



Promoting open, affordable, high-quality broadband for anchor institutions and their communities.

2019-2021 Strategic Plan

PUBLIC VERSION

The SHLB Coalition believes that anchor institutions play a vitally important role in making broadband accessible to all Americans. Our primary goal is to bring open, affordable, high-quality broadband to anchor institutions and their communities across the country. In advocating for the interests of anchor institutions in broadband policy proceedings, we seek to solve the “digital divide” and address the “homework gap.” This three-year Strategic Plan describes how the Coalition plans to strengthen the organization to achieve these goals and better serve our members. We welcome your input and your support.

INTRODUCTION AND MISSION

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization that has a wide range of members from across the United States and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. SHLB’s mission is *“for every anchor institution in the country to have affordable, high-quality broadband that serves the needs of the institution and is open and accessible by the surrounding community.”*

SHLB is a mission-driven, member-supported advocacy organization that works with federal, state, and local policy-makers, anchor institutions, and the broadband industry to promote programs and policies to achieve our mission. We convene regular conference calls with our members, conduct research, develop policy proposals, file comments in regulatory proceedings, and meet with government policy-makers to advance our ideas.

SHLB takes a forward-looking approach that embraces new technologies and incentivizes investment in both wired and wireless networks, especially in rural markets. The organization is “provider-neutral” and supports competition from a variety of commercial and non-profit broadband providers so that anchor institutions have several options when choosing their broadband services. We believe that broadband networks deployed to anchors should be open to interconnection so that they can be used as platforms (“gateways”) to connect surrounding homes and businesses.

SHLB ACCOMPLISHMENTS (2014-2018)

Policy Accomplishments

The SHLB Coalition has had a substantial impact on several broadband policy issues over the past three years and we seek to build upon that success in the coming years. Select accomplishments include:

- SHLB filed an [Emergency Petition for Rulemaking](#) and led the advocacy effort to convince the FCC to increase funding for the Rural Health Care (RHC) program by \$171 million (Summer 2018).
- SHLB initiated the effort to convince the FCC to launch a proceeding to issue new wireless Educational Broadband Service licenses in rural markets. (Summer 2018)
- The SHLB Coalition filed [comments](#) with NTIA urging it to map the broadband available to anchor institutions. (Summer 2018)
- SHLB helped to save hundreds of E-rate applications from being denied. The FCC instructed USAC not to deny any E-rate applications over confusion resulting from the drop-down menu thanks in part to [SHLB's letter](#) on the application difficulties. (Spring 2018)
- The SHLB Coalition developed and published a [study](#) estimating the costs of connecting all remaining anchor institutions to fiber at \$13 and \$19 Billion. (January 2018)
- SHLB participated in the “[Beyond the Walls](#)” grant program that funded five libraries to deliver wireless broadband to their communities using TV White Spaces. (Spring 2017)
- The SHLB Coalition published “[Connecting Anchors: A Broadband Action Plan](#)”, a series of 11 papers recommending broadband policies to promote investment to anchor institutions. (Summer 2016)
- The SHLB Coalition strongly supported changes in the E-rate rules to promote the build-out of fiber optic networks to serve schools and libraries. Two-thirds of E-rate fiber applications were approved in FY 2017. (2015-2017)

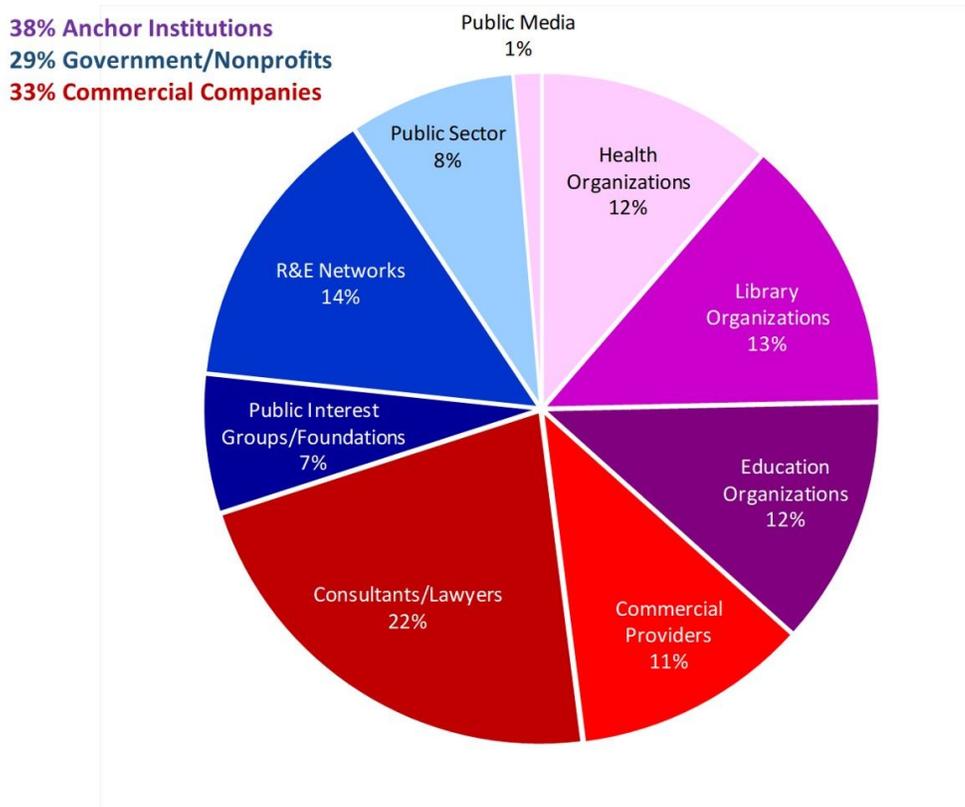
The SHLB Coalition anticipates that it will continue to work on E-rate reform, Rural Health Care program, EBS licensing, TV White Spaces and other unlicensed spectrum, Congressional broadband infrastructure funding, and broadband mapping in the next three years.

Membership Growth and Membership Engagement

Membership is vital to the SHLB Coalition’s growth and effectiveness. We currently have about 150 member organizations and onboard an average of about four new members a month. SHLB seeks to keep a balanced membership that reflects the diversity of the broadband ecosystem, including anchor institutions, non-profit broadband providers, commercial companies, public interest groups, state broadband officials, consultants, and many others. Anchor institutions make up 33% of our members, other non-profit and government organizations make up 29%, and commercial companies and consultants make up the remaining 38% of our members. SHLB seeks to break down silos, cross traditional boundaries and enable members to become part of a greater community. The diversity of SHLB’s membership is shown by the following pie chart:



Membership as of December 2018



SHLB works hard to offer benefits of value to its members. SHLB provides a forum for broadband advocacy where members share best practices, network with colleagues, and get updates on regulatory and legislative changes that impact their work. SHLB Members participate in bi-weekly policy calls, have advocacy input on SHLB's filings, speak at SHLB events, and have the opportunity to learn from other members. These efforts have been successful. In a 2018 membership survey, **89% of members reported that they see SHLB as valuable or more valuable than other advocacy membership organizations.**

In 2016, SHLB revised its dues structure to help SHLB generate more revenue from companies and make membership more attractive to anchor institutions. In 2017, SHLB was proud to launch its new Member Portal, providing access to archived webinars, resource libraries, recordings of policy calls with policymakers, and inside policy information. SHLB also recently introduced its “Calls with Policymaker” series that gives members the opportunity to directly ask questions of government officials such as FCC Commissioners Clyburn and O’Rielly.

Events

SHLB generally holds two events per year - an Annual Conference and a smaller symposium. Every year staff works hard to ensure that each conference and symposium has quality speakers

that cover all the important broadband policy issues that matter to our members and to the country's anchor institutions. Our events include half day workshops that allow attendees access to key policy-makers, compelling plenary speakers or break-out panels, and numerous networking events. The 2017 Annual Conference attendance increased by 33% and had more table-top exhibits than ever before. SHLB's Annual Conference has earned a modest profit the past two years and we plan to continue to expand the Annual Conference in the future.

Membership Services and Surveys

Since 2016, SHLB conducts an annual membership survey. The survey is a consistent and reliable source of membership feedback. It allows staff to inquire about the effectiveness of current membership benefits and what benefits SHLB should offer. The Strategic Planning Task Force used the 2018 membership survey to gather insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as well as how the members envision SHLB over the next three years.

SHLB's VISION OF THE FUTURE

SHLB is uniquely situated to play an increasingly important role over broadband policy in the future. SHLB is a non-partisan, fact-based advocate that promotes broadband investment by both commercial companies and non-profit organizations such as research and education networks, telehealth networks and municipalities. Ideally, SHLB combines the best elements of a "think tank" that develops well-researched policy recommendations, with a strong membership base that provides real-world experience and political support to implement its recommendations.

At the same time, we recognize that SHLB is growing but is still small (only three staff). SHLB is now in its "teenage" years and needs to develop the financial resources to become a self-sufficient "adult." While it is important for SHLB to have a vision of the future, we must also be certain that we focus on the "nuts and bolts" of membership and operations that are essential to providing the foundation for growth. In other words, this vision should not create expectations that outstrip our limited resources.

Over the next three years, SHLB's actions will be guided by three strategic goals that will act as *pillars* to guide the organization's internal vision and external direction.

- **SHLB will strengthen its organizational capacity and deepen its access to financial resources so that it becomes fully self-sustaining and can grow.**
- **SHLB will expand its policy and press operations so that it is widely recognized as a national leader for community anchor institutions on broadband policy issues.**
- **SHLB will enhance its membership engagement to become the premier membership organization serving the needs of anchor institutions on broadband issues.**

HOW WE WILL GET THERE

Pillar One - Organizational Capacity and Sustainability

The SHLB Coalition seeks to add additional staff and consultants to bolster its research capabilities, strengthen its advocacy and increase its effectiveness with Federal and state policy-makers. SHLB also seeks to develop additional financial resources -- from membership dues, Conference revenues, grants and other fund-raising efforts -- to become fully self-sustaining and develop reserve funding.

- A. Member Recruitment - Grow SHLB membership to 300 to 350 members while maintaining sector diversity.
- B. Organizational Sustainability - Continue to build a solid organizational structure that will be sustainable post-Gates Foundation support.
- C. Diversification of Revenue Streams - Pursue multiple revenue streams to ensure SHLB's sustainability and growth.
- D. Increasing Staff Capacity - Align SHLB staff and infrastructure to enable successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- E. Strengthen the SHLB Board - Ensure that the SHLB Board is diverse and contains the skill set needed for SHLB to grow and thrive.

Pillar Two - National Leader for Community Anchor Institutions

SHLB will position itself as the leading authority on community anchor institution broadband policy issues. SHLB will be widely recognized as an important voice and advocate for anchor institutions before the FCC, Congress, the Executive Branch and state and local authorities. The Coalition pursues a non-partisan, provider-neutral, data-driven approach that develops realistic and forward-looking policy solutions and embraces the benefits of new technologies.

Strategies and Key Tactics

- A. Policy Recommendations - SHLB will seek to impact 3-5 federal and state policy proceedings per year.
- B. Research - Publish at least one report a year that best fits the needs of the broadband political environment at the time. Possible projects include gathering more accurate and more granular broadband mapping data, developing CAI state benchmarks, analyzing the pros and cons of using E-rate funding for Wifi on school buses, examining the impact of Rural Health Care funding on rural health providers, etc.

- C. Relationship-building with Policymakers - Deepen and expand our relations with the FCC, Capitol Hill, and Executive Branch, and state and local officials (to the extent possible).
- D. Press Relations - Increase SHLB mentions in the press so that SHLB is seen as the go-to expert and national leader on issues relating to CAI broadband policy matters.
- E. Annual Conference - Building on the foundation of eight successful Annual Conferences, increase attendance each year, focus on diversity (especially from the health sector and universities) and develop an exceptional approach to sponsor and exhibitor engagement.
- F. Public Speaking - SHLB will continue to make 10-20 public speaking opportunities per year to increase SHLB's visibility, highlight SHLB members' successes and recruit new SHLB members.

Pillar Three - Membership Engagement

SHLB will work to increase the value of membership through professional development opportunities and strengthened interactions between SHLB staff and members and interactions between SHLB members themselves.

Strategies and Key Tactics

- A. Track Membership Engagement - Using the new membership portal, develop a system to measure membership metrics and use outcomes to revise membership engagement strategies as needed.
- B. Additional Membership Benefits - Provide relevant new services to our members to ensure member satisfaction and SHLB relevance.
- C. State-Chapter Model - Explore a SHLB state-chapter model in a handful of states as trials to enhance SHLB's state advocacy and to recruit new members.
- D. Strengthen Policy Groups - Facilitate deeper conversations among our members and build a platform for collaboration and community through Policy Groups that contribute to the Full Member Policy Calls and inform our policy recommendations.

APPENDIX

Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

SHLB strategic planning process yielded a feasible strategic growth plan that builds on the last strategic plan's successes and moves the organization towards a model of financial sustainability.

The strategic planning was led by Don Means, former SHLB Board Chair, and Emily Olson, SHLB's Chief Operating Officer. Together they convened a strategic task force comprised of a mix of board and SHLB members. The task force met over a span of six months via conference calls before meeting for a two day in-person summit. During this time the task force created a "report card" to analyze SHLB's accomplishments pertaining to the organization's last strategic plan. The task force conducted a search process for a strategic planning facilitator and decided on Elizabeth Scott, President of Brighter Strategies. The task force provided Ms. Scott with feedback on the membership survey questions and answers to the questions that she asked board, staff and external stakeholders. Last, the task force updated SHLB's mission, value, and work statements.

On March 1 and 2, the strategic task force met in Sacramento, CA to hold a strategic planning in-person meeting. Ms. Scott facilitated the meeting and divided it into four sections.

- 1. Understanding the broader landscape.** During this segment, Ms. Scott presented her findings from the 170 survey responses, her calls with the board and staff members, and her discussions with 6 relevant outside SHLB stakeholder. Afterwards, the task force did an environmental scan to examine current conditions to determine how this affects SHLB's next three years.
- 2. Creating a compelling vision of the future.** Based on the context map, the task force members brainstormed what SHLB should look like in 2021. The purpose of this activity was to generate group alignment about the future direction of SHLB.
- 3. Agreeing on current realities.** During this section, John Windhausen presented SHLB's financial projections to set the foundation for the plan. Using this information, the task force conducted a SWOT analysis and identified key problem areas that the plan needed to address.
- 4. Creating strategies and developing success measures.** Lastly, the task force used all of the above exercises to create "bold steps" that will guide SHLB's future for the next three years. The task force agreed to examine these ideas in more detail and come up with some metrics for each of the ideas.

After the in-person meeting, a draft plan was prepared and circulated to the task force for comments and feedback. A revised draft was then presented to SHLB members at the members' meeting at the SHLB Annual Conference in October 2018. Based on member feedback, SHLB staff presented a final strategic plan to the Board to approve in December 2018.

Strategic Task Force Members

Thank you to all of the members of the task force who donated their time to help SHLB prepare for the next three years of its future.

- Denise Atkinson-Shorey, e-Luminosity
- Rachele Chong, The Lawfirm of Rachele Chong
- Bob Collie, Parana River Group
- Cathy Cruzan, Funds for Learning

- Skyler Ditchfield and Phillip Deneef, GeoLinks
- Elwood Downing, ELAE Enterprises
- Adrienne Furniss, Benton Foundation
- Sean McLaughlin, Access Humboldt
- Don Means, Gigabit Library Network, Task Force Chair
- Emily Olson, SHLB, Staff Lead
- Amy Robinson, SHLB
- John Windhausen, SHLB