

**REQUEST FOR
PROPOSALS
SUBMISSION
DEADLINE
17:00 CT,
3/24/2025**

**RFP TITLE: MAPPING LOGISTICAL BOTTLENECKS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND
ECUADOR (POPEYE 2)**

RFP CONTACT:

Name: Andrea Vargas Aguilar
Email: americasRFP@ussec.org

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 17:00 CT, March

24, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is a non-profit organization that promotes U.S. soybeans and soybean products to international customers through knowledge transfer, onsite training, seminars, workshops, conferences, industry tours and demonstrations. The specific goal of the USSEC Americas Program is to promote, within the region, the use of U.S. soy products in human consumption, aquaculture, and animal feeds as well as the best feeding practices. A key program objective is to support a growing, long-term, high-quality, feed-based industry in the Americas Region and globally.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

Through this RFP, USSEC is seeking a contractor to conduct a study on the logistics of transporting U.S. soybean meal from each of the potential ports of entry in Central America and Ecuador to the major areas where U.S. soybean customers are located. The study will enable stakeholders to assess their current options for importing U.S. soybean meal and identify opportunities to improve logistical efficiency through infrastructure investment. The study will cover a total of nine ports in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Ecuador. There will be additional research at the regional level on a comparative basis, highlighting the advantages of each of the ports.

The comprehensive study will include the following sections: 1) an assessment of current infrastructure for inland transportation from the nine ports to the main feed manufacturing areas; 2) an analysis of port logistics and costs at the nine locations; 3) an analysis of distribution and storage facilities; 4) an assessment of storage capacity at customer facilities (such as processing plants or feed manufacturing facilities); 5) an analysis of railroad capacity (where applicable) 6) a feasibility study on the potential of rail as transportation option; and 7) overall analysis of bottlenecks in logistics and storage

system including the impact on costs; and 8) overall conclusions and recommendations.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT:

Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador are key markets for agricultural products, with a strong dependence on strategic inputs such as U.S. soybeans. These soybeans are essential for the production of animal feed, a critical input for the protein industry in the region, including poultry, pork, and aquaculture. However, these countries face logistical challenges related to the connection between their main ports and inland consumption areas.

Within these six countries, there are nine main ports of entry for imports of U.S. soybeans to Central and South America. In Costa Rica, Caldera on the Pacific coast and the Limon on the Caribbean side are the main ports. In El Salvador, Acajutla plays a key role, while in Guatemala, Puerto Santo Tomás de Castilla and Puerto Quetzal are the most prominent. In Honduras, Puerto Cortés is the primary entry point for agricultural imports. In Panama, the ports within the Canal Zone, such as Balboa (Pacific) and Colón (Caribbean), are strategic not only for the country but for the entire region due to their global connectivity. In South America, Ecuador's port in Guayaquil leads in cargo volume and serves as a vital hub for agricultural imports and exports.

Currently, most soybean products from the U.S. enter through these ports and are transported to feed production facilities primarily by road. At present, use of rail transportation is limited, and in some countries the current regulatory framework is not conducive to further development/utilization of rail. However, this logistics model increases transportation costs, affecting the industry's competitiveness. Diversifying transportation methods, such as integrating rail routes or exploring alternative road transportation routes, could optimize distribution, especially in countries like Guatemala, which have strategic port connections on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

U.S. soybeans are highly valued for their quality and their role in formulating protein-rich animal feeds, essential for meeting the growing demand for animal-based products in these markets. By improving logistical infrastructure and utilizing alternative ports, these countries could not only reduce costs but also enhance their capacity to produce affordable, high-quality food, boosting the development of their local and regional economies.

TARGET AUDIENCES

USSEC will share the full study report and/or presentation with business-to-business U.S. Soy customers in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador active in animal nutrition, aquaculture, soybean oil, and/or soy foods; USSEC stakeholders; and international food and agriculture stakeholders, as appropriate. USSEC may ask the contractor to make presentations to different groups of stakeholders.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

The contractor will map the logistical bottlenecks in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador and propose viable alternatives to reduce the costs of logistics and transportation of soybean meal and grains – including the long-term viability of rail transportation in the ports of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama) and Ecuador as means to reduce costs. The final deliverables are a comprehensive, narrative study report and summary presentations to USSEC and stakeholders. The report and presentations must be prepared in both Spanish and English.

The proposal should describe in detail how the applicant would carry out the work described below including the overall approach/methodology, how information needed to complete the study will be obtained (e.g. desk research, data from existing sources, interviews, site visits, etc.) the applicant’s relevant qualifications/experience to perform the work, and a draft work plan (see the second bullet point below) based on the information in the RFP. For purposes of developing the draft work plan, the applicant should assume an illustrative start date of April 1, 2025 and an end date in August 2025; this would include approximately four months to complete the study with final presentations to stakeholders in August. These dates are illustrative only and may change during the contracting process.

The contractor will:

- Participate in a kick-off meeting (virtual) with USSEC to discuss further background information and details of the study, discuss the study methodology, establish an ongoing communication schedule, and agree on a specific timeline and intermediate deliverables. The draft workplan submitted with the proposal will serve as the base document for discussion.
- Develop and submit a detailed work plan to USSEC. Based on the kick-off meeting discussions, the contractor will revise and further refine the detailed work plan submitted with the proposal. The work plan will include the following sections:
 1. Task Breakdown: Divide the study into phases with a breakdown of the specific tasks involved. Each phase should have a clear description and detail of task to be completed.
 2. Timeline: Specify the start and end dates for each task within the five-month period. Ensure that the timeline is realistic and achievable.
 3. Dependencies: Highlight any task dependencies to ensure that the project progresses smoothly. For example, some tasks may need to be completed before others can begin. State any assumptions made about the ability to complete tasks/deliverables.
 4. Deliverables: Define intermediate deliverables for each phase, such as conducting a certain number of meetings or site visits, maps or other graphics, drafts of specific sections of the overall report, analyses, or recommendations.

Be specific about the format and content of these deliverables and ensure that all items in the scope of work are covered.

5. Progress Monitoring/Key Performance Indicators: Include mechanisms to review progress against the workplan. Consider by-weekly status updates, checkpoints, or interim reports. During the status update meetings any challenges or deviations must be addressed with the USSEC team to keep the project on track.
 6. Quality Assurance: Specify any quality control or review processes that will be implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the work. Include opportunities for USSEC to review and comment on outlines, preliminary findings, or partial drafts as appropriate.
 7. Adjustments as Needed: Be open to adjustments to the work plan if unexpected issues arise or if certain tasks take longer than anticipated. Flexibility is important for successful project management.
- Identify and engage with key stakeholders such as port authorities, railroad companies, logistics providers, and U.S. Soy customers in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama) and Ecuador whose participation is needed to complete the study. USSEC will provide introductions to key customers, but the contractor is responsible for outreach to other stakeholders. The contractor will develop a list of stakeholders, and coordinate with USSEC prior to initiating outreach. The contractor is responsible for arranging any meetings or travel logistics required to carry out the work.
 - Conduct a study that will result in a comprehensive narrative report (in Spanish and English) on the following nine ports: 1) Caldera, Costa Rica; 2) Limon, Costa Rica; 3) Acajutla, El Salvador; 4) Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala; 5) Puerto San Tomás de Castillo, Guatemala; 6) Puerto Cortés, Honduras; 7) Balboa, Panama; 8) Colón, Panama; and 9) Guayaquil, Ecuador. The study/report will include the following sections in a single document:

1) Current Logistics Infrastructure Assessment:

- a) Geographical Mapping
 - i) Identify and map the geographical distribution of soybean meal consumption areas in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador including major cities, provinces, and rural regions. Note: This refers to consumption by businesses such as processors or manufacturers of products that use soybean meals or large producers with the capacity to import and distribute large volumes of soybean meal, soybean, corn and other grains to their production facilities. This is not a mapping of the small end user such as livestock producers.
 - ii) Highlight national and regional transportation corridors connecting these areas to the ports of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador. (Note that in some cases customers in one country may use ports in another country.)

- iii) Include all means of transportation and display in a map the different routes, covering road networks, river and maritime routes, and railway lines.
 - b) Supply Routes Analysis
 - i) Analyze the existing supply routes used for the transportation of soybean meal between the nine ports and the consumption areas (as defined in the Geographical Mapping section above), covering road networks, river and maritime routes, and railway lines.
 - ii) Evaluate the condition, capacity, and congestion levels of these supply routes.
 - c) Regulatory Analysis
 - i) Identify and analyze if there are any regulatory constraints related to logistics which may favorably or unfavorably affect the competitiveness of U.S. soybean meal and grains distribution and consumption in the countries. This would include regulations that are not specific to soybean meal/grains but have an impact because of the way in which in soybean meal/grains are commonly transported or stored.
- 2) **Port Analysis and Unloading Capabilities with Storage Facilities Assessment:** Evaluate and provide comparative analysis of the nine ports in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama) and Ecuador that receive soybean meal and grains shipments. Section 2A (Port Assessment) is a description of what is currently taking place. Section 2B (Unloading Capability Analysis) is an analysis of that information to identify bottlenecks or inefficiencies and comparative advantages/disadvantages of the nine ports from that perspective. Both sections should include quantitative and qualitative data.
- a) Port Assessment:
 - i) Assess the infrastructure, capacity, port draft and equipment available at these ports for handling soybean meal shipments. This should also include quantitative and qualitative information to illustrate the relative importance of soybean meal/grain shipments to overall port operations and the relative significance of the port for soybean meal/grain imports compared to the other ports in the study.
 - ii) Examine the storage facilities at the ports for soybean meals and assess their capacity and condition.
 - iii) Determine the capacity, limitations and requirements to increase this capacity. This should include considerations of competing cargo. Consider rail and truck transportation for soybean meals and grains. Include data to illustrate the relative importance of the currently available transportation options.
 - iv) Identification and Enhancement of Cargo Handling Capacities, including:
 - (1) Timeframes and Methods: Analyzing loading/unloading times and movements streamlines processes, reducing delays. If applicable, note any impact of competing cargo.
 - (2) Discharge Types and Cargo options: Recognizing discharge methods (gravity, pneumatic) and cargo types (bulk, liquid, containerized) helps tailor handling strategies.

- (3) Ship Capacities and Cargo: Knowing vessel capacities concerning different cargo types ensures optimal space utilization.
- (4) Loading Rates Raw Material Type: Understanding loading rates per minute per material type is critical for gauging efficiency.
- (5) Workflow Optimization: Employing efficient equipment and skilled labor to minimize handling times.
- v) Release Times: If available, obtain information on the average time it takes for shipments to be released from customs.
- vi) Costs: Obtain information on any relevant costs or fees that are specific to each port.
- vii) Identify any existing bottlenecks or challenges in the soybean meal storage capacity at the port.
- b) Unloading Capability Analysis
 - i) Analyze the unloading capabilities at each port, including the efficiency of unloading processes, storage facilities, and handling equipment.
 - ii) Identify any existing bottlenecks or challenges in the unloading process.

3) Storage Facilities Analysis at Key Distribution Areas:

- a) Distribution Facilities Assessment
 - i) Identify key distribution centers for soybean meal within Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador.
 - ii) Assess the storage facilities available in these areas, including capacity, conditions, and technology used for storage.
 - iii) Evaluate the efficiency of storage and retrieval processes.
 - iv) Identify if there is efficient access to these key distribution areas from the ports mentioned
- b) Bottlenecks and Capacity Analysis
 - i) Identify any bottlenecks or constraints in the storage facilities at key distribution areas. Focus on supply coming from the ports of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama) and Ecuador
 - ii) Determine if additional storage capacity is required to meet demand and enhance supply chain flexibility.

4) Customer Facilities Assessment:

- a) Customer Facilities Identification
 - i) Identify major customer facilities such as processing plants, feed manufacturers, and other facilities that utilize soybean meal. This will include animal feed, pet food, and fish feed (for aquaculture).
- b) Capacity and Demand Analysis
 - i) Analyze the capacity of customer facilities to receive and store soybean meal and their ability to meet demand.
 - ii) Identify any potential receiving and storage-related challenges that may impact their operations.
- c) Transportation Infrastructure

- i) Examine the condition and capacity of receiving facilities, such as unloading docks, storage areas, and conveyor systems.
- ii) Recommend specific infrastructure improvements to enhance efficiency.
- iii) Identify infrastructure upgrades or modifications necessary for seamless handling.

5) Availability of Rail Infrastructure:

- a) Rail Track Assessment (if applicable)
 - i) Inspect the condition of existing rail tracks used for transporting soybean meal from the ports of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador to the main distribution/consumption areas, including an evaluation of track maintenance and repair needs.
 - ii) Estimate the associated costs for required maintenance or upgrades.
- b) Equipment Evaluation
 - i) Evaluate the availability, condition, and reliability of rail transportation equipment, including locomotives and railcars.
 - ii) Assess the readiness of rail operators to support increased soybean meal transportation.
- c) Risk Assessment
 - i) Identify and assess potential risks and challenges associated with the sustained use of rail transportation. This should include an analysis of the relevant aspects of the legal/regulatory framework for rail development, maintenance, and utilization.

6) Feasibility Study on Rail Transportation

Based on the results of the previous section (Availability of Rail Infrastructure) and upon confirmation from USSEC:

- a) Conduct an extensive feasibility study to assess the long-term viability of rail transportation, at the ports of Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador.
- b) Evaluate factors such as infrastructure requirements, operational sustainability, market demand, and financial feasibility.
- c) Develop a risk mitigation plan outlining strategies to address these challenges effectively.
- d) Propose improvements to the system and the optimization of the strengths highlighted in the study.

7) Bottlenecks and Issues Identification:

- a) Bottleneck Analysis
 - i) Conduct an in-depth analysis of significant logistical bottlenecks and constraints across various modes of transportation within Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama) and Ecuador.
 - ii) Prioritize these bottlenecks based on their impact on the supply chain and potential cost implications.

- iii) Review and analyze the systematic pillars of the current infrastructure from a regulatory and public policy point of view.
- b) Cost Analysis
 - i) Perform a detailed cost analysis to quantify the financial impact of the identified logistical challenges.
 - ii) Breakdown costs associated with delays, transport inefficiencies, and compliance issues.
 - iii) Determine the impact of each type of transportation on the cost of soybean meal.
- c) Security
 - i) Provide a safety and security risk assessment for transportation and logistics from the port to customer facilities including the risk of loss/damage of the soybean meal. This may also include information about additional time, costs, or logistics bottlenecks related to compliance with port security processes and procedures.

8) Conclusions and Recommendations:

- a) Alternative Transportation Modes
 - i) Propose alternative transportation modes, routes, or strategies that have the potential to significantly reduce logistics and transportation costs. This can include both near-term and longer-term solutions.
 - ii) Quantify the projected cost savings associated with each proposed alternative.
 - b) Efficiency Enhancements
 - i) Recommend detailed process improvements and efficiency enhancements across the soybean meal supply chain to minimize operational costs. This can include both near-term and longer-term solutions.
 - ii) Provide a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis for each recommended improvement.
 - c) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
 - i) Define a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to improvements in logistics efficiency and costs that align with project objectives and provide a comprehensive means of measuring improvement.
 - ii) Ensure that each KPI is clearly defined, quantifiable, and directly linked to logistics improvement outcomes.
 - iii) Include sustainability considerations.
- Develop a summary document and infographic (in English and Spanish) that present comparative information about the nine ports analyzed. The summary document will include snapshots of key information on each port (maximum of two pages per port) written and formatted such that they can be used as standalone documents if needed. The summary document will also include a section formatted to allow for easy comparison of the different ports; this will include a high-level infographic as well as a summary table with additional detail. After the draft comprehensive narrative report is completed, the contractor and USSEC will discuss and determine which parameters to

include in the comparison and infographic.

- Develop and deliver presentations to stakeholders. The contractor will prepare a summary presentation (in Spanish and English) to present to stakeholders or potential investors. USSEC will identify the stakeholder groups, and the contractor may need to adapt the main the presentation content to different audiences. The contractor should plan to conduct a minimum of nine presentations. The presentations may be virtual or in-person as determined by USSEC; for budgeting purposes, applicants should assume eight virtual presentations and one in-person presentation to take place in one of the six countries (location to be determined at a later date). The presentations will be delivered in Spanish and English.
- Submit a brief narrative report on all work performed. The contractor will submit a brief report (in English) summarizing all work performed under the contract, any issues encountered in implementation, and any recommendations for next steps. This is separate from the comprehensive study report.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The contractor's work will result in comprehensive report on logistics that:

- Presents a thorough assessment of the supply chain from the port of entry for soybean meal shipments into each country through arrival and storage at customers' facilities.
- Communicates with local industries about the opportunities for improvement that will allow for U.S. soybean meal to be imported into the country at a lower cost to the producer.
- Highlights the advantages that importing U.S. soybean meal through specific ports in Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama) and Ecuador, could have in the market.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The contractor is expected to work closely with the USSEC team and maintain regular contact throughout the contract period. USSEC will provide the successful applicant with further information on the context and project objectives. USSEC will also provide the contractor with information on compliance requirements from the project's funder.

Note the following requirements for preparing the budget proposal:

- Proposal must be itemized, if there are different employees working at different rates and different amounts of hours, each of those amounts/employees/units of time will need to be listed out.
- Payments are made monthly upon actual deliverables. USSEC will require an

invoice for the number of units worked, along with an English narrative report of services provided during the month.

- The fee must include all consulting fees, employee compensation and benefits, overhead, travel expenses or any other type of expenses incurred to effectively complete the services/deliverables agreed upon. The payment represents the sole and complete liability of USSEC for services rendered in relation to the agreement and every payment must be attached to a deliverable.
- USSEC budget table template must be completed outlining how the fee was derived, including hourly rates and an estimated total number of hours, as well as the anticipated out-of-pocket expenses. USSEC will rate proposals based on the following factors:
 - Responsiveness to the requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal (RFP)
 - Relevant past performance/experience
 - Samples of work
 - Fee (described above)
 - This proposal is subject to approval of funding.

DELIVERABLES

Note: This table summarizes the main deliverables. As a part of the proposal and work plan, the contractor is expected to propose intermediate deliverables that would be due prior to submission of the draft comprehensive narrative report on the study. The contractor and USSEC team will also agree to a regular schedule/process for checking in and monitoring progress throughout the duration of the contract.

<i>Completion Date</i>	<i>Description of Deliverables</i>
Within five business days of the prospective contractor notification date	Conduct an introductory call with USSEC team to kick-off the project, share background information, answer questions, and review the draft work plan submitted with the proposal.
Within five business days of contract start date	Submit a revised draft narrative of a work plan as described in the Scope of Work section (second bullet point).
Within ten business days of contract start date	Meet with USSEC's Team to review the draft narrative of the work plan and collaborate on refining the plan until both parties are satisfied. Once agreed upon, the final Work Plan will be signed by both parties as part of the project agreement or contract.
June 30, 2025	Submit a draft narrative of the study for USSEC's team to review and comment.
July 15, 2025	Submit draft summary document (including the infographic) and presentation for USSEC's review and comment

July 30, 2025	Submit final narrative of the study, summary document, and presentation in Spanish and English, with USSEC comments addressed
August 2025	Work with USSEC to present the study to stakeholders and/or potential investors if requested by USSEC (at least nine presentations).
No later than September 10, 2025	Provide USSEC project manager with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invoice 2. Electronic materials of deliverables. 3. Post-travel report including summary and receipts of all expenses (if applicable). Brief English narrative report of the project results, notifying issues, challenges, next steps and recommendations. This report is separate from the comprehensive narrative report on the study.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

*The expectation is for the contract to last from approximately **April 1, 2025, to August 31, 2025.** The project proposal should include further details about the proposed timeline and process based on the scope of work and deliverables described above.*

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** 03/05/2025
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** 03/14/2025 5:00pm Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** 03/21/2025 5:00 pm Central Time
- **Q&A Session:** 3/19/2025 12:00 pm Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** 03/31/2025
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** 03/31/2025

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG, dhernandez@ussec.org, and avargas@ct.ussec.org by **5:00PM Central Time on 03/24/25.**
2. A description of the 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.
4. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor’s personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.

5. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
6. 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 doing the work.
7. 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/about-ussec/>

USB's Long Range Strategic Plan can be found here:

<https://www.unitedsoybean.org/strategic-plan/>

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.

MANDATORY CONTRACTUAL TERMS

Contracts: ***the following terms are required:***

1. USSEC, as well as the Secretary of Agriculture, may terminate the contract and be relieved of payment. USSEC will pay for all work performed under contract until the date of termination.

2. Any work a contractor undertakes prior to contract approval by AMS is at their own risk and USSEC is not financially liable if the contract is not approved.
3. Funds paid to the contractor may not be used for the purpose of influencing legislation or governmental policy or action. "Influencing legislation" is defined as any attempt to affect the opinions of the general public or any segment thereof concerning current or proposed legislation or any attempt to influence legislation through communication with any member or employee of a legislative body or with any government officials who may participate in the formulation of legislation. "Government officials" refers to federal employees outside of USDA, foreign, and State governments/officials, legislators, and legislative staffs. "Influencing of governmental policy or action" is defined as any action the principal purpose of which is to bring about a change in existing policy or regulation or affect the outcome of proposed policy or regulation, except those actions which are specifically provide for in the Soybean Act and Order.
4. The contractor must (a) keep accurate records, books and documents involving transactions relating to the contract; (b) retain the records, books and documents for 3 years; and (c) said records, books and documents may be subject to inspection and audit by a representative of USDA and/or USSEC.
5. EEO policy statement: contractor agrees that, during the performance of this Agreement, contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, protected genetic information, or reprisal. 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, but not limited to, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Genetic Information Act of 2008, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinances, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to the contractor.
6. Subcontractors. Subject to USSEC's approval, the contractor may subcontract specific tasks to outside parties. Should the contractor elect to subcontract specific tasks, subcontractors will be subject to the same contractual terms as its contract agency in regard to:
 - (1) Reporting and record keeping;

- (2) Travel expenses;
- (3) Title of property;
- (4) Confidential information
- (5) Influencing legislation and/or influencing governmental policy or action;
- (6) Federal civil rights policies.

The primary contractor agency who has a direct contract with USSEC will be fully responsible for the quality of all work product, including any approvals from AMS. Any such authorization in the contract must state that entering into a subcontract does not relieve the contractor of primary responsibility to carry out the terms and conditions of the underlying contract in accordance with the Act, Order, Regulations and USDA policies.

7. Confidentiality

Financial or commercial information obtained under contract with USSEC that is privileged and confidential shall be kept confidential by all persons, including employees and former employees of USSEC, USDA and the contractor having access to such information.

Contracts: ***the following terms are not allowed:***

1. Indemnification provisions, unless it is clear that the indemnification will in no way obligate the U.S. government to pay on a potential claim.
2. Liquidated Damages

Intellectual property. Rights will be governed by the Bayh Dole Act, 35 U.S.C. §200-212 for any entity that is a “contractor” as defined by the Act at §201(c).

Expenses. The following expenses are prohibited under the Act and Order:

1. University Principal Investigator salaries;
2. University overhead/indirect costs; non-Principal Investigator salaries are an exception
3. Entertainment expenses;
4. Spousal/family/companion expenses;
5. Personal expenses (except as specifically allowed in USSEC’s Travel policies);
6. Open bars;
7. Funding of capital equipment unless the equipment is purchased (a) in direct connection with a plan or project, and (b) necessary for the completion of the plan or project.