November 17, 2027

Request for Proposal
Third Party Evaluator
7WO66

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 Third-Party Evaluator to provide program evaluation, data analysis, market research, policy analysis, and strategic consulting services to support SUSTA's programs and performance measurement efforts. The evaluator will analyze program and participant outcomes, including Global Events and CostShare activities; track historical export performance; develop state-specific performance fact sheets; provide agricultural market and policy intelligence; and participate in meetings, presentations, and consultations with SUSTA staff, leadership, and member state representatives.

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

Specific responsibilities would include:

1. Participate in two SUSTA meetings with state marketing representatives, presenting on a topic agreed upon with SUSTA.

2. Maintain ongoing liaison with SUSTA, including:

    - Periodic phone consultations throughout the year on evaluation, and performance, including general consulting that provides data analysis and strategic support.

    - Additional depth in data presentation (e.g., product and country specific data).

    - Historical Inventory of Participant Companies: Develop an inventory tracking participants' exporting success over several years. It will form the foundation for company-specific tracking and give SUSTA additional tools to demonstrate program success to FAS and member states.

3. State Fact Sheets: Develop state fact sheets as part of the final report, breaking out FAS performance measure results and additional measurements by state. Delivered in Microsoft Word as standalone documents, they will support state government use, communication, outreach, and marketing.

4. Market and Policy Consulting for SUSTA and Member States: Throughout the project year, provide policy analysis and ad-hoc agricultural market and policy intelligence updates to SUSTA staff and member state officials, including:

    - General availability: Join scheduled or impromptu calls and email discussions on agricultural markets and policy. Through SUSTA, provide a senior analyst on request to member state departments of agriculture, especially personnel working directly with SUSTA.

    - Board Meeting: Present final performance measures and market development program outcomes to SUSTA's Board of Directors, on topics agreed upon with SUSTA.

    - Direct support to the SUSTA Executive Director: Provide agricultural market and policy intelligence and data analysis throughout the year, and update program measurement efforts and achievements so SUSTA's records align with the evaluator's.

5. Analyze SUSTA's Global Events by reviewing closed 6-month and initial evaluation results submitted by exporters.

6. Analyze SUSTA's CostShare program by reviewing year-end evaluations.

7. Compile the above into a single report for delivery at the end of the program year.

8. Evaluate one key market in SUSTA's strategy and compile the findings into a report using the required USDA criteria.

Activity Background:

The Third-Party Evaluator will provide independent evaluation and analysis of SUSTA's programs and activities, assessing program performance, participant outcomes, and overall effectiveness. The evaluation will provide data-driven insights to demonstrate program results, support reporting requirements, and inform future program planning and decision-making.

Deadline for Proposal

All proposals from bidders must be submitted by **December 8, 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
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Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St. Suite 3845
New Orleans, LA 70139
Tel. (504) 568-5986 Fax (504) 568-6010
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And

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Tel. (504) 568-5986 Fax (504) 568-6010
Troy@susta.org

Questions

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

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New Orleans, LA 70139
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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.