An Aon Company

2026 NFP U.S.

Executive Benefits Trend Report

Why executive benefits strategy must evolve to keep pace with a changing leadership landscape.

Table of Contents

A Letter from Tony

Executive benefits strategies are entering a period of meaningful transition.

For years, organizations largely approached executive benefits through a familiar lens: retention, attraction and compensation competitiveness. Those priorities still matter, but as my team and I reviewed the research and survey findings from a nationwide study conducted by NFP and cited throughout this report, it became increasingly clear that the pressures shaping the highly compensated workforce strategy are becoming far more complex.

Economic uncertainty has become persistent rather than temporary. Leadership movement has become less predictable. Retirement timelines continue to shift. Succession planning is becoming more urgent while, at the same time, many organizations still lack formal transition strategies. Across industries, employers are trying to balance continuity, flexibility, personalization and financial discipline all at once.

That combination is changing how executive benefits are being used.

Increasingly, organizations are asking executive benefits strategies to do more than simply retain key employees. They are using them to support continuity, leadership transition and long-term workforce planning while responding to the evolving expectations of a more individualized workforce.

We also see growing recognition that value is no longer created simply through the benefits organizations offer, but through how effectively highly compensated employees can understand, personalize and apply those benefits within increasingly complex financial and career decisions.

Throughout this report, one theme continued to emerge: organizations are moving away from static executive benefits structures and toward more integrated, strategic approaches to continuity and workforce transition.

The organizations best positioned for what comes next may not necessarily be the ones offering the richest executive benefits packages. They may simply be the organizations most effectively aligning executive benefits strategy with long-term organizational stability and leadership continuity.

I hope the insights throughout this report help organizations better understand where the highly compensated workforce strategy is heading and how executive benefits can play a more strategic role in preparing for it.

Tony Greene
President, Executive Benefits

Key Takeaways

99%

of organizations say executive benefits have been successful in retaining top talent, reinforcing the growing role these strategies play in supporting continuity, retention and long-term workforce planning.

81%

of organizations say they cannot afford to lose top talent, even as leadership movement becomes increasingly uneven and succession planning pressure intensifies.

95%

of organizations say they don't know what to expect ahead, underscoring how deeply economic uncertainty is shaping the highly compensated workforce strategy.

49%

of organizations have not implemented strategies to align their executive benefits with succession planning.

Executive benefits are increasingly being used for more than retention. Organizations are leveraging them to support continuity, leadership transition, flexibility and long-term workforce planning.

1 in 5

organizations say their executive benefits strategies still fall short on flexibility as expectations become more personalized and financially complex.

Organizations are placing growing emphasis on education, guidance and activation as highly compensated employees face increasingly individualized financial and retirement planning decisions.

Satisfaction with deferred compensation plans has steadily improved over the past three years, reflecting increasing demand for personalized, flexible and strategically integrated planning tools for key employees.

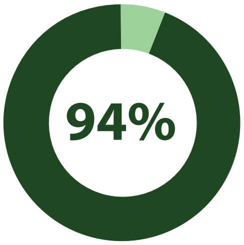
Deferred compensation strategies are expanding beyond traditional retention and are increasingly being used to support continuity, tax efficiency and long-term workforce flexibility in uncertain market conditions.

Across the report, one message remained consistent: organizations are moving away from static executive benefits structures and toward **more integrated approaches to continuity, transition and workforce strategy.**

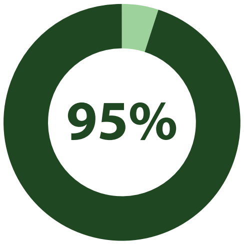
Stability in an Unstable Environment

Economic uncertainty has become a constant for most across America, and it is no longer something organizations can wait out. Today, organizations are planning for volatility and making decisions without a clear path forward. That reality is reflected in the data. A clear majority of organizations report concern about the economy, underscoring how widespread and persistent these conditions have become.

Economic Uncertainty



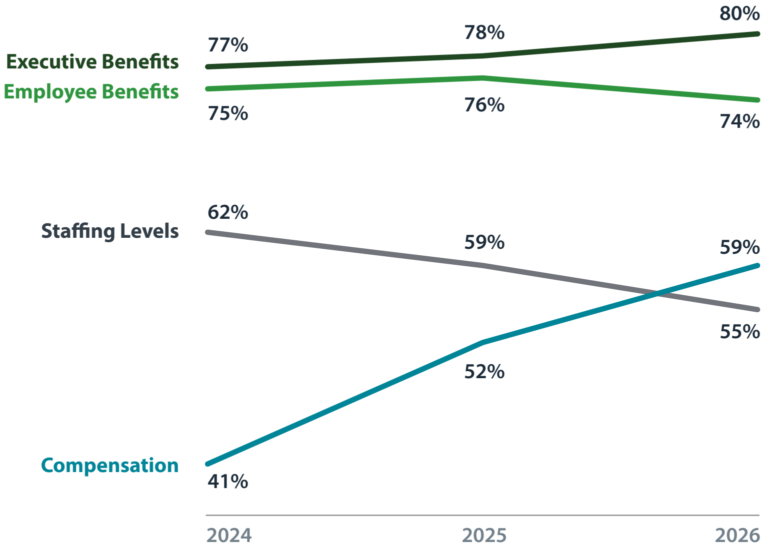
of employers are at least somewhat concerned about the economy.



of employers don't know what to expect ahead with the economy.

Organizations continue to choose stability. Rather than making broad adjustments, they are holding key elements of their workforce strategy in place. Notably, 80% are maintaining their executive benefits offerings, while 59% are keeping compensation unchanged, signaling a shift toward control and predictability.

Holding Steady Amid Economic Pressure



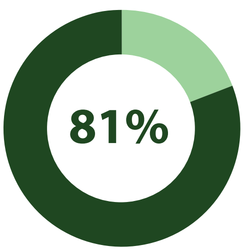
Although this approach reflects discipline, it also reinforces the central tension of our times: while momentum builds across the workforce, economy and leadership landscape, many organizations have kept their executive benefits strategies largely unchanged.

At the Pressure Point, Retention Is the Constant

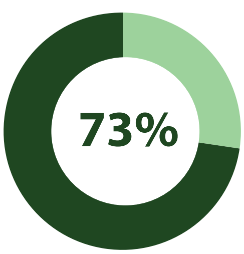
Retention has remained one of the few priorities across the benefits landscape. Even as hiring has slowed and compensation becomes more constrained, the importance of keeping key leadership in place has only increased. At the same time, concerns around succession planning, leadership continuity and long-term financial stability continue to shape how executive benefits decisions are made.

Factors Most Influencing Executive Benefits Decisions

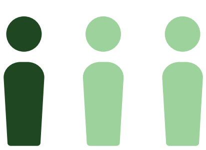
	Past year	Year ahead
Key employee retention	**54%**	**56%**
Succession planning and leadership continuity	**47%**	**45%**
Company financials (e.g., maintaining budget or cost cutting)	**38%**	**36%**
Addressing benefits trends (to remain competitive in the marketplace)	**30%**	**29%**
Corporate strategies	**15%**	**18%**
State of the economy	**12%**	**18%**



of organizations say they cannot afford to lose top talent.



say executive benefits are important, but they must also watch the bottom line.



1 in 3

say it is harder to find the right executive benefits that fit their organization's needs.

That pressure is showing up in how organizations are approaching their benefits strategies. With four out of five organizations saying they cannot afford to lose top talent, retention remains critical to maintaining continuity. At the same time, financial pressure and evolving workforce expectations are making it more difficult to rely on one-size-fits-all approaches.

As a result, the challenge is not whether executive benefits matter, it's how to design strategies that are flexible, targeted and aligned with both organizational priorities and the needs of key employees.

Ultimately, retention remains the constant that organizations continue to prioritize, even as the path to achieving it becomes more complex.

The Bottleneck:

The Shift in Leadership Movement

As organizations work to retain key talent, they are also encountering a less visible but more structural shift: leadership is no longer moving in a predictable way.

Key employees are staying in their roles longer, often beyond traditional retirement age. For some, this reflects continued engagement and a desire to remain active. For others, it reflects financial necessity and an inability to retire comfortably based on current savings.

This is a double-edged sword. Organizations are actively retaining critical leaders longer than planned, particularly where institutional knowledge, client relationships or operational expertise are difficult to replace. On the other hand, delayed transitions can also create succession bottlenecks, limiting leadership mobility and making it harder for organizations to prepare the next generation of leadership.

Leadership movement is becoming increasingly uneven. While some key employees are staying longer, others are beginning to exit.

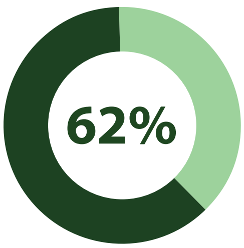
The so-called "silver tsunami" – the long-anticipated wave of baby boomer retirements expected to reshape the workforce – is still building and won't likely peak until 2030. Eventually, it will force leadership transition at scale, but when and how quickly that occurs remains uncertain.

These dynamics are also creating generational pressure within leadership pipelines. As senior leaders remain in place longer, organizations may face slower advancement opportunities for emerging leaders while simultaneously navigating changing expectations around flexibility, personalization and long-term financial planning among younger next-generation talent.

This creates an environment in which organizations must balance continuity with succession readiness while also adapting executive benefits strategies to meet the evolving priorities of multiple generations within leadership.

The Succession Gap

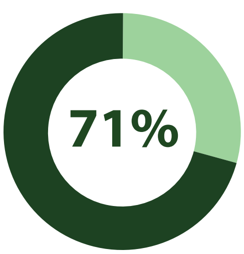
Succession planning is becoming more important and more exposed as movement across leadership becomes increasingly uneven. Organizations recognize the risk, and planning for leadership transition is increasingly seen as a strategic priority, particularly as uncertainty around retirement timing grows.



of employers say succession planning for key employees and leadership roles will be a key focus as these employees approach retirement.

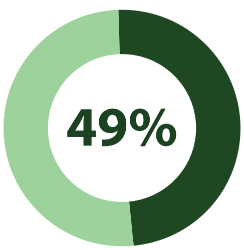
Yet awareness alone does not guarantee preparedness. Despite growing focus on succession planning, execution continues to lag. Nearly half of organizations report not having implemented formal strategies to support leadership transitions, highlighting a persistent gap between intention and action.

This gap is most pronounced in the mid-market, where organizations often lack the infrastructure to plan proactively. In these cases, succession becomes reactive, something addressed in real time rather than through a structured long-term approach.



of organizations do not explicitly design executive benefits around succession planning.

Even among organizations actively thinking about succession planning, many still lack intentional approaches to support leadership transition. Nearly half of organizations report they have not implemented specific strategies to support leadership transitions at all. Among those that have, organizations are more likely to focus on retaining existing leadership through incentives and phased retirement arrangements than on developing structured pathways for future successors or knowledge transfer.



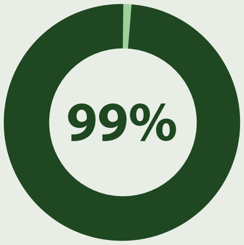
of organizations have not implemented any executive benefits strategies to support leadership transitions.

In many organizations, executive benefits are primarily used to extend leadership continuity rather than to prepare for leadership transition.

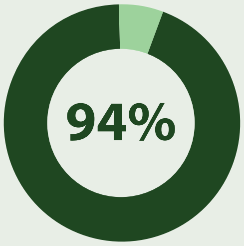
Executive Benefits as a Strategic Lever

Executive benefits are no longer peripheral, and therein lies the opportunity. When designed intentionally, they can help organizations move beyond short-term retention and support a more strategic approach to leadership continuity.

Organizations already recognize their value. By virtually all accounts, executive benefits are widely viewed as effective tools for attracting and retaining leadership talent, reinforcing their increasingly strategic role within workforce planning.

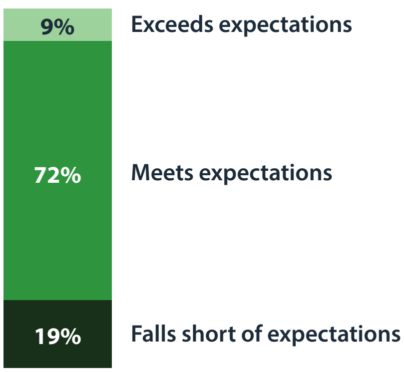


say executive benefits have been successful in **retaining** top talent.

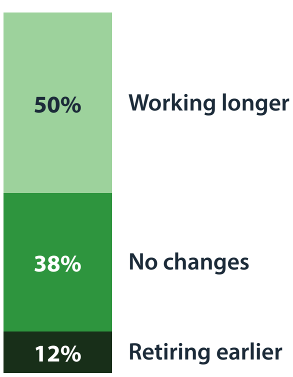


say executive benefits have been useful in **attracting** top talent.

How Executive Benefits Meet Employee Expectations for Flexibility



Key Employee Retirement Behaviors



But their role is evolving.

As retention becomes more complex and leadership movement becomes less predictable, executive benefits are being asked to do more. Today, these benefit programs influence whether key employees stay, how long they stay, how their transition unfolds and how prepared they are when the transition occurs. Given this broader role, executive benefits are becoming less uniform.

With retirement timelines, financial priorities and career paths becoming more and more individualized, it places greater pressure on organizations to offer benefits that are more flexible and personalized as well.

56% ▲

say their key employees have become **more focused on retirement preparedness** over the past year.

On average, the anticipated retirement age is 65 to 67 years old.

▲ *Indicates a statistically significant increase versus 2025.*

▼ *Indicates a statistically significant decrease versus 2025.*

As the needs of key employees and top-performers change, organizations are under increasing pressure to deliver benefits strategies that feel flexible, personalized and adaptable. While satisfaction with executive benefits has improved, many organizations are still meeting expectations rather than exceeding them. And perhaps more importantly, a significant percentage continues to fall short when it comes to the evolving needs of key talent.

Moving From Offering to Activation:

How Real, Ultimate Value Is Created

Equally important is how executive benefits are used. Historically, the employer's focus has been on what is offered, e.g., the structure of plans and the range of benefits available. Increasingly, the focus is shifting toward how those benefits are understood, accessed and applied by these most valuable members of their team.

Organizations are beginning to respond. About a quarter of employers plan to increase education around deferred compensation plans, while others are expanding access to financial planning and advisory support as executive financial decisions become more complex and personalized.

Employee Comprehension of Executive Benefits

28% Understand them completely

61% Mostly understand, but still have questions

11% Mostly confusing

26% ▲

offer financial planning and wealth management services to highly compensated employees.

28%

offer financial advisory services to participants after they receive payment from a NQDC plan.

Resources Used by Employers to Learn About New Executive Benefits Offerings

Insurance consultant/broker	55%
Industry peers/competitors	52%
Individual research	39%
Industry surveys	39%
Industry publications	30%
Industry trade organizations	30%
Financial professionals (certified public accountants, etc.)	26%

23% plan to increase nonqualified deferred compensation (NQDC) plans education in the next 12 to 18 months.

This trend mirrors findings from the **2026 NFP U.S. Retirement Trend Report**, where employees also reported needing greater support in understanding and navigating increasingly complex financial and retirement decisions. Across the entire workforce, value is tied to more than simply what is offered. Real, ultimate value comes when individuals can effectively understand and apply those benefits to financial decisions and long-term planning.

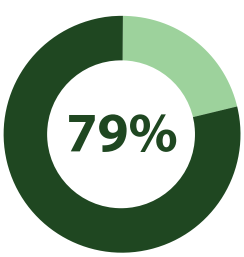
Employees across the broader workforce are facing many of the same challenges: increasing financial complexity, uncertainty around retirement readiness and a growing need for guidance.

The 2026 NFP U.S. Retirement Trend Report found that employees are increasingly looking for support, understanding and help **navigating retirement and financial planning decisions, reinforcing the growing importance of education, engagement and personalized guidance across all workforces.**

Cybersecurity and Trust in a Connected Benefits Environment

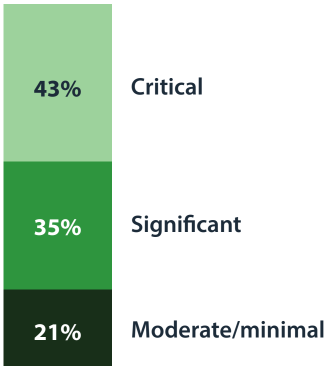
Executive benefits increasingly rely on third-party administrators, financial platforms, recordkeepers and advisory partners to manage sensitive financial, compensation and personal information. As a result, cybersecurity is becoming a more visible component of executive benefits decision-making and long-term workforce planning.

For many organizations, concerns are no longer limited to data privacy alone. The growing integration of AI, digital administration tools and interconnected benefits platforms is expanding both operational complexity and perceived organizational risk.

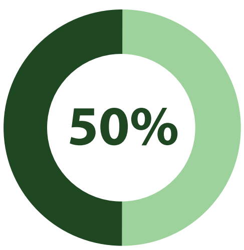


of organizations say their cybersecurity concern has increased over the past 12 months.

Cybersecurity Consideration When Evaluating Third-Party Vendors



Confidence in organizational readiness remains mixed. While organizations continue adopting more advanced technologies across benefits administration and workforce management, many remain uncertain about their ability to effectively manage evolving security risks.



feel confident their organization can manage data security risks as AI becomes more embedded in benefits administration.

As executive benefits become more integrated, personalized and technology-enabled, organizations are increasingly evaluating not only the value and flexibility of their benefits offerings, but also the resilience, security and trustworthiness of the infrastructure supporting them.

The Push and Pull Between Flexibility and Constraint

Recent regulatory changes are adding a new layer of constraint to an already complex environment. Under the SECURE Act 2.0, employees age 50 and older earning roughly $150,000 or more must now make catch-up contributions on an after-tax (Roth) basis rather than on a pre-tax basis.[1]

What sounds simple in theory has proven more complicated in practice. Employers are navigating new payroll handling requirements, inconsistent processes across recordkeepers and increased education needs for a relatively small group of employees. In many cases, this has become a time-consuming issue embedded within an already complex plan environment.

For highly compensated employees, the impact is more personal. Many are already limited in how much they can save through qualified plans and often fall short of replacement income targets in retirement. Enforced Roth treatment, or "Rothification," removes a key lever, making it more difficult for some to manage current tax exposure while continuing to save for the future.

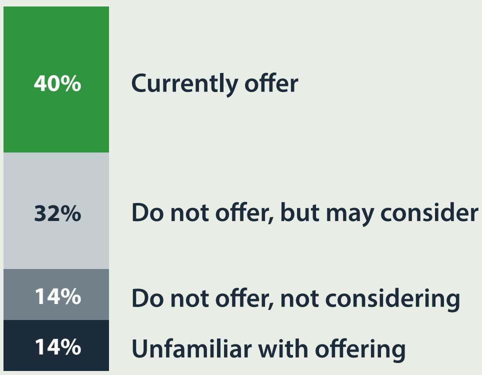
[1] *Internal Revenue Service. "Retirement Topics: Catch-up Contributions," IRS.gov, May 7, 2026.*

Employee Segments with Greatest Interest

Mid-career	38%
Younger/earlier-career	37%
Those with higher compensation	28%
Late career or near-retirement	26%

This dynamic is driving increased focus on NQDC plans. Unlike qualified plans, NQDC arrangements are not subject to these Roth catch-up requirements, allowing organizations to preserve pre-tax deferral opportunities and restore flexibility for highly compensated employees navigating an increasingly constrained system.

Approach to Roth-Style After-Tax Executive Benefit Offerings



In this way, Rothification is not creating a new strategy as much as it is reinforcing the importance of existing ones. As more constraints are introduced on the qualified side, the ability to offer flexibility and control through nonqualified plans becomes more important to the overall executive benefits strategy.

What's Slowing Adoption of Roth-Style Options

Limited awareness and information about options	33%
Limited perceived demand from key employees	30%
Unclear impact on retention or attraction	26%
Uncertainty around participation or utilization	24%
Cost considerations	22%
Administrative complexity or operational burden	16%
Waiting to see broader market adoption	13%

At the same time, there are the usual barriers to adoption: Many organizations cite limited awareness, uncertainty around utilization and unclear impact on retention or attraction as key challenges, reinforcing the growing importance of education, guidance and activation in executive benefits strategy.

NQDC:

Restoring Flexibility and Control

Throughout all of this, organizations are increasingly looking for ways to deliver greater flexibility without sacrificing long-term planning or continuity. This adds another level of complexity, as executive benefits strategies must increasingly align with evolving needs, retirement timelines and financial priorities of key employees.

Organizations are relying on a combination of tools to accomplish this, including deferred compensation plans, supplemental executive retirement plans, life insurance financing strategies such as bank-owned and corporate-owned life insurance (BOLI and COLI) and other benefits to support retention, continuity and long-term financial planning. Together, these offerings are becoming less isolated benefits and more integrated components of broader workforce and leadership strategies.

82%

of employers say NQDC plans have a high/moderate impact on plan success.

63%

of employers say BOLI/COLI plans have a high/moderate impact on plan success.

Alongside deferred compensation and retirement-focused offerings, performance-based incentives and stock and equity compensation also stand out as high-impact tools that organizations use to reinforce retention, align leadership priorities and support long-term organizational continuity.

Other Benefits Offered by Organizations

	Percent offered	High/moderate impact on plan success
Performance-based incentive (short- or long-term)	64%	90%
Employment and severance agreements	47% ▲	73%
Signing bonus	37%	73%
Fringe benefits (e.g., first-class air travel, legal planning services)	33%	69%
Supplemental executive life insurance	33%	56%
Stock and equity	29%	92%
Financial planning and wealth management	26% ▲	65%
Supplemental executive disability coverage	22%	62%
Split-dollar life insurance	19%	58%
Long-term care or hybrid life with long-term care	14%	59%
Supplemental executive medical insurance	11%	70%*
Loans to buy/pay stock, a home, loans, other debt, etc.	9%	46%*
College tuition for children	4%	**

** Small base (n=20-30), ** Base too small for reporting (n<20)*

NQDC plans remain a gold standard for organizations seeking greater flexibility and personalization within executive benefits strategy. What was once viewed primarily as a retention or supplemental compensation tool is increasingly being used to support broader goals around continuity, flexibility and long-term workforce planning.

They solve two problems at once: providing leaders with essential tax efficiency while giving organizations greater flexibility in managing long-term compensation and workforce planning, which is especially valuable in uncertain market conditions.

It's no secret that organizations are operating in an increasingly uneven economic environment where higher-earning employees often face a very different set of financial pressures and planning needs than the broader workforce. As more employees move into higher compensation ranges, many for the first time, demand for tools that offer greater tax efficiency, flexibility and long-term financial control continues to grow.

This demand is further expanding the strategic relevance of deferred compensation beyond traditional executive populations to include a broader range of key employees, reinforcing the need for more personalized financial planning strategies.

Organizations are actively evolving deferred compensation strategies in response to the more uncertain and individualized talent landscape. NQDC plans continue to provide broad flexibility across multiple forms of compensation, including salary, bonuses and performance-based earnings, allowing organizations to align executive benefits more closely with changing financial priorities and career timelines.

Companies are further placing emphasis on how these plans are structured, understood and utilized. Planned increases in participant education, expanded distribution flexibility and enhancements to investment options all point toward a broader shift in strategy: organizations increasingly recognize that long-term value comes not just from offering deferred compensation plans, but from helping highly compensated employees use them more effectively. Expectations for increased participation tied to inflation and future tax concerns further reinforce how financial uncertainty is reshaping executive benefits decision-making and increasing demand for more adaptable planning tools.

These plans are already widely adopted. Most organizations offer some form of deferred compensation option, and a strong majority report that NQDC plans play a meaningful role in overall executive benefits strategy and plan success.

75%

allow participants to defer compensation via:

Base salary	80%
Annual bonuses	74% ▼
Performance-based compensation	40%
Director's fees/retainers	15%
Restricted stock, RSUs, PSUs	7%

82%

make employer contributions determined via:

Employer match	53%
Percentage of compensation	40%
Discretionary	37%
Performance-based	25%

Employer Planned Changes for NQDC Plans

(Over the next 12 to 18 months.)

Increase participant education and education sources	23%
Improve distribution flexibility	11%
Modify company contributions	10%
Enhance the investment menu	9%

Anticipated Participation in NQDC Plans

(Over the next 12 to 18 months.)

17%

of employers say **inflation** will increase participation.

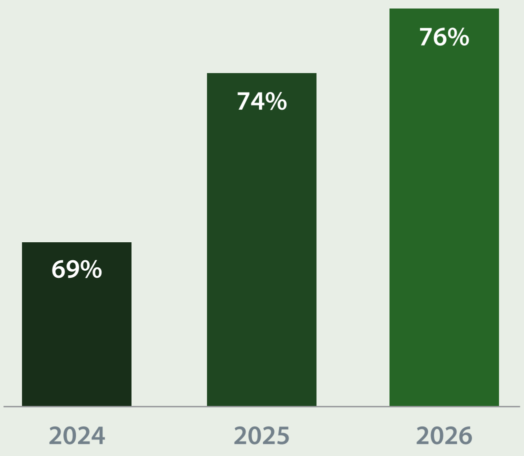
21%

of employers say **future tax rates** will increase participation.

Deferred Compensation Plan Impact and Experiences

The overall participant experience is becoming increasingly important within deferred compensation strategy. Organizations are placing greater emphasis not simply on offering deferred compensation plans, but on how those plans are perceived, utilized and experienced by key employees over time. Satisfaction with deferred compensation plans has steadily improved over the past three years, suggesting greater effectiveness in aligning these strategies with evolving employee expectations and financial priorities.

Impact on Retirement Preparedness



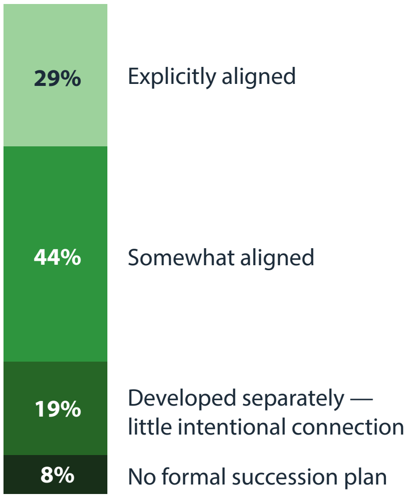
Continuity Through Transition

Organizations craft executive benefits strategies for a simple reason: retaining and supporting key leadership remains critical to long-term organizational stability and overall success. Executive and top-performer benefits are designed not only to attract talent, but to reinforce leadership continuity, align leadership priorities and help organizations navigate increasingly complex workforce transitions.

Throughout this report, it's been noted that leadership movement has grown less predictable. As a direct consequence, succession planning is an active continuity challenge requiring more intentional planning around executive benefits, compensation strategy and long-term leadership development.

A strong majority of organizations anticipate increased focus on succession planning within executive and leadership benefits over the coming years, while others expect growing pressure to reevaluate executive compensation structures and create greater flexibility within benefit design to support leadership transitions.

How Executive Benefits Align with Succession Planning



How Organizations Use Executive Benefits to Support Leadership Transitions

Have not linked executive benefits offerings to leadership transition planning	49%
Use retention incentives to keep pre-retirement executives longer	22%
Offer phased retirement arrangements with continued benefits	20%
Provide structured benefits packages for identified successors	14%
Use knowledge transfer bonuses or consulting arrangements	13%
Offer bridge compensation for external hires in succession roles	7%
Provide incentives for mentoring program participant	7%

Anticipated Increase Due to Upcoming Retirements and Leadership Transitions

Focus on succession planning within key employee and leadership roles	**62%**
Re-evaluation of compensation or benefit structures	**56%**
Need for greater flexibility in benefit design to support leadership transitions	**44%**
Near-term cash outflows related to retirement or benefit payouts	**30%**

Yet even as awareness grows, execution continues to lag. Nearly half of organizations report they still have not implemented specific strategies to support leadership transitions. Among those that have, organizations are more likely to focus on retaining existing leadership through incentives and phased retirement arrangements than on building structured succession pathways, successor development or knowledge transfer strategies.

Continuity is no longer simply about keeping leadership in place. Increasingly, it depends on how effectively organizations prepare for leadership movement, transfer institutional knowledge and create flexibility around evolving executive career timelines.

The organizations best positioned for the years ahead may not be the ones offering the richest executive benefits packages.

They may simply be the ones most effectively aligning executive benefits with continuity, transition and long-term workforce strategy. Because as momentum across the leadership landscape continues to build, the question for organizations is whether their executive benefits strategy is prepared for it.

Financial Services Spotlight

Executive Benefits Under Pressure

Financial services organizations are experiencing many of the same workforce pressures shaping executive benefits strategy across industries, but at a heightened level.

Retention concerns, succession planning and cybersecurity are all becoming more prominent within executive benefits strategy. Financial services organizations are also navigating a workforce with increasingly complex financial planning needs and evolving expectations around flexibility, personalization and long-term wealth strategy.

Together, these dynamics are pushing executive benefits beyond traditional compensation and retention models and reinforcing their role within broader continuity and workforce planning efforts.

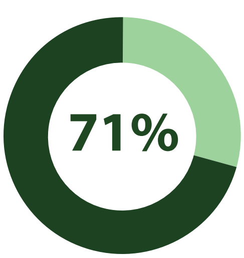
Retention Readiness Gap

Financial services organizations place significantly greater emphasis on the retention of key employees and succession planning than many other industries. In a sector where leadership continuity is closely tied to client relationships, institutional expertise and long-term business stability, those priorities carry even greater strategic weight. Yet despite this, many organizations still lack formal strategies to support leadership transition and continuity planning.

This disconnect highlights an opportunity across the sector: organizations increasingly recognize the importance of continuity and succession readiness, but many continue to rely on executive benefits structures designed primarily around retention rather than long-term leadership transition.

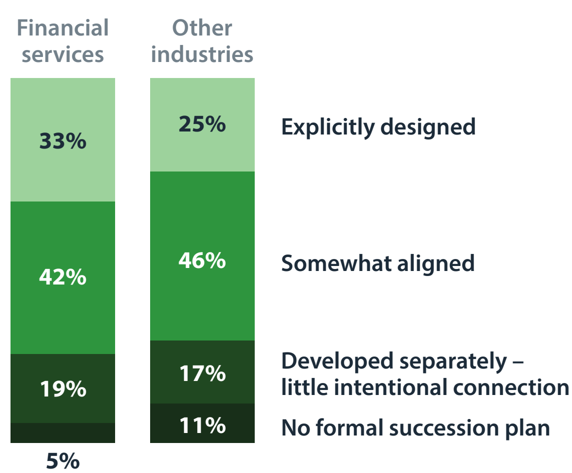
Top Drivers of Executive Benefit Decisions in Financial Services vs. Other Industries

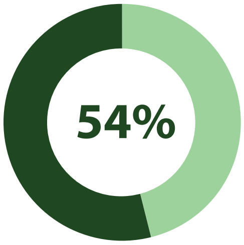
	Past year	Year ahead
Key employee retention	**61%** (vs 46%)	**69%** (vs 43%)
Succession planning and leadership continuity	**59%** (vs 38%)	**58%** (vs 31%)



of employers anticipate an increased focus on succession planning within executive or leadership benefits in the near future (vs. 51% among other industries).

Succession Planning Alignment in Financial Services Executive Benefits vs. Other Industries





of employers have not implemented intentional executive benefits strategies for leadership transitions.

Even among organizations prioritizing succession planning, many have not connected executive benefits to leadership transition and continuity planning. In many cases, executive benefits continue to function primarily as tools for retaining leadership rather than preparing organizations for eventual leadership movement and knowledge transfer.

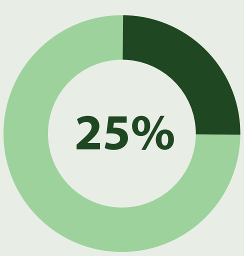
Perception-Driven Benefit Tradeoffs

Financial services organizations often place greater emphasis on compensation-related and fringe benefit offerings while comparatively underweighting financial planning and advisory support.

This may reflect the assumption that employees in key roles within the industry already possess strong financial expertise. However, increasing complexity around tax strategy, retirement timing, deferred compensation and long-term wealth planning may be reshaping what effective support actually requires. As such, organizations may need to reconsider how advisory services, education and personalized planning fit within broader executive benefits strategy.

Benefits Offered Beyond NQDC/BOLI/COLI Plans and Their Contrast Against Other Industries

	Financial services	Other industries
Fringe benefits (e.g., first class air travel, legal planning services)	45%	24%
Employment and severance agreements	42%	57%
Split dollar life insurance	33%	6%
Financial planning and wealth management	23%	37%
Supplemental executive disability coverage	18%	31%



offer financial advisory services to participants after they receive payment from an NQDC plan* (vs. 39% in other industries).

**Among those offering an NQDC plan.*

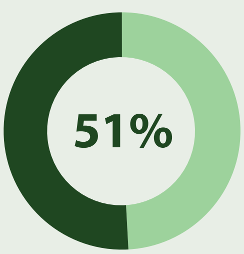
Some organizations may need to rethink whether existing benefit structures fully align with the growing complexity and personalization now shaping executive financial decision-making.

Rising Risk Concerns

Cybersecurity concerns are intensifying within financial services organizations as executive benefits administration becomes more digitally connected and increasingly reliant on third-party platforms and data-sharing environments. For financial services organizations, these concerns carry additional weight given the volume of sensitive financial information they manage, access to liquid capital and level of interconnectedness across financial systems and external partners.

As a result, financial services executives report significantly greater concern around cybersecurity and vendor risk than peers in other industries, particularly when evaluating third-party partners supporting benefits administration and financial data management.

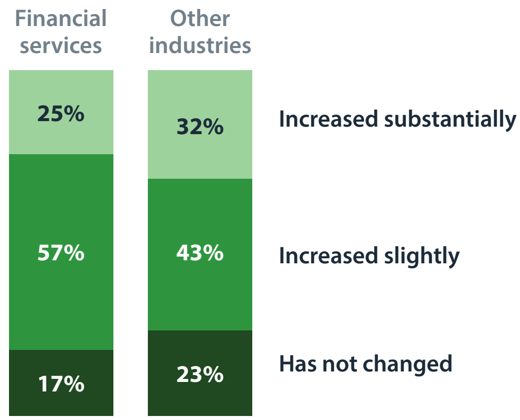
Confidence in organizations' ability to manage emerging security risks remains more measured, highlighting growing pressure to strengthen governance, infrastructure resilience and trust across increasingly technology-enabled executive benefits ecosystems.



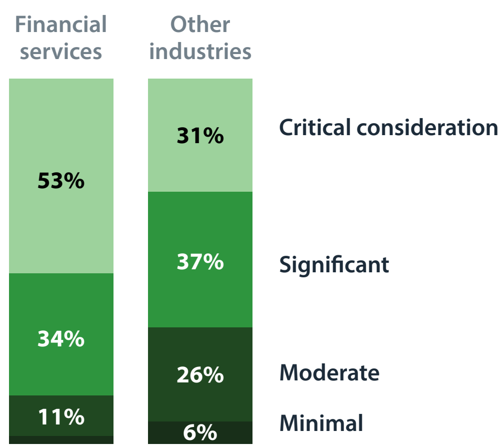
of financial services executives feel confident their organization can manage data security risks as AI becomes more embedded in benefits administration (vs. 48% in other industries).

Cybersecurity Concerns: Financial Services vs. Other Industries

Over the past 12 months



Cybersecurity Consideration When Evaluating Third-Party Vendors: Financial Services vs. Other Industries



Financial services organizations are managing several workforce pressures: heightened retention concerns, delayed leadership transitions, increasing financial complexity among key employees and growing cybersecurity risk.

This reinforces a broader shift occurring across executive benefits strategy. Executive benefits are becoming more than retention tools alone. Increasingly, they are being used to support continuity, workforce transition, personalization and long-term organizational resilience within an increasingly uncertain leadership environment.

Preparing for What Comes Next

A more strategic approach to executive benefits.

Organizations may need to rethink the role executive benefits play within broader leadership and continuity planning efforts. Increasingly, the organizations best positioned for the future may be those treating executive benefits as part of a larger workforce strategy designed to support continuity, flexibility and long-term organizational resilience.

Align Executive Benefits with Leadership Continuity

As leadership movement becomes less predictable, executive benefits strategies may need to support more than attraction and retention alone. Organizations are increasingly using executive benefits to reinforce succession readiness, leadership transition planning and long-term continuity.

What to Do: Evaluate whether current executive benefits structures are aligned with long-term leadership planning goals, including succession strategy, retirement timing and knowledge transfer considerations.

Personalize Benefits Around Evolving Executive Needs

Executive financial priorities, retirement expectations and career timelines are becoming more individualized. As a result, more flexible and personalized approaches to executive benefits will become increasingly important.

What to Do: Regularly assess the priorities of key employees and consider how benefit structures, deferred compensation strategies and financial planning resources can better support their evolving needs, financial priorities, and planning complexity.

Move Beyond Offering Benefits to Activating Value

The value of executive benefits increasingly depends on how effectively key employees understand, access and apply them within broader financial and retirement planning decisions.

What to Do: Expand executive benefits education, financial guidance and decision-support resources to help key employees better utilize available benefits and deferred compensation opportunities.

Strengthen Governance and Infrastructure Readiness

As executive benefits administration becomes more digitally connected and reliant on third-party platforms, organizations may also need to place greater emphasis on governance, cybersecurity and operational resilience.

What to Do: Review vendor oversight, cybersecurity readiness and infrastructure capabilities supporting executive benefits administration and long-term workforce planning.

Reevaluate the Strategic Role of Deferred Compensation

Deferred compensation strategies are increasingly being used to support flexibility, continuity and individualized financial planning rather than functioning solely as retention mechanisms.

What to Do: Consider how deferred compensation plans can support broader organizational objectives around key employee engagement, workforce transition and long-term financial planning.

Partner with the Leaders in Executive Benefits

Let's work together to build executive benefit strategies that drive performance, deepen loyalty and deliver measurable value.

Contact NFP's Executive Benefits team today to transform your executive benefits strategy into a powerful retention tool at **executivebenefits@nfp.com**.

About the Data

This report draws on data from NFP's 2026 Executive Benefits Survey, which **included 273 executive benefits decision-makers** across various industries and organizational levels.

The survey was conducted online in partnership with Empatix, a strategy, insights and activation firm. Respondents represented a mix of organizations across the U.S. Any other sources are as referenced throughout. Due to rounding conventions, data may not add to 100%. Percentage totals may vary throughout the report because some questions were asked of different respondent groups or subsets, and base sizes vary by question. Statistically significant year-over-year differences are indicated by up or down arrows on data points. For full information on the methodology for this NFP survey, contact marketing@nfp.com.

Position Held

The respondents hold a variety of executive-level positions. As leaders within their organizations, they are involved in making decisions about executive compensation packages.

Chief human resource officers	21%
Chief executive officers	16%
Chief financial officers	15%
Chief operating officers	6%
Other executive position	42%

Tenure in Current Role

Respondents' tenure varies in their current roles, representing a range of experience levels within their organizations.

Less than one year	5%
1 to 4 years	29%
5 to14 years	42%
15+ years	23%

Level of Decision-Making Authority

Respondents differ in their level of involvement in executive compensation decisions, highlighting the collaborative nature of these choices.

Primary decision-makers	22% ▲
Shared decision-making responsibility	45% ▼
Influencers in the process	33%

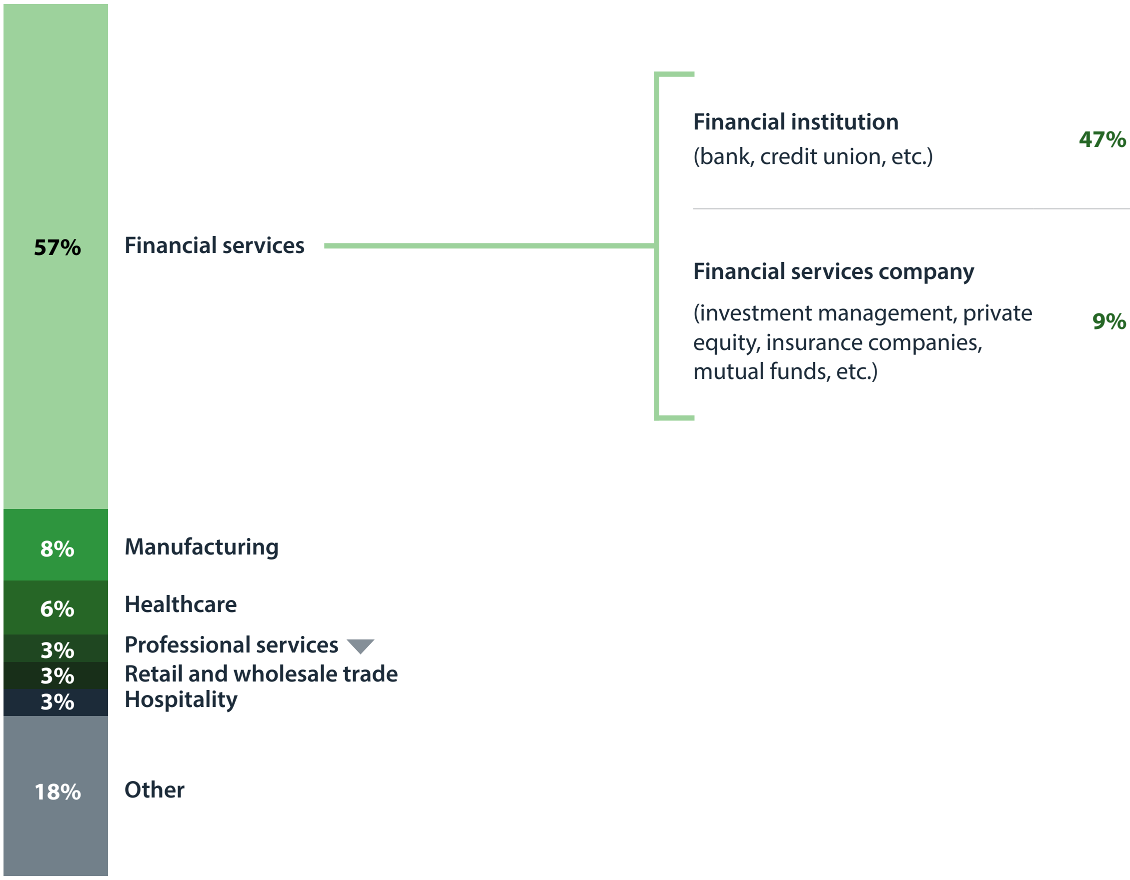
Company Size (Number of Employees)

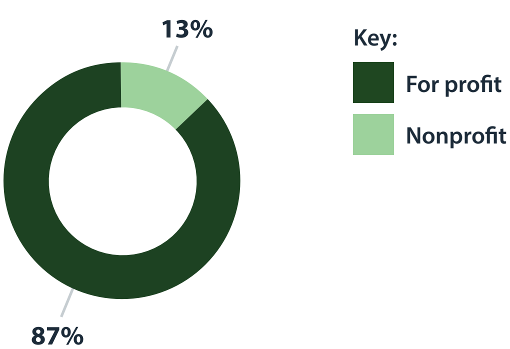
Organizations of varying sizes are represented, capturing a broad cross-section of the market.

Less than 100 employees	29%
100 to 1,000 employees	39%
More than 1,000 employees	32%

Industries Represented

Respondents encompass various sectors, with the majority being financial institutions.





About NFP

NFP, an Aon company, helps companies and individuals address today's most significant Risk Capital and Human Capital challenges.

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