The community networks gathered at the first Community Networks Summit, held from September 7 to 16 in Argentina, arrived at a set of definitions, proposals and recommendations that are expressed in this document.

Definition of community network

The purpose of elaborating a definition of community networks is to be able to recognize ourselves as a collective with common principles and purposes, as well as to agree upon a common language that can be used by us and the different national, regional and international organizations that issue decisions or resolutions that impact the development of this type of community media.

This definition enunciates the main elements and characteristics of this type of network, however it is recognized that there may be innovative community mechanisms that are not considered within the definition, so its content and scope may continue to be discussed and evolve.

Community networks are networks collectively owned and managed by the community for non-profit and community purposes.
They are constituted by collectives, indigenous communities or non-profit civil society organizations that exercise their right to communicate, under the principles of democratic participation of their members, equity, gender equality, diversity and plurality.
The information on the network design and operation is open and accessible, allowing and favoring the extension of the network by the users. Community networks promote local services and content, promote net neutrality and free interconnection and transit agreements with networks offering reciprocity.

Financing

The networks represented at the Summit elaborated a series of recommendations - based on the wealth of experiences shared by each group - that serve to guide the financing programs that aim to support the development of community networks.
The financing, mentioned in this section, is understood as a complement to the internal economic management that each network organizes for its day to day sustainability.

We identify as important that:

- collective actions and strategies are financed in relation to: regulatory [we should include policy here - peter] impact, technological development, training and social impact;
- the Community Networks Special Interest Group (CNSIG) - or another collective space that represents us collectively - manages an annual fund that can be used to allocate small amounts, for example between 3 and 5 thousand dollars, to projects that are beginning. These funds, designed as a Bootstrap Fund, are intended to meet the initial needs of acquiring equipment for infrastructure, technical support and training processes;
- cooperation agencies and non-governmental organizations/international NGOs develop financing strategies focused on collaboration and coordination instead of competition amongst Community Networks, for greater impact and benefit in the ecosystem of community networks and their beneficiary populations;
- clear and agile policies and mechanisms for the allocation of Universal Service Funds[1] to community networks are developed;
- objective studies are financed to understand the costs of deploying community networks in underserved areas and to study their added social value.

Use of resources for underserved areas

We understand that governments, private operators and other stakeholders that do not serve areas with scarce or deficient communications infrastructure could encourage and support community networks at little or no cost to themselves. This would enable community networks to keep reducing the connectivity gap while generating a high postive impact towards achieving obligations, mandates and objectives in relation to the goals of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs / UN) and other regional (Res. CITEL 268/2016) and global (Rec. ITU-D 19) agreements.

- Idle bandwidth: there are successful cases in the region of idle bandwidth usage provided by academic entities which make it available to community networks at times when the

1 Universal service is an economic, legal and business term used mostly in regulated industries, referring to the practice of providing a baseline level of services to every resident of a country. The formation of Universal Services Funds by many states arose from the need to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban communities as well as the rich and the poor, which has been created through the use of private capital to fund telecommunication/ICT projects." https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/stg/D-STG-SG01.05-2017-PDF-E.pdf (p. 35-36)

resource is being underutilized. These types of agreements could be adopted by various public or private actors, allowing for a more efficient use of the resource. Satellite providers are already evaluating offering free or low-cost bandwidth to community networks during low traffic time.

- Extension of public access points: various government programs create access points in public places in regions with little connectivity. These programs should include community networks as a complement to extend connectivity to homes and other points of interest for the local community.
- Community management of government plans: States often deploy infrastructure plans in unattended areas without carrying out a process of popular adoption of technology within the community. This results in an underutilization of local skills, which would extend the life-time of the infrastructure.
- Access to infrastructure: free access to towers, poles, pipelines, shelters, data centers, etc. represents a low cost for the entities that would provide access, but a high value for community networks, facilitating their deployment. In certain cases this is a necessary condition for their existence.
- Free interconnection: it is important that a regime of free interconnection (free peering) between government networks and the community networks deployed in their territory be determined as a default policy in the region. Also, private actors concerned about the reduction of the digital divide could establish similar agreements, which consider the use of idle capacity. It would also be advisable that the Internet exchange points (IXP) consider the cost-free participation of community networks.
- Transit: Tier 1 networks with presence in a given region could offer community networks free global transit agreements. Government and private networks with national coverage could offer national or regional transit agreements under the same conditions.
- IP resources: the community networks of the region propose to elaborate a policy in LACNIC that would exempt community networks from the costs of obtaining and renewing IP resources and Autonomous System Numbers.

Regulatory Framework

In the same sense of the previous point, the regulatory framework in the region needs to be updated in order to comply with the recommendations of CITEL and ITU regarding the promotion of non-profit providers operating in rural or unattended areas.
Governments need to discuss national legislation recognizing the existence of community and non-profit communications operators and their differentiated and favorable treatment.

Legalization:

- In terms of licensing, clear and agile mechanisms must be established to facilitate access to the licenses and resources necessary for legally recognized operation;

- in terms of declaration of deployments [this is not very clear or easy to understand in English - Peter], the Governments that require such declaration, made by registered professionals, of transmitting stations and other network components, should facilitate the process and provide free access to the necessary professional services;
- with respect to the approval and harmonization of equipment, community networks often use equipment developed by them or technologies that are not yet used massively in commercial operations. It would be convenient for governments to facilitate the approval procedures for the technical teams involved and eliminate the economic barriers.

Spectrum:

- spectrum planning should consider reserves for social, community or indigenous uses;
- agile, adequate and free spectrum licensing processes, for example: by direct assignment;
- consider mechanisms for efficient use and spectrum sharing, such as secondary use, dynamic access and allocation of local or regional coverage.
- experimental licenses must easily transition to definitive licenses once the viability of the project has been demonstrated.

Tax exemptions for community networks:

- elimination of taxes, fees and charges, whether one-time or recurrent, in relation to all aspects of the operation of this type of networks, including the use of spectrum;
- reduction or elimination of equipment import taxes.

Horizons and challenges

The Latin American collective of community networks represented has identified a number of goals to continue working on common strategies in relation to:

Training: focusing on the creation of a network of community network schools to contribute to the dissemination of information and tools necessary for the creation of new community networks as well as for existing community networks to have a space to turn to for continuing education and training.
Technology: promote the creation of a development laboratory that allows better coordination and use of resources to meet collective needs and their technical solutions.
Regulatory impact: promote the participation of the CNSIG in CITEL, ITU and other spaces of interest for our sector.
Impact: encourage the preparation of reports focused on the social value of community networks.
Local content: implement strategies that allow communities to strengthen their cultural and organizational heritage, safeguard traditional knowledge and fully and effectively exercise the right to communication and freedom of expression. It is important that this content is shared through technology adapted to the possibility of each territory and its licensing agreed upon to respect the decisions of each's self-governance.

The Latin American member organizations of the Internet Society Community Networks Special Interest Group (CNSIG) took part in the in the Latin American Summit of Community Networks, Argentina, 2018, and they accompany this document:
AlterMundi (Argentina)
Red Comunitaria Atalaya Sur (Argentina)
Coolab (Brasil)
Rhizomática (México)
Telecomunicaciones Indígenas Comunitarias (México)

Other collectives and comunity networks present in the summit:
Red Fusa Libre / Universidad de Cundinamarca (Colombia)
Red comunitaria de Caimito (Ecuador)
Red comunitaria Chaski (Argentina)
Colnodo (Colombia)
Cooperativa de mujeres Luisa Ortiz (Nicaragua)
La Vaca / Río Cuarto (Argentina)
Mesa de Comunicación Popular de Salta (Argentina)
Moinho Mesh (Brasil)
NonoLibre y Nono Lab (Argentina)
Observatorio Dercom / Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina)
Red Celcom / Universidad Federal de Para (Brasil)
REDES AC (México)
Las redes comunitarias reunidas en la primera Cumbre de Redes Comunitarias, realizada del 7 al 16 de Septiembre en Argentina, arribamos a un conjunto de definiciones, propuestas y recomendaciones que se plasman en este documento.