



# PARTNERING FOR A STRONGER WORKFORCE AT LIBRARIES

## Empowering Jobseekers Across Ohio 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 Ohio 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

In the rural farming community of Grafton, Ohio the Grafton–Midview Public Library offers one-on-one assistance to jobseekers. The library also partners with Job and Family Services to hold job-related workshops for local residents, including ex-offenders getting back on their feet following release from the local prison. In its

work with jobseekers, the library takes a results-focused approach, helping community members complete resumes and develop concrete skills needed to apply online, such as organizing a job search using a spreadsheet. During the Grafton-Midview Public Library’s “Get That Job” half-day event participants learned about and practiced using online tools relevant to professional

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



- Libraries in Ohio 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.

and digital skills development. Additionally, a professional speaker—who had struggled with drug addiction in his own past and now worked to help ex-offenders gain employment—offered advice on the job seeking and interview process, including how to set goals and how to present a job gap in a positive light.

## Engaging in community partnerships

In Lorain, Ohio there is a lack of jobs that reflect the skillset of the community, a lack of adequate transportation to jobs, and a lack of skills/education needed for the jobs that are available. In this context, the Lorain Public Library System provides access to necessary resources—free of charge and at an easy-to-access location. This includes internet and computer access, a mobile hot spot lending program, digital and technology skills classes, one-on-one appointments, and more.

Recognizing that other organizations also contribute to workforce and economic development in the community, the library reached out and initiated partnerships with the local Ohio Means Jobs office (a subset of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services) and the Lorain County Community College Career Services Department. These partners teamed up to offer a one-day workshop at the library which helped job seekers

**“Supporting our job seekers and economic development opportunities is vital, as these endeavors are critical to the long-term economic prosperity of our community.”**

—Lorain Public Library System



navigate searching for and finding work in the digital environment.

One workshop participant had a bachelor’s degree in finance and had worked for the Federal Reserve of Cleveland before having children. Two decades later she was ready to rejoin the workforce

but had been too intimidated to start looking for a job because everything had changed so dramatically that she didn’t know where to start. After the library workshop, she felt she had gained the tools and skills needed to start her search.

## Supporting the community in difficult times

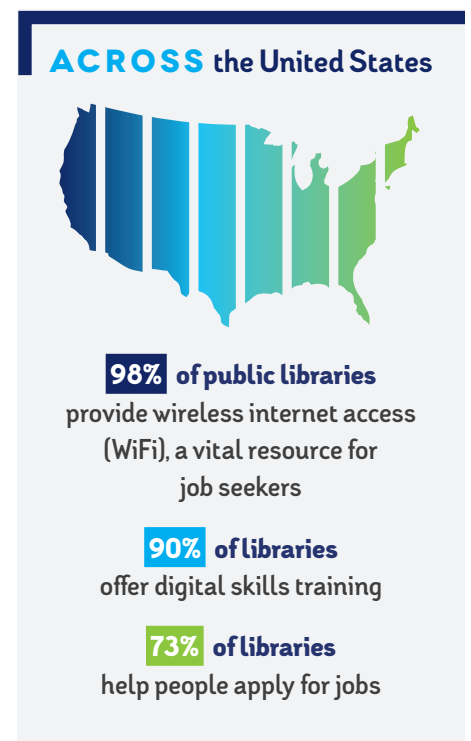
Libraries support their communities in times of crises, responding to specific local needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Lorain Public Library System has worked to significantly expand local digital access by offering free WiFi from library parking lots, distributing 400 hot spots to local schools, and launching digital inclusion initiatives that will put Chromebooks and LTE access into the hands of a number the area’s most vulnerable and at-need residents.

The Lorain Public Library System has also continued to provide virtual

**“Anyone is capable of overcoming adversity and finding good employment.”**

—Participant in Grafton-Midview Public Library “Get That Job” event

training and skills development opportunities online and worked to expand digital resources for job seekers and small businesses. The library system is planning a jobs workshop series for the fall, that will not only provide in-depth digital skills and job seeking technique training but will also provide insight on how to navigate the job seeking environment in the COVID-19/post-COVID-19 world. 🇺🇸



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