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For Immediate Release

Hartford Library Awarded 3-Year Grant From Hartford Foundation; Goal Is To Reduce Digital Divide in Hartford's North End

January 23, 2018 — At least 20,000 households in Hartford are without internet access. The Hartford Public Library reports that individuals are accessing the internet at local branches to search for job listings, file online job applications, drivers' licenses, SNAP benefits, health insurance or to prepare for the GED. Internet access at the library is available when the library is open, and users are limited to two-hour sessions. The movement to make more government services only available online adds urgency to the need for easy and affordable access to the internet.

In some Hartford neighborhoods, small and medium-sized businesses are also severely constrained by the lack of broadband infrastructure, limiting the quality and consistency of services they can provide to the community. Field surveys identified several businesses in Hartford's North end without access to reliable, high-speed internet.

In an effort to enable residents and businesses' access to the internet, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is awarding a three-year, \$297,925 Innovation Grant to the Hartford Public Library. This new project will support two innovative strategies to narrow the digital divide in Hartford, with a focus on Hartford's North end.

"We are looking forward to helping even more people in our community access and use critical information resources. Ensuring that our community residents and entrepreneurs have access to the internet, and to the digital content resources they need to be successful in their education, career and life is a critical role of

Hartford Public Library,” said Bridget Quinn-Carey, Hartford Public Library’s Chief Executive Officer.

The “Crossroads to Connectivity” project will allow low-income adults currently enrolled in a high school diploma or certificate training program to borrow a digital device and Wi-Fi hotspot from the library (along with training on how to use it).

A second strategy coming in 2019 will use TV White Space technology to bring broadband access to Hartford’s North end, where slow and unreliable access stymies the success of small, locally-owned businesses. TV White Space technology, also known as “super Wi-Fi,” performs much like regular Wi-Fi, but uses broadcasting wavelength frequencies to cover greater distances than wireless hot spots or cellular service.

[Here's a YouTube video that explains libraries, white space, and Wi-Fi.](#)

Over three years, the “Crossroads to Connectivity” program will allow 120 individuals to borrow digital devices to further their education and access critical support services. Training provided will increase digital literacy skills among participants in the program. At least ten small businesses in Hartford’s North end will see improvements in service delivery and operational efficiencies through the use of TV White Space broadband access. Hartford Public Library will continue to work with neighborhood associations, leverage existing library infrastructure and adapt its lending and training experience to benefit underserved populations that have largely been left behind by the digital revolution.

“Crossroads to Connectivity is an example of a disruptive innovation that is born from serving a market that is otherwise not served,” said Hartford Foundation senior Community Investments officer Yvette Bello. “What we gain to learn from this project is not just if these strategies will work but also how the Foundation can further support projects in which nonprofits co-create solutions with community stakeholders that address longstanding community needs.”

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for Hartford and 28 surrounding communities. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of

more than \$680 million since its founding in 1925. For more information about the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, visit www.hfpg.org or call 860-548-1888.