

LSTA

Library Services Technology Act

Open for Business: Supporting Small Business Development and Entrepreneurs

Grant Amount:
\$10,000-\$15,000

Time Range:
1-2 years

Eligibility:
Public

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Summary:
Supporting centers for
small business
development and
entrepreneurship.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In times of local economic recovery, libraries are well positioned to help support local entrepreneurs in their efforts to start or expand their respective small business enterprises. Both new and experienced entrepreneurs may seek out resources at their local library on topics such as business plan development, incorporation procedures, human resource management, and similar issues.

Libraries are invited to create a center offering free counseling and small business support workshops in partnership with [Massachusetts SCORE](#) and the [Massachusetts Small Business Development Agency](#).

Activities may include:

- Provision of both in-person and virtual classes to develop business plans.
- A series of programs on topics such as starting a business, managing operations, market research, business finance, legal issues, taxes, and record keeping. These programs could be directed at individuals with a range of business experience.
- Active collaboration with community, municipal, and business

organizations such as Rotary and Chamber of Commerce to include opportunities for mentoring with volunteers.

Training for library staff in curating resources to support participating entrepreneurs, including the potential design of a Small Business Center portal on the library's website should be an essential component of this project.

Staff may consider exploring additional opportunities with local academic institutions, including offering classes at the library (virtually or in person) or tap into excellent statewide programs including [UMass Dartmouth Innovation](#) or [Framingham State University Entrepreneur Center](#).

Libraries are encouraged to include an appropriate focus on programs that appeal to Women Owned Small Business (WOSB) and Minority Owned Business (MOB) that can benefit from targeted programs around small business. These programs may have special appeal in the Gateway City communities that include growing immigrant populations that have shown to be highly entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship and self-employment can also be a valuable and viable option for people with disabilities looking to enter the job market on their own terms. Additionally, proposed programs might interest veterans populations, looking for new opportunities offered through entrepreneurship.

BACKGROUND

According to a report by the Urban Libraries Council, [Closing the Entrepreneurship Gap: Tools for Libraries](#), community libraries have become vital as economic development centers in helping under-resourced entrepreneurs bring their business idea to creation (especially in the time of COVID-19). Business owners and employees use resources at public libraries to support their small businesses 2.8 million times every month. Although no one organization can serve the need of every entrepreneur, the library can maximize its capacity as an entrepreneurial hub. It can intentionally identify and build on its unique niche within the local entrepreneurial ecosystem to leverage partnerships. Based on an ALA funded initiative, [Libraries Build Business](#), existing centers may offer peer counselling to other libraries. National programs such as the [Small Business Hub](#) at the Providence Public Library, and the [Library to Business](#) program at the Seattle Public Library present successful models for how Massachusetts Libraries might support local workforce and small business sector development.

In the time of COVID-19 providing support for under resourced entrepreneurs, strengthening communities of libraries, and support for overall resilience and equity are more vital than ever. By addressing support gaps for high need entrepreneurs, libraries are critical to local economic recovery.

THE FRAMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY'S DOWNTOWN U PROJECT

“The COVID-19 pandemic created a crisis in employment that will mean job seekers at all levels – some of whom have been out of the job market for decades – will need assistance job searching, redeveloping their resumes and CVs, learning or relearning interview skills, and carving new pathways for career and job success”. The program sought to:

- Provide resources for entry into the job market and support career development.
- Foster meaningful and active collaborations with community, municipal, and business organizations
- Help potential entrepreneurs from concept to implementation.
- Provide comprehensive resources on planning, funding, starting up, and maintaining businesses of all types in Massachusetts.

October 2021