



# PREPARING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE AT LIBRARIES

## Empowering Communities Across Connecticut 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 Connecticut 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

Responding to local economic challenges, including a growing demand for skilled labor, the Groton Public Library (CT) offers computer classes and job seeking support to prepare prospective employees with skills that meet employer needs. The library serves teens looking for their first jobs, adults with special needs, second career

searchers, retirees looking for part time work, and more. Classes at the library include computer basics, how to use specific devices, internet safety/security, and three levels of Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The library also offers one-on-one appointments as well as a weekly Job Club to assist with resumes, cover letters, job searching, and interviews.

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



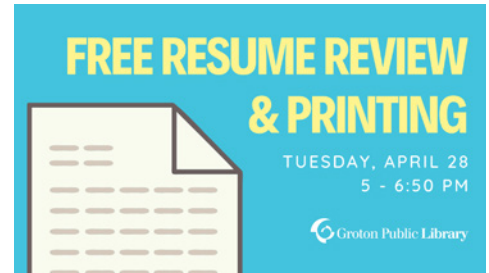
- Libraries in Connecticut and nationally support jobseekers, entrepreneurs, and local businesses.
- Libraries are well-placed to offer digital skills training and economic empowerment programs to all Americans, including those with few alternatives or resources.
- Libraries are cost-effective and efficient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

Job seekers get a boost in confidence at the Groton Public Library through classes and services that would otherwise be unavailable, especially to the under- or unemployed. This helps many go the extra mile. One military spouse turned to the library for help upon moving back to Groton after her husband passed away. While she could have easily found a position in her previous field, her ideal was to work with children in the library or school system. She was a great candidate on paper, however her interviewing skills needed improvement. She worked with library staff weekly, tweaking applications and doing mock interviews, to ultimately successfully find a job in her target area.

### Partnering to meet community workforce needs

Libraries—often the first stop for jobseekers—serve as key institutions that deliver direct services, make referrals to local and online resources, and partner with other organizations to more effectively address community workforce and economic development needs.

Beardsley Library in rural Winsted, Connecticut serves a former manufacturing area that has struggled to revive itself as industries have closed. The library partners with the local community college, the town government, the Salvation Army, and an adult



(left) Job-seekers event at Beardsley Library in Winsted; (right) promotion for an event at Groton Public Library.

education service provider to help people overcome challenges related to re-employment. The Caring for our Community network holds workshops, events, and other training opportunities, reaching a much broader sector of the community than each member could on their own.

Beardsley Library hosts partner programs as well as its own events, such as its “Suit-Up and Learn!” evening which gave jobseekers the opportunity to visit stations to learn about job-related resources available online and at the library, to take home community-donated professional clothing for interviewing and/or work, and to network with other attendees over dinner.

### A look to the future

Connecticut libraries are working to expand their offerings for jobseekers. Beardsley Library is working with its

partners to gather more data to inform programming and services—taking a systems approach to workforce challenges by getting feedback and developing innovative solutions to meet people’s needs. Meanwhile Groton Public Library plans to connect with the town economic development team to discuss best practices for reaching and supporting small businesses in the area.

**“Our workforce has not developed the skills necessary to meet the new hiring demands.”**

—Groton Public Library



**“During the Great Recession, over 30 million people, roughly 10% of the total U.S. population at that time, reported using computers in public libraries for employment-related activities.**

—John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University

### 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](https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/DigitalInclusionBrief2015.pdf)