



# CULTIVATING CREATIVITY:

## EXPLORING ARTS & CULTURE IN COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION



*La Mujer Obrera, El Paso, Texas*



*Thunder Valley CDC  
Porcupine, South Dakota*



*Mālamalama Maui Project  
Pu'unene, Hawai'i*

Creative Placemaking Field Scan #5  
Prepared by DAISA Enterprises, LLC  
Commissioned by ArtPlace America

# PARTNERS

## ARTPLACE

**ArtPlace America** is a ten-year collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions. We envision a future of equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities in which everyone has a voice and agency in creating contextual, adaptive, and responsive solutions. Our mission is to position arts and culture as a core sector of community planning and development. [artplaceamerica.org](http://artplaceamerica.org)



**DAISA Enterprises** works at the nexus of food, health, economy and community. We provide strategic, operational and evaluation services to social enterprises and investors, and innovate new programs and technologies to develop a more equitable food system. DAISA serves as a national strategic partner with an extensive network, with decades of food and agriculture sector experience as practitioners, leaders, and consultants. [daisaenterprises.com](http://daisaenterprises.com)

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# CULTIVATING CREATIVITY: EXPLORING ARTS & CULTURE IN COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

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May 2019 Working Group Convening participants  
Resora at Cypress Pond in Albany, Georgia

# FOREWORD

ArtPlace America is a ten-year collaboration of foundations, federal agencies, and banks that is working to position arts and culture as a core sector of community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities.

ArtPlace focuses its work on “creative placemaking,” which describes projects in which art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development. The “creative” simply invites artists and arts organizations to join their neighbors as collaborators into the suite of placemaking strategies pioneered by Jane Jacobs and her colleagues, who believed that community development must be locally informed, human-centered, and holistic.

**In looking, systemically, at who does community planning and development work in America’s communities, we have found that our colleagues may generally be organized into ten sectors: Agriculture & Food, Economic Development, Education & Youth, Environment & Energy, Health, Housing, Immigration, Public Safety, Transportation, and Workforce Development.** As a core part of ArtPlace’s research agenda, we are exploring how arts and cultural practitioners have long been and may increasingly be partners in helping to achieve each of these sector’s goals.

**The document that follows is one of ten “field scans” that we have commissioned as a part of this work.** This field scan seeks to illuminate key priorities within the agriculture and food sector, and to provide a framework for understanding the ways that arts and culture contribute to local, place-based agriculture and food related outcomes.

Each field scan serves as a framing document for a working group tasked with taking the analysis and findings one step further, helping ArtPlace identify the best practices that warrant formal case studies, key methods for evaluating success, and strategic framing of the material in a way that resonates with people most likely to take up creative placemaking practice in a given sector. The field scan is not an end in itself, but an initial inquiry that, together with other field scans, informs ArtPlace’s knowledge and network building work as well as those working at the intersection of art and community development more broadly.

**The field scans have two primary audiences: artists and other arts and cultural stakeholders seeking to better understand and collaborate with a particular community development sector; and community development practitioners, policymakers, and funders who are interested in how arts and culture partners might further their work.**

Our ultimate goal is for these two audiences to develop a shared language and a set of mutual goals, so that communities across the country will ultimately benefit from these powerful, cross-sector collaborations and synergies.

JAMIE HAND  
Director of Research Strategies  
ArtPlace America



# INTRODUCTION



Nuestras Raíces  
Holyoke, MA

**O**n a summer's day in Holyoke, Massachusetts, you might think you were transported to a different country, when you enter a small street just on the outskirts of this disinvested, industrial city. From the previous landscape of brick tenements and dilapidated factory buildings, you start to see lush green fields and tropical flowers.

As you go through a farm gate with a sign announcing Nuestras Raíces Farm ("Our Roots"), you hear roosters crow and see fields stretching for 30 acres, plots full of beans, squash, and peppers of various colors, and livestock of varieties not commonly found in New England. Farm buildings have the bright colors of the Caribbean. Older farmers listen to salsa music as they work.

Inside the gate is a *lechonera* - a traditional Puerto Rican pig roasting restaurant - with three family member owners serving large chunks of pork along with rice and plantains. A brightly painted farm store sells farm-fresh produce. Near the banks of the Connecticut River is a stage amongst a grove of maple trees, often host to music festivals and theater performances.

Twelve years ago this site was a 30 acre dumping ground, full of weeds and trash. Now Nuestras Raíces Farms is a symbol of the pride and productivity of the large Puerto Rican community of Holyoke, home to six enterprises and twelve budding commercial farms, and an ongoing series

of cultural activities. The space generates community identity, as well as over \$2,000,000 dollars in economic activity every year.

This fusion of cultural and artistic expression with food and agriculture is both a new strategy for some communities and a long held, embedded practice for many others. To better understand this intersection, and complement the emerging learnings from The Kresge Foundation's Fresh, Local and Equitable (FreshLo) multi-year support of community-led efforts which fuse artistic and cultural expression with equitable food-oriented neighborhood change, ArtPlace America has engaged DAISA Enterprises in conducting a field scan. DAISA is the National Program Office for FreshLo at the time of this report and adds this perspective and knowledge to this field scan, exploring the relationship between arts and culture and the community development subsector of food and agriculture. The research report seeks to inform current knowledge and practice around how arts and cultural approaches can be better leveraged to create equitable and place-based food systems change across the country - spanning rural, tribal, and urban settings. In more clearly articulating these processes, the field scan will contribute to building the fields of arts and culture and community development, informed by creative placemaking and grounded in the experiences of artists and community change-makers.



Nuestras Raíces  
Holyoke, MA

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS & FRAMING

To guide our efforts, we articulated three primary research questions:

- 1. In what types of community-based efforts are arts and culture contributing to food and agricultural outcomes?**
- 2. How does the integration of artistic leadership or arts and cultural practices amplify food systems change?**
- 3. How can arts and culture be better leveraged within the community development subsector of food and agriculture?**

As this research will show, food and agriculture are often intimately tied to artistic and cultural expression. Many people we spoke with from diverse locations across the rural-urban spectrum who identify as Indigenous, immigrant, refugee, or people of color described food and agricultural practices as inherently artistic and cultural expressions. Our exploration of the fusion of food and agriculture and arts and culture seeks to lift up this perspective. We acknowledge that contemporary community development, policy, and funding systems often approach these as distinct entities or strategies. This does not always reflect reality - for many people, *food is culture* and its cultivation and preparation is innately artistic. Conversely, we know that not all people experience food and art in this way. It is our aim to approach this work with an encompassing viewpoint that allows for these diverse perspectives to coexist and be equally represented.

*"I think we are looking for a threshold of how we identify arts and culture and how it integrates itself into this work of agriculture and food. [...] Art is naturally a part of our practice as human beings. Philanthropy tries to coordinate and arrange marriages of things in ways that make them awkward, and make them out of the ordinary. If we just pay attention we will see where those things are already intersecting."*

Carlton Turner, Founder and Director,  
Mississippi Center for Cultural Production

It is important to note that many people within philanthropic and community development fields recognize the constraints of siloed and prescriptive funding strategies, as well as the structures that keep

those strategies in place. A key desired outcome of this field scan process is to amplify the realities and needs of practitioners as lessons which inform future availability of resources. Acknowledgment of the authentic, integrated, and multi-faceted ways in which community practitioners work and need to have agency and flexible support is an important step towards holistic systems change.

The audiences intended for this document are diverse. It is our hope that the research resonates with community leaders already engaged at this intersection, and serves as inspiration to those yet to do so. Additionally, we want to reach those working at the philanthropic or policymaking levels who hold privilege in allocating resources or enacting legislative change.



## DEFINING KEY TERMS

To outline these definitions, we draw from colleagues across various disciplines, and lean on their many years of expertise. For further exploration of these terms, see the References section at the end.

**Arts & Culture:** ArtPlace America includes in its definition of arts and culture a wide range of artistic forms including “craft & culinary arts, dance, design & architecture, film & media, folk & traditional arts, literature, music, visual arts, theater & performance, and other formal and informal creative practices.” Arts and culture are critical in meaning-making, connection, and interpretation of the world around us. As characterized by Helicon Collaborative, arts and culture can be “a tangible vehicle through which individuals and communities form culture in the anthropological sense—beliefs, identities, worldviews, and values.”

**Community Development:** Community development refers to the ways in which groups of people design and implement place-based change aimed at improving quality of life and social welfare. Community development is both a social change process and a professional and academic discipline that integrates local communities, nonprofits, philanthropy, government, and the private sector.

**Creative Placemaking:** Creative placemaking happens when artists and arts organizations join their neighbors in shaping their community’s future, working together on place-based community outcomes. It’s not necessarily focused on making places more creative; it’s about creatively addressing challenges and opportunities.

**Culinary Arts:** The culinary arts use a set of food-based practices that are rooted in an expression of culture which shares knowledge and identity. Although culinary arts are often considered outside the scope of funding within the field of arts/culture, it provides powerful opportunities for people to exchange in cultural dialogue due to the centrality of cooking and eating in human lives.

**Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD):** The Equitable Food Oriented Development Steering Committee has crafted a working definition (as of April 2019) of EFOD as “a development strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities, healthy neighborhoods, and explicitly seeks to build community assets, pride, and power by and for historically-marginalized communities.”

**Equity:** PolicyLink, a national research and action institute, defines equity in *The Equity Manifesto* as “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.”

**Folk and Traditional Arts:** Defined by the National Endowment for the Arts, “the folk and traditional arts are rooted in and reflective of the cultural life of a community. Community members may share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region. These vital and constantly reinvigorated artistic traditions are shaped by values and standards of excellence that are passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community, through demonstration, conversation, and practice.”

**Foodways:** All of the traditional activities, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors associated with food in daily human life. Foodways include customs of food production, preservation, preparation, presentation, gathering, marketing, uses of food products other than for eating, and food folklore.

**Food Sovereignty:** According to La Via Campesina, an international movement representing more than 200 million small farmers and peasants, “food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”

**Food Systems:** A food system is all the processes and connections involved in producing food and feeding a population. These can include growing, harvesting,

processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food and food-related items. It also pertains to the inputs needed and outputs generated at each of these steps, including human labor and impacts. Often in this document we use ‘food systems’ as an umbrella term to include various aspects of food and agriculture.

**Rural-Urban Continuum:** Refers to the concept that population density and the attributed characteristics of country and town are rarely discrete with a clear division between them. Rather, one often transitions or overlaps into the other leaving no part entirely rural or entirely urban; there is a continuous scale.

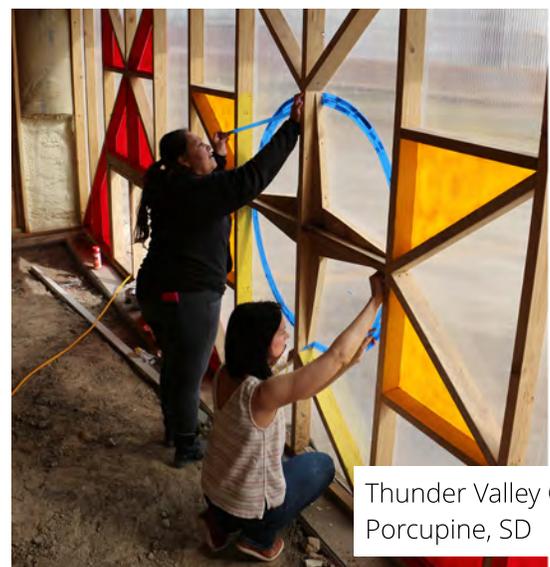


## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report we argue that integrating artistic and cultural practices with food and agriculture enables a creative and inclusive process and ensures community members see their identities, histories, and interests reflected in the work. Through presenting a typology of current work at this intersection and analyzing interview data, we show that this integration is a uniquely effective and inclusive way to:

- Bridge and heal divides
- Drive equitable food oriented development and rural vitality
- Transform community spaces and celebrate identity
- Promote secure land tenure
- Ignite creative, community-led processes
- Preserve and reclaim food & farming traditions

We conclude with a discussion on what success looks like and offer some initial recommendations in advancing this work.



Thunder Valley CDC  
Porcupine, SD

# SETTING THE TABLE

## RESEARCH APPROACH & CURRENT FIELD LANDSCAPE

### RESEARCH APPROACH

To begin this inquiry, we utilized public databases from ten different foundations and governmental funding agencies to establish a baseline of funded community change projects across the country within the last five to ten years (see Note 1). This resulted in an in-depth review of over 1,500 projects among diverse communities and geographic locations. From these preliminary 1,500 search results, we whittled down to a list of approximately 155 projects that integrate arts and culture with food and agriculture. Compiling and analyzing these projects offered a detailed view into current community change efforts, and illuminated opportunities to dig further (see Note 2).

We then engaged in a process of identifying field-level thought leaders and on-the-ground practitioners and artists to inform the research. We conducted 31 semi-structured interviews with individuals representing a wide array of perspectives, geographies, and identities (see Table 1). The interview questions touched upon a range of topics

<b>TABLE 1: INTERVIEWEE BREAKDOWN</b>		
<b>Total Number of Interviews Conducted: 31</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
<b>Person of Color</b>	19	61%
<b>Indigenous</b>	3	10%
<b>Non-Person of Color or Indigenous</b>	9	29%
<b>Urban</b>	20	65%
<b>Rural</b>	11	35%
<b>Practitioner or Artist</b>	21	68%
<b>Field Expert</b>	10	32%

including current trends in the field, the relationship between food & agriculture and arts & culture, access to funding, and common barriers to community change.

After creating the typology of projects and analyzing interview data, DAISA and ArtPlace - along with co-conveners Rural Coalition and Farm Credit Council - held a Working Group meeting in March 2019 to discuss initial research findings and to craft potential steps forward. A total of forty-one participants convened in Albany, Georgia, hailing from twenty-two different states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Among

the group were farmers, community practitioners, artists, community organizers, funders & financiers, chefs, government and policy representatives, media, and academic leaders. Participants came from rural, urban, and tribal communities, as well as numerous racial and ethnic communities from across the country. The Working Group played a critical role in refining research findings and identifying further areas for growth and collaboration in arts & culture-infused food systems change. To introduce these discussions, we start with a brief overview of key issues across the food systems landscape.



# FIELD LANDSCAPE AND DYNAMICS

The US food and agriculture ecosystem is comprised of a multitude of interconnected processes and entities that are responsible for all aspects of producing, moving, consuming, and disposing of food. As one of the largest industries in the American economy, the food system traverses diverse aspects of individual and community life, with touchpoints that reach all the way from public health to business and entrepreneurship to immigration to national agricultural policy. The below infographic provides an illustration of some of these complex linkages within the food system, and specifically names many of the important players and key stakeholders therein. While the scope of this field scan is limited to the US food system, it is important to acknowledge that within the United States there exist many communities who utilize growing systems or food and agriculture perspectives that are informed by other cultures and geographies.

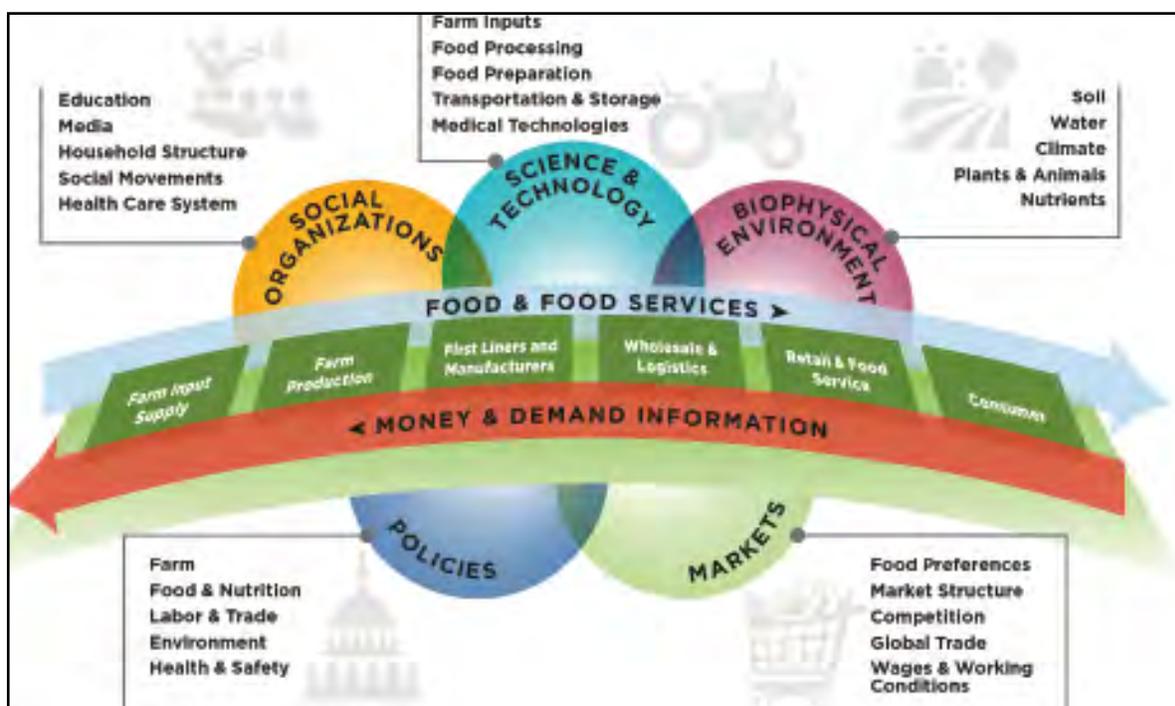


Figure 1: Overview of the food system  
*Institute of Medicine and National Research Council*

The contemporary community food systems movement seeks to re-localize growing and eating practices and prioritize sustainable agriculture that nourishes communities, cultures, and ecosystems. These shifts are in direct response to the disconnect many people feel from the source of their food, as a result of an increasingly globalized food system, the rapid urbanization of cities, and targeted historical efforts to separate certain groups from their ancestral food traditions. The globalization of the food system, in particular, decimates local and regional culinary traditions, replacing them with mass-produced and often overly-processed food commodities aimed at increasing profit margins with little regard for community health or cultural heritage. The shift to more localized, sustainable, culturally-appropriate food systems is being accomplished through the development of community farms and gardens, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, culinary arts education, artisanal food entrepreneurship, and many more examples we present throughout this document.

Food systems have critical intersections with numerous other community development subsectors, most notably in environment & energy and in health. There is particular urgency around environmental concerns as agricultural communities across the globe work to mitigate environmental contamination, safeguard natural and cultural resources, and contend with the effects of climate change. Many farmers and food systems activists are leading the charge to transition to renewable energy sources and adjust growing practices to face warmer temperatures and more frequent destructive weather events.

Additionally, food systems leaders and community activists have long promoted the importance of increasing access to healthy foods – foods that are both fresh and that nourish community wellbeing and connection to place and culture. Food and agriculture-based community development work offers many opportunities to further community health and wellness goals and improve the quality of life for local residents. A critical component of equitable healthy food advocacy is the ability of communities to define for themselves what is considered healthy and to have decision-making power and access to resources that makes holistic improvements to community health a reality.

The scope of this field scan is limited to the specific intersection of food & agriculture and arts & culture, however for further inquiry on the role of arts & culture in other community development sub-sectors, see the References section at the end of this document for a link to additional ArtPlace America field scan research.

In this next section, we present an analysis of select current topics within the field of food and agriculture. While we cannot attempt to provide a truly comprehensive discussion of current trends across the entire food systems sector, we emphasize the wisdom of practitioners and stakeholders who spoke with us and highlight key topics that intersect with our subsequent research findings.

### **Food and culinary arts are hot topics in current popular culture and communities are being transformed by the rise in food trendiness - creating both opportunity and challenges.**

From the abundance of cooking-related television shows, to the explosion in publication of food memoirs, to the countless food photography blogs, current media trends show us that food is on people's minds more and more. At the community level, we see a steady growth in community gardens, farmers' markets, food-themed festivals and events, and food or agricultural tourism. The case of The Kresge Foundation's Fresh, Local and Equitable (FreshLo) open call for proposals where 'food is a creative platform for neighborhood revitalization' illustrates this clearly, attracting record-breaking interest from more than 500 applications from across the U.S. Food is central to people's lives, and key ways in which communities express history and culture.

While food in general may be getting more attention these days, this does not necessarily translate into better outcomes in terms of food access or justice. Some argue that the superficiality of this popularity actually does harm to meaningful food & agricultural-based efforts. One impact of this increased

attention is the growing sector of new, trendy food businesses. As part of the ongoing gentrification of many US cities, we see longtime family-run eateries being pushed out of business by new trendy dining halls or high-end food truck parks. Many community-based organizations and social change leaders have been engaged in struggles for food justice and food sovereignty for many years. Newly revitalized food systems can be easily co-opted by companies capitalizing on the recent surge of interest in food.

These new ventures are sometimes spearheaded by outside developers who have vastly easier access to capital than local residents. This allows developers the ability to fail in their endeavors and quickly bounce back with a new project or to move to a new community with ease. This type of development has less accountability to the local community and can contribute to the displacement of local businesses. Many immigrant and low-income residents have proven the usefulness of business models such as food trucks or market stands as they often require less startup costs and offer lower barriers to entry. However, when it lacks a justice-focused lens, food trendiness and startup culture can enable inequitable development and gentrification.

### **Equitable Food Oriented Development offers a much-needed alternative to historical community development and social change efforts.**

An emerging concept in the field of community development is that of Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD). Based on the efforts of community practitioners, the EFOD Steering Committee, and with support from The Kresge Foundation, the theory and practice of EFOD is a justice-first framework for community ownership, asset building, and health equity in the food system. It requires a change in perspective from top-down or outside-in approaches to resourcing community talent and lifting up local voice in development decisions. This focus illustrates the immense potential of food & agriculture to serve as vehicles for economic development and community wealth-building, especially in communities of color, among immigrants and refugees, and within Indigenous nations.

There is a growing understanding in community change work that the issues facing disadvantaged and disinvested communities do not exist in isolation. Instead, they are the result of compounding and intersectional factors and histories. When considering the example of food access, we must examine how

racial discrimination, rural disinvestment, inequitable economic opportunity, and a lack of transportation and affordable housing all work together to restrict this access. Development approaches based in equity frame resource distribution through this lens, and allow communities to create - and own - unique solutions to complex issues.

**In countless communities across the US, people are coming together now more than ever to design and implement unique place-based responses to a lack of local, accessible, good food.**

Community-based farming and gardening operations have seen extensive innovation in growing strategies, with many space-constrained efforts implementing tactics such as vertical and rooftop farming, hydroponics, and aquaponics. Cooperatively-run farms, farmers' markets, and produce distribution models are cropping up in historically-disinvested areas that have all but been left behind by contemporary local food efforts. The indications of success for these approaches is also broadening beyond pounds of food sold, for example, to include increased social cohesion, bonding across racial differences, a sense of belonging and voice.

Traditional scaling of business operations is often considered the antithesis to effective, place-based responses.

It is of note that many of these strategies are not new inventions, but contemporary twists on historical efforts, such as the victory gardens of World Wars I and II, indigenous community farming practices, and the town commons throughout our country's history. Community members are reconnecting with powerful strategies for food and agricultural place-based change and are seeking to do more with limited resources.

*“Art and culture is really compatible with the food and agriculture sector, because they are both really creationary. [...] Because you can approach agriculture from a systematic mentality that is extractive or you can approach agriculture from a perspective or mentality that is creationary and diverse. So bringing arts and culture to agriculture is a way to restore a more regenerative agriculture system.”*

Lehua Simon, Artist,  
Mālamalama Maui Project



Desert Botanical Garden  
Spaces of Opportunity  
Phoenix, Arizona



Somerville Arts Council  
Somerville, MA



Binghampton Development Corporation  
Kaleidoscope Kitchen  
Memphis, TN

# DIGGING DEEP

## THE INTERSECTION OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE AND ARTS & CULTURE

### KEY FINDINGS

#### RESEARCH QUESTION #1: In what types of community-based efforts are arts and culture contributing to food and agricultural outcomes?

In order to examine our first research question, we have developed a typology that seeks to categorize where and how we see this work happening. The chart below illustrates the types of community-based efforts that are currently integrating artistic and cultural expression within food and agricultural community development. We find that the activities detailed below are uniquely enhanced through artist engagement as conceptualization and planning processes are approached with creativity and inclusivity, often resulting in authentic, community-owned visions. For examples that bring to life many aspects of this typology, see the Stories of Change section at the end of this document. The “descriptions” included here are not intended as universal definitions, rather as a demonstration of what this type of work entails and contributes to communities.

**TABLE 2: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - FUSION OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE AND ARTS & CULTURE**

TYOLOGY	DESCRIPTION
<b>Community Gardens &amp; Farms</b>	Community-run farms and gardens that facilitate regional and neighborhood food and agricultural development. Often offer artistic and cultural programming, volunteer opportunities, and cooking-related activities.
<b>Community Gathering Spaces</b>	Spaces that bring people together around understanding and celebrating local food, agriculture, arts, and culture. Often includes multi-generational or intercultural activities such as dinners, food sales, gardening activities, markets, art shows, and cultural celebrations.
<b>Community &amp; Incubator Kitchens</b>	Shared kitchens utilized for food business training & incubation programs and community usage. Often cater specifically to cultural food businesses or immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship programs. Can include cooking and nutrition education classes.
<b>Culinary Arts</b>	Chefs and culture bearers who design food-based learning as a means to celebrate and share regional, traditional, or cultural/artistic practices of cooking and food preparation. May also include historical and contemporary foodways documentation projects.
<b>Food &amp; Agricultural Tourism and Celebration</b>	Tourism and engagement activities creatively and intentionally planned to celebrate regional foodways or promote agricultural vitality. Includes food or agriculture festivals, events, tours, and art installations.
<b>Food Markets</b>	Retail spaces and efforts focused on the direct sale of food and agricultural products. This includes neighborhood farmers’ markets, historically-significant markets, corner stores, bodegas, supermarkets, pop-up shops, mobile vendors, and ‘global’ markets focusing on immigrant entrepreneurial development.

One notable category that is missing from the above typology is Food Hubs - which we characterize as centers of local and regional produce aggregation and distribution with the goal of providing farmers additional sales pathways for their products. This is a growing food distribution model within the agricultural sector, however in our review of projects we did not see examples of this model where artistic and cultural expression was meaningfully integrated. There is potential for more of this integration into the food hub distribution model, particularly in opening up more opportunities for farmers and food producers of color to move and market their products.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION #2: How does the integration of artistic leadership or arts and cultural practices amplify food systems change?**

To illustrate the various ways that this work happens in community, we draw heavily from interviews conducted with thought leaders and practitioners across food systems, community development, and arts and culture. Based on this review and analysis, ***we argue that the intersection of artistic and cultural practices with food and agricultural community development is a uniquely accessible and effective way to:***

1. Bridge and heal divides
2. Drive equitable food oriented development and rural vitality
3. Transform community spaces and celebrate identity
4. Promote secure land tenure
5. Ignite creative, community-led processes
6. Preserve and reclaim food & farming traditions

We now consider each of these findings in turn, and delve deeply into the complexity of how they show up in community-based food systems work. The “Story of Change” section toward the end of this document helps illustrate this work in action.

### **1. Bridge and heal divides**

Increased social cohesion and trust are critical for embarking on the challenging work of equitable food systems change. Bridging and healing social divides is a necessary step, and community engagement that centers food and art is uniquely effective in initiating this process. Racial and cultural, intergenerational, religious, and socio-economic barriers can be hard-wired into the fabric of communities that have historically or contemporarily experienced or perpetrated discrimination, violence, and injustice. When working towards building just and inclusive food systems, we must consider the impact of complex social divides between:

- rural and urban communities
- dominant western agricultural models and Indigenous practices & traditions
- corporations & landowners and farmworkers & food processing workers
- food producers and consumers
- historically-oppressed communities of color and dominant white culture
- racial, ethnic, & religious groups in conflict over access to resources

Food is a shared basic need - we all need to eat. Similarly, artistic and cultural expression are at the very foundation of how we identify as individuals, ethnic groups, and geographic communities. Consuming food together, sharing culture, and producing art are all activities which provide opportunity for seemingly disparate groups to open and connect with vulnerability and authenticity. Both food and art have explicit power in “disarming” people in cross-cultural interaction.

This is a particularly important intersection when it comes to bridging divides across the rural-urban continuum, as it allows rural, urban, and suburban communities to break down negative and polarizing stereotypes and to find commonality. Eating and creating provide communities with tangible processes and engaging tools which encourage open dialogue and allyship development while exploring challenging topics through creative, expressive and often fun strategies.

*“We want people to be able to formalize and operate food businesses - that’s all very important. But at the end of the day what we are really going for is community cohesion and I don’t think that you get that without the art and culture piece. The art and culture piece reminds us and emphasizes - or maybe accelerates - food’s ability to bring us together.”*

Olivia Haslop, Kaleidoscope Kitchen Coordinator, Binghampton CDC

### **2. Drive equitable food oriented development and rural vitality**

Equitable food oriented development leverages cultural, culinary, and place-based knowledge to increase asset-based wealth-building, food access, and community stability. Many community members of diverse backgrounds bring great strength in food-related enterprise, from cooking, to knowledge about growing, to experience in retail or distribution. As evidenced throughout the Typology on page 11, cultural culinary traditions provide many entryways where low-income

people have assets and expertise. This allows local residents to be leaders and drivers of community development and to actively resist displacement and gentrification.

Opportunities abound to tap into local talent. Growers can utilize their agricultural knowledge to develop “niche” food retail markets by producing heirloom fruit and vegetable varieties for use in local restaurants or catering businesses. Community members with culinary knowledge and skills can utilize incubator kitchens to pilot new food businesses, expanding value chains and injecting capital into the local food system. Across the rural-urban continuum, vacant buildings turned into community food markets, produce distribution hubs, or food processing facilities transform abandoned spaces to places of economic opportunity. Viewing cultural and culinary knowledge as a vital ingredient for business and community innovation ensures myriad possibilities for equitable food oriented development and overall community wealth-building.

*“Because it is part of our culture - our everyday life of the community that we serve - there are less barriers for us to use food as the gateway to opportunity. [...] We see that many folks want to start a business around food - open a restaurant, a catering business - and the barriers to entry are lower. Given the fact that we work with people who are low-income, low-literacy, and low-assets, food for us is a stepping stone to greater economic advancement.”*

Va-Megn Thoj, Executive Director,  
Asian Economic Development Association

In rural communities, agricultural history and food culture can grow new opportunities for areas that have been historically disinvested. Rural communities across the country are developing new farming enterprises and marketing unique, region-specific agricultural products as drivers for development of local, sustainable economies. Integrating arts and culture into this landscape holds vast possibility for revitalization. Increasing collaboration between rural food systems stakeholders and artists and culture bearers can expand the reach and visibility of emerging rural food businesses. Artist-led marketing campaigns or community engagement projects help create meaning and connection for rural residents, and encourages support of local agricultural products.

A robust expression of arts and culture in rural areas is

also dependent on artists being able to make a living and stay rooted in their communities. Rural vitality is made possible when the local environment and available opportunities support a community to achieve positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

*“The instrumentality of art doesn't matter nearly as much, the GDP of art doesn't matter nearly as much. It's important, but it's not as important as building a place where young people want to stay or move to, to build a future with their family. [...] It's creating a place that is diverse and inclusive and artistic, and enrolling and engaging the next generation of citizens. Art does that. Culture does that.”*

Charles Fluharty, Founder & CEO,  
Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI)

### **3. Transform community spaces and celebrate identity**

Greater community pride is possible when residents identify with and value their local community and surroundings. The integration of food systems with arts & culture offers effective entry points to rediscover local history, transform spaces, and deepen awareness of a community's identity. It also opens opportunities to reshape external perceptions of the community through inclusive, positive and fun events which include connecting through food, art and culture. When people feel connected to neighbors and to the spaces around them and have pride in their surroundings, transformation of personal and community narratives as well as physical community spaces can more easily occur.

*“For us, an essential part of any struggle for liberation is the question of identity. Culture helps people to have a greater understanding of their identity.”*

Malik Yakini, Executive Director,  
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network

We have repeatedly heard community members reflect that integrating artistic and cultural expression with farming and gardening projects is personally and physically transformative. Increased access to fresh food, opportunities for physical exercise in a farm or garden setting, and activities that incorporate arts and culture all have beneficial effects on physical and mental health and wellness. Creatively integrating agriculture into public infrastructures - such as green roofs or edible landscaping - positively shifts public perception of local surroundings. Constructing community spaces which reflect local culture and history can convert previously uninspiring or unsafe areas into places of pride and celebration.

*“Along the Oakland Avenue corridor - which is where we started our work - the old commercial district, it was very boring, very desolate, very dark and dreary. People were saying to us 'Look, we walk by this area everyday, we drive down this street. We have no reason to stop. It's just - let's get through the neighborhood.' Well, we want to change that, we want to make it beautiful. We want food to grow, but we also want to see something beautiful.”*

Jerry Hebron, Executive Director,  
Oakland Avenue Urban Farm  
North End Christian CDC

#### **4. Promote secure land tenure**

Infusing artistic and cultural practices into efforts to secure land tenure amplifies community connection to place, and showcases the importance of land access to diverse stakeholders. Equitable and secure land tenure ensures local communities can own decision-making over land use towards food systems goals of increased food access, support for sustainable growing practices, safeguarding natural resources, and cultural food expression.

Historical land loss through land grabbing, enslavement, and red-lining has left lasting impacts on many groups, particularly African-American and Indigenous communities. Loss of family farms and consolidation of farmland in rural areas pushes longtime agricultural producers off the land as well. Restricted access to land disrupts a community's ability to foster self-determination, develop food sovereignty, cultivate connection to place, build structures to meet local food business needs, and access sustainably-grown and culturally-significant foods. Some communities are committed to expanding land ownership, while others prefer to develop cooperatively-run land stewardship models or community land trusts. Regardless of the model of land tenure, being able to own decision-making over land use is critical for communities to be able to thrive in the long-term.

Infusing farms with artistic and cultural programming engages the local community and showcases the value in preserving these cultural land assets. Artists and culture bearers can play critical roles in communicating to the larger community, local businesses, and policymakers about the important role of securing and preserving these hubs of agricultural, culinary, and artistic innovation. Land-based initiatives that are rich in cultural and artistic expression engage residents in an authentic way, and increase the relevancy of the work to the community at large.

#### **5. Ignite creative, community-led processes**

Activating processes of creativity and exploration unlocks greater potential for envisioning innovative solutions to food systems challenges, brings more people to the table in an inclusive and accessible way, and fosters development of local leadership and capacity building. Community-based design processes can tackle the complexity and inequities of our food system in ways that not only identify the numerous problems but also invite intuition and creativity in crafting solutions. Art's ability to incite provocation and create new ways of understanding the world allows for drastic changes needed to shift society. In addition to being a source of aesthetic beauty, artistic practice can be a tool for cultural ritual and community activism.

Leveraging artistic expression within food systems change creates space for an engaged, dynamic process which differs from typical top-down or external expert-driven planning. Creating space for artists to lead and engage in these participatory processes is crucial. Artists can bring a level of imagination and exploration that is often lacking from traditional community development work. Artist-led community engagement sparks innate creativity in local residents and stakeholders, and encourages them to identify, utilize, and lift up existing artistic talent within the community.

In this way, recognizing the everyday creative expression of growing, preparing, and cooking - and utilizing these practices in community-engaged design - allows residents to fully participate in creating social change. Too often local residents are not seen as experts and yet their history and practices are inherently valuable, often best highlighted through creative process and artist leadership. Inclusive celebration of the many forms of artistic and cultural expression and the deep meaning they contribute to individual and community identity is essential.

*“Food tends to be communal, and communal is part of that performance dynamic. That's another element of how I think that art and culture could weave into food systems - when you start thinking of it through the lens of a performer. And it's not that we hire actors to go out into the field - it's the concept, it's the process, it's the theory of how performance works.”*

David Mas Masumoto, Farmer & Author,  
Masumoto Family Farm

#### **6. Preserve and reclaim food & farming traditions**

Reclaiming cultural food and farming traditions can assist communities in addressing damage to cultural continuity, caused or compounded by historical traumas such as land loss, displacement, genocide, and oppression. This gives

communities tools for resisting erasure, maintaining traditions, and creating or reanimating artistic and cultural practices.

Growing and preparing food are acts of artistic and cultural expression, and many chefs and culture bearers employ traditional culinary and agricultural practices to foster intergenerational communication and knowledge transfer. This process of teaching about farming, seed saving, and food preparation contributes to the preservation of important traditions and the reanimation of dormant cultural practices. The sharing of food, recipes, and agricultural methods are storytelling pathways which are used to impart knowledge, re-skill younger generations, and maintain heritage and community identity.

The potential for culinary arts and agricultural practices to preserve heritage is even more important when we consider the complex historical forces at play in many communities across the US. Histories of genocide, enslavement, and forced assimilation of Indigenous Nations and African-Americans have done inconceivable damage to the ability of these communities to remain rooted in cultural heritage. Internment of Japanese-Americans during the second World War displaced farming families and food businesses, severing place-based connection and wealth creation. Immigrants and refugees are often far away from their countries of origin, and many times have experienced unspeakable trauma in their journey to a fresh start in a new country. Tapping into and rediscovering cultural foodways and art forms can reconnect groups to fractured cultural heritage or heal long-held traumas.

*“There’s reasons why we don’t see Native American restaurants everywhere and [...] why we don’t see African-American restaurants everywhere, it’s still kind of a growing thing. Because the cultures are finally starting to find the confidence and the voice of their ancestors to be able to redefine it themselves instead of having the oppressor telling them what their histories are and how they’re supposed to be and how they’re supposed to act. So you’re seeing this rise of culture happening everywhere.”*

Sean Sherman, CEO & Founder,  
The Sioux Chef/NATIFS - North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems

Numerous African-American communities across the country have engaged in sustainable agriculture and food justice efforts as a way to reconnect to their agricultural

ancestry and to address deep intergenerational trauma of enslavement, broken cultural bonds, and land loss. Indigenous nations are using culinary tradition and food sovereignty as a framework to rebuild native agricultural and animal husbandry systems, disrupted by colonization, forced assimilation, and displacement. While healing trauma can be a long journey, creative placemaking efforts that integrate with cultural foodways offer a deep, personal entry point for meaningful, lasting community healing and cultural preservation.

*“There are historical realities that make certain people less likely to think of participation in agriculture as a benefit - the historical legacy of slavery, indentured servitude, and migrant labor. There are certainly plenty of people who say ‘we used to be in agriculture, now we’re not anymore and thank God.’ But I think the potential is still there. I think that agriculture and food systems work is one of the few places where those barriers - which are real and sometimes imposing - I think that they can be more easily overcome in food systems work than in many other sectors of the placemaking spectrum.”*

Jay Salinas, Co-Founder and Director of Special Projects  
Wormfarm Institute

Throughout the process of conducting this research, we have seen arts & culture-infused food systems change in action among numerous communities across the country - but why? What specifically about the intersection of arts and culture with food and agriculture allows for these powerful change-making processes to occur?

***Integrating arts and culture with food and agriculture enables a creative and inclusive visioning and planning process, and ensures community members see their identities, histories, and interests reflected in the work.***

Eating and growing practices often connect to the very center of who we are as individuals and communities. Food and agriculture both articulate with our connections to history, place, environment, sustenance, joy, and communion. Integrating eating and growing practices with creative reflection and action enables people to see themselves reflected in the work, and drives home the potential for personal and community change. As defined at the beginning of this document, artistic and cultural practice give us a multiform vehicle to help make sense of the world around us and to develop values, connection, and meaning.

Utilizing creative placemaking strategies encourages community members to join their neighbors in identifying

and creating relevant and innovative responses to local challenges. Creative placemaking that connects intentionally to food and agricultural practice provides a tangible and deeply interconnected way to drive food systems change and shape the future of a community. Community development efforts within the subsector of food and agriculture that lift up the importance of arts and culture provide a unique opportunity to improve quality of life in connected, meaningful, and equitable ways for community residents.



## EVALUATING SUCCESS

Throughout our inquiry, not only did we want to establish what this work looks like and what is unique about it, we also want to know what success in community agriculture and food systems change looks like when arts and culture are integrated. As with many community efforts in general, the focus and strategies of the work can change between planning and implementation. Food systems work is especially subject to changes, with agriculture and food businesses often dependent upon myriad external factors such as weather, customer attitude, knowledge, behaviors, cost of capital, labor and inputs, as well as many other factors. Agricultural cycles are long, as are the arcs for proof of concept with restaurants, markets, and other food businesses. The evaluation of the work needs to allow for these pivots and to honor changing and emergent goals and indicators throughout. The fusion of art and culture within this work enables both mechanisms and products which highlight the social and structural changes underway through these non-linear, sometimes slower efforts.

Creative data collection and sharing through techniques such as PhotoVoice or Journey Scrolls are just a few examples which uniquely show the benefits of bringing people together through food as a vehicle towards greater health and wealth-building. Traditional evaluation of food work is often heavily reliant on quantitative data focused on numbers of customers, transactions, pounds, or total sales. However, in reality the acts of gaining greater agency over which foods are available in the neighborhood stores and markets, starting a new food business, or growing culturally preferred foods necessitate a wide array of skills. How these skills are developed and shared, as well as the financial outcomes of the work, are all pieces of the overall 'success' picture of this very complex work.

When a food-oriented business or approach becomes a significant contributor to changes in the social determinants of health or economy within an

organization or community, often the conversation shifts towards possibilities for scaling. While the desire to adapt one place-based solution and apply it to other communities to multiply the impact is understandable, it also can undermine the initial work. Community food systems change is highly context-specific, working within the local social and political spheres that influence all change efforts, plus additional consideration of environmental and cultural factors. Creative placemaking elevates these elements in process, practice, and evaluation. Artists and culture-bearers uniquely encourage contextualization with food-based work, reminding us that rather than focus on replicability and scaling, there is an opportunity to focus on the longevity of change and increasing the quality of this work in a more localized - but interconnected - way.

*“For me, scaling is actually about not building up but digging down. It’s about deeper roots, it’s about deeper impact. It’s about not spreading too thin but actually creating more quality.”*

Neelam Sharma, Executive Director,  
Community Services Unlimited

*How do we know when change efforts in food and agricultural systems are succeeding?*

### **Increased community cohesion and engagement**

Food and art both bring local residents together, increasing the level of belongingness that community members feel and encouraging joy and connection. Yet often foundations and investors only seek outcomes from the design and management of a community garden through pounds of produce harvested or sold, or number of points of distribution or sale, falling short of broader outcomes. Gardening, like many other food-centric activities, necessitates collaboratively sharing time, lived experience, and talents. The markets, festivals, kitchens or farming efforts that have longevity and meaning for participants are ones that can also highlight their ability to attract and connect participants and neighbors. Creative processes and the opportunity to engage in artistic and cultural expression, in addition to food transactions and celebrations, results in success. Successful projects can enhance social cohesion, connectedness, and community engagement. They bring people together from different groups to work across silos and inspire them to take action based on their experiences. Community transformation efforts can often be traced back to the advocacy or shared work that began with a food focused issue or activity; it is both a connecting point and an entry point into collective impact.

**Highlighting assets and redefining economic development**

Defining success here shows the opportunity to shift from a framework of scarcity to one of abundance, and to acknowledge the importance of food-oriented economic activity as an important precursor or supplement to traditional economic development. Community food systems practitioners find purpose and success in documenting how much richness exists in cultural, ethnic, and local food heritage and practices. Artists and culture-bearers play a unique and central role in amplifying this asset-based view of a local food ecosystem. The income generated from food preparation and service, catering, sales, value-added processing or other market-based strategies can serve as a vitally critical piece of individual and household economics. Community food systems work and its successful contribution towards economic development is also evident in additional income streams, part-time jobs, and increased salaries, not only in the creation of full-time jobs. An increase in residents building on local assets and increasing wealth through local ownership of food and agricultural businesses and land ownership are important indicators of success. When artists and other community leaders are able to connect the community's positive attributes and identity to new opportunities through

food-oriented development, it's an indication of inclusive, positive growth.

**Capacity-building to develop future leaders**

In food systems work, as in other fields, a specific focus on building community members' capacity and skills will create a ripple effect of lasting change beyond short-term projects. In community food efforts, especially when coupled with artistic practice and cultural celebration, engaging youth becomes particularly appealing and successful. When done well, this engagement often becomes an investment in leadership development, building the capacity of local emergent leaders. Success in food and agricultural work is evident through the creation of youth training, internships, and job opportunities in value-added product development, promotion and sales, farming, and cooking, to name just a few. Multi-generational sharing of cultural practices, including foodways, becomes an important 'capacity' of a resilient and healthy community. Policy changes which enable and promote agriculture and provide long-term investments in food and the arts contribute to meaningful skill-building and drive large-scale change that reflects local history and culture.



Cornerstone Theater Company  
Los Angeles, CA



Mālamalama Maui Project  
Pu'unene, Hawai'i



Somerville Arts Council  
Somerville, MA



Desert Botanical Garden  
Spaces of Opportunity  
Phoenix, AZ

# GROWING BEYOND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT

The community food systems field is wide open with opportunity for increased integration of arts and culture. The purpose of this document is to provide a view into what's currently happening at this intersection, as a jumping-off point for deeper and more collaborative work. In this section we begin to answer our final research question - **how can arts and culture be better leveraged within the community development subsector of food and agriculture?**

## CONSIDERATIONS

We start with a few considerations that provide important context in approaching this work. The ideas presented here were synthesized from interviews we conducted with food systems practitioners, artists, and field thought leaders.

1. Unique communities need unique solutions - it can be difficult to implement "best practices" in community change work. While different organizations should share experiences and learn from their peers, solutions can rarely be cut and pasted from one community to another.

*"One of the things about our country is that each region and each area has its own unique charm. And that's where creative placemaking shines."*

Shawn Dell Joyce, Former Program Director,  
Wallkill River School

2. Community development that inserts projects into communities with an outside-in approach are not effective in the long-term. There is a shift needed from this mentality to community-owned creation of solutions based on local needs. There exists opportunity to lift up these processes with strategic funding and skill-building, however communities themselves must lead decision-making.
3. More effort is needed to specifically strengthen relationships between rural and urban communities. There exists vast possibilities for collaborations that span the rural-urban continuum to reduce negative perceptions and increase integration of these groups.

4. Oftentimes in low-income communities it can be a challenge for people to spend limited disposable income on healthy food or artistic and cultural activities. Practitioners must work creatively to make these accessible by seamlessly embedding them in community-building work.
5. Primarily focusing on quantitative evaluation metrics to measure success of community change work limits practitioners from telling the full story of what is happening on the ground. Allowing funding recipients to report more holistically on their work creates trust and openness in sharing outcomes and challenges.

*I would suggest that we think about other ways than quantifiable data to use as measurement tools of success. [...] The thing I remind many funders about - especially when we talk about evaluation - is that we've gotten away from doing things because it's the right thing to do. And we need to get back to that."*

Seitu Jones, Artist, St. Paul, MN

6. Short-term funded projects often lack the needed longevity to enact substantive change. While immediate action is needed to address pressing community issues, it needs to be coupled with more long-range solutions as well. Funders and investors should work more creatively to offer long-term, flexible funding opportunities that address systemic change. Rural communities, in particular, experience challenges when project funding ends, as they often lack nonprofit and philanthropic infrastructure and resources.
7. It is a disservice to the work to only bring to the table people who agree with each other. There needs to be an effort made to involve more diverse stakeholders for truly transformative systemic change. Funders and financiers can use their position of privilege to engage unlikely groups in this work and to build broader partnerships across differences.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

There are countless possibilities for how artists, community practitioners, scholars, food & agriculture agencies, farmers, arts administrators, funders, and other key stakeholders can collaborate on arts & culture-infused food systems change. We envision the enhancement and design of cross-sector partnerships which may include, in part, public education campaigns, additional research, pilot initiatives, new or expanded funding programs, fellowships, mentorships, or policy changes at all levels.

During the Arts, Culture and Food/Agriculture Working Group Meeting, we reviewed the key findings presented in this document and spent time discussing strategic audiences and actionable recommendations to thoughtfully advance this work and field. Working cross-sectorally and engaging a wide variety of entities in this work is essential. Working Group participants developed the following list of potential stakeholders, keeping them in mind as strategic audiences while proposing targeted recommendations:

1. Mainline Agriculture & Next Generation Farmers
2. Educators & Academic Institutions
3. Community Practitioners & Community Organizers
4. Philanthropy
5. Legislators & Policymakers
6. Local Government

From small group conversations oriented around these audiences, Working Group participants helped shape a wide-ranging list of recommendations that serve as potential next steps:

- Conduct briefings with federal and philanthropic sectors; forge collaborations and support for pilot activities at the intersection of arts and culture and food and agriculture
- Require or prioritize an artist seat on municipal and/or state food policy councils
- Resource artist memberships within member-based, grassroots coalitions working on agriculture and food systems change and in next generation farmer leadership groups
- Develop artist delegations to attend conferences and meetings typically only accessible to farmers, agricultural administrators, and food & agriculture funders and financiers
- Recruit food and agriculture focused media partners who are committed to lifting up diverse "Stories of Change" at this intersection - particularly emerging work that has not received much publicity

- Commission a practitioner-led process to develop common purpose, shared values, and standards of practice for arts & culture integration in food & agriculture
- Establish a practitioner-led learning group to create frameworks and indicators for conducting equitable community-informed research that prioritizes storytelling and data ownership
- Create a training curriculum and how-to toolkit for communities and farmers to engage with artists, grow local artistic talent, and infuse arts & culture into their food & agricultural planning and programming
- Designate funding to increase land stewardship and ownership among historically marginalized communities seeking to establish arts and culture-infused food & agricultural programs



## CONCLUSION

Our inquiry into three primary research questions has illuminated both numerous examples of existing creative place-based food and agriculture work, as well as a great need for further incorporating artistic and cultural practices within food systems change. As we have seen, the intersection of artistic and cultural practice with food and agricultural community development makes both the process and the outcomes uniquely inclusive and effective. As this integration is further developed, it is imperative that community knowledge is centered, community-owned solutions are uplifted, and the integrity of local work is protected from co-optation. Beyond specifically food and agricultural community development, arts & culture hold unique possibility for facilitating collaboration between all ten Community Development subsectors described in the foreword. As we see indicated in this work, the social issues facing our communities are complex and interconnected, requiring a broad and inclusive approach. We cannot seek to address inequities in our food system without simultaneously dealing with environmental, public health, transportation, immigration, and economic development concerns. Further engaging arts and culture can allow us to dig deeper and to create interconnected community change that is not only equitable, but beautiful, delicious, and nourishing as well.



# STORIES OF CHANGE

## STORIES OF CHANGE #1

### Inner-City Muslim Action Network

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

#### Highlighted Work

*Transform a vacant building and lot into a healthy marketplace that will serve as a corner store and community hub. The project will expand access to fresh produce, integrate art and entrepreneurship into community and embed social and economic equity into development.*



#### Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Food Markets, Community Gathering Spaces



#### Background

Incorporated in 1997 in Chicago, Illinois, the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) “fosters health, wellness and healing in the inner-city by organizing for social change, cultivating the arts, and operating a holistic health center.” Throughout all facets of their work, IMAN prioritizes an intergenerational and integrative approach towards challenging structural and systemic injustice. IMAN works in the southwest side of Chicago - a predominantly Black, Arab, and Latino working class neighborhood - with many of their constituents being immigrants or formerly incarcerated citizens.

#### Approach

Organizers at IMAN have identified specific strategies for engaging youth, fostering local artistic talent, enhancing health and wellness, and increasing access to healthy foods, including:

- The Fresh Beats & Eats Farmers’ Market brings healthy food options and artistic and cultural expression through music and performance.
- The Beloved Community Ceramics Studio offers the local community a unique entrypoint to artistic creation, entrepreneurship, and arts therapy.
- Their engagement of local corner stores to prominently display healthier snack options has sparked interest in wellness and healthy eating.
- Their Sacred Cypher Creatives program offers year-long support to five community artists to engage artistically in IMAN’s initiatives on culture, social justice, and community.

Across their work, art is seen as a tool for powerful self-expression and development of voice. Community members have outlets not only for harnessing their own creativity but also for envisioning solutions to local problems. Encouraging artistic expression has greatly enhanced their healthy food access work, making it more relevant to community member’s lives and values. Residents have access to a wide variety of strategies for strengthening community ties, fostering intercultural learning, and healing deep traumas and wounds.



#### Success Factors

- To address long-standing racial and cultural divides, IMAN has used intentional strategies such as youth engagement, establishment of a local farmers’ market, artist support, healthy corner store development, and ceramic art creation. In doing so, they are encouraging the development of community trust and healing, while fostering holistic health and wellness.
- Addressing a need for affordable access to healthy produce, the Fresh Beats & Eats Farmers Market brings fresh vegetables and local music and performance into the heart of the neighborhood, spurring demand for a permanent marketplace to shop, gather and celebrate.

# STORIES OF CHANGE #2

## LA MUJER OBRERA

EL PASO, TEXAS

### Highlighted Work

*Expanding social enterprises by increasing farm production of cultural foods, and connecting farm crops into daycare, market, and restaurant. Developing new opportunities in health education through nutrition and cooking classes.*

### Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Community Gathering Spaces, Community Gardens & Farms



### Background

La Mujer Obrera is based in El Paso, along the border with Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. A former garment district, the Chamizal neighborhood - whose residents are predominantly people of Mexican descent with many mixed-status families - now faces the effects of public disinvestment. Since the organization's founding in 1981, it has employed grassroots community organizing to accomplish their mission of "women workers' overall empowerment through ongoing leadership development in community organizing, women's leadership and food justice." Their organizing efforts have successfully resulted in the resistance of school and public housing closures. La Mujer Obrera believes residents must be able to create the community they want to live in and actively prevent gentrification and displacement.

### Approach

La Mujer Obrera has a deep dedication to community economic development visible through the organization's numerous social enterprises such as Rayito de Sol daycare center, Cafe Mayapan, Tianguis del Chamizal, Tierra es Vida community farm, and Lummetik Trading Company artisan market. La Mujer Obrera places the appreciation and celebration of cultural heritage and artistic expression at the center of all of their work. For members of their community, art is deeply intertwined in culinary preparations, agricultural traditions, artisan-produced goods, and numerous cultural events celebrating ancestral Mexican heritage through music, dance, and the visual arts. Community residents have diverse opportunities to increase economic stability, celebrate their heritage, and fight for a community that reflects their local values and culture. As such, La Mujer Obrera is directly contributing to the stability of households, fighting displacement, and fostering the revitalization of a historically disinvested community.

### Success Factors

- La Mujer Obrera's focus on growing economic opportunity among residents has led to the development of multiple enterprises including a daycare center, cafe, community farm, farmers' market, and artisan store.
- By providing local community members with multiple entry points for cultural connection, political organizing, and leadership development, La Mujer Obrera is building community capacity, increasing appreciation of cultural heritage and therefore strengthening community resiliency.



# STORIES OF CHANGE #3

## PINE MOUNTAIN SETTLEMENT SCHOOL

**BLED SOE, KENTUCKY**

### Highlighted Work

*The Pine Mountain Settlement School serves as a hub of place-based rural revitalization through environmental education, celebration of Appalachian culture and heritage, and integration of artistic expression with community development. They engage their local community with a 5-acre organic educational farm, community workshops, art classes, and youth educational camps.*

### Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Community Gardens & Farms, Food Markets



### Background

The Pine Mountain Settlement School in Bledsoe, Kentucky, utilizes intergenerational place-based education as a tool to holistically enrich the lives of residents of their rural, Appalachian community. They approach stewardship of their local environment through community development and sustainability education that promotes and sustains Appalachian heritage. In a highly disinvested area of the country, Pine Mountain Settlement School is revitalizing their rural community, increasing local food access, and fostering appreciation for local history and culture.

### Approach

Pine Mountain Settlement School focuses specifically on place-based strategies for community development, placing Appalachian culture and heritage squarely at the center of their work. They use food and agricultural education and technical assistance through their Farm Institute to catalyze a movement of local community members who are growing organic food to not only support household food security, but also to sell at local markets and increase economic stability. The organization utilizes shared community meals and educational workshops such as seed exchanges to bring community members together and increase local knowledge on production practices and Appalachian heritage. The Little School program engages children in learning, cultural exchange, and experiencing the natural environment of eastern Kentucky. Community pottery nights in the on-site pottery studio bring local residents together to explore creativity and artistic expression. These strategies offer a multi-pronged approach to lasting community development in an area of the country that has all but been left behind.



### Success Factors

- Pine Mountain Settlement School is fostering rural revitalization and celebrating local cultural heritage through agricultural and artistic engagement.
- Designing and leading their own place-based strategies for community development improves local trust, enhancing participation and opportunity for deep, meaningful change.

# STORIES OF CHANGE #4 CLEMMONS FAMILY FARM

CHARLOTTE, VERMONT

## Highlighted Work

*In Vermont, people of African descent comprise just 1.2% of the population. The majority of Vermonters have little to no exposure to the people, art, culture or history of the African diaspora. Against the backdrop of a rise in race-related hate crimes in the state, the Clemmons Family Farm hosts a series of African diaspora culinary and performing arts residencies that alleviate the social isolation of Black Vermonters and address white fragility, weaving a stronger social fabric with more positive connections among residents across differences in race, ethnicity and culture in and around Charlotte, VT.*



## Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Food & Agricultural Tourism and Celebration

## Background

Jackson and Lydia Clemmons bought the 148-acre farm that became the Clemmons Family Farm in 1962, and shared a deep appreciation for artistic expression. As artist friends traveled through the Northeast, they stopped at the farm to experience the uniqueness of a Black farm in Vermont. The farm is committed to preserving a space for all community members to experience a sense of belonging.



## Approach

The Clemmons Family Farm is fusing creative placemaking with multicultural community-building to create a hub of arts and culture in rural Vermont that improves community health and wellbeing. Through the Sense of Place project, the farm offers a multitude of opportunities for engagement including artist residencies, tours, multicultural events, and K-12 education programs. Their programming centers specifically on African-American and African arts including visual and performing arts, literature, storytelling, spoken word, and the culinary arts. The Clemmons family will also redesign their “Big Barn” as a community agriculture and arts venue. The Clemmons Family Farm actively builds partnerships with local artists, farmers, architects, scholars, and residents.

Expanding African-American land ownership is critical for African-Americans to develop food independence, foster economic development, and increase health outcomes. As evidenced in the Pigford vs. Glickman settlement of 1999, the restitution of lost agricultural land to African-American farmers has barely scratched the surface of the reality of historical discriminatory practices. The Clemmons Family Farm is an important cultural heritage asset, offering a unique platform for a marginalized population to become part of the state’s creative economy.



## Success Factors

- As one of very few African-American-owned farms in Vermont and in the nation, the Clemmons Family Farm’s programs advocate for strategies to increase the accessibility of land, land ownership and food sovereignty among people of African descent.
- Being a privately-owned farm, Clemmons Family Farm, its collaborating artists and the community it serves have greatly benefitted from accessing innovative creative placemaking funding at a level that is normally restricted to established 501c3 organizations, allowing the Sense of Place project to move forward quickly in implementing much-needed programming.

# STORIES OF CHANGE #5 MĀLAMALAMA MAUI PROJECT

PU'UNENE, HAWAI'I

## Highlighted Work

The Mālamalama Maui Project uses artistic process and local cultural traditions to embrace, educate and empower the people of Maui in imagining and advocating for community-based agricultural uses for Central Valley agricultural land in transition.

## Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Food & Agricultural Tourism and Celebration

## Background

In 2016, operations ceased upon 36,000 acres of sugarcane plantation land throughout the island of Maui, leaving behind more questions than answers as to how the land would be managed and used in the future. The Mālamalama Maui Project began in early 2017 as a multimedia campaign using the cultural values of Hawai'i to empower local residents to design and participate in proactive solutions to address this situation. Led by community artist Lehua Simon, a broad coalition of artists, farmers, residents, business owners, nonprofit directors, and educators are engaging the local community with art and culture and working towards the development of a regenerative local economy.

## Approach

In order to foster a truly community-engaged process, Mālamalama Maui Project organizers bring together various community stakeholders through film, music, media, and food. Since initiating this work, the project has collaborated with more than 24 local organizations and built a decentralized coalition that will continue this work into the future. The approach coalition building by targeting expanding circles of influence, cultivating stakeholder buy-in, and leveraging established influence, partnerships and funding investments to reach larger audiences with less resources over time. The project has provided micro-funding to support numerous local partner organizations in integrating artistic and cultural experiences into their mission. By creating new relationships, building capacity, and strengthening local collaboration, Mālamalama Maui is fostering sustainability and a healthy local food system for Maui.

The final campaign of this two-year project - "36,000 Acres, 36,000 Hearts" - aimed to engage 36,000 people in sharing their heart-felt vision or solution for the future stewardship of the Central Valley farmlands of Maui, to be shared with local agricultural corporations and policymakers as a gesture of solidarity and collaboration that promotes community-empowered design.

## Success Factors

- The leadership of Mālamalama Maui specifically aimed to create a decentralized coalition to approach project goals, ensuring increased receptibility among a broad spectrum of agricultural stakeholders as well as long-lasting momentum and cross-sector collaboration.
- To achieve success, project organizers have purposefully built partnerships that are inclusive of agricultural corporations involved in local land management. By utilizing a creative and heart-centered process, the project has facilitated peaceful dialogue between disparate groups.



# STORIES OF CHANGE #6

## THE INDIGENOUS FOOD LAB

### BY THE SIOUX CHEF

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

#### Highlighted Work

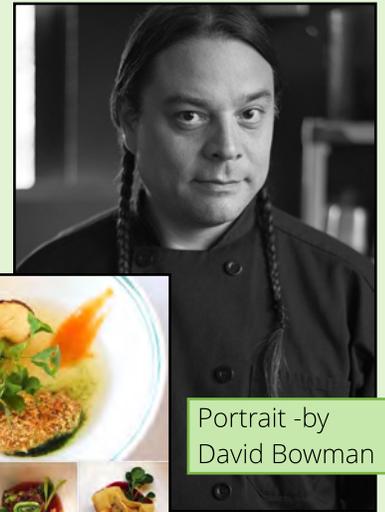
*The Indigenous Food Lab will be a 501c3 nonprofit restaurant, education, and training center focused on research and development of Indigenous food knowledge.*

#### Food & Agriculture Field Scan Typology

Culinary Arts, Community & Incubator Kitchens

#### Background

The Sioux Chef seeks to revitalize Native American cuisine and re-identify North American foodways- reclaiming indigenous culinary traditions, thereby making them more accessible. Founded by Sean Sherman in the Twin Cities region in 2014, The Sioux Chef brand has included catering operations, a food truck, and indigenous food education. Author of cookbook *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, Sean is poised to open an indigenous restaurant in Minneapolis' Water Works development in 2020. Sean collaborates closely with other Native organizations, including the Indigenous Food Network, focused on locally sourcing culturally significant foods, seed saving, and hand-pollination. The Sioux Chef brand has recently grown to include a nonprofit arm called NATIFS - North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems. Through NATIFS, The Sioux Chef will establish the first of an expansive network of Indigenous Food Labs.



Portrait -by  
David Bowman



#### Approach

The first Indigenous Food Lab - which is set to open in Summer 2019 - will be a live restaurant and a hub of indigenous culinary education and business incubation that will create opportunities for sustainable economic development. The work is built around two main goals: (1) increasing accessibility of Indigenous foodway knowledge, and (2) teaching Indigenous food preparation. Both of these tactics are a response to the lasting legacy of colonization and forced assimilation, which have hindered many Native communities in their ability to retain and transfer indigenous

culinary knowledge. The restaurant will provide the nonprofit with a steady revenue source, while the kitchen will offer Indigenous food-based education and business development to local beginning Indigenous food production businesses. The Indigenous Food Lab will link nascent urban food businesses with rural, Indigenous food producers with a focus on not only revitalizing Native American culinary traditions, but also on utilizing local, traditional crops.

The next step of this work will be to replicate this model and establish Indigenous Food Labs throughout the country, North America, and the world. By growing an international network of regional hubs promoting Indigenous foodways, The Sioux Chef team seeks to catalyze a world-wide revitalization of ancestral food knowledge and appreciation.

#### Success Factors

- By centering Indigenous perspectives and traditions on cooking and eating, The Sioux Chef's work is reimagining North American foodways outside of a colonial historical framework.
- The Sioux Chef is creating sustainable economic development in Indigenous communities by providing access to kitchen space, culinary education, and business development support.

# REFERENCES

The following sources were utilized to craft the key term definitions shown on pages 5-6.

ArtPlace America

<https://www.artplaceamerica.org/about/introduction>

Creative Placemaking, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, 2010

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

Farther, Faster, Together: How Arts and Culture Can Accelerate Environmental Progress, Helicon Collaborative, 2018

<https://www.artplaceamerica.org/environment-energy>

The Movement for Community-Led Development

<https://communityleddev.org/2016/07/06/human-centered-design/>

Michigan State University Extension

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/foodways\\_when\\_food\\_meets\\_culture\\_and\\_history](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/foodways_when_food_meets_culture_and_history)

National Endowment for the Arts - Folk and Traditional Arts

<https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/folk-traditional-arts>

PolicyLink

<http://www.policylink.org/about-us/equity-manifesto>

US Food Sovereignty Alliance

<http://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-food-sovereignty/>

## ADDITIONAL SOURCES

ArtPlace America Field Scan Research

<https://www.artplaceamerica.org/our-work/research/translating-outcomes>

Equitable Food Oriented Development, Mandela Partners

<https://www.mandelapartners.org/efod>

Fresh, Local & Equitable (FreshLo) Initiative - The Kresge Foundation

<https://kresge.org/freshlo>

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

<https://doi.org/10.17226/18846>

Journal of Agriculture, Foods Systems, and Community Development

<https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/>

# NOTES

1. The full list of sources utilized to search for and compile funded community change projects is as follows, listed alphabetically:
  - A. ArtPlace America
  - B. Barr Foundation
  - C. Heartland Fund
  - D. Kellogg Foundation
  - E. Knight Foundation
  - F. National Endowment for the Arts
  - G. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program
  - H. The Kresge Foundation
  - I. USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
  - J. William Penn Foundation
2. We acknowledge that our efforts in conducting this research cannot possibly represent all projects across the country that are currently working at this intersection. Searching primarily on foundation and governmental funding databases means our results are not inclusive of those community projects and efforts that have not yet received major funding from the sources we utilized. Focusing our search efforts in this way was an attempt to bound our process and to learn about the types of projects that have been successful in receiving funding. We are inspired by the powerful work highlighted through this research, and excited to continue learning about communities engaging with food & agriculture and arts & culture.

Wallkill River School  
Montgomery, NY



Nuestras Raíces  
Holyoke, MA



Cornerstone Theater Company  
Los Angeles, CA



Montbello Organizing Committee  
Denver, CO  
Photo Credit - Khadija Haynes