



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LIBRARIES

Empowering Jobseekers Across Virginia 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 Virginia 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

Digital skills are increasingly essential to finding work and succeeding in the workplace. In Suffolk (VA), a growing region where the population is expected to more than double over the next 20 years, the Suffolk Public Library in Virginia offers a wide range of skills building workshops as well as one-on-one help. The library’s Digitally

Yours workshop series, for example, started by covering topics such as using digital tools to build a budget and create a meeting agenda. Later sessions introduced participants to resources to help organize and enhance job searches online, as well as tools and tips for enhancing resumes. In addition, community members had the opportunity to book individual appointments

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

- Libraries in Virginia 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.

for assistance with digital tasks. The library is also committed to ensuring that its staff members are digitally savvy so that they can best assist community members. Staff must maintain a high level of expertise and are assessed on their digital skills via the Suffolk Public Library Tech Skills Academy on topics including computer and internet basics, as well as Microsoft Office programs.

“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

Providing opportunity for veterans

Chesapeake (VA) has a large military community with transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses seeking work. The Chesapeake Public Library directly serves this population by offering targeted professional development resources and trainings. For example, at the library’s “Connect the Dots” event, attendees could participate in four sessions designed to build job-seeking skills and awareness of job-seeking resources tailored to the military community. The event included an employment fair featuring local employers such as the Chesapeake Public School system, demonstrations on topics including “Veteran Job Searching with Google” and the “Library’s Free Online Classes,” and workshops on “Transitioning Service Members to Civilian Employment” and “Connecting Military Spouses to

Employment.” In addition, people had the opportunity to participate in hands-on computer sessions where they received help from library staff with job searching, job applications, and digital skills building.



One-on-one digital skills help at the library

Partnering to prepare the workforce

Libraries—often the first stop for jobseekers—serve as key institutions for direct services but also make referrals and partner with organizations to cost-effectively address community workforce and economic development needs. To offer its “Connect the Dots” event, the Chesapeake Public Library partnered with local employers and employment agencies, including the Veteran Employment Center, part of the Hampton Roads Career Workforce Connection. This multi-partner event made it possible for attendees to

Through participation in the Chesapeake Public Library’s “Connect the Dots” event, one woman, who had been laid off a week previously, learned about library resources and made new connections. Following a discussion with a workshop presenter, she made an appointment to get further job search help at a library partner organization—the Hampton Roads Career Workforce Connection.

connect with several resources specifically relevant to their job search in one place. The Suffolk Public Library, in turn, partners with the Career Access Network to provide workshops to boost library staff skills on topics relevant to community needs such as job interviewing skills, modern resume writing, and professionalism & networking. 🌱

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