



**MERCY CORPS**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**U.S. Department of State-funded Strengthening Caribbean Economic Growth (SCEG) Program**

**Award Amount:** \$50,000 USD

**Period of Award:** 1 year

**12 Eligible Caribbean Jurisdictions:** Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the 5 Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

**APPLY BY:** November 24, 2025 at 12pm AST

**CONTACT:** [SCEGgrants@mercy Corps.org](mailto:SCEGgrants@mercy Corps.org)

Dear prospective applicant,

Thank you for your interest in partnering with Mercy Corps to create meaningful impact throughout the Caribbean. We value the work you do and are committed to making the application process as transparent and supportive as possible.

Please use the following information to guide your submission in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP).

## Mercy Corps Overview

Mercy Corps is a global non-profit organization with a seasoned team of humanitarian and development practitioners operating in over 40 countries. Working alongside communities, Mercy Corps tackles today's toughest challenges and shapes a future where everyone can prosper. Mercy Corps helps strengthen local systems where its partners are the drivers of growth and development in the face of conflict, and advocates alongside local and national governments to ensure the needs of local communities and small businesses are prioritized in decision-making.

Mercy Corps' Caribbean Resilience Initiative (CRI) is a subregional portfolio that works across the Caribbean, leading economic strategies to support local communities. Team members located in five jurisdictions (Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands) lead programming aimed at strengthening this region's Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and territories.

## Strengthening Caribbean Economic Growth (SCEG) Overview

### *Problem Statement/Rationale*

Mercy Corps' research identified persistent and interrelated barriers to employment and entrepreneurship across 12 Caribbean jurisdictions. These findings provide the foundation for this RFP, which seeks locally driven solutions to address these challenges through targeted small grants.

### **Key insights include:**

- **Small Island Economies:** Many jurisdictions face structural economic constraints—high import dependency, costly logistics, government debt, and brain drain—that limit local economic opportunity and innovation.
- **Labor Force Participation and NEET Youth:** A significant portion of youth are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), often due to limited access to relevant job training, lack of confidence, and weak connections to the labor market.
- **Skills Gaps:** There is a clear mismatch between the skills job seekers possess and what employers need. Outdated curricula, emigration of skilled workers, and insufficient technical training are key drivers of this gap.
- **Tourism Sector Opportunities:** While tourism remains a major employer—especially for women and youth—jobs are often precarious and low-paid. With better investment and training, the sector could support more stable, higher-value employment and local business development.

- **Entrepreneurship Barriers:** Entrepreneurs struggle with limited access to mentorship, networking, and business development services. There is unmet demand for technical support in business planning, digitalization, and risk management.
- **Structural Challenges:** Small businesses face restricted access to finance, burdensome trade regulations, and workforce limitations that prevent scaling, innovation, and digital growth.

These findings point to a need for localized, practical interventions that address both immediate and structural barriers. While some issues require long-term policy change, community-level initiatives can make measurable progress by focusing on:

- Strengthening job skills aligned with private sector demand;
- Supporting business development and entrepreneurship;
- Expanding digital capabilities for enterprises and workers;
- Improving access to finance and credit-building tools.

This RFP invites proposals from local organizations with context-specific solutions that respond to these challenges and contribute to inclusive, resilient economic growth across the Caribbean.

## SCEG Request for Proposals Overview

As part of the U.S Department of State-funded SCEG program, Mercy Corps will administer a small grants challenge, awarding up to \$50,000 USD to projects that can demonstrably improve access to demand-driven inputs and services, either by enhancing employment opportunities or supporting the growth and success of small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Interested organizations should submit proposals to implement activities spanning a maximum of 12 months in one or more of the 12 eligible jurisdictions. Initiatives should align with at least one of the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Improving the labor force's skills alignment and job readiness with identified private sector needs.
- **Objective 2:** Strengthening access to and utilization of digital tools by individuals and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to improve efficiency, expand markets and employment, and ensure business continuity.
- **Objective 3:** Supporting MSMEs through targeted approaches (sector-specific, geographic clusters, or industry groupings) to identify opportunities, improve management, and connect to local, regional, and global networks, particularly pertaining to trade opportunities with the US.

SCEG intends to fund activities that directly contribute to one or more of the objectives above. Priority will be placed on activities that reach areas or population segments that currently have no or minimal access to these services. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals based on the specific needs and solutions in their area of operations, the organization's mission, and sector of expertise. Program activities might include, but are not limited to:

- Technical skills training in a growth sector in partnership with companies that agree to hire graduates or offer them opportunities as apprentices/interns.

- Development of an online jobs board, along with training for job applicants on completing applications and preparing for job interviews.
- Expansion of clusters or associations of local tourism-related MSMEs, and development of a sustainable industry networking platform to connect them to income opportunities.
- Support of existing agricultural associations or cooperatives to expand markets for high-value crops through improved networking, marketing, sales, processing, and/or production techniques.
- Training of individuals or MSMEs on internet and technology skills that are in demand by the private sector or useful for business expansion and operations.
- Business development services to help MSMEs expand online sales or increase the use of technology in their operations, including assistance with preparing applications for government-run small-business grants programs.
- Training on in-demand skills, with certifications, for individuals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time or face challenges in obtaining employment.

Competitive proposals will:

- Offer creative approaches to addressing specific structural challenges, building on the demonstrated knowledge and experience of the applicant.
- Be based on identified local private sector needs and incorporate direct partnership with the private sector to boost the scale, sustainability, and impact of the project.
- Leverage existing activities and resources such as training packages, tools, platforms, or activities that can be adapted and utilized.
- Expand existing activities and experiences to new, underserved areas, and adapt them to new sectors or participants, through new partnerships, or piloted innovations that show potential for increasing the scale and sustainability of the project.
- Partner with, and/or leverage, relevant government or private programs, existing networks, and other initiatives.
- Identify opportunities to continue the project and increase its sustainability through creative mechanisms such as, but not limited to, exploring fee-for-service activities funded by private sector companies or associations, or utilizing other institutional or government project funding.

Resources are limited, and Mercy Corps is most interested in proposals that maximize existing resources to achieve the greatest positive impact by carefully targeting those who are best positioned to benefit from the proposed support. Any assistance should be based on demonstrated need.

Competitive proposals will prioritize locations and/or participants with limited or no access to the support needed to effectively join the workforce or start and expand an MSME. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Youth trying to enter the workforce.
- Individuals who have been out of the workforce for an extended period.
- Individuals and MSMEs in more remote areas with limited services.

- Individuals who face barriers to employment due to a range of circumstances, e.g., lower education levels, transportation constraints, family care, etc.

Any proposals targeting a specific group of individuals must be able to demonstrate need through clear data and background analysis. Proposals should not include or exclude individuals or groups based solely on falling within a social or economic category.

## Eligibility

Eligible entities must have an active registration in the jurisdiction(s) for which they are applying, and be able to demonstrate a minimum of three years of relevant experience in that jurisdiction.

- **Eligible entities include:**
  - Community-based organizations (CBOs) and Non-Profit Organizations.
  - For-profit entities who implement activities that provide community/social benefit.
  - Business support organizations and associations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, Business incubators and accelerators, industry associations etc.)
  - Academic and research institutions (e.g., university centers, research institutes)
- **Ineligible entities include:**
  - Government entities (e.g. government ministries, municipalities, etc.).
  - Public international organizations.
  - Non-governmental organizations whose headquarters are not based in the targeted jurisdictions.
  - Organizations whose mandate is focused on a single category of people based on protected characteristics including race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation.

## Request for Proposals Details

### Selection Criteria

Mercy Corps will select proposals from eligible entities based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with the stated objectives.
- Demonstration of need based on research, data, and experience.
- Evidence-based design to address the identified need or issue.
- Demonstrated collaboration, coordination, or partnership with other key stakeholders.
- Past experience relevant to the proposed activities.
- Focus on underserved or hard to reach groups or individuals.
- Potential for activities to be sustained without further grants.

- Contribution to creating opportunities for investment and market connections with the regional and US private sector.

## Scoring

Each proposal will be evaluated across **8 core categories** based on the RFP’s priorities. A maximum of five points can be awarded for each category. This score is then multiplied by the weighting factor per the table below.

Category	Weighting (Scoring from 1 to 5)
1. Alignment with RFP Objectives	x 1 (max 5 points)
2. Demonstration of Need	x 4 (max 20 points)
3. Quality of Proposed Solution	x 4 (max 20 points)
4. Focus on Underserved Groups	x 1 (max 5 points)
5. Partnerships & Resource Leveraging	x 2 (max 10 points)
6. Sustainability & Potential for Scale	x 2 (max 10 points)
7. Organizational Capacity	x 3 (max 15 points)
8. Private Sector Investment & Market Linkages with the US	x 1 (max 5 points)

## Timeline

The following table provides a tentative timeline for the RFP process. Participants will be notified of any significant changes in dates.

Activity	Dates
<b>RFP Launch</b>	<b>November 3rd</b>
<b>Q&amp;A Session</b>	<b>November 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup></b>
Info- Session #1 (join <a href="#">here</a> )	November 6th (1pm EST)
Info-Session #2 (join <a href="#">here</a> )	November 7th (1pm EST)
<b>Grant Applications Due</b>	<b>November 28th</b>
<b>DOS Approval Window</b>	<b>January 12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Selected CSOs notified (and provided with feedback)</b>	<b>Late January</b>
<b>Award agreements signed</b>	<b>Early February</b>

## Next Steps for Select CSOs

Selected organizations will receive a packet of administrative documents to complete, including:

- Organization information form
- Conflict of interest forms to be completed by organization’s leadership
- Detailed budget
- Organizational capacity and due diligence form

In addition, each selected organization will need to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in place prior to signing and fully executing the grant agreement. If you do not currently have a UEI, we recommend that you consider starting the UEI application process as soon as possible, as this process can take several

weeks. The UEI is issued by the US Government through sam.gov. ([What information will I need to provide to get a Unique Entity ID?](#))

Applicants may also be requested to provide additional clarification or revisions to their proposal. Mercy Corps will provide technical support and detailed guidance should this be required.

### **Submission Instructions**

The RFP can be submitted in either English or Spanish.

Please email the completed RFP form and all required attachments to [SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org](mailto:SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org) with the email title "SCEG Grant Application – *Org Name- Location*".

## **Other Terms & Conditions**

### **WITHDRAWAL OF RFP**

Proposals may be withdrawn before the RFP submittal deadline by submitting a written request to [SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org](mailto:SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org). Re-submittal before the RFP submittal deadline can be made; however, they may not be re-submitted after the deadline.

### **RFP COSTS**

All costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of proposals to the RFP shall be completely absorbed by the responding party to the RFP. Any material submitted that is confidential must be clearly marked as such.

### **LIMITATIONS**

Mercy Corps reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.

## **Contact**

Please contact [SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org](mailto:SCEGgrants@mercycorps.org) for any questions.

# Request for Proposal Template

Mercy Corps has provided a Request for Proposal (RFP) template/form below. This will help prospective applicants craft proposals. Proposals must include all requested elements listed for each section and should not exceed the word limits.

## SCEG Request for Proposal (RFP)

[Name of Organization]

[Name of Jurisdiction]

[Organization Email Contact]

### I. Background

#### **Summary (500 words)**

*Provide a high-level summary of the proposed program.*

#### **[Name of Org] Overview (250 words)**

- *A brief history and description of the mission and core programs of your organization*
- *The community or population you work with, and how their needs shape your work*
- *Key strengths, relevant past experience, and partnerships that make you well-suited for this project*

#### **Description of Need (500 words)**

- *Clearly define the problem and who it affects*
- *Share relevant data (and how you got it), and any community insights, to illustrate the need of the specific target participant group*
- *Explain the root causes or contributing factors, with data/evidence if possible*
- *Highlight why this issue is urgent or important to address now*
- *Explain how problem can be addressed (the opportunity).*

## II. Project Description

### Proposed Solution (750 words)

- *Overview of the proposed solution*
- *Target population (or location) and how they will benefit*

### Project Rationale (250 words)

*This section should describe:*

- *How the proposed project aligns with the RFP's objectives*
- *Any community input that helped shape the strategy*
- *Why it fits your community's specific needs and context*
- *How it addresses root causes of the problem*
- *Alignment with local economic or workforce trends*
- *How it uses/leverages existing knowledge, tools, or related programs (be specific)*

### Partnerships (100 words)

- *Any collaborations with other organizations, employers, companies, or institutions*
- *Additional funding, if any, that will support the proposed initiative*
- *How these partnerships will enhance the project and support sustainability*

## III. Outcomes & Impact

### Project Objectives & Goals (250 words)

*Provide a high-level overview of what the project seeks to accomplish (both in the short-term and long-term) that includes:*

- *The main objectives of the project (e.g., "increase economic mobility for low-income families")*
- *A clear connection to the problem being addressed*
- *Which SCEG RFP Objective(s) this proposal is contributing to.*

### Expected Outcomes and Indicators (200 words)

*The following indicators are required indicators:*

#### Objective 1

- *% of individuals with new employment following participation in the workforce development programs.*
- *% of individuals with improved perceived quality of employment.*

#### Objective 2

- % of individuals/MSMEs reporting increased confidence in using digital technologies

Objective 3

- % of MSMEs demonstrating improved management practices (e.g., financial tracking, inventory control, quality standards)
- % of MSMEs perceiving improvement in their business performance as a result of program participation

*There should be a minimum of 3 indicators including the required indicators. Additional indicators should be tangible, measurable results within, or beyond, the grant period. Below is a sample table of program **objectives and their corresponding indicators**. Please adapt the table to the selected objectives and proposed activities. You may submit using your own format, but it must include the objective, corresponding indicator, target, and source of data.*

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE	PROJECTED TARGET
Objective 1: Improving the labor force’s skills alignment and job readiness with identified private sector needs.	% of participants showing improved skills	pre/post assessments	
	% of participants demonstrating improved soft skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving)	Feedback forms from employers	
	% of individuals with improved digital literacy	pre/post tests	
Objective 2: Strengthening access to and utilization of digital tools by individuals and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to improve efficiency, expand markets and employment, and ensure business continuity.	% of individuals/MSMEs adopting at least one new digital tool	survey	
Objective 3: Supporting MSMEs through targeted approaches (sector-specific, geographic clusters, or industry groupings) to identify opportunities, improve management, and connect to local, regional, and global networks, particularly pertaining to trade opportunities with the US.	% of MSMEs feeling more connected to support networks (e.g., peers, associations, government, buyers)	survey	

**Sustainability Plan (250 words)**

- *What aspects of the project will be continued after the award and how?*

- *How will the project outcomes be sustained after the grant period, for example through cost-share, partnerships, company engagement, etc.?*
- *The specific partners or projects you will work with to increase sustainability*
- *Potential to scale or replicate the project*

#### IV. Implementation

##### Timeline and Major Milestones (250 words)

*Provide a high-level plan for how the project will roll out over a 12-month period, using the template below. Feel free to edit, add/delete row, re-organize to make specific to your proposed program. Please include:*

- *Key phases (e.g., planning, outreach, implementation, evaluation)*
- *Project start and end dates*
- *Major deliverables or events (e.g., launch of a training cohort, hiring staff, partner onboarding)*
- *Specific milestone (e.g., "50 participants enrolled by Month 3")*
- *Any seasonality or timing considerations (e.g., school year, fiscal year, hiring cycles)*

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Milestone / Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Month 1-3</b>	<i>Project Kickoff</i>	<i>Finalize contracts, onboard staff, hold launch meeting</i>	<i>...</i>

##### Anticipated Challenges & Risks (250 words)

*Please explain any potential challenges/risks, and how to mitigate them:*

- *What are the potential challenges you may face to the successful and timely completion of the proposed activities and/or achieving the stated outcomes?*
- *What are your plans to prepare for or deal with these challenges?*