

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE

5:00 PM CST, 9/30/2019

### RFP TITLE: INCREASING US EXPORTS THROUGH REDUCTION OF NON-TARIFF TRADE BARRIERS

#### RFP CONTACT:

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**PROPOSAL DEADLINE:** September 30, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION:

The U. S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) requests proposals to assist in the advancing the competitive advantage of U.S. exports to increase demand through the reduction of market access barriers.

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 see proposals to devise a strategy for a combined effort to build a competitive advantage for U.S. commodities like corn, sorghum, soybeans, barley and wheat through the establishment of a two-way and complete understanding of the regulatory requirements and customer values that then couples with the attributes of the U.S. production and supply chain. Through these efforts, this U.S. can gain competitive advantage through a system-wide response to the challenges for meeting customer needs and import requirements.

#### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

A competitive advantage for U.S. commodities can be established if a complete understanding of regulatory requirements and customer values can be coupled with the attributes of the U.S. production and supply chain to provide information to support a U.S. system wide response to the challenges for meeting customer needs and import requirements.

U.S. exports are subject to an increasing number of non-tariff barriers, often tied to product safety and quality, that reduce market access and competitiveness. The entire value chain is concerned with safety, quality and compliance with relevant import requirements.

By bringing the relevant participants in the value chain (farmers, traders, grain handlers, and government representatives) together, this project will seek to identify the concerns and steps that can be taken to mitigate non-tariff trade barriers. Although this approach can be used with many destinations for U.S. exports, China will be the initial focus so that the U.S. can be armed when any opportunity to access the China market opens for any one or all grains and oilseeds.

China has broadly articulated some of its needs in the form of Administrative Measures of Inspection and Quarantine for the Entry and Exit Grain (Decree 177) which suggests exporter nations present “protocols” to provide for compliance. However, farmers, exporters and other supply chain participants lack sufficient details and understanding of the regulatory goals and approaches, and at the same time, need to demonstrate to China the safe, innovative and competitive capacity of the U.S. production and marketing system.

A comprehensive review of China’s import requirements coupled with fair and complete representation and some consideration for modification of the U.S. grain and oilseed production, handling and distribution system needs to be undertaken to provide for information and outline steps to reduce and potentially eliminate the non-tariff barriers. Building this two-way and complete understanding of the regulatory requirements and customer values that then couples with the attributes of the U.S. production and supply chain will provide for a competitive advantage in meeting Chinese customer and U.S. value chain.

By providing for more satisfactory, predictable and sustainable trading relationships between the United States and China, the project will be a basis from which an aligned strategy to achieve the goal of mitigating China’s non-tariff barriers to grains and oilseeds by providing for information to demonstrate how the U.S. value chain meets China’s import requirements. The project will deliver a complete analysis of the actions and impacts of the various actions by the players within the value chain as they relate to all aspects of China’s requirements including foreign material and weed seed content, plant pests, pesticide residues and production technologies including plant biotechnology as outlined by Decree 177 and other Chinese measures impacting imports from the U.S. Using this as a foundation, U.S. grain and oilseed production and marketing systems can work with our Chinese customers as well as our respective governments to reach trade enabling measures so that the U.S. can best meet China’s Decree 177 and other destination requirements.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

Regulators and influencers

**SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:**

A prospective consultant should address the scope of work below that would be integral to the project and include the following steps:

- Conduct a thorough review of all relevant studies and surveys already conducted regarding the regulatory requirements (particularly those related to China’s Decree 177) and Chinese customer needs.
- Establish and conduct a robust analysis of the proposed outcomes related to China’s import concerns related to regulatory requirements to more completely understand the entire system.
- Document all aspects of the production, trade and consumption of the respective grain or oilseeds being addressed, including but not limited to, regulatory measures as well as commercial practices that are employed in the production and the marketing value-chain through to Chinese processing and use.
- Provide a report and recommendations on how to devise and implement an aligned strategy to mitigate China’s non-tariff barriers to grains and oilseeds

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Description of Deliverables</b>
November	Work with an advisory group developed from a cooperator team through USSEC to identify existing resources.
	Conduct a thorough review of all relevant existing information regarding the regulatory requirements and customer needs in China as they relate to specified grains and oilseed as determined.
May 15, 2020 or sooner	Provide a draft report which includes robust analysis of relevant information and protocols, which explores all aspects of production, trade and consumption as it relates to both regulatory measures and commercial practices and offers recommendations on strategy to mitigate China’s non-tariff barriers to grains and oilseeds.
June 30, 2020 or sooner	Provide a final report.
As needed	Check-in with USSEC Senior Director, <a href="mailto:rleeck@ussec.org">rleeck@ussec.org</a> and Project Manager, <a href="mailto:kbasala@ussec.org">kbasala@ussec.org</a> to report on developments being made and status of project.
Ongoing	Submit monthly invoices to USSEC Accounts Payable, <a href="mailto:ap@ussec.org">ap@ussec.org</a> and Project Manager, <a href="mailto:kbasala@ussec.org">kbasala@ussec.org</a>

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Our expectation is for the project to last from **November 1, 2019** to **June 30, 2020**. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

## RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** September 13, 2019
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** September 20 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** September 30 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** October 11, 2019
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** October 16, 2019

## 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 **5:00PM Central Time on Monday, September 30**.
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;
- United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC) 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).

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