

Unlocking Potential: Career Pathways for Lane County's Workforce



June 2025

Final Report

Prepared For

Lane Workforce Partnership

Prepared by

The University of Oregon

Institute for Policy Research & Engagement

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Acknowledgements

The Institute for Policy Research and Engagement wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance with this project:

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About the Institute for Policy Research and Engagement



**School of Planning, Public
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The Institute for Policy Research & Engagement (IPRE) is a research center affiliated with the School of Planning, Public Policy, and Management at the University of Oregon. It is an interdisciplinary organization that assists Oregon communities by providing planning and technical assistance to help solve local issues and improve the quality of life for Oregon residents. The role of IPRE is to link the skills, expertise, and innovation of higher education with the transportation, economic development, and environmental needs of communities and regions in the State of Oregon, thereby providing service to Oregon and learning opportunities to the students involved.

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Executive Summary

This report, developed by the University of Oregon’s Institute for Policy Research & Engagement in partnership with Lane Workforce Partnership, explores strategic workforce development opportunities in Lane County, Oregon. It focuses on economically vulnerable populations—specifically ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) individuals and those living below the poverty line—and identifies strategies to support their upward mobility through career cluster analysis in the healthcare and housing sectors.

Key Findings

Healthcare and housing sectors offer accessible entry points for individuals with limited formal education or training, making them critical pathways to economic stability.

In healthcare, clusters such as home care and emergency health services feature low barriers to entry and relatively fast progression to roles that exceed the ALICE income threshold. Nursing offers particularly strong wage growth and long-term advancement potential.

In housing, the skilled trades provide high earning potential through structured apprenticeship programs. However, access to these programs is limited and competitive.

While many entry-level roles are accessible, sustained career advancement depends on the availability of training, certifications, and support services—resources that are not consistently available to all residents.

Career Pathway Flowcharts:

The report includes visual flowcharts for eight career clusters:

- Healthcare: Home care, nursing, emergency health services, dental, and general roles.
- Housing: Trades, construction, and maintenance/operations.

Each flowchart maps:

- Entry-level roles
- Required training and certifications
- Wage progression
- Advancement opportunities

Summary of Recommendations:

- **Promote awareness of career pathways:** Utilizing and expanding multiple communication channels (social media, community centers, local media, or schools), providing multilingual materials, and partnering community organizations.
- **Investing in data and evaluation:** Integrating flowcharts in outreach and planning materials to get individuals information about opportunities.
- **Collaborating with Lane Community College and other educational providers:** Ensure that curricula and certification programs are aligned with current and projected labor market demands. This includes integrating soft skills, digital literacy, and job readiness training into existing programs.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Project Background

This report examines workforce development as a strategic approach to reducing financial hardship among Lane County residents, particularly those classified as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) or living below the poverty line. It aims to identify sustainable employment pathways by analyzing workforce needs in two high-demand sectors: healthcare and housing. The report assesses the current labor market, evaluates job accessibility, wages, required training, and sector-specific workforce demand. It also provides an overview of Lane County's ALICE population to inform projections and recommendations. By proposing targeted career pathways and skill development strategies, such as training and apprenticeships, the report outlines opportunities for economic resilience and long-term stability.

We are a team of Master of Public Administration students from the University of Oregon working on our Capstone project. This project is in collaboration with the Lane Workforce Partnership (LWP), an organization dedicated to supporting workforce development in Lane County. LWP reached out to the University of Oregon's Institute for Policy Research (IPRE) department for support, and we were tasked to complete this work for our capstone. The need for this project arose from the recognition of significant shifts in the local labor market, driven by economic changes, technological advancements, and evolving industry demands. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive analysis of Lane County's key workforce sectors to inform strategic planning and policymaking.

Project Focus and Objective

In Lane County, prioritizing the healthcare and housing sectors as career pathways for people in poverty is a strategic decision rooted in the potential for stable, well-paying jobs and the broader community benefits. These sectors are a priority over others due to their critical role in ensuring the well-being and stability of the population. By moving into healthcare, individuals can secure jobs that offer good wages, benefits, and job security, while also addressing the growing demand for medical services in Lane County.

Similarly, careers in the housing sector, particularly in construction, provide opportunities for steady employment and contribute to the development of affordable housing, making it more accessible to those in need. However, each sector comes with its unique challenges: construction work can be physically demanding, requiring strength and endurance, while healthcare professionals, such as nurses, often face long shifts, including nights, and the physical toll of being on their feet for extended periods. Despite these difficulties, the benefits of increased accessibility to healthcare and housing, coupled with the promise of stable

employment, make these sectors ideal for helping individuals in poverty achieve economic stability.

The information presented in this report is intended for a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- **Policy makers:** Policy makers can use the findings to inform decisions on workforce development policies and initiatives. Local
- **Local businesses:** Local businesses can understand labor market trends and identify potential areas for growth and investment.
- **Educational institutions:** Educational institutions can align curriculum and training programs with current and future workforce needs.
- **Community organizations:** Community organizations can develop targeted programs that support workforce development and address employment barriers.
- **Job seekers:** Job seekers can gain insights into the local job market and identify opportunities for career development.

The objective for this report is to

- Identify pathways for Lane County residents who are ALICE or below the poverty line to secure sustainable employment in healthcare or housing sectors, analyzing job accessibility, wages, required training, and workforce demand.

The identified ALICE (asset limited, income constrained and employed individuals in the county) thresholds that this report will use are:

- The wage threshold that ALICE individuals fall under for Lane County is \$47,673.¹
- The wage threshold that ALICE households with 2 working adults and 2 children is \$63,419.²
- To be considered ALICE, residents of Lane County must be making at or below this threshold, depending on their household demographics.

Methodology

To analyze the healthcare and housing sectors in Lane County, our team employed a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data is from sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census. This data provided insights into employment trends, wage levels, job openings, and sector-specific growth rates. For our qualitative aspect, we spoke with key experts in the housing and healthcare sectors of Lane County, who gave insight into possible job opportunities and immediate needs they saw in the field. These experts helped us to understand job requirements, hiring needs, and workforce challenges. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, we present a comprehensive view of the current and projected state of the healthcare and housing job markets in Lane County.

¹ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

² “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

Impact of ALICE Rates and Poverty in Lane County

In Lane County, the urgent need for career pathways to higher wages and job security for people living in poverty cannot be overstated. Many are confined to low-wage positions with limited benefits, hindering financial progress. Workforce development—through apprenticeships, training programs, and labor market data—can connect these individuals to more stable, better-paying employment. This not only supports individual advancement but also contributes to a stronger, more equitable local economy.

The need for workforce support services in Lane County is substantial, with approximately 47% of residents facing significant financial challenges. This includes 33% of residents classified as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), who are working but do not earn enough to cover basic living expenses, and 15% living below the poverty line.³ This is 24,047 households living below the poverty line and an additional 51,301 households defined as ALICE.

Although the county's unemployment rate is low at 4.3% as of February 2024 (most current available), underemployment and low wages remain persistent challenges. While the county has seen job growth, many of the available jobs are in low-wage sectors. This limits the ability of many workers to achieve financial stability.

Summary of Key Research Questions:

The key research questions driving this report are as follows:

Job Characteristics:

- What jobs exist in the healthcare and housing sectors?
- Do wages in these sectors provide financial stability?
- What is the labor supply and demand in each sector?
- Which sector offers the best opportunities for economic mobility?

Career Pathways:

- What skills and education do ALICE and impoverished individuals currently have?
- What are the entry-level opportunities, salaries, and career pathways in these sectors?
- How do training and apprenticeship programs support access to healthcare and housing positions?

³ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership,” 30.

Report Sections

This report will include an overall landscape chapter of the current workforce in Lane County, and two specific sector analysis sections on the careers and progressions available in healthcare and housing roles. It will conclude with a comparative analysis of the two sectors, findings and recommendations for the audience, and a further research chapter to help inform future professionals working on workforce research and improvement in the county.

- Chapter 1: Introduction
 - Impact of ALICE rates and poverty in Lane County
 - Key Research Question
- Chapter 2: Workforce Landscape
 - Demographics and Overview of Healthcare and Housing Sectors
- Chapter 3: Healthcare Analysis
- Chapter 4: Housing Analysis
- Chapter 5: Comparative Analysis
- Chapter 6: Findings and Recommendations
- Chapter 7: Further Research

Chapter 2: Workforce Landscape in Lane County

This chapter focuses on the specific demographics of the Lane County Workforce. It will show the skills and attainments held by working families or individuals facing financial challenges and highlight key characteristics of the residents of Lane who are most in need of higher wages and stronger career paths. This section will help inform how these residents can fit into the workforce as well as how they may improve the projected workforce of Lane County through career paths that assist the county and its community.

Demographics of Economically Vulnerable Populations

Lane County is an economically challenged region in Oregon. Historically reliant on the timber industry, the county now faces lower wages and significant economic barriers to achieving living wages and sustainable income. Currently, 33% of households in Lane County are classified as economically vulnerable working households.⁴

Key Data Points and Interpretations

Income Disparities:

The median income in Lane County is significantly lower than the state average, highlighting the economic challenges faced by residents.

- The median household income in Lane County is \$64,069, significantly lower than Oregon's median income of \$80,160.⁵
- Nonfamily households earn the least, with an average income of \$39,228.⁶

Educational Attainment:

A substantial portion of the economically vulnerable working households have some college education but no degree, indicating a potential area for targeted educational support and workforce development programs. While many jobs do not require college, education can help with getting higher wages if individuals can gain specialized degrees that prepare them for more

⁴ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

⁵ "Lane County, Oregon - Census Bureau Profile."

⁶ "Lane County, Oregon - Census Bureau Profile."

intermediate or advanced level jobs in their chosen sector. With advanced degrees, individuals may be able to enter the workforce with a higher paying job, rather than entry level.

- 22.5% of individuals have a high school diploma or equivalent
- 27.7% have some college education but no bachelor's degree
- 9.8% hold an associate's degree
- 19.7% have a bachelor's degree,
- 13.6% possess a graduate or professional degree.⁷

Employment Sectors:

(28.1%), construction and administrative services (22.7%), manufacturing and transportation (12.7%), and retail trade (11.8%).⁸ This indicates skills and experience that ALICE individuals and households already have, which is helpful in getting them into higher paying roles. Basing workforce development off skills they have rather than skills they need to acquire will assist in reducing the amount of time they need in training for higher demand roles.

Overview of Healthcare and Housing Sectors

The healthcare and housing sectors are vital to the well-being and economic stability of Lane County, Oregon. These sectors not only provide essential services to residents but also significantly contribute to the local economy through job creation and economic activity. Given the importance of these sectors, our report focuses on them to highlight their potential for uplifting economically vulnerable communities in Lane County.

Healthcare

Healthcare is one of the largest and most critical sectors in Lane County. It employs over 21,000 workers out of 172,100 available jobs in the county across various establishments, including hospitals, outpatient centers, and residential care facilities.⁹ The sector's total payroll is nearly \$1.6 billion, reflecting its significant economic impact.¹⁰ Healthcare services are essential for maintaining the health and well-being of the county's residents, ensuring access to medical care, preventive services, and emergency care. The healthcare sector also plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining residents, as quality healthcare services are a key factor for families and individuals when deciding where to live. Additionally, the presence of healthcare facilities supports other sectors by ensuring a healthy workforce, which is vital for overall economic productivity.

As of 2023, the healthcare sector is the largest industry in Lane County in terms of total employment and payroll. There are 21,782 people working in this sector across 1,167 establishments out of 172,100 jobs in the county.¹¹ The average wage in the healthcare sector is

⁷ "Lane County, Oregon - Census Bureau Profile."

⁸ "Lane County, Oregon - Census Bureau Profile."

⁹ Lane Workforce Partnership, "Healthcare Sector Employment and Wage Data."

¹⁰ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

¹¹ Lane Workforce Partnership, "Healthcare Sector Employment and Wage Data."

\$72,389.¹² Looking ahead, the healthcare sector in Lane County is expected to grow significantly. By 2032, the sector is projected to add approximately 3,106 new positions, a 15% increase in roles.¹³ This growth is driven by the increasing demand for healthcare services and the expansion of healthcare facilities.

Housing

The housing sector is also important in Lane County. It provides the necessary infrastructure for residents to live and thrive. Affordable and accessible housing is crucial for attracting new residents and retaining the existing population, which in turn supports local businesses and the economy. Housing impacts the quality of life for residents, as adequate housing reduces stress and improves mental health, contributing to a healthier community overall. Moreover, the construction and maintenance of housing create jobs and stimulate economic activity, further benefiting the county. In the housing sector, additional workers would accelerate the construction of new homes and the maintenance of existing ones. This would help address the housing shortage, making it easier for people to find affordable housing. More housing options would attract new residents, support population growth, and stimulate economic development.

As of the latest data, the housing sector, which includes construction and real estate, is a significant employer in Lane County. The construction industry alone has shown substantial growth, with employment levels rebounding strongly post-pandemic. By November 2024, Lane County had regained 98% of the jobs lost during the pandemic.¹⁴ Looking ahead, Lane County is expected to see continued growth in the housing sector. Between 2022 and 2032, the county is projected to add approximately 14,200 private-sector jobs, with a notable portion in construction and related fields, which is a 15% increase.¹⁵ This growth is driven by ongoing demand for housing and infrastructure development.

Connection Between Sectors and the Purpose of the Report

The selection of the healthcare and housing sectors as focal points in this report is based on their vital role in supporting economically vulnerable populations in Lane County. These sectors not only deliver essential services but also present substantial opportunities for job creation and sustained economic development. By emphasizing their potential, this report seeks to guide strategic planning and policy decisions aimed at fostering economic resilience and social equity.

Readers should consider these sectors as key areas for investment and development. While there are many sectors that contribute to the local economy, healthcare and housing are particularly impactful due to their direct influence on the well-being and stability of residents. Focusing on these sectors can lead to improved quality of life, increased economic activity, and greater overall community resilience.

¹² “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

¹³ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

¹⁴ State of Oregon Employment Department, “Employment Trends and Projects for Lane County.”

¹⁵ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

Chapter 3: Healthcare Sector Analysis

Healthcare Overview:

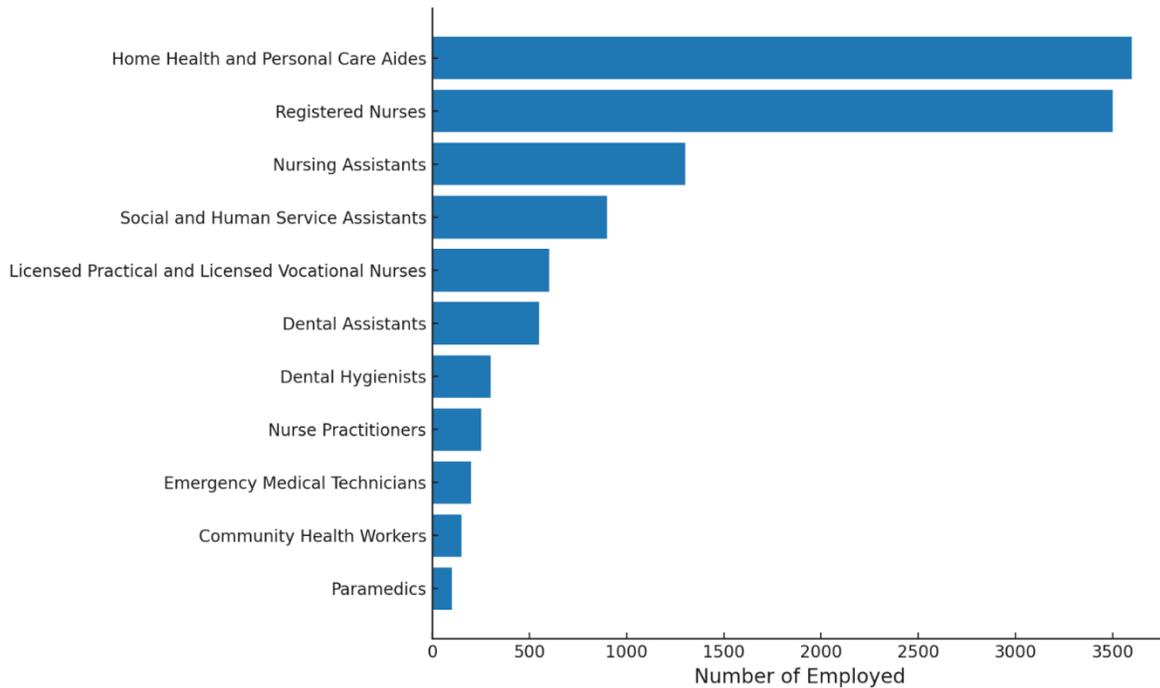
The healthcare sector is Lane County’s largest employer by both total employment and payroll, and it continues to grow. As of 2023, the sector includes 21,782 workers across 1,167 establishments, with an average annual wage of \$72,389 and a total payroll nearing \$1.6 billion.¹⁶ Healthcare roles span from medical assistants and nurses to emergency specialists and dental professionals. Demand for healthcare workers remains high, driven by an aging population and the ongoing expansion of services.¹⁷ Below are two figures to demonstrate the current total employment for healthcare roles in Lane County, and the average annual salary for healthcare roles in Lane County. Both of these are based on data from the year of 2024 (most recent and available).

¹⁶ Lane Workforce Partnership, “Healthcare Sector Employment and Wage Data.”

¹⁷ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

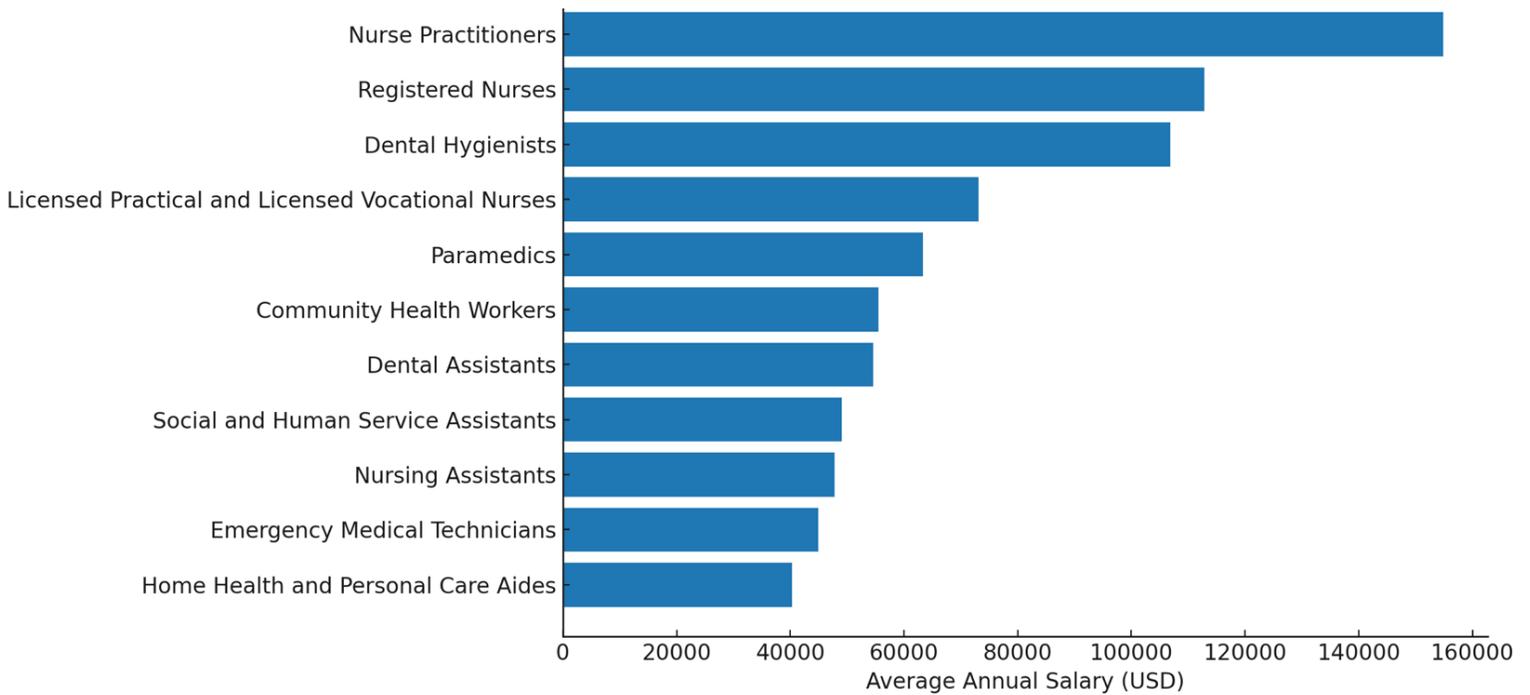
Average Employment Rates in Healthcare Roles in Lane County (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025



Average Annual Salaries for Healthcare Roles in Lane County (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025



This report organizes the healthcare sector into four key career clusters:

- Home care
- Nursing
- Emergency health services
- Dental care

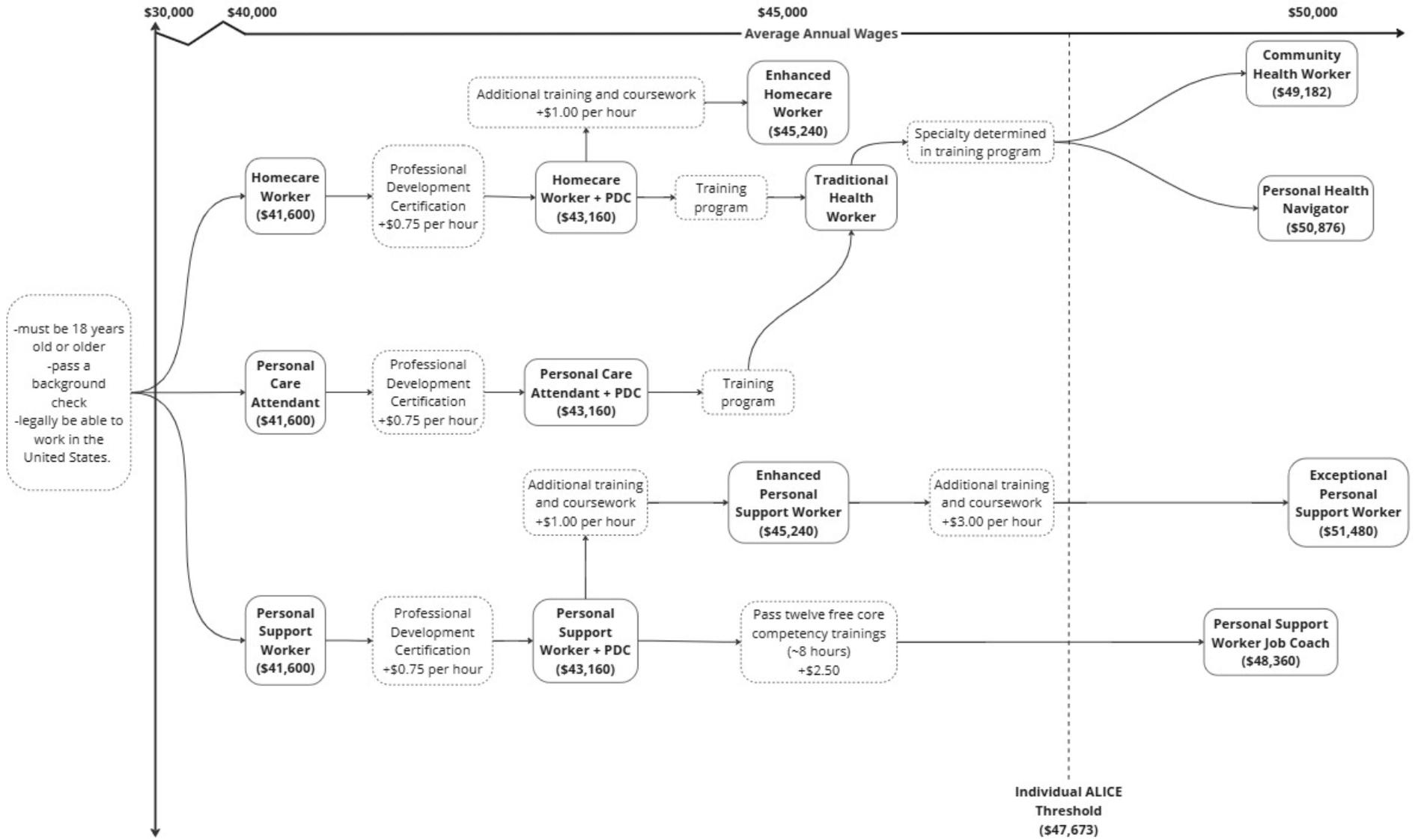
Each cluster outlines potential pathways for individuals in the ALICE population to enter and advance in the field. The accompanying flowcharts begin with accessible, entry-level positions requiring minimal or no specific qualifications. They then map out the steps—such as certifications, training, and experience—needed to progress toward higher-wage roles that exceed the local poverty threshold. Each step includes the required qualifications and how individuals can obtain them to support sustained career advancement.

Career Clusters

Home Care

Home care encompasses a broad set of services delivered in a person's home, ranging from help with daily routines to skilled medical care. It allows people—often older adults, those with disabilities, or individuals recovering from illness or surgery—to receive the support they need without leaving their homes. Services can include assistance with bathing, dressing, cooking, and cleaning, or more specialized care like wound treatment, physical therapy, and medication management. Beyond meeting practical needs, home care enables people to maintain a sense of autonomy and connection to their community, offering a more personalized alternative to institutional care.

Figure 1: Home Care Career Cluster



Job Pathways

One of the key benefits of beginning a career in the home care sector is that initial roles do not require a high school diploma or equivalent. This makes the field especially accessible for ALICE individuals who did not complete high school, offering a viable path into stable, well-paying careers. The following information on jobs in the home care career cluster can be found on the Oregon Department of Human Services website.¹⁸

Entry-level positions such as healthcare aides, personal care attendants, and personal support workers are open to individuals within the ALICE threshold. From there, individuals can complete a professional development certification—typically offered through state-sanctioned programs—which enables advancement within the sector. The certificate involves three core classes (one day each), five hours of safety classes, and five hours of elective classes.

With additional training and certifications, including CPR, workers can move into more specialized roles such as traditional health workers. Further advancement may include becoming a support worker coach or earning credentials to serve as a community care worker or health navigator within a chosen specialty.

Going from Homecare Worker with a professional development certificate to an enhanced homecare worker involves CPR/First Aid skills demonstration, Readiness Assessment or PDC, and complete 24 hours of blended online and webinar coursework. The same is true for becoming an enhanced personal support worker, who can become an exceptional personal support worker through CPR/First Aid skills demonstration, OIS-G Certification (two days), and an Enhanced Certification.

Homecare workers and personal care attendants can take a training program to receive a certification for desired worker type to become a traditional health worker, either community health worker or personal health navigator. The training programs are 80 hours.

The most direct training path in this cluster begins with becoming a personal care attendant, followed by completing the necessary certifications to specialize in health navigation. These roles are essential in supporting individuals with complex health needs that require daily, professional care.

Wage Analysis

While the homecare career cluster offers a multitude of opportunities and possible job pathways, there is a many of the first series of positions still fall underneath the ALICE threshold. This career cluster is meant to be progressed through as written until individuals can secure a job above that threshold, and the beginning careers (homecare worker, personal care attendant, or support worker) are not meant to be the final jobs for ALICE individuals to stay in. The many pathways of certifications such as CPR offer pay increases as the workers move upward in positions. As seen in the flowchart, once they have enough experience and training in homecare and personal support fields they may progress to higher wages. To be above the ALICE threshold

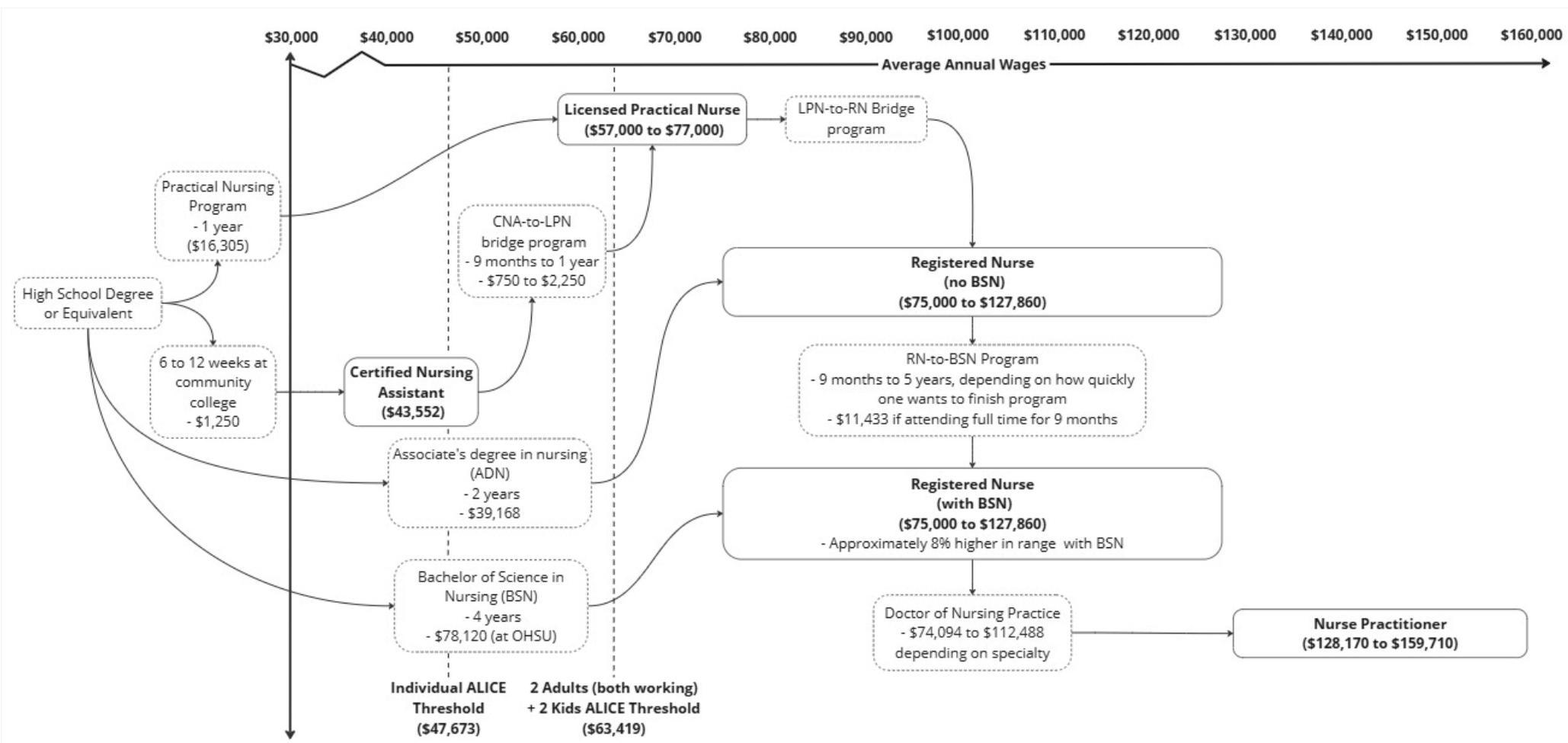
¹⁸ “Oregon Department of Human Services : Resources for the Home Care Workforce : PSW, HCW and PCA : State of Oregon.”

individuals may take on teaching or coaching positions in this field, or they can become specialized in certain health deficiencies that get them into roles above \$47,673.

Nursing

Nursing is an essential career pathway in Lane County due to its significant impact on both healthcare and the local economy. With a diverse population requiring comprehensive medical services, nurses are at the forefront of providing critical care in hospitals, clinics, and community health centers. Their role extends beyond direct patient care to include health education, preventive services, and community outreach, which are vital for improving public health outcomes. Additionally, the nursing sector is a major economic driver in the region, offering numerous job opportunities and contributing to economic stability. Educational institutions like Lane Community College further support this pathway by offering nursing programs that prepare students to meet the community's healthcare needs effectively. Overall, nursing not only enhances individual well-being but also strengthens the entire community.

Figure 2: Nursing Career Cluster



Job Pathways

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, nurses typically need a baccalaureate degree or higher to work in teaching, consultation, research, and administrative positions.¹⁹ This ability to work in different areas of the nursing field enables nurses with their Bachelor of Science (BSN) to offer more to employers, which often equates to higher salaries. However, for individuals who do not hold degrees in nursing, they may start at a community college and receive a nursing assistant role. This role can then lead to a CNA to LPN bridge program, which can then eventually be used to become a licensed nurse. This route is the fastest and most efficient route to a salary above the ALICE threshold. Associate degrees in nursing RNs can make similar wages to BSN RNs – however, RNs with a BSN can earn up approximately 8% more.²⁰ Generally, hospitals will require an ADN RN to get their BSN in a few years, but many have education reimbursements.

Wage Analysis

A large benefit to the nursing career cluster is how quickly ALICE individuals can get above the pay threshold and into higher paying positions. After beginning with a certified nursing assistant, they may rise into roles that fall above the threshold. The lowest paid position in this career cluster would be a certified nursing assistant. This would only require minimal schooling and would open lots of opportunities for higher salaries after they have spent time in this position and completed additional training and certification. In nursing, individuals can get as high as \$159,000 in salary. This requires time as a registered nurse, which is also a higher paid position (\$75,000 or more) and then a paid doctorate program as a practicing nurse. Additionally, the type of healthcare facility and the demand for nursing services also influence salaries. Nurses working in specialized settings or those with advanced certifications tend to earn higher wages.

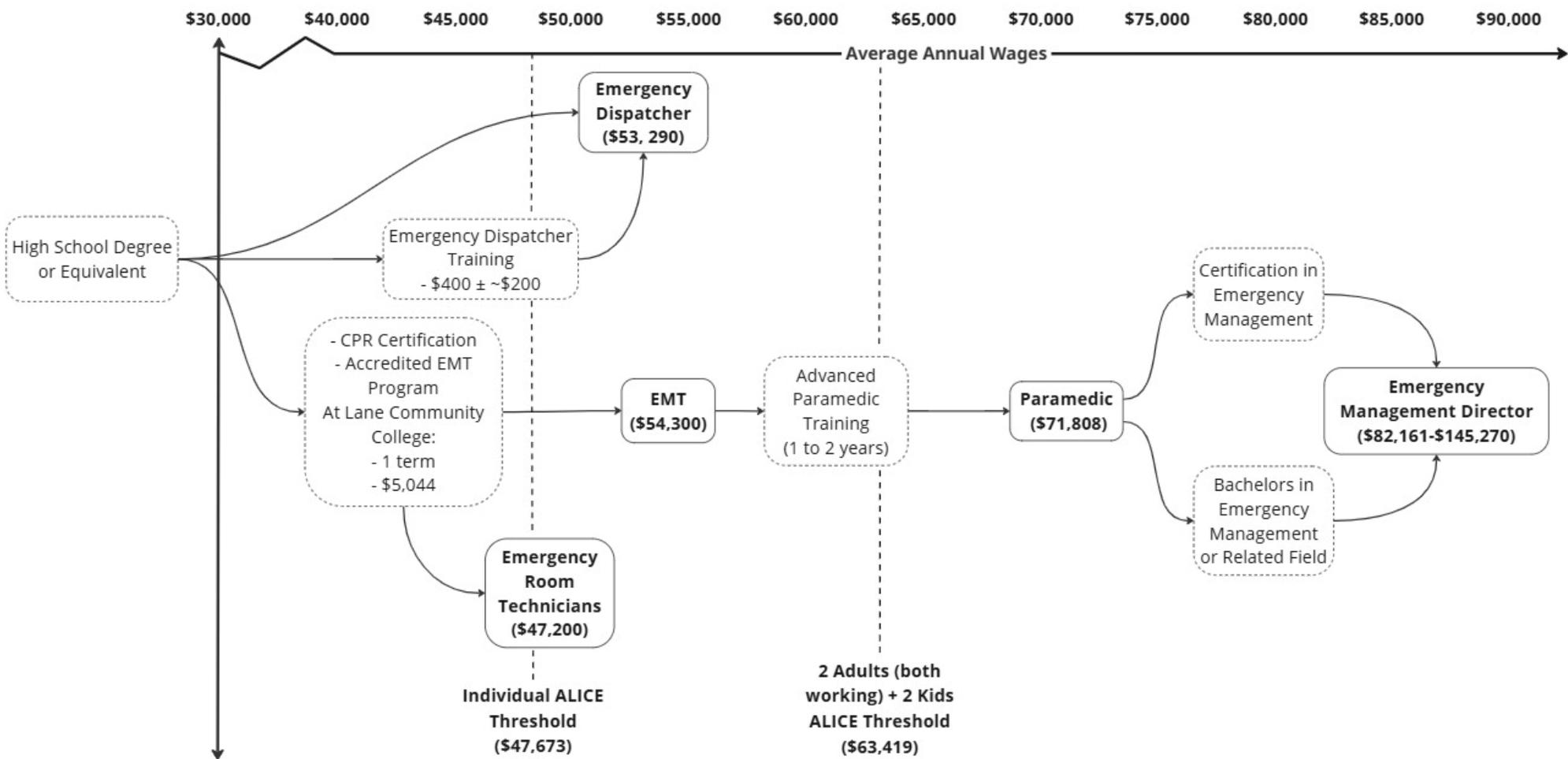
Emergency Health Services

Emergency health service jobs in Lane County are vital for ensuring the health and safety of the community. These jobs include paramedics, emergency dispatchers, and emergency room technicians, all of which provide care during medical disasters or accidents. Some of these roles are the first line of defense in saving lives in Lane County. Services also include dispatching, first aid, providing care and critical attention to accidents throughout the community, and managing first responder actions. Aside from this, emergency health professionals provide protection and safety to the residents of Lane County, making them a vital part of the workforce.

¹⁹ “Registered Nurses.”

²⁰ “How Much You Can Make With an Associate Degree in Nursing.”

Figure 3: Emergency Health Services Career Cluster



Job Pathways

For individuals who are interested in a career in emergency health services, they can start out of high school or equivalent by taking emergency dispatcher training and becoming an emergency dispatcher. Another path is obtaining their CPR certification (this can also be done while they are still a high school student). After that, Lane Community College offers an accredited EMT program, which spans one term (10-12 weeks).²¹ From here, they can apply for emergency room technician positions, or they can take their exam to become a certified EMT. Emergency dispatchers offer the fastest route, but EMT's offer more progression. After becoming an EMT, individuals can go on to become paramedics through more training and even become managers in emergency management or fill a director position through further certification or education.

Wage Analysis

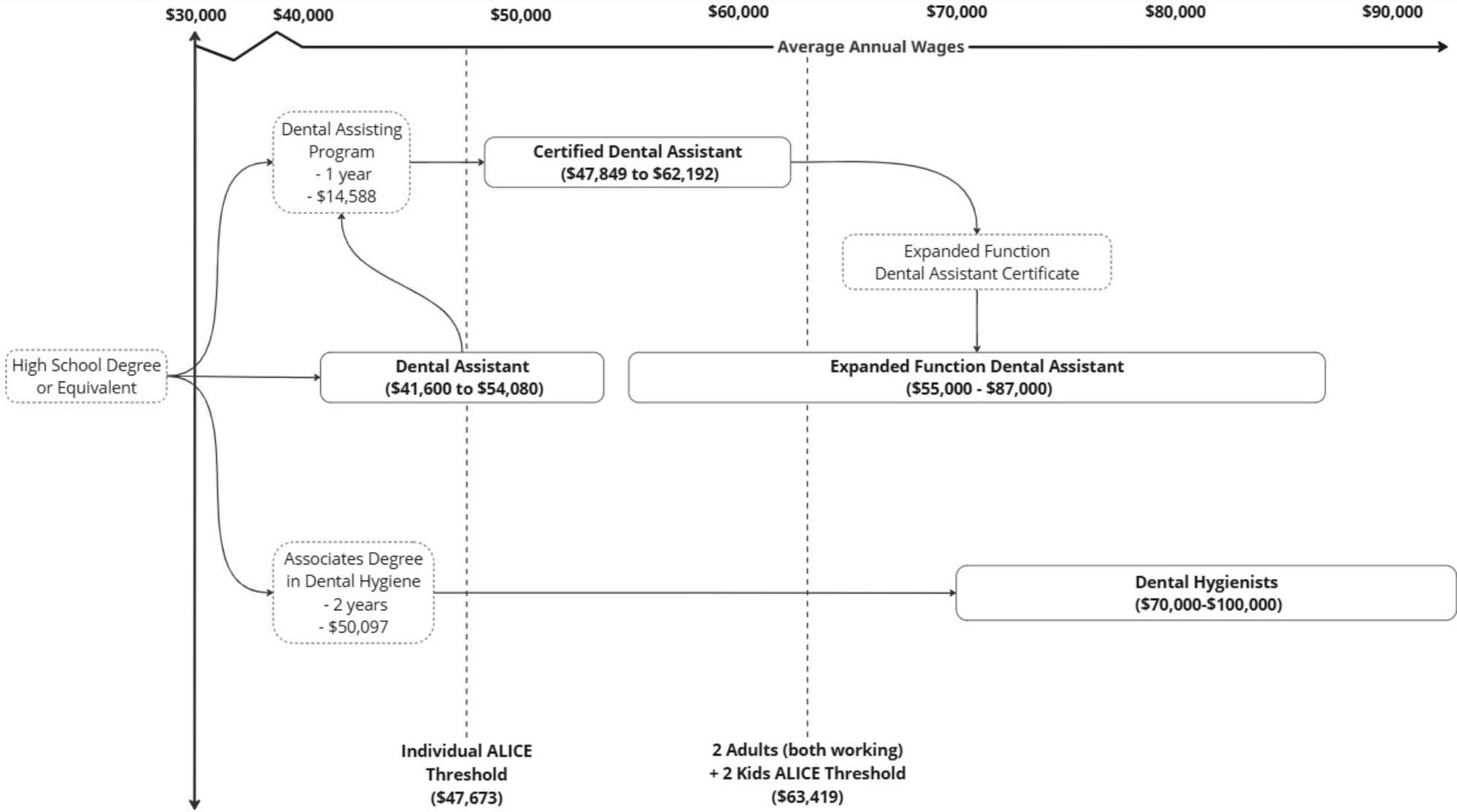
Both emergency dispatchers and certified EMTs provide careers and wages that are above the ALICE threshold. Emergency room technicians fall just short of the threshold, but with further certifications or the EMT exam, they can quickly rise above the ALICE threshold. Moving upward, paramedics offer a much higher pay range, with wages over \$20,000 higher than the ALICE average. Lastly, if individuals make it up into managerial positions, they can almost double their wages from the ALICE average.

Dental

The dental industry in Lane County is an essential part of the healthcare sector, providing a wide range of services to meet the oral health needs of the community. Oral health is closely linked to overall health, as poor dental hygiene can lead to serious health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory infections. The industry emphasizes preventive care, helping avoid more serious and costly treatments in the future through regular cleanings, fluoride treatments, and early detection of issues like cavities and gum disease. This industry is crucial to target in healthcare workforce development.

²¹ "Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) | Health, Medical, and Fitness | Lane Community College."

Figure 4: Dental Career Cluster



Job Pathways

In Oregon, dental assistants can progress through multiple levels, each with specialized duties and certification requirements. Entry-level dental assistants can perform basic tasks but must obtain an Oregon Radiologic Proficiency Certificate to take X-rays, which requires completing an approved course, passing the DANB Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam, and obtaining verification from a licensed dentist or hygienist.²²

Those seeking expanded responsibilities can become Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDAs), who can place temporary fillings, take impressions, and apply fluoride.²³ To qualify, an EFDA must hold a radiography certificate and either complete a CODA-accredited program or pass the DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam along with Oregon's EFDA exam.

Lane Community College in Lane County offers a 2-year program to get an associate's degree in dental Hygiene.²⁴ The current cost of this program is \$50,097. Lane Community College also offers a 1-year dental assisting program for \$14,588.

Further specialization is available through advanced endorsements. An EFDA with Restorative Functions Certification can place and finish fillings after completing a Board-approved restorative curriculum and passing the CDCA-WREB CITA's Dental Hygiene Restorative Exam.²⁵ An EFDA with a Local Anesthesia Functions Certificate can administer local anesthetics under indirect supervision after completing an approved curriculum.

Those interested in orthodontics can become Expanded Function Orthodontic Dental Assistants (EFODAs), allowing them to place separators and arch wires after completing a CODA-accredited orthodontic course.²⁶ Similarly, an Expanded Function Preventive Dental Assistant (EFPDA) can apply sealants and polish teeth with certification through a CODA program or by-passing Oregon's EFPDA exam.

There are 4 different pathways in Oregon one can take to get an Expanded Function Dental Assistant Certificate. These are available on the Dental Assisting National Board website.²⁷

For those working in sedation settings, Oregon offers the Anesthesia Dental Assistant certification, which permits assistants to support anesthesia administration. This requires a Health Care Provider BLS certification and completion of one of several approved anesthesia courses, such as the Dental Anesthesia Assistant National Certification Exam (DAANCE) or the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Assistants Course.²⁸ These structured pathways ensure that dental

²² "Oregon Board of Dentistry : Dental Assistants : State of Oregon."

²³ "Oregon Expanded Function Dental Assistant."

²⁴ "Dental Hygiene | Health, Medical, and Fitness | Lane Community College."

²⁵ "Oregon Expanded Function Dental Assistant."

²⁶ "Oregon Expanded Function Dental Assistant."

²⁷ "Oregon Expanded Function Dental Assistant."

²⁸ "Oregon Board of Dentistry : Dental Assistants : State of Oregon."

assistants in Oregon can advance their careers while maintaining high standards of patient care and safety.

Wage Analysis

After a maximum of two years in training, individuals can become a dental assistant, which puts them right in or above the ALICE threshold. This is the quickest way to reach a higher salary in this cluster. After time as a dental assistant, they can progress to much higher salaries within other positions. Additionally, if they choose to go straight to a certified dental assistant, they can immediately rise above the ALICE threshold through the dental assisting program.

Labor Market Supply & Demand

The healthcare sector in Lane County is navigating a dynamic labor market defined by high demand and persistent supply challenges. The aging population and lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have sharply increased the need for services such as long-term care and specialized medical treatment.²⁹ The continued expansion of healthcare facilities and service offerings further drives demand for a wide range of professionals. However, critical shortages remain—particularly in roles like registered nurses and medical technicians.³⁰

Local institutions, such as Lane Community College, are working to address these gaps by expanding healthcare training programs. Still, retention remains a concern, with burnout, labor competition, and the demanding nature of healthcare work contributing to workforce instability. Strategies to strengthen recruitment and retention include offering competitive wages, robust benefits, and professional development opportunities.³¹ In addition, the adoption of telehealth and other technologies may ease some demand pressures by increasing efficiency and access to care. As demand continues to grow, aligning workforce development strategies with the evolving needs of the sector will be essential for long-term sustainability. Below is a graphic demonstrating the top seven of this report’s identified roles projected demand for the next ten years. The chart will show the percent increase for each role in the next 5 and 10 years.

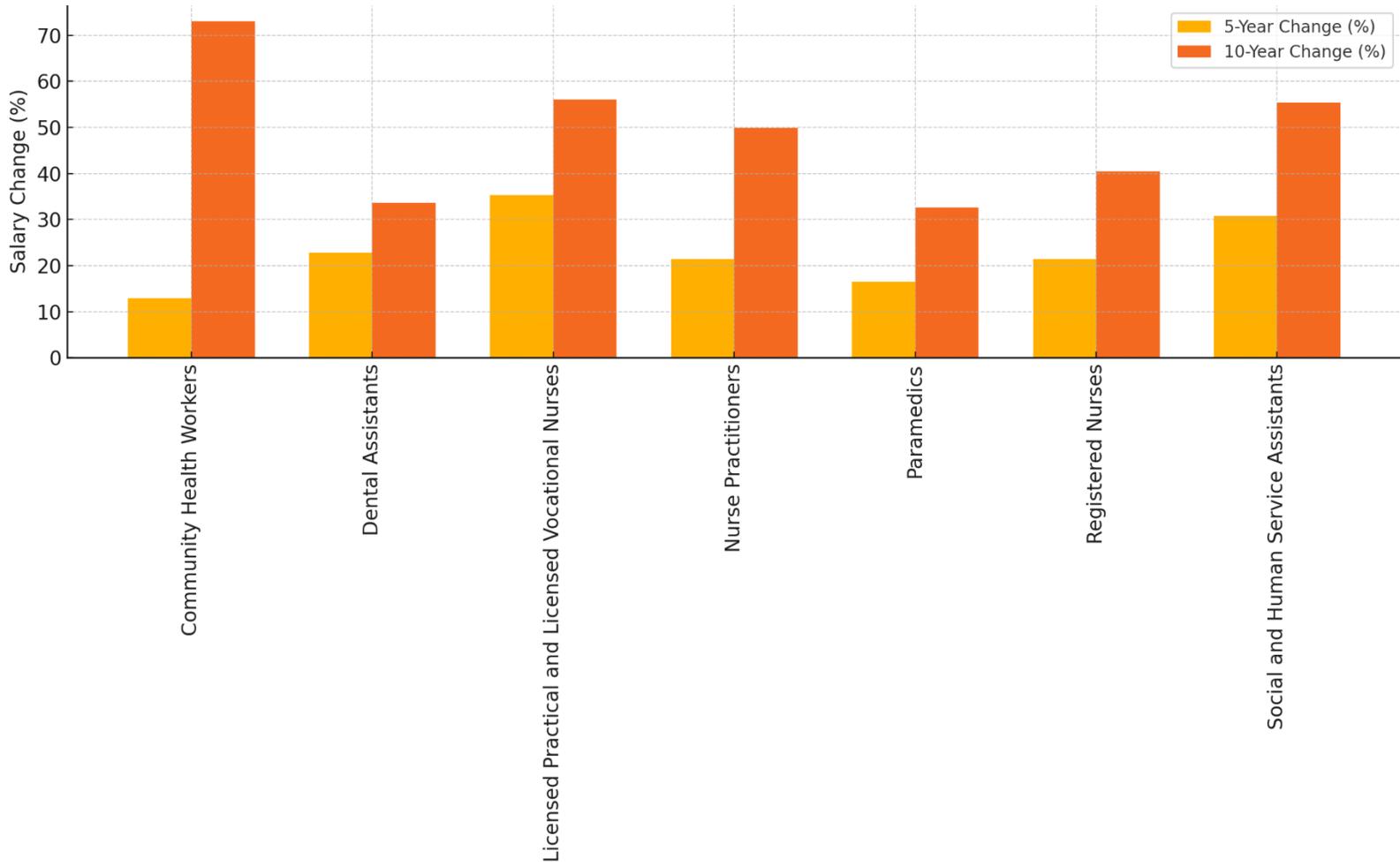
²⁹ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

³⁰ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

³¹ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

Projected Growth of Top Healthcare Careers in the Next 5 to 10 Years (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025



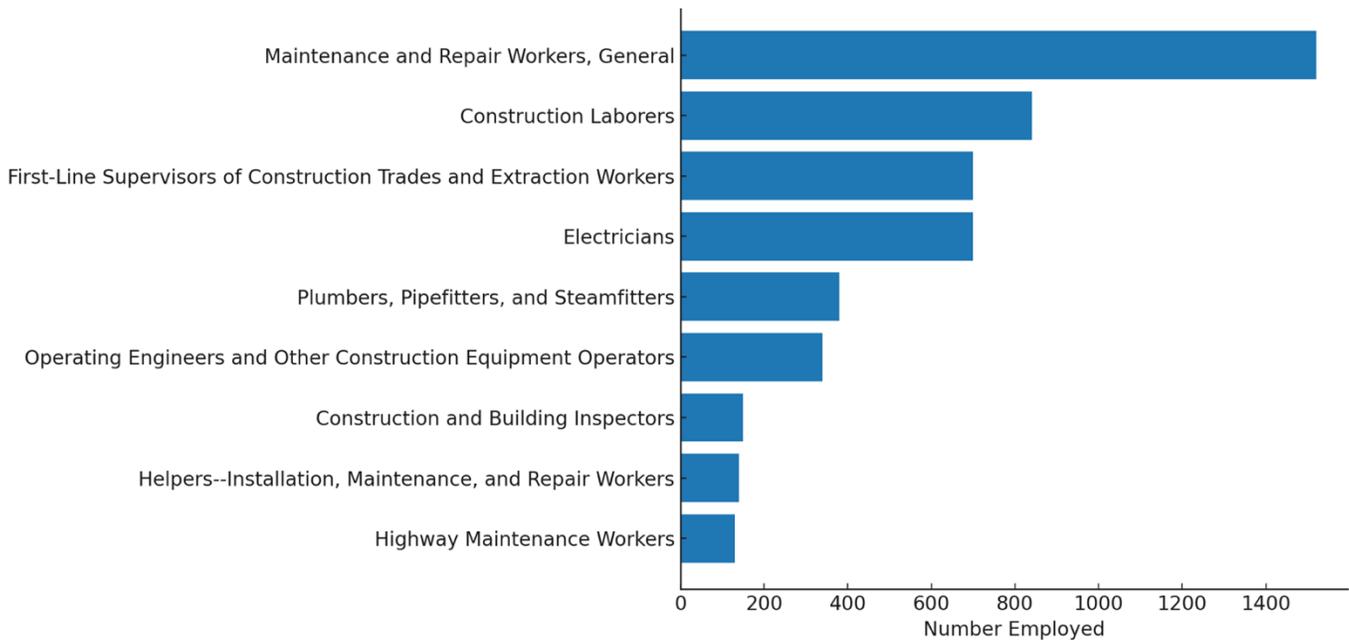
Chapter 4: Housing Sector Analysis

Housing Overview

The housing sector in Lane County offers a variety of job opportunities and faces unique challenges and growth prospects. Jobs in this sector play an important role in supporting the development and maintenance of housing. The housing sector in Lane County employed 8,188 total employees in 2023, compared to the 5,256 that were employed in 2011.³² This sector accounts for \$544 million in lane county payroll, and it is expected to grow 15% in the next ten years, adding 1,191 new jobs in this sector, along with 7,612 expected replacement openings in the next ten years.³³ Below are two figures that demonstrate the total employment rates of housing roles in Lane County, and the average annual salaries of these roles in the county.

Average Employment Rates of Housing Roles in Lane County (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025

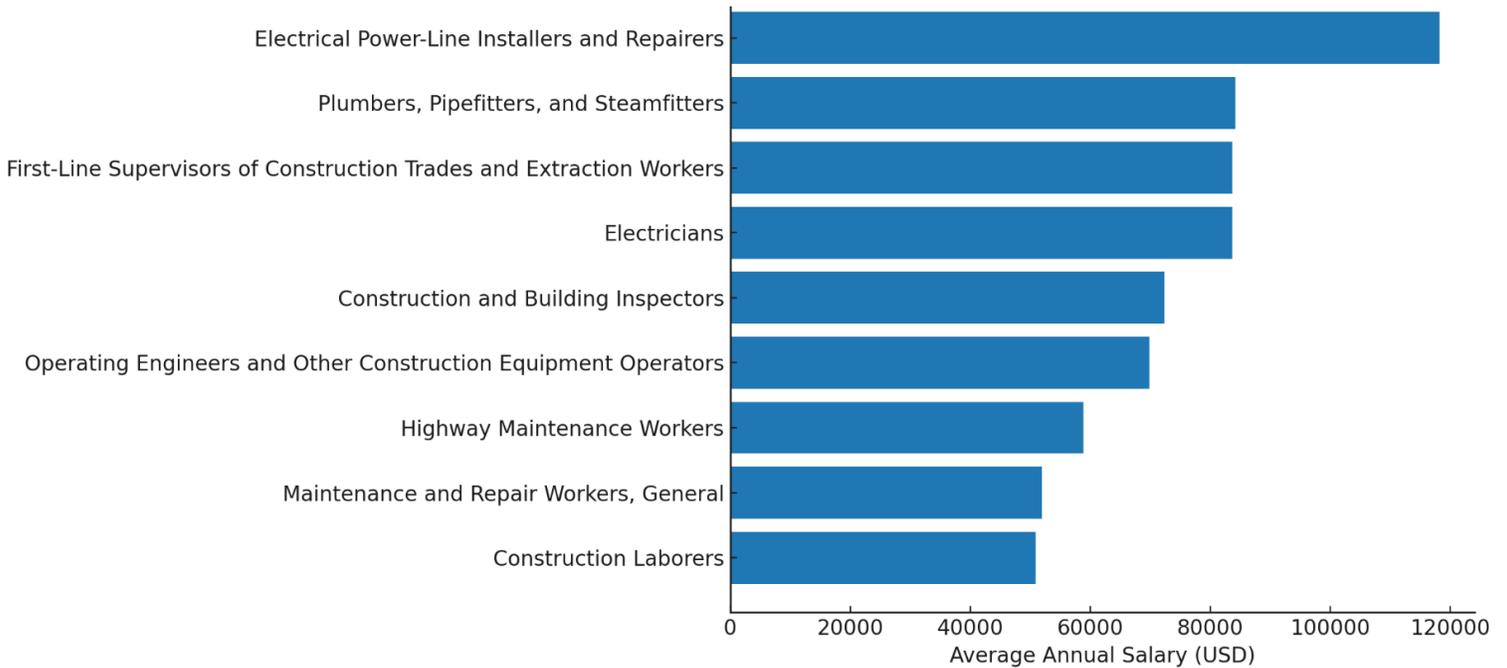


³² "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

³³ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

Average Annual Salaries of Housing Roles in Lane County (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025



The career clusters within housing that this report covers are:

- Trade industries (including plumbers, electricians, and lineworkers)
- Construction
- Maintenance or operations

In creating these specific career clusters and assigning jobs to them, we are not suggesting that these are the only clusters in the housing sector, nor that the listed jobs are exhaustive or exclusive to a single cluster or sector.

Working in this sector in Lane County offers promising job opportunities but also requires strategic planning and investment to address ongoing challenges. Each cluster's flowchart given shown after a description of the cluster begins with entry-level roles that individuals can obtain with minimal or no specific qualifications. The chart then follows different steps to take to a continuous career path, and steps by which individuals can achieve higher wages above the given income levels. Each position has the desired qualifications, the certifications or training needed, and the ways in which individuals can obtain them to move forward in their career.

Career Clusters

Trades

The trade careers used for this report's flowcharts are electrician, plumber, and lineworker. These are not all the trade careers. For brevity's sake, we look at only these three trades as entry into these trades and progression within them are similar if not identical to other trade careers.

Electricians are vital for ensuring that housing units have safe and reliable electrical systems. They install, maintain, and repair electrical wiring, fixtures, and equipment. The electrician sector in Lane County is growing, with opportunities in both new construction projects and existing housing maintenance.³⁴

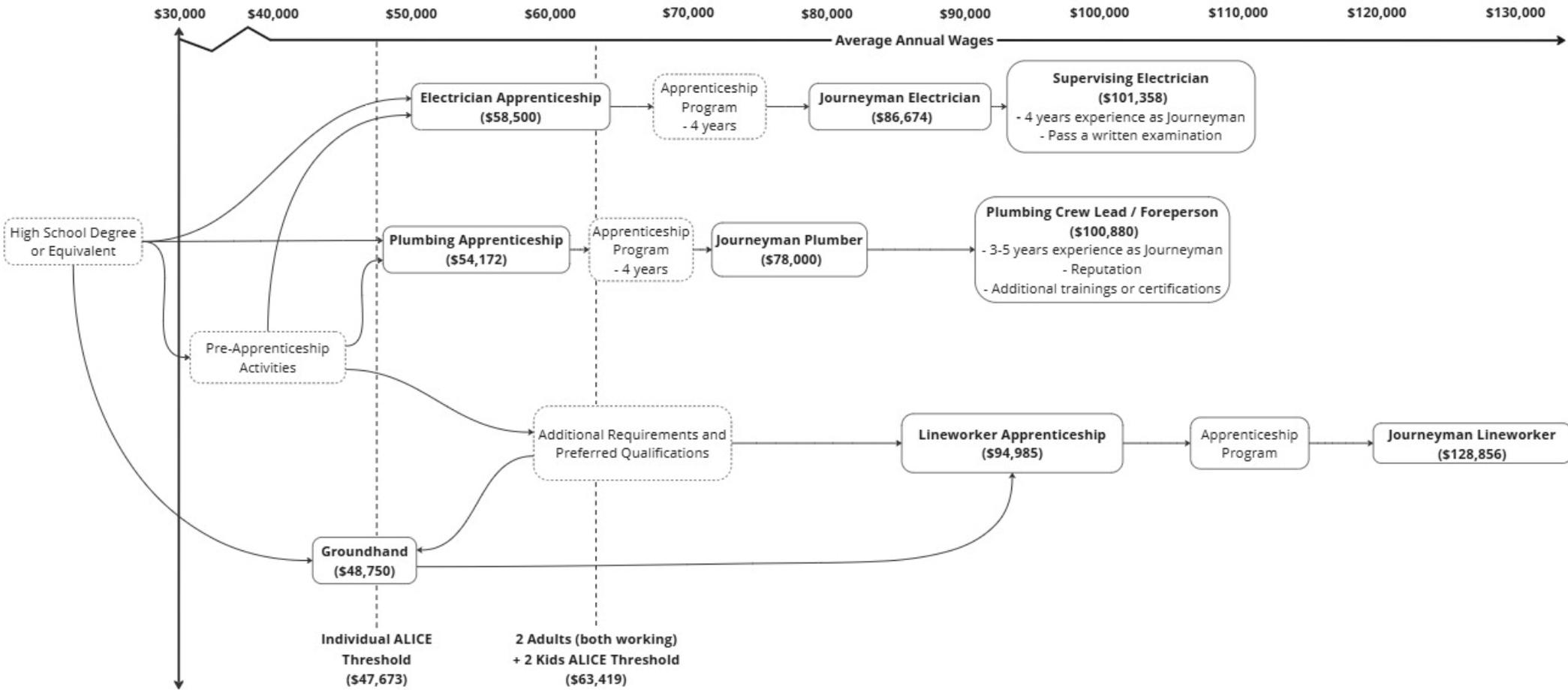
Next, plumbers play a crucial role in the housing sector by installing and maintaining water supply and drainage systems. They work on new construction projects as well as repairs and upgrades in existing homes. The plumbing sector in Lane County is experiencing growth due to the need for modern plumbing solutions and the maintenance of aging infrastructure.³⁵

Lastly, lineworkers are responsible for installing and maintaining the electrical power lines that supply energy to homes and businesses. They work on both overhead and underground power lines, ensuring that the electrical grid is functioning correctly. The lineworker sector in Lane County is essential for supporting the housing sector, as reliable power supply is critical for residential areas. This sector offers opportunities for those interested in working outdoors and handling complex electrical systems.

³⁴ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

³⁵ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

Figure 5: Skilled Trades Career Cluster



Job Pathways

The skilled trade career cluster offers multiple opportunities for residents in Lane County to become specialized in trades such as electricity, plumbing, and line working. These are all key careers that stimulate the housing sector and assist in the building, upkeep, and health of housing for Lane County. The skilled trades cluster is unique in its design, as to get into these positions, individuals must obtain and complete an apprenticeship program in their desired specialty.

The pre-apprenticeship portion are actions to be taken that can help advance candidates to a more competitive standing. Skilled trade apprenticeships are in high demand but have limited supply, especially in Lane County. These actions include getting hands on experience, obtaining algebra proficiency, completing a pre-apprenticeship program, or spending time as an entry level trades worker. An alternative option here and demonstrated in the flowchart is to become a groundskeeper after a high school degree or equivalent, instead of beginning the apprenticeship program.

Both electrician and plumbing apprenticeships have multiple programs across Lane County.³⁶ The coursework for these programs is done at Lane Community College.³⁷

Specifically, there are four plumbing apprenticeship programs in Lane County and two electrician apprenticeship programs. The programs are generally four years and are done at Lane Community College alongside hands-on work with the participating training agent. It is important to note that a person must get an apprenticeship from one of the training agents offering them before they can get into the Lane Community College program.

These programs take four years to complete but are on-the-job paid training apprenticeships. After completion, individuals may become journeymen in their specialty and then move upwards into supervisory roles and crew leads after 3-4 years of experience, and additional training or possible examinations.

Lineworker careers are an alternative path, as apprentices in this specialty generally must be employees of the participating training agent. There are two apprenticeship programs in Lane County for lineworking.³⁸ Some of the apprenticeships also require experience as a ground hand before registering as an apprentice, and this career path requires high physical fitness and motor skills.³⁹ Having a Commercial Driver's License can increase odds of employment. After the paid apprenticeship program, this path leads to a journeyman line worker role.

³⁶ "BOLI: Apprenticeship Details: Inside Electrician Apprenticeship Opportunities"; "BOLI: Apprenticeship Details: Plumber Apprenticeship Opportunities."

³⁷ "Plumbers | Industrial Trades, Technologies, Transportation, and Apprenticeship | Lane Community College"; "Inside Electricians | Industrial Trades, Technologies, Transportation, and Apprenticeship | Lane Community College."

³⁸ "BOLI: Apprenticeship Details: Lineworker Apprenticeship Opportunities."

³⁹ "BOLI: Apprenticeship Details: Lineworker Apprenticeship Opportunities."

Wage Analysis

Both the plumbing and electrician apprenticeships offer wages of \$54,000-\$58,000 which are above the ALICE threshold (\$47,673), but they are competitive in nature so the most qualified applicants may have to spend time obtaining pre-requisites before they can enter an apprenticeship. After the required 4 years of on-the-job training, journeymen electricians and journeymen plumbers make \$86,000 and \$78,000 on average and can obtain even higher wages after a few years in these roles if they wish to become upper-level management and supervisors.

Additionally, the given annual wages for the apprenticeship programs is the average of their pay across the length of their apprenticeship. For example, at the beginning of a plumbing apprenticeship program, apprentices tend to make 60% of a journeyman plumber, and at the end of the program, tend to make 80%.⁴⁰

The groundhand path begins right at the ALICE threshold, with an offered \$48,750 in Lane County. However, the line worker apprenticeship program is the highest paid of the three skilled trades, with a salary of \$94,985, so the beginning pay of a groundskeeper proves to be rewarding overtime. This path is desirable for those who will need a higher salary during their training years, as compared to the other two trade's salaries in their apprenticeship programs.

Lastly, journeymen line workers are the highest paying role for this career cluster, and upon completion of the apprenticeship program, line workers may make over \$128,000 in this role.

Overall, the skilled trades are a strong career path. It is crucial for individuals to set themselves up for a competitive candidacy application to get into the varying apprenticeship programs. The best way to obtain these roles is to complete pre-requisites for the apprenticeships and continue to re-apply for them as openings appear in the County, and completing the pre-requisites in high school is a good option for those looking to begin an apprenticeship after completion of their diploma.

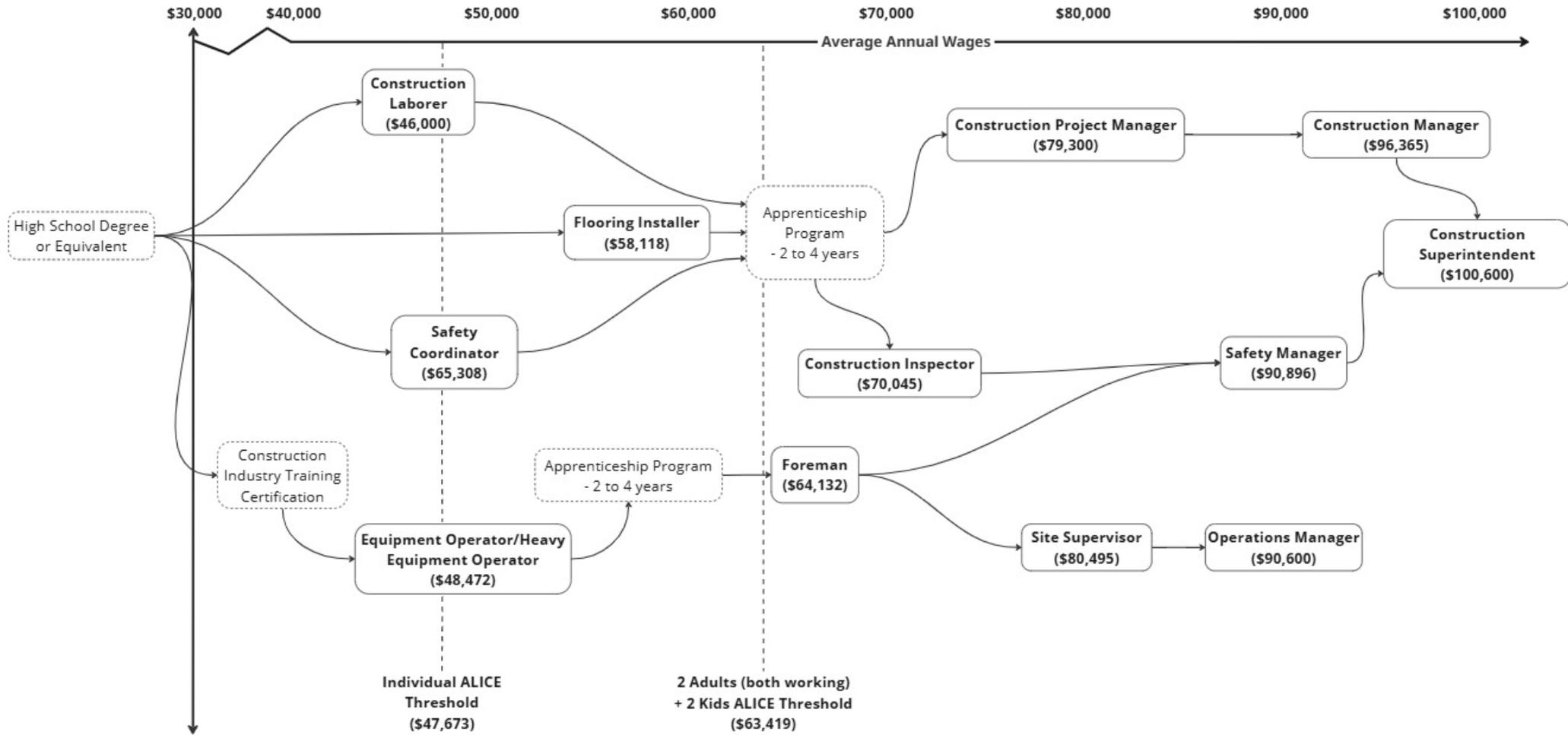
Construction

The construction industry is a significant part of the housing sector in Lane County. It involves residential and commercial building projects, renovations, and infrastructure development. Construction workers, including carpenters, masons, and general laborers, are essential for building and maintaining housing structures. The demand for skilled construction workers is high, driven by ongoing development projects and population growth.⁴¹

⁴⁰ BOLI : State of Oregon, "PWR Apprenticeship Rates Effective January 5, 2024."

⁴¹ "2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership."

Figure 6: Construction Career Cluster



Job Pathways

The construction industry in Lane County is a great way for individuals to get into a career with lots of upward movement and wage increases, beginning with a high school degree or equivalent, and a training certificate if they desire to work with heavy operating construction equipment (forklifts, etc.).

The entry level roles are construction laborer, flooring installer, and safety coordinator. These are on site jobs within construction that assist in housing projects, and require GEDs and minimal experience, and are truly entry level pathways to get into this industry.

The next step in construction is an apprenticeship program. This apprenticeship program is like the ones available for skilled trades in the previous career cluster. The construction industry in Lane County is in high demand for skilled workers, so apprenticeships are competitive. Lane County Community College offers a comprehensive training programs that combine on the job training as well as classroom instruction.⁴² Apprentices can make between \$54,181 to \$66,568 annually.

These apprenticeships are also in demand because they provide paid employment during training (2-4 years), progressive wage increases, and they may earn credit towards an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree or certificate.⁴³ The minimum requirements for these apprenticeships are a high school diploma or GED, and some may desire some college algebra experience, but Lane Community College does offer these courses as part of the classroom instruction. They require 144 hours of on the site training per year along with the classroom instruction.

After the apprenticeship, the opportunities within this sector multiply and they may move upwards into supervisory and management roles. Project managers, construction inspectors, and foremen are traditional jobs taken after a finalized apprenticeship. They may then move to operations manager, site supervisors, superintendents, and more.

Wage Analysis

The entry level roles in construction offer strong wages close to or above the ALICE threshold in Lane County. Flooring installers make over \$58,000 and safety coordinators can make \$65,000. Understanding how competitive this industry helps explain why wages start so high—the work done by people in these positions is in high demand. Through an apprenticeship program, they are paid on the job and may make between \$54,000 to \$66,000. There are progressive wage increases throughout the programs, so they begin on the lower ends and make more throughout the process.

People in apprenticeship programs are not paid at the rate of a fully trained worker, but their wages typically rise throughout the program -- reaching up to 80–85% of a full wage, depending on the trade and the program. These programs lead to higher long-term earnings and open access to full-time, salaried positions with full benefits for workers and their families. After

⁴² “Lane Community College - Construction Trades, General Apprenticeship, AAS.”

⁴³ “Lane Community College - Construction Trades, General Apprenticeship, AAS.”

completing an apprenticeship, many jobs start above \$70,000 annually, with significant wage increases at each step of career advancement into roles like safety manager, operations manager, or superintendent.

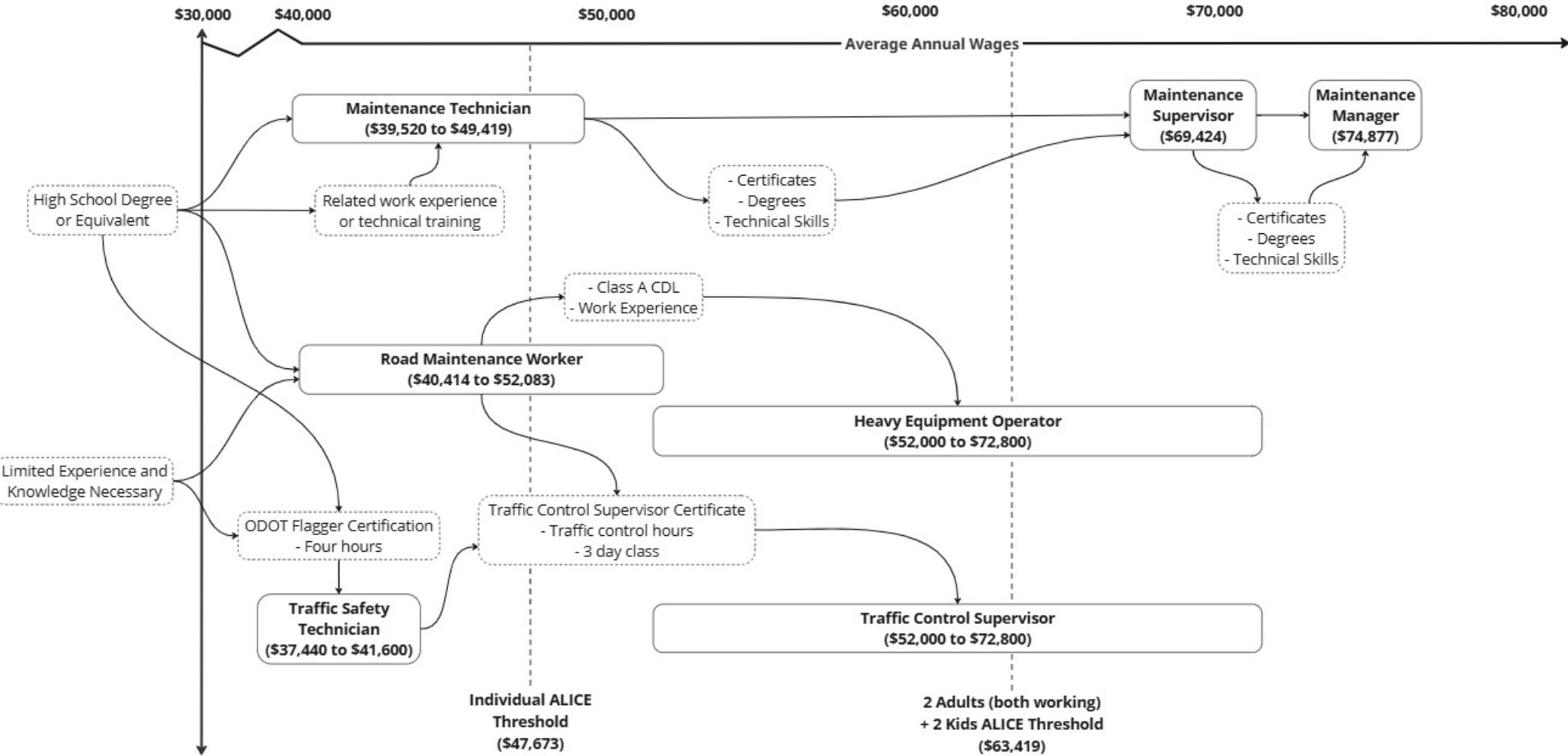
Construction is a competitive field, but it remains one of the most respected, well-paying, and stable career clusters available to Lane County residents. The most direct path into the industry is through a registered apprenticeship program. To become a strong candidate, individuals are encouraged to strengthen their math skills and gain hands-on construction experience before applying.

Maintenance and Operations

Workers in this career cluster are essential for the upkeep of housing and infrastructure, along with ensuring maintenance is done safely with minimal impact on the surrounding community. They perform a variety of tasks, including repairing appliances, fixing structural issues, and ensuring that homes are safe and habitable. The maintenance sector in Lane County is diverse, with opportunities in residential buildings, apartment complexes, and community facilities. Skilled maintenance workers are in demand to address the ongoing needs of homeowners and property managers.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

Figure 7: Maintenance and Operations Career Cluster



Job Pathways

Entry-level positions in this field include maintenance technician, road maintenance worker, and traffic safety technician. These roles involve basic repairs, upkeep of housing units, and ensuring safety around housing construction sites by securing work areas and directing residential traffic. In most cases, only a high school diploma or equivalent is required, along with limited field knowledge and minimal certifications. These positions serve as gateways to advancement into roles such as control supervisor or heavy equipment operator.⁴⁵ The training needed to move forward from these entry level roles are things such as traffic control supervisor certificates, maintenance technical skills and/or certificates, or road maintenance experience.

With experience, workers may take on supervisory responsibilities—overseeing a team, coordinating maintenance tasks, and ensuring work is completed efficiently. Further advancement can lead to department-level leadership roles involving budgeting, scheduling, and managing large-scale repair operations. While experience in the field is often sufficient to reach these roles, pursuing additional education, such as management courses or business credentials through a community college or university, can further support career growth.

Wage Analysis

Starting wages in this career pathway typically fall just below or near the ALICE threshold for Lane County (\$47,673). Maintenance technicians can earn up to \$49,000 with experience, while entry-level road maintenance workers may start as high as \$52,000. Upper management roles—such as maintenance supervisors, heavy equipment operators, and maintenance managers—offer wages in the \$70,000 to \$75,000 range. Traffic safety positions begin below the ALICE threshold, with entry-level roles ranging from \$37,000 to \$41,600. However, after completing a three-day training course and gaining traffic control experience, workers can advance to supervisory positions earning up to \$72,800. Overall, this career cluster presents strong opportunities for wage growth and upward mobility within Lane County’s workforce.

Labor Market Supply & Demand

The housing sector labor market in Lane County reflects a mix of ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, structural challenges, and emerging opportunities. Workers in this sector include construction laborers, electricians, plumbers, lineworkers, and maintenance personnel. While employment levels have returned close to pre-pandemic figures, the rising rate of retirements has reduced the availability of experienced tradespeople, particularly in supervisory and specialized roles.⁴⁶ The extent to which higher-level positions are readily available remains unclear and represents an area for future research.

Demand for labor continues to be fueled by population growth, which drives the need for new and renovated housing. The region's rising housing costs have heightened the urgency for affordable housing, increasing the need for skilled workers across construction and maintenance

⁴⁵ “Oregon Traffic Control Supervisor - Online Training.”

⁴⁶ “2024 – 2026 State of the Workforce Report | Lane Workforce Partnership.”

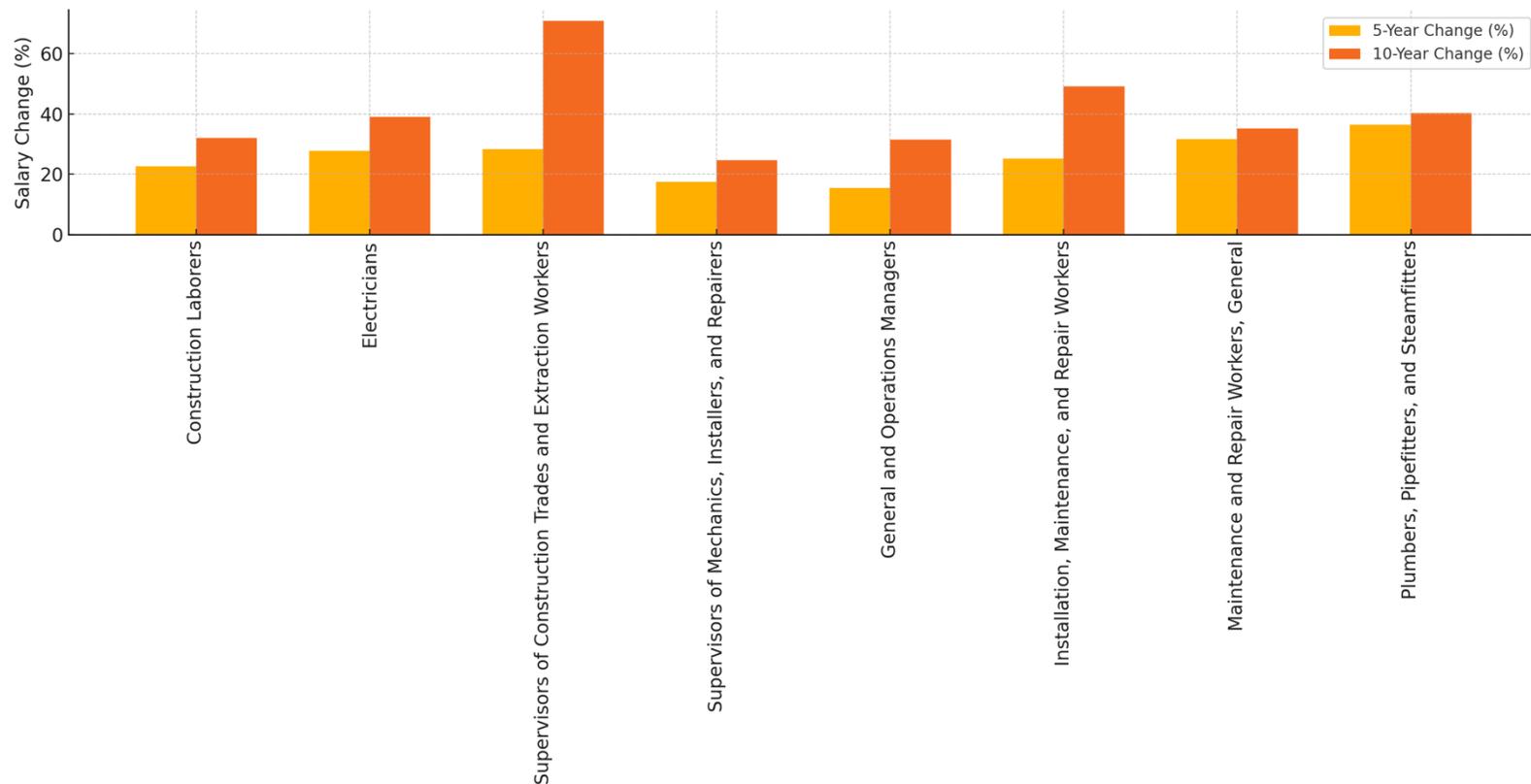
trades. However, the very cost of housing also acts as a constraint: high land and development costs can delay or deter new projects, slowing job creation within the sector.

Regulatory hurdles—including zoning restrictions, permitting delays, and evolving building codes—also shape the pace of development and can limit both the supply of housing and the demand for associated labor. These constraints, combined with labor shortages in specific trades, contribute to project delays and cost overruns.

Looking ahead, the housing sector in Lane County is expected to grow in step with the region’s population and economic development. Sustaining this growth will require coordinated efforts to improve housing affordability, streamline regulatory processes, and expand training opportunities to meet the evolving demands of the workforce. Below is a graphic demonstrating the top eight of this report’s identified roles projected demand for the next ten years. The chart will show the percent increase for each role in the next 5 and 10 years.

Projected Growth of Top Housing Careers in the Next 5 to 10 Years (2024)

Source: U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025



Chapter 5: Comparative Analysis

This chapter will focus on analyzing four different factors to describe the benefits of the career clusters presented for each sector. It's important to highlight that this comparison does not define whether one sector is better than another, but it aims to emphasize what each sector can offer, and the different characteristics each has. This information can be used to inform which career cluster or sector is best for specific needs of individuals and households.

The four factors we considered to evaluate the sectors were

- **Barriers to entry:** This factor demonstrates how hard it is to get into the career cluster. The career clusters with the lowest barriers to entry are opportunities for individuals to enter a field with the least amount of education or certification required for entry level roles.
- **Highest long-term earning potential:** This factor shows how much money will be made while you navigate through the career cluster. Careers with this characteristic will offer the highest salary increases and wages as individuals progress through the cluster.
- **More accessible training pathways:** This factor demonstrates which career clusters offer more opportunities to get trained without large barriers, such as educational requirements. Careers with this characteristic will have accessible apprenticeships and on the job training options.
- **Best pathways out of poverty:** This final factor is based on the previous three factors. The career clusters that have more appearances in the previous three factors will be considered the best pathways out of poverty.

We assess these four factors using five criteria to determine whether a cluster falls under the factor or not. These five criteria are:

- **Education required:** What level of education is required. Highly associated with the first factor, "Barriers to entry".
- **Certification required:** What certifications are required. Highly associated with the first factor, "Barriers to entry".
- **Time taken:** How long does it take to obtain the job title. Highly associated with the third factor, "More accessible training pathways".
- **Expenses:** How much money is invested in getting the job title. Highly associated with the second factor, "Highest long-term earning potential".
- **Wages:** How much money is made once you get the position. Highly associated with the second factor, "Highest long-term earning potential".

Summary Table of Criteria

Sector	Career Cluster	Education	Certification	Time Taken	Wages	Expenses
Healthcare	Homecare	X	X			
	Emergency Health Services	X	X	X	X	
	Nursing				X	X
Housing	Maintenance & Operations	X	X			
	Trades			X	X	X

Which career clusters have the lowest barriers to entry?

In the healthcare sector, two career clusters have low barriers to entry: (1) Home Care, and (2) Emergency Health Services. These career clusters do not require a high school degree and certifications for every role. On the housing sector side, Maintenance & Operations appears as the career cluster with the lowest barriers to entry because it only requires a high school degree, and there are no apprenticeship requirements.

Healthcare

Home Care

- **Education required:** No high school diploma required for entry-level roles (e.g., personal care attendant, homecare aide).
- **Certification required:** Entry roles often only require on-the-job training.
- **Certification required:** Initial certifications (e.g., CPR, personal support certification) are low-cost and short-term.

Emergency Health Services

- **Education required:** High school students or recent grads can enter through emergency dispatcher training or CPR certification.

- **Certification required:** EMT programs are short (about 10–12 weeks) and available at local institutions like Lane Community College.
- **Wages:** Offers quick progression to roles that exceed the ALICE wage threshold.

Housing

Maintenance & Operations

- **Education required:** Most entry-level roles (e.g., maintenance technician, road maintenance worker, traffic safety technician) require only a high school diploma or GED.
- **Certification required:** Many of these roles require limited field knowledge or short training courses (e.g., a three-day course for traffic control).
- **Certification required:** No apprenticeship requirement.

Which career clusters have the highest long-term earning potential?

In the healthcare sector, two career clusters have the highest long-term earning potential: (1) Nursing, and (2) Emergency Health Services. These career clusters can reach a salary of about \$159,000. On the housing sector side, Trades is assessed as the career cluster with the highest long-term earning potential; nevertheless, even when salaries can go up to \$80,000–\$128,000+, these trades require a high initial investment in training.

Healthcare

Nursing

- **Wages:** The maximum salary could go up to \$159,000+.
- **Expenses:** Offers employer-supported continuing education (e.g., tuition reimbursement).

Emergency Health Services

- **Wages:** The maximum salary could go up to \$145,000+.
- Also, for this position further education or experience can lead to high-level administrative or public safety positions.

Housing

Trades

- Lineworker earning scale:
 - Apprenticeship salary: \$94,985
 - Journeyman salary: \$128,000+
- Electricians earning scale:
 - Apprenticeship: \$54,000–\$58,000

- Journeyman: \$86,000, with potential for higher earnings in supervisory roles.
- Plumbers:
 - Journeyman: ~\$78,000+, also with advancement potential.
- **Expenses / Time taken:** These trades require higher initial investment in training (competitive apprenticeships, 4-year programs)
- **Wages:** They offer the highest ceiling for earnings, especially when factoring in fringe benefits (which can add \$36.65/hour in value depending on employer and union status).

Which career clusters have more accessible training pathways?

Now, considering which career clusters are the most accessible training pathways, in the housing sector there are two that stand out: (1) Home Care, and (2) Emergency Health Services. These career clusters don't ask for too many certifications and don't require a long-time investment. Conversely, in the housing sector, Maintenance and Operations stands out as the most accessible training program pathway, and it offers career growth through hands-on experience and optional management or business courses later.

Healthcare

Home Care

- **Education required:** Entry without high school diploma.
- **Certification required:** On-the-job training or short professional development courses.
- **Certification required:** CPR and health navigation certifications (often free or low-cost via community programs).

Emergency Health Services

- **Certification required:** Start with CPR certification and emergency dispatcher training (can be completed during or after high school).
- **Time taken:** Lane Community College EMT program: ~10–12 weeks.

Housing

Maintenance & Operations

- **Education required:** Most jobs only require a high school diploma or GED.
- **Certification required:** No apprenticeships are needed, unlike trades and construction, so individuals can start working immediately and gain skills on the job.

Which career clusters offer the best pathway out of poverty?

Now, considering what was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, to assess which career clusters offer the best pathway out of poverty, we must look at how many times they were highlighted in the previous three factors.

The best pathways out of poverty are offered by Home Care and Emergency Health Services in the healthcare sector, and Trades in the housing sector. On the one hand, in the healthcare sector, Home Care and Emergency Health Services offer a good pathway out of poverty because the education required to enter the career clusters is low, and there is a high starting pay and rapid progression. Also, even when nursing was considered in one category (highest long-term earning potential), it is a good option for people who are willing to invest time into getting a job title because it provides one of the fastest and most efficient routes to a salary above the ALICE threshold. This route includes starting at in community college and receiving a nursing assistant role, which can then lead to a CNA to LPN program, into a licensed nurse. Also, nursing provides fast upward mobility, high wage ceiling, and strong demand make it an interesting pathway out of poverty.

On the other hand, in the housing sector, Maintenance & Operations and Trades (which includes electricians, plumbers, and lineworkers) are presented as the best pathway out of poverty. First, regarding Maintenance & Operations, this career cluster only requires a high school diploma or GED for its entry-level jobs, and doesn't require certifications (a few times, apprenticeships are needed). Secondly, regarding Trades, this is a good option because: (1) it presents high wages early in training, (2) fringe benefits significantly boost overall compensation, (3) there is a secured strong long-term earning potential, and (4) exist a clear progression from apprentice to journeyman to supervisory roles.

Finally, this chapter showed how some of the career clusters are a good pathway to get out of poverty, and it's important to highlight how each career cluster differs from the others. There are options for people who want to sign up for college and start getting educated through an institution, but also for people who immediately want to start working without considering any educational experience on a campus. Whatever people decide must be according to what their strengths and weaknesses are and based on their self-assessment.

Chapter 6: Findings and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of findings and final thoughts on workforce development strategies in Lane County. It will identify promising strategies for connecting ALICE and impoverished residents with training for workforce development and career pathways. This chapter will also offer policy and program suggestions to improve access to jobs in the future.

Findings

The analysis of Lane County’s healthcare and housing sectors reveals several important insights into the region’s workforce development landscape, particularly for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) individuals and those living below the poverty line. First, both sectors offer viable pathways to economic stability, with numerous entry-level roles that require minimal formal education or training. These roles serve as accessible starting points for individuals seeking to enter a particular career cluster and transition into more stable employment.

Specific Sector Findings

- In the healthcare sector, career clusters such as **home care** and **emergency health services** present low barriers to entry and relatively quick progression to roles above the ALICE income threshold.
- **Nursing** stands out as a high-potential pathway, offering strong wage growth and long-term career advancement.
- Similarly, the housing sector—especially the **skilled trades**—provides high-earning potential through structured apprenticeship programs, though access to these programs remains competitive and limited.

Availability of Employment Findings

- The report also finds that while many entry-level roles are accessible, sustained upward mobility often depends on the availability of training, certifications, and support services.
- Apprenticeships, community college and other college programs, and employer-sponsored training are essential for career progression but are not always readily available or accessible to all residents.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of targeted workforce development strategies that align with local labor market demands, reduce barriers to entry, and support long-term career growth. By focusing on sectors with strong job growth and community impact, workforce developers in Lane County can create more inclusive and resilient economic opportunities for its residents.

Recommendations

To effectively connect ALICE and impoverished residents with sustainable employment opportunities in healthcare and housing, the following strategies are recommended:

Promote Awareness of Career Pathways

To ensure equitable access to workforce opportunities, it is essential to raise awareness among residents—particularly those in ALICE households—about available career pathways, training programs, and support services. This could mean utilizing and expanding multiple communication channels (social media, community centers, local media, or schools), providing multilingual materials, and partnering with community organizations.

Invest in Data and Evaluation

Data systems are critical for tracking workforce outcomes and guiding continuous improvement. To do this, it is important to establish systems to track workforce outcomes, identify bottlenecks in career progression, and evaluate the effectiveness of training programs. This data can inform continuous improvement and ensure that resources are directed where they are most needed.

Specifically, this recommendation could mean developing centralized platforms to collect and analyze data on training participation, job placement, wage progression, and retention, identifying barriers to career advancement and adjusting programs, using data to inform funding decisions, and expanding visual tools such as the career pathway flowcharts.

To implement this recommendation, Lane Workforce Partnership—as the region’s local workforce development board—would be well-positioned to coordinate data collection and analysis across partners. Alternatively, Lane County could take a more active role by integrating workforce data systems into its broader economic development and human services planning. Of course, this depends on whether either organization has the capacity and resources to take on this project.

Partner with Training and Educational Organizations

Integrating these flowcharts in outreach and planning materials is also a strong way to get individuals information about opportunities. Additionally, collaborating with Lane Community College and other educational providers will help ensure that curricula and certification programs are aligned with current and projected labor market demands. This includes integrating soft skills, digital literacy, and job readiness training into existing programs. This will help ensure the training needed is available and supported.

By implementing these recommendations, Lane County can strengthen its workforce infrastructure, reduce economic disparities, and unlock the full potential of its residents.

Chapter 7: Further Research

This report provides a starting point, but several areas remain where additional research could strengthen our understanding of workforce pathways and their relationship to ALICE status in Lane County. These opportunities fall into two broad categories: refining the work completed in this report and pursuing new directions that build on—but go beyond—what we had the capacity to explore.

Refining Existing Analyses

Several areas of research could improve the precision and clarity of the work already undertaken:

- **Clarify career transitions for ALICE workers.**
Future research could identify the most common jobs currently held by residents under the ALICE threshold and analyze what realistic pathways exist for them to transition into higher-wage roles. This would help determine which career moves are both desirable and feasible for different populations.
- **Assess how existing experience can be leveraged.**
This includes examining how past work experience might transfer into new roles or help individuals qualify for training programs. It could also involve identifying what additional training or certifications are required—and how those credentials can be made more accessible to people working full time or multiple jobs.
- **Improve wage data accuracy.**
This report relied on publicly available online sources and union agreements for wage data. We did not conduct interviews with workers or employers, so we were limited to posted wage ranges that may not reflect actual earnings. A follow-up study could include direct conversations with employers and workers to collect more representative data.
- **Incorporate a time dimension into pathways.**
More research is needed to understand:
 - How long it typically takes to move from one position to another in a pathway
 - How long it takes to progress within a job's pay range
 - The duration of required training, certifications, or education

These time factors—alongside cost and scheduling constraints—play a major role in determining whether a career pathway is truly viable, especially for people supporting families or managing immediate income needs.

New Directions for Future Research

The following are areas that go beyond the scope of this report but could provide valuable insight for workforce development in Lane County:

- **Expand the flowcharts.**
 Future work could develop an expanded set of career flowcharts by including additional clusters or mapping more roles within the existing clusters. This would give a more complete picture of Lane County’s job landscape and allow for deeper career exploration across sectors.
- **Identify bottlenecks in career progression.**
 Research could identify points in the flowcharts where people are unable to move forward, such as when mid-level roles are already filled, training programs are at capacity, or credentialing is out of reach.
- **Estimate job availability by role.**
 It would be useful to estimate how many positions exist in Lane County for each role identified in the flowcharts. This includes how many are filled versus unfilled, which employers offer them, and whether demand is growing or shrinking.
- **Match labor supply to job demand.**
 With this information, it becomes possible to assess whether the labor supply matches workforce needs, especially for roles critical to society such as nurses, electricians, and housing maintenance workers. If gaps exist, strategies could be developed to build pipelines into these fields.
- **Understand barriers to entry and progression.**
 Finally, further research could explore why more people aren’t entering or advancing in these careers. Some of this may be explained by previous points—such as bottlenecks or job scarcity—but other factors may include a lack of awareness, perceived inaccessibility, or unclear steps to entry. For example, someone may not know a job like nursing assistant exists, or that it leads to higher-paying roles, or may not know how to begin that path. Identifying these gaps could improve how we communicate and structure career pathways.

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