



November 6, 2023

Request for Proposal Hong Kong Initiative 4AS38

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 Program "Branded" program and the Market Access Program "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 an in-country consultant to help with marketing and promotional activities for the Hong Kong market. The consultant will work with assigned SUSTA staff and Activity Managers.

The Hong Kong Initiative is a multi-faceted promotion to source high value-added food and agriculture products from the southern U.S. to Hong Kong. The initiative would utilize an in-country consultant that would continue the momentum gained over the past five years to build trade relationships, determine what challenges the trade face in importing southern products, and increase awareness and interest in the procurement of southern products by retail and restaurant trade. The in-country consultant will identify the best opportunities to promote southern products to Hong Kong by assisting the association in identifying and implementing marketing and promotional activities that will generate outcome for exporters.

The timeframe for the contract will begin on January 1, 2024, and end on December 31, 2024.

Specific responsibilities strategy for the initiative would include:

1. Structure of Initiative: The consulting firm would structure a cost effective, result oriented program that may include several marketing and promotional activities that may include the following: trade show participation, trade mission participation, market briefings/seminars, chef demonstrations at the shows, design and management of SUSTA pavilion, product education and feasibility studies, and trade relations. These activities would take place throughout the calendar year, and each year would build on the efforts of the previous years.
2. Implementation: The contractor would carry out the planned activities for the period and report on successful strategies and modify for unsuccessful strategies. The contractor would also follow-up with retailers, wholesalers and importers to report on sales and other potential opportunities with southern exporters. At the end of the period a final report will be submitted to SUSTA, and any state activity managers assigned to manage activities in the market. This report will follow a format that SUSTA will provide.

3. One of the most important aspects of carrying out the initiative is the evaluation of the U.S. companies participating in activities in the market and the foreign buyers. The consultant will be responsible for evaluating foreign buyers after each activity is carried out and assist with providing feedback for the 6-month follow-up evaluation following the activities.
4. In addition, it is important to give feedback to our constituents on the success and outcome of SUSTA's promotions. The consultant will be responsible for success stories on the marketing and promotional strategies due at the conclusion of each event.

Following each promotional event, a report should be completed for each project to include performance measures dictated by the Foreign Agriculture Services (FAS). This report will follow a format that SUSTA will provide.

5. The consultant should work closely with FAS post to utilize their expertise and knowledge and include them in the planned events for the market.

This program should not only promote southern region products, but also follow through with linking the appropriate U.S. supplier to the appropriate Hong Kong buyers. We have found that one of the biggest shortcomings of promotional activities is follow-up with the U.S. supplier and the buyers. Therefore, an important aspect of this initiative is ensuring that the connection is made between contacts from Hong Kong buyers and the U.S. suppliers.

Activity Background:

SUSTA has conducted several activities in the Hong Kong market. The association is looking for a firm to build on previous success and to create successful targeted strategies for the next five years that will increase exports of southern region products.

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 **Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 5:00pm central standard time (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification after SUSTA's Operations Committee has 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

And

Tami Culver
Deputy Commissioner
Alabama Department of Agriculture and
SUSTA's Operation Chair
Tami.Culver@agi.alabama.gov

And

Sandra Lobb
Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA)

Global Events Director
Sandra@susta.org

Questions

All questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang
Executive Director
Bernadette@susta.org

And

Sandra Lobb
Global Events Director
Sandra@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.