

ICANN | FELLOWS

Draft Summary of Findings from the Community Consultation to Review the Current Fellowship Program

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Executive Summary

It has been over a decade since the inception of the Fellowship Program, and discussions with the ICANN community highlighted the need for a review of the program. This consultation was designed to help identify community needs and priorities and define the vision for the future. Feedback shows strong support for the continuation of the program. The original program goal of supporting participation from underrepresented communities in ICANN remains a priority for the community. There is also a need to make overall improvements.

This report presents a summary of the findings from an SO/AC questionnaire and gathers together concrete recommendations. It captures input from the questionnaire and also takes into account community comments received for the [Draft FY19 Operating Plan and Budget](#), as well as relevant responses to the [Community Consultation Process to Review Current ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines](#).

Respondents note that the program is successful at supporting diversity, bringing in individuals from underserved communities, and introducing newcomers to ICANN. Some fellows are visible in leadership positions, and some alumni have successfully integrated into the community and supported regional outreach efforts. Nevertheless, there is a perception that the program is less effective at generating involvement in policy development and that work is needed to ensure a larger percentage of alumni actively participate.

Moving forward, results suggest that the Fellowship Program should continue to support diversity and to mentor and educate fellows but should place greater emphasis on enhancing active engagement in policy. There is a clear community call for defining and implementing clear engagement metrics to evaluate the program's success and track fellows' participation.

Note that this summary report is a draft.

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Most recommendations fall into the following categories:

- **Metrics**
 - Implement clear objectives and verifiable metrics for first-time and returning fellows; the consultation shows that ICANN Organization (hereinafter “ICANN Org”) should track and reassess metrics periodically, ensure compliance with relevant privacy regulation, and report on the following areas:
 - # applications by region and fellows selected by region
 - # applications by sector and fellows selected by sector
 - Fellowship alumni participation in policy development processes:
 - # pen holders on policy reports and documents
 - # mailing list contributions
 - # public comment contributors
 - # leadership positions
 - Fellowship alumni participation in regional engagement and outreach
 - # regional events attended
 - # regional events organized
 - Utilize metrics, as well as SO/AC input, to inform outreach and recruitment for specific sectors and skills
- **Selection**
 - Include selection committee members from Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, Stakeholder Groups, and Constituencies
 - Increase selectiveness of fellows; mentors to be SO/AC volunteers
 - Provide metrics and expectations at the application stage
 - Require verification of active engagement from returning fellows
 - Ensure fellows’ declared interest in topics are within scope and varied
- **Pre-Meeting Approach**
 - Enhance pre-meeting preparation materials to ensure fellows understand ICANN’s mission and issues that are out of ICANN’s remit
 - Educate fellows on SOs/ACs so that they develop clear goals and plans for the meeting
 - Match fellows to SO/AC-specific mentor
 - Provide concrete and detailed scheduling advice
- **Meeting Structure**
 - Ensure fellows spend more time with community groups and less time in silos
 - Provide additional capacity development opportunities, such as sessions on policy writing, public comment writing, and consensus building, and additional guidance on ICANN’s mission and work
 - Work to avoid scheduling conflicts
 - Involve SO/AC members in mentoring fellows and engaging them directly in discussions
- **Post-Meeting Approach**
 - Follow up with fellows to measure progress and track engagement and participation in the ICANN community and in their region, determine why some fellows are no longer active, and provide further support as needed to integrate fellows in the community
- **Information Dissemination**
 - Provide clarity about the number of times individuals can receive fellowships
 - Publish data on engagement of fellows
 - Provide information about selection committee formation and selection processes
 - Adapt organization materials to adjust perception of program as a travel support scheme

Background

The ICANN [Fellowship Program](#) was formed over a decade ago with the goal of creating a broader and more diverse base of knowledgeable constituents from underserved and underrepresented communities around the world. Since 2007, over 640 people from 133 countries have been awarded a fellowship, representing a wide diversity of gender, background, region, experience, and expertise. Discussions with the community indicated that it was a suitable time for a program review. A community consultation affords the opportunity to review the program, assess its perception by the ICANN community, and plan to improve its effectiveness.

Objective

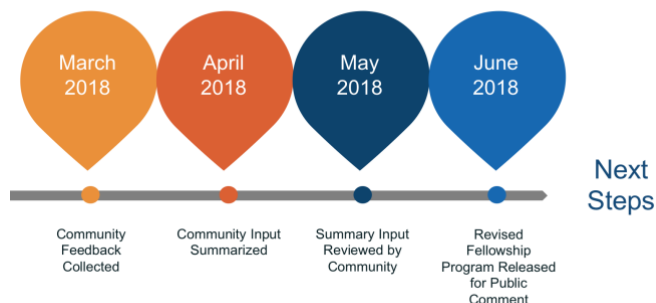
The community consultation is designed to review existing practices and define the vision for the future of the program. The aim is to ensure that the program continues to evolve to meet current and anticipated community needs in an efficient and financially sustainable manner.

Review Methodology and Timeline

As part of the community consultation process, the Public Responsibility Support (PRS) department provided the community with Fellowship Program data and information on program processes and designed a [questionnaire](#) that was circulated to Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and relevant stakeholder groups and communities. The questionnaire was divided into seven categories with the following aims: ascertain alignment between program, SO/AC, and ICANN’s goals; enhance fellows’ community involvement; determine awareness of and support for current processes; gauge priorities of SOs/ACs if program size changes; assess pre-meeting preparation and meeting experience; judge clarity of existing information and the distinction from NextGen; and gather information on what SOs/ACs see as desirable skill-sets and backgrounds for fellows.

Eight community groups submitted official responses, along with individuals and other groups. There was a particularly high response rate from the GNSO and its groups. Official replies came from ALAC, GNSO Council, ISPCP, NCSG, NCUC, NPOC, RrSg, and RySG.

This draft summary captures input from the questionnaire and also takes into account community comments received for the [Draft FY19 Operating Plan and Budget](#), as well as relevant responses to the [Community Consultation Process to Review Current ICANN Community Travel Support Guidelines](#) and the Middle East and Adjoining Country Strategy Working Group (MEAC SWG) survey report. Budgetary decisions are not a part of this process.



PRS consulted with relevant ICANN Org departments and community groups to revise this summary before releasing it for public comment. Following the public comment period, the report will be revised, and PRS will brief the community on updates and an implementation plan. Note that the Fellowship Program is planned six months in advance, so implementation of the revised program will take effect at least two meetings after the final program processes are published. For more details, see the draft Proposal of the New Fellowship Program Approach document.

Consultation Findings

Program Goals and Vision



Proposed Program Objectives:

1. Engage new active participants
2. Support underserved regions and enhance diversity
3. Educate newcomers and integrate program alumni into community

Nearly all official responses indicate that the Fellowship Program's objective should be to **bring new active, committed and engaged participants** to the ICANN community's policy development processes. There is also an emphasis on attracting and supporting those with financial need from **developing, underserved, or underrepresented regions** in order to enhance diversity in ICANN processes, develop global awareness of ICANN, and to give opportunities to those who could not otherwise have participated. Many responses also specify an objective to **educate, inform, and prepare** new participants and to **facilitate the integration** of program alumni into the community and its working groups. Individual comments reiterated similar objectives, as well as the potential to bring in future leaders and stewards of the public interest.



RECOMMENDATION: Develop metrics to evaluate program success. Track fellows' participation in the community, policy development processes, and regional engagement.

There is a strong community call for **clear metrics** to assess the objective's success, particularly in terms of policy development. Though some responses did not provide concrete metrics, the following actions were suggested:

- Develop metrics to measure accomplishments and evaluate success
 - Require each SO/AC to determine policy-centered metrics that define active participation and substantive commitment and provide trackable deliverables; see below for proposed metrics
 - Provide fellows with clear metrics to set realistic expectations and help alumni plan their participation, as well as monitor and highlight their progress (nominal membership and leadership roles are not considered sufficient by many)
- Assess substantive and meaningful contributions to policy development by monitoring fellows' involvement in the community and its work
 - Identify fellows who are members of stakeholder groups and constituencies and track numbers annually
 - Track fellows' activity in working groups, cross-community working groups, contributions to public comments, attendance in online calls/meetings, participation in mailing lists, involvement with agenda setting, and sustained involvement outside ICANN meetings
 - Require returning fellows to demonstrate their commitment to policy work and active involvement in ICANN

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- Ask that communities verify returning fellows' applications, and seek evidence through internal ICANN group discussions or external public communication to verify active engagement
- Communicate with fellows to ensure they are able to become meaningfully involved
- Measure regional engagement
 - Record fellows' efforts for global outreach and engagement in their local communities/countries/regions to promote awareness of ICANN, enhance ICANN's global impact, support ICANN's strategic goals, train local communities, and disseminate information about ICANN (and related topics, such as DNSSEC and the DNS industry)

The following metrics for returning fellows have been proposed:

- Regular participation in working groups conference calls (e.g. minimum attendance rate of 75%) taking into account reasonable constraints inhibiting participation
- Participation in discussions and deliberations, such as on WGs mailing lists (e.g. as a part of his or her application, a fellow can provide URLs linking to some of his/her substantive interventions)
- Participation in drafting and/or reviewing WG deliverables (e.g. a fellow could indicate where he or she was a document penholder)
- Reporting the WG's activities to the fellow's respective Stakeholder Group/Constituency/Community (e.g. a fellow can share examples of such reports)
- Participation in public comments as a penholder or a reviewer (a fellow can provide evidence of the documents of substantive interventions on the mailing lists)
- Participation in regional outreach and engagement in local communities (e.g. a fellow could provide a report or blog post on an event)

One group notes that it could be helpful to conduct a study that assesses retention of those who enter ICANN through other routes in comparison to the Fellowship Program. Individual comments further stress the need for metrics and offered additional suggestions: ask coaches to assess improvement of fellows' knowledge; require coaches to follow up with fellows and assign specific tasks, such as research or blog posts in native languages; trace involvement in other aspects of the Internet ecosystem (ISOC, RIRs, etc); provide geographic reports on number of fellows from different regions. One notes that fellows themselves should be asked to set specific, measurable, time-based objectives which would then be evaluated.

Metrics would help to assess engagement of fellows and ensure that further fellowships are given only to those who actively contribute to policy processes; however, metrics are not only perceived as a limited element but also as a means to identify active fellows and support and encourage the active contributors.

Program Effectiveness

When asked how effective the Fellowship Program is at fulfilling its current goal, of providing access to ICANN meetings to individuals from underserved communities, approximately half of the respondents indicated that the program was effective but could be more so, and approximately half indicated they were unsure due to a lack of metrics. There is a clear call for further metrics to gauge engagement.

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- ✓ Respondents note that the program is **effective** at raising awareness, supporting diversity, introducing newcomers to ICANN, and bringing in individuals from underserved communities.
- ✗ However, there is a perception that the program is **less effective** at generating active engagement in policy and ensuring meaningful participation outside of the meeting structure.

Fellows are also noted to be effective and proactive in promoting ICANN through their own communities, such as creating ALSes and having a positive impact at the local level. Multiple respondents are aware of fellows in leadership positions.

Individual comments note the importance of the program in enhancing **diversity** and validating ICANN's commitment to diverse involvement; however, some respondents note that metrics are needed to evaluate success in maintaining diversity in active engagement. Many public comments emphasize that the Fellowship Program brings in volunteers from **developing countries** who otherwise lack the resources to become involved. The public perception of the program varies. Many perceive fellows as hard-working volunteers from developing countries who are actively engaged in the ICANN community, Board, and organization and who have successfully sought leadership positions. Comments indicate that the program helps to bridge the digital gap for those in low-income countries, and many fellowship alums spoke to the program's value. Other comments, however, indicate that the program is not effective and that its value has deteriorated over time, and one commenter indicated a perception that fellows are relatively privileged and are seen as friends of former fellows.

Many group, individual, and public comments note that there is a **perception of the program as a travel support program** only and that fellows do not make significant contributions at the meetings. Though fellows are visible during the **public forum**, many of their comments are not focused on ICANN's remit, and some community members would like to see more substantial contributions. There is a perception that fellows see the program as a source of travel funding and are interested in returning to meetings but do not feel expected to contribute to working groups. It is noted that the institutional structure supports this perception; it would be helpful to incorporate elements other than travel into the **budget line items**.

ICANN's Priorities

The majority of the groups agreed, albeit with some reservations, that the goal of the program is still a priority for ICANN, given the new bylaws. There is a repeated emphasis on facilitating participation from developing countries and **underserved regions** to enhance geographical and cultural **diversity**. One group noted that while participation of underrepresented communities is a priority, applications should not be restricted by geographical location. Respondents propose the following new program goals:

- Increase active contribution to and substantive engagement in ICANN policy activities
- Focus on capacity development for domain name policy and ensure fellows are familiar with ICANN's limited mission and mandate
- Define measurable targets of success based on SO/AC-specific needs, specific learning outcomes, and expected engagement plans, both in ICANN and in home country
- Encourage other aspects of diversity, such as gender, age, and skills, and an increased diversity of regions
- Enhance fellowship network in spreading understanding of ICANN regionally

Individual comments support program goals of capacity development and diversity enhancement and note that many fellows actively assist in ICANN's global outreach efforts.

Selection Processes

Though most groups are aware of the selection progress, some would like more information and increased transparency. All respondent groups agree that changes are needed, particularly with regards to the selection committee and the selection criteria.

Selection Committee and Guidelines



RECOMMENDATION: Include selection committee members from Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, Constituencies, and Groups.

Over half of the respondent groups proposed including selection committee members from SO/AC/SC/G groups. Many groups also noted an interest in contributing to selection guidelines and committee composition assessments. Comments indicate that SO/AC involvement would increase transparency of the process, improve accountability of the program, assure diversity of interest, and create a more balanced program with a range of backgrounds (private sector, civil society, academic, government, technical community, etc). [Note that these categories could merit revision, as ALAC, for example, noted that they do not fit comfortably into the typical model of civil society and that there should be reference to ICANN's effect on end-users, and the Business Community noted a lack of clarity in categories of affiliation (and that it would be useful for the BC to recommend the criteria for business fellows' approval to increase changes for engagement).]

Comments from the community travel consultation suggest that the selection committee host a working session at one ICANN meeting per year to discuss how to improve the evaluation and selection process and gather feedback. One comment proposed that criteria for serving on the Selection Committee should be published for public comment and that member selection could mirror that of the Nominating Committee in terms of representation.

Individual comments from the GAC Underserved Working Group propose that their group be involved in the selection process. Some public comments also indicate support for having constituencies/stakeholder groups involved in choosing fellowship participants and requiring them to develop an action plan to engage meaningfully; this is seen to improve accountability of the fellow to that group.

Selection Criteria



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide clear metrics and expectations.
- Ensure variety of interests and existing knowledge.
- Require verification of active engagement.

Many groups propose changes related to fellows' (particularly repeat fellows') demonstration of active engagement and of fellows' indicating interest in specific topics. The following recommendations were proposed:

- Staff should provide clarity, propose metrics, and fact-check:
 - Provide clearer information in the application process for fellows regarding expectations for active engagement and involvement in policy development processes

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- Propose clear metrics for selection criteria, particularly for returning fellows
- Emphasize ICANN's mission in the selection criteria (specify the DNS and stability, security, and resiliency, not just Internet governance)
- Verify fellows' statements
- Publish data on number of applications received and number of selectees from region and stakeholder group
- Selection committee should ensure balance and relevance of interest and consider existing knowledge:
 - Require fellows to declare an SO/AC/constituency and ensure interests are balanced
 - Select fellows who have a professional or educational interest in the issue
 - Request SOs/ACs to recommend active participants from their communities to the program for policy development upskilling
 - Consider selecting those who are already members of the Internet community, within organizations that are already motivated to work with the ICANN community and already have individuals to support fellows to become engaged in their community
- All fellows should have demonstrated knowledge, clear learning goals, and varied interests:
 - Complete ICANN Learn introductory courses
 - State what they wish to learn and how that applies to their current work/studies and future plans
 - Establish interests related to a specific group's work (not-for-profits, domain name policy, domain name industry) rather than Internet governance more broadly
- Returning fellows should detail past contributions, current engagement, and future plans:
 - Demonstrate prior learning, past contributions and commitment to participate in calls, engage in working groups, read documents, contribute to statements
 - Provide proof of current active participation and contributions between meetings
 - Outline meeting objectives, planned contributions, and future plans in ICANN and home region
- The Fellowship Program should alter the coach selection process:
 - Assign coaches from the same SO/AC/Constituency
 - Ensure coaches are active in working groups
 - Evaluate effectiveness of coaches
 - Consider expanding coach opportunities to those who have not been fellows in the past; coaches could be drawn from other parts of the community (and thus be able to help fellows with specific community groups and not receive funding only to coach)
 - Design an ICANN Learn course for coaches to provide guidance on how they can better engage fellows and to teach them more about ICANN's mission (Note that there is already an ICANN Learn course for coaches but it is not open to public view)

Individual comments note that the selection process and criteria used are unclear and should be made more transparent. Some public comments indicate that staff need to improve external recruitment efforts. Multiple comments noted that there should be stricter selection criteria and that seats should be left empty if there are not enough suitable candidates.

With regards to selection criteria, some priorities mentioned by individuals are: equity among the underdeveloped and underserved regions, merit rather than geographic region, and gender diversity. Some note that repeat fellows should demonstrate they have actively engaged other members from their local community in the ICANN process or actively engagement in organizing an ICANN-related workshop at a regional event. An individual suggested that the program should try to attract retired people with existing skills, knowledge, and time.

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One comment indicated that fellowship alumni should not serve on the selection committee and that the committee should not be formed of members invited by staff. Some commenters suggested that SOs/ACs should select candidates and monitor, evaluate, and report on the fellows' performance. Groups could assist in identifying and seeking applicants and assist them in successfully integrating into the work.

Three-time Fellowship Rule

Currently, an individual can be awarded a fellowship up to three times. When asked whether they would suggest retaining or revising this number, over half of the respondent groups indicated that they need more data on engagement. Many indicated that this number could be retained, providing active engagement is proven and clear metrics and objective criteria are in place. (One indicated that flexibility should be allowed in certain cases, but the majority seek metric-based decisions.) One indicated that this number does not capture the full reality, since fellows can receive funding more than three times by become coaches and booth leads.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop clear objectives and metrics to measure fellows' engagement
Require demonstration of active participation

The following suggestions were proposed, with 4/8 groups supporting each suggestion:

- Establish metrics to measure the successful engagement of a fellow; develop clear objectives, matched to metrics, to track a fellow's participation; undertake a study of how many meetings it takes for fellows to become active in ICANN
- Require demonstration of commitment to policy development processes, with progressive strictness of criteria for each subsequent fellowship, including concrete outputs on mailing lists, participation in Working Groups and policy-making processes, and regional initiatives in collaboration with the fellow's respective ICANN community; verify through confirmation with community and working group records, attendance lists, mailing lists, and call records

One respondent group suggested the need for information and clarity on expectations for those who receive funding more than three times through additional roles as coaches and booth leads. Some note that third-time fellows should serve as coaches rather than giving additional slots to coaches. Though a small number of individual comments indicate that there should not be a limit of three funded meetings, multiple public comments illustrate the negative public perception of exceptions to the three-time rule by allowing individuals to move from NextGen to the Fellowship Program and then participate as coaches, senior coaches, ambassadors, senior/honorary fellows, and booth leads.



RECOMMENDATION: Impose clear guidelines and restrictions regarding the number of times individuals can receive funding from the Fellowship Program.

Multiple public and individual comments indicate that fellows should only be considered for a repeat fellowship only if fellows demonstrate value and commitment to their local community and to ICANN. Some indicated that the second and third fellowship awards should be decided by the specific SO/AC community leaders; others noted that repeat fellows should prove that they have promoted ICANN regionally, enhanced community interest, and demonstrated a commitment to regular collaboration, engagement, and mentoring to increase their knowledge. Comments also note that fellows should be given clear expectations for contributions.

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Alum-only Policy Forum Rule

Currently, only fellowship alums can apply to Policy Forum Meetings. Half the respondent groups support continuing this approach; half support it, provided fellows prove active engagement. There is general agreement that the ICANN Org should define a measure to demonstrate and a system to verify that alums are actively involved in policy activities and seek to develop their knowledge and skills for participation.

There is consensus that Meetings A and C provide more advantages to newcomers and that Meeting B is best suited to alums who understand ICANN policy development processes. Some groups propose that policy forum fellows should be required to complete specific tasks before the meeting so they are informed and prepared to discuss issues.

Clarity is needed on Policy Forum restrictions, as some note that regional first-time fellows also attend.

Program Structure

When asked if fellows appear sufficiently knowledgeable about ICANN, a majority (6/8) note that many misunderstandings about ICANN and its mission and remit persist amongst fellows. Some note that insufficient knowledge is understandable for first-time fellows but that greater understanding is expected from returning fellows. In particular, two groups note the visibility of fellows' misunderstandings about ICANN's remit at the public forum; likewise, public comments note that public forum participation should be limited to specific policy issues.

Groups noted that the following areas of knowledge should be the focus of pre-meeting preparation:

- ICANN's mission and role (6)
- Defining Internet governance issues that are out of scope/remit (6)
- Constituency-specific topics (5)
- ICANN's structure and multistakeholder model (3)
- Meeting-specific topics (1)

The following suggestions to improve fellows' knowledge were proposed :

- Create ICANN Learn courses and tests (2) - Note that fellows already complete a mandatory ICANN Learn course, which contains quizzes; the course is hidden from public view
- Ensure that returning fellows demonstrate an understanding of ICANN's remit and have an interest in contributing to it (1)
- Attend SO/AC sessions and see policy development in action (1)
- Attach fellows to a specific constituency mentor before the meeting (1)

Key aspects of knowledge mentioned in other comments involve ICANN's ecosystem, ICANN processes at the national level, region-specific information, bottom-up policy making processes, and the wider ICANN and I* ecosystem. Individual comments also emphasize preparing fellows through ICANN Learn, involving fellows in mailing lists before the meeting, and educating fellows about ICANN's work and its limitations. Some propose having fellows shadow more experienced community members. Some public comments suggest that fellows should have studied policy development processes and policy case

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studies and should have a rudimentary knowledge of and interest in the domain name system rather than issues that are not within ICANN's mission (such as Internet shutdowns and access to the Internet).



RECOMMENDATION: Enhance pre-meeting preparation materials along these lines:
Explain ICANN's mission and clarify scope
Provide concrete scheduling advice
Ensure fellows understand SOs/ACs and topics of interest before the meeting

Over half of the groups indicate that fellows do not spend sufficient time in working sessions; reasons diverge widely. One to two groups indicate the following reasons: sessions are not mandatory; other types of engagement with SOs/ACs should be imposed instead; fellows do not have the time or knowledge to do so; sessions overlap; fellows are welcome but choose not to come; insufficient data as attendance is not monitored.

Likewise, when asked if they had enough time to engage with fellows, over half of the groups indicate that they did not, though for varying reasons, the most common being that meetings are very busy (4). Multiple groups indicated that fellows are welcome to join their sessions (3) but do not try to engage (2).

The following suggestions are proposed:

- Provide fellows with concrete scheduling advice (3)
 - Prior to the meeting (1), give fellows a list of useful sessions (1), color-coded to separate administrative internal meetings from substantive sessions (1)
- Enhance preparation to ensure fellows understand ICANN and SOs/ACs prior to the meeting (3)
- Work to avoid scheduling conflicts (3)
- Ensure fellows do not work in silos and engage only with each other (2)
- Fellows should arrange meetings with community members in advance (2)
- Make it mandatory for fellows to attend certain sessions (2)
- Provide time for SOs/ACs to mentor or coach fellows interested in that group (2)
- Alert group of fellow's presence in a session so that they can provide support and guidance (1)
- Ensure fellows follow work of groups between meetings (1)

Individual comments emphasize the need for greater pre-meeting preparation and group-specific mentoring. Some suggestions include: repeat fellows should host a panel to share observations about specific groups; a group of fellows should submit a public comment; and the ICANN Org should ensure that fellows contribute to working groups.

Some public comments suggest that session attendance by fellows should be monitored and that a list of mandatory sessions for fellows should be posted. Though not addressed specifically in the questionnaire, many groups also comment on **post-meeting follow-up**. Many comments note that mentoring should be offered after the fellowship for those unsure of how to engage or needing further support. Some public comments suggested that SOs/ACs should monitor, evaluate, and report on the fellows' performance.

Program Size



Though many groups diverge in their support (4) or opposition (3)¹ to decreasing the program's size, some common themes emerged, particularly the need for establishing metrics on tracking fellows' involvement and for supporting active engagement and diversity.

Those who oppose cuts emphasize the importance of creating opportunities for individuals from **underserved** and underrepresented communities, for bringing diverse members into the community, and for supporting the functional, geographic, and cultural **diversity** of the Internet mentioned in the ICANN bylaws.

Those who seek to **decrease the size** note that there are not sufficient resources to support and integrate a large group into the community. A smaller group, matched with a tighter selection process, is perceived to lead to **deeper involvement** in the community.

For a smaller cohort of fellows, respondents focus on the following priorities:

- active, meaningful, and demonstrated **engagement** in policy development activities and working groups (for returning fellows) / greatest potential for contribution (from first-time fellows) (6)
- **supporting** and mentoring fellows to become self-sufficient and motivated to engage without further aid (4)
- **educating** and informing fellows, who understand what ICANN does, its mission and values, its processes, and its governance structure (2)
- newcomers from **underserved** and underrepresented regions (2)
- individuals under-represented in specific working groups (1)

The following suggestions were proposed:

- Focus on education
 - Decrease the program size and use the remaining budget to train fellows and develop comprehensive educational materials to aid fellows and other newcomers in understanding the ICANN ecosystem
 - Ensure that fellows understand issues that are within ICANN's mission
- Gather metrics
 - Collect metrics and community input before making changes
 - Establish mechanisms for regular reviews of the program with defined metrics
 - Reduce the number of fellows to a smaller group and look into increasing the size after developing a program (with objectives and metrics, etc) that repeatedly results in a successful transition from fellow to active contributor
- Explore alternatives
 - Consider alternative approaches to the current fellowships, such as providing a mix of full and partial coverage of travel costs, or a remote fellowship program (e.g., as introduction

¹ One group was unsure due to the lack of existing metrics.

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- to ICANN and in preparation of attending a next meeting in person, or to support fellows not able to attend or no longer entitled to receive travel support)
- Use educational materials developed to aid fellows more broadly, in ways that do not necessarily require travel support

Individual/personal comments make the following recommendations:

- Emphasize coaching, mentoring, and guiding of fellows
- Focus on newcomers; focus on merit (not geography)
- Require fellows to produce policy reports/articles and engage in mailing lists well before meeting
- Provide more local/regional meetings

Personal comments to the community consultation vary; some seek to maintain or enlarge the program in order to provide more opportunities and maintain a global profile, whereas others support making the program smaller and more manageable. Likewise, many public comments address size and budget cuts. Though some comments indicate that ICANN should trim program spending and size, cut the program, or fold the NextGen program into the Fellowship Program, many comments do not support the cuts of the program's size. A few comments point to the [petition](#) that showed support not to cut the program (298 signed). There is some frustration that other elements of the budget were not cut instead. Many comment that evidence, data, and rationale had not been provided to support the reduction in size/budget.

Assessment of Program Impact on SOs/ACS

Fellows' Contribution

Over half (%) of respondents indicate that fellows had contributed to their group's work; one-quarter indicate that fellows were not involved due to the limited remit of their group (registries/registrars) or lack of contact; one was unsure because of the lack of metrics. Multiple comments also note that a leadership position is not necessarily the best indicator of participation and that further data is needed.



Fellows are perceived to make valuable contributions as new SO/AC members and as supporters of outreach at ICANN and at home.



Fellows' participation could be enhanced through a focus on policy work, a new approach to scheduling, and additional capacity development opportunities.

Fellows are seen to have added the most value in the following ways:

- Contributions to the group directly (5): new participants, new vision and ideas, new issues in the agenda, new leadership roles, new working group members
- Outreach within ICANN (3): activities in Newcomer session, alums serve as link for activities within ongoing fellowship program, outreach within ICANN community and to external audiences
- Regional engagement (2): awareness-raising in Internet governance space at a regional level
- Diversity (1): new participants from developing countries

The following changes were suggested to enhance fellows' participation:

- Focus on participation in policy activities

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- Ensure coaches are mentors who are actively involved in policy work
- Adjust approach to scheduling
 - Ensure fellowship sessions do not run at the same time of groups' sessions and outreach events (conflicts with How it Works sessions and regional sessions were also noted)
 - Guide fellows more directly to sessions and groups that fit within their personal interests and backgrounds to make the meeting more relevant, to lower the barrier to join discussions, and to increase the chance for further involvement after the fellowship
- Develop additional capacity development opportunities
 - Provide guidance on specific skills - such as policy writing, writing public comments, and reaching consensus - to integrate fellows into the community more swiftly
 - Inform fellows about ICANN's mission and work and constituency-specific topics, such as the domain name industry and how ICANN's issues affect contracted parties
 - Encourage groups to develop mentorship programs to support newcomers and fellows
 - Assign fellows specific tasks, such as research projects and interviews, to achieve tangible outputs and to ensure that fellows can contribute at a level that is manageable and realistic (some note that groups with experts are difficult to join and that fellows could be asked, for example, to tailor an assigned marketing plan to their region or to arrange calls with a group to ensure understanding of the group's mission). [Individual comments]
- Change selection criteria. [These comments are accounted for in the [Selection](#) section.]

Individual comments reiterate the value of fellows in promoting ICANN, enhancing diversity, and contributing to discussions and strategies. One indicates that many fellows actively support ICANN-related activities in their home regions, though fewer are able to remain actively engaged with ICANN directly once they have returned home, due to a lack of infrastructure and access to sufficient broadband for Adobe Connect.

Groups' Contribution

Half of the respondent groups indicate that they make great efforts to involve, educate, and/or inform fellows about their work; half indicate that they make some efforts but could do more. Many indicate that ICANN meetings are very busy and that leaders have limited availability.

Groups contribute to involving and informing fellows in the following ways:

- Participate in fellowship sessions at the meeting (4)
- Engage with fellows and other newcomers at the meeting outside fellowship sessions:
 - Teach policy writing courses (2)
 - Engage with fellows at the booth (1)
 - Host sessions for newcomers at ICANN meetings (1)
 - Present at Newcomers Day (1)
 - Implement constituency-specific fellowship and mentorship programs (1)
- Conduct outreach and capacity development outside ICANN meetings:
 - Host webinars (4)
 - Contribute to ICANN Learn courses (2)
 - Create policy briefs (1)
 - Develop onboarding materials (1)
 - Host outreach events to explain core values (1)

Groups volunteered the following suggestions:

- Encourage former fellows to form their own SO/AC-specific working group or outreach group to provide resources for new and returning fellows

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- Select more fellows interested in their line of work
- Ensure schedules do not conflict
- Send invites to members to interact with fellows earlier and link invitations to the groups' activities

Individual comments notes the importance of capacity-development opportunities outside of the Fellowship Program (such as Newcomers Day and GAC Underserved Region workshops). Fellows are encouraged to flag their presence at sessions so that group members can support and follow up with them. Some additional suggestions include: encourage fellows to join mailing lists; have groups prepare materials for new members that explain their mission and members; host monthly calls wherein an experienced member explains topics to newcomers and encourage them to participate; have fellows prepare materials for the next round of fellows; and create a learning road map so fellows can see what they are learning and where it leads them.

Future Involvement

Nearly every respondent group noted a willingness to participate and take ownership for selecting and developing fellows (such as giving them assignments, assigning mentors, etc). The number of groups willing to participate in the following ways is indicated in parentheses:

- Mentor fellows interested in the group (5)
- Participate in selecting fellows (4)
- Engage fellows in sessions, discussions, working groups, leadership, community (3)
- Assign specific assignments relevant to group's work (2)
- Contribute to fellowship curriculum development (1)



RECOMMENDATION: Involve community groups in mentoring, selecting, and engaging fellows.

Individual comments from GAC Underserved Regions Working Group members noted that the working group would be willing to mentor fellows and participate in the selection process. Similarly, comments from individuals in APRALO noted a willingness to include fellows and to design a fellow-specific mentorship program that matches fellows to mentors in their region. Likewise, some Middle East and Adjoining Country Strategy Working Group members noted an interest in training, coaching, and mentoring fellows.

Information Available on the Program

Though there is some agreement (4/8) that the information currently available is clear, many groups (5/8) also call for more information. In particular, groups seek the following changes:

- Metrics about results of program (2), including data on active engagement and on those fellows who did not return to the community
- Information about how the selection committee is formed and how fellows are chosen (2)
- Presentation for SOs/ACs to solicit feedback and submit content on their roles and activities (1)
- Publish biographies of fellows online to help groups identify fellows with relevant interests (1)

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Many public comments addressed the need for more data on how the program has evolved and how it is currently performing. Many were frustrated that there was no data provided to justify the budget cuts. Multiple comments suggested that an assessment of the program in bring active, productive contributors would be useful. The following data points are also suggested: selection criteria; gender diversity; diversity from developing countries; contributions to the ICANN ecosystem; contributions to promoting the objectives of ICANN within their home countries and communities; and what ICANN does to revive the interest of those who have stopped contributing.

The majority (7/8) of respondent groups are aware of the differences between the Fellowship and NextGen@ICANN Programs; however, some (3/8) indicate that though their group is aware, many community members are not. Further details regarding participant eligibility and overlap would be useful.

Multiple individual and public comments indicate that the overlap in participation between the NextGen and Fellowship participants can be seen as problematic, particularly for participants who are not actively involved in the community. An increased separation and distinction between the programs could be useful to ensure that NextGen@ICANN is not perceived merely as a “feeder” for the Fellowship Program.

General Comments

When asked which skill-sets and backgrounds the group sees as valuable to participation and desirable for fellowship candidates, answers vary, as would be expected. Multiple groups (3/6) note that skill sets would need to be periodically reassessed based on changing needs and shortfalls in working groups. Skills or traits that are seen as valuable relate to consensus building, networking, communicating confidently, listening patiently, policy making, policy writing, time management, adapting to diverse settings diplomatically, and proficiency in English. Having personal or professional connections with the topic was seen as useful for successful community integration. Areas of valuable knowledge vary depending on the group’s needs, ranging from issues relating to end users, intellectual property, domain name policy, consumer choice, to those familiar with the domain name industry, the private sector, not-for-profit work, academia, civil society, noncommercial registrants, and law. Varied interests encompass a variety of sectors.



RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that fellows receive capacity development to support skill-building in areas such as consensus-building, policy writing, and communicating effectively and to enhance knowledge in constituency-specific areas.

Some public comments indicated the need for more technical knowledge (in the DNS, for example), while others emphasized the need for more policy knowledge and awareness of ICANN’s mission. Individual comments highlight personal skills, such as being keen to learn, communicate well, and plan effectively, as well as varied expertise (law, business, civil society, technical, etc) and awareness of regional concerns and ICANN’s regional work.