



100 College Ave, Suite 200  
Rochester, NY 14607  
585-258-3500  
[www.rochesterworks.org](http://www.rochesterworks.org)

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
SCHOOL TO WORK (S2W) NAVIGATOR**

**RELEASE:** Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024 **PROPOSALS**

**DUE:** Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**I. INTRODUCTION:**

RochesterWorks seeks experienced and qualified community-based organizations (CBOs) to partner with in the administration of a newly-created School-to-Work Navigator (hereafter, also “S2W Navigator”) to serve students within the City of Rochester (hereafter, “the City”). This program will embed a total of four (4) S2W Navigators in two (2) high schools within the Rochester City School District (hereafter, “the District”), and will: build career readiness skills, provide more focused and extensive career exploration, and help students and families navigate the many resources in the community that exist to connect youth to career pathways. RochesterWorks advances this proposal with the support of the Rochester City School District (RCSD), with whom it is in the process of executing a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Through partnerships with community agencies already providing career readiness and career exploration programming in the K-12 system, the S2W Program is a two-year pilot program. Under the direction of RochesterWorks, Navigators’ broad objective will be to work with school counselors to provide students, teachers, and parents with both general and individualized information about career pathways and help with the development of skills needed to succeed in the workforce. It would complement the long-standing effort to make students “college ready,” while recognizing that among the estimated 1500-1800 students who will graduate or exit city high schools in a given year, most will not attend a post-secondary education program.

This program would be aligned with the [Youth Works model](#) that RochesterWorks developed several years ago, working with its Youth Committee, comprised of community stakeholders. A guiding principle of that model is: “The belief that when accurate information is shared and followed among the youth, youth service

provider/those who advocate for youth, and the workforce development system, results will include improved coordination of services, strengthened skills and positive outcomes for youth and business/employers.”

## **II. COMPANY BACKGROUND**

Founded in 2000, RochesterWorks is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit member of the American Job Center Network that provides employment and training services to Monroe County through three local career centers and one specialized youth employment center. RWI administers workforce development programming on behalf of the Monroe County-Rochester Workforce Development Board (hereafter, also the “WDB”). As required by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (hereafter, “WIOA”) the Board sets policy for the local workforce development system, serving both job seekers in Monroe County, as well as employers. The Board, which is administered by RWI staff, is directly responsible for determining the best use of local WIOA funding.

RochesterWorks, on behalf of the WDB and under its oversight, administers approximately \$6 million million in WIOA funding. In doing so, it provides a variety of free services and training to both prospective and incumbent members of the local workforce. This is done through the operation of two comprehensive and 1 affiliate one-stop career centers that are part of the American Job Center Network.

RochesterWorks administers approximately \$1.9 million in WIOA Title I Youth funding, which is directed towards individuals under the age of 24, primarily to individuals who have barriers to employment. This is done primarily through a Youth Navigator program that serves out-of-school youth (hereafter, also “OSY”), ages 17-24 years old. This comprehensive program prepares individuals for the workforce by improving education and skill competencies; providing education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as the necessary supportive services to remove barriers to workforce participation.

While WIOA is the federal government's primary workforce development funding program, it has been limited by relatively flat funding over the past two decades. RochesterWorks’ WIOA Youth allocation for the upcoming program year will be less than it was in 2014. As a result, several years ago, the WDB made the strategic decision to dedicate WIOA Youth resources to the OSY programming.

RochesterWorks, on behalf of the Monroe County Department of Human Services, does administer a paid work experience program for in-school youth (hereafter, also “ISY”) under the age of 20. This includes the Summer Youth Employment Program, which is offered to several hundred youth annually in July and August, as well as a new Youth Employment Program which provides after-school paid work experience and employment opportunities. These paid work experience programs are funded through

the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA), which has, for the past decade, served as RochesterWorks' primary in-school youth workforce development program.

### **III. PROGRAM DESIGN**

#### **A. The basic service delivery design, as envisioned by RochesterWorks**

The S2W Navigator will work under the supervision of Rochester Work's In-School Youth Coordinator, and collaborate with other appropriate staff at RochesterWorks Youth Services Division. The S2W Navigator will enhance access to and success in existing programs and services for the in-school youth population, primarily those within two demonstration schools assigned by the District. The Navigator must establish formal relationships with students, teachers, counselors, and workforce development system partners. The draft Memorandum of Understanding that is pending approval of the School Board has identified

It is anticipated that the Navigator will co-locate at their assigned school building, and will be provided physical space and resources necessary to administer the scope of services provided in this RFP. Navigator(s) will be expected to be flexible and available in scheduling activities and providing elements/services to meet with youth beyond the conventional hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. It is important to allow participants to attend schooling, training, or work while still being able to connect with Navigators for support in achieving their educational and/or employment goals.

The S2W Navigator approach incorporates components of The Youth Works Model – A Workforce Development Model developed by the Monroe County/Rochester Youth Committee. The model has outcomes in line with WIOA youth funding - credential attainment, workplace and post-secondary readiness, skills gains, median earnings, and retention in employment. These outcomes are accomplished through a coordinated approach where the Navigator works as the conduit in partnership with educators, community and faith-based organizations, employers, career centers, and governmental units to connect youth to needed services.

The S2W Navigator program, through the issuance of this RFP, will fund up to four navigator positions, no more than two of which shall be from one organization. Each Navigator is expected to serve one high school but will be asked to leverage their expertise and experience in working with other community workforce development efforts

## **B. Navigator Duties:**

- Serve as an access point for students in need of guidance to a career pathway that suits their interest
- Working with the In-School Youth Coordinator, cultivate the necessary relationships with school staff and administrators to ensure access to students and shared understanding and acceptable of program goals within the school
- Implement career readiness training for students, which may be done through integration with existing classroom instruction, or, as an extracurricular opportunity for students. This will ultimately depend on the flexibility of the school. Such career readiness training will also include the development of soft/essential skills.
- Connect students with career pathway programs that meet their interests and goals, and, where appropriate facilitate enrollment in dual-credit coursework with MCC or other postsecondary providers
- Facilitate career exploration opportunities, either through visits to employers, demonstrations (including RochesterWorks Virtual Reality Career Exploration system), and/or job-shadowing
- Coordinate with RochesterWorks and the City of Rochester in helping students navigate the enrollment process of Summer Youth Employment/Summer of Opportunity, a six-week paid work experience program for City youth; and also, the ROC Your Job initiative which provides opportunities for students to work during the school year
- Work with both business and workforce partners to identify opportunities for paid work experience or internships
- Partner with Counselors to identify students who are at risk for dropping out of high school (including over-age/under-credit students) to provide exposure to career opportunities
- Where appropriate, facilitate enrollment in WIOA programming, administered by RochesterWorks.
- Build a bridge for students exiting the district to youth workforce programming offered by RochesterWorks and other partner agencies.

Any program activities must be authorized or not prohibited by the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the District and RochesterWorks.

## **C. Program Deliverables**

Unlike the WIOA Youth Navigator program that RochesterWorks administers with community partners for out-of-school youth, S2W Navigators will not be tasked with enrolling students into any formalized programming nor is it the expectation that

they maintain a minimum caseload. This is largely a capacity-building program and RWI acknowledges that with the target population, it is difficult to measure employment outcomes given prospective program participants may not yet be members of the workforce.

Nevertheless, the S2W Navigator will be asked to meet certain benchmarks with program activities that will help lead a student to successful long-term employment outcomes. These will include:

1. **Paid Work Experience:** It is expected that each S2W Navigator will facilitate the enrollment of 25 students annually into a paid work experience program, including but not limited to:
  - the Summer Youth Employment Program/Summer Of Opportunity Initiative;
  - the Roc Your Jobs After-School Paid Work Experience Program;
  - Unsubsidized employment
2. **Career Exploration:** The Project aims to expose a total of 1,000 students to in-demand career opportunities through exploration opportunities. This includes:
  - 752 students through large-scale events (ie career fairs, ROC Your Job Day) and
  - 248 through job shadowing/employer site visits/school demonstrations.

Each Navigator will be responsible for a pro-rata share of this performance metric.

3. **Connection to a Career Pathway Training Program:** The S2W Navigator program seeks to connect and help retain a total of 100 youth ( 50/ per year) into an industry-centric training or pre-employment program. This may include programs such as
  - Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship
  - Rochester Regional Health Young Apprenticeship Program
  - Young Adults Manufacturing Training Employment Program
  - Camp Hard Hat (Rochester Careers in Construction)
  - Classroom opportunities such as PTECH,
  - or enrollment in a Career Technical Education program at their school if they were previously not enrolled.

Each Navigator will be responsible for a pro-rata share of this performance metric.

#### IV. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

At the release time of this RFP, RochesterWorks has been awarded grant funding for \$620,000 from two private foundations, as part of the NYS Regional Revitalization Partnership. OF that grant funding, \$560,000 has been allocated to fund four(4) navigators for a total of two years. **The maximum award available for each full-time equivalent Navigator is \$70,000.**

Providers chosen as S2W Navigators will enter a reimbursement-based contract with RWI to provide these services. Organizations will be expected to invoice RWI on a monthly and/or fixed basis.

Cost competitiveness and efficiency are sought in this solicitation. Every applicant is expected to leverage additional non-S2W grant support and/or work with key community partners, including educators, community and faith-based organizations, employers, career centers, and governmental units to support the navigator position and the services/activities generated as a result. Added consideration will be given to proposals demonstrating genuine quantifiable and value-added support

#### V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals from governmental units, public or private not-for-profit or for-profit corporations, local educational agencies, and incorporated faith-based and community-based agencies will be considered.

Successful proposals will demonstrate how the goals of the S2W Navigator program can be enhanced by your organization's existing programming and/or knowledge of the barriers facing youth in the City of Rochester from successfully entering into the local labor market upon exiting the school system.

Organizations interested in providing the requested services should submit a proposal narrative of not more than eight (8) pages that includes the following information, as ordered below.

- A. **Describe your organization and its experience in providing services to youth as it relates to this RFP.** Include why you are well suited to fill the critical gap that the S2W Navigator program seems to address. Include any established relationships that are relevant to the objectives of the program, including but not limited to those within the City of Rochester school system; with the target population (City of Rochester in-school youth); and/or workforce development, training, or employer partners.

- B. **Describe in detail your Strategy and Workplan**, which must include, at minimum:
- A general approach that demonstrates an understanding of how the goals of the S2W Navigator program can be achieved through a physical presence within a city high school.
  - Proposed Involvement of relevant community partners, including private-sector employers, industry-training programs, and other workforce system partners (note: letters of commitment **are not** required).
  - Proposed interventions to remove barriers to participation in workforce development and career exploration/readiness programming.
  - Specific strategies and tactics you would deploy to achieve the Program Deliverables outlined in Section III (C)
- C. Describe any **Additional or Unique Services** you will provide to enhance and/or complement the services you will provide under this RFP. Please reference any existing programming or resources, whether administered by your agency or by a workforce system partner, that may be utilized to provide better outcomes.
- D. Describe **Challenges and Opportunities**, if any, that might impact your achieving successful performance outcomes as described in this RFP.
- E. **Describe the Quality Control Measures and Management Procedures** that will ensure successful oversight of staff, quality service delivery, satisfactory performance, and consistent communication with the funder.
- F. **Proposed Staffing and Management.** While it is not required to identify proposed personnel that will be assigned to the S2W Navigator program, proposals should identify a proposed staffing plan, as well as how your agency would ensure it would be able to begin administration of the program at the start of the 2024-2025 School Year in September. Please identify who at your agency would be responsible for managing S2W Navigators and also who (if a different person) would serve as the primary liaison to the In-School Youth Coordinator at RochesterWorks.
- G. **Budget.** Using ATTACHMENT 1- BUDGET SUMMARY, please provide a general budget that includes staff, fringe, and operating costs, to not exceed \$70,000 (per year), per Navigator position. Agencies are permitted to have up to two navigators (a total of \$140,000, per year). Where applicable, please include other allocable costs that will be covered by other funding sources. Administrative costs are capped at 10 percent, however, proposals are encouraged to maximize the extent to which grant dollars are allocated towards direct delivery of service.

RochesterWorks' MOU with the District will require the school facility to provide physical workspaces for all S2W Navigators, as well as access to internet, phone, printer and other related IT/multi-media resources. The district is not responsible for providing computers to Navigators.

- H. A **contact person** from your organization, including phone number and email address.

## **VI. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

RWI staff will review all proposals to ensure compliance with the requirements of the RFP. Proposals meeting requirements will be evaluated by a Review Team comprised of RWI staff, WDB, and/or Youth Committee members. Evaluation is based on:

### **A. Demonstrated Capability - 30%**

- Record of achievement in program management and operations within the workforce development eco-system, with preference given to results working with high school-aged students in the City of Rochester
- An understanding of the local workforce system, and the various system partners who will be necessary to collaborate with to successfully meet the objectives of this program.
- High level of professional and technical skill/knowledge, including experienced staff with adequate support
- History of success in serving target area/population
- Sensible plan to reach program outcomes

### **B. Quality of Service Design - 35%**

- A general strategic approach that demonstrates an understanding of how the goals of the S2W Navigator program can be achieved through a physical presence within a city high school
- Innovative, youth-centered service strategy
- Comprehensive, high-quality service components
- Structured, thorough delivery design
- Involvement of relevant community partners, including private-sector employers, industry-training programs, and other workforce system partners
- Advances the [RochesterWorks' Youth Works Model](#)

### **C. Ability to meet project objectives and timelines - 15%**

- Understands the project timeline and is committed to being able to administer the program at the commencement of the 2024-2025 school year.

### **D. Cost Efficiency 20%**

- Clarity and completeness of budget detail



- Reasonableness of costs
- Leveraged resources and in-kind contributions that are quantifiable and confirmed
- Level of investment in proposed outcomes

**VII. RFP/ PROJECT TIMELINE**

RFP Release	May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 at 4:00 pm
Deadline to Submit Written Questions	May 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2024 at 4:00 pm
Answers to RFP Questions Published	May 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 at 4:00 pm
Proposal Due Date	June 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 at 4:00 pm
Proposal Review & Interviews (if needed)	June 10 <sup>th</sup> – June 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2024
Award of Contract (Board approval)	June 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2024
Tentative Project Launch	July 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2024

**VIII. Application Process**

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted via email to Antwan Williams ([awilliams@rochesterworks.org](mailto:awilliams@rochesterworks.org)) no later than May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 at 4:00 pm.

Final responses to this RFP must be submitted via email to Antwan Williams ([awilliams@rochesterworks.org](mailto:awilliams@rochesterworks.org)) no later than June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 4:00 pm