

ECONOMIC STABILITY



“SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS, SUCH AS INCOME, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, COMMUNITY SAFETY, AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT HOW WELL AND HOW LONG WE LIVE. THESE FACTORS AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES, AFFORD MEDICAL CARE AND HOUSING, MANAGE STRESS, AND MORE.”

-COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

WHY IT MATTERS IN THIS ASSESSMENT

Economic stability provides a context in which Mesa County residents can have good health outcomes. In this section, we consider what economic self-sufficiency looks like in Mesa County, and whether current industries are providing the types of jobs needed to earn at a self-sufficiency level.

Looking forward, we consider the future of four industries in Mesa County often cited as ideal sectors for growth toward an economy that provides economic stability for as many Mesa County residents as possible.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD

This 2018 measure from the Colorado Center on Law and Policy estimates local household expenses based on household makeup – number of adults, as well as the number and age of children. The estimated expenses include housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, taxes, and miscellaneous costs, and accounts for the earned income, child, and child care tax credits.

The following profiles represent common household types in Mesa County, or highlight households that are at additional risk or disadvantage within the community. These profiles were intentionally developed based on the household composition of Mesa County—together, the profiles account for 85% of households in the county.

HOUSEHOLD STABILITY



SINGLE FEMALE HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Approximately 6% of households in Mesa County are single female households with children, a group identified as experiencing greater disadvantage in the 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment. 82% of single female households only have children between 6 and 17 years old. However, younger children households are also profiled because of the significant costs associated with their care.

	Single female with one preschooler	Single female with one school-ager and one teenager
Self-Sufficiency Income	\$40,468	\$35,619
Median Income	\$19,805	\$19,805

↓ Median income is **below** self-sufficiency income.


↓ Median income is **below** self-sufficiency income.

THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR A SINGLE FEMALE HOUSEHOLD WITH CHILDREN IS APPROXIMATELY HALF THEIR SELF-SUFFICIENCY INCOME.


MARRIED COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS

20% of households in Mesa County are married couples with children. 59% of married couples with children only have children between the ages of 6 and 17 years. However, younger children households are also profiled here because of the significant costs associated with their care. An additional 33% of households in Mesa County are married couples without children.


	Married couple without children	Married couple with one preschooler	Married couple with one school-ager and one teenager
Self-Sufficiency Income	\$32,508	\$48,268	\$43,038
Median Income Range	\$60-75,000	\$81,290	\$81,290



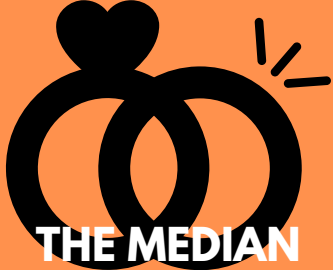
Median income is **above** self-sufficiency income.



Median income is **above** self-sufficiency income.



Median income is **above** self-sufficiency income.




THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR MARRIED COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS IS APPROXIMATELY DOUBLE THEIR SELF-SUFFICIENCY INCOME.


ADULTS LIVING ALONE

26% of Mesa County households are adults living alone. The census reports median income for single adults broken down by age and gender. Men and women over 65 years earn at similar rates to women age 18-65 years (\$25,618 - 27,428), but men age 18-65 years earn considerably more (\$37,250).

	Female living alone	Male living alone
Self-Sufficiency Income	\$20,470	\$20,470
Median Income Range	\$25,618-26,987	\$27,428-37,250



Median income is **above** self-sufficiency income.



Median income is **above** self-sufficiency income.

THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR SENIORS LIVING ALONE IS HIGHER THAN THEIR SELF-SUFFICIENCY INCOME.



There is a significant gap between the Self-Sufficiency Standard and the income levels that determine eligibility for benefit programs. This results in a segment of the population across all household types that fall \$10,000-\$20,000 short of self-sufficiency each year, but are not eligible for benefit programs.

For example, although most married-couple households with children earn above the Self-Sufficiency Standard, families with one preschooler earning \$38,000 per year might not qualify for SNAP benefits, but would fall \$10,000 short of self-sufficiency.

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Assess the range of experience within each household type to identify potential disparities or systematic differences in self-sufficiency such as across different neighborhoods, races and ethnicities, and educational backgrounds.

RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

As described in the *Income and Benefits for Households Below the Self-Sufficiency Standard* table, if a single female householder earning the median household income for her group enrolls in all the benefits programs she qualifies for, she can significantly close the gap to self-sufficiency for her household, or even modestly surpass it. It is difficult to track the proportion of qualifying households who apply for these services, but this table demonstrates the significant stability that can be provided by benefits programs when they are fully utilized.





WITHOUT BENEFITS, THESE HOUSEHOLDS ARE 15-20K UNDER THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD.

WITH BENEFITS, THESE HOUSEHOLDS ARE WITHIN 2K OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY, WITH SOME ACHIEVING IT.

INCOME AND BENEFITS FOR HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD IN MESA COUNTY (2015-2019)

	Single female householder, preschooler	Single female householder, school-ager, teenager
Household Income (median)	\$19,805	\$19,805
Difference from Self-Sufficiency (no benefits)	-\$20,663	-\$15,814
BENEFITS		
WIC	\$660	\$0 (ineligible)
SNAP	\$5,160	\$7,392
LEAP	\$375	\$375
CCAP	\$7,716	\$5,441
TANF/Colorado Works	\$0 (ineligible)	\$0 (ineligible)
Medicaid/CHP+	\$3,816	\$4,404
TOTAL INCOME (wages and benefits)	\$37,532	\$37,417
Self Sufficiency Standard	\$40,468	\$35,619
Difference from Self-Sufficiency Standard with benefits	-\$2,936	+\$1,798

There are additional resources available to families in need through community organizations like Catholic Outreach and Hilltop. Often these programs center around housing stability (see page # for more information), providing food, and education or job training resources.



● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Create an effective measure of how many households are eligible for benefits but are not currently enrolled. Assess the barriers to enrollment and best practices for maximizing benefit enrollments for households without economic stability.

QUANTIFYING NEED IN OUR COMMUNITY

In order to effectively plan for and allocate resources, it is critical to understand how many people are in need in the community. Many of the easily quantifiable measures significantly overlook the variation in expenses across different types of households.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard gives rich information on the experiences of different households, but it is difficult to quantify how many people in each group fall above or below the standard. One estimate, however, is the percentage of households in Mesa County that fall below 185% of the poverty level: 28.8%, or approximately 17,782 households.

This measure closely predicts the Self-Sufficiency Standard for married couple households without children, and all families with older children. It underestimates need in households with young children, but overestimates need for adults living alone or with other non-family adults. It also doesn't capture the fact that many families in this income bracket may lead economically stable lives with the boost in income provided by benefit enrollments.

This measure isn't a perfect correlate to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, but we believe it is a worthwhile statistic to start a conversation about people in need in Mesa County.

**AS MANY AS
30% OF
HOUSEHOLDS
IN MESA
COUNTY MAY
FALL BELOW
THEIR SELF-
SUFFICIENCY
STANDARD.**

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Identify Mesa County areas impacted by stacked disadvantage—e.g. those experiencing high rates of unemployment, single parent families, and poverty.

INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION



MESA COUNTY RESIDENTS EARNING ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE INCOMES

The Self-Sufficiency Standard demonstrates the effect of low-wage work on family stability—workers on the low end of the wage scale struggle to meet basic needs. Reducing financial stress leads to improved health outcomes, and community resilience relies on individuals moving beyond self-sufficiency.



According to community economic development experts, \$50,000 per year is a desirable wage for Mesa County. Based on current eligibility for public assistance programs, \$36,400 is an approximation of what a person can earn if they make minimum wage and take full advantage of all public assistance programs available to them (assuming a household of 4 people with one working adult).

For the remainder of the report, we will refer to \$50,000 per year as the *desirable income* and \$36,400 per year as the *essential income*. We recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all minimum or ideal income for Mesa County residents, but we believe these are meaningful benchmarks for starting the conversation.



The Self-Sufficiency Standard for different Mesa County households tends to fall above the *essential income* and below the *desirable income*, but households with three or more people earning the essential income would likely be eligible for some benefits such as SNAP (food stamps) and CCAP (child care assistance), moving them toward self-sufficiency.

The majority of Mesa County workers are in jobs where the median income falls below both the *essential* and *desirable income*. Nearly four in five Mesa County workers are in jobs where the median income falls below the *desirable income*.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN OCCUPATION AND AN INDUSTRY?

Industries capture every job necessary to make a business or company function, from management to sales to facilities.

Occupations look across industries at people doing similar jobs—managers are grouped together, salespeople are grouped together, and facilities workers are grouped together, whether they work in a hospital, a grocery store, or a construction company.

TOP TEN OCCUPATIONS IN MESA COUNTY

In 2019, Mesa County had 76,614 adults 16 years and older in the labor force. 2,628 of these adults were unemployed, for an unemployment rate of 3.4%. As of publication, the most recent unemployment rate is 7.8% for February 2021.


Among the top ten most common occupations in Mesa County, five had a median pay less than the *essential income* and only two had a median pay above the *desirable income*.


Eight of the ten occupations had entry-level incomes that qualify a family of four for SNAP benefits (food stamps) if this worker is the only earner. Two of the ten occupations have an entry-level wage that would qualify a family of four with young children for WIC and CCAP (child care assistance), even if both parents are working at that wage level.

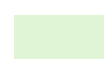
MANY OF THE MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS IN MESA COUNTY PAY WAGES THAT MAKE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OUT OF REACH FOR A SINGLE-EARNER HOUSEHOLD.

**TOP TEN OCCUPATIONS BY NUMBER OF JOBS IN MESA COUNTY
(2019)**

Occupation	Jobs	Entry-Level Wage	Median Wage
Office and Administrative Support	7,690	\$25,742	\$35,403
Sales and Related	5,610	\$23,448	\$29,352
Education, Training, and Library	5,500	\$31,655	\$42,984
Health Care Practitioners and Technical Occupations	4,490	\$43,534	\$70,381
Construction and Extraction (e.g. laborers, skilled craftsmen, mining, and oil and gas)	4,210	\$32,061	\$45,305
Transportation and Material Moving	4,040	\$25,329	\$34,649
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	3,430	\$29,562	\$47,724
Health Care Support (e.g. assistants, aides)	2,950	\$23,347	\$27,310
Production (e.g. food and beverage, manufacturing, and their supervisors and inspectors)	2,770	\$25,712	\$34,872
Business and Financial Operations	2,230	\$37,882	\$60,470

 average wage below essential income

 average wage above essential income and below desirable income

 average wage above desirable income

These top occupations are similar across comparison communities, though Bend, OR and St. George, UT have enough management occupations for the category to rank 7th and 6th respectively, while Mesa County management occupations rank 13th. This indicates a concentration of a high-earning occupation type in their local markets that isn't reflected in Mesa County. This may be because business owners are not counted as employees in these statistics, and Mesa County may have more owner-managed enterprises than the comparison communities.

PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS WITH *ESSENTIAL* OR *DESIRABLE* INCOMES

Economic data lets us examine aggregate income levels for most, but not all, of the workforce in Mesa County and comparison communities. We have excellent data on unemployed workers and workers in jobs with traditional employers outside of the agriculture industry. In Mesa County, approximately 88% of the workforce is countable in this way, but we know very little about the remaining 12%, largely comprised of the self-employed and agricultural workers.

36,020 workers, approximately 56% of countable workers, are in jobs with a median annual income below the *essential income*.

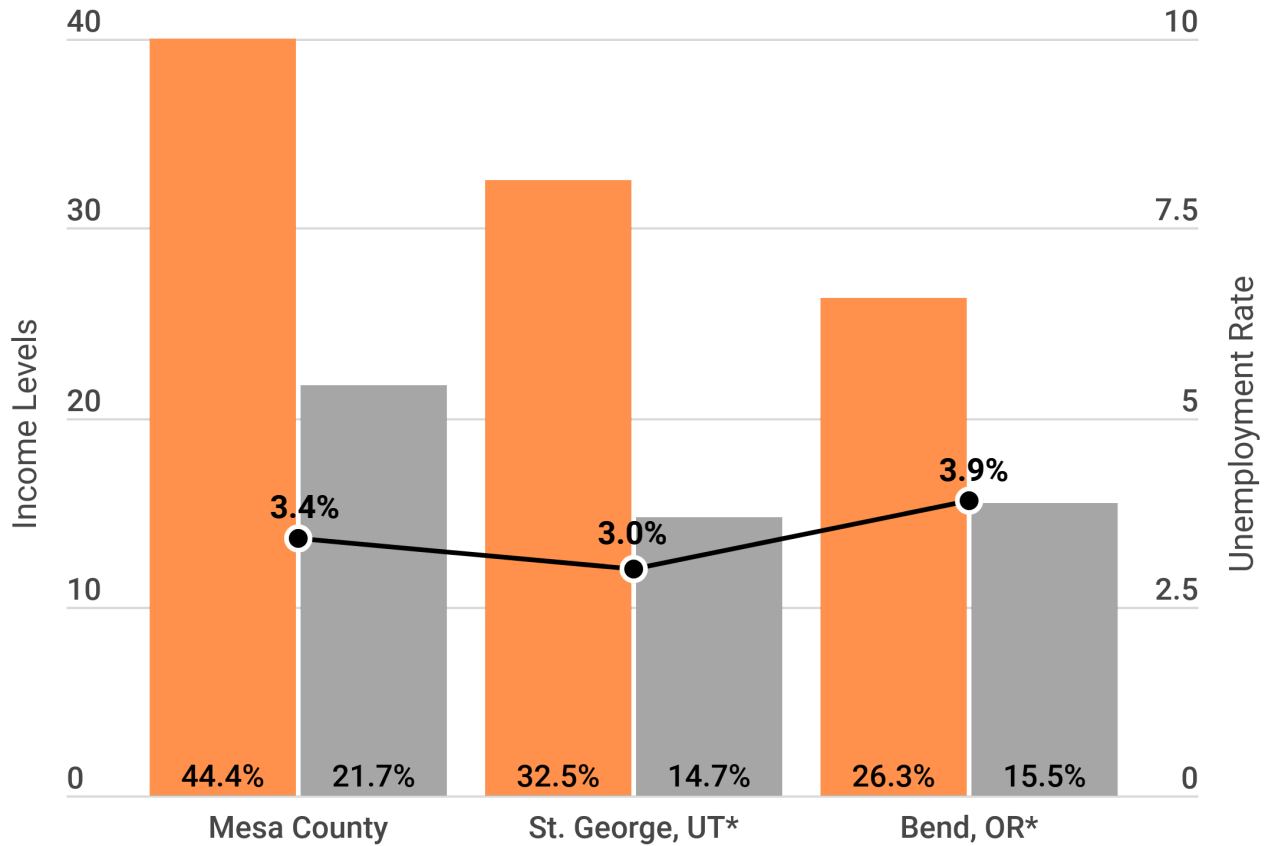
Approximately 78% of that countable workforce, 50,700 workers, are in jobs with a median annual income below the *desirable income*.

While these numbers may be worrying, in a relative sense this is an area of strength for Mesa County. Compared to St. George, UT and Bend, OR, Mesa County has more workers earning *essential* or *desirable incomes* (scaled for relative cost of living in comparison communities).



APPROXIMATELY 56% OF WORKERS ARE IN JOBS WITH A MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME BELOW THE ESSENTIAL INCOME.

RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND INCOME LEVELS IN MESA COUNTY AND COMPARISON COMMUNITIES (2019)



● Unemployment rate ● % above essential income ● % above desirable income

*Essential and desirable incomes are scaled for local cost of living in comparison communities—8% higher for St. George, and 29% higher for Bend.

It is important to note that reports on income by occupation only measure wages, and not the value of bonuses, tips, or cash incentives. Some Mesa County residents who fall below the *essential* or *desirable income* thresholds may be pushed over the thresholds by these types of additional income. Since many of these are not guaranteed, but instead depend on customer traffic, meeting sales quotas, or remaining at a job for a certain amount of time, we feel it is reasonable to use base wages when considering self-sufficiency.

AREA OF ACTION

- Investigate the economic stability of the 12% of workers not included in the “countable workforce”—approximately 9,000 people.



CURRENT AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY INDUSTRY

Industries with strong growth projections, high average wages, and local training opportunities will contribute to the long-term strength of the Mesa County economy. Mesa County currently has several strong industries with average wages above *essential* or *desirable incomes* that are projected to grow.

However, large proportions of the workforce are in retail trade or food service and accommodation, both industries with wages below the *essential income*. Retail trade and mining (including oil and gas) are projected to decline over the next ten years, and there are no jobs in growth sectors with the same skill requirements that earn at the same level. If these workers desire to remain in Mesa County and earn self-sufficient wages, they will need opportunities to re-skill that don't require investment in a four-year degree.

The growth of the professional, scientific, and technical services industry (including legal services, design, computer programming, advertising, and many types of consulting services) may provide jobs that incentivize investment in higher education by the workforce, and its expansion will likely increase the number of economically-stable households in Mesa County. However, growth in this industry will also likely require an influx of workers with 4-year degrees.

Construction jobs, which provide at least the *essential income*, and sometimes the *desirable income*, are projected to grow, and if Mesa County can generate jobs in the manufacturing industry, targeted growth could provide opportunities for re-skilled workers.

CURRENT INDUSTRIES IN MESA COUNTY

Five of the ten industries with the highest employment numbers provide an average wage above the *desirable income*. Two of these industries provide an average wage less than the *essential income*. Since averages are easily pulled up by a small number of high wage earners, the average wage isn't a good indicator of the typical wage of employees in this industry, but higher average wages generally point to higher individual wages.











Among the top three industries with the highest employment numbers, wages vary dramatically. Health Care and Social Assistance is the industry with the highest employment numbers in Mesa County, and workers earn an average wage above the *desirable income*. However, the average worker in the next two top industries—Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services—makes less than the *essential income*.


5 OF 10


INDUSTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS PROVIDE AN AVERAGE WAGE ABOVE THE DESIRABLE INCOME.




TOP 10 INDUSTRIES BY NUMBER OF WORKERS IN MESA COUNTY (2020)

	Industry	Employment	Average Annual Wage
	Health Care and Social Assistance	12,471	\$54,340
	Retail Trade	8,282	\$36,296
	Accommodation and Food Services	6,328	\$22,724
	Construction	4,832	\$55,224
	Educational Services	4,659	\$42,952
	Public Administration	3,525	\$63,128
	Manufacturing	3,009	\$44,408
	Administrative and Waste Services	2,703	\$41,912
	Transportation and Warehousing	2,438	\$53,040
	Professional and Technical Services	2,241	\$60,216

 average wage below essential income

 average wage above essential income and below desirable income

 average wage higher than desirable income

PROJECTED GROWTH AMONG INDUSTRIES OF INTEREST IN MESA COUNTY

While nearly every industry was affected by COVID-19 and shows projected losses in the short term (2020-2022), overall modest growth is expected in Mesa County by 2029. However, Mesa County is not predicted to see as much growth as Colorado as a whole, and within the ten-year projection, some industries such as retail and mining (including oil and gas) are expected to maintain their losses. Losses in retail, in particular, are concerning, because retail jobs are primarily low-skilled work, and there is no compensating growth expected in other low-skilled industries to absorb this loss. Losses in mining, likewise, present a problem, because the average wages in industries with similar skill sets are \$20,000-30,000 lower.

GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR INDUSTRIES OF INTEREST* IN MESA COUNTY AND COLORADO (2019-2029) [JOBS GAINED/LOST (% CHANGE)]

	Mesa County (short term)	Mesa County (long term)	Colorado (short term)	Colorado (long term)
	2020-2022	2019-2029	2020-2022	2019-2029
Total Employment Change	-1,346 (-2.0%)	2,237 (3.2%)	-27,199 (-0.9%)	282,617 (9.5%)
Health Care and Social Assistance**	177 (1.6%)	1,898 (17.1%)	6,448 (1.8%)	60,608 (17.8%)
Construction**	-2 (<0.1%)	493 (10.2%)	3,477 (2.0%)	22,611 (12.7%)
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**	92 (3.9%)	492 (21.6%)	11,593 (4.8%)	54,453 (23.1%)
Transportation and Warehousing	-55 (-2.3%)	116 (4.8%)	1,014 (1.1%)	12,168 (14.0%)
Accommodation and Food Services	-1,163 (-17.9%)	82 (1.2%)	-49,982 (-17.8%)	19,286 (6.7%)
Manufacturing**	-52 (-1.7%)	35 (1.1%)	288 (0.1%)	1,305 (0.9%)
Mining (includes oil and gas)	-180 (-12.4%)	-325 (-15.5%)	-2,581 (-9.8%)	-254 (-0.9%)
Retail Trade	-20 (-0.2%)	-631 (-7.7%)	144 (<0.1%)	-2,879 (-1.1%)

*Industries of interest are either current high employers, historically important industries, or industries that community economic experts would like to grow.

**More information can be found in the industry profiles on the next page.

●●● AREA OF ACTION

- Support workers in waning industries as they transition to work requiring a different skill set.





OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation is a growing industry without a clear classification in labor and economic statistics. Mesa County recognizes the potential for strengthening the local economy through natural resources management and outdoor recreation tourism and the ensuing increase in retail and accommodation and food services necessary to support tourists. As this industry grows it will be important to consider to what extent it provides *essential* or *desirable income* jobs versus seasonal or low-wage work.

In response to the growing attention on this industry, Colorado Mesa University recently added an Outdoor Recreation Industry Studies Bachelor's degree within the kinesiology department.

“COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY’S OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY STUDIES PROGRAM IS A PURSUIT TO BECOME A WELL-ROUNDED EXPERT IN THE OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY, WHICH INCLUDES BUSINESSES, PRODUCT DEVELOPERS, INNOVATORS, ENTREPRENEURS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS.”


**-SARAH SHRADER,
PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

INDUSTRY PROFILES

Below we profile four industries that are either current high employers that pay *essential* or *desirable incomes*, or industries that community economic partners have expressed interest in. We consider the employment and wages from the third quarter of 2020, training opportunities, and projected growth in these industries and two of their interesting subsectors.

Strengthening Mesa County's economy by investing in the industries profiled below is expected to build a diverse and viable workforce pool within the community that is trained and well-prepared to take on needed jobs. This will provide an opportunity for local workers to develop necessary skills and support their families and our community by earning *essential* or *desirable incomes* that empowers them to become self-sufficient.

HEALTH CARE



Health care is predicted to grow in Mesa County at a rate similar to Colorado and has a strong training pipeline in Mesa County for all but the top-earning positions. The key to maintaining the industry's contribution to Mesa County's economic stability is in expanding and strengthening offerings through CMU that prepare workers for jobs at many income levels, and offering competitive wages for low-wage workers in health care settings.



KEY TAKEAWAY

THE FUTURE OF THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY IN MESA COUNTY SUGGESTS AN INCREASE IN JOBS THAT PAY THE ESSENTIAL INCOME AS WELL AS JOBS THAT PAY THE DESIRABLE INCOME, WITH GOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL TRAINING.

This industry accounts for **20.5%** of countable jobs in Mesa County



Above essential and desirable incomes

Employment

12,471

Mean Wage

\$59,666

Subsector

Hospitals

Mean Wage

\$69,108



Above essential and desirable incomes

Nursing and Residential Care Facilities

Mean Wage

\$38,272



Above essential but below desirable income

Training



CMU and WCCC offer education ladders for health care careers that allow multiple entry points for those with a high school diploma to those seeking a graduate degree. Many of the highest-earning positions require training not available in Mesa County.

 **PROJECTED GROWTH**

17.1% projected growth in total sector over 2019-2029

1,898 more jobs

Hospitals

Nursing and Residential Care Facilities

24.8% + **1,019**

projected growth

more jobs

3.2%

projected growth

+64

more jobs

MANUFACTURING



Manufacturing is a varied industry with many active subsectors in Mesa County. While small growth is projected, it appears that this estimate reflects roughly equal losses in high-annual-wage subsectors and gains in low-annual-wage subsectors.

Since many manufacturing jobs do not require a bachelor's degree, the industry has potential to provide jobs for workers currently in industries that are projected to decline in the next ten years, but this depends on the industry growing in a direction that provides high-wage employment. Subsectors like Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, which includes aviation and aerospace manufacturing, have good potential to meet this need, but lack data to inform decision making because of their current small size.



KEY TAKEAWAY

GROWTH OF THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN MESA COUNTY MIGHT PROVIDE ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE INCOME JOBS, OR PROVIDE LOW-INCOME JOBS. TARGETED GROWTH COULD IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES, WITH MANY LOCAL TRAINING OPTIONS.

This industry
accounts for

5.0%

of countable jobs
in Mesa County



Above
essential
but below
desirable
income

Employment

3,009

Mean Wage

\$44,408

Subsector

Machinery Manufacturing

Mean Wage

\$50,596



Above *essential*
and *desirable* incomes

Textile Product Mills

Mean Wage

\$33,124



Below *essential*
and *desirable* incomes

Training



CMU and WCCC offer many manufacturing technical certificates and related 4-year degrees. Some high-level training, especially for specialized engineering positions, is unavailable locally.

 **PROJECTED GROWTH**

1.1%

projected growth in total
sector over 2019-2029

35

more jobs

Machinery Manufacturing

-5.7%

projected growth

-19

fewer jobs

Textile Product Mills

6.4%

projected growth

+21

more jobs

CONSTRUCTION



Construction is a top employer in Mesa County with a majority of jobs that earn at least the *essential income*. The projected growth in construction and the local training should provide opportunities for local workers looking to reskill from waning industries without investing in a bachelor's degree.

While construction offers good opportunities for reskilling some workers, for many workers leaving the oil and gas industry even *desirable income* construction jobs represent a significant pay cut. Nearly one thousand Mesa County workers earn a median income above \$75,000 per year in these jobs, while construction workers who have not completed an apprenticeship or four-year degree typically earn between \$40,000 and \$55,000 per year.

KEY TAKEAWAY



THE PROJECTED FUTURE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SUGGESTS AN INCREASE IN ESSENTIAL INCOME JOBS AND SOME DESIRABLE INCOME JOBS THAT MESA COUNTY RESIDENTS CAN TRAIN FOR LOCALLY.



CURRENT

CONSTRUCTION

This industry
accounts for

8.0%

of countable jobs
in Mesa County



Above
essential
and *desirable*
incomes

Employment

4,832

Mean Wage

\$55,224

Subsector

Specialty Trade Contractors

Mean Wage

\$49,764



Above *essential* but
below *desirable* income

Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction

Mean Wage

\$68,224



Above *essential*
and *desirable* incomes

Training



Most construction jobs require on the job training. Higher paying jobs require apprenticeships, technical certificates, and Bachelor's degrees, all available in Mesa County.



PROJECTED GROWTH

10.2%

projected growth in total
sector over 2019-2029

493

more jobs

Specialty Trade Contractors

11.4%

+350

projected growth

more jobs

Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction

7.6%

+71

projected growth

more jobs



PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES INDUSTRY

When we talk about increasing “tech jobs” in Mesa County, these fall under the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PSTS) Industry, along with lawyers, accountants, architects, and many types of engineers.

The projected growth in the PSTS Industry will undoubtedly bring *desirable income* jobs to Mesa County, but since most jobs require a 4-year or professional degree, they will not be available to the 70% of the Mesa County population that does not have a Bachelor’s degree. Attracting well-educated employees from other regions will effectively fill this gap and improve the economic stability of Mesa County, but this growth will have little impact on the job prospects of the average Mesa County resident.



KEY TAKEAWAY

THE PROJECTED FUTURE OF THE PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES INDUSTRY IN MESA COUNTY SUGGESTS SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN DESIRABLE INCOME JOBS.

BECAUSE OF THE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS, MANY WILL NOT BE FILLED BY CURRENT MESA COUNTY RESIDENTS.



CURRENT

PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC,
AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

This industry
accounts for

3.7%

of countable jobs
in Mesa County



Above
essential
and desirable
incomes

Employment

2,241

Mean Wage

\$60,216

Training



Most Professional Scientific and Technical Service occupations require a 4-year or graduate/professional degree. CMU offers some, but not all of the necessary degrees.



PROJECTED GROWTH

21.6%

projected growth in total
sector over 2019-2029

+ 477

more jobs



FUTURE PLANNING



In planning for the future, in addition to trying to attract highly educated workers for industries like technology, Mesa County must consider how to address the projected changes in the economy that will impact low-skilled workers and skilled workers without bachelor's degrees. Supporting opportunities for the 70% of Mesa County residents who don't have a Bachelor's degree will grow and maintain the middle class, and reduce the impact of the growing wage gap seen in similar communities dealing with the same types of economic changes.

Economic partners will have to weigh in on the tools available to incentivize different types of growth in the Mesa County economy. From the perspective of economic stability as a Social Determinant of Health, it's clear that Mesa County has both strengths and weaknesses in its current ability to provide *essential* and *desirable incomes*, and the possibility of future growth to meet the needs of the existing workforce.

Social assistance and benefits programs can contribute to this stability by closing the gap between low wages and self-sufficiency, but building an economy with more *essential* and *desirable income* jobs reduces the chances of households in need slipping through the cracks and living in economic instability.

● ● ● AREA OF ACTION

- Determine best methods for assessing industries of interest that are too small to be tracked through traditional economic indicators such as Transportation and Equipment Manufacturing and Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services.
- Identify economical training and education opportunities for workers looking to transition away from waning industries, including technical certificates, union training, and programs such as Mesa County Workforce Center's Career Development Program.
- Determine the most effective and best practice methods for incentivizing desired economic growth in Mesa County.

REFERENCES USED

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