

RrSG Response to Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach

The Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) has long had concerns about the ability of the Fellowship Program to meaningfully turn more than a few individuals into active contributors to policy development within the ICANN Community in the long term. The RrSG is therefore pleased to see that the Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach has an emphasis on using a mentorship-style scheme to ensure initial and continued engagement of fellows and on obtaining metrics to measure that engagement. The proposal's commitment to *'revise program materials and budget to adjust perception of program as a travel support scheme'* is key. Adjusting the process, selection criteria and the expectations of Fellows to fit with a mentorship-style scheme should help shift this perception (and the reality).

The RrSG would further like to make the following recommendations:

Session Attendance

The proposal notes that *'Fellows are required to attend working group and other sessions identified by mentors'*. This is certainly appropriate and should include a number of general sessions, not only those designed for newcomers/Fellows. The RrSG would also like to see a stipulated minimum number of these sessions that Fellows must attend (ie 3 or 4 per day). Having a *'check-in process to gauge fellows' involvement'* is good, but will presumably necessitate ICANN staff being available to do the check-in at many sessions but it would not confirm that Fellows actually stay for the entire duration of the session.

It may therefore be useful if the Fellows were also tasked with providing brief session recaps that capture the key takeaways. This could be co-ordinated so that there was only 1 Fellow doing a recap per session, that each Fellow would only need to do 1 or 2 recaps per day and that the session would be appropriate to their level of knowledge/experience. These could then be collated and shared (via email) at the end of the day with all the other Fellows. The taking and reviewing notes would likely deepen the Fellow's understanding of the session topic and the sharing of key session takeaways could be of great benefit to all Fellows. Having the recaps would not replace, but assist the Fellows with producing their post meeting report. The RrSG currently provides daily recaps on all sessions of interest to registrars, to which the recipients of ICANN travel funding contribute (RrSG members are selected using criteria on participation and coming from underserved regions). These recaps are highly valued by the membership.

Selection Criteria

A detailed selection criteria is not laid out in the proposal, but the RrSG hopes that this will be made available for comment once finalised. The RrSG believes it is essential that Fellows are selected because they illustrate the potential for long term participation in ICANN and this should be included as a general point in the proposal. The RrSG would also like to reiterate that the proposal to *'prioritize diversity of applicant pool'* should be in relation to both a diversity of individuals and a diversity of interests. At every meeting there should be at least 1 Fellow selected who has indicated an interest in every individual ICANN SO/AC. It is mentioned that the domain name industry is not well represented in the

Fellowship Program and the RrSG is happy to help see this change and stands ready to assist with recruitment where appropriate. The RrSG would also like to see a minimum time stipulated between being granted a return fellowship. For example, a returning fellow should have not attended the previous 2 meetings, but should have to demonstrate their continuous participation in that time through policy development conference call meeting attendance, email list and public comment contributions and outreach activity in their own country. In general, Fellows should have more visibility between meetings than is currently being seen. When a Fellow is able to continuously engage over a sustained period of time, it is more likely that the same Fellow will continue engaging on their own, without the Fellowship program.

Coordination with Nominating Committee

The RrSG notes that recommendation 26 of the NomCom 2 Review Working Party June 5, 2018 Final Report is entitled "ICANN should investigate advancing its nominations process into a Leadership Development function."

(<https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/nomcom-review-final-05jun18-en.pdf>)

The NomCom receives over a hundred applications every year for just a few openings for the Board, PTI, GNSO, ccNSO and ALAC. Many of the rejected candidates may be ideal candidates for ICANN's Fellowship Program. There should be a formal mechanism between the NomCom and the Fellowship Program to encourage these individuals to apply for the Fellowship Program.

The end result would be to help evolve the current Nominating Committee function into a Leadership Development Committee function that benefits ICANN, internet professionals, and the overall community.

Summary

In summary, the RrSG is happy with the direction of the New Fellowship Program moving towards a mentorship-style approach, but would like to see further requirements around session attendance, feedback and selection criteria to encourage long term participation and not just single meeting involvement.