

Call for research proposals

Competitive Fund *Impact 2.0: Collaborative technologies connecting research and policy*

Policy development is a complex process and there are many reasons why even the best arguments backed by solid research can fail to be heard or to be acted on. Decision makers are barraged with conflicting demands, often supported by contradictory evidence, making it difficult for independent researchers to even be heard. Low levels of public understanding of and interest in policy issues, lack of political will, bureaucratic inertia, and counter arguments promoted by interests with their own agendas in mind further complicate the scenario.

At the same time, we live in an era in which the use of interactive web-based services and applications, including social networking sites, media sharing sites, wikis and blogs, is experiencing explosive growth. Research on the impact of these *Web 2.0* technologies and services emphasizes the impact they are having on people's social lives, on political action and on industries such as advertising and media.

Anecdotal evidence abounds on the websites of organisations using or promoting *Web 2.0* to influence elections, public opinion and policy. But researchers, activists and policymakers are only beginning to explore the use of online social networking in the various stages of the policy influence process and there is a distinct lack of formal research into the theme. What are the attitudes of researchers and policymakers to *Web 2.0* tools and services? Do they use them? Are they willing to? Have researchers had practical experience using interactive web-based technologies to disseminate their research or to promote discussion of it? Can researchers and policy makers harness the power of crowd-sourcing to improve their understanding of policy issues and solutions? What tools might be best-adapted to the task?

Impact 2.0: Collaborative technologies connecting research and policy seeks to develop a body of knowledge about the use of *Web 2.0* in policy-oriented research and design in Latin America and to identify, document and promote good practices and emerging opportunities related to the use of collaborative technologies for linking research to policy.

In order to reach this goal **Impact 2.0** has two components. The first includes three pilot projects which seek to combine current theory on the relationship between research, policy and advocacy with advances in *Web 2.0*/Social networking technologies and practices. The second is a fund to support research into the use of *Web 2.0* tools and behaviours to link research and policy.

The competitive research fund will consider two types of proposals:

Type 1: Proposals that involve both implementing a specific intervention using Web 2.0 to link policy and analyzing, documenting and evaluating the intervention.

This type of project implies the design of a set of actions using Web 2.0 to increase the impact of research in a given policy or policy area; the implementation of the actions; and the analysis and documentation of the intervention. An example this type of proposal could be an campaign advocating a specific health policy that incorporates media sharing and social networking tools to disseminate and generate a discussion of research conclusions and to create and facilitate a multi-stakeholder "forum" concerned with research and health policy.

Type 2: Proposals for documenting and evaluating one or more current or recent projects

making use of Web 2.0 to link policy and research.

In this case it is expected that the project focus on the analysis of actions designed to impact on some policy by using Web 2.0 to disseminate knowledge, generate debate, and/or involve actors and also to document the lessons learned. An example could include the review and analysis of a number of national case studies in which social networking tools were used to create and maintain networks of researchers, policy makers and other actors.

Projects Type 1 involves the implementation of an action and its analysis, while projects Type 2 analyze and action implemented.

Proposals

The proposals may be made from any disciplinary perspective as long as they address, through a formal research process, the impact of Web2.0 on the links between research and public policy, with an overall objective of assessing and documenting the design, implementation and impact of actions undertaken to link the activities of knowledge generation and policy definition.

Independent researchers and organisations (universities, government agencies, NGOs, research centres) are welcome to apply. Applicants must reside in Latin America and the projects to be performed and analyzed must also be located in and relevant to the region.

Proposals will be evaluated taking into account their potential contribution to understanding the field and to future development of the use of Web 2.0 to connect research and policy.

The selection of the proposals to be supported will be done by a five-person committee comprised of an invited expert and representatives of each of the four sponsoring institutions: the Academic Development Program for Information and Communication (PRODIC) from University of the Republic of Uruguay, the International Centre for Advanced Studies in Communication for Latin America (CIESPAL) based in Quito, Ecuador, and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

The evaluation committee will choose between 6 and 12 projects to be funded for a total amount not to exceed \$ 90,000, providing support of up to \$ 15,000 for type 1 projects and up to \$ 7,500 for type 2. All projects must be executed within a maximum period of 12 months.

Formal aspects

Proposals may be submitted in English or Spanish, in a maximum length of 15 pages, single-spaced using Times New Roman 12 points.

Proposals should contain the following information:

1. **Cover** which includes the name of the proposal, specifying whether it is type 1 or 2, and contact information of the applying organization or researcher, which will act as Impact 2.0 interlocutor (name, title, address, phone, email, website, affiliation, etc.).
2. **Summary**
3. **Justification** - Explain interest and relevance of proposed research and its relationship to policy. Provide details of the project or projects to be analyzed. If the project is a Type 1, also provide detailed information on the current status of the topic and the problem it intends to address with the intervention.
4. **Objectives** - Indicate the scope of the proposal for the selected topic (what knowledge will be produced, what problem does it seek to solve, etc).
5. **Methodology and Strategy** - Indicate in which way the project or projects to evaluate employ Web 2. to influence policy. Describe how you will carry out monitoring of the actions implemented, the documentation of the process, and the impact assessment.

- Describe the characteristics of the methodology to apply, specific aspects you plan to evaluate and the type of indicators to be used, etc.
6. **Expected Results** - Identify the contribution you hope to accomplish with your project starting from the objectives stated.
 7. **Budget** - Indicate the total amount requested and detail the different areas you are looking for funding (eg. equipment, salaries, travel, etc.). If the project is Type 1, specify the amount of the requested budget that will be invested the implementation of actions and the amount intended for the analysis and documentation. Also indicate and specify whether your project has other sources of funding.
 8. **Schedule of Activities** - Attach a schedule of activities of no more than one page where indicates starting and completion dates for each of the activities planned to meet the objectives of the project.
 9. **Curriculum Vitae** of each member of the team. In the event that the proposal is held by one organization, indicate its profile and characteristics.

At the end of the project applicants must deliver a publishable research report that describes including conclusions and recommendations. Other products associated with or resulting from the project, such as sites and web pages, videos, publications, partial results of specific actions, etc. can also be part of the final delivery.

Proposals may be submitted electronically only, in text file (MS Word or Open Office) at the following address impacto2@comunica.org until July 31, 2010 inclusive.

Impact 2.0 reserves the right to cancel, suspend and/or modify the call for any reason.

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