

# Partner Spotlight: Ted Lord, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Golden LEAF Foundation

Working together, state government and philanthropy can leverage each other's resources to benefit rural communities. In this interview, Ted Lord, Senior Vice President and General Counsel for Golden LEAF Foundation, discusses ways in which partnerships with government and research help the foundation fulfill its mission to support rural communities.

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**Ted Lord**  
**Golden LEAF Foundation**

## **1. What do you want people to know about your role?**

The mission of the Golden LEAF Foundation is to increase economic opportunity in North Carolina's rural and tobacco-dependent communities. That mission affords us the privilege of working with people across North Carolina who are committed to improving the communities they serve and helping those communities achieve their goals.

## **2. What are some ways that the Golden LEAF Foundation supports government-research or government-philanthropy partnerships? What advice do you have for other philanthropic organizations that are interested in engaging more/better in such cross-sector partnerships?**

Fulfilling Golden LEAF's mission often requires support of government-philanthropy partnerships. Many aspects of economic development, especially in rural communities, involve government organizations. Golden LEAF works closely with local governments and related organizations like community colleges and school systems. For example, we award funds for workforce training to prepare people to work for local employers, and we support extension of public infrastructure to serve businesses that are creating new jobs.

We have also been fortunate to receive appropriations from the State to address disaster recovery and flood mitigation, and much of that funding has gone to local governments. Agriculture is a key industry in North Carolina and is especially important to rural areas. We support applied research that will increase economic opportunities for North Carolina farmers. Most of that research is done by public universities and Cooperative Extension.

Particularly in rural parts of North Carolina, government resources play an especially large role in communities' success. Many philanthropic organizations understandably do not prioritize funding to governmental entities, but they might consider opportunities to leverage government resources. Strategies could include funding nonprofit organizations that can collaborate with governmental entities to ensure programs and resources reach all members of the community. Another example could be supporting planning that includes community members and representatives of local governments and that can identify ways to deploy government resources strategically to help people most in need of them.



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**3. What are three words to describe your role pre-COVID and three words to describe your role during COVID?**

<b>Pre-COVID-19</b>	<b>During COVID-19</b>
Consistent	Flexible
Established	Responsive
Routine	Exploratory

#### 4. How did COVID-19 change the way that Golden LEAF engages with the grantees and potential grantees?

During the early stages of COVID, like other organizations, Golden LEAF had to learn to do many things remotely. Now that people are again traveling and meeting in-person, we have continued with some of those remote activities because they allow for broader engagement with communities. For example, we now conduct grants management training for new grantees virtually and have found that we get more attendees from each organization at the meetings than we did with in-person meetings. Similarly, we now hold some of our outreach sessions virtually and have found that we have good participation and engagement in those meetings. In many ways, remote meetings provide more opportunities for people to learn about Golden LEAF because they eliminate the time and expense of travel. Although some activities like site visits really benefit from in-person meetings, and there is no substitute for visiting places and people, we have tried to expand our engagement through virtual meetings in addition to continuing in-person outreach. As we move further from COVID, we continue to use some of the techniques we learned during the pandemic to expand the scope of our work and complement our in-person engagement.

#### 5. In 100 words or less, what do you want people in other sectors to know about the power and impact of cross-sector partnerships?

Cross-sector partnerships offer important opportunities to bring together knowledge, talent, and resources in unusual and creative ways to provide benefits to communities - ways that a single sector cannot accomplish on its own.



**The North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP)** develops, launches, and enhances partnerships between state government and North Carolina's research and philanthropic sectors.

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