

Learning Without Limits



Library Hotspot Lending Extends Opportunity for All

From research for term papers to completing the GED online, an internet connection powers educational opportunity. Yet one in five U.S. households lack home broadband access, creating a learning gap for millions of people.

20%



of US adults lack access to home broadband internet services

45%



of US adults with a high school education or less lack access to home broadband

23M



Number of households that could lose their connections as the Affordable Connectivity Program winds down

America's public libraries have long worked to bridge digital divides with more than 17,000 technology-enabled and convenient locations with trusted staff to guide and connect people with needed resources and skills.

More recently, libraries are extending their digital reach with technology outreach and device lending.

% U.S. Public Libraries that report internet hotspots for patron use offsite

2023

46.9%

Urban
69.4%

Rural
39.2%

2020

32.6%

Urban
51.8%

Rural
25.5%

*Source: Public Library Association: ala.org/pla/data/plasurveys

Hotspot lending programs power learning



Supports commuter students who may not have access to home internet.



Extends learning opportunities into nights and weekends when libraries and schools aren't open.



Encourages online learning by granting access to students from all backgrounds with tools.



Fosters job training, college and career readiness, and digital literacy and equity for adult learners and jobseekers.

“Hotspot lending programs give families and individuals flexibility in using resources for education, work, and telehealth on their schedule.”

Lauren Abner
State E-rate Coordinator,
Kentucky Department for
Libraries and Archives

ALA Advocacy on E-rate Hotspot Lending



Advocacy Timeline

Program Recommendations

ALA is the leading voice for libraries and has been advocating for a year on this issue. To effectively engage library applicants and increase broadband access through libraries, ALA recommends:

- > **Balance** program goals of stewarding limited funding and minimizing applicant burden to ensure all libraries are able to participate.
- > **Leverage** library expertise in circulating resources for U.S. communities by providing program flexibility for staff to design local lending that works for libraries and their patrons.
- > **Allow** for local variation in assessing need and program impacts. Individual patron records should not be attached to the device once the device has been returned to the library.
- > **Enable** applicants to determine the most cost-effective option to improve broadband access—whether lending hotspots or establishing community networks for home access.
- > **Address** any E-rate internet filtering requirements narrowly to focus only on eligible service (i.e., internet hotspot).

- **SUMMER 2024**
Final Order Anticipated

- **FEBRUARY – APRIL 2024**
 - ALA advocates for program with FCC
 - Joins with coalitions to send letters and urge action
 - Develops resources for libraries to advocate and learn about program

- **JANUARY 2024**
ALA establishes Digital Inclusion Working Group for libraries

- **JANUARY 2024**
ALA files comments in response to the NPRM

- **NOVEMBER 2023**
FCC releases proposal on E-rate hotspot lending

- **JUNE 2023**
Chairwoman Rosenworcel announces Learn Without Limits at ALA Annual Conference

Megan Janicki
Deputy Director, Strategic Initiatives

Email: mjanicki@alawash.org

Phone: 202-403-8210

Hotspot lending provides flexibility to individuals who may lack home internet or who may not have sufficient access for the needs of the household.

Additional Resources: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/erate>



SHOWCASING LIBRARIES & LIBRARY HOTSPOT LENDING PROGRAMS
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