










Turf Management Occupations

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

March 2026

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL(S) OF EDUCATION
 Proceed with Caution	 	 	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma or Equivalent <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than a HS Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	
 	MEDIUM 	HIGH 	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region’s community colleges with strategic planning and program development. *Turf Management Occupations* include “First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers,” “Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers,” and “Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products.” According to available data, *Turf Management Occupations* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 3,063 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and six institutions supply 166 awards for these occupations. On average, entry-level wages are below the living wage. This brief recommends to proceed with caution when developing a new program and supports a program modification because 1) a high number of annual job openings exist for these occupations; 2) there is a supply gap in San Diego County, however 3) entry-level wages are below the living wage. Additionally, colleges should note that the expected level of education ranges from no formal education credential to a high school diploma or equivalent.

Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational codes in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)¹ system:

- **First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers (SOC 37-1012):** Directly supervise and coordinate activities of workers engaged in landscaping or groundskeeping activities. Work may involve reviewing contracts to ascertain service, machine, and workforce requirements; answering inquiries from potential customers regarding methods, material, and price ranges; and preparing estimates according to labor, material, and machine costs.
- **Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (SOC 37-3011):** Landscape or maintain grounds of property using hand or power tools or equipment. Workers typically perform a variety of tasks, which may include any combination of the following: sod laying, mowing, trimming, planting, watering, fertilizing, digging, raking, sprinkler installation, and installation of mortarless segmental concrete masonry wall units.
- **Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products (SOC 41-4012):** Sell goods for wholesalers or manufacturers to businesses or groups of individuals. Work requires substantial knowledge of items sold.

For the purpose of this report, these occupations are referred to as *Turf Management Occupations*.

¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>.

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2024 and 2029, businesses in San Diego County will need to hire 3,063 employees annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example (Exhibit 1). Most of this labor market demand comes from Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, which are projected to have the most annual job openings with 1,983 openings each year between 2024 and 2029.

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Turf Management Occupations (2024-2029)²

Occupational Title	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	2024 - 2029 Net Jobs Change	2024 - 2029 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	15,287	15,176	-111	-1%	1,983
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	10,276	9,740	-536	-5%	870
First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers	2,065	2,026	-39	-2%	210
Total	27,628	26,942	-686	-2%	3,063

Earnings

According to traditional³ labor market information (LMI), entry-level hourly earnings for *Turf Management Occupations* range from \$17.65 to \$24.22 (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings for Turf Management Occupations in San Diego County⁴

Occupational Title	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	\$24.22	\$34.55	\$48.98
First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers	\$20.34	\$27.37	\$35.65
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	\$17.65	\$20.18	\$23.41

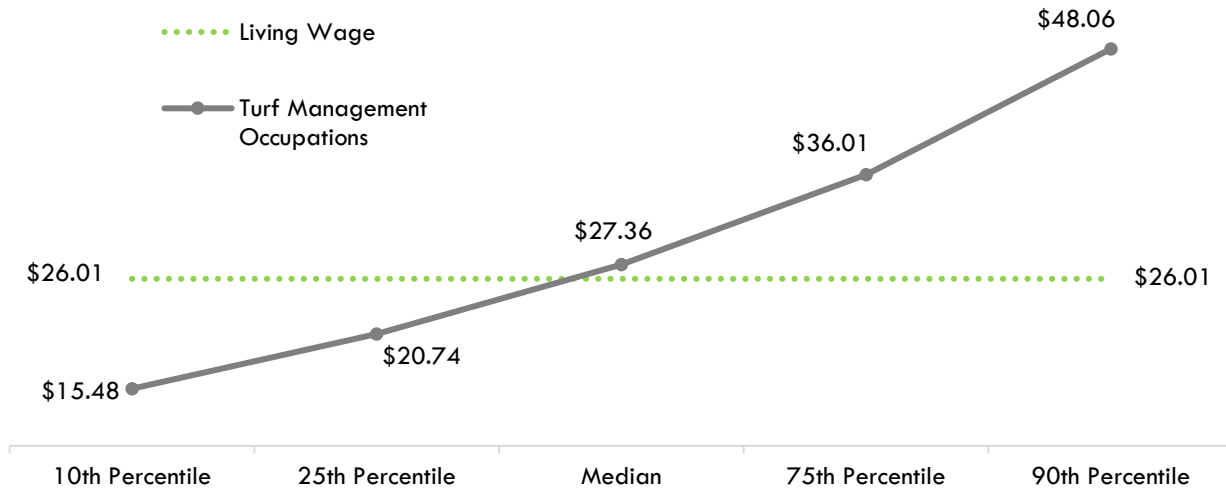
² Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

³ Traditional LMI is generally historical data captured by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) or the California Employment Development Department (EDD). It does not account for recent technological, economic, or legislative changes that may affect labor market demand and wages.

⁴ Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

On average, the entry-level hourly earnings for employed *Turf Management Occupations* are \$20.74—or \$43,139.20 annual salary⁵; this is less than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 3).⁶

Exhibit 3: Hourly Earnings⁷ for *Turf Management Occupations* in San Diego County⁸



⁵ Annualized salaries assume a full-time position with 2,080 hours. Multiplying the hourly wage with 2,080 yields the annual salary.

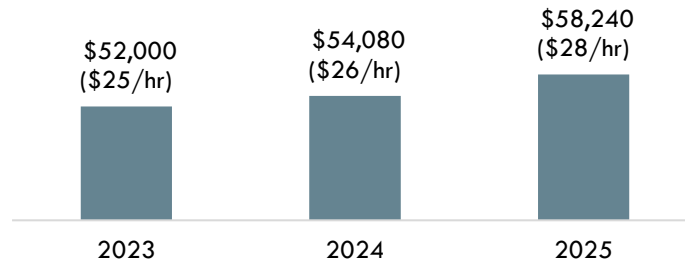
⁶ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. selfsufficiencystandard.org/California.

⁷ 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

⁸ Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

In online job postings, however, employers advertised between \$25 to \$28 per hour between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 for *Turf Management Occupations* in San Diego County (Exhibit 4).⁹ This suggests that employer-advertised wages in online job postings were higher than entry-level wages reported in traditional labor market information and increased over the period analyzed.

Exhibit 4: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for *Turf Management Occupations* in San Diego County (2023-2025)



Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to EDD and BLS), *Turf Management Occupations* have a national educational attainment ranging from **no formal educational credential** to a **high school diploma or equivalent** (Exhibit 5).¹⁰

Exhibit 5: National Educational Attainment for *Turf Management Occupations*¹¹

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers	High school diploma or equivalent
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	High school diploma or equivalent
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	No formal educational credential

⁹ Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

¹⁰ Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹¹ Lightcast 2026.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 in San Diego County had a high school or GED as the most requested educational requirement for *Turf Management Occupations*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 6).¹²

Exhibit 6: Top Certifications for *Turf Management Occupations* in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2023-2025)¹³

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Insurance License | 6. FINRA Series 7 |
| 2. Security Clearance | 7. Commercial Driver's License (CDL) |
| 3. Real Estate Salesperson License | 8. Pesticide Applicator License |
| 4. CDL Class C License | 9. FINRA Series 63 (Uniform Securities Agent State Law) |
| 5. Property And Casualty Insurance License | |

Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. There are six TOP codes and seven CIP codes related to *Turf Management Occupations* (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Turf Management Occupations*¹⁴

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 0109.00	Horticulture
TOP 0109.10	Landscape Design and Maintenance
TOP 0109.30	Nursery Technology
TOP 0109.40	Turfgrass Technology
TOP 0112.00	Agriculture Business, Sales and Service
TOP 0509.00	Marketing and Distribution
CIP 01.0105	Agricultural/Farm Supplies Retailing and Wholesaling
CIP 01.0601	Applied Horticulture/Horticulture Operations, General
CIP 01.0605	Landscaping and Groundskeeping
CIP 01.0606	Plant Nursery Operations and Management
CIP 01.0607	Turf and Turfgrass Management
CIP 31.0302	Golf Course Operation and Grounds Management
CIP 52.1801	Sales, Distribution, and Marketing Operations, General

¹² Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

¹³ Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

¹⁴ This brief uses a conservative estimate of program supply and only calculates awards from the TOP code listed in Exhibit 7.

According to TOP data, six community colleges supply the region with awards for these occupations: Cuyamaca College, Grossmont College, MiraCosta College, San Diego College of Continuing Education, San Diego Mesa College, and Southwestern College. According to CIP data, no non-community-college institution supplies the region with awards (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions (Program Year 2020-21 Through Program Year 2023-24 Average)

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
0109.00	Horticulture	9	0	9
	Cuyamaca	1	0	
	• Associate degree	1	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	0	0	
	MiraCosta	5	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	3	0	
	Southwestern	3	0	
	• Associate degree	3	0	
0109.10	Landscape Design and Maintenance	14	0	14
	Cuyamaca	8	0	
	• Associate degree	6	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	2	0	
	MiraCosta	4	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	2	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	0	0	
	Southwestern	2	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	0	0	

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
0109.30	Nursery Technology	7	0	7
	Cuyamaca	3	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	1	0	
	MiraCosta	4	0	
	• Associate degree	2	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	2	0	
0109.40	Turfgrass Technology	0	0	0
	Cuyamaca	0	0	
	• Associate degree	0	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	0	0	
0509.00	Marketing and Distribution	136	0	136
	Grossmont	9	0	
	• Associate degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	5	0	
	MiraCosta	29	0	
	• Associate degree	13	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	16	0	
	San Diego Cont. Ed.	89	0	
	• Non-credit 144 < 192 hrs	22	0	
	• Non-credit 48 < 96 hrs	67	0	
	San Diego Mesa	5	0	
	• Associate degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	1	0	

TOP6 or CIP Code	TOP6 or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY20-21 to PY22-23)	Total Average Supply (PY20-21 to PY22-24)
	Southwestern	4	0	
	• Associate degree	3	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	0	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	1	0	
			Total	166

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand with labor supply¹⁵ suggests that there is a **supply gap** for these occupations in San Diego County, with **3,063** annual openings and **166** awards. Comparatively, there are **36,518** annual openings in California and **1,682** awards, suggesting that there is a **supply gap** across the state (Exhibit 9).¹⁶

Exhibit 9: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Annual Awards)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	3,063	166	2,897
California	36,518	1,682	34,826

Please note: This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

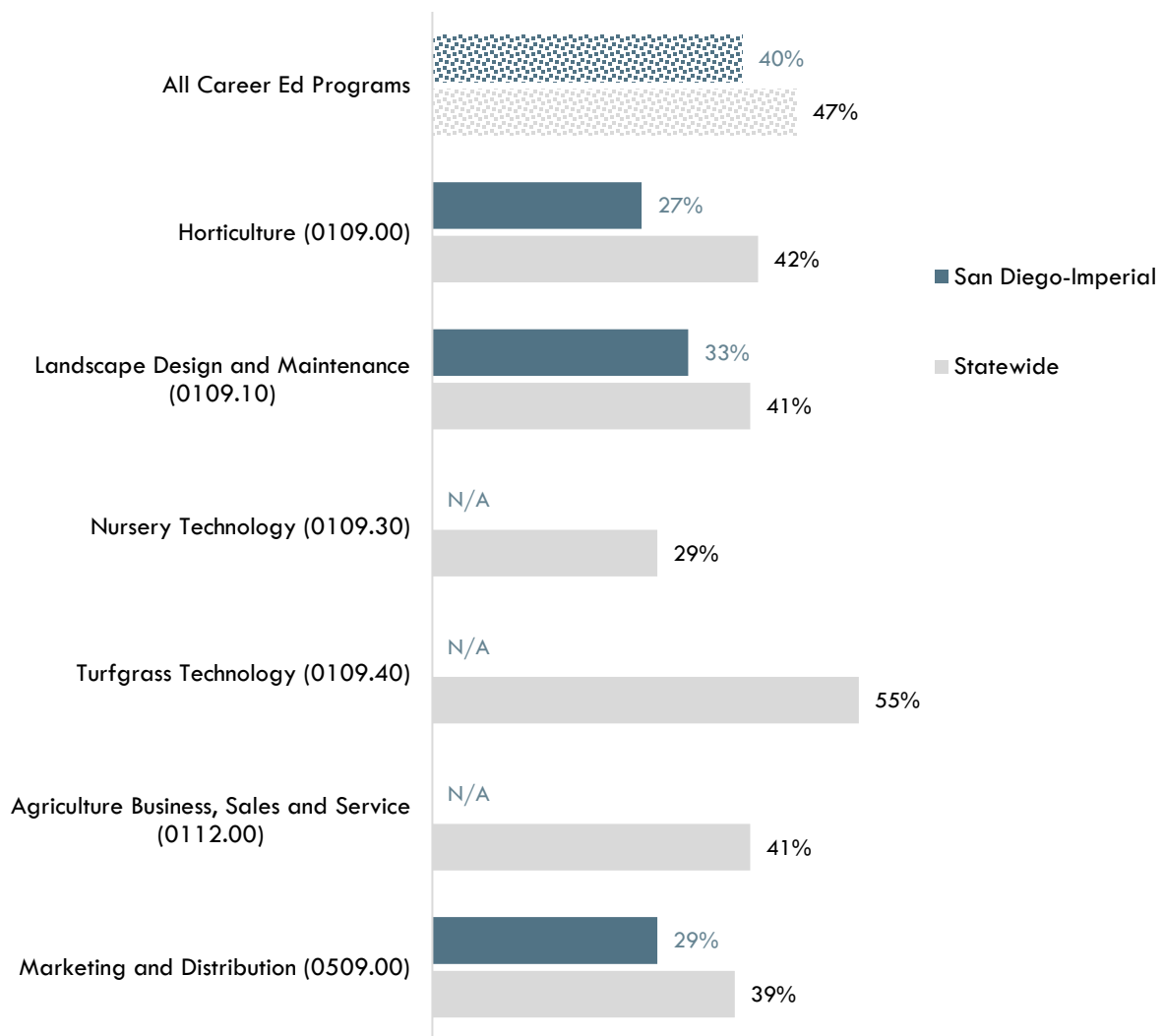
¹⁵ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁶ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coecc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 27% to 33% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Turf Management Occupations*, compared to 29% to 55% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).¹⁷

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage by Program, PY2022-23¹⁸



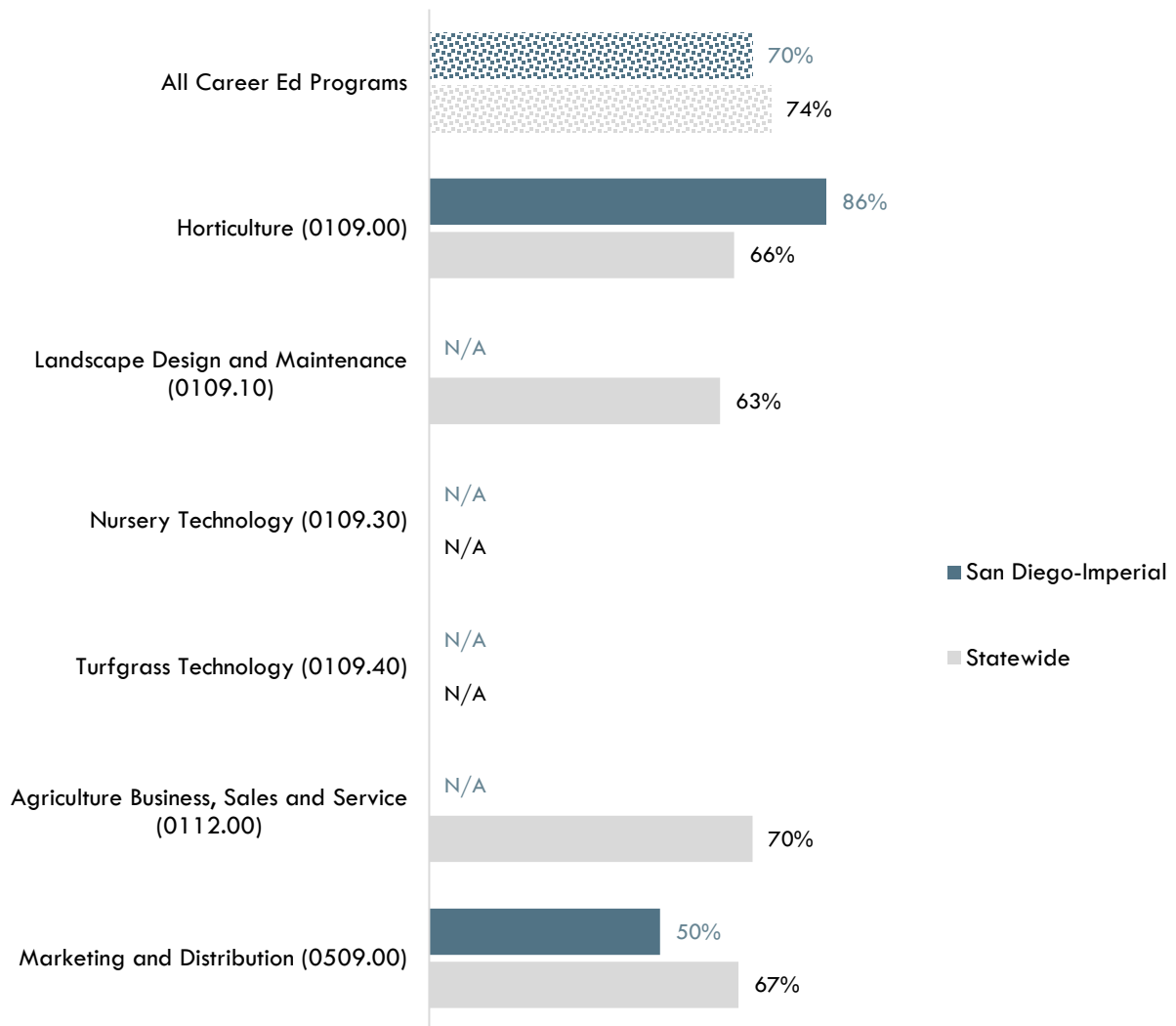
"N/A" indicates insufficient data

¹⁷ DataVista, California Community Colleges, datavista.cccco.edu/.

¹⁸ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2022-23. Among completers and skills builders who exited, the percentage of students who attained a living wage.

According to the California Community Colleges DataVista, 50% to 86% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a program related to *Turf Management Occupations*, compared to 63% to 70% statewide and 74% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 11).¹⁹

Exhibit 11: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study by Program, PY2021-22²⁰



“N/A” indicates insufficient data

¹⁹ DataVista, California Community Colleges, datavista.cccco.edu/.

²⁰ Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2021-22. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

Employers

Between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025, the top employers in San Diego County for *Turf Management Occupations* were [Brightview](#), [AT&T](#), [Spectrum](#), [Thermo Fisher Scientific](#), and [MarketSource](#) based on online job postings (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12: Top Employers for Turf Management Occupations in San Diego County²¹

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brightview • AT&T • Spectrum • Thermo Fisher Scientific • MarketSource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UnitedHealth Group • Danaher • Hub International • Travel & Leisure Group Ltd • Sunbelt Rentals

Skills

Exhibit 13 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.

Exhibit 13: Top Skills for Turf Management Occupations in San Diego County²²

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling Techniques • Sales Prospecting • Marketing • Customer Relationship Management • Account Management • Landscaping • Business To Business • Sales Process • Business Development • Irrigation • Sales Strategy • Mowing • Good Driving Record • Outside Sales • Cold Calling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales • Communication • Customer Service • Management • Presentations • Leadership • Problem Solving • Negotiation • Operations • Self-Motivation • Detail Oriented • Writing • Time Management • Interpersonal Communications • Organizational Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Salesforce • Microsoft Excel

²¹ Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

²² Lightcast 2026.01; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

Prepared by:

Tina Ngo Bartel, Executive Director (tngobartel@miracosta.edu)

John Edwards, Research Analyst (jedwards@miracosta.edu)



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