Call for Concept Notes: Analysis of Barriers to Freedom of the Press in LAC

Freedom of the press is fundamental to democracy, enabling informed citizenship and transparency. Recent trends in Latin America highlight persistent barriers to freedom of the press, including government-imposed barriers and digital authoritarianism, which undermine democratic processes. This call focuses on understanding and addressing these challenges to press freedom across the region. The purpose of this grant is to examine the current barriers to press freedom in authoritarian and democratically backsliding states in Latin America, focusing on understanding and comparing actions and barriers across countries that curtail press freedom, including government strategies, corporate interests, and organized crime.

LACLEARN invites local organizations and academic institutions to submit concept notes for a research grant focusing on the Latin American region.

Research Objectives

To achieve this goal, the research is driven by the following guiding questions:

- What are the governmental, economic, technological, and audience-driven barriers to freedom of the press in Latin America?
- How do these barriers specifically affect journalists and media outlets led by women, indigenous, LGBTQI+, and community journalists?
- What similarities and differences exist in governmental approaches to press limitations across the different countries?
- Do similarities and differences respond to political regime (for example, right-leaning, left-leaning, authoritarian, etc.) variance?

Analytical Priorities

Using qualitative methods such as content analysis, social media analysis, interviews, and focus groups, this project will incorporate a comparative research design. Insights from a complementary Literature Review and insights derived from a Research Advisory Board comprising regional independent media editors and academics will help inform the overall study. This grant should therefore consider the following analytical priorities:

- Analyze resilience capacities of independent media to address current and evolving barriers to press freedom.
- Assess the range of mechanisms used by governments and their proxies to limit freedom of the press.
- Identify potential strategic support for independent media considering existing USAID programming and interventions in the short (2024-2026) and medium terms (2027-2030).

Resulting Illustrative Deliverables could include:

- Comprehensive Reports: In-depth analysis focusing on identified barriers and proposing mechanisms to safeguard press freedom.
- Policy Briefs: Actionable recommendations for policy interventions and support mechanisms for press freedom.
- Scenario Analyses: Documentation of potential future scenarios and strategic responses for preserving press freedom.
- Regional Case Studies: Detailed examination of press freedom challenges and resilience strategies in selected countries.

This list presents some common research deliverables from similar studies; however, each applicant is encouraged to propose the most appropriate deliverable based on their expertise and in accordance with the technical approach.

About LACLEARN:

The LACLEARN Grants Under Contract (GUC) Program aims to support LACLEARN's objectives with complementary work in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The funded grants will contribute to:

- Rapid response to crisis situations, promoting inclusion, participation, citizen-responsive approaches, and transparency/accountability.
- Piloting innovative technical approaches, implementing research, disseminating learnings, and supporting democracy, human rights, and good governance initiatives.

Available Funds:

Subject to availability, the total funding for awards under this call for concept notes is up to $120,000 for one or more grants, each spanning no more than three (3) months.

Submission Details:

Interested organizations should send their concept notes to lacgrants@developmentpi.com using Annex A: Grants Program Concept Note Template.

DEADLINE: May 20, 2024