



Annual Impact Report



2024

About Radically Rural

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.

Staff & Planning Team

- Julianna Dodson, Executive Director
- Megan Miner, Operations Director
- Lillian Chase, Program & Development Coordinator
- Kristen Noonan, Savings Bank of Walpole
- Eileen Sarson, Communitarian
- Julie Schoelzel, Greater Monadnock Collaborative



Advisory Group

- Andrew Button, Mashup Lab, Nova Scotia
- Nicole Civita, EcoGather, Vermont
- Sarah Greene, Kansas
- Kitty Jerome, New Hampshire
- Geoffrey Kershner, Academy Center for the Arts, Virginia
- Ben Rasmussen, National Center for Frontier Communities, New Mexico
- Megan Weis, Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, South Carolina

Plenary Sessions

Opening Session

Our opening plenary session featured music by Guy Davis, a reading by Abigail Rose Clarke, and a keynote panel featuring rural “weavers” from across the country including Frederick Riley (Aspen Institute), Megan Helberg (Nebraska Community Foundation), LB Prevetie (Merle’s), and Fatuma Emmad (FrontLine Farming).



Solutions Slam

The second annual Solutions Slam included more than a dozen pitches for ideas, programs, and models that are already working in rural communities across the country.



Closing Session

The closing session brought together EcoGather’s Executive Director, Nicole Civita, Julianna, and Researcher & Author, Shaylyn Romney Garrett to talk about the social fabric of small communities and what it looks like to be a “weaver” on a personal, rather than institutional level.



Tracks & Sessions

All in for Health

Jennice Chewlin led exercises exploring the audacity of joy in work.

“ This session showed me that other people are also seeking joy in work and that it’s not impossible or utopian. It’s a HUMAN need. -RR Attendee ”

Marc Brackett from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence discussed how being in tune with our emotions can help us close the gap between what we know and what we do.



Track Leader
Tricia Zahn
Director of Population Health
Cheshire Medical Center



Track Leader
Jessica Gelter
Executive Director
Arts Alive

Arts & Culture

Panelists shared their experiences operating three different kinds of arts spaces such as collectives and makerspaces.

“ It was so good to hear about three different types of rural arts spaces. It gave me a lot of inspiration for what I can do in my own community. -RR Attendee ”

Attendees also learned about social practice art from artists Paula Frisch and Craig Stockwell while creating a Radically Rural quilt together, symbolizing the “weaving” theme of the summit.

Tracks & Sessions

Clean Energy

In one session, attendees learned how to access Inflation Reduction Act dollars from the US Department of Energy and Clean Energy NH. In another session, Sarah Kelly and Jason Capello shared innovative clean energy models from their respective organizations, Dartmouth College's Energy Justice Clinic and the Center for Coalfield Justice.

“ I really appreciated the speakers' candor about the challenges with their respective projects. I plan to really consider and think about how to address people and their situations when recommending clean energy efforts. -RR Attendee ”



Track Leader
Doria Brown
Energy Manager
City of Nashua



Track Leader
Rob Werner
NH State Director
League of Conservation
Voters



Track Leader
Emily Lytle
Innovation in Focus Editor
Reynolds Journalism
Institute



Track Leader
Jack Rooney
Managing Editor for
Audience Development
The Keene Sentinel



Community Journalism

Attendees explored six different newsroom resources and support organizations.

“ I feel motivated to create change in my newsroom that encourages practices that bring my community in. -RR Attendee ”

Three journalists shared their approach to upholding civic values in a critical election year.

Tracks & Sessions

Entrepreneurship

In one session, CAPS Network and Empower Schools shared models for cultivating entrepreneurship among youth. In another session, Radically Rural biotech's founding partners discussed their experiences creating a new economic sector in their own rural communities.



Track Leader
Chris Harris
Senior Director of Programs
Patterson Family Foundation



Track Leader
Sara Powell
Program Director
Hannah Grimes Center



Track Leader
Bence Hershon
Community Engagement Director
Cheshire County Conservation
District

Land & Community

Panelists explored collaborative land management and conservation on private lands.

“ One thing I'm not sure I ever considered was the possibility to include and invite small individual landowners into conservation projects – it always seemed like it was either landowners OR conservation organizations. –RR Attendee ”

Panelists shared models and tools for connecting farmers (including young folks) to rural land.

Sessions & Activities

Main Street

Panelists shared models for bringing microtransit to rural communities.

“ I didn't realize there were specific companies that run tech for microtransit. That makes it feel much more possible to set up. -RR Attendee ”

Attendees and panelists discussed ways to make rural communities more welcoming and supportive for young adults and their families.



**Track Leader
Jason Cooper
Planner
Southwest Region Planning
Commission**

Youth Involvement

Young people got involved in Radically Rural in a few new ways this year!

- Springfield College students planned and hosted a pop-up play station during lunch.



- Keene State students recorded and produced a recap video of the entire summit.
- Franklin Pierce students worked with The Keene Sentinel to produce Radically Rural LIVE! complete with man on the street and pre-planned interviews.



**Track Leader
J.B. Mack
Assistant Director
Southwest Region Planning
Commision**



Year in Review

The Summit Data

- 530 attendees
- 37 states
- 19 sessions
- 71 speakers
- 30+ volunteers

Roundtables

Radically Rural hosted four virtual roundtables on:

- News coverage during disasters
- Employee ownership
- Radically Rural biotech
- The art of the interview

Policy

The first ever Radically Rural policy white paper was written and distributed to all members of congress.



[Read it here!](#)



RR On the Road

The team took their Radically Rural on the Road trip to Hood River, Oregon and shared models from the community on the RR blog and social media.



Stories from the Network

Join or Die Catches Fire

Radically Rural 2024 kicked off with a screening of the documentary Join or Die to set the stage for the summit's theme of regenerating rural through social weaving. The documentary follows the story of America's civic unraveling through the journey of social scientist and NH-local Robert Putnam, best known for his "Bowling Alone" research. Many attendees were so impressed with the screening and accompanying discussion that they brought it back to their own communities.

- **New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility** hosted their own screening organized by Zeina Eyceoz.
- Shari Davis screened Join or Die at a **Nevada Main Street** training followed by a two-hour discussion of the film.
- Michael Guidry from **Mississippi Today** is planning a screening of the documentary followed by group bowling!

Nova Arts Inspires

In 2023, Geoffrey Kershner, CEO for the Academy Center of the Arts in Lynchburg, VA, attended Radically Rural for the first time. He spent a lot of time at Brewbakers Cafe, exploring the coffee shop both during the day in his free time and in the evening during the RR after party. He was so impressed with the coffee shop by day and dedicated event space by night that he hosted Eric Gagne (Program Director for Nova Arts), Jessica Gelter (Executive Director for Arts Alive, Nova Arts' fiscal sponsor), and Eliza Murphy (Co-owner of Brewbakers Cafe and Terra Nova Organic Coffee Roasters) on his podcast, Small Towns/Big Arts, to talk about the unique model and how it came to be. In 2024, Geoff and the Academy Center for the Arts launched their own small event venue in Lynchburg inspired by Nova Arts.

Speaking & Media

Press for RR

- NH Magazine - [Life in the Slow Lane](#)
- The Keene Sentinel - [Regenerating Rural](#) and many more
- Poynter - [It's Journalism Conference Season. Here's Your Guide](#)
- [Monadnock Region Thrive Guide](#)
- Reynold's Journalism Institute - [Innovation in Focus at the Radically Rural Summit](#)
- UNH Extension - [Radically Rural: Sparking Solutions Together](#)
- Rural Assembly - [Regenerating the Spirit for Relentless Rural Justice at Radically Rural](#)
- The Daily Yonder - [Young Americans Returning to Rural for More than Just Holiday Dinners](#) and many more
- PBS's The State We're In - [Radically Rural 2024](#)

Podcasts

- [Entrepreneurial Ecosystems' Pathways Podcast](#)
- [SM Graves' Are We Here Yet Podcast](#)
- [Small Town Big Arts Podcast](#)
- [Granite Goodness Podcast](#)
- [The Econ Dev Show](#)
- [Voices of Monadnock](#)

Speaking Engagements

- United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship's Rural Entrepreneurship Symposium
- Local Charter School MC2
- Local Lions Club
- Local Rotary Club
- Local High School's Future Business Leaders of America Club

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