

Request for Proposals

Tropical Avocado from the Dominican Republic – Promotion

Issue Date:	14 September 2020
Closing Date For Proposals:	7 October 2020
Closing Time:	5:00 PM, EDT
Project Title:	Exporting Quality
Offer Reference Number:	RFP-DREQ-001-2020

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereinafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror(s) by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC) in anticipation of IESC's proposal in response to USDA Exporting Quality Award No. FCC-5 17-2015-015-00.

IESC seeks proposals from marketing and promotion companies (Offerors) with experience promoting specialty crops and fresh produce to support the market expansion for U.S. importers/ distributors of tropical avocados from the Dominican Republic (DR). IESC plans to award one contract to the Offeror that is most qualified and represents best value to develop a virtual platform with marketing tools, and provide individualized marketing promotion support to up to three U.S importers/distributors of Dominican tropical avocados on plans that support their market expansion in Texas and the West Coast of the U.S.

The purpose of this RFP document is to provide Offeror(s) with information to assist them in the preparation of their proposal/s for the services that IESC seeks to source. This RFP document does not claim to contain all the information each Offeror may require. Each Offeror should conduct their own assessment and should check the accuracy, reliability, and completeness of the information in this RFP document, and where necessary obtain independent advice from appropriate sources.

IESC may cancel this RFP and is under no obligation to make an award as a result of this RFP, although IESC fully anticipates doing so, should IESC's proposal be selected. Activities are anticipated to begin in October 2020.

Note that the USDA Exporting Quality Program Director determines proposal notification, award, and start dates, and they are subject to change at the USDA Exporting Quality Office or IESC's discretion. Any activities under a final agreement are subject to and shall

be carried out in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the donor under 2 CFR 200 and any other subsequently published rule or regulation governing the program.

IESC may, at its own discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend, or supplement the information in this RFP document.

Interested offerors are responsible for all costs associated with preparation and submission of proposals and will not be reimbursed by IESC.

Any contract resulting from this RFP will be a fixed price deliverables-based contract.

2. Background

IESC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to equitable, sustainable economic growth in developing countries. We believe that a robust private sector is the cornerstone of resilient economies and stable countries. For more than 55 years, IESC has focused on market-driven private enterprise development.

The Exporting Quality program, managed by IESC, developed a marketing strategy to increase sales and consumption of green skin avocados in the U.S. market, with rebranding as Tropical avocados. This strategy can be shared with interested applicants upon request to Lily Alcock at lalcock@iesc.org. Tropical avocados are produced in the DR and Florida and represent less than 10 percent of the avocado market in the U.S., primarily on the East Coast. A significant part of this strategy included education of consumers and retailers. Since both audiences are familiar with Hass avocados, they will need information on the differences between Hass and Tropical avocados, as well as proper handling, usage, and storage of Tropical avocados.

The Exporting Quality program provided support to the Dominican private trade association of exporters, ADOEXPO, to develop and register a collective trademark called Tropical avocados from the DR. All exports from the DR that utilize this trademark will pay a fee that will be utilized to finance market promotion and supervise compliance with the quality and variety requirements of the trademark.

3. Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance will be October 2020 until January 2021*.

**IESC is currently awaiting a notice of a costed extension of our Award with USDA. Should IESC be awarded a costed extension by USDA, the period of performance may also be extended.*

4. Scope Statement

Create virtual marketing platform to include Consumer Website and a Retail Resource Portal to be housed with ADOEXPO, and a local beneficiary handover plan that will include long-term costs estimates and management recommendations. Support the development of marketing plans that include support activities of up to three importer/distributor firms.

All quotations must be valid for sixty (60) of days.

5. Statement Of Work

5.1. Schedule of Authorities

The contractor will report to the Program Director.

5.2. Activities

The contractor is expected to undertake the following tasks:

The Offeror will undertake the following tasks:

1. **Virtual Marketing Platform.** The virtual marketing platform will include two distinct, but related outputs: A Consumer Website and a Retail Resource Portal to be housed with [ADOEXPO](#). The Website may be standalone, linked and managed by ADOEXPO or may be integrated into ADOEXPO's site. The contractor shall propose the best solution and present that in their response. The solution will need to be determined with ADOEXPO during the initial design. A beneficiary handover plan will include long-term costs estimates and management recommendations.
 - a. **Develop Consumer Website.** Design and develop a fully functioning consumer-facing website, featuring information relevant to consumers, such as usage and selection tips, interesting historical and cultural information explaining the Florida/ sourcing and background, list of retailers where Tropical avocados are sold, recipes, and product photography (recipes and photography quoted separately). Partnerships with any influencers should also be featured on site. The website is intended for ADOEXPO. The website should be at a minimum in English and Spanish.
 - b. **Develop Retailer Resource Portal.** Design and develop a fully functioning retailer resource portal website as an adjunct to the consumer website, where retail buyers could access and order promotional materials (wobblers, display bins, signage, and other items as appropriate.), view promotional schedule (if seasonal promotional campaigns are proceeded with), and review consumer research.

2. **Tailored Marketing Tools and Support:** Depending upon the individualized support to the marketing plans of up to three Florida importer/distributor firms, develop the following menu of support activities. Two of the three firms will be Brooks Tropical and WP Produce. The third importer/distributor will be identified and selected by the contractor based upon criteria associated with their market participation and willingness to expand marketing in Texas and/or the West Coast of the U.S. The Exporting Quality Program Director and Contract Manager will approve the selection of the third importer/distributor.

An implementation plan and timetable that describes the steps in the product development, launch, and pricing per product/per unit is requested. Offerors are asked to select at least five of the most impactful promotional products listed below for this initiative to describe and provide estimated costs as fixed priced deliverables, respectively. Offerors may also propose additional or different activities than those provided below in keeping with the purpose and scope of this RFP. The Exporting Quality program will choose the beneficiaries and will seek beneficiary agreement to pay for at least 50 percent of the costs with the Exporting Quality program covering the remaining 50 percent up to a set ceiling. The beneficiary will determine, what if any of this support will benefit their specific strategy. If the importer/distributor does not buy-in to the product, then there will not be an order. The products anticipated are as follows:

- a. **Press Releases and Feature Stories.** Establish presence in produce/ag trade media to position Tropical avocado product top of mind with four (4) press releases and two (2) feature story pitches, for a total of six (6) news items. The press releases should be newsworthy, such as start of season, upcoming retail promotions, and other relevant topics.
- b. **Local Regional Texas / West Coast Influencers.** Partner with regional influencers and food bloggers, who attend popular regional events with high attendance rates and consumer followings. This may include, but not limited to, consumer and or chef social influencers posting photos, short videos, and/ or advertisements about how they use Tropical avocados in their meals. Connect and create partnerships with consumer media (including television appearances) and grocery stores such as Kroger. Develop a strong digital presence including consumer e-Blasts, website, social media, monthly Produce Challenge, e-books, podcast, or other topics.
- c. **Social Media.** Recommend establishing a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and/or other recommended social media with additional guidance on measuring and maintaining consistent posting schedules and consumer engagement metrics.

- Post, monitor, and maintain the Tropical avocado social media accounts, plus produce graphics and photography as needed.
- d. **Consumer Media Relations Program.** Partnership with a food and lifestyle expert such as Chadwick Boyd of Lovely & Delicious Enterprises to leverage established connections with consumer food media. A robust consumer media program could include: 1.) Culinary salons in a NYC test kitchen with writers, editors, producers, podcast hosts, and food and industry influencers, with Tropical avocado education, usage and experience being the focus of the event. 2.) Social media engagement 3.) Customized newsletters for trade and consumer writers and editors 4.) Story pitches to or featured articles/appearances with consumer media outlets such as Huffington Post, Kitchen, Better Homes and Gardens, and Food Network.
 - e. **Sales Video.** Develop 1.5 to 2-minute sales video showing both consumer and trade reactions to Tropical avocados and provide information about sales opportunities for Tropical avocados.
 - f. **Recipe Development.** Develop series of 10 recipes that are tailored to the U.S. consumer palates and taste preferences. Recipes will be intended to show the versatility of Tropical avocados, while retaining the simple instructions and easy ingredient list that consumer desire. Includes full recipe testing and write-up, photography of all recipes, and recipe notes (such as how to make the recipe gluten-free, how to "dress up" the recipe for dinner parties, selection/storage tips, etc.)
 - g. **Recipe How-To Videos.** Develop how-to videos for 10 recipes, one video per recipe. Videos will be shot in the overhead style popular among consumers. Estimated length will be no more than 10 minutes

5.3 Deliverables

The Offeror will provide and be paid based on the successful completion of the following deliverables:

1. Virtual Marketing Platform

- a. **Develop Consumer Website**
 - i. **Story board.** Develop and present a story board that represents content and graphs. Include considerations and recommendations for long-term maintenance costs for proposed platform, updates, and maintenance. *Date: 2 weeks after award of contract*
 - ii. **Beta Version Review.** Beta version launch of consumer website for internal stakeholder review and feedback. Launch plan. *Date: 4 weeks after award of contract*

- iii. **Launch.** *Date: 6 weeks after award of contract*
- iv. **Consumer Website Updates.** Manage six months of updates to the consumer website to add new content (such as blog posts, new recipes, featured consumer promotions, new retailers, etc.) as needed.
- v. **Tropical Avocado Virtual Marketing Platform Handover Plan.** A beneficiary handover plan will include long-term labor, services, and other direct cost estimates as well as management recommendations for day-to-day maintenance and future user evaluations and upgrades. The plan should cover a five-year period of time and keep in mind resource constraints or resource fluctuations of the beneficiary.

b. Develop Retailer Resource Portal.

- i. **Story board.** Develop and present a story board that represents content and graphs. Include considerations and recommendations for long-term maintenance costs for proposed platform, updates, and maintenance. *Date: 2 weeks after award of contract*
- ii. **Version Review.** Beta version launch of consumer website for internal stakeholder review and feedback. Launch plan. *Date: 4 weeks after contract award.*
- iii. **Launch.** *Date: 6 weeks after award of contract*

2. **Tailored Marketing Tools and Support.** The Offeror should present a development plan and timetable along for development and launch for at least five of the different promotional options listed below, with respective impact and estimated costs for each option. The Exporting Quality Market Linkages Facilitator will decide on which and how many options to implement depending upon the individualized support to the marketing plans of up to three Florida firms.

- a. **Press Releases and Feature Stories**
- b. **Local Regional Texas / West Coast Influencers**
- c. **Social Media**
- d. **Consumer Media Relations Program**
- e. **Sales Video**
- f. **Recipe Development**
- g. **Recipe How-To Videos**

Table No. 1: Deliverable Table

Deliverable Name	Date
1. Virtual Marketing Platform	
a. Develop Consumer Website	
i. Story Board	TBD
ii. Beta Version Review	TBD
iii. Launch	TBD
iv. Consumer Website Updates	TBD

v. Tropical Avocado Virtual Marketing Platform Handover Plan	TBD
b. Develop Retailer Resource Portal	
i. Story Board	TBD
ii. Version Review	TBD
iii. Launch	TBD
2.Tailored Marketing Tools and Support	
a. Press Releases and Feature Stories – 6 news items	TBD
b. Local Regional Texas/ West Coast Influencers	TBD
c. Social Media	TBD
d. Consumer Media Relations Program	TBD
e. Sales Video (1)	TBD
f. Recipe Development (10 recipes)	TBD
g. Recipe How-To Videos (10 videos)	TBD

6. Contract Type

The contract is anticipated to be fixed price, to be paid based on the successful completion of deliverables.

7. Instructions to Offerors

7.1. Submission

1. Offers received after the closing date may not be considered.
2. Offers must be in U.S. Dollars.
3. Technical and cost proposals must be submitted as two separate documents. Cost information must not be included in the technical proposal.

Offerors must submit their proposals by the closing date and time, as listed on page one, to the following: **Lily Alcock, Senior Program Associate, lalcock@iesc.org.**

7.2. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarifications via email to **Lily Alcock, lalcock@iesc.org** no later than **5:00 p.m., Washington, DC, Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) time, on Thursday, September 24, 2020** . IESC will provide answers to these questions and requests for clarification asked by all Offerors simultaneously via email and posted on the IESC website with the RFP before the close of business on/or before **Friday, September 25, 2020** IESC may not answer questions before the proposal submission deadline outside of the allotted response period for clarifications. No questions will be answered over the phone or in person.

7.3. Cover Page and Markings

In addition to the required proposal documents listed in sections 10 and 11 below, please include a cover page with your submission for the technical and the cost proposals (separate cover pages). The cover page should be on company letterhead and should contain the following information:

1. Project or Title (from the front page of this RFP document)
2. Offer Reference Number (from the front page of this RFP document)
3. Company Name
4. Company Address
5. Name of Company's authorized representative
6. Contact person if different that Company's representative
7. Telephone #, Cellular/Mobile Phone #, Email address
8. Duration of Validity of proposal
9. Payment terms
10. DUNS # (Applies to companies, not to individuals)
11. Total Proposed Price (cover page of cost proposal only)
12. Signature, date, and time

8. Eligibility Requirements

Offeror may be required to present a business license and must have experience in developing marketing promotional campaigns and materials, including online consumer retail educational products for fresh produce in the U.S. market. Offerors may need to obtain a DUNS number and an eligibility notice prior to receiving any award. Award will be contingent upon USDA 's final approval.

9. Basis for Award

IESC anticipates that award will be based on best-value principles. Accordingly, award will be made to the technically acceptable Offerors whose proposals provide the greatest overall value to IESC and the USDA Exporting Quality program, price, and other factors considered. The winning proposal must conform to all solicitation requirements.

To determine best value, proposals will be evaluated on the criteria below. The number of points assigned, totaling 100 points, indicates the relative importance of each individual criterion. Offerors should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant factors that Offerors should address in their proposals; and, (b) set the standard against which all proposals will be evaluated.

10. Technical Proposal Evaluation

Please read carefully, the following are instructions for preparing proposals. Proposals must be organized into sections corresponding to the sections presented in **10.1 Technical Evaluation Criteria** and numbered accordingly. Please stay in the page limits given below. Only include the requested information and avoid submitting extra content. Any pages exceeding the page limitation for each section of the proposal may not be evaluated.

Proposals must be written in English with each page numbered consecutively. Cover pages, dividers, and tables of contents are not subject to the page limit.

10.1. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria. Points will also reflect the overall presentation of the proposal, which should be clear, complete, well organized, and well written. Most importantly, proposals should address all the requirements listed in this RFP.

[1] Technical, Management, Approach: 10 page limit; possible points 50

Proposals will be scored on the effectiveness of the proposal to meet the requirements of the scope of work, as outlined in **Section 5.2 Activities**

Proposals will be scored based on the following:

- Demonstrated understanding of the challenges faced of Tropical avocados in the U.S. market position, advantages, and challenges in expanding.
- Clear approach to develop each of the described deliverables within a reasonable timeframe.
- Knowledge and approach to engaging key stakeholders.
- Plan for working remotely and in Spanish language, as applicable, on this effort with stakeholders based in the DR and on the East Coast of the U.S.
- Approach to sustainability of deliverables by presenting a well-planned handover to a local beneficiary on management/resourcing, costs, and any cost recovery recommendations for future development and improvements.
- Appropriate use of technology so beneficiaries can best navigate and maintain products delivered.
- Proposed and realistic impact of the work related to expected increase in the volume of Tropical avocado exports from the DR by participant trademark members and increased sales targets due to increased market promotional efforts.

[2] Offeror’s past performance and references: 2 pg. limit (not including samples of previous work, which may be attachments and/or references: 5 pg. limit); possible points 30

The proposal must provide a detailed account of the Offeror’s record in implementing similar activities to those outlined in the tasks and activities. The technical proposal shall include a summary of past performance conducting promotional fresh produce campaigns in U.S. markets. Offerors should provide experience in general, and specifically include experience with fresh produce marketing program design.

This part should include sufficient information to demonstrate the Offeror’s performance for the above tasks and activities and include how the overall approach, including problem solving, is based on extensive prior experience on website promotional design and start up/launch as well as providing the type of promotional materials as described in this RFP. Offers should demonstrate capacity to effectively complete tasks similar to those described in this RFP within the proposed contract period of performance.

Offerors should provide a minimum of three (3) references for past and present programs, to include the contact information of three prior or current employers or clients for which the Offeror has completed a similar task. References must include contact information and a brief summary of the relevant work undertaken. References are to be included in an attachment not to exceed five (5) pages and are not part of the two-page limit.

[3] Offeror’s Personnel Experience and Capacities: 2 pg. limit (not including resumes or CVs, which are attachments); possible points 20

The technical proposal must include a description (biographical sketch acceptable) of the individual, or for companies a minimum of one, but not more than two, senior management personnel, who would directly work on the activities in the contract. Resumes or CVs must be submitted as attachments for individuals submitted in this section and do not count within the page limitations of this section. Additional roles shall be identified and described as part of the application, but no CVs are required. Required CVs must be in English.

This section will be marked on the extent to which the Offeror’s or its personnel have experience in promotional web design, development, and cost analysis of fixed price deliverables. Ability to manage small teams to outcomes effectively and ability to work with stakeholders remotely. Core team possesses appropriate skills, project management background, and expertise needed and adequate time to dedicate to the completion of tasks. English and Spanish writing and speaking capacity is desirable.

11. Cost Proposal Evaluation

The Offeror shall submit a cost proposal as a separate document from the technical proposal. The proposal must address all deliverables stated at Table Number 2 (below) and provide detailed budgets and deadlines for completion of each of the deliverables that can be used for developing a fixed price deliverables-based contract. Deliverable 2 "Tailored Marketing Tools and Support" allows for options to be chosen by the Offeror. The cost proposal should include the cost of all selected promotional options in accordance with the deliverable costs table no. 2 found below. Cost elements related to the deliverables shall be described and included in a spreadsheet for review of reasonableness by IESC.

All proposed costs must be in accordance with the U.S. Government Cost Principles under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E (nonprofit organizations) or the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 31 (for commercial organizations).

The Offeror should submit an explanatory cost narrative as an annex. It should include all elements of the cost proposal and be no more than 10 pages. In the narrative, costs should be broken out by individual cost element, for example labor, supplies, travel, subcontracts (if any), indirect costs (if any), fee (if any), and total cost. Offerors must include detailed narrative justifications for each cost in order for IESC to determine cost and price reasonableness. Should an offeror propose any subcontractors to perform any portion of the work, such subcontract costs must be proposed separately, demonstrating clear delineation between prime and subcontractor costs. Offerors must include a detailed fixed-price budget and corresponding cost narrative for any subcontract proposed.

Table No. 2 Deliverable Costs

Deliverable Name	Date	Cost
1. Virtual Marketing Platform		
a. Develop Consumer Website		
i. Story Board	TBD	TBD
ii. Beta Version Review	TBD	TBD
iii. Launch	TBD	TBD
iv. Consumer Website Updates	TBD	TBD
v. Tropical Avocado Virtual Marketing Platform Handover Plan	TBD	TBD
c. Develop Retailer Resource Portal		
i. Story Board	TBD	TBD
ii. Version Review	TBD	TBD
iii. Launch	TBD	TBD
2. Tailored Marketing Tools and Support		
a. Press Releases and Feature Stories – 6 news items	TBD	TBD
b. Local Regional Texas/ West Coast Influencers	TBD	TBD
c. Social Media	TBD	TBD

d. Consumer Media Relations Program	TBD	TBD
e. Sales Video (1)	TBD	TBD
f. Recipe Development (10 recipes)	TBD	TBD
g. Recipe How-To Videos (10 videos)	TBD	TBD

12. Deviations

IESC reserves the right to waive any deviations by offerors from the requirements of this solicitation that in IESC's opinion are considered not to be material defects requiring rejection or disqualification; or where such a waiver will promote increased competition.

13. Discrepancies

Please read the instructions carefully before submitting your proposal. Any discrepancy in following the instructions or contract provisions may disqualify your proposal without recourse or an appeal for reconsideration at any stage.

14. Conflict of Interest Declaration

The following steps outline IESC's contract selection process and should be understood by all Offerors to ensure the transparency of awards and avoid conflict of interest.

1. Request for Proposals (RFPs) are posted on IESC's website. The offer is open to all qualified offerors;
2. Clarifications will be emailed to all offerors submitting questions, as well as posted on IESC's website, simultaneously;
3. Once the proposals are received, an evaluation committee scores them;
4. Cost proposals are evaluated for reasonableness, accuracy, and completeness;
5. The best value proposal is selected based on a combination of the technical score and consideration of cost;
6. No activity can be started until both IESC and the contractor have signed a formal contract; and,
7. IESC policy against fraud and code of business ethics exists throughout the life of the contract and beyond. Even if the contract is closed, if any party is found guilty of fraud, IESC will make a full report to the USDA, which may choose to investigate and prosecute guilty parties to the fullest extent of the law.

Any contracts awarded will be required to comply with all administrative standards and provisions required by the Award made from USDA. IESC reserves the right to cancel any planned proposal based on any adjustments to the period of performance of the IESC's agreement with USDA.