

# LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

FEBRUARY 2022



**LIBRARIES  
BUILD  
BUSINESS**

ALA American Library Association

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Libraries Are a Valuable Economic Resource**

America's libraries contribute to economic vitality in virtually every community across the country. With a history of bridging gaps in access to information resources and education, libraries are an important infrastructure that can be leveraged to tackle economic divides. Libraries excel at addressing many of the unseen barriers to economic advancement by: building digital skills; offering literacy, ESL, and GED classes; providing internet and technology access; supporting Green Card and citizenship application processes; connecting people with affordable health care; offering early education programs; giving youth of all economic backgrounds the opportunity to engage with STEAM learning, coding, and makerspaces; and more.

As a component of community economic vitality, any library can and should support local small business owners and entrepreneurs. In fact, almost 1 in 2 libraries in the US provide free services to entrepreneurs who wish to start and grow their business.<sup>1</sup> This ranges from offering free access to market trends databases to hosting business coaching classes, providing incubation space, and in some cases, providing seed capital through business plan competitions. Simply acting as an entry point to the entrepreneurial ecosystem by connecting individuals to partner agencies and resources as well as organizing relevant information is a crucial contribution to local economies—and something at which many libraries already excel.

## **Libraries Support a Diverse Range of Entrepreneurs**

Similarly, the nation's nearly 17,000 public library locations can be leveraged to support small businesses and entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups and/or low-income communities, including those in rural and remote locations. Libraries already serve as a trusted resource for and in these communities and are familiar, centrally located institutions through which small business

resources and training can be offered in an accessible, community-oriented way. Library support for entrepreneurs of color, women- and immigrant-owned businesses, startups in lower-income neighborhoods, and others is critical because these groups face significant historical, structural, and financial barriers, which result in measurable disparities. A National Community Reinvestment Coalition research report notes, for example, that: “There are tremendous gaps in black and Hispanic business ownership relative to their population size. Although 12.6% of the U.S. population is black, only 2.1% of small businesses with employees are black-owned. Hispanics are 16.9% of the population yet own only 5.6% of businesses.”<sup>2</sup>

“Despite the fact that the library is a research center, I didn’t think of it first for business data. I will now reach out to the library first for deep dives in data, and I am happy that I can count on my librarians as my CDOs (Chief Data Officers) while I grow my plucky, 21st century startup.”

—NERISSA STREETS, BUILT IN BROWARD COHORT PARTICIPANT

For many, library resources are an accessible way to explore entrepreneurship, build skills, and gather information that can be used to launch a new business idea, investigate a new way to earn income and make a living, or even get started with a new hobby to make extra money. Libraries offer a low-barrier way to learn and test out ideas without investing a lot up front. For some of the smallest enterprises, such as micropreneurs and solopreneurs, this is crucial.

## Libraries Help Build Vibrant Community Economies

Beyond the benefit to individual entrepreneurs, library services for entrepreneurs and small business owners have value for local communities. Small businesses are a core ingredient to a



“We are lifting up our community and our Indigenous practices through the lens of entrepreneurship training and upskilling, providing tools and resources for makers, artisans, and traditional life-ways.”

—MICHAEL SEKAQUAPTEWA,  
YAKAMA NATION LIBRARY

thriving community with a strong economy. They are nimble and responsive to local interests and needs, which helps cultivate a sense of place. Supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs pays dividends, infusing new energy into the community and bolstering economic development, making it a vibrant place to live and work. By offering services for entrepreneurs that aim to provide both business support and a foundation to keep the talent and energy of these small business owners local, libraries can help boost and sustain community economies.

Developing and expanding programs and services for entrepreneurs is an important opportunity for your library, too.

Economic development is a priority of the country and our locales; as libraries continue to innovate for 21st century impact and support business services, they can demonstrate their current and future relevance in a changing world. When library staff develop their expertise and skill set in this area, they expand the library’s reach to new and different users. This reach can prove invaluable to

fostering an engaged community of library users and supporters. In the process of advocating for entrepreneurs in their communities, libraries continuously seek resources and build capacity, staying on the cutting edge of innovative tools and best practices for locally relevant entrepreneurship. Libraries also make the case for themselves as reliable partners by leveraging their resources to get involved in larger economic development and vitality conversations. This willingness to engage with local economic challenges and opportunities and to develop new library services is critical to advocating for libraries with local, state, and national stakeholders, partners, and patrons and highlights why libraries are worthwhile of investment.



“Someone came up to me and said, ‘You know, librarians know everything,’ and I just chuckled, and I said, ‘No, but they definitely know where to look.’ And we are smart enough to know that we did not have expertise in all of these areas.”

—DIANE LUCCY, RICLAND LIBRARY

## How to Use the Playbook

**All libraries, no matter the size of their staff or budget, have a role to play in their community’s small business ecosystem.** As a connector and resource hub, libraries are equipped to support entrepreneurs and small business owners. This Playbook has been collaboratively developed by the Libraries Build Business cohort (learn more below) to share promising practices, models, and strategies to get you started with your small business initiative. We provide ideas and considerations for developing your program, reaching your target audience, and sustaining these services long term for the benefit of your library and your community.

Throughout the Playbook you’ll find practical, library-tested ideas for implementing small business programs, broadly applicable to a variety of populations and communities, and lots of examples and inspiration. Best of all, you’re not doing this alone! We have a growing peer learning network of library workers interested in small business and entrepreneurship services. **The Community is a great place to ask questions, share resources, and network with others around the country. [Join us!](#)**



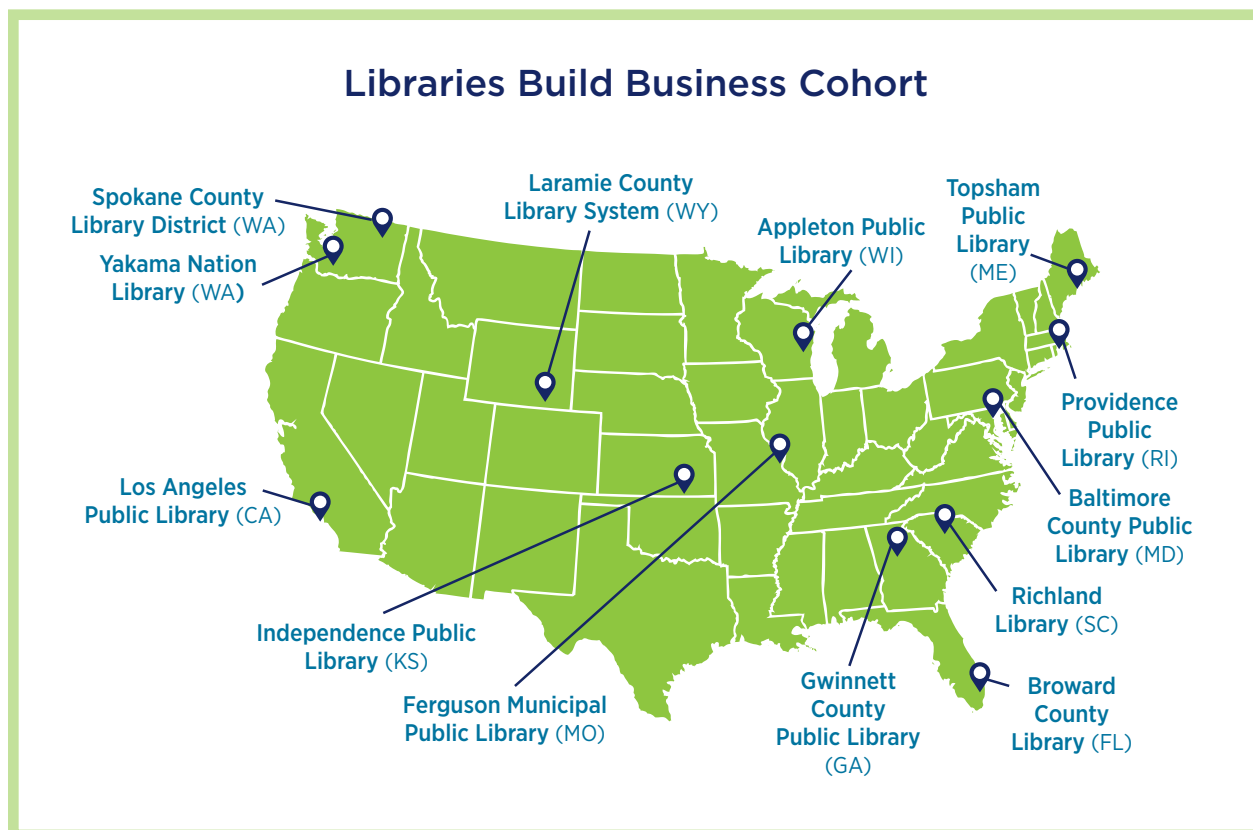
The Playbook will walk you through five key sections:

- 1. Getting Started**—here you will learn about the very first steps you can take to develop or expand your library’s business efforts.
- 2. Building and Expanding the Program**—offers ideas for potential service models, examples of innovative programs, tips on building partnerships, and other aspects of building a successful library small business initiative.
- 3. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**—provides guidance on how to help your library’s business efforts reach new populations.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation**—offers tools and detailed guidance on how to determine what your community needs and how to evaluate the impacts of your programs and resources.
5. **Sustainability**—highlights the most important components of making sure your efforts can be maintained and stay relevant over time. Take notes, skip around, review the resources, and join in conversation with colleagues. Refer back often as you gather resources, connect with partners, and move through the various components involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating a successful business program!

## What Is Libraries Build Business?

[Libraries Build Business](#) (LBB) is a national initiative of the American Library Association (ALA), supported by Google.org, intended to build capacity in libraries offering programming or services to local entrepreneurs and the small business community. During the course of the LBB project, the ALA team and a cohort of 13 public libraries have worked together to answer questions, pilot projects, develop resources, and share these learnings with the wider library community. The initiative is diverse in terms of both library participants and entrepreneurs. The LBB cohort libraries represent 12 states and include urban, suburban, rural, and tribal libraries of all sizes. Additionally, LBB projects have impacted more than 15,000 small business owners and entrepreneurs across the United States, serving a range of entrepreneurs including individuals



re-entering the workforce from jail or prison, primarily Spanish-speaking sidewalk vendors, rural entrepreneurs, tribal members, and minority-owned tech startups. Learn more about each of the LBB cohort libraries and their projects in [Appendix A](#).

LBB cohort libraries are offering programs and services such as: business incubators, co-working and maker spaces; classes and workshops including Business 101, ESL for Business Owners, Web Design and Marketing, and Accounting; mentorship and one-to-one training with small business owners, entrepreneurs, and local partners; specialized equipment and technology; promotion and marketing assistance; as well as research and reference services, including assistance navigating legal and business licensures and requirements. Libraries Build Business projects are thoughtfully designed with consideration of local business and industry demands, based on community-specific market research and needs assessments. Similarly, the Libraries Build Business Playbook will guide your library through tailoring your business initiative for local program fit. To this end, the playbook provides monitoring and evaluation tools, including an LBB-developed theory of change, evaluation framework, and a toolkit of resources that your library can use to track progress and drive impact. We hope that you will benefit from what we've learned and explored—adapting the resources, ideas, and experiences in this Playbook while adding your own library's voice and expertise to the conversation.

## TIER 1 Tips

Throughout this Playbook, you'll find boxes that highlight practical suggestions and strategies for the smallest or most limited-resource libraries. Your library has something to offer small business owners and entrepreneurs. Follow along with these "Tier 1 Tips" for low-barrier entry points.

## Existing Support for Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Often referred to as the “engine” or “heartbeat” of the economy, small businesses contribute significantly to economic wellbeing. With over 30 million small businesses nationwide in 2015, these entities represent nearly half of the private sector workforce in the United States.<sup>3</sup> As millions lost their jobs during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, it forced many to consider new ways of earning a living, and led many to start their own business.<sup>4</sup> According to the Census Bureau, nearly 5 million small businesses were created in 2021—more than double the number of businesses started in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the increase in new business startups, research by Gusto, a provider of payroll and related services to small businesses, found that entrepreneurs in 2020 were more likely to be Black or Latinx or female than in previous years.<sup>6</sup> Black business owners rose from 3 percent to 11 percent of new business in 2020. Similarly, the number of women entrepreneurs grew from 27 percent to 49 of entrepreneurs in 2020.<sup>7</sup> Despite these gains, obstacles persist for minority and underrepresented groups. SCORE found that while Black-owned and Latinx-owned businesses were



more likely to seek external funding, in the form of loans or lines of credit, both were less likely to receive it compared to White-owned businesses.<sup>8</sup> And, in a survey of small business owners expectations, Gusto reported that while half of small business owners were worried that their businesses could fail, the concern was even greater among minority business owners, with more than 73 percent of Black-owned and 71 percent of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)-owned businesses estimating that they could fail within the next year without additional support.<sup>9</sup>

Given the importance of small businesses to the overall economy, multiple agencies and organizations have been created to assist small businesses. At the state and local level, they operate through a network of offices, centers, and chapters to provide counseling, mentoring, and training, along with other services and resources. Major players include:

- The **Small Business Administration** (SBA), a federal agency, created in 1953, helps small business owners and entrepreneurs by providing counseling, capital, and contracting expertise as well as other resources through local and regional district offices and by funding resource partners and other business centers.
- **Small Business Development Centers** (SBDCs) provide business consulting and training to small business and entrepreneurs through over 1000 centers nationwide. SBDCs, funded in part by the SBA, are hosted by universities and colleges, as well as state economic development agencies and private partners.<sup>10</sup>
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, a business federation founded in 1912, represents the interests of more than 3 million businesses, industry associations, as well as state and local chambers. Funded by members' dues, the roughly 4,000 chambers with at least one staff member at state and local levels focus on issues and advocacy relevant to their individual membership.<sup>11</sup>
- **SCORE**, a nonprofit organization established in 1964 and a resource partner of the SBA, offers a nationwide network of business experts through local chapters and provides peer counseling and mentorship, as well as free webinars and other online resources to entrepreneurs through their local chapters.

These organizations interface with and make use of public libraries and their resources in multiple ways. For example, with the rise in new business applications during the pandemic it's not surprising that one of the most popular workshops offered by SCORE is business fundamentals.<sup>12</sup> This five-part series focuses on turning an idea into a business by examining the customer base and competition, brand marketing and sales avenues, as well as financial planning aspects. The objective is to evaluate the feasibility of the business idea while gaining an overview of the core components involved in starting a business. A companion resource by SCORE describes these key elements of small business development in more detail.<sup>13</sup> As research and data collection are a central part of developing and refining a business concept, SCORE frequently references libraries as locations to access databases to gather industry data and consumer information. SCORE also recommends seeking assistance from reference librarians since gathering competitive industry and market research may not be directly accessible, but with some "sleuthing" can often be inferred or found

in different ways. Additionally, when seeking funding from a lender, SCORE mentions business reference librarians, among others, as people who can help a business locate the comparative financial data, benchmarks, and other statistics that lenders and investors will likely need to see to evaluate and approve small business loan applications.

In short, more so than ever, small businesses are a vital part of the nation's economy. Nevertheless, some groups of entrepreneurs face additional barriers to success. Organizations and agencies exist to assist these and other business owners, and libraries are an important part of this entrepreneurial support ecosystem. This wider small business support network—which looks a bit different from community to community—is referenced throughout the playbook. For libraries to offer the most effective assistance, we must see ourselves as a part of this bigger whole.

## Notes

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# GETTING STARTED

If you or your library is new to small business and entrepreneurship, start with questions and assessment. Take a patron perspective and become familiar with local and library resources available to support entrepreneurs. For instance, are there local businesses or independent artisans that need support? Is there a lack of job opportunities because of changing industries or other closures? Or, are particular groups struggling within your community that could benefit from specialized entrepreneurship assistance?

Assess your current resources, including staff, budget, collections, technology and equipment, and available space for meetings or collaboration, to determine the type of program or service you'd like to start offering. You may consider some of your existing services and resources and how you could repurpose them for local entrepreneurs and small business owners. You don't have to do it all at once. Start small, begin with who you know, keep the community's needs and interests in mind, and grow from there. When building small business and entrepreneurship services and support at your library you can work step-by-step, moving from responding (**tier 1**), to building (**tier 2**), to sustaining (**tier 3**).

## TIER 1: RESPOND

Take the first steps. All libraries can act as hubs—connecting local business owners and entrepreneurs to relevant small business agencies and resources at the library and beyond. Library staff know their communities at a granular level and can leverage this expertise to offer tailored guidance. Libraries have many in-house resources that can be helpful to small business owners and start-ups. This includes public computers, printers, WiFi, meeting



space, collections of business books and databases, and staff to help with technology and reference. Offering small business services, then, can be as simple as marketing your library's existing services and resources in the business community to let them know the library is there to help!

**EXAMPLE: Ferguson Municipal Public Library** is a small library that serves a low-income community in Missouri. With 12 staff members, including full and part-time staff, the library has limited staff time to dedicate to a business center. Accordingly, the library created a small business program designed to run “hands free” as much as possible. This included assembling small business information packets that people could review on their own and then schedule a follow up with the library to ask additional questions. The packets contained lists of business resources and services available both inside and outside the library. The library also invested in equipment useful to small business owners such as a Smartboard, projector, laptops, microphones, and web cameras. Further, the library refreshed its meeting room with new tables and chairs to create an inviting, well-equipped space where entrepreneurs can host virtual or in-person meetings.

## TIER 2: BUILD

Grow your involvement. Once your library has established **tier 1** business and entrepreneurship offerings, you may be ready to expand. One important way to build on your existing resources and services is to connect with local partners, such as your community's chamber of commerce, SCORE chapter, non-profits, community colleges, and adult literacy centers. Partners may be able to provide speakers and instructors with subject matter expertise, and can, in turn, benefit from library resources. Develop events and programs geared specifically to business topics at the library such as marketing, developing a business plan, or doing market research. Consider having at least one staff member dedicated to business support services part-time. Build a network of partners and start integrating the library into the local small business community. Do outreach with partners and the local community and find out more about what entrepreneurs in your area need.

**EXAMPLE: Spokane County Library District** in Washington state worked with local partners, including SCORE and the chamber of commerce, to develop a Small Business Boot Camp for business owners that included monthly workshops on essential business topics and an Entrepreneurial Mindset online course. Volunteer instructors from SCORE led the programs and dedicated library staff supported the programs, coordinated with partners, and offered reference and information support as participants moved through the program. The series culminated with the library's Small Business Saturday events.



## TIER 3: SUSTAIN

Become a leader in the small business ecosystem. With the basics of library business programming and partnerships in place, perhaps your library is ready to take things to the next level! Sustain your library's investment in small business services with dedicated budget, staffing, and consistent programming. Develop a curriculum for programs or workshops, build out your collections, develop expertise in business reference, purchase and maintain robust collections/equipment tailored to local needs/industries. Dedicated business staff may support an ongoing initiative in order to build momentum, make community connections, and grow library business services. Dedicated spaces and specialized equipment in the library may include a makerspace or business conference rooms, podcasting kits, photography equipment, or software to build websites.



**EXAMPLE:** The Richland Library Entrepreneurial Launch Pad in South Carolina is a three-pronged approach that includes: Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EiR); a Library of Things and makerspaces; and workshops and classes on business and related topics. The library has a dedicated Business and Careers team to support patrons, as well as Arts and Media staff trained to support the library's creative studios. Entrepreneurs-in-Residence provide programming, one-to-one consultations, and community resources for aspiring business owners to consider. Richland Library also offers learning opportunities organized around peer learning cohorts. For instance, courses such as "Grow Your Handmade Business," and "From Artist to Entrepreneur," aim to support creative entrepreneurs as they: learn about online marketplaces like Etsy or Ebay; employ effective online businesses practices such as using search engine optimization to rise higher in search results; or explore tools like using lightboxes to produce better photographs of their products.

### Learning About Your Community

Take your time to thoughtfully develop a program that works for your community. Start with an **environmental scan** of your local economy and community, learning by researching and reading, as well as having conversations with stakeholders. During this process you will gather information on key factors, trends, and players that inform future directions and opportunities.<sup>1</sup> This effort can be broad, or targeted. Baltimore County Public Library, for instance, conducted an environmental scan to track overarching socioeconomic trends and policies, as well as organizations working on these issues in order to identify new opportunities and potential library partners for their business programs. Other topics you might investigate include: What types of businesses exist in your community? What are the major industries in the local economy? Who are key stakeholders in the small business realm? Ultimately, this scan can help you understand what businesses are in your community, key aspects and challenges of the local business environment, and what services already exist to help businesses thrive.

Next, conduct a **needs assessment** for your community and **market research**<sup>2</sup> to find out what additional supports and assistance would be most beneficial for small business owners. This information will help you discern common challenges as well as gaps in support and will inform the development of your library's business program.

You can also reach out to potential partners, stakeholders, and allies to begin **community asset mapping**,<sup>3</sup> a process which uses surveys, focus groups, and other data collection methods to identify the strengths and assets in the community, including its people, organizations, and resources in order to identify new opportunities or audiences. For instance, Appleton Public Library in Wisconsin drew on existing research, combining the city's strategic plans to foster small businesses with community research that identified a lack of support and access to resources for Black business owners. Putting the plan and this data together revealed a clear need, which helped inform the focus of the library's Small Business—Big Impact initiative, designed to support business startup, retention, and expansion efforts for people of color and immigrants.

While considering community needs and resources, it is of course important to stay in tune with your library as well. What else is your library involved with at the moment? What are the priorities of your leadership and other stakeholders? Looking at all of these key ingredients together—your library budget, resources, staff; partners; community trends, interests, assets, and needs—will help you design the best programs.

## Developing Stakeholder Relationships

Developing stakeholder relationships is an important part of successful engagement in the small business space, and you can get started with this right away. Stakeholders help an organization meet its strategic objectives by contributing their experience and perspective to the mission and vision of the organization or initiative. In other words, stakeholders are those individuals or groups that have an interest in your library's business programs and services and a vested interest in supporting economic development in the community. The stakeholders in your specific community



“The success of the Entrepreneur Academy was the strategy to partner and work collaboratively with other libraries toward a shared goal of economic improvement—the advancement, the growth, the building up of our communities and those individuals who we serve. There is a great deal that can be created, sustained, and supported when we work together across library systems.

We did our research and took our time in creating this. We spent over a year—talking with partners, doing surveys of individuals, and focus groups . . . we did a lot of legwork before we even started the program, which has become a signature series for our system, to try and make it as successful and impactful as it could be. There are long term benefits of taking time and thinking through the details and talking to the right people. And we have built off of it. Success breeds success.

—JULIE BROPHY, BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

can generally be grouped into five categories: **elected officials, library leadership, community members, funders, and partner organizations.** For each stakeholder group, you will want to define who they are, what role they play in your work, determine strategies to make your case for public libraries as an integral part of your community's economic success, and know when and what you will be asking of them. In the process of "selling" the role of the public library to stakeholders, be prepared to share small business success stories and feedback from surveys, focus groups, small business coaching appointments, and other small business-related services in order to bolster your "case". Consider engaging with stakeholders in the following specific ways:

- **Elected officials:** Whether it's the Mayor, City or County Council members, or other representatives, it's a win-win to engage your local elected officials. Reach out and offer to make presentations about the free resources offered by your public library and let them know how you're partnering with other city agencies, referring patrons to existing services, and leveraging city resources—all of which makes them look good. These stakeholders can provide financial and promotional support.
- **Library Leadership:** This could include Administrators, Library Board of Trustees, and your Friends and Foundation Board. Leadership support is crucial to success. Do you need additional staff? Resources? Funding? Leadership can help you with these important needs. Let them know about your successes and build buy-in and enthusiasm.
- **Community Members:** Consider hosting focus groups and community conversations to find out what the community needs. Once you create small business programs and services, you'll need community members to attend, actively participate, and be inspired by what they experience.
- **Partner Organizations:** Collaborate with small business organizations and agencies in your community. Partners are essential to shaping and implementing your program, reaching your target audience, and sharing resources.
- **Media:** Reach out to local media contacts about programs, events, and services. Media support is important to increasing awareness of public programs. Broward County Library hosted a "lightning talk"—a very short presentation—to publicly launch their entrepreneurship program and engage community partners and stakeholders in a conversation about what a successful program would look like. The library and their partners promoted the launch to media contacts to get the word out to their intended audience.<sup>4</sup>

## TIER 1 Tip

Identify a few key stakeholders and consider how you can make the case for your library as part of a vibrant economy. You might start by providing small updates about library activities to local government officials, contacting a partner or larger library nearby, or informally polling community members that visit the library. Little by little, your efforts to develop relationships with stakeholders will become integrated into your routines.

Building relationships and rapport with stakeholders is an essential step to developing and growing a successful library business program. Stakeholders can provide feedback, resources, support, and promote your work. In other words, consider the role of stakeholders in library's business initiative from the start!

## Notes

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# BUILDING AND EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

So, you've learned more about your community and identified the major players and stakeholders in your small business ecosystem. It's time to build or grow your library's business offerings! This section of the playbook offers models, ideas, and inspiring examples to help you along. Let's begin with learning a bit more about the **entrepreneurial mindset** and what kinds of things business owners typically want to know.

## The Entrepreneurial Mindset

For many, readiness and fit will be critical questions to explore as they learn about entrepreneurship. A library program can help to foster the entrepreneurial mindset—a set of skills that help people see and make the most of opportunities, learn from setbacks, and succeed in their endeavors, including critical thinking, creativity, and strong communication.<sup>1</sup> Aspiring entrepreneurs can assess their readiness to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape of risks, opportunities, champions, and competitors; and launch with practical tools, resources, and research before investing in their new endeavor. Libraries

“Participating in the Small Business Boot Camp was very validating to me as an artist because it meant my business was being taken seriously by someone other than me and, not only that, it felt like the staff at the Spokane County Library District fully believed in my ability to be a successful business owner and wanted to help me succeed, so that was marvelous experience. Having monthly meetings was also helpful because it provided accountability for keeping the business part of my art career top of mind, rather than letting that slide in favor of day to day running the business and trying to make the work to sell.”

—MEGAN PERKINS, SMALL BUSINESS BOOT CAMP PARTICIPANT, SPOKANE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT

provide a broad range of opportunities to help cultivate the entrepreneurial mindset, ranging from peer learning cohorts, to self-paced study, to online training programs, to multi-part courses on how to turn ideas into profitable businesses.

For libraries to best meet the needs of small business owners, they need to think like entrepreneurs. As you launch or expand your library’s business program, craft your institutional welcome for business owners with intentionality and prepare staff to engage with the entrepreneurial mindset. There are a variety of questions and ideas an aspiring or existing small business owner or entrepreneur will have and want to explore. Depending on where they are in the process, library resources can support them in starting from scratch—exploring an idea, starting paperwork, and conducting market research. Alternatively, someone in the process of growing an existing endeavor may need assistance with developing an online presence, adding staff, or promoting their products or service to a new audience. Your library’s collection and offerings will support entrepreneurs as they build skills, confidence, and a strong foundation in business.



“One of our students, an immigrant, non-native English speaker, took our ESOL for Business course, the Small Business Hub training program, and computer training classes at the library and ended up teaching computer classes at the library. He started to offer training at other agencies as well, and decided to start his own computer training business. He’s a vendor now to the library and to other agencies. Our Small Business Hub and the ESOL for Business program helped him grow his business from an independent contractor to creating an entity.”

—CHRISTOPHER BOURRET, PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## What do people want to know when starting a business?



- **Business Plans:** What is a business plan? How do I develop one?
- **Market research:** Who is the local competition? Are there businesses in the area doing something similar?
- **Demographic research:** What is the socio-economic and cultural makeup of the area or neighborhood?
- **Legal Matters:** How do I set up my business legally? Where can I get free legal support?
- **Industry information:** What licenses or certifications are required for my business?
- **Local regulations and business license requirements:** What permits do I need? What upfront costs will I need to be aware of?
- **Small business financing:** Where do I find loans, investors, partners, and other stakeholders? How do I make a pitch to “sell” my idea?
- **Promotion:** How do I let people know that my business exists? How can I bolster my social media and online presence?

## Potential Service Models

As demonstrated by the experiences of the Libraries Build Business cohort, there are a myriad of business and entrepreneurship programs and services that libraries can effectively offer. We have organized some of the most common types of offerings into models with examples of how cohort libraries put these into practice—see the chart below. Check them out and consider which ones seem most relevant (and feasible) for you and your library team. Maybe you are doing some of these things already? Once you have chosen one or more models to explore more deeply, spend some time brainstorming on the core components that would be required to build such a program. These may include: budget, staff, partners, outreach and promotion, and developing your library’s business know-how and reference readiness with your collection, databases and other materials.

## TIER 1 Tip

It’s okay to start small! Begin with one idea, one partnership, or one program at a time and then build on that success. Programs often take longer to set up and implement than expected, and adjustments are easier to make when there are fewer components. Starting small also permits more flexibility and allows the program to take a different direction as needed. Small libraries might consider setting up one-to-one reference appointments, a self-paced online course, or curating business resources in your collection to start. Read the examples below for inspiration.

### Business Centers

Libraries can develop business centers which give patrons access to business support resources. These resources can include: broadband access including hotspots; computers with supporting equipment (cameras, microphones, headsets, etc.); and flexible meeting space that can be used for interviews, meetings, or presentations, conducted in person or online. These business resources can be fixed, mobile, or virtual. For instance, an online business center can help busy entrepreneurs quickly find links, resources, and contact information.



#### **EXAMPLE: Broward County’s Creation Station Lab and Business Coworking Hub**

offers co-working space with access to meeting rooms, conference rooms, video conferencing equipment, Smartboards, printing, and Wi-Fi. Additionally, the library—a resource center through the United States Patent and Trademark Office—offers patent and trademark help. Broward County Library also provides equipment and classes for computer programming, video production, and more.

### Makerspaces and Library of Things

Libraries can offer makerspaces and/or a Library of Things for business owners and entrepreneurs. Makerspaces contain tools and equipment for people to build or design a project. Makerspaces can include 3D printers, editing software, sewing



machines, a recording studio, and more. A Library of Things provides some of this equipment for checkout, such as light boxes or cameras.

**EXAMPLE: Richland Library’s Makerspace**, which is staffed by media artists, offers professional equipment and production spaces ranging from a woodworking studio, 3D printers and laser cutters, to audio and visual equipment for prototyping, designing, and producing objects and digital content. Much of this equipment is also available for checkout via the Library of Things. Popular items include cameras and photography kits, sewing machines, and projectors. A local photographer, for instance, checked out two digital cameras that were used to photograph a wedding, while a jewelry maker is using the library’s Glowforge (a \$6,000 laser engraver and cutter) to make her earring collection until she can afford to purchase one on her own.

## Workshops and Classes

Libraries can offer workshops or classes related to starting or growing a business (e.g., writing a business plan). These classes can be offered as a series or standalone and can focus on business theory or supporting components such as technology or finance classes. Outside experts or consultants (e.g., SCORE) or library staff conduct the workshops with coordination and promotion provided by library staff. Classes can be open to the general public or offered primarily for participants in cohorts.



**EXAMPLE: Spokane County’s Small Business Boot Camp** was a series of monthly workshops designed for a cohort of entrepreneurs with an added component of Entrepreneurial Mindset Training. Monthly topics included marketing, goal setting, tax basics, financial basics, branding, social media, hiring, driving traffic to websites, and a session about how to use the library’s databases for business purposes.

## Peer Learning and Networking

Libraries can facilitate small group or informal conversations where local business owners can share experiences and learn from one another. Networking events offer participants the opportunity to build community and contacts, share advice, and ask questions. Networking and peer learning can also take place online, via Slack, Teams, or other online platforms.



**EXAMPLE: Baltimore County’s Entrepreneur Academy** offers networking and peer learning so that participants can build relationships and share advice and contacts. In-person networking may be typically hosted at the library after a business class or event. The Baltimore County Public Library has also offered weekly virtual peer learning sessions with a librarian “on site” to facilitate conversation.

## One-to-One Consultation and Reference Support

Libraries can offer business owners one-on-one meetings with a reference librarian or entrepreneur-in-residence where they can ask specific questions as well as get advice and customized support.



**EXAMPLE:** The Topsham Public Library in Maine partnered with the **CareerCenter** to offer one-to-one virtual meetings for library patrons with CareerCenter staff. These meetings helped aspiring and existing entrepreneurs as well as people in the midst of changing careers to make plans, find resources, and consider various strategies and approaches to achieving their goals.

## Mentoring

Libraries can connect entrepreneurs with business mentors from the community to support them as they launch or grow their business. This mentor can provide one-on-one ongoing support, help make connections, and act as a role model.



**EXAMPLE:** The Gwinnett County Public Library in Georgia provided participants in their program with **business mentors** as they moved through the classes and curriculum. The mentors were available to help with course work, offer advice, and review materials.

## Research, Databases, and Print Collection

Libraries can provide aspiring and existing business owners with resources including books, databases, and periodical subscriptions. This helps give the business community access to important information that would be too costly to pay for on an individual basis. Create a flyer or a LibGuide to organize and promote these materials: What is on the shelf? What physical resources do you have in your library? (A list of business specific Dewey numbers is a great resource.) What is available online? What business resources are available through library databases such as GALE or ProQuest?



**EXAMPLE:** Providence Public Library in Rhode Island has a **dedicated information specialist to support entrepreneurs** using the library's databases or print collection to do research. A list of available databases can be found on the library's website.

## Self-Paced Courses

Libraries can develop or purchase existing small business courses that participants can take at their own pace online. These courses may include



lessons, homework, and accountability checks. Self-paced programming is ideal for small libraries with limited staff capacity, as patrons can work independently.

**EXAMPLE:** Los Angeles Public Library developed a self-paced curriculum for immigrant entrepreneurs through Cell-Ed. These mobile microlessons are available via flip phone or smartphone in Spanish, English, and English Language Learning (ELL). Participants can work through units covering financial literacy, digital literacy, and business basics like customer service, marketing, business taxes, and banking on their own schedule.

## Innovations

While many library business programs share similar models (see the promising models above!) and entrepreneurs often have similar questions, it's also possible to be very creative with how to meet the needs of your particular community using the tools and resources available to your library. Read the examples below for inspiration!

### Beanstack for Business Programs

Independence Public Library in Kansas launched a business development program on **Beanstack, an activity-based tool many libraries use** to track progress and manage summer reading programs. Using the activity feature in Beanstack, the library separated the business development cycle into five parts. This included: idea development, business planning, legal aspects, marketing, and growth. When people complete all the activities in a phase, an incentive is earned. For instance, after completing the first phase, the individual earns a one-year membership to the Fab Lab ICC, a well-equipped makerspace at Independence Community College, one of the library's business partners. Other incentives include a one-year membership to the local chamber of commerce and to Independence Mainstreet. Throughout the library's business development program, expert assistance is available in the form of check-ins, reviews, and advice. This includes things like feedback on business plans, as well as referrals to library resources or other resources in the community. The activity-based challenges and built-in incentives of the program offer a self-paced, yet supportive experience for aspiring entrepreneurs. This approach is a promising model that could be adapted to other areas of library programming, such as job-seeking.



### Entrepreneur Storytelling

Appleton Public Library in Wisconsin launched an entrepreneur storytelling series called **Stories and Strategies**, which highlighted Black Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant experiences of starting businesses. An entrepreneur storytelling series is an opportunity to spotlight the creative, resilient individuals



in your community who are innovating, creating jobs, and contributing to a dynamic local economy. This series can focus on their journey to and through entrepreneurship and/or the strategies that led to the successes and failures that helped them learn and grow. It can also help to foster a sense of connection and belonging for specific groups of entrepreneurs (such as BIPOC business owners) who have the opportunity to see themselves represented in the stories of their peers and build relationships through conversation and sharing.

## Mobile Business Stations

With the support of the **Wyoming Library to Business program**, Wyoming libraries are building business stations that consist of a rolling desk with a new laptop, webcam, headphones, and portable projector. Business owners and entrepreneurs can use the stations for meetings and videoconferencing, to record content, or to access business support software. These business stations can be built entirely on a mobile cart, as not all libraries—especially those in small and/or rural communities—have a dedicated space for a business center. The cart can be reserved, along with the meeting room space, as needed. And, carts can easily be stored or moved if the space is being used for story time, staff meetings, or events.



Perhaps one of these innovations would work at your library? Or, maybe you have an innovation of your own to share with the Libraries Build Business Community?

## Building Partnerships: Engaging with the Local Business Support Ecosystem

As touched on briefly earlier, it is important for libraries to work with existing business groups—as everyone involved has a lot to gain from the exchange. The library has a distinctive role to play in the small business ecosystem as a partner, access point, and connector to resources and services. Libraries by their nature are seen as community anchors that can bring various community interests together in partnership. Establishing external relationships can increase the reach of your library business program, boost your budget, and enrich the experience of program participants. Doing structural work early in the partnership process, such as (formally or informally) defining roles and responsibilities, will keep you and your partner(s) focused and your project on track.

When working with a new partner, build rapport by getting to know one another and by sharing your organizational goals. See if there are natural ways to collaborate. Some partners will help with resources, while others can assist with promotion and marketing. There are a lot of ways a partner can expand the scope of your library's business efforts. Partnerships should be mutually beneficial, so be prepared to talk with potential partners about how the library can support them too. By

talking with partners, the Providence Public Library, for example, was able to identify a gap in services for the local business community and began offering sessions at the library on patents and trademarks. This was of particular value to the Secretary of State's Office, one of the library's workforce partners. When people came to the library for help with patents, the library could direct them to the Secretary of State's office to register their patent. In other words, the library's central place and visibility in the community helped connect the state office with people who needed their service, but who may not have found it so easily otherwise.

Regular communication will be critical to the success and health of your partnerships, and in turn, your programs. Bringing everyone together to share updates and discuss challenges will allow time for troubleshooting and ensure that no balls get dropped in planning and executing a program. Broward County Library, for instance, instituted regular check in calls with all partner agencies when they noticed a lagging registration rate for upcoming business programs. When the library started meeting regularly with all partners, program registration rates increased. These meetings helped strengthen partner relationships, led to increased referrals, and ensured consistent messaging about programs.



“We are working with partners who have already earned their clients’ and members’ trust. We have been working with existing local agencies, including the ColorBold Business Association and the City of Appleton Diversity Coordinator. ColorBold Business Association is a partner agency that we saw as critical to having true relevance and true connection to Black, Indigenous, people of color business owners and entrepreneurs, and something that was critical to the design of our project. We held listening conversations with other groups before we started, and we sought consulting support or referrals from area nonprofits.”

—ADRIANA MCCLEER,  
APPLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

## CASE STUDY

### Expanding your reach through partnerships

As part of Libraries Build Business, Broward County Library developed and ran **Built in Broward**, an initiative intended to eliminate barriers to tech training and business development for underrepresented minorities. Black Valley Digital, a small privately-owned digital marketing agency in South Florida, was a key project partner. The company founder worked closely with the library's Community Engagement department to present a host of beginner technology classes for all ages including for [Creation Station Business](#). Black Valley Digital knew technology, South Florida, the business environment for minority entrepreneurs, and had an established working relationship with the library, making them an ideal group to partner with.

As a result of the library's partnership with Black Valley Digital, the library was able to expand the Built in Broward project beyond their initial expectations. Among other things, Black





Valley Digital’s founder helped the library to establish a relationship with General Assembly Miami, thereby enriching the curriculum of virtual classes offered to the business community. The founder’s background in tech education and his experience as a minority entrepreneur in South Florida also helped guide the topics of the quarterly business cohort meetings and gave authenticity and legitimacy to that portion of the Built in Broward project.

## CASE STUDY

### Leverage Your Website to Connect with Partners

Providence Public Library used the Libraries Build Business project as an opportunity to take stock of its disparate services and resources and organize them on their website as a **Small Business Hub**. Like a digital business card, the online Small Business Hub helped the library clearly show potential partners *what* they had to offer. This meant that more of the conversation could be focused on *how* they could partner together. This was especially useful when the library approached new partners like the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Center for Women and Enterprise. This website also was useful for maintaining and renewing partnerships with organizations when contacts at partner organizations changed or moved on, which happened frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, when many meetings became virtual, the Small Business Hub made things more efficient: library could start with an elevator pitch and send a link to the website in the chat window, so the potential partner could see what the library had to offer, while the conversation focused on potential ways in which to work together.



### Partnering with Participants and the Local Business Community

The local businesses, entrepreneurs, and program participants are important stakeholders in your small business efforts. Demonstrate this by including them in your project—you may ask for input, participation, feedback, or promotional support. Richland Library in South Carolina, for instance, established an Entrepreneur-in-Residence program to offer one-on-one Small Business Coaching to help community members to start, run and grow their businesses. The accomplished business owners selected as Entrepreneurs-in-Residence represent diverse fields and have rich experiences to share. They have included a master crafter who grew her online business through Etsy, the first female African American construction company owner in Columbia, and a media specialist, among others.



“We see hiring entrepreneurs as a part of our mission. We’re investing in our own small business community, by hiring them to work with us. But we’ve also made lasting relationships.”

—DIANE LUCCY, RICHLAND LIBRARY

Somewhat differently, the Sea un Vendedor Ambulante Exitoso/Successful Street Vending program at Los Angeles Public Library identified eight vendors to serve as paid consultants on the project to contribute perspective and content, and test and review materials and curriculum. Vendor leaders also engage in outreach and promotion of the program in their vending community. This had great benefits. According to Madeleine Ildefonso of the Los Angeles Public Library: “The inclusion of a group of vendors as consultants elevated the legitimacy of the project in the community. We have found in our current work with immigrant communities that word of mouth from trusted friends and family is our strongest source of referrals for the library’s immigration services.” Paying people for their contributions and honoring their input and lived experience reinforces priorities of equity and inclusion in library work.

## Memorandum of Understanding

An MOU, or Memorandum of Understanding, provides a framework for any partnership as MOUs clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations for both parties, helping to avoid miscommunications, and to move the project toward your shared goals and vision.

MOUs can be amended and/or negotiated as necessary. This allows for a natural progression of relationships. A strong MOU is clear. It outlines, in simple language: who the major players are; who is in charge of what; and any expectations of shared expenses, publicity, etc. It is important to make sure that each organization is aware of limitations (or differences in practice) that the other has which may affect the partnership. For instance, libraries typically offer programs without a cost to the participants. Some partners may be used to charging a fee for service. Being clear about the particular limitation or difference and finding a workaround may be essential to moving forward. It is much better to address these potential challenges ahead of time in an MOU versus when the program is set for registration.

Another plus of creating strong MOU documentation is that this can be beneficial when applying for grants or other funding. Many funders like to see evidence of partnerships. MOUs help show that the organizations involved are thoughtful, committed, and not partners in name only. Public/private partnerships help to demonstrate accountability and legitimacy of programs for which the

## TIER 1 Tip

Working with partners can build your capacity! Find out what local small business organizations, such as SCORE, are already offering and promote their programs. Offer your space to groups wanting to host workshops, networking events, or classes.

In Topsham, Maine, the library partnered with the CareerCenter to offer one-to-one consultations via Zoom. The library helped community members schedule the appointments and set up the virtual meetings using library equipment. This allowed local residents to get business and career help that wasn’t available locally without worrying about the technical aspect. “We have the access, zoom accounts, and tech people. So there’s none of the anxiety about, ‘my computer is not going to work’ or ‘I don’t have sufficient broadband access,’” said Library Director Susan Preece.

for-profit partner might not normally be able to seek funding. Strong partnerships also demonstrate that the successes and failures will be shared.

Depending on the size of your organization and that of your partner(s), there may not be a need for a formal MOU. At the very least, though, consider spelling out roles and responsibilities in an email or document so that both partners can refer to it as needed. As time passes, people don't remember what was said or agreed upon, so having a written record of who is doing what is very important to the success of your partnership. An example of an MOU is included in [Appendix B](#).

## Outreach to Your Business Community

Once you have a program and partners it's essential to get the word out about your library's small business program. This step is critical to your success. We've all heard someone say, "I didn't know the library did that!" and business services is no exception. Use a variety of channels—inside the library and out in the community—to ensure your programs and services are reaching your target audience. Some strategies include:

- **Word of mouth:** Make sure everyone on staff knows about the library's business offerings. Invite staff to tell community members and partners about these offerings, including at library programs on other topics and at community meetings and events.
- **Library displays:** Put up a display! Use a table, a corner of the reference desk, or a bulletin board, and print flyers, packets, and information for people to take with them. You could also consider sharing flyers about your library's business services out in the community.
- **Website and social media:** Make sure information about your business offerings are listed on the library's webpage for easy access. You could even consider making a stand-alone landing page for your library's business initiative such as the Broward County Library made for [Built in Broward](#). Work with your communications team (if you have one) to get your content up on social media, too. Your library's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts are great places to promote programs and engage with the community. Be sure you update everything regularly, ensuring event times are correct and services are active.
- **Keep in touch with your partners and local stakeholders and ask them to spread the word.** In Independence, Kansas the library sent mailers to all local churches with information about their business initiative that the churches could share with their community or post on message boards. Consider other stakeholders that might help you get the word out: workforce partners, adult literacy groups, community colleges, and local businesses might be a good place to start.
- **Get creative!** Consider a radio, billboard, local transit, or social media advertisement, or attending events where you can talk to stakeholders. When Providence Public Library wanted to reach a new audience with their programs—the creative community—they posted to Reddit.

## CASE STUDY

### Invest in Marketing



Gwinnett County Public Library in Georgia used a [professionally made video](#) to recruit participants to the **New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator** (NSEI) program for formerly incarcerated individuals. It was the first time they used professional marketing to promote a specific program, which they were able to do with the support of and direct assistance from their library administration. They were pleased with the quality of the video and overwhelmed by its positive response.

The library posted the video on its Facebook page and sent it out to partners, some of which specifically worked with the re-entry population, like the Greater Gwinnett Re-entry Alliance. Once the marketing video came out, the library saw a huge increase in applications. “People either saw it on social media [or saw it] and then told some they knew who might be interested in it,” said Adam Pitts, NSEI Project Manager. To learn more about the effectiveness of its marketing approach, the library gathered data on how people had heard about the program on the application form. This revealed that many participants had heard about the New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator via Facebook.

Project Manager Adam Pitts noted: “I think it was invaluable for us to invest in getting a professionally made video because our marketing before that just focused on the facts of the program, whereas the marketing video told a story about it. Kevin, a member of our first cohort, was featured in the video and you learned about the program, but it was also very inspirational and motivational. I think that’s what connected and resonated with so many people. I think what it has taught us is that [this marketing strategy] was a good way to reach a large number of people and really show how serious we are about this project.”

### Offering Participation Incentives

Once you catch people’s interest, how do you get them to stay, participate, and engage? Offering an incentive is one idea. Here are a few examples:

- **As described briefly, the Independence Public Library’s Cultivate Indy small business program** has embedded incentives when an individual completes a benchmark. For example, a participant can gain access to the Fab Lab Maker Space or receive a year-long membership at the local chamber of commerce. Incentives like these have additional benefits for the individual and the community. When people work at the makerspace, for example, they are trained on how to effectively and responsibly use equipment such as laser cutters and 3D printers. Meanwhile,

offering paid membership to the chamber of commerce—a barrier for many low-income entrepreneurs—increases the diversity in the Chamber membership.

- **Participants who completed Gwinnett County Public Library’s New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator program** in good standing were given a laptop to keep. Additionally, they had an opportunity, if they chose to take part, to secure startup capital for their business by pitching their idea to Launchpad, a Shark Tank-like panel of local business leaders and potential donors. Though participation in the Launchpad was optional, it was an incentive which also addressed the issue that formerly incarcerated people typically have very limited access to capital.
- **Everyone who completed Spokane County Library District’s Small Business Boot Camp program** was eligible for a micro-grant award to use toward business expenses. Participants in the program used their funds in many ways, such as: to purchase an enamel kiln for an art business; to expand marketing and advertising for a dentistry business by producing oral health flyers and referral slips for after-hours dental needs; and to print business cards and purchase office supplies for a realty business as well as to take additional real estate courses.

What incentives could be relevant for your library’s small business program? Are there incentives that you can offer with no or little cost to the library? Could partners or grant funds help? How would these incentives help meet both participant and community needs? Be creative!

Now that you have learned about how to get started as well as how to build and expand your library’s business program, we’re ready to dive into the next components. First (and perhaps foremost)—how can you ensure that your library’s small business initiative is reaching and best serving the people that need it?

## Note

1. Definition paraphrased from NFTE: Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship. <https://www.nfte.com/entrepreneurial-mindset/>.



# EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion principles and practices was a central focus of the Libraries Build Business initiative. As noted earlier, particular groups—ranging from rural entrepreneurs, to women, to the formerly incarcerated—have a relative lack of support and resources when it comes to making the leap into business. Thus, libraries and others have a vital role to play in boosting these groups.

## **Libraries Build Business Programs and EDI**

The LBB cohort defined equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles in library entrepreneurship programs as “a commitment to providing programming, resources, and other supports for small businesses and entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups and low-income communities in culturally responsive, impactful ways.” This includes taking a strengths-based approach to integrating library services and supports within local contexts and listening to the needs and interests of those in the community, lifting up and prioritizing the voices of disenfranchised community members, and orienting staff and services toward social justice. Applying EDI principles can help libraries enhance and extend services they already offer as well as identify new groups and new services they can offer. The benefit of an EDI approach lies not only in identifying underrepresented, marginalized, or stigmatized groups that can benefit from library programs, but also from continuously learning how to effectively offer business and entrepreneurship services to these groups.

With a long history of providing business services, Providence Public Library, for example, used an EDI approach to revisit their offerings in several ways. First, the library used an EDI lens to take a fresh look at the broader business ecosystem—identifying populations that they were not serving

or not in touch with. Second, the library took an inventory of their disparate services to see how they could expand their business offerings to more groups through partnerships or other creative solutions. As a result of this evaluation, the library added a business and entrepreneurship focus to their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, combining two of the library's long-standing services into a new program that has met a great need in their community.



“By providing access to information resources, financial resources, and business training, by providing places and virtual spaces for connections and building networks, [and] by channeling capital to low-income and underrepresented communities, public libraries are creating a bridge that advances equity for marginalized communities, supports diversity in small business, and prioritizes inclusion.”

—ADRIANA MCCLEER, APPLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Entrepreneurship can be a vital path toward economic stability for individuals from diverse backgrounds and with different lived experiences. It can also help to build a strong local economy that is responsive to the community. In this way, entrepreneurship can be viewed as a form of mutual aid: when entrepreneurs from the community offer goods and services that reflect the needs of their neighbors and customers, a sustainable, holistic economy is built. Small business owners are valued for what they offer, and their customers, by shopping with them or engaging their services, help these businesses grow and thrive.

This mutually beneficial balance is a critical component of building strong, vital communities and is the goal of equitable and inclusive business practices. In the Yakama Nation, for one, the intention of the library's Business Maker Space program is to support local entrepreneurs in ways that acknowledge and include traditional, ancient lifeways. To be culturally responsive and uphold local values, the Yakama Nation Library defined entrepreneurship through an indigenous lens, and with the purpose of supporting the indigenous economy to sustain and flourish. The Business Maker Space program uplifts Yakama cultural values, including resiliency and self-determination. Equitable business practices that prioritize trade, community wealth, and community vitality are highlighted, in reflection of their importance to the Yakama Nation.

With each step of developing, implementing, and evaluating your library's program, consider how this work can contribute equity, diversity, and inclusion. Listen to the needs, interests, challenges, and concerns of your community. Consider and remove barriers to access and success (e.g., transportation, childcare, time commitment, access to capital). Engage in ongoing conversations with stakeholders to build trust, listen deeply, and work together with intention, shared understanding, and common goals.

## Working with Particular Underrepresented Communities

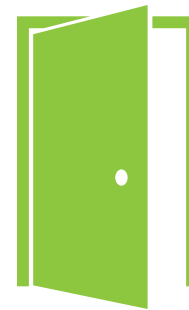
Libraries offer low-barrier access to basic technology, equipment, and information, making it easy for an entrepreneur to explore or test out a business idea before committing or investing. This is a key advantage for low-income or underrepresented entrepreneurs, who may lack the capital to

start or grow their business ventures. With strategic partnerships, libraries can also make referrals and help entrepreneurs get connected. This sense of belonging and inclusion is vital to sustaining a small business venture, and library-initiated networking and introductions can be a critical link to success. Providing access to resources and services necessary to get a business off the ground firmly establishes the important role of the library in fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion for entrepreneurs.

Check out the following stories from Libraries Build Business for more examples of what an EDI approach can look like in practice.

## Re-entry Population

Gwinnett County Public Library's **New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator** (NSEI) in Georgia aims to serve community members who have spent time in prison or jail. This population is heavily stigmatized and faces enormous difficulties securing employment, often experiencing employment offers being rescinded after a background check is performed. The library worked closely with its partner, Greater Gwinnett Re-entry Alliance, which has strong connections with this population, and also secured broad stakeholder support including from the Mayor of Lawrenceville and other community leaders. The NSEI program offered many innovative components to support the re-entry population: peer learning, laptops and hotspots to access an online curriculum, one-on-one mentorship with mentors matched in terms of business interest areas, and an opportunity to secure start-up capital if their business idea was selected by a panel of community leaders and donors.



Despite these strong components, the library realized that a crucial piece was still missing that could undermine the success of the entire program—cohort members needed support outside the program to be successful in it. The NSEI participants continued to face enormous barriers—ranging from a lack of housing or childcare, to a need for legal assistance and expungement of legal records. After recognizing the depth of challenges experienced by the first NSEI cohort, the library hired an Outreach Coordinator with a social work background to join the program team. Only after identifying this need and bringing in a new team member—who could connect with the participants in a way that they felt comfortable enough to share what their barriers were so they could be addressed—could the new entrepreneurs fully participate in and benefit from the carefully designed program elements.



**“After laying this foundation of support, we can supply those resources, we give them this education, we give them these opportunities. We hold their hand through these mock presentations and then we put them in front of the donors, and they feel confident that they can do this. I mean, the world is in their hands at that point, and they feel that, and we feel it as well. I know we’re all really excited about the program.”**

**—ANDREA DEVEREUX, NEW START ENTREPRENEURSHIP INCUBATOR OUTREACH COORDINATOR**



## Immigrants

Like the NSEI program in Georgia, the **Sea un Vendedor Ambulante Exitoso/Successful Street Vending program** at the Los Angeles Public Library aimed to target a traditionally underserved group. In this case the library wanted to reach out to a diverse population of immigrants, from predominantly Spanish-speaking countries, and including indigenous populations, with varying levels of literacy and cultural backgrounds.



Through its design, this program aimed to address the many barriers confronting this group to help them gain access to the small business information and resources that they need to be successful street vendors. A core component of the program was the direct involvement of the vendor community themselves in the content development process. Involving the vending community was instrumental in shaping relevant, useful information. For instance, the project team learned that safety was a very important topic to the vendors. When building an educational unit on community safety, the project team worked with vendors to find out what information and tools were most relevant for them, such as knowing their rights and knowing what to do if they observe a crime taking place. Addressing the topic of violence in this small business project was important because many vendors have experienced violence or harassment either directly or indirectly. Recognizing that building educational units on violence could impact the mental health of the participating vendors reliving and navigating their trauma, both a social worker and therapists were involved in this section of the project. As this unit on community safety was a new and unexpected need that arose, the library and its partners worked to find matching funds to cover therapy or support sessions that the participants needed.

## Small and Rural

Small and rural libraries and communities share many characteristics as well as constraints that must be taken into consideration when designing and offering business programs in these locations. Limited access to broadband internet, for example, is a concern for many rural communities. Susan Preece of the Topsham Public Library notes: “As [the Internet has gotten faster] and broadband usage has increased across the country, we find ourselves in a situation where some of our people in Maine are getting left behind. Part of our effort at the library is to assist people in job and workforce development and entrepreneurship, as well as help them connect to broadband and learn how to use it. If you don’t have broadband, or you can’t use it when you need it, it creates haves and have nots.” In communities where **broadband (or access to it)** is limited, libraries must be creative in terms of offering business programming and ensuring people have the connectivity, devices, and skills to take advantage of it.



Meanwhile, in Kansas, an EDI lens helped the Independence Public Library consider a variety of factors that can create barriers to accessing library business resources, including time. Library

operating hours, particularly for smaller and rural libraries, can represent barriers for those who could most benefit from these services. To address this issue, the Independence Library implemented a new service prior to the pandemic called **Open Access**, through Bibliotheca Open Plus software. This service allows registered patrons in good standing to come into the library after hours at their convenience and use library resources. The library granted the same access to participants in their small business program so they could use the business center makerspace after regular library hours as well.



In sum, when developing your own library's small business programs and resources, considering equity, diversity, and inclusion can help both broaden reach and enhance success. In this area as well, it's okay to start small—you don't need to serve anyone and everyone perfectly all at once. Rather, if you've identified a one typically underserved population or unmet business need in your community, start there!



# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) was a core component of the Libraries Build Business initiative. Building capacity in these practices can benefit your library, too. M&E is for anyone that wants to go beyond simply running a program to truly make an impact. M&E engages practitioners in an action and reflection cycle, incorporating feedback and data to make adjustments and improvements along the way. With data and feedback from your community, you'll be more prepared to provide responsive programming, services, and resources and ensure your efforts to reach and connect patrons are working. Through the sections below and in [Appendix C](#), you'll find practical how-to advice that will help you leverage data that can both prove and improve your impact. We also share the tools and resources we developed to measure the impact of our LBB programs. These materials are available for use, inspiration, or adaptation. Most importantly, we hope to inspire any library to incorporate M&E into their programming practice, for small business programs and beyond!

### **TIER 1 Tip**

M&E is essential to providing the programming your community most needs, and ensuring your efforts are focused on the right things. You probably already engage in feedback and dialogue with your patrons, which is the first step. Start by informally asking patrons for feedback when they visit the library or attend a program to determine interest and need. Do not be discouraged if participation is low or you do not receive many responses at first.

## Introduction to M&E

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a fundamental tool for informing the development and growth of library small business initiatives and enhancing their impact. The M&E process is an iterative cycle of monitoring, evaluation, reflection, improvement, and implementation. It is a structured framework that outlines a standardized method for measuring the effect of programs and initiatives. Using M&E can lead to increased funding, more efficient use of resources, smart scaling and will generally maximize your library's effectiveness. M&E can be used to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of various models, as well as improve the impact that libraries have on their small business community. Ultimately, M&E can help libraries to strengthen their position as change agents and advocates for underrepresented and low-income entrepreneurs—helping libraries to not only to create better programs, but also to demonstrate their importance to stakeholders and funders.

To succeed with M&E you will need to:

- **Learn how M&E works** and how to start using it at your library: this Playbook can help! Start by [watching this clip from a Libraries Build Business lunch and learn](#).
- **Create a Theory of Change.**
- **Create an M&E Framework.**
- **Develop and use measurement instruments** like surveys, focus groups, and interviews in your library programs.
- **Analyze your data** and write up the results. Is what you are doing having an impact? How could it be improved?
- **Revisit and modify** your Theory of Change, M&E Framework, and measurement instruments as necessary.
- **Share your findings** with stakeholders and make necessary adjustments to your programs.

Getting started with M&E doesn't have to be perfect—whatever your first draft looks like, you will be one step closer to improving your impacts. Simply practicing these processes builds capacity at your library, creates increased buy-in, and an increased sense of responsiveness and inclusiveness for your patrons and participants. Need more help? The LBB M&E resources are available for use, inspiration, and adaptation! Ask questions or share your experiences in the Community—we're here to help.

## Libraries Build Business Theory of Change and M&E Framework

### Theory of Change Overview

The Theory of Change is a methodology that starts by determining the long-term goals of an organization or program and then working backwards to determine short-term steps that will move

you towards meeting your goals. The Theory of Change acts as the basic building block of a M&E system. With the big picture established by the Theory of Change, M&E tools and resources can be created to measure and provide actionable insights about an organization’s progress and impact.

Theory of Change frameworks typically contain three sections: inputs, outputs, and outcomes (short, medium, and long-term). In the case of the LBB Theory of Change, **inputs** refer to the business programs implemented by the libraries and their partners. Possible inputs include instructional workshops, networking events, or providing co-working space. **Outputs** are the immediate effect of the inputs and the results that they generate. For example, the output of an instructional workshop could be an increase in the awareness of library-led services for entrepreneurs. Outcomes demonstrate what real world impact inputs have and why this matters. In this case, a possible short-term outcome of increased awareness of library-led services for entrepreneurs may be that more people will take part in the library programs, eventually leading to a longer-term outcome of increased entrepreneur prosperity. The image below outlines a generic Theory of Change framework that can be used as starting point for crafting a specialized roadmap for your library.

**EXAMPLE OF A THEORY OF CHANGE TEMPLATE** ([available online as a Google doc](#))

Theory of Change Framework Template				
INPUTS (What We Offer)	OUTPUTS (What Our Offerings Generate)	OUTCOMES (What is the Long Term Impact)		
		Near-term (Program End)	Long-term (1-5 years)	Ultimate

Use a Theory of Change framework to ensure that the end goals of your small business initiative(s) are met and that the implementation process remains focused on achieving those goals. Check out the Libraries Build Business Theory of Change in [Appendix C](#) for a starting point.

## The Importance of M&E Frameworks

An M&E framework provides a uniform structure to assess the performance and effectiveness of the various components of the Theory of Change. The M&E framework gives libraries a way to understand if their initiatives are having the desired effect. Having a clearly organized approach to evaluate projects maximizes their impact by highlighting their successes and areas for improvement.

A typical M&E framework is made up of the following elements and used to evaluate each of the Theory of Change components (inputs, outputs, outcomes):

- 1. Indicators:** Indicators are the signals that demonstrate if a program is having the results you desire (or not). Connecting back to the previous example, an indicator from inputs could refer the number of networking events held in a given timeframe.
- 2. Unit of Measurement:** A unit of measurement explains what values or numbers you will use to quantify the efficacy of a particular indicator. A possible metric of the networking event could be number of attendees.
- 3. Instrument:** How will the unit of measurement data will be collected? Data about the networking event example would be reported by the library (i.e., library staff would keep track of the number of networking event attendees).
- 4. Frequency:** How often will this data be reported?
- 5. Owner:** Who will be responsible for the collection and management of this data?
- 6. Report/Audience:** How will the information collected be reported and who is the intended audience?

The LBB M&E Framework is shared as an example in [Appendix C](#).

Want to get started? Print out the LBB Theory of Change and M&E Framework templates or make them your own to start drafting your objectives and identifying your inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The Theory of Change and M&E Framework will help you organize your thoughts and align your plans with the intended goals. They'll also help you develop your measurement instruments. See examples of each of these tools in [Appendix C](#).

### TIER 1 Tip

Write down your goals and objectives. What activities and resources will you employ to try and reach them?

## Overview of Monitoring and Evaluation Instruments

Monitoring and Evaluation instruments are the methods by which you measure the results of what you are doing to find out, for example, how many people are participating in your initiative and the impact it has had on their lives. Four key measurement instruments are: surveys, interviews,

reporting forms, and focus groups. You can find the LBB-created M&E Instruments in [Appendix C](#). These can be adapted to and used for your programs. Below we offer some suggestions on how and with whom to administer these instruments to get quality feedback.

**Surveys** can be useful to gather data from two groups: small businesses and library staff. Small business surveys can help libraries understand what entrepreneurs need from the library or the impact of library small business programming and resources on them. Libraries can use surveys at different times in the project cycle, including in planning, implementation, and follow-up phases. For example, a library could deliver a survey to all participants enrolled in a small business initiative once at the beginning of the program to establish baseline benchmarks, and once at the end to see how people have grown during their time in the program, or how they have otherwise benefited from it. Generally, surveys should be short and take participants 5–10 minutes to complete. Results from the survey can help your library determine how to improve your programs for future small business cohorts. Meanwhile, library staff surveys can help you figure out what, if any, additional resources your library needs to continue delivering your small business programs and conducting M&E.

**Interviews** are used to understand things like what the community needs, or how library small business programming has impacted participants in more depth. Rather than just getting the facts (as with a survey), interviews will give you the opportunity to hear someone’s story. Even just a few interviews can enrich your understanding greatly. Your library could, for example, conduct one-on-one interviews with 3–5 patrons enrolled in small business programming following the end of the program. These interviews should last approximately 30 minutes and can be conducted in-person, by phone, or Zoom. What’s learned in these interviews could help your library improve your program for future cohorts, and provide better small business services and resources for the wider public. Consider interviewing elected officials or other stakeholders as well to determine things like the level of awareness that exists about your library’s small business programs, and how

## How do I create a survey?

You can use ready-made surveys like the ones from this Playbook or [Project Outcome](#) to get started. Both can be adapted to your specific needs. Project Outcome also provides resources and training support to analyze and apply results.



If you’re starting from scratch, the M&E sections in this Playbook should provide you with an overview of how to approach data collection. For more specific instructions on how to create a survey, you can refer to these two links: [How to Create a Survey in Survey Monkey](#) and [How to Create a Survey in Google Forms](#).

stakeholders perceive those programs. For Tier 2 and Tier 3 programs, aim to conduct one-on-one interviews with 2–5 stakeholders per year.

**Focus groups** can be conducted with small groups of patrons or other stakeholders (5–8 individuals) to understand community needs as well as responses to your library’s current business offerings. Focus groups can be especially useful for assessing similarities and differences in people’s perspectives and can lead to richer conversations as participants inspire one another to share. Online focus groups could also be used to understand how libraries across the country are implementing monitoring and evaluation systems, M&E culture within libraries, and related challenges.

**Reporting forms** are designed to track library resources and small business programming over time. For LBB, we used reporting forms on a quarterly basis to understand overall trends and themes among the cohort. Your library may consider using reporting forms to track equipment, technology, resources, and program offerings, as well as program attendance, response, and changes.

## CASE STUDY

### Using Community Feedback to Improve Programming

After surveying and conducting focus groups with stakeholders in the community, Baltimore County Public Library launched Entrepreneur Academy to train aspiring entrepreneurs on ways to launch and grow their business. Participants were surveyed on the 1st, 4th, and 7th week of their training to gather feedback on which events and programs were the most helpful. After receiving feedback on the need to provide resources to those in the nonprofit space, Baltimore County launched a smaller Nonprofit Academy and brought in local experts. “Actively soliciting feedback from our community members highlights our care, our willingness to engage with them, and our ability to spring into action and respond to that feedback,” said BCPL’s Adult & Community Engagement Manager Julie Brophy. The library team also analyzed zip codes and census data to identify the demographic makeup of the cohort and determine if they were meeting their target audience. From this, they realized many patrons spoke English as a second language. As a result, the library decided to create an Entrepreneur Academy for Spanish speakers.



### Putting It All Together: Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

When collecting data as part of M&E, there are important administrative protocols that should be followed. Participants should be informed that data is being collected, why, and for what purpose.



It is also critical that participants are explicitly told that their participation is voluntary and that all responses and information they provide will be kept confidential; this is often referred to as “informed consent.” Informed consent is important so that individuals choosing to participate in any study or survey have fully understood what their involvement will entail before participating. For more information on how to add a consent statement to a survey, you can refer to this resource: [Adding a Consent Statement or Privacy Notice](#). For surveys in particular, once the data collection process has begun it is important to regularly monitor response rates to ensure that enough people have responded in order for the data to be meaningful and representative. This said, if you struggle to receive responses, you should not be discouraged: even small amounts of data can be incredibly helpful in informing your future decisions.

Prepare your data for analysis, by “cleaning” the dataset. This typically entails sorting through data and removing or correcting any incorrectly entered responses, duplicates, or corrupted entries. Cleaning data is an important step in the analysis process to improve the quality of the dataset and in turn improve the quality of the insights derived from the data. To analyze your data, you may use a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. **Quantitative** analysis is most often used to analyze results of surveys, reporting forms, and other measurement instruments that generate numeric data. It can help you to create charts, infographics, and other powerful representations of the scope and impact of your programs. **Qualitative** analysis is a method for collecting and making sense of subjective data. This method can give insights into things like participant opinions, perceptions, or experiences. Focus groups and interviews will yield qualitative data. Data collected from these instruments can be analyzed to identify common themes and patterns (as well as differences) among responses.

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## Creating Incentives and Buy-In

Libraries Build Business cohort members found that using incentives helped to boost survey response rates. If you can, offer an incentive to people who take the time to fill out your survey such as a raffle drawing, gift card, or door prize. Keep surveys short, and let respondents know how long it will take them to complete. Baltimore County Public Library learned that creating buy-in is also important. That is, make sure to highlight the purpose of the survey and how the data will be used: what benefits will collecting this data have to the participants, the library, or the community? Laramie County Library System, in turn, learned that setting clear goals for the short-term and long-term, and working to build buy-in from the most important stakeholders is key to M&E success. “Establish personal relationships with community partners and people in the community. This will allow you to measure and collect data much more easily,” advises LCLS Business Services Coordinator Rachael Svoboda.



Your findings will help you determine what impact you are having, what's working well, and what to change for future programming or services. What you've learned can be shared with stakeholders to encourage participation, investment, and general interest. Findings will also inform any adjustments you make to your M&E instruments and process. These reports can also show growth and trends over time; they provide your library documentation of what was tried and how the community responded.

When libraries use M&E successfully to monitor and improve their small business efforts, more entrepreneurs will benefit. This can, in turn, lead to greater economic equity, earning potential, prosperity, and interconnectedness within communities. Library services have the potential to be transformative, and integrating a culture of measurement, monitoring, and evaluation into daily library operations can help make this a reality.



“Keeping  
[survey]  
responses  
anonymous

can respect the privacy of  
respondents and address their  
potential privacy concerns.”

—JULIE BROPHY, BALTIMORE  
COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



# SUSTAINABILITY

Once you have launched or expanded your library's small business offerings, how will you ensure that these efforts can be maintained into the future? Sustainability encompasses both keeping projects going and keeping them relevant. While funding is generally considered a crucial element of sustainability, other factors also influence the ongoing success of your small business efforts.

## **Continuous Improvement and Assessment**

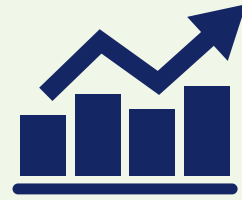
Firstly, engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement and incorporating time for evaluation and reflection will help guide your library business program, ensuring continued support from stakeholders and enthusiasm from your community. Giving yourself time for reflection is essential because it creates space to make adjustments and try new things that will help your library's program flourish long-term. Your library's ability to maintain partnerships, programs, educational content, and business reference requires regular assessment, evaluation, flexibility and responsiveness. As you think about sustainability, consider the key players in your program—partners, staff, and program participants—as well as the core components and resources required to make it work. The success of library small business programs depends on how well they meet the needs of participants and stakeholders. Assessing this is therefore crucial!

Build flexibility into your model in order to be responsive to changing conditions. Establishing a consistent method to solicit feedback provides the library with information necessary to evaluate your programs and services in a non-biased manner. Consider creating a brief general questionnaire which gathers feedback on not only current programs or services but includes input on topics of interest for future events—and then use the information to tweak current services and develop new ones. Try out the M&E framework and instruments from the last section as a way to build assessment and improvement into your program over time, setting your program up for sustainability.

## Using Lessons Learned from Your Program to Improve

### GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

As the **New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator** team reflected on and evaluated their experiences with the first cohort of participants, they decided to make a few key changes to the program model before launching the second cohort. The following adjustments were made in the spirit of continuous improvement with feedback from stakeholders. In order to stay relevant and provide quality services the project team:



- Moved virtual sessions to in-person sessions to foster engagement and participation.
- Built in accountability measures, such as releasing the curriculum month by month upon completion of an evaluation. This change also resulted in better ongoing feedback since participants had to check in and complete the forms to get the next month's materials.
- Built-in incentives. Business books were purchased to use as program incentives—people who attended class would receive the book. If they completed the course successfully, they received a laptop to keep.
- Introduced office hours to create additional supports and opportunities to address concerns or questions about the curriculum. The office hours provided time for students to encourage one another, as well.
- Engaged an outreach coordinator with a social work background in the program. Based on the experience with the first cohort, the project team recognized the depths of the challenges faced by participants and the significant resources (beyond business help) they needed to be successful. The outreach coordinator's support meant that participants could secure housing, childcare, etc. and thus better focus on the curriculum.

## Responding to the Unexpected

Even successful initiatives will falter and lose relevance if they don't evolve. Both internal and external factors can prompt change. How many public libraries, for example, were regularly providing virtual programming and services prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as opposed to now? Building continuous improvement and flexibility into your model allows your library to be responsive to what's happening in the community—whether changes are the result of a natural evolution or unexpected circumstances. To respond to a challenge, assess the following:

- What does my community currently need?
- How can the library respond?

- What resources and services are available in the library and in the community?
- How can we adapt our offerings or delivery model to connect with stakeholders and community members?

In South Carolina, when things shut down due to COVID-19, the Richland Library began to hold weekly meetings with the small business community to talk about their needs. In 2020, the library held over 20 virtual meetings with local government and business leaders to discuss how the community could meet the immediate needs of underrepresented entrepreneurs. During this time, the library maintained a website for small business owners and that was constantly updated by library staff when new information about loans and grants became available.

As the immediate crisis stabilized, the business community still needed support. The library-initiated meetings, now monthly, included 28 community partners. During meetings, participants have an opportunity to talk about the status of their organization, what they have upcoming in terms of training, and to share how the library can collaborate or help promote that. The meetings are a mutually beneficial resource. Richland Business and Careers Manager Diane Luccy explains, “for example, our Entrepreneur-in-Residence was looking to do a program on cybersecurity, and a community partner immediately offered to work on it with her. . . . [The meetings represent] a networking opportunity for the community member, a collaborative opportunity for the library, and more knowledge for us to be able to share with our customers.”

Similarly, the next time your community encounters a challenge that impacts the business community—whether local or global, consider how your library can respond. Perhaps, like Richland Library, you can offer a seemingly simple service (such as regular stakeholder meetings) which ultimately brings unanticipated benefits and strengthens the local small business ecosystem.

## **Staffing and Partners**

Another important aspect of sustainability for library business initiatives is to proactively work with staff and partners to build capacity and mitigate possible program disturbances. Consider creating a team of employees interested in serving the business community and create opportunities for them to access training, share resources, and participate in programming while networking and learning from each other. The skills these employees gain will benefit your community’s entrepreneurs. As an added bonus, these core employees will model their skills for other staff, too.

As an ongoing practice, encourage other staff to familiarize themselves with your business services and participate in programs. This will help with turnover and succession planning, which is a natural part of work life and should be accounted for to ensure sustainability. To this end, keep resources and information essential to running programs accessible in a shared location. This will make it easier for a new person to implement the events if need be. Additionally, keep a list of established partner organizations, associations, and presenters with contact information. These

practices will help ensure that changes in your own staff will not derail your progress and will facilitate a more seamless transition.

Forming intentional partnerships is a great way to combine resources amongst organizations in order to further a shared goal. This is especially true for small libraries with limited in-house staff. As detailed earlier, partnerships allow you to extend your reach to new audiences and expand the breadth and depth of business expertise on offer. Partnerships can be great for programs because they can make it possible for your library to provide information on topics you wouldn't be able to provide otherwise. Forming partnerships and collaborating with outside organizations will ultimately lead to a more unified and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem in your area.

## TIER 1 Tip

For small libraries, staff already wear many hats and take on roles across library functions. Consider including volunteers and partners to build your capacity. Staying organized with easily accessible files, cross-team communication and collaboration, and other key information to keep the program running smoothly will be valuable to your success.

## Finding New Audiences and Scaling Programs

Finding new audiences is another way of ensuring the growth and sustained relevance of your library's business efforts. To this end, identify specific new needs you want to meet or new populations you want to reach (e.g., veteran/re-entry/immigrant communities) when offering small business support. Identify programs and delivery methods that will allow you to meet the needs in your community and make these events accessible to the groups you identified. Refer to the section above on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for more information and inspiration. Aim to be flexible in the way you offer your programs, alleviating and recognizing that not all participants have the same resources. For instance, a library could develop a hybrid version of programming so that individuals without access to a laptop or sufficient computer skills could still participate.

When providing business and entrepreneurship services, there are several different groups you can target: aspiring entrepreneurs that don't have a business yet, new businesses, well-established businesses, side hustles, creative businesses, and more. Maybe you have been focusing on one of these groups, but could expand to others? The resources available at your library and which group you are targeting will determine how to market these resources. For example, there are business databases that can be used by an entrepreneur at any point in their business journey, however *how* they are used will differ. [Reference Solutions](#) can be used by aspiring entrepreneurs that want to determine how competitive the industry they are thinking about entering is. They can also determine locations for their potential business based on where competitors currently exist and how well they are doing. Meanwhile, a newly opened business could use Reference Solutions to generate a sales lead list to grow their customer base. An established business might use Reference Solutions to stay informed on their industry. This could include staying up to date on changes in

## Scaling a Successful Model



The **Wyoming Library to Business** project is a statewide initiative intended to scale the business services offered by the Laramie County Library System. To coordinate this effort, project manager Rachael Svoboda wanted to take everything she had learned in building the library business program and make it “plug and play,” so that any library, even the smallest branches, could provide business outreach services.

To do this, libraries across the state invested in business stations and recording studios to offer entrepreneurs space and equipment to work on their business. With the support of the Wyoming State Library, and a growing online network to share resources and ask questions, the county libraries worked together to offer business services across the state. Rachael also spent time with each library training them on the services and resources to demonstrate their relevance.

the industry (such as new businesses entering), or by spotting opportunities (which might involve expanding into a new market segment). The information available in these library resources and databases can help entrepreneurs make informed decisions that boost the growth and success of their business. Examining how your existing library business resources might be useful to people at different points on the entrepreneurial journey can be a relatively resource-efficient way to broaden your reach.

Finally, scaling your business services can offer an opportunity to expand an already successful model to more branches or other libraries. With some effort and creativity, it is often possible to share the core components of a program and to adapt them to a new context. Read more on how the Laramie County Library System did this in the text box above.

In sum, consider: Are there ways your library could leverage existing programs or resources to serve new groups? Could your library use these same resources to serve businesses owners at a different stage of the entrepreneurship journey? Or could your model, program, or resources be used by other libraries?

## Advocacy and Buy-In

Another very important practice that fosters sustainability is encouraging your program participants to share their experiences and recommend the library to their business colleagues. Be an advocate for your small business initiatives and get the word out through marketing

and promotional efforts on your library's website, social media outlets, and print publications. Visit business associations, the chamber of commerce, and other organizations active in the entrepreneur ecosystem. Finally, document and share your successes with those with whom you seek buy-in, including tracking the number of requests for business related information, which can be used to inform leadership of the growing needs and interests of library patrons.

The final piece of sustainability is buy-in, which means that other groups, and perhaps your library leadership, now recognize your library's efforts as a valued, relevant part of the small business ecosystem. Buy-in from business owners and entrepreneurs means that they'll look to you for education and resources. Buy-in from partners makes them eager to collaborate with you. Buy-in from your own library administration and funders means you'll be able to count on funds and support to sustain, expand, and promote your work.

As discussed earlier, basic data collection on your impact goes a long way towards gaining funding and other support and making the case for your library's offerings to library administration and stakeholders. Quotes, experiences, and any kind of evidence of direct impact on those you've already served is some of the most powerful content you can collect and include in your own proposals or when cultivating partnerships. Providence Public Library, for one, started capturing program feedback to share with stakeholders and now has a "bank" of data and stories demonstrating impact that can be used in promotional materials, reports to local officials and administration, and grant proposals. Making these investments does require time and effort but has the potential to pay dividends in terms of long-term sustainability.





# JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Through the Libraries Build Business experience, collaborating with other libraries—sharing ideas, resources, and challenges—has been a highlight for everyone. Through these collaborations, we’re able to get perspectives and see our work in a new light.

Visit the [LBB Webpage](#)  
or contact Megan Janicki at  
[mjanicki@alawash.org](mailto:mjanicki@alawash.org) to join!

Outside of the cohort, many of the libraries have benefited from working with networks of libraries within their state. For example, seven libraries in Maine adopted a similar business assistance program as Topsham Public Library in mid-coast Maine. It’s a simple program for libraries to offer, but it addresses a clear need for people who lack reliable internet access or the necessary digital skills to set up online meetings. Simply sharing this idea at a state library conference, inspired the other Maine libraries—beyond Topsham—to offer this service for their communities, too. The work grows and makes a larger impact when we share it with one another.

Working collaboratively to develop library business services is motivating and effective, and it connects you to peers and further resources. When things are challenging, you know you have people to talk about the issues with. As you consider the takeaways from our Playbook, know that you are not alone. The programs and ideas shared here are ongoing and will continue to evolve. Connect with us to share and grow together, lifting up and supporting thriving communities around the country as we go. Join our Libraries Build Business Community!



# RESOURCES

Learn more about the Libraries Build Business initiative and cohort by visiting our [webpage](#).  
Review our resources, including:

- **[LBB Peer Coaching Guide](#)**. As part of our initiative goals, LBB identified six LBB Peer Coaches from the cohort to build the capacity of libraries offering small business development initiatives and to scale the LBB Community. Library workers received customized coaching aimed at enhancing performance and achieving short-term and long-term program development goals. This guide offers tools, insights, and strategies to develop and strengthen your peer coaching practice and leverage coaching as a valuable tool for growth.
- **[Whitman, J., M. Janicki, and M. Visser. “Open to Change: Libraries Catalyze Small Business Adaption to COVID-19.” ALA Policy Perspectives, November 2020.](#)** This white paper reviews opportunities and challenges to small business presented by the COVID-19 crisis and offers considerations for libraries to respond.
- **[Zulkey, Claire. “Big Ideas for Small Business: How Libraries Strengthened Their Small Business Programs to Reach Those Who Needed Them Most.” American Libraries, November 1, 2021.](#)** This article features Libraries Build Business cohort members and shares promising ideas from around the country for small business support in public libraries.

**[Business Reference & Services Section](#)** (BRASS) from the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the ALA provides expertise on business references for all kinds of libraries. Among the resources offered are a business reference essentials guide for selecting reference materials and databases, BRASS business guides and best websites for different business subjects, and articles on business reference services within public libraries.

The **[ALA Store](#)** features a range of books related to small business for public libraries. This includes Celia Ross's *Making Sense of Business Reference: A Guide for Librarians and Research Professionals* which explains how all librarians can conduct a reference interview, offers tips on helping clients

help themselves, and identifies essential business resources—both free and fee-based—to help guide collection development. Barbara A. Alvarez's *Embedded Business Librarianship for the Public Librarian* is another available resource. Alvarez makes the case for building relationships with the business community and provides a guide for public libraries to develop sustainable library-business relationships. Published in 2022 from ALA Editions is *Libraries that Build Business: Advancing Small Business and Entrepreneurship in Public Libraries* edited by Megan Janicki, that offers step-by-step advice and inspiration to adapt and implement promising and innovative small business and entrepreneurship programs and services in libraries across the country.

**The Public Library Association** offers continuing education opportunities, public library initiatives, networking opportunities, and resources for public library professionals related to current trends and issues in the profession. For example, this on-demand webinar, **150 Million New Technology-Oriented Jobs and the Skills Needed to Get Them**, shares insight into the labor market and the types of skills needed to succeed in the workforce.

**Project Outcome** is a free toolkit from the Public Library Association designed to help public libraries understand and share the impact of essential library services and programs by providing simple surveys and an easy-to-use process for measuring and analyzing outcomes. Project Outcome also provides libraries with the resources and training support needed to apply their results and confidently advocate for their library's future. Customize the *Economic Development* survey using LBB M&E survey questions to evaluate your business programming.

The Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) created **“Guidelines for Outreach to Immigrant Populations”** to provide a basis for the development of library services and programming that facilitates recent immigrants' inclusion and participation into the broader society while also preserving and promoting their distinct cultural and linguistic heritages.

**Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) Glossary** offers guidance and discussion of key words and terms used in the spirit of creating a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive society.

**Small Business Hub** is a research guide for entrepreneurs from the Library of Congress. Designed for all stages of business development, each section features recommended “how to” books, online resources, as well as free and subscription-based databases. It also includes links to in-depth research guides and other strategies for addressing business information needs.

**Grow with Google** offers a variety of free resources for small businesses, including virtual trainings and workshops, online access to business experts, and other digital tools to help small businesses grow and adapt. Resources are offered in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Additionally, Grow with Google partners with other organizations to better meet the emerging needs of entrepreneurs and small business owners, for instance, SCORE is partnering with Grow with Google

and the International Downtown Association to launch a [four-part free digital readiness series](#) to help small business owners develop the skills they need to succeed online, with sessions on getting found online, reaching more customers, selling online, and running a business remotely. Other Google tools include [Google Think](#) to explore search trends and consumer insights and marketing strategies, and [Google Alerts](#) to monitor the web for news and information that matches the specified search terms.

The Urban Libraries Council's [Closing the Entrepreneurship Gap: Tools for Libraries](#) is a regularly-updated toolkit that includes strategies and resources for libraries offering entrepreneurship support. The toolkit builds on the work of ULC's Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses action team and Strengthening Libraries as Entrepreneurial Hubs collaboration with the Kauffman Foundation.

[Ice House Entrepreneurship Program](#) by the Entrepreneurial Learning Institute is an eight-part training course that introduces diverse audiences to an entrepreneurial mindset. Funded by CISCO Systems' Entrepreneurship Institute and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and based on hundreds of interviews with non-Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, participants learn from "unlikely" entrepreneurs who have embraced this mindset and are introduced to the related logic, methods, and processes they employ. Also check out [Setting up the Entrepreneurial Mindset Training Course](#) by EBSCO.

[LinkedIn Learning](#) has a variety of business, technology, and creative courses, and is available through many public libraries. Included in the broad collection of business courses is guidance on social media marketing, a popular and evolving business topic.

[BeanStack](#), by Zoobean, is a web-based platform used to create, manage, and gain insights from reading challenges. As the challenges are customizable, Beanstack uses could go beyond literacy to include the tracking and managing of other library programs, such as small business or workforce development programs.

[Cell-Ed](#) is a mobile-based platform to deliver and track mobile learning across low resource populations. Los Angeles Public Library used Cell-Ed to deliver training—developed with direct input from the target community—on support services available to street vendors from different cultural background and literacy levels.

[Bibliotheca](#) is a customizable system that allows libraries to provide more flexible hours for their patrons. Access can be extended to an entire library or only a portion of it to better meet the needs of their community and space. Independence Public Library offered this service to participants in its small business program.

[Flourish Agenda](#) offers healing centered practices and principles to help organizations work more

effectively with young people of color to promote well-being and culturally based learning. They offer a framework to support these outcomes as well as consulting services and training programs designed for individuals and organizations.

**ConnectedLib** describes the value of community mapping to libraries and provides resources to create a community access map. Community mapping is a systematic approach to identify the people, places, and resources that surround your library, including local economy assets and stories in the community. It enables libraries to better meet community needs and reach new audiences and groups not currently being served by the library. Also see: **A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities.**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Thank you to the following for their contributions to this Playbook:** The Libraries Build Business cohort members and their respective libraries; Kristen Batch for research and writing; Amelia Bryne for editorial expertise; Cicero Group for monitoring and evaluation expertise and guidance; Dr. Alan S. Inouye, Larra Clark, LaKesha Kimbrough, and Claudia Fenelon for review and feedback; Karen Sheets de Gracia for design and graphic support; and the Public Policy and Advocacy office for their support and guidance. Thank you to the Libraries Build Business initiative, with support from Google.org, and the American Library Association for creating the vision for and funding this initiative and this resource, as well as the opportunity to invest in and strengthen small business and entrepreneurship support in public libraries and a national community.


**For more information** about Libraries Build Business, this publication, or to join the LBB Community, please contact Megan Janicki ([mjanicki@alawash.org](mailto:mjanicki@alawash.org)) or visit our website: [ala.org/advocacy/workforce/grant](http://ala.org/advocacy/workforce/grant).

## How to Cite this Publication

Libraries Build Business. (2022). *The Libraries Build Business Playbook*. The American Library Association. [http://bit.ly/LBB\\_Playbook](http://bit.ly/LBB_Playbook).

**This publication was developed by Megan Janicki, Libraries Build Business Project Manager, in collaboration with the Libraries Build Business cohort and the support of the many individuals listed above.**

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# APPENDIX A

## LIBRARIES BUILD BUSINESS COHORT



### Appleton Public Library, Appleton, WI

#### Small Business—Big Impact

[Small Business—Big Impact](#) provides classes and networking, tailored to people of color and immigrants to create a platform for sharing culturally relevant business expertise and experiences. Hear more in their [IG Live Interview](#).



**Adriana McCleer**  
Community Partnerships Supervisor



**Yee Lee Vue**  
Adult Services Librarian



### Baltimore County Public Library, Towson, MD

#### Entrepreneur Academy

[Entrepreneur Academy](#) is a series taught by business counselors and librarians which covers all areas of small business start-up, including market research, business structure, insurance and legal issues, business finances, taxes and recordkeeping, and marketing your business. The goal is to take budding entrepreneurs from business idea to business plan, while demystifying and de-romanticizing the notion of working for yourself. Hear more in their [IG Live Interview](#).



**Julie Brophy**  
Adult and Community Engagement Manager



**Lori Hensch**  
Adult and Community Engagement Librarian



**Karly Feinberg**  
Small Business Consultant



## Broward County Library, Fort Lauderdale, FL

### Built in Broward

[Built in Broward](#) is designed to teach participants the steps needed to create their own tech businesses, with all the tools they need to create a sustainable freelance business model. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Sheldon Burke**  
Librarian Supervisor



## Ferguson Municipal Public Library, Ferguson, MO

### Business Help at Your Library

The library offers reliable internet access, equipment, resources, one-to-one consultations and digital literacy training for entrepreneurs and job seekers. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Taneesa Hall**  
Adult Services  
Librarian



**LOS ANGELES  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA

### Successful Street Vending/Sea un Vendedor Ambulante Exitoso

The initiative empowers the Los Angeles sidewalk vending community with practical strategies for developing their business, including microenterprise readiness skills, coaching, and support in both English and Spanish. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Madeleine Ildefonso**  
Managing Librarian





## Gwinnett County Public Library, Lawrenceville, GA

### New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator

The goal of the [New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator](#) is to engage individuals returning from jail or prison in learning what is needed to run a successful business with support of successful entrepreneurs and business mentors. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Adam Pitts**  
Branch Manager



**Atlas Logan**  
Branch Manager



**Ann Serrie**  
Volunteer  
Coordinator



**Ron Gauthier**  
Community  
Partnerships  
Manager



**Andrea Devereux**  
New Start Outreach  
Coordinator



## Independence Public Library, Independence, KS

### Cultivate Indy

[Cultivate Indy](#) is a small business center and program that works to cultivate entrepreneurial skills for low-income and minority communities living in rural Kansas that provides state-of-the-art tools, training, and networking opportunities. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Brandon West**  
Development  
Coordinator



## Laramie County Library System, Cheyenne, WY

### Wyoming Library to Business

[Wyoming Library to Business](#) serves the entirety of Wyoming by building photo and video labs in libraries across the state and training librarians on available business resources. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Rachael Svoboda**

Library to Business  
Manager



YAKAMA NATION LIBRARY

## Yakama Nation Library, Toppenish, WA

### Business Maker Space

The Yakama Nation Library provides internet access, computers and software, and reference support in their Business Maker Space for local entrepreneurs to create business related materials and conduct business research. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Merida Kipp**

Library  
Administrator



**Michael Sekaquaptewa**

Multimedia Specialist



**Providence  
Public  
Library**

## Providence Public Library, Providence, RI

### Small Business Hub

[Small Business Hub](#) offers help to local small business owners and budding entrepreneurs by providing classes, special programs, resources, and referral help, with specialized programming for immigrants and English learners. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Christopher Bourret**  
Education Director



**Ann Poulos**  
Librarian,  
Information Services



**Bethany Plummer-Ricci**  
Grants Manager



**Beatrice Pulliam**  
Director of  
Technology and  
Information Services



**RICHLAND  
LIBRARY**  
access freely.®

## Richland Library, Columbia, SC

### Entrepreneurial Launch Pad

The [Entrepreneurial Launch Pad](#) supports emerging businesses with a focus on efforts to assist and encourage minority and woman-owned businesses. Our three-pronged approach provides free access to Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EiR) experts, customized learning and networking, and the Entrepreneurial Library of Things. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Diane Luccy**  
Business and Careers  
Manager



**Mary Kate Quillivan**  
Arts and Media Manager



## Spokane County Library District, Spokane, WA

### Small Business Boot Camp

[Small Business Boot Camp](#) is for business owners and entrepreneurs in the Deer Park area, a rural, low-income community distanced from core services, including Internet. The Boot Camp program is designed to build skills and support business success in the community through training and micro-grants. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Stacey Goddard**  
Adult Services  
Manager



**Danielle Milton**  
Librarian



**Crystal Miller**  
Librarian



**Sarah O'Hare**  
Librarian



## Topsham Public Library, Topsham, ME

### Employment and Business Entrepreneur Center

The [Employment and Business Entrepreneur Center](#) provides a comprehensive and coordinated series of programs, drop-ins, informational opportunities, and collection enhancements in collaboration with partners. Hear more in the [IG Live Interview](#).



**Susan Preece**  
Director

# APPENDIX B

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

#### Memorandum of Understanding Between [Your library] and [Any organization]

Whereas [your library name] and [your partner organization] will embark on a partnership to support [your small business initiative];

Whereas both the library and the organization have specific skill sets that allow for a program that fulfills the mission and objectives of both organizations;

Whereas the library and the organization have received grant funding to create the small business initiative;

Now therefore both parties agree to the following:

1. There will be [X] sessions of the [program] which will alternate at the public library and the organization.
2. Staff members from both [the library] and [the organization] will attend all sessions.
3. Measurement and evaluation information will be collected at all sessions and be shared with each organization.
4. Should there be a need to change dates or address any unforeseen circumstances which will change the schedule of the program the directors for the program, [insert names], will negotiate the details.
5. [Names of program directors] will provide a list of all expenses for [program] and include receipts for reimbursement to the funding source.

This MOU will remain in place until the completion of the [program] and can be renewed if both parties agree. The MOU may be canceled by either party with 120 days notice and the return of all expenses paid out to that date.

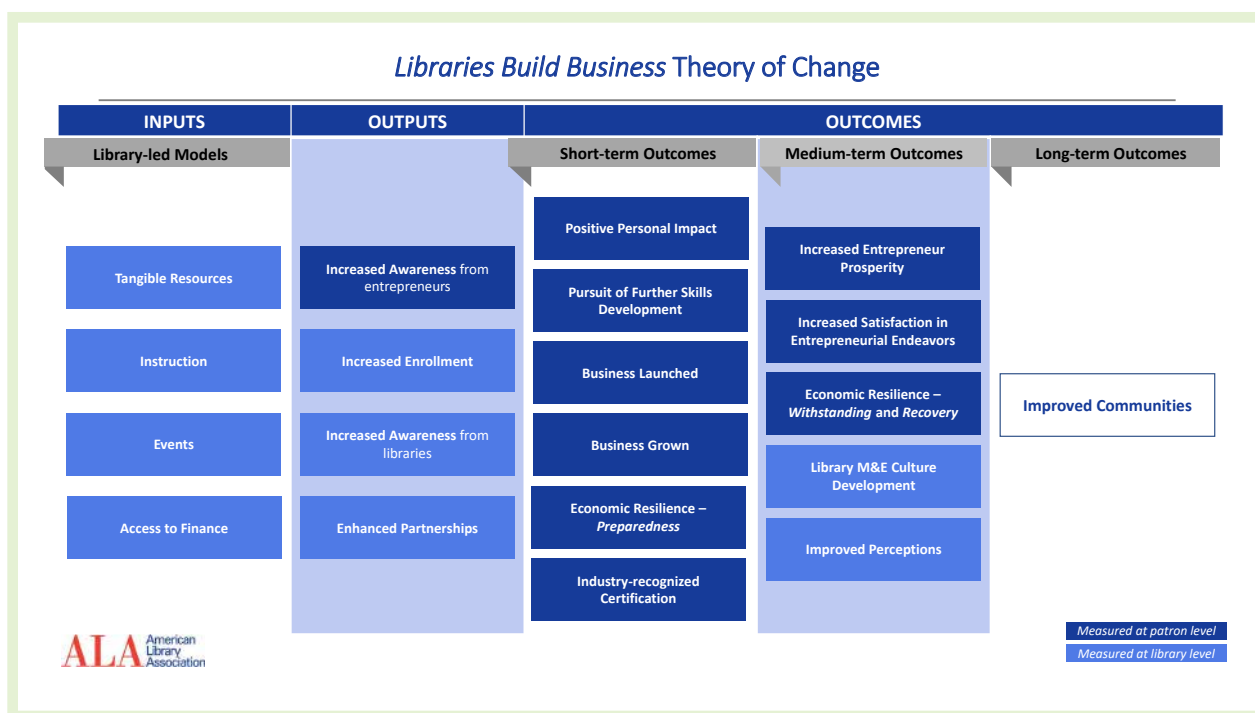
Signed: [Library] Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
          [Organization] Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX C

## LBB MONITORING AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

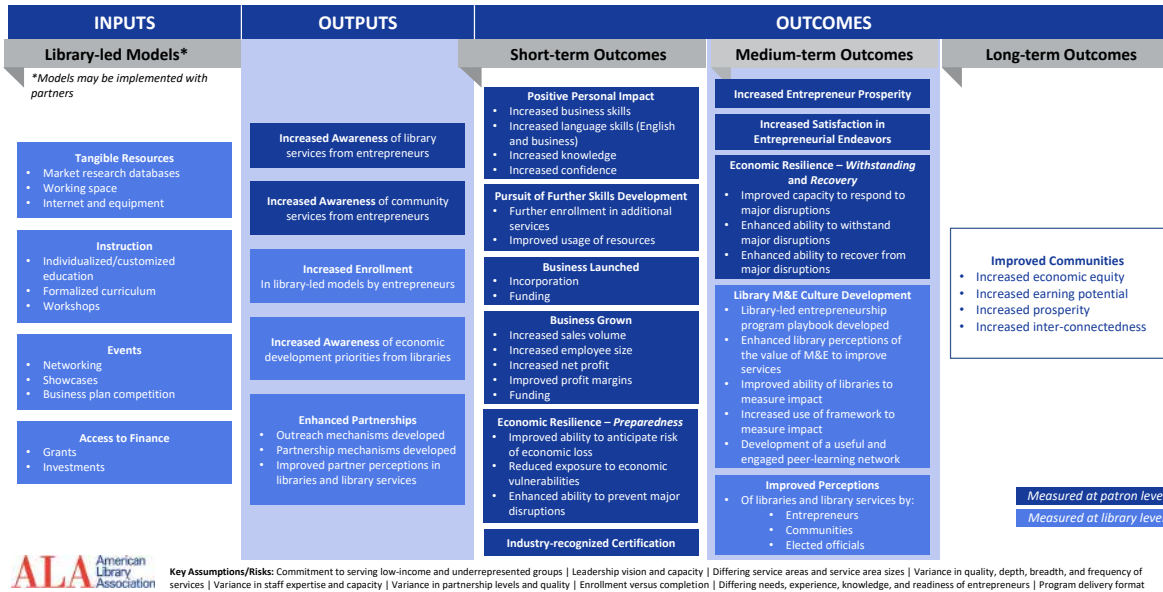
In this appendix you will find the Libraries Build Business–created M&E instruments and further information about the M&E Framework and Theory of Change. These materials were collaboratively developed with ALA, Cicero Group (ALA’s M&E Partner), and the LBB cohort.

### M&E Resource 1: The LBB Theory of Change and M&E Framework



LBB THEORY OF CHANGE ([available online as a Google doc](#))

## Libraries Build Business Theory of Change (Detailed)



LBB DETAILED THEORY OF CHANGE (available online as a Google doc)

## Libraries Build Business M&E Framework Development

The LBB M&E framework was developed using the LBB Theory of Change as basis to determine what to evaluate. The Theory of Change generated actionable practices to help achieve the goals of the LBB initiative. The M&E framework was then built around these practices to measure their impact. See below for an example.

No.	Indicator	Description	Unit of Measurement <small>What are the values/numbers we want to measure?</small>	Data Source <small>Who/what will we collect data from?</small>	Instrument <small>How will the data be collected?</small>	Frequency <small>How often will it be measured?</small>	Owner <small>Who is responsible for measuring it?</small>	Reporting/Audience <small>What type of report will it be?</small>
INPUTS								

EXAMPLE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (available online as a Google doc)

## M&E Resource 2: Small Business Survey

The following survey is [available online as a Google doc](#).

Thank you for completing this survey. You will be asked questions about your business, and how your experience with your library's small business programs/resources have affected your business. All responses you provide will remain **confidential** and will be used to improve your library's support for small businesses.

<b>1. Which library do you receive resources or services from?</b>				
<input type="radio"/> Appleton Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Public Library			
<input type="radio"/> Baltimore County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Providence Public Library			
<input type="radio"/> Broward County Library	<input type="radio"/> Richland Library			
<input type="radio"/> Ferguson Municipal Library	<input type="radio"/> Spokane County Library District			
<input type="radio"/> Gwinnett County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Topsham Public Library			
<input type="radio"/> Independence Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Yakama Nation Library			
<input type="radio"/> Laramie County Library System	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____			
<b>2. In which zip code is your business? (If you do not have a business, please indicate the zip code you live in.)</b>				_____
<b>3. When are you taking this survey?</b>				
<input type="radio"/> Before I receive support from my library.				
<input type="radio"/> During my library's support programming.				
<input type="radio"/> After I received support from my library.				
<b>4. Which of the following best describes the type of support you are seeking/received from your library? (Please select all that apply.)</b>				
<input type="radio"/> <i>Resources</i> (research databases, working space, internet, and equipment, etc.)				
<input type="radio"/> <i>Instruction</i> (education programs, learning sessions, classes, workshops, etc.)				
<input type="radio"/> <i>Events</i> (networking, showcases, business plan competitions, etc.)				
<input type="radio"/> <i>Funding</i> (grants, loans, etc.)				
<b>5. Please rate your level of satisfaction with your library's support for small business.</b>				
Very Dissatisfied <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Dissatisfied <input type="radio"/>	Neutral <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Satisfied <input type="radio"/>	Very Satisfied <input type="radio"/>
<b>6. How likely are you to recommend your library's support for small business?</b>				



0 - Not at all Likely <input type="radio"/>	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	6 <input type="radio"/>	7 <input type="radio"/>	8 <input type="radio"/>	9 <input type="radio"/>	10 - Extremely Likely <input type="radio"/>
--	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	--

**7. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident that I know how to run a successful business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My English business language skills are strong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel motivated to pursue my business ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library helps small businesses become successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel successful as an individual.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. Have you started a business?**

- Yes  
 No, but I plan on starting one within the next year  
 No, but I plan on starting one eventually (more than a year from now)  
 No, and I do not plan on starting one

**9. How much in gross sales is your business achieving? (Please indicate monthly and annual gross sales. If you do not currently run a business, please skip this question.)**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ annual  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly

**10. Including yourself, how many employees does your business have? (If you do not currently run a business, please skip this question.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ employees

**11. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
My business provides enough support to employees so that they do not need to worry about being able to meet their personal expenses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My business is less vulnerable than other similar businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business can handle a major interruption to its sales.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business can quickly recover from a major interruption to its sales.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<b>12. In the last 12 months, how much has your business received in funding?</b>	
Owner's Contribution:	_____
Grants/Awards:	_____
Loans:	_____
Equity Investments:	_____
Other (Please specify):	_____
<b>TOTAL:</b>	_____

<b>13. Please list any industry-recognized certifications, if any, that you or your business currently hold.</b>

<b>14. How often do you...</b>					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
...use your library's resources for small business?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...attend small business events or programs hosted by your library?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This last set of questions is for classification purposes only.

<b>15. Which of the following do you identify as?</b>
<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Other (Please specify): _____ <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer

<b>16. Is English your first language?</b>
<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

**17. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)**

- Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

**18. Which of the following best describes your total annual household income? (Please select all that apply.)**

- Less than \$15,000
- \$15,000 to \$24,999
- \$25,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- Prefer not to answer

**19. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?**

- |                         |                         |                         |                          |                                  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 7 | <input type="radio"/> 10 | <input type="radio"/> 13         |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 8 | <input type="radio"/> 11 | <input type="radio"/> 14         |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 6 | <input type="radio"/> 9 | <input type="radio"/> 12 | <input type="radio"/> 15 or more |

**20. (Optional) To help us track progress and provide support to you over time, please tell us your name.**

Thank you for completing this survey! Your responses are very helpful and will be used to improve small business support from your library.

## M&E Resource 3: Small Business Interview

This interview is also [available online as a Google doc](#).

### SECTION I: INTRODUCTIONS/ WARM UP

5 MINUTES

#### Moderator notes:

- The “why” is an essential part of everything we are learning. When asking follow-up questions, as often as possible, push for the “why” behind each answer
- Probe to understand any core values, assumptions, biases, or influences (cultural and other) that contribute to the way the entrepreneur discusses the topics
- If a topic from a question or probing question has already been discussed before the question was asked, move onto a different question or probing question—do not ask questions that have already been answered
- You likely will not be able to ask all the questions in this interview. This is both okay and expected. Please do not rush through the questions—allow time for the entrepreneur to provide quality responses
- You may go “off script” if other questions arise based on the entrepreneur’s responses

#### Introduction:

- Moderator provides a brief introduction of him or herself
- Moderator emphasizes that all responses are appreciated and needed. There are no right or wrong answers
- The participant will be audio recorded during this interview for tracking purposes. Someone will be taking notes during the discussion, but may need to use the recording to collect verbatim quotes

#### Ground Rules for the Participant:

- Enjoy yourself
- Please be open and honest (no consequences)
- Help me: Are there things I should be asking or things you would like to tell me?
- When you have a comment or question please speak up so I can hear you
- Always pay attention:
  - Please put away your cell phone
  - Avoid any distractions until the interview ends

“Today we are going to talk about your experience using our resources and programs to help grow your small business. The goal of our conversation is to understand how you have perceived those resources and programs, and if there are ways that they can be improved.

Before we begin, does anyone have questions?

Okay, let’s get started.”

1. To begin with, we understand that businesses can be at different phases of their journey. A business could be just an idea, a startup that is just getting its legs under it, an established business looking for opportunities to grow, etc. At what point would you say you are in this process?
  - a. PROBE: What did it take for you to get where you are now?
  - b. PROBE: Where would you like to take the business next?
  
2. As part of our services, we offer small business programming to entrepreneurs and small business owners to provide them with the resources and tools they need to lead a successful business. As someone who has participated in our small business programming, how relevant and useful was the content in helping you improve your business?
  - a. PROBE: How much did you learn that was new?
  - b. PROBE: How did the program and its resources meet your needs as a small business?
  - c. PROBE: How did the program and its resources not meet your needs as a small business?
  - d. PROBE: What pieces of the program did you not find useful and/or relevant?
    - i. Why?
    - ii. How could the program be changed to meet your needs better?
  
3. Outside of our small business programming, what other library resources have you used to help grow your business?
  - a. PROBE: Did you start using these resources before you participated in the small business programming?
  - b. PROBE: Are there any resources you want/need but the library does not currently have available?
  
4. By participating in our business programming and using our other resources, how do you think you have improved your skills as a business owner?
  - a. PROBE: What specific skills have you been able to improve?

5. How has your enjoyment of running a business changed since you began using the library's services?
  - a. PROBE: How has your business grown since you completed our small business program and began using our resources?
  - b. PROBE: How has your comfort and confidence in running a business changed?
  
6. Switching gears a little bit, I want to talk about your business's ability to handle major interruptions to its sales and how this may have changed since you went through the program. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses experienced challenges. It is important to both us as a library and to the community that all small businesses are able handle big events such as this. Based on your experience with the library's services and programs, how has your business improved its ability to prepare for another major catastrophic event like COVID-19?
  - a. PROBE: How have you improved your ability to recognize a major catastrophic event?
  - b. PROBE: How have you made your business less vulnerable?
  - c. PROBE: How have you improved your ability to handle major interruptions to business sales?
  
7. Along that same vein, how has your business's ability to withstand an economic shock improved?
  - a. PROBE: How has your capacity to respond to a major disruption changed?
  - b. PROBE: How has your ability to recover from a major disruption changed?
  
8. Prior to participating in the small business programming and to using our other business resources, what was your perception of the library's business resources and programs?
  - a. PROBE: Was your view predominantly negative or positive?
    - i. Why?
  
9. After participating in the programming and using the business resources, how have your perceptions of the library changed?
  - a. PROBE: Is your view predominantly negative or positive?
    - i. Why?
  - b. (IF APPLICABLE) PROBE: Why has your perception not changed?
  
10. Before we end this discussion, is there anything else you want to mention that we haven't talked about yet?

"Thank you for your time! This concludes our interview. We really appreciate your candid and thoughtful responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to follow-up with me."

## M&E Resource 4: Elected Officials Interview

This interview is also [available online as a Google doc](#).

### SECTION I: INTRODUCTIONS/ WARM UP

5 MINUTES

#### Moderator notes:

- The “why” is an essential part of everything we are learning. When asking follow-up questions, as often as possible, push for the “why” behind each answer
- Probe to understand any core values, assumptions, biases, or influences (cultural and other) that contribute to the way the elected official discusses the topics
- If a topic from a question or probing question has already been discussed before the question was asked, move onto a different question or probing question—do not ask questions that have already been answered
- You likely will not be able to ask all the questions in this interview. This is both okay and expected. Please do not rush through the questions—allow time for the elected official to provide quality responses
- You may go “off script” if other questions arise based on the elected official’s responses

#### Introduction:

- Moderator provides a brief introduction of him or herself
- Moderator emphasizes that all responses are appreciated and needed. There are no right or wrong answers
- The participant will be audio recorded during this interview for tracking purposes. Someone will be taking notes during the discussion, but may need to use the recording to collect verbatim quotes

#### Ground Rules for the Elected Official:

- Enjoy yourself
- Please be open and honest (no consequences)
- Help me: Are there things I should be asking or things you would like to tell me?
- When you have a comment or question please speak up so I can hear you
- Always pay attention:
  - Please put away your cell phone
  - Avoid any distractions until the interview ends

“Today we are going to talk about the librar(ies) services and programs. We want to understand how you perceive the library’s offerings for small businesses.

Before we begin, does anyone have questions?

Okay, let’s get started.”

1. As an elected official, what is your relationship with the local librar(ies)?
  - a. PROBE: In what capacity do you interact with the librar(ies)?
  - b. PROBE: How often do you interact with the librar(ies)?
  
2. What offerings are you aware that the librar(ies) have for small businesses?
  
3. If you could rate your perception of the librar(ies)’ programs for small businesses, would you say that those programs are highly reputable, not reputable, or somewhere in-between?
  - a. Why?
  - b. PROBE: Compared to your opinion, how do you think the public perceives the librar(ies)’ programs?
  
4. What could librar(ies) do to increase the credibility of their programs in your eyes?
  - a. PROBE: What could librar(ies) do that would increase the credibility of their programs in the eyes of the public?
  - b. PROBE: Are there any specific programs, workshops, resources, speakers, etc. that librar(ies) should seek to add to their current repertoire of offerings for small businesses?
  
5. Before we end this discussion, is there anything else you want to mention that we haven’t talked about yet?

“Thank you for your time! This concludes our interview. We really appreciate your candid and thoughtful responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to follow-up with me.”



## M&E Resource 5: Library Staff Survey

This survey is also [available online as a Google doc](#).

Thank you for completing this survey. You will be asked questions about your library's support for small business, and how your library tracks its progress to continuously improve. All responses you provide will remain **confidential** and will be used to improve your library's support for small businesses. As you respond to the questions, please do so from the perspective of only your library that delivers small business resources and/or programming.

<b>1. What is the name of your library?</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Appleton Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Public Library
<input type="radio"/> Baltimore County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Providence Public Library
<input type="radio"/> Broward County Library	<input type="radio"/> Richland Library
<input type="radio"/> Ferguson Municipal Library	<input type="radio"/> Spokane County Library District
<input type="radio"/> Gwinnett County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Topsham Public Library
<input type="radio"/> Independence Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Yakama Nation Library
<input type="radio"/> Laramie County Library System	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____
<b>2. What is your library's service area size?</b>	
<input type="radio"/> Very Large (500k+ service area)	
<input type="radio"/> Large (<500k service area)	
<input type="radio"/> Medium (<99k service area)	
<input type="radio"/> Small (<24k service area)	
<input type="radio"/> Very Small (<10k service area)	
<b>3. Which zip code(s) does your library serve? (Please indicate all that apply.)</b>	
<b>4. Which of the following best describes the type of support your library provides? (Please select all that apply.)</b>	
<input type="radio"/> <i>Resources</i> (research databases, working space, internet, and equipment, etc.)	
<input type="radio"/> <i>Instruction</i> (education programs, learning sessions, classes, workshops, etc.)	
<input type="radio"/> <i>Events</i> (networking, showcases, business plan competitions, etc.)	
<input type="radio"/> <i>Funding</i> (grants, loans, etc.)	

<b>5. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:</b>					
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Monitoring & evaluation is an important component of my library's operations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library has an allocated budget to conduct monitoring & evaluation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library allocates the staff and time resources necessary to conduct monitoring & evaluation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library's staff have the relevant skills and expertise necessary to conduct monitoring & evaluation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library uses the <i>Libraries Build Business</i> M&E resources to guide our monitoring & evaluation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitoring & evaluation has been valuable to informing improvements to my library's support for small businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. Please use the space below to elaborate on any of your responses to the previous question.**

<b>7. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:</b>					
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
My library's staff have the relevant skills and expertise to provide needed support to small businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library has the resources to provide needed support to small businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library is fully committed to providing support for small businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My library is fully committed to improving its support for small businesses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>8. Please use the space below to elaborate on any of your responses to the previous question.</b>					

Thank you for completing this survey! Your responses are very helpful and will be used to improve small business support from your library.

## M&E Resource 6: LBB Reporting Form

This form is also [available online as a Google doc](#).

Thank you for completing this reporting form. As you respond to the questions, please do so from the perspective of only your library that delivers small business resources and/or programming.

<b>1. What is the name of your library?</b>		
<input type="radio"/> Appleton Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Los Angeles Public Library	
<input type="radio"/> Baltimore County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Providence Public Library	
<input type="radio"/> Broward County Library	<input type="radio"/> Richland Library	
<input type="radio"/> Ferguson Municipal Library	<input type="radio"/> Spokane County Library District	
<input type="radio"/> Gwinnett County Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Topsham Public Library	
<input type="radio"/> Independence Public Library	<input type="radio"/> Yakama Nation Library	
<input type="radio"/> Laramie County Library System	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____	
<b>2. Please indicate today's date.</b>		_____
<b>3. What is your library's current annual budget?</b>		\$ _____
<b>4. What is your library's service area size?</b>		
<input type="radio"/> Very Large (500k+ service area)		
<input type="radio"/> Large (<500k service area)		
<input type="radio"/> Medium (<99k service area)		
<input type="radio"/> Small (<24k service area)		
<input type="radio"/> Very Small (<10k service area)		
<b>5. Which zip code(s) does your library serve? (Please indicate all that apply.)</b>		
<b>6. In the table below, please indicate the number of resources your library currently has available, and the number of resources that have been checked out/accessed/reserved <u>this last quarter</u>.</b>		
Resource Type	Number Currently Available	Number Checked Out/ Accessed/Reserved <u>this Last Quarter</u>
Small business print resources		
Databases for small business use		
Printers/Scanners/Copy Machines		
Software Licenses		

Computers		
Laptops/Chromebooks		
Hotspots		
Reservable communal spaces (e.g., meeting rooms)		
Other (Please Specify): _____		

**7. Please use the space below to elaborate on any of the resources your library provided this last quarter.**

**8. Does your library currently have free onsite Wi-Fi available to patrons?**

- Yes  
 No

**9. How many full-time staff does your library currently have?**

**10. How many part-time staff does your library currently have?**

**11. How many volunteers does your library currently have?**

**12. What is the total number of volunteer hours your library received this past quarter?**

**13. Please indicate the current building operation status of your library.**

- The building is fully open to patrons.  
 The building is open to patrons, but in a limited capacity.  
 The building is closed to patrons, but open to staff.  
 The building is fully closed, and staff are having to work remotely.

**14. In the table below, please indicate the number of small business-related events and instructional sessions your library has hosted this last quarter, including the total number of attendees for each.**

Event/Session Type	Number Hosted <u>this Last Quarter</u>	Number of Attendees <u>this Last Quarter</u>
Workshops		
One-on-ones		
ESL classes		
Lectures		

Convenings		
Other (Please Specify): _____		

**15. Please use the space below to elaborate on any of the events/sessions your library hosted this last quarter.**

**16. Please list the topics that are covered in the events/sessions that your library hosted this past quarter. Please be as specific as possible.**

**17. How many small businesses/entrepreneurs has your library supported this last quarter.**

<i>Existing</i> small businesses/entrepreneurs (i.e., those whom your library has supported prior to this last quarter and continues to support)	_____
<i>New</i> small businesses/entrepreneurs (i.e., those whom your library began supporting this last quarter)	_____
<b>TOTAL:</b>	_____

**18. In this last quarter, how many...**

...small business referrals has your library made to community partners?	_____
...requests for community partners has your library received from small businesses?	_____
...requests for partnership has your library received from third-party organizations?	_____

**19. How many community partners for small business support does your library currently have?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**20. In the space below, please list any of your library's partners who help to provide support for small businesses.**

## M&E Resource 7: Library Focus Group

This interview is also [available online as a Google doc](#).

### SECTION I: INTRODUCTIONS/ WARM UP

5 MINUTES

#### Moderator notes:

- The “why” is an essential part of everything we are learning. When asking follow-up questions, as often as possible, push for the “why” behind each answer
- Probe to understand any core values, assumptions, biases, or influences (cultural and other) that contribute to the way libraries discuss the topics
- If a topic from a question or probing question has already been discussed by the libraries before the question was asked, move onto a different question or probing question—do not ask questions that have already been answered
- You likely will not be able to ask all the questions in this focus group. This is both okay and expected. Please do not rush through the questions—allow time for libraries to provide quality responses
- You may go “off script” if other questions arise based on the elected official’s responses

#### Introduction:

- Moderator provides a brief introduction of him or herself
- Moderator emphasizes that all responses are appreciated and needed. There are no right or wrong answers, and participants should speak up even if they feel they are the only person in the room with a certain opinion/perception
- Participants will be audio recorded during this focus group for tracking purposes. Someone will be taking notes during the discussion, but may need to use the recording to collect verbatim quotes
- Moderator goes around the room and has each library introduce themselves (i.e. individual’s name and name of affiliated library)

#### Ground Rules for Libraries:

- Enjoy yourself
- Please be open and honest (no consequences)
- Feel free to disagree with others
- Help me: Are there things I should be asking or things you would like to tell me?
- When you have a comment or question please speak up so I can hear you
- Please respect each other’s comments and let each other finish speaking prior to adding your own comments.
- Always pay attention:
  - Please put away your cell phones
  - Avoid any distractions until the focus group ends

“Today we are going to talk about your measurement and evaluation efforts. Our goal of this conversation is to get an understanding of how you’re implementing a measurement and evaluation system at your library, and to understand the culture of measurement and evaluation at your library.

Before we begin, does anyone have questions?

Okay, let’s get started.”

1. As you began your small business programming, you were provided with a measurement and evaluation framework and some template data collection instruments such as surveys, interview protocols, and a reporting form. Tell me about the M&E system you have implemented at your library.
  - a. PROBE: How often do you deploy the data collection instruments?
  - b. PROBE: What instruments do you use to measure your small business program participants?
  - c. PROBE: How are you delivering your small business programming and testing instruments?
2. What are some of the challenges you have experienced in deploying an M&E system in your library?
  - a. PROBE: What financial limitations have you experienced?
  - b. PROBE: What resource (time, staff) limitations have you experienced?
  - c. PROBE: What trouble have you had getting responses from small businesses and other patrons?
3. As mentioned earlier, you were provided with an M&E framework as well as several data collection instruments such as surveys, interview protocols, and a reporting form. Tell me about how you have used the M&E framework to guide your M&E activities
  - a. PROBE: Have you experienced any challenges using the framework?
  - b. PROBE: How has your organization adjusted to using the framework?
4. Following up on my previous question, tell me a little more about how you have used the data collection instruments in your M&E activities.
  - a. PROBE: Have you experienced any challenges using the instruments?
  - b. PROBE: How has your organization adjusted to using the instruments?



5. Changing gears a little bit, how effective have your M&E activities been in measuring your program's impact?
  - a. PROBE: Have you experienced any scenarios where the M&E framework or data collection tools were not effective in measuring your program's impact?
    - i. In what ways did you modify the framework or instruments to better fit your program's needs, if at all?
  
6. How valuable have your M&E activities been in helping to inform improvements to your programs and services?
  - a. PROBE: What improvements have you made to your programs/services because of your M&E findings?
  
7. Changing gears one last time, I want to take some time to understand your library's internal culture around M&E. Tell me about how your organization has adjusted to your new M&E activities.
  - a. PROBE: Is the culture around M&E at your library overall positive, or negative?
    - i. PROBE: Dive deeper into why the culture is either positive or negative
  - b. PROBE: Prior to your implementation of your current M&E system, what history do you have of tracking data in your library?
    - i. What data did you track?
  
8. In your opinion, do you think that measurement and evaluation will be a long-term activity your library implements into its operations?
  - i. PROBE: How have you incorporated small business programming and M&E into your strategic plan?
  
9. Before we end this discussion, is there anything else you want to mention that we haven't talked about yet?

"Thank you for your time! This concludes our focus group. We really appreciate your candid and thoughtful responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to follow-up with me."

# LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!



With feedback from public libraries, the ALA can make improvements and updates to this and future resources and publications, providing high-quality, relevant materials to library professionals.

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