

## Responses from RFC Q & A Conference Call

1. I am thinking about submitting a concept on XYZ. Is this something USB would be interested in?
  - a. Yes, creativity and new concepts are encouraged provided some justification is included regarding why it would be a good opportunity for U.S. soy.
2. I understand that the RFC is a new addition to USB proposals. Can you describe more on the reasoning for introducing this step and if you foresee a similar process in the future?
  - a. The purpose of the RFC is to make the process easier. Instead of spending time on a full proposal that may or may not be aligned with USB strategic direction, a two page concept is submitted first. Another purpose of the RFC is to encourage new ideas. We anticipate continuing to use this process going forward.
3. Regarding the RFC process, if a subcontractor for USB decides to respond to the upcoming request, should the organization coordinate this submission with the primary contractor that we have a previous working relationship with or submit our concept separately?
  - a. The concept should be submitted separately. If the concept is chosen to move forward to the full proposal stage, the primary contractor will work with you on the full proposal submission.
4. Can a concept address more than one theme?
  - a. Yes, if you can demonstrate how the themes are related. Or, you can submit a separate concept for each theme.
5. For concept submission, is USB expecting any high-level timeline or cost estimates? Or is the goal to simply convey the concept for potential selection for secondary phases (which would then require a full, comprehensive proposal with budget, deliverables, timelines, etc.)?
  - a. The goal is to convey the concept for potential selection for the secondary phase. For concept submission, you only need to provide proposed duration and estimated budget total.
6. Is there an average \$ amount or range for proposed concepts?
  - a. The average is probably somewhere between 50K and 150K, although there is no right amount or strict guidelines. For the purposes of the RFC, propose what would be needed to accomplish the work proposed.
7. Can we enter range in the budget estimate section or does it need to be a fixed amount?
  - a. A fixed amount is preferred.
8. Can you clarify how much detail should be included in the budget estimate (e.g. line item detail or overall project budget estimate, hourly rates for personnel, etc.)?
  - a. A total budget estimate is sufficient. No breakout required at this stage.
9. Can USB funds be used to pay a portion of principal or co-principal investigator's salary when the PI or co-PI is a research faculty who is required to find outside funding to support a portion of his/her salary?
  - a. Per USB policy, "In research contracts with land grant universities, the salaries of principal investigators are not to be paid by USB".

10. If we already have a FY19 project supported by the USB and we want to follow up with a project for 2020, can we continue that particular research project with USB? Meanwhile submit a RFC-USB FY20? Are these two separated from each other?
  - a. You will need to submit a concept for any work you are proposing for FY20 even if it is a continuation of previous work. If your concept is selected to move forward, you will be invited to submit a full proposal.
11. If submitting a concept that builds upon past USB funding, should we include the progress from the previous project given the 2 page limit?
  - a. Yes please provide a very brief summary as part of the background as indicated in bullet 5 of the background section.
12. Does the two-page limit prohibit exhibits/attachments to better convey the concept? In other words, is there a limit of two pages total for the entire submission, or two pages of body with additional supporting documentation allowable?
  - a. No attachments allowed. 2 page limit only. If more detailed is required, we will reach out to you.
13. Can USB be more flexible on the performance period, and/or the use of no-cost extensions? I have an idea that requires a postdoctoral researcher. Postdocs can take a long time to get in place; recruiting takes time, and visa issues cause delay since most postdocs are internationals. In other words, it is nearly impossible to align the academic system with a fixed performance period.
  - a. The earliest possible start date is October 1, 2019 but you can propose a duration of longer than 12 months as long as you provide justification (see guidance under *proposed duration*).
14. What information is being sought in the team capacity section? Is this meant to capture capability information or simply number of staff?
  - a. A brief description detailing why your organization is equipped to address the proposed concept. Do not include capacity or number of staff.
15. Is there a preference for multi-institutional projects vs. single institution, multi-PI projects, vs. single PI projects?
  - a. There is no preference, although collaboration and partnerships are welcomed.
16. Since some soybean pest problems that affect sustainability may be region-specific, would concepts that have 'national impact' be viewed more favorably than those with 'regional impact'?
  - a. National impact is preferred but concepts with regional impact will also be considered.
17. What qualities of projects make them particularly attractive and unattractive for funding by USB?
  - a. Concepts that address the themes identified in the RFC and concepts that present a new opportunity for U.S. soy are most attractive.

18. The Request for Concepts provides the evaluation criteria. What is the weight given to each of these criteria in USB's scoring of concepts? What other metrics are important to USB in defining/tracking success?
  - a. These are general, unweighted evaluation criteria.
19. Will all concept-submitting organizations be notified individually and/or publicly of the selection outcome for a full proposal invitation? What is the confidentiality policy for these submissions?
  - a. Organizations will be notified individually. Every effort is made to keep individual information confidential but please do not disclose intellectual property in your concept submission.
20. When concepts are developed and sent in on Feb. 12, will they be held in confidence or be open for public inspection? Will competitors be able to learn what others are proposing and have their own information exposed, or will these be held close by USB and not become open books? Just wondering!
  - a. Concepts will not be shared outside of USB. Competitors will not be able to learn what others are proposing.
21. Who will be involved in the process of reviewing, prioritizing and selecting the Research and Program Concepts that are submitted?
  - a. Concepts are reviewed exclusively by USB.
22. Can we get access to existing market research that has been done in the last 18 months related to the theme areas of Sustainability, Oil and Meal?
  - a. This may be possible after the concept phase if selected to move forward with a full proposal.
23. Please further explain what is meant by "value chain connectivity"?
  - a. Enhanced partnerships to bring more value to U.S. soybean farmers or improve information flow through the value chain.
24. Under Oil/Marketplace on page 6, what is meant by "Novel components in soy"?
  - a. Research to define and assess the value of additional novel components of soy such as lecithins, free fatty acids, omega 3, omega 6, DHA, etc.
25. How will USB evaluate cross-cutting concepts and proposals that impact multiple target areas, such as work that spans meal, sustainability and oil?
  - a. Cross-cutting concepts are encouraged. The mechanics regarding how this process will work within the current structure will be managed internally.
26. The industrial uses categories include Asphalt, Motor Oil, and Surfactants; are these the major end-use that USB prefers? How about other industrial uses such as coating?
  - a. Any industrial applications utilizing U.S. soy are encouraged, but priority themes are priorities for a reason.
27. Why has USB chosen to focus on SDGs?

- a. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created by the United Nations. Private industry and end users are setting up their sustainability goals to align with the SDGs so we are trying to align with our customers.
28. The themes include "Accelerate industrial uses for conventional and high oleic soybean oil". Can we propose the use of other soybean oil products such as the soy wax (hydrogenated soybean oil, which is derived from traditional soybean oil and HOSO)?
  - a. Creativity and new concepts are encouraged provided some justification is included regarding why it would be a good opportunity for U.S. soy. See background section under guidance for more details.
29. The OIL strategic theme in Attachment 2 also lists "Create new use challenge" and "Develop challenge platforms for new uses across the value chain." Can you clarify the meaning and intent of "new use challenge" and "challenge platforms" in this context? Also, is the "value chain" synonymous with "supply chain"? If not, please clarify.
  - a. Looking for new applications in the marketplace involving soybean oil such as packaging, biodegradability, compostability, etc.
  - b. Value chain is the full range of activities – including design, production, marketing and distribution – businesses conduct to bring a product or service from conception to delivery, adding value or margin through that process.
30. The RFC refers to "market-driven opportunity" as a key evaluation criteria and also encourages "market-driven" approaches. What is the meaning of "market-driven" as used by USB in the context of this RFC?
  - a. Market-driven means that clear market potential exists for work proposed. Demand-driven is synonymous with market-driven.
31. The SUSTAINABILITY strategic theme in Attachment 2 uses the terminology "brand customers," "consumer brands," and "brand partners." What is the meaning of these terms in the context of this RFC?
  - a. These terms are largely interchangeable and refer to all end users such as food companies or private companies focused on industrial research.
32. Under the strategic theme of Sustainability, we understand Ag Data would include precision ag related data, farm management tools, online platforms, and data related to crop consultants/ag retailers. Can you confirm whether this understanding is correct?
  - a. Your understanding is correct.
33. When concepts are selected to move on, will it be an open call for proposals or limited to the proposed concepts?
  - a. There will be no open call for proposals. Full proposals will be requested by invitation only from the concepts received.
34. Are multi-year concepts allowable?
  - a. Yes they are allowable provided you include a justification for why it will take longer than one year. You should include the full time frame and budget required to complete the total program in the concept submission. Do not enter an annual budget, but rather the total needed for the time frame proposed.

35. For multi-year concepts, is there a maximum \$ amount?
  - a. No maximum. If you believe work on your concept will take five years to complete and cost \$5M, you would indicate that in the concept submission.
  
36. I lead a large group with several subcontracts. Should they all submit separate concepts or one big concept?
  - a. It could be combined or separated into individual concepts. If each piece is reliant on the other, it should be submitted as one concept.
  
37. AgData – are you looking for something conceptual or very specific solutions?
  - a. At this point conceptual. Details will come later in the full proposal.