
ICANN79 | CF – ICANN Grant Program
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – 3:00 to 4:00 SJU

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: And before I start, I'm going to leave the floor to the standards and all the initial information for attending this session. So with that, I'm leaving the floor to Yvette.

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: Thank you very much, Giovanni. Hello everyone. As Giovanni said, welcome to the ICANN79 Grant Program session that's being held today, Wednesday, March 6th, 2024 at 1900 UTC. My name is Yvette Guigneaux and Madeleine Werbelow and myself will be your participation managers for this session.

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Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English, and please speak at a reasonable pace. All are welcome to use the chat. Please note that private chats are only possible among panelists in the Zoom webinar format. Any message sent by a panelist or a standard attendee to another standard attendee will also be seen by the session hosts, co-hosts, and other panelists. Okay, I think that about does it for me. I will hand the floor over to Giovanni Seppia, Vice President of Implementation Operations. Back to you, Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Yvette, and welcome everybody again. Together with me today to present this session, it's Shayna Robinson, Grant Program Director, and Maarten Botterman, ICANN Board member as well as chair of the ICANN Board Caucus on the ICANN Grant Program. Today's agenda is divided into five parts. We'll start with an overview on the Grant Program, then we'll get straight to some details about the Grant Program, the funding and the selection, the next steps of the implementation phase, and then frequently ask questions that we have been receiving recently. We'll also speak to recommendation seven path forward.

Recommendation seven is one of the 12 recommendations that the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds made at the end of their work on the new gTLD auction proceeds. We'll then have a Q&A at the end of our presentation, so we welcome any question that

you may have, and we look forward to answering them. And with that said, I'm leaving the floor to my colleague Shayna Robinson, Grant Program director. Thank you, Shayna.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you so much, Giovanni. My name is Shayna Robinson, and I am the ICANN Grant Program Director. I joined ICANN last summer, so this is my second ICANN meeting, and I continue to be totally impressed and also overwhelmed by the scale and the scope of what goes on here. So thank you so much for having me, and I'm really happy to be here, sort of, at the precipice, at just the beginning of the grant program. So we're really excited to start this journey.

If I can, before we get into that, I just want to take a moment to say thank you to our Board, our Board caucus, and Maarten, for shepherding this project, to members of the CCWG on auction proceeds who charted our course, to our steering committee executives, to our core team, all of the folks at ICANN who have supported us and me along the way in answering questions and ensuring that we have a successful launch. So thank you so much.

As we start the Grant Program, I just want to ensure that you all understand fully what we are endeavoring to do and what we're setting out to achieve with this program. The ICANN Grant Program is a global competitive grant program, that means that you will be competing with all applicants to receive funding.

And we hope that we will support organizations and the projects that they propose that align very well to the mission of ICANN. I know there

are many awesome projects related to other aspects of the internet, specifically around things like content and other parts of the stack. This program is really focused on in working to supercharge the mission of ICANN. We expect that once we're able to actually go through this process and make awards, that we really will sort of improve and increase participation in the multi-stakeholder process and in the partners who participate in ICANN activities, and we hope that we'll make a difference and the mission and the vision of ICANN to ensure future development of the internet.

There are a few objectives specifically outlined by the CCWG-AP in their final report that this program seeks to accomplish. The first one is around benefiting the development, distribution, evolution of the structures that support the Internet's unique identifier systems. The second is providing capacity development and infrastructure support in communities that need them the most, advancing work related to open access, future oriented developments, innovation and open standards for the internet community.

And finally, addressing diversity, participation, and inclusion across all regions and stakeholder groups. So these are really the objectives that we've outlined and that we hope all projects that are proposed would align to. A few elements that are specific to this first cycle of funding. And again, I say cycle because there is over \$200 million currently in the fund from auction proceeds. We are not releasing all of that funding here at the beginning. We will release the funds in trenches. The first trench will be for \$10 million.

We're considering a bit of a test to ensure that we have the infrastructure, that we've built decision making processes, and that we have great standards for eligibility and admissibility as we assess applications. Awards will be made between \$50,000 and \$500,000 for this first grant cycle. We anticipate that projects would run up to 24 months or two years. But again, all of these elements will be revisited after review of the first cycle and may change. So please stay tuned and be sure to provide feedback as you experience the grant program this first time.

Next, we'll go through a bit of funding and selection. A lot of the questions that I've gotten here today and also prior to my coming to San Juan have been about, well, what exactly are you looking for? What types of projects are you really going to fund? We've designed this to have two themes that are sort of, again, aligned to the objectives of the program and to the mission and vision of ICANN.

So the first one should be no surprise. It's the unique identifier systems work that would fall under this theme. We've broken into areas that you'll see on the screen, there around standards development, universal acceptance, usability and sustainability in long term, promoting innovation and use of the DNS and other systems, strengthening security and stability, and improving performance. Again, these are really sort of core to ICANN'S mission, as much as we know, again, that there are many other parts of the internet that need intervention or could use some solutions, we really want to focus specifically on the Internet's unique identifier systems.

The second theme is around a unified internet. This one is a bit broader, and there there's a few more work areas that have been defined under that. The first one is related to open access. The second, around interoperability. Did I say that right? And ensuring that all who want access to the DNS have access, and then ensuring the resiliency and sustainability of the internet at large around the world.

In addition to these two themes, we have two other overarching themes that we hope projects that we support will address. The first one is around diversity participation and inclusion. So we want to support communities and stakeholders who are often not included in ICANN activities. We want to make sure that they are brought to the center and sort of supported in this work. The second is around capacity development.

So we also want to see projects that are really working to build capacity of beneficiaries. Not that it's something that just it's there for a year and then there's nothing to speak about it after the end of that year, but that the capacity of those who receive interventions from those projects really lives on after the life of the project.

There are few things that we are not able to fund. There are few activities for a few reasons that we are not able to fund. The first one is around duplication of activities that ICANN already funds. And I think I've probably had about 10 conversations about this, and I know it's a bit difficult to explain because we haven't yet made any grants.

But essentially, we want to ensure that we're not double dipping, which is an Americanism, and we're not

paying for similar activities that are already funded by ICANN. Now, it doesn't mean that because you've already established a relationship or have other projects that are supported by ICANN, it's just that we don't want to duplicate the same work and pay for it through different funding streams, if that makes sense.

The other three items here on the screen really relate to ICANN's legal and fiduciary responsibility as a public benefit corporation based in the United States. There are certain areas and regulation that impact our ability to fund any activity that leads to the private benefit of an individual. We are also not able to support any lobbying or political activity, and we are also not able to support any unlawful activity in the country in which the project is being implemented. So this is a requirement of the US government and is connected to our status as a public benefit corporation.

A few notes about how applications will be selected. There will be a series of checks and reviews that we will go through first of our internal team to make sure that all applications are complete, that they are submitted in English. There are a few other items specifically that we will be looking for as we go through admissibility. All of those things are detailed in our applicant guide, so please ensure that you read that. Eligibility checks, all of the issues or criteria related to eligibility are also defined in our applicant guide. We will be checking those things to ensure that we are in fact able-- that the proposal and that the applicant is in fact able to receive funding.

And then finally, there will be an independent application assessment panel that will actually review the content of the proposals. So

Giovanni and I will not be making decisions about that, not even Maarten, but it really will be an independent panel that will assess projects and applications against a rubric that, again, is included in the applicant guide. So if you have any questions about that, please start there first, and feel free to ask additional questions later.

The rubric which I just described, is outlined here on the next few slides. The first sort of criterion that we want to assess, or that panelist again will assess is around alignment with the objectives and the mission and vision of ICANN. So again, we want to ensure that we are supporting projects that are very specific to what we are trying to achieve.

The second is around outlining key performance indicators to monitor progress of the project, to ensure that you understand what you're trying to achieve, and that you're able to communicate with us about those achievements. They will assess the work plan that you've submitted, the details of the activities you hope to accomplish, and when you hope to accomplish them.

In addition, they will look for how you've considered potential risks. We know that these projects don't operate in vacuums, the world is an ever-changing place. So they will assess how you think about and think through potential risks to your project. They want to ensure that your budget has clear and appropriate costs outlined. And then finally, that the applicant has the expertise and skills to deliver what they are proposing. So these are really the key elements that the panelists will assess. With that, again, I just want to say if you have specific information that you need or would like to find out, please,

please, please check our applicant guide, it has much more detailed information, and also feel free to reach out with any questions additionally. And with that, I'll turn it over to Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Shayna. I'm gonna speak about the next steps of the grant program journey. So, as Shayna said, the application window is going to open on the 25th of March at 1500 UTC, and it'll close on the 24th of May at 2000 UTC. So this is a 60-day window during which applicants can submit their applications.

Applicants can also register on the application platform, and they can start filling the application form. The application platform features an auto save tool so that an applicant can really use the application platform as a sort of project management tool where to start input data and the data is going to be saved. And then at some point, of course, this should be a decision of the applicant to click the submit button. At the moment, the submit button is clicked, that's one way button, so the application is officially submitted and is gonna be part of the submitted applications.

In terms of next steps, Shayna just mentioned the applicant guide. We recently uploaded on the grant program webpage on icann.org, version two of the applicant guide. Version two of the applicant guide contains a page at the top where you can see the changes against the previous version.

Those changes are mainly language refinements to make the applicant guide more accessible and understandable, especially for non-English

mother tongue speakers. And applicant guide version three is expected to be published next week, at the end of next week. And this applicant guide version three will contain reference to the privacy policy and also more information about the application platform.

The next step is the 25th of March when we are going to open the application window. And as I said, that will close on the 24th of May. Then from the end of May till the end of October this year, there's gonna be the initial admissibility and eligibility checks on the applications, and then the independent panel assessment. That will be followed in November, 2024 by the final admissibility and eligibility checks, mainly eligibility checks on the applicants. And then in December, 2024, so at the end of this calendar year, we expect to produce the proposal for the Board resolution on the first slate of successful applications out of the first cycle.

So this is the tentative timeline that we have ahead of us, and as you can read, there is dependency that is highlighted. That is the dependency on the path forward on recommendation seven, which Maarten will speak to. Before leaving the floor to Maarten to speak to recommendation seven, we have produced a couple of slides about two of the most frequently asked questions that we have received over the past months.

First one is about the eligibility of the organization. We understand the concept of not-for-profit charitable organization varies in the world. At present, we are unable to make a determination on the eligibility of possible applicants. This is something that will go through a review. However, again, the applicant guide is offering you

very good information about the concept of not-for-profit and the process for making sure that an applicant is eligible.

And the next question which Shayna touched base is that many of you, even during the office hours at the booth that we have been offering over the past three days, you have come to us and you have asked us, is this proposal eligible for the grant program? We cannot answer because, as Shayna said, proposals are going to be evaluated from a content perspective by an independent pilot, not by us. And so make sure that your proposal is aligned with the grant program objectives with the teams and above all with the ICANN mission. So that's an important self-check for you before you submit your proposal.

But again, ICANN staff, we are not in the position to answer any question about the eligibility of the proposal from a content perspective because this is gonna be assessed by an independent panel. And with that said, I'm going to leave the floor to Maarten Botterman, Chair of the ICANN Grant Program Caucus and member of the ICANN Board. Thank you, Maarten.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

Thank you, Giovanni. Taking you forward through a change that we are proposing to the policies as submitted by the Cross Community Working Group on AP to which I was lucky to be one of the board leaders liaisons at some point in time, we don't likely do that. And specifically, about recommendation seven, recommendation seven is about the accountability mechanisms and the ability to make sure that challenging that doesn't lead to a lot of the auction perceived

money going to administrative burden rather than the purpose, improving the internet.

It sets out the limitations for the challenging of the decision to individual applications to grants. And the spirit of the recommendation is really that to minimize administrative costs and focus on the purpose. So this recommendation was developed before implementation. And in the implementation, we now know that not all decisions will be made by the independent panel. There will also be eligibility and admissibility decisions, and in the end it's up to the Board to adopt and decide to adopt the entire slate.

In Hamburg, the board tried to address this issue in a resolution directing ICANN Org to use terms and conditions to limit applicant access to ICANN accountability mechanisms. Non applicants or third parties were not subject to this application. The Board has heard the concerns of some members of the community about resolution, has reflected and identified a new path forward.

So the first step is the Rec 7 language refinement. So basically, we suggest to remove the phrase from the independent project applications panel as the only identifier for decisions that may be challenged. Therefore, any decision regarding submitted applications are not just decisions made by the independent panel, and these are exempted from the ICANN accountability mechanisms. The second action, which already started, which we decided earlier this year, is to amend ICANN's fundamental bylaws.

We are very careful with that, and of course, we do follow the process for that, which is a well described process in the bylaws. This includes

proposing and then acceptance, and then posted for public comments, and the empowered community in the end to accept or not. So this bylaw is really about making it possible that if community chartered working group comes to requests that relates to exception of the IRP opportunities, that in that case, the Board may proceed accordingly.

So what the Board has now done is sent a letter to the chartering organizations also to ask each group to consider supporting the removal of this specific text, independent assessment panel language. This is the only change to the CCWG final report that the Board is now seeking. And your support, the support of the community is of paramount importance to keep the process moving forward and successful complete the first cycle of the grant program. A cycle purposely kept relatively small in the order of 10 million to learn from and to make sure that for the future rounds, we also can build on the experience of this first round.

If the community approves the update to recommendation seven and the fundamental bylaws amendment, then the Board will adopt and make the updated recommendation seven fully implemented through that bylaw change. If this whole process is indeed successful before the time that the slate of successful projects is known, we can then at that point in time decide on the slate and move forward toward contracts. If there's any reasons that we need to rethink or go back to the drawing board and see how it's been done even better than we currently propose, that may lead to delays, but not more than that, because we all agree on one thing, we need to use those grants well and sooner rather than later.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Maarten. Thanks a lot to drive us through the path towards the refinement of recommendation seven, which is one again, of the 12 recommendations of the Cross Community Working group. Before we move to the Q&A, some information where you can find more information. The first one is the grant program webpage on icann.org. This webpage contains the link to the applicant guide, the latest version and its translation in the other UN six languages. As well, it contains FAQs that are regularly updated, and also links to the key documents.

For information also, when looking at the applicant guide, you will see that the applicant guide has two appendixes, one containing the terms and conditions that the applicants will be requested to sign off at the time they submit the application. And also an appendix with the grant agreement template that applicants will be requested to sign if they become successful grantees.

There is also support that we provide with a dedicated email address, which is grantprogram@icann.org, where you can send any request for information and or clarification, and we respond nearly in real time and we'll be happy to make sure that you have and receive information and clarification for moving forward with a possible submission of an application. There is also the ICANN help desk to which you can address your questions, and questions that cannot be answered by the ICANN help desk will be escalated to the grant program core team. With that said, I like to open the floor to the questions that you may have.

We have a standing mic in the room, so those who are in the room and would like to ask questions, please take advantage of the standing mic. And there are also the questions that have been placed in the Zoom chat and Q&A pod, and in that case, Yvette will read them. So I don't see anybody yet. Well, okay, now, okay, so I had to open. Let's have first question from the floor here in the room, and then we'll take a question from the Q&A pod in the Zoom. Thank you. And please identify yourself so that we know.

JEFF OSBORN: Just name or organization?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Both if possible.

JEFF OSBORN: Okay. My name's Jeff Osborn, I'm the chair of RSSAC, and in my day job, I'm the president of ISC. I have two questions. One is, I run a 501C3 charitable organization, fundraising over time is a question we all suffer from, and one of my first thoughts was, when you give away money once, you inevitably have an angry person, a year later when they don't get it again, it takes away much of the joy of giving. Your first tranche is \$10 million, which is exactly 5% of the total.

A good money manager could make this a \$10 million annual program forever. Just curious whether that had been considered. Second is a chicken and egg question. If there is an organization that would love to get this kind of money to be created as a 501C3 and then do good

things, who is capable of speaking for the as yet not extant organization?

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you. This is Shayna again. Thank you so much for those questions. The first one around how much money, I think cycles per cycle, when we do them, how much money will be involved? Really depends. I think it depends on how much demand we see in this first round, how many applications we receive.

If we find that there are so many worthy applications that have been scored and assessed very highly, well then that will be a great data point for us to know that we can increase the funding in future rounds. So I think certainly, as we build the infrastructure for the program and we continue to build on and iterate different processes and considerations, I hope that we would be able to do that. But again, I think a lot will depend on what happens with this first round and what we see coming through the door.

To your second question, that's a great question. And can I tell you, coming from the other side of the table, as a grant seeker, I absolutely understand the pain of having to chase funding. Every year, your budget, you're hitting shortfalls and that means jobs and people, and I get it. So there absolutely are considerations for how we can manage funding, unrestricted funding, multi-year grants and things like that. Again, that's not currently at the moment for this first cycle part of the program, but that's absolutely something we want to consider as we move forward. I understand the concern and thank you so much for that question.

JEFF OSBORN: And about the chicken and egg one, who could apply for something that has not yet been granted 501c3 status by the IRS, but would expect to within, if I read this correctly, that would be by about March, 2025.

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Yes. So all eligibility checks will be assessed throughout the program. So if you are starting new organizations in order to compete for funding, that's great, but you should also with your application, provide any documentation of applications and things that you've made. However, we will not be able to award funding until you actually meet all of those eligibility criteria and that you actually have achieved that status.

JEFF OSBORN: Thank you very much.

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Jeff. Yvette, is there any question you may like to read from the Q&A pod?

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: Currently, we do not have anything in the q and a pod as of yet. I did let the Zoom participants know. Everybody has access to the Q&A pod, just please feel free to type a question if you have one, I'll be happy to read it aloud on the record.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thanks a lot. Richard, please.

RICHARD WEIN: Hello. Thank you. My name is Richard Wein coming from Dot AT, the Austrian Registry. A very short question. What is the reason for the very short timeline to the opening of the first application window? I mean, it's less than 20 days from now, so for me it's quite near the program, so I think it's a very, very short timeline. So any reason for that short time?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Richard. So we have been announcing that we would've opened at the end of March since quite some time, and that the window for submitting applications would be 60 days. That's in line with most of the global grant program organizations. And this is for us, again, the first cycle.

If there are comments to say that that's not sufficient, we may reevaluate the application window term for future cycles. At the same time, I want to highlight that contrary to many global grant program application forms, the application form that is going to be the one for the ICANN grant program is very simple, extremely accessible. So you

are going to be requested to describe the project, provide information about the organization. But again, contrary to many other application forms, we have made sure that this is simple, and therefore, the 60 days should be a right window for any organization to be able to complete it.

And again, as Shayna said, one of the criteria is that applications must be submitted in English. However, we are not going to pay attention at the grammar of the English that is used by the applicant. That's not, as I said, a Cambridge test, that's not what is going to be. So the independent panel is going to look at the content from really a content perspective rather than grammar perspective. Thanks again. Please.

JIM PRENDERGAST:

Yeah, thanks. Jim Prendergast with the Galway Strategy Group. I'll take a bit of a contrary, and that is, congratulations on finally getting this launched. I know it's something that's been hanging over your heads for quite some time, and having all that money in the bank account is probably not something that ICANN want. Two questions, both hypotheticals.

One, for the first round, say I've got a \$3 million idea, can I come back and seek funding in multiple rounds to fully fund my \$3 million idea? And then second, I apply for that \$3 million grant and you decide, you know what, it's good, but it's not 3 million, will you be funding at levels less than what was requested by grant applicants?

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- SHAYNA ROBINSON: Thank you so much for that question. Hypotheticals are always tricky to answer, but I'll try. In terms of the scope and scale of your project, if your budget for your project is much larger than what the grant maximum exceeds this cycle, we would ask that in your application you provide information about other sources of funding so that we can assess that as well. So we want to make sure that we have a clear budget for what ICANN funding will be spent for, but we also wanna ensure to pull off the entire project that you have other funding secure.
- JIM PRENDERGAST: So then the project can't be fully reliant on the ICANN Grant Program.
- SHAYNA ROBINSON: Indeed.
- JIM PRENDERGAST: That's good clarification.
- SHAYNA ROBINSON: Okay. And then your second question was-- sorry, what was that?
- JIM PRENDERGAST: Say I apply for a hundred thousand dollars and the evaluators go through and look at my application and determine it's a good idea, but it's not a hundred thousand, will you be granting levels less than what people are actually asking for?
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SHAYNA ROBINSON: So that will really depend on the panel, and we'll see. We don't have any historical data to rely on at this point. I have seen that in my experience, that panelists may come back and say, well, we know how much these servers or routers cost, and that seems a bit extreme. So there may be some feedback from panelists, but in the event that that happens, there would absolutely be a conversation with the applicant to discuss that and to ensure that everyone's aligned and on the same page about what would be happening.

JIM PRENDERGAST: Okay, great. Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Thank you so much.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Jim. Yvette, is there any question from the Q&A pod?

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: No, sir. We do not have any questions in the Q&A pod.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Okay. Thank you. Sandra, please.

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- SANDRA HOFERICHTER:** Thank you very much. Sandra Hoferichter, I'm asking for EuroDIG, the European IGF, and for the organization that organizes the European Summer school on internet governance. First question, I have two. My first question is in follow up from what Jim just said about the threshold of funding from other sources or funding that come from your own budget. Is there a threshold, so to say 30%, 10%, whatsoever, should come from other sources depending on the entire budget?
- SHAYNA ROBINSON:** No, there are no thresholds or expectations around that. However, you should again, be able to demonstrate in your application how you would achieve all of the activities even if the budget exceeds the maximum amount that we're able to give.
- SANDRA HOFERICHTER:** Okay. Thank you. And my second question is, can projects apply that are existing already, and if no, is it possible within that one project that is existing and going on already, to create a sub-project, another project within the project in order to apply, or can existing project apply without any concerns?
- SHAYNA ROBINSON:** Yes, and I know especially in the internet community, there are a lot of people who have been working really hard to really hold the whole thing up with not much money or support or resources to do that. So there may be ongoing projects that have been started previously.
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However, again, if you look at the rubric that panelists will be scoring innovation and strategies and the challenge you're really trying to solve and how you're gonna go about solving it is something they will assess. So you may want to consider new ways of tackling that challenge or new things you want to bring into the project that you've already been working on.

SANDRA HOFERICHTER: Okay. Thank you very much.

SHAYNA ROBISON: Thanks.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Sandra. Xavier, Please

XAVIER CALVEZ: Just wanted to add a comment to the point that Jeff was mentioning in his question earlier about what about this program being 10 million every year, forever, in quotes. This point of how long the program lasts was addressed by the CCWG who worked on the recommendation with an intent of making this program the vehicle to disperse the existing proceeds that we have on hand up to the total amount, and then be done with it, with the spirit that ICANN's mission is not to, as a matter of core activity, to organize the collection and distribution of funds for grant making, but to coordinate the unique identifier system.

And as a result of which, while, of course, the proceeds are generated thanks to the new gTLD program and distributing them is, of course, within ICANN's mission, it's not its core operations to organize grant making. So while those funds came to us in the manner that they did, the purpose of this program is to distribute them and then be done with it. It is, of course, possible that more funds come to ICANN maybe from the same source coming from the next round of new gTLD programs or in other manners.

And then those funds would also need to be distributed and maybe we'll have this grant program as a vehicle to be able to do so. But this program is aimed at distributing the proceeds that we have on hand, all of them up to completion and then be done with it for the reasons that I mentioned. So we purposefully have not developed a program that is meant to live forever in quotes, and we could have, to Jeff's point, invested the proceeds, for example, and only distributed the fruits of that investment. Many organizations work that way, we purposefully didn't try to do that as a result of the recommendations from the CCWG. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. And by the way, for those who do not know him, Xavier Calvez is the CFO of ICANN, and he is also the project owner of the ICANN Grant Program project from an administrative perspective. So thank you a lot, Xavier, also for moving this project forward together with all of us. Next in line, please.

ADEBOYE ADEGOKE:

Thank you. My name is Adeboye Adegoke. I work for an organization called Paradigm Initiative from Africa. First, to thank you for setting up an independent panel to review the application. I think that goes a long way to eliminate bias and also reduce the pressure on you. But I want to ask a further question regarding the work of the panel in selecting successful applicants. Do you have mechanism in place to ensure that traditionally disadvantaged organization or demographics, let me put it that way, that there are guidelines in place to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the application process.

And perhaps for me to further articulate this, traditionally organizations from Global South are usually disadvantaged in global grant giving, and this is an issue for some of us who are from that demographic. I'm just interested in a system that have been put in place to consider what I think has been a traditional disadvantage for such groups. Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBISNON:

Thank you so much. And yes, thank you for mentioning Paradigm Initiative and Gbenga and the team there, I appreciate that. So one of, again, the overarching themes of this program is around participation and inclusion. And we recognize, I know I do for a fact when I attend some of these events and activities, I feel very much like an outsider and don't really know what's going on or know how to find access to those things, so I can appreciate that. I think how we operationalize that and implement that is something we're building and learning.

It may seem really simple to say, well, let's just allocate specific portions of funds to specific parts of the world, but that's pretty tricky

and can seem unfair to some folks. So we have to be careful with how we do that. But I think again, the panel will be given instruction in the guide for ensuring that we maintain a vision and visibility of that. We're asking for applications in English, but we're not assessing grammar, and we understand that folks are not native English speakers. So there are mechanisms that we're putting into place, and certainly we'll hope to develop them as we iterate and move forward with the program. So thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thanks a lot. Yvette, any questions from Q&A pod?

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX: No, we have no questions yet from the Q&A pod.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. Georgia, please.

GEORGIA OSBORN: Hi, Georgia Osborn from the DNS Research Federation. First of all, I just want to commend the Board for basically encouraging new applications who are not already involved in ICANN, I think that is important. My question is really regarding the conflict of interest. So for example, our organization has recently been a contractor with UASG, and I think according to the conflicts of interest, so that's obviously a very-- it's been a very small amount, but I think that means that we're not allowed to apply for this grant. Can you just give an sort

of guidance around whether previous contractors can apply for the grant? Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBISNON: I would say for that specifically, I know there are many, many relationships in ICANN, we'd have to look at and assess those individually. There will be a space in the application to disclose relationships previous funding and the like. So please ensure that you do that, and we'll assess that as a part of our review. Thanks.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: A little addition on to whom these funds would be available. We have put a lot of emphasis in communications on making sure that outside of ICANN, a lot of press bodies and organizations, particularly in the global south, have been actively informed about this opportunity, and we intend to continue to do that.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thanks a lot, Maarten. Please.

GLORIA: Hi, good afternoon. Gloria [00:47:40 - inaudible] from EDP University of Puerto Rico. And I wanted to ask regarding multiple academic units within an academic system, would you require independent applications for the different units and campuses, or would you require a systemic application? That's the first question. The second one is, would you consider possible non-cost grant extensions in the

case of the different grants that you provide? And thirdly, will you require an APR, an Annual Performance Report?

SHAYNA ROBISNON:

Yeah, I'll take your first question around whether or not it's a good idea to sort of have separate applications if you're within one large institution, or to have a more comprehensive one. I think it's gonna depend on the university and your system and how you normally go about funding. I think collaboration and partnership is always a great thing to demonstrate, so perhaps a comprehensive approach would be better suited for you. But again, I think it's up to you as the applicant to decide the best way to communicate what you're trying to achieve. And then I'll hand it over to Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Yeah, thank you, Shayna. In terms of grant extension, that's a very good question. So indeed, it's quite common when you submit a project that sometimes the project stretches a bit what was set as the end date of the project. This is something that the grantee will have to discuss with ICANN at some point because, of course, hopefully that doesn't happen at the time it is the deadline.

So it happens in advance, so there's gonna be a discussion between ICANN and the grantee about a possible extension of the grant and the project that is at the core of the grant. When it comes to the performance report, indeed, as the applicant guide explains once, an applicant becomes a successful grantee and enters into an agreement with ICANN, the grantee will be requested to submit regular reports,

both administrative and financial reports, that will trigger the disbursement of future installments.

So when it comes to a grant, at the moment, a grantee is signing the grant agreement, there's gonna be an initial disbursement of the first installment, and subsequent installments will be subject to the submission by the grantee of performance reports, again, both administrative, that they will show the progress against the project plan and also financial.

And of course, they will have to be approved by ICANN, and this is gonna be a process that is going to be highlighted in the grant agreements. So that depends on the duration of the project. So of course, if the project is, like for the first cycle, two years we may require the submission of two midterm reports and a final report. But if the project is shorter, of course, the report or requirements will be different.

SHAYNA ROBISON: I just wanted to add.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah. And Shayna, please compliment.

SHAYNA ROBISON: Yes, I just wanted to add one more clarifying thing, that applicants are welcome to submit as many applications as they would like. However, only one application will be eligible for funding. So even if you submit

10 applications and they're all scored very well and they make it through the different rounds of review, we would only be able to actually award one application. So you may also want to consider that as you go back to your teams. Thanks. For the first cycle, that may be subject to change.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Shayna, and thank you, Maarten. Please.

FARZANEH BADIEI: Hi my name is Farzaneh Badiei from Digital Medusa. I profusely apologize if this has been mentioned in the guidelines, but something came to my mind. Can the internet infrastructure organizations apply for the grant to do their operation, to continue their operation or do research? And by internet or infrastructure organization, I mean, for example, [00:52:10 - inaudible], obviously not the ones that have their own foundation, but also not-for-profit network operators or others. And can they do that for maintaining their operation or can they do that for research?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Farzaneh, it's a good question. So from the applicant perspective, they must meet, of course, the eligibility requirement that we have set. From the application perspective, again, as Shayna mentioned, there are some evaluation criteria. One of them is that we are looking forward to receiving projects with the start date and end date.

So usually, regular operations of not-for-profit organizations, they don't really fit into what we are looking to receiving. Again, but it depends on the kind of operation because it could be an operation that is not yet there and therefore can be seen as a project. So much depends on the project itself and the way it is presented. Thank you. We are quite up to the hour that we have been given for this session, and thanks a lot for the great questions so far. Is there any question from the Q&A pod?

YVETTE GUIGNEAUX:

No, there is not, not at this point.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Yvette. If there is no other question from the floor, I'd like to thank all the speakers, Maarten, especially for supporting this project, big project of ICANN to go through the different phases, Shayna, for sharing our excellent expertise in ground programs, and of course, I'm going to thank all those who have supported this session remotely, Yvette, Sarah, Madeleine, and Daniella, and all the technical team here in the room and all the interpreters.

With that said, please continue to send questions to us. If you're interested, stay tuned on the ICANN Grant Program webpage on the ICANN Org site, where soon we're gonna publish the version number three of the applicant guide and where you're gonna have the link to the application form on the 25th of March. Thank you for being with us this afternoon. Enjoy the rest of the day. Bye.

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