


# Measuring Impact, Driving Innovation

## How Libraries Share the Impact of ULC's Business Value Calculator

Launched in 2022, [ULC's Business Value Calculator \(BVC\)](#) is a resource that helps public libraries quantify the economic impact of their support to entrepreneurs and small business owners in their communities. Since its release, libraries have successfully used the tool to communicate with stakeholders and advocate for library funding.

With its use has come a wealth of feedback on ways to enhance the tool. Therefore, in February 2025 ULC released an updated version of the tool and accompanying resources. Updates include additional suggestions to calculate various metrics, the ability to calculate the impact of a library makerspace, adjustments for inflation<sup>1</sup>, and the option to receive an AI-generated summary of key themes. Users can opt in to having their BVC results shared with other ULC members. Doing so could strengthen local advocacy efforts, lead to more informed decision-making, and further drive innovation in how libraries serve entrepreneurs and small business owners.

<sup>1</sup> Between December 2019 and October 2024, the U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose from 256.974 to 315.664, reflecting an estimated 22.8% increase in overall prices. This inflationary rise has impacted service costs across various sectors, including business consultations, educational programs, and technology access. As a result, several estimated retail values in the Business Value Calculator have been adjusted accordingly to ensure they reflect current market rates and economic conditions.



**Business Value Calculator**

URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL

ULC's enhanced member tool — the Business Value Calculator — provides libraries with concrete ways to showcase their value to the local economy. By inputting real data on your library's business services, you can begin to estimate the monetary value of business services provided to patrons and demonstrate your library's impact to economic developers, business owners and local government leaders alike.

**User Guide**  
Read our how-to **User Guide** to learn more about the calculator and discover what you will need to get started. This resource includes methodology details and a worksheet to support you with data collection.

**Communications Guide**  
Review our **Communications Guide** to learn storytelling strategies on how to share the value you provide to your local business community.

## Acknowledgements

Various libraries supported ULC in the process of improving the tool by attending feedback sessions and test groups. An extra thanks to the following for their participation throughout this process:

- Johnson County Library
- Kansas City Public Library
- Memphis Public Library
- Mid-Continent Public Library
- Milwaukee Public Library
- Palm Beach County Library
- Salt Lake County Library
- The ULC Economic Opportunity Action Team

This report serves to highlight a handful of libraries that completed the updated BVC in 2024 and the value of the business services they provide to their communities.

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## IMPACT PREVIEW:

1. **Jackson County Library Services (OR)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$453,889
2. **Johnson County Library (KS)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$2,112,378
3. **Kansas City Public Library (MO)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$2,930,302
4. **Memphis Public Libraries (TN)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$1,347,627
5. **Mid-Continent Public Library (MO)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$6,886,422
6. **San Diego Public Library (CA)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$1,764,187
7. **Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library (KS)**
  - a. Total Impact Calculated: \$1,532,272

# Library Profiles

## Jackson County Library Services



**Location:** Oregon, USA  
**Library Service Population:** 220,768  
**Number of Branches:** 15

Jackson County Library Services (JCLS) primarily supports small businesses, which make up the majority of businesses in the county, with a particular focus on helping newly established ones. The local economy is predominantly a mix of agricultural and artisan ventures, with the Applegate Valley and Bear Creek watershed featuring many vineyards and orchards. Hospitality associated with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, headquartered in Ashland, is another major piece in the local economic landscape.

Services for entrepreneurs include:

- One-on-one support in creating business plans
- Connecting with mentors
- Support in joining networking groups for new business owners

One patron used JCLS’s services to **establish a new emergency veterinary practice in the region**. They indicated the library’s help with accessing databases (e.g. company profiles, SWOT reports, and articles from peer-reviewed business journals) and demographic information helped them establish their practice on quantifiable information over qualitative.

“—  
| *"The results of the BVC Tool were used in presentations at the Women Entrepreneurs of Southern Oregon annual expo and made communicating the way libraries support local entrepreneurs and the economic community clear, concise, and simple."*

*-Katrina Ehrnman-Newton, Outreach Coordinator*

### Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$120,876
Research Services	\$304,763
Training and Education	\$6,900
Physical Space	\$21,350
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$453,889</b>

## Johnson County Library



**Location:** Kansas, USA

**Library Service Population:** 600,000

**Number of Branches:** 15

The library provides spaces, technology and resources to entrepreneurs in Johnson County. From free conference rooms to a MakerSpace, they offer unique tools to help their businesses thrive.

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*"I was amazed to see how much value we provide to Johnson County Entrepreneurs. I see small business owners, artists and entrepreneurs in the MakerSpace everyday, but the support we provide through our meeting rooms, technology and database access is what really astounded me. The ULC Business Value Calculator helped us tell the story of the value we provide not just to our community but ourselves!"*

*-Kate McNair, Maker Services Operations Manager*

### Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$357,108
Research Services	\$1,516,470
Training and Education	\$2,100
Physical Space	\$236,700
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$2,112,378</b>

## Kansas City Public Library



### Kansas City Public Library

**Location:** Missouri, USA  
**Library Service Population:** 500,000  
**Number of Branches:** 10

Kansas City Public Library offers one-on-one consultations, virtual and in-person programs, and referrals to entrepreneur and nonprofit support organizations in the Kansas City metro area. Kansas City Public Library typically serves entrepreneurs and non-profit founders at the beginning of their journey, leveraging tools found in the digital catalog to help them advance.

Kansas City Public Library is also working to expand Spanish language access to small business learning through the further development of an existing virtual programs partnership with Diana Rongish, CEO and founder of connpas.com.

### Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$30,335
Research Services	\$2,528,587
Training and Education	\$160,230
Physical Space	\$211,150
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$2,930,302</b>

### Community Impact Highlight:

In 2023, Small Business & Non-Profit Specialist Hadiza Sa-Aadu supplied \$12,200 in value from **one-on-one consultations** via the Kansas City Public Library to the Kansas City entrepreneurial ecosystem. At the end of 2023, one entrepreneur who started benefitting was Tamika Roberson. Despite being unhoused at the time, she was determined to build structure around **Invalid Voices, a grassroots mutual aid initiative**.

Among many milestones, Tamika has been working hard to develop multiple skillsets necessary to become a non-profit founder. Every other week, Tamika and Hadiza meet to **check in, set goals, and evaluate progress toward existing goals**. Most recently, Tamika took advantage of the opportunity to present to the Community Learning Specialists team for feedback that she is working to apply to her work.

In 2025, in addition to developing storytelling skills, Tamika hopes to expand her network of support to be able to fundraise and continue providing support to survivors of abuse in Kansas City who are forced to live outside.

# Memphis Public Libraries



**Location:** Tennessee, USA

**Library Service Population:** 735,656

**Number of Branches:** 18

Memphis Public Libraries (MPL) has a rich history of offering programs geared toward job-seekers, and the employment and workforce development resources available at MPL are some of the library’s most utilized programs. These offerings include: business classes, resume building, technology classes for job-readiness, the award-winning JobLINC mobile career services bus, financial literacy programs, writing workshops, Meet The Employer opportunities, Techie Seniors for older adults, HiSET/ESL classes, and career fairs.

MPL's Innovator-In-Residence program, an award-winning program recognized as a 2024 ULC Innovations Initiative Honorable Mention, connects working creative professionals in a myriad of fields with library patrons to teach marketable skills, build business savvy, create strategic support networks, and channel passion into a new profession.



*"Through a combination of books, online resources, facilities, and in-person programming, libraries are vital partners in the business community. This calculator assigns a monetary value to those services that can assist with describing the impact to those that may be unaware of our capabilities."*

*- Kevin Dixon, Virtual Digital Branch Manager*

## Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$298,236
Research Services	\$123,233
Training and Education	\$191,408
Physical Space	\$624,750
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$1,347,627</b>

### Community Impact Highlight:

The success of Memphis Public Library's (MPL) pilot **Innovator in Residence** (IIR) program, led by podcaster and radio personality Ena Esco, has paved the way for significant expansion. Ena collaborated with staff to design a **professional podcasting studio** at Cossitt Library in 2023, where she has since hosted her Verbally Effective podcast, **mentored over 40 emerging podcasters**, and led popular workshops on podcasting from concept to monetization. The studio has become a hub for creativity, with **at least 20 new podcasts launched** and weekly use by community members. Ena also founded the annual PODBOX Memphis Podcast Festival, drawing **over 100 participants in its inaugural year**.

Leveraging Ena’s achievements, **MPL secured \$300,510 in state grant funding** to expand the IIR program through 2026, placing five Innovators at Cossitt and two at Raleigh Libraries. With focus areas including podcasting, photography, and culinary arts, the program will enhance library impact, foster entrepreneurial pathways, and increase awareness of library resources. [\[Source\]](#)

## Mid-Continent Public Library



**Location:** Missouri, USA  
**Library Service Population:** 840,000  
**Number of Branches:** 34

Square One Small Business and Career Services started as one of Mid-Continent Public Library’s Mission Enhancements along with The Midwest Genealogy Center, The Story Center, The Reading Rocket, and most recently, The Culinary Center. Square One provides programming and one-on-one support to anyone looking to explore career options, business ideas, or an idea inside their business.

### Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$1,514,401
Research Services	\$4,660,652
Training and Education	\$119,050
Physical Space	\$592,319
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$6,886,422</b>

“*Libraries are an overlooked and untapped resource for entrepreneurs. If you want to write a business plan, find new prospective customers, learn about a business concept, or network with other small business owners, your local library offers a wealth of free resources you probably never knew you had access to!*”

*- Kelly Head, Business Information Librarian*

### Community Impact Highlight:

One patron, Lauren, was working on her **skincare spa business** that she and her husband are opening in the area of Lee’s Summit. She was looking for help with registering the business with the local, state, and federal government, as well as how to reach potential customers through a postcard mailing using Reference Solutions and Vistaprint. The library’s support helped them make sure people were aware of their grand opening and the location of their brick-and-mortar store.

# San Diego Public Library



**Location:** California, USA  
**Library Service Population:** 1.4 Million  
**Number of Branches:** 36

San Diego Public Library offers robust entrepreneurship and business services through **The StartUp**, a free resource hub and workspace located at the Central Library. Officially opened in June 2024, the StartUp offers business planning tools, access to research databases, and expert guidance.

Also, as an official Patent and Trademark Resource Center in partnership with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, the library offers **expert assistance in patent and trademark matters** to help entrepreneurs protect their innovations. This collaborative approach helps local innovators navigate the complexities of starting and growing a business while fostering a culture of intellectual property awareness and entrepreneurship that strengthens the community's economic growth and sustainability. In January 2025, the StartUp was awarded a grant from the U.S. Bank Foundation to support their vision for the future. Librarian II Sarah Hendy-Jackson contributed to securing the grant by providing dollar values for their services, which she calculated using the BVC.

“*The StartUp plays a crucial role in fostering innovation and supporting small businesses in San Diego by providing accessible resources, mentorship, and a collaborative space where entrepreneurs can thrive. It's not just about business growth—it's about strengthening our community, creating opportunities, and empowering individuals to turn their ideas into impactful ventures that benefit everyone.*”

*-Sarah Hendy-Jackson, Librarian II, Patents and Trademarks, Government Documents, & Business and Industry*

## Community Impact Highlight:

Former Navy officers Matt Semple and Andy Camp transformed a common deployment frustration into an innovative product thanks to the business resources at the San Diego Public Library. While serving aboard the USS Jason Dunham, they designed the Razor Rinser, a compact device that cleans disposable razors with ease. When they relocated to San Diego, they discovered the library's free makerspace, where they used 3D printers and laser cutters to build their prototype. With additional guidance from the library's Patent and Trademark Resource Center, Semple and Camp navigated the complexities of patenting their invention. Their Kickstarter campaign for the Razor Rinser exceeded expectations, raising nearly \$70,000.

## Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$1,810
Research Services	\$1,730,487
Training and Education	\$29,790
Physical Space	\$2,100
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$1,764,187</b>



# Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library



**Location:** Kansas, USA  
**Library Service Population:** 174,460  
**Number of Branches:** 1

Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library's most successful entrepreneurship services have been developed in partnership with the Greater Topeka Partnership – Shawnee County's economic and business development organization – the Washburn Small Business Development Center, and SCORE. These include popular monthly “How to Start a Business” programs, weekly walk-in assistance with SCORE business mentors, and monthly programs on “Vital Topics in Business.” The library also serves its business community through the Level 2 Tech Center, which includes a makerspace with high-end tools and software, two audio/visual studios for content creation, and CoLab rooms equipped for remote work and small meetings.

## Value Calculated with the BVC:

Technology and Equipment	\$557,639
Research Services	\$705,558
Training and Education	\$81,025
Physical Space	\$188,050
<b>TOTAL VALUE:</b>	<b>\$1,532,272</b>

“*“Completing the Business Value Calculator in 2024 helped us see the dramatic impact that opening our Level 2 Tech Center and expanding our program and service offerings had on our business community. It also highlighted the incredible value of the databases and software that we provide to our community.”*

*-Debbie Stanton, Public Services Manager*

### Community Impact Highlight:

One of the library’s regular young adult visitors has been using the audio/visual studio to record voice work for his web cartoons, which he publishes on his YouTube channel. In another instance, a doctor used the video recording studio to film physical therapy movements for children. These videos will be shared with her colleagues at an upcoming conference. Lastly, a regular patron proudly showed library staff the brochures they created for their business using the software in the Level 2 Tech Center. They were thrilled with their design work, demonstrating the valuable benefits of the library’s services.