RochesterWorks

ROCHESTERWORKS, INC.

Request for Proposal

Nonprofit Legal Services for Finger Lakes ON-RAMP (One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships)

Issued October 21, 2026

Procurement milestone	Date /time
RFP released	Wednesday, October 21, 2026
Questions due	Wednesday, October 28, 2026
Proposals due	Friday, November 6, 12:00 p.m. (noon) ET
Staff recommendation to the Board	Tuesday, December 1, 2026
Anticipated award announcement	Thursday, December 3, 2026
Anticipated contract execution	Tuesday, December 15, 2026
Service start	Thursday, December 17, 2026

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE DEADLINE ABOVE.
Submit electronically to Jeanette Koncikowski, Project Management Consultant, at **jeanette@thrivecommunityconsulting.com**

1. Background and Purpose

Background

RochesterWorks, Inc. (RWI), a nonprofit organization, is seeking proposals for legal consultation for the startup and launch of a new 501(c)(3) connected to the Finger Lakes One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships ("FLX ON-RAMP") initiative. RWI is located at 100 College Ave., Suite 200, Rochester, New York 14607. Additional information is available at https://rochesterworks.org.

Purpose

The One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships ("ON-RAMP") program is a $200 million investment to help fund and realize a network of four new workforce development centers in strategic, high-impact locations in Upstate New York.

The primary goal of ON-RAMP is to connect diverse and skilled New Yorkers with careers in dynamic, high-growth advanced manufacturing industries.

With a flagship location in Syracuse, New York State is funding three additional ON-RAMP initiatives. In February, 2025, the Finger Lakes Region (comprised of nine counties in the Greater Rochester, NY, region) was awarded a planning development grant from New York State Empire State Development ("ESD"). Throughout 2025, a coalition led by Monroe Community College and RochesterWorks engaged in a strategic planning effort to develop an FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan that was centered on using the Finger Lakes Workforce Development Center (FWD Center) at Monroe Community College's ("MCC") downtown campus as the region's main training hub for careers in advanced manufacturing, with RochesterWorks being responsible for participant recruitment, career navigation, and supportive services. RochesterWorks recently received an implementation award from ESD through the Office of Strategic Workforce Development to support capital and operating activities associated with the initiative.

The FLX ON-RAMP initiative will serve as a regional hub for advanced manufacturing workforce development in the Finger Lakes region. The initiative intends to:

- Increase access to advanced manufacturing careers;
- Coordinate workforce training and supportive services;
- Build partnerships with employers and training providers;
- Support underrepresented populations entering manufacturing careers;
- Coordinate implementation of startup activities, facilities buildout, staffing, branding, operations, and reporting;
- Establish a new independent FLX ON-RAMP 501(c)(3) organization to ultimately govern and operate the initiative, with RochesterWorks and the MCC FWD Center as primary partners.

The goal is for the new 501(c)(3) to file all necessary paperwork with the New York State Charities Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service by the end of March 2027.

2. Organizational Structure and Mission

FLX ON-RAMP will fulfill its mission as a regional gateway to advanced manufacturing career pathways by assessing job seekers' skills and needs and connecting them with the opportunities and resources they need to succeed.

To do this, FLX ON-RAMP will be governed by an independent 501(c)(3) organization, led by a board of directors with industry, community, and workforce development expertise. At least 50% of the board will be comprised of industry representatives.

RochesterWorks is currently the fiscal sponsor for FLX ON-RAMP until it establishes its independent nonprofit and builds the necessary organizational infrastructure and capacity to implement the Empire State Development grant award. A FLX ON-RAMP advisory board currently exists and will transition some members to the 501(c)(3) board when it is established. The advisory board will collaborate with the project management team (comprised of RochesterWorks and MCC personnel and project consultants) and the selected law firm to ensure all 501(c)(3) startup requirements are met, including drafting and approving the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and meeting the filing requirements for EIN and tax-exempt status promptly.

FLX ON-RAMP will hire a full-time Executive Director and additional staff (initially as employees of RochesterWorks) to collaborate with workforce development partners as well as industry and community representatives to ensure outreach, awareness, and relevant offerings. The FWD Center will be the physical home of FLX ON-RAMP's training programs through a to-be-negotiated space and equipment sharing lease agreement with MCC. The FWD Center will serve as the primary training partner, with additional specialized courses and training supports provided by external partners. RochesterWorks will be co-located on-site beginning in 2027. They will work with FLX ON-RAMP to create recruitment pathways and coordinate social and supportive services for FLX ON-RAMP program participants from training through career success.

3. Scope of Services

The selected law firm will work closely with RochesterWorks leadership, their project management consultants, MCC, Empire State Development, and other stakeholders to support the establishment of the FLX ON-RAMP 501(c)(3) as a New York State nonprofit organization.

Services may include, but are not limited to:

- **Entity formation**: Drafting, reviewing, amending, and ultimately filing the organization's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. RochesterWorks and its project management team, along with the FLX ON-RAMP advisory board, will be consulted and will collaborate to complete all required paperwork.
- **Compliance and registration:** State charitable solicitation registration, state tax exemptions, and initial business licensing.
- **Tax-exempt status:** Prepare and file IRS Form 1023 or Form 1023-EZ (if counsel can document eligibility for the streamlined form) for establishment of 501(c)(3) status.

- **Startup governance consultation:** Provide consultation as requested to the initial board of directors or project management team on required NYS charitable policies to ensure they meet all legal requirements and best practice standards (e.g., conflict of interest policy, whistleblower policy, sexual harassment policy, etc.)
- **Fiscal Sponsorship/Pass through agreement:** Consulting with the FLX ON-RAMP board of directors and RochesterWorks, Inc. staff and leadership and drafting and revising, as needed, a fiscal sponsorship/pass through agreement that outlines the working relationship of the parties and the timeline/conditions needed for a change of status to a fully independent 501(c)(3). These terms and conditions may include direction and/or approval from Empire State Development as the initiative's primary funding source.

4. Contractor Responsibilities, Deliverables, and Desired Qualifications

Contractor Responsibilities

In addition to the contracted services, the selected contractor will be required to:

- Maintain internal procedures that ensure budget control, prompt billing, and quality control, including but not limited to auditing invoices.
- Provide regular status reports as agreed upon to provide timely updates regarding the progress on all projects.

Deliverables

Expected deliverables include:

- Preparing and filing Articles of Incorporation.
- Preparation of bylaws for adoption by the authorized governing body.
- Preparing and filing IRS Form 1023 or Form 1023-EZ (if counsel can document eligibility for the streamlined form) for 501(c)(3) status.
- Preparing and filing state charitable solicitation registration, state tax exemptions, and initial business licensing.
- Obtaining an EIN.
- Post-filing support for up to six months, built into the cost proposal at an hourly rate.
- Reviewing initial organizational policies including but not limited to Conflict of Interest, Whistleblower Policy, Nepotism, and Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.
- Preparing a fiscal sponsorship/ pass though agreement between RochesterWorks, Inc. and FLX ON-RAMP.

Desired Qualifications

The ideal law firm will demonstrate experience in:

- Nonprofit and/or startup launch development, including strong working knowledge of federal and state tax codes governing 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Expertise in drafting bylaws, managing board conflicts of interest, establishing fiduciary duties, and organizing appropriate legal structures.
- Knowledge of state charitable solicitation registration laws, commercial co-ventures, and federal or private grant compliance.
- Employment and labor law, discrimination protections, risk management, and volunteer liability.
- Familiarity with the Finger Lakes nonprofit sector and/or workforce development systems.

RochesterWorks is committed to promoting economic growth through the inclusion and utilization of diverse businesses. We strongly encourage proposals from certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOBs). Each respondent must submit an MWBE/SDVOB Participation Plan identifying its own applicable New York State certifications and each proposed certified subcontractor or supplier. For each participating firm, identify its certification number, proposed scope, dollar amount, percentage of the proposed award, and evidence of its agreement to participate. Separately identify M/WBE and SDVOB participation and distinguish prime-contractor self-performance from subcontracted work and third-party purchases.

Participation credit is subject to ESD verification and applicable counting requirements. The selected contractor's approved commitments will be incorporated into the contract. The contractor must provide monthly participation and payment information, supporting documentation, and advance notice of proposed substitutions or reductions in committed participation.

5. Contract Term, Budgets, Procurement Schedule, and RFP Conditions

Contract Term

The initial contract term is expected to run from December 15, 2026 through September 30, 2027. A separate contract for up to four one-year renewals for ongoing legal services may be released later. It will be based on funding availability, satisfactory contractor performance, and successful negotiation of contract terms. An award does not guarantee a minimum expenditure amount.

Budget

The budget for this project is negotiable. Propose a flat fee by required deliverable, along with 1) filing fees and other disbursements, 2) hourly rates by assigned personnel for authorized additional work, including post-filing support (if needed) for up to six months, and 3) hourly rates for future legal consultation.

RochesterWorks reserves the right to negotiate final scope, deliverables, timeline, and compensation with the selected proposer.

Questions, Clarifications, and Addenda

Questions must be submitted to Jeanette Koncikowski, Project Management Consultant, via email to jeanette@thrivecommunityconsulting.com no later than **Wednesday, October 28, 2026**. Only written responses or addenda issued by RWI are official. Respondents are responsible for reviewing all issued addenda, which become part of this RFP. Responses will be posted at https://rochesterworks.org/request-for-proposals/.

RFP Conditions and Reservations

RWI reserves the right to amend, suspend, reissue, or cancel this RFP; reject any or all proposals; waive minor irregularities; request clarifications, references, demonstrations, or interviews; negotiate with one or more respondents; and make one or multiple awards by population, geography, industry, or service capacity. This RFP does not obligate RWI to award a contract or reimburse proposal preparation costs.

The RFP, issued addenda, the successful proposal, and negotiated contract will form the agreement. Respondents must identify material exceptions to the RFP or anticipated contract terms. Proposals missing material required information will be considered nonresponsive and will not be evaluated.

6. Proposal Requirements

Submit *one proposal* of no more than six narrative pages. The cover page, rate sheet, certifications, references, resumes, or bios are excluded from the narrative page limit.

1. **Organization, contacts, and eligibility.** Provide the organization's legal name, address, telephone number, website, President/CEO, contract manager, and authorized representative empowered to negotiate and bind the organization. Identify office locations and regional service capacity, any subcontractors, and the prime respondent responsible for all performance. Confirm the organization is legally eligible to contract and is not suspended or debarred.
2. **Experience, qualifications, and capacity.** Describe relevant experience, including nonprofit incorporation, work with public workforce programs, manufacturing, professional and business services, etc. Include resumes/bios of key project personnel in addenda.

3. **Approach and implementation.** Describe your proposed services, approach, and timeline of activities.
4. **Budget proposal and pricing.** Detail your flat fee by required deliverable, along with 1) filing fees and other disbursements, 2) hourly rates by assigned personnel for authorized additional work, including post-filing support (if needed) for up to six months, and 3) hourly rates for future general legal consultation.
5. **References and Conflict of Interests.** Provide three references, preferably for other nonprofit clients. Also provide a Conflict of Interest check.
6. **MWBE/SDVOB participation plan.** Identify your own applicable New York State M/WBE and/or SDVOB certifications and those of each proposed certified subcontractor or supplier. For each firm (including your own) with a certification, identify the certification number, proposed scope, dollar amount, percentage of the proposed award, and evidence of its agreement to participate. M/WBE and SDVOB participation should be identified separately. Although RWI's M/WBE and SDVOB goals for this project are 30% and 6%, respectively, points will be awarded for plans utilizing up to 100% participation between the two categories.

7. Evaluation and Award

Proposals will first be reviewed for responsiveness and completeness. Responsive proposals will be evaluated using the criteria below. RWI may verify references, request clarifications, or conduct finalist interviews before award. Awards are subject to approval by the Monroe County/Rochester Workforce Development Board. Grievances related to this procurement must be emailed to Lee Koslow, Director of Workforce System Performance, at Lkoslow@rochesterworks.org with the subject line "*Nonprofit Legal RFP Grievance*" by December 29, 2026, or 14 days after the date of the occurrence of the cause for complaint, whichever is later.

Evaluation criterion	Weight
Relevant experience	**30%**
Project understanding and approach	**20%**
Key personnel, qualifications, and organizational capacity	**20%**
Cost reasonableness and pricing transparency	**15%**
M/WBE and SDVOB participation plan	**15%**

RWI may select multiple contractors based on capacity, proposed services, service quality, and/or price. Final award is subject to successful negotiation and execution of a contract.

The selected consultant must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including M/WBE and SDVOB participation requirements established by Empire State Development.

8. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be received electronically by 12:00 p.m. (noon) Eastern Time on Friday, November 6, 2026.

Submit to: Jeanette Koncikowski, Project Management Consultant, at **jeanette@thrivecommunityconsulting.com**

The email subject line should read: *"Nonprofit Legal Services RFP Response."* Late proposals will not be considered. Ms. Koncikowski, on behalf of RWI, will acknowledge receipt by email.

RochesterWorks, Inc. is committed to equal opportunity in its contracting process. Reasonable accommodations and accessible proposal materials are available upon request.