



# Media Viability in the CORAPE network

Powerful voices.  
Community Media in Latin America.



# **Media Viability** **in the CORAPE network**

Powerful voices.  
Community Media in Latin America.

Supported by the



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



---

## Imprint

### PUBLISHER

Deutsche Welle  
53110 Bonn  
Germany

### RESPONSIBLE

Carsten von Nahmen  
Rodrigo Villarzú

### COORDINATION OF THE SERIES POWERFUL VOICES

David Olmos  
Lena Gamper

### TRANSLATOR

Santiago Killing-Stringer

### AUTHORS

Patricio Cerón Llive  
Jorge Guachamín

### EDITOR

Magnus Kossmann

### COVER FOTO

Leo Wieling, unsplash

### PUBLISHED

11/2020

© DW Akademie



Except otherwise noted Media Viability in the CORAPE network by DW Akademie is licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License: [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0).  
The following content is excluded from the license: photos on pages 7, 8, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27.



## Content

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Background, justification and methodology</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 Background – CORAPE, CORAPE network, territorial presence	11
1.2 Justification of the project. Viability for community media	12
1.3 Methodology applied	12
<b>2. Media Viability Examples</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares de Ecuador (ERPE)	18
2.2 La Voz del Upano	20
2.3 Radio Sucumbíos	22
2.4 Radio Ilumán	24
<b>3. Guide for community media viability</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Steps and tools to begin a media viability process	28

# Introduction





The Coordinadora de Medios Comunitarios, Populares y Educativos de Ecuador (CORAPE) is the biggest network of community media in Ecuador, and since 2016 has been the main partner of DW Akademie in that South American country. Between 2016 and 2019 the two organizations implemented a project financed by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with the aim to strengthen the work of community media in Ecuador in the provision of access to information to vulnerable populations, especially in indigenous languages. One central line of this project was the financial sustainability or viability of community media, which has historically been one of the greatest problems for this sector. The economic viability of community media worsened during the course of the project because of economic and political changes in the country: the fall in oil prices and state restructuring made necessary by the fiscal crisis caused a drastic reduction in advertising income for community media.

The project was designed with the participation of CORAPE members, leading to the definition of four focus areas of media viability (advertising; projects and entrepreneurship; partnerships and alliances; production and programming) and the agreement on a series of methodological tools. A selection of eight community media outlets, which varied in their nature, organization, and sources of financing, participated in a process of self-analysis, external consultation, and peer exchanges with the goal of finding solutions to the viability of community media. In this way, they succeeded in defining a series of

processes and created specialized tools that could be applied within the network, as well as to other community media in the world. This publication is divided into three chapters. The first presents background information, justification for the project, and the methodology used. The second shows the training procedures and best practices of four of the participating community media outlets. The final chapter reflects the learning outcomes of the project by recommending eight steps and tools to help community media achieve viability.

The results of the eight media viability experiences of the community media participating in the process are available in Spanish on CORAPE's website at the following address:

➔ [corape.org.ec/organizacion/contenido/item/sostenibilidad](https://corape.org.ec/organizacion/contenido/item/sostenibilidad)

## What is media viability?

Media viability was a key area of the project jointly implemented by DW Akademie and its partners in Ecuador between 2016 and 2019. But what do we mean, when we aim to strengthen the viability of media? Media viability is the ability of media outlets and media landscapes to produce high quality journalism in a sustainable way. DW Akademie believes that this viability of quality media is essential to freedom of expression. Only when media are independent and “free” from entities or persons that can exert economic pressure on them, are they truly able to perform their important role of providing quality information.

The work of the DW Akademie and its partners is based on the following model on page 9.

This approach places emphasis on a multifaceted definition, that not only prioritizes financial income, but includes other aspects that guarantee financial resilience, foment trust among audiences, stay up to date with technological developments and maintain quality content. Community media are included in this model, they do however require a slightly different emphasis than commercial media. During the project presented here, CORAPE developed its own media viability approach – one that is adapted to the specific needs of community media in Ecuador.

For more information about the work of DW Akademie on media viability:

➔ [dw.com/en/dw-akademie/media-viability/s-32577](https://www.dw.com/en/dw-akademie/media-viability/s-32577)



## DW Akademie's Media Viability Model



DW Akademie's Media Viability model centers around the media users having access to reliable, independent information. It widens the scope of traditional sustainability approaches and focuses on more than just the business models of individual media outlets.

3 levels: Organizations, networks and the overall environment (including markets, legal systems, politics, and technological infrastructure) are the relevant focus areas for Media Viability.

5 dimensions: Media Viability is about finding a stable balance between the aspects of politics, economics, the community, technology, and content.

# 1. Background, justification and methodology





### 1.1. Background - CORAPE, CORAPE network, territorial presence

CORAPE was established in 1990 and acquired legal status through the Ministry of Education and Culture by means of Ministerial Decree N° 1596 dated April 16, 1992, published in Official Register No 927 of May 4, 1992. CORAPE focuses its activities on strengthening the network of community, popular, and educational radio stations in Ecuador by organizing and conducting seminars and workshops. These aim to strengthen the capacities and knowledge of the people who work in the affiliated media. CORAPE has proved itself to be a communications reference for defense of rights, promoting access to publicly relevant information, democratization of communication and participation, with the aim of enhancing the communications spaces of affiliated media. At the same time, CORAPE has had political, social and cultural impact through the exchange of knowledge and the development of an alternative and educational means of communication for the people, thereby contributing to the creation of a new society in Ecuador.



The community, popular, and educational media represent an essential means of communication and source of information for the provinces and communities far from the political, administrative and economic centers of the country. Their activities therefore make them an important tool for the dissemination of news about events in those territories and for publicizing the opinions of the inhabitants. They play an inordinate role in strengthening the voices of women, boys and girls, youth, workers, indigenous people, small farmers and local authorities, thereby fostering the community, participatory, alternative and democratic nature of these forms of communication. Because of their acceptance of responsibility to their

The community, popular, and educational media represent an essential communications and information source for distant provinces and their communities; their activities therefore make them an important tool for the dissemination of events in those territories and of the opinions of the inhabitants.



audience, they work hard to offer programs that preserve and promote the identity of the indigenous peoples and nations that comprise Ecuador. With the aim of contributing to the construction of critical consciousness in the population, they focus their work on education and on raising awareness in areas such as the environment and their rights and duties associated with civil society.

Community radio stations preserve and promote the identity of the indigenous peoples and nations that comprise Ecuador, educating them on important topics such as the environment, and social rights and duties, in order to construct a critical and informed population.

## 1.2. Justification of the project. Viability for community media

Within the framework of social development, community media have begun to support, strengthen, and generate the production and commercialization of local products. On the one hand, these activities allow them to obtain income for financial, administrative and technical improvements in community media; on the other, they create jobs, revitalize the economy, democratize communications spaces.

The communications model must be accompanied by a productive and administrative model that generates the same or a greater percentage of revenues for investment, and communicational and institutional strengthening.

Working toward viability, community media need to create good operational and management models. The communications model must be accompanied by a productive and administrative model that generates the same or a greater percentage of revenues for investment, and communicational and institutional strengthening, so that in the long term it is possible for community media to position themselves in the field of communications and make community realities and voices heard.

In the same way, media viability includes the implementation of a series of institutional actions that allow community media to adapt to the planned projects and the different circumstances they can produce within the legal framework that regulates their existence in the country.

Sometimes, to make the radio station viable, it is necessary to implement administrative and operational changes, or modify the management model, or the financial-administrative and legal structure, but without discarding their role of contributing to solidarity and support for community development of our radio channels.

These changes begin on an organizational and operational level, and it is necessary at certain moments for community media to modify their management model, as well as their financial-administrative and legal structure without discarding their role of contributing to solidarity and support for community development through the democratization of communication. For this reason, flexibility, adaptability, and innovation are all crucial to the successful creation and implementation of a process of media viability.

The viability of media depends not only on selling their advertising spaces, but also on a significant relationship with governmental and nongovernmental institutions involved in social

improvement with coherent educational proposals. In other words, working towards viability, media must link up with other institutions and broadcasters in order to work together and join forces. This is currently fundamental for educational broadcasters and the main reason for the necessity of marketing.

## 1.3. Methodology applied

Research into experiences of community media for the definition of media viability and relevant focus areas begun in 2017, in collaboration with eight community media outlets. These participating media outlets all belong to the CORAPE network:

- **Radio Alfaró 96.1 FM**  
located in Manabí Province in Jipijapa Canton
- **Emisora la voz del Upano 90.5 FM**  
located in Morona Santiago Province in Macas Canton
- **Radiofónicas Erpe 91.7 FM**  
located in Chimborazo Province in Riobamba Canton
- **Radio la voz de Guamote 1520 AM**  
located in Chimborazo Province in Guamote Canton
- **Radio Ilumán la voz intercultural 96.7 FM**  
located in Imbabura Province in Ilumán (bajo) parish
- **Radio Latacunga la voz de un pueblo en Marcha 1080 AM**  
located in Cotopaxi Province in Latacunga Canton
- **Radio Sonoonda International 960 AM**  
located in Azuay Province in Cuenca Canton
- **Radio Sucumbíos su compañera solidaria 105.3 FM**  
located in Sucumbíos Province in Lago Agrio Canton

The CORAPE network's sustainability and management policy is a conceptual and policy framework for the strengthening of its management and viability processes.



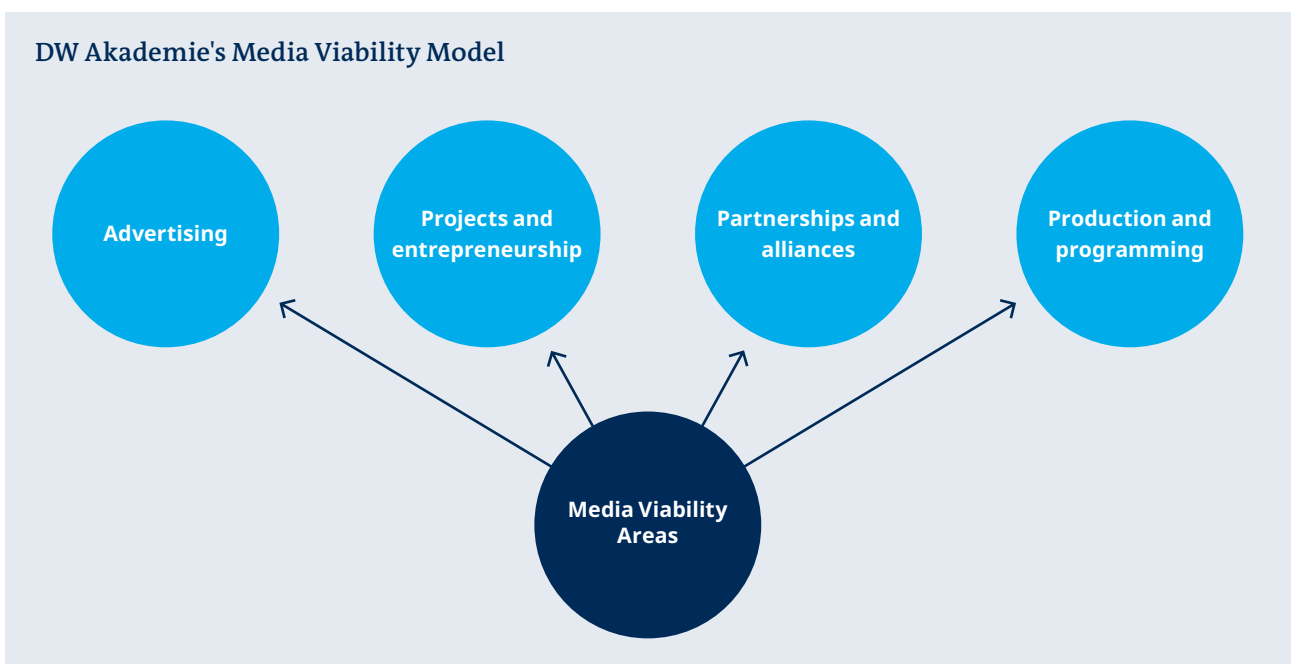


The eight were chosen for this process because of their activities, alliances, and experience accumulated over a number of years in the field of media viability, enabling them to increase their revenues. Such activities begin with the sale of advertising and communicational products, organization and execution of music and sports festivals, generation and commercialization of agricultural products, and creation of technical and financial alliances. This work led to the establishment of CORAPE's sustainability and management policy, a conceptual and policy framework with the following objectives: the enhancement of viability and management in the network; the formation of alliances with civil society organizations, academic institutions, and public and private institutions; and the establishment of

networking activities linked to different areas, including politics, management, training, production, and technological development.

### Media Viability Areas

Media viability, for the project, can be divided into four areas, namely: advertising, projects and entrepreneurship, partnerships and alliances, and production and programming. These four areas are defined and developed through the actions and experiences of the community media belonging to the CORAPE network.



## a) Advertising

The goal of this area is to promote institutional strengthening in the network through the creation of activities that ensure the efficient sale of advertising spaces by harmonizing processes and prices. This approach is backed by research to define the target audience and thus obtain more space in the advertising market.

URPIKU is an advertising agency independent of CORAPE that attracts and sells services with the aim of contributing to viability in the network.

To implement this system, the advertising agency URPIKU was founded to attract and sell services to clients, with the aim of contributing to the sustainability of the network. In order to avoid financial risks, the agency was formed independently from the executive secretariat of CORAPE, thereby reinforcing the institutional images and identity of CORAPE and of URPIKU at a national level.



## b) Projects and Entrepreneurship

The present economic and political situation has caused a considerable reduction in the purchase or rental of advertising spaces, especially by the State. At the same time, international cooperation organizations have reduced support to community media, which has made it more difficult to consolidate support and strengthen community communication processes. These circumstances have forced community media to look toward alternatives in entrepreneurship that they have been developing individually for more than a decade. CORAPE, however, decided that it was necessary to work collectively, pooling experiences to create a common viability strategy based on better planning, implementation, and evaluation of each project.

CORAPE understands entrepreneurship as productive activities not directly connected to community radio projects, providing extra income to support the work in radio. In other words, these entrepreneurial projects are distinct from the main activities of the radio stations. In some cases, these activities are conducted through social and religious organizations linked to the media, or they may be carried out by the community radio itself.

## c) Partnerships and Alliances

CORAPE considered it necessary to undertake a series of actions designed to understand social, political, and economic changes in order to identify the principal international and national groups and entities with which they could establish new strategic alliances.

CORAPE considers strategic alliances to be necessary for the development and viability of the media, taking into account three types: social, institutional, and financial-economic viability.

Currently, CORAPE's executive secretariat coordinates these activities by arranging meetings between different entities. In preparation, media belonging to the network are required to make a list of needs for future projects and alliances, as well as develop a communications product that demonstrates the strength of the media that comprise CORAPE.

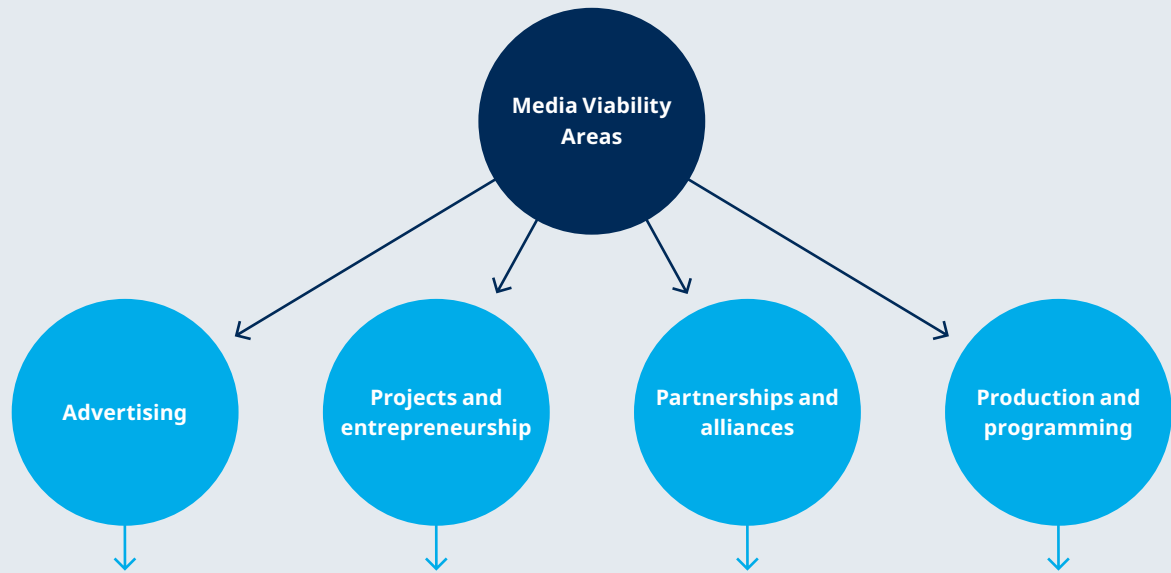
## d) Production and Programming

Conscious of the fact that this is the most important viability area, CORAPE decided to strengthen it by designing and implementing a communications strategy to enhance the creation and distribution of communications products. To this purpose, a series of criteria were established to help the network with production and distribution, with the idea that the productions developed by the executive secretariat of CORAPE should not only be destined for the radio stations affiliated with the network but also for other media. This wider distribution benefits the network's sales revenues, in addition to strengthening its institutional image.

These four viability areas are being implemented in all eight radio stations belonging to the CORAPE network. Each station chose to work in one or two of these areas, according to its characteristics, capacities and experience.

The following section presents a brief description of four of these media in the network, the viability areas already implemented by them, and future actions.

Media Viability focus areas of the CORAPE Network



Search for clients (institutions or persons) for placement in their program schedule.  
Obtain revenues and strengthen the work of URPIKU

Centered on the generation and commercialization of products and services.  
Contribute to social development through production activities promoting viability and participation in the community

Creation of alliances with international and national organizations in both the public and private sectors.  
Establish cooperation projects and obtain financial support.

Creation and commercialization of communications products.  
Technological innovation of radio production and achieve more space in the communications market.



## 2. Media Viability Examples







● Ilumán

● Lago Agrio

○ Quito

**ECUADOR**

● Riobamba

● Macas

Locations of viability examples





© Magnus Kossmann

**Radiofónicas ERPE**  
Founded in 1962

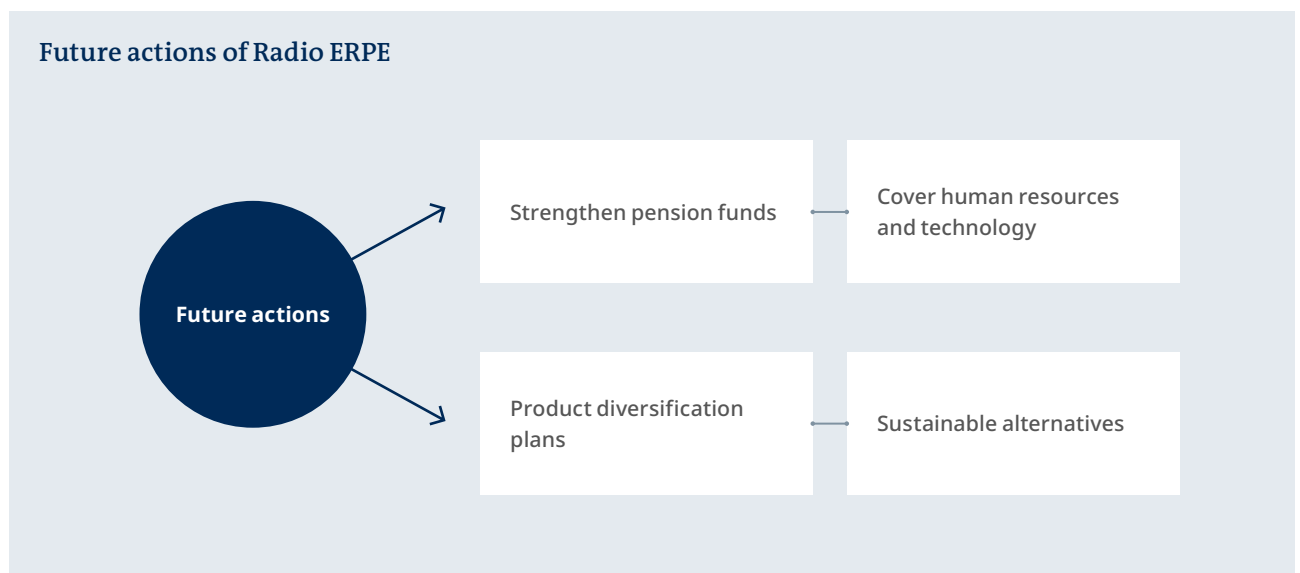


**2.1. Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares de Ecuador (ERPE)**



Radio ERPE 91.7 FM is located in Chimborazo Province in Riobamba Canton. It is part of the ERPE Foundation (Popular Radio Schools of Ecuador), a private, autonomous, non-profit organization founded in 1962 under the guidance and leadership of Monsignor Leonidas Proaño. It is focused on educational services and social development, dedicated to helping the poorer rural population, especially indigenous people. This radio station supports the foundation's activities and has conducted literacy projects involving more than 20,000 people, both indigenous and others, in rural areas in 13 provinces. It has also established a formal education distance-learning system that has trained about 16,000 indigenous and rural people. It offers 18 hours of daily programming with informative, educational, religious, cultural, and music broadcasts, both in Kichwa and Spanish.

This communications project is an expression of the culture and territory of the people, and aims at making their voices heard. It has achieved great recognition, not only in Chimborazo Province, but also in Ecuador as a whole. Because of its experience and activities over 20 years, Radio ERPE chose the following of CORAPE's viability areas:







© Radio Voz del Upano

**La Voz del Upano**  
 Founded in 1983

Quito ●  
 ECUADOR  
 Macas

radiovozdelupano  
 +593.7.270.0186  
 90.5 FM  
 vozdelupano.com

## 2.2. La Voz del Upano

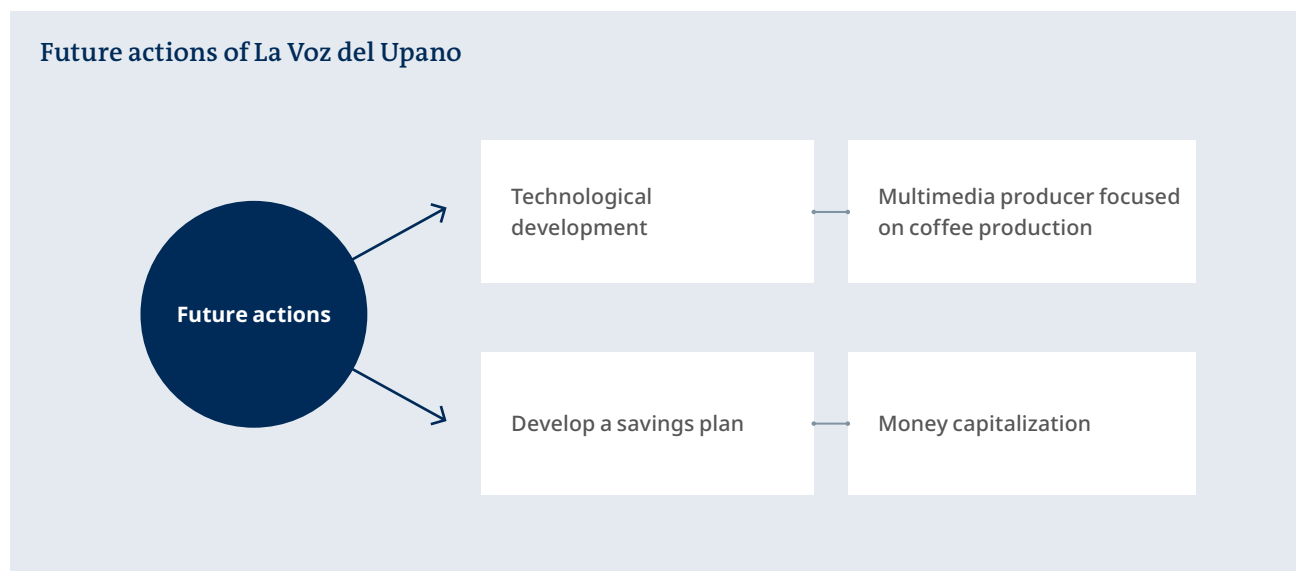
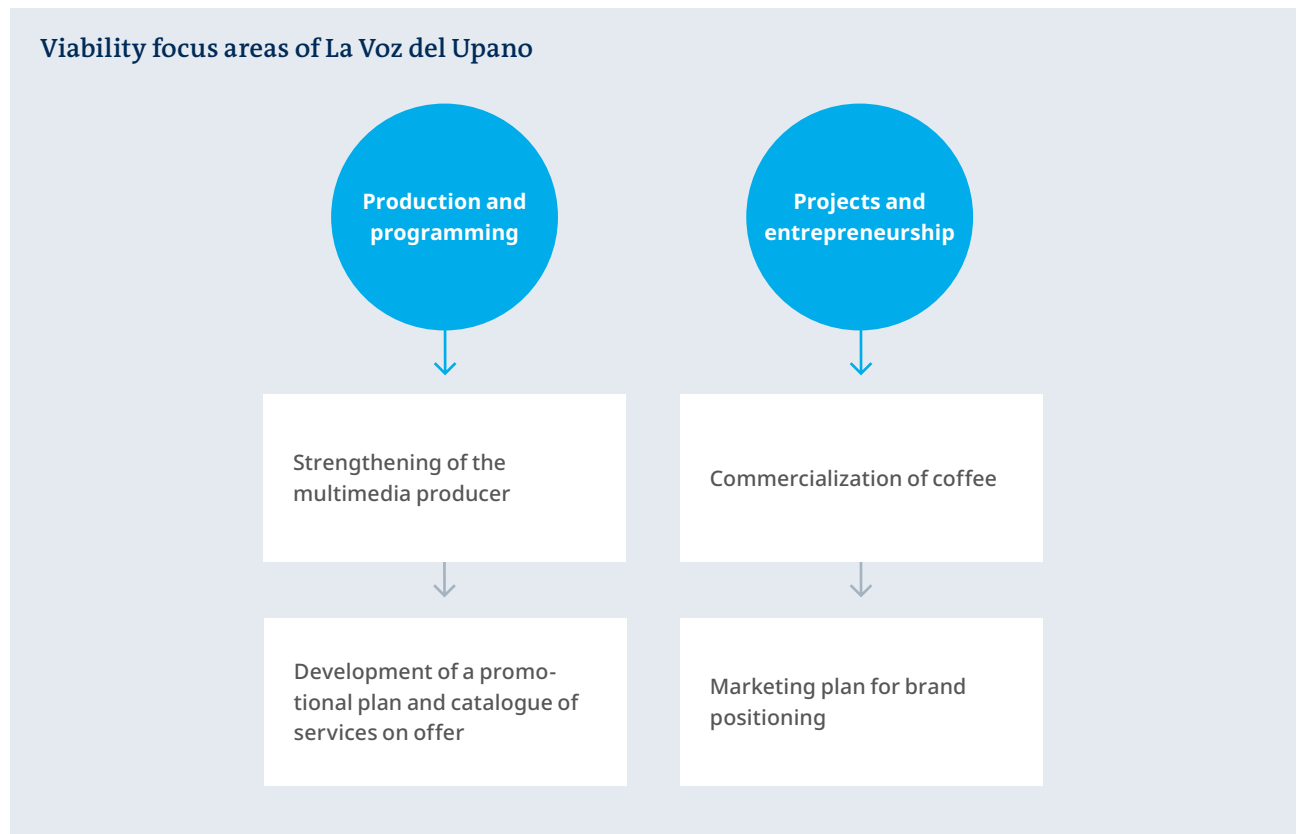


Radio Voz del Upano is located in the city of Macas in Morona Santiago Province and belongs to the Apostolic Vicariate of Méndez, which is the licensee of the radio frequency and shares management responsibilities. Since its beginnings, it has promoted evangelization and literacy, through educational programs in agreement with the Ministry of Education.

One important goal is work with communities and their products; it uses volunteer personnel from pastoral organizations as well as scout groups. It has opened up spaces for young people, and has been able to innovate technologically to create its own communication productions and services.



It has wide coverage, broadcasting in two provinces; however, it needs to strengthen its audience to position itself better in the advertising market. This radio station prioritized the following viability areas:





© Radio Sucumbíos

**Radio Sucumbíos**  
 Founded in 1993

Quito ●  
 Lago Agrio ●  
 ECUADOR

- radiosucumbios
- +593.76.283.0423
- 105.3 FM
- radiosucumbios.org.ec

### 2.3. Radio Sucumbíos

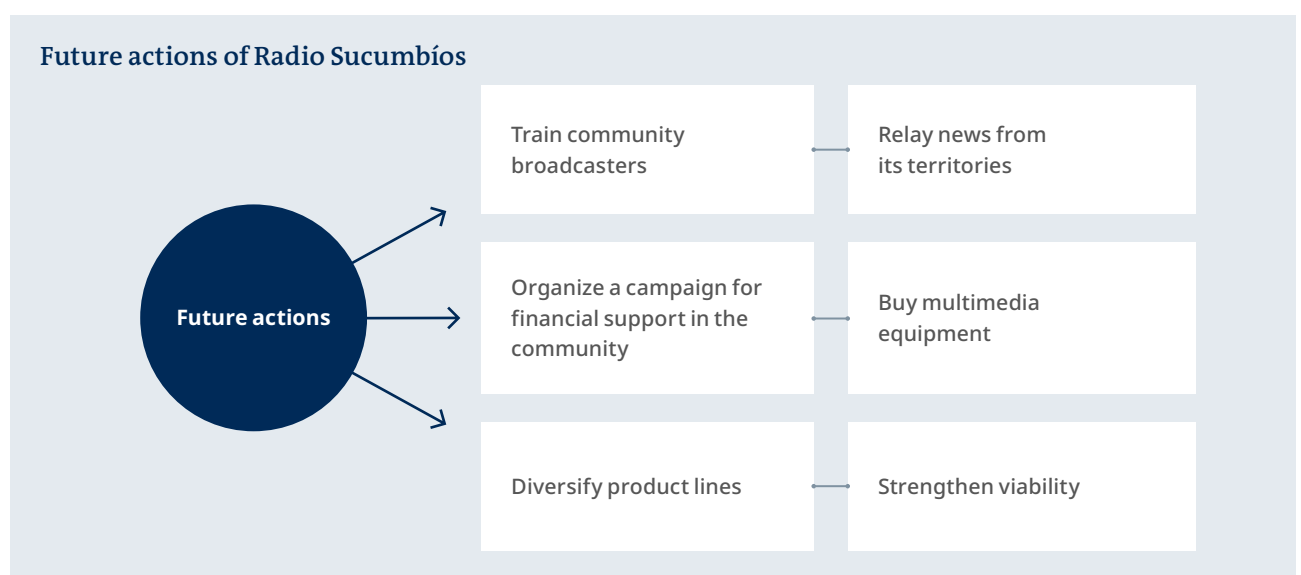
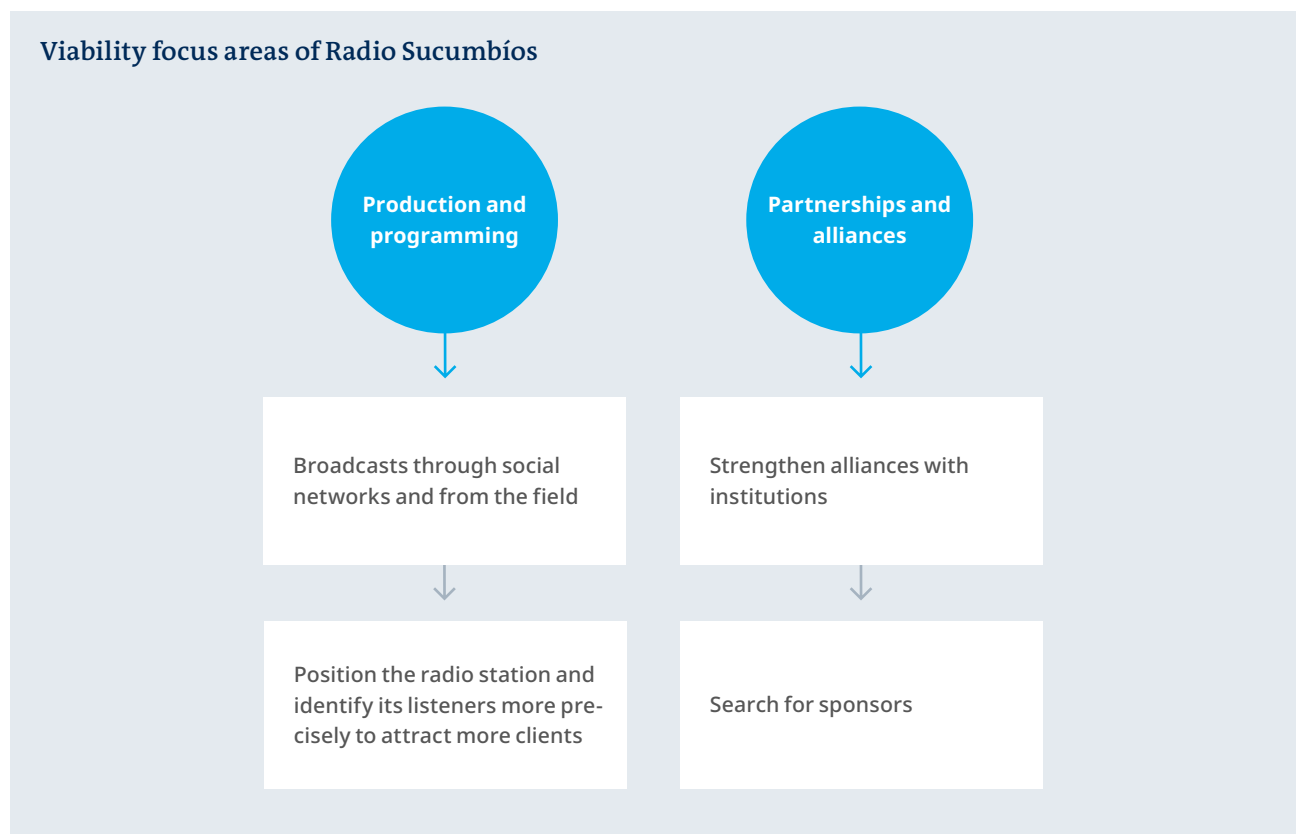


Radio Sucumbíos is located in Lago Agrio Canton in Sucumbíos Province, and belongs to the Apostolic Vicariate of San Miguel de Sucumbíos, which is the licensee of the radio frequency and responsible for its management and financing. This radio station dedicates itself to programming and to the sale of advertising space. It began viability efforts more than 15 years ago and is normally financially independent through its own projects, with occasional help in the form of small loans from the vicariate. Its origins and current work are focused on evangelization, support for social resistance, and informing on the reality of people of African descent. The station has strong support from the population.

In the 2017 tender process for frequency concessions the radio station was denied a frequency, leading to protest from local inhabitants who campaigned for a return of the concession because of the many years of positive work for the communities. At various moments the radio was able to survive thanks to

the contributions made by individuals, who wanted the money to be specifically devoted to social organizations and not to pastoral work. Out of this conflict came a pact between these organizations and the vicariate with the aim of not discarding the goals and alliances established in the beginning. The radio station has positioned itself in rural areas by organizing events

and interviews in the communities. It has also received recognition for enabling local people to produce their own programs. From the viability areas, Radio Sucumbíos prioritized the following:







## Radio Ilumán

Founded in 2000

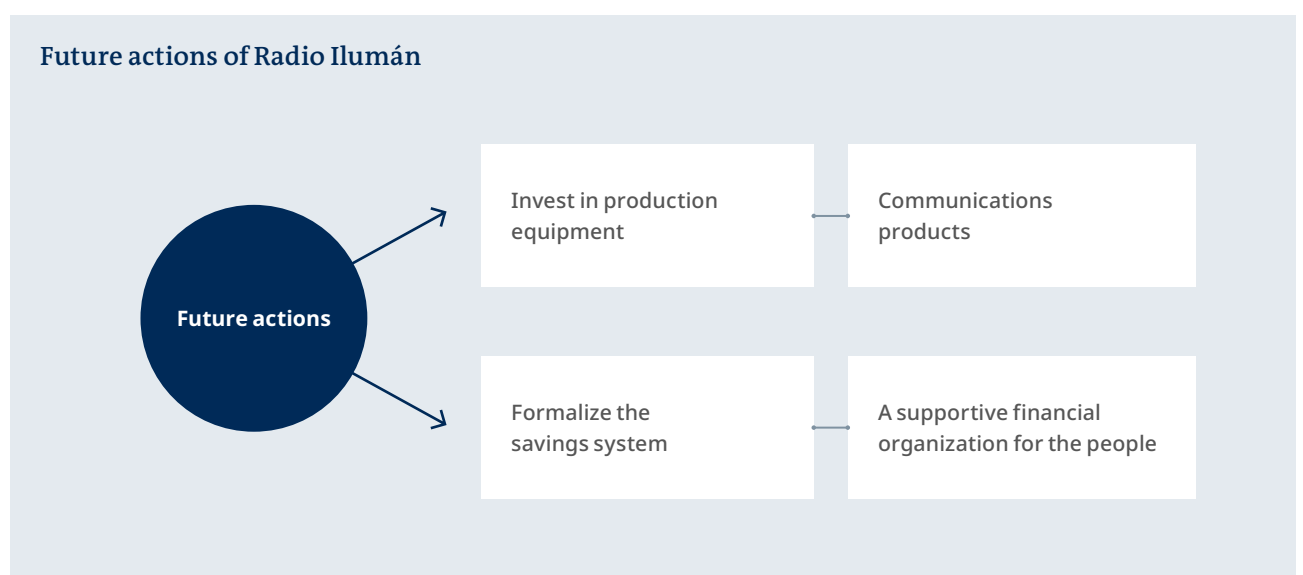
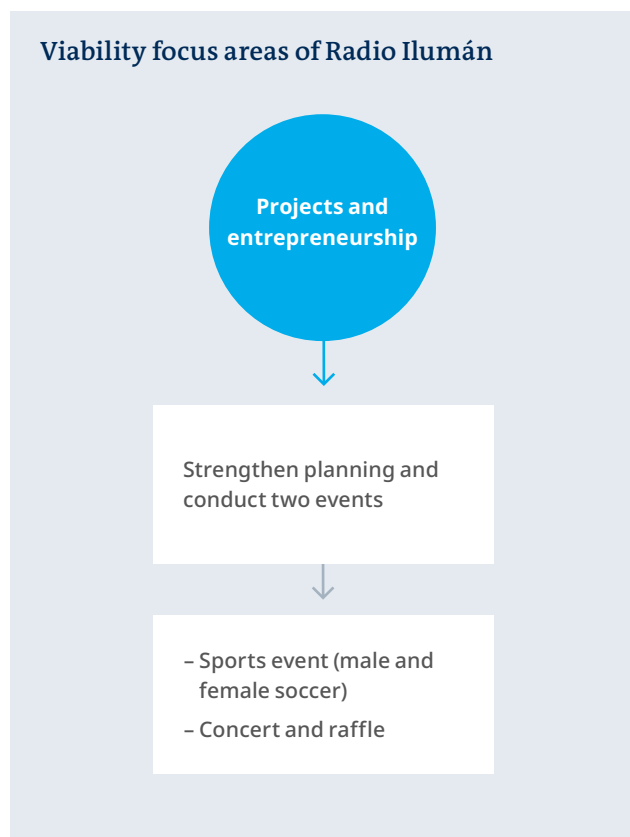


## 2.4. Radio Ilumán



Radio Ilumán is located in the community of Ilumán in Otavalo Canton in Imbabura Province. It belongs to the Asociación de Jóvenes Kichwas de Imbabura (Imbabura Young Kichwa Association) (AJKI), which is the frequency licensee. Its work is focused on social service through community education and the strengthening of cultural identity. It was established as part of the ongoing struggle to defend indigenous rights by presenting their lives, culture, music, traditions, gastronomy, and customs. Most of the radio programs are in the Kichwa language and are enthusiastically received by the Mindalae traders in various countries in the world. Through social media and the webpage, these people who have migrated elsewhere can follow their programming. Productions are also greatly appreciated by local communities and the radio station would like to extend coverage to neighboring provinces with Kichwa-speaking inhabitants. The radio's team is young, as are the members of the AJKI board of directors, which has enabled them to take consensual decisions about the technological innovation essential for

reaching a wider audience. They engage in entrepreneurship to financially support the association and therefore the radio. Radio Ilumán prioritized the following viability areas:



### 3. Guide for community media viability







To understand viability from the point of view of the eight CORAPE media outlets, we present this short definition, constructed by and based on their experience:

The 8 community media outlets understand viability as a planned, technical, accounting process, framed by prospective studies, enabling community communications media to obtain income from the provision of communications services and the generation and commercialization of entrepreneurial projects. In this way, they strengthen their institution, independence, self-management, and strategic alliances, all of which contribute to the continuation and optimization of their political mission in the future.

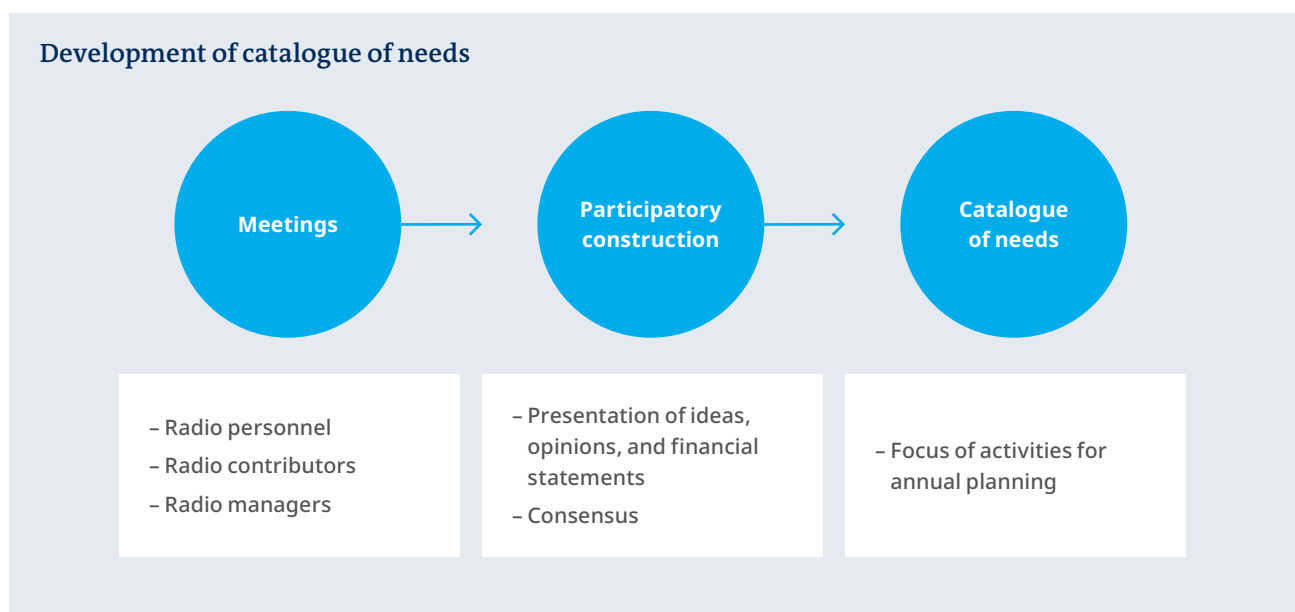
### 3.1. Steps and tools to begin a media viability process

To begin the implementation of a media viability process, community media needs to take a series of steps or stages into account to ensure its efficacy:

a) Establish the requirements and interests of the communications medium, producing a catalogue of needs to focus its activities within an annual planning framework. This catalogue

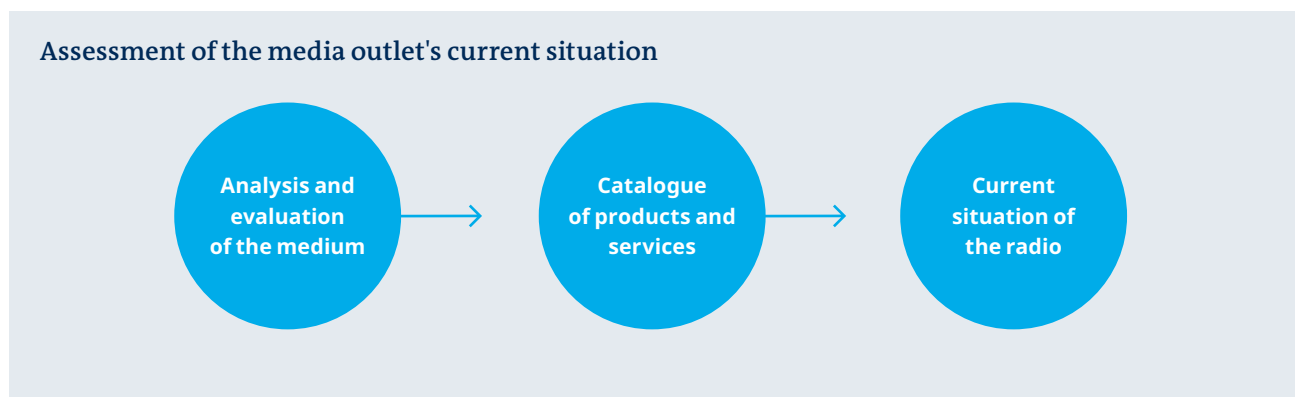
will be defined by the communications objectives and policies of the radio station. It should be constructed collectively by gathering opinions and proposals from all departments of the radio station.

The steps and tools identified for the implementation of a media viability process are presented here.



b) It is essential for the viability of the radio station to create strategic cooperation alliances to exchange technology and knowledge in addition to financial support. For this purpose, the radio will have to identify public and private, national and

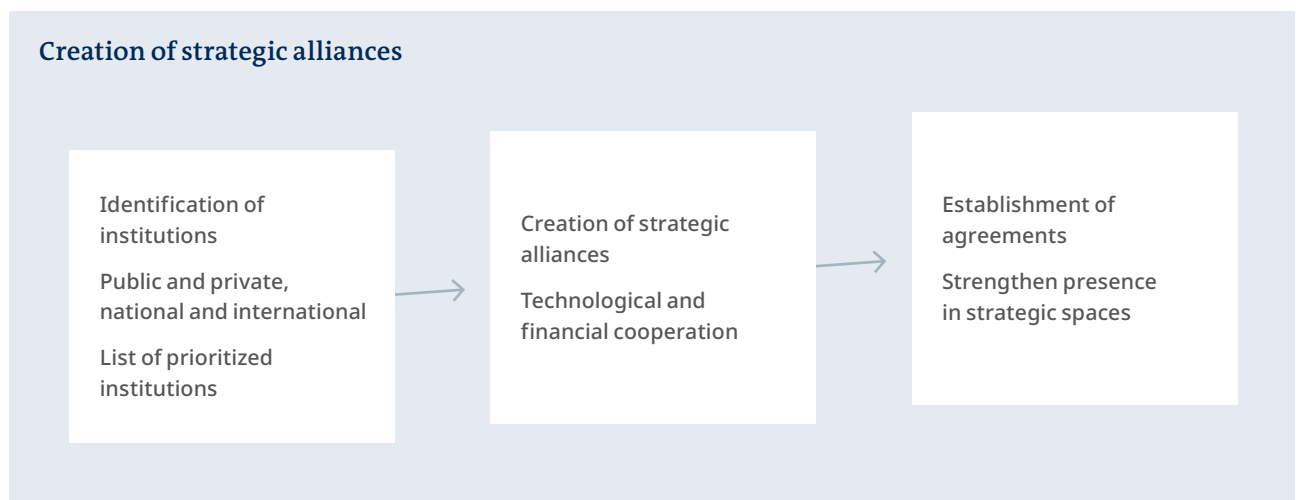
international institutions aligned with its own objectives and lines of work, with which it can establish agreements and strengthen its presence in strategic spaces.





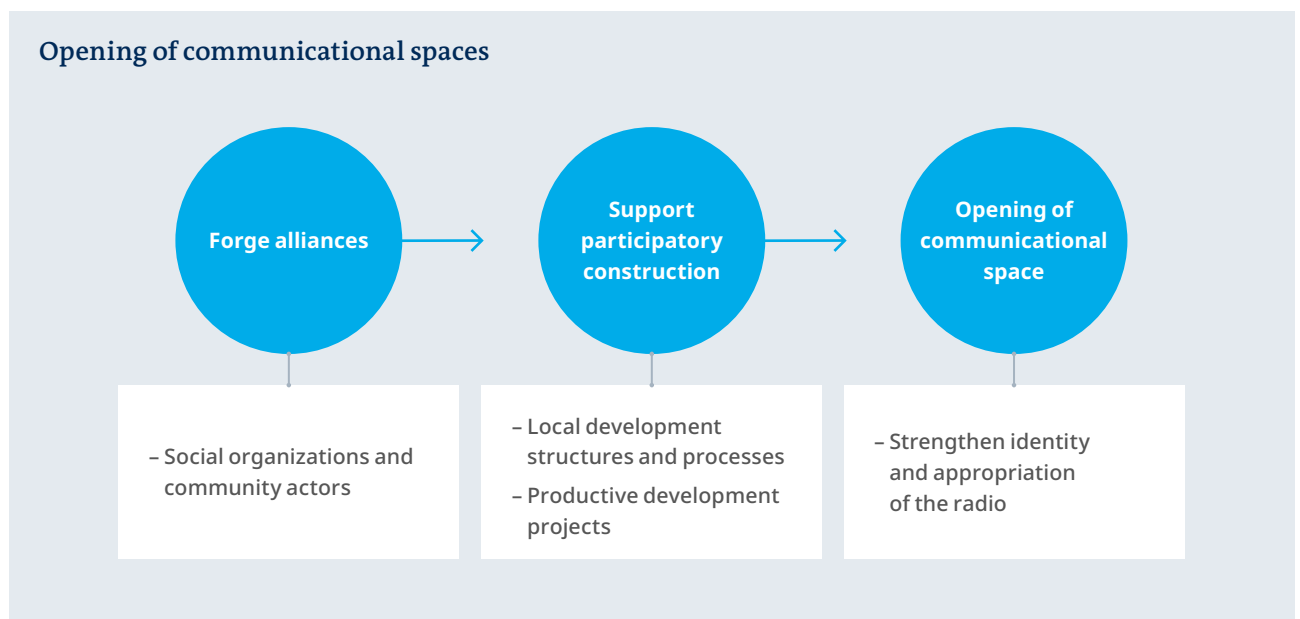
c) With the aim of contributing to social development and the democratization of communication, community media must forge strategic alliances with social organizations and other community actors. In Ecuador, this could mean supporting local development plans and structures, like the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADS) and the Population

in the Participatory Construction of Development and Land-Use Plans (PDYOT), productive development projects, and the opening-up of communications spaces to the population, with the goal of strengthening the identity and appropriation of the radio.



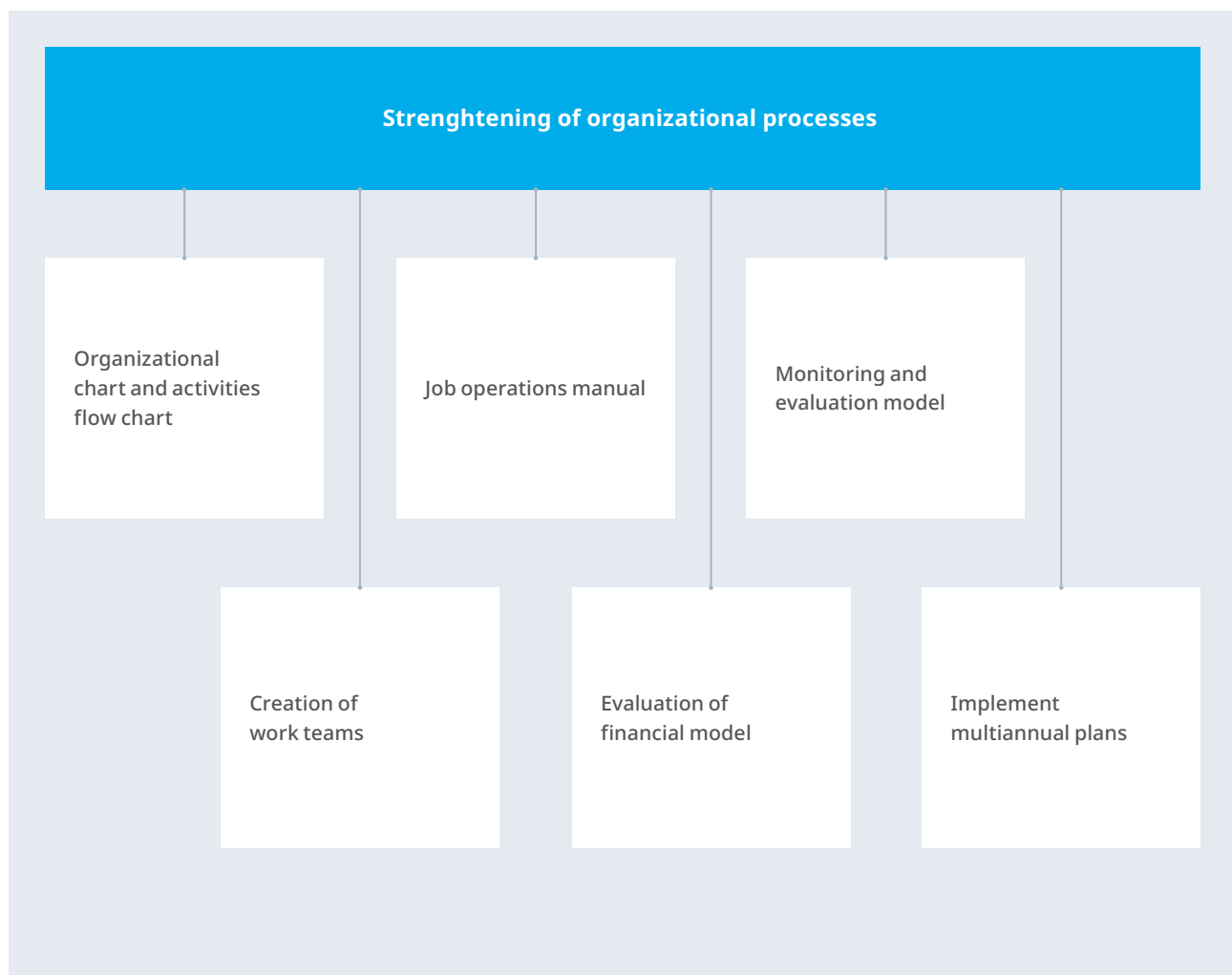
d) Through the restructuring of work procedures, the radio strengthens organizational processes by producing documents setting out work goals and procedures. It should have an organization chart, a job operations manual, and an activ-

ities flow chart. It should also implement an monitoring and evaluation model, create specific work teams, evaluate the financial model, and implement multiannual plans.



e) It is essential for the radio to create a production and commercialization plan for products and services, supported by audience and market studies, links with agencies and institutions, the creation of a product and services price catalogue, sales strategy, and the search for commercialization spaces. This point focuses on marketing activities that enable

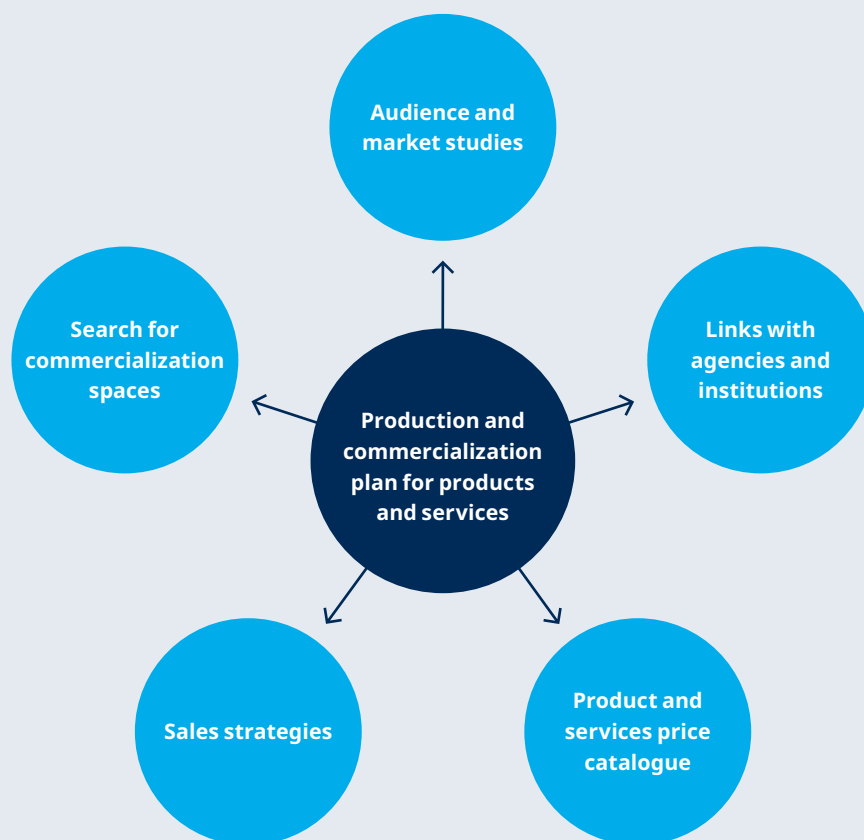
the community medium to establish and strengthen its own space in the advertising market. To save money, such activities could be conducted through support agreements with institutions.



f) Taking into account the profitability of income generated by the radio, it is necessary to construct an investment plan for technological innovation and infrastructure with the aim of being more competitive in the market. One of the most effective

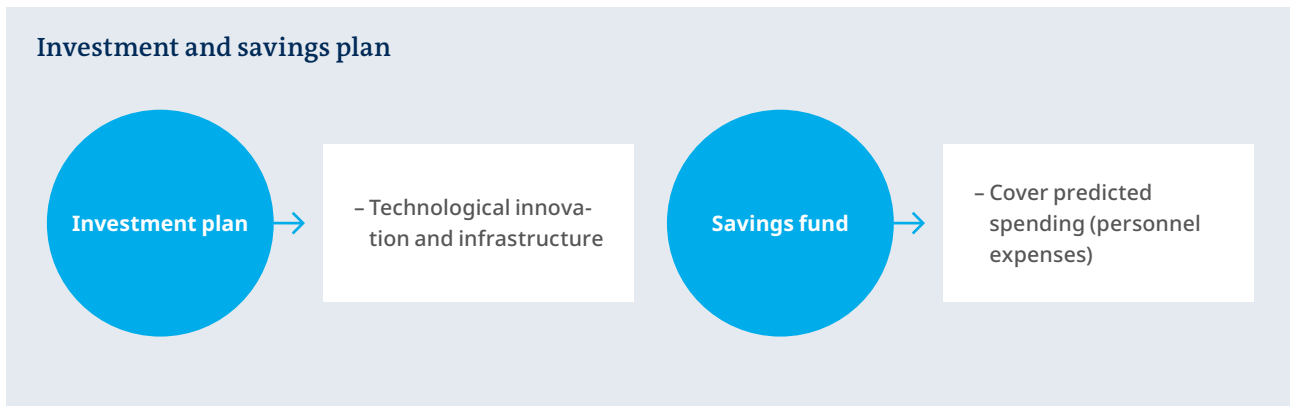
investment tools for the media in this study is a savings fund designed to cover unexpected spending and emergencies.

### Key aspects of the production and marketing plan



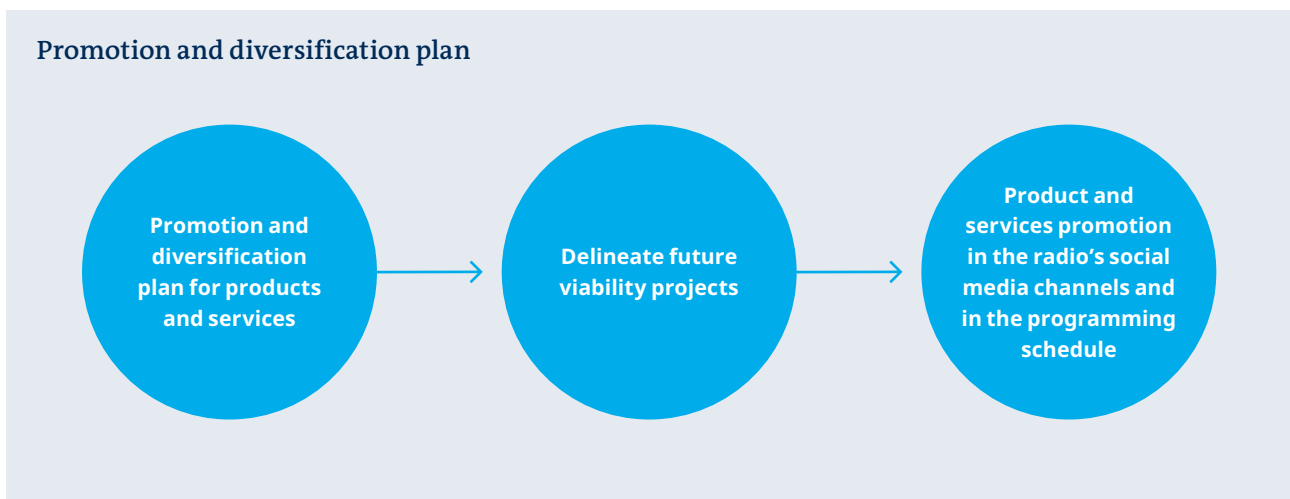
g) The radio must have a product promotion and diversification plan, allowing it to advertise the products and services it offers, and it must delineate future viability projects to bring in income. It should assign at least 25% of programming to this task, in addition to creating communications promotional

products, through social networks and a webpage, and contracting communications production services. At the same time, it should develop its technological innovation process, organize interviews, extend contacts with clients and sponsors, and participate in events and trade fairs for promotion.



h) The media outlet must have a plan for promotion and diversification that allows to make their products visible as well as the services that it offers, likewise outlining future viability projects that can be worked on and that support its economy. For the promotion of products and services, the media outlet should assign a minimum of 25% of the programming schedule for this activity, in addition to creating communication

promotional products for both the station and for social networks and website, contracting communication production services, while developing its process of technological innovation, production of interviews and coverage to clients and sponsors, participation in events and fairs for promotion.



To reach viability, radios should carry out the following actions

Establish needs

Conduct analysis and evaluations of their legal situation, technical infrastructure, and financial situation

Create strategic cooperation alliances and restructure work procedures

Create a Production and Commercialization Plan for products and services

Construct a Product Promotion and Diversification Plan





-  DWAkademie
-  @dw\_akademie
-  [dw.com/newsletter-registration](mailto:dw.com/newsletter-registration)
-  [dw-akademie.com](http://dw-akademie.com)

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue. DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in proximately 50 developing countries and emerging economies. DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development. As a strategic partner of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), DW Akademie executes media development projects that strengthen the human right to freedom of opinion and promote free access to information.



*Made for minds.*