



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Project Name: Ingredient Key Attributes and Applications Research

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Introduction:

Dear Prospective Bidders,

We are pleased to announce that the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) is soliciting proposals from qualified vendors to assist with research on food ingredients from the Western US for key attribute and application information along with potential logistics support. As a non-profit entity, WUSATA is dedicated to expanding the export market for agricultural products originating from 13 western states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and 2 U.S. territories (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam). Our core objective is to foster international growth for Western agribusinesses through financial support, export readiness, and business development services.

We seek vendors who deliver exceptional trade services aligned with our organizational mission. The ideal candidate will demonstrate market research, culinary development, and ingredient sales knowledge. Prior experience with similar organizations would be advantageous. We value integrity, accountability, and excellence in our partnerships.

We encourage you to submit a comprehensive proposal detailing your relevant experience, qualifications, and strategic approach to addressing our needs. Please ensure that your proposal includes a detailed breakdown of costs, a summary of your experience, and any pertinent references. Our evaluation of proposals will be based on a set of criteria, including but not limited to your experience and qualifications, cost-effectiveness, and the capacity to fulfill our requirements.

We look forward to reviewing your proposal and collaborating with the selected vendor to further our mission of enhancing the export of agricultural products from the western states and territories.

Sincerely,

Renata Dalton
Director of Programs
Western United States Agricultural Trade Association

Background

The Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) is a nonprofit entity established in 1980 to foster international expansion for Western agribusinesses. This is achieved through the provision of financial aid, export readiness training, and business development services. WUSATA is one of four State Regional Trade Groups (SRTGs) dedicated to promoting exports alongside SUSTA (Southern United States Trade Association), Food Export Midwest, and Food Export Northeast.

WUSATA's operational funding is sourced from the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Regional Agriculture Promotion Program (RAPP) under the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). The organization is responsible for administering its core programs—Export Education, Global Connect, and FundMatch—in accordance with MAP and RAPP regulations.

The membership team, comprising the Department of Agriculture from 13 western states and 2 U.S. territories, collaborates with WUSATA and its contractors to plan and execute program projects. Our program participants are small companies based in the Western region whose products must contain at least 50% U.S. agricultural ingredients. We are proud of our company's wide array of products, including savory snacks, beverages, sauces, pet foods, and animal feed.

For further information on our organization, please visit our website at www.wusata.org.

Many companies in the Western US have developed high quality ingredients for which they are aware of only a limited scope of applications. This limits the target customers that they can effectively approach for sales of their ingredient products. The focus of this project is to help Western US suppliers of ingredients gather more technical information about their products to help them in selling their ingredients to international food processing companies. The intent is that this effort will also create content for educational workshops and seminars that can be done in conjunction with future WUSATA trade missions.

Intended Timeframe and Flow for Project

The funding for this work will begin in 2024 and go through the end of 2025. Depending on the results and funding opportunities this project could be extended.

Once a contractor for the ingredient research and analysis is selected, WUSATA will open up recruitment for ingredient suppliers in the Western US to register to participate. Each participating company be allowed to submit up to 2 ingredients for research and analysis. The intention is to accept batches of 5-10 companies at a time for inclusion in the project at two or three intervals during the duration of the project. We are open to recommendations from contractor on how best to batch these participating companies for optimal workflow.

The expectation is to send batches of Western US suppliers/ingredients to the selected contractor each quarter. We are also open to recommendations on this intended timing.

Scope of Work

Food Ingredient Analysis, Research, Advising & Education

The contractor's responsibilities in conducting ingredient analysis and research for each submitted ingredient and prepare materials for the company to use in targeting their sales efforts. In addition the contractor is responsible for leveraging this work to create the content for future educational workshops

targeting international ingredient buyers. That expected activities include the following, but may include additional steps depending on the ingredient and the resources of the company.

- (i) **Work with WUSATA Project Manager throughout the project:** The project manager will provide the batches of registered companies with up to 2 ingredients each for participation in this research project. The Project Manager (PM) will also need to be kept up to date on the progress and any issues. All invoices will need to be submitted to the project manager.
- (ii) **Receive and store ingredient samples for research:** Upon acceptance into the project, contractor will advise PM on quantity and timing of sample needed for research project. Contractor must be able to receive and appropriately store all products samples.
- (iii) **Hold an initial and final consultation meeting with each supplier of ingredients:** At the beginning the consultation with each Western US company supplying the ingredients would be to learn more about the ingredients provided and set expectations. The final consultation would be to deliver findings. PM should be invited to join all consultations.
- (iv) **Conduct analysis and/or research on each submitted ingredient to determine the key attributes:** Key attributes would include features/traits of the product that set it apart from other products on the market and key benefits that it would offer food processors, baking companies, or beverage makers in their product formulation. For example, an ingredient's positive impact on the flavor, appearance, mouth feel, or nutrient value of a finished product.
- (v) **Identify and recommend 2-5 potential applications:** These application recommendations should point to where the ingredient would add value to a finished food or beverage product. This would be general application ideas and not fully developed products.
- (vi) **Create 1-page information sheet with graphics about the findings:** After key attributes and potential applications information work is completed, create an informational sheet that the company can leverage in refining their sales targets and message about the ingredient when talking with international food ingredient buyers, food technologists and food product development teams.
- (vii) **Leverage findings to create content for educational seminars to international buyers:** The key attribute and potential applications findings should be packaged in a way that can be shared in live workshops or virtual seminars with international buyers. The intention is to have live in-person workshops in Oregon in the summer of 2025 and at the IBIE (International Baking Industry Exposition) in Las Vegas in September of 2025. The content should be developed such that a different mix of ingredients can be included in the different seminars depending on the sales strategy of the Western US supplier of the ingredients. (The budget for travel, venue and other logistics will be covered in separate budgets, so please do not include in this proposal.)
- (viii) **Provide reports and invoices for work:** Ideally the formal reports and invoices will be submitted as each batch of participating companies/ingredient work is completed. The report must include a list of the companies that participated, ingredients analyzed, at least one photo of each

ingredient during the work, and copies of the 1-page information sheets developed. It will need to include the WUSATA project code that will be provided by the Project Manager. Reports need to be submitted to the PM with invoices.

Not required, but may also be included in this proposal.

- (ix) **Sample management for delivery to potential international customers.** Each participating Western US company for which the research/analysis work is completed, will have an allowed \$1,500 in shipping costs covered to send product samples to potential international customers. The contractor of this service will need to make arrangements to appropriately store product samples prior to shipment, send to international customer in compliance with regulations, and have it clear customs in the receiving country.

Budget

This project is intended to support a broad mix of Western US companies and ingredients, including nut products, pastes, oils, processed fruits, purees, powders, processed vegetables, ground seeds, seed/nut meal, freeze dried products, baking ingredients, etc. A budget request of \$110,000 has been approved to provide research and analysis on these diverse ingredients from Western US companies. With the intention is to serve the maximum number of companies. We look forward to seeing proposals that reflect this desire to serve many companies with diverse ingredients.

Evaluation Criteria

The following guidelines shall be implemented with a request for proposals. The Proposal Review Panel shall meet the following requirements:

- (i) The Proposal Review Panel will consist of at least four individuals.
- (ii) The Proposal Review Panel will include at least one WUSATA employee and will include panelists from state departments of agriculture.
- (iii) The review panel evaluates the proposals according to a pre-determined weighted average scoring system below:
 - a. Completeness of Workplan - The proposal meets the expectations and goals described in the RFP.
 - b. Technical expertise of the organization - The contractor demonstrates comprehensive skills in culinary research and applications work.
 - c. Staff Qualifications - The contractor clearly identifies their credentials, skills, and industry connections as described in the RFP.
 - d. Cost Effectiveness - The budget of the proposal is competitive and efficient.

Contractors may be asked to provide additional information or participate in an interview during the evaluation process.

Requirements and Proposal Format

Please submit your proposal in the following format with the suggested content below.

- (i) Cover letter: Introduce your company and your proposal. Please include the following details.
 - a. Name of entity as it would appear on contracts and invoices.
 - b. Main point of contact.
 - c. Complete mailing address and physical office address.
 - d. EIN/TIN/SS Number or, if an overseas entity, the equivalent tax identification number
 - e. Type of Structure
 Individual Corporation LLC Partnership Sole Proprietorship

- (ii) Executive Summary: Summarize the main points of your proposal, including how you would hand the research and analysis for a broad mix of ingredients from the Western US, recommended timeline, and the main benefits of your proposal.

- (iii) Company Profile: Provide information about your company's history, experience, and qualifications related to the RFP. Include a summary of similar work conducted, your experience working with WUSATA or other relevant organizations on these types of projects, experience with food ingredient research and application work, and/or other relevant experience that qualifies you as a successful contractor.

- (iv) Solution Overview: Provide a detailed description of your proposed solution of how you will fulfill the scope of work for the project and how it meets the requirements outlined in the RFP.

- (v) Cost Proposal: Provide a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with project. Please provide this information by completing the table below:

Service Fee Proposal:

Budget Item	Budget Description	Budget Amount (USD \$)
Key attribute and applications research/analysis	Per participating company or per ingredient	
Digital informational materials for each ingredient for company and WUSATA reporting	Per ingredient	
Other fees		
Overall project management/administration (including reporting and billing)	Per batch of participants or per quarter	

Optional sample handling and shipping to international customers		
Other		
TOTAL		

- (vi) References: Provide a list of references from previous clients or customers who can speak to your experience and qualifications.
- (vii) Appendices: Include any additional supporting documentation, such as executed projects, white papers, or technical specifications that support your proposal.

Please note that WUSATA is not liable for any costs associated with any company’s response to this RFP. WUSATA reserves the right not to award this contract if, in the opinion of the evaluators, a suitable proposal is not received. The awarded contract may be renewed for up to two (2) additional years.

Terms and Conditions

The selected contractor must agree to abide by all WUSATA Terms and Conditions:

WUSATA does 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 communicating program information should contact us.

WUSATA has zero tolerance for fraud in their programs and expects all participants to comply with the [Code of Conduct - WUSATA](#).

WUSATA reserves the right to deny services to any firm or individual which, in the sole opinion of WUSATA, does not comply with MAP, FAS, or SRTG regulations and policies, reflects poorly on WUSATA, its officers, members, company participants, FAS or the USDA.

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, WUSATA reserves the right that its contractors may not discriminate based on 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.

WUSATA's acceptance of the proposal is conditional upon the contractor disclosing all existing relationships with another party that could potentially impact and/or influence 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 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 reused for any purpose, in whole or in part, including any text or related concepts, strategies, or tactics described, without written permission from WUSATA.

Proposal Submission

Only electronic proposals will be accepted. All proposals must be received on or before the due date outlined below. Any proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The deadline for submitting proposals is **5:00 pm PST on Friday, November 8, 2024.**

Proposals must be submitted electronically to:

Renata Dalton, Director of Programs - renata@wusata.org

Contact Information

Questions regarding this RFP may only be addressed electronically to Renata Dalton, Director of Programs at the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association. Answers to all questions will be provided to every RFP participant.

Please reference the RFP project name in the email's subject line, which is listed above the table of contents.

Name: Renata Dalton

Title: Director of Programs

Email: renata@wusata.org