

1 Proposal for Multi-Year Planning of At-Large RALO Face- 2 to-Face meetings

3 26 April 2016, Draft Version 2.0

4 1. Executive Summary

5 The At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) is charged with integrating users and user organizations world-
6 wide into the ICANN ecosystem. To help in this endeavour, the ALAC conducts significant on-boarding
7 and training, but as a key component, representatives of At-Large Structures (ALSes) are periodically
8 brought together, generally at ICANN meetings. These gatherings take on two forms: General
9 Assemblies where representatives of ALSes from within a single region attend an ICANN meeting held
10 within that region; and At-Large Summits, where representatives from ALSes from all regions are
11 brought together at an ICANN meeting. The pattern that has evolved over the past years is that At-Large
12 Summits have occurred at five-year intervals, and in the intervening years, each region has a General
13 Assembly (GA). There have been two Summits, one in 2009 in Mexico City, and one in 2014 in London.
14 Five GAs (1 per region) were held in 2010-2013, and one GA has been held since London.

15 Although the funding process has evolved as has general ICANN budgeting, the GAs have been funded
16 through the Community Special Budget Request Process, and the Summits through special requests to
17 the Board Finance Committee.

18 The pattern of GAs and Summits is now well established and there is a general appreciation of their
19 benefits. **The ALAC is proposing that ICANN integrate these meetings into its normal planning and
20 budgeting processes and do so in such a way as to allow these meetings to be scheduled and planned
21 over multiple years, much as ICANN meetings themselves are planned ahead of time.**

22 2. Background

23 The ALAC currently receives travel funding to ICANN meetings for 27 people, the 15 ALAC Members, 2
24 leaders per Regional At-Large Organization (RALO) and the ALAC Liaisons to the GNSO and ccNSO. At-
25 Large attendance at ICANN meetings is generally limited to those participants who are explicitly funded,
26 with occasional other participants who are part of a particular funded work group, review team or the
27 ICANN Fellowship. Unlike other parts of ICANN where many SO or AC members attend based on funding
28 from their employers who are either part of the domain name industry, do business with the industry,
29 are involved in national or regional government or are involved in civil society organisations which focus
30 professionally on Internet Governance, virtually all At-Large participants participate in ICANN purely on a
31 volunteer basis, have no professional connection to the domain industry or Internet Governance, and
32 have no access to funding at a level which would support ICANN attendance.

33 The ALAC came into being in 2003 as the Interim ALAC (10 ALAC Members selected by the Board, and 5
34 by the NomCom). ALSes and RALOs were just a concept. From 2003-2008 the Interim ALAC, supported
35 by regional ICANN staff, identified local groups within each region to form At-Large Structures (ALSes).

36 Representatives of these new ALSes were funded to meet together to create the rules for their
37 prospective ALSes and ultimately to sign Memorandums of Understanding with ICANN (2006-2008).

38 As new ALSes joined At-Large, it quickly became apparent that without having been to an ICANN
39 meeting, having met with their peers, or having contact with ICANN staff (who had ceased recruiting
40 efforts once the RALOs were formed), these new groups and their representatives would have a nearly
41 unsurmountable problem being integrated into the At-Large Community and becoming productive
42 participants. ALAC, RALOs and Staff on-boarding and capacity building programs address part of the
43 problem, but there is still a need to “touch and feel” ICANN in order to become effective. The fact that
44 the native and often only language of many ALS members is not English significantly exacerbates the
45 problem (in part addressed by extensive interpretation and translation services).

46 By 2009, there were approximately 100 ALSes, and funding was requested and received to bring one
47 representative from each ALS together for a “Summit” to be held during the ICANN 34 meeting in
48 Mexico City. This meeting was seen as a turning point in building an effective At-Large Community, with
49 the ALAC, RALOs and ALSes all working towards a common goal.

50 As promising as this Summit was, however, it was intuitively obvious that we would not have the
51 volunteer, staff or financial resources to repeat it very soon. The ALAC, together with RALO leaders and
52 ICANN Staff developed a plan under which a Summit would be held every five years, and in the
53 intervening four years, one General Assembly (GA) per region would be scheduled, bringing together
54 one representative from each ALS in that region, preferably at an ICANN meeting held within that
55 region. In conjunction with a GA, the concept of a “Showcase”¹ was developed to publicly highlight the
56 achievements of the RALO and its ALSes.

57 Such General Assemblies require far less resources (even factoring in five of them) than a Summit. Travel
58 costs are solely within a region. Since the number of attendees is much smaller than for a Summit, the
59 planning required is far reduced and volunteers local to the region and city where the meeting is to be
60 held can handle most of the arrangements and even fundraising (for special meals, showcase
61 entertainment, etc.). This diverts no resources from the ALAC itself or volunteers from other regions.
62 These meetings are however, seen as essential to discuss key policy issues within the region, develop
63 strategies for the future acquaint new representatives with ICANN, and reinvigorate those who had
64 previously attended. Staff resources are needed for both General Assemblies and Summits. However,
65 there is an exponentially higher level required for a Summit.

66 The intent was that we would take one year off after the Summit, and then schedule the five regional
67 GAs over the next three fiscal years (perhaps 1 GA in one year, and 2 in each of the other two years).
68 This pattern reduces the draw on ICANN funds in the year after a Summit, and allows time for Summit
69 action items to be implemented. Although we met the overall target in FY10-FY13, in practice, flexibility
70 is and will be required due to the regional rotation of ICANN meetings, funding available in any given
71 year and region- and venue-specific issues.

¹ Showcases have proven so popular that we now often hold one even when there is not a GA or Summit.

72 A second Summit - ATLAS II (for AT-Large Summit) was held during ICANN 50 in June 2014 in London. An
73 ATLAS II Declaration was prepared during a series of Face-to-Face (F2F) plenaries and workshops and
74 presented to the ICANN Board. The At-Large Community is currently finalizing the [implementation of](#)
75 [these recommendations](#), through an [Implementation Taskforce](#). Although the IANA transition has
76 slowed progress on other projects, it is worthy of note that the ATLAS II outputs were substantive
77 enough to still be in the implementation phase nearly two years later. The Summit was, according to its
78 participants, others within the ICANN community, and many ICANN leaders, judged to be an outstanding
79 success.

80 **3. Importance of Face-to-Face Meetings**

81 At-Large is a very heterogeneous community which represents an extremely geographically, culturally,
82 and socially diverse set of organisations. All of these organisations have one thing in common - they
83 have a very strong Internet end-user component in their mission, aims and governance. The diversity is
84 certainly a strength given the At-Large mandate to represent the interests of all users world-wide, but it
85 has been extremely challenging to keep the At-Large Structures focused on At-Large and ICANN
86 activities over a number of years without regular F2F meetings. This is not due to a lack of remote
87 meeting opportunities. In 2015, At-Large held over XXX teleconferences, and that does not count CWG,
88 CCWG, GNSO WGs and various ICANN-wide meetings that At-Large volunteers participate in.

89 There are many reasons for this difficulty, some obvious, some less so. F2F meetings address many of
90 the problems and provide a number of strong benefits.

- 91 • No commercial interest in domain names, the number of At-Large volunteers whose work life
92 involves domain names and related ICANN issues is very small;
- 93 • 100% volunteer body - Volunteers come and go in the structures that make up At-Large,
94 depending on their personal time availability and priorities. Volunteering is a very cyclic activity,
95 particularly in the absence of compelling business motivations;
- 96 • A very diverse membership:
 - 97 ○ Conference calls are bound to clash with working day or middle of the night for some;
 - 98 ○ Technology in some parts of the world makes remote participation very challenging and
99 sometimes very expensive, and indeed seriously hinders the opportunity for
100 involvement. This is not only true for technologically complex tools such as Adobe
101 Connect, but for simple voice communications as well;
 - 102 ○ Language issues – The majority of At-Large members have a mother tongue other than
103 English and the majority of ALS members do not speak any English.
 - 104 ○ Cultural issues – Some regions of the world have a cultural need to meet F2F and see
105 the people they work with in order to build a working relationship. Other regions have a
106 culture where it is incorrect to express oneself with force. The diversity of cultures
107 appears to be exacerbated in remote participation, with potential for conflict being
108 heightened.
- 109 • Sustained knowledge and skills gap - Although the ALAC has done extensive work in organising
110 capacity building webinars, the arrival of a significant number of new ALSes (over 50 new ALSes
111 in the last four years) and natural cycle of ALS representative replacement, means that there is a

112 sustained need for more capacity building and raising of awareness of ICANN policy issues.
113 Much of ICANN’s work takes place at an ICANN meeting and it is well understood that it is nearly
114 impossible to work out ICANN’s complex ecosystem without actually attending an ICANN
115 meeting. General Assemblies and Summits have proven a vital component in sustaining a
116 reasonable level of interest and involvement.

- 117 • Because of the interest born at F2F meetings, some ALS representatives now actively participate
118 in At-Large and ICANN-wide activities remotely.
- 119 • Opportunity for networking - The incentive offering for volunteers in the At-Large Community
120 might be considered as quite limited for people who have no commercial interest in domain
121 names. The ability for participants to network with other like-minded individuals from their
122 region and across the world has been a key component need of this community;
- 123 • In addition to networking opportunities within At-Large, there are also benefits of providing ALS
124 representatives with an opportunity to network with their counterparts in government, ccTLDs
125 and regional registrars. It is quite common for alliances to be formed at ICANN meetings even
126 though the individuals live in the same country and often the same city.
- 127 • The combination of exposure to the workings of ICANN coupled with the networking has
128 allowed these meetings to be major source of the new dedicated volunteers who support our
129 day to day work.

130 It must be noted that the need for F2F meetings is not unique to the At-Large. ICANN hosts periodic
131 meetings for Registrars and Registries, the GNSO Non-Commercial House has met intersessionally a
132 number of times, AoC Review Teams and other ICANN-wide groups meet outside of ICANN meetings,
133 and of course the Board regularly meets outside of ICANN meetings. Each of these groups does this for a
134 wide variety of reasons, but all find such meetings beneficial.

135 4. Need for Multi-Year Planning

136 Although the process has varied over the years as the ICANN budgeting process has evolved, the At-
137 Large GAs have been funded through annual special budget requests and Summits through ad hoc
138 requests addressed to the ICANN Board Finance Committee.

139 This has given rise to several problems:

- 140 • No predictability for the ALAC, the RALOs or ICANN Staff. Effective F2F meetings require
141 concerted planning of several months for a GA and up to a year for a Summit. The yearly budget
142 cycle makes this very difficult. Imagine how difficult it would be to organize the first ICANN
143 meeting of the fiscal year if we didn’t know IF there would be a meeting until the budget was
144 approved;
- 145 • No predictability for the ICANN Finance and the ICANN Board - The budget for a RALO GA has
146 ranged from \$35K-\$100K depending on RALO size and conference venue. The budget of an At-
147 Large Summit has been in the order of \$700K, which required that it be handled by
148 extraordinary budget requests since the normal special requests could not accommodate it.
149 Although the individual numbers vary highly, the total envelope for a 5-year cycle is more
150 predictable.

- 151 • Although the issue will no doubt be reviewed in the forthcoming At-Large Review, the ALAC is
152 comfortable with the 5 year cycle for GAs and Summit meetings. It balances an achievable
153 workload, ALS involvement target with fiscal responsibility. But it is a relatively long cycle from
154 the point of view of volunteer, staff and Board turn-over. We are continually faced with
155 explaining the entire pattern, its history, benefits and requirements over and over again.
156 • With the limited budget planning cycle and the uncertainty of success until very close to event
157 dates makes it difficult to plan and to set volunteer expectations. The recent occurrences of last-
158 minute meeting venue changes to a different region exacerbate the problem. (Not that such
159 moves are easy on anyone!)
- 160 • Volunteer and Staff time – Requesting General Assemblies and Summits has taken countless
161 volunteer hours as well as those of staff. Establishing a multi-year budget for these meetings
162 would allow this work to be carried out in a more orderly fashion, conserving staff time and
163 allowing volunteers to focus on issues of substance.

164 It is therefore clear that coordination needs to be increased for the RALOs and the ALAC but also with
165 ICANN Finance and the Board. Without such multi-year planning, difficulties will continue. In the past,
166 requests to consider such multi-year planning have been simply rejected. The ALAC is pleased that is no
167 longer the case.

168 Multi-year planning will result in:

- 169 • More financial predictability for ICANN at all levels;
170 • Better ability for the ALAC and RALOs to plan events ahead of time with the added benefit of
171 starting detailed financial planning for an event as soon as venues are announced.
172 • More efficient use of resources - ICANN keeps on doing things at the last minute and paying
173 through the nose for it. An advance plan for General Assemblies and Summits will allow for the
174 meetings Team to forecast resource requirements when scouting for venues especially in the
175 format of A, B and C meeting types;
176 • A more prepared community - A General Assembly or a Summit requires extensive preparation
177 with the community so as to take full advantage of face time. An advance plan will allow for the
178 preparation to not be linked to the budget process. For example, a GA or Summit could take
179 place in a Meeting type C in October or November, only 4 or 5 months after budget adoption,
180 but its preparation could start up to a year earlier. Better preparation equals better use of
181 available resources and a more active community;
182 • More efficiency throughout the process - Budget preparation for a GA or ATLAS is time
183 consuming both for volunteers and staff. Volunteers are more likely to participate constructively
184 in the process of building a budget if they know their efforts will be utilised.
185 • Better volunteer moral and cooperation - Currently we have regions vying against other regions
186 to make sure they get their GA. And the impact of requesting funding for a GA and then having it
187 rejected during the special budget process, perhaps several years in a row, is very demoralizing
188 for our volunteers.

189 **5. Proposal**

190 The five year cycle of General Assemblies and Summits has proven to be a reasonable balance of
191 volunteer and staff effort, costs, and benefits. We therefore recommend that we continue with a
192 Summit scheduled every five years, and a cycle of RALO General Assemblies in the four year interval
193 between Summits and that these meetings be incorporated into the ICANN Operating Plan and Budget.
194 Ideally this should be spread among the years, as follows:

- 195 • Year 1: 1 year with no General Assembly post-ATLAS
- 196 • Years 2-4: 1 or 2 General Assemblies per year, 5 in total, with a preference for nothing late in
197 year 4 in preparation for the Summit
- 198 • Year 5: At-Large Summit

199 This pattern reduces the draw on ICANN funds in the year after a Summit, and allows time for Summit
200 action items to be implemented. Although we met the overall target in FY10-FY13, in practice, flexibility
201 is and will be required due to the regional rotation of ICANN meetings, funding that is available in any
202 given year and regional issues and region- and venue-specific issues.

203 The timeline on page 7 shows the history since the first summit and is the general pattern that the ALAC
204 is recommending continue going forward.

205 This proposal to understand and plan for recurring At-Large meetings is fully supportive of the direction
206 described in the ICANN Draft FY17 Operating Plan & Budget section 3.4 on how ICANN should address
207 multiyear projects.

208 **Conclusion and Next Steps**

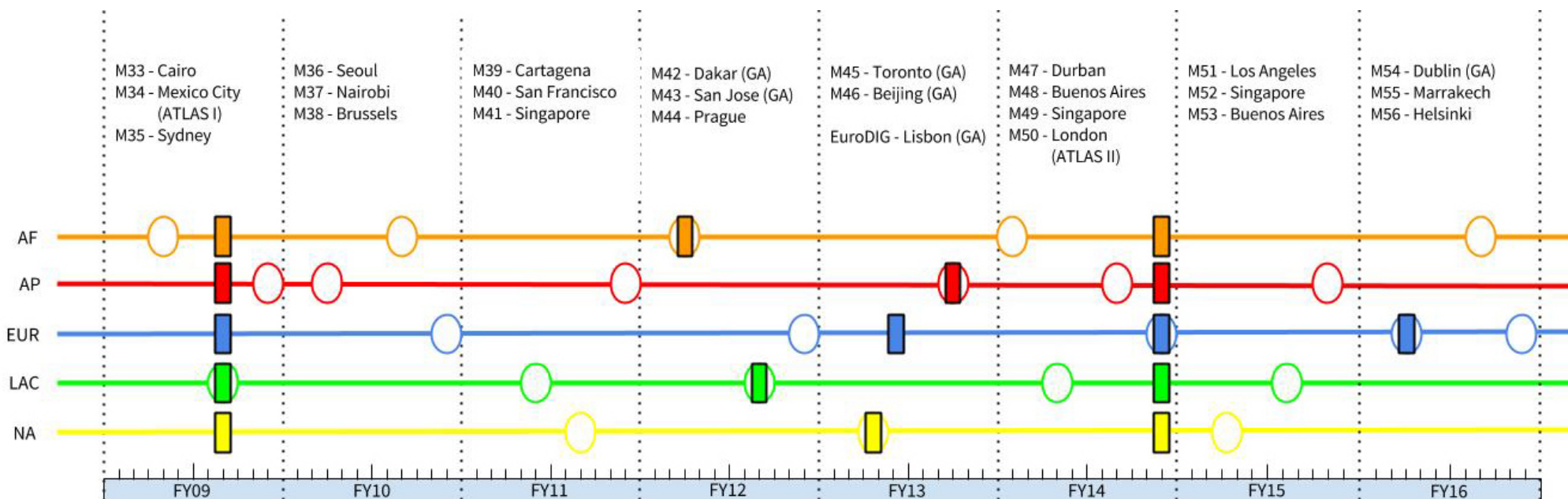
209 Until now, the ALAC, collaborating with its Regional At-Large Organisations, has filed annual Community
210 Special Budget Requests in order to fund the organisation of RALO General Assemblies and made
211 exceptional Requests for the first and second At-Large Summits. However, this process needs to be
212 aligned with ICANN's strategic and operational planning processes and no longer rely on ad hoc planning
213 and budgeting.

214 The Chair of the Board Steve Crocker, ICANN's outgoing President and CEO Fadi Chehadé, and other
215 ICANN leaders have gone on record saying that the Summits need to be part of ICANN's regular meeting
216 schedule. Our proposal builds on that support, and continues the practice of the far less resource-
217 intensive General Assemblies.

218 A multi-year schedule rotating General Assemblies and a Summit satisfies the need of At-Large for a
219 predictable way to actively involve its ALSes in ICANN activities, while providing more planning and
220 transparency incumbent on a maturing ICANN. It sets medium and long term community goals whilst
221 ensuring fairness across all regions and sets good accounting practice to enhance efficiency across
222 ICANN. It also allows for a stricter regime of budget management which will include performance
223 measurements that can tie in with the mainstream ICANN key performance indicators, a significant
224 improvement over the ad-hoc system that has been used thus far.

225 If this proposal is accepted by ICANN, the ALAC and ALAC Staff are prepared to work with other ICANN
226 staff to integrate it into the ICANN operational plan and budget.

Historical At-Large General Assembly and Summit Timeline



- ICANN meeting - colour coded to indicate region
- indicates when a GA/Summit took place - colour coded by RALO

Annexes

Annex A: Presentation of ATLAS II Program

This Annex contains a copy of the ATLAS II presentation proposal, as used to obtain sponsorship. It provides a full presentation of what an At-Large Summit is. Annex A can be found at [provide URL here].

Annex B: Table of Historical and Projected GA/Summit Details

This table is a comprehensive table of RALO General Assemblies and At-Large Summits, starting with the Summit in 2009 and projecting possible GAs and Summits through to 2020. It provides actual financial details for past meetings, and best estimates of funding required for future meetings. The table, a living document which will change over time, can be found at:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG-](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG-VSVw4COj5MxrD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing)

[VSVw4COj5MxrD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11e1U8ZzOoqwUVG-VSVw4COj5MxrD13tWi15gnMTYlc/edit?usp=sharing). Worksheet two of the table provides a legend describing the columns and data in detail.