

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: COMMUNICATIONS FREELANCER CONTRACTORS

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2022

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this RFP is to identify communications freelance professionals as full- or part-time contractors to lead and/or support the development and/or implementation of communications plans and/or initiatives. U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) has an ongoing U.S. Soy reputation and B2B marketing communications strategy and program to shape the differentiation, preference, and market access for U.S. Soy.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE RFP:

USSEC seeks multiple freelance contractors with experience and capacity to support:

- the brand reputation of U.S. Soy and USSEC, and,
- U.S. Soy's B2B marketing and communications.

Freelance contractors will be selected for the period of February 15, 2022 through September 30, 2022 to align with the current fiscal year.

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.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- B2B customers in animal nutrition, aquaculture, oil, soy food sectors
- (traders; R&D / product development; supply chain - procurement, nutritionist; manufacturing / production; product management / marketing; finance; sustainability)
- International food and agriculture stakeholders
- USSEC Members and Investors

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

Communications Plans

- U.S. Soy differentiation and preference with user industries (aquaculture and animal protein, human, oil)
- Soy Excellence Centers
- Support integration of WorldWide and Region Communications plans and calendar

Branding and Marketing Materials

Brand identity, and communications and marketing materials and plans development (for example but not limited to)

- Logos
- Videos and videography
- Visuals, infographics, pictures, photography
- Newsletters
- Annual report
- Banners
- Ads
- Booth
- Invitations
- Event collateral
- Giveaways

Content Development

- Blog posts and web content
- Social media posts
- Videos, and videography
- Visuals, infographics, pictures, photography
- News releases
- Email
- Newsletters
- Annual report
- Country / market snapshots
- PowerPoints
- Speeches / talking points

Digital and social media

- Website and social media channels design and content refresh, updates, and metrics reporting
- Define USSEC's social voice; develop and implement plans to build USSEC's presence on social media as a thought leader and consistent participant in relevant conversations about food, ag, ESG/sustainability, and trade. Cultivate and maintain USSEC's social media community.

- Manage USSEC Hubspot communications and marketing assets, organize targeted campaigns in collaboration with internal teams, and agency partner(s). Provide organization wide leadership in utilization and training of Hubspot in direct marketing communications

News media

- Build and maintain media list and relationships
- Develop media pitch / briefing / background materials, talking points, Q&A, responses to media inquiries
- Preparation and coordination of spokespeople for interactions; media interaction (interview / story) pitching, generate coverage, and reporting

Executive Visibility

- Develop and implement USSEC leaders' executive visibility plans to position as thought leaders and consistent participants in relevant conversations, leveraging content (e.g. speeches/ talking points, presentations, videos, visuals etc.); social media conversation and connections; events/speaking engagements; and news media
- Identify and engage potential food and ag industry leaders and/or related stakeholders for stakeholder engagement / dialogue with USSEC leaders

Issues management

- Issues mapping (health, environment, trade) with monthly dashboard
- Develop issues preparedness and response plans to mitigate and manage issues effectively via key messages, content (holding statements/blog post/FAQs, video), and leveraging third-parties

Market Research

- Support market research needs related to customer segmentation, customer journey, and customer insights on drivers of differentiation and preference

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** January 14, 2022
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** January 25, 2022 by 11:59 PM Chicago time
- **Project Proposals Due:** January 31, 2022 by 11:59 PM Chicago time
- **Selections Made By:** February 10, 2022
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** February 11, 2022

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to **RFP@USSEC.ORG** by 11:59pm Chicago time on January 31, 2022.
2. A description of the prospective Freelancer's capabilities, experience, and education. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Freelancer (or personnel) to be assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
4. Budget: All proposals for services must provide the scope of work that the freelance contractor proposes to cover and a breakout of the fee including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the approx. number of hours anticipated to execute the work.
5. Proposals for this work can address it in its entirety or specific scopes of work that a freelancer is most competent to address. **Segment proposal headers according to support areas, as defined under SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK.**
6. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
7. Proposals should be no longer than **10 pages** (8 ½" x 11").

NOTES:

- Prospective Freelancers 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.

ABOUT U.S. SOYBEAN EXPORT COUNCIL (USSEC)

Soybeans are the United States' No. 1 food and agricultural export. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is focused on building preference, improving the value, and enabling market access for the use of [U.S. Soy](#) for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in 82 countries across the world.

USSEC is a dynamic partnership of U.S. soybean producers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations; and connects food and agriculture industry leaders through a robust membership program.

USSEC is farmer-funded by checkoff funds invested by the United Soybean Board, various state soybean councils, the food and agriculture industry, and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

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:

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

To learn more, visit www.ussec.org and www.ussoy.org, and engage with us on USSEC's [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and U.S. Soy's [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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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.

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.