By mid-March of 2021, Texas had reported more than 2.5 million coronavirus cases and almost 45,000 deaths. The pandemic caused hundreds of thousands of Texans to flood unemployment phone lines and Internet portals and to wait for hours in food bank lines. COVID-19’s impact on Texas was unlike anything that came before it. But despite this enormous impact, by mid-March of 2021, many Texans were also experiencing pandemic fatigue. People were exhausted by the tragedy and the restrictions it imposed.

Those were the dueling realities the Texas Standard team faced as we prepared to put together a special show marking one year of the pandemic. What more could we say about the coronavirus? Could we say it in a way that addressed how people were feeling twelve months into the so-called “new normal”? And could we put together something special as we ourselves struggled to navigate the challenges of working remotely? We decided we needed to try.

As journalists, we wanted to embrace our important role as the first drafters of history. We decided to treat our material from the past 12 months as an oral history of sorts. We combed through hundreds of interviews and reported stories in an effort to begin to capture some understanding of how the pandemic shaped the lives of Texans.

But we also wanted to add something new to the conversation for audiences who were only starting to see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel offered by increasing vaccine access. We rallied behind an idea to explore COVID-19’s impact through the lens of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

At first, this felt like a very abstract idea. The framework wasn’t as concrete as a timeline, for example. But as we listened back to our reporting, it became more tangible and, in fact, felt absolutely intuitive. Whether we know Maslow’s name or not, the concept of a hierarchy of needs is one we all live with every day. We must have access to water and food but we yearn with another part ourselves for higher understanding.

We believe the result of our hard work is stunning. This special show does a tremendous job of serving as an archive for history and also a cathartic experience for listeners still raw from the effects of the pandemic.

We hope that even many years from now our project will serve as a yardstick for which to measure and better understand the Texas experience during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the immediate aftermath, our audience has been grateful. We heard from many, including this listener:

“Driving to the mechanic this morning, I had to pull over and weep while listening to today's [@TexasStandard](https://twitter.com/TexasStandard) COVID anniversary special. Do yourself a favor and take a long moment to stop and reflect on this past year. It hurts, but it helps.”