



INTRODUCTION

The North American Blueberry Council (NABC) seeks an experienced consultant or firm to provide federal government relations strategic advisory and lobbying services that promote the blueberry industry's interests before the United States Congress, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the executive branch of the federal government in Washington, D.C.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The NABC is a membership-driven organization representing the collective interests of blueberry growers, fruit brokers, marketers, processors, food manufacturers and others connected to the blueberry industry. Specifically, NABC provides the following core services to the industry:

- Eliminating trade barriers to ensure competitive global market access.
- Managing and communicating key issues.
- Delivering data such as seasonal crop reports, monthly cold storage figures and yearly production data.
- Supporting good industry practices by providing members with relevant education and information.
- Representing the industry when critical issues arise.

NABC's mission is to encourage cooperation among the international blueberry community, providing members with timely, relevant market information and acting as an advocate for the North American highbush blueberry industry in legislative and regulatory concerns.

NABC's vision is to serve as a recognized leader and trusted partner in addressing issues, opportunities and industry practices that drive success and profitability in the production and distribution of blueberries in North America and around the world.

Together with its stakeholders, NABC navigates the opportunities and challenges of today to better plan for the future.

BACKGROUND

NABC seeks to expand the scope and breadth of its government affairs program and services to its membership. Through direction of a Director of Government Affairs (a new staff position

added in 2022), NABC seeks to establish a multi-year government relations strategy to commence in mid 2022 ahead of 2023 Farm Bill negotiations.

NABC seeks to establish a professional services contract with a qualified individual or firm who can demonstrate competency and experience in providing government relations services for agricultural industry representative entities (foreign entity representation is a plus) and who has demonstrated success in securing funding, partnerships, strategic contacts and building awareness among key congressional, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), executive branch and other Washington, D.C.-area stakeholders. This individual or firm will work directly with the Director of Government Affairs to implement the strategy and effectively represent blueberry industry interests in Washington, D.C.

SCOPE OF WORK AND ISSUES OF INTEREST

Specifically, NABC seeks a qualified individual or firm with broad experience in securing federal funding and a variety of budgetary, legislative and regulatory matters. Additional experience in state funding and policy issues will be favorably considered. Specific funding and policy areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

1. The Farm Bill
2. COVID-19 relief programs
3. USDA foods procurement programs
4. Labor and immigration reform
5. Trade policy
6. Conservation and the environment
7. Food safety
8. Food nutrition and labeling

DELIVERABLES

Under direction from the NABC Director of Government Affairs, the selected individual or firm will be responsible for the effective implementation of advocacy activities related to the specific portfolio of issues assigned.

Specific deliverables include:

Strategy Development

- Work with NABC to formulate and execute a federal policy strategy for federal funding, policy objectives, long-term growth and sustainment of the blueberry industry.
- Work with staff to prepare written communications that convey NABC's priorities and position on federal legislative and policy issues.
- On an annual and as-needed basis, participate in meetings with NABC members and other stakeholders (private and/or public meetings/webinars) to educate the attendees on federal policy and funding issues of particular interest to NABC and its stakeholders.

Advocacy and Communication

- Represent NABC's interests in Washington, D.C., including to key members of Congress, USDA and executive agency stakeholders.
- Advise and prepare NABC for engagements with lawmakers, USDA, executive agencies and administration staff.
- Identify funding opportunities and lobby executive agencies in support of NABC interests.
- In response to NABC direction, act quickly on NABC's behalf regarding developments in Washington, D.C., with impact on funding and policy matters.
- Establish new relationships to support emerging, evolving and growing NABC priorities and activities.
- Handle the logistics related to arranging meetings between NABC staff, leadership and Government Affairs Committee members, executive agency and administration stakeholders.
- Prepare specific talking points and briefing materials for NABC meetings upon request.
- Other activities as defined.

Tracking and Reporting

- Conduct regular review, analysis and notification to NABC of existing and proposed federal policies, programs and regulations that may impact NABC and the blueberry industry.
- Provide preparation, materials and support for NABC legislative activities and events, including but not limited to: calls, briefings, meetings and visits between executive agencies and legislative stakeholders and members.
- Other activities as defined.

Relationship-Building and Management

- Establish and maintain effective strategic relationships within the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA AMS, APHIS, FAS and FSA divisions, FDA, EPA and United States Trade Representative to achieve outcomes that support or advance the blueberry industry's federal funding, legislative and policy positions.
- Facilitate regular meetings and updates between NABC, government officials, policymakers and legislative stakeholders to strengthen relationships and further NABC's priorities and protect its interests.
- Effectively engage stakeholders to solve problems on behalf of NABC, as necessary.
- Other activities as defined.

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE AND DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS

Firms must demonstrate the following expertise and success:

- Expertise in federal legislative, budget and appropriations processes.
- Broad, established network of stakeholders, including legislators and policymakers representing key blueberry production districts.
- Demonstrated understanding of federal funding and grant processes, including identifying opportunities and helping clients to submit high-quality proposals.
- Federal lobbying.
- Effective representation of nonprofit agricultural organizations and public-private partnership priorities and goals in Washington, D.C.
- Extensive experience in providing all the services required within the Scope of Work and Deliverables.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following components:

- Strategy and vision for a two- to three-year period beginning mid-2022.
- Strategic and operation plan detailing how services outlined in this RFP will be successfully delivered, including a staffing plan that will meet NABC's needs.
- Demonstration of individual or firm's knowledge and expertise in the federal policymaking, appropriations, authorization process and lobbying arenas.
- Budget, including itemization of costs and fees, and confirmation of established accounting practices to allow for itemized invoicing of lobbying expenses.
- Examples of previous work demonstrating a track record of success in providing services to clients in the following areas:
 - i. Securing federal agency funding and grant opportunities.
 - ii. Influencing the outcomes of federal legislation.
 - iii. Elevating the client's standing in the federal and regional public policy arena.
 - iv. Assisting clients with breaking through bureaucratic obstacles.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please submit your proposal by email to NABC President Kasey Cronquist at kcronquist@nabcblues.org by **July 22, 2022 at 5pm PT**. Please address the five bullet points listed above in the Requirements and Evaluation Criteria section.

In addition, please include:

- A general cost estimate to cover the scope of work described in this document.
- References from past and current governmental affairs clients.
- Examples of work with governmental affairs clients or like-minded associations and an explanation of how you have helped to solve their challenges and supported organization objectives.
- A description of the team who would collaborate with NABC.

- A description of how you measure your success and regularly report metrics to clients.

CONTACT

If you have questions about the RFP or submitting a proposal, please contact NABC President Kasey Cronquist at kcronquist@nabcblues.org.