

# Multnomah County Library Workplace Team **Community Needs Assessment** 2021



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# Key players

- Sponsor: June Bass
- Project Team Members: Lori Moore, Tara Nash, Enrique Rivera, Erin Sims, Steph Miller (Workplace Team and Public Training Librarian)
- [Community Engagement Team and Modified Public Access Project Subteam](#)
- WSYL and BCLA and other staff representative of specific communities
- Community Partner - [Worksystems](#)

# Summary

This project took place from November 2020 to April 2021. The Workplace Team set out to assess the current needs of the job seeking and entrepreneurial community in order to determine and recommend the most appropriate services for Multnomah County Library. The team investigated the landscape with a benchmark report, interviewed staff and stakeholders, reviewed information collected by the Community Engagement Team and researched data collected by Federal, State, County and local agencies and organizations.

The Workplace Team seeks to provide culturally specific, multigenerational, holistic, accessible, and trauma-informed services to job seekers and entrepreneurs. We will focus on equity and lead with race by creating culturally specific programs, services and partnerships in traditional and nontraditional career options. We will connect patrons with existing community programs and services and act as the experts for job and entrepreneur related services to support patrons and staff. The services, programs and focus of the Workplace Team will adapt and change as our communities and their needs change.

# Key Findings

2020 brought numerous challenges, among them deep losses of jobs and small businesses. As of January 2021, Portland Metro's unemployment rate was 6.2% (1). While that rate is not as high as during other economic downturns, other factors are unique. Many industries may not return to pre-pandemic levels (2). Some groups such as women (particularly Latine women), suffered higher job loss rates and may have more trouble reentering the workforce (3). Other groups, such as currently and formerly incarcerated people already have few resources for returning to the job market (4). In February, 2021 the Council of Economic Advisors reported: "the economy remains down 9.5 million jobs from February 2020 and will require more than two years of job growth at February's pace just to get back to pre-pandemic levels" (5).

Additionally, small business losses were huge. In September, 2020 as many as 34% of small businesses in the Portland area were closed and continue to suffer despite steps toward reopening (6). Black entrepreneurs face particular hardships in business losses and racial barriers. (7) However, entrepreneurship is surging as people are looking for ways to start and sustain businesses (8).

# Themes

Our inquiries to staff (9) and the findings of the Community Engagement Team (11) report have provided insights into the most needed library services related to Job Search and Entrepreneurship :

- Free programming and classes provided virtually and in person at times not offered by other organizations
- Education and retraining information for patrons to get and improve career skills
- Connections for entrepreneurs to each other, mentors, resources, funding sources and data
- Staff support - training, communication and access to information
- Access to technology
- Digital skills
- A trusted source and place to connect to community and get information
- Holistic services such as referral to childcare and secure housing

# Focus Areas

Many groups have need of library services and especially job search and entrepreneurship services. The needs assessment brought up several key groups the Workplace Team can focus on while still providing these services to a broad range of patrons.

## **Black Entrepreneurs**

- Mentorship through community partners and volunteers
- Connection to lender organizations
- Library Programs/Classes for small business skills
- Space for meeting, connecting and coworking

## **Native and Indigenous Community Job Seekers**

- Resume help
- Library Programs/Classes for job seeking and digital literacy skills
- Connecting patrons to partner organizations and programs with warm referrals\*

## **Latine Women**

- Connecting to programs currently offered by other community organizations
- Connecting to certification and training programs/classes
- Connecting patrons to partner organizations with warm referrals

## **Formerly Incarcerated People**

- Work with existing outreach program via LOS to provide job related information
- Work with existing tech help and literacy programs to provide skills assistance
- Connecting patrons to partner organizations and programs with warm referrals

## **Staff**

- Provide training for relevant resources and databases
- Provide easily accessible resources and information to assist staff in helping patrons
- Support staff providing reference and one-on-one help with “pre-packaged” guides
- Be the experts to guide staff and patrons to relevant organizations with warm referrals

\*Making connections is a key part of our services. Warm referrals involve understanding what our partner organizations do and how patrons can best get services so we can give our patrons added support and information before referring them.

# Recommendations and Next Steps

Note: The following recommendations for this assessment will be implemented as possible in post pandemic changing realities. The Workplace Team will follow MPAP planning and guidelines to provide the best service as needed until the library is back to full services.

## Staffing

Currently, four FTE is assigned to the team. To best serve the communities most in need, the Workplace Team recommends considering a future staffing model that reflects those communities. This would best be served in a staggered approach whereby positions are added/changed over a period of time and in response to the developing needs of the community. At this time, the most pressing need is for a Business Services Librarian. Though Workforce services and Entrepreneurial services are related, they require very different focus, partnerships and development and would therefore be best served by two librarian positions to fully deliver adequate services. Program Specialists in lieu of Library Assistant positions could possibly add additional expertise and abilities to match similar services are delivered in other library areas.

## Services

### **Programs, Events and Classes**

The Workplace Team will create and solicit programs and classes specific to communities of opportunity. These will include cultural groups such as Black, Latine, Native/Indigenous people, and women. We will do this in partnership with community organizations as well as internal staff and partners. Programming will fill gaps not provided by partners and local organizations, focus on communities of opportunity, and evolve with the community's needs. We will use the new [Equitable Program Worksheet](#) as well as input from WSYL and KSA teams as we develop new programs and services. The Workforce team will oversee programs, events and classes in partnership with the Programming and Events team.

#### **Programming will include:**

- Virtual/One-on-One Resume Help, Job search and Entrepreneurship assistance
- Grow with Google classes for Job Seekers and Entrepreneurs
- Non-Traditional job programs and niche programs not offered by partners
- Tech help related to Job search/Entrepreneurship
- Events in conjunction with partner events such as job fairs

### **One-on-Ones**

The Workplace Team will help support one-on-one assistance services virtually and in person to help patrons seeking jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. Additionally, we will support

staff in providing appropriate assistance in filling in online forms and applications. The Workplace Team will do this in partnership with Regional Staff, WSYL, BCLA and Native/Indigenous staff, staff working with houseless populations and volunteers. The team will create and maintain resource tools to help staff with limited time and capacity to deliver this service. We will strive to provide culturally specific resources and information.

### **Outreach**

The Workplace Team will support meeting people where they are to deliver services. This may be in branches serving our focused audiences or community places people already visit regularly. We will do this in partnership with community organizations, Outreach staff, Regional teams, WSYL, BCLA, Native/Indigenous staff and other internal staff and partners. To provide the best services to people where they are, a mobile services vehicle as well as transportable technology and tools will be necessary in the future and will currently be done in partnership with Library Outreach Services.

### **Web Portal**

The Workplace Team will create and update a web portal that includes information, events, referral, and videos to connect Job Seekers, Entrepreneurs and staff to pertinent resources. This will include working with the Electronic Resource Librarian to create pathways to those resources, the Content Creation Team to upload content, and the Social Media team to utilize MCLs social media. Currently we will also work with the Website update team to help develop the new website. One or more of the program specialists will be the point person for the Web Portal and Social media.

### **Space and Business Services**

The Workplace Team will work with Capital Planning to provide input for location space such as quiet rooms, interview spaces, child-friendly work spaces for parents, co-working spaces and maker-spaces. We will also advocate for branches in having necessary business services such as printing, faxing, scanning and other in demand services by working with IT, Technology Action Team, Public Services Action Team, and other stakeholders.

### **Staff Support and Training**

#### **One-on-One Appointments and Research**

The Workplace Team will provide support to Information Services and frontline staff who help patrons with Job Search and Entrepreneurship by providing ready resources and information for reference interactions and one-on-one appointments. Additionally, the Workplace Team will be the experts staff can go to or refer patrons to for complex needs. The Workplace Team will

develop a system for appointments with partners such as Information Services, Contact Center, ATL and Regional Staff.

Staff Support and Training continued

### **Training**

The Workplace Team will provide training to staff necessary to provide frontline services to patrons. This will include pertinent databases, partnership referral information and awareness of resources available online.

### **Communication**

The Workplace Team will regularly communicate with staff about important information around jobs and entrepreneurship. We will do this via pathways like the Commons, email, Roadshows/Downloads, and a regular newsletter or similar digest.

### **Information and Resources**

The Workplace Team will provide easily accessible, updated and relevant information on the public website, staff commons, and google docs so that staff can feel confident that they have good information to share with patrons. We will stay aware of trends and emerging information to share with staff. The Workplace Team will also provide Tip Sheets, blogposts and other pre-packaged resources to help staff help patrons in the moment.

### **Partnerships, Collaboration and Referrals**

The Workplace Team will partner both formally and informally with [local and state organizations](#) that provide Job and Entrepreneur services. We will particularly focus on organizations that serve our focus communities such as Black, Latine, Native/Indigenous and women. These partnerships can help provide educational opportunities, skill building, mentorship/coaching, community connections, space, and many other services that help us help our patrons. The Workplace Team will develop relationships with organizations and provide staff with the ability to implement warm referrals for patrons.

### **Currently, we have developed partnerships with:**

#### **Internal Partners:**

[Public Technology Training Team](#), the Digital Equity and Inclusion Coordinator and the Tech Help Coordinator to integrate services needed to best help patrons with access and digital literacy including supporting patrons with needs like phones, computers and tech lending [Staff Technology Training Team](#) and [Information Services Training Team](#) to provide training to staff.



[Programming and Community Outreach](#) to provide support for classes and (eventual) outreach WSYL, BCLA and Native/Indigenous staff - to garner input about culturally specific services and eventual support of these services.

[Library Outreach Services](#) to provide support for incarcerated individuals and other communities currently served by the department.

### **External Partners**

[Worksystems](#) / [WorkSource Portland Metro](#) to develop cross-training and understanding of services to confidently refer patrons and fill gaps. This organization also provides career coaching and education/skill development and holistic services.

[Grow with Google](#) to provide pre-developed classes for Job Seekers and Entrepreneurs.

[State Library of Oregon](#) to provide information channels and training opportunities.

[Columbia River Correctional Institution](#) to provide support services to recently incarcerated people in addition to outreach services already being provided.

Additionally, we have investigated [numerous groups](#) throughout the local area and Oregon that provide services to specific groups. We will build relationships with these organizations and connect our patrons to them as appropriate.

### Marketing and Social Media

The Workplace Team will work with the Marketing manager and internal partners to reach audiences that don't know about our services and focus marketing to specific communities. We will also work with community partners to reach specific audiences. The Workplace Team will work closely with the Marketing team to examine social media avenues already in place but also hope to build avenues specific to job search and entrepreneurship with LinkedIn and possible targeted facebook, twitter, and other social media feeds.

### Action Team

The Workplace Team will reflect the realignment work to see how we could develop and maintain a system-wide action team to help guide services, solicit feedback and ideas, and to make sure we continue to offer the right services for our communities.

# Methods

## Data collection

[Benchmark report](#)

[Community Partner inquiry](#)

[CET Report](#)

[Survey of staff](#)

Survey of patrons - See CET Report

[Statistical Data](#)

## Participation

- 12 library systems of similar size and scope were investigated in the Benchmark report.
- More than 50 local organizations providing job and small business services were identified and examined.
- 8 group conversation sessions were conducted with various staff groups.
- Patron surveys were extrapolated from the CET surveys.
- Community partner interviews with Worksystems/WorkSource, Columbia River Correctional Institute, Portland Community College, State Library of Oregon,

# Strengths and Limitations of Assessment

The strengths of this assessment are that there is general support as well as demand for workforce development and entrepreneurship during this time and in the foreseeable future beyond the pandemic. Our investigation was met with positive encouragement thereby gaining important input. The results are limited in that we did not have as much direct access to patrons because of the pandemic to determine their needs as fully as possible. Additionally, patrons may have been experiencing “survey fatigue” from several community assessments happening at once. The assessment was challenged by the fact that MCL has not previously offered focused services in this area and we do not have a basis of information for comparison or example.

## Resources Cited

1. [Current Unemployment Rate Portland Metro Area, US Bureau of Labor Stats](#)
2. [Forbes Article: Many Of The 22 Million Lost Jobs 'May Never Return'](#)
3. [Pew Research: Hispanic women, immigrants, young adults, those with less education hit hardest by COVID-19 job losses](#), [Worksystems Article: Women in the Covid Economy](#), [Worksystems Report: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ECONOMIC CRISIS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR FORCE](#), [CNN: The US economy lost 140,000 jobs in December. All of them were held by women](#), [CNBC: Black and Hispanic women aren't sharing in the job market recovery](#)
4. [NPR News: Libraries are key tools for people getting out of prison even during a pandemic](#)
5. [White House briefing: Employment Situation February 2020](#)
6. [Oregon Employment Department: Suffering from COVID: Results from the U.S. Census Small Business Pulse Survey](#)
7. [The Skanner: Portland's Black business owners struggle to find relief](#)
8. [Foundation for Economic Education: Entrepreneurship is Skyrocketing During the Pandemic](#)
9. [Inquiries to staff and internal partners](#), [Staff service ideas](#)
10. [Community Engagement Team Report](#)
11. [Benchmark Report](#)