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# Draft Summary of Findings from the Community Consultation to Improve the Current NextGen@ICANN Program

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## Executive Summary

The five-year anniversary of the NextGen@ICANN Program presents an opportunity to seek community input on the program's progress to date and evaluate how to best anticipate and meet future community needs.

This report presents a summary of the findings from broad community consultation on the program that ICANN org conducted with Supporting Organizations (SOs) and Advisory Committees (ACs). Four community groups submitted responses to a questionnaire to identify improvement opportunities for the NextGen@ICANN Program:

- Commercial and Business Users Constituency (BC)
- Intellectual Property Interests Constituency (IPC)
- Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG)
- Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG)

The findings suggest that the NextGen@ICANN Program should continue to support young university students but should place greater emphasis on raising overall global awareness of ICANN and enhancing engagement. There is a clear community call for better defining the program's goals and for implementing clear engagement metrics to evaluate the program's success and track NextGen@ICANN alumni's participation.

ICANN also conducted a follow-up survey to explore the feasibility of having community volunteer representatives from SOs, ACs, Stakeholder Groups (SGs), and Constituencies (Cs) nominate individuals as NextGen@ICANN Selection Committee members and NextGen mentors. Seven community groups participated in the poll:

- African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO)
- At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)
- Country-Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO)
- Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)
- Non-Commercial Users Constituency (NCUC)
- Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group (NCSG)
- North American Regional At-Large Organization (NARALO)

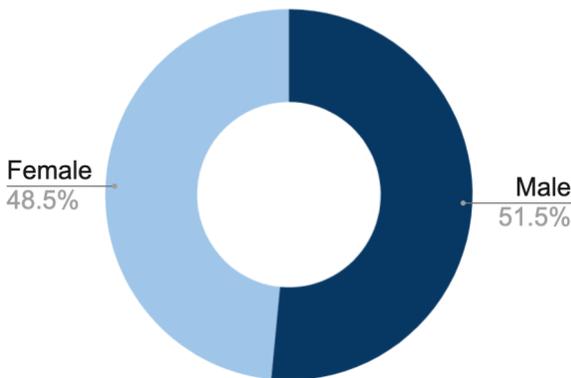
Most of the participant groups demonstrated interest in nominating volunteers to serve on the Selection Committee and as NextGen mentors.

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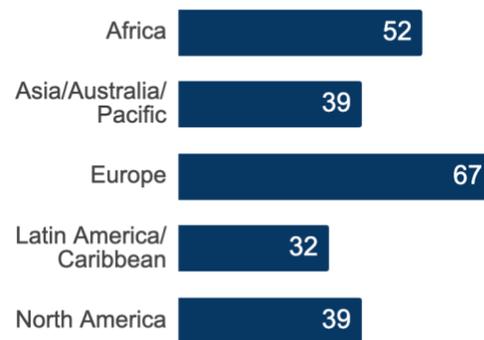
## Background

The NextGen@ICANN Program aims to broaden participation in ICANN by providing opportunities for university students to better understand ICANN and the Internet ecosystem. It is intended for university students aged 18-30 who are studying in the region where the ICANN Public Meeting is taking place. Since its inception in 2014, 229 students from 106 countries have participated in the program. The following graphs provide a snapshot of the gender and regional diversity of NextGeners:

Gender Diversity of NextGeners



Regional Diversity of NexGeners



ICANN recently undertook a NextGen@ICANN Five-Year Survey, which was completed by 82 NextGeners. Survey data indicates:

- 90% of respondents (78 individuals) have supported regional academic outreach.
- 75% of respondents (64 individuals) spread the word about NextGen@ICANN at their university.
  - A quarter of them (23 individuals) contacted ICANN's local regional representatives to come to their university to speak about ICANN.
- 39% Of respondents (32 individuals) are engaged with their respective ICANN regional team.
- 41% of respondents (34 individuals) are currently involved in one or more of ICANN's community groups.

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## Objective

The community consultation is designed to review existing practices and define a vision for the future of the program. The aim is to ensure that the program continues to evolve to meet current and anticipated community needs in an efficient and financially sustainable manner.

## Methodology

As part of the NextGen@ICANN Program community consultation, ICANN provided the community with NextGen program data and information on program processes.

A [questionnaire](#) aimed at identifying improvement opportunities for the NextGen@ICANN Program was circulated to Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, and relevant stakeholder groups between 9 July to 9 September 2019.

The consultation gathered input on several aspects of the program, including its purpose, goals, processes, and synergies with the ICANN academic community. Four community groups submitted responses: the Commercial and Business Users Constituency (BC), the Intellectual Property Interests Constituency (IPC), the Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG), and the Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG).

ICANN conducted a follow-up poll to explore the feasibility of having community volunteer representatives from SOs, ACs, Stakeholder Groups, and Constituencies nominate individuals for two roles: NextGen Selection Committee members and NextGen mentors. From 10 October to 16 December 2019, seven community groups participated in the poll:

- African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO)
- At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)
- Country-Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO)
- Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)
- Non-Commercial Users Constituency (NCUC)
- Non-Commercial Stakeholders Group (NCSG)
- North American Regional At-Large Organization (NARALO)

The updated plan for program processes will be released for public comment in February 2020 and end in March 2020. The report will then be revised, and Public Responsibility Support (PRS) will brief the community on updates and an implementation plan.

The NextGen@ICANN Program is planned six months in advance, so implementation of the revised program will take effect at least two meetings after the final program processes are published.

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# Consultation Findings

## Program Goals and Vision

### *Program Objectives*

Respondents from all four community groups indicate that the goals and objectives of the NextGen@ICANN Program need to be better defined. Almost all respondents agree that the program should continue to focus on university students and young people. The need to broaden the medium and long-term participation of young people at ICANN was seen as an important objective of the program, as was raising global awareness of ICANN.

The goal of the NextGen@ICANN Program is to provide students with opportunities to better understand ICANN and the Internet ecosystem, and one group notes that the community indirectly benefits when NextGenners use their academic work and related activities to contribute to a global awareness and understanding of ICANN's role and the Internet ecosystem.

### *Community Engagement*

The community responses also show an emphasis on increasing the NextGen participants' exposure to **all** stakeholder groups, while also raising awareness of the program within the various stakeholder groups. According to the community responses, NextGen participants could be more effectively exposed to the ICANN community as a whole through a better introduction to ICANN's active policy development processes (PDPs), community leaders, and other substantive work.

In line with this, the following actions for deliberate engagement were suggested:

- Organize a social event with just community leaders and NextGen participants
- Have the SO/ACs (and stakeholder groups (SGs) and communities) more involved in the NextGen@ICANN Program
- Have current ICANN community members engage as mentors to NextGen participants
- Introduce a "shadowing" component to the program where NextGen participants can observe a community member for a day during the ICANN meeting
- Introduce NextGen participants to the Implementation Review Team (IRT), cross-community working groups (CCWGs), and review teams
- Provide PDP updates for beginners at NextGen sessions to introduce substantive ICANN work
- Provide the NextGenners with a high-level background of each community group
- Make available to community groups an opt-in database of NextGenners ahead of ICANN meetings
- Ensure NextGenners work with mentors to select sessions of interest and have fewer mandatory sessions

All groups believe that ICANN should encourage active participation of NextGenners at ICANN and proactively attempt to integrate them into the community. Below are some example suggestions for how the NextGen@ICANN Program could evolve to enhance the future participation of NextGenners in ICANN:

- Provide tools for community members to engage with NextGenners and alumni that can potentially contribute to the policymaking process; for example, an opt-in database of

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NextGenners should be created and made available to the community ahead of meetings.

- Guide NextGenners interested in becoming actively involved in the ICANN community to other opportunities (e.g. the Fellowship Program), which might support them in their desire to attend more than a single ICANN Public Meeting.
- Focus on more deliberate community engagement with participants in the NextGen Program at ICANN meetings.

When asked if they are aware of the contributions of NextGenners to the ICANN community, respondents perceive that contributions are isolated and few in number. They noted that some parts of the community (e.g., ALAC, NCSG, NCUC) have benefited more from the program than others. One group noted that the academic nature of the program makes it hard for some communities to recruit NextGenners into their groups.

### *Metrics*

There is a strong community call for clear metrics to assess the program's success. Though some responses did not provide concrete metrics, the following actions were suggested:

- Develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure accomplishments and evaluate success
  - Involvement in SO/AC/SG/Cs
  - Participation in PDPs
  - Membership in IRTs
  - Participation in specific reviews
- Map the journey of program alumni

### *NextGen and Fellowship Programs*

All groups agree that the differences between the NextGen@ICANN Program and the Fellowship Program are unclear, which could be solved by clearly defining the program's focus and goals. Some community members offered suggestions to help differentiate between the two programs, such as changing the name of the program, having two different logos for the programs, and combining the two programs into one.

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## Application and Selection Processes

### *Application*

Two groups noted that the current NextGen application format limits the diversity of applicants by being unfairly weighted towards those who are good writers. Both groups requested that the NextGen application should allow for short video presentations, giving an opportunity to those who present well and/or can showcase a relevant technical project.

### *Selection Criteria*

The RySG noted that it “might be worth considering to tighten the eligibility criteria and reserve the program to graduate or doctoral students while removing the age-limit of 30 years old.” The group suggests that candidates who are further advanced in their studies should be prioritized in the selection process, and they believe that the program is more useful to them than to first-year students, as they have more opportunities to further spread the gained knowledge and insight.

The RrSG supports ICANN’s initiative to actively support the inclusion and development of young people within the community. However, the group suggests that the program could also be open to graduates under 30 who are already in the workplace and starting their careers.

### *Selection Committee*

All groups agree that broader community involvement in the selection process of NextGen participants could improve the diversity of program participants and consequently broaden future involvement in the community.

Two groups believe that NextGen Selection Committee members should be appointed by the community, in a manner similar to that employed by the Fellowship Program Selection Committee. The BC noted the diversity of the GNSO and recommended that the GNSO should have at least three slots in the Selection Committee (two for the Non-Contracted Party House, one for the Contracted Party House). For greater efficiency, the IPC recommended that ICANN consider combining the application process of the NextGen and Fellowship programs, perhaps by using a bifurcated Selection Committee. They noted that this would help identify “serial” applicants and overlapping applications.

The RrSG and RySG both noted limited volunteer time. The RySG suggested that ICANN conduct a poll with the community to ascertain who would be interested in participating in the Selection Committee. PRS subsequently undertook a poll, and six groups (AFRALO, ALAC, GNSO, NARALO, NCUC, and NCSG) noted interest in nominating volunteers to serve on the Selection Committee.

The RrSG recommended expanding the current selection process to include those who may not be university students. This group wrote that broadening the selection criteria beyond students could provide groups with the opportunity to directly nominate candidates for the NextGen@ICANN Program.

### *Selection of Ambassadors*

Currently, the NextGen Program Ambassadors (i.e., mentors) are selected by the NextGen Selection Committee. One group (IPC) believes that the Ambassador selection process should be altered so that the community identifies and nominates mentors, with a

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preference for previous NextGen participants who have become active participants in PDPs, IRTs, review teams, etc.

The BC suggests that, due to the typical background of NextGeners, most mentors would ideally need to come from the GNSO and ALAC.

Two groups (BC and RySG) recommended enhancing the role and training of Ambassadors; some suggestions include:

- NextGeners should be matched with a mentor from interested SO/AC groups in the community.
  - The mentor would preferably be a previous NextGenner who is actively involved.
- Ambassadors need to be made aware that their objective “should be to go above and beyond in an attempt to make relevant the participation of these entrant members.”
- Ambassadors should be required to take extensive training in ICANN Learn, so they have a sufficient degree of knowledge about both their role and the community’s workings.
- More generally, the groups agree there is a need to enhance the mentoring aspect of the program through “training the trainer.”

The IPC also noted that, in addition to Ambassadors, “it would be worthwhile to consider seeking ‘shadowing’ opportunities of PDP, IRT, review team, etc leaders to provide participants with alternative perspectives and additional mentoring.” The aim would be to bridge the gap between newcomers and active participants.

In the subsequent poll conducted by ICANN org, five groups (AFRALO, ALAC, NARALO, NCUC, and NCSG) noted interest in nominating volunteers to serve as NextGen mentors.

## Synergies Between NextGen and ICANN Academic Community

Most groups at ICANN felt that commenting on the synergies between NextGen and ICANN’s academic community was fairly difficult since they felt there is a lack of an academic community structure at ICANN. Most feel that more work is needed to identify academic groups within the ICANN community and that this will help NextGeners engage with ICANN community members. Outreach through mailing lists and social events can be implemented once these groups have been identified.

- The IPC group feels that better matching needs to take place between students and the SO/ACs, stating “More work needed to identify academics in the ICANN community as a starting point (ie, there isn’t as yet a readily identifiable ‘ICANN academic community’).”
- RySG is concerned that there is not significant showcasing of the students’ research other than the on-site presentations that many community members do not have time to attend. RySG states that a “periodic e-publication could be created that highlights the NextGen contributions and makes clearer to the community what sort of research is being produced.”
- BC feels that “ICANN does not promote the students’ research in a significant way other

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than the public presentations held parallel to the meetings.” Their recommendation is to better promote students’ research via periodic e-publications, which could solve the overlap in schedules during ICANN meetings when the NextGen presentations take place. They also suggest promoting the NextGen@ICANN Program by posting papers or short essays of NextGenners and alumni, which would make the program accessible to the broader community.

The IPC also noted that the NextGen program schedule at ICANN meetings should be available to the community as part of the consultation and comment process so the community has a better sense of what it is commenting upon.