

ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

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Governmental Advisory Committee Comment on ICANN Draft FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and Five-Year Operating Plan Update

Introduction

The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the ICANN Draft FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and Five-Year Operating Plan Update (see - <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/fy20-budget-2018-12-17-en>). GAC members have reviewed ICANN org's planning documents and proposals and herein provide targeted comments regarding specific aspects of the draft budget process that are applicable to GAC activities.¹

General Comments

The GAC thanks the ICANN org Finance Department for the improvements to the detail and scope of information provided in the draft FY20 operating plan and budget materials. Over the past few years, the GAC Leadership has observed the efforts of the ICANN Finance Team to improve the format and detail of the extensive materials made available for review. The GAC Leadership appreciates the willingness of the ICANN Finance Department team to engage with GAC leadership and individual GAC members on the organization's financial planning and various operational efforts. The GAC takes seriously its responsibilities as a part of the ICANN Empowered Community. The committee looks forward to future dialogue with ICANN Finance Team on relevant matters.

Specific Comments

- **Core Travel Support for GAC Participants from Developing Regions**

Despite the ever-growing intersessional community workload, in-person participation remains a critical component of work for GAC members and GAC representatives. The GAC believes that

¹ This comment was prepared by the Committee's leadership and is made on behalf of the entire GAC. It has been subjected to review of the GAC membership and is intended to complement, but not replace, any input that may be provided on the ICANN Draft FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and Five-Year Operating Plan Update by individual GAC members.

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ICANN resources should continue to be devoted to support GAC participants from developing countries who are interested in participating at face-to-face ICANN Public Meetings.

In recent years, the ICANN organization has increased outreach and engagement to potential government participants from developing countries and regions. Those efforts have proven successful as new members have joined the GAC from those regions. It is important to follow that success with targeted support to help those new members fully realize the opportunity to substantially participate in GAC activities – particularly in-person at ICANN Public Meetings where that basic membership can be transformed into substantive participation in GAC work efforts.

The GAC is pleased to see that its current allocation of 40 supported travel slots per public meeting has been targeted to continue in FY20. The committee has consistently championed expanded support for in-person participation by GAC member representatives at ICANN Public Meetings.

With the adoption of new ICANN Travel Guidelines late last year, the GAC is focused on updating its internal guidelines for travel support requests this 2019 calendar year. It is hoped that these updates will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how the GAC utilizes its current travel support resources. As a result of these intended improvements, the GAC expects to realize more efficient use of travel support resources in the current FY19 and upcoming FY20 fiscal years. The GAC as a responsible and accountable member of the ICANN community will also accompany the current GAC travel support with an assessment and analysis of the effectiveness of this travel arrangement to be discussed further within the GAC.

Recognizing the current challenges and goals for the organization's finances and to give those changes an opportunity to be fully implemented, the GAC is not seeking any specific increases in travel support levels for ICANN Public Meetings this year. Eventually, however after further discussion and analysis of current travel arrangement, the GAC might like to see the current 40 traveler allocation increased by 25% to a total of 50 supported traveler slots and asks that ICANN org consider ways that this support can be prioritized and achieved in the future – as soon as FY21.

- **Resources to Support Successful Capacity Building Workshops**

Energized and active GAC participant contributions to the work of the committee in the post-IANA transition environment is a critical factor needed to maintain the legitimacy of the ICANN multistakeholder model. This is a unique need of the GAC because the committee experiences substantial turnover of GAC participants (approximately 30%) on an annualized basis.

Collaborating with the ICANN org Government Engagement (GE) staff, the GAC has devoted targeted efforts in the past two years to the development of capacity-building workshops to

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increase participation in GAC activities and strengthen relationships between GAC members and the rest of the ICANN multistakeholder community.

In 2017 the GAC and the GE began to conduct prototype capacity building workshops to promote informed participation in GAC affairs. These workshops were directed at encouraging participation from current GAC members and membership prospects to inform them about the basics of ICANN and to encourage them to more actively participate in GAC work by educating them about particular “hot-topic” DNS policy issues of importance to governments. At targeted workshops, special curriculums aimed at local law enforcement entities were designed to encourage participants to join GAC working groups like the Public Safety Working Group. The GAC’s experience with these workshops has been very successful – resulting in increased GAC understanding and involvement and leading to new countries joining the GAC. The GAC will also be utilizing ICANN Learn in its capacity development efforts, as a cost-effective long-term tool to lower barriers for participation and enable more meaningful engagement of all GAC members into GAC and ICANN processes.

Unfortunately, as part of the ICANN SO-AC Additional Budget Request (ABR) component of the FY19 budget effort, the GAC was allocated limited resources to conduct only a single workshop in conjunction with an ICANN public meeting. That workshop is being planned for the ICANN65 Public Meeting in Marrakech.

The committee notes that there is no apparent core budget resource support for these types of activities in the Draft ICANN FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and thus the GAC has again made use of the community Additional Budget Request (ABR) process this year to seek support for a total of 5 events in FY20 including – three (3) to be held during ICANN 66, 67 and 68 and two (2) during a multistakeholder regional meeting in partnership with a host country or organization (see - <https://community.icann.org/display/projfinadhocws/GAC+-FY20+Additional+Budget+Requests>). The workshops, to be conducted on the margins of ICANN Meetings and multistakeholder regional meetings will be cost effective, as the respective venues will be used to take advantage of the presence of GAC members who are already attending these meetings and members of the ICANN and technical community.

Noting that a substantial number of competing community requests for the ABR funds have now been submitted for FY20 (a total of 35)(see - <https://community.icann.org/display/projfinadhocws/FY20+Budget+Requests+Submitted>), the GAC is not optimistic that the ABR process will provide the resources needed to completely fulfill that request. As a result, the GAC requests an allocation of \$20,000 USD to enable the GAC to provide at least half of the contemplated workshops in FY20.

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- **Sustainable Solution to GAC Secretariat Support**

For the last several years, the GAC has found it challenging to maintain a stable and reliable source of funding to continue to support its independent secretariat support activities. The GAC has appreciated direct and growing support from ICANN staff for various staff support functions but believes the maintenance of a sustainable and accountable secretariat resource is a basic capability that could be supported by the ICANN organization. A sustainable and accountable secretariat capability helps the GAC to offer the ICANN Board reliable, and consistent advice as needed on important policy development matters.

As of 31 December 2018, the existing contract with the GAC's independent secretariat was terminated. The GAC has been very appreciative that the ICANN org has been able to provide additional ICANN staff support on a temporary basis to assist the GAC in managing this loss of resources.

The GAC requests that the ICANN organization carefully consider providing the GAC with additional resources to help sustain its secretariat function. The GAC requests that the ICANN org earmark specific staff support resources that will enable the current level of staff support to continue for the entire FY20 fiscal year.

The GAC understands the challenges that the ICANN organization faces for revenue and expenses in FY19, but this resource support should be examined for FY20 and beyond.

The GAC is grateful to ICANN for this opportunity to share the committee's perspective on the Draft ICANN FY20 Operating Plan and Budget and Five-Year Operating Plan. The GAC looks forward to future comment opportunities as they relate to ICANN's finances and other budget-related proceedings.

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