



March 13, 2026

**Request for Proposal
Strategic Plan
6WO66**

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 businesses to offset their export promotion costs.

Background

SUSTA's funding is almost entirely derived from federal Market Development Program funds, which is administered by the USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS). SUSTA participates in the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP). SUSTA 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 MAP or RAPP Branded (CostShare) program and the MAP or RAPP Generic (Global Events) 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, pet food, wood, alcoholic beverages, 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 developed and managed by SUSTA staff and 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 help with a comprehensive long-term strategic plan. The firm will work with SUSTA' Executive Director and Operations Committee to help strengthen the organization's strategies, market and funding priorities, and address ways to increase the organization's program participants.

The strategic plan would engage all stakeholders and help the association to meet the objectives outlined below. **The time frame for the contract will be May 11, 2026 – December 31, 2026.**

Specific responsibilities:

1. Develop a new system for coordinating proposals with SUSTA's members and in-market representatives.

2. Develop an outcome-based model for accepting proposals. Determine which markets receive priority with program funds based on outcome, performance measures, company success stories, and goals.
3. Evaluate a system to determine which percentage of projects should focus on innovative and new strategy ideas or new markets.
4. What criteria are needed to add new strategies for funding.
5. Determine what criteria are used to remove a strategy.
6. Identify a system that ties into USDA ROM exercise to determine if SUSTA has met its obligations to receive funds. Include the following basic elements to determine how strategies are reviewed and scored:
 - a. innovative/originality: approach is innovative or unique and solves a problem.
 - b. methodology and approach: strategy is well-defined to achieve the objective with a clear timeline.
 - c. Target market, audience and goals: prioritize markets with a clear, differentiated, and appropriate marketing strategy that addresses the target market, target audience and goals.
7. Identify and increase participation of companies into SUSTA programs. Focus on expanding company participation to grow (types of companies and size).
8. Identify ways to expand SUSTA's existing company databases and identify new resources to help support and expand Outreach.
9. Identify new tools to target which markets are the right fit for certain product sectors to continue to help southern exporters grow in the international market.
10. Engage more member states to evaluate and expand the products promoted by SUSTA with focus on those that are underserved or not being served by another Cooperator.
11. Review if the Brand programs for the State Regional Trade Groups are aligned in structure as emphasized by the bullets below and if there should be one name for the program that is unique and the same across all regions.
 - a. When are Brand participants counted a participant.
 - b. What are the parameters around the Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards when reviewing affiliates.

Structure of Strategic Plan:

The consultant would structure a cost effective, result oriented comprehensive plan that meets the objectives outlined above. This plan may include a tiered approach to completing the objectives for the association. The plan must include a budget breakdown. The consultant may be required to travel to SUSTA's spring or winter meeting to meet the goals outlined in this strategic plan.

Implementation:

The consultant would carry out the plan by engaging all stakeholders. This includes SUSTA staff, Member State Departments of Agriculture, SUSTA companies participating in and benefitting from program funds, and Foreign Agriculture Service leadership that work directly with SUSTA. At the end of the period, a final report will be submitted to SUSTA's Executive Director and shared with its operations Committee.

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 measures:

- Description of proposal meets the stated objectives.
- Measurable results of previous, similar programs managed by the respondent.
- Approach to executing the strategic plan with a timeline.
- 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 drawn up 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, April 17, 2026, 5:00pm (CST)**. The planned commencement of the project will start upon written notification from SUSTA. Proposals may be emailed to Bernadette@susta.org, Troy@susta.org, and aamos@wvda.us.

Questions

All questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Bernadette Wiltz-Lang
Executive Director
SUSTA
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Suite 3845
One Shell Square
Bernadette@susta.org

And

Troy Rosamond
Deputy Director and Financial Director
SUSTA

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Ashley Amos
SUSTA Operations Committee Chair
Planning Coordinator
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
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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.