

NEWS RELEASE

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Information Contacts:

Doug Baker, Library Technology Consultant, ICfL, doug.baker@libraries.idaho.govChelsea Summerlin, Digital Inclusion Consultant, ICfL, chelsea.summerlin@libraries.idaho.gov**ICfL's Connecting Communities Application Is Open**

BOISE, Idaho --The Idaho Commission for Libraries' (ICfL) is again offering public libraries in the Gem State the opportunity to receive Chromebooks, accessories, and training resources to bolster local digital inclusion, equity, and literacy efforts. The number of available Chromebooks is 175. The application period is open through August 16, 2023.

During a pilot of the Connecting Communities program in fall 2022, the ICfL distributed 135 Chromebooks to 10 libraries throughout the state. Those libraries then utilized the devices at their locations or gave them to community members to keep after those individuals completed basic technology and cybersecurity training.

"I was really pleased with the response to this pilot opportunity from the Idaho library community," said State Librarian Stephanie Bailey-White. "Getting quality devices plus training and support to Idahoans who may face additional barriers connecting to digital resources is a high priority. This was a good way to test some assumptions and strengthen partnerships."

Libraries that participate in the program are required to work with at least one community partner to identify and respond to local digital access needs. Additionally, the ICfL encourages libraries to focus on targeted outreach to community members who will most benefit from increased access to digital resources – specifically the [eight covered populations](#) identified by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

One of the pilot libraries selected for the first round of the project was the Onieda County Library District, in Malad City. Library staff collaborated with staff of the local American Legion Post and the Malad Senior Citizen Center to reach program participants. Through individual training sessions, Library Director Kathy Kent gave away about a dozen Chromebooks and watched seniors grow empowered to pursue hobbies such as researching family history, documenting personal stories, and organizing photos on their new devices. Kent said, "This has been one of the most rewarding grants I've done. This one opens doors. And it was fun to watch those doors open."

For more information on the Connecting Communities program, visit <https://libraries.idaho.gov/grants-funding/monetary-grants/connecting-communities/>. The Connecting Communities program is just one component of the ICfL's work to [support digital inclusion](#) and assist Idahoans in accessing the information and technology vital for life in the 21st century. The ICfL is the lead agency developing a collaborative [Digital Access for All \(DAAI\) Plan](#) to guide the state's efforts in the coming years. A draft of the DAAI Plan will be available for public comment beginning August 8, 2023.

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) builds the capacity of the more than 850 public, school, academic, and special libraries in Idaho to best serve their communities through: statewide programming and resources, like Read to Me and Libraries Linking Idaho (LiLI); consulting; continuing education; partnerships; and aid to underserved populations, such as the visually impaired through the Talking Book Service. For more information, visit: <https://libraries.idaho.gov>.