

US Composting Council

2025 Compensation & Industry Trends White Paper

US Composting Council®

CR Compensation Resources

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Benchmarking Composting Pay Rates & Benefits: An Art & A Science

We are pleased to bring you our first edition of the Compost Industry Compensation & Industry Trends White Paper. We will admit it brought several surprises to our attention that compost facility owners and managers could probably have told us!

It may feel like we are becoming an established industry, but really we are still in our early days when it comes to traditional job roles.

This benchmarking data collection project began in 2025 with outreach for data to our member companies and others in the industry for information about pay and benefits information for their employees. While we did our homework about the job titles that exist in the industry, it never occurred to us that so many of our industry employees are not working full time in a single job title, but hybridizing roles, such as operator/laborer; safety/HR, compliance/site manager.. and on and on!

For that reason, many of you had difficulty completing the survey, and our original plan to provide an in-depth plethora of information to guide you in your employee hiring, retention and advancement was not quite ready for prime time.

However, we did find some small indications of where the industry is landing on some benefits areas, so we thought it might be worthy to share with you for future consideration, and Compensation Resources, an industry compensation firm, analyzed those for the report you will be reading.

For those of you who did participate and provide that data, we thank you, and look forward to doing this again as our industry matures. See you in 2030!

Sincerely,

Linda Norris-Waldt, CAE
Executive Director, US Composting Council

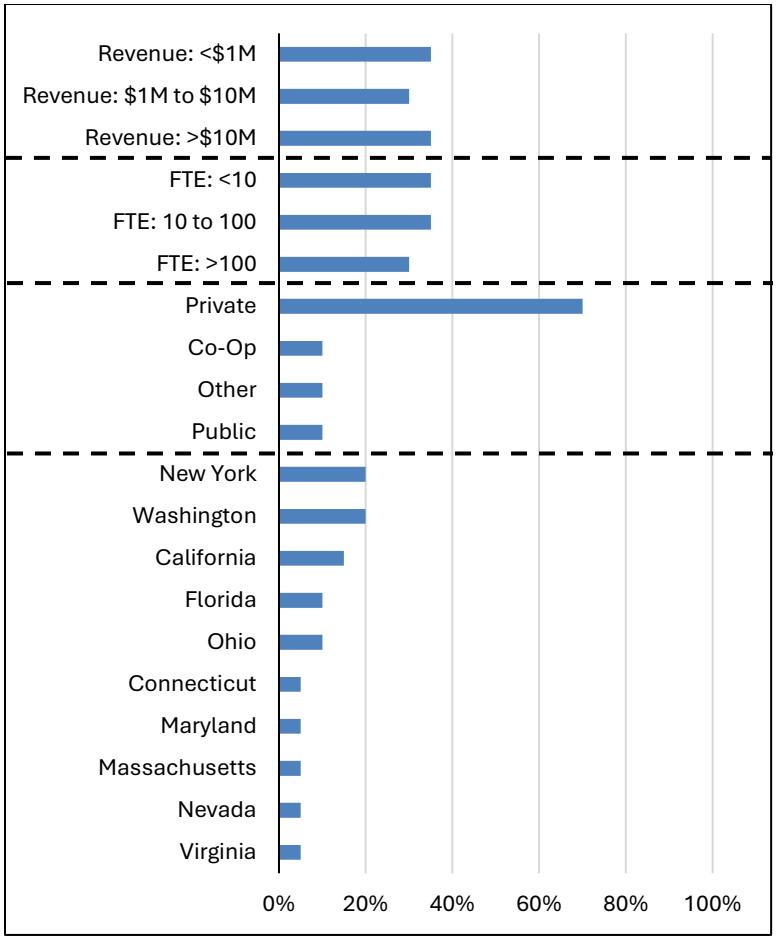
Introduction

The US Composting Council ("USCC") partnered with Compensation Resources to produce a white paper discussing composting industry trends and compensation practices using data collected from a compensation and benefits study conducted by the USCC in 2025. This was supplemented with economic data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for industry trends and aggregated benefits data from multiple published surveys ("Published Survey Findings"). [1]

Survey Demographics

20 organizations responded to the survey. The following table presents their demographics.

Category	Prevalence
Revenue	
<$1M	35%
$1M to $10M	30%
>$10M	35%
Employee Count	
<10	35%
10 to 100	35%
>100	30%
Ownership	
Private	70%
Co-Op	10%
Other	10%
Public	10%
State	
New York	20%
Washington	20%
California	15%
Florida	10%
Ohio	10%
Connecticut	5%
Maryland	5%
Massachusetts	5%
Nevada	5%
Virginia	5%

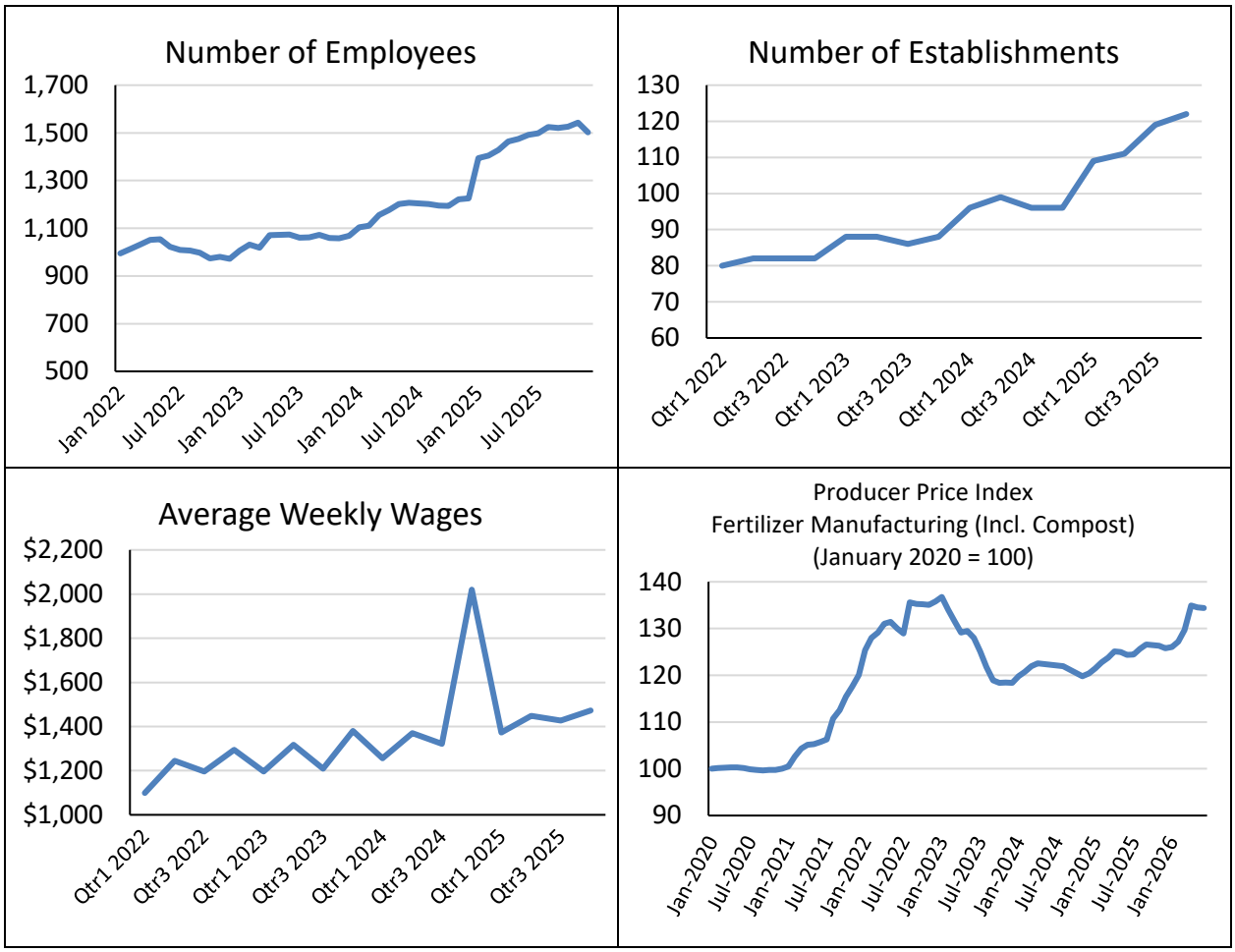


[1] Due to data licensing agreements, this data must be aggregated and cannot be reported individually. The following surveys were used: 2026 CompData Benefits USA Survey, 2025 KFF Employer Health Benefits Survey, and the 2026 Society for Human Resource Management Employee Benefits Survey.

Industry Trends

Industries experience three stages: Growth, Maturity, Decline.[2] The composting industry is in its growth phase, which some define as growing faster than a country's overall GDP. This period can be characterized by rapid increases in demand, the innovation and creation of technologies and business processes, and the entrance of new firms. Companies may be focused on scaling up operations, engaging in marketing to reach potential customers, and accessing capital to fuel growth. From an HR and operations perspective, management at composters may feel like they are flying by the seat of their pants and making decisions as they go. Because business practices are still being created and organizations tend to be smaller, roles and positions may be hybrid with one person or team handling multiple functions.

Industry trend data was sourced from the Bureau of Labor Statistics using the NAICS codes for composters (325315). The number of employees and establishments in the industry have both grown approximately 50% since 2022 while average weekly wages have grown 34%. Wages spiked in 2024 Q4 significantly, however this may be influenced by outliers or data collection given the industry is still nascent. The producer price index, which measures the prices companies would receive for their finished product (fertilizer/compost), spiked in 2022 and has grown steadily over the past few years.



[2] https://www.ibisworld.com/blog/industry-life-cycles/99/1127/

Survey Results: Compensation

The following table presents the prevalence of annual merit increases and cost of living adjustments among USCC survey respondents.

Category	Prevalence
Merit Only	16.7%
COLA Only	33.3%
Both	41.7%
Neither	8.3%

The following table presents the average merit increase and cost of living adjustment provided to each employee group among USCC survey respondents.

Category	Minimum Merit Increase	Maximum Merit Increase	Cost of Living Adjustment
Executive/C-Suite Positions	2.4%	8.9%	4.4%
Management/ Supervisory Positions	2.9%	9.4%	4.1%
Staff Positions	2.9%	8.0%	4.1%

The following table presents salary market data for positions with at least 5 responses from USCC survey respondents.

Position	# Orgs	# Inc	Average Salary
Compost Facility Operator/Manager	9	14	$82,744
Heavy Equipment Mechanic	6	32	$75,122
Equipment Operator (Loaders, Grinders, Screeners)	8	92	$59,806
Hauler (Driver)	8	87	$55,798
Sorting & Contamination Control Specialist	5	13	$53,218

Survey Results: Insurance

The following tables present information on insurance plans from the Published Survey Findings. Insurance data from USCC respondents could not be reported due to lack of responses.

Plan Type	Prevalence (Companies Can Offer Multiple)	Average Monthly Employer Contribution to Premiums
HMO	19%	$661
PPO	70%	$692
HDHP	68%	$605

Plan Type	% of Premiums Paid by Employer	Average Deductible	Most Common Out-of-Pocket Max (Prevalence)
HMO	86%	$1,649	<=$2,000 (24%)
PPO	84%	$1,337	$3,000 - $4,000 (23%)
HDHP	84%	$2,609	$3,000 - $4,000 (35%)

For companies offering an HDHP, the average HSA contribution is $690.

	Average Co-Pay	
Plan Type	Primary Care	Specialist
HMO	$26	$44
PPO	$27	$45
HDHP	19% coinsurance	

Survey Results: PTO

The following table presents the prevalence of various PTO policies among USCC survey respondents.

PTO Policy		Prevalence
Company offers paid time off for Full Time Employees (FTEs)		90.0%
How paid time off is awarded	Combined Bank of Days	50.0%
	Separate Number of Days for Vacation, Illness, Holidays, etc.	44.4%
	Number of Paid Holidays Offered by Company	5.6%
Company offers a sell-back option for unused PTO days (limited amount)		22.2%
Company provides additional paid family leave		22.2%
Company has a maximum PTO days granted per year		61.1%
Company offer part-time employees PTO		44.4%

The following table presents the average PTO days for each level of tenure for full-time employees from the USCC survey respondents compared to the data reported in the Published Survey Findings.

Tenure	Average # of PTO Days	
	USCC Survey Respondents	Published Survey Findings
At Hire	7.4	10.6
At 1 Yr of Service	10.9	13.2
At 2 Yrs of Service	11.9	16.1
At 3 Yrs of Service	13.1	
At 5 Yrs of Service	15.1	18.0
At 10 Yrs of Service	18.5	20.4
At 15 Yrs of Service	19.5	24.1

Survey Results: Retirement and Other Benefits

The following table presents the findings for retirement plans.

Retirement Plan Policy		USCC Survey Respondents	Published Survey Findings
Offers retirement programs		60.0%	93.3%
401(k) options offered	Traditional 401(k)	80.0%	--
	Other	20.0%	--
Offers automatic enrollment		33.3%	--
Offers company matching contribution		83.3%	--
Average matching contribution		3.5%	5.9%

The following table presents the prevalence of various other forms of employee benefits among USCC survey respondents.

Benefit	Prevalence
Attendance at industry conferences and workshops	65.0%
Online courses and webinars	55.0%
Certification and licensing fee coverage	40.0%
Leadership training programs	30.0%
Participation in external committees or advisory boards	30.0%
Tuition Reimbursement	30.0% ($4,313 max)
Memberships in professional organizations	25.0%
Group Life Insurance	25.0%
Long-Term Disability Insurance Paid by Employer	20.0%

Survey Results: Retention and Turnover

The following table presents the prevalence of various employee retention items among USCC survey respondents.

Employee Retention Item	Prevalence
Hiring Practices/Orientation/Training	65%
Employee Appreciation	60%
Work from Home	55%
Increased Pay Incentives	45%
Increased Wages: Existing Employees	45%
Increased Employee Engagement	40%
Employee Satisfaction Surveys	35%
Exit Interviews	35%
Increased Wages: New Hires	35%
Schedule Changes	35%
Career Development	30%
Communication Strategies (Town Halls, Newsletters, etc.)	30%
Interviews: Existing Employee-Stay	30%
Leadership/Management Changes	30%
Timely Employee Feedback	30%
Continuing Education	25%
New Positions	25%

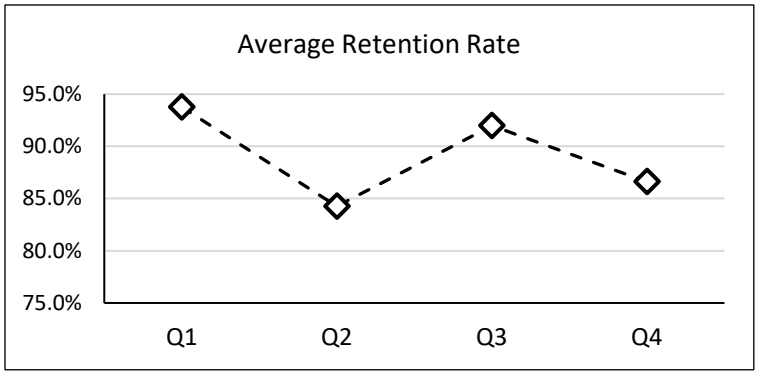
The following table presents the average turnover rate for USCC survey respondents.

Turnover	Average Turnover
Total	30.5%
Voluntary	23.5%
Involuntary	7.2%

The following table presents how turnover compared to the prior year among USCC survey respondents.

Turnover	Prevalence
Increased	45.5%
Remained the Same	36.4%
Decreased	18.2%

The following chart presents the average retention rate of USCC survey respondents by quarter.



Conclusion

The compost industry is in a stage of growth and transformation. Operators face challenges both common to nascent industries—small economies of scale, creating and implementing new business processes, necessity to grow, etc.— and unique to composting—spanning multiple labor markets and industry classifications, volatile markets for demand, using/permitting physical space, etc. This white paper presents key findings related to compensation practices that composters may be looking to implement, as well as offering data representative of and a comparison to manufacturing companies who may be more established.