



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Submission Deadline  
5:00 PM CST, 5/26/2023

**TITLE:** USSEC's Digital and Social Media Agency Partner

**CONTACT 1:** Kerrey Kerr-Enskat, [kenskat@ussec.org](mailto:kenskat@ussec.org)

**CONTACT 2:** Alanah Preston, [apreston@ussec.org](mailto:apreston@ussec.org)

**PROPOSAL DEADLINE:** 05/26/2023

USSEC'S Standard practice is to RFP every three years openly and competitively. This type of cost analysis assists in determining fair market value for the work performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate new contractors, their expertise, and proposals for selecting the best based on experience, availability, expertise, approach, and cost. You may respond to the scope of the work in its entirety or respond to portions of it that best fit your expertise. Contractors selected will be asked to complete work in the current fiscal year and will be qualified for engagement through September 30, 2026.

### INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Soybeans are the United States' No. 1 food and agricultural export. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) focuses on differentiating, building preference, and attaining market access for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in 80+ countries internationally. USSEC members represent the soy supply chain including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations. USSEC is funded by the U.S. soybean checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry.

Representing the positive global human impact of soy grown in the United States, the **U.S. SOY** brand exists to carry forward soy's promise to **transform global nutrition**, provide **climate-forward solutions**, and support **progress for people and communities**. U.S. Soy is powered by the **innovation** of the industry; the unsurpassed **quality, reliability, and sustainability** of the soybeans grown by our **farming families** who invest through checkoff dollars; and the commitment of the organizations that raise awareness, build demand, develop new markets, and discover new uses for soy and soy products. U.S. Soy envisions a world where soy is a fundamental ingredient in solving the broad challenges of humanity.

**USSEC seeks an agency partner that excels in digital and social media strategy and implementation.** This includes, but is not limited to, the following: multi-lingual website builds and maintenance; SEO; social media listening and leverage; digital media planning and buying; CRM (HubSpot) strategy and implementation; Cvent and Swoogo event solution; analytics, measurement, and reporting; and project management. This scope of work does not include message and content development; however, insights and learnings will be shared to help guide campaign and content strategy and implementation.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

Note: *You may respond to the scope of work in its entirety or respond to portions of it that best fit your expertise.*

1. Please email the proposal to [RFP@ussec.org](mailto:RFP@ussec.org) by 5 p.m. Central time, May 26, 2023.
2. Describe your firm's capabilities, resources, and global experience. Please include the profiles of core team members who would be leading and servicing this account should it be awarded to your firm.
3. Include a detailed servicing team structure who will be working on the account, workflow, Single Point of Contact on the team. Note that this team must also present the proposal, if selected.
4. Include a detailed budget.
5. All bids for services must provide a breakout of how the fee is derived, including a breakdown of hourly rate and the number of hours anticipated for execution.
6. Please segment the costs associated by function as described under Scope of Work.
7. Provide at least two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

## **TIMELINE**

This timeline is a guide and may be adjusted based on needs.

- RFP Distribution: May X, 2023
- RFP Briefing: Week of May 15, 2023 (TBC)
  - Please email Kerrey Kerr-Enskat, [kenskat@ussec.org](mailto:kenskat@ussec.org) to indicate your interest in participating and to be added to the invitation list
- Project Proposals Due: May 26, 2023, by 5 p.m. U.S. Central time
- Narrowed Selection Made By: Jun 2, 2023
- Meet & Greets and Final Presentations: Week of June 12, 2023
- Final Selection: By June 23, 2023

## **ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

The firm will be required to become familiar with USSEC policy and adhere to the requirements of the Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act & Order and other related government mandates for checkoff programs which govern USSEC.

## **DELIVERABLES**

1. Build and launch a new ussec.org multilingual website (non-exhaustive list e.g., English, Arabic, French, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish), SEO optimized, and factoring UX-design X-d technical security considerations.
2. Manage and maintain all USSEC-owned domains and websites.
3. Build new landing pages, micro-sites, databases, tools, and calculators as determined and at the direction of USSEC's Communications & Marketing team.

4. Based on specific metrics, analytics and insights, develop a regular reporting framework and intervals for internal decision-making and reporting across all digital channels.
5. Manage and monitor USSEC's social media channels. This includes managing worldwide channels, and monitoring regional channels, as well as leveraging paid promotion.
6. Lead USSEC's CRM (Hubspot) strategy and execution for targeted audience engagement and analysis. Continual maintenance of lists and contacts for ensuring recency and optimal performance and outreach.
7. Guide building a world-class digital ecosystem that delivers the U.S. Soy vision, and positions USSEC as a trusted partner internationally. We seek a partner who not only executes on the deliverables outlined here but who is forward-thinking and brings insights, ideas and solutions, helping the team reach our audiences where they are.

## **TARGET AUDIENCES**

### **A) International (e.x. U.S.)**

- a. Customers: Soy exporters and importers, integrated food and feed companies, crushers, animal protein, aquaculture, feed formulators in animal nutrition and aquafeed, edible oil refiners, soy food, food CPG companies, retailers
- b. International Policymakers and Regulators
- c. ESG/sustainability standards and ratings organizations, sustainable finance and banking entities
- d. Development sector NGOs, foundations
- e. News media and commentators
- f. Consumers

### **B) Domestic (U.S.)**

- a. USSEC Members and Investors (American Soybean Association, United Soybean Board, Qualified State Soybean Boards, USDA, food and agriculture industry, U.S. Soy farmers)
- b. Agriculture news media and commentators

We operate internationally and have a global mindset that respects cultures across all the countries we reach. This is central to how we build, operate, and leverage our digital and social media strategy.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The scope is “developing world-class digital and social media strategy and executing it in a dedicated and timely manner through a professional approach to project management in order to achieve agreed upon goals.” Contractors are expected to conduct the following work, which is segmented into key functions:

### Digital Strategy

From campaigns and content to events, USSEC deploys an omnichannel strategy to build awareness and engage our audiences to build a preference for U.S. Soy. We are looking for an agency who will partner to set direction and cut through the clutter creatively and credibly in a fragmented and polarized digital and social media environment and help us achieve results internationally. We also need this partner to recommend a digital security strategy, including Domain/URL security to protect brand reputation and for proactive risk mitigation purposes.

## Websites

Rebuild USSEC.org to best reflect the brand, USSEC's team, expertise, and impact.

Manage and maintain USSEC.org and other websites owned by USSEC. The scope includes maintaining the registrations and integrity of the sites in addition to performing design and content updates, refreshes, integrations, APIs, or other identified work. All content is provided by the client. However, care is taken in the 'Build' process, allowing flexibility to surface customized regional market content when accessed from that market.

USSEC owns 107 domains of which we intend to maintain 5. Need technical backbone to build, leverage and measure:

- <https://ussec.org/> integrating solutions.USSOY.org.
- <https://www.ussec.org/>
- <https://ssap-red.org/>
- <https://www.soyexcellence.org/>
- <https://globalsoygrowers.org/>

This does not include any URLs, if any, owned by regional teams to further in-country engagement.

Additionally, our team invests in innovative digital tools such as calculators and databases (Soy Value Calculator, Oil Value Calculator, Soy Foods Variety Database, and others) and integrates them into our website(s)). These digital tools may need to be updated with new datasets or new digital tools built with guidance from our focus area directors and team leads.

## Social Media

Develop social media strategy for USSEC owned channels - currently LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook in English. The plan is to expand to include regional social channels in other key languages. This includes helping develop channel personas, recommending the posting cadence and timing, utilizing appropriate tagging and keyword strategies to reach targeted audiences and sector influencers. This also includes social listening, owned and paid amplification. At this time, Loomly is used for scheduling and managing the various channels. All content is provided by the client.

## HubSpot Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Manage the relevant portions of the HubSpot account in this manner:

- Implement efforts that will optimize our ability to categorize international audiences (contacts and visitors), engage them, and deliver highly targeted marketing messages.
- Monitor, manage, and maintain our HubSpot platform to ensure optimal functionality. This includes ensuring that international-oriented contact data, lists, workflows, and other aspects of HubSpot are organized and of the highest quality possible.
- Manage HubSpot international subscriber lists, maintain nurture campaigns, workflows, and forms.
- Monitor and manage deployment of RSS feeds and/or other recurring emails, such as USSEC's Global News Update.
- Provide ongoing support to best use HubSpot.
- Strategize, create, design, copywrite, code, and deploy as necessary new emails, landing pages, and forms within HubSpot.

## Digital Paid Promotion

To ensure that our brand and content is found, the agency will provide:

- Strategy, adapting creative, media planning and buying, management, and optimization of paid promotion. All content is provided by the client.

The intention of these activities is to support the content strategy, targeting and messaging goals by continually evolving channel strategy, message and media mix, and deployment.

Advertising network recommendations and creative ways to reach our target audience.

## Project Management

Scale and execute our digital and social media strategy through world-class performance. Strong project management skills are needed with an emphasis on getting the work done, meeting deadlines, and setting expectations.

Key components include:

- An agreed upon method of project tracking and timelines
- Standardized and regular reporting of identified metrics, analytics, and insights across channels /platforms.

## **BACKGROUND**

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is the international marketing arm of U.S. Soy. Both U.S. Soy and USSEC have a digital footprint and there is a terrific opportunity to build a more globally cohesive digital ecosystem for a better audience experience that improve awareness, preference, and reputation.

USSEC has been building a Worldwide Communications & Marketing team, expanding from a team of two to eight plus 8 and counting. The push for excellence is on and we have a healthy dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Existing platforms/subscriptions:

- WordPress
- HubSpot
- Cvent (transitioning to Swoogo in May-June 2023)
- Meltwater
- Loomly
- LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- SharePoint / Microsoft 365
- ASANA

In recent years, our team has launched the U.S. Soy Delivers Solutions integrated marketing campaign in 17 different languages across our key markets. Our team leveraged digital platforms (e.g. LinkedIn, Google, Facebook, Yahoo), and industry/trade media outlets to effectively reach target audiences and

establish relationships to leverage future opportunities (e.g. content, events, speaking engagements, sponsorships).

## **PREFERRED AGENCY PROFILE**

We seek a solutions provider in our partner who will place high priority to the USSEC business. A global perspective, multilingual capability, cross-cultural sensibilities, and B2B and B2C expertise is valued.

The desired partner ideally shows all of the following:

- **Global experience** in agriculture, food and beverage, and retail sectors;
- **Responsiveness** built into its DNA, be it responding with empathy and agility to technical issues, change requests, reputation management, or issues and crisis communications;
- **Proactive thought partner** that can deliver on strategy and hands-on execution.
- **Strong project management skills/acumen** to develop, deliver and maintain high-quality outcomes and outputs, on-time and within agreed budgets

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

To create a transparent proposal process, all questions received will be shared with all interested parties. To assist interested organizations in putting their best foot forward, USSEC is happy to host additional briefings on the proposal. During this meeting, USSEC will provide background on the proposal and answer questions. Refer to RFP timelines as above. To coordinate an additional briefing, please contact USSEC Project Manager Alanah Preston, [apreston@ussec.org](mailto:apreston@ussec.org). Questions may also be directed to Alanah Preston at [apreston@ussec.org](mailto:apreston@ussec.org).

## **NOTES**

- Prospective Contractor's proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of all the information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC 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 and the contractor selected.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC'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 learn from or is provided about the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC 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 USSEC 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. The contractor shall not act as an 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.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agree to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC 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.

### **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, audiotope, 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](mailto: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.