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Board of Trustees Work Session
Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
St. Cloud Public Library Mississippi Room
Agenda

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|--|------|
| 1. Call to Order | 6:00 |
| 2. State & Federal Issues Update (verbal) | 6:01 |
| 3. Project Evaluations | 6:10 |
| 3.1 Exploring Potential Interests and Careers (EPIC) Kits pg 3 | |
| 3.2 Lucky Day WiFi2Go pg 5 | |
| 3.3 Regional WiFi2Go pg 9 | |
| 3.4 Community Engagement Platform (CEP) SirsiDynix pg 11 | |
| 3.5 Welcome Email Series pg 13 | |
| 3.6 Senior Library Assistant pg 15 | |
| 4. 2026-2030 GRRL Strategic Plan (verbal) | 6:25 |
| 4.1 Presentation | |
| 4.2 Discussion & Small Group Work | |
| 5. Next Meeting – May 20, 2025 | 7:24 |
| 6. Adjournment | 7:25 |



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: EPIC (Exploring Potential Interests and Careers) Kits

Date(s): July 2021 – December 2024

Usage/statistics (outputs):

We have 20 kits in the collection, which circulated 86 times in 2023 and 117 times in 2024. The most popular topics are Architecture & Construction, Health Science, and Manufacturing/STEM.

Patron demographics served by the project:

Students, families, and job seekers.

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

The kits were created in partnership with the United Way/Partner for Student Success and Exploring Potential Career Interests (EPIC) to connect students, families, and job seekers with career exploration experiences. The project was funded with ARPA dollars.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

The project went well, but there have been some hurdles. The kits were curated by the Career Cluster leaders at EPIC based on guidelines from GRRL staff. The project created a lot of buzz with staff and patrons, and several positive feedback forms have been received.

If we did the project over again, we need to better define the audience for the project. Some of the kits are more advanced, and some seem geared toward younger kids. For example, the Business kit binder includes activities such as tracing letters, but other kits have complicated games. Several kits like Arts, AV, and Communication and Transportation only include the binder and no hands-on activities. Patrons prefer the kits with accessories.

Many items did not hold up well to public use such as the robot in the Manufacturing and STEM kits. These kits have been withdrawn from the collection. A few kits have consumable items like glue dots that need regular replacement. Accessories should be limited to items that can be used incomplete and/or purchase replacement parts for easy replenishment, and have minimal small parts.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

Yes.

What do you wish you'd known before you began work on the project?

Several kits of the most popular kits were duplicated in late 2023; however, the contents varied from the original inventory, which meant the new kits, went on new catalog records. This isn't a huge issue but created a little confusion. The majority of publicity was handled through EPIC; circulation has been good but would improve with more promotion. Also, clearer expectations around replacing items would have been helpful, although this could be related to staff turnover at EPIC.

Were stated goals for the project met?

Yes.

Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

Yes, this project identified an internal workflow need. When new kits are added there should be a



review by a workgroup including the cataloger, a clerk who prepares the item for public use, and someone who works with the check-in of library materials. This will improve the "staying power" and promotion of kits and other specialty library items. Another staff member who is part of a homeschooling group said the kits should be promoted on the library's website using pictures; the items aren't easy to find in the catalog and lack pictures. Once her group understood what was included they were excited to use them! This concept could be expanded other "library of things" type items such as our Try It Yourself kits.

Was there positive feedback? Specify.

Several positive comment forms were received. An educator shared the kits were great but she was concerned about using them in her classroom as pieces tend to go missing.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue.

Continue to circulate the existing kits. Any new kits should be vetted by the staff workgroup mentioned above. Create a webpage to highlight the collection with photos and links other supporting resources such as the EPIC website. This will make the collection easier to promote on social media. Continue to cross-promote with EPIC.

Evaluation completed by: Jami Trenam



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: Lucky Day WiFi2Go

Logic Model short term outcome: Increased self-efficacy/confidence using technology

Date(s): August 2020 – December 2024

Background:

The hotspot program initially started in 2019 as a pilot in Pierz funded exclusively with donated funds. In early 2020 a variety of grant funding such as a special Library Services and Technology Act grant and CARES Act funding were used to expand to branches identified as underserved in access to high-speed internet and having higher poverty rates using data from MN DEED. Legislation for Regional Library Telecommunications Aid was updated in 2021 which allowed the one week loan program expand to all locations in 2021. In response to high demand and a desire for a longer checkout period, three-week devices were launched in late 2021. The Lucky Day lending model was retained in order to tide people over while waiting for a three-week device and serve folks who are not able to place holds on their own.

Usage/statistics (outputs):

Usage by Year

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1,173	4,323	3,619	3,046	2,202

The Lucky Day usage peaked in 2021 before the three-week hotspots were available.

Cost of Service

T-Mobile	\$28,971 per year	\$15.49 per circ
Verizon	\$5,579 per year	\$16.81 per circ

The cost per circulation for Lucky Day hotspots based on the cost of service alone is lower than for the 3-week loan; however, it does not reflect the additional staff time needed to suspend and reactivate lines 2 to 3 times more often.

Patron demographics served by the project:

Patrons without high-speed internet at home, particularly in communities lacking infrastructure for broadband with higher rates of poverty. Locations with the highest usage include Little Falls, Staples, Long Prairie, St. Cloud, and Pierz.

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

The project intent was to keep patrons connected for remote work and e-learning by providing home access to high-speed internet in underserved areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the regional devices launched in late 2021, the local Lucky Day devices were intended to tide patrons over while they waited for a 3-week hotspot.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

Overall, the project was successful. The program clearly fills a need: devices are well used, but are often



overdue or not returned. Patrons who need the service most can sometimes have the biggest barriers getting devices returned to the library. The “on-demand” service model creates unrealistic expectations for patrons, and does not align with the library’s goal of empowering users to use library resources on their own.

The one-week Lucky Day model puts staff in awkward situations because it is staff mediated. Staff report patrons repeatedly ask about availability and occasionally pressure staff to bend the rules or make exceptions. Staff feel responsible to monitor the creative ways people try to work around the limits in place. Some patrons check out multiple hotspots from various locations, which creates access issues for others. Likewise, some staff have refused to checkout to devices to patrons who are “not from our community.” These interactions create unnecessary tension and do not contribute to a welcoming atmosphere.

The service took more hands-on time at the regional level than expected. Suspending/reactivating the service takes at least 90 minutes of staff time per week to maintain, and the systems are not set up to have multiple people working in them at one time as the data is not in real time.

Any future program with high demand such as hotspots should be automated as much as possible. Examples include using technology to limit patrons to one device per card, using the network name and passwords as configured out of the box, and exploring new services that may be able to automate suspensions and restorations.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

No, the project was developed quickly in response to the pandemic, and limited information was available regarding best practices.

What do you wish you’d known before you began work on the project?

I wish I would have known how much maintenance it would take to suspend and restart service, as well as how much time it would take to program the devices. We learned through experience: during the initial rollout, patrons were resetting the hotspots back to the factory default. People began to catch on to password patterns, which resulted in additional people accessing networks. While having a standard pattern was helpful for troubleshooting, people are now more familiar with how to view the network name and password on the device. I do not recommend spending the time to reprogram the devices in the future.

T-Mobile has dead spots coverage in several areas through the region, which required launching a Verizon service in Grey Eagle and Upsala.

Were stated goals for the project met?

Yes, usage is highest in the counties with the highest rates of connectivity issues and poverty.

Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

Yes, the project helped created library awareness and goodwill. County stakeholders and partners were willing to spread the word for us. Literacy Minnesota featured the project in a Digital Equity study for the Minnesota Department of Education.

**Was there positive feedback? Specify.**

Yes, staff report the project brought new faces into their branches. Over a dozen positive feedback forms were received from patrons expressing thanks for the access.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue:

Discontinue through attrition. The equipment has been in use for at least two years and needs refreshing or replacement.

While the program was successful overall, feedback from both staff and patrons indicate the longer checkout model is preferred, which requires less local and regional staff intervention. Additionally, vendor policies such as limits to the number of times lines can be suspended before the line is canceled.

- The remaining Lucky Day hotspots will continue to circulate, but will not be replaced if lost/damaged.
- Devices may be reallocated if not circulating.
- The library should explore and highlight community and state services that are better equipped to meet long-term need such as the Federal Lifeline credit <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>

Evaluation completed by: Jami Trenam



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: Regional WiFi2Go

Logic Model short term outcome: Increased self-efficacy/confidence using technology

Date(s): September 2022 – December 2024

Usage/statistics (outputs):

3-week hotspot usage by carrier

	T-Mobile	Verizon	Total Circ
2024	1,626	175	1,801
2023	2,063	183	2,246
2022	816	114	930

Average cost of circulation based on annual service cost

	Cost of service	Cost of service per circ
3 week T-Mobile	\$49,781.54	\$30.62
3-week Verizon	\$ 7,704.89	\$44.03
Lucky Day T-Mobile	\$28,971.22	\$15.49
Lucky Day Verizon	\$ 5,579.41	\$16.81

While the cost per circulation is lower for the one-week loan, there is a hidden cost to suspending the units more often due to the shorter loan period.

Patron demographics served by the project:

The intent was to serve patrons without high-speed internet at home, particularly in communities lacking infrastructure for broadband with higher rates of poverty. However, all patrons are eligible to place requests. Feedback received from patrons indicates that people also use them when traveling. The locations with the highest usage were St. Cloud, Little Falls, Melrose, Staples, and Long Prairie.

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

The project's intent was to keep patrons connected for remote work and e-learning by providing home access to high-speed internet.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

As a whole, the project was successful. The program clearly fills a need: devices are well used, but are often overdue or not returned. The service takes more hands-on time at the regional level than expected; suspending/reactivating the service takes at least 90 minutes of staff time per week.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

Yes, I was able to apply some of the things learned from the initial Lucky Day project.

**What do you wish you'd known before you began work on the project?**

How much time it would take to launch and maintain the program! The staff who assisted with the initial program left the library.

Were stated goals for the project met?

Yes.

Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

The project helped create library awareness. County stakeholders and partners were willing to spread the word for us.

Was there positive feedback? Specify.

Yes, staff report the project brought new faces into their branches. Over a dozen positive feedback forms were received from patrons.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue.

Continue, provided funding is available. While the pandemic ended and connectivity has improved across the region, poverty remains an issue. The equipment has been in use for at least two years and will need refreshing. Before renewing contracts, explore if vendors can help manage devices to reduce staff time. While the wait time has increased due to lost devices, we are well within the 6:1 hold ratio we use for other collections. The service is only sustainable if the RLTA funding stream is available; the Universal Service Fund case being heard in the Supreme Court in March 2025 may affect future funding.

If we move forward with replacement devices, they should not be specially programmed; this may require revising training materials for staff and patrons. A new i-type should be created to limit accounts to one device per patron.

While this has been a great bridge service for the region, the library itself is not a long-term solution to home internet access. We should continue to collaborate with community organizations, advocate for better connectivity, and promote resources to help make home internet access more affordable.

Evaluation completed by: Jami Trenam



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: Community Engagement Platform (CEP) SirsiDynix

Date(s): 2015 – 2025

Usage/statistics (outputs):

Welcome email series and one-time GRRL2Go Sartell service announcement email.

Patron demographics served by the project:

All new patrons within Horizon system

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

At one point, GRRL began using MailChimp for patron email communication. When we decided to pursue patron retention, one of the efforts at retention was to create an email welcome series to engage with patrons right away upon registration. With MailChimp the terms of service were not ideal for creating an opt-out mailing list. Instead, we asked patrons to opt-in at registration time, which was less than ideal.

CEP among other things allowed us to create that opt-out welcome email list. It was also tied in to Horizon, which would allow us to create email communication based on patron record attributes, but not actual material usage.

Ideally, CEP would improve the retention of new patrons and allow us to email them on an opt-out basis.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

The project was prolonged several years due to the platform not being ready once contracted. GRRL was fortunate to be in on early development, but it happened in fits and starts. SirsiDynix even switched out the underlying email technology midstream. The non-IT staff do not find it user friendly and require IT assistance. Though CEP also had an events calendar system, it was determined that it was not suitable for GRRL's events operations. Despite the issues, the welcome emails sent through the system received positive open rates.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

We were a pilot user with SirsiDynix, so the process was slow and dependent on our feedback. After feedback and suggestions were provided, SirsiDynix did not deliver on their part in a timely manner.

What do you wish you'd known before you began work on the project?

We wish we knew the true status of the project rather than the marketing spin that was put on it. Unfortunately, since we took an early adopter position we didn't know that it wouldn't meet our needs ease of use.

Were stated goals for the project met?

We did ultimately receive a product that allowed us to email patrons in an opt-out fashion. However, for a number of reasons including business shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are unable to say with any certainty that our patron retention numbers were influenced.



Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

It taught us to ask questions at the beginning of a project, and it became a basis for our questions on other software systems.

Was there positive feedback? Specify.

No.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue.

Discontinue CEP due to cost, but seek another project to carry project of welcome email series.

Evaluation completed by: Breanne Fruth, Julie Bouchie, Beth Ringsmuth Stolpman, and Jay Roos



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: Welcome Email Series

Date(s): 2018 – 2025

Usage/statistics (outputs):

Welcome email series one (sends immediately when a patron signs up with a library card) focuses on the library's overall services. From December 2018 to September 2023, it reported 501 unique clicks and a 55% open rate. From October 2023 to Feb 2025, it reported 5,155 unique clicks and a 61% open rate.

Welcome email two (sends two days after sign-up) focuses on accessing your account, searching the catalog, and how circulation works. From December 2018 to September 2023, it reported 304 unique clicks and a 52% open rate. From October 2023 to Feb 2025, it reported 1,583 unique clicks and a 63% open rate.

Welcome email three (sends seven days after sign-up) focuses on events. From December 2018 to September 2023, it reported 461 unique clicks and a 46% open rate. This email was swapped with the fourth email sent in the latest timeframe and instead featured the NextReads newsletters. From October 2023 to Feb 2025, the email was set up incorrectly in CEP and was not sent according to plan; therefore, there are no statistics.

Welcome email four (sends twelve days after sign-up) focuses on online resources and databases available. From December 2018 to September 2023, it reported 174 unique clicks and a 44% open rate. From October 2023 to Feb 2025, the email was set up incorrectly in CEP and was not sent according to plan; therefore, there are no statistics.

From December 2018 to February 2025, there have been roughly 48,369 welcome emails sent.

Patron demographics served by the project:

New patrons

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

We intended or hoped it would engage patrons and boost retention.

In 2016-2020 GRRL Strategic Plan:

Organizational Priority: Community Focus

Goal 1: Communities will have strong library partners to serve their unique and diverse needs, promote understanding between residents, and avoid duplication of effort. Residents will have a broader awareness of the library services available to them as potential users.

Objective 2: The library will maintain a list of community organization for regular distribution of information about library services and resources.

Milestone: The library will maintain a centralized e-mail distribution list of new borrowers to inform them about library services. Messages regarding library services are delivered by email to new borrowers automatically at increments: immediate, one week, three weeks, five weeks.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

Databases were switched and entailed a lot of staff time (learning systems). In hindsight, we would not use CEP again.



The idea of information sharing is good, but we cannot determine how patrons received or liked the email series.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

No, because we knew the content we wanted to share with new patrons (which essentially mirrors our Find It brochures in a digital format).

What do you wish you'd known before you began work on the project?

No.

Were stated goals for the project met?

We intended or hoped it would engage patrons and boost retention, but we cannot track that data.

Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

Library awareness to new patrons, by helping share what is available through their library.

Was there positive feedback? Specify.

No.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue.

We do not recommend new software to send the welcome email series. We are open to trying monthly "new to GRRL" emails through already-subscribed LibraryAware, as we believe patrons should know more about what their library offers.

Evaluation completed by: Breanne Fruth and Julie Bouchie



PROJECT EVALUATION SHEET

Title of Project: Senior Library Assistant

Date(s): February 2024 to December 2024

Usage/statistics (outputs):

This position provides vital support to the Library Services Coordinator (LSC) by delivering friendly and welcoming service to the public, while assisting patrons in utilizing library resources. The Senior Assistant oversees the work of library aides and volunteers, and plays an integral role in the day-to-day operations of the library.

Patron demographics served by the project:

External patrons and internal staff.

What were the stated goals for the project (intended outputs/outcomes)?

The Senior Assistant position is designed to strengthen the capacity of the LSC, facilitating greater outreach and community collaboration. Furthermore, this role provides staff with opportunities to develop supervisory skills, serving as a valuable pathway for advancement to more senior positions within library services.

How did the project go as a whole? What went well? What would you do differently?

The Senior Assistant role effectively allowed the LSC to delegate additional responsibilities, such as programming, volunteer coordination, and communication with aides, which helped balance the library's workload. However, the project revealed the need for improved training infrastructure for this position. Initially, staff were unsure where to seek direction, and there was a delay in communication regarding decisions for the aide position due to scheduling and the limited hours allocated to this role. Moving forward, enhancing training and improving communication processes would help streamline operations and ensure smoother transitions in responsibility.

Did you have the resources and information you needed to prepare for the project?

The resources and information necessary to effectively prepare for the project were insufficient. The training infrastructure was not adequately established, resulting in a lack of clear guidance and resources to support the Senior Assistant position. Furthermore, there was significant confusion about the role's responsibilities and how it was intended to support both the LSC and the branch. This uncertainty hindered the integration of the position into the existing structure and made it challenging to align the role with the expected goals and objectives.

What do you wish you'd known before you began work on the project?

Better communication regarding the role of the Senior Assistant within the hierarchy of the library system would have been beneficial. While the position has provided valuable support to the LSC, the close proximity of staff in the St. Michael workspace may have limited its full potential. Additionally, addressing the LSC's concerns about other staff feeling alienated or perceiving a loss of authority due to the introduction of this position would have helped alleviate any misunderstandings.

Were stated goals for the project met?

The stated goals for this project were partially met. The position successfully provided a reliable staff member to take on additional projects, collaborate on outreach efforts, assist with training, and



strengthen connections with the aides. This support has allowed the LSC to better manage the increasing demands of growing library usage.

However, the supervisory aspect of the position remains unclear as branch staff feel this should not be part of the Senior Library Assistant's responsibilities. This uncertainty surrounding the supervisory duties has hindered the full realization of the intended leadership development goals for the position.

Were other goals met by the project that were unexpected (unintended outcomes)?

N/A

Was there positive feedback? Specify.

Having a dedicated person to rely on for additional responsibilities, collaborate with, and assist in communicating with the aides has been extremely valuable.

Recommendation to continue/discontinue.

It is recommended to pause the implementation of additional Senior Assistant positions within the library system until comprehensive training and orientation programs are established. These programs would better support both the position and the LSC, while providing a clearer understanding of how the Senior Assistant fits within the branch staff structure.

Branch staff suggest removing the supervisory responsibilities and focusing the role more as a liaison. However, this would conflict with the position's primary goal of providing supervisory and leadership experience. Eliminating these responsibilities would limit staff opportunities to gain the essential experience and training needed for advancement within the library system.

Evaluation completed by: Jeannette Burkhardt