



January 7, 2019

Request for Proposal Middle East Initiative 9ME59

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 is seeking an in-country consultant to help with marketing and promotional activities for the Middle Eastern market. The consultant will work with assigned SUSTA Activity Managers.

The Middle East Initiative focuses on the promotion of high value added food products, seafood, horticulture and fresh produce from the U.S. to the Middle East. The initiative would utilize an in-country consultant that would continue the momentum gained over the past eight years to generate and continue to build trade relationships, determine what challenges the trade face in importing southern products, increase awareness and interest in the procurement of southern products by retail and the restaurant trade. The in-country consultant will assist in identifying key buyers from the Gulf Region to meet with southern exporters at Gulfood and assist in planning and executing an Outbound Trade Mission to Jordan. **The time-frame for the contract will be determined by the dates identified to assist with planning and executing each of the projects for the market.**

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, trade mission participation, market briefings/seminars, 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 specified period and report on the outcome of the strategy. The contractor would also follow-up with retailers, wholesalers and importers to report on sales and other measures of success. At the end of the activity a final report will be submitted to SUSTA and any state activity managers. This report will follow a format that SUSTA will provide.
3. One of the most important aspects of carrying out the program is the evaluation of the U.S. company participants. 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 of our promotions. The consultant will be responsible for success stories on the promotions due at the conclusion of each event.

Following each promotional event, a report should be completed for each project to include performance measured dictated by 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 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 Middle Eastern 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 Middle Eastern buyers and the U.S. suppliers.

Activity Background:

The one-o-one meetings will specifically target Middle Eastern buyers to promote and generate interest in 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:

- Description of proposed activities and relevancy
- Measurable results of previous, similar programs managed by the respondent
- Approach to managing the activity
- Cost
- 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.

Subcontractors

If any service is to be performed by someone other than the contractor's permanent staff, 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 submitted by **Friday, January 11, 2019 at 4:00 P.M. (CST)**. The successful bidder will receive notification by **Friday, January 25, 2019**. The planned commencement of the project will start upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be emailed to Penney@susta.org or submitted to the following:

Penney Lawrence
Global Events Director
Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St., Suite 3845
New Orleans, Louisiana 70139
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010
Penney@susta.org

And

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701 Poydras St., Suite 3845
New Orleans, Louisiana 70139
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010
Katie@susta.org

Questions

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

Penney Lawrence
Global Events Director
Southern United States Trade Association
701 Poydras St., Suite 3845
New Orleans, Louisiana 70139
Tel. +1 (504) 568-5986 Fax +1 (504) 568-6010

Penney@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.