

ANNUAL
REPORT
2020



 SEMBRAMEDIA

**Empowering the success
of digital media entrepreneurs**

Letter from our co-founders



In October 2020, we celebrated our fifth anniversary at SembraMedia with a virtual Zoom party for our international team, our distinguished board of directors, and nearly 100 of the dedicated journalists, entrepreneurs, and other supporters who we have come to know and cherish over the years.

We shared drinks that represented our cultures (from Mate to Mescal) and at the end we invited extended family members, children, and pets to dance with us, each in our own homes, but feeling just a little more connected to each other.



Despite the joy we felt celebrating our work together, we also reflected on the difficult year, the losses that so many have faced, and the challenges we all know are still ahead.

As the pandemic lockdowns spread around the world, advertising and sponsorship revenues plummeted, leading to even more layoffs and media bankruptcies. Early research on the effects of the crises suggest traditional media (newspapers, radio stations, and television); may have suffered more significant losses than the entrepreneurial journalists we work with at SembraMedia. At the same time, we know our community has also faced many challenges, especially in the countries that have been hit the hardest by the economic impacts of the pandemic.

“Zoom has been our conference room since we launched five years ago”

The new organizations in our network range from small, volunteer-fueled projects serving



adventures with audiences in the tens of millions. Throughout the region, these media startups have become increasingly important and credible news sources, and in many communities, they provided the only source of reliable, fact-based news about COVID-19.

It's been a tough year, but since SembraMedia has operated as a virtual organization from the start, our team adapted relatively well to working from home during the pandemic. While we had to cancel our plans for our

annual conference and participation in many other events, we were able to continue providing consulting, training and financial support to media leaders in our community.

When we started SembraMedia in 2015, our initial goal was to better understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the founders of independent digital media organizations. Everything we have done since then has been founded on the key insights derived from our research.

Over the last five years, we've learned that these entrepreneurs are driven by their dedication to their communities, and that they routinely put readers, and even personal safety, ahead of profitability.

Our mission at SembraMedia is to help media organizations develop the financial security they need to defend their journalistic independence, protect and support their teams, and serve the information needs of their communities for years to come.

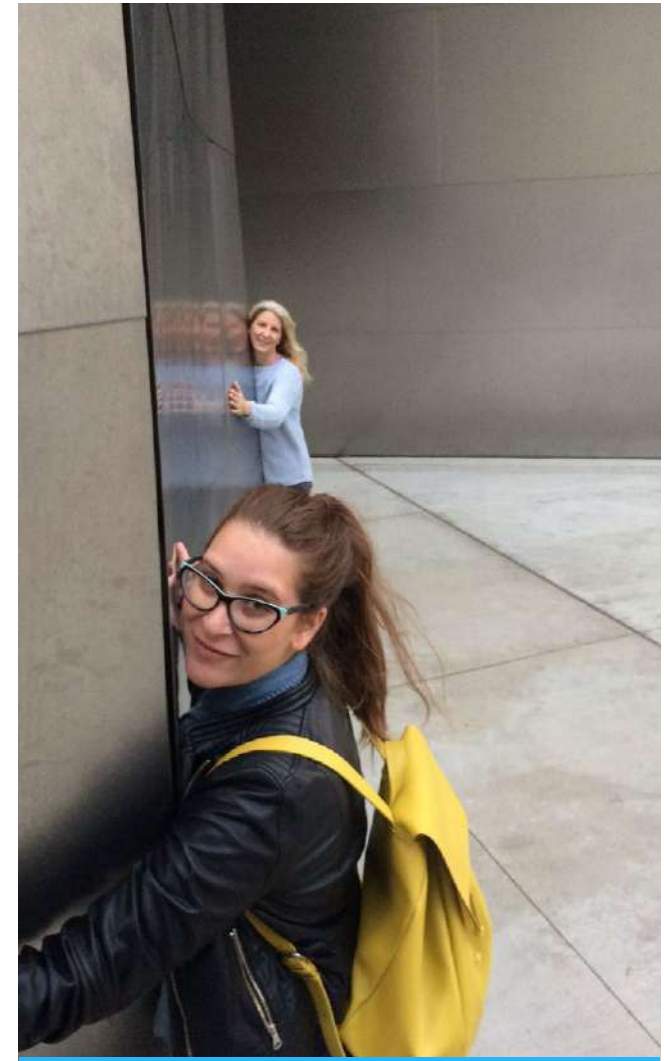
Measuring our impact in the ecosystem is a high priority for us. We share this information with our funders, but we also use what we learn to improve the effectiveness of our work on an ongoing basis. In the following pages, we share a review of our activities and impacts in 2020.



Janine Warner
Co-founder and
Executive Director.



Mijal Iastrbner
Co-founder and
General Director.



About



● WHO ARE WE?

We are a team of journalists, entrepreneurs, professors and consultants from Latin America, the United States and Spain, who represent **a community of more than 850 digital media entrepreneurs.**

● HOW DO WE DO IT?

- ▶ **Media Directory:** We have been mapping and studying the regional media landscape since 2015.
- ▶ **Events, conferences, and interactive webinars:** We love bringing people together so they can connect and learn from each other.
- ▶ **Reports, research and resources:** Our team has published more than 25 case studies and detailed reports about the media ecosystem. We've also collected a broad collection of tools we recommend to journalists and media leaders.

● WHAT DO WE DO?

We help independent digital media **develop sustainable business models.**

- ▶ **Virtual School:** We offer courses in business development, marketing, management, accounting, analytics and more. Some courses are free, and we provide scholarships to entrepreneurs for special special programs with interactive webinars.
- ▶ **Initiatives and Special Projects:** Thanks to support from our amazing group of funders, we provide mentoring, consulting, and grants via our growing number of media business accelerators and other initiatives. Our 2020 initiatives include Velocidad, SembraMex, Metis, and SembraEducativo.

● WHY DO WE DO IT?

Our mission is to **empower diverse voices** so that they can publish valuable information with independence, journalistic integrity, and a positive impact on the communities they serve.



2020 Impacts

Highlights from 2020, as well as some of the impacts SembraMedia had on the digital media ecosystem:

Our team, board, and grantees spoke at more than

60

conferences and events

including ISOJ, ONA, SRCCON, UNESCO and others to share what we've learned through our research and work with independent media.

We supported

22

independent media projects

through our initiatives, providing more than **2,100 hours of consulting and \$375,000 in direct funding.**

We drove

33

changes to our grantee's business models

by helping them develop membership programs, new services for clients, event sponsorship, digital advertising sales, and more.

We helped our grantees develop

86

new revenue sources

contributing to their sustainability efforts. Our research has shown that income diversification is essential for media independence and integrity.



SembraMedia's Virtual Environment

● OUR MEDIA COMMUNITY AND DIRECTORY



Our diverse team of ambassadors represents more than 850 digital media organizations in Latin America, the United States, and Spain.

This group of media professionals conducts ongoing, extensive research in order to map the digital native media that make up our SembraMedia community.

In our Directory, you can learn more about the media entrepreneurs in our community.

This year, we redesigned our Media Directory to support more simultaneous users. It can also facilitate comparative search features across a range of data points, including media name, country, coverage area, and revenue source.

99 new entries were added to the SembraMedia Directory in 2020.

44 new partnerships were formed by media organizations in the SembraMedia



network. These outlets now share content, organize events together, and collaborate in other ways.

Our board of directors, ambassadors and other team members reported more than 59 direct impacts in our community, helping the media organizations we serve to find training opportunities, form alliances, and learn about new funding opportunities.

At least three new journalistic ventures were started this year with direct support from our team.

847

MEDIA OUTLETS IN 22 COUNTRIES.

99 MEDIA OUTLETS MAPPED AND ADDED TO THE DIRECTORY.

44 NEW PARTNERSHIPS.

59 DIRECT IMPACTS.

● OUR WEBSITE KEEPS GROWING!



In addition to the Media Directory, www.sembramedia.org features a Virtual School, as well as an extensive array of resources and content focused on the needs of our community.

In 2020, we redesigned our site to offer more services, **improve the user experience and make it easier to find online resources.**



● THE SEMBRAMEDIA VIRTUAL SCHOOL:

We are pioneers in providing online training focused on entrepreneurial journalism.



In 2020, **we updated the design of our Virtual School** to accommodate more simultaneous users and help students find interrelated courses, based on whether they are starting a new media organization or they need help in a specific area, such as marketing or revenue development.



WE PUBLISHED THREE NEW CLASSES:

How to Start a Podcast; How to Monetize Newsletters, and How to Diversify Revenues.



WE DELIVERED 4,098 CLASSES TO NEARLY 1,300 STUDENTS.



WE AWARDED MORE THAN 250 SCHOLARSHIPS TO JOURNALISTS, ENTREPRENEURS AND TEACHERS.

● RESOURCES AND CONTENT:

Our ongoing research helps journalists, entrepreneurs, and academics keep up with trends, learn best practices, identify funding opportunities and discover new tools.



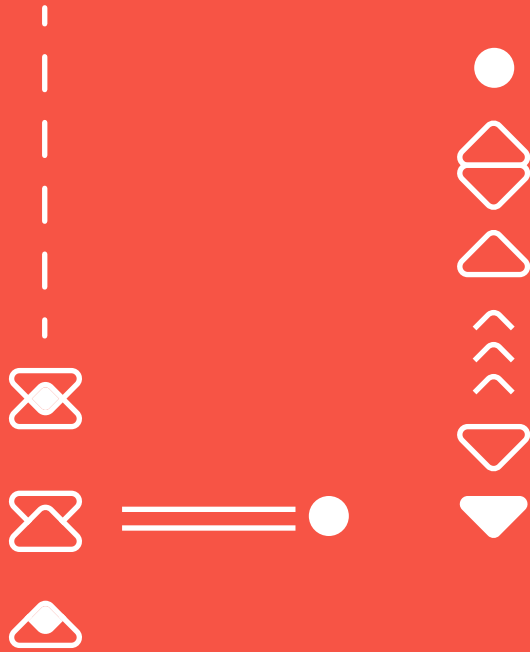
IN 2020, WE MAPPED AND ADDED MORE THAN 120 NEW PROGRAMS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

to the Resources section of our website.



WE PUBLISHED 12 NEW CASE STUDIES AND 15 BLOG-POSTS.





Initiatives and special projects

During 2020, we received **more than 974 applications to our programs.**

VELOCIDAD PHASES 1 & 2

A media business accelerator for Latin America.

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM: ICFJ AND LUMINATE GROUP.

Why? Our research shows that many journalist-led startups are adept at building audiences around their innovative content, but most struggle to construct sustainable business models.

Velocidad is designed to help a carefully selected group of media entrepreneurs bridge that gap by providing direct financial support, as well as intensive consulting and training.

Designing this accelerator has also given us the opportunity to experiment with a variety of business models across nine different Latin America markets, and we are sharing what we learn through case studies, guides, and webinars.

Program Highlights:

- ▶ During 2020, together with our partner ICFJ, we invested \$350,000 in **grant funding** for the ten selected media outlets. We also provided **more than 550 hours of personalized consulting** across a range of key impact areas, including leadership and technical skills. The grantees also participated in 15 seminars led by regional leaders and experts.

- ▶ Despite the pandemic, during the first six months of the program, these media outlets were able to generate new revenue totalling more than \$370,000, exceeding the initial grant funding awarded to them from Velocidad. The main sources for this revenue were: new clients, new grants, clients who increased contract amounts, and revenue from membership programs. **The grantees also forged new alliances, strengthened and diversified their teams,** and improved their management and leadership skills.
- ▶ In November 2020, **six of the ten winners advanced to the second phase** of the program that will continue through 2021, with further grant funding and consulting.



VELOCIDAD GRANTEES 

LADO
ladebo.com.mx

El Pitazo

EL SURTI.COM

POSTA

070

CIPER

eLTUQUE

ponte

CONVOCA
GANOS

REDACCIÓN



SEMBRAMEX YEAR TWO

This accelerator program is designed to provide business support to independent digital media that conduct investigative reporting and cover news along the U.S.-Mexico border.

THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM: **U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ICFJ AND THE BORDER CENTER.**

Why? Mexico's border states are some of the most complicated and dangerous places in the world to do investigative journalism.

SembraMEX focuses on strengthening the business models of media outlets along the border, so they can better support and defend their teams, while maintaining high ethical standards journalistic and editorial independence.

This year's winners, Raíchali and El Malpensado, received support and specialized business consulting for six months in 2020.

Program Highlights:

- ▶ **Raíchali** worked to build a **new business model and diversify revenue sources**. They created a school with courses focused on their expertise and a subscription model to access premium content. They also redesigned their website.
- ▶ **El Malpensado** underwent **various changes to strengthen the organization's current business model**: they hired new team members, redesigned their website, and diversified their sources of income.

SEMBRAMEX GRANTEES:



METIS YEAR TWO

Mentoring program for women founders of Latin American digital media.

THANKS TO THE SUPPORT FROM: **GOOGLE NEWS INITIATIVE.**

Why? One of our research findings is that there are a large number of women entrepreneurs in Latin America, the U.S., and Spain, especially when compared with traditional media. The percentage varies from country to country, but currently the founders of the media outlets in our directory are, on average, 45% female.

Metis connects women who are starting new media organizations with women who have more experience leading independent media companies in Latin America.

During 2020, 10 women entrepreneurs worked with both their mentors and a team of consultants to strengthen and improve their business and leadership skills.

Thanks to this mentorship program, we have **recorded more than 70 impacts** for the participants and their media organizations, **including 20 new revenue sources and nine new strategic alliances**.



"Metis gave us the confidence to keep believing in what we are doing, it helped us consolidate our team, and respect the diversity in our region"

Edilma Prada Céspedes | Agenda Propia (Colombia), Mentee.



"Metis helped us understand that success is a broad concept, which gave me a much greater understanding of what it means to be an entrepreneur."

Daniela Mendoza | Verificado.com.mx (México), Mentor.

E SEMBRAEDUCATIVO

A program that combines classes in our Virtual School with webinars for entrepreneurial journalists.

THANKS TO THE SUPPORT FROM: ICFJ, THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION, AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

Why? Many journalists want to become entrepreneurs and are looking for ways to solve challenges related to sustainability. To help them, we provide tips, guides, templates and more resources through the SembraEducativo program.

Program Highlights :

- ▶ In 2020, we trained **150 journalists**, chosen from 606 applicants.
- ▶ This project was so successful that we received a grant from the **U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires to offer a version of this program specifically for Argentina in 2021.** We hope to expand the program to other countries in the region.



P RED DE PROFES

A network of more than 300 professors who teach Spanish-language entrepreneurial journalism and other business, innovation and digital journalism classes at universities throughout Latin America, the U.S. and Spain.

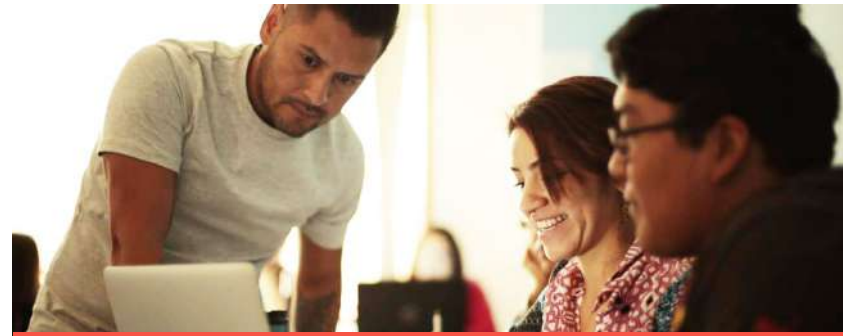
THANKS TO THE SUPPORT FROM: GOOGLE NEWS INITIATIVE.

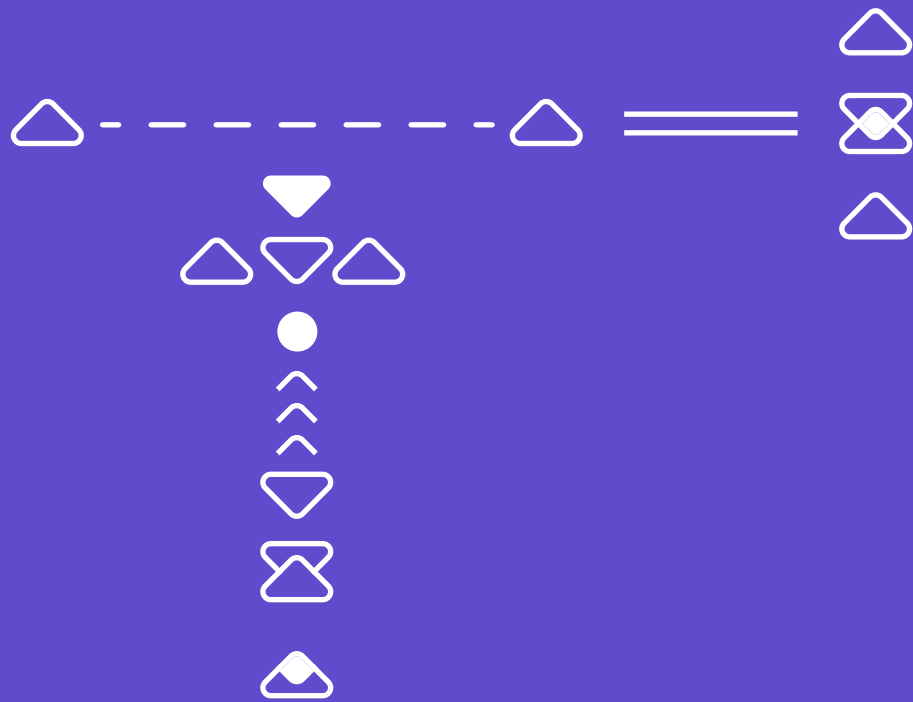
Why? We conducted a survey and found that less than 3% of communications and journalism programs in Latin America offer classes on or related to entrepreneurship.

In response, we developed a **suggested curriculum for teaching entrepreneurial journalism.** We also collected books and other academic resources in Spanish and developed eight new tools for teaching entrepreneurial journalism.

Program Highlights :

- ▶ 100 teachers participated in interactive seminars, learned how to teach classes based on our suggested curriculum and received special tools developed by our team.



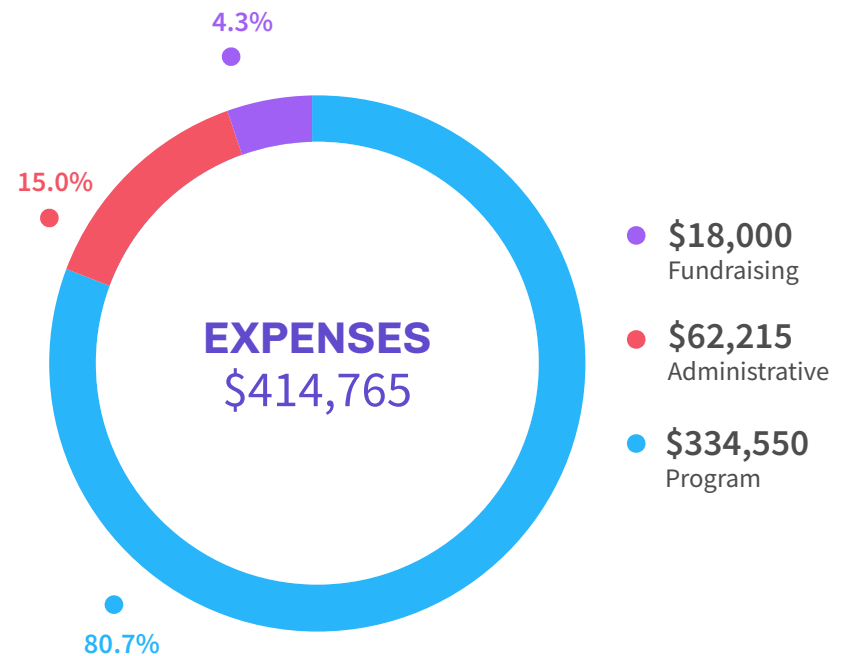
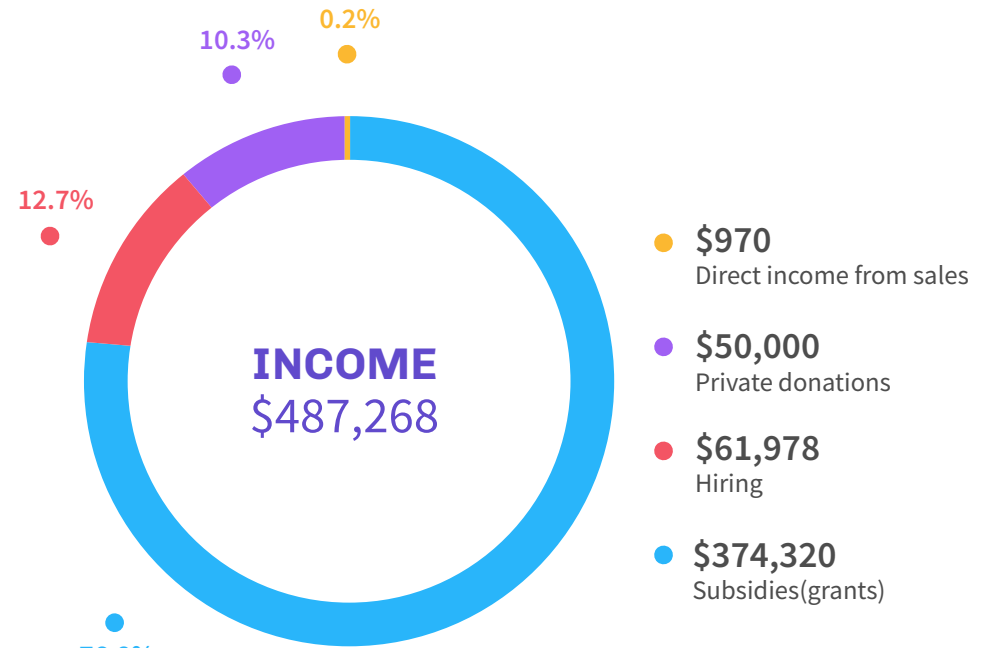


Financial Report

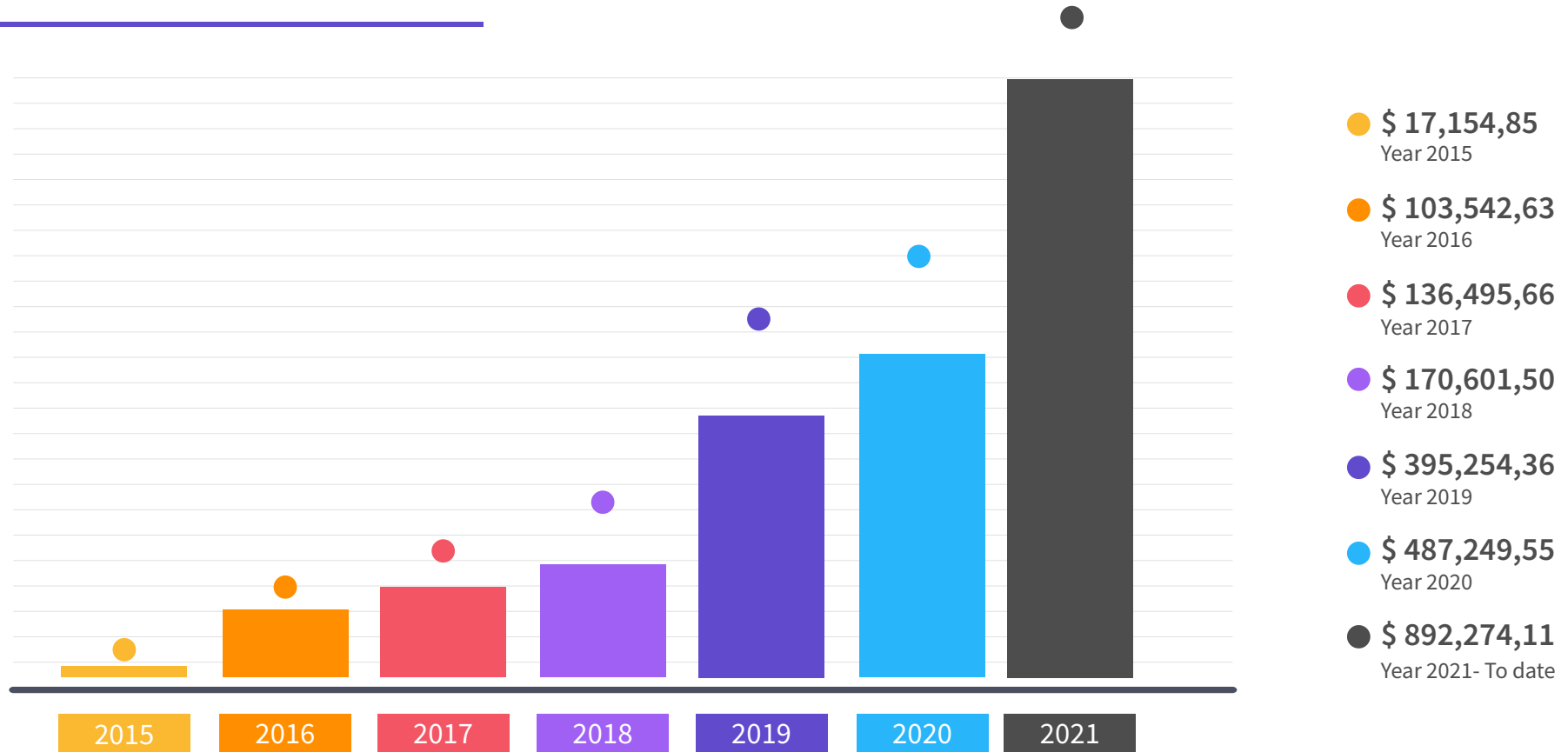
Financial Report 2020

SembraMedia benefits from a diverse mix of funding sources, including grants, contracts, private donations, and income generated from selling courses in our virtual school.

We are thankful for the support of all of our donors and clients in 2020, including: Luminate Group, Google News Initiative, the Swedish Human Rights Foundation, the Violeta Barrios Chamorro Foundation, the International Center for Journalists and their Knight Fellows program, as well as a collection of private donors, including the Cook Family Foundation.

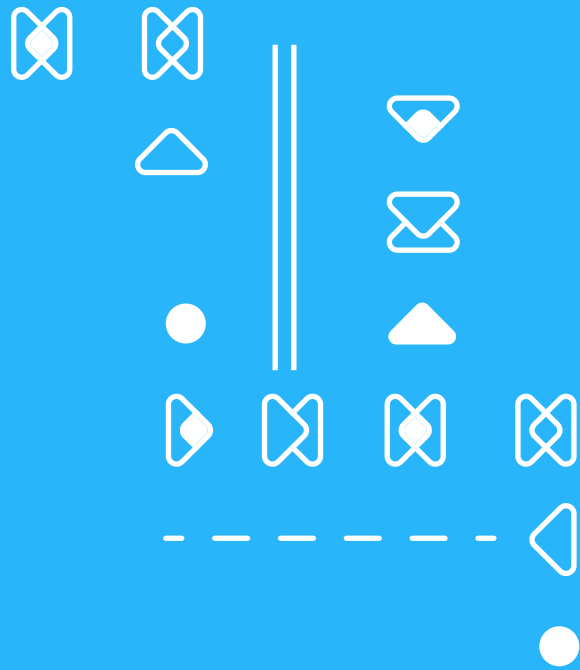


Our Revenue Growth



Thanks to grants we have already been awarded, we expect to double our budget in 2021.

TOTAL **\$2,202,572⁶⁶**
(2015- 2021 TO DATE)



The SembraMedia Community

The SembraMedia Team

● IN 2020

more than 100 people from **19 countries** worked on SembraMedia projects. This included eight members on the operations team, 15 part-time country ambassadors, and more than 80 project managers, researchers, consultants, and mentors.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Teresa Frontado - President
Ismael Nafría - Vice President
James Breiner - Treasurer
Patrick Butler - Secretary
Laura Zommer - Director



ADVISORY BOARD

Alejandro Alvarado Bremer
Ramón Salaverría
Glenda Umaña
Charo Henríquez
Lindsay Green-Barber
Patricia Torres-Burd
Amy Schmitz Weiss
Luz Mely Reyes

David LaFontaine
Rosental Calmon Alves
Fabiola Torres
María Catalina Colmenares-Wiss

“The importance of SembraMedia is that it is helping journalism survive the current situation.”

Rosental Alves - Board Member, SembraMedia - Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas



“Being part of SembraMedia in 2020 helped me keep my mind focused, and gave me hope as I saw how many people were interested in our events and courses. Similarly, because I joined SembraMedia well before 2020, I was already prepared for virtual work, which helped me to make the transition easier [during the pandemic].”



Indhira Suero
SembraMedia’s Ambassador for the Dominican Republic

“As a consultant for Velocidad, I have never stopped learning, and I have had the privilege of accompanying media outlets and journalists from Latin-American that I admire as their organizations develop. I also feel that the entire Velocidad program has helped me develop further as a journalist, in multiple ways.”



Juan Carlos Simo
Velocidad consultant

“Being a part of the SembraMedia team during 2020 was a motivating experience, despite the fact that our pandemic-related challenges were twofold. We always concentrate on how we can help Latin America’s digital native media grow and become sustainable. This year, we build on that goal by striving to create supportive spaces designed to help journalists facing a variety of crises.”



María Eugenia Alvarez
Director of Strategic Initiatives at SembraMedia

meet the
TEAM



SembraMedia team and Board of Directors members at our Annual Conference in Cancun, 2019.

● **CO-FOUNDERS AND DIRECTORS:**

SembraMedia's co-founders work closely with the board of directors to manage the organization's diverse team.



Janine Warner
Co-founder and
Executive Director



Mijal Iastrbner
Co-founder and
General Director

● **OPERATIONS TEAM:**

Based in Argentina, the operations team provides support for all of SembraMedia's initiatives.



María Eugenia Álvarez
Director of Strategic
Initiatives



Vanina Berghella
Director of Velocidad



Melanie Pragier
Director of Finance



Soledad Zavala
Institutional
Development



Felicitas Carrique
Director of Innovation



Naimid María Cirelli Asef
Director of Communication

● AMBASSADORS:

SembraMedia's ambassadors map and study the independent digital media ecosystem and are responsible for creating and managing our directory of digital media outlets. They are an international group of journalists, teachers, and entrepreneurs.



Olivia Sohr
Ambassador for Argentina



Fabiola Gutiérrez
Ambassador for Bolivia



Paulette Desormeaux
Ambassador for Chile



Sara Trejos
Ambassador for Colombia



Elaine Diaz
Ambassador for Cuba



Indhira Suero
Ambassador for Dominican Republic



Miguel Loor
Ambassador for Ecuador



Abraham Torres
Ambassador for México



María Lily Delgado
Ambassador for Nicaragua



Desirée Esquivel
Ambassador for Paraguay



José Hernández Falcón
Ambassador for Puerto Rico



José Antonio González
Ambassador for Spain



Natalie Van Hoozer
Ambassador for United States



Sebastián Auyanet
Ambassador for Uruguay



Nilsa Varela Vargas
Ambassador for Venezuela

● ALLIES



THANK YOU!



Velocidad grantees and members of the Sembramedia team at the accelerator kickoff event in Colombia, February 2020.

www.sembramedia.org 



