



**Request for Proposals**  
Export Readiness Training  
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 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 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 firms to assist with the implementation of a collaborative Export Readiness Training through a competitive proposal process. Export Readiness Training is intended to provide small and mid-size companies in the southern US territory an opportunity to evaluate company capacity for exporting, teach practical export fundamentals (how to: do market research, price products, organize logistics, insure shipment) and exposure to business resources to move export opportunities forward utilizing the MAP and other marketing based tools. The period for the contract will be one year. SUSTA's ERT will be held virtually twice a year and will accommodate up to 15 companies per training. SUSTA will renew contracts based on funding for each program year.

The deliverables of the project include structural and implementation components:

1. A review of existing ERT resources through agriculture and non-agriculture-based resources. Examples could include FAS, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), colleges and universities, Commerce Department models, and World Trade Centers. Though thorough in content, the deliverable is expected to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) with each of these resources to see what components may work well with a custom SUSTA program design. It is expected that these resources will be multi-agency and multi-media. (Structure)
2. A needs assessment of member-state ERT export business concerns. This deliverable should explore the existing services provided to potential agriculture exporters and how can a program build upon existing resources. Critical to this deliverable is how state department of agriculture personnel can assist the program in providing custom training or engagement for specific product categories (fresh, horticulture, seafood, value-added) at the state level to be an integral part of SUSTA's overall ERT goals. (Structure)
3. Based on needs and existing resources (as identified in numbers 1 & 2 above), develop a core curriculum that will guide a new-to-export companies through the process of creating an international marketing strategy. Candidate should be knowledgeable and experienced in practical implementation of such a strategy.
4. Establish measurable and quantifiable ERT goals through work with SUSTA's third-party evaluator. (Implementation)

5. Assist in recruiting participants for ERT through webinars or other educational activities (Implementation)
6. Create and deliver a valid and concise curriculum design that promotes flexibility, customization and scale for SUSTA region companies to deploy. Specifics about assessment tools and “best practices” may be included in this section. (Structure and Implementation)
7. Develop and deliver a training matrix and performance measures to insure ERT learning outcomes that are reportable to FAS. (Structure and Implementation)
8. Details of a communication and interaction plan with individual State Department of Agriculture personnel and potential exporters should be documented. This may require individual state visits and training for staff and potential exporters. (Implementation)
9. Create a budget for the Structure and Implementation stages focusing on sustainability and adaptability within each participating state. (Implementation)
10. Deliver reports and program documentation to a variety of constituents. (Implementation)

### **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 nine (9) 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 **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](mailto: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](mailto:Danielle@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 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  
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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)

#### **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.