

Subject: Business Constituency (BC) comment on ICANN's Draft North America Engagement Plan for FY21-25
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From: Steve DelBianco
To: comments-north-america-engagement-plan-fy21-25-19may21@icann.org
CC: BC List

BC Comment on ICANN's Draft North America Engagement Plan for FY21-25

The ICANN Business Constituency (BC) is pleased to provide input to the draft North American Engagement Plan FY21-25. We note that the areas of focus are aligned with the goals and objectives in the ICANN FY21-25 Strategic Plan.

The BC has always had strong engagement in North America and our committed core of participants will continue to represent the interests of business users even though we remain a relatively small group. The opportunity to draw others that can share in our mandate and can greatly benefit from expanded participation makes it easy for us to support the targeted engagement proposed. Because of the importance of extending ICANN's reach, Strategic Objective 2 (Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance) needs to be carefully addressed so that:

- ICANN Org recognizes that participation has limited value when the outputs of working groups are deferred for future implementation or blocked by contract parties' control of GNSO. This creates fatigue of existing participants when long horizons stand in the way of exhaustive efforts to achieve consensus.
- New participants are enticed to bring their expertise about business and the internet so that policy development work can be more broadly distributed.

The BC believes there needs to be a far more targeted approach to North American Engagement than outlined in the draft Plan. The document references community very narrowly, describing existing stakeholders, that relatively small group of participants that has already found use and need for ICANN for their own purposes. This group will likely continue to be involved, unless engagement efforts do not result in new participation. To this point, we note that only once does the Plan mention 'new stakeholders' and only twice do they talk about 'potential stakeholders'.

As a result, more details of the emphasis that will be placed on engagement is necessary. Specifically:

- What proportion of engagement will be spent on existing community vs. new or potential stakeholders?
- How will ICANN org identify and reach potential and new stakeholders? While technical or professional associations, chambers of commerce, universities, or other regional entities are mentioned, as is USG and GoC, limited resources require careful attention to where ICANN org's resources will bear the greatest fruit.
- What partnerships (2.2 Proposed Engagement Area) will be on the outreach list?
- they are talking about when they mention relevant vendors or talking about strengthening partnerships (with who?).

We believe that giving careful consideration to these matters will also result in better defined Key Performance Indicators, as we note with 2.1 that it is stated as solely 'Number of documents or pieces

of content produced’.

With a well-structured plan, the BC believes that broader engagement in North America can occur. At present, a relatively small number amount of participation exists across all SOs and ACs. On the business side alone most companies either are not aware of ICANN or do not see the need to have a voice in policy for the internet. Like most people, many companies see themselves as users of the internet rather than influencers.

There are significant matters taking place within ICANN that could grab the attention of such parties - if they understood that geopolitical issues could have an effect on their data and their customer, in the globally interoperable internet, opportunities that may come to multi-cultural focused groups through Universal Acceptance, and challenges to technology that that could result from their development.

The BC looks forward to seeing more details about the North American Engagement Plan FY21-25 and we hope our comments are useful in helping you shape effective actions with strong outcomes from this process.

We close with this quote from one of our longstanding members from North America:

From my experience, there needs to be a targeted approach to engagement. When I first started with CIPA, I also worked with the regional telco and ISP in my province. In 6 years, I never heard anyone on that side of the business mention ICANN. Nobody ever mentioned attending an ICANN meeting. Similarly, since I started attending ICANN in 2012, I’ve never heard of a person from Bell Canada, Rogers Communications or Telus (the big 3 in Canada) participating in ICANN. – Tim Smith

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This comment was drafted by John Berard and Tim Smith.
It was approved in accord with our charter.