

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE

12:00 PM CST, 6/2/2020

**RFP TITLE: FARMER COMMUNICATION PLATFORM TECHNICAL SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT**

#### RFP CONTACT:

Name: Kristen Basala

Phone #: 314-707-2147

Email: [kbasala@ussec.org](mailto:kbasala@ussec.org)

**PROPOSAL DEADLINE: TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020 AT 12:00 PM CST**

#### INTRODUCTION:

U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. requests proposals to assist in the continued development and implementation of a farmer communication platform related to crop protection as well as a microsite to house these new resources.

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, 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.

#### 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 assist in the continued development and implementation of a Farmer Communication Platform on Production Innovation. This platform is a proactive, collaborative and cross cutting communication effort by a broad range of interests along the U.S. agricultural value chain, leveraging domestic and international relationships. Core message developed collectively and with the entire value chain will be the strongest and best represent all of U.S. agriculture.

#### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

Agriculture, both in the U.S. and abroad, continues to innovate. However, customers of U.S. agriculture products, as well as consumers, lack factual information and often real world

understanding of the innovative seed and crop protection tools that are in the toolbox of today's farmers.

U.S. farmers have achieved success in a number of export markets of the U.S. products in carrying the message of the benefits of biotechnology to the policy makers and regulators. The time is now to launch a coordinated communications effort from the voice of the farmer on Plant Breeding Innovation (PBI) and the many ways new plant varieties are improved to increase yield, resist pests and be more tolerant to changing weather patterns. Additionally, the regulatory approaches and policies around the world for crop protection products continue to put pressure on farmers who use these tools to combat a variety of production challenges. Grower need a better way to directly tell how these innovative tools help them on their farms.

Drawing upon the lessons learned in other outreach and education activities used to address market access issues such as biotechnology, successful communication vehicles are at times external and at times internal. With this understanding, both U.S. communicators and in-country voices will be cultivated based on the uniqueness of the market and what motivates policy and regulatory development.

Ultimately, we have a shared goal to advance U.S. agricultural around the world through fair, transparent, and science-based regulations and policies. Future innovation in crop production, particularly in seed and crop protection products, depends on trade enabling and consistent regulatory outcomes and endpoints. It is the trusted voice of the farmer with a clear and consistent message that past experience has shown to have real impact in improving market access for all U.S. products.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Regulators and influencers from key influential countries, as well as direct importers of US products, to build appreciation of production agriculture, consider the role of innovation, and ultimately formulate policy/regulations that facilitate market access and reduce the potential for trade disruptions.

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

Provide technical subject matter expertise and programmatic support in the development of a toolkit to support the U.S. agricultural industry in its efforts to educate farmers, breeders, first-line customers, policymakers, government leaders and others within foreign markets. Information should convey the full range of technologies associated with crop protection along with the safety and benefits of its science and practice. A review of all relevant existing materials should be conducted to determine items that may need to be revised and gaps in information that is missing. Items to be considered include: fact sheets, infographics, presentation slides, handouts, etc.

This toolkit should then be housed within a web portal/microsite that can be accessed for easy review by the U.S. farmer. Additional items to consider include translation of materials and ongoing training on general communication strategies.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION (if applicable)**

Contractor selected for this work will be expected to collaborate with contractor chosen to provide web portal design and maintenance.

**TYPE OF CONTRACT:**

End Result Contract: The proposal fee should 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.

All proposals must include 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)

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
July – September 2020	Perform gap analysis, review existing materials and develop communication plan
October – December 2020	Assist in updating current web portal and provide technical subject matter expertise to ensure proper messages are being conveyed

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Our expectation is for the project to last from July 2020 to December 2020. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

**RFP TIMELINE:**

- **RFP Distribution:** May 26, 2020
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** May 29, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** June 2, 2020 by 12:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** June 8, 2020

- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** June 9, 2020

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

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

1. Please email the proposal to [RFP@USSEC.ORG](mailto:RFP@USSEC.ORG) by **12:00PM Central Time on June 2, 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](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.