RETAIL ASSET PROTECTION & LOSS PREVENTION

Compensation Snapshot 2026

Base salary, bonus structure and organizational design across six AP/LP roles

Retail asset protection has a compensation visibility problem. No federal occupational code. No aggregator that can tell a corporate AP leader from a store-level manager. This is a first attempt at supplying instruments.

$230,000	$172,500	1.4%
median base salary, VP of AP/LP	median base salary, Director of AP/LP	gap between our two independent sources at Director

What's inside

- Median base salary and quartile ranges for six AP/LP roles
- A confidence rating on every figure, so you know what to cite and what not to
- Where public salary data agrees with practitioners, and where it collapses
- Bonus eligibility, reported targets, long-term incentives and car allowances
- Reporting lines, org headcount, budget bands, metrics and education requirements

Built from two independent sources: 49 company-role observations across more than thirty named U.S. retailers, and a panel of senior AP/LP practitioners.

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This report presents a compensation snapshot for six retail AP/LP roles, built from two independent sources: public market data covering 49 company-role observations across more than thirty named U.S. retailers, and a panel of senior AP/LP practitioners. Every figure carries an explicit confidence rating. It is a snapshot of the market as it stands in mid-2026, not a comprehensive industry benchmark, and readers should not use it as one.

Executive summary

Retail asset protection has a compensation visibility problem. The federal government does not track these roles. Commercial salary aggregators cannot tell a corporate AP leader from a store-level AP manager. And the people best positioned to know, practitioners themselves, have never had a shared reference point to check their own numbers against.

This report is an attempt to close part of that gap. Six findings stand out.

- A VP of AP/LP sits at a **$230,000** median base salary. Practitioner-reported and public market data agree on this figure to within 2.6%.
- A Director of AP/LP sits at a **$172,500** median base. The two sources agree here to within 1.4%, the tightest convergence in the study.
- Below Director, public data stops being usable. For Regional AP/LP, public sources report figures ranging from $54,000 to $120,500 for the same job title.
- Bonus is effectively universal at leadership level. Every organization in the panel offers bonus potential to at least some AP/LP roles, with targets clustering at 20 to 30% of base for Director and above and reaching 40% at VP.
- Asset protection reports to Operations more than anywhere else. A majority of the panel reports into an Operations executive, and reporting directly to the CEO is rare.
- Most AP/LP organizations still require no college degree, even as the median leader in this study has 28 years in the field.

Why this snapshot exists

There is no official benchmark for retail asset protection leadership pay, and this is not an oversight anyone can fix by looking harder.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains occupational codes for most of the American workforce. It has no code for retail AP/LP leadership. The two nearest classifications are "Managers, All Other", with a mean annual wage of $153,890, and "First-Line Supervisors of Security Workers", at a $54,580 median. The first is a catch-all spanning thousands of unrelated jobs. The second describes store-level security supervision. Neither describes a Vice President of Asset Protection at a $20 billion retailer, and no amount of interpolation between them produces a usable number.

Commercial aggregators fill the void with modeled estimates, but they inherit a title problem the industry created for itself. "Asset Protection Manager" describes both a corporate multi-unit leader and a single-store role. Aggregators cannot separate them, so they average across both, and several report total compensation while presenting it as salary.

An AP leader trying to evaluate an offer, or a CFO trying to justify a band, has been working without instruments. This snapshot is a first attempt at supplying some.

Base salary by role

All figures are annual base salary in U.S. dollars, excluding bonus, equity, allowances and benefits. The confidence rating should be read before any figure is cited.

Role	Median base	Typical range	Full reported range	Confidence
VP of AP/LP	**$230,000**	$201,000 – $263,000	$120,000 – $300,000	VALIDATED
Sr. Director of AP/LP	**$200,000**	not reported	$140,000 – $250,000	DIRECTIONAL
Director of AP/LP	**$172,500**	$145,000 – $181,000	$90,000 – $220,000	VALIDATED
Sr. Manager of AP/LP	**$117,500**	$104,000 – $131,000	$75,000 – $145,000	PRACTITIONER-ONLY
Regional AP/LP	**$95,000**	$90,000 – $100,000	$80,000 – $120,000	PRACTITIONER-ONLY
District AP/LP	**$90,000**	$86,000 – $98,000	$55,000 – $120,000	PRACTITIONER-ONLY

Typical range is the interquartile band. Full reported range shows the extremes of every range submitted; it illustrates dispersion and is not a recommended pay band. Where coverage is too thin to support a quartile, the range is not reported.

How to read the confidence ratings

VALIDATED Two independent sources, practitioner reports and public market data across more than thirty named retailers, produce medians within 5% of one another. These are the figures the study stands behind.

DIRECTIONAL Coverage is thin on both sides. Treat the figure as indicative of where the role sits between Director and VP, not as a benchmark.

PRACTITIONER-ONLY No usable public comparison exists. The figure comes entirely from practitioners reporting on their own organizations. For these roles that is a strength rather than a weakness, for reasons the next section explains.

Where the public data agrees

The two roles with the deepest coverage on both sides converge closely.

Role	Practitioner median	Public market median	Difference
VP of AP/LP	**$230,000**	**$224,250**	**2.6%**
Director of AP/LP	**$172,500**	**$175,000**	**1.4%**
Sr. Director of AP/LP	**$200,000**	**$210,250**	**4.9%**

Public market medians are drawn from 49 company-role observations across more than thirty named U.S. retailers.

Two methods with entirely different failure modes landing within three percent of each other is the strongest signal in this study. Practitioners reporting from inside their own organizations and modeled market data compiled from thirty-plus retailers should not agree by accident.

Where the public data breaks down

Below the Director level, public compensation data stops being a check on anything. The same job title returns figures that differ by more than a factor of two depending on which source is consulted.

Role	Source	Reported figure	Why it diverges
Regional AP/LP	Salary.com	**$120,500**	Modeled for a corporate regional role
	Glassdoor	**$118,202**	Blends base with additional pay
	ZipRecruiter	**$53,997**	Conflated with store-level AP Manager
District AP/LP	Glassdoor	**$123,913**	Total pay, not base salary
	Payscale	**$81,622**	Self-reported, base-like
	ZipRecruiter	**$76,761**	Skews to smaller-format retailers

This is a title problem, not a data problem. Retail has never standardized what "Regional" or "District" asset protection means, and it uses "Manager" for roles separated by six figures of salary. Aggregators average across the ambiguity.

For these three roles, practitioners are the better source rather than the weaker one. They reported base only, for defined roles inside their own organizations, and their figures are internally consistent where the public sources are not. That is why the study reports them as practitioner-only rather than attempting a validation that would be false precision.

One employer-posted figure is worth recording. A Director of Asset Protection role in California, posted under state pay-transparency law, listed a base range of $165,000 to $185,000, consistent with this study's Director findings.

Beyond base: bonus, equity and allowances

Bonus potential is close to universal. No organization in the panel excludes AP/LP from bonus eligibility entirely, and every respondent reported that the Director of AP/LP role is bonus-eligible.

Role	Bonus eligibility across the panel
Director of AP/LP	Universal
Regional AP/LP	Nearly all
VP of AP/LP	Most
Sr. Manager of AP/LP	Most
District AP/LP	A majority
Sr. Director of AP/LP	Just over half
Manager of AP/LP	Just over half
Sr. VP of AP/LP	About half
AP/LP Analyst	Uncommon
AP/LP Auditor	Rare

Eligibility only. The targets below were reported separately and are not matched to the roles in this table.

Reported bonus targets

Most respondents disclosed a target. Targets were generally reported at the organization level rather than role by role, so they are presented here as a distribution.

Reported target	Context given by respondent
40% of base	At VP level, the highest figure reported
35% of base	No level specified
30% of base	Target, with up to 1.5x available on overperformance
25–30% of base	For VP and C-suite; 10 to 25% for roles below
20% of base	No level specified
15% of base	Stated as the asset protection bonus
11% of base	Standard short-term incentive target; three bonus structures in total
5–10% of base	No level specified
Varies by position	Percentage basis, not capped by a dollar amount

Roughly 20 to 30% of base is the common band at Director level and above. Long-term incentives are less consistent. Restricted stock units are the most widely offered, while stock options, LTIPs and deferred compensation appear less often and at similar rates to one another. One grocery respondent reported an LTIP worth 50% of base annually on a three-year vest, available at VP level only.

Car allowances are the clearest split in the study. Close to half of the organizations offer none at all. Where they exist, they concentrate in field roles, Regional and District AP most often, and some respondents tie eligibility to a driving threshold or a field-based designation rather than to title.

How AP/LP organizations are built

Compensation is difficult to interpret without the shape of the organization around it. Every participant answered each of the questions below.

Dimension	Finding	Detail
Most common reporting line	**Sr. VP of Operations**	A majority report into Operations in some form
Reports to CEO	**Rare**	Single instances also at HR, Finance, Legal and COO
Median direct reports	**8**	Range 2 to 19
Median AP/LP org headcount	**110**	Range 2 to 500
Most common budget band	**Over $12M**	Also $5.1–8M and $3.1–5M; one under $1M
Unionized in whole or part	**A minority**	

The reporting-line finding deserves attention. Asset protection sits under Operations in the majority of these organizations and reaches the CEO in only one. Where a function reports has a well-documented relationship to how its leaders are banded, and this is the kind of structural detail no salary aggregator captures.

What gets measured

Shrink remains the dominant metric, named by nearly every respondent. But it is no longer alone. Return on investment for AP/LP-purchased solutions was named by a majority, ahead of case clearance rate, and ahead of ORC caseload, inventory accuracy and audit scores. A number of respondents are measured on sales.

A large majority report that performance metrics are tied to total compensation either directly or partially, which makes the metric mix a compensation question rather than an operational one.

Education requirements

Most organizations require no more than a high school diploma, GED or some college for AP/LP employees. A minority require a bachelor's degree or higher, and one an associate's degree. No respondent reported having no education requirement at all. Set against a panel whose median tenure in the field is 28 years, this suggests a profession that still credentials through experience rather than education.

What practitioners would change

Respondents were asked what they would change about compensation practices industry-wide. Those who answered converged on a theme.

One asked for annual cost-of-living adjustments layered on top of performance increases, arguing that cost of living has outpaced salary growth for long enough to create a free agency style market that does not encourage longevity within an organization.

Another pointed to the definitional problem this report ran into directly. Not all AP departments have the same responsibilities, which makes title-to-title comparison unreliable without a review of scope.

A third asked for exactly what this study attempts, a regular compensation study usable for benchmarking positions, org structures and designs across companies.

A fourth raised entry-level pipeline: more paid internships, on the grounds that many college graduates are unaware of the opportunities in the industry.

Taken together, these describe a field that lacks shared definitions, lacks a benchmark, and lacks a visible entry path. Three problems that compound one another.

About this study

This snapshot draws on two independent sources.

Public market data. Forty-nine company-role observations across more than thirty named U.S. retailers, covering VP, Sr. Director and Director. This data is modeled rather than employer-reported, and is used as a cross-check against practitioner reporting. Employer-posted ranges published under state pay-transparency laws were reviewed separately where available.

Practitioner data. The TalkLPnews Industry Compensation Benchmark Survey was fielded between 26 March and 26 May 2026 among a panel of senior AP/LP leaders. The median respondent has 28 years in asset protection and seven years in their current role. Most work at companies above $5 billion in revenue and at organizations above 10,000 employees. Respondents reported base ranges only for roles that exist in their own organization, so coverage varies by role; the confidence rating on every table reflects that.

Method. Salary figures are annual base only. Point values were treated as low equal to high; hourly responses were excluded from salaried statistics; "N/A" was treated as no response rather than zero. Role medians are medians of reported range midpoints. Quartiles are suppressed where practitioner coverage is too thin to support them. Every figure carries a confidence rating, and no figure is presented as validated unless two independent sources agree.

Limitations. This is a snapshot drawn from a focused panel of senior leaders, not a census of the industry. Coverage varies by role and is thinnest at Sr. Director, which is why that row is rated directional. The panel skews toward large-format grocery and specialty retail and toward organizations above $5 billion in revenue, so the figures describe the upper end of the market better than the lower. No geographic, tenure or demographic breakdowns are supported. This is a snapshot, not a comprehensive benchmark, and should not be cited as one.

Confidentiality. Respondent identities, employers and contact details are not published in any form.

Year two

The convergence between what practitioners reported and what independent market data shows suggests this picture is sound as far as it goes, and the gaps in it are specific and fixable. Deeper coverage of Sr. Director, Sr. Manager, Regional and District roles, and enough participation to cut the data by region, format and company size, would turn a snapshot into the benchmark this industry has never had.

One respondent asked for precisely that: a regular compensation study usable for benchmarking across companies. Building it requires participation, not analysis.

If you lead an AP/LP function, the 2027 survey is where that gets solved.

Retail AP/LP Compensation Snapshot 2026 is a TalkLPnews research report. Practitioner responses were collected confidentially and no respondent, employer or contact detail is published in any form. Public market figures are modeled estimates from commercial salary aggregators and are used only as an independent cross-check. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures are cited from the nearest available occupational classifications, neither of which describes retail AP/LP leadership.