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RURAL LIBRARY HOTSPOT LENDING A TOCKER FOUNDATION-FUNDED PROJECT

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Presentation agenda

- The challenge: the digital divide
 - Lack of access to Internet services in rural areas
- The Tocker Rural Hotspot Program
 - Piloted a hotspot lending program at six Texas libraries with funding from Tocker, in-kind from AT&T
- What we found in our study
 - Quantitative and qualitative results

What's the digital divide?

Differences between households that have and those that lack broadband access & adoption

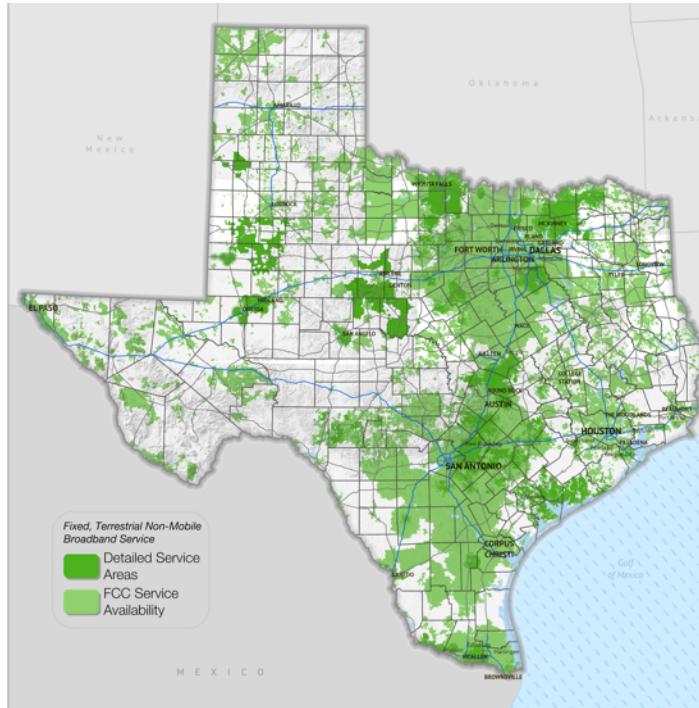


The digital divide is a barrier to:

- Employment
- Staying connected with friends & family
- Accessing news & information
- Education

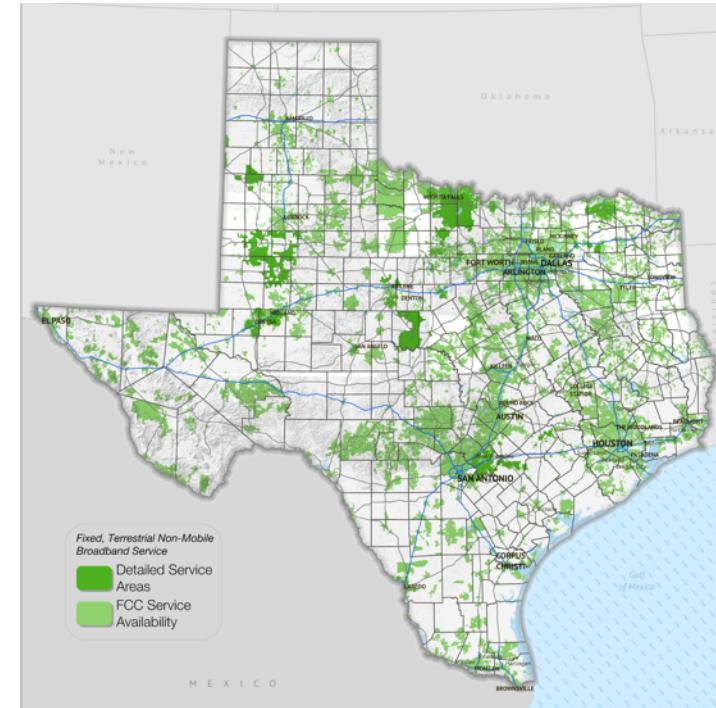


Anderson & Kumar, 2019; Horrigan & Duggan, 2015



Broadband service with speeds of at least 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload

Source: Connected Nation Texas



Broadband service with speeds of at least 50 Mbps download/5 Mbps upload

Rural libraries & Internet Services

- 23% of Americans do not have home Internet access
- Broadband adoption rates are lower in rural areas
 - Lack of providers
 - Higher costs
 - Lower incomes
- Rural libraries serve “beyond the books”

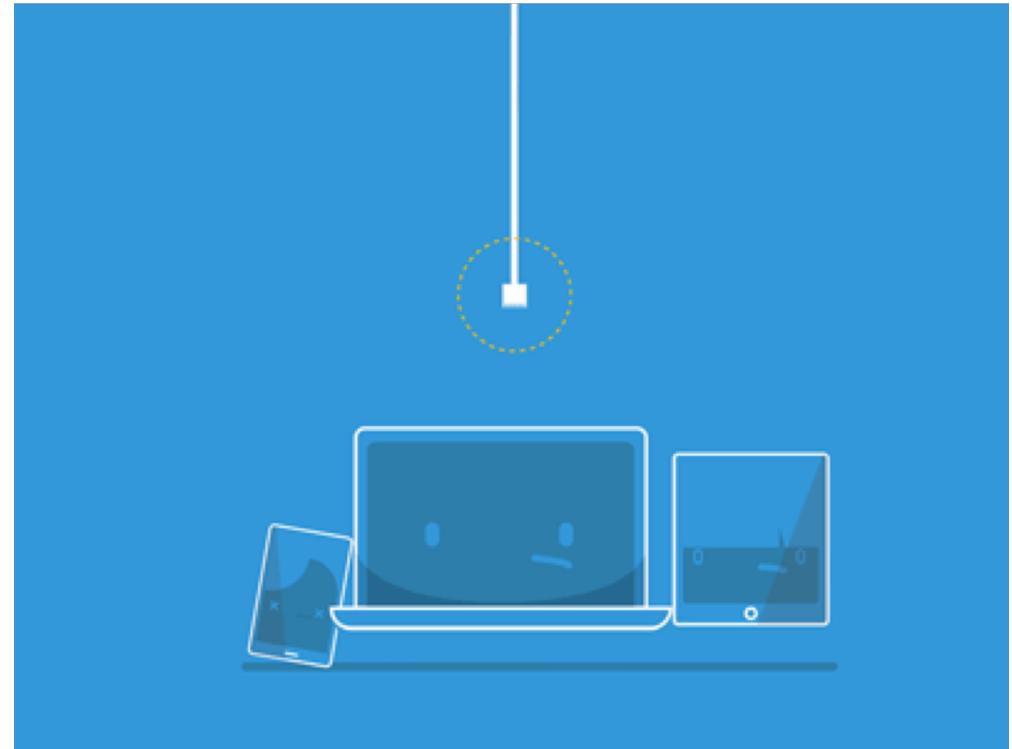


Efforts to address broadband difficulties in TX

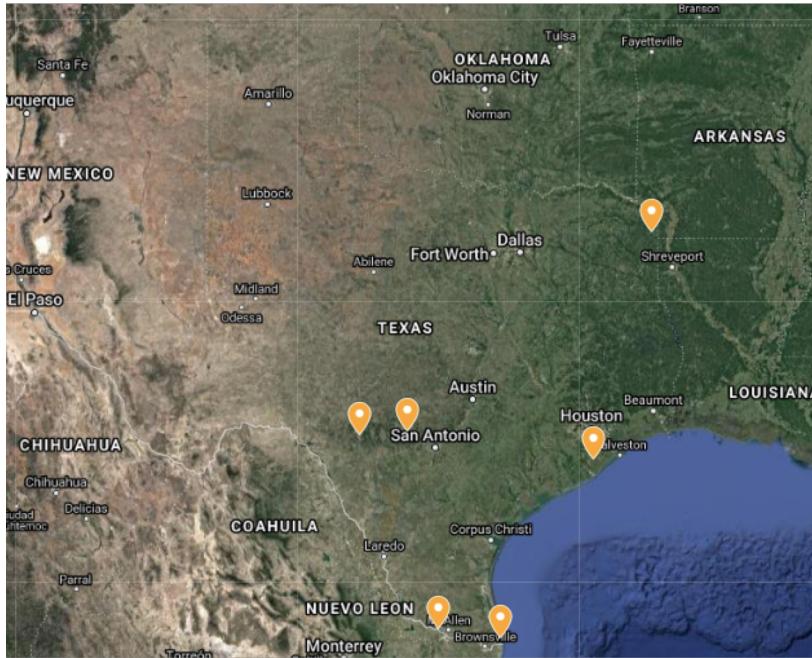
- Three bills passed by Texas legislature in 2019
- Listening sessions at the Bastrop, Amarillo and Hewitt libraries
- New Broadband Advisory Group established



The Tocker Rural Hotspot Program



Partnering with six Texas libraries



- 70 libraries applied to participate
- Six libraries were selected; in rural areas serving populations under 11,000
- Locations service by Sprint network's low-cost Mobile Beacon service

Hotspot Services & Implementation



- Hotspots offer unlimited data & 3G or 4G service
- TIPI provided support, materials, and use policies to librarians

Demographics of the sample we surveyed



Gender
29.5% male
70.5% female



Median age
52 years old



Number of children per household

- No kids: 54.6%
- One child: 19.4%
- Two kids: 13.9%
- 3+: 11.8%

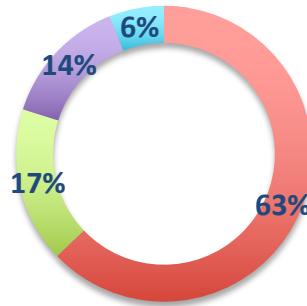


Education

- 33.1% some college/associates
- 27.9% high school or GED
- 21.1% college degree
- 14.3% post college degree
- 3.6% less than high school

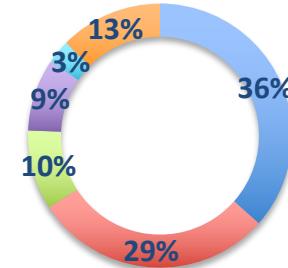
Demographics continued

Employment



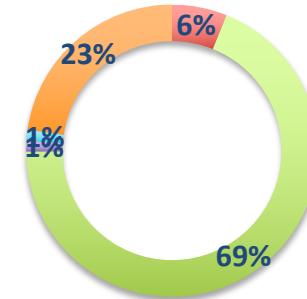
- Employment
- Employed, full time
- Employed, part time
- Not employed
- Student

Income



- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 -\$124,999
- \$125,000 or more
- Prefer not to answer

Race/ethnicity



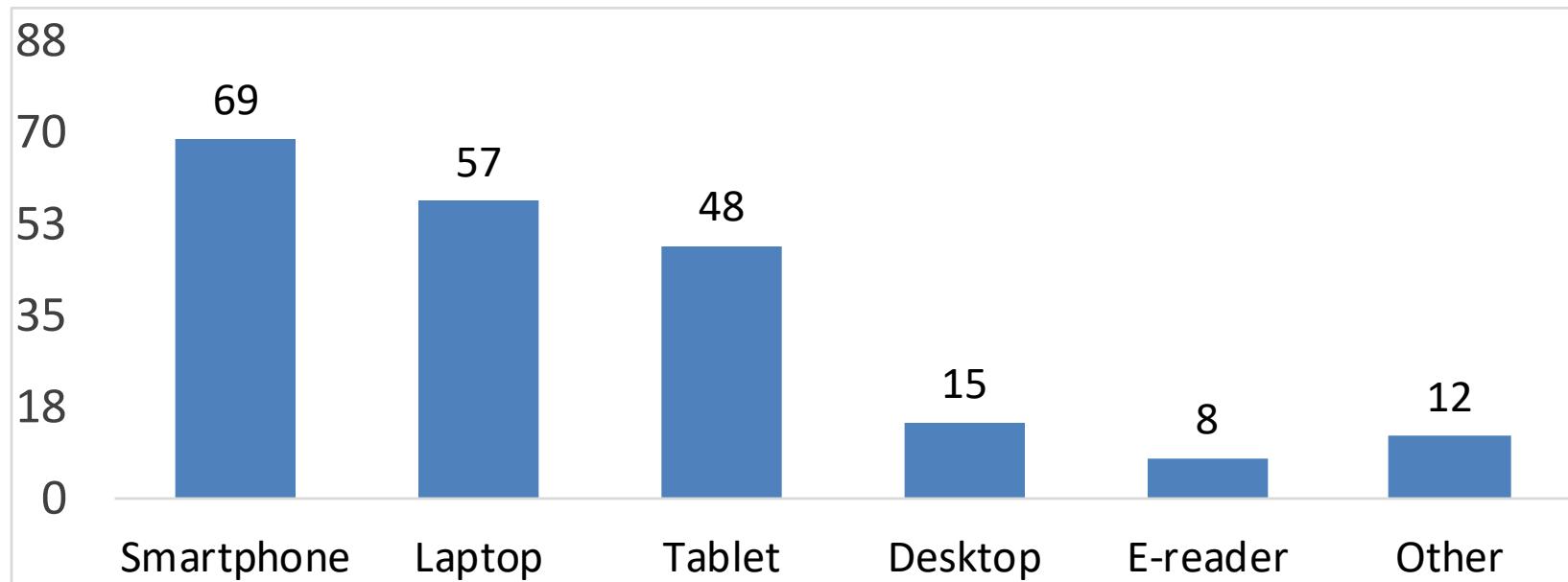
- Race/Ethnicity
- African American
- Caucasian/ White
- American Indian
- Asian
- Other

Satisfaction with the Program & Using the Hotspots

On a scale of 1-10 in terms of satisfaction with the library hotspot program, the mean rating was 9.1 - in other words, people were very satisfied.



Which devices were connected to the hotspot?

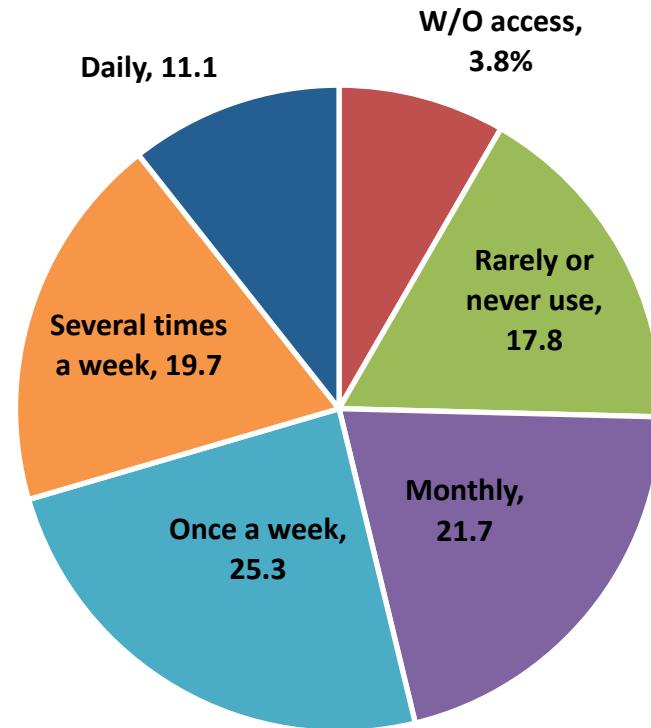


Smartphone and broadband services

- 80% of respondents pay for monthly smartphone service
- 20% of respondents pay for home broadband
- 64% of respondents said home broadband is too expensive

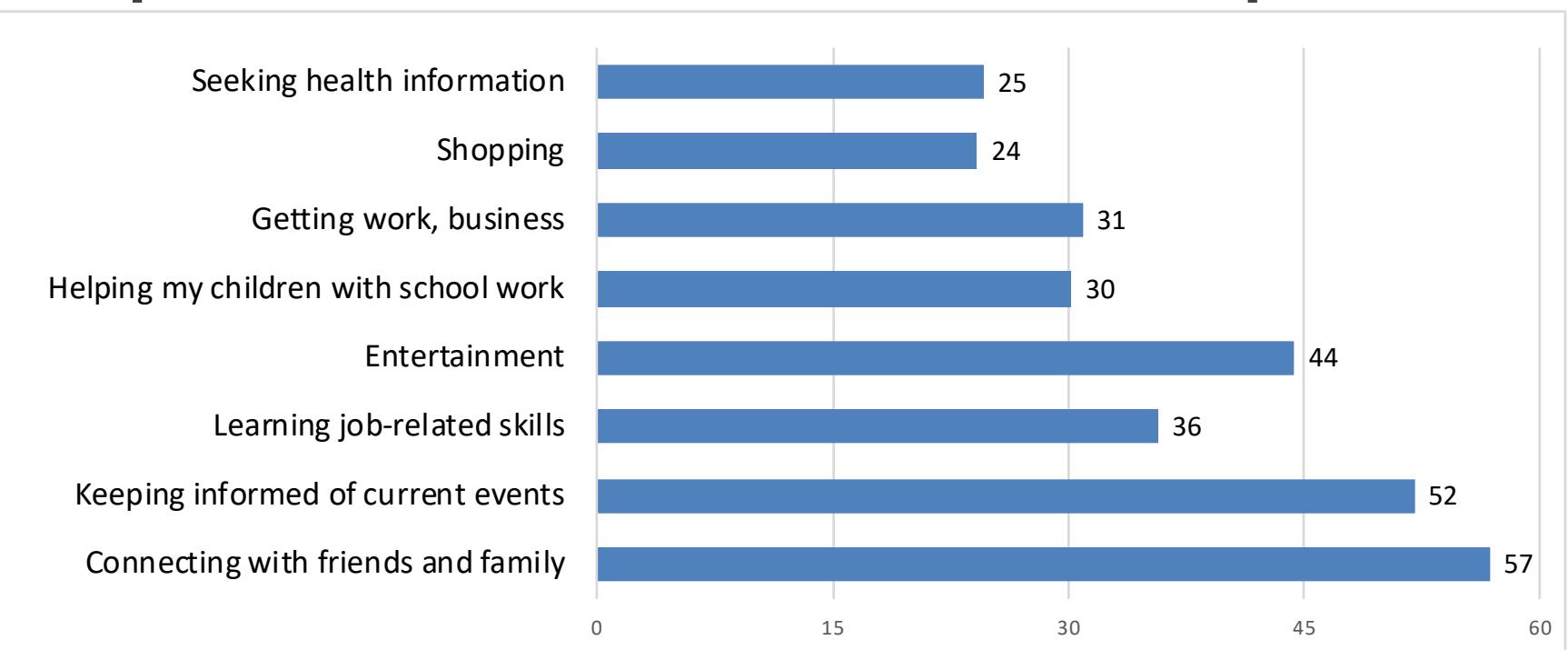


How frequently participants
go to the Internet at the
Library Using Wi-Fi or
Computers (%)



Feelings about the Internet & access to it	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The Internet is very important in my life	6.2	11.6	82.2
The apps on my phone are a good substitute for using a computer to get to the Internet	19	21.9	59.1
My computer is too old to use the Internet	60.1	18.4	21.5
I use the Internet less often when I don't have the Hotspot	21.5	19	59.5
The cost of a home broadband service from a cable or phone company is too high for me	14.4	21.8	63.8
When I have a financial crisis, one of the first things I do is drop my mobile phone plan	42.4	24.4	33.2
I feel like I am always searching for free WiFi access	20.2	24.4	55.4
I get nervous when I can't go online as often as I want	48.1	24.7	27.2

Top three uses of the hotspots



What participants are saying about the program



The Future...

- Program continuing
- Expansion in new TX counties
 - Brazoria Cty program expansion
 - New counties (3-years)
- More attention statewide, federally

Love the library hotspot they just need more especially for people that cannot afford the internet or Wi-Fi at home. Thank you for this great help from the public library, it also makes my job easier when I cannot stay late at work to get things done, and get my personal things done on my personal computer.

My girls and I are homeless for the most part at the moment and having access to the internet keeps us connected enough to be able to pay bills and do homework. So happy this is an option.

This is a great program to offer the community. It was very user friendly and worked perfectly for my needs. I hope this program can continue for others that do not have access to the internet. Thank you!

I live out of the city limits in a town of 6000. rural service is unreliable with current carrier. Service with this device is 2-3 bar of 4 and does not drop connected devices. Provides good service.

It's a necessity for those living in rural areas without access to internet and those who need data on occasion

Great options of service very thankful that we have this service

Thanks so much for the use of the hotspot. Will definitely use again