

“INTERNET SHARED IDENTITY COLLABORATIVE”

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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We describe here the Internet Shared Identity Collaborative (*working title*), a multistakeholder initiative aimed at creating a collaborative governance structure for Internet trust, identity, privacy and information commerce. A goal is to create a set of trusted, non-proprietary business rules, functional specifications and protocols for authorized, privacy-respecting exchange of user data – fostering commerce across the open Internet.

The first three parties committed to working together on the project are:

- The Local Media Consortium, an association of more than 2,200 local U.S. newspapers and broadcasters, to serve as principal stakeholder.
- Internet Society ISOC) and its consultant, [Lawrence E. Strickling](#), to serve as facilitator and co-convener via ISOC’s [“Collaborative Governance Project.”](#) [\(VIDEO\)](#)
- [The Information Trust Exchange Governing Association](#) (ITEGA), a new, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization to serve as the initial governing authority and co-convener.

BACKGROUND

The Shared Identity Collaborative is the work of three nonprofit organizations:

- The [Information Trust Exchange Governing Association](#) was formed in late 2016 and obtained IRS 501(c)3 status in July 2017. It is an outgrowth of several years of research and [two reports](#) by the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI) at the Missouri School of Journalism led by RJI fellow Bill Densmore.
1. The [Local Media Consortium Inc.](#) , is a strategic partnership of [local media companies](#) leveraging new opportunities for revenue and audience growth among 80 media companies owning more than 2,200 local media outlets. It negotiates with service providers and [partners](#) for terms available by individual agreement any LMC member. The LMC began operating informally in 2006 and was founded in 2013. (*Also see: “About the Local Media Consortium,” at the end of this document*).
- The nonprofit [Internet Society](#) (ISOC) 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. It focuses on building and supporting the communities that make the Internet work. Founded in 1992 by people involved in the Internet Engineer Task Force (IETF) it is a home for internet standards processes. ISOC has contracted

with Lawrence Strickling to test the feasibility of expanding the use of multistakeholder approaches for Internet governance through [the Collaborative Governance Project](#).

In [an Oct. 26, 2018 report](#) to ISOC (discussed, [here](#)), Strickling and co-collaborator Grace M. Abuhamad wrote: “The focus of this project **should be on action**—convening stakeholders to solve problems and develop norms on a consensus basis . . . Reaching consensus on important policy issues requires a lot of work, often from interested volunteers, a lot of good faith, and a strong willingness of participants to compromise because the urgency of the need for a decision outweighs the status quo.”

A multistakeholder process will have the following attributes:

- Stakeholder-driven: Stakeholders determine the process and decisions, from agenda setting to workflow, rather than simply fulfilling an advisory role;
- Open: Any stakeholder may participate and the process includes and integrates the viewpoints of a diverse range of stakeholders;
- Transparent: All stakeholders and the public have access to deliberations, creating an environment of trust, legitimacy, and accountability; and
- Consensus-based: Outcomes are consensus-based, arrived at by compromise, and are a win-win for the greatest number or diversity of stakeholders.

GOAL

A goal of the Shared Identity Project is to form and implement a common ecosystem for sharing and management of user identity that is enforceable without resorting to either government regulation or the coerciveness of a private platform monopoly.

“History is replete with examples of waiting for governments to take action and it doesn’t happen, or if it does happen it solves a problem that doesn’t exist any longer, or you end up with a case of regulatory capture and an outcome that does not really serve the needs of stakeholders,” Strickling said at a Jan. 26, meeting of the Internet Society ([VIDEO](#)).

One approach considered is an independent public-benefit trust, similar to ICANN, which has the practical ability to audit and censure and/or exclude actors from its trust ecosystem unless they subscribe to certain business, technical and “trust” norms.

PROCESS

The Shared Identity Project will consist of both plenary sessions and small-group intercessional work. The in-person plenary sessions will occur every 2-3 months in various convenient venues. Smaller working groups will address specific aspects of the process during inter-sessional gatherings and via teleconferences. All work will be open to any stakeholder and records of proceedings will be public.

During 2015, ITEGA-in-formation created [four tasks groups](#), each of which met once. These task groups covered:

- Member-partner development
- User data and exchange
- Authentication and identity management
- Content description, tagging, sharing and selling

There is no assurance that this will or should continue to be a logical grouping of tasks, but it is initially instructive.

COMMITMENTS

The parties will collaborate to:

- LOCATIONS -- Identity and schedule host venues – academic, NGO or donated facilities are preferred -- for a minimum of three plenary sessions over a nine-to-12-month period generally in the eastern, western and central United States. |
- SCOPE – Seek and interview key additional stakeholders to define the scope and extent of the issue or issues to be handled at convenings such that a path to action is likely.
- PROTOTYPING – Champion and participate in prototyping -- developed by ITEGA or LMC, their members, partners or potential vendors – which supports elements of a shared-user network for trust, identity privacy and information commerce.
- INCLUSION – Recruit participants to ensure broad participation, both across disciplines and geographies, and economic status, in order to support the global outlook and missions of ISOC and ITEGA.
- TRAIN / ACT – Ensure that to process meets twin objectives to (a) explore, document the multistakeholder process and (b) act to improve trust, identity, privacy and information commerce on the web.

SUPPORT

The Shared Identity Project will require financial resources for:

- Planning, facilitation and participant outreach for the 3-4 plenaries.
- Participation, leadership and documentation of task-group meetings
- Document editing and control
- Travel support for stakeholder participants lacking means
- Venue costs not born by NGO partners and participants
- General public outreach, including web and email services

- Seeding prototype service developments prior to engagement with commercial vendors.

Support is sought from:

- Foundations, optimally several
- Individual donors with no direct economic interest in outcomes
- Corporate founding members of ITEGA who subscribe to ITEGA's public-benefit charter and are transparent about any point-of-view.

CONCLUSION – BUILD IT

“If it doesn't lead to consensus outcome that people have come together to work to build, and then commit to implement then I think for the most part it is an interesting conversation but we really aren't advancing the ball,” Strickling [said at the Jan. 26 ISOC](#) gathering, adding: “There will have to be a discipline of people coming together to actually commit to working on an issue and committing to implementing it. I think if we do that we will see the legitimacy of these processes continue to grow and expand and providing guidance then to what may end up to be ultimate government intervention down the line, and will provide importance guidelines, important precedent, important norms that can be utilized if a more universal, enforceable solution needs to be implemented by governments.”

ABOUT THE LOCAL MEDIA CONSORTIUM

LMC's monthly digital reach, as measured by comScore exceeds 175 million unique visitors. The LMC is working to create a “private open-web social graph of 150 million people.” No one member is large enough to accomplish this in a meaningful way on its own. Technical scaling a service like this is not the main challenge. The hardest thing is getting by in from a large enough group of media companies. LMC welcomes a nonprofit initiative that could help establish a level-playing field of rules-of-the-road for data usage, sharing and privacy – that's a potential value point of ITEGA. Another potential value point would be if ITEGA's standards process could draw in other players in the media ecosystem to make the ITEGA user ecosystem leapfrog that of Google or Facebook.

People matter more than devices, we need scaled people-based marketing. A recent survey of ad marketers predicts almost two thirds of current ad buyers will be out of the third-party cookie-matching business within two years. He thinks a goal should be around acquiring new relationships with people and “pairing them” in anonymous interest-cohorts like public media does, and getting permissions to acquire “rich, first-party data” from individual users. And in some ways doing so as Facebook does, but responding to the end-user's right to control over what is done with their personal data. The goal is to drive greater value by delivering ad messages to people, not machines, in an acceptable and desired (e.g. opt-in) fashion. The strategy: (1) Assemble the cult of the willing (2) create a plan and (3) go. Is there a lingering challenge? Yes. Figuring out the best way to obtain data-consent from users.