

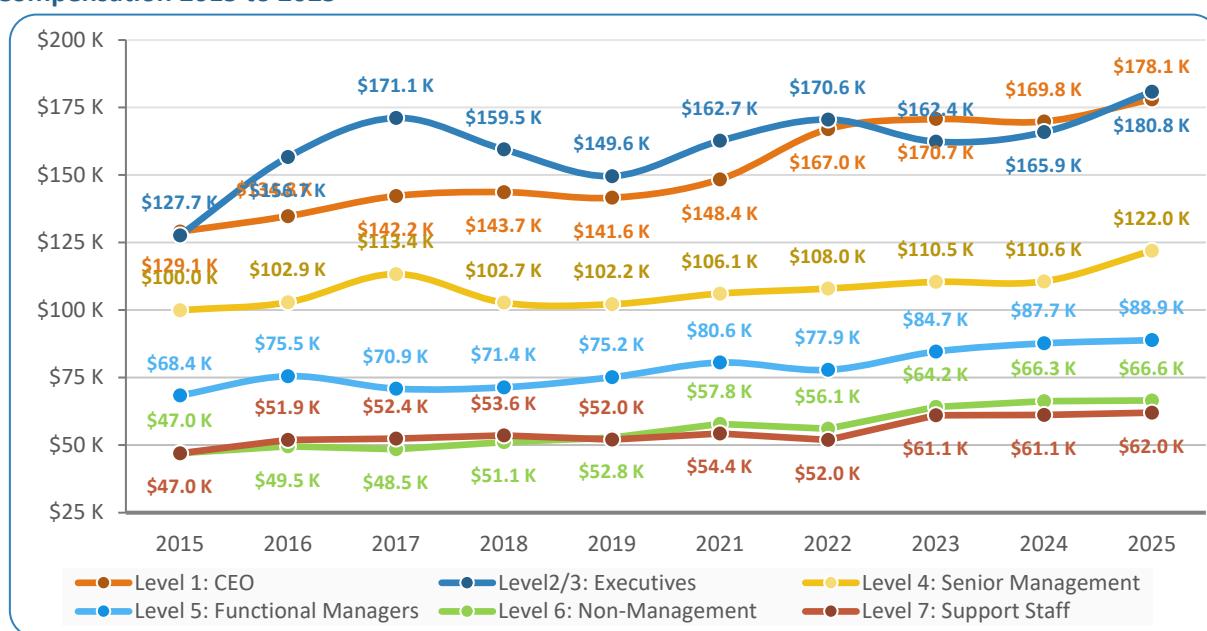
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 edition of the **CSAE Benefits & Compensation Report** marks the 43rd installment in CSAE's annual series. Jointly developed by CSAE and The Portage Group (TPG), this report offers a detailed analysis of the compensation and benefits provided to staff working in associations and other not-for-profit organizations across Canada.

MODERATE COMPENSATION GROWTH IN 2026, WITH VARIATION BY LEVEL

- Average compensation (base plus additional cash compensation) increased at all staff levels in 2026. The largest year-over-year increases in 2026 are observed among Senior Management (Level 4), at 10.3%, followed by Executives (Level 2/3), at 9.0%. CEO compensation increased by 4.9%, while growth among Functional Managers (Level 5), Non-Management staff (Level 6), and Support Staff (Level 7) was modest, ranging from 0.4% to 1.5%.
- Over the past decade, compensation benchmarks have shown modest long-term growth across all levels. Ten-year compound annual growth rates range from 2.0% to 3.5%. With the exception of Senior Management (Level 4), the 10-year CAGR matches or exceeds inflation for all levels.

Compensation 2015 to 2025



Notes: Source for 2015 through 2024 figures was the CSAE Benefits & Compensation Reports.

- The average cash compensation for CEOs in 2026 is \$178,100, comprising \$169,900 in base salary and \$8,200 in additional cash compensation (i.e., bonus or incentive). Additional cash compensation accounts for an average of 2.9% of total compensation.
- Average compensation for Deputy CEOs (Level 2) and Executive Management (Level 3) is slightly higher than that of CEOs in this year's study, at \$180,900 and \$180,800, respectively. Additional cash compensation accounts for 2.4% of total compensation for Deputy CEOs and 3.9% for Executive Management.
- Senior Management (Level 4), Functional Management (Level 5), Non-Management staff (Level 6), and Support Staff (Level 7) report average total cash compensation of just under \$122,000, \$88,900, \$66,600, and \$62,000, respectively. Additional cash compensation accounts for between 0.6% and 2.0% of total compensation at these levels.
- A majority of association staff at all levels report increases in compensation over the past 12 months, ranging from 72% to 84%, depending on level. Average increases for management levels range from 2.8% to 3.8%, compared to 2.9% for Non-Management staff (Level 6) and 1.6% for Support Staff (Level 7).
- The average anticipated change in compensation over the coming 12 months ranges from 2.5% to 3.2% for management levels, with 82% to 93% anticipating an increase. For lower levels, the anticipated change ranges from 2.2% to 2.3%, with 82% to 90% expecting increases.

BENEFITS CONTINUE TO BE A KEY COMPONENT OF TOTAL COMPENSATION

- Eight in ten participating organizations (80%) report offering retirement benefits to at least one level of staff. Executives (Level 2/3) are the most likely to receive retirement benefits (92%). For other staff levels, access ranges from 81% to 87%.
- RSP plans remain more common than pension plans across all staff levels. CEOs (Level 1) are the most likely to receive an RSP contribution (70%), while Support Staff (Level 7) are the least likely (47%). For other levels, the proportion ranges from 56% to 67%.
- 92% of organizations offer health benefits to at least one level of staff. Health benefits are least common among CEOs (Level 1 - 90%) and Support Staff (Level 7 - 91%). For other levels, between 96% and 98% receive health benefits. Among those who receive them, the value of health benefits ranges from \$5,600 to \$7,100 across all levels.
- Automobile benefits, including vehicle allowances or employer-provided vehicles, are most common among CEOs (Level 1 - 9%) and Executives (Levels 2/3 - 8%).
- Nearly all organizations (98%) provide fringe benefits to at least one staff member, with most employees at all levels receiving them. Support Staff (Level 7) are the least likely to receive fringe benefits (92%). Professional development remains a top fringe benefit across all levels.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCE COMPENSATION

- Across most staff levels, regulatory authorities report the highest average compensation; however, these results should be interpreted with caution due to small sample sizes. Focusing on industry/trade and professional associations, compensation is higher in industry/trade associations for four of six levels. The exceptions are CEOs (Level 1), where compensation is higher in professional associations, and Executives (Level 2/3), where the difference is negligible.
- The highest average compensation for CEOs (Level 1) is found in Ottawa, followed closely by Toronto and Alberta. Alberta leads for Executives (Level 2/3) and Functional Managers (Level 5), while the Prairies report the highest compensation for Senior Management (Level 4), Non-Management staff (Level 6), and Support Staff (Level 7).
- Continuing a trend from previous studies, larger organizations generally offer higher compensation, with factors like organizational scope, revenue, and staff size correlating with pay for most positions.

DEMOGRAPHIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND EXPERIENCE FACTORS SHAPE COMPENSATION

- Compensation generally increases with age across most staff levels, though statistically significant correlations are not observed consistently at all levels.
- The sector remains predominantly female-staffed, although the proportion of female staff declines with seniority. A persistent wage gap remains at management levels. At the CEO level (Level 1), males earn 15% more than females on average, continuing a pattern of gradual narrowing over time. The largest wage gap in this year's study is observed among Senior Management (Level 4).
- Compensation generally increases with higher levels of education at management levels. The strongest relationship is observed at the CEO level (Level 1), where compensation is 51% higher among those with a post-graduate degree compared to those with a college degree.
- Compensation generally increases with experience, though significant correlations vary by experience measure and staff level. For CEOs (Level 1), experience in the association/not-for-profit sector registers as the only significant positive correlate.

IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK ON COMPENSATION

- In this year's study, CEO compensation (Level 1) is highest among those who are fully in office. At all other levels, average compensation is lowest among those who are fully in office, while the difference between hybrid and fully remote arrangements is relatively small.