



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

What ICANN Does and Doesn't Do

Figuring out who handles what in the Internet ecosystem can be tricky. Some people think that ICANN is the organization that “runs the Internet,” but the fact is that ICANN plays a high-level, important but limited role in how the Internet is organized.

Here’s how it works. To reach another person on the Internet you have to give your computer a destination – usually entered as a name or number. That destination has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination we wouldn't have one global Internet.

Humans prefer to find desired web addresses and email addresses by name (such as “icann.org.”) But computers know each other by numbers, or Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. ICANN helps coordinate the Domain Name System (DNS), often referred to as “the phone book of the Internet” because it matches domain *names* with appropriate IP address *numbers*. ICANN also operates part of the DNS, and manages IP addresses and other protocol numbers.

No one person, organization or government controls the Internet. The ICANN community plays a critical role in managing some Internet infrastructure at a global level, and includes broad representation from governments, registries, registrars, commercial users, non-commercial users, and individual Internet users. We refer to this as the “multi-stakeholder model.”

Below is a short list correcting common misperceptions about ICANN.

Misperceptions about ICANN:	What ICANN actually does:
ICANN registers domain names, like example.com or example.net.	The vast majority of domain name registration is done by registrars, most of which are accredited by ICANN. ICANN is responsible for coordinating the names and numbers that relate to Internet addresses, but does not register domain names with the exception of .INT (used for intergovernmental agencies with international treaties).
ICANN can help people or organizations obtain Internet access.	ICANN does not help with Internet access. That is done by Internet Service Providers.

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Misperceptions about ICANN:	What ICANN actually does:
<p>ICANN polices the Internet for inappropriate content, spam or trademark violations.</p>	<p>ICANN does not police the Internet. It does not control Internet content or stop spam. ICANN works to ensure the security, stability and interoperability of the Internet through creating fair policies and through operation of the domain name system.</p>
<p>Because ICANN allocates IP address space, it does so to organizational networks or individual users.</p>	<p>ICANN allocates IP addresses to five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) and in-line with IETF decisions. The RIRs then allocate addresses to Internet Service Providers, who sub-allocate to networks and individual users.</p>
<p>ICANN helps organizations or individual Internet users with domain ownership or registration disputes.</p>	<p>ICANN does not get involved in disputes regarding domain ownership or registration disputes. Its role is at the policy level, in ensuring the registries and registrars comply with policies related to those issues, developed through a bottom-up, consensus based multi-stakeholder process.</p>
<p>ICANN accredits every organization that sells or issues domain names.</p>	<p>There are many organizations that offer various types of domain registration services. ICANN accredits a number of them for provision of domain name registration services. However, ICANN accredits only those registrars and registries who contractually commit to the service level and guarantees that are your right as an Internet user; and ICANN has no role in accrediting managers of country code domains such as .cn, .de, .uk, and .jp.</p>

For more information, visit <http://icann.org>.