

Senior Director, Talent Strategy

THE OPPORTUNITY

Greater Rochester is at an inflection point. With federal investments flowing into upstate New York's advanced technology corridor, a nationally recognized optics and photonics cluster, and a Micron semiconductor megafab rising just 80 miles away, the region has a rare window to reassert itself as a destination for innovation-driven growth and broadly shared prosperity. Seizing that window will require a fundamentally different approach to talent strategy — one that treats workforce development not merely as a response to today's job openings, but as a deliberate stimulus to innovation and long-term competitiveness.

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce is implementing a bold 2026–2030 Regional Talent Strategy informed by rigorous economic analysis, extensive stakeholder engagement, and peer benchmarking. At the center of that effort is a new senior leadership position: Senior Director of Talent Strategy. This is a high-impact, high-visibility role for a seasoned professional who combines analytical rigor, employer credibility, and the entrepreneurial spirit to build something new.

Greater Rochester Chamber serves as the region's preeminent business leadership organization, and its partnership with OneROC provides a rare form of “embedded autonomy” — the ability to work closely with the employer community while setting independent priorities based on what the region's economy actually needs. The Senior Director of Talent Strategy will be the architect of that work, leading a team, shaping employer behavior, and driving measurable change in the quality and competitiveness of Greater Rochester's workforce.

The Chamber's 2026–2030 Talent Strategy reorients the region's approach around four underserved priorities: upskilling incumbent workers within existing firms, improving management practices through peer-to-peer learning, deepening industry immersion for graduate-level STEM talent, and extending career development and retention support well beyond initial job placement. The Senior Director of Talent Strategy will lead the Chamber's effort to pursue these priorities with the discipline, analytical rigor, and employer trust they require.

ABOUT THE ROLE

The Senior Director of Talent Strategy leads the Chamber's efforts to advance a vibrant Greater Rochester economy that grows, retains, and attracts talent, fueled by advanced industries that drive good jobs, rising wages, and shared prosperity. Reporting to the President & CEO, this senior leader is responsible for setting strategic direction, managing a growing team, and serving as a credible, trusted voice with employers, educators, policymakers, and civic partners across the region.

This is a role for a practitioner-strategist: someone who can translate labor market intelligence into concrete action, hold honest conversations with business leaders, incubate new workforce solutions with partners, and build the institutional credibility that enables the Chamber to move the employer community from conversation to commitment.

Key Responsibilities

Strategy, Leadership, and Impact

- Lead the development, annual refresh, and implementation of the Chamber's 2026–2030 Regional Talent Strategy, ensuring alignment with the region's broader economic and innovation agenda.
- Develop, and lead a six-person team with functions spanning industry engagement, data and insights, and workforce innovation; establish clear decision gates and ensure the portfolio remains focused on strategic, high-impact priorities rather than diffuse responsive activity.

- Represent the Chamber at regional leadership tables, before public and philanthropic funders, and with state and national partners; serve as the Chamber’s primary voice on talent strategy and workforce policy.
- Drive the region’s adoption of a data-informed approach to talent strategy, moving partners from conventional metrics to a diagnostic framework that surfaces root causes and sharpens collective action.
- Identify opportunities to incubate new workforce solutions in partnership with employers and education/training providers; lead transitions of proven interventions out of the Chamber’s portfolio and into sustainable, scalable structures.

Employer Engagement and Problem-Solving

- Cultivate and steward deep, trusted relationships with senior business leaders across Greater Rochester’s advanced industries, engaging at the level of HR, operations, and C-suite to understand real workforce challenges and strategic direction.
- Provide leadership, direction, and support to the team in designing and facilitating solutions-oriented convenings with small groups of employers and education partners to diagnose root causes of talent disconnects and advance concrete action; resist the tendency to build programs in response to symptoms rather than causes.
- Maintain accountability for a disciplined workforce development and problem-solving approach across the Chamber’s Talent strategy, including from data analysis to employer convening, to solution design, to rigorous evaluation and deliberate decisions to scale, hand off, or stop.
- Serve as a trusted advisor to employers by challenging and supporting them to sharpen their own definitions of talent need and examine hiring and management practices as part of the talent equation — a capability most workforce intermediaries cannot provide.

Operations and Accountability

- Develop, staff, and facilitate a Talent-focused Board Committee to support board-level engagement, strategic accountability, and credibility with the broader employer community.
- Build and lead a high-performing team by aligning talent, roles and capabilities to strategic priorities, including thoughtful team development, role evolution and selective hiring to achieve strategic goals.
- Oversee team workflow, goal-setting, and performance; actively constrain the team’s “responsive mode” activities to approximately 25 percent of effort, preserving strategic capacity. Maintain and evolve the region’s talent metrics dashboard, ensuring it is actively used by partners and updated at least semiannually as a shared source of diagnostic truth.
- Support fund development strategy and manage grant relationships and reporting relevant to the talent portfolio.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate is a seasoned leader with at least eight years of decision-making experience in workforce development, economic development, education, corporate talent leadership, civic sector or a closely related field. They bring a combination of strategic acumen, analytical instincts, and facilitative leadership that allows them to earn trust with business leaders, hold honest conversations, and build momentum toward shared action. They have an entrepreneurial mindset and high tolerance for ambiguity.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor’s degree required; advanced degree in public policy, business, urban planning, economics, education, law, or related field preferred. (moved up from ‘preferred qualifications’)
- Minimum of eight years of progressive leadership experience in workforce development, economic development, education, corporate talent leadership, civic sector or a comparable field, including direct management of staff and complex initiative portfolios.

- Demonstrated track record of building and sustaining trusted relationships with senior business leaders, and the ability to engage employers as partners — not just constituents — in identifying and solving workforce challenges.
- Strong analytical abilities and instincts: comfortable interpreting labor market data, translating analysis into strategic implications, and using evidence to sharpen priorities and inform employer conversations.
- Exceptional communicator with a facilitative leadership style: able to build alignment across diverse stakeholders, move groups toward decisions, and translate complex ideas into compelling narratives for varied audiences.
- Entrepreneurial orientation: energized by building new things, comfortable with ambiguity and the risk of failure, and skilled at moving partners from interest to investment.
- Demonstrated ability to lead a complex portfolio of initiatives simultaneously, applying discipline around what to pursue, what to stop, and what to hand off to partners better positioned to deliver.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience working in or alongside chambers of commerce, regional economic development, or business-led civic institutions.
- Familiarity with Greater Rochester's major industry clusters — particularly optics/photonics, advanced manufacturing, and emerging semiconductor supply chain — or demonstrated ability to quickly develop deep industry knowledge.
- Experience incubating and scaling talent innovations, including in partnership with community colleges, universities, and employers.
- Comfort with applied economic research, labor market analysis, or regional economic development, including familiarity with publicly available workforce data sources.
- Experience with or knowledge of Upstate New York's workforce and education ecosystem, including partners such as Monroe Community College, RIT, the University of Rochester, and OneROC.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

In the first year, the Senior Director of Talent Strategy will:

- Develop the Talent team including by aligning talent, roles and capabilities, and hiring key positions. Establish a Board Talent Committee, and launch the regional skills premium metrics dashboard.
- Drive the team's employer engagement strategy and ensure the successful growth of the Chamber's employer-led work in key sectors, particularly optics/photonics in partnership with NY Photonics and Monroe Community College in year one.
- Complete an initial diagnostic scan of the talent and innovation challenges in at least two cross-cutting areas (e.g., AI/automation readiness, electrification).
- Establish clear criteria for "responsive mode" engagement and begin shifting the team's time allocation toward strategic priorities.

At full speed, the team will:

- Co-convene robust employer collaboratives (including in optics and photonics) attended by senior leaders and generating concrete actions.
- Drive one to three targeted talent interventions annually — designed, incubated, and transitioned to scale — that represent the Chamber's distinctive problem-solving approach.
- Publish employer and talent insights at least twice per year, alongside an annual regional talent convening.
- Inform the Chamber's annual policy advocacy priorities relative to talent with evidence from employers and talent development partners around challenges that are solvable and worth solving with public policy solutions.