



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Data Communications for Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending & Internet Connectivity Kits - Award of Contract

Date: March 25, 2024

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request Toronto Public Library Board approval to enter into a new service contract for data communications with Rogers Communications Canada Inc. to support continued delivery of the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program and the Internet Connectivity Kit service.

The Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program is an initiative in support of the City of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy to help further its strategic objective of increasing service access and availability. The program began in 2016 as a pilot to determine how the service might be delivered and to focus distribution to low-income households. The program has since grown to a service level of 1000 Wi-Fi hotspot devices with unlimited data service available for six-month loans, supported by sustainable operating funding from the City.

The Internet Connectivity Kit service provides a laptop and 2 years of unlimited data service to Torontonians in highest need of home internet access. This service is fully funded by donations to the Toronto Public Library (TPL) Foundation. It is expected up to 450 Internet Connectivity Kits may be funded over this new service contract period.

The total cost of data contracts entered into over the proposed new service contract period of May 2024 to April 2026 is approximately \$1,750,000, excluding Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the service contract for data communications to Rogers Communications Inc. to support delivery of the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program from May 2024 to April 2026, which is comprised of:
 - a. 1000 Wi-Fi hotspot devices; and
 - b. a two-year unlimited data plan for the devices at a total cost of approximately \$1,200,000, excluding HST.
2. approves the service contract for data communications to Rogers Communications Inc. to support the delivery of Internet Connectivity Kits funded exclusively from external donations and grants from May 2024 to April 2026, which is comprised of:
 - a. up to 450 Wi-Fi hotspot devices; and
 - b. a two-year unlimited data plan for the devices at a total cost not to exceed \$550,000, excluding HST.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total value of the new service contract with Rogers Communications for up to 1450 Wi-Fi Hotspot devices and two-year unlimited data plans to support the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program and Internet Connectivity Kit service is approximately \$1,750,000, excluding HST. The contract is expected to start on May 1, 2024 and end on April 30, 2026.

The annual Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program service cost is included in TPL's approved operating budget. The Internet Connectivity Kit service is exclusively funded by donations to the TPL Foundation and therefore has no impact on TPL's approved operating and capital budgets.

Rogers Communications Canada Inc. is the vendor of record (VOR) for the acquisitions of paging and mobile devices and services for the Province of Ontario (OSS-00415819). This VOR arrangement may be optionally used by provincially funded organizations and is currently being leveraged by the Library for corporate devices. Rogers and the Library have amended the existing Master Adoption Agreement to include the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program and Internet Connectivity Kits.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program and Internet Connectivity Kits service support TPL's 'Broadening Toronto's Digital Access & Inclusion' strategic priority. With their continued delivery, TPL will be helping to provide the internet connectivity and access supports that low-income families and individuals need to remain connected in their communities and provide equitable access to online resources and services.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Both services have a positive impact on all equity-seeking groups, with a focus on low-income families, by providing opportunities for them to remain connected in their communities and provide access to online resources and services.

DECISION HISTORY

On May 16, 2017, the Board received the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Pilot Project – Phase 1 Findings and Future Directions Update](#) report for information.

At its meeting on June 19, 2017, the Board considered the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Award of Contract for Data Communications](#) report and approved the recommendations supporting additional service from July 2017 to June 2019.

At its meeting on January 29, 2018, the Board received the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Project Phase 2 – Findings and Future Directions](#) report for information.

At its meeting on February 26, 2018, the Board considered the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Award of Contract for Data Communications](#) report and approved the recommendations supporting additional service from March 2018 to February 2020.

At its meeting on April 27, 2020, the Board considered the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Award of Contract for Data Communications \(2020\)](#) report and approved the recommendations supporting additional service from May 2020 to April 2022.

At its meeting on January 25, 2021, the Board considered the [Internet Connectivity Kits](#) report and approved the recommendations for service contracts with Rogers for Wi-Fi Hotspots and with Dell Computers for laptops for service provision from January 2021 to April 2024.

At its meeting on April 25, 2022, the Board considered the [Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Award of Contract for Data Communications](#) report and approved the recommendations supporting additional service from May 2022 to April 2024.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program supports the Poverty Reduction Strategy initiative to help further the City's strategic objective of *increasing service access and availability*. Access to the internet and technology supports full participation in society, education, employment, government, and community, and is increasingly seen as essential as more information and services are becoming available only online. Public libraries are important access points for technology and, for some people, the public library is their only access to the internet. Public libraries promote digital inclusion and digital literacy, including the safe

use of the internet. While the Library provides free access to computers and Wi-Fi in all branches, this program provides unlimited access to home internet service for low-income households. In partnership with the City, TPL has offered Wi-Fi hotspot lending in branches serving communities with a large number of low-income households since 2016. The program is also aligned with TPL's strategic priority to broaden Toronto's digital access & inclusion across the city.

Since starting the Internet Connectivity Kit service in 2020, TPL has provided over 925 kits to high priority households exclusively with funding received as donations to the TPL Foundation or from City grants. Kits are comprised of a new laptop and a Wi-Fi hotspot with two-years of unlimited data access. Existing vendor contracts will be used to supply the laptops for these kits. TPL works with community agencies to identify and distribute the kits to Torontonians in most urgent need.

COMMENTS

With the approval of this award, the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending Program will continue through to April 2026. The service level will remain at 1000 Wi-Fi hotspot devices with unlimited data service available for six-month loans with the distribution of units remaining focused on low-income families living in high-needs areas.

With the approval of this award, TPL will continue to distribute Internet Connectivity Kits to high priority households, in coordination with community agencies, when funding is received in support of the kits through the TPL Foundation.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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