

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET)

Leadership Position Profile

Prepared by Bird Dog Recruitment and Consulting, LLC | September 2026

The Opportunity

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust seeks an exceptional executive leader to serve as its Executive Director and lead one of Oklahoma's most distinctive public institutions.

Created by a vote of the people of Oklahoma in 2000, TSET is entrusted with converting the certified earnings of the state's tobacco settlement endowment into strategic grants that improve the health and well-being of Oklahomans. Through statewide programs, community grants, research, and evidence-based initiatives, TSET works to and create lasting improvements in the health of Oklahoma communities.

The Executive Director reports to the TSET Board of Directors and serves as the organization's chief executive, strategic leader, and principal administrative officer, responsible for translating the Board's vision, policies, and priorities into effective strategy, disciplined execution, and measurable results.

This is more than an administrative leadership position. The Executive Director must lead at the intersection of public policy, public health, government, grantmaking, organizational management, and Board governance, and must understand how to operate effectively within a politically complex environment while preserving TSET's institutional integrity, credibility, statutory responsibilities, and long-term mission.

The successful candidate will bring exceptional executive judgment, political acumen, strategic thinking, financial stewardship including a comprehensive understanding of the financial statements of TSET, communication skill, and relationship building ability, equally comfortable advising a governing Board, leading a professional staff, engaging senior state leaders, working with public and private grantees, evaluating grant proposals, and representing TSET before diverse constituencies across Oklahoma.

TSET's founders built this organization twenty-five years ago in the truest entrepreneurial sense, establishing its systems, its credibility, and its impact largely at the same time it was already operating. Today, TSET enters a different season: a mature institution with a substantial endowment, an established track record, and significant resources to direct toward growth and innovation. The next Executive Director will need real leadership maturity: the ability to assess what the Board of Directors of TSET wants the Trust to become, recognize what has earned its place, and lead the organization through thoughtful renewal where it is warranted, bringing the same resourcefulness that built TSET together with the institutional discipline this next chapter demands, including an assessment of the necessary cultural changes to accomplish the future direction of TSET

About TSET

TSET is a constitutionally protected public trust and, at the same time, a state agency, a grantmaker, a public health institution, and a steward of tobacco settlement certified earnings, governed by an appointed Board of Directors. By constitutional design, only the certified earnings on the Trust's investments, may be spent, and those earnings are directed toward clinical and basic research and treatment efforts in Oklahoma for the

purpose of enhancing efforts to prevent and combat cancer and other tobacco-related diseases, cost-effective tobacco prevention and cessation programs, and other health related initiatives.

Vision and Mission: Improving the health of every Oklahoman.

TSET's giving is guided by five core principles: prioritizing evidence based and proven approaches; encouraging innovative and creative solutions; fostering collaborative relationships to maximize efficiency; supporting comprehensive services across both urban and rural Oklahoma; and awarding funding based on merit and public benefit. In practice, current strategic priorities span tobacco cessation, cancer research, healthcare access, workforce development, and prevention.

TSET holds assets of approximately \$2 billion and ranks among the state's largest health focused grantmakers, supporting roughly 100–150 active grants each year, typically \$50,000 to \$5 million per award, to universities, health systems, and community organizations. Signature initiatives include the Legacy Grants program, which awarded a combined \$150 million to 14 grantee organizations, announced in 2025, and research grants, and efforts to promote tobacco cessation.

Governance

TSET's governance is divided between two boards. A separate, five-member Board of Investors, chaired by the State Treasurer, is constitutionally responsible for investing the Trust's assets. The seven-member Board of Directors does not invest the endowment; rather, it directs the certified earnings that the assets generate toward constitutionally authorized health programs, research, and administration. The Executive Director leads the agency that converts those earnings into public impact.

Each of the seven Board of Directors seats is appointed by a different statewide official: the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Attorney General, the State Treasurer, the State Auditor and Inspector, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to staggered seven-year terms. The Oklahoma Constitution further shapes the Board's composition: no more than four appointees may belong to any one political party, at least one appointee must come from each congressional district (with no more than two from any single district), and all appointees must demonstrate expertise in public or private health care, or in programs benefiting children or senior adults.

This structure was built to keep TSET's governance broadly representative and insulated from any single political authority, which in turn shapes the kind of executive leadership the role demands. Oklahoma law (62 O.S. § 2309) vests the Board of Directors with the authority to appoint the Executive Director and other necessary staff, and the Executive Director reports to, and works in close partnership with, that Board.

Position Summary

The Executive Director is TSET's chief executive, and principal administrative officer. This is a high visibility, mission driven leadership role that calls for an executive equally comfortable in the boardroom, the State Capitol, and the community, someone who can preserve TSET's institutional integrity and credibility while translating Board strategy into disciplined execution and measurable results.

Primary Responsibilities

Board Governance and Strategic Partnership

Serve as the Board of Directors' principal executive partner and trusted adviser. Provide the Board with timely, objective, decision ready information; identify emerging opportunities and risks; make well-reasoned recommendations; and execute Board approved policies and strategic priorities, maintaining a clear distinction

between Board governance and executive management while fostering transparency, trust, accountability, and consistent communication.

Strategic Leadership

Provide enterprise level leadership for TSET, translating its constitutional mission and Board direction into clear strategic priorities, operating plans, grants, and measurable outcomes, and continually evaluating whether TSET's resources and activities are achieving accountable, measurable, and sustainable improvements for Oklahomans.

Government Relations and Political Acumen

Develop and maintain productive relationships with Oklahoma's executive and legislative leadership, state agencies, policymakers, local officials, tribal governments, grantees, and community leaders. Understand the political, legislative, regulatory, and public policy environment surrounding TSET, anticipate developments that may affect its mission, governance, funding, reputation, or operations, and navigate differing political and policy perspectives with diplomacy, discretion, credibility, and sound judgment while remaining focused on TSET's mission and governing responsibilities.

Public Stewardship and Accountability

Recognize that TSET exists because Oklahoma voters entrusted the institution with resources intended to produce long term public benefit. Maintain the highest standards of transparency, accountability, ethics, fiscal stewardship, and organizational integrity, and ensure that recommendations concerning grants, programs, partnerships, and other investments are supported by appropriate evidence, analysis, performance expectations, and accountability.

Grantmaking and Impact

Provide oversight of TSET's grantmaking and programmatic portfolio, ensuring grants are aligned with TSET's mission and Board approved priorities and that appropriate systems exist to evaluate effectiveness, outcomes, and sustainability of grants. Identify opportunities to leverage TSET resources through grants with other governmental, philanthropic, academic, health care, and nonprofit organizations.

External Leadership and Partnerships

Serve as a highly credible ambassador for TSET throughout Oklahoma and nationally when appropriate. Build durable relationships with public health leaders, health systems, universities, researchers, community organizations, businesses, state agencies, and policymakers.

Organizational Leadership

Lead, develop, and hold accountable a high performing professional staff. Establish clear expectations, appropriate delegation, strong internal communication, and measurable performance standards, and build a culture characterized by professionalism, collaboration, integrity, innovation, and results, ensuring TSET has the organizational structure, talent, systems, policies, technology, and internal controls necessary to accomplish its mission effectively. As TSET enters its next chapter, the Executive Director must proactively lead the change management needed to align staff practices and culture with the Board's evolving priorities, setting clear expectations and holding the organization accountable to that direction.

Financial and Operational Stewardship

Provide disciplined oversight of agency operations and resources. Develop budgets and recommendations aligned with Board priorities, ensure the Board receives clear, accurate, and understandable information concerning organizational finances, commitments, contracts, grants, risks, and performance, and maintain rigorous internal controls and compliance with applicable constitutional, statutory, regulatory, contractual, and Board requirements. Produce accurate quarterly financial statements including Balance Sheets, Budget to Actual Statements, and analysis of TSET's equity accounts including reserves.

Communication and Public Trust

Communicate complex issues clearly to the Board, policymakers, stakeholders, partners, media, and the public. Ensure TSET's communications are accurate, credible, consistent, and appropriate for a public institution operating in a highly visible environment and protect and strengthen TSET's reputation as a responsible steward of resources entrusted to it for the benefit of Oklahoma. Serve as a compelling public voice for TSET, able to tell the larger story of its mission, evolution, and impact in ways that build genuine public understanding and support rather than simply report on activity.

The Ideal Candidate

TSET requires an executive who can lead an organization while simultaneously navigating governance, public policy, government, and significant public accountability. The strongest candidates will demonstrate:

- Significant executive or senior leadership experience in a complex organization.
- Successful experience working with a governing Board, commission, public authority, or comparable governance structure.
- Exceptional political acumen without allowing partisan considerations to interfere with institutional responsibilities.
- Demonstrated ability to develop trusted relationships with elected officials, policymakers, senior government leaders, community leaders, and diverse stakeholders.
- Strong strategic and organizational leadership capabilities including transforming the culture to align with the direction of the Board.
- Experience overseeing significant budgets, grants, programs, contracts, or public resources.
- Demonstrated ability to evaluate organizational performance and translate strategy into measurable outcomes.
- Strong understanding of public accountability, transparency, ethics, and responsible stewardship.
- Exceptional written, verbal, interpersonal, and public communication skills.
- Ability to communicate complicated policy, financial, programmatic, or scientific information in clear and understandable terms.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and develop high performing professional teams.
- Sound judgment and discretion when managing politically sensitive, confidential, controversial, or high profile matters.
- Ability to build coalitions and work effectively with individuals representing differing perspectives and interests.
- A strong, mature executive presence that earns credibility and builds lasting relationships with stakeholders who may hold differing, and at times competing, positions.
- Comfort as a public facing leader who can tell a compelling, credible story about TSET's mission and impact to media, policymakers, and the people of Oklahoma.
- Demonstrated ability to assess an organization's current state, honor what has made it successful, and lead it through thoughtful reinvention during a new period of growth and innovation.

Experience in public health, health care, government, public policy, grantmaking, philanthropy, research, prevention, or a related field is highly desirable. However, the successful candidate's executive leadership capacity, judgment, governance experience, and ability to operate effectively within Oklahoma's complex public environment are the critical considerations; a proven executive need not come from a public health background to succeed in this role. Because TSET operates within the health sector, meaningful familiarity with the healthcare landscape, whether gained through direct professional experience or through substantial exposure to health policy, delivery systems, or public health issues, will strengthen a candidate's effectiveness in this role.

Critical Executive Competencies

- **Political Acumen.** Understands governmental institutions, decision makers, constituencies, competing interests, and the broader consequences of organizational decisions.
- **Executive Judgment.** Knows what requires action, what requires additional information, what requires Board involvement, and what requires discretion.
- **Board Governance.** Understands the difference between governing and managing and creates an effective relationship with the Board.
- **Strategic Thinking.** Looks beyond immediate programs and issues to determine where TSET can achieve meaningful, long-term impact, including recognizing when the organization's next stage of growth calls for fresh thinking and deliberate change rather than more of the same.
- **Executive Presence.** Brings a mature, grounded leadership presence that earns credibility and trust with stakeholders holding differing, and sometimes competing, positions, inside and outside the organization.
- **Public Stewardship.** Understands that TSET's resources carry a significant obligation of accountability to Oklahoma citizens.
- **Relationship Capital.** Builds trusted relationships before they are needed and maintains credibility across political and institutional changes.
- **Courage and Candor.** Provides the Board with objective analysis and professional recommendations, including when the information is difficult or the recommendation may be unpopular.
- **Diplomacy.** Navigates disagreement and competing interests without unnecessarily damaging important institutional relationships.
- **Communication.** Distills complex information into clear choices, implications, and recommendations, and tells TSET's story in ways that build public understanding, trust, and support.
- **Operational Excellence.** Builds systems, teams, accountability, and processes capable of converting strategy into results.
- **Integrity.** Demonstrates unquestioned ethical standards and protects the mission, independence, resources, and reputation of TSET.
- **Healthcare Acumen.** Understands the clinical, regulatory, and delivery system complexities of health care and public health and applies that understanding to grantmaking strategy and Board decision making.
- **Financial Acumen.** Understands complex financial statements, investment structures, and public fund accounting, and applies that understanding to safeguard TSET's assets and long-term sustainability.

Measures of Success

The Executive Director's effectiveness should ultimately be evaluated by more than activity or dollars distributed. Success will include:

- A strong, high trust relationship with the Board of Directors.
- Effective execution of Board approved strategic priorities.
- Demonstrable health and community impact from TSET grants.
- Responsible stewardship and rigorous accountability for public resources.
- Strong relationships with state leadership and key external stakeholders.
- A respected and credible institutional presence throughout Oklahoma.
- Effective anticipation and navigation of legislative, political, regulatory, and reputational issues.
- A high performing, accountable, and well led organization.
- Evidence based decision making and meaningful measurement of outcomes.
- An organization positioned to protect its long-term mission while adapting effectively to emerging health challenges and opportunities.
- Maintaining a strong balance sheet while balancing the constitutional mandate to grant awards based on certified earnings.

Compensation & Location

- **Compensation.** The anticipated salary range is \$175,000–\$275,000, based on Oklahoma state job family benchmarking. Final compensation will be determined by the Board based on the selected candidate's experience and qualifications.
- **Location.** This role is based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, with regular travel across the state and to the State Capitol.
- **Employment terms.** As a state agency position, compensation, benefits, and at-will employment terms are subject to Oklahoma state personnel requirements.

About the Search

TSET has engaged Bird Dog Recruitment and Consulting, LLC to lead this national search on the Board's behalf. All inquiries and nominations will be held in confidence. Interested candidates should email their resumes to Kim Borchers by Tuesday, October 20, 2026.

Kim Borchers, President

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