



Little League International - Better Together

Rebuilding Community Baseball & Softball Opportunity in Oklahoma

Executive Brief | Better Together - Oklahoma Youth Sports Community Opportunity

Purpose

This brief is designed to support a constructive institutional conversation with Little League International about Oklahoma. It does not ask Little League to accept prior Baseball Heaven conclusions, revisit a personnel decision, or take sides in past disputes. It asks whether the documented record can help identify why community-based baseball and softball have struggled to achieve broader, sustainable reach in Oklahoma - and what Little League, Oklahoma communities, municipalities, schools, philanthropy, volunteers and families might do differently together.

Central Question

How can Oklahoma create conditions in which Little League's community-based model can grow alongside tournament and travel sports, while protecting local access, volunteer capacity, public facilities, affordability, baseball and softball opportunity, and organizational accountability?

Prepared as a research and dialogue document - not an advocacy verdict.

1. Why Little League Belongs in Better Together

Little League’s own public model is closely aligned with the questions Better Together is asking. The Southwest Region serves Oklahoma and five other states. Little League provides pathways to join an existing league, start or affiliate a community program, and grow a league through baseball, softball, Challenger and teenage opportunities.

Little League also describes local programs as volunteer-run community organizations with registration, fundraising, donations, sponsorships, capital funds, facility expenses and municipal or lease relationships. Its current guidance explicitly addresses grant resources, capital fundraising, public-field relationships and financial transparency.

Institutional Role	What the Model Can Contribute
Community chartering	Locally governed baseball and softball tied to defined communities.
Volunteer infrastructure	Boards, coaches, umpires and local leadership rooted in the community.
Player pathways	Baseball, softball, Challenger and teenage divisions, plus tournament progression.
Facility support	Capital fundraising guidance, grant resources and public-field partnership guidance.
Affordability tools	Local cost guidance and assistance mechanisms intended to reduce barriers.

Oklahoma is not a blank slate.

The state has a long Little League history, current baseball and softball representation, and an existing network of volunteers and facilities. Tulsa National represented Oklahoma in the 2026 Southwest Region baseball and softball tournaments. The research question is therefore not whether Little League exists in Oklahoma, but why its community footprint is comparatively limited in many places and what conditions would allow sustainable expansion.

2. Researcher Relationship Disclosure

Kenneth R. Crawford previously served within Oklahoma Little League district administration and has raised governance, eligibility, facility, participation and administrative concerns with Oklahoma leadership, the Southwest Region and Little League International. Some interactions involved disagreements and unresolved disputes.

Better Together does not ask readers to accept those prior conclusions. The Little League profile should re-examine the Oklahoma record under the same evidence protocol used for every institution.

Class	Evidence Type	Standard
A	Documented Fact	Primary or reliable contemporaneous records.
B	Organizational Statement	A claim or description attributed to Little League or another organization.
C	Research Finding	Analysis derived from disclosed evidence and methodology.
D	First-Person Recollection	Historical testimony separated from contemporaneous documentation.
E	Research Hypothesis	A plausible, testable proposition not yet established.
F	Unresolved Question	The current record does not support a responsible determination.

Leadership chronology requires the same discipline.

Little League publicly appointed Blaine Whitmire as Southwest Region Director effective March 28, 2022. A September 24, 2026 communication attributed to Senior Director of Regional Operations Corey Wright informed District Administrators that Whitmire was no longer a Little League International employee and directed matters through Assistant Region Director Brant Durden during the transition. The reviewed announcement did not establish whether the separation was a resignation, termination, negotiated separation, or related to Oklahoma controversies. Chronology must not be converted into causation.

Current source discrepancy: Little League's public Southwest Region staff/contact pages were still listing Whitmire as Region Director when reviewed in late September 2026. That discrepancy should be documented as a possible website-update lag, not used to infer current employment.

3. The Oklahoma Research Questions

The public landing page should not be organized around a single controversy. It should test the statewide ecosystem.

Historical Footprint	What do league, charter, championship and participation records show about Little League's Oklahoma footprint over time?
Baseball & Softball	Where do the two sports follow similar or different participation, facility and volunteer patterns?
Public Facilities	How do municipal field ownership, scheduling, leases, maintenance and tournament demand affect recurring community play?
Affordability	What are actual family and league costs, and where do grants, sponsorships and assistance programs reduce barriers?
Volunteer Workforce	What conditions recruit and retain boards, coaches and umpires?
Governance	How should responsibility be distinguished among local league, district, Southwest Region and Williamsport?
Growth Tools	Which Little League resources - affiliation, grants, capital fundraising, Urban Initiative, Challenger and training - are being used in Oklahoma, and which are not?
Competing Models	What does travel/tournament growth explain, and what other explanations must be considered?

Tulsa National / Team Oklahoma

The 2026 Tulsa National eligibility disputes belong in the profile as a governance-learning case, not as the page's identity. Little League's own public tournament pages and official statements provide an authoritative record that can be compared with local, district and regional documentation. The research should ask what the episode reveals about eligibility verification, appeals, communication, review and accountability - without assuming motives or treating every organizational level as the same actor.

4. Where Collaboration May Be Possible

The strongest Better Together approach is to identify what Little League is structurally equipped to contribute and what Oklahoma communities must provide in return.

Little League International / Southwest Region	Oklahoma Communities / Partners
Affiliation and league-development expertise	Stable access to fields and recurring community schedules
Baseball, softball, Challenger and teenage pathways	Local volunteer boards, coaches and officials
Training, governance and financial resources	Transparent facility agreements and sustainable maintenance
Grant-resource guidance and capital-fundraising tools	Municipal, school, philanthropic and business partnerships
Tournament pathway and recognizable national brand	Affordable registration and local identity
Regional staff support and volunteer education	Evidence-based participation and outcome measurement

A practical five-year research question

If Little League International and Oklahoma partners wanted to materially expand sustainable community baseball and softball over the next five years, which combination of facility access, capital support, affiliation assistance, volunteer development, umpire recruitment, softball growth, Challenger programming, affordability and municipal partnership would produce measurable results?

The answer should be tested community by community rather than assumed statewide.

5. Recommended Outreach Posture

The executive brief should accompany - not precede - a public institutional profile that has been reviewed for factual attribution, competing explanations and clear separation of organizational levels.

Suggested message to Little League International

This profile is not asking Little League International to accept Baseball Heaven's prior conclusions about Oklahoma. It is asking whether the evidence can help identify why community-based baseball and softball have struggled to achieve broader reach in Oklahoma - and what Little League, Oklahoma communities and other youth-sports institutions might do differently together.

Right of response

Little League International, Southwest Region personnel, Oklahoma District leadership, local leagues and other stakeholders should be invited to identify errors, supply missing records, challenge interpretations and document successful Oklahoma models that the research may have overlooked.

Selected Current Sources

Little League Southwest Region

<https://www.littleleague.org/region/southwest-region/>

Play Little League - Southwest Region

<https://www.littleleague.org/region/southwest-region/play-little-league/>

Local League Finance Guide

<https://www.littleleague.org/university/articles/local-league-finance-guide/>

Understanding Your League's Finances

<https://www.littleleague.org/university/articles/understanding-your-leagues-finances/>

Grant Resources for Local Leagues FAQs

<https://www.littleleague.org/help-center/grant-resources-for-local-leagues-faqs/>

2026 LLB Southwest Region Tournament

<https://www.littleleague.org/world-series/2026/llbws/tournaments/southwest-region/>

2026 LLS Southwest Region Tournament

<https://www.littleleague.org/world-series/2026/lls/tournaments/southwest-region/>

Baseball Heaven - Same Questions. Different Logos. Real Impact.

<https://www.baseballheaven.net/same-questions-different-logos-real-impact/>

Little League - Blaine Whitmire Named Southwest Region Director (2022)

<https://www.littleleague.org/news/blaine-whitmire-named-little-league-southwest-region-director/>

Research status: Working executive brief. The Little League International Better Together institutional research file and public landing page should continue to be updated as Oklahoma participation, governance, facility and historical records are assembled.