



National
Industrial
Hemp Council
of America

1775 I Street, NW, Suite 1150; Washington, DC 20006 **National Industrial Hemp Council**

**India - Marketing Representation
Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP)**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

In Country Representation

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The National Industrial Hemp Council (NIHC) is a nonprofit trade association representing all segments of the U.S. Hemp industry, including but not limited to US farmers, producers, processors, exporters, merchants, and retail stores, as well as other entities involved in the production and marketing of U.S. Hemp. The organization was founded in 2019 after the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, which legalized hemp.

NIHC operates a domestic promotion program as well as export promotion programs. The NIHC sits on the Executive Board of the Federation of International Hemp Organizations (FIHO) and the Board of Directors. Programs are funded by both NIHC members and through various public programs for which NIHC competes annually.

NIHC is headquartered in Washington, DC. Consultants and agencies are used as appropriate, for a wide variety of projects, including domestic and international promotion programs.

NIHC is an equal opportunity employer and prohibits discrimination in all programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or familial status.

II. MARKET SITUATION IN INDIA

The Hemp industry in India is expanding rapidly, driven by shifting perceptions of Hemp and the recognition of its potential economic and medical benefits. Several countries in the region have implemented Hemp reforms, either legalizing medical use, decriminalizing possession, or even exploring the possibility of recreational legalization. This evolving regulatory environment has laid the foundation for a flourishing Hemp industry in India.

While the United States is expected to develop into one of the world's largest markets for hemp and hemp products, many nations in India – and specifically, countries in Asia are expected to become major players in the global hemp market over the next several years. This is an opportunity for US companies to market goods and services to India. That being noted, In-country research needs to be performed to ensure US Farmers remain competitive in the global marketplace.

III. Hemp in Asia and Southeast Asia

Countries, like India, have decades of experience in developing their Hemp textile market, and cultivators have a head start relative to their regional competitors in the hemp market.

China is the main competitor in the Indian hemp market. While hemp has been grown in China for centuries, the liberalization of production, processing, and use regulations has occurred only in recent years. China's hemp regulations are opaque, incomplete, and ever-changing, and they vary by province. These regulations continue to evolve as hemp and hemp products gain more consumer awareness and popularity. However, only a few provinces regulate hemp, and streamlined national guidelines do not exist.

With established agricultural sectors and favorable climates, many Asian countries appear well-positioned for hemp cultivation. Asian hemp growers, especially in the equatorial nations, must grapple with high humidity and tropical temperatures, two factors that are thought to contribute to pushing a hemp crop's THC levels above legal limits. US Farmers are situated to take advantage of genetics and growing environment that keeps limits at or below the legal .3% THC by dry weight limit.

The hemp fiber market in India remains in its infancy, although a hemp grain market is developing.

IV. Market Access:

In India, cannabis is regulated under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, which broadly classifies cannabis as an illegal substance. However, the NDPS Act distinguishes between cannabis, marijuana, and hemp, with industrial hemp being granted certain exceptions.

Cultivation and Production: India benefits from favorable climatic conditions and lower production costs, making it an ideal region for Hemp cultivation. Entrepreneurs and investors could explore opportunities in cultivating high-quality Hemp strains and establishing production facilities for various Hemp products. However, only two provinces in India allow the cultivation of industrial hemp – severely limiting hemp fiber production.

V. Market Promotions:

There is potential for increasing per capita consumption of U.S.-origin hemp and promoting education and technology through effective promotions and trade servicing. Given the relative newness of hemp in India, promotional activities and trade servicing will be conducted in conjunction with market research.

In conjunction with market research. NIHC objectives in India include:

- a. Increasing both the value and volume of U.S. Hemp exports to India.
- b. Building long-lasting market awareness and preference for U.S. origin Hemp among consumers, textile professionals, media, and trade.
- c. Providing the India consumers with the information to encourage increased U.S. origin Hemp purchases.
- d. Positioning the U.S. Hemp industry as a consistent trading partner for Latin American and US Farmers, targeting fiber and textiles.

VI. SCOPE OF WORK

NIHC seeks a qualified individual or agency to serve as the trade and promotional representative in India, and to accomplish the following scope of work:

Market research in India is the foundation of which to build collaboration, establishing relationships with hemp sector industry, marketing, and developing marketing materials to promote US hemp and hemp products.

Collaborate with manufacturers, spinners, retailers, distributors, and importers to develop consumer facing promotional strategies that maximize the return on investment and raise awareness of U.S.- origin Hemp. This strategy will leverage retail and market research insights. It will also explore new sectors.

- Develop and establish relationships with hemp sector industry/individuals to amplify the reach of U.S. Origin Hemp among consumers. Create generic social media campaigns that can be tailored to support the brands of retailers and importers who source U.S. origin Hemp. The social media messaging will also complement trade shows, trade missions, and trade collaborations, showcasing US hemp and hemp products.
- U.S. Hemp as the preferred foreign origin. Strategies include but are not limited to social media blitzes to spread key messages, share brand origin stories, highlight brand “US Hemp”, and explain sustainability practices.
- Develop generic digital and in-person activities that promote the benefits of consuming U.S. origin.
- Create campaigns that bring awareness to targeted consumers about the economic, value and versatility of U.S. origin Hemp, as well as identify potential markets.
- Monitor, report, and assist with consumer or market trends and developments related to Hemp in India.
- Represent NIHC at conferences, trade shows, NIHC events and other functions conducted by and for the Hemp trade in/for India.
- Keep NIHC members and team apprised of market opportunities in the region via the submission of regular communications. A monthly written report will be required and should include an outline of projected activities for the remainder of 2024 as well as a report on all activities conducted during the reporting month. Consultant will also submit trip reports after travel to any of the Central American or Andean countries.
- Develop and conduct promotional activities that will create awareness of local brands that utilize US origin Hemp, as well as identify areas for the sale and consumption of US Hemp in targeted Indian countries.

The firm or consultant shall successfully complete the above scope of work from January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025. The firm will work directly with the President and CEO, Patrick Atagi, of NIHC. The agency or individual selected to conduct activities will contract with the

NIHC and will be subject to the regulations applicable to the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) as administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

PROPOSALS

NIHC requests that you include the following components in discussing your capabilities:

- Describe how you/your agency will achieve the Objectives outlined in Section VI, Scope of Work.
- NIHC requests that you include the following components in discussing your capabilities: • Describe how you/your agency will achieve the Objectives outlined in Section VI, Scope of Work.
- Explain why your qualifications and background make you the best individual/agency to represent the NIHC in India (please mention language proficiencies).
- Provide information regarding your past work, especially related to representing U.S. agricultural commodities in India.
- Please detail which of your staff member(s) will make up the NIHC team and explain their roles and experience.
- Include a detailed estimate of all costs necessary to complete this scope of work including staff fees, third party expenses, administrative overhead, travel, and other direct/indirect costs needed to support your program. Anticipated budget \$75k-\$100k.
- Include any additional information that demonstrates the ability to perform the functions outlined in this Request for Proposal.
- RFP response should be no longer than ten pages, appendixes may be attached and will not be considered as part of the 10-page maximum response.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Potential conflicts of interest relative to this program are as follows: agency representation of another entity that is directly competitive to Hemp, e.g., related association(s), cannabis marijuana; or a firm of record for any U.S., or other Hemp company. Please disclose any conflicts of interest.

Additionally, no NIHC employee, officer, board member, or agent thereof will participate in the review, selection, award, or administration of a contract if a real or apparent conflict of interest would arise. Such a conflict would arise when an employee, official, board member, agent, or the employee's, officer's, board member's, or agent's family, partners, or an organization that employs or is about to employ any of these parties or their affiliates has a financial or other interest in the contract.

NIHC officers, employees, board members, and agents thereof shall neither solicit nor accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors or subcontractors. Procedures shall also provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such

standards by officers, employees, board members, or agents thereof.

SELECTION CRITERIA

NIHC reserves the right to award the contract to the individual/agency with the best combination of attributes and ability to successfully serve as the organization's marketing representative in India, not necessarily the lowest bid. Minority and women owned businesses are encouraged to apply. Also, prior experience in the hemp industry is of weighted interest.

ADMINISTRATION

The individual or agency selected for the position will report directly to Patrick Atagi, President and CEO of the National Industrial Hemp Council.

FINANCIAL

The total budget for all aspects of this scope of work, including all fees, overhead, third party expenses, travel and other expenses is India: Funds for this project come from the U.S. Department of Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) and are subject to the annual availability of funds in that program.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE / PROJECT TIMING

Proposals are due by close of business on Tuesday, November 26, 2024. For the individual or agency selected to complete this scope of work, the contract will run for one year, commencing on January 1, 2025, and ending on December 31, 2025. If mutually acceptable, the contract may be renewed at the end of the fiscal year at the option of the NIHC.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Individuals / agencies are invited to submit proposals to NIHC by close of business (5pm EST) on Tuesday, November 26, 2024. The decision will be made on Friday, November 29, 2024. Please direct your proposal to the following email address:

info@hempindustrial.com

Attn: Curtis Anderson, Chief Financial Officer

Further information about the National Industrial Hemp Council can be found at www.NIHCOA.com.