CITY OF FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

FOR WIRELESS BROADBAND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA

RESPONSES TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

City of Florence
City-County Complex BB
Attn: Patrick Fletcher, Procurement Officer
180 North Irby Street
Florence, SC 29501

ISSUE DATE: December 7, 2007

RESPONSE DATE: March 19, 2008

I. Background & Introduction

The City of Florence, ("City") has concluded that there is substantial need and interest across many segments (residential, business, nonprofit public agency, community group, etc.) of the Florence community regarding development of a comprehensive, advanced wireless broadband network that would serve the entire approximate 19 square miles of the City.

Throughout this document, the City asks a number of key questions concerning City-wide wireless broadband system development in Florence. The City is issuing this Request for Information ("RFI") in an effort to elicit creative and innovative system solutions that will address these questions and identify elements that a successful respondent will incorporate into a specific system concept to serve the City. Specifically, the City is seeking to encourage development of a solid, supportable, sustainable system model for wireless broadband deployment in Florence.

After reviewing the information provided in response to this request, the City expects that it will move forward to encourage development of a wireless broadband system that best fits the needs of system providers and users. No equipment or services will be purchased under this Request for Information. The City will purchase such equipment and services separately, through its normal procurement process.

II. Florence, "A City of Character"

The City of Florence is the largest city in Northeastern South Carolina and is positioned at the heart of eight counties collectively known as the state's Pee Dee Region. The City is approximately 80 miles northeast of Columbia, SC; 100 miles north of Charleston, SC; 90 miles south of Fayetteville, NC; and about 70 miles west of Myrtle Beach, SC. The City of Florence serves as the county seat for Florence County.
Florence is located at the intersection of I-95, the major north/south traffic corridor for the East Coast, and I-20 which begins in Florence and runs through Atlanta to the western United States. US Highways 52, 301, and 76 also meet in Florence, providing access to Charleston, Myrtle Beach, and a direct connection, via US 76, with Chicago. In addition, Florence is accessible by a recently expanded regional airport, twenty trucking terminals, and both Amtrak and CSX railway services.

Florence County is the hub of the dynamic Northeastern South Carolina market area.
» Current Population at 1,042,013 in a 60-mile radius
» Civilian Labor Force exceeding 387,226 in a 60-mile radius
» Prime Working Age component of the region's population in excess of 278,000 people and projected to grow to nearly 281,000 people by 2008, thereby ensuring a continual re-supply of available employees
» Cost-of-Living at 96.3% of the national average.

Florence Region Population:

1990	454,908
2000	482,645

Florence & all contiguous counties including: Clarendon, Darlington, Dillon, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter, & Williamsburg Counties. Source: US Census Data

Population by 30, 40, & 60 Mile Radii:

	30 miles	40 miles	60 miles
1990	267,585	400,027	907,800
2000	284,762	429,895	1,002,820
2005	289,198	438,731	1,042,013

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, using radii as measured from the intersection of I-95 & SR 327 in Florence, SC.

2005 Population by Race:

	30 Miles	40 Miles	60 Miles
White	55.2%	53.2%	55.1%
Black	43.5%	41.9%	37.8%
Other Races	1.3%	4.9%	7.1%
Hispanic	1.1%	1.3%	1.6%

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, using radii as measured from the intersection of I-95 & SR 327 in Florence, SC.

Households by 30, 40, & 60 Mile Radii:

	30 Miles	40 Miles	60 Miles
1990	93,557	139,316	315,026
2000	104,954	156,073	359,598
2005	109,483	163,135	380,745

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, using radii as measured from the intersection of I-95 & SR 327 in Florence, SC.

Median Household Income:

	30 Miles	40 Miles	60 Miles
1990	$21,491	$21,052	$21,347
2000	$31,571	$30,966	$31,469
2005	$35,743	$35,220	$36,083

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, using radii as measured from the intersection of I-95 & SR 327 in Florence, SC

2005 Age Population:

	30 Miles	40 Miles	60 Miles
<5	6.2%	6.3%	6.7%
5-14	13.9%	14.2%	14.5%
15-19	7.6%	7.6%	7.5%
20-24	7.2%	7.1%	7.1%
25-34	12.7%	12.7%	13.2%
35-44	14.0%	13.9%	14.0%
45-54	15.7%	15.4%	14.7%
55-64	10.8%	10.8%	10.5%
65-74	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%

Continued

75-84	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
85+	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%
18+	75.3%	74.8%	74.2%
Median Age	37.0	36.6	35.8

Source: CACI Marketing Systems, using radii as measured from the intersection of I-95 & SR 327 in Florence, SC

III. Goals & Objectives

The City has identified a number of essential goals and objectives it seeks to encourage in any wireless broadband deployment. The wireless broadband system should provide the highest available bandwidth in a highly reliable and secure manner by utilizing the latest technological advances. Additionally, it will be necessary for the system to provide service to the City's public safety entities and to accommodate applications for or from other public agencies. The system should provide service to all areas of the City, particularly those that currently do not receive a high degree of broadband services, as well as communities that cannot currently afford such services.

The City understands that more than one business/operational model may need to be implemented to achieve the above mentioned goals and objectives. The City encourages Respondents to provide information on how these goals and objectives can be achieved using various models that have been deployed successfully in other systems.

The City opines that successful designs will contain the following elements:

- *Reliability:* A system that is "always on," despite the network's evolving characteristics, the mobile setting, or environmental factors;

- *Functionality:* A system that provides a user-friendly experience and basic functions such as access to mobile applications, electronic mail, and voice/data needs;

- *Commonality:* A system that demonstrates a common user experience, notwithstanding geographical differences, overlapping technologies, and varying environments;

- *Scalability:* A system that can be replicated and expanded to new applications and locations; and

- *Supportability:* A system that can be maintained remotely, can be monitored, and can be updated and configured for evolving needs.

IV. Development of a Model for Florence

The City is interested in exploring the variety of different types of business and operational models to determine the model or models that would provide the best business case for sustainable wireless system deployment while also meeting the goals and objectives detailed further in this RFI.

The City desires the Respondent to provide information on the model or models that would be the most effective in Florence, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- *Commercial – a* commercially sponsored and implemented model, including a model designed to be self-sustaining at some level of no or low cost user access by, for example, selling commercial advertising as the underlying support mechanism.

- *Non-profit Owned* – the development of an independent, private sector non-profit to spearhead system deployment and manage system operation and service provision.

- *Public/Private Partnership* – the best combination of public and private involvement *(i.e.,* the City would reach agreement with a private network provider to utilize the City's physical assets in exchange for certain forms of compensation to the public) to deploy successfully the wireless broadband system. **It should be emphasized that the City is not interested in models which propose municipal sponsorship, ownership or operation of the system.** The City, however, is open to proposals such as those described elsewhere in this section which would support a non-municipal entity's proposal to provide the best business case for sustainable wireless system deployment while also meeting the goals and objectives detailed further in this RFI.

- *Anchor Tenant* – the City would reach agreement with a private network provider to utilize the City's physical assets in exchange for certain forms of compensation to the public. As part of this element, the City will consider proposals for a paid level of service to be utilized by the City.

- *Private/Internal Network* – wireless system deployment for the City and its allied public entities, including a system strictly designed to enable Public Safety personnel to coordinate efforts, particularly during emergency response efforts. It should be emphasized that the City is least interested at this time in a private/internal-only solution since it wants to encourage the provision of wireless broadband access for its residents, visitors and businesses. However, the City is receptive to any information provided by Respondents on this model.

Please provide examples of municipalities, counties, regions, etc. where the models described have been successfully implemented. Also, knowing that many of the issues discussed herein (infrastructure considerations, backhaul and ISP access, service, maintenance and repair, system cost. etc.) may be significantly affected by the business/operational model(s) chosen, it is important for the Respondent to discuss these issues in light of the preferred model(s) that it would recommend deploying.

V. Desired Applications

The City and its residents and businesses desire a system implementation that can, either from inception or through various migration phases, serve a wide variety of uses and users. Accordingly, please provide information on how the system can best be developed and configured to successfully enable the following applications in a reliable manner throughout the City:

- Various tiers of **residential and business-class Internet access;**
- **High capacity broadband connections** (primary or back-up) **between public facilities,** such as public safety and public works facilities;
- Enablement of **remote/field municipal operations,** such as:
    - Inspection and other field services
    - Public Safety and transportation services data terminal transmission and reception
    - Public Safety monitoring utilizing IP monitoring devices and transmission
    - Receipt and transport of graphic intensive data such as GIS maps, photographs, other image files, etc.
- **Critical emergency service communications** including everything from medical telemetry to Reverse 911 messages;
    - In the response to Reverse 911, if provided, describe how either current or future technology could be utilized to target emergency messages to just one or a small group of Access Point (AP) locations
- **Internet Protocol (IP) Video** communications, including:
    - Streaming video
    - Video for first responder and incident management use

    - Surveillance-oriented video; including IP devices and systems

    - Public Educational and Governmental (PEG) access video, including live community event and meeting coverage as well as outreach information about government and educational programs and services.

- **Voice over IP** communications;

- **Telecommuting,** including both portable and mobile (public transportation, etc.);

- **Monitoring and control services** (supervisory control and data acquisition [SCADA], automatic meter reading [AMR], etc.), including enablement of automatic polling systems for meter reading;

- **Location based services** such as automatic vehicle locators (AVL) and overall radio frequency identification (RFID) devices;

- **Directional services,** such as those through integrated geographical information system (GIS) and global positioning system (GPS) platforms;

- **Personalization services** for e-government and e-commerce purposes;

- **Transactional-based services** including immediate request services and access to fee-based services; and

- **Digital Inclusion -** Respondents should propose methods to assist the City in overcoming, in particular, the obstacles and issues identified below in order to achieve a greater degree of digital inclusion (in other words, promotion of a common user experience throughout the City), including:

    - Computer literacy training

    - Hardware and software for accessing the proposed network

    - Services for entities that offer network access to the public via on-site computers and equipment

    - Affordable wireless broadband access for all the citizens of Florence, especially low-income and disadvantaged residents.

VI. Desired Specific Goals

The City has identified the following specific goals for Citywide Wireless:

- Ensure universal, affordable wireless broadband access for all the citizens of Florence, especially low-income and disadvantaged residents;

- The Network shall support a free level of service (Basic Internet Access Service). Offerors shall include the characteristics (e.g., bandwidth, geographic coverage, features) being proposed for this Basic Internet Access Service;

- The Network shall support various Premium Services consisting of a fixed Broadband Premium Service. This service should support 802.11 b/g and 4.9 GHz (government only) devices at a best-effort minimum 1 Mbps symmetric data transmission rate, a dynamic IP (Internet Protocol) address and other Core ISP Services;

- The Network should provide a Nomadic Broadband Premium Service. This service should support 802.11 b/g and 4.9 GHz (Government only) devices at a best-effort minimum 1 Mbps symmetric data transmission rate, a dynamic IP address and other Core ISP Services;

- The Network should provide a Portable Broadband Premium Service. This service should support 802.11 b/g and 4.9 GHz devices at a best-effort minimum 1 Mbps symmetric data transmission rate, a dynamic IP address and other Core ISP Services. Session-level connectivity must be maintained for in-motion subscribers at a minimum speed of 30 MPH (miles per hour);

- The Network should provide a Fixed Broadband Premium Service at a guaranteed minimum 3 Mbps symmetric data transmission rate (i.e., a wireless T-1 alternative);

- The Network Operator should allow Service Providers to provision Premium Services on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis;

- Fees may be charged for these Premium Services to residents and commercial customers;

- The Network shall support Open Access for Premium Services. Open Access fees for these Premium Services shall be priced to encourage retail fees that are lower than existing fees for service alternatives;

- The Network Operator shall promote the open and interconnected nature of the public Internet by operating the Network in a neutral manner that ensures consumers are entitled to:

    - Run applications and use services of the consumer's choice
    - Access the lawful Internet content of the consumer's choice
    - Connect the consumer's choice of legal devices that do not harm the Network
    - Benefit from competition among network providers, application and service providers, and content providers

- Ensure outdoor and in-building access to the greatest extent possible for all municipal employees, residences, businesses and visitors to the City;

- Improve the efficiency of government service delivery, especially services related to public safety;

- Promote job creation, business growth and economic development;

- Streamline the interaction between government and constituents;

- Enhance education and improve the interaction among teachers, students and parents;

- Stimulate private investment, competition and consumer choice for broadband services;

- Assure continuity in the event of any vendor default or breach of contract and protect the Network from obsolescence over time; and

- Complement the City's strategy to connect all the citizens of Florence to the modern modem economy.

In addition to the goals defined above, the City anticipates that this initiative will provide the following community benefits:

- Enhance the lifestyle of all Florence citizenry;

- Improve the experience for visitors to the City;

- Reduce government telecommunications costs;

- Promote the City's image;

- Enhance backup and contingency measures for disaster response and recovery;

- Promote innovative solutions for consumers;

- Improve public safety through better communication and interoperability; and

- Control crime rate and improve police efficiencies.

VII. Technological Considerations

The City appreciates that technology for a City-wide wireless broadband system deployment is rapidly evolving. Consequently, we seek information about the *best option,* or the *best range of options,* to deploy a system that not only has proven viability under the range of conditions that will be present, but that allows for evolution into systems that may provide greater capabilities in the future.

- Wi-Fi – What is the best use of technology based on established IEEE 802.11a/b/g (commonly known as Wi-Fi) and related wireless broadband specifications?

- WiMAX - What is the best use of technology based on IEEE 802.16a/c/d/e and related WiMAX specifications?

- Overall Design Characteristics – Describe the best practices in a system design that could be employed throughout the City. The City is especially interested in current developments regarding:

    - Mesh technology;

    - Systems designed for only outdoor coverage;

    - Systems designed for both outdoor and indoor coverage – Note: on this point, if selected, please discuss methods for and costs to customers, i.e., a requirement for necessary customer premises equipment (“CPE”), for overcoming obstacles in order to receive service indoors;

    - System implementation needed to support priority based services (for Voice over IP, emergency communications, etc.), virtual private networks, and VLANs;

    - The technology refresh cycles that should be incorporated into network design and operation to ensure that the system does not become obsolete;

    - The scalability of the system to support an increasing number of users and uses; and

    - Development of the 4.9 GHz spectrum on the system for utilization by public safety entities.

VIII. Development Details

A. Infrastructure Considerations

All infrastructure changes, additions, modifications, etc., SHALL comply with the City's development design guidelines.

It will be important for the City to understand the physical nature of the technology to be deployed. The City has oversight of various assets that may be available for use in deployment of the system, including thousands of streetlights, buildings, and a limited number of streetlight poles. In addition, other assets in the City, such as those overseen by other entities may be available for utilization for the build-out of the system such as communications towers, buildings, other above ground structures, and rights-of-way locations for placement of ground mounted appurtenances. This inventory will be made available should the City proceed to issue a request for proposals pursuant to this RFI.

Access to infrastructure beyond that controlled by the City would need to be gained through the owners of those facilities, including utility poles owned by public utilities; privately-owned buildings; infrastructure owned by various competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs); and other entities' infrastructure.

Accordingly, related to the preferred technological solution described by the respondent under Section VII, please provide information (e.g., narrative, specification sheets, URL links or other pertinent materials) concerning the following:

- The ***physical antenna, transmission, and reception equipment that must be deployed on the streetlight, pole or other aerial infrastructure,*** including a description of specifications (dimensions, weight, power consumption, transmission and reception radius, structural support required, etc.).

- A description of ***how the connection to the power source is made.*** This should include connections to streetlights and particularly how the respondent anticipates overcoming powering issues presented by streetlights wired utilizing a bank or gang-type method.

- The ***types of supporting appurtenances*** that would be collocated above ground or underground adjacent to the wireless access point (such as a wireline interface for backhaul purposes).

- The ***number and nature of the access points*** that would be needed under a variety of different scenarios taking into account the number and types of users, topography and overcoming dense foliage, dense building areas and other environmental factors that would impact deployment.

- A description of the ***server hardware, system software, BackOffice infrastructure and other components*** that would be needed to support the external system.

- The ***system monitoring tools*** that would be employed to track performance and system usage, and alert the operator to address peak periods and boost capacity.

B. Backhaul and ISP Access

The City currently has some agreements with private carriers for infrastructure utilization, which are intended to help facilitate provision of backhaul and/or Internet services. Additionally, the City and its surrounding area are home to a number of Internet service providers ("ISPs") who might desire access to a new wireless broadband network in order to provide services. Therefore, please provide information regarding the following:

- What types of ***wireless and/or wireline backhaul infrastructure and services,*** including backhaul capacities and connection transfer rates to the Internet, are typically utilized for the type of deployment described under Section VII above?

- Describe the typical ***ability and subject terms for network use by third party*** ISPs or other service providers. Describe any limitations or obligations on the content or delivery of information and services that would be placed on these providers.

- How is backhaul or network aggregation accomplished for public entities that may desire to look at ***private networking over the wireless broadband system*** between their facilities, without going through the Internet?

C. Construction, Installation and Acceptance Testing

The City is amenable to considering a variety of potential system construction and installation possibilities, including everything from a turnkey installation to installations that would include local government contractor support personnel assisting in the development of the network. Related to this, please provide information regarding the following:

- For the best organizational model(s) and system concepts for the City described in the response to Sections IV and VII, the most efficient and cost effective way to install the system.

- The expected timeframe for walk-out, design and other pre-construction work related to the proposed system concept, including gaining all necessary zoning approvals and other required permits.

- The anticipated time from the beginning of construction and installation to complete system turn-up and service activation.

- How acceptance testing would occur, including both physical plant compliance with all required codes and electronic system compliance with all required regulations for either the licensed or unlicensed spectrum utilized, as well as a demonstration that all performance criteria are met or exceeded.

D. Pilot Implementation (Optional)

On the subject of pilot projects, the City is aware that, for other jurisdictions which have successfully implemented municipality-wide wireless broadband systems, or are in the process of implementing such systems, pilot projects have been developed and studied prior to full system deployment. The City opines that such a project might be useful in Florence. If the Respondent concurs that a pilot project is desirable in advance of a full-scale implementation of the wireless broadband system, please answer the following questions:

- Does the Respondent recommend implementation of a pilot project before making decisions on full system deployment? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Should the pilot be constructed to test every conceivable variable or parameter related to the technology chosen, service and technical support, capacity needed, etc.? If not, what subset of all the system development elements are the most critical to test?
- How long should such a pilot last in order to make an informed decision regarding larger system deployment?
- What is the typical cost (per user, per square mile, per access point, etc.) for a successful pilot implementation?

IX. Operations & Maintenance Issues

A. Service, Maintenance and Repair

The City is concerned about ongoing support requirements from several different perspectives. First, the City seeks to ensure that the system will continue to be viable and useful in the long term for internal applications as well as resident, business and visitor use. Second, the City is concerned about the impact on its operations from a technical and customer service support point of view, including both personnel and material considerations. In light of the foregoing, please provide information concerning the following:

- A description of the ranges of technical support that are typically expected to be provided by vendors and service providers.

- Examples of the types of service level agreements that have been developed that ensure a high degree of system performance, including preventative and demand system maintenance and user support services.

- Types of network user agreements that are customarily employed:

    - Do such agreements typically indemnify the provider concerning any misuse of the network by the user?

    - Do such agreements normally indicate that CPE support is the responsibility of the user?

B. System Survivability, Security and User Privacy

The City is concerned, based on both a past and recent historical perspective, about the survivability of a constructed wireless broadband system, especially as it may be utilized for critical emergency communications in a natural or man-made disaster (e.g., hurricane or terrorist attack), as well as system security and user privacy. Accordingly, please provide information related to the following:

- Discuss a disaster recovery plan that can be put in place to enhance the reliability of individual components and the overall system, as well as the availability of the network during catastrophic emergencies. Potential network components to be addressed in the response to this element should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

    - Redundant access points
    - Redundant powering for network components
    - Alternate backhaul paths
    - Alternate ISP access
    - Interface with other wireline and wireless systems, especially those used for emergency communications.

- Respondents should discuss company philosophies and technology approaches relating to security and associated utilization of methods needed to assure that maximum security measures are continually in place over the life of the Network.

- Describe what measures, if any, the Respondent suggests that end users, including Governmental entities, take to further insure an optimum level of secure transport over the network.

- Describe how the Respondent proposes that a network operator comply with all applicable privacy laws and track uses and users on the network only to facilitate easy access to the network.

X. Costs; Compensation

A. Costs

The City understands that, for any system implementation, meeting both economic viability objectives and public policy goals will require the best possible wireless system deployment for the lowest possible cost. Accordingly, for the range of information previously provided (e.g., applications to be enabled; type of technology; scalable network architecture; ranges of technical and customer service support; ranges of system reliability and network availability; challenges to be overcome; etc.) please provide the following cost information:

- *Construction, installation and system integration costs* – this should include all costs from system design through initial turn-up and activation.

- *Hardware and replacement/upgrade costs for the network, BackOffice and technical support* – please delineate and describe in as much detail as possible.

- *Software costs for all transport network connectivity, network access, security, customer service and other allied systems* – this should include initial implementation as well as software update and upgrade costs over the projected life of the system.

- *Human resources costs* - including construction, installation, maintenance, network support, BackOffice support, customer service support and any other human resources costs.

- *Internet access costs, including initial and expanded costs as greater levels of Internet access are needed* – this should also include any typical backhaul transport costs for the transfer rate required from the central server location to the ISP.

Additionally, for the business/organizational model(s) described above, please explain typical:

- Overall costs, if any, that must be borne by the local government;

- Costs, if any, to users of the network.

Funding Mechanisms – The City is aware certain grant opportunities may be available to support at least certain portions of wireless broadband network development. For example, federal grants are used by some jurisdictions to fund new CPE requirements in order to utilize Wi-Fi and (currently pre-certified) mobile WiMAX systems. In light of this,

based on Respondent experience, please provide information on funding sources available both to and beyond the City or users of the network (such as state and federal grants, private grants, matching funds, etc.).

B. Compensation

The City realizes that there is significant value for use of the public Right of Way, City easements and the City's physical assets. For solutions where use of these types of assets is a component of the response to this RFI, please describe the anticipated compensation to the City for utilization of these assets. Compensation models could include some or all of the following:

- Monthly or annual payments for each vertical asset being utilized for network deployment. This would include reimbursement for fees imposed by local electrical utilities on the City for additional power consumption needed for wireless equipment located on the aforementioned streetlights and other infrastructure.

- Revenue sharing.

- In-kind services such as certain levels of network access provided to various public safety and other government agencies.

- Access availability for persons affected by "digital divide" issues (**see further details in the earlier subsection of Section V of this RFI entitled Digital Inclusion**).

- Other compensation mechanisms.

XI. Alternative Concepts

Pertaining to the information sought by the City herein, if there are any alternative concepts that have heretofore not been mentioned that the City should consider, please describe them within this section.

XII. Ancillary Materials

Please provide descriptive materials that describe the Respondent organization, its experience, its capabilities, and any other attributes germane to a full consideration of the Respondent's qualifications.

Also, please provide a detailed map of the City denoting proposed "Hot Spots" or connectivity locations throughout the proposed system.

XIII. Disclaimer

This RFI and the process it describes are deemed proprietary to the City and are for the sole and exclusive benefit of the City of Florence. This RFI is not binding on the City, nor shall it be construed as a Request for Proposal (RFP) or as an obligation on the part of the City to acquire any products or services or to ever issue an RFP or any other document with respect to the matters on which this RFI has been issued. No other party, including any Respondent to this RFI or future Respondent to any RFP that may be issued by the City, is intended to be granted any rights hereunder. **Any response to this RFI, including written documents and verbal communication, may be subject to public disclosure (as may be required under any and all State of South Carolina and U. S. Federal Freedom of Information Act(s)) by the City or any authorized agent of the City, and any materials submitted or ideas otherwise elicited in response to this RFI shall be the sole and absolute property of the City with the City having title thereto and unrestricted use thereof.**

The proposed uses of part or all of the system as referred to in this RFI are intended to be initial proposals only, and the City reserves the right at its discretion to withdraw this RFI at any time or to determine not to proceed with any proposed action suggested in responses to this RFI, or any other action or project with respect to a proposed system. The City makes no representation or warranty as to the accuracy of information provided in this RFI, and nothing contained in this RFI is, or should be relied upon as, a promise or representation. The City shall not be liable or responsible for any costs incurred by any person or entity in preparing any response to this RFI or for any other costs, expenses or liabilities incurred by any person or entity in connection with or in reliance on this RFI or any information or material contained herein. Submission of a response to this RFI constitutes an agreement by the responder to the terms hereof.

XIV. Request for Information Requirements & Response Process

Responses to this RFI are to be submitted no later than 3:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on March 19, 2008, **to the agency contact person as set forth in this section. Respondents should submit five (5) sets of all response documents, one set clearly marked "original," and four (4) sets clearly marked "copy" to the address listed on the cover page of this RFI. One set should be unbound for duplication purposes as the City may deem necessary. Respondents are encouraged to use a generally accepted format of submission, such as three-ring binders; respondents also are encouraged to include at least one (1) electronic (e.g., CD or DVD) copy of their respective responses. There is no page limitation on responses; however, concise responses are encouraged and expected.**

Respondents should be aware that responses submitted to this RFI are not expected to be treated as confidential, and may be disclosed to the public in accordance with South Carolina and/or U.S. Federal law or otherwise made a matter of public record. Materials should not be submitted that the respondent would not wish to be subject to public disclosure or placed on the public record.

Communications with the City Regarding This RFI:

All communications regarding this RFI should be submitted in writing no later than February 13, 2008 and directed to:

Thomas B. J, Shearin, CPA
Special Services Administrator
City of Florence, SC
City-County Complex; AA
Florence, SC 29501-3456
E-mail: tshearin@cityofflorence.com
Tel: (843) 665-3113
Fax: (843) 665-3110

XV. Rights and Options Reserved

The City reserves and in its sole discretion may, but shall not be required to, exercise the following rights and options with respect to the Proposal submission, evaluation and selection process under this RFI:

- To supplement, amend, substitute or otherwise modify this RFI at any time and to cancel this RFI with or without issuing another RFI or RFP;

- To waive any informality, defect, non-responsiveness and/or deviation from this RFI and its requirements that is not, in the City's sole judgment, material to a response;

- To request additional or clarifying information or more detailed information from any Respondent at any time, before or after RFI submission, including information inadvertently omitted by the Respondent;

- To inspect and otherwise investigate projects performed by the Respondent, whether or not referenced in the RFI, with or without the consent of or notice to the Respondent;

- To conduct such investigations with respect to the financial, technical, and other qualifications of each Respondent as the City, in its sole discretion, deems necessary or appropriate; and

- To request that some or all of the Respondents modify their responses based upon the City's review and evaluation;

- To permit or reject at the City's sole discretion, amendments (including information inadvertently omitted), modifications, alterations and/or corrections to responses by some or all of the Respondents following response submission.