

Request for Proposals

Tropical Avocado Promotion

Issue Date:	January 29, 2021
Closing Date For Proposals:	February 24, 2021
Closing Time:	5:00 PM, EST
Project Title:	Exporting Quality Program
Offer Reference Number:	RFP-DREQ-003-2020

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror(s) by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC). IESC is the prime implementor of the Food for Progress Exporting Quality Program in the Dominican Republic funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) 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 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. Activities are anticipated to begin March 15, 2021.

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, 7 CFR 1499, 2 CFR I, II, and IV 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.

IESC manages the USDA-funded Exporting Quality (EQ) program in the DR. The EQ program developed a marketing strategy (Attachment A) to increase the sales and consumption of green skin avocados in the U.S. market. The strategy recommended rebranding green skin avocados as "Tropical Avocados". These 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. The strategy identified consumer and retailer education as a significant opportunity to increase consumption and sales. Both audiences are already familiar with Hass avocados. The next step is to provide information that helps retailers and consumers differentiate between Hass and Tropical Avocados, and how best to handle, store, and eat Tropical Avocados. The recommended markets to target for the initial marketing push is Texas and the West Coast.

The Exporting Quality program supported the Dominican Private Trade Association of Exporters (ADOEXPO) in developing and registering the trademark "Dom Tropical Avocados" in the DR. All green skin avocado exports from the DR that utilize this trademark will pay a fee to ADOEXPO which they will use to finance the promotion of Dominican Tropical Avocados and supervise compliance with trademark requirements, e.g. quality and variety.

The estimated value of the anticipated contract is US\$25,000 - US\$40,000. It is expected that approximately \$15,000 of the total contract amount will be dedicated to partnerships with regional influencers and bloggers (see Part 5.2.1.2 below).

3. Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance will be from March to August, 2021.

4. Scope Statement

Design and implement marketing tactics to promote “Dom Tropical Avocado” collective trademark in Texas and West Coast of the United States.

All quotations must be valid for at least 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:

5.2.1 Provide an implementation plan and calendar describing the steps to be taken to develop and launch each of the following tactical activity:

1. **Press releases and feature stories.** Establish presence in produce or agriculture 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.
2. **Influencer Marketing.** Leverage contractor network of regional influencers and food bloggers with large consumer followings, and who educate consumers on how to select, store, cook and serve fresh produce. Influencers should have extensive connections and partnerships with consumer media (including television appearances) and major grocery stores located on the West Coast and in Texas and should possess a strong digital presence including very popular and well-followed consumer website, social media, podcast, etc. Number of influencers and specific influencers to partner with should be identified based on a total budget for all partnerships of around US\$15,000.
3. **Recipe Development.** Develop series of at least (5) five 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.)

5.2.2 Coordinate and implement each tactical activity listed in 5.2.1

5.3. Deliverables

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

5.3.1 Implementation plan and calendar to develop and launch the marketing tactics listed in section 5.2 of this RFP. The plan should be at least 8 pages, delivered via email and presented via conference video to IESC technical team and ADOEXPO.

5.3.2 Drafts and proof of completion of each tactical activity including their respected impact and costs.

1. **Four (4) Press releases and feature stories and two (2) feature story pitches, for a total of six (6) news items.**
2. **Materials produced in the context of the collaboration with influencers.** Custom digital content (infographic, blog, video, podcast), traditional media (lifestyle television and live streaming), email marketing (custom newsletters and ongoing content promotion).
3. **Minimum of five (5) recipes** including 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.)

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 and time 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.
- 4) 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 not later than **5:00 p.m., Washington DC Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) time, on Monday, February 15, 2021**. 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 **Wednesday, February 17, 2021**. 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

7.4. Table of Contents

Offeror must provide a Table of Contents and organize its proposal as such:

Technical Proposal

- 1) Company background (one [1]-page limit)
- 2) Technical, Management, and Approach (five [5] page limit)
- 3) Past Performance (two [2] page limit)
- 4) Personnel Experience and Capacities (two [2] page limit)
- 5) Attachments
 - a. Samples of work, minimum three references (five [5] page limit)
 - b. Personnel Resumes or CVs

Cost Proposal

- 1) Executive Summary with proposed terms and conditions of payment
- 2) Budget, must use Attachment B – Budget Template
- 3) Budget Narrative (ten [10] page limit)

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. Eligibility Requirements

Please carefully read the following instructions for preparing proposals. Proposals must be organized into sections corresponding to the sections presented in **11. Technical Evaluation Criteria** and numbered accordingly. Offerors must not exceed page limits; doing so will result in disqualification or redaction of pages that exceed the page limit. Should IESC opt to redact, any pages exceeding the page limitation for each section of the proposal will not be evaluated. Only include the requested information and avoid submitting extra content.

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

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

11.1. Technical, Management, Approach: 5-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 facing the tropical avocado market in the US, the advantages, and opportunities for expansion.
- Clear approach to developing each of the deliverables described at Part 5.3. The approach must demonstrate the achievement of deliverables within reasonable timeframes.
- Demonstrated ability to approach, engage, and leverage marketing influencers, i.e. social media influencers and bloggers.
- 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.

11.2. Offeror's past performance: 2 pg. limit. Samples of previous work and references as attachments: 5 pg. limit; possible points 30

Past performance shall include:

- Detailed account of the Offeror's record in implementing similar activities to those outlined in the tasks and activities.
- Summary of past performance conducting promotional fresh produce campaigns in U.S. markets and using marketing influencers.
 - Offerors should provide experience in general, and specifically include experience with fresh produce marketing program design.
- Sufficient information to demonstrate the Offeror's performance for the above tasks and activities
- Demonstrate ability to problem solve based on extensive prior experience on website promotional design and start up/launch
- Identify the promotional materials to be leveraged, derived from the types described in this RFP.
- Demonstrate capacity to effectively complete tasks similar to those described in this RFP within the proposed contract period of performance.

Offerors should provide as an attachment not to exceed five (5) pages, and not part of the two (2) page limit for past performance:

- 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.
- Samples of previous work

11.3. 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:

- 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 must be identified and described as part of the application, but no CVs are required for additional roles. Required CVs must be in English.

This section will be scored on:

- Extent to which the Offeror's or its personnel have experience in conducting promotional fresh produce campaign in the U.S. market and using marketing influencers;
- 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 highly desirable.

12. Cost Proposal Evaluation

The Offeror shall submit a cost proposal, consisting of an executive summary, a budget, and budget narrative, as separate from the technical proposal. The executive summary portion must address and include all deliverables stated in section 5.3, and provide proposed deadlines for completion of each of the fixed price deliverables. The executive summary must also include Offeror payment terms and conditions, including if any working capital advances will be necessary and the amount of such, if applicable.

The Offeror must submit a budget in accordance with the IESC budget template found in Attachment B. Please note that Attachment B Budget Template requires the Offeror to price each of the three deliverables as total fixed price deliverables as well as provide detailed breakout of those proposed costs (on separate tabs). Proposed labor rates must be presented as fixed daily rates burdened with and inclusive of labor, fringe, indirect cost (if any) and profit (if any).

The Offeror must also submit an explanatory cost narrative as an Attachment. 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, subcontracts (if any), other direct costs the Offeror believes are necessary for achievement of the deliverables, and total cost. The detailed narrative justifications for each cost enable IESC to determine cost and price reasonableness as required by U.S. government regulation.

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 deliverables-based budget and corresponding cost narrative for any subcontract proposed.

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).

13. 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.

14. Discrepancies

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

15. 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, completeness, and compliance with the budget template (Attachment B);
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 contract 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.