



Anchor NETS

2025

**Where broadband policy
meets real-world action.**



13th Annual SHLB Conference
October 29-31 , 2025
Crystal City, VA



WELCOME

Welcome to the 2025 SHLB AnchorNets Conference!

We are honored that you've joined us for three days of learning, reflection, and connection. Now in its 16th year, AnchorNets brings together the people, policies, and innovations shaping the future of broadband for community anchor institutions and their constituents. This year's program is designed to leave you more informed about public policy, more knowledgeable about ways to improve services offered by anchors and their partners, more energized for the work we each perform, and more connected to colleagues and friends across our ecosystem.

Much has changed since last year's gathering. After more than a decade of building SHLB from an idea into a mature, effective coalition that punches above its weight, John Windhausen has passed the baton to our new Executive Director, Joey Wender. Together, we are charting the next phase of SHLB's growth and impact. We've also refreshed AnchorNets itself—launching the full conference at midday on day one, offering all sessions at one all-access price, and creating even more space for community and camaraderie through two receptions and an afterparty. And of course, earlier this year our first-ever fly-in brought SHLB's collective voice to over 70 Congressional offices—a tradition we plan to continue.

Even as we innovate, SHLB's mission remains steady: strong advocacy and on-the-ground support that improve digital access and inclusion every day. This year finds us at a historic moment. In *SHLB v. Consumers' Research*, we successfully defended the constitutionality of the Universal Service Fund before the U.S. Supreme Court. With that threat lifted, we are now engaging with the USF Congressional Working Group to secure sustainable and predictable funding that supports programs including E-Rate and Rural Health Care - vital lifelines for schools, libraries, and health clinics nationwide. Beyond USF, SHLB continues to lead on issues like BEAD deployment, digital adoption, cybersecurity, spectrum, and emerging challenges like AI.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the SHLB staff—Kristen E, Kristen C, Saskya, Henery, and Elle—whose dedication makes this conference, and our collective success, possible.

We wish you a productive, inspiring, and enjoyable AnchorNets 2025

Sincerely,
The SHLB AnchorNets Team



Joseph Wender
Executive Director



Philip Neufeld
SHLB Board Chair

AGENDA AT A GLANCE

New in 2025 - we are starting the conference at noon on Wednesday for all attendees!

Wednesday, October 29

12:00PM - 1:00PM Salons AB	Plenary: Lunch & Setting the Scene
1:15PM - 4:00PM Salon H	Workshop: Doing More With Less? Overcoming the Scarcity Mindset to Achieve Sustainable Digital Opportunity
1:15PM - 4:00PM Salon C	Workshop: Exploring the Intersection Between AI, Infrastructure, and Public Trust
1:15PM - 2:15PM Salons DE	Breakout: The Pole Attachment Problem: How to Prevent Delays in Broadband Deployment Caused by Utility Poles
2:15PM - 2:45PM Foyer	Break for Refreshments
2:45PM - 4:00PM Salons DE	Breakout: In the Air: How Spectrum Policy Impacts Anchor Institutions
4:00PM - 4:15PM Foyer	Networking Break
4:15PM - 5:00PM Salons AB	Plenary: USF Contribution Reform: How Do We Solve That Problem?
5:00PM - 6:30PM Skyview	Reception: Sponsored by Broadband Legal Strategies
6:30PM - 8:00PM Offsite	Dinner on Your Own (Check out local options)
8:00PM - 10:00PM Offsite	After Party: Highline RxR 2010 Crystal Dr, Arlington, VA 22202 sponsored by AIM Concepts , C-Tech , E-Luminosity , and Ciena

Thursday, October 30

8:00AM - 8:45AM Foyer	Breakfast
8:45AM - 9:30AM Salons AB	Plenary: Keynote With Tracie D. Hall on Information Islands: The Rise of Co-intelligence, the Necessity of Civic Fluency, and the Decline of Human Literacy
9:30AM - 9:45AM Foyer	Networking Break
9:45AM - 12:00PM Salon H	Workshop: Rural Health Care: Understanding the Program, Navigating Change, Influencing Tomorrow
9:45AM - 10:45AM Salons FG	Breakout: Training for the Future: Hybrid Workforce Models Connecting Tribal Nations, Latino Communities, and Carriers
9:45AM - 10:45AM Salon C	Breakout: Better Broadband Data Mapping with Crowd-Sourced Speed Testing
9:45AM - 10:45AM Salons DE	Breakout: Beyond the Hype: How Schools Are Building Real AI Literacy
10:45AM - 11:00AM Foyer	Networking Break
11:00AM - 12:00PM Salon C	Breakout: E-Rate Efficiency: Maximizing E-Rate as a Statewide Consortium
11:00AM - 12:00PM Salons FG	Breakout: Getting to \$30: ACP's Lessons for the Future of Universal Service
11:00AM - 12:00PM Salons DE	Breakout: What's Next for BEAD? A conversation with State Broadband Leaders
12:00PM - 12:15PM Foyer	Networking Break
12:15PM - 12:45PM Salons AB	Lunch
12:45PM - 1:30PM Salons AB	Plenary: Fireside Chat with FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez
1:30PM - 1:45PM Foyer	Networking Break
1:45PM - 4:00PM Salon H	Workshop: E-Rate: Reflecting on the Past, Listening to the Present, Shaping the Future
1:45PM - 2:45PM Salons FG	Breakout: Bridging the Digital Divide With Cultural Awareness
1:45PM - 2:45PM Salon C	Breakout: Broadband in Action: Empowering Anchor Institutions and Advancing Community Impact
1:45PM - 2:45PM Salons DE	Breakout: Enhancing Rural Health Care Resilience
2:45PM - 3:00PM Foyer	Networking Break

AGENDA AT A GLANCE

Thursday, October 30 (cont.)

3:00PM - 4:00PM Salons FG	Breakout: Extreme Conditions, Extraordinary Response: Recovery After Natural Disasters
3:00PM - 4:00PM Salons DE	Breakout: Powering Rural Innovation: How Middle Mile and Edge Infrastructure Enable AI Across Communities
3:00PM - 4:00PM Salon C	Breakout: Closing the Gap: Broadband Affordability, State Innovation, and the Connectivity Imperative
4:00PM - 4:15PM Foyer	Networking Break
4:15PM - 4:45PM Salons AB	Plenary: Awards Ceremony
4:45PM - 5:45PM Salons 1&2	Speed Networking hosted by Finley
5:30PM - 7:00PM Skyview	Reception hosted by Zayo
7:30PM - 9:30PM Pentagon	SHLB Board Member Dinner (Invite Only)

Friday, October 31

8:00AM - 8:30AM Salons AB	Breakfast
8:30AM - 9:15AM Salons AB	Plenary: The USF Congressional Working Group
9:15AM - 9:30AM Foyer	Networking Break
9:30AM - 10:30AM Salons DE	Breakout: Research & Education Networks Advancing Community Healthcare
9:30AM - 10:30AM Salon C	Breakout: Securing the Digital Frontlines: Cyber Resilience for Anchor Institutions
9:30AM - 10:30AM Salons FG	Breakout: E-Rate Rules on the Applicant-Service Provider Relationship: What's Allowed, What's Not, and What's New?
10:30AM - 10:45AM Foyer	Networking Break
10:45AM - 11:45AM Salon C	Breakout: Impact of Federal Dollars on Library Connectivity
10:45AM - 11:45AM Salons DE	Breakout: How Hot Spots and Public Wi-Fi Help Close the Digital Divide
11:45AM - 12:00PM Foyer	Grab & Go Lunch
12:00PM - 1:00PM Salons AB	Plenary: The Future of Anchor Connectivity: A Public Strategy Session with SHLB

Join us at AnchorNets 2026

Save \$150 by November 7 (lowest rate available!)



WEDNESDAY

PLENARY SESSION:

Lunch & Setting the Scene

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | Salons AB

Kick off AnchorNets with SHLB's new Executive Director Joey Wender where he sits down with major thought leaders in broadband space and engages the audience to debate the big questions facing anchors and their communities.



MODERATOR

Joey Wender

Executive Director - SHLB Coalition



SPEAKER

Rachelle Chong

Principal - Law Office of Rachelle Chong



SPEAKER

Carl Guardino

Vice President of Government Affairs & Policy - Tarana Wireless



SPEAKER

Angela Siefer

Executive Director - National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA)



SPEAKER

Scott Woods

President, Public-Private Partnerships - Ready.Net



WEDNESDAY

WORKSHOP

Doing More With Less? Overcoming the Scarcity Mindset to Achieve Sustainable Digital Opportunity

1:15 PM - 4:00 PM | Salon H

In the face of shrinking budgets, limited staffing, and growing demand, how can we continue to advance digital opportunity in our communities? This interactive, three-hour workshop explores how anchor institutions, community-based organizations, and digital equity advocates are pushing beyond a scarcity mindset to build sustainable, long-term strategies for digital inclusion.

Through a dynamic panel discussion, attendees will hear firsthand from leaders who are navigating resource constraints while driving innovative digital opportunity initiatives. Panelists will share actionable models, tools, and real-world examples of how they've sustained efforts to keep communities connected—even when the funding is uncertain.

The session will conclude with an engaging group exercise where participants will step into the role of advocate—crafting and practicing pitches to key stakeholders such as policymakers, board members, or state leaders. Whether you're looking to refine your message, strengthen your strategy, or build new partnerships, this workshop will leave you with practical insights and renewed energy to continue the fight for digital equity.

FEATURED DISCUSSIONS:

- **Bringing Digital Services into Core Care:** The Digital Life Exchange Model: Learn how KC Digital Drive's DLX model empowers case managers to treat digital needs like housing or food—integrating access and literacy into the core of human services.
- **New Tricks from Old Dogs:** Lessons from Digital Inclusion Veterans: Hear real-world insights from long-time practitioners who've adapted through federal shifts—from BTOP to IJJA—and kept digital equity work alive.
- **Stretch, Shift, Sustain: Keeping Digital Skills Alive Without a Budget:** Explore how libraries, especially in rural areas, continue delivering digital training and job-readiness programs even after the funding runs out.



MODERATOR

Jess George

Head of Digital Equity & Community Impact - Google Fiber



SPEAKER

Misty Hawkins

Regional Library Director - Arkansas River Valley Regional Library System



SPEAKER

Leslie Scott

Program Manager - KC Digital Drive



SPEAKER

Carrie Coogan

Deputy Director - Kansas City Public



SPEAKER

Antonio Ocampo

Technical Project Manager - Los Angeles County Office of Education



SPEAKER

Angela Siefer

Executive Director - National Digital Inclusion Alliance



SPEAKER

Aaron Deacon

Managing Director - KC Digital Drive



SPEAKER

Rebecca Ranallo

Literacy & Learning Director - Cuyahoga County Public Library



SPEAKER

Gillian Cassell-Stiga

Senior Counsel of the Digital Justice Initiative - Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law



SPEAKER

Tom Esselman

Executive Director - Digital Equity Program Office of Greater Kansas City



SPEAKER

Sara Raza

Senior Clinical Fellow - Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School

WEDNESDAY

WORKSHOP

Exploring the Intersection Between AI, Infrastructure, and Public Trust

1:15 PM - 4:00 PM | Salon C

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in education, workforce, and public services, anchor institutions face both opportunities and challenges as they grapple with both the promise and the complexity of these emerging technologies. This three-hour workshop explores how AI can be responsibly integrated into schools, libraries, healthcare, and community programs—with a focus on governance, access, and ethics. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the opportunities and risks AI presents to public-serving institutions, along with practical considerations for advocating, implementing, or governing AI tools in their own communities.

FEATURED DISCUSSIONS:

- **Ethical AI Governance for Community Anchors:** Dr. Pierrette Renée Dagg shares lessons from Merit Network's work developing AI governance frameworks to protect privacy, promote transparency, and build public trust in education and municipal systems.
- **The Universal Connectivity Imperative:** Ji Soo Song presents SETDA's latest report outlining policy recommendations and strategies to sustain digital access in K–12 schools and ensure equitable AI integration.
- **AI in the Classroom and Beyond:** Leaders from Common Sense, Khan Academy, Code.org, and OpenAI discuss how communities are building AI literacy across students, families, and educators.
- **AI-Powered Learning in K–12:** Russ Selkin explores best practices for district-wide AI adoption—from personalized learning to scalable, ethical implementation backed by strong digital infrastructure.
- **Innovation in Action: AI & Quantum Literacy:** Michael Keough, CIO at Region 16 Education Service Center in Amarillo, TX, shares how their robust network powers cutting-edge initiatives, including AI systems, advanced data center management, and a pioneering quantum literacy program—all supporting students and educators across the region.



MODERATOR

Luis Wong

CEO, Network Initiatives - California K12 High Speed Network



SPEAKER

Pierrette Dagg

Director of Research - Merit Network



SPEAKER

Chris Wohlschlagel

VP of ISP Network Operations - Tribal Ready



SPEAKER

Amina Fazlullah

Head of Tech Policy Advocacy - Common Sense Media



SPEAKER

Pete Just

AI Project Director - Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)



SPEAKER

Michael Keough

Chief Information Officer - Region 16 ESC



SPEAKER

Ji Soo Song

Director of Projects & Initiatives - SETDA



SPEAKER

Johannes M. Bauer

Professor of Media and Information - Michigan State University



SPEAKER

Steven Singleton

Field Services/Project Manager - Region 16 ESC



SPEAKER

Austin Bonner

Partner - HWG LLP



SPEAKER

K. John Egelhaaf

Executive Director - Southwest Michigan Planning Commission



SPEAKER

Tina Gustin

Associate Professor of Doctor of Nursing Practice Program



SPEAKER

Blair Levin

Policy Advisor - New Street Research

WEDNESDAY

SESSIONS

The Pole Attachment Problem: How to Prevent Delays in Broadband Deployment Caused by Utility Poles

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM | Salons DE

Billions in state and federal broadband funding—especially through BEAD—are driving the push toward universal connectivity. But one major obstacle could slow everything down: utility pole attachments.

This session unpacks how pole permitting delays and unpredictable costs are threatening broadband deployment timelines—and what states can do about it. Hear from state officials, broadband offices, and industry experts on how to digitize, standardize, and streamline pole attachment processes. Learn best practices to reduce delays, cut costs, and keep BEAD-funded projects on track to connect unserved communities faster.

MODERATOR **Jake Varn**, Associate Manager of Broadband Access - The Pew Charitable Trusts

SPEAKER **Ernesto Falcon**, Program Manager - California Public Utilities Commission

SPEAKER **Daniel Linville**, Delegate - West Virginia House of Delegates

SPEAKER **Meghan Sandfoss**, Executive Director - Kentucky Office of Broadband Development



2:15 PM - 2:45 PM | Networking Break

In the Air: How Spectrum Policy Impacts Anchor Institutions

2:45 PM - 4:00 PM | Salons DE

From Wi-Fi to private networks, spectrum access plays a critical role in how schools, libraries, and health centers connect their communities. This session explores the latest developments in spectrum policy and what they mean for anchor institutions and Tribal areas. Experts from advocacy, policy, and industry will break down the opportunities and challenges ahead—helping attendees understand how to engage in the spectrum conversation and ensure anchors and Tribal areas aren't left behind.

MODERATOR **Mary Brown**, Spectrum and Technology Policy Consultant - Salt Point Strategies

SPEAKER **Michael Calabrese**, Director, Wireless Future - New America Open Technology Institute

SPEAKER **Robert Eubanks**, Networking and Mobility Practice Manager - Netsync Network Solutions

SPEAKER **Joe Valandra**, Chairman & CEO - Tribal Ready



4:00 PM - 4:15 PM | Networking Break

WEDNESDAY

PLENARY

USF Contribution Reform: How Do We Solve That Problem?

4:15 PM - 5:00 PM | Salons AB

The FCC's Universal Service Fund—which funds critical programs like E-rate and the Rural Health Care Program—plays a critical role in ensuring affordable broadband across America. After the recent SCOTUS decision, it's more important than ever to modernize the fund and put it on more stable and sustainable financial footing. This breakout panel will discuss the nuts and bolts of expanding the USF's contribution base.



MODERATOR

Jimm Phillips

Congressional Reporter/Associate Editor - CommDaily



SPEAKER

Carol Matthey

Founder - Matthey Consulting LLC



SPEAKER

Gregory Guice

Chief Policy Officer - Vernonburg Group



SPEAKER

Paroma Sanyal

Principal - The Brattle Group



SPEAKER

Roslyn Layton

Executive Vice President - Strand Consult

RECEPTION

SPONSORED BY BROADBAND LEGAL STRATEGIES

5:00 PM - 6:30 PM | Skyview

Join us in the hotel's beautiful atrium for drinks and appetizers at this reception sponsored by Broadband Legal Strategies—celebrating their 10th anniversary!



AFTER PARTY

HIGHLINE RXR 2010 CRYSTAL DRIVE, ARLINGTON, VA

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Keep the celebration going at the AnchorNets After Party—join us for drinks, bites, and great company!



THURSDAY

Breakfast

8:00 AM - 8:45 AM | Foyer

KEYNOTE

Information Islands: The Rise of Co-Intelligence, the Necessity of Civic Fluency, and the Decline of Human Literacy

8:45 AM - 9:30 AM | Salons AB

This session explores how digital networks are reshaping collective intelligence—and what’s lost when human literacy and civic understanding lag behind. A keynote presentation sets the stage, followed by a conversation between TIME Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World, Tracie Hall, and former SHLB Board Chair and University of Washington’s iSchool Program Chair, Cindy Aden. They will unpack the risks of fragmented “information islands” and the urgent need for civic fluency in a networked world.



Cindy Aden

Program Chair -
University of Washington, iSchool

SPEAKER

Cindy Altick Aden graduated from Stanford University with a degree in International Relations. Her focus was on languages, cultural communication and political science. A year later Cindy completed a certification program from Stanford’s Mass Media Institute and became a reporter for the Palo Alto Weekly.

Cindy graduated from the University of Washington with a master’s in Library & Information Science and was recruited for the Library of Congress intern program where she started her library career serving Congress. She worked subsequently at the University of Washington as a reference librarian and as a collections selector at Suzzallo Library, as a reference librarian at Odegaard Undergraduate Library and as Head of Circulation at the Gallagher Law Library.

Cindy became the Washington State Librarian in August, 2016. Issues like access to broadband, developing a statewide ebook platform, augmenting library catalog visibility, defending federal library funding and identifying new ebook models that benefit libraries and authors, have been some of her areas of focus.

In August, 2020 she became the third iSchool Distinguished Practitioner of Practice at the University of Washington. She is excited to bring together her experience with journalism, government, internet search and discovery and strategic partnerships, to guarantee libraries are always relevant to their communities.



Tracie Hall

Distinguished Practitioner in Residence -
University of Washington, iSchool

SPEAKER

Distinguished Practitioner in Residence Tracie D. Hall is the former Executive Director of the American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and largest library association in the world, serving library and educational institutions throughout and beyond the U.S. The first Black woman to helm ALA in its nearly 150-year history, Hall was most recently Visiting Fellow at the University of London’s Royal Holloway College. Hall has served innumerable library and arts leadership positions nationwide. Other posts have included Culture Program Director at The Joyce Foundation where she was recognized for creating numerous programs in support of arts-based community and economic development; Deputy Commissioner of Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events where she received citations for her work to expand arts, fresh food, and social services access; Vice President of Strategy and Organizational Development at Queens Library where during her tenure she founded the NYC Early Learning Network; and other library positions at the Hartford Public Library, New Haven Free Public Library, and Seattle Public Library and non-profit and public sector roles across the country.

Holding dual bachelor’s degrees from University of California at Santa Barbara, and master’s degrees from the Yale University School of International and Area Studies and the University of Washington Information School, Hall’s work in library and arts administration has focused on advancing early and adult literacy, expanding broadband access, advocating for library and literacy services for people who are incarcerated. In 2022, Hall became only the second librarian to be honored with a National Book Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. In April 2023, TIME Magazine named Hall to its annual TIME100 list of the most influential people in the world.



9:30 AM - 9:45 AM | Networking Break

THURSDAY

SESSIONS

Training for the Future: Hybrid Workforce Models Connecting Tribal Nations, Latino Communities, and Carriers

9:45 AM - 10:45 AM | Salons FG

With over \$60 billion in federal broadband funding about to be deployed, the demand for skilled, credentialed workers is urgent. This panel will bring together leaders from Tribal Nations and CSU Pueblo to share best practices for leveraging schools, libraries, and community anchors as hubs for industry-recognized broadband and utility certifications.

Both programs operate in partnership with their respective Department of Labor agencies to maximize stakeholder benefits, align with WIOA and other workforce frameworks, and ensure effective, compliant use of tax-funded programming. Using a hybrid delivery model—combining mobile labs, on-site instruction, and virtual platforms—these programs create direct career pathways into carrier, utility, and construction fields.

MODERATOR **Pete Bley**, Director, Broadband and Tribal Business Development - Ciena

SPEAKER **Denise Atkinson-Shorey**, President/CEO - e-Luminosity

SPEAKER **Dana Lambert**, CSU Pueblo Director - Digital Equity

SPEAKER **Michelle Parada**, Co-Founder and Lead Teacher - All Tribes Charter School

SPEAKER **David Brady**, Certified Training Partner - CTech

Better Broadband Data Mapping with Crowd-Sourced Speed Testing

9:45 AM - 10:45 AM | Salon C

Discover how crowd-sourced internet speed tests are transforming broadband mapping—and what that means for students and communities. This session dives into real-world data collected along students' daily routes to school, revealing major gaps in official broadband coverage maps. Join leaders from school districts, state broadband offices, and analytics firms as they explore how this data is reshaping infrastructure planning and policy decisions. While the focus is on K–12, the conversation extends to libraries, colleges, and healthcare institutions—underscoring that broadband is a basic utility for learning, health, and opportunity.

MODERATOR **Philip Neufeld**, Executive Officer, Strategic Research - Fresno Unified School District

SPEAKER **Kelleigh Cole, MBA**, Director of Policy and Communications - Utah Education and Telehealth Network

SPEAKER **Bryan Darr**, Vice President, Government Affairs - Ookla

SPEAKER **Evan Feinman**, Principal - Feinman Strategic Network

SPEAKER **Gautham Sampath**, CEO - Innive Inc.

Beyond the Hype: How Schools Are Building Real AI Literacy

9:45 AM - 10:45 AM | Salons DE

As artificial intelligence transforms the workforce and economy, the K-12 education digital divide takes on new urgency—students without equitable access to foundational computational thinking and data science education risk being left behind in an AI-driven future. Digital Promise's 'From Pathways to Progressions (P2P)' project demonstrates how district-led research partnerships can build comprehensive AI literacy through foundational competencies rather than marketed tools. Join this dynamic panel of district leaders and education technology experts as they share frontline experiences from three years of collaborative work integrating data science into existing computational thinking pathways.

MODERATOR **Dr. Mekka Smith**, Deputy Chief of Strategic Partnerships & Community - Digital Promise

SPEAKER **Andrew Fenstermaker**, Instructional Technology Coordinator - Iowa City Schools

SPEAKER **Dr. Lisa Milenkovic**, STEM and Computer Science Supervisor - Broward County Schools

SPEAKER **Tania Moneim**, Instructional Specialist for Equity and Innovation - Indian Prairie School District

SPEAKER **Dr. Brooke Morgan**, Director, Innovative Programs - Talladega County Schools

THURSDAY

WORKSHOP

Rural Health Care: Understanding the Program, Navigating Change, Influencing Tomorrow

9:45 AM - 12:00 PM | Salon H

Join this interactive workshop to dive deep into the Rural Health Care (RHC) program—what's working, what's changing, and what's needed next. This three-hour workshop begins with a discussion from RHC experts who will offer both a historical perspective of the program and how healthcare trends and needs require policymakers to consider modernized reform.

Then, workshop participants will break out into groups to consider program reform from an application and programmatic perspective. Whether you're new to the RHC program or looking to improve your approach, these breakouts provide your opportunity to connect, learn, and help shape the future of rural health connectivity.



SPEAKER

Sharhonda Dodoo

Director of Rural Health Care Consulting Services - Kellogg & Sovereign Consulting



SPEAKER

Dan Kettwich

CEO - ADS Advanced Data Services, Inc.



SPEAKER

Bryan East

Equipment Manager - SpectraCorp Technologies Group, Inc.



SPEAKER

Jeff Mitchell

Counsel - Mitchell Law LLP



SPEAKER

Kim Gaffney Corriher

Director of Government Operations - Southern Ohio Health Care Network



SPEAKER

Gina Spade

Principal - Broadband Legal Strategies



SPEAKER

Kathy Hsu Wibberly

Director of Research - Karen S. Rheuban Center for Telehealth



10:45 AM - 11:00 AM | Networking Break

THURSDAY

SESSIONS

E-Rate Efficiency: Maximizing E-Rate as a Statewide Consortium

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Salon C

Statewide E-Rate consortia are proving to be powerful tools for driving digital opportunity in schools and libraries. By streamlining procurement, simplifying applications, and maximizing funding, these coordinated efforts help anchor institutions get connected faster—and more affordably. This session will explore successful statewide strategies from North Carolina, Utah, and New Mexico, and how they have transformed the broadband landscape for anchor institutions. Whether you're building a new consortium, strengthening an existing one, or seeking practical ways to improve your E-Rate outcomes, this session will offer real-world insights and opportunities for cross-state collaboration.

MODERATOR **Mel Van Patten**, Director - E-Rate Central

SPEAKER **Michael Babb**, Software Engineer - Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University

SPEAKER **Jerome Browning**, State E-Rate Coordinator - Utah Education and Telehealth Network

SPEAKER **Ovidiu Viorica**, Broadband Manager - New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion

SPEAKER **Ray Zeisz**, Director - Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University

Getting to \$30: ACP's Lessons for the Future of Universal Service

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Salons FG

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) brought millions of households online—proving that targeted subsidies work. As the future of broadband affordability shifts and the Universal Service Fund faces legal and financial uncertainty, what lessons can we take from ACP's success? This fireside chat will explore what ACP revealed about subsidy levels, enrollment strategies, and the path forward for sustainable, universal connectivity.

MODERATOR **Revati Prasad**, Executive Director - Benton Institute for Broadband & Society

SPEAKER **John Heitmann**, Partner - Nelson Mullins

SPEAKER **John Horrigan**, Senior Fellow - Benton Institute for Broadband & Society

SPEAKER **Adeyinka Ogunlegan**, Vice President, Government Affairs & Policy - National Urban League

SPEAKER **Kate Rivera**, Executive Director - Technology Learning Collaborative

What's Next for BEAD? A Conversation with State Broadband Leaders

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Salons DE

With BEAD implementation underway, what challenges and opportunities are emerging on the ground? Join state broadband leaders for a forward-looking conversation about what's working, what's not, and what's next. Hear insights from state leaders as they discuss permitting, partnerships, anchor institution engagement, and how states are navigating the path to universal connectivity.

MODERATOR **Kathryn de Wit**, Project Director of Broadband Access - The Pew Charitable Trusts

SPEAKER **Michael Baldino**, Director and General Counsel - Massachusetts Broadband Institute

SPEAKER **Christine Hallquist**, Executive Director - Vermont Community Broadband Board

SPEAKER **Dr. Tamarah Holmes**, Director, Office of Broadband - Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development



12:00 PM - 12:15 PM | Networking Break

THURSDAY

Lunch

12:15 PM - 12:45 PM | Foyer

KEYNOTE

Fireside Chat with FCC Commissioner Anna M. Gomez

12:45 PM- 1:30 PM | Salons AB

Join us for a special Fireside Chat with FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez, a true broadband champion. We'll dive into the future of connectivity and why Commissioner Gomez continues to be a powerful advocate for anchor institutions and unserved communities.



MODERATOR

Tracy Doaks

President & CEO - MCNC North Carolina Research and Education Network

Tracy Doaks is President & CEO of MCNC, the technology nonprofit focused on delivering high performance protected Internet and networking, cloud services, cybersecurity, and other essential technologies for communities throughout North Carolina. MCNC owns and manages nearly a 4,500-mile fiber optic infrastructure backbone, the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), that supports more than 900 community anchor institutions (CAIs) in all 100 counties.

Prior to joining MCNC in August 2020, Tracy was state chief information officer and secretary for the N.C. Department of Information Technology where she led the state agency responsible for all IT procurement, state cybersecurity, operational services, broadband infrastructure, solutions division, data analytics center, the N.C. 911 Board and strategic IT planning.

Tracy earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from North Carolina State University and then went on to earn her CIO certification from the UNC School of Government. Additionally, she received the 2018 Public CIO Award from NC TECH and the 2016 Distinguished Alumnus Award from North Carolina University's Edward P. Fitts Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. Most recently, Tracy was named the recipient of the Triangle Business Journal's 2022 Women in Business Award for Nonprofit Leadership.



SPEAKER

Anna Gomez

Commissioner - Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Commissioner Anna M. Gomez is the first Latina-American to be confirmed to the FCC in over two decades. She believes the FCC does best when its work honors the people it serves.

Commissioner Gomez is committed to ensuring we have a vibrant, strong, competitive telecommunications and media marketplace that promotes U.S. economic prosperity and security while also meeting the needs of all consumers.

There is much work to be done to ensure that every person in every community, regardless of geography or income, has access to high-speed broadband. She has experienced the fear of not being able to afford a telephone bill and knows what it means to risk the loss of connection. Ensuring that everyone in rural, Tribal, suburban, and urban communities can get and stay connected is critical to next-century success for us all. As a Latina American, she brings her perspective to the Commission on ways to address the needs of all communities—including the Latino community.

She knows we must be vigilant about protecting consumers. From spam calls and scam texts, to promoting localism and diverse media ownership, to ensuring the internet is open and that consumers can go where they want online without limits, Commissioner Gomez believes consumers' interests must lead communications policymaking. That also means ensuring our first responders can communicate in times of crisis. Her years of working with public safety leaders and first responders has given her an appreciation of their unique—and vital—communications needs. It also means ensuring our connections are secure and resilient.



1:30 PM - 1:45 PM | Networking Break

THURSDAY



WORKSHOP

E-Rate Workshop: Reflecting on the Past, Listening to the Present, Shaping the Future

1:45 PM - 4:00 PM | Salon H

This interactive three-hour workshop brings together experts and practitioners for a timely discussion on the current state and future of the E-Rate program.

The Future of E-rate: From Connectivity to Capacity: The session opens with a panel designed to explore the program from both a historical perspective and how evolving broadband needs have shifted current reform and modernization efforts.

Listening to the Nation: E-Rate Trends & Community Voices: The conversation continues through the lens of the school and library, as participants will get a firsthand look at the current trends and challenges captured in this year's Funds for Learning E-Rate Trends Report.

Make Your Mark: Shaping E-Rate Reform: Finally, workshop participants will break out into groups to consider program reform from an application and programmatic perspective. Whether you're a seasoned applicant or new to E-Rate, these breakouts provide your opportunity to connect, learn, and help influence the future of one of the nation's most impactful broadband initiatives.



Rachelle Chong
Principal - Law Office
of Rachelle Chong

MODERATOR



Bretton Himsworth
Managing Director -
E-Rate Central

SPEAKER



Kitty O'Connor
Chief of Staff - UDT United
Data Technologies, Inc.

SPEAKER



Andrew Eisley
Consulting Director -
E-Rate Central

SPEAKER



Megan Janicki
Deputy Director, Public Policy
& Advocacy - American
Library Association

SPEAKER



Karina Roiuk-Yu
CFO - Kellogg & Sovereign
Consulting

SPEAKER



John Harrington
CEO - Funds for Learning

SPEAKER



Lauren Moore
Assistant Commissioner for
Libraries and State Librarian -
New York State Library

SPEAKER



Gina Spade
Principal - Broadband
Legal Strategies

SPEAKER



Winston Himsworth
Executive Director -
E-Rate Central

SPEAKER



Christine Morris
Digital Resources Manager -
Ohio Public Library
Information Network (OPLIN)

SPEAKER



Jean Welsh
Project Manager - Fairfax
County Public Schools

SPEAKER

THURSDAY

SESSIONS

Bridging the Digital Divide With Cultural Awareness

1:45 PM - 2:45 PM | Salons FG

Closing the digital divide requires more than infrastructure—it demands cultural understanding and community trust. This session explores how policymakers and practitioners can better engage diverse communities to ensure federal broadband programs truly reach those they're meant to serve.

Panelists will highlight how culturally responsive approaches to digital literacy, affordability, and outreach can unlock lasting economic and educational benefits nationwide.

MODERATOR **JudeAnne Heath**, Executive Director - HTTP Policy

SPEAKER **Amy Hinojosa**, National President and CEO - Mana or Hermana National

SPEAKER **Lia Nitake**, Senior Director of Technology, Telecommunications and Media Policy - Asian Americans Advancing Justice

SPEAKER **Claudia Ruiz**, Senior Civil Rights Policy Advisor - UnidosUS

SPEAKER **Garfield Swaby**, VP of IT - New York Public Library

Enhancing Rural Health Care Resilience

1:45 PM - 2:45 PM | Salons DE

Reliable broadband is the backbone of digital health, especially in rural communities. This panel brings together leaders working at the intersection of healthcare and connectivity to explore what it takes to build sustainable healthcare ecosystems - where anchor institutions play a critical role in expanding telehealth services, improving cybersecurity, and bridging healthcare gaps. Speakers will share real-world success stories, from hurricane recovery efforts to telestroke networks and tribal clinic connectivity, highlighting how programs like the Rural Health Care (RHC) Program, the Rural Health Transformation Program, and even the BEAD program can work together in building resilient healthcare networks. The panel will also highlight current challenges that providers face, and how funding for healthcare networks help anchor institutions sustain and expand telehealth services, improve cybersecurity, and bridge healthcare gaps.

MODERATOR **Kim Gaffney Corriher**, Director of Government Operations - Southern Ohio Health Care Network

SPEAKER **Jordan Rogers**, Relationship Marketing Director - NC Telehealth Network Association

SPEAKER **Tom Valandra**, VP of Tribal Business Development - Tribal Ready

SPEAKER **Michael Wallace**, Assistant Director - UAMS e-Link

SPEAKER **Jameka Williams**, Director of Member Engagement - Merit Network

Broadband in Action: Empowering Anchor Institutions and Advancing Community Impact

1:45 PM - 2:45 PM | Salon C

Broadband is about more than access—it's about opportunity. This session spotlights grantees of the Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program, including HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs, as they build high-speed infrastructure, boost digital literacy, and drive workforce development in underserved areas.

Hear directly from campus leaders and the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives on lessons learned, replicable strategies, and how broadband investments are powering long-term community growth.

MODERATOR **Katherine Kempe**, Vice President, Community & Stakeholder Engagement - Kaptive

SPEAKER **Uttam Gaulee**, Professor of Higher Education Administration and Policy - Morgan State University

SPEAKER **Dawit Haile**, Dean of the College of Engineering and Technology - Virginia State University

SPEAKER **Dana Lambert**, CSU Pueblo Director of Digital Equity

2:45 PM - 3:00 PM | Networking Break

THURSDAY

SESSIONS

Extreme Conditions, Extraordinary Response: Recovery After Natural Disasters

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM | Salons FG

The images were unimaginable – raging wildfires in California, devastating floods in West Virginia, and in September 2024, Hurricane Helene’s punishing blow to Western North Carolina. Across the country, natural disasters have displaced families, triggered landslides, overwhelmed critical infrastructure, and tested the resilience of entire communities. This panel brings together leaders and representatives from the states most impacted to share their firsthand experiences responding to these events. They will spotlight the innovative solutions, tough lessons, and collaborative strategies that emerged – from grassroots action rooted in community knowledge to public-private partnerships that bridged gaps in infrastructure and services.

- MODERATOR** **James Nester**, Senior Director of Marketing & Client Advocacy - MCNC North Carolina Research and Education Network
- SPEAKER** **Adam Geisler**, President - AIM Concepts
- SPEAKER** **Tommy Jacobson**, Chief Operating Officer - MCNC North Carolina Research and Education Network
- SPEAKER** **Derek Zerkowski**, Broadband Project Coordinator - West Virginia Department of Economic Development

Powering Rural Innovation: How Middle Mile and Edge Infrastructure Enable AI Across Communities

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM | Salons DE

Discover how middle mile fiber networks and edge data centers are unlocking the power of AI in rural markets. This session will unpack the current federal landscape around AI infrastructure and spotlight real-world models where advanced infrastructure is being used to support smart agriculture, personalized learning, modernized healthcare, and digital government services. Panelists will also discuss how NTIA and middle mile funds can foster rural broadband projects. Learn how strategic investments in connectivity are transforming rural communities—and what it takes to replicate this success elsewhere.

- MODERATOR** **Austin Bonner**, Partner - HWG LLP
- SPEAKER** **Brian Daniels**, Managing Director, Strategic Sales - Zayo
- SPEAKER** **Michael Keough**, Chief Information Officer - Region 16 ESC
- SPEAKER** **Dave Irek**, VP of Business Development - Duos Edge AI

Closing the Gap: Broadband Affordability, State Innovation, and the Connectivity Imperative

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM | Salon C

This session will explore the evolving policy landscape around broadband affordability and its downstream impact on education and health access. Panelists will discuss new research into the K-12 digital divide, recent state-level approaches like New York’s Affordable Broadband Act, and how these efforts intersect with telehealth, equity, and long-term digital inclusion strategies.

- MODERATOR** **Amina Fazullah**, Head of Tech Policy Advocacy - Common Sense Media
- SPEAKER** **Drew Garner**, Director of Policy Engagement - Benton Institute for Broadband & Society
- SPEAKER** **Albert Pulido**, Deputy Secretary for Finance & Technology - NYS Executive Chamber
- SPEAKER** **Ji Soo Song**, Director of Projects & Initiatives - SETDA



4:00 PM - 4:15 PM | Networking Break

THURSDAY

PLENARY:

Awards Ceremony

4:15 PM - 4:45 PM | Salons AB

Join us in celebrating both public leaders and SHLB members who are Broadband Champions!



SPEAKER

Jessica Rosenworcel

Executive Director - MIT Media Lab



SPEAKER

John Windhausen

President - Telepoly Consulting



SPEAKER

Kelleigh Cole, MBA

Director of Policy and Communications -
Utah Education and Telehealth Network



SPEAKER

Lauren Moore

Assistant Commissioner for Libraries and
State Librarian - New York State



SPEED NETWORKING

SPONSORED BY FINLEY ENGINEERING

4:45 PM - 5:45 PM | Salons 1&2

Skip the stress, keep the small talk! This guided (and seated) speed networking session sponsored by Finley Engineering helps you take the guesswork out of networking. Let our host lead the way as you make meaningful connections, one timed conversation at a time.



RECEPTION

SPONSORED BY ZAYO

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM | Skyview

Raise a glass at this reception sponsored by Zayo Education, SHLB's proud partner in advancing connectivity for the anchor institutions that power our communities.



SHLB BOARD DINNER

(INVITE ONLY)

7:30 PM - 9:30 PM | Pentagon

FRIDAY

Breakfast

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM | Foyer

PLENARY

The USF Bipartisan Working Group

8:30 AM - 9:15 AM | Salons AB

Join SHLB's Joey Wender and Kristen Corra in conversation with Congressional staff on the newly relaunched bipartisan USF Working Group. Hear insider perspectives on USF's future, upcoming reforms, and what it means for broadband access nationwide.



MODERATOR

Joey Wender

Executive Director - SHLB Coalition



SPEAKER

Carmen Scurato

Senior Policy Counsel - Senator Ben Ray Lujan



MODERATOR

Kristen Corra

Policy Counsel - SHLB Coalition



SPEAKER

Scott Leathard

Legislative Counsel - Senator Dan Sullivan



9:15 AM - 9:30 AM | Networking Break



FRIDAY

SESSIONS

Securing the Digital Frontlines: Cyber Resilience for Anchor Institutions

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM | Salon C

Cybersecurity threats are escalating across every sector, and for healthcare organizations, K-12 schools, and libraries, defending against them is especially complex. These anchor institutions face a perfect storm: rising ransomware and data breach incidents, limited budgets, uneven compliance requirements, and a critical shortage of cybersecurity expertise. This session will focus on strategic cybersecurity planning and implementation, including how to build scalable, resilient infrastructure that protects patients, students, patrons, and staff. We'll delve into the challenges of managing technology needs with current funding resources (such as the FCC's Cybersecurity Pilot Program and Rural Health Care program) as anchors try to implement advanced security solutions.

MODERATOR **Bryan Brown**, Operational SE Director - Cisco

SPEAKER **Ty Beauchamp**, Integrated Library Systems Manager - Harris County Public Library

SPEAKER **Bryan East**, Equipment Manager - SpectraCorp Technologies Group, Inc.

SPEAKER **Michael Flood**, Founder & CEO - Alpine Frog, LLC

SPEAKER **Sheryl Knox**, MILS - Technology Director Capital Area District Libraries

SPEAKER **Russ Selken**, K-12 Technology Executive and Cyber/AI Advocate - Russ Selken Consultancy

Research & Education Networks Advancing Community Healthcare

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM | Salons DE

Medical-grade broadband is essential for modern healthcare—especially in rural and underserved areas. This session highlights how state Research & Education (R&E) networks are expanding telehealth access through community partnerships and smart use of funding like the Healthcare Connect Fund.

Hear from leaders at UETN, MCNC, and AREON as they share real-world strategies for building secure, high-capacity broadband networks that support clinics, hospitals, and medical training institutions. Learn how R&E networks are bridging the gap between education and healthcare to strengthen community well-being.

MODERATOR **Jen Leasure**, President and CEO - The Quilt

SPEAKER **Kelleigh Cole, MBA**, Director of Policy and Communications - Utah Education and Telehealth Network

SPEAKER **Tracy Doaks**, President & CEO - MCNC North Carolina Research and Education Network

SPEAKER **Elon Turner**, Executive Director - Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network

E-Rate Rules on the Applicant-Service Provider Relationship: What's Allowed, What's Not, and What's New?

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM | Salons FG

Navigating the E-Rate application process can be complex, especially when it comes to the communications between service providers and applicants. This timely panel will unpack the complex boundaries that govern communication between vendors and E-Rate applicants, particularly in the critical period before a Form 470 is filed.

Panelists will walk through what the E-Rate rules say about pre-Form 470 interactions, real-world examples, common missteps that can lead to competitive bidding violation, and recent USAC guidance and FCC appeal decisions that clarify (or complicate) the rules. In addition, they will discuss E-Rate gift rules, with an interactive session where you can quiz yourself.

SPEAKER **Jeff Mitchell**, Counsel - Mitchell Law LLP

SPEAKER **Gina Spade**, Principal - Broadband Legal Strategies



10:30 AM - 10:45 AM | Networking Break

FRIDAY

SESSIONS

Impact of Federal Dollars on Library Connectivity

10:45 AM - 11:45 AM | Salon C

In every community across the country, libraries advance literacy, digital skills building, and workforce development. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) provides the only dedicated source of federal funding for the 125,000 libraries across the country through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

Federal investments such as LSTA boost digital opportunity for all and advance connectivity, digital literacy, and inclusion so every American can achieve their economic, educational, and social goals. Efforts to cut library funding harm communities and further widen digital opportunity gaps. Learn more about how LSTA funds have worked to bridge the digital divide, including supporting programs like E-Rate. An expert panel will break down the various ways the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funds access and connectivity and how this funding supports communities across the country.

MODERATOR **Megan Janicki**, Deputy Director, Public Policy & Advocacy - American Library Association

SPEAKER **Lauren Abner**, State E-rate Coordinator - Kentucky Department for Library and Archives

SPEAKER **Christine Morris**, Digital Resources Manager - Ohio Public Library Information Network

How Hot Spots and Public Wi-Fi Help Close the Digital Divide

10:45 AM - 11:45 AM | Salons DE

Discover how innovative public Wi-Fi initiatives and hotspot programs are connecting underserved communities and expanding access to essential online resources. This session will showcase the best use cases from schools, libraries, and local governments that are using these solutions to bridge gaps in affordability and availability—bringing reliable internet to those who need it most.

MODERATOR **Landon Garner**, President - Kajeet, Inc.

SPEAKER **Michael Flood**, Founder & CEO - Alpine Frog, LLC

SPEAKER **Zack Kowalski**, Senior Vice President of Business Development - Inseego

SPEAKER **Edward Melton**, Executive Director - Harris County Public Library

SPEAKER **Dr. David Weems Sr.**, Director of Technology - Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD

FRIDAY

Grab & Go Lunch

11:45 AM - 12:00 PM | Foyer

PLENARY

The Future of Anchor Connectivity: A Public Strategy Session with SHLB

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | Salons AB

Join SHLB for an interactive conversation to help shape our coalition's strategic priorities for the next 3–5 years. This session invites feedback from the field on the most pressing needs and opportunities facing anchor institutions—and how SHLB can lead the way in advancing broadband equity and connectivity nationwide. Your insights will help kickstart our strategic planning process and guide our collective path forward.



SPEAKER

Cindy Aden

Program Chair - University of Washington, iSchool



SPEAKER

Philip Neufeld

Executive Officer, Strategic Research - Fresno Unified School District



SPEAKER

Joey Wender

Executive Director - SHLB Coalition



THANK YOU to our SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



THANK YOU to our SPONSORS

BRONZE SPONSORS








... AND TO OUR SUPPORTERS







Thanks to Kelley Drye for making SHLB Conference attendance possible for anchor institutions.



Become a SHLB member today!

The SHLB Coalition is a mission-driven, public interest organization that advocates for policies and programs that enable anchor institutions to obtain and promote open, secure, high-quality broadband services to support connectivity and opportunity for all. SHLB works with a diverse coalition of member organizations from across the broadband ecosystem to advance its mission. Your membership supports this work and gives your organization a seat at the table where it can help shape SHLB's advocacy and programs. To learn more visit www.shlb.org/membership.

