



CT State Library

Division of Library Development

April 20, 2022

Mayor Lauren Garrett
Hamden Government Center
2750 Dixwell Avenue
Hamden, CT 06518

Dear Mayor Garrett,

I am writing in support of the efforts of the Hamden Public Library to find funding for the wonderful digital navigation project that the director is operating there.

Hamden Public Library began this pilot program this year with the support of a \$100,000 grant from the CT State Library. This highly competitive grant was awarded to the library due to the clear plan outlined in their grant application, a plan that included the deployment of community-savvy digital navigators who would assist town residents who need one-on-one help to become functional in important online tasks, including telehealth and job applications. As the library has begun to implement pilot project, Hamden Public Library director and pilot project coordination, Melissa Canham-Clyne, has become well-known in the broader library community for her expertise in digital inclusion project management.

Digital navigation is today considered an essential component of efforts to enhance inclusion, civic engagement, and basic democracy. The Hamden team of navigators, due to a benefit of the grant, have been trained by experts from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, and been participating and improving their practice as part of state and national peer group sessions with other navigators from libraries and government projects from around the country. They have been singled out more than once to share the experiences and lessons they have learned in Hamden for both peer groups, setting an example with their sophisticated practice and documented success in closing the digital divide, one Hamden resident at a time.

In the first 11 weeks of the pilot project, the navigators had physical appointments with 99 residents in need, jumped in to assist 60 people get online after being relocated due to an apartment fire, and developed unexpected partnerships with Hamden Adult Education and Davenport Dunbar Residences via the Town Clerk's office. These efforts are in addition to their work with Elderly Services and the Keefe Community Center. If one includes their engagements with residents over the phone, they have served approximately 160 clients in the short term of their operations, distributing refurbished computers to 25 patrons with great need and assisting many others to sign up for the federal low-cost broadband benefit. They have created a model and set of best practices that the State Library plans to disseminate to other public libraries around the state. I can think of no project more worthy of being sustained.

Please let me know if you have an questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Dawn La Valle, Director, Division of Library Development, CSL