

PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. The City of Ocala (the "City") is seeking proposals from qualified firms to evaluate the Ocala Fiber Network (OFN) business plan and strategies, assess growth viability in residential and commercial development, and provide a path to success.
2. This RFP does not commit the City to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of submittals or to select any interested firms who respond.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ENTERPRISE

The City of Ocala, located in Marion County, Florida, has a population of approximately 65,000 residents and spans 47.2 square miles. It maintains a small-town atmosphere within a medium-sized metropolitan area and is accessible via Highway 40 and Interstate 75.

Ocala Fiber Network is operated as an enterprise fund within the City operations.

OFN has owned and operated its fiber system since the mid-1990s. The network has been successful, providing operational savings and revenue for the City, as well as offering internet services to over 3,000 customers and connecting various facilities. OFN's fiber enterprise represents a cost-saving and efficient model for other communities.

Ocala Electric established the Telecommunications Enterprise in 1997 to upgrade the method of communication for their Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. Previously, substations were connected with copper conductors which were prone to damage from lightning strikes. Fiber was chosen as a more reliable alternative to connect the SCADA system, and this decision coincided with municipalities being authorized to provide telecommunications services. The high bandwidth capability of fiber made it possible to expand the use of the SCADA fiber and offer more services. The expansion of the fiber system led to the creation of the Ocala Fiber Network (OFN). OFN's fiber installation plans were expanded to include strategic points in the community, allowing the City to utilize its own resources for internal phone and computer networking while also connecting other governments and private businesses. This expansion of the fiber system allowed the City to generate revenue.

OFN offers customized high-speed network solutions, owning latest fiber optic connection equipment. The department provides reliable, cost-effective, and integrated solutions for individual needs. OFN's technical proficiency enables it to operate efficiently, focusing on core activities while utilizing broadband technology to serve communities effectively.

OFN has developed a gradual and realistic growth strategy to expand its services throughout the City of Ocala, Marion County, and beyond, providing high-quality, profitable services to Community Anchor Institutions and over 3,150 commercial and residential customers. This includes internet bandwidth, MAN connections, dark fiber, co-locations space, and E-Rate services for schools and libraries.

EXPERIENCE

1. Proposer must have no less than 10 years' experience in providing consultant services for Fiber Network viability Studies.
2. Proposer must have completed at least four (4) directly comparable projects.
3. Key personnel assigned to this Project should have a minimum of 10 years' experience in similar project roles.
4. A proven history of engagements of similar size and scope with other governmental public sector clients.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Commercial General Liability:** with limits of \$1,000,000 per occurrence/\$2,000,000 aggregate.
2. **Commercial Automotive Liability:** a combined limit of not less than \$1,000,000.
3. **Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability:** per Florida statutory requirements.
4. **Professional Liability/Errors & Omissions:** with limits of \$1,000,000. Coverage must continue five (5) years after contract expiration.

CONSULTANT REQUIREMENTS

All proposals are required to respond to the following items:

1. Conduct an independent review of the OFN's business plan. Provide an opinion on the plan's potential viability and recommend appropriate alterations.
2. Compare OFN's current and proposed consumer service offerings and pricing structure against major internet service providers in the area, such as Cox Communications and CenturyLink (Lumen). Identify strengths and weaknesses in the business strategy and provide recommendations for improvement if appropriate.
3. When applying alternative product and pricing structures, recalibrate forecasts in the conservative, moderate, and aggressive plan models. Otherwise, verify the accuracy and soundness of current forecasts.
4. Evaluate the feasibility of the Fiber Build Plan, provide cost estimates for capital improvements, and determine the time frame for OFN to break even, including assessing and paying off any debt financing for the Fiber-to-the-Premise project.
5. Provide 10-year estimates of maintenance needs.
6. Provide an assessment of a municipal operation of an internet enterprise such as OFN and identify the public good benefits and drawbacks to municipal service provision of internet. Determine the enterprise's market value and potential exit strategies should the City wish to divest itself of the enterprise.
7. Consultant might be required to host a workshop/presentation to City of Ocala's Council members and stakeholders to discuss any strategic/business plan findings.

CONSULTANT EMPLOYEES AND EQUIPMENT

1. Consultant must utilize competent employees in performing the work. Employees performing the work must be properly licensed or qualified as required by the scope/project.
2. The Consultant shall provide an assigned Project Manager, who will be the primary point of contact for the Consultant for the scope, schedule. The Consultant shall meet with the City's Project Manager on a regular basis and shall provide monthly progress reports as needed. The Consultant shall provide a detailed hourly breakdown for all progress/billing reports for the evaluation and processing of invoices. Consultant must provide a valid telephone number and address at all times to the City Project Manager. The telephone must be answered during normal working hours or voicemail must be available to take a message.
3. At the request of the City, the Consultant must replace any incompetent, unfaithful, abusive, or disorderly person in their employment. The City and the Consultant must each be promptly notified by the other of any complaints received.
4. The employees of the Consultant must wear suitable work clothes and personal protective equipment as defined by.
5. Consultant will operate as an independent contractor and not as an agent, representative, partner or employee of the City of Ocala, and shall control their operations at the work site, and be solely responsible for the acts or omissions of their employees.
6. No smoking is allowed on City property or projects.
7. Consultant must possess/obtain all required equipment to perform the work. A list of equipment shall be provided to the City upon request.
8. All company trucks must have a visible company name/logo on the outside of the vehicle.

CITY OF OCALA RESPONSIBILITIES

The City of Ocala will furnish the following services/data to the Consultant for the performance of services:

1. Provide access to drawings, specifications, schedules, reports, and other information prepared by and/or for the City of Ocala by others which are available to the City of Ocala and which the City of Ocala considers pertinent to the Consultant's responsibilities.
2. Access to City buildings and facilities to perform the work.
3. Provide office facilities for the Consultant as needed.

CONSULTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Consultant shall complete all work performed under this contract in accordance with policies and procedures of the City of Ocala and all applicable State and Federal laws, policies, procedures, and guidelines.
2. The Consultant shall obtain and pay for any and licenses, additional equipment, etc., required to fulfill this contract.
3. Data collected by the Consultant shall be in a format compatible with, or easily converted to City's databases. A sequential naming convention should be applied to the files and documentation provided to the City.

4. The Consultant shall ensure that all documents prepared under this contract have been prepared on a Windows-based operating system computer using the most current version of Microsoft Office, which includes: Word, Excel, Power Point, Access or any other software as specified and approved by City staff.
5. The Consultant shall keep the premises free at all times from accumulation of waste materials and rubbish caused by operations and employees.

SUB-CONSULTANTS

1. Services assigned to sub-consultants must be approved in advance by the City Project Manager.

PRICING AND AWARD

1. Price Proposal must include all direct and indirect costs to complete the project.
2. Award will be made to the highest ranked firm meeting all requirements outlined herein.
3. **AMOUNTS DUE TO THE CITY.** Contractor/Vendor must be current and remain current in all obligations due to the City during the performance of services under the Agreement. Payments to Contractor/Vendor may be offset by any delinquent amounts due to the City or fees and/or charges owed to the City.