

Labor Market Analysis for Program Review:

Ironworkers in Greater Sacramento

Prepared by the North Far North Center of Excellence
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Summary

The North Far North Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (NFN COE) prepared this report to provide an analysis of occupational demand and educational supply for selected occupations employed across the 22-county North Far North region. This report aims to determine if demand in the local labor market is unmet by the supply from existing community college programs and other postsecondary training providers, with a primary focus on training that leads to living wage jobs in middle-skilled occupations.¹

Key Findings

- **Jobs in ironworking are growing faster in Greater Sacramento than in California.** Ironworking occupations are expected to have 5% growth by 2029 in Greater Sacramento compared to only 3% growth for the state.
- **Those in ironworking occupations make above the living wage for a single working adult.** The living wage for a single working adult is \$21.17 in American River's community college district, and entry-level wages for ironworkers are between \$1.55 and \$6.30 above that.
- **The highest educational attainment for most ironworkers is a high school diploma.** Across ironworking occupations, 60% to 79% of workers have a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment, and no job postings requested a higher educational credential than a high school diploma. However, these jobs usually require an apprenticeship for entry-level workers.
- **There is an undersupply of ironworkers.** There are 63 annual job openings and an average of only 48 related awards (all from American River College).

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the North Far North COE recommends that community colleges **proceed** in creating new programs related to ironworking. The COE also will defer to the community colleges for making program modifications to better suit the needs of the labor market. Key considerations include:

- There is a significant undersupply for ironworkers, and all that supply comes from just one community college in the North Far North region.
- Those in ironworking occupations make above the living wage for a single working adult.
- New ironworking programs should be apprenticeships, as this is the typical on-the-job training requirement.

¹ Pursuant to California Education Code §78015, labor market information (LMI) is required for all new career education certificate and degree program proposals, and the North Far North Regional Consortium (NFNRC) requires LMI to come from the NFN COE. This report should serve to satisfy those requirements.

Introduction

The North Far North Center of Excellence (COE) was asked to provide labor market data to support a proposed new career education program or modifications to existing programs at a regional community college (see Appendix A for methodology and data sources).

This report focuses on the following Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) occupations and codes:

- Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers (47-2171)
- Structural Iron and Steel Workers (47-2221)

A review of related programs revealed the following Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) title(s) and code(s) are appropriate for inclusion in this report:

- Sheet Metal and Structural Metal (0956.40)

The corresponding Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) title(s) and code(s) are:

- Ironworking/Ironworker (48.0509)

Occupational Demand

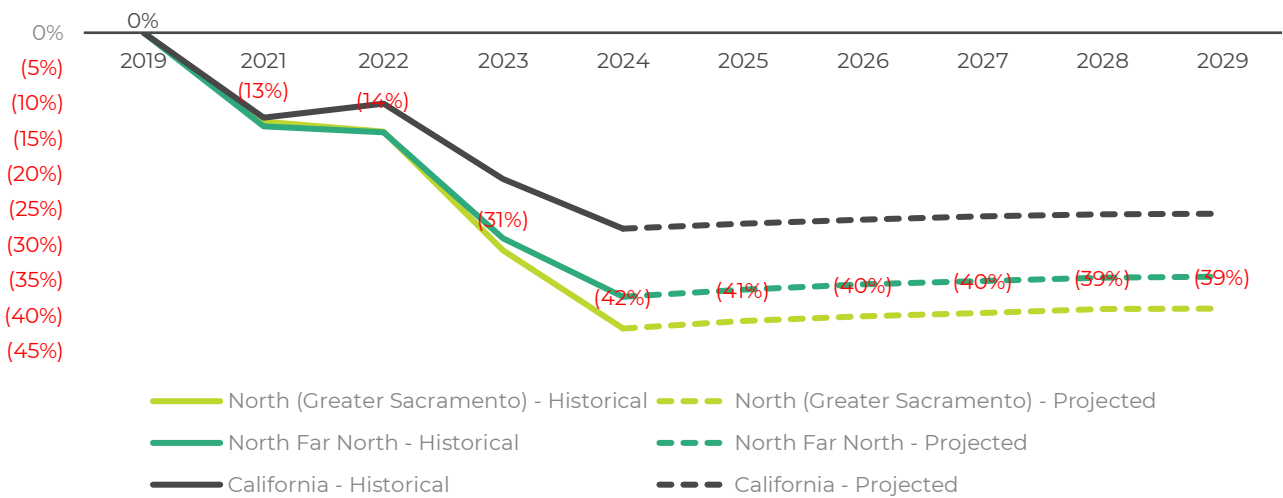
Exhibit 1 summarizes the five-year projected job growth for the targeted occupational groups in the Greater Sacramento subregion, the 22-county North Far North region, and California.²

Exhibit 1. Current employment and projected occupational demand, 2024-2029

Occupational Group	2024 Jobs	2024-2029 Change	2024-2029 % Change	2024-2029 Annual Openings
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	154	5	3%	13
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	529	28	5%	50
Greater Sacramento	683	33	5%	63
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	199	3	2%	17
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	662	36	5%	64
North Far North	861	39	5%	81
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	2,249	5	0%	179
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	7,447	279	4%	690
California	9,696	284	3%	869

Exhibit 2 compares historical and projected annual change in employment for the period 2019 to 2029 with the base number of jobs in 2019 for Greater Sacramento, the 22-county North Far North region, and California.

Exhibit 2. Changes in employment, 2019-2029



² The 22-county North Far North is a dual region. It is represented by the North (Greater Sacramento) subregion that covers seven counties, including El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba, and the 15-county Far North subregion which includes Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity.

Earnings

Exhibit 3 compares the percentile hourly earnings for the selected occupations to the living wage for a single working adult and a working family residing in the county of the community college district that requested this report.^{3,4} Earnings data includes wages from employed and self-employed workers. Also, it's important to note that living wage thresholds vary by county, and in the Greater Sacramento subregion, range from \$17 to \$24 per hour for a single working adult.

Exhibit 3. Hourly earnings compared to the community college district's living wage



³ A “living wage” is defined as the level of income one working adult with no children must earn to meet basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, healthcare, taxes, and other miscellaneous basic needs. Please note that the 25th-percentile and 75th-percentile hourly wages are used as proxies for entry-level and experienced-level wages.

⁴ A “working family” is defined as one working adult and one infant (between the ages of 0 and 2 years).

Job Postings

Analysis of online job postings can offer additional insights into recent labor market changes not reflected in historical trends. However, it is important to note that job postings do not equate to actual labor market demand, which is based on projected annual job openings.

There are several limitations to interpreting online job postings. Employers may repost the same position multiple times to attract more applicants, or job postings may remain active even if the position is no longer being filled. Additionally, a single job posting can be used to hire for multiple openings, and not all job opportunities are advertised online. Despite these limitations, job posting analyses can be valuable for guiding community college curriculum development and identifying potential employers for targeted experiential learning opportunities.

The North Far North COE identified 86 online job postings for the selected occupations across the Greater Sacramento subregion. Job posting data comes from and represents unique advertisements posted online during the last 12 months, from October 2024 to September 2025.

Exhibit 4. Job postings by occupation

Occupation	Number of Job Postings	Share of Postings	Median Advertised Salary
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	1	1%	Insf. Data
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	76	99%	\$27.45
Total	77	100%	\$27.45

Top employers

Exhibit 5 shows the employers with the most job postings for the selected occupations across Greater Sacramento.

Exhibit 5. Employers with the most job postings

Employer	Number of Job Postings
Wastequip	3
Dynamic Iron Works	3
Confab Manufacturing	3
ATP Flight School	2
WeidnerCA	2
Challenge Works	2
Metal Finishing Group	2

Employer	Number of Job Postings
Berger Steel Corp	2
Beeler Tractor	2

Top titles

Exhibit 6 shows the job titles with the most job postings for the selected occupations across Greater Sacramento.

Exhibit 6. Job titles with the most job postings

Job title	Number of Job Postings
Metal Fabricators	8
Fabricators	7
Sign Installers	7
Welding Technicians	4
Production Workers	3
Steel Fabricators	3

Skills and qualifications

Exhibit 7 shows the most requested skills in job postings by occupation in Greater Sacramento.⁵

Exhibit 7. Most requested in-demand skills in job postings

Specialized Skills	Common or Employability Skills	Software and Technology Skills
- Welding - Fabrication - Power Tool Operation - Grinding Machine - Forklift Truck - Structural Steel - Metal Inert Gas (MIG) Welding - Aluminum - Construction - Drill Press	- Detail Oriented - Problem Solving/Troubleshooting - Lifting Ability - Communication - Good driving record - Quality Control - Management - Customer Service - Operations - Teamwork	-

⁵ Specialized skills are those primarily required to perform specific tasks in an occupation. Common skills are typically related to employability; these are skills that are prevalent across many occupations and usually include a mix of interpersonal attributes and soft skills. Software skills are specific to any software tool or programming component used to accomplish tasks in a job.

Exhibit 8 shows the employer-preferred minimum level of education in job postings related to the selected occupations in Greater Sacramento.

Exhibit 8. Employer-preferred education levels for the studied occupations

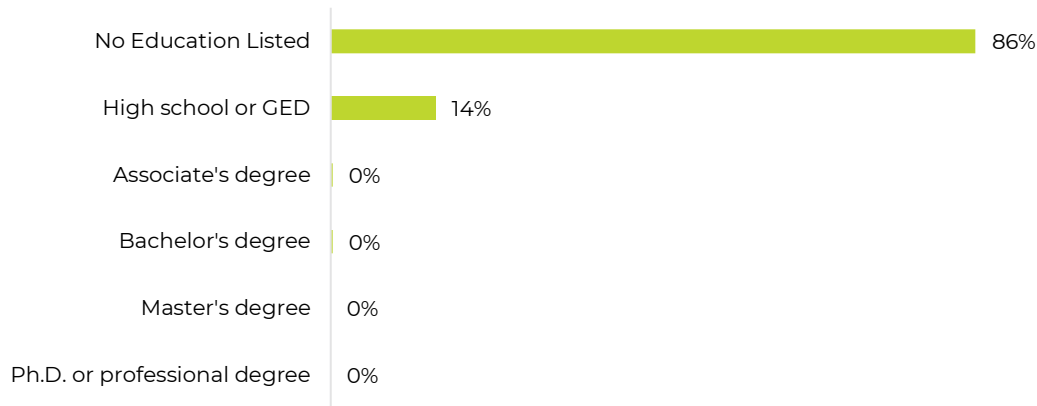
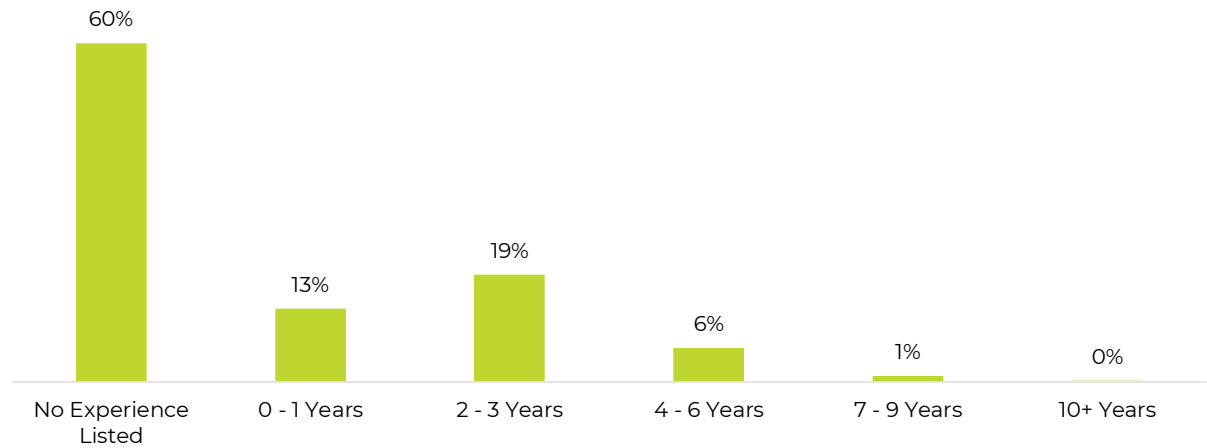


Exhibit 9 shows the employer-preferred minimum level of experience in job postings related to the selected occupations in Greater Sacramento.

Exhibit 9. Employer-preferred experience levels for the studied occupations



Education and Training Requirements

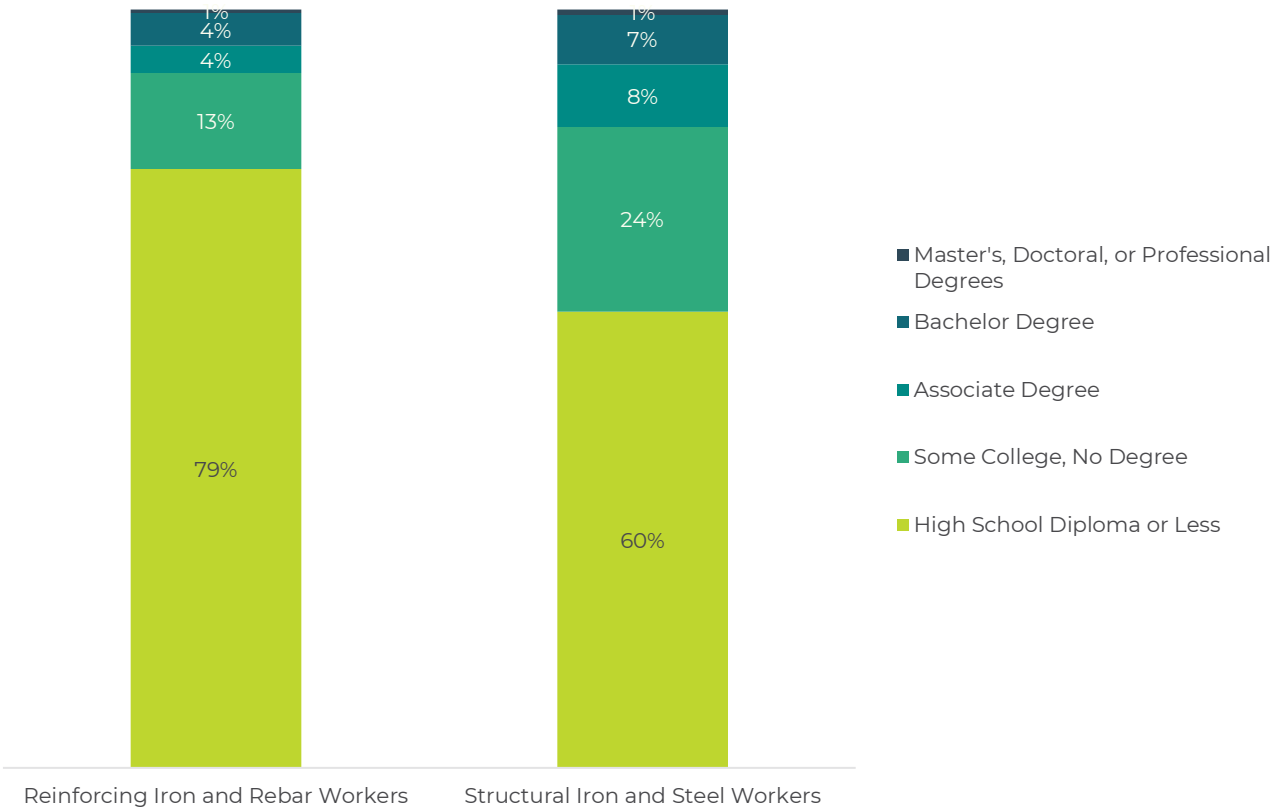
The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) assigns each occupation a typical entry-level education, related work experience, and on-the-job training category in its projection data. Exhibit 10 summarizes these requirements by occupation.

Exhibit 10. Typical entry-level job requirements for the studied occupations

Occupation	Entry-Level Education	Work Experience	On-The-Job Training
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship

The U.S. Census Bureau tracks the highest education level attained by workers in all occupations. Exhibit 11 presents this data for the current U.S. workforce in the studied occupations.

Exhibit 11. Educational attainment for workers 25 years and older by occupation, 2021-22



Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards issued in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes.

Community college supply

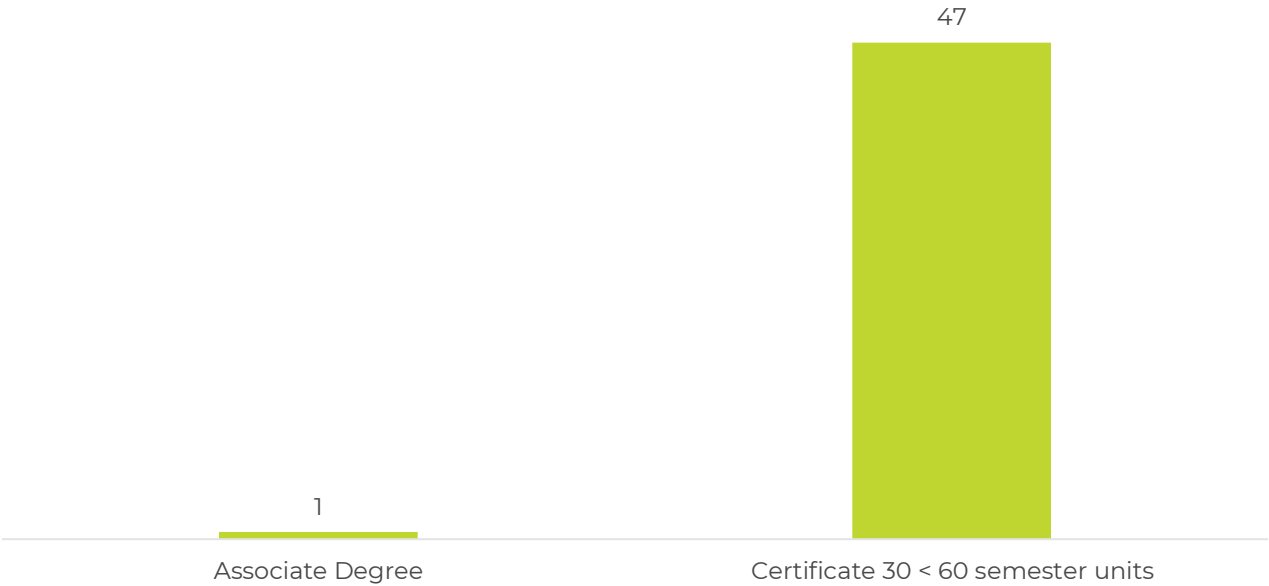
Exhibits 12 and 13 summarize the three-year average of awards (certificates and degrees) conferred by the Greater Sacramento community college programs relevant to the occupations studied. American River College is the only college with an Ironworking program. Under the same TOP code, American River College also has a Sheet Metal apprenticeship, so not all of the awards shown in the following exhibits are specific to Ironworking.

Exhibit 12. Average annual community college awards by TOP program

TOP Program and Code	College	2022-23 Annual Awards	2023-24 Annual Awards	2024-25 Annual Awards	Three-Year Average Awards
Sheet Metal and Structural Metal – 0956.40	American River	61	36	46	48
Totals		61	36	46	48

Note: Values in the table are rounded to the nearest whole number. However, subtotals and totals are calculated using unrounded values.

Exhibit 13. Average annual community college awards by award type and program area



Conclusion and Recommendations

Data insights

Demand— Ironworking occupations are growing faster in Greater Sacramento than in the rest of California. Ironworking occupations are expected to have 5% growth by 2029 in Greater Sacramento compared to only 3% growth for the state as a whole.

Living Wage— Those in ironworking occupations make above the living wage for a single working adult. The living wage for a single working adult is \$21.17, and entry-level wages for ironworkers are between \$1.55 and \$6.30 above that.

Education— The highest educational attainment for most ironworkers is a high school diploma. Across ironworking occupations, 60%-79% have a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment, and no job postings requested a higher educational credential than a high school diploma. However, these jobs usually require an apprenticeship for entry-level workers.

Supply Gap— There is a significant supply gap for ironworking. There are 63 annual job openings and an average of only 48 related awards (all from American River College). Additionally, some of these awards are for the sheet metal apprenticeship as opposed to being solely focused on ironworking.

Recommendation

Based on the current analysis, the North Far North COE recommends that community colleges **proceed** in creating new programs related to ironworking. The COE also will defer to the community colleges for program modifications to better suit the needs of the labor market.

New Program Recommendation		
Proceed	Use Caution	Do Not Proceed
☒	☐	☐

Support for Program Modification	
Yes	No
☒	☐

Appendix A. Methodology and Data Sources

Labor market and educational supply data compiled in this report derive from a variety of sources. Occupations were identified by using the Center of Excellence TOP-to-CIP-to-SOC Crosswalk: <http://coeccc.net/>. This report's findings were primarily determined with labor market and educational supply data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the economic modeling firm and job postings aggregator Lightcast, and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Data Sources

The following table summarizes the data sources used in this study.

Data Type	Source
Labor Market Information and Job Postings	Traditional labor market information data is sourced from Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm. Lightcast's occupational employment data are based on final Lightcast industry data and final Lightcast staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and non-QCEW employee classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (self-employed and extended proprietors). For more information, see https://lightcast.io/ .
Living Wage	The living wage is derived from the Insight Center's California Family Needs Calculator, which measures the income necessary for an individual or family to afford basic expenses. The data assesses the cost of housing, food, childcare, health care, transportation, and taxes. The Chancellor's Office uses wage data to calculate the percentage of students that attained a regional living wage. For more information, see https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California/ .
Typical Education Level, On-the-job Training, and Educational Attainment	The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides information about education and training requirements for hundreds of occupations. BLS uses a system to assign categories for entry-level education, work experience in a related occupation, and typical on-the-job training to each occupation for which BLS publishes projections data. For more information, see https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm .
Emerging Occupation Descriptions, Additional Education Requirements, and Employer Preferences	The O*NET database includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge areas, work activities, and interests associated with occupations. For more information, see https://www.onetonline.org/help/online/ .
Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Estimates	The California Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division is a source of labor market and workforce data. For more information, see labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov .
Educational Supply	The CCCCO Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart provides information about students, courses, student services, outcomes, and faculty and staff. For more information, see https://datamart.cccco.edu. The Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory System (COCI) collects data on courses and programs offered by the California Community Colleges. For more information, see https://coci2.ccctechcenter.org/. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) collects data from providers of postsecondary education, including the number of postsecondary awards earned (completions). For more information, see https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components/7/completions.
Student Metrics and Demographics	DataVista, a statewide data system supported by the Chancellor's Office and hosted by Cal-PASS Plus, provides data on progress, success, employment, and earnings outcomes for California community college students. For more information, see https://datavista.cccco.edu/ .

Living Wage

Beginning in October 2024, to determine if an occupation meets the living wage threshold, the NFN COE compared the 25th percentile hourly wage of an occupation in the subregion to the living wage for a single adult (no dependents) living in the county where the requesting community college district was located.

This change aligned with the Chancellor’s Office methodology for calculating the share of students earning a living wage after leaving the California Community College system, as reported in the Data Vista living wage metric (802S). For details, see the *DataVista Metric Definition Dictionary*.

The NFN COE updated this practice as needed to remain consistent with the Chancellor’s Office. The table below summarizes hourly living wages by community college district and county.

2024 Single Adult Living Wage			
Community College District	County	Hourly	Annual
Butte-Glenn	Butte	\$16.77	\$35,416
Feather River	Plumas	\$15.11	\$31,909
Lake Tahoe	El Dorado	\$22.11	\$46,703
Lassen	Lassen	\$14.81	\$31,274
Los Rios	Sacramento	\$21.17	\$44,709
Mendocino-Lake	Mendocino	\$17.06	\$36,039
Redwoods	Humboldt	\$16.59	\$35,046
Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint	Shasta	\$16.99	\$35,874
Sierra Joint	Placer	\$23.92	\$50,519
Siskiyou Joint	Siskiyou	\$14.51	\$30,639
Yuba	Sutter	\$17.08	\$36,074
California Minimum Wages			
All industries, except fast food and healthcare (Effective January 2025)		\$16.00	\$33,280
Fast food (Effective April 2024)		\$20.00	\$41,600
Healthcare (Effective October 2024)		\$18.00-\$23.00, depending on facility type	\$37,440-\$47,840

Sources: University of Washington Self Sufficiency Standard and State of California Department of Industrial Relations, “Minimum Wage,” https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/minimum_wage.htm

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