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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ALAC Statement on the ICANN Fellowship Program Community Consultation

Introduction

Alan Greenberg, At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) Chair and Maureen Hilyard, ALAC Vice Chair developed an initial draft of the Statement on behalf of the ALAC.

On 28 March 2018, the first draft of the Statement was posted on its [At-Large workspace](#).

On that same date, ICANN Policy Staff in support of the At-Large Community sent a Call for Comments on the Statement to the At-Large Community via the ALAC Work mailing list.

On 29 March 2018, the ALAC Chair submitted comment. On 02 April 2018, a version incorporating additional comments received was posted on the aforementioned workspace and the ALAC Chair requested that Staff open an ALAC ratification vote.

In the interest of time, the ALAC Chair requested that the Statement be transmitted to the ICANN public comment process, copying the ICANN Staff member responsible for this topic, with a note that the Statement is pending ALAC ratification.

On 06 April 2018, Staff confirmed that the online vote results in the ALAC endorsing the Statement with 12 votes in favor, 0 vote against, and 0 abstention. Please note 80% (12) of the 15 ALAC Members participated in the poll. The ALAC Members who participated in the poll are (alphabetical order by first name): Alan Greenberg, Alberto Soto, Andrei Kolesnikov, Bartlett Morgan, Bastiaan Goslings, Holly Raiche, Javier Rua-Jovet, John Laprise, Kaili Kan, Ricardo Holmquist, Sebastien Bachollet and Tijani Ben Jemaa. 3 ALAC Members, Hadia Elminiawi, Maureen Hilyard and Seun Ojedeji, did not vote. You may view the result independently under: <https://www.bigpulse.com/pollresults?code=539153QaA2FhB6eArIdeLGtgtS>.

ALAC Statement on the ICANN Fellowship Program Community Consultation

Summary:

The ALAC has noted that the Fellowship Program has only successfully integrated a small percentage of its alumni to be actively engaged and participating in At-Large specifically, but also other SO/ACs, to support their policy-related goals and objectives. It has been suggested that changes are required in order to achieve greater effectiveness of the Program not only to meet At-Large policy goals relating to the DNS. Metrics are needed to monitor effectiveness. The Fellowship has been more effective in recruiting people to be active in At-Large administrative activities and outreach.

Program Goals and Vision

1. What does your group believe should be the objective of the Fellowship Program? How would the success of this objective be measured?

The ALAC sees the objective of the Program as the Integration of Fellowship alumni into the various constituent parts of ICANN as active participants in ICANN, with a focus on policy-related activities, The Program should be viewed as an investment by ICANN because the output from the alumni has the potential to benefit not only At-Large but across all sections of the ICANN ecosystem. However, there is a need to ensure that metrics are used regularly to assess return on this investment and also to ensure that the Program is helping to develop Fellows who can not only commit to the policy work-related needs of the various sections of ICANN.

Those supporting ICANN's strategic goals for global outreach and engagement in their communities should also be tracked to what extent possible.

2. The Fellowship Program was established to provide access to ICANN meetings to individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities. In your group's opinion, how effective is the Fellowship Program at fulfilling its current goal?

Although there have been a number of notable successes, the Program appears to be more effective at raising awareness rather than in generating workers actively engaging in regular At-Large policy activities.

What is not visible within the global ICANN community and therefore is not accounted for, is that in many of these underserved and under-represented communities are small pockets of proactive former Fellows promoting ICANN and its work through their own community based channels, and some are creating ALSes that join in with At-Large activities when they can. It is there that the program has in fact had a more positive impact, which is at least a start at grassroots level. Access issues are a major barrier to greater participation by those from underserved regions.

3. In your group's opinion, is this goal still a priority for ICANN, given the new bylaws? If not, what new goals would your group propose for the program?

Yes, it must still be a goal but with a target of success as appropriately measured by the different AC/SOs dependent on their needs. More statistical data on follow-on activities after a Fellowship would identify how the Fellowship could be used effectively both within ICANN and their local communities. The value

of the Program by some assessment mechanism could evaluate whether the basic outcomes of the Program have been achieved - particularly to do with what they have learned about ICANN and how they aim to use this knowledge in future engagement. Initiating something in their home community may already be an anticipated outcome, knowing what their limitations are.

Assessment of Program Impact on your SO/AC group

4. Have Fellows contributed to the work of your group? If so, where do you think they have added the most value? What might be changed about the Fellowship Program to enhance participation of Fellows in your group?

At-Large has had a number of great successes with Fellowship alumni. The greatest value has come from those who have chosen to devote time and energy to ICANN post-Fellowship. The vast majority of these, however, have become active in outreach and administrative roles and not policy-related.

This could be enhanced if the Fellowship Program could include those who are already members of the Internet community, within organisations that are already motivated to work with the ICANN community for a better good, and already have people within their system to support them to become more engaged in our community. On a wider scale, SO/ACs could recommend active participants from their communities to take part in a Fellowship Program that could focus on policy development upskilling similar to that of the ICANN Leadership Academy. This would create a new stream of entrants, but the current program has become too complex and confusing for new community members and too broad and repetitive for those already participating in ICANN.

If we are to have more successes with encouraging Fellows to participate in policy activities, changes must be made to have coaches and mentors who are themselves active in these areas.

5. Does your group make efforts to involve, educate, and/or inform Fellows about your work? If so, please describe these efforts.

Yes, but our formal contact with the Fellows program tends to be less regular - more due to the lack of availability of ALAC leaders and because of their full schedules at ICANN meetings. Selected representatives (former Fellows) make themselves available to participate in Fellowship activities and to share messages about At-Large. ALAC members also make a point to visit and engage with Fellows at the Fellows booth at ICANN meetings. But the ALAC could, and will, make more of a concerted effort to draw people into our activities. In order to improve their outreach, former At-Large fellows could form their own working group or outreach group to provide resources for new/returning fellows

6. How willing would your group (SO/AC/SG/C) be to participate and take ownership for selecting and developing fellows, including giving them assignments, assigning mentors, etc?

We are willing to participate. At-Large has rich expertise that could contribute to the development of Fellows and provide suitable mentors who could familiarise them with our systems and activities, but that would presume filtering candidates who have a particular interest in our areas. It must be noted, that while at ICANN meetings, most of our funded travelers (At-Large members who, not being employed in the domain industry, cannot self-fund) are heavily committed and would have limited time to devote to Fellows. Former Fellows and some others on the ALAC and on RALO leadership teams are particularly good at maintaining contact with Fellows during their activities, and in engaging them to join At-Large working groups and sessions.

Selection Processes

7. Are you aware of the Fellowship selection process? What changes, if any, would you suggest for the selection process?

The ALAC would be willing to be part of the selection process, based on guidelines/good practices produced by the ALAC for this purpose, but also in order to increase the transparency of the process and improve accountability of the Fellows programme.

Prospective fellows must be willing to participate in introductory courses from ICANN Learn. If there are not suitable courses there that will provide the needed background, they should be created.

One of the problems may be the categories used in the selection process. At-Large fits best into "civil society" but we do not comfortably fit into the typical model of "civil society". Therefore we may not be selecting for potential Fellows who have a real interest in user-issues.

It should be clear that the Program is not tourism, but a path towards active engagement. It was identified by a former fellow and now coach/mentor, that in order to get real engagement from Fellows, there has to be a sense of "giving back to the community". Despite the best efforts of a mentor/coach some Fellows still do not understand the need for their engagement and involvement in the PDP process.

It is difficult to measure a Fellow's motivation, commitment or willingness to participate in calls at all hours of the day and night or to read through screeds of documents in order to make a comment that will contribute to an At-Large statement. All of these qualities cannot be assessed by their attendance at one ICANN meeting trying to absorb everything about a particular SO/AC of interest in one go. However, after reflecting on this experience post-meeting, they should be able to demonstrate, that they have what it takes to become a committed "ICANNer", and get another chance to receive a Fellowship. Post-meeting Fellows need to be set a task that ascertains what they learned and how it can make a difference to their lives and the lives of others in their community. There should be an expectation for returning Fellows, especially for those who have had multiple opportunities, to join a working group and actively participate, but only a small number actually do.

Returning Fellows should come with a specific AC/SO/Constituency in mind and these must be balanced over the organization. This should be accompanied by the identification of coaches from the appropriate group.

The effectiveness of Fellows returning as mentors and coaches should be evaluated. Currently only past fellows have the opportunity to be a coach, yet, having that as the requirement may not help us achieve the results that we believe the program needs to achieve. An ICANN Learn course specifically for Fellow mentors/coaches would be helpful – not only to give guidance on how to better engage "new Fellows" but also to encourage them to learn more about ICANN's mission and how they can be directed to help to achieve this.

8. An individual can be awarded a Fellowship up to three times. Do you suggest retaining or revising this number? Why?

We would like to see a study of who (and with how many trips) actually becomes active in ICANN.

9. For Policy Forum Meetings, currently only Fellowship Alums can apply. Do you support continuing with this approach? If not, what changes would you suggest?

We support this limitation IF there is measure to demonstrate that these people are already involved in policy activities within a particular SO/AC and are developing their knowledge and skills for participation. Participating in the Forum meeting should require the Fellows to then have done some homework first

before they come to the forum meeting based on the issues to be discussed, and this can provide part of the Program content for this meeting, so that Fellows can be better informed for active participation in the policy meetings as well as the Public Forum..

Program Size

10. Considering your responses to previous questions, would you suggest making the program larger, smaller, or maintaining the current size?

When the Fellowships were first established there were 15 Fellows. This was increased to 30 which was considered an effective group size, and At-Large supported increasing it. It may be that 60 was overreaching and there are not sufficient available resources (throughout the community) to integrate them.

11. If the program were to be reduced in size, what would your group deem as the priorities for the program with a smaller cohort?

Our priority would be migration of Fellows to active participation and a reasonable part of those must be willing to participate in policy processes. This is too expensive a program to use it as purely dissemination of information about ICANN.

Program Structure

12. When you interact with Fellows at an ICANN Meeting, do you find that they are sufficiently knowledgeable about ICANN? If not, what skills or areas of knowledge would you suggest increasing focus on for pre-Meeting preparation?

It depends on whether they are new or have been to prior meetings. But we would expect the basics of an understanding of what ICANN is, what it's mission aims to achieve, how it is constructed and the purposes of each of its constituencies. A specific pre-meeting ICANN Learn course and perhaps an online test before an application for Fellowship is accepted may establish a standard of knowledge required before starting work on more advanced policy development study during the face-to-face Program. Once at the meeting, it would be handy for first-time Fellows to attend sessions of the various SO/ACs so that they can see the policy development processes of the different SO/ACs in action and build better understanding of this from within the Program, but it would be expected that returning Fellows would get involved somewhere within the system..

One of our more seasoned veterans in At-Large said: "As long as we still have fellows at the public meeting asking questions why ICANN doing nothing to regulate dangerous content, we are clearly not getting the selection/preparation right."

13. Do you think that Fellows spend sufficient time in working sessions with your group during the course of an ICANN meeting? If not, what changes would your group propose?

No, but it would be good if we first of all submitted a list of sessions that might prove useful to them. Fellows should have a good understanding of ICANN's purpose and of the roles of the SO/ACs within it, preferably before they get to make contact with the SO/ACs. In this way, subsequent learning within the Program is more relevant and meaningful, and Fellows can make better sense of what is going on when they visit a particular SO/AC session later on in the week.

14. Do you feel that you have enough time to engage with Fellows at an ICANN meeting?

Sadly, no.

Information Available on Program

15. Is the information currently available clear and sufficient for your community members to understand the Fellowship Program? If not, which elements could be improved and how?

A presentation either via teleconference or at an ICANN meeting would be a good start in order to get feedback from the different SO/ACs and for them to suggest content matching their roles and activities.

16. Are your community members aware of the differences between the Fellowship and NextGen@ICANN Programs? If not, please state what type of clarification would be useful.

Yes, we believe so.

General Questions

17. The Fellowship Program seeks to engage participants who will go on to participate actively in the ICANN community. What skills, attributes and backgrounds have provided the most successful and active participation in your SO/AC/SG/C? What skillsets and backgrounds would your group see as desirable for candidates for the Fellowship Program?

At-Large focuses on issues that impact individual end-users. A passionate consideration for end-users as well as knowledge of ICANN, is the key. See also the reference to "Civil Society" in Question 7.

18. With which elements of the Fellowship Program is your group most satisfied? What changes or improvements would your group most want to see implemented to the program?

We are most satisfied with the relatively small number of people who have gone on to make At-Large their home and productively work with us. We would like to see more!

19. Do you have any other questions or comments about the Fellowship Program?

We have some additional thoughts.

- The criteria (<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/fellowship-applicant-criteria-2016-09-08-en>) puts significant emphasis on "Internet Governance". While ICANN IS part of Internet Governance, it is not the part that many people think about. The criteria do not once mention the DNS or stability, security and resiliency of the DNS, which is ICANN's mission. And from an At-Large perspective, the criteria vaguely refer to "a member of civil society and engaged in studies or work related to Internet issues that reflect regional strategies or current work in ICANN" - this is not a particularly clear statement. Where does it make reference to our interest in how the 4 billion Internet users are affected by decisions that ICANN makes?
- According to the ICANN budget, in FY19, the average employee costs ICANN \$180,919. The average Fellowship traveler cost \$2,690, or 67 travelers per average employee. So the entire cost of the fellowship program is well under 1% of staff costs. If, as At-Large believes, it is a program that should help create active volunteer workers, it must be structured to actually do that, and funded accordingly to do that effectively. This is not to say the program needs more money - but all costs must be looked at in perspective.
- One of the difficulties of assessing the Fellowship program is that we have no other reference group (for instance, the people who come into ICANN directly, not through the Fellowship route). If we had such a reference group, one could compare the retention between the two groups, and then do a cost-benefit analysis. Maybe a later study can do this
- While getting underserved and underrepresented communities/regions participating is of utmost priority, we believe the programme should not restrict participation based on geographical location.