

Greater Gardner, MA Employment Market Analysis: Jan. 4, 2026

1.0 Introduction and Methodology

This report provides a detailed examination of the employment landscape in the Greater Gardner, Massachusetts region, based on publicly available job listings compiled on January 4, 2026. The purpose of this analysis is to identify dominant industries, analyze compensation trends, and map the geographic distribution of job opportunities to provide a clear and actionable snapshot of the regional labor market. The methodology for this report is grounded exclusively in job posting data from the City of Gardner and its surrounding municipalities, including Fitchburg, Leominster, Athol, Westminster, Orange, and others. By synthesizing this publicly available data, the report highlights key economic indicators and employment patterns currently shaping the region. This analysis begins by identifying the most active employment sectors driving hiring in the Greater Gardner area.

2.0 Analysis of Dominant Employment Sectors

Identifying a region's dominant employment sectors is of strategic importance, as it reveals the foundational drivers of the local economy and indicates where the highest concentration of job opportunities exists. An analysis of the available job listings from early January 2026 clearly shows that the Greater Gardner economy is heavily supported by a few key industries, with healthcare standing out as the principal engine of employment.

Healthcare and Social Assistance

The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector is unequivocally the cornerstone of the region's current job market. The sheer volume and variety of available positions underscore its critical role. The sector's breadth is demonstrated by opportunities ranging from entry-level support roles such as **Dietary Aide** (Gardner Rehabilitation and Nursing Center) and **Housekeeper** (Healthcare Services Group, Inc.) to highly skilled professional positions. Demand for nursing staff is particularly high, with numerous listings for **Registered Nurses (RN)** and **Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)** across multiple facilities. Beyond direct patient care, the data shows strong demand for a diverse array of specialized clinical and administrative roles, including **MDS Coordinator** and **LCSW/LICSW** (Gardner Rehabilitation) and **Mental Health Professional** (VitalCore Health Strategies), illustrating the deep and varied career pathways within this industry.

Retail and Customer Service

The retail and customer service sector represents a significant source of entry-level and part-time employment in the region. These roles are foundational to the local service economy, providing accessible job opportunities across several communities. Available positions include **Team Member** at Tractor Supply, **Crew Member** at Wendy's, **Sales Associate** at Five Below and the Salvation Army Thrift Store,

and **Deli Associate** at Hannaford Supermarket. These listings indicate a steady demand for front-line workers to support the area's consumer-facing businesses.

Manufacturing and Skilled Labor

While not as voluminous as healthcare, the manufacturing and skilled labor sector provides crucial employment opportunities that often come with higher-than-average entry wages. These roles require specific operational skills and contribute to the region's industrial base. Key positions identified in the market include **General Laborer** at NEWW Packaging and Display, **Press Assistant** at Seaman Paper, and **Quality Control Inspector** at both Balance Staffing and Employer Solutions Services Inc. These roles represent a critical pathway for regional workers to achieve higher wages without necessarily requiring a four-year degree, with starting pay often exceeding the service sector by over 30%.

Understanding these dominant sectors provides a foundation for the next critical piece of analysis: a detailed examination of the compensation structures that define the region's economic landscape.

3.0 Compensation Analysis by Role and Sector

Compensation data serves as a critical indicator of market health, skill demand, and economic opportunity. An analysis of the advertised pay rates in the Greater Gardner area reveals a distinct stratification of wages based on industry and required skill level. This section dissects pay rates across different job tiers to provide a granular view of earning potential in the region.

3.1 Entry-Level and Service Positions

The foundational wage tier in the Greater Gardner market is comprised of entry-level retail, food service, and support positions. These roles typically require minimal prior experience and offer hourly wages clustered around the state's minimum wage.

- **Crew Member** (Wendy's): \$15.00 - \$18.00 per hour
- **Team Member** (Tractor Supply): \$15.25 - \$15.90 per hour
- **Sales Associate** (Five Below): From \$15.00 per hour
- **Dietary Aide** (Gardner Rehabilitation): \$15.00 - \$17.00 per hour
- **Housekeeper** (Healthcare Services Group): From \$15.00 per hour

This range, generally between **\$15 and \$18 per hour**, represents the baseline compensation for a significant portion of the available jobs in the service sector.

3.2 Skilled Labor, Technical, and Administrative Roles

A distinct step up in compensation is evident for positions requiring specific skills, training, or administrative capabilities. These roles form the region's middle-skill employment tier and demonstrate the financial benefit of specialized experience.

- **General Laborer** (NEWW Packaging): From \$20.91 per hour
- **Press Assistant** (Seaman Paper): \$18.00 - \$21.00 per hour
- **Quality Control Inspector** (Balance Staffing): From \$18.00 per hour

- **Administrative Assistant** (Ride Rite): \$18.00 - \$20.00 per hour
- **Loan Servicing Specialist** (GFA Federal Credit Union): \$20.20 - \$28.00 per hour

Compensation for this category generally falls within the **\$18 to \$25 per hour** range, significantly above the entry-level service tier.

3.3 Healthcare and Clinical Professional Compensation

The highest compensation levels are found within the dominant healthcare sector, where specialized credentials, advanced degrees, and clinical experience command premium wages.

Nursing Staff (RN & LPN)

Registered Nurses and LPNs are in high demand, with competitive pay rates offered across various employers that clearly differentiate between the two license types.

Employer	Position	Role Type	Hourly Pay Rate
Family Lives	Registered Nurse	RN	\$54.79 - \$63.05
VitalCore Health Strategies	Registered Nurse	RN	\$50.00 - \$53.00
Fitchburg HealthCare	Registered Nurse	RN	\$40.00 - \$46.00
Gardner Rehabilitation	RN LTC/SNF	RN	\$38.00 - \$46.00
Northeast Recovery	RN/LPN Nurse	RN/LPN	\$33.00 - \$37.00
Clinical & Support Options	CBHC ESP Overnight Nurse	LPN (Salaried)	~\$24.50 - \$33.65

While RN roles frequently command rates between \$40 and \$60 per hour, LPN positions show a distinct pay scale, as seen in the salaried and combined-role listings.

Salaried Clinical and Management Roles

Leadership, supervisory, and advanced practitioner roles offer substantial annual salaries, representing the top tier of earning potential in the regional market.

- **Regional Clinical Supervisor** (Spectrum Health Systems): \$85,000 to \$90,000 per year
- **Clinical Director BCBA** (Autism Care Partners): \$87,500 to \$92,500 per year
- **Director of Outpatient Services** (Recovery Centers of America): \$80,000 to \$100,000 per year
- **Dentist** (Dental Dreams): \$290,000 to \$350,000 per year

This clear wage hierarchy is not evenly distributed across the region, making a geographic analysis essential to understanding the complete employment picture.

4.0 Geographic Distribution of Job Opportunities

Analyzing the geographic distribution of job postings reveals the economic hubs within the broader region, helping to illustrate where job seekers can find the highest concentration and variety of opportunities. The data indicates a clear hierarchy, with the City of Gardner serving as the primary center of employment activity.

4.1 Gardner: The Primary Employment Hub

The City of Gardner stands out as the central hub of hiring activity in the region. This is supported by the sheer volume and diversity of job listings originating from Gardner-based employers. The city hosts a wide

spectrum of opportunities, including numerous roles in healthcare (Gardner Rehabilitation, Heywood Hospital, VitalCore), retail (Tractor Supply, Hannaford), manufacturing (NEWW Packaging, Seaman Paper), and financial services (GFA Federal Credit Union). This concentration makes Gardner the primary destination for job seekers in the area.

4.2 Fitchburg and Leominster: Key Secondary Markets

The cities of Fitchburg and Leominster function as significant secondary employment centers. Fitchburg shows a notable cluster of facility-based openings for **Registered Nurses** at employers like Fitchburg HealthCare and The Highlands. Leominster, in contrast, appears to be a hub for outpatient and private practice specialty care, with listings for a **Dentist** (Dental Dreams), **Medical Receptionists** (AP Derm, Optum), and a **Clinical Medical Assistant** for a dermatology practice. Together, these cities complement Gardner by offering a density of professional service opportunities with distinct concentrations.

4.3 Opportunities in Surrounding Towns

The smaller towns surrounding the primary hubs offer more specialized or distinct employment opportunities. Athol features several high-level clinical and management positions with Clinical & Support Options and a **Retail Co-Manager** opening at Hobby Lobby. Westminster is home to leadership roles at Recovery Centers of America, while Orange offers positions in education (The Farm School) and industrial supervision (Charter Next Generation). These listings, though fewer in number, point to a varied economic landscape with unique opportunities outside the main city centers.

This geographic distribution, combined with the sector and compensation data, points to several key market indicators.

5.0 Conclusion: Key Market Indicators

This analysis of the Greater Gardner employment market as of January 2026 provides a clear snapshot of a regional economy with distinct characteristics. The data from publicly available job listings synthesizes into several key indicators that define the current labor landscape.

- 1. Healthcare and Social Assistance as the Dominant Sector:** This sector is the primary driver of employment in the region. It offers the widest variety and highest volume of available jobs, ranging from entry-level support staff positions paying approximately \$15 per hour to six-figure salaried opportunities for clinical leaders and highly compensated roles for specialized practitioners.
- 2. Clear Wage Stratification:** The market exhibits distinct compensation tiers based on skill and industry. There is a foundational tier of service and retail roles clustered around the 15–**18 per hour** mark; a middle tier of skilled, technical, and administrative positions in the 18–**25 per hour** range; and a top tier of highly compensated healthcare professionals, with nurses earning over *50 per hour and salaried clinical leaders exceeding 80,000* annually.
- 3. Gardner's Role as the Central Economic Hub:** Based on the high volume and diversity of available listings, the City of Gardner functions as the primary center for regional employment. The neighboring cities of Fitchburg and Leominster serve as important secondary markets, particularly for professional and specialized healthcare services.

In summary, the Greater Gardner employment market is characterized by a robust and dominant healthcare sector that creates a wide spectrum of opportunities, with clearly defined career pathways and corresponding compensation levels across various industries and geographic centers.