



30 October 2017

**Re: Review of the At-Large Community - 2016/17**

Dear Mr Marby,  
Dear Mr Crocker,

On 19th September, the ALAC submitted to ICANN's Board of Directors a "Feasibility Assessment" of the recommendations resulting from our Review of the At-Large Community. We were disappointed to read that this assessment calls for 8 out of the 16 recommendations in our Final Report to be rejected. These include our most substantial recommendation in favour of organisational reform, namely the adoption of a new, simplified organisational structure – the "Empowered Membership Model" - aimed at increasing accountability, transparency and the overall effectiveness of At-Large.

In our report we noted that the At-Large Community plays a critical role in ICANN's accountability mechanisms. It is widely recognized as the primary organisational home for Internet end-users around the world and, as such, there is a strong desire within At-Large and the wider ICANN system, to see this part of the ICANN structure succeed.

However, our survey and extensive interview findings revealed a high degree of frustration within ICANN (including within At-Large) regarding the way in which At-Large operates. Despite the personal dedication of the volunteers that make up the At-Large Community there is a sense that the organisation has turned in on itself, that it has become burdened with excessive internal procedures, that its leadership structures have become self-absorbed and, ultimately, that the organisation has lost sight of its original mission to act in the interest of Internet end-users.

By the end of the Review process our assessment was that At-Large undoubtedly has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure, but that significant change in its structure and operation is necessary to improve its overall effectiveness and accountability. Our "*Empowered Membership Model*" was designed with the following objectives:

- To address low levels of end-user engagement and input in ICANN processes by eliminating excessively complex ALS membership criteria, and allowing end-users around the world to become engaged on exactly the same terms (same, simple criteria for engagement for *all* end-users).
- To address internal inefficiencies by putting a freeze on the creation of new internal At-Large Working Groups (i.e. WGs that are not specifically tied to ongoing policy work within ICANN).
- To improve the organisational effectiveness of At-Large by merging RALO and regional ALAC seats (i.e. by giving the 5 RALO Chairs a seat on the ALAC).
- To create new incentives for qualified Internet end-users to become engaged in ICANN processes and serve in representation/leadership positions in At-Large through the introduction of a "Rapporteur" function (see report for details).
- To improve At-Large elections, including Board nominations and other key leadership positions, through the use of random selection of qualified and vetted candidates.

In addition to the "*Empowered Membership Model*" we recommended a fundamental re-evaluation of the current system of At-Large meetings, notably the 5-yearly ATLAS meetings. In our view, these meetings which *all* ALSes (including the large number of inactive ALSes) are currently invited to attend, and for which they are provided significant funding for travel and accommodation, are an inefficient use of ICANN funds. According to many reports we heard, the model is ineffective, un-scalable if as expected the At-Large Community grows in years to come, and financially unsustainable. For this reason, we proposed a more regular, annual meeting, building on the current system of regional general assemblies, for which priority would be given to local/regional participants.

The ALAC has also called for this recommendation to be rejected.

During the course of the Review, we drew the attention of the Board Organisational Effectiveness Committee to the fact that the previous Review of the ALAC, conducted by Westlake Consulting Ltd. in 2008, had been largely rejected and or liberally interpreted to suit the desires of the At-Large Community. We expressed concerns that our own Review might be subjected to the same treatment, but were given repeated assurances that the processes in place have changed over the past eight years.

We accept that the ALAC may not share some of the views, conclusions or recommendations in our report. However, we vigorously stand by the validity of the data we presented and our main finding that organisational reform is necessary. In our view the EMM will deliver the necessary reform and results in terms of genuine end-user engagement.

Were the ICANN Board of Directors to consider variations of our main recommendations would be more appropriate we would have no objection. But, to simply ignore the findings of our Review team in favour of maintaining the status quo would, in our view, be a mistake and undermine the whole purpose of ICANN's external review process.

We would urge the members of the ICANN Board to consider carefully our Final Report before adopting a post-review implementation plan, as presented in the ALAC's "Feasibility Assessment", that seems to us to be based on a misreading of our report, and significantly overstates the difficulty of implementation.

Of course, we remain at your disposal to provide any further information or clarification you may require.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Mackenzie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Tom Mackenzie  
Nick Thorne  
Tim McGinnis  
Rosa Delgado

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