

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
SUBMISSION DEADLINE
5:00 PM CST, September 16, 2020

RFP TITLE: U.S. SUSTAINABILITY ALLIANCE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: September 16, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. Sustainability Alliance (USSA) is a non-profit organization which represents 20 U.S. farms, fishery and forestry associations and other partners in the supply chain. The project outreach began in 2014 as a multi-year effort to interact with USSA counterparts and customers in key member states in the EU to promote and explain the numerous sustainable and conservation practices and laws which are followed by the Alliance members in their operations.

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 for the following work:

- Using USSA's EU Policy Report (soon to be developed) as the foundation, develop a communications strategy that lays out the best target audiences, messages and communications tactics for building a narrative of USSA member's sustainability and conservation practices. This should include an audit of current communications efforts, including but not limited to the USSA website, social media accounts, newsletter and update calls and their value in promoting and explaining the practices of USSA members to intended audiences. Host, maintain, and update, as needed, the USSA website.
- Maintain a USSA contacts database, which is used for direct communications (newsletter) to contacts.
- If recommended as an impactful form of communication, continue the development and distribution of the monthly USSA newsletter.
- Serve in a secretariat role to USSA by planning monthly calls for cooperators and FAS European posts. Calls to include a speaker on a sustainability topic of current interest, a

cooperator presentation (where the cooperator will talk about their sustainability program), and an update on the communications plan. This role will secure the speakers, develop the agendas, and take call notes. Calls occur monthly, except for August.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

USSA is a Global-Based Initiative (GBI) with funds awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Market Access Program (MAP). The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is the lead organization responsible for implementation of the sustainability GBI program. USSA has recently implemented a new management structure that includes three sectors and a Management Council, with representation from each sector.

Agri-Bulk	Animal/Seafood & Related Products	Specialty
North American Export Grain Association	Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute	Almond Board of California
USA Rice	Food Export Association of the Northeast	American Hardwood Council
U.S. Grains Council	Leather and Hide Council of America	American Peanut Council
U.S. Soybean Export Council	North American Renderers Association	Cotton Council International
U.S. Wheat Associates	USA Poultry & Egg Export Council	Food Export Association of the Midwest
	U.S. Dairy Export Council	Organic Trade Association
	U.S. Meat Export Federation	Softwood Export Council
		U.S. Dry Bean Council

The project began initially as a pilot in Germany and the United Kingdom (and Brussels) and later extended to France and the Netherlands. Today the USSA also now covers Denmark, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Poland and Ireland. While the purpose is to provide information and context to U.S. conservation and sustainability practices, the USSA is eager to work with our EU counterparts on the bigger challenge of global sustainability in the food supply chain.

We appreciate that there is something of a bias and / or misunderstanding across sections of the EU food value chain, supply sectors and officials of the extent to which the U.S. has engaged in conservation and sustainability programs. Our aim is to address and correct such impressions by providing context and verifiable examples of the U.S. approach to conservation and sustainability to demonstrate that these issues are taken very seriously. And have been for many years.

This project will be funded by USDA with MAP funds dedicated to GBIs.

The contractor will be explicitly prohibited from any and all lobbying activities with U.S. government officials. No lobbying efforts will be undertaken on behalf of USSEC or the United Soybean Board (USB).

TARGET AUDIENCE:

European policy influencers and policy makers, officials, and regulators.

Commercial and industry sectors including food retailer associations, feed trade association, importers, buyers and distributors, food processor associations and their members, hardwood products users, media – trade and national, clothing manufacturers, and consumer associations.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

We are seeking the development of a communications strategy that identifies the best target audiences, messages and forms of communication to support our goals of promoting and explaining the numerous sustainable and conservation practices and laws which are followed by the Alliance members in their operations. This strategy should account for an audit of current communications tactics and their value in reaching USSA’s intended audiences.

While the communications strategy is being developed, the agency should ensure continuity of all current communications efforts. The agency will host, maintain and update, as needed, the USSA website. Maintain and update, as needed, a USSA contacts database, which is used for direct communications. Continue the development and distribution of the monthly USSA newsletter (distribution would be to USSA database contacts) and/or implement any new communications efforts that result from the proposed communications strategy.

Agency will serve in a secretariat role of USSA by planning monthly calls for cooperators and FAS posts. The role will include the development of the agenda, securing speakers for the call and taking call notes.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is that work will begin in November. If 2021 funding is granted, work will continue through 2021.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** September 1, 2020
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** September 7, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** September 16, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** October 1, 2020

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG by **5:00PM Central Time on September 16, 2020**
2. A description of Prospective Contractor's capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
3. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables and timeline to complete the work.
3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
4. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.
5. Detailed Budget
 - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.
6. Proposals should be no longer than **10 pages** (8 ½" x 11").

NOTES:

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

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

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY

USSEC's strategy can be found here: <http://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/>

USB's Long Range Strategic Plan can be found here: <http://unitedsoybean.org/about-usb/strategic-planning/>

We are a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusiness and agricultural organizations.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., we help build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

Our 15-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board, created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Because of the limitations on administrative and salary costs established in the Act, USB outsources the majority of its program management responsibilities to USB's three primary contractors:

- SmithBucklin-St. Louis for domestic marketing, new uses, production research and Board initiative activities;
- Osborn & Barr Communications for communications/public relations activities and;
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

As one of these three primary contractors USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, 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.