



URBAN
LIBRARIES
COUNCIL

Strengthening Libraries as Entrepreneurial Hubs

With support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, ULC is working to strengthen the role public libraries play in nurturing and promoting entrepreneurship in the communities they serve focusing particularly on reaching underserved populations.

STATE OF LIBRARY PRACTICE

- 96%** currently provide services that support entrepreneurs
- 89%** partner with city/county government to strengthen their programs
- 63%** provide one-on-one assistance to support aspiring entrepreneurs and small business development
- 40%** have dedicated spaces for entrepreneurs, freelancers and small businesses
- 50%** report not having enough staff time or expertise to support entrepreneurs

Source: ULC survey of all member libraries, November 2017

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

- By 2020, **50 percent of all workers** will be independent contractors/freelancers rather than salaried employees.
- Technology innovation and the **maker, gig and sharing economies** offer new opportunities for independent success and local economic growth.
- **Many women, people of color and immigrants** have limited access to the resources, networks and capital to help them connect to new economic opportunities or turn their entrepreneurial dreams into reality.
- Public libraries are ideal resources to **level the entrepreneurial playing field** by reaching and engaging those most in need of support.

Learn more at urbanlibraries.org

LIBRARY LEARNING COHORT

Twelve library systems are participating in a learning cohort to explore new ways to reach and engage potential entrepreneurs. Here's a snapshot of the work they are undertaking through the end of 2018:

Austin Public Library is working to extend the reach of Austin's Small Business Program by bringing programming, networking and resources to historically underserved and hard-to-reach residents using the library's 19 neighborhood branches.

Baltimore County Public Library and Enoch Pratt Free Library are building a unified support infrastructure as a foundation for working together to meet the needs of underserved small business entrepreneurs, particularly solo entrepreneurs, in the region.

DC Public Library is developing a package of resources and programs to support returning justice-involved residents in becoming entrepreneurs and will provide training for library staff to guide them in supporting this special audience.

Durham County Public Library is developing policies, procedures and contracts that will set the tone for the library's new co-working space that is currently under construction as part of the renovation and transformation of the system's Main Library.

East Baton Rouge Parish Library is working to expand public awareness of the library as a starting point for potential small business startups and entrepreneurs, particularly underrepresented groups that face extra challenges including offering open business clinics at library branches and community centers in neighborhoods where the most economically challenged residents live.

Kansas City Public Library is assessing the special workforce needs of the city's refugee and immigrant populations in order to align library resources, create partnerships and determine where and how the library should focus its efforts to have the greatest impact.

King County Library System will develop and pilot a replicable, evidence-based strategy for effectively engaging the county's small business community focusing particularly on refugees and immigrants.

Mid-Continent Public Library will address the opportunities that food service businesses offer to immigrant populations in order to sharpen the resources and support that the library provides to this population.

St. Louis County Library is launching a long-term objective to strengthen the local economy by identifying key components of a successful model for working with discrete populations in the county entrepreneurial ecosystem. The process will begin with immigrant and student populations.

Toledo Lucas County Public Library is creating a business outreach team to expand the library's capacity to provide resources and referrals for the region's growing entrepreneur communities from startups to mom-and-pop shops — with an initial focus on women and immigrant entrepreneurs.

Toronto Public Library has created a Newcomer Entrepreneur in Residence program to provide information, personalized support, opportunities for skills development and connections to successful entrepreneurs to introduce newcomers to the Canadian economic and labor market and successful business practices in a welcoming environment.