

## RrSG response to Draft Proposal for NextGen@ICANN Program Improvements

<https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/draft-proposal-nextgen-improvements-11feb20-en.pdf>

Public Comment closes: 31 March 2020

The RrSG welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Proposal for NextGen@ICANN Program Improvements, following our participation in the Community Consultation.

The RrSG notes that according to the “Draft Summary of Findings from the Community Consultation to Improve the Current NextGen@ICANN Program”, there have been 229 participants in the NextGen program, 82 (36%) of which completed the recent five year survey. Only around 40% of those 82 (15% of the total) indicated they were engaged with the regional ICANN office or an ICANN community group. Conversely, 90% did support academic outreach and 75% did spread the word about ICANN in their universities. This would be a good outcome if the aim of the NextGen program was to simply increase awareness of ICANN, but since it’s also supposed to be about broadening actual participation in ICANN activities, these numbers are disappointingly low and certainly point to a need to improve the program.

With regards to the proposed program improvements, the RrSG believes that participation in policy development work should specifically be called out as a mid-long term program goal, and not only engagement in “ICANN activities”, which is very broad.

The RrSG is pleased to see the metrics that participants will be tracked and reported on, which the RrSG previously commented were essential for gauging the success of the NextGen program. In line with our belief that engagement in policy development work is ultimately a key goal, alongside active participation in an ICANN Group, the RrSG would like to see a further breakdown in the “number of participants in PDPs or cross-community activities”. This should specifically include the number of Working and Sub Groups they participate in (both within the wider ICANN Community as well as individual ICANN Groups) and the number of meetings attended.

It is noted that on the “Community Input Issue Tracking” sheet, in response to RrSG comments on combining the NextGen and Fellowship programs in order to streamline and improve upon both, ICANN Org states they are “currently exploring synergies between the programs and has created a draft chart to explain the differences between the programs. Feedback on the chart (which is linked to on the public comment page) is welcomed, as ICANN Org will consider creating an infographic/visual to explain the differences/goals/activities/etc.”. The “New NextGen@ICANN Flowchart” does indeed provide a good and easy-to-follow outline of the NextGen program process, and we would expect that one for the Fellowship program process looks relatively similar. It does not, however, substantively illustrate the differences between the two programs that would justify why they should remain separate.

The RrSG appreciates that the NextGen application process will now have the option of including an endorsement letter from an ICANN Group to address our previous recommendation that groups should be able to nominate candidates for the program. We are likewise pleased that “potential engagement in ICANN” is to be a selection criteria and trust that candidates with such a letter and identified potential will be prioritised. With ICANN also now tasked to “adjust (the) outreach plan to recruit from a more diverse pool of candidates” the RrSG is hopeful this will all result in NextGen participants learning from and becoming engaged in more than just a handful of ICANN groups. This should also lead to ICANN groups wanting to be more involved themselves, notably by providing selection committee members and mentors for the program, who would be of more benefit for a specific type of participant.