

# Labor Market Analysis for Program Review:

## Arborists in the Far North

Prepared by the North Far North Center of Excellence  
January 2026



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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR LABOR MARKET RESEARCH  
NORTH FAR NORTH

# Summary

The North Far North Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (NFN COE) prepared this report to provide an analysis of occupational demand and educational supply for selected occupations employed across the 22-county North Far North region. This report aims to determine if demand in the local labor market is unmet by the supply from existing community college programs and other postsecondary training providers, with a primary focus on training that leads to living wage jobs in middle-skilled occupations.<sup>1</sup>

## Key Findings

- **Arborist occupations have job growth in the Far North subregion that is on par with growth in the rest of California.** In both California and the Far North subregion, jobs for arborist occupations are growing at a rate of 2% annually.
- **Eighty-five percent of annual openings are for Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, which has entry-level wages below the living wage.** Entry-level wages are \$16.04 per hour for Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, which is below the living wage for a single working adult in Butte's community college district of \$16.77 per hour.
- **The majority of those in arborist occupations have a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment.** Between 52% and 71% of those in arborist occupations had a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment.
- **There is a significant supply gap for utility arborists.** There are 685 annual job openings and an average of only 2 annual awards.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings, the North Far North COE recommends that community colleges **proceed with caution** in creating new programs related to Arborists. Key considerations include:

- There is a significant supply gap, with only 2 annual awards from related programs at community colleges in the region and 685 annual job openings.
- Training beyond a high school diploma is not typically required for employment in arborist occupations. While community colleges tend to focus on middle-skill occupations, there are opportunities within Adult Education and contract education to offer training towards occupations that community colleges may not typically focus on.
- Most of the annual job openings are for Landscaping and Groundskeeping workers, which have entry-level wages below the living wage. Programs for Arborists should ensure that the education they provide equips students with the experience and qualifications necessary to pursue openings for First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers, or Tree Trimmers and Pruners, such as by fulfilling educational qualifications for arborist certifications.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to California Education Code §78015, labor market information (LMI) is required for all new career education certificate and degree program proposals, and the North Far North Regional Consortium (NFNRC) requires LMI to come from the NFN COE. This report should serve to satisfy those requirements.

# Introduction

The North Far North Center of Excellence (COE) was asked to provide labor market data to support a proposed new career education program or modifications to existing programs at a regional community college (see Appendix A for methodology and data sources).

This report focuses on the following Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) occupations and codes:

- Tree Trimmers and Pruners (37-3013)
- Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers (37-3011)
- First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers (37-1012)

A review of related programs revealed the following Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) title(s) and code(s) are appropriate for inclusion in this report:

- Landscape Design and Maintenance (0109.10)

The corresponding Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) title(s) and code(s) are:

- Applied Horticulture/Horticulture Operations, General (01.0601)
- Urban Forestry (03.0508)

# Occupational Demand

Exhibit 1 summarizes the five-year projected job growth for the targeted occupational groups in the Far North subregion, the 22-county North Far North region, and California.<sup>2</sup>

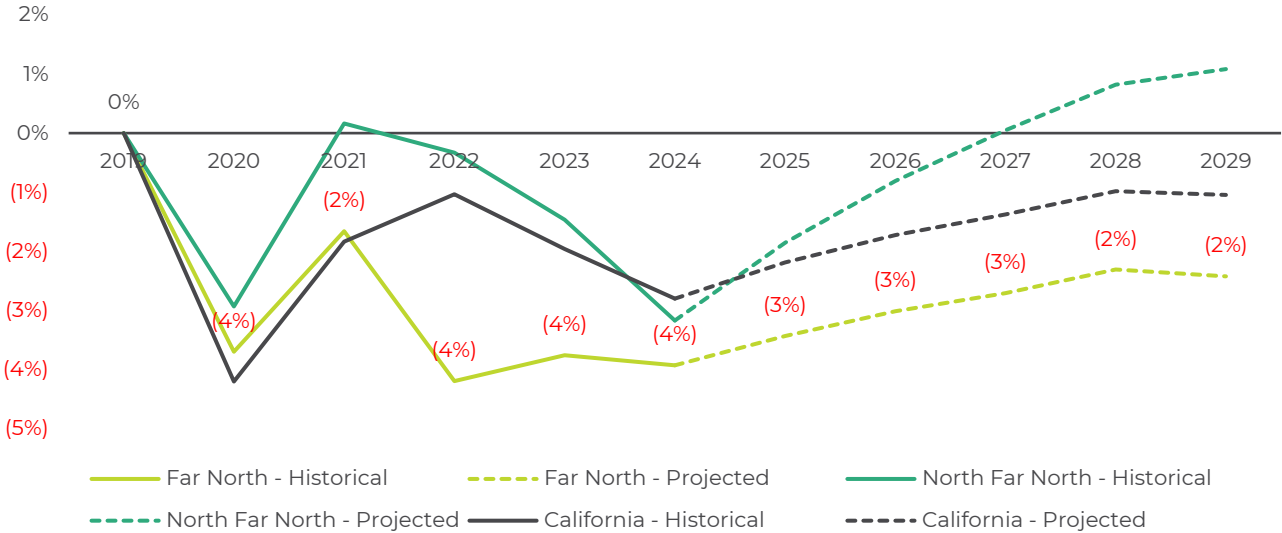
**Exhibit 1. Current employment and projected occupational demand, 2024-2029**

| Occupational Group  | 2024 Jobs      | 2024-2029 Change | 2024-2029 % Change | 2024-2029 Annual Openings |
|---|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers | 460            | 465              | 1%                 | 53                        |
| Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers  | 4,211          | 4,275            | 2%                 | 582                       |
| Tree Trimmers and Pruners   | 368            | 378              | 3%                 | 50                        |
| <b>Far North</b>  | <b>5,039</b>   | <b>5,118</b>     | <b>2%</b>          | <b>685</b>                |
| First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers | 2,059          | 2,153            | 5%                 | 243                       |
| Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers  | 15,963         | 16,664           | 4%                 | 2,281                     |
| Tree Trimmers and Pruners   | 1,561          | 1,626            | 4%                 | 212                       |
| <b>North Far North</b>  | <b>19,583</b>  | <b>20,443</b>    | <b>4%</b>          | <b>2,736</b>              |
| First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers | 21,220         | 21,565           | 2%                 | 2,374                     |
| Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers  | 156,636        | 159,543          | 2%                 | 21,573                    |
| Tree Trimmers and Pruners   | 11,429         | 11,593           | 1%                 | 1,495                     |
| <b>California</b>   | <b>189,285</b> | <b>192,701</b>   | <b>2%</b>          | <b>25,442</b>             |

<sup>2</sup> The 22-county North Far North is a dual region. It is represented by the North (Greater Sacramento) subregion that covers seven counties, including El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba, and the 15-county Far North subregion which includes Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity.

Exhibit 2 compares historical and projected annual change in employment for the period 2019 to 2029 with the base number of jobs in 2019 for the Far North subregion, the 22-county North Far North region, and California.

**Exhibit 2. Changes in employment, 2019-2029**

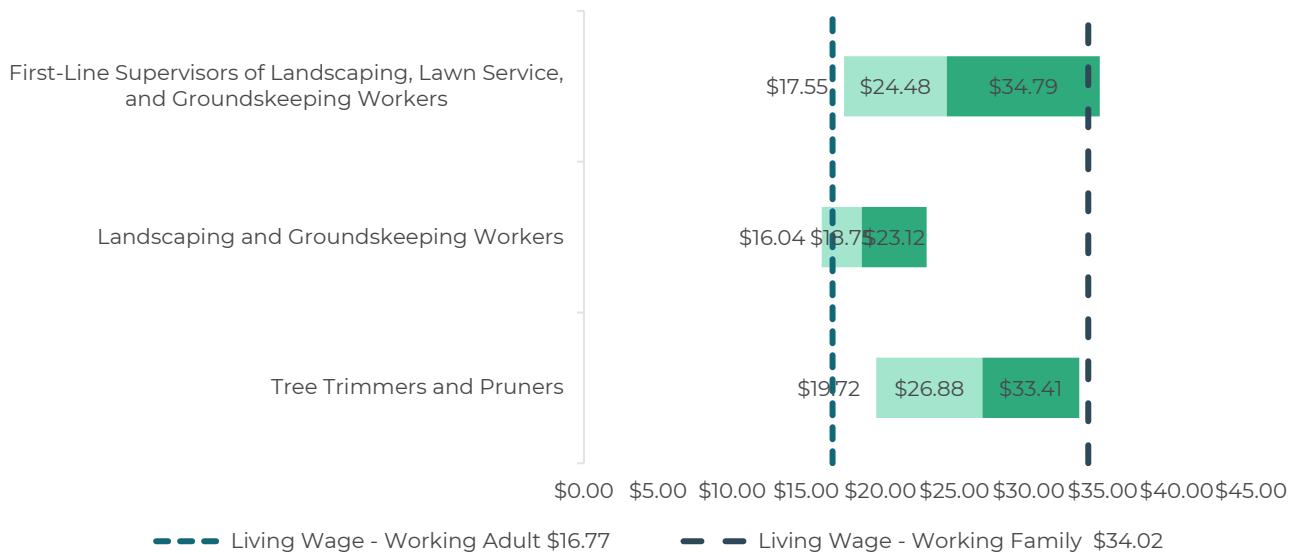


# Earnings

Exhibit 3 compares the percentile hourly earnings for the selected occupations to the living wage for a single working adult and a working family residing in the county of the community college district that requested this report.<sup>3,4</sup> Earnings data includes wages from employed and self-employed workers. Also, it's important to note that living wage thresholds vary by county, and in the Far North subregion, range from \$14 to \$17 per hour for a single working adult.

**Exhibit 3. Hourly earnings compared to the community college district's living wage**

| Requesting College | Living Wage – Working Adult | Living Wage – Working Family |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Butte College      | \$16.77                     | \$34.02                      |



<sup>3</sup> A “living wage” is defined as the level of income one working adult with no children must earn to meet basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, healthcare, taxes, and other miscellaneous basic needs. Please note that the 25th-percentile and 75th-percentile hourly wages are used as proxies for entry-level and experienced-level wages.

<sup>4</sup> A “working family” is defined as one working adult and one infant (between the ages of 0 and 2 years).

## Job Postings

Analysis of online job postings can offer additional insights into recent labor market changes not reflected in historical trends. However, it is important to note that job postings do not equate to actual labor market demand, which is based on projected annual job openings.

There are several limitations to interpreting online job postings. Employers may repost the same position multiple times to attract more applicants, or job postings may remain active even if the position is no longer being filled. Additionally, a single job posting can be used to hire for multiple openings, and not all job opportunities are advertised online. Despite these limitations, job posting analyses can be valuable for guiding community college curriculum development and identifying potential employers for targeted experiential learning opportunities.

The North Far North COE identified 413 online job postings for the selected occupations across the Far North subregion. Job posting data comes from and represents unique advertisements posted online during the last 12 months, from January 2025 to December 2025.

**Exhibit 4. Job postings by occupation**

| Occupation  | Number of Job Postings | Share of Postings | Median Advertised Salary |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers | 30                     | 7%                | \$26.95                  |
| Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers  | 262                    | 63%               | \$22.40                  |
| Tree Trimmers and Pruners   | 121                    | 30%               | \$42.95                  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>413</b>             | <b>100%</b>       | <b>\$24.98</b>           |

### ***Top employers***

Exhibit 5 shows the employers with the most job postings for the selected occupations across the Far North subregion.

**Exhibit 5. Employers with the most job postings**

| Employer                     | Number of Job Postings |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Wright Tree Service          | 32                     |
| ACRT Pacific                 | 29                     |
| State of California          | 11                     |
| Clear Path Utility Solutions | 10                     |
| Jensen Landscape Services    | 8                      |
| Shasta College               | 5                      |

| Employer                | Number of Job Postings |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Branching Out Tree Care | 5                      |
| Arborworks              | 5                      |
| PG&E                    | 4                      |
| Lawns R Us Landscaping  | 4                      |

### ***Top titles***

Exhibit 6 shows the job titles with the most job postings for the selected occupations across the Far North subregion.

**Exhibit 6. Job titles with the most job postings**

| Job title                      | Number of Job Postings |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Groundskeepers                 | 34                     |
| Tree Trimmers                  | 16                     |
| Landscape Maintenance Managers | 15                     |
| Plant Inspectors               | 12                     |
| Arborists                      | 11                     |
| Landscape Maintenance Workers  | 11                     |
| Trimmers/Climbers              | 9                      |
| Landscape Gardeners            | 9                      |
| Landscape Crew Members         | 8                      |
| Landscapers                    | 8                      |

### ***Skills and qualifications***

Exhibit 7 shows the most requested certifications along with the median hourly salary for job postings requesting that certification. The ISA Certified Arborist credential requires three years of experience or two years in conjunction with an associate degree, while the Certified Arborist Utility Specialist requires two years of experience<sup>5</sup>.

| Certification               | Number of Job Postings | Median Hourly Advertised Salary |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Commercial Driver's License | 49                     | \$36.31                         |

<sup>5</sup> "Which ISA Credential is Right for You?" 2025. International Society of Arboriculture. <https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Which-Credential-is-Right-for-You>.

| Certification                                     | Number of Job Postings | Median Hourly Advertised Salary |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Certified Arborist                                | 46                     | \$47.38                         |
| First Aid Certification                           | 44                     | \$42.46                         |
| Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification | 43                     | \$42.46                         |
| Herbicide Applicator License                      | 36                     | \$39.75                         |
| 30-Hour OSHA Industry CARD                        | 19                     | \$37.26                         |

Exhibit 8 shows the most requested skills in job postings by occupation in the Far North subregion.<sup>6</sup>

**Exhibit 8. Most requested in-demand skills in job postings**

| Specialized Skills  | Common or Employability Skills   | Software and Technology Skills  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Mowing</li> <li>• Irrigation</li> <li>• Pruning</li> <li>• Lifting Ability</li> <li>• Chainsaws</li> <li>• Trimming</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Groundskeeping</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Operations</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Customer Service</li> <li>• Detail Oriented</li> <li>• Positivity</li> <li>• Time Management</li> <li>• Adaptability</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Excel</li> <li>• Geographic Information Systems</li> </ul> |

Exhibit 9 shows the employer-preferred minimum level of education in job postings related to the selected occupations in the Far North. Jobs requiring education beyond a high school diploma were few, but commanded a premium with an average advertised salary of \$47.38 per hour.

<sup>6</sup> Specialized skills are those primarily required to perform specific tasks in an occupation. Common skills are typically related to employability; these are skills that are prevalent across many occupations and usually include a mix of interpersonal attributes and soft skills. Software skills are specific to any software tool or programming component used to accomplish tasks in a job.

**Exhibit 9. Employer-preferred education levels for the studied occupations**

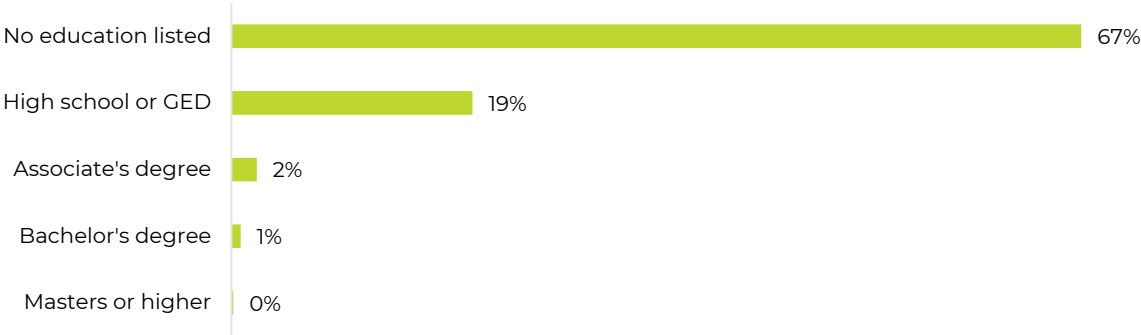
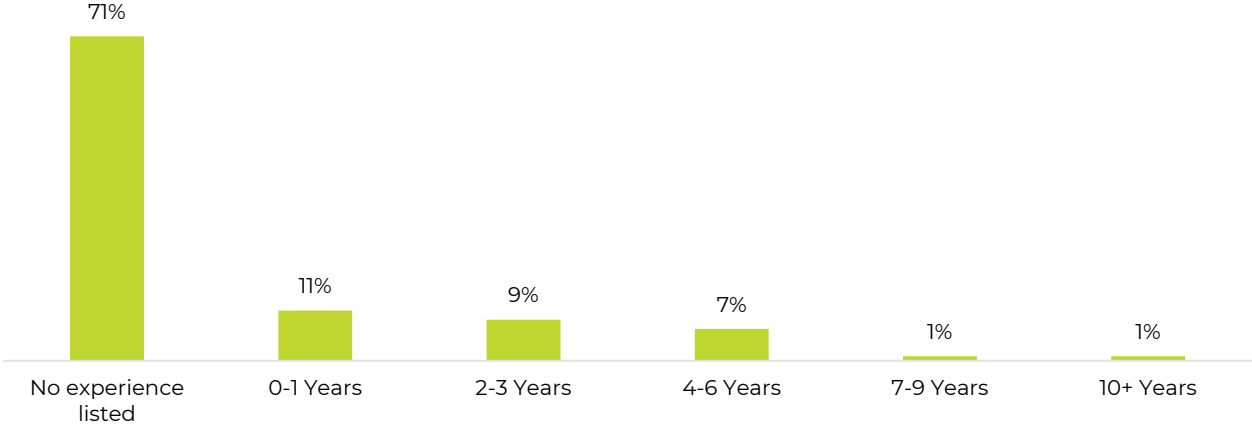


Exhibit 10 shows the employer-preferred minimum level of experience in job postings related to the selected occupations in the Far North.

**Exhibit 10. Employer-preferred experience levels for the studied occupations**



# Education and Training Requirements

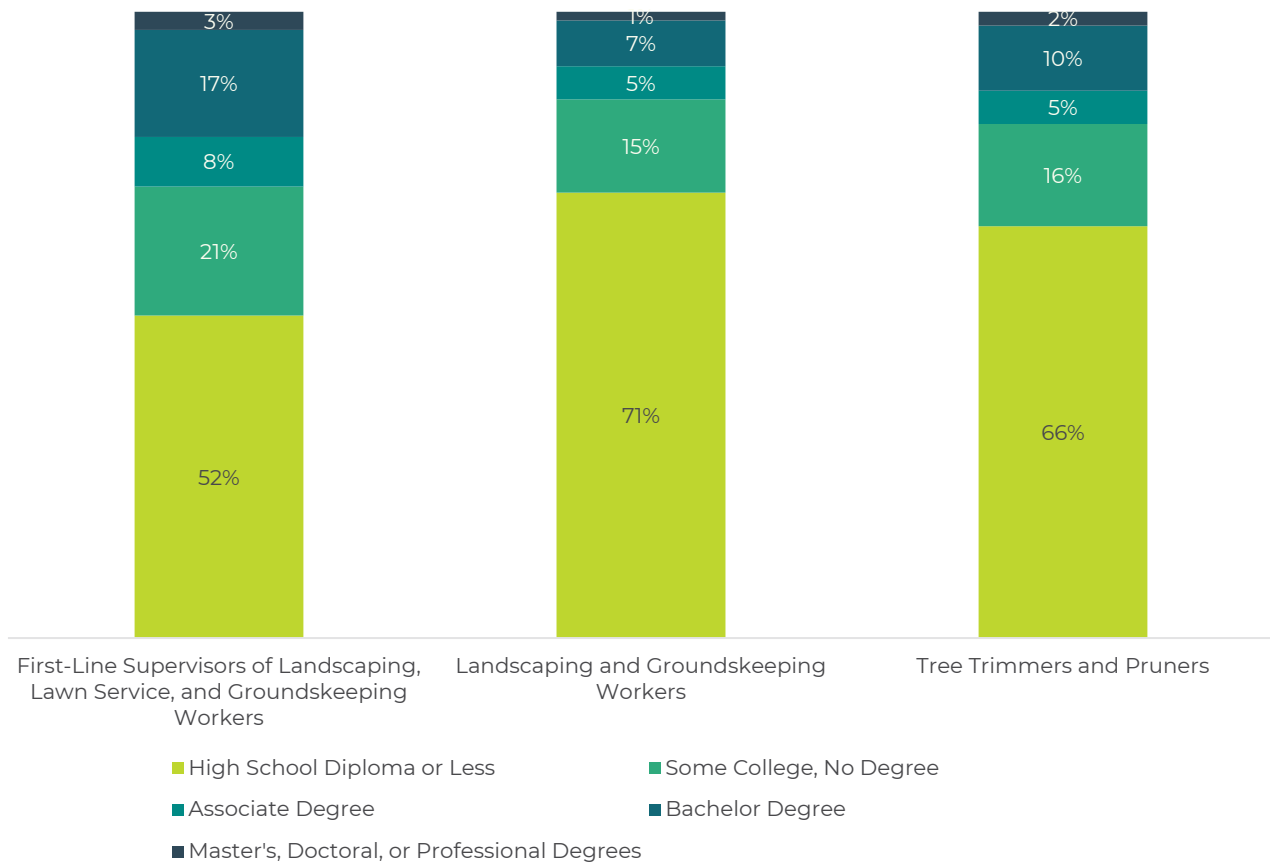
The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) assigns each occupation a typical entry-level education, related work experience, and on-the-job training category in its projection data. Exhibit 10 summarizes these requirements by occupation.

**Exhibit 10. Typical entry-level job requirements for the studied occupations**

| Occupation  | Entry-Level Education             | Work Experience   | On-The-Job Training            |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers | High school diploma or equivalent | Less than 5 years | None                           |
| Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers  | No formal educational credential  | None              | Short-term on-the-job training |
| Tree Trimmers and Pruners   | High school diploma or equivalent | None              | Short-term on-the-job training |

The U.S. Census Bureau tracks the highest education level attained by workers in all occupations. Exhibit 11 presents this data for the current U.S. workforce in the studied occupations.

**Exhibit 11. Educational attainment for workers 25 years and older by occupation, 2021-22**



# Educational Supply

Educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards issued in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes.

## Community college supply

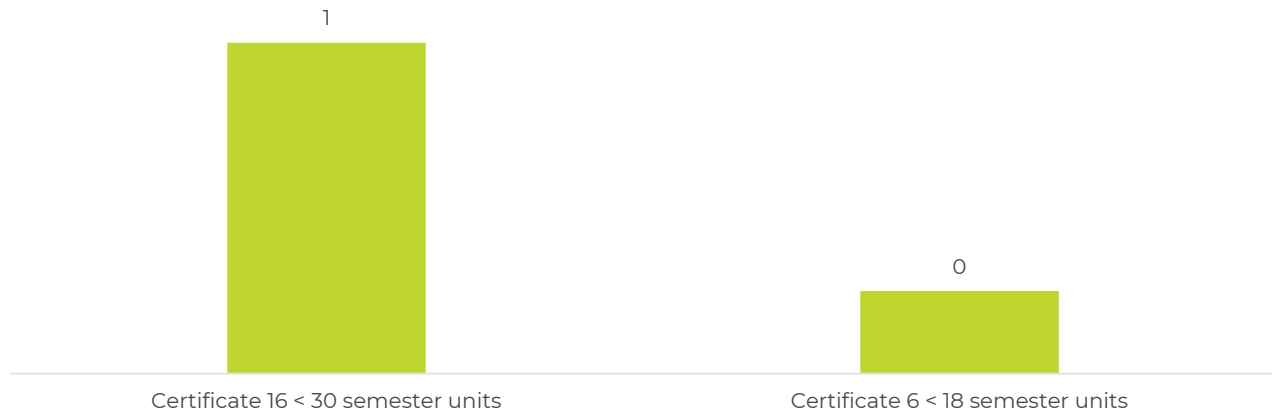
Exhibits 12 and 13 summarize the three-year average of awards (certificates and degrees) conferred by the Far North community college programs relevant to the occupations studied. Butte's program is titled Landscape/Turfgrass Technician, and Mendocino's program is titled Agriculture: Landscape Practices. Shasta's program is not chartered with the Chancellor's Office.

**Exhibit 12. Average annual community college awards by TOP program**

| TOP Program and Code                       | College   | 2022-23 Annual Awards | 2023-24 Annual Awards | 2024-25 Annual Awards | Three-Year Average Awards |
|--|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Landscape Design and Maintenance (0109.10) | Butte     | 1                     | 0                     | 0                     | 0                         |
|  | Mendocino | 0                     | 1                     | 2                     | 1                         |
|  | Shasta    | 0                     | 0                     | 1                     | 0                         |
| <b>Totals</b>                              |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>1</b>              | <b>3</b>              | <b>2</b>                  |

Note: Values in the table are rounded to the nearest whole number. However, subtotals and totals are calculated using unrounded values.

**Exhibit 13. Average annual community college awards by award type and program area**



## Other postsecondary supply

There are no programs conferring awards at other postsecondary institutions outside of the community college system in the Far North that provide relevant training for utility arborists.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Data insights

**Demand— Arborist occupations have job growth in the Far North subregion that is on par with growth in the rest of California.** In both California and the Far North subregion, jobs in arborist occupations are growing at a rate of 2% annually.

**Living Wage— Eighty-five percent of annual openings are for Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, which has entry-level wages below the living wage.** Entry-level wages are \$16.04 per hour for Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers, which is below the living wage for a single working adult in Butte's community college district of \$16.77 per hour. However, job postings show a higher advertised salary of \$22.40 per hour. Also, entry-level wages are much higher for First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers and Tree Trimmers and Pruners, at \$17.55 and \$19.72 per hour, respectively.

**Education—The majority of those in arborist occupations have a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment.** Between 52% and 71% of those in arborist occupations had a high school diploma or less as their highest level of educational attainment.

**Supply Gap— There is a significant supply gap for utility arborists.** There are 685 annual job openings and an average of only 2 annual awards.

## Recommendation

Based on the current analysis, the North Far North COE recommends that community colleges **proceed with caution** in creating new programs related to Arborists.

| New Program Recommendation          |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Proceed<br><input type="checkbox"/> | Use Caution<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Do Not Proceed<br><input type="checkbox"/> |

## Appendix A. Methodology and Data Sources

Labor market and educational supply data compiled in this report derive from a variety of sources. Occupations were identified by using the Center of Excellence TOP-to-CIP-to-SOC Crosswalk: <http://coecc.net/>. This report's findings were primarily determined with labor market and educational supply data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the economic modeling firm and job postings aggregator Lightcast, and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

### Data Sources

The following table summarizes the data sources used in this study.

| Data Type   | Source  |
|---|---|
| Labor Market Information and Job Postings   | Traditional labor market information data is sourced from Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm. Lightcast's occupational employment data are based on final Lightcast industry data and final Lightcast staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and non-QCEW employee classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (self-employed and extended proprietors). For more information, see <a href="https://lightcast.io/">https://lightcast.io/</a> .  |
| Living Wage   | The living wage is derived from the Insight Center's California Family Needs Calculator, which measures the income necessary for an individual or family to afford basic expenses. The data assesses the cost of housing, food, childcare, health care, transportation, and taxes. The Chancellor's Office uses wage data to calculate the percentage of students who attained a regional living wage. For more information, visit <a href="https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California/">https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California/</a> .  |
| Typical Education Level, On-the-job Training, and Educational Attainment                      | The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides information about education and training requirements for hundreds of occupations. BLS uses a system to assign categories for entry-level education, work experience in a related occupation, and typical on-the-job training to each occupation for which BLS publishes projections data. For more information, visit <a href="https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm">https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm</a> .  |
| Emerging Occupation Descriptions, Additional Education Requirements, and Employer Preferences | The O*NET database includes information on skills, abilities, knowledge areas, work activities, and interests associated with occupations. For more information, visit <a href="https://www.onetonline.org/help/online/">https://www.onetonline.org/help/online/</a> .  |
| Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Estimates  | The California Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division is a source of labor market and workforce data. For more information, visit <a href="http://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov">labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov</a> .   |
| Educational Supply  | <p>The CCCCO Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart provides information about students, courses, student services, outcomes, and faculty and staff. For more information, visit <a href="https://datamart.cccco.edu">https://datamart.cccco.edu</a>.</p> <p>The Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory System (COCI) collects data on courses and programs offered by the California Community Colleges. For more information, visit <a href="https://coci2.ccctechcenter.org/">https://coci2.ccctechcenter.org/</a>.</p> <p>The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) collects data from providers of postsecondary education, including the number of postsecondary awards earned (completions). For more information, visit <a href="https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components/7/completions">https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/survey-components/7/completions</a>.</p> |
| Student Metrics and Demographics  | DataVista, a statewide data system supported by the Chancellor's Office and hosted by Cal-PASS Plus, provides data on progress, success, employment, and earnings outcomes for California community college students. For more information, visit <a href="https://datavista.cccco.edu/">https://datavista.cccco.edu/</a> .   |
| International Society of Arboriculture Credentials  | The International Society of Arboriculture maintains many credentials, including the Certified Arborist and Certified Arborist Utility Specialist. For more information, visit <a href="https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Which-Credential-is-Right-for-You">https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Which-Credential-is-Right-for-You</a> .  |

## ***Living Wage***

Beginning in October 2024, to determine if an occupation meets the living wage threshold, the NFN COE compared the 25th percentile hourly wage of an occupation in the subregion to the living wage for a single adult (no dependents) living in the county where the requesting community college district was located.

This change aligned with the Chancellor’s Office methodology for calculating the share of students earning a living wage after leaving the California Community College system, as reported in the Data Vista living wage metric (802S). For details, see the [DataVista Metric Definition Dictionary](#).

The NFN COE updated this practice as needed to remain consistent with the Chancellor’s Office. The table below summarizes hourly living wages by community college district and county.

| <b>2024 Single Adult Living Wage</b>  |               |   |                   |
|---|---------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>Community College District</b>   | <b>County</b> | <b>Hourly</b>                                     | <b>Annual</b>     |
| Butte-Glenn   | Butte         | \$16.77   | \$35,416          |
| Feather River   | Plumas        | \$15.11   | \$31,909          |
| Lake Tahoe  | El Dorado     | \$22.11   | \$46,703          |
| Lassen  | Lassen        | \$14.81   | \$31,274          |
| Los Rios  | Sacramento    | \$21.17   | \$44,709          |
| Mendocino-Lake  | Mendocino     | \$17.06   | \$36,039          |
| Redwoods  | Humboldt      | \$16.59   | \$35,046          |
| Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint   | Shasta        | \$16.99   | \$35,874          |
| Sierra Joint  | Placer        | \$23.92   | \$50,519          |
| Siskiyou Joint  | Siskiyou      | \$14.51   | \$30,639          |
| Yuba  | Sutter        | \$17.08   | \$36,074          |
| <b>California Minimum Wages</b>   |               |   |                   |
| All industries, except fast food and healthcare<br>(Effective January 2025) |               | \$16.90   | \$35,152          |
| Fast food (Effective April 2024)  |               | \$20.00   | \$41,600          |
| Healthcare (Effective October 2024)   |               | \$18.63-\$24.00,<br>depending on facility<br>type | \$38,750-\$49,920 |

Sources: University of Washington Self Sufficiency Standard and State of California Department of Industrial Relations, “Minimum Wage,” [https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/minimum\\_wage.htm](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/minimum_wage.htm)

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