CASE STUDY: Cambria County Library System

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 Cambria County Library System (CCLS) primarily because of its colocation and collaboration with CareerLink, its associated workforce development services, and because it is an example of a library system that encompasses a small city and rural regions.

Overview of the case

The Cambria County Library System includes the Cambria County Library and 13 other public libraries in the county. Cambria County Library, located in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is the headquarters of the larger system, which consists of independent libraries, not branches, and there is significant integration of the system staff and Cambria County staff. While this case is primarily about Cambria County Library, it also addresses the larger system.

The Cambria County Library and the broader library system present useful learning for the role libraries play in their local workforce development systems, especially how libraries are helping to close the gap between access to the internet and the technology necessary for job seekers to gain basic skills and eventually employment. CCLS also serves as a useful case for learning about how libraries are co-locating and collaborating with more traditional workforce development organizations and contributing to system efficiency and reach. CCLS staff work in a small city and serve patrons across the county, including those in rural areas. CCLS maintains close working relationships with partner organizations to maximize its services and make effective referrals across the system.

As a smaller library system, CCLS has limited funding and staff capacity for data and measurement efforts. The library's data practices and challenges may serve as practical learning for further research into how small library systems can effectively demonstrate their impact.

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 *(Library Designed and Led 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 *(Library Designed and Led 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 *(Partnerships)*	• 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

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 the Cambria County Library System, the Mt. Auburn team conducted eight interviews. The team conducted seven of these interviews onsite in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, during an April 18, 2022 site visit and one virtually over Zoom the following week. Of the eight interviewees, one was library system staff, three were independent library staff, two were workforce actors, one was a small business actor, and one was a civic leader. The Mt. Auburn team used semi-structured protocols to guide stakeholder interviews.

Community context

To better understand CCLS'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 Cambria County, Pennsylvania.

Library system

In 1870, the citizens of Johnstown established a public library, and in 1971, the Cambria County Library moved to its current location in Johnstown. The library underwent a major renovation after a flood in 1977, constructed the third floor in 1983, and created a teen space and senior space in 2009 and 2019, respectively. The Cambria County Library began its partnership with CareerLink, a one-stop career center, in 2018, becoming the first public library in the state to co-locate with a full-service CareerLink site. [1]

The Cambria County Library System is a nonprofit organization serving as a federated library system. Rather than branches, the system consists of 14 independent libraries in Cambria County, including the headquarters. Each library functions largely independently, featuring its own programs, mission, and board of directors. Patrons with a library card have access to all 14 libraries and can use their cards to borrow items and access programs and online resources. Libraries coordinate so patrons can request an item from one library and pick it up at another. The Cambria

Library	Cambria County Library System
Service area	Cambria County, PA
Population of service area	104,316
# of branches*	1
Administrative structure	Nonprofit
Operating revenue	$1,340,561
Operating revenue per capita	$12.85
Total paid staff (FTE)	20.03
# of adult programs**	132
# of internet computers	47
Computers per 1,000 population	0.45

* 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*

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[1] CCL About. CCLSYS. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.cclsys.org/cambria-about/

County Library Board of Directors oversees the Cambria County Library and the member libraries.[2] Cambria County Library in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is the system headquarters. It is also the District Library Center of the Johnstown District, which encompasses Cambria, Indiana, and Somerset counties. The District Library Center is responsible for providing and coordinating supplementary services and resources to the local libraries within the district.[3] The District Library Center has one full-time district consultant, who serves as a liaison between the local libraries and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries in Harrisburg.[4]

As the headquarters of the federated library system, Cambria County Library provides resources for interlibrary delivery and guidance for the member libraries to meet requirements for state funding. As part of these requirements, member libraries must have sufficient hours of operation and consistent use of the Integrated Library System and library card policies but, otherwise, independently decide their own policies. The system headquarters, when relevant, also shares information with member libraries, such as staff policies related to COVID.

The current library director has been in the position for three years and has over ten years of experience working across the county library system.

According to the IMLS Public Libraries Survey data for the Cambria County Federated Library System, there are overall revenues of $1,340,561 of which local government sources provide only 35 percent. The state provides 48 percent, including funds for operating district center library services for local libraries and funds that the system headquarters distributes directly to the member libraries, including state and county aid.

The Friends of the Cambria County Library (FOCCL) primarily operates the bookstore in the library lobby. FOCCL runs fundraising efforts, such as raffle events, as well. Funds contribute to summer reading programs, library furniture and equipment, and library events.[5] Before the pandemic, FOCCL raised about $20,000 a year for the library.

Community conditions

Cambria County is located approximately 70 miles outside Pittsburgh in the western central part of Pennsylvania, along the Allegheny Mountains. Cambria County's population is 133,472, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, a population increase of 1 percent since 2010. Ebensburg is the county seat of Cambria County, which includes the city of Johnstown, 32 boroughs, and 30 townships. Cambria County comprises the Johnstown, PA Metropolitan Statistical Area and is the 27th most populous county in the state of Pennsylvania, out of 67 counties.[6] The county is predominantly white (92.6 percent), with small Black (3.7 percent) and Hispanic or Latino (1.8 percent) populations. According to the ACS 5-year average data from the U.S. Census, the median household income in Cambria

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[2] CCL About. CCLSYS. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.cclsys.org/cambria-about/
[3] Johnstown District Resources. Johnstown District Libraries. Accessed June 24, 2022.
  https://sites.google.com/view/johnstowndistrictlibraries/
[4] CCL About. CCLSYS. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.cclsys.org/cambria-about/
[5] Friends of the Cambria County Library. CCLSYS. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.cclsys.org/cambria-friends/
[6] Population of Counties in Pennsylvania (2022). World Population Review. Accessed June 24, 2022.
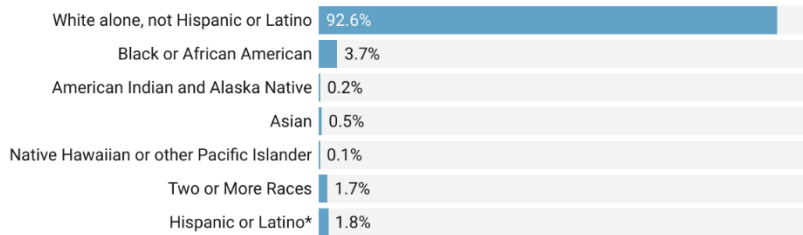 https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties/states/pa

County is $47,644, and the poverty rate is 12.5 percent. Ninety-two percent of Cambria County residents have a high school degree or higher.

Community Conditions	Cambria County	United States
Unemployment rate	5.2%	5.4%
Persons in poverty	12.5%	11.4%
Median household income	$47,644	$64,994
In civilian labor force	54.9%	63.0%
HS graduate or higher (> 25 y.o.)	92.0%	88.5%
BA or higher (> 25 y.o.)	22.0%	32.9%
Foreign-born persons	1.1%	13.5%
Households with internet access	77.9%	85.2%

Cambria County was established in 1804 and became a major center for steelmaking and coal mining thanks to Johnstown serving as the western terminus for the Allegheny Portage Railroad.[7] In 1889, the South Fork Dam of the Little Conemaugh River, located 14 miles upstream from Johnstown, failed. The ensuing flood killed over 2,200 people and caused almost $500 million (in 2020 dollars) of damage.[8] However, many survivors stayed in Johnstown, and recovery happened relatively quickly. The city's major industry and employer, Cambria Iron Works, reopened just days after the flood, and the city rebuilt over the next few years.[9]

Racial and ethnic breakdown of Cambria County

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	92.6%
Black or African American	3.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Two or More Races	1.7%
Hispanic or Latino*	1.8%

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

Today, manufacturing is the largest sector of the Cambria County economy, followed by retail. The largest employers in Cambria County are Duke LifePoint Healthcare - Conemaugh Health System, Pennsylvania state government, federal government, Cambria county government, and Wal-Mart.[10] Currently, Cambria County has an unemployment rate of 5.2 percent, down from a peak of 17.7 percent in April 2020.[11]

Three commissioners who are responsible for fiscal decisions oversee the county. A slate of additional elected and appointed officials executes other county governance functions.

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[7] Encyclopædia Britannica, ed. Cambria County, Pennsylvania. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambria

[8] "Johnstown Flood." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnstown_Flood; and Encyclopædia Britannica, ed. Cambria County, Pennsylvania. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambria

[9] "Background Article: The Johnstown Flood of 1889." Education: Johnstown Flood Museum. Johnstown Area Heritage Association, 2013. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.jaha.org/edu/flood/background.html#:~:text=Four%20square%20miles%20of%20downtown,99%20whole%20families%20perished

[10] Major Employers. JARI. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.jari.com/about-us/area-demographics/

[11] Unemployment Rate in Cambria County, PA. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PACAMB5URN

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 Cambria County Library System operates.

State-level support: policies, funding, and infrastructure

State Library administrative agency

The Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) sits within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and operates a major research library; collects, preserves, and digitizes important state documents; and supports local, district, and statewide libraries and library services. The deputy secretary for libraries leads the office, with support from the Governor's Advisory Council (GAC) on Library Development, which has 12 members whom the governor appoints. The GAC advises the governor, the secretary of education, and the deputy secretary of libraries on policies and operations related to the state's libraries.

OCL has two bureaus:

- *The Bureau of the State Library* provides residents with access to government documents, print materials, digitized collections, online reference services, and subscription electronic resources in a range of areas for scholarly and legal research, such as Academic Search Ultimate, JSTOR, and America's Newspapers, among many more. In addition, it houses the State Law Library and a Rare Collections Library, which includes a historic collection of Pennsylvania documents and newspapers.

- *The Bureau of Library Development* supports public libraries established under the provisions of the Library Code. The Bureau provides professional development and continuing education to the broad library community and advisory services to library staff, trustees, administrators, and volunteers. The Bureau administers state funds for library services to the blind and print-disabled through the Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians and administers the Library Access fund in order to provide statewide library resources, including support for materials delivery and sharing, electronic information and resources, reference, and digital repositories. The Bureau directs and administers the federal Library Services and Technology Act program, managing statewide and competitive grants, and the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Library Facilities Grant Program.

OCL also supports the POWER Library, an online portal to all that Pennsylvania libraries offer for e-collections and e-services, like Chat with a Librarian. This portal also provides access to general information sources related to workforce development services in Pennsylvania.

OCL has made workforce development an important component of its strategy for public libraries in the state. The 2018-2022 Library Services and Technology Act five-year plan identified developing and improving workforce development services and community organization collaborations in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages as one of its five goals. Pennsylvania is one of the few states that made workforce development a major goal of its plan, and, in July 2017, the GAC on Library Development endorsed this work by resolving to "encourage public libraries' efforts to work

with workforce investment boards to advance workforce development for employers and job-seekers in Pennsylvania." In 2017, OCL fielded a public library survey on workforce development services. Survey findings concluded that 61 percent of responding libraries had workforce-related partnerships, and top-ranked partnership activities included providing information, making referrals, and using library space.[12] In addition, in 2018, the governor issued an executive order that identified the GAC on Library Development as "one of fourteen agencies that the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board should collaborate and coordinate with in order to develop statewide policies that improve workforce development."[13]

IMLS' Grants to States, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) state funds provided Pennsylvania with significant federal support for libraries. In 2021, IMLS' annual allocation for Pennsylvania was $5,668,793 and one-time ARPA funding was $4,785,292. In addition, there was a special allocation of $1,156,768 through the CARES Act in 2020. Pennsylvania identified a set of potential project areas for the use of ARPA funding by libraries that primarily involved responding to specific COVID-related issues, such as enhancing technology access, moving services outdoors, and addressing pandemic preparedness and response.

In addition to these federal resources, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also provides significant financial support for public libraries. This includes:

- Libraries are eligible for facility-related grants through the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. Since its creation in 1993, the fund has specifically targeted public libraries for a portion of its funding. Grants pay up to 50 percent of eligible costs to plan, acquire, construct, or rehabilitate public library facilities. In 2022, the Keystone Fund granted $5.28 million to libraries.

- State aid, also known as the public library subsidy, goes to public libraries that meet standards found in the Public Library Code (24 PA. C.S. Education. Chapter 93) and the Pennsylvania Code (22 PA Code § 131; § 141.) The amount and the specific formula change from year to year, but in general, while it has not grown, in the 2022 fiscal year, the allocation of state funds for public libraries was about $70 million.

While not officially part of the State Library, Pennsylvania was also the first state to receive funding through the *Libraries Lead with Digital Skills* initiative, a partnership of the American Library Association and Public Library Association to develop free programs to assist job seekers in finding or preparing for work or empower small businesses to grow online. The initiative selected 20 libraries in Pennsylvania to participate, which involved integrating *Grow with Google* programs into events or ongoing workshops.

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[12] "Office of Commonwealth Libraries Public Library Workforce Development Services 2017 Survey Highlights." Pennsylvania Department of Education, July 2017. https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Documents/For%20Libraries/Programs%20and%20Services/Workforce%20Development/2017%20Workforce%20Development%20Survey%20Highlights.pdf

[13] By Direction of Tom Wolf, Governor. "Executive Order Number 2018-04 Amended, RE: Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board." Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Governor's Office, August 2, 2018. https://www.oa.pa.gov/Policies/eo/Documents/2018-04.pdf

State workforce system

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry oversees the public workforce development system in Pennsylvania. The Bureau of Workforce Development oversees the 22 Workforce Development Boards across the state, sets out the state's priorities under the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and administers a range of grant programs to support its goals.

The Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board (PA WDB) is the governor's policy advisor on workforce development and coordinates "workforce development initiatives and policies across commonwealth agencies and programs and coordinates the development and implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)."[14]

The state workforce development system has developed many programs and services to support the role of public libraries in workforce development. These include:

- The 2014 WIOA plan for the state specifically identifies public libraries as possible partners for One-Stop Career Centers (CareerLinks). In the 2020-2024 State Workforce Plan, there is also an explicit strategy for strengthening the One-Stop Career Centers: "The commonwealth will expand customer access and services across the One-Stop system to engage new customers and increase the number of individuals being served by the workforce system through better partner relationships including, but not limited to, local libraries and community-based resources and programs, as well as ensuring additional resources are available virtually, when possible."[15]

- Governor Wolf's *PA Statewide Movement for Accountability, Readiness and Training* (PAsmart) framework, which guides the approach to workforce development and education, also has relevance to public libraries. Libraries can use Department of Education PAsmart grants to support cross-sector partnerships that provide technology-related skills for adult learners.

- The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has purchased statewide access to online job skills training for all Pennsylvania residents through an arrangement with Metrix Learning, an online learning platform including tools to address skills gaps, provide training, explore career pathways, and connect job seekers to employment.[16] There is a deliberate effort to familiarize the staff of public libraries with this resource, SkillUp™ PA.

- The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has funded two rounds of grants as part of its Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grants. This program has awarded grants to a number of libraries for digital literacy training programs, including the Cambria County Library.

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[14] "Pennsylvania Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan for the Period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024." Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of the Governor, March 30, 2020. https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/wioa/2020-WIOA-State-Plan.pdf

[15] "Pennsylvania Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan for the Period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024." Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of the Governor, March 30, 2020. https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/wioa/2020-WIOA-State-Plan.pdf

[16] Metrix Learning. SkillUpAmerica. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.metrixlearning.com/

Local workforce and business development ecosystems

Workforce development system

The Workforce Development Board covering Cambria County is the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB). In collaboration with CareerLink, the primary workforce development actors in Cambria County are CCLS and Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies. Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, operate CareerLink locations in Cambria County. Cambria County Library is the primary site for CareerLink in the region, and there is an affiliate site at the Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies (located in Johnstown) and a site in Ebensburg, which is about 20 miles away from Johnstown, in central Cambria County. Goodwill offers the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment and provides free high school equivalency classes in four locations (including Ebensburg, Johnstown, and the Cambria County Prison), although participation in these programs waned since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.[17] These core organizations work closely together to serve job seekers in the region.

Business development system

Organizations that serve small businesses in the region include Johnstown Area Regional Industries (JARI), Westmoreland SCORE, the Cambria Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Saint Francis Small Business Development Center (SBDC). JARI's mission is to support the formation and growth of businesses, and its services include connection to financing (grants and loans), as well as coaching for entrepreneurs.[18] JARI also convenes employer partnerships for businesses to share information, resources, and to communicate their hiring needs to workforce development stakeholders so that they align. JARI is in downtown Johnstown. Westmoreland SCORE is the Cambria County location of the national network, which connects small business owners to volunteer mentors. The organization also offers webinars and online resources. Westmoreland SCORE serves many counties in Pennsylvania, including Armstrong, Cambria, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Indiana, Somerset, Venango, and Westmoreland. It is based in Latrobe, which is about 30 miles from Johnstown.[19] The Cambria Regional Chamber of Commerce is in Johnstown and provides services for its members, including marketing services for growing small businesses.[20] The Saint Francis University Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is an affiliate of the national network of small business development centers and works with entrepreneurs in Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset counties. The center is in Loretto, about 25 miles from Johnstown. The SBDC offers client consulting services, business planning, and other services to create or grow a small business.[21]

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[17] "Goodwill Southern Alleghenies 2019 Annual Report." Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, n.d. https://www.gogoodwill.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2019-Annual-Report-2.pdf

[18] About Us and Our Region. JARI. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.jari.com/about-us/

[19] Westmoreland SCORE. SCORE Association. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://westmoreland.score.org/

[20] Cambria Regional Chamber Membership Benefits. Cambria Regional Chamber | Cambria County Business Chamber. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.crchamber.com/membership-benefits/

[21] Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Saint Francis University. Accessed June 24, 2022. https://www.francis.edu/Small-Business-Development-Center

Library workforce and business development services

Overview of the library's approach

CCLS is a collaborative library, working together with CareerLink and other organizations to deliver workforce and small business development services in an area that includes small cities and rural areas and faces challenges related to internet access and digital literacy. The library is a trusted resource, a welcoming space, and an organization that works to fill in the gaps in the workforce and small business ecosystems to address community needs. The library more heavily focuses on workforce development services, especially with its collaboration with CareerLink, but offers small business development services and resources and works closely with small business development providers to serve patrons looking to start or grow a business.

Workforce development services

Standard services

In the system headquarters library, the Cambria County Library in Johnstown, if patrons come to the library for assistance on a job application, for example, staff will most likely direct them to CareerLink, located within the library, rather than to a library worker. However, the library's operating hours are longer than CareerLink's, and librarians can assist patrons if CareerLink's office is not open. For other independent libraries in the system, librarians may refer patrons to the Johnstown location or a satellite CareerLink office for these services or offer some support to job seekers themselves. One library staff member from an independent library in the system said, "*I still contribute to workforce development, just in my day-to-day reference work, of course, as any librarian does with helping bridge the gap and connect those coming here looking for jobs with the resources they need …or actually calling up CareerLink and being that contact person for them.*" Additional online resources available to patrons include Grow with Google (which offers tools for job seekers and business owners), research databases, Glassdoor, language learning programs, and job listing websites, among others.

For many of the libraries that are members of the system and located in the more rural areas, a very basic function is providing internet and technology access that supports job seekers. The system libraries offer access to computers, tablets, printers, webcams, headsets, and other technology that patrons may not have access to at home. Patrons may access the internet at a library, or check out a hotspot and/or a laptop at some libraries in the system. Library patrons can use this technology to search for and apply for jobs, apply for supportive social services, and participate in a Zoom interview or webinar for job training.

> *I think it's how we play a role is unique to rural America in that there is little to no internet infrastructure out here. You know, cell phones don't work out here … everyone else has like very slow internet or dial up or do not have access to internet at all, because there's not infrastructure. So we're specially positioned in that we are one of the only institutions where the public can go without the expectation of spending any money whatsoever, and get resources they need to be able to access anything from SSI to Medicaid to filing their taxes … we sort of act as a safety net for the safety net that's lacking out here.*

Specialized services

While CCLS does offer some specialized workforce development services, it offers most services in partnership with CareerLink and other organizations.

In interviews with library staff from independent libraries in the system, one stakeholder reported that their library is piloting a program featuring a digital literacy lab, including staffed hours to assist patrons with reference questions and digital resources. A Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry one-year grant is funding the pilot program, and programming activities support digital literacy and help patrons understand job and career resources at the library, including resources for obtaining certifications.

Community hub services

CCLS is able to make the most of its reach and effectiveness working in a sparsely populated region with small cities and rural regions by collaborating with other organizations. Its most prominent collaboration is Cambria County Library's collocation with CareerLink (see sidebar).

In addition to the career center operating within the library building, CCLS functions as a community hub in collaboration with partners in several other ways, including:

- *On-the-job training placements in collaboration with Goodwill*: Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies offers a mentorship program to job seekers early in their careers. The program places participants at the library to gain professional experience. Participants are usually transitioning from high school to the labor force.

- *Job/resource fairs:* The library is a centrally located and welcoming location, making it an appropriate site for job fairs. The library collaborates with community partners to host and/or participate in employment and resource fairs that support job seekers. The fairs consist of workforce development services and social services. In order to encourage participation and reduce stigma, the fairs also include "quality of life providers," who share information with patrons to attend cultural or community events, such as concerts. In interviews, stakeholders reported that one particularly well-attended resource fair at the Cambria County Library

CareerLink site in Cambria County Library

Before 2018, the CareerLink location was in Richland, far from downtown Johnstown. Job seekers had to transfer bus lines, making for a time-consuming trip that limited access to workforce development services. When CareerLink staff considered relocating, they analyzed data on where job seekers were coming from and where job seekers were going for support. They learned that job seekers often came to CareerLink from Johnstown and that people saw the library as the place to go locally if they were looking for a job. From there, CareerLink staff met with library staff and began working on a collaboration. Now, there is a comprehensive full-service CareerLink site on the first floor of the Cambria County Library.

CareerLink provides intensive one-on-one support for job seekers, including a skills or interest assessment to identify career goals, help with a resume, assist with interview skills, and coordinate job interviews with employers. The organization also offers opportunities for on-the-job training and upskilling. CareerLink is able to cover 50 percent of the wages and training costs for some training programs. If job seekers need to improve their basic skills before they are ready for employment, staff refer them to adult literacy and digital literacy resources. GED classes are available onsite in a classroom twice weekly. There is also representation from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation on staff to work with veterans and refer those with disabilities to relevant resources.

In the early days of the pandemic, CareerLink served a key community need by assisting with unemployment registration. Previously, the site had a phone that was a direct line to unemployment, but that was not sufficient in a time of high need and shutdown. CareerLink staff helped patrons fill out forms to send to unemployment, and this continues to be a service offered onsite. In interviews, staff shared, "*This is a big service. If somebody just lost their job and is not sure where to go, they can come in, and we can start directing in the right path.*"

included workforce development resources and entertainment for families, including a petting zoo. In other cases, the library collaborated with community partners on job fairs at larger locations.

- *CareerLink staff hours in independent libraries:* Some of the independent libraries not located in Johnstown partner with CareerLink to have staff periodically come to their library to assist patrons. This stopped during COVID, but interviewees reported that it helped others view the library as a relevant player in economic development.

- *Library workshops in collaboration with CareerLink:* In addition to the services CareerLink provides, the organization partners with the library to offer workshops and other programming, such as workshops for Grow with Google, information sessions with employers, and digital literacy workshops that include the opportunity to take the Northstar Digital Literacy assessment to earn a credential.

- *Digital navigator program:* At the time of the interviews, the library, in partnership with CareerLink, was the recipient of a grant for a digital navigator program. They planned to hire a contractor to go to the independent libraries to teach a five-part introduction to computer literacy and at least one course that focuses on job-specific digital skills such as how to use email and how to use Microsoft Word to create a resume. The library and CareerLink plan to develop the curriculum together for the contractor to teach.

Small business development services

Standard services

Patrons looking to start or grow their business may come to libraries in the CCLS to use computers and access books and other materials related to starting a business, market research, writing a business plan, etc. The library also offers online resources supportive of small business development, including Grow with Google (which offers tools for business owners), AtoZdatabases, and access to online news sources.

Cambria County Library and JARI work collaboratively to serve entrepreneurs and often facilitate referrals in both directions. For example, if an entrepreneur in the early stages comes to JARI for coaching or financing, JARI will make a referral to the library for market research and other research to refine the patron's plan before working more intensely with JARI. One stakeholder shared, "*You need to do a marketing plan. You need to figure out who your competition is going to be. You have to do a budget, all of those kinds of things. We walk you through that, but the research that you have to do has to be done by yourself. And where's the best place to find that information? Or, if you want to look at something in one of the business journals … where are you going to get that information? The library.*"

Specialized services

While the Cambria County Library focuses more heavily on workforce development than small business development, it does offer specialized services to support patrons to start or grow a business. For example, the library will offer information sessions or workshops on topics such as Google Docs for business owners.

Community hub services

The community hub services also center primarily on workforce development. However, the libraries in the system will sometimes collaborate with other organizations by hosting a workshop at their location and advertising other organizations' workshops.

Service administration

Staffing and management

Across the system, CCLS has a relatively small staff with about 18 full-time and ten part-time employees. At Cambria County Library, the CareerLink staff are primarily responsible for administering workforce development services, with support from and in collaboration with the library director. Three full-time reference librarians assist job seekers when CareerLink is not open. Small business development is a lesser focus, and the library works closely with JARI to provide services. Librarians may assist with access to databases and other resources for business development. At other libraries in the system, there may be only one staff member who will facilitate services and programs alone or with volunteer support, and are more likely to provide one-on-one support to job seekers and those looking for support for their business.

System support and role

Each library has its own director and board of trustees and is able to determine if and how it provides workforce and small business development services. The headquarters library funnels federal and state funding to the other libraries in the federated system, manages the cost of the Integrated Library System, and shares information with the other libraries. For workforce development services, the independent libraries closer to Johnstown may refer patrons to the CareerLink site at Cambria County Library or to a satellite location in Ebensburg. Additionally, Cambria County Library offers interlibrary delivery to share resources between libraries. Otherwise, the libraries manage workforce and small business development services largely independently.

Funding

General support for the staffing and facilities flows through the general funding stream of CCLS. In some cases, the library uses grant funding to deliver its services, such as the grant that supports the Chromebook and hotspot rentals and grants that support the traveling digital literacy programming led by the Cambria County Library and the Digital Literacy Lab (from the Department of Labor and Industry, which this case study described previously). However, CareerLink leads most workforce services delivered at the library and receives federal and state funds as the one-stop center for workforce development. Some of the organization's funding serves specific populations, such as displaced workers or veterans.

How they determine what to offer

Generally, the library offers workforce and small business development services in response to emerging needs and opportunities. For example, with the digital literacy grant, the library is responding to a funding opportunity and filling a skill-based need in the county. Additionally, ecosystem partners reported that the library hosts workshops based on need. These decisions rely more heavily on knowledge of community needs rather than a formal needs analysis relying on data or more systematically collecting feedback. However, one library staff member reported that their library utilizes surveys to collect patron feedback on programming to determine what to offer.

Marketing of services

CCLS has one staff member responsible for marketing. While funding is limited, the system coordinator helps to provide resources for marketing for member libraries. In 2020, the system redesigned its website, which included a logo design for each of the member libraries. Library staff reported that the website redesign helped rebrand the member libraries. Other marketing methods include a newsletter, flyers, a Facebook page, and word of mouth or referrals. The chamber of commerce also features library services and programs on its mailing list. CareerLink cannot use federal funds for marketing but does perform some outreach and recruitment that focuses on communicating information about the services the organization offers.

> *I think having the library here is a critical resource for the community. Anything the library can do, that it can conceive of to plug into the workforce development system … not only is welcome, but encouraged. And I think that libraries are so much more than just taking out books these days. And this library recognizes that, and I think that's real positive.*

Aspirations

Across the system, the libraries have varying levels of resources, and smaller libraries struggle to provide cohesive programming. In interviews, stakeholders from member libraries reported that they wished they could offer more services, but funding and staff capacity are constraints.

At Cambria County Library, there are aspirations for the third-floor renovation to include bookable meeting spaces and a parent and child resource center. This space would allow privacy for job seekers to complete a job application or interview, with room for children to play safely while patrons work. Ideally, this renovation would facilitate a better environment for job seekers, especially those with children.

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

Library collaboration with ecosystem partners

CCLS takes a collaborative approach to workforce and small business development services, partnering most intensely with CareerLink, as well as JARI and Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies. Examples detailed above include collaborations on workshops, on-the-job training placements, and job/resource fairs. In addition to collaborating actively on programming, the organizations are highly aware of each other's resources and often make referrals to connect job seekers and entrepreneurs to the most relevant resources. Library staff, particularly the director of the Cambria County Library, participate in community events and meetings relevant to economic development, such as employer partnership meetings. Library staff also participate in Johnstown's Vision Together 2025 community engagement initiative, which concentrates on redeveloping Main Street, as well as an effort to improve broadband access in the county.

Workforce development and community stakeholders conveyed that they see library staff consistently participating in community events and convenings. One interviewee reported, "*They're very involved in the community. So you'll see … they might be doing something downtown, a community event, the library is right there, front and center.*" Additionally, library staff participate in

some community convenings. For example, the library has a seat at JARI's employer partnership meetings, contributing to better communication across the system.

Library's position in the greater ecosystem

Traditional economic development stakeholders see the library as a community asset and a relevant player in the ecosystem, particularly since the CareerLink site opened in the headquarters library. Ecosystem partners see the collaboration between the library and CareerLink as highly compatible and in service of job seekers in the community. One ecosystem partner shared, "*With the CareerLink mission, with the mission of the library, I think they just they fit perfectly … They're extraordinarily compatible… it just makes complete sense.*"

Key local partners work together, acknowledging that funding is limited in the community. One partner summarized the process, saying, "*We make sure that we don't duplicate because funding is tight. And so we all work together and we say, 'Okay, [one organization] has the funds for this. [One organization] has funds for this. Can the library pick up where we don't have funds?' In most cases, they can.*" The organizations are not competitive and see each other as resources to maximize their work.

CCLS's workforce development services and role in the ecosystem suggest it is both filling system gaps and expanding system reach:

- *Evidence of filling system gaps:* CCLS fills system gaps by responding to community needs and providing resources and services to increase access to technology and improve digital literacy. Partner organizations reported that the library offers space or hosts programming to respond to needs. A librarian from a member library shared, "*We were reacting to the needs that we were seeing and we're being told about by the community, as far as things they're looking for us to do. We will react and try to provide those direct needs based on their direct asks or direct request of us. That's usually the motivating force for the library.*" Especially relevant since the start of the pandemic, the library plays a critical role in Cambria County by expanding access to the internet at its libraries through the hotspot-lending program and other services.

- *Evidence of expanding system reach:* Cambria County Library expands the reach of the workforce development system because it is an accessible, centrally located, and welcoming space. Community members feel comfortable going to the library, especially job seekers with the highest need who may be intimidated by a more formal setting. In interviews, one partner organization stakeholder shared that the library is *"a central location people can get to. I think, welcoming. I do not think this place intimidates people. I've come to learn that, you know, other job fairs that over the years we've had a couple of people who lack the experience of working within this, are intimidated. And you have to figure out how to meet them where they are, and I don't think the library is a place that people are afraid of."* Additionally, because CCLS attracts patrons and is knowledgeable of system resources, it is a source of referrals for other organizations in the system. One partner explained this by saying, *"The library will know whatever we're doing…and they're ready, willing, and able to share it. So that extends, obviously, extends my reach."*

Some partners see opportunities to increase the library's role. While the library already plays a role in digital literacy, this is a space where partners want to continue to grow. Other organizations specialize in job search and placement and see an opportunity for a smoother continuum of service

if digital literacy services continue to strengthen at the library. Additionally, some partners shared a need for a stronger community navigator role to assist job seekers in a complex system. At this point, each organization makes referrals, but it does not seem like a centralized role of any individual staff member or organization. While staff capacity may be a challenge, this may be a role the library is well-positioned to play given its knowledge of the community and its reputation as a welcoming space and useful resource.

Pandemic response and recovery

Overview of library services during the pandemic

Cambria County Library closed its doors to the public starting in mid-March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff began working remotely almost immediately after, until about early June 2020. At that point, the staff split into "teams," working in the building on an alternating schedule to reduce the number of people working together in person. Staff provided curbside and virtual services from that time throughout lockdown. The library adapted its digital library card options to make resources more accessible, making it possible to apply online and offering digital library cards to all the school districts, including those of member libraries. When the library first reopened to the public, operating hours were limited. At the time of interviews, stakeholders reported that foot traffic was still not back to pre-pandemic numbers as they continue to ramp up to offer their full range of services in person.

Approach to workforce and business development services during the pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, library staff and partners worked to promote and increase access to library cards and digital resources and offer virtual programming. CareerLink workshops became virtual, and so did information sessions with employers. In the physical space in the Cambria County Library, the library installed Plexiglas and made other adaptations to make it physically safer for in-person interaction. CareerLink played a critical role for community members to apply for unemployment benefits during the pandemic. Staff reported that the office was so busy that they used restaurant pagers for patrons while they waited.

In interviews, library and ecosystem partner stakeholders reported seeing shifts in demand for workforce and small business services since the start of the pandemic, as well as changes in hiring practices. Generally, foot traffic is trickling back to the library and CareerLink but not to pre-pandemic levels. However, some stakeholders mentioned they see increased demand for small business development services. They shared that the pandemic allowed for more flexible approaches to working, especially remotely, and that many people are looking to start their own business in order to maintain a flexible work environment, often so they can care for their children at home. Additionally, partners shared examples of how employers are adapting their approach, such as by advertising that job seekers with limited criminal records are welcome to apply or otherwise broadening their search for employees in the current landscape.

The pandemic also created a need for people who may have been resistant to or unable to access technology to adapt in order to access workforce or small business development resources. This shift contributes to the importance of providing services related to digital literacy and access at the library. The library responded in various ways, including using ARPA funding for the hotspot and Chromebook lending program.

Learning from the pandemic

Aside from increasing access to digital resources, library and ecosystem stakeholders cited planning to move forward by continuing to collaborate and address community needs. The need to address access to the internet and technology, digital literacy, and the workforce participation rate in Cambria County continue to be priorities for the library and its partners.

Tracking and measurement

The library system's approach to tracking and measurement

As a smaller system, CCLS's data collection is limited primarily to reporting system-required data and tracking foot traffic and program participation. In some cases, library staff utilize surveys, anecdotal feedback, or stories from patrons to inform their approach or meet grant reporting requirements. No single staff person oversees all of the data collection processes or systems. Specific areas of data collection include:

1. *General data collection on library operations:* The system headquarters library reports system-level data to IMLS as part of the Public Libraries Survey, including operating revenue, number of programs, program attendance, number of computers, etc. Each library completes an annual report for OCL, which feeds into the Public Libraries Survey. Additionally, the Cambria County Library's entrance has a door counter that tracks the number of people who walk through the door each day.

2. *Information requests and referrals*: This type of data collection did not surface in CCLS stakeholder interviews. However, "reference transactions" are reported as part of the Public Libraries Survey data.

3. *Usage of specialized online resources and website analytics:* While some library staff suggested it may be possible to track specific use of workforce or small business development resources, such as e-books, this does not appear to happen systematically.

4. *Outputs related to specialized and partner services:* Library staff and partners track program participation for specialized services, such as workshops and community hub services like job fairs. One librarian from an independent library reported using Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, as well as hardcopy surveys, to get patron input on what time the library should offer a program.

5. *Outcomes related to services:* CCLS does some outcome tracking in response to grant requirements. For example, the system will report outcomes related to upcoming digital literacy courses as a requirement of its grant award.

6. *Anecdotal evidence:* Library staff from the headquarters library and the independent libraries shared that they keep stories from patrons as a way to understand feedback and communicate impact. Cambria County Library has a "contact us" form that some patrons use to share feedback. Periodically, patrons will also return to the library to share their stories. Library staff will keep these stories for use in grant applications.

Another data effort relevant to the library is the survey Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies' used to determine where to locate the CareerLink site in 2018. The organization handed out paper surveys at its locations to ask patrons where they go for job search assistance. The data revealed that the library was just as common a source for job search assistance as Goodwill, which influenced the decision to locate the CareerLink site at Cambria County Library.

Outcome measurement challenges

The primary barrier to more intensive tracking and measurement efforts for CCLS is capacity. It is challenging to track even program attendance accurately without sufficient funds and staff. One library staff member shared, "*I would say capacity [is a challenge] for sure. Because of the nature of how we operate, it can be challenging to maintain the stats we have to maintain for the state at times because of the fast-paced nature of the job … so adding an extra layer of tracking which of those reference questions were workforce development, I think would be hard to consistently track over a period of time.*" Tracking program attendance can be challenging as patrons go in and out of the building, making it difficult to get a static headcount, or do not sign in for an event, etc., especially without sufficient staff capacity. Additionally, a challenge for tracking in a small library is that the data could potentially hurt more than it would help because the numbers are so small that they may not sound impactful even when they are.

In addition to capacity, the library's commitment to privacy is a challenge for tracking and measurement. Patrons appreciate that the library does not collect any personally identifiable information, which creates a level of trust in the community. However, because the library is not collecting this information, there is no easy way to follow up with patrons to ask about outcomes.

Interest and feasibility of implementing new outcome measurement systems

For library stakeholders, the main priority related to outcome measurement is to increase capacity so that there are the necessary funds and staff to capture the work they perform more accurately, gather feedback from patrons, and understand the related issues affecting patrons' needs. One staff member from an independent library expressed frustration that the library's limited capacity to perform data analysis even constrains the ability to use the data that partner organizations share. In addition to increasing the capacity to strengthen existing data and measurement efforts, library and ecosystem stakeholders expressed interest in more systematically collecting success stories from patrons to better communicate libraries' impact.

In interviews, some representatives from partner organizations expressed potential interest in more effectively tracking referrals to or from the library, although it does not appear that partner organizations have explored this idea in any detail. It is possible that if partner organizations are able to share outcomes data back with the library related to referrals of library patrons, the library could better understand its contributions to outcomes related to workforce and small business development.

Observations

Some observations that emerged from the Cambria County Library System case study include:

✓ **Taking a collaborative approach to delivering workforce and small business development services may help libraries have more impact, especially small library systems.**

CCLS is a small library system with limited funds and staff capacity. It works in a region with challenges related to internet access and transportation, especially for the patrons with the highest need for these services. In this challenging landscape, CCLS works creatively and collaboratively with partner organizations, including CareerLink, Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, and JARI. By coordinating with each other when responding to grant opportunities, the organizations create

synergy instead of competition and reduce duplication of efforts when funding is already limited. Partner organizations are highly knowledgeable of the resources and services offered across the system and are able to identify when there is an opportunity for each to play a role in contributing to serving the community. For example, when partner organizations in Cambria County came together to host a career fair, utilizing Cambria County Library as the location took advantage of the library's position as a welcoming community space in order to reach the most job seekers.

✓ **Locating a career center at the library may be mutually beneficial as it could readily offer workforce services at the library and attract job seekers to the career center.**

Library and ecosystem stakeholders in Cambria County see the location of the CareerLink site at the Cambria County Library as highly compatible and beneficial for both parties, as well as for the broader workforce system. The Cambria County Library location is a more central, accessible location than the previous CareerLink site, and its welcoming atmosphere and foot traffic help to attract job seekers that CareerLink may not have previously been able to reach. Even when the center is closed, job seekers are able to access career resources and assistance at the library. Additionally, CareerLink offers a full range of career services, expanding the library's offerings and allowing the library to focus its resources where it can make the most impact. In interviews, stakeholders expressed interest in expanding the model, which has received national attention.

✓ **Smaller libraries may have to take a unique approach to data and measurement efforts.**

Limited capacity is a major challenge to collecting accurate, consistent data, even around program participation for a small library system like CCLS. Even more, using quantitative data in a small community context may not be helpful. With small numbers, quantitative data alone may not be the most effective way to understand or communicate the library's impact. In interviews, library stakeholders suggested how compelling it can be to collect and share stories of patron success rather than raw data, for example. The CCLS case study presents interesting information for further research about what it would take to effectively use data to demonstrate the impact of smaller library systems or libraries that serve rural regions.