



Request for Proposals
Automated Business Process and Licensing
4WO26

Overview

The Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) seeks proposals for the Automated Business Process and Licensing for organization member states in the 14 state and commonwealth region for value-added and qualified agricultural commodities covered by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Market Access Program (MAP).

The Organization

The Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) is a 501c non-profit international trade development organization, which combines federal, state and industry resources for export market development. SUSTA's member states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

SUSTA cooperates with its member State Departments of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to carry out programs that will increase U.S. agricultural exports. SUSTA promotes U.S. agricultural products in over 30 countries by way of international trade exhibitions, trade missions, in store promotions, export seminars, and point-of-sale promotions. It also provides export assistance to small businesses to offset their export promotion costs.

Background

SUSTA's funding is almost entirely derived from the federal Market Access Program (MAP), which is administered by the USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS). The organization is tasked with working with southern exporters to find markets for their agriculture products and enhance the economic well-being of the region it serves. All federal funds under MAP must be utilized according to federal regulations outlined by USDA.

SUSTA assists companies in promoting products internationally through two basic types of programs: The MAP "Branded" program and the MAP "Generic" program:

- SUSTA's 50% CostShare (Branded) program assists individual companies to carry out their own marketing activities internationally by reimbursing them for 50% of eligible marketing and promotional expenses. Companies must be small according to the Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines. Their products must be of at least 50% U.S. agricultural origin. Products promoted have been as diverse as pecans, rice, seafood, alligator hides, snack foods and hot sauce. Companies apply for funding on a fiscal year basis, with marketing and promotional activities taking place year-round and concluding by December 31st.
- SUSTA's Global Events (Generic) activities are industry-wide projects managed by SUSTA staff along with its member State Departments of Agriculture. Activities typically include trade missions, trade shows, in store promotions, chef promotions, and trade seminars. Any company or cooperative with products of 50% or more U.S. agricultural origin are welcome to participate in SUSTA's Global Events.

Scope of Work

SUSTA is seeking a firm to assist with the Automated Business Process and Licensing, which encompasses SUSTA's website and back-office portal. The current Automated Business Process and Licensing is fully integrated with SUSTA's programs and processes and eases the interaction and communication between SUSTA staff, member states and company participants. The Automated Business Process and Licensing also allows for data collection, record keeping and oversight of programming.

The efficiencies and transparency gained by automation are critical to SUSTA's programs and must be maintained and enhanced. Because technology is continually changing, SUSTA needs a firm that will apply best practices and new tools to keep it up-to-date.

Deliverables for the next three years are:

1. Enhance our existing platform to create an online portal for Expense Claims that CostShare participants can use to upload documents. The SUSTA CostShare team can track and communicate about expense claims through the portal, streamlining the process for staff and participants. All other partners including Member State Departments of Agriculture and SUSTA Consultants will also be able to upload claims documents into the system.
2. Split the review of Organizations in our database, so that both key program areas (Global Events and CostShare) can independently review accounts for eligibility. Our current system just acknowledges a company's overall status in our database rather than breaking it up by program.

3. Tying performance data into a success story component of our website so that SUSTA can track the success of our participants in the back office. This will create a more efficient tracking of a company's success over years, rather than only tracking success tied to an activity that the company participated in.
4. Rework the event registration process for consultations with SUSTA's in-country representatives, which take place all year long. Currently, SUSTA is repurposing our event registration process to work for consultations. However, events have a start and end date with a definite registration deadline, which is different from consultations that are available throughout the year.
5. Ongoing protection of SUSTA's portals and data to include require ongoing maintenance. Today, technology performance requires ongoing uninterrupted updates to ensure the security of systems.
6. In addition to maintaining the platform that has been built, SUSTA is seeking a firm that can strategize on increasing performance with the modules developed by enhancing the modules to continue to support the association in meeting performance goals.

Sufficiency of Response

Each proposal will be scored on the following requirements:

1. Description of proposed activities and relevancy to the Scope of Work items
2. Vendor qualifications and measurable results of previous, similar programs managed by the respondent
3. Approach to managing the activity and deliverables
4. Brief (one paragraph) description of project principals and what roles/expertise they bring to the project.
5. Organizational Information-provide the name of the entity, complete mailing/physical address, and other contact information as well as any web linkages for previous, similar project work
6. Cost. Please provide a budget breakdown for fees associated with managing the six (6) items described in the Scope of Work section. The cost summary section should breakdown all costs by category justified by the details provided in the Scope of Work—personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual and other.
7. References (minimum of 3)

Proposals should be concisely written to respond to this RFP. Elaborate attachments are not necessary.

Acceptance of Proposal

The successful bidder's proposal will be the basis of a contract executed with SUSTA to perform all services at the specified costs contained in the bidder's proposal. SUSTA retains the right to negotiate with the successful bidder prior to final contract execution. SUSTA, by written notice

to the Contractor, may terminate the Contract in whole or in part when SUSTA determines in its sole discretion that it is in SUSTA's best interest to do so.

Subcontractors

If someone other than the contractor will perform any services permanent staff (as described in the project principals section), all subcontractors and their addresses must be included in the proposal. These will be subject to approval by SUSTA.

Deadline for Proposal

All proposals from bidders must be received by **February 20, 2024 at 5:00 P.M. (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification within 30 days of the close of the bidding date. The planned commencement of the project will start upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be emailed to the following at the email address listed or mailed to each of the individuals listed below:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang
Executive Director
Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St., Suite 3845
New Orleans, LA 70139
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010
bernadette@susta.org

And

Danielle Coco
Marketing and Communications Director
Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St., Suite 3845
New Orleans, LA 70139
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010
Danielle@susta.org

And

Charles Green

Deputy Commissioner
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Tel. +804.786.3501
Charles.Green@vdacs.virginia.gov

Questions

All questions regarding this RFP can be directed to any of the individuals below:

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Southern United States Trade Association
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Deputy Commissioner
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Vendor Requirements and Qualifications

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by SUSTA's Executive Director, Bernadette Wiltz-Lang and Marketing and Communications Director, Danielle Viguerie Coco.

The selected contractor should have previous experience in planning and conducting similar services, and works effectively with people by telephone, email and in person. The contractor

must be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated project and the RFP response. SUSTA reserves the right to not award this contract, if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. SUSTA is not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP.

Rejection of Proposals

SUSTA retains the right to reject all proposals submitted in response to this RFP. SUSTA does not discriminate in any of its programs and activities against recipients on the basis of age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, military status, marital or familial status.

NOTE: All vendor selection(s) and contract awards are subject to Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) funds available funds and outcome evaluation.