

Comment on the Projected FY17 Improvements to the ICANN Fellowship Program

Dear ICANN,

As a member of the great family of Fellowship alumni, first of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this program. It has brought to me the opportunities to interact with, learn from, and be inspired by ICANN staff, senior community members as well as other extraordinary fellows. And I appreciate DPRD's initiative to help it evolve to ever more success. To contribute as much as I could, below I would like to share a few thoughts:

1. I understand the necessity to bring in “more diverse voices in order to have more inclusive decision-making”. However, my concern about “accepting applications from ALL nations” is whether this will dilute the participation from the traditionally underrepresented regions and whether there is consideration to address this.

More community members from traditionally underrepresented countries are becoming real stakeholders than ever before because of the new gTLD program. They have new gTLDs or even IDN TLDs to understand, to explore or to look after and they cannot afford to just sit by and follow like what they usually did when there were mainly legacy TLDs. And the Fellowship Program is a perfect platform for them to observe, to learn about the multi-stakeholder model and to share with participants from similar backgrounds and possibly with similar problems and concerns.

Also, voices of fellows from traditionally underrepresented regions will likely draw a larger audience among their local communities and thus become the messengers of ICANN and fulfill the out-reaching goal of the Fellowship Program.

We have seen exciting examples of fellows rising up to community chair, to GAC representative, or even to member of the Board and it would be great to have this momentum proceed.

2. I appreciate DPRD's continuous effort in improving diversity, and among other diversities I would like to give special support to gender diversity. Women are still “minorities” both in ICANN leadership and ICANN community and they need opportunities like the Fellowship Program to be able to connect with role models whom they may look up to.

It was through participation of the Fellowship Program that I had the opportunity to attend DNS Women's Breakfast organized by Ms. Cheryl Langdon-Orr, Ms. Vanda

Scartezini and other inspiring role models and the session “Women in ICANN, Internet and ICTs: Opportunities and Challenge” initiated by Ms. Asha Hemrajani and Ms. Olga Cavalli. These sessions were so well received that almost all participants were excited about the chance to share, connect and support each other. And the success of these sessions speaks the necessity of support for the “underrepresented” gender.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Wen Zhai