



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Executive Director

The Lumpkin Family Foundation

Mattoon, IL

*Supporting people working together to build healthy, sustainable communities in
East Central Illinois and across the U.S.*

--The Lumpkin Family Foundation's mission

Background

The Lumpkin Family Foundation (LFF) has been a beacon for healthy, sustainable communities in East Central Illinois and beyond for over seventy years.

The Foundation is situated in Mattoon, Illinois, a rural/industrial community on the main line of the Illinois Central Railroad, where Iverson Lumpkin, the family patriarch, made his home in the late 1800s. Iverson was a dentist, not a farmer, but he was also a technological visionary and entrepreneur who understood the role telephone could play in the growth of rural communities.

Iverson Lumpkin and his son, William C. Lumpkin, also a dentist, incorporated the Mattoon Telephone Company in 1894. Under their leadership, the company evolved into the Illinois Consolidated Telephone Company, one of the nation's largest privately held telecommunications firms.¹ In 1953, what is now known as The Lumpkin Family Foundation was established by a bequest from Besse A. Lumpkin, William Lumpkin's widow.²

That early history is important to present circumstances for several reasons.

- First, the senior Lumpkins were entrepreneurs and informed risk-takers, attributes that continue to inform the Foundation's work.
- Second, the Lumpkins' ethos was rooted in East Central Illinois's rural values and respect for community, both of which are central to today's philanthropy.

¹ Ultimately, under the leadership of Iverson's grandson, Richard Adamson Lumpkin, and his great grandson, Richard Anthony Lumpkin, the company expanded considerably. The company went public in 2005 as Consolidated Communications and was taken private again last year. It now has customers and operations in 21 states coast-to-coast, but it is still based in Mattoon.

² Initially known as The Lumpkin Foundation, "Family" was added to the name nearly 50 years later to clarify and honor the foundation's status as an independent grantmaker governed by the family.



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- And third, their business and their lives focused on the power of connectivity, which enriched the way people worked and lived and even now is at the heart of the Foundation's efforts. As one member of the Foundation's team put it recently, "Connecting people to one another is the best part of this work."

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Recently, Bruce Karmazin, the Foundation's Executive Director since 2001, told the board of his intention to retire this coming summer. The current search is designed to identify a successor ready to guide the Foundation and the family to even greater impact.

The Organization

With an annual grantmaking budget of about \$2.5 million, The Lumpkin Family Foundation has evolved from a responsive local grantmaker to a strategic philanthropic organization focused on five mission themes:

- Preserving and protecting the natural environment
- Promoting human health by encouraging physical activity and/or healthy eating
- Supporting a strong local food and agricultural economy
- Fostering collaboration among people and organizations through strategic community leadership
- Promoting mental wellness.

These themes are executed through six programs:

1. [Land, Health, Community Program](#), LFF's largest program, focuses on East Central Illinois (ECI) and accounts for at least half the annual grant budget each year
2. [Nature-Based Climate Action Program](#), started in 2020, promotes nature-based solutions to climate mitigation in rural areas of ECI
3. [Land, Health, Community—Chicago Program](#), supports holistically healthy communities in Chicago
4. [Neighborhood Fresh Programs](#), collaborative grantmaking in the Chicago area
5. [Good Food Policy](#), by-invitation-only grants that help strengthen the good food movement.
6. [Wellness Grant Program](#), small, one-time grants that support wellness or rejuvenation activities for staff of recent grantees.

Overlaying LFF's work is a pervasive commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance principles. More recently, LFF activated more of its investment portfolio in ways that support mission and program impact. Tangible examples include a \$500,000 investment in [Proofing Station](#), established with Food:Land:Opportunity and the Margot L. Pritzker Fund to provide financing and technical assistance to small and mid-sized food enterprises in the Midwest, and a \$500,000 loan to [Mad Capital](#), which finances organic, regenerative and transitioning farmers.

Lastly, LFF understands that the advancement of equity is central to developing truly healthy, sustainable communities. Among other initiatives, the Foundation collaborated with three local community foundations on Untold Stories, a regranting program that highlights underrepresented people in the history of East Central Illinois.



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LFF also established an [equity rubric](#) to guide future action and to support an audit of the Foundation's own practices with respect to racial equity, social justice and a lens towards rural equity.

All this good work is handled by a devoted staff of four who work closely with three board committees overseeing grants.³ The staff members reporting to the Executive Director are relatively new to LFF, but they are a team of deeply experienced individuals.

The Foundation is governed by a board of trustees elected by members of The Lumpkin Family Foundation Inc. By definition, "members" are the direct descendants and their spouses of Besse A. Lumpkin, the original donor. Members' sole responsibility is the election of trustees; however, LFF offers them abundant opportunities to learn about and engage in LFF's work as they desire.

The by-laws call for a board of trustees consisting of up to eight family members and up to three independent trustees; the 2025 board includes five family members and three independent trustees. All trustees are subject to term limits of two three-year terms. The current chair of the board is the first member of the sixth generation to serve in that capacity. (Bios on all board and staff members are available [here](#).)

The Foundation's extensive [website](#), updated in December 2024, has a wealth of information for interested parties. Three items in particular offer an overview of LFF's recent work and current strategy:

- [2024 Grant Seeker Survey Results](#)
- [Annual Big Questions: Reflections on 2023](#)
- [2024 Report on Activities](#), detailing progress on specific goals set forth in the latest update to the strategic plan.

³ Land, Health, Community Committee; Land, Health, Community-Chicago Committee; and Good Food Policy Committee.

The Mandate

The pride among board and family members in the Foundation's work is genuine and deep. Exchanges with three groups—the search committee, the board of trustees and family members at large—reveal broad alignment on several key aspects. All are proud of the place-based focus, all value community engagement and all emphasize the importance of relationships.

Even so, there is general awareness that the foundation is at an inflection point, made more prominent by the impending departure of the leader who has been involved in the foundation longer than most of the individual members. The questions are basic, but the answers can seem elusive:

- How do we define success? What sort of impact can a foundation our size truly hope to have?
- Given the competition for time, especially for younger family members, what governance structure makes the most sense, given a growing and increasingly dispersed member group faced with compelling family and funding priorities closer to home?
- How do we ensure the entrepreneurial spirit and smart risk-taking that helped make the Foundation possible are reflected in the Foundation's work in its eighth decade and beyond?
- How do we balance strategic philanthropy with our commitment to support hyperlocal needs?
- How can we strengthen internal collaboration and promote professional development within LFF and collaboration with like-minded foundations?
- What are our “leverageable niches,” and how do we best capitalize on them?
- Internally, how do we minimize the tendency every foundation faces of operating in silos?



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- How do we ensure opportunities for professional growth for our own team members?
- How do our stated values show up in our own workplace, and what would full alignment look like?

The next Executive Director will not be expected to have answers to all these questions, but they will be expected to foster the framework within which such questions can be addressed, respectfully and comprehensively. Among the ED's overlapping priorities:

- 1. Assimilation:** Quickly developing a deep appreciation for the Foundation's work and the communities it serves.
- 2. Relationships:** Building connections, both internally and externally, across the Foundation's network.
- 3. Management:** Ensuring the Foundation's systems and processes align with strategy. How the ED frames expectations and capitalizes on staff capabilities will be major determinants in their collective impact.
- 4. Board engagement:** Developing effective relationships with the trustees, individually and collectively.
- 5. Family relationships:** Navigating the dynamics with nearly 40 family members in three branches across three generations. The family is geographically mobile and currently is dispersed across the US and Europe, with the US families spread from California to Connecticut.
- 6. Continuity.** Ensuring a smooth transition through effective engagement, communications and transparency across LFF's network—the anchor for successes to come.

The Relationships

<i>The Executive Director reports to:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LFF Board of Trustees
<i>And works closely with:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees of the Board, consisting of trustees, non-trustee family members and community leaders • A cross-section of regional leaders and organizations who have a vested interest in LFF's issues and communities
<i>And directs:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff of three, responsible for programs, operations, communications and administration (back-office support is provided by the SKL Family Office, also based in Mattoon)
<i>While stewarding other key relationships, such as:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the extended Lumpkin family • Program partners, co-funders and collaborators • Grantees (actual and potential) • Thought leaders on issues relevant to LFF's priorities • LFF's outside advisors (principally investment managers and auditors) • SKL Family Office, which provides investment, accounting and related services to LFF and the extended Lumpkin family members



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The Candidate

The Lumpkin Family Foundation's Executive Director must be a proven leader, an approachable manager and an active listener who embraces collaboration, community relationships and continuous learning.

A leader versed in family dynamics and community-based philanthropy would be most attractive, but the committee is open to other relevant experiences. The demonstrated ability to lead in a predominantly rural environment will be critical.

The ideal candidate will offer a compelling mix of the following experiences and characteristics:

Expertise: The ideal candidate will offer...

- Impactful executive leadership in significant community-based contexts
- A balance of strategic and tactical leadership, informed by relationships of mutual trust with strong colleagues, board members, family members and community partners
- The skills of a general manager, the passion of a community leader, and the commitment of an engaged resident who shows "This is my community too"
- Experience in one or more of LFF's core programmatic areas, ideally gained in a rural context
- The budgeting and investment acumen to be a full partner in discussions with investment advisors and financial professionals. Experience with impact investing would be a definite plus.
- A history of developing strong, sustainable teams
- Experience working with a remote board and remote board committees
- Familiarity with the philanthropic sector, its history, laws and functional requirements.

Culture: The Foundation seeks an ED who is...

- Aligned with LFF's values and commitment to equity and ESG principles
- Humble, yet has a confident leadership style
- An active listener
- Comfortable with rural and urban environments
- A leader who balances a sense of urgency with patience and persistence.
- A life-long learner
- Comfortable leading by influence rather than authority; a natural collaborator who nevertheless can make the tough calls, setting boundaries where necessary
- Respectful and empowering, with the confidence to lead a team of smart, capable colleagues with transparency and candor
- Invested (or wants to be invested) in the larger community, not simply as the head of a thoughtful foundation, but as an engaged, participating citizen
- A clear thinker, strong writer and compelling communicator adept at conveying the essence of complex subjects, whatever the medium or audience
- An authentic leader who can connect with people at multiple levels and in multiple contexts.



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The Location

The Lumpkin Family Foundation is headquartered in Mattoon, Illinois, part of Coles County, in the heart of the Grand Prairie region, where the rolling terrain and some of the world's most fertile soil make agriculture the region's economic and cultural backbone.



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Community engagement runs deep. High school ball games, the annual Bagelfest celebration, community fundraisers—all reflect a keen sense of civic pride and involvement. Faith communities, social organizations and local sports teams serve as important community anchors.

What visitors often find most striking is the genuineness of the people. There's an unpretentious, friendly atmosphere where neighbors know each other by name and are not shy about offering help when needed.

Coles County residents benefit from several first-rate educational resources:

- [Eastern Illinois University](#), home to the Lumpkin College of Business & Technology and the Lumpkin School of Nursing, among other schools
- [Lake Land College](#), a community college providing career-focused programs and workforce training that support the county's economic development and skilled labor needs
- [LIFT](#) (Leaders Innovating for Tomorrow), a pre-collegiate Regional Innovation and Technology Center serving students from 28 area high schools.
- [The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#), a major research center and the flagship institution of the University of Illinois System, based in LFF's service area, about 45 miles north of Mattoon.

⁴ According to various public sources, the largest employers in Mattoon include [Rural King](#) and [Consolidated Communications](#), both private companies; [First Mid Bancshares](#), a public company; and the [Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center](#), [Eastern Illinois University](#) and [Lake Land College](#), all tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations.

The region offers affordable cost of living, quality healthcare services (anchored by Sarah Bush Lincoln Health System⁵) and abundant recreational opportunities. The picturesque trails of Lake Charleston, exceptional facilities for youth baseball and softball⁶, and a new \$75-million, 150-acre [sports complex](#)⁷ are all outlets for an active and fulfilling lifestyle.

For more about Mattoon and Coles County, see [Coles County Compass](#), [Explore Mattoon](#) and [Mattoon in Motion](#).

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email relevant materials to:

LFF@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call Lysondra Somerville or Sam Pettway at
404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).



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⁵ A frequent Lumpkin Family Foundation grantee

⁶ Host in past years to several youth baseball and softball World Series games

⁷ Phase 1 opened in December 2024.