CSL x LWB Partnership

The **Connecticut State Library** and **Libraries Without Borders US** launched a twelve month pilot to enhance the capacity of Connecticut libraries. The pilot included a cohort of six libraries representing urban, suburban, and rural communities across the state.

The overarching goal was to **grow each library's reach** and **sustainably connect community members to its resources and services** through solutions tailored to the unique circumstances and opportunities within each community.

Pilot Library Locations

David M. Hunt Library – Falls Village, Canaan

- Canaan population: 1,243
- Median household income: $80,298
- 1 FT and 3 PT staff; 1 branch

East Hartford Public Library

- East Hartford population: 50,272,
- Median household income: $58,922
- 15 FT and 20 PT staff; 2 branches

Norwalk Public Library

- Norwalk population: 91,041
- Median household income: $91,434
- 23 FT and 37 PT staff; 2 branches

Otis Library - Norwich -

- Norwich population: 40,020
- Median household income: $59,791
- 14 FT and 13 PT staff; 1 branch

West Haven Public Library

- West Haven population: 55,584
- Median household income: $72,827
- 29 staff; 2 branches

Willimantic Public Library

- Willimantic population: 18,150
- Median household income: $37,752
- 13 staff; 1 branch

Timeline of Activities

Library & Community Assessment

March – June

Comprehensive **data collection** process:

- Internal assessment of library assets and offerings
- External assessment of community assets, needs, and barriers

In what ways can the library meet community needs?
Who does not currently access the services and resources of the library?
What barriers exist to library access?
How can the library sustainably expand its outreach efforts?

Strategy Design & Implementation

June – February

Custom **design and implementation of relevant strategies**, including:

- Expanding awareness of library offerings:
    - Community canvassing
    - Community partnerships
    - Digital promotion

- Bringing library resources to convenient community spaces
    - Access points
    - Access hubs

- Increasing efficiency and effectiveness through auditing and redesigning:
    - Physical space, resources, collections
    - Services and programming
    - Community partners

Sustainability

January – February

Individualized **tools and training** to ensure library staff and community members can sustainably continue implementation

Growing the Reach of the Library
Strategy Overview

Library Promotion

Community Canvassing	Raised awareness of a branch re-opening through a door-to-door campaign, increasing the community's limited knowledge of the library's existence
Digital Promotion	Increased consistency and intentionality of social media cadence and content to better inform the local community of library offerings

Community Partners

Partner Audit and Expansion	Prioritized potential partners and optimized existing relationships to intentionally connect with new populations through the reach of local community organizations
Storytelling Pathway	Created a physical and digital point of connection for community members to share their stories and connect to library resources/offerings

Community Outposts
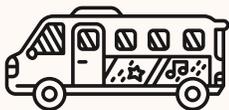
Bookmobile	Revamped a library bookmobile to strategically bring resources to regions of the community with limited access to physical branches
Access Point/ Access Hub	Promoted library offerings in spaces community members already trust and spend time (e.g. local schools)

Asset Optimization

Collection Optimization	Weeded irrelevant and underutilized collection materials, creating room to intentionally highlight resources and ease patron browsing experiences
Multi-Functional Space Design	Reconfigured interior library spaces to create usage flexibility for individual and communal work space, library programming, and other multi-functional activities

Project Outcomes

Increased usage of library services by previously underserved or unserved communities.

> " We are seeing an influx of new library users...staff have observed more people coming in... The increase in "new" rather than "legacy" patrons seems likely to be attributable to canvassing.
>
> ....

Foot traffic has increased every month. Actually, statistics have increased across the board; visits, circulation, new patrons, website hits, Wi-Fi use, and computer use.

Deepened relationships with community partner organizations, institutions, and leaders from previously underserved or unserved communities.

This has given us much-needed structure to managing our partnerships...a very helpful tool for staff communicating with each other and staying up to date in where we are with our partnerships.

> " **This partnership will catapult the library forward in ways that would have [otherwise] taken us years.** "

We have begun to recognize the different ways we can utilize our relationships with groups and organizations in town to best meet the needs of our patrons.

....

Creating library access points and hubs at schools and other community locations will create stronger ties between the library and the community. It will bring more awareness to the heaps of information and resources that we have to offer. "

Project Outcomes

Increased confidence and capacity among staff for ongoing outreach efforts to connect underserved communities with library resources.

> **You helped me to dream about what was possible, and then make it happen.**

> Our staff has grown to have a better understanding of the impact that they have in their work and role. They can see how their role fits into the big picture and that gives everyone a sense of purpose & commitment.

> The resource hubs are an amazing service we can provide to people...it helps people get the resources that they need. This will overwhelmingly help us achieve our goals of aiding the community as much as we can [and will] increase patrons' positive view of the library.

> I've learned a great deal about social media [and made] strategic changes in the way I post. I now have a better grasp on running the accounts [which] constantly have content now that shows many different aspects of the library.

Increased access to library resources.

> [These access points] will be very helpful. We already reach the people who enter the buildings, but that's just a fraction of our potential audience. Outreach and community engagement outside the buildings is crucial but often gets sidelined.

> We are now able to strategically coordinate our resources to reach all of our community members and provide what they want and need from their public library.