

# The Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group's (MEAC-SWG) Response to the Call for Public Comment on the 'Proposed New Fellowship Program Approach'

In its mission to continue and deepen its engagement with the regional community in the Middle East and Adjoining Countries (MEAC), the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has worked with the regional community through its Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) team for the Middle East since 2013 in order to contribute to the development and implementation of a regional strategy.

With 58 members and 18 observers, the [MEAC Strategy Working Group's](#) (MEAC-SWG) mission is to *"attract more active and engaged participants from the region to contribute to ICANN's policy development processes and to acquire leading roles within the ICANN community."* Since the ICANN Fellowship Program has produced active community members for years, it is very strongly linked to the MEAC-SWG's mission, especially since many of the members and observers are alumni of the program. This is also evident from the active involvement of ICANN fellows in the SWG and other initiatives by ICANN in the region. Therefore, the MEAC-SWG considers it vital to respond to the call for public comment on "Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach".

We welcome the new proposed fellowship program approach and provide our itemized responses based on it different sections as presented below.



## Outreach and Recruitment

- SOs/ACs provide clear targets on desired skills and diversity
- ICANN Organization uses input to implement targeted outreach

## MEAC-SWG Comments

The MEAC-SWG believes that, while desired skills as an input from the supporting organizations (SOs) and advisory committees (ACs) is of great importance, it is also important to solicit input from the regional GSE teams since they are the ones actively engaged with the community in each particular region. As such, there should be input of the regional GSE team when establishing the required skill and diversity requirements for the fellows.

Attracting individuals from underserved and underrepresented regions should remain the main goal of the Fellowship program and not limited to SOs/ACs applicants.

Outreach is not enough to find applicants that have the desired skills targeted by the program in underserved and underrepresented regions. Instead, a set of special ICANN skills is needed via a capacity building program to develop potential candidates would be an important component of the Fellowship program. The successful fellow of such capacity program could provide great potential fellows for the SOs/ACs.



### Application

- Those interested in applying take an introductory ICANN Learn course; proof of course completion required to apply
- Interested individuals encouraged to reach out to their regional GSE representatives

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

The idea of requiring potential fellows to complete an ICANN Learn course is good and encouraged. Conversely, however, the MEAC-SWG maintains the opinion that webinars, calls, and/or chat sessions can also be arranged by the GSE, and alumni for potential applicants so they can get a good idea of what is expected of the fellows and address any questions. We recommend that once the Fellowship round is open for applications, such a session be arranged before the deadline. Also, the MEAC-SWG believes that for the interested individuals, in addition to reaching out to the regional GSE team, it may also be a good idea that they reach out to the alumni of the fellowship program because they are in a better position to help explain and introduce the program, its expectations, and benefits. The application form and modalities have to be designed to capture and identify the knowledge between the newcomers, alumni, and others engaged in SOs/ACs. Although the current application form does capture the difference between the newcomers and the alumni, there is still a need to capture the desired skills for the SOs/ACs.



### Selection

- Selection committee made up of SO/AC appointees to serve 2-3 year terms
- Criteria for selection of committee members identified by relevant SOs/ACs; ICANN Org to provide guidance on skills and commitment required
- Criteria for selection of applicants to be reviewed and revamped by SO/AC selection committee members; individuals with desired skills that meet all criteria to be given special consideration
- Strict three-time fellowship limit to be imposed
- Diversity of applicant pool remains a priority
- Terms and conditions of Fellows updated by SO/AC selection committee members

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

It would be good to consult th GSE teams about the selected fellows by the SOs/ACs before the announcement, as they might be in a better position to validate the applicant information. The term ‘Diversity’ should be defined in order to have accountable and transparent criteria. There should also be an evaluation process of the selection committees activities to make sure that they respect the selection criteria set by the SOs/ACs.



### Pre-Meeting Preparation

- Mentors identified by SOs/ACs to be paired with selectees
- ICANN Learn courses to serve as pre-requisites for those selected to participate
- Mentors to provide additional guidance and support, as needed, including on-site

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

Mentors should be selected based on a transparent criteria, such as:

- ❑ Mentors should be very active within some ICANN workgroups,
- ❑ The matching process for mentors and mentees should consider geographic and topical familiarity of the mentor and mentee, and match them appropriately.

The mentors should provide guidance for shadowing the fellows. Mentors should be assessed based on standard assessment criteria developed by the SOs/ACs in line with their needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and if the mentee has benefited from his/her fellowship/mentor experience.

It should also be clearly communicated to the selected candidates that they have to be consistently in touch with their mentor from the time of selection until the ICANN meeting as well as during and after the meeting.



### **On-Site**

- Fellows are required to attend working group and other sessions identified by their mentors
- Fellows engage and network with relevant (to their interests) policy and advice experts

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

The MEAC-SWG holds the view that fellows should attend sessions that are relevant to their stakeholder group and individual interests. These sessions can be identified by the help of mentors. The fellow's schedule should include a session organised by GSE team members and with the participation of mentors and all fellows from the region. Additionally, the MEAC-SWG also suggests that fellows attend sessions that are related to their region, such as the regional spaces, for these are the sessions where they can easily network with the more senior members of the community from the region. Fellows should attend and report on the activities of at least one working group identified in collaboration with their mentors.



### **Post-Meeting Requirements**

- Fellows submit a report detailing their activities and indicate:
  - Which community group they plan on engaging with
  - Their area(s) of interest in PDP and advice activities
  - Plan for engaging with regional ICANN teams
- Mentors and SO/AC members to identify fellows with skills to contribute and work to involve them in their policy and advice work

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

Mentors and fellows should identify at least one working group that is in line with the interests of the fellows as starting point for fellow possible contribution. We also propose that the mentorship continue past the meeting as well so the newcomers/fellows can remain engaged into their selected constituency.



### **Metrics**

- ICANN Org to track the following data points, ensuring compliance with relevant privacy regulation, and report on data to the community:
  - # applications by region and fellows selected by region
  - # applications by sector and fellows selected by sector
  - Participation in policy development processes:
    - # pen holders on policy reports and documents
    - # mailing list contributions
    - # public comment contributors
    - # leadership positions
  - Participation in regional engagement and outreach
    - # regional events attended
    - # regional events organized

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

The MEAC-SWG suggests that the term “region” be clearly explained when it comes to the Fellowship program and clearly classified based on a consistent standard We are more interested in this because the MEAC-SWG consists of a unique set of countries when it comes to regional groupings. Also, it would be worth mentioning if there is any target/cap of fellows from a particular region or not. If yes, the criteria and other details must be explained. There is a need to track down the number of applicants by country and by speaking language. Particularly in MEAC region, many applicants do not speak English, and have difficulty completing their applications. Tracking by country will help the GSE team in each region target a specific country or community in their outreach programs.

**Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach:  
Overview of Responsibilities and Expectations**

	FIRST-TIME FELLOWS	RETURNING FELLOWS	SO/AC MENTORS
<b>Application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify SO/AC/SG/C of interest</li> <li>Complete introductory ICANN Learn course; certificate of completion required to apply</li> <li>Write a short piece on a topic within ICANN's remit</li> <li>Encouraged to reach out to regional GSE representatives for more information on ICANN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify community group of interest and demonstrate commitment to participating in its policy development</li> <li>Complete advanced ICANN Learn course and attach certificate to application</li> <li>Demonstrate efforts for global outreach and engagement in local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SO/AC-specific mentors would replace Coaches; role open to all experienced community members, not just former fellows</li> <li>Answer call for volunteer mentors by selection committee, who match interests with skills</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-Meeting Preparation and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete additional ICANN Learn course; program manager to verify completion</li> <li>Work with mentor to develop goals for meeting (such as identifying at least two community members to meet to discuss a given topic)</li> <li>Propose meeting schedule and receive feedback from mentor</li> <li>Identify skills to build and knowledge to gain at meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete additional ICANN Learn course; program manager to verify completion</li> <li>Work with mentor to define concrete goals for meeting</li> <li>Mentor to check in throughout meeting and report on progress to project manager</li> <li>Complete mentor-assigned task (i.e. research project)</li> <li>Propose meeting schedule in writing and receive feedback</li> <li>Identify skills to build and knowledge to gain at meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advise on schedule</li> <li>Assist fellow in planning meeting goals</li> <li>Provide feedback on an assigned task (such as a short piece on ICANN's mission's relevance to a topic of interest for first-time fellows and policy writing for returning fellows)</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Newcomers Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend constituency-specific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce fellows to relevant</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend mandatory sessions identified by mentor</li> <li>Engage and network with relevant policy/advice experts</li> </ul>	<p>sessions, as identified by mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with relevant policy/advice experts</li> <li>Work with other fellows to write a public comment</li> </ul>	<p>community members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select sessions for “shadowing”</li> <li>Offer advice and support</li> </ul>
<b>Post-Meeting Expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce report detailing activities and indicating the community group with which they plan to engage, their area(s) of interest in PDP and advice activities, and plans for engaging with regional ICANN teams</li> <li>Write a blog about a meeting topic/session of interest and its relevance to ICANN’s mission</li> <li>Participate in policy development and regional engagement and provide regular annual updates on involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce post-meeting report detailing activities and indicating engagement with a community group, goals relating to an area of interest in PDP and advice activities, and plan for engaging with regional ICANN teams</li> <li>Establish regular check-ins from mentor and seek help from experienced community members if experiencing trouble integrating into the community</li> <li>Participate in policy development and regional engagement and provide regular annual updates on involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide feedback on assigned topics</li> <li>Encourage fellows to participate on calls and mailing lists and offer ongoing mentorship</li> <li>Write mentees’ progress report</li> <li>Identify fellows with skills to contribute and work to involve them in policy work</li> </ul>

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

**Meeting Structure:** On the responsibilities and expectations, the MEAC-SWG believes that the fellows (particularly first-time fellows) attend the meeting sessions declared as mandatory by the Fellowship program team /Development and Public Responsibility Department at ICANN. Additionally, mentors should take into account the possibility of attending regional spaces/sessions while helping develop the agenda for the mentees/fellows.

**Post-Meeting Expectations:** Should possibly include involvement in other Internet governance related spaces, national and regional initiatives in addition to the involvement in the ICANN ecosystem.

# Selection Committee

## **Alter Committee Structure**

- SOs/ACs to select all committee members; individuals to serve two- to three-year terms to ensure familiarity and consistency with the process
- SOs/ACs to identify criteria for selection of committee members; ICANN Organization to provide guidance on skills and commitment required

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

Selection criteria of Committee members should be transparent and accountable this criteria should be published to public before any round. A transparent and accountable process should be conducted by SOs/ACs in order to appoint committee members. Every committee should develop target goals to achieve during its mandate.

## **Revise Selection Criteria**

1. Review and revamp criteria for selection of applicants; individuals with desired skills that meet all other criteria to be given special consideration
2. Ensure that underserved regions remain a priority
3. Prioritize diversity of applicant pool
4. Update terms and conditions of fellows
5. Work with relevant community groups to verify active engagement of returning fellows
6. Publish information on application numbers and selection criteria
7. Rank candidates according to point-based selection criteria
8. Support three-time fellowship limit
9. Host an information session at one ICANN meeting per year on selection committee criteria; revise criteria as needed

## **MEAC-SWG Comments**

For first time fellows with unsuccessful applications should be considered as positive point in the vetting process. The percent of target participants from different stakeholder groups should be determined before any round and respected in case of non availability. Selection Criteria should be published and available for public scrutiny before any round, and the number of target fellows (first time fellows, returning fellows, SO/AC mentors) should be also announced before any round. A rank of all consenting applicants (not only successful) should be published to public after any round.

### **Verify Proof of Engagement Provided by Returning Fellows**

- ❑ Record of participation in working group conference calls
- ❑ Links to substantive discussions and deliberations on mailing lists
- ❑ Demonstration of involvement of drafting or reviewing working group materials
- ❑ Examples of contributions to reporting on working group activity to the stakeholder group/community
- ❑ Links to public comment participation
- ❑ Links to blogs about ICANN-related topics and events
- ❑ Reports on local training and informational sessions fellow assisted at or attended

### **MEAC-SWG Comments**

We are of the view that the selection committee should strictly consider verification of the proof of engagement provided by the returning fellows. Additionally, a mechanism should be devised in order for this particular step during the selection process.

## **Public Responsibility Support**

- Track and report on metrics agreed upon with community; metrics proposed in the consultation process noted above
- Work to ensure all metrics fit within relevant privacy regulation
- Work with SOs/ACs to determine clear targets on needs (skills, diversity, etc) and create a targeted recruitment plan; aim to recruit fellows from constituency groups with low numbers, such as the domain name industry, as identified by SO/ACs in selection committee
- Work with Policy staff to revise metrics to assess policy development work on a regular basis
- Work with Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) staff to revise metrics to assess regional engagement and outreach efforts on a regular basis
- Work with Policy team to create a color-coded schedule for beneficial sessions
- Work with GSE team to create structured post-fellowship regional integration opportunities
- Develop check-in process to gauge fellows' involvement in line with metrics; publish results, ask for verification on active fellows from relevant community groups, and follow up with fellows who are not engaging; ask that each community group appoint a fellowship liaison to verify accounts of active fellows and to follow up with fellows who are having trouble integrating
- Revise program materials and budget to adjust perception of program as a travel support scheme



Subgroup members:

1. Walid Al-Saqaf (MEAC-SWG Chair)
2. Chokri Ben Romdhane (Subgroup Lead)
3. Nadira Al-Araj
4. Zakir Bin Rehman
5. Michael J. Oghia
6. Hadia El Miniawi
7. Sogand Ghorbani
8. Hanan Khatib
9. Ines Hfaiedh
10. Hamideh Shahrabi