

GNSO Council comments on Proposed Incremental Changes to the ICANN Meetings Strategy

<https://www.icann.org/public-comments/proposed-changes-meetings-strategy-2017-12-14-en>

The GNSO Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Incremental Changes to the ICANN Meetings Strategy.

We acknowledge that the purpose of this comment period is specifically related to a limited number of proposed incremental changes to ICANN meetings; however, the Council has also included high level comments that are more fundamental in nature and are intended to inform future discussions about the potential need for a more comprehensive review of the current meeting strategy with the community.

High Level Comments

The GNSO Council notes that despite considerable planning efforts to reduce the number of sessions, remove conflicts from the 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 ICANN has a shortfall in the Reserve Fund in the order of \$80m, and both the ICANN CEO and Chair have put the community on notice that they are actively looking for ways to save money, it seems that it is time to consider how ICANN meetings could be streamlined or managed in order to reduce the considerable cost attached to producing each meeting. For example:

- using regional hubs on a regular basis rather than constantly searching for new locations;
- reviewing the requirement to have all meetings recorded, transcribed and translated;
- re-assessing whether three major ICANN meetings each year are necessary, particularly in light of other ICANN sponsored meetings such as the GDD Summit, NCPH Intersessional, and the DNS Symposium;
- consider the utility of conducting a series of virtual ICANN meetings as an alternative to face-to-face meetings.

Incremental Recommendations

Community leaders and representatives were asked what consideration, if any, should be made for changes to the meeting duration.

a. Community Forum

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

GNSO Council comment:

Consideration should be given to adopting the Policy Forum format for the first meeting of each year. The focus does not necessarily have to be policy focused, but there may be value in giving preference to other work efforts that are being undertaken within the community at any given time, such as Review Teams and CCWGs, including the opportunity for these efforts to host dedicated cross-community sessions to progress and inform their work. It might also be more appropriate to adopt the low-key

version of an opening ceremony, remove the public Board meeting from the agenda, and perhaps have only one public forum.

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.

GNSO Council comment:

The Council has no objection to adding an additional day to the Policy Forum meeting. We understand that there have been many complaints that four days makes the workload on the community too compressed, and does not allow sufficient time to devote to outreach activities.

However, we do believe it would be sensible to be non-prescriptive about what the additional day can be used for. We appreciate that there are a number of groups within the community that conduct outreach events at ICANN meetings and that the extra day will enhance their ability to conduct those activities. We are also aware that the strong focus on policy efforts limits the ability of various stakeholder groups, constituencies, supporting organisations and advisory committees to have substantive face-to-face meeting time. To that end, we believe that it would make sense for all community groups to be able to use the additional day to suit their respective needs.

The Council would strongly object to any other changes being made to the four day schedule that has to date worked well in Helsinki (ICANN56 June 2016) and was enhanced for Johannesburg (ICANN59 June 2017). The GNSO Council has received positive feedback from across the community about the value of dedicating the four day meeting specifically to policy efforts. The PDP workload of the GNSO is currently considerable and is not expected to diminish any time soon.

To that end the ability to dedicate substantive time for PDP WGs to meet face-to-face during one ICANN meeting each year, and engage in discussions with the broader community during non-conflicted cross-community sessions, is critical to assisting the PDP WGs progress their respective work efforts.

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.*

GNSO Council comment:

The Council supports reducing the official dates published for the AGM to six days and adding an additional day for the community to hold internal working meetings and wrap-ups.

For a volunteer community, a seven day commitment is considerable in terms of time away from work and home. We also reiterate the comments above that some laws prohibit employees from working more than 5 days in a row without a day off including travel time.