



Request for Proposals: Outside Legal Counsel for Labor and Employment Litigation

Summary

IREX seeks proposals from qualified law firms to provide legal representation, litigation defense, and strategic counsel in connection with a pending labor and employment matter filed in the District of Columbia. The selected firm will serve as outside litigation counsel and will be expected to defend IREX's interests through all stages of the matter, beginning immediately and continuing until the case is finally resolved, dismissed, settled, or otherwise closed.

Services will include, but are not limited to, case assessment, defense strategy, pleadings, motions practice, discovery, witness preparation, factual investigation, review of employment records and prior administrative filings, coordination with IREX leadership and insurance representatives as appropriate, settlement analysis and negotiation support, trial preparation, hearings, post-judgment matters, and related legal advice necessary to protect IREX's legal, operational, reputational, and institutional interests.

IREX intends to select a single law firm for this engagement; however, IREX reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to award one or more contracts, negotiate terms with one or more firms, reject any or all proposals, cancel or modify this RFP, waive informalities or minor irregularities, or decline to proceed with an award. IREX will not reimburse any costs incurred in preparing or submitting a proposal, participating in interviews, or negotiating a potential engagement.

About IREX: IREX is a global development and education organization that strives for more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies around the world. We work with partners in more than a dozen countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.



Engagement Term and Performance Period

The engagement will begin immediately upon execution of an engagement letter or other written agreement acceptable to IREX and will continue until the District of Columbia court enters final judgment, the matter is dismissed, the matter is resolved through settlement approved by IREX, or the case is otherwise closed. The selected firm must be prepared to provide continuous representation and timely legal advice for the duration of the matter, including any required post-judgment proceedings, enforcement issues, fee petitions, appeals-related consultation, or related matters unless otherwise agreed in writing by IREX.

Scope of Legal Services

The selected firm will be responsible for providing comprehensive labor and employment litigation defense services, including factual investigation, legal research, risk assessment, development of defense strategy, preparation and filing of pleadings and motions, discovery planning and responses, document review, depositions, witness preparation, hearings, trial preparation and trial representation, settlement evaluation and negotiations, coordination with insurance counsel or carriers as directed by IREX, and regular written updates to IREX regarding litigation status, material risks, upcoming deadlines, budget implications, and recommended next steps.

The firm must identify a lead attorney who will have primary responsibility for the matter and ensure appropriate staffing, supervision, continuity, and responsiveness throughout the engagement. The firm must also preserve attorney-client privilege, attorney work product, confidentiality, and all applicable ethical obligations in connection with its representation of IREX.

IREX Points of Contact

Deborah Harrison, Senior Director, People & Culture will provide oversight for this engagement and serve as the primary point of contact for proposal submissions and engagement coordination.

Amber Kubera, Senior Director, Global Operations, will serve as the point of contact for coordination with IREX's insurance broker and applicable carriers, including Moody and Chubb.



Proposal Requirements

Interested firms must submit a written proposal that demonstrates the firm's qualifications, experience, capacity, staffing model, litigation approach, and ability to provide sound legal advocacy and litigation services in labor and employment law, workplace investigations, government investigations, administrative proceedings, and litigation defense. The proposal should identify the proposed lead counsel and supporting attorneys; describe relevant local, regional, national, and global experience defending employers in labor and employment matters in the District of Columbia and federal or local courts; and explain the firm's proposed approach to case assessment, litigation strategy, discovery, motions practice, settlement evaluation, trial preparation, communications, budgeting, and risk management.

Proposals must include: a detailed fee proposal and budget assumptions; hourly rates by timekeeper; a breakdown of fees by segment (discovery, pretrial, etc...) as well as rates by different levels of counsel; any proposed discounts, caps, alternative fee arrangements, or blended rates; résumés or biographies of key personnel; a representative matter list demonstrating comparable labor and employment defense experience; references; a description of conflicts-check procedures and any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts; confirmation of licensure and good standing for attorneys assigned to the matter; proof of professional liability insurance; anticipated staffing and reporting practices; and any proposed engagement terms or exceptions to IREX's anticipated contract requirements.

IREX expects the selected firm to provide practical, timely, and legally sound advice that supports informed decision-making while protecting IREX's legal rights, privileges, reputation, mission, and operational interests.

Proposal Submission

Interested firms should confirm their intent to submit a proposal by email. Final proposals must be emailed to Deborah Harrison at dharrison@irex.org no later than **August 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time**. Proposals must remain valid for at least ninety (90) calendar days from the submission deadline.

Proposal Evaluation

IREX will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria, listed in descending order of importance:



- Demonstrated experience defending employers in labor and employment litigation, including discrimination, retaliation, wage and hour, equal pay, employee relations, administrative agency, and court-based claims.
- Experience representing nonprofit, international, mission-driven, or similarly complex organizations.
- Strength of proposed litigation strategy, staffing model, client communication practices, responsiveness, and ability to provide continuity through final resolution.
- Knowledge of District of Columbia employment law, applicable federal employment laws, court rules, litigation procedure, and employer defense best practices.
- Cost competitiveness, budget transparency, billing discipline, and willingness to provide phased budgets and regular budget-to-actual reporting.
- Professional liability coverage, conflicts management, ethical compliance, confidentiality protections, and proposed contractual protections for IREX.
- References

IREX will evaluate and rank proposals in Washington, DC. IREX may, at its discretion, request additional information, conduct interviews, or request presentations from selected firms. Any final engagement will be subject to negotiation and execution of a written agreement acceptable to IREX.

Confidentiality

Any confidential information provided by IREX or obtained in connection with this RFP must be treated as confidential and used solely for purposes of preparing a proposal or performing services under any resulting engagement. Firms may not disclose, publish, reproduce, distribute, or use IREX confidential information for any other purpose without IREX's prior written consent. All proposals received by IREX will become the property of IREX and will not be returned.

Submission of a proposal does not create an attorney-client relationship with IREX. An attorney-client relationship will arise only upon execution of a written engagement agreement signed by IREX and the selected firm.



Firms are responsible for conducting an initial conflicts review before submitting a proposal. IREX may require additional conflicts information before disclosing privileged or sensitive case materials or entering into an engagement.

Privilege, Conflicts, Insurance, and Indemnification

The selected firm must maintain the confidentiality of all IREX information and must take all steps reasonably necessary to protect attorney-client privilege, attorney work product, personally identifiable information, employment records, litigation materials, and other sensitive or confidential information. The firm must promptly disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest and may not undertake representation adverse to IREX in the matter or in any substantially related matter without IREX's prior written consent.

The selected firm must maintain professional liability insurance, commercial general liability insurance, cyber/privacy insurance where applicable, and any other insurance reasonably required by IREX, in amounts appropriate for the nature and risk of the engagement. Upon request, the firm must provide certificates of insurance or other evidence of coverage.

To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law and professional responsibility rules, the selected firm will agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless IREX, its officers, directors, employees, agents, affiliates, and representatives from and against any and all third-party claims, liabilities, damages, losses, costs, and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, arising out of or related to the firm's negligence, willful misconduct, breach of confidentiality, violation of law, infringement of third-party rights, data security incident caused by the firm, or breach of the final agreement. Nothing in this RFP shall be construed to require indemnification for legal advice rendered in good faith within the scope of the attorney-client relationship to the extent prohibited by applicable law or rules of professional conduct.

The selected firm must comply with all applicable laws, rules of professional conduct, court rules, data privacy and security obligations, sanctions and anti-corruption laws, and IREX policies communicated to the firm in writing. The selected firm must also maintain adequate safeguards to protect any personal data, employment records, litigation materials, or other sensitive information received from IREX.



IREX is an equal opportunity organization and encourages proposals from qualified firms with diverse ownership, leadership, staffing, and demonstrated commitments to equity, inclusion, and professional excellence.

This RFP does not obligate IREX to award a contract or pay any costs incurred in responding to this RFP. IREX reserves the right to amend, withdraw, or cancel this RFP at any time and to negotiate with any firm in the best interests of IREX.

Contact Information

Please contact Deborah Harrison by email with any questions before August 21, 2026. No phone calls, please.

Deborah Harrison

Senior Director, People & Culture

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