

## **Request for Proposals (RFP) Strengthening Independent Media in Syria (SIMS)**

Issue Date: April 2, 2018

Proposal Due Date: April 16, 2018

Anticipated Award Date: April 24, 2018

### **1. Overview**

IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) is seeking quotes from qualified respondents to provide technical assistance in the design and implementation of a media audience study in Syria. The study will be a follow-on to a survey conducted in October 2017 with the dual purpose of measuring change in key program indicators and improving understanding of media audience consumption habits and perceptions of media outlets. The study will include two components: 1. A quantitative media audience survey consisting of at least 800 interviews 2. in-depth semi-structured interviews with a smaller sample of media audience members. Interested consultants or firms are invited to submit a proposal for only one or both components of the research.

### **2. Project objective and background**

The Supporting Independent Media in Syria (SIMS) program is an NEA/AC funded program implemented by IREX. SIMS aims to increase the capacity of media outlets to maintain and build audience share and to generate professional content that encourages inclusive and tolerant dialogue, promotes coexistence, and provides alternatives to regime and violent extremist narratives.

In October 2017, IREX conducted 891 face-to-face interviews of respondents 15+ years old in nine locations. Following data quality checks and cleaning, a data set of 771 respondents was finalized. The survey questionnaire was designed to obtain accurate data regarding media consumption habits, media preferences, and perceptions of media outlet programming (e.g. credibility). The survey concentrated on radio audience measurement, as there are 6 partner stations. TV and Internet were also investigated, but in minimal detail.

An enhanced snowball sampling methodology was used which involved, 1) capping the number of people that could be referred before randomly selecting a new respondent; and 2) incorporating quotas to ensure the sample better reflected the Syrian population along select demographic groups (e.g. gender, age, location).

The following three locations and three sub-locations were included in the 2017 survey:

1. Idlib – Saraqib, Kafranbul, Marrat Alnuman
2. Aleppo – Azaz, Jarablus, Albab
3. Hasaka – Amouda and/or Kamishli, Hasaka City

Data collectors were permitted to collect data from within a 60-km radius of identified target locations. The precise areas and perimeter for this survey took into consideration the broadcasting range of media outlet partners.

### **3. Research Objectives**

The main objective of the media audience research will be to measure the change in Syria Media Audience Research program indicators from the baseline established in October 2017. In addition, results from the survey will be used to support learning about audiences of media partners to inform IREX's strategy and interventions and to inform media partner programming decisions.

### **4. Research Questions and sub-questions**

- What are the media consumption habits of Syrians (e.g. how long do they listen/view media, what programs do they listen to, and when)?
  - What media platforms and media do Syrians listen to or view?
  - What programs at specific media stations do they listen to or view?
  - How do they get their media/news (YouTube, facebook, radio, TV, website)?
  - What topics or types of content are Syrians most interested in?
  - How long do they listen/view their preferred news sources?
  - What are audience profiles for different stations and media sources?
- What are Syrian attitudes towards media stations?
  - Why do people listen to media stations?
  - Why do Syrians trust or not trust media stations?
  - Do Syrians perceive stations as objective or credible and why?
  - Do Syrians perceive stations as promoting tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful co-existence and why?

## **5. Research methods**

Survey – Surveys will be done through face-to-face interviews, consist of primarily close-ended questions, and not take more than 15-20 minutes. The survey will include most locations included in the baseline survey with some changes, to be determined in consultation with NEA/AC. These include potentially adding a fourth province, Raqqa, and the district Afrin. The sample should include at least 800 respondents. We also anticipate using the same or a similar sampling methodology as the one developed for the baseline.

Interviews - Semi-structured in-depth interviews will be employed to gather primary data from media audience members. Interviews will generate insights into target group media preferences and habits, and provide time to probe on reasons behind key insights, ideas, and action. The researcher(s) will work with IREX to develop the scope and methodology for these interviews.

## **6. Deliverables**

1. Draft narrative report in MS word for feedback and comments from IREX and NEA
2. Final narrative report in MS word that addresses comments and feedback provided
3. Final powerpoint slides highlighting key findings, conclusions, and recommendations
4. Survey questionnaire in English and Arabic, interview guide and data collection protocols
5. Raw data and tabulated results
6. Field procedure plan (includes field protocols, data management logistics, quality assurance and control measures, etc.)
7. Enumerator training curriculum

## **7. Responsibilities**

The researcher(s) will conduct the research according to a work plan and budget to be agreed upon prior to start. The researcher(s) will be responsible for:

- developing a proposed work plan and budget;
- recruiting, hiring, and training enumerators as necessary;
- developing a sampling plan and questionnaire in collaboration with an independent media audience expert consultant (to be hired by IREX)
- conducting the research in accordance with the pre-agreed work plan and budget (includes a small pilot);
- Potentially participating in a training of data collectors in Turkey;
- Monitoring data quality and addressing quality issues as they arise;
- processing and addressing comments on data collection instruments and narrative report

- timely delivery of the deliverables in accordance with the agreed specifications;

Responsibilities of IREX include:

- supporting the researchers with contacting key stakeholders (NEA, media partners, IREX field team) for input and feedback on data collection instruments and sampling plans
- additional reviews of the sampling methodology and survey questionnaire by an independent media audience expert
- Ensuring timely payment in agreed amounts to the researchers
- Ensuring compliance with NEA requirements
- Reviewing deliverables submitted and providing inputs to the tools and research report

### **Duration and Schedule**

The research—including research design, implementation, and reporting—should not take more than 4 months starting as soon as possible. All research will be conducted based on a detailed work plan and taking into account the budget available.

### **Proposal Submission and selection**

Person(s) interested in providing this service must demonstrate:

- substantial and proven experience with media audience research
- knowledge of the Syrian context
- ability to adjust smoothly to changing situations and able to value active involvement of stakeholders and their engagement;
- proven experience in report writing;

Interested researchers are invited to send a technical proposal, time frame, and detailed budget in USD (max 5 pages). The technical proposal should include information on the proposed recruitment and training of data collectors, the data collection tools (i.e. mobile technology is preferred<sup>1</sup>), safety and security considerations for data collectors. The estimated budget should have sufficient detail to determine the price elements.

In addition, researchers are requested to submit:

- Curriculum Vitae or portfolio clearly presenting experience in conducting research (and if available a report to share as sample)
- References to two to three previous clients
- Resume(s) of key staff that will be assigned to the project

If you are interested in furnishing this service, please e-mail the technical proposal and additional documents to **[cguedenet@irex.org](mailto:cguedenet@irex.org)**.

If you decide to submit a proposal, it must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the closing date indicated above. Late submissions will only be considered if in the best interests of the project, and then at IREX's sole discretion. All proposals submitted must be valid for a period of not less than sixty (60) calendar days from the closing date indicated above.

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<sup>1</sup> Mobile data collection offers many advantages over paper-based surveys, including fewer errors and greater efficiency. Considerations for any mobile data collection in the Syrian context should include offline data collection capabilities, quality control or quality assurance measures, safety and security, the ability to use visual prompts to display radio station names, logos, or frequency numbers, and the ability to display matrix questions.

Evaluation and ranking of proposals will be done by IREX in Washington, DC. IREX may at its discretion ask for additional information.

**Renewal**

IREX reserves the right, based on availability of funding and vendor performance, to enter into subsequent contractual agreements with the winning vendor for a period of up to two years without issuing a new RFP.

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