

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AT THE INTERNET SOCIETY

Policy Development Approach

According to its mission: the Internet Society “... supports and promotes the development of the Internet as a global technical infrastructure, a resource to enrich people’s lives, and a force for good in society”. This mission statement allows the Internet Society to be flexible, yet focused, on issues aligned with its mission.

The Internet Society was originally founded on two pillars: development and technology. For over 25 years, the Internet Society has devoted itself to building the Internet in different parts of the world and has contributed to the promotion of Internet technical standards. In light of this experience and expertise, the Internet Society made a clear strategic decision to focus its work on two broad thematic areas¹ that would allow it to continue performing its historical role while accepting today’s realities and looking into the future:

Access: Connect the unconnected to enable economic, social, and human development (enrich people’s lives); and,

Trust: Increase trust in the Internet to deliver its full benefit (as a force for good in society)

In this context, the Internet Society **advocates for policies** that enhance security and privacy, enable the growth of Internet access, and promote the ecosystem of transparent, multistakeholder Internet governance. The Internet Society believes that the Internet is a place of opportunity for the benefit of people around the world. To this end, the Internet Society strives for public policies that enable the Internet to grow and benefit people.

The Internet Society’s policy positions and approaches are grounded in our historical role in Internet development and mission statement, enhanced by community input, and true to the core technical invariants of the Internet. In the public policy space, we find that the Internet Society’s unique contribution typically involves issues where we can speak to the **intersection of technology and policy** - where we can highlight the implications of a policy decision on the future of the “open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy” Internet. To be globally relevant, our positions must be topical, scalable (i.e. relevant in Brussels AND Jakarta AND Brasilia), and actionable.

The Internet Society is not a policy-making body. Rather, we advocate for public policy outcomes that support a “open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy” Internet. We have found that approaching issues through frameworks and core principles is both impactful and enables members to tailor the positions to the specifics of their local or regional environments. In addition to recommending global policy positions, events like the ISOC’s Regional Chapter Workshops allow ISOC staff to identify regional issues which are then addressed using the tools and process identified in this document.

¹ These topics will be revisited periodically to ensure that they remain relevant and forward-looking.



How topics are chosen:

1. **Annual Plan:** Each year, the Internet Society's policy focus derives primarily from the Board-approved strategic plan.

In 2020, our policy advocacy is rooted in eight projects involved with building a bigger, stronger Internet:

- Promoting the Internet way of networking
- Extending Encryption
- Securing global routing
- Increasing time security
- Leading by example with open standards and protocols
- Building community networks
- Fostering infrastructure and technical communities
- Measuring the Internet

2. **Future Issues:** At the same time, the Internet policy environment is complex and fast moving and doesn't lend itself easily to detailed predictions. Thus, we know that, in addition to the above topics, the Internet Society must be ready to speak up on emerging policy issues that are at the forefront of the policy debate worldwide. The 2017 and 2019 Internet Futures report² offers an additional lens by which we identify key emerging issues that our community has identified as crucial for the future.
3. **Core Technical Issues:** Finally, we are an active member of the **Internet technical community** and must remain engaged in issues that impact the ability of this community to do its work. While many of the issues are technical and/or operational, the Internet Society has a role to examine topics from the perspective of the health of the Internet and interests of Internet users at large.

Consultation approach:

Chapters, Organization Members, and individual members are all key parts of the Internet Society's global community that have a role in advancing the Internet Society's work and mission. The Internet Society benefits from the insights and expertise of its diverse membership and seeks to be as inclusive as possible in its policy development processes. Members help inform policy positions but also help identify the kinds of issues the Internet Society tackles, bearing in mind the need to remain focused on its core mission and strategic plan/goals. Members may also provide input as positions are being developed and/or updated.

2 And their subsequent editions



1. **Membership Consulting within a relevant scope:** The Internet Society staff seeks input from members prior to the publication of new position papers in a systematic and predictable fashion. Members are also informed when policy papers are submitted to outside entities. Staff needs to be able to assess when consultation is needed and retain sufficient flexibility to be responsive to the fast-moving environment. In any case, staff is responsible for determining the final position of the Internet Society. The ISOC Board of Trustees may direct the staff to conduct further consultations on positions if appropriate.

In addition, we welcome input from the Internet technical community, in particular the IETF and IAB, in order to ensure that the Internet Society's Policies derive from a sound technical foundation.

2. **Sending policy alerts:** The Internet Society staff provides monthly policy alerts to the membership including information about forthcoming submissions, meetings or policy documents. Through this communication channel, members know what to expect, when input is sought, and can, in return, share information and opportunities that arise from their own network.
3. **Supporting our community in advocacy:** The Internet Society's goal is to support its members and Chapters in their own advocacy by providing messaging they can use to deliver meaningful on-the-ground gains. Some of these include policy frameworks, toolkits and background information, talking points, power points, outreach assistance and more.

Steps of the Policy development process for new issues³:

Fundamentals: Guiding Principles for Internet Society Policy Development

- Internet Society Mission Statement
- Internet Society Principles (invariants, abilities)
- Annual Strategic Plan

Step 1: Development

- Identify issues, many flagged by members, aligned with our strategic agenda
- Create an internal team charged with the development of the policy position.
- Conduct preliminary analysis, external outreach to experts & develop initial policy position (Internet Society staff)
- Alert members via monthly policy alerts of policies under development

3 This policy position development process applies to ISOC staff (global and regional staff) when taking positions on behalf of the Internet Society and does not replace existing chapter approaches to developing their local policy advocacy. Rather the existing approach, as stated in the Chapter Charter Agreement, remains unchanged: "The purpose of the Chapter shall be to support ISOC's vision, mission and operating principle in the Territory". In addition, 'all public positions and statements made by chapter shall clearly indicate that the chapter as opposed to ISOC is the source of such public positions or statements'.



Step 2: Consultation

- Distribute to members (and additional experts as appropriate) for review (~14 days)
- Comments evaluated and, as appropriate, incorporated;
- Final approval by Executive leadership

Step 3: Multi-layered communications – raising awareness; advocacy

- Community engagement on implementation
 - tailoring the position to local context (Regions, Organization Members and/or partners)
- Public / media outreach
- Policy outreach

Step 4: Maintenance & staying current

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of positions
- Leverage position to address current policy events
- Updates on policy issues as appropriate