MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
A GREATER STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

MEMO

To: State Library Commission

From: Rebekah Kamp and Cara Orban

Subject: Hot Spot Lending Program

Date: December 7, 2022

The purpose of the hot spot lending program administered by the Montana State Library is to bridge existing gaps in internet access across the state until more permanent broadband solutions are established. In this brief presentation the State Library Commission will receive information regarding the program's origins, current operations, data-supported outcomes, and prospects.

Key takeaways from the hot spot data dashboard include:

- Year-to-date hot spot usage statewide has increased by 26% over fiscal year 2022.

- 70% of the patrons who borrow hot spots either do not have household internet service or rely on cellular data. The remaining 30% of borrowers report using hot spots to bridge access. For example, these users check out hot spots to provide access while working in the field, while caring for relatives without service, or while traveling.

- 48% of hot spot users report using the device for work or school tasks such as completing homework, checking school information, working remotely, or applying for jobs. Additional users report informal educational uses like researching a topic of interest (48%) or learning a new skill (22%).

- There is a relationship between per capita data use, the percentage of households without internet access, and the percentage of individuals living below poverty level. However, some libraries have more success than others. For example, Big Horn County has reported the most data use out of all libraries. The county is ranked 51st in the state for access, with 28% of households without access. The State Library and its local partners can use data to move devices to where there is greater need.

Hot spot program dashboard