
ICANN78 | AGM – ICANN Grant Program
Thursday, October 26, 2023 – 1:15 to 2:30 HAM

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the ICANN78 Grant Program live session with questions and answers, being held on Thursday, 26th of October at 11:15 UTC. My name is Yvette Guigneaux, and Daniela Chomikova and Sarah [inaudible – 00:00:20] will be your remote participation managers for this webinar, which is being recorded and will be posted online shortly after we conclude.

This session, like all other ICANN activities is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments submitted in the Q&A pod will be read aloud at the time set aside for the question-and-answer portion. Questions written in the chat may not be read aloud.

If you have a comment or a question you would like addressed during the Q&A discussion portion, feel free to raise your hand or to follow the noted format instructions in the chat. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, and Portuguese.

Click on the interpretation icon in Zoom and select the language you wish to listen to during the session. Also, please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if you are speaking a

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

language other than English. When speaking, make sure to mute all other devices and notifications.

Please speak clearly and at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. This session includes automated real-time transcription. Please note this transcription is not official or authoritative. To view the real-time transcription, click on the closed caption button in the Zoom toolbar.

And to ensure transparency of participation in ICANN's multi-stakeholder model, we ask you to sign into the Zoom sessions using your full name. Okay, I think that about does it for me. With that, I will hand the floor over to our vice president of Implementations and Operations, Giovanni Seppia.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Yvette, and welcome, everybody. Before jumping into the agenda of today's meeting, I'd like to leave the floor for a couple of introductory remarks by Xavier Calvez, CFO of ICANN. Thank you, Xavier.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Thank you, Giovanni. Thank you, Yvette. I'm speaking from here because I don't like speaking to people while they're in my back. So welcome, everyone. This is an important topic for many of you and for hopefully a lot of other people as well who will benefit from this program when it is launched. I wanted to thank Maarten Botterman for being present in this session.

Maarten is the Board member who is chair of the Board caucus on the grant program. So for all of you to know, there is a very focused group of the Board who provides oversight over this program, which is a really important demonstration of how much the Board cares about this topic. And thank you for Matthew Shears also to participate, who's also a Board member for another few hours. Thank you, Matthew.

I'll leave it very quick. This is a very important program for all of us. This is the opportunity for ICANN to do good with a significant amount of resources, and we all want this to go well. We are putting a lot of efforts, attention, and a lot of heart in making this happen the best possible way. And with that, the team will show you where we are at the moment, where we're going.

And please the information you are getting from this session, disseminate it, share it, let everyone else know around you about this program and about what you will learn today. And of course, questions, Giovanni and the team will explain how to share them, to provide them, and to not hesitate to ask them. So with that, Giovanni, please go ahead.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. And again, welcome everybody, those attending in person and those online. Today's session is divided into four blocks. If we can go to the next slide, please. So the first block is about background, quick overview on the ICANN Grant Program, the origins of this program. The second is about making a difference, the

potentials of this program, and it's about the objectives this program is meant to pursue.

The third part is about the Grant Program implementation progress. And the last part is about the first grant cycle with some updates where we stand with implementation. We will finish with the Q&A session. And with that said, let's move to the first block of today's agenda, which is about the background on the ICANN Grant Program. And one more slide please.

So as many of you may remember, in 2012, ICANN launched a program to introduce new Generic Top Level Domains, the so-called new gTLD program, and ICANN is about to launch another one soon, so this goes back in 2012. And over 1200 new gTLDs were introduced to the domain name system, and any established entity in the world could apply to form and operate a gTLD registry.

In some cases, more than one eligible entity applied to operate the same or similar top-level domain. However, as we know, there could be only one registry per top level domain. There were several methods to determine the ultimate registry for the new gTLDs. In cases where the resolution between two or more entities could not be reached, there was a last resort auction run by ICANN's authorized auction service providers.

The proceeds generated from these auctions are referred to as the new gTLD auction proceeds or auction proceeds. They were reserved and earmarked until a community proposal for this distribution was produced. If we can go to the next slide, please.

So the ICANN community formed a Cross Community Working Group on the auction proceeds, which we as we like short, we call it CCWG AP, in January, 2017 to develop the proposal for the use of these proceeds and their distribution. In September, 2020, this Cross Community Working Group submitted the final report with 12 recommendations and related guidance to the ICANN Board for review and consideration.

The ICANN Board adopted those recommendations and the final report in June, 2022. At that time, the Board directed ICANN Org to produce a preliminary implementation design that was expected within 120 days, and that was delivered to the ICANN Board in early October, 2022.

Since then, work has progressed to implement the 12 recommendation and to move forward with the design of the ICANN Grant Program. To date, four community webinars have been held, two in 2022 and one at each of the ICANN meetings during the prep week sessions. If we can go to the next slide.

Thank you. And with this slide, I'd like to introduce you, my colleague Shayna Robinson. She's the Grant Program director. She has recently joined ICANN in this brand-new role. Thank you, Shayna. She has been of a tremendous help to move work forward in designing the implementation of the Grant Program, thanks to her background and to her vast experience in managing grants. Shayna is based in our DC office, Washington DC office, and she's leading the Grant Program Department. And with that said, I'm leaving the floor to Shayna.

Thank you, Shayna, for the next block of this presentation, which is making a difference. Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you so much, Giovanni. I'm Shayna Robinson as stated, and I'm based in Washington DC, and this is roughly my third month with ICANN. And it is my very first ICANN meeting and I will tell you I'm having a blast. It's really nice to see the multi-stakeholder model at work, I've been sitting in meetings, although half of the terms I don't really understand, but I try my best.

I just want to congratulate you all, 25 years, that's amazing, but also to say towards the Grant Program and thinking about the slides that Giovanni just presented, how much work has gone into having this moment. I want to also celebrate and thank members of the Community Working Group and also ICANN staff who have worked really hard I think over a decade to make this possible. So, congratulations. Next slide.

One of the things that I really appreciate about philanthropy and what makes me very excited about this type of work is the opportunity to bring a human-centered approach to meeting an organization's mission. And I think that's exceptionally important for technical organizations.

Oftentimes, we're really focused on technical endeavors and activities, policies, and things like that, but philanthropy really gives us an opportunity to bring some of our human values and to center that in the work that we're doing, and this program will be no different.

So although we are working to improve the DNS, to improve development of the internet, we're doing that with a human-centered lens. And so this is what that program will do. We hope to positively impact folks around the world with the work that we're going to support through this program, and we hope all of you will join us in that effort. Next slide.

The objectives of the program are really again, pulled from the Cross Community Working Groups recommendations. These are expanded a bit, but the first is really to benefit the development and distribution, evolution, and other projects of the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems. It's also to provide capacity development for underserved populations and underrepresented groups, those of us who are often not represented at these meetings.

Advancing developments and innovation for open standards for the benefit of the internet community as a whole and the various stakeholders that it represents. And then finally, contributing to diversity participation and inclusion across stakeholder groups and specifically geographic regions. Thank you so much. Next slide. And I think I'll hand it back over to Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Shayna. So the message is quite clear, Shayna is still digesting the never ending series of acronyms that has been populating her brain since she joined. And we have been making really-- despite of this, she's really into the work that we are doing, so thanks again. Let's go into the grant implementation progress, and if we can move to the next slide, please.

So, the implementation team over the past months since the last webinar that took place in early June during the ICANN77 prep week, made significant progress on several key elements of the program, including the selection process, designing several elements of the selection process, as well as the fund disbursement and the monitoring of the projects, which Shayna will touch base during the next block of this agenda.

We also started to work hard on the applicant guide, which is going to be made available soon to those interested as it will be the key document to look at if you're interested in applying to the ICANN Grant Program. We have also developed the requirements for the application platform as well as we have developed a strategy for the communication and engagement.

When it comes to community engagement, we have updated on a regular basis the frequently asked questions that are available on a dedicated section of the ICANN Wiki, a dedicated section to the Grant Program, and we have also started to develop an ICANN Org page on the Grant Program. We have also formed a publicly archived mail list of the group of the former members of the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds.

And we have also reached out directly to the chairs of each organization that was a chartering organization of the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds. This is just I would say 5% of the work that we have been doing to communicate about the Grant Program to date, and this is a really a minor percentage of

the work that we have been planning in terms of community engagement and also communication around the Grant Program.

And this is expected to increase in the coming months as soon as we are approaching to the launch of the first call for applications. If we can go to the next slide, please. In terms of operational readiness, we have completed the initial staffing of the Grant Program Department, which Shayna as a ground program director, and recently we have had the pleasure to welcome Madeleine, who is the Grant Program Coordinator, and she's based in the LA, Los Angeles Office of ICANN.

In terms of external expertise and support, during the implementation design phase, we have determined that certain aspects of the program would have benefited from external vendors with a proven track record of expertise in the grant making field. The three areas are the support to some of the eligibility checks the applicants will have to go through before their project is assessed.

The management of the independent application assessment panel and the management platform for those who apply and also throughout the application process and the grant process, as we just said, that grantees are going to be expected to submit reports and it's going to be a regular interaction.

Once an applicant becomes a grantee, it's going to be a regular interaction between the grantee and ICANN. ICANN for these three services conducted a request for information in April and May, 2023, and the results of this RFI provided confidence that the market can offer these services.

Therefore, a request for proposal was published on the 5th of June and closed on the 7th of July. And at present, we are in the final phase of assessing the vendors that have responded to the RFP to make a determination about which vendor is going to support ICANN in this job. Next slide, please.

Next slide is an update on recommendation seven of the Cross Community Working Group on Auction Proceeds. This recommendation is about existing accountability mechanism, and I'm nearly quoting the recommendation such as the independent review panel or other appeal mechanism that based on the recommendation cannot be used to challenge a decision from the Independent Application Assessment Panel to approve or not approve an application.

Not selected applicants should receive further details about where information can be found. The Cross Community Working Group also recognize that they will need to be an amendment to the fundamental bylaws to eliminate the opportunity to use the request for recommendation and independent review panel to challenge grant decision.

So there's been quite a lot of work on this recommendation during the implementation design phase, and the Board is having a recommendation by ICANN Org on this recommendation in the agenda for their meeting.

This afternoon, the anticipated new approach to recommendation seven forces the use of the applicant terms and conditions to bar

applicants in the Grant Program from using ICANN's accountability mechanism on individual application decisions.

This will remove the prior dependency on amending the fundamental bylaws to move forward. And as stated in the Board paper that the Board is having further consideration at their meeting this afternoon, it is planned that this approach and its effectiveness will be reviewed at the end of the first grant cycle to make sure that ICANN accountability remains for any applicant in the Grant Program. With that said, if we can go to the next slide, I'm moving to the last block of today's agenda, which is an update on key elements and timeline on the first grant cycle. And with that, I'm leaving the floor to my colleague, Shayna. Thank you, Shayna.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you, Giovanni. If we can go to the next slide. So many of these elements are just a start and will be revisited and assessed and reviewed as we work through the first cycle of the program. So there may be updates in future cycles. So again, be clear that this is just the start. \$10 million will be the first tranche of funds available in this very first cycle, grant awards will be available from \$50,000 up to \$500,000.

And again, we will reassess those thresholds as we move forward. Currently, the limit of submitting applications per applicant is at three, and the maximum duration of a project that we will support is 24 months.

Also, you should note that the grants will be dispersed in installments, so at the signing of contracts, there'll be a tranche of funds that will be

made available, there will be some interim reporting that happens, and then a subsequent tranche released, and then a final payment at the end. Next slide, please.

In terms of applicant eligibility, this program is restricted to applicants who are charitable in nature, meaning in the US, they are a 501C3, and that is a very specific US designation. So if you are not from the US, you may not know what that is. But you must also, if you are from a country that is not in the US, be the equivalent of a 501C3.

The way that we make those determinations of equivalency will be handled by a certain tax professional, that's not a decision that I can make., that's not anything I can assess, so even if you ask me, I'm going to say, I don't know, do your best. But we will assess those at the time of application and review.

Applicants must also meet all US trade laws and regulations and must not be the subject of any US sanctions, and they must also meet all standards for reputation and background checks. Next slide, please.

When we think about activities, and I know this as I've been meeting with folks here at the meeting, there's been a lot of questions about the types of activities that this program will support, all of the activities that the program will support must be aligned to ICANN's mission, which you can see there. There are also going to be activities that will not be eligible.

Any political or lobbying activities are not eligible, any activity that may lead to the private benefit of an individual is not eligible, any unlawful activity is not eligible, and probably really important for this

group, any activity that's already supported by another ICANN program will not be eligible.

We hope to in our applicant guide to go into a bit more detail and explain these things and have some examples so that folks will have better information and can make determinations on whether or not their project will fit. Next slide, please. Oh, sorry, Xavier.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

I just wanted to make a quick comment. Can we go back to the previous slide, please, on the eligibility? This one. So, what we are talking about here is a worldwide global program, but we are US headquartered entity, and therefore we need to abide by laws applicable in the US to our entity.

So this is not trying to say that this is a US specific program in the sense of its scope and its beneficiaries and the grantees, it simply means that we need to abide by laws that are imposed on us by the location where we are headquartered. But this is a global program and any entity across the world will be evaluated against these principles of charitable status in a manner that we then need to check is consistent with the requirements of a US law.

But that should not be seen as an obstacle for any non-US entity to be able to apply so that everyone knows that wherever you were in the world, you will be considered like any other applicant. Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you very much, Xavier, for that clarity. If we could move forward, and one more. Yes. As we continue to work through the program and its implementation, there are some items that we have currently on the docket that we are working through. The first one is around translating those objectives that I shared with you earlier into specific themes and work areas that this program will support.

The assessment criteria for independent panelists who will assess all applications, we are working to develop rubrics based on the criteria that you see listed here. And then we are also working to outline eligible and ineligible expenses that may be included in the project budget. Next slide, please.

As far as the timeline, with our fingers crossed, our fingers and toes crossed, we hope that by Q1 of 2024, at the end of Q1, so this is looking towards the end of March, that we will open our application window and that we will be able to receive applications.

The window will be open for 60 days and the applicant guide will be published three months prior. So we're hoping by the first of the year or early part of 2024, that we will have the applicant guide with much more detailed information about all the things that we've discussed here today. We will also start an awareness campaign that hopes to bring more attention to what we're doing. We think, and we hope that we're going to receive a lot of applicants, but we want to ensure that we make this as accessible to all parts of the world and to all folks who may be interested.

Once we close the application window, we'll have about five months for evaluation for our independent panel to assess and to make a

determination on what the final slate will be of awarded projects. Once that's done, we will go into grant agreement negotiations, which will also take some time. But if it all works smoothly, we should by the end of the year, be ready to start with agreements signed. Thank you so much. Next slide. And I'll turn it back over to Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you again, Shayna. So, to be fully up to date as implementation work progress, there is this webpage that we are having, dedicated webpage on the ICANN wiki about the grant program. And as I said earlier, we are going to develop also a page on the ICANN Org main site. So those lights, as well as other information will be uploaded in the next couple of days on the wiki space, and FAQs will be also updated to reflect the new information we have offered you today.

With that said, I'm opening the floor for questions, and I know there are already some questions and some hands up. So I'd like to ask my colleague, Daniela, Yvette, and Sarah also to help me with the questions because I do not have the list of those who raised their hand first.

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX:

Okay. Hello everyone. What we have is we'll just be alternating between the Q&A pod and questions coming from the room. If you have a question in the room, we do ask that you ask that question on the microphone. If you don't have a microphone in front of you, Daniela can be raising her hand in the room, she does have a microphone for you.

So we just make sure we get everything on the record. And I'm going to simply go in the order that things came. Okay. So here we go with our first question. Our first question was from Alfredo. The question is, "The external expertise and support, will it have a multilingual staff?"

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Okay. Thank you, Yvette. As Xavier said, the purpose of this program is to be a global program, so we'll try to offer support in as many languages as possible. At the same time regarding the external expertise and support that I was referring to is for internal vendors that are going to support the program. So it's between ICANN Org and those vendors.

So in that case, there is, let's say, there is an agreement about the language that we are going to use with those vendors. But again, the applicant guide, the plan is to offer the applicant guide in the ICANN Org languages and also to make sure that, again the program is as global as possible.

So we'll be happy to interact with possible applicants or any interested party in as many languages as we can. Again, we are still in the design phase, and we'll communicate which languages are going to be covered by what and when. Xavier.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Just to add to what Giovanni said, we're working on trying to accommodate information to be provided to potential interested

parties to apply in several languages, but what we are expecting to put in place, though, as Giovanni said, it's still in the works, is it is likely that we will require the applications to be submitted in English.

However, we are intending to provide information to applicants in several languages so that the information about the program can be used in those languages by non-English speakers. But the application will likely to be submitted in English. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. And you're fine? Okay. I have a question from the room, and then we can take a question from the podcast and also from those who are attending remotely. Thank you.

ALFREDO CALDERON:

I'm Alfredo. Sorry, I'm the one that's asking a couple of questions. Now as a follow up to what you just said, I'm Alfredo, for the record, transcript record, even though there's going to be an external agency or whatever giving support, if the main language of the proponent or the applicant is Spanish or any other language, will through the proposal they submit, could be an element of having a translation person or team available to help them submit the proposal in English. Just a question, because that's going to happen.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Alfredo. As we just said, we are still in the design phase of these elements, we are currently addressing the big elements first, and

also in terms of applicant support, we'll provide information in a timely manner. Xavier.

XAVIER CALVEZ: Just to add that Alfredo's point is exactly the type of input that we're welcoming to receive, because that will help us inform what we need to be able to put in place. So thank you for sharing that, and anyone else who has the same type of thoughts or concerns, please do share with us because that helps us understand better what the needs are. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: So next question from --

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: Next raised hand was from Jean.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Please.

JEAN-FRANCOIS QUERALT: Hi, Jean-Francois for the record. So my question is about the equivalency for those organizations that may be registered in Europe. When we look at the US context, what the 501C3 means is basically your tax exempt. So any possible donation or grant sometimes may be tax exempt for the donor.

Is it exactly that kind of situation that we are trying to replicate in Europe or just to be a non-profit under the corresponding jurisdiction should be more than enough? That would be first question first. The second one is if it has to be qualified by that expert body, who will be bearing the cost for that qualification? Thank you.

SAMANTHA EISNER:

Thanks so much for that question. I'm Samantha Eisner, I'm with the ICANN Legal Department, and I've been working with the grant program team on this. So the tax exempt component of US based 501C3s, that's the benefit they get for demonstrating that they're charitable in purpose.

So we're not looking for the tax exempt portion, we're looking at the purpose for which they've been granted that tax exemption in the US, which is that charitable purpose. And so we know that in many regimes or many jurisdictions across the world, there are types of equivalent entities, and so some are very easy to identify as equivalent, and then there are some that are more difficult based on that form of entity might just not exist in a particular place.

But there are hallmarks of showing that it's charitable in nature, the money goes to a charitable purpose, it feeds back in, back into their programming as opposed to going to the pockets of shareholders. Those are all the types of elements like that that will be looked at.

So it's not the tax exempt outcome, it's actually the purpose for which are formed. In terms of the equivalency determination, so we're still identifying the full scope of where that cost will be. It's definitely an

issue that we're considering. We also know that many organizations that participate in other grant programs in the US, because this is a very normal requirement for grant programs in the US, and so if you already have your equivalency determination, we don't have to do it again, as long as it's still valid, they're valid for a period of time.

And so it's not a requirement that you get a new one for coming to the program. So if you have one in existence, it's there. And then we are definitely considering, and we will be sharing more information as soon as we can about how the cost for entities that do not yet have their own equivalency determination will be handled.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. Thank you, Sam. I have Vanda. Yes, please.

VANDA SCARTEZINI: Well, one of my questions, you have rightly responded because it's important to know the procedures. Most of the country like mine has stating the law in the constitution, who is the issue, blah, blah, blah. But this needs to be in some way certified for something. Okay, understood. The other question, have you read the site, if you're going to have one vendor for around the world or more than one?

SAMANTHA EISNER: And Vanda, is this specifically for the equivalency determination work?

VANDA SCARTEZINI: No, no, it's just for this disbursement of the amount of money.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: So the vendors that we are currently assessing, our vendors that are going to cover the support to ICANN for some of the eligibility checks like the 501C3, the management of the independent application assessment panel and the grant management platform, the other activities will be done by ICANN in-house, so there's going to be no other vendor.

So the disbursement will be done by ICANN, again, following the criteria that will be published both in the applicant guide and also in the grant agreement that the successful applicants will be requested to sign to become a grantee.

VANDA SCARTEZINI: Yeah, because I ask just because many countries, not mine, but many other countries have some difficulties to delivery money for one side to another side. We discussed this in the working group, and certainly something complex to have it done for around the world. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Vanda. And we have been made aware of this money transference situation, so we are going to address that as well as been an element that the implementation core team of the grant program has taken due note of. Thank you. I have a question from the pod. Yvette, if you can please read it.

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: Sure. This question is for, hopefully, I'm pronouncing your name correctly, it's Anupam. The question is, in respect of qualified tax practitioner, is this practitioner being envisage, I believe is what this says here, to be from the US or can it be from the country where the entity is registered?

SAMANTHA EISNER: Thank you for the question. We would look at the actual letter that was there. We don't have a requirement that it be out of the US, but it would have to be a letter sufficient to demonstrate or certification sufficient to demonstrate that need.

And so we'll work to make sure that we have all the relevant information about those requirements published in that applicant guide so that applicants understand what is expected of them. But we are trying really not to limit this to one way to achieve this goal, and we know, again, this is something that there are many practitioners around the world who understand what the needs of this are and the tax practitioners around the world who are competent to deliver this equivalency determination.

XAVIER CALVEZ: Just to add to that point very quickly, Giovanni, I think in practical terms, we will receive applications, the applicant will provide that information that Sam just described about if they are not a 501C3 entity in the US, if they're any type of other entity in another country, they will provide the documentation to explain that they're a

charitable organization. We, as part of the program, will then evaluate that information.

If we need to reach out to an expert in the country where that applicant's status is from, we may end up by doing that to have the right information that then allows us to be able to evaluate the information that the applicant produced.

I don't know, Anupam, if that helps explain or addressing your question, but that's what we would expect to do dependent upon the information that we are getting from each of the applicants that are not 501C3 entities. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. I have Paul, please.

PAUL DIAZ:

Thank you, Giovanni. It's Paul Diaz from PIR. Thank you for all these clarifications, very, very helpful. I was hoping you might be able to provide a little more specificity about when you actually expect to add the guidebook, the applicant guidebook ready.

Obviously, as we're discussing now, a lot of details still need to be worked out, but a lot of thought has been given. I just question how soon we may get it, because applicants, of course, will have to digest what the rules are, determine if they can still move forward. They'll need more than a couple weeks, a few months even.

And a related question is, how does ICANN intend to, or what are the plans for publicizing who is applied? Because I can easily imagine scenarios where applicants may be looking to do the same sort of things, and if there's some publicly available lists, if within the application window they can combine their efforts, might come out with an even better proposal.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Paul. So with respect to the applicant guide, the current plan is to make the applicant guide available three months prior to the publication of the call for applications. So at present, we envisage the publication of the applicant guide in the early weeks of January.

So that's the current plan. With respect to your second question about the sharing information on those who have applied, that is something that is still under discussion internally. We are also looking as recommended by the Cross Community Working Group at best practices of other global grant programs. Some global grant programs, they do not have this kind of information shared in advance.

There are some except of successful applications that are posted once there is an agreement signed between the two parties. However, upfront at present, the global best practices are not supporting this publication. But again, this is something that we are still investigating and exploring. So thanks again for your questions. Very good points. I have, yes, please. Okay, I have some also in line in the pod, but please. And thank you for identifying yourself. Thank you.

LAURA TRESKA: You. I'm Laura Tresca. I'm a civil society representative CGI.br. And I would like to know how much complex will be the application, because sometimes it's better to have a concept note first and make a forge for a full proposal after, because we spend a lot of time writing the proposals.

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Thank you for that. Yes, writing grant applications can be very time consuming. And so for this round, we are asking that applicants submit full proposals, although in subsequent rounds having a statement of interest or concept note to submit prior to all of the additional work of a full proposal is definitely something we're going to look at. But for this first round, you will be required to submit a full proposal, but I understand.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: I have to respect the orders, and I'll come to you. So the next one is a question from the po from Ann. "Will the background checks include checks on individuals behind the non-profit entities that will be applying?"

SHAYNA ROBINSON: So typically, as we've used in other processes within ICANN, when we have applications, we don't just do a background check on the entity, but we do a background check on the named officers or directors of the entity. And we'll have more information available about the scope

of those checks, but it's not just about the entity itself, you need to look at who's behind it.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Sam. I like also to take another question from the podcast, it's been there for quite a long time. "Are international governmental organizations or United Nation agencies eligible for this program?"

SHAYNA ROBINSON: So applicants must be a 501C3 or equivalent, so that will be assessed. Some intergovernmental organizations may, sometimes they have foundations, sometimes they have supporting organizations that are actually registered that way, so that would have to be assessed at the time of application. But the eligibility requirement is that the applicant is a 501C3 or equivalent.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Shayna. I have Sue who raised her hand. I don't know. Yes, Sue. Thank you.

SUE SCHULER: Hi, Sue Schuler, secretary with the Registry Stakeholder Group. If the ICANN Board does not come to a decision today on REC 7, is this going to affect your timeline? Is this going to push it back another month until their next Board meeting, and then another month after that? Is this going to continue to push this back? Thanks.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Okay. That's an interesting question, and I would say that we have different scenarios that as implementation design team of the program, we have ahead of us, we have contemplated also that one including possible scenarios depending on the decision of the Board on the new approach to recommendation seven.

And this is something that we'll evaluate as soon as the Board consider the proposal and makes a decision. So at this stage, I am not able to offer you a response to say if it's going to be a delay or not. The work is in place to make sure that we open the first call for application as soon as possible, and that we deliver an up to standards and in line with the Global Grant Organization best practices program.

So that is our goal. And so we'll get to the scenario depending on the Board consideration of the new approach to recommendation seven. And of course, we'll keep everybody informed about it. Thank you. But very good question.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Just so that everyone know, the decision that Sue referred to is being considered by the Board in about a couple hours, just so that people understand.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. I have Herve. Herve, please. Yes, I knew you were somewhere, but this room has a special configuration, so thank you for getting to a mic.

HERVE HOUNZANDJI: Okay. Hello everyone. I want to speak in French, please. Hello everyone. My name is Herve Hounzandji, I am from Benin, I'm the president of ISOC in Benin. I would like to thank the person who is organizing this session to enable us to have an interpretation service. This is very important for us to understand what is being said.

Here's my question. I don't want to be lecturing you, but as a member of ISOC, ISOC has a platform that enables us to apply easily for grants. I would like to know if ICANN, although I don't know ICANN's applications procedure, but I'm saying this because ISOC's platform is very easy to use.

I'm saying this because it's not when you want to present your application that you should be requested to provide hundreds of documents. You already have documents, registration documents. When the processes open, it's easy to find out whether your documents are good or not. I don't know if you have a similar process. It's very much needed. Thank you very much.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Enjoy a response in your mother tongue language by Xavier. Thank you. Xavier.

XAVIER CALVEZ: Thank you. Thank you for asking this question in French. I will answer in French, at least I will try. Herve is talking about the platform that ISOC has in Benin that enables applicants to provide information pertaining to the entity. And then this information will be validated

easily, and then when the round is open for submissions of applications, then information about entities eligibility, entities who submitted their application, this evaluation is easy to carry out.

We are assessing platforms that will enable to receive applications. As we said earlier, there will be an assessment of the entity and of the project in fact. We are currently assessing, just like you are doing in Benin, we're trying to do this in a two-pronged manner. It is not confirmed yet that we will be able to proceed this way.

Many factors will be considered to make this decision. It would be useful for you to provide information, your contact information to Shayna and to Giovanni, because we might have questions for you, either in French or in English. But thank you for this information and this question. We are looking into this and there are a lot of benefits to what you're saying.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

So as Xavier just said, please get in touch with me or Shayna, and we'll make sure that we listen to your concerns and we're going to address them as we are developing the design of the program. I have Seun, I don't know if he's in the room. Yes,

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Yes, that will be me.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Okay. Sorry.

SEUN OJEDEJI:

Yes. Seun, for the record. Thank you very much. So I have two questions. The first one is for the first round or first cycle as you say, in terms of success, what do you envisage to be the indicators of success when it come to diversity of the applicants? Would you say 50% from the US is a successful round, would you say 17% from the other part of the world indicate a success application round?

Are you thinking in that direction and is there anything you have in terms of the goals for the first round? The second question is I recall when this discussion about this grant came up, the community supported ICANN Staff overseeing this process to reduce administrative costs, but I'm hearing a lot of costs now, tax verification, getting vendors, and so on and so forth.

It seems to me that there may be more costs. So is there an estimate on the administrative costs of this first round? So we say it is 10 million, but how much is it going to cost us to execute the 10 million? Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you so much. Shayna, please.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Yes. Thank you so much for the question. To enter the first one as a part of the working group recommendations, there was a specific mention of diversity and inclusion as a part of the objectives of the

program. So that is absolutely something that we are working to implement and operationalize in the program.

For example, guidance will be provided to independent panelists of what they should look for and what the final slat, how that will impact that. We don't have specific ratios or things like that at the moment, but certainly that is an objective, it's something that we're prioritizing in the operationalization.

To your second question, yes, we've been looking at the costs and we've assessed, we've done some cost modeling, although we are still in the process of identifying and selecting vendors. So there's still some things that we need to work out. But I will say comparatively and from other grant programs that I've run, it's very much aligned.

International grant making is not a cheap endeavor, it does cost money to send money around the world, it does cost money to do that in a legal and appropriate way, and we are prepared, our board is prepared, our executives are prepared to take on that cost. But I think it's very much in line with what we should expect, and I don't think that there is any significant risk there at the moment. Maybe Xavier wants to add.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Thank you. Just to add to that point, and as you were indicating along with your question, for the community that work for the Board, for the organization, we are all completely aligned, we want to minimize the cost in any way possible. So when Giovanni explained that we are

looking at vendors to help us, it is also with the expectation that it will minimize the cost. Let me give a very small example of that.

We are looking to find a platform, software basically, that helps where applicant will apply, where the applications will be tracked and evaluated. We are looking for a vendor to provide that. We could build it ourselves, but we think it's going to be a lot more timely and costly to build it ourselves when there are plenty valuable platforms already existing that are just available. So that's an illustration.

You are pointing to vendors, potentially adding costs, in that example, we are expecting that to save us costs. And so, our objective is to have the lowest possible cost for this program with the understanding that, of course, for ICANN, it's a first, we are building everything from scratch.

But we're also trying to not build a platform, for example, but to use an existing platform. It's an international program, for those of you who know grant programs, a national program is usually a little bit easier, one dimension less. So this is something that we know is a challenging endeavor, we are bringing the expertise that Shayna and others are bringing into this, and we need to do this well.

There's no compromise here about doing it correctly, well, and we do want to have diversity in the applications, and that's also an objective. And to your point, we will want to define the criteria of success, which we absolutely want to do. So thank you for those comments, they're very important, and thank you for the opportunity also to repeat the comments we've made about the costs.

This needs to be the lowest possible cost, but it also needs to be done very well. The two together will lead into a place where we think we will have a very competitive program from a cost standpoint. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you. I'm taking a question from the pod, and then I'm leaving the floor to Judith. Question from the pod from Ann, "How was the \$10 million limitation for the first cycle determined?" Xavier, please.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Thank you. There was not a lot of science in that we looked at the entire amount of auction proceeds that there is available. Many of you know, and probably many of you also don't know that within the entire amount of auction proceeds that we have collected, there is a significant amount that is currently stemming from an auction that is under legal matters, and therefore is not currently available.

That amount is part of the auction proceeds, but currently not available for distribution. So the amount available for distribution is approximately \$70 million at the moment. The total amount of auction proceeds is about \$210 million.

So when we looked at the first cycle with the idea of creating a first cycle that is not a pilot, but a little bit of a test of all the mechanisms that we are putting in place for this grant program, we wanted to dimension it not too big so that there's not a huge amount of risks applied to a lot of funds in the first exercise of distribution, but not too

small, so that it is also attractive and it can start already to do a certain amount of good.

So there was not a lot of science about it, simply the intent to have a fraction, a small "fraction," a minority fraction of the funds being distributed in this first cycle so that we get a chance to learn from this first cycle for the subsequent cycles of funds, which also leaves us some time to be able to make improvements, receive feedback, and be able to design the second cycle in an improved fashion. That's it. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. I'd like to leave the floor to Judith, please.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN:

Yes, hello, it's Judith Hellerstein for the record. Thanks so much for all your answers, it's great to meet all the other people as I was one of the chartered members from At-Large. My question is also related to the-- you're talking about you're working with a vendor for new platform and working on those, and have you also thought about engage-- and whenever your choice of platform is, how you're going to make sure that whatever the platform meets the WAS, web accessibility standards, and it is definitely either WCAG 2.2 or higher AAA compliance.

Are you going to engage a-- oftentimes firm says, oh yes, well, we meet all the checklist, but then the components together doesn't work. Or it may also want to engage an accessibility firm to test out the platform

to make sure, because sometimes what happens is each individual component is accessible, but then when they're all put together and the application form is set up, it becomes inaccessible or things are added in, components are added in later on, and the whole site becomes not accessible.

So I'm just wanting to see, make sure that you have that on your list when you're looking at vendors and making sure that that is a requirement for the vendor because it shouldn't be an after one. Thanks.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Judith. It's an excellent point in terms of the accessibility and compatibility of the platform. We are currently in the process of assessing. Rest assured that W36 standards as well as any important items that, for instance, are touching universal acceptance, so support to ID and emails, those are all factors that we have been considering in the selection process of the vendor.

So thanks a lot for your input, and as I said, this is one element that we have been taking into account as well as universal acceptance of the platform in terms of supporting scripts that are non-ASCII scripts for user and user ID, password ID, and emails and much more. So thanks again.

With that, I'm taking a question from the pod from an anonymous participant who is asking if there are two or more similar applications applied for the grant program at the same time, how ICANN evaluate and decide who will be granted. So it's a very good question and it's a

question that relate to the content of the application. So the content of applications that are admissible and eligible. So they have gone through the screening checks that Shayna was presenting to you earlier. This is something for the independent application assessment panel.

So ICANN is not going to have anything to do with the content of the project. This is for the independent application assessment panel to evaluate and determine the value of that project against the ICANN objectives, the objectives of the program, the mission, a set of criteria that we are currently discussing, the threshold in terms of the scoring.

So there are many elements. And if there are two similar applications that are presenting similar projects, this is something for the independent application assessment panel to come up to us with a recommendation. Everything that is relating to content assessment is and will remain completely independent from ICANN.

That is again, in line with the recommendations of the Cross Community Working Group, but also in line with the best practices of global grant organizations. I'm moving to Alfredo, who has another question. Thank you, Alfredo.

ALFREDO CALDERON:

Yes, thank you. This is Alfredo. Great job you guys are doing. So I congratulate you on that. I have a clarification question for you. Between the first cycle and the period of evaluation, the second cycle, since some projects will have a 24-month length, are we expecting the

second round to be two and a half years later, or how is that going to work? Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Alfredo. It's an excellent question. We are also discussing internally the currents of the grant cycles. And at present we are discussing that specific element. And certainly, we do not want any possible future applicant to wait so long for next cycle.

So we are also aiming in the coming months to publish a tentative schedule for the cycles, the future cycle, that will also enable applicants to determine when and how to submit or organize their work to submit the application. But that is, again, work in progress, it's under discussion, the current of the cycles.

And again, much will depend on how the first cycle goes because again, we have made several stimulations regarding the cost, the number of applications. So we are prepared with different scenarios once the first cycle is launched with a call for application.

And at the end of the call for application, we'll be able to tell you more about the future cycles. Thank you. I have another question from Alan Greenberg. I don't know if Alan is in the room. Alan, sorry I didn't see you. Thank you, Alan.

ALAN GREENBERG:

Thank you very much. I was a member of the CCWG, I also may be the only person in the room who is a member of the drafting team that designed the CCWG process. Sorry, I'm not the only person in the

room. During that process, certainly during the CCWG, there was an awful lot of lack of trust that ICANN could and would do this and do this properly.

I'd like to say that from what I'm hearing so far of what you have done, what you are considering, and what the program looks like, I am absolutely delighted. So I'd like to offer my congratulations all around. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you so much, Alan. Indeed, we are making everything we can to make sure not only we meet the, let's say, spirit of the Cross Community Working Group recommendations, but also as the recommendations, we are in line with best practices and all the rest that you need to launch up to standards grant program. Thank you so much. I have a gentleman in the room. Thank you.

NENAD ORLIC:

Hello, everybody. My name is Nenad Orlic, I am from Serbia National Domain Registry. I have a question about what is the stance of ICANN towards the co-financing of the programs? Is it expected for these programs to be solely financed by ICANN or is it possible to have a project that someone's applying to be co-financed?

I will give you a specific situation about this. There are programs that for co-financing, so maybe grant from ICANN would allow somebody to unlock bigger financing with other co-financing organization. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. That's another excellent question that we are currently addressing in the applicant guide. Co-financing will be possible under specific rules and criteria, so that is something that we have envisaged, especially considering that the first grant cycle is a cycle that is going to provide grants between 50,000 and \$500,000.

So of course, if there are projects that are above that threshold of the 500,000, there's an opportunity for them as long as they meet some specific criteria that we are setting in the applicant guide for co-financement. So thanks a lot. Please.

NENAD ORLIC: Just a clarification, but if somebody has like \$150,000 project and he could get 100,000 financing, if he gets 50,000 financing from ICANN, would that be according to the rules or not?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah, this is something that is really relating about the sort of co-financing chain of a project, and this is something that will be explained in the applicant guide. Usually, global grant best practices, they foresee some sort of reassurance that the applicant has secured the remaining amount for that specific project. Again, this is something that it's in the discussion and we'll be explaining detail in the applicant guide. Thanks a lot. Do we have any other questions from the room? Please.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Hi, [01:11:51 - inaudible] for the record. It's a very quick question. Will you accept collaborative projects? I mean projects in collaboration between one or more entities?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: That's also another excellent question that is going to be fully addressed in the applicant guide. At present, we have discussed the possibility for a group of eligible organization to apply to the program, and indeed that will be one of the contemplated, let's say, options for applicants. Any other question from the pod before I leave the floor to Maarten, who has been of great support to this program and to push us to do better and better day after day. Maarten, please.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Yes. Now, just to express from the Board side, we've been very impressed by the professionalism and the approach of the team as well. As former CCWG AP member myself, I recognize very much the spirits being reflected in where we're going, and the careful way forward is I think useful for all of us.

Let's develop the mechanisms, let's see how it works, and let's make it work. This is to make the internet better, and the aim is to reduce indeed, as was very well expressed and asked by the gentleman from Africa, to reduce the overhead costs as much as we can, and there will be overhead costs. But thank you all for what you're doing and you're on track and we hope we'll be able to stay on track.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Maarten, for the confidence. Thank you everybody remotely or in person for attending. Thank you to the interpreters, to Yvette, Sarah, and Daniela for the support. Thank you also to Sam and Shayna and Xavier for supporting this workshop and answering all your interesting questions.

We have taken note of the good input and again, many things will be addressed in the applicant guide. Stay tuned on the ICANN Wiki and we are going also to announce soon the ICANN Org webpage. Thank you everybody. We'll stay in touch.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]