Terms of Reference

Social media strategy – Consultancy

1   Context

1.1   Background of Sphere

Sphere was established in 1997 as an inter-agency project in response to concerns about the performance and accountability of humanitarian actors during the Great Lakes refugee crisis. Sphere developed standards for humanitarian response which have inspired generations of humanitarians. Sphere transformed from a project to an independent non-profit membership organisation in 2016.

Sphere is a diverse global community of purpose and practice that brings together frontline practitioners, humanitarian agencies, community organisations, trainers, donors, policy makers, government agencies and affected communities, around a common goal – to improve the resilience of, and outcomes for, people affected by disaster and crisis.

Sphere establishes, promotes and reviews quality standards for humanitarian action which provide an accountable framework for preparedness, resource allocation, response, monitoring and advocacy, before, during and after disasters and crises. Sphere believes that people affected by crisis must be at the centre of decisions about humanitarian protection, assistance, recovery and resilience.

Sphere platforms are freely available and Sphere products are open source.

1.2   Background to the consultancy

Sphere's current social media presence is summarised as follows (figures as of 30 June 2021):

- **Website** (https://spherestandards.org/): 132,000 page views per quarter by 43,700 unique users
- **Learning Management System** (https://learning.spherestandards.org/): 1,580 new registrations per quarter
- **Interactive Handbook** (https://handbook.spherestandards.org/): 17,700 unique users of the Sphere Handbook per quarter
- **Newsletter**: 98,200 subscribers
- **Facebook**: 17,900 followers
- **Twitter**: 9,390 followers
- **LinkedIn**: 4,350 followers
- **YouTube**: 3,550 subscribers

Assuming some overlap between platforms, Sphere's current *direct*[1] social media reach is probably around 100,000 to 120,000. A key audience for Sphere – but by no means the only one – is humanitarian sector field personnel. The total size of this audience was estimated as 570,000 in 2017, of which 304,000 are national NGO staff[2]. Sphere's audience in 2016 (based on a self-selected sample of 2,800) includes 22% national/local NGO staff[3]. Extrapolating these figures, Sphere is directly engaging less than 10% of national/local humanitarian field personnel. Lack of awareness, lack of acceptance and limited accessibility may be factors.

Sphere may be reaching significantly more people *indirectly* through the social media channels (and in-person engagement) of other organisations in the Sphere network, notably focal points, members, trainers, and other members of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP).

Sphere wishes to inform and engage existing social media subscribers, grow audiences and reach new audiences, both directly and indirectly, because we believe that principled humanitarian assistance – based on Sphere principles and standards – results in better outcomes for people affected by crisis.

2 Project description

2.1 Objective of the project

Develop a social media strategy for Sphere for the next 5 years (2022 to 2026), including where we are, where we want to get to, how we are going to get there, and a detailed action plan for the first 12 months (2022).

2.2 Guiding questions

The social media strategy should provide answers to the questions below. The list is not exhaustive and will be refined in consultation with the selected Consultant.

2.2.1 Where are we?

- What is Sphere's current reach (directly and indirectly) among various audiences, e.g., national NGOs, local NGOs/CBOs, students/academics, new/young humanitarians, civil protection actors, donors, field personnel, volunteers, UN agencies, trainers, policy makers, government agencies, affected communities, etc.?

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[1] *Direct* refers to people who subscribe to the Sphere secretariat's social media channels. *Indirect* refers to people who subscribe to the social media channels of Sphere's members and focal points. Typically, only a small proportion of posts created by Sphere focal points and members are related to Sphere.
[2] The State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS) 2018 – Full Report, Knox Clarke, P., https://www.alnap.org/help-library/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system-2018-full-report
[3] Sphere Handbook usage survey infographic 2016, https://spherestandards.org/resources/sphere-handbook-usage-survey-infographic-2016/

2.2.2 What are the relevant external trends and influences?

- How are tastes in social media consumption changing? How does this vary by geography, age group or other factors? What are the factors specific to the humanitarian sector?

2.2.3 Where do we want to get to **and why**?

- What factors are important when defining audiences? E.g., type of employer, geographic location, job role, age, disability status, etc.
- What should Sphere's reach be in 5 years' time (directly and indirectly) by audience, geography, and/or other factors?
- Which audiences should be prioritised?

2.2.4 How are we going to get there?

- What is the optimum mix of social media platforms for Sphere for direct engagement? For example, should we add Instagram, TikTok, etc. and/or should we drop one or more existing channels, e.g. Twitter?
- What will be communicated to whom, and via which platforms?
- What is the optimum balance of direct social media engagement (via our own sites/pages) vs. indirect engagement via our focal points and other partners?
- How can we enable, engage and support our focal point network (and other partners) as part of a network-level social media strategy? This could, for example, involve contracting people and/or organisations to post translated and/or unique Sphere content on their feeds, which would require quality monitoring.
- How can we ensure localised (locally relevant) engagement? For example, could we establish a network of paid or unpaid community managers, with each person focused on a specific audience or language?
- Sphere's direct posts on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are 95% in English. Should we post in different languages? If so, on the same feed or on separate feeds?
- How often should Sphere post on social media channels?
- Is it acceptable to use the same content several times, or even "evergreen" key messages for periodic use? If yes, what is the optimum mix of new/time-sensitive content vs. repeated/key messages; and what should be the gap between identical posts? In no, what are other ways to recycle existing content effectively?
- What is the best post-scheduling package/platform (if any) for Sphere, balancing cost vs. features?
- How can Sphere transform analytics (from Google analytics and elsewhere) into intelligence to support decision making?
- How, and to what extent, should Sphere use paid ad campaigns to reach beyond existing subscribers?
- How, and to what extent, should Sphere outsource implementation of the social media strategy, including to Sphere focal points and professional consultants, keeping in mind Sphere's commitment to localisation and participation?

- How can Sphere reach staff of local/national NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), especially in countries with low internet penetration, e.g., Mozambique (~20%)?

2.2.5 How will we know when we've got there?

- How can Sphere measure indirect social media engagement? (Including baseline research and ongoing monitoring.)
- How will we measure the success of this strategy and its implementation? What are the key performance indicators? Are there useful benchmarks we can use to measure position and success against sector peers?

2.3 Reference documents

These documents will be available to the selected consultant and are available to bidders on request.

- **Mailchimp database consultancy report**: Sphere worked with a consultant in 2020/2021 on a similar project to this one but focused on our approach to newsletters.
- **Draft social media strategy**: Sphere staff started drafting a social media strategy in mid-2019. While this was never completed, it includes some background information, ideas and a SWOT analysis.

3 Activities and deliverables

3.1 Activities

- **Consult stakeholders**: By survey, interviews and/or other appropriate methods. Including staff (Sphere secretariat), focal points and users of Sphere social media platforms.
- **Draft strategy document**
- **Present strategy to small review panel** (to be set up by Sphere)
- **Finalise strategy document** including year 1 action plan

3.2 Deliverables

- **Draft strategy document**
- **Final strategy document** including year 1 action plan
- **Brief project report** including methodology, survey results and lessons learned for any similar projects in the future

4 Duration

The contract is for up to 7 days between mid-October 2021 and mid-December 2021.

5   Consultant profile

The ideal candidate will have:

- experience in defining communication strategies, including social media communications strategies;
- knowledge of the humanitarian sector; and
- knowledge of regional (Africa, Asia, Latin America, etc.) differences in social media platforms, trends, tastes and audiences.

6   Location

The Consultant can be based in any country except those restricted by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the federal council of Switzerland. Consultants based in Switzerland must be registered as a consultant under Swiss law.

7   How to apply

Please submit an expression of interest to recruitment@spherestandards.org no later than 30 Sep 2021.

To be included with your application:

- Motivation letter (max 1 page)
- Consultant profile/CV (max 3 pages)
- Example(s) of previous similar work
- Financial offer i.e. daily rate and number of days
- Reference(s)

7.1   Process

- After analysis of bids, shortlisted applicants will be invited for a 1-hour online conference during the first half of October 2021.
- The decision for the award of the contract will be communicated in mid-October with the project start date shortly thereafter.