



MEMO

To: Montana State Library Commission
From: Savanna Sill, Montana Library Network Coordinator
Subject: Hotspot Funding Program final report
Date: June 6, 2025

There is no current update or change to the status of Hotspot Funding which is set to expire on June 30, 2025. The last date for the Notice of Funding Opportunity from NTIA (National Telecommunication and Information Administration) for the Digital Competitive Grant was April 20, 2025, but the status is currently still listed as pending review.

The hotspot program will transition to be funded at a local level starting July 1, 2025 for libraries that would like to continue and are financially in position to continue the program on their own. Currently 37 public libraries or 54% of currently participating Public Libraries plan to continue the program on their own. We are currently finalizing and confirming the information needed for transition.

The Montana State Library started the Hotspot Program in July of 2020 in response to COVID-19 and the increasing need to have access to the internet. A total of 54 counties in Montana participated in the program at some point over the last 5 years and many will continue the program in the future. As of 2023 Montana had an estimate of 39,343 households with no internet access. With the 33 counties that are continuing the hotspot program, that will help serve an estimated 26,852 Montana households without internet access or just over 68% of Montana's population without internet access. Hotspots will continue to be checked out for temporary use, similar to other library items/materials.

Montanans have utilized hotspots in numerous ways over the past 5 years. Uses range from keeping up with current events, connecting with family and friends, accessing telehealth services, filling out required online forms (social services/taxes), completing homework, broadcasting funeral services, keeping a library open with temporary loss of internet, and even supporting a cattle sale.

3.84 million gigabits of data were used from July 2020-April 2025, creating a significant and positive impact on thousands of Montanans. This program played a more significant role in rural Montana. Rural Montana Libraries had 6.520 gigabits of data use per capita, while Urban



Montana Libraries had 1.736 gigabits of data use per capita. This data was last pulled in December of 2024 and rural and urban areas are defined by the 2020 Census.

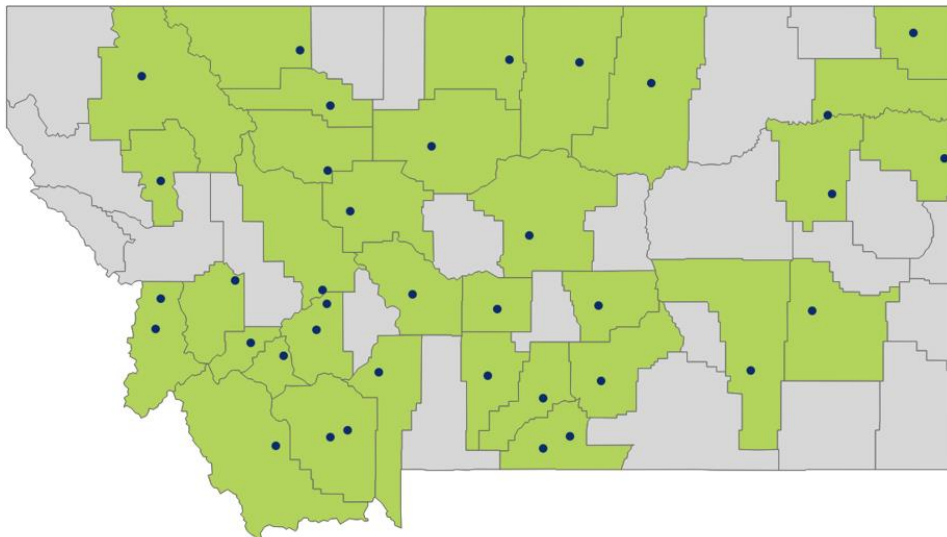
Direct Quote from Patron: *"Thank you for having hotspots to help keep us "online" when we do not have service. My dad is not a computer or internet person and it is a huge help when I am there to keep in touch with my home and do the many things online that my dad needs. THANK YOU!"*

The hotspot dashboard will be updated after the fiscal year ends and the monthly billing and data tracking cycles from the providers become available for the Month of June.

U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Presence and Types of Internet Subscriptions in household." *American Community Survey, ACS 5- Year Estimates Detailed*

Tables, Table B28002, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2023.B28002> .

Map of Public Libraries Currently Planning to Continue the Hotspot Program.



Public Libraries Continuing the Hotspot Program: Bicentennial Library of Colstrip, Billings Public Library, Bitterroot Public Library, Boulder Community Library, Bridger Public Library, Butte-Silver Bow Public Library, Carnegie Public Library- Big Timber, Chouteau County Library, Conrad Public Library, Dillon Public library, Drummond School-Community Library, Fairfield-Teton Public Library, Glacier County Library, Harlem Public Library, Harlowton Public Library, Havre-Hill County Library, Hearst Free library- Anaconda, Lewis and Clark County Library, Lewistown Public Library, Madison Valley Public Library-Ennis, Manhattan Community Library, McCone County Library, Meagher County City Library, Miles City Public Library, North Jefferson County Libraries, North Valley Public Library- Stevensville, Phillips County Library, Red Lodge Carnegie Library, Ronan Library District, Roosevelt County Library, Roundup Community-School Library, Sheridan County Library, Sidney-Richland County Library, Stillwater County Library, Thompson-Hickman Madison County Library- Virginia City, Wedsworth Memorial Library- Cascade, and Whitefish Community Library. Some libraries will continue at full/current capacity, and some will continue at a lower capacity. This list is subject to change, but this is the list as one June 2, 2025.