What do we mean by stakeholder engagement?

Ask five people inside the ICANN community what they mean by engagement and you will get at least seven different answers. Wikipedia defines stakeholder engagement as:

"The process by which an organization involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions".

This seems a good definition for ICANN. It needs to be broad enough to encompass activity that helps us to ensure that anyone whose life is affected by our work can understand what we do, why they might be interested in it and how to engage with ICANN if they want to. This embraces all aspects of outreach, communication and capacity building. It is a lot of work and the burden is shared between volunteers and staff. It is important to coordinate these activities and this overview describes our approach to improve understanding, coordination and impact.

Our engagement mission

To work with our stakeholders around the world to help to make everyone affected by ICANN's work aware of their rights and responsibilities and of how they can engage with the issues and policies that affect their future.

Our operating context

ICANN is a unique organization with a unique role. Evolving from the ARPANET and academic network of the early Domain Name System (DNS) to the set of functions coordinated by Jon Postel as the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), ICANN was born 15 years ago in a process for private sector coordination of the technical and policy management of the DNS.

The Internet has grown from being a technically focused resource for defined communities to becoming an essential enabler for global knowledge and information exchange, commerce and social discourse. Its size, speed of growth and immense societal impact defies definition. But amid the hyperbole, at its heart the vast majority of its users share a desire to sustain a secure, free and open Internet. And this is the core of ICANN's mission – to ensure that a healthy, sustainable, resilient and interoperable Internet is maintained for the people of the world.

In parallel with the increase in the Internet's importance has been an interest in how it is governed and coordinated. How can we ensure that as technology advances we can use the Internet confidently without fear of unwanted invasion of our rights? How do we protect the delicate balance that ensures all users are represented equally in decision making over how this precise resource is used? How can we find a space to ensure that all regardless of nationality and role in society can enjoy the advantages the Internet enables?

And what does this have to do with engagement for ICANN? After all, ICANN's core role is to oversee the

technical coordination of the Internet's unique identifier systems.

The answer lies in the unique multi-stakeholder model that ICANN has developed. ICANN is living and breathing a multi-equal governance model that has heavily influenced the remarkable success story of the Internet today. It is doing this on a larger scale than any other organization in the world. This means that ICANN is inevitably drawn into wider discussions as well as needing to connect with those who are involved with creating, managing and protecting the DNS.
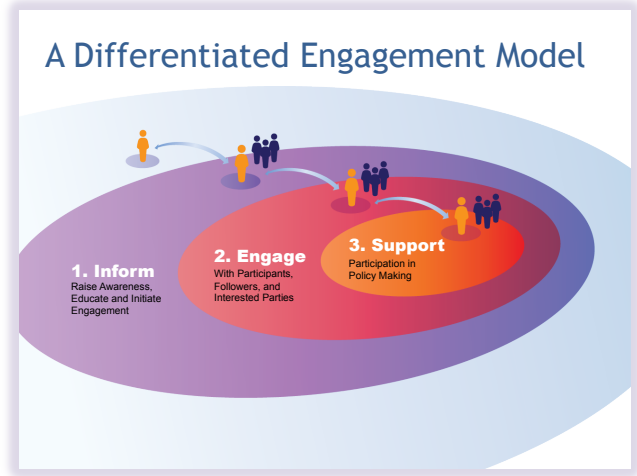
Who do we need to engage?
All those who are affected by the DNS, which ultimately means all Internet users. Whether they realize it or not, without the vast global address system that ICANN coordinates, the names and numbers that make up key building blocks of the Internet, we would struggle to find anyone or anything online.

Today that means more than 3 billion users including the registrants of 400 million domain names around the world. This group is challenging not only by its sheer size, but also its lack of homogeneity. Any engagement program needs a simplifying approach to ensure that real progress can be made.

How are we going to engage them?
We think about engagement in three very broad categories. They require slightly different areas of focus and different types of resources. We visualize this in this simple model which helps us to devote the right

amount of focus to current and future stakeholders. This approach informs our work globally and regionally.

We need to engage deeply at the global level on specific issues that are being handled by our community and beyond which affect both our immediate remit and wider Internet governance issues. This means we need over-arching programs on topics such as increasing public responsibility, evolving the multi-stakeholder model, improving policy making and launching and operating the new wave of top level domains safely and securely. We gain input from a wide group of communities around the world, aiming to expand understanding and engagement of these key issues that affect millions (and potentially billions) of Internet users.

These groups include but are not limited to: the technical community, the academic community, governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the domain name businesses, the wider business community, global

community groups, civil society, influencers such as the media, analysts and social media commentators, registrants. And not least, regular Internet users, who are interested in what we do.

To be successful, these programs require a combination of leadership by recognized experts and well organized implementation programs that combine to connect with these diverse groups around the world.

Regional engagement
Implementation of any program is always local. We organize this through eight Regional Vice Presidents (RVPs) around the world who are appointed based on their recognized expertise in ICANN's issues in their region, and knowledge of the regional cultural, linguistic and political differences. In other words, they bring to ICANN the cultural diversity of the countries and territories they are working with, and they bring back to their regions the technical and policy issues that require community engagement. These RVPs have assembled teams of volunteers from across the entire community and developed relevant plans that identify key engagement goals by region and prioritize activities to address those goals. The RVPs coordinate these teams, ensuring they have the resources they need to be successful and that their work is tightly connected with similar activities around the world. This helps to share best practices and improve success.

Each RVP may have a small staff team working with them depending on the size of their region, to help the wider volunteer team to get their work done. This will include a communications capability as well as a digital engagement resource. The RVPs are also an integrated part of ICANN, and coordinate efforts within the organization that have global, regional or national impact.

Crucially the RVPs are responsible for close ongoing liaison with the stakeholder engagement team to ensure that they are maximizing opportunities to coordinate priorities and activities. This coordination is managed through regular team calls, a shared workspace and face-to-face meetings to assess progress and actions of importance to the regions.

The group works hand-in-hand with many of the very active volunteer community members who give generously of their time working on different programs around the world.

Engagement Overview
We're using a simple matrix approach to pull this all together effectively.
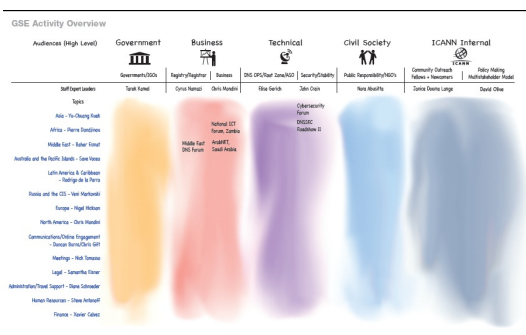
Here you can find links to all the key contact global or regional Engagement leads. You can also click on the links to find details of programs and key activities by region and topic.

Working as part of a community

ICANN is a community in which staff and volunteers play specific and complementary roles. Volunteer roles are specified by the Supporting Organizations (SO) and the Advisory Committees (AC) structures. The ICANN Policy team works closely with these groups running secretariats and ensuring that they have the resources they need to function effectively. The ICANN Engagement team works hand in hand with the secretariats and community leaders to ensure that the engagement priorities of SO/AC groups are understood and to collaborate on plans to ensure objectives can be achieved within budget.

Each SO/AC group has dedicated leaders as key liaison points below:

	SO/AC Team Leaders	Engagement Leaders
GAC	Olof Nordling	Regional VPs
SSAC	Julie Hedlund	Patrick Jones
RSSAC	Barbara Roseman	Patrick Jones
ccNSO	Bart Boswinkel	Regional VPs
ALAC	Heidi Ullrich	Regional VPs
GNSO	Marika Konings	Cyrus Namazi / Chris Mondini
ASO	Barbara Roseman / Carlos Reyes	Regional VPs
Stakeholder Groups	Rob Hoggarth	Janice Douma Lange

Embedding Communications

Much of the content that needs to be developed for engagement programs is done by, or with the support of, the ICANN Communications team. This is a diverse international team providing support for the community regionally and globally for issues and groups who need to have their voice heard and understood.

They have close relationships with media and influencers in all key markets around the world and can manage many different channels and types of communication to ensure that as many people as possible hear about what ICANN does and how it might affect their lives, and supporting our approach with appropriate social media engagement.

They need to ensure people can easily understand what ICANN does and why they should care about it. This means making content easy to understand – in several languages - including plain English. Six full time translators are part of the team and more work is being done to use video and graphics to improve understanding, relevance and accessibility for wider audiences.

Scaling Engagement

Reaching millions of people is extremely challenging. We need to find ways to talk to people, who speak many different languages, have different abilities to access content and come from different cultures. This demands creative thinking and innovation.

ICANN Labs, http://labs.icann.org/, is our platform to experiment with solutions. Some of these are about testing better ways of what we do already – for example MyICANN, which brings together ICANN information in easily accessible channels. We are working to tap the knowledge of our existing community and weave that into better solutions and tools. Sometimes we need to solve problems for the first time. So our Labs are exactly that – an open and experimental online laboratory where you can help us to work out how we get closer to ICANN's

ambitious engagement goals. And note that our goals are not strictly fixed in time and space. They are part of a constantly moving and changing world, and they can rapidly change to follow the interests of the ICANN and the broader Internet community.

Engaging Face to Face
At the beating heart of our community are our public meetings. We get together regularly to solve existing problems, to understand new challenges, to meet existing partners, or to find new ones, and to get the inside track on the things that matter.

As we pursue increasingly complex challenges we will take our successful meeting formats to new countries, in new combinations and to new stakeholder groups. As remote access technology gets better and cheaper and more available, we can open up our discussions to thousands more people who want to understand key issues that affect how their Internet works and have their say.

Improving our services around the world
We have expanded our support services to three time zone hubs in Istanbul, Los Angeles and Singapore. You should now be able to get someone to deal with any issue you have with ICANN at any time. This will help our community to work in a more efficient and joined up way. We are hiring people and complementing them with hub websites and helplines. Teams in the hubs will be able to respond quickly to questions and if they can't answer you directly, they will be able to connect you to exactly the right person to handle your issue.

24 Hour Support around the world
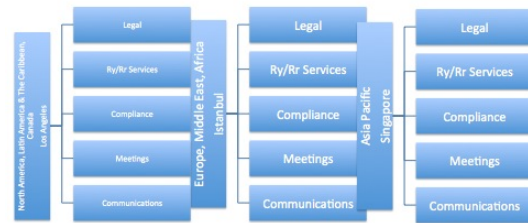
Setting goals and measuring progress
It's true that what is measured is managed. Engagement can be hard to measure, but we have put the following Key Performance Indicators in place and will measure them regularly to monitor progress. We will share these with the community and accompany them with views on what is working and not and share the corrective action taken. Here are some examples of the activity we are already tracking:

Number of followers on LinkedIn and Twitter	Trimester
Number of tier 1 speaking engagements	Trimester
Number of visitors to ICANN.org	Monthly
Number of subscribers to ICANN Labs	Monthly
Number of SO/AC members	Annually
Number of new recruits for regional engagement committees	Annually
Positive sentiment	Trimester

in media
Increase in media   Trimester
awareness of
ICANN

We'd like your input. Just drop us an
email at engagement@icann.org.

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