

Submission to ICANN on ICANN's Draft Operating Plan and Budget Financial Year 2019

At the outset, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on [ICANN's draft Operating Plan and Budget for the fiscal year 2019](#).

While I am the APRALO ALS representative of my organization CCAOI and have been an ICANN Fellow, the comments below are in my personal capacity.

My comments are limited to Section 2.5:2 : Reductions to Engagement and Community Support and specifically to the reduction in the Constituent travel support for Fellows.

- The Fellowship has over the last 10 years been highly effective in creating **Ambassadors of ICANN** all across the globe- and specifically amongst people residing in the **developing nations** who are new to the world of names and numbers, These are also the areas where the **next billion internet users** reside.

The fellowship program provided an opportunity to people like me residing in a developing country with limited resources to participate and learn about ICANN's work, which helped me also to understand and build awareness in India on how and why the community in India should participate in the various stakeholder groups of ICANN. All this would not have been possible without the fellowship program.

- Most of the **fellows have been contributing** to the ICANN ecosystem in some way or the other. There are several fellows who are contributing significantly and are in leadership position, apart from being in ICANN Board or joining as ICANN staff.

While some have made more substantial contribution than others and their contributions have been visible to the global community, there are many who have been working in their respective countries spreading awareness of ICANN, and whose contributions have not been visible to the global ICANN community and therefore gone unaccounted.

- The **proposed reduction in the fellowship program is quite drastic** and quite difficult to understand. Moreover **no substantial evidence has been provided to support this reduction.**
- Perhaps before reducing the Fellowship support by 50% it would be good if ICANN would **conduct a careful and detailed review** on :
 1. The effectiveness of the Fellowship program to bring diverse voices in ICANN vis-a vis the other approaches adopted by ICANN to increase diversity especially from developing countries and women in particular.

2. A detailed analysis and mapping of the ICANN fellowship Alumni's based on their contributions to the ICANN ecosystem till date and also on how they are promoting the objectives of ICANN within their own countries and communities.
 3. A study on what has been done by ICANN to revive interest of people who have stopped contributing.
- I agree that, like any other program **there is definitely scope of improvement** even in the **Fellowship Program**. This could be in terms of improving the selection process, laying down clear expectations from a Fellow, or for second fellowship - how the fellow is contributing after his first fellowship or other parameters which ICANN deems fit, rather than reduction in the numbers of fellows in the program.
 - Also, **only after careful deliberation and proper rationale backed by supporting data, should ICANN, if required propose a reduction in the Fellowship numbers.**

To conclude, if ICANN truly wants to enhance and grow the multistakeholder model, it is important to encourage new voices and stakeholders from developing world, who are still not represented, into the ICANN ecosystem and that is what the Fellowship program has been facilitating in the last 10 years. In that light, I would request ICANN to relook on the decision of reducing the ICANN Fellowship numbers by 50% and come up with an action plan which is backed with proper data and better rationale.

Thanking you once again for the opportunity to comment on ICANN GY 2019 budget.

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