

## **RrSG response to Draft Community Travel Support Guidelines**

The Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) recognises both the importance of ICANN travel support and the need for responsibility around how it is applied. The domain industry, and subsequently ICANN, are in a time of flat growth, so efforts should be made to reduce unnecessary spending where possible. The RrSG generally sees the Draft Community Travel Support Guidelines as well considered and reasonable, but believes the following points should be further considered.

### **Cancellations and Substitutions**

*'Up to 45 days before the start of an event, a community group or program may substitute another supported traveler' (page 11)*

Having a 45 day cut off for being able to substitute a nominated travel funding recipient is fair given the usual increase costs involved in last minute booking and time potentially required to get a visa. However, the RrSG believes an exception could be made, perhaps up until 7 days prior to the event, where the substitute has already acquired any flights and visa required and simply requires reasonable reimbursement, in accordance with the guidelines.

*'If a supported traveler misses two consecutive days of an event once it has started, ICANN Travel Support cancels support for this supported traveler.'* (page 11)

The RrSG believes a supported traveller should not be able to miss any days of an event, except as the result of a medical emergency (in which case it may be more than 2 days) or due to a cancelled/delayed flight. Travel support should be cancelled after the first day of missing an event, unless they can prove good cause.

### **Travel Visas**

*'Sometimes supported travelers need to travel to another country to visit a consulate or embassy to apply for or obtain a visa. In these cases, ICANN Travel Support may provide additional financial support for a single trip for that purpose.'* (page 12)

The RrSG appreciates that there needs to be some flexibility and allowances for travel support recipients who happen to live in countries that don't have the required consulate or embassy. Using a visa agency should be the first option, where feasible, above sending an individual to another country to obtain a visa. When this is not an option, there should be a limit on how much can be spent on trip to obtain a visa and if the traveller is likely to exceed this, their suitability to receive funding should be reviewed by the relevant SO/AC and only if their presence is essential for the meeting should they be permitted to receive the additional funding on this occasion.

### **Air Transportation**

*ICANN Travel Support selects flights based on the following criteria, in descending order of priority (page 12/13):*

- *Economy (non-refundable)*
- *Approved date of arrival/departure*
- *Nonstop/direct flight routes from the supported traveler's original main domicile airport location*
- *Lowest fare available at time of booking.*

The preference for nonstop/direct routes should be considered alongside sensible costs. Certainly when travelling shorter distances turning a half day travel into a full day is not reasonable, but for long haul travel, an indirect flight may be available for significantly less money and have only a short layover. The RrSG proposes that cheaper flights should be prioritised over nonstop/direct long haul flights if they are more than a certain amount cheaper (ie 30+%) and add only a limited amount of time to the journey (ie 3-4hrs).

*In exceptional cases, supported travelers are authorized to arrange their own air travel. (page 13)*

The RrSG recognises that having control over the booking of air travel is done so to ensure the flights meet the criteria outlined in the guidelines. However, experience and local knowledge can enable a traveller to directly obtain flights that not only meet the guidelines, but do so at a cost that is at or below what ICANN Travel expects to spend on it. This saves time and therefore resources for ICANN. If a traveller is able to procure economically priced flights, and they prefer to do so, they should be authorized to arrange their own air travel.

*If an airline does not allow a supported traveler to select a seat free of charge, fees for selecting a standard seat are eligible for reimbursement, up to a maximum reimbursement of USD 100. (page 16)*

The RrSG does not believe it is necessary for ICANN to spend any money on selecting a standard seat, unless the traveller has a medical or other good reason for requiring a certain seat position (ie: height, claustrophobia, etc). Special seat selection should otherwise be the responsibility of the traveller. Having 300 travellers spending up to USD 100 a year is potentially a significant amount of money that ICANN can ill afford to spend at the moment.

### **Actual Reimbursements**

Reimbursement for '*actual expenses for meals, ground transportation, visa costs, etc*' (page 23) should come with stated limitations, where various cost options exist. For example, this would not be the case for visa costs, but certainly for meals and ground transportation, where both reasonable and expensive options are possible, travellers should be advised in advance of their budget limit for lunch, dinner, airport transfer, etc to avoid excessive spending. Individuals are always free to spend their own money to get additional services.

### **Group Rates**

The RrSG would also like to take this opportunity to suggest that ICANN should be negotiating group rates with both hotel chains and airline groups that have a good worldwide presence. This would almost certainly provide repeated cost savings.

In summary, the RrSG would like to see the guidelines include a few more restrictions on potential spending around air travel, ground expenses and trips to obtain visas, whilst also having some more flexibility in when travellers can be substituted and how they arrange their flight, when doing so comes at the same or lower cost to ICANN.