MARKET BRIEFING
CHARLOTTE, NC · 2026

— BATTERY BELT MANUFACTURING

INSIDE THE BATTERY BELT TALENT MARKET

The corridor, the competition, and what it actually costs to hire.

THE CHAMBERS GROUP
MICHAEL CHAMBERS

SWIPE →

They're all hiring from the same bench. Most don't know it yet.

Process engineers. Controls leads. Quality directors. Battery cell engineers. These profiles **don't exist at scale nationally** — they exist in one corridor, and they move **along** it, not across the country.

> Charlotte to Clarksville is one competitive labor pool for senior manufacturing leadership. If your sourcing was built for a local market, you're already behind.

— THE CORRIDOR

$82 billion. 20+ facilities. One labor market.

NC
- **Toyota Battery** Liberty
- **Wolfspeed** Durham · Siler City
- **Vulcan Elements** Benson

SC
- **Scout Motors** Blythewood
- **BMW Mfg** Spartanburg
- **Schaeffler** Cheraw
- **AESC** Florence
- **Redwood Materials**

GA
- **Hyundai-SK On** Bartow County
- **Hyundai-LGES** Savannah
- **Metaplant** Bryan County

TN
- **Ford BlueOval City** Stanton
- **LG Chem** Clarksville

KY
- **BlueOval SK** Glendale
- **AESC** Bowling Green

AL
- **Toyota / Mazda** Huntsville

Geographic flow north → south. Partial list — investment ongoing across all six states.

— COMPENSATION

What these plants are actually paying.

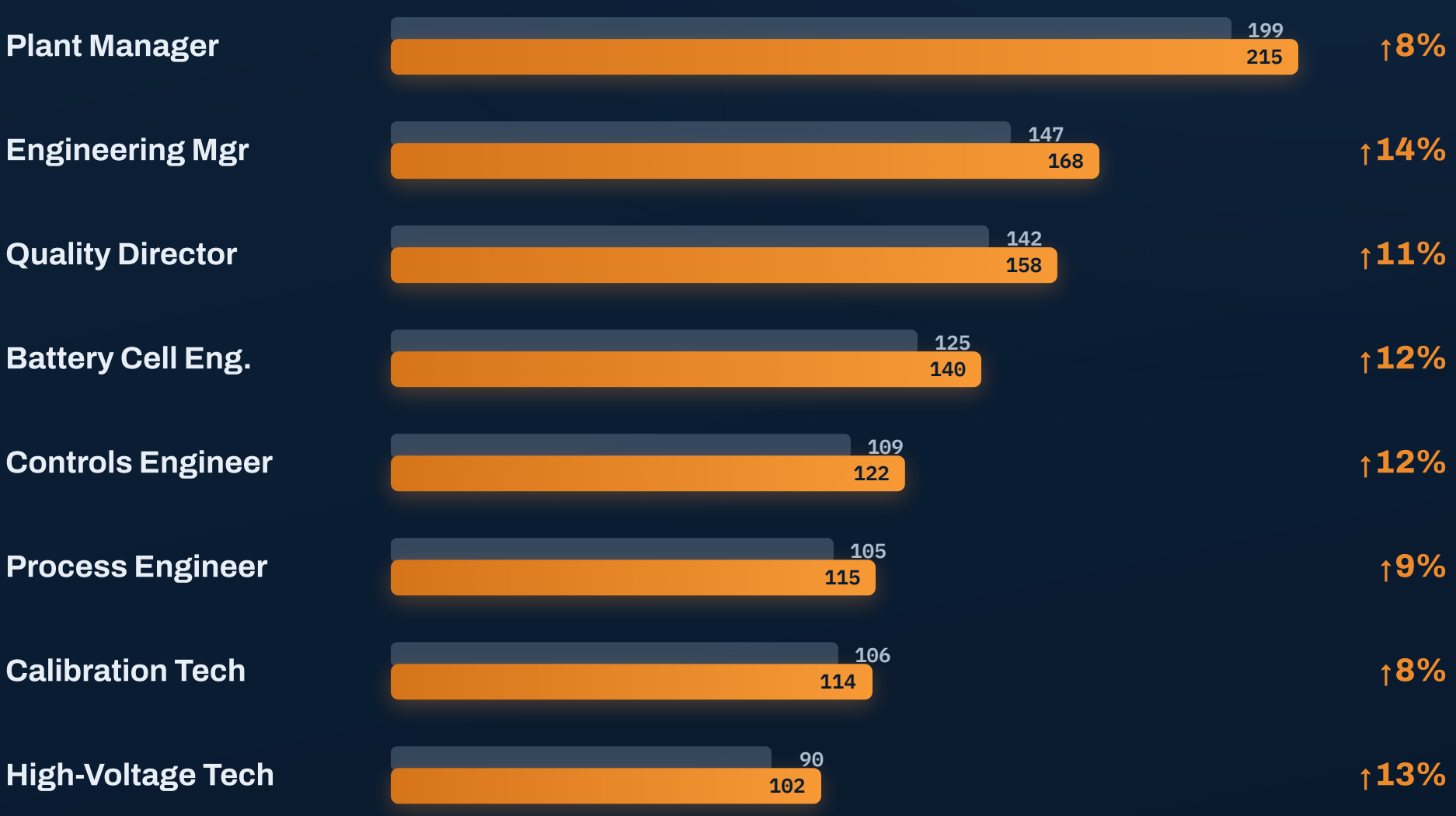
Corridor-competitive base ranges · 18-month change · SE Battery Belt 2025–2026

ROLE	BASE SALARY RANGE	18-MO
Engineering Manager	$145K – $190K	↑14%
Battery Cell Engineer	$120K – $160K	↑12%
Quality Director	$135K – $180K	↑11%
Controls / Automation Eng.	$100K – $145K	↑12%
High Voltage Technician	$85K – $119K	↑13%
Process Engineer	$95K – $135K	↑9%
Plant Manager	$175K – $255K	↑8%
Calibration Technician	$95K – $132K	↑8%

Source: TCG placement data + Lightcast EV Mobility Assessment (2026). Directional, corridor-competitive offers — not posted ranges.

— COMPENSATION · TRAJECTORY

Up 8–14% in 18 months — and still climbing.



Steepest gains: **Engineering Manager +14%** · High-Voltage Tech +13% · Battery Cell & Controls +12%

Most companies are 12–18 months behind market reality.

12–18

months behind market reality on comp

↑↑

Steepest gains at the **manager-of-managers** level — where the bench is thinnest

2024

Benchmarks that are **already out of date**

> Offers are being rejected not because they're low — but because they match internal bands the market has already passed.

— THE COST OF GETTING IT WRONG

The real number isn't the salary. It's the wrong hire.

$390K

Average cost of a bad engineering hire in a Battery Belt plant · **≈ 3× salary** · McKinsey

01 **Ramp delay**

A controls or process seat open through a launch window shows up in throughput, scrap, and missed timelines — never on the comp sheet.

02 **Team destabilization**

A mis-hire at the manager level resets a team. Your strongest people start taking recruiter calls.

03 **The 11-month exit**

The hire who looked right and leaves inside a year costs you the search twice — plus the gap in between.

The interview loop is now a selection signal.

2
Weeks

WINNING

Candidates read a fast-moving process as a proxy for how your organization actually runs.

3+
Weeks

LOSING

Candidates are already in other conversations — and not waiting for you.

— THE RELOCATION PROBLEM

The local passive candidate is the real pool.

51%

of employers report difficulty recruiting due to **relocation resistance**

- The right profiles **already live along the corridor** — not in Detroit, Boston, or the Bay Area.
- Many sites are rural or semi-rural. **Housing is thin, school options uneven.** Premium comp alone isn't always enough.
- Winners run **structured packages**: spouse employment, community storytelling, a regional future narrative.
- Start with national searches and filter down, and you're **working the market backwards.**

Source: Center for Automotive Research / Li-Bridge Battery Workforce Assessment.

— THE SCALE

This isn't a future story. They're hiring now.

$82B+

Invested in U.S. battery manufacturing since 2021

$37B+

Across five Southeast states · NC · SC · GA · TN · AL

$23B

GA–TN–KY gigafactory cluster — producing now

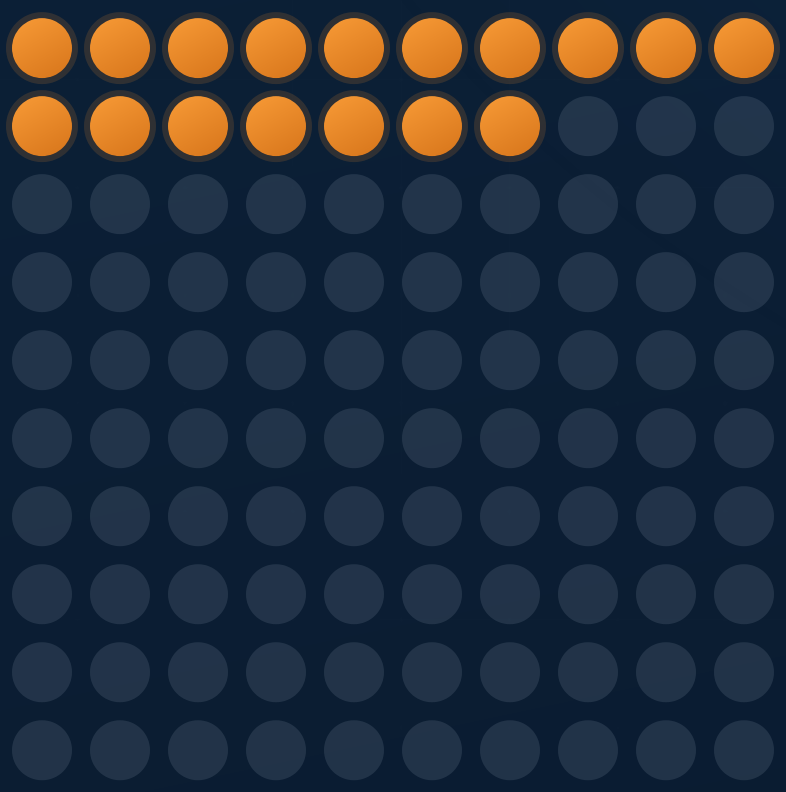
104,750

EV-mfg job postings · avg $120,614 — open, not projected

Different sources & scopes — figures are not additive. C2ES · EV.Careers · Lightcast · U.S. DOE (2026).

— THE SUPPLY GAP

For every 100 roles, fewer than 17 trained candidates exist.



0.17

Sub-baccalaureate supply-to-demand ratio · Lightcast / NAWB, 2026

- The schools are building — **but facilities are hiring now.** readySC, NCCCS Careers Electric, Georgia Quick Start are years from catching up.
- **70% of Battery Belt roles need an associate degree or less.** The widest gap is in skilled trades and technician talent.
- **Posting is not sourcing here.** The right profiles are employed, passive, and won't self-identify through a job board.

— WHAT WE'RE SEEING · FROM THE SEAT

Five observations from the recruitment seat.

01 **The ICE-to-EV skill cliff is larger than OEMs publicly admit.** Inbound from 20-year ICE veterans is running higher than any prior cycle.

02 **The best candidates aren't searching — they're working.** Strong profiles are employed and passive; they won't surface through a posting.

03 **Comp inflation is outrunning internal HR benchmarks** at almost every facility we touch — widest at the manager-of-managers level.

04 **Speed is itself a selection signal.** Senior candidates use the pace of your process as a proxy for how the organization runs.

05 **The easy SiC talent window has already closed.** Post-Wolfspeed displaced engineers are absorbed; the contest moved from displaced to deeply passive.

Three patterns playing out in real time.

01 **They compress the loop**

Two-week decisions are winning; three-week decisions are losing. They run on the candidate's timeline, not the internal calendar.

02 **They benchmark the corridor, not the zip code**

What comparable roles pay in Stanton, TN or Bartow County, GA decides offers — not last year's internal hire.

03 **Their process is visible long before the offer**

Pace, clarity, and follow-through reach candidates early — and get read as signals about how the place actually runs.

A regional dogfight with national stakes.

The talent lives in the corridor — it doesn't relocate across the country. But the capital, the comp, and the urgency are national-scale. **20+ facilities, one finite regional bench.** The winners source locally and move at the speed the competition demands.

Comment "BATTERY BELT"
below and I'll send you the full briefing.

Michael Chambers michael@chambersrecruitment.com 704-388-6869
chambersrecruitment.com