

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

5:00 PM CST, 1/21/2022

RFP TITLE: COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTOR

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 1/21/2022

INTRODUCTION:

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, advocates for the use of soy in livestock and aquaculture feed and human consumption, promotes the benefits of soy use through education and connects industry leaders through a robust membership program.

USSEC has established Soy Excellence Centers (SEC) to aid emerging markets in addressing their protein challenges and create a cascade of demand for soy products by providing sustainable, renewable learning models. USSEC, launched the first Soy Excellence Center in 2019 in the Middle East/North Africa. Since then, other centers have launched in Sub Saharan Africa, the Americas and SE Asia.

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 seek proposals to for a Communications and Community Development contractor for the Soy Excellence Centers (SECs). The chosen contract will drive engagement and growth within the SEC's professional development community, build the reputation of the SECs, and execute SEC-focused investor and partner communications.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

The USSEC SEC's are a work force training and capacity building program targeting enterprises in the protein value chain in emerging markets. The SEC's currently operate in four regions, the Americas, Asia, Middle East and North Africa and Nigeria.

The basic and intermediate training provided to the work force in enterprises targeted by USSEC include poultry, aquaculture, feed production, swine and crush plant operations. The SEC training readies the participating enterprises to be for increase in protein demand in their markets.

It is USSEC intention to create a community among SEC certificate holders focused on continuing professional development, and through this community increase awareness and affinity for U.S. soy.

The contractor selected by USSEC will lead the strategy and execution around the creation of the SEC community, as well as coordinate and plan communications promoting the community and the SEC's to internal and external target audiences.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The target audience for the project include trainees that complete SEC training and receive certificates of completion, the industry in target markets that sponsor trainees, U.S. soy industry, potential foundation and investors and global USSEC representatives

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

- Community Development and Activation
 - Drive industry participation by creating and sustaining a dynamic digital community focused on the professional development mission of the SECs.
 - Shape global reputation of SECs domestically and internationally
 - Using the SEC digital learning management system (LMS) platform create and deliver dynamic content that will energize engagement and interaction within the SEC digital community.
 - Working with the SEC team develop and activate content that will drive increased engagement and involvement of community members.
 - Develop schedule of regular and frequent engagement points with community members
 - Post community content and continuing education topics on SEC digital platform
 - Design and execute a community gamification program that rewards and incentivizes engagement with SEC content and programs
 - Monitor and analyze community members' engagement with content and make improvements to meet members' expectations
 - Through constant engagement with community members develop an understanding of SEC industry participants across regions, and the best content and channels to engage with them.

- Communications Functions, Duties and Responsibilities
 - Partner with the SEC program lead and regions on branding, communications and amplification, measurement, and reporting
 - Develop and lead SEC online and social media community development and management
 - Direct investor and partner communications to sustain long term support and funding and support of SECs
 - Serve as point person to USSEC staff and contractors to ensure SEC branding guidelines, and coordinated communications planning and execution
 - Facilitate communications operations and coordination

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION (if applicable)

Contractor Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Advanced proficiency with Office 365 products and related software. HubSpot (or other CRM/digital communications program) and WordPress experience required. LMS experience a plus
- Ability to lead development and execution of impactful and measurable communications programs at global scale through proactive collaboration and open communication
- Comfortable working with evolving priorities in a fast-paced, matrixed environment where multi-tasking is required
- Culturally agile, a non-hierarchical collaborator, and act as a liaison between domestic and international colleagues
- Ability to bring creativity to technical content
- Have a growth mindset and pursues operational excellence
- Ability to prioritize and managing multiple projects and client relationships
- Proficiency in digital and social media platforms

Other Experience

- Food / agriculture / consumer goods / education sector communications is a plus
- Familiarity with food & ag industry
- Familiarity with U.S. agriculture, agricultural programs, and policies a plus
- Success working across cultures and nationalities

Requirements

- Ability to travel domestically & internationally, and work productively across international time zones
- Provide specific examples of similar community development and communications experience in the proposal

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
On or before March 15, 2022	Submission of overall plan for SEC community activation, communications plan and calendar, and timelines for implementation through December 31, 2022
Last day of each month	Monthly report detailing progress made in SEC community activation and communications
Weekly	Participate in SEC team meetings
Ad Hoc	Participation in meetings and preparation of reports as directed by the SEC leadership Preparation of communications on SEC progress as directed by SEC leadership
Ongoing	Implementation of approved SEC community development and communications plan

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is for the work to last from February 1-December 31, 2022 (or be completed by a certain date). We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** January 5, 2022
- **RFP Briefing:** January 14, 2022 8:00-9:00 am CST
Zoom meeting information:
<https://ussec-org.zoom.us/j/91549221530?pwd=WEVXMnBCWGkzZXhxeFpkU3pwQnpkUT09>
Meeting ID: 915 4922 1530
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** January 19, 2022 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** January 21, 2022 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** January 24, 2022

- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** February 1, 2022

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG by *5:00PM Central Time on XYZ*
2. A description of Prospective Contractor's capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP. Examples of similar work is encouraged.
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.

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.