

2025 FUTURE IMPACT OCCUPATIONS

Connecting Talent to Opportunity

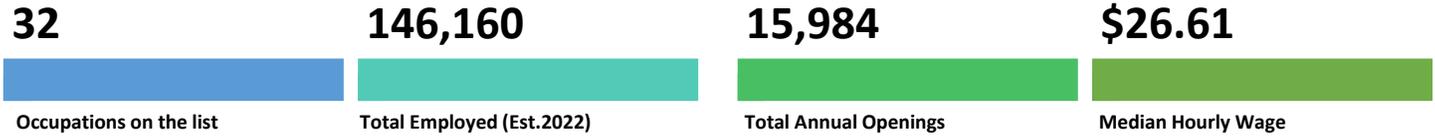
Abstract

This report pinpoints 32 high-demand, high-opportunity occupations that do not require a four-year college degree. Representing almost 16,000 annual job openings and a median hourly wage of \$26.61, these roles offer not just a job, but a family-sustaining career. From the Skilled Trades to Healthcare and Business Services, this research serves as a critical resource for job seekers planning their future, for educators developing relevant training, and for policymakers investing in a stronger, more resilient regional workforce.

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Introduction: Purpose and Rationale

This research introduces the 2025 Future Impact Occupations (FIO) list, a strategic guide to high-opportunity occupations with accessible levels of education and training. The list is designed to guide workforce investment toward careers that offer family-sustaining wages and clear pathways for economic advancement for Philadelphians. For the purpose of this report, an "accessible" occupation is defined as one that does not require a four-year bachelor's degree for entry.



The FIO list is the result of a rigorous analysis combining regional wage data with official long-term occupational projections. The primary data source for employment demand is the "2022-2032 Long-Term Projections" for the Philadelphia County Workforce Development Area (WDA), published by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA). To understand the context in which the FIO list was developed, it is helpful to first examine the high-level trends shaping Philadelphia's labor market. The chart below provides a snapshot of major occupational groups, illustrating their projected growth and average wages.

Job Growth Rate & Avg. Hourly Earnings By Occupation

In Philadelphia, data pulled in July 2025

	2025 Jobs	% Change (2021-2025)	Avg. Hourly Earnings
Management Occupations	60152	31%	\$71
Legal Occupations	13314	4%	\$67
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	21599	8%	\$52
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	70262	6%	\$51
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	9947	6%	\$48
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	50543	5%	\$46
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	10388	18%	\$45
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	74147	12%	\$39
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	11261	7%	\$37
Military-only occupations	1816	-14%	\$35
Construction and Extraction Occupations	13251	7%	\$35
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	18526	-1%	\$32
Protective Service Occupations	27555	5%	\$31
Community and Social Service Occupations	22481	12%	\$30
Sales and Related Occupations	37768	-8%	\$28
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	46402	5%	\$28
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	87256	-7%	\$26
Production Occupations	16423	6%	\$25
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	585	58%	\$21
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	17570	10%	\$20
Personal Care and Service Occupations	19797	20%	\$19
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	60106	28%	\$19
Healthcare Support Occupations	80070	34%	\$17

Source: SOC Code & Lightcast • Created with [Datwrpper](#)

According to Lightcast, occupational groups like **Management (+31%)**, **Computer and Mathematical (+8%)**, and **Healthcare Practitioners (+6%)** continue to expand while offering some of the highest average wages in the region (\$71, \$52, and \$51, respectively). While many roles in these fields require advanced degrees, their strength validates our strategy of identifying accessible, high-paying occupations within them, such as Computer User Support Specialists.

Furthermore, the foundation of Philadelphia's economy rests on large, stable, middle-skill sectors. **Construction and Extraction (+7%, \$35/hr)** and **Transportation and Material Moving (+5%, \$28/hr)** show solid growth and offer family-sustaining wages. This data strongly supports the FIO list's focus on essential roles, such as Electricians, Plumbers, and Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers as vital pathways to the middle class.

Finally, two of the largest employment sectors, **Office and Administrative Support** and **Sales and Related Occupations**, are projected to shrink (-7% and -8% respectively). However, they continue to offer wages at or above the self-sufficiency threshold (\$26 and \$28). This validates the FIO list's "Consistent Demand" category, which correctly identifies that even in declining sectors, replacement needs to create thousands of annual openings for roles like Office Clerks and Supervisors. Ignoring these occupations would mean overlooking some of the largest sources of employment for Philadelphians.

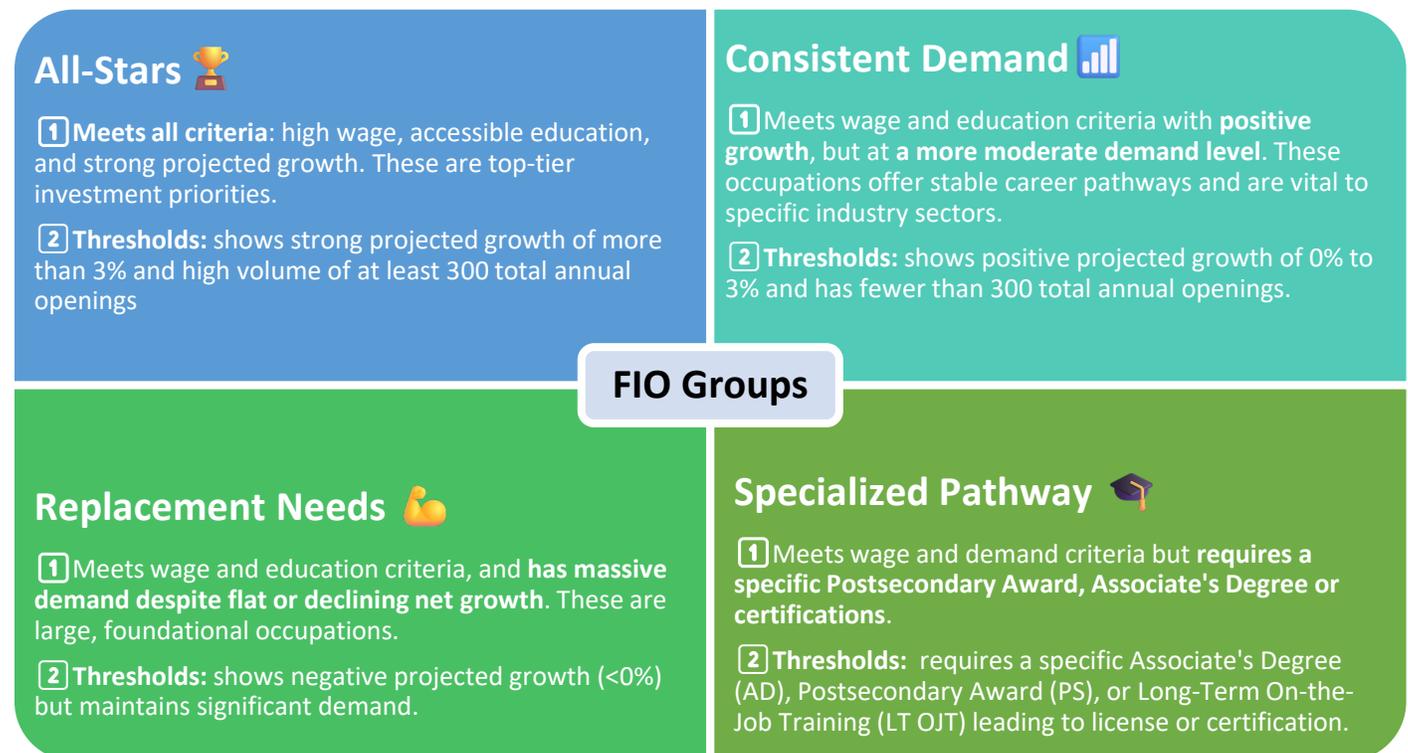
Selection Methodology

An occupation must meet three core criteria to be included on the FIO list, with a fourth criterion used to validate alignment with state priorities.

- **Criterion 1: Family-Sustaining Wage.** The occupation must offer a **median wage of at least \$20.00 per hour**. This threshold is selected to align with regional living wage estimates and identifies roles with wages capable of supporting a family, a core goal of the public workforce system.
- **Criterion 2: Low Barrier to Entry (Accessible for Education & Training).** The occupation's typical entry-level education **must be an Associate's degree or less** to minimize barrier to entry. This focuses on occupations accessible to the majority of CareerLink® customers, emphasizing pathways that do not require a four-year university degree. Educational levels are defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).
- **Criterion 3: Verified Regional Demand.** The occupation must demonstrate significant and **sustained demand within the Philadelphia WDA**. Crucially, this methodology uses **Total Annual Openings**, a metric from the CWIA that includes new jobs from growth and openings from worker replacements (e.g., retirements, career changes). Occupations must show either:
 - A) Potential Growth: **Projected positive** employment growth and at least 50 total annual openings.
 - B) Sustained Demand: Projected employment **decline but maintains at least 30 total annual openings** due to high replacement needs.
- **Criterion 4: State Priority Alignment.** After meeting local criteria, the occupation is cross-referenced with the state's **High Priority Occupations (HPO) list** published by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry¹. This ensures our local strategy is synchronized with state funding streams and economic development goals.

Future Impact Occupations Groups

Based on the selection methodology, the 32 Future Impact Occupations are organized into the following groups to highlight the rationale for their selection.



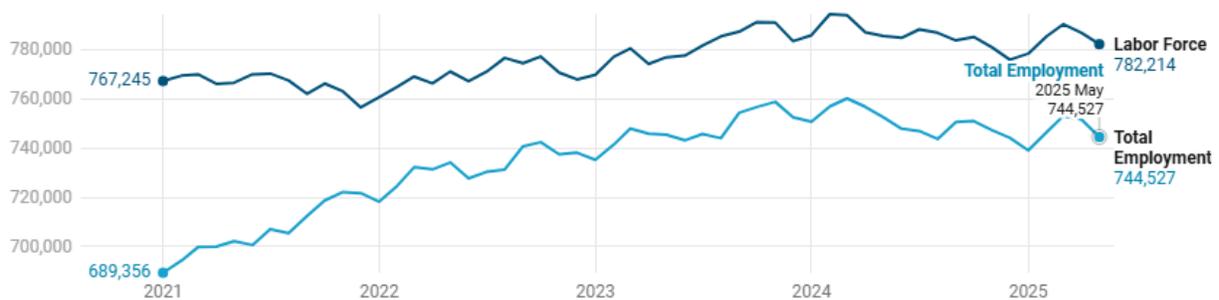
¹ [High Priority Occupations \(HPOs\)](#)

Justification for the Family-Sustaining Wage Criterion (\geq \$20/hr)

The wage floor is the cornerstone of the FIO list, ensuring that public investment is directed toward jobs that provide economic stability. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the guiding legislation for the public workforce system, mandates a focus on employment that leads to "economic self-sufficiency"². While WIOA does not set a specific dollar amount, the principle requires moving beyond minimum wage to a threshold that allows individuals to meet their basic needs without public assistance.

Labor Force and Employment in Philadelphia

From 2021 to 2025



Source: Census ACS 1-year Estimates 2023

The \$20 per hour threshold serves as a data-informed proxy for a self-sufficiency wage in Philadelphia County. This figure is substantiated by economic models like the **MIT Living Wage Calculator**³, which estimates the hourly rate an individual must earn to support themselves and their family, considering local costs for food, housing, transportation, and healthcare. For Philadelphia County, the 2024 living wage estimate for a single adult is well over this threshold, making \$20/hr a reasonable and necessary minimum for an occupation to be considered "family-sustaining". Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Commerce have established "Good Jobs Principles," which identify "Pay" as the first and most foundational component of a quality job. By setting a robust wage floor, the FIO list directly aligns with this federal priority to promote not just any job, but a good job.

Justification for the Accessible Education Criterion (\leq Associate's Degree)

The strategy to prioritize roles not requiring a bachelor's degree is a direct response to the educational attainment levels of Philadelphia's residents.

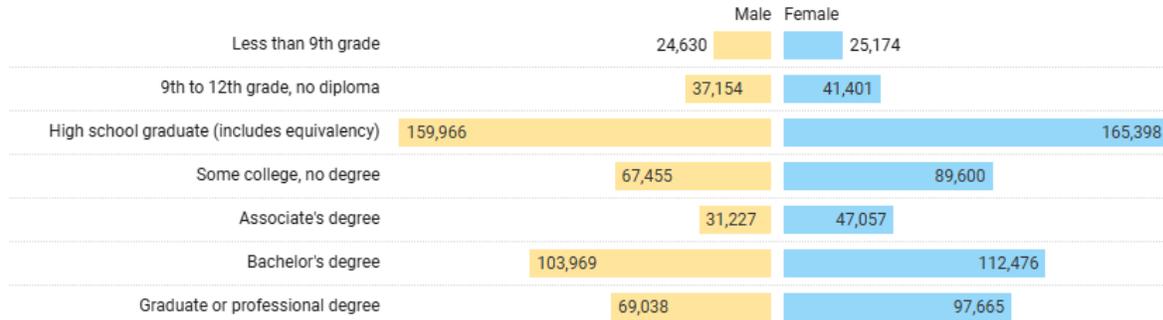
² [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#)

³ [Living Wage Calculator](#)

Education Attainment By Gender in Philadelphia

Population 25 years and over

Male Female

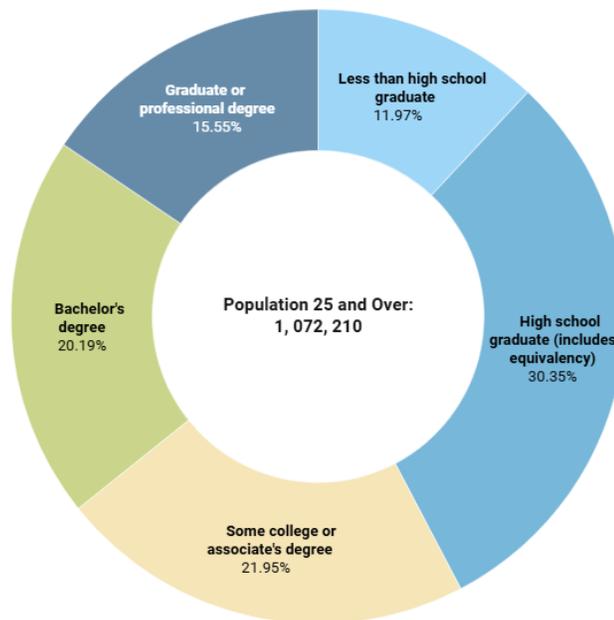


Source: Census ACS 1-Year • Created with Datawrapper

According to the latest U.S. Census data, nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of Philadelphia's adult population hold an associate's degree or less. This includes:

- **12% of residents (over 128,000 individuals)** with less than a high school diploma, for whom access to quality employment is significantly limited.
- **30% of residents (over 325,000 individuals)** with a high school diploma or equivalent, representing a substantial workforce pool positioned to benefit from career pathways that provide family-sustaining wages without requiring a four-year degree.
- **22% of residents (over 235,000 individuals)** have completed some college or earned an associate's degree. This demographic is a critical opportunity area for targeted workforce development, as they are primed for roles that require modest additional investment in skills training.

Educational Attainment for Adults (Ages 25+) in Philadelphia



Source: Census ACS 1-Year • Created with Datawrapper

This data reinforces the national focus on "middle-skill" jobs, which require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree⁴. These roles are critical for economic mobility, and the FIO list is designed to illuminate these high-opportunity pathways. The educational levels used in this analysis (PS, MT OJT, AD, etc.) are the official classifications from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)⁵⁶. Using this national standard ensures our methodology is consistent, comparable, and grounded in a rigorous, well-documented system.

Justification for the Verified Regional Demand Criterion (Projections and Total Annual Openings)

Focusing only on "net employment growth" is a common but misleading analytical error. It ignores the largest source of job openings in most occupations⁷: replacement needs, workers retire, change careers, or leave the labor force for other reasons, creating vacancies that must be filled. The "Consistent Demand" category is built on this principle, correctly identifying large, stable occupations (like Office Clerks) that may be slightly declining in size but still generate thousands of openings annually.

The demand projections are sourced directly from the PA Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA). As defined by CWIA, Total Annual Openings = (Demand from Growth) + (Demand from Exits) + (Demand from Transfers). This comprehensive metric⁶ provides the most accurate forecast of the number of positions that will need to be filled, making it the most reliable data point for strategic workforce planning.

⁴ [The Future of Middle-Skill Jobs](#)

⁵ [Education and training assignments by detailed occupation](#)

⁶ [Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections Methodology](#)

⁷ [Employment Projections: Concepts](#)

List: All-Stars 🏆 (8 Occupations)

Criteria: High demand (≥300 annual openings), good median wage, positive projected growth and accessible education.

Group	SOC Code	Occupation Title	Median Wage	Annual Demand	Projection (% Change)	Education	HPO	Turnover Rate	Replacement Rate
	31-1131	Nursing Assistants	\$20.96	1,759	+5.9%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	59.4%	14.0%
	53-7062	Laborers & Freight/Stock/Material Movers	\$20.73	1,608	+2.8%	ST OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	94.4%	12.9%
	49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	\$26.04	644	+3.2%	MT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	39.0%	9.0%
	35-1012	Supervisors of Food Preparation & Serving Workers	\$21.83	622	+1.9%	WK EXP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	46.8%	14.3%
	31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$22.17	562	+12.0%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	40.6%	12.8%
	21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	\$22.31	468	+6.9%	ST OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	53.7%	10.0%
	53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	\$29.10	438	+1.2%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	54.6%	10.2%
	41-3091	Sales Representatives, Services	\$38.66	345	+2.8%	MT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	49.4%	9.5%

List: Consistent Demand 📊 (8 Occupations)

Criteria: Lower demand (<300 annual openings) but stable or positive growth (>0%) with a decent wage.

Group	SOC Code	Occupation Title	Median Wage	Annual Demand	Projection (% Change)	Education	HPO	Turnover Rate	Replacement Rate
	43-6013	Medical Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	\$23.15	293	6.20%	MT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	25.1%	9.9%
	43-4061	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	\$28.88	273	4.80%	MT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	32.9%	8.4%
	15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	\$32.43	235	0.90%	PS+	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	36.7%	6.3%
	49-1011	Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers & Repairers	\$41.11	165	3.70%	WK EXP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26.6%	7.9%
	31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$25.04	160	4.50%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	56.8%	13.2%
	47-1011	Supervisors of Construction & Extraction Workers	\$48.60	122	3.40%	WK EXP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	38.1%	7.6%
	49-9021	HVAC Mechanics & Installers	\$32.64	89	4.00%	PS+		57.3%	8.3%
	49-2022	Telecommunications Equipment Installers	\$35.21	71	6.30%	PS+	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13.8%	9.4%

List: Replacement Needs 🧑 (6 Occupations)

Criteria: Negative future growth (<0%) but high annual demand due to replacements.

Group	SOC Code	Occupation Title	Median Wage	Annual Demand	Projection (% Change)	Education	HPO	Turn over Rate	Repl acem ent Rate
	43-9061	Office Clerks, General	\$23.22	2,055	-6.20%	ST OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	44.3 %	11.6 %
	43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	\$23.45	1,426	-6.20%	ST OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	60.0 %	13.2 %
	43-6014	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	\$23.86	887	-12.30%	ST OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	34.7 %	10.9 %
	43-1011	Supervisors of Office & Admin Support Workers	\$35.24	818	-5.90%	WK EXP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	30.3 %	9.4%
	43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks	\$26.40	681	-5.80%	PS+	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33.3 %	11.3 %
	41-1011	Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	\$24.19	416	-7.50%	WK EXP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	40.7 %	9.8%

List: Specialized Pathway  (10 Occupations)

Criteria: Stable demand and good median wage but require an Associate's Degree, formal license, certification, or long-term OJT (apprenticeship).

Group	SOC Code	Occupation Title	Median Wage	Annual Demand	Projection (% Change)	Education	HPO	Turn over Rate	Repl acem ent Rate
	23-2011	Paralegals & Legal Assistants	\$34.17	402	4.60%	AD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26.9 %	10.0 %
	29-2061	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$33.35	367	6.20%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	48.2 %	7.9%
	29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$20.79	305	6.80%	MT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	51.0 %	9.2%
	49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	\$27.58	184	0%	PS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50.0 %	8.2%
	47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	\$40.72	146	1.20%	LT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	56.0 %	8.4%
	47-2111	Electricians	\$38.37	129	4.30%	LT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	49.0 %	8.7%
	31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	\$31.80	91	25.50%	AD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	70.3 %	14.7 %
	29-2034	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	\$37.93	90	1.80%	AD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	22.9 %	5.1%
	49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$32.59	80	12.90%	LT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	32.1 %	7.7%
	49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	\$31.21	53	0%	LT OJT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	41.8 %	8.1%

The occupations in the Specialized Pathway group are defined by their mandatory and rigorous entry occupational requirements, which go far beyond a high school diploma. For healthcare roles, state licensure is

universally required. Licensed Practical Nurses must pass the national NCLEX-PN exam, Physical Therapist Assistants need to pass the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE), and Radiologic Technologists require certification from the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) to practice in most states⁸. Similarly, Pharmacy Technicians in many states must earn certification from bodies like the PTCB and register with the state board of pharmacy⁹.

In the skilled trades, the path is equally structured, centered on formal apprenticeships and state licensing. Electricians and Plumbers must complete multi-year apprenticeships¹⁰—often involving 8,000 hours of on-the-job training—before they can even sit for a state journeyman license exam¹¹. For vehicle-focused careers, while state licensure is less common, professional certification is the industry standard. Automotive, Bus, and Truck Mechanics demonstrate their competence through a series of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)¹² certifications, which are often required by employers. Even roles like Paralegals, while not always licensed at the state level, rely heavily on voluntary certifications from associations like NALA to validate their skills and secure employment. Finally, Industrial Machinery Mechanics often pursue specialized credentials, such as those from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)¹³, to validate their expertise in complex industrial systems.

Industry Cluster

This analysis maps the 32 unique Future Impact Occupations to their core industry clusters, preserving the strategic FIO groupings.

⁸ [How to Become a Licensed Practical Nurse](#)

⁹ [Certified Pharmacy Technician \(CPhT\)](#)

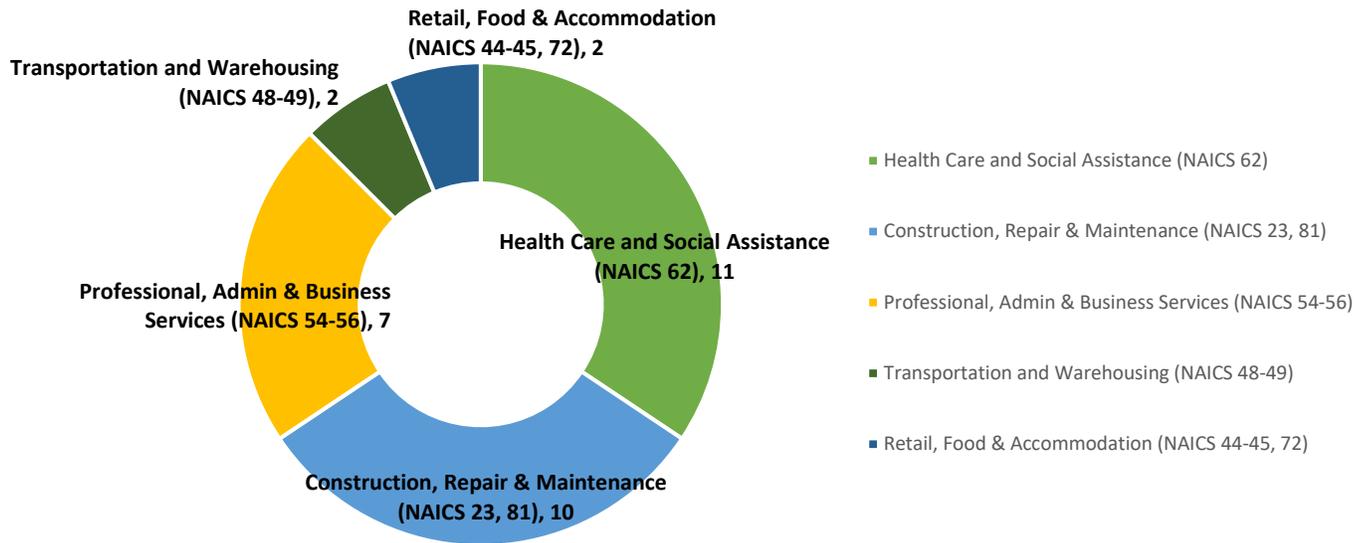
¹⁰ [Electrician Licensing & Certification](#)

¹¹ [Get a Journeyman Plumber License](#)

¹² [ASE Certifications](#)

¹³ <https://www.nccer.org/>

Future Impact Occupations By Industry Cluster (NAICS)



First, **Health Care & Social Assistance (NAICS 62)** is the undeniable leader, accounting for over a third (34.4%) of all high-demand occupations. Second, the **Construction, Repair & Maintenance (NAICS 23 & 81)** cluster represents the economy's high-skill, high-wage backbone, making up nearly another third (31.3%) of opportunities. Together, these two sectors—Health Care and Skilled Trades—represent two-thirds of the region's most promising career paths and should be the primary focus for workforce development investment.

The remaining clusters tell an important story about economic stability and career progression. **Professional & Administrative Services** is defined by high-volume, high-turnover roles that serve as crucial entry points into the workforce, while **Transportation & Warehousing** and **Retail/Food Supervision** offer accessible, foundational jobs that keep the economy moving and provide pathways into management.

Conclusion

This research identifies a clear, actionable, and vital segment of the regional economy. The key takeaway is twofold: the demand for skilled workers in accessible occupations is both significant and concentrated. The concentration of these roles in the **Skilled Trades, Healthcare, and Professional Services sectors** provides a clear roadmap for strategic action. For educators and training providers, this data validates the need to build and scale programs that feed these specific talent pipelines. For policymakers and economic developers, it highlights where to focus investment, support, and public awareness campaigns. For students and job seekers, it serves as a practical guide to rewarding careers that are in high demand now and will remain so into the future.