

# The ccNSO buddy system

## Purpose

To foster a welcoming environment for new volunteers by pairing them with experienced members (“buddies”) who can help lower the threshold for participation in meetings, increase engagement, and promote retention.

## Program Objective

- Facilitate smoother integration of new volunteers into the group.
- Reduce anxiety or uncertainty around participation.
- Build personal connections and a sense of belonging.
- Encourage earlier and more meaningful involvement in discussions and projects.

## Program Structure

### 1. Program Coordinator (Claudia)

Designate a Buddy System Coordinator responsible for:

- Managing pairings
- Communicating expectations
- Checking in on progress
- Collecting feedback for improvement

### 2. Matching Buddies and Newcomers

See below: How to get started?

### 3. Oversight and Evaluation

#### 1. Regular Check-Ins

- Members OMC regular check in with both parties: during meeting and at the end of the pairing.
- Collect informal feedback to identify areas for improvement.

## **2. Feedback Loop**

- After the buddy period, send a short survey to both buddy and newcomer:
  - What worked well?
  - What could be improved?
  - Do you feel more confident participating?

## **3. Review and improvement of buddy program ( 6 weeks post ICANN meeting)**

OMC and Coordinator to identify what worked well, what could be improved, and set expectations next time ( metrics?)

## How to get started? Matching Buddies and Newcomers

### 1. Create a group of buddies (qualified people) for newcomers

It can be tempting to choose the people who are most social and bubbly, but remember that buddies need to have other qualities, such as good communication and listening skills. Look for people with the following characteristics:

- Approachable, enthusiastic, and positive
- Knowledgeable of the ccNSO in general and day-to-day
- Special knowledge of the new-comers role
- Willing to take the time to help

Not everyone is suited to be a buddy, and that's okay – just make sure that the group you select is willing and able to support the newcomers.

Don't send your buddies in unprepared, either. Consider setting up buddy training so they understand what's expected of them and tips to be a great working buddy.

### Actions

1. Call for volunteers, make sure that the expectations are clear, and time commitment (4 weeks prior to ICANN meeting)
2. Screen buddies (not everyone is suited see above)
3. Introduce the program and set expectations prior to matching ( 1 week prior to meeting)

### 2. Identify the newcomers

One of the more interesting tasks will be to identify the newcomers. Experience has shown they are difficult to identify:

1. Easiest pool to identify are from the ICANN fellows,
2. Some will show up at the newcomer webinars
3. Some Presenters (ccTLD news others as well)
4. Working group members who turn up at ICANN meetings
5. Identify @ ccNSO Members meeting
6. Ask community if they send someone for the first time?

Develop template for easy, low key matching (ccTLD, languages, areas of interest, role with ccTLD)

### **Actions**

1. Start identifying newcomers ( 4 weeks before the meeting)
2. Get in touch with newcomers
3. Introduce the program and set expectations prior to matching ( 1 week prior to meeting or at meeting)

### **3. Pair each buddy with one or two newcomers (but make sure they're a good match)**

At times, you may find there are more newcomers than buddies. That's okay; simply pair them up so that each buddy has one or two newcomers to support. Just be sure to match buddies and newcomers with personalities that will complement each other.

Role coordinator with OMC members

### **4. Give buddies a checklist of activities to complete with their partner**

Depending on how closely the buddy system is managed, buddies might be given a specific checklist of activities to complete with their partner. This could include anything from introducing them around, sharing best practices, and answering any questions they may have.

Here are a few ideas to get your buddies started:

- Introduce the newcomers to others, jointly attend the ccNSO cocktail
- Share the ccNSO culture, values, and goals
- Introduce them to the secretariat
- Help them to find their way to sessions of interest, both for the newcomer, and from a more general perspective. Don't limit this to ccNSO sessions.
- Provide an overview of the activities of the ccNSO
- Answer any questions they may have

Make sure your buddies aren't too regimented, though – after all, the whole point of having a buddy system is to foster a sense of community and support. Let them use their own judgment on what works best for them and their new partner.

#### **5. Survey buddies and newcomers and use the feedback to improve (post ICANN meetings)**

You won't know how effective your buddy system is until you survey both the buddies and the newcomers. Feedback is crucial for the success of any program, and it's especially important to get feedback from the people who are directly involved.

Use the feedback you receive to improve the buddy system and make it even more beneficial for everyone involved. Maybe there are certain activities buddies should be doing with their new partners, or maybe you need to add more buddies to the group.

No matter what, always be open to feedback and willing to make changes so that everyone can benefit from a buddy program at work.

### **Sample Buddy Guide (1 Page Summary)**

- **Goal:** Be a friendly and supportive point of contact for a new volunteer.
- **Do:** Check in, explain basics, encourage participation, be available.
- **Don't:** Speak for the new person, pressure them to participate beyond comfort level.

**Duration:** 4–6 weeks (around an ICANN meeting)