

Local Bank rebuilds trust and expands financial access across native nations

How the Barrier Breaker Cobalt Award Winner Uses Digital Innovation to Tear Down Rural Barriers



Local Bank

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Assets

\$465 million

Founded

1907

Software Solutions

Banno Digital Platform™, Banno
Conversations™, Geezeo®



Cobalt Award Winner: The Barrier Breaker

The Cobalt Awards program focuses on celebrating outstanding achievements in financial institution and fintech performance, dedication to people and communities, and a passion for innovation and reducing the barriers to financial health. Learn more about submission categories (The Changemaker, The Barrier Breaker, and The Integrator) and annual prizes at jackhenry.com/cobalt-awards.



“On the Cherokee Nation Reservation, the barrier to financial well-being isn’t just access to a bank account,” starts Breanna Ellis, Assistant Vice President of Applications Management at Local Bank.

“It’s access to the knowledge and confidence required to use [a bank account] effectively,” Ellis explains.

As the only Native American, female-owned bank in the United States, Local Bank is headquartered inside the Cherokee Nation Reservation in northeastern Oklahoma, where geography, transportation constraints, and deep-rooted historical distrust of traditional banking have long left communities underserved. In an area where an estimated 40% to 50% of individuals in local tribal communities were unbanked as recently as 2020, Local Bank recognized that eliminating barriers required meeting accountholders exactly where they are – both digitally and in person. Local Bank employees represent seven Tribal nations and many are banking in the Tribal communities that raised them, and have an intimate knowledge of the cultural nuances and values of the distinct tribal affiliations that they represent.

By pairing culturally grounded community outreach with Jack Henry’s digital technology, Local Bank is giving rural accountholders the financial freedom to move forward.

digital access removes geographical distance

In rural Oklahoma, driving to a physical branch or attending a financial seminar can mean a two-hour trip.

To remove this friction, Local Bank uses Banno Digital Platform to put enterprise-level banking directly into accountholders’ hands. Features like mobile check deposit transformed routine banking for rural residents, eliminating unnecessary miles on the road and giving fast, reliable access to funds.

With Banno Conversations, accountholders can message bank staff online, improving communication and access to information. “Through Banno’s Conversations feature, accountholders can securely message our team at any time,” Ellis notes. “This has removed the friction of needing to call or visit a branch, allowing for faster resolutions and more consistent engagement.”



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To address educational barriers, Local Bank integrated on-demand financial literacy courses directly through their Banno-powered website, giving users the ability to learn budgeting and credit skills at their own pace.

"Looking ahead, we're excited to expand our impact through the integration of Geezeo, which works seamlessly within the Banno Platform," Ellis adds. "This enhancement will allow accountholders to aggregate accounts, build budgets, track spending habits, and set financial goals in one place. By providing clear insights into their financial behaviors, we're equipping customers with the tools they need to make informed decisions, reduce unnecessary spending, and plan for the future."

Rebuilding Trust One Classroom at a Time

Technology is only half the equation. Local Bank executives, Market Presidents, and employees are encouraged to volunteer in classrooms or other forums where financial literacy training is needed.

Local Bank combines digital tools with deep, hands-on community involvement. The bank sponsors the Banzai financial education platform in local schools, providing teachers with ready-made curriculum on budgeting, saving, and responsible credit use.

Local Bank bankers regularly visit schools across tribal nations to deliver hands-on financial literacy training, answering real-world questions from students preparing for adulthood.

These face-to-face interactions foster open dialogue and help dismantle generations of skepticism surrounding financial institutions. The impact is tangible: Local Bank reinvests approximately 95% of its deposits right back into Cherokee County to support local small businesses, homeownership, and community infrastructure.

Because of their unwavering dedication to bringing unbanked community members into the financial fold, Local Bank earned The Barrier Breaker Cobalt Award. "In a community where distrust of banks has deep historical roots, these relationships are how trust is rebuilt, one classroom at a time," Ellis reflects.



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Breanna Ellis

Assistant Vice President of Applications Management

Results That Speak for Themselves

“The results of these efforts have been both tangible and qualitative,” says Ellis.

“We’ve seen increased adoption of digital banking services, reduced reliance on in-branch transactions, and positive feedback from customers who value the added convenience and accessibility,” continues Ellis. “More importantly, customers consistently express appreciation for having more control, better visibility into their finances, and easier ways to interact with their bank.”

Ellis concludes, “By leveraging Jack Henry’s digital solutions, we are not just enhancing banking services. We’re helping our accountholders build stronger, more informed financial futures.”

About the Jack Henry Cobalt Awards

The annual Jack Henry Cobalt Awards celebrate financial institutions and fintechs dedicated to community impact, technological innovation, and improving the financial health of their accountholders.

The Barrier Breaker award specifically recognizes financial institutions who tear down obstacles to financial wellness by leveraging Jack Henry solutions to empower their communities. Entrants in this category demonstrate a deep understanding of accountholders’ challenges and deliver practical tools that give people the financial freedom to move forward.

elevate your community’s financial health

[Give your accountholders](#) the modern digital tools and direct communication channels they need to build financial confidence.

For more information about Jack Henry, visit jackhenry.com.