



INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their Activity Coordinators and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development activities for processed foods. These activities include Food Show PLUS!™, Market Builder, Focused Trade Missions, various Buyers Missions, food promotions, and special projects. The selected Activity Coordinator(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2022 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2022.

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

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on **Wednesday, March 16, 2022**. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

Please forward proposals to:

Joy Canono
Food Export USA – Northeast
One Penn Center, Suite 420
1617 JFK Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Email: jcanono@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:

Teresa Miller, Strategic Partnership Manager
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA at 312-334-9200 or via e-mail to
Tmiller@foodexport.org

Andrew Haught, International Marketing Program Manager
Food Export USA – Northeast at 215-829-9111 or via email to
ahaught@foodexport.org



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Request for Proposals Activity Coordinators

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 thirteen 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 Oceania, 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.

Scope of Work

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking an individual/company to be their Activity Coordinator(s) and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development activities. These activities may include Food Show PLUS!™, Market Builder service, Focused Trade Missions, various Buyers Missions, product promotions, and special projects. Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast are seeking individuals/companies to assist with aforementioned responsibilities for processed food products and will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2022 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2022. Orientation of any new vendors will likely commence in early 2022.

Please provide a quotation for each of the following services:

1. Buyers Missions

Scope of Work

Buyers missions are activities in which a team of international buyers is invited to travel to the U.S. The purpose of these activities is to encourage and facilitate the purchase of U.S. products. Buyers missions may involve a stop in one or more U.S. cities for one-on-one meetings with U.S. suppliers. The team often visits a major U.S. trade show where the buyers walk the show and may have additional one-on-one meetings. Facility tours including retailers and supermarkets are also often planned for the team to allow them to see innovative products and merchandising techniques. Due to recent circumstances from the Covid-19 global pandemic, many of our activities have been virtual instead of in-person using various software platforms. Flexibility and capability for both types of activities will be required.

The responsibilities of the individual(s) that are contracted under this RFP include:

Project Phase: Activity Planning and Preparation (approximately 25%)

Primary Tasks:

- Development and submission of activity plan and project budget
- Liaise with Food Export staff, states and In-Market Representatives
- Solicitation of buyer nominations from In-Market Representatives and FAS offices / Posts
- Collect buyer nominations, review and recommend buyers for selection
- Assist with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- Work with Food Export staff to develop a recruitment list

- Collaborate with liaisons on company calls
- Monitor recruitment progress
- Responsible for contacting and securing participation for the activity

Project Phase: Activity Execution (approximately 50%)

Primary Tasks:

- Confirm buyer participation and create Buyer Profiles
- Communicate buyer information to travel coordinator
- Assist with securing a tradeshow booth and requests for proposals for vendors (i.e. meeting room, hotel), as needed
- Development and/or execution of retail store tour or other site tour (when applicable)
- Collect supplier meeting preferences and profiles
- Ongoing communication with buyer and supplier participants
- Development of meeting matrix
- Monitoring of activity budget
- Provision of information for buyer newsletter to Food Export staff
- Ensure that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures
- Cross-selling of Food Export programs and services, as appropriate
- Coordination and communication with Food Export staff, states and In-Market Representatives, the [Foreign Agricultural Service](#) (FAS) Offices / Posts, freight logistic coordinator and others as needed
- Ongoing communication with supplier participants
- Taking photographs of activity participants and U.S. Pavilion

Project Phase: Post-Event Wrap-Up (approximately 25%)

Primary Tasks:

- Collect outstanding initial evaluations
- Ensure all expenses are submitted to Food Export within 30 days after activity completion
- Follow up on post-event supplier and In-Market Representative inquiries
- Provide buyer feedback through Food Export database notes section
- Participate in wrap-up call with Food Export staff and provide reporting on activity as directed
- Provide activity photos and other written material for use by Communications (i.e. blog post, social media outlets)
- Document success stories and submit to program staff

Additional duties such as recruitment, on-site coordination, and additional services to be defined will be assigned on a case-by-case basis with pre-authorization by the International Marketing Program Manager.

Based on our experience, we estimate an average-sized Buyers Mission activity (typically 10 buyers traveling in the mission and 30 suppliers participating) will require approximately 75 hours of work, exclusive of on-site coordination.

2. Food Show PLUS!

Background

Food Show PLUS!™ describes Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast’s approach to assisting U.S. exhibitors at key international trade shows with the main objectives of preparing them and helping maximize their experience at the show. We do not pursue a traditional approach of buying booth space from the show organizer and reselling it to exhibitors at a discount. Instead, we try to add value for exhibitors by focusing our efforts on maximizing their potential for developing leads, securing an importer/distributor, and realizing sales from the show.

Food Show PLUS!™ targets key international trade shows where we can offer a package of appropriate services to exhibitors. The services offered vary by show, and are selected based on: the requirements of the market; services offered by the show organizers; services offered by the local FAS office; and our ability to provide effective support. Every attempt is made not to duplicate services offered from another source. Our Food Show PLUS!™ services are performed primarily by our network of foreign in-market representatives who are located in 20 markets around the world.

During the Covid-19 global pandemic many if not all trade shows were cancelled. For the shows that were able to continue with restricted or reduced capacity, Food Export offered a Food Show PLUS!™ Showcase service in which our local in-market representatives showcased products of companies who registered with us. Despite our hopes of returning to in-person activities in the future, there still remains the possible of using this model for shows where U.S. exhibitors can’t attend.

The types of services considered for each Food Show PLUS!™ include:

- Assisting exhibitors with registration with the show organizers;
- Targeted invitation of qualified buyers;
- Setting up introductions between buyers and suppliers;
- Translation of exhibitor material into appropriate language(s) for show visitors;
- Providing technical (food industry) interpreters at the show booth;
- On-site show assistance by the local in market-representative;
- In-market briefing and local industry tours, as appropriate;
- Qualifying exhibitor leads from the show, and conducting checks on the top few;
- Writing and sending a generic follow up letter in the local language to all contacts;
- Assisting eligible exhibitors with obtaining Branded Program reimbursement;
- Providing a final report; and
- Other services as defined.

The responsibilities of the individual(s) that are contracted under this RFP include:

Project Phase: Activity Planning and Preparation (approximately 25%)

Primary Tasks:

- Development and submission of activity plan and project budget
- Liaise with Food Export staff, states, and In-Market Representatives
- Assist with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- Work with Food Export staff to develop a recruitment list
- Collaborate with liaisons on company calls
- Monitor recruitment progress
- Responsible for contacting and securing participation for the activity

Project Phase: Activity Execution (approximately 50%)

Primary Tasks:

- Assist with participant exhibit inquiries
- Create activity guidelines for participants
- Collect supplier profiles and preferences for additional services, where applicable; follow up with unpaid participants for fees
- Ongoing communication with supplier participants
- Prepare supplier profiles for submission to IMRs
- Assist with securing a tradeshow booth and requests for proposals for vendors (i.e. meeting room, hotel), as needed
- Monitoring of activity budget
- Coordination and communication with Food Export staff, states and In-Market Representatives, show organizers, FAS Post (travel notification) and others as requested
- Ensure that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures
- Cross-selling of Food Export programs and services, as appropriate

Project Phase: Post-Event Wrap-Up (approximately 25%)

Primary Tasks:

- Collect outstanding initial evaluations
- Ensure all expenses are submitted to Food Export within 30 days after activity completion
- Follow up on post-event supplier or IMR inquiries
- Participate in wrap-up call with Food Export staff and provide reporting on activity as directed
- Provide activity photos and other written material for use by Communications (i.e. blog post, social media outlets)
- Document success stories and submit to program staff

Additional duties such as recruitment, on-site coordination, and additional services to be defined will be assigned on a case-by-case basis with pre-authorization by the International Marketing Program Manager.

Based on our experience, we estimate a Food Show PLUS!™ activity will require approximately 55 hours of work, exclusive of on-site coordination.

3. Focused Trade Missions

Background

The Focused Trade Mission is designed to offer U.S. exporters both a sales opportunity and educational experience. Often, cost and time prohibit U.S. tradeshow exhibitors from the opportunity to study the market outside the tradeshow walls.

The Focused Trade Mission will combine aspects of the following services and service providers: FAS Overseas office, In-Market Representative, aspects of the Market Builder service, the Branded Program and member state representatives to offer U.S. companies a first-hand experience of the target market and highlight opportunities and constraints. This program provides market analysis of the potential export products, meetings with buyers, market briefings, retail tours and assistance with following-up on sales leads. Coupled with the educational component of this mission, there will be a tabletop reception to put U.S. exporters in contact with potential buyers. In 2020 and 2021 Food Export conducted multiple virtual trade missions in lieu of in-person travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic and may continue to conduct virtual missions or include virtual components to in-person trade missions in the future. Flexibility and capability for both types of activities will be required.

The responsibilities of the individual(s) that are contracted under this RFP include:

Project Phase: Activity Planning and Preparation (approximately 20%)

Primary Tasks:

- Development and submission of activity plan and project budget
- Liaise with Food Export staff, states and In-Market Representatives
- Assist with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- Work with Food Export staff to develop a recruitment list
- Collaborate with liaisons on company calls
- Monitor recruitment progress
- Responsible for contacting and securing participation for the activity

Project Phase: Activity Execution (approximately 60%)

Primary Tasks:

- Confirm supplier profiles and information for pre-event research;
- Prepare supplier profiles for IMR submission
- Assist with requests for proposals for vendors (i.e. meeting room, hotel), as needed
- Create activity guidelines for participants
- Coordinate shipping of event samples to market
- Deliver pre-event research to participants, as prepared by the IMRs

- Monitoring of activity budget
- Coordination and communication with Food Export staff, states and In-Market Representatives, FAS Post, freight logistics firms and others as needed
- Ongoing communication with supplier participants
- Taking photographs of activity participants and U. S. Pavilion
- Ensure that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures
- Cross-selling of Food Export programs and services, as appropriate

Project Phase: Post-Event Wrap-Up (approximately 20%)

Primary Tasks:

- Collect outstanding initial evaluations
- Ensure all expenses are submitted to Food Export within 30 days after activity completion
- Follow up on post-event supplier or IMR inquiries
- Participate in wrap-up call with Food Export staff and provide reporting on activity as directed
- Provide activity photos and other written material for use by Communications (i.e. blog post, social media outlets)
- Document success stories and submit to program staff

Additional duties such as recruitment, on-site coordination, and additional services to be defined will be assigned on a case-by-case basis with pre-authorization by the International Marketing Program Manager.

Based on our experience, we estimate a Trade Mission activity will require approximately 60 hours of work exclusive of on-site coordination.

4. Evaluation and Outreach Work

Scope of Work

Two elements that are critical to our programs are our Activity Evaluations and our Database of Companies.

Upon the completion of each service that we provide, i.e., Buyers Missions, Food Show PLUS!™, Focused Trade Missions, trade lead dissemination, etc., we ask the U.S. supplier participants to complete an initial evaluation of our services. This evaluation includes information on the sales and other results that they expect from the activity. Four-to-Six months after the activity has been completed, we ask the participant to complete another evaluation. It is anticipated that this evaluation will be more accurate as more time has been allowed to work with buyers and generate sales.

These evaluations are critical to our ability to assess the success of our individual activities as well as to obtain future funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for our

programs. However, evaluation return rates can be low, particularly for our six-month evaluations, without the support of additional resources.

The Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast database system contains more than 9,000 companies. This on-line system is used for a variety of purposes. One of the most important aspects is to help us identify potential candidates for our activities. A complete and up-to-date system is critical to this effort.

It is anticipated that the work associated with this portion of the RFP would be conducted primarily by telephone. The responsibilities of the potential contractor may include the following:

1. Upon completion of each activity on Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast's calendar of events, contact the appropriate activity coordinator and/or staff to identify what initial evaluations were collected. The contractor will then contact U.S. supplier participants to collect any evaluations that are missing.
2. Four-to-six months after each activity is completed, the contractor will send U.S. supplier participants a follow up evaluation form and contact them to obtain the completed form. In some cases, it may be necessary to complete this form by telephone. These forms will then be sent to Food Export – Midwest's or Food Export- Northeast's staff.
3. Provide feedback and recommendations to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast as to the effectiveness of our activities and improvement of our evaluation system and timing.
4. Receive company records periodically from Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast's staff that need to be updated and/or completed.
5. Contact the companies to complete the information and return updated and completed company records to Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast staff.
6. While both collecting evaluations and updating the database, talk with suppliers regarding their experience with our activities and their success with exporting. Encourage them to enroll in the Food Export Helpline™, Branded Program, Market Builder, or other services, as appropriate.

5. Special Projects

New and special projects are often undertaken by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast. Outside assistance is often needed on these projects. Some examples include: Provide support with writing and editing contents for webinars, blog posts and other digital media content and communications/public relations materials; assistance with planning, design, production, implementation and execution of these educational and communications programs; assistance in coordinating in-store and menu promotion projects overseas, assistance with “staffing” the Food Export - Midwest and Food Export- Northeast booth at domestic trade shows, assistance with collecting activity evaluations, managing individual aspects of the Food Export on-line product catalog, working with U.S. exporters as a result of trade leads which are generated through our trade leads system,

establish best practices on programs and services, coordinating store tours for buyers as part of our Buyers Missions, and more. The responsibilities of the contractor for these projects would be to work with the International Marketing Program Manager to provide input on a plan of work for the project, as appropriate, and to provide the assistance required and assigned.

Requirements and Submitting a Proposal

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience in planning and conducting similar activities for food and agricultural products, and working effectively with people and by telephone, email and in person. Previous experience with not-for-profit groups, international marketing, 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 as a rate per hour for assisting with the activities as outlined in the Scopes of Work above. Vendors may choose to submit different rates per hour for various aspects such as: activity coordination, recruitment of participants, on-site services during an activity, administrative tasks, etc. Typically, pre-approved direct, eligible expenses related to carrying out the activity such as production of materials or travel costs are reimbursed separately.

Selected vendors may be requested to participate in interviews with Food Export staff and/or its representatives.

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).

If you suspect any instance of fraud, please contact our Ethics Reporting Line at: 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.

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 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 ET on Wednesday, March 16, 2022. Emailed proposals will be accepted.

Please forward proposals to:

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