

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
**5:00 PM CST, 02/06/2023**

**RFP TITLE: OUTREACH TO INTERNATIONAL BANKS ON U.S. SOY SUSTAINABILITY**

### **RFP CONTACT:**

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**PROPOSAL DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 6, 2023**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., the United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC) helps build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of U.S. Soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

Sustainability is an important differentiator for U.S. Soy. U.S. soybean farmers are leaders in environmentally sustainable production, the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) is recognized in key export markets, and use of SSAP certificates and the Sustainable U.S. Soy logo have been increasing.

### **PURPOSE OF RFP:**

USSEC seeks a contractor to conduct outreach to international banks and other financial institutions who have or are developing soy sourcing policies. The contractor will serve as a representative of U.S. Soy to promote understanding of U.S. Soy sustainability and the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) within the banking/finance sector. The primary focus will be on engagement with financial institutions that are signatories to the United Nations Environment Program Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) Principles for Responsible Banking. The contractor should have an understanding of financial institutions' commitments under the UNEP FI Principles for Responsible Banking, experience communicating with financial institutions about agricultural sustainability issues, and familiarity with the SSAP.

### **BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:**

The UNEP FI Principles for Responsible Banking serve as a framework for financial institutions to develop strategies and business practices that align with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement, and relevant regional or national initiatives. Since it began in 2019, more than 300 financial institutions around the world have joined the program. As a part

of their commitments under the Principles for Responsible Banking, financial institutions conduct an environmental impact analysis of their lending and investment portfolios, develop targets and identify actions to address the most significant impacts, and regularly report on progress. As a part of this process, financial institutions active in the food and agriculture sector are developing sustainable sourcing policies for agricultural commodities. USSEC is aware of at least 21 financial institutions that either currently have or are in the process of developing soy sourcing policies. These policies have the potential to impact international customers' ability to access loan or investment financing for their businesses. Current U.S. Soy sustainability initiatives and the SSAP are highly complementary to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement, and there is a need to increase awareness of this within the banking and financial sector. The contractor will engage with financial institutions to improve their understanding of how U.S. Soy sustainability and the SSAP align with their soy sourcing policies and contribute to their sustainability targets.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** International financial institutions that are signatories to the UNEP FI Principles for Responsible Banking with soy sourcing policies that are active or in development. The majority of the target financial institutions are based in the U.S. or Europe.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

- Work with USSEC to develop a list of financial institutions and individual contacts for outreach. USSEC has a preliminary list of financial institutions that currently have or are in the process of developing soy sourcing policies. The contractor will assist with further developing the list; this will include identifying the appropriate contact people within the institutions. The primary focus will be on financial institutions that are signatories to the UNEP FI Principles for Responsible Banking and that serve international customers of U.S. Soy.
- Arrange and conduct meetings (virtual or in-person) with relevant institutions to discuss U.S. Soy sustainability, the SSAP, and their alignment with the financial institutions' soy sourcing policies. USSEC already has informational materials and PowerPoint presentations for the contractor to use during the meetings.
- Produce reports summarizing the meetings including participant contact information, outcomes, and recommended next steps.
  - Touch base with USSEC (email or call) after key meetings with any time sensitive information or urgent follow up action items.
  - Submit monthly summary reports.
  - Submit a final report summarizing all meetings held during the contract period.

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
Within 5 business days of contract start date	Conduct a kick-off call with the USSEC sustainability team to discuss the scope and objectives of the assignment, additional background information, timeline, and communication.
Ongoing as needed	Provide regular check-ins or updates to the USSEC sustainability team as agreed to during the kick-off call.
March 15, 2023	Read the SSAP and key documents related to soy sustainability, review the informational materials and PowerPoint, and discuss any questions with the USSEC sustainability team.
March 15, 2023	Submit draft list of target financial institutions and contact people. The list will include: the name of the institution; location (city and country); name, title, and contact information of key individuals; status of soy sourcing policy (active or in development); proposed meeting format (in-person or virtual); and approximate timeframe for the meeting (month).
March 29, 2023	Submit final list of target financial institutions with USSEC feedback addressed
September 15, 2023	Submit draft summary report of meetings conducted including the main topics discussed, participants' main questions or concerns, outcomes, and recommended next steps. The report should include the meeting schedule – date, financial institution name, contact information of participants (name, title, email/phone), and location (if in person). Conduct a final call/meeting with the USSEC sustainability team to discuss findings and recommendations.
September 30, 2023	Submit final summary report with USSEC feedback addressed.

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

The estimated contract dates are **March 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023**

**RFP TIMELINE:**

- **RFP Distribution:** January 19, 2023
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** January 30, 2023 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** February 6, 2023 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** February 17, 2023
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** February 17, 2023

**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) & [LVargas@ussec.org](mailto:LVargas@ussec.org) by **5:00PM Central Time** on **February 6, 2023**.
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.