



2023 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



**FOUNDED BY HANNAH
GRIMES CENTER FOR
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
THE KEENE SENTINEL**

REIMAGINING RURAL



Our unending gratitude to every speaker, volunteer, attendee, staff member, vendor, and sponsor that made 2023 a year of powerful growth. Whether it was through our roundtables, the summit, or all the engagement with our network, we are in a more connected place because of you. If I could wish only one thing for the upcoming year, it would be to lean into that access to and connection with each other. Join our Facebook group, and when you have a need or feel stuck with a problem you are trying to solve in your community, reach out! When you feel like you have something to offer that someone else might need, reach out! When we aggregate our knowledge and experiences, none of us have to do this important work alone.

Julianna Dodson
Radically Rural Director

Track Leaders

All in for Health Track

India Olchefske, Partners for Andean Health

Arts & Culture Track

Jess Gelter, Arts Alive

Clean Energy Track

Rob Werner, League of Conservation Voters

Drew Polatchek, League of Conservation Voters

Community Journalism Track

Jack Rooney, The Keene Sentinel

Terry Williams, The Keene Sentinel

Entrepreneurship Track

Alison Chisolm, Hannah Grimes Center

Chris Harris, Kansas Leadership Center

Sara Powell, Hannah Grimes Center

Land & Community Track

Amanda Littleton, Cheshire County Conservation District

Matt Smetana, Cheshire County Conservation District

Main Street Track

Todd Horner, Southwest Region Planning Commission

Planning Team

Emma Armstrong, Designs by EA

Lillian Chase, Hannah Grimes Center

Kitty Jerome, Retired Public Health Professional

Eileen Sarson, Communitarian

Julie Schoelzel, Monadnock Collaborative

Terry Williams, The Keene Sentinel

MISSION & VISION

Mission:

Radically Rural builds powerful networks of passionate, engaged, innovative people willing to share ideas and resources and take action to strengthen their small communities across the country.



Vision:

Rural communities across the country will be working in harmony with the land and each other, creating vibrant and inviting communities through pragmatic, bold and innovative solutions to social, political and environmental problems. They will be highly valued for their aggregate contributions to our world and will feel pride in what makes them great.



VALUES

Positive Deviance: We find those who have identified unique and replicable solutions to the problems facing small communities and then elevate what is working.

Innovation: We foster innovation by creating an environment that is ripe for ideas to grow. Our annual summit and year-round experiences are unforgettable. They generate energy, excitement, and exposure to new ideas in order to keep rural communities on the cutting-edge.

The Common: Historically a public gathering space, we want Radically Rural to be a common platform through which rural people of all kinds can work together and engage in a free exchange of ideas—where “all flourishing is mutual” – Robin Wall Kimmerer.

History: We value the ideas, cultures, and dreams that came before and have nourished our rural realities today. We also acknowledge the history of inequities and oppression that brought us to today. Valuing our history helps us move into the future in a more radical way.

Genuine Inclusivity: We know that accurate representation of rural means diverse representation; our work is far more relevant and impactful when we bring all rural voices to the table.

Rural Empowerment: We know that each individual community has expert knowledge of both their needs and what makes them great; we strive to provide resources and connections to empower them.

Conscientiousness: We put great care into every aspect of our work. We strive to be intentional about how we handle all aspects of our work, including our relationships, funding, support, and time.

Reciprocity: Bringing balance and reciprocity to our relationships with each other and the earth is what we know will bring lasting change. Rural communities are the sustainable communities of the future, and we will exhibit leadership in this new way forward.



KEYNOTES

The opening ceremony featured music by Monadnock Music, poetry by Shanta Lee Gander, and a keynote panel with Tony Pipa, Gloria Dickerson, and Alex Beck. The keynote dove into rural policy and how changemakers like Gloria and Alex are reimagining rural in their hometowns of Brattleboro, VT and Drew, MS.



“ You often hear people say that hope is not a strategy, but without hope there is no strategy.
-- Gloria Dickerson, 2023 Keynote Speaker ”



The opening session on day two featured a Solutions Slam and keynote address. 13 Radically Rural attendees shared their ideas, initiatives, and solutions. Each participant had one minute to share before the crowd voted for their favorite. Solutions Slam sponsor, Good Fortune Jewelry & Pawn, presented Mason Lord from Trades Up with the \$500 prize. Chris Estes gave the keynote address, where he shared the Aspen Institute's Thrive Rural Framework and how working regionally can inspire success.

“ The level of curation and detail and effort of this conference is really unprecedented.
-- Chris Estes, 2023 Keynote Speaker ”

TRACKS & SESSIONS

ALL IN FOR HEALTH

Sessions followed the theme: Folks helping folks. We heard about different models to support rural health outside the traditional medicine model.

“ Great examples of out-of-the-box thinking in a field that is likely pretty slow to "innovate" given its strict regulations. -- RR Attendee ”



ARTS & CULTURE

Sessions explored welcoming artists to rural communities and using theater to develop community-based solutions.



CLEAN ENERGY

Sessions covered clean energy investments and the cross section of climate, energy, and health.



COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

Sessions followed the theme: How'd they do that? We heard success stories from sustainability to audience revenue to groundbreaking journalism.

“ Incredible presentations about different strategies employed by news outlets in different parts of the country. -- RR Attendee ”

The Journalism Track also hosted a lunch with photographer, Jeremiah Ariaz, who spent a year photographing over 100 newspapers in his home state of Kansas. He put together a special news tab available to session attendees.

TRACKS & SESSIONS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sessions covered capital access for entrepreneurs, including fresh models, real life experiences from small business owners, and hands-on strategizing. Local entrepreneurs also competed for \$10,000 at the annual PitchFork Challenge. Broken Boat Farm took home the prize money for a new livestock trailer.

“ So well done! I don't envy the judges their jobs because the contestants were all so good.
-- RR Attendee ”

LAND & COMMUNITY

Sessions covered agrarianism and the social value of agriculture, featuring speakers from The Wendell Berry Center, Benevolence Farm, Fresh Start Farms, and more.



MAIN STREET

Sessions included a bus tour of Keene's local resident owned community and a panel on strengthening rural communities through welcoming new arrivals.



YEAR IN REVIEW



This year's summit hosted

540

attendees from 40 states,
DC, and Canada.

19

Sessions

78

Speakers

35

Volunteers

Radically Rural hosted 5 virtual roundtables this year with 274 attendees.

Radically Rural on the Road kicked off this year with visits to two small towns. Perry, NY and Plymouth, NH both hosted the RR team. Models from those towns were collected and shared in our newsletter, blog, business journal, and online resource database.



Following the 2023 summit, Radically Rural convened a national advisory group to assist in the planning of the 2024 summit. As our network grows, our team will continue to diversify in order to ensure the best experience possible for each and every one of our attendees.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Local Student Involvement

Engaging with youth has always been important to Radically Rural, but this year we took things up a notch by collaborating with three different local schools.

Since its inception, Radically Rural has been partnering with **Franklin Pierce University** to bring journalism students to the summit. They attend and cover sessions in order to produce a news tab of the first day's events. Under the advisement of The Keene Sentinel's Terry Williams, the students experience the real life hustle of bringing a paper to print over night.



The theme of this year's CONNECT Event was "Reimagining Communication," which we brought to life with the help of **MC² Charter School**. Graphic design students put together thoughtful installations that highlighted the past, present, and future of communication.

When a local **Keene High School** English teacher reached out to Radically Rural about getting his students involved, we jumped at the chance to bring them into the fold. These students attended sessions, interviewed attendees, researched, and wrote their own white papers, inspiring the Radically Rural white paper slated to come out in 2024.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Radically Rural White Paper

The first Radically Rural white paper is in progress. In 2023, we completed the following steps:

1. Researched how to construct a white paper with Keene High School students
2. Hosted two focus groups with Tony Pipa at the summit
3. Compiled notes into an outline and working document
4. Hosted a with working session with roundtable participants
5. Finalized the outline and sent to entire network for feedback

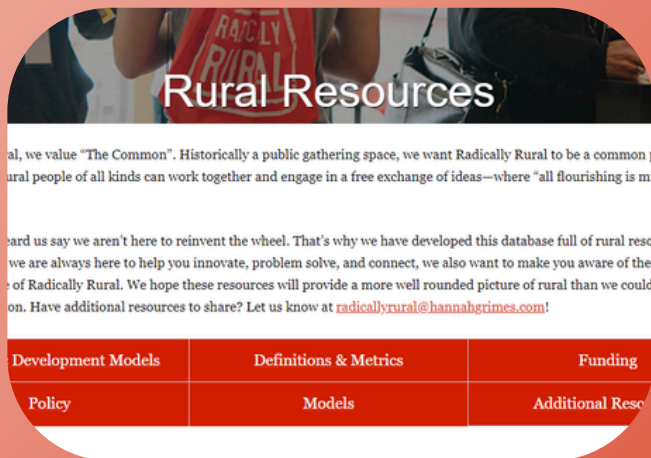
New Ways to Connect

This year, we launched the [Radically Rural Network Facebook Group](#). This is a place for speakers and attendees to stay in touch year-round, crowdsource ideas, troubleshoot problems, share what's working, and ask for help.



Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)

2023 marked the end of a three-year grant from NBRC that supported Radically Rural programming. Thanks to this funding, we were able to hire a Radically Rural Director, organize monthly virtual roundtables, publish [local economy indicators](#), and complete a [case study](#) of Radically Rural's parent organization, Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship.



Radically Rural Resource Database

For the past six years, Radically Rural has been sharing resources and models through our newsletter, annual summit, and virtual roundtables. This year, we compiled those resources and more into a [database](#). The database lives on our website, where it is organized into sections including economic development, definitions & metrics, funding, policy, models, and additional resources.

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