



PRESS RELEASE

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Hartford Public Library Receives Grant To Fund a New Digital Literacy Training Program

HARTFORD – Hartford Public Library received a \$211,194 grant from The Institute of Museum and Library Services to fund a new digital literacy training program.

“This was a very competitive process, and our success in securing federal grants is a testament to the reputation, proven results, grant writing skills and experience of our This American Place staff, under the leadership of Homa Naficy,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, Hartford Public Library’s president and CEO.

The funded projects were selected from 1,701 applications. The grants will support only 68 museum and library service projects that will take place over the next two years.

The funding will enable HPL to provide critical digital literacy skills training for Hartford residents.

In Hartford, a city with a poverty rate of 31%, the Digital Divide continues to be a pervasive issue and contributes to the persistent opportunity gap facing large segments of our community. The share of Hartford households with Internet access is 57.7% and at least 20,000 households are without Internet access.

“Unsurprisingly, those areas with the least connectivity are also the most economically disadvantaged,” Quinn-Carey said.

In addition, the pandemic has exposed the fact that U.S. industries are lacking in employing adequate numbers of skilled workers able to respond to the high demand for services and goods related to keeping healthcare workers, patients and the general public, healthy and secure. HPL’s training program will join the effort to create and advance programs that expand economic opportunities for workers and their families while boosting local businesses’ capacity.

The training will utilize a flexible Blended Learning approach, combining online educational coursework with remote live daily tutoring, including weekends and evenings. “We believe, individualized attention provides our learners not only with academic and technical support, but more importantly, it offers ongoing encouragement during these difficult times,” said Homa Naficy, executive director of The American Place.

This project will deliver integrated digital and industry-certificate trainings. It will target low income adults enrolled/enrolling in a high school diploma or certificate training program. It will prioritize those individuals residing in Hartford's federally designated Promise Zone, which encompasses one of the highest rates of poverty and digital exclusion in the region and nation.

The online coursework provides lessons in computer basic literacies and productivity skills as well as industry certificate trainings. The coursework may be completed at the Library or any place with Internet access. Once enrolled, progress is monitored by staff from The American Place. Students will be contacted regularly to make sure they are on track to finish the program in a timely manner.

"Digital literacy is more than just an educational concern. The pervasiveness of the digital divide is a social justice issue, preventing the vulnerable in our communities from improving their lives and providing for their families. The fallout from this problem is wide-reaching. This program will allow HPL to address the problem directly. By helping to increase people's skills, we hope to make a large impact on the quality of life in all of Hartford," Quinn-Carey said.

For more information about Hartford Public Library, visit hplct.org.

For more information about The American Place, visit tap.hplct.org.

About Hartford Public Library

Now celebrating its 126th year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. www.hplct.org.