



INVITATION FOR BIDS

Food Export – Midwest and Food Export - Northeast are seeking one or more individuals/companies to be their Project Coordinators and assist in the execution of all responsibilities pursuant to their market development programs for processed foods, pet foods, food and animal feed ingredients, Northeastern US seafood products, wood products, and other agricultural product industries. These projects include Food Show PLUS!™, Market Builder, Focused Trade Missions, various Buyers Missions, Virtual Consultation, Lead Qualification Service, Product Showcases, Retail and Foodservice Promotions, Importer Education and Development, Market Research, Market Development, Marketing and Communication, Partnership Coordination, New Product Launches, and Special Projects. You may reply to all or a selection of scopes included in this RFP. The selected Project Coordinator(s) will be responsible for the aforementioned activities during our 2026 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2026.

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.

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

The deadline for proposals is 12:00 noon ET on **Monday, June 23, 2025**. Only emailed proposals will be accepted.

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

Please send proposals to:

Joy Canono
Food Export USA – Northeast
Email: jcanono@foodexport.org



Request for Proposals – Project 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, seafood 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), 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, India, Oceania, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Mexico. Food Export -Northeast targets northeastern exporters and nine overseas markets, including China, Southeast Asia, Europe, Hong Kong, 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

staff 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 2026 Program Year from January 1 to December 31, 2026. Orientation of any new vendors will likely commence in mid to late 2025.

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. This activity requires participants to travel and attend live, in-person meetings, industry events or other large gatherings. If unforeseen circumstances occur and don't allow for this to take place in person, Food Export may shift to a virtual program to fulfill the objectives and goals of the activity. 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 30%)

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

Project Phase: Activity Execution (approximately 50%)

Primary Tasks:

- Confirm buyer participation and create Buyer Profiles
- Communicate buyer information to travel coordinator
- Communicate with buyers regarding travel and on-site logistics
- 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; follow-up with unpaid participants on fees
- Ongoing communication with buyer and supplier participants
- Development of meeting matrix
- Assist with 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/RAPP and all federally funded program 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
- Taking photographs of activity participants and U.S. Pavilion

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 and In-Market Representative 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 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.

This activity requires participants to travel and attend live, in-person meetings, industry events or other large gatherings. If unforeseen circumstances occur and don’t allow for this to take place in person, Food Export may shift to a virtual program to fulfill the objectives and goals of the activity.

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

- Targeted invitation to qualified buyers to exhibitor booths and when possible, setting-up appointments (markets where appointments are unavailable must provide extra background on invitation process)
- Virtual Consultation with individual participants before the show
- On-site show assistance by In-Market Representative
- Welcome Packet and Market Briefing.
- Local industry tours as appropriate
- Performing 3 Lead Qualifications
- Assisting eligible exhibitors with obtaining Branded Program reimbursement

A la carte services:

- Translation of exhibitor material into appropriate language(s) for show visitors
- Store Checks
- Providing technical (food industry) interpreters at the show booth

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
- Assist with the development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- Coordination with show organizer

Project Phase: Activity Execution (approximately 50%)

Primary Tasks:

- Assist with participant exhibit inquiries
- Coordinate booth logistics along with IMR and Show Organizer for shows where Food Export facilitates booths. This may include gathering directory information, collect wall graphics, work with standbuilder, order badges, amongst other tasks.
- Create activity guidelines for participants
- Collect supplier profiles and preferences for pre-show research; 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
- Set-up Virtual Consultation between suppliers and IMR
- 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/RAPP and other federally funded program 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
- Collect leads to be qualified from suppliers and submit to IMR. Send lead qualification report to supplier.
- 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!TM 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. This activity requires participants to travel and attend live, in-person meetings, industry events or other large gatherings. If unforeseen circumstances occur and don't allow for this to take place in person, Food Export may shift to a virtual program to fulfill the objectives and goals of the activity. 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

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
- Ensure that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP/RAPP and all federally funded 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. Product Showcases

Background

Food Export offers U.S. suppliers opportunities to showcase their products in a Food Export shared booth at various trade shows around the world. Participants at these showcases do not need to travel to be present at these shows. They are represented at the show by Food Export In-Market Representatives. Product samples and literature are provided by the participants for display, sampling and distribution during the shows. Targeted buyers are invited to visit the Product Showcase at these shows. Participants receive a one to two-page post-show report for each Showcase participant with a list of trade contacts and potential buyers as well as buyer feedback on their products.

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

- Development and submission of activity plan and project budget
- Liaise with Food Export staff, states, and In-Market Representatives
- Assist with development of recruitment materials for U.S. suppliers
- Coordination with show organizer
- Assist with participant exhibit inquiries
- Create activity guidelines for participants
- Assist with product sample and literature shipment to the In-Market Representative
- Collect outstanding initial evaluations
- Ensure all expenses are submitted to Food Export within 30 days after activity completion
- 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
- Ensure that all activities and expenses are in compliance with all MAP/RAPP and all federally funded regulations, and Food Export – Midwest/Food Export- Northeast policies and procedures
- 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

- Cross-selling of Food Export programs and services, as appropriate

Additional duties such as recruitment 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 Product Showcase activity will require approximately 12 hours of work.

5. Marketing and Communications

Background

Food Export's network of In-Market Representatives (IMRs) in 20 countries actively works to develop foreign buyers. To support and enhance this, IMRs use social media to build awareness of Food Export programs and services and manage websites to engage potential buyers and promote Food Export importer services. They also create presentations and other promotional materials featuring Food Export branding and educational content.

The contracted individual(s) will be responsible for:

- Helping Food Export create a consistent content calendar for IMR websites and social media.
- Identifying new and relevant market information for IMR regions.
- Pinpointing key Food Export events and programs in IMR markets for timely promotion.
- Assisting with the writing and production of communication materials for IMRs.
- Contributing to the development of educational and marketing materials that promote Food Export programs and the quality and safety of U.S. food products.
- Reviewing IMR-created content to ensure compliance with Food Export branding and standards.

We estimate an average of 20 hours per month.

6. Subject Matter Experts - New Product Categories

Background

The agriculture and food industries are highly dynamic, with new products and product categories constantly emerging and many global trends originating from within the U.S. Products like identity-preserved soybeans, “free from” and plant-based foods are examples of trends that have brought sizeable changes to food and agricultural product marketing yet were little-known and quite inconsequential when they emerged. Furthermore, Food Export’s portfolio of eligible products has expanded in recent years to include some additional non-food products such as wood, hemp, health and beauty products, cleaning supplies, pet care products, nutritional supplements, and others.

Given that these newer products often have distinct export pathways compared to food products, Food Export's export educators must understand these differences to effectively advise U.S. suppliers. Leveraging its In-Market Representative network, Food Export helps U.S. suppliers understand both the export process and identify potential markets in over 50 countries.

Food Export is currently researching emerging products and markets with export potential and seeks support to:

- Collaborating with Food Export stakeholders in assessing new products with export potentials and value to their constituents, industry structure and organization, industry outlook and projections, anticipated future changes in the industry and key support needs.
- Researching accurate classification of products; required export certifications; impact of Free Trade Agreements; commercial documentation; shipping and logistics; and top exporting and importing markets.
- Developing new initiatives to foster strategies for these new niche industry sectors

7. Partnership Coordinator

Food Export collaborates with its members and partner associations to provide comprehensive information, education and assistance that empower suppliers to diversify their export markets. The contractor will help cultivate relationships with current and new collaborators of Food Export to grow participation within Food Export Programs:

- Proposing tailored action plans for each selected industry organization, based on their goals, capabilities, and resources.
- Developing and implementing a partnership strategy and action plan for each selected industry organization, based on their goals, capabilities, and resources.
- Monitoring and evaluating the impact and results of the partnership activities and provide regular reports and feedback to the client and the industry organizations.

Specific deliverables may include: assistance and guidance manual and materials on export program topics, such as market intelligence, training, networking, and funding opportunities; A list of partnership meetings, workshops, webinars, and events, including the number of participants, the agenda, the feedback, and the follow-up actions; A final report on the impact and results of the partnership activities, including the partnership performance, the member satisfaction, the lessons learned, and future recommendations.

8. Special Projects

Recognizing the dynamic nature of international markets, Food Export - Midwest and Food Export-Northeast often develop new and special projects or enhance existing services. The contractor may be called upon to provide support for these undertakings. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- Contributing to the writing and editing contents for webinars, blog posts and other digital media content and communications/public relations materials;
- Assisting with the planning, design, production, implementation and execution of these educational and communications programs;
- Helping to coordinate in-store and foodservice promotion projects overseas;
- Aiding in the organization of educational seminars;
- Supporting Food Export - Midwest and Food Export-Northeast booth at domestic trade shows;
- Assisting with the collection of 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;
- Coordinating store or industry tours

The responsibilities of the contractor for these projects would be to work with the International Marketing Program Manager or Program Specialist to provide input on a plan of work for the project, as appropriate, and to provide the assistance required and assigned. A specific scope of work and fees will be determined and agreed upon by Food Export and the contractor prior to the commencement of the special project.

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, 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/RAPP and other federally funded programs; 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 **Monday, June 23, 2025**. Only emailed proposals will be accepted.

Questions should be directed to:

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