APRALO Response to At-Large Leadership on:
HOW WE MEET: A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

At-Large community members are encouraged to read the **full ICANN's Policy & Advice Development staff team discussion paper** and are invited to **pose questions, provide input or comments** to the paper, on this Google Doc **by way of inserting a comment to relevant sections below**. Please do not edit the text in this Google Doc in any way.

If you wish to offer questions, input or comments but are unsure of or do not see an appropriate place for them under Section II, please add them to the Other Questions, Input or Comments section.

The ALAC Chair and Co-Vice Chairs will, beginning on **12 August 2024**, review the initial round of questions, inputs, comments received and advise the At-Large community of next steps, vis a vis a phased dialogue approach being driven by ICANN Org. At-Large Staff will collate and/or format all questions, input or comments received in this Google Doc to enable optimum readability while preserving each contributor's contribution to the extent feasible.

Overall Comments from APRALO

Community travellers are an asset that ICANN could better exploit to its advantage. The objective of traveller support should be to enhance the contribution that volunteer community end-users make to the work of ICANN, rather than disguising corporate cost saving as an exercise in efficiency.

There should be a more careful analysis and further trials before setting new rules. Rather than adopting a myopic short-term view, ICANN needs to look at the long-term objectives and repercussions. For example, enabling more funded travellers into smaller targeted regional/sub-regional meetings, first needs to ensure that these meetings will be adequately resourced to enable active, efficient and meaningful activity that can contribute appropriately to the continued work of ICANN.

It is important to note that it is not an easy thing to just cull. Diversity, opportunity and enthusiasm for engagement, as well as any chance for a genuine global voice, will suffer, and so too, will our Multistakeholder Model.

I. OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

At ICANN80, ICANN Interim President & CEO Sally Costerton held a meeting with the SOAC Chairs and Vice-Chairs. The meeting resulted in two specific topics for a dialogue with the community leaders, to be facilitated by ICANN's Policy & Advice Development function: 1) "How We Meet" and 2) "How We Work".

ICANN's Policy & Advice Development staff team prepared a paper as a starting point for a dialogue with the community on "How We Meet"; i.e., how ICANN org and the community can collaborate to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our in-person and hybrid meetings in the current economic environment, exercise financial prudence and realize meaningful cost savings while continuing to ensure that the resources (including staff and community time) expended on meetings meets the community's actual needs.

The ideas have been grouped under two headings:
> 1) broader, longer term, more strategic ideas; and
> 2) narrower, largely more tactical suggestions focused on ICANN Public Meetings.

Should this community dialogue result in practical options that do not require significant time or effort to implement, these can be included in the budget and planning process for FY26 which is expected to begin at the end of August or in early September 2024.

At-Large leadership is seeking the contribution of At-Large members to prepare for their upcoming meetings with Sally and the SOAC Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

II. IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK & DIALOGUE

A. Broader Strategic Ideas Spanning All Community Meetings

1. Evaluate the full cycle of in-person and hybrid community meetings, including standalone SOAC Leadership and Strategic Planning meetings, targeted group meetings (such as the Contracted Parties Summit, the At Large Summit, and the High-Level Governmental Meeting) and similar, cost-intensive, travel-dependent Meetings.

Org Examples	APRALO's Response
Standalone SOAC Leadership and	Examine, through a cost-benefit analysis

Strategic Planning Meetings	the need for standalone meetings for any internal stakeholder(s) over a period of time. Standalone SO/AC meetings may be only required if the current cadence of public meetings is shortened.
Contracted Parties Summit	Since this meeting has business aspects involved, see if a part of the costs can be covered by any DNS industry forum.
At-Large Summit	ATLAS meetings are important from an ICANN community as well as At-Large community-capacity building perspective. If costs need to be reduced, explore cheaper venues or choose destinations with lower transportation costs.
High-Level Government Meeting	These meetings have strategic and tactical utility that are hard to achieve by other means, especially today when the Multistakeholder model faces a threat. Explore if one or more governments can partially bear the costs by hosting these meetings.
Others?	Where volunteer time is a critical factor and significant amounts of progress can be made through a F2F meeting, special-purpose meetings can be considered. For example, the F2F meeting of the EPDP on IDNs in Dec 2023 made significant progress in 3 days that perhaps reduced the length of the EPDP by more than a month. Several small meetings a year, that can add value to the work of ICANN, for example (1) 2-3 day strategic, high-level SO-AC leaders similar to what was held in LA just before COVID (2) 2-3 day specific-focus cross-community working groups requiring targeted expertise, and (3) one general hybrid conference - AGM (including GAs and an ATLAS every 5 years). The rest, even organised plenaries, can be done online.

	This is a well-proven effect and needs to be part of any new Meetings Strategy/Framework.

2. Review the planning by ICANN Org and the community for all in-person/ hybrid meetings (including ICANN Public Meetings) by adopting an annualized, regular approach of planning for a full meeting cycle (either by a calendar year or a fiscal year)

Org Examples	APRALO'S Response
Adopt an annualized, regular plan for a full meeting cycle (by SOAC and/or by the community). This might include community groups to identify its policy focus and objectives in advance, to utilize each in-person/ hybrid meeting appropriately and to achieve specific targets/goals across "The ICANN Year".	Yes, an annual plan for the fiscal year can be adopted. However it is essential that the plan is Agreed to/adopted by the ICANN Community and not forced upon them! Also it *should require the community groups to identify its policy and other focus etc., as proposed… That is essential
Using the new Five Year Strategic and Operating Plans, ICANN org and the community to collaborate to ensure that objectives, priorities, and work plans are aligned and thus budgeted and planned accordingly and predictably.	Yes, especially with regards to the special attention RALOs give to align their strategic RALO outreach plans to help meet ICANN priorities
Others?	

3. As part of the discussions around #1 & #2, consider a review of the current allocation of Funded Travelers to each ICANN Public Meeting.

Org Examples	APRALO's Response
Revisit the current overall number of Funded Travelers to ICANN Public meetings.	It should be the SO/ AC's who should be reviewing who should be the funded travellers to any ICANN Public Meeting from their community and setting the

Currently, ICANN provides travel funding - which includes airfare, hotel accommodation and a per diem allowance - to up to 300 community travelers per ICANN Public Meeting.	criteria.

For example, the funded travellers for such meetings could be those who are a must attend category and any 'experts" can be funded for more focused and intensive meetings where there are deliverables at the end. |
| Share best practices and information about how each group allocates its travel slots for each ICANN Public Meeting. | Yes. Each SO/AC could have discussion within their community on how the travel slots are allocated.

APRALO has initiated community level discussion on how travel slots should be used, who should decide upon it and what parameters and metrics should be used |
| Integrate the topic of travel support into the broader dialogue about the necessity of, and planning for, all in-person and hybrid meetings that require travel, venue, and other support to provide a comprehensive discussion about how community travel support can best be utilized to maximize their value and objectives for each group. | We do that all the time! |
| Others? | Instead of 3 public meetings, several small / shorter / more focused meetings a year would add value to the on-going work of ICANN.
Small meeting examples:
(1) 2-3 day strategic, high-level SO-AC leaders similar to what was held in LA just before COVID. (The Board and Nom-Com already meet separately.)
(2) 2-3 day specific-focus cross-community working groups requiring targeted expertise (and getting the work done).

But also (3) a 2-3 day general hybrid conference - AGM (including GAs and an ATLAS every 5 years).

The rest, even organised plenaries, can be done online. |

B. Narrower Ideas Focusing on ICANN Public Meetings

1. Reduce the number of sessions at ICANN Public Meetings, which could result in a reduction in the cost of travel (i.e., accommodation) and venue-related costs (e.g., room and equipment rentals, contractors)

Org Examples	APRALO's Response

Reduce the number of sessions at ICANN Public Meetings by:
    (a) "bunching" of specific community sessions, and/or
    (b) focusing each ICANN Public Meeting on specific types of sessions
with administrative or other internal work, wrap ups, topical updates, and sessions designed for broad outreach moved to virtual meetings.
	The number of sessions at ICANN can definitely be rationalised, focussing on having sessions where work can be done, decisions have to be taken, critical points discussed/ negotiated, or collaborative brainstorming.

How could we leverage and assess the value of and impact on Prep Week if more sessions are moved to virtual meetings?	Before responding to this question, there is a need to get more data on the actual participation of the At Large community during the Prep Week and their actual engagement in the sessions vis a vis the participation of the At Large community during the ICANN meeting For on-line participants, prep-week is perhaps avoidable.
An analysis of how sessions at ICANN Public Meetings are conducted - ICANN org and the community can jointly agree to ensure that sessions should focus only on timely topics (e.g., there is an important deadline coming up impacting a significant cross-section of the community) for which interactive dialogue in a hybrid format is needed (e.g., to facilitate consensus decision making)	Yes there are agreed benefits here.
Others?	

2. Reduce or eliminate informational and training sessions at ICANN Public Meetings

Org Examples	APRALO's Response
Balancing benefits to in-person interactions versus significant costs of putting up sessions primarily intended to build "soft" skills and enable effective learning (including contracting expert trainers and additional travel) which normally involve only limited participation.	Agree on the need to balance. However building "soft skills" is also necessary and advantageous for ICANN in the long run and those investments need to be made. Perhaps other options of generating funds for such initiatives could be explored by ICANN. For example, many participants at ICANN meetings are funded by their companies. Exploring with these companies find "value" in such training and if they would sponsor such training could be explored.
Could the "How It Works" (and similar) sessions as well as the skills-building and leadership development training sessions, and those more broadly targeted toward the general community be moved to an expanded Prep Week? Could the more targeted leadership and skills training opportunities may need to be moved to purely virtual, regular cycles decoupled from an ICANN Public Meeting?	Yes absolutely for the How it works etc., But Leadership Skills and team building are best F2F and if orientated to incoming membership in a AC/SO Leadership or Board / new teams etc., then it is probably best to consider coupling as an advantage (and as it is cheaper to cover a night or two extra of accommodation than do a new set of flights for all involved probably cheaper too.
Others?	It is necessary to hold more strategic guidelines meetings for the community, where aspects such as ICANN's goals and objectives are made transparent, as well as making known to the community in a clear and complete manner, the organisation's position and opinion on various issues of the daily news such as those explosive emergencies at certain times. This will seek to align the entire organisation from the community bases behind the same discourse.

3. Reduce or eliminate ICANN-hosted or ICANN-sponsored social and outreach events at, or associated with, an ICANN Public Meeting

Org Examples	APRALO's Response

Reduce or eliminate receptions such as those held daily during the Policy Forum, any welcome and closing receptions, sponsored group dinners and other social networking events?	No, as these networking sessions help community members to reach out to each other in an informal setting and help to negotiate many issues. In a social setting as much, if not more, happens in these informal networking sessions as they do in formal meetings. If there was one formal conference a year then welcome and closing receptions would be important. Three conferences a year and the current social events are a strain on sponsors as well as on ICANN and its communities.
Could a community group seek sponsors for hosted events as well as explore creative ways to facilitate networking?	Yes but it is harder these days than ever before
Others?	Communities (especially those in underserved regions) already seek sponsorship locally for such a wide range of community (social) needs. so that access for IT-related activities, always gets lesser priority. Even raising awareness about actual harms can be hard work.

4. Move at least one (1) upcoming ICANN Public Meeting to a Virtual Meeting

Org Examples	APRALO Contribution
Whether there is, in fact, a current need to have three in-person/hybrid ICANN Public Meetings each year, or whether the community can work just as effectively if at least one of these meetings is conducted virtually	That is possible but needs to be part of a more complete and **Effective** meetings design.
Would moving one ICANN Public Meeting to a virtual one result in more community requests for alternative meeting opportunities (e.g., for small, focused, in-person meetings for leadership teams and working groups deemed to have reached critical points of their policy work)?	Absolutely, it would mean many more events to try and avoid clashes with in terms of timetabling and resourcing (human and otherwise)… As well as a likely disequity in terms of geolocation of such meetings Easy to do these in NA and EU(parts) but much more complicated in LAC, AF and APAC for global based mini-meets there is always going to be the disadvantage of distance from the chosen location and unlikely to be much fairness in the choice of such locations either!

Others?	

5. Review the current state of ICANN Public Meetings, with a view toward updating the ten-year old ICANN Meetings Strategy (dating from 2014) to match current and expected future needs and budget constraints

Org Suggestions	APRALO's Response
Making a long-term change to the current cycle of three hybrid meetings per year (e.g., conduct one or more as virtual meetings on a permanent basis)	The iterative nature of asynchronous work across various other committees may permit the luxury of one fully virtual meeting. However, since ICANN is a multistakeholder "Internet Governance" forum, many things work best on "physical presence" of some pertinent representatives. So,one of the three meetings may have many virtual only sessions and few hybrid sessions. Virtual Meeting could work if we continue with a three meetings per year option and is also very dependent on how well the arrangements and actualization of other specific to purpose meetings might end up being. If we went to 2 Public Meetings a year and did 1 Hybrid and 1 Virtual that needs cautions consideration.
Changing the regional rotation cadence (e.g., explore the advantages of smaller, regional, targeted meetings and the benefits of longer-term contracting with fewer hub locations)	There are advantages of smaller, regional and targeted meetings. This needs to be explored more extensively BUT considering the APAC Region is historically *DIS*-advantaged by so called "regional rotation cadence' let's see if that can also be rectified; Also just doing another DNS Industry focussed event in a region does NOT cut it either. There is a need for better developed (planned and executed) opportunities for the diversity of an ICANN Region to gather AND work together in such opportunities, be that in general or specific policy activities… Again Proper planning well resourced and fairly executed activities *should(be able go meet these desires.

Reviewing the need for three ICANN Public Meetings a year (especially if policy work can be completed just as well, or more effectively, via short, intensive meetings with limited attendees)	As long as Policy Meetings are in fact instigated, as opposed to just dropping the so call Policy Mid year ICANN Public Meeting. then this could work. The timing of the 1st Public ICANN Meeting might need to be explored, to best fit with the cadence of other plans and activities that ICANN and the Regions might have.
Others?	

OTHER QUESTIONS, INPUT OR COMMENTS

APRALO's Response

While reviews and analysis are welcome to improve. However, in general we are deeply concerned that this is seeming like just *another* cost saving opportunity, to satisfy some accountants desire. However, when the idea was initially shared at Kigali that did not seem to be the intent.