

Staff Report of Public Comment Proceeding

Draft Proposal for NextGen@ICANN Program Improvements					
Publication Date:	14 April 2020				
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Public Comment Proceeding		Important Information Links			
Open Date:	11 February 2020				
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Section I: General Overview and Next Steps					
<p>The NextGen@ICANN Program is a staple Public Responsibility Support (PRS) initiative to engage regionally-based undergraduate and graduate students at ICANN meetings and introduce them to ICANN through guided programming. The NextGen@ICANN Program was initially organized at ICANN49 in Singapore with DotAsia and NetMission and has been successfully replicated since ICANN50 in London. The 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 students who are 18-30 years old and who are studying in the region where the ICANN Public Meeting is taking place. The five-year anniversary of the program presented an opportunity to seek community input on progress to date and evaluate how to best anticipate and meet future community needs.</p> <p>Taking into account the comments that are received, ICANN org will prepare a Final Report and will brief the community on updates and the implementation plan for program improvements. Implementation of the program improvements will take effect at least two meetings after the final plan is published.</p>					
Section II: Contributors					
<p><i>At the time this report was prepared, a total of eleven (11) community submissions had been posted to the forum. The contributors, both individuals and organizations/groups, are listed below in chronological order by posting date with initials noted. To the extent that quotations are used in the foregoing narrative (Section III), such citations will reference the contributor's initials.</i></p>					
<u>Organizations and Groups</u>					
Name	Submitted by	Initials			
Youth4ig	Mili Semlani	Y4ig			
Business Constituency	Mark Datysgeld	BC			
Registries Stakeholder Group	Samantha Demetriou	RySG			
At-Large Advisory Committee	N/A	ALAC			
Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group	Rafik Dammak	NCSG			
Registrar Stakeholder Group	Zoe Bonython	RrSG			
Intellectual Property Constituency	Brian Scarpelli	IPC			

Individuals:

Name	Affiliation (if provided)	Initials
Oluwaseun Ajani	[NextGen Program Alumni]	OA
Dave Marglin	[None Provided]	DM
Moriam Omowunmi Sulaimon	[NextGen Program Alumni]	MOS
Elliott Mann	[NextGen Program Alumni]	EM

Section III: Summary of Comments

General Disclaimer: This section intends to summarize broadly and comprehensively the comments submitted to this public comment proceeding but does not address every specific position stated by each contributor. The preparer recommends that readers interested in specific aspects of any of the summarized comments, or the full context of others, refer directly to the specific contributions at the link referenced above (View Comments Submitted).

The public comment forum received eleven (11) submissions, generally falling into the following categories:

- Overall comment or overview statement
- Suggestion to change or alter program criteria
- New proposals and ideas for improvements of the NextGen Program

With regard to topics, most public comments concerned the following categories:

- Application
- Selection
- Purpose & goals
- Mentoring
- Eligibility

An analysis of comments along these topical categories follows below. Further analysis will be undertaken by PRS staff and the results will be included in the final NextGen Program materials, which will be broadly circulated with the community.

Section IV: Analysis of Comments

General Disclaimer: This section intends to provide an analysis and evaluation of the comments submitted along with explanations regarding the basis for any recommendations provided within the analysis.

There is a good response and support for the Draft Proposal of the New NextGen@ICANN Program Improvements; many comments focused on enhancing the NextGen introductions to community groups involved in the Policy Development Process which would lead to better community engagement. Longer term involvement is a key concern across many comments.

Application

RrSG noted its support for allowing applicants to upload to their application an endorsement letter from an ICANN group to address the previous recommendation that groups should be

able to nominate candidates for the program. However, NSGC, youth4ig, and EM recommend not allowing for a letter of endorsement; they note that since the program is meant for newcomers, this process might give an unfair advantage to those who are already engaged in ICANN or have personal connections with ICANN community members. IPC notes concern that an absence of a letter of endorsement could inadvertently screen out qualified candidates and suggests the letter could come from a university lecturer; this would allow applicants to provide support to their application without having to navigate an ICANN community group.

Additional group recommendations include: broadening the application to include relevant work from the candidate/applicant such as source code or blue-prints for hardware, in order to create a balance between candidates from different sciences (BC); identifying undergraduate students, and graduate / doctoral students from ICANN meeting regions, underserved, under-represented, and indigenous communities, as well as individuals with identified subjects of interest to ICANN discussions (ALAC); making modifications to the application forms for both NextGenners and Ambassadors, as the current application questions for NextGenners presume quite significant knowledge of ICANN, so most applicants show good knowledge in Internet governance in general but not in ICANN, which results in low scoring (NCSG). ALAC also recommends that the application include more information for the Selection Committee such as CV, cover letter, and previous ICANN community involvement.

Selection

RySG recommends that the selection criteria be made public at the opening of the application period for transparency reasons.

Additional recommendations include: taking special attention to ensure a wide scope is still left in the selection criteria for individuals to be selected even in areas where they have no previous Internet governance/ICANN experience (youth4ig); supporting ICANN Org's proposal to allow the community-nominated NextGen Selection Committee to have multiple representatives from the same SO (i.e. to allow representatives from different GNSO constituencies/groups, unlike the Fellowship Program Selection Committee, which only has one GNSO slot) (BC); leaving a small quota (2-3 places) for the students coming from other regions than the one where an ICANN meeting is held, in order to give students from all regions the opportunity to get involved at any time rather than waiting until a meeting is held in their region (NCSG); removing regional limitations, particularly for more experienced individuals like PhD and Master's students (ALAC); inviting the whole community and former Selection Committee members to provide input when reviewing the NextGen selection criteria (NCSG).

Purpose & Goals

ALAC recommends more active participation of the NextGen participants in the community by way of direct involvement in policy work taking place in the community. In addition, the group proposes: creating open opportunities for NextGenners through shared sessions with Fellows at ICANN meetings; providing an opportunity for At-Large to engage with the NextGen group via the weekly schedule; and highlighting the academic work done by At-Large members in educational efforts such as the Schools of Internet Governance and academic research. Lastly, the group recommends enabling those who are qualified and interested to be able to attend more than one meeting, thus benefiting from becoming more long-term and serious participants.

BC, NCSG, RySG, and RrSG suggest revising the proposed language describing the program's purpose and goals as follows: purpose and goals should not be mixed up with activities (RySG); purpose should be broader and deeper than the goals and give an overall sense of value (NCGS); goals should emphasize the importance of policy development processes (PDPs) (NCSG, RrSG); awareness raising should be extended to all types of higher education institutions (NCSG); the primary long-term goal of the program should not be the engagement of NextGenners in ICANN activities after completion of their studies (RySG); goals should not use excluding language to limit engagement after completion of studies (BC, RySG).

Additional recommendations include: looking for synergies and ways to coordinate with initiatives focused on increasing participation, such as the Fellowship Program (RySG); providing NextGen participants with an introduction to the ICANN ecosystem, working groups, and policy development processes (PDPs), as well as raising awareness and increasing the participation of NextGen participants in ICANN and regional engagement activities (NCSG).

Mentoring

ALAC recommends utilizing At-Large subject matter experts who can provide feedback to the NextGen participants to enhance academia rigor via papers and research and provide them with a real experience of how the ICANN policy processes develops. They also suggest the following: that mentors should be selected based on similar criteria used for the Fellowship Program, and those chosen must be representative of the different AC/SOs; that ICANN Learn courses and community introduction webinars should cover theoretical knowledge prior to attending the meeting; and that sessions should also provide pointers to relevant communities and individuals.

NCSG recommends keeping Ambassadors in place as opposed to mentors, noting that mentors are usually well-recognized community members with personal agendas at the ICANN meetings, so mentoring might disrupt their work to provide quality guidance. However, youth4ig supports the move to mentors (rather than Ambassadors) but suggests the need for oversight in the selection process for safety reasons and suggests a prerequisite of ICANN Learn courses; this group stresses the need for mentors to be available to the NextGen participants during ICANN meetings.

IPC does not support mentors being identified by SOs and ACs and instead suggests that each SO and AC appoint a pool of mentors from which mentors can be identified for each meeting depending on the interests of the NextGen participants.

Eligibility

RySG suggests removing the age limit of 30 and narrowing the criteria to limit participation to graduate and doctoral students, noting that the current criteria (university students between the ages of 18 and 30 and studying in the region where the ICANN Public Meeting takes place) is not clear.

Additional recommendations include: reviewing the age criteria to those over 18 (ALAC, OA); allowing tertiary students (youth4ig); amending 'university students' to 'tertiary students,' reflecting the inclusion of further education students not studying at a university but still within the demographic of the NextGen program who seek to engage (EM).