

# WSIS+20 Implementation

## Non-Paper

3 July 2026



## Executive Summary

The culmination of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 review in December 2025 marked the beginning of a new phase for digital development and Internet governance. The outcome document<sup>1</sup> reaffirmed the multistakeholder model, established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a permanent forum, and reaffirmed the WSIS Action Lines as the main reference for advancing progress over the next 10 years. But commitments alone cannot transform the lives of 2.2 billion unconnected people or build a safe and secure digital environment for all.

The impact of the WSIS+20 commitments will depend on well-designed implementation mechanisms, meaningful progress tracking, and accountable institutions. In this non-paper, we offer practical suggestions for improving the implementation of the WSIS framework by:

- Developing effective roadmaps and measurements (with an example in the Annex).
- Strengthening the Internet Governance Forum.
- Adopting blended financing and collaborative financing approaches.

The WSIS+20 outcome document outlines priorities for implementing the WSIS framework over the next 10 years. When executed well, the WSIS framework has the potential to effectively extend connectivity, close digital divides, and enhance online safety and trust.

We offer this non-paper as a contribution to that work and encourage stakeholders across the WSIS community to build on these ideas and push for commitments that produce results.

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<sup>1</sup> UN A/RES/80/173: <https://docs.un.org/a/res/80/173>



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## Introduction

The conclusion of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 review in December 2025 marked the end of one process and the beginning of another. The WSIS+20 review outcome document reaffirmed the multistakeholder model, made the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) permanent, and set a forward-looking agenda for digital development through to 2035. But commitments adopted in a UN resolution do not, on their own, change the lives of the 2.2 billion people still without Internet access, or build a safe and secure digital environment.

The WSIS framework is a United Nations process that was launched at summits in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) to guide the world in building an inclusive and beneficial information society. The process sets out a shared agenda organized around 11 “Action Lines,” i.e., thematic areas to pursue digital development, including commitments to promote infrastructure, capacity building, and enabling policy environments—each overseen by a designated UN agency to act as an Action Line facilitator.

The Tunis phase endorsed the multistakeholder model for Internet governance, in which governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community share responsibility for governing the Internet. The Tunis phase also established the IGF as a space for that dialogue. For over two decades, this framework has been the key reference point for international collaboration on digital development, with a review of the process every 10 years to evaluate and improve its implementation. The next review will occur in 2035.

Whether the WSIS+20 review outcomes<sup>2</sup> translate into impact depends on what happens next. Specifically, whether implementation mechanisms are well-designed, progress is tracked against meaningful benchmarks, and responsible institutions are equipped and accountable.

Drawing on the Internet Society's strategic priorities<sup>3</sup> and operational experience in capacity building, this non-paper offers practical suggestions to improve the implementation of the WSIS framework in three areas:

- **Roadmaps and measurements.** The WSIS+20 outcome document mandates the production of implementation roadmaps for the Action Lines by 2027. This is a useful first step, but its

<sup>2</sup> UN A/RES/80/173: <https://docs.un.org/a/res/80/173>

<sup>3</sup> The Internet Society's 2030 Strategy: <https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2024/2030-strategy/>



value in facilitating digital development depends on how those roadmaps are designed and used. A roadmap that restates existing commitments and tracks activity rather than outcomes will not drive progress. This paper sets out what a useful implementation roadmap looks like.

- **Strengthening the IGF.** Permanence does not guarantee effectiveness. Drawing on contributions to an Internet Society community consultation in early 2026, this paper presents recommendations to strengthen the IGF's sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and institutional design, while safeguarding its multistakeholder character, which gives the IGF its distinctive value.
- **Getting financing right.** The gap between global connectivity ambitions and available resources remains large. Drawing on the Internet Society Foundation's experience with blended financing and co-funding models, we illustrate practical approaches that others can adapt and scale.

We offer this non-paper as a contribution to that work and encourage stakeholders across the WSIS community to build on these ideas and push for commitments that produce results.

## Section 1: Roadmaps and Measurements

The WSIS+20 outcome document asks Action Line facilitators to develop targeted implementation by 2027. This is a welcome step, but it raises an important question: what makes a roadmap useful, and what is it for?

At its most basic level, a roadmap answers one question: how do we get from where we are to where we want to be? The WSIS Action Lines describe ambitions—affordable connectivity, universal digital skills, secure networks, enabling policy environments—but not how to achieve them. A roadmap fills that gap. It organizes priorities, identifies who needs to do what, sets milestones, and establishes how progress will be measured.

This matters for several reasons:

**Roadmaps operationalize commitments.** The Geneva Plan of Action<sup>4</sup> and the Tunis Agenda<sup>5</sup> set broad goals that have guided digital development for over two decades. For example, translating a call to “encourage the creation and development of Internet exchange points” into tangible outcomes requires specificity. What interventions are needed at each stage of development? What does success look like in 3 years versus 10? A roadmap forces these questions to be answered.

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<sup>4</sup> The Geneva Plan of Action (2003): <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html>

<sup>5</sup> The Tunis Agenda (2005): <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

**Roadmaps focus efforts and conversations.** The WSIS process involves a wide range of stakeholders, each with different priorities. A well-designed roadmap provides a shared frame of reference, ensuring a common understanding of where things stand, what the priorities are, and where stakeholders' contributions could fit. Without it, discussions tend to revisit the same broad ambitions without a clear sense of what has changed or what needs to happen next.

**Roadmaps create the basis for meaningful stocktaking.** The WSIS Forum,<sup>6</sup> the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) review process, and the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) follow-up all depend on the ability to assess progress. But progress against what? If the only benchmark is the original text of the Geneva Plan of Action,<sup>7</sup> any activity in the general direction of a commitment can be reported as progress. Defined milestones and targets allow review mechanisms to move from collecting descriptions of activities to assessing whether those activities are producing the intended results, and to identify where course corrections are needed.

**Roadmaps are not static documents.** They set a direction, and they structure the steps to get there. But our understanding of what works may evolve as implementation progresses. New evidence emerges, contexts shift, and some interventions prove more effective than others. A good roadmap builds in moments to incorporate these lessons and adjust based on what the community has learned.

### What a Useful Roadmap Looks Like

Not all roadmaps are equally useful. A document that simply restates the original commitment, lists vaguely defined activities, and reports on inputs rather than outcomes does not serve the purposes above. A useful roadmap has the following characteristics, which we illustrate in the Annex:

- **Current situation.** Before charting a path forward, you need to know where things stand: how many countries have made progress, where the gaps are, and what the key barriers are. Without a baseline, targets are arbitrary, and progress is unmeasurable.
- **Context.** The WSIS Action Lines apply globally, but countries are not starting from the same place. A single set of targets will be too ambitious for some and not ambitious enough for others. A useful roadmap recognizes this and provides a framework—such as a maturity model—that lets different countries identify where they are and what the next meaningful step looks like for them.
- **Theory of change.** Some actions are prerequisites for others; some require policy groundwork before technical implementation becomes feasible. A roadmap that lays out a logical structure helps stakeholders prioritize and avoid the common trap of jumping to technical solutions before the enabling conditions are in place.

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<sup>6</sup> “The WSIS Forum serves as the central multistakeholder convening platform mandated to advance the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines and support global digital cooperation,” see <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2026/en>

<sup>7</sup> The Geneva Plan of Action (2003): <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html>

- **Metrics and targets.** The difference between a useful and a misleading indicator often lies in whether it measures outputs or outcomes. For example, counting the number of workshops held tells you something about activity, but nothing about whether participants gained skills they can use. A useful roadmap tracks whether the intended change is occurring, not just whether activities took place.
- **Stakeholders and partnerships.** While Action Line facilitators have a responsibility to convene and coordinate efforts at a strategic level, the practical implementation depends on a wider set of actors. A roadmap should map the range of actors involved, including local partners, operators, regulators, the technical community, and development partners, identifying both the initiatives and partnerships that already exist and those that still need to be created.
- **Responsibilities and reviews.** Identifying which institutions are responsible for specific milestones and connecting ongoing review to existing processes—such as the WSIS Forum, CSTD sessions, and SDG review cycles—ensures progress is tracked and the roadmap can be updated as circumstances change.

However, even well-planned roadmaps have dependencies, and data availability is one of the most common. A roadmap that defines ambitious targets without considering whether the underlying data exists risks producing a framework that looks rigorous but cannot function in practice. Where gaps exist, e.g., if data is held by private actors with no reporting obligation, or simply not being collected, these gaps need to be addressed as part of the roadmap design, not an afterthought.

For example, Action Line C2, paragraph 9(j),<sup>8</sup> which seeks to expand regional information and communication technology (ICT) backbones, illustrates this well. A roadmap for regional ICT backbones would need indicators on fiber coverage, route diversity, and capacity, yet operators and regulators across many regions hold this data in different formats with no common standard for sharing it. The Open Fibre Data Standard (OFDS), which the Internet Society developed with the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and others, provides that schema. Adoption of OFDS would enable baseline assessment and progress tracking.

Another dependency is coordination across Action Lines. No roadmap exists in isolation: progress on connectivity infrastructure depends on the enabling environment (C6), and capacity building (C4)<sup>9</sup> is a prerequisite for almost everything else. A useful roadmap explicitly identifies these links, so facilitators can align their work.

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<sup>8</sup> The Geneva Plan of Action (2003): <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html>

<sup>9</sup> The Geneva Plan of Action (2003): <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/docs/geneva/official/poa.html>

## A Roadmap for Action Line C2 and Internet Exchange Points (IXPs)

To illustrate what a useful roadmap looks like in practice, Annex A offers a detailed implementation roadmap for one specific component of Action Line C2: Internet exchange points, as called for in paragraph 9(j). The roadmap uses the characteristics outlined above and is intended to serve as an example to inspire the roadmaps that Action Line facilitators have been tasked with producing.



## Section 2: Strengthening the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The IGF's distinct value lies in what fragmented, siloed processes cannot do. Through a comprehensive ecosystem that includes its intersessional work (such as the Best Practice Forums and Dynamic Coalitions) and national, regional, sub-regional, and youth initiatives, the forum brings all stakeholder groups together on the same issues, builds common ground, and channels that collective, bottom-up insight into the spaces where decisions are made. Because it draws on perspectives from every region and stakeholder, it's also uniquely positioned to spot emerging issues before they reach other spaces.

A permanent mandate for the IGF is a starting point, not a finish line. The IGF should be the place where the multistakeholder approach demonstrates its effectiveness on the most pressing issues. The following recommendations incorporate the IGF's foundational approach into its next chapter. They are based on contributions to an Internet Society community consultation in early 2026, which identified priorities for enhancing the IGF's capabilities.

### Secure Sustainable Funding—from the Global to the Local

A permanent IGF needs sustainable funding on two fronts.

The first is the Trust Fund that supports the IGF Secretariat's essential functions. It is a predictable UN baseline that keeps the institutional core stable, with a complementary share coming from a diversified multi-year pool to reduce dependence on any single contributor.

The second front is to support the IGF process between its annual meetings, which will determine whether the IGF's permanent mandate produces change on the ground. Our community expressed, almost with one voice, that funding must reach beyond the annual meeting to intersessional work, including the national, regional, sub-regional, and youth initiatives (NRIs) and schools of Internet governance. These initiatives are creating a lasting impact at the local and regional levels, and many were inspired by the global IGF.

They are also where the multistakeholder model is most tested. As civic space narrows in many parts of the world, the venues that enable civil society and local communities to participate in these conversations are increasingly important.<sup>10</sup> When those opportunities disappear, so do the voices that rely on them. The joint ICANN and Internet Society report "Footprints of 20 Years of the Internet Governance Forum" traces this reach, documenting how more than 180 national and regional IGFs have grown into a decentralized backbone of year-round governance dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2026/05/how-rightscon-is-an-unexpected-stress-test-for-the-multistakeholder-model-of-internet-governance/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/government-engagement-qe/footprints-20-years-igf-06-06-2025-en.pdf>

While this kind of distributed and bottom-up coordination works, it is not yet self-sustaining. Closing the gap requires dedicated, multi-year funding for the NRI ecosystem, within the IGF's overall financing structure. The Internet Society Foundation's grant program for NRIs and schools of Internet governance,<sup>12</sup> which already funds initiatives recognized by the IGF Secretariat, offers a proof of concept that others could adopt and help scale.

Concretely, this means:

- A predictable UN baseline for the Trust Fund that keeps the IGF Secretariat's core functions stable, complemented by a diversified multi-year pool of contributions to reduce dependence on any single donor.
- Establishing a dedicated funding stream for the NRI ecosystem, within the IGF's overall financing structure, distinct from the Trust Fund.
- Shifting from annual pledges to multi-year contribution commitments from UN Member States and voluntary donors, to give the NRI ecosystem the planning horizon it needs to sustain year-round work.
- Tasking the IGF Secretariat with publishing a transparent annual funding report covering both the Trust Fund and NRI support, so the community and contributors can track what is funded and what is not.

## Broaden Government Participation

The WSIS+20 outcome document calls on the IGF to broaden government participation by establishing a dialogue among governments, with all stakeholders participating. The Internet Society community made it clear that implementing this government dialogue should uphold the carefully balanced outcome of the WSIS+20 review: while there may be a need for a dedicated focus on governments in the IGF, it should remain within the wider multistakeholder discussions. Supporting governments in articulating their policy and capacity development needs should not be a parallel discussion that dilutes the IGF's open, bottom-up character.

To implement this objective, and in line with the IGF Expert Group Meeting (EGM) recommendations,<sup>13</sup> the goal should be to strengthen what already exists rather than to build something new. The IGF already convenes ministerial-style engagements on day zero and runs a parliamentary track. The effort should focus on strengthening these formats, deepening their substance, broadening participation, and connecting their outcomes to the wider agenda. This would give Member States room to set out their priorities, particularly around policy and capacity development, while keeping the process open to all stakeholders.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.isocfoundation.org/grant-programme/internet-governance-forum-events/>

<sup>13</sup> IGF EGM Report (May 2026): <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/read-the-igf-egm-report>

Furthermore, our experience shows that preparations matter. Pre-IGF briefings, paired with capacity-building initiatives, can help government officials come prepared to contribute to IGF activities. The sessions for these activities can be designed so that government representatives sit among other stakeholders to discuss matters of mutual interest with the right context for each session.

Governments contribute most, and most effectively, when they are in the room as participants with the right context to engage.

Concretely, this means:

- Tasking the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) with redesigning the day zero ministerial engagement and parliamentary track to deepen substantive discussion and widen geographic participation, with outcomes connected to the broader IGF agenda.
- Developing a standing pre-IGF briefing and capacity-building program for government delegates so that officials arrive with the context needed to engage as full participants.
- Designing sessions to ensure that government priorities for policy and capacity development are discussed within, not alongside, the multistakeholder process.

## Connect the IGF Ecosystem and Align It to the WSIS Framework

Over the years, the IGF has demonstrated that it works best as a year-round, connected ecosystem rather than a single event on the calendar. As a result of the WSIS+20 review, the IGF will now report its outcomes to the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), which will contribute to the work of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS). The UNGIS is the main interagency network within the UN system designed to coordinate policies, share expertise, and promote the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support global development goals, the WSIS Forum, the WSIS Action Lines facilitators, and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) review.

Our community has made clear that a significant part of the IGF's value stems from its intersessional activities, including the Best Practice Forums, Dynamic Coalitions and the NRIs. Channeling these into the strengthened reporting structure to inform annual themes early enough will be crucial, giving the IGF community time to prepare meaningful contributions. As the EGM report noted, identifying priority topics early is key to making the most of the IGF's work.

Building on this insight, the IGF could complement its annual themes with multi-year work programs on issues that need sustained attention rather than a single cycle of discussion. This kind of programmatic, multi-year work is where the NRIs can add even further value, since their continuous, on-the-ground engagement is well-suited to follow an issue over several years with local expertise. Together, early theme-setting and multi-year programs would allow intersessional activities and NRIs to map their work and outcomes to the WSIS Action Lines and the GDC commitments, making IGF outcomes an effective reference for WSIS Action Lines facilitators and the broader community.

For this to work, IGF outcomes—understood broadly as its intersessional work and outputs from the NRIs—must have a longer life span than the annual meeting. Too often, they peak around the global meeting yet lose visibility before the next cycle begins. Embedding them in recurring intergovernmental processes would change that. For example, a standing CSTD agenda item that draws on IGF outcomes would give the community's work a sustained reach, while keeping the CSTD's review grounded in evidence from every region. Other WSIS and digital cooperation processes could likewise draw on these outcomes.

For these arrangements to work, the IGF MAG and the Secretariat should maintain their clearly defined roles. As it shapes the annual meeting agenda, the MAG is the right place to set themes early, align them with the WSIS Action Lines, and incorporate a long-term strategic vision. Its annual membership rotation offers a steady, low-friction way to widen the mix of regions and stakeholder perspectives over time. In parallel, the IGF Secretariat is the natural home for coordinating the ecosystem and managing the flow of reporting into the WSIS processes; its role is to enable and coordinate, providing the community with a much-needed administrative backbone and continuity.

Concretely, this means:

- The MAG sets annual themes no later than nine months before the global meeting and develops multi-year work programs on issues that need sustained attention, giving intersessional activities and NRIs adequate time and a longer arc to follow issues with the local expertise and continuity they are best placed to provide.
- The IGF Secretariat establishes a standing reporting mechanism to channel NRI and intersessional outputs into CSTD review cycles, ensuring that community evidence from every region reaches the relevant intergovernmental processes at the right time.
- CSTD Member States formally request a standing agenda item on IGF outcomes as part of the WSIS implementation review, giving the community's work a durable, recurring home in the intergovernmental calendar and extending its reach beyond the annual meeting.

## Section 3: Getting Financing Right

The WSIS+20 outcome clearly recognizes the importance of financial mechanisms in bridging digital divides.<sup>14</sup>

While the ITU has been called upon to establish a task force to assess existing gaps and develop recommendations, it is not starting from zero. Around the world, various stakeholders have tested and used different approaches to fund connectivity infrastructure and build capacity and digital skills among users and communities, especially in contexts where traditional investment models do not work

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<sup>14</sup> UN A/RES/80/173: <https://docs.un.org/a/res/80/173>

well. We strongly encourage the task force to consider two approaches that have emerged as the most promising for scaling impact: blended financing and collaborative financing.

## Background: Traditional Options for Development Finance

International finance for development has undergone a major transformation over the last few decades, shifting from a traditional system of government-provided development assistance funded by public funds to a more flexible, pluralistic system with various actors and mechanisms. This evolution has been driven by the widening gap between available public resources and the scale of investment required to meet the SDGs, which is estimated at trillions of dollars annually. Each of the traditional models below has an important role, but each also has structural limits that blended and collaborative financing are specifically designed to address. The traditional models include:

**Official development assistance (ODA).** This remains the foundational model and comprises grants and concessional loans from bilateral donors and multilateral institutions. Its primary purpose is to fund essential public goods, like health systems, education, humanitarian assistance, and governance reforms, that are unlikely to attract private investment. However, ODA faces structural constraints. Political shifts in donor countries, fiscal pressures, and competing domestic priorities have led to declining, volatile flows, making them an unreliable foundation for bridging digital divides and building connectivity.

**Multilateral development finance.** Institutions such as the World Bank and regional development banks operate a leveraged financing model, using shareholder capital to raise funds in global capital markets and extend loans, grants, and guarantees. For instance, the World Bank Group has leveraged USD \$29 billion in shareholder capital into approximately USD \$1.5 trillion in development finance.<sup>15</sup> These institutions are well-suited to long-term infrastructure financing and macroeconomic stability, while also helping reduce investors' risk. Yet they still face barriers, including bureaucratic complexity, slow disbursement processes, and limited capacity relative to global needs.

**Private investment and development finance institutions (DFIs).** Private capital mobilized through DFIs, impact investors, and commercial banks play an increasingly important role in development. Tools include equity investments, bonds, guarantees, and public-private partnerships. DFIs help bridge markets by de-risking investments and enabling access to capital for underserved sectors. Yet structural challenges persist: high perceived risk, weak regulatory environments, and limited bankable project pipelines constrain the flow of private capital to low-income countries.

**Philanthropic financing.** Philanthropic foundations have become influential actors, contributing billions of dollars annually to global development. The largest 10 foundations alone account for over USD \$8.6 billion in development spending, with a strong focus on health, education, and poverty alleviation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/unit/brief/transforming-finance-to-meet-today-s-development-needs>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.devex.com/news/how-20-us-foundations-spent-more-than-8-billion-on-development-109925>

Philanthropy is uniquely positioned to fund innovation, pilot programs, and high-risk initiatives that governments or the market may avoid. However, its limitations are clear: overall philanthropic development spending remains modest relative to global needs and has even declined in some years.

## Blended Financing and Collaborative Financing—Expanding the Toolset

The limitations noted above point to a common problem: no single model can bridge the financing gap on its own. Blended and collaborative financing have emerged precisely to address this by combining the strengths of public, private, and philanthropic capital in ways none can achieve independently.

### Blended Financing

Blended financing is an approach for leveraging catalytic capital from public or philanthropic sources to increase private-sector investment and advance sustainable development. It is often deployed at concessional (below-market) rates, in the form of grants or zero-interest loans, to mobilize private capital from commercial banks, asset managers, or insurance companies, which is then invested at commercial, market-rate terms.

The objective of blended finance is not to substitute for private capital, but to selectively absorb, reallocate, or mitigate risks that markets are unable or unwilling to price, while preserving incentives for efficiency and long-term sustainability. Experience shows that these mechanisms are most effective when tightly aligned to specific market failures and applied with strong governance and execution discipline.<sup>17</sup>

According to Convergence Capital, blended finance in international development reached USD \$18.3 billion in 2024, down from a peak of USD \$23.1 billion in 2023.<sup>18</sup> In 2026, when many nonprofit organizations are expected to struggle financially due to a retraction in bilateral donor funding for international development, BDO Digital anticipated that the sector would turn to blended finance as an alternative form of capital and a strategic approach to linking social impact outcomes with investor returns.<sup>19</sup>

The Internet Society has explored ways to deploy blended finance to expand community-centered connectivity networks and support smaller Internet service providers (ISPs) in growth opportunities. Grant dollars alone will not close the digital infrastructure investment gap. Loan guarantees at favorable interest rates are what these networks need to expand. Applying blended finance tools, alongside well-resourced investment vehicles that blend grants and loans, is crucial.

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<sup>17</sup> Smart Africa, "Guidelines for Digital Infrastructure Financing Models in Africa"

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.convergence.finance/news/urVUbSe6NepM9Gzo9KDdt/view>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bdo.com/insights/industries/nonprofit-education/2026-nonprofit-higher-education-predictions>

## Collaborative Funding

Another popular model is collaborative funding, in which funders with like-minded objectives pool resources to share risks and amplify impact to address intractable development challenges. This brings a diverse group of funders together—including governments, nonprofits, for-profits, philanthropic groups, high-net-worth individuals, and multilateral organizations. By pursuing a collective approach, funders can achieve deeper, broader engagement than they can through grants alone. The number of collaborative funds has expanded significantly, with over 300 identified globally as of early 2025, many of which were established in the past decade.<sup>20</sup>

The Internet Society's Connectivity Co-Funding Initiative follows a collaborative funding model, in which we pursue connectivity-focused projects for marginalized and underserved populations in partnership with other donors, leveraging our financial resources for greater, longer-term impact. We do the same under the Common Good Cyber Fund (CGCF).<sup>21</sup> Digital and cyber threats are rising in frequency and sophistication, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities and underserved regions where digital defenses are weakest. High-risk actors, including NGOs, journalists, human rights defenders, and dissidents, face targeted activity that can span borders within the online information environment. CGCF was designed to strengthen the civil society cybersecurity ecosystem by supporting the nonprofits that provide critical services. The fund consists of pooled donations from a mix of funders, including the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office of the United Kingdom, the German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, the Internet Society, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

What we propose the WSIS+20 task force should do next:

- The WSIS+20 implementation takes place in the landscape of international development finance, which is shifting from a public aid-dominated model to a diversified ecosystem integrating public, private, and philanthropic capital. While traditional ODA remains essential for the most fragile contexts, its decline underscores the need for new approaches.
- These new approaches are being developed and implemented. The newly convened task force led by the ITU does not have to reinvent the wheel: the knowledge and expertise are already there, built through the years of deploying emerging models to expand connectivity and strengthen digital security. The traditional models still work, but the new collaborative models can and should be scaled, which is possible only by enabling stakeholders and building on existing expertise.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/philanthropic-collaborative-landscape>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.isocfoundation.org/grant-programme/common-good-cyber-fund/>

- Assessments of financing tend to capture the perspective of the institutions that supply capital, while the actors that receive and deploy it offer critical insights for when a mechanism succeeds, where it stalls, and what conditions it depends on. To build a rounded picture of what works in practice and when, the task force should engage both recipients and providers.

## Conclusion

The WSIS+20 outcome document sets out a clear agenda: develop implementation roadmaps, strengthen the IGF, and address financing gaps. This paper offers practical contributions in each area— a framework for what useful roadmaps look like, recommendations for the IGF drawn from community consultation, and recommendations for scalable financing models.

When done well, these three areas represent more than just implementation tasks. Phased, evidence-based roadmaps designed for accountability demonstrate that the WSIS Action Lines are not legacy commitments but living frameworks that produce measurable results. A strengthened IGF shows that the multistakeholder model delivers the inclusive governance that top-down processes cannot replicate. And sustainable financing approaches practically prove that WSIS implementation is not merely aspirational.

With these improvements, the WSIS framework, the center of the UN's approach to digital development, will more effectively extend connectivity, close digital divides, and enhance online safety and trust.

## Annex A: WSIS Action Line Implementation Roadmap

### C2 – Information and Communication Infrastructure. Internet Exchange Points (IXPs)

#### The Commitment

The Geneva Plan of Action (2003), under Action Line C2 (Information and Communication Infrastructure), paragraph 9(j), calls on stakeholders to "optimize connectivity among major information networks by encouraging the creation and development of regional ICT backbones and Internet exchange points, to reduce interconnection costs and broaden network access."

**Note:** Paragraph 9(j) addresses two distinct components of Internet infrastructure: Regional ICT backbones and Internet exchange points (IXPs). While both are essential and interdependent, they may involve different actors, investment models, policy levers, and metrics. Regional ICT backbones warrant a separate, dedicated roadmap. **This roadmap addresses IXPs.**

#### Background

An Internet exchange point (IXP) is a physical location where Internet networks, such as Internet service providers (ISPs), content delivery networks (CDNs), cloud providers, and other network operators, interconnect to exchange traffic directly, rather than routing it through third-party transit providers, often located in other countries or continents. IXPs advance the goals of paragraph 9(j) in several concrete ways:

- **Cost reduction:** Local traffic exchange reduces reliance on expensive international transit, thereby lowering ISPs' operational costs. Those savings can be passed on to end users.
- **Improved performance:** Keeping traffic local reduces latency and improves quality of experience, particularly for latency-sensitive applications.
- **Resilience:** IXPs diversify routing paths and reduce single points of failure. When international submarine cables are damaged, for example, countries with well-developed IXPs are better positioned to maintain domestic connectivity.
- **Enabling local content ecosystems:** IXPs attract CDNs and content providers to deploy local caches, making content faster and cheaper to access and creating conditions for local content production to grow.



## Current State

### IXP Deployment Today

Indicator	Number
Total active IXPs (globally)	1063
Countries without IXPs	93
IXPs in LDCs	44 IXPs in 22 LDCs (total of 44 LDCs— 50% IXP coverage)
IXPs in SIDS	38 in 24 SIDS (total of 57 SIDS—42% IXP coverage)
Region: Europe	357
Region: North America	187
Region: Asia-Pacific	315
Region: Latin America and Caribbean	133
Region: Africa	71
Region: Middle East	28

*Data Source: Internet Society Pulse—IXP Tracker*

### Progress Since 2003

When the Geneva Plan of Action was adopted in 2003, the global IXP landscape was fundamentally different. For example, in many developing regions, most Internet traffic, including traffic between two users in the same city, was routed via international links, often through Europe or North America, at high cost. The growth to over 1000 IXPs represents significant progress, but it remains unevenly distributed. The countries still without IXPs are concentrated in regions that can least afford to miss out on the cost reductions they offer.

## Evidence of Impact

- **Cost reductions:**<sup>22</sup> Peering reduces transit expenses, translating into higher revenues for operators. According to our research, a one-unit increase in peering intensity (ratio of peering ISPs to all ISPs in a country) is associated with a nearly 22% increase in telecom revenues. We also observed an 83-percentage-point increase in average revenue per user (ARPU) for every 1% increase in peering intensity, i.e., the revenue ISPs generate per subscriber. A percentage-point increase in savings from peering was further associated with a 2.3 percentage-point increase in average telecom revenues, suggesting market-wide implications of lower costs.
- **Improved performance:** Peering paths outperform transit paths in most cases (over 90%) by reducing both logical and geographical distances (lower AS-path hops and IP hops).
- **Resilience:** When networks connect at an IXP, they create multiple redundant logical and physical paths (more physical connections). If international transit connections fail, the Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) will seamlessly continue to route traffic through the peering links and networks reachable via the IXP.
- **Enabling local content ecosystems:** For example, Suriname (85.71%), Saint Kitts and Nevis (71.43%), Grenada (63.64%), Burundi (55.56%), and South Africa (53.61%) have among the highest proportions of local content accessible via IXPs, and lower Internet access costs can be correlated in several of these markets.

## Common Barriers to IXP Deployment

There are several barriers to IXP deployment, particularly in developing regions. In many markets, competition is constrained by market concentration, where incumbent operators have little incentive to peer at a local IXP. Policy and regulatory gaps can further exacerbate this. Some countries lack necessary legislation, such as intellectual property frameworks, that restrict CDNs from deploying services even where an IXP exists. Limited technical capacity in network operations and poor IXP management are among the challenges that may pose barriers.

However, even where IXPs are established, ensuring their long-term financial sustainability remains a challenge, particularly in smaller markets where few network operators can generate sufficient revenue to cover operational costs. This challenge is intensified by evolving CDN peering policies, with some increasing minimum traffic thresholds, which creates a barrier for smaller IXPs to attract and retain these catalytic partners.

## Theory of Change

IXP development is not a uniform process. Countries are at different stages of maturity, and the interventions required may differ accordingly. This roadmap adopts a four-stage maturity model that

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<sup>22</sup> Dissecting the cost of peering: Global evidence from internet exchange points (IXPs): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308596126001035>

reflects the reality on the ground: some countries have no IXP at all, some have nascent or struggling IXPs, some have operational IXPs that need to grow, and some have mature ecosystems that need to improve sustainability.

**Note:** The four stages are not strictly sequential. A country may require interventions from multiple stages simultaneously, and in some markets, stages may need to be pursued in tandem.

#### Stage 1: Awareness and Consensus Building

- Applies to: Countries and locations without an existing IXP, or those with a non-functioning IXP. As of 2026, approximately 32 countries fall into this category, along with several where IXPs have become non-operational.
- Objective: Educate key stakeholders on the advantages of IXPs and build a shared vision and commitment for their establishment.
- Interventions: Policy briefings, economic impact assessments, support for forums, and drawing on case studies from comparable economies.

#### Stage 2: Policy and Regulatory Framework Development

- Applies to: Countries where an IXP exists but faces regulatory risks (licensing barriers, peering mandates, or other constraints on an open peering ecosystem), and countries without IXPs where the regulatory environment may lack enabling provisions, requiring engagement in tandem with Stage 1.
- Objective: Establish a clear and supportive regulatory environment that encourages investment and participation in IXPs.
- Interventions: IXP-specific policy consultations, exploring regulatory or financial incentives for peering, and/or ensuring that regulatory frameworks promote neutral, non-discriminatory, and open-access environments.

#### Stage 3: Technical Implementation and Operational Support

- Applies to: Countries where awareness exists and a supportive environment is in place (or being developed), but the IXP is either newly established, early-stage, or requires operational strengthening.
- Objective: Ensure the technical viability and sustainable operation of IXPs by providing necessary infrastructure and local capacity development.
- Interventions: Equipment grants for new or expanding IXPs, targeted training programs covering technical and operational best practices, direct technical assistance to IXP operators implementing development plans.

#### Stage 4: Ecosystem Development and Sustainability

- Applies to: Countries with operational IXPs that need to maximize long-term value, achieve financial self-sustainability, and contribute to the broader national digital economy. Mature

IXPs in this stage typically have strong membership, established governance, and growing traffic volumes.

- Objective: Maximize the long-term value and impact of IXPs on the national digital economy by fostering a vibrant and self-sustaining local Internet ecosystem.
- Interventions: Engaging global content providers to deploy local caches, expanding IXP service offerings beyond traditional peering, transitioning IXPs to self-sustaining financial models, integrating IXPs into national digital strategy frameworks, and expanding points of presence into secondary and tertiary cities.

### Country Maturity Assessment

Country Situation	Stages applicable	Priority Interventions
No IXP	Stage 1 + 2	Policy briefings, economic impact studies, regulatory analysis
IXP exists but is early stage/struggling	Stage 2+3	Regulatory analysis and development, technical training, governance development, equipment grants
IXP is operational and growing	Stage 3+4	Membership growth support, CDN engagement, service expansion
Mature IXP ecosystem	Stage 4	Sustainability planning, secondary-city expansion, regional interconnection, self-financing

### Stakeholders and Partnerships

Delivering the interventions described above will require a shared effort across many stakeholders. Most actors are relevant at every stage, though some take on more prominent roles at particular points of implementation.

The Action Line facilitator's role is to convene, coordinate, and track progress, not to establish or operate IXPs itself. Governments and regulators set the enabling conditions through licensing, fair competition, and neutral, open-access frameworks. ISPs and network operators are the core participants, and their willingness to peer determines whether an IXP succeeds. Technical communities and academia, including network operator groups (NOGs), IXP associations, ISP associations, and national research and education networks (NRENs), operate the exchanges and build local capacity, while the regional Internet registries (RIRs) support them by providing the IP resources an IXP needs to operate, such as address blocks and autonomous system (AS) numbers. Content providers and CDNs



peer at the IXP or supply the local caches that make IXPs more valuable as the ecosystem matures. International organizations such as the ITU, regional telecommunications bodies, and the World Bank contribute funding, technical assistance, and best practices. Other actors, such as the Internet Society and its chapters, add awareness-building, training, grants, and policy support across every stage.

### Target and Milestones

Based on the theory of change and phased maturity model above, the following metrics, targets, and milestones track progress across review cycles. The target horizon extends to the next WSIS high-level review (2035), with intermediate milestones aligned to CSTD and SDG review cycles. Numbers below are illustrative based on historical progress (average 6% to 8% growth year-over-year in IXP developments)

#### Metrics

Metric	Relevant Stage	Data Source	Baseline 2027
Number of countries without an IXP	1	Internet Society Pulse	93
Number of IXPs in LDCs	2-3	Internet Society Pulse	44
Number of IXPs in SIDS	2-3	Internet Society Pulse	38
Percentage of locally cached content	3-4	Internet Society Pulse	50%
Percentage of IXPs that are financially self-sustaining	4	Internet Society/ITU Survey	TBD

#### Targets

Target	Relevant Stage	2028	2030	2035
Countries without an IXP	1	>30	>20	>10
Active IXPs in LDCs	2-3	60% coverage	65 % coverage	< 70% coverage
Active IXPs in SIDS	2-3	50% coverage	55 % coverage	< 60% coverage



Countries with locally cached content above 50%	3-4	50% of countries	70%	< 85%
IXPs that are financially self-sustaining	4	TBD	TBD	TBD

### Review Cycle

- 2027: CSTD 30th session—baseline and initial roadmap presented
- 2028: WSIS Forum—first progress review against milestones
- 2030: SDG review/GDC review—assessment against 2030 milestones
- 2035: WSIS high-level review—full assessment against targets

### Cross-Action Lines Dependencies

The success of IXP deployment also depends on conditions that fall under other WSIS Action Lines. These dependencies must be recognized and coordinated across roadmaps and facilitators.

### Enabling Environment (Action Line C6)

A liberalized telecommunications market is a prerequisite for IXP success. Where incumbent operators have monopoly or near-monopoly control, they may have little incentive to peer at an IXP. Pro-competitive regulation, including open access policies, interconnection obligations, and licensing frameworks that allow new market entrants, is essential.

### Local Content (Action Line C8)

The relationship between IXPs and local content typically represents a virtuous cycle. First, IXPs are most effective when there is local content to exchange. The development of locally relevant content, applications, and services creates the demand that drives IXP traffic. Conversely, IXPs enable local content by reducing the cost and latency of hosting and delivering content domestically.

### Capacity Building (Action Line C4)

The technical skills required to operate and participate in an IXP, including advanced IP network routing and switching skills, such as BGP configuration, route server management, and network security, depend on the broader ICT capacity-building agenda. Countries with limited technical capacity will struggle to establish and sustain IXPs without targeted training support.

### Cybersecurity (Action Line C5)

IXPs are critical infrastructure and must be operated securely. The adoption of routing security measures—such as resource public key infrastructure (RPKI) and MANRS compliance—at IXPs depends



on the broader cybersecurity agenda. IXPs can also serve as platforms for deploying essential core Internet infrastructure services (e.g., DNS root servers, network time servers, measurement infrastructure) that benefit the wider Internet ecosystem.

## Coordination

The roadmap for IXPs under C2 cannot succeed in isolation. The facilitators of C4, C5, C6, and C8 should be aware of these interdependencies, and their own roadmaps should include relevant supporting actions. Cross-cutting dependencies should be mapped so that facilitators can coordinate their milestones and review cycles accordingly.

