



Compensation Trends in Accommodation and Leave Management

Findings from the 2026 DMEC Salary Survey
Executive Summary

A Message from the CEO

Compensation conversations have become increasingly important across accommodation and leave management. As the profession continues to grow, employers are asking how to attract and retain experienced talent, while professionals want a clearer understanding of how their compensation compares with others performing similar work.

Reliable benchmarking has become a crucial part of answering those questions. That is why DMEC developed the 2026 Salary Survey. By bringing together compensation data from professionals across employer organizations, carriers, consultants, and the public sector, this report provides a clearer picture of today's accommodation and leave management workforce. It offers practical benchmarks that support compensation decisions, career planning, and conversations about professional growth.

I hope this report helps employers make informed compensation decisions and gives professionals valuable perspective as they navigate their careers. As our profession continues to evolve, DMEC remains committed to providing the research, education,

and practical resources that help accommodation and leave management professionals succeed.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's survey. Your willingness to share your experience makes this resource possible and strengthens the profession as a whole.



Bryon E. Bass, CLMS
Chief Executive Officer, DMEC

Executive Summary

The 2026 DMEC Salary Survey provides a detailed view of compensation trends among professionals working in accommodation and leave management. Conducted in April and May 2026, the survey collected information on compensation, job characteristics, and workplace perceptions from 592 responses across employer, carrier, consulting, and public-sector environments.

The findings show a field with a relatively consistent compensation baseline, but meaningful variation by role, responsibility level, experience, credentials, and employer context. Most respondents report annual base pay within the middle salary bands, with an **average annual base pay of \$110,662 and a median of \$112,500**, indicating that compensation is relatively centered around the midrange rather than driven by extreme outliers.

Several themes emerged from the data.

- The clearest pattern in the data is that **compensation growth is tied more closely to expanding responsibility than to experience alone**. Respondents in individual contributor roles report lower average pay than those in team lead, department management, cross-functional leadership, and executive or strategic leadership roles. Salary generally increases as respondents gain more years in accommodation and leave management. Still, the largest increases occur when experience is paired with people-management accountability, program ownership, cross-functional influence, or strategic decision-making.
- The survey also highlights **the value of specialized knowledge and professional development**. Respondents with advanced education and multiple certifications report higher average salaries, reinforcing the importance of formal learning in a field that requires knowledge of leave administration, disability and absence management, compliance, employee relations, and program strategy. **The Certified Leave Management Specialist (CLMS) certification is the credential most commonly held by respondents and most often preferred or required by employers.**
- **Compensation structures extend beyond base salary** for many respondents. Slightly more than half report bonus eligibility, and



performance-based bonuses are the most frequently reported form of additional compensation. Continuing education support and professional membership reimbursement are also commonly reported, suggesting that employers are using both financial and developmental rewards to support these roles.

- **Pay perception and retention risk are central themes in the findings.** While some respondents report satisfaction with their current compensation, a substantial share are dissatisfied or uncertain about whether their pay is competitive. Fewer than half believe their compensation is competitive, and most respondents indicate they would or might leave their current employer for higher pay.

For employers, the findings point to the importance of regularly benchmarking compensation, clearly defining role levels, and aligning pay practices with the complexity and strategic value of accommodation and leave management work.

