

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
SUBMISSION DEADLINE
March 17, 2025 – 5:00 PM EST

RFP TITLE: BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL AGRICULTURE PROMOTION PROGRAM (RAPP)

RFP CONTACT:

Name: Waris Mustamandi
Phone #: +1.314.917.0213
Email: mmustamandi@ussec.org

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: MARCH 17, 2025 – 5:00 PM EST

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is dedicated to promoting U.S. Soy's reputation as a premier and sustainable protein source across diverse global markets. Through the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP), USSEC is implementing a range of projects to enhance market presence, improve customer engagement, and drive the adoption of U.S. Soy products worldwide. To support the successful execution and monitoring of these projects, USSEC seeks a qualified consultant or firm to conduct a baseline assessment for selected projects, laying the groundwork for effective monitoring and evaluation.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

The purpose of this RFP is to identify a qualified consultant or firm to design and conduct a baseline assessment for specific soy-related projects. The assessment will establish initial values for key performance indicators (KPIs) across each project, providing essential benchmarks for measuring progress and outcomes. The consultant will be responsible for developing a detailed assessment plan, designing and testing data collection instruments, and conducting thorough data analysis to capture current conditions accurately.

Additionally, the consultant will engage with stakeholders to gather insights, ensuring that the baseline assessment aligns with the project's context and objectives. The final deliverables will include a detailed baseline report, including recommendations for target setting and strategic adjustments, as well as a plan for data management and quality assurance. The consultant will also provide insights into ongoing monitoring and evaluation tools and methodologies, equipping USSEC with the resources needed to measure impact and effectiveness over time.

The baseline assessment key objectives are as follows:

- Collaborate with USSEC to define key performance indicators (KPIs) for each project (where appropriate), capturing essential baseline data to track future progress.
- Create a baseline assessment plan outlining the methodology, data collection tools, sampling strategies, timeline, etc.
- Engage with key project stakeholders, including potential project participants, and partners, to gather insights into the project's objectives, challenges, and expected outcomes.
- Conduct a review of relevant literature, previous evaluations, and project documents to understand existing knowledge, establish context, and identify any historical data that can inform baseline conditions.
- Design and test relevant data collection instruments (e.g., surveys, interview guides, observation checklists) aligned with each concept/project's indicators.
- Recruit and train a qualified data collection team, ensuring that they are skilled in data collection techniques, ethical standards, and cultural sensitivity, especially if field data collection is involved.
- Oversee and execute data collection across all project sites (where applicable) as outlined in the baseline assessment plan.
- Perform a comprehensive analysis of the baseline data, using both quantitative and qualitative methods as appropriate. This analysis should identify key findings, trends, and any gaps in current conditions that the project aims to address.
- Compile findings in a baseline report, which should include a summary of baseline values for each indicator, an analysis of findings, and recommendations for project planning. The report should provide a clear reference point for project monitoring and evaluation.
- Based on baseline findings, the consultant will provide actionable insights and recommendations to help set realistic project targets and refine project strategies. This may include suggesting adjustments to project activities to align with the baseline conditions and contextual factors.
- Prepare and deliver a presentation summarizing baseline findings, key challenges, and recommendations.
- The consultant will implement data quality checks and ethical safeguards throughout the assessment process.
- Provide a data management plan outlining data storage, security, and handling procedures to ensure baseline data is accessible, secure, and well-documented for future reference.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The consultant will conduct the baseline assessment with a representative sample of USSEC's potential event participants, customers, regional USSEC staff, government funders/investors (if

applicable), and relevant Home Office staff. The assessment will involve consultations with these groups to gather insights and review relevant literature or project documents for contextual data that inform baseline conditions and the development of appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) for each project.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The contractor’s role includes working collaboratively with USSEC to fulfill the objectives outlined above for the following concepts and their relevant projects (as detailed in Annex II). The scope involves designing, planning, and executing a baseline assessment tailored to each project’s needs, aligned with USSEC’s strategic goals.

Concepts for Baseline Assessment (see Annex II for details):

- Soy Leadership Promotional Campaigns
- Soy Market Intelligence and Data Clearinghouse
- Soy Foods for Human Consumption
- Soy Customer Professional Development
- Feed Demand Market Development

The selected consultant will be responsible for all tasks necessary to achieve the objectives, including KPI identification, stakeholder consultations, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

DELIVERABLES:

The table below outlines the deliverables for this RFP:

Deliverable	Description
Inception Report	Outlines the baseline assessment framework, objectives, methodology, and initial KPIs for each project.
Stakeholder Consultation Summary	Summary report on consultations conducted with stakeholders, including insights gathered and context analysis findings.
Monthly Status Updates	Regular progress updates on data collection activities, any challenges encountered, and adjustments needed.
Baseline Data Report (Draft)	A draft report summarizing findings, initial baseline values for each KPI, and recommended methodologies.
Baseline Data Report (Final)	Final report incorporating feedback, with comprehensive analysis, recommendations for target setting, and guidance on continuous monitoring/evaluation.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

USSEC anticipates the contract will begin in early January 2025 and end in June 2025. Throughout the contract, the contractor will work closely with the USSEC Measurement and Evaluation

Manager to coordinate activities, data collection, travel (if needed), and other relevant or support activities.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** February 19, 2025
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** February 28, 2025, by 5:00 PM EST Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** March 17, 2025, by 5:00 PM EST Time
- **Selections Made By:** April 4, 2025
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** April 11, 2025

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG by **5:00 PM EST Time on March 17, 2025**
2. A description of the Prospective Contractor's relevant capabilities, resources, and related 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 implementing the contract.
4. Provide at least 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 **20 pages** (8 ½" x 11"), including personnel resumes.

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.

Annex I: 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.

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.

Annex II: Concept/Project summaries

1. Soy Leadership Promotional Campaigns

Under this concept, the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) and the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH) will implement a variety of programs focused on elevating preference for U.S. Soy and differentiating U.S. soy from other products as a superior, sustainable nutrition and energy product.

The proposed 'Nourish' strategic platform will bring to life the U.S. Soy brand vision of nourishing people and animals/aquaculture, local economic growth, and our planet (environmental sustainability).

Countries are at different stages in a multi-stage commercial market development journey.

First, to meet food and nutrition security needs, they need to recognize the value of better and diverse nutrition (e.g. protein with soy) and choose to consume protein with soy.

Then, they need to recognize the nutritional and health benefits of soy (soy's halo).

Then they need to recognize the superior value of U.S. Soy, prefer it, and advocate for it.

The ultimate objective is to position soy and especially U.S. Soy as a healthy and sustainable dietary choice for humans and animals/fish, thereby elevating brand reputation and driving increased uptake of U.S. Soy products and services (e.g. Sustainable U.S. Soy on-pack labels).

Key Projects:

- "Nourish Now" - Food Security Campaign: This global campaign promotes soy-based protein as a solution for food security and diverse nutrition, building on regional initiatives like "Right to Protein" in South Asia.
- Climate Smart Agriculture Communications Campaign: This project partners with aquaculture sustainability certification programs to promote U.S. Soy's role in sustainable aquaculture, leveraging the Sustainable U.S. Soy logo and co-branding initiatives.
- Nourished by Soy – Health Campaign: This campaign highlights soy's health benefits, targeting specific aspects like muscle growth, heart health, and benefits for aging populations. It addresses common myths and promotes soy's nutritional value.
- Sustainability Advantages Campaign - "Be Your Best with U.S. Soy": This integrated campaign promotes U.S. Soy as a premier choice for human and

animal health, highlighting its nutritional quality, sustainability, and benefits across sectors like animal nutrition, aquaculture, and soy foods.

- Sustainable U.S. Soy - Best Aquaculture Practices Co-Marketing Campaign: Targets aquaculture markets with co-marketing initiatives to drive sustainable aquaculture practices using U.S. Soy

2. Market Intelligence and Data Clearinghouse

Develop a comprehensive understanding of customers and markets (Customer 360 and/or Market 360 degree view) targeted for diversification efforts to modernize marketing and promotional approaches, develop unique intellectual property that can benefit soy and incentivize participation by potential partners/stakeholders, and improve the effectiveness of future export market development by targeting those efforts towards explicitly identified and data supported customer/market needs and pain points across the supply chains and value chains. Ultimately, this program will further enhance our ability to understand and serve the diverse needs of US Soy's current and future customer base as well as prioritize future investment in new capabilities to deliver on those customer and market needs as well as develop a unique and differentiated asset for the U.S. soybean industry.

Key Projects:

- Customer Journey Mapping: This project creates customer journey maps for prioritized U.S. Soy personas, using voice-of-the-customer research to identify engagement opportunities that address key customer pain points and promote U.S. Soy.
- Supply Chain Assessment: This project develops comprehensive value chain studies for soy products in target markets, focusing on logistics barriers and opportunities to optimize U.S. Soy delivery. It covers key logistical factors, from port capacities to inland transportation costs, to identify high-impact improvements for cost efficiency and quality.
- Market Readiness and Growth Opportunity Assessments: This project evaluates growth opportunities for U.S. Soy products, focusing on feed inclusion rates and nutrient value to validate market demand. By integrating customer data, supply chain insights, and additional research, it assesses market potential and attractiveness to guide USSEC and RAPP in prioritizing impactful programs.

3. Soy Foods for Human Consumption

This concept is intended to increase awareness of and promote the benefits of soy beans and soy products as a food source for human consumption. The ultimate goal is

to increase both the volume of U.S. soy exports for human food use as well as the value of those exports as food grade products are inclusive of value-added elements for the U.S. industry through further processing and/or handling processes to ensure quality attributes for customers and end consumers.

This effort will further establish USSEC as a leader in the promotion and support of value added soy and soy product trade in key markets

Key Projects:

- **Extending Soy Health Claims:** In collaboration with local partners, this project aims to establish health claims for U.S. Soy's protein and oil benefits in new markets with existing frameworks for food health claims.
- **U.S. Soy Food Promotion Program:** In collaboration with local associations, this "eat soy" campaign drives consumer demand for U.S. soy food products, including traditional items like tofu and soymilk, as well as soy ingredients like soy protein concentrate and soy flour.
- **High-Value U.S. Soy Food Bean Sourcing Programs:** This project educates companies on strategies for sourcing high-value U.S. soy food beans, both Identity Preserved (IP) and non-IP, to navigate market complexities and mitigate risks.
- **Japan SUSS Export Promotion:** This program partners with Japanese companies using the Sustainable U.S. Soy (SUSS) logo to expand their exports into key global markets, leveraging Japan's reputation for health-conscious food.

4. Soy Customer Professional Development

The concept is expected to secure, enhance and expand soy customer workforce and leadership development programs. This program would build upon and amplify the success of the Soy Excellence Centers developed through ATP.

The purpose of this effort is to develop capacity building within the soy value chain and further opportunities to promote the value of soy and to differentiate U.S. soy both in quality as well as the support the U.S. soy farmers provide to their customers.

Increased workforce preparedness leads to more efficient production of protein, impacting the entire value chain through profits which can create more jobs and expand access to protein at lower costs.

Additionally, leadership development with key U.S. soy customers plays a crucial role in improving trade exports by building trust, improving cultural understanding and creating access to knowledge and information.

Ultimately the Soy Customer Professional Development will support positive development outcomes in economic growth, food security, nutrition and trade.

Key Projects:

- Soy Excellence Center - Secure the Foundation: This project strengthens the existing SEC workforce development program, expanding its reach and enhancing community engagement.
- Enhance SEC Program Impact: This project broadens the SEC program's geographical reach and educational offerings, targeting emerging markets to support workforce development in soy-related industries.
- Soy Excellence Center – Experiential Learning and Internship: This project expands SEC’s capacity-building initiatives with hands-on, demonstration-based learning to complement traditional education.
- Soy Leadership Impact Network: This project establishes a network to engage and support leaders within the soy value chain, complementing the SEC program.

5. Animal Feed Demand Expansion

This concept aims to accelerate efforts to develop demand for the highest priority end uses of soy and soy products in emerging and expansion markets that represent the greatest opportunities for volume demand and diversification of U.S. exports. The projects within this concept are primarily focused on animal feed market developments which represent the vast majority of current and future expected demand for soybeans and soybean meal.

It is expected that the activities within these projects will be focused on providing technical market development support and providing access to leading practices and technologies for the respective industries to help them accelerate their progress down a development curve that has been experienced by similar more mature markets around the world.

Key Projects:

- Modern Aquaculture and Feed: This supports the growth of the aquaculture feed industry in emerging markets, focusing on innovation and competitiveness through local and virtual training, as well as specialized programs with U.S. universities.
- Poultry and Poultry Feed: This project aims to enhance modern poultry production practices in emerging and expansion markets, focusing on both meat and egg sectors. By fostering growth, competitiveness, and innovation, it encourages local poultry industries to adopt the latest practices.

- **Expanded Animal Species Opportunities:** This project assesses and develops market opportunities for animal feed in sectors like dairy and pet food with high growth potential. It involves evaluating value chains, animal and feed management, nutrition, and quality control across targeted markets, followed by tailored education programs.
- **Market Access:** This project aims to address regulatory and biotech barriers impacting U.S. soy exports in emerging markets. Through engagement with regulators, industry support, and educational events, it promotes science-based, risk-managed approaches to enhance market access.