Insight Global

Data Centers Salary Guide 2027

The Talent and Pay Trends Powering Data Center Growth

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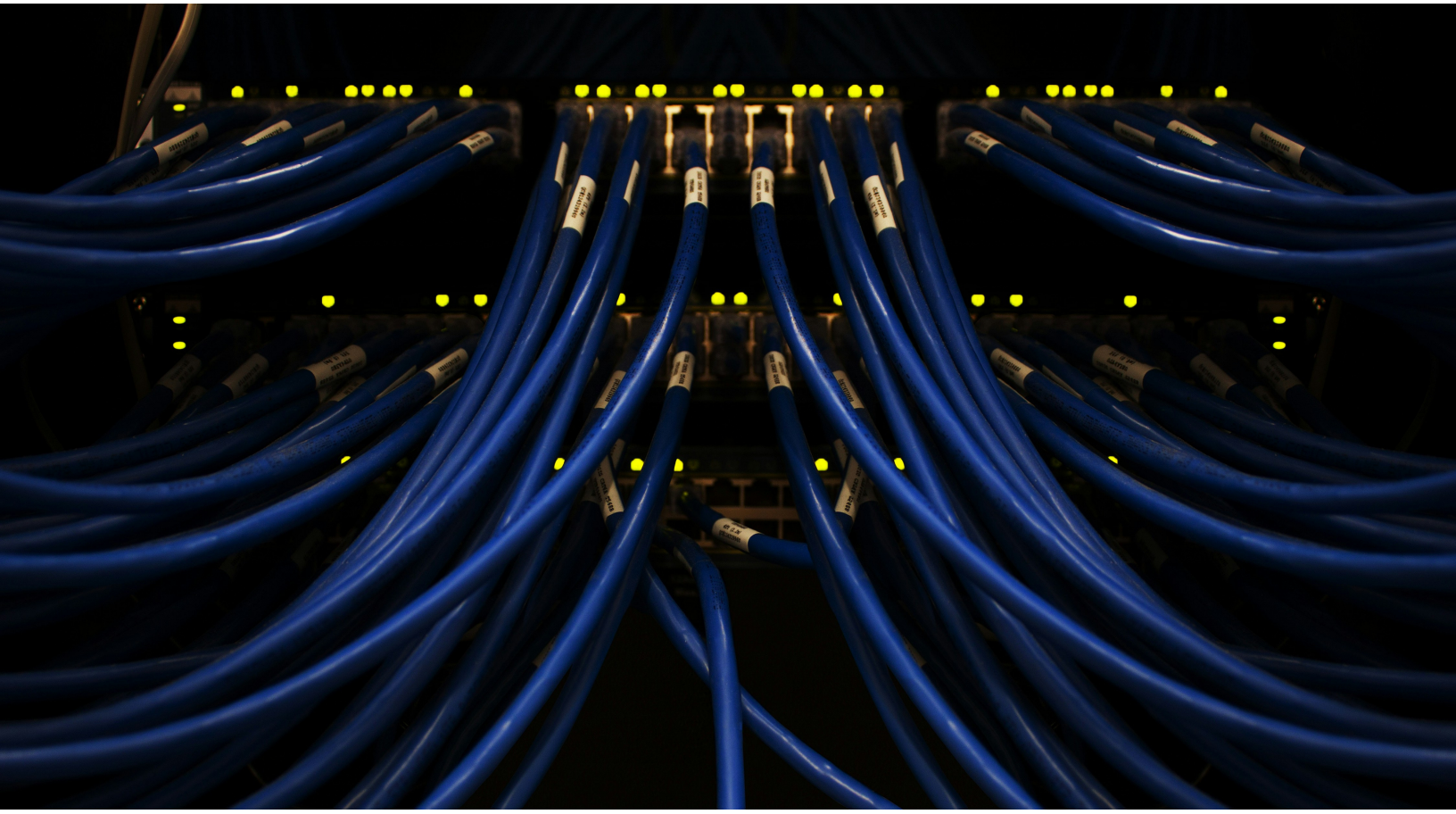
Executive Summary

Data center development is accelerating across the United States as companies add capacity for cloud computing, AI, and other high-density workloads. New facilities are being built in established data center hubs and emerging markets, creating demand for the people who can plan, build, commission, and operate these mission-critical environments.

Those facilities are also getting more complex. Power availability, high-density racks, advanced cooling, electrical infrastructure, structured cabling, and increasingly sophisticated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) systems are changing what it takes to bring a data center online and keep it running reliably.

Finding the right people isn't always easy. Uptime Institute's 2025 survey found that 46% of data center operators had difficulty finding qualified candidates, while 37% reported difficulty retaining staff. Their research also found continued talent shortages in electrical and mechanical trades, along with increased need for operations management candidates.

This Data Centers Salary Guide combines both Insight Global's extensive compensation data and additional industry and labor-market research to provide a real-world look at what these expert professionals are earning, what skills are in demand, where the market is growing, and what employers should consider as they build their teams.



The U.S. Data Center Market is Expanding

Data center development is spreading across the United States. Established markets including Northern Virginia, Atlanta (where Insight Global has our international headquarters), Dallas-Fort Worth, and Chicago continue to grow, while new investment is moving into markets where developers can find the land and power needed for large-scale facilities.

CBRE identifies Tennessee and West Texas among the emerging North American markets gaining traction.

NOTE: The industry measures data center capacity in megawatts (MW) and gigawatts (GW) because power capacity, rather than square footage alone, helps indicate how much computing infrastructure a facility can support.

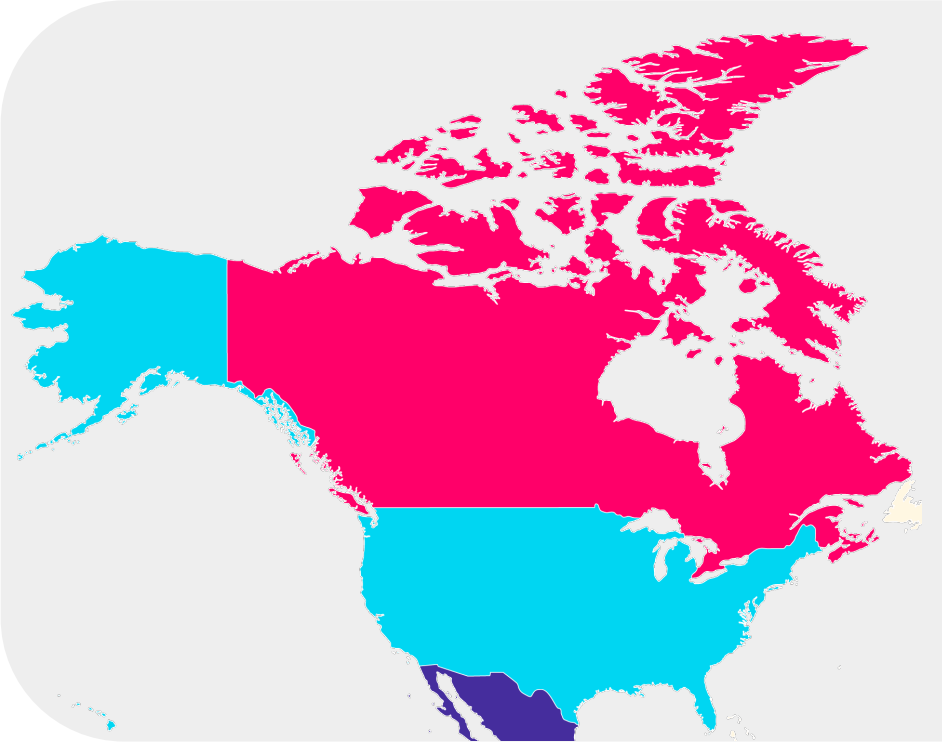
JLL reports more than 66 GW of data center capacity under construction in North America. Even more notable is where that development is happening: 77% is in emerging markets, with West Texas, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, and the Carolinas among the areas experiencing this shift.

Power is one reason the map is changing. CBRE reports that power availability and grid infrastructure constraints are affecting development timelines and site selection in major markets.

That makes pre-construction decisions around power availability, site selection, feasibility, zoning and permitting, and long-lead equipment increasingly important.

Once construction begins, projects require expertise across civil, structural, and architectural (CSA) work, MEP systems, quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC), environmental health and safety (EHS), commissioning, and eventually critical facilities management.

Behind each stage is a workforce that must keep pace with the buildout.



Data Center Salaries by Role

Data centers rely on teams across the entire lifecycle, from early planning and construction through commissioning, deployment, and operations. The compensation benchmarks below provide a look at median hourly rates and annual salaries based on Insight Global data.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

Role	Median Hourly Rate	Median Annual Salary
Preconstruction Manager	$65.00	—
Cost Estimator	$57.69	$100,000
Project Scheduler	$54.00	$150,000
Project Controls Manager	$95.50	$162,500
Data Center Design Engineer	$63.50	$127,500

CONSTRUCTION

Role	Median Hourly Rate	Median Annual Salary
Construction Manager	$97.50	$162,500
Project Manager	$77.50	$135,000
MEP Superintendent	$57.50	$125,000
Electrician	$31.00	$93,000
HVAC Technician	$35.00	$75,920
Electrical Engineer	$60.00	$120,000
Mechanical Engineer	$55.00	$115,000

COMMISIONING AND DEPLOYMENT

Role	Median Hourly Rate	Median Annual Salary
Commissioning Manager	$108.00	—
Commissioning Engineer	$57.00	$110,000
Controls Engineer	$50.00	$120,000
Electrical Testing Technician	$24.40	—
Network Engineer	$50.00	$130,000
QA/QC Technician	$68.07	$68,120
Fiber Splicer	$42.00	$82,300
Network/Cabling Technician	$20.00	$56,000

Data Center Salaries by Role

OPERATIONS

Role	Median Hourly Rate	Median Annual Salary
Data Center Technician	$25.47	$95,680
Critical Facilities Technician	$43.00	$100,880
Critical Facilities Engineer	$47.00	$105,000
Data Center Operations Manager	$75.00	$90,000
Reliability Engineer	$67.25	$109,500
Maintenance Technician	$28.00	$76,003
BMS/SCADA Engineer	$44.00	$108,160

Roles Across the Lifecycle

Some roles support multiple stages rather than fitting only into one.

Role	Median Hourly Rate	Median Annual Salary
Owner's Representative Project Manager	$60.14	—
EHS/Safety Manager	$57.43	$115,000
Logistics Manager	$44.74	$105,000

Some roles do not have enough data to calculate median annual salary since they are primarily filled with hourly contractors at this time. As that evolves over time, we will update this data.

Talent Across the Data Center Lifecycle

Getting a data center from site selection to steady-state operations requires different expertise at every stage. Many of these roles overlap as a project moves forward, particularly as construction gives way to commissioning and operations.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

Before breaking ground, developers have to determine whether a site can support the facility they want to build. That work can include power availability, site selection, feasibility studies, BIM/VDC, zoning and permitting, and long-lead procurement.

- Preconstruction Managers lead early planning, constructability, estimating, and coordination.
- Cost Estimators develop and refine project costs as design and scope change.
- Project Schedulers track milestones and dependencies across complex builds.
- Project Controls Managers oversee cost, schedule, risk, change control, and project performance.
- Data Center Design Engineers support the electrical, mechanical, and facility design required to move from concept to construction.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction turns the plan into a mission-critical facility. The work spans CSA, shell and core construction, MEP infrastructure, QA/QC, EHS compliance, and coordination across multiple trades.

- Construction Managers oversee onsite execution, contractors, safety, quality, schedule, and budget.
- Project Managers coordinate scope, stakeholders, schedules, budgets, and delivery.
- MEP Superintendents lead field coordination across mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems that support power and cooling.
- Electricians install and test electrical systems and power distribution equipment.
- HVAC Technicians install and service cooling and environmental control systems.
- Electrical Engineers support power generation, distribution, protection, switchgear, and other electrical infrastructure.
- Mechanical Engineers design and support cooling, airflow, piping, and other mechanical systems.

COMMISSIONING AND DEPLOYMENT

Before a data center can operate at full capacity, its systems must be tested, verified, connected, and prepared for use.

Commissioning, or Cx, verifies that MEP systems perform as designed before handover. Deployment then extends into white-space fit-out, cable routing, rack and stack, network connectivity, and testing.

- Commissioning Managers lead commissioning strategy, testing, documentation, issue resolution, and turnover.

Talent Across the Data Center Lifecycle

- Commissioning Engineers verify that facility systems perform according to design and operating requirements.
- Controls Engineers configure and support the systems used to manage facility equipment and performance.
- Electrical Testing Technicians test electrical equipment, protection systems, and power infrastructure.
- Network Engineers design and support the infrastructure required to connect the facility.
- QA/QC Technicians verify that installation and testing meet project requirements.
- Fiber Splicers build, test, and troubleshoot fiber-optic connections.
- Network/Cabling Technicians support structured cabling, cable trays, cabinets, racks, and network connections.

OPERATIONS

Once the facility is online, the priority shifts to reliability. Operations teams manage the critical environment, maintain power and cooling infrastructure, monitor capacity, perform preventive maintenance, and support uptime and service-level commitments.

- Data Center Technicians install, monitor, troubleshoot, and support servers, racks, hardware, and equipment in the white space.
- Critical Facilities Technicians operate and maintain electrical, mechanical, power, and cooling systems.
- Critical Facilities Engineers provide advanced technical support for those systems.
- Data Center Operations Managers oversee staffing, procedures, safety, reliability, and day-to-day operations.
- Reliability Engineers analyze system performance and help reduce downtime and equipment failure.
- Maintenance Technicians perform preventive and corrective maintenance.
- BMS/SCADA Engineers support building-management and monitoring systems used to oversee equipment and facility conditions.

Data Centers Are Competing for In-Demand Talent

Data center employers aren't hiring in isolation. Many of the same people needed to build, power, cool, and operate data centers are also in demand across construction, utilities, manufacturing, and other complex infrastructure environments.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects faster-than-average employment growth from 2025 to 2035 for several occupations that play important roles in data center development and operations.

Data Centers Are Competing for In-Demand Talent

Occupation	Projected U.S. Employment Growth, 2025–2035	Average Annual Openings
HVAC mechanics and installers	11%	40,600
Mechanical engineers	11%	17,800
Electricians	9%	72,700
Construction managers	9%	49,700
Electrical and electronics engineers	8%	16,300

The takeaway from this for data center employers is the level of competition you're facing for the expert talent and teams you need.

These projections cover the entire U.S. economy, which means data center organizations are drawing from talent pools that other industries need too. Electricians alone are expected to have about 72,700 openings each year over the decade, while HVAC mechanics and installers are expected to have about 40,600.

That broader competition comes as data center operators are already experiencing talent pressure.

Uptime Institute found that 46% of operators had difficulty finding qualified candidates, while 37% struggled with retention. Electrical and mechanical trades remain particularly challenging, and the need for operations management candidates has increased.

For employers, this makes workforce planning bigger than filling the next open role. It means thinking ahead about where talent will come from, which skills can transfer from adjacent industries, and when specialized expertise will be needed across the data center lifecycle.

The Data Center Skills Employers Need

As data centers become larger, more power-dense, and more complex, employers need more than generic construction or facilities experience.

Power and cooling expertise are especially important. IEEE Spectrum reports increasing demand for civil, mechanical, and electrical engineers, construction management and oversight, data center operations and facilities professionals, electrical and mechanical technicians, power-systems engineers, HVAC technicians with high-density or liquid-cooling experience, and construction specialists familiar with complex MEP integration.

That creates an opportunity for employers to evaluate candidates based on transferable systems and infrastructure experience, not only previous data center titles.

Where Data Center Talent Demand is Growing

Where data centers are built shapes where employers need talent.

The U.S. Census Bureau found that data center employment increased from 306,000 workers in 2016 to 501,000 in 2023. More than 40% of that employment was concentrated in California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Georgia.

That concentration may not tell the whole story going forward. New data center development is also expanding into markets that had relatively little capacity a decade ago. At the same time, established hubs such as Northern Virginia, Atlanta, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Chicago continue to grow.

For employers, that broadening footprint changes the talent equation. Established markets need experienced professionals to support continued construction and operations, while newer markets need teams that can help take projects from pre-construction through MEP installation, commissioning, and critical facilities operations.

The result is a workforce strategy that increasingly has to account for location, or re-location, to find the right people. Access to power and land may help determine where a data center gets built, but access to the people who can build and operate it matters too.



A Global Market for Data Center Talent

The compensation benchmarks in this guide focus on the United States, but demand for data center workforce infrastructure extends globally.

CAPACITY DOUBLING BY 2030

JLL projects that nearly 100 GW of new data center capacity will be added globally between 2026 and 2030, roughly doubling global capacity. The Americas currently represent about half of global data center capacity, with the United States accounting for approximately 90% of capacity in the region.

Growth is also accelerating across Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America. CBRE reported year-over-year inventory growth in every major region it tracks in the first quarter of 2026. Latin America grew 41.3%, led by significant expansion in Querétaro, Mexico. European inventory increased 18.9%, while Asia-Pacific increased 13.4%.

The reasons for that growth vary by market. JLL projects Asia-Pacific data center capacity will grow from 32 GW to 57 GW by 2030. EMEA is projected to add 13 GW of new supply, with growth supported by government investment in AI infrastructure and demand for sovereign AI clouds.

POWER REMAINS A SHARED CHALLENGE

CBRE reports that grid and power constraints are affecting development timelines and site selection in established North American and European hubs. In Asia-Pacific, power availability, construction costs, and regulatory complexity are also extending development timelines in major markets.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES CROSS BORDERS TOO

Uptime Institute's global survey included data center owners and operators from the U.S. and Canada, Europe, Asia-Pacific, China, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Nearly two-thirds reported difficulty retaining staff, finding qualified candidates, or both.

For organizations expanding across markets, access to talent needs to be considered alongside power, land, infrastructure, and speed to market. The exact needs will vary by facility and location, but the underlying skills remain familiar: teams need people who understand power and cooling, MEP infrastructure, commissioning, connectivity, and critical facilities operations.

How AI is Changing Data Center Talent

AI is driving demand for more data center infrastructure, but the impact goes deeper than simply a need to build more facilities. AI workloads can require high-density racks that place greater demands on power and cooling. That is increasing the importance of advanced approaches such as direct-to-chip and immersion liquid cooling.

IEEE Spectrum identifies increasing demand for power-systems expertise, electrical and mechanical engineers and technicians, operations and facility-management professionals, construction specialists with MEP experience, and HVAC technicians familiar with high-density or liquid-cooling environments.

JLL projects that AI could represent half of all data center workloads by 2030 and describes shifting power, infrastructure, construction, and cooling requirements as capacity expands.

AI is also starting to change how existing facilities operate. In Uptime Institute's 2025 survey, 58% of respondents saw increased facility efficiency as a potential benefit of using AI in data center operations, 51% cited reducing human error, and 48% cited improving staff productivity. Most respondents, however, continued to view AI software controlling facility equipment as an unacceptable risk.

For employers, that creates two related needs: people who understand the increasingly sophisticated infrastructure behind AI workloads, and people who can determine where new technology can safely improve data center operations.

Hiring Data Center Talent

Hiring for data centers requires more than filling individual roles. Talent needs will change as a facility moves from early planning and construction through commissioning, deployment, and ongoing operations.

Employers must consider when specialized skills will be needed, where that talent will come from, and how to build teams that can support both immediate project demands and long-term operations. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

1. PLAN TALENT ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE

Workforce planning should begin alongside the project schedule, not after hiring needs become urgent. Map the expertise required at each stage, identify where roles overlap, and determine when specialized talent must be in place to support handoffs from construction through commissioning and operations.

2. LOOK BEYOND THE JOB TITLE

Titles vary between organizations. A Critical Environment Technician at one company may perform work comparable to a Critical Facilities Technician somewhere else. Focus on the systems someone has worked with, the scale and complexity of the environment, and the responsibilities they've owned.

Hiring Data Center Talent

3. CONSIDER TRANSFERABLE EXPERIENCE

Not every strong candidate will come directly from another data center. Professionals with experience in power systems, HVAC and cooling, controls, MEP, complex facilities, reliability, commissioning, and other mission-critical environments may bring skills that transfer into data center work. IEEE Spectrum reports data center employers looking to sectors including nuclear energy, aerospace, and the military for relevant expertise.

4. MATCH THE TALENT MODEL TO THE WORK

Workforce needs change across the lifecycle. Full-time employees can provide long-term ownership and institutional knowledge. Contractors can provide specialized expertise or additional capacity when demand increases. Coordinated project teams can take responsibility for defined scopes or outcomes. The correct mix may change over time based on the project stage, scope, and expertise required. The right approach depends on the project, timeline, internal capabilities, and level of ownership required.

5. BUILD OPERATIONS READINESS BEFORE HANDOVER

Operations don't start the day construction ends. Bringing operations and critical-facilities expertise into the process earlier can create a stronger connection between commissioning, documentation, training, preventive maintenance, capacity management, and steady-state operations.

Build the Data Center Workforce You Need

Whether you're planning a new facility, scaling construction, preparing for commissioning and deployment, or strengthening ongoing operations, the right talent strategy and partner can help keep the work moving.

Insight Global supports data center organizations across the lifecycle with talent and technical expertise for construction, engineering, commissioning, connectivity, critical facilities, and operations. We can help you build individual roles, scale specialized teams, or solve defined project needs.

What's standing between your data center plans and execution? Let's talk about where the right talent, expertise, or delivery support can help move the work forward.

See more at insightglobal.com or contact Morgan Manning at morgan.manning@insightglobal.com.

About Insight Global

Insight Global is a talent, consulting, and AI company that delivers business outcomes in an ever-changing world. We obsess over solving problems and building solutions that move our customers further, faster.

With access to top talent in more than 50 countries, our tech-enabled recruiters can build teams quickly. Our technical experts across cloud, AI, data, enterprise operations, and applied engineering deliver solutions tailored to each customer's needs. As those needs evolve, so do we.

As we evolve, though, we stay true to our purpose: to develop people personally, professionally, and financially so they can be the light to the world around them. It shows up in everything we do, from investing in our people to delivering results for our customers to making a meaningful impact in our communities.

SOURCES

Insight Global payroll and other internal Consultant workforce data, JLL North America Data Center Report Midyear 2026, CBRE Global Data Center Trends 2026, U.S. Census Bureau, Uptime Institute Global Data Center Survey Results 2025, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, IEEE Spectrum. Some AI was used to develop this content.

METHODOLOGY

This guide uses Insight Global placement data to provide compensation benchmarks for data center and related roles in the United States.

Contract compensation is reported as median hourly pay, while permanent-placement compensation is reported as median base salary.

Similar job titles and role variations were grouped into common categories to make comparisons more consistent. Median compensation is used rather than averages to reduce the effect of unusually high or low compensation values.

National employment projections come from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook. The projections cover each occupation across the entire U.S. economy and are not projections of data-center-specific employment.