

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

March 17, 2023 by 5:00PM DUBAI TIME

RFP TITLE: INDIA MARKET ACCESS ADVISORY

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE:

INTRODUCTION:

The United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC) requests proposals to assist in the continued development, implementation and execution of strategies and programs within the South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (SAASSA) Region. For contractors, the expectations are to carry out the deliverables of the activities they are managing and are summarized in associated contracting documentation. Therefore, specific outputs and deliverables for personnel will be included as engagements with key contractors are formalized. Administrative performance will be based on delivering on the terms of those contracts. Contractors are required to provide monthly reports on progress if they are a long-term contractor, or post event reports if they are retained for a specific event. Information from the reports is used to keep stakeholders informed of the progress of their investment.

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 US 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.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

USSEC has collaborated with India since 1996. India is currently one of the largest importer of edible oil, though palm oil remains the largest but soy oil and sunflower oil have been

increasing and the government wants to reduce the dependence on Palm Oil. Soy Oil is on TRQ until June 30th 2023.

In 2021, India permitted the import of GM soybean meal. Moreover, India's soy food industry is expanding as consumers want more and more high quality food products, but finding available raw materials to source is a huge challenge.

This RFP seeks to retain a firm until Sept 30, 2023 for the following items:

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide strategic advice around market complexities, focused USSEC narrative and targeted stakeholder identification.
- Identification of opportunities to capitalize on for USSEC to engage with stakeholders, leveraging bilateral avenues and India's 2023 G20 Presidency/B20 opportunities.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Soy Importers, refiners, wholesale distributors, exporters, retail distributors, cold chain providers, industry associations, government agencies, commodity traders and brokers, restaurants, hotels and other institutions, Soybean crushers, feed manufacturers, livestock/aquaculture and poultry producers

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

The selected policy strategy advisory firm will provide the following support services to USSEC in India.

Strategic Advice on Market Complexity, Narrative and Policy and Stakeholder Identification

- **Understand and decipher the market complexity for USSEC's with Boots on Ground market intelligence** and closely track policy and regulatory developments in the soybean sector, leveraging the consulting firms' extensive networks with the Indian government, business community and civil society.
- Identification of industry partners, B2B customers in animal nutrition, aquaculture, oil, and soy food sectors in India for USSEC to forge strategic alliances.
- Monitor and analyze major changes or significant shifts in the geo-political, economic, trade and industry developments that might impact USSEC's interests. Areas to be monitored will include but may not be restricted to:
 - US-India Bilateral trade negotiations and developments from both U.S. and Indian agencies with potential impact on agricultural policy agendas and negotiations.
 - Domestic soybean production and procurement policies in India.
 - Incentives or soybean subsidies, import of soybean and soybean products.
 - Analysis of the public information and report on US and Indian trade policy initiatives.

- Proprietary information relevant to the USSEC’s activities in India from the government, trade associations and private sector.
- Relevant personnel changes in the US and Indian governments including insights on their background and views.
- Updates and insights on policy recommendations from the relevant G20 working groups and B20 taskforces under India’s presidency.
- **Provide timely updates and reports on a monthly or bi-weekly basis** on the above areas for proactive action. The above information will be compiled into monthly written reports. Virtual briefings to supplement written reports may also be conducted as required
- **Support “development of a bespoke narrative”** by aligning USSEC’s market objectives to the government’s strategic policy objectives in the soybean, feedstock and the larger agriculture and nutrition domain.
- **Map relevant stakeholders**, and indicate their level of influence, describe their political interconnectedness, and evaluate their sentiments toward USSEC’s market access issues. This includes identifying throughout the process allies, possible opponents and vested interests.
 - Stakeholder map will include government officials and regulators, influencers from the private sector, think tanks/academia, advocacy groups, industry and trade associations and key opinion leaders (KOLs) who are relevant. The maps will be reviewed and updated periodically.

Engagement Strategy Development and Thought Leadership Support

- Analyze and provide strategic advice around opportunities **for USSEC to engage and further its India narrative.**
- Support USSEC’s executives in **building relations with relevant identified stakeholders.** In this process, the contractor will:
 - Identify key and relevant Government of India stakeholders who will be critical to India’s soybean import policy.
 - Develop on a strategy for USSEC’s engagement and advocacy including meeting sequencing and bespoke messaging.
 - Create and tailor meeting request letters to the officials of relevance to USSEC’s interests in the Market, including from the appropriate G20 working groups.
 - Provide briefing materials and talking points.
 - Identify proper channels for delivering the meeting requests, and support in following-up with the requests.
- The contractor will also **track and monitor developments at relevant G20 working groups and B20 task forces** in order to identify specific engagement opportunities for USSEC.
- The contractor will also **leverage its knowledge partnership** with USIBC to provide USSEC a platform for education.
 - **Identify thought leadership opportunities for USSEC** to effectively deliver USSEC’s messages to key stakeholders (contractor to support organizing an event/ seminar upon the USSEC’s approval).

- Identification of stakeholders to be invited to the event. To attract the right audience, the contractor will utilize its existing exhaustive list of stakeholders in the Indian market which includes government personnel, industry associations, academia and media.
- Provide talking points, stakeholder bios and other required briefing materials;
- Produce notes and recommendations for USSEC.

This development must be in accordance with the policies and procedures and will utilize approved templates and forms.

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
Monthly	1. Provide Budget & Accounting Analyst with CC to the Regional Director & Project Manager with the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Executive English Narrative Report (In USSEC Template) with services rendered during the month, that should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Brief description of near or future potential for the use of soybean products b. Report progress toward the situation described in each activity summary c. Recommendations and opportunity areas for further programs or events d. List of key industry contacts e. Progress towards USSEC projects f. Action photos/vidoes (if any)
30 days before <u>regional travel</u> incurs within contract terms	1. Send Travel Authorization Form (TA) to the Sr Regional Project Manager with CC to Project Manager
45 days before <u>out of region travel</u> incurs within contract terms	1. Send Travel Authorization Form (TA) to Sr Regional Project Manager with CC to Project Manager
No later than 30 days after <u>travel incurs</u> within contract terms	1. Provide Budget & Accounting Analyst with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) USSEC Travel Expense Report (in USSEC Template) b) USSEC Travel Mission Report (in USSEC Template)

RFP TIMELINE:

- RFP Distribution: February 13, 2023
- Last Day to Submit Questions: March 15, 2023
- Project Proposals Due: March 17, 2023
- Selections Made By: March 20, 2023

- Prospective Contractors Notified By: March 22, 2023
- Expected Contract Begin Date: April 1, 2023

Please email the proposal to nsharma@ct.ussec.org and RFP@ussec.org

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

- At least 10 years' relevant experience living, working operating in India
- Ability to network and build relationships
- A proven track record of strategic thinking and planning
- Ability to multitask by planning and implementing many projects at one time
- Highest moral integrity and character
- Located full time in India, but preferably with networks outside of India

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to nsharma@ct.ussec.org and RFP@ussec.org by 5:00PM Dubai time on March 17, 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: <https://ussec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USSEC-Strategic-Plan-2025.pdf>

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.

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.