

# HPL: Strategic Plan Frame

Draft prepared by TDC

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## Vision

HPL envisions a future where all people have the multiple literacies required to be lifelong learners and participate fully in a democratic society. HPL contributes to this vision by providing the community with access to resources that support their knowledge and skills building, foster curiosity and enjoyment in learning, and facilitate engagement in civic and cultural life. HPL prioritizes its work with the Hartford community but in the spirit of global citizenship support a society seeking to extend access to learning and engage in community building.

## Strategic Context

The Hartford Public Library observes the following trends in the city and library sector today:

- The relevance of multiple literacies
- 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

## 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 opportunities for expansion

**Goal 2:** Develop active channels for dialogue with the community

**Goal 3:** Expand access to and awareness of HPL programs and services throughout the branches and in community-based locations

**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 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, and acts 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. It will be critical for HPL to assess our role as a direct service provider, strategic partner, referral source, or venue for each new opportunity.

### **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 technology, 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)
- 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
- Promote opportunities for volunteers to support education and multiple literacy work, particularly reading and digital literacy

#### **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 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 priorities
- Ensure that the evaluation framework incorporates EDI thinking and reflects HPL's values around equity
- Charge community advisory board with supporting 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, including: People with disabilities and people who cannot access current services and information, including people with hidden disabilities; LGBTQIA+ people, especially youth; and seniors

### **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: Develop active channels for dialogue with the community**

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.

### **Strategies to achieve Goal 2**

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

#### **Strategy 1: Convene a community advisory committee**

- Recruit active community members and leaders to serve as an advisory committee that is reflective of the different neighborhoods that HPL works with. Look to HPL Corporators for potential members of the advisory committee
- Charge the group with being a part of raising awareness of HPL programming and offerings, and sharing community voice in service recommendations
- Develop processes that support informed decision making by building stronger and more continuous processes of collecting feedback from customers
- In the composition of the committee, and the feedback solicited, maintain an awareness for the neighborhoods that were impacted by the consolidation or are otherwise underserved

#### **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**

- Develop a process (trainings, check-ins, reports, and expectations) that holds HPL staff accountable for engaging more deeply with the community, and supports them in developing the tools to feel comfortable engaging
- 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 access to and awareness of HPL programs and services throughout the branches and in community-based locations**

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.

#### **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 offering 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

##### **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 support their development and success in this role. Staff satisfaction and engagement continues to be a priority. 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

#### **Strategy 2: Encourage and reward staff for community engagement** *(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