An Overview of New Mexico’s Long-Term Occupation Projections
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New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions’s (NMDWS) Economic Research and Analysis Bureau (ER&A) has finalized long-term projections for the 2012 to 2022 period. New Mexico’s employment projections are produced in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor’s (US DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Employment projections are based on methodologies developed by US DOL for forecasting state and area occupational needs using both national information and procedures specifically adapted to each state’s industrial and occupational patterns.

Employment projections are designed to assist students, job seekers, educators, employers, and public and private groups in their individual planning and reporting activities. Employment growth and occupational job openings provide insight into key growth sectors and potential areas of decline in New Mexico’s labor market.

Long-term projections have been prepared for New Mexico, its four metropolitan statistical areas (Albuquerque, Farmington, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe), and four Workforce Investment Act (WIA) regions (Central, Northern, Eastern, and Southwestern). Projections are available for over 100 industry subsectors and close to 800 detailed occupations at the state and substate levels.

This article provides information on occupation employment projections at the statewide level. An overview of industry employment projections was presented in the September Labor Market Review, Volume 43, Number 9, published October 24, 2014 (found at www.dws.state.nm.us/LaborMarketInformation/Publications/LaborMarketReview). Data on substate areas and detailed information on methodology, definitions, assumptions, and limitations can be found in the 2012-2022 Employment Projections Report, which is available on the NMDWS website under Labor Market Information, Economic Research Publications (www.dws.state.nm.us/LaborMarketInformation/Publications/EconomicResearchPublications). All projections data is currently available at www.jobs.state.nm.us/analyzer.

Projected Employment Growth Overview

Employment in New Mexico is projected to grow from approximately 845,380 to 946,990 between 2012 and 2022. This represents growth of 101,610, or 12.0 percent. Growth is projected to result in an average of 30,540 job openings annually during the 10-year period. Approximately 10,780 of these openings will come from growth, or jobs not previously held by any worker, while 19,760 openings are projected to come from the need to replace workers who left the occupation permanently (e.g., moving into another occupation, retiring).

Projected Percentage Employment Growth

New Mexico, MSAs & Regions, 2012-2022

The Albuquerque MSA is projected to see the fastest employment growth over the 10-year projection period (14.9 percent) of all four MSAs; Santa Fe’s employment is projected to grow the slowest (8.7 percent). (See Exhibit 1.) The Northern Region is projected to see its employment grow the fastest (16.1 percent) of all four regions, with the Southwestern Region’s employment growing the slowest (7.9 percent).

Projected Occupation Employment Growth

Exhibit 2 illustrates projected numeric employment growth by major occupational group in New Mexico. Employment growth in food preparation and serving occupations is projected to account for close to 15 percent of total growth across all occupations (15,030 jobs). When combined with projected growth in personal care and service occupations (around 13 percent of total growth, or 13,570 jobs), health care-related occupations (just over 12 percent of total growth, or 12,440 jobs), and education, training, and library occupations (over 11 percent of total employment growth, or 11,430 jobs), employment growth comprises 50 percent of total
Food preparation and serving related occupations are joined by personal care and service and education, training, and library occupations as the occupations that are expected to see the largest employment growth between 2012 and 2022. These three occupations, along with healthcare support occupations, are also projected to see the greatest percentage growth.

Projected growth. Office and administrative support and sales and related occupations are projected to add another 9,210 jobs, or 9 percent of total growth. These occupational groups are traditionally large; therefore, it is useful to look at how quickly employment is projected to grow to further identify occupational groups with promising growth prospects. Most of the occupational groups with the largest projected growth mentioned here are also expected to experience some of the fastest growth over the 10-year period, with the only exception being office and administrative support. Other major occupational groups with fast growth include building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, community and social services, and the higher-paying computer and mathematical occupational group.

Typically, the number of projected job openings corresponds with projected employment growth; this is the case across the majority of occupational groups. Exhibit 3 presents projected annual job openings by growth openings and replacement openings, which can provide useful information on types of employment demand anticipated in the future. Of the major occupational groups, only three are projected to see more job openings from growth than replacement needs. These groups include education, training, and library; personal care and service; and healthcare support.

**Projected Occupation Employment Growth: Detailed Occupations**

NMDWS produces occupation employment projections for over 800 detailed occupations. Around 200 occupations are projected to grow by 100 or more jobs; about 415 occupations are projected to grow by less than 100, statewide, over the projection period; just over 30 are not projected to see employment change; and just over 150 are projected to see their employment decline between 2012 and 2022.

Large employment growth is not the sole indicator of occupation employment prospects. The largest occupations will naturally provide the largest number of projected jobs. Occupations that don't provide as many jobs but are projected to grow quickly represent occupations in which demand is increasing. For example,
there may be more job openings in the future for waitresses than for computer systems analysts. Computer systems analysts, however, are projected to grow quickly, indicating that more are demanded than before. Increased demand can be the result of a variety of economic factors. It is important, therefore, to note the occupations in which demand is expected to increase as well as those in which employment is expected to grow the most in number.

Exhibit 4 presents occupations that are projected to grow the fastest and by the greatest number of jobs. Several large occupations make the list, including personal care aides (ranked third in total employment as of 2012), food preparation and serving workers (ranked eighth), elementary school teachers (ranked nineteenth), and teacher assistants (ranked twenty-third). Notable occupations for which their fast projected employment growth drives their designation as one of the greatest and fastest growing include industrial machinery mechanics; physical therapists; coaches and scouts; market research analysts and specialists; postsecondary health specialties teachers; other health technologists and technicians; and interpreters and translators. All of these occupations, except coaches and scouts, have a median annual wage that is greater than that for all occupations combined ($31,490).

Personal care aides and home health aides top the list when weighing both number of projected jobs and rate of employment growth. Several education occupations also make the list, alongside a variety of health care-related occupations.
It is necessary to note that long-term projections report what is likely to happen if historical and state-level employment patterns continue on their historical growth trends; this includes trends in population, labor force, productivity, and economic growth. These projections do not take into consideration major shocks to the economy and assume that employment will ultimately return to levels that fit long-term growth trends. Projections, therefore, are designed to provide general magnitudes and probable directional changes in employment rather than precise predictions of actual employment developments.

Projections measure occupational demand only, not supply of labor. Projections, therefore, should be utilized as a starting point in evaluating occupational surpluses and shortages in the labor market and should be coupled with other data measurements for such purposes. In addition, employment projections are based on place-of-work and count the number of jobs (including full- and part-time) as opposed to the number of workers. The total number of projected jobs will exceed the number of employed workers in the labor force due to persons holding more than one job or commuting from other states for work. For more information on employment projections methodology, definitions, assumptions, and limitations, visit www.dws.state.nm.us.