








Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations

Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

August 2025

Summary

NEW PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION?	EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLY GAP?	AT OR ABOVE THE LIVING WAGE?	EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATION
<div> Do Not Proceed with New Program</div>	<div> </div>	<div> </div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Associate Degree</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Certificate</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> HS Diploma or Equivalent</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less Than a HS Diploma</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship</div>
<div>SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION?</div>	<div>NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE TRAINING</div>	<div>NUMBER OF ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS</div>	
<div>The COE defers to the region</div>	<div>LOW </div>	<div>LOW </div>	

The San Diego & Imperial Center of Excellence (COE) developed this brief to assist the region’s community colleges with strategic planning and program development. *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* include “Butchers and Meat Cutters” and “Slaughterers and Meat Packers.” According to available data, *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County have a labor market demand of 260 annual job openings (while average demand for a single occupation in San Diego County is 289 annual job openings), and two institutions supply 263 awards for these occupations. Entry-level and median wages are below the living wage. This brief recommends that the colleges do not proceed with developing a new program for these occupations and defers to the region for a program modification because 1) supply is met in the region; 2) on average these occupations’ entry-level and median wages are below the living wage; 3) no formal education is necessary for these occupations.

## Introduction

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

- **Butchers and Meat Cutters** (SOC 51-3021): Cut, trim, or prepare consumer-sized portions of meat for use or sale in retail establishments.
- **Slaughterers and Meat Packers** (SOC 51-3023): Perform nonroutine or precision functions involving the preparation of large portions of meat. Work may include specialized slaughtering tasks, cutting standard or premium cuts of meat for marketing, making sausage, or wrapping meats. Work typically occurs in slaughtering, meat packing, or wholesale establishments.

For the purpose of this report, these occupations are referred to as *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations*.

## Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2023 and 2028, businesses in San Diego County will need to hire **260** 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 Butchers and Meat Cutters, which are projected to have the most annual job openings with **248** openings each year between 2023 and 2028.

**Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations (2023-2028)<sup>2</sup>**

Occupational Title	2023 Jobs	2028 Jobs	2023 - 2028 Net Jobs Change	2023 - 2028 % Net Jobs Change	Annual Job Openings (Demand)
Butchers and Meat Cutters	1,508	1,752	244	16%	248
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	89	79	-10	-11%	12
Total	1,597	1,831	234	15%	260

<sup>1</sup> 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/>.

<sup>2</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

## Earnings

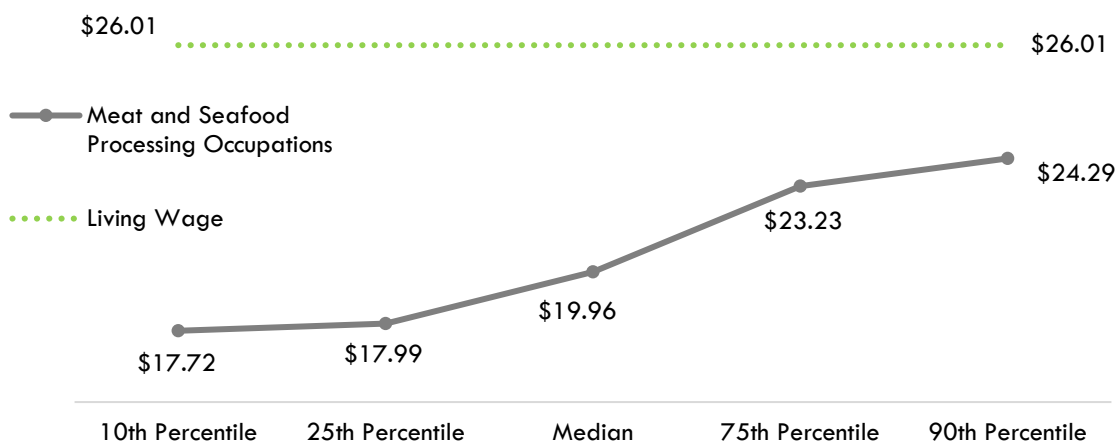
According to traditional<sup>3</sup> labor market information (LMI), entry-level hourly earnings for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* range from \$17.55 to \$18.43 (Exhibit 2).

**Exhibit 2: Hourly Earnings for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County<sup>4</sup>**

Occupational Title	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile)
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	\$18.43	\$18.48	\$19.68
Butchers and Meat Cutters	\$17.55	\$21.44	\$26.78

On average, the entry-level hourly earnings for employed *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* are \$17.99—or \$37,419.20 annual salary<sup>5</sup>; this is less than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is \$26.01 per hour (Exhibit 3).<sup>6</sup>

**Exhibit 3: Hourly Earnings<sup>7</sup> for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County<sup>8</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

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

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

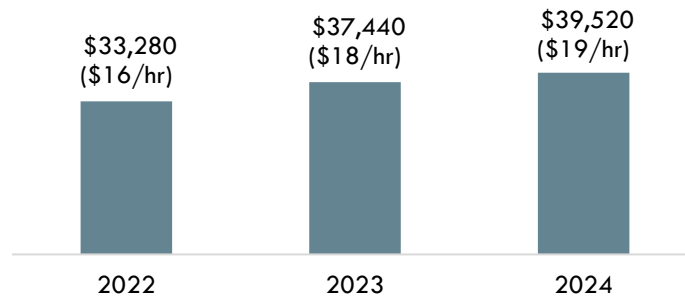
[selfsufficiencystandard.org/California](https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California).

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

In online job postings, however, employers advertised between \$16 to \$19 per hour between January 1, 2022 and December 30, 2024 for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County (Exhibit 4).<sup>9</sup> This suggests that employers in recent years are increasing wages due to labor market forces that may not be captured by traditional LMI.

**Exhibit 4: Entry-Level Advertised Salaries in Online Job Postings for  
*Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County (2022-2024)**



## Expected Level of Education

According to traditional LMI (data reported to EDD and BLS), *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* have a national educational attainment of **no formal educational credential** (Exhibit 5).<sup>10</sup>

**Exhibit 5: National Educational Attainment for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations*<sup>11</sup>**

Occupational Title	Typical Entry-Level Education
Butchers and Meat Cutters	No formal educational credential
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	No formal educational credential

<sup>9</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

<sup>10</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>11</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

Similarly, online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024 in San Diego County had a [high school diploma or GED](#) as the most requested educational requirement for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations*; however, employers also expected the following certifications (Exhibit 6).<sup>12</sup>

**Exhibit 6: Top Certifications for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations*  
in San Diego County in Online Job Postings (2022-2024)**<sup>13</sup>

1. Food Handler's Card
2. Valid Driver's License
3. ServSafe Certification

## 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 is [one](#) TOP code and [one](#) CIP code related to *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* (Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations***<sup>14</sup>

TOP or CIP Code	TOP or CIP Program Title
TOP 1306.30	Culinary Arts
CIP 12.0506	Meat Cutting/Meat Cutter

According to TOP data, [two](#) community colleges supply the region with awards for these occupations: [San Diego Mesa College](#), and [Southwestern College](#). According to CIP data, [no](#) non-community-college institutions supply the region with awards (Exhibit 8).

<sup>12</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

<sup>13</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

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

**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)
1306.30	Culinary Arts	<b>263</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>263</b>
	San Diego Cont Ed	<b>221</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Noncredit 480 < 960 hrs	16	0	
	• Noncredit 288 < 480 hrs	32	0	
	• Noncredit 192 < 288 hrs	16	0	
	• Noncredit 96 < 144 hrs	90	0	
	• Noncredit 48 < 96 hrs	67	0	
	San Diego Mesa	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	7	0	
	• Certificate 30 < 60 units	3	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	1	0	
	Southwestern	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	
	• Associate degree	10	0	
	• Certificate 16 < 30 units	6	0	
	• Certificate 8 < 16 units	6	0	
	• Certificate 6 < 18 units	9	0	
			<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>

## Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand with labor supply<sup>15</sup> suggests that supply is met for these occupations in San Diego County, with 260 annual openings and 263 awards. Comparatively, there are 3,681 annual openings in California and 1,653 awards, suggesting that there is a supply gap across the state (Exhibit 9).<sup>16</sup>

**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	260	263	-3
California	3,681	1,653	2,028

**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.

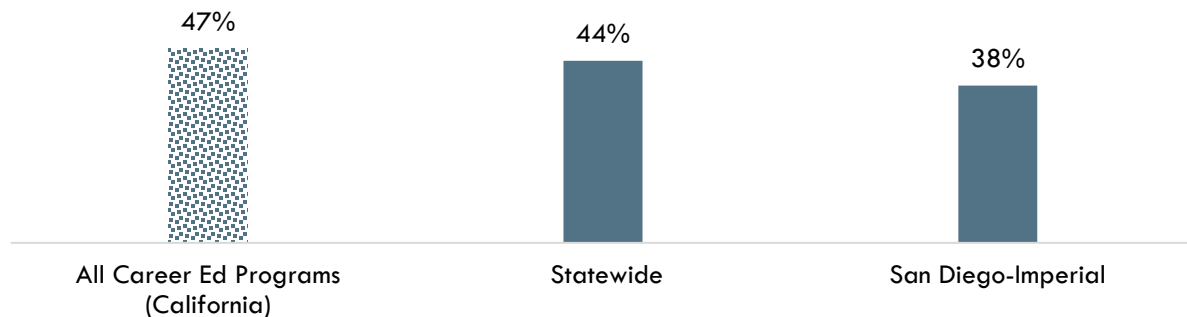
<sup>15</sup> Labor supply can be found from two different sources: Lightcast or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. Lightcast uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

<sup>16</sup> "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, [coecc.net/our-resources](http://coecc.net/our-resources).

## Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

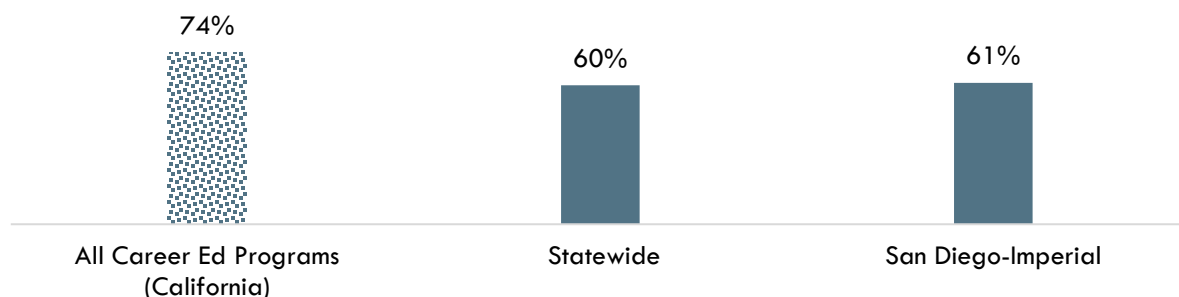
According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 38% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing Culinary Arts (TOP 1306.30) program, compared to 44% statewide and 47% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 10).<sup>17</sup>

**Exhibit 10: Percentage of Students Who Earned a Living Wage (Culinary Arts, PY2022-23)<sup>18</sup>**



According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 61% of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a Culinary Arts (TOP 1306.30) program, compared to 60% statewide and 74% of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 11).<sup>19</sup>

**Exhibit 11: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study (Culinary Arts, PY2021-22)<sup>20</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> DataVista, California Community Colleges, [datavista.cccco.edu/](http://datavista.cccco.edu/).

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> DataVista, California Community Colleges, [datavista.cccco.edu/](http://datavista.cccco.edu/).

<sup>20</sup> 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, 2022 and December 31, 2024, the top five employers in San Diego County for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* were [Restaurant Depot](#), [El Super](#), [Walmart](#), [Vallarta Supermarkets](#), and [Valley View Casino & Hotel](#) based on online job postings (Exhibit 12).

**Exhibit 12: Top Employers for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County<sup>21</sup>**

Top Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restaurant Depot</li><li>• El Super</li><li>• Walmart</li><li>• Vallarta Supermarkets</li><li>• Valley View Casino &amp; Hotel</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rancho Bernardo Inn</li><li>• Mission Linen Supply</li><li>• 99 Ranch Market</li><li>• Sodexo</li><li>• Costco</li></ul>

## Skills

Exhibit 13 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024.

**Exhibit 13: Top Skills for *Meat and Seafood Processing Occupations* in San Diego County<sup>22</sup>**

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food Safety And Sanitation</li><li>• Restaurant Operation</li><li>• Seafood Preparation</li><li>• Cooking</li><li>• Meat Cutting</li><li>• Merchandising</li><li>• Warehousing</li><li>• Pallet Jacks</li><li>• Meat Products</li><li>• Hazard Analysis And Critical Control Points (HACCP)</li><li>• Poultry</li><li>• Selling Techniques</li><li>• Food Services</li><li>• Palletizing</li><li>• Stocking Merchandise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customer Service</li><li>• Cleanliness</li><li>• Sanitation</li><li>• Communication</li><li>• Sales</li><li>• Management</li><li>• Packaging And Labeling</li><li>• Lifting Ability</li><li>• Positivity</li><li>• Operations</li><li>• Mathematics</li><li>• English Language</li><li>• Fine Motor Skills</li><li>• Detail Oriented</li><li>• Quality Control</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• N/A</li></ul>

<sup>21</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

<sup>22</sup> Lightcast 2025.02; "Job Posting Analytics." 2022-2024.

Prepared by:

Tina Ngo Bartel, Executive Director ([tngobartel@miracosta.edu](mailto:tngobartel@miracosta.edu))

Christine Timbol Larson, Associate Director ([ctimbollarson@miracosta.edu](mailto:ctimbollarson@miracosta.edu))

John Edwards, Research Analyst ([jedwards@miracosta.edu](mailto:jedwards@miracosta.edu))

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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 Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research (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.