**Tompkins County Workers' Center**

**Living Wage Certification Criteria: 2025**

# What is a Living Wage?

We believe that few principles are more basic to our nation than the importance of rewarding work. A job should take you out of poverty, not keep you in it. A living wage is the amount that an individual must earn in order to maintain a basic standard of living without need for public assistance. The 2025 Tompkins County Living Wage is based on figures calculated by the Cornell Industrial and Labor Relations School’s Ithaca and Buffalo Co-Labs.

The living wage for a single person without dependents in Tompkins County, NY is currently $51,628.32 a year or $24.82 per hour for an individual working a 40-hour week for the full year. This figure is derived using the cost for housing (fair market rent for a single bedroom apartment including utilities), transportation (weighted average), food (based on USDA “low cost” food plan), communications (local plan + 30 minutes long distance/month, plus DSL), health care (median cost of a Silver Plan available to the public *after* subsidies received + additional out-of-pocket medical expenses) recreation, savings, miscellaneous plus taxes. The living wage for a family is significantly higher.

For details on the Tompkins County Living Wage, go to:

<https://www.tcworkerscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Tompkins-County-Living-Wage-2025-Study.pdf>

For more details about the Living Wage Certification program go to: [www.tcworkerscenter.org/campaigns/living-wage-certification/](http://www.tcworkerscenter.org/campaigns/living-wage-certification/)

**2024 Living Wage Calculation**

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| **Factor** | **Monthly** |
| Housing | $1,489.00 |
| Food | $ 341.07 |
| Transportation | $ 519.98 |
| Communication | $ 134.23 |
| Health care – insurance and out of pocket | $ 348.09 |
| Recreation | $ 187.90 |
| Savings | $ 98.82 |
| Miscellaneous | $ 273.84 |
| Taxes | $ 909.43 |
| **Gross Pay** | **$ 4,302.36** |
| **Hourly**  **40 hours/week, 52 weeks/year** | **$24.82** |

# Any employer that pays all employees at least a living wage can receive Certified Living Wage Employer status. The criteria for certification are:

1. The employer must endorse the living wage concept.
2. The employer must pay $24.82/hour to all regular full and part-time employees, excepting:

2a. An employer may pay a wage that is less than the living wage to youth employed during the summer; to part-time employees who are under 18 years old; to employees who are in a probationary status of no more than 3 months; to employees who are hired on a temporary basis of 3 months or less; or to workers paid by others.

2b. An employer with employees eligible for tips must commit to pay additional direct wages whenever an employee's direct wage plus tips provide earnings less than $24.82 per hour.

1. The employer must pay $26.82/hour to all independent contractors to whom you pay an hourly rate (typically an independent contractor would receive a 1099 form from you). The additional wage requirement beyond $26.82 is meant to cover their individual tax requirements and insurances.
2. An employer may be rejected for certification, or have certification revoked, if there are known health and safety violations, or other violations of labor standards (including wage & hour violations/wage theft, whistleblower retaliation, or violations of union rights), at the discretion of the Tompkins County Workers’ Center Leadership Team.

5. Certification remains effective until the following year, when the living wage is recalculated.

First-time Certified Living Wage Employer applications are reviewed, and certified by a vote, by the Living Wage Employer Task Force, which includes businesspeople, non-profit representatives, and community members.

Applications or questions about living wage certification may be sent to Pete Meyers, Tompkins County Workers’ Center, 103 W. Seneca Street, Suite 301B, Ithaca, NY14850 / 607-269-0409 or 607-339-1680/ [pete@tcworkerscenter.org](mailto:pete@tcworkerscenter.org)

<https://www.tcworkerscenter.org/campaigns/living-wage-certification/>