Risk Assessment

INFORMATION NOTE

SUMMARY CONTENT OF DOCUMENT

This document summarizes current IPDC priorities and project assessment criteria.

IPDC priority areas and project assessment criteria

1. BACKGROUND

IPDC priorities and project assessment criteria have been revised and approved by the IPDC Intergovernmental Council over the years, with regard to the unique strengths of the programme and UNESCO's role in the media development landscape on the one hand, and contemporary dynamics in society on the other. These priorities and criteria are provided for information to project submitters prior to the formulation exercise and applied by the Secretariat in field offices and in HQ during the project submission cycle. Finally, priorities and criteria are used as a reference by Bureau Members in the final approval process.

2. DESCRIPTION

IPDC's current priorities are the following:

1. Promotion of freedom of expression, and press freedom (including the safety of journalists), pluralism (particularly community media, youth and gender dimensions), and independence (self-regulation and professional standards).

2. Capacity development for journalists and media managers.

3. Innovation in convergence and integration of legacy (traditional) news media and new communications.

In addition to these priorities, Bureau members are requested to take into account the following additional considerations:

- The need to spread the available funding as widely as possible (as is still meaningful), which translates into a maximum of one project being recommended per country (with a few exceptions);
- The importance of projects on journalistic safety, for the reason that this subject synergizes with the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity which UNESCO co-ordinates;
- A point in favour is when an applicant is a proven and serious partner of IPDC.
- With some exceptions, a negative point is the high percentage of costs related to air travel and per diem of consultants and participants, particularly within the projects submitted by regional media organizations. Also projects which are mere shopping lists for equipment, with no proportionate training component, have been declined.

Other features that have enhanced the chances of project selection in the past are:

1. Projects that dovetail with UNESCO expected results and benchmarks
2. Projects which entail wider lessons or learning outcomes (incorporated in the project design), including strategic research that will contribute to knowledge development and dissemination around media development, such as the Media Development Indicators (or a relevant aspect thereof), the Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) or the Journalists' Safety Indicators.
3. Projects with potential impact at national or regional level.
4. *Endogenous* media development efforts, i.e. projects of local media organizations rather than organizations that are not based in the country (except in the case of regional projects, in which case preference is given to media organizations based in the region).

Projects that IPDC does not normally support are:

- Projects which do not demonstrate gender-sensitivity as regards the ultimate beneficiaries (for instance, which fail to disaggregate how many men and how many women will benefit).
- Projects that do not demonstrably have editorial independence of owners or authorities.
- Projects where any support provided might give an undue advantage to the submitter over other competitive media organizations in the same location.
- Projects entailing the creation of stand-alone content websites, audio streaming, blogs, audio-visual archiving etc. (unless these are part of existing print or electronic media systems and serve to extend the media services of those organizations).
- Projects involving stand-alone seminars (unless they are an essential part of building sustainable networks of media organizations and professionals).
- Specific audiovisual television productions/films and communication campaigns. IPDC does not support specific audiovisual television productions or films. Nor does it provide support to develop independent media production houses which are not a part of existing media organizations. IPDC does not consider support to subject-specific programme productions as a priority, since other UN agencies specialized in areas such as HIV/AIDS, agriculture, health, etc. can provide the necessary support; however IPDC does support projects to train journalists to acquire disciplinary knowledge in specific subject areas such as science journalism, media management, coverage of climate change, etc., since such projects are considered as contributing to the capacity building of media professionals.
- Conferences, unless they are clearly a programmatic part of a wider and ongoing initiative.
- Proposals that cover the institutional and maintenance costs of organizations.
- Support for the establishment costs of media NGOs.

In order to be eligible for IPDC support, project proposals need to be submitted by the following type of organizations:

- Projects are considered only if submitted by editorially-independent media organizations, professional associations of media workers, or institutions offering regular media development services.
- In the case of training projects, these should be based in organizations/institutions that offer regular, systematic and model courses for working and future journalists.
- As far as community media are concerned, community organizations and NGOs working in the community media sector, such as community radio, can submit proposals. The involvement and contribution of the community must be ensured from the inception of the community media project. IPDC will not support projects if such support gives an undue advantage to the submitter over other competitive media organizations in the same location.
- Individuals are not eligible to submit proposals.
- All submitting organizations should have a credible status, and preferably have a working relationship with UNESCO offices. All media NGOs that have no previous record of IPDC support are requested to fill the *UNESCO NGO Assessment Form* which can be obtained from the relevant UNESCO field office.
- IPDC does not normally encourage the submission of projects by non-media NGOs wishing to offer training courses to journalists as an ad-hoc activity. The eligibility of non-media organizations to receive IPDC support depends on the existence of credible evidence that the submitting organization can offer meaningful and high-quality training with the participation of working journalists from operational media institutions. Exceptions are made for NGOs working in the area of human rights and democracy that wish to obtain support to facilitate a dialogue between media, civil society, elected representatives and government officials, as long as the proposal can be interpreted as aligning with IPDC priorities, and the participation of the media sector can be assured. In these cases, IPDC Field Officer will verify the track record of the concerned NGO.
- In all the cases, it is necessary to assess the contribution of the beneficiary organization in order to assess the credibility of the commitment of the submitting organization. Beneficiary contributions should cover all the recurrent costs, regular staff salaries, project coordination and transaction costs. In short, applicants should not seek to cover their ongoing institutional costs in budgets. Whenever a project proponent requests overhead costs to be paid by IPDC, the capacity of the organization to implement the project is put into question.

3. DISCUSSION

IPDC's current main priorities, agreed by previous meetings of governing bodies, are:

1. Promotion of freedom of expression, and press freedom (including the safety of journalists), pluralism (particularly community media, youth and gender dimensions), and independence (self-regulation and professional standards).

2. Capacity development for journalists and media managers.

3. Innovation in convergence and integration of legacy (traditional) news media and new communications.

Given the lack of proposals received in the third area, the Bureau may wish to discard this priority. The Bureau may also wish to specifically single out the safety of journalists in the light of increasingly violent attacks around the world. This would also give effect to the decision of the 29th IPDC Council that the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC continues to "give priority to projects that further the objectives of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity."

The Bureau may also wish to elaborate on specific areas of safety such as priority to projects in this field which seek to:

- Promote knowledge through the application of the IPDC Journalism Safety Indicators
- Counter hate speech in media and social media.
- Promote conflict-sensitive journalism practice, including in journalism schools.
- Promote cross-cultural and cross-religious dialogue among journalists.

The Bureau may also seek to add as a priority the strengthening of IPDC Special Initiatives (Media Development Indicators, Journalism Excellence and Knowledge-Driven Media Development) by more actively and specifically encouraging project proposals that aim at supporting the implementation of these global initiatives either at the international, regional or national level.

The Bureau may also wish to reflect on project assessment taking into account the current funding levels and consider whether to reserve a portion of the available budget in the Special Account for a limited number of larger project grants, while keeping another portion for a wider number of smaller project grants. This would necessarily reduce the number of beneficiaries, and benefitting countries, although at the same time providing the possibility of greater impact in selected cases. It would also reduce the transactional costs associated with administering large numbers of small grants.

4. CONCLUSION

Inputs from this discussion and any proposals to modify the current priority areas, and/or project assessment criteria, will be considered at the end of the session in the form of a Bureau decision. The Bureau may wish to:

1. Include as a priority to "Promote projects on journalism safety or law reform by independent media or media-related institutions, which also seek the active involvement and commitment of the State in the realization of the aims of the project[i]"
2. Discard the priority "Innovation in convergence and integration of legacy (traditional) news media and new communications"
3. Create a distinction between small projects (normal maximum of $10 000) and larger projects (normal maximum of $35 000).
4. Encourage small project proposals that address the issue of innovation, while also encouraging bigger project proposals that resonate globally, regionally, locally and involve several stakeholders, including state institutions, while preserving the media sector independence.
5. Encourage the submission of projects that apply Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) or the Journalists' Safety Indicators.
6. Advise UNESCO field staff about these modifications of the priorities and the new project assessment considerations.