
ICANN79 | CF – At-Large Leadership Working Session on the ICANN Grant Program
Tuesday, March 5, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:00 SJU

MICHELLE DESMYTER: Hello and welcome to the At Large working session on the ICANN grant program. My name is Michelle DeSmyter and I am a participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN's expected standards of behavior. During this session, questions or comments will be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, and Spanish. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English. Please speak at a reasonable pace. And with that, I'll hand the floor over to Jonathan Zuck, ALAC Chair.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thanks, Michelle, and thanks everyone. I'm glad everyone survived the reception last night. Let me know if you need me to speak up because your eardrums no longer work. It was a fun party. So we are here to talk about the grants program, which I think a lot of folks in this room are excited about. A lot of us come from the civil society and the nonprofit arena, and so we're curious to see what this is about and what the parameters are of it. There was a lot of work that went into figuring out what the best thing was to do with the auction proceeds and to set

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some of them aside before Org took them all. So it was good to get the grant program off the ground. So I'm excited to have our distinguished guests here to tell us a little bit about the grant program. And with that, I think I have no more to say, so I think I'll hand the microphone to you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Jonathan. This is Giovanni Seppia, Vice President, Implementation Operations at ICANN under the Finance Department. And I'm here with my colleague, Shayna Robinson who is the grant program director, to provide you an update on the ICANN grant program and where we are and what are the next steps to launch the application window for the first cycle. With that said, thank you for having us. And we are going to have this presentation, which is going to be followed by a Q&A session. And so please, we're looking forward to receiving your questions and provide further clarification whenever needed. So if we can go to the next slide, please.

This is the agenda for today. We'll start with some information about what is the ICANN grant program. That is going to be followed about grant program development, where the grant program comes from. Then we'll touch base on some key elements. And among them, there's going to be a section about recommendation seven, and then the next steps. If we can go to the next slide, please.

Starting the vision. So as ICANN, as we know, is dedicated to serving its mission and acting in the global public interest, the ICANN grant program offers an opportunity for ICANN Org to maximize its impact by supporting creativity and innovation that fosters our vision of a single, open, and globally interoperable internet. So that's the vision that we

have set for the ICANN grant program that is also based on, as I'm going to say, the recommendations of the cross-community working group on auction proceeds. If we can go to the next slide, please.

So the ICANN grant program wants to be a competitive, global program, open to applications from eligible organizations for projects that are consistent with ICANN mission. They're also in line with the objectives of the program as they were set by the cross-community working group on auction proceeds, and also as they were worked on by ICANN Org during the implementation design phase. The ICANN grant program is expected to make a difference in the internet ecosystem and positively impact people across the globe by investing in creative and innovative projects that further our vision of a single, open, and globally interoperable internet. The expected outcome is going to be, that's what we wish and we are going to work on to make sure it happens, a broader and more diverse user base with greater capacity to further develop and improve the internet around the world. If we can go to the next slide, please.

So as we all know, the ICANN mission is to help ensure the stable and secure operation of the internet unique identifier systems. It's very important, and this is one of the first requirements of the ICANN grant program, that projects are consistent with the ICANN mission. That is what is on this slide. As I said, the project should be also consistent with the ICANN grant program objectives, which we'll speak about. Next slide, please.

Regarding the development, if we can go one more slide, please.

So where the ICANN grant program comes from. As Jonathan was saying, in 2012, that's the year when the last new gTLD round was launched, and the round was meant to introduce new generic top-level domains. Any established entity could apply to operate a gTLD registry, and as we, you know, by memory we know, there were nearly 2,000 applications, and to date there have been more than 1,200 new gTLDs that since then have been introduced into the domain name system. In some cases, more than one entity applied to operate the same extension, the same top-level domain. However, as we know, by the way the domain name system is configured, there could be only one registry per top-level domain, and therefore there was a procedure in case multiple entities applied for the same top-level domain. If we can go to the next slide, please.

So there were several methods to determine the ultimate registry for the new gTLDs. In cases where resolution between two or more entities could not be reached, there was a last resort auction run by ICANN authorized auction service providers. The proceeds generated by those auctions were set aside and they are called new gTLD auction proceeds or auction proceeds. One more slide, please.

So the ICANN community outlined that proceeds from auctions will be reserved and earmarked until the uses of funds are determined. Funds must be used in a manner that directly supports ICANN mission and core values and allows ICANN to maintain its not-for-profit status. A cross-community working group was established to determine the use of the auction proceeds and the grant program emerged as the method to disburse the auction proceeds in line with ICANN mission. Therefore the ICANN grant program is one of the greatest achievements of the

ICANN community in terms of getting together and determining the use of the auction proceeds. And today here we are to present to you the grant program which we have been doing extensively over the past year and the cross-community working group submitted their final report to the ICANN board. The final report was approved a couple of years ago and now we are about to launch the first cycle of the grant program. One more slide, please.

And with that I'm going to leave the floor to my colleague Shayna Robinson from the grant program director. She joined ICANN just last year, although as we say it feels like she's been always with the grant program implementation team since the very start. She's carrying with her great and extensive expertise on global grant programs. So with that said, I'm leaving the floor to Shayna. Thank you, Shayna.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you so much, Giovanni, and thank you to everyone here and everyone online for inviting us to come and speak with you about the grant program. As Giovanni said, I just joined ICANN last summer and so I wasn't here for all of the activities with the CCWG on auction proceeds and all of the things that Giovanni just outlined, but I am here at the finish line, which is a really exciting place to be. So I just want to take some time today to talk a little bit about specifics and what's going to happen with this first cycle of grant funding.

The objectives that were outlined in the cross-community working group final report are here on the screen. The objectives of the grant program, again, align very well with the mission of ICANN, so there should be no surprises. The first is around benefiting the development,

distribution, evolution of the structures that support the Internet's unique identifier systems, providing needed 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 greater Internet community, and finally, addressing diversity and participation and inclusion across all regions and stakeholder communities. So this is really what the grant program is focused on and what we are hoping to achieve with all the great projects that we will support. If we can go to the next slide.

So the pot of funding right now is a little over \$200 million, but we're not going to give all of that out at the start. Funds will be disbursed in tranches. The first tranche for this first funding cycle in 2024 will be for \$10 million. We're doing that so that we have time and opportunity to improve our systems, to improve decisions that we've made. If things aren't working as expected or we encounter some challenges, we have opportunities to iterate and to improve what we're doing, so that's helpful. For this first tranche, we will make awards from \$50,000 to \$500,000. And again, these things may change as we look at future cycles and other rounds of funding, but we want to be sure that we have a good place to start where we think most folks expect us to start. If we go to the next slide.

I'll talk a little bit about who can apply, and this is a question that we've been getting a lot around eligibility, who is eligible to apply, who can access the funding. The first piece is that any organization interested in applying must be a charitable organization. The word charitable means different things in different countries and different contexts, so I'm not able to tell you directly today whether or not your organization would

be charitable, but there is an expectation that all eligible applicants would be charitable.

They must not be the subject of any U.S. sanctions. Because ICANN is headquartered in the U.S., we have to abide by specific regulation and laws related to the U.S. government, so that means we have to be mindful of certain regulations related to trade. Having no conflicts of interest with ICANN, I know this is a big question, we've been hearing a lot of discussion about this. I know in this very participatory environment here at ICANN, where every stakeholder gets an opportunity to say how they feel and what they think should happen, it can be difficult to put boundaries around who can and cannot participate. These are things that we would work to improve as we move along, but there are certain legal requirements that we have that would restrict certain participation or beneficiaries of the program. They must also meet all applicable standards for background checks and reputation, as well as having a bank account in the organization's name that can receive funding from a U.S. institution. If we go to the next slide, we'll talk a bit about activities that are eligible.

Again, as Giovanni mentioned, being consistent with ICANN's mission, we want to make sure that we're not funding things that are really outside of the scope of the mission of ICANN. The second is around duplicating activities that are already funded by ICANN. ICANN has lots of funding streams and projects that they support through sponsorship, fellowship, and other funding programs, and we want to ensure that we don't duplicate those efforts, that we keep those streams separate as they have their own objectives attached to them. We want to be sure that we are mindful of that.

Then lastly, again, as ICANN is a public benefit corporation and has charitable status, there are certain obligations that we have based on regulation of the United States government that we have to abide by. So we are not able to support political or lobbying activities, any activities that may lead to the private benefit of individuals, and no unlawful activity in the jurisdiction or the country where those activities are happening.

So what can be funded? We talked about what cannot be funded, but what can be funded? Again, projects that are really aligned to the mission and reviewing, again, the mission is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems as described in the bylaws, but also those projects that align to those objectives that we just reviewed at the beginning. So we request that all of the projects and proposals that we receive align to specific themes and work areas that are connected to those objectives. If we go to the next slide, we'll go through the first one.

The first theme is around the Internet's unique identifier systems. So this is a broad-ranging theme, but within that, we have specific work areas that we've defined that projects should align to one or more under this theme. The first is around supporting standards development to increase the operation of the unique identifier systems. If we go right -- sorry, left to right, supporting long-term usability and sustainability of the DNS. So there are lots of challenges that we hope projects will address there. Strengthening security and stability, obviously that's a big issue. If we go to the second row, universal acceptance, so this is around different scripts, either right to left or left to right, right to left, scripts and languages to make sure that our

systems are inclusive and able to be accessed by many different folks, different cultures and languages. Promoting innovation and projects that expand the use and reimagine the use of our unique identifier systems. And then finally, improving the performance of those systems as well.

The next theme, if we go to the next slide, is more around the Internet more broadly, a unified Internet. So this work -- the work areas under this theme are around advancing open access to the Internet, also around interoperability and managing contingencies and issues that impact folks' ability to connect to the DNS or to use it as expected, and then also enhancing resiliency and sustainability of the Internet at local, global levels. So again, these themes are pretty broad because we want to make sure that folks can see their projects and see the work that they're already doing reflected in them, but we also want to be sure that we, again, align to ICANN's mission as we search for those projects.

There are two additional themes, if we go to the next slide, that are sort of overarching or transversal themes that we really hope to promote throughout and weave throughout all of the work that we're doing here. The first one is around diversity, participation, and inclusion of underserved populations. In our applicant guide, we have a wonderful definition that we worked really hard to write about underserved populations, so please take a look at that. But we want to ensure that we're bringing folks along for the ride, the folks who aren't necessarily at the table currently but who are stakeholders nonetheless. We want to ensure that we're bringing them into the fold.

And then the last is around capacity development. We hope that we can fund projects that really have a lasting impact of the beneficiaries so that they can carry forward any impact or outcomes that they've achieved through the project. So not just, you know, we're here for a year and then the project's over and no one hears about it after that, but something that can really develop the capacity of beneficiaries.

If we go to the next slide, there are a few things, again, that cannot be funded. And we've talked about these, but I just want to make sure that we reiterate them. Again, any projects that duplicate activities that we're already funding, so if there are projects that are funded through the Emergency Assistance Program or things like that, those projects would not be able to be funded through the program. Again, anything that leads to the private benefit of individuals, any political lobbying activity, and anything that would be considered unlawful in the country in which the activity is taking place. If we go to the next slide.

How will we select applications? And I know this is a big question people have been asking us here this week but also prior to us arriving here in San Juan. Our applications will be, we expect all applicants to submit applications through the submittable platform which we are currently building out. All applications must be submitted through that platform. Please don't email them to me because I'm not going to be able to register them for you. Once we receive those applications, there will be several rounds of checks and review that we have to administer. The first is around admissibility. We want to ensure that everything required for the application is there and that it's eligible to move through the process. There are different eligibility checks, again around conflicts of interest or charitable status that we have to check and ensure that the

application meets those requirements. And then finally, an independent application assessment panel that really will be the large review to assess the success of the project or the application and the proposed activities. So it's not just Giovanni and I sitting in a room making decisions but really up to an independent panel who will make some decisions about applications that will be funded. If we go to the next slide.

So what is the panel going to be looking at? There are some, a bit of a rubric and again all of this information is detailed in our applicant guide so don't feel like you have to take copious notes at the moment. But if you check out our guide, you'll see the rubric that will absolutely be used by the panel to assess applications. First, again, we want to ensure that those applications align to the mission and align to the objectives of the program. Secondly, we want to make sure that the project speaks to a defined challenge. While some things may be nice to have, if there's no real impact that we can see from that solution, well, maybe that's not the best opportunity to fund. We also want to ensure that there's a comprehensive work plan and that there's adequate planning for activities that are realistic and feasible. If we go to the next slide, there are a few more.

We also hope that applicants will consider risk. There are lots of risks. The world is ever changing. We don't operate in vacuums. And so we want to make sure that projects really assess and think about those risks and strategies to mitigate them. We also want to ensure that the budget is reasonable. The panel will be assessing that as well and to ensure that makes sense. And then finally that the team who is slated

to implement the project has the ability and expertise to do so. If we can go to the next slide.

I'll hand it back over to Giovanni to go through the next steps. Thank you so much.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you Shayna. And we have seen, I've seen in the chat there are a couple of questions and there was also a hand up. We'll collect questions and answer them at the end of the presentation if that's okay. And so I'm going through the next part which is the next steps. I fear that we are missing recommendation seven. Are we? Yeah. So if we can go, okay. So if we can go to, yes, next slide.

So the opening is on the 25th of March. So in a couple of weeks' time from now we are going to have the opening of the application window. So we are 15:00 UTC and the application window will remain open until the 24th of March, 20:00 UTC. Those are 60 days and we have received some questions about those 60 days because, you know, some of the possible applicants have said that maybe they are not sufficient. However, we'd like to reassure you that the application form that is going to be online is simple and accessible. It's not a dramatic application form like those application forms that some international organizations are using. We have been trying to make it very simple. It's an application form that forces for you the opportunity for any applicant once you register and you start input the data for the application that is automatically, everything is automatically autosaved, which is quite important. So you can really work online and use this application form as a sort of project management tool until you

feel ready to submit the proposal. At the time you click submit, that's submitted. No way back. It's just, you know, that moment is going to be one way towards the assessment of the application. And if we can go to the next slide, please.

So at present, as I said, we are working on the version number three of the applicant guide. The applicant guide has been posted on the ICANN grant program webpage on icann.org. The applicant guide version two has been posted last week. And at the top of the applicant guide version two, you can find a list of the changes that were introduced against the previous version. Those changes are not impacting any of the key elements of the program or the procedures, but are mainly changes to refine the language and make it clearer for ensuring the accessibility of the applicant guide.

The applicant guide version three is going to be published on the 15th of March and translations of the guide in the other languages will follow. For applicant guide version three, the main, let's say, new elements are going to be reference and more information about the online application form as well as the privacy policy. On the 25th of March, we are going to open the window for the first cycle that will close on the 24th of May, as I said. And then from early June to October 2024, we are going to go through the admissibility and eligibility initial checks followed by the assessment by the independent panel on the application. And the assessment is on the content of the application. So the independent panel, which we are saying independent panel, but actually they're going to be panels because that depends on the number of applications that we are going to receive. So the

independent panel assessment will be on the content of the project's applications that we are going to receive.

In November 2024, we will run through the final eligibility checks on successful applications. And therefore, currently, the estimated timeframe for the submission to the board of the final slate of successful application is December 2024. The board is expected to make a resolution on the final slate of successful applications. And the final slate will be accompanied by proper documentation to explain how the procedures for the assessment of the projects were followed in accordance with the cross-community working group recommendations. If we can go to the next slide, please.

So as we know, continuous improvement is key to ensuring the ICANN grant program functions they move forward as intended. So the cross-community working group recommendations, they recommended that at the end of each cycle, there should be an evaluation of the cycle that will inform possible refinements and changes to future cycles. And that is what is going to happen at the end of the first grant cycle. The cross-community working group on auction proceeds also recommended that there should be an external evaluation at the end of a certain number of cycles, which is also something that we are going to have implemented in the coming cycles. The timing of the external review will be conducted based on the needs of the program and as we move forward with the implementation of the different cycles. If we can go to the next slide, please.

Where can you stay up to date? As I said, there is a dedicated ICANN grant program page, which is divided into sections with a section that

is about the applicant guide, a section that is about the key documents of the program. In the current version of the applicant guide, at the end, you will have the terms and conditions that the applicant is expected to sign off when submitting the application, as well as the grant agreement template that will be used for successful applicants when they are invited to sign the grant agreement. So this page also contains an FAQ section. FAQs are regularly updated and there is a sort of nearly similar section that is on the community.icann.org site. So there are two ways for you to be always fully informed, both on the ICANN Org official web page and also on the community web page. One more slide, please.

We also have opened a channel with all of you, not only the ICANN community, but anybody who wants to have information about the grant program. We have a dedicated grant program email address and we respond nearly in real time to mails that we are receiving at grantprogram@icann.org. And also we are having the ICANN main help desk that is providing support to questions relating to the grant program. Any question that cannot be answered by the ICANN help desk is escalated to the grant program team.

Now before we move to questions, I think there was an issue with the slides because there was another section which was about recommendation 7. I am going to speak to this. I am sorry, there are no slides. There was a subsequent version of the slides that was produced. So recommendation 7 is one of the 12 recommendations that were produced by the cross-community working group on auction proceeds. The implementation operations team, my team, is dealing with recommendations on a daily basis. We know that some recommendations are a bit more special than others in their

implementation because sometimes they are a bit more challenging. The recommendation is a recommendation says that existing ICANN accountability mechanisms such as the IRP or other appeal mechanisms cannot be used to challenge a decision from the independent project applications evaluation panel to approve or not approve an application. Applicants not selected should receive further details about where information can be found about the next round of applications as well as any educational materials that may be available to assist applicants. The cross-community working group recognizes that there will need to be an amendment to the fundamental bylaws to eliminate the opportunity to use the request for reconsideration and independent review panel to challenge grant decisions.

Now this recommendation, as I just read, sets out limitations on the possibility to challenge decisions made on individual applications to grants. The spirit of this recommendation is to minimize the use of proceeds for purposes other than grants such as administrative legal costs. The recommendation was developed before implementation and now that we are into the implementation of the program, we know that not all decisions relating to applications are going to be made by the independent panel because there are going to be decisions about the eligibility and admissibility that ICANN Org, the grant program core team, as well as in cooperation with other departments will be in charge of that.

In Hamburg, the board tried to address this issue in its resolution directing ICANN Org to use terms and conditions to limit applicant access to ICANN accountability mechanism. Non-applicants or third parties were not subject to this limitation. From Hamburg until some

weeks ago, the board has heard the concerns of some members of the community about the resolution and has identified a path forward. That is why a few days ago we have sent a letter to the chartering organizations, those organizations that were behind the cross-community working group on auction proceeds, to propose the path forward which is made of two main actions. The first one is a refinement of the recommendation language which basically is to remove from the recommendation language the phrase from the independent project applications panel. So to make clear that decisions are not going to be the decision of the panel but are going to be the decisions on applications that are both by the independent panel and by ICANN Org. And therefore any decision regarding submitted applications and not just decisions made by the independent panel are exempted from ICANN accountability mechanism.

The second action which has already started is to amend the ICANN fundamental bylaws. And this has already started. And the proposed amendment which has been initiated by the board and is currently posted for public comment empowers cross-community working groups to make recommendations that would limit access to the IRP or reconsideration processes so long as certain thresholds are reached with participation by decisional participants in the ICANN empowered community. Any board decision on the slate of successful applications out of the first grant cycle is subject to the successful completion of this process which as I said is the process of amending recommendation 7 to refine the language and completing the fundamental bylaw process. As I said ICANN Org, the ICANN board has sent a letter to the chartering organization asking support to those two actions and I'm sure, we have

already liaised with Jonathan, this is going to be on your agenda to speak and discuss in the coming months.

In a nutshell, if the community approves the update to recommendation 7 and the fundamental bylaws amendment, then the board will be able to move forward at the end of the year and approve the slate of successful applications. So this is a dependency on the process that with the work working together and your support we hope is going to be going in the right direction so that we can start disbursing the auction proceeds funds to projects that have been assessed as successful.

With that said, I know I spoke a lot, I know that this part was a bit tricky. Please forgive me, it was something that I wanted to share with you so that you have a full picture of where we stand with the grant program. We are now opening the floor to questions. And again, thank you for having us.

AZIZ HILALI:

Thank you for your presentation. I'm very happy that ICANN finally decided to keep this type of financial support coming from the auctions to help within those programs that are interesting to many organizations, non-profit organization. I heard this word you use, charitable in English. Do you mean non-profit when you say charitable?

Second question about the form, the form you use to make that request is written in different languages. What languages is it written on? I don't know if you know our organization, we have ALSes who some of them are NGOs and they're all non-profit. So these organizations should be

eligible for this program. We talk about it quite a bit when in 2012 there were a lot of requests for the same gTLD as we said earlier. We had auctions and we always ask ICANN what will you be doing with this money. So I am quite happy that we have this results now.

I am in academia so I would like to know if there is an opportunity here or a priority in order to encourage universities to start courses on internet governance in order to talk about these challenges about DNS, etc. I had courses at the university and engineers, telecom engineers have no idea of what a root server is, how a DNS is managed and it would be a great experience. It should be among the priorities. So we could encourage such universities to introduce such classes linked to whatever the internet is, not necessarily just ICANN.

Last question. When it comes to assessment, if it is quite a large project, will there be stages of financing? Will they be done? Will it be staggered? And it's happened before. It happened among other organizations. If an ALS or an organization cannot complete the project, do you plan to stop the financing at some point or are you going to start financing stages by stages? Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

This is Shayna again. Thank you so much. I was taking notes. I hope I have them. So to your first question around charitable status, yes, in fact, we do mean non-profit, but again, that status is different around the world. So in the United States, for example, there's a status of 501(c)(3) which would make an organization tax exempt. But that status doesn't carry weight around the world. So there are other designations that organizations receive in their countries. So we have to do

something called an equivalency determination to ensure that, in fact, the standard that exists in other countries around non-profit or charitable status equals that in the United States, again, because that's where ICANN is headquartered. So yes, non-profit would be another name for that.

In terms of English or in terms of languages, you will note that the applicant guide has been published in additional UN languages. So information is available. And again, you can find that on our website. But all applications are expected to be submitted in English. That is a requirement. That is an admissibility requirement. We are not able to manage applications in other languages. So those should be submitted in English. However, you should note that we're not testing the actual English grammar in the application. So as long as you're able to communicate as best you can what you're trying to do, we'll work with you to ensure that.

In terms of actual types of applicants, of course, universities, academics, colleges, all kinds of places that are non-profits or working towards these types of things or thinking about these types of things are really exactly the types of organizations that we hope would apply. There are think tanks, civil society organizations, digital rights organizations, all of these folks who are in the ecosystem who are not necessarily the big corporations. You know, of course, they have their place as well. But there are many others that we hope that this program will target and support.

And then lastly, on the funding, so for successful applicants, the money will be distributed to those applicants in tranches. So you won't get all

of the money up front. There will be a sort of schedule of payments that will coordinate with reporting, financial and narrative reporting that will be due. So for example, a portion of the total award will be given at the beginning of the project. A few months later, we'll request a report. As that report is reviewed and approved, then we would release another tranche of the funding. So that's both for us, as ICANN, to be good stewards and to have accountability around where the money is going, but also for projects to be able to manage the award and to flag any challenges or issues as they go about implementing their projects. So I hope that answers all of your questions. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

All right. Michelle, do you want to read a question out of the question pod, please?

MICHELLE DESMYTER:

Certainly. Thank you, Jonathan. This is Michelle from staff. We have a question in the Q&A pod from Lance Hinds. What specific information will you need from nonprofit charitable organizations outside the United States?

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you. That's a good question. So if there are documents, governing documents, incorporation documents in your country that outline the type of organization that you are, you should submit that along with your application. For institutions or organizations within the U.S., we simply need your EIN number to validate that. But for other

organizations, we would just ask that you submit those documents. Ongoing, there will be a process to, again, conduct an equivalency determination. That's done by a team of lawyers. That's not something that I will do or that Giovanni will do. So that will be the process for that. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK: All right. [inaudible] go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Jonathan. Thank you both for that presentation. It's an exciting time, and I think that this is going to take the organization to—really take it to another level. I'm very excited about it. We went through this quickly, and I will go and look and learn more from the site. But just one of the things that I saw, or please correct me if I'm wrong, once we go through this process of assessment and so forth, then it finally shows up and it goes to the board. What is the purpose of it going to the board if we've had independent panelists and everything doing the work? What will the board do?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah. This is a good question. The board is expected to approve the final slate of successful applications. So this is in line with the recommendations of the cross-community working group. So there are the steps of the admissibility and eligibility, and then there is the independent panel assessment of the project, the content of the project. And then we are going to have further admissibility and

eligibility checks because the time passes. So we want to have a final run of those checks on the applications that the panel will return to us as successful applications. And once that step is complete, everything goes to the board because the board has this fiduciary duty to make sure that the process has been followed and the rules of the grant program were applied to determine the slate of successful applications. So the board will not look at any application per se. The board will approve the fact that the process has been followed to reach that slate of successful applications.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

I'm going to jump in the queue for just a second to follow on that question. There's a natural tension in your presentation between the idea that the application should be in alignment with ICANN's mission, but at the same time not duplicative. And ICANN's mission is fairly narrow. And so I'm wondering, is there some underpinning there of where that overlap exists that the mission could be defined as more broadly? I mean, like Aziz brought up the idea of an Internet governance course, for example. Is that considered to be within the mission? Or more close to home, I think there have been some people talking about helping applicants for new TLDs to do things that ICANN feels uncomfortable doing because of their fiduciary liability. Is that something, not to hold you to it, but does that hypothetically feel like something that's aligned with the mission, not duplicative, but close enough that it would be something that might be approved?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah, Jonathan, it's a good question. So as we said, the project should be consistent with ICANN's mission and also aligned with the ICANN grant program objectives and themes. So what Aziz was saying, we cannot say now if that's a project that is going to be successful or eligible or whatever. But you have to not only look at the ICANN mission, but also look at the objectives and the themes. And so we have tried to basically make a cascade from the ICANN mission to the objectives, which is a process that was already done by the cross community working group on auction proceeds. And then we have translated the objectives into themes and work areas. So again, you have to look at the big pictures of mission, objectives, teams, and work areas.

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Maybe I can just add also. So it's really about actual projects and funding that is currently underway and being funded by ICANN. For example, if there's a project that's being funded through the Coalition for Digital Africa, that project would not then also be eligible to be funded under the grant program. So it's going to take some learning and some figuring, finding our way through this, because I know that the universe here is really broad. And there are lots of folks who are working on things. But I think the spirit of it is to ensure that we're not duplicating and spending money for a project where we're already-- yeah, double dipping. We just want to avoid that.

JONATHAN ZUCK: All right. Michelle, perhaps another one from the Q&A pod.

MICHELLE DESMYTER: Thank you, Jonathan. Our next question is from [inaudible]. “Thanks for the information. One question. Can an applicant be leader of a project and partner in another one, or even be partner in more than one project proposal, or any applicant can only be part in one proposal?”

SHAYNA ROBINSON: That's a good question. And thank you for that. How we've defined it in our applicant guide is that any person, any applicant, can submit as many applications as they would like. They can be a part of as many applications as they would like. However, we are only able to fund one project per applicant for this first round. That includes partnerships. So we don't want situations where one particular organization receives the bulk of the funding. We want to avoid that. We want to ensure that we're distributing the proceeds fair and equally, as equitably as possible to those who are interested. So that is the rule for this cycle.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thank you. Claire?

CLAIRE CRAIG: Hi. Claire Craig for the record. Thank you so much for this presentation. I have a few questions, but I'm going to make them very succinct in the interest of time. So number one, I assume that organizations that are not already part of the ICANN ecosystem can participate, so not necessarily just ALSes. Can projects that have already started, not within ICANN, just projects that you're working on, will they be eligible as well? You spoke to the ability and expertise, so therefore can

consultants and experts be used in the project, and do they have to be named when the application is submitted? And finally, the whole idea of duplication. So there are some projects that are funded by ICANN on a case-by-case basis, such as sponsorship for capacity building. If you wanted to have something over a longer term, will that be eligible? And I'm speaking specifically, you have capacity building in regions, and so each time you're going to do it, you apply to ICANN for funding, and they may give you small funding, but the size is nothing near what you're getting for this grant. And finally, will travel be included, can travel be included as part of your grant proposal? Thank you.

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Thank you. That was very succinct, and again, been jotting them down. So the first question of outsiders or folks who are not already involved in the ICANN community, absolutely, yes. Those are absolutely the folks that we want to bring in. Again, if we think about that overarching theme of increasing participation and inclusion, absolutely, we want to bring them in.

For the question around projects that have already started, yes, that's okay. We know that we don't anticipate or expect that these would necessarily be brand new ideas, although innovation and how you're approaching the challenge is a part of the rubric and what the panel will be assessing. So while yes, some of those things or activities may be ongoing, it is the applicant's responsibility, and I would encourage them to really talk about the innovative aspects of their approach and how that fits in with what they're doing.

In terms of consultants and advisors, again, if you look in our applicant guide, we have some information around budgets and things that can be included. Yes, they can, and yes, they should be named in the application. There is a space to provide information about project leaders and implementers that we would expect folks would provide names for that.

Again, in terms of duplication of activities, it's going to be tricky, but again, the spirit of that is that we don't want to double dip. We want to be fair and give everyone an opportunity to participate. So if you know for a fact that that's something that you're already receiving funding for, please don't submit it for the grant program. And then lastly, travel. Yes, that is also a budget category that we would include. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

All right, we've only got five minutes left, so let's not do any more compound questions. Just one question at a time. Next, Michelle, back to online, please.

MICHELLE DESMYTER:

Thank you. We have a question from Alfredo Calderon. Does the subject of any U.S. sanctions apply to all the partners in a collaborative project or only to the lead organization?

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

Yes, it does apply to all partners. And that is not an ICANN or requirement. That is a U.S. government requirement. And so we have to

ensure that any funding that goes out the door to any recipient or beneficiary meets that requirement and standard. Yes.

PRANAV TIWARI:

Greetings. I'm Pranav. I'm an ICANN 79 fellow. For the record, speaking on my own behalf. Great presentation. Thank you. I wanted to understand that the non-profit status is a tricky term in many geographies in a country like India, while many maybe non-profit organizations receiving foreign funding is heavily regulated and it's tricky. I wanted to understand if there is thinking around in the future there would be possibility of giving grants to individuals as well?

SHAYNA ROBINSON:

That's a good question. And I do know the India case specifically, it can be tough with regulation there to receive funding, foreign investment in funding that way. At the moment, there's not currently a discussion to open the program to individuals. But again, based on our reviews and as we go through the cycles, that could change. But at the moment, no, that's not a consideration.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Alright, Michelle, back to online.

MICHELLE DESMYTER:

Question from [inaudible]. Is there funding available for UA outside of the UA Day funding?

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Yes, yes. So that is one of the work areas that is included under the first theme of the program. So yes, there is.

JONATHAN ZUCK: That's great. Thank you. Lilian.

LILIAN IVETTE DE LUQUE: Thank you, Jonathan. My question has to do based on the context of Latin America. When we submit the application, should we attach documents that would certify the legal existence of that organization that is applying for the grant? Because many times in our countries, we need to renew those documents, like for the Chamber of Commerce saying that this is an organization that has no lucrative ends. And also, sometimes we need some type of clearance saying that there is no legal procedures instated against our organizations. Do we need to add that to the documents?

SHAYNA ROBINSON: Yes. So we would ask that you provide for us any governing documents that you have for your organization to help support us in determining your eligibility or the organization's eligibility for the program. So whatever you have to provide, that would be helpful. And we will have partners who will manage the equivalency determination who may come back and ask for additional information to verify and validate what's been stated in the application. So the more information that you can provide, the easier it will be for us to make those determinations.

JONATHAN ZUCK: All right. Last question. Andrew Mack.

ANDREW MACK: Thanks. This sounds really exciting, but very broad, right? I'm one of the people that was on the applicant support group for many years. And so, we know how complex this could be. Two pieces of this, right? One are choosing the right groups at entry and the criteria around that, and the other one is what, if any, support those groups get and how you, as ICANN—I know there's a review process. Can you talk a little bit about the internal capacity that you have or you need to build to support these kinds of projects and a little bit more about how the vetting process will work to make sure you get quality at the front end?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah. Thank you. So, the grant program department has been established last year to make sure that the grant program is run properly. And we are, of course, going to expand the department depending on the number of applications. Currently, for ICANN, it's quite an uncharted territory because we have not had any first cycle yet. So, we'll see, you know, at the time we start with the application window that is opening, how much, you know, how many applications we are going to receive. And based on that, we'll make sure that there is sufficient support, internal and external, to develop the process, as I mentioned, so that, you know, everything is run smoothly between June and the end of October for the evaluation of the applications. And in terms of the review process, that is also something that is going to be built on, based, again, on the number of applications, based on the success of the first grant cycle. So there are several elements that we

are putting together to design the review process at the end of each cycle and every certain cycle.

I just want to say that I and Shayna, we're going to be available upstairs at the ICANN booth in the next hour, today and tomorrow, and that tomorrow at 3:00 PM local time, there's going to be in the main boardroom a session about the grant program where we give you also further opportunity to ask us questions. Thank you for having us. We are beyond the time. We remain available. There is a grant program help desk, grantprogram@icann.org. We are going to be upstairs the coming hour, today and tomorrow. So anytime, feel free to reach to us. Thank you so much.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thank you. There are a couple of questions online. We'll make sure and get them to you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]