

# benefit trends

innovative offerings reflect employee demographics



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**B**eyond staples such as health care and retirement benefits, employers are offering a wider variety of innovative benefits that reflect their diverse workforces.

Younger employees might value workplace flexibility and tend to use an educational assistance plan, for example, while employee populations that skew older might value the stability of supplemental insurance offerings.

Organizations have long offered employee benefits to attract and retain talent. A large majority of U.S. employers offer health care benefits—typically, major medical benefits, prescription drug coverage, and dental and vision benefits—to maintain a healthy and productive workforce. In addition, a large majority offer defined benefit pensions, defined contribution plans or hybrid plans to help provide retirement security as well as paid and unpaid time-off benefits to allow workers to recuperate from illness and take family vacations.

The International Foundation's *Employee Benefits Survey 2016* captured benchmarking data on health, retirement and leave benefits and also on miscellaneous offerings that reflect employer populations. Corporations and public employers offer a variety of at-work perquisites, education benefits, access to events and entertainment, fertility services, insurance, external services, transportation and relocation benefits, wellness programs and perks specifically for executive-level employees. Survey findings addressed a number of the most prevalent types of miscellaneous benefits.

## At-Work Perquisites

At-work perks aim to improve the on-site experience at the workplace and, in turn, increase employee satisfaction and productivity. Employers commonly offer on-site coffee services (62%), service award programs (47%)

and a business casual dress code (45%). Some organizations are more creative about benefits, offering holiday gifts to employees (21%), gifts when an immediate family member dies (18%), "Take Your Child to Work" days (17%) and on-site or takeout meal options (17%).

## Education

Employers are offering a number of educational benefits aimed at developing a well-trained workforce. Educational assistance plans are offered by 36% of respondents, followed by cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid training (30%). In addition, 15% of respondents offer scholarships or paid tuition for employees' children, helping employees ease the significant financial burden of higher education.

## Events and Entertainment

Employers provide employees with the ability to socialize with co-workers and family members while away from the office. This commonly occurs through the use of discounted tickets to sporting, recreational or cultural events (34%), employee and family events including picnics, concerts and fairs (34%), and sports teams, leagues or clubs (13%).

## Fertility Services

Particular attention has been paid to fertility services, aimed at easing the stresses of family planning. While rare, these services are gaining traction in corporations and public sector firms. Firms have targeted in vitro fertilization treatments (14%), fertility medications (9%) and other fertilization treatments (6%).

## Insurance

Firms are offering a variety of supplemental insurance products to employees, including ac-

cess to group automobile insurance (15%), group homeowner/property insurance (15%) and identity theft insurance (15%).

## External Services

Employers provide a variety of external services designed to reduce the burden on employee finances and time. These include employee product discounts (27%), subsidized cell phones and mobile devices (26%), matching charitable gift programs (22%) and employee purchase programs (16%). Some employers are going one step further, offering dry cleaning and laundry services (12%), on-site postal services (11%) and on-site check cashing and banking (7%).

## Transportation and Relocation

Employers recognize the financial and logistical burden of traveling to work, with 22% offering transportation subsidies, reimbursement and car or vanpool services. In addition, 14% of respondents offer temporary relocation benefits for extended work assignments.

## Wellness Benefits

Wellness benefit programs are designed to promote safety and good health among employees, increasing worker morale and reducing costs associated with accident and illness. Responding organizations frequently offer access to employee assistance programs (79%), flu shot programs (74%), mental health benefits (62%), health risk assessments and screenings (62%) and smoking-cessation programs (52%). In addition, organizations are trying innovative practices such as health coaching (46%) and walking and exercise programs (43%).

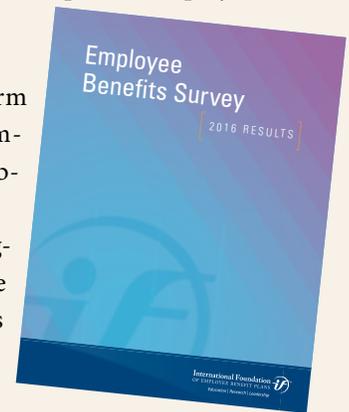
## Executive Perquisites

About 45% of corporate respondents offer specific benefits to executives including external services, compensation and retirement, supplemental insurance and travel benefits. Those that provide these benefits most commonly offer supplemental executive retirement plans (52%), company car allowances (44%) and executive physical examinations (42%). In addition, survey responses show significant growth in the use of equity compensation plans for executives (42%).

## Examples of Innovative Benefits

In addition to the more common miscellaneous benefits, respondents shared their most unusual and innovative offerings, citing their significant impact on employee populations. Ten organizations shared their offerings:

1. A Michigan educational firm provides long-tenured employees with a six-week sabbatical.
2. A CPA firm in Indiana recognizes the long hours during the busy tax season and provides dinner for its employees.
3. A transportation company in Missouri gives its employees steep discounts on automobile purchases.
4. A construction firm in Virginia grants its employees a four-day weekend around summer holidays—Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day.
5. A consulting firm in Washington, D.C. that searches for staff nationwide pays expenses for relocation, house-hunting and moving for new employees.
6. Recognizing the impact of employee stress, an administration firm in Hawaii provides a quiet room with leather chairs and access to easy listening music.
7. A transportation company in Ohio provides will preparation services for employees.
8. An education firm in New York provides telehealth access for new and expecting mothers.
9. Similarly, a Washington technology firm offers employees up to \$13,000 toward the use of a surrogate to start a family.
10. A family-friendly Wisconsin logistics company reimburses the purchases of Costco and Sam's Club membership.



*Employee Benefits Survey 2016* reveals extensive benchmarking data from 577 organizations representing nearly 20 industries and ranging in size from fewer than 50 to more than 10,000 employees. Visit [www.ifebp.org/benefitsurvey2016](http://www.ifebp.org/benefitsurvey2016) for more information.