# CASE STUDY:  Kenton County Public Library

## Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc.
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# Introduction

## Purpose of the case

The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), launched the Measures that Matter initiative in 2016 to examine, evaluate, and map the landscape of public library data collection in the United States.  COSLA retained Mt. Auburn Associates with Program and Policy Insight (the Mt. Auburn team) to pilot a research effort to provide insights into how to measure library activities related to workforce and business development.  In addition to completing an extensive literature review, the core research for this project involved ten case studies of library systems across the U.S.  The case studies examine the processes in play for designing and delivering workforce and small business development-related services, identifying the role of libraries in workforce and business development in their community, and, most importantly, understanding if and how public libraries share the story of their work related to workforce and small business support through the tracking of outcomes.  These case studies represent a diversity of public libraries in terms of the size of the community, the structures of the library system, and the types of state support for a library's role in the workforce system.  The Mt. Auburn team selected the Kenton County Public Library (KCPL) as a small system in a suburban community well known for its innovative workforce development programs.

## Overview of the case

The Kenton County Public Library is a suburban system with three branches in Northern Kentucky, just outside Cincinnati, Ohio.  Dynamic staff leadership at KCPL engage in key economic and workforce development boards throughout the community, including the workforce investment board, the chamber of commerce, the Kentucky Career Center Leadership Team, and the Covington Business Council, among others.  The library plays a prominent role in connecting, expanding, and building the workforce development ecosystem, including through direct delivery of services.

In partnership with regional workforce stakeholders, the library system uses labor market information to develop its workforce programming.  The system's Career and Job Services Division includes online job search resources and skill-building courses and in-person facilitated job search skills classes, computer training, and online training.  In 2018, the Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (NKWIB) certified Kenton's Erlanger branch as one of three public libraries in the region serving as Kentucky Career Center Access Points.[1]   Additionally, KCPL provides robust programming for a management-level job search support group, the Northern Kentucky Accountability Group (NKYAG), as well as diverse job fairs, including those targeted toward immigrant and other communities.

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[1] In addition to the three public libraries, four other locations in Carrollton, Florence, Williamstown, and CVG Airport serve as Career Center Affiliate or Access Points in the Northern Kentucky workforce region.

## Methodology

During the first phase of this project, the Mt. Auburn team completed a literature review on libraries' role in workforce and business development and identified public libraries with interesting or exemplary models.  In addition, the team developed a Theory of Change (TOC) that presents a framework for thinking about the public libraries' role in contributing to the economic wellbeing of residents.  The TOC identified three distinct roles that public libraries play:  standard, specialized, and community hub (see sidebar).  This framework became an important element in the case study research.  Working with an Advisory Committee, the Mt. Auburn team identified 80 public libraries to consider for case studies, developed criteria for site selection, and selected ten public library systems.

### Role of libraries in workforce and business development system

| | Workforce development | Small business development |
|---|---|---|
| **Standard services** | • Access to computers for resume writing<br>• Help filling out applications or submitting resumes<br>• Books and online information related to job search<br>• Access to online training programs<br>• Direct librarian assistance and referral to other resources | • Access to computers for tax, regulatory, and other forms<br>• Books and online information on entrepreneurship, small businesses, specific industries<br>• Access to databases for business plans and market studies<br>• Access to technology for prototyping - 3D printer<br>• Direct librarian assistance and referral to other resources |
| **Specialized services** | • Computer literacy workshops and training<br>• Career readiness workshops and training<br>• Occupational training<br>• Adult education and ESOL training<br>• Digital navigation and one-on-one coaching<br>• Designated career space<br>• Facilitate job search support groups | • Business plan development and other specialized workshops<br>• Maker spaces, co-working space, media and technology space<br>• Pitch contests and other specialized programs<br>• One-on-one coaching or mentorship programs by dedicated small business staff<br>• Entrepreneur networking events |
| **Community hub services** | • One Stop Career Center location<br>• Facilities for training providers<br>• Training programs run with other partners<br>• Host job fairs with partners<br>• Trusted convener of community service providers<br>• On-the-job training and internship placements | • Joint programs and workshop with other small business service providers such as SCORE<br>• Facilities for small business support organizations to meet clients and hold workshops<br>• Trusted convener of community service providers |

*Library Designed and Led Services* (Standard services, Specialized services) / *Partnerships* (Community hub services)

The first step in the case study process was to conduct baseline research on the communities in which the libraries reside.  This baseline research included a demographic and economic overview of the market area that the library system operates within, an overview of the library system, an analysis of the state policy environment relevant to libraries and workforce development, and background information on the workforce development and business development ecosystem in the community. After gathering the baseline information, the Mt. Auburn team had an introductory phone call with the library system lead to further our understanding of the library and identify the internal and external stakeholders whom system leaders believed would be critical to interview.

In terms of the library system, the Mt. Auburn team interviewed library system staff, including leadership at both the system and outlet levels, library staff directly involved in workforce or business development activities, and communication- and technology-related staff.  The external interviews focused on stakeholders in the workforce and business development ecosystem in the library's service area, including "partner" organizations engaged in active collaboration with libraries,

organizations providing workforce or business development services in the region but not engaged in a formal library partnership, and other civic leaders.

The case study interviews were in-person as part of a site visit to each library system and completed virtually for those unable to meet in person. In the case of the Kenton County Public Library, the Mt. Auburn team conducted 15 interviews. The team conducted 13 of these interviews onsite in during an April 5 and April 6, 2022 site visit and two interviews virtually over Zoom. Of the 15 interviewees, four were library system staff, three were branch staff, six were from the workforce system, and two were civic leaders. The Mt. Auburn team used semi-structured protocols to guide stakeholder interviews.

# Community context

To better understand KCPL's role in providing workforce- and business development-related services, it is necessary to understand the context within which it operates. This section looks at the library itself—its history, governance, and structure—and provides a demographic and economic profile of Kenton County more broadly.

## Library system

KCPL, a former Carnegie library established in 1898, is a three-branch library system in Kenton County, Kentucky. The system's branches are in the cities of Covington, Erlanger, and Independence.

The library system operates as a quasi-public library district with its own taxing authority under Kentucky law. A board of library trustees responsible for hiring and evaluating the library director, monitoring and evaluating the overall effectiveness of the library, planning and advocating for the future of the library, and setting library policy, oversees the system.

| Library | Kenton County Public Library |
|---|---|
| Service area | Kenton County, KY |
| Population of service area | 165,410 |
| # of branches* | 3 |
| Administrative structure | Library District |
| Operating revenue | $14,040,893 |
| Operating revenue per capita | $84.89 |
| Total paid staff (FTE) | 140.4 |
| # of adult programs** | 2,481 |
| # of internet computers | 258 |
| per 1,000 population | 1.56 |

\* Number of branches including central branch, but not including bookmobiles
\*\* Number of adult programs is estimated as the number of total programs that are not children's or young adult programs.
**Source:** *PLS 2019 data*

Historically, library boards sent two nominees for each vacant position on the board to the county judge/executive, who was required to choose between the two options. In April 2022, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 167, changing the appointment process for trustees.[2]

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[2] Albanese, Andrew. "New Kentucky Law Hands Control of Libraries to Local Politicians." PublishersWeekly.com, April 18, 2022. https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/89080-new-kentucky-law-hands-control-of-libraries-to-local-politicians.html

The new appointment process is:

- The library board will recommend two persons residing in the county to fill each position and forward those recommendations to Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA).

- KDLA will send those two names to the county judge/executive (CJE) in the county.

- The CJE and fiscal court may make a selection from those names, or

- The CJE may reject these names and request the KDLA to submit within (30) days two (2) additional recommended persons for each unfilled appointment, and, with the approval of the fiscal court, may make the selection from those recommendations, or

- If the CJE/fiscal court chooses not to appoint from the final submittal from KDLA, the CJE may appoint, with the approval of the fiscal court, individuals of his or her choosing no later than 30 days after the day the CJE received the final recommendations from KDLA.

- The CJE will notify KDLA of the names of those appointed.

- Board member terms remain unchanged at four years.

Kenton County Public Library Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, supports KCPL. Its mission is to "stimulate voluntary financial support for the Library in order to support, encourage, and enhance the programs and facilities of the Library; to assist in financing capital improvements for the Library; to acquire and administer funds devoted to these purposes." During the pandemic, KCPL used donations to support job seekers through technology and remote learning opportunities and fund the region's first public makerspace, the STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math) Center at the Erlanger branch.[3]

The system's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan outlined several goals for local workforce development, including providing "a variety of workforce programs that showcase library resources and support the community including employers and job seekers" and working with "other workforce development providers/agencies/entities to ensure non-duplicative job services in Kenton County."[4]

## Community conditions

Kenton County, part of the Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN Metropolitan Statistical Area, is located in north central Kentucky, bordered by the confluence of the Ohio and Licking rivers, with Cincinnati, Ohio, immediately to the north. The county is predominantly white (88 percent), with small Black (5 percent) and Hispanic or Latino (3.4 percent) populations. According to the U.S. Census, the median household income in Kenton County is $66,541, and the poverty rate is 11 percent.

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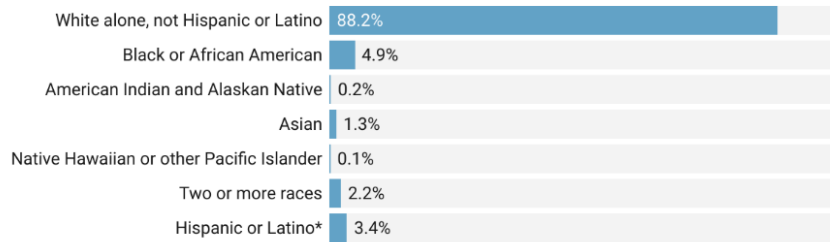[3] Kenton County Public Library Foundation Inc. - 501c3 nonprofit - Erlanger, KY - 611385139. TaxExemptWorld, March 26, 2022. Accessed June 15, 2022. https://www.taxexemptworld.com/organization.asp?tn=621883

[4] "Kenton County Public Library 2017-2020 Strategic Plan." Kenton County Public Library. Accessed June 15, 2022. https://www.kentonlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/104/2021/06/StrategicPlanKCPL20171-1.pdf

Kenton County was established in 1840 and became home to large communities of Irish and German immigrants attracted to the growing industrial work opportunities in nearby Cincinnati. The 20th century brought suburban development and the completion of Interstate Highway 75 through the county. Today, Kenton County encompasses 19 cities and covers 164 square miles. The regions of Kenton County along the Ohio River (the cities of Covington, Fort Mitchell, and Ludlow) are urban with a commercial and industrial base, Central Kenton County is primarily suburban residential communities, and much of Southern Kenton County remains predominantly rural.[5]

| Community Conditions | Kenton County | United States |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment rate | 3.9 | 5.4% |
| Persons in poverty | 11.0% | 11.4% |
| Median household income | $66,541 | $64,994 |
| In civilian labor force | 68.9% | 63.0% |
| HS graduate or higher ( > 25 y.o.) | 91.0% | 88.5% |
| BA or higher ( > 25 y.o.) | 33.8% | 32.9% |
| Foreign-born persons | 3.5% | 13.5% |
| Households with internet access | 88.6% | 85.2% |

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, 5-year average, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs



**Racial and ethnic breakdown of Kenton County**

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino 88.2%
Black or African American 4.9%
American Indian and Alaskan Native 0.2%
Asian 1.3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 0.1%
Two or more races 2.2%
Hispanic or Latino* 3.4%

*Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race, and are also included in applicable race categories. Total percentages exceed 100%.*

Source: 2020 Census • Created with Datawrapper

The largest industries in Kenton County are healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and retail trade.[6] While data for Kenton County alone are not readily available, the largest employers in Northern Kentucky are St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Amazon, Fidelity Investments, and Kroger Co.[7] Currently, Kenton County has an unemployment rate of 3.9 percent, down from a peak of 13.6 percent in April 2020.

Three district commissioners oversee the county, with support from elected county officials and agencies. Ongoing priority projects within the county include the development of the new Kenton County Park and a road reconstruction project.

# Relevant systems

The state-enabling environment—the policies and practices of state agencies related to both public library support and workforce development policies and priorities—influences each public library.

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[5] "History of Kenton County Part IV." Kenton County Public Library. Accessed June 15, 2022. https://www.kentonlibrary.org/genealogy/regional-history/kenton-county-history-part-iv/

[6] Kenton County, KY. Data USA. Accessed June 14, 2022. https://datausa.io/profile/geo/kenton-county-ky#economy

[7] Drilling, Joanne. "Northern Kentucky's Largest Employers Ranked by Northern Kentucky Employees." Cincinnati Business Courier. July 2, 2021. https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/subscriber-only/2021/07/02/northern-kentuckys-largest-employers.html

Moreover, each public library operates within a very different local environment related to the workforce and small business ecosystems. This section reviews the state-level and community-level systems in which the Kenton County Public Library operates.

## State-level support: policies, funding, and infrastructure

**State Library administrative agency**

In Kentucky, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives houses the library administrative agency within the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. The Division of Library Services houses the Library Development Branch and the Continuing Education Section. KDLA's mission is to "support and promote access to library services and to ensure that documentation of government activities is created, preserved and made available for public use." KDLA's vision is "a future in which Kentuckians value the importance of libraries and Kentucky government records and we are recognized for:

- Innovative and creative approaches for preserving and providing access to government records

- Enabling libraries to be essential to their communities

- Being a valued partner in the educational and economic development of the Commonwealth."

The Library Development Branch provides professional and consulting services to public libraries on topics ranging from budgets, policies, planning, and community relations. It also administers federal and state grant opportunities. Kentucky's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program allotment from IMLS in 2021 was $2.5 million.[8] Although the State Library had level or increased funding prior to the Great Recession of 2008, overall funding has declined since that time.

KDLA provides statewide public relations and library promotion campaigns, continuing education, library planning, evaluation and research services, literacy programs, and consultation on library organizational development. It also encourages literacy support in a range of domains, including adult literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and health literacy.

On its website, KDLA lists statewide partners, including Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), with references and links to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), Kentucky Career Centers (KCC), and a map with contact information for each workforce area. It also links to Kentucky Skills U, which provides free adult education to help Kentuckians obtain a GED. Kentucky Skills U sits within the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet within the Department of Workforce Development. The State Library website encourages libraries to partner with Kentucky Skills U centers to share information with patrons, provide meeting space for individual or group classes, provide computer or laptop access, or become a GED testing center. The website also refers visitors to the Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts (ADDs), which support workforce development, economic development broadband planning, and tourism. The site suggests opportunities for libraries to partner with ADDs to promote library services or offer new services. It also notes that ADDs can provide information on community trends to the library.

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[8] Grants to States: State Allotments. Institute of Museum and Library Services. Accessed June 14, 2022. https://www.imls.gov/grants/grants-state/state-allotments

KDLA's website also identifies library programs, including workforce development. The workforce development section references KCC; Kentucky Career EDGE, a web-based platform delivering virtual career services to job seekers; Kentucky Center for Statistics, which provides links to education and workforce efforts; and Kentucky Education Television Workplace Essential Skills, an online course focusing on math and language arts to prepare learners for careers in high-demand workplaces (sectors include manufacturing, healthcare, construction, IT, marketing, and transportation). Additional programs the website identifies include KWIB and LWDA.

**State workforce system**

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board is an advisory board to the governor on workforce development issues and creates the statewide vision for workforce training and development. The most recent KWIB strategic plan identifies four key goals: increase employer engagement, increase educational attainment and completion, increase Kentucky's workforce participation rate, and resource alignment of partners.

The Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative comprises 19 economic, workforce development, education, business, and training partners. The state established the collaborative to implement the Work Ready Strategic Plan, develop and analyze resource and funding maps, complete self-sustainability and benefit cliff analyses, develop a memorandum of agreement among partners, and ensure quarterly reporting of local boards to KWIB.

KWIB recognizes KDLA as a program partner. The KWIB Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plan notes that the agency may use online training and webinars by other state agencies and that staff from these agencies, including KDLA, regularly distribute training opportunities to workforce staff.

Kentucky has ten LWDAs, which are partners with the KCC, the statewide version of America's Job Centers. Comprehensive KCCs throughout the state offer job search assistance, fund training, arrange space for interviews, provide access to labor market information, offer unemployment insurance, and make connections with vocational rehabilitation. KCCs also establish Access Points, which are mobile or permanent locations with a designated point of contact. Access Points have at least one staff member trained on WIOA core programs, provide material and resources on KCC services, and refer job seekers and employers to partner staff at comprehensive KCCs.

## Local workforce and business development ecosystems

**Workforce development system**

KCC's Northern Kentucky workforce development area encompasses the counties of Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, and Pendleton. The Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board—Kentucky Works—drives policy, direction, and funding oversight for the local workforce investment system. NKWIB is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization responsible for managing the local KCC network, including selecting the one-stop operator and direct service providers.

The comprehensive KCC is in Covington, two affiliate centers are in Florence and Williamstown, and there are KCC Access Points in Carrollton, at CVG Airport, and at the Kenton County (Erlanger), Owen County, and Pendleton County Public Libraries. The Northern Kentucky regional and local WIOA plan articulates several roles that libraries play in the regional workforce development system, including

Kenton County Public Library's identification as a one-stop partner and KCC Access Point, libraries' role in providing workforce development meeting places to accommodate customer schedules and proximity, and libraries' ability to provide entrepreneurship programming and consulting.  Library staff at all Access Points undergo training to help job seekers.

Kenton County is a certified "Work Ready Community," a Team Kentucky program that requires communities to meet criteria in six key areas critical to building a productive workforce.  Criteria include high school graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders, community commitment, educational attainment, soft skills, and internet availability.  Designation as a work ready community signals to employers that the region is "committed to providing the highly skilled workforce required in today's competitive global economy."[9]

Several postsecondary educational institutions serve the region, including two community colleges within a 25-mile radius of Fort Mitchell.  In addition, Boone County Schools operates the Ignite Institute at Roebling Innovation Center, which provides education and experience in career fields in high demand in the community.

Other notable workforce development partnerships and initiatives include:

- *Growing Regional Outcomes Through Workforce (GROW NKY):*  GROW NKY is a strategic workforce collective of leaders across key industries, educational institutions, and community organizations working collaboratively to leverage the region's assets to grow, attract, and retain a globally competitive workforce.

- *MyCareerE3:*  GROW NKY partners established MyCareerE3 in 2020 to connect regional students to valuable career experience opportunities while simultaneously providing employers better access to the talent needed for tomorrow's workforce.

**Business development system**

The city of Covington hosts the Kentucky Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which provides one-on-one coaching at no cost to existing and potential entrepreneurs in Northern Kentucky and serves the counties of Boone, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, and Pendleton.  The SBDC meets the educational needs of the local small business community by offering a variety of low-cost training programs taught by industry experts and qualified SBDC coaches.

Northern Kentucky Tri-ED provides economic development services to stakeholders in Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties.  With support from the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development Office of Entrepreneurship, the Northern Kentucky Tri-ED sponsors Blue North, a network and support system for startups and small businesses in Northern Kentucky that launched in 2019.  It is billed as the front door for entrepreneurs in the Northern Kentucky region.  Blue North provides direct startup support services and activities to expand access to large and midsize companies and investor and capital networks.

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[9] Kentucky Work Ready Communities. Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. Accessed July 11, 2022.
https://ced.ky.gov/workready/#:~:text=A%20Kentucky%20Work%20Ready%20Community,in%20today's%20com petitive%20global%20economy

# Library workforce and business development services

## Overview of the library's approach

KCPL serves as a direct service provider, referral agency, and strategic partner in the development of community workforce policy via its engagement in the underlying workforce development ecosystem. Through its continuum of services, KCPL provides ongoing system-wide service capacity and develops responsive programming to fill gaps in the ecosystem that it or its workforce development partners have identified. KCPL provides an extensive range of entry-level digital literacy courses and more advanced online training and skill credentialing. Classes take place across the branches as well as online and hybrid as a result of the pandemic. The Erlanger branch serves as a formal Access Point to the public workforce development system. Both internal and external stakeholders noted that the library is integrated into the workforce development ecosystem and has a primary seat at the regional workforce development table during strategic conversations.

The offerings related to small business development are more limited, in part due to KCPL's s interest in not duplicating services. KCPL houses a makerspace, hosts small business council meetings at the library, networks with small business community partners, and provides targeted one-on-one small business assistance to patrons. Compared to its workforce development footprint, KCPL plays a less significant direct role in the efforts to promote and support new business development and growth in the county.

## Workforce development services

### Standard services

KCPL serves as the first Access Point for many community services, including workforce development. Stakeholders reported that job seekers are generally more likely to approach the library first for basic job search activities versus visiting a WIOA-supported KCC. This pattern stems from residents being more comfortable attending library services, a lack of awareness of Career Center services among residents generally, and limited staff capacity of Career Center services to handle more rudimentary steps in the job-seeking process, such as establishing an email address and developing basic computer literacy. As a result, stakeholders noted that KCPL tends to attract job seekers who may be more economically diverse or with more emergent starting skillsets than other workforce development agencies in the area.

Public access to computers and internet connection are two standard fundamental services KCPL provides job seekers. Individuals seeking help with resume writing or job search activities may approach the reference desk for help. Library associates are universally equipped with the capacity to help with basic workforce development services, such as establishing email addresses, completing applications, resume writing, and basic job search help. All Library associates are able to direct patrons to online resources related to workforce development. Despite their ability to help patrons with basic job and career services, general library associates will typically refer patrons seeking job search assistance to one of the workforce librarians or career navigators for more targeted assistance.

KCPL has a landing page on its website for Career and Job Services. This page provides visitors with job search tools and resources related to resume development and online applications; research resources for salary information, job search sites, and employer information; links related to personal

development such as Dress for Success, the Toastmasters Club, and local career coaches; and suggested reads for career changers and job hunters.  Patrons can also access online workforce development-related resources, including Gale Courses, ProQuest Career and Technical Education, Data Axle, GCFLearnFree, and LearningExpress Job and Career Accelerator.

**Specialized services**

KCPL provides robust specialized services related to workforce development, including:

- *Career navigators:*  In addition to permanent library workforce development staff based at the Erlanger branch, KCPL, working with partners, established two new career navigator positions to assist patrons with career and job search activities.  A dislocated worker grant in partnership with NKWIB provided initial funding for the three career navigator positions.  When funding ran out, KCPL incorporated two of the positions into its permanent budget and based the navigators at the Covington and Independence branches.  Career navigators are available for one-on-one appointments to assist job seekers.  These navigators provide assistance with exploring skills and interests, resume writing, learning how to search for jobs, preparing for interviews, and finding where to go for additional help at the library or through community partners.  At the Erlanger branch, the dedicated workforce development librarian or workforce development programming specialist provides these services.

- *Job search skills classes:*  KCPL offers a range of in-person, online, and hybrid job search skills classes taught by library staff or program partners.  KCPL offers classes at various times throughout the workday, in the evening, and on weekends.  Examples of job search skills classes include:

  o Finding a Job 101;
  o The Fine Art of Job Search Correspondence;
  o Using Data Axle to Build a Target Company List for your Job Search;
  o Personality Assessments;
  o Interviewing Skills Workshop;
  o Building a Resume from Scratch;
  o Elevator Pitch Power Hour;
  o LinkedIn Photo Session;
  o Core Skills Workshop;
  o Toastmasters;
  o Manage and Build Your Online Brand;
  o Get Started: Begin your Career Transition with Us;
  o Create a Federal Resume;
  o Introduction to Online Learning; and
  o Improve Your Resume with Practical Strategies.

- *Computer and online training classes:*  KCPL offers a broad spectrum of computer and online training courses that can help job seekers upskill their credentials for prospective positions.  Similar to the job search skills classes, KCPL offers computer and online training classes throughout the week at variable times to accommodate patron schedules.  Class examples include the basics of Microsoft PowerPoint, Team, Word, and Excel; Powering Your Job Search with Google Tools; and Communicating with Gmail and GCalendar.

- *Northern Kentucky Accountability Group:* NKYAG is perhaps KCPL's most visible workforce development program. Prior to the library establishing the NKYAG, KCC staff hosted a weekly networking group for professionals, and a separate group of six to eight professional job seekers met at the library for networking and support. As staff engaged in these two services retired, they approached the library about taking over an effort to provide networking support for professional job seekers. Since that time, NKYAG has grown into a robust "job search support group for professionals in career transition due to layoff, business closure, change in life situation, or simply desire to switch careers."[10] Stakeholders noted that NKYAG participants may not be familiar with or comfortable using KCC services and Career Center staff did not focus on mid-level professionals. The library recognized this gap in services and developed a vigorous menu of resources and connections for participating patrons (see sidebar). NKYAG has support from ten KCPL-vetted volunteer coaches who assist the participants with editing resumes, reviewing cover letters, preparing for interviews, negotiating salary, and general job search journey questions that significantly amplify the program's reach.

## Community hub services

The most notable example of a community hub-related service is the location of a KCC Access Point at KCPL's

## The Northern Kentucky Accountability Group

NKYAG is perhaps KCPL's most visible workforce development program. The program meets weekly from 9:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Erlanger branch and provides job search support, weekly speakers, networking opportunities, connections to community partners, job leads, and career coaching. Each meeting centers on a relevant speaker and ensures time for facilitated discussion and general networking. NKYAG sets the speaker schedule on a "just in time" basis, rather than weeks in advance, to ensure it is responsive to current patron needs. In addition to periodic "How Did They Do It" presentations from NKYAG alumni who have found new positions, examples of recent NKYAG speakers include:

- Mitch Dunn: The Power of the Personal Brand
- Monika Royal-Fischer: Know Your Value
- Travis Nipper: Reinventing Yourself During a Career Transition
- Patricia Borne: Handling Criticism: Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Dr. Kimberly Luse: The Imposter Syndrome
- Nadia Ibrahim-Taney: Diversity in the Job Search
- Nichole Sims: Salary Negotiation
- Bob Goodwin: Making Your Own Weather
- Dr. Bruce Rosenthal: Making a Great Presentation
- Jeff Staley, Lauren Weir, Rodney Driscoll: Transferable Skills in Demand Today
- Alexandra Bowden: How to Find the Right Job for You

Over time, NKYAG has served hundreds of area job seekers and built strong connections with area employers. In their new positions, these NKYAG alumni continue to serve as contacts for participating NKYAG members, facilitating greater networking and direct connections for individuals investigating job leads at their organizations. Stakeholders noted that these ongoing connections and communication are one of the hallmarks that distinguish NKYAG from other job search support groups. Additionally, there is strong cross-pollination between NKYAG and local business groups, such as the chamber of commerce and business councils. NKYAG members are eligible to participate in monthly chamber "Eggs and Issues" breakfasts at chamber member prices, further expanding their networking opportunities. Additionally, library staff present regularly at the Eggs and Issue events as well as other chamber and business meetings to share what they are learning about job seeker capacity and needs and improve connections between employers and prospective job candidates.

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[10] Kenton County Public Library, Northern Kentucky Accountability Group. Kenton County Public Library. Accessed June 15, 2022.
https://www.kentonlibrary.org/nkyag/#:~:text=Purpose,the%20Kenton%20County%20Public%20Library

Erlanger branch.  KCPL was the first library to serve in this role within the eight-county Northern Kentucky workforce development area, becoming an Access Point in 2018.  Two additional libraries in Owen and Pendleton counties became Access Points in January 2021.  As an Access Point, KCPL is a place for patrons to become acquainted with KCC workforce development services.  For the library to qualify as an Access Point, at least one library staff member must undergo training on WIOA services and KCC policy and programming.  Additionally, the library must establish a physical Access Point space to showcase KCC and provide current information, such as posters, flyers, and pamphlets.  For its part, the local KCC co-locates a business services representative several hours a week at the library, which coincides with the NKYAG meetings.

KCPL supports numerous other services in partnership with other local organizations.  First, KCC staff teach and KCPL hosts a limited number of job search skills classes.  Second, the library hosts career fairs in partnership with other community organizations, such as local universities, KCC, and the Brighton Center.  The job fairs not only concentrate a large number of area employers but also provide opportunities for community partners to share resources and meet the library patron base.  Direct employers reserve library lobby and meeting spaces to hold hiring events themselves.  KCPL is also starting new hiring events in partnership with community-based organizations focusing on the area's Latino population.  Previous KCPL events directed at Latino residents did not have the attendance that the library anticipated.  KCPL assessed the process and determined it needed greater engagement with trusted organizations within the Latino community to establish rapport.  It has since conducted joint planning and will collectively implement upcoming hiring events to connect Latino residents with interested employers.

*If you have been in a position for 20 years, you probably don't know how to navigate the job search process—you didn't have to.  That is the nature of this library.  They asked:  What can we do to make lives better?  This library, in particular, excels at that.*

Additionally, the library provides space for Kentucky Adult Education to offer GED preparation at the Erlanger branch, and the Covington branch serves as a GED testing site.  Stakeholders cited that the broad community participation in the library provides some level of privacy for individuals who may be ashamed of needing GED assistance—with so many community resources at the library, no one will necessarily guess that someone is there for GED instruction.

## Small business development services

### Standard services

Services focused on small business development are more limited compared to workforce development services.  Patrons interested in small business development or entrepreneurship have access to a wide range of circulation materials and online resources, including Gale Legal Forms, Business Source Premier, Small Business Reference Center, ThomasNet, and the Northern Kentucky Employer Resource Guide.

Similar to foundational workforce development services, all KCPL librarians are able to assist patrons with basic small business development resources and questions.  While they do not have a point person specific to small business development, librarians may refer patrons to Career and Job Services library staff, including career navigators, for more detailed questions.  Library staff also

shared that they facilitate referrals to area small business resources, such as SCORE and the local Small Business Administration office.

**Specialized services**

Due to the large number of Google classes offered and the uptake within the community, KCPL is a gold-level Google partner and offers its small business classes when they do not duplicate those of community partners. KCPL also is a recipient of a Google Ad Grant enabling up to $10,000 in Google ads per month. Many of the workforce development in-person and online training, such as personality assessments, elevator pitch development, managing your online brand, and Microsoft and Google suite sessions, are relevant to patrons interested in entrepreneurship or small business development. Additionally, certain NKYAG presentations may provide relevance to small business owners or entrepreneurs.

The career navigator at the Covington branch manages more of the small business interaction in the urban core of the community. The navigator participates in Covington Business Council meetings to share library resources and understand business demands. The navigator also provides one-on-one appointments with business owners to educate them on how the library can support their needs, such as staff training, including business management, business writing, or advanced Microsoft skills. Relevant business training may include the in-person Microsoft suite sessions but may also draw on Gale Courses or Business Express online resources. Additionally, the navigators help connect businesses seeking employees with NKYAG to match businesses with prospective candidates.

KCPL also has a maker space in the Erlanger branch that small business owners can use for marketing, printing, fabrication, and product development.

**Community hub services**

The Erlanger Business Council meets weekly at the Erlanger branch. KCPL allows small businesses immediate access to the Business Resource Center and STREAM Center makerspace. A library staff member attends at least one meeting a month to discuss library resources.

Library stakeholders mentioned that prior to the pandemic, the local SCORE chapter met at the library to provide small business counseling. This has not resumed since the pandemic but may start up again in the future. Broader community hub services focusing on small business development in particular are otherwise limited.

## Service administration

**Staffing and management**

KCPL has multiple staff positions dedicated to workforce development. These staff include dynamic leaders who provide strategic direction for the entire workforce ecosystem. The manager of KCPL's Career and Job Services Division is a key driver of services and is intimately woven into the workforce ecosystem. The manager has a charismatic leadership style and views the library's role as a problem solver, beyond just a community referral or connector resource.

Besides the library director, digital librarian, manager of KCPL's Career and Job Services Division, and Erlanger branch manager, who all contribute to library workforce services, KCPL's Career and Job Services Division has multiple dedicated staff, including a career programmer, workforce reference librarian, and

a workforce library associate all at the Erlanger branch, and two career navigators, working from the Covington and Independence branches.

## System support and role

KCPL library branches are fairly autonomous in their workforce activities, but there is a baseline of coordination among the branches and with the system leadership.  Because of its central location and facility size, KCPL has centralized the majority of services at the Erlanger branch, including workforce development services.  The branches make choices of services they feel would be most appropriate for their patrons and in consultation with the other branches.  The Covington branch generally serves a more urban demographic, the Erlanger branch serves a more suburban demographic, and the Independence branch serves a more rural community.  The career navigators will usually provide their classes at their own branch, but they will refer patrons to each other for additional classes.  Additionally, the career navigator at the Covington branch handles more of the business interaction and requests, and the career navigator at the Independence branch tends to provide more digital literacy services targeted to the older population.  The Career and Job Services Division manager provides system-wide oversight and guidance.

## Funding

Library tax revenue is the primary funding for KCPL workforce development services.  For the 2021-2022 budget, 95 percent of KCPL's general operation fund came from tax revenue.  The reliance on tax revenue versus restricted grants or state aid allows KCPL considerable autonomy in determining what services to provide and flexibility in funding priorities.  In the 2021-2022 year, the library spent $187,000 on library workforce development staff salaries and $10,000 for other workforce program direct costs.

One outside grant of significance to the workforce services is a 2021 Dislocated Workers Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that awarded the system $46,500 to assist local workers in responding to large, unexpected layoff events causing significant job losses.  KCPL's selection for grant funding was because of its strong existing program for job seekers at all levels of employment and its consistent track record of commitment to providing opportunities to those seeking employment or changing careers.  Grant funding enabled KCPL to hire three part-time career change navigators who work with patrons on refining job search and interview skills, creating resumes, identifying opportunities and researching companies, and directing them toward library classes and courses to build employable skills.[11]  When the grant ended, the library integrated one full-time and one part-time position into its operating budget and changed the job titles to accommodate anyone needing job or career search assistance, not just those displaced by the pandemic.

## How they determine what to offer

KCPL's role in workforce development initiated when key staff noted their proximity to the local America's Job Center (Kentucky Career Center) and investigated opportunities to mutually support each other's work.  At this time, KCC expressed interest in having the library provide computer access, digital literacy

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[11] Klaene, Robin. "Library Receives Grant to Help Get People Back to Work." Web log. Kenton County Public Library Blogs (blog). Kenton County Public Library, September 23, 2021.
   https://www.kentonlibrary.org/blogs/post/library-receives-grant-to-help-get-people-back-to-work/

training, online job search, and resume assistance. KCPL, in turn, invited KCC staff to teach workforce development classes at the library for a stipend in their off-hours.

Over time, KCPL staff became increasingly familiar with workforce development topics and resources and began offering more classes themselves. They also recognized their role as a trusted institution in the community to connect job seekers and other individuals who may not approach KCC with access to workforce development services and connections. As part of this approach, KCPL developed a dynamic webpage providing an overview and links to comprehensive community workforce development services so that librarians had a user-friendly site to share with patrons requesting related assistance. As the relationship with KCC evolved, including KCPL hosting services for KCC during its renovation and taking over the professional networking group upon KCC staff retirements, the library expanded its internal workforce development offerings.

KCPL considers itself a problem-solver and seeks ways to fill identified gaps in community services. Internal and external stakeholders view KCPL as having a culture of "yes." When KCPL sees a community need or receives a request for a new service/class, its leadership figures out how to address barriers and ensure implementation. At the same time, KCPL strives to strengthen collaboration with existing providers and avoid duplication of services. Despite offering services that may overlap with KCC offerings, for example, both KCC and library stakeholders commented that KCPL is the better choice to offer some classes, such as digital literacy and Microsoft training. KCC staff noted that despite this being a documented need, they are never able to garner sufficient attendees within their own offices compared to the high demand for these services via the library. In addition, both KCPL and KCC stakeholders reported that for services that both organizations offer, such as resume writing or job search assistance, the varied location and extended hours at the library complement rather than compete with each other.

Because KCPL sits at multiple workforce development tables, such as NKWIB and the chamber of commerce, it is involved in conversations related to larger, regional-level workforce development decisions. Stakeholders noted that KCPL's unique value-add in these strategy sessions stems from its working with individuals every day and identifying the kind of tangible help requested and gaps in existing provision. One external stakeholder mentioned that the library is often the first to identify an underlying problem in the workforce development infrastructure because it is witnessing daily the challenges that its patrons face throughout the process. This first point of contact positioning with patrons, coupled with strong engagement with the broader ecosystem, helps the library understand unmet needs and plan new programming.

## Marketing of services

KCPL uses a range of marketing strategies to promote its services, including the Career and Job Services library webpage, social media, texts, LinkedIn, newsletters, electronic billboards outside the Erlanger branch, and connections to traditional print and voice media to cover upcoming workforce development programs. KCPL encourages workforce development staff to promote upcoming services during programming. While some staff initially felt this marketing talk was outside of their skillset, they have come to understand that increased promotion of their services is a service in itself: raising awareness of library services can lead to greater participation and outcomes. At a policy level,

several KCPL staff recently presented at the state legislature on what KCPL is doing in workforce development and shared their perspective on the needs of employers and employees in the state.

NKYAG has its own subpage on LinkedIn to share upcoming events and showcase recent hires. It also publishes a weekly newsletter, providing summaries of upcoming presentations, links to past sessions, and highlights of patrons who have "landed" (successfully gained employment). The NKYAG eNewsletter has a broad distribution network of current members, alumni, employers, and partner organizations. KCPL also created a promotional video, primarily to market NKYAG and secondarily other workforce development services the library provides. KCPL will show the video at partner meetings and post a shortened version on social media (Facebook and LinkedIn). KCPL posts regularly on social media about library offerings, including workforce development services.

### Aspirations

One of the services KCPL is growing is outreach and delivery to patrons who have a job but may be seeking a career change rather than focusing primarily on job seekers. Many of the in-person and online training, as well as the NKYAG content, are relevant to those contemplating a change, even if they currently have a job. Furthermore, the transition to hybrid services and recording the NKYAG proceedings allows those not available for the weekly morning meeting to view the presentation on their own time and follow up with questions.

KCPL workforce development staff expressed interest in expanding their services to reach more young adults. Although the perception is that young adults do not require as much digital literacy training, staff stressed the need for more networking skill development in this demographic. Additionally, young adults are often unaware of broader job search resources outside of Indeed.com, so may benefit from exposure to more comprehensive job search services. Because this age group is comfortable with online activities, KCPL is offering more digital classes and resources to meet their needs.

Additionally, KCPL will continue to serve NKYAG participants from outside its geographic region through virtual hybrid hosting of the weekly sessions. Initially, KCPL was concerned that some would view serving those outside the community as inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars. KCPL has learned that participants beyond its local area often are considering a move to the region or live in proximity to Kenton County and may gain local employment through NKYAG and contribute to ongoing economic development.

# Library system's role in the community's workforce and small business development systems

### Library collaboration with ecosystem partners

KCPL has deep roots in the regional workforce development ecosystem through formal partnerships, widespread participation by library staff in key workforce collaborations, and informal strategic communication and referrals. Key partnerships include:

- *KCPL as a Kentucky Career Center Access Point:* As noted above, KCPL is a KCC Access Point, which means the library has agreed to have at least one staff person trained in all KCC services and processes and participate in regular check-ins with KCC staff. KCPL displays and makes available to patrons KCC information and brochures.

- *KCPL staff collaboration with regional workforce development actors:* The library director is the treasurer of the NKWIB and has served on the NKWIB for many years. The director also serves on chamber committees, including a Get Out the Vote campaign and the Refugee Committee. KCPL's career and job services manager sits on the NKWIB's Business Services Committee, multiple chamber of commerce committees, the local Demographic Drought Committee, the KCC Leadership Team, the Strategic Workforce Action Team, and GROW NKY, a collective impact initiative with NKWIB as the backbone organization. The KCPL workforce programmer sits on the KCC Job Fair Committee, and the career navigator at the Covington branch participates in Covington Business Council meetings.

- *Cross-referrals between the library and community workforce development agencies:* There is evidence of broad cross-referrals and cross-pollinations between KCPL and area workforce development organizations. KCPL regularly refers to all system partners, not just Brighton Center and KCC, but to the Kentucky Adult Education (GED), the chamber of commerce, the Covington Business Council, and other business groups. Conversely, all system partners refer back to KCPL. KCC staff, for example, refer residents to the library for computer access, training, and workshops, and KCPL staff refer participants to KCC for funded training and WIOA services. The business council hosts a monthly panel for job seekers to highlight their current needs and receive advice from participating employers—KCPL refers NKYAG patrons to the business council panel, and the panel, in turn, refers panel participants to NKYAG. The library also refers patrons to the Life Learning Center, which provides services to individuals with felonies to equip them with the necessary training to obtain jobs with participating employers. Additionally, Kentucky Adult Education asks library frontline staff to complete a card when someone comes in inquiring about GED services. Staff scan the card and send it to Kentucky Adult Education so it can connect with the patron on the next steps in seeking a certification.

## Library's position in the greater ecosystem

KCPL's community of partners strongly supports the library's work in the workforce ecosystem and lauds its role as a strategic partner in setting a regional workforce development vision. There is no evidence of turf issues among providers; partners emphasized their pride in collaboration over competition. Library and partner stakeholders reported that they do a good job of not duplicating services and collaboratively determining who is best positioned in the community to provide a particular program. External stakeholders were so impressed by KCPL's level of engagement in workforce development that they could not think of any additional contributions the library could make beyond its current efforts.

KCPL workforce development services and role in the ecosystems suggest that it is both filling system gaps and expanding system reach:

- *Evidence of filling system gaps:* External stakeholders explicitly noted that the classes KCPL offers provide service capacity that would otherwise need the more traditional workforce partners to fill. NKYAG, in particular, fills a niche for mid-level professionals whom no other providers serve. KCPL also provides robust free job search skills and computer and online training unavailable at any other provider.

- *Evidence of expanding system reach:* The library expands system reach in two ways—by providing direct service provision to those who may not access workforce service through other avenues and by providing coordinated referrals and hand-offs across providers to increase the

number of individuals participating in partner agency services. KCPL expands the workforce development system reach by capturing residents unfamiliar with or unwilling to seek KCC services, including those not typically eligible for WIOA-funded services and those who may mistrust or be intimidated by government agencies. Stakeholders suggested this latter sentiment may be particularly true for unhoused populations and immigrant communities who are not used to trusting the government for services. Additionally, KCPL's role as a cornerstone of the community enables residents who may feel embarrassed about seeking job support through other avenues to participate surreptitiously in workforce services through the library.

# Pandemic response and recovery

## Overview of library services during the pandemic

During the pandemic, KCPL buildings closed for a limited time. Because KCPL is an independent taxing district, it had a little more flexibility in reopening compared to other public agencies. The first day KCPL was able to reopen, it did so. During the course of the pandemic, KCPL increased its hotspots and computer access and shifted to online options for its workforce development services, including NKYAG and training sessions.

## Approach to workforce and business development services during the pandemic

Within two weeks of the library building closing its doors, KCPL had shifted NKYAG and all career and job services online. Given the potential for widespread job losses, KCPL workforce development staff knew that NKYAG and select training would be in demand. They immediately consulted with the library director and digital branch library to determine the best online platform (they chose Zoom, and were able to negotiate a discount on pricing) and trained workforce development staff, including volunteer coaches, in both Zoom and Microsoft Teams operations so they could continue to meet individually with patrons. Attendance in digital literacy classes decreased during the pandemic since the online environment made it difficult to attract people who struggled with technology.

As noted previously, the addition of the career navigators was the biggest workforce development service the library added in response to the pandemic. The library initially called them career change navigators since the grant mandated that the funds help people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. When the grant funds were exhausted, the library added the roles to their operating budget (one full-time and one part-time) and changed the job titles to accommodate anyone needing job or career search assistance.

Beyond the career navigator positions, the transition to online NKYAG implementation expanded the geographic reach of participants, and library staff noted that individuals from as far away as California, Texas, and the Northeast joined NKYAG sessions. The expanded participation has continued post-pandemic, and library staff expect to continue to see broad participation from diverse geographic areas. In many cases, these outside participants are referrals from local residents, such as family members in Kenton County who participated in NKYAG, and cannot find a similar service in their own regions. Additionally, individuals contemplating a move to the area have joined NKYAG to proactively assess job opportunities prior to relocation.

Outside of changes to service delivery, KCPL used the relative downtime stemming from reduced in-person service delivery to provide professional development to its workforce development staff. Staff participated in a range of online training to gain new workforce development knowledge as well

as exposure to all library workforce development trainings and resources to better understand the continuum of services and more effectively direct patrons. Additionally, given the widespread job losses during the pandemic, the library decided to increase public service desk staff training related to basic job search needs to better assist everyday patrons using the buildings. Public service desk staff participated in the following Grow with Google trainings: Power Your Job Search with Google Tools, Digital Skills for Everyday Tasks, and Calendar and Gmail.

### Learning from the pandemic

KCPL staff learned how quickly they could pivot to online services when needed. They also recognized the benefits of online services to expand reach, both geographically, as with the NKYAG, and in scale, as local participants who may not be able logistically to attend an in-person class at a library branch can participate in online training remotely. The library intends to continue to provide a blend of in-person, online, and hybrid services to meet patrons' training and networking needs.

Stakeholders cited KCPL staff's commitment to delivering services, flexibility in allocating resources, and an overall culture of problem-solving as key factors that enabled the library to adapt to pandemic uncertainty.

## Tracking and measurement

### The library system's approach to tracking and measurement

KCPL primarily measures key direct services in aggregate with minimal participant data and no personally identifiable information. This includes course/event counts, participation counts, and participant "landing" lists (graduates from NKYAG that get a job). KCPL tracks analytics from social media, circulation, and digital resource use.

KCPL's monthly Excel report is the primary vehicle for capturing workforce development service information. There are no formal data-sharing agreements or specialized platforms for internal data collection. Outside of the job opportunities that NKYAG members receive, which are reported monthly and include the place of employment, there is limited outcome data collection. Although KCPL generally has participant contact information for any specialized services requiring registration, it does not use this personal information for any reporting or follow-up purposes.

Forthcoming, to better assess and communicate its impact, KCPL has contracted with the Center for Economic Analysis and Development at the Haile/US Bank College of Business at Northern Kentucky University to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of NKYAG to understand the net value of the program to the community.

Specific components of data collection at KCPL include:

1. *General data collection on library operations:* KCPL collects the data required for state and federal reporting. These data provide a broad picture of programming, online resource use, circulation use, and WiFi/hotspot and laptop use. It collects standard information about how many people attend workforce development programs for state reporting purposes.

2. *Information requests and referrals:* Frontline staff record and tally ad hoc reference requests from walk-in patrons. In the past, this included identification of what the patron was seeking according to strategic plan priorities, but KCPL jettisoned that practice for either lack of utility or

poor data quality (e.g., staff did not have consistent definitions and, therefore, categorization was inconsistent).  Additionally, although library staff and external stakeholders both reported ongoing referrals across the system, there is no consistency in capturing these referrals across providers.  Stakeholders from the libraries and partner agencies proposed that understanding the degree and direction of cross-referrals could better define the system network and refine outreach efforts.  Stakeholders also expressed that existing data systems are not adequately capturing the breadth and value of library workforce development services.  Because libraries provide their services free of charge, they are not eligible to be included as formal WIOA training vendors.  This may decrease referrals from KCC case managers who are new to their positions and reliant on vendors' lists.  It may also undercount the number of WIOA customers receiving universal services through library capacity and prevent libraries from receiving WIOA funding to support service delivery or growth.

3. *Usage of specialized online resources and website analytics:*  The digital librarian tracks targeted website analytics.  For example, the digital librarian assesses the interaction that occurs on the library website when a workforce development blog posts or the number of clicks on "celebration" stories of successful jobseekers on the NKYAG LinkedIn page.  Additionally, the KCPL digital librarian completes monthly statistics on online resource usage to assess what resources patrons are utilizing; however, the library does not break out the use of any database as exclusively "workforce" except for Jobscan.co.  The librarian remarked, *"We can measure pretty much everything."*

4. *Outputs related to specialized and partner services:*  KCPL produces a monthly report with workforce development statistics that includes each KCPL workforce development program (e.g., NKYAG, Microsoft Word training, Open Job Search, career navigator meetings, personal career coaching sessions, etc.), the number of sessions held, the date of sessions held, and the attendance across sessions.  The report also provides a count of the Workforce Development Service Responses (workforce development library staff emails and phone calls to answer questions about resources, programs, services, community partners, and the job search process), outreach presentations, KDLA laptop usage, and career landings by NKYAG members.  Beyond the monthly report, typically, further analysis is only for grant funding purposes or episodic understanding of program demand.  In addition to this internal KCPL output reporting, KCC counts certain KCPL workforce development activities as part of its universal services. It provides information in aggregate by service category, including the number of hiring events held, the number participating in skill-building workshops, and the number taking their GED test.

5. *Outcomes related to services:*  Outside of the job opportunities that NKYAG members receive, which are reported monthly and include the place of employment, there is limited outcome data collection.  KCC also counts the number of NKYAG members who have "landed" or obtained employment in its data reporting.

6. *Anecdotal evidence:*  Staff described anecdotal evidence of outcomes.  Although the library cannot differentiate who is using the resources and for what purpose, the digital librarian indicated that the use of digital workforce development and training resources, such as Gale Courses, has increased since the workforce development librarians have started promoting it.  Despite this anecdotal perception, the library still attributes the growth in online resources to all patrons, rather than making an explicit workforce connection.

### Outcome measurement challenges

Staff and stakeholders cited several barriers to data collection, including privacy concerns that may deter participation in programming and concerns that user and staff burden may impede further outcome measurement or analyses. Similar to other libraries, KCPL staff are reluctant to link user activity (such as online resource use) with patron contact information. They feel this would breach the privacy norms KCPL is known for and dilute institutional trust. Moreover, more extensive data requests at registration or follow-up may deter patrons from participating in specialized programs or utilizing standard services more broadly. Staff also voiced that more detailed reference desk data collection is burdensome and not sustainable on an ongoing basis, though expressed willingness to implement more detailed data collection for limited time periods to assess changes in patrons' requests and gather longitudinal information over time.

### Interest and feasibility of implementing new outcome measurement systems

There are no current plans to develop new data tracking or outcomes measurement systems; however, KCPL staff expressed openness to testing a measurement tool, such as a short computer survey or a point-in-time census of services they provided to walk-in clients by subject matter. Staff cited the importance of the survey being brief and providing an easy opportunity to opt out.

## Observations

KCPL provides a robust continuum of workforce development programming, has dedicated staffing and resources to provide these services, and is well integrated into the broader ecosystem. Assessing the delivery of workforce development services at KCPL identifies possible themes for future research, including:

✓ **Dynamic, proactive leadership can help integrate libraries into the broader ecosystem.**

Library leadership may influence the level of engagement in workforce development services. KCPL's leadership continually seeks opportunities where the library may provide capacity, fill a gap in services, or connect partners to improve the overall workforce development system. The leadership extensively networks with other workforce development service providers and has integrated KCPL as a key voice in that system, due in large part to an underlying view of the library not just as a resource connector in this space but also as a direct resource provider.

✓ **Clear communication can reduce duplication of services across providers.**

KCPL engagement in and ongoing communication with KWIB, NKWIB, the chamber of commerce, and other workforce collaborations ensure mutual awareness of services across providers. KCPL participation in regular collaborative meetings and conversations, as well as ad hoc communication with program partners regarding library programming, keep ecosystem stakeholders apprised of activities and potential partnership opportunities. In some cases, traditional providers have recognized that KCPL is more successful at specific programs, such as digital literacy and NKYAG, and have developed robust referrals to KCPL. In other cases, KCPL and traditional providers may offer similar services, but meet different audiences, limiting duplication of services.

✓ **Libraries' position as the first point of contact for patrons may provide advanced insight on workforce development trends.**

Stakeholders noted that the high traffic volume and diverse patron population interaction that occur in patron-to-staff interactions help KCPL identify workforce development trends before more traditional partners. Library standard and specialized services may reveal service barriers or gaps in the system unnoticed by other providers. Stakeholders look to KCPL as a thought leader on emerging workforce development trends.

✓ **Libraries may capture new audiences for workforce development services.**

Libraries serve diverse patrons, including audiences that may not typically visit traditional workforce development providers. Their role as a community institution may enable them to serve populations, including immigrant communities, unhoused individuals, and patrons without digital literacy skills, who may not trust more traditional government agencies. Additionally, more skilled individuals unfamiliar with typical public workforce services may be more comfortable pursuing services at the library versus workforce agencies.

✓ **WIOA regulations may adversely impact partnership and data coordination between libraries and the traditional workforce development services.**

Existing WIOA regulations may limit eligible service providers to fee-for-service entities. Because the library provides its services free of charge, public workforce agencies may be unable to include the library on its eligible provider list. This may limit referrals to library services, especially among new staff who may not be as familiar with the ecosystem. It also hinders the further potential for data collection and sharing since KCPL is a specialized service provider. Opportunities to include library activity in WIOA universal service data have advanced in Kenton County, with further discussions on the horizon for ways to address the current barrier to eligible provider designation and resultant direct service referrals, participation, and data sharing.

KCPL is hopeful that the state will eventually allow attendance at library job skills programs to count as WIOA work-search activities for unemployed people currently receiving unemployment insurance.