

Non-Commercial Users Constituency

We ensure that the voice of non-commercial users is heard at ICANN.

Questionnaire Response from the Non-Commercial Users Constituency

1. What guidelines does your group have for supported travelers? How do these differ from the ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines?

The NCUC has guidelines described in our travel policy:

<https://www.ncuc.org/get-involved/travel-policy/>.

Our budget is very limited and sourced from an external donor. As we have a fixed budget that caps the maximum amount of travel expenses that we can reimburse annually, we cannot at this time offer a per diem. Furthermore reimbursement of expenses incurred after attending a meeting is the only way we can support our travelers. These are the most significant differences from the ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines. Our Travel Policy is designed to bring two NCUC members who have an active involvement in GNSO PDPs, participating in these groups on behalf of non-commercial interests and reporting about them to our members.

2. What aspect of the current ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines work well for your group?

(The NCUC is aligned with NCSG in this response).

The NCUC is very appreciative of the travel support that ICANN offers us. As a network of individuals and organizations including academics, Internet end-users, and civil society actors representing the interests of non-commercial registrants, we represent a broad cross-section of the global Internet community, and are volunteers in the truest sense of the word. We volunteer at ICANN because we care about the Domain Name System, and we have no financial incentives to be here. Accordingly, with typically no employers to reimburse our travel and no alternative funding sources to cover our travel, we have limited means with which to participate in the meetings that we need to be present at in order to fulfil our chartered mandate and to legitimise the multistakeholder model. The simple truth of the matter is that the multistakeholder model would not function without representation from civil society, and ICANN's travel support for active volunteers is crucial in many cases.

3. What specific area of the ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines affect your group the most?

We feel very strongly that ICANN should continue to provide targeted funding to support and retain volunteers who are productively contributing to ICANN community activities.

As a community of volunteers, the current travel support policy does not provide us with the resources to bring our most active and valuable voices to each meeting. This is because the resources allocated to us are neither sufficient (in terms of number of slots) nor adequate (in terms of actual provision). We believe there should be a common travel policy for all ICANN funded travelers who are active participants in ICANN policy work, whether they be ICANN board members, ICANN senior management, or community members, and that there should be a reasonable increase in the number of travel slots that ICANN funds to bring those actively engaged in policy work to ICANN meetings to uphold the multistakeholder model ICANN stands by, in the most effective way going forward.

As volunteers, we also have professional and personal obligations outside of ICANN. We are not compensated for the time that we spend in working groups, reviewing documents, or building our constituencies. The current policy typically sees travelers authorised to arrive in a city on the day before a meeting begins. In practice, however, this may mean arriving at the hotel after midnight, and needing to be up by 6am to make our first breakfast meeting. This means that our volunteers do not have the opportunity to have a full night of rest before the meeting begins.

We respectfully ask that ICANN consider making reasonable adjustments to the community travel guidelines to ensure that participants are able to travel to meetings at reasonable cost. We suggest that ICANN allow travellers to arrive at least 12 hours before the start of the working day so that they get enough rest. We understand that for some travelers this may require that ICANN purchase an additional night of hotel. Travellers from rural regions who, in order to attend a meeting must combine several modes of transportation, require a reasonable degree of flexibility in arrival time to recover from journey.

Finally, while there has been significant improvement considering visa support (and we thank you for that), we would like to ask Constituency Travel to sustain this effort with regard to issuing all the documents, including hotel booking confirmations and itineraries, in a timely manner. We also ask to provide information regarding per diems and/or stipends in a timely manner, ensuring these funds are received *before* a traveler departs for a meeting. We have members from over 100 countries, in some countries the banking systems are less developed. We would appreciate it if ICANN staff could help our members to track remittances or to recover lost payments swiftly.

4. What area might be added to the ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines to provide additional support to your group?

Our participants travel frequently and have many professional and personal obligations outside of ICANN. They need to be able to work on the day of arrival in a city. ICANN's current travel policy does not provide relief for frequent travelers. The relief that we believe would be appropriate is, as explained above, being able to arrive at least 12 hours before the start of the working day (as opposed to simply the night before).

We would also like to ask that the travel guidelines be updated in order to fully reimburse reasonable expenses related to obtaining visas. In many cases, particularly for travelers in less urban areas, the supported travellers have to take a train or fly to another city to apply at the embassy or the visa centre. In some cases these costs are higher than the visa fees themselves and are certainly beyond the official USD 200 lump sum provided for in the current guidelines. We would like to highlight that this should only be for reasonable and justified expenses, and Constituency Travel should be consulted in advance about estimated costs, and reimburse costs only upon receiving receipts and supporting documentation. A reasonable timeline for visa processing and complete information about the process should be an area where Constituency Travel devotes efforts as well. Misinformation and not enough time for obtaining visa can easily hinder community members participation

5. How does your group allocate its community travel support slots? How are members prioritized? How are newcomers to ICANN considered?

At the NCUC, the limited travel support that we receive from ICANN is allocated to our elected officers. There are also three travel slots allocated to the Executive Committee, which are being assigned by rotation between the 5 members of the NCUC EC. If an elected officer is unable to attend an ICANN meeting, the NCUC allocates their travel slot to other active members of the stakeholder group. In addition, GNSO Councillors get travel slots to perform their duties at Council during ICANN meetings.

The NCUC uses its own limited budget sourced from external donors to supplement these travel slots. We offer both partial and full funding allocations to Executive Committee officers and community members whenever possible. The NCUC reaches out to our members to engage in CROP opportunities and we conduct extensive, targeted outreach with these allocations. Newcomers have signed up to participate in several GNSO PDPs as a result of NCUC activities in outreach and community member meeting participation.

6. What, if any, educational and informational activities does your group conduct to inform participants of ICANN community resources?

There are calls for expression of interest published on the mailing list. All members who meet the criteria can apply, with selection made based on merit. Webinars can be arranged to help members apply to specific opportunities like CROP.

7. What are actionable and measurable expectations your group or leadership has for members who receive travel support? Are there follow-up reporting requirements for members who attend ICANN Public Meetings and/or receive Community Regional Outreach Program (CROP) funding?

There is an expectation of attending GNSO, NCSG, and Constituency (NCUC) meetings, proposing and organizing thematic sessions and participating actively in the discussions. Supported travellers are customarily required to provide a report and to update our membership about the activities going on during ICANN meetings, in addition to attending the relevant meetings. These reports may occasionally be published in communications channels, in addition to distribution on mailing lists. We would like to work with ICANN Communications department to amplify audiences to such reports or social media content, which can make engagement in ICANN meetings increase exponentially.

8. Instead of reimbursement for travel-related expenses, would your members prefer to receive a stipend or per diem from the ICANN organization?

We prefer to keep the current arrangement of receiving a daily per diem instead of reimbursement of expenses because we are not very experienced at maintaining records of receipts and keeping to budget. We would also like to note that finalizing the payments of these per diems before travel is paramount to our members. Those who do not have access to efficient banking systems may go through additional hurdles in receiving financial support and information about per diem emission and receipt could be improved to safeguard the community participation in meetings.

9. Are there categories of travel and events that you are not presently able to support?

Yes. However, since our NCUC budget is limited, we are unable to regularly support our members' participation in civil society fora where we could recruit qualified new members. In particular, we would like to be able to participate in the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the annual World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Internet Freedom Festival, RightsCon, and other regional fora where we have a genuine and justified need to participate.

We suggest that at least one ICANN travel slot for the IGF be allocated to the NCUC annually, without dependency on workshop selections, which we could then assign upon an open call to one of our most active NCUC members (active both in NCUC policy making and IGF participation in terms of speaking and representation). This would be helpful in order to increase our visibility and involvement in the IGF.

10. How does your group plan for upcoming events? What is your planning cycle for deciding on whether ICANN community or organization resources might be used?

The NCUC Executive Committee takes these decisions. This is done via NCUC-EC mailing list and, when necessary, periodical meetings to deliberate on candidates. Our Operating Procedures also help guiding these decisions (www.ncuc.org > Governance > Procedures)

You are welcome to append any general comments on the community resource consultation.

We would like to point out that the questionnaire contains no questions related to the ICANN Fellowship, NextGen@ICANN programme, and ICANN community onboarding programme. As one can see from the ICANN travels reports, many of the travelers who ICANN supports participate in the Fellowship, NextGen, and community onboarding programmes.

While we agree that both newcomers and active members of ICANN community should receive travel support, it should be provided to those (at least in case of returning ICANN fellows) who are actively contributing to working groups and policy making processes. This means contributing not only by visiting different sessions at the ICANN meetings, but also taking active part in different processes between the meetings, when most of the work is being done.

The reassessment of these programmes via a broad community consultation could also solve other problems that are outside of the scope of this questionnaire. There is no question that some of the points made in this comment may have budgetary implications for ICANN. But the value that the NCUC brings to ICANN - by way of our legitimising the multistakeholder model and developing policy through donated time - far outweighs this. We believe that a proper evaluation of existing resource allocation may make it possible for ICANN to better retain hardworking volunteers and attract new active participation without there being an overall increase in cost of community travel support.

Currently these programs have selection committees which do not have a community call for volunteers, SO/AC leaders could be involved in assessing the composition of these committees and even in fellows selection. A list of the fellows from the Constituency could be sent to check for affiliation or even activity. We have had instances where fellows alleged an affiliation with NCUC and this was not verifiable information. Candidate members, therefore, should make this status clear when applying for Fellowship and similar programs. NCSG and NCUC have a vetting process of their membership and candidate members are only confirmed when their affiliation to the stakeholder group is deemed without conflicts of

interest. Travel reports for fellows should also be shared with their affiliation group. This can be beneficial for assessing the effectiveness of the program and performance reviews of community members.

In several occasions, candidates to Fellowship from underserved regions who were not approved to the program came to our focal point in this theme of one of our constituencies requesting travel support. While other factors may have been involved in the programme decision, a communication with SO/ACs with statistics on regional and stakeholder group allocation of travel support for each announcement of these programmes could greatly improve our inreach efforts and selection of travel support for our own community members.

We would also suggest ICANN to continuously seek better provider support than the current only partner in this endeavor, FCM Travel. Some of our community members participate in different community activities and have reported much better experiences with other travel providers, so we kindly request ICANN look into FCM website and its usability, feasibility for flexible travel arrangements and time of agency response.

(You may find some excerpts of this response are similar to NCSG response. As we work together in ICANN for Non-Commercial interests there are many points we converge but also our response brings newer points to this healthy debate, we are grateful for this consultation).