

Supply and Demand for Middle-Skill Occupations in Rural California in 2018–20

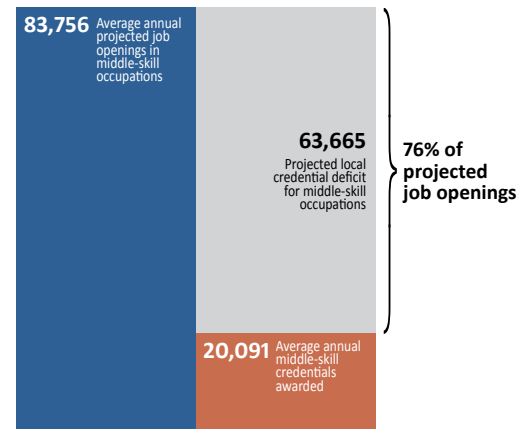
This study focuses on the alignment of middle-skill workforce supply and occupational demand across four rural regions in California to help stakeholders strengthen the economy in rural parts of the state. The four rural regions in the study are Central Valley and Mother Lode North, Central Valley and Mother Lode South, Northern Coastal, and Northern Inland. The study used the most recent federal data available to calculate descriptive statistics on projected job openings, projected job growth rate, wage ranges and living wage status, and middle-skill credentials (subbaccalaureate credentials such as associate degrees and certificates that are awarded by a postsecondary institution and aligned with a middle-skill occupation).

Key findings

- **Across the four regions combined, nearly 84,000 job openings in middle-skill occupations were projected for each year in 2018–20, or about 31 percent of all job openings in the four regions.** These openings were to fill new jobs and replace workers who retire, change jobs, or otherwise leave their jobs.
- **Each year in 2014/15–2016/17, postsecondary institutions in the four regions awarded enough credentials to fill only 24 percent of the projected job openings in middle-skill occupations in 2018–20.** Postsecondary institutions in the four regions combined awarded an average of 20,091 middle-skill credentials each year over 2014/15–2016/17.
- **If that rate persists, there will be a 76 percent deficit in local credentials needed to fill the average annual projected job openings in middle-skill occupations in 2018–20 (see figure).**¹ Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers might consider developing career pathways in middle-skill occupations with a local credential deficit and communicating the job opportunities in those occupations and descriptions of the credential pathways that lead to those jobs.
- **Most middle-skill occupations in the four regions combined were projected to grow and paid a living wage at entry level.** About 70 percent of middle-skill occupations in these regions were projected to have positive job growth, and 79 percent of job openings for middle-skill occupations each year paid a living wage for a single adult. Postsecondary institutions in the four study regions might want to identify opportunities to prepare more students for credentials in programs related to those occupations.

1. The number of credentials awarded may overestimate the labor supply and underestimate the gap between demand and supply because individuals can be awarded more than one credential.

Based on historical trends, the majority of job openings in middle-skill occupations in four rural regions of California were not projected to be filled by locally credentialed workers



Source: Authors' analysis of data from Economic Modeling Specialists International, Datarun 2018.4, and the National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, U.S. Department of Education, retrieved April 16, 2020, from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>.