High-Level Comments

The value and effectiveness of the ICANN fellowship program is unclear. There does not seem to be any defined metrics or other forms of assessment that measure the effectiveness of the program in converting fellows into active participants in ICANN's various policy making and community processes. Given its significant cost and unclear benefits, there is a need for the reassessment of this program. We swee real value in a fellowship program which brings active participants into GNSO working groups and other community policy making processes. However, contributing should mean more than sitting in the room of a session at an ICANN meeting, or asking a question and thanking ICANN for the travel support during the public forum. Contributing must mean taking active part in various intersessional processes between the meetings when most of the work is being done. Given the ineffectiveness of these programs in bringing in active contributors, the current scale of these programs does not look like a wise resource allocation.

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As guiding principles, the GNSO Council believes that:

1. ICANN needs to cut back on its expenditure on these programs; and
2. ICANN needs to have clear and measurable metrics to demonstrate the Return On Investment for each and every dollar spend on these programs.

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Fellowship Program at ICANN Community Consultation Process

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 GNSO Council expects that Fellows, in particular those interested or claiming to be a part of the GNSO via its Stakeholder Groups/Constituencies, to be active in Policy Development Process Working Groups and to actively participate in these processes, bringing in any missing expertise or skills that may have been identified during the formation or progression of work of the Working Groups.

Such success should be measured through combination of active and informed participation in Working Group conference calls (and related sub-teams or subgroups), substantive contribution in Working Group mailing lists, and participation in deliberation and report drafting, be that through the submission of comments made in a personal capacity or actively shaping the comments made by a Stakeholder Group, Constituency, or other group.

Mere attendance of sessions at ICANN meetings cannot be used as a measure of success because it does not constitute active participation. A returning fellow should demonstrate, through tangible examples and references from the Working Group leadership team, of meaningful participation in Working Groups discussion. As GNSO Working Groups have open membership, being a member is not in and of itself sufficient proof that one is

participating in a way that is impactful. The same applies for one claiming an affiliation to a Stakeholder Group or Constituency.

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?

We acknowledge the increase in the number of returning Fellows and the wide regional diversity of those chosen, and this effort is appreciated. However, further follow-up and monitoring of Fellows is required to ensure that funded travelers become meaningfully involved in the GNSO's core business, which is our policy development work.

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?

That is still valid, however the Cross Community Working Group Work Stream 2 Subgroup on Diversity identified additional elements, in particular skills, that should be considered more closely during the selection of fellows.

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?

In the absence of reliable data, metrics, and Key Performance Indicators, we face a challenge in evaluating the contributions (if any) of Fellows in the core business of the GNSO.

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

The GNSO Council does not conduct outreach or educational activities, per se, targeting Fellows. We depend on our Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies to conduct such tasks. However, GNSO policy staff have developed material in the ICANN Learn platform, routinely provide policy briefing updates that update Fellows and other interested persons on the status of the working groups which the GNSO Council manages, periodically run policy tutorials and webinars, and engage in other activities which keep the community, including Fellows and other newcomers, informed as to our work.

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?

It would not be appropriate for the GNSO Council to absorb this function; however we will defer this matter to our various Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies to comment on.

Selection Processes

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

The GNSO Council does not participate in the fellowship selection process. However, as members of the Empowered Community we do our best to track the activities which the organization undertakes and have both an understanding of the objectives of the fellowship program and an awareness of the eligibility criteria. The selection process, as it stands today, is not itself problematic and sounds sensible. However, we have concerns as to whether or not the selection criteria is consistently utilized, as it is not always apparent that some of the chosen Fellows meet it. In particular, we think it is important that ICANN staff verify the statements made in fellowship applications for accuracy. If a candidate claims to have a specific skill, or to be active in a particular Working Group, Stakeholder Group, or Constituency, these claims must be verified. . Furthermore, we believe additional consultation between the community and the candidates, in regards to those being interested in gTLD policies, would be more effective in bringing those who demonstrate a commitment and interest in GNSO-related activities. It may also be advisable to interview candidates to ascertain their suitability for a fellowship.

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

We feel that the development and implementation of objective Key Performance Indicators are key to answering this question in an evidence-informed manner. Without agreed metrics or other methods of tracking a Fellow's activity and participation, it is impossible for us to comment on whether Fellows should be allocated travel resources for three times, or whether this time limit is insufficient or overly generous.
However, no matter whether this number is retain or revised, we would like to suggest clarifying the following: an alumni of the fellowship program can become a booth leader a fellowship coach, or a senior coach, and this allows Fellows to be granted travel support more than three times. We are aware of fellowship alumni who have received travel slots in excess of 10 times by rotating between the roles of NextGen participant, NextGen Ambassador, Fellow (x 3), Fellow Coach (x 3), Senior Coach (x 3), and Booth Lead. There is a need for clarification as to whether or not this travel support is included in the restriction. It is our strongly held view that creative new names for programs funded from the fellowship budget are contrary to the spirit of the existing three time limitation.

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 the continuation of this approach, and request that ICANN review more carefully their contribution as requirement for their selection. This must also include the verification of statements made in applications for fellowships, along with the introduction of measurements that allow for the candidate's activities in the community to be objectively assessed for value and utility..

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

It is difficult for the Council to respond to this question given the lack of metrics, however given the present budgetary crunch, we would suggest significantly reducing the size of the program until such time as metrics can be developed and agreed upon by the community.

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?

We suggest focusing resources on a small group of first-time Fellows with the potential to become active community members swiftly, and supporting the participation of very active returning Fellows with close support and mentorship to ensure they are meaningfully participating in Policy Development Process Working Groups. The GNSO Council, in consultation with GNSO policy staff and Working Group leadership, can help in identifying the missing expertise and skills that such a program can bring.

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?

No, many of the Fellows we interact with are enough knowledgeable regarding ICANN-related issues and in particular GNSO topics. Most Fellows are interested in important Internet governance issues that fall outside of ICANN's remit.

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 would changes would your group propose?

We are not aware of any Fellows actively attending in GNSO Council meetings. However, as previously stated, participation must be both informed and meaningful to bring a added value to the discussion and get involved in policy processes. One issue is the newcomer session that clashes with the GNSO working session on Sunday..
14. Do you feel that you have enough time to engage with Fellows at an ICANN meeting?

Yes.

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?

More information would be useful as to how returning Fellows are selected and, in particular, how members of the Fellowship Selection Committee are chosen. We have reviewed the names of the Fellowship Selection Committee, who serve terms of 3 years / 9 rounds, and observed that none are members of the GNSO. It appears that these committee members are chosen solely based on factors of geographic diversity.

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.

We are familiar with the difference between these two programs. However, we wonder if ICANN staff are, because there is significant overlap between participation in the two distinct programs, and this seems contrary to the objectives of both.

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?

There is no one answer here. Skillsets and backgrounds depend on the needs of the Policy Development Process working groups. These are identified during the formation of the working group, and may need to be reassessed with the passage of time to identify any gaps that have arisen as a result of membership turnover. These needs evolve and, for this reason, they should be updated. In this respect, the fellowship selection criteria must be agile and flexible.

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

The fellowship program should go through evaluation and an improvement process to respond to the needs of different part of the community such as the GNSO..