



Career Navigators and Libraries

Library-based career navigators are key partners in the public workforce development system, meeting underserved populations where they live in rural, urban, and suburban communities. The American Library Association (ALA) supports the inclusion of library-based career navigation programs in federal workforce policy and a federally funded pilot program to increase the number of high-quality, library-based career navigators throughout the county.

With nearly 17,000 locations, virtually every American community has convenient access to a public library with information about career planning, job searches, and the local economy. All libraries offer job seekers free access to broadband, computers, and online tools. Many libraries also provide specialized services, such as resume and interview workshops, job clubs, and even skills-based job training courses in IT and other fields. Library professionals work closely with and refer patrons to One-Stop Career Centers/American Job Centers, local training providers, and community colleges.

According to a survey of state libraries conducted by Rutgers University¹ 88% of respondents report medium or high demand for career services, and 89% expect that demand will increase. To meet demand, a growing number of libraries are hiring or hosting Career Navigators to provide career services to patrons. Career navigators are professionals with extensive knowledge of workforce development programs and services who provide support for those entering or re-entering the workforce, as well as those interested in a career change. Locating career navigators in libraries improves public access to these critically needed specialized resources while situating them within a family-friendly and trusted hub for literacy and lifelong learning.

Examples of library-based career navigators include:

COLORADO: Pikes Peak Library District

The Pikes Peak Library District's bilingual Career Navigator spends half her time providing services to those enrolled in library adult education programs, funded through a WIOA Title II grant, and the other half of her time providing job search, goal planning, and resume/cover letter support in five branch libraries in and near Colorado Springs. In a typical week, the Career Navigator offers office hours open to the public and meets with one or two walk-ins as well as follow-up meetings with ongoing clients. She also provides one-on-one career counseling sessions scheduled before, after, or during class with adult education program students. The number of people she meets varies but the goal is to meet with every one of the students to discuss career goals, further education, and resources to increase their

¹ Stephanie Holcomb, Amy Dunford, and Fopefoluwa Idowu, Public Libraries: [A Community's Connection for Career Services](#), Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University, September 2019.

preparation for the workforce. The program was launched in October 2021 and in March 2022 three patrons obtained employment.

"People in the community don't know about workforce centers, so the first place they come to is the library," said Career Navigator Deyanira Rohe. For example, Annette walked into the Penrose Library in February 2022 and asked for help to find a job. "She just wanted to fill out applications online for part-time fast-food jobs. During our initial conversation, she disclosed having disabilities that I thought will make those jobs difficult. After discussing her goals and work experience, we researched options more suitable for her and helped her to apply for a transitional job in the ReHire Colorado Program, where she will receive paid, on-the-job training and support while working to overcome her barriers to employment." She received a job offer on March 7, 2022. For more information:

<https://research.ppld.org/career>

KENTUCKY: Kenton County Public Library

Kenton County Public Library serves a community of 160,000+ cardholders with three physical branches bordering Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. The two Kenton County library-based career navigators help patrons with career exploration, identification of skill sets, resume and interview preparation and job search. The career navigator roles were originally funded by a WIOA Dislocated Workers grant, before ultimately becoming a part of the library's operating budget. Kenton County Public Library also convenes a job search support group for professional-level job seekers. The library has become an American Jobs Center Access Point, offering skills-based classes, labor market information and connection points to high-growth job opportunities for jobseekers or career changers at all levels. The library provides a navigator link on its website to enable easy access for zoom or in-person appointments.

One client shared: "Your program made a major impact in my life and helped me to get through on of the most difficult experiences that I have ever encountered. I was let go from my job during Covid cuts. I had been the supervisor for 27 years and at (the agency) for 33. I did not know even where to begin. I did not know how to market myself or network. In came your program! What a difference it made. I built a resume and a LinkedIn page and learned how to use Google. I plugged into courses on interviewing, marketing, networking, using Zoom, and building my own brand. Your program gave me confidence and the skills I needed to move ahead. Your program changed my life." For more information: <https://www.kentonlibrary.org/careerandjobservices/>.

MARYLAND: Howard County Library System

The HCLS's Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrants program serves immigrants with advanced degrees and/or professional training from their native countries who are eligible to work in the United States. The program was piloted with a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and is currently funded by a WIOA Title II grant. The career navigator (now called Transition Specialists)

works with Project Literacy, Howard County Library System’s adult education department, and collaborates with Howard County Office of Workforce Development, and Howard Community College to offer professional English language lessons, job search and professional networking skills, career exploration and work preparation, and referrals to higher education and skills training.

Over 65 participants from 32 countries were served in the programs first two years, including “MC,” who worked as a classroom monitor. As a result of the English-language classes and interview skills training offered by the program, she achieved her goal of becoming an ESOL Paraeducator within several months.

“Actively listening to participant’s unique challenges, guiding them to appropriate program activities, thinking creatively about other ways of helping them, and identifying and connecting with available resources from partner organizations are key skills for career navigators in libraries,” said Transition Specialist Jovita Vas. For more information: <http://hclibrary.org/community-education/project-literacy/career-pathways/>.

MINNESOTA: Saint Paul Public Library

The Saint Paul Public Library’s 4.4 FTE navigators provide individualized assistance with job search, resume writing, tech tools, and referrals to community and economic resources through Career Labs at seven branch libraries. With initial funding from the CARES Act and the Ramsey County Investment Support Efforts (RISE) program, and current funding from a Community Development Block Grant (CDGBG), the navigators serve youth and adults economically impacted by COVID-19. In 2021 staff provided nearly 2,700 individual sessions in the communities most economically affected by COVID.

In October 2021, “P.S.” was able to find part-time employment through the libraries’ Career Labs, but continued to make appointments for help to find his ideal job at a hospital that would provide benefits. By late December, he landed the hospital job, but continued to obtain help at a Career Lab to complete pre-employment paperwork online, practice computer skills, and do research about economic assistance programs. In February 2022, P.S. returned seeking assistance on how to purchase a car for transportation to work. “Library staff figured out that he qualified for a loan from his credit union. By early March, he had bought his car and was very excited about how much time having his own car would save in his day,” said Xenia Hernández, Workforce and Innovation Center Manager and Community Services Coordinator. For more information: <https://sppl.org/career-labs/>.

NEVADA: Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Office of Workforce Innovation; Nevada State Library; and Nevada Public Libraries

Led through Nevada Governor’s Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED), in partnership with the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records (NSLAPR) the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and other stakeholders, a \$13.8 million federal grant is being leveraged to reimagine a more efficient and effective way to get

Nevadans back to work in meaningful middle-wage STEAM careers. The **Supporting and Advancing Nevada's **Dislocated Individuals (SANDI)** project:**

- uses virtual reality and 3D digital content to teach labor market literacy and provide training
- decodes prior work experience to assign college credit and/or competency badges
- trains public library staff to serve as career navigators within Nevada's workforce community of practice to seamlessly further the reach of career services and connect community residents to career navigation, training and job placement focused on the talent needed to advance Nevada's resilient industries

Virtual reality content enables individuals to “see” and experience tasks, key skills and abilities of in-demand STEAM careers so they can evaluate job interest and aptitude. If a user feels well-suited to begin a program of study, they can enroll in training that leads to short-term stackable, nationally recognized STEAM credentials of value.

Through powerful library networks and extended reality technology and content, Nevada's public libraries are helping to lead workforce development through programs and initiatives that are meaningfully linked into statewide and local workforce ecosystems leveraging LSTA and WIOA goals, together. For example, all four library systems in Nevada's major metropolitan area (Clark County) house One-Stop Career Centers in 12 community libraries combined and employs career navigators to assist patrons in developing career pathways and pursuing employment opportunities.

“As the 4th Industrial Revolution's unprecedented capacity for global business continues to expand markets with greater efficiency, less cost, higher profits, and treads light on the planet, the obvious imperative for workforce training is focus on advancing labor market literacy and helping all Americans compete for good jobs. This is an obvious role for libraries and will have even greater impact than what Carnegie libraries ignited or reading in America between 1893 and 1919,” said Karsten Heise, Senior Director of Innovation and Strategic Programs Governor's Office of Economic Development.

For more information: <https://sandi.libguides.com/training> and <https://www.nvcareercenter.org/>

About American Library Association

The American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all. To learn more about libraries and workforce development, please visit <https://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/workforce> or email Larra Clark, deputy director, ALA Public Policy and Advocacy, at lclark@ala.org.