

# Registries Stakeholder Group Statement



Issue: **NextGen@ICANN Community Consultation**

Date statement submitted: **9 Sept 2019**

Reference url:

<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/nextgen-community-consultation-2019-07-09-en>

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Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG) comment:

The Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the NextGen@ICANN Community Consultation. We hope that our input contributes to the revision of the program and look forward to the proposed program improvements in October.

## ***Program Goals and Vision***

***1. In your group's opinion, is this current program goal clear and well understood? What improvements would you suggest?***

RySG:

- The NextGen@ICANN program has a clear focus. However, it is our feeling that most community members, if asked, would not link the NextGen@ICANN program to its target group, university students (18-30) from the region where the ICANN meeting is taking place.
- The goal and purpose of the program needs to be defined more accurately and consistently.  
We note that the "About" section on the NextGen@ICANN webpage describes the program's purpose as '*The ICANN organization is looking for the next generation of individuals who are interested in becoming actively engaged in their regional communities and in shaping the future of global Internet policy.*'  
The introduction to the survey reads: '*This questionnaire only refers to the NextGen@ICANN Program, the goal of which is to broaden participation in ICANN by*

*providing opportunities for university students from the region where the ICANN meeting is taking place to better understand ICANN and the Internet ecosystem.'*

Given the specific target group of university students, we believe that the NextGen@ICANN program should focus on education and capacity building. We expect program participants to leave the ICANN meeting with a good understanding of ICANN's role and insight in the working of the ICANN multistakeholder model, and use this knowledge for their studies and later academic or professional work, or volunteer engagement in internet governance. This will contribute to the global awareness and understanding of ICANN's role and governance model.

Broadening participation in ICANN is the goal of the Fellowship program, which should focus on actively engaging new people in ICANN policy work.

***2. Does your group believe that the NextGen@ICANN Program is often confused with the Fellowship Program? If so, do you have any suggestions on how to reduce confusion between these two programs?***

RySG:

From an internal perspective – or looking at these two programs as an established member of the ICANN community – the basic difference between the two programs is clear. However, there may be some level of confusion or unfamiliarity among community members. In particular, if a group has not had the occasion to work with either program.

A suggestion to assist in reducing confusion might be to clearly announce various opportunities for both the NextGen@ICANN and Fellowship Program when announcing/promoting ICANN Public Meetings. When doing so, ICANN staff should describe the goal of both programs in a clear and unambiguous wording (see answer to question 1).

It might be worth considering a name change and opt for a name that clearly links the program to its academic target group. In fact, 'next generation @ ICANN' fits too well as a description for what the Fellowship Program intends to achieve and might be one of the reasons why both programs get confused.

The reference to the Fellowship Program in the eligibility criteria on the NextGen@ICANN webpage ( "Between the ages of 18 and 30. If you are over the age of 30, learn about the ICANN Fellowship program") creates the illusion that both programs are similar but focus on a different age group.

**3. What does your group believe should be the objective of the NextGen@ICANN Program moving forward? What would successful implementation of that objective look like?**

RySG:

The NextGen@ICANN program should maintain its focus on university and doctoral students. The program should provide information on ICANN's role and insight in the working of the ICANN ecosystem, knowledge that the alumni can further spread within their local academic and internet governance communities. As such the NextGen program contributes to increasing global awareness and support for the ICANN MSM and serves a clearly different purpose than the Fellowship program, which is focused on broadening participation in ICANN.

One objective would be to better introduce those eligible to participate in the NextGen@ICANN program with the high-level background of each ICANN community member organization. For example, provide those accepted applicants with information for their review (i.e., such as a link to the RySG website [and other community members websites/newsletters, etc.]) to assist in their being able to make a more informed decision and choices about various activities that take place at ICANN Public Meetings. A successful implementation/outcome of this objective might be a broader, yet more targeted, exposure from the academics considering various fields of opportunity within this industry.

Candidates who are further advanced in their studies should be prioritized in the selection process. We expect that the program is more useful to them than to first-years, and that they have more opportunities to further spread the gained knowledge and insight. 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. We recommend ICANN Org to be cautious when setting eligibility criteria as for example the use of hard age limits might not be lawful in some jurisdictions on the basis of age discrimination.

***Assessment of Program***

**4. Are you aware of the contributions of NextGeners to the ICANN community? If so, where/how has the community benefited from the contributions of NextGen participants?**

RySG:

As the purpose of the NextGen@ICANN program is "providing opportunities to better understand ICANN and the internet ecosystem," we expect that the community indirectly benefits when NextGeners use this knowledge for their academic work and related activities and as such contribute to a global awareness and growing correct understanding of ICANN's role and the Internet ecosystem.

We have witnessed how different initiatives at global and regional levels cross-pollinate (NextGen@ICANN, Fellowship Program, programs within the IG ecosystem of the RIRs and IGF, etc.), and we find that this strengthens the contributions from the students across the

board as well as helps retain the young talent. Several have gone onto roles with more responsibility within industry organisations as well as started their own think tank initiatives.

***5. Have NextGenners contributed to the work of your group? If so, please describe.***

RySG:

There is little known about the contributions from NextGenners to the Registries Stakeholder Group as a whole. Perhaps this may differ at the organization level of the membership.

***6. How could the NextGen@ICANN Program evolve to enhance the future participation of NextGenners in ICANN?***

RySG:

NextGenners interested in becoming actively involved in the ICANN community should be guided to other opportunities (e.g. the Fellowship Program) that can support them to attend more than one ICANN Public Meeting. For a young academic, the first ICANN Public Meeting can be extremely overwhelming and the level of assimilation and benefit of information and opportunities going forward may be constrained (this, of course, would vary depending on their background and basic knowledge coming in).

***Selection Processes***

***The NextGen program manager selects the five-members of the NextGen@ICANN Selection Committee. Each committee member spends approximately 10 hours reviewing applications during an application cycle.***

***7. Should Selection Committee members be appointed by the community, in a manner similar to the Fellowship Program Selection Committee?***

RySG:

Knowing this opinion will vary among ICANN community members, it would be worth considering taking a poll to ascertain who would be interested in participating at this level. If a broader cross section of Selection Committee members participates, this may facilitate a broader cross section of those approved to be a part of the NextGen. If the appointment of the Selection Committee members is supported, this opportunity should revolve to various SO/AC groups who are interested in participating.

**8. Would your SO/AC group be prepared to nominate a Selection Committee member who would contribute the necessary time?**

RySG:

A final decision on identifying a member within the RySG would first need general discussion and then a call for interest. Interest may vary from the RySG membership based on what region is involved.

***The NextGen@ICANN Program Ambassadors (i.e., mentors) are selected by the NextGen@ICANN Selection Committee. Each Ambassador spends 40 hours to help with activities before, during, and after the meeting.***

**9. Do you think the Ambassador selection process should be kept as is or be replaced by a process that allows the community to identify and nominate mentors?**

RySG:

Perhaps less about “keeping as is” or “replacing,” but consideration be given to “enhancing” the Ambassador program with a mentor from interested SO/AC groups in the community.

There is room to enhance the training ('training the trainer') and commitment aspects of the NextGen Ambassadors program, currently those returning as Ambassadors do not have an obligation other than to provide some form of mentoring, which for a seasoned community member would be fine, but for a young academic still finding a footing in the community this is vague and undefined.

**10. Would your SO/AC group be prepared to nominate a mentor who would contribute the time required?**

RySG:

As above, and given the RySG is a fully voluntary membership, a final decision on identifying a member within the RySG would first need general discussion and then a call for interest. Interest may vary from the RySG membership based on what region is involved.

***Synergies***

**11. Given the academic nature of the program, do you have any suggestions on how to improve synergies between NextGeners and the ICANN academic community?**

RySG:

This question about synergies between NextGeners and “the ICANN academic community” gives the impression that the latter is a well-defined separate group or structure within the

ICANN ecosystem. To our knowledge there is not such an academic group active at the moment. We assume that the question intends to ask how NextGeners could be triggered to become involved in the ICANN community and participate in community discussions and policy work.

Recruiting new active participants to broaden the ICANN community is not the objective of the NextGen@ICANN program. However, the program's detailed introduction to all aspects of the ICANN ecosystem and the working of the ICANN MSM can trigger the participants' interest to get further involved in a specific topic, group or discussion. The NextGen program should support these individuals in reaching out to the topic leads, group leadership or relevant staff.

Currently there is no showcasing of the students' research in a significant way other than the public presentations held within the meetings, and with the tight overlapping scheduling, very few can actually spare time to attend. It would be beneficial to make this accessible to the broader community. 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.

The NextGen@ICANN program should not provide support to alumni to allow them to attend additional meetings with the aim to get further involved in community discussion as there are other mechanisms in place, such as the Fellowship program or Community travel support.

### ***General Questions***

#### ***12. Do you have any other questions or suggestions about the NextGen Program?***

RySG:

- The NextGen@ICANN and Fellowship Program serve a distinct purpose. However as per comments above there is a lot of overlap and confusion. Clarifying the program's focus and purpose would help volunteers and organisations involved in administering and supporting them. This would increase efficiencies and allow for better coordination between programs.
- Re-expanding the application option to allow for short video presentations. This way the selection committee will have a more diverse pool of applicants who are not just "good at writing applications" but can also speak and present well. There could also be possibilities for more technically-minded students to showcase a project.

***You are welcome to share any general comments on the NextGen@ICANN Program community consultation.***

RySG: no further comments