

**Request for Proposals
RFP: 10-Strategic Plan
Fairfield County Economic Development Strategic Plan & Target Industry Study**

December 15, 2009

GENERAL INFORMATION

Fairfield County Economic Development, in Fairfield County, South Carolina, is requesting proposals from qualified firms or teams to assist with the preparation of a county-wide Strategic Plan to guide Fairfield County's Economic Development efforts over the next three to five years, as well as a Target Industry Study (TIS) that identifies existing, emerging and preferred industry/employment sectors for which the attributes of the County would be accommodating to their (re)location and conducive to future economic growth.

BACKGROUND ON FAIRFIELD COUNTY

Fairfield County is located in the Midlands of South Carolina between Columbia, SC, and Charlotte, NC (via I-77) with five major interstates within an 85-mile radius. It is uniquely positioned halfway between New York and Miami, within 24-hour ground access to more than 70 percent of the U.S. market. Additionally, one of the nation's most effective and productive deepwater ports, the Port of Charleston, is an easily accessible 138 miles away. Connectivity to major North/South and East/West interstates allows for easy market access, making Fairfield County the premier location for business.

Fairfield County has the unique advantage of being located within close proximity to urban areas and their amenities, while offering all of the benefits of a rural county. Fairfield is less than one hour's drive from the Douglas International Airport and upscale shopping offered in Charlotte, NC, and less than one half hour's drive to South Carolina's capitol city of Columbia and the State's flagship University (the University of South Carolina). However, with a total area of 687 square miles, two recreational lakes encompassing more than 20,700 acres, 11,080 acres of the Sumter National Forest and a County Seat with small town charm and historical significance, Fairfield County offers its 23,862 residents a more "traditional" quality of life.

The June, 2009 unemployment rate for the County is 13.5%, which makes approximately 1,550 persons immediately available for employment from a labor force estimated at 11,500 workers. Major employers in the County include Ben Arnold Beverage Company (350), VC Summer Nuclear Station (330), State government (258), INVISTA (225), Lang Mekran (153) and Isola Laminate Systems (122), which is consistent with County employment by industry sector led by Trade/Transportation/Utilities (35%), Government (29%) and Manufacturing (7.5%).

In 2008, the average weekly wage in the County was \$765 per week, which was the highest in the Midlands region, and educational attainment equaled or exceeded the State averages in all categories, such as high school graduates, high school diploma/college degrees and degrees held.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

The project is intended to result in the preparation of a county-wide, customized, strategic economic development plan for Fairfield County, in conjunction with local stakeholders, that determines the best and most reasonable strategies, initiatives, methodologies and techniques, the implementation of which will encourage 1) capital investment, 2) job creation in appropriate industry sectors, 3) increases in personal wealth for the local workforce and 4) maximize sustainable economic growth in the County. Additionally, a Target Industry Study will identify those specific industry and employment sectors that would most likely be attracted to the County's geographic location, infrastructure, workforce and overall business and political climate.

SCOPE OF WORK

A. Strategic Plan

Fairfield County Economic Development expects the consultant firm or team to assist the County and its stakeholders in the preparation of a Plan that will be the product of a proven process and guide the County toward positive and sustainable economic growth.

Below is a general outline of the anticipated services to complete the planning process:

- Assess past and present economic development strategic plans
- Analysis of development and economic trends
- SWOT analysis
- Identify and assess preliminary economic development strategies and initiatives
- Convene stakeholder planning sessions to validate and detail priority strategies
- Finalize the economic development strategic plan

These services will be provided through six tasks outlined below:

Task 1 – Project Kickoff Meeting and Delineation of Responsibilities

An initial project kickoff meeting will be held with representatives of Fairfield County (and appropriate stakeholders) to finalize the scope of the project, tasks and schedules. An important aspect of this meeting will be to delineate the specific tasks that will be accomplished by the selected consultant firm or team, as well as defining the role(s) of Fairfield County and its stakeholders, in order to ensure the success of the strategic planning effort.

Task 2 – Establishing a Steering Committee

The selected consultant firm or team will assist Fairfield County in assembling a Steering Committee that will spearhead the overall planning process. The composition of the steering committee will consist of County economic, business and civic representatives that generally reflect the interests of the broader community.

During the planning process, the selected consultant firm or team will assist the Steering Committee with the identification of additional community stakeholders, as well as a proven methodology by which they must be brought into the strategic planning process to broaden community input to and eventual support for the Plan.

Task 3 – Review of Current Strategic Economic Development Plan and Analysis of Fairfield County's Development and Economic Trends

The selected consultant firm or team will commence work with the Steering Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of prior strategic plans and/or initiatives. Each task, goal, deliverable and performance measure will be evaluated with respect to its level of implementation and demonstrated impact. Wherever possible, these evaluations will be quantitative in nature, and recommendations will be made to the Steering Committee with respect to continuing, modifying or terminating the specific initiatives.

This will also include performing a series of interrelated analyses that will enable Fairfield County and its stakeholders to better understand past development trends and their resulting fiscal and economic impacts on the County. Factors that are reflective of past development trends will be identified and available data will be collected, including population growth; residential, commercial and industrial building permits; real and personal property assessment data; employment/unemployment rates; job creation; household income; and public school enrollment figures. These data sets and trends will be evaluated with respect to revenues generated, actual annual County expenses, and be extrapolated into the future to project areas of potential concern. The analysis will address the County's projected economic sustainability, and the extent to which economic development must occur in order to achieve a balance between revenues generated and the costs of services.

Responding firms or teams are expected to propose a scope of work that includes a demographic and economic assessment of the County, particularly in projecting the breadth, depth and duration of the impacts of the current economic recession; a detailed project approach and methodology which ensures stakeholder involvement in the planning process; and a comprehensive, coordinated and detailed set of recommended strategies that will satisfy the purpose of the project, outlined above, within the context of the economic climate from 2010 through 2015.

Task 4 – Preliminary Work by the Steering Committee and Presentation of Investigation Results

Utilizing the above assessments as a reference point, the selected consultant firm or team will facilitate a SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis among the Steering Committee members in order to preliminarily identify the strategies and initiatives that are most likely to provide the greatest potential economic return for Fairfield County to implement. During this process, the consultant will ensure that the Steering Committee considers a full range of traditional and non-traditional economic development strategies, including but not limited to, organizational structure, funding, programs addressing business retention, attraction and entrepreneurship development; infrastructure and product planning and development; ED partner alignment, marketing, etc.

Through the SWOT Analysis, the consultant will assist the Steering Committee in the preliminary identification of major strategies and tasks for further consideration by an expanded stakeholder group.

Task 5 – Strategic Planning Methodology

The selected consultant form or team will propose methodologies including surveys; interviews; structured, interactive strategic planning session(s); and public meetings to expand and engage the larger group of stakeholders and to facilitate multiple, interactive discussions about each of the prioritized economic development strategies/initiatives as they have evolved through the preliminary work and survey process.

Task 6 – Draft and Finalize the Economic Development Plan Document

The selected consulting firm or team will provide, based on this meeting, a summary report to be used in compiling the final comprehensive economic development plan. A final meeting will be held with the Steering Committee to review the summary report. The consultant will then use the results of the review to subsequently provide the Steering Committee with a draft copy of the comprehensive economic development plan, which will include: strategies and initiatives, as well as implementation measures such as responsible parties, budgets and potential funding sources, schedules, deliverables and measurable outcomes.

The Plan will also include recommendations regarding “branding” and marketing Fairfield County to economic prospects, including traditional and non-traditional mechanisms such as brochures, flyers, CD Rom, website, real estate broker and site search consultant relationships and functions and general advertising programs, as well as messages and initiatives that may be targeted to specific clusters, sectors or prospects. These will include budget estimates for product development, necessary software and hardware, as well as quantitative/qualitative performance measures. (This does not include actual product development or the preparation of “camera ready” artwork, printing, or CD Rom development, but rather is limited solely to cost estimates.)

The Strategic Plan will also include an assessment of workforce development partners and the effectiveness of their programs and services in Fairfield County, including recommendations that

would strengthen the connections between education/workforce training and the specific skill sets that current and future local employers will require of their employees.

Following review of the draft and subsequent changes, the consultant will finalize the Plan document and present copies to the Steering Committee for distribution.

B. Target Industry Study

Completion of a Target Industry Study for Fairfield County will eliminate uncertainty regarding the industries that are the “best fits” for the County, and will better enable the County Economic Development staff, the Central SC Alliance and the South Carolina Department of Commerce to better “sell” Fairfield County to prospects that are consistent with the County’s business attributes.

The Target Industry Study should be undertaken in four general phases, as outlined below, and may coincide with the preparatory work outlined in Tasks #3 and #4 of the approach for the Strategic Economic Development Plan.

Task 1 – Collection and Analysis of Relevant Data

With the assistance of Fairfield County, the consulting firm or team will collect a range of data that would be required to assess the ability of the County to accommodate certain industrial/employment clusters, sectors and/or prospects, including but not limited to:

- Location/Transportation/Access
- Access to Surrounding Regional Population Centers
- Demographics
 - Population
 - Education
 - Income/Wage Data
 - Employment/Unemployment
 - Residential and Non-Residential Assessment/Tax Data
 - Commuting Patterns
- Infrastructure (Existing and Proposed)
- Industrial Land and Building Inventory/Availability
- Environmental and Natural Resources
- Businesses and Industries (Past and Present)
- Prior Economic Diversification and Target Industry Analyses
- Other Miscellaneous Factors

The above information and other local and regional data will be evaluated by the consultant firm or team and will be synthesized to produce a general assessment of Fairfield County’s ability to support and sustain economic growth that potentially results in new investment, employment generation, increased wages, and an expanded tax base.

(Much of this data collection and analysis could occur simultaneously with the data collection and analyses required in Task #3 of the Strategic Economic Development Plan.)

Task 2 – Stakeholder Input

In addition to the input of the Steering Committee, the consulting firm or team will conduct interviews and/or focus groups involving selected individuals from Fairfield County, wherein the above assessment will be presented, and comments and local input will be solicited. The interviewees will include representatives from business, industry, education, local and regional economic development organizations, as well as County and municipal elected officials. These interviews and the resulting comments and input will help validate and detail the above assessment. Additionally, the interviewees will also be asked to identify 1) issues or challenges to the County’s economy that need to be addressed and 2) future general or specific industrial and/or economic sectors that, in their opinions, represent future opportunities for economic development in Fairfield County.

(These interviews and the qualitative identification of potential economic targets could occur simultaneously with the SWOT analysis and other proposed work of the Steering Committee in Task #4 of the Strategic Economic Development Plan.)

Task 3 – Industry/Employment Sector Needs v. Fairfield County Assessment

The consulting firm or team will utilize the data to identify existing, emerging and new industry sectors, and potential projects and initiatives, that most closely match and can be supported by the many attributes and other factors involved in creating an overall business environment in Fairfield County. This effort would highlight 1) potential synergies with existing local and/or regional industries; 2) “growth” sectors that are likely to create (new) wealth in the County; 3) reasonable possibilities for technology-driven manufacturing and “knowledge based” companies; and 4) targets that are “value added” in nature, and which represent significant capital investment (which is difficult to abandon in the long term).

The consulting firm or team will also identify obvious “gaps” that may exist between the County’s overall business attributes and target industries’ needs, such as land availability, inadequate infrastructure or workforce capabilities or limitations, and make recommendations to remediate those shortcomings. Such analysis would potentially position the County for expanded or new industrial sectors and/or other economically sustainable projects, which otherwise may not occur.

(These analyses and recommendations could occur simultaneously with the work of the Steering Committee in Tasks #4 and #5 of the Strategic Economic Development Plan.)

Task 4 – Draft Target Industry Study Report

In addition to the process summary, findings, and recommendations, this phase of the project will include a “matrix” of potential industry clusters, sectors and specific industries, as well as other projects that are the most reasonable and realistic for (a variety of locations throughout)

Fairfield County and its marketing agents to pursue. Based on the specific outcomes, the County will be in the position to assume leadership responsibility for certain initiatives that are better-controlled at the local level, and provide clear direction to the Central SC Alliance and SC Department of Commerce with respect to the “best” potential targets and reasonable expectations for success.

CONDITIONS

The successful consultant firm or team shall procure, maintain, and provide proof of insurance coverage for injuries to persons and/or property damage as may arise from or in conjunction with, the work performed on behalf of Fairfield County by the firm, its team members, its agents, representatives, employees or subcontractors. Proof of coverage as contained herein shall be submitted fifteen (15) days prior to the commencement of work and such coverage shall be maintained by the bidder for the duration of the contract period; for occurrence policies.

1. Commercial General Liability

Coverage shall be as broad as: Comprehensive General Liability endorsed to include Broad Form, Commercial General Liability Form including Products/Completed Operations.

Minimum Limits:

\$1,000,000 General Aggregate Limit
\$1,000,000 Products & Completed Operations
\$1,000,000 Personal & Advertising Injury
\$1,000,000 Each Occurrence Limit
\$50,000 Fire Damage Limit
\$5,000 Medical Expense Limit

2. Business Commercial Automobile Liability

Coverage sufficient to cover all vehicles owned, used, or hired by the contractor, his agents, representatives, employees or subcontractors.

Minimum Limits:

\$1,000,000 Combined Single Limit
\$1,000,000 Each Occurrence Limit
\$5,000 Medical Expense Limit

3. Workers' Compensation

Limits as required by the Workers' Compensation Act of SC, to include state's endorsement for businesses outside of SC. Employer's Liability, \$1,000,000.

4. Professional Liability

Minimum limits are \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

CONTENTS OF PROPOSAL and GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION

The following information must be provided within the content of the proposal:

1. Introduction to the proposing firm or team, and a statement of the firm's or team's qualifications and abilities to successfully execute this project.
2. Identification of the Project Manager and each member of the firm or team that will work on the project, including their qualifications, experience, area(s) of expertise and a resume. Where the proposing firm is teaming with another firm(s), it must show evidence of having successfully worked with the team member(s) in other recent, similar projects.
3. Detailed methodologies regarding the demographic and economic assessments, and a Project Approach, including a schedule for completing the Project within an eight (8) month period of time.
4. A list of relevant projects, and three (client) references.
5. The successful firm or team should be located within close driving proximity of Fairfield County. This criterion recognizes the need for close cooperation and communication between the County and the firm or team throughout the duration of this important Project, and the convenient access to economic and workforce development partners throughout the Midlands region.
6. A Lump Sum cost proposal, with a break out showing the total cost associated with the Economic Development Plan services and Target Industry Study components (the sum of the two parts should equal the total lump sum amount). Total cost will be considered, but will not necessarily be a major determinant in the selection process.

SCHEDULE OF AWARD OF CONTRACT

Fairfield County reserves the sole right to establish a proposal review and selection process that leads to the selection of a single consultant firm or team, which in the opinion of the County, is in the best interests of the County, and whose response to this "Request for Proposal" best demonstrates consistency with and ability to meet the above guidelines.

Fairfield County reserves the right to reject all proposals received in response to this Request for Proposals.

Fairfield County reserves the right to interview any, all or none of the consulting firms or teams submitting proposals in response to this Request for Proposals.

Consultant firms or teams submitting proposals to Fairfield County shall be responsible for all costs related to the preparation of such proposals.

Fairfield County anticipates that it will award the contract to the selected consultant firm or team in a timely manner.

All consultant firms or teams submitting proposals shall be notified in writing of the final decision or disposition of this process.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

Consultant firms or teams shall submit **an original and five (5) copies, as well as an electronic version** of their proposal. Fairfield County will expect that all proposals be valid for **sixty (60) days** after the proposal submission date. Any confidential or proprietary information submitted with the proposals, which responders consider being exempt from possible public disclosure, should be marked accordingly. Otherwise, Fairfield County reserves the right to determine which information it may deem to be confidential or proprietary.

- A. Proposals submitted under this Request for Proposals must be received by Fairfield County no later than **3:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 14, 2010**. Any proposal received after the date and time stipulated will be rejected and returned unopened.
- B. The proposal package must be clearly marked with "**Economic Development Strategic Plan & Target Industry Study**," or identified as instructed elsewhere in the Request for Proposals.
- C. Proposals may be **hand delivered** to the address below in sufficient time to ensure receipt by Fairfield County on or before the time and date specified in Section A, above:

Fairfield County Purchasing
Attention: Sheila Pickett, Purchasing Director
350 Columbia Road
Winnsboro, SC 29180

OR

The proposal submission may be **mailed** as outlined above to:

Fairfield County Purchasing
Attention: Sheila Pickett, Purchasing Director
P.O. Drawer 60
Winnsboro, SC 29180

Respondents assume full responsibility for the timely delivery of the package to Fairfield County.

- D. Any questions regarding this proposal must be **emailed** to the following contact no later than the close of business on Tuesday, January 5, 2010. Any questions received after this date and time will not receive a response.

Sheila Pickett
spickett@fairfieldsc.com

- E. For any reason, Fairfield County may extend the date and/or time of the Proposal deadline.

End