



Opportunities in Business Support

One of the largest areas of middle-skill employment in Jersey City and Hudson County involves the occupations that help businesses function and grow. This sphere of jobs, called “business support,” includes the people who keep track of finances, handle payroll and human resources, and offer general reception and administrative services.

The skills required to succeed in business support are directly and immediately transferrable across multiple industries, leading to a greater scope of opportunities than may be found in more specialized occupations. All three of the top economic sectors in Hudson County, including finance and insurance, health care and social assistance, and retail trade, employ people in these occupations.

In this field, there are ample opportunities for Jersey City residents at every level of education and experience. Many employers interviewed for this study expressed an interest in recruiting diverse and local talent as well as a desire to promote people from within to higher-level positions.

Hiring demand is strong and there is potential for education and training programs to better align their offerings with the skills required or preferred by employers in these fields.

Which types of business support jobs?

Based on an analysis of data on labor market demand, advice and guidance from local industry experts and employers, and a review of existing training and education programs, the following fields were selected for further attention:

- ▶ *Bookkeeping and accounting*
- ▶ *Human resources*

According to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks, and payroll and timekeeping clerks are projected to grow about as fast as or faster than the average for all occupations in New Jersey between 2012 and 2022. Together, they represent more than 54,000 jobs in Hudson County

and are expected to add 4,500 more by 2022. While the Hudson County economy is expected to grow by eight percent, LWD also estimates that there will be 4,200 more bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks by 2022, representing eight percent growth. LWD also estimates that payroll opportunities will grow by seven percent, adding 350 net new jobs by 2022.

People who work in bookkeeping and accounting help businesses and organizations keep track of their finances.

Accounting clerks carry out many tasks. Their job titles often represent the work they do:

- ▶ **Accounts payable clerks** *make sure their companies pay their bills. These jobs are mostly entry-level and involve posting details of transactions, adding up accounts, analyzing invoices, and processing payments.*
- ▶ **Payroll clerks** *compile and record employee time and payroll data, which may also include production and commission data. Depending on the size and type of company in which they work, they may also compute wages and deductions and prepare paychecks.*
- ▶ **Accounts receivable clerks** *make sure their companies are paid. They maintain billing systems, generate and send invoices, resolve payment discrepancies, prepare deposits, and assist with financial reporting. This job involves a higher degree of responsibility and trust, since a company must get paid in order to stay in business.*

TABLE 3: HIGHEST VOLUME BUSINESS SUPPORT JOB ADVERTISERS IN HUDSON COUNTY.

Industry	Employer	City	Job Title
Healthcare	RWJBarnabas Health	Jersey City	Billing Coordinator Human Resources Assistant Billing Coordinator/Patient Services Representative
	Secura Home Health	West New York	Payroll Coordinator
Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD)	Yusen Logistics	Secaucus	Payroll Specialist
	Kuehne + Nagel	Jersey City	Accounts Payable Specialist
	Port Authority of NY & NJ	Bayonne Union City Jersey City	Senior Accounting Clerk
	COSCO Americas, Inc.	Secaucus	Accounts Payable Coordinator
Finance and Insurance	Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc.	Jersey City	Payroll Administrator
	Deutsche Bank	Jersey City	Payroll Specialist
Professional Services	Verisk/ISO	Jersey City	Payroll Specialist Accounts Payable Associate Accounts Receivable Analyst
	Canon Business Process Services	Jersey City	Accounts Payable Help Desk Coordinator
Retail/e-commerce	BRAM Auto Group	North Bergen	Payroll Associate Accounts Payable Clerk Accounts Receivable Clerk
	Jet.com	Hoboken	Accounts Payable Analyst
	Target	Jersey City North Bergen	Human Resource Team Member
Manufacturing	Moog, Inc.	Jersey City	Payroll Administrator
Education	Hoboken Public Schools	Hoboken	Accounts Payable/Purchasing Specialist
Real Estate	CBRE	Jersey City	Accounting Clerk
	Alliance Residential Company	Bayonne	Bookkeeper
Accommodation & Food Service	Sheraton	Jersey City	Accounts Receivable Agent Account/Payroll Administrator
	Aramark	North Bergen	Accounts Receivable/Collection Representative
Construction	Finishing Touches	Hoboken	Bookkeeper/Office Manager
	China Construction America	Jersey City	Accounts Payable Coordinator

Source | NYCLMIS analysis with Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ tool, job listings from November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2016.

***Bookkeepers** have a broader set of responsibilities. They are often responsible for some or all of an organization’s accounts, known as the general ledger. They record all transactions and post revenues and expenses. Bookkeepers prepare bank deposits by compiling data from cashiers; verifying receipts; and sending cash, checks, or other forms of payment to the bank. They prepare financial records for accountants to review and may handle payroll, make purchases, prepare invoices, and keep track of overdue accounts.*

Table 3 shows examples of accounting clerk, payroll clerk/specialist, bookkeeper, and human resources assistant jobs listed online in Hudson County over the last 12 months. No single employer dominated online job listings, and there was a wide range of industries represented among employer listings.

People in accounting clerk and bookkeeping jobs can move into supervisory positions or office management. With additional schooling, they can become **professional accountants**. Within the last 12 months, there were 514 online job listings for bookkeeping and accounting clerks in Hudson

County and 148 online listings for payroll and timekeeping clerks (Table 3).

Staff in **human resources** screen, recruit, interview, and place workers. They compile and keep personnel records. They make sure their employers comply with employment laws and requirements. They prepare employment records and compile federal compliance reports. They project future hiring needs. While there are some jobs at the middle-skill level, such as human resources assistants and specialists, advancement into management often hinges on obtaining a bachelor’s degree. Within the last 12 months, there were 76 online job listings for **human resources assistants**—also called human resources clerks and team members by employers—and 874 ads for the slightly more advanced **human resources specialists**. Other popular titles for this position include human resources coordinator, recruiter, or associate.

Where are the business support jobs?

These positions are found across a range of industries, including Finance and Insurance, Professional Services, Retail Trade, Transportation and Warehousing, Real Estate, Manufacturing, Education, Government, and Health Care and

Social Assistance. Within the bookkeeping and accounting area, accounting clerks typically work for larger companies. They may also work for payroll companies or accounting firms. Bookkeepers may work for one or several small businesses, which tend to advertise online less frequently. Many employers use staffing services to fill these positions, often on a temporary-to-permanent basis. There are several large staffing firms, such as Accountemps-Robert Half, Aerotek/Allegis, Medix, and Randstad, that serve this segment of the labor market and advertise widely.

What do employers want?

While there is variation among the specific job-related skills needed in different industries and for the different types of business support jobs, there are certain general skills that are preferred for all of these jobs. These include:

- ▶ **A customer-focused orientation.** Whether working with internal customers or with vendors or clients, business support professionals need to focus on the needs of the person on the other end and be able to avoid or manage conflict.

TABLE 4: BUSINESS SUPPORT JOBS.

	Title	Education	Certification	Yrs Exp.	Median Pay
ENTRY	Accounts Payable Clerk	HS + training	None	0–1	\$37K
	Accounts Receivable Clerk	HS + training	None	1–2	\$38K
	Payroll Clerk	HS + training	None	0–1	\$39K
	Bookkeeper	Some college	None	1–2	\$41K
MID	HR Assistant	HS, associate preferred	None	0–1	\$40K
	Full Charge Bookkeeper	Some college or associate	None	2–3	\$44K
	Office Manager	Some college or associate	None	3–4	\$48K
MID–HIGH	Staff Accountant	Bachelor’s	CPA preferred	2–3	\$51K
	HR Specialist/Generalist	Bachelor’s	SHRM CP/SCP or other HR certification	2–3	\$53K
	Senior Accountant	Bachelor’s	CPA	2–3	\$64K
	Accounting Manager	Bachelor’s	None	3–5	\$68K
	HR Manager	Bachelor’s or Master’s	SHRM CP/SCP or other HR certification	3–5	\$71K

- ▶ **Excellent communication skills.** *Business support professionals must communicate clearly and effectively so as to avoid errors and misunderstandings.*
- ▶ **Problem-solving and decision-making skills.** *Business support professionals need to be able to make decisions on their own and know when decisions must be brought to the attention of their supervisors.*
- ▶ **Attention to detail.** *These roles require accuracy and consistently careful performance.*
- ▶ **Organizational skills** *are essential for managing accounts and records.*
- ▶ **Computer applications skills, especially proficiency in Excel.** *Business support professionals must have at least intermediate proficiency with software applications that manage data.*
- ▶ **Learning agility/interest in gaining knowledge.** *Employers look for candidates that care about their jobs and show interest in learning more about the business.*
- ▶ **Accountability and responsibility.** *Similar to the need for problem solving skills, employers look for individuals who take responsibility for their own work and who are able to recreate the processes they have used to arrive at conclusions.*

For **bookkeeping and accounting clerk jobs**, employers typically seek an understanding of generally accepted accounting principles, an ability to analyze and reconcile general ledger accounts, and experience with popular accounting software, such as Oracle, QuickBooks, ADP Payroll, or other major accounting systems. They also seek good planning and organizational skills. Employers interviewed for this research said “accounts payable and accounts receivable are no longer the ‘paper-pushers,’” and that they “need emotional intelligence and critical thinking skills.”

Employers in the banking and financial industry stressed the importance of integrity and ethics, as they face high regulatory scrutiny. Some jobs require a criminal background check and drug screening.

Jobs in human resources (HR) are highly competitive and increasingly require higher education. Several companies gave examples of HR assistants that were promoted from within after starting in reception or clerical jobs. Employers look for prior experience using human resources information systems (HRIS), such as PeopleSoft. In order to progress to an HR specialist or generalist role, candidates who either have or are pursuing a bachelor’s degree are often preferred. From the interviews conducted for this study, however, it was not clear if the degree itself was required or if the degree served as a proxy signal for a set of technological and soft skills required for advancement.

Role of Technology

Because new technology systems have had the effect of reducing the number of administrative jobs in general, employers are looking for people with a greater level of sophistication who are highly able, skilled, and comfortable with technology. One employer interviewed noted that jobs that were once considered “entry-level” now require much higher-level problem solving and technological skills. Employers want people who are able to analyze data so that they can make sound decisions. In addition, the interviewed employers expressed a strong preference for individuals with customer service and excellent communication skills, since business support is seen as serving internal clients.

What is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA)?

This is an accountant who has passed the CPA licensing exam and earned the CPA license. Requirements to sit for the CPA exam vary by state, but usually require at least a bachelor’s degree, a specific sequence of courses, and at least one year of relevant accounting experience. With a CPA, accountants can qualify for positions of greater authority and responsibility.

Human Resources (HR) Certifications

Certification is not required to begin a career in HR, but is desirable in order to advance in the field. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) offers Certified Professional (CP) and Senior Certified Professional (SCP) designations. The Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI) offers a number of certifications, including the Professional

in Human Resources® (PHR®) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources® (SPHR®).

What are the career pathways in business support?

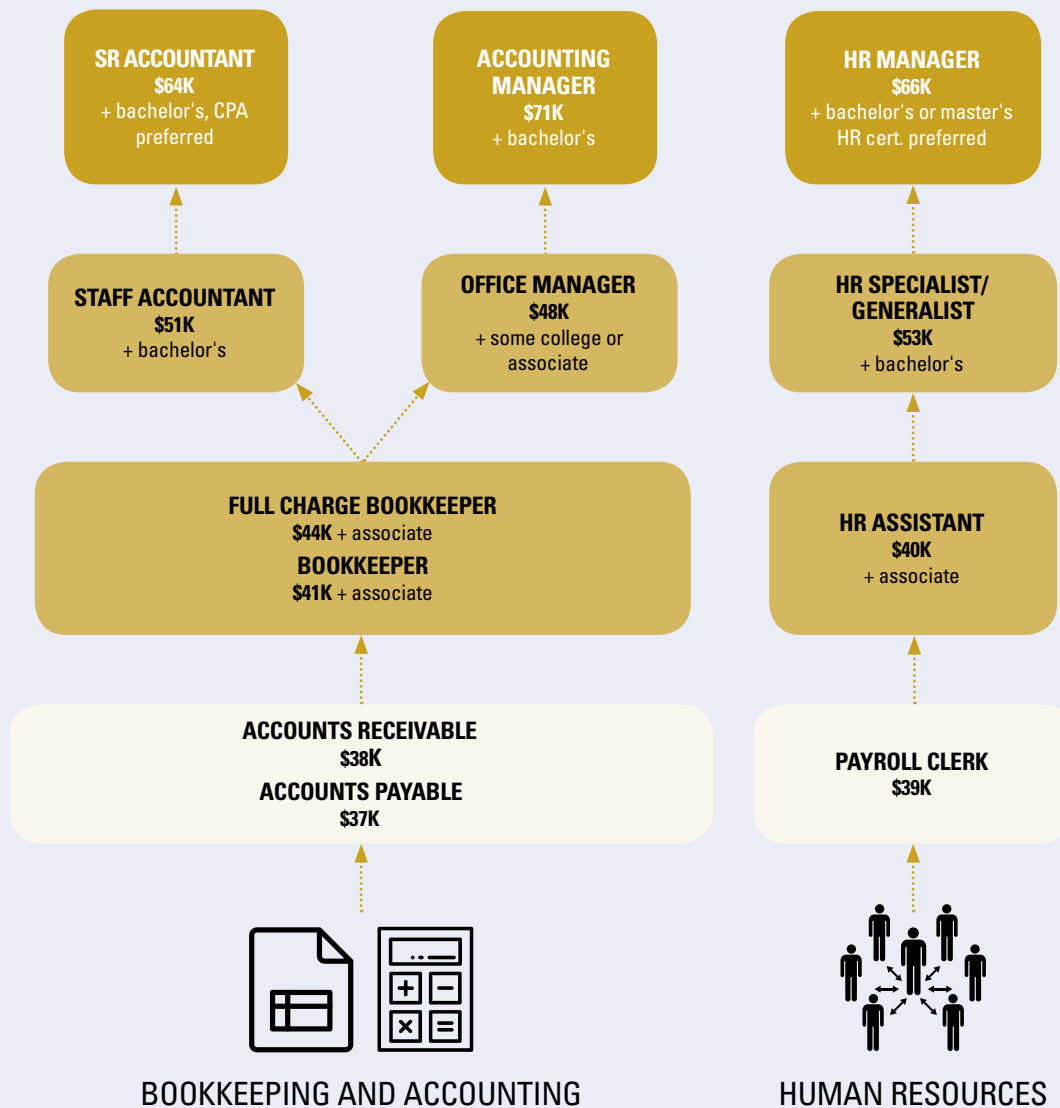
Career paths are based on good performance in the entry-level job, and, in many cases, additional education. According to the employers interviewed for this report, candidates who are eager and take initiative—i.e. who go beyond their scope of duty—have a better chance of advancing their careers.

Bookkeeping and Accounting

There are two clear paths for someone who begins work as an accounting clerk or bookkeeper. On the first path, with time and experience, they generally earn more in these positions and can become supervisors or office managers.

On the second path, bookkeepers or accounting clerks can complete their bachelor’s degrees and become professional accountants. The earnings on this path are significantly higher. Accountants

BUSINESS SUPPORT CAREER PATHS



Source | PayScale.com & Salary.com; salaries reflect Hudson County, NJ



What education and training opportunities are currently available to prepare Jersey City residents for these careers in business support?

Local capacity to prepare people for bookkeeping and accounting occupations exist, but is insufficient to meet local demand. There are more than 500 jobs advertised per year for accounting clerks, payroll clerks, and bookkeepers.

- ▶ *Hudson County Community College (HCCC) offers both accounting AAS and AS degrees. However, collectively these programs graduated fewer than 50 students in 2014, the most recent year for which data are available.⁸ HCCC also has some non-credit offerings in QuickBooks, Excel, and Bookkeeping.*
- ▶ *Saint Peter's University offers a bachelor's level accountancy program and a certificate program that allows graduates to sit for the CPA exam. Twenty-six students graduated from this program in 2014 .⁹*
- ▶ *Hudson County Schools of Technology offers training to prepare students to be accounting and bookkeeping technicians. Eight students graduated from this program last year.*
- ▶ *Other private proprietary schools, such as Pro Data Inc., Chiron Training Center, and Campus Education Center, offer courses either in bookkeeping or computerized accounting, but have very few completions.¹⁰*
- ▶ *There are a number of courses throughout Hudson County in basic office skills (MS Office, etc.), offered by both HCCC and a number of private providers. None appear to specialize in human resources, human resources information systems, nor intermediate to advanced functions of Excel.*

can go into different branches of accounting such as tax, audit, and management consulting or financial analysis. Alternatively, they can move into a specialty area related to accounting, such as financial forensics, business valuation, or personal financial planning. With additional education, they can become CPAs and qualify for positions of greater authority and responsibility.

Human Resources

Most medium-sized and larger companies employ human resources (HR) staff to assist with recruiting, training and retaining employees. Someone may enter the field in an administrative position such as receptionist or administrative assistant, and be promoted from within the company to a human resources assistant role. To advance to specialist positions and beyond, bachelor's degrees are highly preferred. Specializations within HR include recruiting, compensation and benefits, learning and development, diversity and inclusion, strategic HR planning and employee/labor relations.

Specializations within HR include:

- Recruiting
- Compensation and benefits
- Learning and development
- Diversity and inclusion
- Strategic HR planning
- Employee/labor relations

⁸ The figures on enrollment were found in the Hudson County Community College FACT BOOK for 2013-2014, found at www.hccc.edu. Completion data was provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), nces.ed.gov/ipeds, and represent 2014 completions.

⁹ www.njtrainingsystems.org

¹⁰ Ibid.

