



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

GLOBAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

I. INTRODUCTION

USA Rice is a nonprofit trade association representing all segments of the U.S. rice industry: producers, millers, exporters, and merchants, as well as other entities involved in the production and marketing of U.S. rice.

USA Rice's grower representation includes approximately 90% of the U.S. rice crop. The organization also represents virtually all U.S. rice millers and processors, as well as the nation's major rice exporters, which account for practically one hundred percent of U.S. rice supplies and exports. Furthermore, associate members of USA Rice cover almost the entire marketing and distribution channels for U.S. rice.

USA Rice operates a domestic promotion program as well as export promotion programs in more than 20 countries. In addition, USA Rice represents the industry on federal legislative and regulatory matters, industry quality standards, education, research, product development and policy. Programs are funded by both USA Rice members and through various public programs for which USA Rice competes annually.

USA Rice has a total staff of approximately 30 employees, with its main office in Arlington, Virginia, United States of America, and other offices in Arkansas, Louisiana and Germany. Consultants and agencies are used as appropriate for a wide variety of projects, including for domestic and international promotion programs.

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

II. U.S. RICE INDUSTRY

The U.S. rice market is open to and depends on the global market. Nearly half of the nearly \$2 billion U.S. rice crop is exported to over 100 countries. The United States is unique as a major exporter of all rice types – long, medium, and short grain. The major rice-producing states are Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Missouri. The U.S. rice industry can provide rice in whatever form demanded by the market (i.e. rough, brown, milled, or parboiled) and according to the shipment basis required (packaged, bagged, bulk, destination bagging, f.a.s., f.o.b., c.i.f., etc.).

The global rice market is extremely "thin," with more than 90 percent consumed where it is grown. This makes the United States, which is a relatively small global rice producer, a large player in the international market as the fifth largest rice exporter and supplying about 6 percent

of world trade. Because of widespread cultivation in many countries and the generally high share of in-country consumption, rice is one of the most heavily protected crops in terms of domestic support and border protection. As a result, U.S. rice exports face near constant market access barriers all over the world.

RFP OVERVIEW

Research will include both an evaluation of current programs and activities as well as the development of a longer-term strategic plan appropriate for those markets.

1. **Evaluation of Current Programs:** A global evaluation of USA Rice's current international promotions programs. Constraints, target audience and performance measures from our Unified Export Strategy should be evaluated for accuracy, validity and effectiveness. Suggested amendments or changes should be noted. The evaluation should provide both quantitative and qualitative data on the U.S. rice industry's ability to achieve the performance measures. If performance measures are not achieved, the evaluation should provide insight and suggestions for future modifications. The impact of the U.S. rice industry's global programs around the world should be determined, encompassing all activities funded by the various FAS programs including Market Access Program (MAP), Foreign Market Development Program (FMD), and Regional Agricultural Trade Promotion Program (RAPP). Activities are meant to be measurable, increase sales and impact the target audience.

Below is a description of programs typically conducted in our markets. Further detailed background information for the remainder of country/regional promotions programs is available in our Unified Export Strategy (UES).

Global Programs

Trade Servicing

The objective of this activity is to reinforce market access and maintain cordial relations with local rice industry participants and government officials. This may include provision of market information, site visits, STRE events, hosting trade delegations, etc. USA Rice conducts trade servicing activities in over 20 countries.

Trade Issues

The objective of this activity is to respond to market access issues that arise which cannot be anticipated and to be proactive regarding bilateral/multilateral discussions, overcoming trade disruptions or lack of WTO-required purchases.

Consumer Promotions

Many of our activities are focused on changing attitudes and behaviors in our various target audiences. Most of the countries where we work are unaware of U.S. rice and its attributes.

Foodservice Promotions

We work with the HRI sector in tourist areas and large cities in various markets to increase the usage of U.S. rice. In recent years, we have looked at the institutional sectors and/or food processing sectors in various markets to see if this would be a viable segment.

Social Media

We have websites in most of our markets with other social media tools such as Facebook (or Weibo in China), Instagram and YouTube. The objective of this activity is to provide importers, millers, the foodservice industry and consumers with both general and technical information about U.S. rice, thereby increasing their knowledge of the availability, varieties, versatility and nutritional aspects of U.S. rice. This is also a vehicle to share information about the promotional activities being conducted in each country.

The following is the list of countries/territories to be reviewed in this global evaluation where USA Rice has either a trade servicing or marketing presence: Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, European Union, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom and West Bank.

III. EVALUATION SCOPE AND PURPOSE

A vital function is to evaluate the overall impact of the U.S. rice industry's programs in foreign markets. The objective of these evaluations is to determine whether, how and why these programs affect U.S. rice exports to individual markets to plan future activities and funding levels for these markets. The U.S. rice industry proposes to conduct a unified program evaluation of all country/regional programs through a single evaluator. Information will be segregated on a country/regional basis but will apply a standard methodology and analysis format to all market segments. The evaluation will include an examination of the collective impact of specific activities on market segment and country goals and on the target audiences' perceptions, purchase and consumption of imported U.S. rice. Our Unified Export Strategy (UES) represents both the strategic and activity plans for the U.S. rice industry and should be used as a blueprint for impact analysis with particular emphasis on performance measures. The evaluation will determine the industry's success in utilizing various activity tools to address the market constraints in determining market segment impact.

The unified evaluation will reflect the format of the UES by analyzing market segment impact utilizing a full range of industry responses under all participating programs (i.e. MAP, FMD, RAPP). The industry anticipates that the inclusion of all market responses will result in a more accurate assessment of the relative successes and/or failures of market promotion strategies. The evaluation will rely on benchmarks and performance measures outlined in the UES to gauge impact and, where possible, will suggest improvements in establishing performance measures.

IV. PROPOSAL FOR SERVICES

USA Rice is seeking a consultant/firm to conduct a program evaluation of the rice industry's 2024 global and country-specific activities identified and outlined in our UES. The evaluation will include examining the collective impact of specific activities on the market segment and country goals specified in the industry's 2025 UES. The contract period is from March 17, 2025 through August 31, 2025, but may be extended at the discretion of USA Rice.

The consultant/firm will work directly with the USA Rice COO. The agency or individual selected to conduct activities will contract with the USA Rice and will be subject to the regulations applicable to the Foreign Market Development (FMD), Market Access Program (MAP), and/or Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP), as administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Your proposal should address how your firm will coordinate and execute a program that fulfills the following evaluation requirements:

1. Impact Assessment: Conduct interviews/surveys of USA Rice's international promotion activities. Poll participants from the activities as outlined in the UES. These include members of the target audiences for several countries/regions including recipients of publications, visitors to trade shows, seminar attendees, public relations contact lists, importers, retailers, wholesalers, consumers and contacts made through trade servicing. Surveys will be conducted to determine:

- a. how memorable are the U.S. rice industry's activities;
- b. the degree to which activities changed perceptions of U.S. rice;
- c. the degree to which these activities have had an impact on the trade flows of U.S. rice going into each country/region; and
- d. the degree to which these activities have had an impact on the amount of U.S. rice going into specific targeted end-uses (e.g. consumer and foodservice).

2. Analysis of achievement of specific activities: Determine the degree to which the activities were successful in addressing the market segment constraints as outlined in the UES. This will include assisting in the development and analysis of questionnaires to be distributed and collected by the U.S. industry at industry events. The purpose of these surveys is to establish benchmark levels of knowledge, interest and current use of U.S. rice of those who participate in these events. All activities should be analyzed based on the degree to which they address the market segment constraint. Examples of activities to be analyzed include but are not limited to:

- Seminars/workshops
- Public relations campaign
- Trade shows
- Newsletters
- Trade missions
- Publications
- Billboards/mupis

- TV/radio ads
- Social media
- Cooking Competitions
- Recipe Development

3. Personal Contact: To the extent possible, contact all contractors and several USA Rice members/stakeholders to discuss activities, goals and benchmarks as outlined in the activity plan including:

- a. the level of activity/awareness achieved by the U.S. rice industry, and the impact the country contractors are having on the trade and whether or not they are a recognized source of information on U.S. rice;
- b. opinions about the U.S. industry's achievements in the marketplace and perceptions about the impact the U.S. industry is having;
- c. satisfaction among target groups with the U.S. industry's performance in each country and the performance of the country contractors in particular;
- d. expectations about current and future trends which impact the U.S. industry;
- e. the extent to which key messages of the U.S. industry have come across;
- f. indications that rice industry activities have or will cause changes in purchasing behaviors, and;
- g. suggestions for future activities and performance measures.

4. Ongoing Market Definition: Determine the most appropriate size, composition, socio-economic group and geographical location of the target audience in each market segment.

5. Continuous Improvement of Constraints: Where such constraints are lacking, vague or inappropriate, work with USA Rice to develop and revise these as part of a continuing improvement process. The actual goals and benchmarks for each activity are included in the UES. The evaluator should be familiar with the market segment constraints and benchmarks at the outset of the contract period, and work with the industry early in the evaluation process should there need to be adjustments or revisions.

6. Evaluation of Performance Measures/Benchmarks: The evaluation will rely on benchmarks and performance measures outlined in the UES to gauge impact and effectiveness of activities. Assist in revising performance measures, if necessary, or developing new benchmarks to appropriately capture the effect of our activities on U.S. rice consumption.

7. Mid and Final Report: Produce reports on Canada, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, and United Kingdom by May 23, 2025 and the remaining countries by August 31, 2025. This report will be used by the industry as an evaluation requirement for the 2026 UES. A full evaluation of the industry's performance, including feedback on all specific goals and benchmarks is required. The report will include the following:

- a. comparisons of the results or activities completed against the goals and benchmarks

- specified in the UES for each country, each market segment, and to the extent possible, for each activity;
- b. quantified impact - presentation and analysis highlighting which activities had an impact contributing most successfully to industry's goals and objectives;
 - c. any additional or updated statistics mentioned above, and an analysis of the data explaining any trends;
 - d. recommendations:
 1. Mid and Final Report will contain the following:
 - i. identity of the Consultant;
 - ii. identification of the activities evaluated to date;
 - iii. identification and description of each activity's timing, target audience, budget, expenditures and contributions;
 - iv. country progress reports containing the following information (mid-year report will have some gaps):

Country Executive Summary

- Evaluation findings
- Strengths/weaknesses
- Recommendations and proposed changes

Constraint/Performance Measure Table

- Constraints, target audience and performance measures by sector for each country
- Benchmarks, target and actuals

Review of constraints, performance measures and activities

- Collective impact of activities against respective constraint as per performance measures
- U.S. exports achieved compared with performance measures and market share
- U.S. sales by market segment
- Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of key activities, which were most/least successful and why

Conclusion/lessons learned

- Was the constraint adequately identified
- Were performance measures appropriate
- What other circumstances affected progress against constraints

Overall Market Recommendation

- Is the program designed to meet the market goal; if not, recommended changes – different country/product mixes?
- Where is the program in terms of maturity (growth, declining, etc.)?
- Is the allocation of expenditures appropriate for the target

audiences?

- How can other factors that address the achievement of the goal be addressed?
- To what extent is the achievement of the goal dependent on overcoming the constraints?
- Proposed changes in strategy/performance measures – particularly focusing on future market opportunity or new areas for industry focus.

Trade Results/Benchmarking

- Consumption of rice, trade, U.S. share
- Size of end use market, e.g. foodservice, consumer, institutional, for sushi, etc.

V. REQUESTED INFORMATION/SELECTION CRITERIA

USA Rice wishes to provide you with as much latitude as possible in presenting the unique attributes of your firm. For consistency, however, we ask that you **include the following components** in discussing your capabilities:

- A. Describe how you/your agency will achieve the objectives.
- B. Explain why your qualifications and background make you the best individual/agency to represent the USA Rice in the participating countries.
- C. Please detail which of your staff members will comprise the USA Rice team and explain their roles and experience.
- D. Include a budget of all costs necessary to complete this scope of work including staff fees, third party expenses, travel, and other direct/indirect costs needed to support your program.
- E. Include any additional information that demonstrates the ability to perform the functions outlined in this Request for Proposal.

VI. CONTRACT AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The contract for this account will be written on an end-result fee paid out in installments as follows:

1. a first installment of 1/3 of the total budget upon signing of the contract;
2. a second installment of 1/3 of the total budget upon acceptance of the interim report by May 23rd
3. a final installment of 1/3 upon acceptance of the final report

USA Rice reserves the right to award the contract to the individual/agency with the best combination of attributes and ability to successfully conduct this evaluation, not necessarily the lowest bid.

VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Potential conflicts of interest relative to this program are as follows: agency representation of another entity that is directly competitive to rice, e.g., pasta, tortillas, potatoes, riced vegetables; or a firm of record for any U.S., or other rice company. Please disclose any conflicts of interest.

Additionally, no USA Rice 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.

USA Rice officers, employees, board members, and agents thereof shall neither solicit nor accept 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.

VII. PROPOSAL FORMAT

The format of the proposal is open, except for the breakdown of costs. While the fee will be all-inclusive, we require that the following information be specifically included in the budgeting section of the proposal to compare the value of various proposals. The more detailed the information you provide, the better assessment we can make as to the overall merit of your proposal. The cost breakdown should include:

1. Name and title of all staff people assigned to this account with corresponding hourly rates at which USA Rice will be charged, and the approximate number of hours per month that each person will spend on the account. For example:
 - a. Senior Staff Consultant:
\$1.00/hour x 2 hours/month \$ 2.00
 - b. Project Director:
\$ 0.75/hour x 20 hours/month \$15.00
 - c. Support Staff:
\$.25/hour x 60 hours/month \$15.00
 - d. Total Monthly fees: \$32.00
 - e. Project duration: 6 months
 - Total project cost (d x e): \$64.00

* None of these examples reflect any expectation of staff requirements or a fee structure. These hourly rates should include any administrative or overhead costs that are part of the normal course of doing business. They should not reflect specific administrative costs.

2. A listing and explanation of any other costs that your firm feels should be incorporated into the final fee.

USA Rice reserves the right to award the contract to the company with the best combination of attributes, not necessarily the lowest bid.

A copy of our 2025 Unified Export Strategy is available upon request.

VIII. FINANCIAL

The total budget for all aspects of this scope of work, including all fees, overhead, third party expenses (including subcontracting fees), travel and other expenses is \$200,000. Submitted proposals should not exceed this budget. Funds for this project come from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's FMD, MAP and RAPP programs and are subject to the availability of funds in that program.

IX. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Individuals / agencies are invited to submit proposals to USA Rice by close of business (5 pm EST) February 27, 2025. Please email your proposal to the following address:

Sarah Moran
smoran@usarice.com