



**Comments on  
Meeting Strategy Working  
Group (MSWG)  
Recommendations**

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**Business Constituency Submission**

**GNSO//CSG//BC**

## Background

This document is the response of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC). The BC's comments arise from the perspective of Business users and registrants, as defined in our Charter<sup>1</sup>:

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.

ICANN has been hosting international meetings since 1999 at a rate of four meetings per year, which was then reduced in 2003 to three meetings per year. The meetings are a central principle of ICANN's multi-stakeholder model because they provide a venue for progressing policy work, conducting outreach, exchanging best practices, conducting business deals, interacting among members of the ICANN Community, including Board and Staff, and learning about ICANN.

Over the past several years the ICANN meetings have become increasingly complex events, and the success and growth of the Community's Global Multi-stakeholder organization has begun to introduce stresses to the current meetings model. The growing demand for more sessions and meetings spread over more days has resulted in over-scheduled agendas and reduced opportunities for cross-community interaction. The growth of constituencies and overall attendance at the meetings has also created the need for larger venues to accommodate the growing number of attendees.

On 25th February 2014, the Meeting Strategy Working Group (MSWG) published its Draft Report and Recommendations and it was posted for public comment.

## BC General Comments

The BC greatly appreciates the efforts of the Meeting Strategy Working Group (MSWG). We recognize that the most significant aspects of ICANN meetings addressed by the group include:

- Scheduling (and general conference agenda)
- Length (of the conference overall)
- Number (of international public meetings per year)

The BC remains concerned about **unique challenges for small businesses** to participate in ICANN meetings:

- The high cost of attending ICANN meetings. Small companies do not have the same resources as larger corporates, nor is going to ICANN meetings a top priority in their broader business purview in comparison to some more politically oriented organizations. 2014 is a particularly expensive year, with meetings in Singapore, London and Los Angeles. The BC requests that the ICANN meetings team endeavor to include less expensive locations in the rotation and in order

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<sup>1</sup> Business Constituency Charter, at <http://www.bizconst.org/charter.htm>.

to monitor this an ICANN meeting “cost index” metric is developed and published to aide further review.

- It would help if locations and hotels were announced much further in advance. This would allow for better planning and perhaps reduced travel costs. ICANN announced at the Costa Rica meeting public Forum that it was aiming to publish meeting venues two years in advance, The BC support this target.
- The BC values the voice of small business and would encourage ICANN to sponsor small businesses that would otherwise not be able to attend.
- The BC is concerned about under-representation within the Fellowship program for business participants.

The BC supports the “two part” public forum recommendation with the question and reply format.

The BC requests that two of the three meetings should have a "real" board meeting.

Reports from the relevant Board Committees should be presented to Stakeholders at least once a year.

The BC calls upon ICANN to give the highest priority to community needs, rather than scheduling meeting space to accommodate ICANN staff, who are increasingly using the meetings to talk about their ideas and plans, rather than working with the community in a more distributed manner.

Senior staff and Board members have high influence on scheduling decisions. The BC proposes a “Meeting Schedule Committee”, with 2 representatives per Stakeholder Group, who can help to set priorities, and maintain an improved understanding of community needs.

### **BC Comment on Main Recommendations**

The BC supports the MSWG recommendations to “Continue the three-meeting schedule annually, but evolve the structure of the three meetings to better address meeting objectives, scheduling conflicts and to use the time in a most effective way.”

The BC supports the MSWG recommendations to “Continue regional rotation for all meetings”  
The BC supports the MSWG recommendations “that ICANN not restrict rotation of any meeting to ICANN hub cities.”

The BC notes the innovative solution to accommodate the changing meeting environment by varying the format and length of the meeting. The BC makes the following comments on the three different meetings.

**Meeting A** - *First meeting in the three-meeting annual cycle, Duration would be up to six (6) total days, similar to the current ICANN meeting structure.*

The BC supports this.

**Meeting B** - *Second meeting in the three-meeting annual cycle. Duration would be up to four (4) total days, and would be focused on SO/AC policy development work as well as cross community interaction and outreach.*

The BC supports this while expressing a concern around the Travel. Unless this location is very easy to get to, its unlikely that people will come to a meeting that is only 4 days. This might especially be true for groups from the global south, as transport can take so long. If it takes 1.5 days there and 1.5 days to get back, it is difficult to justify for just a 4 day meeting.

We also question whether SO/AC policy work be enough to convene people. Is it possible that this will evolve into becoming more of an “insiders’ meeting”? Just know we are looking to encourage more openness and more participation.

**Meeting C** *Third meeting in the three-meeting annual cycle, include AGM. Duration would be up to eight (8) total days, but should be optimized to allow some groups to conduct their activities over a shorter duration within the overall meeting timeframe.*

The BC supports this, but notes that 7 days is the longest that people are likely to stay.

#### **BC Comment on RECOMMENDATION FOR ROTATION OF THE MEETING LOCATION**

The BC supports the MSWG recommendations that “Rotation...should remain mandatory for the new strategy.” and “that regional rotation should be as regular as possible.” The BC assumes this means that the recommendation is not just to rotate among hubs in the five regions, but to continue to visit diverse locations in the five regions. Please clarify in the final report.

#### **BC Comment on RECOMMENDATIONS ON MEETING SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

*Technical support for remote participants, interpretation, scribing, transcription and translation will be consistent to current support, but effort should be made to focus on continuous improvement, especially for remote participation.*

The BC strongly supports this recommendation. The BC notes that it has been voiced before and no real progress has been made. The BC requests that an implementation plan be created and published, that adequate budget is provided, and that metrics are recorded and published for each meeting.

*Fellowship program should continue at all meetings, with a more regional emphasis for Meeting B.*

The BC supports.

*ICANN meeting planning team should continue to focus on ease of securing visas as a criterion in evaluating meeting locations. The MSWG recognizes the problem related to visas for attendees and recommends existing procedures be improved to enhance collaboration with the relevant Government and local hosts while maintaining the open enrollment and registration policies of the meetings.*

*Steps should also be taken to keep track of recurring attendees to support easing of future visa attainment for attendees.*

The BC supports.

*A program should be developed to facilitate local outreach at ICANN meetings with particular emphasis on Meeting B, where a specific day is set aside for local outreach projects.*

The BC supports in principle, and requests examples of local outreach projects. The BC believes ICANN must make greater refforts to sensitize the local business community about the coming of an ICANN meeting and how they can (and why they should) participate.

*ICANN Staff should continue to evolve and improve efforts to support press interest at ICANN meetings, and additional effort should be given to establish compelling themes and foster new press outlets in all Meeting locations, with emphasis on highlighting the outreach efforts in those locations.*

The BC support efforts to support press interest at ICANN meetings. In particular the standard and facilities of the 'press room' is currently well below that expected by international journalists who visit events of comparable size.

The BC notes the comment about "out of scope recommendations" and requests feedback on which have been implemented.

*The MSWG does not recommend requiring ICANN to secure a local host for ICANN meetings, but does recommend that ICANN continue to encourage a multi-stakeholder local host structure. This support does not have to be financial in nature but with support for events, contacts with local government and media contacts, and support in the effort to secure visa letters is recognized as a benefit and should be continued.*

The BC supports this approach.

*The opening ceremony should include, whenever feasible, a cultural element from that region or country, such as local music or dance.*

The BC supports.

#### **BC Comment on RECOMMENDATION ON MEETING PLANNING**

*ICANN meeting planning team should provide framework and direction to ICANN staff and community members to organize schedules to minimize meeting conflict.*

The BC supports, and also requests advance information about the room layouts for the meeting rooms the BC has been assigned. In this way the BC can help meeting staff by accommodation variations.

*Additional preparation time and flexibility should be afforded ICANN staff meeting planning group to optimize rotation and location of meetings and structuring of agenda framework to accommodate*

*necessary working sessions while also reducing session conflict across community groups.*

The BC supports, notwithstanding occasional deviation from the principles set out above.

*ICANN meeting planning team should optimize scheduling of meeting days to take advantage of recognized working days (Monday through Thursday), and minimize impact on globally recognized non-working or religious observance days.*

The BC supports.

*ICANN staff should continue to advance attendee and session feedback for each of the three meeting formats, and make such information broadly available to the community in order to measure the progress and success of the new recommended meeting structure.*

The BC supports.

Chris Chaplow and Andrew Mack led drafting of these comments, with significant help from multiple BC members, including Tim Chen, Gabriela Szlak and Marilyn Cade. These comments were approved in accordance with the BC Charter.