



Business

Value Calculator

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

*Sharing the Value of Your
Library's Business Services*



URBAN
LIBRARIES
COUNCIL

Introduction:

Developed in 2022 by ULC's Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses action team and inspired by St. Louis County Library's Small Business Value Calculator, [ULC's Business Value Calculator \(BVC\)](#) helps libraries concretely estimate the value they provide to their local business community. As of 2025, the BVC has been updated to include additional suggestions to calculate various metrics, the ability to calculate the impact of a library makerspace, adjustments for inflation, and the option to receive an AI-generated summary of key themes.

The Business Value Calculator (BVC) is a powerful tool designed to help libraries quantify the economic impact of their support for entrepreneurs and small business owners in their communities. By using the BVC, libraries can strengthen their "elevator pitch" to local business communities, build confidence in their teams, and demonstrate their value in concrete, dollar terms.

This guide provides storytelling strategies and actionable communication plans tailored to four key audiences: community business owners and entrepreneurs, library partners and stakeholders, library boards and budget decision-makers, and the general public.

By leveraging the BVC and the strategies in this guide, libraries can effectively communicate their impact and advocate for greater support.

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I. Preparing to Share Your Library's Economic Impact

Understanding Your Audience

Tailor your messaging to the motivations and priorities of each audience group. Understanding who they are and what matters most to them is crucial for effective communication:

1. **Local Entrepreneurs and Business Owners**
2. **Library Partners and Stakeholders**
3. **Library Board Members and Budget Decision-Makers**
4. **General Public**

Aligning Your Messaging with Your Library's Strategic Goals

Highlight how library business services align with community and economic development goals by emphasizing their strategic importance. Public libraries are uniquely positioned to serve as hubs for entrepreneurship and small business growth, offering resources that directly contribute to local job creation, workforce development, and economic resilience.

For example, library-hosted workshops on business planning can help entrepreneurs develop robust strategies, while access to industry-specific databases supports market research and innovation. Additionally, libraries can leverage partnerships with economic development agencies to strengthen their role in fostering a thriving local business environment.

Tailor your messaging to underscore how these services fill critical gaps in community infrastructure, meeting the needs of underrepresented or resource-limited business owners. Use this alignment to highlight the library's role as an indispensable partner in achieving broader community goals, such as increasing economic mobility, supporting local startups, and driving inclusive growth.

Incorporating Stories with Data

When sharing your BVC data, tell success stories of your business services to illustrate impact. Share the story of an entrepreneur who accessed library resources to launch a successful business and include the calculated dollar value of services provided.

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.

Understanding Return on Investment

Use the BVC value figure along with your business services budget to calculate and communicate ROI. Communicate this ROI to economic developers, business owners, and local government leaders to demonstrate the library's economic impact. This is crucial because it underscores the tangible value that libraries bring to their communities. By showcasing ROI, libraries can validate their role as essential contributors to economic development, secure increased funding, and build stronger partnerships. It also helps libraries articulate their relevance in addressing local challenges, such as job creation and business support, fostering a deeper understanding of their mission and impact among stakeholders.

To Calculate ROI:

$$\text{(Divide } \div \text{)} \frac{\text{BVC Value Figure}}{\text{Total Investment in Business Services (e.g. staff positions, databases, equipment)}} = \text{___\%}$$

This resulting percentage shows the return on investment.

II. Messaging Strategies for Key Audiences

1. Local Entrepreneurs and Business Owners

Typically, entrepreneurs and small business owners are seeking tools, resources, and guidance to help grow and sustain their businesses. They value practical, actionable insights and success stories they can relate to.

Suggested Messaging Focus:

“Your library is a vital partner in your business success.”

Storytelling Example:

Highlight how the library’s resources, such as business databases, workshops, and mentoring programs, have directly contributed to the success of local entrepreneurs. Share a story of a local entrepreneur who started their business with library support, showcasing the calculated dollar value of services provided.

Action Plan:

- Host workshops for entrepreneurs and include BVC data in presentations.
- Distribute flyers or digital materials featuring success stories and statistics.
- Share individual value of using the library’s business services: **Divide your total calculated value by the number of business owners and entrepreneurs served to determine an average individual value.** Present this figure to business owners to highlight the specific benefits they can gain from library services. Use this data to start meaningful conversations about the range of services offered.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{BVC Value Figure} & & \\ \text{(Divide)} \frac{\text{Total Number of Business Owners}}{\text{and Entrepreneurs Served}} = & \boxed{\text{—}} & \text{The resulting number presents} \\ & & \text{the individual value of using the} \\ & & \text{library’s services.} \end{array}$$

Next Steps:

- Develop partnerships with local chambers of commerce or small business associations.
- Create a library resource guide tailored to entrepreneurs.

2. Library Partners and Stakeholders

These include organizations such as local business incubators, chambers of commerce, and economic development agencies. They look for opportunities for collaboration and shared success.

Suggested Messaging Focus:

“Libraries are critical to economic development in your community.”

Storytelling Example:

Highlight successful collaborations with local business incubators and their outcomes. Share about a joint initiative where the library partnered with a local business association to host a successful business expo or workshop.

Action Plan:

- Present BVC findings at stakeholder meetings or community events.
- Create co-branded reports with partner organizations to distribute widely.

Next Steps:

- Pursue shared grants or funding opportunities based on demonstrated economic impact.
- Formalize partnerships with shared initiatives.

3. Library Board Members and Budget Decision-Makers

This group prioritizes clear evidence of economic impact and ROI. They want data-driven proof of the library’s value to the community and how it aligns with fiscal priorities.

Suggested Messaging Focus:

“Investing in libraries is investing in your community’s economy.”

Storytelling Example:

Show how library programs for entrepreneurs have returned \$X in economic value for every \$1 invested. Use the ROI formula below to calculate.

$$\text{(Divide)} \frac{\text{BVC Value Figure}}{\text{Total Investment in Business Services (e.g. staff positions, databases, equipment)}} = \text{---} \% \text{ This resulting percentage shows the return on investment.}$$

Action Plan:

- Share BVC data during budget presentations with clear ROI narratives.
 - See “Templates” section for sample talking points
- Prepare one-pagers tailored to decision-makers focusing on financial impact.

Next Steps:

- Advocate for increased funding tied to measurable goals, such as expanding business services.
- Build champions among board members to advocate for library funding.

4. General Public

This audience includes community members who may not directly use business services but benefit indirectly from the economic growth libraries support. They respond to personal, community-focused stories that illustrate the broader impact of library services.

Suggested Messaging Focus:

“Libraries transform lives and local economies.”

Storytelling Example:

Share community-centric success stories through newsletters, social media, or local news outlets. Share a story of a local business that thrived thanks to the library’s support and emphasize how it contributes to the community’s economic vitality. Leverage the stories you gathered for the BVC or explore new projects that patrons have shared.

Action Plan:

- Launch a public awareness campaign featuring BVC data and stories.
- Host open houses or events showcasing the library’s role in business development.

Next Steps:

- Encourage community members to advocate for the library.
- Develop easy-to-share content such as infographics for community use.

III. Tools and Resources for Effective Communication

Templates:

Utilize these ready-to-use templates for your outreach and communication efforts. Download each at their below links or by clicking the image.

Sample Press Release - [Download Here](#)

Urban Libraries Council Business Value Calculator
Sample Press Release:

[Library Name] Announces Annual Business Impact Value of \$[X] for Local Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

[City, State] — [Date] — [Library Name] is proud to announce that its business services provided an estimated \$[X] in economic value to the local community over the past year, according to the Urban Libraries Council's Business Value Calculator. This remarkable figure underscores the library's critical role as a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

Through resources such as [examples: business databases, mentorship programs, networking events, and technology access], [Library Name] has supported the growth and success of local businesses. One notable success story includes [specific example of a local business/entrepreneur who benefited from library services].

"Our library is more than just books," said [Library Director's Name]. "We are a catalyst for economic development, providing tools and support that help businesses thrive. This \$[X] value reflects the real, tangible impact we have on the local economy."

Why This Matters:

- **Empowering Entrepreneurs:** The library's resources give local business owners access to tools and knowledge they might not otherwise afford.
- **Strengthening the Local Economy:** By helping businesses grow, the library contributes to job creation and economic resilience.
- **Demonstrating Return on Investment:** For every \$1 invested in our business services, the community sees \$[X] in return, showcasing the library as a smart and essential investment.

[Library Name] invites the community to explore its business services and discover how the library can help entrepreneurs and small businesses succeed. For more information, visit [Library Website URL] or contact [Library Contact Information].

About [Library Name]: [Insert a brief description of the library, its mission, and its commitment to community development.]

For media inquiries, please contact:
[Media Contact Name]
[Title]
[Email Address]
[Phone Number]

Sample Elevator Pitch - [Download Here](#)

Urban Libraries Council Business Value Calculator
Sample Elevator Pitch Language:

At [Library Name], we are your partner in business success.

Did you know that our business services provide \$[X] in economic value to our community each year? Whether you're an entrepreneur just starting out or a seasoned business leader, we offer resources like market research databases, free business workshops, and expert mentoring to help you succeed.

For every dollar invested in our business services, our community sees a return of \$[Y], showcasing just how impactful we can be for local businesses like yours.

Let's talk about how we can support your goals and drive your business forward.

Sample Email/Newsletter Copy - [Download Here](#)

Urban Libraries Council Business Value Calculator
Sample Email/Newsletter Copy:

Subject Line: Unlock Your Business Potential with [Library Name]

Header: Discover the Value of Your Library's Business Services

Body: Did you know that [Library Name] provides over \$[X] in economic value to our local business community every year? From market research databases to free business workshops, we are here to help entrepreneurs and small business owners like you succeed. Whether you're just starting out or looking to grow your business, our resources are designed to support your journey.

On average, each entrepreneur who uses our services benefits from an estimated \$[Y] in value. Imagine the possibilities for your business when you take advantage of our tools, guidance, and expertise.

Here's how we can help:

- Access industry-leading business databases to research your market.
- Attend free workshops on everything from business planning to digital marketing.
- Connect with expert mentors for one-on-one support.
- Utilize our makerspace facilities, which include 3D printing for prototypes, laser printing, and audio/visual studios for creating professional content.

[Library Name] is more than just books — we're your partner in business success. Let us show you how our services can empower your goals and drive your growth.

[Call to Action Button: Explore Business Services Today]

III. Tools and Resources for Effective Communication

Story Success Guidelines:

Tips for collecting, crafting, and sharing impactful stories.

Collecting Stories:

- **Engage Regularly with Patrons:** Build relationships with entrepreneurs and small business owners using your library’s services. Ask them about their experiences and outcomes.
- **Use Feedback Tools:** Leverage surveys, comment cards, or follow-up emails to gather testimonials and success stories. Ask specific questions like, “How has the library helped your business grow?” or “What library resources were most valuable to you?”
- **Host Events:** Use business-focused library events to network with patrons and identify individuals with compelling stories to share.

Crafting Stories:

- **Focus on Impact:** Highlight specific benefits and measurable outcomes. For example, instead of saying a patron “received help,” share how they used library resources to increase revenue, secure funding, or expand their business.
- **Be Personal and Relatable:** Showcase the individual behind the story. Include their name (with permission), business name, and details about their journey.
- **Pair with Data:** Strengthen stories with relevant statistics from the Business Value Calculator to show the larger economic impact.
 - Example: “With access to our market research databases, Jane Doe launched her bakery, creating 5 new jobs and contributing \$50,000 in economic value to the community last year.”

Sharing Stories:

- **Use Multiple Channels:** Share stories through social media, newsletters, press releases, and community presentations.
- **Create Visual Content:** Pair stories with photos, videos, or infographics to make them more engaging and shareable.
- **Leverage Partnerships:** Collaborate with local business groups or chambers of commerce to amplify stories and highlight the library's role in economic development.
- **Highlight Success Stories During Events:** Include impactful stories in workshops, public meetings, and budget presentations to demonstrate value.
- **Share Individual Value:** Present average individual values calculated from the BVC to patrons to help them understand the specific benefits they gain from library services.

Always obtain written permission before sharing a patron's story publicly, ensuring their comfort and compliance with privacy guidelines.

SHARE WITH ULC

We would love to hear how you are using the data and stories collected for the BVC to educate and advocate for libraries. Email the Urban Libraries Council at info@urbanlibraries.org to share your success stories. We would love to share your library's work in ULC's newsletters or on social media.

Tag us on social media:

