

Registrar Constituency Position re ICANN Travel Support Policy

June 11, 2008

BACKGROUND

In May 2008, the Registrar Constituency (“RC”) was asked to provide comments regarding ICANN’s proposed Travel Support Procedure (“Travel Procedure”).¹ During the two months prior to ICANN’s request for comments, the members of the RC discussed possible Travel Procedures at length. Accordingly, this Position Paper captures the overall sentiment expressed by the RC members who provided feedback about this matter and this Position Paper seems to reflect the general sense of the RC. However, due to time constraints, no formal vote regarding this Position Paper was taken.

POSITION

The RC opposes ICANN’s proposed Travel Procedure. In short, a majority of RC members that responded to an informal survey argue that:

1. ICANN *should not*, under any circumstances, provide travel support to Council Members.

The RC members who advocate this position seek to contain ICANN’s “ever increasing budget”, and believe that registrants should not be burdened by funding travel expenses for Council Members who represent the narrow interests of constituencies which are comprised of large, well capitalized organizations.

Furthermore, RC members advocating this position believe that Council Members have excellent track records of attending live meetings and will continue to attend these meetings regardless of whether ICANN funds their travel expenses. To that end, several RC members believe that attendance by Council Members at live meetings will continue, at least in part, because their travel tends to be funded by the private organizations for which the Council Members are employed.

Alternatively, RC members argue that:

2. If ICANN insists on providing travel support, then it should provide modest financial support to each constituency, as opposed to the GNSO in general, and each constituency should have the authority to allocate that support among its members and representatives for travel or other constituency needs.

¹ See ICANN’s Proposed Travel Support Procedure available at: <http://www.icann.org/topics/travel-support/draft-procedure-22may08.htm>. (last visited June 11, 2008).

In its proposal, ICANN allocates \$184,800 to the GNSO for Councilor travel and charges the GNSO itself with the responsibility of dividing this funding between Councilors. However, instead of charging the GNSO with the responsibility of deciding which Councilors receive funding, RC members who support this alternative position believe that constituencies themselves should be responsible for distributing the funding.

Supporters of this alternative position recognize that each constituency has unique needs; not only with respect to travel, but also with respect to carrying out day-to-day constituency related functions. As such, this position permits constituencies the flexibility to use support funds to defray those travel costs or other expenses a particular constituency deems important, independent of how other constituencies may be utilizing their respective support funds.

For example, the RC might prefer to use these resources to enable its advocate or assistant to attend an ICANN meeting instead of its Councilors, who receive travel funding from their employers.

The RC members who have expressed support for this opinion believe that an accounting mechanism should be adopted by the constituencies to ensure that the funds are put to appropriate use and subject to appropriate ICANN-expense policies.

Because the bulk of the Travel Procedure discussion among RC members was focused on the narrow topic of travel support for only Council Members, rather than travel support for supporting organizations in general, this Position Paper is concentrated on that particular question, with only minimal attention paid to other Travel Procedure issues.

The RC notes with great interest, however, that ICANN's proposed Travel Procedure provides that the ccNSO members receive an almost equal travel allocation relative to the GNSO, notwithstanding the fact that the ICANN budget contemplates that the gTLD registrants/registrar/registries fund over 93% of ICANN's budget and the ccTLD registrants/registrar/registries only fund less than 4%.

Some RC members also recommend using ICANN's budget for "Broadening Participation" to create an "outreach fund" through which some members of the GNSO community may apply for travel assistance on a needs basis. The purpose of such a fund would be to ensure that non-profit participants of the GNSO and other community members who need financial assistance would still be able to participate in the work of the GNSO. Partial and complete funding requests may be fulfilled depending on the nature of the request, demonstrated need, etc.

Finally, the RC strongly believes that ICANN should further investigate improved remote access and participation technologies to reduce meeting attendance costs and encourage more members of the community to participate in ICANN meetings.

CONCLUSION

The RC opposes ICANN's proposed Travel Procedure, but if ICANN insists on providing travel support then modest financial support should be provided to each constituency and each constituency should have the authority to allocate that support among its members and representatives for travel or other constituency needs.

The opinions expressed by the RC in this Position Paper are the opinions of the RC as a whole, and should not be interpreted to reflect the individual opinion of any particular RC member.