

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: SOY EXCELLENCE CENTER COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

RFP CONTACT:

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PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: January 12, 2026

INTRODUCTION:

Soybeans are the United States' No. 1 food and agricultural export. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) focuses on differentiating, building preference, and attaining market access for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in 80+ countries internationally. USSEC members represent the soy supply chain including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations. USSEC is funded by the U.S. soybean checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE RFP:

The purpose of this RFP is to identify a communications professional to serve as a contractor to lead the development and implementation of communications and brand reputation strategies, plans and/or initiatives for USSEC and U.S. Soy for the Soy Excellence Centers (SEC).

USSEC seeks a full-time contractor with experience and capacity to lead:

- U.S. Soy's global marketing and communications related to Soy Excellence Centers
- Global brand management of USSEC and U.S. Soy related to Soy Excellence Centers
- SEC investor communications
- SEC stakeholder communications focusing on workforce training with ag related businesses, ag organizations, and universities

USSEC developed the Soy Excellence Centers in 2019 designed to equip early- to-mid career professionals with the essential agribusiness knowledge and practical skills with a focus on soy.

More information on Soy Excellence Centers is at <https://soyexcellence.org>

USSEC's standard practice is to RFP every 3 years in an open and competitive manner. This type of cost analysis will assist in determining the fair market value for the work to be performed and allows USSEC the opportunity to evaluate various proposals and select the best contractor for the job based on experience, availability, expertise, approach, and cost.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Businesses in animal nutrition, aquaculture, feed milling, soy processing oil, soy food sectors (nutritionist; manufacturing / production; product management / sustainability)
- International food and agriculture stakeholders
- USSEC Members and Investors

SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK:

Strategic Responsibilities

1. Assist the Executive Director Soy Excellence Centers and Director of Communications with strategic goals and objectives.
2. Provide strategic direction on Communications to the SEC staff and contractors and/or other communications contractors or resources as applicable.
3. Develop and implement effective marketing and communications strategies based on target audience insights.
4. Promote the awareness and use of U.S. soybeans and soybean products in coordination with SEC training programs and industry relations.
5. Identify opportunities to differentiate the value, sustainability, and competitive advantage of U.S. Soy in coordination with SEC training programs and industry relations

Communications Strategies & Plans

- Build U.S. Soy differentiation and preference with regional end-user industries (aquaculture and animal protein, feed, human, oil) and consumers through the development of a robust communications strategy and execution plan leveraging paid, earned, shared and owned channels
- Grow awareness of the contributions and value generated by the regional Soy Excellence Center (SEC) in coordination with the regional and global SEC team
- Coordinate SEC regional communications strategy, plans and editorial calendar with global communications direction

Branding and Marketing Materials

Brand identity, communications and marketing plans development consistent with USSEC and U.S. Soy brand guidelines (for example, but not limited to):

- Brand activations
- Third-party event sponsorships
- USSEC event branding
- Paid advertising
- HubSpot campaigns

Content Development

Create and disseminate a steady stream of compelling content (for example, but not limited to)

- Blog posts and web content
- Social media posts

- Articles
- Ads
- Videos, vlogs and videography
- Visuals, graphics and photography
- News releases
- Newsletters
- PowerPoints
- Speeches / talking points
- Industry and Stakeholder testimonials
- Plan and deliver SEC overview video content
- Review SEC website content and design, in coordination with regional and WW team

Digital and Social Media

- Develop and implement plans to build SEC's presence on regional social media channel(s) as a thought leader and consistent participant in relevant conversations about food, ag, ESG/sustainability, and trade.
- Manage SEC communications and marketing assets, execute targeted digital marketing campaigns in collaboration with internal teams, and agency partner(s).

Media Relations

- Support development of regional media lists and relationships (trade, sustainability and business outlets and reporters)
- Prepare and coordinate spokespeople for media interviews, generate positive media coverage

Executive Visibility

- Develop and implement USSEC Soy Excellence Center leaders' executive visibility plans to position as thought leaders and consistent participants in relevant conversations, leveraging content (e.g. speeches/ talking points, presentations, videos, visuals etc.); social media conversation and connections; events/speaking engagements; and media

Investor Communications

Raise awareness of the effectiveness of USSEC regional investments, programming and activities (for example, but not limited to):

- Regular content development featuring USSEC work in the Soy Excellence Centers for USSEC global channels, including weekly newsletter (Global News Update)
- Manage development and submission of quarterly USDA FAS success stories to global communications
- Update SEC snapshots annually
- Plan, organize, and write monthly SEC newsletter "Tomorrow Solvers"
- Support development of SEC Annual Report with primary responsibility for research, vendor coordination, content creation, and delivery in partnership. Ensure coordination with worldwide communication groups' input
- Ensure completion of investor required reports

- Support communication needs for SEC annual, quarterly meetings with Global Advisory Panel stakeholder group
- Support global and regional staff at in-person regional SEC events including Global Advisory Panel/Regional Advisory Committee events

Issues Management

- Regional issues sensing and mapping as required
- Develop regional issues preparedness and response plans to mitigate and manage issues effectively
- Plan, develop and deliver industry testimonial content creation in coordination with regional and worldwide communication groups' input
- Initiate STAR Award communication planning cycle

Market Research

- Support regional market research needs related to customer segmentation, customer journey, and customer insights on drivers of differentiation and preference

Metrics Reporting

- Monthly and ad hoc metrics and KPI reporting related to execution plans of regional Soy Excellence Centers

Nigeria/South Africa communications support

- Support Nigeria/South Africa USSEC team with communications request as needed

POSITION REQUIREMENTS:

- Degree from an accredited university in business, communications, or similar
- Minimum 5 years' experience in communications with extensive marketing/branding knowledge
- Fluency in English
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Willingness and ability to travel internationally as required
- Meet the following technological requirements:
 - Reliable high speed internet access
 - Microsoft Office 365, which includes Outlook, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Teams, SharePoint
- Ability to network and build relationships
- Ability to multitask by planning and implementing many projects at the same time
- Preference for previous experience or knowledge of international trade and/or agriculture
- Receptive and willing to advocate for agricultural technologies, such as GMOs, sustainable farming practices, etc.
- Background in U.S. agriculture is beneficial

DELIVERABLES:

Completion Date	Description of Deliverables
February 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide applicable project support documents, forms and templates for the proper implementation of events including SEC Annual meeting, SEC GAP quarterly meetings, and Regional GAP/Regional Advisory Committee meetings.• Provide the Regional Project Manager and/or applicable USSEC department required and approved USSEC documents, forms and templates for review and approval.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All documents, forms and templates will be turned in according to the task timeline provided by the Executive Director - SEC
Monthly, or as incurred	<p>Provide invoice of professional fees for payment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide with the invoice any materials, presentations, trip reports, etc. created and utilized for any applicable services that were accomplished.• Ensure all applicable invoices are submitted within 30 days of transaction and are compliant with USSEC policies and procedures.• Ensure invoice is submitted to sverdin@ussec.org
By the 5 th calendar day of each month	<p>Detailed report of monthly activities and events attended with expected impact(s) and outcome(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure report template is utilized.• Ensure report details all events with critical discussion of results for any applicable services that were accomplished.• Provide inside or along with the report any insights gained that can improve the execution of the activities and events.• Provide to Executive Director, Global Communications Director and Regional Project Team Lead.
Sept 30, 2026	<p>Detailed summary of year's events, key issues, alliances, and recommended actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure report template is utilized.• Ensure report details all events with critical discussion of results for any applicable services that were accomplished.• Include any insights gained that can improve the execution of the activities and events.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide to Executive Director, Global Communications Director and Regional Project Team Lead.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in regularly scheduled and ad hoc meetings • Review SEC website content and design in coordination with regional and WW team • Support SEC WW and regional social media • Global News Update articles • Support quarterly FAS success stories development • Primary responsibility for Annual report development • Organize STAR Award communications planning cycle

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The contract term of the proposal is February 15, 2026 to September 30, 2026

*Additional terms beyond 2026 at the discretion of USSEC

RFP TIMELINE:

- RFP Distribution: December 8, 2025
- Last Day to Submit Questions: December 19, 2025
- Project Proposals Due: January 12, 2026
- Selections Made By: January 30, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS:

Proposals must contain at a minimum the specific criteria listed below:

1. Please email proposal to sverdin@ussec.org by January 12, 2026, at 5:00pm Central Time.
2. A description of the prospective contractors' capabilities, experience, and education. Emphasis should be placed on experience related to this RFP.
3. Resumes for each of the Prospective contractors (or personnel) to be assigned to work directly on the implementation of the contract.
4. Budget: All proposals for services must provide the scope of work that the contractor proposes to cover and a breakout of the fee including but not limited to a breakdown of hourly rate and the approx. number of hours anticipated to execute the work.
5. Proposals for this work can address it in its entirety or specific scopes of work that a contractor is most competent to address. **Segment proposal headers according to support areas, as defined under SCOPE (SERVICES) OF WORK.**

6. Provide a minimum of two names and contact information for other similarly sized clients for reference purposes.

7. Proposals should be no longer than **10 pages** (8 ½" x 11").

NOTES:

- Prospective contractors are hereby notified that proposals will be duplicated for internal review only. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of all information presented. The appropriate representatives from staff and legal counsel will review proposals. Proposals will not be returned.
- USSEC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the submitter of the conditions contained in the request for proposal, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between USSEC and the selected contractor.
- Confidentiality - Without USSEC's prior written consent, Prospective Contractors and its officers, employees, agents, representatives, affiliates, and subcontractors shall not disclose to any third party any documents, materials or information that the Prospective Contractors learns from or is provided in relation to the RFP request.
- During the evaluation process, USSEC reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors and omissions.
- USSEC reserves the right to reject any proposal that is in any way inconsistent or irregular. USSEC also reserves the right to waive proposal defects or deficiencies, to request additional information, and/or to negotiate with the Prospective Contractor regarding the proposal.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that Fees are in lieu of any and all other benefits, including, but not limited to, repayment of any and all taxes related to contractor service fees, health and life insurance, administrative costs and vacation.
- Prospective Contractor agrees that any income taxes, value added taxes or any other form of direct or indirect taxes on compensation paid under the contract shall be paid by Contractor and not by USSEC or Funding Sources.
 - Prior to any payment to a Contractor, a contractor must provide a W-9, W-8, or W-8BEN upon agreement signature
- Non-Competition. Contractor shall not act as agent or representative for any product or service directly or indirectly competitive with U.S. soybeans or soybean products for the length of the contract.
- USSEC and Prospective Contractor agree to comply with the provisions of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). USSEC provides EEO to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status,

amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

ABOUT U.S. SOYBEAN EXPORT COUNCIL (USSEC)

Soybeans are the United States' No. 1 food and agricultural export. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is focused on building preference, improving the value, and enabling market access for the use of U.S. Soy for human consumption, aquaculture, and livestock feed in over 80 countries around the world.

USSEC is a dynamic partnership of U.S. soybean producers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations; and connects food and agriculture industry leaders through a robust membership program.

USSEC is farmer-funded by checkoff funds invested by the United Soybean Board, various state soybean councils, the food and agriculture industry, and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Our 16-member board of directors is comprised of four members from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven members representing trade, allied industry, and state organizations.

New board members are seated annually. We are receiving funding from a variety of sources including soy producer checkoff dollars invested by the USB and various state soybean councils; cooperating industry; and the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agriculture Service.

The United Soybean Board (USB), created by the 1990 Farm Bill to manage and direct the National Soybean Checkoff, is dedicated to marketing and research for the soybean industry. USB is comprised of 73 volunteer soybean farmers representing the interests of fellow growers nationwide. Each board member is nominated by Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) and appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

As one of these three primary contractors, USSEC may also undertake initiative activities on behalf of USB. USB considers primary contractor staff (approximately 60 people) as core USB staff. These three primary contractors use a number of subcontractors and, together, these entities carry out approximately 450 projects each year for USB. USB also manages approximately 10 subcontractors.

To learn more, visit www.ussec.org and engage with us on USSEC's [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#)

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 {voice and TTY} or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Civil Rights Clause

Contractor agrees that during the performance of this Agreement it will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, parental status or protected genetic information. Contractor further agrees that it will fully comply with any and all applicable Federal, State and local equal employment opportunity statutes, ordinances and regulations, including, without limitation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Nothing in this section shall require Contractor to comply with or become liable under any law, ordinance, regulation or rule that does not otherwise apply to Contractor.