REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Released 02/18/2021

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
5:00 PM CST, 03/12/2021

RFP TITLE: ONLINE TRAINING TECHNICAL CONSULTING, IDENTITY PRESERVED FIELD CROPS.

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: MARCH 12, 2021

INTRODUCTION:

The Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) requests proposals to assist in implementing projects related to its programs under the FAS/Agricultural Trade Program to increase exports of U.S. identity preserved (IP) specialty soya and specialty grains through foreign market development programs.

SSGA is a national alliance of companies focused on production, processing, and shipping of specialty soya and grains worldwide. Its mission is to provide resources that communicate the quality, diversity, and availability of their products. Its members include specialty grains and IP soybean producers, processors, genetic/seed providers, export traders, international export companies, and qualified state soybean boards (QSSBs).

The contract will help fulfill SSGA's overall strategy using USDA/ FAS ATP funding to brand the U.S. as a quality origin for IP field crops like soybeans and products, and specialty grains, create a digital IP marketplace, and provide trade events and technical information to overseas buyers.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

The Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance seeks to develop and make available to international industry contacts a series of "Identity Preserved Field Crops Highway" online educational courses. The individual courses will highlight the strengths, advantages and efficiencies of the data-driven system of traceability and techniques that encompass the U.S. identity preserved (IP) field crop process.

IP practices that ensure back-to-the-farm traceability and other advantages can raise the cost at each transaction step along the IP value chain, including a premium to producers, however, they are costs that add great value to end product. These courses will provide reasons and examples of why it's worth it – and advantageous – to spend more for U.S. IP premium crops.

The modules will provide foreign buyers and companies involved in the soya and specialty grains value chains the opportunity to study in detail the U.S. IP system and to understand the cost effectiveness of paying more for the premium grain and oilseed crops they want for ingredients in their food manufacture. The training should provide participants the tools and understanding to follow the message on the quality, diversity, food safety and availability of U.S. soya and specialty grains products and to be able to deliver that message to influential decision makers in key target export markets. Targeted international trade contacts for these virtual online trainings include importers, exporters, distributors, food manufacturers and processors, among others.

The selected contractor will assist SSGA staff in creating an online training system for SSGA, including six initial individual training modules with options and recommendations for appropriate systems management and training implementation software. The system will be used for online training to be delivered to the IP field crop industry. SSGA already has created content in six technical areas that will serve as the basis for the module's content and be used to train new-to-market participants and established commodity companies on the uses and benefits of IP commodity systems that can earn higher value premiums to all participants along the value chain, from buyers to producers. The contractor will act as consultant, designer and developer, which will allow SSGA to manage the system, administer the training courses, utilize and operate the evaluation and feedback mechanisms and develop and prepare additional training modules.

Vendors are encouraged to provide al a carte pricing against the contract steps. Proposal writers should use their creativity and experience to suggest alternative approaches to find time and cost savings. SSGA has a skilled staff of experts in identity preserved field crops and a successful communications team for promotion, video production, website development and technical software management. The strongest proposals will offer opportunities to SSGA to use its own resources in concert with the expertise of the contractor to complete the project successfully.

Business Confidentiality: To whom and how a business sells its products is often business confidential. The contractor will at all points protect confidentiality and provide assurances that the results are to collect data to make policy decisions on how best to market goods and to gain feedback for better market development.

DELIVERABLES AND REPORT RESULTS:
The contractor will design an on-line instructional framework for SSGA through the following steps:

- Analysis: Working with SSGA staff and selected association members, the consultant will assist SSGA in the development and articulation of the organization's learning objectives for the program, including the desired training outcomes.
- Software choice: Provide SSGA with options, recommendations and costs for the learning management software application that will be responsible for the overall administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of the new and future training programs. The software can be separate from contractor pricing. The system will need to accommodate a paywall, with discount codes, and should be able to be added to the association's WordPress-based website. Cybersecurity and international access will be important components in selecting the appropriate learning module software.
- Instructional design: Design lesson plans and training program for SSGA, consistent with the learning objectives from the analysis, which uses existing technical information on specific IP products (content is available for inspection). The lesson plans should accomplish adult learning tasks and be interesting and informative. Modules will reflect best practices from a wide range of interdisciplinary research, such as educational psychology, organizational psychology and systems theory and reflect current approaches to innovative adult learning.
- Instructional developer for the six training modules: Using existing technical content, the consultant will assist SSGA staff to move recordings, tests, feedback and all related recorded and online text into the selected learning module software, as well as advise SSGA staff and provide assistance, as needed, to complete the content for online publication. Based on the lesson plans, SSGA staff will record and compile the lessons using the learning module with consultant coaching. SSGA staff will make and produce content, videos, narration, etc. The consultant will guide SSGA into moving content to a hosted training section at the website soyagrainsalliance.org.
- Assessment/evaluation: Wishing to learn from our students, training modules should include a self-assessment/evaluation that can be consolidated into a continuous feedback mechanism to improve the existing and future modules and the management and implementation of the entire training system. Ensure the system has a certification and standards checking system.
- Option for buildout: SSGA is looking to host training modules at soyagrainsalliance.org and an option for building this out as part of the existing website is requested.
- Option for translation: Provide SSGA potential options for courses to be completed in multiple languages. This could include subtitles and translated texts.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION:
Contractors should provide bids in price against the deliverables and segment proposals for SSGA to choose. Creativity and cost or time savings will gain extra consideration. Timeline for individual steps and completion should be included in proposals within the deadlines posted here.

Consideration will be given to proposals that draw on public sector enterprises as subcontractors or primary contractors. Agricultural education is a proud heritage of the United States and public sector enterprises are encouraged as participants, leads, or subcontractors in proposals.

Technical content for creation of the online teaching tool is available for review, based on signature of a nondisclosure agreement. Send a request to review content to rfp@soyagrainsalliance.org, noting Technical Manuals Review in the subject line and you will be provided information to view the manuals.

LIST OF TERMS:
LMS – Learning Management System - a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, automation and delivery of educational courses, training programs, or learning and development programs.

Instructional Designer – specialize in designing and developing effective, engaging learning experiences…making learning more efficient by drawing on best practices from a wide range of interdisciplinary research, such as educational psychology, organizational psychology, and systems theory.

Instructional Developer – using different tools, strategies, programming, and creativity to make the Instructional Designer's vision come to life.

MANUALS:
The IP Highway Series#1– Use identity preserved practices to increase your business and profit in premium quality field crops.

IP Highway Series#2: Using premium ingredients in soymilk and tofu

IP Highway Series#3: Using premium ingredients in fermented soyfoods

IP Highway Series#4: Using premium ingredients in tempeh

IP Highway Series#5: Using premium ingredients such as soy isolates, flakes, and meals

IP Highway Series#5: Using premium ingredients in producing snacks, distilled, baked, and brewed products from grains and ancient grains.

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution: Feb. 18, 2021**
- **Last Day to Submit Questions: March 8, 2021, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time**
- **Project Proposals Due: March 12, 2021 by 5:00PM Central Time**
- **Selections Made By: March 19, 2021**
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By: March 22, 2021**

INSTRUCTIONS:

Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@soyagrainsalliance.ORG by ***5:00PM Central Time*** by March 12, 2021.

2. A description of Prospective Contractor's capabilities, resources and experience. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.

3. A thorough proposal outlining Prospective Contractors planned work, deliverables and timeline to complete the work.

3. Resumes for each of the Prospective Contractor's personnel assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.

4. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

5. Detailed Budget

    - All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee was derived including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the amount of effort they anticipate to do the work.

6. Proposals should be no longer than ***10 pages*** (8 ½" x 11").

NOTES:

- Prospective Contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- SSGA reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between SSGA and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without SSGA's prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learns from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, SSGA reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- SSGA reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. SSGA also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by SSGA or Funding Sources.
    - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature
- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- SSGA and Prospective Contractor agrees to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). SSGA provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND
Information about SSGA can be found here: https://soyagrainsalliance.org/about/

SSGA was formed in February 2019 from the consolidation of the Midwest Shippers Association (MSA) and the Northern Food Grade Soybean Association (NFGSA). SSGA is a national alliance of companies focused on production, processing and shipping of specialty soya and grains worldwide. Its mission is to provide resources that communicate the quality, diversity and availability of their products.

This RFP is part of an activity approved for financing under the FAS/USDA Agricultural Trade Promotion program and will focus primarily on South East Asia. The goal is to create an IP Brand to identify the United States as a quality origin for US field crops focused on creating a sharing hub focused on helping growers, processors, shippers, end users and food and health professionals to:

- Source U.S. IP soybeans and soy products, and specialty grains
- Connect seamlessly with exporters
- Understand the benefits of U.S. IP products
- Trace the origin of U.S. IP soybeans/products
- Navigate regulatory pitfalls to food processing
- Better understand logistics of getting products to end user

SSGA is undertaking this RFP directly with the contractor, with operational support and assistance by agreement with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC). Through a global network of international offices USSEC helps build a preference for U.S. soybeans and soybean products, advocate for the use of soy in feed, aquaculture and human consumption, promote the benefits of soy use through education and connect industry leaders through a robust membership program.

USSEC's strategic plan can be found here: **https://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/**

SSGA and USSEC partner when applicable to provide resources for the IP industry. SSGA also focuses on other IP crops and the shipping of these products.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT:
In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 {voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,1400 Independence Avenue SW,Washington,D.C.20250-9410; (2) fax:(202) 690-7442;or (3) email:program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

CIVIL RIGHTS CLAUSE:
Contractor agrees that during the performance of this Agreement it will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, parental status or protected genetic information. Contractor further agrees that it will fully comply with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, without limitation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require Contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinance, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to Contractor.