

IX. New Business

A. Digital Inclusion at Your Library Survey Results and Next Steps – information item



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Digital Inclusion at Your Library

July 2022



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INTRODUCTION

In February of 2022, the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) sent out an email survey to 105 Idaho library directors asking them to provide information about digital inclusion at their library. Ninety-four (90%) of the libraries responded. This report is a summary of the survey findings.

According to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and communication technologies.

Original Email Language -

Subject: ICfL needs your help!

Body:

Dear Director,

The Idaho Commission for Libraries is leading Idaho's efforts to create a digital access coalition and statewide plan and we need your help!

One of the first steps is to gather data from Idaho libraries to understand what digital access/inclusion services and programs are being offered to your communities. The answers you provide in this short survey will be instrumental in our data collection phase of the Digital Access for All Idahoans plan.

You may ask, what is digital access and inclusion? In short, it means that every person in Idaho has the resources, knowledge, and skills to participate in the digital society and economy.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries is asking for no more than 5-10 minutes of your time in completing [this survey](#). If possible, we request that all responses be received by March 31st.

[You can complete the survey right now by clicking here!](#)

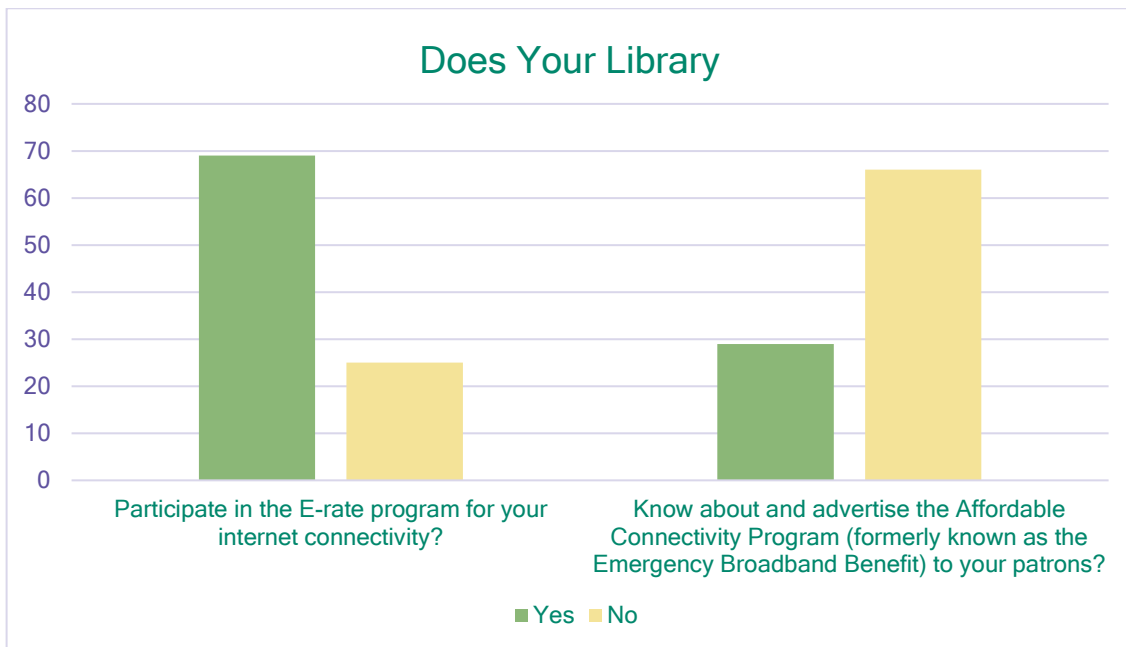
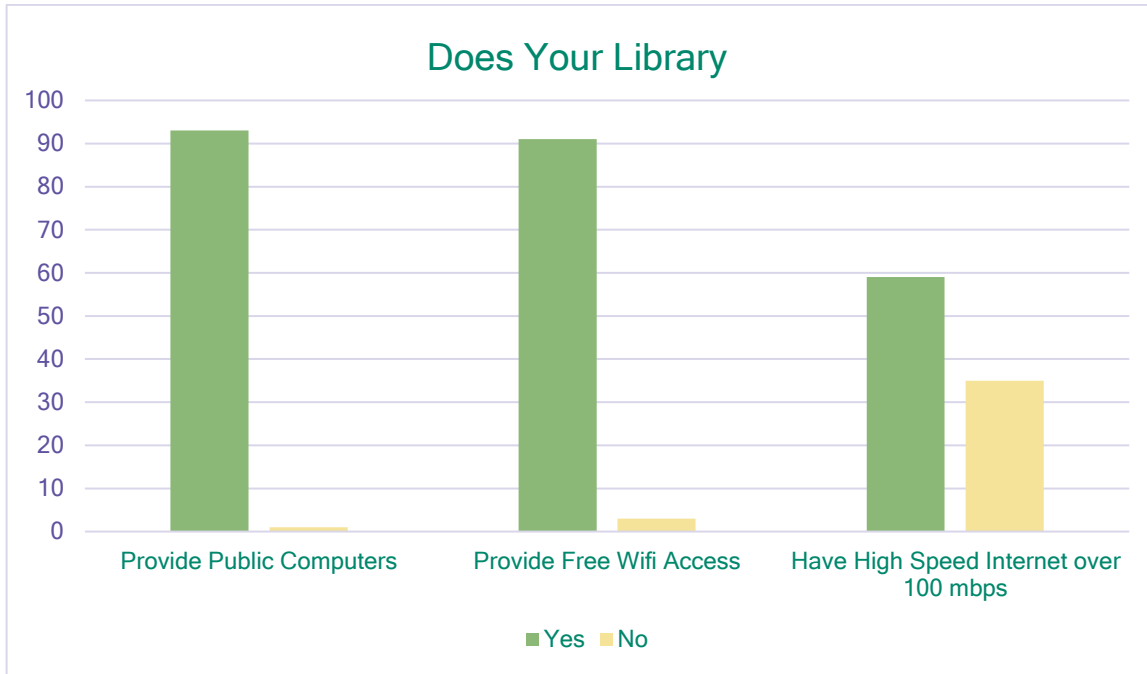


Want to learn more about Digital Access and Inclusion?

Join us on March 2 & 3 for the Digital Inclusion Summit. The Digital Inclusion Summit is an opportunity for Idaho library staff, our state partners, and other stakeholders to build their awareness of digital inclusion efforts in Idaho. This gathering will bring libraries and community partners together as they, and the Idaho Commission for Libraries, plan their digital inclusion efforts.

[Click here to register now!](#)

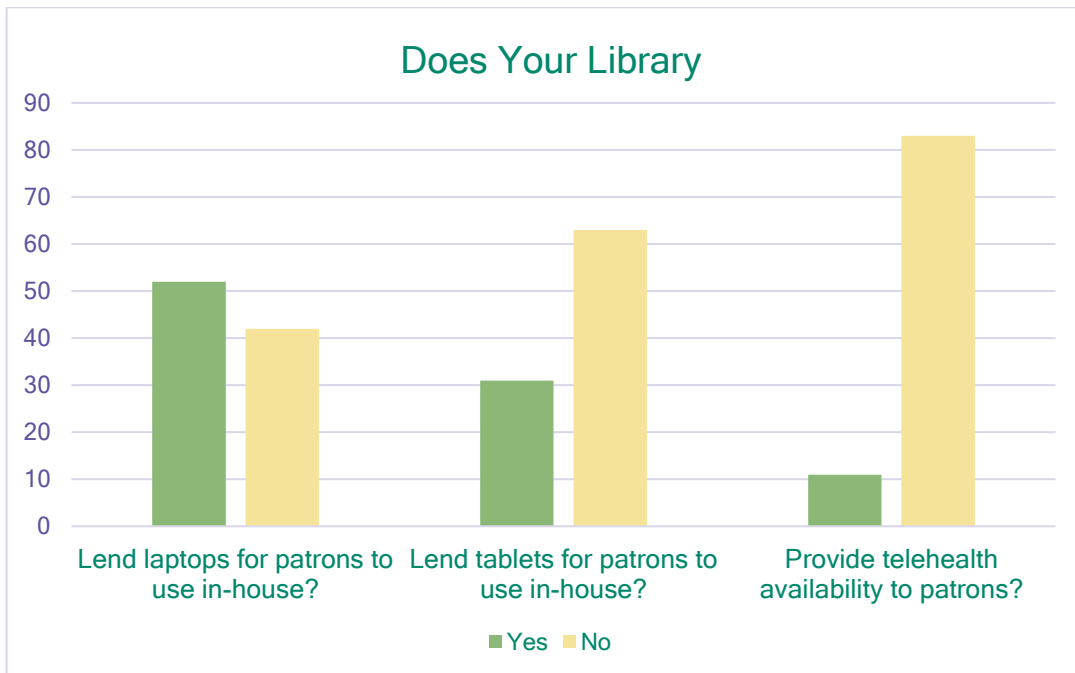
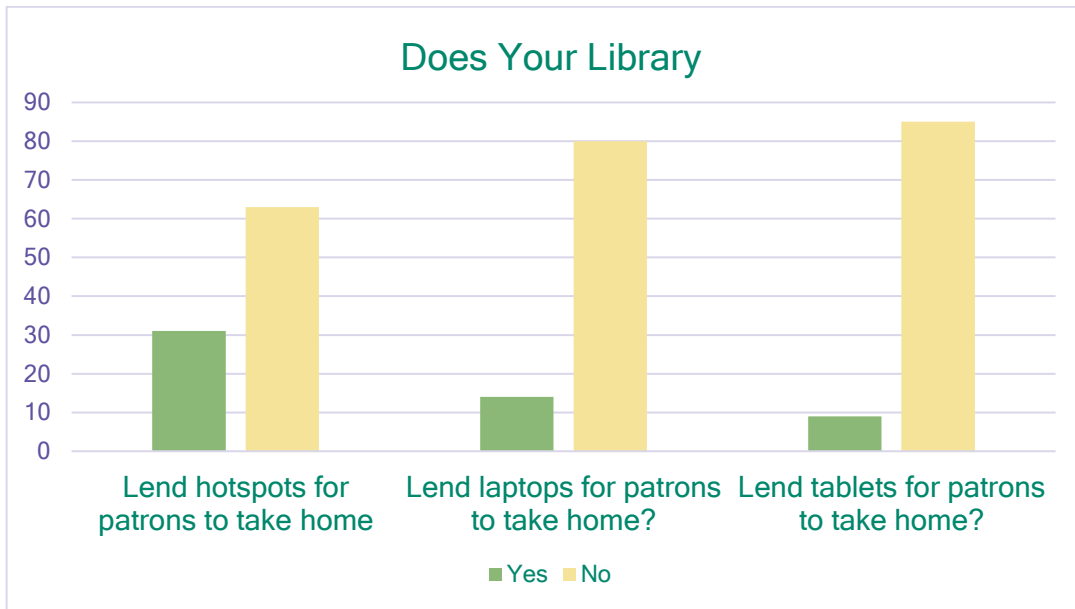
AFFORDABLE, ROBUST BROADBAND INTERNET

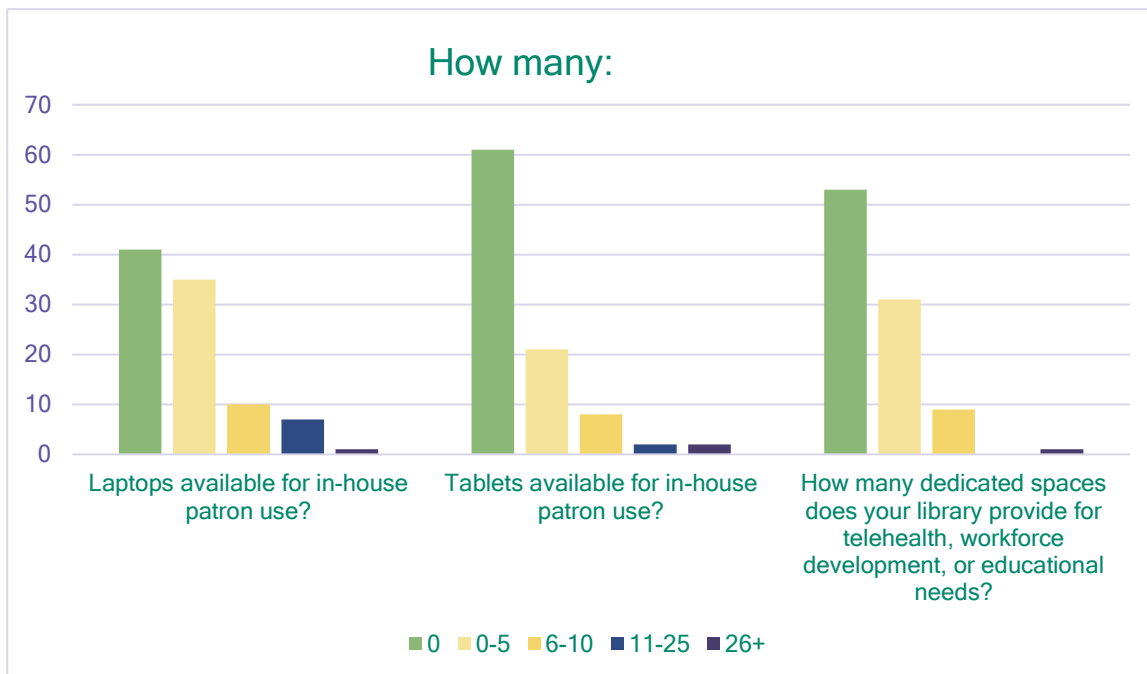
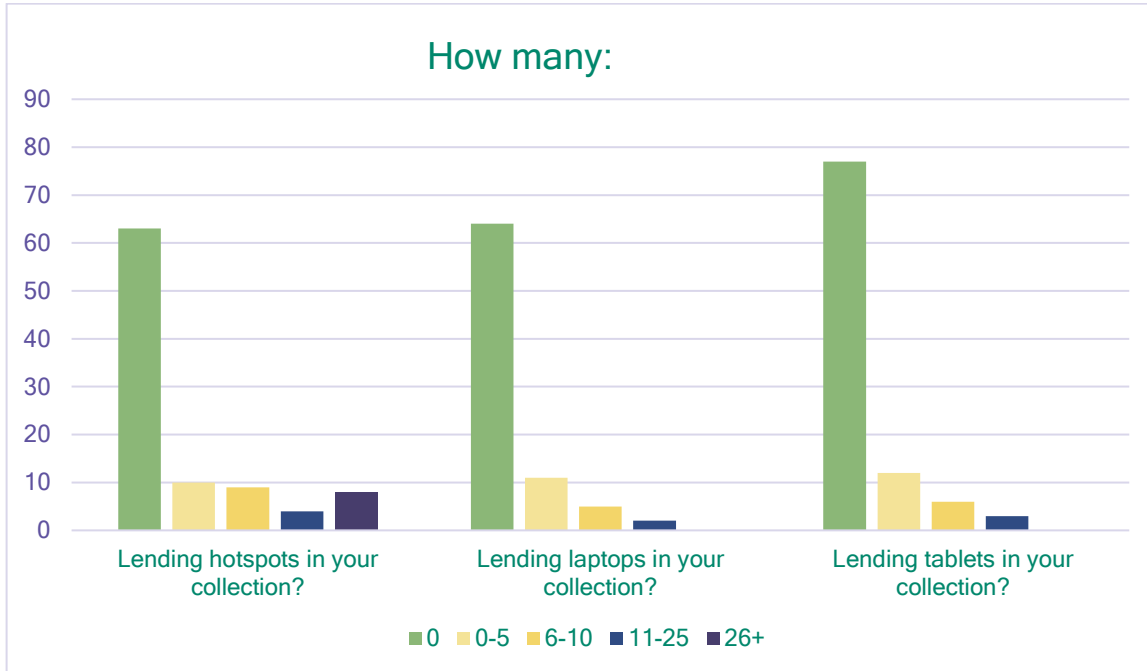


Library staff were asked a series of questions about the services they provide at the library related internet access. Almost all the respondents said they provide both public computers and free Wi-Fi access in their buildings. 60% of libraries provide Wi-Fi over

100 Mbps. Almost 70% of libraries indicated that they participate in the E-rate program for their internet connectivity. Only 30% know about and advertise the Affordable Connectivity Program.

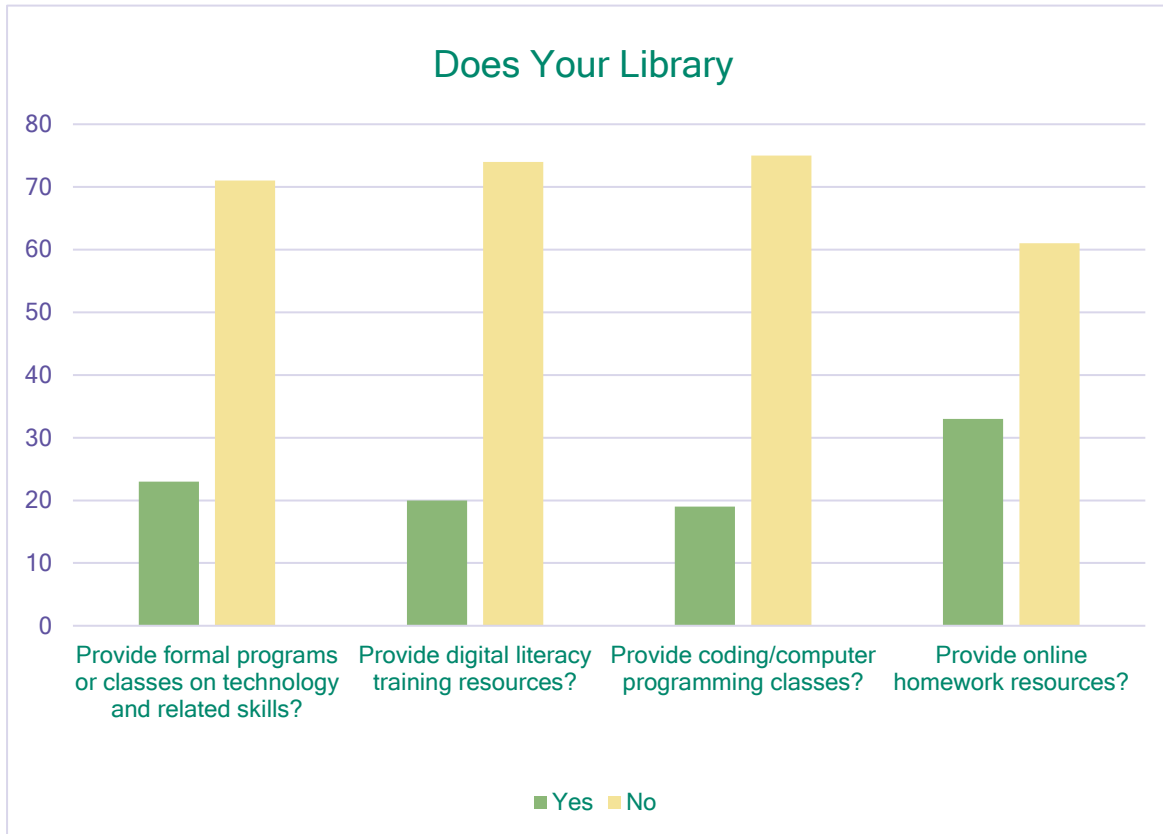
INTERNET-ENABLED DEVICES





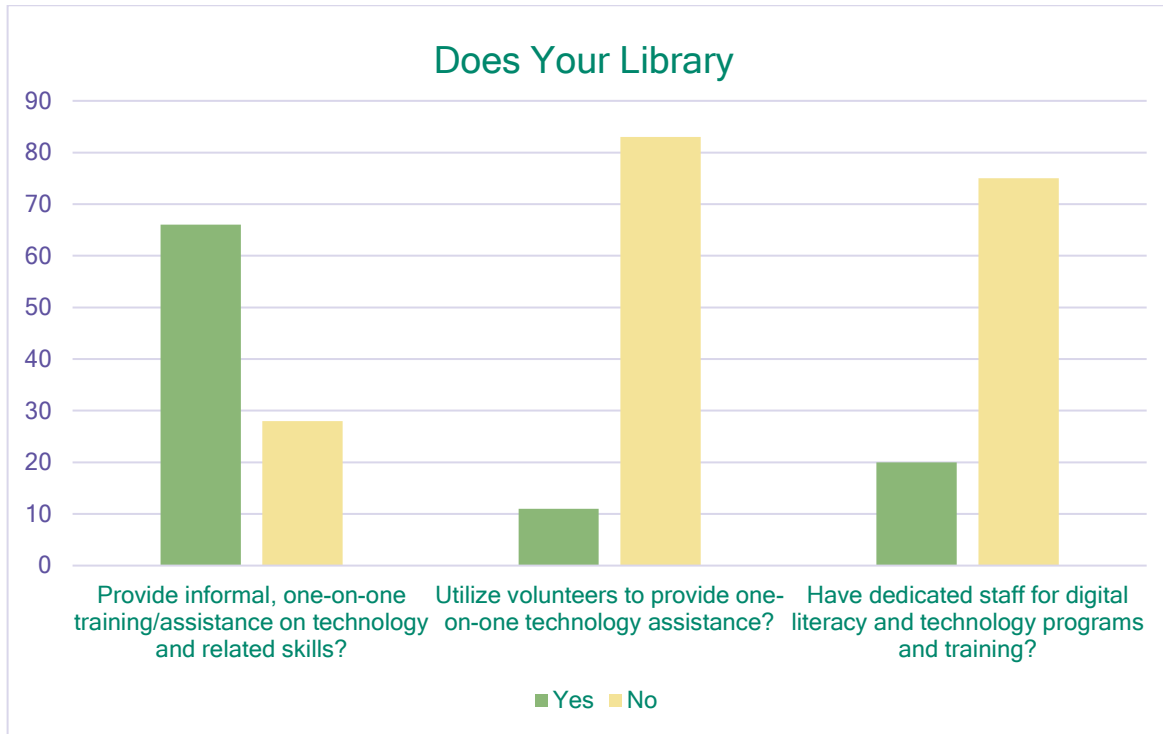
Library staff were asked a series of questions about the internet-enabled devices they provide for the public. Most of the respondents do not lend hot spots, laptops, or tablets for the public to take home. 55% of the respondents lend laptops in-house for patrons, but very few lend tablets (33%) or provide space for telehealth appointments (12%). Most respondents do not have a collection of lending laptops, tablets, or hot spots.

ACCESS TO DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING



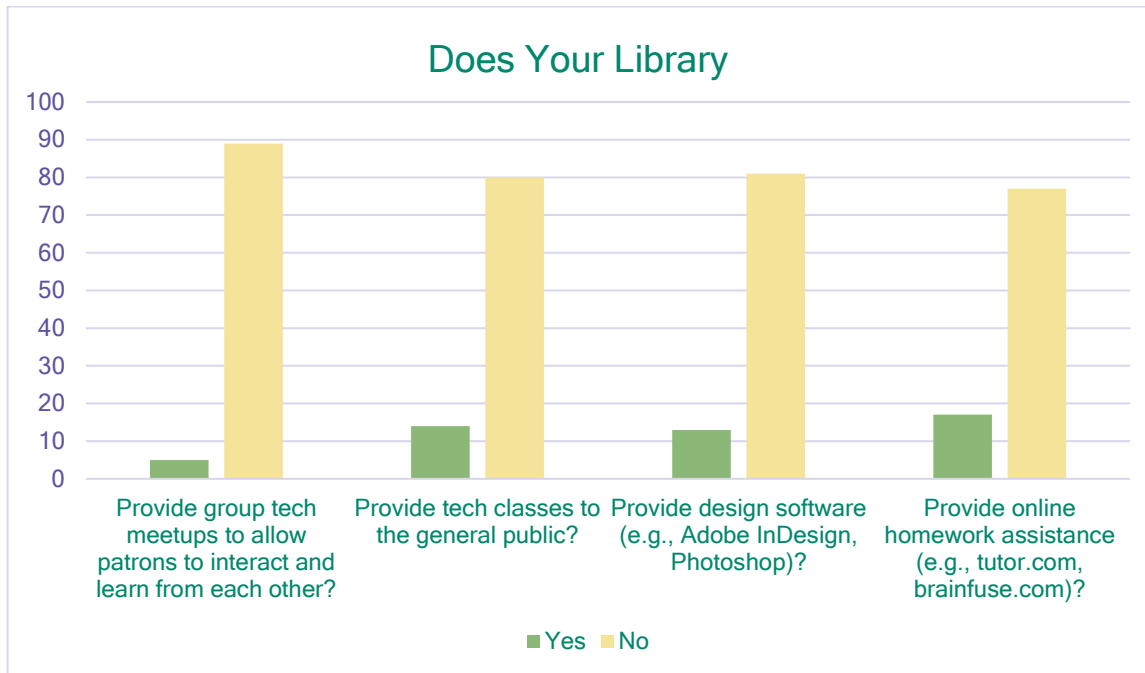
Library staff were asked a series of questions about access to digital literacy training for their staff and patrons. 20% or less of respondents say they are providing formal programs for the public related to technology, including digital literacy training resources and coding/computer programming classes. 33% of respondents are providing online homework resources.

QUALITY TECHNICAL SUPPORT



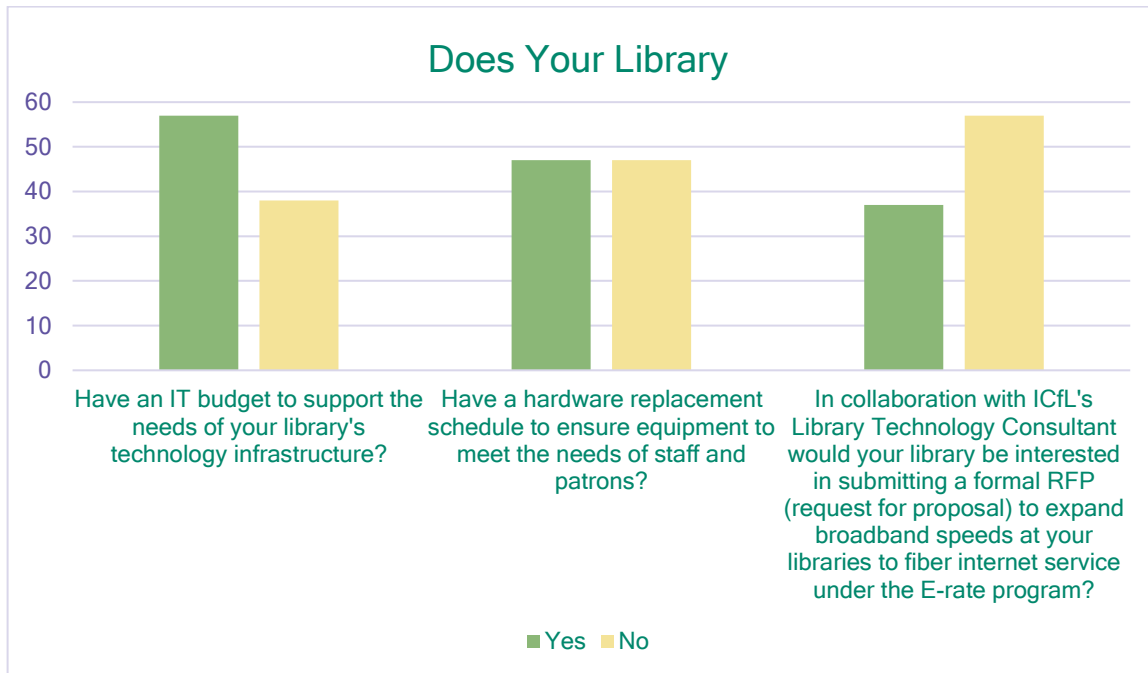
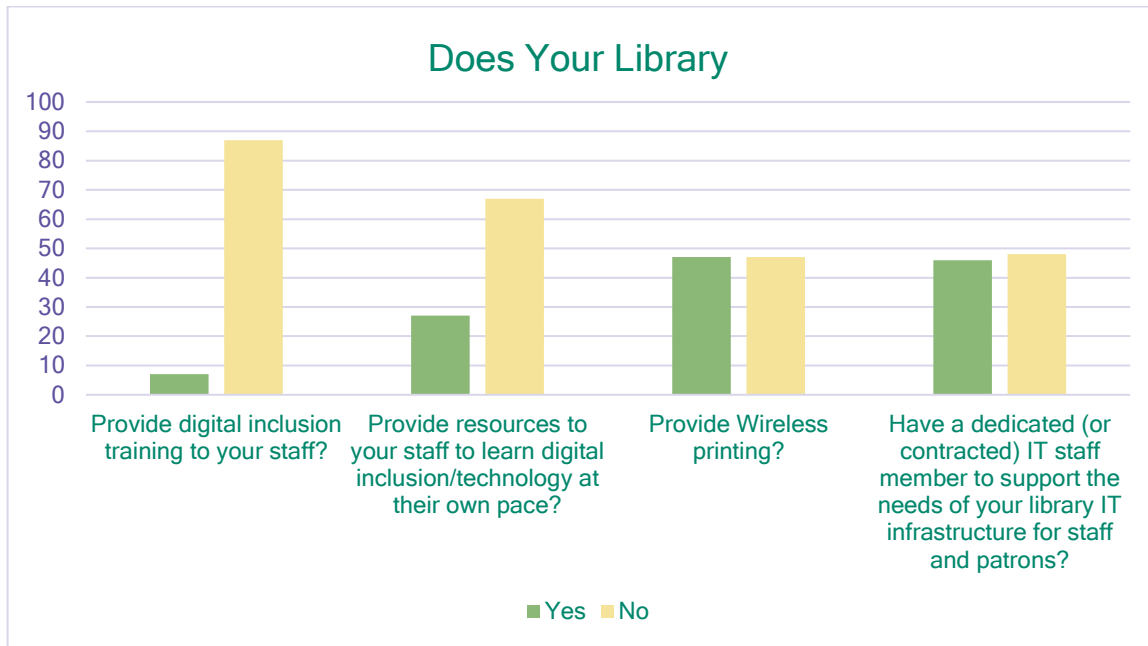
Library staff were asked a series of questions about quality technical support at their library. 70% of respondents indicated they provide informal, one-on-one technology training/assistance in their library. 12% of respondents utilize volunteers for technology assistance and 21% have dedicated staff for digital literacy and technology programs and training.

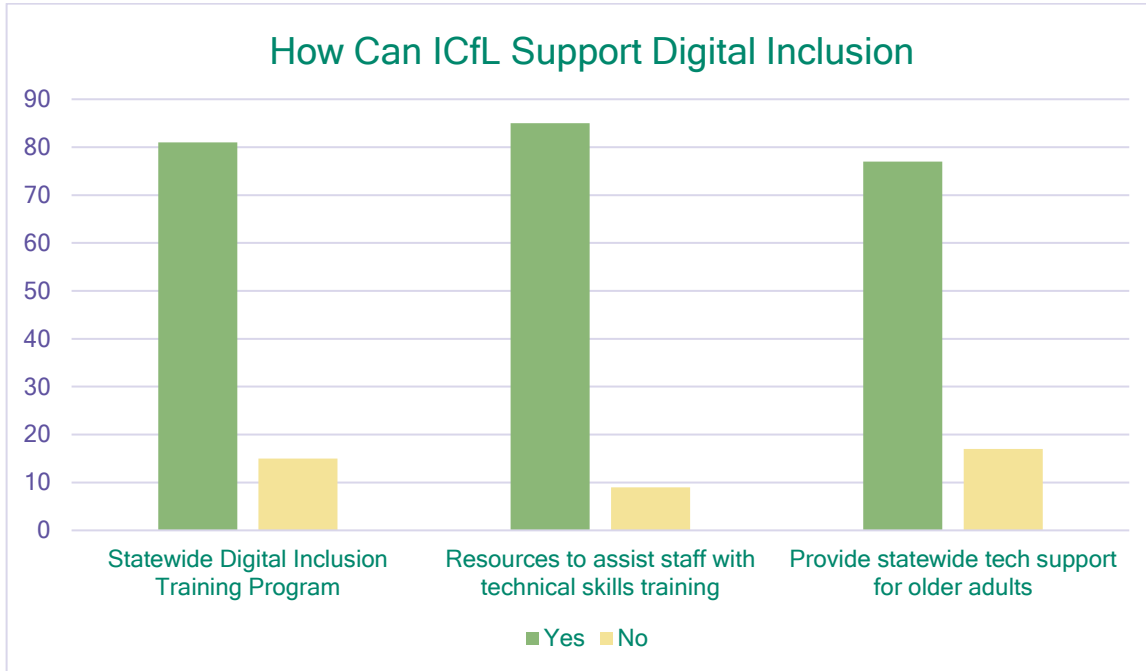
APPLICATIONS AND ONLINE CONTENT TO ENCOURAGE SELF-SUFFICIENCY, PARTICIPATION, AND COLLABORATION



Library staff were asked a series of questions related to applications and online content. 5% of respondents provide group tech meetups at their library. 15% of respondents provide tech classes to the general public. 14% of respondents provide design software for patrons to use. 18% of respondents provide online homework assistance.

OTHER QUESTIONS





Library staff were asked a series of other questions. 27% of respondents supply resources for their staff about digital inclusion but only 7% provide training. 50% provide wireless printing and 50% have a dedicated IT staff member. The majority (75%+) of respondents are in support of the ICfL creating a statewide digital inclusion training program, providing resources to assist staff with technical skills training, and providing statewide tech support for older adults.

OTHER COMMENTS

“The question that is most common in our library is about navigation on the internet and how to use Word documents. This question is asked generally by our older generation and patrons who don't have computers or internet access in their homes.”

Library staff were asked what technology patrons struggle with the most and the most common technology question asked by patrons. There were many common themes among respondents, including printing, navigating the internet, devices, Microsoft products, email, and e-books. Many libraries noted that it is specifically their elder patrons who struggle the most.

“The majority of patrons who use public computers need assistance with logging into email accounts, finding attached documents in emails, and using USB drives. Patrons also need help with Google searches and choosing legit websites.”

Library staff were asked if there are additional online resources that Idaho Commission for Libraries should consider adding to [LiLI](#). The most common responses were for LinkedIn Learning, a resume builder, tutoring software, or anything that could help technology learners go at their own pace.

Library staff were asked if there are other ways that Idaho Commission for Libraries can help support **digital inclusion** in libraries and communities throughout Idaho. Many respondents mentioned the need for faster internet access, the strain they are under due to being short-staffed, and the real challenges associated with the digital divide.

SUMMARY

Through the information provided by respondents, there were many areas of strength identified where Idaho libraries seem to be excelling at digital inclusion. Those areas include providing public computers, providing free Wi-Fi, participating in E-rate funding, providing one-on-one technology instruction, and having a designated IT budget. There is also interest from Idaho's public library staff members in having the ICfL create a statewide digital inclusion training program, to provide resources to assist their staff with technical skills training, and to provide statewide technical support for older adults.

Through the information provided by respondents, there were also challenge areas identified. Very few public libraries in Idaho provide training to their staff or the public about digital literacy. Very few public libraries in Idaho are providing technology that can be checked out to be used outside of the library. Very few libraries in Idaho are providing opportunities for telehealth visits, and very few libraries in Idaho are providing formal programs related to building technology skills.