

Request for Proposals Marketing & Communications Projects

Background

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export – Midwest) and Food Export USA - Northeast (Food Export – Northeast) are currently seeking proposals from agencies to assist with ongoing communications, marketing and outreach services to help promote our programs and services.

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast are not-for-profit export associations whose primary functions are to develop export markets for Midwestern and Northeastern (respectively) producers and processors of value-added food and agricultural products. Our members include state agricultural promotion agencies from twelve Midwestern and ten Northeastern states.

Both groups are participants in the Market Access Program (a federal program handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.) The MAP is intended to boost the export of value-added food and agricultural products from the U.S.

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast are independent organizations that have been engaged in a strategic alliance since April of 2000. Through this alliance, the strategy and tactics of the organizations have been aligned so that the activities and services of each group are very similar, with differences based primarily on geographic focus. Food Export – Midwest focuses on Midwestern exporters and a series of nine overseas target markets, while Food Export - Northeast targets Northeastern exporters and six overseas markets. By collaborating, the activities and services of each organization are open to participation by companies from the other region. Food Export programs and services focus on three main areas: Outreach and Export Education, Market Entry and Market Promotion.

The states that are members of Food Export – Midwest include: Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio and Missouri. Food Export – Northeast encompasses: New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Objectives

The goal of communications, marketing and outreach is to educate domestic food manufacturers about exporting opportunities and to generate awareness of and participation in Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast programs and services. Outreach is a critical function of Food Export so we can:

- 1) Identify prospects and determine their value as a potential participant.

- 2) Educate them as to what programs and services we can offer depending on their export readiness level.
- 3) Develop an ongoing relationship with the companies and drive them to participate in our educational programs, market entry and market promotion services.

Through continued outreach, various communications and targeted database marketing efforts we hope to recognize new growth from prospects. In addition to generating awareness and turning prospects into new participants, we hope to develop new ways of illustrating our value and benefits to existing customers to realize incremental growth.

Scope of Work

Project 1: Overall Marketing and Communications Plan

Assist in the development of an overall strategic marketing and communications plan. This may include plans for various marketing campaigns to educate food manufacturers about global export opportunities as well as specific campaigns for our unique programs, services and events. Provide assistance with market research initiatives and evaluation of plans/projects to support future communications and marketing planning activities. Participate in Communications/outreach planning meetings and conference calls as requested.

Project 2: Redesign of promotional materials for outreach, awareness building and general participation

Provide marketing design, brand and identity support for a variety of print and electronic communication projects that support the overall plan. Activities may include developing a design theme for materials supporting Food Export programs and services. These materials may be instructional or promotional in nature targeting domestic and international audiences. Various materials may be needed depending on purpose, audience, export readiness level, product category, program/service and delivery channel. First projects will include comprehensive 2012 Activity Calendar and 2012 Branded Program Exporter Manual.

Project 3: Development of audience acquisition plan for Food Export events and the Food Export Forum

In addition to general instructional and promotional pieces, materials will be needed for various event based programs and services including Buyers Missions (International buyers come to the U.S. to meet with suppliers. Suppliers can learn more about products' export potential and build relationships with buyers), marketing programs around buyers missions, "Food Show Plus!" services (Tradeshaw enhancement services that maximizes international trade show experience, customized services can include translation services, competitive information, interpreters, buyers meetings, site visits, etc.), Focused Trade Missions (events that bring U.S. suppliers to a country no meet with international buyers

and learn about the markets), and the Food Export Marketing Forum (Food Export's annual two day educational seminar). Marketing will support general awareness building and audience acquisition and a plan to promote these events as a comprehensive offering, not as ala carte services, based on where a company falls in terms of export readiness, location and interest.

Project 3: Develop a content marketing plan for website, social media outlets, print and e-newsletters for exporters, buyers, and related stakeholders

Prepare realistic framework to utilize various web, social and print based channels to stay in front with information regarding programs and services, important dates, food/ag industry information, research and USDA/MAP information. Employ various social media outlets to build a network and educate companies and potential participants on our programs and services.

Project 5: Special Projects

Provide assistance on an as-needed basis for additional domestic and international projects. Some examples include: assisting with projects that support the development of marketing materials such as brochures, advertorials, and/or program presentations for Seafood and Wild Blueberries.

The responsibilities of the contractor for these projects would be to work with the Communications Manager to provide input on a plan of work for the project and to provide the assistance required.

Response to RFP

The proposal should include the names of the individuals who will be conducting the work, the qualifications of the proposed individual/company, experience in planning and conducting similar projects, the cost of assisting with these activities, and references. The price quotation should be provided on an hourly basis and detail all costs associated with project work.

When submitting proposals, the contractor should include all costs for project management from conception to completion, which could include assistance with planning, research, project coordination, project development, and evaluation. Contractor must comply with Section 508 on any electronic marketing projects so that the information is accessible to people with disabilities.

Proposals should be addressed to both Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast. If awarded, partial invoicing would also need to be sent to both organizations.

The contractor must be able to cite and provide examples of previous experience in marketing and communications, and may submit a proposal for any or all of the projects outlined above. Experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing,

communications programs, food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The contractor should detail experience with the above groups. The contractor must be willing to collaborate with Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast's other vendors when necessary to ensure successful production of joint marketing and communication projects. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated project.

Timeline for Proposals and Project Decisions

The deadline for proposal submission is **June 15, 2011**, at the office of Food Export - Midwest. Emailed proposals will be accepted. Please address any questions and submit completed proposals to:

Food Export - Midwest
Attention: John Belmont
309 West Washington, Suite 600
Chicago, Illinois 60606-3217
Ph: 312-334-9200 Fax: 312-334-9230
Email: jbelmont@foodexport.org

The decision on the award of the contract will be made by **June 20**. The agreement is to be signed shortly thereafter and projects may begin in June 2011.

Other Relevant Information About the Project

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast reserve the right to not award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast may renew the awarded contract for up to three (3) years.

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast are required to obtain:

1. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country): _____
2. Type of Structure (choose one): Individual Corporation LLC
 Partnership Sole Proprietorship
3. A completed and signed W9 for tax purposes prior to contracting.

The selected contractor must agree to abide by the provisions contained in Section 202 of Executive Order 11246 (30 Federal Register 12319) with regard to employment and contracting practices. In addition, Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast require that their contractors may not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, national

origin or ancestry, race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, military status or membership in the military reserve.