

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST PRIORITY SECTOR SNAPSHOT

CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST

Under California Jobs First, five sectors represent strategic priorities in the South Central Coast due to their projected growth and importance to the regional innovation ecosystem. Collectively, the five Jobs First sectors represent:

18%     
share of jobs in the South Central Coast

26%    
share of the region's economic output



SOUTH CENTRAL COAST GROWTH CONSTRAINTS



The average annual wage is **24% below the statewide average** and **37% below the living wage**, creating affordability challenges that contribute to difficulties hiring and retaining talent.

38%     

share of employers citing hiring and retention as a top challenge, 2026

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST ASSETS & DEMAND DRIVERS

Despite these challenges, regional assets and demand drivers create opportunities for growth:



Aerospace & Defense Employer Cluster and Vandenberg Space Force Base



Goleta Tech Corridor and High-Tech Employer Cluster



Diablo Canyon Power Plant and Morro Bay Offshore Wind Assets



Conejo Valley Incubator and Life Sciences Employer Cluster



UC Santa Barbara and Cal Poly R&D Assets and Incubator



Large Working Lands & Water Employment Footprint

SOUTH CENTRAL COAST PRIORITY SECTOR SNAPSHOT

CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST

EMPLOYER DEMAND SIGNALS

67%

Employers expecting
headcount growth over
the next three years

90%

Employers interested in
work-based learning
partnerships

48%

Employers currently
partnering with community
colleges to hire or train

PRIORITY SECTOR SNAPSOTS

Aerospace & Defense <i>aircraft, space, and defense systems manufacturing and services</i>	Clean Economy <i>renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, grid modernization</i>	High-Tech <i>software, hardware, IT services, AI/ML, quantum, robotics, advanced computing</i>	Life Sciences <i>R&D in biotech, diagnostics, medtech, therapeutics, genomics</i>	Working Lands & Water <i>agriculture, AgTech, Blue Tech, land management, natural resources</i>
\$7.5B economic output 23.1K jobs \$115K average wage	\$19.1B economic output 22.5K jobs \$92K average wage	\$8.6B economic output 18.9K jobs \$154K average wage	\$6.1B economic output 14.7K jobs \$128K average wage	\$19.0B economic output 85.4K jobs \$53K average wage

CROSS-CUTTING OCCUPATIONAL PRIORITIES

Current Priorities



Electrical and Electronic
Equipment Assemblers



Industrial Machinery
Mechanics



Welders, Cutters,
Solderers, and Brazers



Electrical
Technicians

Emerging Priority

CROSS-CUTTING REGIONAL SKILLS NEEDS

- Data Analysis and Problem-Solving
- Hands-On Mechanical Skills
- Safety and Compliance Protocols
- Precision Assembly

- Troubleshooting and Diagnostics Skills
- Hands-On Electrical and Electronics Skills
- Communications Skills
- AI Literacy and Digital Skills

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CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

EXTERNAL FORCES

- Technology and Automation Shifts
- Energy Costs and Infrastructure Constraints
- Evolving Supply Chains and Trade Policies
- Immigration and Migration Patterns and Policies



WORKFORCE IMPACTS

- Cross-Cutting Skills Needs
- Rising Employer Demand for Talent
- Uneven Access to Opportunity
- Job Quality and Job Advancement Challenges



COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRIORITIES

- Strengthen high-wage career pathways
- Scale high-value trades and technical programs
- Support job quality via program design
- Offer foundational job readiness courses
- Develop flexible, accessible training
- Facilitate regional advisory structures
- Future-proof programs via AI literacy
- Strengthen regional workforce intelligence

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PRIORITIES



Regional
Coordination



Cross-Regional
Pathways



Cross-Cutting and Emerging
Skills Development



Expanded Access
to Opportunity

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (2000-2025), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2025), O*NET Online 30.0 Database (2025), JobsEQ (2026), regional employer surveys and stakeholder interviews (2026), education & training provider websites (2026).