



## HOW WE MEET: A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The BC thanks ICANN for starting the process to review our meeting calendar and request for community feedback to make meetings more effective and efficient.

After due consideration and discussion within our members, we are pleased to submit the following comments on this topic.

### I. OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

It is critical for the entire ICANN community to be more fiscally prudent, since the negative impact of budgetary constraints will be harmful for everyone including the ICANN org, Board and the wider ICANN community.

Categorizing the meetings/gatherings into “need to have” and “nice to have” is the first step in conducting the cost benefit analysis of our meetings and gatherings. This simple step can assist in deciding from where we can extract the required cost savings.

It is very important to keep in mind that any decision which is taken as an outcome of this exercise should be EQUALLY beneficial for ALL members and groups within the community and should neither penalize nor be advantageous to only one community group.

### II. IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK & DIALOGUE

#### Broader Strategic Ideas Spanning All Community Meetings

**Evaluate the full cycle of in-person and hybrid community meetings, including standalone SOAC Leadership and Strategic Planning meetings, targeted group meetings (such as the Contracted Parties Summit, the At Large Summit, and the High-Level Governmental Meeting) and similar, cost-intensive, travel-dependent Meetings**

- Physical ICANN meetings can be safely categorized as “need to have”. While we all conduct much of the work remotely, the physical meetings allow not only relationship building and more nuanced conversation (people are far more willing to debate and compromise when they’ve spoken face-to-face, including during corridor or coffee conversations) but also serve as an opportunity for people from the region to attend and be more involved.
- The meetings for specific groups/SOACs could be reviewed since they are intended for the direct benefit of only one group. They can either be conducted virtually or alternatively, clubbed with existing ICANN meetings to reduce the overall cost of logistics with ICANN staff to put together and manage them. All constituencies should have equal opportunity to meet and connect in person which when combined with ICANN meetings can also allow more interaction with other community members.
- If needed, these group-specific meetings can be sponsored either by the SOAC/community themselves or an external party and managed/supported by ICANN staff.
- The Board’s meeting calendar can also be reviewed and wherever possible the meetings can be combined with ICANN public meetings or conducted virtually.

**Review the planning by ICANN Org and the community for all in-person/hybrid meetings (including ICANN Public Meetings) by adopting an annualized, regular approach of planning for a full meeting cycle (either by a calendar year or a fiscal year)**

- Ideally, it will be quite efficient if each community group can organize their work calendar, priorities and agenda as per the ICANN public meeting schedule; this is attempted by the BC as and when possible. But it is not always feasible given the unpredictable nature of events within ICANN and the global arena. We definitely encourage this and look forward to contributing to planning for the same.
- However, each part of the community sets its own priorities, and agenda, and will use their (rare) in-person time together for their own best interests. Things change during any given year; the communities need to be able to react to reality, not only expected targets/milestones. It would be extremely difficult to know a year in advance when a consensus decision will be needed just as it may be difficult to impose stricter timelines on the working groups to also align their work to the ICANN meeting calendars.

**As part of the discussions around #1 & #2, consider a review of the current allocation of Funded Travelers to each ICANN Public Meeting**

- The funded travelers’ program is essential to keeping the ICANN community engaged with members from all regions and economic strata.
- Each of the community groups have and should continue to allocate their funded travel slots as they deem fit, since they are in the best position to understand the need of their community. We therefore appreciate this confirmation: “ICANN org is not proposing to change the practice that it is for each community group to decide how to allocate its travel slots, in accordance with its own internal rules and processes.”

- One cost saving measure in this regard would be to book the flights for funded travelers as early as possible to get better flight rates. In most cases the funded traveler and the destination is known far in advance hence making it possible to book the flight tickets. A pilot for the same can be conducted for ICANN 83 and the cost savings will help determine if this should be made a standard practice.

## Narrower Ideas Focusing on ICANN Public Meetings

### **Reduce the number of sessions at ICANN Public Meetings, which could result in a reduction in the cost of travel (i.e., accommodation) and venue-related costs (e.g., room and equipment rentals, contractors)**

- Reducing the number of sessions for the sole purpose of reducing cost is contradictory to the whole ethos of ICANN meetings and may turn out to cost more in the long run.
- “Focusing each ICANN Public Meeting on specific types of sessions” or “bunching’ of specific community sessions” would promote silos and be against the whole idea of the multi-stakeholder model. Each community group needs time to learn about the work and progress of other groups to help move the work forward. These meetings provide a valuable chance for community members to engage, learn, discuss and react to matters from other parts of the community.
- Prep week should focus on two broad areas: (a) updates, where little if any debate is needed, and (b) overviews that will feed into discussion in person. Prep week should be the digital equivalent of reading the background papers before you attend any meeting.

### **Reduce or eliminate informational and training sessions at ICANN Public Meetings**

- A review of the attendance of the existing training sessions can help determine the interest in that session and its continued relevance. A policy that reviews each training session’s attendance, and whether attendees found it useful, and puts in place checks to eliminate the session if the attendance/use falls below a threshold, will be helpful.
- A running list where members can request training sessions and show their interest in existing sessions can be good yard stick to measure the relevance of these sessions and help decide if a virtual training session will be more helpful or an in-person one.
- However, in a restricted financial environment, all such events – not least those involving external consultants – may best be categorized as “nice to have”.

### **Reduce or eliminate ICANN-hosted or ICANN-sponsored social and outreach events at, or associated with, an ICANN Public Meeting**

- There can be a method of rationalize the social gatherings and events which are inconsistent in their number and quality at each of the ICANN meetings. One session is “need to have”: the entire community should have the opportunity to interact socially at least once. These sessions help build cross community camaraderie and serve to bring the whole community together. More than one is “nice to have”.

- We agree with the following suggestion - “may be possible to seek sponsors for hosted events as well as explore creative ways to facilitate networking”.

**Move at least one (1) upcoming ICANN Public Meeting to a Virtual Meeting**

- We disagree. Reducing the number of ICANN public meetings will be a disservice to the ICANN community. The return to in-person meetings following the pandemic reminded everyone about how valuable it is to meet face-to-face, and we can attest to the fact that ICANN public meetings help move the needle on many topics. This would suffer if a meeting were eliminated.

**Review the current state of ICANN Public Meetings, with a view toward updating the ten-year-old ICANN Meetings Strategy (dating from 2014) to match current and expected future needs and budget constraints**

- “Smaller, regional, targeted meetings” will be contrary to the needs of the ICANN community and create silos.
- Instead of the revising the number of meetings, more focus can be placed on the duration and the sessions within each meeting. Again, the attendance of each meeting and the attendance of each session should serve as a yardstick to help measure the effectiveness of each meeting.