The Empowered Community

**What is it?**
The Empowered Community describes the legal structure by which the ICANN Community can organize under California law to legally enforce the community powers recommended by the CCWG-Accountability.

In short, the Supporting Organizations (SOS) and Advisory Committees (ACs) would each become “Members” of ICANN through unincorporated associations, giving them a range of powers guaranteed under California law, and the tools to enforce their rights against ICANN.

Making this change would not impact how participants of those groups operate, or introduce new risks to them.

**Which powers can it exercise?**

1. Reconsider/Reject Budget or Strategy Operating Plans
2. Reconsider/Reject Changes to ICANN Bylaws
3. Approve Changes to Fundamental Bylaws
4. Recalling Individual Board Directors
5. Recalling the Entire ICANN Board

**Who gets to vote?**
The members of the group are comprised of ICANN's core Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, and the Nominating Committee*. Each SO and AC has a number of seats in the group, representing votes on matters brought before them.

*(for powers 4 & 5)

**How does it work?**
The bottom-up community process would be able to raise the question, with a Supporting Organization (SO) or Advisory Committee (AC) initiating the petition process.

*On one of the five community powers: See ‘Which powers can it exercise?’

**DRAFT April 30, 2015**

**While there is broad support for the membership model, it must be confirmed in developing the community powers mechanism**
This power would give the community the ability to consider strategic/operating plans and budgets after they are approved by the Board (but before they come into effect) and reject them.

**WHO CAN INITIATE A PETITION?**
The bottom-up community process would be able to raise the question, with a Supporting Organization (SO) or Advisory Committee (AC) initiating a petition process.

**ON WHAT GROUNDS CAN THEY INITIATE?**
The community can reject Board decisions on strategic/operating plans and budget where the Board has failed to appropriately consider community input.

**THINGS REQUIRED TO INITIATE?**
Timeframes would be included in the planning and budgeting process to ensure that a single rejection would not unduly disrupt the planning and budgeting process.

**LIMITS SET TO PREVENT ABUSE?**
A process of reconsideration, it does not allow the community to re-write the budget. To prevent a cycle of blocking, a plan or budget cannot be sent back again with new issues raised, but the community can reject a subsequent version when it does not accept the Board’s revisions.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

1. The Board approves the ICANN budget.
2. The SO or AC objects to the approved budget.
3. The community empowers the Board to reconsider.
4. The community votes to accept or reject the Board’s revisions.

**QUOROM REQUIRED**

- 2/3 of total member representation

**VOTING**

- First time decision threshold: 2/3 votes
- Subsequent decision threshold: 3/4 votes
**DESCRIPTION**
This power would give the community the ability to reject proposed Bylaws changes after they are approved by the Board but before they come into effect.

**WHO CAN INITIATE A PETITION?**
The bottom-up community process would be able to raise the question, with a Supporting Organization (SO) or Advisory Committee (AC) initiating a petition process.

**ON WHAT GROUNDS CAN THEY INITIATE?**
This would most likely be where a proposed change altered the Mission, Commitments and Core Values, or had a negative impact on ICANN's ability to fulfill its purpose in the community's opinion, but would be available in response to any proposed bylaws change.

**THINGS REQUIRED TO INITIATE?**
Exercising the power would be included in the bylaws adoption process (probably a two-week window following Board approval). Board response should be to absorb the feedback, make adjustments, and propose a new set of amendments to the bylaws.

**LIMITS SET TO PREVENT ABUSE?**
This power does not allow the community to re-write a proposed bylaws change: it is a rejection process, signalling the community is not happy. No limit to the number of times a proposed change can be rejected, but the threshold is a supermajority to limit potential for abuse of this power.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

**QUORUM REQUIRED**
2/3 of total member representation

**VOTING**
75% of all the support available within the community mechanism

**DRAFT**
April 30, 2015
This power would form part of the process set out for agreeing any changes of the “fundamental” bylaws. It requires that the community would have to give positive assent to any change, a co-decision process between the Board and the community.

**Who can initiate a petition?**
No petition, a process of the Board and community. The Board may propose adding or removing a fundamental bylaw. This process requires a high degree of community support.

**On what grounds can they initiate?**
To protect bylaws provisions the community considers to be essential, and automatic process is triggered whenever the process of adding or removing a fundamental bylaw is proposed.

**Things required to initiate?**
Such changes would require a very high degree of community assent, changing items in such bylaws should only be possible with a very wide support from the community. The Board must cast three quarters of votes in favor of any change.

**Limits set to prevent abuse?**
N/A
The community organizations that appointed a given director could end their term, and trigger a reappointment process. The general approach, consistent with the law, is that the appointing body is the removing body.

**WHO CAN INITIATE A PETITION?**
A removal process should be triggered by petition of at least two SOs or ACs (or a Stakeholder Group from the GNSO). Such a petition would set out the reason/s for removal was sought.

**ON WHAT GROUNDS CAN THEY INITIATE?**
For the 7 directors appointed by the 3 SOs or 1 by the At-Large, a process led by that entity would lead to the director’s removal. For the directors appointed by the Nominating Committee, the CCWG seeks the community’s views about how to allow for removal.

**THINGS REQUIRED TO INITIATE?**
Whether the decision-making body is the SOs, ACs or the Nominating Committee, removal would require a (75%) level of support (or equivalent) to decide in favor of removal.

**LIMITS SET TO PREVENT ABUSE?**
The voting thresholds for both the Petition and Recall processes are high to prevent frivolous use of the process and to ensure it is a mechanism of last resort.

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**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

**QUOROM REQUIRED**

- 2/3 of total member representation

**VOTING**

- Decision threshold: 75% of votes in favor

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**PROCESS TBD**

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**DRAFT April 30, 2015**
This power would allow the community to cause the removal of the entire ICANN Board.

WHO CAN INITIATE A PETITION?
The community would initiate use of this power on the petition of two thirds of the SOs or ACs in ICANN, with at least one SO and one AC petitioning.

ON WHAT GROUNDS CAN THEY INITIATE?
There may be situations where removing individual ICANN directors is not seen as a sufficient remedy for the community -- where a set of problems have become so entrenched that the community wishes to remove the entire ICANN Board in one decision.

THINGS REQUIRED TO INITIATE?
It would be preferable for a decision of this sort to be the result of cross-community consensus. Where this consensus is not apparent, a suitably high threshold for the exercise of this power, [75%] of all the support available within the community mechanism would have to be cast in favor to implement it.

LIMITS SET TO PREVENT ABUSE?
The high threshold for initiation was chosen to prevent any particular SOs or ACs to be able to prevent the recall of the Board, but also as high as possible without making it impossible to occur. The requirement on all recordable support/opposition to be counted is to avoid non-participation reducing the effective threshold for decision.

HOW DOES IT WORK?
PROCESS TBD

QUORUM REQUIRED

VOTING

GNSO
ccNSO
SSAC
RSSAC
GAC
ASO
At-Large

DECISION THRESHOLD

75% OF ALL THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY MECHANISM
The new IRP

• has decisions that are binding
• allows for a review of the merits
• is more accessible in terms of who has standing to initiate an IRP
• has lower cost
• has a new standing Panel of seven
The core of the recommendation is a standing, 7-member panel to serve as a fully independent judicial/arbitral function for the ICANN Community.

**Panel characteristics**

- Culturally & Geographically diverse (English is primary language + translation as needed)
- Significant experts in international arbitration and ICANN (with access to additional experts)
- Compensated by ICANN
- Limited to a fixed term on the Panel

**Panel member selection process**

- Third party international arbitral bodies nominate candidates
- The ICANN Board selects panelists and propose appointees
- The community mechanism would confirm appointments
Who can request an IRP?
An IRP can be initiated by any community person/group/entity who can demonstrate:
Material harm by ICANN’s actions or inactions in violation of commitments made in ICANN’s Articles of Incorporation and/or Bylaws, including commitments spelled out in the proposed Statement of Mission, Guarantees & Core Values

IRP Process

1. Board Action
2. Independent, group, or entity harmed
3. Good faith effort to resolve
4. File an IRP for consideration
5. IRP process followed
6. Decision reached
IRPs reach a decision by creating a 1- or 3-person panel from the standing 7-person panel.

Possible decisions

1-person panel
- ICANN and complaining party agree on panelist

3-person panel
- ICANN and complaining party select one panelist each, two panelists select third

Decision characteristics

- Binding on ICANN and not subject to appeal (except on a very limit basis)
- Reached in a timely fashion
- Documented and well reasoned based on applicable standards
- Members should strongly consider existing precedent in decision making to help enable consistency in treatment over time
- Possible decisions are that an action:
  - is or is not within ICANN’s Mission
  - was undertaken in a manner that violates ICANN’s Guarantees or Core Values
- The IRP and its decision reached cannot prescribe remedy to the situation; it can only confirm a violation exists, and/or cancel a decision totally or in parts.