





ONE SMALL BUSINESS AT A TIME

Building Entrepreneurial Opportunity in America's Communities

ibraries propel entrepreneurship across the United States. To research or brainstorm new ideas or markets, develop business plans, gain access to or learn about emerging technologies, obtain information about intellectual property, and sustain an enterprise, the 120,000 libraries across the country are ideal partners. Libraries possess the relevant information, technology, and expert resource base and are widely acknowledged as a respected and trusted community institution.

Libraries are a cost-effective, turnkey national network of resources for implementing new initiatives advancing entrepreneurship. We urge decision makers in the U.S. Small Business Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, and other federal agencies; the White House; U.S. Congress; business-related associations, foundations

and corporate philanthropy; think tanks; and other organizations to include libraries in their plans to promote entrepreneurship and small business development. Libraries represent economic opportunity for all.

Brainstorming and formulating new business concepts

America's libraries are well-equipped to enable the creation of business ideas, providing access to both relevant resources and relationships. From offering digital media labs that enable original audio and video production to hosting author talks, libraries stimulate creativity across topics and walks of life. Libraries are

rich centers for brainstorming and discovery—with staff that guide businesspeople to the right resource among an avalanche of options. They also offer valuable networking opportunities for entrepreneurs, such as the popular Princeton Tech Meetup hosted by the Princeton (N.J.) Public Library.

Libraries provide no-fee access to specialized digital content available online 24/7—indispensable for exploring new ideas. With a library card, any resident can access their virtual library and find demographic information, market research, industry sector profiles and company information and financials. Reference USA, for instance, is a database of 14 million U.S. businesses and 220 million U.S. residents that powers search for suppliers, patent research, and competitive intelligence. Whether starting

up or growing a business, the library connects businesspeople to newspapers, magazines, e-books and databases for exploration and deepening knowledge.

Market research and business planning

Completing a business plan is one of the first tasks at hand to bring an idea to reality—and libraries are there to help. The Carnegie

Library in Pittsburgh, for instance, has created a Business Plans and Profiles Index that offers resources in 28 major categories that include Baby & Children's Products; Computers, Software & Electronics; Retail; and Travel & Tourism. The Lansing (Mich.) Community College Library offers a Business Planning: Start-up Guide through its website.

In addition to online resources, libraries also provide and host training and consultations. The New York

isa Kilby relied heavily on resources at the **Cecil County (Md.) Public** Library to write a plan that helped her secure \$50,000 in seed money and realize her dream of opening an ice cream shop. Kilby Cream now has two locations.

Public Library Science, Industry and Business Library offers a business plan research workshop, in which participants receive tailored guidance. And the non-profit WomenVenture has partnered with an alliance of more than 100 libraries in the Minnesota Twin Cities area to provide small business classes at libraries, such as "How to Write a Business Plan." The Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County (N.Y.) placed a librarian in Eastman Business Park, which serves 65 companies, to provide direct, on-site service to these small businesses.

Libraries also partner with national small business support organizations to extend the reach and depth of support available to startups. The Small Business Administration administers the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) program, which provides

> management and technical advice in partnership with varied organizations. SCORE (formerly known as the Service Corps of Retired Executives) provides free and confidential business advice for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Libraries work with both SBDCs and SCORE. The Boulder (Co.) and Evanston (Il.) public libraries are home to two of 900 SBDC service sites across the nation, connecting dedicated small business technical assistance with deep and diverse

library collections and resources. At the Pima County (Az.) Public Library, the local SCORE chapter teaches weekly classes and supports nonprofit formation.

More than 6,000 public library outlets (38% of the U.S. total) provide specific assistance with the development of small business plans.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND DIGITAL INCLUSION SURVEY, 2013

Access to capital and workspace

A big challenge for entrepreneurs is access to capital, and some libraries have stepped up with programming to help. For example, the Houston and Brooklyn public libraries partnered with financial institutions to administer competitions that provide seed funding. "Liftoff Houston!" and "PowerUp!," respectively, provide information resources and training to participants who are eligible for prizes up to \$15,000.

Increasingly, libraries are re-designing spaces to accommodate co-working and mobile work. Libraries of all sizes informally support freelancers and contractors, but a growing number (more than 1,000 nationwide) offer dedicated co-working spaces. Damian Huising partially operates his IT and cybersecurity consulting business out of the co-working space at the Akron-Summer County (Ohio) Public Library. The Alexandria Co-Working

Network is an Arizona State University (ASU) effort that brings people together in Arizona public libraries. The Alexandria initiative also provides access to experienced mentors, classes from ASU's Rapid Startup School and physical and digital assets.

Prototyping and intellectual property issues

Libraries also are investing in 3D printers and other equipment that allow entrepreneurs to prototype and/or create materials to advance their business. Scott Rownin used the 3D printer at the Westport Library (Ct.)

"Before I walked into
the public library,
I knew nothing of
3D printing," said
Cleveland brewery
owner John Fuduric.
But when he walked
out, Fuduric had
3D-printed designs
for his new beer taps,
fusing the technology
and expertise found
at the library with his
business know-how
and creativity.

to prototype a device that attaches to cell phones and prevents drivers from texting while driving. One of Rownin's neighbors used the 3D printer to prototype a square-shaped headband that has received seed funding for marketing and production.

Intellectual property considerations are integral to many business ventures, and even more so in the digital economy. Libraries serve as Patent and Trademark Resource Centers (PTRCs) under the auspices of the U.S.

Patent and Trademark Office, where specialists help entrepreneurs determine whether someone else has registered a trademark or obtained a patent.

PTRCs also provide public programming. For example, the PTRC at the Evansdale Library of West Virginia University delivered the free public seminar "Patents and Trademarks 101: Essential Information You Need to Protect Your Intellectual Property," targeted to inventors, entrepreneurs, educators, students, and legal professionals. The PTRC at the St. Louis (Mo.) Public Library held a "Kids Inventing Day" to educate about manufacturing processes and the basics of the patent system, illustrating one way libraries cultivate our future entrepreneurs.

Copyright is a long-standing topic in libraries. In college and university libraries, one or more copyright specialists may be on staff, providing expertise and resources. For example, Cornell University's virtual Copyright Information Center offers an overview of copyright law and guidelines for determining fair use.

Dallas's Office of Economic
Development worked
with the Dallas Public Library
to launch the Business
Resource and Information
Network (B.R.A.I.N.) to deliver
entrepreneurship literacy
and business development
services that include classes and



services that include classes and an interactive web portal. The library also has detailed information on 75 small business development organizations for referrals as needed.

Professional development

Entrepreneurs and small business people have need for varied professional development. The skills to be honed include public speaking, negotiation, writing, and web design. Libraries provide training and resources for improving abilities as a routine part of their mission.

Some libraries offer ongoing professional development tailored to small business. At the THINKspot! in the Red Mountain Library in Mesa (Az.), seminars are offered on Tuesday evenings. A sample of topics offered include:

- Budgeting & Cash Flow Estimation for Small Business
- Video is King . . . Marketing Using Video
- Google My Business

TAKEAWAYS for decision makers >>>>>>>>

- Realizing economic opportunity for all means heightened entrepreneurship and small business activity across the nation. But how can such activity be promoted and supported cost effectively?
- One great solution is libraries—120,000 strong—already present in communities across the land.
- Libraries have the information resources, technology, physical presence, and expert staff to research and brainstorm new ideas or markets, develop business plans, gain access to or learn about emerging technologies, obtain information about intellectual property, and implement business plans and sustain an enterprise.
- Leverage libraries in new policy initiatives to grow entrepreneurship and small business.

ABOUT AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

he 120,000 libraries across the United States are a powerful force in addressing public policy priorities. Libraries advance Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, and Engagement for Everyone, Everywhere—The E's of Libraries®.

Libraries serve America's cities, towns, counties, and states; on school and college campuses; on military bases; in hospitals, government agencies, corporations, and other institutions. Library professionals provide diverse programs, services and resources tailored to community needs.

The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 57,000 members. The ALA Annual Conference, held in June, typically attracts over 20,000 participants. ALA maintains a Washington Office to engage federal and national decision makers and influencers.

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