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ICANN78 | AGM – Introduction to ICANN's new Travel Portal for Funded Travelers  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 – 4:00 to 5:30 HAM

RIA OTANES: Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Introduction to ICANN's New Travel Portal for Funded Travelers. My Name is Ria Otanes, and I am the remote participation manager for this session.

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For example, a first name and last name or surname. You may be removed from the session if you do not sign in using your full name.

With that, I will hand the floor over to Josh Baulch, who's joining us remotely. Josh, I turn it over to you.

JOSH BAULCH:

Thank you, Ria. As Ria said, my name is Josh Baulch, and I will be walking us through today's presentation. I'm sorry for not joining you in person and just joining remotely from my hotel room, but I didn't want to share my germs with you. So I appreciate that.

The ICANN Travel Team is excited to announce our new Travel Portal for Funded Travelers, which will be launched in 2024. This new platform will make the process of traveling easier for you, from welcoming and onboarding you as a new traveler to simply keeping track of your bookings and exchanging travel information.

The focus of this session is to give you a special preview and learn about many of the new features. You will also learn about the upcoming changes that you should be aware of in the next few months.

It's important to note that in this session, we will not be covering the funded traveler selection process and how to become a funded traveler. Please see the individual groups for more information on becoming a funded traveler.

If you have questions, we will take pauses throughout, so please raise your hand, and we'll bring a mic or open the Zoom for you to be able to ask your questions.

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All right. With that said, let's jump into it. So take a look at the screen.

VIDEO: [music playing]

JOSH BAULCH: We would also like to give a special thanks to [Yvonne] Edwards, to whom many of you have probably worked, and has helped support ICANN travel this year during our transition, and her support has been greatly appreciated. So thank you, [Yvonne], and we wish you the very best in your future endeavors.

We have Joseph here in the room. Please wave, Joseph. And then we also have Ria, who's managing the virtual room. Ria, if you don't mind waving. And they will help us through the Q&A throughout the session.

And as the video said, my name is Josh, and I am the lucky manager who gets to work with this phenomenal team and the amazing feats that they accomplish every ICANN meeting. If you don't mind, I'd love to give them a round of applause.

JOSH BAULCH: So let's get started with some fun facts about ICANN travel. This is an interactive part, so fair warning. But it is going to be multiple-choice, so get ready. All right.

So how many air miles did ICANN Org and the funded travelers fly in 2019? Raise your hand if you think a) 3 million air miles. If you're online, use the reaction feature to give us the applause emoji. Okay. And then

those of you that think b) with 7 million air miles. Those on Zoom, give us a thumbs-up emoji. And how about c) 12 million air miles? Those on Zoom, give us a heart emoji. And finally, D) 28 million air miles. Those on Zoom, give us the laughing emoji.

Wow, we've got some mixed answers there in the room. I can see via the camera.

RIA OTANES: In the room—

JOSHUA BAULCH: Ready to see who's correct?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [inaudible].

JOSHUA BAULCH: D. That's right. ICANN Org and the funded travelers flew a whopping 28 million air miles in 2019. That's 5.7 years of constant flight for one person. Or to put that in another context, that's 59 round trips to the moon and back.

All right. Should we try another one? Those of you who got that last one wrong, here's your chance to redeem yourself. How many emails did the two-person ICANN Travel Team process per month in 2019?

Raise your hand if you think a) 1,133 emails per month. If you're online, give us the applause emoji. And how about b) with 923 emails per month? Those on Zoom, give us a thumbs-up emoji. And how about c)

with 4,633 emails a month? Those on Zoom, give us a heart emoji. And finally, how many of you think 2,743 emails per month? Those on Zoom, give us a laughing emoji.

All right. Ready to see who has the correct answer? Drum roll, please. C, 4,633 emails a month on average. That's over 220 emails a day. I want to let that sink in. Think about it. How many emails do you handle a day, or how long do you normally take to read or answer an email?

The average office worker sends about 40 emails a day and receives about 121 business-related emails per day. I don't know about you guys, but that makes my head hurt just thinking about reading or answering over 200 emails a day. We'll talk a little bit more about this later.

So I want to dig into how we got here with modernizing the ICANN travel process. Today we're going to talk about all the work that ICANN Org and the Travel Team have been doing since the pandemic and during the pandemic, and how we're transforming our travel process moving from a manual and fragmented system to a more efficient approach.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start back at the beginning. I want to tell you about where all this started. Picture it. Marrakech, 2019, in a small venue meeting room where ICANN leadership acknowledged concerns from ICANN staff and the community about our travel process. The leadership wanted to better understand the problems.

This led to an internal review process that began in October of 2019, which marked the start of our Travel Modernization Project. This project was led by Joseph with the support of myself and Ria, and many

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other ICANN staff throughout the next few years. The Travel Modernization Project's first phase in 2020 kicked off by mapping out the entire travel process. This was an opportunity to identify the gaps and the challenges.

Joseph worked with some incredibly talented team members, Steve Allison and Hilary Jin in the ICANN Engineering and Information Technology Department, who spent hours upon hours pulling information from all the processes within ICANN to execute a trip for an ICANN funded traveler, and even ICANN's staff travelers whom the Travel Team also supports.

After months of work, the deliverables that came out of this mapping process were astounding and was the foundation of what we are presenting to you guys today. On the screen here, you will see some of the process maps. Some of these maps included the processes behind onboarding of a new traveler, booking your air travel, ticketing a flight, managing the per diem and stipend process, managing ad hoc travel changes, payables, and even reporting travel metrics.

In the end, these guys produced 22 process maps, which includes 14 specific processes for just the funded travelers alone, plus an additional 10 sub-processes within those 14 maps.

Now, I wish we had time to dive into these maps because I personally love them, especially as an operations-focused person. But we want to get to the exciting bits. So we'll just keep it to a quick sampling.

The review was about identifying the gaps and challenges. This entire process mapping and review revealed several gaps and challenges

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throughout our travel process. The internal review highlighted issues with user experience and onboarding to ICANN as a funded traveler. Some principle themes that became apparent throughout this review was that our travel procedures from gathering and processing traveler information are largely manual, outdated. And this affected your experience as a traveler, whether as a funded traveler or even as an ICANN staff traveler.

These systems and applications have been cobbled together over the last 25 years, creating an incohesive and often unintentional, abrasive first experience of ICANN. And we know how quickly technology changes.

Another theme that was not clearly visible in the process documentation in itself but became apparent in the feedback sessions was the lack of global visibility. That 360-degree view on the travelers' current status within the travel process for everyone involved, including the Funded Travelers (you), staff requesters, and ICANN Org as a whole.

What I mean by this is not only do you as the traveler not know necessarily what's going on with your flight booking status on an ongoing basis or if your hotel has been booked yet or not; but also, ICANN support staff don't have clear visibility on that either. And to round out that 360-degree view, ICANN travel doesn't know if you've gotten your visa or when you plan to provide your banking information to us.

This leads to numerous update and informational requests via email not only from you as a traveler, but from support staff—questions from our travel agents; questions from internal departments which only

continues to compound inefficient processes and already backlogged communication channels.

Remember that volume of 4,600 emails a month we talked about earlier? As travelers yourselves, none of this should be a surprise. And I see some people agreeing with these points.

So now I want to talk about the data itself and what we're calling touchpoints and related inefficiency. We're referring to touch points as encounters where information or transactional data is exchanged during the travel process for each traveler.

For example, every time throughout the process your information had to be touched, updated, shared was considered a touchpoint. And this will become apparent in just a moment. In 2019, each funded traveler had an average of 293 touchpoints per trip, translating to a whopping 617,000 touchpoints for the year for just two ICANN staff to manage. There's also an ICANN staff component as well that you see listed up there. This all adds up to a significant amount of resources.

You may be asking why we're showing 2019 data, and we're in 2023. Well, this was mostly because this was the last full year of data prior to the pandemic that we had to do our analysis on. As highlighted earlier with our fun fact question, the Travel Team processed over 55,000 emails in 2019.

Emails were counted and processed as incoming or outgoing by Travel Support, including from travelers, ICANN staff, support staff, FCM agents, FCM automated emails, and other third-party vendors. In the current system, there is no priority processing of emails other than

basic email sorting. And by adding a ticketing system, we can cut time spent on emails by half. The average office worker spends 28% of their work week on email.

So what this led to: the outcomes and recommendations and improvements. By May of 2021, we began with phase two, which was focusing on those recommendations and the solutions to the gaps and challenges that we had identified.

Our internal review recommended modernizing and standardizing our current procedures; improving data security; and, for example, ensuring EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) compliance, as well as automating as many of our manual processes as possible while also looking to make sure that our travel program was scalable based on the demands of the moment, and ensuring that we have the continuity of the travel program from a staffing perspective.

The recommendation also emphasized the need for a proper centralized database and a better communication system for clear visibility and prioritization. While as much as I love Google Spreadsheets, it does not constitute a database. And basic email is not an enterprise-level communications system.

Through this Travel Modernization Project, we're streamlining our processes, reducing the overall touch points, and enhancing global visibility for everyone, ensuring a smoother travel experience.

The review specifically had identified 59 areas of opportunity for improvement. Thirty-one of these will be addressed by our new Funded

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Traveler Portal. The centralized database, ticketing system, and updated process functions will lead to significant time savings. The remaining 28 opportunities have been mitigated within internal process changes.

Now we're in phase three: implementation. This is the exciting part. Continuing throughout this year, many ICANN departments are working together to implement these 59 recommendations. This will culminate in the launch of our new Funded Traveler Portal in 2024, which will provide a seamless user experience. This will allow travelers to track their status, update records, efficiently communicate with the Travel Team. It will work in conjunction with other platforms to compile all the data-processing interactions into one database.

But to be clear, this is not replacing tools like Concur or agencies like FCM, but it's bringing everything into one place for easy access, control, and data management for both you and us.

This powerful tool will significantly enhance the travel process for everyone involved. ICANN has partnered with Zoho CRM to be our principal database management system for Funded Travelers, using Zoho's Creator platform for the travel portal itself and Zoho Desk for the communications and support. We're excited to be bringing this tool online to be able to better support you, the ICANN community, in our mission.

With that, I'd like to pause and take a moment for any questions that you may have on how we got here. And then once we get through this little section of questions, then we'll jump right into showcasing the features of this new Funded Traveler Portal.

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Joseph and Ria, I'll hand it over to you guys to take any questions.

RIA OTANES: If anyone has any questions, there's a—oh, Joseph. One second, Josh. Is it on?

VANDA SCARTEZINI: Yeah. Mine is not really a question, but a thank you to Joseph because I'm here for 23 years, and Joseph always gets me to wherever I need to go. So an applause to him. And I will also like to appreciate Josh, all the statistics you gave me. Thank you for the numbers we use in DNS Women. It was a great one, and I will give back because I have made a lot of surveys. So I give back some other information so we continue to go. Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH: Thank you so much for that. And I appreciate the thanks for the Travel Team as well. They work long hours and work very hard. And the appreciation goes a long ways with them, so thank you.

TIM SMITH: Hi. Thanks very much for looking into this, and I'm intrigued that you've been working on this since 2019. So that's very encouraging. That's great. And I'm dying to learn more.

But just for one point of clarification, am I to understand that you are continuing with Concur and with FCM?

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JOSH BAULCH: Yes, that is correct. Those platforms are tied, basically, back-end with a lot of ICANN's operational systems for the time being. But ICANN does go through periodic reviews of the travel agencies, and so those normal routines will continue. But for the sake of what we're talking about here today, the back-end systems will stay the same related to Concur and FCM as a travel agency.

ABDELDJALIL BACHAR BONG: Hi, everyone. My name is Abdeldjalil. I'm coming from Chad. So one word. Just, I need to say thank you to the Travel Team because it's my first time to see Joseph. It's my first time. So all the time [inaudible] email, but it's my first time to see. So thank you so much for what you are doing to bring us here and around the world. Thanks so much.

And for the platform, it is sometimes difficult to try to do the booking via the platform because [always] I send an email to the staff and help. So the platform, I think that it is difficult to [catch up] everything because I receive a lot of messages from people of my community. Also, I think the platform is difficult to [catch in]. So it's easy to send an email to the staff to respond [then] with the platform. So thank you so much.

JOSH BAULCH: Yeah. Thank you.

EDUARDO DIAZ: Eduardo Diaz here, just so there's a face to a name. I do have a question with Concur. I look for flights outside of Concur. There are flights available. When you go to Concur to look for it, it never comes up. So

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you end up calling FCM, and they find them. So is there any reason for that? That's a question for your Josh [inaudible].

JOSH BAULCH:

Yeah. We'll be able to help with that. One of the things that we're hoping that comes out of this is with the platform being in place, that it will free up time for Joseph and Ria and Salih to be able to provide more information related to this because we do offer some training.

I'll be honest, as a Concur user myself, there are some little manipulations you have to learn with the system to try to get the flights that you're looking for specifically. But, yes, that is something that we are hoping to free up more time to be able to allow the Travel Team, really, to be able to interact and help and support you guys in that, to be able to find really what it is that you need.

And, Joseph, I don't know if you have anything you want to add to that as well.

JOSEPH DE JESUS:

No. You said it right. Thanks.

ADEBUNMI AKINBO:

Thank you. Akinbo for the record. I should get used to the record thing anyway. Ria?

RIA OTANES:

Yes?

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ADEBUNMI AKINBO:                      Okay. I just wanted to put a name to that face. That's why I called it out. So thank you so much for that.

My own suggestion is the timing. Next tomorrow, my flight is scheduled for 8:00 a.m. I'm not so sure I'm going to beat the traffic or the train to the airport. And while we were coming, we had some delay with the first flight, and then we missed the connecting. And they weren't that nice to us. They sent us to the train, and I had to join my meetings on the train, which was good anyway as an alternative. But please help us. Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH:                              Thanks.

RIA OTANES:                                Thank you. Please send us a note, the travel support mailbox. Thank you.

I'm sorry. Can I just read one question that's been on the chat?

ALFREDO CALDERON:                      Sure. Go ahead.

RIA OTANES:                                Thank you. This question is from Abdulrahman Abotaleb. "Is this new model dedicated and specified only for ICANN, or it is already applied somewhere before?"

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JOSH BAULCH:

That's a great question. Thank you for that. This has actually been customized for ICANN. We've spent probably about the last eight months going through and working out matching up to all the process mapping that I was talking to you and making sure.

Because as much as it seems that travel booking should just be as simply as going to the Delta website, finding the flights that you want, and hitting Book, paying for it, and being done, in a corporate environment, there's actually a bit more complication to that. And so that process is unique and has a lot of individual steps to that. And so that's really what we've built into this system.

And what you guys will see when we get to the demonstration is probably 25% of what you see on the front-facing is actually only about 25% of what's actually going on. The other 75% is behind the scenes related to whether it's going through Legal, Finance, HR, any of the departments within ICANN that are helping support the travel function and the Funded Traveler Program.

So I hope that answers the question. This is customized, and that is why it's taking a little bit longer to roll out. It's because we are going through the beta testing and making sure that there are not any bugs. And I'll be honest, we may launch, and there may be a few things that we find throughout the process. But we're trying to go through it to make sure that we don't have anything on the initial launch. So thank you for the question.

RIA OTANES:

Thank you. And we have another question or comment.

**ALFREDO CALDERON:** This is Alfredo Calderon. I'm a new member of the NomCom. My question is related to the itinerary, and I'm going to give you my specific case. When I flew in from the United States into Europe, and I went to Paris, I only had 90 minutes for my connecting flight. And Travel probably wasn't aware that the connecting flight going through the border, there was a long, long, long, really long line, so we missed our connecting flight. And they rebooked us for four or five hours later to get here to Hamburg.

So my suggestion is that when we design the program, please, please, please make sure that we have enough time to make the connecting flights because this is my first time to Hamburg through Paris, so I wasn't aware that that would happen. If I would have been aware, I would have approved a different scheduling. Okay? So that's something that you should make us aware of so that we will avoid those situations.

I did make it to the hotel the same day. Otherwise, I would have to be overnight in Paris. Thank you.

**JOSH BAULCH:** Yeah. Thank you for the comment. And we do try to take all of these different things into play. Unfortunately, the travel world is not as precise on schedules as we'd like them to be. And so in some cases, we do have travel disruptions. And, unfortunately, we've seen an unprecedented amount of travel disruptions since the end of the pandemic, as many airlines and airports are struggling with staffing and various issues.

So even if we had scheduled you for a two-hour, three-hour layover, it may not have changed the situation. But this is really, for us, the main important thing is how we're able to react to those situations and make sure that you're still able to get here.

But those are important things, and those are things that we hope, with freeing up some of the Travel Team's time that we'll be able to help with more educational-type things to be able to help first-time travelers or new travelers understand that itineraries with less than 90 minutes of a layover really is not practical in many international airports. And just things like that.

Now, we can do as much as we can with the travel agencies and making sure that we don't have things like that happen. We try to avoid that as much as possible, but, on occasion, it does happen. But I do appreciate the feedback, and we will work to continue to build in those kind of feedbacks throughout this process. So thank you.

EDUARDO DIAZ:

Can I go? I'm just curious, you know, when you talk about the flow of the internal review, if you thought about including some of the community members into that process? Because, really, we are the users of the systems that you put together. That includes the internal staff, but the community.

I'm sorry. This is my telephone. Somebody's asking for money.

JOSH BAULCH:

Yes, thank you for that—

EDUARDO DIAZ: Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH: —question. Go ahead. Sorry. Thought I was waiting for somebody to talk. Yeah, thank you for that. And the Travel Team actually has included ... We have taken all of the feedback in the comments that we've gotten from travelers over the years, which is really what kicked off this entire thing in the first place of going through that entire process, just understanding it.

And really, from our standpoint, we had to look at it from kind of an operational and internal issue to resolve at first. So that's really kind of what you're seeing here, is trying to understand and get the operational efficiencies in place and then go through that.

But we do have a significant amount of feedback from the community and the funded travelers. Throughout the years that we've been going through this, we can go through the thousands of emails that we've gotten on this. So I do appreciate that.

And this is always an open dialogue. And the feedback will continue to come through, and we encourage it. And this is always very much of a learning experience for all of us, and especially with the changing dynamics of the travel industry. Traveling in 2018 and 2019 is very different than traveling in 2022 and 2023. Being a very seasoned traveler myself, I can definitely talk through many of those different points there.

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I'm not seeing any other questions in the queue. Are we ready to go ahead and jump into the demonstration?

RIA OTANES: Yes. Please go ahead, Josh.

JOSH BAULCH: All right. Thank you. All right. So our team has worked tirelessly to take back the feedback from you the travelers throughout the years, understanding your pain points to create the Funded Traveler Portal to be your one-stop shop for everything ICANN travel-related.

Today, we'll be bringing you previews of what it is to come, and hope you're as excited as we are to use this new tool developed just for you. The ICANN Funded Traveler Portal consolidates all of your travel funding information such as air, hotel, and per diem into one dashboard.

Here's an example of the home screen of the current events that you may have as a funded traveler. Simplified onboarding all in one place now. Color-coded status indicators on where you are in your travel booking process.

Utilizing the stoplight color codes to indicate that red requires action from you, yellow indicating action from ICANN or a hold state. For example, like waiting on a hotel booking or confirmation. And finally green indicating that you are done or the task is completed. Grayed out means that those do not apply to you for that particular event.

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Key features of the portal include an organized onboarding process, an events summary or dashboard, progress-based statuses, submit your reimbursements, and get help desk support.

Now, we'll highlight some of the key onboarding features. Our goal is to make your onboarding as organized as possible. We've tied your login to your single sign-on ICANN account. When you log into your ICANN account, there will be a new tile for Travel Support Portal. These tiles will be visible for all eligible funded travelers to start using.

It's important to note, this will not be visible until the system goes live for you. So those of you that are beta testing, you'll see this. But others of you, if you log in right now, you won't see that.

Your onboarding has now been broken down into three easy visual steps to follow: providing your personal information, required forms for U.S. laws, and banking information. You can also update any of this information at any point in time for those more seasoned travelers, as your banking information may update, or if you move, or anything else that may change with your personal information.

So now, let's look at the Current Event summary page. The event dashboard consolidates all of your travel information into one place and provides transparency into your travel funding. You will be able to see what categories have been allocated with your travel funding. We will look at these views in more detail in a couple of slides.

You can see your past events and the funding allocations that had been processed through this portal. So if you have reimbursements or anything that you need to go back and look at, this is where you would

do that. We understand that arranging travel can be complex, and it can be challenging to keep track of everything that's going on.

Going from the current events dashboard, selecting the UA Day event, as in our example here, you can see the key event details. This is where the progress-based status comes in. It gives you the transparency and control you need to manage your journey effectively.

So here you can see yellow and visa, so there's action that needs to be done. There's action that's required in air travel, hotel, meals. If you are a funded traveler from air travel, hotels, to the per diem, your current booking status is updated in real time. So you're seeing. You're not waiting for somebody to update this. All the information is being tracked in real-time. So when the Travel Team makes an update, or FCM or somebody books your travel, all of that information is live-captured here.

There's no need to sift through your confirmation emails. The information you need is right here in the dashboard. Here is an example of the travel visa process. You would also be able to request assistance if your visa is denied. So you can see on the screen, you've got the documentation gathering, visa application submitted, the fact that we're waiting on your visa appointment, and then the visa approved. And you as the traveler will be able to give feedback to us when this process is done.

Or in a situation where a visa is not required, you will already be cleared for the next step. And as you can see on the screen here, even if by some mistake, there is a point where we say you don't need a visa, but in turn you actually do, you can still click on the "I need a visa" button.

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If your booking is pending, you'll know exactly why and what you can do to expedite the process. This shows an example of your Air Travel Information summary. You can see the travel class, the dates, the project ID, and the airport that you would be allocated. You can also link in to set up your Concur profile or to manage Concur from this point as well.

Here's an example of the hotel information with your hotel assignment, check-in and check-out dates, your confirmation number, and a downloadable hotel confirmation document. And, of course, any special notes that might be important for your hotel booking.

Here is the meals and incidentals breakdown. Depending on your allocation that your group has provided for you, this may indicate a per diem or a stipend. This will also provide your payment information and when to expect your deposits.

So, again, this is all linked to everything that's going on back end. So once all of the batches are produced and ready and sent off to Finance, then you'll see that information listed here and on screen.

Another major enhancement is you can now submit your reimbursement requests directly in the portal. We all know how tedious and complicated the reimbursement process can be: sifting through your receipts, filling out forms, and then waiting for approvals. You can now select which meeting to submit your reimbursement for and upload the receipts or invoices in real-time.

Further, you'll have transparency and history of all your submitted reimbursements along with the status of each request and payment

confirmation. And again, you'll be able to see this in the past information as well. So if an event has already closed out and you're still waiting for reimbursements, you'll be able to go back and look at—

BIKRAM SHRESTHA: [inaudible].

JOSH BAULCH: Bikram, if I can ask you to go ahead and mute yourself. Thank you.

So the help desk is one of the most exciting enhancements for us because this was designed to empower you with the ability to connect with us more efficiently. The help desk is your first point of contact. The help desk will provide a multilayered support to ensure you have the smoothest experience possible while navigating the ICANN Travel Support Portal.

Our new ICANN Travel Support is designed to offer you an integrated, efficient, and user-friendly experience from start to finish. From organized onboarding to real-time booking statuses, seamless reimbursements, and a comprehensive help desk, we've got all of your travel needs covered.

Now, let's talk about the release timeline. Our launch timeline will continue with internal testing through November and into December, while we will start beta testing with a small, targeted group of travelers.

Starting in January of 2024, we plan a soft launch for the first groups that submit their funded traveler lists. Moving into February, we will launch to all travelers, including training and educational sessions with

an anticipated full launch by March, which will include all the smaller events, the face-to-face meetings that everybody attends for all of the funded travelers.

So stay tuned to communications from ICANN Travel to get all the important details you'll need to prepare for your future ICANN travel and get ready for a streamlined travel process. You will hear more from us in early 2024. So thank you for taking the time with us today and hearing about how we got here today and about the exciting new changes coming to ICANN Travel.

We'd like to open the floor to questions. So thank you very much, and the floor is open.

CLAIRE CRAIG:

Hello, Josh, Ria, Joseph. My name is Claire Craig. I'm the current LACRALO secretary and incoming ALAC. I wish to say thank you to the Travel Team for everything that they have done for my travels.

And my question concerns one of the issues that I had, which I didn't see in the new system—and the Travel Team dealt with it quite well—which is you spoke about reimbursement, but that was reimbursement for your expenses.

But what happens in the case where you may be unable to travel and ICANN would have already provided you with funds? Do you have to go through the email manual process, which happened twice to me for various reasons? The Travel Support Team, again, they were very excellent in dealing with the situation. But I did not see that on this new portal. Thank you.

**JOSH BAULCH:** Claire, thank you for that question, and thank you for the compliments to the team. This is a little bit of an outlier issue for us, and so it's not directly built into the portal at this point in time. But we will take the feedback back and see if there's any process improvements that can be made there for those exceptions that do happen.

**ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE:** Thank you very much. I wanted to find out two things. The first one is the issue of invoice. And I have that problem now because I just got an email. I was trying to buy a house, and they asked me to submit my bank account, which I give them. And they were asking me this money from ICANN. What is it for? I explained, but they said they want an invoice. So I was trying to explain to them that: how would I give an invoice?

Is it possible for you to incorporate an invoice into the system? That's number one.

Then number two is the help line. Usually, for some of us, when the United States is awake, we are asleep. When we are asleep, that's when United States is awake. And it's difficult sometimes by the time problems—especially when you have to go to the embassy or you needed something. By the time the U.S. is waking up, the embassy is closing already.

So is it possible to incorporate something into the helpline that can actually be 24-hours? Thank you.

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JOSH BAULCH:

Yes. Thank you for that. And I will take the second part of your question first, and then I'll hand the first part back to Joseph to help answer.

The second part of the question is, actually, we are really happy to be onboarding Salih who is based in Istanbul, Turkey, which broadens our hours. So we have Ria, who's based in the U.S., but on Washington, D.C. And then you have Joseph who's in Los Angeles.

So right now we have about an 18-hour coverage of the 24 hours. So we are getting closer. We have expanded the team from a two-person team of Ria and Joseph to a three-person team. So we are working slowly to get that expanded to the 24-hour timeframe. So there's only just going to be a few hours that will be offline for that.

So I really do appreciate that comment, and we really have taken that feedback because we felt the same thing that you did about struggling to work always with the Los Angeles timeframe. So we are making changes there, and you should see that impact moving forward, as Salih has just joined us in the last couple of weeks and is getting up to speed with the uniqueness of ICANN.

And so, Joseph, I'm actually going to hand it over to you for the answer on the first part of the question.

JOSEPH DE JESUS:

I'll touch base with him on the invoice on that part since I'm quite unclear on what the question was.

JOSH BAULCH:

Perfect. Thank you. Next question.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Hi. I also want to thank the team for their help over the years. My question is—Josh might know this already—have you looked into any, with the new Travel Portal, on whether it is [WCAG] 2.0 or AAA? And because of the heavy reliance on visual, have you looked into making sure that persons with disabilities are taken into [impact].

And especially as you're testing the form, whether you have a firm who's doing the testing for you to make sure that it remains accessible for everyone and can be used by everyone?

JOSH BAULCH: Judith, I really appreciate the question. And this is something that ICANN has taken as a standard practice moving forward with any new applications, which is specifically why I called out the fact that we contracted with Zoho for this particular product. And so one of the things of going through ...

Now, on the travel portal itself, there are some customizations that we have done there. So we will definitely need to look into to make sure that it does meet the compliance. But the way that the platform is designed from Zoho itself is to ensure that there is that accessibility compliance there.

And so, Judith, what I can do is work with you a little bit offline to just provide some additional details that I just don't have right in front of me right at the moment. But I can provide some additional information there.

And this is one of those things. There are a couple of things that we have not shared. And one of them, for example, is that we do intend that this portal is multilingual, but we are not initially launching with that because we want to make sure that we get the system right, foundationally correct, to make sure that that's right before we start layering in the multilingual aspect.

But that is something that was one of the core aspects that we wanted to do because we recognized that English is not the core language of everybody who is often a funded traveler. And so we really wanted to make this easier for everybody. We did not highlight it specifically here just because it's not ready for display.

But it is something that we're looking to do, and we're doing everything that we can to have it in place by the first launch so that everybody can see that. But it may be one of those things that—we want to make sure that we get right, so if it's not ready and if it's not to the point that we feel that it's providing an asset to what we're doing, then we may hold off on the launch of that particular feature until it is 100% on target.

So thank you, Judith. I appreciate that. And I appreciate your concerns and making sure that we are keeping on track and making sure that we are making this equal for everybody to be able to access fairly.

ALFREDO CALDERON: Can I go ahead?

RIA OTANES: Yes.

ALFREDO CALDERON: Okay. Thank you. I do want to thank the staff and everybody that's been helping us out since I've been in ICANN. My question is regarding the launching date. If I understood correctly, it will be launched during ICANN79 or for ICANN79?

JOSH BAULCH: That's a great question. So it seemed a little muddled. The goal is just that it's launched for ICANN59. As you know, we do all the travel booking well in advance of ICANN59—sorry, ICANN79—which will be in March. And so the goal is to have it ready to go.

The only reason that I kind of hedged a little bit on that is that if we find any major issues or anything that would prevent us from launching it globally to everybody all at once, we may just do smaller groups. But the intention behind this is to launch it for everybody.

Ideally, we'd love to do it by mid-January, but we want to make sure we get through all the testing and make sure everything is working the way that it should.

ALFREDO CALDERON: Okay. Thank you for that answer, Josh. But then for those that need visas, it might be an issue because they might have to start the process way ahead of that. Thank you.

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JOSH BAULCH: Yeah. That's a great question. And actually, if you go to [meetings.icann.org](https://meetings.icann.org), the visa process is already open with the invitation letters on that site. So this is going to be a little bit of a layered approach to this, that we will have some old processes still in place because you're exactly right. The timeline for getting U.S. visas is very long, so that process is already open and ready to go. So if you are a funded traveler and are looking for the visa invitation letters, you can start that process there. So thank you.

RIA OTANES: Josh, can we take a question online?

JOSH BAULCH: Yes, go ahead.

RIA OTANES: The question is from Abdulrahman Abotaleb. "Will the system include the old information for events before implementing the system?"

JOSH BAULCH: That's a great question. Unfortunately, no. The information that will be in the system will be from that starting point. So, for example, ICANN79 will be the first event going into that. We didn't want to go through and try to port in old information because we're just doing everything in a very different process.

I wish I could walk you guys through the back end and all of the automations that are happening there because that has just

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revolutionized how the Travel Team itself will work. And so it just isn't possible for us to incorporate that old information. But it will be, from that point forward, that information will be in the system.

RIA OTANES: Thank you. Go ahead, please.

THOMAS LENOX-CONYNGHAM: Hello, good evening. My name is Thomas Lenox-Conyngham, and I don't have any questions. I just want to invite you all to my house, Anaverna in Ireland, A91 V253. It's a lovely place, and it loves interesting people. And there seems to be a nice, multinational, cosmopolitan group of people here. It's very dark times in the world right now, so if anybody is seeking refuge, I'll offer that also. Thank you very much.

Oh, I'll say a bit of Irish for you. Go n-éirí an bóthar leat agus slán abhaile. It means, "May the road rise to meet you and safe home." Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH: Thank you.

RAYMOND MAMATTAH: Hello. My name is Raymond from Ghana. I'd like to thank the Travel Team for the great support that they have been giving to all of us. They really need to be commended for the great work that they have been doing.

My question is why don't we include airport pickup or airport shuttle in the bookings? Because coming from Ghana, all the big hotels give

airport pickup for free. So I think we should remember to include that if it is possible. Because when we're, for instance, having the GA in Ghana, they said no airport pickup. But I told them, in Ghana all hotels provide it. And when they did indeed check, it was true. And that was made possible for anybody who was coming into the hotel.

So my question is on the airport pick up and the shuttle for the people. Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH:

Yeah. Thank you so much for that. And what I would recommend for you to do is to actually talk with your SO or AC groups and let them know that because the groups, the leaders, and everybody helped develop the policy, the Community Travel Policy. The rules that the Travel Team follows is not created by the Travel Team. It's actually a community effort.

So what I would really encourage you to do is provide that feedback to your leadership and advocate for them to make the rule changes there accordingly. So thank you for the feedback.

ABDULKARIM OLOYEDE:

Okay. Thank you very much. I didn't see anything about hotel in the new system, so are you going to incorporate hotel accommodations, especially for meetings that are not the normal ICANN meetings? Thank you.

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JOSH BAULCH: Yes, thank you. I may have gone quickly over that, but we do have a hotel section there that will cover that for you. So thank you for that, and it is included.

RIA OTANES: And we have another question in the chat. Abdulrahman Abotaleb. "In the beginning of implementing this system, you, as Travel Team, might have a double work and efforts with a lot of emails again, as given the traveler have no enough experience in the new system. My question, how much do you think such system could reduce your direct interact with travelers? In other words, what is the average number of emails that you expect to deal with eventually?"

JOSH BAULCH: That's a great question. So what we anticipate have happened is actually cut our emails in half. Now, that's not intended to cut our interactions with the travelers down. It's really meant to make it more efficient because what we were seeing was, for example, if you hadn't seen your hotel confirmation, you may send an email and say, "Hey, has my hotel been booked?" And then not necessarily getting a response from right away, you might send in another email.

And so what we're hoping that this does is allow for you to have more information readily at your fingertips so that you'll have that information. And then with this new ticketing system, what it will allow us to do—in the old email system, basically if you imagine just taking all the emails, if you had printed them out, and if I came and just threw

them on your desk. There's no order. There's no sorting. You just have to go through one by one.

What the ticketing system will allow us to do is to sort those emails by topics and by urgency. Meaning that if you have something that, "I'm stuck at an airport, and it looks like I might have to overnight," or "Hey, I've missed one of my layovers" something of an urgent nature, you can flag it. It will go right to the top of the queue for the Travel Team that will see first thing when they start their shift and be able to help.

And also, if you think about your Workday, I know there are some aspects where if you jump from email to email to email, that you're going all over the place. You might be emailing one issue related to visas, one issue related to hotels, one issue related to flights.

What we're trying to do is operationalize things a little bit to where the first thing in the morning, Ria might just address visa issues. And so she'll go to the visa ticket queue and address all of the emails or all of the tickets that are related to visas. Because oftentimes, the answers are very similar between them, so we can get through them faster when you go through that. And then the next cue might be flight bookings.

So we're hoping that through these operational changes that we'll see efficiencies that will be impacted with everybody else, and that you guys will all see those improvements as well.

So I appreciate the question, and we hope that it does not cut down in positive communications with the travelers themselves. And we actually hope that by cutting down email itself, that we'll be able to increase on education and helping really answer some of the questions

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that you guys may have throughout the process that we've just never been able to answer in a quality way.

RIA OTANES: Thank you, Josh. It doesn't look like we have any more questions. Oh, one more. One second.

TIM SMITH: Thanks very much. I'm just wondering, and maybe it's not something you can provide right at the moment, but I'm just wondering about the process, I guess, at a very high level. For anybody who needs a visa, does the process of travel planning start once the visa is approved? Because if the visa's not approved, then you can't, obviously, process any travel. So that's sort of one question.

I guess another question, when one goes into Concur and starts to try to plan out a trip, at what point does the travel agent get involved? So that's stuff that I'm kind of unclear of. And some of that doesn't change with your new process, I don't think. I don't know whether others feel this way, but that might be helpful just to try to understand that a little bit better. Thank you.

JOSH BAULCH: Yeah. Thank you for that, Tim. This really comes down to the process maps because each of those steps is going to be different for different travelers. For example, for those that are waiting on visas because oftentimes the visas may not come in until a week or two before the

start of the event. So in those cases, oftentimes things are done in parallel.

We may still put flights on hold and hotels on hold for them during that process. Now, there's some things that are not necessarily transparent, front-facing to necessarily you guys, but there are things that are happening on the back end that we're kind of reserving spaces.

And one of the things is we potentially could share a lot of the process maps that does disclose that type of information. It is a very well-documented process of when those different steps happen. There's a lot of conditionals that happen along with those different processes.

But that's really what we're hoping, is that this system will give visibility for you as an individual traveler and where you are in those steps and make it so that you don't feel like you're constantly in just that constant wait/limbo, that things will seem that they're going much quicker than they have in the past. Because there are things that are constantly moving on the back end, but that doesn't always translate to being visible for you as the funded traveler.

So I'm really hopeful that this portal will allow for that. And at some point, too, maybe you and I can connect offline, and we can walk through some of that.

RIA OTANES:

We have another question.

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UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. My name is [inaudible]. I'd just like to say thank you to Joseph also. I've seen most of your mails without seeing your face. Now I can match the two together.

My question is, you have a budget for everybody, but I want to travel, do multi-cities. And the money ICANN, as I look at it, does not cover that trip. So in the portal you are designing, is there a opportunity to say, "Let me have more money," or "Instead of giving me economy seat, I want one with legroom a little longer. Let me have more money." Is there that facility, that opportunity, to [inaudible] [the funds] that I'm supposed to use?

JOSH BAULCH: So I appreciate the question. And this actually is another one of those questions where I need to defer to the SO-AC and the community leadership who set the rules and priorities for funding and how all of that's allocated. The Travel Team is really just the group that facilitates it, but we're not the ones who decide allocations or what things are allotted, what level of travel, that type of thing.

So I'd really encourage you to provide that feedback back to your leadership, as they're the ones that ultimately make those decisions and decide those things.

So I really thank you guys for all of these great questions, and we are over our time slot in this. So, again, thank you all for joining, and we really look forward to launching this portal to you. And we'll be providing some more information to you in the coming months.

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So thank you all very much for taking the time with us this evening, and we wish you all a wonderful evening. Thank you so much.

RIA OTANES:

Thank you. You may stop the recording. Thank you.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**