



**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Job Posting**  
**December 11, 2023**

Highland Planning is a city planning consultancy specializing in planning, urban design and public engagement. We are seeking a Chief Operating Officer to manage the consulting practice and support our growing team in Rochester, NY and Albany, NY. This is a professional position that requires organization, vision, and the ability to develop, build and maintain working relationships with firm colleagues and clients. We are a creative and collaborative team, and we are seeking someone who matches our firm culture. The firm's core values are trust, excellence and flexibility.

**What You'll Do:**

*Thought Leadership and Staff Development*

- Coach, cultivate and mentor a team of project managers and planners
- Schedule and conduct regular check-ins with staff to review workload, progress towards professional goals, and identify opportunities for improvement
- Identify and recommend professional development activities aligned with employees' professional goals
- Recruit and develop new employees
- Research and track national best practices in planning, urban design, public policy, and public engagement to ensure Highland Planning is integrating innovative, yet proven strategies into their planning and engagement practice
- Identify opportunities to improve planning and public engagement processes; provide training to employees to assist with the implementation of new strategies and processes

*Firm Administration and Operations*

- Work with the leadership team to set one-year and three-year performance goals
- Work with the leadership team to develop the Strategic Plan for the Planning + Design business line on an annual basis
- Design and implement processes to efficiently track financial information
- Plan and track workload allocation to meet or exceed monthly revenue goals
- Oversee key performance indicators, development and reporting
- Monitor billing, accounts receivable and accounts payable
- Oversee knowledge base development, quality assurance and quality management
- Review and assess Employee Handbook policies and procedures on an annual basis
- Oversee hiring and on-boarding
- Oversee training and continuing education, including the establishments of budgets for professional development
- Lead strategy to identify and lease office space with team input
- Oversee and direct Office Manager's daily activities
- Assess and recommend equipment purchases

### *Client and Project Management*

- Manage consulting projects, identifying and understanding client needs and priorities, and recommending relevant approaches and deliverables
- Set project direction by defining objectives and approaches and deliverables aligned to those objectives
- Build project plans that structure the work effort, including success criteria, meetings and milestones, and communications cadences
- Engage proactively with clients and team members to drive progress and decision-making
- Lead regular meetings with clients and stakeholders and ensure target outcomes are accomplished
- Develop clear, consistent client communications (e.g., emails, presentations)
- Lead project execution to ensure a great client experience and high-quality results
- Set weekly priorities for yourself and the team and advance proactively to ensure commitments are met
- Provide feedback on work products and mentor team members
- Develop high-quality deliverables that represent the excellence of the Highland Planning brand
- Identify and shape follow-on engagement opportunities for yourself and others through your exceptional delivery and gaining client trust as a strategic advisor
- Build on your professional network to identify project leads and create new opportunities for the firm
- Develop written scopes of work and budgets for proposals
- Represent the firm at project interviews

### **Who You Are:**

- A seasoned consultant and/or operations manager with 10-15 years of project management experience
- An expert in planning who can advise clients on communications, strategy and execution
- A strategic thinker capable of generating, testing, refining, and implementing new ideas
- An entrepreneurial leader with an interest and experience in growing a business
- A collaborator, an active listener, and someone who is always eager to learn and is open to new ideas / ways of doing things

### **Requirements**

- Master's degree in urban/regional planning, communications, business management, public policy, or other related field
- 10-15 years of client-facing professional services experience
- A passion for public sector planning work, public engagement, equity, and inclusion



- Exceptional communication skills, project planning and management skills, and attention to detail
- Strong relationship management and interpersonal skills
- Experience managing client relationships
- Good business acumen and awareness of business, marketing, and technology trends
- Budget management experience
- Positive attitude and strong willingness to learn from mentors and team members
- Advanced experience with productivity tools (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook, AirTable)
- Training with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a plus

This position is open to all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or status as a veteran. To apply, send a resume, cover letter, and three references, to Tanya Mooza Zwahlen, AICP at [tanya@highland-planning.com](mailto:tanya@highland-planning.com).