



Request for Proposals

JustMembers Helpline

4ED70

Overview

The Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) seeks proposals to develop and implement an Export Readiness Training (ERT) 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 consultant to assist with responding to inquiries from exporters involving a wide range of export needs. Whether a company is new to exporting or have some experience there are always specific issues and questions that are unique to each company, their products, and the export markets they are targeting. This helpline is intended on providing answers and linking a company with the right resources to be successful in their export journey. In exporting, there are no canned answers to specific company questions. Having the right consultant to provide insightful, customized, customer-friendly advice is required to help better guide companies in finding the resources and tools to be successful exporters. The period for the contract will be one year with the opportunity to renew in subsequent years.

SUSTA intends for the consultant to respond to an inquiry received online from a company that is an approved MySUSTA Member. The consultant will acknowledge the inquiry within one business day. The consultant will formally address the inquiry by email and/or telephone within two business days to address the company's specific concerns. The consultant will then take the necessary steps to make certain the company has the tools needed to be successful in exporting with the goal of referring them back to SUSTA to answer specific program (Global Event and CostShare) questions. Success for SUSTA is not only to answer specific questions; it is also to guide companies into SUSTA's programs and services, including referring any new-to-export companies to SUSTA's Export Readiness Training.

The consultant will provide one-on-one answers to some of the following common questions exporters may have:

- Am I ready to export?
- How do I get started exporting?
- Where can I get research on my products for the European market?
- Does my product have any potential in other countries?
- Where can I get good market research for China?
- What steps can I take to find qualified buyers and distributors?
- How do I write an effective letter of introduction to potential distributors?
- How can I arrive at a competitive export price?
- What is a Schedule B number?
- How do I identify the best markets for my products?
- I received a trade lead at an event with SUSTA. How do I follow up on this?

- What specific things do I need to get ready for an international trade show?
- What commercial documentation do I need for shipping?
- Is there someone that can help me calculate my destination duties and taxes?
- Is there a report that you can share on the retail market in Singapore?
- How do I update my Duns and Bradstreet?
- Does SUSTA have an event planned for Kenya?
- Where can I get information on Free Trade Agreements (FTA)?
- How do I receive assistance through SUSTA's Export Readiness Training?
- How do I calculate export prices based on terms of sale?

The consultant must have broad knowledge of exporting and experience guiding companies and providing solutions to companies, especially small to medium sized companies. The consultant must be well versed on SUSTA's core programs to refer the company back to the right program area for further support. The consultant will be responsible for reporting on the outcome of the services and support given to each company and provide follow-up if needed.

Sufficiency of Response

Each proposal will be reviewed and scored based on the following requirements:

1. Description of proposed activities are relevant to the goal as described in the scope of work above.
2. Provide qualifications and results of previous, similar services provided to companies.
3. Provide an approach to how inquiries will be managed, processed, and how results will be delivered.
4. Brief (one paragraph) description of relevant training projects previously conducted. Please include what role and expertise you provided in export training.
5. Cost Effective. Please provide a budget breakdown for fees associated with managing the JustMembers Helpline. The cost summary section should breakdown all costs (personnel, equipment, supplies, telephone, etc.)
6. Relevant Body of Work. Provide the name of the entity/organization, complete mailing/physical address, contact information, as well as any linkages for previous, similar project work.
7. Proposal includes a plan for assessing needs, tracking, and reporting outcome.
8. 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 **January 31 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:

Bernadette M. Wiltz
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

Vendor Requirements and Qualifications

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by SUSTA's Executive Director, Bernadette Wiltz 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.