

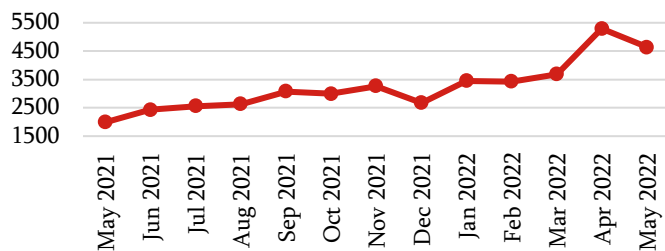
Community Connect: Digital Access at Home

The Community Connect: Digital Access at Home initiative seeks to increase internet access and financial literacy for rural communities nationwide. The American Library Association (ALA) together with Capital One supports the initiative's two components: 1) Hotspot Lending and 2) the Ready, Set, Bank program. Through the initiative, 20 rural public libraries received five Wi-Fi hotspots with two-year contracts; the curriculum and tools for the Ready, Set, Bank program; and \$2,000 to support financial literacy programs.

A total of 105 patrons and 7 library staff from 13 libraries shared feedback on phase one of the program. One patron explained:

"I was able to borrow the hotspot from the library free of charge. I was certain there might be a deposit, but it was absolutely free. What is more, the device worked perfectly.... I was able to work, and my child did not fall behind in his classes." – Library Patron

On average, library hotspots used 3K Gigabytes of data per month



Programs Highlights

- 53% of respondents did not have internet access prior to the Hotspot Lending Program
- 84% of patrons reported that their ability to access the internet was improved.
- 69% shared that their quality of life had improved.



Future Considerations & Lessons Learned

1. **Hotspot Protection:** ALA might provide more guidance on the type of protective material needed for the hotspots. This can help avoid issues of fit or incompatibility with the devices.
2. **Ready, Set, Bank Flexibility:** Allow for some flexibility when implementing Ready, Set, Bank. One interviewee posited that had they been able to partner with local banks, community engagement might have been better. However, doing so would have conflicted with grant requirements. Additionally, a couple of libraries would appreciate having some input in video content.
3. **Tips & Strategies for Ready, Set, Bank Implementation:** Provide recommendations for implementing Ready, Set, Bank from both ALA and past grantees. For example, one participant shared that her library recruited a presenter to facilitate the curriculum.
4. **Survey Consistently:** PIE recommends a single survey for the Ready, Set, Bank program instead of two, since many items are duplicated on the instruments.
5. **Diversify Outreach & Engagement:** ALA and its affiliate libraries might consider strategies for engaging more diverse populations in the Community Connect program [participants of hotspot lending were mostly female (70%) and Caucasian (68%)]. For example, one strategy is to promote the program in underserved communities.