



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ULC Joins National Partnership to Develop COVID-Era Digital Service Models for Libraries**

*The Urban Libraries Council, Salt Lake City Public Library and National Digital Inclusion Alliance team up for year-long “Digital Navigators” initiative.*

**WASHINGTON** – In partnership with the Salt Lake City Public Library and National Digital Inclusion Alliance, ULC is advancing a new Digital Navigators service model to help libraries address the new and intensified digital access barriers resulting from COVID-19. This project was made possible in part by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) grant number [LG-248566-OLS-20](#).

Now being piloted by SLCPL and NDIA through September 2021, the Digital Navigators model offers a replicable blueprint for meeting the digital needs of underserved community members via phone-based support services. This framework trains Digital Navigators – who can be either volunteers or professionals – to confidently assess digital needs over the phone and guide people to supports relevant to their specific experience level and situation.

“For decades, libraries have relied on physical spaces and face-to-face engagement to meet the digital needs of their communities. But COVID-19 has made it critical for libraries to rethink our strategies so that vulnerable residents can access the digital tools, supports and skill-building opportunities they need,” said ULC President and CEO Susan Benton. “ULC is honored to partner with NDIA and the Salt Lake City Public Library to equip North America’s libraries with the powerful Digital Navigators framework for digital services in the pandemic era.”

As the project lead for the initiative, Salt Lake City Public Library is working to test and enhance the Digital Navigators service model through partnered outreach to residents in three of Salt Lake City’s lower-income neighborhoods. The service areas include ZIP codes where reported COVID-19 rates have been among the highest in the county. Salt Lake City Public Library's outreach will kick off in December 2020.

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance is helping to extend the reach and adaptability of this project by offering [online resources](#) and coordinating a cohort of organizations who are developing their own Digital Navigators programs.

Additional information about ULC's support of the Digital Navigators initiative can be found at [urbanlibraries.org](http://urbanlibraries.org).

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### **About the Urban Libraries Council**

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America's leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st-century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today's communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital equity, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.



### **About the Salt Lake City Public Library System**

The City Library consists of a Main Library and seven branch libraries with a staff of over 300 smart, compassionate, and dedicated people who are deeply committed to supporting and advancing the success of every customer they serve and making lives better for residents of Salt Lake City. The City Library serves an engaged community where 80% of citizens hold library cards with a cardholder base of over 161,000. The Library plans and hosts roughly 4,600 events annually. The Main Library attracts visitors from around the world to take in the stunning architecture, attend cultural festivals, and enjoy the 360-degree view of the city from its Rooftop Garden.



**NATIONAL DIGITAL INCLUSION ALLIANCE**

### **About the National Digital Inclusion Alliance**

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) is a unified voice for home broadband access, public broadband access, personal devices and local technology training and support programs. NDIA works collaboratively to craft, identify and disseminate financial and operational resources for digital inclusion programs while serving as a bridge to policymakers and the general public. NDIA represents leaders of local community organizations, public libraries, municipalities and other institutions working to reduce digital disparities. NDIA Affiliates total 500+ in 44 states, the District of Columbia and the US Virgin Islands.



### **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.ims.gov](http://www.ims.gov) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).