

Supporting Land Policy Research in Latin America

To enhance the Lincoln Institute's commitment to building research capacity on international land policy issues, the Program on Latin America and the Caribbean initiated an expanded effort in 2006 to support research in that region. Since then the Lincoln Institute has issued annual public requests for research proposals that set out the criteria used to evaluate the proposals and a set of priority thematic topics, normally related to land markets, local public finance, and urban development. This year's priorities include implementation and impacts of land use regulations; land-based instruments to finance urban development; land markets; and urban form.

Most of those who submit research proposals are affiliated with academic institutions throughout Latin America. Other applicants are typically practitioners from government entities, nongovernmental organizations, and private consultancies, as well as scholars working on Latin American themes at universities outside the region. About two-thirds of the proposals submitted and funded are from researchers having no prior affiliation with our Latin America Program, which is consistent with one objective of the research program—to widen the network of those studying land policy issues in the region.

The average size of research project funding has increased over time from around \$10,000 in 2006 to about \$26,000 at present. Some projects that involve extensive field work to support empirically based research have received larger amounts. Over time the program has also become more competitive, with the number of applications growing from 90 in the first year to 150 currently.

The priority topics and selection criteria are designed to encourage empirical studies, and the 18-month funding cycle allows time for data collection, analysis, and preparation of a final report. Lincoln Institute staff provide technical assistance to many researchers as they finalize their research designs and carry out their work. The participants are also invited to a methods workshop at the beginning of each research project cycle to review survey instrument and sample design, multivariate statistical analysis, experimental methods, and the use of geographic information systems.



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At the end of each research project cycle all participants discuss each others' draft papers at a research seminar. Both the methods workshop and research seminar are highly valued by the researchers, and the events have been offered in Colombia, Argentina, and Costa Rica to facilitate access from different parts of the region. Other training courses offered by the Latin America Program, such as those on urban economics

and land market analysis, are also often relevant for those carrying out these research projects.

Selected final research reports are posted as working papers on the Lincoln Institute Web site. Currently 33 final papers are available and another 15 are in process. Many of these papers are downloadable in both English and either Spanish or Portuguese. In addition, seven of the completed research papers have been summarized as *Land Lines* articles, making their results accessible to a wide audience. This April issue presents one such report on home values in Mexico, and announces the completion of a CD-ROM that compiles more than 80 *Land Lines* articles that have been translated into Spanish under the title *Perspectivas Urbanas*.

This research program complements another long-standing Latin America Program initiative that provides support for students working on dissertation and masters theses. The graduate student program is also competitive and based on open requests for proposals. In the past two years, the Lincoln Institute has taken steps to increase the coordination between these two research support initiatives, particularly by coordinating the priority topics and harmonizing the selection criteria. By supporting both emerging graduates and more experienced researchers, these initiatives are developing an extensive network of capable analysts who can advance knowledge about land policy and its consequences in Latin America.

The request for research proposals in 2010 will be posted on the Lincoln Institute's Web site and distributed electronically by email to those in the region who have registered on our Web site. See page 28 of this *Land Lines* issue for additional information.