

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
SUBMISSION DEADLINE  
5:00 PM CST, 03/31/2021**

**RFP TITLE: AMERICAS AGRIBUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY BASELINE**

**RFP CONTACT:**

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**PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 05:00 PM CST, MARCH 31, 2021**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is a non-profit organization that promotes U.S. soybeans and soybean products to international customers through knowledge transfer, on-site trainings, seminars, workshops, conferences, industry tours and demonstrations. The specific goal of the USSEC Americas Program is to promote within the region the use of United States soy products, in human consumption, aquaculture, animal feeds and the best feeding practices. A key program objective is to see a growing, long-term, high-quality, feed-based industry in the Americas Region and globally.

USSEC requests proposals to assist in the continued development, implementation and execution of strategies and programs within the Americas Region. For contractors, the expectations are to carry out the deliverables of the activities they are managing and are summarized in associated contracting documentation.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., USSEC helps 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.

**PURPOSE OF RFP:**

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an openly and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis will assist in determining the fair market value for the work to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate various proposals and select the best contractor for the job based on experience, availability, expertise, approach, and cost.

The purpose of this RFP is to produce a baseline report, to be published in PPT format, that presents the current state of different sustainability variables, relevant to USSEC, and that will determine future success in promotion. The contractor will identify qualitative and quantitative variables to be measured, explain their importance to support our Americas program funding to

our headquarters & donors, and ensure these variables can be followed-up in time. Also, to select the best communications frameworks for this endeavor and outline proper target markets, key accounts, and specific messaging for direct promotion of the SUSTAINABLE U.S. SOY™.

The goal is to create a starting scenario and show development to our headquarters and donors from there. Also, to create a solid message about sustainability in the region; thus, USSEC customers will be encouraged to sign the license agreement of the Sustainable U.S. SOY™. The scenario will likely emphasize in three countries in the Americas and provide sales arguments to make the case for U.S. SOY.

*Expected Results:*

- A report which outlines the state of agribusiness sustainability in the region, intended to be published in PDF format and shared with 10 key customers/influencers in the Americas region (executive PPT and full version PDF).
- Specific marketing and communications recommendations to conduct our programs until future update of the baseline.
- Continuous cooperation and collaboration with the USSEC Americas team, and specifically with the U.S. SOY Marketing Specialist Americas.

**BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:**

Sustainability is a key point of differentiation and can help drive demand among those companies where sustainability is an important buying consideration, but also an opportunity where sustainability might not yet be a critical purchasing factor. However, importers and end-users in the Americas need constant reminding about the sustainable U.S. SOY advantage.

This proposal is designed to educate buyers in the Americas region on better understanding the value of the Sustainable U.S. SOY™; a free trademark license offered to customers who buy at least 60% of U.S. SOY products out of their total purchases in a marketing year.

The U.S. Soybean Export Council aims to maximize awareness and preference for U.S. SOY from the key decision makers by providing direct marketing & technical information. They will be provided with the information needed to take decisions as well as to acknowledge the advantages and value of U.S. soybean products into different animal feed and crushing businesses.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

Through this proposal, influential importers and end-user will acknowledge the value of the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ to increase demand among targeted companies in the region.

## **2) SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

- Proposal must be itemized, if there are different employees working at different rates and different amounts of hours, each of those amounts/employees/units of time will need to be listed out.
- Professional fees are paid monthly upon actual expenses. USSEC will require an invoice for the number of units worked, along with an English narrative report of services provided during the month.
- Deliverables created to distribute among USSEC customers should be provided in English and Spanish.

| <b>Completion Date</b>             | <b>Description of Deliverables</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>April 9, 2021</b>               | <i>Provide USSEC project manager with documentation for contract:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1. Signed W9 or W8BEN-E</i></li><li><i>2. Banking information (USSEC template)</i></li><li><i>3. Payment terms</i></li></ol>  |
| <b>April 16, 2021</b>              | <i>Work with USSEC assigned staff to develop a program for each phase. Program should include topics such as but not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1. Inquiry of compliance issues.</i></li><li><i>2. Definition of the scope of the work.</i></li><li><i>3. Work plan for the implementation.</i></li><li><i>4. Proposal of success measures.</i></li></ol>  |
| <b>April 19 – October 30, 2021</b> | <p><i>Phase 1: Variable identification</i></p> <p><i>The contractor will review existent secondary sources and conduct data collection methods to contrast with primary sources to identify and describe variables that should be added in the baseline, considering future updates. Possible variables categories are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1. Market offer: i.e., Number of agribusiness products labeled as sustainable, among others.</i></li><li><i>2. Consumer behavior: i.e., Willingness of consumers to buy sustainable, among others.</i></li><li><i>3. Sustainable techniques: process, marketing, logistics, etc.</i></li><li><i>4. ESG and sustainability reporting.</i></li></ol> <p><i>Phase 2: Variable justification &amp; projection</i></p> <p><i>The contractor will elaborate the case for each variable selected, those on a second list that might be useful in the future, and those completely rejected. Consistency and solid arguments are needed to demonstrate this is an unbiased baseline which is useful for USSEC but also for the Americas agribusiness industry.</i></p> <p><i>Phase 3: Communications strategy</i></p> <p><i>The contractor will design a marketing &amp; communication strategy for USSEC Americas sustainability programs until future update of the baseline.</i></p> |

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|   | <p><i>Phase 4: Report writing</i></p> <p><i>The agency will produce a 10-slide executive report for USSEC, and full report for distribution to key customers.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>No later than November 30, 2021</b></p> | <p><i>Provide USSEC project manager with:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Invoice</i></li> <li><i>2. Electronic materials for each phase.</i></li> <li><i>3. Post-board report including summary and receipts of all expenses.</i></li> <li><i>4. Brief English narrative report of the event notifying issues, challenges, next steps and recommendations.</i></li> </ol> |

#### RFP TIMELINE:

- RFP distribution: **March 4th, 2021.**
- Last day to submit questions: **March 19, 2021 by 05:00 PM CST**
- Project proposals due: **March 31, 2021 by 05:00 PM CST** - email to [americasRFP@ussec.org](mailto:americasRFP@ussec.org)
- Selections made by **April 2, 2021.**
- Prospective contractors notified by **April 5, 2021.**

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

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

- 1. Please email the proposal to [americasRFP@ussec.org](mailto:americasRFP@ussec.org) by 5:00PM CST on March 31, 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.*
- 4. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.*
- 5. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.*
- 6. 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 doing the work.*
- 7. 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, audiotope, 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.