

Qs and As
Broadband Modernization Feasibility Project
May 2018

Q1. What is the objective of the broadband modernization feasibility project?

A1. To help improve internet connectivity, the Culture Division, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) is collaborating with the Community Services and I&IT Cluster (CSC) Division, MTCS, to explore the feasibility of providing a broadband upgrade service that includes affordable access to those public libraries in need, with an initial focus on First Nation Public Libraries. As part of this work, MTCS will leverage the Ministry of Education's experience addressing similar broadband needs at publicly funded schools across Ontario (including network design, capacity and last mile fibre issues).

One of the objectives of the feasibility project will be to determine minimum target bandwidth requirements to support current and future technology needs of Ontario's public libraries. Minimum bandwidth requirements are based on community population, library capacity and average number of daily users.

Q2. Why is the ministry undertaking this work?

A2. The ministry is undertaking this work in response to feedback received during engagement with public libraries and First Nation Public Libraries in 2017. We heard that while public libraries are key access points for new technologies and digital resources, the availability of these services is uneven across the province, in large part due to inadequate internet connectivity. In many communities, typically rural, remote and First Nations, digital services remain limited. For residents of these communities, this places them at a disadvantage in an increasingly knowledge-based economy and society.

For First Nation Public Libraries, which are critical community and cultural hubs, there are even greater challenges with respect to broadband limitations. The 2017 First Nation Public Library (FNPL) Needs Assessment report pointed to the fact that FNPLs require significantly improved internet access, and that the digital divide continues to be a major barrier to accessing digital content, training opportunities and electronic government services including online grant applications.

Q3. What does a feasibility project entail?

A3. As part of this work, the ministry will undertake an assessment with libraries, prioritizing First Nation Public Libraries, to better understand current internet network usage as well as network challenges that may prohibit effective use of technologies. The format will include a combination of site visits, interviews and data collections that will outline network design, capacity, current bandwidth, current usage trends and future needs. The project will involve MTCS staff working in cooperation with local library, First Nation Band partners, and/or municipal contacts drawing on and respecting local information, skills, and

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knowledge. The project may also include a jurisdictional review to assess network issues and trends across other provinces.

The information gathered from this assessment will inform the development of a government business case (that includes key findings, gaps, options, recommendations, cost estimates and a proposed implementation plan) to request funding for a broadband upgrade for libraries in need of this service.

Q4. What libraries will participate in the feasibility project?

A4. The intent of feasibility project is to have representation from publicly funded libraries across Ontario, with an initial focus on First Nation Public Libraries and engaging First Nation Band Councils (through the Band offices) and/or Education Authorities where appropriate. Any library that has internet connectivity challenges (e.g., related to download and upload speed, broadband connection, last mile fiber) and is interested in taking part in the feasibility project may do so.

Q5. If funding is secured for a broadband upgrade to libraries what would implementation look like?

A5. If funding is secured for a broadband upgrade to libraries, the intent would be to rollout implementation to First Nation Public Libraries first, followed by rural and remote libraries, and then consider urban libraries in need. The information collected from the feasibility project will help to inform the implementation plan including timelines and costs.

Q6. Can the feasibility project and potential implementation address the broadband needs of First Nation communities in addition to First Nation Public Libraries?

A6. First Nation Public Libraries report to First Nation Band Councils (through their Band office), and in some cases, Education Authorities. They may also be co-located in the Band office, school or other multi-purpose facilities. The ministry will work with the library, and Band partners to explore the feasibility of upgrading broadband access to the First Nation community.

Q7. What does a broadband upgrade include?

A7. If approved, the broadband upgrade would include:

- Working in partnership with public libraries to provide affordable broadband access
- Developing last mile broadband connections
- Improving the design of networks so that the user experience can be improved
- Ensuring networks have more capacity to support increased use of technology in libraries

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- Working in partnership with public libraries to introduce internet security tools and practices to help ensure networks are managed safely and securely
- Introducing network monitoring tools and practices so libraries have access to how their networks are being used so that they may identify and remove barriers preventing optimal use