RochesterWorks

ROCHESTERWORKS, INC.

# Request for Proposal

***Branding, Communications, and Marketing Services for***

***Finger Lakes ON-RAMP (One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships)***

**Issued October 26, 2026**

| Procurement milestone | Date/time |
|---|---|
| **RFP released** | Monday, October 26, 2026 |
| **Questions due** | Monday, November 2, 2026 |
| **Proposals due** | Friday, November 13th, 12:00 p.m. ET |
| **Staff recommendation to the Board** | Tuesday, December 15, 2026 |
| **Anticipated award announcement** | Thursday, December 17, 2026 |
| **Anticipated contract execution** | Monday, January 4, 2027 |
| **Service start** | Monday, January 11, 2027 |

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

## 1. Background, Purpose, and Objectives

### Background

RochesterWorks, Inc. (RWI), a nonprofit organization, is seeking proposals from experienced, qualified contractors to develop branding, communication, and core messaging strategies, and marketing services (including both creative ad campaigns and community outreach) aligned with employer and community needs for the startup and launch of the Finger Lakes One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (“FLX ON-RAMP”) initiative.

Respondents should submit one comprehensive proposal for all services. RWI reserves the right to make one or multiple awards. 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. ON-RAMP's primary goal is to connect diverse, 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, New York, 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.

## Objectives

The primary objective of this award is to launch with a clear identity, strong internal systems, and early awareness among key partners across sectors, including potential students drawn from historically marginalized communities; advanced manufacturing companies and their leadership and talent acquisition teams; and community-based and workforce development organizations. Core messaging, community outreach, and

marketing campaigns must align with overall NYS ON-RAMP initiatives and branding while remaining distinctive enough to achieve significant regional attention.

## 2. Mission, Vision, Market Position, Key Features, and Audience

### Mission:

FLX ON-RAMP will be a regional gateway to advanced manufacturing career pathways by assessing the skills and needs of job seekers and connecting them with opportunities and resources they need for success.

### Vision:

FLX ON-RAMP envisions a region where family-sustaining advanced manufacturing careers are available, attractive, and accessible to every resident.

### Market Position:

FLX ON-RAMP is entering the workforce development field to fill existing gaps by developing accessible career pathways through entry-level positions in advanced manufacturing. FLX ON-RAMP's primary focus will be to open doors to new potential talent pools of workers not yet in advanced manufacturing careers, while also upskilling entry-level workers already employed in the industry.

### Key FLX ON-RAMP Features:

- Focus on Advanced Manufacturing: FLX ON-RAMP is strongly focused on advanced manufacturing, even as training partners, including Finger Lakes Workforce Development Center, have a broader portfolio of offerings across industries.

- Gap-filling Model: FLX ON-RAMP is designed to fill gaps in the advanced manufacturing workforce ecosystem, not to create duplicative or competing offerings, but to catalyze expansion of existing ecosystem strengths.

- Accessible Location: FLX ON-RAMP brings together different training providers into a centralized, accessible, and welcoming location in downtown Rochester.

- Serving Communities that Have Been Marginalized: FLX ON-RAMP serves clients across the region while expanding opportunities for communities and individuals who have faced barriers to training, good-paying jobs, and career pathways.

- Employer-Driven Focus: By collaborating closely with industry, FLX ON-RAMP responds in real time to develop talent with the current and emerging skills advanced manufacturing employers need.

- Leveraging Public Dollars: FLX ON-RAMP focuses on stretching federal and state dollars for greater impact, matching them with private philanthropic funding, and ensuring success beyond training through job retention and career pathways.

### Audiences

FLX ON-RAMP's strength within the advanced manufacturing workforce development landscape will be its focus on generating partnership interest with industry partners and building bridges across diverse cross-sector constituencies. FLX ON-RAMP will connect career-seekers, employers, and workforce development partners, and its marketing efforts must reach each audience with clear messages that convey the value of its unique role and the outcomes its partners and participants can achieve.

For career-seekers, FLX ON-RAMP will expand awareness of advanced manufacturing opportunities and improve the industry's image. Working with partners, it will dispel outdated perceptions of industrial-era factory work and reposition manufacturing as a welcoming, technology-driven career pathway. Messaging will emphasize three core features of the ON-RAMP model: pathways to good jobs and career success, strong employer engagement, and accessible, affordable training. Marketing will also highlight FLX ON-RAMP's supportive services that directly address common barriers—such as cost, transportation, childcare, and educational attainment—by emphasizing pathways to rapid upskilling and reskilling for in-demand jobs.

For employers, FLX ON-RAMP must address perceptions across organizations, from executives to hiring managers and line supervisors. Through ongoing industry engagement, FLX ON-RAMP and its partners will continually refine training offerings to meet industry needs and demonstrate a clear, ongoing value proposition: FLX ON-RAMP is a reliable source of talent, and its credentials are trusted and recognized regionally.

FLX ON-RAMP must also be positioned as a regional asset—not a competitor—to existing workforce development providers, including adult education programs and P–12 Career and Technical Education (CTE). While adult education providers have expanded manufacturing offerings across the region, capacity and equipment vary. FLX ON-RAMP can serve as connective tissue, strengthening referrals and collaboration so partners can focus on their strengths while meeting client needs. As FLX ON-RAMP launches at the FWD Center, it will continue to build relationships that deepen and expand training opportunities regionwide.

## 3. Scope of Services

Building off of FLX ON-RAMP's approved business plan, this scope of services focuses on developing the brand identity and core messaging strategies, as well as community outreach and a marketing plan for FLX ON-RAMP's pre-launch and public launch activities over the next year.

The selected firm(s) will work closely with RochesterWorks leadership and its project management consultants, MCC, Empire State Development, and other stakeholders to 1) develop the organization's public-facing identity and brand that aligns with NYS ON-RAMP's branding guidelines and 2) develop, coordinate, and/or implement all pre- and post-launch communication messages, community outreach, and marketing strategies for FLX ON-RAMP (including a separate budget for ad buys).

Services may include, but are not limited to:

### A. Creation of a Regional Startup Brand Identity that Remains in Alignment with NYS ON-RAMP Branding Guidelines (Parent Brand)

- Complete logo suite (primary, secondary, icon, variations)
- Comprehensive color system (not just primary colors)
- Typography system with clear hierarchy
- Photography and imagery direction
- Brand guidelines document that includes relationship to parent brand with visual consistency rules and differentiation points
- Core collateral templates (letterhead, presentation deck, email signature)

### B. Communications, Marketing, Community Outreach, and Transition Support

#### 1. Design and Development of Core Messaging and Marketing Materials

- Building off the approved Business Plan, strategize and differentiate core messaging to career seekers, employers, and workforce development/community partners.
- Develop campaign materials for community outreach to support the program launch, highlighting FLX ON-RAMP's value proposition to job seekers, such as earning potential and career ladder opportunities in advanced manufacturing (i.e., supported by wage data and examples of career progression).
- Advise on messaging and advertising across digital, print, and public spaces to reach target demographics. Efforts should include a detailed plan with recommendations for which communication channels to use (including, for example, article placement, appearances in traditional media, engagement with local podcasters, and collaboration with trusted community messengers and social media strategy), as well as frequency, goals, and metrics to track. Separate ad buy budget available with client approval for year 1 activities.

### 2. Community Outreach Strategy, Communications Coordination, and Transition Support

- Develop an outreach plan with efforts grounded in trusted institutions, direct engagement, and community-centered media, while strengthening connections between trainers and employers across the region. There should be a clear emphasis on pathways to good jobs and how FLX ON-RAMP can expand opportunity in disinvested neighborhoods.
- Participate in planning launch activities and provide information on related project milestones, deliverables, and implementation progress to project management consultants and stakeholders, as this grant-funded project will require close metric tracking.
- Advise and support the transition of communication strategies as FLX ON-RAMP moves from its initial incubation at RochesterWorks to a standalone nonprofit. This will include advice on transitioning from the core identity, along with planning guidelines and rollout support for the second phase of organizational development, including the internal hiring of a Communications and Media Director, an Industry Relationship Specialist, and a Community Outreach Partnership Director and Recruiter.

## 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.
- Prepare cost schedules and project sheets for expenditures and obtain approval of all expenditures with regard to authorized advertising by submitting preproduction estimates.
- Provide regular status reports as agreed upon to provide timely updates regarding the progress on all projects.
- Provide monthly, quarterly, and annual performance cost analysis.

RochesterWorks and the FLX ON-RAMP Advisory Committee will establish program objectives, provide relevant background and stakeholder input, and review the selected firm(s)' proposed work. The firm(s) should be able to recommend strategies to expand the impact of marketing/public relations campaigns, allowing for the broadest possible exposure to the focus audience within the available budget.

The selected firm(s) must provide creative briefs before each campaign or individual project outlining the goal(s), objectives, audience, strategies, budget, and evaluation format.

The selected firm(s) must demonstrate the ability to plan strategically; integrate, manage, and execute an assortment of marketing projects. Firm(s) must be able to identify, evaluate, recommend, develop, and execute, and/or manage new and emerging technology opportunities.

### Deliverables

Expected deliverables may include:

- **Brand identity, logo suite and visual assets:** Deliver primary logo, secondary marks, sub-marks, and favicons (with specified revision rounds) along with a branding guidebook to include the color palette (defining primary, secondary, and neutral colors with hex, RGB, and CMYK codes) and typography (including selecting and specifying primary and secondary fonts, including licensing guidance).

- **Messaging and value proposition:** Core brand messaging frameworks suitable to each of the cross-sector audiences, taglines, and pillar narratives.

- **Integrated marketing strategy and community outreach plan:** Develop a comprehensive 1-year external communications and stakeholder outreach plan and media strategy for launch, including related core content creation that can be used across channels (i.e., earned media, social media, and paid traditional media) to target key audiences through relevant channels and drive program awareness.

- **Digital and social media:** Support digital asset management, brand awareness, and multimedia/video production workflows through the first year.

## Desired Qualifications

The ideal firm will demonstrate experience in:

- Subbrand identity and public-sector brands
- Nonprofit and/or startup launch development
- Workforce development systems and partnerships
- Economic development and/or advanced manufacturing initiatives
- Familiarity with the Finger Lakes region and markets
- Reaching and engaging underrepresented populations including unemployed or underemployed adults without college degrees, parents, veterans, opportunity youth, women, people of color, and foreign-born residents

RochesterWorks is committed to promoting economic growth through the inclusion and utilization of diverse businesses. We strongly encourage proposals from and teams including certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) 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 January 11, 2027 through December 31, 2027. RochesterWorks may release a separate contract for up to four one-year renewals for future marketing campaigns, based on funding availability, satisfactory contractor performance, and successful negotiation of contract terms. An award does not guarantee a minimum expenditure amount.

### Budgets

RochesterWorks has budgeted $225,000 for professional services for all project deliverables, including brand identity, logo, and visual assets; integrated messaging and marketing strategies; community outreach; and social media assets. There is a separate $250,000 for first-year paid media placements. Respondents must separately identify

proposed media planning and buying fees, commissions, markups, and third-party placement costs. All media expenditures require prior written approval. The allocation does not guarantee expenditure of the full amount.

### Questions, Clarifications, and Addenda

Questions must be submitted to Jeanette Koncikowski at jeanette@thrivecommunityconsulting.com no later than **Monday, November 2, 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, creative samples, and 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 work with public workforce programs, manufacturing, professional and business services, and focus communities. Include resumes/bios of key project personnel in addenda.
3. **Approach and implementation.** Describe your proposed services, approach, and timeline/workplan. Be sure to submit projected deliverables (estimated impressions, clicks, or conversions) and pricing structure (management fees, commission, or net media costs) for ad buys, which will be an optional service with approval by the client.
4. **Budget proposal and pricing.** Detail all expected costs and your fee structure/pricing plan.

5. **References and samples of work.** Provide three references and samples of creative work.
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 "*Branding, Communications, and Marketing Services RFP Grievance*" by December 31, 2026, or 14 days after the date of the occurrence of the cause for complaint, whichever is later.

| Evaluation criterion | Weight |
|---|---|
| Relevant experience | **25%** |
| Project understanding and approach | **20%** |
| Key personnel, qualifications, and organizational capacity | **15%** |
| Creativity | **10%** |
| Cost reasonableness and pricing transparency | **15%** |
| M/WBE and SDVOB participation plan | **15%** |

RWI may select multiple contractors based on target audience, 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 13, 2026.**

**Submit to: Jeanette Koncikowski**
Project Management Consultant for RochesterWorks, Inc.
jeanette@thrivecommunityconsulting.com

The email subject line should read: *"Branding, Communications, and Marketing 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.