

# Lending Connectivity Tools

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## A Library Planning Guide



**BCLibraries**  
COOPERATIVE

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# Executive Summary

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Connectivity Lending programs in public libraries are intended to expand on existing efforts libraries make to provide in-branch Internet access, by allowing patrons to borrow portable Internet-connected devices from their local library.

Programs have typically taken one of two approaches — they have either loaned out Wifi Hotspots, small battery-powered units connected via the cellular network that allow other devices to connect via Wifi, or else have loaned out mobile devices themselves like tablets or phones with pre-enabled mobile data connections. In a loan program, the public library procures these devices and negotiates a contract with a wireless telecommunications carrier for a SIM (cell service) package at a monthly rate to ensure use of the device while on loan does not incur any cell call or data charges for the client.

Lendable Connectivity programs in British Columbia are not yet widespread, though there appears to be growing interest. There are more Loan programs in Ontario than any other Province, where they have been offered since 2013. Loan program sizes in Canada vary from 10 devices to 1000, depending on jurisdiction and size of the population.

The larger programs are all in major cities and are mostly funded by Poverty Reduction programs, with the largest being the City of Toronto.

Nearly all loan programs in Canada and the USA have been well-received by library patrons. The devices are typically loaned for periods of 1 week to 4 weeks and usually have large “Hold” lists.

The main challenges in establishing and running Connectivity Lending Programs arise in the costs (both initial and monthly), finding and maintaining funding, and partnering with a viable wireless communications vendor. A lack of wireless (cell) network coverage in many rural areas of BC is also often stated as a barrier to satisfactory delivery of remote Internet services and is a serious concern, one likely not addressable by libraries themselves but requiring solutions from government, communities and the telecommunications sector.

With a detailed planning process to define the goals, client and library outcomes, a multi-year budget and a well defined stakeholder identification exercise, most of the issues can be addressed to result in a successful Connectivity Lending program.

# Introduction

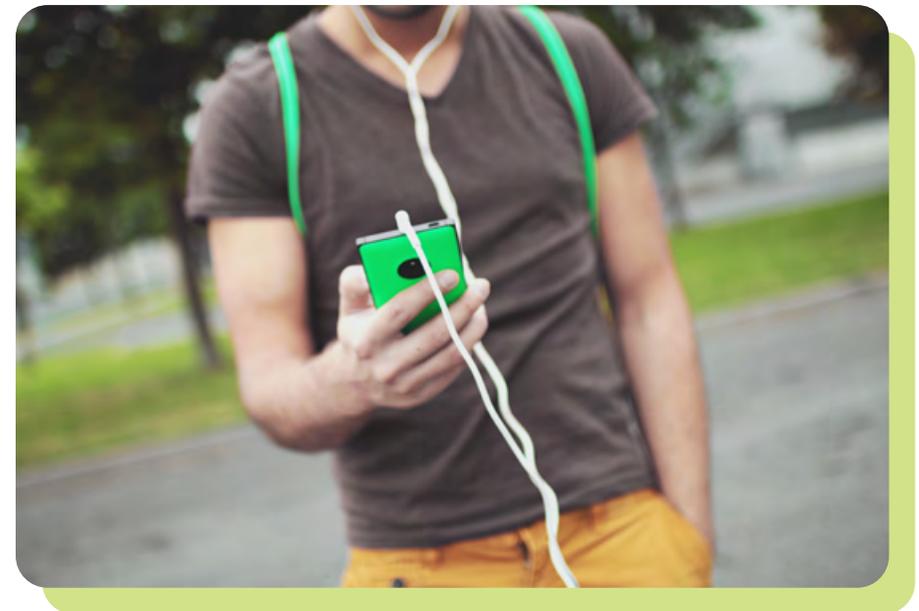
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Since the advent of the Internet, public libraries have been involved with providing in-branch access to the Internet, serving as a critical access point to help address a digital divide that has, 30 years on, still not gone away.

Increasingly, and even more now during the global pandemic, libraries are seeking ways to expand that access beyond the walls of the physical library branch, and so are looking to lend out Internet-connected devices to their patrons. As more and more of our lives take place online, from online learning to remote work, from access to government services and telehealth appointments, access to the Internet from where the patron is, at any time, has become not a nicety but a critical service.

This report looks at different ways libraries can lend out Internet Connectivity to their patrons, offers some guidelines in trying to plan such a program, and shares some lessons learned by previous programs from across Canada and the US.

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY VIA FLICKR



# Approaches to Lending Connectivity

Within the walls of a library branch we often find two different approaches to enabling Internet access. The first (and earliest) is through Internet-connected public computers (either in a lab setting or through mobile devices that can be used in-branch). The second (more recent, spurred on by widespread ownership of digital devices) is through the provision of library Wifi access. These two approaches (and the distinct complexities and concerns they bring with them) mirror the two main approaches to lending out connectivity outside the branch: lending out mobile devices (typically tablets, phones and sometimes laptops) with pre-enabled wireless service, versus lending out mobile hotspots (devices which connect to the cell network, create a local Wifi network which a patron can then access with their own device). Each approach has different benefits as well as limitations or additional concerns.



VIA UNSPLASH: COOKIE THE POM (LEFT); ASIF ASHARAF (MODIFIED)

## Pre-Enabled Mobile Devices (Cell Phones & Tablets)

Cell phones and some (though not all) tablets can take a SIM-card which allows them to connect to a cell network and, with a mobile data plan enabled, the Internet. As such they most resemble the experience of a patron coming into a branch to use one of the public access computers — the patron does not need to bring anything else (except knowledge of how to use the computer) and can immediately go online as soon as they access it.

Loaning pre-enabled Wifi devices involves management and maintenance of operating systems and applications. As such, this type of hosting raises a host of issues about device configuration management to preserve both the devices' integrity but also each patron's privacy and security. It may also involve more complicated documentation & processes for both staff and patrons.

## Mobile Hotspots

Mobile Hotspots are usually small battery-powered units providing a connection to the Internet using the cell phone network. The Hotspot will then provide a local wireless network through which people can connect their laptop or tablets or smartphone to the Internet. Hotspot loan programs provide just the Internet connection for a patron. The device to be used is not identified or provided by the library, though some libraries have taken to a hybrid approach of lending out hotspots AND pre-configured Chromebooks, lightweight and less expensive laptops that can then be used to access the Internet.

All the major Canadian wireless communications companies offer mobile Hotspots for sale. Mobile hotspots can also be bought on their own at major electronics suppliers. All the major Canadian cell carriers list the same Novatel MiFi 700 Hotspot device plus one or two others. There are many others available elsewhere and SIM Service packages are often available without a device so you can shop around.

## Internet “Sticks”

Finally, one other option is the loaning of Internet “Rocket Sticks”. These are very small devices that look like USB memory sticks but deliver cell-connected connectivity to the Internet through cell service SIM. They plug directly into the USB port on a computer. This is ultimately similar to loaning out a mobile hotspot in that the end user is still required to have an additional electronic device (typically a laptop or home computer) in order to actually use the Internet. So it shares the advantage with hotspots of the library not needing to get into mobile device management and the additional advantages of being both less expensive hardware and typically close to “plug and play” connectivity for the end user.

Only Telus and Bell are currently listing sticks for sale on the Mobile Internet web sites in BC listed below.

- [Telus](#)
- [Rogers](#)
- [Bell](#)



# Connectivity Lending Program Planning

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The planning process for any project requires definition of scope, time and cost of the project, investigation of the ways in which these will be achieved, and implementation and measurement of the project. A Connectivity Lending project involves:

1. Specifying goals (e.g. identify who in your community you are helping, state the library's desired outcomes)
2. Based on your goals, investigate the technology options available to you
3. Develop policies in line with your goals and technology choices
4. Develop a budget based on the above choices
5. Execute and evaluate the program

With answers in each of these areas, the project plan will contain a target client base, the staff and support resources needed to ensure the running of the project, the funding sources and the vendors available (and willing) to supply products and services. At the end of the initial project period, you will also need to evaluate the results against the intended outcomes and make decisions on continuation, closure or expansion of the Lending Program.

We were made aware of a useful [page put together by the American Library Association](#) specifically on Hotspot Lending. We caution that the American context is **substantially** different from Canada in many regards, nevertheless there are a large number of useful planning resources there too.

## Goal Setting

There are multiple reasons to start a connectivity lending project, and understanding your local populations needs, and the general conditions they face, in trying to connect to the Internet is a critical part in defining a successful project. Is there a sizeable portion of your patrons for whom Internet access is not affordable? Has there been a recent shift (e.g. the pandemic) that is placing increased demands on existing home connections or causing an increase in demand from patrons? One which may change down the road? Are you dealing with a sizeable population of seniors for whom navigating the devices themselves, in addition to the connectivity, may be a challenge?

And what would success look like? Depending on the kind of problem you are trying to solve, success might be measured in a large number of short-term loans, but it might also look like a much smaller number of much longer term loans (say for instance over the course of a school year to facilitate an increase in online schooling from home.)

ALA's [Performance Measurement guide](#) offers far more detailed information on how to define & measure program outcomes than is possible in this report.

## Questions to Help Set Goals

- ❓ What is the mission and value statement for the program?
  - Who are the clients for this program?
  - Is the program expected to serve all patrons equally or are there specific populations you want to target?
  - What benefits do you expect for those clients?
  - Are there any social service agencies or local non-profit groups that need to be included in the planning or marketing and administration to ensure the target clients are reached effectively?
- ❓ How will success be defined for my program?
- ❓ What to do if the program does not seem particularly successful?
- ❓ What are the next steps if the program is completely over-subscribed?
- ❓ What is the intended initial Lending Program timeframe?

## Technology Considerations

There are two main technological considerations in lending out connectivity. The first are about the type of device you plan to lend. The second major set of considerations are around the Internet connection itself: its speed, any limitations to the connection, its cost and the length of the contract you'll sign. The sections below walk you through both of these sets of considerations.

## Device Choice & Management

As mentioned, the first major decision, ideally driven from your goal setting and understanding of your local context, is whether to lend out hotspots or more complex mobile devices. Are you in an urban setting, with few actual connectivity issues and lots of free Wifi around? Maybe mobile devices are what's needed to allow folks to connect who don't have the devices to get online. Are you intending primarily to address Internet plan affordability but have a limited budget yourself? Then maybe hotspots are the place to start.

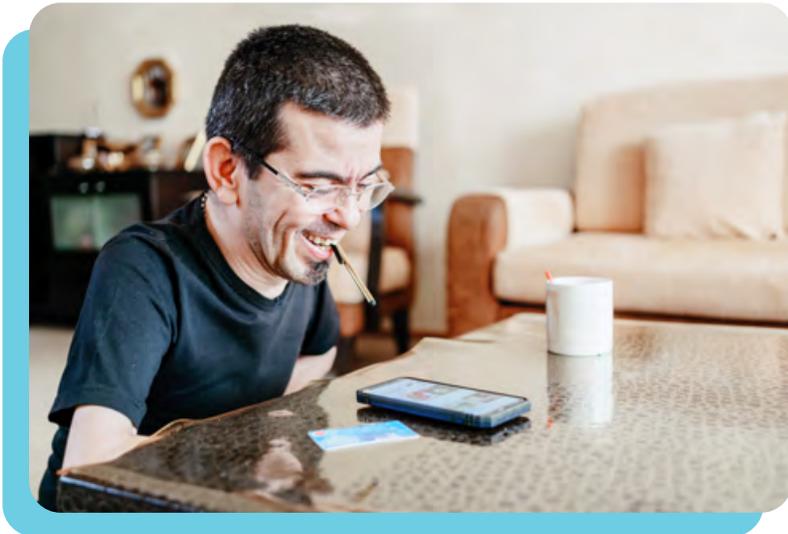
If a hotspot is the right choice for you, and given that hotspots offer no real interface or additional functionality other than creating an Internet-connected Wifi network, your planning on this step is mostly done. As you move to decide on a carrier you can decide whether to buy the hardware from a telecommunications carrier along with your plan, or whether to shop for a data-only SIM card from the telco but buy your hotspot elsewhere. Ultimately hotspots are fairly straightforward hardware devices.

If instead you choose to lend out a tablet or phone, there are a host of additional decisions to make. The first is simply whether you will lend Apple or Android devices (with Windows tablets also being an option but not phones.) This choice can be driven by a number of factors. What technologies does your library have strengths in? What is your budget? What devices do you find showing up most often in the hands of patrons you help?

You'll also need to decide how to manage the devices. Part of this is similar to managing the lending of any physical object from your library, and you may find your ILS can contain an entry for a phone or tablet to let you know who has it checked out and manage due dates etc. But the far more challenging element is "Mobile Device Management" (MDM) — a set of tools and practices to help manage the configuration of mobile devices which can also provide capabilities to lock down certain features, remote disable functionality and sometimes track the device's physical location.

A lengthy exploration of MDM for libraries is beyond the scope of this report.<sup>1</sup> If your library is already using this technology to lend out devices *within* your branch, you may be well positioned to expand this to devices loaned outside of the branch. If not, then this will become an area of considerable learning and investment. But MDM is likely critical to lending out complex devices like tablets and phones in a way that preserves the device's integrity, the patron's privacy and security, and limits the library's liability.

One thing to note – investment in MDM solutions can, depending on the solution you choose, be a way to partly mitigate device loss, as some of these solutions offer both a way to remotely disable a device as well as physically track them.



## Questions to Ask About Device Management

- ❓ What does a mobile hotspot cost to buy and where do I get them?
- ❓ What comes in a hotspot kit? Typically:
  - 1 case
  - 1 hotspot device
  - 1 wall charger with 1 micro USB cable
- ❓ How can I best keep track of the devices and accessories?
- ❓ Can they be effectively integrated as inventory in my circulation system?
- ❓ What if a hotspot gets stolen or lost?
- ❓ If a device breaks, is there any budget to replace it?
- ❓ If I decide to loan out tablets or phones, how will I manage what software is installed on there? How do I ensure that patron privacy is preserved across patrons? How do I ensure that the device is returned to an initial configuration point?
  - Will the device be locked down or will patrons be able to install additional software on it?

<sup>1</sup> For some additional reading on MDM for libraries see [British Columbia Library Association](#), and for related perspective from K-12, “[10 Ways Mobile Device Management can Help your School.](#)”

## Choosing A Connectivity Plan

Once you've made the choice of the type of device to lend, you need to choose a wireless service provider. This choice has many elements — most basic is around coverage and the type of service, but also important are whether data-only plans are available, at what cost and under what contract length. The next sections go through each of these considerations in detail.

### Carrier Coverage, Types of Service & Plan Limits

A carrier's coverage is probably the most critical element in choosing a carrier. Determining cell phone coverage can be notoriously difficult<sup>2</sup>, but at the end of the day, without decent wireless coverage in your general region, any lendable connectivity program is likely to fail.

Assuming your region has decent coverage, you can use maps like those provided at [Compare Cellular](#) to determine which carrier may fit best. Another consideration for a carrier is whether or not they offer LTE and 4G coverage, 5G<sup>3</sup> coverage?

Are their plans with hard caps that can help avoid overages (or are these best implemented within the device?) Or, do you want unlimited plans that are within the library's budget? Is there a tradeoff to be made to allow for unlimited data but at the cost of limiting the connection's speed (bandwidth) and if this choice is made, will the slower bandwidth support all of the uses you are hoping to enable for patrons? For example, is online gaming (something that typically requires low latency connections) something you hope a patron can do with the connectivity they have borrowed, or streaming videos or videoconferencing? If yes, then faster speeds may be required.

Most plans will allow for data roaming — but is that something your library wants to enable? Is there a way to limit this in the contract to avoid any unexpected bills up front?

### Data-only vs Phone & Data

Another decision point in choosing a plan, especially where cell phones are involved, is whether it is a data-only plan, or whether it also includes cell minutes. Cell minutes may be a useful thing to offer patrons, but bring with them additional concerns about billing overages as well as number privacy between patrons, which can be a non-trivial to solve.

### Contract Lengths

The SIM service will require a contract which is normally offered from 1 month to 24 months. Given that an initial loan program is often a pilot with limited funding, the choice of contract length should not exceed the term of the funding. Generally the longer the term, the lower the monthly fee for the service.

### Cost

In the various examples we examined below, cost was THE most significant consideration and usually the reason for not proceeding with a planned program. Yet cost (or better, affordability<sup>4</sup>) is also typically THE major motivating factor for lendable connectivity projects.

In negotiating cell plans all of the above (rate, data caps, type of plan) will influence your costs. Many of the examples we looked at used costs for consumer-level offerings. It can be the case that

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2 [Compare Cellular](#) offers one starting point to investigate wireless coverage with links to each providers' maps

3 [The WIRED Guide to 5G](#)

4 [Why Are Cell Phone Plans So Expensive In Canada?](#)

businesses may be offered discounted rates for them as part of their overall service packages. Direct contact with telecommunication firm sales representatives will be required to negotiate these and this option is often not found on a consumer web site. It may also be the case that better deals can be negotiated at scale, through multiple library partnerships.

The libraries we spoke with in BC were generally quoted monthly rates of \$80-125 per device, with the upfront device costs being separate.

### Questions to Ask Regarding Cell Service

- ❓ Do we understand the technical service offerings in our area?
  - Does any service provider offer adequate data-only cell service?
  - Are there issues with cellular service coverage in my community?
- ❓ Will the target clients still be able to use the hotspots if some areas lack coverage?
- ❓ Does my service provider offer adequate cell service?
- ❓ Are there issues with cellular service coverage in my community?
- ❓ Are there data cost limits or maximum speed restrictions? And how do these relate to costs? Is it possible to limit cost overruns while not hindering service by, for instance, having an unlimited data plan but at a lower bandwidth speed?



## Policy Considerations

Policy considerations will vary slightly depending on the approach (hotspots vs phones/tablets) one takes to lending connectivity, but in general, because of the expense of these devices and the potential for hidden costs, are steered by roughly the same concerns.

Like any loaning collection, circulation policies will need to be applied:

- Length of lending period;
- Policy to deal with loss and damage above and beyond standard library policy, if required;
- Policy to deal with potential user-driven costs, be they from overages or app purchases (if allowed).

We reviewed a number of existing policies both from libraries lending Internet-enabled devices as well as some from BC libraries who were lending out relatively expensive (though not yet Internet-connected) devices like tablets or chromebooks.<sup>5</sup>

Generally we found wide support for the following kinds of policies:

- Limits to borrower age, typically age of majority and up, sometimes requiring an additional proof of age.
- Patron needs to be in good standing and/or specifying the maximum amount of fines they may currently own.
- Limits to newness of patron; many libraries required a patron to have a 3-6 month record of regular library usage before loaning out expensive devices.
- Limits to loan period length — these varied widely, from short 2-3 week loans to examples like those in New York where hotspots were loaned out for a full school year. Given the likely relative scarcity of these devices, there were often limits to renewals too.
- Some libraries chose to stick with their generic loss and replacement rules which a patron had agreed to upon first being issued a card. Others looked to sign a unique loan agreement for the connectivity devices, in particular highlighting the high replacement costs the borrower would become responsible for, and other ways in which there could be liability for the borrower. This was also seen as appropriate for lending these types of devices because they will require a lengthier check-out time the first time a patron borrowed one of these items.
- Clear indications of costs up front for replacement due to damage or loss.

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5 Some example policies from libraries lending connected devices include: [Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library](#), [Eastern Monroe Public Library](#) and [Brantford Public Library](#). And policies from BC libraries lending expensive digital equipment include: [Powell River Public Library](#), [Elkford Public Library](#) and [West Vancouver Memorial Library](#).

- Acceptable Use policies and/or other statements in which to limit the liability of the library for any actions performed by a patron on equipment the library owns but is not directly in the possession of. This can include things like agreeing to not pirate content or otherwise use the device for illegal purposes, and that the user must use their own logins for any services they access on the device.
- Return policies, typically indicating return directly to a staff member who can ensure the device is working before it is accepted back.

### Policy Questions to Consider

- ? What library support should you offer? What if the patron needs help connecting a device to the hotspot?
- ? How long should the lending period for the devices last? (i.e. 3 days? 1 week? 1 month? 1 year? Multiple options?)
- ? Will patrons need to sign a user agreement? An internet use agreement? Have a library card?
- ? Does it matter if the patron is not a long-standing patron with an established borrowing record?
- ? Will we ask patrons to fill in survey forms or web pages to evaluate need and use?
- ? Will there be overdue fines? Lost or stolen fees?
- ? Have you conferred with the staff who will administer this program, or have administered similar in-branch device lending, to influence policy, especially issues which might make answering patron questions easier?



## Budget Considerations

Multiple factors will impact your budget estimates based on the decisions you've reached above. With both hotspot and devices like cell phones and tablets, there will be both upfront costs (typically FAR greater in the case of mobile phones and tablets) to purchase the devices, as well as the ongoing monthly cell charges. In addition, approaches that lend out connected devices such as phones and tablets will almost certainly have to implement some form of mobile device management to deal with device configuration and patron privacy. In this regard, libraries who already manage in-branch loaning of mobile devices may be able to easily piggyback on the software used to do this and are possibly better positioned to loan out such devices outside of the branch.

Depending on your choices and model, there are almost certainly additional costs related to staff training, documentation (both internal and for patrons) and staff time to administer the program to consider.

Finally, every project we looked at experienced loss and breakage of loaned devices. While some of this may be recoupable from the patron, for a program to be sustainable in the longer term it should account for some year-to-year replacement and repair costs, likely no less than 20% of initial budget. Indeed, even without breakage and loss, technology projects would do well to factor in a specific hardware renewal cycle to replace technology as it ages and becomes obsolete. A figure of 30% annually on initial hardware outlay is a decent estimate that would enable both loss coverage as well as build a reserve for a 3 year replacement cycle, which in the past has been fairly standard for hardware renewal.

## Budget Questions to Ask

- ❓ How will my library fund this program? Internal budget? Grants? Partnerships?
- ❓ How many devices should we start with?
- ❓ Have we budgeted for ancillary hardware costs (cases, additional power cables)?
- ❓ Do we currently have mobile device management in place, and if not, what are we prepared to pay for this?
- ❓ What percentage of annual breakage and loss should we budget for?
- ❓ Is there a number of devices below which the program no longer makes sense to run?
- ❓ Are we able to secure a plan that will avoid unforeseen overages (i.e. for excessive data use)?
- ❓ Is there a need for dedicated staff to handle the devices?
- ❓ Should we have training plans for staff and borrowers?



## Evaluating Your Project

Part of successfully evaluating a program is actually having gone through the goal setting process laid out earlier. While programs often achieve additional unintended beneficial consequences (which should not be ignored when later evaluating), knowing what and who you were aiming at in the first place is important. Keeping track of basic quantitative data like the number of unique individuals who borrowed devices, the length of waitlists to borrow the devices and, if available from the telecommunications provider, anonymized data on device usage intensity can all be good ways to demonstrate general demand and uptake.

However, qualitative data may also be helpful in demonstrating how the program is helping solve connectivity problems that can't be addressed by users coming to the branch to access the Internet. This data can be harder to gather, especially in a way that respects patron privacy. Check-out questionnaires are one possibility<sup>6</sup> that may be more effective than general library use surveys at the end of year.

Libraries should also be aware of how important the aggregated, anonymized data they can glean from program users can be for policy makers outside of the library. Learning what patrons were able to do with their new connectivity, what affordability looks like for them, and what their access to connectivity was before borrowing the device can all be powerful arguments for the many layers of government currently trying to improve connectivity coverage and costs in BC.

## Questions to ask in evaluating your project

- ? How will you do post-program evaluation with patrons? Remember, patrons may no longer have an Internet connection once they return a device.
- ? Where might you get stories to share with stakeholders?
- ? Do you include an option for users to opt-into follow-up interviews?
- ? What other metrics are key to track in showing the effectiveness of this program?



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6 [This is one example of a checkout questionnaire](#) for hotspots, and slide figure 3 in this [research paper on hotspot effectiveness](#) is another.

# Conclusions

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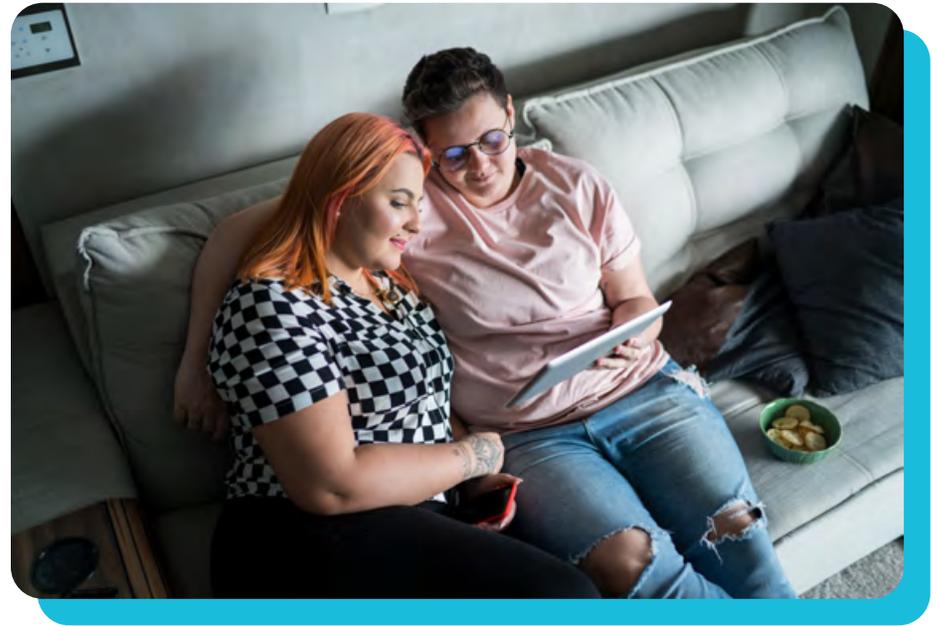
Examples of existing and planned connectivity lending projects are listed in Appendix 1, but hopefully it is already clear that public libraries do, and should, expand their existing efforts to provide Internet access by lending out hotspots and other mobile-enabled devices.

Unfortunately, many of the geographical areas that could most benefit from these types of projects are not good candidates because of the general poor connectivity in the region. Before any project is proposed, that is likely the first important area to research.

If that seems favourable, there are still many other preparatory steps required. Beyond those steps, these kinds of projects can be expensive. Serious effort is required to put cost limits in place to ensure these costs do not balloon.

Many of the successful projects we saw in the US benefitted from philanthropic entities that do not operate in Canada. However large funders and philanthropic entities are likely a part of any program attempting to lend out connectivity at scale. Any savings to be found with telecommunications providers may also only be found when negotiating at scale, likely a scale larger than what even our larger individual libraries can command on their own. Without these savings, individual libraries will need to be clear on the strenuous budget demands such programs can create and tailor them to a scale they can manage.

Finally, partnership with non-library groups can also be a useful element. The largest projects in Canada were done in partnership with poverty reduction-focused NGOs as well as assistance from their province, as were many of the US-based projects we looked at.





# Appendix 1

## — Existing Connectivity Lending Programs

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As part of this guide we tried to discover as many existing connectivity lending programs as we could, both in BC, across Canada and the US, and interviewed a number of them to see what we could learn. Below are some of the projects we learned of, with links to reports they've produced, as well as some choice lessons from our interviews

### British Columbia

As part of researching this guide we reached out to 5 BC libraries, both rural and urban, who were either in the process of planning a connectivity lending program or else who had planned one but failed to move forward, typically due to costs. There may be others we did not learn of who have run such programs in BC.

Several public libraries have investigated their options and costs for this program. Regardless of location, the libraries have been offered consumer pricing and products by sales staff. Cell service prices offered varied from \$85 per device per month to \$150 per month plus a \$100 to \$350 per device purchase cost. These offers included unlimited data use. In all cases the library staff involved view these

costs as unsustainable and have not proceeded with a formal proposal for a connectivity loan program.

There are 3 North Shore libraries (West Van, North Van City and North Van District) who have been involved with a [recent pandemic-driven project](#) to distribute (not loan) via local charitable organizations refurbished devices provided by Telus' charitable foundation. While this does help vulnerable members of the community get online, surely a key goal of any lendable connectivity program, it is not strictly speaking a "lending" project.

We were unable to identify any currently operating Connectivity Lending Programs in BC.

### Other Canadian Programs

Possibly the best known and most publicized program to lend connectivity in Canada was run by the Toronto Public Library. We interviewed the lead on the project for this report. Their Hotspot Loan Program consisted of 100 hotspot devices, supplied to social service agencies under funding of the Poverty Reduction program of the City of Toronto. The devices had a 10% breakage rate annually and were supplied free by Rogers Communications with an annual contract costing \$50/month each, with unlimited data but speed limited to 5Mbps/second. Funding for this program was lost in 2018.

Toronto also administers an "Internet Kit" program, not a loan program as such, but a provisioning program under a Poverty Reduction framework funded by their Foundation, with 100 laptops initially given to recipients consisting of an older hotspot with a 4-month contract and a refurbished laptop. The initial success of this program has resulted in a 2nd step with 100 new Dell laptops and hotspots with a 2-year contract budgeted at \$1250 each, funded by their Foundation.

All program recipients are given a Library card and are subject to the Internet Use policy, must participate in surveys and provide video/pic opportunities and a post program evaluation.

In addition to Toronto's well known project, poverty reduction programs at the provincial level in Ontario have also contributed to a number of other library lending projects:

- [Wellington Country Library, Ontario lends hotspots](#)
- [Niagra on the Lake Public Library lends out hotspots](#)
- [Kitchener Public Library in Ontario lends Internet sticks](#)
- [Ottawa Public library outreach for Covid includes loaning Chromebooks and Hotspots](#)
- We also learned of at least two hotspot lending projects in Alberta
- [Grand Prairie Public Library in Alberta has a Hotspot lending Program](#)
- [Edmonton Public Library Hotspot Lending Program](#)



## US-based Programs

Below is a list of some select US-based programs. We are cautious about sharing these because the landscape in the US is so different on ALL fronts: their population density means there is FAR greater cell coverage and competition, meaning both cheaper access for individuals as well as more affordable plans for libraries wanting to undertake this work; there are national-level programs available (such as [TechSoup's hotspot program](#)) which make library-led connectivity lending programs much more straightforward; the funding and philanthropic landscape is much different than in Canada.

We did interview one of these projects, based in New Jersey. There, the library administers a Hotspot loan program which they have partnered with 2 national charities, Mobile Beacon and Techsoup, to provide a Hotspot to patrons for up to 2 weeks. The cost for the wireless service is only \$10 per month via Mobile Beacon, who sponsor many thousands of devices across the USA. The device is provided free to the library through Techsoup. The library has 100 devices in the program, but no budget for breakage.



In addition, we learned of the following existing connectivity loan programs in the US:

- [The EauClaire Public Library](#), WI website has a comprehensive outline of loan programs for Hotspots, iPad Air tablets and other technology
- iPads Minis and Wi-Fi Hotspots are loaned at [Hoboken Public Library New York](#)
- [Houston Public Library in Texas](#) lends Hotspots and other tech
- [North Carolina Library Wi-Fi Hotspots For Students in Need](#)
- [Heights Libraries in Cleveland](#) have a hotspot lending program
- [Chicago Public Library](#) lends out hotspots and Chromebook Kits
- Three large library systems in New York City have partnered on a [hotspot lending program](#)
- [This article has several other examples](#) of connectivity lending programs in US



# Appendix 2

## — Additional Links and Resources

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- [ALA's Hotspot Lending Program Playbook](#)
- Excellent [How To Guide on Setting Up a HotSpot Lending Program](#) from Maine
- [Library Journal Article on Starting Up A HotSpot Program](#)
- Good [Presentation from Oklahoma State on starting a hotspot lending program](#)
- [BC Government Connectivity page](#) (funds, program info)
- [Canada's National Broadband Availability Map](#)
- [Canadian ISP lookup](#) (free but privately run service)
- [Canadian Internet Registry Authority \(CIRA\) Speedtest](#) (contributes to a national database of factual speedtest, not ISP-reported speeds)

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