

# BUILDING THE WORKFORCE, BUILDING BUSINESSES AT LIBRARIES

## Providing Opportunity Across Kentucky and the Nation

As technology further shifts the economic landscape, libraries prepare American jobseekers to enter the workforce, to reskill to meet new requirements, and to succeed as business owners.

Public libraries in Kentucky and nearly 17,000 strong across the country: (1) help people secure employment through job search, resume writing, and interview training, (2) provide internet access and digital skills programs that encourage use of emerging technologies and empower entrepreneurship, (3) collaborate with other community stakeholders to identify workforce challenges and build vibrant local economies.


With many communities hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and facing economic challenges, libraries are a critical part of the economic safety net, now more than ever.

### Skills building and job seeking

In Casey County (KY) jobs are scarce, and more than one quarter of people live under the poverty line. Many local businesses have shuttered and finding a job in the community is a challenge. What's more, a significant portion of the county population (more than 25%) does not have a high school diploma, and many do not have the necessary

digital and technical skills that are required in business and jobs today. This lack of knowledge and skill especially limits older residents in finding work and staying employed. Most cannot afford to learn these new skills or have limited access to technology and the Internet.

The Casey County Public Library is a critical resource in addressing

**TAKEAWAYS** for local, state and national public officials, and potential partners 

- Libraries in Kentucky and nationally support jobseekers, entrepreneurs, and local businesses.
- Libraries are well-placed to offer digital skills training and economic empowerment programs to all Americans, including those with few alternatives or resources.
- Libraries are cost-effective and efficient partners that should be included in the development and implementation of workforce and economic development initiatives.

these challenges. The library provides access to computers and the internet for jobseekers and has partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce and the employment office to offer resume writing and job search classes. The library also offers weekly technology classes—the only free digital skills classes in the county. In these sessions, community members receive one-on-one aid tailored to their specific technology needs, ranging from email set-up, to job search, to eBook downloads.



Crittenden County Public Library

### Bridging the rural resource divide

In Crittenden County (KY) residents struggle to access the educational opportunities they need to apply for jobs and grow their businesses. To bring these resources to the community the Crittenden County Public Library partnered with the local economic development agency—the Lake Barkley Partnership, as well as the Chamber of Commerce to offer digital skills training for small businesses. An initial Small Business Lunch and Learn session, intended to demonstrate how online resources and

**“We want to continue to offer the services we already are, but also want to figure out what other services people need and how we can best compile all that information and share it with our community.”**

—Daviss County Public Library

**“Our closest Small Business Administration Office is in Murray, Kentucky which is an hour and a half drive from Marion. Those resources are just are not available to business owners in town.”**


—Crittenden County Public Library

further classes could help businesses, saw participation from a diverse range of sectors including the medical field, food industries, restaurants, and retail shops. Through this partnership the library created buy-in and made new connections with business owners, facilitating further workshops on online business

tools as well as providing one-on-one technology help. The library is now a trusted resource for the business community.

### A look to the future

Libraries reach outside their own walls to identify ways that they can better serve their communities. While Daviss County Public Library (KY) currently offers services to support jobseekers and entrepreneurs, the library is also investigating how to better serve the local homeless population. What

resources do people need to obtain jobs and get back on their feet? To this end, the library is working to develop outreach programs with homeless, abuse, and drug shelters to provide their residents with technology skills training. 

### ACROSS the United States



**98%** of public libraries provide wireless internet access (WiFi), a vital resource for job seekers

**90%** of libraries offer digital skills training

**73%** of libraries help people apply for jobs

SOURCE: digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/DigitalInclusionBrief2015.pdf