

LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS



RESOURCE GUIDE

Effectively Measure the Impact of Your Library Small Business Program

Use the **Libraries Build Business Monitoring and Evaluation System** or **Project Outcome Economic Development Survey** to evaluate your library's business programs

This resource is designed to help you to create your own small business surveys using the existing tools of the Public Library Association's [Project Outcome](#) and the [Libraries Build Business \(LBB\) Monitoring and Evaluation system](#). By leveraging the existing Economic Development survey on Project Outcome or the tools created for LBB, libraries gain insight into the experiences of their program participants and the needs of their communities.

WHAT IS LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS?

Libraries Build Business (LBB) is a national initiative of the American Library Association (ALA), supported by Google.org, intended to build capacity in libraries offering programming or services to local entrepreneurs and the small

business community. The initiative took place over the course of 2020–2021 with 13 LBB cohort libraries representing 12 states and including urban, suburban, rural, and tribal libraries of all sizes. LBB projects have directly impacted nearly 15,000 small business owners and entrepreneurs across the United States, prioritizing low-income and underrepresented entrepreneurs. Libraries Build Business projects are thoughtfully designed with consideration of local business and industry demands, based on community-specific market research and needs assessments. Additionally, the LBB initiative created a community of practice and learning resources to share with the field, including monitoring and evaluation, promising practices, and resources for effectively measuring and evaluating a library business program. Read our [2022 final impact report](#), which details findings of the LBB initiative, using the M&E framework.

WHAT IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process is an iterative cycle of monitoring, evaluation, reflection, improvement, and implementation. M&E engages practitioners in an action and reflection cycle, incorporating feedback and data to make adjustments and improvements along the way. With data and feedback from your community, you'll be more prepared to provide responsive programming, services, and resources and ensure your efforts to reach and connect patrons are working. One LBB cohort member shared that M&E is “a tool that helps us ensure that our programming is tied to what customers both need and want; if they don't want it, they won't show up, no matter how valuable the information is.” Adding M&E doesn't need to be overly complicated: you probably already engage in feedback and dialogue with your patrons, which is the first step.

M&E can help libraries to strengthen their position as change agents and advocates for underrepresented and low-income entrepreneurs—helping libraries to not only to create better programs, but also to demonstrate their importance to stakeholders and funders. “M&E has helped us with the more compelling story we can tell to our officials, funders, and partners. It helps us to tell the story of how important libraries are to the development of our local economy,” said LBB cohort member and Baltimore County Public Library's Adult & Community Engagement Manager Julie Brophy. When libraries use M&E successfully to monitor and improve their small business efforts, more entrepreneurs will benefit. This can, in turn, lead to greater economic equity, earning potential, prosperity, and interconnectedness within communities.

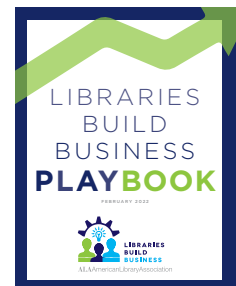


The LBB M&E System

If you've read the Libraries Build Business Playbook, you know that M&E was a core component of the LBB initiative, with a goal of building capacity in cohort libraries to effectively measure their programs.

The LBB cohort, ALA project team, and Cicero Group, ALA's M&E partner, collaboratively developed a M&E system.

The M&E system includes a Theory of Change, M&E Framework, and survey instruments, interview protocols, and other tools to capture data and feedback from small business owners and entrepreneurs in libraries'



programs. These resources are all available in [Appendix C](#) in the Playbook in their original forms for libraries to adapt and implement in their programs.

The LBB tools provide robust support specifically tailored to small business and entrepreneurship needs and small business programming. The questions in the small business surveys were designed to capture library patrons' responses to engagement with library small business programs and resources, as well as their feelings of confidence, motivation, and preparedness. These surveys can also be used to gain insight and perspective about who is using your business resources. The surveys can help you understand impact and change over time, by asking patrons to complete surveys before, during and after program series or workshops.

For more detailed information about how M&E works, the Libraries Build Business M&E tools, and how to incorporate it into your small business program, see the [Libraries Build Business Playbook](#).

Using Project Outcome for M&E

Project Outcome offers free standardized outcome surveys and data analysis tools. The Project Outcome survey questions align with and measure four key patron outcomes—knowledge, confidence, application, and awareness. These four outcomes are the same across all surveys. This standardization allows libraries to see consistent and comparable data across all their programs and service areas. In addition, Project Outcome's data collection tool aggregates data and allows you to demonstrate the total impact of your programs and services nationally. Project Outcome surveys are short and a simple way to capture basic feedback about the outcomes of your program.



The projectoutcome.org homepage

For programs related to business development, Project Outcome's Economic Development survey may be the best fit. It is intended to be used for programs/services to improve business start-up and development skills. The ready-to-go survey contains six pre-set questions designed to capture the outcomes of a patron's specific interaction with the library (i.e., attending a program or event).

HOW TO: DEVELOP A SURVEY

You can use ready-made surveys from the Playbook or from Project Outcome. Both can be adapted to your library's specific programs or needs. For more specific instructions on how to create a survey, you can refer to these two links: [How to Create a Survey in Survey Monkey](#) and [How to Create a Survey in Google Forms](#). For more, check out Project Outcome's tips for thoughtfully and intentionally developing your own open-ended survey questions.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT YOUR OWN SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM SURVEY USING PROJECT OUTCOME

Now that you have a basic overview of M&E and its importance to the LBB project, we will discuss how to implement your own small business program survey using Project Outcome. Depending on what information you are looking to gather, you can tailor the existing Economic Development Survey by adding up to three questions. Use questions from the bank below or write your own questions.

While the pre-set questions in the Economic Development survey measure outcomes, these optional questions may help your library determine trends in the local business community, including areas of concern. There are also questions that would help you determine the use of library resources for businesses, which may help you with future outreach.

This question bank presents you with six potential questions that you can add to the Project Outcome Economic Development survey.

Question Bank

To add a question to a Project Outcome survey, in step 4 of the [survey creation process](#), select “yes” when asked if you want to add custom questions. Then select “write your own question.” The questions you add can be open-ended (free text), Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree), multiple choice, or check all that apply.

1. Your business provides enough support to employees so that they do not need to worry about being able to meet their personal expenses.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A

2. Your business can handle a major disruption to sales.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A

3. You frequently use your library’s resources for small business.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A

4. You frequently attend small business events or programs hosted by your library.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- N/A

5. To what extent do you believe the library’s support for small businesses will affect your revenue and/or the number of employees you will have in the coming year?

- The library’s support will be the primary reason my business will grow
- The library’s support will be one of the main reasons my business will grow
- The library’s support will help my business a little
- The library’s support will have no impact on my business
- The library’s support will have a negative impact on my business

6. In the coming year, how do you expect your business revenue (i.e. total sales or gross income) will change compared to the last 12 months? (If you do not currently run a business, please skip this question.)

- Decrease by 50% or more
- Decrease by 25%-49%
- Decrease by up to 25%
- Stay about the same
- Increase by up to 25%
- Increase by 25%-49%
- Increase by 50% or more

If you want to learn if your library community knows about the small business resources you offer, you may consider adding the questions such as, “You frequently attend small business events or programs hosted by your library.” And/or “You frequently use your library’s resources for small business.” If you want to get a better understanding of the financial security of the small businesses and entrepreneurs your library serves you may consider adding the following questions: “Your business can handle a major disruption to sales.” And/or “In the coming year, how do you

expect your business revenue (i.e., total sales or gross income) will change compared to the last 12 months? (If you do not currently run a business, please skip this question.)” Adding these questions to surveys library patrons take will help you better understand the needs of the entrepreneurs in your community. This information could inform your programming or lead you to create a curated listed of business resources or it could drive you to reach out and create a partnership with your local chamber of commerce to bring awareness to funding opportunities, or library resources and services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you’d like to hear more about how a member of the LBB cohort utilizes Project Outcome to evaluate and inform their library small business program, please see our [case study](#) with Susan Preece, Topsham (ME) Public Library Director.

Additionally, if you would like to learn more and hear directly from members of the LBB cohort and libraries across the country about their small business programs, join the [LBB Community on Slack](#).

For further information about this Resource Guide or Libraries Build Business, contact Megan Janicki (mjanicki@alawash.org) or visit our website: ala.org/advocacy/workforce/grant.



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