

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

5:00 PM CST 9/22/2021

RFP TITLE: SECRETARIAT SERVICES FOR SOY EXPORT SUSTAINABILITY LLC

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: September 22, 2021

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.

Soy Export Sustainability LLC (SES) manages the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP) as well as a version of the protocol adapted to meet the requirements of the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive (RED). Certification in this adapted protocol, known as SSAP-RED, allows U.S. soy to meet the sustainability requirements for use as feedstock for biofuel production in the European Union. USSEC chairs the SES Board of Managers.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC seeks a contractor to serve as the secretariat for the SSAP-RED protocol. Responsibilities include supporting the SES Board of Managers and Advisory Committee, overseeing the certification process, ensuring the SSAP-RED remains compliant with the European Commission's requirements, promoting awareness and use of SSAP-RED, and managing website content. The contractor must have familiarity SSAP, RED (and RED II), SSAP-RED, European Commission processes, and the U.S. soy industry.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

SSAP is a certificate available to exporters of U.S. soybeans and soybean products. The protocol is based on a national system of conservation laws and regulations as well as farmer participation in the U.S. Farm Program. RED (and subsequently RED II) is the European Union's comprehensive legislation on renewable fuels which establishes the policy for production and promotion of renewable energy from renewable sources. This includes criteria for biofuels that are produced or consumed in the European Union. SSAP-RED is an adaptation of SSAP to meet RED and RED II requirements and enable use of U.S. soybeans as feedstock for biofuel

production in the EU. SES is responsible for managing both the SSAP and SSAP-RED. SES is governed by a Board of Managers and assisted by an Advisory Committee. More information on SSAP-RED and the SES governance structure can be found at www.ssap-red.org.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The contractor will support the SES Board of Managers and Advisory Committee on SSAP, SSAP-RED and engage with auditors, certificate users, and other stakeholders.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

- Ensure that SSAP-RED meets the European Commission’s qualifications for REDII and that SES meets the governance requirements for sustainability schemes. This includes the updating and management of protocol, governance and auditing documentation to submit to the European Commission as needed.
- Provide support to the SES Board of Managers and the Advisory Committee. Attend committee meetings, respond to queries from committee members,
- Prepare and submit the annual report to the European Commission in keeping with the reporting requirements for voluntary schemes under REDII. The report must address topics such as frequency of audits, robustness of the scheme, stakeholder consultation, monitoring of the certification bodies, and accessibility for economic operators, amongst others.
- Support further development and improvement of the SSAP-RED program. Regularly analyze data to evaluate the effectiveness of SSAP-RED and impact of implementation, identify risks, and facilitate continuous improvement. Conduct market intelligence, assist in benchmarking as requested, and provide conceptual support to better promote the program.
- Train auditors on the certification and implementation process for SSAP-RED and what the SSAP-RED certificate covers. Monitor certification activities to ensure that certification reports are correct, consistent, and meet requirements. Assess verification reports.
- Communicate with SSAP-RED certificate users on topics such as the certification process, what the certificate covers, and supporting tools such as the Risk Assessment Tool and the Traceability Platform. Maintain up-to-date program information and communicate any changes to users and stakeholders.
- Develop/update content for website and IT systems functionalities. This includes overseeing yearly maintenance and updating of the Traceability Platform and Risk Assessment Tool, and ensuring that they are operational and compliant with privacy protections.

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
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Ongoing	Provide secretariat support services to SES for SSAP and SSAP-RED as described in the scope of services.
April 1, 2022	Submit draft annual report on SSAP-RED to SES LLC for review
April 15, 2022	Submit final annual report on SSAP-RED to SES LLC
Monthly	Submit report summarizing work performed

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The contract will last from approximately October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** September 3, 2021
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** September 9, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Project Proposals Due:** September 22, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** September 30, 2021
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** October 4, 2021

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 22, 2021**.
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.