

Dear ICANN Community Leaders,

It is my pleasure to present a draft plan for an ICANN Academy and to invite you and your community members to learn more about the plan and to discuss the idea with us. The ALAC is organising a webinar on Friday 2 March at 12:00 UTC, prior to the upcoming ICANN meeting in Costa Rica in order to give participants some basic information about the project. We will also present the project for discussion at the ICANN community during the Public Participation Committee (PPC) on Thursday, 15 March 2012 (time tbc).

Point of departure:

ICANN is a complex and structured organization. New participants coming to ICANN meetings often need a lot of time and advice in order to understand the structure, the issues and the working methods of the numerous ICANN bodies. Compared to organizations such as the United Nations, OECD, IOC or the World Bank, there is very little available literature in which outsider newcomers can get concise and structured information about the organization as a whole. Even experienced participants, who transfer from one part of ICANN to another, often experience disorientation and confusion. Over the years "learning by doing" has emerged as the only method for integration into ICANN meetings and the on-going processes between the meetings. Sometimes attendees who apply for an ICANN leadership position, find they need up to a year of ICANN meetings before they begin to understand the complex environment of ICANN procedures and issues, and begin to see how the multi-stakeholder model works in practice. One of the consequences of the difficulty in introducing new participants and especially new leaders to the full scope of ICANN participation is that a lot of their potential knowledge, wisdom and energy remains unused and unfocused and is not fully available for the improvement of ICANN's performance and its further development as a multi-stakeholder model.

Situation:

ICANN has recognized this problem and has developed various instruments to improve the situation for new participants. For example a number of training lectures as part of the fellowship program or webinars have been used as introductory material. There is, however, no systematic mechanism in place that can provide a comprehensive and analytical presentation of ICANN, its mission, its core values, its structure, and its working methods. There is no mechanism that can provide an introduction to the breadth of specific ICANN issues or to the broader historical and political environment in which ICANN functions as an important part of the global Internet governance ecosystem. The lack of a comprehensive educational program has been particularly hard felt in the attempt to successfully deploy the resources of ICANN volunteers, especially those who have been selected by the Nominating Committee (NomCom) or the various ICANN groups to serve in a leadership position: as a board director, a Supporting Organization council member or an Advisory Committee member.

Project description:

To improve ICANN's efficiency there is a critical current need to provide a comprehensive educational programme for new elected ICANN officers (the Board directors, the Supporting Organization councils and the Advisory Committee members) who are selected annually by the NomCom and by the various ICANN groups. The ICANN Academy has been designed to fill this gap and to provide a coherent introduction for newly appointed ICANN officers.

The proposal to create an ICANN Academy is an outcome of the At-Large Improvements Work Team B. A first draft proposal was submitted in August 2011 in close collaboration with ICANN Staff. An At-Large working group was formed and they in turn created a curriculum team with members from ICANN's five geographical regions.

The training is designed as a 3-day face to face programme, where lectures and fellows should be able to interact and communicate intensively both inside the meeting room and in social settings. The Academy will initially focus on newly appointed ICANN Board directors and AC/SO officers, at the beginning of their terms, in order to enable them to serve in a leadership position from the start of their term. The two key elements of this academy are the formal knowledge transfer and the socialising aspect conducive to networking. Both should provide the future leaders with the necessary abilities to contribute to their respective constituency and collaborate with other community members.

Next Steps:

The ALAC considers the ICANN Academy a community project and invites all members of the other ICANN constituencies to collectively discuss and to develop this project. The first pilot ICANN Academy is planned for immediately prior to the ICANN Annual meeting in Toronto in 2012. The program would then be evaluated with the goal of repeating the ICANN Academy (at least) once a year. The plan is to implement the current proposal after the community review as an inclusive ICANN Academy concept, synchronized with existing capacity building programs offered by ICANN combined with other training methods such as virtual learning, to meet the needs of ICANN stakeholder groups.

The final goal would be to gather all the learning activities inside ICANN (newly selected ICANN leaders training, fellowship program, RALOs' capacity building, Policy update webinar, etc.) under the hat of the ICANN ACADEMY, making use of all types of education and training (face to face, virtual, etc.)

While the budget for the Academy proposal has already been filed by the ALAC and is currently under ICANN Finance Department evaluation, the ALAC has been advised that we must progress forward if we wish the program to be ready by the Toronto AGM. The Webinar will provide a good introduction to the Academy concept, ahead of the San José meeting and I hope that you and your members will be able to join us.

Kind regards,

Olivier Crepin-Leblond,
ALAC Chair