Strategic Plan

2021-2025 Strategy, Operations, and Implementation

January 2021

T.L.L. TEMPLE FOUNDATION
—— EST 1962 ——
BUILDING A THRIVING DEEP EAST TEXAS

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Grounding for our 2020 Strategic Plan

- The foundation has historically been a general purpose responsive grantmaker operating in six broad program areas: education, economic opportunity, health, human services, arts and culture, and conservation.

- In 2016, the foundation adopted a strategic plan with a few specified areas of strategic focus. Our experience implementing that plan convinced us that we can continue to grow our impact by focusing more proactively and strategically on key areas of need in our communities.

- For our 2020 strategic plan, the foundation identified a few highly strategic areas in which we will be more proactive and take on an active leadership role.

- Even as we go deeper on areas of strategic focus, we will maintain our commitment to funding direct service grantmaking, long-term areas of interest, and solutions we know work and that have impact.

- We will also, in the near-term, continue to respond to regional challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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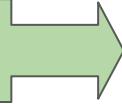
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The Foundation's Mission and Beliefs

Mission

The T.L.L Temple Foundation works alongside rural communities to build a thriving East Texas and to alleviate poverty, creating access and opportunity for all.

Beliefs

- We believe in the inherent dignity–the value and worth–of each individual.
- We work toward equitable outcomes for all people.
- We recognize and value diverse perspectives.
- We believe in the importance of being a good neighbor and giving back to communities in our region.
- We will act ethically and with integrity.
- We value learning and are committed to utilizing available knowledge and to developing new knowledge.
- We are committed to partnering with others to advance shared goals, and we rely on strong nonprofit partners to fulfill our mission.
- Rural people and rural places are important to us. We recognize the challenges of rural isolation and are committed to bringing resources to rural communities in East Texas

Geographic Focus

- The foundation is focused on impacting rural communities in 24 counties:

  - East Texas: Anderson, Angelina, Bowie, Cass, Cherokee, Hardin, Harris, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Panola, Polk, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler

  - Arkansas: Miller County

- We appreciate the unique strengths, challenges, and diversity of the communities we serve. Our team regularly visits communities across the region to form personal relationships and understand local context and priorities.

- Most of the grants we make are to organizations within our rural counties. We do occasionally support organizations based in Houston or outside our area of geographic focus when there is a direct benefit to residents of our rural counties.

Population Served

Overall Population

- The 24 counties we serve are home to 5.7 million people—4.5 million in Harris County alone.

- Compared to the rest of Texas and the U.S., residents of our 24 counties (not counting Houston) skew older, are more likely to face poverty, are less likely to be Hispanic or immigrants, and on average have lower health and educational outcomes.

- Nearly all our population growth is projected to be in the Hispanic population, which skews younger than the overall population.

Our Focus

- We primarily focus on helping residents of our rural communities address their most pressing challenges.

- We also place an emphasis in our work on efforts that serve youth and families with children as the future of our thriving region.

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Context on our Service Area

In 2016, when the foundation first articulated its mission, we knew access to resources and opportunities was important. We also had a sense for the role poverty played. What we know now is that poverty expresses itself across education, economic opportunity, health, and human services. Even though we have these issues as program areas, we are not focused upon discrete populations that face a single challenge. Residents of our mostly rural service area confront multiple challenges every day, and those challenges are often intergenerational.

Poverty is present across our entire service area. Remoteness and proximity to resources (which tend to be located in our largest communities such as Jasper, Lufkin, Nacogdoches, Jacksonville, Beaumont, or Texarkana) play a role in how services are delivered and how interventions are designed. Each community or county has assets to build upon and some have more "anchor" institutions - like a hospital, a college, or a strong business community. There is good news, and there are challenges in all of the issue areas and across all of the geographies and populations that interest the foundation.

Poverty Data*

- Poverty is widespread across the region, with rates higher than state and national averages

    - 17.4% of East Texas residents live in poverty vs. 13.6% in TX and in the Southern US

    - 27.3% of East Texas children live below the poverty line with counties ranging from 17% to 40.8%

- Unemployment overall is 4.7% in DETCOG (TX=3.5%) and is concentrated in some ages and places

- Poverty is interlinked with health, housing, education and safety; is often multi-generational; and can be very difficult to address

- COVID-19 has increased unemployment and exacerbated poverty and issues impacted by poverty such as food insecurity

Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau (2019) Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps 2020. www.countyhealthrankings.org, Texas Workforce Commission

*All statistics are for periods prior to COVID-19.

General Demographics (1 of 2)

		Data	Key Trends/Facts
Overall	● **Total** ● **W/O Harris County**	● **5.7M** ● **1.2M**	● Counties along I-69/US-59 growing population, other counties holding or losing population ● Most (w/o Harris County) live in rural areas, including in Nacogdoches and Angelina which are micropolitans
Age	● **0-18** ● **18-24** ● **25-65** ● **65+**	● **26%** ● **10%** ● **53%** ● **11%**	● Similar to Texas averages ● Skews older w/o Harris County
Race/ Ethnicity	● **White** ● **Latinx/Hispanic** ● **African-American** ● **Native** ● **Other**	● **38%** ● **36%** ● **19%** ● **<1%** ● **7%**	● Skews white vs Texas w/o Harris County ● White population is largely flat (but declining as an overall percentage) ● Majority of current and projected growth driven by Hispanic population

Source(s): American Community Survey

		Data*	Key Trends/Facts
Income/ Poverty	• **<$25K** • **$25-$75K** • **$75-200K** • **$200K+**	• **30.7% (TX=19.8%)** • **43.6% (TX=39.5%)** • **24.0% (TX=33.6%)** • **1.7% (TX=10.1%)** **W/O Harris County**	• From 2010-2018, number of people in poverty increased 16% but poverty rates declined slightly in 16 of 22 counties • % on SNAP up in 17 of 22 counties • Skews toward lower wage jobs and higher un/underemployment vs. TX
Education Level (25 & Older)	• **< HS** • **HS** • **Some college** • **Associates** • **Bachelors** • **Post-Grad**	• **11.2%** • **37.8%** • **24.0%** • **6.6%** • **10.2%** • **4.5%** **W/O Harris County**	• High school completion is close to, but slightly below state average • 6% below TX average for students enrolling directly into higher education from HS • 25.3% of Texans >25 have a higher education degree vs. 21.5% for service area

*All statistics are for periods prior to COVID-19.

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Program Area Introduction and Context

- The foundation has pursued six primary areas of programmatic activity: Education, Economic Opportunity, Health, Human Services, Arts and Culture, and Conservation. We remain committed to and are continuing all of these program areas.

- Within each program area, we set specific objectives, which were prioritized into three categories:

  - **Lead:** We will play a leadership role, conduct proactive grantmaking, launch initiatives, and use multiple philanthropic tools to pursue impact.

  - **Support:** We will speak to this as a priority and actively make grants.

  - **Respond:** We will consider submitted proposals for quality and alignment.

- We plan to "live our way into the strategy" - meaning we will get to work, learn along the way, and adapt the strategy over time to improve outcomes.

Impact of COVID-19 on our Strategy

- As we developed the strategy, we considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated health, poverty, and basic needs issues across our region; challenged our health systems; and disrupted education.

- Responding to the pandemic has required significant effort from--and put additional stress on--the community and nonprofit leaders with whom we work as implementation partners.

- In response to the pandemic, the foundation launched crisis response and recovery grant programs focused on food insecurity, utility and rent assistance, facility modification, and organizational capacity to address COVID-19.

- The foundation will continue to monitor conditions in our region and will focus on food and basic needs and for opportunities to address the impact of COVID-19 within our health, economic opportunity, and education program areas.

Philanthropic Roles

At the center of the foundation's work is our role as a grant maker. The foundation also plays a number of other roles to advance our goals, particularly in those areas where the foundation has committed to asserting leadership and being more proactive. These roles include:

- *Catalyst*: Launch philanthropic initiatives and programs.

- *Capacity Builder*: Help grantees and partners improve their effectiveness and sustainability by providing access to technical assistance and training, funding infrastructure and capacity improvements, and building the fields within which our grantees work (e.g. secure other funding, improve the state of knowledge and practice, form alliances, etc.).

- *Convener*: Bring together grantees and partners to share best practices and form partnerships.

- *Educator*: Commision and share research and data on issues, solutions, and challenges.

- *Advocate*: Seek policy and systems change through influencing, educating, and funding advocacy.

Education Program Area Strategy

Goal

All students in the service area have access to a high quality education—from early grades through college completion—that prepares them for high wage, high demand jobs in the region.

Objectives

- **Early Literacy and Numeracy:** All East Texas students have access to high quality Pre-K and early grade programs that enable them to meet or exceed third grade education standards in reading and mathematics.

- **Post-Secondary Success and Workforce Development:** All 16-24 year old rural East Texas residents earn a credential with labor market value that contributes to building a thriving East Texas.

- **Educational Supports:** Positive education outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Population Focus

All students in the service area with a focus on Pre-K to 3rd graders, 16-24 year-olds, students from low-income families, minorities, special populations (e.g. ELL students), and students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

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Early Literacy and Numeracy

Objective: All East Texas students have access to high quality Pre-K and early grade programs that enable them to meet or exceed third grade education standards in reading and mathematics.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Instructional Effectiveness:** Strengthen the capacity of Pre-K and elementary schools to deliver high quality instruction that increases third grade early literacy and numeracy.
    - Redesign teacher prep programs to effectively teach evidence-based early literacy and numeracy.
    - Train in-service teachers on evidence-based strategies to teach literacy and numeracy.
    - Support training in evidenced-based early literacy and numeracy practices for school district and college leaders.

- **Quality Programs**: Increase student access to high quality full-day Pre-K and early grade programs with special attention to early literacy and numeracy.
    - Expand high-quality full-day Pre-K in districts.
    - Develop and scale high-quality full-day Pre-K and early grade models, emphasizing science of reading and numeracy.
    - Explore and fund evidence-based literacy and numeracy models.
    - Support quality programs that increase kindergarten readiness.

Objective: All 16-24 year old rural East Texas residents earn a credential with labor market value that contributes to building a thriving East Texas.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Student Success:** Advance rural education models and programs that help students complete postsecondary degrees and credentials that lead to high demand, high wage careers.
  - Ensure rural students, particularly historically underrepresented groups, are prepared for college and career success.
  - Develop effective pathway models to help rural students, particularly historically underrepresented groups, gain degrees or credentials that lead to high demand, high wage jobs.

- **Education System Redesign and Alignment**: Strengthen and better align educational institutions to improve student outcomes.
  - Strengthen and scale guided pathways to postsecondary success.
  - Align K-16 math pathways for postsecondary success.
  - Connect schools and/or districts to vetted technical assistance providers that help them address systemic barriers to school improvement with an emphasis on equitable student outcomes.

Educational Supports

Objective: Positive education outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "respond" area that the foundation will pursue primarily through making grants in topics that might include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting out-of-school time programs.

- Improving teacher quality.

- Providing curriculum supports.

Economic Opportunity Program Strategy

Goal
Rural communities in the service area will be sustainable, thriving, and offer economic opportunities to residents.

Objectives

- **Broadband Access:** Broadband connectivity is improved, propelling economic opportunity and building thriving rural East Texas communities.

- **Economic Opportunity Supports:** Positive economic outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Population Focus
All residents in the service area with a focus on those who need access to broadband to improve education, economic opportunity, health, and human services outcomes.

Broadband Access

Objective: Broadband connectivity is improved, propelling economic opportunity and building thriving rural East Texas communities.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Leverage Capacity:** Support rural communities to access local, state, and federal resources to improve broadband connectivity.
  - Strengthen regional capacity to secure the resources to develop broadband infrastructure at scale across East Texas.

- **Community Support:** Enable partners to provide services that improve rural communities' capacity to plan, develop, and improve broadband infrastructure and increase connectivity.
  - Engage rural communities in strategic planning to improve broadband access and usage.
  - Strengthen locally-led efforts to improve broadband access and usage across rural East Texas.

- **Advocacy:** Fund partners to provide data, studies, and information for legislative and agency action to improve rural East Texas broadband connectivity.
  - Invest in data to better understand availability, usage, and benefits of broadband.
  - Provide key decision makers with information and ideas to improve broadband access.

Economic Opportunity Supports

Objective: Positive economic opportunity outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "respond" area that the foundation will pursue through making grants in topics that might include, but are not limited to:

- Developing the workforce.

- Improving housing availability and affordability.

- Enabling working families to access quality childcare and early learning opportunities..

- Supporting financial literacy and stability.

- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health Program Area Strategy

Goal

East Texas children, adults, and families are healthy and have access to quality healthcare.

Objectives

- **Provider Availability:** The supply of primary care providers and other high need health occupations in East Texas is increased.

- **Affordable Health Options:** East Texans obtain affordable health insurance.

- **Care Delivery:** Systems and infrastructure for providing physical and mental health care are improved.

- **Community Health and Wellbeing:** Communities are living healthy lifestyles and addressing community-wide health issues.

- **Health Supports:** Positive health outcomes in our region are improved through responsive grantmaking.

Population Focus

All residents in our rural counties, with a focus on the underserved, uninsured, and families and children

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Provider Availability

Objective: The supply of primary care providers and other high need health occupations in East Texas is increased.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Rural Residency Programs:** Establish and fund rural residency programs in health professional shortage areas.
  - Build support for hospitals and clinics to host rural residency programs.
  - Fund feasibility studies, planning grants, and trainings for hospitals and clinics to prepare for residency programs.
  - Fund residency program start-up costs and hospital and clinic infrastructure to support residency programs.

- **Hiring Incentives:** Create and fund incentive programs for clinics to recruit physicians and other providers.
  - Build support for hiring incentive programs among clinics.
  - Establish and fund hiring incentive programs.

- **Support to Enter Practice:** Support efforts to recruit primary care providers and dentists to rural East Texas.
  - Create, fund, and promote loan repayment programs.
  - Fund clinic on-boarding costs such as credentialing, DEA registration, Medicaid & Medicare certification for providers to ensure transition into practice in rural East Texas.
  - Coordinate nonprofit placement sites with the loan repayment/recruitment process.

Affordable Health Options

Objective: East Texans obtain affordable health insurance.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Children's Health Insurance:** Increase the number of children and families that have access to affordable health insurance.
    - Make grants to organizations that enroll children in CHIP and MEDICAID.
    - Fund studies/convenings to identify barriers to enrollment for those eligible.
    - Fund organizations to proactively move into identified communities to increase enrollment.

- **Public Coverage Options:** Support efforts that help people access affordable health insurance options.
    - Support advocacy for expanded public coverage options.
    - Make grants to organizations advocating for expanding MEDICAID or alternate plans.
    - Make grants to organizations that advocate through public awareness campaigns.
    - Promote the advantages of Medicaid expansion.

Care Delivery

Objective: Systems and infrastructure for providing physical and mental health care are improved.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "support" area that the foundation will pursue primarily through making grants in the following areas:

- **Telehealth:** Make grants for telehealth services and advocate for better broadband coverage and regulations that improve access and sustain reimbursements.

- **Mobile Health:** Make grants for mobile health services and advocate for better mobile health coverage and capacity.

- **Care Delivery Systems:** Fund increased infrastructure capacity for mental and physical health services.

Community Health and Wellbeing

Objective: Communities are living healthy lifestyles and working together on community-wide health issues.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "support" area that the foundation will pursue primarily through making grants in the following areas:

- **Community Health:** Make grants that help communities address community-wide health issues such as substance abuse, obesity, and diabetes.

- **Wellness:** Make grants for programs and infrastructure that promote healthy living choices and lifestyles.

Health Supports

Objective: Positive health outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "respond" area that the foundation will pursue through making grants in topics that might include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting health care institutions and programs.

- Addressing emergent health issues.

- Providing transportation to healthcare.

- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human Services Program Area Strategy

Goal

The most vulnerable residents of our service area will have their basic needs met.

Objectives

- **Food Insecurity:** Families have access to healthy food options to alleviate food insecurity.

- **Safety Net and Social Services:** Organizations and agencies have the capacity and funds to meet basic needs of clients.

- **Human Services Supports:** Positive human services outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Population Focus

All residents of the service area, with a focus on those in poverty, in crisis, or who are food-insecure.

Food Insecurity

Objective: Families have access to healthy food options to alleviate food insecurity.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Sector Capacity:** Build the capacity of and better align the efforts of organizations that address food insecurity.
    - Make grants for best practices/capacity building.
    - Convene leaders in the sector for peer networking and professional development.
    - Create more alignment and a stronger network between health care organizations, social service organizations, and food pantries.

- **Food Provision:** Make grants to food banks, pantries, and other providers to distribute healthy food.
    - Make grants to procure and distribute food, including fresh and healthy options.
    - Maximize distribution infrastructure (buildings, storage, transportation, software, technology, volunteers).
    - Identify best practices and programs of opportunity.
    - Make grants that ensure food can be distributed at the hours and locations needed for working and non-working residents of the service area.

Safety Net and Social Services

Objective: Organizations and agencies have the capacity and funds to meet basic needs of clients.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "support" area that the foundation will pursue primarily through making grants in the following areas:

- **Capacity Building:** Make grants to help safety net and social service organizations be more effective, efficient, sustainable, and aligned.

- **Direct Services:** Fund safety net and social service organizations to deliver services that assist families and individuals in poverty or in crisis (e.g. homelessness, housing, children and family services, domestic abuse, rent and utility assistance, etc.).

Human Services Supports

Objective: Positive human services outcomes in our region are enhanced through responsive grantmaking.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "respond" area that the foundation will pursue through making grants in topics that might include, but are not limited to:

- Providing transportation to services.

- Responding to disasters.

- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arts and Culture Program Area Strategy

Goal

East Texans have opportunities for artistic and cultural experiences in their communities and schools.

Objective and Strategies

- **Arts and Culture Supports:** Access to arts and culture in schools and in the community is improved through responsive grantmaking.

This is a "respond" area that the foundation will pursue through making grants in topics that might include, but are not limited to:
- Supporting arts education.
- Funding capital and infrastructure projects.
- Supporting arts and culture organizations, libraries, schools, and other entities that provide arts and cultural experiences to students and residents.

Population Focus

All residents of the service area, with a particular focus on youth in schools.

Conservation Program Area Strategy

Goal

The Boggy Slough Conservation Area is a model for excellence in ecological research, conservation, and stewardship of natural resources

Objectives

- **Demonstrating Conservation Through Management:** Boggy Slough natural resources are stewarded in a manner that exhibits and promotes conservation practices, sustainability and biodiversity.

- **Develop Research and Outreach Programs:** Understanding of the functioning forest ecosystem is improved and this information is shared with those who will practice or influence regional conservation.

Population Focus

Landowners, natural resource professionals who implement conservation practices on other properties, graduate and undergraduate students, researchers, and policy makers.

Demonstrating Conservation Through Management Overview

Objective: Boggy Slough natural resources are stewarded in a manner that exhibits and promotes conservation practices and sustainability.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Operational Implementation:** Transition management at Boggy Slough toward conservation goals with clearly stated objectives and prescriptions.

- **Demonstration Trials:** Implement alternative practices, with monitoring and quantified results, that are easily accessible for outreach events.

- **Mentoring:** Develop an internship program to provide practical experience.

- **Innovation:** Build the capacity of contractors we work with to develop and implement operational practices.

Research and Outreach Programs Overview

Objective: Understanding of the functioning forest ecosystem is improved and this information is shared with those who will practice or influence regional conservation.

Focus Area Strategies: This is a "lead" area that the foundation will pursue through the following strategies:

- **Research Studies:** Define important natural resource and conservation research questions to explore through on-site studies with applied conservation impact.

- **Visiting Scientists/Scholars:** Recruit and support scholars for collaborative research projects focused on important questions.

- **Student Projects**: Offer graduate fellowships for identified topics, and site access for graduate and undergraduate projects compatible with BSCA objectives.

- **Outreach:** Establish partnerships to develop innovative outreach programs and materials, use on-site management demonstrations.

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Evaluation and Learning Principles

- ***Use evaluation to improve strategy and performance:*** Our goal for evaluation is to add value to and strengthen our work and the work of our grantees and partners.

- ***Ensure evaluation is right-sized:*** We tailor our evaluation approach based on the nature of the grant or opportunity being evaluated.

- ***Evaluate at multiple levels:*** We look at indicators of progress and impact for our grants, for our program areas, and for the issues we seek to address.

- ***Set clear expectations with grantees:*** We include intended outcomes that focus on the fewest and most meaningful metrics in all grants.

- ***Embrace an evaluative mindset:*** We hold ourselves accountable to and expect our grantees to look at data and reflect on key questions that help continually improve the work.

- ***Create a culture of learning:*** We embed learning as a critical element of our work, and we develop and pursue a learning agenda that helps shape our current and future strategy.

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Concluding Thoughts

To develop this strategic plan, we looked at data, reflected on donor intent and past experience, incorporated grantee and partner input, and assessed our region's greatest needs and opportunities. We are very appreciative in particular of our grantees whose insights and on-the-ground experience informed and shaped our strategic direction.

We are excited about this plan. It is grounded in our expertise, informed by our learning over time, reflective of community input, and motivated by creating impact at scale. The strategy will allow us to focus on high-leverage opportunities, address important community issues, and respond to good proposals that come our way.

All of us at the foundation are inspired to work through this strategy toward our mission of *creating access and opportunities for rural East Texans* and to *building a thriving rural East Texas.*

More information about the foundation, our strategy, and how to submit a grant proposal can be found at https://tlltemple.foundation.