



ART OF THE RURAL

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Art of the Rural and RUPRI recommended for funding by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town for one of five “knowledge building” awards for “Next Generation: The Future of Arts & Culture Placemaking in Rural America”

This morning, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 69 Our Town awards totaling almost \$5 million through the Our Town program's fifth year of funding. The [Next Generation](#) initiative, a collaboration between Art of the Rural, the Rural Policy Research Institute, and a host of regional and national partners, is one of those recommended projects and will receive \$75,000 to engage artists, organizations and communities across the public and private sectors to advance field building, innovative strategies, and “next generation” leadership in rural creative placemaking. The NEA received 275 applications for Our Town this year and will make grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000.

The Our Town grant program supports creative placemaking projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. Since the program’s inception in 2011 and including these projects, the NEA will have awarded 325 Our Town grants totaling almost \$26 million in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

Through the expertise and networks of the Rural Policy Research Institute and Art of the Rural, as well as the program’s regional and national partners, Next Generation links three activities: Regional Networks that spark exchange, collaboration, and dissemination of best practices; a Digital Learning Commons that shares this knowledge and contributes further perspectives from across the rural arts and culture field; and a Next Generation Conference that will merge the activities of the Networks and Commons, combine digital and face-to-face exchange, and expand the rural placemaking network.

“Next Generation demonstrates the best in creative community development and whose work will have a valuable impact on its community,” said Chairman Chu.

Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro is also celebrating the announcement: “The arts reveal the heart and soul of our nation. We’re proud to work with the NEA to create neighborhoods of opportunity where



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culture is honored and creativity can flourish. Together with our partners, we'll give more Americans the chance to experience life in a vibrant and thriving community."

"Our partnership with the Rural Policy Research Institute unites strong public policy perspectives with robust arts and culture innovations taking place across America," said Matthew Fluharty, Executive Director of Art of the Rural. "The next generation of rural citizens and leaders demand resilient, inclusive, and creative places. We find the pathways to that future in the space where these fields converge."

For a complete listing of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov. Project descriptions, grants listed by state and by project type, and resources are available as well. The NEA's online resource, [Exploring Our Town](#), features case studies of more than 70 Our Town projects along with lessons learned and other resources.

The Twitter hashtag is #NEAOurTown15

For additional information about the Next Generation Initiative, contact info@ruralgeneration.org, visit <http://www.rupri.org/areas-of-work/next-generation/>.

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