

Hartford Public Library

Strategic Plan

January 2022

Prepared by



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Introduction

Hartford Public Library (“HPL”) is a vital civic anchor for the City of Hartford. HPL provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration, including: circulating collections and programs in seven locations across the city, programs supporting Hartford Public Schools and students, support for jobseekers, immigration services, concerts, exhibitions, lectures, and an archive of special collections spanning the city’s 300-year history through the Hartford History Center.

Since conducting its last strategic planning process in 2017, which included the consolidation of several branch locations, HPL has built back stronger on almost all accounts. HPL was able to expand services and operating hours at its remaining locations and made progress toward realizing the goals set out in the 2017 plan. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was an unforeseen and unwelcome new aspect to HPL’s operating environment, however, HPL pivoted its traditional services to serve the immediate needs of the community. The Library hosted coat drives, served as a FoodShare and COVID vaccination and test kit distribution site, loaned out hot-spots, and offered contactless book pickup.

In the Winter of 2021, HPL began a new planning process to articulate a vision for the coming years. Central to this planning process was engaging the voices and feedback of the community, to ensure that the resulting plan and programmatic strategy is reflective of community need and priority. The Library is also engaging in a separate but related planning process to define a strategy around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Additional key components of the strategic context guiding this planning process include: ensuring that HPL is building from a position of strength as a nationally recognized leader in library innovation and best practices, responding to the digital divide that has been deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and continuing to serve as a strong partner to the City of Hartford and Hartford Public Schools as they engage in parallel planning processes.

Task Force Members

The planning process was guided by a Task Force of senior staff, board, and corporators. The Task Force was convened five times over the course of planning. We thank them for their active participation, expertise, and time.

Task Force members were:

David Barrett, *Board Chair*

Rick Costello, *Board*

Leticia Cotto, *Customer Experience Officer*

Greg Davis, *Former Board Chair*

Violette Haldane, *Corporator*

Steve Harris, *Board*

Sara Lashetski, *Board*

Lois Lewis, *Corporator*

Sarah Needham, *Board*

Dan O'Shea, *Task Force Leader*

Bridget Quinn, *President & CEO*

Phyllis Shikora, *Board*

Karen Taylor, *Board*

Mary Tzambazakis, *Chief Operating Officer*

Julie Koo and Jennifer Martin of TDC facilitated this planning process.

Methodology

The planning process was conducted over four phases:

- Phase I: Discovery
- Phase II: SOAR Assessment
- Phase III: Community Engagement
- Phase IV: Planning

Phase I: Discovery

Phase I was completed between January and March of 2021. The work began with a set of initial interviews with HPL senior staff and Task Force members. Next, we drafted a process work plan and planning hypothesis to guide our next steps of research. This planning hypothesis served as a framework to test and update through the following phases of planning.

Phase II: SOAR Assessment

The SOAR Assessment phase commenced in mid-March 2021 and was completed in mid-May 2021. The primary sources for the SOAR assessment were 14 interviews¹ with HPL managers, three focus groups with 15 HPL staff members, two focus groups with 16 board members and corporators, internal documents and data provided by HPL, and secondary research to establish the external context in which HPL operates. TDC reviewed and analyzed data provided by HPL, as well as demographic data and other relevant information from external sources. To provide additional context, the SOAR Assessment also includes benchmarking against peer libraries.²

Phase III: Community Engagement

Phase III of the planning work began at the end of May 2021 and ran until early September 2021. Community engagement and feedback has always been viewed as a critical component of this planning process. In Phase III, we sought to collect community feedback through multiple vehicles, including:

- Interviews with 13 community leaders and partners³
- Two different surveys:
 - A short intercept survey that was administered at community events. This vehicle yielded 80 completed responses and 20 partial responses;
 - A longer digital survey, which was shared on the Library website and through Library email lists, and yielded 407 completed responses and 304 partial responses;

¹ A full list of staff interviewees can be found in Appendix A.

² A full list of SOAR assessment resources can be found in Appendix B.

³ A full list of community interviews can be found in Appendix A.

- Five focus groups were hosted at Barbour, Camp Field, Dwight, Park Street, and with youth/teens at the Downtown location. Approximately 40 people participated.
- Two hybrid town hall sessions were hosted Downtown and online and approximately 28 people participated.

It was important to HPL that this phase of work provide the community ample opportunities to share their perspectives and make their voices heard. HPL also offered translation services in Spanish, Urdu, Hindi, and ASL for the town halls; Spanish for one focus group; and Spanish for the surveys. The town hall was conducted in person, on Zoom, and on Facebook Live. The team accommodated requests to participate in the digital survey on paper.

Planning

HPL and TDC took the findings from Phases I through III and used them to develop a draft strategic plan with a revised vision, goals, strategies, and tactics. In order to engage more community voices, HPL facilitated discussions between October and November 2021, to give the community additional opportunities to provide feedback on the plan when it was still in the process of being drafted.

Opportunities for feedback included seven listening sessions (Albany, Barbour, Camp Field, Central, Park, Ropkins, and a virtual staff session) that were attended by approximately 64 community members and 17 staff, an online feedback form through which three staff and 13 community members participated, as well as topic-specific conversations about programming and financial implications with senior staff.

Research Findings

Implications of the SOAR Assessment

The SOAR Assessment was a critical input to Hartford Public Library's strategic planning process. The purpose of this Assessment was to provide information about HPL's services and to assess HPL's current strengths and opportunities in order to target strategic planning toward achieving specific and meaningful goals and highlight key implications for HPL to consider through the planning process.

The SOAR Assessment highlighted the following key points⁴:

- HPL's full complement of programs is needed in the community with the potential for different resource allocation;
- An inclusive, aspirational digital strategy needs to be articulated to address the digital divide;
- Internal and external training and marketing is needed to increase comfort with digital resources;
- Social services are critical for supporting the community but a strategy is needed to clarify HPL's role as service provider versus as a connector to resources;
- There is a desire and a need to engage the community more deeply in regular assessment and strategizing, as well as continuing to see and celebrate community members' strengths and interests by listening rather than being prescriptive;
- Workplace culture and practices should continue to develop and build from a place of strength;
- There is an opportunity to develop HPL's financial position through fundraising and relief funding;
- Leverage role as a national leader as a 21st century library.

Community Research Summary Findings

Summarized below are the key ideas and findings that came out of our Phase III research with community members through external interviews with HPL partners, community surveys, community focus groups, and town halls.⁵

Value of HPL

- HPL is a reputable and sophisticated organization;
- HPL is a community hub, a place for respite and a center of learning;
- HPL is a host of engaging and meaningful programming;
- HPL is a language resource and a resource for new arrivals;
- HPL has reliable, knowledgeable staff.

⁴ Please see Appendix C for more detail on the SOAR Assessment implications.

⁵ Please see Appendix D for more detail on the Community Engagement findings.

Community and Partner Concerns

- There remain some lingering concerns about branch closures as well as operating hours and reduction in services;
- HPL is overall a strong partner with some key areas for improvement;
- There are opportunities to align on strategic plans and goals of other organizations;
- There may be a need to address concerns around safety and parking;
- There is continued need for spaces and programming for both adults and children;
- A focus on literacy should be maintained.

Priorities for the City of Hartford

- Poverty and lack of skills based employment opportunities;
- Housing and homelessness;
- Health and violence;
- Broad education and multiple literacies;
- Asset mapping.

Strategic Opportunities for the Library

- Bridge lines of communication between service providers;
- Be a leader in a more robust referral service, mentoring, and one-on-one connections;
- Consider strategies for potentially underserved constituencies.

Feedback on Community Outreach and Engagement

- Communication could be improved with particular focus on youth and teens;
- There is an opportunity to build on HPL's community presence, including increasing the capacity of Library on Wheels;
- Opportunities for community input could be expanded.

HPL facilitated discussions between October and November 2021, to give the community additional opportunities to provide feedback on a draft version of the plan.

Specific feedback included:

- Making the vision statement more digestible and easier to understand for readers;
- Clarifying the meaning of multiple literacies and adding a reference to multiple languages;
- Acknowledging the impact of COVID on the trajectory and timeline of these goals;
- Elevating digital literacy and technology, as well as programming for seniors;
- Using more encompassing language when identifying groups who may currently be underserved by the Library;
- Clarifying the use of metrics and tools for guiding implementation and evaluation of these goals;

- Clarifying the accountability the Library has to the proposed advisory committee and identifying the opportunity the Library has to consider appropriate methods for compensating committee members for their time and expertise;
- Clarifying the difference between Goals 1 and 3 strategies.

This opportunity for direct feedback on the Plan while it was still in its drafted state allowed the Library to respond directly to suggestions before bringing the Plan to the board. The Plan is stronger because of the feedback shared by the community.

Strategic Context Assessment

Based on the research summarized above, HPL observes the following trends in the city and library sector today:

- The relevance of multiple literacies, including reading, digital literacy, and financial literacy
- The desire for trusted sources of information
- The need for skills-based training
- The need for community connections, especially for people new to Hartford
- The negative impact of COVID-19
- The importance of celebrating community strengths and assets
- The role of public libraries as anchors for democracy

Vision

Hartford Public Library envisions a future where all people:

- Are inspired by reading, learning, and exploration
- Realize dreams, prosper, and thrive
- Co-create, build, and work towards safe and sustainable communities

Through programs and services that:

- Spark curiosity and enjoyment
- Ensure full and equal access to resources, opportunities for knowledge and skill building
- Center community priorities, voice, and engagement
- Serve as a national model for 21st century urban libraries

Goals

To progress toward the vision and respond to the strategic context, HPL has articulated four strategic goals:

- **Goal 1:** Continue providing a wide variety of high-quality services and carefully assess priorities, including opportunities for expansion
- **Goal 2:** Prioritize community engagement
- **Goal 3:** Expand physical and virtual access to HPL programs and services throughout Hartford
- **Goal 4:** Continue to prioritize employee development and internal communication

The goals and key strategies are detailed on the following pages.

Goal 1: Continue providing a wide variety of high quality services and carefully assess priorities, including opportunities for expansion

HPL is operating from a position of strength. The services that HPL provides are extensive and receive high levels of satisfaction from customers. HPL's TAP and language services are especially vital and viewed as a top resource. The Hartford community identified literacy and education as a key priority – for children, youth, and adults. HPL is a center for learning and a leader in supporting multiple literacies (including reading, digital literacy, and financial literacy), particularly in our role as a key partner for Hartford Public Schools. HPL serves a unique role as a civic center as well as an educational resource. Many local service providers and community advocates utilize HPL's resources in their work. Additionally, there are many knowledgeable partners in Hartford with programming and expertise to complement our work. While HPL's services support a broad variety of resident priorities, they cannot address everything, or offer programming that is beyond the scope of HPL's strengths. As we continue to reopen and safely return to full capacity following COVID closures, it will be critical for HPL to assess our role as a direct service provider, strategic partner, referral source, or venue and to consider the need to re-prioritize our work as we assess new opportunities.

Strategies to achieve Goal 1

To achieve this goal, HPL will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Support and expand HPL's existing strength in broad education programming

- Continue to offer access to resources that support broad education programming including access to books, access to materials, access to cultural and educational programming, and access to safe and welcoming spaces
- Determine ways to more effectively communicate the resources (particularly online) that HPL offers to support different types of learning (i.e. tutoring platforms, language learning programs)
- Highlight and expand access to digital literacy and technology
- Maintain strong relationships with partners who support broad educational offerings, including HPS, workforce development organizations; financial institutions; organizations dedicated to health and well-being; and adult education providers, and identify opportunities to strategically develop ongoing partnerships with other service providers.
- Promote opportunities for volunteers to support education and multiple literacy work, particularly reading and digital literacy
- Ensure that resources and programs offered align with HPL's priority on EDI.

Strategy 2: Build on HPL’s current role in elevating existing community assets

- Host and elevate the work of community advocates and organizers
- Participate in and contribute to neighborhood asset mapping
- Amplify existing neighborhood celebrations
- Continue supporting local artists and businesses

Strategy 3: Strengthen HPL’s ability to respond to social service requests

- Explore the opportunity to operationalize an enhanced social worker role at HPL in order to facilitate a continued and stronger relationship with UConn School of Social Work and other social service institutions
- Define process and provide training to support staff as they respond to navigating social service questions and provide referrals.

Strategy 4: Develop processes for evaluating current programs and new opportunities

- Develop a framework for evaluation and prioritization that is centered on community dialogue and aligned with community goals. HPL priorities should be Hartford’s priorities⁶
- Ensure that the evaluation framework incorporates EDI thinking and reflects HPL’s values around equity
- Support open dialogue and information sharing between Hartford neighborhoods and HPL (*see Goal II for more detail*)
- Assess when HPL is best positioned as a direct service provider, strategic partner, referral source, or venue based on an assessment of our capacity and expertise as well as our role among Hartford’s many service providers

Strategy 5: Consider additional services for underserved populations

Define HPL’s role in serving populations identified as needing more support.⁷

⁶ Please see Appendix E for more information about the programmatic logic model.

⁷ HPL’s planning has identified potential gaps in serving constituents in the LGBTQIA+ community and people with disabilities, including people with hidden disabilities, people who were formerly incarcerated, and seniors. HPL recognizes that there are likely other groups that also need more support and/or resources. Through implementation of Goal 1 we will seek to study other populations identified through our work.

Intended outcomes for Goal 1

If HPL is successful in achieving Goal 1:

- The community will continue turning to HPL as a trusted resource
- Customers will have access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and feel empowered to develop their skills
- Community assets will be strengthened and HPL will be more connected to neighborhoods
- HPL will have a process by which to refine and prioritize programming that reflects our capacity, expertise, and values and directs our resources most effectively
- HPL will have more capacity to assist customers with social service inquiries

Goal 2: Prioritize community engagement

To progress toward our vision, HPL must develop how we engage in dialogue with the community. Better communication with Library partners, a clearer articulation of what the Library is currently offering, and deeper engagement with community members regarding their feedback and satisfaction have been identified as areas for improvement. We must create multiple channels for communication, and build processes by which community members can more regularly inform our thinking. Community engagement work is strongly aligned with HPL's priority on EDI, and we expect that our work on this goal will be deeply informed by our ongoing EDI process.

Strategies to achieve Goal 2

To achieve this goal, HPL will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Build organizational processes for community engagement and input into decision-making

- Leverage opportunities for HPL staff to learn about community priorities at existing convenings, including NRZ meetings, and create mechanisms for findings to be incorporated into HPL's decision making processes
- Develop processes that support informed decision making by building stronger and more continuous processes of collecting feedback from customers, including accountability as to how community recommendations are considered, followed-up on, and communicated
- Develop processes by which community members are empowered to communicate to their networks about HPL programming and offerings
- Ensure that the priorities of neighborhoods that were impacted by the consolidation or are otherwise underserved are represented
- Assess the option of creating a community advisory committee to be the focal point for community engagement
 - If HPL were to convene an advisory committee, HPL will seek to identify and address critical barriers that could impact community members' ability to engage, and find ways to appropriately compensate them for their time and expertise. HPL sees this step as critical for ensuring the socioeconomic diversity of a committee

Strategy 2: Do a thorough review of communications strategies

- Identify customer groups for whom targeted communication or different approaches may be needed, including teens and people whose primary language is not English
- Identify which, if any, methods for customer communication are being missed or under used
- Establish regular reviews to keep communication strategies current
- Ensure that EDI values are reflected in our communication strategies and messages

Strategy 3: Articulate a strong priority for external community engagement for all staff

- Define and develop an organizational community engagement model and provide a process for staff trainings/supports, check-ins, and reports, that hold HPL staff accountable for engaging more deeply with the community
- Develop best practices in partnership with staff members who have been doing engagement successfully
- Ensure that EDI values are reflected in staff community engagement practices

Intended outcomes for Goal 2

If HPL is successful in achieving Goal 2:

- The community will have a clearer voice in making recommendations regarding HPL services and feedback will be collected on a continuous basis, allowing HPL to be a stronger steward of public resources. Resource allocation and prioritization will be responsive to the community, and community dialogue will be centered in decision making at all levels of HPL
- Constituents will have a greater awareness of what is offered at HPL and how to access these resources. There will be clear expectations for community engagement at the staff level, and customers will be able to more knowledgably engage with HPL

Goal 3: Expand physical and virtual access to HPL programs and services throughout Hartford

Expanding access to services was highlighted by community members as a priority. Access includes several factors, including geographic proximity, language, schedule, and simple awareness. The experience between different branches and access to Library services could be improved to provide customers with equal access and opportunities regardless of where they live. Opportunities exist to increase the use of outreach services and the availability of Downtown services at branch locations. Capacity and space at branch locations has historically created a barrier to hosting more at these locations, however with new branch expansion projects, there is an opportunity to offer more, particularly at the new Park St. Branch, the Swift Factory Location, and the Albany branch annex expansion, as well as community programming that is not tied to one branch location.⁸

Strategies to achieve Goal 3

To achieve this goal, HPL will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Determine which services can be co-located Downtown and at a branch or partner location

- Expand offerings at branches with additional capacity and space, including: Adult education at the Swift Factory; a technology lab at Park Street; additional cultural opportunities and HHC access at Park Street; and teen spaces at Park and Albany
- Identify neighborhood partners who can serve as a venue for HPL services and programs in neighborhoods without branch capacity or space
- Consider opportunities to expand and deepen Boundless and other partnerships with Hartford Public Schools

Strategy 2: Reimagine what mobile outreach services can look like

- Work with community advisory committee to identify neighborhoods where additional outreach would be beneficial, including: neighborhoods that experienced a branch closure; additional presence at concerts and community events; more outreach to convalescent homes and senior centers; additional services to day-care, child care and after-school centers; Habitat for Humanity communities
- Consider expanding the number of vehicles
- Ensure that EDI values are reflected in mobile outreach services

⁸ This complements the existing capital plan that is approved by the HPL Board.

Strategy 3: Provide support for access at all Library locations, virtual engagement and in mobile outreach

- Explore opportunities for volunteers to serve in a welcoming/greeter function when people arrive at HPL, and/or tutoring mentoring programs
- Build on improved communications strategies to raise awareness
- Continue providing language support for customers whose primary language is not English
- Ensure website and all virtual services and communications are up to date and user friendly, and deliver an excellent experience for users who engage virtually
- Ensure that EDI values are reflected in HPL’s strategies to increase access and awareness

Intended outcomes for Goal 3

If HPL is successful in achieving Goal 3:

- HPL customers will have an equally positive experience with the Library, regardless of where they engage. Customers and community members will have access to different types of learning opportunities and feel empowered to develop/refine their skills
- HPL will be supporting the efforts of individual communities and neighborhoods, while serving as a unifying and connecting presence for the City. HPL will be able to reach customers beyond the physical locations of the Library to a greater extent, making HPL an even more viable presence in communities and more accessible to those facing location based barriers to accessing HPL

Goal 4: Continue to prioritize employee development and internal communication

Staff play a critical role in HPL's success and delivery of services. HPL prioritizes and values retaining our staff and providing them with the tools to develop skills that will make them successful in their roles and careers. There are opportunities to continue to improve the employee experience and make HPL the best workplace it can be. Planning research suggested strong satisfaction with the mission driven/community impact aspects of the work, as well as opportunities to improve professional development/training, advancement/increased salary opportunities, increased capacity, communication.

Strategies to achieve Goal 4

To achieve this goal, HPL will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Align internal goals with EDI work

- Review of hiring and personnel policies including education requirements, opportunities for advancement, and value of different types of experience
- Reinforce HPL's commitment to having a staff that is representative of the community
- Create intentional supports for staff with non-traditional experience
- Continue developing stronger internal streams of communication and feedback
- Ensure recruitment is focused on building a broad and diverse talent pool, including opportunities for development of current employees to grow within the organization.

Strategy 2: Encourage, support and adequately resource staff community engagement work (see Goal II for more detail on community engagement)

- Encourage staff to solicit feedback from community members and consider that feedback when assessing programming impact and success
- Create clear lines for how staff should share concerns, ideas, and feedback from the community with management
- Acknowledge and reward staff who go above and beyond the expectations of their role to be a partner for the community

Strategy 3: Develop stronger follow through between training and execution

- Strengthen the bridge between professional development and trainings already provided to staff and application of these trainings through formal structures and processes

Intended outcomes for Goal 4

If HPL is successful in achieving Goal 4:

- Staff will have strong buy-in to both the strategic and EDI plans and the opportunity to engage in deeper planning through an equity lens that contributes to their sense of satisfaction with HPL as an employer and their ability to engage with the community. Internal lines of communication and feedback will be strengthened
- Staff will feel supported and equipped to implement what was covered in trainings. HPL will have articulated avenues for staff to access resources, processes, and protocols. Staff will have a clear sense of what is expected of them and support and capacity to achieve those goals

Financial Implications

Background

This summary provides a general overview of the potential financial implications of the proposed Strategic Plan. Any new expenses would be considered as part of the annual budget process and would not be final until included in the budget and approved by the Board. The implementation process for strategies/tasks of the plan will inform if and when the possible new expenditures would be included. Those expenses may replace or leverage other spending and expense items, or require a new funding source to be identified before implementation. The figures noted are estimates.

Personnel Expense

The strategic plan includes programmatic and service elements that may increase personnel capacity.

- Communications/Programming/Operations/Strategy:
 - A part or full-time role to assist with engaging, collecting and documenting feedback from community members and formalizing efforts to elevate the community assets and provide programming to potentially underserved populations (*Multiple Goals and Strategies*)
 - Enhanced marketing and outreach (*Goal 2: Strategy 2 and 3*)
- Volunteer Coordination: A role to plan, coordinate and facilitate opportunities for volunteers to support education and multiple literacy work (*Goal 1: Strategy 1*)
- Social Services: Operationalize the consistent presence of a social worker at HPL (*Goal 1: Strategy 3*)
- Public Service and Outreach: Enhanced programming, services and expanded days/hours of service will require additional part and full time positions; the number will depend on the level of expanded services. (*Multiple Goals and Strategies*)
- Administration and support: expansion of services increases the load on support services such as IT, HR, business office operations, supplies and maintenance. (*Goal 1: Strategies 1,2 and 3*)

These updates to personnel capacity could result in the addition of 1 to 10 FTEs, and/or engaging service providers and programming through contracting or professional consulting (i.e. for assessment and evaluation work). Depending on how these duties are distributed among current staff and the level to which the plans are implemented, these elements imply a range of potential increase to the operating budget of \$75,000-\$750,000.

OTPS: Non-Personnel Expense

The strategic plan includes the potential to impact non-personnel expenses.

Library Programs

- Stipends for advisory committee members (*Goal 2: Strategy 1*)
- Increase to program budget to support enhanced programming in branch library locations (*Goal 4: Strategy 2*)

The above additions could result in the addition of \$50,000 - \$100,000 to the budget.

Advertising

- Additional advertising budget (*Goal 2: Strategy 2*)

The above addition could result in the addition of \$25,000-\$50,000 (+) to the budget.

Staff Training Services

- Expansion of the already robust professional development budget for additional training, including EDI (*Goal 4: Strategy 1*)
- Expansion of tuition reimbursement options (*Goal 4: Strategy 1*)

The above additions could result in the addition of \$50,000 - \$100,000 to the budget.

Capital Investments

The plan proposes the purchase and outfitting of two new vehicles for Library outreach, one to replace the current Library on Wheels and an additional vehicle (Goal 3: Strategy 2). The Library estimates that these vehicles will cost \$100,000-\$125,000 each to purchase and outfit.

Appendix A: Interview List

Phases I and II

Staff Interviews:

- Will Bailey, Technical Services Manager
- Irene Blean, Barbour Branch Manager
- Christopher Brown, Albany Community Hub Manager
- Liz Castle, Adult Program and Outreach Manager
- Leticia Cotto, Customer Experience Officer
- Karl Fisher, Finance Director
- Rebecca Gonzalez, Facilities Director
- Marie Jarry, Director of Public Service
- Pat Knapp, Campfield Branch Manager
- Liz Matias, Dwight Branch Manager
- Denise Martens, Youth and Family Services Manager
- Brenda Miller, Executive Director of Culture and Communications
- Bridget Quinn, President & CEO
- Graciela Rivera, Park Branch Manager
- Jennifer Sharp, Hartford History Center Archivist
- Diana Smith, Director of HR
- Bonnie Solberg, Coordinator of Branch Services
- Julie Styles, Central Public Services Manager
- Jennifer Torres-Parker, The American Place Manager
- Mary Tzambazakis, Chief Operating Officer

Phase III

Community Interviews:

- Carl Guerriere, *Associate Professor of ESL and Foreign Languages*, Capital Community College
- Christopher McCluskey, *Vice President Housing & Community Services*, Community Renewal Team (CRT)
- Janet Bauer, *Community Partner and Associate Professor of International Studies*, Trinity College
- Joan Cruz, *Director of Administrative Operations*, Hispanic Health Council
- Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, *Superintendent*, Hartford Public Schools
- Marion Griffin, *Chair*, Hartford Next
- Marlene Ibsen, *Vice President Community Relations*, Travelers Foundation
- Nadine Brennan, *Associate Campus Director*, University of Connecticut

- Nina Rovinelli Heller, Dean, *Zachs Chair in Social Work and Co-Director*, PhD Program, UConn School of Social Work
- Nuchette Black-Burke, *Chief Engagement & Partnerships Officer*, Hartford Public Schools Sabrina Tucker-Barrett, *Founder*, Girls for Technology
- Sara Harington, *Associate University Librarian for Academic Engagement*, University of Connecticut
- Sharon Castelli, *CEO*, Chrysalis Center

Appendix B: SOAR Assessment Resources

Internal

- Annual Reports
- Audits
- Internal financials
- LibPass reports
- Press releases
- Reflections on progress from the last Strategic Plan (unpublished report)

External

- Anderson, Janna, Lee Rainie, and Emily A. Vogels. “Experts Say the ‘New Normal’ in 2025 Will Be Far More Tech-Driven, Presenting More Big Challenges.” Pew Research, February 18, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/02/18/experts-say-the-new-normal-in-2025-will-be-far-more-tech-driven-presenting-more-big-challenges/>
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- Thomas, Jaqueline Rabe. “Thousands of students didn’t show up for school this year. Where are the children?” CT Mirror. March 15, 2021. <https://ctmirror.org/2021/03/15/thousands-of-students-didnt-show-up-for-school-this-year-where-did-they-go/>
- US Census Data including:
 - American Community Survey (ACS), five-year estimates 2015-2019
 - ACS, five-year estimates 2012-2016
 - ACS, one-year estimates 2019
 - Census of Population and Housing, calculated for use with Census 2010
 - Population Estimates Program (PEP) 2019
- Walia, Apjit and Sai Ravindran. “America’s Racial Gap & Big Tech’s Closing Window.” Deutsche Bank Research, September 2, 2020.

Appendix C: SOAR Assessment Implications

HPL’s full complement of programs is needed in the community with the potential for different resource allocation: This planning process should consider how to address community priorities through different types of services and programs. Stakeholders expressed a need to support youth, especially opportunity youth, and job seekers through connection to services, as well as to support cultural connections and celebrations within the community, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic. Place-based services were seen as critical, particularly in underserved and under-celebrated neighborhoods, with an opportunity to better integrate resources and program innovations developed Downtown into the branches. At the same time, innovating on reaching customers where they are through expanded outreach services and continued virtual programming will be important ways for HPL to integrate even more deeply into the community beyond the Library locations. A critical question for HPL is to consider the declines in resources for Public Service. If funding gravitated to other programs because of grant dollars, is that a positive trend or should HPL seek more unrestricted dollars to re-invest in Public Service, while it continues to build Outreach and Virtual?

An inclusive, aspirational digital strategy needs to be articulated: This planning process is happening at a time when digital engagement is at the forefront of how people communicate, socialize, work, learn, buy and sell, etc. During SOAR research we heard concern about the digital divide in Hartford and the sense that it has been made worse by the pandemic. External research reiterates this concern, particularly in regards to how lack of digital literacy can keep people from accessing the job market. However, the digital delivery of services can also expand reach and help the Library and other service providers connect with more customers. This is exemplified by HPL’s online offerings through TAP, HHC, and educational resources, that people highlighted an opportunity to continue and develop even once in person gathering can resume. HPL must stay on the cutting edge of digital engagement, while still actively breaking down barriers to participation. HPL recognizes that access is complex: skills, hardware, broadband access, software, and awareness of resources are all at play. In addition to purchasing resources, HPL will need to ensure that staff, partners, and customers know they exist and how to use them. HPL must develop an even more sophisticated approach to being in the digital world, and to ensuring that all Hartford residents can participate.

Internal and external training and marketing is needed to increase comfort with digital resources: A key element of the digital strategy should center on creating awareness of HPL’s digital resources in order to remove the barrier of people simply not knowing what exists or how to access them. This should also include raising awareness and professional development among staff members to ensure that they know how to direct people and offer wraparound services that include digital resources.

Social services are critical for supporting the community but a strategy is needed: Internal stakeholders expressed appreciation for the wide-reaching services that HPL offers beyond the

scope of a traditional library, and praised how HPL pivoted this year to address customers pressing needs like food insecurity, in addition to literacy. We heard agreement with a hierarchy of needs and the idea that people can't expand their creativity or leaning if their basic needs are not being met. However, there was also a concern that HPL can't serve all needs. Articulating a clear plan for how to consider social service programming going forward, that is cognizant of HPL's capacity and expertise, will be critical. The framework, presented in the logic model (Appendix B), can serve as a starting place for articulating strategy between social services that will be offered as HPL direct services, in partnership with other organizations, through another organization using HPL as a venue, and through completely independent partners whom the Library can provide referrals to.

There is a desire and a need to engage the community more deeply: From the beginning of planning, we heard stakeholders express that they want to see community voice in this Plan. From a programmatic standpoint, we also heard that there is a desire to further develop relationships with customers and community members to help guide the direction of offerings. While this is happening in informal ways, developing ways for the Library to serve as a resource for people, a co-host for community programming, and share community stories was raised. This strategy should pay specific consideration to constituencies that were highlighted as needing to be engaged more deeply, including people with different abilities and teens. Furthermore, while it was recognized that community need has depended due to COVID, HPL's approach to the community cannot focus solely on need. As a true partner to the City, HPL should continue to see and celebrate community members' strengths and interests by listening rather than being prescriptive.

Workplace culture and practices should continue to develop and build from a place of strength: Following the difficult consolidation of branches after the last planning process, HPL has an opportunity to plan for the future strength and stability of staff and workplace culture. This should include developing stronger cross departmental communication channels, considering equity in hiring practices, and determining where staff capacity concerns need to be addressed.

There is an opportunity to develop HPL's financial position: HPL has two major lines of financial opportunity at this moment: 1) Grow fundraising through stronger connections with individual donors, including people from the suburbs of Harford; 2) Continue to demonstrate strength as civic anchor and position in order to access COVID relief funding from the City and HPS.

Leverage role as a national leader: HPL is already a national example of what a 21st Century library can be. Additionally, as exemplified through benchmarking, HPL is currently less reliant on local governmental support than many of its peer systems. HPL has an opportunity to leverage its position of strength into a case for additional governmental support, as well as other forms of contributed revenue. This is particularly relevant given the city planning and COVID

recovery efforts that are underway in Hartford and HPS. There are articulated goals in each of these plans that align with the services and impact that HPL seeks to provide to the community. Alignment between HPL planning and the plans of HPS and the City will promote efficiency and effectiveness in supporting the community and help leverage HPL's position as a partner.

Appendix D: Community Engagement Findings

Value of HPL and Services

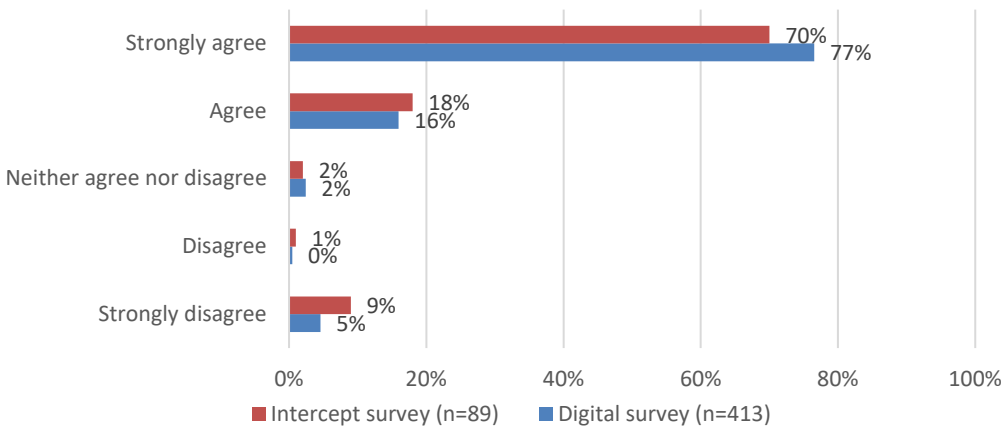
HPL is a reputable and sophisticated organization

Through interviews with partners, we heard that HPL has a positive reputation in Hartford as well as nationally, and the infrastructure and capacity to serve as a valuable partner to the City. This reputation and model provided by the Library was specifically highlighted in relation to its leadership in literacy, immigration, wide ranging programming, and consideration of racial and social justice issues. The Library was identified as having more capacity than many other non-profits, which allows it to function in a more sophisticated way.

HPL was identified by a partner as being a model of a 21st Century Library. Partners in the Hartford Public Schools identified HPL as an important resource that children and families rely on, and a partner in their community schools model, which allows for extended learning time and wraparound services. The Commission on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (CRIA), which routinely gives reports and makes recommendations on services for immigrant and refugee populations, suggested that the City support HPL as a critical immigration resource.

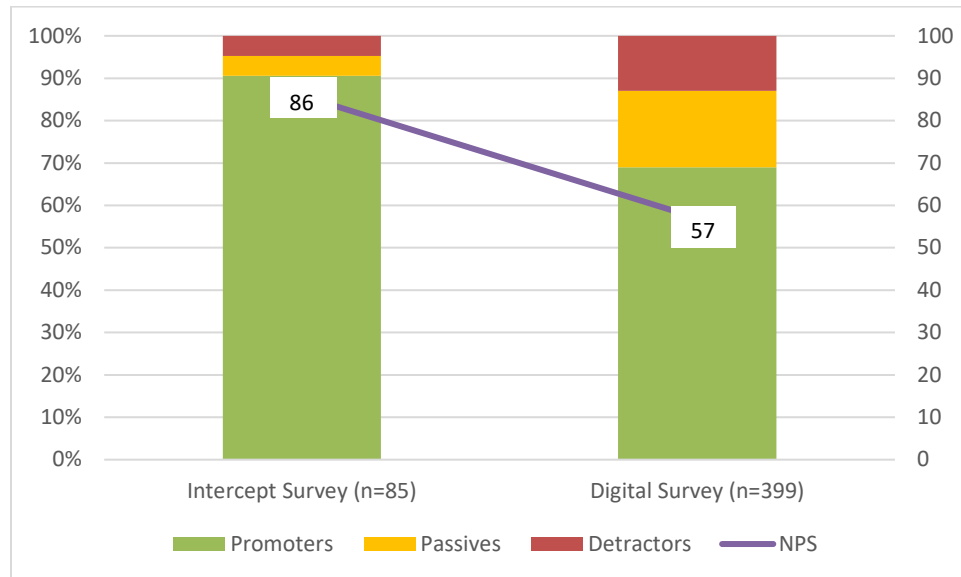
Community members in town halls and focus groups spoke positively about the services that HPL provides to customers. The value that it offers the city of Hartford, and the consistent quality of HPLs work was recognized. 70% of intercept survey respondents and 77% of digital survey respondents strongly agreed with the statement: *HPL is a valuable resource for the community*. Furthermore, digital survey respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction across all Library services. For every service, over 70% of customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience, and the average ranking was 86%.

Figure 1: Level of Agreement with the statement "HPL is a valuable resource for the community"



The survey responses also suggested that HPL is operating from a place of strength, with some room for improvement. The Net Promotor Score (NPS)⁹ the Library received for likelihood of recommending HPL to friends, family, neighbors was 57 in the digital survey and 86 in the intercept survey.

Figure 2: Customer and Community Member NPS



HPL is a community hub and place for respite

Interviewees and community members alike identified that HPL already serves as a “hub” and conveyor in multiple ways, including serving as a valuable connector/referrer for services and providing shared spaces for people to come together and find community.

Partners and community members in the focus groups and the town halls identified the Library as a place where people feel safe. HPL was referred to as a town square, oasis, and welcoming, free place to be. This function of providing a space for people to come together and be welcomed in, was recognized by community members as being unique and serving an important function within the City. Additionally, community members and leaders identified Library branches as a neutral space to hold meetings and community discussions free of charge. While community members spoke to the convenience of the space that the Library provides, they did not cite other resources that they access through the Library. It is possible that there are additional resources that the Library could help connect community leaders to.

⁹ Net promoter scores predict the likelihood of both referral and retention for companies and organizations serving a population. A population is asked to rate how likely they are to refer a given service or product on a 10 point scale. Survey respondents were given the following prompt: How likely are you to recommend visiting HPL and/or using HPL resources to friends, family, neighbors?

A key example of this critical role that the Library plays is through the community and the support it offers to victims of domestic violence. In our conversation with Park Street focus group participants we had the privilege of speaking to people who are part of this community of survivors and spoke to the resources they were connected to through the Library and the community that they have there.

HPL is a center of learning

Community members of all ages described the window to learning and discovery that the Library provides, both in terms of books as well as programming. At the start of the focus groups we asked participants to share stories of their first visit to HPL. In their responses we heard that many began visiting HPL or other libraries in their youth, and still rely on the Library as a valued resource today. These accounts epitomized the role that HPL plays in supporting lifelong learning and learners. Parents shared that HPL offers great programming and instilled a love of learning in their children. An adult participant described that he has taken advantage of foreign language classes online and others talked about having the opportunity to learn about new things that they had never been exposed to before, such as hydroponics and computers.

Hands on learning opportunities for youth were also highlighted as a value that the Library provides. Teens raised access to materials such as computers, pianos, cameras, etc., as a value of the Library, as well as hand on opportunities and internships through the Library, that exposed them to the availability of this equipment.

HPL is a host of engaging and meaningful programming

The value of programming, particularly through Hartford History Center, was highlighted by focus group participants and partners as being especially important due to the opportunity these programs provide to engage with local history and issues, come together as a group, and learn from different people. This opportunity to engage on a local and community level was identified as being especially important given Hartford's diversity. One participant described an exhibit that centered on neighborhood stories from the civil rights era, including this community member's own family.

A partner of the Library highlighted the importance of centering this ability of the organization to play a key role in the City's resilience, vibrancy, and future success in communications with regional donors. Arts and cultural programming was identified as being important to community members for a similar reason; one respondent identified that these programs are a catalyst for bringing people into Hartford, and that HPL stands out from other arts organizations in the city due to its continuity in programming and offering its programs for free. We also heard that arts and cultural programming is a way of supporting local artists. Discounted tickets to other organizations and museums was also highlighted as a great benefit that can be accessed through the Library. Adult community members also described enjoying the arts and crafts programming

at branches. Additionally, customers and community respondents across both the intercept survey and digital survey identified adult collections, services and programs as the top service priority for themselves and/or the city of Hartford.

HPL is a language resource and resource for new arrivals

Both partners and community members highlighted HPL as a valuable resource for language services and resources, as well as a resource for immigrants and people who have newly arrived to the City. The availability of books in different languages is an important part of what HPL offers. Additionally, HPL's ESL programs were highlighted as an asset that makes HPL a valuable partner or potential partner.

In their survey responses, current and former HPL employees and partners identified the Library as the leading service provider in Hartford for immigrants and new arrivals.

HPL has reliable, knowledgeable staff

Community members spoke to their general Library experience as being largely positive including, applauding HPL's friendly and helpful staff and informative email communications about the happenings at HPL. Community members also spoke to their experience with specific staff and branch managers, commending the great job that they do with the communities. We heard about the value that comes from having different cultures represented in the staff.

While the overwhelming majority of what we heard was positive, community members also expressed room for improvement with customer service at the Library that suggests not all customers are having the same positive experience with HPL. Specifically, we heard that the process of finding resources and books can be challenging for people, especially those who are not used to using the digital system.

In the survey, employees identified the knowledgeable and helpful staff as one of HPL's biggest strengths as a customer serving organization, along with availability of technology and availability of a safe/welcoming space. They identified participating in impactful community serving work and mission driven work as HPL's biggest strengths as an employer. It appears, however, that while employees are highly motivated by the mission of their work, they are less satisfied with other aspects of working at HPL, as reflected in the relatively low proportion of staff members who were enthusiastic about recommending HPL to prospective employees.

Community and Partner Concerns

Lingering concerns about branch closures

Community members, as well as partners speaking on behalf of their constituents, expressed continued concern regarding the closure of HPL branches. One partner explained that there is a community perception that HPL's budget, within the City's budget is very large. This perception makes it difficult for people to understand decisions like the branch closures. Additionally, another partner expressed that former patrons of the Blue Hills branch are not well informed about the plans regarding the Swift factory branch and could be better kept up to date on the timeline and plans for that space. Community members, specifically at Camp Field, also described feeling like they did not have access to all of the services that they did when Goodwin branch was open.

Concerns regarding operating hours and reduction in services

Community members and partners also raised concerns about the reduction of services offered by the Library during COVID, as well as hours of operation more generally, particularly for children who do not have strong parental advocacy and support. Partners in the school system expressed concerns with the reduction in services for families during the pandemic and the timeline for bringing all of these services back.

In regards to operating hours, community members expressed a desire to see the Library remain open later so that it is a resource for students especially, during the hours that they do their homework. This included nighttime hours and weekend hours at neighborhood branches. In the digital survey, customers ranked more accessible hours as the second highest place where HPL could improve.

Varying accounts on partnering with the Library

Partners shared varying accounts on their experience partnering with the Library that highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in the Library's partnership strategy. One partner shared that HPL is productive in securing grants for programming, and another partner described HPL as their go-to, default partner. Additionally, a partner described that their experience of working with the Library had improved recently, explaining that previously they did not experience the same barriers to moving the grant process along that they had in the past. Additionally, partners identified the value in HPL's willingness to work with different types of organizations, including faith-based organizations. Of the five survey responses we received from partners, HPL received an NPS of 100, both for likelihood to recommend partnering and likelihood to recommend services to constituents.

A few partners shared areas for improvement including lack of follow through on partnership opportunities and the possibility that a successful partnership pilot with a branch was not being

scaled to its full potential. One of these partners questioned whether the Library saw value in partnering with other organizations. Similarly, we heard a few partners express concerns or questions regarding the stability of their partnerships with the Library, as well as more generally with other organizations and partners across the City. Partners expressed concerns that turnover in organizations, differences in priorities between leaders, as well as the reliability of grants can pose a challenge to otherwise strong partnerships.

Opportunity to align on strategic plans and goals

Through this process we had the opportunity to speak with various partners at UConn. Through these conversations we heard that there is an opportunity to align goals and strategies with UConn in order to maximize the benefits of this partnership and the shared space that the two organizations have.

Similarly, community members spoke to the opportunity the Library has to support the City including emerging non-profits like Park Watershed and introducing them to more customers was highlighted as an opportunity. The expected federal pandemic relief funds were raised as an opportunity to have the resources to connect more people to HPL.

Safety and parking concerns

Community members voiced concerns about safety including suggesting that a crossing guard is needed on the busy and dangerous street corner at the new Park Street branch location.

Parking was also raised by community members as a need that would make the Library more accessible. During the town hall, free parking during the week was suggested, and at the focus group at Park Street, participants voiced that they felt parking had been left out of the design of the new space. These community members suggested through better communication with Public Works, HPL could designate parking in front for Library visitors and local residents or utilize an empty lot on Broad Street. A Camp Field community participant also identified parking as being one of the things they miss from the Goodwin branch.

Spaces and programming for adults and children

While we heard community members speak positively to the idea that the Library is for everyone, we also heard that sometimes the adult and youth populations existing in a combined space can create conflict. One community member described that it can be hard to find quiet spaces in the Library during after school hours, while other community members expressed interest in having services such as digital literacy classes and other programs specifically for older adults. It was raised that the Senior Center costs money, so free programming to take that space through the Library is appreciated. Youth and teens also expressed value in having a space that was just for them.

Maintaining a focus on literacy

Some participants and partners also expressed the need for the Library to continue its central focus on literacy. While wraparound services were acknowledged as positive, the identity of the Library as a place to access books was mentioned frequently. Both the intercept and digital surveys identified borrowing books or other materials as the most widely used service by customers in the last two years. Additionally we heard that while the Library has robust ELL offerings, expanded adult literacy and family literacy (multi-generational programming) offerings more generally would be welcome.

Priorities for the City of Hartford

Poverty and lack of skills based employment opportunities

Poverty was raised as a significant issue in Hartford, one that has become a greater problem in recent decades. Additionally, jobs and job training for adults was raised by numerous interviewees, one of whom described a particular need for employment opportunities in roles that are skill based and have the ability to take people out of poverty. Community members also connected the importance of digital literacy and employment. Additionally, reentry services for people who were previously incarcerated was mentioned.

Housing

Housing was identified as a statewide need. The housing need, which existed before the pandemic, has been exacerbated by COVID. Interviewees acknowledged that the eviction moratorium will not last forever, and there could likely be an increased need for services. Still, the system has over-extended many landlords so the supply of safe, affordable housing is not as robust as it needs to be.

Additionally, homelessness was raised as an important issue facing the City, as well as a population that is difficult to reach. This was raised by interviewees in various contexts, as well as community participants in a town hall and focus group, who identified that people experiencing homelessness in the City have very few places to turn, beyond the Library. Even then, a participant raised that the Library could be doing more to diminish barriers to access for people experiencing homelessness and encourage a feeling of being welcomed in the Library space. A partner reflected on a program that was attempted to be piloted at the Library to support people experiencing homelessness that had not been very successful, and reflected that this kind of partner program could have positive impacts on the people who use the Library as a resource during the day when they cannot stay in shelters.

Health and violence

Health and safety were highlighted by interviewees and community members in interviews. In regards to health, participants mentioned the isolation of older adults, unchecked mental illness, access to quality healthcare, and overall quality of life. Additionally, safety concerns, including a violent crime and youth violence, was raised.

Broad education and multiple literacies

Education was raised in interviews and community conversations in a variety of ways, including:

- Support for K-12 students, particularly in improving the number of Hartford students performing at or above grade level, college and career readiness, and address learning loss related to COVID;
- Support for opportunity youth by exposing them to positive past times like extracurricular activities and life skills, as well as mentorship, internships, and positive adult relationships;
- Family literacy and parental training/support including engaging children and parents in programming together and providing resources for parents to learn skills and be supported and invest in the “social infrastructure” of the community;
- Digital literacy and access to technology and internet access was identified as a basic human right, as well as a service that is linked to job searching and employment;
- Financial literacy, both for young people and older adults.

Asset mapping

Interviewees and community participants identified the need to celebrate what is within each Hartford neighborhood and engage in asset mapping. Participants shared that Hartford offers rich cultural opportunities including longstanding festivals and programs and opportunities to engage with theaters, museums, and other cultural institutions. Hartford’s cultural diversity was also highlighted as an asset. HPL in and of itself was cited as an asset, serving as an institution that offers wide programming and service opportunities with the ability to provoke meaningful conversation. Branches in particular were identified as vital neighborhood anchors. A Library open house was highlighted as an event that could help educate people about all that the Library offers and familiarize people with the branches.

Cultural programs and events were identified as the second biggest priority for respondents and/or the city of Hartford in both the intercept and digital surveys.¹⁰ Participants in the focus groups and town halls highlighted a unique opportunity for the Library to be involved in community celebrations and organizing opportunities to come together. We heard from community members and partners that there is a need to understand the assets and offerings in

¹⁰ This intercept survey finding includes responses from current/former employees and partners. For customers/community members alone cultural programs and events was ranked third.

each of the neighborhoods that makeup Hartford, in order to increase the sense of city wide community and shared assets.

Additional Strategic Opportunities for the Library

Help bridge lines of communication between service providers

While we heard some partner reflections about saturation in certain areas (for example youth employment services), we did not hear anyone express concerns about the Library and “mission creep.” However, some partners spoke to overlap in programmatic offerings that is not beneficial or serving of the community. For example, one partner recounted a time where HPL and other organizations were hosting speakers as a part of Black History Month programming on the same evening.

In order to develop the programming that community members highlighted as beneficial, town hall and focus group participants identified ways in which this programming could be strengthened including: larger venues for popular arts and culture events like Baby Grand Jazz, continued emphasis on paying artists a fair compensation, and finding ways to offer interdisciplinary cultural programming that connects to other subjects like literacy, science, and math. To this end, partnerships that bring museums and other arts organizations onsite at HPL could help broaden access to art and culture across the City.

Be a leader in a more robust referral service

Additionally, community partners spoke to the great resource that HPL serves as a place to send people for referrals. One partner described that when they do not have the resources for customers, they can send them to the Library, and that even when there is crossover in services, it gives the customer the opportunity to go where they are most comfortable.

However, we also heard a strong case made for the need for improved communication among all service providers as well as with the community. Partners described the benefit that a “one-stop station” for services, or a network that could facilitate the linkage of people to services, could be in Hartford. Partners described the 211/311 as a positive service, but one that is limited and needs to be strengthened. Partners described the frustration that people can experience when they are looking for access to a service, and not able to be matched to a provider. Stronger communication among providers could be helpful in lessening these barriers, and it was suggested that HPL could play a leadership role in making this a reality.

Additionally, we heard a need to develop channels so that partners and potential partners know more about what services are being offered, and can make the process of partnering more transparent. Similarly, survey responses of current and former employees and partners suggested that a need to increase knowledge of service providers across various sectors. When asked to

identify the top providers in sectors including pre-k to middle school, teen and opportunity youth, workforce development, cultural and lifelong learning programs for adults, and civic programs, the top response of employees and partners was “Not sure/do not know.” Developing stronger channels of shared knowledge and communication would allow HPL employees and other organizations to more effectively refer their constituents to other organizations that are a good fit, as well as potentially see where there are complementary services being provided.

Be a leader in mentoring and one-on-one connections

We heard from community members and partners that there is tremendous value in the opportunity for people to connect one-on-one with mentors and service providers, in order to get relevant assistance. Additionally, ensuring that there are people with the right skills and experience to assist is critical. One partner highlighted that with social service networks and regulations constantly changing, volunteers can be overwhelmed and unable to provide the kind of assistance that people would most benefit from. For that reason, assistance from social workers would be very useful. A partner at UConn also expressed that growing the Library’s social worker presence would allow UConn’s School of Social work program the opportunity to potentially expand in the future.

One idea that was raised by community members in focus groups was providing a work study program with college students and/or young adults that provides mentoring and tutoring to Hartford students. This program could provide the mentors with community service, while allowing the Library to remain open later. A community partner also expressed the desire that people working in Hartford have to volunteer and support youth, which provides additional channels for supporting this opportunity.

Consider strategies for potentially underserved constituencies

Community members brought up the need consider programmatic and service strategies for potentially underserved constituencies, citing opportunities for people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ youth as specific examples. Ideas for programming for people with special needs included activities designed specifically for children with autism and disabilities, particularly fun enrichment programs that encourage children to feel a sense of belonging and make friends. Additionally, the idea of anti-bullying programming for all children, that helps educate kids on what autism is in order to build sensitivity and understanding, was raised.

We also heard a desire to see the Library provide programming and services for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, anti-bullying programs were highlighted, similar to education programs about autism and disabilities, for all community members but particularly youth.

Feedback on Community Outreach and Engagement

Communication could be improved

Partners and community members highlighted that communication channels between the Library and the community should be strengthened. People are not always aware of all of the services that are available through the Library, and more could be done to constantly remind people of what is already offered, as well as what HPL is willing to offer if asked. The town hall attendance was raised an example of a program or event where there appears to be a disconnect in the attendance numbers and the number of people who would be interested in attending, had they known that it was happening. Community members and partners spoke to centering a clear message of what services are available at the Library and that the Library is there to help them. We heard from multiple sources that one of the biggest barriers to accessing services was knowing what was offered. The digital survey reiterated this feedback, with customers and community members ranking better communication of programming, services, and events as the number one area of improvement for the Library.

Developing the website and other forms of digital outreach, which are not as robust as they could be, as well as using other Hartford partners to advertise HPL services and programs were highlighted as ideas. However, community members expressed the importance of direct methods of communication in the focus groups, such as face to face engagement, word of mouth, and fliers in community hubs would be helpful. With printed forms of communication, people stressed the importance of being up to date so they are not receiving advertisements the day after an event takes place.

Teens and adults alike spoke to the role that HPL staff have played in greeting people and helping them feel welcomed and directing them. Expanding the presence of “greeters” who can help guide people, and inform them of the services that the Library offers, perhaps beyond what they came in looking for, was raised by the teen focus group. One example was to have a greeter informing adults about youth programming so they can encourage their kids and grandkids to come participate.

Language barriers were identified as being a continued area of focus for the Library to consider. However, the town hall events were recognized as being very accessible and example in this regard. Teens highlighted that having translators available in as many languages as possible would be beneficial for people who do not speak English as their primary language. This service would allow them to know in advance that there will be someone there to help them. The teens suggested that this role of translator and Library guide could be good job opportunities.

Focus of communicating with youth and teens

Our conversations with youth and teens also reiterated the need for more strategic communications to connect with young people specifically. We heard that teens did not feel like their classmates and friends were as involved with the Library, and while many of the participants were introduced to HPL through school channels, they expressed that others had preconceived notions about what the Library is, suggesting that there is not enough being done to tell students about all of the opportunities available at the Library.

The youth and teens focus group identified the following as ways to promote the Library:

- Youth-produced commercials that contradict commonly held stereotypes of libraries as boring and unwelcoming places;
- Advertisements on Spotify and social media platforms (specifically TikTok and YouTube, sponsored posts, etc);
- Marketing for internships and jobs;
- In-school demonstrations of YouMedia activities;
- Events with food and the opportunity to explore different stations that show the various things you can do at YouMedia.

Build on neighborhood presence

A partner expressed a desire to see HPL more present in neighborhoods, both on its own and through partnerships. Community members identified the importance of the Library going where the people are. It was said that exposure to HPL in the places where people are already comfortable going will make it easier for them to connect. While it was expressed that there is already strong collaboration with other community organizations and agencies, some participants shared the perspective that partnerships such as those with HPS, the senior community (including senior homes and AARP), arts and culture organizations, and local businesses can be improved. It was also suggested that HPL could have kiosks and more community hubs around the City. A new idea that was raised in multiple community conversations was tapping into the system of Little Free Libraries that has emerged around the City.

We also heard a desire to see the services that are offered downtown, extend to the branches. Specifically people expressed a need for a designated job searching terminal with a support person once a week at the branches, passport services, and computer certification opportunities.

Increase the capacity of LOW

We heard mixed accounts of how accessible the Library on Wheels (LOW) is to the community. Community members shared that they liked seeing LOW at community events, while others questioned how active it was. Some feedback on how to better deploy LOW and increase the visibility and accessibility of LOW included:

- Communicating where LOW will be;
- Offering a greater presence of LOW in neighborhoods that experienced a branch closure;
- Additional presence at concerts and community events;
- More outreach to convalescent homes;
- Expand the number of LOWs;
- Partner LOW and Habitat for Humanity.

Expand opportunities for community input

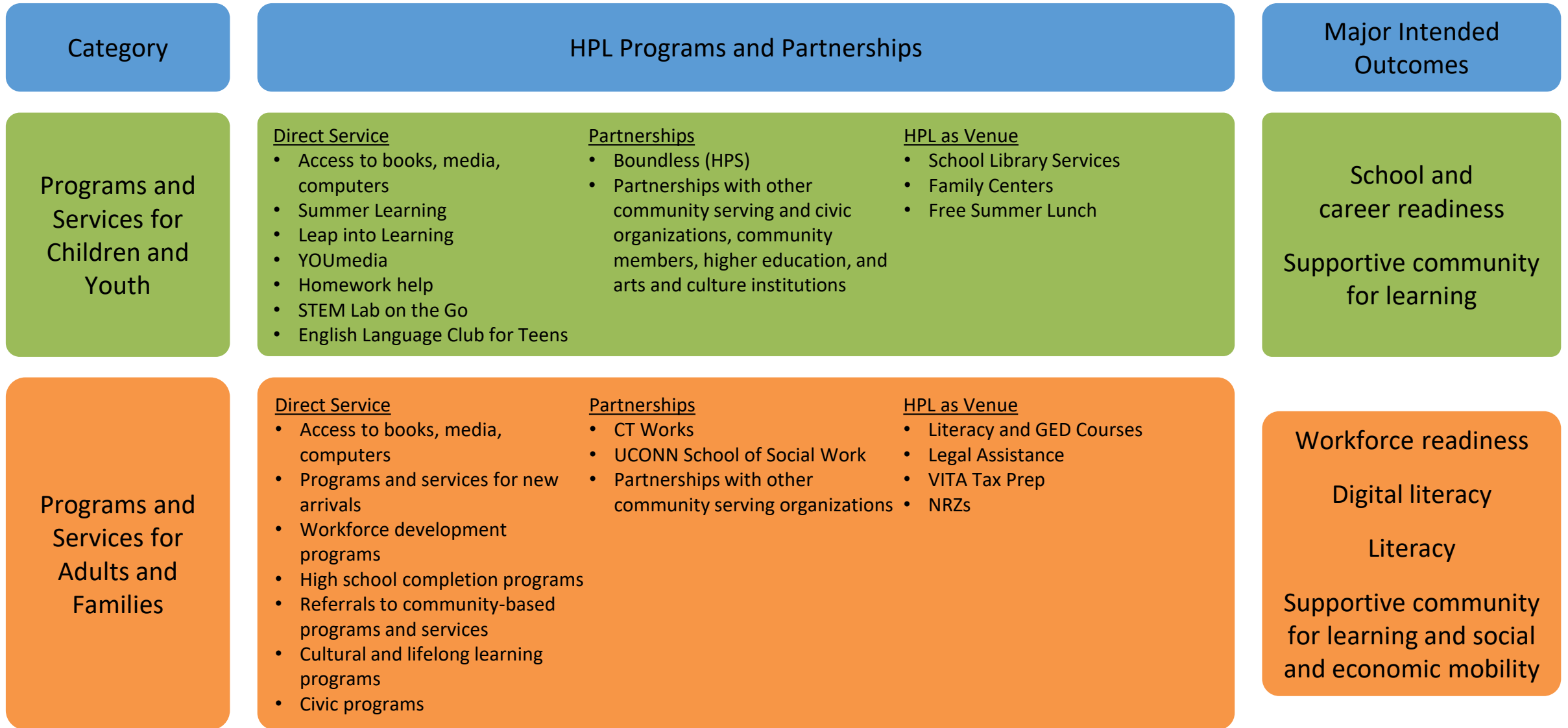
Partners and community members expressed the importance of capturing community voice and input. This was raised specifically in regards to immigrants and refugees, as well as in branches through ideas like a suggestion box. From conversations with community members as well as HPL staff, it seems as though this might be happening to varying degrees of success depending on the branch location. Finding ways for community members to participate in Library programming decisions, regardless of which location(s) they most frequently utilize could be beneficial.

Hartford History Center was also highlighted as a way to expand collaborations that capture community history. HHC serves as a repository of information and can help to archive interviews and histories of members of the community. This telling of community stories was identified by community members and partners as being beneficial, and was also highlighted as being an area to develop in order to decolonize the way we understand history, and could serve as a very important resource.

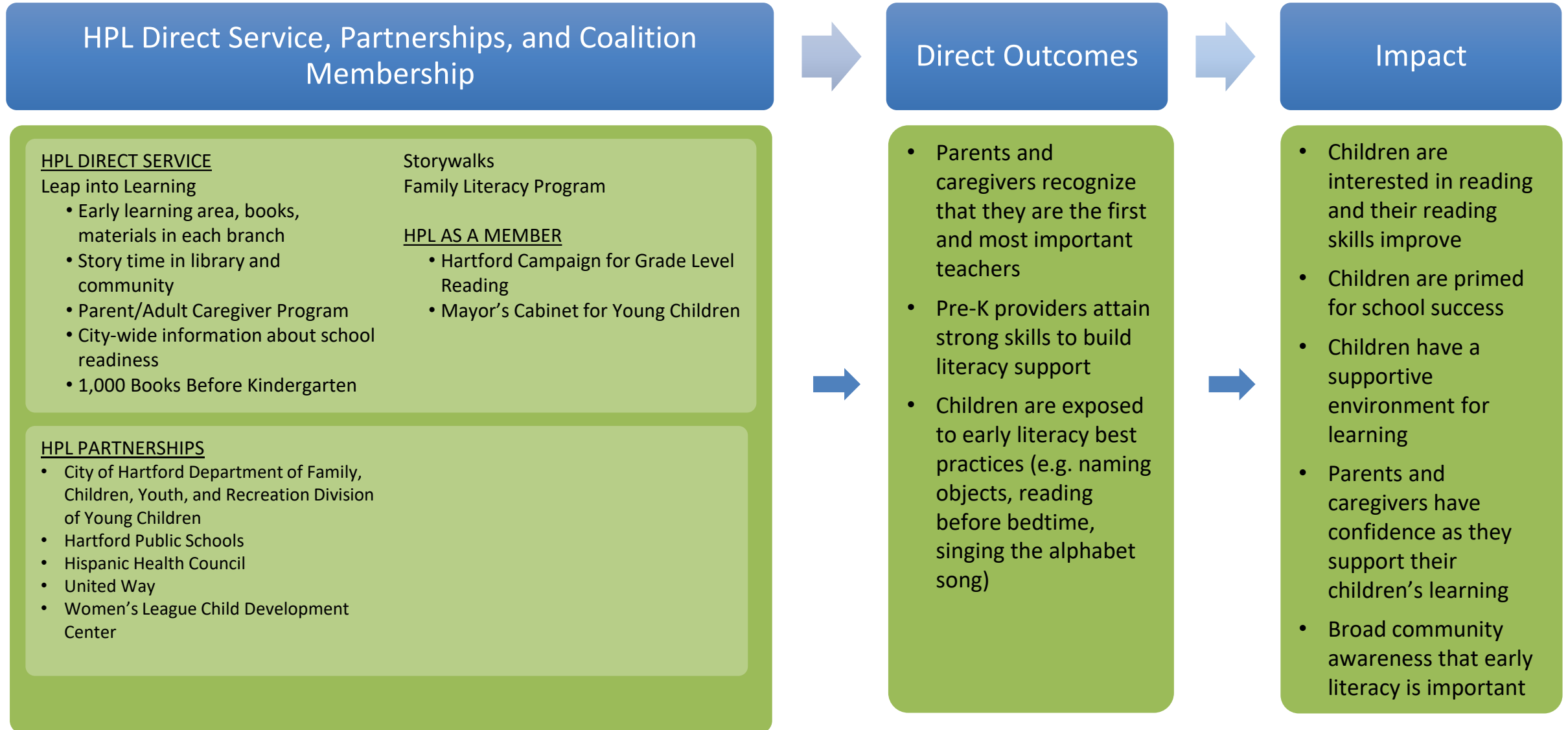
Appendix E: Logic Model

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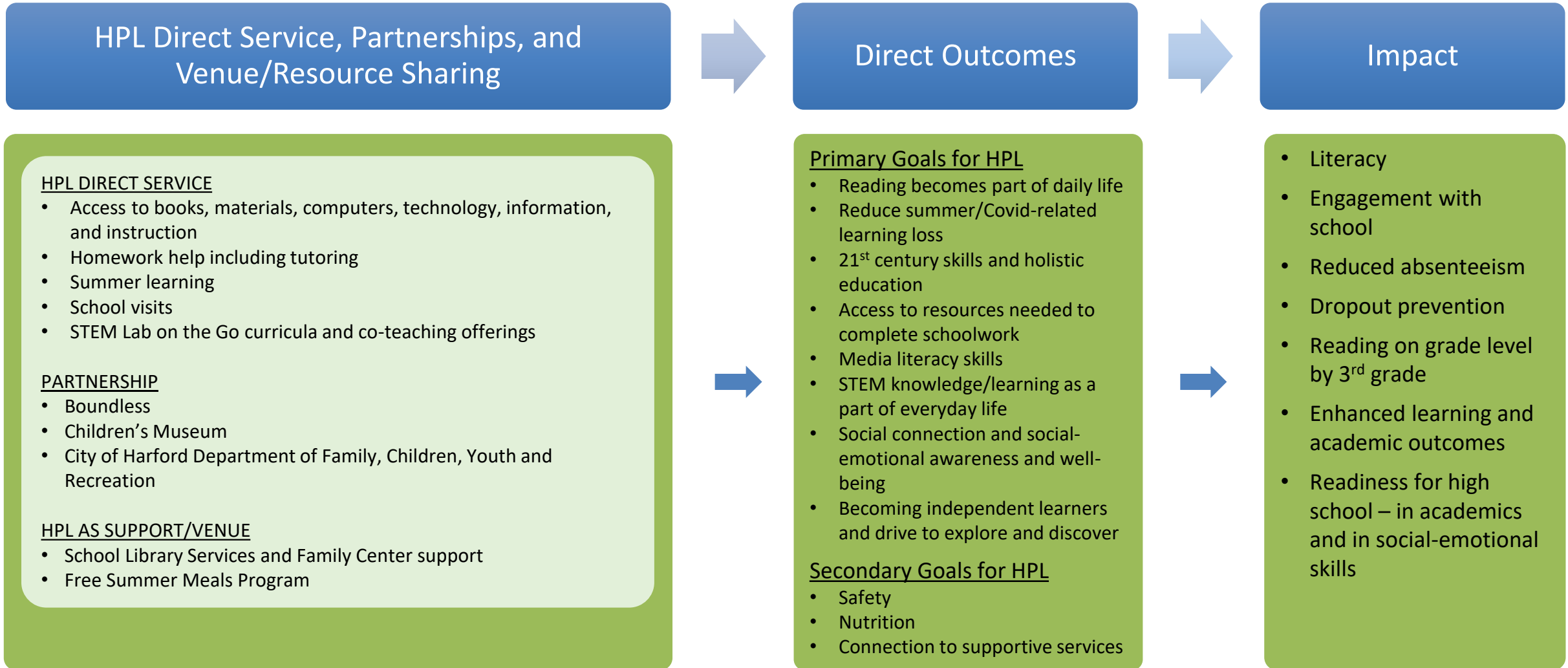
Hartford Public Library: Logic Model Overview



Logic Model: Pre-K Programs



Logic Model: Elementary and Middle School Programs



Logic Model: Teen and Out of School Youth Programs

HPL Direct Service, Partnerships, and Venue/Resource Sharing



Direct Outcomes



Impact

	<u>High School Students</u>	<u>Out of School Youth</u>
<u>HPL DIRECT SERVICE</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUmedia • Access to books, materials, computers, training, technology, and information • Teen Services/Spaces (ex. Teen Hollow) • Homework help including tutoring • Afterschool ESOL Program • Citizenship Capstone 	
<u>PARTNERSHIP</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Community College • Boundless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative • Hartford Job Corp.
<u>HPL AS VENUE/SUPPORT</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Library Services • Summer Youth Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED classes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT Works 	

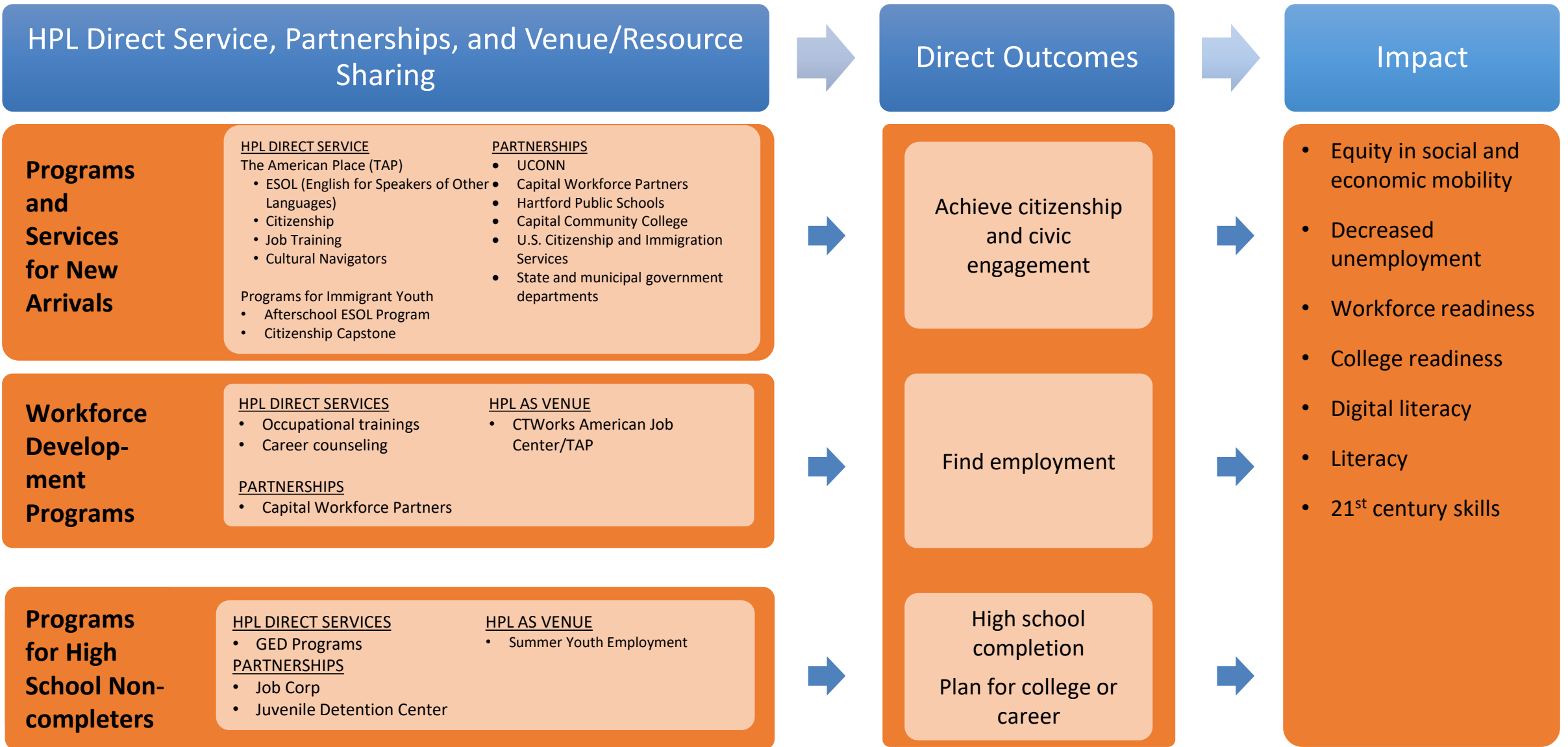


- Engagement with school and learning
- Academic success
- Literacy
- Digital Literacy
- Job skills, career exploration, and entrepreneurship
- Leadership skills
- Belief in a positive future
- Exposure to a broader view of the world
- Connection to services
- Social skills
- Safety
- Nutrition
- Mental health



- High school completion
- College and workforce readiness
- 21st century skills
- Conception of a positive pathway forward
- Supportive environment for success
- Civic engagement

Logic Model: Programs for Adults and Families (1)



Logic Model: Programs for Adults and Families (2)

HPL Direct Service, Partnerships, and Venue/Resource Sharing



Outcomes and Impact

**Referrals
and
Connection
to
Community
Programs
and Services**

HPL DIRECT SERVICE

- Referrals to Services
- Access to internet, 211, and other information sources
- Computer support/Digital Navigator Program
- School Choice Specialist
- Library of Things
- Wifi hotspot loans

HPL AS A VENUE

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- CT Foodshare pantry
- CT Women's Educational and Legal Fund
- Greater Hartford Legal Aid
- Hartford Behavioral Health
- Hartford Police Department Liaison to People Experiencing Homelessness
- NRZs
- Regional School Choice office
- UCONN School of Social Work Internship
- VITA Tax Preparation



Direct Outcomes

- Access to information, resources, and services that can contribute to community and individual well being
- Creation of a positive path forward

Intended Impact

- Improved quality of life
- Improved health and wellness outcomes

Logic Model: Programs for Adults and Families (3)

