

# Ideation Phase 1 of N

## Raw Ideas without Implementation Details

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### HOW TO VOTE:

- Comment with a **1-3** anywhere near an **idea you like**. **Ideas are in Purple Bold Headings with Yellow Highlights**
- Comment "1" for "okay"
- Comment "2" for "good"
- Comment "3" for "great."
- You can vote on **multiple** ideas (or none.)

### Introduction

This report is simply a documentation of ideas and will sound informal since it is a call to vote on, improve, discard or use **ANY NUMBER (INCLUDING ZERO) OF** these ideas. It is also a call to inspire brainstorming and I encourage anyone reading this to add their ideas to this pad [\[HERE\]](#) anonymously. **Or comment anywhere on this document.**

A lot of gamification conversations turn into "how to reward relay operators" - and that is but one of 4 major parts of the goals we are trying to reach.) Gamification is a pathway, a great one, but not the end goal.

### Quick refresher to our actual goals with this project:

attracting more relay operators

learning from relay operators' experiences and make new relay operators' experience smoother wherever possible

rewarding existing relay operators to continue their efforts

building and furthering a transparent and trusted relay community

## 1. Money as Reward

This is the no-brainer solution at the surface but with **due context** and careful design it can be built as a reward into a gamified system that encourages desirable activity in the Tor Network (relay operators being transparent about their identities.)

## 1.1 Grants to Verified-Only Relay Operators

If there is any chance for rewarding cash prizes only verified relay operators should be eligible. This was coincidentally also suggested by one of the relay operators who answered our survey. Grants to verified relay operators - emphasis on “verified” as it promotes the social trust facet we’re trying to build in the relay operator community.

**Pros:** promotes long term trust and consistency of relay operator identity.

**Cons:** may attract frustration if the way of qualifying as a “verified” relay operator is vague or unpredictable.

### How we can mitigate cons:

By making the process of being a verified operator very clear and predictable, showing relay operators their “progress” on progress bars, sharing “exemplars.”

## 1.2 Cash Prizes

Relay operators hitting certain progress milestones get rewarded with cash prizes associated with that milestone.

- **Short term** task-to-reward scheme where Relay Operators get some cash for doing something specific.
- **Long term** progressive rewarding scheme identical to the Run a Bridge campaign.

### Pros:

- 1 - Long term solid rewards will keep people passively engaged in long term activities of running relays.
- 2 - Short term rewards can get certain priority-based / urgent tasks completed by the community and are flexible, can extend to bug bounty-like campaigns, testing campaigns, webinars/talks, mentoring, workshop hosting.
- 3 - Cash prizes can be used to offset relay running costs.
- 4 - This system is effective as observed from the Run a Bridge campaign

### Cons:

- 1 - Not immersive/engaging enough to count as a complete holistic incentive scheme.
- 2 - Does not align with values as relay operators are largely not motivated by money - it is optional or “good to have” but not central to motivation.
- 3 - Independent from trust and community building.
- 4 - Needs a funding mechanism

### How we can mitigate cons:

- 1 - We can make it immersive by attaching it to a points system / trust system with additional rewards and context
- 2 - We can make it a secondary reward instead of primary.
- 3 - We can tie cash prizes as a secondary reward scheme to other social / community building activities like webinars/talks, mentoring, and workshop hosting.

## 1.3 Donations in your name to Friends of Tor or Relay Organizations

Relay Operators progressively collect points that translate into cash over time. They then choose to donate away this cash at regular intervals / when they hit milestones.

They are given the choice to donate to Tor itself, friends of Tor, or verified Tor relay organizations like Artikel10, NosOignons etc.

### **Pros:**

- This scheme can be used to partially fund exit relay running organizations via other relay operators making the relay operating experience somewhat peer-for-peer aligning motivations perfectly.
- Further rewarding non-Exit relay operators with the fulfillment of contributing to Exit relays. This intrinsically rewards the altruism of those who wanted to run Exit relays but couldn't because of hostile internet policies in their countries, or infrastructure reasons, etc.
- Immersive. This system is long term, and depending on who you choose to donate to (announced publicly/privately to the receiver), creates social nets and opportunities for networking and social trust.
- Values. This system rewards the most observed value of altruism observed in Relay Operators by doubling down on social good.

### **Cons:**

- 1 - Needs a stable source of funding.
- 2 - Altruism is observed under the current system and should not be assumed for the new system - not everyone will be keen on sending money away to other organizations or causes, they should have a choice.
- 3 - Giving relay operators the choice to send their funds to organizations might start conflicts between popular organizations and otherwise.

### **How we can mitigate cons:**

- 1 - Introduce a tier of volunteers who help specifically with funding. These can be financial analysts, students, anyone from the management studies community, anyone who wants to help and possibly gain hands-on experience, volunteer orgs etc.
- 2 - Giving relay operators the choice to cash out the amount their relays have collected, keeping donation as a choice
- 3 - Giving relay operators the choice to not pick anyone from the list if they don't have a preference. No-preference pools go to unpopular / lesser known projects or organizations.

## 2. Scholarship

Introducing scholarships for InfoSec students / CompSci students who run relays. to support their relay expenses and college-level / school-level relay running efforts. This falls under the money as reward section but the effect of this scheme might be a lot different. Taking up relay running to further technical knowledge is a motivation seen quite frequently in our survey analysis.

### Pros:

- Tor advocacy on University and Academia level: Students whose universities have idle infrastructure can potentially run relays of all kinds and recruit fellow relay enthusiasts and form communities.
- A common pain point observed with Tor relay running is the learning curve - this can be solved at university level with student relay operators who have a tendency of learning and problem solving.
- Free press and awareness via students: Students have time and other flexibilities / incentives to carry out Tor community building activities. (It's Fun!)
- Possible collaboration with Universities - Students receiving grants from FOSS foundations like Tor may open up conversations with Universities to further Tor's mission
- Targeting a new demographic - Students who do not have financial resources (but have other resources like time, and curiosity) can run relays if there's support.

### Cons:

- 1 - Places communication/education overhead with universities if we are to host activities other than running the relay itself.
- 2 - Someone from Tor will have to overlook any complex activities like seminars for legitimacy. Tor themselves will need to announce these events so participants know it is Tor's own initiative and not malicious actors impersonating Tor employees etc. in attempts to scam students/universities.

### How we can mitigate cons:

- 1 - Create documentation specifically for students and universities with guidelines on how to conduct events, how to contact Tor

2 - Create documentation with authorization steps and warn universities / students to authenticate external volunteers by communicating with Tor, BEFORE running any events.

### 3. Tor Swag as Rewards

**Pros:**

- They are popular and do not come with the moral/philosophical pandemonium money comes with and does not distort core motivations of the community like money does.
- We are furthering branding efforts, this is a good way to circulate Tor's brand identity
- Flexible - for one time tasks or longer term tasks.

**Cons:**

- 1 - They are bound to get stale. "Here's your monthly / yearly hoodie" does not work.
- 2 - There is a limit on how much Tor-branded wearable merchandise or stickers / paraphernalia one can want or need.

**How we can mitigate cons:**

- 1 - Diversify WHAT we create as merchandise. Hardware trinkets, custom hardware, charms, stationery items that can be "exhausted" - like notebooks.
- 2 - Diversify the design of merchandise itself and create "collectibles" for long term contributors - like a whole collection of trading cards or something that makes sense as a collection. This creates another opportunity for "limited edition" merchandising to attract more funding or as an exciting reward for urgent calls to action

### 4. Mentorship Program

Ask relay operators if they want to sign up as mentors for other relay operators. Ask them if they want to host/conduct seminars or webinars in their community and provide them with the resources and support to do it. There is joy in mentorship and fellowship as seen in interactions on the mailing list, forum and survey analysis. Most relay operators are not driven by money.

**Pros:**

- Many other volunteers may be eligible to further Tor's mission by signing up to this program and assisting Relay Mentors.
- This is also a chance to build and strengthen relay operator community and make it more accessible to newcomers.
- There is also potential for building 1-to-1 trust with the relay operators, a hub for networking and teamworking, and potential for old school word-of-mouth press.

**Cons:**

- 1 - This might take some time to kick in as it requires relay operators to contribute work bandwidth.
- 2 - This might place too much peer-to-peer responsibility on mentors.

3 - Verification and Qualification: Relay operators need to be vetted in some way to qualify as mentors, they also need to be verified and recognized by Tor in some way as real people and not malicious actors.

#### **How we can mitigate cons:**

- 1 - Describe very clearly what mentorship means and entails, what to expect etc.
- 2 - Make the mentor-to-mentee relationship all-to-all instead of one-to-one
- 3 - Start with a set of people who qualify as Relay Mentors now, formulate checklists with them to create "Qualifier Tests/Interviews" - conduct these tests and create certificates for Relay Mentors.

## **5. Rewards in the Form of Power to do More**

As seen repeatedly across survey answers, emails and other communication, the Tor Relay Operator community is very excited to do more and participate more actively. As seen in the gamification study - doing more community/team work outweighs physical/monetary rewards in terms of satisfaction in a 3-to-1 ratio.

Much like #4 - Mentorship Program, relay operators who want to diversify their efforts can be recognized formally by Tor as

- **trainers, onboarders** - relay operators qualified to train newer operators
- educators - relay operators qualified to talk about Tor relays at events, host webinars recognized by Tor
- **support** - relay operators who are recognized by Tor as capable of solving relay support queries
- **organizers** - relay operators who can form associations with each other and have those
- **associations** recognized by Tor as an external group / Friend of Tor.
- **campaigners** - relay operators who apply to run campaigns for more relays, more awareness etc.
- **technical writers** - relay operators who have seen it all firsthand and want to write/moderate more helpful documentation/forum advice.
- **forum moderators** - moderators who can filter out / rank advice specific to tor relays or best practices, solutions etc on forums to arrange info on priority

#### **Pros:**

- Diversifying Relay Operators' efforts will gamify their own experience by nature.
- They will feel more engaged with the community and help build it at the same time
- They will have an avenue to feel heard and seen.
- They will be able to attract non-technical volunteers

#### **Cons:**

- 1 - Lots of initial community overhead (which will later disperse as more people get recognized as Tor Advocates)

2 - This plan relies on relay operators' time commitments and will be irregular like freelance work.

**How we can mitigate cons:**

1 - As Tor chooses recognizes volunteers, if they qualify to be objectively trustworthy (I am teasing a trust-metric system here) Tor can transfer more power and responsibility to these relay operators to do community work.

2 - This program can be discussed / synchronized with / made a part of Relay Operator Meetups

## 6. Shoutouts

Daily/monthly shoutouts to publicly acknowledge relay operators for their great contribution with relays and otherwise. This can be done on Tor's main website along with the Relay Operator portal (there should be a portal!)

**Pros:**

- Relatively easy to implement once relay operators establish a consistent identity
- Incentivizes relay operators to make their identity consistent (and have a self-brand - this is the backbone of every idea on this list)
- Free.
- Offers finish-lines for relay operators to engage in healthy competition with each other in any given country / community / culture / niche.
- Offers recognition and popularity as points-of-contact for relay operators and a chance to be looked up to or reached out to for relay discussions, queries, how-did-yous etc.

**Cons:**

1 - A sense of unfair advantage to those who can contribute more.

2 - Claims of favoritism that plague many FOSS communities

3 - People can pick offensive nicknames to be featured on the Tor websites/portals/social media

**How we can mitigate cons:**

1 - Create a system that makes fair opportunities for everyone to participate and get shoutouts for.

2 - Detail every contribution made by operators getting these shoutouts and space them out over time (in a rotation that does not repeat names) to display diversity even if there are superstar contributors.

3 - Make it clear that shoutouts require you to follow the code of conduct. Make shoutouts monthly or of a smaller frequency so someone can monitor names.

## 7. Relay Award Ceremony

Meetups hosting a relay award ceremony. An extension to badges and shoutouts- but more immersive. Humans look forward to eventful experiences, the meetups can be one.

### Pros:

- Offers formal recognition and certificates or similar paraphernalia to remember these events by
- Creates a sense of competition and compels others to compete for fun
- Added interest in meetups for winners and runners-up
- Diversifies the agenda of a meetup and creates opportunities for creative discussions about what else can be done for Tor Relays
- Addresses the "Tor feels distant" pain point directly as long as these ceremonies involve the participation of Tor's employees and directors etc.

### Cons:

1 - It is relatively hard to track and evaluate who qualifies to receive an award and when

### How we can mitigate cons:

1 - This needs a complex but fair and transparent system to evaluate who qualifies for a Tor Relay Award. Anyone participating should have access to their own progress bar to show them how close they are to an award, suggestions on what they can do to get an award, etc.