

ROLECALL

PRESENTS

ROLECALL

TALENT ATTRACTION
SUMMIT

Buffalo

2026

FULL AGENDA

JUNE 15-17, 2026



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MONDAY, JUNE 15

@ **Statler Buffalo** (107 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY)

4:00 PM **Opening Reception + Check-In**

5:00 PM **Speed Networking**

6:00 PM **Panel: Newcomers to Buffalo**

We're excited to kick off the Talent Summit with a conversation featuring newcomers who relocated to Buffalo through Be in Buffalo as they share the story behind their move. This panel will explore the experiences, challenges, and connections that shaped their journey as newcomers, while also offering valuable insight into what today's talent is looking for in a place to call home and how communities can help newcomers put down roots.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16

Breakfast & Welcome @ Collaboration Hall (50 Fountain Plaza, Suite 1700, Buffalo, NY)

Sessions @ M&T Tech Hub (1 Seneca St, Buffalo, NY)

8:00 AM **Breakfast Networking + Check-In**

@ **Collaboration Hall**
(50 Fountain Plaza, Suite 1700, Buffalo, NY)

8:30 AM **RoleCall Intro + Welcome**

9:00 AM **Keynote - Strengthening Connectivity:
The link between Talent Attraction and
Placemaking**



Brandye Merriweather
President, Buffalo Urban
Development Corporation

Placemaking and talent attraction are two sides of the same strategy: creating environments where people can forge meaningful connections, build careers, and genuinely belong. Discover how strengthening your sense of place improves quality of life and drives economic vitality by giving talent the reasons and relationships they need to thrive and become rooted in your community.

10:00 AM **30-Minute Break – Walk (~20 mins) / Trolley (~10 mins)**

Travel to M&T Tech Hub @ Seneca One
(1 Seneca St, Buffalo, NY)

10:30 AM **Welcome from TechBuffalo**

TechBuffalo will welcome us to the M&T Tech Hub and Seneca One Tower, Buffalo's tallest tower and the hub of its innovation economy.



Jeffrey Botteron
President & Chief Executive
Officer, TechBuffalo



Greg Pokriki
Director of Communications &
Engagement, TechBuffalo

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11:00 AM

Panel: Strategic Media Coverage for Community Growth

Media coverage is one of your most powerful talent attraction tools. Learn how to pitch stories that resonate with reporters, secure coverage that builds community credibility and pride, and leverage positive press into sustained momentum for both attracting and retaining talent.



April Mason
President and Founder,
Violet PR



Whitney Martin
Director, Made for Rockford

Moderated by Tim Carty, Chief Executive Officer

12:00 PM

Lunch + Ignite Sessions

Getro will share how they build branded job boards and talent networks for organizations seeking to leverage the potential within their professional communities.



We'll also spotlight RoleCall and how we're helping communities attract, engage, and retain talent through innovative strategies and tools.



1:00 PM

Interactive Session - Placemaking Mad Libs

Talent attraction is heavily tied to a sense of place and community infrastructure. We're all used to talking about tax incentives and job stats, but how do you humanize your community for potential new residents? We'll give you some time to create a mad libs-style pitch template for your region and time to practice your pitch to your fellow attendees.

1:30 PM

Breakout Sessions (Choose one session to attend)

Giving the Green Flag: Influencer Partnerships to Attract Gen-Z Talent

When you're trying to reach Gen Z and younger millennials, talent attraction marketing can't just show up; it has to show out. In Greenville, North Carolina, the marketing and talent programming team at the Greenville Eastern North Carolina Alliance decided to level up with influencer-driven, short-form video storytelling... and the ROI seriously slaps. Through a strategic partnership with Salary Transparent Street, a social media advocacy channel with 3+ million followers, Greenville's digital talent campaign pulled more than 17 million views in just three months: big numbers, no cap. The videos highlighted over 30 professionals living and working in Greenville-Pitt County, giving attendees the real tea on salaries, earning potential, career pathways, and quality of life.

Semper Economic: How Veteran Pipelines Strengthen Local Economies

Tired of fighting the "war for talent"? Good news – the reinforcements have already landed. Semper Economic: How Veteran Pipelines Strengthen Local Economies takes a light-hearted but data-driven look at how transitioning service members can become a community's best workforce strategy. We'll connect the dots between military precision and Main Street prosperity, showing how veteran relocation, housing, and employer engagement can turn bases into boomtowns. Expect less jargon, more laughs, and plenty of actionable takeaways – including how to translate "mission readiness" into "market readiness." From DD-214s to GDP, this session breaks down how veterans bring skills, families, and paychecks that strengthen the local economy. You'll leave ready to deploy your own pipeline

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In this session, you'll learn what works, what's worth the hype, and how your community can tap into creator-style content to attract the talent of tomorrow.



Maria Satira

Vice President of Marketing and Talent Programming, Invest Greenville

Location: Room A

strategy – and maybe retire a few acronyms while you're at it.



Steve Janke

President, Semper Forward



Emmanuel Noel

Chief Revenue Officer, STEAME

Location: Room B

2:15 PM **15-MINUTE SNACK BREAK**

2:30 PM **Interactive Session - Fix My Flop**

Not every event or campaign tops your last one. Do you have an event that flopped? Or a campaign that didn't soar like you had hoped? Work with your table of talent attraction's finest to sharpen past work! Borrow ideas and fix your flops.

6:00 PM **Party Time @ Patrick's Rooftop** (500 Pearl St, Suite 1300, Buffalo, NY)

Theme: JerseyCall. Buffalo is a city that shows up for its teams, so we're bringing that energy to the party. Rep your favorite team by rocking a jersey. Football, hockey, baseball, you name it. Want to go all in? Throw it back with a vintage pick or rep a team you love. Extra credit if you match the Buffalo spirit and show up ready to celebrate like it's game day.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17 @ HANSA Workspace (505 Ellicott St, Buffalo, NY)

8:00 AM **Breakfast & Networking**

9:00 AM **Panel - From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Powering your Talent Strategy with Good University Relations**

Universities are a triple threat. They are a high quality talent pipeline, innovation engine, and anchor employers. This panel will explore how economic developers can partner strategically with higher ed to retain graduates, attract alumni back to town, connect budding entrepreneurs to your talent ecosystem, and build employer connections that turn students into long-term residents. Learn how to move beyond transactional recruitment into sustained partnerships that benefit the campus and community.



Amy Monin

Strategic Initiatives Director, University at Buffalo



Katie Shorey

Director of Engagement, Live + Work in Maine



Shannon Allen

Executive Director, Future Talent Strategies, Innovate Alabama

Moderated by Ian Gannon, Client Solutions Coordinator

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10:00 AM

Behind the creation of Series B(uffalo): a new methodology for civic storytelling



Dan Miner

VP of Storytelling, 43North Foundation

The 43North Foundation knew they wanted to create a storytelling engine that was distinctly Buffalo, based on their observation that most successful innovation economies have a central narrative engine that creates a sense of movement and progress. The result was Series B(uffalo), an omnichannel digital platform that combines elements of journalism and marketing. Series B editor-in-chief Dan Miner will take us behind-the-scenes of the creation strategy for the platform, a process which included identifying the key places where social-cultural-political conversations are happening, analyzing Buffalo's innovation story on those platforms, choosing key audience groups, engaging locally-based stakeholders as believers and content creators, developing KPIs and finally in crafting a diverse editorial calendar that incorporates all the elements of New Buffalo. This hour-long session will include a significant amount of time for Q&A around the Series B philosophy, creation strategy and performance.

11:00 AM

Closing Remarks + Special Announcement

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



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SPEAKER BIOS



Brandye Merriweather
President,
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation

Brandye Merriweather is President of the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC) - making her the first black woman to lead an economic development agency in Western New York. BUDC leads several development projects and initiatives that are furthering Buffalo's resurgence. Some of BUDC's major initiatives include the Buffalo's Race For Place effort which focuses on talent attraction through placemaking, vibrant streetscapes and improved accessibility, walkability with Buffalo's downtown and waterfront area while enhancing connections of adjacent neighborhoods to the East and West of the city center. Brandye also created the Queen City Pop Up Project, downtown's first pop up retail program. This program encourages retail in downtown Buffalo by transforming vacant spaces into vibrant retail shops that feature local retailers -- with over 85% of participants being minority or women owned businesses.



April Mason
President and Founder,
Violet PR

With 30 years of experience marketing places and a talent for crafting compelling narratives, April founded Violet PR in 2010. Passionate about working with civic leaders, economic developers and entrepreneurs, she is dedicated to helping communities thrive and grow.

An expert in economic and real estate development, April has led public relations campaigns for states including New Jersey, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Georgia and North Carolina, as well as metro areas such as Newark, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Savannah and Kansas City. She has orchestrated hundreds of media interviews for governors, mayors, CEOs and industry leaders, elevating the profiles of cities, states, developments and organizations.



Whitney Martin
Director,
Made for Rockford

Whitney Martin is the Program Director of Made for Rockford, a high-touch talent attraction initiative under the region's tourism bureau. An Emmy-nominated and multi-Associated Press award-winning journalist, Whitney built her career uncovering the stories that shape communities. Today, she applies that same storytelling expertise to help Rockford attract, retain, and connect talent in meaningful ways. Known for her deep understanding of narrative, human behavior, and place-based marketing, Whitney bridges media and community development with authenticity, strategy, and purpose, helping others see that talent attraction is ultimately about connection.



Maria Satira
VP of Marketing and Talent Programming,
Invest Greenville

Maria Satira is an award-winning communications leader who knows how to make communities stand out. As vice president of marketing and talent programming for Invest Greenville, she leads bold, data-driven campaigns that showcase the area as a fast-rising destination for business growth, career opportunities, and exceptional quality of life. Since joining the organization in 2020, Maria has transformed local storytelling by blending her decade of experience as a morning news anchor with innovative marketing strategies. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, she now lives in Greenville with her husband, two daughters, and two rescue dogs.

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Steve Janke
Founder,
Semper Forward

Steve is a Marine veteran who has been engaged in state-level talent attraction for several years. Through this work, he has developed a globally recognized best practice for recruiting transitioning military and successfully transitioned a government-funded effort to a for-profit company during a global pandemic. He has served as an advisor to Presidential Advisory committees on infrastructure support and has consulted with numerous states on how to better attract military talent.

Semper Forward addresses the national-level need for talent attraction by aligning national companies with his gold standard model of transition support. A subject matter expert in building communities of support around the transitioning military family, he continues to serve his brothers and sisters who have served.

Steve is an avid golfer and in his spare time, you will find him drinking brown liquor and shooting in the 90s at any of Wisconsin's many golf courses.



Dan Miner
VP of Storytelling,
43North Foundation

Dan Miner is the VP of storytelling for the 43North Foundation and editor-in-chief of its media platform. That platform, Series B(uffalo), features stories about progress and momentum in Buffalo across its website, social channels and newsletter. Dan is a former award-winning business journalist who specialized in covering startup companies and venture capital. Following his journalism career, Dan spent three years on the University at Buffalo's Startup Ventures team. Dan joined the 43North Foundation in June 2025 and officially launched Series B in January 2026.



Emmanuel Noel
Chief Revenue Officer,
STEAMe

Emmanuel Noel is a builder and systems thinker who believes that access to high-demand, high-wage careers should not be a matter of luck or zip code. As Chief Revenue Officer at STEAMe, he is passionate about building the digital and data infrastructure needed to modernize and scale sector talent pipelines, creating connected pathways to prosperity for learners, employers, and communities alike. STEAMe addresses the national need for connected, data-driven workforce systems by powering talent pipelines at scale, aligning partners, measuring impact, and supporting learners on their journey to a job. Emmanuel leads revenue strategy with a focus on ensuring that every stakeholder in the ecosystem sees real, sustained results.

Before joining STEAMe in 2024, Emmanuel founded Skilbi, an early-stage technology company dedicated to upskilling overlooked students and connecting them to meaningful career exploration opportunities. He also served as Head of Growth at Upkey, scaling remote career readiness and talent engagement tools for students, universities, and employers nationwide. In his spare time, Emmanuel enjoys watching and playing soccer, getting his runs in on the basketball court, or finding any other excuse to stay active.


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Katie Shorey
Director of Engagement,
 Live + Work in Maine

Katie Shorey is Director of Engagement of Live + Work in Maine (LWM), and a proud boomerang. She returned to Maine after working in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA. Prior to LWM, Katie was the business & community liaison for People's United Bank and then worked at WEX on the New Business Ventures team. Katie is active in economic development initiatives to help foster innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition to Live + Work in Maine, she serves on the advisory board of Maine Accelerates Growth, is a certified SCORE mentor and former workshop facilitator, and is a board member of the Portland Community Chamber. She attended St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY and Fryeburg Academy.



Shannon Allen
Executive Director, Future Talent
Strategies,
 Innovate Alabama

Shannon Allen is deeply committed to Alabama's tech ecosystem, driving innovative strategies to build a future-ready workforce. As the Executive Director of Future Talent Strategies at Innovate Alabama, she leads statewide initiatives that bridge the gap between education and high-growth industries, with a special focus on entrepreneurship and technical fields such as cybersecurity, computer engineering, artificial intelligence and data analytics. Her work is actively shaping Alabama's talent pipeline — connecting thousands of students to real-world tech opportunities and empowering organizations through more than \$4 million in strategic funding. With over a decade of experience in strategic partnerships, economic development and creative leadership, Shannon is transforming the way Alabama cultivates, attracts, and retains tech talent. Her commitment to innovation and impact is helping to ensure that the future of tech in Alabama is bright.



Katie Shorey Amy Monin
Strategic Initiatives Director,
 University at Buffalo

Amy is a strategic operations and program leader with 15 years of experience in higher education, designing initiatives, driving organizational change, and connecting people and priorities across one of New York's largest public research institutions. As Strategic Initiatives Director at the University at Buffalo's Startup and Innovation Collaboratory, she oversees the university's largest annual student business pitch competition and launched the Sophomore Externship Experience (SEE), a workforce development program connecting students with regional employers. These programs have earned national and international recognition from NASPA and the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers. Amy is committed to building programs that create belonging, connection, and opportunity and to helping organizations turn strategy into lasting results.