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Midwest USA



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Northeast

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export Association of the Midwest USA (Food Export-Midwest) and **Food Export USA-Northeast** (Food Export-Northeast) are seeking individuals/companies to join a network of subject matter experts to assist with the following:

1. Provide advice on a variety of technical topics related to the process of exporting food and agricultural products including but not limited to: compliance on export regulations practices, international shipping and logistics, label and package modifications required for exporting, export finance, and international intellectual property etc.
2. Work with Food Export staff and participate in designing and developing educational resources to transfer such technical expertise to Food Export-Midwest, Food Export-Northeast, USA-based suppliers, its members, and other stakeholders.

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by the appropriate International Marketing Program Manager. The selected Contractor(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2025 Program Year to December 31, 2025.

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

The deadline for the first phase of proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Tuesday, December 31st, 2024 Emailed proposals will be accepted.

Please forward proposals to:

Eric Salzeider
Food Export USA - Northeast
1617 JFK Blvd., Suite 420
Philadelphia, PA 19103 USA
Email: Esalzeider@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:

Ben Cortese, International Marketing Program Manager
Food Export USA – Northeast at 215-829-9111 or via email to
bcortese@foodexport.org



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Request for Qualifications Export Education Programs & Technical Assistance Services 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), and Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP), federal programs handled by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MAP, ATP, and RAPP are 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



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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 one or more individuals/companies to join a network of subject matter experts to provide advice on a variety of technical topics related to the process of exporting food and agricultural products from the U.S. including but not limited to: compliance on export regulations practices, international shipping and logistics, label and package modifications, export finance, international intellectual property etc.

In addition, the contractor will assist with export educational programming. These activities include but are not limited to preparing and presenting educational seminars and webinars, providing export strategy consultation and coaching, troubleshooting export logistics, offering business-to-business meeting preparation services, and providing content for exporter online learning programs.

The contractor will work closely with and be supervised by the appropriate International Marketing Program Manager. The selected contractor will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2024 program year (January 1 – December 31, 2024). Orientation of any new vendors will likely commence in August 2024.

Most activities are coordinated in close partnership with our member state staff at various state agricultural promotion agencies. The specific duties and responsibilities assigned to a contractor will vary by activity and by year.

Such tasks will be assigned by an International Marketing Program Manager.



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A contractor may submit a bid based on one or multiple areas of technical expertise listed below. The fee quotation(s) should be submitted as a rate per hour for assisting with each of the programs and services as outlined in the Scopes of Work below. Vendors may choose to submit different rates per hour or set fee for various aspects such as: services, administrative fee, etc. Typically, pre-approved direct, eligible expenses related to carrying out the programs/services such as production of materials or travel costs are reimbursed separately.

i. Scope of Work: Customized Technical Assistance

Provide technical expertise directly to Food Export-Midwest, Food Export-Northeast, USA-based staff, its members, and other stakeholders in the following export technical areas:

- a. International Shipping and Logistics: as companies need to seek new markets for their production, they are confronted with a new set of shipping and logistic challenges. In addition, high value processed food products usually do not move by the full container load (FCL) and require consolidation. While some buyers, have consolidation systems in place, in many cases the supplier needs to make the arrangements, which can often be a challenge. This assistance will be designed to help smooth out that process thereby encouraging more U.S. agriculture producers to consider markets where they do not yet have a presence.
- b. Foreign Package Label Compliance and Modification: progress in new markets will require companies to develop packaging which is compliant with the new market's laws. This service will be designed to assist companies to better understand how to develop market compliant packaging. Full understanding is needed on language(s), package size, ingredient considerations, nutritional panel design, required disclosers, etc.
- c. Export Regulatory Compliance: Understanding of compliance and documentation of individual countries is key to strengthening food producers confidence in seeking export opportunities. This is particularly true when the products have enough animal protein or other ingredients in them to warrant additional approvals and/or certifications. This support is expected to help navigate food and agricultural export regulations both in the U.S. with federal and state regulations as well as complying with foreign regulations.
- d. International Legal Consultation: The dynamic international trade environment requires companies to be familiar with the laws of a country in



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which they are exporting to. Topics may include: intellectual property concerns, non-payment, trademark protection, protecting their recipe and formula with non-disclosure agreements, geographic indicators, and representative agreements or termination procedures among others.

- e. **Export Financing:** Thorough knowledge of the financing and payment strategies for small-size businesses. Assistance on formulating an export finance strategy leveraging loan programs provided by federal (ie: EXIM Bank and SBAs) and state agencies. These efforts are indispensable to reduce risk and enable suppliers to offer competitive terms of sale.
- f. **Export Documentation:** Although they are sometimes an afterthought, export documentation is an integral part of the export process and a key component of becoming a successful exporter. We are seeking expertise on commercial and regulatory export documentation for food products. Topics may include: what each document is use for? Who requires it? Which agency prepares it? Etc.
- g. **Localized Advertising (including Social Media Marketing):** advertising strategy varies greatly between countries. Variations in platforms, cultural norms, posting frequency, target demographics and more make social media marketing challenging for international companies. Knowledge on setting basic standards on what to seek for, research and even providing suggested framework for content etc. to help U.S. exporters advice and manage their international clients marketing agenda.
- h. **Other topics relevant to small businesses, the food or agricultural industry, doing business internationally, exporting, etc.**

The selected contractor(s) would provide the following services:

1. As requested by Food Export staff, conduct telephone/video counseling (consultation) answering industry specific questions about exporting Midwest/Northeast food, food ingredients, and agricultural products.
2. Maintain a detailed log on such inquiries and solutions proposed.
3. Provide monthly progress reports and maintain close communication with Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast.
4. Reviewing USDA/FAS and private sector reports and research which may be used in a qualitative and quantitative manner.



Food Export projects an average of 15 to 20 hrs. for the first 6 months and an increasing thereafter.

II. Scope of Work: Direct Export Support

With emphasis on customer-service, directly provide support to small and medium sized food and agribusiness companies in any of the following formats: 1) in-person seminars; 2) live or recorded content such as a webinar, video, or learning module, 3) written content for a general audience or a report for an individual company; 4) one-on-one assistance directly with an individual company; and/or 5) special projects as needed.

Exporting seminars are held in various Midwest and Northeast states to educate suppliers about exporting opportunities, to teach suppliers about the “How To’s” of exporting and inform them of services and export opportunities through Food Export - Midwest and Northeast programs. In addition, export seminars are also offered to other food trade associations.

In addition, webinars are a large part of our educational services and have facilitated reaching a wider audience and add considerable advantages over traditional onsite seminars such as interactive Q&A, real-time collaboration, and the ability to digitally archive for playback from a company website. Webinars are a cost-effective way to communicate information to our target audience, build our brand, generate quality leads and build strong customer and prospect relationships.

1) Speaker Contractor Tasks

Contractor will be responsible for working with the International Marketing Program staff at Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast to prepare an agenda and a PowerPoint presentation for export seminars and webinars, and to serve as an expert speaker in these educational programs.

Some of the seminars might be scheduled on consecutive days so domestic travel may be required up to three weeks of travel per year.

2) Webinar/Seminar Coordination Tasks

Responsibilities of the potential contractor include:

- a. Participate in the program year initial planning
- b. Develop a project plan with specific timelines
- c. Liaising with the appropriate State Department of Agriculture, as appropriate.
- d. Assisting with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- e. Developing the agenda/program



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- f. Administrative requirements, including: management of the webinar system, setting up final presentations, upload registrants into system, obtaining initial activity evaluation forms and follow-up on unanswered questions. (is this for this role? I think better to omit)
- g. On-site supervision
- h. Managing expenses to stay within the specified budget;
- i. Ensuring that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures and submitted to Food Export 30 days after the activity has been completed;
- j. Other responsibilities associated with successfully conducting the webinars/seminars.

Food Export projects an average of 15 to 20 hrs. for the first 6 months and an increasing thereafter.

III. Scope of Work: 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. Export Consulting Services are instrumental to the education platform Food Export offers.

Export Consulting includes providing assistance to Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast staff and member states on developing strategies and implementing programs to better serve U.S. food and agricultural producers.

These services may include but are not limited to:

1. Recommend changes to current educational programming or develop new programming opportunities. All suggestions should be accompanied by a detailed plan to measure relevant results.
2. Work with the Communications Program staff in developing content for organizational communications platforms.
3. Review and provide advice on various market development programs and activities that are offered by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast i.e. U.S. Foodlink Project, choosing data systems, market research efforts, etc. (I think this one could be eliminated as it could fit under scope I and is a bit confusing.)
4. Attendance at our buying missions to provide export counseling to companies.
5. Work with U.S. exporters as a result of trade leads which are generated through our trade lead system or through buying missions.
6. Advise senior management on ongoing or new trade developments/disruptions that may affect the processed food industry.



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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.

In addition to the above, Contractor is expected to assist Association with:
Referring participating importers and exporters to other relevant services offered by Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast, the FAS offices and other service providers that can further assist them in achieving increased sales/purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products. Contractor will also assist Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast evaluate participants in these various educational programs and provide leads for success stories.

Food Export projects an average of 10 hrs. for the first 6 months and an increasing thereafter

Requirements and Submitting a Proposal

The contractor must be able to cite background and significant previous experience in their stated area(s) of export subject matter expertise. Additionally, they must evidence prior experience in planning and conducting similar activities specifically 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.



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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/termsandconditions).

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 and/or ATP; 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



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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 Qualification 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 Tuesday, December 31st, 2024.

Emailed proposals will be accepted.

Please forward proposals to:

Eric Salzeider
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA
309 West Washington Ste 600
Chicago, IL 60606
Email: esalzeider@foodexport.org

Questions should be directed to:

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