for local. In other instances, people think about their places as only a small watershed or neighborhood. Local can also be considered to include multiple counties or portions of several counties. Your definition of local will have to balance people’s vision of “local” with practical considerations about how data is collected and how much is available. Because people will have different perspectives and data considerations will intervene, your definition will be imperfect. Give it some thought but don’t get bogged down.

Boundary approach

One common way to define “local” is to draw an area on a map with boundaries. Everything inside the map is local; everything outside is not. As you and your partners think through your definition of local, you might begin by considering what nearby means for your group. Which neighborhoods, communities, and land ownerships you want to include? After you have begun to narrow in on your ideal monitoring area, you should think about where your data is likely to come from and how it is compiled. Will you be getting county or forest level data? Can you get subwatershed, district, or community data? Next, consider how much data you are likely to get if you chose your particular area. Are you going to be overwhelmed with information? Will you have too little information to reveal patterns? Finally, test your definition of local by looking on both sides of the boundaries. Has an important community or land base been left out? Are some areas unnecessarily included?

Relative approach

A second approach to defining local uses Map Quest or other simple on-line mapping tool to measure the distance between project sites and business locations or worker residences. This approach can be particularly useful if your project locations are near the edges of counties or other logical boundaries or are spread across large areas where the sense of local changes from place to place.

To determine if something is local, use web-based directions services such as Map Quest or Yahoo to calculate the travel distance between to points. In this approach, you might define local as the distance that people drive to and from work each day and still return home to sleep each night. This distance will vary considerably depending on driving conditions and local practice. The example below shows how you might determine how many local workers worked on particular project using commute distances.

A word of warning: Map Quest and other on-line mapping services will be inaccurate when your project sites are deep in national forests far from communities, as they will measure from the closest community.

Example: Measuring between work site and worker residence

What you need A web-based mapping site like <http://www.mapquest.com> or <http://maps.yahoo.com>
Zip code or name of the closest town to where the work took place
List of the zip codes in which workers live

How to calculate Using the “driving directions” option on Map Quest or similar web site, enter the zip code or name of the town nearest to where the work was performed. Then enter the zip code in which one or more workers lived. If you are given the choice between the shortest time or the shortest distance, use the shortest distance. It is usually more accurate. Count as “local” all zip codes within a given distance of the project site.