Registries Stakeholder Group Statement

Issue: **Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach**

Date statement submitted: **27 July 2018**

Reference URL: https://www.icann.org/public-comments/fellowship-proposal-2018-06-11-en

Background[1]

The ICANN Fellowship Program was formed with the goal of creating a broader and more diverse base of knowledgeable constituents from underserved and underrepresented communities around the world.

The public comment proceeding is to gather community input on the draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach, as part of the community consultation process to review existing practices and define the vision for the future of the Fellowship Program.

ICANN Fellowship Consultation

- RySG Feedback on the consultation (5 April 2018)
- Draft Summary of the findings from the Community Consultation to Review the Current Fellowship Review Program

---

Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG) comment:

In light of the vigor and diversity it has brought to the ICANN Community, the Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG) fully supports the continuous improvement of the Fellowship Program to maintain its success. The credibility, well-functioning, and long-term survival of the ICANN multistakeholder model largely depend on the ability of the ICANN community to attract new people of diverse backgrounds. Volunteer recruitment and volunteer retention are key, and the Fellowship Program is an important instrument to ease the path to a continued involvement for those from underserved and underrepresented communities.

The RySG welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach and wishes to make the following comments:

Selection

- While we support the strict three-time limit for fellows to receive support to attend ICANN meetings in person, we regret that the current proposal does not explore the possibility of 'Remote Fellowships'. Remote fellowships could be a useful addition to the Program without major financial implications on the Program's total cost, and allow fellows to get acquainted to and develop skills for online participation in the ICANN community. They could also be useful for fellows who cannot participate to consecutive meetings.

---

[1] *Background: intended to give a brief context for the comment and to highlight what is most relevant for RO's in the subject document – it is not a summary of the subject document.*

- We suggest that the Program is more clear on how a Fellow's performance is evaluated and how this assessment influences the chances to be selected for a second and third fellowship.

- In our reply to the Consultation, we expressed in support of the practice of only sending Fellowship Alumni to the Policy Forum that have shown active interest in policy development. We don't see this reflected in the current document, and request this principle be included as a guiding selection criterion for fellowships to the Policy Meeting.

- We see benefit in an earlier involvement of SOs/ACs and/or returning Fellows in the selection process (e.g., review Fellow applications by designee(s) from the appropriate SO/AC). Returning Fellows could be matched with first-time Fellows for mentoring using the same/similar guidelines as SO/AC Mentors.

<u>On-Site</u>

- We welcome the increased flexibility allowing mentors and fellows to identify sessions that fit with the interests and background of the Fellow. Quantified guidelines for mentors with regard to expected weight (total time, #sessions) and variety of a fellow's individual schedule would be useful.

- A Fellow's individual programme should allow them to get a balanced view on the community and the issues at stake. This includes an understanding of the domain name industry and of the impact of ICANN decisions on the contracted parties. We reiterate that it is important that fellows have more exposure to how certain issues affect contracted parties.

<u>Post meeting follow-up</u>

- Asking Fellows to reflect in a blog on a meeting topic or session of interest and its relevance to ICANN's mission is very valuable for the learning process to better understand ICANN. In addition we suggest that fellows be asked to explore a topic within ICANN's mission from their local perspective. This would allow them to contribute insights on the situation in their developing or underserved region and point at issues specific for their local context. This would be an added value of the Program for the community.

- We would welcome further clarification on the process for Fellows to submit a report detailing their activities and participation in diverse meetings, and how follow-up and feedback is given. For example: who receives the report, what follow-up of follow-through activities are planned (i.e., continued engagement as an observer of a PDP or other active working groups within the ICANN community, etc.). Publication of the individual reports on one webpage on the ICANN website for open viewing by SO/AC interested members would give more visibility to the Fellows, raise their profile, and might further diminish the perception that the Fellowship program is mainly a travel support program with no real benefit.

- We do not question the importance of following the path of Alumni within the ICANN community, as this is the only success indicator of the Fellowship Program. However, we do not agree with the wording in the matrix on page 2, *"(fellow to) provide regular annual updates on involvement"*, which puts the responsibility on the fellow/Alumni. ICANN staff should take the lead and actively reach out to Alumni in various ways (interviews, surveys, etc), including to those no longer involved in the ICANN community after receiving a fellowship.

As a footnote: when the Fellowship Program was first developed it was extremely difficult for at least the RySG to meet the criteria/identify potential candidates from developing countries and underserved regions. We worked long and hard to meet the criteria but, based on the expansion of the new gTLD Registry Operators, we found it extremely difficult. Again, speaking for the RySG, there are few Fellows who are a good match for our Stakeholder Group who meet these criteria. Hopefully, with the continued efforts on the part of the ICANN GDD relative to outreach, there will be more candidates evolving from developing countries and underserved regions to enhance geographical and cultural diversity.