

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
END RESULT CONTRACT  
SUBMISSION DEADLINE  
5:00 PM CST, 07/09/2021**

**RFP TITLE: AMERICAS SUSTAINABILITY PROMOTION CAMPAIGN**

**RFP CONTACT:**

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**PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 17:00 CST, July 9, 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.

Sustainability is a key point of differentiation for U.S. SOY, and it is a growing topic of interest for customers in the Americas. To build on this momentum, USSEC seeks to educate current and potential customers in the Americas, as well as end users, about the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ advantage.

**PURPOSE OF RFP:**

USSEC seeks a contractor to develop and implement a communications strategy and promotional campaign to elevate recognition and use of the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ brand and logo within key markets in the Americas. The strategy and campaign will include broad-based communications to the general public via mass media outlets and social media as well point-of-sale printed or electronic materials for use by customers. The focus countries are Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. The contractor must have experience with communications on sustainable agriculture, knowledge of the media markets in the target countries, the capacity to produce all required communications materials, and the ability to coordinate with media outlets to conduct the campaign.

**BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:**

In marketing year 2021, U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) certificates have accompanied 40% of U.S. soybean exports. The use of SSAP has grown exponentially since it was developed in 2014, with SSAP shipments totaling over 20 MMT the past two years. The Americas region has been adopting the SSAP in their sourcing of U.S. SOY, with close to 70% of the exports into the Americas accompanied by an SSAP certificate.

The SSAP is one way that U.S. farmers can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and continuous improvement. This protocol has commanded the attention and support of consumers worldwide. Companies that are using the SSAP can label their products, promotional items, and marketing materials with the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ logo (SUSS™). The logo is 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 logo allows for recognition of the inclusion of U.S. SOY in whole bean, oil, and food products. The Sustainable U.S. SOY™ logo is currently used by more than 30 companies on over 460 products, across five USSEC regions. Within the Americas, eight companies are using the logo on 203 products. Products include animal feed, cooking oil, soy lecithin, soybean meal, soybean hulls, textured soy protein, and extruder soybean powder. Also, at least eight additional companies have expressed interest in adopting the logo due to increasing market demands and consumer behavior shift.

Through this RFP, USSEC seeks a contractor to develop a communications strategy and implement a communications campaign that will elevate the profile of the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ brand and logo within the target countries, thereby increasing its value to customers in the region. The messaging will be consistent with USSEC's overall communications plan on Sustainable U.S. SOY™ and will explain sustainability and the advantages provided by the U.S. SOY industry from the farm, until the final consumer.

In each country, the campaigns will be conducted in collaboration with firms that have adopted the SSAP logo in their marketing or other potential partners with leverage in sustainability messaging. The campaign will include broad-based communications to a general audience, for example through advertisements in radio, television, or social media outlets, as well as point-of-sale materials that firms can use with their customers, such as posters or brochures. The communications materials for each country will acknowledge all companies in that country that use the Sustainable U.S. SOY™ logo. The promotion campaign must be conducted in Spanish. All activities, administrative procedures, partnerships, and engagements must be completed by the end of the program year (December 2021).

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

The target audience for the strategy is USSEC. The target audience for the communications campaign includes the general public in the five focus countries as well as customers and end users of Sustainable U.S. SOY™.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

- Develop a communications strategy to elevate the recognition and use of Sustainable U.S. SOY™ brand and logo in the following countries: Colombia (30% of total effort), Mexico (20%), Guatemala (20%), Costa Rica (20%), and Dominican Republic (10%). The strategy will be consistent with global Sustainable U.S. SOY™ communications plan, the logo use policy, and the requirements of the project's funder. The strategy will include: defining the target audience, recommended messaging, types of communications materials, media outlets, a

timeline for rollout of the campaign in each country, and metrics for success. The contractor will present the strategy to USSEC for input and final approval.

- Develop all communications materials as agreed to in the communications strategy. USSEC must review and approve materials before they are finalized. All materials will be available for USSEC and its customers to continue to use after the conclusion of the contract. Materials must be available in Spanish and English, but any advertising or media outreach would be in Spanish
- Carry out the communication campaign in each country according to the agreed upon schedule. This may include printing and distribution of materials, coordinating ad placement in media outlets, providing public relations support, or other actions to roll out the plan.

### **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The contractor is expected to work closely with the USSEC team to develop and implement the communications strategy and campaign. USSEC will provide the successful applicant with further information on existing general communications plans and preferred messaging. USSEC will also provide the contractor with information on compliance requirements from the project’s funder.

Applicants should include an illustrative, general plan for the campaign as part of their proposal including suggested types of communications materials and types of media outlets to demonstrate their capabilities and produce a budget estimate. Budgets should include all costs for producing and disseminating communications materials.

Note the following requirements for preparing the budget proposal:

- 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.
- Payments are made monthly upon actual deliverables. USSEC will require an invoice for the number of units worked, along with an English narrative report of services provided during the month.
- The fee must include all consulting fees, employee compensation and benefits, overhead, travel expenses or any other type of expenses incurred to effectively complete the services/deliverables agreed upon. The payment represents the sole and complete liability of USSEC for services rendered in relation to the agreement and every payment must be attached to a deliverable.
- USSEC budget table template must be completed outlining how the fee was derived, including hourly rates and an estimated total number of hours, as well as the anticipated out-of-pocket expenses. USSEC will rate proposals based on the following factors:
  - Responsiveness to the requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal (RFP).
  - Relevant past performance/experience
  - Samples of work
  - Fee (described above)
- This proposal is subject to approval of proper funding.

<b><i>Completion Date</i></b>	<b><i>Description of Deliverables</i></b>
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<b><i>Within one week of contract signing</i></b>	<i>Conduct a kick-off meeting with USSEC to discuss background information and brainstorming for strategy development</i>
<b><i>July 28, 2021</i></b>	<i>Submit and present the draft communications strategy to the USSEC team for discussion and feedback. The strategy will incorporate all content described in the Scope of Work including a calendar for delivery of individual communications materials and media placements.</i>
<b><i>August 7, 2021</i></b>	<i>Finalize strategy with USSEC comments addressed</i>
<b><i>Ongoing following the schedule agreed to in the strategy</i></b>	<i>Carry out all activities described in the campaign plan. Also, gather electronic materials and photographic evidence of the campaign.</i>
<b><i>No later than December 23, 2021</i></b>	<p><i>Provide USSEC project manager with:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Electronic versions of all materials and photographic evidence of the campaign.</i></li> <li><i>2. Brief English narrative report of the campaign notifying issues, challenges, next steps, and recommendations.</i></li> </ol>

#### **RFP TIMELINE:**

- RFP distribution: June 17, 2021.
- Last day to submit questions: July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, by 17:00 CST
- Project proposals due: July 9, 2021, by 17:00 CST - email to [AmericasRFP@ussec.org](mailto:AmericasRFP@ussec.org)
- Selections made by July 14, 2021.
- Prospective contractors notified by July 16, 2021.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

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

1. To receive an invitation to the Q&A Session, please email [AmericasRFP@ussec.org](mailto:AmericasRFP@ussec.org) by July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.
2. *Please email the proposal to [americasRFP@ussec.org](mailto:americasRFP@ussec.org) by 17:00 CST on July 9, 2021*
3. A description of Prospective Contractor's capabilities, resources, and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
4. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables, and timeline to complete the work.
5. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
6. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
7. 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.

8. 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.