



# **CALC+ Quick Rate (QR) Tool**

## **BLS Rates**

### **User Guide**

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Description of Change</b>   |
|----------------|-------------|--|
| 1.0            | 08/2023     | Original Issue   |
| 1.1            | 08/2024     | Updates for accessibility and images   |
| 1.2            | 12/2025     | Updates for occupation level/percentile mappings, removal of Materials & Subcontracting indirect rate field, and default MSA setting |
|                |             |  |
|                |             |  |

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## **CALC+ BLS Tool Purpose and Applicability**

The CALC+ Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Quick Rate (QR) tool is a pricing research tool located on buy.gsa.gov to support government acquisition professionals in services pricing business intelligence. Acquisition and program management staff can use BLS data to support market research, pricing analyses, develop Independent Government Cost Estimates (IGCEs), compare against prices paid, and create budgetary project cost estimates.

When evaluating CALC+ pricing, including BLS QR, Contracting Officers (COs) must exercise independent business judgment consistent with their authority, while remaining compliant with all applicable regulations and guidance.

Results from CALC+ searches cannot be relied upon exclusively to demonstrate prices are fair and reasonable in accordance with FAR 15.4. Federal acquisition professionals will need additional analysis techniques to make such a determination.

## **Where does data/prices in the tool come from?**

CALC+ BLS QR data is based on the BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program which provides employment and wage estimates annually for approximately 830 occupations. These estimates are available for the United States as a whole, for individual states and U.S. territories, and for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. This is the primary source of the data BLS uses to display labor wages.

The BLS QR tool allows users to apply escalation rates to the most recent BLS labor wages in order to determine future wages for an occupation. The BLS's Employment

Cost Index (ECI), Wage and Salaries Private Workers Index (seasonally adjusted) provides one of the best basis for rate escalation. The ECI is a Principal Federal Economic Indicator that measures changes in labor costs and measures the change in total employee compensation each quarter. The BLS QR tool compares the last two Q4 ECI values to calculate the escalation rates. The methodology in the BLS QR tool specifically uses Q4 data as it consistently captures the wage increases over a calendar year in which the increase has occurred. Please refer to the BLS Escalation Rate Methodology for more information.

## How does CALC+ BLS QR work?

Access to the CALC+ BLS QR tool begins with [Pricing Intelligence Suite](#). BLS rates in CALC+ do not require user credentials.

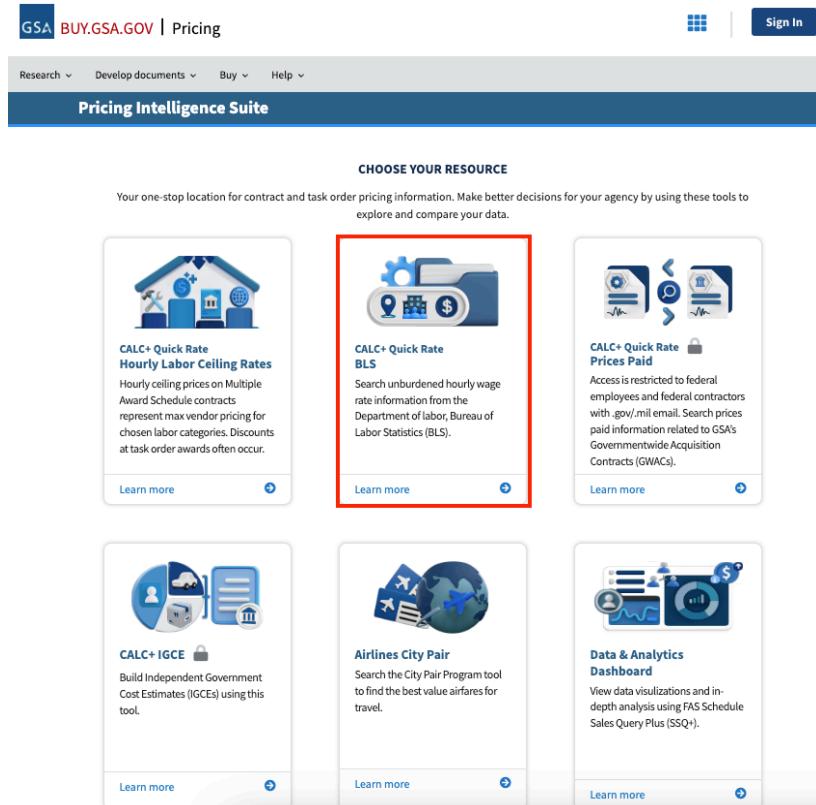


Figure 1 - Accessing BLS QR from Pricing Intelligence Suite

Remember that CALC+ pricing information is intended for market research and price evaluation purposes. It should not be considered as the only acceptable resource when making a determination. Relying solely or primarily on CALC+ for price reasonableness determination is an improper use of this tool.

## **Appropriate Use**

This tool allows users to review labor wages from BLS to create budgetary and project cost estimates, and support (and is not intended to be in lieu of) the U.S. Government's determination of price reasonableness. The labor wages shown are estimated wages intended for research purposes and do not represent exact labor wages for an occupation; since there are many factors affecting hourly services rates. Contracting Officers should always review order level prices in accordance with [GSAR 538.7102-2\(d\)\(2\)](#) , [FAR Subpart 15.4 - Contract Pricing](#), [FAR 16.506\(f\)](#) and [FAR 16.507-2\(c\)\(iv\)](#).

Compensation levels are an important element of successful professional service contracts. The BLS publishes wage statistics that include wages at the 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> (Median), 75<sup>th</sup>, and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of all wages paid in the economy. As a reminder, GSA managed Non-MAS contracts are structured around BLS labor categories with four experience and qualification (E&Q) levels: Junior, Journeyman, Senior, and Subject Matter Expert (SME). SMEs are most commonly priced at the highest wage levels and often above the 90th percentile according to GSA research. For pricing evaluation and strategy, the BLS QR tool calculates the SME/expert level wage as 15% greater than the 90th percentile wage reported. SMEs are often principals of companies or employees with very high credentials working on complex high profile projects.

| <b>E&amp;Q Level</b> | <b>Level Definition</b>   | <b>BLS Wage Percentile Displayed in QR Tool</b>                     |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Junior               | A Junior labor category is responsible for assisting more senior positions and/or performing functional duties under the oversight of more senior positions.  | 25th  |
| J Journeyman         | A Journeyman labor category possesses and independently applies expertise on multiple complex work assignments. Assignments may be broad in nature, requiring originality and innovation in determining how to accomplish tasks. Operates with appreciable latitude in developing methodology and presenting solutions to problems. Contributes to deliverables and performance metrics where applicable.   | 50th  |
| Senior               | A Senior labor category typically works on high-visibility or mission critical aspects of a given program and performs all functional duties independently. A Senior labor category may oversee the efforts of less senior staff and/or be responsible for the efforts of all staff assigned to a specific job.   | 75th  |
| SME                  | A SME labor category is an individual whose qualifications and/or particular expertise are exceptional and/or highly unique. SMEs do not have specific experience/education qualifications, but are typically identified as recognized industry leaders for a given area of expertise. SMEs typically perform the following kinds of functions: initiates, supervises, and/or develops requirements from a project's inception to conclusion for complex to | Separately calculated by GSA as 15% > than the 90th percentile wage |

| <b>E&amp;Q Level</b> | <b>Level Definition</b>  | <b>BLS Wage Percentile Displayed in QR Tool</b> |
|----------------------|--|---|
|                      | extremely complex programs. Provides strategic advice, technical guidance and expertise to program and project staff. Provides detailed analysis, evaluation and recommendations for improvements, optimization development, and/or maintenance efforts for client-specific or mission critical challenges/issues. |   |

**Table 1 - Experience and Qualification Levels**

This tool is being introduced as an initial version with new features and enhancements planned in the future. Users are encouraged to submit feedback and enhancement requests through the Feedback form button displayed on the BLS QR tool.

## **Search Criteria and Filters**

As a starting point for price comparison, the acquisition professional or program management staff must search by the Occupation Title or Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) ID number. See Figure 2.

1. Begin typing characters and select from the pre-populated suggestions. This method will display an exact match of the selected occupation title or SOC ID.
2. Type characters for an occupation title or SOC ID number then click Search. This method will display results that contain the search criteria entered.

Figure 2 - Search Criteria

Users should also attempt to narrow the labor category search to avoid non-comparable titles. For example, searching 'Supervisor' could return unrelated results such as Warehouse Supervisor, Data Entry Supervisor, Restoration Supervisor, etc.

Figure 3 - Search & Filter Features

Once the main search criteria is entered, the results can be filtered using the various filters shown on the left navigation pane as seen in Figure 3.

### **Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)**

The United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines MSAs according to published standards that are applied to Census Bureau data. OMB generally defines a MSA as a core area containing a substantial population nucleus (e.g., at least 50,000 people), together with surrounding areas having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core.

By default, Nationwide data is displayed until results are filtered by MSAs in the BLS QR tool. Select a MSA where you expect work will be performed or similar to where work will be performed to obtain the most accurate price estimate. The MSA list is limited to areas where wage data exists for the selected occupation.

### **NAICS Code**

Results can be refined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code to view occupations in a specific industry. Further filtering by NAICS enables the user to assess rates related to the occupation selected and industry to meet their acquisition objective. For example, an occupation like “Management Analysts” is being performed across many industries, so selecting the appropriate industry is critical to returning the most representative pricing result. Begin typing the 6-digit code to select the preferred industry for nationwide results. BLS data for specific industry NAICS codes is not available for specific locations such as MSA and state.

Note: When a NAICS code other than ‘All Industries (000000)’ is applied to a MSA or State filter, it will lead to 0 results. Please remove the location filter(s) OR select the NAICS as ‘All Industries’ when using a specific location (MSA or state).

## State

Results can be refined by a state or U.S. territory when data exists. When results are filtered by the state, the National Estimate Wage value is displayed to represent the geographical national average to quickly compare it to the state's wage.

## Occupation Level

Results can be refined by the occupation levels mentioned in Table 1. Taking time to analyze the experience level of the labor you are seeking prices for to the level definitions will deliver the most accurate pricing data. Occupation level is a key field that substantially affects the hourly rate cost structure.

## Table Results

Once the main search is generated, the table of results will display data if available. If too many results are returned, then results can be filtered by various criteria (e.g., MSA, NAICS code, State, or Occupation Level) as previously mentioned. See Figure 4 below for the layout of the results table.

Estimated Hourly Wage for Project Management Specialists 1      SOC ID 131082 2      [Export Data](#)

National Estimate Wage: 3 \$50.44      [+Add Indirect Rates](#) 4

2022 Average 5      \$56.21

Estimated 2023 Average

\$56.95

Escalate the Rate

1.33% (10 years average) 7

BLS Prices

Learn more about Occupation Level 8

Showing from **1 - 10** out of 128 Results for "Project Management Specialists"

| Occupation <span style="color: blue;">10</span> | Occupation Level <span style="color: blue;">11</span> | MSA <span style="color: blue;">12</span> | State <span style="color: blue;">13</span> | Price <span style="color: blue;">14</span> | NAICS Code <span style="color: blue;">15</span> | Action <span style="color: blue;">16</span> | Give Feedback <span style="color: blue;">17</span> |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| Project Management Specialists                  | J Journeyman  | Sherman-Denison, TX                      | Texas                                      | \$46.41                                    | 000000  | <span style="color: blue;">X</span>         |  |
| Project Management Specialists                  | J Journeyman  | San Angelo, TX                           | Texas                                      | \$45.15                                    | 000000  | <span style="color: blue;">X</span>         |  |

BLS data was last updated **5/16/2024**

Figure 4 - Results Table Layout

1. Occupation Title selected
2. SOC ID (auto-populates when the Occupation Title is selected)
3. National Estimate Wage (The geographical national average for the selected occupation)
4. Add Indirect Rates ([Access additional information about indirect rates.](#))
5. Average Value (Represents the average price of the results.)
6. Estimated Average Value (Represents the average value + the selected escalation rate.)
7. Escalation Rates (2, 5, or 10 year averages OR enter a custom rate.)
8. Total count of results
9. The last date BLS prices were pulled (This data is updated annually.)
10. Occupation
11. Occupation Level
12. MSA
13. State
14. Price
15. NAICS Code
16. Remove the result row (Removed rows cannot be restored unless a new search is generated.)
17. Feedback Form (Submit issues, bugs, or enhancement requests.)

## BLS Average Cards

The BLS QR tool highlights summarized and future estimate information based on the results. The left card highlighted in Figure 5 displays the average of all prices listed in your search results. BLS does not recognize the SME occupational level and wage. SME is separately calculated by GSA as 15% greater than BLS's Senior occupational level (90th percentile wage). Because of this, the average price displayed will not equal the National Estimate Wage.

The right card highlighted in Figure 6 displays the estimated average with the selected escalation rate applied to help determine the next year's wage. The escalation rate can apply to the 2-year, 5-year, or 10-year ECI average based on the selected NAICS code. However, a custom rate may be applied if desired. Please refer to the BLS Escalation Rate Methodology for further information on escalation rates.



Figure 5 - BLS 2022 Average (Left Card)

Figure 6 - BLS 2023 Average (Right Card)

## Indirect Rate Calculations

Important Notice for Price Comparisons and Cost Estimates: The BLS prices shown below only include unburdened wage rates, a portion of a vendor's overall hourly rate.

**Inputting indirect rates such as General & Administrative, Overhead, Fringe Benefits, and Profit are required to develop a comparable rate for estimation.**

| Indirect Rate            | Definition/Guidance  |
|--------------------------|--|
| General & Administrative | <p>General and Administrative (G&amp;A) expenses are incurred to operate a business and are not attributable to a specific project, contract, order or product.</p> <p>Examples of common G&amp;A expenses include HR, IT, Legal, and Finance staff supporting business operations.</p> <p>G&amp;A rates typically vary from 5-20% between vendors and do not vary depending on Government or Contractor worksite location.</p> <p>Below are rate considerations depending on analysis type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceiling rate: consider values at or near 20%</li> <li>• Average rate: consider 15%</li> <li>• Low Rate: consider 5%</li> </ul> |
| Overhead                 | <p>Overhead includes ongoing business expenses unrelated to direct labor or direct materials used in creating a product or service.</p> <p>Common examples of overheads are rent, utilities, management</p>  |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | <p>salaries, office supplies, marketing costs, and depreciation of equipment.</p> <p>Overhead rates vary depending on work performance site, contractor or Government. Overhead rates are typically much lower at a Government site, because office space, utilities, and other costs are paid for by the Government. Overall, overhead rates vary from 5% to over 100%. Below are overhead rate considerations by worksite.</p> <p><b>Government Site</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceiling rate: consider values at or near 55%</li> <li>• Average rate: consider 25%</li> <li>• Low Rate: consider 5%</li> </ul> <p><b>Contractor Site</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceiling rate: consider values between 75-100%.</li> </ul> <p><i>If you choose ceiling recommendations for all or most other cost components, consider 75% here to offset the low likelihood of a vendor having high costs in every single rate category. This guidance will lead to the most realistic ceiling value.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rate: consider 50%</li> <li>• Low Rate: consider 15%</li> </ul> |
| Fringe Benefits | <p>Fringe benefits are employee associated costs such as health plan expenses, pension plan expenses and workman's compensation expenses, among others. Rates typically vary between 30-45% and do not vary by worksite location. Below are rate considerations depending on analysis type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceiling rate: consider values at or near 45%</li> <li>• Average rate: consider 35%</li> <li>• Low Rate: consider 30%</li> </ul>   |
| Fee/Profit      | <p>Fee (applied to cost-reimbursable contracts) and Profit (applied to fixed-price contracts) represent contractor's margins above cost. Fee/Profit compensates a contractor for risk, effort, and return on investment. While certain procurements may allow for higher profit, most Federal acquisitions typically vary between 5-15%. Below are rate considerations depending on analysis type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceiling rate: consider values at or near 15%</li> </ul>  |

- Average rate: consider 10%
- Low Rate: consider 5%

Click 'Add Indirect Rates' as shown in [Figure 4 - Item 4](#). Enter the appropriate values for each Indirect Rate type as needed. By default, Indirect Rate calculations are applied to the Average value and Estimated Average value cards, but can be individually unapplied.

[- Remove Indirect Rates](#)

Add Indirect Rates

**Important Notice for Price Comparisons and Cost Estimates:** The BLS values shown below only include unburdened wage rates, a portion of a vendor's overall hourly rate. Inputting indirect rates and profit estimates below is required to develop a comparable rate for cost estimation purposes.

|                          |          |                      |            |
|--------------------------|----------|----------------------|------------|
| General & Administrative | Overhead | Fringe Benefits      | Fee/Profit |
| <input type="text"/>     | %        | <input type="text"/> | %          |

**2024 Average**

**\$57.30**

Enable Indirect Rates

**Estimated 2025 Average**

**\$59.26**

Escalate the Rate

3.41% (10 years average)

Enable Indirect Rates

**Figure 7 - Applying Indirect Rates**

## Calculation: Average Price with Indirect Rates Applied (Left card)

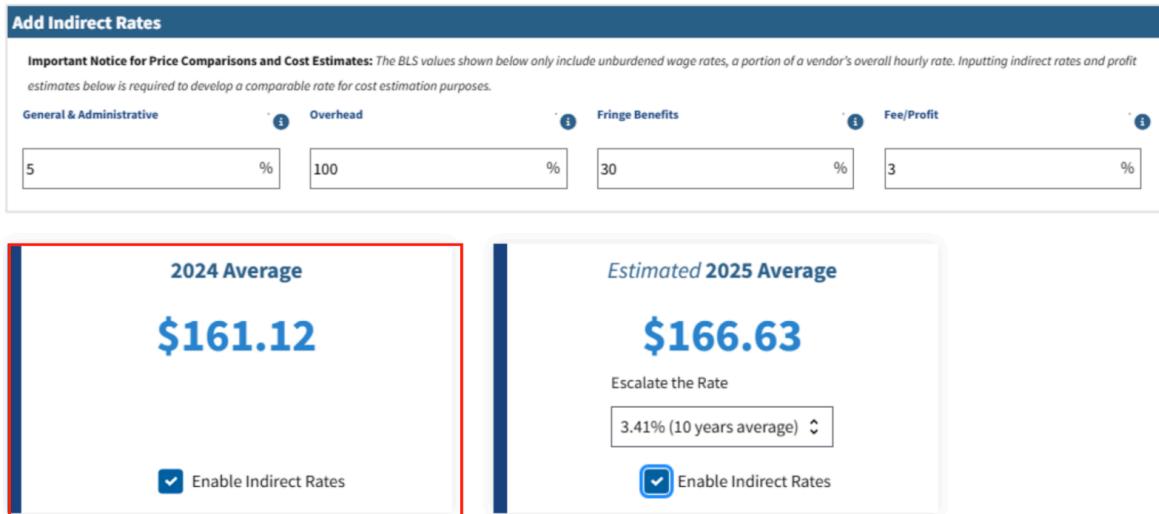


Figure 8 - Average Price with Indirect Rates Applied

Average Price  $\times$  (1 + Fringe Benefits)  $\times$  (1 + Overhead)  $\times$  (1 + General & Administrative)  $\times$  (1 + Fee)

## Calculation: Estimated Average Price with Indirect Rates Applied (Right card)

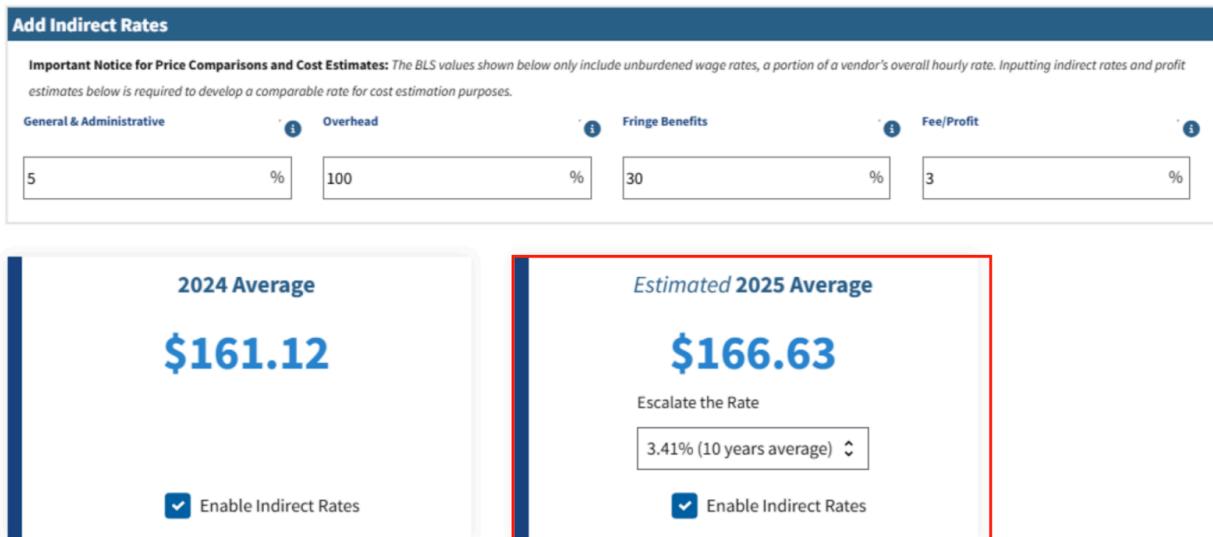


Figure 9 - Estimated Average Price with Indirect Rates Applied

Estimated Average Price x ( 1 + Fringe Benefits) x ( 1 + Overhead) x ( 1 + General & Administrative) x ( 1 + Fee)

## Download and Export Results

Acquisition professionals should document:

- Search and filter criteria used in the query
- All detailed data records obtained in the CALC+ tool output
- Verification that the labor category comparison made using CALC+ are the same or similar in accordance with FAR 15.4
- Any filtered or removed data records the CO determined were outliers or not the same/similar
- Any other supporting references to obtain pricing information

The ability to download the results with query/filter parameters is available for support documentation. Do not use the results table or graph as a basis for fair and reasonable pricing.



Figure 10 - Download & Export Feature

## Export Data

Data can be exported in CSV format for viewing or editing in spreadsheet platforms such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets. Click Export Data to get started.

As a reminder, users must exercise independent business judgment while remaining compliant with all applicable regulations and guidance.

## Points of Contact

[Contact us at fasdigitalsupport@gsa.gov](mailto:fasdigitalsupport@gsa.gov)