

**Office of Foreign Labor Certification Technical Release Notes for the Occupational
Employment and Wage Statistics Update
Wage Year 2026-27**

Effective July 1, 2026

The Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC) will apply the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) wages for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 (Wage Year 2026-27).¹ This data is based on BLS's May 2025 wage estimates.²

Below are technical release notes explaining how OFLC will apply the 2018 SOC structure to OEWS wages for the July 2026 through June 2027 wage year. In certain instances, the 2018 SOC codes may be aggregated, may not have wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations, may not have American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act (ACWIA) Higher Education wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations, or may not have Job Zone data due to the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) data limitations. Examples of such instances are presented below.

2018 SOC Detailed Occupations Aggregated into a Single Broad OEWS Occupation

OEWS has aggregated certain 2018 SOC detailed occupations into a single broad occupation. OFLC will apply the single broad occupation wage estimate to each of the 2018 SOC detailed occupations. OEWS has published a list of OEWS occupations and definitions that include SOC detailed occupations that have been aggregated. This list can be found at https://www.bls.gov/oes/occupation_definitions_m2025.xlsx. See example below.

13-1020, Buyers and Purchasing Agents: OFLC will apply the wage for this broad occupation to the following SOC detailed occupations:

- 13-1021, *Buyers and Purchasing Agents, Farm Products*
- 13-1022, *Wholesale and Retail Buyers, Except Farm Products*
- 13-1023, *Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail, and Farm Products*

OEWS Was Unable to Provide Wage Estimates for One 2018 SOC Detailed Occupation Due to Data Limitations

45-3031, Fishing and Hunting Workers, does not have wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations. OFLC will continue to apply the same guidelines from previous years. OFLC will apply the OEWS mean wage for the 2018 SOC major group 45-0000, *Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations* to all wage levels of 45-3031, *Fishing and Hunting*

¹ See Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 2018, available at https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/soc_2018_manual.pdf (providing further information regarding definitions of particular classification of occupations); see also O*NET-SOC 2019 Taxonomy, available at <https://www.onetcenter.org/taxonomy.html#latest> (providing further information on how the O*NET-SOC 2019 taxonomy structure has been revised based on transition to 2018 SOC).

² See Occupational Employment Wage Statistics, available at <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>.

Workers. OFLC will apply the OEWS wage estimate in the most geographically specific area.

- OFLC will first look at OEWS wage estimates published at the MSA or non-MSA level (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/2025/may/oessrema.htm>).
- If no MSA or non-MSA data is available, OFLC will use state-level data (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/2025/may/oessrcst.htm>).
- When a location is within a multistate MSA, OFLC will use state-wide data for the first principal city listed in the MSA (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bulletin-20-01.pdf>).
- Absent a state value, OFLC will use the national wage estimates (<https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/area/0000000/2025>).

SOC Detailed Occupations That Do Not Have an ACWIA Higher Education Wage Estimate Due to OEWS Data Limitations

Certain occupations do not have ACWIA Higher Education wage estimates due to OEWS data limitations. For these occupations, OFLC will continue to apply ACWIA Higher Education wage estimates for the most closely aligned occupation based on 2018 SOC occupational definitions and wage patterns. OFLC will first select the appropriate 2018 SOC code and assess the appropriate wage level. Then, if no ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate is available, OFLC will assign a wage from the most closely aligned occupation with an ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate. See example below.

29-1011, Chiropractors: OFLC will apply the ACWIA Higher Education wage estimate for 29-1123, *Physical Therapists*, which is the most closely aligned occupation, based on the 2018 SOC occupational definitions and wage patterns.

Geographic Areas That Do Not Have an ACWIA Higher Education Wage Estimate Due to OEWS Data Limitation

For certain occupations, an ACWIA wage estimate may be available in some but not all geographic locations. When an ACWIA wage estimate for the occupation is not available in a geographic location, OFLC will assign the ACWIA wage estimate from an adjacent geographic location that has an ACWIA wage available for that occupation. See example below.

19-3022, Survey Researchers, has ACWIA wage estimates available in most geographic locations, but does not have wages available in the Dover, DE MSA. OFLC will apply the wages for the adjacent MSA, which is Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD MSA.

Application of High Wage Estimate for Geographic Areas and Occupations That Do Not Have Wage Data Due to OEWS Data Limitations

For some occupations in certain geographic areas OEWS determines that wages are too high to

provide an estimate because most of the data fall into the top, open-ended wage interval. In these geographic locations, the actual wage estimate is at or above \$115 per hour (\$239,200.00 per year). Therefore, OFLC will issue the prevailing wage as \$115.00 per hour or \$239,200.00 per year as indicated in the OEWS data. See example below.

29-1216.00, General Internal Medicine Physicians in the Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH MSA: OFLC will issue the prevailing wage as \$115.00 per hour or \$239,200.00 per year for this occupation as indicated in OEWS wage estimates.

O*NET Detailed Occupations Under Job Zone 1-2

In its February 2026 release (30.2), O*NET combined Job Zones 1 and 2 into a consolidated category of Job Zone 1-2. O*NET states that Job Zone 1-2 continues to include two types of occupations: those which require “little or no previous experience” and those which require “several months to a year of experience.”³ Occupations requiring over one year of experience (falling into Job Zone 3, Job Zone 4, or Job Zone 5) are not impacted by this update.

OFLC is evaluating the optimal way to apply the Job Zone structure in a way that accurately reflects occupational norms. In the interim, for Wage Year 2026-27, OFLC will continue to assign Job Zone 1 or Job Zone 2 to each occupation that O*NET has assigned as a Job Zone 1-2 occupation in release 30.3, based on the Job Zone assigned by OFLC during Wage Year 2025-26.

Furthermore, occupations that are assigned Job Zone 1-2 that were assigned Job Zone 3 in Wage Year 2025-26 will be assigned Job Zone 2. O*NET states that Job Zone 3 occupations require “one or two years of training involving both on-the-job experience and informal training with experienced workers,” which exceeds the requirements for occupations within Job Zone 1-2. Therefore, OFLC has determined that it is not appropriate to assign to these occupations the higher Job Zone 3 used during Wage Year 2025-26.

A list of the Job Zones to be applied will be available on the OFLC website (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor>). See examples below.

45-2092.00, Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse: In O*NET Release 30.3, this occupation is assigned Job Zone 1-2. In Wage Year 2025-26, this occupation was assigned Job Zone 1. Therefore, in Wage Year 2026-27, this occupation will continue to be assigned Job Zone 1.

47-2022.00, Stonemasons: In O*NET Release 30.3, this occupation is assigned Job Zone 1-2. In Wage Year 2025-26, this occupation was assigned Job Zone 3. Therefore, in Wage Year 2026-27, this occupation will be assigned Job Zone 2.

³ O*NET Job Zone Reference, available at https://www.onetcenter.org/dictionary/30.2/excel/job_zone_reference.html.

O*NET Detailed Occupations That Do Not Have Job Zone Data

Not all 2018 O*NET detailed occupations have Job Zone data due to O*NET data limitations. For 2018 O*NET detailed occupations with no available Job Zone data, OFLC will use the methodology announced in its November 15, 2021 *Federal Register* notice.⁴ A list of the Job Zones to be applied to these occupations will be available on the OFLC website (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor>). See example below.

13-2099.00, Financial Specialists, All Other, for example, does not have an established Job Zone in O*NET. OFLC assigned Job Zone 5 to this occupation by calculating the mean of the other O*NET detailed occupations in the same SOC broad occupation, 13-2090. These detailed occupations are 13-2099.01, *Financial Quantitative Analysts*, Job Zone 5, and 13-2099.04, *Fraud Examiners, Investigators and Analysts*, Job Zone 4.

OEWS Broad Occupations That Do Not Have Education Data

OEWS has aggregated certain SOC detailed occupations into a single OEWS broad occupation. OFLC will apply the applicable education level of the OEWS broad occupation to each 2018 SOC detailed occupation. A list of the education levels to be applied to these occupations will be available on the OFLC website (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/foreign-labor>).

⁴ See Update to Appendix A to the Preamble-Education and Training Categories by O*NET-SOC Occupations; Labor Certification for Permanent Employment of Immigrants in the United States and Procedures To Establish Job Zone Values When O*NET Job Zone Data Are Unavailable, 87 FR 63070 (Nov. 15, 2021), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/15/2021-24813/update-to-appendix-a-to-the-preamble->.