

FORGE CITY WORKS

Request for Proposals

*Executive Search Consulting Services
Search for the Next Executive Director*

Issued By	Forge City Works
Issue Date	April 6, 2026
Due Date	May 8, 2026
Proposal Contact	Luz Conde, HR Manager luz@forgecityworks.org

INTRODUCTION

Forge City Works invites proposals from qualified consultants or executive search firms to partner with our Board of Directors in the search for our next Executive Director.

We are seeking a search partner who understands nonprofit leadership and can help us recruit a leader for a role that is both compelling and demanding. Forge City Works sits at the intersection of workforce development, food access, hospitality, social enterprise, fundraising, community partnership, and organizational leadership. The next Executive Director will need to lead across all of that with clarity, discipline, vision, and heart.

We are looking for a firm that can run a strong, equitable, well-managed search process and help us define the leadership profile for this next season.

ABOUT FORGE CITY WORKS

Forge City Works is a Hartford-based nonprofit that provides job training and food access through sustainable social enterprises, empowering people to improve their lives. Food is the tool we use to empower.

Our work includes culinary and hospitality job training, Fire by Forge Restaurant & Café, Fire by Forge Catering, and The Grocery on Broad. Forge City Works traces its roots to 2007 and has deep ties to Hartford and the Frog Hollow neighborhood. Our annual operating budget is approximately \$6.5 million with approximately 80 people on payroll.

SEARCH CONTEXT

What makes Forge City Works interesting also makes this role challenging. We are mission-driven and highly operational. We are relational and performance-oriented. We run programs, but we also run businesses. We need a leader who can build trust, lead teams, strengthen systems, represent the organization well, raise resources, and keep mission and execution connected.

Forge City Works is in an important season of transition and opportunity. The Board is preparing for leadership change while also continuing to strengthen the organization's long-term capacity, culture, and operations.

As part of this work, Forge City Works is already undertaking a full organizational, operational, and cultural assessment. The selected consultant or firm will receive access to that assessment and will be expected to help synthesize key findings as they relate to the Executive Director role, leadership profile, and search strategy.

We view this as more than a replacement hire. It is an opportunity to identify the right leader for the next chapter of Forge City Works.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Lead and manage the full executive search process from kickoff through finalist selection.
- Work with the Board Search Committee and key stakeholders to understand Forge City Works, the leadership context, and the needs of the role.
- Review and help synthesize the organizational, operational, and cultural assessment as it relates to the Executive Director profile and search strategy.

- Help develop the position profile, candidate prospectus, and related recruitment materials.
- Provide compensation benchmarking and market guidance for the role.
- Develop and execute a proactive recruitment strategy designed to attract a strong and diverse pool of candidates.
- Conduct outreach, sourcing, screening, and initial vetting of candidates.
- Facilitate regular communication with the Search Committee, including progress updates and candidate pipeline reports.
- Help design and facilitate interview stages, candidate evaluation tools, and selection processes.
- Conduct or coordinate reference checks and background checks for finalists.
- Support offer-stage consultation and transition planning.
- Provide limited onboarding or transition support for the selected candidate and Board, as proposed.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Demonstrated success conducting Executive Director, CEO, or equivalent senior-level nonprofit searches.
- Experience with mission-driven organizations that are complex, community-facing, and operationally demanding.
- Experience in one or more of the following areas: workforce development, community development, food systems, hospitality, human services, social enterprise, or multi-revenue-stream nonprofits.
- A clear and credible approach to equitable and inclusive recruitment.
- A strong track record of developing diverse candidate pools.
- Strong project management, communication, and facilitation skills.
- Regional or New England search experience preferred, with the ability to cast a broader search if needed.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Firm Overview** Brief description of your firm or practice, including location, size, and relevant experience.
- 2. Relevant Search Experience** Examples of similar nonprofit executive searches, especially those involving complex organizations, leadership transitions, or community-based nonprofits.
- 3. Proposed Approach** Description of how you would manage this search, including kickoff, stakeholder engagement, use of the organizational assessment, recruitment strategy, screening, interviews, references, background checks, and transition support.
- 4. Equity and Inclusion** Description of how you build equitable and inclusive practices into the search process and candidate outreach strategy.
- 5. Search Team** Names, titles, and bios of the people who would directly work on this engagement.

- 6. Timeline** Proposed timeline for the work, based on the schedule below.
- 7. Fees** Clear fee proposal, including payment schedule, reimbursable expenses, and any optional services. Respondents should clearly state whether their proposed fee is fixed or percentage-based and identify any advertising, background check, travel, or other costs not included in the base fee.
- 8. Guarantee** Description of any replacement guarantee or related policy.
- 9. References** At least three client references for comparable searches.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Relevant experience and track record.
- Understanding of Forge City Works and the nature of this role.
- Strength of methodology and project management approach.
- Commitment to equitable and inclusive search practices.
- Qualifications of the proposed team.
- Value and clarity of fee structure.
- Client references.

Forge City Works may invite selected firms to participate in interviews as part of the review process.

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

RFP Issued	April 6, 2026
Deadline for Questions	April 29, 2026
Responses to Questions Shared	May 1, 2026
Proposals Due	May 8, 2026
Finalist Interviews with Firms	May 26 - June 5, 2026
Firm Selected	By June 10, 2026
Search Launch / Kickoff	Late June 2026
Organizational Assessment Available	To be confirmed with selected firm

Target Search Window: Summer and Fall 2026, with the goal of identifying the next Executive Director by late Fall 2026 and supporting a start date in late Fall 2026 or early 2027, depending on candidate availability and transition planning.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit proposals electronically in PDF format to:

Luz Conde

HR Manager

Forge City Works

227 Lawrence Street, 2nd Floor

Hartford, CT 06106

luz@forgecityworks.org

Subject line: Executive Search Proposal – Forge City Works

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Forge City Works reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, request additional information, waive minor irregularities, and select the proposal that best serves the interests of the organization.

All respondents should treat this process and any non-public information shared during it as confidential.

FINAL NOTE

We are not looking for a firm that will simply post a role and send us resumes.

We are looking for a partner who can help us tell the story of Forge City Works well, understand the complexity of this leadership role, and guide a search process that is strategic, relational, equitable, and disciplined.

The next Executive Director of Forge City Works will lead an organization with a strong mission, real community impact, visible social enterprises, and meaningful operational complexity. We want a search partner who understands that and is ready to help us find the right leader for what comes next.