

# **Native Public Media Comments on the “Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach”**

**July 2018**

Native Public Media (NPM) appreciates the opportunity to review the draft Proposal of the new Fellowship Approach and advances recommendations for fellowship program activities.

NPM respectfully submits the following comments.

## **I. Introduction**

NPM, a Tribal nonprofit organization, encourages Native Americans across the United States to participate actively in all forms of media. NPM is an established leader in communications and telecommunications policymaking, supporting development that encourages the expansion and strengthening of native choices through media platforms that are community based, local and democratic. As an advocate for spectrum opportunities on behalf of Tribes over the past 13 years, NPM agrees with the U.S. Federal Communications Commission “that ‘members of federally-recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages and other residents of Tribal lands have lacked meaningful access to wired and wireless communications services.’”

To that regard, NPM as an At-Large Structure within NARALO, proposed the establishment of the Global Indigenous Fellowship Program (GIAP), formerly the “Tribal Ambassadors Fellowship” to enhance ICANN’s outreach to U.S. American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages and Canada’s First Nations. To realize an authentic “One Internet, One World” all must be at the table. The GIA program was rightfully expanded to include other self-governing Indigenous communities worldwide.

## **II. Self-Governing Indigenous Communities versus Quota**

As a predicate to the debate that is very important to NPM, we wish to strongly suggest a refocus of the dialogue to the actual nature of the question at hand. This should not be a debate about a quota.

NPM’s work is based on the foundation of Tribal sovereignty. In this broad and complex context, all of NPM’s policy work is organized around the inherent sovereignty of Tribes recognized in the U.S. Constitution which vests Congress, the Executive and Judicial branches of the U.S. federal government with the authority to engage in relations with Tribes. A federally recognized Tribe is an American Indian Tribe or Alaska Native Village that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

Under this cloak of understanding, NPM does not support the dialogue that has grown out of the experiences of the GIAP that now characterizes the proposal as a “quota.” The use of this term to couch the dialogue is misplaced for three reasons at the least:

- First, a quota presupposes that fellowship selection decisions will be made only on one criteria -- the applicant's status as being indigenous. It suggests that the decisions on inclusion do not consider whether the applicant is a member of a self-governing Indigenous community nor the applicant's merit, knowledge, accomplishments, and effort.
- Second, it suggests that the level of commitment to diversity of viewpoint and inclusion of underserved communities extends only as far as a minimum level of involvement. Couching the discussion in "quota" terms makes it appear that the ALAC and ICANN will be fulfilling its mission and stated goals by the minimum of effort and level of commitment. It suggests meeting a quota is actually an accomplishment, when it is not. The accomplishment must be a sustained level of outreach and liaison with self-governing Indigenous communities and to engage them through identifying and including their best and brightest. Put plainly, this dialogue should be about more.
- Third, a dialogue of quota also stages the conversation upon a term that elicits very negative and difficult societal connotations between classes, races, and communities of peoples. It raises pre-suggested issues of inequality and preferential treatment. It elicits often unspoken but deeply held emotions concerning what has come to be known as "reverse discrimination. This would suggest that an unqualified Indigenous representative would take the place of a qualified non-Indigenous representative. From the very start, it places the unserved and un-included party, here an Indigenous person, in a difficult defensive posture. The target of the discussion becomes a negative

As you can see, each reason has very negative implications and depths of complexity that are awkward at best, routinely offensive, and often destructive to the efforts of peoples and communities that are already marginalized by the effects of history, geo-politics, and now vastly outdated thinking. A quota debate smacks of that sort of unhealthy thinking and all of us must refrain from such thinking.

Instead, NPM advocates for the identification of funding resources and concerted efforts at outreach dedicated to identifying qualified candidates from unserved Indigenous self-governed communities worldwide. Just as ICANN has an existing relationship with governments around the world, so should it have a relationship with self-governed Indigenous communities. If the dialogue focuses on a commitment of resources and efforts to find and include qualified and capable indigenous candidates, rather than to fill a quota, the purpose of the program becomes clearer.

### **III. GIAP Alignment**

NPM advocates for an alignment of the GIAP program administration with Tribal and Indigenous community representatives. In order for the program to have legitimacy and operate with an authenticity, it would be appropriate to identify and empower an indigenous or tribal representative to lead the efforts. Having the program driven and led by a member of an actual member of an Indigenous community, from the region where his or her people experience the issues of their community and reside, is paramount to the program and brings

a genuine awareness and ability to engage tribal and indigenous communities in a way that is relevant, informed, and meaningful to them.

#### **IV Application**

- Based on the success of the previous Global Indigenous Ambassadors Fellowship program, NPM encourages the Fellowship Program to organize concerted efforts at filling an additional two slots for fellows representing First Nations, American Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and other indigenous communities such as the un-served communities of the SE Pacific Rim and the continent of Africa. The Fellowship program is an ideal place for the inclusion of Newcomers and coordination of shared interests and training in the diverse elements of ICANN.
- NPM encourages the Regional At-Large group to produce and provide an introductory webinar as a general introduction to ICANN describing the policy development process of ICANN as well as ICANN's overlapping importance and relevance to local world communities.
- NPM supports continuous outreach to indigenous communities through the ALAC and the RALOs to encourage applications from candidates.

#### **V. Selection Committee**

NPM recommends that the selection committee be representative of veteran ICANN members, fellowship alumni, and individuals that demonstrate a commitment to the diversity of the ICANN community. The Selection Committee should include a representative from an Indigenous ALS.

#### **VI. Selection Criteria**

- Equity and inclusion should be built into the selection criteria. These include geographic, ALS diversity, talent, disabilities, gender, and such other criteria that are representative of ICANN's global community and values including merit, knowledge, accomplishments, and effort.
- NPM recommends that the Fellowship be open to new entrants to ICANN as well as current At-Large Structures that are continuing to grow their capacity, experience, and understanding of ICANN.
- Post fellowship, NPM recommends that ICANN produce and provide a webinar that details the many opportunities fellowship alumni can choose from to remain active in ICANN's work.

#### **VII. Verify proof of engagement**

- As part of the fellowship application, listing ways that fellows or returning fellows can demonstrate their engagement with ICANN or within their local communities remains integral to the Fellowship Program. Tracking this engagement will need to be more formalized in order to detail outcomes and success.

- GIAP alumni should be encouraged to serve as ambassadors of the program at ICANN events and conferences (including within their own communities) and speak to the benefits of the ICANN Fellowship Program. Funding should be allocated for this.

### **VIII. Pre-meeting and On-Site**

- The ICANN handbooks and other resources should be available to incoming fellows.
- Early interactions between selected fellows and their mentor(s) should follow a uniform structure so that it can be evaluated for effectiveness from year-to-year.
- The Fellowship Program should assist in the coordination and training of GIAP Fellows and/or Mentor that speak many different languages, in many different time zones worldwide. This will help to overcome significant language barriers that often result in the fellows not being able to relate or articulate the depth of the engagement without a translator.

### **IX. Post Meeting**

- Fellows should be invited to making a commitment to assist with the recruitment of future Indigenous applicants.
- NPM remains strongly committed to having a hand in assuring that the GIA Program continues to benefit Indigenous communities and in fulfilling the mission of the ICANN. That commitment includes involvement in the selection process, serving as advisors and/or mentors to the GIAP, and in general helping to make the GIAP successful annually.