



THRIVING WORKFORCE, THRIVING ECONOMIES WITH LIBRARIES

Empowering Communities Across Delaware and the Nation

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


Public libraries in Delaware 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.

Providing access to opportunity

As the major downtown library of Wilmington, Delaware the Wilmington Public Library serves a diverse population, many of whom lack financial resources. The city has a poverty rate of 25.1% and 14.2% of adults lack a high school diploma. Through its many partnerships and programs, the library supports the employment, health, and

life-long learning of its community members. Seniors make use of library computer labs and classes along with adult programs, including a senior fitness class. Literacy Delaware, a nonprofit housed in the library, offers adult literacy programs and serves the English Language Learner/refugee population. The state AmeriCorps VISTA representative hosts programs

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

- Libraries in Delaware 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.

“We work with many other local organizations and non-profits to provide a rich and robust variety of resources and services through the library.”

—Wilmington Public Library

for veterans and people with disabilities at the library. Additionally, the library offers social service programs to assist the city’s sizeable homeless population and helps formerly incarcerated community members obtain expungements and pardons via the APEX program.

Wilmington Public Library

The Wilmington Public Library offers a workforce development programs for job seekers as well as business workshops and resources for aspiring entrepreneurs. Most of these offerings are rooted in technological literacy to address the digital divide – in Wilmington 20.2% of households do not have a computer and 32.4% lack a home broadband connection. One day-long library workforce event, the Career and Business Expo, included several different sessions to help jobseekers move forward. This included a session for pardons and expungements to assist people who are hindered from attaining employment because of a criminal record, a career readiness workshop for those seeking employment, a workshop on how to start a business, and a session where individuals received one-on-one assistance related to their career and

“Because our community includes many individuals with various levels of education and computer literacy, we strive meet them where they are and help them take their next step in career, business and lifelong learning.”

—Wilmington Public Library

business development goals.

One man who attended the expo initially came for the APEX Pardons and Expungement program to receive help in removing some items from his juvenile record. He then attended the career readiness workshop to gain more insight into how to further and maximize his career options. He stayed for the small business workshop to gather information to determine whether it would be feasible for him to start a business. Finally, he took part in the walk-in assistance session to have his resume reviewed and do a job search using Google and Indeed. After participating in all four sessions he stated, “I didn’t know I was going to leave with all of this information! It’s motivational and inspiring.”

A look to the future

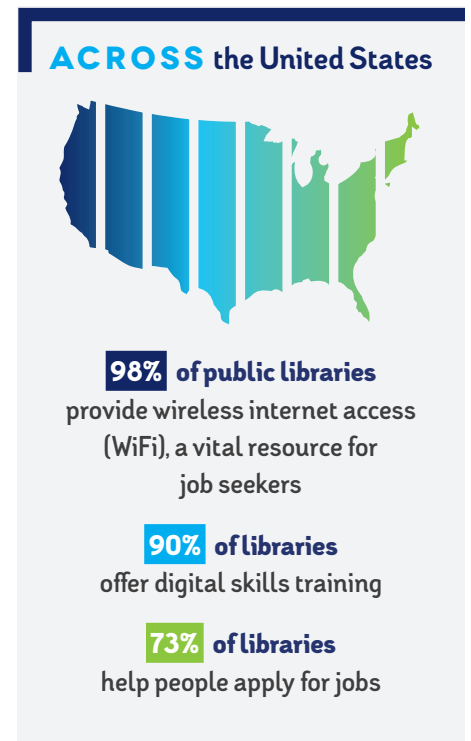
Moving forward, the Wilmington Public Library seeks to continue their workforce and economic development efforts. The library plans to hire staff to make the library’s job center available for more hours and to conduct additional workshops, classes, and consulting sessions. Hiring a bilingual workforce development staff member or volunteer to work with the English



Wilmington Public Library

photo by Charles Uniatowski

as a Second Language (ESL) population would also help to meet local needs. Additionally, the library plans to continue to work with the Department of Labor and other state agencies, as well as nonprofit partners, to provide a thorough and comprehensive support system for jobseekers. 📖



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

ALA American Library Association

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