November 16, 2027

Request for Proposal
Automated Business Process and Licensing 2027
7WO26

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 the 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 seeks a qualified technology firm to assist with the Automated Business Process and Licensing, which includes SUSTA's public website, custom CRM/database and back-office portal. Together, these systems support the administration and delivery of SUSTA's programs and facilitate interaction among all users.

The selected contractor will be responsible for maintaining the reliability, security and functionality of SUSTA's existing technology while providing ongoing development and support as SUSTA's programs and business needs evolve. The contractor will also serve as a strategic technology partner, proactively identifying opportunities to improve efficiency, user experience, data management, reporting, automation and system functionality through existing and emerging technologies.

Because SUSTA's technology and organizational needs will continue to evolve over the three-year contract period, the Scope of Work is intended to establish broad areas of responsibility rather than prescribe specific technical solutions. SUSTA expects the selected contractor to provide the flexibility and technical expertise necessary to respond to new requirements and priorities as they arise.

The time frame for the contract will be 01/01/2027 – 12/31/2027.

The anticipated contract period is three years. Specific responsibilities include:

1. **Data Reporting and Management:**
   Improve SUSTA's reporting capabilities to make it easier and more reliable to access and analyze the information maintained in its database. SUSTA collects a significant amount of program and participant data and needs a consistent, efficient way to extract the information required for annual reporting and program management.
   Enhance SUSTA's database to track and retain company eligibility by program and year. SUSTA should be able to easily access historical information and generate

reports identifying which companies were eligible for specific programs during a given year.

2. **Website Redesign and Modernization:**
   Redesign and modernize SUSTA's website to improve its appearance, usability and functionality. The website should provide a modern and intuitive user experience across all devices and make it easy for exporters, member states and other stakeholders to find relevant resources and information.

   The redesign should also simplify ongoing website management and maintenance, enabling SUSTA staff to keep content current and make routine updates with minimal assistance.

3. **System Architecture and Stability:**
   Assess and modernize the underlying architecture of SUSTA's website and database to improve system stability and maintainability. The system should be structured so that routine updates and new functionality can be implemented without causing unintended disruptions to other features or processes. The contractor should identify and address dependencies, outdated components or other system limitations that create unnecessary operational risk or make future development difficult. The goal is to create a more resilient and sustainable technology platform that can adapt to SUSTA's evolving needs

4. **Ongoing Security:**
   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.

5. **Technology Strategy and Innovation:**
   Serve as a strategic technology partner to SUSTA by maintaining the existing platform while proactively identifying new ways technology can improve SUSTA's programs and processes. The contractor should recommend enhancements and new solutions that increase efficiency, improve the exporter journey and help SUSTA better achieve its organizational goals.

Activity Background:

The Automated Business Process and Licensing will provide ongoing technology support and development for SUSTA's systems, improving reliability, security, efficiency, automation, functionality, and user experience

Deadline for Proposal

All proposals from bidders must be submitted by **December 7, 2026 at 5:00 PM (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification as soon as the committee has reviewed and assessed all proposals received. The planned commencement of the project will start upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be emailed to the following:

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

And

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

Questions

All questions in regard to this RFP should be directed to:

Danielle Coco
Marketing & Communications Director
Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St. Suite 3845
New Orleans, LA 70139
Email address Danielle@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.