



# Comment on Proposed Incremental Changes to the ICANN Meetings Strategy

Status: FINAL

Version: 1

1-Feb-2018

**Business Constituency Submission**

**GNSO//CSG//BC**

## Background

This document is the response of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC), from the perspective of business users and registrants, as defined in our Charter:

The mission of the Business Constituency is to ensure that ICANN policy positions are consistent with the development of an Internet that:

1. promotes end-user confidence because it is a safe place to conduct business
2. is competitive in the supply of registry and registrar and related services
3. is technically stable, secure and reliable.

### BC comment on proposed incremental changes to the ICANN Meeting strategy

The Business Constituency was privileged to have a member engaged in the ICANN Meetings Strategy Working Group, which published its recommendations in 2014. Although it was presented as a consensus document, the BC raised several questions and concerns at the time<sup>1</sup>.

We understand that the purpose of this comment period is focused and limited. However, we have comments of relevance to the next ICANN Meetings Strategy Review. We note the public comment page background states that “*Community leaders and representatives were asked what consideration, if any, should be made for changes to the meeting duration.*” This statement lacks details of the scope and the process, and appears to act as a filter to restrict this comment opportunity.

In this comment, the BC is focusing solely on the ideas presented as proposed *Incremental Changes*<sup>2</sup>:

- a) Add one additional day dedicated to outreach for the mid-year Policy Forum;
- b) For the annual general meeting, either
  - 1) Reorganize the work for better use of time on day 7, or
  - 2) Reduce the official meeting to 6 days, keeping day 7 available for the community to hold internal working meetings and wrap-ups.

### BC comment on adding one day dedicated to Outreach for the mid-year Policy Forum:

The BC supports adding one day dedicated to outreach and/or other directly relevant events and working sessions requested by the community.

We understand that the idea of a 4-day policy-only meeting did receive support from some parts of the ICANN community and from the ICANN meetings staff. However, its implementation has presented challenges for many in the community who need to schedule working sessions and small cross-community gatherings on-site during the ICANN meeting.

The BC does not find the allocation of the present tightly-curtailed Policy Forum and use of ICANN on-site resources to be a good use of time for ICANN stakeholders. We find that the present arrangements

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<sup>1</sup> Apr-2014, BC Comment on Meeting Strategy Working Group (MSWG) Recommendations, at <http://www.bizconst.org/assets/docs/positions-statements/bc-comments-meeting-strategy-wg.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See ICANN comment page at <https://www.icann.org/public-comments/proposed-changes-meetings-strategy-2017-12-14-en>

unduly limit resources and availability to engage across the community.

The BC supports the addition of one additional day for outreach and engagement, with full on-site support for related events and relevant engagement activities. During the Policy Forum, we should allow additional relevant events on-site during lunch periods or early evenings. This would maximize use of available space and remote engagement resources over the full five days. This should not compete with the focus on policy development, but would provide better support to the broader ICANN stakeholder community.

We propose a further improvement: Allow a limited number of new fellows to apply for fellowships for the Policy Forum with a focus on fellows that are from under-represented groups, as identified by an analysis of the Fellowship Program.

ICANN's benefit to its stakeholders is based on interaction and exchange between its various sub groups. Adding a fifth day with on-site use of available meeting space is a step in the right direction and can bring benefit to the communities and to the organization.

Travel time is excessive for some travelers for a curtailed meeting such as the Policy Forum. Some ICANN participants travel over 30 hours to attend a 4-day event. A longer event would serve to justify the considerable travel time incurred by some.

The barrier to holding related side events and outreach activities has limited preparatory engagement among various SO/ACs. For example, the BC has expended member funds to pay for off-site facilities – for an outreach event that could have been reasonably hosted at the ICANN venue. Hosting on-site at ICANN would draw guests from the local business community into the ICANN orbit and would make it easier for ICANN senior staff or Board members to “drop in”.

### **BC comment on options presented for the annual general meeting**

Regarding option 2) Reduce the official meeting to 6 days, keeping day 7 available for the community to hold internal working meetings and wrap-ups, ***the BC recommends cutting day 7 completely.***

We could consider an exception for such meetings as CCWGs and the ICANN Budget Working Group. But otherwise, we recommend reducing the meeting to 6 days.

Maintaining a full meeting setup just for just a few groups who prefer to stay over and meet informally does not seem cost-justified. Savings from cutting day 7 could then be applied to the mid-year meeting to cover the additional day recommended above.

We note that one or two groups have used day 7 and requested staff support and funding for travel, but we do not find that cost to be justified except for face-to-face work of chartered CCWGs or for the ICANN Budget Working Group.

The BC also prefers to maintain the Board meeting and the Public Forum at all ICANN meetings. We supports the return to holding two public forums, recalling that it is the community that should be publicly speaking to each other and to the Board and Senior staff.

We also recall that originally, ICANN had an opening Public Forum on Day 1, and a full day Public Forum later in the week, just before the then public Board meeting. Even with two phases of the Public Forum, time across the community in speaking to each other in public and to the Board and Senior staff is curtailed as compared to earlier days at ICANN.

We do, however, suggest that more should be done to provide information about what is relevant to a Public Forum and to work carefully on scheduling so that the GAC members can attend and participate.

### **Conclusion**

To summarize, the BC supports adding one day to the mid-year meeting, with flexibility for day five activities and use of on-site meeting rooms and remote participation resources.

We recommend cutting day 7 from the Annual General Meeting. This will reduce lodging costs for all ICANN travelers. If a CCWG or Budget WG were to require a face-to-face that cannot be accommodated during the 6 days, ICANN could require a written justification from the proposing group.

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This comment was drafted by Marilyn Cade, Michelle Chaplow, Arinola Akinyemi, Christian Bope, and Tola Sogbesan, and edited by Steve DelBianco..

It was approved in accord with the BC charter.