Position Profile

President & Chief Executive Officer
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce

Duluth, Minnesota

The Chamber

Founded in 1870, the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce ("DACC" or the "Chamber"), representing approximately 950 members and operating with a $1.5 million budget, serves as a business resource and advocate for the Duluth area. The Chamber brings together leaders from business, government, education, labor, and the broader community to support its members and advance economic opportunities.

The Chamber's strategic work centers on three areas:

- **Business conditions:** Researching, monitoring, and improving economic drivers that impact business operations.
- **Economic development:** Creating pathways and seeking solutions to attract and retain business and development.
- **Community progress:** Driving efforts that advance regional livability, workforce participation, and population growth.

Key Programs and Initiatives:

- **Leadership Duluth:** A ten-month program, running annually September through June that develops leadership skills, introduces participants to regional employers and community organizations, and examines local challenges. More than 1,500 professionals have completed the program since its first graduating class in 1988.
- **Fuse Duluth:** The Chamber's young professionals program provides professional development, networking, and community involvement opportunities, connects employers with local talent, and encourages collaboration across generations.
- **Business connections and education**: More than 100 annual events, including networking gatherings, educational sessions, the Annual Meeting & Dinner Celebration (1,300 attendees), and Duluth & St. Louis County Days at the Capitol, which brings regional priorities to state lawmakers
- **Women in Leadership Conference:** Career workshops, speakers, and networking for women at different career stages. The fourth annual conference was scheduled for September 14, 2026, with proceeds supporting Fuse Duluth.
- **Duluth Area Chamber Foundation:** Established in 2022, with federal tax-exempt status received in 2023, the Foundation supports workforce development, research, aviation careers, and military advocacy. Its workforce development grant program offers eligible individuals grants of up to $1,000 to help remove employment barriers.

Current Priorities:

The Chamber's 2026 Strategic Action Plan identifies priorities including improving permitting processes, advocating for competitive taxes, expanding financial literacy training, advancing housing and downtown redevelopment, increasing childcare capacity, and supporting growth in aerospace, energy, natural resources, medical, and innovation sectors.

Specific efforts include:

- Support Duluth's efforts to ensure the 148th Fighter Wing of the Minnesota Air National Guard, based in Duluth, succeeds in its competition with other sites around the country for a major base upgrade.
- Supporting the proposed Google data center in neighboring Hermantown. The Chamber reiterated its support for the project in September.

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The Board of Directors has embarked on a national search to recruit a new President & Chief Executive Officer to guide Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce and its prominent business, advocacy, and leadership activities.

More information on DACC and its programs can be found on the website: https://www.duluthchamber.com.

Duluth, Minnesota and surrounding region

Duluth, the fifth largest city in Minnesota, is a city of nearly 90,000 residents built along steep hills overlooking Lake Superior. Superior, Wisconsin is located directly across an active Great Lakes Shipping harbor from Duluth. The two communities together are known as the Twin Ports of Duluth-Superior. Duluth's waterfront, wooded neighborhoods and cultural institutions offer a distinctive combination of city amenities and everyday access to nature. Canal Park, the Aerial Lift Bridge and nearby North Shore destinations give the community a strong sense of place. Duluth offers a strong regional business community with an economy anchored by strong sectors including health care, aviation, shipping, higher education, engineering and tourism. The downtown and local corridors feature expanding tech, data center operations, and local retail headquarters.

Families can choose from public, charter, independent, or Catholic schools for precollegiate years. Three institutions provide choices at the higher education level; the University of Minnesota Duluth offers undergraduate and graduate study in business, engineering, sciences, education, and the arts, with medical and pharmacy programs on campus. The College of St. Scholastica provides campus and online study, including healthcare programs. Lake Superior College offers transfer pathways and practical training in aviation, healthcare, manufacturing, business, and skilled trades. Also, the University of Wisconsin—Superior, is located across Duluth-Superior harbor in Superior, WI.

In Duluth, Lake Superior sets the stage for a lifestyle rich in adventure, entertainment, and community. Walk or bike the scenic Lakewalk, explore the wooded trails of Hartley and Lester parks, or enjoy skiing and snowboarding at Spirit Mountain and Chester Bowl. Sports fans can cheer on UMD athletics (including NCAA Division I hockey), catch Duluth Huskies baseball at historic Wade Stadium, follow Duluth FC soccer, or join the excitement of Grandma's Marathon. The city's arts culture shines through performances at the NorShor Theatre, concerts by the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Ballet productions, local galleries, and independent films at Zeitgeist. After a day outdoors or an evening at the theater, discover waterfront dining, neighborhood cafés, craft breweries, and farmers markets, with Canal Park and the Lincoln Park Craft District offering inviting places to gather, explore and feel at home.

For more information about Duluth and St. Louis County please see:

- https://visitduluth.com/
- https://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/
- https://duluthchamber.com/resources/relocation-resources/

The Position

Location

The President & Chief Executive Officer position is located in Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce offices at 5 West First Street, Suite 101, Duluth, Minnesota 55802.

Reporting Relationships

The President & Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce reports to a 30-member volunteer Board of Directors and works closely with the nine-member Executive Committee, serving as one of its voting members.

The CEO supervises a staff of five including the Directors of Events and Board Operations; Membership Development and DEI; Office Administration; Strategic Engagement, Marketing and Communications; and the Member and Operations Specialist.

Other important interactions include local, state, and national elected officials and their staffs; education officials; and representatives of other public and private sector partnership organizations.

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Position Charter

The President & CEO is the chief executive and administrative officer of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce and the leading voice for the area's business community. In partnership with the Board of Directors, the CEO develops and executes strategic priorities that support business success, advance economic growth, and enhance quality of life, while overseeing Chamber operations, policy, and membership.

As the Chamber's principal spokesperson and ambassador, the CEO builds strong relationships across business, government, higher education, and civic sectors. The role balances leadership on regional initiatives with responsiveness to small and mid-sized businesses, strengthening membership engagement, organizational growth, and community impact.

Major Duties and Responsibilities

The President & CEO is responsible for the following activities within the limits of DACC's bylaws and the policies as established by and with appropriate delegation from the Board of Directors:

Strategic Leadership & Regional Impact

- Provide clear strategic vision for DACC and guide long-term priorities in partnership with the Board of Directors.
- Lead initiatives that strengthen the regional economy, advance workforce development, and promote a competitive business climate.
- Serve as a trusted advocate for the business community on key issues at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Identify emerging economic opportunities and position DACC to respond strategically and effectively.
- Balance bold, forward-thinking leadership with thoughtful, disciplined decision-making.

Membership & Value Creation

- Champion DACC's role as a member-driven organization, ensuring programs, advocacy, and initiatives reflect the needs of businesses of all sizes.
- Strengthen relationships with existing members and key investors while expanding the organization's reach and value proposition.
- Oversee membership development, retention, engagement, and investor relations to drive sustainable growth.
- Ensure DACC remains a vital convener, connecting business leaders and fostering collaboration across sectors.

Organizational Leadership & Culture

- Lead, mentor, and support a high-performing professional staff.
- Foster a collaborative, empowered workplace culture with clear expectations, accountability, and alignment.
- Develop emerging leaders and promote succession planning across key functions.
- Provide decisive leadership and direction when organizational priorities require clarity and focus.
- Maintain a positive, high-trust environment that encourages innovation, teamwork, respect, and professional growth.

External Leadership, Community Engagement, & Advocacy

- Serve as the chief spokesperson and public representative of DACC, articulating the Chamber's positions on various public policy issues, political initiatives, and community developments.
- Build and sustain trusted relationships with business leaders, elected officials, higher education institutions, and civic organizations.
- Act as a skilled convener who brings diverse stakeholders together around shared regional priorities.
- Maintain a strong and visible presence throughout the Duluth region, representing the Chamber in public forums, media, and community initiatives.
- Lead advocacy and public policy efforts on behalf of the membership by monitoring legislative activity, developing positions on key issues, and building strong relationships with elected officials at all levels.

Operational & Financial Stewardship

- Ensure effective management of all DACC operations, programs, and initiatives.
- Oversee financial planning, budgeting, and resource allocation to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Maintain strong, timely financial discipline, ensuring decisions reflect enterprise-wide priorities.
- Partner with the Board to develop and execute revenue strategies that support mission and growth.
- Provide oversight of governance, operational systems, and compliance with all applicable policies, regulations, and best practices.

Compensation
The President & CEO is expected to earn a competitive base compensation commensurate with the candidate's experience and knowledge. In addition, the candidate will receive appropriate benefits including but not limited to healthcare coverage, retirement, paid holidays, and other paid time off. Additional perquisites and some relocation assistance may be provided.

The Candidate

Education
A bachelor's degree or graduate degree in business, public policy, organizational development, communications, or related discipline is preferred. However, any combination of advanced education, training, or lived and learned experience will be valued and considered.

If the candidate's professional experience includes Chamber, association, or economic development industry background, then a graduate of the U.S. Chamber's Institute for Organization Management, Certified Chamber Executive, Certified Association Executive, Certified Economic Developer designation, or other certification, will be appreciated but is optional.

Professional Qualifications
The ideal candidate will bring 8–10+ years of progressively responsible leadership experience, including a minimum of three years in a senior executive role. Qualified candidates may come from a variety of backgrounds, including serving as the top executive of a progressive and comparably sized chamber of commerce, economic development organization, association, or related business organization; as a "second-in-command" or other senior-level leader within a larger, similar enterprise; or as an executive within a complex private or public sector organization with a strong record of community engagement. Experience working closely with a board of directors, leading and motivating volunteer leaders and military advocacy is strongly desired.

Preferred Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
- **Advocacy/Public Affairs** (experience in the process of local, state, regional, and national government, and government organizations; has developed effective working relationships with elected/appointed officials).
- **Board Relationships** (significant involvement with Board development and recruitment, governance issues, and Board of Director interactions).
- **Business Savvy/Varied Industries** (programmatic success of serving businesses of all sizes from small enterprises and working with entrepreneurs to large global companies; interactions with executives and owners of diverse industries).
- **Collaborative Relationships** (demonstrated track record of developing effective partnerships among all sectors, from large companies to entrepreneurs, from city to state governments, from related business organizations to higher education).
- **Communication/Media/Public Relations** (strong communicator with internal and external audiences including business members and prospects, Board of Directors, government representatives, staff, members of the media and the public; ability to effectively articulate goals, objectives, and policy positions of DACC to the media and the community at large).
- **Diversity** (inclusive; has experience working with diverse groups; promotes diversity programmatically).
- **Economic Development** (able to identify both local and regional issues and effectively manage interactions with regional organizations to achieve common goals; has worked collaboratively with established public sector delivery systems and private sector resources to effectively promote the business growth of a community, county, or region).
- **Established Contacts** (has developed and maintained regional and national connections with business, government, and other public sector organizations).
- **Executive Leadership Experience** (strong staff leadership and human resource development; has effectively led a complex organization).

- **Fiscal management** (demonstrated ability to manage financial affairs of an organization; i.e., develop revenue sources and control expenditures to preserve and enhance financial stability).

- **Membership Development/Sales Orientation** (has actively promoted a membership-based organization; track record of membership development, retention, increased value, and appropriate expansion; ability to market and promote the organization).
- **Planning** (has successfully developed and implemented both operational and strategic plans).
- **Resource Development** (experience with varied successful funding activities including development programs, publications and advertising, special events, dues, and non-dues revenue campaigns).

Desired personal traits

- **Business Champion** (personal belief in the free enterprise system and the role of private sector business in serving the economic and community development needs of society).
- **Change Agent** (able to set forth a vision based on collaboration and communication; willing to take calculated risks to push the envelope and challenge traditional thinking for positive change).
- **Collaborative/Teamwork** (sees value in working with others to achieve positive results for the community; demonstrates a willingness and ability to work with and through others; recognizes that many parties are necessary to accomplish big things; speaks of "we" first, not "I;" relishes in sharing credit with others).
- **Communication/Interpersonal Skills** (good listener; excellent written and oral communication skills; personable; relates well to diverse population and at all levels; builds constructive and effective relationships; socially adept and a good conversationalist).
- **Credibility/Integrity/Genuine** (can command respect of Board, members, staff, business, and regional leaders; honest; possesses the highest ethical and moral standards; sincere; authentic; trustworthy; transparent).
- **Empowering Management Style** (encourages staff; inclusive while providing basic direction and allowing staff team to execute; holds staff accountable; serves as a mentor for staff in their own professional development).
- **Energetic/Positive Attitude** (genuinely enthusiastic; strong personal work ethic; genuinely light-hearted; able to enjoy life and see the humor in sometimes difficult situations).
- **Executive Presence** (polished; self-confident; has political savvy necessary to maneuver through complex situations effectively and quietly).
- **Leadership** (Sound judgment and the ability to take calculated risks when appropriate; a take charge individual; can manage, motivate, challenge and delegate to others; proactive versus reactive; looks for and fosters "win-win" results).
- **Humility** (Practices and exhibits humility; regularly and naturally shares credit with others).
- **Organizational Skills** (results oriented; meets established goals and objectives).
- **Persuasive** (able to synthesize various viewpoints and convince disparate groups to come to a logical resolution).
- **Political Acumen** (demonstrated ability to strategically navigate among local, county, state, and federal leaders).
- **Strategic Thinker/Visionary** (can plan for the future and also brings innovative ideas; a forward thinker and able to envision "the big picture" beyond daily operations and lead an organization and community toward strategic goals and ideas).
- **Visibility** (highly visible to staff, members, and leaders in the community; active in the region and community).

Challenges and Opportunity

The projected first year accomplishments and projects for the new President & CEO of DACC include:

- Establish presence as CEO and become completely familiar with all operating aspects of the organization including staff, finances, program of work, Board members, volunteers, and the communities it serves.
- Build and sustain strong, trust-based relationships with key business leaders, elected officials, community stakeholders, and educational partners by proactively initiating formal and informal connections and developing a deep understanding of the individuals and organizations driving regional influence and impact.
- Work with the Board and staff to evaluate and refine DACC's strategic direction through the development and

execution of strategic and operational plans while continuing to strengthen and align the organization's mission and vision as a chamber of commerce, building trust through transparency.
- Continue building a robust military advocacy program to support the Minnesota Air National Guard's 148th Fighter Wing along with other local military branches.
- Evaluate the organization's financial position budgetary plans, working closely with staff and the Board to strengthen both near and long-term financial health, with a clear focus on expanding and diversifying funding streams.
- Become actively involved in the community, attending multiple chamber and non-chamber events; become known as "the face" of the organization within the community.

The President & CEO position of Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce is an outstanding opportunity for a chamber of commerce, association, or perhaps private sector executive to lead an organization committed to the success of the vibrant four-seasons community of Duluth and the surrounding region. The Chamber enjoys established connections, an engaged community, a strong economy, and a valued reputation as a strong advocate for business. The Chamber CEO is a highly visible leadership position and, as such, the new CEO will have considerable influence on the growth and development of the city in the years to come.

Contacts

If you know an outstanding chamber of commerce or economic development executive or other business leader who meets these requirements and would be interested in evaluating this dynamic opportunity, please email:

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The Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce and WAVERLY PARTNERS firmly support the principle and philosophy of equal opportunity for all. All applicants will be considered for employment regardless of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran, or disability status.

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