



**Food  
Export**  
Midwest USA



YOUR CONNECTION TO GROWTH™

## **INVITATION FOR BIDS**

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their Meeting Planner and Lodging and Travel Coordinator in support of Food Export activities. These activities include Food Show PLUS!™, Focused Trade Missions, various Buyers Missions and Member State meetings. The selected Vendor(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned assistance during our 2026 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2026.

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

The deadline for proposals is **12:00 noon ET on Friday, June 20, 2025.**

**Questions should be directed to:**

Femke Bosch  
International Marketing Program Manager  
**Food Export Association of the Midwest USA**  
Phone: (312) 334-9201  
Email: [fbosch@foodexport.org](mailto:fbosch@foodexport.org)

Please send proposals to:

Joy F. Canono  
International Marketing Program Coordinator  
Food Export USA - Northeast  
Email: [jcanono@foodexport.org](mailto:jcanono@foodexport.org)



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## **Request for Proposals Meeting Planner, Lodging and Travel Coordinator**

### **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 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 ten overseas target markets, including Africa, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Oceania, Mexico and Taiwan. Food Export -Northeast targets northeastern exporters and nine overseas markets, including Canada, Caribbean, Central America, China, Europe, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, South America, and the Middle East. 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 on the Internet at: [www.foodexport.org](http://www.foodexport.org).

### **Scopes of Work**

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export USA Northeast are seeking proposals from selected companies to assist with meeting planning, coordination of travel arrangements including flights, lodging, meeting facilities and other travel logistics that are required in the execution of Association activities.

## **Member-State Meetings Planner**

### **Background**

Food Export-Midwest and Food Export-Northeast hold two annual meetings with member states. These are a day-and-a-half meeting in April and a two-day meeting in October. They are usually held alternately in a Midwest and Northeast city.

Food Export is seeking contractor assistance with the planning and implementation of the meetings. The primary responsibility will be researching locations and negotiating hotel contracts. Additional meeting planning services could include the following:

- Work with Food Export-Midwest's and Food Export-Northeast's planning committee.
- Development of project timeline and ensuring adherence to the project timeline.
- Development of an event budget.
- Ongoing hotel contract negotiation and liaison.
- Pre-event site visit.
- Development of all banquet event orders and audiovisual requirements.
- Assistance with agenda development, including speaker invitations and confirmations.
- Development of list of and liaison with offsite entertainment options.
- Event promotion (familiarity with Cvent is a plus).
- On-site assistance, as needed.
- Post-event follow-up, including review and approval of all hotel and related charges.
- Help staff with:
  - Attendee registration.
  - Preparation (or supervision of) necessary signage, name badges, and meeting handout materials.

We are open to consideration of other services not listed here.

Please provide a quotation on the services outlined above at a per hour rate.

## **Lodging and Travel Management**

### Background

In relation to the meeting planning requirements described in the scope of work above, lodging and travel arrangements are also required for Food Export staff and Member States to attend the abovementioned meetings. In addition, Food Export coordinates Buyers Missions, in which they invite international buyers to travel to the U.S. to participate in a broad series of private one-on-one meetings with U.S. suppliers. These meetings offer an unparalleled opportunity for each to learn more about the other's business, product lines, marketing requirements or capabilities, strategies, opportunities, and limitations. These activities include a showcase of various U.S. food and beverage products to introduce these products to international buyers. These Buyers Missions include an 10-30 rooms per night and a duration of about 3-7 days. We conduct approximately 20 of these events per year. The events take place in different cities across the country. In addition, Food Export – Midwest and/or Food Export – Northeast also coordinate events internationally which may require staff and/or members to travel overseas. Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking contractor assistance with the coordination of lodging and travel logistics that are required in the execution of Association activities.

### Travel Arrangements

Food Export is seeking a vendor to assist with the planning, purchasing, and managing airfare. This includes:

- Provide travel services outside of basic issuance of e-ticket to ensure compliance with Federal Travel and MAP/RAPP Regulations and Association travel policies
- Provide secure methods to travelers who need to send sensitive information including credit card information, scans of travel documents, or other relevant sensitive information
- Provide travel disruption services, including providing guidance in regards to flight changes, cancellations, alternative options, or other requests.
- Assist travelers with seat upgrades at their own cost and provide secure methods to facilitate payment
- Assist with non-sponsored traveler airfare bookings and provide secure methods to facilitate payment

In addition, Food Export is seeking a vendor with a travel management system that provides for planning, purchasing and travel expense recording, centralized data and expenditure control and approvals. The system should ensure that travel arrangements are in line with Food Export policies and other pertinent rules and regulations such as the [Fly America Act | GSA](#). A cloud-based system is desired to enable Food Export to effectively manage and control organization's travel as follows:

For Food Export management:

- Route travel requests/approvals for individual airfare ticketing and lodging
- Ability to track and manage booked and outstanding travel
- Capture travel spending
- Being able to apply policy to outside bookings
- Data analytics tools to run and audit reports
- Integrate travel management system with financial system

For user/travelers:

- Efficient searching and booking for airfare and lodging

- Secure method to provide sensitive information such as travel documents or credit card information
- Capture receipts
- Automate expense reports post-travel
- Manage expenses via mobile application

#### Group Lodging Arrangements

Contractor will be responsible for requesting and reviewing proposals from appropriate hotels and negotiating hotel contracts. Hotel contracts may include lodging and/or meeting space. Contractor will be responsible for reviewing billing/invoices related to the event, ensuring that all is correct before passing to Food Export for payment.

Contractor should evaluate the hotels based on the quality of their facilities and environment including cleanliness and safety of guests in and around the hotel. Other considerations to be noted are:

- Quality of Service, dining options, banquet and catering capabilities
- Compliance with federal regulations, for example the American with Disabilities Act
- All efforts shall be made to ensure hotel sleeping room rates comply with the government per diem in effect at the time of the event
- Guarantee that no guest who has confirmed reservations by the rooming list shall be “walked” by the hotel. The hotel contract should have a “Do Not Walk” provision
- Meeting rooms and sleeping rooms should meet standard business requirements and amenities such as:
  - Early check-in
  - Express check-out
  - Meeting facilities
  - Business center
  - Include a restaurant or other dining options
  - Non-smoking rooms
  - Proximity and/or accessibility to the Association event
  - The sleeping rooms should include internet connections, a well-lit work area and wake-up service
  - Flexibility of single and double rooms
- Provide confirmation numbers for guests prior to check-in

Food Export - Midwest and Food Export - Northeast recommend presenting a minimum of three proposals for review to that end.

#### Specifications/requirements:

- Sourcing and negotiation of venue
- Hotel rooming list management
- Assist with managing room setup, catering and AV requirements.
- Air reservation services with full communication and reporting for use in arrival/departure manifests to coordinate room block and ground transfers

#### Deliverables/completed Services shall include:

- Review and Correction of IPO vs group billing
- Confirm that hotel invoices match final rooming list and that separate folios per guest are submitted to Food Export

- Confirm that hotel invoices of meeting rooms, food & beverage, AV, or other items are correct and match hotel contract
- Assist with communication to hotel and/or meeting venue on any outstanding items or concerns
- Ensure all expenses are submitted to Food Export within 30 days after activity completion

All eligible expenses will be reimbursed under the USDA Market Access Program (MAP), Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) and/or other federally funded programs. Therefore, knowledge about these regulations, such as government per diems, [Fly America Act](#) | [GSA](#) and how they apply in this situation, will be considered favorably.

Contractor will provide meeting and travel management services, including, but not limited to local transportation arrangements, changes to flight arrangements, food and beverage arrangements and coordination with hotel (beyond hotel contract tasks). Food Export will direct the Contractor regarding the services needed on a project-by-project basis.

The responsibilities of the contractor for these projects would be to work with International Marketing Program Manager or other appointed Food Export - Midwest and/or Food Export - Northeast staff to provide input on a plan of work for the project, as appropriate, and to provide the assistance required.

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

The contractor must be able to cite previous experience in providing meeting and travel management services. 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

Contractors may reply to all or a selection of scopes included in this RFP.

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. Ticketing fees may be separate. Typically, pre-approved direct, eligible expenses related to carrying out the activity such as 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 age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation or military status. 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 and Food Export – Northeast do not comply with MAP, RAPP and other federally funded programs; FAS; Food Export – Midwest and 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 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 Food Export – Northeast.

The contractor must agree to abide by Food Export – Midwest and Food Export – Northeast invoicing guidelines which include:

- Invoice must contain a unique invoice number
- Individual invoices per project or activity
- Each invoice must include the current hours being invoiced, the hours already invoiced on the project, and the total number of hours agreed upon for the vendor to carry out the project
- Invoices must be submitted no less-frequently than at the completion of each project phase
- Final invoices must be submitted within 30 days of completion of the project.
- The Scope of Work for a specific project as agreed to by the vendor, Food Export – Midwest and/or Food Export – Northeast must be included as a basis to track the actual work performed against the agreement.

**The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on Friday, June 20, 2025.** Only emailed proposals will be accepted.

**Questions should be directed to:**

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International Marketing Program Manager  
Food Export Association of the Midwest USA  
Phone: (312) 334-9201  
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