Californians Can Now Check Out Free Online Job Training from over 1,100 Libraries Throughout the State

$4.3M American Rescue Plan Act grant from the California State Library invests in state’s future workforce

For Immediate Release: November 22, 2021
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To help Californians prepare for and find the jobs they want in the post-COVID economy, the California State Library is introducing a package of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded online tools, available through local libraries, that provide job training, skill building, test preparation, and professional development.

These services, dubbed CAreer Pathways [https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-public/career-pathways/], are from some of the top online learning companies and are accessible either at the public library or at home. Access to these platforms, which are in multiple languages, normally comes with subscription and other fees. Now, for at least one year, they are all available for free to any California library user.

“These are valuable resources for all Californians – and a good value investment of taxpayer dollars,” said Greg Lucas, California State Librarian. “During the pandemic, Californians entered their local libraries through the digital rather than the physical front door. These skill-building, self-improvement platforms are exactly the kind of thing they should be finding at their public libraries.”

Nearly $4.4 million in one-time federal emergency COVID funding from ARPA was used with the State Library’s grantee, Pacific Library Partnership, to invest in a year of subscriptions to a subset of CAreer Pathways platforms. American Rescue Plan Act funding is earmarked for pandemic relief and recovery in workforce development and job re-skilling. Additional funding will be needed to continue the program.

Thanks to this ARPA funding, CAreer Pathways now offers free access to Coursera [https://www.coursera.org/], GetSetUp [https://www.getsetup.io/], LearningExpress [https://www.learningexpresshub.com/], LinkedIn Learning [https://www.linkedin.com/learning], Northstar Digital Literacy [https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/], and Skillshare [https://www.skillshare.com/]. As an example of the value of these services, the annual cost of subscriptions to access all of Coursera’s more than 5,000 online classes, Skillshare’s 35,000 videos, GetSetUp’s interactive classes, and LinkedIn Learning’s suite of courses would cost an individual over $1,000 per year.

As part of CAreer Pathways [https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-public/career-pathways/], the State Library already offers resources such as Brainfuse’s JobNow/VetNow and Career Online High School. Many public libraries offer scholarships to Career Online High School, a program that allows Californians to earn a high school diploma online. To date, more than 2,343 Californians have graduated from the program.

While the different platforms are designed to appeal to the broadest spectrum of Californians possible, State Librarian Greg Lucas stated, “We know these unemployed or underemployed Californians are disproportionately women, people of color, young people, and those without a college degree. A key driver in making these services available online is to help women return to employment who left the workforce during the pandemic.”

These resources [https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-public/career-pathways/], available freely to California public library cardholders, are another way in which libraries aid in personal economic development, build and encourage communities of lifelong learners, increase digital equity, and support the information needs of a 21st Century society.

These projects were made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the primary source of federal support for the nation’s libraries and museums. IMLS advances, supports, and empowers
About the State Library: Founded in 1850, the California State Library has an extensive collection of art, books, diaries, maps, newspapers, periodicals, photographs, and posters from throughout California’s rich history. The State Library is also California state government’s information hub and holds federal and state publications, is home to the Bernard E. Witkin State Law Library and the Braille and Talking Book Library, and serves as the lead state agency for library-related services throughout California. [State Library website](http://www.sos.ca.gov/library/)

About the Pacific Library Partnership: The Pacific Library Partnership is a cooperative with 42 public and academic library jurisdictions, spanning the eight counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. The purpose of this regional system is to improve the services of its constituent member libraries by leading research and development efforts to ensure that libraries are best positioned to respond to demographic, economic, and cultural changes through innovative and collaborative approaches to programming and services and the enhancement of collective resource building and sharing. More information can be found at [http://www.plpinfo.org](http://www.plpinfo.org).