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New Hartford Public Library Program Aims to Help Bridge Digital Divide

“Crossroads to Connectivity” to Increase Internet Access in Hartford

(HARTFORD, CT: December 17, 2018) The digital revolution has left thousands of Hartford residents behind. At a time when going online is becoming more and more of a necessity rather than a convenience, an estimated 20,000 households in Hartford still do not have regular internet access in their homes. Many small businesses in Hartford also lack reliable internet access, particularly in the northern part of the city.

Hartford Public Library (HPL) has been working to close the digital divide for years by providing free internet access in all locations and with the library on wheels. Thousands have turned to the library to complete online job and school applications, fill out insurance forms, take online courses and accomplish numerous other tasks that can only be done online. The library is only open at certain times, however, and computer sessions are limited to two hours due to high demand.

“One of the most valuable contributions public libraries have made in the last decade is to help ensure everyone has free access to online resources. It is impossible to navigate school, work, government and community information without robust internet access, training and assistance in accessing information and using the technology, and the devices needed to be effective. The Hartford Public Library is committed to closing the digital divide and ensuring 100% digital literacy for our community,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, CEO of Hartford Public Library.

HPL is proud to announce the launch of Crossroads to Connectivity (C2C), a two-part program designed to close the digital divide in Hartford even further. Crossroads to Connectivity is supported by a three-year, \$297,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG).

The Crossroads to Connectivity initiative has two components. In Phase 1, HPL will be loaning out laptop computers and WiFi hotspots to individuals who qualify for the program. Phase 2 will provide broadband access through TV White Space technology.

Phase 1 of Crossroads to Connectivity is underway. City residents age 24 and older may now apply to borrow a laptop computer and WiFi hotspot to help them complete their education or a training program. Applicants must be at least 24-years-old and enrolled in a high school diploma or SNAP training course. Applicants must also meet certain Federal income guidelines and other requirements to be accepted into

the program. Acceptance into the program requires a one-on-one interview with an HPL technical education case worker.

Once accepted into the program, the participant will meet with the HPL case worker every other week to assess their progress and provide assistance as needed. Laptops and hot spots will be loaned out for an initial period of six months. After that, the participant and the case worker will decide whether the loan period should be extended. The program is expected to serve 120 people over the next three years.

Phase 2 is anticipated to launch in the fall of 2019. C2C addresses the lack of broadband infrastructure in certain areas of Hartford, particularly the city's North End. As a result, a number of businesses and residents do not have access to high-speed internet service. To help remedy the situation, HPL will deploy TV White Space (TVWS) technology. TVWS provides internet access through unused television broadcasting frequencies. It is often known as "Super WiFi" because it is more reliable and has a far greater range than conventional WiFi service.

ABOUT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Now celebrating its 125th 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. Please visit Crossroads to Connectivity www.hplct.org.