Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group

Charter

Background

In March 2025 the ICANN Board passed a resolution for ICANN org to evaluate and evolve strategies to support Universal Acceptance (UA) adoption work by ICANN org and the community moving forward, aligning its UA efforts with ICANN's Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2026-2030.

Based on the Board's resolution, the ICANN President and CEO announced the establishment of a Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group (UA EWG), which will provide guidance to ICANN for future work on UA adoption. This group will include expert members invited directly by the ICANN President and CEO along with those nominated by ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees (SOs and ACs). A Call for Nominations was published to seek the SO and AC nominees.

Purpose

The UA Expert Working Group will meet regularly online to develop guidelines for ICANN org's work on UA adoption among the following stakeholders:

- Big Tech and Open-Source Organizations: Update applications and services to support UA.
- Tech Developers and System Administrators: Ensure existing and new software applications support UA and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs).
- Domain Name System (DNS) Industry and Related Businesses: Encourage generic top-level domain (gTLD) and country code top-level domain registries, registrars, registry service providers, resellers, hosting providers, Internet service providers, and others to become UA-ready.
- Internet Governance and Policy Professionals: Raise the visibility of UA and its importance to the multilingual Internet within international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and governments.

In addition, the Expert Working Group will guide on developing measures to gauge progress on Universal Acceptance.

The guidelines developed by UA EWG will be submitted to the ICANN President and CEO. After review, these guidelines will be used by ICANN org to guide its implementation work towards UA adoption, to the extent practicable. The UA EWG is expected to act in an advisory capacity and not make policy recommendations or advocate for particular implementation of the

guidelines. ICANN org will implement the guidelines, as well as track the progress of their implementation.

Scope

The UA EWG will focus on developing guidelines to address the following questions:

1. Different big tech organizations are structured differently. What are the strategies ICANN org may use to encourage them to adopt UA in their applications and systems? As there are many big tech organizations globally and regionally, what criteria should ICANN org use to prioritize engagement with them?
2. Different open-source communities are structured differently. What are the strategies ICANN org may use to encourage them to adopt UA in their applications and systems? As there are many open-source projects and applications globally and regionally, what criteria should ICANN org use to prioritize engagement with them?
3. Are there any specific standards ICANN org should contribute toward promoting UA adoption across applications and systems? Are there any emerging topics to consider for standards work for UA which ICANN org should consider? Which organizations should it collaborate with for the work? How should ICANN org prioritize its contribution to standards work related to UA?
4. What are the best platforms and mechanisms to reach out to software development professionals to encourage them to adopt UA in the tools, applications and systems they design and develop? What capacity development strategies and materials may be needed for software developers to promote UA adoption?
5. What are the best platforms and mechanisms to reach out to system administrators to encourage them to adopt UA for email servers and other relevant systems? What capacity development strategies and materials may be needed for system administrators to promote UA adoption?
6. How may ICANN org further encourage the DNS industry, including gTLD and ccTLD registry, registrars and resellers, to support UA in their systems during the registration process?
7. What mechanisms may ICANN org use to encourage hosting providers and internet service providers to be able to provide IDN and EAI hosting services to the registrants? What capacity development strategies and materials may be needed for this purpose?
8. What are the most effective mechanisms for ICANN org to reach out to the public sector, including suggested relevant ministries, to promote UA adoption? How can ICANN seek support and collaboration from intergovernmental organizations to achieve these mutually relevant goals? What are the materials needed to promote both awareness and adoption of UA in the public sector?

9. What are the most effective mechanisms for ICANN org to reach out to academia to promote UA adoption? How can ICANN seek support and collaboration from universities to achieve these mutually relevant goals? What are the materials needed to promote both awareness and adoption of UA in academia?
10. What aspects of UA adoption should be measured generally, as well as specific to different types of stakeholders, to create awareness of the gaps and gauge progress over time? Who would be good collaborators, and how do we encourage self-reporting on these indicators by the stakeholders?

The UA EWG may also discuss remaining risks and challenges in achieving UA for the scope questions above, and propose any additional mitigation strategies.

Composition

All members of UA EWG will be volunteers and have demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Technical challenges and solutions for UA.
- Technical training for promoting the use of IDNs and UA.
- IDNs and/or Email Address Internationalization.
- Internet governance or public policy work related to digital inclusion and a multilingual Internet.

The membership is composed to reflect a balance of perspectives, including from the different stakeholders from the technical industry and internet governance community related to multilingual Internet. At present, the working group will have the members listed in the table below. The ICANN President and CEO may nominate additional members based on specific requirements.

	Name	Affiliation	Member
1	Abdalmonem Tharwat Galila (Alt: Aderonke Adeniyi (Sola-Ogunsola))	National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) of Egypt (Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC))	GAC nominee
2	Cathy Wissink	UNICODE Consortium	CEO nominee
3	Edmon Chung (co-chair)	DotAsia	ALAC nominee
4	Guilherme Canela (Alt: Tarja Turtia)	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	CEO nominee
5	James Galvin	Identity Digital	ICANN Board Liaison
6	Jiankang Yao	China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC)	CEO nominee
7	Nabil Benamar	Moulay Ismail University	SSAC nominee
8	Nitin Walia	XGEN Plus	GNSO nominee
9	Richard Ishida	World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)	CEO nominee
10	Sami Mohamed Ali	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), Bahrain	ccNSO nominee
11	Sarmad Hussain (co-chair)	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)	CEO nominee
12	Sean Bedford	Meta	CEO nominee
13	Thomas Mullaney	Stanford University	CEO nominee

Alternate (Alt) members will be invited to attend the meetings as observers. Primary members may inform the co-chairs when they need to delegate their participation to the alternate members. The co-chairs will then invite the alternate members to participate.

ICANN org will staff support scheduling, note taking and other management of the working group. The working group will be supported by:

- Seda Akbulut, Senior Manager UA Program (Project Manager)

Working Methods, Participation and Decision Making

The UA Expert Working Group will have online meetings. The meetings will be held weekly or once in two weeks, as set by the group. Its meetings will be recorded and publicly posted, along with supporting materials. ICANN org staff will support the scheduling, recording, note taking, and their publication for meetings of the UA EWG online. ICANN org staff will also ensure a work plan is established to complement the questions outlined in the scope of work, above.

The UA EWG members must submit Statements of Interest (SOI). Completion and submission of the SOI, which require disclosure of any affiliations or interests that may be impacted by the UA EWG's work, is required for participation in the WG. These SOIs will be publicly posted. On topics and discussions which create a perceived or actual conflict, the members should declare it and recuse themselves from such discussions and meetings. The members may not nominate another person in their place to attend the meetings (beyond those already identified).

The co-chairs may meet separately with the ICANN staff to plan for the meetings. They will manage the scope of work, meeting agendas and steer meeting discussions to remain in this scope. The co-chair from ICANN will guide the members on the scope and provide feedback if the guidelines being developed pose any challenges for implementation later by ICANN org. The co-chairs may also represent the UA EWG at different forums.

The co-chairs will conduct the UA EWG meetings, guide the discussions, and help develop consensus on the guidelines. While the co-chairs will aim for full consensus (unanimous), a consensus (most agree, but minority disagrees) on the output of the UA EWG is sufficient to proceed. The co-chairs may ask for consensus over the UA EWG mailing list, in case multiple members are not present in a call. An alternate member will contribute to the consensus discussion if delegated by the primary member and invited by the co-chair. The co-chairs will determine the level of (or lack of) consensus achieved. The guidelines for which at least a consensus is not achieved will not be included. Only the guidelines which achieve consensus or full consensus will be noted in the output document. Interim discussion, alternate views, and any other details will only be noted in the meeting notes and also available through the call recordings, which will be posted for the UA EWG publicly. The co-chairs will document the guidelines developed by the UA EWG, with the support of ICANN staff.

The UA EWG members must not use their participation to advance personal, organization, or commercial interests. Contributions should be guided by the principles of transparency, technical merit, and benefit of the community. All members of the UA EWG are expected to follow ICANN's Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN's Anti-Harassment Policy. Any members who disrupt the WG would be warned privately, then publicly, and then may be restricted from participation by the co-chairs.

High-Level Timeline and Deliverables

The tentative steps and timeline of work for the UA EWG are as follows:

- August 2025: Work commences
- February 2026: Public comment on Draft Guidelines for Promoting UA Adoption
- March 2026: Finalize and publish Guidelines for Promoting UA Adoption

The working group will be closed after the publication of the guidelines.

High-Level Assumptions and Constraints

The UA EWG will be meeting online on a weekly or fortnightly basis. ICANN does not anticipate convening the group in a face-to-face setting. In case the work needs to be accelerated, a face-to-face meeting may be scheduled.