

## Cover Page

**Title:** Expanding Access to Employment, Education and Training Information: Idaho Department of Labor, Idaho Commission for Libraries and Idaho Public Television

**Category:** Digital Government: Government to Citizen

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**Project Initiation and Completion Dates:** Initiated Dec. 1, 2009 – Targeted Completion Ongoing – Do not foresee project ending as Idahoans will always use their local libraries to access information for job searching, career planning and exploring education options.

## Executive Summary

The collaboration of the Idaho Department of Labor, the Idaho Commission for Libraries and Idaho Public Television expanded free high-speed Internet access to employment and education and training information at a time when the number of Idahoans seeking this information rose from 50,000 to over 100,000 in a matter of months.

This targeted use of federal stimulus money and grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation leveraged federal Workforce Investment Act funds and other sources to provide permanent, long-lasting improvement to the public services available through the state's network of 25 local Labor offices and 144 local public library locations.

A significant byproduct of the technological advancement was the introduction to the world of work for computer-savvy young people from low-income families who signed on as digital literacy coaches. Although these jobs paid only minimum wage, they provided teens with the opportunity to learn about getting to work on time, working with others, showing initiative and being part of a team.



Idaho Youth Corps coach Jesseca Alvarado points out new online resources to Omar Alvarez and Mayor Terry Greenman at the Burley Public Library.

## Section 3:

### Business Problem

As the national economy declined and Idaho jobs were lost, the number of people visiting the Idaho Department of Labor's local offices or their local libraries rapidly increased as they searched for access to public computers and high speed Internet access to file for unemployment insurance and look for work.

### Solution

Expand public access to career information, job listings, job search support and training resources by increasing access to public computers, free high-speed Internet access and an online job search workbook available in libraries throughout Idaho. Steps taken:

- Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funds, the Idaho Department of Labor made Idaho's Career Information System, which is integrated with Labor's online job search services, available to the public through public libraries at no cost for all Idahoans.
- A \$1.9 million Broadband Technology Opportunity Program Grant (BTOP) and matching funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation were tapped by the Idaho Commission for Libraries to increase the number of computers and Internet connectivity in 55 of Idaho's least connected public libraries.
- Working with Idaho Public Television, the Idaho Department of Labor created an online digital job search workbook called Maximize Your Job Search. This online workbook features video tips from Idaho employers and job seekers on networking, the hidden job market, using social media, and more – in both English and Spanish. A series of video modules – also available in both English and Spanish – was developed to help workers file for unemployment insurance benefits.
- Technical support in Idaho's libraries for their computer users was increased through the use of digital literacy coaches hired through the Idaho Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act-funded Idaho Summer Youth Corps program. The coaches' wages are paid with Workforce Investment Act funds and money from the Idaho Commission for Libraries' BTOP grant.
- A series of 24 "Credible Connections" workshops were held so Idaho's libraries, local Department of Labor staff and community leaders could network and leverage resources to address local economic development and college and career readiness for Idaho students.
- Using BTOP funds, access to LearningExpress Library was provided to all library users throughout the state, providing free access to computer skill training and test prep (CDL, ACT, SAT, GED, vocational certifications).
- Public information on the expanded resources – computers, Internet access, resources for job seekers and the under-employed was shared across state agencies, cross-promoting to the public through public and commercial television and radio broadcasts, in both English and Spanish.

**Maximize Your Job Search**

Finding a Job or Making a Career Transition?  
Download the workbook and take the online workshop.

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## Section 4:

### Significance

Increased access to public computers and the Internet through Idaho's libraries created scores of additional local sites beyond the Department of Labor's 25 local offices where unemployment workers and job seekers could file benefit claims, look for work and find the kind of support that can lead to more successful job search efforts.

These additional 55 Internet access sites provided by the libraries took significant pressure off the Labor Department's local offices, where it was not unusual to see lines of benefit claimants and job seekers out the doors and snaking around the building – in good weather and in bad.



## Section 5:

### Benefits

The partnership between the Department of Labor, Idaho's public libraries and Idaho Public Television resulted in:

- Turning Idaho's basic Career Information Systems – eCIS and CIS Junior – into public access versions available at no cost for all Idahoans, schools and workforce agencies. Overall usage of the system, which is the only source of Idaho-specific job, wage, education and training information, increased 97 percent statewide from 2009 to today.
- Idaho's libraries can now provide the kind of online training not possible before the expanded broadband connection. Library users are thrilled with the faster connections. Today, connectivity in 55 Idaho libraries is up from an average of 1.5 Mbps to an average of 11 Mbps. To date 530 new computers have been installed. Most of the libraries eligible for the connectivity upgrades also received Wi-Fi equipment.
- Building on the statewide electronic reference tools of the Libraries Linking Idaho program, known as LiLI. Idahoans can now access full-length Idaho Public Television programs, Idaho Department of Labor resources, e-government, education, employment information and job- skills resources through the libraries' public computing centers and through the Idaho Commission for Libraries' portal at [lili.org](http://lili.org). These resources also include study guides and practice tests for GED, SAT, ACT, GRE, CLEP and others; job-skill tutorials; career certification preparation; and computer skills training. Use of [lili.org](http://lili.org) has tripled since the project's inception.

