



Organisational Effectiveness Committee
ICANN Board of Directors

3 May 2017

Dear Chair,

On 2 May ITEMS International completed its Review of the At-Large Community and submitted its Final Report to ICANN.

This Final Report is the result of a 12-month collaboration between the four members of our Review Team with significant input from the members of the At-Large Review Working Party, the ICANN Board of Directors, other stakeholder groups within ICANN, and many individual volunteers that make up the the global At-Large Community.

At the end of the Review process one thing is clear: the mission and purpose of the At-Large Community *“to act as the primary organisational home within ICANN of individual Internet users”* is broadly supported, both within At-Large and throughout the ICANN system. In answer to the question posed by ICANN Bylaws with regard to SO/AC Reviews, there is little doubt in anyone’s mind - let alone in our own - that the At-Large Community has a continuing purpose within the ICANN Structure.

However, the way in which the At-Large Community is structured and operates in order to achieve its mission is, in our view, ripe for reform. There is a strong and widely shared view within At-Large and the wider ICANN Community that change in the current structure is necessary to improve organisational effectiveness and enhance overall accountability. Only a relatively small minority, mostly from within the well-established leadership, were reluctant to consider significant changes to the status quo.

From the earliest stages of the Review process three issues came across more clearly than any others: 1) barriers to entry and the low level of active participation by Internet end-users in At-Large policy-advice and/or ‘outreach and engagement’ activities; 2) the widespread perception of an unchanging leadership team who are responsible for most policy-related and key decision-making processes, and; 3) excessive focus of the At-Large Community on internal procedural matters to the detriment of genuine end-user input into policy advice or outreach and engagement activities.

During the Review we faced a choice between making a set of recommendations aimed at “patching” the current system, or proposing a revised (simpler) organisational structure aimed at boosting Internet end-user engagement. We opted for the latter as piecemeal reforms over the last decade have been largely ineffective at addressing the structural issues.

The result is the *Empowered Membership Model (EMM)*, a package of reform which aims to build on those parts of the current At-Large Community that work well, while introducing a number of changes, notably giving *all* Internet users around the world the exact same rights of access. We have recommended merging RALO and ALAC leadership positions; the creation of ‘Rapporteur’ positions (with corresponding travel support) to allow newcomers to become more quickly involved in policy-advice and outreach processes; and other reforms concern the way in which “active” members of At-Large can become enfranchised and are able to vote in certain elections.

The *Empowered Membership Model* takes into account community concerns, ensures the overall stability of the organisation and includes built-in mechanisms to guard against capture. It will allow the At-Large Community to focus more of its attention on policy work within ICANN, and much less on internal procedural matters. Finally, we believe it can be implemented with little disruption to the At-Large Community, and at minimal cost to the ICANN organisation as a whole.

A few notes on process:

- The OEC and other Board Members will be aware that the first draft of our report was inadvertently made public which meant that we lost some of the benefits of that initial confidential exchange with the RWP.
- Following the Public Comment period, it is apparent that many within At-Large and other Stakeholder Groups within ICANN broadly welcome the thrust of our Report.
- The proposed switch to individual membership of At-Large and the continuing role of ALSes under the EMM was discussed at length with At-Large Community members. We have sought to make it clear that, under the EMM, well-performing ALSes will continue to have an active and vital role to play in support of the Community.
- A key conclusion of our Report is that the current ALS organisational structure is not effective and acts as a barrier to end-user involvement. Our proposal to replace this construct with an individual membership structure has met with considerable resistance from within the At-Large leadership, yet we believe that reform in this area is of critical importance for At-Large.
- While we acknowledge the disparate cultures that make up At-Large, and fully respect regional diversity, we do not feel that local values trump the ICANN community’s ethos of openness, transparency and bottom-up, consensus-based decision making.

We strongly urge the ICANN Board to adopt the proposed EMM as described in our report, and we remain at your disposal to provide further clarification regarding its interpretation and implementation.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Mackenzie
Nick Thorne
Tim McGinnis
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cc: OEC Members, MSSSI