
Nevada County Rising to the Challenge: Creating Pathways for Learning, Innovation and a Resilient Community

*A Report of the
Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries*

Sarah Carpenter and Joaquin Alvarado
Rapporteurs

August 29, 2018
Grass Valley, California



This report is written from the perspective of informed observers at the Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries. Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments, ideas or recommendations contain in this report should be taken as embodying the views of carrying the endorsement of any specific participant or affiliated organizations or employers at the Dialogue.

Copyright © 2018 by The Aspen Institute
The Aspen Institute
2300 N Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037
www.aspeninstitute.org

Amy K. Garmer
Director
Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries
www.LibraryVision.org

Yolande Wilburn
County Librarian
Nevada County Community Library
www.mynevadacounty.com/290/Library

Published in the United States of America in 2018
By The Aspen Institute
All rights reserved.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 United States license (CC BY-NC 4.0).

This publication was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services or the California State Library, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services or the California State Library should be inferred.

Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
List of Participants	5
Introduction	7
The Nevada County Context.....	9
History of Innovation in Nevada County.....	10
Library Strengths: People, Place and Platform	12
A Vision and Goals for Nevada County	13
Library Alignment with Community Goals.....	14
Creative Collisions	18
Lifelong Learning Working Group.....	18
Economic and Workforce Development Working Group	21
Community Health and Wellness Working Group	24
Conclusion	27
Appendix.....	29

Acknowledgements

Conferences by their very nature are collaborative affairs. The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries and the Nevada County Community Library would like to acknowledge and thank the people and organizations whose partnership and support made the Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries and this report possible.

The California State Library under the direction of Greg Lucas, state librarian, and his state library colleagues, Janet Coles and Beverly Schwartzberg, provided funding and expertise to guide our work in California, and the Southern California Library Cooperative (Diane Satchwell, executive director) has managed the grant.

We appreciate the time and energy of our Steering Committee members who helped us think through the critical issues and plan all aspects of the Nevada County Dialogue. The committee included: Richard Anderson, District 5 Supervisor; Alison Barratt-Green, County Counsel; Mary George, Placer County Library; Heather Heckler, Connecting Point; Hilary Hobbs, Town of Truckee; Steve Monaghan, Nevada County CIO; Stephanie Ortiz, Sierra College; Martin Polt, Deputy County Executive; Beverly Schwartzberg, California State Library; Eliza Tudor, Nevada County Arts Council; Yolande Wilburn, Nevada County Community Library.

We thank our consultants and rapporteurs at Studiotobe, Joaquin Alvarado, Kristin Belden and Sarah Carpenter for their partnership and assistance in planning the dialogue and for preparing this report. Finally, we thank the individuals named below whose generous contributions of time and expertise as Dialogue participants have made this report possible. Titles reflect positions held on August 29, 2018.

Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries List of Participants

Alison Barratt-Green

County Counsel
Nevada County

Kristin Belden

Founding Partner
Studiotope

Phebe Bell

Director, Behavioral Health Department
Nevada County

Roo Cantada

Executive Director
San Juan Ridge Community Library

Amy Garmer

Director
Dialogue on Public Libraries
The Aspen Institute

Mary George

Director of Library Services
Placer County

Jonathon Glus

Director, Cultural and Creative Economy
Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission

Heidi Hall

District 1 Supervisor
Nevada County Board of Supervisors

Heather Heckler

Communications Manager
Connecting Point

Hilary Hobbs

Management Analyst
Town of Truckee

Norman Jacknis

Senior Fellow
Intelligent Community Forum
and
Adjunct Professor
School of Professional Studies, Technology
Columbia University

Danielle Johnson

Technical Product Manager
Traitware

Scott Lay

Superintendent of Schools
Nevada County

Alison Lehman

Assistant CEO/Incoming CEO
Nevada County

Heidi Lyss

Business & Education Liaison
Nevada County Tech Connection

Phyllis McConn

Community Impact Officer
Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation

Steve Monaghan

Chief Information Officer
Nevada County

James Ochsner

Library Director
Sutter County Library

Narinder Sufi

Deputy State Librarian
California State Library

Alexis Tjoa
President
Friends of the Nevada County Library

Eliza Tudor
Executive Director
Nevada County Arts Council

Yolande Wilburn
County Librarian
Nevada County

Louise Zabriskie
President
Friends of the Truckee Library

Observers:

Mary Moore
Librarian
San Juan Ridge Community Library

Cindy Pawlowski
Acting Branch Manager
Madelyn Helling Library
Nevada County Community Library

Beverly Schwartzberg
Library Programs Consultant
Library Development Services
California State Library

Rapporteur:

Sarah Carpenter
Studiosobe

Staff:

Sarah Eppheimer
Project Director
The Aspen Institute
Communications and Society Program

Nevada County Rising to the Challenge: Creating Pathways for Learning, Innovation and a Resilient Community

Introduction

The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries creates unique opportunities for community leaders, innovators and institutional partners to collaborate on developing next generation initiatives for libraries across the country. Libraries play an important role in areas that are priorities for communities, like civic engagement, workforce development, education and democratic discourse. As the nation continues to confront intense polarization, libraries are increasingly serving as third spaces where diverse populations can coalesce, connect and confront the challenges in their community through open and trusted channels and relationships.

The Aspen Institute in partnership with the Nevada County Community Library convened community leaders from various sectors to align goals across the county and to generate creative and innovative pathways toward addressing those goals at the day-long Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries in Grass Valley, California on August 29, 2018. The agenda and discussions at the roundtable focused on priorities related to innovation, lifelong learning, economic and workforce development and community wellness. The assembled participants represented a varied and intergenerational cohort of stakeholders who share a commitment to the residents, institutions and civil society in Nevada County. A number of long established relationships as well as an important array of potential new partners were represented in the room.

Nevada County Library Director Yolande Wilburn opened the roundtable discussion with a brief status report on the county's library system. Notable is that the library has funding to preserve existing libraries, enhance services and collections and expand capacity due to the ballot measure, Measure A, passed in November 2016. This ¼ cent sales tax doubled the funding the library has been receiving since 1998. The Board of Supervisors approved an Expenditure Plan (see the Appendix) that outlines the specific projects for which the revenues from the tax should be spent, including programs and services for children and teens and information and technology access. The library has already expanded its operating hours and increased programming at library branches, but Wilburn asked what libraries can do to collaborate and ensure that they are meeting community needs and staying true to the Expenditure Plan.

This report summarizes the key insights, issues and themes discussed by participants at the Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries. It concludes with a set of recommendations and proposed partnerships to move the ideas into action. This report is not intended to be prescriptive, but to encourage fresh thinking and further dialogue on the role of public libraries in ensuring that every community in Nevada County is vibrant, prosperous and resilient. The goal is to identify models of library innovation and partnerships in Nevada County that are working well, recommendations to strengthen existing initiatives and proposals to advance development of new partnerships that tap the knowledge and information expertise of public libraries and their networks.

The Nevada County Context

Participants described Nevada County as a community that is a bit fragmented, a confederation of different geographic areas with some distinctly different needs or concerns. Its borders contain rural and nonrural areas. Some rural and remote areas, like North San Juan, have extremely limited access to services like libraries and broadband connections. Other parts of the county are experiencing increased development as Bay Area real estate pressures push people into the foothill communities in search of space, affordability and opportunity. This fragmentation expresses itself in the challenges the county and its communities face in unifying initiatives to effect change on a county-wide basis, such as driving greater investment in capital and workforce development. It is also reflected in the diversity of residents and their needs and in the cultural forces that are transforming the county.

Participants recognized that society is increasingly dependent upon digital platforms for communication and information sharing. The digital exclusion experienced in rural communities leaves some students at a disadvantage because they can't access resources or complete their homework at home. Community members living in places with no broadband connection have less access to information than their more connected county neighbors.

Participants identified a number of strong assets within the county which could be better aligned and utilized in pursuit of county goals. These include the untapped potential of young creatives along with the resources of the business and non-profit sectors. Nevada County is the only rural county in California with two designated cultural districts—Truckee and Grass Valley/Nevada City. The county government is

just beginning to leverage the area's existing cannabis economy. There is county-wide support for strong economic and community development, coupled with an endemic resistance to big box stores. Local is the logic of Nevada County.

The county continues to face a unique set of demographic and other challenges when it comes to broad economic prosperity. Unemployment is low, but there are many young people who live in poverty. The county has almost double the statewide percentage of persons 65 or older and a smaller percentage of persons under 18 than the statewide percentage. The library and other county institutions have to address the needs of a large aging population while also planning for the future by serving the needs of the county's children and families. Neighboring counties with higher-wage jobs entice some families to leave the county for better paying jobs in these neighboring jurisdictions. In the eastern part of the country, there is a significant number of people who live in lower-cost communities in Nevada and commute across the state line to work in Truckee. In Truckee, the Spanish-speaking population is more concentrated than in other parts of the county.

History of Innovation in Nevada County

"Innovation is usually a group effort, involving collaboration between visionaries and engineers, and that creativity comes from drawing on many sources. Only in storybooks do inventions come like a thunderbolt, or a lightbulb popping out of the head of a lone individual in a basement or garret or garage."

- Walter Isaacson, "The Innovators"

An innovative culture is one that embraces new technologies and collaborations and eases barriers to opportunities for ingenuity and advancement. For Nevada County, this culture started in the 18th century with the California Gold Rush. More gold came out of Grass Valley, California than all of the rest of the gold rush across the state. That enormous amount of wealth and resources drove early innovation, like the 19th century Pelton wheel, first forged in Miners Foundry in Nevada City. The Pelton wheel is still used throughout the world for generating power where sources of high-head water are available.

The world's first long-distance phone line was in Nevada County, stretching 58 miles from French Corral to French Lake (now called Bowman Lake). Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) was founded in Nevada County. Grass Valley and Nevada City were two of the first cities in California to have electric light. These innovations grew from the mining industry, as people found new ways to advance the work already being done.

In the 1950s, Charles Litton moved his manufacturing lab from San Francisco to Grass Valley. A few years later, his friend Dr. Donald Hare moved to the area and started a company called Grass Valley Group. These two men spawned a new high-tech economy in the area, attracting numerous related technology companies – some of which remain in the county today.

Steve Monaghan, chief information officer for the county, relayed this history to the roundtable of participants. Then he asked, “What is the new [innovation] goal for Nevada County in the 21st century?”

Monaghan noted the individual efforts being made by makerspaces like The Curious Forge and hubs like Nevada County Tech Connection, which are already creating

pockets of innovation in the non-profit and technology sectors. He encouraged participants to think about how the library can serve as a platform for furthering these efforts, and for spreading a culture of innovation throughout the county.

Library Strengths: People, Place and Platform

The Nevada County Library has key assets that can be leveraged in the community to advance innovation: people, place and platform.

People. Human capital remains the critical resource in communities and is the gating factor in considering how to move forward in the era of ubiquitous digitization and dawning artificial intelligence (AI) and economic transformation. Developing and supporting pathways for local residents, to build up and support an expanding set of economic and cultural opportunities, is essential for libraries to deliver within their missions.

Place. Libraries provide physical infrastructure and human capital in a community. They represent investments made over generations that bring people together, help to build community at a time when virtual experience and interactions (often solitary) are on the ascent. Libraries exist within deeply local relationships and histories rooted in their geographies. They reflect the dynamics of their communities and they also struggle with the same issues confronting the rest of the regions they serve. They are also reflections of the strengths and peculiar assets of their locations. For libraries, place is not abstract. It defines their conditions for success.

Platform. It is often assumed that platforms are inherently technology based. In the age of social media, this is easily a safe assumption. This trend does not exclude the

possibility that civil society institutions can also perform the role of a platform for enabling connections and programming that otherwise would not exist. Libraries are this kind of platform and more. They provide an essential layer of trust that is required to bridge many of the divides that challenge community development.

A Vision and Goals for Nevada County

Nevada County Supervisor Heidi Hall led off the morning sessions by presenting a vision for the county that aligns with the strengths of the library as a locus of knowledge and information. Leveraging the library's assets to the fullest is particularly important and necessary for a rural community with significant challenges to accessing knowledge and information. This vision included a well-educated citizenry with the ability to think critically and discern truth and nuance from the expanse of information available. It envisioned a capacity for open-mindedness, collaborative problem solving and tailored attention to specific groups divided by age, income or geography that takes into consideration the unique ways in which each group learns and participates best. Equitable access underlies a strong, resilient community and access to art and innovation make the Nevada County and the world a more beautiful place.

The library can be a way to support inspiration and innovation. It is an important institution in the county's ability to meet the current challenges of this world. The library is a place—its physical location provides space for community to gather and collaborate. Hall said there are three tools that communities need to move forward: an understanding of how to get and leverage funding, access to the Internet, a commitment to sharing, collaboration and partnership critical to achieving aligned goals. Meaningful

collaboration can help bridge the social and political divides in the country, the world and in this community.

Library Alignment with Community Goals

Libraries have been a repository of information since their inception, and the way information is obtained, consumed, shared and secured has evolved over time.

Libraries have maintained their role as a trusted information access point by adapting and continuing to adapt to these new modes of information access through internet research, offline research and community. Libraries have deployed their often limited resources in strategic ways to capture new opportunities to serve their communities.

This trend is often complicated by the accelerating pace of change in the marketplace of competition for people's attention. Some key service areas were highlighted by the roundtable participants.

Broadband Access and Digital Literacy. The internet has become such a basic research tool that people are expected to be proficient in gathering information this way. This presents an equity challenge identified by participants who highlighted that not everybody in Nevada County has 24-hour access to the internet. Broadband connectivity is an ongoing issue. Students who go home to a rural area may not have any internet connection at home, leaving them at a disadvantage in completing their homework and other projects.

Participants also identified emerging tensions with the internet in the age of social media. Although it is an incredibly useful research tool, the internet is overloaded with information, some of which is not factual and purposely misleading. This leads to the

internet being, in some instances, an obstacle to information. Libraries are increasingly required to support users in finding credible sources and reliable networks for critically consuming information. This new domain of information literacy has strong implications for libraries in Nevada County and throughout our democratic society.

Early Literacy and Adult Literacy. Libraries are more than a warehouse of books, yet books remain a key asset of their portfolio and an important resource for residents. The rewards of reading can be experienced across all walks of life if they have access to the shared collections of libraries and literacy skills. The library is often one of the first places for that facilitation—parents have access to children’s books long before their child’s first day of school. The library is a place of access and discovery. While technology evolves and information is more accessible, the joy of reading does not require innovation. It merely requires engagement.

Navigating Resources for Social Services. Another form of offline research is navigating resources for social services. The government and nonprofit sectors have information to share. Participants highlighted the opportunity for libraries to serve as an information access point for social services resources. This role will become more important as outreach becomes more integral to the future of social services. The library is a public space equipped with restrooms, temperature control, charging stations, computers and Wi-Fi. All of these resources are crucial to unhoused people—a population participants said utilize the library on a daily basis, sometimes living in the vicinity of the building. 2-1-1 Connecting Point is an organization that connects people with community programs and services through a searchable web page and 24/7 local call center. Some libraries now have 2-1-1 kiosks, accessible by any library visitor—a model participants recommended be replicated. If no kiosk is situated, however, librarians can refer patrons in need to 2-1-1.

Civic Participation. The library acts as facilitator for the sharing of information and experiences. Its physical space allows for community gatherings and fosters awareness of new information for and about the community. Libraries host classes, meetups, community activities and more. Library branches are one of the few institutions located across different communities in the county, and thus can provide equitable opportunities for participation in civic life while also being free to use.

Equity and Opportunity. The library can serve as hosts for new services, like pre-K and family services. The ongoing exploration of universal pre-K in California is a critical opportunity for libraries to explore an expanded set of services. But the physical space of the library can only provide an equitable opportunity for participation if it has maximized accessibility. This means the buildings must be ADA compliant—many in the county are not—and its services must reach every part of the county. Sometimes the library can step outside of its physical space to meet the community in areas more accessible to them. Currently, Nevada County has a Mobile Technology Center which goes into the community to provide technology classes and programs, as well as book-lending kiosks in North San Juan and Chicago Park. Participants also highlighted opportunities to provide more services and outreach in nontraditional settings, like hosting story time in a grocery store where parents are already spending time.

Workforce Development. The library's role as a convener could also benefit local business leaders by hosting innovation meetups where entrepreneurs can talk, network and learn from each other simply through convening. The same model could extend to other industry sectors like arts and culture, education or non-profits. According to a Board of Supervisors' study, 94 percent of residents ranked Nevada County as an excellent or great place to live. However, 33 percent ranked economic development in

the county as fair or poor. A third of the population said they struggle to have enough income for their needs.

Retaining Creative Talent. Leaders in Nevada County want to foster a culture of innovation, engagement and a sense of connectedness county-wide. Participants recognized the benefits of blending the unique assets of the county with the creative and technology driven forces that can bring necessary disruption to legacy systems. They want young creatives to be empowered to innovate in their own community, rather than feel the need to leave for larger cities with more tech and arts opportunities. Retaining creative individuals is important to drive a healthy economy, as is the retention of businesses in the county. Participants asked how they can weave the existing businesses into the fabric of the community to keep them from leaving for economic reasons.

Information Literacy. Participants want Nevada County residents to not only have their basic needs met, but to be equipped to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. In an era with great quantities of information both factual and non-factual, participants recognized the need for a well-educated citizenry with the ability to think critically and assess information. Participants' perceptions of local media reflected national concern that traditional news organizations are not sufficient to provide the complete and credible coverage required for a fully informed citizenry. Some participants expressed interest in the potential to form partnerships between libraries and local media—something that is happening in other communities around the country to enhance the local news and information environment but has yet to be done in this area.

The challenge going forward is to identify and leverage key partnerships that take advantage of community assets to address the needs of the community. A guiding principle is to ensure equitable access to the benefits of such partnerships across demographic groups and locations within the county. Through smart collaboration, communities can put services in the library and move library services out into the community.

Creative Collisions

After the morning sessions, participants were assigned to one of three working groups: Lifelong Learning, Economic and Workforce Development, and Community Health and Wellness. Each group was asked to identify opportunities for partnerships that align with priorities in the county. Each working group was charged with proposing collaborative activities that would strengthen the community and support a culture of innovation in the county. Participants were asked to pay particular attention to how the proposals address the needs of vulnerable and diverse populations. Leaders from different sectors of the community were encouraged to consider their existing networks to forge creative collisions across sectors.

Lifelong Learning Working Group

The Lifelong Learning working group focused on the continuum of learning throughout a person's life—from birth onward or, as the colloquial expression has it, from cradle to grave. Data shows that people access libraries at distinct points in their lifetime and often at major points of transition—childhood, parenthood, job changes, relocating, dealing with a health crisis or aging family member are just a few of the reasons that bring people into public libraries if they are not already regular patrons.

The working group participants first discussed how the library can be a useful place of learning and personal enrichment throughout or in between every stage of life and what the distinct interests and needs of the county's youth and adult populations might be. After identifying that there is a lack of programming for children ages 0-5 throughout California and that government officials across the state (including state officials and candidates in the 2018 midterm elections) are prioritizing early learning opportunities universal pre-K, the Lifelong Learning working group ultimately focused on early literacy programs for children in the 0-5 age group.

Children ages 0-5 need programs to prepare them for school and their parents and caregivers need access to spaces, resources and training that promote early literacy. Early Learning with Families (ELF) 2.0 is an existing California State Library initiative that strives to extend library services to young children in their first five years—critical years in the formative development of children and families. ELF is a strong potential partner for the Nevada County Library with regard to early learning programs in Nevada County.

The Nevada County libraries currently give library cards to residents five years or older. The working group suggested that library cards could be available to children in the preschool years (birth to age five). This would help to embed the library into the lives of early learners and help the library track library usage for that age group. Parents would decide when their child is ready for their own library card; the card would become a passport to learning as children begin their lifelong learning journeys. A proposal to advance this idea, with the goal of having no fines or fees for youth 0-18 and parents can bring children in at any age to obtain a library card, is currently under review by the county counsel. Data supports the importance of engaging families with young children. According to the Applied Survey Research and California State

Library Statistics, "In 2014, more than a 1,000 public libraries throughout California (in small rural hamlets and in large urban municipalities), were visited by more than 6 million young children. In fact, public libraries were second only to public parks as the MOST frequented destination by families with young children."

Superintendent of Schools Scott Lay has already been working toward building a child development center. School and library administrators could identify potential partners for grant applications, programming and ways to build more capacity into the center, possibly using two-generation approaches to education and skills development. The working group recommended that the library establish connections at strategic locations as a means to extend lifelong learning services and opportunities to youth, families and adults. They considered partnerships and programs that could strengthen the project by stitching together existing community assets. The following are several recommended partnerships:

- Truckee Head Start Programs: Partnership with Truckee Head Start programs would assist in expanding the programs to the Truckee area of the county. It is recommended that more partnerships be made to ensure areas like North San Juan have equitable access to early literacy programs.
- Nevada County Hospitals and Jails: Partnering with facilities like hospitals and jails will allow parents who may be excluded from current conversations around the importance of early learning to become aware of the services offered by the child development center. In hospitals, parents may be given such information as soon as their babies are born.
- Real Estate Companies: A partnership with realtors for homes in the county could provide library card applications and informational welcome pamphlets

for new residents upon move-in, encouraging newcomers to participate in library services.

- Other early childhood development centers: The Sierra College Child Development Center, Early Learning with Families, Placer Community Action Council-Kidz Kount, Inc., Early Head Start/Head Start, Sierra College, and the California State Preschool Program are all potential partners with aligned goals. Partnerships with any and all of these programs will allow programs to learn from each other and ultimately achieve greater impact.

Economic and Workforce Development Working Group

This working group focused on bolstering a resilient local economy with room for creatives and innovators to grow. They discussed leveraging the library as a trusted information center and a non-political hub, as well as partnering with organizations so that the library can offer innovative pathways and networking opportunities for the county's workforce.

Participants cited existing individual efforts in the county to support economic growth and workforce training. The library is in a unique position to bring those efforts together, and make them known to communities across the county. Moreover, the library has locations across the county, and can provide accessible space for classes, programs or meetups.

The Economic and Workforce Development working group identified the opportunity to create a position for a special coordinator or facilitator to organize partnerships and events with the many organizations that offer related resources. This position—potentially a volunteer position or filled by a group of volunteers—could facilitate such

programs across all libraries in the county, allowing existing positions to continue unhampered by the extra workload. To avoid duplicating programs and services that already exist and to streamline information for employers and the public, the group also suggested the creation of an inventory or map of economic and workforce development resources available to residents in the county.

The group recognized a significant need in western Nevada County for a community foundation. The Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation in eastern Nevada County serves as a successful model for what a community foundation can look like. In addition to its core function as a donation platform, the Foundation connects resources and partners to build philanthropy and non-profit resiliency.

To create innovative pathways for residents who are entering the workforce, transitioning careers, or wanting to develop new skills or expand their network, the working group suggested partnering with a number of key organizations and institutions concerned with workforce development. While some of these entities already have ties to the library, the aim is to turn existing weak ties and episodic collaborations into stronger ties and relationships.

- Sierra College: A partnership with the college would connect students to resources in the county, preparing them to enter the workforce.
- Sierra Business Council: This non-profit takes concepts from academia, business leaders and think tanks, and innovates practical ways to apply them as on-the-ground action for rural areas. This is a model for other rural areas to follow on their path to sustainability.
- Local Makerspaces and Innovation Hubs: Nevada County Tech Connection, The Curious Forge, Truckee Roundhouse, Yuba Village

Building Convergence. These local makerspaces attract creative people and have access to new technology and insights. Their base, along with their innovative know-how, offer invaluable resources for workforce development and skill-building, especially for the county's younger residents just starting their careers.

- CalWorks Employment Services: This public assistance program operated by the county offers employment services, also called Welfare-to-Work, for adults with children. Their service, tailored for families, provides unique support to help families achieve self-sustainability. Their model for basic job skills development can be replicated for all residents in need of employment services.
- Employment Development Department: This statewide department offers a plethora of resources for job seekers and would be a strong starting point for a mapping of resources.
- 2-1-1 Connecting Point: Already a resource guide, this organization would also be another strong starting point for a mapping of resources.
- Friends of the Nevada County Libraries: This nonprofit, already a partner of the library, has a surplus of volunteers, many of whom are retirees. The library could tap some of those retirees who have experience and expertise to share for classes or programs at the library specifically aimed at workforce development, including technical and “soft” job skills.
- Successful local businesses, i.e., Jada Windows: Local business leaders may be willing to offer their entrepreneurial expertise and participate in library classes, programs, networking events, etc. These local businesses would be able to elevate their visibility through their participation in such programs and become more embedded in the civic life of the community.

The library itself is engaged in collaborative efforts on workforce development in the county and sees great opportunity to explore the library's role in supporting workforce development and the development of human capital. The Nevada County Library is currently hiring interns through 211 Connecting Point to teach people the basic customer service and technology skills needed in most jobs. The library hires those that do well when there are positions available and when there are no open library positions, Connecting Point helps them find other relevant work or moves them on to higher education options at Sierra College.

Community Health and Wellness Working Group

The Community Health and Wellness working group took a holistic approach to wellness—physical, mental and emotional expressions were explored. They considered the library's role as an information center and as a safe space for bringing community together. The aim was to identify practical approaches to understanding how the library can offer trusted health information and a nurture a sense of belonging for the community.

The working group identified first action steps: survey county residents annually, in and out of the library, about access to health and wellness information and consult available data like public health surveys. These steps would provide information about what health and wellness information gaps exist, allowing the library to tailor programs for those needs. Currently, much of this information is available on a piecemeal basis that does not provide a picture of health literacy across the county or the types of information and programs that the library could provide to improve health and wellness outcomes in the county's communities (e.g., nutrition, exercise, disease-specific information, substance abuse, behavioral health, Alzheimer's care, etc.).

As the working group considered the library as an information center that can build health literacy in the community, participants agreed that much work to compile resources for health and wellness has already been done by 2-1-1 Connecting Point. Some libraries have already partnered with this organization, which connects people with community programs and services through a searchable web page and 24/7 local call center, by providing 2-1-1 kiosks in some branches.

The library is already a place where community gathers and information is trusted. It could serve as a space for doctors, nurses and other health professionals to volunteer time to answer community questions around particular health matters identified as important for the community, i.e. raising a child with autism, women's health, etc. The library could host staff from health service agencies and organizations on regular rotations in its branches. The group also suggested that the library host a space for a semi-private telehealth kiosk, where visitors could video chat with a doctor. Libraries could also serve as platforms for existing funded projects to reach new constituents.

In addition to addressing physical health and wellness concerns by improving access to health information, the working group considered ways the library could foster emotional well-being. We know that isolation negatively impacts mental and emotional health, and that a sense of belonging contributes to wellness. This working group recommended that the library, being a space for communities to gather, address wellness simply by bringing people together.

The group proposed that libraries encourage "takeovers" of the library for groups lacking a community center. These groups could use the library as a gathering space for a period of time (possibly one week at a time) to host community events, disperse

information, connect with other individuals and groups in the county and build their memberships.

The following is a list of potential partners that could either boost access to health information or organize a library takeover. As technology and artificial intelligence continue to improve, some of these functions could be automated to serve greater numbers of people. This is also an area where creative collisions could bring technology innovation into direct community service. In summary, programs that can be leveraged include:

- 2-1-1 Connecting Point: This organization offers an extensive list of resources for health services in the county and beyond. A partnership with 2-1-1 could put more kiosks in libraries or simply be an excellent referral resource for librarians to recommend to library users.
- LGBTQIA+ Community Groups: Nevada County Pride, Sierra College Rainbow Alliance, Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Stonewall Alliance Center, California State University - Pride/Safezone. These LGBTQIA+ groups are functioning without a public community center, and are spread throughout the county. With the suggestion above for group takeovers at the library, the working group advocated for a “queer takeover” of the library, so that these organizations, and those who are not yet part of a queer community, can connect, learn, collaborate, and grow as a community.
- Other Community Groups: To determine potential issues or interests around which people in Nevada County wish to build community, a needs assessment could be implemented. Recommendations from the other working groups also called for information and data-gathering through surveys; this could be a portion of the same survey.

Conclusion

The Nevada County Dialogue on Public Libraries yielded recommendations for partnerships and collaborations that would leverage the library's strengths toward achieving key community goals and priorities. Participants defined a vision of a well-educated, interconnected and resilient community in a county with equitable access to resources and growth opportunities—identifying the North Star for the work that lies ahead. The library's role in lifelong learning, economic and workforce development, and community health and wellness is significant and growing. Far more than a repository for books, the library is a place for collaboration and engagement, a trusted space where all are welcome to pursue new knowledge, new skills and personal enrichment.

The range of ideas and insights shared throughout the day captured the unique history and challenges of a community balancing two very different versions of itself. Nevada County has a singular place in California's history. In a state with such an outsized impact on entrepreneurship, media and technology, Nevada County continues to depend on human capital and networks to drive innovation and negotiate its future. As the dialogue progressed participants were able to cover considerable ground and address very specific areas for developing new strategic initiatives.

Important examples include early literacy programs, for which the State has funding, and the opportunity to partner with early childhood development centers to expand their own peer learning to evolve as catalysts for early childhood literacy. Participants underscored the importance of creative and innovative pathways for residents at every stage of their careers—from new workers, to retraining, and even into retirement. They

wanted to see the creative economy of the community invested in and expanded. They also argued for the need for a community foundation in the western region of the county, although the mechanics for doing so were not identified.

The group took a holistic approach to wellness, and discussed the library's role in cultivating a community that is physically, emotionally, mentally, socially and spiritually healthy. They discussed using library takeovers as a mechanism to make the library a safe space for everyone, as well as partnerships that could avail patrons to trusted health information or telehealth services. As California continues to lead the nation in critical areas, so does Nevada County express an ongoing pioneering spirit with a courage to change and confront critical challenges.

The Dialogue on Public Libraries gives communities a platform to negotiate and engineer a future version of themselves and re-establish the role of the 21st century library in achieving those dreams. The Nevada County community expressed its readiness to embrace new technologies, new insights and new connections. This report, full of progressive ideas and promising partnerships, was generated from a convening that lasted one day. Nevada County has the motivation it needs to grow a culture of innovation. Now it needs the platform for people to activate the vision. The libraries are that platform.

Appendix

Requirements of the Measure A Expenditure Plan for Nevada Countyⁱ

The specific projects for which the revenues from the transactions and use tax shall be expended are contingent upon total revenue received and allocated as follows:

A. OPEN HOURS: Extend hours at Library locations in response to needs and desires of Library users.

B. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS: Increase children's services at all age levels and at all circulating library branches, including for the Summer Reading Program. Provide after school programs, homework help, and reference services for students at circulating branches in response to needs and desires of Library users.

C. LIBRARY MATERIALS: Increase books and other materials for all ages and replace worn and out-of-date items at all library locations. Continue to include a variety of formats, such as DVDs, audiobooks, eBooks, and online resources.

D. INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS: Provide current information services and products in libraries and for remote access. Keep pace with changing and emerging technologies. Increase and improve public access to computers, high-speed broadband, and other technologies such as 3D printers, tablets, video conferencing, software, etc. Provide technology and digital literacy based educational classes for all ages.

E. SERVICES FOR SENIORS AND LIBRARY USERS WITH DISABILITIES: Improve the accessibility of library locations, services, and materials for seniors and library users with disabilities. Offer a variety of library materials and

services in order to be inclusive of the needs of all library users.

F. LIBRARY SERVICE LOCATIONS: Establish, move or add library service locations in areas where the demand for services and cost effectiveness is warranted. Improve and enhance current service locations to meet community needs and the objectives listed in this expenditure plan.

G. CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: A Citizens Oversight Committee will be appointed by the Board of Supervisors consisting of members of the public interested in the continued operation of the public libraries. The purpose of the Committee will be to ensure that the proceeds of the library sales tax are appropriated in accordance with the Expenditure Plan set forth in this Section. Such Committee shall serve without compensation.

The County Librarian will meet with representatives of the County's Eastern and Western Friends of the Library organizations to develop and propose an equitable and fair fiscal plan for the operation of the libraries and the proceeds of the tax.

ⁱ See full text of Nevada County Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 16-333, available online at <https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/13267/Measure-A-PDF>