



BioScience Summit 2025

Attracting & Retaining Top Talent

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What Attracts Professional Talent to U.S. Geographies (2025)



- Key drivers for professional-level migration in the U.S.
- Data-backed trends from national talent studies

What Attracts Professional Talent to U.S. Geographies

- Heartland Forward research



- Over the first two decades of the 21st century, **college grads & knowledge workers became massively clustered in coastal superstar cities & tech hubs.**
- **Now, those superstar cities & tech hubs come up against their limits to growth.**
- Even before COVID, **traffic congestion, gentrification, & extreme inequality were exacting a toll on their quality of life.**
- **Spurred by the pandemic-induced shift to remote work, knowledge workers & knowledge-based businesses began to seek out more affordable locations.**
- **Whether that trend will continue is unclear.**

Regional Trends



- Attraction to Heartland & Sun Belt cities is rising due to affordability & professional density
- Fargo is considered part of the “Heartland”

Core Drivers for Attracting Professional Talent

- Successful regions & organizations...



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- **Industry Clusters & Career Opportunity** - Regions with active tech, healthcare, finance, & engineering industries lead in attracting & retaining professionals
- **Networking and Professional density** - Innovation districts & frequent professional events boost talent inflows
- **Market Regional Strengths:**
76% of relocating professionals use talent attraction websites and regional marketing. Clear messaging around the area's advantages boosts both attraction and retention.

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Quality of Life & Affordability

- 80% of professionals include cost and lifestyle as key factors in moves
- Short commutes, safety, and cultural amenities matter

Workplace Flexibility

- 12% of professional hires now work >50 miles from their employer
- 27% actively seek flexible work location options

Retention Strategies for Professional Talent

- Regional Strategies



Regional strategies:

- Public/private partnerships & incentives
- Targeted academic & industry collaboration
- Invest in workforce development & upskilling
- Promote community connectivity, engagement, & place-making
- Offer incentives like student debt relief or tax incentives for in-demand occupations
- Prioritize local internships & first-hire pipelines
- Market regional strengths



Retention Strategies for Professional Talent

- Organizational Strategies



Organizational strategies:

- Create visible career paths & and professional development
- Foster workplace flexibility
- Competitive compensation & benefits
- Recognition & feedback
- Inclusive culture
- Well-being & mental health



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