

Comment from the Internet Society on the  
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers'

**Public Comment Proceeding on its Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach**

The Internet Society is pleased to submit the following submission to ICANN's public comment proceeding on the Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach.

The Internet Society is a global not-for profit organization committed to the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world. The Internet Society works in partnership with our global community, comprised of over 110,000 members, 136 chapters and special interest groups, and 149 organizational members. It is also the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)<sup>1</sup> and the Online Trust Alliance (OTA)<sup>2</sup>.

The Internet Society supports ICANN's activities to build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and other groups from underserved and underrepresented communities around the world to participate in ICANN processes. In particular, we agree with the suggestion in the [Draft Summary of Findings from the Community Consultation to Review the Current Fellowship Program](#) that the:

"Fellowship Program's objective should be to bring new active, committed and engaged participants to the ICANN community's policy development processes. There is also an emphasis on attracting and supporting those with financial need from developing, underserved, or underrepresented regions in order to enhance diversity in ICANN processes, develop global awareness of ICANN, and to give opportunities to those who could not otherwise have participated."

We encourage ICANN to pay particular attention to applications from Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities generally lag behind their non-Indigenous counterparts in terms of access to quality, high-speed Internet. Yet, it is these communities that could benefit most from the opportunities provided by the Internet. Internet access in these communities is increasingly a lifeline to health, education, and economic development. For many, it is a vital link to the world and means the difference between being remote and isolated and connected to the global marketplace.

Indigenous Peoples' voices are crucial in the development of Internet policy and technical resources if we truly believe the Internet is for everyone. Including individuals from Indigenous communities brings unique and much needed voices to ICANN, and indeed, the global Internet

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<sup>1</sup> Internet Engineering Task Force: <https://www.ietf.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Online Trust Alliance: <https://otalliance.org/>



governance community. The Internet Society has had the opportunity to work with a number of Indigenous alumni from ICANN's Fellowship Program, including on the Indigenous Connectivity Summit, the Internet Governance Forum, and our work on Community Networks and Internet Exchange Points. In fact, two former ICANN fellows have made important contributions to the Internet Society's work on Community Networks by sharing their knowledge and experience building and maintaining sustainable networks in Indigenous communities in North America.

The Internet Society commends ICANN on this successful program, and looks forward to seeing it grow and serve as a means of including underrepresented communities in global conversations.