

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 35-15
	DATE May 4, 2016

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS
AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Encouraging Collaborations between the Workforce Investment System and Public Libraries to Meet Career and Employment Needs.

1. **Purpose.** To encourage collaborations between the workforce investment system and public libraries to improve the quality and quantity of employment and training services to job seekers and employers.

2. **References.**
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
 - Training and Employment Notice 50-09 “Encouraging Partnerships between the Workforce Investment System and Public Libraries to Meet Career and Employment Needs”

3. **Background.** Public libraries have played an important role in addressing the varied employment-related needs of American workers, job seekers, and employers. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) recognizes this role, and specifically identifies public libraries as optional partners in American Job Centers, particularly but not limited to helping library visitors find workforce and labor market information, and assistance searching for jobs. According to a report released by the U.S. Impact Study (<https://www.ims.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/OpportunityForAll.pdf>), at the height of the recession more than 30 million Americans reported using library computers for workforce related needs. By 2013, 96 percent of respondents to the 2013 Digital Inclusion Survey (a survey of public libraries throughout the country) offered online job and employment resources. Additionally, the survey found 78 percent of responding libraries offered programs to help the public apply for and obtain jobs.

Collaboration with public libraries can increase the quality and quantity of access points for individuals to receive needed career information and assistance. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) issued a Dear Colleague Letter in July 2014 with the Institute of Museum and Library Services to encourage greater collaboration between libraries and adult education (WIOA, title II) programs to help more Americans take advantage of the educational, employment, financial, health, social and civic resources that are available online. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has also encouraged collaboration between the workforce system and libraries as a way to expand access for all jobseekers to the information and services needed to gain employment (See Training and Employment Notice 50-09 “Encouraging Partnerships between the Workforce Investment System and Public Libraries to Meet Career and Employment Needs” available at (http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2920)).

In addition to offering public computers and Internet access for job seekers and individuals, many libraries also provide space for employers as they host career fairs and networking events. As trusted institutions within their communities, libraries are often at the front-line of employment and training related inquiries. Additionally, libraries also serve school-aged youth who can use public resources for career and education planning along with the traditional adult job seeker.

For example, in 2015, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development selected 26 public libraries to serve as access points for New Jersey's workforce services. These libraries distribute job search information and assist job seekers in using New Jersey's digital job search platform to help connect job seekers with jobs.

Another example of collaboration between the workforce system and public libraries occurred in Maryland. In 2012, the Maryland Public Library signed a formal partnership agreement with the Maryland Department of Labor (MDOL). The partnership included the expansion and refinement of web-based resources that both the Maryland Public Libraries and the MDOL make available to the public, raising the public's awareness of the MDOL's website, "Maryland Workforce Exchange."

The above examples show how the workforce system can increase its reach and visibility by collaborating with libraries as partners. Many states and local areas are acting upon the mutual benefits of collaboration between the workforce system and libraries, using Federal, state and local funding to improve coordination of employment and training, adult education, and literacy services to the community. ETA encourages collaborative efforts, such as:

- Leveraging of digital literacy activities occurring in public libraries;
- Collaborating to train library staff about in-person and virtual employment and training resources available through the public workforce system;
- Inclusion of libraries as a stop on the route of mobile American Job Centers;
- Using space available at a library to provide career assistance and employment services to library patrons (e.g. familiarizing patrons with career resources available electronically or in-person at American Job Centers) or to host career events (e.g. job fairs);
- Sharing workforce and labor market information, including data on high-growth industries and occupations from the public workforce system to libraries;
- Signing of memoranda of understanding or other formal agreements; and
- Co-locations between American Job Centers and libraries.

4. **Existing Partnerships and Activities.** ETA and OCTAE have undertaken activities to support partnerships with libraries, including:

- Library locations are included in America's Service Locator (www.servicelocator.org), a national online search tool. Anyone can easily locate the nearest library along with an American Job Center or social service provider within their community.
- The American Library Association, Institute of Museum and Library Services, U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor introduced WIOA to libraries and stakeholders across the country (<http://www.districtdispatch.org/2014/10/webinar-archive-available-2-2-billion-reasons-libraries-care-wioa/>).
- ETA has provided training for librarians and other staff on the national electronic tools, including the workforce information portal CareerOneStop (www.careeronestop.org) and the occupation database O*NET (<http://online.onetcenter.org>).

- ETA, OCTAE and IMLS have highlighted library partnerships in technical assistance efforts, and will continue to develop tips and share best practices on effective partnerships between libraries and the public workforce investment system.
5. **Action Requested.** State and local workforce development boards, state workforce agencies, and American Job Centers are encouraged to collaborate with public libraries to complement and extend the career and employment services available through the public workforce system to job seekers and unemployed workers.
 6. **Inquiries.** Please direct questions concerning this Training and Employment Notice to the appropriate ETA regional office.