



Request for Proposal for Export Readiness Coach



Introduction

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or organizations to develop and deliver export readiness coaching and training programs. This initiative aims to strengthen the export capabilities of U.S. agricultural businesses, equipping small- and medium-sized producers with the tools and knowledge needed to compete in global markets.

The selected contractor will design a hands-on curriculum tailored to agricultural producers, addressing key aspects of export readiness, including compliance, logistics and international market entry strategies. A major component of this initiative includes providing export coaching to exhibitors participating in NASDA's *A Taste of the States* pavilions in 2025. The ideal candidate will have experience working with agricultural businesses and familiarity with export market development programs such as those offered by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Proposals will be evaluated based on program design, relevant U.S. agricultural business experience, alignment with NASDA's mission and cost-effectiveness.

Background

NASDA represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. As a nonpartisan, nonprofit trade association, NASDA is committed to promoting U.S. agriculture domestically and internationally through trade promotion, advocacy and educational programs. NASDA has been actively involved in export promotion for over 40 years, primarily through its work with trade shows.

In the early 1980s, NASDA partnered with FAS to develop a trade show presence focused on exporting U.S. consumer food and beverage products. The goal was to combine the efforts of the state department of agriculture marketing staff, funding support from USDA FAS and the global network of FAS overseas offices. To further enhance exhibitor success, NASDA offers export readiness coaching as part of its *A Taste of the States* program, which currently includes pavilions at the National Restaurant Association Show and the Americas Food & Beverage Show. This initiative provides personalized training and consultation to help participating businesses navigate international trade regulations, market entry strategies and logistical challenges.

NASDA is also exploring opportunities to expand the *A Taste of the States* program to additional trade shows, including the 2026 Summer Fancy Food Show and/or Winter Fancy Food Show. For future shows, NASDA would endeavor to work with the same export coach partner as the National Restaurant Association Show and the Americas Food & Beverage Show.

This Export Readiness Coach initiative is part of NASDA's efforts to support U.S. agriculture producers by equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to enter or expand their presence in international markets. The program is designed to provide hands-on training, personalized coaching and actionable resources for export market development, fostering long-term success for participants.

Scope of Work

The selected contractor's 2025 responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Collaborate with NASDA staff to manage program execution**, ensuring seamless delivery of training, coaching and reporting.
- **Recruit program participants** from *A Taste of the States* exhibitors (information provided by NASDA), with up to twenty participating companies per show.
- **Schedule coaching sessions** to be conducted virtually before the show or in-person during the show, with one session per participating company.
- **Develop a company profile questionnaire** for participating exhibitors to complete, gathering key details to customize the coaching deliverables.
- **Conduct market research and create tailored export strategy reports** for each participating company. Reports should provide context for exporting their products to specific regions/markets of interest, identify promising opportunities and address additional export-related inquiries.
- **Develop user-friendly materials** such as export readiness checklists, templates for export business plans and market research, sample documentation for export compliance (e.g., invoices, bills of lading, export licenses) and practical guides on financing and risk management.
- **Provide personalized one-on-one coaching sessions** for participating exhibitors, offering guidance on their specific export challenges and assisting them in developing customized export action plans.
- **Implement pre- and post-training evaluation tools** to assess participant programs and measure program impact.
- **Provide NASDA with a final program report** summarizing key outcomes, participant feedback, developed export strategies and recommendations for future training and capacity building efforts.

Opportunities for Expanded Scope of Work in 2026 and Beyond:

NASDA is evaluating potential opportunities to further expand its export readiness coaching program, including partnerships for additional trade shows and enhanced training services. Based on performance and program impact the selected contractor may be considered for continued or expanded work, including but not limited to:

- **Design and deliver a comprehensive training curriculum** focused on the export readiness of U.S. agricultural producers for export markets. Topics should include market research and target market identification, trade compliance and regulatory requirements,

logistics, transportation for agricultural goods, pricing strategies, payment methods, financial risk management and leveraging USDA export assistance programs.

- **Lead export readiness training workshops** in-person, virtually, or through a hybrid format. Training should incorporate interactive exercises, case studies and practical tools tailored to the needs of various agriculture sectors, including small- and medium-sized producers.

Key Competencies and Expertise

- Strong listening skills, with the ability to understand and address exhibitors' needs.
- Deep expertise in the export process for food and agricultural products, including knowledge of what international buyers seek.
- Advanced analytical skills, with proficiency in using the HS Code system, USDA and U.S. Commerce export databases and presenting data in a clear and actionable manner.
- Comprehensive understanding of the roles played by FAS, cooperators, NASDA and the state regional trade groups (SRTGs), as well as the services they provide for international market development.
- Proven experience working with small- and medium-sized businesses, particularly in the food and agriculture sectors.
- Hands-on private sector experience within the food industry, offering practical insights and strategies for navigating export challenges.

Proposal Requirements

- Interested bidders must submit a proposal that includes a cover letter briefly introducing the individual or organization qualifications and interest in the project for the 2025 calendar year.
- Provide a detailed description of the proposed 2025 training curriculum, delivery format and timeline.
- Provide a description of all services proposed including 2025 strategies and tactics for clear communication.
- Highlight expertise in export readiness, agricultural trade and training delivery and include relevant experience with USDA programs, international trade organizations, or state-level agriculture agencies.
- Include a detailed cost breakdown covering program design, delivery, materials and follow-up support.
- Provide contact information for at least three references familiar with relevant work in export readiness or agricultural trade.
- Attach examples of similar training programs, templates, or tools if available.
- Note any timing conflicts with the 2025 shows:
 - National Restaurant Association Show: May 17-20, 2025 (not including travel/prep days)
 - Americas Food & Beverage Show: Sept. 10-12, 2025 (not including travel/prep days)

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on program design, relevant U.S. agricultural business experience, alignment with NASDA's mission and cost-effectiveness. Demonstrated expertise in export readiness, marketing opportunity analysis, distributor selection and management, sales management, product development and adaptation for export markets and agricultural trade, with prior experience working with farmers, ranchers, or food producers, will be considered. A reasonable and transparent budget aligned with the project scope is essential. Proposals should demonstrate the ability to tailor the program to the unique challenges faced by agricultural producers. Positive feedback from prior clients or partners will also be factored in the evaluation.

Proposal Timeline

Proposals due date: March 7, 2025. Late submissions will not be considered.

Selection: March 17, 2025

Services Begin: March 24, 2025

Term: 1 year

Submit proposals via email to Derrek Miller, Associate Director of International Trade Outreach at derrek.miller@nasda.org.

For questions about this RFP, contact Derrek Miller at derrek.miller@nasda.org with the subject line Export Readiness Coach RFP Inquiry.

Terms and Conditions

By submitting a proposal, bidders certify their eligibility to participate in federally funded programs and compliance with all relevant regulations.

NASDA'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 conduct the scope of work.

By responding to this request for proposal, you are certifying that neither 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 Scope 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 NASDA.