

PART-TIME RESEARCHERS ON DISINFORMATION AND CIVIC SPACE USAID DRG LEARNING CENTER

Background

NORC at the University of Chicago, under a contract with the USAID Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center, seeks to engage two part-time researchers for one year to synthesize research, design and/or suggest areas for new research, collect data for ongoing research, identify promising approaches, make presentations, and produce informational materials. One researcher will work on the topic of countering disinformation and its impacts on democratic discourse and democratic processes, while the other will work on preventing and responding to restrictions on freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, and on strategies to enable and protect civic space. The research topics and parameters address the following DRG Center 2019-2020 Learning Agenda questions:

- What programming interventions and measures are needed and have been successful in preventing and/or responding to restrictions on freedoms of association, assembly, and expression, and in enabling and protecting civic space? Is it possible to forecast restrictions on civic space? How can USAID best support local and international actors working to keep civic space open?
- What interventions and measures are needed to develop and implement effective programming to counter disinformation and social media manipulation online?

These efforts are expected to build and expand on the research and knowledge base of USAID, other donors, academics, and civil society actors in these fields to date.

Responsibilities and Outputs

The researchers will work closely with staff from USAID's Learning Division and the Civil Society and Media Division of the DRG Center to address the learning agenda questions and prepare informational materials, as needed. The researchers will review and summarize existing literature on their respective topics, coordinate with relevant USAID-funded implementing partners, identify potential best practices and effective approaches, identify knowledge gaps and propose areas for further research, make presentations, and produce informational materials for USAID staff and other practitioners or interested parties. They will be expected to work with multiple USAID partners and other non-USAID-funded stakeholders who are conducting research and/or implementing programming on sub-themes under the topics. The researchers will track and synthesize this work and integrate it with other existing and ongoing research initiatives and findings so as to develop USAID-specific guidance and programmatic recommendations.

Specific tasks the researchers are expected to complete include:

- Communicating regularly with USAID staff, implementing partners, and our research partners to stay up-to-date on the latest approaches in the field and new research and literature.
- Reviewing the relevant literature, including both academic literature and reports, working papers and similar documents produced by USAID, NGOs, think tanks, activist organizations, etc.
- Identifying and summarizing key findings from the literature and from communication with USAID staff, implementing partners and other practitioners.
- Identifying gaps in the literature and recommending areas for further exploration/study.
- Presenting the research findings in a practitioner-friendly way in written, oral, and visual formats.
- Providing collaborative research, implementation, evaluation and learning design advice to USAID partners.
- Assisting USAID partners in field research, data collection and/or data analysis.

It is expected that each researcher will need to dedicate an average of 10 to 20 hours per week to this work, although tasks and/or travel may emerge that require more time. The following are illustrative tasks and outputs for each position:

- Schedule and lead regular (at least monthly) calls with USAID/DRG staff to update them on progress and to learn about new questions and opportunities.
- Schedule and lead two to three monthly/bi-monthly phone calls or meetings with USAID/DRG implementing partners involved in programming and/or research on this topic in coordination with DRG Center project officers.
- Participate in a quarterly in-person meeting with USAID staff and implementing partners in Washington, DC.
- Produce a monthly progress report on the outcome of these calls and meetings and on accomplishments during the period.
- Produce 30-40 page report(s) describing and synthesizing the findings from the partner research and from the latest academic research on the topics and identifying gaps and areas for further research/exploration.
- Present his/her findings at the USAID headquarters Washington and/or at a workshop, conference or other thematic event to be determined in consultation with USAID.
- Produce a practitioner-friendly summary of key findings and effective approaches (i.e. including infographics, programmatic tools, and other practical information).

Qualifications

- The candidate should possess at least 3 years' experience in positions of increasing responsibility in social science research or related field (or equivalent education.)

- Successful candidates are able to work proactively and with minimal supervision, envisioning future needs, initiating communication with and meeting the demands of multiple stakeholders, and managing multiple work streams.
- Researchers must have a Masters' degree. A PhD or All but Dissertation (ABD) status in a PhD program, with the terminal degree in a social science discipline and completion of advanced coursework on quantitative and/or qualitative research methods is strongly preferred.
- The researchers' own work should focus on the topic in question (communications, social media manipulation, or civic actors in politically restrictive environments) and the researchers should have at least one publication on this topic (in-press, non-peer-reviewed publications are acceptable).
- Additional desired researcher characteristics include experience working with international development organizations in the democracy, human rights and governance field, field research experience in one or more foreign countries, and experience using cutting edge methods to study social media and/or closing civic space. Candidates who have demonstrated experience working with multiple stakeholders on research projects will receive preference.

This assignment is expected to begin in September 2019 and have a term of 12 months. Candidates need not be located in the Washington, DC area, but must be able to travel to Washington, DC on a quarterly basis and possibly undertake other travel as required.

Application Instructions

For consideration, please apply online and submit your CV and cover letter describing your interest in the position no later than September 15, 2019.

<http://careers.norc.org/cw/en-us/job/495382/parttime-researchers-on-disinformation-and-civic-space-usaid-drg-learning-center>

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