

# ★ HEALTH SCHOLAR SHOWCASE

## HOW TO DEVELOP A NETWORK OF ENTHUSIASTIC RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: THE GREAT RESILIENCE IN TEXAS (GRIT) AWARDS

### BACKGROUND

In 2022-2023, the Translational Health Research Center (THRC) launched the Great Resilience in Texas (GRIT) Awards in partnership with TXST's SCALEUP and Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The awards were conceived as a mechanism to identify research participants for THRC Faculty Fellow and SCALEUP Director, Dr. Josh Daspit, to use when surveying small businesses across the state as part of the SCALEUP program.

### PURPOSE

THRC is a research center focused on community health and economic resilience. The GRIT Awards have 3 primary objectives.

1. Build a network of small businesses that can be accessed for research purposes. All nominees were given the option to opt in for future studies and dissemination efforts.
2. Position TXST as a "hub" for resilience and related resources to support small businesses and foster economic resilience.
3. Highlight the great work being done by small businesses throughout Texas and learn from their experiences.

### PROCESS

Eligibility was limited to Texas-based small businesses of 500 employees or fewer. Businesses could self nominate or be nominated by their community.

GRIT Award nominees submitted their stories of resilience, which included how they navigated the COVID-19 pandemic or other public-health emergencies.

Our extensive promotion efforts resulted in a nominee pool of almost 100 small businesses from all parts of Texas.

### MEASURES

Using a measure from Deloitte Global (2021), we assessed nominations using five attributes of resilience:

1. Preparedness
2. Adaptability
3. Collaboration
4. Trustworthiness
5. Responsibility

### RESULTS

The GRIT Awards resulted in the following outcomes:

- 88 submissions
- 41 opting into a resilience network
- 37 opting into future research
- 28 finalists
- 7 winners
- GRIT Showcase via Zoom on March 21



**Achieve Integrative Health** ★ **Award of Excellence in Resilience**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Achieve Integrative Health developed a new business model for medical clinics by embracing social media and remote work. Owner, Jimmy Yen, leveraged social media to educate his patients and developed an online presence of over 1 million followers. The clinic shifted to remote-work while continuing to serve patients in person and increasing its team from 2 to 20 team members.



**HillDay Public Relations, Inc.** ★ **Award of Excellence in Resilience**

HillDay Public Relations exemplifies how business experience and personal connections can be parlayed into a thriving, resilient business. Owner, Argentina James, has fostered trust and developed strong, enduring relationships with her clients and the communities they serve. As a result of her efforts, the firm experienced their greatest period of growth and prosperity during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**TekWav** ★ **Award of Excellence in Resilience**

TekWav addressed an immediate and critical need during the COVID-19 pandemic by finding innovative ways to provide internet access for their community. Owner, JJ McGrath, shared also best practices he developed with other providers to meet customer demands during this challenging time. TekWav's innovation helped keep communities connected, informed, and engaged during the pandemic.



**A. Miller Consulting Services** ★ **Award of Recognition for Collaboration**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, MCS had a culture of cross-training and collaboration, which enabled their staff to share and learn new skills, pitch in, expand opportunities, and handle administrative hurdles throughout the pandemic. Owner, Amy Miller, and team were motivated to collaborate and learn new skills during the pandemic, which allowed them to emerge with new services and opportunities.



**E Contractors** ★ **Award of Recognition for Dependability**

The principal of E Contractors, Irfan Abji, understands that resilience requires putting core values to action when faced with adversity. For E Contractors, dependability is a core value. During the pandemic, the company used new technologies to coordinate their team and ensure projects were completed ahead of schedule and under budget. The E Contractors' team is an example of "True Texas Grit."



**Salon One 12** ★ **Award of Recognition for Adaptability**

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Salon One 12 pivoted to ensure the safety of staff and clients while incorporating new approaches to continue and expand their services. Owner, Rebecca Acosta-Ojeda, leveraged social media to remain connected with clients, developed new ways to offer services, and launched a new e-commerce venture. She now educates other salon owners on how to do the same.

Attend the GRIT Awards Showcase on March 21, 2023, to celebrate small businesses in Texas & learn best practices for resilience.



Register now!



**Tito's Texas** ★ **Award of Recognition for Preparedness**

Texas Tito's entered the COVID-19 pandemic with an existing continuity plan, which allowed them to continue operations and navigate interruptions caused by the pandemic. They quickly added a pandemic-specific plan to address staffing shortages and social distancing. These plans allowed Texas Tito's to fill service gaps and continue providing high-quality products when other businesses were unable.

### CONCLUSION

By developing the GRIT Awards, we built a network of small businesses based on the recognition and celebration of their resilience and their contributions to a resilient Texas economy.

The seven inaugural winners also taught us the importance of preparation, adaptability, collaboration, and dependability when facing a significant crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic or other public-health emergencies. Five themes emerged from their testimonies about building a resilient business:

1. Using new technologies in innovative ways
2. Shifting to new business or sales models
3. Fostering existing and new relationships
4. Collaborating and working as a team
5. Developing a plan before the crisis strikes

Many nominees also commented on the **process of reflection** that the GRIT Awards required, and how revisiting these challenges reminded the business owners of what they did to overcome these challenges. Future research should examine this process of reflection and how an awards program—through recognition and celebration—might foster resilience as well.

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