

# LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS IN TOPSHAM



LIBRARIES ADVANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP across the United States. With the relevant technology, resources, and staff expertise, libraries are well-equipped to support entrepreneurs and local small businesses in conducting market research, developing business plans, gaining access to emerging technologies, and sustaining small business amidst economic uncertainty. America's libraries have a critical role in addressing inequities in economic opportunity.



**Libraries Build Business** is a national initiative of the American Library Association, supported by Google.org, to partner with a cohort of 13 public libraries. The cohort will build local capacity and expand services for small businesses and entrepreneurs with a focus on businesses owned by people from low-income and underrepresented groups, such as Black, Latinx, and women-owned businesses. With the goal of identifying promising practices and models for library-led entrepreneurship initiatives, the cohort, in collaboration with the ALA project team, will develop and evaluate practical resources for the field to ultimately scale successful entrepreneurship programs in the nearly 17,000 public libraries.

Representing 12 states and including rural and tribal, urban, and suburban communities, the cohort will create a playbook of promising models and lessons learned available to all public libraries across the country.

## Topsham Public Library Employment and Business Entrepreneur Center Makes Local Connections

The Topsham Public Library in Midcoast Maine has been actively involved in supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs and job-seekers since before the Brunswick Naval Air Station closed in 2005. Hundreds of people who had worked for the Navy and the supporting community businesses found themselves facing a new workforce model. Partnering with the Maine Career Centers, New Ventures Maine, the Southern Midcoast Chamber of Commerce and Topsham Economic Development, the library found ways to assist the newly unemployed in rebuilding and expanding their skills. That work continues, as part of the **Topsham Public Library Employment and Business Entrepreneur Center**, which provides a comprehensive and coordinated series of programs, drop-ins, informational opportunities and collection enhancements in collaboration with partners. Topsham Public Library provides access to technology and the Internet to its low-income patrons in a rural community trying to evolve and grow its small businesses.



**Topsham Public Library**  
Topsham, Maine

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Partnering with experts and connecting people is what libraries do, and our goal is to provide tailored services to each individual patron based on their needs, with support of knowledgeable staff and our community partners with business expertise.