



## HQ Strategy Review RFP - Questions and Answers Document – Jan 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Q. Presumably the board meetings in June are the key determinants of the project timeline. Is there scope to modify the interim milestones (for example, to allow a little longer for Situation Analysis)?

A. The board meetings in June are a key determinant of the project timeline. We are eager to work together with the consulting firm to identify the best project plan for meeting our ultimate deliverable and are open to recommendations. While our timeline is aggressive, we wanted to indicate a very real desire to spend a significant amount of time exploring the strategic questions surrounding the information we gather during the situational analysis.

Q. We note your need for the contractor to lead internal communications. Will Mercy Corps provide resources to support the internal communications work or is the contractor expected to be self-sufficient in this respect?

A. Mercy Corps will provide resources to support the internal communications work, but is looking for consultants that have expertise managing large change initiatives that can help guide us through effectively informing and engaging team members as this process progresses.

Q. Who does Mercy Corps currently see as the closest and best in class NGO/ actor? For which reason?

A. We see many NGOs as peers, collaborators, and at times, competitors. We also benchmark against non-traditional NGOs, social enterprises etc. For the purposes of this review, we will benchmark against INGOs, social enterprises, non-traditional NGOs.

Q. Are there any expectations on how many internal and external stakeholders we are expected to talk to for our research?

A. We are anticipating a mix of focus groups and stakeholder interviews both internally and externally. We are looking for guidance on what would be needed to conduct a thorough but not exhaustive series of interviews or focus groups. We also anticipate the consultant drawing heavily on secondary research.

Q. How many people are in the core internal strategy team (the internal client team) for this project, in which functions? As this has implications on the organization of meetings and workshops.

Q. How many resources will be available from the "internal strategy team" to help support the Situational Analysis and Strategy Development phases of work? (Section III, Activities, Paragraph 4)

- A. The core internal client team consists of the following four individuals:
- The Vice President of Strategy and Learning is accountable for this strategy review.
  - The Senior Strategy and Learning Advisor is the primary project manager.
  - The Senior Adviser for Strategic Program Partnerships has been seconded to our team for the purposes of this review and will support in analysis, synthesizing and communicating information.
  - The Assistant Program Officer will support in all logistics and coordination.

The internal client team is being guided by and reports to a Steering Committee which consists of a subsection of our executive team and is chaired by our CEO.

Q. Which are the communication channels that MC currently uses and prefers within the organization (beyond email, i.e. slack, intranet, Zoom, MS teams...?)

- A. Workplace (Facebook for business); a global newsletter; a combination of Slack and Skype - the internal client team will happily use either; Zoom and Google Hangouts for synchronous meetings.

Q. It hasn't been mentioned in the RFP, but are you able to share the budget for this initial piece of work?

- A. We do not share budgets.

Q. Global Team Engagement / Internal Communications -> Only related to the input given by MC staff and stakeholders and informing about the process, progress, results or related to outputs of the developed strategy (socializing the result?)

- A. Also related to the outputs of the developed strategy - socializing the result and supporting buy in as the process unfolds.

Q. Are you open to firms partnering with other qualified firms to deliver this project?

- A. Yes. We would want to understand the skill sets and responsibilities of the firms, what the combination offers that one of the firms alone would not offer, and understand whether there has been a track record of collaboration that enables the unique combination of firms to be the best candidate for our purposes.

Q. On page 3, in the Mercy Corp Overview section, paragraph 5 - Most of the

metrics cited are activity metrics (# of people reached). We understand the challenges you face in consolidated reporting of outcomes, so understand the potential reasons behind this. Where is the best place for us to see a greater picture of how activity indicators and paired with the respective outcome data?

- A. The metrics cited were an assortment of indicators to demonstrate the breadth and depth of our **Impact, Influence, and Innovation**. We believe that transformational change occurs through the combination of: programmatic impact; influencing change-makers at local and global levels; and a restlessness to innovate in search of better solutions.

At Mercy Corps we pride ourselves on contextually-relevant market systems approaches. While each of our individual programs have outcome and impact indicators, we do not consistently apply those across programs and varying contexts. You can request access to a newly added document which pulls together four impact briefs from flagship initiatives.

Q. On page 7, in the Strategy Development section, first bullet - Why did you choose a 10-year horizon for your new vision?

- A. As a part of this strategy review process, we would like to expand our time horizon to explore what doing so allows us to achieve in terms of greater clarity, focus, and success metrics. This is a departure from how we have conducted strategy up to now and will require acculturation.

Historically, Mercy Corps' approach to strategy has fallen into the emergent strategy category. We have described strategy as a compass, not a map. The metaphor of the 'Compass' signals our commitment to organizational agility and is a reflection of the highly dynamic nature of the work we do and the places we do it. The **Strategic Framework** outlines and ties together our core tenets: our mission, Vision for Change, Core Strategies, and Guiding Principles. The **Strategic Objective** section outlines priorities for the coming year, although many are designed as multi-year objectives with interim metrics of success. Strategic Objectives provide targets and a means of accountability and transparency, and serve as the basis for reporting to Mercy Corps' leadership, global team and Board of Directors throughout the year.

However, one of the dilemmas of this approach is that evolving objectives allow for the perception that there is no long term vision - Even though Compass objectives are almost always multi-year and stated as such, there is a perception from some quarters and an accompanying narrative that Mercy Corps is not working towards a clear vision. We posit that by selecting a 10-year timeframe, we may be able to address this concern and with that, help the organization continue to evolve and transform.

Q. On page 7, in the Global Team Engagement section - What communication channels and tactics does the organization already have in place to engage mid- and junior-level staff across the organization? To what extent is your internal communications function available to execute

the communication needs of the project if provided direction on messaging, channels, and tactics?

- A. Communicating effectively with the whole organisation, including mid- and junior-level staff, is a priority for the Strategy Review. We are keen both to inform and to engage colleagues across the organisation - so that it is not just a one-way communication from HQ. Internal Communications will work with the consultant to identify the best ways to do that. We already use channels including Workplace (Facebook for business); a global newsletter; a combination of Slack and Skype (the internal client team will happily use either); Zoom and Google Hangouts for synchronous meetings. The consultant will be responsible for designing the best ways to gather input from a wide range of Mercy Corps staff, and until the consultant starts work we don't know exactly what that will look like. However, we expect mid- and junior-level staff to be able to share their thoughts in a range of ways, including through their line managers and in some cases as members of Working Groups.

On page 9, in the Cost Criteria section - Our typical pricing model is value-based pricing where we offer the client a firm fixed price for the scope of work. We do not bill our non-government clients based on hourly rates. Is this pricing approach acceptable or would it result in loss of evaluation points in the Cost Criteria section?

- A. A fixed price proposal for the scope of work is an acceptable pricing approach and would not result in loss of evaluation points strictly as a form of pricing versus time and materials.

Q. What are the video conferencing capabilities across your footprint? What communication channels do you currently have available to you to engage all team members?

- A. We have consistently been using Google Hangouts and Zoom since the beginning of COVID-19. Most offices across the globe have been able to adequately adapt. In addition to Hangouts and Zoom, Mercy Corps uses Workplace, a global newsletter, and emails.

Q. In light of COVID, what are your expectations for in-person consultation and workshops vs. digital ones?

- A. Due to COVID-19 we have limited all non-essential travel. Starting in March of 2020, all strategic consultations have been conducted virtually. We anticipate that all consultations and workshops for this strategy review will take place virtually.

Q. The organization has clearly done strategic planning in the past. What about the process previously are you looking to improve by requesting an external partner?

- A. Mercy Corps is conducting a strategy review to ensure we maximise our impact, in a context of rapid global change and upheaval. As we enter an exciting new phase under Tjada's leadership, this review will consider questions across a range of different areas,

including: our philosophy and purpose, our approaches and strategic priorities, our structure and our business model. We are overdue for a full fledged, ground up, review of our strategy. This will require a revised process and ultimately may result in a different type of product to our current Compass. The product and the process was cultivated over years in direct response to the needs of the existing executive team. We are excited to revisit both the process and the strategy product with the support of an outside consulting firm in order to bring in fresh perspectives, new skills, and unique approaches.

Q. What industry benchmark data do you already have access to?

A. We have access to publicly available information about industry actors, such as total revenue, what is reported on 990s, etc.

Q. Your most recent 990 does not seem to break down your sources of grant funding. Can you provide us a sense of major donors?

A. Institutional donors such as USAID, DFID (now the Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office), ECHO, and others account for nearly 2/3rds of our revenues. The other third is acquired through partnerships with Corporations, Foundations, and Individual Donors.

Q. Are the reviewers of the RFP responses accustomed to executive summary sections as part of proposals, particularly those of this type and page count?

A. The selection committee is made up of a combination of individuals from a cross section of the organization. The page count for this proposal is short and we encourage you to utilize the space to the best of your ability.

Q. Who is the visible sponsor of this effort in front of the organization?

A. Tjada D'Oyen McKenna - Mercy Corps' CEO

Q. Who is the project manager of this effort and in what time zone are they based?

A. The Senior Strategy and Learning Advisor is the project manager for this initiative, reporting to the Vice President of Strategy and Learning. Both are located in Portland Oregon, Pacific Standard Time.

Q. What strategy frameworks, if any, have you been accustomed to using for strategy development and execution? From your list of questions (page 4, in the Project Background

and Context section, paragraph 2, bullets 3 and 6), it seems apparent that SWOT is one of them.

- A. Planning takes place at different levels of the organization from individual projects through to technical teams, and as the agency as a whole. Mercy Corps uses a suite of strategic planning tools, captured in a strategy toolkit, of which the SWOT is one of them. We are excited to experience new and creative ways of setting strategy with our partner as well as drawing on tried and tested frameworks.

Q. One of the questions you articulate (page 4, in the Project Background and Context section, paragraph 2, bullet 8) is, “How do we build upon the substantive strategic thinking that we have already done...” What strategic thinking have you already done? Might you provide us a summary of your most recent conclusions? Attached to this question, what plausible scenarios have you discussed as a team or planned for, particularly beyond COVID?

- A. Please see the previously attached Global Program Vision and Strategy as one important example. Significant work has been done on this over the past year and the operationalisation of this initiative is already in motion. The consulting firm that is selected will receive a full briefing that includes a large list of assets that captures our research, analysis, and driving

Q. What is the process by which you currently review your strategy? Is there a current strategy progress report that you could share?

- A. We report in line with the Board and Leadership meetings which take place three times a year (Q1, Q2 and Q4) with the intent of creating accountability and also time to reflect and adapt. These quarterly reports also document changes in our strategy. Our Q4 reports come in the form of an End of Year report which tracks overall success in achieving success metrics and objectives, along with the areas where we fell short or changed our strategy. Quarterly Reports are submitted to the board for review. The end of year report is not available for sharing at this moment but will be made available to the selected firm.

Q. Do you have a Diversity & Inclusion Officer? What work has already been done in recognition of the colonialist influence on current systems?

- A. Yes. We do have a Director of Gender, Diversity and Inclusion who manages a small team and works with matrixed teams to support the organization globally. Please see our public facing statement on [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) and our Vision for Racial & Ethnic Diversity for Mercy Corps’ Global Leadership Team. In addition, please review the Localisation paper that we have shared as a part of the packet for interested consulting firms. While there is much more work that has been and is being done, these two sources will provide some indication on our work and thinking to date.

Q. How different are the prescribed activities and deliverables in the RFP relative to what Mercy

Corps has used in the past? (Section III, Activities and Deliverables, Paragraphs 3 – 21)

- A. Many of these activities and deliverables are similar to the strategy work we do every year during the Compass process - in which we take stock of the global context of our work, map our strategic direction based on our strengths, plan specific activities and identify metrics. However, the proposed Strategy Review is different in terms of scale and timescale. In scale, while asking similar strategic questions, it will take a more root and branch look at our position in the global landscape, and what approaches we should take. This is a bigger step back than usual and will include an extra level of inquiry into what and where we should/could be focusing. On timescale, it will deliver a strategy and metrics of success for a much longer period of ten years.

Q. What previous approaches have worked or not worked for strategic planning? (Section III, Objectives, Paragraph 1)

- A. Mercy Corps is an adherent to adaptive management and as such we have generally fostered an emergent approach to strategy development. We revisit our strategy annually, with greater focus or emphasis on different elements of the organization that require the greatest amount of cross agency collaboration or attention. This has worked well for us, but we are at a moment in time when we want to revisit this approach.

Historically, our strategy processes have struggled when we focused too much energy on aspects of the situational analysis without making sufficient time for decision making around the strategic implications coming out of that analysis.

A common complaint we have heard about past strategy analysis is that we do not need a firm to come back to us with information that we already know. We are looking for a partner that will understand who we are, and will challenge us through conversation, identifying gaps, and pushing us for greater clarity. And we recognize the importance of facilitation in this process.

Q. Has Mercy Corps applied human-centered design thinking in its planning efforts? If so, how has this been used? (Section III, Characteristics of the Consulting Firm, Paragraph 2)

- A. Yes Mercy Corps has used human-centered design thinking in planning efforts. And has had partnerships with organizations like IDEO. Planning takes place at different levels of the organization from individual projects through to technical teams, and as the agency as a whole.

Q. What data / research / insights does Mercy Corps maintain on the various constituencies it serves and the partners it relies on for support? (Section III, Activities, Paragraphs 1 – 3)

Q. What tools and data exist for measuring strategic, program, financial performance, brand

equity/reputation, and employee sentiment/engagement levels? (Section III, Activities, Paragraphs 1)

- A. Mercy Corps has a significant amount of data/research/insights related to our business, our industry, our participants, brand, etc. We have compiled an extensive Asset List which we use to share the most important and relevant information with the consulting firm upon engagement.

Q. Which of these mission statements will be used in developing the go-forward strategy? Or is a new mission statement part of the strategy development scope? (Section I, Paragraph 2)

- o From the website: We're leading a global community of humanitarians to create a future where everyone can prosper.

- o From the RFP: Our mission: to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities.

- o From the Compass: Mercy Corps exists to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping build secure, productive and just communities.

- A. Mercy Corps exists to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping build secure, productive and just communities.

Q. To what extent should operating and organizational models be addressed in the Strategy Development phase? (Section III, Deliverables – Strategy Development, Paragraph 6)

- A. We do not expect operating and organizational models to be fully addressed or developed during the Strategy Development phase. We do believe that decisions taken during this phase will trigger discussions and decisions that will have operational and organizational implications and anticipate spending time in late summer and into early fall considering these discussions.

Q. How many Mercy Corps team members is the Situation Analysis phase of work expected to involve? (Section III, Activities, Paragraphs 1 - 6) Q. Like the above, how many external stakeholders are expected to be involved in this effort? (Section III, Activities, Paragraph 2)

- A. Mercy Corps has a loose group of leadership (about 100 individuals) from across the agency consisting of country directors, regional directors, and senior directors of technical or operational functions. This group will be a key source of information and will need to be consulted at different stages and in different ways throughout this strategic review. Many calls for input will be funneled through this group, who will be tasked with pulling together insights from their teams. Depending on the plan that we co-develop with the consulting firm, we may form working groups to engage in specific deep dive topics.



Q. What resources (e.g., functional leads, SMEs) will Mercy Corp make available to form the "internal work groups" mentioned in the Situation Analysis section? (Section III, Activities, Paragraph 3)

A. Mercy Corps is looking to co-design the process with the consulting firm. We may form working groups to engage in specific deep dive topics - leaning on and engaging the experts who may be able to best contribute towards that topic.

Q. Where in the organization is change management currently owned? Please describe the level and amount of internal change and communication resources that will be available for this effort. (Section III, Deliverables, Global Team Engagement, Paragraph 2)

A. Mercy Corps does not have a change management function. The Strategy and Learning team will be co-managing the change management process for this initiative together with the consultant up front, and carrying through into the future.

Q. When do you want the project to begin: Feb 22 or Mar 1? (Section V, Timeframe / Schedule, Paragraphs 2 – 3)

A. March 1st is more realistic given the timeline and the need to formalize the partnership after selecting the best matched firm.

Q. What is driving the overall timeline beyond the planned Board meetings in June? (Section V, Timeframe / Schedule, Paragraph 3)

A. We have chosen an aggressive timeline to ensure momentum. We are looking for a fast paced but robust process. We would like to reexamine who we are, but focus more on who we want to be and how we will get there.

Q. Is there any flexibility in the proposal submission deadline?

A. We understand that the timeline for the proposals is limited and as such we have adjusted the submission deadline to 5pm PST (Friday 22nd January) to provide one more business day for firms in the United States.

Q. Will Mercy Corps give serious consideration to a project proposal with an April start date and October end date?

A. Given the right fit, we may be able to insert some flexibility into the timeline. We need to make progress on identifying the right consulting firm first and we will listen to their guidance on ensuring we meet the deliverables. We are eager to begin.

Q. Can conversations with Mercy Corps' executives be organized before proposal submission?

A. It will not be possible to arrange conversations with Mercy Corps executives. Now that we have launched the RFP we are in effect in a quiet period through proposal submission. The questions and answers period can

be utilized to gain additional clarity for the proposal.

Q. Who is on the steering committee and what role does the Steering Committee play? What role do you anticipate them to play in strategy development? Frequency of engagement and decision rights?

Q. What role do you expect the board to play? How much engagement do you anticipate? Frequency of engagement and decision rights?

A. The steering committee consists of five team members from our executive team: Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, CEO; Craig Redmond, Senior Vice President of Programs; Jennifer Cooperman, Interim CFO; Adrienne Karecki, Chief Development and Marketing Officer ; and Alex Angulo Interim Executive Director, Mercy Corps Europe. They will help steer and guide the strategy review process. Currently we are engaging this group bi-monthly for key decision making.

We anticipate the board will be available and eager to engage in stakeholder interviews or focus groups as outsiders/insiders. Their thoughts will be meaningful and informative. They will not be engaged in the day to day of this strategy review - the process is fully owned and led by our CEO. The board will act as a sounding board at key moments within the strategy process and will hold us accountable to progress.

Q. Will your communications team play a role here to support communications? And if so, what will their role be?

A. A member of the Strategy Team who has communications experience will be assigned to support communications, and will help to connect with other comms colleagues across the organisation as necessary.

Q. Has the board provided any investment parameters for the coming year that would impact direction or approach?

A. No

Q. On page 10, in the "Timeframe / Schedule" section, paragraph 1 – The RFP references "key convening/meetings of Mercy Corps leadership" that should be leveraged by the project. There are two board meetings listed (June 17 and June 24) and the suggestion of a situational analysis presentation on March 31<sup>st</sup>. What group of people is being presented to on March 31 (as opposed to the two weeks following that presentation)? Is there a meeting already slated for April 15 for the "Strategy Development launch"? If so, who is attending that meeting? Finally, is there already a meeting slated for June 30 and, if so, who is attending that meeting?

A. The board meetings are already scheduled for March 4th, June 17th and June 24th. The situational analysis will need to be submitted first to the Executive Team, then to the wider Leadership Group, and finally to the Board. For this reason, we have reserved two weeks for these conversations. No meetings have been scheduled to date. Given current

travel restrictions all meetings are being conducted virtually and therefore scheduling has become a simpler task. The Strategy Review is of utmost priority within the organization and team members are eager to engage and will be flexible with scheduling.