REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
SUBMISSION DEADLINE
5:00 PM CST, 11/16/2020

RFP TITLE: U.S. SOY EXCELLENCE CENTER - AMERICAS

RFP CONTACT:
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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 05:00 PM CST, NOVEMBER 16, 2020

1. INTRODUCTION:
The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable, feed-based production approaches through knowledge transfer, on-site trainings, seminars, workshops, conferences, industry tours and demonstrations. The specific goal of the USSEC Americas Program is to promote the use of U.S. SOY products in feeds and the best feeding practices. A key program objective is to see a growing, long-term, high-quality, feed-based industry in the Americas Region and globally.

USSEC requests proposals to assist in the continued development, implementation and execution of strategies and programs within the Americas Region. For contractors, the expectations are to carry out the deliverables of the activities they are managing and are summarized in associated contracting documentation.

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. To this end, USSEC has received support from USDA’s Agricultural Trade Promotion Program (ATP) whose mandate is to help U.S. agricultural exporters develop new markets.

BACKGROUND OF PROJECT:
USSEC aims to maximize awareness and preference for U.S. SOY from key decision makers by providing direct marketing & technical information on the advantages and value of U.S. soybean products into different animal feed, human consumption and crushing businesses. This proposal is designed to educate buyers in the Americas region on better assessing and calculating the value proposition of U.S. SOY compared to other feed ingredients and origins, so they can make smarter
buying decisions, paying more for U.S. SOY where the feed value supports a premium price and increase the inclusion in feed rations.

**What is a U.S. SOY Excellence Center?**

The U.S. SOY Excellence Center is a proprietary global education and training platform that is relevant to the region to demonstrate real-world application of cutting-edge best practices, and the specific benefits of increased inclusion of U.S. SOY products, within target countries and for each relevant operation. This Center will demonstrate best production practices creating a resource for ongoing USSEC promotional efforts, education, and relationship building. These facilities will be designed and tailored to fit the market dynamics specific to the region consolidating the Center as:

1. Information repository: web and physical repository of case studies, best practices.
2. Soybean discussion forum: a platform to increase knowledge about soybeans and best practices (also a web forum).
3. Training center: Online and physical training center where case studies and demonstrations take place.

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.

**2. TARGET AUDIENCE:**
The U.S. SOY Excellence Center Americas will target influential importers, end-users, animal protein integrators, feed millers, agribusinesses, animal nutritionists and local academic resources in the Americas.

**3. PURPOSE OF RFP:**
The purpose of this RFP is to seek business plan proposals from qualified organizations to be selected as the Center Lead to administer approved U.S. SOY Excellence Center (SEC) programs in the Americas.

This will be implemented in three phases, which will be later expanded, as follows:

- Phase 1: Create a business plan with USSEC identifying activities and needs (partnerships, locations, tracks, and facilities) to create a compliant SEC.
- Phase 2: Execute SEC tracks, provide advice to USSEC on training needs appropriate for the Americas.
- Phase 3: Roll-out best practices and implement follow-up

In the region, within a phased approach carried out over two years (FY21-22), the Center Lead will conduct the three overarching phases. USSEC will be an active partner in creating the Center.
Each phase must be completed in full and accepted by USSEC before moving to the next phase. It is envisioned that each phase will take approximately 8 months.

**Phase 1: Create a business plan with USSEC identifying activities and needs to create a compliant self-sustaining Center**

The Center Lead will work with USSEC to identify and list needs (partnerships, locations, tracks, and facilities) to create a compliant SEC projecting its future auto sufficiency. If any partner is already in mind, the bidder should list it in the proposal. These partners may be a private enterprise, a production center or a public university considering any cultural concerns or biases. The location of the Center will be selected based on ease of access ensuring that it is representative of ‘typical’ conditions in the region.

Specific selection criteria of the proposal will be established and utilized in this process including, but not limited to:

- Scale of operation, relevance to region, location, safety, reputation, facilities, and communications & logistics capabilities.
- Progressive orientation, interest, and receptivity towards approach.

During Phase 1 the Center Lead will propose a collaboration agreement with each partner, depending on the structure presented for the RFP, to ensure the following core functions are included in the Center framework:

- Provide technical assistance to support the implementation of SEC approved tracks related to animal production and specifically feeding with an increase inclusion of U.S. SOY products.
- Resources to support the establishment of appropriate facility improvements or additions to host tour and implement SEC approved tracks.
- Ongoing access to a physical facility to host educational and trade facilitation groups, access to data and experience results relative to adoption of best practices to be shared.
- Communications and outreach capabilities to attract regional and international stakeholders and media coverage to the Center through showcased events hosted at the facility.

The U.S. SOY Excellence Center must be embodied by the following functions in any configuration that is easy to control, compliant and result oriented. One partner can embody one or more functions depending on their demonstrated capabilities; or several partners could be acting in the same Center. All should be drafted in the proposal. The required partners are:

1. **Center Lead:** Purpose of this proposal, always the administrative partner and direct liaison with USSEC authorized staff in the region. In a best-case scenario, the implementing partner will embody all functions.
2. **Education partner:** In charge of executing curriculums from global USSEC’s established Soy Excellence Centers (Ex.: Global SEC Poultry Track) and providing education advise.
3. **Facilities center:** A real-world environment at a commercial scale for ongoing education, promotional efforts and relationship building.
4. Training center: The Center will have access to tangible, real-world demonstration facilities to create awareness about the benefits of U.S. SOY.

5. Communications partner: dedicated to promoting, write content, attract regional & international stakeholders, and pull media coverage to the Center through showcased events hosted at the facility.

**Phase 2: Execute SEC tracks, provide advice to USSEC on training needs appropriate for the Americas:**
The Center Lead will engage with partner organizations with strong technical expertise in oilseeds procurement, animal nutrition and feed production practices for the relevant species (poultry, swine & aquaculture). The Center Lead must define a plan on how to teach best practices, according to SEC approved tracks, recommend necessary improvements for the facility operations, and customize an improvement plan to follow-up participant companies. These improvements will be based on a comparison of current management practices with those that can be reasonably implemented to improve production efficiencies and profitability.

Then the Center Lead will elaborate an education plan to execute SEC approved tracks, including inputs from local production experts or qualified advisors as well as experts from the U.S. and USSEC. This will include data gathering on current/existing practices as well as typical outcomes related to operational performance to serve as a baseline that enables tracking of progress/improvements because of implementing recommended improvements in later stages of this project.

Proposals that include a relevant recognized U.S. based education institution in the SEC track execution, education baseline and follow-up plan will be better valued.

**Phase 3: Roll-out best practices and implement follow-up**
The Center Lead will employ a technical services consulting approach where experts will engage directly to educate/train two 20-people SEC cohorts per year. These efforts will include delivery via face-to-face support as well as written and/or multimedia training materials according to SEC approved tracks. Results will be measured, tracked, documented, and communicated to illustrate the improvements from changes in production practices and nutritional shifts as a basis for case study development.

The Center Lead will develop a communication and outreach plan to attract visitors to the center via showcase events hosted at the Center facility and provide sponsored transportation where appropriate. At least 5 case study outcomes comparing the baseline situation, recommended improvements, implementation experience and outcomes developed will be prepared at month 16, and 10 must be ready by month 24. Using this case study input, a demonstration and education curriculum will be prepared to be used in training and lessons for key stakeholders in the region.

At this phase, an ideal U.S. SOY Excellence Center will have the following attributes:
▪ The ability to demonstrate direct improvements and efficiencies in animal protein production following consultation with a dedicated USSEC facilitated technical service team and implementation of recommended improvements. These recommendations are expected to emphasize the nutritional benefits of feed rations with increased U.S. SOY inclusion and may provide recommendations on animal rearing best practices.

▪ Documented and summarized best practices for both demonstration and research purposes to show economic benefits of U.S. SOY to stakeholders.

▪ Testimonials from partners (if any), owner-operators and/or nutritionists, available to use in promoting the benefits of U.S. SOY.

▪ The process of providing the education baseline assessment, planning and training to convert a local facility into an SEC will generate data that can be analyzed and summarized for potential academic publications and reports that can be used in local and regional ag shows and conferences promoting associated benefits.

▪ A plan in place on how to institutionalize the training by creating an on-going Center that will lead to a renewable global SEC certification as a financially independent continuing education unit with several levels of instruction (minimum: basic, intermediate, advanced).

4. SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:
The following deliverables are envisioned: Exact dates and timelines will be mutually agreed upon by contractor and USSEC upon award of the contract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Description of Deliverables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 20, 2020</td>
<td>Provide USSEC project manager with documentation for contract:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Signed W9 or W8BEN-E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Banking information (USSEC template)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Payment terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 21 – December 20, 2020</td>
<td>Work with USSEC assigned staff to develop a program for each phase. Program should include topics such as but not limited to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Inquiry of compliance issues.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Definition of the scope of the work.</td>
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<td>▪ Work plan for the implementation.</td>
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<td>▪ Proposal of success measures.</td>
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<td>Q1 2021</td>
<td>Partner selection: location, safety, reputation, communication capabilities, logistics and facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 2021</td>
<td>Definition of the curriculum, demonstrations, best practices: invitee lists &amp; communications plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3 2021</td>
<td>Survey of representatives from all regulatory agencies that invited to best management practices programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4 2021</td>
<td>Five positive coverage from distinct media outlets with overall coverage that reaches a national audience.</td>
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Q1 2022 | Top feed mills representing 75% of commercial feed production within the region invited to the SEC. 50% of those exposed express an intent to change their feed formulations based on a follow-up survey.

Q3 2022 | Top and influential producers representing 50% of the production invited to the SEC, 50% made at least 1 change to their operation due to SEC based on a follow-up survey.

Q4 2022 | 10 positive coverage from distinct media outlets with overall coverage that reaches a national audience.

Our expectation is for the U.S. SOY Excellence Center project to last two years, approximately from DATE to DATE. We are asking that the project proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

RFP TIMELINE:
- RFP distribution: October 19, 2020
- Last day to submit questions: November 11, 2020 by 05:00 PM Mexico Time
- Project proposals due: November 16, 2020 by 05:00 PM Mexico Time - email to americasrfp@ussec.org
- Selections made by: November 17, 2020
- Prospective contractors notified by: November 18, 2020

INSTRUCTIONS:
Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:
1. Please email the proposal to americasrfp@ussec.org by 5:00PM Mexico Time on October 15, 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.
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: 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 doing the work.
7. Proposals should be no longer than 10 pages (8 ½” x 11”).
8. Preference may be given to the bidder with the capacity and history of doing similar work in this region.
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.
  o 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 most 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 several 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.