

Onboarding Testimonial – Omar Mansoor Ansari, BC

Like many others, finding my role and engaging at ICANN has been quite a journey; helped along the way by a number of individuals, and by ICANN's supportive processes. I first joined the ICANN community "formally" in 2014 when I attended ICANN51 as a first time Fellow. It was an exciting opportunity, but so much to learn as well. I tried a couple of more times to reconnect to continue learning and to serve my interests; I could not make it. I had known about ICANN's work previously, as I was Chair of the National ICT Alliance of Afghanistan, and a Board Member of World IT and Services Alliance (WITSA), but direct engagement had not been possible until the 2014 Fellowship.

Following my first ICANN experience, I joined the ICANN Business Constituency (BC). However, there was so much going on at ICANN. I was not able to catch up with most of the issues, and I had many questions in mind. I did not know if there was a proper mechanism that could help me address these questions. The BC provided a space where I could engage and learn about what other businesses, coming to ICANN, cared about. Still, the learning curve was sharp.

Later, in 2016 I was included in the ICANN Community Onboarding Program, being piloted to ensure engagement of various constituencies in the ICANN work. In the Onboarding pilot, I received coaching from an outstanding mentor, Marilyn Cade, who has been engaged in ICANN since before it existed. Through this program and mentoring, I learned more on how I can contribute to the ICANN policy work, got connected with various other stakeholders, and became a member of the ICANN BC Outreach Committee. I currently help with creating awareness about ICANN across not only Afghanistan, but also Central Asia and South Asia (CASA). Through studying the past business fellows, I am analysing how they continue maintaining relations with ICANN, and sustaining work after returning home. This study will help with identifying ways to assist the business user community engage more with the ICANN. Following my first Onboarding experience, I served as a coach to new Fellows in two successive ICANN meetings, ICANN58 in Copenhagen and ICANN59 in Johannesburg, and I am expected to coach three new fellows at ICANN60 in Abu Dhabi.

Being a coach to new Fellows gives me a sense of why it is important to actively engage in ICANN's policy work and governance activities. It enhances my ability to pass the learning on to other Fellows and community members. This program has increased my effectiveness to advocate on: a) how the BC members can contribute to the learning process of the community members, b) how they can identify new ways to attract and engage members, c) how to support other Fellows to play a proactive role in the BC, and in the ICANN in general, and d) what new knowledge and experience sharing ways can help ICANN achieve its goals for multi-stakeholder engagement.

Moving from just attending ICANN and watching others to a more deeply engaged and an accepted and knowledgeable voice from the CASA region is a key priority for me. This is my

primary reason to be part of the Onboarding program. This program helps me move from interest to active participant to make a positive engagement across the community, and give meaning to participation at ICANN.

The Onboarding Pilot has already made an impact on how the Business Constituency increases its focus on potential new business user attendees, and I am very proud of contributing to those enhancements, along with my fellow mentee and mentor. I believe this program will help me and others to continue building on what we have learned and how we contribute to our communities. The resources that ICANN provided to support the program, including encouraging its participants to deliverables and further engagement within ICANN, and the key champion, Janice Douma Lange's, continued guidance and coaching of the team, are exemplary. In particular, for someone from a country that often faces tough challenges to gain access, both on site and online, but also encounters visa challenges for travel to some parts of the world. Onboarding within the various groups at ICANN also needs to recognize that "onboarding" to ICANN more broadly is also a very important commitment of all of us. I look forward to making a further difference from my country, and the CASA Region.