RrSG Comment: ALAC Review

The Registrar Stakeholder Group ("RrSG") firstly applauds the work undertaken by ITEMS International ("ITEMS"). We agree with the report's assessment that At Large's current form has been limiting its ability to properly deliver on its mission; this is key given the importance of end user input to ICANN. Current At-Large Structures intended to support user engagement in ICANN may actually be standing in the way of direct user participation as well as discouraging new voices from engaging within ICANN policy development processes.

The RrSG believes that many of the reforms proposed by ALAC will lead to improvements in user participation within ICANN. Positive reforms proposed include fully opening participation to individual users with an interest in ICANN, expanding outreach and engagement initiatives, capping travel support, rotating leadership positions to broaden participation and grow new leaders within the At Large community, and encouraging At Large members to work directly within the community rather than in At-Large working groups.

We agree with ITEMS that these reforms are likely to provide modest but important improvements to end user participation in ICANN. The RrSG recognises that even a moderate increase in the number of At-Large members is a worthwhile goal when paired with changes proposed for *how* those members engage with other parts of the community

That said, the RrSG proposes the following areas for further refinement and consideration by the review team:

Carry out user research in areas where user data would be useful to policy development.

Carrying out quantitative and qualitative user studies[1] on the impact of policies and other proposals and developments on Internet users would be effective way to deal with the breadth and diversity of user perspectives and balance ongoing concerns about the motivations of, and potential capture by, At-Large leaders. Objective user data would help inform both At-Large positions and policy-work by other Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees. At-Large members would then be able to play an important role in identifying prospective areas for research. This suggestion is raised twice in the Report but appears not to be fully considered in the analysis nor reflected in the recommendations and we encourage its reflection in the final recommendations.

Consider whether the Regional At Large Organizational (RALO) structure is the best mechanism for supporting user outreach.

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[1] Examples of studies that could be performed could include: what fraction of users understand how their registration information is used/published; how the current transfer policy impacts registrants' ability to move domains between registrars; or whether users have been affected by name collision. Today, effects of these sorts of policies on users is generally the subject of conjecture and anecdotes.

We strongly support the emphasis placed on user outreach and education, and believe that this is a prerequisite to even modest increases in At-Large participation. However, we question whether the preexisting RALO structures, which are designed around the ICANN Geographic Regions, are best-designed to support this goal. User needs with respect to outreach and education do not cut cleanly across these geographic regions and other divisions (e.g. linguistic communities) may be more effective. Certain populations, for example users in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, may have similar resourcing needs despite being in different ICANN geographic regions. In contrast, other populations may have very different needs and engagement levels despite being in the same geographic region as one another; for example, despite all existing in the Asia Pacific region, we would expect that users in China, Vietnam, and Australia might have very different demands in terms of outreach and engagement.

There is no need to deliberately and artificially subdivide outreach and education initiatives. These efforts could be undertaken holistically within the at large with ad hoc task forces or work streams set up to address particular community needs (whether identified on the basis of language or geography) as needed.

One tool that At Large could leverage in doing so is the preexisting network of At Large Structures. While we agree with ITEMS that regional At Large Structures (ALSes) should not be the primary unit for engagement in the ALAC over individual users, many of these organizations are already well equipped to support educational and networking initiatives and could be well utilized by the At Large to further these goals.

ITEMS should consider whether the RALOs should be abandoned as the primary unit for user education and outreach in favor of a flexible holistic approach that relies upon new or repurposed engagement structures that are better fit for purpose.

Remove references suggesting that At-Large should be given access to New gTLD Auction Funds.

The Report's suggestion that At-Large be given access to auction funds generated through the new gTLD program raises concerns with the RrSG. Recommendations that At-Large members be able to participate in the Auction CCWG in pursuit this objective runs counter to guidance put forth by the ICANN Board that "to avoid conflicts of interest, there should be clear separation of those deciding the general direction, those choosing specific projects, and those receiving the funds".[2] Furthermore, it misunderstands the primary goal of the CCWG: to identify the mechanism for allocating the funds, rather than the parties that will receive them.

The Auction CCWG charter makes explicit note that the auction proceeds are an "exceptional, one time source of revenue" and must therefore be treated as distinct from ICANN's on-going revenue streams and expenditures. Proposals that would allocate auction proceeds to broad on-

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[2] Letter from Steve Crocker to James Bladel, Board Members for the auction drafting team, 11 February 2016

going projects and are already considered among ICANN's core functions are thus problematic. Allocations must not create a dependency on that funding stream such that it would put pressure on the community to identify new sources once auction proceeds are expended.

Consider actual working group timelines when setting travel funding limits

ITEMS has made a number of appropriate recommendations with regard to improving the distribution of travel funding benefits. The RrSG supports the introduction of an upper limit on total travel funding granted to any one member, the establishment of a cooling-off period following a change in most At-Large leadership positions and the restructure of how travel seats are identified, particularly through the introduction of the rapporteur role.

The RrSG recognises that a cap on travel funding will enable broader participation amongst members and is appropriate for various At-Large leadership roles, but may be counter productive if unilaterally applied to ICANN working groups whose work necessarily exceeds the proposed six-meeting term limit. For this reason, it may be worthwhile to have the initial rapporteur continue to fill this function until the working group has completed it's task and to continue applying an eighteen-meeting cap on these particular members to ensure overall turnover.

Do not propose an additional Board seat for the At-Large.

The RrSG supports maintaining the current recommendation of allocating only one ICANN Board Seat to the At-Large. As outlined in the Report, the At-Large already has greater influence over Board member appointments by virtue of its appointing of 5 out of 15 voting members of the ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom). The RrSG would also like to highlight that the creation of a voting board seat for At-Large contradicts the recommendation in Westlake's previous review of the At-Large and is a departure from the approach taken for other Advisory Committees who only have a non-voting representative.