



## **INVITATION FOR BIDS**

**Food Export Association of the Midwest USA** (Food Export–Midwest) and **Food Export USA–Northeast** (Food Export–Northeast) are seeking the assistance of a qualified marketing and communications professional (individual or company) in the areas of 1) marketing and communications strategy; 2) design services and digital/print content development; 3) web site design consulting and ongoing content development; 4) production and distribution of organizations’ publications; 5) media relations and public relations; 6) industry partnerships; and 7) special projects.

The selected professional will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2020 Program Year, from January 1 to December 31, 2020 and is renewable on an annual basis. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups/trade associations, international marketing, and food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably.

Attached please find the official Request for Proposal for details, requirements and deadlines.

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The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon CT on **Thursday, October 31, 2019**. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

**Please address all proposals and questions to:**

Greg Cohen, Communications Manager  
**Food Export Association of the Midwest USA**  
**Food Export USA–Northeast**  
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Chicago, IL 60606 USA  
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## **Request for Proposals Communications Contractor**

### **Background**

The Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export–Midwest) and Food Export USA–Northeast (Food Export–Northeast) are not-for-profit export associations and whose primary function is 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 (MAP), 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. through a partnership between FAS and approximately seventy-five other industry-based trade organizations. This includes primarily commodity-specific groups, as well as two other unaffiliated regional groups similar to Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast that handle the southern and western regions of the U.S.

The products covered for export promotion by Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast include a wide variety of processed and semi-processed products found throughout the retail, foodservice, and food processing sectors. These include products or derivations of meat, dairy, poultry, seafood, grains, fruits and vegetables, salty and savory snack foods, confections, beans, sauces and condiments, pet foods, beverages, canned foods, animal feeds, bakery products, pasta and many others. Marketing channels include mass market retail, specialty foods, convenience foods, private label, healthy/organic, food ingredients, frozen foods, and others. Additionally, Food Export–Northeast promotes benchmark seafood products from the northeastern U.S. including lobster, scallops, monkfish, Atlantic herring, squid, Atlantic mackerel, dogfish and skate.

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 eight overseas target markets, including Australia/New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Mexico. Food Export–Northeast targets northeastern exporters and six overseas markets, including Europe, Central America, Canada, the Middle East, South America and the Caribbean. By collaborating, the activities and

services of each organization are open to participation by companies from the other region. The net effect is that exporters in the Midwest and Northeast have access to a larger range of export promotion opportunities, while the limited staffs at Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast can focus on specific market development opportunities.

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

More information about Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast is available at [www.foodexport.org](http://www.foodexport.org).

### **Communications Objectives**

Food Export–Midwest’s and Food Export–Northeast’s communications, outreach and marketing efforts have a variety of goals and objectives including:

1. Broaden domestic outreach to Midwest and Northeast U.S. food and agricultural companies and increase their awareness about the benefits exporting.
2. Educate Midwest and Northeast U.S. food companies about export opportunities, food export-related news, and “how to export.”
3. Establish the organizations as well-respected, credible industry resources, both for U.S. suppliers and international buyers.
4. Boost participation in Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast programs and services and help increase export sales of Midwest and Northeast U.S. food and agricultural products.
5. Broaden domestic outreach to industry partners, e.g. other associations, current partners and industry stakeholders (i.e. partnerships).
6. Increase awareness about the two organizations and about Midwest and Northeast U.S. food products/companies to international buyers.
7. Provide a variety of marketing and promotional support for the organizations’ network of overseas In-Market Representatives.

### **Scope of Work**

Contractors may bid on one or any combination of the following projects.

#### **Project 1: Marketing and Communications Strategy**

Conduct a marketing and communications audit of our current efforts for key target audiences and provide recommendations/strategic direction in a variety of areas, including but not limited to branding, design, messaging, print and digital publications, content strategy, social media and marketing/promotional activities.

## **Project 2: Design Services and Digital/Print Content Development**

Provide design, production and brand identity for a variety of print and electronic communications materials as needed. Activities may include developing a design theme, developing messaging, and writing content for materials supporting Food Export programs and services. Various materials may be needed depending on purpose, audience, export readiness level, product category, program/service and delivery channel. As such, they may be educational and/or promotional in nature targeting domestic and/or international audiences. Materials may include print and/or electronic brochures, annual reports, promotional emails, newsletters, presentations, advertorials, content for social media campaigns, graphics and infographics, and other activity or program-specific materials as needed, e.g. the Branded Program manual, the annual activity calendar, etc.

## **Project 3: Web Site Design Consulting & Ongoing Content Development**

Food Export–Midwest’s and Food Export–Northeast’s current web site (foodexport.org) needs to be updated so it presents a more streamlined and user-friendly experience. The organizations seek a contractor to assist with updating the web site’s design, navigation, process flow, user experience, content and other improvements to increase its effectiveness in supporting the organizations’ goals and mission. The Contractor will also assist with ongoing website maintenance, tracking of metrics and content development as needed.

## **Project 4: Production and Distribution of Organizations’ Publications**

Manage and execute the day-to-day production and distribution of Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast publications, including but not limited to:

- *The Global Food Marketer*<sup>TM</sup> – printed newsletter (6 issues a year) and E-Bulletin (monthly):
  - Primary audience is U.S. food and agricultural suppliers
  - Content may include, but is not limited to, cover stories, country profiles, news bites, success stories, Food Export Helpline<sup>TM</sup> articles (provided by the Food Export Helpline<sup>TM</sup> counselor), promotional articles, upcoming activity listings, and other appropriate content.
- *U.S. Foodlink* – printed newsletter (6 issues/year) and E-Bulletin (monthly)
  - Primary audience is international buyers

The Contractor will coordinate all activities with the Communications staff and provide the following services as needed:

- Content development: Research potential topics and provide outline of potential stories to be approved by Communications staff.
- Copywriting and/or editing of content.
- Layout and Design of print and electronic publications.
- Print Management: Manage printing and distribution of newsletters, working directly with printer.

## **Project 5: Media Relations & Public Relations**

Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast seek a Contractor to provide planning and execution of an overall media/public relations strategy designed to 1) broaden its domestic outreach to Midwest and Northeast suppliers, industry partners and other industry stakeholders to build relationships and support for the organizations’

efforts; 2) Increase awareness about the benefits of exporting; and 3) Boost participation in Food Export–Midwest’s and Food Export–Northeast’s programs and services.

In support of the above, the Contractor will prepare and distribute press releases around major trade events and other notable organizational activities, assist with building and maintaining media relations, and produce other materials (e.g. specific press releases, blog and social media posts, articles for industry partners’ newsletters, etc.) to highlight overall program successes.

### **Project 6: Industry Partnerships**

Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast are looking to broaden its domestic outreach to industry associations, current partners and other industry stakeholders (i.e. partnerships). Our objective is to maintain and build new, long-term relationships that will result in increasing the number of U.S. suppliers in our programs. The Contractor will provide support in the following areas: 1) crafting an effective communication plan/strategy for building partnerships; 2) developing appropriate content, materials, and distribution methods; 3) developing marketing kits for partners’ usage. The contractor will create messages that add strategic value to the partnerships, keep partners informed, and persuade/influence partners’ audiences.

### **Project 7: 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, e.g. custom marketing materials, newsletters, advertorials, copywriting projects, special presentations or any other projects in need of marketing communications vendor assistance. Assistance may also be needed to create success stories, which includes reaching out to Food Export companies, gathering information about their activities and writing a success story based on the Food Export guidelines. 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.

### **Requirements and Submitting a Proposal**

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, and food and/or agricultural groups will be considered favorably. The proposal should also include the names of the individuals who will be conducting the work and the qualifications of the proposed individual / vendor. The proposal should also include references. The contractor must also be financially and legally capable of entering into and executing a contract for the above stated projects. In addition, please provide the following information:

1. Name of Entity (as it would appear on contract/invoices)
2. Main point of contact
3. Complete Mailing Address / Physical Office Address
4. EIN/TIN/SS number (or if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number in your country)
5. Type of Structure (choose one):  
 Individual    Corporation    LLC    Partnership    Sole Proprietorship

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. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to three (3) years.

**The quotation(s) should be submitted with rates per hour for the projects described. Vendors may choose to submit different rates per hour for various components of the projects listed above.**

The selected contractor must agree to abide by Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast Terms and Conditions:

Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information should contact us. Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast do not tolerate fraud in their programs or services, and expect all participants to comply with our code of ethics ([www.foodexport.org/codeofethics](http://www.foodexport.org/codeofethics)).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: [www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com](http://www.foodexport.ethicspoint.com) or 1-855-727-6715 (domestic toll-free.)

We reserve the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of Food Export–Midwest or Food Export–Northeast does not comply with MAP; FAS; Food Export–Midwest or Food Export–Northeast regulations or policies, or otherwise reflect positively on them; their members states; FAS; or USDA, in pursuit of their mission of increasing food and agricultural exports, or for continued public support for their programs. For more information please see our Terms and Conditions located at [www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions](http://www.foodexport.org/termsandconditions).

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 its contractors may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Food Export–Midwest and Food Export–Northeast acceptance of proposal is conditional upon contractor disclosing all existing relationship with another party that has the potential of impacting and/or influencing the contractor’s ability to carry out the scope of work.

By responding to this request for proposal, you are certifying that your company nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency. If you are unable to certify to the preceding statement, but you wish to

proceed with a proposal to this request, you will need to include an explanation as to why you cannot certify this statement as an attachment to your proposal.

The contents of this Request for Proposal and Scopes of Work are confidential and business proprietary. They may not be re-used for any purpose, in whole or part, including any text, or related concepts, strategies or tactics described, without written permission from Food Export–Midwest and/or Northeast.

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon CT on **Thursday, October 31, 2019**. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

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