

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
July 15, 2024 by 5:00 PM CST

RFP TITLE: MEASURING THE VALUE OF U.S. OFFICIAL GRAIN STANDARDS

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: July 15, 2024 by 5:00 PM CST

INTRODUCTION:

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., USSEC focuses on differentiating, elevating preference, and attaining market access for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in 80+ countries internationally. USSEC members represent the soy supply chain including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations.

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) seeks an individual or organization to conduct a study that measures the value provided to customers of U.S. grain commodities, farmers, and the supply chain of the U.S. official grain standards and the official export grading system.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an open 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 for a research project that will analyze the value that U.S. official export grain grading system provides to end users, customers, U.S. farmers, and the value chain. With limited exceptions, all exports of grains covered by the U.S. Grain Standards Act, including corn, wheat and soybeans, must be provided an official grade by the Federal Grain Inspection Service or its designated or delegated agencies. Official grain standards assist with the domestic and international marketing of U.S. grains, promote price discovery and assist with providing clarity and transparency around grain quality. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, this project seeks to measure the value of this system.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

In the past, customers of U.S. grains and oilseeds have provided positive feedback about the value of official U.S. grain standards for export, and official standards are a key differentiator for U.S. products when compared to other origins. U.S. grain standards are also used in futures contracts to standardize product specifications, aiding with price discovery and helping to improve the liquidity of U.S. futures markets. While these benefits are well known anecdotally, USSEC seeks a contractor that can conduct qualitative and quantitative research that can establish a numeric value that these standards provide to customers, farmers and the grain

value chain. The final research project should provide a background of U.S. grain standards for the top exported commodities, including soybeans, wheat and corn; a clear quantitative and qualitative methodology for measuring the value of U.S. official export grading which may include interviews with U.S. soy and U.S. grain value chain stakeholders; and an estimation of the value of U.S. grain standards for export customers, U.S. farmers and the value chain.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

The target audience for this research project will include:

- The U.S. soy and grain value chain.
- Allied U.S. agriculture organizations and cooperators.
- U.S. government partners including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and official grain grading and weighing service providers
- Overseas partners, including importers and consumers of U.S. agricultural products.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

This project will gather information on and measure the benefits of U.S. official grain grading standards to the export supply chain, importers and consumers. Selected contractors will be expected to:

1. Develop a quantitative and qualitative methodology that will measure the value of official grading standards to the export supply chain. Qualitative aspects of this study may include interviews or surveys with U.S. farmers, the grain trade and value chain, importers, and end-users.
2. Using this methodology, conduct research and analysis on the value of the U.S. export grain grading system.
3. Deliver a report to USSEC that places a monetary value on U.S. export grain grading system.

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
August 1	Project start and kickoff meeting with USSEC staff
August 7	Finalize methodology and review with USSEC staff
September 13	Draft report due to USSEC staff
September 30	Final report due to USSEC staff
As needed	Check-in with USSEC Industry Affairs Manager Ryan Olson, rolson@ussec.org , and Project Manager, mhannig@ussec.org to report on developments being made and status of project.
Monthly	Submit monthly invoices, along with report/brief of deliverables accomplished, to USSEC Accounts Payable, ap@ussec.org and Project Manager, mhannig@ussec.org

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Our expectation is for the proposal to last from August 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024. We are asking that the Project Proposal include details about what the proposed timeline and scope would look like.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** July 1, 2024
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** July 8, 2024
- **Project Proposals Due:** July 15, 2024 by 5:00 PM CST
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** July 22, 2024

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 **July 15, 2024**
 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
 - a. 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: <https://ussec.org/about-ussec/>

USB's Long Range Strategic Plan can be found here:

<https://www.unitedsoybean.org/strategic-plan/>

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, audiotope, 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.