
Internet Society Partnerships

The Internet Society's view about partnerships could be summarized in the following points:

- Partnerships are crucial for the Internet Society to achieve greater impacts with the work we do;
- To achieve these impact, we engage in different kinds of partnerships;
- Our engagement in these partnerships is always driven by our mission, objectives and priorities, and not by the interest of parties who might benefit from our work; and
- The funding of any initiative involving a partnership is done thru a non-profit organization.

INTERNET SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

Overview

One of the ways in which we at the Internet Society are able to achieve a greater impact with our activities and projects is by building partnerships and strengthening our alliances thru our partnerships.

This is more than just a way of working. The idea of partnerships is an intrinsic part of our culture. For us, doing something in cooperation with other organizations is just as valuable – perhaps even more valuable – than doing things on our own. In those cases, in addition to advancing our mission, we are able to do so within a framework of community building that strengthens alliances that support the values and principles for which we advocate.

The Internet Society has engaged in more than 60 partnerships around the world as proof of the success of this vision. Our partners include a very broad range of organizations, among them: governments, international organizations, private companies, civil society organizations, academic institutions, as well as organizations that are part of the technical community.

Types of Partnerships

The types of partnerships in which we engage vary in nature, size, and scope. In some cases, these partnerships involve the Internet Society receiving funds from other organizations or the Internet Society providing funding to activities organized by third parties. In other cases, the partnership may simply be a matter of the Internet Society and applicable organization(s) joining forces and creating synergies around common goals.

In cases where the Internet Society is the funding organization, the funds are always used to support projects in “the public interest” to the community that supports ISOC’s mission. In keeping with our 501(c)3 tax status as a U.S. non-profit organization, the funding must go to a non-profit organization that meets the requirements of US tax laws. The non-profit can then, in turn, support non-profit projects.

Direct and indirect benefits

The work of the Internet Society in promoting the development of an open, globally connected, secure and trustworthy Internet, generally provides opportunities for actors from all sectors and interests including, of course, the private sector. Sometimes the goal of a project may be to build capacities among the community, or to develop infrastructure for connecting people who are not yet connected to the Internet. In many of these cases, in addition to providing direct value for the community,

opportunities for private ventures are also generated. Such opportunities may range from an individual who is now connected to the Internet and is able to sell services or products, to large companies who may see this as an opportunity grow with the number of Internet users.

Partnerships for advancing ISOC's mission

Our non-profit tax status allows the Internet Society to engage and benefit for-profit entities, although we do not provide funding to them (as mentioned above), only when the project is for “the public interest¹.” That requirement is defined by the charter for which we were granted the tax status and by our own internal policies. Thus, for instance, building IXPs most certainly benefits for-profit companies that connect through those facilities. Our policy is to support community based IXPs that will serve the public interest in providing greater connectivity for Internet providers.

Small or large, the size of private beneficiaries does not matter. While they can – and still do – benefit from the work of the Internet Society, such interests have never been the drivers of our projects. The drivers of our projects always involve advancing our mission for the benefit of the entire community.

Public-Private partnerships are both possible and desired. We especially welcome corporate money that comes through corporate responsibility programs and, itself, is earmarked for “public interest” projects.

¹ There is a difference with respect to who we can benefit given the differing tax status between the work of the Internet Society and the Internet Society Foundation. The Foundation may be used only for purely philanthropic causes. The work of the parent organization, however, may benefit for-profit entities so long as it is in the “public interest” and supports its stated mission.