

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
12:00 PM CDT, APRIL 10, 2026

RFP TITLE: GOLD STANDARD SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

RFP CONTACT:

Name: Kevin Roepke
Phone #: +971 522118859
Email: Kroepke@ussec.org

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: APRIL 10, 2026

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) champions U.S. Soy worldwide. Through innovation, sustainability and partnerships, we connect farmers to global markets.

USSEC members represent the soy supply chain, including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses and agricultural organizations.

USSEC is funded by the U.S. soybean checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry.

PURPOSE OF RFP AND BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), along with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), are partnering to create the GOLD Standard (Grain & Oilseed Livestock Digestibility) to enhance soybean meal quality benchmarking. This initiative addresses the limitations of relying solely on crude protein as a value proxy, which often fails to predict animal performance due to variations in digestibility, solubility, processing, and energy factors. GOLD Standard provides a single composite score, tier, and summary of key drivers, benchmarked against a reference population, using a focused set of non-redundant variables (e.g., crude protein, essential amino acids, KOH solubility, sugars/energy, and anti-nutritional signals). MIT is helping with the underlying scientific model; the selected contractor will implement the validated algorithm and will not be responsible for model development.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The intended target audience will be soybean processors, traders, importers, integrators, and anyone else involved in the soy supply chain—either directly or indirectly.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

Contractor will develop the software required for the calculation of the score. The software should be intuitive, user friendly and simple to understand. Proposals must price both a (a.) web application and (b.) optional native Android/iOS mobile application (React Native or Flutter single codebase). USSEC will select the mobile approach during final scoping.

Two existing and well used models were identified when developing the GOLD Standard. They are:

- Expected Progeny Differentials (EPDs): Used for decades in the hog and cattle industries to evaluate individual breeding stocks, relative to their peers within their breed, instead of individual analyses
- Corn Suitability Rating (CSR): A singular composite rating and scoring system used to evaluate different tracts of land for sales to better equip buyers with relevant information on future purchases

KEY FEATURES AND DESIGN PRINCIPALS:

- **Simplicity and Transparency**: Avoids overwhelming users with excessive metrics; delivers one interpretable score with clear explanations that matter to CUSTOMERS/USERS and fosters trust by enabling quick decisions.
- **Integration**: Complements existing workflows, using lab/NIR data inputs and supporting—not replacing—crude protein, as the transitional benchmark.
- **Adoption-Focused**: Phased validation, governance and education via pilots, workshops and an adoption playbook. Data remains customer-owned, with secure handling
- **Future-Proofing**: Modular for expansion and modification like outcome validation and automated data ingestion, without complicating the core experience.

CONTRACTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND POSITION REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for the organizational proposal should be at least:

- Minimum 5 years of continuous operation as a software development firm (or equivalent proven track record via principals).
- U.S.-based headquarters or primary development team with clear ability to comply with U.S. export-control and data-sovereignty requirements (preferred).
- **Financial stability**: Positive cash flow, bonding/insurance capability, and no material litigation in the past 3 years.
- **Full-stack expertise**: Modern front-end frameworks (React.js / Next.js preferred; Vue.js or Angular acceptable), back-end (Node.js, .NET, or Python/Django), and relational/NoSQL databases (PostgreSQL or Azure SQL).
- **Mobile development**: React Native, Flutter, or native Swift/Kotlin with single codebase for iOS/Android; PWA as minimum viable mobile option.

- Algorithmic and data-processing capabilities: Experience implementing configurable composite scoring engines, sensitivity analysis, and real-time calculations (similar to USSEC's Soybean Value Calculator or agricultural nutrient/quality models).
- Cloud infrastructure: Demonstrated deployment on Microsoft Azure (strong preference, given current USSEC calculator hosting) or AWS/GCP with equivalent security. Experience with Azure App Service, Azure Functions, and Cosmos DB a plus.
- Security & compliance stack: OAuth 2.0/JWT authentication, encryption at rest/transit (AES-256), GDPR/CCPA compliance, role-based access control, and vulnerability scanning (OWASP standards).
- Additional: RESTful/GraphQL APIs, CI/CD pipelines (GitHub Actions or Azure DevOps), automated testing (unit, integration, end-to-end), and WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility compliance.

The contractor must propose a dedicated team with the following minimum roles and credentials.

- Project Manager: PMP or equivalent certification; 5+ years managing web/mobile projects; proven on-time, on-budget delivery.
- Lead Full-Stack Developer: 7+ years' experience; expertise in chosen tech stack.
- UX/UI Designer: 5+ years; portfolio showing clean, intuitive data-input and dashboard interfaces; accessibility expertise.
- QA/Test Engineer: Automated and manual testing experience; familiarity with agricultural or scientific data tools.
- DevOps/Security Specialist: Cloud certification (Azure Administrator or equivalent); security auditing background.

All key personnel must be available for regular USSEC status meetings (virtual or in-person at USSEC headquarters in Chesterfield, MO).

High-level scope (for qualification purposes only; detailed requirements will be in the final RFP/SOW):

- Responsive web application (desktop-first) with optional native or progressive web app (PWA) mobile versions for iOS/Android.
- Secure user authentication, data input forms, real-time calculation engine, results dashboard, exportable reports, and multilingual support.
- Backend logic for composite scoring (configurable weights, sensitivity analysis).
- Integration potential with SSAP certificate data or external APIs.
- Hosting on secure cloud infrastructure with analytics and usage tracking
- Full documentation, training, 12-month post-launch support, and optional ongoing maintenance

The contractor must be prepared to deliver this under USSEC's branding and accessibility standards while protecting proprietary formulas and user data.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION (if applicable)

USSEC promotes U.S. Soy in more than 90 global markets with emphasis on verified sustainability through the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP), superior quality, reliable supply, and the world's lowest carbon footprint for soy. Existing USSEC digital tools already enable users to input facility-specific and origin-specific data to calculate economic value and refining yields. The new GOLD Standard application will extend this capability into a unified composite scoring system incorporating weighted measures.

DELIVERABLES:

Below is a comprehensive, contract-ready list of final deliverables that the selected contractor must provide upon project completion. These are structured to ensure USSEC receives a fully operational, maintainable, secure, and branded solution that can immediately be launched and supported. All deliverables will be formally accepted via a written sign-off at the end of the final sprint (or phase) using the agreed-upon acceptance criteria in the Statement of Work (SOW).

1. Fully Functional Application (Core Deliverable)

Production-ready web application (desktop-first, fully responsive) hosted on Microsoft Azure (or mutually agreed cloud) with 99.9% uptime SLA.

- Mobile experience delivered as either:
 - Progressive Web App (PWA) with offline capability, or
 - Native iOS and Android apps via React Native/Flutter (single codebase) if selected in the final scope.
- Complete composite scoring engine ("GOLD Standard") with:
 - Configurable weighted factors (sustainability, nutrition, quality, carbon, reliability, etc.)
 - Real-time calculation with sensitivity analysis and "what-if" scenarios
 - Input validation, error handling, and audit logging
- User features: secure login (SSO/OAuth), multi-language interface (English + up to 5 additional languages), data input forms, results dashboard, shareable/exportable reports (PDF, Excel, CSV), and printable "GOLD Standard" certificate.
- Administrative backend: dashboard for USSEC staff to update weights/formulas, manage users, view analytics, and export usage reports.
- All source code (front-end, back-end, database schema, algorithms) in a private Git repository with complete commit history, branching strategy, and READMEs.

2. Infrastructure & Deployment Assets

- Complete Azure (preferred) or equivalent cloud infrastructure as code (Terraform/Bicep scripts).
- CI/CD pipelines (Azure DevOps or GitHub Actions) fully configured for automated builds, tests, and deployments.
- Database schema and initial seed data (including sample soybean metrics for testing).
- DNS, SSL certificates, CDN configuration, and monitoring/alerting (Application Insights or equivalent).
- Load-testing results demonstrating support for at least 5,000 concurrent users.

3. Documentation Package

- Technical documentation (API reference, architecture diagrams, database ERD, deployment guide, security model).
- User Guide (PDF + interactive online version) with screenshots and step-by-step instructions.
- Administrator Guide for USSEC staff.
- API documentation (Swagger/OpenAPI) if any external integrations are built.
- Data dictionary and scoring algorithm white paper (non-proprietary version for internal USSEC use).
- All documents delivered in both editable source (Markdown/Word) and final PDF formats, branded with USSEC style guide.

4. Testing & Quality Assurance Deliverables

- Comprehensive test plan and results: unit, integration, end-to-end, performance, security, and accessibility (WCAG 2.2 AA) test reports.
- Automated test suite (80%+ code coverage) included in the repository.
- Independent third-party penetration test report (conducted in final two weeks of project).
- Accessibility audit report (including automated and manual screen-reader testing).

5. Training & Knowledge Transfer

- Two live training sessions (recorded) for USSEC staff: one for end-user features, one for administration and maintenance.
- Video tutorials (8–10 short videos) hosted on USSEC’s Vimeo/YouTube channel or internal portal.
- One-day on-site or virtual “train-the-trainer” workshop at USSEC headquarters (Chesterfield, MO) or virtually.

- Knowledge-transfer session with USSEC’s internal IT team covering code structure, deployment, and ongoing maintenance.

6. Support & Warranty Period

- 12-month post-launch warranty and support package included at no additional cost:
 - Unlimited critical bug fixes (response < 4 hours, resolution < 48 hours)
 - Up to 40 hours of minor enhancements or formula adjustments
 - Monthly uptime and usage reports
 - Quarterly security updates and patching
- Extended maintenance option (years 2–5) priced separately in the proposal.

7. Optional / Phased Deliverables (if scoped)

- Integration with existing USSEC tools (e.g., Soybean Value Calculator data feed).
- AI-assisted input suggestions module (future phase).
- Annual usage analytics dashboard with export to USSEC’s CRM.

Acceptance & Payment Milestones

Payments will be tied to these deliverables via the following structure (example; final SOW may adjust):

20% – Requirements & Design approval

30% – Development & internal testing complete

30% – User Acceptance Testing (UAT) passed

20% – Go-live + all final documentation & training delivered

PROJECT TIMELINE:

*Our expectation is for the **deliverable** to be completed by **Sept 30, 2026**. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.*

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** March 20, 2026
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** March 31, 2026 Noon Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** April 10, 2026 Noon Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** April 15, 2026
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** April 16, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG and kroepke@ussec.org by **Noon April 10, 2026**
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.
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 to do 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 selected contractor.
- 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 learn 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 agree 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 16-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and eight 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 77 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 primary contractors. U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. is contracted to manage projects for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

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 and providing proof of payment to the subcontractor for any work they have performed. If proof of payment cannot be provided, USSEC will be unable to reimburse the contractor. 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.

Request for Proposal Budget Development

Company Name:	
Contact Person:	
Proposal Name:	
Total Budget:	\$ -

This budget proposed contains information including all consulting fees, 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 relations to the agreement.

PROFESSIONAL FEES:

Total Fees	
\$	-

TRAVEL EXPENSES

Provide the anticipated travel expenses to successfully execute the project:

Domestic Travel	International Travel	Purpose
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	
\$ -	\$ -	

Other

Provide list of any other costs related to the project that are not included in Professional Fees or Travel Expenses

Type of Expenses	Cost	Purpose
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	

Budget Summary

Professional Fees	\$ -
Travel Expenses	\$ -
Other	\$ -
	\$ -