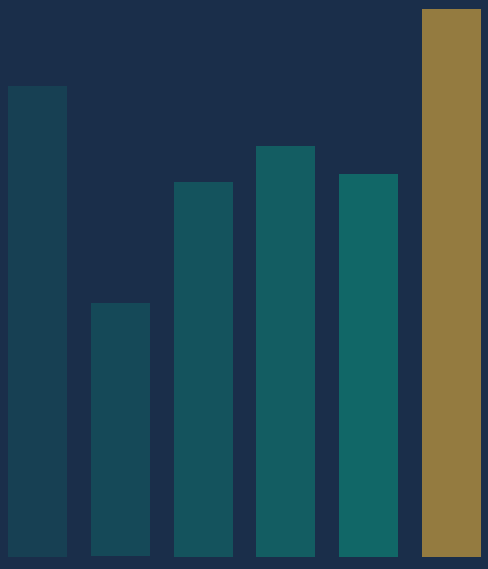
CauseComp

RESEARCH

What to Budget for 2027 Raises

Continuing Nonprofit Chief Executives Got a Median 4.8% in 2024, and About One in 19 Got No Change in Total Pay



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AT A GLANCE

In Form 990 filings, the median continuing nonprofit chief executive saw total pay change by 4.8% in pay year 2024, and other officers 4.7%.

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4.8%
Median change in chief-executive total pay
Form 990 filings, 70,451 pairs, pay year 2024

5.1%
Chief executives with no change in total pay
Form 990 filings, 70,451 pairs, pay year 2024

4.5%
Median change in chief-executive base salary
Schedule J pairs, 28,648 pairs, pay year 2024

01 The median continuing nonprofit chief executive got 4.8% in pay year 2024; about one in 19 got no change in total pay.

02 Total pay fell for 21.8% of chief executives and rose by 10% or more for 30.4%.

03 Where Schedule J reports base salary, the median change in base salary was 4.5% for chief executives, against 5.2% for total pay.

04 Among continuing chief executives, the median raise runs from 3.9% at organizations under $500K in revenue to 7.8% at $500M and over, and the share with no change goes from 11.6% to 0.0%.

05 This page describes the shape of raises already given.

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Related guide: How to set nonprofit salary ranges

The median continuing nonprofit chief executive got 4.8% in pay year 2024; about one in 19 got no change in total pay. Across 236,559 pairs of the same person in the same role at the same organization in consecutive years, the median change in total compensation was 4.8% for chief executives (70,451 pairs) and 4.7% for other officers (166,108 pairs). Other officers are everyone else with pay reported in Part VII or Schedule J: officers, key employees, highest-compensated employees and former officers, including clinical, faculty and unclassified titles. Total pay fell for 21.8% of chief executives and rose by 10% or more for 30.4%. Where Schedule J reports base salary, the median change in base salary was 4.5% for chief executives, against 5.2% for total pay. Chief executives whose pay moved onto Schedule J had a median raise of 23.6% (3,677 pairs); those whose pay moved off it had a median fall of 18.1% (1,119 pairs). Both groups are left out of the figures above.

These are old pay years. Form 990 filings run one to two years behind. Pay year 2024 is the latest complete year in the filings, and pay year 2025 is still arriving. This page describes the shape of raises already given. It is not a forecast of what 2027 will bring.

The median raise, year by year, beside the Employment Cost Index

A budget season starts from two numbers: what continuing executives were actually paid last time, and what the wider labor market is doing now. The table sets the median raise in the filings beside the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Cost Index (ECI) for private-industry wages and salaries, as an annual average. The spread is the all-roles median raise less the ECI. It was +0.8 points in pay year 2024.

PAY YEAR	PAIRS, ALL ROLES	ALL ROLES, MEDIAN RAISE	CHIEF EXECUTIVES, MEDIAN RAISE	OTHER OFFICERS, MEDIAN RAISE	ECI, PRIVATE INDUSTRY WAGES AND SALARIES, ANNUAL AVERAGE	SPREAD: ALL-ROLES MEDIAN RAISE LESS ECI
2019	83,349	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	3.0%	+0.4 points
2020	114,018	3.2%	3.4%	3.2%	2.9%	+0.3 points
2021	208,200	3.6%	3.8%	3.6%	4.0%	-0.4 points
2022	213,166	4.8%	5.3%	4.6%	5.3%	-0.5 points
2023	224,366	4.9%	5.2%	4.8%	4.6%	+0.3 points
2024	236,559	4.7%	4.8%	4.7%	3.9%	+0.8 points
2025 (still arriving)	47,197	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: CauseComp Form 990 corpus as built on October 30, 2026 (Part VII and Schedule J rows); pairs of the same person in the same role at the same organization in consecutive pay years, with pay reported the same way in both years. ECI: BLS series CIS2020000000000I, private industry wages and salaries, seasonally adjusted, annual average of the four quarters. A pay year still arriving shows its pair count only. The spread is computed from unrounded values, so it may differ by 0.1 point from the difference of the rounded columns.

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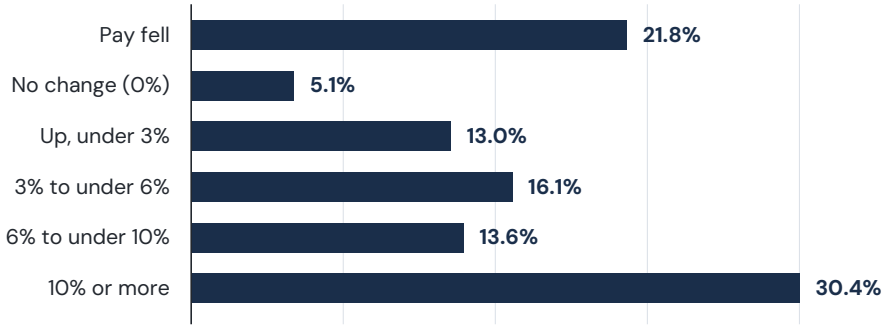
A raise here is the change in total reported pay. Total pay is base salary, bonus and incentive pay, other reportable pay, retirement and deferred pay, and nontaxable benefits, as filed. It is not a measure of merit-pool size.

The spread of raises: the middle hides a wide range

Raises are not clustered at the median. In pay year 2024, 21.8% of continuing chief executives saw total pay fall, 5.1% saw no change, and 30.4% saw it rise by 10% or more. The six groups below do not overlap and together cover every pair counted here: pay fell; no change (exactly 0%); up but under 3%; 3% to under 6%; 6% to under 10%; and 10% or more.

EXHIBIT 1

About one in 19 continuing chief executives had no change in total pay, and 30.4% had a rise of 10% or more



Share of continuing chief executives, by change in total pay, pay year 2024

CHANGE IN TOTAL PAY	SHARE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES
Pay fell	21.8%
No change (0%)	5.1%
Up, under 3%	13.0%
3% to under 6%	16.1%
6% to under 10%	13.6%
10% or more	30.4%

Source and notes: Source: CauseComp Form 990 corpus as built on October 30, 2026; 70,451 pairs of the same person in the same role, reported the same way in both years, pay year 2024.

CHANGE IN TOTAL PAY, PAY YEAR 2024	CHIEF EXECUTIVES	OTHER OFFICERS
Pay fell	21.8%	21.8%
No change (0%)	5.1%	2.2%
Up, under 3%	13.0%	14.6%
3% to under 6%	16.1%	19.2%
6% to under 10%	13.6%	15.6%
10% or more	30.4%	26.6%
Pairs	70,451	166,108

Source: CauseComp Form 990 corpus as built on October 30, 2026 (Part VII and Schedule J rows); pay year 2024. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place, so a column may not add to exactly 100%. A share above zero that rounds to 0.0% prints as <0.1%.

What "pay fell" counts. It is a count of pairs whose as-filed total pay was lower than the year before: 15,352 pairs, 21.8% of continuing chief executives in pay year 2024. The filing does not say why. Where Schedule J splits the pieces (5,939 of those pairs), base salary itself fell in 56.9% of those 5,939. Of all 15,352 falls, 14.0% are under 1%, and 61.3% cannot be split, because Schedule J does not report a base salary above zero in both years.

Base salary against total pay

Where Schedule J reports a base salary above zero in both years, base pay moved less than total pay in pay year 2024. The median change in base salary was 4.5% for chief executives, against 5.2% for total pay, and 3.3% of chief executives had an unchanged base salary. For other officers the figures were 4.2%, 4.9% and 1.8%. These are the pairs with a Schedule J row in both years. Schedule J is required mainly where reportable compensation exceeds $150,000, so these pairs skew toward higher-paid executives and larger organizations, and at those organizations base salary grew more slowly than total pay.

SCHEDULE J PAIRS, PAY YEAR 2024	CHIEF EXECUTIVES	OTHER OFFICERS
Median change in base salary	4.5%	4.2%
Median change in total pay	5.2%	4.9%
Base salary unchanged	3.3%	1.8%
Total pay unchanged	1.2%	0.6%
Pairs	28,648	112,520

Source: CauseComp Form 990 corpus as built on October 30, 2026 (Part VII and Schedule J rows); pairs with a Schedule J row in both years and base salary above zero in both; pay year 2024. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place, so a column may not add to exactly 100%. A share above zero that rounds to 0.0% prints as <0.1%.

Raises by organization size

Among continuing chief executives, the median raise runs from 3.9% at organizations under $500K in revenue to 7.8% at $500M and over, and the share with no change goes from 11.6% to 0.0%. Budget bands are a display of filings, as in CauseComp's 2026 report, not how CauseComp's benchmarks are computed. Bands with fewer than 100 pairs are not shown.

BUDGET BAND (FIRST-YEAR REVENUE)	CHIEF-EXECUTIVE PAIRS	MEDIAN RAISE	NO CHANGE	10% OR MORE
<$500K	16,479	3.9%	11.6%	32.1%
$500K–$1M	9,617	4.6%	6.7%	30.2%
$1M–$2.5M	13,167	4.7%	4.4%	28.4%
$2.5M–$5M	8,907	4.5%	3.0%	27.2%
$5M–$10M	7,175	5.1%	1.6%	28.6%
$10M–$25M	6,965	5.2%	1.1%	29.8%
$25M–$50M	3,520	6.0%	0.6%	33.1%
$50M–$100M	2,073	6.4%	0.1%	35.3%
$100M–$500M	1,885	7.2%	0.1%	40.3%
$500M+	663	7.8%	0.0%	43.3%

Source: CauseComp Form 990 corpus as built on October 30, 2026 (Part VII and Schedule J rows); continuing chief executives, pay year 2024, by the organization's revenue band in the first year of the pair. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place, so a column may not add to exactly 100%. A share above zero that rounds to 0.0% prints as <0.1%.

Private foundations (Form 990-PF)

Form 990-PF, the private foundation return, reports officer pay in Part VII and has no Schedule J, so only the change in total pay can be measured. With the same pairing, the median change in total pay in pay year 2024 was 4.4% for 2,007 continuing foundation chief executives and 4.4% for 5,765 continuing officers in all roles, and 8.9% of the chief executives had no change. These foundation figures are separate from every other figure on this page, which cover Form 990 and 990-EZ filings only.

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Beside the wider labor market

The ECI measures wage growth for a fixed set of jobs, by industry. For the two industries closest to most nonprofits, health care and social assistance ran 3.7% and educational services 3.6% in the 12 months to the third quarter of 2026, against 3.1% for private industry as a whole. The Congressional Budget Office's February 2026 projection for the ECI, private wages and salaries, is 3.4% for 2026 and 3.4% for 2027, annual-average change.

WAGES AND SALARIES, 12 MONTHS TO Q4	2023	2024	2025	12 MONTHS TO Q3 2026
Private industry	4.3%	3.7%	3.3%	3.1%
Health care and social assistance	5.0%	4.1%	4.2%	3.7%
Educational services	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%	3.6%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Cost Index, wages and salaries, not seasonally adjusted, series CIU2020000000000I, CIU2026200000000I and CIU2026100000000I, retrieved October 30, 2026.

The private-industry figure in the first table (3.9% for 2024) and the one in this table (3.7% for the 12 months to Q4 2024) are the same wages and salaries measured two ways: the first is the annual average of four seasonally adjusted quarters over the year before, and this one compares the fourth quarter with the fourth quarter a year earlier, not seasonally adjusted. They differ for that reason.

What this means for a budget

A board setting a raise budget can read these figures as a description of what continuing executives at filing organizations received. They are not a recommendation. The spread column shows how far the all-roles median raise sat from the ECI in each pay year, the range around the median is wide, and in pay year 2024 base salary moved less than total pay. For how ranges and increases fit into a salary structure, see how to set nonprofit salary ranges.

APPENDIX

Method and scope

Scope of every figure on this page: Form 990 and 990-EZ filings in the CauseComp corpus as built on October 30, 2026, Part VII and Schedule J rows. The unit of count is a pair: one person in one role at one organization, observed in two consecutive pay years. A pay year is the calendar year the reported pay covers, not the tax year or fiscal year: a return for a fiscal year ending in December reports that year, and one ending in any other month reports the year before.

- **Pairs:** the same organization, the same person (name compared after normalizing case and punctuation) and the same role, in two consecutive pay years, with total compensation and revenue above zero in both. Rows with no name are never paired. This follows the pairing behind CauseComp's measured nonprofit pay growth: the median year-over-year change for the same executive in the same role at the same organization, from consecutive Form 990 filings; here, pairs whose pay crossed the Schedule J reporting threshold are left out.
- **Same-place pairs:** a pair counts only when the person's pay was reported the same way in both years: Part VII in both, or Schedule J in both. Pairs whose pay crossed the Schedule J reporting threshold are shown separately, because crossing it goes with an unusually large change in pay: a rise for pay moving onto Schedule J, a fall for pay moving off it.
- **Chief executives and officers:** chief executives are the role Executive Director / CEO. Other officers are every other person with a paired Part VII or Schedule J row, in every role CauseComp classifies, including key employees, highest-compensated employees, former officers, board members paid as such, clinical and faculty roles, and titles CauseComp cannot classify.
- **Raise:** total compensation in the second year divided by total compensation in the first, less one, as filed. Total compensation includes nontaxable benefits (Schedule J column D). The median is taken over pairs.
- **Groups:** pay fell (below 0%); no change (exactly 0%); up under 3%; 3% to under 6%; 6% to under 10%; 10% or more.
- **Base salary:** Schedule J base compensation, for pairs with a Schedule J row in both years and base above zero in both.
- **Size:** the organization's revenue band in the first year of the pair.
- **De-duplication:** returns are de-duplicated and a Part VII row that repeats a Schedule J row on the same return is removed before pairing. Run without it, the largest change to any median shown is <0.01 percentage points.
- **Employment Cost Index:** BLS wages and salaries, private industry (annual average, seasonally adjusted, for the spread; 12-month change to Q4, not seasonally adjusted, for the industry table), health care and social assistance, and educational services. The latest reading is the 12 months to the third quarter of 2026.
- **Completeness:** a pay year is complete when its pair count is at least half of the previous pay year's. A pay year still arriving shows its pair count only, because early filers are not typical of all filers.
- **Minimum:** every share and median is taken over at least 100 pairs.
- **Private foundations:** Form 990-PF returns are left out of every other figure on this page. The foundation paragraph uses the same pairing, de-duplication and minimum on Form 990-PF Part VII rows.
- **Total:** 1,126,855 pairs across the pay years in the first table.

(a) Filings run one to two years behind. Pay year 2024 is the latest complete year. Pay year 2025 is still arriving: 47,197 pairs so far, 20% of the previous year's count, so it shows no median.

(b) A raise here follows the same person in the same role. It leaves out people who changed role, left or joined, and it covers organizations that filed in both years.

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(c) Total pay includes bonus, retirement, nontaxable benefits and other reportable pay, so a change in total pay is not a salary increase.

(d) This analysis is research, not legal or tax advice; organizations should consult their advisors on their specific facts.

Frequently asked questions

Is this a forecast of 2027 raises?

No. Form 990 filings run one to two years behind, so the latest complete pay year is 2024. The page describes the shape of raises already given and sets them beside the Employment Cost Index.

What counts as a raise here?

The change in total reported compensation for the same person in the same role at the same organization in two consecutive pay years. It includes bonus, retirement, nontaxable benefits and other reportable pay, so it is not a measure of merit-pool size. Only pairs whose pay was reported the same way in both years are counted; pay that moved onto or off Schedule J is shown separately.

Why do some executives show a fall in pay?

The filing does not give a reason. In pay year 2024, 21.8% of continuing chief executives reported lower total pay than the year before. Where Schedule J splits the pieces, base salary itself fell in 56.9% of the falls it can split.

How does base salary compare with total pay?

Where Schedule J reports base salary in both years, the median change in base salary was 4.5% for chief executives in pay year 2024, against 5.2% for total pay.

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