



**PBS NEWS HOUR** **STUDENT REPORTING LABS**

**2023-2028  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

# 2022-2023 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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## STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANTS

Story|things

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

If you're lucky, there comes a moment in projects, organizations, and life when the lessons and experiences of the past coalesce into a clear understanding of purpose and opportunities for the future. I'm incredibly excited to share this strategic plan, shaped by a transitional year of hard questions, research, analysis, and engagement with students, alumni, teachers and stakeholders. The result is a five-year plan for PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs that builds on the foundation we've created through innovation and focus.

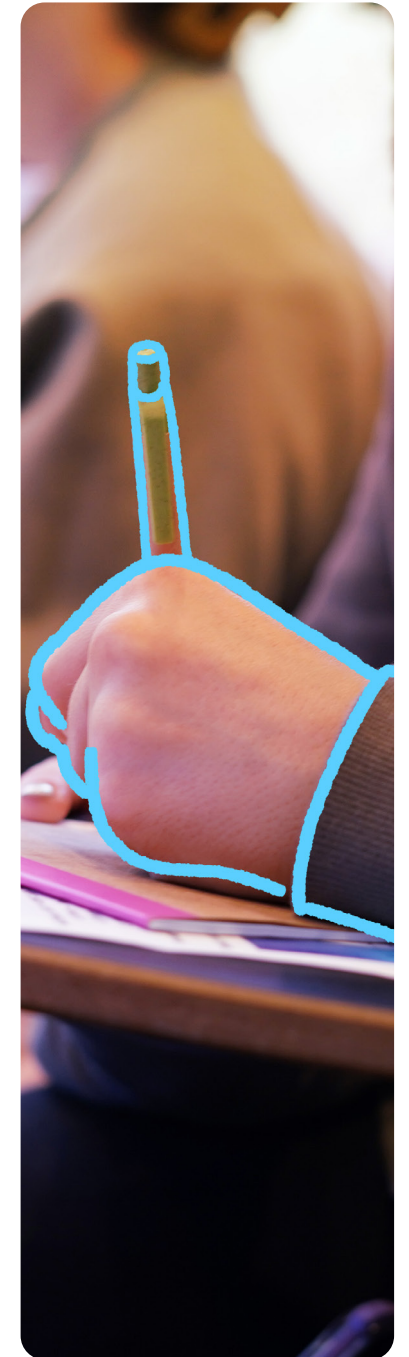
Many thanks to StoryThings, the consultants whose organization, passion, and investment in this strategic planning project were matched by their insights, professionalism and creativity. StoryThings conducted more than 40 interviews with students and teachers, provided literature and landscape analyses, and hosted dynamic roundtable discussions with thought leaders across sectors. They supported the SRL team as we thought through organizational shifts and asked important questions that helped shape the ideas and priorities reflected in this plan.

SRL's strategic plan for 2023-2028 is ambitious. We know there will be challenges along the way, questions to ask and answer, resources to be acquired, and decisions to be made. But I could not be more confident in the team we have in place to carry out this plan. In tandem with our partners and our participants, SRL's remarkably talented staff bring curiosity, expertise, and passion to the work ahead. We invite you to take this journey with us.

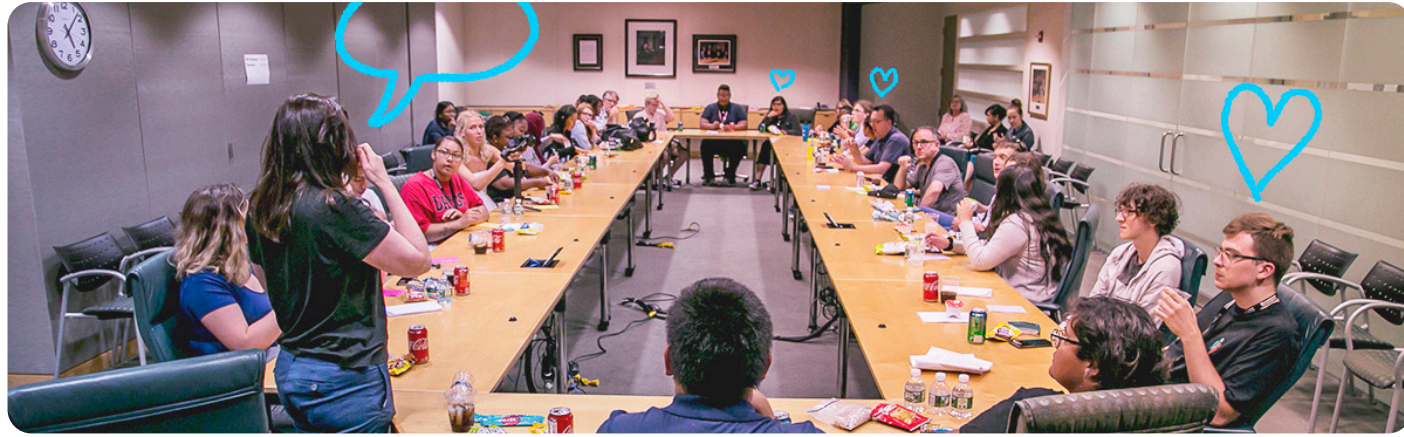
As we enter our 14th school year, I'm filled with gratitude for everyone who made this period of exploration possible. Here's to the next 14!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Leah Clapman'.

Leah Clapman  
Founder and Executive Director







## THE BIG PICTURE:

PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs is a hands-on journalism training program that connects young people with real world experiences and educators with resources and community.

## MISSION

To be the premiere, non-collegiate journalism training program in the United States by providing tools and meaningful learning opportunities for young people and the educators who support them.

## CORE VALUES

Listening, journalistic integrity, equity, collaboration, representation, curiosity, intentionality, respect.

## VISION

A world in which young people's voices are heard and valued, free expression meets journalistic integrity, and SRL leads a diverse and creative community of practice in media and journalism education.

## THEORY OF CHANGE: COMMUNITY

SRL has grown from its origin as a small pilot project in a handful of high school journalism classrooms. Over the past 14 years, we have increased not only our scale, but our scope. SRL now works with hundreds of students directly each year, and tens of thousands more through a vast network of educators using our resources. We collaborate with dozens of local public media stations and other nonprofit organizations around the country to uplift student voices and experiences, champion the tenets of unbiased and highly professional journalism, and support young people as they navigate early career paths and civic participation. We partner with philanthropic institutions to further broad goals around the future of journalism, workforce training, civic engagement, teen mental health, and more.

All this to say: SRL has become many things to many people. Our strategic plan for the next five years recognizes that broadening scope and scaling reach are not the sole markers of success. We have spent the past year identifying how program elements that have developed to meet needs and opportunities over the years will morph and grow into a sustainable, more cohesive SRL. The answer is community.

Over the next five years, SRL will convene and nurture a Community of Practice that holds space for all of our stakeholders while keeping students and the educators who support them at the center. Our theory of change, inspired by the Get Together model, provides a clear framework to spark the flame, stoke the fire, and pass the torch, empowering our community members to learn, lead, and light the way.

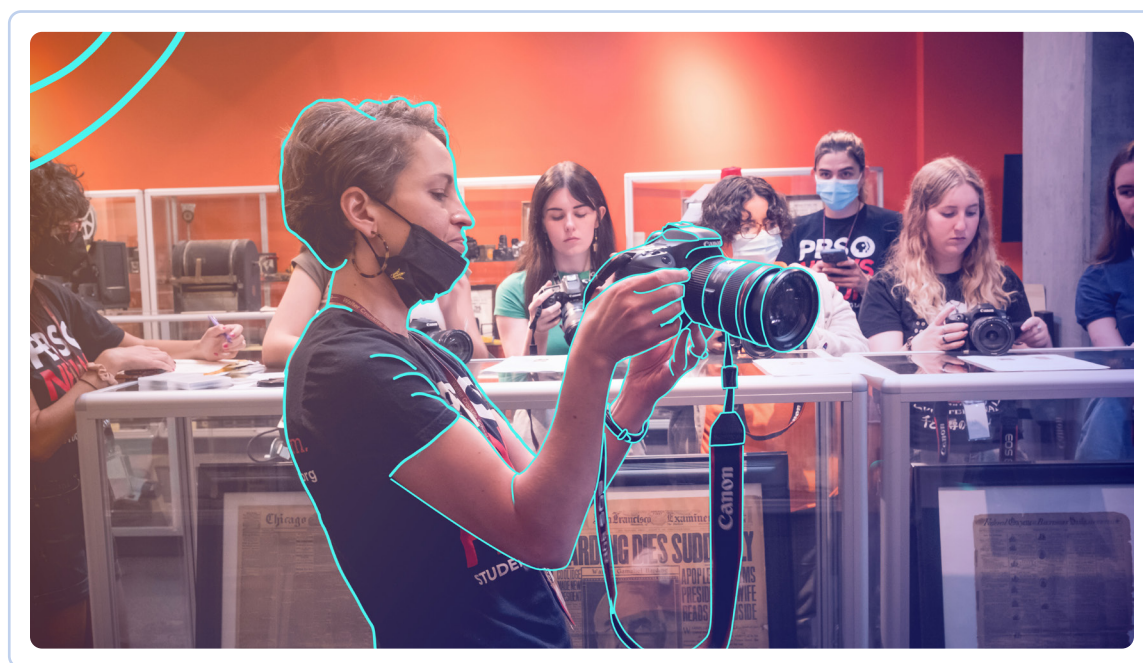




As our community and our organization take on a newly defined shape, SRL will further establish ourselves as leaders in this work, both as thinkers and as doers. With an ambition of being the premiere non-collegiate journalism training program in the country, SRL will attract widespread recognition for our program elements, the quality resources and content we produce, and – most importantly – the successes of our students and alumni.

Within this community-centered framework, our strategic plan rests on four priorities:

1. **Serve Young People:** support a thriving student and alumni community
2. **Support Educators:** steward a meaningful, peer-driven educator community
3. **Elevate SRL:** grow awareness and prestige in public media, journalism, and education sectors
4. **Enhance Sustainability:** develop strategies for long term growth and stability



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

## SERVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Support a thriving student and alumni community

### Needs, as found by consultants:

- Connection and network
- Trust in institutions
- Financial opportunities, internships, and jobs
- Access to mentors
- Representation in media

### How:

- Provide high quality, hands-on journalism training opportunities, including intensive Academy offerings, local workshops and training events, and gig opportunities with SRL and partner organizations
- Simplify the application process and benefits of SRL to more easily attract and nurture the next generation of journalists and media leaders, including clear pathways for students who don't have access to SRL through school
- Invest in alumni career development, including fellowships and internships as well as career resources such as job boards and networking opportunities
- Create early career pathways within SRL
- Establish spaces for community engagement and celebration through online platforms and in-person convenings such as conferences, local events, and trainings

### What are the goals for 2028?

- Established alumni community with ongoing online and regularly occurring in-person components
- Dedicated SRL alumni staff position for an alumnus to further their career development
- Regularly maintained resources for alumni, with ways to stay involved with SRL, alumni success stories, job opportunities, and more
- 50+ SRL alumni working in journalism and media
- Opportunities for alumni to become mentors and leaders
- Reliable tracking of alumni to better capture impact

### What's happening now?

- Piloting an additional, smaller scale Academy in addition to the weeklong summer training
- Establishing an Alumni Committee of SRL staff to identify the community's key needs and the resources required to address them
- Hosting more summer fellowships than years past
- Created Student Advisory Team involved in design of program strategy and activities
- Including career tips and resources in our Alumni Newsletter
- Gathering input and feedback from students through surveys, our new Student Advisory Team, conversation, and other listening tools

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

## SUPPORT EDUCATORS

**Steward a meaningful, peer-driven educator community**

### Needs, as found by consultants:

- A new outlook on media literacy from a trustworthy, independent source
- Paid opportunities, access to mentors and accreditation, consolidation of the teachers' roles
- Community, resources and support to deal with challenges and controversial teaching topics

### How:

- Provide high quality, customizable resources for teaching journalism, media literacy, storytelling, and media making
- Convene educators in virtual and physical places to connect, collaborate, and build community

### What are the goals for 2028?

- StoryMaker includes co-branded resources leveraging partner expertise
- Establish a formal achievement pathway, such as badges or certificates for completing SRL trainings and program participation
- A thriving, peer-driven community of 10,000+ educators from across the country that includes resource users and more deeply connected practitioners

- Pathways for educators to share their own lessons and resources via SRL
- More scholarships for Teacher Workshop participants and more paid opportunities for educators working on SRL projects
- More formal peer mentorship opportunities

### What's happening now?

- Piloting an SRL Regional Ambassador program to connect locally through peer leaders
- Building engagement on the SRL Educators Facebook group
- Gathering input and feedback from educators through surveys, our annual in-person Teacher Workshop, and conversation
- Designing a variety of new listening tools
- Working with local organizations, including PBS and NPR member stations, to host regional in-person professional development events
- Establishing an Accreditation Committee of SRL staff to identify educator wants and needs around acknowledgment of program participation, research options for accreditation and other acknowledgments, and make recommendations for next steps
- Collaborating with partners such as Poynter Institute's MediaWise and KUOW's RadioActive on co-branded resources for StoryMaker



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

## ELEVATE SRL

Grow awareness and prestige in public media, journalism, and education sectors

### Needs, as found by consultants:

- Establish relationships with other leaders in the field
- Make SRL more widely known and recognized
- Deliver on the SRL brand

### How:

- An industry advisory board that includes thought leaders, practitioners, and decision-makers from journalism and media professions
- More student and staff representation at large-scale conferences
- Prioritizing award submissions
- New partnerships with other established organizations

### What are the goals for 2028?

- SRL is broadly recognized in the journalism and media sectors as the premiere non-collegiate journalism training program
- StoryMaker is the destination for comprehensive journalism and media literacy education resources, with 10,000+ users
- Participants are able to clearly articulate their role in the SRL community

- SRL is regularly invited to participate in conferences, research projects, interviews, and collaboratives
- Conduct and disseminate research in tandem with partner on the need areas SRL is addressing, to include in future Annual Community Reports

### What's happening now?

- Establishing an Industry Committee of SRL staff to build an advisory board, with a goal of hosting the first convening in early 2024
- Developing content pitches for established distribution channels to publish planned SRL productions
- Creating a conference attendance plan that maximizes reach and impact
- Formalizing the way we and our participants talk about SRL, including terms for different forms of participation (ex. Fellows, Student Correspondent, Ambassador, etc.)
- Developing our first-ever Annual Community Report

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

## ENHANCE SUSTAINABILITY

Develop strategies for sustainable distribution and funding

### Needs, as found by consultants:

- Lasting financial security for a multi-million dollar, entirely self-funded program
- Stability for staff retention and participant expectations
- Focus SRL staff efforts on our strategic priorities vs. opportunistic grant projects and high cost, low reward efforts

### How:

- Diversify revenue streams, including exploring individual giving, content licensing, and offering services
- Establish channels and pathways for distribution beyond SRL as a publisher, leaving room to grow as a producer and training program

### What are the goals for 2028?

- Revenue streams including traditional foundation, government, and corporate grantmaking; individual giving; and other earned income from licensing and services
- SRL produces content that is published and distributed widely on other established channels

### What's happening now?

- Activation of a “donate button” online for small and moderate individual donations
- First-ever individual giving campaign
- Discussions with PBS NewsHour staff and supportive community members on establishing individual giving plans
- Developing content pitches for established distribution channels to publish planned SRL productions
- Changing the student content submission process to encourage self-publication and using data management to connect student producers to local PBS stations and other local media partners
- Continued prospect research of foundations, government programs, and corporate philanthropy that align with our strategies and annual projects