







DIGITAL SKILLS BUILDING AT LIBRARIES

Empowering Communities Across New Mexico and the Nation

s technology further shifts the economic landscape, libraries prepare American jobseekers to enter the workforce, reskill to meet evolving requirements, and succeed as business owners.

Public libraries in New Mexico and nearly 17,000 strong across the country: (1) help people secure employment through job search, resume writing, and interview training, (2) provide internet access and digital skills programs that encourage use of emerging technologies and empower entrepreneurship, (3) collaborate with other community stakeholders to identify workforce challenges and build vibrant local economies.

With many communities hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and facing economic challenges, libraries are a critical part of the economic safety net, now more than ever.

Building digital skills

In the small, mostly rural town of Belen, New Mexico, 23% of adults do not have a high school diploma, 32% of households are below the poverty line, and nearly one third lack home internet access. In light of these circumstances, the Belen Public Library provides critical resources to bridge the digital divide. is includes o ering 48 public

computers with internet access, as well as programs on basic digital skills, job resources, and career information. e library's Computer Learning Lab helps people gain the condence and skills necessary to make digital resources work for them, de-mystifying computer use in a supportive environment and helping participants move from uncertainty to condence.

TAKEAWAYS for local, state and national public officials, and potential partners

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library provides digital skills support for elderly, disabled, and economically struggling community members, as well as individuals lacking formal education and those learning English as a second language.

For example, Belen Public Library sta noticed that one man brought his laptop to the library 2-3 days a week to use the public Wi-Fi network. He was looking for a job that would pay his bills until he reached retirement but was thwarted in his search by limited computer and Internet skills. He was frustrated because he knew the computer was a path to a job, but he didn't know enough to make e ective use of it. e library's computer coach helped him to re ne his searches on job sites, referred him to the job placement services and training available through Goodwill, and directed him to online resume templates and other aids.

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