

Public library programs and services strengthen communities.

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Public libraries offer a wide range of programs, from children’s story time to health programs and beyond. The Public Library Association’s (www.ala.org/pla) Project Outcome initiative (www.projectoutcome.org) enabled libraries to survey program participants and assess whether these programs had a positive impact on their community. Overwhelmingly, these programs did! Based on 390,000+ responses from library users between 2015 and 2023, we know that:

1. Children’s literacy programs create more confident caregivers.

Your library’s storytime programs improve children’s reading skills by exposing them to literature. They also build parents’ confidence in teaching children and improve literacy at home.

- **85%** of parents who attended early childhood literacy programs reported feeling more confident in teaching their children.
- **84%** of parents used what they learned from public library programs to engage in new and different learning activities.
- **92%** of parents gained a better understanding of the value of interacting with their kids.
- **90%** of parents planned to spend more time interacting with their children in literacy-related activities after attending a library literacy program.

2. Children and teens who participate in summer programs become better readers.

Summer reading programs engage children, maintain their reading skills over the summer, and encourage them to explore new topics.

- **87%** of parents and caregivers reported that participating in summer reading programs helped maintain or improve their children’s reading skills.
- **86%** of children and teens reported learning something new as a result of participating in a program.

Summer reading programs also improved children’s reading confidence.

- **76%** of parents and caregivers reported their children were more confident in their reading skills.
- **80%** of children and teens reported that they enjoyed reading more because of their participation in a program.

Children enrolled in summer reading programs also read more often than their counterparts.

- **80%** of parents and caregivers reported that their children read more often because they participated in a summer reading program.
- **78%** of children and teens reported reading more often.

3. Libraries support lifelong learning.

From technology to genealogy and beyond, your public library provides adult and other educational programs that cultivate community members' knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- **93%** of attendees reported learning something helpful.
- **88%** of program attendees reported an increase in confidence in their knowledge of educational topics.
- **85%** reported intending to apply their knowledge in the future.
- During a follow-up survey, **72%** of program attendees reported applying their new learning in an additional capacity.

4. Libraries support healthy communities.

Your public library provides health-related programs that help you and your neighbors live healthier lives.

- **92%** of respondents reported that they gained more knowledge about health topics because of attending a library program.
- **87%** of attendees reported increased confidence in caring for their health and that of their family.
- **91%** of attendees intended to apply what they learned to maintain a healthier lifestyle.

5. Community programming also creates engaged community members.

Your library is a hub for civic engagement. Engagement-focused programming fosters community involvement and interaction, cultivating a sense of community by creating neighbors rather than strangers and uniting people around shared causes.

- **76%** of people who attended civic engagement-related programs between 2015 and 2023 became more aware of local issues or causes.

- **78%** of attendees became more confident about “getting involved.”
- **77%** of people planned to become more engaged in their community after attending a civic engagement program, while Follow-up surveys indicated that **58%** became more involved.

6. Library programming promotes the creation of small businesses and supports job seeking.

Your library’s business development and employment programs help advance economic growth. Library programming about establishing businesses has changed people’s knowledge, confidence, intentions, and actions regarding starting a business.

- **90%** of program attendees reported more knowledge about what it takes to establish a business.
- **84%** of program attendees reported increased confidence about starting a new business.
- **93%** of people intended to apply what they learned in programs related to business development.

Programs about the job search process also helped improve people’s knowledge, confidence, and behaviors.

- **92%** of attendees reported an increase in knowledge about the job search process.
- **91%** of program attendees reported increased confidence about finding a new job.
- **68%** of program attendees intended to use what they learned from library programming in their job searches.
- **71%** of survey respondents used what they learned from library programming to search for a job.
- **41%** of program attendees went on to apply for a job as a result.
- **29%** received an interview or job offer.

About this handout.

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- Million, A. J., Adkins, D., & Public Library Association. (2024). *Public Library Services, Programs and Outreach, United States, 2015-2023* [Data set]. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR38653.v1>