



# LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS

## Digital Skills for Workforce and Small Business Development

Digital skills, defined broadly as the ability to find, organize, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital devices, are essential for career opportunities across the nation. For jobseekers and aspiring entrepreneurs, access to digital devices and technology, digital literacy and resilience, and confidence to engage in emerging technology are key to gainful employment and many career pathways.

Libraries support their communities with broadband access and skills training. Many provide access to:

- high-speed internet;
- computers and other digital devices and technologies; and
- digital literacy and skills training.

Reliable broadband access and digital skills are essential for economic opportunity and mobility and are required for even the most basic tasks such as job searching and job applications, developing resumes, and using email. By helping workers, jobseekers, and prospective business owners develop the skills to take full advantage of digital tools, libraries are a key force in ensuring that U.S. workers can succeed in the economy of the future.



**92% of jobs require digital skills, regardless of industry sector or level of experience.<sup>1</sup>**



**31% of workers lack digital skills; with 13% of workers reporting no skills and 18% reporting limited skills.<sup>2</sup>**



**Digitally advanced small businesses experience significantly better outcomes compared to businesses with lower levels of digital tool usage, reporting nearly 3 times the level of job creation.<sup>3</sup>**



**95% of all public libraries currently offer formal or informal digital literacy training.<sup>4</sup>**



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# Library Career and Entrepreneurship Programs Supporting Digital Skills Development



The **Nevada State Library** partners with the Office of Economic Development to facilitate workforce development training at libraries across the state. Public and academic libraries provide **virtual reality (VR) headsets** to support individual career mapping and workforce preparation. The headsets allow people to explore careers in manufacturing, information technology, health-care, and other skilled trades.



**Birmingham (AL) Public Library** offers computer courses ranging from basic skills, such as keyboarding and online safety, to more advanced subjects, such as working with spreadsheets. In addition, the library hosts a **teen digital learning lab**, helping young adults to develop essential college and career readiness skills related to STEM, robotics, and coding.



As part of its Business Maker Space, the **Yakama Nation (WA) Library** provides internet access, digital skills training, and reference support to tribal residents in a community with limited high-speed internet access. The library started a **trade and barter listserv** supporting area trades- and craftspeople who are engaged in entrepreneurial ventures.

The **San Antonio (TX) Public Library** operates Learn at SAPL, an adult education and job support program focused on **computer skills training**. The library has also partnered with the City of San Antonio and startup collaborative Geekdom to host Launch SA, a small business support organization, in its Central Branch.



The **Atlantic City Free (NJ) Public Library** partners with Atlantic Cape Community College to run a computer literacy training course covering workplace digital skills and a guest services **certification recognized by the hotel and hospitality industry**. These efforts help members of the community gain skills relevant to employment in the region's core industries.



The **Broward County (FL) Library's** Built in Broward teaches participants **how to develop successful tech businesses**. This program was designed to provide affordable, accessible digital skills and technical training and included access to advanced technical training via General Assembly, a tech education bootcamp. Program workshops held in 2020 saw over 1,000 participants.

