RochesterWorks

ROCHESTERWORKS, INC.

Questions and Answers

Branding, Communications, and Marketing Services for
Finger Lakes ON-RAMP
(One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships)

November 4th, 2026

Vendor Questions and RWI Responses

Note that duplicate or similar questions will only be answered once.

Q1. The RFP identifies $225,000 for professional services and a separate $250,000 allocation for first-year paid media placements. Does RochesterWorks have a preferred or anticipated allocation of the $225,000 professional-services budget across brand development, communications/messaging, community outreach, creative/content production, social/digital support, project management, and transition support? Or should respondents recommend the allocation they believe will produce the strongest first-year impact? Can you also confirm that this means Year 1 of this contract is valued at $475,000?

A1. Respondents should recommend the allocation they believe will produce the strongest first-year impact. The total budgeted value of Year 1 of this contract is $225,000 for professional services, including but not limited to branding, communications, community engagement, and marketing. There is a separate $250,000 allocation for first-year paid media placements. RochesterWorks (RWI) reserves the right to make one or multiple awards, per the RFP.

Q2. Please clarify how the stated 30% MWBE and 6% SDVOB goals will be calculated for this procurement. Are percentages calculated against professional-services fees only, the total $225,000 professional-services budget, or the combined professional-services and paid-media spend?

A2. The 30% MWBE and 6% SDVOB goals set forth by Empire State Development are only indexed against products and services that may be procured competitively. Given that it may not be feasible to have both MWBE and SDVOB participation, for the purposes of this RFP, proposals may establish a 30% MWBE participation goal or a 30% SDVOB participation goal or a combined 30% participation of MWBE and SDVOBs.

Q3. What exactly constitutes community outreach? Please clarify the expected scope of "community outreach." Is the selected contractor expected primarily to develop the outreach strategy, messaging, materials, partner toolkit, and measurement framework, or is the contractor also expected to execute direct community engagement such as staffing events, grassroots canvassing, recruiting and managing community ambassadors/trusted messengers, coordinating neighborhood organizations, and conducting in-person outreach?

A3. FLX ON-RAMP is looking for respondents to share their proposed community outreach strategies, including either direct community engagement efforts or subcontracting to neighborhood organizations or trusted ambassadors to conduct outreach. The $225,000 budget for professional services is inclusive of these efforts. Ultimately, FLX ON-RAMP will have backbone community outreach staff that will implement the strategies developed by the consultant.

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Q4. Which community-based organizations, workforce providers, neighborhood groups, faith/community institutions, and trusted messengers are already formal FLX ON-RAMP partners, and which relationships would the selected contractor be expected to develop independently?

A4. There are two core stakeholders involved in FLX ON-RAMP: Monroe Community College (MCC)—more specifically the Finger Lakes Workforce Development (FWD) Center at the MCC Downtown Campus—and RochesterWorks, who are spearheading the effort to coordinate planning, align training priorities, and ensure FLX ON-RAMP meets both regional workforce needs and industry demand. Both institutions have a broad range of cross-sector partners, but FLX ON-RAMP will need to develop independent relationships throughout Rochester and the region. The FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan envisions a broad spectrum of organizations that can provide wraparound training supports for the primary programming offered at the FWD Center. Furthermore, FLX ON-RAMP intends to partner with community-based organizations closely connected to the communities the initiative will serve, primarily populations underrepresented in the workforce. It is not expected that prospective consultants will identify these stakeholders in their proposal, but rather work with the FLX ON-RAMP leadership team to identify the best collective of community stakeholders and advance strategies that activate this network to meet program objectives.

Q5. Can RochesterWorks provide the awarded agency current NYS ON-RAMP parent-brand standards and clarify which brand elements are mandatory versus where the selected firm will have discretion to differentiate FLX ON-RAMP?

A5. Yes, the awarded agency or agencies will have access to the NYS ON-RAMP parent-brand standards, and RWI will clarify which elements are mandatory versus where the selected firm will have discretion to differentiate FLX ON-RAMP. RochesterWorks will also share the FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan with the selected agency to provide further guidance.

Q6. What Year 1 outcomes will RochesterWorks consider the primary measure of success: regional awareness, outreach engagements, inquiries, event participation, training interest, participant leads, applications/intakes, training enrollments/starts, employer engagement, placements, or another set of outcomes?

A6. Expected Year 1 outcomes that RWI will consider a primary measure of success include:

Q1: Create a community profile for the initiative that allows it to stand out from other large-scale economic and workforce development initiatives

Q2: Generate visibility in neighborhoods and schools with high opportunity gaps by positioning FLX ON-RAMP as a clear pathway to advanced manufacturing careers, with an initial focus on zip codes adjacent to the FWD Center.

Q3: Expand outreach through community events and open houses, strengthening relationships with students, families, and community-based organizations.

Q4: Reinforce FLX ON-RAMP's presence in schools and career readiness programs by engaging parents, students, and counselors as trusted messengers.

Q5: Demonstrate employer commitment and participant success through testimonials, building trust in FLX ON-RAMP as a bridge to quality jobs.

Q7. What participant recruitment, CRM/intake, website analytics, and enrollment/trainin data will be available to the selected contractor for campaign attribution and optimization, and what systems currently house those data?

A7. As FLX ON-RAMP is in its pre-launch stages, internal systems have not yet been developed but will be shared with the selected consultant as they are brought into the FLX ON-RAMP operational model. Existing reporting systems and data within MCC and RochesterWorks can help provide insight into existing workforce development program volume and demographics.

Q8. What major launch dates, enrollment/recruitment milestones, events, or state-level ON-RAMP announcements should respondents incorporate into the January–December 2027 work plan?

A8.ON-RAMP is an emerging state-level partnership and, in its pre-launch phase, is ensuring the incoming executive director and staff can establish and refine timelines and milestones to suit their approach and work

plans. As such, the schedule for the coming year is in flux; however, important FLX ON-RAMP events expected to occur in 2027 include:

- Executive Director hiring announced in Q1 2027
- Groundbreaking ceremony for RochesterWorks Career Development Center at FLX ON-RAMP facility is expected in Q2 2027
- FLX ON-RAMP labs ribbon cuttings in Q2-Q3 2027
- Signage and branding reveal in Q2-Q3 2027
- Ribbon cutting of RochesterWorks Career Development Center in Q2-Q3 2027

Q9. How will final decision-making and approvals be structured among RochesterWorks, MCC/FWD Center, FLX ON-RAMP leadership, Empire State Development, and the project management consultant for brand, messaging, creative, and media decisions?

A9. RochesterWorks is the lead agency for FLX ON-RAMP but will collaborate closely with MCC/FWD Center, the FLX ON-RAMP Advisory Committee, and Empire State Development through bimonthly and monthly calls where major project decisions are shared and discussed. Ultimately, it will be RochesterWorks and/or its Project Management Consultants (Make Communities and Thrive Community Consulting) who will be in a working relationship with the awarded agency.

Q10. Could RochesterWorks/FLX ON-RAMP clarify whether there is an existing website or landing page already built for this effort? Where will the paid media be driven to?

A10. This has yet to be determined.

Q11. Are you able to share how many organizations have been invited to bid?

A11. To secure the best possible fit for this contract opportunity, we posted this RFP publicly and distributed it broadly, including to MWBE and SDVOB databases across the Finger Lakes Region (including Rochester) and other areas of Western and Central NY. We also publicized it through the RochesterWorks website, social media, and other broad-scale distribution.

Q12. Is there a target date for the public launch of FLX ON-RAMP at the FWD Center?

A12. Right now, FLX ON-RAMP is expected to launch publicly sometime between Q2 and Q3 2027.

Q13. Is the brand developed under this contract expected to carry over to the independent 501(c)(3), or is a separate identity anticipated at that transition?

A13. The brand will be one and the same for the 501(c)(3).

Q14. Which sections count toward the six-page narrative limit? Specifically, can the organization and contact information appear on the cover page, and do the budget narrative and the MWBE/SDVOB participation plan count toward the six pages?

A14. The organization and contact information may appear on the cover page. The budget narrative is expected to count within the 6-page limit, as will the MWBE and/or SDVOB participation plan. However, fee sheets and certifications themselves will not be counted in the page limit and may be attached as addenda.

Q15. Who will review and approve creative work during the engagement (for example, RochesterWorks leadership, the Advisory Committee, MCC, and ESD), and should we plan for review by NYS ON-RAMP as well?

A15.RochesterWorks is the lead agency for FLX ON-RAMP during the first year post-launch, as FLX ON-RAMP simultaneously works to establish itself as a 501(c)(3). When hired, the FLX ON-RAMP Executive Director will begin their engagement as an employee of RWI. During this Year 1 contract period, RWI leadership (including FLX ON-RAMP's Executive Director once hired) will review and provide final approval for all creative work during the engagement. All creative work must align with ESD's statewide ON-RAMP branding guidelines, which will be shared at the start of the award. The Advisory Committee and critical partners like MCC/FWD Center and ESD will be consulted as needed for feedback.

Q16. For respondents without New York State certification, will a participation plan that commits to certified subcontractors by scope and dollar amount, with firms confirmed before contract execution, be considered responsive, or must certified firms be named in the proposal?

A16. The RFP requires respondents to identify proposed certified subcontractors or suppliers in their participation plan, including certification numbers, proposed scopes, dollar amounts, participation percentages, and evidence of agreement to participate. A general commitment to identify certified firms before contract execution does not satisfy this requirement.

Q17. Given the regional focus of this initiative, will any consideration or preference be given to Rochester-based firms, or will agencies from outside the region be evaluated equally? Would any on-site participation be required from the design team?

A17. Proposals from firms within and outside the region will be evaluated using the same criteria. A Rochester location does not, by itself, confer a preference. However, demonstrated knowledge of the Finger Lakes region, established community relationships, and the ability to engage effectively with local partners and priority populations will be considered in evaluating relevant experience and the proposed approach.

Q18. In Section 6, Proposal Requirements, firms are asked to provide projected deliverables, including estimated impressions, clicks, or conversions. Are you expecting a preliminary media plan as part of the proposal, or would a recommended approach to media planning and buying, along with corresponding budget considerations, be sufficient at this stage?

A18. A detailed preliminary media plan is not required in proposals. A recommended approach to media planning and buying, including proposed channels, budget considerations, and illustrative performance estimates, is sufficient at this stage. These estimates should show an understanding of the task at hand and include key assumptions that will be evaluated as projections, not actual results. The selected contractor will develop the detailed media plan in coordination with RochesterWorks and the project leadership team.

Q19. In Section 7, Evaluation and Award, creativity accounts for 10% of the evaluation criteria. Can you clarify how creativity will be evaluated? For example, will this be assessed through work samples and the proposed approach, or are firms expected to develop original creative concepts as part of their proposal?

A19. Creativity will be assessed through work samples and the proposed approach. Firms are not expected to develop original creative concepts as part of their proposal, given that NYS branding guidelines for ON-RAMP have not yet been shared. 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.

Q20. Would you be open to splitting the deliverables among multiple agencies based on their areas of expertise (e.g., branding)?

A20. Per page 1 of the RFP, comprehensive proposals are expected for all services. RWI reserves the right, however, to negotiate with one or more respondents and make one or multiple awards by population, geography, industry, or service capacity.

Q21. When we lead grant-funded projects, the funder or grantmaker often has specific requirements – quarterly reports, sign-off on final deliverables, etc. How would the funders like to be involved in this project?

A21. As the funder, NYS ESD will be involved in this work in several ways.1) ESD and RWI will coordinate launch milestones with the communications firm and their Project Management Consultants. 2) ESD has established parent brand guidelines that will be shared with the awarded agency to ensure all visual assets are in alignment with their requirements. 2) RWI and their Project Management Consultants (Make Communities and Thrive Community Consulting) are responsible for monthly reporting to NYS ESD. As such, they will ask the selected firm for regular project updates to be included in these reports. 3) RWI must report all MWBE and SDVOB utilization planning and documentation to ESD. We will collect this data regularly from all contractors.

Q22. We know the strategy includes transitioning communication responsibilities to a standalone 501(c)(3) and new internal hires (such as the Communications and Media Director). We'd want to incorporate transition planning. Would you like our team's help leading hiring and/or onboarding?

A22. The selected firm will support the transition to internal hires who will lead communications going forward, including the Communications and Media Director, an Industry Relationship Specialist, and a Community Outreach Partnership Director and Recruiter to build and sustain community-level relationships. RWI, with its Project Management Consultants, will lead the hiring and/or onboarding of these employees; however, the selected firm will help with transition planning, including orienting new hires to the brand, visual assets, key communication and marketing strategies, and engaged outreach partners.

Q23. What do you imagine as the biggest roadblocks to this work?

A23. As a startup initiative, FLX ON-RAMP will require coordination among multiple partners and alignment with statewide branding requirements as programming develops. Respondents should identify any anticipated challenges, assumptions, and proposed approaches to addressing them based on the scope outlined in the RFP.

Q24. What will make you say "we chose the absolute right partner," at the end of the partnership?

A24. Ultimately, the "absolute right partner" will support a successful public launch of FLX ON-RAMP, with memorable, easily identifiable branding and messaging for key stakeholders, including trainees.

Q25. What kind of research and information (if any!) do you already have about your target audiences (ie: the values of adult students drawn from historically marginalized communities, etc.)?

A25. Of the 59,625 un/underemployed workers in the Finger Lakes….

- 60% do not have a college education
- 18% do not have a vehicle
- 17% are attending school
- 10% have children under 5 at home
- 6% have a disability

Of the 4,168 individuals age 25-54 who are out of the labor force and available for work…

- 64% do not have a college education
- 53% live in or near poverty
- 26% have children under 5 at home
- 25% do not have a vehicle
- 11% have a disability

The FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan, including market research and information, will be provided to the selected firm to support their understanding of the target audiences. Consultation with the Project Management Consultants and RWI staff will also be regularly available.

Q26.The RFP calls for wage data and examples of career progression. Will employers or the FWD Center supply those along with alumni stories?

A26. Yes, RWI and its partners will provide the selected firm with wage data and examples of career progression in manufacturing and/or student/alumni stories/testimonials. However, our preferred qualifications for the selected firm include experience in workforce development systems and partnerships, economic development, and/or advanced manufacturing initiatives.

Q27. ESD's announcement names MCC, Finger Lakes Community College, Genesee Community College, and regional workforce boards as partners. Are any employers or community organizations already committed to the launch?

A27. This initiative is intended to serve the nine-county Finger Lakes Economic Development Region, which includes the footprint of other regional workforce partners. Several advanced manufacturing employers and community organizations are engaged in the FLX ON-RAMP Advisory Committee, and many more responded to survey and interview requests to shape the initiative from its earliest stages. FLX ON-RAMP's pre-launch

efforts are intended to set the stage for success for the ON-RAMP organization and incoming staff, rather than predetermining how all partnerships and collaborations will function.

Q28. The RFP says marketing will highlight services that address barriers like cost, transportation, and childcare. How far in advance of the public launch will these services be live? Are any expected to come after?

A28. The selected firm will receive a copy of the FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan and regular advisement from RWI and its Project Management consultants related to launch milestones. Currently, a soft launch of two courses is underway while FLX ON-RAMP transitions to a 501(c)(3), the lab buildout continues, and existing supportive services provided by RWI will be available to support students throughout program ramp-up. Supportive and wraparound services will be available at public launch, but the extent of and delivery system for these services will continue to evolve based on the needs of students and the best practices of supporting agencies.

Q29. Is there a preferred format for the rate sheet and media pricing breakdown?

A29. There is no preferred format. We will leave this to each firm's discretion.

Q30. Our strategic and creative development process is unique because it leverages "co-creation" directly with our clients, meaning decision-makers work with us to ideate, refine, and make decisions in a workshop format. Given there are at least five stakeholder groups, do you feel this co-creation process (which is built to go 50% faster than traditional processes) is truly workable for your client?

A30. We welcome a diversity of approaches to consider. Given this is a start-up initiative, and its leadership team is made up of organizations with existing obligations related to their own programming, we expect the contractor to conduct the bulk of the scope of work outlined in this RFP, in coordination with RochesterWorks.

Q31. Can you describe what is meant and included in the "Outreach Plan" portion of the deliverables?

A31. We would like firms to pitch an outreach plan that best aligns with their messaging strategies. An effective outreach plan will provide a blueprint for engaging with prospective program participants in a manner that educates them about the programming provided by FLX ON-RAMP, the career and income opportunities it provides, and helps create a line of sight between that outreach and enrollment in the program. Outreach methods could include distributing flyers, hosting information tables at community centers, libraries, and neighborhood events, and cross-promoting programs with organizations that serve similar populations. High school guidance counselors and CTE teachers can act as ambassadors, while staff or peer navigators promote FLX ON-RAMP directly in neighborhoods. Messaging should clearly address transportation and childcare barriers and outline available supports and the full pathway from training to sustained employment. Community outreach efforts may also be subcontracted.

Q32. The RFP references the eventual hiring of a Communications and Media Director, Industry Relationship Specialist, and Community Outreach Partnership Director and Recruiter. Is there an anticipated timeline for hiring these positions?

A32. At this time, we expect to hire for these positions after onboarding the Executive Director. We are currently searching for the Executive Director, who is expected to begin with RWI early in the new year. Therefore, these other positions are expected to start as early as Quarter 2 of 2027 and continue through the remainder of the year until the full team is in place.

Q33. Are there existing photo and video assets that can be used for this project (either from RochesterWorks, partners, etc.)?

A33.There are none at this time specific to FLX ON-RAMP.

Q34. What internal marketing resources are available to support the selected firm? For example, will internal staff be responsible for day-to-day activities such as social media management, email communications, website updates, etc., or should the selected firm anticipate managing all responsibilities?

A34. Responsibility for day-to-day implementation of the marketing strategies will fall on FLX ON-RAMP backbone staff.

Q35. Will the consultant be provided with a full list of existing partners/institutions that should be targeted for community outreach?

A35. The awarded firm will be provided with a list of existing partners and institutions. The firm is also expected to conduct its own targeted community outreach, especially in areas in the City of Rochester and Monroe County that are underrepresented in the workforce, most of which lie within a 5-mile radius of the FWD Center/FLX ON-RAMP facilities.

Q36. May an out-of-state prime contractor satisfy the MWBE and SDVOB participation goals through eligible New York State-certified subcontractors? Are there any additional eligibility or documentation requirements we should consider?

A36. Yes, provided the MWBE and SDVOB contractors are certified by the State of New York or are in the process of obtaining certification.

Q37. May a company legally established outside of the U.S. submit as prime contractor and deliver the creative, branding, and digital-marketing components remotely, or is a New York/US legal presence or registration required?

A37. This would be acceptable, provided the firm satisfies all New York State contracting requirements.

Q38. Are there any published payment milestones or advance-payment arrangements for the professional-services portion, or are invoices payable only after completed work?

A38. Payment will be made on a reimbursement basis, and invoices will be subject to Empire State Development approval.

Q39. Section 1 (page 1) asks respondents to submit one comprehensive proposal for all services and notes that RochesterWorks may make one or multiple awards. If RochesterWorks makes multiple awards, how would the work be divided (for example, professional services versus paid media), and who is responsible for coordination between awardees, particularly the handoff of ad creative to media placement? Also, which firm would produce the media plan, and which budget would fund it?

A39. Should RochesterWorks elect to award multiple contracts, multiple scenarios are possible. If the proposed and awarded services are not fully aligned, RochesterWorks would negotiate scope specifics and any necessary cross-firm coordination during contracting.

Q40. Section 5 (Budgets, pages 8 and 9) sets aside a separate $250,000 for first-year paid media placements and asks respondents to separately identify media planning and buying fees, commissions, markups, and third-party placement costs. Section 4 (page 6) and Section 5 (page 9) require preproduction estimates and prior written approval of all media expenditures, and Section 6, item 3 (page 9) describes ad buys as an optional service subject to client approval. To make sure we respond accurately, could you help us understand how these fit together? Specifically: (a) is media planning, including the projections and strategy, funded from the $225,000 professional services budget; (b) which budget pays media buying fees, commissions, and markups, and will the contractor or RochesterWorks pay publishers and platforms directly; and (c) because ad buys are described as optional and the allocation is not guaranteed, if RochesterWorks does not proceed with paid media, are the media planning deliverables still expected under the professional services scope?

A40. Media planning, including projections and strategies, shall be included in the professional services budget. Media buying fees were intended to be included in the $250,000 paid media placement budget, and are expected to be paid for by the contractor on behalf of RochesterWorks. If the contractor does not propose utilizing paid media, they should be prepared to describe how they would execute the strategies outlined in their marketing plan.

Q41. Section 6, item 3 (page 9) asks respondents to submit projected impressions, clicks, or conversions and a pricing structure for ad buys, and Section 3 (page 6) notes the project requires close metric tracking for grant reporting. Is a detailed media plan with projections expected at the proposal stage, or are indicative ranges based on stated assumptions acceptable, with the full media plan developed after award? To size our response appropriately, what level of detail will be scored? If

projections are required, may we base them on the full $250,000 allocation, with the understanding that RochesterWorks may approve a different amount and we would recalculate the projections and use of funds accordingly? Does RochesterWorks also have baseline data or target outcomes (enrollments, placements, applications) against which projections should be measured, and which grant reporting metrics must be built into the channel plan?

A41. A detailed media plan is not required at the proposal stage. Respondents should describe their recommended approach, anticipated media distribution, budget allocation, media buying fee structure, and a reasonable projection for impressions, clicks, or conversions, with key assumptions clearly stated. Evaluation will focus on the rationale, feasibility, cost transparency, and proposed measurement approach, rather than projected impressions or clicks.

Respondents may use the full $250,000 paid media allocation as a planning assumption. RochesterWorks must approve actual expenditures, and the selected contractor will adjust the detailed media plan and projections to reflect the approved budget.

For proposal purposes, respondents are not expected to use an established campaign baseline or specific enrollment, application, or placement targets. Respondents should recommend appropriate measures for awareness, engagement, qualified inquiries, and referrals, explaining how results would be tracked. During project planning, the selected contractor will review available baseline information, program targets, and applicable grant reporting requirements and incorporate them into the final measurement framework.

Q42. What media mix does RochesterWorks expect for the $250,000 (for example, video, static display, transit, audio, print, social), or is the mix left to the respondent to recommend?

A42.We expect proposals to suggest a mix of media that will best meet the objectives outlined in the RFP.

Q43. Section 4 (Deliverables, page 7) expects digital asset management and multimedia/video production workflows through the first year. Does digital asset management mean organizing and handing over finished files, or does it include licensing and hosting a platform? Is ongoing ad creative expected to be funded from the $225,000 professional services budget, and if more creative is needed than the agreed scope, may it be funded from the paid media budget? The amount of ad creative (video, static ads, social content) can scale with the budget set aside for it, so does RochesterWorks have an expected volume, variety, or share of video, or may respondents propose a creative package sized to the available budget, with options at different levels?

A43. Digital asset management means maintaining organized project files and ensuring RochesterWorks and FLX ON-RAMP receive the finished materials, editable files, and any licensing information. We are not requiring a separate platform. If you recommend one, please identify the cost separately.

Ad creative, including video, static ads, and social content, should be covered by the $225,000 professional services budget. The separate $250,000 allocation is for paid media placements. Any additional creative work beyond the agreed scope would need prior approval, including how it would be funded.

We have not set a required number or mix of creative materials. We're looking for respondents to recommend what will work best within the available budget. Please be clear about what is included, how often materials would be updated, and the cost of any optional additions.

Q44. Section 3 (page 5) says the scope builds off the approved business plan. Can the approved FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan be shared with respondents, since the scope builds directly on it?

A44. The approved business plan will be shared with the selected contractor.

Q45. Section 3 (page 5) says the contractor will "develop, coordinate, and/or implement" all pre- and post-launch communications, and the outreach plan on page 6 calls for "direct engagement." Which activities is the contractor expected to carry out (for example, running social media accounts, media relations, community events or meetings), and which will the contractor plan while RochesterWorks or its partners carry them out?

A45. We expect the selected contractor to help carry out the work, as well as develop the strategy. Respondents should describe the activities they would take responsibility for—such as managing social media,

media relations, and community outreach—and identify where RochesterWorks or its partners would need to provide support or take the lead.

RochesterWorks and its partners will provide program information, help make connections, review and approve materials, and handle participant eligibility, enrollment, and services. For community events and meetings, please explain your proposed role in organizing, promoting, and participating in those activities.

We have not prescribed every responsibility at this stage. We're looking for a practical proposal that clearly explains what your team will deliver within the budget and what you would need from us. Final responsibilities will be agreed upon during contracting.

Q46. Section 3 (page 6) calls for advising on and supporting the transition of communication strategies to a standalone nonprofit, including rollout support for three hires. What does transition support involve in practice (scope, duration, and whether it continues beyond December 31, 2027), and what is the expected timeline for forming the 501(c)(3), making the three hires, and launching publicly?

A46. Transition support will include helping the new nonprofit and its staff smoothly take over communications and outreach. This could include handing over materials and accounts, documenting ongoing work, and orienting staff to the brand, messaging, and marketing plan. The contractor is not being asked to recruit or hire the three positions.

The timing of nonprofit formation, staffing, and the public launch is still being finalized. Respondents should explain how they would accommodate a phased transition and identify any scheduling assumptions in their proposals.

For proposal purposes, transition support should fall within the stated contract period. Respondents should not assume work will continue beyond December 31, 2027.

Q47. Also, who will own the ad accounts, tracking pixels, audience data, and creative files after the transition, and do subcontracts and participation commitments transfer to the new entity?

A47. We expect ad accounts, tracking tools, audience data, and creative files to remain under RochesterWorks' control during the startup period and transfer to the new FLX ON-RAMP nonprofit as it takes over. These should be set up to facilitate that handoff.

Subcontracts and MWBE and SDVOB participation commitments should not be assumed to transfer automatically. Any transfer must be documented and receive the required approvals. The transition is not intended to reduce or eliminate agreed participation commitments.

Q48. Section 5 (page 8) sets the initial term from January 11, 2027 through December 31, 2027, and Section 4 (page 7) expects production workflows through the first year. When should the identity and core messaging be final so that ad creative production and paid media can begin, and is all work, including media placement, expected to happen within the January 11 to December 31, 2027 term?

A48. Respondents should explain their individual approaches to identity and core messaging timelines, given the timing of nonprofit formation, staffing, and the public launch, which is still being finalized. Paid media and media placement are expected to happen before the end of the contract term on December 31, 2027.

Q49. Section 5 (RFP Conditions, page 9) asks respondents to identify material exceptions to the RFP or anticipated contract terms. To do that accurately, can RochesterWorks share its draft contract, template, or general standard terms before the deadline, including any requirements that come with the grant funding? Will the contract use RochesterWorks' own template or one required by the funding source? Also, where should exceptions appear in the proposal: within the six-page narrative, or in a separate section that does not count toward the page limit?

A49. RochesterWorks will not be providing a draft contract or template before the proposal deadline. We generally ask the selected contractor to submit its proposed agreement and reserve the right to amend it to meet RochesterWorks' standard conditions and applicable grant requirements. Final terms will be agreed upon during contracting.

Respondents should identify any material exceptions to the requirements stated in the RFP in a separate section labeled “Exceptions,” which will not count toward the six-page narrative limit. Respondents are not expected to identify exceptions to contract terms that have not yet been provided.

Q50. Section 7 (page 10) scores cost reasonableness and pricing transparency at 15%. Is the $225,000 professional services budget (Section 5, page 8) a ceiling or a target, and will a proposal that scales its scope to come in under that amount be scored differently from one that uses the full amount?

A50. The $225,000 professional services budget is a ceiling, not a spending target. Respondents should propose the scope and price they believe will best meet the RFP’s objectives within that amount.

A lower-priced proposal will not automatically receive a higher score, and proposing the full amount will not automatically result in a lower score. We will consider whether costs are clearly explained and reasonable for the services and deliverables offered. Proposals below the ceiling should clearly identify any limits or exclusions and explain how the proposed scope will meet the RFP’s requirements.

Q51. As FLX ON-RAMP transitions from RochesterWorks incubation to a standalone entity, what does the current internal marketing staff look like, and how much content will internal staff produce versus relying on the contractor for end-to-end creation?

- **Internal Social Strategy Expertise: Does the internal team currently have hands-on social media experience, and will the contractor lead all digital and social channel management?**
- **Content Volume Expectations: Are there specific targets for content creation (such as the number of social posts, collateral pieces, or campaign assets per month) during the first year?**
- **Historical Marketing Performance: What marketing channels or outreach methods have been most successful for RochesterWorks or its partners when reaching underrepresented job-seekers and local employers?**

A51. FLX ON-RAMP is still building its internal team. Respondents should plan to provide creative and implementation support during startup, with responsibilities shifting as staff are hired. RochesterWorks and its partners will provide program information, connections, feedback, and approvals. Please clearly identify any content or staff support your approach would require from us.

Internal Social Strategy Expertise: It is anticipated that FLX ON-RAMP staff will have experience managing digital and social channels, but respondents should not assume dedicated complete internal capacity to manage FLX ON-RAMP’s channels. Please describe the management and content support your team would provide and how those responsibilities could transition to permanent ON-RAMP staff. If the contractor proposes paid social media placement, it should facilitate the purchase of those placements.

Content volume: We have not set monthly production targets. Respondents should recommend an appropriate mix and frequency of content within the budget and clearly state what is included.

Past performance: FLX ON-RAMP is a new initiative, so there is no established campaign history specific to the program. Respondents should recommend channels and outreach methods based on their experience reaching the identified audiences. RochesterWorks and its partners will share relevant experience and available performance information during project planning.

Q52. Are there existing brand assets, templates, or past campaigns from RochesterWorks or the Finger Lakes Workforce Development Center that we can build upon for the ON-RAMP initiative?

A52. Yes, and we will share them with the selected contractor.

Q53. Do we envision this as a sub-brand of RochesterWorks or its own entity? (Should they be related visually, or should RochesterWorks be integrated into the name)

A53. FLX ON-RAMP will be a sub-brand of NYS ON-RAMP. It needs to meet the NYS ON-RAMP Brand Guidelines, which will be shared with the awarded agency. RochesterWorks will not be integrated into the name.

Q54. Are there key themes within the brand that would need systems developed for (ex., colors that represent certain phases or initiatives within)

A54. None identified at this time.

Q55. Who will be using the brand guidelines and assets? Will a Canva/Figma/Adobe template integration be needed, or is access to raw files appropriate for use?

A55. The brand guidelines and assets will be used by RochesterWorks staff, future FLX ON-RAMP staff, and partners helping promote the initiative. We would like practical, editable templates that staff can use without needing advanced design skills, along with some initial guidance on how to use them. Please recommend an appropriate format or platform, such as Canva, and identify any licensing costs. Editable source files should also be provided. Raw design files alone would not meet our needs.

Q56. What plans for content and imagery are there (photography and videography), if any, so far?

A56. There are no plans for content and imagery at this point.

Q57. What existing research identifies the target audience (career-seekers and employers) and core problems related to lack of awareness in this industry and the area?

A57. The approved FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan is the starting point for understanding the target audiences, regional workforce needs, and barriers to participation, and was developed through extensive industry and stakeholder engagement. RochesterWorks, MCC, and other partners will also bring employer relationships and experience working with the populations we hope to reach.

The firm selected will build on that foundation and help identify gaps in our understanding, including awareness of advanced manufacturing careers and perceptions that may discourage people from pursuing them.

Q58. Is there existing research to support FLX ON-RAMP's market position? If not, is the organization open to the awarded agency conducting research (within the existing scope) to inform brand identity, messaging, and value proposition?

A58. FLX ON-RAMP's Business Plan reflects substantial planning, research, and input from employers, training providers, and community partners.. We expect the selected agency to build on that work to develop the brand identity, messaging, and value proposition.

We are open to targeted research or audience testing within the existing budget where it addresses a specific gap or helps refine the creative approach. Respondents should explain how any proposed research would complement the work already completed and inform project deliverables.

Q59. Has FLX ON-RAMP identified employers in the advanced manufacturing industry that can help support this initiative? If not, will the awarded agency be responsible for identifying those partners?

A59. Yes, FLX ON-RAMP has identified employers in the advanced manufacturing industry that will help to support this initiative. Such information will be shared with the chosen marketing/communications agency following the contract award.

Q60. We understand the project will support regional workforce development through adult education and employer partnerships, while also strengthening the pipeline through P–12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) support. For the initial launch, will the focus be on adults or on children and teens?

A60. A priority for the initial launch will be on adults (especially residents in the City of Rochester) who are currently unemployed or underemployed. FLX ON-RAMP will deliver an industry-driven training model that helps participants explore advanced manufacturing careers, build foundational skills, and move directly into pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, employment, and credit-bearing pathways. Training will align with the FWD Center's model and provide access to industry-recognized micro-credentials, including NC3, SACA, Amatrol, and OSHA. Participants will receive comprehensive supportive services from outreach through early employment to improve completion, placement, and long-term success. These pathways prepare residents for in-demand jobs in optics, smart manufacturing, robotics, and related fields while supporting career advancement.

While New York State has indicated that ON-RAMP funds are intended to serve the working-age population (18 and above) who have exited the P-12 school system, FLX ON-RAMP will seek to establish partnerships with workforce development programs that serve in-school youth and build opportunities for warm and soft handoffs from P-12 system programming to ON-RAMP programming.

Q61. Who would be considered competitors to this program?

A61. A lasting single-site partnership between FLX ON-RAMP, FWD Center, and RochesterWorks will greatly expand opportunity in the advanced manufacturing sector. The FLX ON-RAMP initiative is envisioned in such a way that it builds upon—rather than duplicates or competes with—the region's existing workforce development infrastructure. This collaboration reflects a shared commitment in the manufacturing industry to alignment, efficiency, and responsiveness to employers.

Q62. Is the project expected to include any brand strategy services (such as positioning, mission, purpose/values, etc)?

A62. The Business Plan already establishes FLX ON-RAMP's mission, vision, and market position. We expect the selected firm to build on that foundation rather than develop a new organizational strategy. Brand strategy services should focus on translating that direction into a clear identity, messaging, and value proposition for our audiences. Recommendations to refine how we communicate those elements are welcome.

Q63. Is media placement for the campaign expected to be managed by the chosen vendor as part of this scope, or will the RochesterWorks/ON-RAMP team manage media buys, targeting, and ad management?

A63. For at least Year 1, the media placement for the campaign is expected to be managed by the chosen vendor in conversation/collaboration with the Rochester Works/ON-RAMP team.

Q64. With respect to the Digital and Social Media deliverables, is the selected agency expected to provide a full year of post-ready social content as part of this budget?

A64. We expect the budget to include ready-to-use social content and ongoing support during the contract period, but we are not asking for a full year of content to be produced upfront. Respondents should recommend a realistic content schedule and clearly identify the volume, formats, and account management included in their proposal, along with any support needed from internal staff. Content should be developed and updated as programming and launch plans take shape.

Q65. What are the most important qualities you are looking for in a partner for this initiative?

A65. The ideal firm will demonstrate experience in subbrand identity and public-sector brands, nonprofit and/or startup launch development, and workforce development systems and partnerships. Knowledge of economic development and/or advanced manufacturing initiatives is also highly desired, as is familiarity with the Finger Lakes region and markets. They will also ideally have a demonstrated ability to reach and engage 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 (MWBEs) 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.

Q66. Is the MWBE/SDVOB participation plan included in the six narrative pages?

A66. Yes, a participation plan for MWBE/SDVOB should be included in the six-page narrative. Certifications, however, can be attached in addenda.

Q67. What launch milestones, in-person engagement, language access and original photo/video production should be included in the base scope?

A67. We have not set specific requirements for these items. Respondents should recommend what to include in the base scope based on the RFP's objectives and available budget. Please clearly identify proposed milestones, in-person activities, language access support, and original photo/video production, along with any assumptions or separately priced options.

Q68. Should the budget cover January 11–December 31, 2027 with partial-January pricing?

A68. Yes, the estimated budget should run January 11-December 31, 2027, although the actual award date may vary.

Q69. Will there be an opportunity for shortlisted agencies to engage directly with program leadership to better understand strategic priorities, operational readiness, and implementation expectations before finalizing the scope of work?

A69. Shortlisted agencies will have an opportunity to interview with RWI and its Project Management team in order to better understand strategic priorities. The awarded agency will have access to NYS Parent Brand Guidelines as well as the FLX ON-RAMP Business Plan. Regular consultation with RWI staff and Project Management consultants will help finalize the scope of work as the project's implementation timeline becomes clearer.

Q70. We're a two-firm team submitting one proposal: one firm leading brand identity and one leading marketing strategy and outreach. May two firms submit jointly as co-respondents, or must one firm be named prime with the other as a subcontractor?

A70. RochesterWorks will award one contract pursuant to this RFP. Therefore, if more than one firm wishes to submit a joint proposal, they must identify a prime contractor and any proposed subcontractors.

Q71. Is FLX ON-RAMP the final approved public-facing name, or should vendors include naming exploration within the proposed scope?

A71. FLX ON-RAMP is the public-facing name.

Q72. Beyond alignment with the NYS ON-RAMP parent brand, are there required partner logos, funding acknowledgments, or co-branding rules? Will Empire State Development or another state-level entity need to approve the identity?

A72. Partner logos, funding acknowledgments, and co-branding rules may all be applicable and will be discussed with the awarded agency. NYS ON-RAMP Parent Brand Guidelines will need to be followed and will be shared with the awarded agency.

Q73. The RFP identifies three primary audiences: career seekers, advanced manufacturing employers, and workforce development/community partners. Is there an established priority among these audiences, or should respondents recommend how the paid media budget is allocated based on their assessment of campaign objectives?

A73. We expect respondents to recommend how the paid media budget is to be allocated between the three primary audiences identified in the RFP: career seekers, employers, and workforce development/community partners. Any such recommendations in a proposal are subject to the approval of RochesterWorks.

Q74. Will RWI provide forms for the MWBE/SDVOB Participation Plan? Is a signed letter of intent acceptable as evidence of a subcontractor's agreement to participate?

A74. Respondents should outline their MWBE and SDVOB participation plan as they see fit within their proposal. A signed letter of intent would be acceptable as evidence of a subcontractor’s plan to participate. However, for each firm (including your own) with a certification, you must still identify the certification number, proposed scope, dollar amount, percentage of the proposed award, and evidence of its agreement to participate. MWBE and SDVOB participation should be identified separately. Although RWI’s MWBE 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.

Q75. Could we include example media plans and media dashboards in the Appendix so as not to use the 6 Narrative pages?

A75. Yes, this is acceptable.

Q76. Are there existing templates, systems, platforms, or reporting formats that the selected contractor will be required to use for budget management, expenditure tracking and approvals, invoice auditing, project status reporting, and monthly, quarterly, and annual performance and cost analysis? Or will the contractor have the flexibility to utilize its own established processes and reporting tools, subject to RochesterWorks’ approval?

A76. The selected contractor may use its own established processes and reporting tools, subject to RochesterWorks’ approval. We are not requiring a particular platform or template at the proposal stage.

Reports must clearly show expenditures, progress, and results, with supporting documentation sufficient to meet RochesterWorks’ financial and grant reporting requirements. Final formats, reporting schedules, and approval procedures will be agreed upon during contracting and project startup. This is subject to change, pending future direction from the grantor.

Q77. How must the brand relate to the MCC/FWD Center brand at the shared downtown location?

A77. There is no requirement for the FLX ON-RAMP brand to relate to the MCC/FWD Center brand at the shared downtown location. Requirements for the brand are related to the parent NYS ON-RAMP brand. These guidelines will be shared upon award.

Q78. Does anything exist already, such as a placeholder logo, domain, or social handles?

A78. No, not currently.

Q79. The deliverables mention "specified revision rounds." Should respondents propose the number?

A79. Yes, each respondent should identify their preferred number of revision rounds for their budget allocations.

Q80. When will finalist interviews take place, and when will answers to these questions be posted?

A80. Finalist interviews are expected to take place the second week of December. Answers to these questions are expected to be posted by the close of business on 11/4/26.