



Hotspot Access in Texas Rural Libraries

“Take the Internet Home”

Austin, TX June 29, 2018 | The Technology and Information Policy Institute (TIPI) at the University of Texas at Austin has received a grant from the [Tocker Foundation](#) to implement hotspot lending programs at rural libraries throughout the state of Texas. TIPI has selected the following libraries to each receive hotspot devices with unlimited data:

Atlanta Public Library

Danbury Community Public Library

Bandera Public Library

Peñitas Public Library

Camp Wood Public Library

Port Isabel Public Library

Project Director Sharon Stover said “These hotspots should assist the local populations with Internet access in many ways. Our work in other rural regions shows that hotspots allow people otherwise “unconnected” to complete GED programs, to help their kids do homework, and to use Internet resources at their homes. The convenience and affordability factors are important.”

TIPI has previously conducted research on mobile hotspot lending programs in New York, Kansas, and Maine through grants from the Robin Hood Foundation and the federal agency Institute of Museum and Library Sciences. Library programs “lending out the Internet” to bridge the digital divide have been successfully implemented in many locations through cellular-based mobile hotspot devices. Mobile technology presents many unique opportunities for the access in rural communities suffering from a lack of available home-based broadband due both to affordability issues as well as simple absence of local facilities.

Libraries serve purposes “beyond the book” as crucial community anchors for Internet access, particularly in rural locations. Through our IMLS-funded assessment, we developed a ["best practices" guide](#) for rural hotspot lending in libraries. These devices have helped library patrons bridge gaps in access to health care, education, and employment. Adding mobile hotspot lending programs to rural library catalogs not only brings new patrons through library doors but also provides Internet connections after library hours are over, extending the benefits of the library and broad information access into patrons’ homes. AT&T and Mobile Beacon are assisting with the devices and the connectivity.

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