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Putting BEAM's Competency Framework to the test!



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All blogs

Improving hiring processes and supporting individualised mentorship - how MercyCorps, iDE and Swisscontact put BEAM's new Competency Framework into practice.

The **MSD Competency Framework** launched in 2018. Beyond a list of knowledge and skills, the framework aggregates resources and promotes six ways to teach the competencies, as well as three ways to assess them.

It consists of 17 competencies, split into three groups:

- A - Analysis & insight
- B - Intervention delivery
- C - Teamwork & interaction

Since its launch BEAM has spent six months engaged in conversations with 10 organisations implementing MSD programmes. We have piloted elements of the framework with six organisations in more than 10 of their programmes.

In this post I explore the experiences of three key leaders who shared their learning in a recent webinar.

MercyCorps, Ethiopia

MercyCorps' Will Baron was the first to actively apply the MSD Competency Framework by redesigning their hiring process for a National MSD Adviser position.

Will wanted to better assess these key competencies for the role:

- relationship building
- facilitation
- knowledge synthesis and donor relations

The hiring team took advantage of sample traditional interview questions and worked with BEAM to develop a customised case study to assess candidates in a complex, yet realistic, scenario.

They noticed a big difference between candidates familiar with MSD language and those who were directly from the private sector - cautioning others against assuming that jargon use equates to competencies.

Ultimately, the team hired someone with direct business experience who demonstrated stronger competencies. This new MSD Adviser, Meseret Tefera, is now using elements of the framework to attract and hire women for remote entry-level positions on multiple MSD programmes.

For guidance on how to take a similar approach, check out the newly launched page on [Guidance for hiring and recruitment](#).

iDE Bangladesh

Deepak Dhoj Khadka and the team of project managers at iDE Bangladesh also used the framework to sharpen hiring processes. However, their team focused on hiring for new programmes and for technical staff roles.

This is closely suited to the purpose of the MSD Competency Framework. Although it is designed for field practitioners it can be adapted to reflect the additional layers required for managers, monitoring personnel, and even donor staff.

Taking a human-centred design approach, Deepak and colleagues gathered a range of insights on the value and challenges of applying the framework:

- new programmes offer a great opportunity
- changes in HR systems take time
- encourage managers to draw on their own knowledge and experience as well as external guidance

Some leaders from the organisation took the initiative to create their own tools, including a simple self-assessment rubric staff and managers can use to track competency strengths across multiple team members. This personal development

approach is closely related to new [Guidance for individual practitioners](#) seeking to build their own competencies.

Swisscontact

Ailsa Buckley represented the four-person internal working group from Swisscontact committed to testing the competency framework.

Ailsa has supported individualised mentorship of new staff, focusing on Group A (Analysis & insight) competencies during the start-up phase of the new MSD programme, [CASA](#).

Her colleagues, Tanjima and Franz, have both worked with practitioners to test out tools specific to particular competencies – from [Intervention design](#) to [Self-learning](#). They explored what it takes to work one-on-one with practitioners *in situ* to strengthen their competencies.

These experiences are expanded on in the [Guidance for mentors and managers](#). This can help MSD programmes realise the breadth of competencies across their teams and to treat staff as different individuals - with unique priorities for development.

These three examples spotlight some of the early adopters and their initial experiences with the MSD Competency Framework. Looking to the future, several pathways open up. One is to continue to curate an inventory of resources by constantly updating competency pages and linking to new research.

An example of this, which will be featured in our December 2019 webinar ([MSD business models: case studies and competencies](#)), is a set of case studies developed by the ILO to highlight the crucial importance of staff capacity to understand business models.

Long-term, the successful uptake of a competency framework requires organisational transformation. In 2020 we will start to share the experiences of organisations that have sought to create a more fundamental change - in culture, structure and practices.

- [Browse the MSD Competency Framework](#)
- Sign up to our webinar [MSD business models: case studies and competencies](#) taking place on 5 December 2019