

## Program Endorsement Brief: 2105.40 – Forensics, Evidence, and Investigation *Criminal Forensics (Certificate)*

Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence, December 2021

### Summary

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Program Endorsement:</b>                            | <b>Endorsed:<br/>All Criteria Met</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <b>Endorsed:<br/>Some Criteria Met</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Not<br/>Endorsed</b> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Program Endorsement Criteria</b>                    |   |   |  |
| <b>Supply Gap:</b>                                     | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                   | No <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |  |
| <b>Living Wage:<br/>(Entry-Level, 25<sup>th</sup>)</b> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                   | No <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |  |
| <b>Education:</b>                                      | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                   | No <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |  |
| <b>Emerging Occupation(s)</b>                          |   |   |  |
| Yes <input type="checkbox"/>                           |   | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                          |  |

The Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE) prepared this report to provide Los Angeles/Orange County regional labor market supply and demand data related to one middle-skill occupation: *forensic science technicians* (19-4092). Middle-skill occupations typically require some postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor's degree.<sup>1</sup> Although this occupation typically requires a bachelor's degree, it is considered middle-skill because at least one-third of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree. This report is intended to help determine whether there is demand in the local labor market that is not being met by the supply from community college programs that align with the relevant occupation.

Based on the available data, there appears to be a supply gap for *forensic science technicians* in the region. In addition to entry-level wages exceeding the self-sufficiency standard wage in both Los Angeles and Orange counties, more than one-third of current workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree. **Due to all of the criteria being met, the COE endorses this proposed program.** Detailed reasons include:

#### Demand:

- **Supply Gap Criteria** – Over the next five years, there is projected to be nearly **150 job openings available annually** in the region due to new job growth and replacements, **which is more than the 54 awards conferred** by community colleges in the region.
- **Living Wage Criteria** – In Los Angeles County, the **typical entry-level hourly wage** for *forensic science technicians* is **\$33.18, which is above the self-sufficiency standard wage** for one adult in the region (\$18.10 in Los Angeles County).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The COE classifies middle-skill jobs as the following:

- All occupations that require an educational requirement of some college, associate degree or apprenticeship;
- All occupations that require a bachelor's degree, but also have more than one-third of their existing labor force with an educational attainment of some college or associate degree; or
- All occupations that require a high school diploma or equivalent or no formal education, but also require short- to long-term on-the-job training where multiple community colleges have existing programs.

<sup>2</sup> Self-Sufficiency Standard wage data was pulled from The Self-Sufficiency Standard Tool for California on 12/8/2021. For more information, visit: <http://selfsufficiencystandard.org/california>.

- **Educational Criteria** – The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists a **bachelor's degree** as the **typical entry-level education** for *forensic science technicians*.
  - However, national-level educational attainment data indicates that **37% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree.**

**Supply:**

- Between 2017 and 2020, **three community colleges** in the LA/OC region issued awards in forensics, evidence, and investigation programs, conferring an average of **54 awards.**
- Currently, there are no non-community college institutions in the region that provide training programs for *forensic science technicians*.

**Occupational Demand**

Exhibit 1 shows the five-year occupational demand projections for *forensic science technicians*. In Los Angeles/Orange County, the number of jobs related to this occupation is projected to increase by 9% through 2025. There will be nearly 150 job openings per year through 2025 due to job growth and replacements.

*This report includes employment projection data by Emsi which uses EDD information. Emsi's projections are modeled on recorded (historical) employment figures and incorporate several underlying assumptions, including the assumption that the economy, during the projection period, will be at approximately full employment. To the extent that a recession or labor shock, such as the economic effects of COVID-19, can cause long-term structural change, it may impact the projections. At this time, it is not possible to quantify the full impact of COVID-19 on projections of industry and occupational employment. Therefore, the projections included in this report do not take the full impacts of COVID-19 into account.*

**Exhibit 1: Occupational demand in Los Angeles and Orange Counties<sup>3</sup>**

| <b>Geography</b> | <b>2020 Jobs</b> | <b>2025 Jobs</b> | <b>2020-2025 Change</b> | <b>2020-2025 % Change</b> | <b>Annual Openings</b> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Los Angeles      | 843              | 920              | 77                      | 9%                        | 112                    |
| Orange           | 216              | 235              | 19                      | 9%                        | 28                     |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>1,060</b>     | <b>1,155</b>     | <b>96</b>               | <b>9%</b>                 | <b>140</b>             |

<sup>3</sup> Five-year change represents new job additions to the workforce. Annual openings include new jobs and replacement jobs that result from retirements and separations.

## **Wages**

The labor market endorsement in this report considers the hourly wages for *forensic science technicians* in Los Angeles County, as they relate to the county's self-sufficiency standard wage. Orange County wages are included below in order to provide a complete analysis of the LA/OC region. Detailed wage information, by county, is included in Appendix A.

**Los Angeles County** — The typical entry-level hourly wage for *forensic science technicians* is \$33.18, which is above the self-sufficiency standard wage for one adult (\$18.10 in Los Angeles County). Experienced workers can expect to earn approximately \$58.10/hour, which is above the self-sufficiency standard wage estimate.

**Orange County** — The typical entry-level hourly wage for *forensic science technicians* is \$31.07, which is above the self-sufficiency standard wage for one adult (\$20.63 in Orange County). Experienced workers can expect to earn approximately \$54.38/hour, which is above the self-sufficiency standard wage estimate.

## **Job Postings**

Over the past 12 months, there have been 82 online job postings for *forensic science technicians*. The highest number of job postings were for biometric fingerprinting technicians, forensic specialists, and fingerprint technicians. The top skills were customer service, administrative functions, application support, forensic science, and DNA. The top employers, by number of job postings, in the region were PAE Incorporated, City of Santa Ana, and County of Orange.

*It is important to note that the job postings data included in this section reflects online job postings listed in the past 12 months and does not yet demonstrate the full impact of COVID-19. While employers have generally posted fewer online job postings since the beginning of the pandemic, the long-term effects are currently unknown.*

## **Educational Attainment**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists a bachelor's degree as the typical entry-level education for *forensic science technicians*. However, national-level educational attainment data indicates that 37% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree. Of the 77% of job postings listing a minimum education requirement in Los Angeles/Orange County, 29% (18) requested high school diploma or equivalent, 25% (16) requested an associate degree, and 46% (29) requested a bachelor's degree.

## Educational Supply

**Community College Supply** — Exhibit 2 shows the annual and three-year average number of awards conferred by community colleges in Forensics, Evidence, and Investigation programs (TOP 2105.40). The college with the most completions in the region is East LA.

**Exhibit 2: Regional community college awards (certificates and degrees), 2017-2020**

| TOP Code                    | Program                                | College            | 2017-18 Awards | 2018-19 Awards | 2019-20 Awards | 3-Year Average |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2105.40                     | Forensics, Evidence, and Investigation | East LA            | 34             | 35             | 31             | 33             |
|                             |  | El Camino          | 6              | 6              | 4              | 5              |
|                             |  | Long Beach         | 8              | 15             | 23             | 15             |
|                             |  | <b>LA Subtotal</b> | <b>48</b>      | <b>56</b>      | <b>58</b>      | <b>54</b>      |
| <b>Supply Total/Average</b> |  |                    | <b>48</b>      | <b>56</b>      | <b>58</b>      | <b>54</b>      |

**Non-Community College Supply** — Currently, there are no non-community college institutions in the region that provide training programs for *forensic science technicians*.

**Exhibit 3. Los Angeles County**

| Occupation (SOC)                       | 2020 Jobs | 2025 Jobs | 5-Yr Change | 5-Yr % Change | Annual Openings | Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) | Median Hourly Earnings | Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Forensic Science Technicians (19-4092) | 843       | 920       | 77          | 9%            | 112             | \$33.18   | \$44.09                | \$58.10   |

**Exhibit 4. Orange County**

| Occupation (SOC)                       | 2020 Jobs | 2025 Jobs | 5-Yr Change | 5-Yr % Change | Annual Openings | Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) | Median Hourly Earnings | Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Forensic Science Technicians (19-4092) | 216       | 235       | 19          | 9%            | 28              | \$31.07   | \$41.27                | \$54.38   |

**Exhibit 5. Los Angeles and Orange Counties**

| Occupation (SOC)                       | 2020 Jobs | 2025 Jobs | 5-Yr Change | 5-Yr % Change | Annual Openings | Typical Entry-Level Education |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Forensic Science Technicians (19-4092) | 1,060     | 1,155     | 96          | 9%            | 140             | Bachelor's degree             |

## Appendix B: Sources

- O\*NET Online
- Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass)
- Economic Modeling Specialists, International (Emsi)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, OES
- California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington
- Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI 2.0)

For more information, please contact:

Luke Meyer, Director  
Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence  
[lmeyer7@mtsac.edu](mailto:lmeyer7@mtsac.edu)

