REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
12:00 PM CST, 11/30/2026

RFP TITLE: INDIA MARKET ACCESS ADVISORY

RFP CONTACT:

Name: Kevin Roepke
Email: kroepke@ussec.org

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 30, 2026

INTRODUCTION:

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., USSEC helps build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocates for the use of soy in livestock and aquaculture feed and human consumption, promotes the benefits of soy use through education and connects industry leaders through a robust membership program.

To drive consistencies and share best practices amongst multiple groups, documentation of processes and procedures have been underway. Our next step is to make the information available to everyone that needs it and present it in a logical and informative format.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an openly and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis will assist in determining the fair market value for the work to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate various proposals and select the best contractor for the job based on experience, availability, expertise, approach, and cost.

The purpose of this RFP is to seek proposals to take the collection of documentation and create library of easy-to-understand training guides.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

USSEC is a non-profit organization and operates with funds provided by multiple funding agencies and membership groups. Because of this, we must ensure that everything we do is compliant to their funding rules. They provided guidelines on how we can invest their funds in the projects we are implementing on their behalf. From this, USSEC created Processes and Procedures that everyone must follow. Several USSEC teams have created regional and departmental interpretations of them. Throughout the year, USSEC is audited to ensure we are following the guidelines and processes and procedures. Therefore, in order for us to be successful, it is critical that everyone understands and follows them.

We have found that some of those rules are in conflict, may not have been updated and some needed further details. USSEC has several audits throughout the year.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

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

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

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

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

- **Understand and decipher the market complexity for USSEC's with Boots on Ground market intelligence** and closely track policy and regulatory developments in the soybean sector, leveraging the consulting firms' extensive networks with the Indian government, business community and civil society.
- Identification of industry partners, B2B customers in animal nutrition, aquaculture, oil, and soy food sectors in India for USSEC to forge strategic alliances.
- Monitor and analyze major changes or significant shifts in the geo-political, economic, trade and industry developments that might impact USSEC's interests. Areas to be monitored will include but may not be restricted to:

    - US-India Bilateral trade negotiations and developments from both U.S. and Indian agencies with potential impact on agricultural policy agendas and negotiations.
    - Domestic soybean production and procurement policies in India.
    - Incentives or soybean subsidies, import of soybean and soybean products.
    - Analysis of the public information and report on US and Indian trade policy initiatives.
    - Proprietary information relevant to the USSEC's activities in India from the government, trade associations and private sector.
    - Relevant personnel changes in the US and Indian governments including insights on their background and views.
    - Updates and insights on policy recommendations from the relevant G20 working groups and B20 taskforces under India's presidency.
- **Provide timely updates and reports on a monthly or bi-weekly basis** on the above areas for proactive action. The above information will be compiled into monthly written reports. Virtual briefings to supplement written reports may also be conducted as required
- **Support "development of a bespoke narrative"** by aligning USSEC's market objectives to the government's strategic policy objectives in the soybean, feedstock and the larger agriculture and nutrition domain.
- **Map relevant stakeholders**, and indicate their level of influence, describe their political interconnectedness, and evaluate their sentiments toward USSEC's market access issues. This includes identifying throughout the process allies, possible opponents and vested interests.
    - Stakeholder map will include government officials and regulators, influencers from the private sector, think tanks/academia, advocacy groups, industry and trade

associations and key opinion leaders (KOLs) who are relevant. The maps will be reviewed and updated periodically.

Engagement Strategy Development and Thought Leadership Support

- Analyze and provide strategic advice around opportunities **for USSEC to engage and further its India narrative.**
- Support USSEC's executives in **building relations with relevant identified stakeholders.** In this process, the contractor will:
  - Identify key and relevant Government of India stakeholders who will be critical to India's soybean import policy.
  - Develop a strategy for USSEC's engagement and advocacy including meeting sequencing and bespoke messaging.
  - Create and tailor meeting request letters to the officials of relevance to USSEC's interests in the Market, including from the appropriate G20 working groups.
  - Provide briefing materials and talking points.
  - Identify proper channels for delivering the meeting requests, and support in following up with the requests.
- The contractor will also **track and monitor developments at relevant G20 working groups and B20 task forces** in order to identify specific engagement opportunities for USSEC.
- The contractor will also **leverage its knowledge partnership** with USIBC to provide USSEC a platform for education.
  - **Identify thought leadership opportunities for USSEC** to effectively deliver USSEC's messages to key stakeholders (contractor to support organizing an event/ seminar upon the USSEC's approval.
  - Identification of stakeholders to be invited to the event. To attract the right audience, the contractor will utilize its existing exhaustive list of stakeholders in the Indian market which includes government personnel, industry associations, academia and media.
  - Provide talking points, stakeholder bios and other required briefing materials;
  - Produce notes and recommendations for USSEC.

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

- **For the purpose of this RFP, <u>you will only be required to provide</u>:**
  - **your CV,**
  - **your daily rate based on an eight (8) hour workday in USD, and**
  - **a draft program proposal**
    - **show your understanding of the market,**
    - **list of what the issues and opportunities are,**
    - **summary of what can be done to build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy, and promote the benefits of soy, and**
    - **explanation of why you would be the best candidate.**
- **Do not provide event proposals or details of specific events you would like to see developed and implemented. This will be developed with input from our US Soy Family in conjunction with USSEC's Unified Export**

Strategy (UES).

- **See instructions below for other detailed information.**

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION (if applicable)

- Preference will be given to proposals from companies/individuals residing in or already doing business in the country/region indicated.
- Submitter must have the following technological requirements:
  - Reliable high speed internet access
  - Microsoft Office 365, which include:
    - Outlook
    - Excel
    - Word
    - PowerPoint
    - Teams
    - SharePoint

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	**Description of Deliverables**
Monthly	Provide Budget & Accounting Analyst with CC to the Executive Director & Project Manager with the following: 1. Executive English Narrative Report (In USSEC Template) with services rendered during the month, that should include: a. Brief description of near or future potential for the use of soybean products b. Report progress toward the situation described in each activity summary c. Recommendations and opportunity areas for further programs or events d. List of key industry contacts e. Progress towards USSEC projects f. Action photos/videos (if any)
30 days before regional travel incurs within contract terms	1. Send Travel Authorization Form (TA) to the Sr Regional Project Manager with CC to Project Manager
45 days before out of region travel incurs within contract terms	Send Travel Authorization Form (TA) to Sr Regional Project Manager with CC to Project Manager
No later than 30 days after travel incurs within contract terms	1. Provide Budget & Accounting Analyst with: a) USSEC Travel Expense Report (in USSEC Template) b) USSEC Travel Mission Report (in USSEC Template)

Monthly, or as incurred	Provide invoice of professional fees for payment. • Provide with the invoice any materials, presentations, trip reports, etc. created and utilized for any applicable services that were accomplished. • Ensure all applicable invoices are submitted within 30 days of transaction and are compliant with USSEC policies and procedures. • Ensure invoice is submitted to ap@ussec.org.
By the 5th calendar day of each month	Detailed report of monthly activities with expected impact(s) and outcome(s). • Ensure Report Template is utilized. • Ensure report details all events with critical discussion of results for any applicable services that were accomplished. • Provide inside or along with the report any insights gained that can improve the execution of the activities. • Provide to Executive Director and Regional Project Team Lead.
Ongoing	Submission of invoices and expenses will be in accordance with Section III.3.c. of this Addendum.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The term of the proposal will last from January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027

*Additional terms from January 1, 2028, to December 31, 2028, and January 1, 2029 to December 31, 2029 possible after first term performance.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

• At least 10 years' relevant experience living, working operating in India

• Ability to network and build relationships

• A proven track record of strategic thinking and planning

• Ability to multitask by planning and implementing many projects at one time

• Highest moral integrity and character

• Located full time in India, but preferably with networks outside of India

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** October 26, 2026
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** November 25, 2026
- **Project Proposals Due:** November 30, 2026 and 12:00 PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** December 15, 2026
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** December 17, 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 ***5:00PM Central Time*** on ***November 30, 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.

3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.

4. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

5. Detailed Budget

    - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.

6. Proposals should be no longer than ***10 pages*** (8 ½" x 11").

NOTES:

- Prospective Contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between USSEC and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC's prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learns from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.

- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by USSEC or Funding Sources.
    - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature
- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agrees to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY

USSEC's strategy can be found here: https://ussec.org/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.

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) focuses on attaining market access, differentiating, and elevating preference for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in more than 90 countries. 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 Soy Checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry. Visit www.ussec.org for the latest information about USSEC and U.S. Soy internationally.

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 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.

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.