



1 February 2018

## Proposed Incremental Changes to the ICANN Meetings Strategy

Neustar welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Incremental Changes to the ICANN Meetings Strategy. In addition to the specific changes proposed, we have included some general comments regarding the nature of the meetings and the potential need for a more comprehensive review of the meeting strategy.

### General Comments

Neustar notes that despite considerable planning efforts to reduce the number of meeting sessions, remove conflicts from the meeting schedule, minimize duplication and provide more opportunity for cross-community discussions, which were some of the principles of the Meeting Strategy Working Group (MSWG), ICANN meetings continue to grow in length and complexity. The initial thinking of the MSWG was that the Policy Forum meetings would be considerably smaller in terms of attendance and number of sessions etc., and this would allow ICANN to use smaller venues in Africa and Latin America and fulfill the geographic rotation requirement. However, the reality seems to be that regardless of the type of ICANN meeting, the venue requirements are largely the same and again the ICANN meetings team is challenged in finding suitable venues across the globe.

At a time when both the ICANN CEO and Chair of the ICANN Board have put the community on notice that they are actively looking for ways to save money to address a decline in funding, the significant cost of these meetings should be considered. Large meetings with complex schedules preclude the use of smaller venues, increasing costs and making geographic rotation and finding suitable venues more difficult. Consideration should be given to how these meetings can be refined and/or restructured to control meeting costs while improving their utility and value. For example, the need to have three major face-to-face meetings every year should be evaluated; given the number of other ICANN sponsored meetings that take place throughout the year, it may be possible for meetings to be streamlined, consolidated, or perhaps brought online as a series of virtual meetings. Consideration should also be given to the use of regional hubs on a regular basis rather than continually searching for new locations, and to reviewing the presentation, participation and recording methods used for ICANN meetings to ensure that their function and utility are commensurate with cost.

### Proposed Incremental Changes

**a. Community Forum** - *There were no recommendations for change to the duration of the Community Forum.*

The format of the Community Forum should be considered against the cost and practical benefits of the meetings. Consideration could be given to the appropriateness of a more low-key opening ceremony, holding only one public forum, and removing the public Board meeting from the agenda.

Streamlining these meetings would minimize duplication and reduce their considerable cost.

Without suggesting that the meeting be policy focused, the Policy Forum format might better serve community work being undertaken. Adopting the format of the Policy Forum with preference to community efforts, such as Review Teams and CCWGs, would provide an opportunity to host dedicated cross-community sessions to inform and advance these efforts.

**b. Policy Forum** - *Input suggests one additional day dedicated to outreach should be added for the mid-year Policy Forum for a total of five days.*

We understand that there has been some concern that the four day duration of the Policy Forum compresses the workload unreasonably and doesn't allow sufficient time for outreach activities. As such, Neustar does not object to adding another day to the Policy Forum; however, we would consider that the use of this additional day should be flexible based on the needs of community groups.

While the extra day will allow for some groups to better conduct outreach activities, many stakeholder groups, constituencies, supporting organisations and advisory committees would benefit from using the additional day to enhance face-to-face meeting time, which is critical to the progress of their respective work efforts. For that reason, we believe that it would be most appropriate for the community to be able to use the additional day flexibly, based on their respective needs.

**c. Annual General Meeting** - *Community leaders raised concerns about the underutilization of the last day (Day 7) at the Annual General Meeting. They also ask that the announced meeting dates of the official ICANN Public Meetings guarantee constructive use of the participants' time. Thus, we have two potential recommendations for the Annual General Meeting:*

- *Keep the Annual General Meeting to seven days, but reorganize the work so that there is better use of participants' time on day seven; or*
- *Reduce the official dates published for the Annual General Meetings to six days, while keeping day seven available for the community to hold internal working meetings and wrap-ups.*

Neustar supports reducing the official dates of the Annual General Meeting to six days, with a seventh day available for the community to utilise as needed, to alleviate some of the volunteer fatigue associated with this considerable time commitment.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

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