

2025 L&D EXECUTIVES BENCHMARKING: **INSIGHTS TO POWER TALENT DEVELOPMENT**



QUICK BRIEF

METRICS AND DEFINITIONS

This brief presents key insights from SHRM's 2025 benchmarking data, offering metrics for HR executives and learning and development (L&D) leaders who are responsible for managing learning, training, and professional development within their organizations.

Learning and development ranked among the top six priorities CHROs identified for their teams in 2025, with leadership and manager development cited most frequently as the top focus.¹ This reflects the growing recognition that effective L&D is essential to driving business success, particularly as it plays a critical role in attracting and retaining top talent.² As the need for effective learning and development continues, this data brief can equip HR executives and L&D leaders to guide their own organizations and make the necessary adjustments to meet their learning and development needs.

Below are some key terms and descriptions of metrics that will appear in this brief.

Industry categories: Industry categories in the benchmarking data follow the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which was set by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).³ Some specific industries mentioned in this brief include:

- » Health care and social assistance organizations, such as hospitals, ambulatory health care services, residential care facilities, child care services, and individual, family, and community services.
- » Professional, scientific, and technical services organizations, such as those in law, accounting, advertising, engineering, and scientific research.
- » Real estate, rental, and leasing organizations, such as real estate companies, equity real estate investment trusts, and property leasing companies.

Organization size: Organizations were grouped into four categories based on their number of employees. Small organizations have 2 to 99 employees, medium-sized organizations have 100 to 499 employees, large organizations have 500 to 4,999 employees, and extra-large organizations have 5,000 or more employees. Some of the data metrics in this brief are discussed by similarities and differences among the different organization sizes.

Learning and development budget as a percent of total HR budget: The percentage of total HR budget allocated to the learning and development function. This is calculated by dividing the learning and development budget by the total HR budget.

External training spend as a percent of total learning and development expenses: The amount of money a company spends on training and development programs provided by third-party vendors or external organizations for employees, represented as a percentage of total learning and development costs.

¹ *CHRO Priorities and Perspectives*, SHRM, 2025.

² *What Global Workers Want and the Global Worker Experience*, SHRM, 2025.

³ Please see NAICS industry sectors explained here: <https://www.census.gov/naics/> and here: https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag_index_naics.htm.

Learning and development expenses per FTE: The total amount of learning and development spend divided by the total number of full-time employees (FTEs) at the organization.

Learning and development hours per FTE: The total number of employee hours spent learning across the organization in the last 12 months divided by the total number of FTEs at the organization.

Percentage of employees who completed nonmandatory training in the last 12 months: The percentage of an organization's total workforce that completed any nonmandatory learning and development training in the last 12 months. This does not include employees who only completed training for compliance purposes. This is calculated by dividing the number of employees who completed this type of learning and development training by the total number of employees.

Percentage of organizations offering skills training resources and/or opportunities: The percentage of organizations that offer any kind of skills training resources and/or opportunities for employees intended to maintain and/or acquire new skills. This does not include training conducted only for compliance purposes.



UNDERLYING DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The following analyses highlight key insights derived from SHRM's 2025 benchmarking data, which builds upon and refines SHRM's prior benchmarking research. 2025 data was collected through an electronically fielded survey from a random sample of active SHRM Members from Jan. 9 to March 3. Given the robust data collected in this research, an additional stratified sampling approach was implemented to oversample members who held a VP or higher position within their organization. In total, 2,371 members responded to the survey. The data is not weighted and respondents were not required to provide data on every metric, meaning the sample size for each individual metric may vary. Respondents represent a diverse range of industries, sectors, and organization sizes across the U.S.

The analyses in this brief use median values to define central tendency and identify trends in the data over time. Central tendency refers to a statistical measure that identifies the center point in a data series. The median is a commonly used measure of central tendency, as it represents the middle value when the data is ordered from lowest to highest, helping to avoid the influence of extreme outliers that can have a greater impact on the average value. For example, if measuring a set of salaries, the median would be the salary that falls exactly in the middle of the range and avoids being skewed by very high or very low values. By using the median, we improve comparability across different time periods, especially when accounting for changes in methodology and metric calculations since 2017. Additionally, using the median helps mitigate the impact of shifts in SHRM Membership used for this research over time, ensuring stronger consistency and reliability in the findings.



KEY FINDINGS OVERVIEW

1. Organizations dedicate sizable portions of their HR budgets to learning and development.
2. Organizations spend over \$400 per FTE on learning and development.
3. Most organizations offer resources and opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.
4. Employees spend only one workday (8 hours) per year on learning, despite available resources.



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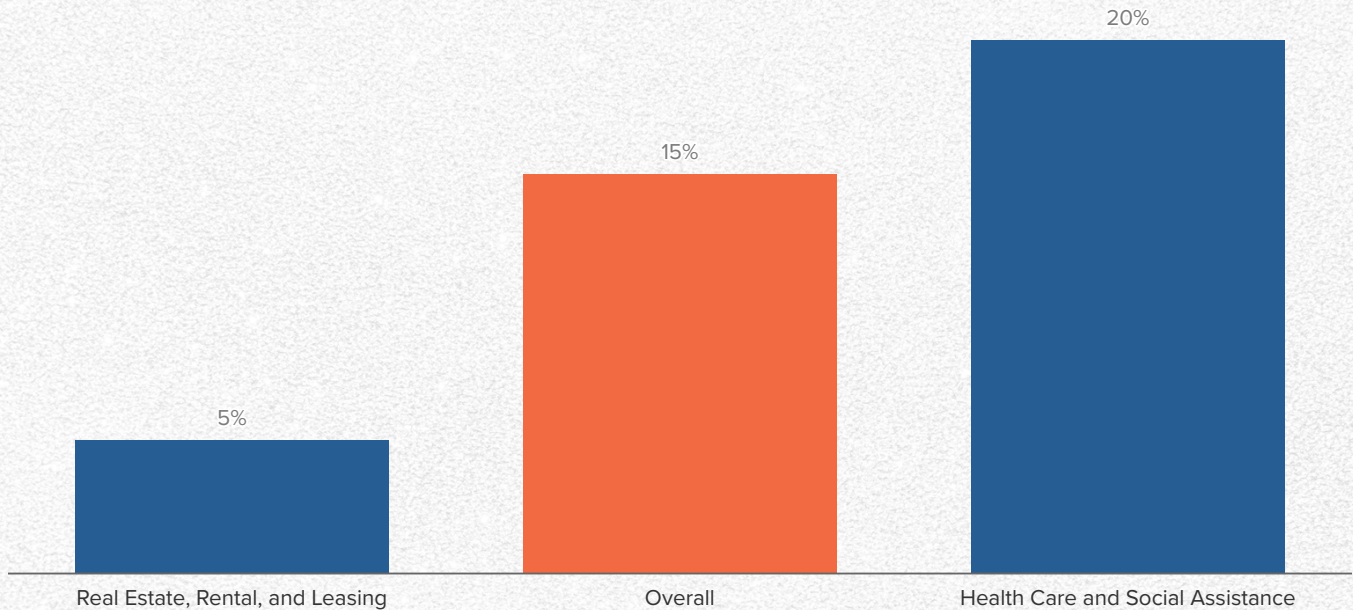


ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATE SIZABLE PORTIONS OF THEIR HR BUDGETS TO **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

L&D as a Percentage of Total HR Budget



The median percentage dedicated to learning and development as a percent of organizations' total HR budget for organizations in the real estate, rental, and leasing industries, overall (across all organizations), and organizations in the health care and social assistance industries.



SOURCE: 2025 L&D EXECUTIVES BENCHMARKING: INSIGHTS TO POWER TALENT DEVELOPMENT, SHRM, 2025. VISIT [SHRM.ORG/RESEARCH](https://www.shrm.org/research) TO LEARN MORE.

Across all organizations, the median percentage of total HR budget dedicated to the L&D function is 15%. Organizations in the health care and social assistance industries dedicate 20% of their total HR budget to learning and development. This is the highest percentage of allocated budget toward L&D across industries. One of the lowest percentages dedicated to L&D was 5%, reported by organizations in the real estate, rental, and leasing industries.

Within their L&D budgets, organizations spend a median of 25% on external training. This signifies a substantial portion invested in training and development programs delivered by vendors. Benchmarking data indicates that small and medium-sized organizations allocate a higher portion of their L&D budgets to external training (30% each). By contrast, large and extra-large organizations allocate less (20% each).

Takeaways/Implications

- Learning and development serves all employees at every level. Given this, it is essential for organizations to strategically manage their L&D budgets and align workforce development initiatives with both personal growth and organizational success.
- Organizations in the health care and social assistance industries dedicate a larger share of their HR budgets to L&D, likely reflecting certification and other professional development requirements for their workforce. They are also more likely than other industries to report difficulty finding candidates with the necessary credentials and certifications,⁴ which may be prompting some to invest more heavily in developing talent from within rather than relying on external hiring.

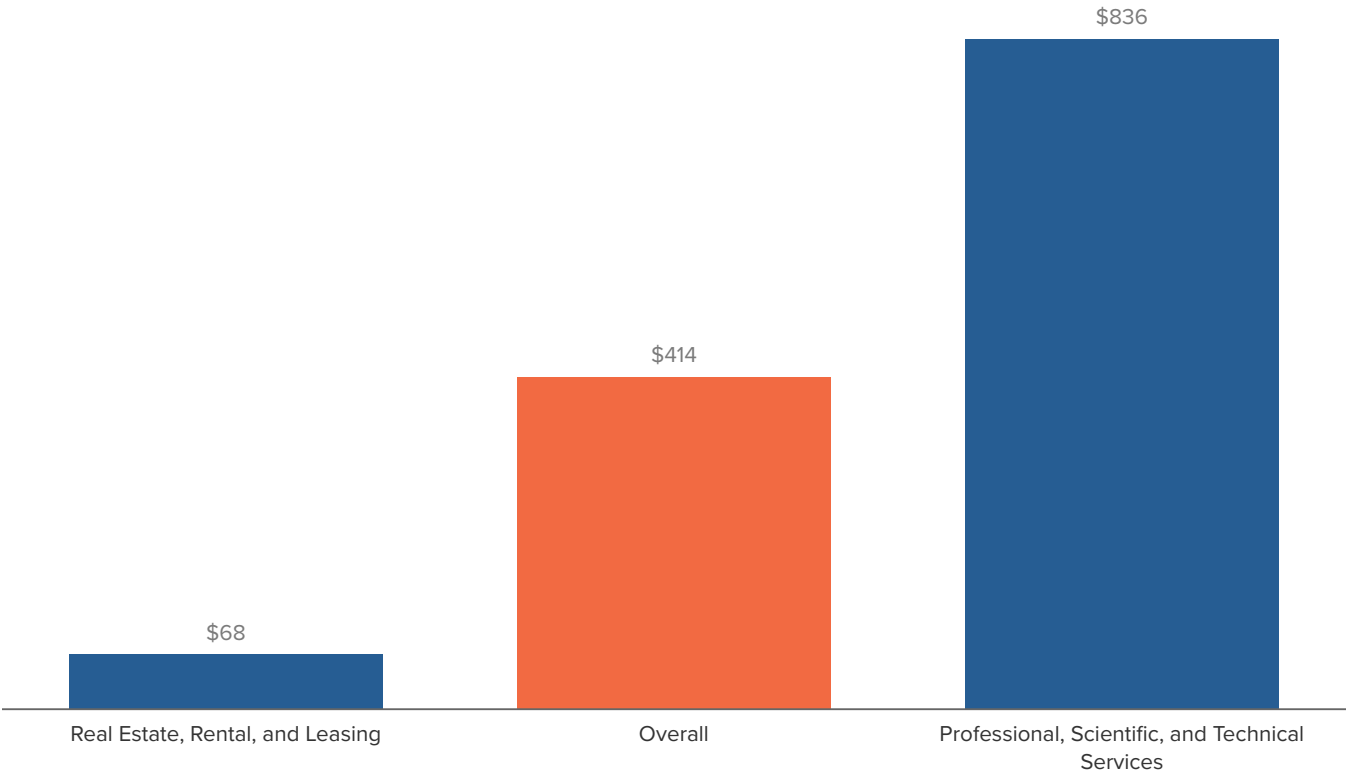
⁴ 2025 Talent Trends, SHRM, 2025.

ORGANIZATIONS SPEND OVER \$400 PER FTE ON **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Learning and Development Spend per FTE



The median learning and development expense per FTE for organizations in the real estate, rental, and leasing industries, overall (across all organizations), and organizations in the professional, scientific, and technical services industries.



SOURCE: 2025 L&D EXECUTIVES BENCHMARKING: INSIGHTS TO POWER TALENT DEVELOPMENT, SHRM, 2025. VISIT [SHRM.ORG/RESEARCH](https://www.shrm.org/research) TO LEARN MORE.

A key benchmark of an organization’s commitment to workforce learning and development is its L&D spend per FTE. Across all organizations, the median spend is \$414 per FTE on L&D resources and opportunities. Notably, organizations in the professional, scientific, and technical services industries spend significantly more on L&D at \$836 per FTE, just over double the overall median. In contrast, organizations in the real estate, rental, and leasing industries spend much less per FTE at \$68, which is one-sixth of the overall median.

Takeaways/Implications

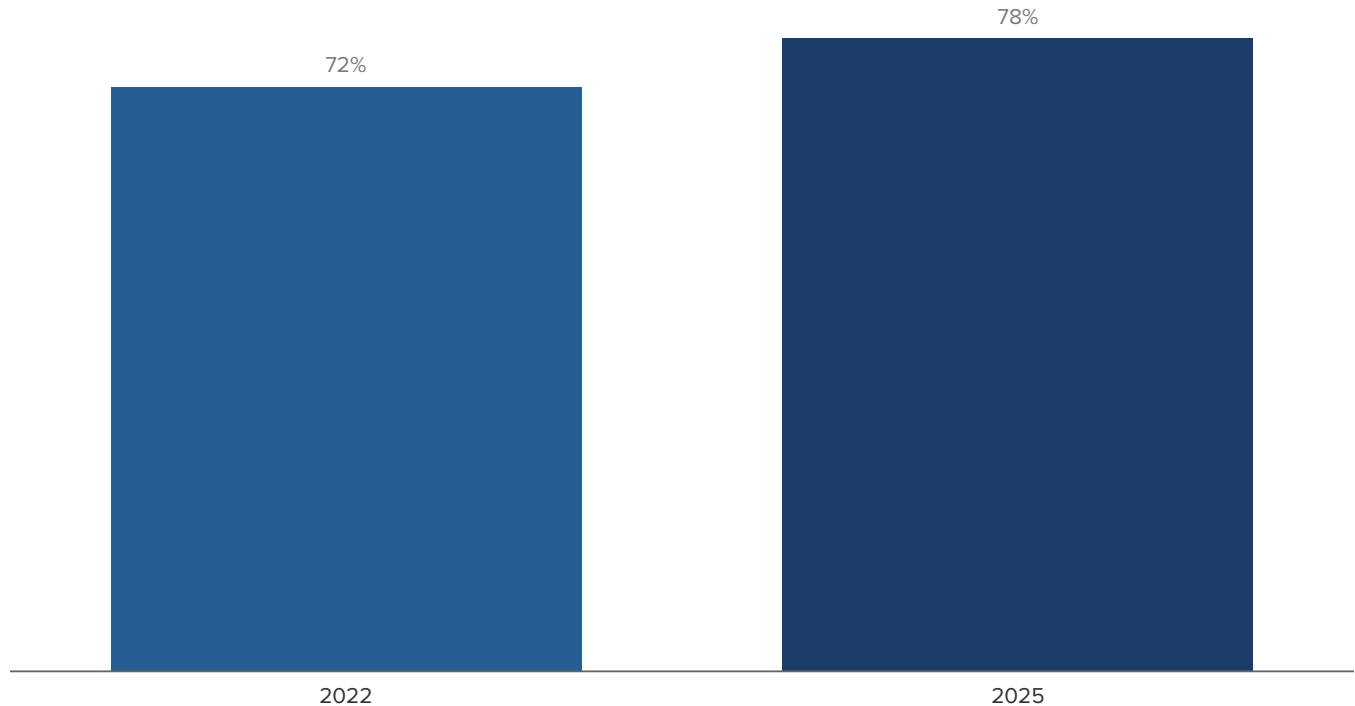
- The median annual investment in L&D resources and opportunities per FTE is approximately \$414, showing a commitment to employees’ professional growth.
- Industries vary greatly in L&D spend per FTE. Professional, scientific, and technical services organizations dedicate \$836 per FTE, while real estate, rental, and leasing organizations dedicate only \$68 per FTE. This difference highlights greatly varying budgets among industries to provide resources and opportunities for their employees’ professional growth.

MOST ORGANIZATIONS OFFER RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR **UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING**

Organizations Offering Skills Training Resources



Prevalence of organizations offering nonmandatory skills training resources and/or opportunities in 2022 and 2025.



SOURCE: 2025 L&D EXECUTIVES BENCHMARKING: INSIGHTS TO POWER TALENT DEVELOPMENT, SHRM, 2025. VISIT [SHRM.ORG/RESEARCH](https://www.shrm.org/research) TO LEARN MORE.

Across organizations, 78% of employers offer skills training resources, defined as nonmandatory training and opportunities to maintain or build skills beyond compliance-only requirements. This marks an increase from 72% in 2022, signaling growing employer investment in upskilling and reskilling resources and opportunities. This trend aligns with expectations from 53% of CHROs that rapid skills development will be much more prevalent in 2025.⁵ What's more, leadership and manager development was identified as a top priority by CHROs in 2025, with basic leadership skills and management skills as most important to target.⁶ Thus, as organizations are offering upskilling and reskilling resources and opportunities, there is a clear need for programs to support leaders and managers to be more effective in inspiring, motivating, directing, and overseeing their teams and team operations.

⁵ [CHRO Priorities and Perspectives](#), SHRM, 2025.

⁶ Ibid.

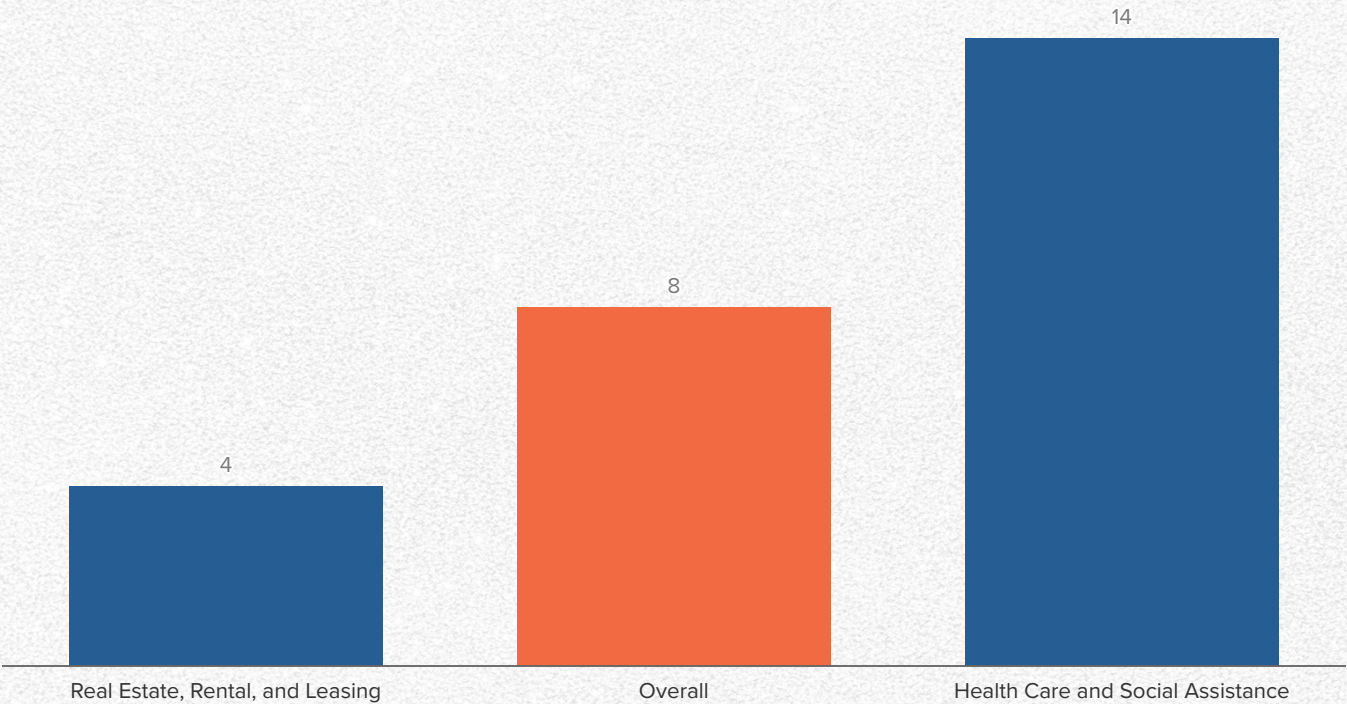
Takeaways/Implications

- The majority of organizations across industries invest in L&D by providing employees with access to skills training resources. This ensures that employees have readily available opportunities for upskilling and reskilling within their organizations, reducing the need for personal out-of-pocket expenses for similar opportunities.
- The percentage of organizations providing skills training resources has increased slightly to 78% in 2025. This signals growth in employer interest and investment in upskilling and reskilling.

EMPLOYEES SPEND ONLY ONE WORKDAY (8 HOURS) PER YEAR ON LEARNING, DESPITE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Learning and Development Hours per FTE SHRM

The median number of hours spent learning in the last 12 months per FTE for organizations in the real estate, rental, and leasing industries, overall (across all organizations), and organizations in the health care and social assistance industries.



SOURCE: 2025 L&D EXECUTIVES BENCHMARKING: INSIGHTS TO POWER TALENT DEVELOPMENT, SHRM, 2025. VISIT [SHRM.ORG/RESEARCH](https://www.shrm.org/research) TO LEARN MORE.

Employee participation in L&D is relatively low. Organizations reported that a median of 25% of employees completed nonmandatory training in the past year. Also, the median time spent on L&D (excluding compliance-related training) was 8 hours per FTE. This data suggests that, despite increased access to upskilling and reskilling opportunities, many employees may not be prioritizing professional growth or may face barriers to doing so. Notably, when compared to other industries, employees in the health care and social assistance industries spent nearly double the median time on L&D, with a dedicated 14 hours per FTE. In contrast, employees in real estate, rental, and leasing organizations applied only 4 hours per FTE on L&D.

Takeaways/Implications

- Employees have spent a median of 8 hours in the past 12 months on L&D, suggesting there may be barriers to engagement or time constraints limiting participation.
- More health care and social assistance employees completed nonmandatory training and devoted more hours to learning compared to workers overall, which may be due to certification and/or other professional development requirements for their positions.

CONCLUSION

Learning and development is an important investment for employees and organizations to better position themselves to meet and exceed both personal and organizational goals. This data brief shows that organizations are making significant financial commitments in providing L&D opportunities for their employees. However, the data also suggests that employees may need other support beyond access to resources and opportunities. Organizations should align workforce development into their long-term strategic plans and decisions, and for that, actionable data is essential.

Insights from this research offer a snapshot of where U.S. organizations currently stand across key L&D metrics. These benchmarks empower HR executives to evaluate their own organization's performance, identify areas for improvement, and refine their strategies for workforce planning and decision-making.

With this data in hand, HR executives and L&D leaders are better equipped to align their function with organizational goals, address workforce development needs proactively, and ensure their organization attracts and retains the right talent to thrive in a competitive landscape.

How to cite this research: *2025 L&D Executives Benchmarking: Insights to Power Talent Development*, SHRM, 2025.

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