

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

### **SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

**5:00 PM CST, 1/31/2024**

### **RFP TITLE: DATABASE ASSESSMENT OF USSES.ORG**

#### **RFP CONTACT:**

Name: Kim Liliensiek

Phone #: +1-636-449-6056 or +1-660-537-3964

Email: [kliliensiek@ussec.org](mailto:kliliensiek@ussec.org)

### **PROPOSAL DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2024**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Due to global trade regulations and data protection efforts, this RFP outlines a critical examination of the <https://www.ussec.org/> front-end and back-end processes to ensure strict adherence to exporter and customer legal compliance, bolstering trust and credibility while facilitating success in executing the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol.

#### **PURPOSE OF RFP:**

The purpose of this proposal is to outline a comprehensive assessment of <https://www.ussec.org/>, aimed at critically evaluating both its front-end and back-end processes to ensure strict adherence to exporter and customer legal compliance. Global trade regulations and customer data protections are now standard across web platforms, and this will seek to identify and rectify any potential non-compliance issues that may exist within the website's operations. By examining the front-end processes, such as user interface, content, and exporter and customer-facing interactions, we intend to verify that the platform provides accurate and accessible information while safeguarding against any misrepresentations or deceptive practices. Simultaneously, the assessment will delve into the back-end processes, including data handling, security measures, and regulatory adherence, to ensure that user information is handled securely, and the organization meets all legal obligations. The proposal aims to secure trust and credibility for <https://www.ussec.org/> and its users, fostering an environment that not only adheres to legal compliance but also builds a solid foundation for long-term success in executing the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol.

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

The Soy Export Sustainability, LLC oversees <https://www.ussec.org/>, a platform for international sustainability verification of U.S Soy exports, essential for the exchange of information, certificates, and data between U.S. exporters and their international customers, with a commitment to trust, transparency, and legal compliance.

The primary objective of this project is a comprehensive assessment with a specific focus on legal compliance, essential to USSEC’s core commitment to the highest standards of regulatory adherence. The assessment will emphasize regulatory compliance, data security, privacy, user agreements, contracts, and export compliance, ensuring alignment with federal, state, and international regulations, safeguarding user data, validating the legality of user agreements and contracts, and ensuring export law compliance.

Anticipated outcomes include an in-depth assessment report to entail comprehensive insights into legal compliance, recommended solutions for compliance gaps, and potential issuance of a compliance certification if <https://www.ussec.org/> aligns with all relevant laws and regulations. We invite proposals from firms and legal compliance experts to participate in this assessment, allowing for future customization to meet specific requirements.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** The direct audience for the study is the USSEC Sustainability Team.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

The scope of work for the legal compliance assessment entails a collaborative effort between the contractor and USSEC. Initially, they will jointly define the assessment's scope, identifying key evaluation areas, and develop a comprehensive assessment plan with clear objectives and criteria, along with a defined approach and methodology. Following this, the contractor will gain full access to <https://www.ussec.org/> with the assistance of USSEC, both back-end and front-end, and all relevant website documentation. They will meticulously review user agreements, contracts, and privacy policies, examining export-related procedures, data security measures, and regulatory compliance, assessing alignment with federal, state, and international laws. Subsequently, the contractor will perform a remote assessment, verify legal compliance implementation, analyze collected data, identify compliance gaps and suggest user data protection improvements. The contractor will deliver a comprehensive report, including findings, recommendations, and solutions to enhance legal compliance, potentially leading to compliance certifications. They will engage in discussions with USSEC, collaborate to address compliance gaps, and aim for legal compliance certification. The contractor will also maintain detailed records, propose a continuous legal compliance monitoring plan, and assist in implementing recommendations to ensure ongoing legal adherence and transparency.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- All work must be completed by May 31, 2024. Other dates listed in the deliverables section below are illustrative, and applicants may propose adjustments to the deliverables schedule, if doing so will result in a higher quality product.

**DELIVERABLES:**

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
February 12, 2024	Submit an assessment methodology document for USSEC to review and provide feedback

February 23, 2024	Submit the final assessment methodology report incorporating USSEC's feedback
May 31, 2024	Deliver the following to USSEC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Assessment Report</li> </ul>
May 31, 2024	Submit all invoices.

#### PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is for the contract to last from February 5, 2024 to May 31, 2024. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

#### RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** January 15, 2024,
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** January 29, 2024 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** January 31, 2024 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** February 5, 2024

#### 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) by **5:00PM Central Time** on **January 31, 2024**.
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, 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.