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 it’s 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 firm to assist with the implementation of a Digital Marketing Strategy through a competitive proposal process. This strategy is intended to find, in the digital sphere, prospective companies that meet SUSTA’s eligibility requirements and get them to take the first step with SUSTA. A Digital Marketing Strategy will use targeted advertising techniques to place SUSTA in front of our target audience. The goal is to get them to click on the call to action and sign up for a consultation (or some other action).

Our goal is to convert these prospects into participants in our programs, but the first step is collecting their basic information. The period for the contract will be one year with the opportunity to renew in subsequent years.

SUSTA traditionally employs several marketing strategies to conduct outreach to new companies, including sponsoring seminars and webinars, walking domestic trade shows and speaking at export focused events. SUSTA has become more and more systematic in conducting outreach. The pandemic has forced us to be even more strategic in finding alternative and innovative ways to engage with new prospects. A digital strategy will help SUSTA maximize opportunities during the pandemic and give the association a broader reach to find new prospects to grow beyond the pandemic.
SUSTA will track the progress of each campaign toward key performance measures that includes but not limited to an analysis of the number of prospects that click the Call to Action and sign up for the next step, a consultation with SUSTA (or some other action). Our intent is to turn prospects into MySUSTA members by having them create a MySUSTA account and eventually participate in our programs.

The deliverables of the project include structural and implementation components:

1. Create target audience profile(s) based on current SUSTA participants, eligibility requirements, lookalike audiences, etc.
2. Determine the best channels (social media, display ads, search engine ads...) to reach SUSTA’s target company.
3. Work with SUSTA to create and implement a schedule of digital campaigns for 2021.
4. Using A/B testing, determine what messaging and content resonates with prospects and adjust our strategy accordingly.
5. Deliver a monthly reports and document engagement strategies with a final concluding report at the end of the year.

**Sufficiency of Response**

Each proposal will be reviewed and scored based on the following requirements:

1. Description of proposed activities are relevant to the goal as described in the scope of work above.
2. Provide an approach to how the strategy will be developed, implemented and managed. All sub-contractors used must be identified in the proposal.
3. Proposal includes a plan for reporting outcome; how will you track each step and document the outcome.
4. Cost Effective. Please provide a budget breakdown for fees associated with implementing a digital marketing strategy. The cost summary section should breakdown all costs.
5. Relevant Body of Work. Provide qualifications and measurable results of previous, similar digital marketing strategies managed by the respondent.
Include links or screenshots for previous, similar project work.

6. 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 are due to by Friday, February 19, 2021 at 5:00pm Central Standard Time. 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 M. Wiltz
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
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

And

Whitney Flatt
International Trade Consultant, Business Development Division
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Ellington Agricultural Center
P.O. Box 40627
Nashville, TN 37204
Tel. +1 (615) 837.5334
whitney.flatt@tn.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
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010
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And
Vendor Requirements and Qualifications

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by SUSTA’s Marketing Director, Danielle Viguerie Coco.

The selected contractor should have previous experience in planning and conducting similar services. 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.