

Promoting Entrepreneurship Programs at Your Library

Libraries are finding a natural niche as learning centers for entrepreneurs. They've recognized a gap in their communities — budding business owners need a single source of accurate information and start-up resources *and* a place to work through their ideas, free from coffee shop distractions. They've taken the time to understand these customers' unique needs and make them feel welcome.

And isn't that what libraries are all about?

If your library is ready to offer entrepreneurship programs or position itself as an entrepreneurial learning center, you've come to the right place. Throughout this guide we'll share ideas, practical tips and actionable steps to help you promote your entrepreneurship program.

Thanks for taking us along on the journey.



Introduction

You always had the power...

Libraries have the top business and market research that start-ups and solopreneurs need but can't afford, like demographics, customer leads, and competitive analysis. Librarians are professional researchers with master's degrees — pretty impressive, right? And many libraries have staff specially trained in business reference. Libraries are community centers, information hubs, maker spaces, and more.

Entrepreneurs are busy 24/7 trying to get their idea off the ground. You'll need to cut through the clutter to grab their attention. And you'll need to reach them where they are, inside and outside the library, in print and online.

In this guide, we'll show you how to package what you're already offering with entrepreneurs in mind. We'll give you our best ideas plus a few tools to get you started.

No marketing department or a very busy one?

We're excited to offer LibraryAware customers a line of fresh templates laser-focused on entrepreneurs. You'll find templates for print, digital, and online materials under the Print: Drag and Drop editor in several formats, plus under Newsletters and under Email/E-blasts. Use the search term "entrepreneur." Copyright-free graphics and images can be found by searching "entrepreneur" in the Image Selector. And as you know, your branding will drop in automatically, so your library's logo and information is always perfectly placed just the way you want.

Not a LibraryAware customer? You'll find free printables throughout this guide to help you get started. They're great saved as images and posted online, too!

We also pulled together **proven promotional tactics and marketing messages** to bring attention to your entrepreneurial-focused offerings. These ideas are budget-friendly and scalable to any library. [We'd love to see which ones you implement!](#)

4 ways libraries already help entrepreneurs (that you need to brag about!)

- 1 Free Wi-Fi, wireless printing, and private rooms for collaboration or quiet concentration.
- 2 Access to top business and market research most individuals can't afford, like demographics, customer leads, and competitive analysis.
- 3 Online tools exclusive to your library to help entrepreneurs kickstart their ideas.
- 4 Help from professional researchers with master's degrees (aka librarians).

10 Top Tactics to Try

Start a monthly newsletter just for entrepreneurs, promoting online and in-library resources, upcoming programs, tips, and, of course, the latest business books from your collection. Get inspired by [Indian Prairie Public Library](#) and [Mid-Continent Public Library](#).

Alert the media. Literally (and we do mean “literally”). Use our entrepreneur workshop media release template for LibraryAware customers ready to customize with your dates and times (under Media Releases/Media/Entrepreneur Workshop). It’s a great way to remind local reporters that you’re a great source for business stories, features on local entrepreneurs, or background research.

Offering the Entrepreneurial Mindset Course or an entrepreneur bootcamp event? We’ve got you covered with easy-to-customize templates.



Reach entrepreneurs you didn’t know you had. Send an e-blast to all your cardholders about your resources and support for entrepreneurs. LibraryAware customers: go to Emails/E-blasts and search “entrepreneur.” You’d be surprised how many people are considering going solo or launching a second career.



Got books? Thought so. Promote your collection of start-up success stories, business know-how and bios of influential business leaders with [this book display sign](#). Click, print, done.

Speaking of books, start a book discussion group for entrepreneurs (you are a library, after all). Use [this](#) as inspiration. For a full list of recommended titles for your collection, see Core Collections Nonfiction.



Get out! Bring [this flyer](#) or a rack card to coffee shops, photocopy shops, office supply stores, community centers — get outside your library and meet entrepreneurs where they are.

Shout it from the rooftop (or at least the ceiling) that your library is a great place for entrepreneurs. Hang an “Entrepreneurs Welcome!” banner across your entrance, from the ceiling, or from the second level banister. Use your wide-format printer for a quick paper banner or contact a local sign shop.



No budget for banners? No problem. Print out one of our flyers and slide it into a plastic sign holder. Don’t just display them at your reference desk; scatter them around your library near your public access computers, print stations, even the Children’s Department (mom or dad might be thinking of starting a business). Extra points for asking other community agencies to display them for people who aren’t coming in your doors (yet!).

Go online. Save that flyer as an image and use it on display screens, post it to social media, add it to the front page of your library’s website using a widget (ask us how!).

6 Marketing Messages to Steal

- 1 Get start-up savvy at your library
- 2 Our online tools will help you kickstart your idea
- 3 Entrepreneurs welcome!
- 4 Free business leads with your library card
- 5 We've got the scoop on your competition
- 6 Resources your business needs to succeed



Timing is everything

Take advantage of national and community small business/entrepreneur holidays or events, such as National Entrepreneurship Week (February) and National Small Business Week (May) to draw attention to your services. For example, consider issuing your media tip sheet a few weeks earlier so the local media knows who to contact for timely features.

Keep your finger on the local start-up community's pulse. What new businesses are emerging in your area? Are food trucks still hot? Short-term housing rentals? Eco-friendly services? Make sure your collection is up to date on your area's next big thing.

What's in a name?

Consider giving your service a name to bring extra attention to it.

- » **Square One Small Business Services**, Mid-Continent Public Library (MO)
- » **Entrepreneur Academy**, The Enoch Pratt Free Library (MD)
- » **Innovation Hub**, Maricopa County Library District (AZ)
- » **hive @ Central**, Phoenix Public Library (AZ)

Plan your work and work your plan

It can feel overwhelming to run an entrepreneurship program in addition to your other duties. You don't have to do it all at once (and probably shouldn't). Follow our 12-month campaign timeline (or create your own!) and you'll keep interest high and stress levels low.

Month 1:

Inform library staff about your library's Entrepreneurship Program. Make sure every employee at every level can guide people to your resources.

Month 2:

Talk to your webmaster about promoting your program on the library's website. Can they create a webpage dedicated to your program? Other libraries have done it. Two great examples: [Square One by Mid-Continent Public Library](#) and [Business Studio by State Library of Queensland](#).

Month 3:

Print signs and place in plastic frames for information desks and stacks; print bookmarks or rack cards for your circ desk staff to hand out and place inside hold books. Remember the children's and teen departments — parents, caregivers, teachers and others might be considering turning that side-hustle into a career.

Month 4:

Send out announcements to local news media about your Entrepreneurship Program. Schedule social media posts for the next six months — set it and forget it! Add images to your digital displays. Ask other community agencies, work force commission/employment agencies, Chamber of Commerce, and your local SBA/SCORE offices to help spread the word to those they serve.

Month 5:

Send email invites to attend an Entrepreneurial Expo where you'll showcase your business start-up resources. Put up signs in your library; have the circ desk staff hand out bookmarks publicizing the event. Send a press release to local media and distribute event flyers outside your library to reach entrepreneurs who are not yet customers (think coffee shops, office supply stores, etc.).

Month 6:

Hold the Entrepreneurial Expo. Ask attendees to subscribe to your forthcoming monthly newsletter for entrepreneurs.

Month 7:

Begin sending your monthly newsletter (with the emails collected at the event).

Month 8:

Invite entrepreneurs to attend your upcoming bootcamp/training class.

Month 9:

Hold your upcoming bootcamp/training class. Collect success stories from attendees who benefit from the event.

Month 10:

Start an entrepreneurs networking group/meetup/book club. Set up book/resource displays and keep them filled.

Month 11:

Got a success story from one of your events? Are they willing to be interviewed about how the library helped them? Contact your local business reporter (follow your library's media policy, of course).

Month 12:

Assess the past year's activities. What helped draw in customers? What do you want to repeat next year? What are other libraries doing that you'd like to model? Consider a survey in your monthly newsletter to entrepreneurs to find out whether your library is meeting their needs. And get ready for another fantastic year!



Conclusion

We hope you found this guide helpful in transforming your library into an entrepreneurial learning center. Providing support to local entrepreneurs is a fantastic community service, a great way to increase circulation, and a sure bet for more public support when budget time rolls around. We'd love to see what you create and hear about your success!

Share your story with us at
NoveListCommunications@ebSCO.com.



**Like what you've seen?
We can help your library
promote your resources
and engage readers.**

LibraryAware offers an easy way for libraries to engage cardholders through email as well as social media, event flyers, bookmarks and more. We created LibraryAware especially for libraries, so you'll find thousands

of library-specific templates and graphics. It also includes unlimited users and subscribers to meet your growing needs. To see a demo or get a quote visit us at www.ebscohost.com/novelist.

