

**Midterm Performance Evaluation
"Promotion of Social and Economic
Development in Nicaragua",
implemented by FUNIDES**



Managua, September 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
I. INTRODUCTION	8
I.1 Purpose and Audience of the evaluation.....	8
I.2 Brief Description of the Project	8
II. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY.....	9
III. FINDINGS.....	10
III.1 Findings related to Goal 1: The administrative and financial platforms of FUNIDES established and strengthened.	10
III.2 Findings related to Goal 2: The foundation’s long-term policy research agenda well-defined and implemented.....	15
III.3 Findings related to Goal 3: A population more aware of socioeconomic policy issues; public opinion and policy decisions affected.....	20
III.4 Summarized responses to the evaluation questions.....	29
IV. CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS / LESSONS LEARNED	38
IV.1 Conclusions	38
IV.2 Recommendations	40
IV.3 Lessons learned.....	42
V. References: Bibliographical documentation.....	44
Appendix 1: Different phases of the consultancy and the actions undertaken during implementation ...	48
Appendix 2: Events and participants in FUNIDES activities (2011 – Junio 2014).....	49
Appendix 3: Survey of the Public Attending FUNIDES Presentations.....	52

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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ASOMIF	:	Association of Micro-financing Institutions
ASOBANP	:	Association of Private Banks of Nicaragua
BCN	:	Central Bank of Nicaragua
CACONIC	:	Chamber of Commerce of Nicaragua
CCSN	:	Chamber of Commerce and Services of Nicaragua
CMA	:	Arbitration and Mediation Center
CNU	:	National Council of Universities
CONICYT (Chile)	:	National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research
COSEP	:	Supreme Council of Private Enterprise.
COSUDE	:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.
CSJ	:	Supreme Court of Justice
DLGP	:	Diploma Studies in Leadership and Management Policy
ECLAC	:	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EXCAN	:	Coffee Exporters Association of Nicaragua
FUNDESA	:	Foundation for the Development of Guatemala
FUNICA	:	Foundation for Technological Development of Agriculture and Forestry of Nicaragua
FUNIDES	:	Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development
FUSADES	:	Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
ICE	:	<i>Informes de Coyuntura Económica</i> (Reports on the Current Economic Situation)
IDB	:	Inter-American Development Bank
IEEPP	:	Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies
INDE	:	Nicaraguan Development Institute
INSS	:	Nicaraguan Social Security Institute.
M&E	:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHCP	:	Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit
MIFIC	:	Ministry of Industry, Promotion and Commerce
MINED	:	Ministry of Education
MINSA	:	Ministry of Health
MIPYME	:	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NA	:	National Assembly
NGO	:	Nongovernmental Organization
NUPAS	:	Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey.

PMP	:	Performance Management Plan
PNDH	:	National Human Development Plan
PNUD	:	United Nations Development Program
PYME	:	Small and Medium Enterprises
RRHH	:	Human Resources
SIBOIF	:	Superintendence of Banks and other Financial Institutions
SGS	:	Société Générale de Surveillance.
SICA	:	Central American Integration System.
SME	:	Monitoring and Evaluation System
TERCE	:	Education Teacher Training Campaign
UAM	:	American University
UCA	:	Central American University
UCC	:	University of Commercial Sciences
UNAN	:	National Autonomous University of Nicaragua
UNCTAD	:	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
U.S., USA	:	United States of America.
USAID	:	U.S. Agency for International Development
WB	:	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Mid-term Project Performance Evaluation is to verify the efficacy and impact of activities undertaken by FUNIDES within the Project *Promotion of Social and Economic Development in Nicaragua*. It assesses the progress made by FUNIDES toward achieving its initial objectives as set forth in the results framework and the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This includes an analysis of progress made on key indicators related to institutional strengthening and FUNIDES' long-term financial sustainability, the reach of its communications and dissemination network, and the production and distribution of its analyses of economic and public policies. At a higher level, this Mid-term Project Performance Evaluation also verifies FUNIDES' progress in achieving results in overall project outcomes aimed at increasing the level of informed public opinion, which in turn has an effect on policy decisions.

This program has three components: **Component 1: Institutional Strengthening**, which seeks to improve the foundation's administrative and financial sustainability over the long term, improve its strategic planning capacity and strengthen its financial and personnel management and its internal institutional controls; **Component 2: Definition and implementation of the foundation's policy research agenda**, aimed at improving its research program; and **Component 3: Communication and outreach**, finalizing the drafting and approval of the foundation's medium- and long-term communication strategy and implementing it as well as strengthening the dialogue with universities to improve the population's knowledge and influence Nicaragua's policy definition.

The evaluation covered the period from January 25, 2011, when the project started until June 30, 2014, and was done with a **participatory methodology focused on the use of the results**. A variety of analytical and investigatory techniques was employed during the evaluation, including documentary analysis, in-depth interviews with FUNIDES personnel and directors, and interviews and a survey with users of its products and representatives of the organizations linked to the foundation's work.

The **key results** regarding each of the components indicate that:

- 1) FUNIDES has been strengthened: The organization has developed a five-year, time-phased Strategic Plan, built networks and alliances with regional think tanks; strengthened financial, personnel management and internal controls; obtained the NGO best practice certification from SGS; and defined a fundraising strategy to increase and diversify FUNIDES' funding base, although it seems unlikely that FUNIDES will reach financial sustainability by the end of USAID's support.
- 2) The foundation's long-term policy research agenda is well defined and is being implemented: FUNIDES has continued to publish macroeconomic reports and surveys of consumer and business confidence; has formulated and implemented a policy research agenda plan; has developed policies for its research agenda plan to ensure its quality, independence and effectiveness; and has formulated and disseminated its research findings and policy proposals
- 3) As demonstrated by FUNIDES' monthly monitoring of its appearances in the media, FUNIDES has created greater awareness of socioeconomic policy issues in the population and influenced policy decision-makers through its optimal communications and outreach strategy, which promotes a policy research agenda, has developed a series of conferences to disseminate its results and has enhanced journalists' capacities on its issues and provided information exchange programs for them.

Furthermore, FUNIDES activities have had an effect on public opinion on social and economic issues as well as on political decision makers and on the design of public policy itself.

The main conclusion of the study indicates that with the support of this project, FUNIDES has positioned itself as the lead think tank in Nicaragua. It is seen as independent, impartial and professional, generating broad, credible and reliable quality information of current interest; doing rigorous research and analysis of public policies; communicating effectively with the private sector, public sector and civil society on economic and social issues; promoting progressive, sustainable and transparent public policies and fostering civic participation and open dialogue to promote Nicaragua's social and economic development. Even more important, FUNIDES has begun to influence policy definition and decision-making. **In terms of this evaluation, this means that the foundation's activities have been effective and are having the expected impacts; it also means that the project has so far been very successfully executed and managed.**

Other important **conclusions** of the evaluation are:

- FUNIDES has delayed a lot in taking more organized and systematic actions to implement its financial sustainability strategy. It took almost two and a half years to hire the person in charge of implementing this strategy, which delayed its initiatives to achieve financial sustainability.
- As of 2017 there will be an annual financial gap of around US\$560,000 that must be covered with new resources, so FUNIDES must seek contributions from the private sector and multilateral and bilateral cooperation, as well as income from providing specialized professional services.
- FUNIDES shows good fulfillment of the project monitoring and evaluation indicators, the majority of which effectively reflect the real progress of the project.
- The conferences and events organized by FUNIDES and its publications have reached a broad and diverse audience. Distinguished figures from the business world, trade association authorities, officials of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation organizations and representatives of the diplomatic, academic, political, governmental and media spheres as well as independent professionals often attend the events, are frequent visitors to the web page and positively assess the FUNIDES products.
- FUNIDES has been able to bring some important themes to the country's political, social and economic agenda, which have then been taken up by other social actors, and it has contributed to disseminating knowledge among public opinion on important topics to the country. It has become a reliable referent and provider of information on the issues it has dealt with.

Some of the evaluation's **recommendations** are presented below:

- The communications area, with advice from the research personnel, should be put in charge of adapting the technical documents prepared by FUNIDES with simpler language for a non-specialized public, without losing their technical essence. The objective is to have greater influence on change and on the vision of people who are not professionals and do not have the level to understand important economic problems.
- Demand for sectorial studies is growing and could be filled by FUNIDES if it seeks resources to finance them jointly with those requesting them and can get those same institutions or organizations to provide specialized collaboration in the research projects.
- FUNIDES should strengthen its research work even more. This is not a finite goal but one that must be consistently and permanently sought by all members of the foundation,

which can never be reached, so improvements in this field must be an ongoing search by all members of the organization. . The sharing of experiences with other national, regional and international think tanks and internships could contribute greatly to this.

- FUNIDES should continue strengthening the line of work of “facilitating and harmonizing opinions” to create and organize convergence points of opinions and activities with participation by the public and private sectors and civil society on specific areas and themes requiring analysis of the problematic and a search for consensus.
- The work of the fundraising area and the services unit needs to be intensified, prioritizing full implementation of the funding strategy and the search for bilateral and multilateral international donors and private international foundations. We also consider it necessary to raise awareness among the business sector of what the country would lose if FUNIDES were to reduce its actions due to lack of resources. In the first half of 2015, a “Let’s save FUNIDES” campaign should be designed for implementation in case the bilateral and multilateral cooperation funds are not obtained and the contributions of the private sector do not increase.

Some of the **lessons learned** for think tanks during the evaluation follow:

- To achieve optimum positioning, recognition and acceptance of a think tank’s research work, it is fundamental to have research policies, precisely define the areas of intervention, have a research agenda and plan and implement the studies effectively.
- The think tank must be realistic and clear about the areas in which its advocacy work can have real influence, to which end it must focus and concentrate its efforts on increasing arenas of discussion and do research and formulate proposals in those fields.
- The quality, independence and efficacy of policy proposals results from applying work procedures, methodologies and processes based on technically structured and validated protocols, and having criteria to select study topics. Among the latter, the following cannot be absent: (1) the topic’s importance; (2) the value it can add; (3) the degree of influence it can generate; and (4) available resources to develop it. The selection must also be approved by the center’s directors or a commission that includes highly qualified people.
- In projects of this nature, which aim to increase the financial sustainability of think tanks, it is indispensable to develop a funding or sustainability strategy from the very beginning, and immediately begin its implementation by one or more individuals dedicated full time to these tasks.
- The quality and professionalism of a think tank’s human resources, both its managers and those involved in the research processes and support activities, are fundamental to its success and sustainability. Moreover, to improve the institutional and professional competencies of a think tank’s personnel in an ongoing way, there must be permanent training, specialization and updating programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Purpose and Audience of the evaluation

This Mid-term Project Performance Evaluation is intended to verify the efficacy and impact of the activities FUNIDES has undertaken within the Project titled *Promotion of Social and Economic Development in Nicaragua*. It assesses FUNIDES' progress in achieving its initial objectives as set forth in the Results Framework and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This includes an analysis of progress made on key indicators related to FUNIDES' institutional strengthening and long-term financial sustainability, the reach of its communications and outreach network, and the production and distribution of its analyses of economic and public policies. At a higher level, this Mid-term Project Performance Evaluation also verifies FUNIDES' progress in achieving results in overall project outcomes aimed at increasing informed public opinion, which in turn has an effect on policy decisions.

The main users of this report are the FUNIDES directors and personnel, USAID, donors and partners of the foundation. If FUNIDES so approves it could reach the organizations and individuals FUNIDES works with and relates to (economic associations, universities, public institutions, consultants and other think tanks).

I.2 Brief Description of the Project

FUNIDES is an independent nonpartisan think tank specializing in research and policy analysis related to socioeconomic development and institutional reform. The organization's mission is to promote economic development and poverty reduction in Nicaragua by promoting public policies based on democratic principles, free enterprise, a strong institutional framework and respect for the rule of law. FUNIDES achieves its goals through:

- Research and rigorous analysis of public policies,
- Communication with the private sector, public sector and civil society on economic and social issues,
- Advocacy for progressive and sustainable public policy and transparent policy implementation,
- Promotion of civic engagement and open dialogue.

The program has three components, which are detailed below:

(i) Component 1: Institutional Strengthening: This component seeks to improve the foundation's administrative and financial sustainability over the long term, enhance its strategic planning capacity and strengthen its financial and personnel management and internal controls. It includes approval of institutional manuals and the strategic plan for the next five years. In this component FUNIDES must finalize the development of its financial sustainability strategy, which it expects its board of directors to approve. Of particular importance is its preparation for international certification as an NGO with best practices.

The goal for this component is **Goal 1:** FUNIDES' administrative and financial platforms established and strengthened. Its intermediate result is Institution Strengthened.

(ii) Component 2: Policy research agenda: This component defines and implements the foundation's policy research agenda for the purpose of improving its research program. FUNIDES must continue preparing quarterly macroeconomic reports, including business and

consumer surveys. During the period considered, it must prepare and publish four quarterly economic reports. It must also continue expanding its research agenda in order to promote reforms in critical development areas.

The goal for this component is **Goal 2**: The foundation's long-term policy research agenda well-defined and implemented. Its intermediate result is Policy Research Agenda defined and implemented.

(iii) Component 3: Communication and outreach: The aim of this component is to finalize the drafting and approval of the foundation's medium- and long-term communication strategy and to implement it. The component must strengthen the dialogue with economic, social and political leaders and with universities. This component will continue building capacity among the media on institutional and economic reforms. FUNIDES will create awareness among the population through the use of the research agenda results (macroeconomic reports and in-depth studies) to produce different information products, including press releases, news bulletins, television and radio announcements, social networks, banners and others.

The goal for this component is **Goal 3**: A population more aware of socioeconomic policy issues; public opinion and policy decisions affected. Its intermediate result is Communications and Outreach Expanded.

Although FUNIDES' goals are not differentiated by levels of impact or importance, Goal 3 encapsulates the organization's overall objectives. Through its research, communication and advocacy efforts, FUNIDES expects to increase popular awareness of socioeconomic policy issues and manifest changes in public opinion and policy decisions. For this midterm evaluation, the Goal 3 statement represents the project outcomes and outlines the criteria against which FUNIDES' impact will be measured.

II. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The midterm evaluation covers the results and impacts the project generated in the period January 25, 2011, when the project started until June 30, 2014. During the evaluation a variety of analytical and research techniques were employed, including in-depth interviews with FUNIDES staff and principals and interviews and a survey with FUNIDES clients and relevant USAID team members. Archival and desk research was also included.

The consultancy was divided into the following four operational phases:

1. Implementation of preparatory tasks,
2. Design of the evaluation,
3. Information gathering and processing,
4. Drafting and presentation of a Final Report.

The evaluation was done without major difficulties and with the full support of FUNIDES officials; there were no restrictions or information gaps that could have affected its results. Appendix 1 reflects the different phases of the consultancy and the actions undertaken during implementation.

III. FINDINGS

This section first presents the findings for each of the project components in accord with its goals, results and indicators, and second a summary response to the evaluation questions based on the findings described at the start of the section. The end of the section presents the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from the analysis and interpretation of all the findings presented.

III.1 Findings related to Goal 1: The administrative and financial platforms of FUNIDES established and strengthened.

○ Intermediate Result: Institution Strengthened

● *Sub-IR 1.1: Develop a five-year, time-phased Strategic Plan*

At the end of October 2011, the board of directors approved FUNIDES' five-year strategic plan. This plan was developed after three workshops with the participation of the board and one with the foundation's staff personnel. During its development, six board members and the executive director visited the FUSADES think tank in El Salvador to learn about its experience and the consultant responsible for formulating the plan also had that center's full support.

The plan has quite correctly defined FUNIDES' strategic thinking framework, as follows:

Mission	FUNIDES is an apolitical think tank made up of independent businesspeople and professionals and is dedicated to socioeconomic research and the promotion of public policies and private initiatives geared to increase private investment, generate employment, reduce poverty and foster the wellbeing of Nicaraguans.
Vision	To distinguish itself as an institution rigorous in its thinking and effective in its proposal for actions aimed at promoting Nicaragua's progress in consensus.
Values	It believes in a democratic free-market system with equal opportunities; absolute respect for individual freedoms and the rule of law; and education and institutionality as the basis for achieving individual and societal progress. Its work is governed by the following values: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Integrity and intellectual rigor● Independence and objectivity● Veracity and responsibility● Relevance and effectiveness
Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Encourage dialogue on issues of national interest● Provide economic and socioeconomic analysis● Propose public development policies● Foster private development initiatives

The Strategic Plan also defines the roles FUNIDES must play, its sphere of action, its organization and the responsibilities of the different authorities comprising it; it provides a detailed analysis of the organization's sustainability and presents a plan of action, the greatest weakness of which is that it is too general. Another weakness of the strategic plan is that it does not establish a monitoring system that would allow the degree of progress in implementing it to

be learned. To deal with the first of these lacks, FUNIDES is formulating annual institutional plans, which are the medium through which the strategy is being implemented. It is also drafting annual plans referring to the USAID project implementation. Although the strategic plan does not include a set of indicators, it has had a set since the beginning of the project with USAID (2011). And in April 2013, the board of directors approved an institutional set of indicators, which are being given periodical follow-up, with the board informed annually. A major current challenge is impact measurement (influence on decision-makers revealed through concrete public policies).

The board commissions have reviewed the Strategic Plan. In August of last year a specific session was held to that end, which took an entire afternoon in INCAE; it will be analyzed even more profoundly in August of this year.

- ***Sub-IR 1.2: Build networks and alliances with regional and international think tanks***

FUNIDES is a member of the Central American Network of Think Tanks and Advocacy Centers, a volunteer association of 10 nongovernmental think tanks and advocacy centers (2 from Nicaragua) dedicated to research, analysis, strategic reflection and proposals for addressing issues and finding solutions from a regional perspective to the fundamental issues of development and citizen coexistence, as well as to the most acute problems facing the Central American isthmus. The Network seeks to contribute to the development of regional integration in a way that complements the work being done by the intergovernmental entities of the Central American Integration System (SICA). FUNIDES has participated in meetings of this network in San Salvador and Guatemala and has established very close relations with FUSADES of El Salvador and FUNDESA of Guatemala.

With respect to establishing alliances with think tanks internationally, FUNIDES has identified a set of international think tanks with which it wants to build relations, has held many meetings with representatives of international, binational and multinational agencies and is preparing a set of actions to identify and contact other likeminded centers, basically in the United States and Europe, with which it could establish working relations and also as a source of resources through the execution of joint studies or provision of services. Nonetheless, it has not yet established any alliances with centers of this nature.

FUNIDES has been more successful nationally, having established many alliances with organizations and institutions related to its work, a detailed description of which is presented in the following section. In addition, relations with the two existing donors, USAID and COSUDE, are excellent. These two sources of cooperation as well as US Embassy officials value very positively what the foundation has done, a high quality and professional implementation of the organization's actions and a transparent and efficient management of its resources.

- ***Sub-IR 1.3: Strengthen financial, personnel management and internal controls***

All institutional manuals were completely reformulated in 2011, including the personnel training manuals. The directive council approved these manuals and the foundation immediately proceeded to train its personnel in their use as required, after which the manuals were used for all procedures covered by them.

The FUNIDES personnel in charge of administrative-financial, human resources and internal control aspects have received ongoing training through diverse courses. In April 2014 the

foundation identified and prioritized training and capacity-strengthening actions, resulting in the selection of training and specialization courses to be implemented this year. Each year the foundation establishes its annual training plan based on its personnel needs to obtain greater productivity.

FUNIDES uses good administrative practices, especially with respect to planning. It formulates and reviews its annual plan and budget well ahead of time, as it also does with its multi-annual budget so the administration can be aware of future financial needs and take the necessary measures.

FUNIDES has undergone two external financial audits corresponding to 2011 and 2012. The reports of the independent auditors confirm that for both exercises, there are no major observations, with respect to which: (i) the statement of accountability of the Program financed by USAID reasonably presents in all important aspects the income received, costs incurred and goods acquired directly by USAID in conformity with the terms of the agreement and based on cash income and disbursements and modifications to the cash base; (ii) the review of the shared cost documents indicates that the contribution of shared costs was provided and accounted for in conformity with the terms of the Agreement and program needs; (iii) the internal control implemented by the foundation is adequate for administration of the funds; and (iv) the foundation has fulfilled in all important aspects the terms and conditions of the agreement (including the shared costs) and the applicable laws and regulations relative to the programs financed by USAID.

During the period evaluated, FUNIDES has significantly improved its administrative-financial, human resources and internal control management.

- ***Sub-IR 1.4: Obtain NGO best practice certification***

On April 2014, the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) certified FUNIDES as an NGO that carries best practices for NGOs. FUNIDES' results were satisfactory, fulfilling three main aspects: (i) There is no major nonconformity related to the benchmark; accumulated points above 50% in strategy and governance finance and operations dimensions; and (ii) a minimum of 70% (average) in all of the 101 indicators in nine dimensions evaluated.¹ This SGS certification is a seal of quality recognized worldwide and is recognition of the coordinated work between the board of directors and the foundation's technical and administrative staff.

This provides a letter of presentation for FUNIDES in matters of administrative and operational processes, strength, management quality, accountability and transparency, all of which reinforce FUNIDES' fundraising efforts. FUNIDES' administration is confident this certification will facilitate and contribute to much better fundraising results. At this moment, FUNIDES is publicizing the certification via different communication products and media.

- ***Sub-IR 1.5: Define a fundraising strategy to increase and diversify FUNIDES' funding base***

The concern about FUNIDES' institutional financial sustainability has always been present on the agenda of the board of directors and the organization's officials. Actions have been taken in

¹ The dimensions evaluated in the standard were: Board of Directors; Strategy framework; Ethical framework and integrity management; Communication and public image; Human resources management; Finance and fundraising; Supervision of field operations; Supervision of results and Continuous improvement.

that regard, but the foundation has delayed a long time in taking more organized and systematic actions. First it did a financial analysis of the organization in October 2011 as part of the strategic plan, determining the needs up to 2016. By January 2012 it had formulated a Financial Sustainability Strategy (2012 – 2020), but it did not hire a full-time person with fundraising experience to take charge of implementing this strategy until June 2014, so much time was lost in intensively initiating the efforts to bring in more funds.

It is expected that implementation of the fundraising strategy will be strengthened with this new position, emphasizing access to different funds and financing sources. Through these efforts, FUNIDES expects to achieve sustainable development for the future years. As part of its annual planning, it will have to make realistic future budget projections for at least 3 or 4 years and in them should more precisely estimate the resources it will be able to count on.

The fundraising strategy is geared to: (i) the loyalty of the membership and donors; (ii) the attracting of new donors among businesses and business chambers; (iii) the creation of a group of volunteers in Miami; (iv) the creation of a services unit; (v) the search for international and bilateral and multilateral donors as well as private international institutions, especially those remaining in Nicaragua. On this issue, USAID has already informed the World Bank of FUNIDES' capacity. The World Bank in Nicaragua does not have a single economist on staff, so it may be a future funding source opportunity for FUNIDES; and (vi) the establishment of alliances with think tanks of the United States and Europe to execute studies financed by these centers. The commission in charge of funding has been reactivated and the board members are now more involved in funding.

Considering that some companies and cooperation agencies have expressed a demand for consultation services FUNIDES could provide as they are related to specific economic studies these organizations need, the foundation also approved in its August session the creation of a unit that will provide services related to the objectives declared in its constitution, to wit: consultancies, advisory services, policy and strategy formulation, project cycles, sectorial studies, specialized studies and thematic surveys. The services will be offered to multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies, international cooperation programs and projects, regional organizations, private sector chambers and organizations, private businesses, governmental institutions and civil society organizations.

A first crude estimate indicates that such services could contribute a minimum of US\$100,000 to the foundation's fixed costs, equivalent to 20% of those costs. Nonetheless, we believe these estimates have to be contrasted with reality because many such contracts are tendered, which would require developing capacities for that purpose.

In line with the projections and considering that FUNIDES will cover the projected deficit for 2016 with the reserve funds it currently has, 2017 will require finding greater resources, which it must provide from the funding efforts and service provision described above. It will especially need to obtain resources from the private sector, the provision of professional services and multilateral and bilateral cooperation. USAID has made clear that it will not be possible to continue the support it has provided FUNIDES so from here forward it must identify potential sources of project financing, take initiatives to obtain them, prepare project profiles and present them to potential donors. We consider that COSUDE's cooperation has good possibilities of remaining and that some service contracts could be obtained from it. It is important to keep in mind that while service contracts such as are being conceived by FUNIDES will have margins and surpluses after covering all their direct and indirect costs that will help reduce the

foundation's deficit, that will not be enough; it will be necessary to work strongly on all fronts to obtain the resources required.

III.2 Findings related to Goal 2: The foundation's long-term policy research agenda well-defined and implemented

○ Intermediate Result: Policy Research Agenda defined and implemented

- **Sub-IR 2.1: Continue to publish macroeconomic reports and surveys of consumer and business confidence**

The main publications and reports FUNIDES disseminates are the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* (ICE) and the consumer and business confidence surveys, both of which are quarterly and represent 45% of the publications. In addition, FUNIDES prepares policy documents, working documents and technical notes by FUNIDES and its *staff*, all with a smaller audience. At a third but no less important level are the special studies, which represent 36% of the publications in the 2007-June 2014 period.

The *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* and the business confidence and consumer surveys are mainly directed to business, academic and professional sectors, representatives of international agencies and the government, and the media. The special studies respond to diverse sectorial needs. The objective of the policy documents is to bring to the national agenda priority themes related to Nicaragua's economic and social development.

According to the FUNIDES records, around 55 products have been published and distributed by category and period as shown in Table 1. FUNIDES projections are to maintain an average of 10 publications annually until 2015, which would imply an increase of 50%, within the normative framework from the Research Agenda Plan.

Table No. 1: FUNIDES Products

Period	Category of FUNIDES publications								Total
	ICE	Institutional Reports	Special Studies	Work Documents	Policy Documents	Third-Party Studies	Technical Notes	Others	
2014	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
2013	4	1	4	2	1	-	1	2	15
2012	4	-	5	1	-	3	-	-	13
2011	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	7
2010	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
2009	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	5
2008	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	6
2007	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	4
Total	24	1	20	3	1	3	1	2	55

Source: Based on data from FUNIDES.

The data from Table No. 2 show the composition of the public that attends the presentations of the Macroeconomic Reports and the Surveys in Managua, with 33.7% of those attending belonging to or representing trade associations and companies, 15.4% international

organizations, 14.3% students and 8.4% university professors or academics and 6.2% State leaders and politicians.

Table No 2: Public participating in the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* Presentations

Order	Participants	Distribution of the public by calendar year					
		2011	2012	2013	2014*	Total	%
1	Representatives of business guilds	171	246	138	98	653	33.7
2	Representatives of international organizations	80	104	68	46	298	15.4
3	Students	0	68	182	28	278	14.3
4	Representatives of universities and upper level institutes	44	24	64	30	162	8.4
5	Representatives of unions or social leaders	19	65	29	16	129	6.6
6	State leaders and politicians	62	25	20	14	121	6.2
7	Representatives of research institutes and NGOs	23	42	28	20	113	5.8
8	Independent professionals	9	39	26	13	87	4.5
9	Members of the media	13	14	22	10	59	3.0
10	Others	35	1	4	0	40	2.1
TOTALS		456	628	581	275	1,940	100.0

Source: Based on data from FUNIDES.

* Only 2 presentations as of July 2014

1. During the 2010-July 2014 period the issues included as studies and policy proposal profiles are shown below. Many of them have been addressed in the quarterly presentations, generating additional interest by the participating public. Presentation of Nicaragua's Challenges: Toward a Vision of Nation.
2. Analysis of the barriers to economic growth and poverty reduction in the country.
3. Trade Arbitrage Practice in Nicaragua.
4. Contributions to Justice at the Service of Development.
5. Program of Productive Improvement in Growing Coffee for small and medium growers.
6. The needs for investment in highways and electricity.
7. Considerations for a future fiscal reform.
8. Analysis of the interconnections of the main sectors of Nicaragua's economy using the latest data of the national accounts.
9. Analysis of the main characteristics of Nicaragua's labor market using ongoing household survey 2010.
10. The external cooperation trends.
11. Analysis of some health indicators in Nicaragua.
12. Impact and macroeconomic management of large investments.
13. Analysis of the medium and long-term availability of, access to and demand for financing.
14. Report on Economic Institutionalality.
15. Productivity growth in Nicaragua.
16. The relation between the demand for money and incomes.
17. Studies on the returns of education and labor force skills.
18. The productivity of the dairy sector in Nicaragua.

- **Sub-IR 2.2: A policy research agenda plan formulated and implemented.**

FUNIDES has institutionalized a well-defined strategy and agenda of studies, research and policy designs to help define topics and supervise the studies and in-depth research on policies and occasional documents. The current Research Agenda being implemented meets the following characteristics:

- It is framed within FUNIDES' principles and objectives.
- It establishes direct relevance in line with the country's situation and needs.
- It helps improve advocacy for better public policies.
- It constitutes the base for publicizing FUNIDES' principles and studies.
- It helps generate debates around the issues addressed.

The agenda is being implemented as a dynamic, consultative process for analysis and ongoing reflection by the FUNIDES board of directors and personnel. It is important to stress that this process has allowed the selection of adequate themes to define the medium-term research projects as far as 2015. It has also helped validate the quality of the products (studies, research and analysis) so they meet the high standards of quality, independence and pertinence and are in line with the country's reality.

The Research Policies Agenda circumscribes FUNIDES' activities in four fields: economic, social, institutional and sectorial. This methodological and regulatory instrument (Research Plan) has also helped achieve a crucial objective for FUNIDES, which is to "advocate and target studies and research to attract the attention of both the government and the private sector regarding the most important bottlenecks to Nicaragua's development." These central challenges are to: (1) increase the GDP growth rate; (2) increase productivity; (3) put in relief the pertinence of education; (4) resolve the structural credit problems; and (5) solve the institutional bottlenecks.

- **Sub-IR 2.3: Developing policies for FUNIDES' research agenda plan to ensure its quality, independence and effectiveness.**

A leap in the quality of the production and policy orientation regarding the institutional mission is observed starting in 2012 with the qualitative improvement in decision-making to prepare the research work and make efficient use of the products to be publicized. This was accompanied by a strengthening of the Thematic Commissions in 2012. The FUNIDES directors formally established these technical and administrative commissions to ensure technical feedback on the policies and they still exist.

The economic, social and institutional technical commissions are in charge of reviewing and approving the investigations, analyses and recommendations by work area and of supervising the foundation activities. This organizational process has raised FUNIDES' institutional level, with the topic selection passing through a series of filters to guarantee objectivity, pertinence, quality, timeliness and opportunity cost relative to similar research. The technical commissions are also an idea-generating center on policies to strengthen the Research Agenda Plan through the contribution of internal and external consultations for approval and pertinence of the studies, approval of the terms of reference and the contracting of consultants.

So far, all FUNIDES commissions (economic, institutional, social, administrative-financial, funding and ethics) have been quite active. Their presidents participate actively in the preparation and review of the reports or documents related to the field for which they are responsible.

The FUNIDES board of directors approves the research agenda each year and evaluates it as a function of the documents produced and publicized, with their execution the responsibility of the executive director. This process has also helped direct the publications to the target sectors and

disseminate the contents of the research works and policy recommendations to achieve greater advocacy with the public and decision-makers.

With respect to the publications, the total of 55 publications have been generated by the institution between 2007 and June 2014, of which 45% are quarterly *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* and 38% are special studies. The rest are reports, technical notes and third-party studies.

- **Sub-IR 2.4: Formulate and disseminate research findings and policy proposals**

FUNIDES' practice in preparing and disseminating its investigative works and policy proposals goes through a regulatory process (filter) of development, review and approval. To reach this stage of public dissemination, the FUNIDES board of directors has been preparing the terrain with the obligatory application of the Research Agenda Plan Policy, approved in 2012.

FUNIDES has established and defined its target advocacy sectors. It has identified the interested parties (target sectors) and analyzed the results to distill the key messages of the communications strategy. To ensure the quality and impact of the results, the presentations are prepared beforehand through the creation of small consultation groups, depending on the topic and advocacy sector, before developing the massive presentations with a greater scope.

FUNIDES has made use of its linkage and coordination with international, regional and national organizations to publicize its works and research results when they merit deeper and broader public outreach. Thus, FUNIDES organized a high-level conference in collaboration with INCAE and COSEP, held on February 21, 2012, in which it presented its recommendations for a Development Agenda. Close to 400 leaders attended from the private sector, public sector, politics, civil society, academia, the international community and the media, among others.

For purposes of monitoring the publicizing of the studies, FUNIDES files the records of the events, their participants, evaluation forms, specialized media monitoring, clippings from newspapers with relevant notes, number of downloads on the web, feedback from the participation in networks and others. This work has been implemented with greater technical rigor since 2012.

FUNIDES' publications and reports are publicized in different ways, among which are: (1) Presentations to the media, (2) Public presentations,² (3) Private presentations to donor or others requested, approved by the executive director, (4) Replicas of the presentations in universities, whose main audience is university students and instructors of careers related to the topic being presented, (5) Replicas of the presentations in the departments, whose main audience is business leaders, farmers, public officials, media, university instructors and students, NGOs and representatives of projects related to the topic to be presented, (6) Press Conferences, (7) Press Releases, (8) The Monthly Bulletin, (9) Interviews in different media (print, televised, radio, etc.), (10) Distribution of printed copies based on data of selected contacts, (11) Sending of the corresponding link to FUNIDES' contact database, (12) Availability on the FUNIDES web page, the institutional blog, social networks and in applicable cases the web site of the Central American Network of Think Tanks and Research Centers, among others, and (13) Drafting of informative capsules for the use of social networks.

² In the case of public presentations, a presentation is made previously to the FUNIDES directors. This only applies to the first presentation to be made.

FUNIDES has a coherent and organized strategy of preparing, disseminating and communicating its research works and studies, in addition to having an adequate short-, medium- and long-term Institutional Communication, Strengthening and Positioning Strategy (described in Sub-IR 3.1).

FUNIDES, sometimes through agreements or coordination with educational centers such as UNAN, UCA, UCC, UAM, La Salle de León and other universities, has constructed a direct outreach platform with trade associations, students and professors around the economic sciences, which is a relevant contribution to the scientific and outreach development of FUNIDES' research and studies in the country. FUNIDES has also constructed an important platform for publicizing studies with other trade associations and business institutions such as COSEP and its affiliated chambers, INDE and its departmental expression, the Chambers of Commerce in the departments and productive trade associations, as well as the universities, establishing study agendas and advisory services that in many cases have been requested by the institutions to respond to local and sectorial development problems. It signed an alliance with Eduquemos to coordinate conferences on investment strategies for educational quality by Nicaragua's private sector.

The macroeconomic reports and consumer and business confidence surveys have prevailed as the most important documents generated by FUNIDES for an auditorium presentation that averages 150 attendees per event (See Appendix No. 2). The replicas in six departments of the country (Masaya, Granada, Rivas, Matagalpa, León and Chontales) have buttressed its scope and penetration.

Between 2011 and the second quarter of 2014, 13 *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* and 20 replicas were presented in direct audiences and publicized with the public in different parts of Managua and other departments of the country with a total of 3,773 participants. Appendix No. 3 presents the events and participants in these presentations of *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* and of the Special Studies in the 2011-June 2014 period, which had a participation of 2,171 people. It is worth mentioning that attendance is usually greater than reported, as many participants do not register in all events.

FUNIDES has implemented a growing process of presenting the special studies, which has been expanded to the departments. Over 47% of the presentations have been held in departments outside of Managua and attendance has been 35.9% of the total. A little over half has been concentrated in Managua, but it is important to highlight that the projection in the departments has been a penetration success by the foundation.

III.3 Findings related to Goal 3: A population more aware of socioeconomic policy issues; public opinion and policy decisions affected

○ Intermediate Result: Communications and outreach expanded

● Sub-IR 3.1: Formulate and implement a communication and outreach strategy

FUNIDES has developed and is implementing a very well formulated and adjusted short-, medium- and long-term Institutional Communication, Strengthening and Positioning Strategy aimed at strengthening FUNIDES' transcendence, relevance and impact through fulfillment of the following objectives:

- Positioning FUNIDES as an independent, impartial and professional think tank that generates quality information of current interest.
- Effectively and constructively disseminating its research topics, analysis and proposals.
- Facilitating the exchange of ideas and improving the quality of debate, as well as creating arenas of discussion and dialogue.
- Strengthening advocacy in the media agenda and with opinion-generators.
- Building a more informed and aware population about the challenges confronting Nicaraguans.

FUNIDES has progressively been achieving these objectives and successfully inserting itself as an organization of broad, credible and reliable thinking on the country's media agenda with the sectors of interest to it.

The strategy identifies the audience and spokespeople: public decision-makers, social media and others. It is also establishing internal communication mechanisms aimed at FUNIDES members and executive director; spokespeople (the president, vice president, executive director, commission presidents and technical team) and external communication mechanisms geared to government institutions, legislators, business chambers, trade associations and business people, civil society, academia, the media, the donor community, multilateral agencies, homologous institutions, the general public and the citizenry.

Identifying the audiences of interest to FUNIDES was a very important step because it has largely facilitated the foundation having an orientation and specific focus for each audience identified and establishing goals for each of them.

FUNIDES has defined the tasks for implementing the medium- and long-term strategy (2013-2016), which are in process or are being implemented. Among them are the following:

- Continue to produce and set guidelines for communication projects and the dissemination of the studies and analyses done by FUNIDES.
- Draft informative capsules with a streamlined format that is easy to publicize.
- Design banners that serve to support FUNIDES' institutional image.
- Prepare publicity material to support the fundraising work.
- Update and distribute FUNIDES' questionnaire.
- Create informative alliances with the media.
- Continue holding press conferences and workshops.
- Send out foundation press releases, communiqués, articles, etc. to the different media, the web page and social networks.
- Interact with the media, visiting media directors, providing interviews, holding meetings with journalists, etc.
- Develop activities that consolidate the organization's image, importance and institutional positioning.
- Promote the need for a dialogue to achieve national consensus.
- Promote gatherings with opinion leaders to debate and encourage support networks.
- Implement the Brand Manual and use of FUNIDES information.
- Establish strategic alliances within and outside the country.
- Participate and have a presence in national and international events.
- Hold an annual conference each year where key sectors and actors converge.
- Publish and share information of interest on the social networks.
- Redesign and ensure a user-friendly web page.
- Send out a monthly e-bulletin massively.

- Analyze suggestions transmitted in the forms from each event.
- Use and promote live transmissions of the events.
- Use the media monitoring service as an indicator of image and influence on key actors.
- Conduct focus groups and surveys in accord with communication needs.

Many of these tasks have been implemented continuously since 2011 and others were initiated in 2013 and will continue to be implemented until the project ends in January 2016. They are very correct actions, as they are allowing FUNIDES to position itself as a think tank recognized for the honesty, credibility and reliability of its research work.

As part of implementing the strategy, FUNIDES has prepared and disseminated the following communication products:

- **Television Spots:** (i) Economic growth and generation of more and better jobs; (ii) Quality education; (iii) Respect for and application of the laws (clear rules, institutionalality); (iv) Let's tell things how they are: Our economy needs to grow twice as fast as it is now (consolidating the three topics mentioned above).
- **Vignettes and a jingle:** (i) Vignette on economic growth and generation of more and better jobs; (ii) Vignette on clear rules (institutionality); (iii) Jingle on economic growth with education, justice and clear rules.
- **Other communication products included in the strategy and found currently in use are:** (i) Press releases, communiqués, articles, speeches and photographs; (ii) A separate pamphlet with the Development Decalogue proposed by FUNIDES; (iii) A folder with inserts that provide information about the foundation and its areas of work; (iv) Monthly e-bulletin; (v) Monthly economic report; (vi) FUNIDES Annual Report; and (vii) CD with information on FUNIDES' analyses, studies and proposals.
 - **Sub-IR 3.2: Design and implement an advocacy plan for the policy research agenda**

With respect to advocacy and the determination of decision-makers' information needs, FUNIDES has used the evaluation formats filled out at the end of each presentation of the studies and the interviews done at those events to learn more about the issues of interest to those attending that it could research or take back up.

The advocacy plans identify to whom the reports will be presented first and outreach is done to key institutions so they will see FUNIDES as a reliable organization that provides realistic information and proposals based on rigorous assessments. The studies are presented first to personalities who are specialists in the topic of the study before being presented to the general public. These are the key individuals who define the points of entry for the consultations.

The advocacy plans are worked out and the process to follow is defined with the FUNIDES board of directors. In addition, FUNIDES holds meetings to validate the studies at the level of the executive president and Commission presidents.

Advocacy plans are also made for specific studies, in which advocacy actions are generated with personalities from different sectors and specialists on the topic researched in these specific studies. For example, conferences have been held with the UNDP, international personalities of the World Bank and COSEP, representatives of different sectors, the diplomatic corps and experts from other countries.

FUNIDES follows a three-stage process to have influence through its research. First it puts ideas into the public debate; then it must convince a critical mass about them; and finally it must achieve their implementation via public policies. In the great majority of cases, the implementation of the proposals requires time.

FUNIDES has had an important impact in its short life. It has installed its economic, institutional and social agenda in the public debate and generated significant support for it, laying the groundwork for changes in policies in a complex national setting. Specifically:

1. FUNIDES has incorporated into the public agenda crucial topics for economic growth and social and institutional development. The topics put on the agenda include:
 - The need to accelerate growth and have pro-poor policies.
 - The importance of strong institutions that can implement clear property rules and rights for economic growth, the sustainability of any development model and the democracy and wellbeing of Nicaraguans.
 - The need for a new awareness about priorities in education to improve the system's efficiency and equity in quantitative and qualitative terms.
2. FUNIDES provides the country objectives, high-quality analysis on economic, institutional and social issues.
 - FUNIDES has become a reference source valued as trustworthy.
 - The FUNIDES studies have allowed journalists to include in their medium's agenda the topics the foundation is promoting.
 - FUNIDES has helped improve the quality of the discourse on economy and on institutional and social development in the public debate.

Sub-IR 3.3: Carry out monthly monitoring on FUNIDES' appearances in mass media, including coverage of publications and events

The strategy's communication products have focused on the media with the greatest audience, such as print, radio, TV, social networks and web page, achieving excellent results in all of them.

FUNIDES has drawn up media plans aimed at key audiences. For each spot or vignette it wants to use for publicity, it draws up a media publicity plan in accord with its budget and selects the media, often prioritizing broadcast times: news programs, political programs and magazines.

The media plans drawn up contain the period of time in which it will place the ad, the medium in which it wants to place it, the number of placements and their cost. There is an annual budget for communication activities, which is approved by USAID.

Since April 2011, a company specializing in media monitoring has been doing follow-up on FUNIDES' outreach and communication strategy, reporting monthly on what and how much is being disseminated about FUNIDES. For example, in June 2014, it identified the following news outreach regarding FUNIDES: 53 news items: 21 in print media, 19 on television, 11 on digital media and 2 on radio.

Of the total of 53 publications about FUNIDES in June 2014, 47 items had a positive tone and 6 were neutral. In addition 4 important items about FUNIDES came out in publications; 5

spokespeople, directors and members of the FUNIDES board were quoted and 6 journalists of different media cited FUNIDES studies as their source of information.

The company in charge of monitoring the strategy has made an estimate of the commercial value and public relations of the news broadcast related to FUNIDES in June 2014, which is shown in Table No. 3.

Table No. 3: Commercial and public relations value of news about FUNIDES (June 2014)

Type of medium	Space or duration of the news	Commercial value	Public relations value
Radio	1 hour, 21 minutes	US\$ 971.98	US\$ 4,859.90
Web	N/A	US\$ 5,686.75	US\$ 28,433.75
Written press	287 modules and 374 inches	US\$ 24,666.29	US\$ 123,331.46
Television	1 hour, 2 minutes, 58 seconds	US\$ 32,207.16	US\$ 161,035.82
Total	--	US\$ 63,532.18	US\$ 317,660.94

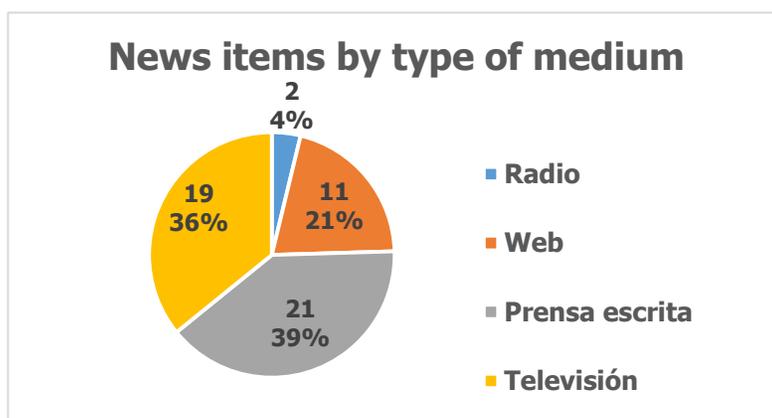
These amounts indicate that the organization is making optimal use of its resources for outreach and communication. It suffices to point out that the budget for communication services for the entire April-June quarter of 2014 was US\$20,233, while the commercial value of the month of June 2014 multiplied that investment by three times.

With respect to the type of media in line with its level of progress, they are presented in Table No. 4 and Figure No. 1.

Table No. 4: Media by Tiers (June 2014)

Type of media	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Radio	1	1	-
Web	6	-	5
Written press	21	-	-
Television	19	-	-
Total	47	1	5
Percentages	88.68%	1.89%	9.43%

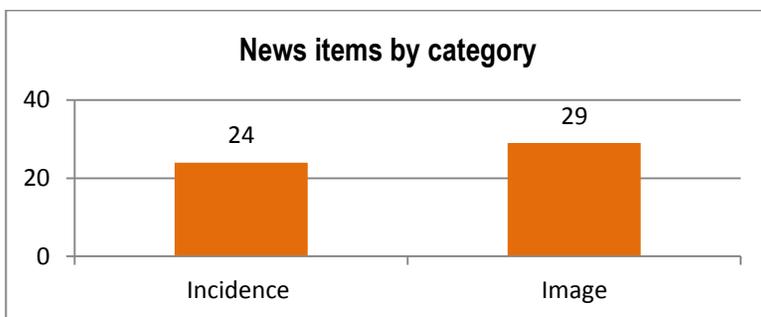
Figure No. 1: News items by type of medium (June 2014)



As can be seen, the greatest quantity of media that propagated information regarding FUNIDES are those in Tier 1, which are the ones with the greatest reach.

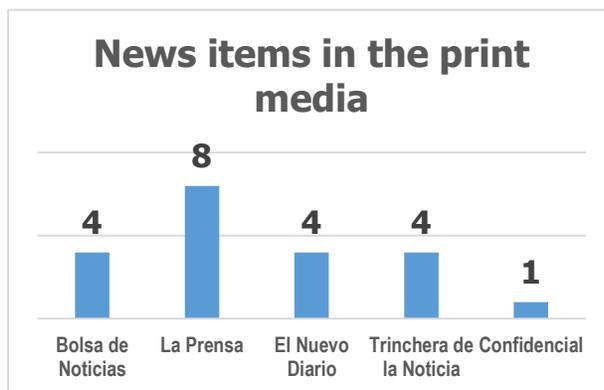
The news items about advocacy totaled 24 (See figure No. 2), of which 9 were about education, 8 about economic institutionalality, 5 about economy, 1 about macro-economy and 1 about the productive sector. The news about its image totaled 29, of which 28 are in the direct subcategory and 1 in the indirect subcategory.

Figure No. 2: News Items by category (June 2014)



The media that published the most news items were *La Prensa* with 9 (8 in print version and 1 on the Web), Channel 12 with 6 and Channel 100% Noticias with 5. Figure No. 3 shows the publications in the print media.

Figure No. 3: News items in the print media (June 2014)

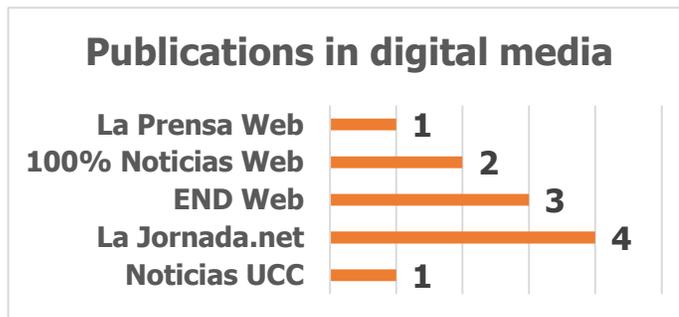


In this same period, 47 positive news items were recorded. The issues that predominated were education and jobs, investment, and FUNIDES receives SGS certification. The TV news items by channel are presented in Figure No. 4 and the publications in digital media are in Figure No. 5.

Figure No. 4: Television news items (June 2014)



Figure No. 5: Publications in digital media (June 2014)



With respect to the national dailies, a search for “FUNIDES” on *La Prensa*’s web page obtained 7,130 references and on *El Nuevo Diario*’s 9,340 references. The publication *Confidencial* had 692 references; the magazine *Envío* 24 and COSEP’s web page 84. All of this demonstrates the broad outreach FUNIDES has achieved with Nicaragua’s two news dailies and in the two most distinguished magazines and series on political, social and economic topics, as well in with a representative Nicaraguan business organization.

With respect to the immediate future of its communication strategy, FUNIDES has proposed a set of new opportunities and challenges it is thinking of respectively taking advantage of and accepting through the following actions:

- Diversify and expand the proposals and messages on other thematic areas, beyond the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* (ICE) and reports on economic institutionalality.
- Agree on new research lines with other groups and make the results visible to strengthen FUNIDES as a source of reference, consultation and debate in Nicaragua.
- Achieve real and visible influence in the public agenda.
- Maintain sustained visibility, open new spaces of drawing power and coming together.
- Communicate its proposals’ content and analysis in a digestible, appealing and innovative form.
- In a polarized atmosphere reach the broadest sectors of the population and construct shared understandings about where Nicaragua is and what it needs to make progress in its economic and social development.

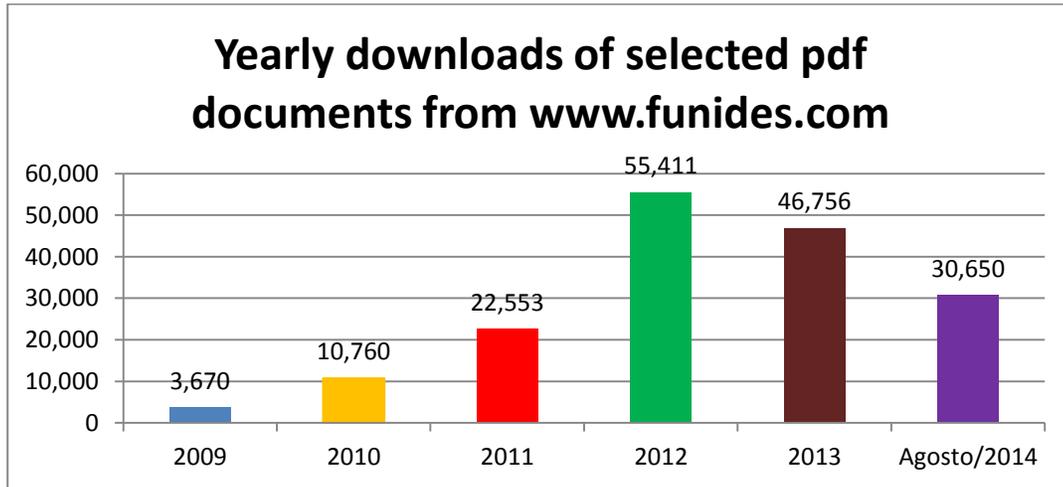
Other outstanding aspects and achievements by FUNIDES regarding Communication, Strengthening and Institutional Positioning are described below:

- An important effort with regard to the print media (graphic line) was made during the International Conference “The shared challenge of constructing a Vision of Nation,” held in 2012, when a separate supplement was prepared that was circulated through *El Nuevo*

Diario, La Prensa, Bolsa de Noticias, Trinchera de la Noticia and *Confidencial*, with around 95,000 copies distributed.

- Based on this conference, a document was prepared titled “Development Decalogue” covering the 10 issues FUNIDES has concentrated on and was published in the supplement. This document has led increasingly more institutions to take an interest in approaching FUNIDES.
- FUNIDES follows up on its events, so that at the end of each one it does evaluations through a format in order to learn the perception of FUNIDES’ work by those attending. The journalists attending also conduct interviews, which are included in FUNIDES’ E-Bulletin. That bulletin started in 2011 with bi-monthly issues and is now monthly and is distributed to all those attending the events organized by the foundation and all those related one way or another to FUNIDES.
- The most important results obtained by the Communication Strategy so far are having created greater awareness and having established an agenda of issues to focus on, since FUNIDES has proposed topics for economic and social development and they have been accepted, thus positioning FUNIDES as a credible and reliable reference source.
- The positioning plan is linked to the FUNIDES Brand Manual, in which everything related to projection of the image and communication products is defined. The manual is constantly updated as is the communication strategy itself, to ensure that FUNIDES acts in line with the context and with the foundation’s communication needs at each moment.
- The FUNIDES web page has played an important role in the foundation’s communication efforts. It has been an essential means for publicizing FUNIDES’s work, as it is the virtual tool the foundation uses to communicate everything it is doing to the page’s visitors and makes available all published studies, which can be consulted and downloaded by people both inside and outside of the country.
- Additionally, FUNIDES is making efficient use of the social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to publicize its activities. The organization’s videos and vignettes are uploaded in these networks as well as through Youtube and the FUNIDES blog. The studies and activities are also promoted through these social networks as is the shared information that can be obtained from them. The *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* as well as specific reports published by FUNIDES can also be accessed through these networks.
- To verify if FUNIDES has good traffic in the social networks, the program Awsats, provided by the server or web hosting provider, is used to check the statistics of visits to the web page. For its part, Facebook provides its statistics, as the FUNIDES page is institutional and as such this counting is done. For the moment there is no charge for promoting the page or its publications, but if there is a desire to reach larger audiences, it will be necessary to pay to achieve this greater reach. There are no statistics in Twitter; it just provides follow-up to the followers of FUNIDES that are “tweeting.” The Blog has the same system as the web page to keep track of its statistics. The number of visits reflected in it is increasing every month. In April 2014, 902 visits were recorded, in May 918 and in June 1,287. With respect to visits to the FUNIDES’ website in those three months, May stands out with the greatest number of visits (2,451 visits in April, 2,477 in May, and 2,432 in June). For downloads on the website, 2012 recorded the greatest number of documents downloaded (55,411). See Figure No. 6.

Figure No. 6: Yearly downloads of selected pdf documents from www.funides.com



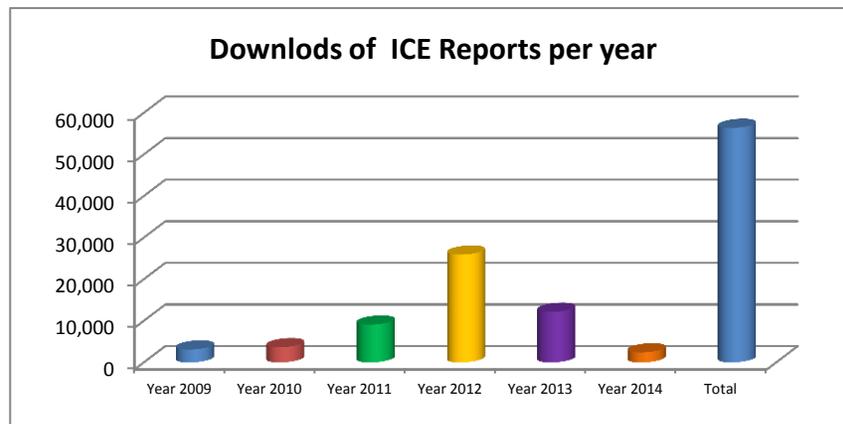
- The quarterly *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* (ICE) reports downloaded from the FUNIDES website between 2009 and July 2014 recorded an accumulated 56,400, 46% of which corresponds to 2012 and 51% of that to the year's first quarterly report, which gathered the tax reform process in 2011/2012. The reports for the first quarter of each year are the most massively downloaded as their data represent an average 53% of all downloads per year. See Table 5 and Figure No. 7.

Table 5: Download of FUNIDES Publications: ICE Product – Housing on the Web

Quarterly ICE/Period	From its publication to July 2014						Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
I	881.0	2,428.0	3,024.0	13,314.0	8,076.0	1,946.0	29,669.0
II	930.0	499.0	2,512.0	6,961.0	1,550.0	485.0	12,937.0
III	524.0	736.0	3,555.0	3,137.0	1,381.0	-	9,333.0
IV	778.0			2,517.0	1,166.0	-	4,461.0
Total	3,113	3,663	9,091	25,929	12,173	2,431	56,400

Source: Based on data provided by FUNIDES

Figure No. 7: Downloads of ICE Reports per year



- In the area of communications, focus groups were held on the communication strategy. Between 2011 and 2012 the company Comunicación Corporativa held eight focus groups with housewives, students, educators, journalists, public and private sectors and business chambers.
- To date two surveys have been contracted to measure the perception and effectiveness of the communication strategy: that of the baseline in June 2011 and of the exit survey in March 2012. The results obtained indicate greater knowledge and understanding by the population about FUNIDES and its work, as well as improvements in FUNIDES' positioning and in the population's perception. These results were used to make adjustments to the communication strategy, seeking greater closeness to the target audiences.
- FUNIDES has contacted qualified companies to produce documentaries, as indicated in the Program Description. It has also prepared 4 spots, which are more difficult to program but reach a larger public.
- The 4 spots, 2 radio vignettes and the jingle are on the FUNIDES web page and show very professional work. The 2 vignettes done for radio and the TV spots are still on the air, broadcasted on stations or channels of national coverage and on specific programs such as news programs, sports magazines, broadcasting of baseball games, etc.
- A DVD was also made, containing FUNIDES information and publications in the framework of the International Conference: "The shared challenge of constructing a Vision of Nation" held in 2012, in which 400 copies were given out; another 300 were given to donors, diplomats, public sector, private sector, media and church. In addition, CDs have been prepared that are given out in communication workshops with journalists. In 2014 more than 300 CDs containing all of FUNIDES' publications from its start to December 2013 were distributed.
- An internet search on FUNIDES, eliminating references to other FUNIDES, totals 63,600 references, which indicates that the foundation has broad outreach on that medium. Among the academic organizations that have documents citing FUNIDES are the following: IDB, UNCTAD, University of Chile, Scientific Electronic Library Online of CONICYT of Chile, University of Costa Rica, Zamorano, ECLAC, University of Rioja of Spain, Open University of England, Danish Institute for International Studies, University of Uppsala of Sweden, American University, Wilson Center, DePaul University and Princeton University, the last four in the United States. In a search with Google Academics, 61 references to or citations of FUNIDES were found in studies, books or academic publications, as well as in library summaries. They contain citations in degree and masters theses, investigations and academic journals or publications of international institutions. Eight references were found since January 2013 and four since January 2014. These references could be greater in number because many degree and masters theses of universities in Nicaragua and Latin America are not published on the web and we know of publications in which many thesis writers consulted the documents and studies published by FUNIDES. FUNIDES should study the possibility of supporting a university student, perhaps in Library Sciences or Economics, to do a manual review of theses in Nicaragua for a better measurement of this indicator.
- ***Sub-IR 3.4: Capacity building and information exchange programs with journalists***

FUNIDES has held activities to create capacities and exchange information with journalists, which generally deal with the issue of good and correct management of the information

FUNIDES generates through its diverse specific research works and periodical studies, in which it highlights the important function they play as social communicators.

More than 16 workshops have been held with the media that set the media agenda. Around 160 journalists have participated in these workshops. FUNIDES chooses the journalists and media according to their coverage and regular attendance at the events held by FUNIDES, among others. These workshops also include journalists from the country's departments, via presentations held in coordination with the departmental affiliates of INDE.

FUNIDES also holds an advance presentation on the ICE reports to selected journalists from print and digital media in Managua in order to explaining their content in detail, facilitating full understanding of it, fostering objective coverage of the information and providing support to the journalists in their informative work on the issues. FUNIDES also attends to the requests for information sent by journalists.

Throughout 2011 and 2012 the participants attending the workshops were given a toolkit that generally contained a printed presentation, a CD with related information, a press release, a glossary of terms, a list of contact addresses for consultations and a proposal on how to involve key actors in the issue. Starting in 2013 the print and digital media have been prioritized more, holding presentations for them prior to the public one, in which in addition to dealing with their consultations and concerns, they are provided the Press Release, Executive Summary, graphics, etc. The journalists participating in these meetings have expressed their interest in continuing this type of preparation and have appreciated its usefulness, as it improves their journalistic work with more "objective, truthful, useful and reliable" information, to use their words.

- ***Sub-IR 3.5: A series of conferences to disseminate the results of the studies under component 2.***

FUNIDES' conferences, events and publications have reached key audiences and the media. Each study done by FUNIDES has had a special conference to publicize it. In general terms it has reached the target audiences, opinion leaders and personalities of interest who see FUNIDES as a high-level and credible think tank, which favors them taking up the foundation's proposals. The presence of different government institutions is also noted in the FUNIDES events, but more work must still be done to get greater participation by this sector.

FUNIDES also encourages arenas for the exchange of diverging points of view, especially during the presentations themselves, in which an exchange of opinions and debate takes place following the reporting on the topic.

FUNIDES has succeeded in constructing an excellent outreach platform for the results of its research and policy proposals. Based on the support provided by USAID, an improvement can be seen in the number and quality of conferences and penetration in the sectors receiving its works.

More than 80 accumulated presentations and study group meetings developed by FUNIDES were recorded during the 2011–June 2014 period, of which 67 were direct conferences with the receiving public to disseminate the quarterly economic reports, consumer and business confidence surveys, special studies and replications of them in different arenas, places and auditoriums in Managua, León, Granada, Matagalpa, Estelí, Chontales, Rivas, Jinotepe and

Masaya, among the most important. These study groups are held at the beginning of each research process to get the participants' input as well as to publicize FUNIDES' work with them.

To summarize, as can be observed in Table No. 6, around 6,600 people have participated in FUNIDES events during that period, and the trend is to grow as the structuring of the conferences in the departments is expanded through the universities and trade associations.

Table No. 6: FUNIDES: Number of Presentations and participants in the Studies and Works (2011 - June 2014)

Type of Product	No. of Presentations (Period)				Total	%	No. of participants (Period)				Total	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014			2011	2012	2013	2014		
Total	16	19	21	23	79	100	1,419	1,589	1,977	1,677	6,662	100
1. <i>Informe de Coyuntura Económica</i>	3	4	4	2	13	16.5	456	628	581	275	1,940	29.1
2. Replicas of the <i>Informe de Coyuntura Económica</i>	3	2	7	8	20	25.3	360	215	595	623	1,793	26.9
3. Special Studies	7	10	8	9	34	43.0	315	620	678	576	2,189	32.9
4. Others (Workshops, work meetings, etc.)	3	3	2	4	12	15.2	288	126	123	203	740	11.1

Source: Based on data provided by FUNIDES

III.4 Summarized responses to the evaluation questions

This section shows the response to questions posed in the terms of reference that the evaluation must answer, based on the findings described in the preceding sections.

III.4.1 Questions related to Output

- ***How effectively are M&E indicators reflecting FUNIDES' real progress?***

We consider the monitoring and evaluation indicators used in the quarterly reports FUNIDES presents to USAID to be appropriate. All the indicators effectively permit a reflection on the project's real progress. Table 7 presents the relationship of indicators with their respective advances as of June 30, 2014.

Table No. 7: Relation of indicators to their respective advances as of June 30, 2014

No.	Indicator	U.M.	Frequency	Target 2014 (Fiscal year)	Progress as of June 2014
1	Achieve the SGS Certification.	% allocated	Once	70%	FUNIDES approved the SGS certification audit on best practices for ONG, fulfilling three main aspects: (i) There is no major nonconformity in relation to the benchmark; (ii)

No.	Indicator	U.M.	Frequency	Target 2014 (Fiscal year)	Progress as of June 2014
					accumulated points above 50% in strategy and governance, finance and operations dimensions and (iii) a minimum of 70% (average) in all 101 indicators in nine dimensions evaluated.
2	% of mission implementing partners with organizational capacity development objectives or activities in their agreements who regularly report on capacity development metrics.	Percentage	Annual	1	This is a standard indicator that the USAID mission needs to measure for its entire portfolio. The inclusion here seems illogical, and only a review and modification of the PMP could remove or change it.
3	US\$ amount of non-USAID funds for its operations and financial sustainability.	US\$ (cumulative)	Annual	350,000	179,451.36 (51% of fiscal year target)
4	Policy research agenda approved by board of directors.	Document	Annual	1	Policy research agenda was approved by board of directors for the year.
5	Policy research agenda reports published.	Number of reports/studies published	Annual	10	13 reports have been published during 2013 and 3 this year.
6	Visits to the FUNIDES' website.	Number of visits	Annual *	28,000	21,327 (76% of fiscal year target)
7	Number of independent reports or studies disseminated by FUNIDES	Number of downloads and number of printed copies distributed	Annual *	55,000 + 4,300	43,536 (79.2% of fiscal year target) +2,960 (68.8% of fiscal year target).
8	Advertising cost equivalent of media presence.	US\$000 equivalent	Annual *	500	775.3 (156% of fiscal year target)
9	Number of public third-party citations of independent reports, studies or information produced by FUNIDES	Number of citations	Annual *	50	61 in total, 8 since January 2013 and 4 since January 2014, according to a search in Google Academics. These numbers could be larger, given that many universities in Nicaragua and Latin America do not publish this type of information in the web.

Source: Based on data provided by FUNIDES

FUNIDES' progress is evident, as reflected in the majority of indicators of the Results Follow-up Plan. The progress made certifies that FUNIDES is doing its work in the correct line and is generating evidence of the knowledge transferred and sent out to its target sectors or publics.

- ***Have publications and reports been widely and appropriately disseminated?***

In line with the information presented in the findings section, we consider the publications and reports to have been widely and appropriately disseminated. With respect to FUNIDES' periodical publications, they are recognized as high quality and are expected by an audience that now knows them. Moreover, with respect to the studies done, they have been presented and disseminated to the audiences linked to the problematic of each study and have been

valued by them. In general terms, FUNIDES' publications and reports are appreciated and used, and provide information of value to their users as well as providing prestige and recognition to the foundation.

In the 2007–July 2014 period, 55 products have been adequately disseminated. The FUNIDES publications starting in 2011 average 10 annually, very superior to the four publications annually on average in the 2007–2010 period. FUNIDES' projections are to maintain an average of 10 publications annually until 2015.

- ***Have conferences, events and publications reached key audiences and media outlets?***

The conferences and events organized by FUNIDES and its publications have reached a broad and diverse audience, as can be seen by the participants at them and the recipients of the publications, both directly and through the web page. Distinguished individuals from the business world, trade association authorities, bilateral and multilateral cooperation organization officials and representatives of the diplomatic, academic, political governmental spheres and independent professions often attend the events, are frequent visitors to the web page and positively value the products produced by FUNIDES.

During the 2011–June 2014 period around 80 key conferences were recorded designed to do outreach to and penetrate the receiving public. The conferences have also been backed by 36 publications of the products prepared by FUNIDES. The FUNIDES website of the quarterly *Informes de Coyuntura* during that period registers an accumulated 52,737 downloads. The growth has multiplied by 14 with respect to the 2009–2010 period for which there are records.

On the other hand, the broad outreach on the foundation's activities, publications and continuous request for opinions by its directors on diverse issues that can be seen in the main print, radio, television and virtual media are irrefutable proof that FUNIDES has fully reached those media. In fact, the times that FUNIDES is cited on the web pages of Nicaragua's main news dailies and magazines well exceeds that of the other think tanks in the country.

III.4.2 Questions related to Outcome/Impact

- ***Could events, publications or mass/social media communications be made more effective?***

Yes, it is feasible to make the events, publications or mass communications and social networks more effective than is being done currently. The quality of the FUNIDES products and sophistication of the audiences have now been established, but there are other opportunities to expand the impact. Given the nature of the topics dealt with, the contents and language used, the receiving public has largely been limited to professionals or other individuals with a certain level of knowledge of given fields. The impact could be expanded through three mechanisms: (i) expand the audiences to other publics that do not have the professional level of the current audience but could be reached if some versions of the FUNIDES products are prepared in a simpler, less technical language, designed to reach people with a lower knowledge level about the issue dealt with, and the medium appropriate to that audience would be the social networks. (ii) Expand the geographic spaces where the FUNIDES products are being disseminated. The foundation has reached 6 departments, which could be expanded to others in order to reach university professors in those new departments who might like to act as multiplier partners, organizing guided discussions of the FUNIDES products and in some cases even presenting

and promoting the FUNIDES products. (iii) Expand the outreach channels, publicizing FUNIDES, its products and proposals via a weekly radio or TV program in which the main FUNIDES activities, product and proposals are presented and described. That program could also serve to learn the needs and interests of their audiences through program segments for answering questions or receiving opinions from them.

- ***How have FUNIDES' activities affected public opinion on social and economic issues?***

It is difficult to measure how a think tank's activities can influence public opinion on social or economic issues; nonetheless, the aspects related to and dealt with regarding advocacy as described in the findings section show that FUNIDES has: (i) been able to bring some issues of national importance to the country's social and economic agenda that have then been taken up by other social stakeholders; (ii) helped disseminate knowledge among public opinion on important issues for the country; (iii) influenced public opinion on given issues; and; (iv) become a referent and information provider with respect to the issues it has dealt with.

A full 95% of those surveyed consider FUNIDES' investigative work very "important," "relevant" and "necessary" to the activities and organizations they represent and say it influences their activities. Consensus is also expressed that "the content of the works published by FUNIDES has evolved in quality and depth since 2012." This opinion is based on the incorporation and presentation of important topics and on a good perception of FUNIDES' work, which has succeeded in "attracting the attention" of the business sector, general public and government for having identified the main bottlenecks affecting Nicaragua's development, as mentioned above. Those surveyed also say that they consider the analyses derived from the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica* and the studies correct with respect to the information they present, serve as inputs for public policy formulators, and help in private sector decision-making and other technical uses for the other sectors, especially the academic and consultancy sectors.

- ***How have FUNIDES' activities affected policymakers and policy decisions?***

As with the previous question, it is complicated to precisely measure whether a FUNIDES activity, document or proposal may have influenced the content of a policy or those policies' decision-makers; establishing a relationship of attribution between a project's actions and its impact on policies is very difficult. Despite that, we believe that, based on what was expressed in the advocacy section (see Sub IR-2), we can conclude that FUNIDES has very probably: (i) had some influence on the making of political, economic and social decisions—although it is very hard to establish how much; (ii) acted as a facilitator in the search for consensus, which later has resulted in social and economic policies or decision-making on them; and (iii) provided knowledge and proposal inputs that have raised the level of debate around given policies, improving the quality of those policies and decisions.

FUNIDES' intangible influence can be felt in various spheres: (1) the punctual prevalence and constancy of a growing public attentive to its activities and publications; (2) the correctness of its recommendations which, however general they may seem to a segment of recipients, are on the "correct line"; (3) the degree of timeliness in generating recommendations in key development areas and topics; (4) its increasing penetration with greater force and breadth in key sectors for development, such as the business, university and labor sector; and (5) ongoing presence in the media and high appreciation for the opinions issued by FUNIDES. Table 7 summarizes the issues in which some level of influence by FUNIDES can be appreciated.

III.4.3 Questions related to Organizational issues

- ***Based on the original Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS), how has FUNIDES' organizational and managerial effectiveness improved?***

NUPAS did not exist at the time this project started. In its place the Financial and Procurement Capability Assessment was applied, from which emerged a set of recommendations with respect to the issues of Staffing, Manuals, Software Accounting System, Budget Planning and Control and Petty Cash. To date, all observations presented in this evaluation have been attended to, and there are no pending observations.

- ***What progress has FUNIDES made toward NGO best practice certification?***

FUNIDES has been certified by the SGS.

III.4.4 Questions related to Sustainability

- ***What are the lessons learned from the implementation of FUNIDES' Financial Sustainability Plan? What has/has not worked, and why?***

In projects of this nature, which attempt to increase the financial sustainability of think tanks, it is indispensable to develop from the outset a sustainability or fundraising strategy and immediately begin to implement it through one or several people dedicated full time to these tasks. Another lesson learned is that the good will and intention of the think tank members are not enough to systematically attract contributions from the private sector. The members' support to bring in donations must be promoted but that effort needs to be accompanied by and integrated into a strategy and systematic plan to attract resources.

We believe it is necessary to raise awareness among the business sector of what the country would lose if FUNIDES' actions had to be reduced due to lack of resources. It would be enough to get another 20 large businesses contributing US\$15,000 each year and another 100 businesses, between medium and large, to contribute US\$2,000 each to give it the annual resources similar to those contributed by USAID in the last three years. That, added to the provision of services and probable contribution of COSUDE and other potential donors, would give FUNIDES financial sustainability.

- ***Is FUNIDES on pace to be financially viable after the end of USAID funding?***

The current budget figures and income projections for the next two years indicate that FUNIDES is not yet on the road to being financially viable or sustainable when the financial support USAID is providing to the foundation ends, i.e. for the exercise of 2016. The growth of contributions from the private sector in recent years, the contraction of international cooperation in Nicaragua and also the efforts it is making in the fundraising area and that will be done in the area of professional services will take time, making it unlikely that in the remaining period before the end of the project it will be able to generate income that could cover the projected deficit. It must be noted that the foundation has reserve funds that could cover that projected deficit for the exercise of 2016, but to cover the budget requirement starting in 2017 it will need to intensify the funding work and that of the services unit, as well as prioritize full implementation of the funding

strategy and search for bilateral and multilateral international donors and private international foundations. Otherwise it is probable that starting that year the foundation will have to adjust its budget and reduce its level of activities, which would also reduce its positioning and influence.

One of the most important points to be addressed in the next meeting of the FUNIDES board of directors to review the strategic plan, projected for this coming October, must be the analysis of the financial projects and the actions required for the organization's financial sustainability.

In our view long-term sustainability must fall fundamentally on contributions from the private sector, added to the formation of a trust fund, whose interest will increasingly assume the financing of FUNIDES. The business sector must be convinced of the benefits FUNIDES provides to the entire sector and for that reason must provide contributions that will not affect their economies so the foundation can increase its strength and count on the resources required for its operation. The work of building awareness and convincing the companies is critical to financial sustainability and must be prioritized.

IV. CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS / LESSONS LEARNED

IV.1 Conclusions

The main conclusion of the evaluation indicates to us that: with the support for the project, FUNIDES has been able to:

- Significantly strengthen itself, achieving administrative and operational sustainability;
- Define and start implementing a funding strategy aimed at diversifying its financing sources and achieving financial sustainability for the foundation, which will not, however, happen by the end of the USAID support;
- Improve its capacities for strategic planning, internal control and use of NGO best practices, permitting it to obtain SGS certification;
- Define a research agenda on policies and improve its research program;
- Continue preparing quarterly macroeconomic reports, including surveys of businesses and consumers and specific studies, expanding its research agenda and promoting reforms in critical areas of development;
- Define and implement a successful medium- and long-term communication strategy based on strengthening the dialogue among economic, social and political actors as well as with universities;
- Strengthen media capacity on the issue of institutional and economic reforms;
- Make progress in creating awareness in the population on issues of socioeconomic policy through people's knowledge of its research products;
- Produce different information products, which support the development of its activities.

As a consequence of this, FUNIDES has succeeded in positioning itself as the lead think tank in Nicaragua, catalogued as independent, impartial and professional, generating broad, credible and reliable quality information of current interest, doing rigorous research and analysis on public policies on economic and social issues that are effectively communicated to the public and private sector and civil society and promoting progressive, sustainable and transparent public policies.

More important yet, FUNIDES has begun to influence policy definition and decision-makers. It is very probable that FUNIDES has had some influence—although it is very difficult to establish how much—on political, economic and social decision-making, having in other cases acted as

facilitator in the search for consensus that then resulted in economic and social policies or decision-making, fostering civic participation and open dialogue and promoting Nicaragua's economic and social development. **In terms of this evaluation, this means that FUNIDES' activities have been effective and are having the hoped-for impact. It also means that so far the project is very successful in its execution and management.**

Other conclusions

- FUNIDES has been able to insert itself into a Central American and national network of think tanks and has established multiple alliances with private sector trade associations, universities and others related to its work.
- FUNIDES has delayed a lot in taking more organized and systematic actions to implement its financial sustainability strategy. It took almost two and a half years to hire the person in charge of implementing this strategy, which delayed its initiatives to achieve financial sustainability.
- As of 2017 there will be an annual financial gap of around US\$500,000 that must be covered with new resources, so it must seek contributions from the private sector and multilateral and bilateral cooperation, as well as income from providing specialized professional services.
- FUNIDES has succeeded in establishing a user base for its research products made up of business people, company directors, trade association representatives, international agencies, union and social leaders, universities and higher-level institutions, research institutions and NGOs, independent professionals, public authorities, opinion leaders, politicians, students and members of the media, who frequently attend the presentations of FUNIDES' studies, consider its research work very "important," "relevant" and "necessary," use those products and fervently follow the foundation's activities.
- FUNIDES has developed the capacity to formulate advocacy plans for the policy problems contained in its periodical publications and specific studies; it has succeeded in incorporating onto the public agenda topics crucial to economic growth and social and institutional development and has directly influenced decision-makers and both private organizations and public institutions with respect to policy definition.
- The "FUNIDES" brand is little known by the Nicaraguan population, but very well known in professional and policy circles and those in power, and is projecting the image of a serious, reliable organization of high professionalism and influence.
- FUNIDES has made efficient use of the virtual media (web page, social networks) in its communication efforts, as a virtual tool to communicate all it has done and make all the studies it has published available to those interested.
- The significantly large number of references to FUNIDES (63,600) on the web indicates that the foundation has strong outreach in that medium. It is noted that academic organizations internationally are beginning to have documents that source FUNIDES, indicating that its products are increasingly being used.
- FUNIDES shows good fulfillment of the project monitoring and evaluation indicators, the majority of which effectively reflect the project's real progress.
- The conferences and events organized by FUNIDES and its publications have reached a broad and diverse audience, as can be seen by the participants in the conferences and events and the recipients of the publications both directly and through the web page.

Distinguished figures from the business world, trade association authorities, officials of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation organizations and representatives of the diplomatic, academic, political, governmental and media spheres as well as independent professionals often attend the events, are frequent visitors to the web page and positively assess the FUNIDES products.

- FUNIDES' activities and publications are amply publicized in the main print, radio, television and virtual media, which has given FUNIDES an excellent degree of recognition and positioned it as the best known knowledge center in the country.
- FUNIDES has been able to bring some important themes to the country's political, social and economic agenda, which have then been taken up by other social actors, and has contributed to disseminating knowledge among public opinion on important topics to the country. It has constituted itself as a reliable referent and provider of information about the issues it has dealt with.
- FUNIDES' research work and analysis is considered pertinent by all recipients of the reports and by those who have directly and indirectly participated in works linked to FUNIDES. They value the objectives and contents of the publications due to the systematized information they offer as well as the objective proposals on specific topics of national and regional interest.
- The content of the works published by FUNIDES has evolved in quality and depth with the incorporation and presentation of important issues through which the foundation has been able to "attract the attention" of the business sector, general public and government by concentrating its efforts on the main bottlenecks most relevant to Nicaragua's development, which are to: (1) raise the growth rate of the GDP; (2) increase productivity; (3) increase the pertinence of education; (4) resolve the structural credit problems; and (5) solve the institutional challenges.
- The high acceptance of FUNIDES' work and the public's positive opinions and appraisals in recent years are based fundamentally on four products considered the most important by its public, to wit: (1) the quarterly *Informes de Coyuntura Económica*; (2) surveys; (3) in-depth studies; and (4) policy documents. The sectors most influenced by and committed to FUNIDES' work are businesses, trade associations, universities and the media.
- With respect to the public's perception of the influence of FUNIDES' work on government policy formulators, a little more than half of those surveyed consider FUNIDES an intermediary, although some think its work and publications "still lack force and penetration" to achieve greater influence on key opinion leaders and public policy formulators.
- Throughout the 2012–2014 period FUNIDES has been seen to quantitatively and qualitatively improve its penetration in diverse sectors by expanding the number of those attending the presentations and receiving its works. There is also increased demand for its advisory services and research work in key areas and issues such as education, the coffee crisis and the issues of commerce and circulation from the international trade perspective. FUNIDES' work in these areas has demonstrated its institutional utility with respect to "facilitating convergence processes" in specialized areas and topics and those governed or influenced by both the public and private sectors. This is so much the case that the results generated in these kinds of processes are being implemented through better coordinated institutional efforts and agreements on instrumentalization for the execution of agreed-upon actions.

IV.2 Recommendations

- To achieve greater influence, FUNIDES must seek more effective methodological alternatives and other approximation mechanisms to make itself listened to, be able to penetrate and exercise deeper advocacy regarding the decisions of government leaders, such that the recommendations of its studies and analyses will have more influence on the government's policy conduction and development strategy. Investigating how other think tanks in Latin American countries do so could help with this.
- FUNIDES should continue strengthening its technical commissions by incorporating new members who are recognized professionals in its fields of intervention. This will help improve identification of the priority and most important thematic and research and policy formulation processes to achieve greater impact in the sector it least influences, which is the government sector. This will help in decision-making and the generation of policies that seek solutions to the country's sensitive and complex problems.
- The communications area, with advice from the research personnel, should be put in charge of adapting the technical documents prepared by FUNIDES with simpler language for a non-specialized public, without losing their technical essence. Such is the case of the presentations of the current economic situation, which are loaded with data and figures that are hard to understand for a broad sector of the non-economist public that has not done specialized studies. The objective is to have greater influence on change and on the vision of people who are not professionals and do not have the level to understand important economic problems. This perspective of work would notably help shape a better "institutional identity" for FUNIDES, as while its work is considered important and fundamental to a segment of the population it still lacks enough strength to advocate as an independent "think tank" in a broad universe of citizens.
- It is important to continue strengthening independent thinking in its research and policy analysis in the areas of socioeconomic development and institutional reform and its existing alliances with institutional sectors of development through more in-depth renewed agreements with cooperation parity.
- Demand for these sectorial studies is growing and could be filled by FUNIDES if it seeks resources to finance them jointly with those requesting them and achieves the specialized collaboration in the research projects by said institutions or organizations through temporary or part-time assignment of a professional to participate in the research.
- Greater selective growth of FUNIDES' membership should be procured by attracting new members with recognized and outstanding professional performance, above all those who work on FUNIDES' topics and sectors of interest. This strengthening would help improve the foundation's performance in its already defined line of work and provide it greater available expertise to advise and support the research and policy work.
- The possibility should be investigated of expanding FUNIDES' work toward the formation and systematic grounding of a "new political culture" of the citizenry. In other words, through pioneer works, research and well directed messages in its presentations, FUNIDES should advocate to the population the forming of a new political culture. Working on this line of thinking could contribute to the search for an "alternative vision" of the country's development, as well as create and form new leaderships.

- FUNIDES should strengthen its research work even more. This is not a finite goal but one that must be consistently and permanently sought by all members of the foundation. The sharing of experiences with other national, regional and international think tanks and internships could contribute greatly to this.
- FUNIDES should continue strengthening the line of work of “facilitating and harmonizing opinions” to create and organize convergence points of opinions and activities with the participation of the public and private sectors and civil society on specific areas and themes that require analysis of the problematic and the search for consensus. Such is the case of the recent work by a FUNIDES technical team that developed research and proposed measures for simplifying the bureaucratic paperwork in the customs posts to streamline the movement of goods and make it more transparent.
- Some recipients of FUNIDES’ products have pointed out that their recommendations are very general and that it would be useful to incorporate methodologies and instruments that would allow the proposals to be put into practice. For FUNIDES’ proposals to have more impact the policy recommendations contained in its research works and special studies must be clearly identifiable and more solid. This means they must contain practical conclusions and precise recommendations and indicate how to instrumentalize the proposed policies. To improve its advocacy by sector, it could have different approaches to resolve the problems; in some cases the recommendations could be concretized in legislative bills or regulatory proposals, and in others in the adoption of recommendations or agreements that lead to the solving of specific problems.
- The advocacy effort can be increased with the private sector because there is already a close link of relations that only requires buttressing the already constructed platform; shared work through joint commissions or internship exchanges between FUNIDES officials and trade associations could be some of the methods to use.
- FUNIDES should continue taking advantage of and deepening the optimal use of the diverse press, web, mass communication and social network channels to make known the results of its special studies, periodical publications and other products, as well as to publicize the institutional positions it is taking on given themes of national importance.
- The current budget figures and income projections for the coming two years indicate that FUNIDES is still not on the path to being financially viable or sustainable after the financial support USAID is providing the foundation ends, i.e. for the exercise of 2016. It is necessary to intensify the work of the fundraising area and services unit, as well as to prioritize full implementation of the funding strategy and the search for bilateral and multilateral international donors and private international foundations. We also consider it necessary to raise the business sector’s awareness of what the country would lose if FUNIDES were to reduce its actions due to lack of resources. In the first half of 2015, a “Let’s save FUNIDES” campaign should be designed for implementation should the bilateral and multilateral cooperation funds not be obtained and the contributions of the private sector not increase.
- To contribute to FUNIDES’ development given the impossibility of maintaining USAID’s economic support after the culmination of this project, this organization could report to the foundation when viable options come up for new financing, as well as promote its link with other think tanks or foundations in its country that support these organizations.

IV.3 Lessons learned

- To achieve optimum positioning, recognition and acceptance of a think tank's research work, it is fundamental to have research policies, precisely define the areas of intervention, have a research agenda and plan and implement the studies effectively.
- A think tank must be realistic and clear about the areas in which it can have influence and advocacy, to which end it must focus and concentrate its efforts on increasing arenas of discussion and do research and formulate proposals in those fields.
- The quality, independence and efficacy of policy proposals is the result of applying work procedures, methodologies and processes based on technically structured and validated protocols, and having criteria to select study topics. Among the latter, the following cannot be absent: (1) the topic's importance; (2) the added value the topic could generate; (3) its degree of influence; and (4) available resources to develop it. It is also necessary for the selection to be approved by the center's directors or a commission in which highly qualified people participate.
- In projects of this nature, which aim to increase the financial sustainability of a think tank, it is indispensable to develop a funding or sustainability strategy from the very beginning and immediately begin its implementation by one or more individuals dedicated full time to these tasks.
- The good will and intention of a think tank's members is not enough to attract contributions from the private sector; while their support in getting donations must be promoted and stimulated, this effort must be accompanied by and integrated into a strategy and systematic plan to attract resources so the implementation of these activities will have the needed human resources and budget.
- The quality and professionalism of a think tank's human resources, both its managers and those involved in the research processes and support activities, are fundamental to its success and sustainability. Moreover, to improve the institutional and professional competencies of a think tank's personnel in an ongoing way, it is necessary to have permanent training, specialization and updating programs.

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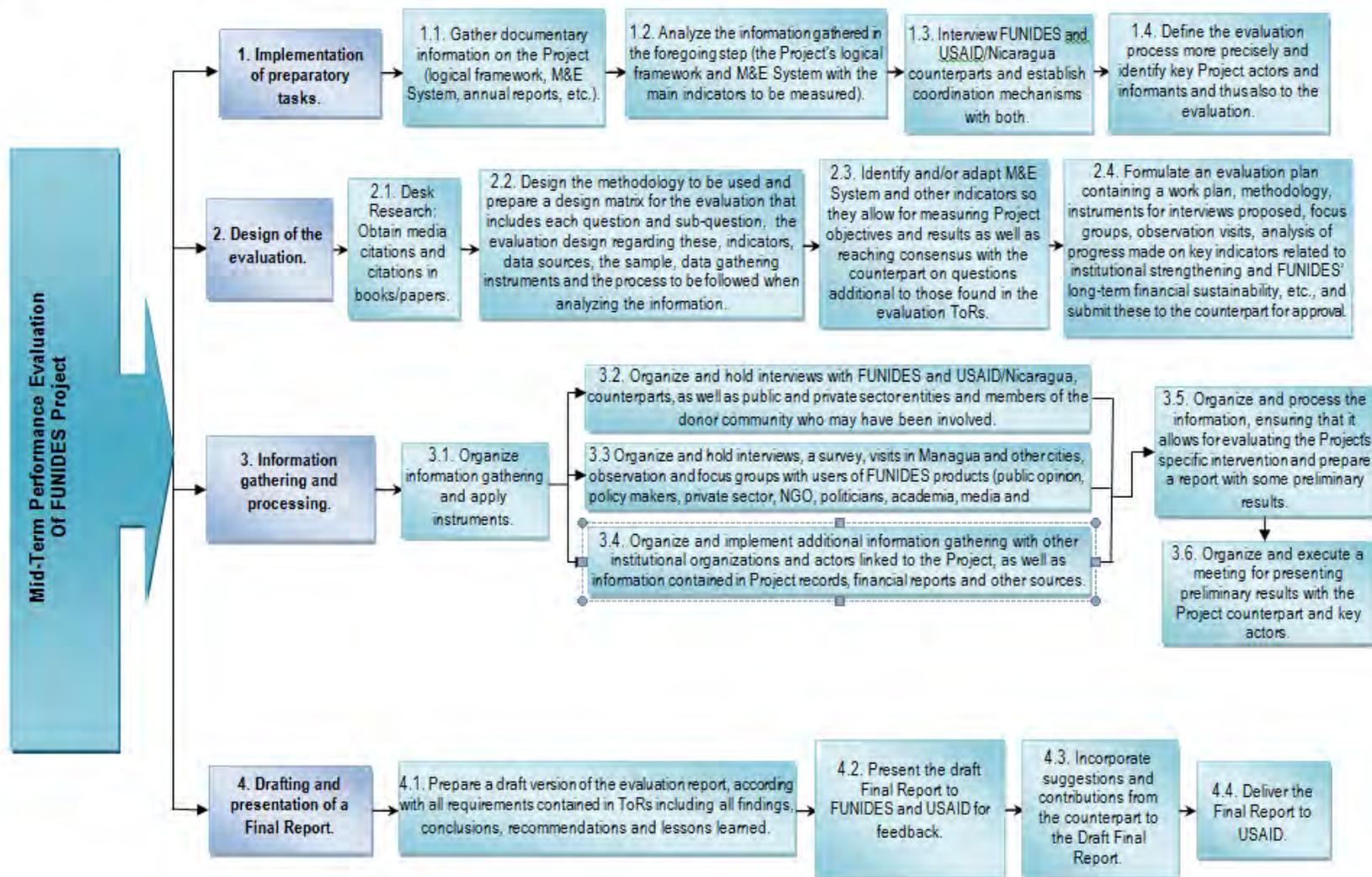
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- Promotion of Economic and Social Development in Nicaragua – FUNIDES. April to June 2012 Budget Execution (in US\$).
- Promotion of Economic and Social Development in Nicaragua – FUNIDES. July to September 2012 Budget Execution (in US\$) USAID Funds.
- Promotion of Economic and Social Development in Nicaragua – FUNIDES. October – December 2012 Budget Execution (in US\$) USAID Funds.
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- Promotion of Economic and Social Development in Nicaragua – FUNIDES. July to September 2013 Budget Execution (in US\$) USAID Funds.
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Appendix 1: Different phases of the consultancy and the actions undertaken during implementation



Appendix 2: Events and participants in FUNIDES activities (2011-June 2014)

Table 2.1 Number of Participants in presentations of FUNIDES' Quarterly Reports, Special Studies and Study Groups in Managua (2011-June 2014)

Participants Groups	Number of Participants in Quarterly Reports presentations						Number of Participants in special studies presentations						Number of Participants in Study Groups					
	2011 (3)*	2012 (4)	2013 (4)	2014 (2)	Total Category	%	2011 (2)	2012 (7)	2013 (2)	2014 (7)	Total Category	%	2011 (3)	2012 (3)	2013 (2)	2014 (4)	Total Category	%
a. Government and political leaders	62	25	20	14	121	6.2	11	23	20	12	66	6.7	6	---	---	1	7	1.0
b. Trade Associations representatives	171	246	138	98	653	33.5	70	68	59	76	273	19.4	15	---	1	16	32	4.3
c. Unions and social leaders representatives	19	65	29	16	129	6.7	20	28	24	31	103	7.3	4	---	1	25	30	4.0
d. International organizations representatives	80	104	68	46	298	15.4	36	46	40	51	173	12.3	10	---	---	---	10	1.4
e. Universities and Colleges representatives	44	24	64	30	162	8.3	20	28	24	30	102	7.2	244	---	6	27	277	37.4
f. Research institutions and NGOs representatives	23	42	28	20	113	5.8	16	27	23	30	96	6.8	3	---	2	---	5	0.7
g. Professional freelancers	9	39	26	13	87	4.5	15	42	36	47	140	9.9	5	---	---	9	14	1.9
h. Students	---	68	182	28	278	14.3	---	124	107	154	385	27.3	---	126	112	119	357	48.2
i. Members of the media	13	14	22	10	59	3.0	8	14	12	15	49	3.5	1	---	1	6	8	1.1
j. Other:	35	1	4	---	40	2.1	6	6	5	6	23	1.6	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTALES	456	628	581	275	1,940	100	202	406	350	452	1,410	100	288	126	123	203	740	100

* Notes: (n) Number of events held throughout the year.

Data for 2014 is for the period January-June 2014

Source: Data provided by FUNIDES

Table 2.2: Number of events and participants to presentations of FUNIDES' Quarterly Reports in Managua and Departments (2011-June 2014)

Place	Number of Events						Number of Participants					
	Period				Total	%	Period				Total	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014			2011	2012	2013	2014		
Total	6	6	11	10	33	100.0	816	843	1,176	898	3,733	100.0
Managua: Intercontinental Hotel	3	4	4	2	13	39.4	456	628	581	275	1,940	52.0
Departments	3	2	7	8	20	60.6	360	215	595	623	1,793	48.0
	Number of events after initial presentation at Intercontinental Hotel						Number of participants after initial presentation at Intercontinental Hotel					
Total	3	2	7	8	20	60.6	360	215	595	623	1,793	48.0
Managua (Universities and other places)	3	-	7	4	14	42.4	360		595	368	1,323	41.2
Departments	-	2	-	4	6	18.2		215	-	255	470	12.6
• León	-	1	-	1	2	6.1	-	65	-	85	150	4.0
• Juigalpa	-	1	-	-	1	3.0	-	150	-		150	4.0
• Rivas				1	1	3.0				65	65	1.7
• Masaya				1	1	3.0				45	45	1.2
• Matagalpa			-	1	1	3.0				60	60	1.6

Source: Data provided by FUNIDES.

Table 2.3: Number of events and participants by Product (2011-June 2014)

Type of event	Number of events					Total	%	Number of Participants				Total	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011			2012	2013	2014			
Total	16	19	21	23	79	100	1,419	1,589	1,977	1,677	6,662	100	
1. Report on Economic Situation	3	4	4	2	13	16.5	456	628	581	275	1,940	29.1	
2. Report on Economic Situation after initial presentation	3	2	7	8	20	25.3	360	215	595	623	1,793	26.9	
3. Special Studies	7	10	8	9	34	43.0	315	620	678	576	2,189	32.9	
4. Others (workshops, meetings, etc.)	3	3	2	4	12	15.2	288	126	123	203	740	11.1	

Source: Data provided by FUNIDES

Tabla 2.4: Number of events and participants to presentations of Special Studies (2011-June 2014)

Place	Number of events				Total	%	Number of participants				Total	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014 1/			2011	2012	2013	2014 1/		
Total	7	10	8	9	34	100	315	620	678	576	2,189	100
Managua (H. Metrocentro and others)	2	7	2	7	18	52.9	202	406	350	452	1,410	64.4
Departments	5	3	6	2	16	47.1	113	214	328	124	779	35.6
• Chinandega	1				1	2.9	21				21	1.0
• Masaya	1				1	2.9	45				45	2.1
• Estelí	1				1	2.9	16				16	0.7
• Matagalpa	1	1	1		3	8.8	14	95	80		189	8.6
• Jinotepe	1	0			1	2.9	17				17	0.8
• Jinotega		1			1	2.9		95			95	4.3
• León		1	3	2	6	17.6		24	145	124	293	13.4
• Granada			1		1	2.9			18		18	0.8
• Juigalpa			1		1	2.9			85		85	3.9

Source: Data provided by FUNIDES

Tabla 2.5: Number of events and participants in workshops and work meetings (2011-June 2014)

Location	Number of Events				Total	%	Number of Participants				Total	%
	2011	2012	2013	2014 1/			2011	2012	2013	2014 /1		
Total	3	3	2	4	12	100	288	126	123	203	740	100
Managua (FUNIDES, Universities, etc.)	3	3	2	4	12	100	288	126	123	203	740	100

Source: Data provided by FUNIDES

Appendix 3
Survey of the Public Attending FUNIDES Presentations
 (Number of people surveyed: 50)

No.	Questions	% type of response			Total
		Si	No	Indifferent	
1.	Are you a continual follower or attendant at FUNIDES activities?	98%	2%	0%	100%
2.	Are you satisfied with FUNIDES' conferences and public events?	98%	2%	0%	100%
3.	Do FUNIDES conferences present an objective assessment of the country's reality?	95%	5%	0%	100%
4.	Do you consider FUNIDES' works and publications precise and focused on the central issues of the country's development?	98%	2%	0%	100%
5.	Do you consider the FUNIDES proposals and recommendations correct and believe they must be approved as inputs for the government's overall policy?	95%	5%	0%	100%
6.	Do you think the private sector has a firm ally in FUNIDES to back the work of the country's business sector?	100%	0%	0%	100%
7.	Do you think FUNIDES helps institutionally strengthen the trade associations?	78%	17%	5%	100%
8.	Do you consider the recommendations you know FUNIDES has proposed to benefit the country's policies to be correct?	93%	7%	0%	100%
9.	Would you or your business/organization be willing to make some financial or economic contribution to support FUNIDES' work?	37%	61%	2%	100%
10.	Do you find the consumer confidence survey objective and reflecting the real situation of this social segment?	90%	10%	0%	100%
11.	Do you consider the growth projections and economic perspectives prepared by FUNIDES to be correct?	100%	0%	0%	100%
12.	Have the research work and studies developed by FUNIDES been of use to you or your business /organization?	98%	2%	0%	100%
	If your answer is yes, how have they helped you?	90%	2%	7%	100%
13.	Do you believe the business climate survey is objective and reflects the real situation of the country's investment and business atmosphere?	98%	2%	0%	100%
14.	Do you think FUNIDES has established itself as an objective and respected information source on socioeconomic topics and public policies?	98%	2%	0%	100%
15.	Do you believe FUNIDES has ensured its reputation and positioning thanks to the quality of its publications and effectiveness of its policy proposals?	73%	27%	0%	100%
16.	Do you think FUNIDES has succeeded in informing and influencing key opinion leaders and public policy formulators?	56%	44%	0%	100%
17.	Do you access the FUNIDES web page and download publications of interest to you?	66%	32%	2%	100%
18.	Do you have any kind of communication link with FUNIDES for consultations and expressing your recommendations?	41%	59%	0%	100%
19.	Do you find FUNIDES a broad and accessible institution for independent professionals, businesspeople and decision-makers?	66%	32%	2%	100%

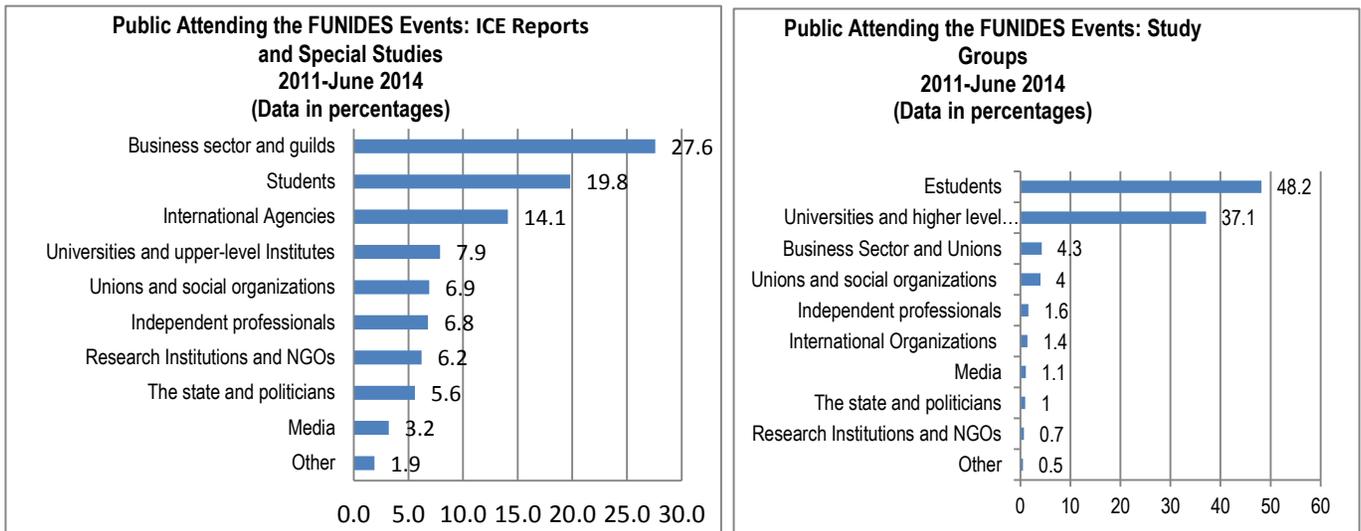
Source: based on a consultation of 50 people who attend FUNIDES' public activities

RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

Ninety-five percent of the public surveyed considers FUNIDES' investigative work to be very "important," "relevant" and "necessary" for the activities and organizations they represent and to help exercise influence in their activities. Consensus is also expressed with respect to the statement that "the content of the works published by FUNIDES have evolved in quality and depth since 2012." This qualification is based on the incorporation and presentation of relevant topics and on a good perception of FUNIDES' work, which has succeeded in "attracting the attention" of the business sector, general public and government for having identified the main and most important bottlenecks affecting Nicaragua's development with respect to its challenges, which are: (1) to raise the growth rate of the GDP; (2) to increase productivity; (3) the pertinence of education; (4) the structural credit problems; and (5) the institutional bottlenecks. Those surveyed also consider that the analyses derived from the *Informes de Coyuntura* and the studies are correct with respect to the information they present; that they serve as input to be used by public police formulators; to help the private sector in decision-making as well as other technical uses for the other sectors, especially the academic sector (students and educators).

Through Graphic No. 1, a close link and correlation is observed between attendance at events and the nature and depth of the opinions and appraisals, determining that the public that participates in FUNIDES activities is eminently a business/trade association sector interested in the period's macroeconomic issues, policies and special studies. It is followed by students.

Graphic No. 1: Composition of the public attending the FUNIDES activities



Those surveyed evaluate the products as positive, but grant them a differentiated order of importance, as shown in Table No. 1. Thus the "star" product is the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica*, followed by the results of the Consumer and Business Surveys.

Graphic No. 1: Composition of public attending the FUNIDES activities

Table No. 1: Order of importance in the target sectors' preferences about FUNIDES' work

No.	PRODUCTS	Order of importance					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1	The analyses and <i>informes de coyuntura económica</i>	80.5%	7.3%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
2	The reports on Institutionalality	14.6%	34.1%	14.6%	12.2%	9.8%	0.0%
3	The special studies and those for third parties	7.3%	12.2%	17.1%	26.8%	14.6%	0.0%
4	The policy documents	2.4%	26.8%	22.0%	12.2%	12.2%	7.3%
5	The results of the consumer and business surveys	51.2%	9.8%	4.9%	14.6%	2.4%	2.4%
6	The technical notes	9.8%	0.0%	7.3%	0.0%	12.2%	46.3%

Source: Based on Surveys and Interviews conducted.

The *Informes de Coyuntura* (macroeconomic and the surveys) are valued by the public as “substantial” due to the positive value this type of information has for the business sector, the “disseminators” (media), independent consultants, educators and students.

For their part, representatives of the State consider these works as “products that help validate the analysis and perspectives of the country’s economic behavior and that of its sectors.” They consider FUNIDES’ contribution in this area “important” and “necessary” in that it helps “validate and consider” the source material for technical works that serve as underpinnings to the public policies on macroeconomic issues the government prepares through specialized institutions.

The public’s perception of the macroeconomic reports indicates that they offer a retrospection of the economy’s performance over a given period of time. They also allow the recipients of these reports to see clearly the country’s external context and the challenge of economic growth.

With respect to the consumer surveys and those of business confidence, over half of those polled consider these reports “very important” because they provide an objective approximation of the short-term situation and the degree of confidence and intention of the businesses. From the consumer point of view of, they generate an independent vision of the economy’s situation and the population’s consumption capacity. In addition, 85.4% of those interviewed and surveyed consider them relevant to the *Informes de Coyuntura Económica*, because they complement them and “are a guide to foresee some future circumstances and appraise the past.”

Some interviewees say the *Informes de Coyuntura*, apart from offering relevant and necessary information for users, do not provide decision-making tools because the recommendations are very dispersed and general.

Of those surveyed, 84.5% think the *Informes de Coyuntura*, the surveys and some studies are very loaded with figures, data and graphics, whose message is a little “difficult to understand and assimilate” given that they are presented with a technically economic focus.

For 95% of those surveyed, the analyses derived from the *Informes de Coyuntura* and the studies are considered correct with respect to the information they present; they serve as inputs for public policy formulators, as help to the private sector in making decisions and for other

technical uses for the other sectors. But some of these “see some profound insufficiencies” in the final conclusions, as they consider them to be geared to general aspects and not very effective in generating major discussion or debate elements among the sectors of interest.

Some 18% of those surveyed think FUNIDES’ works and publications “still lack force and penetration” to influence key opinion leaders and public policy formulators, given that the government has not modified its strategy with respect to the external recommendations coming from studies and analyses done by these think tanks. Consequently, they recommend that FUNIDES seek “**a more effective methodological form**” to make itself heard and to penetrate and exercise deeper advocacy in the decisions of the State’s leaders. These considerations are confirmed by the interviews with government representatives, who consider FUNIDES’ recommendations and works “important with respect to considering the scenarios and room for maneuver that can present itself in the short run with some topics on sectorial aspects.”

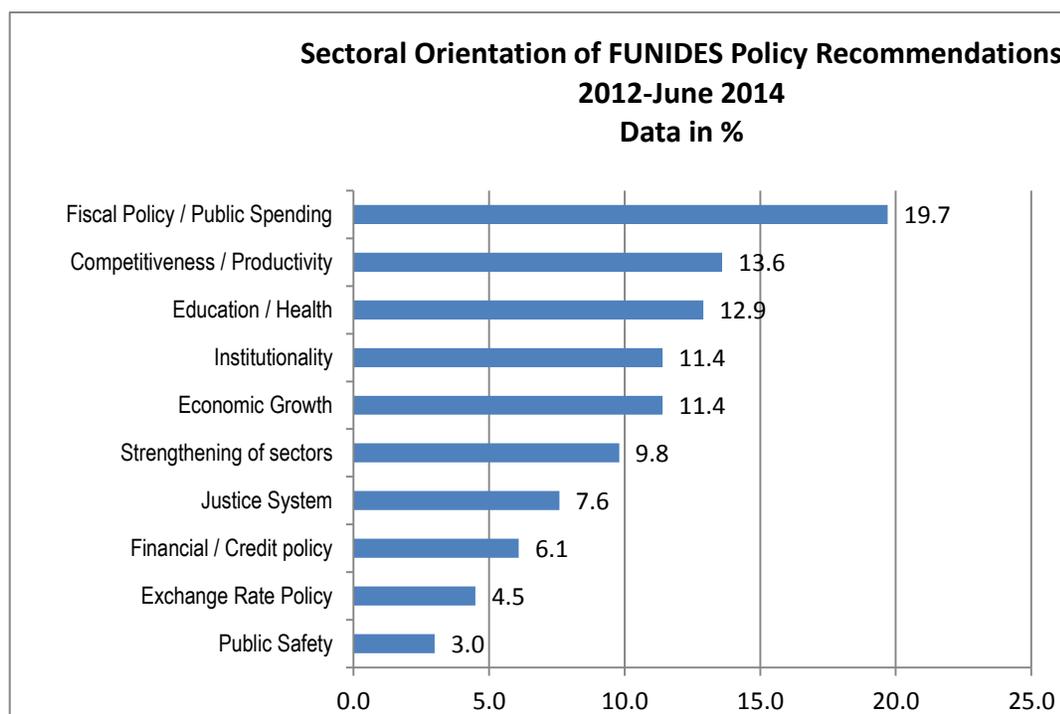
With respect to providing monetary contributions to FUNIDES’ activity, 37% considers that it could provide some backing or make some kind of financial or economic contribution, but the details of amounts or forms were not specified. We consider it a good sign that one in every three users is willing to do so.

Of those surveyed, 41% considers that it has a good communication channel with FUNIDES officials and personnel to do consultations and express their recommendations. This channel is established through various means: direct communication, the Website, Social Networks and personal contacts with some officials.

FUNIDES is considered by 66% of those surveyed to be broad and accessible to independent professionals and decision-makers. That opinion covers the establishment of collaborative relations in presentations, especially with the academic, business and trade association sectors and access to relevant information for third-party studies and advisory services.

Graphic No. 2 describes in percentages the sectorial orientation detailing the recommendations of FUNIDES’ studies and research. Of the 120 tabulations inserted into the working documents, the greatest weight of the recommendations has focused on issues of fiscal policy, public spending and competitiveness problems. This description agrees with the public’s opinions, 64.5% of whom consider that the general recommendations of FUNIDES’ special studies are geared to removing the structural obstacles to Nicaragua’s economic growth. The graphic illustrates the order of importance of 10 key topics FUNIDES has been developing.

Graphic No. 2: Content of the General Recommendations of the FUNIDES Studies



According to some interviewees, there is a perception that FUNIDES leans politically to the right and is focused on backing the business position of big business. Various people interviewed believe FUNIDES needs a fresher face, a board of directors with members of all political, ideological and business currents. “This would contribute to the search for equilibrium and a positioning more adjusted to the reality and consensus being sought in Nicaragua.” On the other hand, a INDE’s representative considers that FUNIDES should be “*an independent, autonomous, nonaligned think tank that promotes activities and organizations of such an array that it tries to exercise influence on them to avoid distort either its purpose or its way of operating.*” That way it could dedicate efforts and resources to new activities. Moreover this concurrence of elements would financially help improve its budget and operate independently.

With respect to the message and advocacy to policy formulators of the State, FUNIDES’ economic publications, policy messages and recommendations are based on official data and the studies are considered technically good, but insufficient to help specify less dispersed policy instruments. In addition, an inclination is perceived that is “that there is a high emphasis on descriptive presentation of figures and little qualitative analysis.” Although the topics addressed are pertinent, the focus tends to be seen more as a “quasi-political” message and the public policy formulators require inputs with an independent nature to validate and contrast the public policy decisions.