

Recompete Strategy Development Proposal

Rochester, NY lies within a fairly successful labor market within Monroe County, however, our residents lack access to good jobs in the broader region, creating a prime age employment rate gap of 7.2 and making our city eligible for EDA’s Recompete funding opportunity. Employment issues in Rochester indicate underlying issues that necessitate a comprehensive, systems-based approach to resolution. Our coalition, led by RochesterWorks, Inc., will seek to address these issues and decrease the prime age employment gap (PAEG) while increasing access to well-paying, good-quality jobs for our city’s residents.

I. REGIONAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT, ASSETS, AND POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

A. Regional Conditions. The past 75 years have seen companies and skilled workers move out of the city of Rochester and into the surrounding suburbs. The large manufacturing sector once present in the city, including companies such as Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch & Lomb, has been largely replaced by the services sector, which includes local hospital systems (University of Rochester Medical Center and Rochester Regional Healthcare) and Wegmans Food Markets. From 1970 to 2020, the population of Rochester has decreased from 295,750 to 211,328 (28.5%), meanwhile, the population of surrounding Monroe County has increased from 711,917 to 759,443 (6.7%) during the same time period. Data also shows that the prime-age Rochester city population has become more diverse over the past couple of decades. In 2000, the White population, ages 25–54, was nearly half (49.7%) of the total city population. Today that White population is down to 41.5% of the city’s total. As the prime-age White city population shrunk by 10,595, the number of prime-age Hispanic or Latino residents grew by 5,323.¹ Table 1 shows the current Employment Rate, ages 16–64, in Rochester by race, ethnicity, and gender. This is the only age group for which we have reliable data by race, ethnicity, and gender in Rochester.

Table 1: Rochester Employment Rates, ages 16–64, by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

Gender	Black	Hispanic or Latino	White	All
Female	59.9%	54.5%	72.4%	64.1%
Male	54.6%	57.6%	71.3%	62.6%
Total Unemployed + Not in Labor Force	21,848	11,143	16,569	52,911

Issues with the PAEG in Rochester are mirrored in the changes in median income over the last 20 or so years. The real median household income (in 2021 dollars) decreased from \$43,397 in 2000 to \$35,193 in 2010. The Great Recession was likely a major contributor to this decrease. Median incomes have steadily increased since 2010 but have not fully recovered. In 2021, the median household income in Rochester was \$23,977 lower than in Monroe County. The poverty rate of Rochester is 29.3%, significantly higher than Monroe County (13.3%) and the national average (11.5%).²

Drawing on the knowledge of our coalition partners and other stakeholders with local expertise, we have identified 6 major issues affecting the PAEG and access to well-paying jobs in Rochester: Disconnected services; transportation; skills and education level; job readiness; career awareness; and, lack of well-paying jobs.

¹https://data.census.gov/table?t=Race+and+Ethnicity&g=050XX00US36055_160XX00US3663000&y=2021&tid=ACSDT5Y2021.B01001H

²<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/rochestercitynewyork,US/PST045222>

B. Assets and Potential Interventions.

The full listing of Rochester Recompete coalition partners can be found in Section III of this proposal.

Disconnected Services: A Systems Integration Project began in 2017 to directly address issues around disconnected services uncovered through the 2015 IBM Smarter Cities Challenge. The public-facing online iteration of the Systems Integration Project, MyWayfinder, began beta testing in April 2022 and is administered by Recompete coalition member TogetherNow. The MyWayfinder website is itself an important asset. Funding has already been secured for both the platform and 4 Neighborhood Navigation Centers. Recompete funding will help double the number of navigators in key city neighborhoods. The City of Rochester operates 10 R-Centers (Rochester Community Centers) that provide access to the city neighborhoods with the lowest prime-age employment rates and may be used as a base for outreach and programming.

Transportation: The Recompete strategy for overcoming transportation issues for City of Rochester residents will be two-fold: ensuring workers have consistent access to a vehicle as well as the means to maintain the costs of having a valid driver's license and maintaining a vehicle. We will use coalition partner Monroe Community College's successful emergency fund program as a model to provide point-of-need funds for vehicle maintenance, payment of fines, insurance costs, etc. Coalition partner, Unions and Businesses United in Construction (UNiCON) has begun discussions with private sector dealerships in the Rochester area to provide a fleet of vehicles for Rochester workers.

Career Awareness, Job Readiness, and Stipends: We will work with our employer coalition members and other select Rochester-area employers to conduct a needs assessment to come to a comprehensive understanding of the competencies they are looking for in their employees and where additional training can be provided to level up workers' skills. Information from this needs assessment will be used to tailor specific worker-centered strategies that focus on skills training and pre-apprenticeship opportunities. To ensure the skills of our residents are in alignment with what companies are looking for in their workers, we will expand upon existing training opportunities and create new training with the help of our coalition members and other employer stakeholders. Our residents have valuable lived experiences that they bring to potential careers yet may not have had the funds to pay or awareness of available training programs that can level up their essential skills, such as self-motivation, communication skills, problem-solving/critical thinking, timeliness/attendance, and attention to detail. MCC's Finger Lakes Workforce Development (FWD) Center is located in downtown Rochester in a space currently under-utilized and can be used for newly created essential skills training sessions.

We will provide stipends to offset the costs incurred in attending training programs; stipends such as these have been found to drive better outcomes for participants. We will also provide financial literacy sessions for any Recompete stipend recipient; we will use the Bridges to Success program provided through the United Way of Rochester as a model. The Rochester Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) has been working with RochesterWorks to receive referrals from all newly enrolled participants. FEC will be central to our financial literacy counseling offerings.

Training and Well-Paying Jobs: Advanced Manufacturing and Skilled Trades are two local industry sectors with a combination of good wages and low educational requirements for entry. Our coalition will leverage existing, effective training programs in our two key industry sectors, scaling them where possible, creating new programs where needed, leveraging existing supportive services for program participants, and using grant funds to fill gaps in supportive service, with the

guidance of MyWayfinder navigators. We will focus on plugging holes in existing career pathways, including pre-apprenticeship programs and providing career pathways through supervisor training programs for existing employees. We will also work with companies to help them identify ways in which they can recruit well-trained employees through incentives such as higher pay and specific benefits such as flexible work hours.

II. POTENTIAL OF PROPOSED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Our Strategy Development activities will build capacity for interventions that will help reduce the prime-age employment gap and increase the employment rate of prime-age Black and Hispanic or Latino residents. Strategy Development activities will be led by the Recompete Plan Coordinator and Community Outreach Specialist, under the supervision of RochesterWorks Technical Assistance and Training Manager, Lee Koslow.

The Recompete Plan Coordinator will play a pivotal role in coordinating and facilitating the implementation of workforce development plans in Rochester, NY. Specifically, the Recompete Plan Coordinator will:

- Convene meetings with coalition partners and other stakeholders quarterly to develop detailed implementation plans for strategies designed to reduce the PAEG and increase access to good jobs for residents in the City of Rochester. For each strategy, the RCP will secure commitments from coalition partners and additional stakeholders, including employers, funders, training providers, and community-based organizations to ensure the resources necessary to achieve our desired outcomes.

During the Recompete Plan implementation period, the Coordinator will:

- Oversee the expansion of the human-centered MyWayfinder navigator network and the training of new navigators by coalition member TogetherNow;
- Coordinate creation of emergency fund and vehicle purchase program for city residents and stipend program for participants of training programs
- Facilitate Rochester-area employer needs assessment and work with coalition members and other stakeholders to prioritize the development of specific essential skills, and job-specific training such as pre-apprenticeship programs, and supervisor training programs
- Work with employers to identify ways to incentivize and recruit well-trained employees

The Community Outreach Specialist will engage prospective adult workers and program participants, and the community organizations that represent them to incorporate the community's voice into the project plan and implementation plan. Specifically, the Community Outreach Specialist will complete the following activities over the 24-month Recompete Strategy Development time period:

- Convene monthly stakeholder sessions located at various sites throughout the City of Rochester where food and water will be provided to encourage participation by the public. These meetings will include prototyping sessions using the human-centered design processes currently being used by coalition partner RMAPI.
- Coordinate with MyWayfinder Navigators, Recompete Plan Coordinator, coalition partners, and other stakeholders to ensure community feedback is fully embedded into strategy development activities

III. ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

RochesterWorks, Inc. (RWI) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation and provides a pathway to a skilled and sustainable workforce in Rochester, NY. We provide the staff to the Monroe

County/Rochester Workforce Development Board, act as fiscal agent to the County of Monroe for the administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other workforce funding, provide WIOA and related career, training, and business services. As a research and planning organization, RWI takes the lead in providing labor market information to our workforce partners, businesses, and job seekers in Rochester. We also have experience managing large projects with multiple subrecipients and contractors. For example, during our most recently completed program year, we budgeted \$1.4 million for direct services to youth, provided by 10 different subrecipient partner organizations. On a larger scale, between 2014 and 2019, RWI was the lead agency for a \$5.2 million USDOL grant under which we contracted with all three community colleges in our region as subrecipients. The grant served over 1,000 participants in three key industry sectors.

Recently, RWI has secured an \$862,000 state grant in partnership with the Young Adult Manufacturing Training and Employment Program (YAMTEP) to provide basic manufacturing skills and job readiness training to 270 individuals, most of whom will be Rochester residents. We have secured an additional \$900,000 in local government funding to support our employment programs addressing substance use disorders and to increase resources for our business services grants. Additionally, we have received several hundred thousand dollars in funding to address gaps in services to vulnerable populations from two private foundations serving our region.

RWI occupies a central role in Rochester's workforce development system. We meet quarterly with more than a dozen providers of workforce development services, including state and local government agencies, our local community college, local education agencies, and community-based organizations. We staff the local workforce development board, whose membership includes 19 individuals with optimal decision-making authority at different local businesses and business associations. Most of our business members make use of RWI's business services, which included 1,047 unique employer engagements, 1,468 jobs posted, 250 recruitment events, 21 training contracts, and 120 referrals to partner business services in the most recently completed program year.

Made possible through our years in workforce development in the Rochester area, we have created a coalition of diverse organizations with the experience and expertise to work effectively with our underserved communities and make a lasting impact on local workforce development efforts.

The City of Rochester and the **County of Monroe** will aid in planning Recompete projects, identifying service gaps, and coordinating existing workforce development efforts.

TogetherNow is the team of community advocates, change management experts, software engineers, and data specialists who launched MyWayfinder and will be central in formulating and implementing Recompete strategies.

The Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce will aid in convening local businesses and will contribute expertise to training curricula.

Monroe Community College will offer space in their new Finger Lakes Workforce Development Center for Recompete-related training and will provide expertise in creating training programs.

PathStone Corporation is a not-for-profit organization with a mission of building family and individual self-sufficiency by strengthening farmworker, rural, and urban communities

The SUNY Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (REOC) is one of 10 such centers in New York State and delivers comprehensive adult-focused workforce development programs while providing wraparound supportive services. REOC will incorporate all programming, services, and expertise into essential skills and job readiness curricula.

Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) is a multi-sector community collaborative that represents historically underserved populations with a goal to improve quality of life by reducing poverty and increasing self-sufficiency. As a coalition member, RMAPI is in a unique position to leverage the work of our Employment Working Group to improve the conditions that lead to Rochester residents securing good jobs.

Unions and Businesses United in Construction (UNiCON) represents a wide range of employers, labor unions, and engineering firms in the skilled trades industry sector and will aid in convening relevant stakeholders, incorporate wraparound services into program models, and contribute to essential skills and job training curricula.

IV: EFFICIENT AND APPROPRIATE PROJECT BUDGET

The period of performance for the Rochester Recompete Strategy project will be 24 months. **Personnel.** Funding will support the 1.0 FTE Recompete Plan Coordinator (to be hired) and 1.0 FTE Community Outreach Specialist (to be hired). The RWI Technical Assistance and Training Manager, Lee Koslow, will directly supervise the Recompete Plan Coordinator and Community Outreach Specialist and will oversee project activities (0.05 FTE). IT staff will support all technology needs of Recompete project staff, including computing devices, telephone and internet, software, and data security (0.02 FTE). Total personnel costs are \$286,455.92.

Fringe Benefits. Fringe costs related to allocable project personnel costs are \$83,072.22.

Travel. Travel for the Recompete Plan Coordinator to attend local meetings and for the Community Outreach Specialist to conduct outreach and attend local meetings will total \$4,585.

Supplies. The Computers for the Recompete Plan Coordinator and Community Outreach Specialist will be purchased (\$4,000 total) as well as mobile phones (\$2,000 total). Supplies for public outreach packages will be purchased, consisting of a brochure, pen, notepad, and refrigerator magnet with a printed call to action (\$3,225). Food and water for community engagement meetings will be purchased; we estimate a total of 24 meetings consisting of 20 attendees, \$3,600. The total cost of supplies is \$12,825.

Contractual. Finance and administration contracts for audit, payroll, general liability insurance, and HR consultant fees allocable to project staff are \$12,890. Internet service and technology support for phones, servers, and web hosting, allocable to project staff is \$11,746. The total for contractual services is \$24,636.

Other. Other expenses include office space costs allocable to all staff included in the Strategy Development budget staffing plan (\$41,071). Postage for 500 mailings to stakeholders will total \$330. Other costs total is \$41,401.

Rochester Works, Inc. is requesting a total of \$452,975.14 from the EDA for our Recompete Strategy Development project.