

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE

5:00 PM CST, 1/8/21

#### RFP TITLE: SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

#### RFP CONTACT:

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#### PROPOSAL DEADLINE: JANUARY 8, 2021

#### INTRODUCTION:

There is a growing market demand for sustainable soy and for sustainable plant-based proteins/oils more broadly. In the U.S., use of the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) Certificate is increasing and verified sustainable soy currently accounts for more than 36% of U.S. soybean exports. Sustainability is a market differentiator for U.S. soy and the sector's performance on measures of sustainability is already well-documented.

#### PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC seeks a communications firm to develop a robust communications plan that includes sustainability messaging and communications materials aimed at informing buyers about the sustainability of U.S. Soy. This work will expand upon the messages and information shared through the [Dare to Compare campaign](#). The firm must have knowledge of the soy industry, agricultural conservation practices in the U.S., as well as experience with communications on agricultural sustainability.

#### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

Market demand for sustainable soy and plant-based protein/oils is increasing in response to growing consumer interest, companies' corporate sustainability strategies, and market regulations. U.S. Soy has a strong performance on sustainability measures and is well-positioned to supply customers interested in sustainable sourcing. In making purchasing decisions, buyers consider a number of factors including price. While the U.S. is competitive on price for a narrow window each year, customers interested in sustainable soy may be willing to pay a premium for U.S. soy if superior performance on sustainability measures is documented.

The contractor will develop a communications plan to communicate with buyers about the sustainability of U.S. Soy including the SSAP, SSAP-Renewable Energy Directive (SSAP-RED), Sustainable U.S. Soy, mapping to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, carbon footprint of

U.S. Soy, and forest protection in the U.S. This work will expand upon the messages and information shared through the [Dare to Compare campaign](#).

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Current or potential buyers of U.S. Soy

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

- Develop overall sustainability messaging and promotional strategy for Sustainable U.S. Soy, SSAP, and SSAP-RED for U.S. and international audiences.
  - Develop an outreach plan to the signatories of the Principles for Responsible Banking about SSAP.
- Support the USSEC Sustainability Team on responding to sustainability issues as they arise. Would expect this to be minimal, but proposals should demonstrate capabilities of issues response.
- Develop branding guidelines for sustainability logos. Logos have been developed, but guidelines on when they should be used and for which audiences need to be developed.
- Develop refreshed standard PowerPoint presentation slides on U.S. Soy Sustainability to include information on SSAP, SSAP-RED, Continuous Improvement Goals, Sustainable U.S. Soy Logo, U.S. forests, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the carbon footprint of U.S. Soy.
- Write 2 articles on SSAP and SSAP-RED for the USSEC website, qualified state soybean board communications (U.S. domestic market), and the USSEC newsletter.
- Create messaging and materials on U.S. grassland conversion, based upon upcoming report completion
- Recreate the Soy Export Sustainability LLC logo.
- Develop marketing materials on Sustainable U.S. Soy, SSAP, SSAP-RED, SDG mapping, and greenhouse gasses, including brochures (printed and electronic), blogposts
- Develop short informational videos on SSAP and SSAP-RED to be posted on USSEC’s media and used during presentations as well as on SSAP QR code landing page.
- Develop a consumer directed QR code and promotional website about Sustainable U.S. Soy tied to the Sustainable U.S. Soy logo that adopters of the SSAP logo can utilize.
- Redesign the [U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol document](#) to include updates to the protocol (as provided by USSEC).

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- All created materials should be presented in a format that can be translated by our regional translators.

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
February 12, 2021	Submit draft of redesigned SSAP
February 26, 2021	Submit final redesigned SSAP with USSEC input

February 15, 2021	Finalize grassland conversion messaging
March 1, 2021	Develop draft overall messaging and promotional strategy
March 19, 2021	Finalize the messaging and promotional strategy with USSEC feedback
April 2, 2021	Develop draft PowerPoint presentation slides on SSAP, SSAP-RED, Sustainable Development Goals and the carbon footprint of U.S. Soy
April 16, 2021	Finalize PowerPoint presentation slides with USSEC input
May 1, 2021	Finalize brand guidelines and logo design with input from USSEC
March 12, 2021	Draft marketing materials
March 12, 2021	Finalize marketing materials
April 2, 2021	Develop draft concept/script for videos on SSAP and SSAP-RED
May 3, 2021	Submit first cut of videos of SSAP and SSAP-RED
May 28, 2021	Finalize video of SSAP and SSAP-RED with USSEC input
July 1, 2021	Develop QR Code & Website for Sustainable U.S. Soy logo
Ongoing	Draft and finalize articles with USSEC input; provide support on issues response

#### PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is for the contract to last from **February 1, 2021** to **September 30, 2021**. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

#### RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** December 14, 2021
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** December 18, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** January 8, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** January 25, 2020

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:

1. Please email the proposal to [RFP@USSEC.ORG](mailto:RFP@USSEC.ORG) by **5:00PM Central Time on January 8, 2021**
2. A description of Prospective Contractor's capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
3. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables and timeline to complete the work.

3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
4. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
5. Detailed Budget
  - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.
6. Proposals should be no longer than **10 pages** (8 ½" x 11").

**NOTES:**

- Prospective Contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between USSEC and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC's prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learns from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by USSEC or Funding Sources.
  - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature

- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agrees to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

### *BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY*

**USSEC's strategy** can be found here: <http://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/>

**USB's Long Range Strategic Plan** can be found here: <http://unitedsoybean.org/about-usb/strategic-planning/>

We are a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusiness and agricultural organizations.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., we help build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

Our 15-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board, created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Because of the limitations on administrative and salary costs established in the Act, USB outsources the majority of its program management responsibilities to USB's three primary contractors:

- SmithBucklin-St. Louis for domestic marketing, new uses, production research and Board initiative activities;
- Osborn & Barr Communications for communications/public relations activities and;
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

As one of these three primary contractors USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

**Civil Rights Clause**

Contractor agrees that during the performance of this Agreement it will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, parental status or protected genetic information. Contractor further agrees that it will fully comply with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, without limitation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require Contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinance, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to Contractor.