



THRIVING WORKFORCE, THRIVING ECONOMIES WITH LIBRARIES

Providing Opportunity Across Utah 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 Utah 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.

Supporting jobseekers

In Delta City (UT), pop. 3,500, residents find work in factories, the energy sector, and with the Millard County School District. This rural community is facing a potential loss of jobs as the Intermountain Power Service Corporation plant, that employs 500 people, is planning to move from coal to other means of power, which is likely

to result in layoffs. In this context, the Delta City Library aids job seekers with the goal of helping residents gain the skills they need to keep companies hiring within the community, rather than from elsewhere. Located approximately 90 miles away from the closest big city, the library aims to provide job and computer skills not only to residents of Delta City, but to people

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



- Libraries in Utah 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 provide help for those who are job seeking, and direct them to the local businesses that are hiring or show them how to apply online.”

—Delta City Library



The Delta City Library building

who live in West Millard County more widely. One local resident, with little to no computer knowledge, came to the library looking for help in creating a resume. Library staff helped her use an online template to successfully create a resume, and she left feeling hopeful that she would be able to obtain the job he was applying for.

Building digital skills

Libraries across the country provide critical connectivity to high speed internet access and computers—a service which can be especially important in rural communities where broadband access still lags. According to BroadbandNow, just 58.6% of Millard County residents have access to high-speed internet—the fourth-lowest percentage of all counties in Utah. Delta City, meanwhile, has less than 61% broadband coverage. In comparison, 95.6% of Utah residents as a whole have access to high-speed wired broadband.

“Through established partnerships and existing knowledge and resources, libraries will continue to be an important actor and partner as the country assesses and begins to address the damage COVID-19 has caused the labor market.”

—Stephanie Holcomb,
Public Libraries and the Workforce

Many people visit the Delta City Library to use the library’s broadband network

and to receive help using digital devices or to navigate online tools, digital services, and applications for programs like Medicaid and Medicare. In this and other ways, the Delta City

Library is a valuable resource for the community—people routinely drive 30 to 100 miles to visit the Delta City Library for books and services offered.

Pivoting to provide pandemic services

COVID-19 has affected Delta City in many ways. When the pandemic forced Delta City Library to close its building to the public in March 2020, the library began providing curbside assistance to residents. This service, as

well as the library’s online Storytime, have supported families with children at home. Additionally, the library’s WiFi signal is strong enough to reach outside to the parking lot as well as to some parts of the City Park. Due in part to the increased need for connectivity during the pandemic to work and socialize, people have consistently parked outside the library to use its internet connection. 📖

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



“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

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

ALA American Library Association

© November 2020. This state brief is part of the Libraries Lead with Digital Skills initiative, a collaboration of the American Library and Public Library Associations. The initiative aims to ensure public libraries across the nation receive ongoing access to resources to help everyone across America grow their skills, careers, and businesses. Libraries Lead is sponsored by Google.