Tribal Ambassadors Pilot Project
ICANN 2016 Proposal Narrative

On behalf of tribal communities across the United States, Native Public Media (NPM) respectfully requests your consideration of the Tribal Ambassadors Pilot Project (Project). The Project addresses the digital divide throughout Indian Country in the United States by enhancing ICANN's outreach to Native American stakeholders. Specifically, the Project aims to generate increased awareness and understanding of educational opportunities available for internet governance development within un-served and underserved tribal communities, in addition to advocating for intergovernmental digital communication policies that are responsive to the unique perspectives and characteristics of Native communities.

An ambassadorship opportunity for one student at one ICANN conference with two adult coaches will allow NPM to protect and advance the rights of tribal communities in the digital age by ensuring that Native Americans have a voice at the ICANN communications policymaking table.

Building upon NPM's commitment to creating healthy digital ecologies within tribal communities, the Tribal Ambassador will deliver on three explicit objectives.

1) In correlation to the 2016—2020 Strategic Plan goal 1.2 to bring ICANN to the world by creating a balanced and proactive approach to regional engagement with stakeholders, NPM will recruit one student ambassador for the Project. NPM supports ICANN's aspiration to reach out and include individuals from un-served or underserved Tribal communities in order to maximize ICANN's program and engagement effectiveness.

2) Two coaches (one Tribal/one ICANN) will chaperone the ambassador at the San Juan ICANN conference, maximizing the educational opportunity of the student participant. The Tribal coach will ensure that capacity building in Internet governance is tethered to Native Nation building efforts; while the ICANN coach will ensure that the ambassador's experience is maximized during the conference.

3) A report for Tribal media related to digital communications policy development in tribal communities that is reflective of the Native American priorities and perspectives will be produced by the ambassador.

NPM requests Project support from ICANN to cover travel, lodging and such other associated costs to ensure the successful participation of the Tribal Ambassador and coaches.

Background & Context

Founded in 2004, NPM is an established national leader in communications policymaking, advocating for development that encourages the expansion and strengthening of Native choices through media platforms that are community-based, local, and democratic. NPM's mission is to promote healthy, engaged, independent

Native communities by expanding communications capacity on tribal lands and by empowering a strong, proud Native American voice. With a proactive program of policy analysis, representation and advocacy, NPM works to raise Indian Country's priorities among national decision-making bodies within the media democracy movement. As a direct result of NPM's work, American Indians and Alaska Natives have representation at a critical moment in the evolution of communications. As traditional media becomes digitized, the Internet has become the common carriage for all media platforms. NPM is working alongside local, national and international stakeholders to ensure that Tribes remain at the forefront of these fast-moving processes and that any proposed recommendations and actions related to the implementation of broadband infrastructure and communications policy prioritize Native perspectives in relation to planning, regulation, and deployment of broadband on tribal lands.

For decades, Native Americans have been largely ignored by federal communications policy and underserved by telecommunications providers. Tribal lands appear as barren broadband desert pockets across the technology laden lands of the United States. As the FCC mentioned in their 2004 report, *Extending Wireless Communication Services to Tribal Lands*, "By virtually any measure, communities on tribal lands have historically had less access to telecommunications services than any other segment of the population." Per best available estimate, broadband deployment throughout Indian Country is at a less than ten percent penetration rate—standing in stark contrast to the FCC's aspiration to achieve 100 percent broadband service saturation across the United States. The longer tribal communities are removed from broadband connectivity, the less involvement they are afforded in protecting and advancing their community rights in the digital age. Digital communications are now critical to educational access, health care delivery, economic development, and civic participation—particularly for those in rural areas where American Indians and Alaska Natives predominately reside. As stated in the FCC's ONAP 2012 Annual Report, "The lack of robust communications services presents serious impediments to Tribal Nations' efforts to preserve their cultures and build their internal structures for self-governance, economic opportunity, health, education, public safety, and welfare."

There is a strong demand for 21st Century resources throughout Indian Country. In spite of the barriers to broadband access in tribal communities, Native Americans' rates of adoption and use of broadband are higher than national averages. Tribal citizens are using technology when it is available to interact, communicate, share culture, and gain the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly digital world. Native leaders and organizations like NPM have been creative with limited resources while working to develop visions of thriving Native digital ecologies and to build self-sufficient networks and communal technology centers that connect and strengthen tribal communities. Native societies once considered isolated and closed off from the rest of the world, are now among the fastest growing consumers of the Internet. To benefit from the quickly evolving information technologies, Native Americans need to be directly involved in the policymaking process to ensure governmental recommendations and actions account for the complexity and unique demands of development on sovereign tribal lands.

Given the less than ten percent penetration rate of broadband access throughout Indian Country and the unique geographical, financial, and cultural characteristics of tribal communities, achieving a 100 percent broadband saturation rate across the U.S. will require efforts outside those of the federal government and other key allies such as ICANN.

Organizational Capacity

NPM's overarching goal is to provide Indian Country with a voice at the communications policymaking table and to ensure Native Americans are able to participate in the constantly evolving media and digital environments on their own terms. With a mission to promote healthy, engaged, and independent Native communities through media access, control, and ownership, NPM represents the 567 federally recognized tribes across the continental United States, in addition to working with 59 Native-owned and operated radio stations. Tribal citizens are the stakeholders and beneficiaries of NPM's work and are therefore continuously consulted throughout the development and implementation of all policies and projects.

"Native Public Media" reflects the organization's explicit vision to empower Native people across the U.S. to actively participate in all forms of media and to do so on their own terms. Media, particularly via the Internet, has a vital role to play in supporting economic and community development and is tied directly to the Nation building efforts of sovereign Tribes. NPM has a strong track record of achievement in these important areas for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Recent accomplishments include:

- Establishing a tribal consultation policy in conjunction with the FCC that is now being used as a model for other federal agencies to implement their own similar policies
- Providing a voice for Indian Country by issuing policy positions to the FCC regarding the impact of broadband and media policy in tribal communities
- Developing tribal-centric recommendations to the FCC's National Broadband Plan, including the creation of the Tribal Broadband Fund
- Serving on the FCC's Consumer Affairs and Digital Diversity Committees