



# PARTNERING FOR A STRONGER WORKFORCE AT LIBRARIES

## Empowering Communities Across Missouri 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 Missouri 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.

**Digital skills for jobseekers**  
Springfield–Greene County Library District in Springfield, Missouri provides classes and one-on-one computer training via library branches, senior centers, Alpha House (a residential reentry residence for offenders), as well as via the Edge Community Technology Center, located within the Midtown Carnegie Branch Library. A

recent workshop series for jobseekers offered two, three-hour sessions that taught basic digital skills and resume building and included an open help session for attendees to receive one-on-one tutoring and assistance geared towards their specific needs. Participants ranged from young adults who were looking for new jobs to older adults who had retired but wanted to

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

- Libraries in Missouri 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.

get back into the workforce and felt they needed to update their skills. The workshops helped participants not only learn new skills, but also develop confidence.

One older man was very nervous and uncertain about his ability to use digital tools and create his own resume. He participated in the instructor-led portion of the training and then worked one-on-one with a staff member. When he left, he had hard copies of his resume as well as a digital copy saved online.

### Connecting businesses to resources

In addition to supporting individual jobseekers, the Springfield–Greene County Library serves as the community’s business portal, meeting entrepreneurs in and outside of the library and helping them connect with both library and community resources. The library’s Embedded Business Library team supports this work. The library regularly partners with Southwest Missouri SCORE to provide programs and training. Past programs have included

**“The public library is part of the local economy and possesses a variety of assets that can help local small businesses grow and thrive, thus contributing to the wealth and vitality of the community.”**

—Christine Hamilton-Pennell,  
*Growing Local Economies*

Networking & Social Media for the Apprehensive; Hot Topics in HR; How to Start a Small Business in Missouri; Simple Steps for Starting Your Business;

Preparing (Your Business) for the Unexpected; Your Most Important Skill in Business—Communication; Caring for Your Businesses, Yourself, and Your Life; and Overcoming the Fear of Writing a Business Plan with Business Model Canvas. The library also partners with eFactory—a local business incubator. In addition, librarians provide computer training to local businesses and nonprofit staff as well as the individuals these organizations serve.

### Outreach to underserved groups

The Springfield–Greene County Library strives to bring services to a wide range of community members. In its *Refugee and Immigrant Library Welcome Video* project the library sought to inform refugees and English Language Learners about services and materials in their native languages—an important first step to using the library and its services. Meanwhile, the Embedded Business Library team works with local businesses and universities to collect data and identify community needs. This allows the

**“Our region is home to a wealth of business resources, but those new to small business and entrepreneurship are not always aware of those resources or how to take advantage of them.”**

—Springfield–Greene County Library District



Jobseeking workshop at the library

library to target resources to underserved, underrepresented entrepreneurs and small business owners, helping to inform them of library services for businesses, and connect them with library partners at SCORE, the Small Business Administration (SBA), Reference USA, Missouri State University, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and more. 



One-on-one help for jobseekers

**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)

## ALA American Library Association

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