

Comments

ICANN Budget 2019

Namibian Network Information Center (Pty) Ltd*

2018-03-08

Comments on the reduction in Number of Fellows and Next Gen and proposals on how to improve the program.

1 Introduction

The Draft FY19 Operating Plan [2] proposes in *Module 2 – Direct Community Activity Support* to reduce the number of Fellows to 30 (down from 60) and the number of Next Gen participants to 15 (down from 20) per meeting.

This has led to considerable discussion on the Facebook Group *ICANN Bad Attitude* [1]¹.

Namibian Network Information Center (“NA-NIC”) is the country code Top Level (“ccTLD”) Manager for .NA and wishes to make the following comments.

2 Next Gen

NA-NIC does not see any value, whatsoever, in the Next Gen program and therefore proposes to remove it outright.

Should the Next Gen program be continued, we would prefer it to be folded into the Fellowship program (see 3.2 and 3.3).

3 Fellowship

While the intentions for the Fellowship have been good, in our view it has deteriorated and delivers little value other than to the participants by funding their travel. Very little value has been demonstrated for ICANN itself and even less for all but one SOAC.

In our opinion there can only be three possible outcomes.

*dns-admin@na-nic.com.na

¹We are grateful for Chris LaHatte providing a slightly edited summary of the discussion with names of posters removed which is attached on page 4.

3.1 Cancel the Fellowship program outright

As NA-NiC currently does not see any value in the Fellowship program this would be our preferred outcome.

3.2 Allocate seats to SOACs

If the Fellowship program is to be continued a number of seats could be allocated to each participating Supporting Organization/Advisory Committee (“SOAC”) and ask these to establish their own Guidelines for selection of their candidates which would then be appointed accordingly. The SOACs would then be also responsible for Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, providing reports to the public after each meeting.

This would have the advantage that the number of slots per SOAC would have to negotiated infrequently and it would be in line with the subsidiarity principle.

For NA-NiC this would be the least desirable outcome.

3.3 Revise the program

If the Fellowship program is to be continued, a significant overhaul should take place and a more formal process should be developed by a multi stakeholder group to improve at least on

- Guidelines to define
 - what goals the Fellowship Program actually should achieve; and
 - strict (selection) criteria and procedures how to achieve those goals
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation

3.3.1 Guidelines

While having an opinion about what goals such a Fellowship Program should achieve we are not expressing it, given the outcome preferred by us in 3.1.

That said, whatever goals to be developed should

- be communicated widely;
- be measurable;
- their achievements should be monitored continuously;
- and evaluated on a regular basis.

The current selection criteria [3] are quite broad and subjective. While not wishing to dissect them in detail here, they need to be tightened up significantly.

Some non exhaustive examples:

- Selection criteria should be
 - objective, measurable and published;
 - they could describe how many seats per SOAC can be filled at the most per meeting.
- Candidates should provide value to ICANN's multi-stakeholder process, for example
 - by proposing as part of their application an abstract of a presentation in their field of expertise to be held during a suitable session (ie from the technical field during TechDay or DNSSEC Day), from the legal field during any of the legal sessions, ccTLD related matters at the ccNSO Meeting, gNSO related matters at the gNSO Meeting, Governance at ALAC or a corresponding cross constituency meeting, civil servants at GAC and so forth.
 - by providing evidence for increasing participation, by way of providing copies of regular written reports having been submitted to the SOAC by whom they have been nominated,
 - * for second applications having been observers in Working Groups; or
 - * for third applications having been members of Working Groups

for at least one year, each.
- No more than three Fellowships should be awarded under any circumstances.
- No candidate must be selected who does not fulfill every single criteria (whatever they may be in the end) even if that were to lead to non-filling of available seats.
- Candidates should be preferably from developing countries, in particular from the region the corresponding ICANN meeting is being held in.
- Specific Guidelines could be developed to include younger Candidates.
- A previous non-selection can not be a factor in the selection process.

We have serious concerns about the Selection Committee

- Currently *Membership is at the invitation of ICANN staff*², which is unacceptable, even if they *may utilize recommendations from the ICANN communities to canvas for potential candidates* [4].
- We do not feel that any Alumni, in particular repeat Alumni, can serve on the Selection Committee.

3.3.2 Implementation

Some non exhaustive examples:

- All SOAC participating in the Fellowship program should appoint members to a Selection Committee
- Only complete applications fully compliant with the Guidelines would be forwarded to the Selection Committee.
- Unfilled seats would fall away and not be carried over to subsequent meetings.
- The list of presentations (see 3.3.1) would be published separately.

²Emphasis is mine.

- A list of sessions where attendance by the Fellows is mandatory would be published

3.3.3 Monitoring

Some non exhaustive examples:

- While not wishing to be restrictive some form of monitoring must be developed for compliance by Fellows, such as attendance of sessions.
- Session Chairs could be informed about expected attendance in order for them to be inclusive.

3.3.4 Evaluation

Some non exhaustive examples:

- All Fellows must submit a report shortly after end of the meeting, detailing their activities and observations, which is posted on the ICANN web site.
- All Session Chairs involved would provide feedback on the participation of Fellows, in general and with regards to presentations.
- No Alumni would ever receive travel funding from ICANN again, for whatever reason (even if a Board Member) unless they complied with attendance requirements and turned in the after-meeting report for each funded meeting on time.
- A final report by the program manager would be provided to the public for each meeting.

4 Policy Development Process

NA-NiC is aware of the fact that a Cross Constituency Policy Development Process might be required,

5 FaceBook Discussion

| Comments in Favour of Fellowship | Comments against or critical |
|---|---|
| I think if the people in the ICANN Fellows program want to save it , they should discuss all the benefits the program has brought (if any) . What purpose it actually serves. Petitions and stating give us money instead of other people is never the right path to getting funded | The Fellowship Program (and much else of what's considered the travel boondoggle) is a consequence of ICANN consciously deciding that so much of its decision-making and policy-churning would be done at F2F meetings in exotic locales. At its core, the main reason that any travel subsidy is needed is because a physical presence at meetings was from the outset a necessity to have even ground with lobbyists and policy bullies subsidized by vested interests. For the Fellows, travel is a necessity to be there in person to see how the sausage is made. The seemingly obvious answer is to eliminate nearly all F2F except Board and NomCom. Make all ICANN meetings virtual so that nobody needs travel (subsidized or not) just to keep up. Make it available to anywhere with Internet so things aren't just dominated by the Usual Suspects for which attendance is a tax deduction. Take a fraction of what it costs to hold a meeting and pay Cisco or some other vendor to come up with a usable global meeting system. Then access and participation is more meritocracy and less pay-to-play. |
| Let's keep ICANN only for white western male (US-Europe), who needs a program for diversity in a global policy-making institution which legitimacy and functionality depend on properly representing everyone's stake on a core internet resource? | Two board members former fellows? One GNSO Council member? Ten staffers? It produces (or at least supports) *some* lasting engagement. Question is whether it's value for money. |
| I don't think anyone disagrees that diversity is important (at least, they shouldn't). But I don't think anyone believes that the fellowship program provides meaningful, lasting engagement. | If the fellowship brings value then it should be possible to defend on its merits. What we see repeatedly is a line of people thanking ICANN for a free trip and little else. There are a small number of former fellows that add value, but it's a small number. |
| I do think it brings meaningful engagement, despite things that should be improved, but my comment was just about playing the BA with more BA. | "What we see repeatedly is a line of people thanking ICANN for a free trip and little else." What do you expect them to do? |
| I liked your blog spot! Remember, that ALL fellows come from developing countries, not just most of them, that the first rule of the program. They are also elected by a community/staff committee and is region, gender, and profession and stakeholder balanced. You are also missing a whole lot of people in your count that should be included as fully engaged. There are leaders and pen holder in almost every structure, and those leaders are a key diversity feature in the MS model that validates and improves what ICANN does. Also, you are only seeing a photograph, while the product of the fellowship is a | An exception (Board Member) confirms the rule. All, fellows have not in any visible manner attended sessions such as TechDay or DNSSEC, and do not contribute to ccNSO sessions. The same applies to gNSO sessions from what I hear. We mainly see them huddle at their designated coffee spot, but this may be wishful vision (:-O) from my part. That is an opportunity wasted., per hour and per fellow. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>movie that has produced result though years, like people that got engaged for a few years and left or leader today that held several positions before. Even some of this successful cases only got engaged after years after their fellowship experience, since it took time to find the right way to make sense to be involved.</p> <p>The fellowship is not only needed because of the lack of resources in developing countries for a specific fellow, is the same structural asymmetry between regions that affect the level of diversity inside ICANN, and as well, the presence and legitimacy of ICANN around the world. So is a street that goes both ways, people from X countries begin in ICANN and X countries IG ecosystem being aware and knowledgeable about ICANN. So fellows might not become penholder in a PDP, but they are still successful if, as leaders in their own profession IG related in their region, they bring awareness and new networks that bring more people that do gets directly engaged.</p> <p>There are many ways in which ICANN improves its diversity and legitimacy with the Fellowship, and selecting people that will directly be involved is absolutely impossible, since ICANN is a very cryptic and expensive place to be, most people need to first get to know it, sometimes even build a regional network or ecosystem in their country so they later find a useful way for them to get directly engaged. For instance, a lawyer doing privacy issues in it's NGO may not found the funds to be right now a penholder in a PDP, but will teach and use the fellowship acquired knowledge to use DNS in its activities regarding privacy back home. Creating in that way a lot of value to ICANN and very good potential for more people, and more meaningful, to join (since a more developed ecosystem will foster better candidates).</p> <p>We even have ccNSO people which NICs don't send them because they lack resources or is not a priority or governments!, imagine how far are business or civil society to find reasons and resources to directly and fully engaged someone in leading an ICANN process. The work the fellowship does is hard and very crafty, people are not being remotely fair in their analysis and I blame, the fellowship for not giving more tools and data to properly set the cost-benefit debate.</p> <p>If ICANN is serious about diversity and a true global MS model, then a program like the fellowship is essential, even if we agree a lot of things could be this way or that way.</p> | <p>I would like to see something like</p> <p>Each fellow must give a 20 minute presentation on a topic of their choice with the schedule being published beforehand. Presumably they have expertise in their own field, so someone from a small ccTLD can do this at ccNSO, small Registrar at gNSO, government official at GAC, and so on. TechDay is always on the lookout for presenters, lawyers have opportunities at the various legal sessions, and so forth.</p> <p>Anyone applying for a further repeat fellowship must demonstrate ACTIVE participation as observer in one of the many Working Groups, AND present this (20 minutes).</p> <p>Anyone applying for a third fellowship must demonstrate ACTIVE participation as member (Rapporteur) in a cross community Working Group originating outside their SO/AC, and present this (20 minutes).</p> |
| <p>ccNSO fellows in the program could probably be replaced by granting ccNSO some slots they could choose. This works quite well in RySG.</p> | <p>I have in the very beginning attempted to get the fellows to attend TechDay. They did not, and never have. Not an effing once. And I am convinced the</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>same applies to the DNSSEC day.</p> <p>You may have former fellows now in positions, but it is an exception to the rule.</p> <p>As far as the junctim goes, the funding for fellows has nothing to do with funding for staff.</p> <p>I agree that there is too much staff, and the budget is too big, having been on record from early on that the budget should be minimal.</p> <p>Austerity is always painful.</p> |
| I propose to keep the fellowship for FY19, capped at 15 seats, and in FY20, following community consultation, to launch something new which will have 30 seats - 15 seats for newcomers, and 15 for community pioneers. Each 'fellow' will have a community mentor responsible for taking them under their wing. The community has said we need to support those in PDPs, this approach will do that, providing resources to allow those both old and new to the community to be able to travel to meetings. | The program worked when there was a smaller number of fellows (around 30 each meeting). They doubled that number. 60 people each meeting, the whole DNS does not have 60 people interested in it. it's not a super exciting field. Some fellows don't even know the mission of ICANN after having attended many meetings. It's not good, a smaller number of fellows can be trained better, we can reach out to them better and can be selected better. also the selection process of fellows is problematic. Some claim they are active in some groups, while they are not at all and they keep getting selected and staff doesn't even check with us. [I was a former fellow for Durban, Singapore and Argentina, I like the program, but needs a lot of improvement] |
| Today there are many fellowship who contribute in SO/AC, some points are important... there are many fellows who help ICANN in their regions and are not present at annual meetings. Today for example there is a Board member who has been fellowship, then this alone shows the value of the program. We have to ponder a few things, the main thing is that today most of those selected are within the civil society group or linked to the domain market, when in fact maybe there was a more efficient selection mechanism, such as a committee formed by key stakeholders (ASO, RALO, Security & Stability, GAC, Root-Server, TLG, GNSO, ccNSO) the quality of the candidates might be more valuable and less costly. Another point is that 100% of fellowship are of the less favored regions and can not afford their travels, the great major does not work in companies of direct interest connected to the ICANN ecosystem or to an RIR/NIR, so in the current mechanism of selection it really is difficult to separate good candidates. | |
| Fellows invade the tech day and the DNSSEC every time, and we even have fellows in the ccNSO Council, the same goes for the GNSO were they held chair position of all sort for many years now. | |

| | |
|---|--|
| I would agree on make them do a presentation of some sort. Those are the improvements we could debate with the developers of the program. | |
| I see the deliverables for returning fellows as a good thing - smth like a Stakeholder Journey Plan for returning Alumni. And this plan would have to state the efforts he/she could have in the local community (regarding advocating for DNS and etc) but also within Icann (PDP engagement, SG contribution, etc). | |
| <p>I know for a fact they do, I've seen them and talk about them in every meeting, they actually enjoy and like both of them. Myself as a fellow went to both more than once with other fellows, since some of us don't have technical background and this sessions are gold. They are classic session inside the fellowship, and are particularly encouraged to be taken almost as mandatory.</p> <p>And leading fellows are no exception, they are in almost every council or ExCom.</p> <p>Don't get me wrong, I approve the austerity and I agree on the need to better measure this programs, I could even agree on a different size or way to do them, but I keep reading and hearing things that are not true nor fair. Fellows for the biggest part are proven leaders in their profession and region, and value their fellowship experience and take it back to what they do, sometimes that means directly engaging and maybe leading icann work, sometimes is doing better using their better knowledge on dns and icann, and all of them become new network hubs in places icann had none.</p> <p>So I am all up to debate and change things, but there has been a demonisation of the fellowship, as it was a low hanging fruit of obviousness bad, and I can't start a debate from there.</p> | |
| Should it be 30 Policy/Governance fellows + 30 Tech fellows with chances to have training in addition to talks? So registrars/registries/cyber-security guys could have possibility to look at them, so the brightest ones stay with the industry, even remotely (industry needs engineers too, not only policy guys). | <p>I don't care about the ratio relating to the different SO/ACs.</p> <p>If they want to continue with the Fellowship Program, they should have objective, stringent selection criteria, including a proposal for the presentation that I previously suggested (of each Fellow's choice).</p> <p>Each Fellow should be required to write a comprehensive report on his/her activities, so you can evaluate repeat applications.</p> <p>So far this has been a simple travel racket for Workshop Warriors (PDPs).</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>is there a reason why the community is not mobilised to protect the fellowship. Why AC/SO chairs do not bother to defend it against cuts? Why there are so many sceptical voices? You would say the community is demonising it - might be true. However, what's the share of the fellows and those who administered the program in this? I think there is a fair share. An opaque selection process, creating a bubble, no real feedback, no communications channels. And if there were no fellows who consider this program as "get a free ride and have fun" multiple-times-ticket the general attitude would be different. But it's not. So yes, there are nuances and subtle things, however those free riders are not nuances, they are there and people -- those who come for their own money, or those who work hard are annoyed. And there is no surprise they are annoyed, is there?...</p> | <p>I keep agreeing with you, and I don't blame the community for thinking like that either, nonetheless, I feel compelled to give another perspective on the matter when I see a combination of an exaggerated negative view, even false statement, which consequence is so broad and not thoughtful.</p> <p>If we find true we have to tighten the process and try new/different path on the development of the program, we have way more productive ways to do so than cut it in half and justify the cut for its failure, when is really just a scapegoat to "make the budget cut" that is being commanded.</p> <p>While I can agree with what you say, I can also say that the Fellowship does bring a lot of talent into ICANN, and also takes ICANN to a whole regional ecosystem where there was nothing, and these are the things I find as normal outcomes in the program over the years, being the "tourist" the exceptions. And be aware of bubbles as well outside the fellowship, because I have groups with and without fellows with chairs that fully share my view, your bubble might be all negative, I can loudly hear both. So changing the program is not about slaying it, is about getting involved with it if we agree ICANN needs a diversity and inclusive program, for some, that is not even necessary, and that should also be part of the debate that is not being held.</p> |
| <p>I admit I did not read the comments above as there were too many, and I figure they consist of anecdotes of fellowship success stories. I could similarly provide anecdotes of where I have seen the programme fail, but I won't. We need systematic data. After all, anecdotes can guide us just as easily as they can mislead us. There's the inevitable selection bias (only the exceptional cases make for interesting stories), there are no controls for confounding variables, and sometimes they aren't even verifiable...</p> <p>We have the names of the fellowship alumni over the past 10 years; this is public. We have the names of those who are in community leadership roles. Mapping how many fellowship alumni have progressed into community leadership roles shouldn't be too challenging. An imperfect metric, but not an expensive one...</p> <p>For example, it would be not too difficult to get the names of former Fellows. They're listed in spreadsheets ICANN has published pertaining to its travel expenses. So copy-paste those names and dollar values into a spreadsheet. Do it 10 times, once for each year of the program. Then try to determine which of those people continued to contribute to the ICANN community in a voluntary capacity after they no longer had Fellowship</p> | |

funding. Bear in mind that you can't just look at people who are in named positions today, you also have to look back over 10 years of participation data to figure out how many fellows contributed something before they stopped contributing.

References

- [1] *Facebook Group ICANN Bad Attitude.* <https://www.facebook.com/groups/288415224613892/>, Last Accessed: 2018-02-24
- [2] ICANN: *Draft FY19 Operating Plan.* <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/proposed-opplan-fy19-19jan18-en.pdf>, Last Accessed: 2018-02-24
- [3] ICANN: *Fellowship Applicant Selection Criteria.* <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/fellowship-applicant-criteria-2016-09-08-en>, Last Accessed: 2018-03-07
- [4] ICANN: *ICANN Fellowship Selection Committee.* <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/committee-2012-02-25-en>, Last Accessed: 2018-03-07