

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
12:00 PM CST, 5/15/2020

RFP TITLE: TRAVEL AGENCY SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL & DOMESTIC TRAVEL

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL DEADLINE: May 15, 2020, by 5:00PM Central Time

INTRODUCTION:

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., USSEC (US Soybean Export Council) 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.

PURPOSE OF RFP:

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an openly and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis will assist in determining the fair market value for the work to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate various proposals and select the best contractor for the job based on experience, availability, expertise, approach, and cost

The purpose of this RFP is to seek proposals for travel services for both international and domestic travel.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

The purpose of this RFP is to enter into a contract for the services of exclusive travel agency to manage and coordinate the official travel need, primarily airline tickets, for the employees, contractors, clients and leadership of USSEC including teams requiring coordinated travel organized by the St. Louis home office. USSEC is soliciting proposals from travel agencies who can demonstrate knowledge of the United States Federal Travel Regulations including Fly America Act and other private sector unique regulations; be able to charge costs to multiple internal department cost centers and credit cards; and generate invoices & reports outlining costs related to each cost center and card. Additionally, the bidder must demonstrate, via references, that such travel services have been provided to similar organizations with numerous travelers across multiple countries. Furthermore, USSEC is seeking a travel agency that will earnestly put forth

their best effort in resolving any travel-related problems or emergencies that may arise while traveling, and an agency that can demonstrate the achievement of cost savings for clients in comparable size and complexity.

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

USSEC is interested in securing the highest quality of travel services, maximizing service convenience for its employees and various programs participants, while minimizing travel cost and developing a database that will give USSEC an accurate reference of its between \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000 in airfare costs annually. USSEC reserves the right to use other travel services, when necessary.

The selected travel service shall provide corporate travel services, primarily airline tickets, for official domestic and international travel of USSEC employees and various program participants organized by the St. Louis home office. Domestic and international travel includes travel within the US and travel outside US including all other countries.

If the selected travel service has International Offices that could meet the need of USSEC's Regional Offices around the world an introduction will be given such that the selected travel service could have the opportunity to compete for USSEC's Travel Business in that Region.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION

Additional Considerations to include any specific information regarding the proposal that could affect the Prospective Contractors ability to submit a proposal.

- Comply with mandatory U.S. Government Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) including but not limited to the Fly America Act for all air travel conducted against federal award funds. The Fly America Act generally precludes use of non-US flag carriers, except as provided in the FTR and the Foreign Affairs Manual, Volume 14 Section 500. Also, the contractor will follow the instructions provided by the program officer/associate for the conduct of other non-federal and private travel.*
- Except for the constraints listed in the FTR including the Fly America Act, the Contractor shall book the lowest available requested class of service fare that satisfies the agency's mission requirements and meets the Travelers needs. Full coach fares may be used if no reduced fares are available. Specific airlines or connections may be requested for specific travelers at the request of USSEC.*
- Promotional or other types of discount fares can be used under this contract provided that the contractor shall not use any restricted fare which provides for a monetary penalty for itinerary changes or flight cancellations without consulting the program officer/assistant in charge of the relevant official travel arrangements first.*
- When USSEC official travelers include personal legs of travel in their official itineraries, the contractor should be able to separate the official cost from the personal cost on a cost*

construct basis and coordinate payment of the personal difference with the traveler directly.

- The Contractor shall provide USSEC with the reservation and ticketing services which industry practice normally accords corporate or private travelers, to include new and improved reservation and ticketing technologies.*
- The Contractor shall provide USSEC with a 24-hour phone number accessible by travelers to perform emergency itinerary changes and emergency services outside regular business hours. The Contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that any subcontractor providing such emergency service complies with all conditions of the contract.*
- The Contractor may only issue business or premium class tickets for which USSEC will have to pay an additional amount only with advance approved official travel authorization providing the authority for that travel. This does not apply to situations in which frequent flyer benefits will be used to obtain the premium class tickets.*
- The Contractor shall provide delivery of tickets, itineraries, and boarding passes (if applicable), and other travel documents, as determined necessary. Tickets shall routinely be provided in advance of travel unless USSEC requests otherwise. The Contractor shall deliver tickets in the form of either E-tickets or Paper tickets (if no E-tickets are available) only to employees designated by USSEC.*
- The Contractor shall provide off-site service, Monday through Friday, compatible with USSEC standard workday schedule excluding the official holidays observed by USSEC (a list of the holidays will be provided separately to the bid winner).*
- In the event of emergencies (e.g., Presidential-declared disasters, airline strikes, fires, natural disasters, terrorist attacks including evacuations, etc.), the Contractor shall maintain operations necessary to support USSEC under the contract. This includes maintaining services 24 hours a day as required by USSEC responding to the emergency and providing necessary delivery of tickets.*
- The Contractor is required to identify qualified personnel for project management and for handling reservation requests. They should be fluent in English (writing and reading) and experienced in providing international travel and management services for US. Government and/or other well recognized entities and demonstrate knowledge of the Federal Travel Regulations and any other private company travel operating procedures. Contractor's Project Manager – The Contractor shall assign a Project Manager who shall be responsible for the administration, supervision, and coordination of USSEC travel operations. The Project Manager shall have experience in the management of travel services and shall have adequate authority to make decisions for the timely resolution of problems. The Project Manager shall coordinate closely with the designated person in USSEC.*
- Travel Counselors/Reservationists - The Contractor shall assign full-time travel counselors/reservationists. The Travel Counselors/Reservationists shall have been trained in operating the proposed automated reservation and ticketing equipment. The Contractor shall provide qualified substitute personnel for absent employees, or when service levels are negatively impacted, as determined by USSEC.*

REPORTING AND MONITORING:

The Contractor is required to provide management cost reports or access to online reporting to include spend analysis for USSEC various cost centers (projects) incurred against individual or multiple credit cards, activity management, reconciliation analysis, etc. The reports should have the capability of detailing specific expenditures related to ea. project/credit card, i.e. Airfare, car rental, hotel and designated travel locations, as well as individual travel expenditure.

The Contractor is also required to provide quarterly summary reports.

In addition to the above, the Contractor is required to maintain an internal monitoring process for identifying and correcting deficiencies in the quality of service furnished to USSEC. This may include but is not limited to generating quality service survey forms that address travel services to be furnished under this contract.

PAYMENT METHOD:

All travel tickets booked are paid via USSEC dedicated credit card(s). However, bi-weekly or monthly documentation detailing tickets issued, or other travel reservations made, are required along with all USSEC required documentation. Travel services will be paid upon invoice.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

*Our expectation is for the **Contract period** to last for three (3) years from the date of signed contract with an annual renewal. USSEC will RFP travel services at the end of three (3) years.*

RFP TIMELINE:

- **RFP Distribution:** April 15, 2020
- **Last Day to Submit Questions:** May 10, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Proposals Due:** May 15, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
- **Selections Made By:** May 31, 2020
- **Prospective Contractors Notified By:** June 1, 2020

INSTRUCTIONS:

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

1. Please email the proposal to RFP@USSEC.ORG by **5:00PM Central Time** on May 15, 2020 by 5:00PM Central Time
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.
- 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 between USSEC 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 learns from or is provided in relation to 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 by 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. 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.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agrees 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.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

BUILDING A PREFERENCE FOR U.S. SOY

USSEC's strategy can be found here: <http://ussec.org/about-ussec/vision-mission/>

USB's Long Range Strategic Plan can be found here: <http://unitedsoybean.org/about-usb/strategic-planning/>

We are a dynamic partnership of key stakeholders representing soybean producers, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusiness and agricultural organizations.

Through a global network of international offices and strong support in the U.S., we help 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.

Our 15-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board, created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Because of the limitations on administrative and salary costs established in the Act, USB outsources the majority of its program management responsibilities to USB's three primary contractors:

- SmithBucklin-St. Louis for domestic marketing, new uses, production research and Board initiative activities;
- Osborn & Barr Communications for communications/public relations activities and;
- U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Inc. for international marketing and global opportunities activities.

As one of these three primary contractors USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.

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.