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**CUES Compensation Survey Results Highlight Growing Focus on
Talent, Leadership, and Succession Planning**

MADISON, Wis. – October 22, 2026 – Credit unions continue to invest in talent, leadership development, and succession planning, according to the [2026 CUES Compensation Survey Executive Summary](#).

More than 300 credit unions participated in the [2026 CUES Compensation Survey](#). The survey highlights trends in executive compensation, governance, workforce planning, and emerging leadership roles across the credit union industry.

Among the key findings:

- **Compensation Growth Continues:** Executive compensation increased approximately 4% year over year, outpacing inflation and reflecting the continued strength of the credit union industry. Variable pay also continues to play a larger role in executive compensation, particularly at larger credit unions.
- **Succession Planning Becomes More Urgent:** Approximately one-third of credit union CEOs are expected to retire within the next five years, underscoring the importance of leadership development and transition planning. Internal promotion remains a common pathway to executive leadership, highlighting the value of developing strong talent pipelines.
- **Talent Priorities Are Evolving:** Chief People Officer compensation showed some of the strongest growth among executive positions, while more credit unions are adding Chief Member Experience Officer roles. Digital banking and cybersecurity positions also continue to gain prominence as organizations respond to changing member expectations and technology demands.

“Credit unions are taking a broader view of compensation as part of their overall talent strategy,” said Sharon Messmore, CUES Products & Services Manager. “The survey findings show organizations balancing competitive pay with investments in leadership development, succession planning, and specialized roles that support future growth.”

Additional findings indicate that economic uncertainty, talent recruitment, employee retention, and rising healthcare and benefits costs remain top concerns for many credit unions. At the same time, organizations continue to invest in employee development, with tuition reimbursement programs becoming increasingly common.

The survey also confirms that asset size remains the strongest factor influencing compensation levels, reinforcing the importance of benchmarking against peer institutions when evaluating executive and employee pay practices.

Results include executive compensation data covering salaries, incentives, bonuses, and benefits, as well as new board compensation benchmarks, annual salary trend insights, and customizable reporting tools that allow credit unions to compare compensation practices by asset size, region, and peer group.

New this year, CUES partnered with [The Sheeter Group](#), a trusted CUES Supplier member specializing in executive benefits plans for credit unions, to enhance survey reporting and introduce a CEO Benchmark Report, available exclusively to 2026 survey participants. The report provides personalized benchmarking insights across both the credit union and broader financial services sectors.

"Credit unions gave their time and data generously this year, and that generosity pays off," said Liz Santos, Chief Consulting Officer at The Sheeter Group. "CUES has built a database that turns those numbers into real, actionable insight. I'm proud to have been part of it."

The survey results are available to CUES Unlimited+ members and for purchase by subscription for all others.

The [2026 CUES Compensation Survey Executive Summary](#) is available for download, providing an overview of key findings and emerging trends.

Learn more and download your report at cues.org/Survey.

About CUES

For over 60 years, CUES has advanced the credit union movement by developing exceptional purpose-driven leaders who meet the unique needs of their organizations and the communities they serve. CUES partners with the credit union system to elevate the leaders of today and tomorrow through exclusive networking and event opportunities, programs that facilitate personal and professional development, and unmatched digital and in-person learning experiences. Visit CUES.org to learn how CUES plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of credit unions.

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