Thank you for providing the Noncommercial Stakeholders Group with the opportunity to express our opinion about the fellowship program at ICANN.

Program Goals and Vision

1. **What does your group think should be the objective of the program and how success should be measured?**

The objective of the fellowship program should be to educate participants about ICANN's mission, its policy processes, facilitate active participation in agenda setting and policy making activities at ICANN meetings and mailing list and help with the diversity of views and underrepresented regions view to be reflected in ICANN processes . The success of the program should be measured by verifying the participation of the fellows in GNSO policy development process working groups, cross-community working groups, participation on calls and in mailing lists. Additionally, recommendations by the leadership of the SO/AC that do policy should be considered. Solely being a part of the group is not sufficient to constitute participation. Prospective fellows should first know what ICANN does and what is within its remit and mission, and secondly, should be actively engaged with said processes. This can be measured by regular attendance in online meetings, becoming pen holders in drafting public comments, and substantively contributing to processes. Being nominally a leader or an officer of a SO/ AC does not necessarily provide evidence for the success of the fellowship program either. They should be involved with ICANN's agenda setting and policy making processes throughout the year and not simply attend face-to-face ICANN meetings.

2. The Fellowship Program was established to provide access to ICANN meetings to individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities. In your group's opinion, how effective is the Fellowship Program at fulfilling its current goal?

The fellowship program purpose, as described on the ICANN website, is as follows:

> "The ICANN Fellowship Program seeks <u>to help create a broader base of knowledgeable constituents to engage in the ICANN multistakeholder process</u> and <u>become the new voice of experience in their regions and on the global stage</u>" (emphasis added).[1]

This was the primary goal. While the program has been to some extent successful in creating a broader base of knowledgeable constituents, its rapid expansion has led to the program not achieving its full potential. The NCSG believes that the goal of bringing individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities to ICANN has been to a great extent achieved. The natural consequence, therefore, is ensuring that this base of knowledge is used and tapped into by the community, and it is this which needs improvement.

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[1] https://www.icann.org/fellowshipprogram

Another goal of the fellowship program was to bring those not otherwise able to attend face-to-face meetings to attend in person. While this effort can be good for a limited number of times, attending meetings on its own does not in and of itself enable a participant to meaningfully contribute to policy making processes. Attending meetings in person is important for networking, building relationships, and better understanding the processes, but it is not the only way to get engaged in ICANN activities.

3. In your opinion, is this goal still a priority for ICANN, given the new bylaws?If not, what new goals would your group propose for the program?

The new ICANN bylaws have a limited definition for ICANN's mission. ICANN's mission is related to Domain Name System policy. While the goal of the fellowship does not contradict this mission, often times the fellowship participants do not know of this limited mandate and believe that ICANN has a responsibility for broader Internet governance issues which it does not. Considering ICANN's limited mission, the program's goal should be limited to building capacity for engagement in domain name policy at ICANN.

4. Have Fellows contributed to the work of your group? If so, where do you think they have added the most value? What might be changed about the Fellowship Program to enhance participation of Fellows in your group?

We have some leaders in our Stakeholder Group and in our constituencies who have participated in the fellowship program, including our current Chair. However, holding a leadership position on its own does not necessarily attest to the success of the program; bringing substantive contribution does. Fellows need to be more well-versed about ICANN's mission, what it does, and either have a professional interest in the issue (for example, be a digital rights advocate), or be on an educational path that directs their interest in ICANN work.

5. Does your group make efforts to involve, educate, and/or inform Fellows about your work? If so, please describe these efforts.

We have many programs for newcomers that are led by our volunteers and funded with scarce resources procured from external donors or occasionally through Additional Budget Requests approved by ICANN org. These tend to be led by our member constituencies, rather than at the stakeholder group level, though the NCSG does have a new policy course intended to build cross-constituency collaboration.At the constituency level, we have a mentor/ mentee program whose travel is funded by an external donor. The Noncommercial Users Constituency also runs periodically a policy writing course. We also do outreach periodically through Adobe Connect webinars, and during ICANN meetings where the fellows are invited to attend and to participate. We advertise these programs through the fellowship channels and generally have some fellows attend our sessions. However, the existence of these programs does not mean fellows proactively reach out to us, nor necessarily watch our newcomers webinars, nor attend our sessions, especially if they are held in the mornings. We have noticed that newcomer sessions held at 8:30am (so not to conflict with policy work) have very small rates of attendance.

6. How willing would your group (SO/AC/SG/C) be to participate and take ownership for selecting and developing fellows, including giving them assignments, assigning mentors, etc?

We will be willing to participate in the selection of fellows. As it is, we already help those interested in civil society concerns to interact with the broader community.

Selection Processes

7. Are you aware of the Fellowship selection process? What changes, if any, would you suggest for the selection process?

The selection criteria should be fine tuned to ensure that candidates have a genuine interest and/or involvement in activities relevant to ICANN and ICANN's mission. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that selected candidates are interested in domain name policy, and not simply more general and broader Internet governance issues. There should also be fact checking of candidate statements. In the past, fellows have claimed to be members of our stakeholder group when they had not in fact even applied for membership, and ICANN staff had not sought to verify that the candidate was an NCSG member in good standing.

8. An individual can be awarded a Fellowship up to three times. Do you suggest retaining or revising this number? Why?

We are not in a position to respond to this question, as we do not have enough information available to access the success of the fellowship programme in bringing in active participants to ICANN processes. While awarding a fellowship three times may be a suitable number, it is possible that more success could be achieved with a different number. That said, we believe that only those fellows who have become meaningfully engaged with ICANN after their first fellowship should be awarded additional fellowships. You can objectively verify their participation by confirming with the community whether one is a member in good standing, by verifying that they have joined working groups and reviewing the attendance lists, and identifying how active or inactive they have been on mailing lists and calls.

In addition, we have observed that fellows can receive travel more than 3 times by being coaches, senior coaches, and booth leads. If this information is not available somewhere on ICANN website we think it should be made available. We feel that it is not an appropriate use of precious travel resources to bring someone to an ICANN meeting to stand by the ICANN booth. This is a task that could be assigned to some of the 200+ ICANN staff who are sent to each face-to-face meeting.

We do not think fellowship alumni are necessarily in the best position to coach the fellows.After attending three ICANN meetings, fellow alumni should only be awarded funding for travel by being active in working groups and a part of the ICANN community. We do not believe that coaches should solely be sourced from the fellowship program. Coaches should be from various parts of the community, so that they can help the fellows with being a part of ICANN community, and they should not receive travel funding just for being a coach.

9. For Policy Forum Meetings, currently only Fellowship Alums can apply. Do you support continuing with this approach? If not, what changes would you suggest?

This approach is something that we support; however, fellowship alumni are not always active in ICANN nor the groups that they mention. There should be a process for verifying that they are truly engaged with the groups they mention.

Program Size

10. Considering your responses to previous questions, would you suggest making the program larger, smaller, or maintaining the current size?

We suggest making the program size smaller and bringing a lesser number of fellows to face-to-face meetings. However, the remaining budget should go to training the fellows and developing comprehensive educational materials to aid fellows and other newcomers in understanding the ICANN ecosystem.

11. If the program were to be reduced in size, what would your group deem as the priorities for the program with a smaller cohort?

Domain name policy is a limited field; finding those who are interested in this is a challenge. We can have better and more effective interaction with a smaller number of fellows. Priorities for the smaller cohort should be to understand what ICANN does, understand its governance structure and the groups within it, along with the values the various groups hold and what they want to achieve at ICANN. Moreover, there needs to be a professionally-designed program during the ICANN meeting that helps the participants to engage with ICANN processes (even during their very first meeting). The program should not represent a burden on the participants or the community, and they should be able to attend community meetings they care about, and so pre-meeting work may be required.

12. When you interact with Fellows at an ICANN Meeting, do you find that they are sufficiently knowledgeable about ICANN? If not, what skills or areas of knowledge would you suggest increasing focus on for pre-Meeting preparation?

There are fellows who are very enthusiastic. passionate, and who are professionals in this field. However, there are not many fellows that are sufficiently knowledgeable about ICANN. This is evident from the public forum interventions. The narrow mission of ICANN should be focussed on. Moreover, they should know more about the internal ICANN governance structure prior to attending the meeting.

Issue areas: 1. ICANN governance structure 2. Clear understanding of ICANN mission 3. The issues ICANN is working on during the meeting they are going to attend

13. Do you think that Fellows spend sufficient time in working sessions with your group during the course of an ICANN meeting? If not, what would changes would your group propose?

Spending time in working sessions might not be the best measure through which to identify their involvement, however it is important that they attend these sessions. In recent history, NCUC outreach meetings have become compulsory for them to attend, so we do see a lot of them at such meetings. However, newcomer fellows are sometimes distracted as they have not been privy to previous conversations that lend background to the deliberation taking place during a meeting. They sometimes have too many fellowship sessions and activities that conflict with ICANN working sessions, and this prevents them from attending sessions where they could see real deliberations taking place. All in all, they work in their silos and we need to re-program the fellowship in order to overcome this problem. Moreover, having too many fellows in the program is what results in taking on those who are not truly interested in DNS policy, hence naturally they do not find the sessions interesting enough to attend.

Another reason for lack of attendance is that they find the sessions boring, too complex and very internal. We can see if there could be solutions for that, for example by providing background information about the meetings or have a coloring scheme that separates administrative internal meetings from substantive interesting ones, but this is an exercise, to be effective across the entire community, that would need to be run by ICANN staff.

14. Do you feel that you have enough time to engage with Fellows at an ICANN meeting?

If fellows are a part of the community or becoming the part of the community then yes, we are at ICANN meetings to engage with the community. If spending time means having lunch or breakfast with them, then that also can be arranged and we have done that before. However, fellows should feel free to attend our meetings and gatherings and to be a part of the community and spend time with us -- and not just spend their entire meeting with the other fellows. They should reach out to us proactively. The fellowship is a program; it should not be a separate group in the community.

Information Available on Program

15. Is the information currently available clear and sufficient for your community members to understand the Fellowship Program? If not, which elements could be improved and how?

We would appreciate more information on how the fellowship selection committee is formulated, and on how fellows are ultimately chosen.

16. Are your community members aware of the differences between the Fellowship and NextGen@ICANN Programs? If not, please state what type of clarification would be useful.

We are familiar with the difference between the two programs, though we do think there is a significant overlap in who is eligible to participate in both, as evidenced by the sheer number of NextGen participants who, after exceeding that program's maximum attendance limit, go on to become fellows. If these programs are so similar, perhaps they could be consolidated into one..

General Questions

17. The Fellowship Program seeks to engage participants who will go on to participate actively in the ICANN community. What skills, attributes and backgrounds have provided

the most successful and active participation in your SO/AC/SG/C? What skillsets and backgrounds would your group see as desirable for candidates for the Fellowship Program?

In general we think that the fellowship program should be looking to address gaps in the community, and so a periodic reassessment of which working groups need what skill might be the best way to find candidates who will be successful and active in their participation. However, at a high level, we think it would be desirable to see candidates with backgrounds as follows, noting that this list is not exhaustive:

- Academics that study or teach relevant issues; specifically those who are focused on ICANN policies and structure;
- Representatives of civil society organizations that work on digital rights issues and want to find a balance between intellectual property and freedom of speech;
- Lawyers that have a background in advancing public interest-oriented perspectives on issues such as human rights, privacy, access to knowledge, freedom of expression, and/or consumer choice; and
- Noncommercial domain name registrants that care about domain name policy.

18. With which elements of the Fellowship Program is your group most satisfied? What changes or improvements would your group most want to see implemented to the program?

The fellowship brings in new voices, new perspectives, and skills to our groups. Currently the fellowship program is largely a travel line item in the budget. A stronger institutional structure, with a budget that incorporates elements other than travel and its own operational success metrics that support the organization's strategic vision, could allow it to reach its full potential.

Considering the number of fellows that are being taken on, and the number of inactive fellows, unfortunately the program's expansion has not worked out. We want to see a professionally-designed program to onboard fellows into the community. We want to see that the selected fellows feel as though they are a part of the community from day one, because they are a part of the community from the first day they arrive!

19. Do you have any other questions or comments about the Fellowship Program?

There should be a followup matrix to measure the activities and participation of fellows on a medium to long term basis. It is very important to be able to assess the impact that fellows have, as a result of the program, and how much they contribute either to the ICANN community, as well as their impact outside of the ICANN ecosystem. At present, fellows fill in a self-assessment form after each meeting and then there is no follow-up to help them integrate into the community or to measure their progress. Fellows should be asked to set specific, measurable, achievable, and time-based objectives, and these should be evaluated.