
**JUST
CONSTRUCTION**

CONSTRUCTION & ENGINEERING
SPECIALIST RECRUITERS

DATA CENTRE CONSTRUCTION SALARIES

2026 COMPREHENSIVE
COMPENSATION SNAPSHOT

Data compiled from The Birmingham Group, DataX Connect, Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, Bureau of Labor Statistics, LVI Associates, and industry placement data

[just-constructionrec.com](https://www.just-constructionrec.com)



MARKET CONDITIONS

Data centre construction professionals are commanding record compensation in 2026 as hyperscale operators, cloud giants, and AI infrastructure developers compete fiercely for a limited talent pool.

With total US data centre construction spend projected to surpass \$52 billion in 2026, and 82% of firms reporting difficulty filling both craft and salaried positions, wages are surging across all roles.

Data centre builds require highly specialised knowledge of mission-critical systems, complex commissioning sequences, and continuous operations constraints — commanding meaningful premiums over general commercial construction.

12-18%

**Annual Wage Growth for
Data Centre Construction
Professionals**



10-25%

Pay premium over
General Commercial
Construction for Data
Centre roles

82%

Of firms struggling to fill
craft and salaried
construction roles

650K

Projected Construction and
Operations positions across
the sector by 2026

\$25-40K

Average non-salary benefits
for mid to senior
professionals



2026 SALARY RANGES BY ROLE

| Role | Experience Level | Salary Range | DC Premium |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Project Manager | Entry-Level | \$95,000 – \$120,000 | +10-15% |
| Project Manager | Mid-Level | \$115,000 – \$155,000 | +10-15% |
| Senior Project Manager | Senior | \$150,000 – \$220,000 | +15-20% |
| VP / Director of Construction | Director | \$220,000 – \$300,000+ | +15-20% |
| Superintendent | Assistant / Entry | \$85,000 – \$110,000 | +8-12% |
| Superintendent / General Super | Senior | \$135,000 – \$230,000+ | +15-20% |
| Construction Manager | Mid-Senior | \$130,000 – \$185,000 | +10-15% |
| Commissioning Engineer | All Levels | \$105,000 – \$210,000 | +20-30% |
| MEP Engineer | All Levels | \$80,000 – \$140,000 | +10-20% |
| Electrical / Power Systems Specialist | All Levels | \$90,000 – \$165,000+ | +15-25% |
| AI Infrastructure Specialist | All Levels | \$145,000 – \$215,000 | Premium tier |
| Estimator | Assistant | \$80,000 – \$110,000 | +8-12% |
| Estimator | Mid-Level | \$100,000 – \$140,000 | +8-12% |
| Senior Estimator | Senior | \$140,000 – \$180,000 | +10-15% |
| Lead / Chief Estimator | Lead | \$160,000 – \$220,000+ | +10-15% |
| Skilled Trades (Electricians) | Experienced | \$65,000 – \$125,000+ | +25%+ |

Note: Ranges reflect total market conditions and cover both general contractors and specialist subcontractors. Specialist subcontractor rates for MEP, electrical, and commissioning disciplines typically sit at the upper end of each range. Data centre roles command 10–25% premiums over general commercial construction due to mission-critical systems complexity, strict commissioning standards, and continuous operations constraints.



GEOGRAPHIC PAY VARIATIONS

Location is a major driver of data centre construction compensation. Markets with acute talent shortages, high construction density, and hyperscale activity command significant premiums:

TOP TIER

ESTABLISHED HYPERSCALE MARKETS

25-40% above national average

- › Northern Virginia (Ashburn)
- › Silicon Valley / Bay Area
- › New York Tri-State Area
- › Seattle, WA
- › Hillsboro / Portland, OR

Driven by highest construction density globally, severe talent competition, union markets, and simultaneous hyperscale campus builds exhausting local talent pools.

HIGH GROWTH

EMERGING HOT MARKETS

15-25% above national average

- › Phoenix, AZ
- › Dallas-Fort Worth, TX
- › Atlanta, GA
- › Chicago, IL
- › Austin / San Antonio, TX

Rapid data centre expansion, competitive labour markets, lower power costs, and major hyperscale campus break grounds driving sustained wage pressure.

EMERGING

SECONDARY GROWTH MARKETS

5-15% above/below national average

- › Columbus, OH
- › Charlotte / Raleigh, NC
- › Salt Lake City, UT
- › Denver, CO
- › West Texas (Stargate region)

Growing activity as operators seek power availability and lower land costs. Faster permitting timelines and strong incentives attracting major investment from 2025 onward.



COMPENSATION DRIVERS IN HEALTHCARE CONSTRUCTION



1. MISSION-CRITICAL SPECIALISATION

- **Commissioning Expertise**
Navigating complex multi-phase Cx processes for power, cooling, and controls
- **High-Density Cooling**
Experience with liquid, immersion, and direct-to-chip cooling systems
- **Continuous Operations**
Proven track record delivering live-facility builds and phased occupancy
- **Power Infrastructure**
Medium and high voltage distribution, UPS, and generator systems
- **Uptime Standards**
Familiarity with Tier III/IV Uptime Institute design and delivery criteria



2. TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

- **AI Infrastructure**
Experience with GPU-optimised, high power density facilities adds 15–20% premium
- **BIM/Digital Delivery**
Experience with liquid, immersion, and direct-to-chip cooling systems
- **DCIM Platforms**
Data Centre Infrastructure Management fluency valued by hyperscale operators
- **Prefabrication**
Modular and factory-built MEP coordination increasingly sought across all builds



3. CERTIFICATIONS THAT PAY

- **RCDD**
Registered Communications Distribution Designer, highly valued in hyperscale
- **BICSI / DCIE**
Data Centre Infrastructure Expert credentials add \$8,000–\$18,000 annually
- **CCM / PMP**
Certified Construction Manager and PMP add \$5,000–\$15,000 to base pay
- **LEED AP / EAC**
Sustainability and energy credentials increasingly requested by operators
- **OSHA 30 / NFPA 70E**
Safety certifications required on most hyperscale sites



4. LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS

- **\$52B+ Spend**
Record 2026 construction pipeline with 60+ major projects breaking ground
- **82% Hiring Difficulty**
Firms unable to fill both craft and salaried roles despite aggressive compensation
- **Multi-Sector Competition**
Data centres competing directly with healthcare, infrastructure, and manufacturing for same talent
- **90+ Day Time-To-Hire**
Qualified senior candidates now average 3+ months to place across the sector



TOTAL COMPENSATION PACKAGES

Modern data centre construction compensation extends well beyond base salary. The average value of non-salary benefits adds \$25,000–\$40,000 annually to total compensation for mid to senior-level professionals, with hyperscale operators offering the most competitive full packages:

Performance Bonuses

- **Project completion bonuses:** 10–20% of base salary on major campus builds
- Commissioning milestone bonuses tied to phased energisation targets
- **Safety bonuses:** Zero-incident site performance rewards growing in prevalence
- Bid accuracy bonuses for estimators (growing trend among GCs)
- **Overtime uplift:** \$15,000–\$25,000 additional annually during peak construction phases

Sign-On Incentives

- \$10,000–\$30,000 signing bonuses now common for experienced PMs, supers, and Cx engineers
- Full relocation assistance packages standard for key mission-critical hires
- Per diem and accommodation for professionals deployed across project sites
- **Technology stipends:** Tablets, software licences, field technology allowances
- Retention bonuses tied to multi-year hyperscale campus delivery programmes

Benefits & Perks

- Health insurance (family coverage valued at \$15,000–\$25,000 annually)
- 401(k) matching: typically 3–6% of salary, with faster vesting at hyperscale firms
- Vehicle allowances: \$500–\$1,200/month for field roles
- Accelerated promotion timelines: career growth 2–3 years faster than general commercial
- Professional development: BICSI, RCDD, and commissioning certification sponsorship



2026-2027 OUTLOOK

+12-18%
ANNUALLY

Forecast:

Wage growth in data centre construction is forecast to continue at 12–18% annually through 2027, driven by AI infrastructure build-out, persistent labour shortages, and hyperscale operators accelerating global campus programmes. The sector is expected to remain the most competitive construction segment for specialist talent through the decade.

Key trends shaping compensation:

- **AI Density Premium:**
GPU-optimised and high power density builds are creating a distinct premium tier, professionals experienced with AI infrastructure commanding 15–20% above standard data centre rates.
- **Commissioning as a Career Differentiator**
Cx engineers and leads are now the hardest roles to fill sector-wide, with companies engaging talent 6–12 months before peak project demand and offering milestone-tied retention packages.
- **Geographic Expansion Driving New Premiums**
Secondary markets like Columbus, West Texas, and Charlotte are rapidly closing the gap on established hubs as operators seek power-advantaged sites with shorter permitting timelines.
- **Retention Investments Escalating**
Replacing senior leadership on a hyperscale project costs \$50K–\$75K+ per position. Operators and GCs are responding with long-term incentive plans, campus retention bonuses, and internal pipeline programmes.
- **Cooling Expertise as the Next Premium Skill**
Liquid cooling and immersion systems experience is rapidly becoming a standalone compensation premium as rack densities jump to 120–140 kW — a gap that will widen through 2027.



NEGOTIATION LEVERAGE

Data centre construction professionals hold significant negotiating power in 2026's tightest-ever labour market. With 80%+ of firms unable to fill roles and hyperscale build programmes accelerating simultaneously across multiple markets:

FOR JOB SEEKERS:

- Multiple competing offers are now the norm for experienced PMs, supers, and Cx engineers, use them to maximise total package, not just base salary
- Commissioning, AI infrastructure, and liquid cooling experience should be negotiated as standalone premium skills, not bundled into a standard rate
- Request project completion and milestone bonuses. These are expected in hyperscale and increasingly common in co-location builds
- Geographic mobility can unlock 20–35% salary increases by relocating to or deploying across top-tier markets such as Northern Virginia and Phoenix
- Request labour escalation clauses on long-term project roles to protect compensation through multi-year campus programmes
- Partner with specialist data centre recruiters: time-to-hire is 90+ days, the right representation accelerates the process and improves final offer quality

FOR EMPLOYERS

- Move decisively on qualified candidates: experienced Cx engineers and superintendents are fielding multiple offers simultaneously and time-to-hire is averaging 90+ days for senior roles
- Price competitively from day one: underbidding and counter-offering after candidate hesitation rarely works in this market
- Structure campus retention bonuses and long-term incentive plans tied to phased project delivery milestones
- Invest in internal pipeline development: fast-tracking high-potential assistant supers and PMs into mission-critical roles is becoming a strategic necessity, not an option
- Offer certification sponsorship (RCDD, BICSI, DCIE) as part of the package, it drives loyalty and addresses the sector-wide skills shortage
- Partner with specialist data centre construction recruiters to access pre-qualified immediately deployable senior talent