

Internet Society Comments on the “Draft Proposal, Based on Initial Community Feedback, of the Principles and Mechanisms and the Process to Develop a Proposal to Transition NTIA (US National Telecommunications and Information Agency’s) Stewardship of the IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) Functions

Executive Summary

The Internet Society (ISOC) is a global, non-profit organisation founded in 1992 to provide leadership in Internet-related standards, education, and policy. We are dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world. The Internet Society has consistently advocated for the US Government to complete the transition of its stewardship role to the global multistakeholder community. We have previously submitted comments to the NTIA, and we also joined with the leaders of other Internet organizations in the Montevideo statement calling for the globalization of the IANA functions.

In this submission, we focus our comments on two key issues:

Relying on existing expertise and experience: The work of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), provides an invaluable source of information and knowledge; similarly, the experience with accountability mechanisms and the checks and balances that are in place for the work of these bodies should be fully utilized.

The Role and Functions of the Steering Committee: The role of the committee should be limited to performing coordinating functions. Each community should design their own mechanisms to ensure accountability for the various IANA functions. The committee may help ensure that the combined input is coherent and effective.

Introduction

The Internet Society welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the “Call for Public Input: Draft Proposal, Based on Initial Community Feedback, of the Principles and Mechanisms and the Process to Develop a Proposal to Transition NTIA (US National Telecommunications and Information Agency’s) Stewardship of the IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) Functions”.

In March 2014, the NTIA asked the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) “to convene the multistakeholder process to develop the transition plan” and “work collaboratively with the directly affected parties”. As the organizational home of the IETF, ISOC is a materially affected party. More substantively, the mission, principles, and work of the Internet Society and our global community of chapters and members are focused on ensuring an open, participatory, and robust global Internet. We recognize that the IANA functions are a critical part of a healthy Internet ecosystem. Therefore, we are committed to participating and contributing to the process that will allow the smooth transition of these key Internet functions in a multistakeholder, open, transparent, and bottom-up manner for the good of the whole Internet.

Relying on existing expertise and experience

The Internet Society believes that a set of characteristics, including effectiveness, flexibility, inclusiveness, and robustness should guide the process regarding the evolution of the IANA functions. Given the complexity of the issues and the diversity of opinions, it is critical to devise a process that is easily adjustable and capable of addressing the voices and needs of all different stakeholders.

In this context, it is imperative that we rely on, as well as make full use of, the expertise and experience of the various bodies currently involved in the IANA functions. The IETF and the RIRs have historically played a significant role and can provide invaluable sources of information and knowledge. For years now, the work of these bodies has been key in creating a workable system of standards development and Internet Number Resources (INR) administration. Similarly, the experience with accountability mechanisms and the checks and balances in place for the work of these bodies should be fully utilized.

It is vital that discussions are informed by, and the community is aware of, how the IETF and the RIRs have contributed to the technical management of the IANA functions. It is equally important to take advantage of the experience gained from the oversight role performed by the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and the Number Resource Organization (NRO) to the IETF and RIRs, respectively. For instance, with regards to the oversight role performed by the IAB, RFC 2850 states:

“A major role of the IAB is long range planning and coordination between different areas of IETF activity. The IAB, both collectively and on an individual basis, is expected to pay attention to important long-term issues in the Internet, and to make sure that these issues are brought to the attention of the group(s) that are in a position to address them. It is also expected to play a role in assuring that the people responsible for evolving the Internet and its technology are aware of the essential elements of the Internet architecture.”

To this end, it is important that any sustainable, independent IANA recognizes and supports the roles of the IETF, IAB, and the set of organizations engaged in supporting Internet infrastructure for the good of the Internet as a whole (such as the RIRs today).

Role and Functions of the Steering Group

The Internet Society believes that the role of this group should be more of a coordinating body than a steering group. We would therefore recommend that the name be adjusted to reflect this function. We consider it vital that each community represents itself with respect to a recommended plan; each community should also be allowed to design their own mechanisms to ensure accountability for the various IANA functions.

In this context, we understand the role and function of the committee should be limited to performing specific tasks as they will be identified by its members to:

- Facilitate a transparent and inclusive coordination process that is informed by and proceeds according to the criteria set out by NTIA in its statement;
- Identify gaps, if any, left by bringing together the plans developed by the individual communities and the requirements of the overall transition; and
- Publish periodic reports on the work and progress of the committee and the individual communities.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, the committee should be coordinating the dialogue, and should not make decisions or seek to guide the discussions. In order to ensure that the process is open and transparent, the committee should maintain minutes and email archives during its existence.

Conclusion

The Internet Society is looking forward to working with ICANN and all other stakeholders, and to supporting the community's engagement in an open and inclusive process. We are committed to an Internet that remains managed by distributed collaboration. This collaboration has been key to its dynamic and resilient growth as a platform for innovation, communication, and economic development.

This process presents an opportunity for stakeholders to consider, discuss, and forge agreements on a number of important issues concerning roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for the continued deployment and evolution of a global, robust, and trusted Internet. Moreover, this process should not depart from the principles of openness, consistency, and predictability that have guided much of the evolution of the Internet.

The Internet Society is committed to participating in the process and contributing to the ongoing dialogue to foster the best possible outcome for the Internet as a whole.