

Grants Call - Facilitating Dialogue Events

Dear X,

LACLEARN invites local, regional, and international organizations to submit proposals for grants aimed at facilitating dialogue events. These events are intended to explore the impacts of "tough-on-crime" (Mano Dura) policies in Central America, *focusing on their implications for democracy, human rights, inclusion, and governance* (DRG). LACLEARN also seeks to amplify the perspectives of local voices and grassroots perceptions in dialogue with international stakeholders.

Themes for Dialogue Events

Proposals should focus on organizing events that align with one or more of the following themes:

- Mano Dura Impacts: Discussing the impacts of these policies on civil society, civil liberties, freedom of the press, and democratic governance.
- Narratives on Mano Dura Approaches: Analyzing the communication strategies and public perceptions of Mano Dura policies.
- Alternatives to Mano Dura Approaches: Identifying and promoting alternative, evidence-based security policies.

Crosscutting themes include the trajectories of Mano Dura policies, their gendered effects, and overall impact on democratic resilience.

Analytical Priorities

- Understanding the broader impacts of Mano Dura policies on DRG.
- Exploring local and regional perceptions and narratives of Mano Dura approaches.
- Identifying evidence-supported alternatives to Mano Dura policies.

Resulting Illustrative Products May Include

- Event Summaries: Detailed reports from each dialogue event, encapsulating key discussions, diverse viewpoints, and notable insights on the impacts and implications of Mano Dura policies.
- Stakeholder Engagement Report: Documentation of the engagement and contributions of various stakeholders (civil society, media, international and local experts) in the dialogue events, reflecting the multiplicity of perspectives on the issue.
- Best Practices for Dialogue: A guide or framework developed from the events, outlining effective practices for facilitating dialogue on sensitive policy issues such as Mano Dura.

About LACLEARN

The LACLEARN Grants Under Contract (GUC) component is intended to support LACLEARN's objectives with complementary work in the LAC region. The grants funded through this program will contribute to the achievement of LACLEARN's programmatic objectives:

1. Provide support for rapid response to crisis situations, including short-term democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming through local organizations to promote inclusion, participation, citizen-responsive approaches, and transparency/accountability during the transition phase.
2. Pilot innovative DRG technical approaches, implement research, disseminate DRG learnings, support democracy, human rights, and good governance, or other learning and analysis objectives.

Additional information regarding LACLEARN can be accessed here:

<https://developmentpi.com/news/laclearn-fy24-annual-program-statement-for-grants-under-contract>

Background

In recent years, Central America has seen a resurgence of “tough-on-crime” policies, characterized by mass incarceration, extended states of exception, and heavy reliance on military forces for public security. Notably, in El Salvador, the government has aggressively advanced pro-Mano Dura narratives, gaining significant public support despite evidence suggesting that such policies may exacerbate conflict dynamics, undermine the rule of law, and impede human rights. This trend, exemplified by the so-called “Bukele model,” is gaining traction across the region.

These policies, while sometimes effective in the short term, have historically shown limited long-term success in addressing crime and violence. They pose significant challenges to democratic stability, including the suppression of civil society and media, erosion of interpersonal trust, and centralization of power in the executive branch. The popularity of tough-on-crime narratives, often irrespective of their long-term effectiveness, underscores a need for comprehensive research to understand and potentially mitigate their adverse effects on democracy, human rights, and governance.

In response to the growing traction of Mano Dura policies in Central America, LACLEARN is undertaking a comprehensive activity to analyze and understand the broader implications of these security strategies. This initiative aims to scrutinize the effects of such policies on democracy, human rights, and governance. Through this activity, LACLEARN seeks not only to deepen the understanding of Mano Dura narratives among governments and citizens but also to explore alternative security policies. A significant aspect of this effort involves identifying practical strategies to mitigate the potential negative consequences of these policies on the rule of law and human rights. To achieve this, LACLEARN is amplifying ongoing research, facilitating policy analysis, and creating opportunities for dialogue by integrating diverse perspectives and forming partnerships with regional organizations.

Available Funds

Subject to the availability of funds, the total level of funding available for awards under this call for concept notes is **up to \$100,000** per grantee. Each grant should span no more than five (5) months in duration. Concept note submission is voluntary and LACLEARN will not reimburse applicants for expenses incurred during concept note development.