Nominet DNS Fund

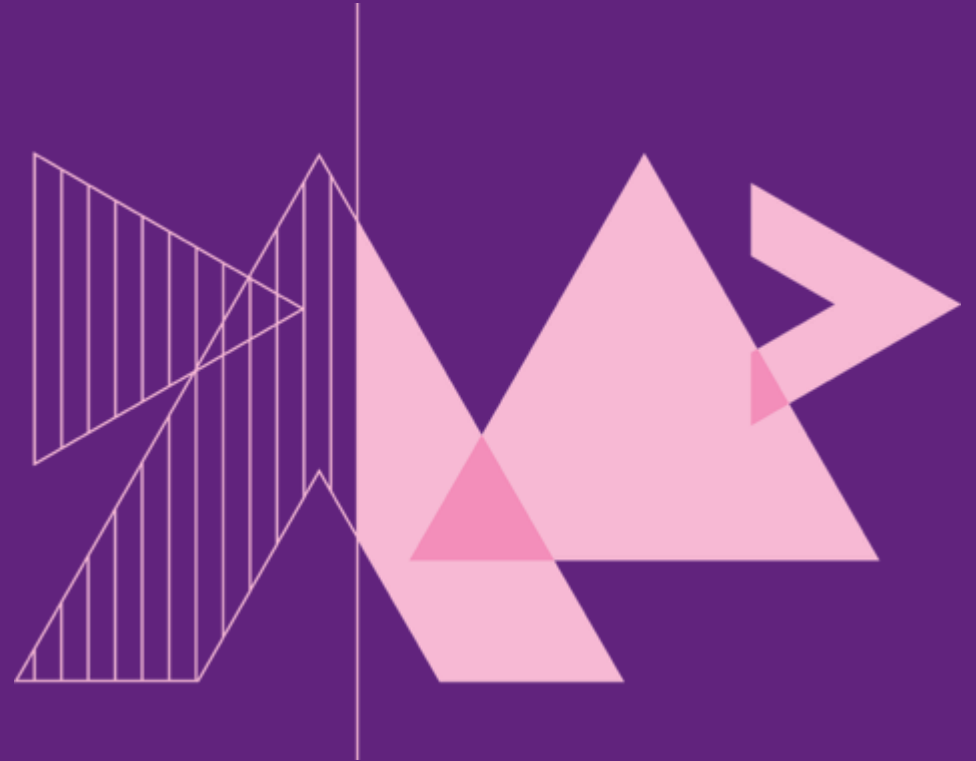**What can we learn?
What haven't we got right?**

Amy O'Donnell
Social Impact Lead

Nominet
DNS Fund

DEMOS

Research summary

Research Questions

Where should Nominet focus its investment in order to best support the technology ecosystem that underpins the internet infrastructure?

What funding model should Nominet use and why?

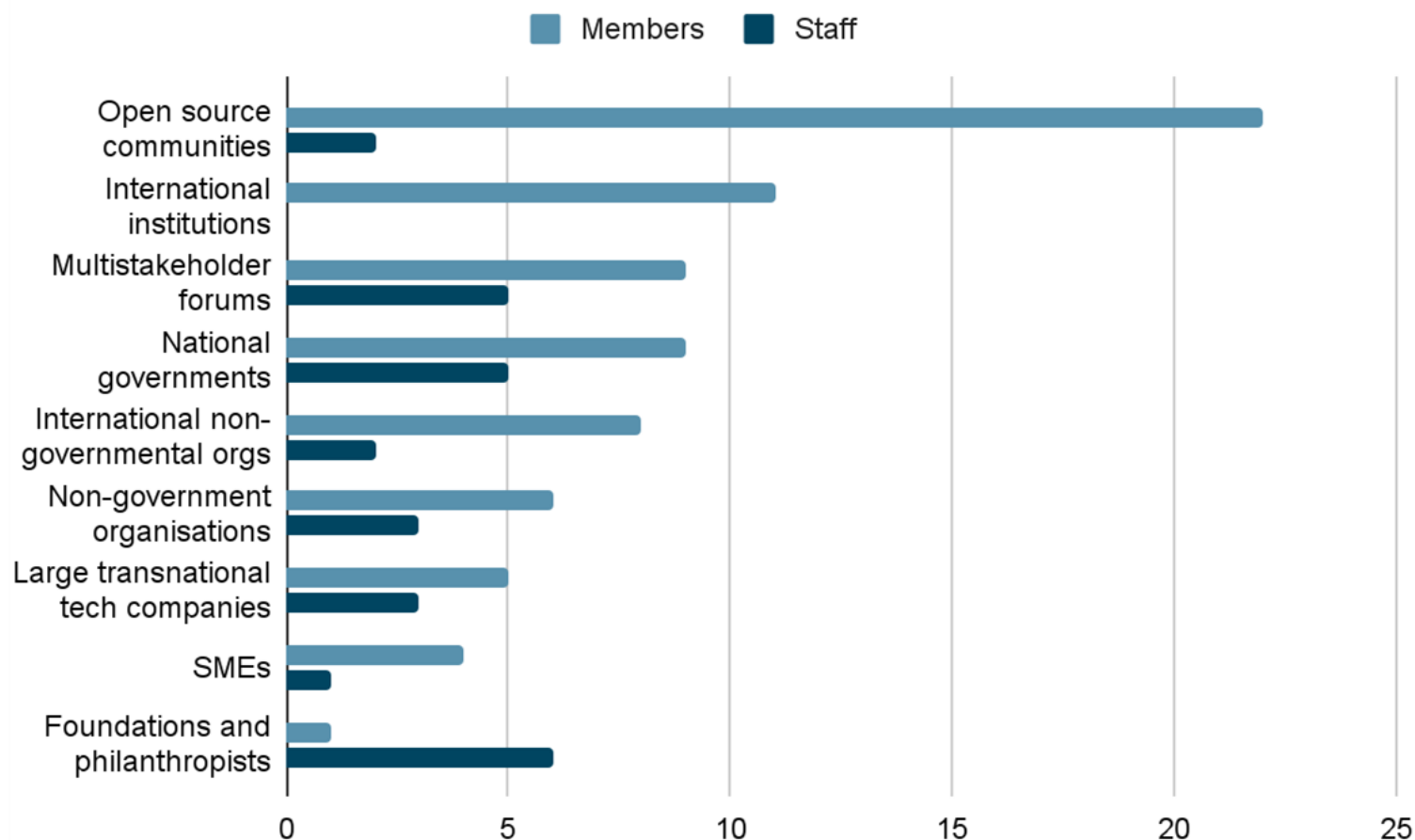# 'Existing digital infrastructure' is a priority for members and staff

Q9. In which of the following areas do you think Nominet could contribute meaningful support? (n=41)
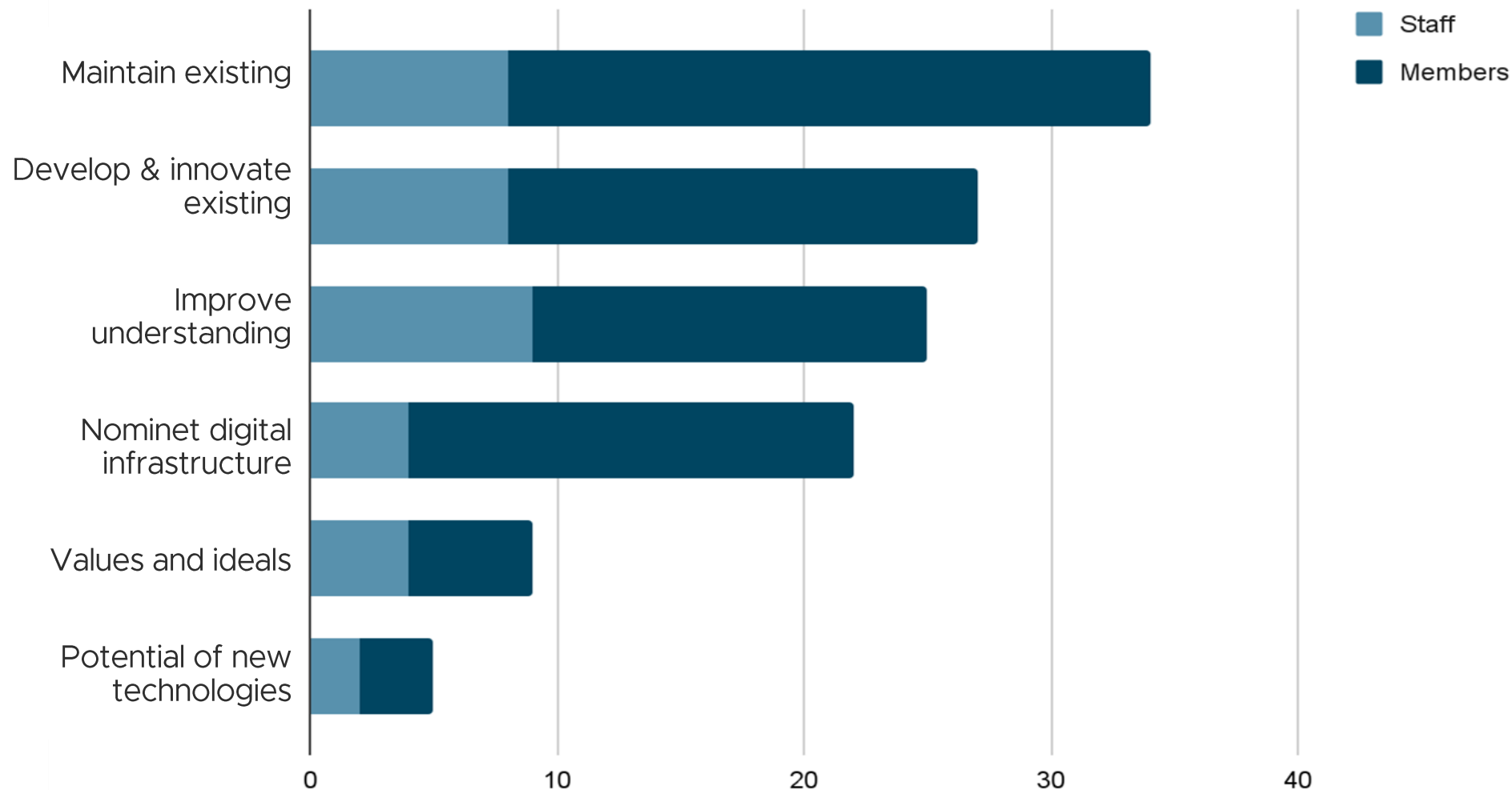
The open source community is key for members

Q7. Who is best placed to fix these issues and challenges? Select up to three. (n=41)

Legend: Members, Staff

Open source communities
International institutions
Multistakeholder forums
National governments
International non-governmental orgs
Non-government organisations
Large transnational tech companies
SMEs
Foundations and philanthropists

X-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25

"Invest profits into Open Source software development and research, with a focus on human rights. Seriously, nothing else."
Member

"Funding proven open-source projects to ensure their ongoing security and speed up development would secure the internet for everyone."
Member

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"When all of the people who are being paid well to maintain OSS are doing it at the behest of a for profit corporation, the **motivations are going to inherently steer them toward profit driven motivations.**"

Expert Advisor

Problems in pre-existing OSS funding...

1

Majority of funding stemming from corporates and not foundations which can bias development towards corporate interests

2

Single source funding i.e. just one funder for one project

3

Funding not being available for individuals (only projects)

Nominet DNS Fund

Key Details

Primary Goal

Fund and improve the security, long-term sustainability, and resilience of DNS open source projects.

Focus

Open source critical infrastructure components relevant to the development, deployment, and operation of the global DNS.

Funding available

Round 1: £370,000 maximum of £100k per applicant.
Round 2: TBA

Key dates

17th September to 26th October.

More at nominet.uk/our-impact/nominet-dns-fund/

Assessment principles: In the pilot

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Criteria	
1 Public benefit	To what extent your work enable safe, secure and resilient running or critical infrastructure, whose loss or compromise could severely impact society?
2 Core need	To what extent does the successful, resilient operation of the global DNS depend on this solution to operate?
3 Proven use	Is the technology or capability already being used successfully and at scale?
4 The right people	Does the person or team have the skills, experience, and understanding needed for this task? Do they have a track record of getting similar things done?
5 Value and sustainability	Does the proposal represent good value for money, and would the funded activity help ensure long-term sustainability?

A wide variety of open-source DNS projects have applied

- Improving DNS path transparency
- Running query sequences on DNS resolvers
- DNS tracking to reduce maintenance and admin issues
- Maintaining and improving DNS client and server libraries
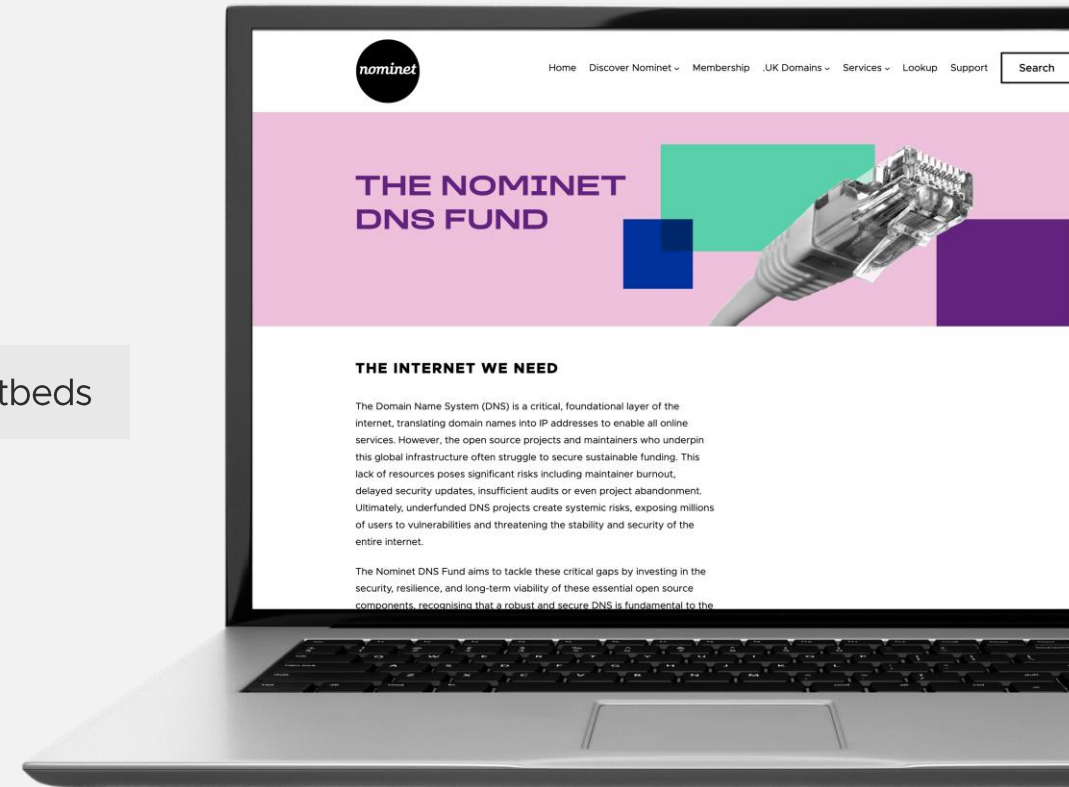- Creating and using DNS security testing environments / testbeds
- Monitoring availability and performance of DNS servers
- Monitoring DNS traffic for performance optimisation
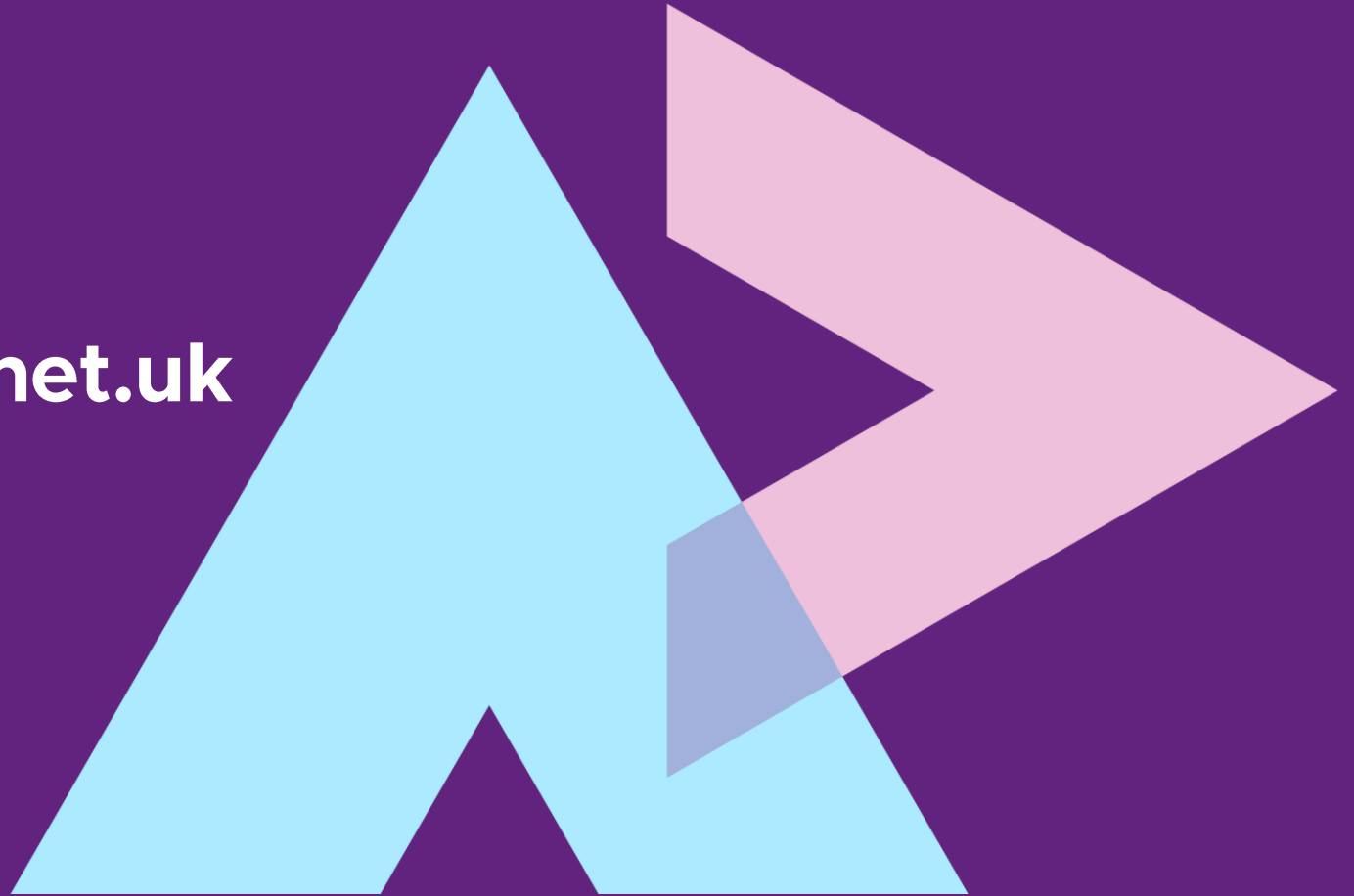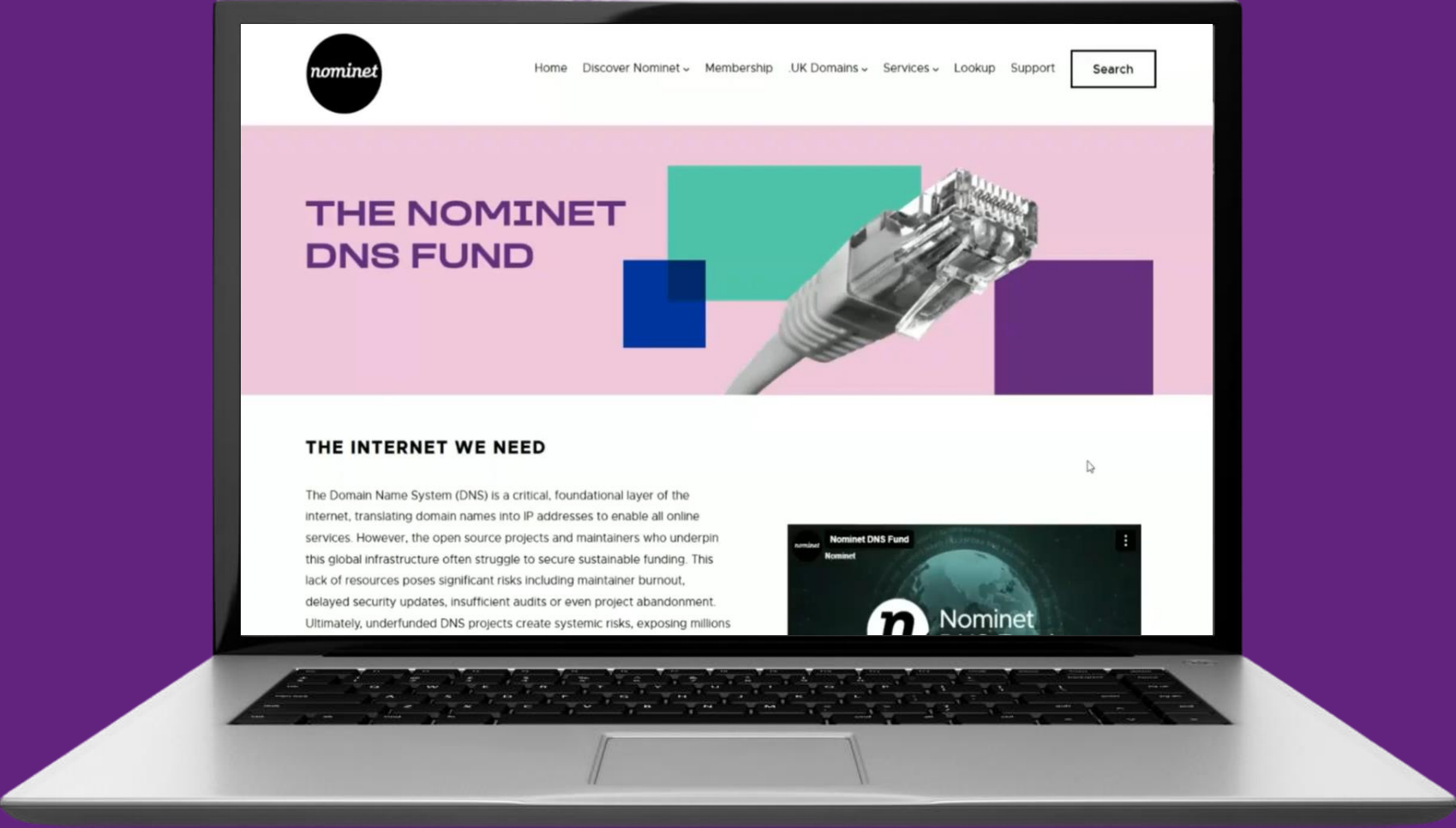- Assessing adoption of critical internet standards

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THE NOMINET DNS FUND

THE INTERNET WE NEED

The Domain Name System (DNS) is a critical, foundational layer of the internet, translating domain names into IP addresses to enable all online services. However, the open source projects and maintainers who underpin this global infrastructure often struggle to secure sustainable funding. This lack of resources poses significant risks including maintainer burnout, delayed security updates, insufficient audits or even project abandonment. Ultimately, underfunded DNS projects create systemic risks, exposing millions of users to vulnerabilities and threatening the stability and security of the entire internet.

The Nominet DNS Fund aims to tackle these critical gaps by investing in the security, resilience, and long-term viability of these essential open source components, recognising that a robust and secure DNS is fundamental to the

Based on what you've heard, what should funders like us stop doing?

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Thank you

amy.odonnell@nominet.uk

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THE NOMINET
DNS FUND

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