Thames Valley Council
for Community Action, Inc.
Partnering for Prosperous Communities Since 1965

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
FOR GENERAL LEGAL SERVICES

Issuing Organization: Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA)
Date of Issue: Tuesday, November 24, 2026
Proposal Due Date: Monday, December 21, 2026 at 12:00 PM (Noon) ET

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

The Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) is a non-profit Community Action Agency dedicated to fighting poverty and improving the quality of life for individuals and families in eastern Connecticut. We administer various social service programs, including Meals on Wheels, Head Start, Family Bridge, and more. TVCCA is soliciting proposals from qualified law firms or individual attorneys to serve as **Tribal Employment Counsel** and provide legal services in the area of employment law on tribal lands on an as-needed basis. TVCCA contracts separately with an attorney specializing in labor and employment law that represents the agency in cases originating outside tribal lands, but who is not eligible to represent TVCCA in front of the Mashantucket Employment Rights Office (MERO) and related agencies; TVCCA's Tribal Employment Counsel will be responsible narrowly for cases originating on tribal lands. Respondents to this RFP MUST specialize in labor and employment law, but do not necessarily need to have prior experience representing clients in front of MERO. We are seeking a partner who understands the unique constraints and regulatory environment of a non-profit organization dependent on state and federal funding on tribal lands.

1.2 Purpose of RFP

The objective of this RFP is to select a legal firm that provides high-quality legal advice, is readily accessible and responsive, and offers a fee structure that reflects a commitment to and understanding of the non-profit sector.

1.3 Timeline

- **RFP Issued:** Tuesday, November 24, 2026
- **Deadline for Questions:** Thursday, December 10, 2026
- **Responses to Questions Posted:** Monday, December 14, 2026
- **Proposals Due:** Monday, December 21, 2026
- **Interviews (if necessary):** January 2026
- **Selection Notification:** February 2026
- **Contract Start Date:** March 1, 2026 (at latest)

2. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected firm will act as Tribal Employment Council to TVCCA and may be asked to perform the following services:

2.1 Tribal Employment Counsel

- Advise Executive Management, Human Resources, and the Board of Trustees on federal, state, and tribal employment laws applicable to non-profit programs operating on Tribal lands or employing Tribal members.
- Provide guidance on the applicability of federal labor statutes (e.g., FLSA, FMLA, Title VII, ADA, OSHA, NLRA) and the requirements and processes of agencies like the Mashantucket Employment Rights Office (MERO) versus Tribal sovereignty, Tribal Employment Rights Ordinances (TERO), and Tribal preference policies.
- Assist in navigating jurisdictional nuances between Connecticut state employment mandates and Tribal laws for TVCCA staff assigned to on-reservation facilities (such as early childhood education and community service centers).

2.2 Workforce Transitions, Policies, and Employee Relations

- Advise on legal and operational issues related to workforce transfers, staff onboarding, and program management transitions involving Tribal entities.
- Review, draft, and update employee handbooks, job descriptions, employment agreements, and internal HR policies to ensure alignment with applicable Tribal ordinances, non-profit standards, and federal grant requirements.
- Provide counsel on employee discipline, accommodations, leave administration, wage-and-hour compliance, and termination matters involving staff working within Tribal jurisdictions.

2.3 Tribal Agreements, Contracts, and Grant Compliance

- Review, draft, and negotiate employment-related provisions within contracts, leases, sub-contracts, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Tribal governments and Tribal enterprises.
- Advise on workforce and labor compliance requirements tied to federal, state, and Tribal grant funding (including OMB Uniform Guidance and Head Start/Early Head Start standards, where applicable).

2.4 Dispute Resolution & Risk Management

- Advise on potential employment litigation risks, administrative claims, and liability issues arising in Tribal courts, Tribal administrative bodies including MERO, or state/federal agencies.
- Represent TVCCA in employment-related disputes, mediations, or administrative proceedings before Tribal tribunals or regulatory agencies (e.g. MERO), as authorized.
- Coordinate with TVCCA's Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI) and general liability carriers regarding employment claims involving Tribal jurisdictions.

2.5 Miscellaneous

- Provide other specialized Tribal employment law advice, training for HR/management, and representation as requested.

3. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Please ensure your proposal addresses the following sections in order:

3.1 Firm Profile & Qualifications

- Provide a brief history of your firm.
- Identify the specific attorney(s) who will be primarily responsible for this account ("Lead Counsel") and their bios.
- Describe your experience specifically with **Community Action Agencies (CAAs)** or similar human service non-profits or public agencies.

3.2 Approach to Services & Responsiveness

- **Responsiveness is a critical priority for TVCCA.** Please describe your firm's standard policy on returning phone calls and emails.
- Describe how you handle urgent time-sensitive personnel or legal matters that arise outside of standard business hours.
- Explain who covers the account when the Lead Counsel is unavailable or has a conflict of interest with an item brought to them by TVCCA.

3.3 Fee Structure

- **Hourly Rates:** Provide the hourly rates for all attorneys and paralegals who may work on this account.
- **Non-Profit Discount:** Clearly state if you offer a discounted rate for non-profit organizations.
- **Retainer Option:** If applicable, propose a flat monthly retainer fee for a specific scope of routine services (e.g., unlimited phone consultation), and what that retainer would cover.
- **Expenses:** Detail what out-of-pocket expenses are billable (e.g., copies, travel, filing fees).

3.4 Conflicts of Interest

- Disclose any potential or actual conflicts of interest your firm may have in representing TVCCA, specifically noting any current or past representation of Tribal governments, Tribal enterprises, or related entities in Connecticut.

3.5 References

- Provide contact information for three (3) clients, as similar to TVCCA as possible, for whom you have provided similar services in the last three years.

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

1. **Experience:** Demonstrated expertise in employment law and other related areas of the law.
2. **Responsiveness:** Clarity of the plan to ensure timely communication and availability.
3. **Cost:** Competitiveness of fees and willingness to work within a non-profit budget.
4. **Cultural Fit:** Understanding of TVCCA's mission and community focus and respectful navigation of Tribal sovereignty and partnerships.
5. **References:** Satisfaction of current or past clients with similar employment needs.

5. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit your proposal in PDF format via email to:
Joshua Steele Kelly, CEO
Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.
josh.kelly@tvcca.org
860-425-6684

Subject Line: Tribal Employment Law Services Proposal - [Firm Name]

TVCCA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive informalities, and to select the firm that, in its sole judgment, best meets the needs of the agency.