

Interpreters and Translators

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

September 2026

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
 Proceed with Caution	 	 	☐ Doctorate Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☒ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Associate Degree ☐ Some College or Certificate ☐ HS Diploma or Equivalent ☐ Less Than a HS Diploma ☐ Apprenticeship
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING	NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS	
 	LOW 	MEDIUM 	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region's community colleges with strategic planning and program development. According to available data, Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 84 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and three institutions supply 34 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is a supply gap in the labor market. Entry-level wages are below the living wage; however, median wages are above the living wage. This brief recommends that colleges proceed with caution when developing a new program for this occupation and supports a program modification because 1) there is a supply gap; 2) three institutions in San Diego County supply awards for this occupation. However, entry-level wages are below the living wage. Additionally, colleges should note that the expected level of education is a bachelor's degree.

Introduction

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

Interpreters and Translators (SOC 27-3091): Interpret oral or sign language, or translate written text from one language into another. Sample reported job titles include:

- Interpreters
- American Sign Language Interpreters
- Spanish Interpreters
- Sign Language Interpreters
- Spanish Analytic Linguists
- Interpreters/Translators
- Linguists
- Linguists/Translators
- Translators
- Tagalog Interpreters

Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2025 and 2030, *Interpreters and Translators* are projected to decrease by **six** net jobs or **one percent** (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire **84** workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.²

Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Interpreters and Translators (2025-2030)

Occupational Title	2025 Jobs	2030 Jobs	2025-2030 Net Jobs Change	2025-2030 % Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Interpreters and Translators	921	915	-6	-1%	84

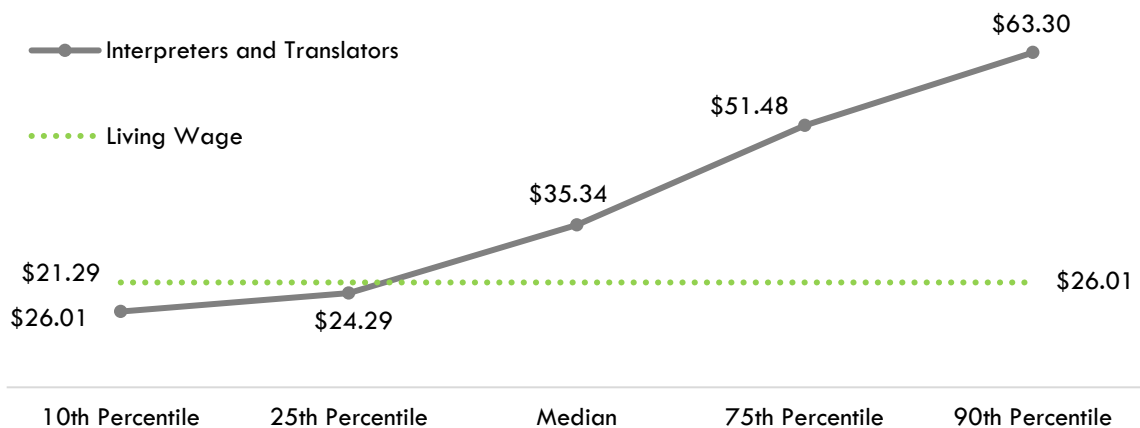
¹ The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. [bls.gov/soc](https://www.bls.gov/soc)

²Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Earnings

According to traditional labor market information (LMI), *Interpreters and Translators* had entry-level hourly earnings of \$24.29—or \$50,523.20 annual salary; this is below the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 2).^{3,4,5}

Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings for Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County^{6,7}



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

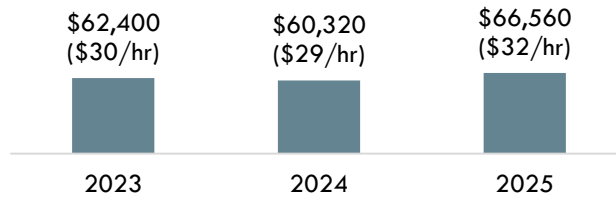
⁵ Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024. selfsufficiencystandard.org/california

⁶ 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.

⁷ Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

In online job postings, employers advertised between \$29 and \$32 per hour between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 for *Interpreters and Translators* in San Diego County (Exhibit 3). This suggests that employer-advertised wages in recent years are higher than traditional U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates.⁸

Exhibit 3: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County (2023-2025)*



*Hourly wages are rounded to the nearest dollar amount.

Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)), *Interpreters and Translators* have a national educational attainment of a [bachelor's degree](#) (Exhibit 4).⁹

Exhibit 4: National Educational Attainment for Interpreters and Translators¹⁰

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Interpreters and Translators	Bachelor's degree

⁸ Lightcast Q3 2026; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

⁹Lightcast Q3 2026; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

¹⁰Lightcast Q3 2026; 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 diploma or General Educational Development (GED) as the most requested educational requirement for *Interpreters and Translators*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 5).¹¹

Exhibit 5: Top Certifications for Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2023-2025)¹²

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance) | 4. Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) |
| 2. Top Secret Clearance | 5. National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI) |
| 3. Security Clearance | |

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 two TOP codes and three CIP codes related to *Interpreters and Translators* (Exhibit 6).¹³

Exhibit 6: Related TOP and CIP Codes for Interpreters and Translators

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 0850.10	Sign Language Interpreting
TOP 2140.00	Legal and Community Interpretation
CIP 16.0103	Language Interpretation and Translation
CIP 22.0304	Court Interpreter
CIP 16.1603	Sign Language Interpretation and Translation

¹¹ Lightcast Q3 2026; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

¹² Lightcast Q3 2026; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

¹³ This brief includes awards from all TOP and CIP codes listed in Exhibit 6.

According to TOP data, [Palomar College](#), [San Diego Mesa College](#), and [Southwestern College](#) supply the region with awards for this occupation; according to CIP data, [no](#) non-community-college institution supplies the region with awards (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7: Number of Awards Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, PY2021-22 to PY2024-25

Average

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY22-23 to PY24-25)	Other Institutions 3-Yr Average Awards (PY21-22 to PY23-24)	Total Average Supply (PY21-22 to PY24-25)
0850.10	Sign Language Interpreting	23	0	23
	Palomar College	15	0	
	• Associate degree	5	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	10	0	
	San Diego Mesa College	8	0	
	• Associate degree	4	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	4	0	
2140.00	Legal and Community Interpretation	11	0	11
	Southwestern College	11	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	5	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	6	0	
16.0103	Language Interpretation and Translation	0	0	0
22.0304	Court Interpreter	0	0	0
16.1603	Sign Language Interpretation and Translation	0	0	0
			Total	34

Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply suggests that there is a **supply gap** for this occupation in San Diego County, with **84** annual openings and **34** awards. Comparatively, there are **1,073** annual openings in California and **429** awards, suggesting that there is a **supply gap** across the state (Exhibit 8).¹⁴¹⁵

Exhibit 8: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or Oversupply
San Diego	84	34	50
California	1,073	429	644

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.

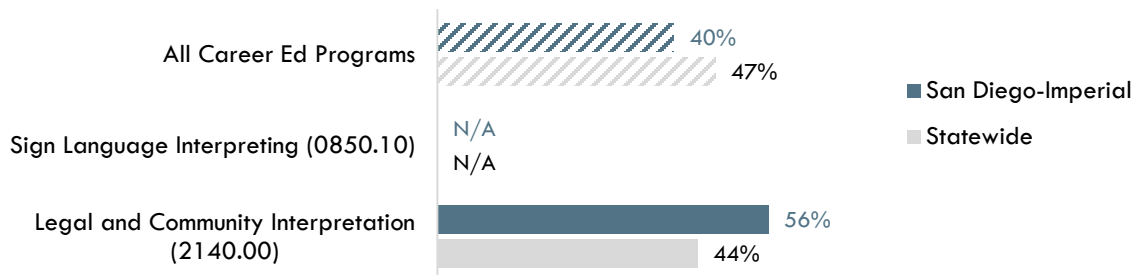
¹⁴ Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

¹⁵ "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, coeccc.net/our-resources.

Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

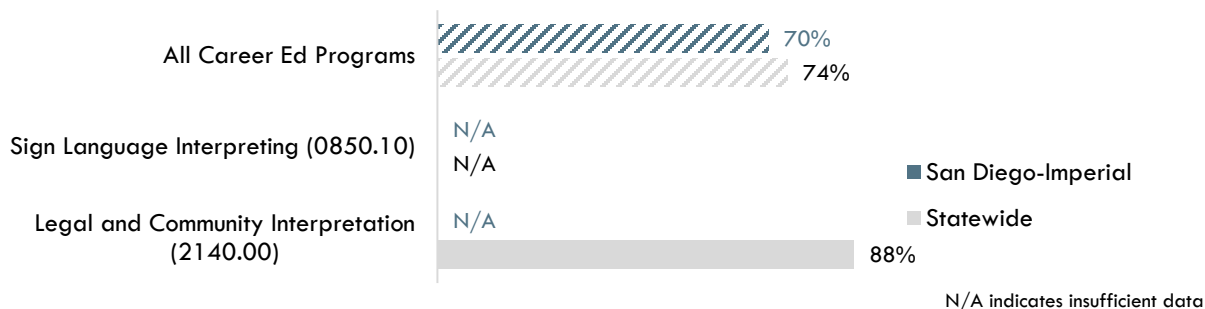
According to DataVista, **56%** of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing *Legal and Community Interpretation* (TOP 2140.00), compared to **44%** statewide. Data were insufficient for *Sign Language Interpreting* (TOP 0850.10). Comparatively, **47%** of students in Career Education programs statewide earned a living wage (Exhibit 9).¹⁶

Exhibit 9: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage, PY2022-23¹⁷



According to DataVista, **88%** of students statewide obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing *Legal and Community Interpretation* (TOP 2140.00). Regional data for that program and regional and statewide data for *Sign Language Interpreting* (TOP 0850.10) were insufficient. Comparatively, **74%** of students in Career Education programs statewide obtained a closely related job (Exhibit 10).¹⁸

Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study, PY2021-22¹⁹



¹⁶ DataVista, California Community Colleges, datavista.cccco.edu

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ DataVista, California Community Colleges, datavista.cccco.edu

¹⁹ 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 five employers in San Diego County for *Interpreters and Translators* were [Hanna Interpreting Services](#), [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#), [Leidos](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), and [San Diego Unified School District](#) based on online job postings (Exhibit 11).²⁰

Exhibit 11: Top Employers for Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County

Top Employers	
• Hanna Interpreting Services • Federal Bureau of Investigation • Leidos • International Rescue Committee • San Diego Unified School District	• Poway Unified School District • Rady Children's Hospital • San Diego County Office of Education • San Ysidro Health • San Diego Community College District

²⁰ Lightcast Q3 2026; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025.

Skills

Exhibit 12 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.²¹

Exhibit 12: Top Skills for Interpreters and Translators in San Diego County

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
• Language Interpretation • Language Translation • Bilingual (Spanish/English) • Transcribing	• English Language • Communication • Spanish Language • Professionalism • Writing • Confidentiality • Foreign Language • Multilingualism • Detail Oriented • Computer Literacy	• Microsoft Office • Microsoft Excel

²¹ Lightcast Q3 2026; "Job Posting Analytics." 2023-2025. Skills must populate in at least 10% of job postings to be listed.

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All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the California Community Colleges Centers of Excellence (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.