



Frequently Asked Questions VILS Connect Model

Why apply for Verizon Innovative Learning Schools?

Millions of students nationwide lack the access to technology and the skills they need to succeed in the digital world. Since 2012, Verizon has been working to help solve this problem through a transformative program called Verizon Innovative Learning.

We now offer two models for schools and districts with demonstrated need: Our **Verizon Innovative Learning Schools Comprehensive** model provides devices with data plans so students have access both in and outside of school. Our **Verizon Innovative Learning Schools Connect** model provides mobile hotspots with data access, professional development for teachers, and opportunities for collaboration with other educators. These schools must have existing 1:1 device programs.

Why apply to join Verizon Innovative Learning Schools Connect?

Our new reality is that learning must happen at school and at home. Wherever students are learning, they need access to reliable high-speed internet to succeed in the digital world. Through the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools Connect model, schools can ensure they have hotspots for their students in need, as well as professional learning in digital skills for the educators who teach them.

Who is eligible?

School districts that have:

- Existing 1:1 device programs in which students take devices home
- Middle and high schools with a 65% or higher free and reduced-price lunch rate
- Documented student need for internet access at home

What is required of my 1:1 device program?

In addition to having your students take their devices home, we require that your 1:1 device program continue after the transition back to in-person learning. When in-person classes resume, students must take their devices home, and the need for student internet access at home must be documented.

What does the program include?

- Mobile hotspots for students with documented need for reliable home internet access. Hotspots include two (2) years of Verizon Wireless LTE monthly 30GB data plans.* If students exceed their limit, access will be throttled to a slower speed until the data plans refresh each month.
- IT implementation support and assistance with mobile hotspots.
- Up to \$8,500 in funding to support instructional liaison positions, depending on the size of school staff.
- On-demand virtual professional learning opportunities for all teachers. At least 30% of teaching staff will be required to submit for a micro-credential each semester.
- Regular opportunities to collaborate with a national network of innovative, technology-driven school leaders and educators.

What types of devices are offered?

Each student with demonstrated need will receive a mobile hotspot with two (2) years of Verizon Wireless LTE monthly 30GB data plan.*

What happens when the hotspot device reaches the 30GB limit?

Once the 30GB limit is exceeded, the hotspot data is throttled to a much slower speed for the remainder of the month. The normal data speed resumes on the first day of the next monthly user cycle.

Is a content filtering service provided with each device?

The hotspot does not come with a content filter and must be filtered by the district. However, VILS partners with a specific provider for filtering if the district is in need of a solution.

How many hotspots will my school receive?

Each student with demonstrated need will receive a mobile hotspot. Schools will be required to submit evidence to justify student need (e.g., surveys). In addition, each school will receive a set of surplus hotspots equal to 5% of the total number of hotspots necessary to meet student need.

As students transition to a school not in the program, are they able to keep the hotspot?

No, the hotspots are the property of the district. As students move in and out of schools, the hotspots will be returned to the school or district to be used by other students with demonstrated need. At the conclusion of the program, Verizon Innovative Learning Schools will donate all hotspots to the district.

*Data plans are subject to change

What if additional students in the district show a demonstrated need for internet access?

Opportunities to request additional hotspots due to increased student need will be reviewed by VILS on a rolling basis throughout the school year.

What staffing roles does the VILS Connect program require?

To be eligible for the VILS Connect program, a district must identify district- and school-level employees to serve in the following roles:

District level:

- [District Lead](#): A district-level employee who will be the primary point of contact for district communication and overall project management with Digital Promise and Verizon.
- [District IT Lead](#): A district-level employee who will be the primary point of contact with Digital Promise and Verizon for the management of hotspots and any technology issues that may arise.

At each participating school:

- [Principal](#): A school-based administrator (preferably principal or assistant principal) who will be a primary point of contact for school communication with Digital Promise and Verizon.
- [School IT Lead](#): A school-level employee who will be the primary point of contact for IT support related to the student use of hotspots.
- [VILS Liaison](#): A school-based point of contact for the VILS Connect program who has instructional coaching experience and whose primary role is to support professional learning for all teachers participating in the program. The position can be filled by a small team of individuals if the school sees fit, however one person will need to serve as the sole point of contact for meetings, communications, and program reporting with the Digital Promise team.

How can the Liaison stipend be used?

Schools should assign the VILS Liaison role to an existing employee, or small team of employees, who is responsible for reporting about the VILS Connect program progress and ensuring 30% of teachers submit micro-credentials each semester. The school or district determines how to allocate the stipend, provided that it supports instructional coaching or professional learning and the VILS Connect program. The amount of the stipend will depend on the size of the school:

- Schools with 50 teachers or less will receive \$5,000 per year.
- Schools with 51 teachers or more will receive \$8,500 per year.

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What does professional learning/professional development entail?

The program requires each school to designate a [VILS Liaison](#) who has instructional coaching experience and will support teachers with intentional use of technology. All teachers are able to participate in virtual, on-demand VILS professional learning each semester, with at least 30% of teachers expected to submit for a [micro-credential](#) each semester. School leaders will develop a plan, with support from Digital Promise, to impact all students in the building through teacher training in the two (2) years of program participation.

What are micro-credentials?

Micro-credentials are a form of competency-based recognition that validate an educator's professional learning. An educator selects a micro-credential that captures a research-backed, discrete skill and submits evidence to demonstrate their competence in that skill. The educator receives a micro-credential, in the form of a digital badge, if Digital Promise determines that the evidence meets the requirements of the scoring guide and rubric.

Which micro-credentials are available through the VILS Connect program?

Educators can earn micro-credentials in several pathways, including:

- *Introduction to Instructional Technology Coaching*, which defines instructional coaching and provides guidance on strategies coaches can use as they develop or expand their roles within a school.
- *Evergreen Tools for Blended and Remote Learning*, which offers teachers an opportunity to explore powerful tools for creating online classroom spaces and meaningful blended and remote learning experiences.
- *Transitioning to Remote Learning*, which helps teachers address learning challenges specific to remote learning environments, including needs assessment, course design, and implementation of key elements to ensure an equitable and inclusive learning ecosystem that meets all students' needs.
- Additional pathways will be released in Spring 2021.

Can teacher assistants or administrators complete the micro-credentials? Will it count toward our 30 percent?

Yes, any instructional staff member with direct interaction with students can complete and submit to earn a micro-credential.

How long does it take to complete a pathway and submit for a micro-credential?

Pathways are designed to be completed in 1-4 hours, depending on the amount of micro-credential opportunities each pathway contains. The amount of time it takes to complete a pathway and submit for a micro-credential depends on the particular teacher training pathway and an educator's previous experience with the skill addressed in the pathway.

What can I do with my micro-credentials once I've earned them?

Once earned, micro-credentials can be shared through social networks, embedded in websites or learning management systems (LMS), emailed to colleagues, and downloaded as digital badges. Micro-credentials comply with the open badges specification, which means they are unique to each earner and contain metadata recognized and supported by dozens of platforms across the web.

Can I earn micro-credentials collaboratively with other educators?

Yes. All micro-credential submissions should be unique to each educator. As a result, it's imperative that the evidence you submit reflects the work you've done. Additionally, please indicate that you worked with other team members in your submission.

Can I earn other micro-credentials offered by other issuers and can it count toward our 30 percent?

No, only the VILS pre-selected micro-credentials will count towards your school's 30% completion rate. You're welcome to complete as many microcredentials as you'd like from other platforms; however, only the VILS pre-selected micro-credentials will count towards your VILS Connect requirements.

If 60% of our staff completes the micro-credentials in one semester, is 30% still required to complete the micro-credential the following semester?

Yes, each semester at least 30% of your staff is required to submit for a micro-credential. You may choose to have more than 30% submit for a microcredential in one semester; however, you will still need 30% to submit for a micro-credential in the next semester.

How many micro-credentials are the teachers required to earn?

Teachers are required to submit for one micro-credential. Please note that some pathways include only one micro-credential and others may have multiple micro-credentials.

How will we know which teachers submitted for micro-credentials?

Your VILS Liaison will receive a monthly report.

How long does it take to receive assessment feedback?

Micro-credentials will be scored within 14 days after submission.

Are micro-credentials a valid form of professional development for relicensure?

Nearly every state mandates that teachers renew their licenses periodically, but renewal requirements vary. For more information about state renewal requirements click [here](#).

The VILS liaison does not have coaching experience; are they required to complete Introduction to Instruction Technology Coaching Pathway?

It is highly recommended that the VILS Liaison completes the Introduction to Instructional Technology Coaching pathway. The pathway is designed to be completed over the course of one school year.