

BRIAN CRAWFORD MEMORIAL

Community Opportunity Initiative

WE CAN DO MORE TOGETHER

Executive Brief for Communities Foundation of Oklahoma

Why This Conversation - Why Now?

The Brian Crawford Memorial began after the death of Brian Allen Crawford in 2005. What followed was not a prewritten strategic plan: seventeen annual memorial baseball tournaments (2006-2022), a scholarship tradition beginning in 2015, a permanent scholarship fund through Communities Foundation of Oklahoma (CFO) in 2016, BCM Sports operations, permanent memorial facilities in Prague and Seminole, service to grieving families, and eventually a substantial research effort examining youth opportunity, public facilities, governance and economics in Oklahoma. [1]

On March 12, 2025, Kenneth Crawford contacted CFO about whether this experience and emerging research might support a broader nonprofit/community partnership. The conversation included philanthropic services, fiscal sponsorship, endowments and the possibility that CFO could help identify other organizations if the concept was not a fit for CFO. The follow-up did not develop into a substantive partnership discussion. [2]

Eighteen months later, the concept is materially different. The question is no longer whether one nonprofit should build a sports facility or operate a statewide program. The question is whether multiple institutions can combine their respective strengths to help local communities create and sustain opportunities for children and families.

The Core Proposition

Brian Crawford Memorial cannot do this alone - and should not try.

Many communities possess pieces of the solution but not the complete institutional capacity required to sustain opportunity: fields without programming; volunteers without administrative systems; children without an affordable entry point; nonprofits without durable facility access; donors without long-term fund structures; schools with facilities but limited after-hours programming; or economic activity without a deliberate connection to local opportunity.

The proposed Community Opportunity Network would not replace local organizations. It would help connect local leadership to specialized expertise, philanthropic infrastructure, facilities, funding, program partners and governance support while preserving meaningful local control.

What Twenty-One Years of Experience and Research Suggest

- Mission needs durability. Successful programs can create participation, goodwill and community value without securing the long-term facility rights, governance systems or institutional continuity needed to protect the mission.
- Economic impact is not the same as community benefit. Visitor spending, facility revenue, operator revenue and local youth opportunity are different measurements and should be evaluated separately.
- The economic system is substantial. A July 2026 Hidden Valley working dataset documented 165,190 recorded team entries and \$36.34 million in calculated team-entry fees across covered Oklahoma youth baseball/softball records. Modeled gate, concession, umpire and economic-impact values are expressly not verified receipts. [3]
- Community and competitive pathways can coexist. Children need an entry point even when they do not already have a team; advanced players can still pursue competitive pathways. Tournament activity can support rather than replace the community mission.
- The model must be larger than sports. Opportunity can include recreation, after-school programming, scholarships, mentoring, adaptive inclusion, arts/enrichment, family support and connections to specialized nonprofits.

What BCM Brings - and Why Partnership Is Essential

BCM can contribute memorial and scholarship history, tournament and facility operations, officials management, technology, community relationships, documentation practices, public-record research, institutional memory and pilot-design experience.

BCM should not attempt to supply expertise it does not possess internally: philanthropic administration, specialized accounting and legal structuring, statewide grantmaking systems, formal program evaluation, multi-organization child safeguarding, clinical services, disability-service specialization, insurance architecture and broad nonprofit capacity building. Partnership is the operating premise, not an afterthought.

Why CFO Is Being Asked First

CFO already has a direct relationship with the Brian Crawford Memorial through the scholarship fund. Its current public materials also describe collaboration as a strategy for community impact, fiscal sponsorship as a possible option for qualifying charitable projects, and community funds that combine local advisory governance with CFO financial and administrative support. Those structures do not establish that this initiative fits CFO; they make CFO an informed organization to help evaluate the question. [4]

Potential CFO Roles - CFO Decides

Advisor or convener • philanthropic infrastructure partner • fiscal-sponsorship resource for a qualifying pilot • fund administrator • community-fund resource • connector to aligned nonprofits/donors • scholarship partner • or no formal role beyond guidance and referrals.

The initial request is assessment, not commitment and not funding.

Pilot Before Scale

1. Discovery - Map existing Oklahoma resources, identify duplication, test assumptions and define the problem with cross-sector partners.
2. Design - Choose one willing community; map children, programs, facilities, organizations, barriers, resources and governance.
3. Pilot - Strengthen existing local organizations where possible; test a limited set of opportunity supports.
4. Measure - Evaluate participation, affordability, facility use, volunteer capacity, partner leverage, financial transparency and organizational strength.
5. Decide - Replicate only if evidence shows the model adds value and can adapt to local differences.

Important Firewall

Participation in a future Community Opportunity Initiative would not constitute endorsement of Baseball Heaven research, allegations, litigation positions, tax submissions, policy recommendations or interpretations. Research can be available for independent review; charitable decisions should rest on the initiative's own governance, due diligence and evidence.

Questions for the First Conversation

- Does the underlying community-opportunity problem merit structured exploration?
- Which Oklahoma organizations are already solving parts of it and should be strengthened rather than duplicated?
- What governance, safeguarding, financial-control and evaluation standards would be required for a pilot?
- Could any CFO structure be relevant, subject to CFO review?
- Who else should be at the table?

- If CFO is not the appropriate institutional partner, who should BCM approach next?

The Invitation

We are not asking CFO to adopt a theory. We are asking CFO to review what has been learned, help determine whether the documented need and emerging framework merit further discussion, and - if appropriate - help identify what a responsible collaborative structure could look like.

What could Oklahoma accomplish for children and families if organizations asked not who should solve the problem alone, but what each institution is uniquely equipped to contribute?

Source Notes

[1] From Memorial to Mission project archive; Brian Crawford Memorial chronology and supporting project records.

[2] March 12, 2025 CFO audio transcript and Expanding Community Partnerships strategic discussion summary.

[3] Hidden Valley / HVIIOG July 2026 working briefing packet; figures are dataset measures and modeled-value limitations are preserved.

[4] Communities Foundation of Oklahoma public materials, accessed September 29, 2026: About/Home; Fiscal Sponsorship; Community Engagement/Community Funds; Scholarship Funds.