REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
July 9, 2024 - 12:00 PM SGT (GMT +8)

RFP TITLE: PROJECT SUPPORT SPECIALIST – AQUACULTURE, SOUTHEAST ASIA REGION (SEA)

RFP CONTACT:
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INTRODUCTION:
U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. formally requests proposals for the delivery of services and costs of engaging a Project Support Specialist to provide professional services for the S.E. Asia aquaculture market.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in aquaculture, USSEC helps build a preference in aquaculture for U.S. soybeans, soybean meal and soybean products (collectively known as ‘U.S. soy’), advocate for the use of soy in livestock feed and for human consumption, promote the benefits of soy through education, and connect aquaculture food and agriculture industry through a robust customer program.

PURPOSE OF RFP:
USSEC’s standard practice is to RFP every 1 to 3 years, or as and when required, in an open and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis and benchmarking will assist in determining the fair market value for the services to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate qualified proposals and select the best Contractor for the job based on technical qualifications, related industry experience, managerial abilities, strength of industry connections and contacts and suitable cost and time that matches the needs under this contract.

CONTRACTOR QUALIFICATIONS:
The Project Support Contractor plays a pivotal role in providing comprehensive support to regional Technical Directors, Technical Consultants, and to overall program operations for the focus areas, e.g. Animal, Aqua, and Human utilization of soy. Candidates for this position should possess a strong foundation in project administration, contract management, compliance, logistics, and budget oversight.
Ideal candidates will have at least a Bachelor degree, complemented by 3-5 years of relevant experience. Experience in agriculture, aquaculture, or related fields is highly advantageous. They should demonstrate a proven track record in managing project logistics, including procurement processes, travel arrangements, and event coordination specific to the focus area. Proficiency in budget monitoring, financial reporting, and compliance with donor regulations is essential to ensure effective project implementation. Moreover, the role requires adeptness in providing support to ensure smooth operational execution of programs and projects within the aquaculture. Familiarity with technical terminologies and processes in agriculture or aquaculture related to the focus area is beneficial for effective collaboration and communication with Technical Directors and Consultants.

Communication skills are crucial, enabling effective interaction with stakeholders at various levels, both internally and externally, within the aquaculture. The ability to coordinate meetings, workshops, and other project activities specific to focus area is key to maintaining operational efficiency and effectiveness. Team collaboration is also vital, necessitating the capability to work harmoniously in multicultural environments and support senior management and technical teams as required within the aquaculture.

Proficiency in MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook) is required and familiarity with project management software would be a bonus. Candidates should exhibit initiative, adaptability to changing project demands, and proactive problem-solving abilities with strong time management skills. Fluency in English, reading and writing is required, with proficiency in additional relevant languages advantageous for operations within diverse in-country or regional contexts related to the aquaculture.

**CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBJECTIVES:**
The Contractor will drive USSEC’s efforts in aquaculture and the region. Key responsibilities include:

- Efficiently manage administrative tasks related to project implementation within the aquaculture, ensuring compliance with contractual requirements and donor regulations.
- Coordinate project logistics, including procurement, travel arrangements, and event coordination specific to projects within the aquaculture.
- Support in drafting, reviewing, and monitoring contracts, agreements, and sub-agreements related to projects within the aquaculture.
- Ensure compliance with all contractual obligations, reporting requirements, and regulatory guidelines applicable to projects within the aquaculture.
- Assist in budget development and monitoring for projects within the aquaculture, ensuring accurate financial reporting and adherence to approved budgets.
- Facilitate communication and coordination among project stakeholders, including partners, beneficiaries, and relevant institutions within the aquaculture.
- Prepare timely and accurate reports, including progress reports, financial reports, and other documentation required for projects within the aquaculture.
• Maintain comprehensive project records and documentation, ensuring data integrity and accessibility for internal and external stakeholders.

• Support in organizing and facilitating meetings, workshops, and events related to projects within the aquaculture, ensuring effective communication and engagement.

• Liaise with stakeholders at various levels, including government agencies, NGOs, donors, and community representatives, to foster collaboration and support project objectives within the aquaculture.

• Identify potential risks and challenges related to project implementation within the aquaculture, proposing and implementing mitigation strategies as needed.

• Proactively address issues and challenges, applying problem-solving skills to ensure smooth project execution and achievement of objectives within the aquaculture.

• Contribute to the continuous improvement of project methodologies, tools, and approaches within the aquaculture, incorporating lessons learned and best practices.

• Explore innovative solutions and technologies to enhance project effectiveness and impact within the aquaculture.

Collectively contribute to USSEC’s mission to develop a strong preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products in aquaculture, ultimately increasing U.S. soy exports to the country.

GENERAL SCOPE OF SERVICES/WORK:

• Collaborate closely with USSEC’s Aquaculture In-Country Representatives, trade, and technical Contractors to efficiently organize and support implementation of USSEC’s programs.

• Organize both in-person and virtual trade servicing and networking activities to foster relationships with key local industry and government stakeholders within the aquaculture.

• Provide project support for USSEC’s major regional buyer support programs and country-level initiatives, focusing on promoting and increasing exports of U.S. Soy.

• Ensure active engagement of aquaculture representatives, decision-makers, and influencers in major regional conferences, workshops, and trade missions organized by USSEC.

• Collaborate with USSEC Southeast Asia Staff and Contractors to arrange and execute country-specific workshops, seminars, and round table discussions to advance USSEC’s mission within the aquaculture.

• Plan, coordinate, and facilitate in-person and virtual trade and industry meetings for USSEC’s Leadership and Team, U.S. Farmer Leadership and Trade Teams, and USSEC member exporter companies.

• Assist in developing program itineraries and travel arrangements for USSEC Leadership and Team, U.S. Soy Family Organizations, U.S. Soy Producers, and Exporters visiting the aquaculture.

• Coordinate additional logistical arrangements as directed by USSEC Leadership, ensuring strict compliance with travel and safety protocols at all times.

CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT:

• Abide by instructions from USSEC’s management, accounting, and compliance teams.

• Meet the Services, Deliverables, and KPIs outlined in the Master Agreement and Addendum.
• Uphold USSEC’s core values: (1) Deliver World Class Performance, (2) Act Responsibly, (3) Foster Our Diversity, and (4) Trust Our Team.
• Refrain from any activities that contradict or reflect negatively on USSEC or USSEC’s Mission.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION (if applicable)
• NA

CONTRACT DELIVERABLES:
• Submit comprehensive monthly reports detailing activities, achievements, and challenges encountered in supporting USSEC’s programs within the aquaculture.
• Include updates on project progress, stakeholder engagements, and outcomes of trade servicing and networking activities.
• Maintain documentation of in-person and virtual trade servicing and networking activities, including participant lists, feedback summaries, and action points for follow-up.
• Provide documentation and progress reports for USSEC’s major regional buyer support programs and country-level initiatives, highlighting contributions and impact.
• Submit attendance reports for aquaculture representatives at major regional conferences, workshops, and trade missions organized by USSEC.
• Document outcomes and key insights from country-specific workshops, seminars, and round table discussions organized to further USSEC’s mission in the aquaculture.
• Prepare detailed summaries of in-person and virtual trade and industry meetings facilitated for USSEC’s Leadership and Team, U.S. Farmer Leadership and Trade Teams, and member exporter companies.
• Maintain logs of inquiries received from U.S. exporters, importers, end-users, processors of U.S. soy, trade organizations, and government officials, along with responses provided.
• Document the development and coordination of program itineraries and travel arrangements for USSEC Leadership and Team, U.S. Soy Family Organizations, U.S. Soy Producers, and Exporters visiting the aquaculture.
• Ensure all logistical arrangements and travel protocols strictly adhere to USSEC’s compliance standards and safety regulations.
• Prepare ad hoc reports and updates as requested by USSEC Management, addressing specific inquiries or information needs related to ongoing projects and initiatives.
• Provide regular updates and reports on budget utilization, including breakdowns of expenses related to project activities and travel logistics.
• Compile feedback and evaluation reports from stakeholders regarding the effectiveness and impact of USSEC’s programs and initiatives within the aquaculture.
• Ensure the prompt submission of communication pieces such as success stories, event reports, and other relevant updates that highlight the impact and progress of USSEC’s initiatives in S.E. Asia.
• Provide swift and accurate responses to communication requests from USSEC leadership, demonstrating a high level of responsiveness and reliability.
• Be thoroughly familiar with USSEC’s comprehensive catalogue of communication and marketing collateral. Utilize these resources effectively in all communication and outreach efforts.
• Ensure seamless internal communication within USSEC’s team, keeping all relevant parties informed about ongoing projects, market developments, and strategic initiatives.
• Assist in creating and distributing content across various platforms, ensuring consistency and alignment with USSEC’s messaging and objectives.

REPORTING AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:
• Submit an invoice accompanied by a detailed monthly report to USSEC leadership in the prescribed USSEC format.
• Manage inquiries and questions from U.S. exporters, importers, processors of U.S. soy, trade organizations, government officials, and other stakeholders regarding soybean availability, sourcing, and related topics. Ensure urgent, important, and time-sensitive communications are promptly relayed to USSEC leadership.
• Provide monthly budget tables detailing the latest investment estimates for this contract and any associated projects and activities under the Contractor’s purview. Submit these tables by the 20th of each month or upon request from USSEC management.
• Respond promptly to ad hoc report requests from USSEC leadership, addressing specific information needs or urgent matters related to ongoing projects and initiatives.
PROJECT TIMELINE:
Contract for: PROJECT SUPPORT SPECIALIST – AQUACULTURE, SOUTHEAST ASIA REGION (SEA)
Contract start date: October 1, 2024
Contract end date: September 30, 2025
Following this period, and subject to regular contract reviews and an annual performance evaluation, the contract may be renewed for a mutually agreed term or period, subject to and in alignment with the terms of each marketing season and or the tenure of the funding source.

RFP TIMELINE:
- **RFP Distribution**: June 20, 2024
- **Last Day to Submit Questions**: July 1, 2024 by 5:00PM SGT (GMT +8)
- **Project Proposals Due**: July 9, 2024 by 12:00PM SGT (GMT +8)
- **Selections Made By**: July 12, 2024
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By**: July 12, 2024

Please note that the selection and notification period outlined in this RFP may be extended under certain circumstances. While we aim to adhere to the specified timeline, unforeseen factors may necessitate an extension. Such factors include, but are not limited to:
- A high number of submissions may require additional time for thorough evaluation and review; conversely time may be required to draw more submissions to meet compliance or if there are no suitable candidates in the first round.
- Additional time may be required if we need to request clarifications or additional information from prospective contractors.
- Conflicts in scheduling with key evaluators or decision-makers within USSEC may result in delays.
- Changes in regulatory requirements or funding sources may impact the timeline for finalizing selections.

We appreciate your understanding and patience should an extension become necessary. We will communicate any changes to the timeline promptly to ensure transparency throughout the selection process.

INSTRUCTIONS:
Proposals must include, at a minimum, the specific criteria listed below:
1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG and chatan@ct.ussec.org by 12:00 PM SGT (GMT +8) on July 9, 2024.
2. A description of the Prospective Contractor’s capabilities, resources, and experience, with an emphasis on experience related to this RFP.
3. A thorough proposal outlining the Prospective Contractor’s planned work, deliverables, and timeline to complete the work.
4. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor’s personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
5. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

6. Detailed Budget:
   a. All bids for services must include a breakdown of how the fee was derived, including but not limited to, an hourly rate breakdown and the anticipated effort required to complete the work.

7. Proposals should be no longer than 10 pages (8 3/4” 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/

ABOUT USSEC:

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 receive 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:

- Smith Bucklin - St. Louis: Domestic marketing, new uses, production research, and Board initiative activities.
- Osborn & Barr Communications: Communications/public relations activities.
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc.: 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, 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:

2. Fax: (202) 690-7442.
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.

END OF DOCUMENT