CASE STUDY: San Diego Public Library

Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc.
September 2022

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 San Diego Public Library (SDPL) as a large system in an urban community well known for the co-location of workforce development services.

Overview of the case

San Diego Public Library is a large municipal system with 36 outlets. In partnership with the San Diego Career Center Network (SDCCN), SDPL hosts the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Career Center, referred to in the library as the "career center," which offers free job search and career development resources to the community. The San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) operates the career center, which is an affiliate of the SDCCN, a nonprofit employment support organization. Services include free individual and small group counseling; resource materials; computer and resume assistance; job search, work readiness, and occupational skills workshops; bilingual services; and specialized veteran services. Although the co-location of the career center was the impetus for this case study, additional workforce development collaboration between SDPL and SDWP has been relatively limited. In 2020, the California State Library made a grant to SDPL to deepen and expand the relationship with the workforce system and planned grant strategies aimed to facilitate coordination and engagement across the two entities. Beyond workforce development, SDPL has robust business development services, including Innovate Discover Experience Achieve (IDEA) Lab makerspaces, a Patent and Trademark Resource Center (PTRC), and an emergent Microbusiness Center.

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

Library Designed and Led Services (spans Standard and Specialized services)
Partnerships (spans 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 or completed virtually for those unable to meet in person. In the case of San Diego Public Library, the Mt. Auburn team conducted ten interviews. The team conducted nine of these interviews onsite in San Diego during an April 14, 2022 site visit and one virtually over Zoom later that week. Of the ten interviewees, four were library system staff, four were library branch staff, and two were workforce actors. The Mt. Auburn team used semi-structured protocols to guide stakeholder interviews.

Community context

To better understand SDPL'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 the County of San Diego more broadly.

Library system

San Diego Public Library, a former Carnegie library established in 1882, is a 36-branch library system in the city of San Diego, California, which serves city residents. The city has primary responsibility for managing and funding the library system. In 2019, the system had total operating revenue of $60.3 million, of which 87 percent came from city funds. Library appropriations have increased over the past several years.

Library	San Diego Public Library
Service area	San Diego, CA
Population of service area	1,420,572
# of branches*	36
Administrative structure	Municipal
Operating revenue	$60,301,128
Operating revenue per capita	$42.45
Total paid staff (FTE)	402.63
# of adult programs**	10,421
# of internet computers	1,189
Computers per 1,000 population	0.84

* 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*

The system's main branch is the Central Library, located in the Downtown East Village. The nine-story building opened in 2013 and won several design awards. The library is home to the e3 Civic High School, the only charter school in the United States housed in a library. The Central Library branch also hosts a literacy hub, vets center, and mental health office. The fifth floor of the Central Library is home to the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Career Center, a free career development services space that SDWP, the region's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provider, operates.

The 501(c)(3) nonprofit Library Foundation SD, established in 2002, supports the system.[1] The foundation has raised more than $130 million in private funds to support library-operated programs, complete the new Central Library, and build six new library branches. The Friends of the San Diego Public Library (FSDPL), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with chapters at each of the city's 36 library branches, also supports the library system. This volunteer organization raises funds for library programs and engages in advocacy on behalf of the library system.

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[1] The Library Foundation SD was formerly the San Diego Public Library Foundation.

SDPL's 2021 master plan seeks to address inequities among branches across the city in the areas of access to services, technology, spaces, and resources. The master plan framework identifies large branches as the best model for service because of their ability to provide greater depth and diversity of service, more space and choices, more efficient operations, and greater resiliency in recent climate and COVID crises.[2] The plan calls for increasing the system's network by replacing or expanding small branches with larger buildings rather than adding smaller branches. In 2019, five branches accounted for nearly one-fourth of all library computer sessions: City Heights/Weingart, Logan Heights, Mission Valley, Oak Park, and Skyline Hills.
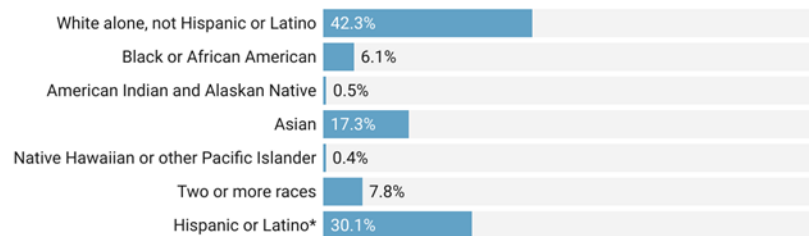
Community conditions

Nicknamed the "Birthplace of California," San Diego is a rapidly growing city with a population of 1,386,932, a 6 percent increase since 2010 and a 13 percent increase since 2000. San Diego is the county seat of the County of San Diego and part of the San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA Metropolitan Statistical Area. San Diego is the second most populous city in California and the eighth most populous city in the United States. The city is predominantly white (42 percent), with Hispanic or Latino (30 percent) and Asian (17 percent) populations. Notably, according to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, just over a quarter of the city's population is foreign-born, and the poverty rate is 11.8 percent.

Community Conditions	San Diego	United States
Unemployment rate	5.9%	5.4%
Persons in poverty	11.8%	11.4%
Median household income	$83,454	$64,994
In civilian labor force	64.9%	63.0%
HS graduate or higher (> 25 y.o.)	88.8%	88.5%
BA or higher (> 25 y.o.)	46.7%	32.9%
Foreign-born persons	25.6%	13.5%
Households with internet access	92.2%	85.2%

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

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, San Diego was on the traditional territory of the Kumeyaay people, who inhabited the lands that today encompass San Diego. Spanish settlers arrived in 1542, and the city changed hands between the Spanish and the Mexicans until the United States acquired the state of California in 1846. The city saw rapid development and population growth throughout the late 1800s and 1900s, aided by the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1885 and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, which boosted the city's traditional economic base of agriculture and fishing, and introduced a new market for manufacturing.

Racial and ethnic breakdown of San Diego

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino — 42.3%
Black or African American — 6.1%
American Indian and Alaskan Native — 0.5%
Asian — 17.3%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander — 0.4%
Two or more races — 7.8%
Hispanic or Latino* — 30.1%

* 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

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[2] "San Diego Public Library Master Plan Framework" San Diego Public Library. Accessed July 11, 2022. https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/sdpl_mp_final_lc_nov.pdf

For much of the 20th century, the defense industry dominated the city's economy, a natural alignment given the Port of San Diego and the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard military bases in San Diego. Toward the end of the 20th century and into the 21st, the city's economy diversified through the growing presence of the tourism, non-defense manufacturing, and technology (especially biotechnology, finance, and telecommunications) industries. Today, four sectors constitute the backbone of San Diego's economy: international trade, manufacturing, defense, and tourism. The largest employer in the city is the U.S. Navy.

Mayor Todd Gloria has served as the city's mayor since 2020. Key pillars of his mayoralty include a commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2035, an inclusive pandemic response and recovery, infrastructure improvements, transit and mobility, public safety, homelessness, and affordable housing. Made possible by American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding, the city allocated money for several new services, such as the "Back to Work" program, homelessness funding, infrastructure funding for road repairs, citywide compensation increases for city employees, and the creation of the Climate Equity Fund.

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. 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 San Diego Public Library operates.

State-level support: policies, funding, and infrastructure

State Library administrative agency

The California State Library is an independent agency and public research institution. Its mission is to empower the people of the nation's most diverse and populous state by:

- "providing credible information services to all Californians, especially those in state government and the legislature, libraries, academia, and persons with disabilities;

- leading and establishing partnerships with California libraries through funding, program development, and support; and

- preserving and providing access to California's unique history to enrich the lives of current and future generations."[3]

The vision of the State Library is to be "a leader, innovator, champion, and important source of trusted information to Californians and their libraries." The State Library provides consulting and technical assistance and directs state and federal funds to support local public libraries and statewide programs. It also serves as the primary legislative research organization. The State Library offers continuing education programs, library planning, research and evaluation, literacy programs, and consulting on library management and organizational development, technology, and marketing to

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[3] Mission and Values - California State Library. California State Library. Accessed June 28, 2022.
https://library.ca.gov/about/mission/

its libraries. Its literacy programs for patrons focus on language, numeracy, information, digital, finance, health, and family.

California's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program allotment from IMLS in 2021 was $15.7 million.[4] State Library revenues have been in long-term decline over time. In 2021, IMLS awarded California an additional $10.6 million in ARPA grants. A portion of these grant funds, approximately $.4 million, supported workforce development by expanding the State Library's investments in online *CA*reer Pathways platforms, including Coursera, GetSetUp, LearningExpress, LinkedIn Learning, Northstar Digital Literacy, and Skillshare. These resources expanded on the existing state offerings, which included Brainfuse's JobNow/VetNow and Career Online High School (COHS).

The State Library has demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting the workforce and small business development roles of public libraries in the state. Goal 5 of California's LSTA 5-year plan is that California libraries contribute to economic development and workforce innovation in their communities. According to the plan, it supports projects that:[5]

- provide Californians with workforce readiness skills, job training, job-seeking resources, and career development opportunities; and

- develop libraries as hubs of entrepreneurship and innovation.

California intends to improve libraries' coordination with workforce development. As noted in the five-year plan: "The State Library is beginning conversations with the California Chamber of Commerce, the Employment Development Department and job training providers as well as large and small employers to find ways libraries can better connect Californians to information, services and opportunities as well as provide spaces for collaboration and transforming ideas into prototypes."[6]

The Library Workforce Partnership Initiative is an LSTA grant-funded opportunity that provided eight grants to California public libraries to partner with their Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to extend and enhance their ability to support employment, career development, and skill-building for job seekers. Grantees built staff skills and knowledge around the workforce development systems and how to raise awareness of their services in their communities. The State Library helped libraries connect with LWDBs to initiate partnerships. The initiative provided participating libraries with up to $15,000 in grant funding, State Library training, and engagement with a cohort of library and workforce staff who convened monthly to collaborate. During the grant period, libraries engaged in asset mapping and facilitated shared conversations so that all libraries

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[4] "Grants to States: State Allotments." Institute of Museum and Library Services. Accessed June 15, 2022. https://www.imls.gov/grants/grants-state/state-allotments

[5] Lucas, George. "California Library Services and Technology Act 2018-2022 Investment Plan." IMLS, June 2017. https://www.library.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaliforniaFiveYearPlan2018-2022.pdf

[6] Lucas, George. "California Library Services and Technology Act 2018-2022 Investment Plan." IMLS, June 2017. https://www.library.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaliforniaFiveYearPlan2018-2022.pdf

and workforce agencies had the opportunity to share ideas and solutions. SDPL was one of the participating libraries.

Community Connections is another LSTA-funded opportunity for libraries to provide resource navigation services to patrons. The purpose is "to eliminate barriers to access to community resources, including housing, health, employment, and education."[7] The program is helping ten libraries build staff competency around social care resources and create or join a hub of service providers with awards up to $60,000. The program required participating libraries to partner with at least two California-based social service organizations, receive State Library training, and engage monthly with library and social service staff. The State Library urged participating libraries to select one individual to serve as a community resource specialist to receive training, serve as a point person for partnerships, and staff a community resource desk.

State workforce system

The California Workforce Development Board establishes and directs workforce development policy and develops innovative initiatives. The workforce development system comprises 49 Local Workforce Development Areas, each with its own LWDB. There are several key workforce initiatives in the state:

- *High Roads Training Partnerships:* regional strategies to support economically and environmentally resilient communities.

- *High Road Construction Careers:* partnerships that link local building and trades councils to workforce boards, community colleges, and community-based organizations to create construction career pathways.

- *Workforce Accelerator Fund*: funds projects that design, develop, and implement projects that accelerate employment.

- *AB1111:* supplements existing workforce development infrastructure to provide services to populations ineligible for other state or federal programs.

- *Regional CA:* collaboration among multiple workforce development areas to develop a cohesive regional economic approach.

- *Prison to Employment:* collaborative partnerships with state workforce programs and the state corrections systems to facilitate formerly incarcerated individuals' successful re-entry into society and the workforce.

There is no explicit mention of libraries in the state workforce development plan.

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[7] About Community Connections. California State Library. Accessed June 29, 2022.
https://www.library.ca.gov/grants/community-connections/

Local workforce and business development ecosystems

Workforce development system

The San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc. is the LWDB for San Diego County. As an LWDB, SDWP is accountable for providing workforce services to adults, dislocated workers, youth, and employers by funding job training programs that empower job seekers to meet the current and future workforce needs of employers in San Diego County. SDWP is part of the Southern Border Region, a two-county region in the southernmost point of California.[8] SDWP supports employers through Talent Pipeline Management, an employer-led, demand-driven workforce process. SDWP also provides local labor market data analysis.

SDWP operates six America's Job Center of California career centers in San Diego County for all ages and one career center focusing on the needs of young adults between the ages of 16 and 24.[9] The Bank of America Merrill Lynch Career Center is an affiliate center co-located in the main branch of the San Diego Public Library.

SDWP is a member of Live Well San Diego, a collaborative initiative that aligns the efforts of many public and private agencies in diverse domains to advance physical and social wellness in the region. SDWP is also a member of Advancing San Diego, which is the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation's talent development initiative that seeks to create inclusive growth by strengthening relationships between local industry and education systems. The San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation is an independently funded regional economic development agency serving San Diego County. Additional Advancing San Diego partners include San Diego Imperial County Community College Association, the city of San Diego, and the United Way of San Diego.[10]

As summarized on SDPL's Job Start @ the Library page, several postsecondary educational institutions provide career education and training opportunities in the region, many of which partner with SDWP on demand planning, credential requirements, and other strategies to build talent supply chains:[11]

- *Public community colleges:* The San Diego Community College District includes City College, Mesa College, Miramar College, and six continuing education campuses. Courses include adult

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[8] San Diego Workforce Partnership Plan, https://workforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/San-Diego-Local-Plan-Draft-March-20211.pdf

[9] Career Centers. San Diego Workforce Partnership. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://workforce.org/career-centers

[10] Advancing San Diego. San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, 2022. https://www.sandiegobusiness.org/about-edc/our-initiatives/advancing-san-diego/

[11] Job start @ the library. The City of San Diego. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://www.sandiego.gov/public-library/job-start

basic education, career technical training, computer, business, academic, and personal development programs.[12]

- *Public and private four-year institutions:* San Diego State University, University of California San Diego, and University of San Diego are four-year and graduate-level institutions that provide academic, vocational, and extended/continuing education opportunities in a wide range of fields and degree or certificate types.

- *Private career technical education providers:* Center for Employment Training, Comprehensive Training Services, and Occupational Training Services are among the for-profit career technical education providers in the region.

Business development system

The San Diego & Imperial Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network offers small business development services through nine subcontractors located throughout the region.[13] In addition to the SBDC, many public and private agencies in San Diego provide small business resources, including the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and myriad incubators and accelerators, such as SCORE small business mentoring service. CDC Small Business Finance Corporation, California Southern Small Business Development Corporation, and others provide financial resources for small businesses. [14,15,16]

Library workforce and business development services

Overview of the library's approach

San Diego Public Library is a primary access point for individuals seeking access to an internet connection, computers, job search assistance, and community resources. As noted above, in addition to employment and job search resources available directly through the library, an SDWP contractor staffs the SDWP Career Center co-located in the main library branch. Beyond the career center, workforce development activities include access to technology, reference librarian assistance, digital resources, computer and technology courses, and annual job fairs. Small business development resources include reference help, digital resources, the Patent and Trademark Resource Center, and the new Microenterprise Center.

As noted above, the State Library funded a grant, now two years old, to increase the collaboration between libraries and workforce development. That effort, still in implementation, focuses on increasing public awareness, access, and use of the workforce services that SDPL and SDWP provide. Strategies include hosting Family Career Exploration Days, cross-training the branches and career center, and co-marketing communication between the career center and SDPL. Despite the co-

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[12] District, San Diego Community College. About the District. San Diego Community College District. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://www.sdccd.edu/about/index.aspx

[13] About the San Diego & Imperial Small Business Development Center Network. San Diego & Imperial Small Business Development Center Network. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://sdivsbdc.org/about/

[14] Economic Development: Startup Resources. The City of San Diego. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/resources/startup

[15] San Diego's Incubators and Accelerators Index, https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/economic-development/pdf/incubatorsaccelerators.pdf

[16] San Diego. San Diego Chapter of SCORE.org. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://sandiego.score.org/

location, the relationship between the library and the SDWP Career Center has historically only been about space sharing and referrals; the new grant aims to create more dynamic collaboration. They have involved Library Foundation SD in the communication regarding the grant to help build ongoing sustainability after the grant ends.

Workforce development services

Standard services

Patrons visit SDPL to access basic technology, including WiFi, hotspots, access to laptops, and software and printing services. Reference librarians are the first point of contact with patrons and can handle basic job search-related questions, including references to their collections, job application assistance, resume help, and navigation of online resources. Online workforce development resources include Brainfuse's JobsNow and VetNow, Career Online High School, LinkedIn Learning, Peterson's database, Gale Courses, and Reference USA. SDPL offers test preparation courses for several targeted industries, including nursing, firefighting, and postal service. SDPL hosts online training on how to navigate its website and databases and responds to over 1,000 reference questions a month via text, chat, and email. If patrons need more assistance than reference librarians can provide, staff may direct them to the SDWP Career Center, depending on patron need.

Specialized services

SDPL offers multiple specialized services to support workforce development.

- *Certifications:* SDPL provides targeted certification courses. Although the library had to pause the courses during the pandemic, it hoped to resume in-person courses this summer. Typically, courses include Google Suite, Microsoft, and accounting certification.

- *Digital navigators:* SDPL is introducing digital navigators to provide additional library capacity and help bridge the digital divide. The city's IT department provides funding for the digital navigators through the San Diego Access 4 All initiative, a city effort to close the digital divide by offering free WiFi access at over 300 public locations. The program selected libraries as digital navigator hosts because of their trusted role in the community, access to technology, and complementary services. Digital navigators will work at five library branches. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) has trained interns as navigators to provide in-person tech support, connect patrons to resources such as no-cost internet and device lending programs, and lead digital classes. Digital navigators can also help patrons complete various forms that are outside of existing library capacity. Navigators are fluent in several languages, such as Bengali, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese, and provide ties to their communities. NDIA first piloted the program at the Salt Lake City Library, and the city of San Diego entered into an agreement with NDIA to replicate the program. SDPL provides training and tutorial materials related to device lending, hosts outreach activities for the digital navigators to engage with the community, creates resource guides for navigators, and provides access to and training on library tools.

- *Career Online High School:* SDPL offers a COHS and career certification program. To participate in the program, applicants must complete an online self-assessment and prerequisite course and participate in an in-person interview. COHS matches each student with an online coach who provides academic support, helps develop an individual career path, evaluates performance, connects the student with resources, and offers ongoing guidance. Students have 18 months to

complete the course. In addition to a high school diploma, students may earn a certification in childcare and education, security, office management, transportation (including a commercial driver's license), retail customer service, food service, and general career preparation. SDPL offers limited scholarships to qualified adult learners.

Community hub services

SDPL offers several robust services in partnership with community agencies.

- *Co-location of an SDWP Career Center:* An SWDP Career Center, formally the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Career Center, opened at the main branch in 2013. Three career agents, a resource room specialist, and a supervisor staff the career center. Although SDWP currently contracts for these services, it plans to bring all services back in-house over the next year. Librarians refer patrons to the career center for more advanced workforce development services after librarians have assisted within their capacity (see sidebar).

- *Joint workforce development landing page:* As part of the State Library workforce grant, the library and SDWP jointly created a landing page that provides online access to all library and SDWP employment and training resources. The landing page's goal is to provide one stop for patrons and community members more broadly to gain awareness of and access to workforce development services.[17]

- *Family Career Exploration Days:* As part of the current State Library workforce development grant, SDPL and SDWP jointly provide Family Career Exploration

Co-Location of Workforce Partnership Career Center

The Bank of America Merrill Lynch Career Center, an SDWP Career Center, is on the fifth floor of the Central Library branch. SDWP contractors staff the career center. Doors open when the library opens, and the center closes at 5:00 p.m. unless there is an evening career center workshop. Anyone can utilize basic career center resources, but more intensive workforce development service offerings through the career center are eligibility-determined based on income. If patrons are recipients of unemployment assistance or public benefits, they are largely eligible for career center intensive services.

Basic career center services include computer and workshop access. If patrons do not have a CalJOBS profile, they are encouraged to become a career center "member" by establishing a profile, but they can still access basic services without one. Setting up a CalJOBS profile requires basic demographic information, including name and contact information.

A profile is a basic career center membership, but to enroll in CalJOBS, patrons must complete a more extensive application and have worked with a career agent to complete the process. CalJOBS tracks the number of individuals accessing career center services, so if patrons do not complete an application, the career center's data may undercount basic service utilization.

The career center offers access to computers, job search databanks, job search workshops and trainings, one-on-one job search assistance, and access to and funding for training for eligible individuals. The career center also invites partner agency representatives to provide easy access to programs, such as CalFresh and the San Diego Continuing Adult Education School, while patrons are in the career center. When the career center hosts a community agency, it informs SDPL so the library can share the information with its patrons.

SDPL posts career center workshops and events on the library website, flyers throughout the library, and via real-time announcements that the library makes on the public announcement system to inform patrons of the start of a workshop.

Days where all individuals in the family, children to grandparents, can consider their interests, strengths and weaknesses, and aligned opportunities in the San Diego economic market. During

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[17] San Diego Public Library + Workforce Partnership. San Diego Workforce Partnership. Accessed June 29, 2022. https://workforce.org/library/

the Family Career Exploration Day, workforce and library staff help patrons understand how they can develop their skills, create a resume, and pinpoint jobs that match their skill sets or aspirations. Although the library had contingency plans for engaging younger children with related coloring and other activities, they found children of all ages to be interested and engaged in the material. The Family Career Exploration Day rotates throughout the library branches to bring workforce development services to every library without having to set up office space to do it. During the pandemic, the library and SDWP offered this service, and they are planning to offer hybrid and in-person versions moving forward.

- *READ/San Diego*: Located on the eighth floor of the library, this program offers adult and family literacy services. Literacy professionals staff the program and work with community organizations to coordinate adult literacy services throughout the city.

- *Partnership with San Diego Futures Foundation:* In partnership with the San Diego Futures Foundation, SDPL offers once-a-week tech help. These sessions center on a specific theme, such as how to use Zoom, Smart Phone 101, or social media basics, and provide a structured session and free Q&A or drop-in time.

> *We are bringing the learning that we're able to provide through the workforce development aspect of our work directly to people and patrons of libraries. People may not know that we exist, but they certainly know the library exists.*

- *Partnership with the city of San Diego on diversion program for youth:* SDPL is currently partnering with the city of San Diego to engage youth from under-resourced areas as paid interns. The program participants receive six weeks of training in audio-video services through the digital IDEA Lab with a goal of bringing them on as part of full-time permanent staff (Library Assistant I positions) in the city at the end of the training. This initiative looks to fill a gap in staff digital and media capacity and improve the library's ability to collect and share patron stories and qualitative data. Workforce development dollars currently fund the training.

- *Job fairs:* Library branches hold job fairs in partnership with different community providers. Some branches may hold job fairs more frequently than others based on community needs. The central library branch recently held a job fair in partnership with the city's economic development department. It has also hosted various job fairs for teens and individuals experiencing homelessness in partnership with SDWP. A local library branch recently held a job fair in partnership with the Logan Heights Community Development Corporation. In addition to providing the space for the job fair, SDPL is involved in planning and outreach. Library staff may also manage tables at the job fairs, such as a recent table on the creative economy at a job fair held at the library's black box theatre facilities.

Small business development services

SDPL has several resources for small business development, including makerspaces, the Patent and Trademark Resource Center, and the Microbusiness Center.

Standard services

Reference librarians provide basic small business support, including access to a wide range of circulation materials and online support. Similar to foundational workforce development services,

all SDPL librarians can assist patrons with basic small business development resources and questions and will refer patrons to specialized library centers for more advanced help.

Specialized services

SDPL has specialized centers to support small business development, including the PTRC, the IDEA lab, and the new Microbusiness Center.

- *Patent and Trademark Resource Center:* The PTRC at the central branch provides targeted resources and assistance for entrepreneurs seeking patent and trademark help. To provide staff capacity, one librarian at the main library has completed training with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and attends related conferences. Patrons can come to the library for in-person support, or patrons can "Book a PTRC librarian" and request a Zoom conference with the central staff specialist if they need more assistance than their branch reference librarian can provide. Before the pandemic, the PTRC offered programming to support patron needs, such as the Procopio law firm offering pro bono patent and trademark legal advice monthly at the library. Staff noted that this resource would help prepare patrons' paperwork for patent applications so that when they were ready to file, they simply needed to pay a lawyer to sign off on their documentation, saving time and money in the process. SDPL hopes to continue similar programs moving forward.

- *IDEA Lab makerspace:* SDPL established the IDEA Lab makerspace to inspire interest and build skills in science, technology, and design. Patrons can learn from direct experimentation and peer support. At the central branch, IDEA Lab patrons can access 3D printers; vinyl cutters; sewing, embroidery, and serger machines; a CNC milling machine; a laser printer; and a printer and heat press, among other tools. The IDEA Lab makerspace also has a transfer station where patrons can access, digitize, and share video and audio recordings. Software available in the IDEA Lab includes varied 3D design, Adobe, audio/visual, coding, and graphic design programs. There are eight other makerspaces in the branch libraries to increase equitable access to these resources. The theme of each library makerspace is different to avoid replication, but the technology is similar to ensure program support across the system. Staff reported that patrons use the makerspaces for diverse purposes, such as developing marketing materials, business cards, flyers, and promotional advertising and updating design portfolios or architectural renderings. Patrons who want to learn how to use the specialized software can take digital courses through SDPL and practice in the makerspace to hone their skills.

- *Microbusiness Center:* Library Foundation SD recently provided SDPL with funding to start a microbusiness center to provide centralized access to the library's small business resources. An existing science librarian who currently staffs the central branch PTRC will staff the center. In addition to focused resources for entrepreneurs and microbusiness owners, there will be a new Entrepreneurs in Residence program model, where an established small business owner will provide public programming to library patrons, assist patrons with the use of the space, and provide one-on-one business or mentor coaching. The resident will receive a $2,500 monthly stipend. The microbusiness center currently has funding for one year.

Community hub services

SDPL partners with the College of Continuing Education to provide Google Suite, Microsoft Suite, and other basic business platform training. Prior to the pandemic, an instructor from the College of Continuing Education would lead the classes in person on a weekly basis at the central branch's Wells

Fargo Technology Center. During the pandemic, the classes shifted to a virtual platform, and SDPL has been sharing information to raise awareness about class availability.

Service administration

Staffing and management

None of the SDPL staff undergo targeted workforce development training. One staff person completed training in patents and trademarks to support the PTRC. SDPL has grant funding to enhance the existing workforce/library partnership, but there is no dedicated staff or funding for workforce services SDPL directly provides outside of universal services. SDPL is unclear how long this initiative will continue to receive funding, but it is not concerned about the sustainability of funding based on the strength of its ongoing foundation support.

System support and role

SDPL offers standard workforce and business development services throughout the library branches. Branch staff refine their workforce development offerings based on local demand. Some forge job fair partnerships with community agencies, for example. Eight library branches also have makerspaces to support small business development and entrepreneurs. Library staff refer patrons requesting more advanced workforce development assistance to the career center at the Central Library or other locations, depending on the closest library branch. Previously, SDPL piloted an SDWP Career Center at another branch but there was insufficient foot traffic to sustain the relationship. Library staff refer patrons needing more advanced small business services to the central branch for assistance from the PTRC or the Microbusiness Center.

Funding

SDPL's regular operating budget funds standard services. Partnership agencies, including SDWP, the city of San Diego, and the College of Continuing Education, offer and fund some specialized services. Library Foundation SD will support the emergent microbusiness center. The State Library currently funds the enhanced partnership between SDWP and SDPL, and this partnership will continue with Library Foundation SD funding.

How they determine what to offer

SDPL assesses patron feedback, service requests, and the community context to determine what to offer. If the library notices increasing patron requests for a certain certification, for example, it will work to develop responsive programming. SDPL also collaborates with partner agencies, such as SDWP and the College of Continuing Education, to develop programming based on identified needs, including course offerings and job fair events.

Marketing of services

A State Library grant supports marketing collaboration between SDWP and SDPL communications offices. The library and partnership meet quarterly to cross-promote events and strategize. As this case study noted previously, a joint landing page that SDWP hosts lists the workforce development

services the career center offers and the services the library provides.[18] A *job start @ the library* link on this page connects to a city-hosted website that cross-promotes the career center.[19] This team produced a postcard and a bookmark that included information on the services that SDPL provides related to workforce development for the first Family Career Exploration Day. For the current and upcoming Career Days, SDPL and SDWP are creating a poster that promotes the services SDWP provides. For the opening of the new Microbusiness Center, SDWP and SDPL are reaching out to community partners to raise awareness, and they will develop a press release for the media. SDWP and the library are hoping to increase cross-training, which will increase awareness of mutual services. Beyond that, they create promotional flyers and promote services through social media, eNewsletters, and their websites.

Aspirations

Most library staff seemed satisfied with the service offerings of the career center and SDPL. Staff expressed they would like to increase resident awareness of library services more broadly. At the central branch, staff do not have time to deliver the same level of ad hoc, one-on-one support that some of the smaller libraries provide, but they did not express that they need additional staff to support more one-on-one workforce support, perhaps because they can refer patrons to the co-located career center. Staff recognized the siloed nature of services between the library and the career center, and there is interest in increased cross-pollination across the library and career center staff. SDWP and SDPL both expressed interest in training staff across the branches to increase access to their services.

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

Library collaboration with ecosystem partners

The primary workforce development activity focusing on collaboration is the partnership with the career center co-located in the central branch. SDPL provides the brick-and-mortar space for the career center, and SDWP provides the funding and staff. No SDPL staff work in the career center, and no career center staff work in the library. Some library staff at the central branch wish for greater visibility of career center staff throughout the facility, such as at the Community Partner Desk, where community-based organizations can outpost at certain periods of time to serve as a resource to patrons and librarians regarding their content area or have information sessions with library staff. The increased cross-staff training that the State Library workforce grant is funding may address some of these staff considerations.

Beyond the co-location of the career center, collaboration largely centers on networking and outreach to partners, such as the local chamber of commerce, SCORE, and the Small Business Administration, to ensure staff are aware of library services and can promote them even without a

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[18] San Diego Public Library + Workforce Partnership. San Diego Workforce Partnership. Accessed June 29, 2022. https://workforce.org/library/

[19] Job start @ the library. The City of San Diego. Accessed June 28, 2022. https://www.sandiego.gov/public-library/job-start

library representative present. There is some sentiment among library staff that despite these efforts, partner agencies are unaware of the breadth of library offerings.

Library stakeholders noted several challenges to collaboration between SDPL and more traditional workforce development providers. First, some partner agencies charge for their services, and SDPL is committed to offering free services. Stakeholders reported ongoing conversations to see if they could creatively address this obstacle, such as Library Foundation SD funding to pay service fees; at the time of this report, there was no solution. Additionally, library and workforce development staff both note a challenge in calibrating referrals to ensure patrons have the requisite skills to participate in offered services.

SDPL indicated that career center services are more for individuals with foundational digital knowledge, such as basic computer skills and access to an email address. Although library staff are encouraged to refer people to SDWP services, they reported that SDWP will sometimes refer patrons back to the library for digital services because they do not meet a certain threshold of competency to engage in career center services. Similarly, SDWP stakeholders noted that they refer individuals to the library who may need additional

And so what we want to work toward is a world where when we do in-person workshops, we're doing them in our libraries, rather than exclusively at our Career Centers. Because libraries are in the communities much more tightly embedded than at least our current career center locations. And again, we know people are coming here who maybe aren't looking for us, but could find us.

digital skilling support, such as typing classes, that SDPL is better equipped to provide, a back-and-forth process that can be frustrating for patrons. Increased cross-staff training may also help with this recognized challenge.

In terms of partner interest in more collaboration with the library system, stakeholders noted possible future efforts to develop micro career nooks in libraries to provide a physical space for patrons to think about their career futures in a colorful, engaging way. Stakeholders would like to capture the attention of everyone who walks through the library, not just individuals directly seeking workforce services.

Stakeholders also cited lessons learned from the recent State Library grant to increase collaboration across the library and the workforce development system. First, the mutual education in the services each agency provides built awareness and internal capacity for referrals. Continued cross-staff training should further this effort. Second, creating an explicit set of goals within a defined time helped stakeholders focus. Third, grant funding to prioritize select efforts enabled the partners to build the value and relationships of the effort and help sustain it over time. They hope to apply these lessons to new opportunities moving forward.

Library's position in the greater ecosystem

SDPL plays a connector role in the greater workforce ecosystem. Outside of the co-location of the career center, the involvement in the greater workforce and business development ecosystem is somewhat limited to referring patrons to community partners and developing programming in response to partner requests, such as job fairs. Neither library nor workforce staff could identify standing workforce collaboratives and boards with SDPL participation. Prior to the State Library grant that prompted the partnership, SDWP actors admitted to limited knowledge of libraries in the

workforce development space but are pleased with the growth to date in awareness across providers.

Despite the limited role as a strategic partner in discussions about the broader workforce and business development ecosystem, evidence suggests that existing services fill system gaps and expand system reach.

- *Evidence of filling system gaps:* The small business development services of the IDEA Labs, PTRC, and emergent Microbusiness Center provide robust resources and access to technical assistance for entrepreneurs and small businesses not found elsewhere in the system. Additionally, certain library workforce services, such as basic digital literacy, typing, the Career Online High School program, Gale Courses, and some certification options at the library, offer programming that SDWP does not offer. Career center staff reported that they often refer clients to SDPL to access these services. Similarly, career center staff also mentioned the importance of the library's I CAN! Center, which provides adaptive technology and other support to assist job seekers with disabilities.

- *Evidence of expanding system reach:* Stakeholders noted that one key way that SDPL expands system reach is by providing opportunities for patrons who may be interested in, but not actively seeking, workforce development services to become aware of their options. Individuals who have recently lost their jobs and are seeking unemployment insurance are likely to seek services directly from career centers, but many other prospective clients may benefit from program offerings yet not even know that the options exist until they see flyers or SDPL staff refer them to the career center. Stakeholders mentioned that SDPL, particularly the Central Library, provides more workforce service support to individuals experiencing homelessness than traditional workforce avenues capture.

> *I think people who are interacting with libraries could be people who are just at a dead end in their career, who maybe don't know that there are ways to take next steps. So they wouldn't be necessarily seeking that out or thinking about the next step, but giving them the opportunity to run into that information at the right point in time, the right time in their lives, where they can learn that services are there where we can pay for training or give a stipend or help support them through those transitions.*

Pandemic response and recovery

Overview of library services during the pandemic

At the beginning of the pandemic, SDPL paused most of its in-person services. The library closed in March 2020 and started offering curbside pick-up in June 2020. It reopened slowly, starting in June 2021, because the director did not want to confuse community members by cycling through an unpredictable opening and closing schedule. Therefore, there were limited standard services for walk-in patrons.

Approach to workforce and business development services during the pandemic

During the pandemic, SDPL supplied outdoor computer lounges, take-home laptops, and hotspot access. With the State Library grant, SDPL pivoted to an online format of the Family Career Exploration Days. SDPL shifted the in-person College of Continuing Education's Google Suite and Microsoft Suite courses to virtual, and the library offered several other virtual workshops, such as

one by the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer program. Stakeholders noted that library staff had the digital background to support a robust transition to online service using a diversity of platforms.

Additionally, at the IDEA Lab in the central branch, library staff printed over 5,000 face shields, providing critical PPE supplies to city staff, hospital staff, and other emergency responders. Library Foundation SD supplied funding for all 3D printed materials, and library staff significantly increased their printing activity for three months to meet the demand.

Makerspaces across four different branches also shifted to an on-demand service where patrons could send a file they needed to have printed, and staff would print and make it available for curbside pick-up. As SDPL has gradually reopened services, it has continued offering this service since 3D printing is a passive service that SDPL can offer with little monitoring or staff burden.

Learning from the pandemic

The biggest learning from the pandemic reported across stakeholders was the ability to pivot quickly and robustly to the online delivery of many workforce services, including workshops and courses. Stakeholders noted ongoing challenges stemming from staff attrition over the pandemic and difficulty hiring sufficient staff to reopen access to library facilities and services.

Tracking and measurement

The library system's approach to tracking and measurement

SDPL uses Project Outcome to measure satisfaction with events, particularly the Family Career Exploration Day. SDPL has an annual satisfaction survey it fields with an iPad at the exit to the library. This survey does not ask for information specifically related to workforce or business development services.

Program staff described gaps in longitudinal outcome information, and they lack data on the distribution of universal services across library domains. This lack of data impacts SDPL's ability to make informed choices for programming and limits strategic funding. SDPL staff expressed interest in improving the utility and integration of the data they collect across library departments. They are also interested in developing some sort of data dashboard. Currently, staff indicated that they do not use data as purposefully as they might like.

Specific components of data collection at SDPL include:

1. *General data collection on library operations:* Monthly output summaries demonstrate standard library services such as foot count, program participation, database usage, and collection usage. SDPL uses these data to comply with state and federal reporting requirements. SDPL also fields a patron satisfaction survey that provides a public assessment of overall library services. It is a multi-pronged outreach strategy, including a pop-up on the library computer if a screen is idle for more than three seconds, paper surveys, and electronic surveys accessed via a QR code. The survey is available in English and Spanish.

2. *Information requests and referrals:* During the pandemic and ongoing, SDPL has been tracking reference questions by topic but not by workforce development or business development. SDPL has also been capturing tech help questions and PTRC questions. Staff do not track referrals to or from the library.

3. *Usage of specialized online resources and website analytics:* SDPL is capturing database and website traffic. Database metrics help the library understand the value of different offerings and the needed capacity for subscription services. Website visits help SDPL understand how many patrons are seeking information about the library online, and the number of visit counts for various service pages serves as a proxy for community interest in a topic.

4. *Outputs related to specialized and partner services:* Specialized and partner service output data collection varies somewhat across services but tends to include the number of classes or workshops offered, number of participants, and hours of service. SDPL does not currently share or receive information with SDWP. During the pandemic, the IDEA Lab overhauled its data reporting to better capture program output metrics, such as daily prints and lab usage. It also uses an anonymous Google survey form to learn why patrons are visiting the Lab and the services they are using to better understand utilization and demand. This helps internal programming decisions, such as which software to purchase as well as outreach strategies. Despite intentional changes to data collection, library staff noted ongoing ambiguity about how to categorize certain library services. Staff are still unsure how to capture equipment use or printing, for example, as a program, a service, an interaction, engagement, or one-on-one assistance. This has made it difficult for SDPL to aggregate the data from its centers, including the IDEA Lab, the PTRC, and the emergent Microbusiness Center, into cohesive performance information that tells a story.

> *We have different little pots of information lying around that definitely don't speak to each other. And so we're trying to consolidate things and have, through the use of project management software and other strategies, to have everything be a little more apples to apples, because it will be a typical thing where the State Library needs some information, and our business office people need something, and our programming need something, and our marketing people need something, and it's not organized.*

5. *Outcomes related to services:* SDPL uses self-modified Project Outcome surveys to capture participant feedback and expectation of outcomes after program completion. SDPL captures participant perception of skill gain and the likelihood of using the information. Surveys are generally in person at the end of the session or through a virtual link for remote services. SDPL translates Project Outcome feedback results into infographics to share with stakeholders. The library does not currently capture long-term outcomes beyond the program completion survey.

6. *Anecdotal evidence:* Since SDPL has limited quantitative outcome data, it emphasizes using stories to communicate the impact on the community. SDPL is currently building internal capacity to capture audio-video patron stories and better showcase patron experiences. The technology librarians have also created a "feel good" folder where they collect positive and negative feedback. They address any negative feedback they receive and use the positive feedback to share library success stories.

Outcome measurement challenges

SDPL is considering how best to gather information organizationally to help the library assess whether it is meeting its goals or trending in the right direction. Key challenges to outcome measurement include staff capacity limitations and data and survey fatigue of patrons. Moreover, like other libraries, staff are concerned about their ability to maintain patron privacy and remain an

open, trusted space if they start collecting personally identifiable information about patron library behavior.

Interest and feasibility of implementing new outcome measurement systems

SDPL staff acknowledged the value of the information that increased data collection could provide, including helping them access additional funding. However, real-world implementation of a pop-up survey or similar platform seems unlikely based on stakeholder feedback. There is a perceived trade-off between the data that would help them make better decisions and SDPL's status as a trusted open-access institution. Additionally, SDPL finds that similar surveys sometimes have poor data quality, with patrons conveying what they think the library wants to hear or rushing through the survey to continue with their activity. Although one staff member mentioned that the library's IT department indicated it would not be possible to do a pop-up survey on library computers, other staff are familiar with similar examples, in the Atlanta Public Library, for example, where the library conducted brief real-time surveys to understand the services the patron is accessing at the library. Stakeholders noted that snapshot tallying of reference desk questions by topic area may be more palatable.

Observations

✓ **To maximize benefits, locating a traditional workforce development service provider in a library may also require cross-staff training and collaboration.**

Although co-located within the central branch, the workforce development services SDPL offers and those the career center offers remain separate. SDPL delivers its workforce development-related services primarily through its standard services and library-staffed specialized programs, with limited SDWP engagement outside of referrals to the career center. Similarly, career center services are standard SDWP fare and include referrals to select library services. Cross-staff training that SDPL and SDWP have planned may address the siloed nature of service provision within the central branch as well as the familiarity of services between SDPL and SDWP staff across the system.

✓ **Libraries' basic foundational skill-building efforts, such as digital literacy, can prepare individuals to optimize the traditional workforce development system.**

Job seekers entering the workforce development system may require foundational literacy or digital literacy skills, such as basic computer skills and familiarity with email platforms, before they can optimize the service offerings of traditional workforce development providers. Libraries can play a significant role in filling this gap in services and preparing individuals for success within the workforce system. Site experience suggests that a clear understanding of each partner's roles in preparing job seekers and communicating skill thresholds for participation may streamline referrals and facilitate participant experience.

✓ **Program measurement may be more successful and meaningful when it provides utility to program staff.**

As libraries continue to refine their data collection and measurement processes, there may be opportunities for broader capacity building to help library staff understand how to select program measures that provide value to their understanding of the implementation and inform program decisions. There is no objective guidance on which data elements to collect or how to value program interactions, such as equipment use, printings, or classroom participation. However, building the

capacity of each library to facilitate reflection on which program outputs and outcomes illustrate their program progress can help them identify which measures to collect and track over time and create meaningful change.