



METROLAB NETWORK

# ANNUAL REPORT

2019

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear MetroLab Network members, supporters, and friends:

Presented here is MetroLab's 2019 annual report. This past year has been a critical one for our organization and this report lays the year's developments and previews our forthcoming activity. At the onset, it is important to thank those who have made MetroLab a success: our university and local government members; supporters from the philanthropic and corporate community; and partners from the federal government and broader civic ecosystem.

2019 was a year of institutional growth at MetroLab, with three major highlights:

- Organizational spinout to an independent nonprofit organization after incubation during our initial phase at Carnegie Mellon University. Our orientation as a standalone 501(c)3 allows us to form strengthened partnerships with our members, funders, and partners.
- Successful implementation of membership dues model, with **34 universities and their local government partners committed** to MetroLab's new model that allows us to invest in programming that addresses the core priorities of these members.
- Establishment of 3-year **cooperative agreement** with the National Science Foundation to support the Civic Innovation Challenge, a national research and action competition that underscores how the federal government can partner with MetroLab to develop new funding opportunities for universities and local governments in the civic ecosystem.

These institutional developments allow MetroLab to refine our ability to offer year-over-year impact for our universities and local government members and partners from a range of sectors, including federal agencies and philanthropic, corporate, nonprofit, and civic organizations. Beyond organizational growth, there have been a number of program-related highlights:

- Preparation for the launch of the \$10+ million Civic Innovation Challenge, a partnership between the National Science Foundation, Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security, and MetroLab, that supports partnerships between universities, state and local governments and agencies, and community organizations focused on mobility and resilience priorities.
- Successful 2019 Annual Summit in Boulder.
- MetroLab's international expansion, welcoming 4 new members from the United Kingdom and Canada.
- The preparation of the **strategic plan**, which includes a blueprint for activity through 2022, including member-focused initiatives like an effort to scale civic research agendas across the network.
- Continuation of project promotion, including our Innovation of the Month series in partnership with GovTech.

Thank you for your continued support for and engagement with MetroLab. Our successes over the past year -- and our vision for the future -- are due to your interest and enthusiasm in growing this field of important work.

Sincerely,



Ben Levine  
Executive Director

## About MetroLab Network and Organizational Update

MetroLab Network is an international collaborative of 34 universities, 27 cities, and 6 counties focused on civic research and innovation.

- We cultivate **partnerships between universities and local governments** to drive research-informed, evidence-based policy and enable data and technology transformation.
- We foster a **peer network** of stakeholders from academia and local government that constitute an applied, interdisciplinary field of research and practice.
- We connect to an **ecosystem of federal, philanthropic, and civic partners** with a shared interest in the promise of civic research and innovation.
- These efforts **enable data & tech transformation** and drive **evidence-based, research-informed policy** at scale.

MetroLab was launched jointly by 40 mayors and university leaders as part of the White House Smart Cities Initiative in 2015. In 2019, with strong support from the universities and local governments that were involved, and with a proven track-record with funders and partners, MetroLab moved forward with its next phase. That phase included a spin-out from Carnegie Mellon University, which served as MetroLab's fiscal sponsor since its launch, to an independent 501(c)3 organization. It also included a call for the university-local government members to invest in the organization, to offer funding that will enable MetroLab to reach its full potential, including an emerging portfolio of member-oriented activities and partnerships with key stakeholders like the National Science Foundation.

## 2019 Program Overview

### Civic Innovation Challenge

MetroLab continues its work with the **National Science Foundation**, the primary funder of basic research in the US, on developing the Civic Innovation Challenge (CIVIC). CIVIC is a research and action competition that aims to fund ready-to-implement, research-based pilot projects that have the potential for scalable, sustainable, and transferable impact on community-identified priorities.

MetroLab began working with NSF on this project as part of an EAGER grant received in 2018. As part of developing the Civic Innovation Challenge, MetroLab and NSF hosted an Ideas Competition in the spring of 2019, where civic partners from across the US shared their ideas for important research topics in their communities, and ways to best structure a research competition.

MetroLab received over 100 unique idea submissions and on April 29, 2019 hosted an *Ideas Festival*, a workshop at NSF to scope the structure and topics gathered from the Ideas Competition. This external engagement process, along with a research effort on successful challenge competitions, ultimately led to a cooperative agreement in August 2019 between NSF and MetroLab to support MetroLab’s role in the execution of CIVIC. MetroLab’s role



*Attendees of the Ideas Festival discuss potential structures for the Civic Innovation Challenge.*

includes communications, the development of resources, cultivation of communities-of-practice, and other programs and strategies to elevate the reach and impact of the program.

In late 2019 MetroLab hired Josh Schacht as a program manager for CIVIC. CIVIC was launched in April 2020 and teams of researcher and civic partners will compete across two tracks - Mobility and Resilience. You can learn more about CIVIC [here](#).

The ideation, scoping, and execution of CIVIC reflects an important role that MetroLab can play in the civic innovation ecosystem. Beyond the impact of more than \$10 million in new funding, the program also introduces design features that will target research on demonstrated community-identified high-priority topics, offer a platform for approaches to scale across sites, and ensure all teams that participate advance project goals during the process.

**Annual Summit**

In September, we hosted our annual summit in partnership with the City of Boulder and the University of Colorado, Boulder. At the summit, over 200 leaders from academia, government, and other civic



*Left to Right: Mayor of Boulder, Suzanne Jones; Gov. Martin O’Malley, Chair of MetroLab Advisory Council; Mayor of Albany, GA, Dorothy Hubbard; Mayor of Gainesville, FL, Lauren Poe; and Mayor of Fort Collins, CO, Wade Troxell*

domains gathered for panels, workshops, and networking. We were pleased to welcome Governor Jared Polis, along with a number of Mayors from across MetroLab’s community. Among the focus areas that gained major attention at the MetroLab Summit included 1) new developments in mobility data standards, sharing, and analytics; 2) municipal data privacy and data sharing; 3) a range of member-driven roundtable events focused on topics like digital equity, regional partnerships, and more.

## Membership

This year we introduced our membership dues model for both US and international members. Our **membership includes** 34 universities along with their civic partners that include 27 cities and 6 counties. Dues funding brings capacity to MetroLab to invest in activities that will shape the civic research and innovation ecosystem while advancing local activities in our members' communities. The **Strategic Plan**, completed in 2019 and released in early 2020, highlights our member priorities and planned activities, briefly reflected below.

1. Strengthening the Civic Research and Innovation Ecosystem
2. Advancing MetroLab Member Projects
3. Strengthening University-Local Government Partnerships
4. Cultivating a Peer Network and Member-Driven Organization
5. Engaging Students and Cultivating Talent

Map of MetroLab Network Members



An in-depth guide to MetroLab membership is available in the **MetroLab Network Member Guide**.

## Civic Research Agenda

As part of our membership model, in 2019 MetroLab began an effort to create a new national model for how universities, cities, and communities can identify priorities and work together, leveraging a new tool initially developed by the City of Boston called a "**Civic Research Agenda**." A review of successful MetroLab university-local government partnerships and projects revealed the importance of agenda-setting and common language to ensure that the expertise of academic partners is channeled to the nuanced, real-world priorities of local communities. These foundations are critical to enable data and technology transformation and drive evidence-based, research-informed policymaking, and they are even more imperative as communities across the country face challenges caused by COVID-19, racial inequality, and economic distress.

Kim Lucas, who spearheaded the creation of Boston's Civic Research Agenda, joined the MetroLab team as the Senior Director of Civic Research and Innovation to lead our development and scale of Civic Research Agendas across our membership, along with a national agenda that will inform institutional investments from federal agencies, national philanthropies, community foundations, and civic nonprofits. We are committed to this effort and look forward to engaging with members and partners as we develop this program in 2020.

## Innovation of the Month Series

MetroLab continues to curate and promote the excellent work happening across the network through our Innovation of the Month series, which aims to highlight impactful tech, data, and innovation projects underway between local governments and universities. A special thanks to our publishing partner, [GovTech](#), for helping us push these projects to their broad audience. You can explore the Innovation of the Month articles [here](#).

# 2019 SERIES

 <p><b>JANUARY</b></p> <p><b>Real-Time data analytics aim to reduce traffic fatalities</b></p> <p>University of Central Florida researchers, in partnership with the <b>City of Orlando</b>, are using real-time traffic data to uncover strategies for reducing car crashes and creating fatality-free roads</p>	 <p><b>FEBRUARY</b></p> <p><b>Urban, social data help reduce fire and safety risk</b></p> <p>This project highlighted how the <b>Portland Fire and Rescue Bureau</b> and <b>Portland State University</b> are using public data to reduce emergency call volume and improve city vibrancy</p>	 <p><b>MARCH</b></p> <p><b>Planning tool tracks climate change effect on infrastructure</b></p> <p>With a GIS and data forecasting stormwater planning tool, the <b>University of Colorado Boulder</b> and the <b>City and County of Denver</b> are informing policymaking ahead of predicted rainfall increases</p>
 <p><b>APRIL</b></p> <p><b>Houston works toward data-driven disaster response</b></p> <p>April's Innovation of the Month showcased how the <b>City of Houston</b> and <b>Rice University</b> are leveraging data in resilience plans for future flood mitigation</p>	 <p><b>MAY</b></p> <p><b>Data drives down Nashville's emergency response times</b></p> <p>The <b>Nashville Fire Department</b> and <b>IT Agency</b> partnered with the <b>Vanderbilt Initiative for Smart Cities Operation and Research</b> to create a tool that uses predictive modeling to forecast emergency response times</p>	 <p><b>JUNE</b></p> <p><b>EPIC-N engages students on city issues</b></p> <p>This feature detailed the high-tech solutions developed by the <b>Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities - Network (EPIC-N)</b> with 38 university programs across the country</p>
 <p><b>JULY</b></p> <p><b>KC takes data-driven approach to addressing blight</b></p> <p><b>Kansas City</b> and <b>UMKC</b>, as part of the <b>Abandoned to Vacant</b> project, use open data to map abandoned houses and provide insight into the neighborhoods surrounding houses on the market</p>	 <p><b>AUGUST</b></p> <p><b>Data-driven health care benefits underserved populations</b></p> <p>In partnership with the <b>University of Florida</b>, <b>Gainesville Fire Rescue</b> tracked patient metrics and facilitated real-time communication between emergency workers and hospitals to reduce costs of frequent EMS users</p>	 <p><b>SEPTEMBER</b></p> <p><b>Chattanooga smart corridor hot bed for real-time analytics</b></p> <p>A collaboration among the <b>University of Tennessee at Chattanooga</b>, the <b>City of Chattanooga</b>, and other civic partners drives work behind the <b>MLK Smart Corridor</b> to test technologies and generate data-driven policy</p>
 <p><b>OCTOBER</b></p> <p><b>South Bend, Indiana works to cut lead contamination in homes</b></p> <p>October featured a program at the <b>Center for Civic Innovation at Notre Dame</b> which is collecting data on contamination from lead paint in homes and creating at-home testing kits to improve health outcomes</p>	 <p><b>NOVEMBER</b></p> <p><b>Mapping tool IDs potential land for affordable housing</b></p> <p><b>City of Miami</b> policymakers are using a mapping platform called <b>Land Access for Neighborhood Development</b> to identify available lots near transit services and visualize housing options for underserved populations</p>	 <p><b>DECEMBER</b></p> <p><b>N.C. County takes preventative approach to opioid crisis</b></p> <p>This month highlighted the <b>Guilford County Solution to the Opioid Problem</b>, an organization that both treats overdoses and additions and gets ahead of overdoses before they occur</p>

## People

### Board of Directors

**Bill Fulton, *Board Chair*** - Director of the Kinder Institute Rice University

**Michael Mattmiller, *Vice Chair*** - Director, Government Affairs Microsoft

**Lisa Camp, *Secretary*** - Chief of Staff, Office of Provost Case Western Reserve University

**Karen Lightman, *Treasurer*** - Executive Director, Metro21: Smart Cities Institute, Carnegie Mellon

**Daniel Correa** - Strategic Advisor on Government Innovation, Partnership for Public Service

**Santiago Garces** - Chief Innovation Officer, City of Pittsburgh

**Debra Lam** - Managing Director of Smart Cities and Inclusive Innovation, Georgia Tech

### Staff

**Ben Levine** - Executive Director

**Katy Getsie** - Director of Strategy and Operations

**Kim Lucas** - Senior Director of Civic Research and Innovation

**Josh Schacht** - Program Manager

### Advisors

**Martin J. O'Malley** - Senior Fellow and Advisory Council Chair

**Advisory Council** - 20 Advisors with expertise in government, academia, and civic innovation

## Support

MetroLab benefits from broad-based support from across the civic innovation ecosystem. Thank you to all those who continue to support our organization through time investment, partnerships, and funding. Select supporters are acknowledged below:

We are also grateful for the support of funders in 2019, including the **National Science Foundation**, **The Kresge Foundation**, and the **Annie E. Casey Foundation**.

Our **34 university members**, along with their government and civic partners, committed funding as part of our membership dues model, creating resources for investment in member-centric programming at MetroLab.

Our 2019 Summit was supported by generous sponsorship from **AARP**, **CrownCastle**, **Grant Thornton**, **Spin** and **Zayo**.

MetroLab partners with external organizations with mission alignment that help advance joint priorities, including the **Future of Privacy Forum**, with a focus on issues of privacy in new data and technology deployments, and the **Open Mobility Foundation**, with a focus on data-driven mobility.