**TO:**  PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** PLA Partnerships Report

**DATE:** April 17, 2023

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** Larra Clark and Mary Hirsh, Deputy Directors

**DRAFT OF MOTION:**N/A

PLA has secured three new partnerships and expanded its relationship with AT&T over the last quarter. These partnerships are all in support of PLA’s digital inclusion work and point to the key role libraries play in addressing the digital divide.

**Heartland Forward** is a non-partisan “think and do tank” focused on the improving economic viability in the 20 states in the center of the country. A relatively new organization, [Heartland Forward](https://heartlandforward.org/) is partnering with PLA to develop three [new DigitalLearn](https://www.digitallearn.org/) modules: Accessing Telehealth; Exploring Career Opportunities, and; Digital Tools for Starting a Business. All modules will be available in English and Spanish and posted on digitallearn.org for asynchronous access. PLA will develop complimentary training packages (scripts, decks, handouts) for live group trainings. Heartland Forward is supporting this work with $162,500 in funding, including $19,500 in overhead to ALA and a $13,000 donation to Friends of PLA.

**Google** piloted its Super Searchers information literacy training with [Public Libraries 2030](https://publiclibraries2030.eu/2022/10/super-searchers-launch/) in Europe last year and reached out to ALA/PLA at the end of 2022 to ask us to review, refine, and bring the training to a North American audience in 2023. After reviewing the short virtual training (60 minutes for library staff and 45 minutes for library patrons), PLA saw value aligning with our digital literacy work and the strategic plan goal related to supporting all literacies, as well as addressing growing challenges related to mis- and disinformation. The training will provide tools for patrons to engage online information more critically and search more efficiently. The [initiative launched](https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2023/04/pla-google-tackle-misinformation-with-new-information-literacy-effort/) April 4 at DC Public Library with PLA President Maria McCauley, and virtual training for library staff is planned to begin in early fall. Google is supporting this work with $138,000 in funding, including $18,000 in overhead to ALA and a $10,000 donation to Friends of PLA.

**AT&T** continues to invest in its partnership with PLA, most recently with a $2.6 million dollar grant. Of this, about half will flow through to libraires as incentives to support use of [DigitalLearn training content](https://training.digitallearn.org/). Additional incentives will be offered to libraries specifically for using [Affordable Connectivity Program](https://www.digitallearn.org/courses/the-affordable-connectivity-program-basics-e62a355c-786b-44ae-a663-ac25147d2383) (ACP) content in community trainings. A small group of libraries will be invited to pilot Teen Tech Trainers, using previously developed online citizenship content. Salaries of several PLA staff will covered partially by this grant, totaling $279,000. ALA will receive $303,000 in overhead and a $202,000 donation to Friends of PLA.

This award is a major funding step-up from previous AT&T awards. This funding has been critical in accelerating advancement of PLA’s digital inclusion goals by providing direct support to libraries to engage with DigitalLearn. It also demonstrates AT&T’s confidence in PLA’s ability to exceed stated objectives. The first round of incentives was a great success, meeting both PLA and AT&T’s goals, developing a new group of library users working with PLA, and enabling PLA to evaluate the success of DigitalLearn (see Initiatives report for more details). PLA anticipates the next round of activity will be equally successful.

**Community Connect** is a related broadband adoption effort led by colleagues in the ALA Public Programs Office as part of another [ongoing partnership](https://www.ala.org/tools/programming/communityconnect) they have with Capitol One Bank focused on small and rural libraries. Community Connect: Fostering Digital Access will create resources and professional development opportunities linked to the [Federal Communications Commission’s Affordable Connectivity Program](https://www.fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-program)(ACP) and/or other programs geared to connecting people with low incomes to broadband and devices. The initiative expands service capacity of rural libraries, improves digital access for rural library patrons via hotspots and laptops, and incorporates financial and digital literacy resources to assist patrons with building the necessary skills to foster sustainable internet access at home. PLA is receiving $60,000 for our contributions to the overall project, which includes developing toolkit content focused on digital literacy and leveraging DigitalLearn and related resources.