Document Name: Proposal for multi-year budget planning of ALAC and RALO Face to Face meetings
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Introduction

The current funding level for At-Large volunteers to participate in ICANN face to face meetings is currently set at the 15 members of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), two regional leaders from each Regional At-Large Organisation (RALO) and two bylaw-mandated Liaisons to the Country Codes Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO) and the Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO). The regional leaders are selected by each RALO and may include the RALO's Chair and Vice Chair or Secretariat, depending on the RALO leadership structure and their strategic needs at each ICANN meeting. Currently there is no standing budget for any other travel slots to ICANN meeting. Some At-Large community members have managed to attend face to face meetings by applying through the ICANN fellowship process. Others have through the youth at ICANN process. Others self-fund their way. However the total number of members outside those funded outside the standard ALAC and RALO allocation has been small due to the nature of the members being volunteers have no business interest in domain names and ICANN activities. The funding for RALO general assemblies (GA) and face to face Summits (ATLAS) bring the whole At-Large Community together has consisted entirely of filing ad-hoc requests in the *Community Special Budget Requests* process for such events to take place. Although many such requests have been granted, including the granting of funding for two Summits (Mexico 2010 and London 2014), the process has been inefficient, taking excessive volunteer, staff and ICANN Board time, at a point where ICANN needs to enhance and streamline its processes.

This document is a proposal for process streamlining. It is driven by the need to enhance ICANN budget processes at Board and Staff level and at ALAC level. It is suggested by the At-Large Community as a follow-up to its recommendations in the ALAC Review (2009)[1], recommendations of the first At-Large Summit Declaration (2009)[2] and materialising into recommendation 42 of the second At-Large Summit Declaration (2014)[3].

Historical background of At-Large face to face meetings

Ever since its inception as its current structure with a 15-member At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and 5 Regional At-Large Organisations (RALOs), the At-Large community has found it necessary to meet face to face in order to be able to evolve. These meetings have taken place both at ICANN meetings and at other venues. For instance, there were other meetings and gatherings of ALSes facilitated or funded by ICANN before or up until the time when RALOs formally signed their MoU with ICANN (prior to ICANN 34 Mexico); these meetings/gatherings included 1-2 APRALO meetings.

RALOs have conducted face to face General Assemblies (GA) on an ad-hoc basis, whenever they were financed to do so, but this allocation has been sporadic. When not funded, some RALOs have conducted a GA with only skeleton members self-funding to a third party location, usually a meeting that brings many ALS participants together but this has not worked well. Hence, some RALOs have

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[1] https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/final-report-alac-review-28jan09-en.pdf
[2] https://newatlarge.icann.org/advice_statements/9261
[3] https://newatlarge.icann.org/advice_statements/9735

not had general assemblies for over 4 years and this has strained relations between the RALO leadership and its member At-Large Structures (ALSes).

Two At-Large Summits (ATLAS) have taken place. The first one was in Mexico City in 2009 and was seen as a turning point in the effectiveness of the At-Large Community, the RALOs and the ALAC. It was the first time when the whole community of At-Large Structure representatives was able to meet face to face and work on common challenges, thus giving rise to the first At-Large Summit declaration (see footnote 2). The At-Large Community worked in following years to implement these recommendations.

The second ATLAS took place in London In June 2014. The Summit brought together 150 ALSes and was, once again, a milestone for the At-Large Community. An ATLAS II declaration was conceived during a week-end of face to face workshops and presented to the ICANN Board (see footnote 3). The At-Large Community is, to this date, in the process of implementing these recommendations, through an Implementation Team (ATLAS II IT).

Why are face to face meetings important?

The At-Large Community in ICANN is a very heterogeneous group which represents a very geographically and socially diverse set of organisations taking part in the ICANN policy processes. All of these organisations have one thing in common: they have a very strong end user component in their mission, aims and governance. This diversity is a strength, especially given the ALAC's mission in ICANN, with a 100% volunteer body, but it is very hard to keep the At-Large Structures focus over a number of years without regular face to face meetings.

Reasons for this challenge are as follows:

- 100% volunteer body. Volunteers come and go in the structures that make up At-Large, depending on their personal time availability and priorities. Volunteering is a very cyclic activity;
- No commercial interest in domain names, hence for the majority of At-Large volunteers, domain names are not part of their business life;
- A geographically very diverse membership
  - Conference calls are bound to clash with working day or middle of the night for some
  - Technology in some parts of the world makes remote participation very challenging indeed and seriously hinders the opportunity for involvement;
  - Language issues – the majority of At-Large members have a mother tongue other than English;
  - Cultural Issues – some regions of the world have a cultural need to meet face to face and see the people they work with. Other regions have a culture where it is incorrect to express oneself with force. The diversity of cultures appears to be exacerbated in remote participation, with potential for conflict being heightened;
- Sustained knowledge and skills gap. Although the ALAC has done extensive work in organising capacity building webinars, the arrival of new ALSes and natural cycle of ALS representative replacement as is common occurrence in volunteer organisations, means that there is a sustained need for more capacity building and indoctrination. A lot of ICANN's work takes place at an ICANN meeting and it is well understood that it is nearly impossible to work out ICANN's complex ecosystem without actually attending an ICANN meeting. RALO General Assemblies and ATLAS Face to Face meetings are a vital component of this face to face boost in knowledge that ALS representatives absolutely require on a regular basis;

- Opportunity for networking. The incentive offering for volunteers in the ALAC environment might be considered as quite thin for people who have no commercial interest in domain names.
  The ability for participants to network with other like-minded individuals from their region and across the world has been a key component need of this community. Many participants at RALO General Assemblies or ATLAS have found a visit to an ICANN meeting to both be an eye opener and a door opener, with their skills contributing to the overall ICANN community.

A document detailing the contents of an At-Large Summit is available for download. [Link to At-Large Summit II description document, a copy of which I have in my possession- OCL]

Why a multi-year budget is better

Until now, the ALAC has submitted ad-hoc budget requests as part of ICANN's yearly Community Special Budget Request process.

This has given rise to several problems:

- No predictability for the ALAC or for the RALOs. For a face to face meeting such as a General Assembly or a Summit to be effective, it must undergo a process of preparation that lasts several months (RALO GA) or up to a year (ATLAS). Additional Budget Requests being constrained to a yearly submission cycle provide absolutely no visibility nor predictability in being able to launch a preparation cycle;
- No predictability for the ICANN Board. The budget for a RALO General Assembly ranges from $20K-$50K depending on RALO size and conference venue. The budget of an At-Large Summit oscillates around $700K. These are all significant budget line items which cannot be anticipated by the Board prior to the applications being filed in the Additional Budget Requests;
- Misunderstandings regarding allocation of funds. Past ALAC Reviews and other analysis have found that a 5 year cycle is most optimal for Summit meetings. With General Assemblies needing to take place in between this 5 year cycle, it has been hard to offer visibility to the Board and the rest of the community why some years would need a General Assembly to take place in two different regions. With a finite additional Budget Requests envelope, this has the potential to give rise to strains within the community. The Board Finance Committee's handling has been to consider each request individually with the result that the recommended 5 year cycle has been broken;
- Misunderstandings within the At-Large Community. When more than one RALO have submitted an Additional Budget Request and the Board Finance Committee has only allowed for one request, members in the region not receiving funding have wondered whether their region was considered as less worthy of funding for a RALO General Assembly and on what grounds. This rejection in turn has also led to apathy in the next budget year cycle for Additional Requests, especially when significant time was spent by volunteers in putting together the Budget Request.

It is therefore clear that a coordination needs to be established both for the RALOs, the ALAC but also for the Board and ICANN. Without such multi-year planning, conflicts will continue.

A multi-year planning, which the ALAC has asked for in several years, is exactly the solution proposed which will bring the following advantages:

- More predictability for ICANN. The ICANN Board Finance Committee and ICANN Finance department will be able to forecast the needs of the At-Large Community when it comes to General Assemblies and Summits several years in advance;
- More visibility for ICANN into ALAC budget requests. Prediction of a General Assembly or Summit dates will provide more time for the ALAC to work with meetings staff in submitting a detailed budget plan as soon as a venue is announced;
- More efficient use of resources. ICANN keeps on doing things at the last minute and paying through the nose for it. An advance plan for General Assemblies and Summits will allow for the meetings Team to forecast resource requirements when scouting for venues especially in the format of A, B and C meeting types;
- A more prepared community: a General Assembly or a Summit requires extensive preparation with the community so as to take full advantage of face time. An advance plan will allow for the preparation to not be linked to the budget process. For example, a GA or Summit could take place in a Meeting type C in October or November, only 4 or 5 months after budget adoption, but its preparation could start up to a year earlier. Better preparation equals better use of available resources and a more active community;
- More efficiency throughout the process. Budget preparation for a GA or ATLAS is time consuming both for volunteers and staff. Volunteers are more likely to participate constructively in the process of building a budget if they know their efforts will be utilised.

We repeat that with no commercial interest in domain names, recognition is one of our member's incentives for being involved. Rejection is felt much more than just a failed application. It is felt as a waste of time and has high demoralising potential to it. Thus more predictability is needed by our volunteers.

The key to this proposal is the table of General Assemblies and Summits that we offer for consideration.

How to read the table

The table is a living document found on:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG-VSVw4COnj5MxrD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing

The table shows every General Assembly and At-Large Summit since ICANN meeting #39 in Cairo. Care has been taken to make the table as self-explanatory as possible but for avoidance of any ambiguity, some aspects of the table are discussed here.

First the table headers

- **Meeting #:** the official ICANN meeting number
- **Date:** the date (month & year) of the ICANN meeting
- **FY:** Official Financial Year that the ICANN meeting is taking place in. Note that the ICANN FY starts on 1st July and ends on 30th June each year.
- **Summit Year:** this is a counter that counts the year since an At-Large Summit. For a 5 year cycle Y0 is the Summit's year, then Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5 = Y0 = another Summit year.
- **ATLAS:** column for the name of the Summit. ATLAS was the first Summit. ATLAS II was the second. ATLAS III for the next one etc.
- **Meeting Type:** this column contains the type of meeting, A, B or C according to the new meeting strategy type of meeting.
- **City/Country:** The City/Country in Red characters is an ICANN AGM.

- **Region/RALO:** The boxes are colour coded according to the official RALO colours:
  - AFRALO: brown (beige to show better on the sheet)
  - APRALO: red
  - EURALO: blue/cyan
  - LACRALO: green
  - NARALO: yellow
- **GA due:** this column shows whether a General Assembly needs to take place in that financial year/meeting for the 5 year cycle of Summits and mid-cycle General Assemblies to be complied with.
- **GA granted:** this column shows a 1 if the General Assembly has been granted in the additional budget requests. It shows a 0 if this is not the case. This column is used in automatic calculations that the spreadsheet performs to the right of this column.
- **GA at ICANN meeting:** this column provides an estimated cost for a General Assembly to take place at an ICANN meeting, according to the figures worked out between the At-Large Community, At-Large Staff and Constituency Travel + Meetings Team
- **GA at other events:** this column provides an estimated cost for a General Assembly to take place at a date **outside** an ICANN meeting, according to the figures worked out between the At-Large Community, At-Large Staff and Constituency Travel. This might mean a GA at a completely different event or at an ICANN office.
- **At-Large Summit:** this column contains an estimated cost for an At-Large Summit (ATLAS) to take place at an ICANN meeting, according to the figures worked out between the At-Large Community, At-Large Staff and Constituency Travel + Meetings Team
- **FY Total Cost:** this column contains a calculated value taking into account the figures of the 4 columns to the left of this column
- **Event Description:** this column contains a description of the event, whether a General Assembly (GA) or At-Large Summit (ATLAS). For ease of identification at a glance the box is coloured blue/cyan for a GA and yellow for an ATLAS.
- **Code:** a code used to identify General Assemblies more easily. We encourage the use of such codes when there is a potential for confusion as to what is what and when. ATLAS I; ATLAS II, ATLAS III are such codes. EU-1, EU-2, AP-1, AP-2 etc. are such codes too.

Please note that General Assemblies take place for **all** RALOs at an At-Large Summit hence the notification "GA in ATLAS" and "GA in ATLAS II" etc. which count as if there had been a GA in each region – and hence the whole "Event Description" column is marked accordingly.

Conclusion

Until now, the ALAC, collaborating with its Regional At-Large Organisations, has filed yearly Community Special Budget Requests in order to fund the organisation of RALO General Assemblies and the first and second At-Large Summits. It has been recognised that this process no longer satisfies the strategic goals that ICANN has set for itself, to enhance accountability and transparency and improve the efficiency of its processes. The multi-year schedule of General Assembly and Summit rotation satisfies the need for more predictability and transparency that an efficient budget process requires as the organisation matures. It sets medium and long term community goals whilst ensuring fairness across all regions and sets good accounting practice to enhance efficiency across ICANN. It also allows for a stricter regime of budget management which will include performance measurements that can tie in with the mainstream ICANN key performance indicators, a significant improvement over the ad-hoc system that has been used thus far.