

## **At-Large Community Engagement in ICANN**

### **ICANN-50 ATLAS II Thematic Group No. 5**

**2014/Jun/22/Sun**

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## **Introduction**

The At-Large community has grown from 88 ALSes to over 160 since the 2009 ATLAS 1 summit in Mexico City. It has become one of the largest communities within ICANN, comprised of a diverse group of organisations across all regions with various end user interests and backgrounds. The challenges of the At-Large Community Engagement in ICANN remains an important issue after five years.

Thematic Group 5 identified several problem areas and made recommendations for ways to improve and increase engagement and trust of the At-Large and its processes.

Members of the Thematic Group 5 are shown at the Appendix at the end of this document.

# Issues and Recommendations

## 1. **Reduce Volunteer Burnout.**

The At-Large Community's volunteers, like all other ICANN AC/OCs community members, contribute their time and intellect to the organization's bottom-up policy development processes. Too often the pressures associated with these commitments significantly affect the morale of volunteers and result in burnout.

One cause of burnout results from the nature of ICANN's acceptance of volunteer contributions: Too often volunteer contributions to the ALAC policy comment process are not considered by the Board, with the volunteer's contribution not receiving encouragement. This reduces the engagement of volunteers and adds to the burnout risks.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1.1. ICANN should ensure transparency and accountability with regards to volunteer contributions to ICANN's bottom-up policy development processes by acknowledging all ALAC contributions.
- 1.2. ICANN should respond to At-Large contributions with reasoned response indicating why it accepts or rejects such comments. (*This is now done but only informally*)
- 1.3. It is important to highlight that volunteers do not receive financial remuneration for the work, time, intellect, internal and external resources they contribute to the ALAC policy process. These contributions should receive due recognition by the At-Large Community and ICANN.

## 2. **Lack of understanding of what are the At-Large Community's interests and expertise.**

Not all topics in the ICANN public comment process are of interest for ALSes or individual members in an ALS. However, there exists specific interest and expertise on different topics (e.g. privacy, IDNs) amongst the At-Large Community.

Frequently the flood of emails makes it difficult to reach them in a timely manner in order to draw upon their expertise.

### **Recommendations:**

- 2.1. The At-Large community should support all RALOs and ALSes to map the current expertise and interests in their membership and to identify Subject Matter Experts within these organisations.
- 2.2. The At Large Community should build up a database of these Subject Matter Experts and a means to engage them when needed in the various regions and as a resource for ICANN Stakeholder Engagements as possible Speakers.
- 2.3. The At-Large Community should keep an updated list of topics of interest being discussed among the various RALOs, visible on the ICANN At-Large website, and readily accessible by everyone.

### **3. Improve the ALAC's Policy Taxonomy Process**

Not all topics in the ICANN public comment process are relevant to all the ALSes and their members. It is difficult to identify the specific issues from the title, acronyms used or summary.

### **Recommendations:**

- 3.1. ICANN should establish a taxonomy for policy categories in order to bring clarity to the subjects debated.
- 3.2. The At-Large should connect this taxonomy with the subject matter experts list and link appropriate experts to relevant issues.
- 3.3. ICANN Community members should be able to sign up for notifications based upon this taxonomy list.
- 3.4. At-Large Community should encourage RALOs to facilitate discussions from ALSes and Subject Matter Experts willing to contribute.
- 3.5. ICANN should explore whereas, at least on some policies, the texts submitted for public consultation could be simplified (*e.g citing possible examples of impacting end-users*) in order to engage a wider audience. ICANN should also explore structuring public comments by simple tools for participation and opinion input (*e.g. <http://liquidfeedback.org/>*), in order to allow the global public to get involved (*see examples from the NGOs guiding forms for the copyright review consultation in EU - [ORG, fixcopyright.eu](http://ORG.fixcopyright.eu)*)

## 4. Capacity Building and Awareness

Getting up to speed with the complexity of ICANN's policies and processes remains a specialized challenge for new and existing members and their ALSes.

### **Recommendations:**

- 4.1. ICANN should enhance its capacity building and awareness programmes and policies. This should be done in accordance with the ever-changing needs of the At Large community in order to increase better understanding, inclusiveness and volunteer involvement in key contributions to policies and processes.
- 4.2. ICANN and the At-Large Community should ensure that all acronyms, terminology in its materials are clearly defined in simpler terms.
- 4.3. At Large Capacity Building Webinars should continue after ATLAS II to regularly update the community about ICANN policies and processes under development or review.
- 4.4. ICANN should continue the development of Beginner Guides. A suggestion is a Beginner's Guide to the IANA Function.

## 5. Policy Management Process

The current Policy Management Process poses challenges for At-Large to effectively contribute. Comments for Policies are expected in a short timeframe (often 21 days), are often not available in multiple languages and are difficult to understand. It is difficult to understand the history behind the policy issue and the previous contributions from ACs and SOs. Improvements to the Policy Management Process are needed.

### **Recommendations:**

- 5.1. A functional and technical policy management process system is needed to enhance knowledge management in ICANN within and across all ACs and SOs. Such an effort cannot be done without ICANN's complete input and support as this will improve efficiency of all AC/OCs across the community. This will also require a great deal of cross-community input. The system will help create 'Parent Policy and Process Documents' that will be versioned and available for editing across the AC/OCs without the need for mass distribution of such documents individually. The community progress on such documentation will form the basis of efficient knowledge management and shared memory across ICANN.
- 5.2. The Policy Management System envisions having ways to deliver metrics on the status of policy development and commenting across the community through a single dashboard. Such dashboards will also enhance the work and contributions of AC/OCs.

- 5.3. There is an urgent need to Identify a translation queue forecast system and incorporate an efficient document review system. Such systems can be part of the Policy Management System, and will also ensure that the much needed references to all other documents used in ICANN documentation are clearly identified and linked to
- 5.4. Policy Management System should include the policy development history as reference for newcomers.
- 5.5. The ALAC should continue to research its approach to how the At-Large Community comments on policies. It was noted that our current approach requires a lot of manual editing and could benefit from automation.

## **6. Public Interest in ICANN**

The term 'Public Interest' within ICANN's remit remains ambiguous and ill defined. Consequently no consistent measure of the basis and quality of its decisions is possible. This could also clarify that the Internet users are stakeholders and not "consumers".

### **Recommendations:**

- 6.1. ICANN should clarify both the term and define in detail its understanding of the Public Interest and what role the Advisory Committees/OCs should play in preserving it. Public Interest should be explored, starting from the user interest and the understanding and respect of global human rights. The At-Large Community supports the draft 'FY15 Strategic Plan's focus area to develop and implement a global public responsibility framework in this regard. As the definition of the Public Interest will bear on the future operation of ICANN, such clarification should take place prior to making the IANA Functions.
- 6.2. The At-Large Community should review its criteria for accrediting At-Large Structures as to how such ALSes are protecting the public interest.

## **7. Improve relationship between At-Large and ICANN Board**

Within the context of other advisory committees, the ICANN by-laws it has been observed that ICANN considers and responds adequately to GAC Advice and thus displays a level of difference between ICANN's relationship with GAC in comparison to other ACs. It is well understood that across the community that ICANN does not ignore the advice from GAC and it has been negotiating on certain issues. The ICANN by-laws require that GAC Advice be acknowledged, respond to, with differences negotiated.

### **Recommendations:**

- 7.1. ICANN should ensure balance in reviewing policy advice and comments across all Advisory Committees such that no one AC receives preference over the other.
- 7.2. ICANN should provide a timely response and attention to all ACs on the basis of equality.
- 7.3. ICANN should negotiate differences with all the ACs on an ongoing basis otherwise this will challenge the user trust and interest in ICANN.
- 7.4. The ICANN Board should have regular conference calls with the At-Large Community (and with other ACs) in between ICANN Public Meetings.
- 7.5. The At-Large Community should also arrange for conference calls in between ICANN public meetings with other ACs and SOs to improve collaboration and engagement.

## 8. Improving the ICANN & At Large website

The ICANN website and especially the At-Large Community website does not serve the At-Large community information needs.

The ICANN At-Large website has become outdated in-terms of technology, information dissemination and knowledge management.

### **Recommendations:**

- 8.1. The ICANN At-Large website needs to be completely revamped. Its current design makes it difficult for the At-Large community to appeal to end users and for the At-Large Community to do its work. The At-Large Community's website and ICANN website are completely different. Recommend synchronizing the two websites and increase their usability (UX).
- 8.2. Explore the opportunity for crowdsourcing the Public Comment process beyond just the remit of ICANN AC/OCs in order to involve the broader Internet user community so that trust and engagement is improved. (*e.g. as the liquidfeedback.org system already quoted*)
- 8.3. The ICANN At Large Community can be involved in an improvement of the current wiki in order to ensure that better information organisation and presentation serves the interests of the At Large Community. Additional logistical support from ICANN is needed in order to allow to achieve this.
- 8.4. The efforts to improve ICANN's website is applauded. However, we would suggest to further improve the website in a way that encourages the re-use of the information

by any third party and embraces the “open data” best practices. *(in order to allow and enhance initiatives such as At-Large Policy Development Page)*

8.5. Ensure ICANN Beginner Guides are visible on the ICANN and At-Large websites.

## 9. Ability for At-Large to get funding

At-Large can only submit budget requests to ICANN Finance between a brief application period before the beginning of a Financial Year. It's a challenge for RALOs and ALAC to anticipate what is needed at particular times during the financial year.

Under the current framework, where At-Large receives funding directly from ICANN, such funding diminishes the perceived independence of their operation and reduces the public's trust in decisions made by the At-Large Community and ICANN. A more independent role for At-Large might benefit in planning the suitability of the At-Large as an oversight mechanism for the IANA Functions.

### Recommendations:

- 9.1. ICANN should offer a funding mechanism to ACs and SOs similar to the Community Regional Outreach Pilot Program (CROPP). CROPP offers ACs and SOs a structured and accountable approach for ACs and SOs to apply to ICANN for travel within 2 months of such travel..Having a similar facility for At-Large to apply for short notice ad-hoc budget requests would greatly help At-Large.
- 9.2. At-Large should work with the ICANN Board to research additional sources of funding for At-Large. One example is by dedicating a fixed percent of the ICANN budget for At-Large's operation.
- 9.3. The At-Large Community should be enabled to seek additional funding from crowdsourcing and private foundations.

## 10. Improve At Large engagement with observer ALSes

Many ALSes are not involved in the actual policy work of the ICANN community and are just observing or even ignoring the whole process. How does At Large improve the engagement process with members who are simply observers?

### Recommendations:

- 10.1. ICANN should fund annual face to face RALOs meetings potentially at ICANN regional offices or in relation with local/regional Internet Governance events.
- 10.2. RALOs should make it mandatory for its ALSes to attend at least one meeting (online or offline) per year. In this process, the moderators should actively invite

- observers to join the table or group, at meetings or online and should improve the process of how Observers are being heard.
- 10.3.** The At-Large Community (in collaboration with ICANN) should better prepare observers to better use the tools used by ICANN and At-Large for its online conferencing calls. (currently Adobe Connect). Suggestions include to simplify participation in the teleconferences, by typing relevant information in the chat window, including how to mute your microphone, and the link for the one-page introductory document for Adobe Connect.
  - 10.4.** The At-Large Community should consider to evaluate alternate communications platforms for co-operative online work sessions.



## Thematic Group 5 Members

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