

Waves of Opportunity

A Workforce Needs Assessment for the Future of the Marine Industry



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➤ **Purpose & Scope**

➤ **Stakeholders**

➤ **Prioritize Needs**

➤ **Existing Data**

Marine Industry Workforce Today
Marine Industry Workforce Ahead

➤ **Solutions**

Michigan Marine Industry Workforce Development Building on Success to Support Growth

\$11.7B

MI marine
industry annual
economic impact

58,000

MI marine
industry jobs
supported

**3rd
largest**

marine market
nationwide

\$1.6B

total
addressable
market

Economic Momentum Drives Strategic Investment

Michigan's marine industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience, with an 82% increase in economic impact from 2018 to 2023, far outpacing national growth. This trajectory, fueled by **rising demand** for recreational boating, has created exciting opportunities for skilled marine technicians with expanded career pathways across the industry.

Competitive salaries reinforce this momentum. Mid-level technicians in Michigan earn upwards of **\$60,000 annually, 10–16% above national averages**, and have six-figure income potential at the master level. With more than 800,000 Michigan registered boats requiring maintenance and 135 technician positions currently open statewide, the industry's skilled workforce demand is substantial and growing.

↑82%

economic impact
growth
(2018-2023)

835K

registered boats
in MI

135+

open marine
tech jobs
statewide

Demographic Transition Creates Workforce Expansion Opportunities

Like many skilled trades, the marine industry is undergoing a **generational transition**, with 23% of the U.S. workforce aged 55 or older. Combined with recreational boating's surge — more than 1 million first-time boat buyers entered the U.S. market between 2020 and 2022 — this shift creates substantial opportunity for new technicians to enter a thriving field.

The evolution toward more sophisticated marine systems has also created **demand for specialized expertise**. Marine diesel technicians average \$72,010 annually, compared to \$48,690 for general marine techs. Furthermore, today's electronically controlled systems require advanced training, making **formal pre-employment education more critical than ever** for both students and employers.

23%

U.S. workforce
aged 55+

1M+

1st time U.S.
boat buyers
(2020-2022)

\$48K

general
tech salary

\$60K+

mid-level
tech salary

\$100K+

master-level
tech salary

Building the Future of Boating

MBIA and RBIEF are taking the lead in navigating our industry toward workforce solutions.

Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA)

The Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA) was established in 1958 and is a statewide, non-profit, marine trade association representing nearly 1,500 marine businesses. The mission of MBIA is aimed at supporting, promoting, and protecting Michigan's boating industry through education, market expansion, and advocacy. The association facilitates a series of annual boat shows ensuring that all proceeds from these events go directly back into growing and strengthening the industry.

*MBIA is recognized as one of the **most productive** and **progressive** marine trade associations in the nation.*



Recreational Boating Industries Educational Foundation (RBIEF)

The Recreational Boating Industries Educational Foundation (RBIEF) is a 501(c)(3) established in 1986 dedicated to workforce development through scholarship, training, and education. Specifically, the foundation's purpose is to offer financial assistance to individuals interested in or currently working in the marine industry and to support congruent educational program development across Michigan.

*RBIEF has awarded nearly **\$500,000** in **scholarships** to students pursuing marine industry careers.*



"I've spent my entire life in and around the marine industry and am 4th generation working in this remarkable field. As president and co-owner of one of Michigan's largest boat sales and service operations (and with locations in Florida) I see firsthand the need for tactical and sustainable workforce development strategies to keep clients enjoying the water and the boating lifestyle. These strategies must start at the high school level and cycle through to retirement."

– Amy Krueger, Jefferson Beach Yacht Sales President, MBIA and RBIEF Board Member

"RBIEF is collaborating with educational institutions in a targeted and strategic manner which enhances recruitment and outcomes. These collaborations support boat building, gas and diesel engine maintenance and repair, electronics, HVAC systems, fiberglass work, and more. Our funds assist not only with scholarships but also in supporting educational establishments in a variety of ways."

– Jim Coburn, RBIEF President

Marine Industry at a Crossroads

The Urgent Need to Collaborate



Key Challenges

- Persistent misperceptions about marine industry careers
- Low awareness of opportunities among students and parents
- Shrinking pipeline of skilled workers
- Aging workforce across all trades
- Limited training & education programs in Michigan and across the nation



Job Positions in Demand

Focused projections show current demand for 135+ new marine mechanics and technicians across Michigan. While the primary workforce deficit is among the technical marine trades, hundreds of marine related job postings are identified annually in Michigan — a critical workforce gap that must be filled to support the industry's growth.

- Marine mechanics, technicians & service specialists
- Sales professionals & dealership staff
- Marina operations & management roles
- Boat builders, repair specialists, and riggers
- Finance, insurance, marketing, and support staff



Our Role in Solutions

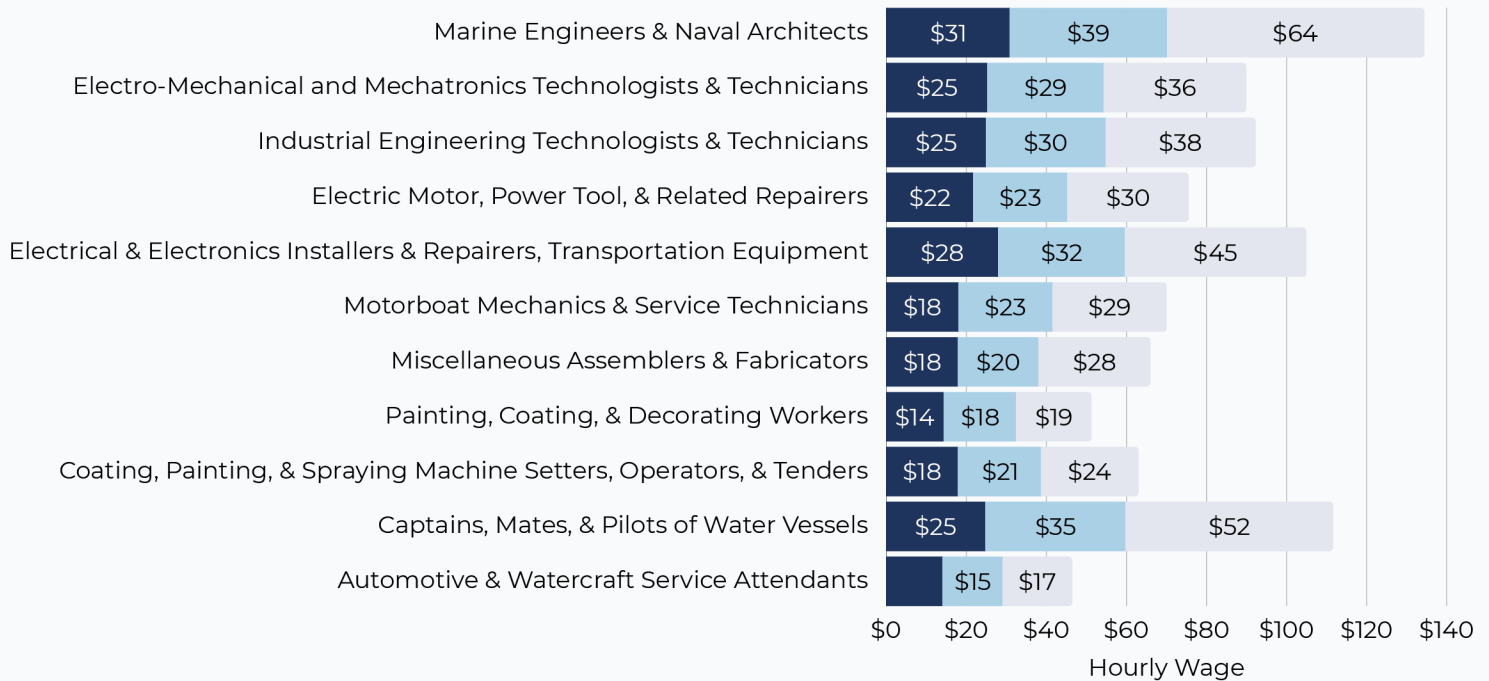
Through scholarships, workforce partnerships, and ongoing advocacy, MBIA and RBIEF are bridging the gap between Michigan's rich boating culture and the growing need for talent.

"This isn't just a workforce problem. It's a customer service problem. Without sufficient staffing and technical expertise, increased boat sales simply translates to service wait times that could drive boaters to a different choice of recreation."

– Nicki Polan, MBIA Executive Director

Where Michigan's Marine Workforce Stands **Today**

Wage Ranges for Marine-Related Occupations in Michigan (2024)*



25th Percentile Wage
(entry-level) Lower range of typical pay
25% of employment in the occupation
earns less than the indicated hourly wage

50% Percentile / Median Wage
(mid-career) Average pay
50% of employment in the occupation
earns less than the indicated hourly wage

75th Percentile Wage
(experienced / high-skill level) Upper range of pay
75% of employment in the occupation
earns less than the indicated hourly wage

*Reported wage figures represent base gross earnings and do not account for additional compensation such as holiday/overtime premiums or discretionary bonuses. Marine trade occupations are currently experiencing significant wage growth. Additional national-level studies are underway and are expected to provide further insight.

Most marine roles in MI pay between **\$18–\$37/hr** and require training

Top Earners

Marine Engineers: \$40/hr median
(\$83,200 annual)

Captains & Pilots: \$35/hr median
(\$72,800 annual)

Largest Workforce Segments

Assemblers: **124K employed**
Techs, Mechanics, Machine Operators
& other Attendants: **16K employed**

Michigan's Marine Workforce: **Looking Ahead**

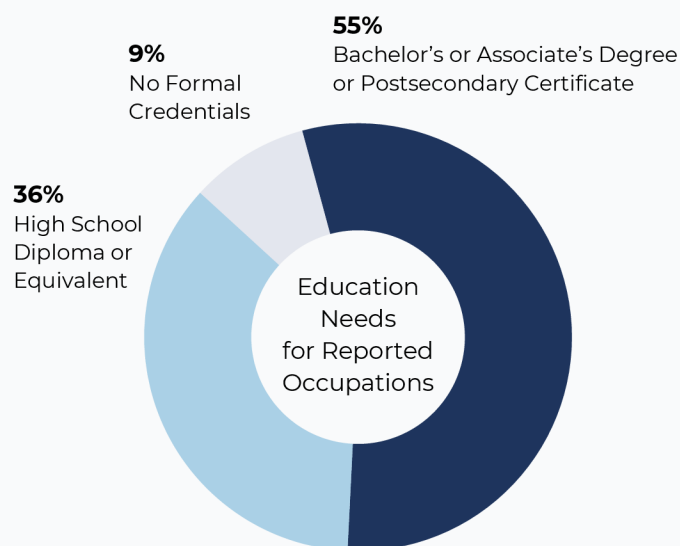
Projected Outlook for Marine Trade Careers (2022–2032)

Marine Trade Occupation	Annual Openings
Electro-Mechanical & Mechatronics Technologists & Technicians	60
Industrial Engineering Technologists & Technicians	470
Electric Motor, Power Tool, & Related Repairers	65
Motorboat Mechanics & Service Technicians	135
Misc. Assemblers & Fabricators	11,445
Painting, Coating, & Decorating Workers	25
Coating, Painting, & Spraying Machine Operators	570
Captains, Mates, & Pilots of Water Vessels	50
Automotive & Watercraft Service Attendants	435

Key Takeaway

The marine trades **offer stable, high-demand employment opportunities** across Michigan — with mechanics, technicians, and engineers as the top projected growth sectors.

Training & Education Snapshot



Of all reported occupations, 73% require some form of on-the-job or work-based training, ranging from short-term instruction to long-term skill development, depending on the specific role.



The data highlights a **critical need for high-quality, marine-specific postsecondary education**, complemented by sustainable, integrated work-based learning opportunities—such as apprenticeships, internships, targeted mentorship programs, and coordinated job placement initiatives.

Advancing, Promoting & Protecting Boating in Michigan Since 1958

Progress Through Collaboration

- Industry leaders are creating awareness and excitement with students and educators
- Career awareness events growing across Michigan with high interest in marine trades
- Marine businesses and dealers are committing to job placement and mentoring programs
- High school CTE programs with marine exposure are expanding (4 schools today, with room for growth)
- Community colleges and universities progressing in adding marine-based competencies to existing programs
- Cedarville's Marine Trades Institute: Michigan's only comprehensive year-long program, with 100% job placement

Strategic Partnerships

- Michigan Department of Education collaboration advancing standards and competencies to embed marine instruction
- Industry-led initiatives are forming comprehensive solutions that strengthen career pathways
- Apprenticeships and systematic job placement programs are connecting new students with experienced technicians
- Partnerships with publications, schools, and community groups help broaden awareness

Momentum for Continued Growth

- Current educational output: ~50 new technicians annually
- Industry demand: 135+ technicians needed annually
- Gap = clear opportunity for expansion in both secondary and post-secondary programs
- Michigan's status as the nation's 3rd largest marine market provides the foundation to become a national model for workforce development

Michigan's \$11.7B marine industry supports 58,000 jobs and stands as a thriving economic asset. With strong industry growth, generational succession opportunity, and expanding partnerships, Michigan is positioned for national leadership in marine workforce development.



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