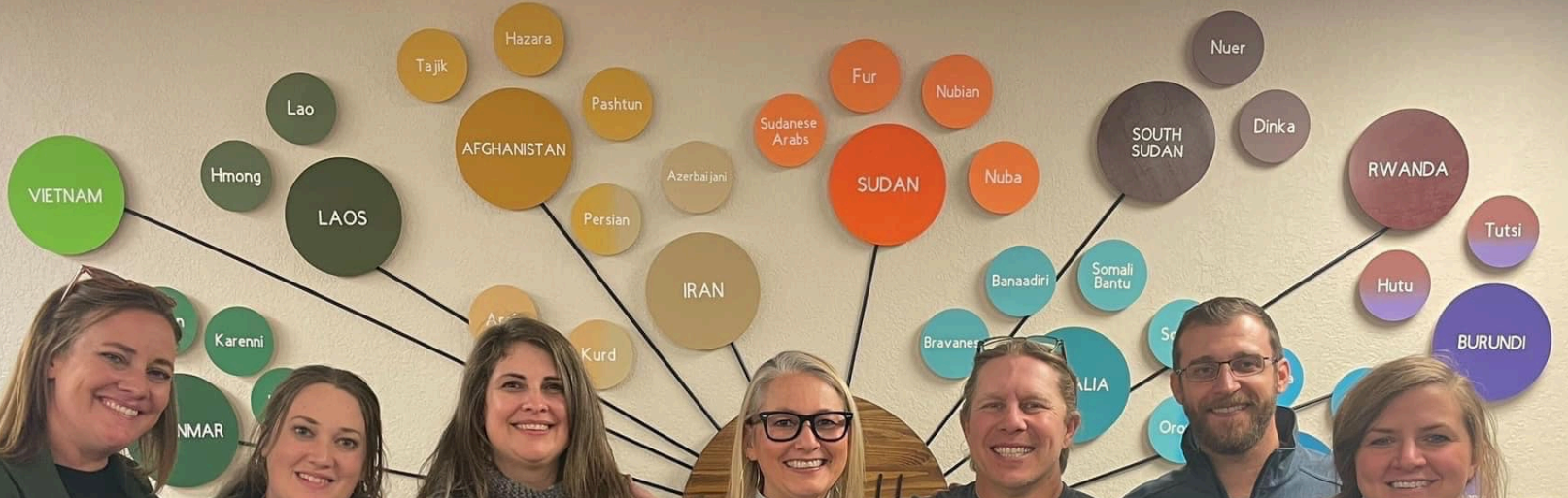


# Building this plane as we fly it: A case study in collaboration in Amarillo, Texas



Crystal Pennington  
Marketing Director  
Literacy Texas 2023



the place for **PLACE** language art culture & economic growth

# From one Somali man to a multicultural community center: A story about the impact of reciprocal relationships, listening well and taking a risk on collaboration

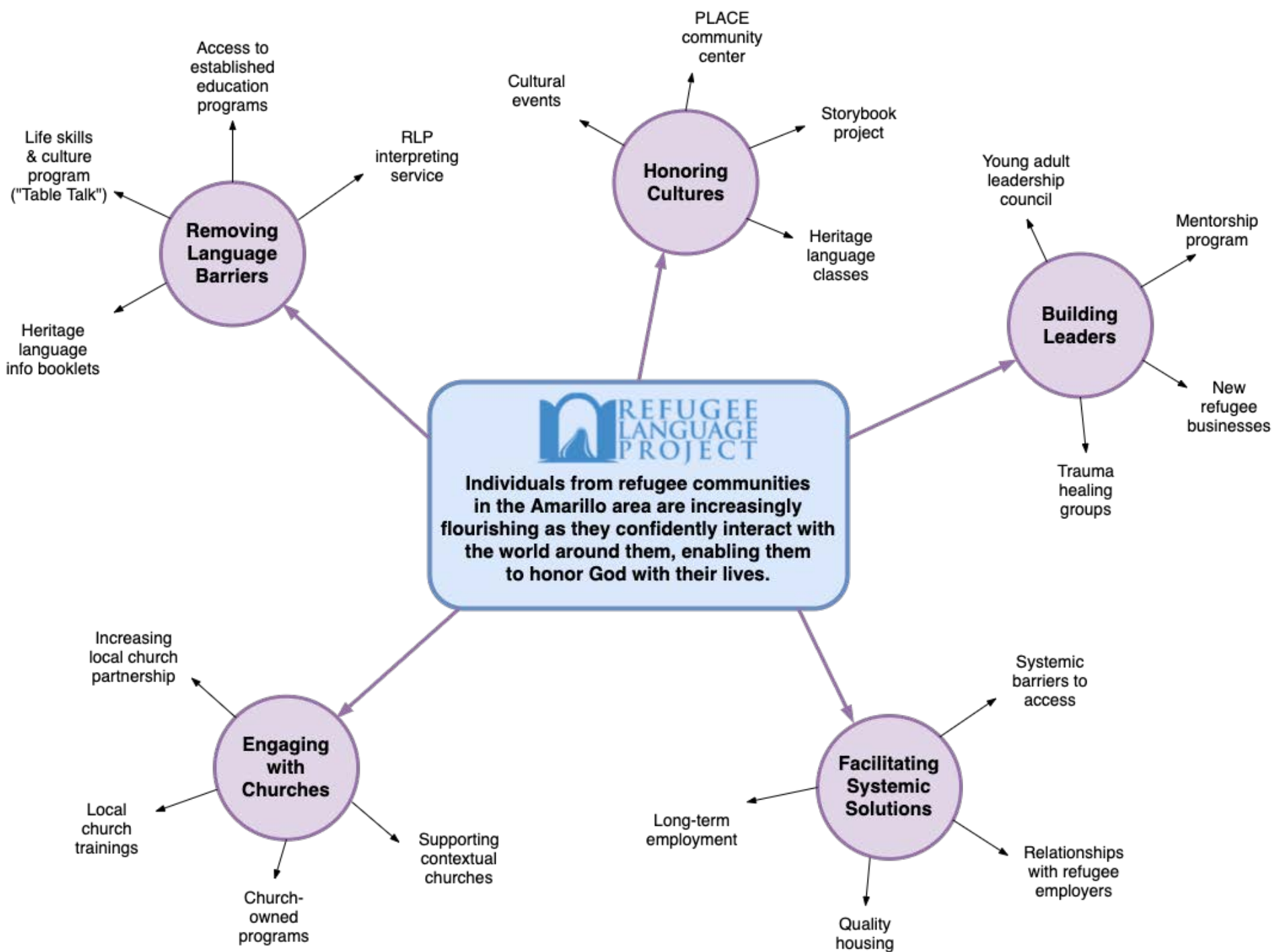


# VISION & MISSION

Refugee Language Project exists to ensure that individuals from refugee communities in the Amarillo area are increasingly flourishing as they confidently interact with the world around them, enabling them to honor God with their lives.

We accomplish this vision by removing the language barriers refugees face, honoring their cultures, overcoming obstacles to build leaders, facilitating systemic solutions for long-term issues, and engaging with local churches.





# RLP History

2008-2016 *Background*

★ SIL Papua New Guinea translation and linguistics



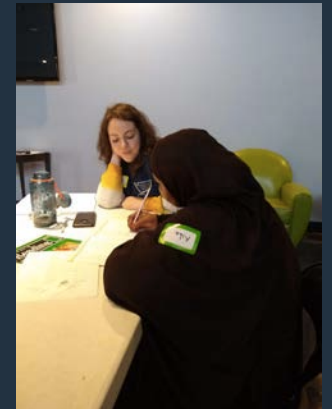
# RLP History

## 2008-2016 *Background*

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## 2017 - 2018 *Incubation & Research*

- ★ RLP Launched out of Redeemer Christian Church
- ★ Dr. Pennington began research and relationship building
- ★ Table Talk, Somali women's literacy class







# “Yes, but...”

- In teaching literacy, ESL, etc... how many times are you asked about other issues that are not in your wheelhouse?
- List the top 5 problems you hear about most often from your clients, students, etc... that are not in your area of service.

# RLP History

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## 2019 *On Our Own*

- ★ RLP becomes standalone non-profit
- ★ Conducted needs assessments



# Needs assessments



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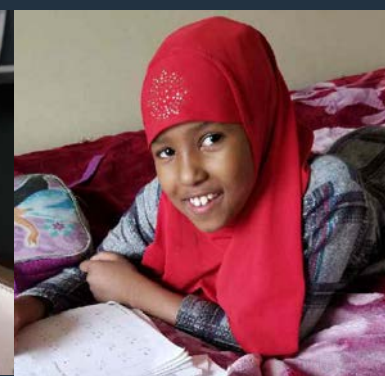
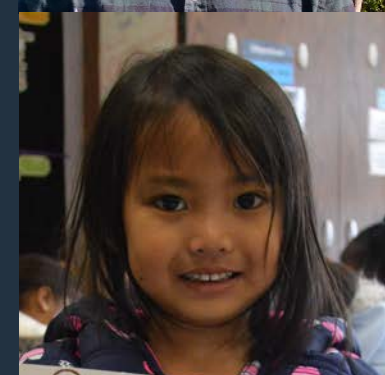
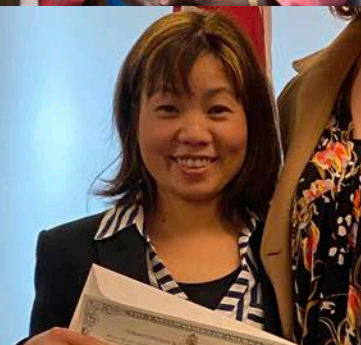
## 2020 - 2021 *Growing the Team*

- ★ Staff hired and moved into first office
- ★ Analyzed findings and share results with broader community





Amarillo Refugee  
 — 2021 —  
 State of the Union



# The Collaboration



# Afghan Crisis 2021





 **The Mary Sue**   
@TheMarySue

How it started      How it's going

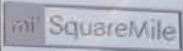


500

# the PLACE

Monday-Thursday  
9.00am-5.00pm

Friday  
9.00am-12.00pm



WE FIND...  
...IN LOVE

**LAUNCH**  
TUESDAYS  
4:00 - 7:30 PM  
THE PLACE  
AMERICAN RESTAURANT  
THE GOLF & BAGGAGE  
CHILDREN

PLACE PLACE PLACE PLACE PLACE

Examples  
1. The first example shows the layout of a room that is designed to be flexible and adaptable to different uses.

perch  
sitting  
table  
chair  
cushion  
back  
rest  
padding  
ergonomics  
flexible  
adjustable  
stack  
table  
chair  
back  
rest











**PLACE**  
Building community across culture

**PLACE**  
Building community across culture

**PLACE**  
Building community across culture

**PLACE**  
Building community across culture

**PLACE**  
Building community across culture

**PLACE**  
Building community across culture







**THE PLACE**  
**TUESDAYS**  
**6:00 - 7:30 PM**  
THE PLACE  
3307 PLAINS, #500

- ★ ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- ★ TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS
- ★ CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES





# Year 1 Model

1. By word of mouth, refugees discover the PLACE and drop in when they need something - English class, WiFi, job application help.
2. A host welcomes them, serves tea & snacks, and connects them with what they need.
3. Welcome their family to our evening Table Talk program to practice English over a potluck dinner.
4. Identify their specific goals and connect them with a trained volunteer mentor.
5. Highlight their skills publicly, enabling them to be seen as leaders.





PLACE Video

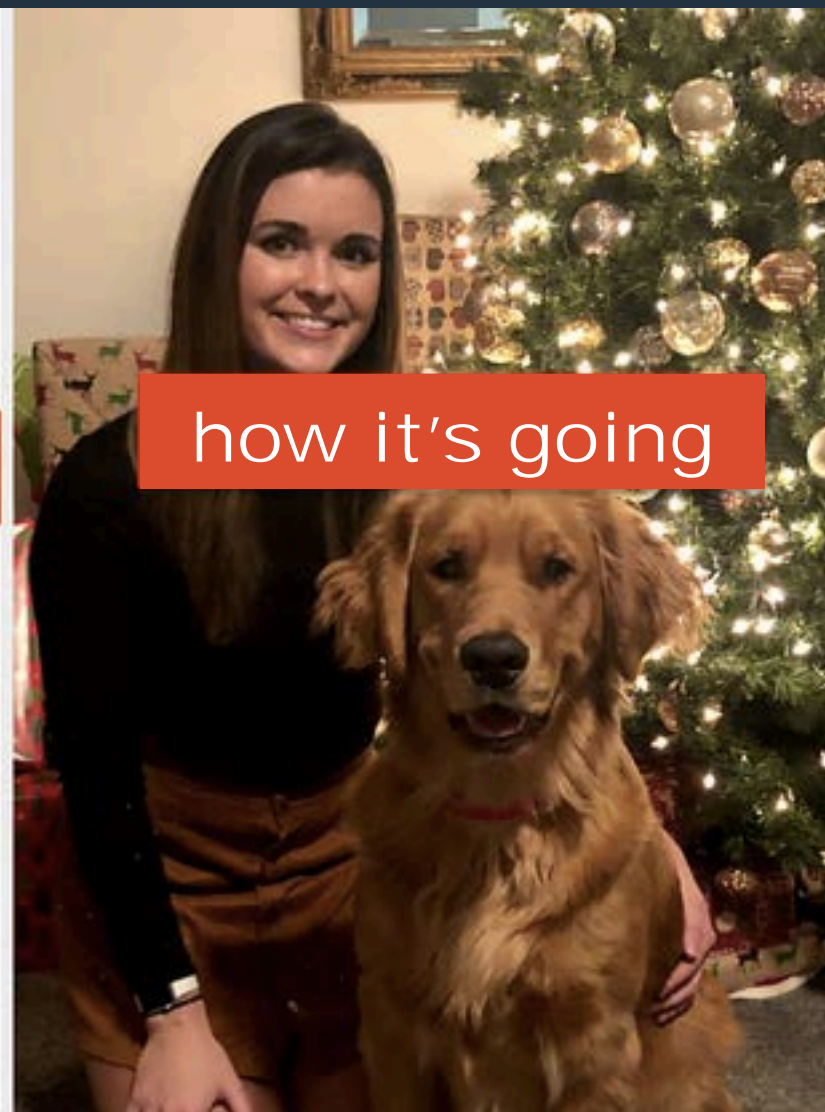


# Year 2 Model

1. Social work focused (asylum, etc...)
2. ESL classes expand
3. Translation and interpretation boom
4. Afterschool program/youth hours
5. 800+ people coming through the doors each week.
6. Financial burden shifts to WFiL



**how it started**



how it's going

# The good

1. Even contributions of \$ or time
2. Further collaborations that we didn't have to outright own, but benefited from
3. Outside consultant for an MOU
4. Community support
5. New grants, funding and support

# Collaboration Explosion

- City of Amarillo Health Department
- AISD
- RST/CCTXP
- Amarillo Environmental Health Department
- Library
- Area churches
- Americorps
- Area ESL programs
- Police Department
- Don Harrington Discovery Center
- CNMC





# The bad

1. More social work rather than social space
2. Plug and play mismatch
3. Identity blur from community standpoint
4. Changing dynamics and priorities of any single organization impacts all parties

# The verdict is still out...

- Hosting vs managing ; no boss
- Weekly meetings to stay in sync and trouble shoot take time
- Consultant needed to help think through an MOU
- Separate spaces
- Changing priorities and dynamics of involved orgs
- Year 3 will be an experiment in broadening impact to expand beyond immediate needs of Afghans and social services

# Lessons learned

- Have a clear identity before joining hands
- Always listen first and don't assume you're meeting a felt need because you have a cool idea
- Work out the details beforehand
- Be flexible and humble
- Be aware of organizational credibility imbalances
- Expect it to take longer than you think
- Be willing to accept risk

Xavier

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten notes

- Handwritten list of names: Ben, Carlos, John, etc.

Handwritten notes in teal and light blue

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten note

Handwritten notes

Handwritten notes in purple, pink, and yellow



MEMBER (unders... vision)

# QUESTIONS

