

Published in October 2013, "[Culture in Agriculture: The Cooperative Extension Service as an Alternative Rural Arts Model](#)" aimed to "inform rural arts practitioners, community arts academics, and policy makers of the limitations of existing resource investment in rural areas and need for additional rural arts organizational models." The piece also examined historical and contemporary Cooperative Extension arts programs in Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, and Wisconsin as a viable alternative model to the traditional nonprofit structure [1].

Housed within the USDA, the Cooperative Extension Service has utilized the arts to promote quality of life for more than a century [2]. These programs have proven an effective strategy for small communities to sustain cultural programming and for universities to fulfill their service mandates. This article shares a few of the new developments in Extension arts work and the USDA's support of the arts since "Culture in Agriculture" was published.

In 2014, Imagining America launched the [Extension Reconsidered](#) Initiative in partnership with 13 land-grant universities to "highlight Extension's legacy of public engagement while encouraging new partnerships and leaders to move that legacy forward" [3]. In 2015, [Iowa State University](#) launched a new program. In 2016, the Robert Gard Foundation hosted "[Our Communities: A Symposium on the Arts](#)" in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) supported "[The Arts in the Small Community: A National Plan](#)" by bringing together 30 community arts leaders to "acknowledge the past, understand the present and envision a future where the power of human expression through art defines and transforms our communities" [4].

Rural arts and culture communities have benefitted from other USDA departments as well. USDA Rural Development's approach has been increasingly supportive of the arts, especially through Rural Business Development and Community Facilities Grants. In 2016, a Kentucky USDA Rural Development grant was awarded to the Kentucky Arts Council to support "artist residents of Ohio and Owsley counties through technical assistance that ensures they are equipped with the knowledge required to sell their work at farmer's markets, and potentially expand their sales outside the local community" [5].

The USDA also supported gatherings to investigate the future of rural creative placemaking. In 2015, [the White House Rural Council](#) co-hosted the [White House Convening on Rural Placemaking](#) to focus on "how federal, state, and philanthropic entities can support and leverage the process that brings life to rural downtown areas and community gathering places [6]." In 2016, USDA joined federal agencies including the NEA, Delta Regional Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission alongside many national partners to support the [Next Generation Rural Creative Placemaking Summit](#). "[Next Generation: The Future of Rural Creative Placemaking](#)" was launched by the [Rural Policy Research Institute](#) and [Art of the Rural](#) with support from the NEA and the University of Iowa. USDA Rural Development State Directors Colleen Landkamer (MN) and Bill Menner (IA) co-chaired Next Generation Working Groups and supported statewide convenings.

In 2012, then USDA Deputy Under-Secretary Doug O'Brien explained that USDA leveraged resources in the arts because "the arts increase quality of life in rural America, provide a competitive edge for recruiting businesses, and directly provide jobs." [7] The USDA's support demonstrates the essential contribution of arts to the health and sustainability of our rural regions.

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#### References:

1.

<http://culturework.uoregon.edu/2013/11/01/october-2013-vol-17-no-3-culture-in-agriculture-the-cooperative-extension-service-as-an-alternative-rural-arts-model-savannah-barrett-coming-of-age-access-and-equity-in-ame/2/>

2. Overton, Patrick (1997). *Rebuilding the front porch of America: Essays on the art of community making*. Astoria, Oregon: PrairieSea Press.

3. *Extension Reconsidered*

4. Gard Foundation 2016 Symposium page.

5. USDA Rural Development Provides Grant to Kentucky Arts Council

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/news-release/usda-rural-development-provides-grant-kentucky-arts-council>

6. [http://programs.lisc.org/rural\\_lisc/building\\_sustainable\\_communities/what's\\_new/rural\\_lisc\\_participates\\_in\\_white\\_house\\_convening\\_on\\_rural\\_placemaking.php](http://programs.lisc.org/rural_lisc/building_sustainable_communities/what's_new/rural_lisc_participates_in_white_house_convening_on_rural_placemaking.php)

7. *"Resources for Rural Development: The USDA and the Arts:"*

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#### Bio:

**Savannah Barrett is the Director of Programs for Art of the Rural.** She serves on the Board of the of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice and the Robert E. Gard Foundation, has served on the review panel for the National Endowment for the Arts' Citizen's Institute on Rural Design and on the Innovation Team for EmcArts' Community Innovation Lab program, and has widely published essays and interviews. She holds a Masters of Arts Management from the University of Oregon, and is an alumnus of the Muhammad Ali Scholars for Peace and Justice at the University of Louisville and from the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts. She previously guided community programs for the Center for Community Arts and Cultural Policy, the Louisville Visual Art Association, the Oregon Folklife Network, Paul Paletti Gallery, and Salvo Collective.

Savannah was raised on a seventh-generation homeplace in Grayson Springs, Kentucky, where she co-founded a local arts agency in high school. The heart and soul of her work with Art of the Rural is the [Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange](#), a project that she leads with Josh May from [Appalshop](#) and a brilliant cast of artists and community builders throughout the state to innovate on a regional creative placemaking strategy. This project is complemented by Art of the Rural's collaboration with the [Rural Policy Research Institute](#) on the [Next Generation initiative](#), which engages the public and private sector to advance collaboration, share innovative strategies and research, and elevate emerging leaders in the national field of rural creative placemaking.