

What is ICANN?

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is an internationally organized, non-profit corporation that has responsibility for Internet Protocol (IP) address space allocation, protocol identifier assignment, generic (gTLD) and country code (ccTLD) Top-Level Domain name system management, and root server system management functions. These services were originally performed under U.S. Government contract by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) and other entities. ICANN now performs the IANA function.

As a private-public partnership, ICANN is dedicated to preserving the operational stability of the Internet; to promoting competition; to achieving broad representation of global Internet communities; and to developing policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes.

What is the Domain Name System?

The Domain Name System (DNS) helps users find their way around the Internet. Every computer on the Internet has a unique address called its "IP address" (Internet Protocol address). Because IP addresses (which are strings of numbers) are hard to remember, the DNS allows a familiar string of letters (the "domain name") to be used instead. So rather than typing "192.0.34.65," you can type "www.icann.org."

Ensuring predictable results from any place on the Internet is called "universal resolvability." It is a critical design feature of the Domain Name System, one that makes the Internet the helpful, global resource that it is today. Without it, the same domain name might map to different Internet locations under different circumstances, which would only cause confusion.

The DNS translates the domain name you type into the corresponding IP address, and connects you to your desired website. The DNS also enables email to function properly, so the email you send will reach the intended recipient.

What is ICANN's Role?

ICANN is responsible for coordinating the management of the technical elements of the DNS to ensure universal resolvability so that all users of the Internet can find all valid addresses. It does this by overseeing the distribution of unique technical identifiers used in the Internet's operations, and delegation of Top-Level Domain names (such as .com, .info, etc.).

Other issues of concern to Internet users, such as the rules for financial transactions, Internet content control, unsolicited commercial email (spam), and data protection are outside the range of ICANN's mission of technical coordination.

How does ICANN work?

Within ICANN's structure, governments and international treaty organizations work in partnership with businesses, organizations, and skilled individuals involved in building and sustaining the global Internet. Innovation and continuing growth of the Internet bring forth new challenges for maintaining stability. Working collectively, ICANN's participants address those issues that directly concern ICANN's mission of technical coordination. Consistent with the principle of maximum self-regulation in the high-tech economy, ICANN is perhaps the foremost example of collaboration by the various constituents of the Internet community.

ICANN is governed by an internationally diverse Board of Directors overseeing the policy development process. ICANN's President directs an international staff, working from three continents, which ensure that ICANN meets its operational commitment to the Internet community.

Designed to respond to the demands of rapidly changing technologies and economies, the flexible, readily implemented policy development process originates in the three Supporting Organizations. Advisory Committees from individual user organizations, and technical communities work with the Supporting Organizations to create appropriate and effective policies. Over eighty governments closely advise the Board of Directors via the Governmental Advisory Committee.

ICANN's Board has included citizens of Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Ghana, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

