



BUILDING DIGITAL WORKFORCE SKILLS AT LIBRARIES

Empowering Communities Across Arizona 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 Arizona 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

In rural Navajo County the Show Low Public Library (AZ) helps community members get and keep jobs by offering workshops on basic and advanced computer skills, social media, job search strategies, and more.

The library’s workshops are an especially important resource for members of the workforce who may

feel disenfranchised due to their lack of digital literacy as they seek work in a digital environment. Providing a safe space to learn how to look and apply for jobs online, organize job searches and timelines, and create cover letters and resumes while saving digital copies of relevant documentation supports these jobseekers. And, teaching people how, where, and when digital literacy skills

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

- Libraries in Arizona 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.

can be usefully applied beyond a job search can be transformational.

A wide range of community members benefit from the job seeking and educational resources at the library, including retirees, veterans, folks with illnesses or injuries that have forced them out of the regular workforce, and former inmates. May, a retired veteran-of-color with neural and physical disabilities stemming from exposure to pesticides, was interested in working part-time but felt insecure and self-conscious when looking for work, because she has difficulty remembering things and using a mouse. She attended a 6-part job seeking and digital skills workshop at the Show Low Public Library. With the support of library instructors, May's self-confidence, mental acuity, and manual dexterity all improved. Parents, grandparents, and guardians who are looking to return to work after having been away from the workforce to care for a family member also take advantage of the library's programs.

Empowering local businesses

In addition to assisting job seekers, the Show Low Public Library provides the only educational opportunities geared towards small businesses in



Show Low Public Library SOURCE: showlowaz.gov

"Letting our patrons' needs drive programming decisions is a strong motivator for both consistency and change in the types of digital skills and literacy courses we offer."

—Show Low Public Library

"Even if this lack of digital literacy is self-perceived, lack of confidence in their ability to seek work in a digital environment further isolates and frustrates vulnerable members of our community."

—Show Low Public Library

the community, such as workshops on online advertising, social media presence, and technology trends. A recent event included a livestream viewing party for veteran-owned businesses hosted at the library computer

lab. This free workshop showed these businesses how to stand out online and reach more customers.

Responding to community needs

Libraries are responsive to the particular needs of their communities and find ways to best serve specific populations. The Show Low Public Library is working to increase its outreach and services to several groups. For one, extended evening opening hours and new afternoon and evening digital literacy classes will target people already in the workforce. Additionally, the library

plans to offer digital skills courses to members of the local homeschool community, addressing topics such as job searches, applications, and digital skills useful in entry-level positions in the local economy. The library also plans to continue outreach to local recovery programs, recognizing that providing an opportunity people in recovery to learn and develop digital skills will enhance their ability to attain and sustain independence and self-sufficiency after they leave their programs. ■

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



"The City of Show Low is committed to continued growth. The library is an extension of this commitment as we work towards offering more services to those in our community that are seeking employment, seeking to gain improved employment and to grow their businesses." —Show Low Public Library

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