

In an era when the public is demanding greater efficiency and program consolidation at all levels of government, Pennsylvania’s libraries – public, academic, and school libraries – serve as models of cost-effective service. Libraries stretch the public’s resources through sharing books, computers, online resources, DVDs, facilities, and expertise. By their very definition, libraries serve the public broadly and efficiently.

Yet, much potential remains for libraries to do even greater things to prepare Pennsylvanians to compete successfully in the Information Age labor force and to live healthy, productive lives. Our libraries – properly leveraged – can help solve some of the Commonwealth’s biggest economic and social problems.

PA Forward | Pennsylvania Libraries, a new initiative of the Pennsylvania Library Association, aims to make sure that libraries have what they need to help people reach their greatest potential and meet the demands of 21st century life. This initiative establishes new **public-private partnerships** and builds on the belief that libraries are uniquely positioned to help Pennsylvanians improve their command of **five types of literacy** essential to greater success in all vital roles of life, from citizens, students, and parents, to employers, employees, and consumers. The five essential literacies are:



BASIC LITERACY – Libraries can push Pennsylvania to achieve one of the highest literacy rates in the country, a better trained and more skilled workforce, and a growing tax base, economy, and population.

INFORMATION LITERACY – Libraries can help all Pennsylvanians learn how to use online resources and current technology to improve their education, to enhance their job skills, and to participate fully in a digital society.

CIVIC AND SOCIAL LITERACY – Libraries can give citizens of all ages the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives, contribute effectively in their communities, and participate in civil discourse.

HEALTH LITERACY – Libraries can play an important role in helping citizens actively manage their own and their family’s well-being, making them effective partners with their health care providers and reducing costs.

FINANCIAL LITERACY – Libraries can help citizens become informed consumers and guide individuals, small businesses, and other organizations in ways to better manage their finances and contribute to the economic vitality of their communities.