

Ripple Effects of Folk Arts & Cultures

The impact of Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies –
Folk Arts & Cultures program from 2016-2024



Introduction

In 2016, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) formally launched its Folk Arts & Cultures (FAC) program to support the intergenerational transmission of artistic skill and cultural knowledge. To this end, MACP has focused its support on partners doing related work in two U.S. regions: the Upper Midwest (with a specific focus on Nordic-American folk arts and cultures) and Central Appalachia. MACP’s vision is that folk arts and cultures will be more **deeply understood**, more **broadly recognized**, and more **widely practiced** in these regions and beyond.

This report celebrates the work to date of 17 FAC grantee partners across both grantmaking regions. Behind the following stories, numbers, and photographs lies a systematic analysis of grantee partner impact by Wilder Research that illuminates the ripple effects of FAC-funded work. By studying the substantial and rich work accomplished by FAC partners and in hearing the stories of the many people they have impacted, MACP hopes to gain insights that will inform future work and inspire others to more deeply engage and invest in the folk arts and cultural traditions.

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Above: Textile made by Cate Clayton “Granny” Donaldson (1864-1960). Textile piece is part of Folk School archival collection. Photo courtesy of John C. Campbell Folk School.

Cover, left photo: Mentor Jim McDowell (right) with apprentice Nick Garrison through the Mentor/Apprentice Program in Weaverville, NC. Photo courtesy of the North Carolina Arts Council and South Arts.

Cover, middle photo: Cocktails at the Castle at the American Swedish Institute (ASI). Photo courtesy of ASI.

Cover, right photo: Gourds created by Judy Zeigler for her class, *Coiling with Waxed Linen on Gourds*. Photo by Steve Newton, courtesy of John C. Campbell Folk School.

Our Approach and Vision: A message from MACP's Folk Arts & Cultures team

OUR INTENTION

Folk arts and cultures are more than a set of creative practices and aesthetic expressions. They are the ties that bind us – to place, to our environment, to the past and the future, and to one another. Margaret A. Cargill cared deeply about what we call, “the Art of the Everyday.” She cherished the creativity of many communities in her lifetime, launched herself into her own creative explorations with beloved mentors, and believed that art belonged to us all. And we are fortunate indeed that she did.

Beginning in 2016, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies made good on our commitment to support folk arts and cultures out of a concern that the lack of intergenerational transmission would threaten the continuity of folk arts and cultures. We know that every day people and communities are discovering for the first time, or renewing their commitment to, folk and traditional arts and giving of their own labor, resources, heart, and soul towards this work. MACP felt that we could make a difference by supporting more activities, more opportunities, and more connections. We named as our desired Vision that as a result of MACP's support and through the work of our partners, folk arts and cultures would be **more deeply understood, more broadly recognized, and more widely practiced.** We named our strategic direction, identified and began to support partners already doing exceptional work related to our focus, and have proceeded to learn from them as they identify community needs, respond, and adapt.



A hand woven cloth created by Berea College students using a digitally assisted fly shuttle loom – an example of using traditional techniques with contemporary technology. The cloth was created as a part of the Crafting Diversity in Design program. Photo by Justin Skeens, courtesy of Berea College.

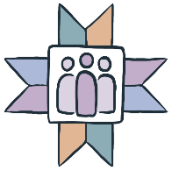
OUR SHARED IMPACT

In 2024, we set out to learn about our progress towards our Folk Arts & Cultures Vision Statement. We partnered with Wilder Research to review and analyze grantee reports, facilitate discussions with partners to inform our understanding, and collect stories that speak to the impact of the Folk Arts & Cultures program. This summary of eight years of work by our partners yielded clear themes:



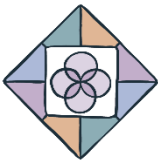
Honors, sustains, and grows traditions

The first theme relates directly to our core interest in intergenerational transmission of artistic skill and cultural knowledge. Our partners (and their partners) affirm soundly that this is of the greatest priority to them and their communities.



Creates, connects, and sustains community

The second theme exemplifies the ultimate goal of the FAC program to ensure that communities thrive *through* folk arts and cultures. The community piece is essential for the FAC Vision Statement to become a reality. One has to create, feed, and build a community to keep traditions alive; and the practice of traditions, in turn, strengthens community bonds and inspires future generations.



Embodies and fosters belonging and justice

Finally, the third theme speaks to the highest aspiration this work can achieve. Through their work, MACP's Folk Arts & Cultures partners have long committed and contributed to justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, and MACP affirmed our own commitment in this area with our [Vision Statement for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice \(DEIJ\)](#). The results from this study show that what folk arts and cultures achieves for people and communities goes far beyond the rich practices and knowledge of these artistic and cultural pursuits. Indeed, they make for a better world.

“Equity and justice are not new to the work we are doing...it is inherent in what we do. It feels natural to have equity and justice be part of this work.”

– FAC partner

CONNECTING VISION AND IMPACT

What is notable about the emergence of these themes is how they echo and build upon Margaret’s interests, the Folk Arts & Cultures Vision, MACP’s priority on community-informed impact, and our Vision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. These themes represent layers of impact which build upon and reinforce one another. The work has exceeded our expectations in its impacts on the people served.

Our aim with this report is to share and celebrate the impact of our FAC partners. Through numbers, photos, and stories, we hope to highlight the power of folk arts and cultures to transform individuals and communities. And, like Margaret, we hope to continue inspiring others to more deeply engage and invest in the folk arts traditions found in their community and beyond.

- Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Folk Arts & Cultures team
Nina Clark, Cheryl T. Schiele, Jayson Smart, and Jacob Sorrells



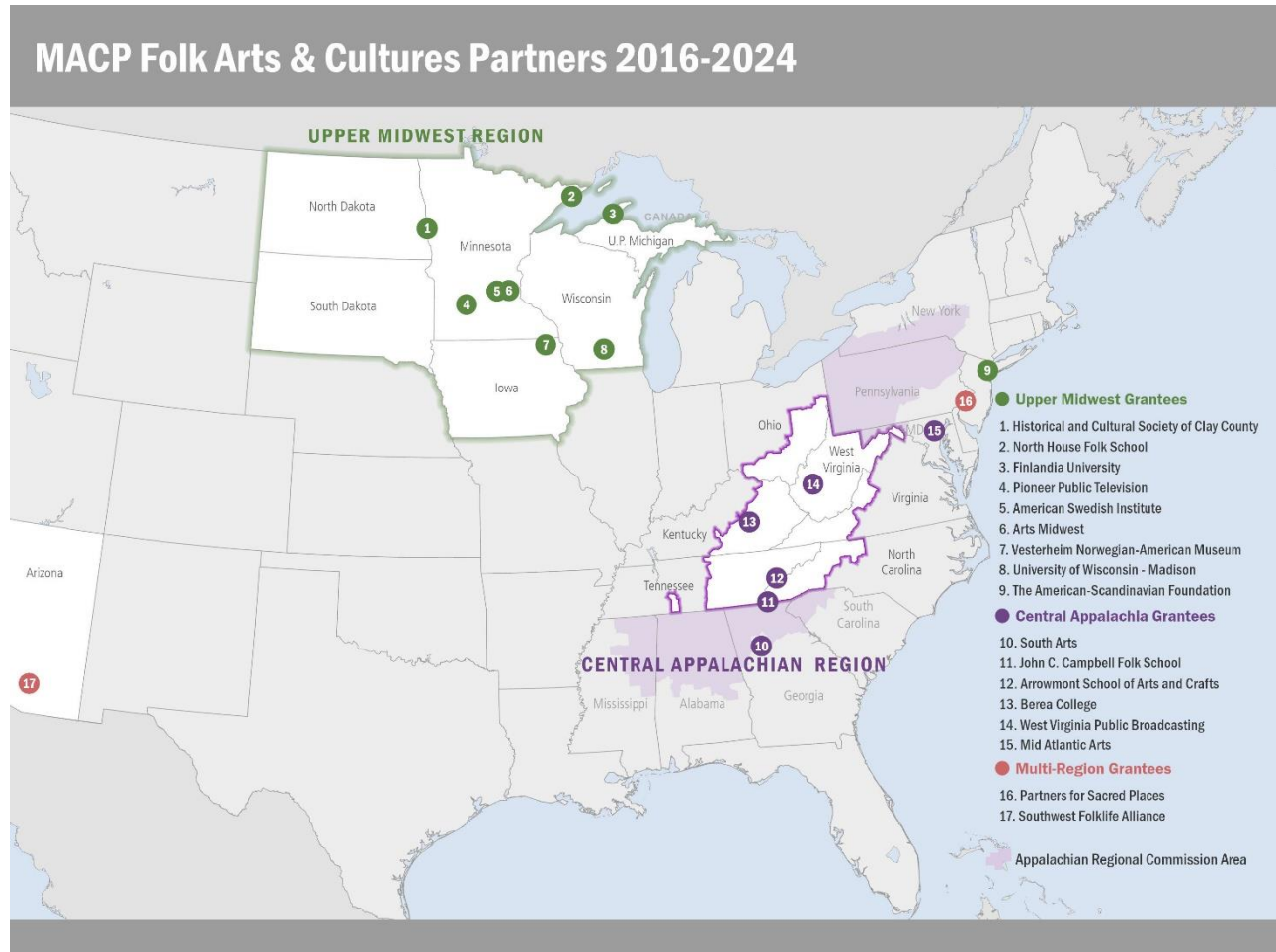
Maija Pokela of the Finnish band Kardemimmit helps elders at United Presbyterian Home Health Center in Washington, Iowa, play the kantele, the national instrument of Finland. Kardemimmit conducted a week-long residency in Washington in March 2018 as part of Arts Midwest Folkefest, a program of Arts Midwest. Photo by Stephen Manuszak, courtesy of Arts Midwest.

“This sense of collective belonging and the affirmation of the importance of culture in Central Appalachia has a deep impact on partners and people from these counties. It roots people in place, and personally affirms the inheritance of this work.”

– FAC partner

Partner organizations

From 2016-2024, MACP funded 17 partner organizations through its Folk Arts & Cultures program. The following map names each partner and respective location – though their impact is far-reaching. For more information about each partner and their MACP-funded work, see pages 27-29.

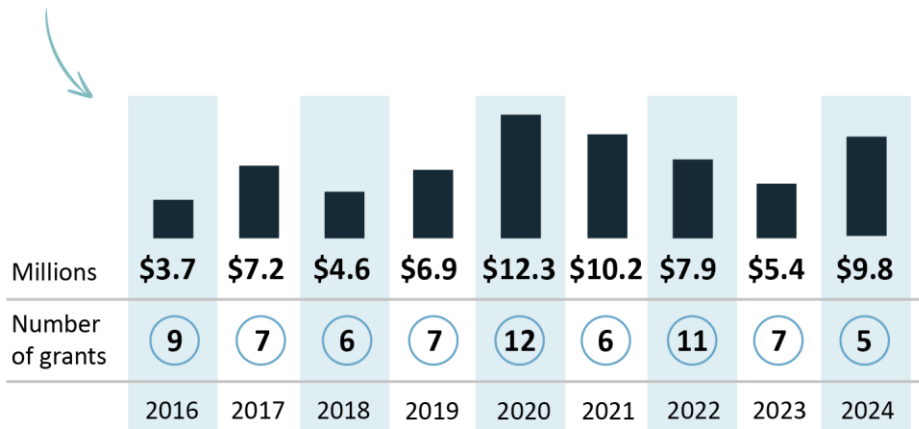


Folk Arts & Cultures grants overview

FROM 2016-2024, THE MACP FOLK ARTS & CULTURES PROGRAM MADE:

70 Grants 

Totaling **\$67,997,154**



Note. Yearly grant amounts are rounded to the nearest \$100,000. For multi-year grants, the total amount across years is attributed to the year the grant was initiated. Grants include programs, capacity building, and capital projects.

FAC partner work in numbers

Over a 10-month period, Wilder Research worked closely with MACP and FAC grantee partners to capture the impact of this rich and extensive work. To begin quantifying FAC partner impact, Wilder Research asked FAC partners to identify measures that were both meaningful and feasible to capture. Using those partner-identified measures, Wilder compiled data from grantee reports and verified its accuracy with FAC partners in June 2024, making updates to reflect any MACP-funded work completed through May 2024. Please see the Methods section for more details on the study design.

Through this study, Wilder Research found that FAC grantee partners use a variety of strategies to build the vitality of folk arts and cultures in their communities and enrich the broader folk arts ecosystem. The following section provides a snapshot of the types and numbers of activities implemented by FAC partners from 2016-2024 through MACP support.

SINCE 2016, FAC PARTNERS HAVE:

Created opportunities to share about, deepen practices of, and develop an appreciation for folk arts and cultures



9,437 classes

Offered 9,437 classes, workshops, lectures, trainings, and retreats to inspire and deepen the practice of traditions to 237,809 participants



1,851 tours

Organized 1,851 tours, field trips, or excursions for 7,889 participants to immerse themselves in a tradition, learn from knowledge bearers and expert artisans, and connect with others that share in the tradition

“This tour has changed my perspective on folk music, music in general, and a lot more. Seeing and participating in this long-running tradition firsthand in the country where it originated has been an unforgettable experience. This trip also gave me a lot of hope. Seeing swarms of people line up to watch performances of folk music ...showed me that this tradition is still important to a lot of people...this tour has incentivized me to work harder to carry this folk music tradition on in America.”

– Youth tour attendee, American Swedish Institute



Celebrated and gathered community together around traditions



648 events

Held or sponsored 648 festivals, concerts, performances, movie-screenings, and community-wide events attended by over 149,737 individuals



80 exhibits

Hosted 80 exhibitions featuring art forms, traditions, and artisans that reached over 291,559 individuals



891 lesson plans

Generated 891 lessons plans and curricula around folk arts traditions and the preservation of local assets for youth, college students, and program participants

Sustained the people and organizations that keep traditions alive



\$3,377,517 in financial support

Provided \$3,377,517 in financial support through subgrants to 257 organizations that lift up folk arts and cultures in their communities

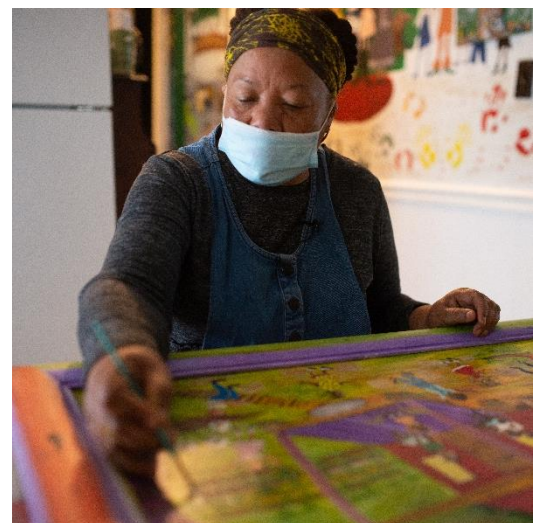


6,194 artists

Hosted and supported over 6,194 artists, instructors, apprentices, and interns through financial support, formal programs or fellowships, and increased exposure of their work



Folkways lead editor, Nicole Musgrave, trains two Folkways journalists, Stefani Priskos and Rebecca Williams, on best recording practices at an annual training retreat. Photo courtesy of Molly Born and West Virginia Public Broadcasting.



Artist Theresa Gloster. Photo by Jesse Barber, taken during his time doing fieldwork for the ITM Student Documentation component of In These Mountains. Photo courtesy of South Arts.

Preserved and amplified traditions, stories, artifacts, and places



1,368 films and video clips

Produced 1,368 documentaries, films, or video clips that honor, disseminate, instruct, and preserve folk arts and cultures



1,347 music and audio files

Created 1,347 digital music and audio files of traditional songs, instruments, and spoken word



667 articles and reports

Published 667 newspaper articles, blog posts, or reports on arts, cultures, traditions, and the people who carry them forward



1,043 social media posts

Created 1,043 social media posts promoting folk arts and cultures



3,824,012 social media views

Garnered 3,824,012 views and 580,740 followers on social media related to arts and cultures



239 audio stories

Created 239 podcasts or audio stories around people, culture, and traditions



9,700+ artifacts preserved

Built or contributed to archives and databases by adding over 9,700 digital artifacts – including audio files, videos, and photographs

“Thank you for telling our story so well...As I listened to my mother's voice, together with voices from Art, June, and Charlie, I felt a certain relief from the overwhelming pain and passion of it all...Thank you for working with me and my family to bring to life one more story inside Appalachia. Who knows but someone will listen and be encouraged to share yet another story.”

— Susie Green, speaking of *Inside Appalachia*, a weekly radio show created by West Virginia Public Broadcasting that tells the stories of the region's people, history, food, music, and culture



A decade of impact: Findings from Wilder Research

Beyond the numbers of events and participants, how *else* can the impact of folk arts and cultures be measured? Guided by the insight of MACP staff and those closest to the work – the FAC partner organizations – Wilder Research analyzed grantee reports, foundational MACP documents, photographs, and quantitative data to identify the impact of the Folk Arts & Cultures program.

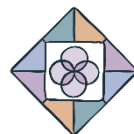
This research found that, through MACP funding, the work of FAC partners:



Honors, sustains, and grows traditions



Creates, connects, and sustains community



Embodies and fosters belonging and justice

The following pages provide an in-depth description of each impact area, along with stories and examples from FAC partners that illustrate these impacts.

“I see the power in these small objects and the size of the ideas they represent – I see how small an idea can be and how big its impact can be.”

– FAC partner



Left photo: 2022 Folk and Traditional Arts Community Projects grantee Kulu Mele artists demonstrating West African dance at the Baltimore Rhythm Festival. Photo by Ira Bond, courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts.

Right photo: Blacksmith Lars Mørch of Denmark traveled to the US in 2023 to teach his craft. Photo courtesy of the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County.

The Ripple Effects of MACP's Folk Arts & Cultures Grantee Partners

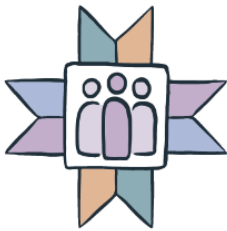
Partners create impact on the levels of:

- + Individuals
- + Organizations
- + Communities
- + Sectors/
Ecosystems



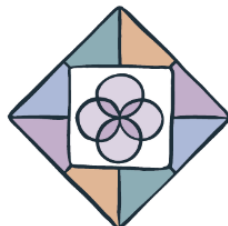
Honors, sustains, and grows traditions

- + Creating opportunities to share about, deepen practices of, and develop an appreciation for folk arts and cultures
- + Cultivating intergenerational connections
- + Financially sustaining individuals and organizations
- + Balancing tradition with innovation
- + Preserving the sacred
- + Strengthening the ecosystem of folk arts and cultures



Creates, connects, and sustains communities

- + Empowering, nourishing, and inspiring people
- + Creating safe spaces for people to come together
- + Cultivating communities of practitioners



Embodies and fosters belonging and justice

- + Increasing access to participation
- + Celebrating a diversity of traditions



Honors, sustains, and grows traditions

The rich tapestry of FAC partner programs and approaches keeps traditions alive. These varied efforts share a common thread of intergenerational relationships, which enable the celebration, adaptation, and livelihood of traditions. The following section illustrates the ways FAC partners foster traditions.

CULTIVATING INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS TO ENRICH INDIVIDUALS AND CONTINUE THE PRACTICE OF TRADITION ACROSS GENERATIONS

- By asking experienced artisans and knowledge bearers – who are often Elders – to share their traditions, wisdom, and histories, FAC partners create opportunities to honor Elders and reconnect them with community.
- Mutual learning and reciprocal growth happens through intergenerational relationships built through FAC partner programming; people of all ages are fortified and build their skills and knowledge.
- Intergenerational sharing around a tradition inspires a new generation of folk arts practitioners or enthusiasts, which helps keep traditions alive.

“Intergenerational transfer can happen in all directions...It's an opportunity for collective joy.”

– FAC partner



Photo taken in Athens, Ohio, by Joel Prince and Ahmed Hamed, courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: JOHN C. CAMPBELL FOLK SCHOOL – TRADITIONAL CRAFT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Through intensive, month-long sessions, John C. Campbell’s Mentorship Program connects emerging artists with experienced Appalachian artisans. Each year, small groups of students spend concentrated time with their peers and master artisans to build their skills and knowledge in Appalachian traditions, including blacksmithing, music, dance, weaving, and timber framing. Both mentees and mentor artists experience the impact of the program on their own practice and the livelihood of Appalachian traditions.

“The Traditional Craft Mentorship Program was an incredibly rare and awesome experience. I will be forever grateful to the John C. Campbell Folk School, and its supporters, for the truly transformative opportunity to study so intimately with the masters of my craft.”

- Kadey Ambrose, Basketry mentee

“These students were and are the future of craft. These two sessions were just the tip of the iceberg as far as what this program will be able to do for the future of traditional craft. I watched this program open doors, and show people things they never thought were possible. In just four weeks, this program changed the trajectory of people’s lives.”

- Elizabeth Belz, Blacksmith and Creative Catalyst Fellow 2020-2021



A student in Delia Fian Turner’s basketry class, *Baskets of the Woods*, shows off their finished basket backpack. Photo courtesy of John C. Campbell Folk School.

FINANCIALLY SUSTAINING THE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO KEEP TRADITIONS ALIVE

- Through stipends, fellowships, scholarships, and the promotion of artists' work, FAC partners provide a livelihood to artisans and knowledge bearers so they can continue to practice and hone their craft.
- FAC partners provide paid apprenticeships and mentorships that enable emerging artists with the time and resources to learn a craft; these apprentices share their new skills and knowledge with others, inspiring new people to take up the tradition.
- FAC partners subgrant to community organizations that host community events, performances, classes, and other programs that are integral to place-based traditions – as well as sustaining important community institutions vital to maintaining traditions.

“Students who have worked with us have gone on to professional careers in public folklore, bringing with them an appreciation for and expertise in Nordic folk arts. Artists who have worked with us have made connections at our symposiums and received offers for commissions and for teaching jobs.”

– University of Wisconsin–Madison staff member, FAC partner



Artist Nathan Bush holding his partially finished wild potato vine design on copper. Cherokee, NC. Photo by Jesse Barber, courtesy of South Arts.

BALANCING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

- FAC partners honor tradition while allowing space for adaptation and invention – which invites new generations into the tradition and encourages them to make it their own.
- Partly due to needed adaptations to the COVID-19 pandemic, partners leverage technology – through virtual workshops, online programs, and digital storytelling – to build broader interest in traditions, deepen a practice, and expand their organizational reach.
- FAC partners inspire “everyday practitioners” by creating classes and events that appeal to a wide range of skill levels. Casual practitioners are vital to keeping traditions alive in homes, families, and communities.

PRESERVING THE SACRED

- FAC partners produce podcasts, videos, documentaries, photo series, and other creative formats to preserve and disseminate the stories and traditions important to communities.
- Through grassroots preservation efforts, FAC partners build the capacity of communities to build and restore structures that embody their unique traditions and histories. Ultimately, these preservation efforts connect a broad base of people with the traditions and histories of their community, unite community members, and provide tools for future preservation of beloved assets.
- Partners build and contribute to online databases that preserve and provide access to artists, art, stories, photos, and artifacts that sustain traditions – allowing these traditions (and knowledge bearers) to live on and be accessed by a wider audience.



Sacred fresco-style painting entitled "Suffer The Little Children" by Benjamin F. Long IV, dated July 2006, in the E. H. Sloop Chapel in Crossnore, NC. Photo by Ted Olson, courtesy of Partners for Sacred Places.



Students of University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Folk Artist-in-Residence program axing out spoon blanks from basswood billets during Liesl Chatman's Spoon Carving Club. Photo by Anna Rue, courtesy of University of Wisconsin–Madison.

STRENGTHENING THE ECOSYSTEM OF FOLK ARTS AND CULTURES

- Through site visits, workshops, archival efforts, and story collecting, FAC partners forge relationships with artists and knowledge bearers. This in turn increases awareness and appreciation of these individuals and their craft, and connects programs with new instructors, mentors, and enthusiasts.
- FAC partners bolster communities of practitioners and folk arts enthusiasts through instructor retreats, convenings of the field, and gatherings that include crafters of all levels of experience.
- Through partnerships with and outreach to a broad array of organizations, FAC partners connect and sustain the field of folk arts and cultures.
- FAC partners organize and present at national and regional conferences, strengthening the sector through network-building, information sharing, collaborative events, and co-hosting artisans.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: ARROWMONT SCHOOL OF ARTS AND CRAFTS – ARTREACH-ON-THE-ROAD

Through Arrowmont’s ArtReach-on-the-Road program, local artists bring Appalachian crafts, history, and culture to 4th-12th grade classes in rural Central Appalachia. By engaging young people in these practices, ArtReach preserves traditions and creates a new generation of practitioners. It also introduces the opportunity for kids to be creative and engage in “making,” which is important beyond the specific tradition or art form.

In a letter to the editor included in LaFollette Press, the head of the Campbell County Arts Coalition wrote:

“Dear Instructors and Directors of the ArtReach Program: From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I have an eleven-year-old origami master. She is meticulous and diligent, and loves every aspect of creating. On Friday, she was able to participate in a silver working class through your outreach program. Silver working?! Amazing. It was apparently the most wonderful thing that has happened to her all year. I am wearing the bracelet she made on my wrist, and it is lovely, but the excitement and range of possibilities that you opened the door for with our daughter is - as the commercial says: priceless. She felt so incredibly lucky to be a part of your program. If you ever question whether there is an impact from what you do in this program, please refer back to this message.”



Students and instructor, Susan Parry, in a wire wrapping bead class at ArtReach on the Road in Morristown, TN, in 2019. Photo courtesy of Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts.



Creates, connects, and sustains community

FAC partners generate a positive feedback loop between the practice of folk arts and community building. The work of partners brings healing, togetherness, and a collective sense of pride in tradition. By connecting people through the practice of folk arts and cultures, FAC partners build and sustain community – which in turn strengthens the practice of those traditions.

EMPOWERING, NOURISHING, AND INSPIRING INDIVIDUALS

- Through workshops, classes, festivals, and other programming, FAC partners create opportunities for individuals to experience a tradition or learn a skill, providing enjoyment and inspiration to participants.
- Coming together to practice traditions with others increases one's connection to community and a broader network of practitioners.
- Learning about a tradition and how it links to the history of one's community or family shifts participants' perspectives to a community mindset.
- FAC partners provide avenues for personal growth through programming, exposing participants to an array of people who may think and live differently than themselves.
- Taken together, folk arts and cultures empower, nourish, ground, and inspire individuals, and individual well-being feeds community well-being.

"The practice of engaging in art and music with other people helps you to learn about those around you. It's a deep connection and way of life."

- FAC partner



Photo taken in Athens, Ohio, by Joel Prince and Ahmed Hamed, courtesy of Mid Atlantic Arts.

"It is heartwarming to see firsthand the great relationships that develop through the learning of handcraft. It creates a community of folks with a desire to share in a unique experience."

- FAC partner

CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER

- By bringing individuals together around a tradition, FAC partners create a safe space for community members to come together to learn and play. This inspires shared feelings of safety, healing, and joy among participants.
- By creating a safe space for connection around a tradition, a "third space," folk arts bring people together from different generations, political beliefs, and backgrounds. FAC partners create welcoming environments for all people to connect, explore, and create through folk arts.
- The communal practice of a tradition creates and sustains community. When people interact in ways that feel new or novel, or share experiences that can only happen in that space, they build a unique relationship with one another.



St. Lucia Procession. Photo by Zoe Vayer, courtesy of the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTITIONERS THAT SUSTAIN TRADITION

- By bringing together people of various skill levels around a common tradition, FAC partners foster inclusive communities.
- FAC partners connect experienced artisans and knowledge bearers through networking, skill-development, and relationship building. In turn, they learn from one another and deepen their practice.

“Pottery tells a story. It's the language of a community.”

– FAC partner



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: NORTH HOUSE FOLK SCHOOL – INSTRUCTOR RETREAT

Supported by MACP funding, North House’s annual Instructor Retreat deepens connections between artist instructors and strengthens North House’s ties with the artisan community. Over several days, 60+ artists come together for conversation, professional development, and hands-on learning opportunities. As one participating instructor shared:

“This event is unique. Nowhere else that I teach has a time set aside for instructors to come together and learn from each other. And in general, professional development for independent craft instructors is virtually non-existent, unless you make a significant effort to seek it out on your own. And, when it happens, it's amazing...just hanging out with people who 100% understand what I'm trying to do with my life, exchanging ideas and thoughts and laughing, refuels my soul like nothing else.”



Opening circle, 2023
Instructor Retreat. Photo
courtesy of North House
Folk School.



Embodies and fosters belonging and justice

As an emerging area of impact, FAC partners continue to align their work with a deepened commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This section outlines the impacts of strategies to increase the accessibility of FAC partner work and to uplift a diversity of traditions present in the regions and communities they engage.

Through discussions at partner convenings and information in grant reports, FAC partners consistently recognize folk arts and cultures as a transformative tool for justice. By bringing people together, sharing stories, celebrating traditions, and supporting the diversity of practices in their communities, FAC partners continue to foster both belonging and justice in their communities and look to deepen this impact in the years to come.

INCREASING ACCESS TO PARTICIPATION

- By providing no cost or low cost programming and instrument rental, FAC partners allow more people to experience and develop skills in folk arts.
- FAC partners keep apprenticeships and fellowships accessible to a variety of participants – not just those who can afford it on their own – by providing room and board to artists and general support of their basic needs.
- The creation of virtual, hybrid, and touring craft workshops and demonstrations expands the reach of FAC partners to schools and organizations they could not reach prior to receiving MACP funding due to geographic and financial barriers.



Students of the Pick & Bow Mountain Music Education Program in Kentucky, which offers free music lessons and low-cost instrument rental to K-12 students. Photo courtesy of South Arts.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: SAKSANICA, PIONEER PBS

In 2022, Pioneer PBS produced *Saksanica*, a 30-minute documentary tracing the dress-making traditions of Lakota and Dakota communities in the region. Pioneer PBS contracted with Diné/Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota producer Leya Hale to create the documentary. The station also facilitated a mentoring relationship between Hale and Native videographer/editor at Pioneer PBS, Tanner Peterson (who has family ties to the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota and is a citizen of Upper Sioux Community/Pezihutazizi Oyate). *Saksanica* premiered at the Omníčiye Tipi community center at the Sisseton Wahpeton College in Sisseton, South Dakota, and was shown at various screenings throughout the Upper Midwest.

“The stories Pioneer PBS produces lift up the voices of Dakota people and are truly immeasurable. For so long, the first people of this land have been invisible in mainstream society. These stories provide opportunities to learn of our beautiful ways of being. Our arts, culture, and the way that we see the world has value in this contemporary world. When we are seen, heard, and appreciated, it nurtures a sense of belonging that I want my grandchildren to experience.”

– Teresa R. Peterson, Upper Sioux Community member and author



Photo from the documentary, *Saksanica*. Photo by Tanner Peterson, courtesy of Pioneer PBS.

CELEBRATING A DIVERSITY OF TRADITIONS

- Through programming and collaboration with folk artists representing a variety of traditions in their communities, FAC partners uplift the cultures and traditions of under-resourced communities.
- Cross-cultural programming provides opportunities for people to learn about the traditions that are present in their communities and connect with individuals of different cultures and backgrounds. This helps individuals to grow, respect traditions different from their own, and work across cultures.
- FAC partners forge partnerships with organizations representing traditions that receive less philanthropic support. These partnerships support the infrastructure of folk arts and traditions that are less likely to be supported by philanthropic dollars – including the traditions of newer immigrant groups, BIPOC communities, and other marginalized populations at risk of losing cultural practices. Through this kind of collaboration, funded groups are able to share financial benefits, space, and opportunities across diverse folk arts and cultural communities.
- By making connections between diverse individuals, cultures, and traditions through a common medium or art form, partners use folk arts to help all people in their community feel they belong.

“Basket making is important to Native communities, African communities, Scottish-Irish communities... All [of these communities] adapted the tradition to different materials.”

– FAC partner



LOOKING AHEAD

MACP’s Vision for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice states that, “justice is a transformative practice that relies on the entire community to respond to past and current harm when it occurs in society” (from the Center for the Study of Social Policy). The MACP Folk Arts & Cultures program can continue to foster justice and belonging in coming years by:

- **Listening to and engaging with** a diverse community of culture bearers that represent the mix of traditions present in its two grantmaking regions, together exploring what is needed for their traditions to thrive;
- **Connecting** with organizations representing traditions that receive less philanthropic support, especially those supporting communities at risk of losing their arts or cultural practices; and,
- Continuously **reflecting** on ways to align grantmaking with a renewed commitment to the DEIJ Vision.



Descriptions of FAC partners: 2016-2024

The full body of work led by these MACP Folk Arts & Cultures partners is too great to describe in detail here. Please visit each one of them online or in person to get to know them better!

UPPER MIDWEST

[The American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York, NY](#)

Mission: *ASF is committed to promoting educational, cultural and professional exchange between the United States and the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.* **Key program area:** Scandinavian Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions grants to organizations and individuals.

[American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis, MN](#)

Mission: *A gathering place for all people to explore diverse experiences of migration, identity, belonging and the environment through arts and culture, informed by enduring links to Sweden.* **Key program areas:** classes and workshops; community events; school partnerships; exhibitions.

[Arts Midwest, Minneapolis, MN](#)

Mission: *To build unprecedented opportunity across the Midwest by advancing creativity.* **Key program areas:** Midwest Culture Bearers Award; folk arts and cultures storytelling; artist residencies/tours.

[Finnish American Heritage Center \(supported via Finlandia Foundation National\), Hancock, MI](#)

Mission: *Serves as the hub of Finnish-American life for Hancock, the region and the broader North American Finnish community.* **Key program areas:** classes and workshops through the Finnish American Folk School; community events; school partnerships.

[Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County, Moorhead, MN](#)

Mission: *To collect, preserve, interpret, and share the history and culture of Clay County, Minnesota. In short, we tell local stories.* **Key program areas:** artist apprenticeships, exchanges, and programming through the Viking Connection.

[North House Folk School, Grand Marais, MN](#)

Mission: *To enrich lives and build community by teaching traditional northern crafts in a student-centered learning environment that inspires the hands, the heart and the mind.* **Key program areas:** classes and workshops; Artisan Development Program and internships; annual instructor retreat; artist residencies.

[Pioneer PBS, Granite Falls, MN](#)

Mission: *Fosters civil discourse and improved quality of life through thought-provoking and inspiring media productions that connect people to rural stories and shared values.* **Key program areas:** short- and long-form documentaries on Nordic folk and Native arts and cultures; curriculum for educators; screenings and in-person events; community partnerships.

University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI

Mission: *To provide a learning environment in which faculty, staff and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of this and future generations and improve the quality of life for all.* **Key program areas:** Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest: community outreach and fieldwork; documentation; artist residencies; scholarship, professional development, and network-building.

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, IA

Mission: *Building community and creating experiences inspired by Norwegian American stories and folk art.* **Key program areas:** classes and workshops; artist fellowships; partnerships with Luther College and local schools.

CENTRAL APPALACHIA

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN

Mission: *Enriching lives through art and craft.* **Key program areas:** educational programming for youth and adults; residencies and fellowships for artisans; art administrator internship program for BIPOC students; summer educational gatherings for teachers; traveling in-person and virtual art programs and outreach for K-12 students.

Berea College, Berea, KY

Mission: *The first interracial and co-educational college in the South, Berea offers academic breadth, a work program, and unmatched support for its highly diverse population of students to belong, thrive, and succeed. It admits students of limited means but unlimited potential and does not charge tuition.* **Key program areas:** student craft product design and development program, outreach with K-12 schools and communities, and an artist fellowship program; folklore courses and initiatives; Appalachian Fund and Grow Appalachia grant programs; traditional music instruction, performances, tours, music workshops, and traditional instrument purchases and repairs; digital preservation and archival efforts.

John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC

Mission: *Transforms lives and brings people together in a nurturing environment for experiences in learning and community life that spark self-discovery.* **Key program areas:** classes, work-study opportunities, and artist residencies in folk arts and cultures of Central Appalachia; local community programming and education through an off-campus Community Lab location, a Mobile Outreach program, and Pop-Up Classes.

Mid Atlantic Arts, Baltimore, MD

Mission: *Nurtures and funds the creation and presentation of diverse artistic expression and connects people to meaningful arts experiences within our region (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, and West Virginia) and beyond.* **Key program areas:** program and institutional support of local cultural venues; awareness building and dissemination of artistic skill through Folk and Traditional Arts Experiences grants; fellowship programs.

[South Arts, Inc., Atlanta, GA](#)

Mission: *Advances Southern vitality through the arts.* **Key program areas:** In These Mountains grant program supports the handcraft/material culture, music, and foodways of Appalachians through: mentor/apprentice team; folk arts education; support for students pursuing advanced degrees in ITM-aligned studies; cohort program for folk arts instructors and emerging artists; artist fellowships; grant opportunities for infrastructure and programming; and fieldwork/documentation by graduate students and community scholars.

[West Virginia Public Broadcasting Foundation, Charleston, WV](#)

Mission: *To educate, inform, and inspire our residents by telling West Virginia’s story.* **Key program areas:** public television and radio state network serving the state of West Virginia; training and development of emerging folkways reporters; capacity building around local storytelling across the Appalachia region; K-12 and adult educational content generation around Appalachian arts and culture.

MULTI-REGION GRANTEES

[Partners for Sacred Places, Philadelphia, PA](#)

Mission: *The only national, non-sectarian, nonprofit organization focused on building the capacity of congregations of historic sacred places to better serve their communities as anchor institutions, nurturing transformation, and shaping vibrant, creative communities.* **Key program areas:** identifying culturally significant historic sacred places in Central Appalachia and the Upper Midwest; grants, support, and training programs for local organizations to use their heritage to grow connections to friends and neighbors and preserve their sacred places.

[Southwest Folklife Alliance, Tucson, AZ](#)

Mission: *We build more equitable and vibrant communities by celebrating the everyday expressions of culture, heritage, and diversity rooted in the Greater Southwest and U.S. Mexico Border Corridor. Nationally, we amplify models and methods of meaningful cultural work that center traditional knowledge, and collaboration.* **Key program areas:** Support to the National Folklife Network.



Photos of FAC grantee partners at their spring 2024 convening in Minneapolis, MN. Photos taken by Rebecca Slater.

Methods

STUDY DESIGN

In summer 2023, MACP’s Folk Arts & Cultures program at Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies partnered with Wilder Research to learn about the impact of its grant program. Grantee partner voice, trust, and flexibility are central to MACP’s approach to capturing the impact of its work in folk arts and cultures. Through annual reports and touch-points with FAC staff, grantee partners share the numbers, pictures, stories, and other artifacts that partners feel can best capture their work and impact. This evaluative approach – grounded in partner voice and using a mix of both stories and numbers – also guided Wilder’s design for this study and resulting report. These methods included:

Document review: Wilder analyzed FAC program documents, partner convening summaries, and MACP’s DEIJ-related work. Wilder then generated recommendations for engaging partners around measuring impact through future convenings in 2023-2024. These recommendations were rooted in the FAC program Vision Statement, and refined by FAC partner input on how they envision and see the impact of their work.

Convening discussions and activities: Wilder designed a series of activities and discussions for FAC partners to engage with around measuring, capturing, and communicating the impact of their work. Wilder facilitated these activities at a two-part virtual convening in fall 2023 and a two-day in-person convening in spring 2024. Representatives from all 15 grantee partner organizations funded in 2023-2024 attended both convenings. Through small group discussions, a show-and-tell activity, impact mapping, and an inventory of evaluative measures used by each grantee partner, Wilder collected partner input and combined these findings with results from the document review to identify three main impact areas. These data- and partner-driven impact areas were used in the analysis of partner reports and this resulting impact report.

Analysis of FAC partner reports: Guided by the impact areas identified through the document review and convening activities, Wilder Research conducted a systematic analysis of all available grantee partner reports from 2016-2024. This included the qualitative coding of more than 115 reports and supplemental documents, along with hundreds of photos. See table A1 below for the coding frequencies across the main themes of the report.

A1. Frequency of themes coded in qualitative analysis of FAC grantee partner reports

| Main theme | Number of times each theme was coded | Number of partners to which the theme was coded (N=17) |
|--|---|---|
| Honors, sustains, and grows traditions | 457 | 17 |
| Creates, connects, and sustains community | 237 | 17 |
| Embodies and fosters belonging and justice | 148 | 14 |
| *Intergenerational transfer of tradition | 129 | 16 |

*Note. While intergenerational transfer of tradition was not identified as a main impact area – but rather as a key mechanism by which these impact areas are achieved – Wilder Research included intergenerational transfer as its own code during the qualitative analysis given its importance to the FAC team and grantee partners.

Analysis of FAC partner reports, cont'd: Through this analysis, additional depth, nuance, examples, and mechanisms of impact were collected and synthesized. Quotes from FAC partners included in this report came from the spring 2024 convening, year-end partner reports, or interim partner reports.

Partner data request: At the spring 2024 partner convening, partner organizations shared how they capture and communicate their impact, the meaningfulness of each measure, and the burden associated with collecting each measure. Using this partner feedback, Wilder worked with the FAC program team to collect data for standardized measures across partners in July 2024.

LIMITATIONS

Constraints of using grantee partner annual reports for evaluative purposes: While rich in stories and examples of impact, FAC partner annual reports were created for grant monitoring purposes rather than with an explicit evaluative purpose in mind. In addition, grantee partners provided different levels of detail and types of data in response to annual report questions. MACP also provided an abbreviated report format for FAC partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the quantity of reporting and data received from partners. Therefore, annual reports may not capture the full breadth of impacts generated by FAC partners.

Undercounts of FAC partner work: In addition, the partner data request most likely undercounts the work of FAC partners. While Wilder Research reviewed FAC partner reports to compile data related to each measure, researchers may have missed some data points. In addition, given that the data request came up to eight years after the inception of FAC partner grants (and these measures were not asked for at the beginning of the grant), partners did their best to include as much data as possible, but may be missing some numbers.

Narrowed timeframe on information regarding MACP's investment in folk arts and cultures: In detailing MACP's investment in folk arts and cultures, this report provides information on grants made from November 2016 through May 2024. While some folk arts and cultures focused grants were made prior to November 2016, this time frame was chosen because November 2016 marks when MACP first made grants based upon the approved Folk Arts & Cultures strategy focus. Note that this time frame does not correlate exactly to the quantitative data in this report as the time frame represents grant start dates. In addition, the results of grants provided to FAC partners after May 2024 are not captured here.

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Fiestas de la calle San Sebastián, Viejo San Juan, 2024. Photo by Ricardo Alcaraz, courtesy of Southwest Folklife Alliance.

Report authors (Wilder Research)

Jackie Aman
Kerry Walsh
Amanda Eggers
Briellen Griffin
Maria Robinson
Ryan Ander-Evans

Design and graphics

Maureen McGovern
Meagan Hein, Arlene Birt, Lisa Blakeborough, Karen Lanthier, and the Background Stories team
Evan Roberts, Sara Lepasti, Jamie Millard, Leeanne Huber, and the MACP Communications team

MACP staff guidance and review

Nina Clark
Jayson Smart
Cheryl T. Schiele
Jacob Sorrells
Carson Faust
Pam Nippolt
Heidi M. Grandstrand
Elizabeth Hutchinson Kruger
Kurian Thomas

Additional Wilder Research staff

Anna Alba
Jen Collins
Marilyn Conrad
Kristin Dillon
Isha Gadkari
Kyla Goux
Thalia Hall
Rachel Fields
Naw-Amelia Kacher
Heather Loch
Ananya Matewos
Shannon McLevish
Julia Miller
Sophak Mom
Christina Muñoz-Piñon
Niyati Panchal
Dan Swanson
Jessica Tokunaga
Jacqueline Zhang

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Left photo. Jouhikko builders. Photo courtesy of Finlandia Foundation National.

Right photo. Folk Art students and Vesterheim staff enjoy Kaffeepause in Vesterheim Folk Art School's Bruening Welcome Center. Photo courtesy of the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum.

