



**January 3, 2024**

**Request for Proposal  
International Export Promotion Evaluation  
4WO66**

**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 business 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 promoting exports of high-value food and agricultural products of U.S. origin and federal funds must be utilized according to federal regulations outlined by USDA.

SUSTA assists companies in promoting products internationally through two basic types of programs: The Market Access "Branded" Program and the Market Access "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 promotional expenses. Companies must be small according to the Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines and their products must be of at least 50% U.S. agricultural origin. Products promoted have been as diverse as 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.

- SUSTA's Global Events (Generic) activities are industry-wide projects managed by SUSTA staff and its member State Departments of Agriculture. Activities typically include trade missions, trade shows, in store 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 help the association continue to evaluate the small to medium sized exporters that we service and to evaluate how the program funds have assisted the growth of our program in the international markets. The consultant will work with assigned SUSTA staff, Activity Managers, and the Executive Director.

The overview for the evaluation focuses on the promotion of high value-added food and agriculture products from the southern U.S. The evaluation strategy would use a consultant to follow-up with SUSTA exporters participating in its Brand and Generic programs to analyze if key performance measures have been met, and report on the outcome in various ways that are useful to SUSTA and its stakeholders. Specific responsibilities for the evaluation would include:

The contractor shall meet the objectives and program components set forth below.

1. Participate in (2) SUSTA meetings with state marketing representatives. Present on evaluation results and additional topics agreed upon by SUSTA.
2. Ongoing liaison with SUSTA that includes:
  - Periodic phone consultations throughout the year to discuss issues related to evaluation and performance. This includes general consulting that provides data analysis and strategic support.
  - Provide additional depth in data presentation (e.g., product-specific and country-specific data) and includes market analysis on monthly basis (for use by SUSTA in the organization's communication channels), and historical data review.
3. Develop State Fact Sheets: To further delineate topline data gathered through Global Events and 50% CostShare evaluation develop state fact sheets that highlight performance measure results and additional measurements by state.
4. Market and Policy Consulting for SUSTA and Member States: Throughout the duration of the program year, be accessible to SUSTA staff and Member State Officials to provide any specific reports tied to the outcome of the evaluations and policy changes that may impact outcome.

5. Conduct 6-month post-activity evaluation for Global Events.
6. Conduct year end evaluations for CostShare.
7. Provide a final report for delivery at end of the program year.
8. Help to support the evaluation of one key market in SUSTA's strategy. Follow criteria needed for the evaluation.

**The timeframe for the contract will begin on February 5, 2024, and end on December 31, 2024.**

**Activity Background:**

The association is looking for a firm to continue to help the association report on outcome of these important programs.

**Budget:**

Funding for this project is provided through the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service Market Access Program and is subject to the appropriate regulations and policies.

**Sufficiency of Response**

Each proposal will be scored on the following measurements:

- Market knowledge
- Strategies/activities relevant to reaching the association goals to increase exports.
- Approach to managing/carrying out the strategies.
- Measurable results of previous, similar programs managed by the respondent.
- Cost effective.
- References (minimum of 3) of similar work conducted for other clients.
- Staff resources to effectively carry-out strategy for this association.
- Timeliness of proposal received.

Proposals should be concisely written to respond to this RFP. Elaborate attachments are not necessary. A budget analysis or breakdown of costs is required.

**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.

## Subcontractors

If any service is to be performed by someone other than the contractor's permanent staff, all subcontractors and their principals, contact information including addresses must be included in the proposal. These will be subject to approval by SUSTA.

## Deadline for Proposal

All proposals from bidders must be submitted by **Friday, January 31, 2023, 5:00pm central standard time (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification after SUSTA's Operations Committee and Activity Managers have reviewed all proposals based on the key criteria. The planned commencement of the project will start in 2024 upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be submitted to the following:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang  
Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Executive Director  
[Bernadette@susta.org](mailto:Bernadette@susta.org)

And

Troy Rosamond  
Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Deputy Director and Financial Director  
[Troy@susta.org](mailto:Troy@susta.org)

And

Charles Green  
Deputy Commissioner  
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Tel. +804.786.3501  
[Charles.Green@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:Charles.Green@vdacs.virginia.gov)

## Questions

All questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang  
Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Executive Director  
[Bernadette@susta.org](mailto:Bernadette@susta.org)

And

Troy Rosamond  
Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)  
Deputy Director and Financial Director  
[Troy@susta.org](mailto:Troy@susta.org)

### **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.