



## Request for Proposals

Version March 2018

### **What Free Press Unlimited is and What It Wants to Achieve**

Free Press Unlimited strongly believes that all people are entitled to have access to unbiased, reliable and timely information. This enables them to assess their own living conditions, influence these and make the right decisions. With its Syria programme Free Press Unlimited supports the development of a competent, sustainable and independent media sector. The sector is vital for conflict reduction, the growth of a pluralist society and the development of democratic structures.

### **Research Objectives**

- Connect knowledge gathering with the aims of both the Syria programme and Free Press Unlimited at large
- We do this to review and potentially optimise the way in which we invest in the Syrian media sector
- Free Press Unlimited understands that its primary partners are audiences
- Ultimately, Free Press Unlimited wishes to connect audiences and journalism in a new way
- Free Press Unlimited endeavours to understand expectations of audiences and media professionals alike
- It aims to systematically compare and contrast data produced by audiences and media professionals in order to understand potential gaps: gaps that Free Press Unlimited's future strategy aims to narrow or close

### **Research Questions**

- Do audiences, media partners and Free Press Unlimited share the same understanding of the idea of independent media?
- Similarly, potential discrepancies in the decoding of concepts such as democracy, freedom, stability and pluralism.
- What news and information do Syrians need to run their lives and survive?
- How does this compare with what media professionals do and how they see information needs?

- Where do Syrians think they can get the information and news they need to run their lives and survive? Now and in the future?
- The degree to which media content matches audience expectation and need, comparing media consumers and providers.
- How do audiences assess actual journalistic products?
- What can media professionals learn from such assessments?

### **Locations**

Bidders should indicate which areas in Syria they can access and their logic for choosing certain areas over others. Furthermore, bidders should provide information on the proportion of media professionals that they intend to recruit inside of Syria, and in what parts of the country as well as outside the country.

### **Methodology**

Free Press Unlimited has developed a two-pronged approach: it aims to connect to both audiences and the media professionals that serve them. Therefore, Free Press Unlimited requires a multi-component research strategy. Free Press Unlimited's approach is fundamentally qualitative with crucial supporting elements of quantitative data.

#### *Components - Audiences*

- **Recruitment interviews** (fully structured closed-ended questionnaire) with members of the intended target audience (n=50; 10-15 minutes). This will validate adherence to the recruitment criteria and quantify basic media U&A across multiple digital and analogue platforms
- **Clinics** (controlled research environment) with 50 members of the audiences where respondents are exposed to media content (online, offline, video, audio, text) and their reactions gauged according to a set of prepared scores (e.g. reliability, presentation, length, use of images, impact, news value, relevance, language/accents, etc.). Media content will consist of 14 journalistic products (articles, online links, podcasts, etc.) that audience members will evaluate (rotated). About half of the pieces will have been produced by Free Press Unlimited's media partners, half will come from other sources. The duration of the clinics is between 60 and 90 minutes
- **In-depth interviews** (based on both a semi-structured interview guide and free-wheeling discussion). 25 of the most responsive clinic participants are selected for a thematic deep-dive. In ca. 60-minute in-depth interviews, respondents are queried about 3 of their clinic inputs for deep insight and rich authentic data.

#### *Components – Media Professionals*

- **Recruitment interviews** (fully structured closed-ended questionnaire) with 30 stake holders and media professionals. This will validate adherence to the recruitment criteria and help Free Press Unlimited understand the basics of their work as well as potential differences between Free Press Unlimited supported media professionals and others
- **In-depth interviews** (based on both a semi-structured interview guide and free-wheeling discussion). This deep-dive (n=30) explores journalistic ambitions regarding impact and target audiences. Furthermore, it will map out expectations, working

environment, regulatory situation and journalistic ethics. The in-depth interviews will last 60-90 minutes

- **Workshops** with Free Press Unlimited partners. This component is designed to expose Free Press Unlimited partners to audience reactions to 14 journalistic products and the insights produced by the audience in-depth interviews. The workshops are clearly intended to exploit the data for maximum learning and cross-fertilisation. The workshops are conducted by Free Press Unlimited independently of Free Press Unlimited's research partners

## **Recruitment**

### *Members of the Audience (n=50)*

- 50% women; 50 men
- 50% below 35 years of age; 50% above
- 75% of respondents have at least completed secondary education
- All respondents have access to online and can recall 2 news items they consumed in the past week

### *Media Professionals (n=30)*

- All media professionals are either full-time or predominantly engaged in journalistic activity
- 50% of the media professionals benefit either directly or indirectly from Free Press Unlimited support; the other 50% do not
- Stakeholders (n=4) – Persons who command a controlling share in a media organisation
- Content deciders (n=6) – Editors or persons who instruct journalists in their work and/or decide on the content of journalistic products
- Journalists (n=20)
- Free Press Unlimited will provide its research partner with contact details of media professionals it supports

## **Quality Control**

100% of respondents (audience and media professionals) for adherence to recruitment criteria and their output are quality controlled by an independent team. Moreover, all steps in the research are subject to rigid quality control routines. Free Press Unlimited expects bidders to fully outline their proposed quality control strategy.

## **Deliverables**

- Design
- Client consultation either face-to-face or via VoIP
- Format and adaptation of all materials provided by Free Press Unlimited
- Weekly progress updates; daily updates during the fieldwork
- Same-day response to Free Press Unlimited queries
- Translation and back-translation of all materials
- Recruitment and over-recruitment of respondents that fully comply with the recruitment criteria determined by Free Press Unlimited
- Fieldwork management
- Audio- or video recordings of all in-depth interviews (where feasible)

- Transcripts in Arabic and English
- Data file in SPSS and export format
- Fully detailed technical report
- Descriptive report (10-15 pages) drawing on data from all research components
- In-house presentation at Free Press Unlimited's offices in Amsterdam, Netherlands

### **Timing and Period of Performance**

Preparation work will start on or around 18 June 2018. The fieldwork will start at the end of approximately 1 month after that. The deliverables are due 8 weeks following Free Press Unlimited's sign-off of the research instruments and the corresponding translations/adaptations.

### **Pricing**

Bidders should quote in Euros including all services and taxes.

### **Bidding Process**

Bidders are required to indicate their interest and register their contact details on or before 30 March 2018, COB. Bidders are invited to send their questions to [schot@freepressunlimited.org](mailto:schot@freepressunlimited.org) on or before 6 April 2018, COB. Telephone enquires will not be answered. All questions and their corresponding answers will be submitted by Free Press Unlimited to all bidders on or before 12 April 2018. Proposals are due on or before 26 April 2018. Free Press Unlimited will contact short-listed bidders within 5 weeks of receiving proposals but may contact individual bidders for clarification beforehand.

### **About Your Proposal**

- Indicate a full understanding of Free Press Unlimited's strategic imperatives and the research brief
- Outline key personnel including a short bio
- Indicate which parts, if any, will be subcontracted and to whom
- Outline your incentivisation strategy
- Describe your methodological approach in detail
- Outline any anticipated challenges for each step/component
- Describe your experience in conducting research in Syria and other challenging/conflictive research environment

### **Terms and Conditions**

- Full confidentiality
- Copyright over the data, research and results published shall be with Free Press Unlimited
- Full adherence to ESOMAR codes
- Unreserved submission to Dutch law
- Free Press Unlimited reserves the right to alter any or all of the above components or cancel the procurement process altogether