CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG

LiBRARY

News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY AWARDED $492,000 FEDERAL GRANT TO REDUCE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
IMLS Grant will fund wireless internet service provider (WISP) network in west Charlotte

Charlotte, NC – October 28, 2020 – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library announced it is the recipient of a $492,000 federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) CARES Act Grants to support a tangible solution for the nearly 10 percent of households in Charlotte-Mecklenburg who lack dedicated broadband internet access for telehealth, online schooling, job searching and more. In partnership with the Charlotte Digital Inclusion Alliance and inspired by the BKYLNConnect Playbook, the Library will pilot its neighborhood WISP (wireless internet service provider) network to increase internet access in the county's West Boulevard corridor. In addition to receiving free internet with a Library card, individuals will receive digital literacy training, and some may train as support technicians for the project.

"We're excited to secure this grant and expect to demonstrate a working model for how libraries can better leverage the internet to narrow the digital divide," said Seth Ervin, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Chief Innovation Officer. "We'll test and pilot this network over the next two years, with a goal to demonstrate scalability for future expansion or replication in other communities."

A WISP allows subscribers to connect to a server at designated hot spots (access points) using a wireless connection such as Wi-Fi. Selected from more than 1,700 applications, the Library's program is in the early planning and development stages but is expected to impact up to 350 households in the West Boulevard corridor over the next two years. "We are doing our due diligence to partner with community neighborhoods that need this service. We want to make sure we identify a neighborhood that desires this connectivity and is committed to making it sustainable long after the funding of the project," added Ervin.

The IMLS Grant will fund one of the several Library programs helping bridge the digital divide that has become even more apparent because of the pandemic. One Library program offers laptops for a 7-day checkout at five Library locations, with funding support from the COVID-19 Response Fund. In addition, the Library received funding from Mecklenburg County to distribute 1,400 refurbished laptops through the MeckTech program that runs through November.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. The grant award number is CAGML-248107-OMLS-20.

###

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services
The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on Facebook and Twitter. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov.

About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library:
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America's leading urban public libraries, serving a community of more than one million citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Through 20 locations, targeted outreach and

online resources, the Library delivers exceptional services and programs, with a mission to improve lives and build a stronger community. For more, visit cmlibrary.org.

Media Contact:
Ann Stawski
Marketing & Communications Leader
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
o:704-416-0702 c: 980-293-5634
astawski@cmlibrary.org

Media resources:
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library newsroom: cmlibrary.org/library-news

Social sharing:
Hashtags: #cmlibrary
Facebook: www.facebook.com/cmlibrary
Twitter: @cmlibrary
Instagram: @cmlibrary
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/charlotte-mecklenburg-library