

Discussion Group Summary - How We Meet Public Comment Proceeding

The "How We Meet" project is a collaborative effort between the community and the ICANN org to assess how the 2014 ICANN Public Meetings Strategy is being implemented. The project aims to identify **practical options** for planning and conducting ICANN Public Meetings that will enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, optimize cost efficiencies, and support the evolving needs of the community. It is important to note that this project is intended to be a high-level review of the implementation, not a comprehensive review of the 2014 strategy itself.

The project resulted in an [Initial Project Report](#), dated 31 March 2025, which outlined several potential practical changes to the meeting structure, location model, and format for community input via a Public Comment proceeding. During the [Public Comment proceeding](#), five SO/ACs, seven SG/C/RALOs, five organizations and governments, and six individuals submitted their comments.

Key Topics

Possible Changes to the ICANN Public Meeting Structure

1. Shortening the Community Forum by One Day

- *Rationale:* The aim is to optimize meeting room usage based on demand and adjust the schedule to gain efficiencies. Data indicates a consistent decrease in meeting room usage on the final two days of a six-day meeting. Estimated annual savings from shortening by one day could exceed US\$460,000, stemming from reduced venue rental, lower travel costs, and streamlined scheduling.
- *Community View:* There is **broad support** for shortening the Community Forum by one day among many participants, who point to underused rooms on later days, potential cost savings, and logistical streamlining. ALAC and GAC support efficiency improvements but stress that any reduction **must not harm community engagement, inclusivity, or participation**. GAC suggests reinvesting savings into openness, onboarding, and regional diversity. Several respondents recommend implementing this change as a **pilot** with thorough community review. There is a consensus that a shorter format must **preserve critical sessions, opportunities for newcomers, and policy engagement**. Suggestions include using more virtual preparatory sessions and hybrid tools. Conversely, several groups, including the BC and RrSG, **do not support** shortening the meeting, warning it could **reduce inclusivity**, make participation harder for those with multiple roles, and disadvantage participants from underrepresented regions or with limited resources. Some emphasize that **cost savings should not override effective, inclusive engagement**.

2. Moving High-Attendance Sessions Earlier

- *Rationale:* Grouping sessions like the Public Forum, Geopolitical Forum, and Welcome Ceremony on a single day can optimize venue use, reduce costs, and set a strong start for the week. This would limit the need for the main ballroom to a single day.
- *Community View:* **Many favor** consolidating high-attendance sessions earlier for optimization and cost reduction, seeing it as an opportunity for early cross-community engagement. GAC and ALAC agree with optimizing scheduling provided the value of these sessions is maintained. **Concerns and alternative views include** cautions against moving the Public Forum too early, as some argue it's most

effective at the end of the meeting after discussions have progressed. Suggestions include only moving the Geopolitical Forum or exploring alternative venues for the Public Forum. Concerns exist that compressing these sessions might reduce the depth and quality of discussion.

3. Scheduling Community Wrap-Up Sessions at the End

- *Rationale:* Consolidating wrap-up sessions at the end of the last day aims for efficiency and a clear conclusion.
- *Community View:* **Most respondents support** consolidating wrap-up sessions at the end for efficiency and better use of earlier days for substantive work. Some suggest holding wrap-up sessions virtually after the meeting to free up in-person time. However, it's noted that attendance at wrap-up sessions is already low at the end of meetings.

4. Adding a New Board-Community Engagement Session

- *Rationale:* Adding an open session intends to improve transparency, reduce duplication, and foster more inclusive dialogue by allowing the Board and community to hear from one another and potentially reduce discussing the same topics separately with individual groups.
- *Community View:* **Many support** adding this session. Suggestions include careful moderation, thematic focus, and potentially integrating dialogues earlier in the week. **Reservations and opposition** exist, with GAC, BC, RrSG, and others cautioning that individual Board-group meetings serve distinct purposes and should be retained. GAC specifically opposes replacing focused dialogue with only a general session, emphasizing that tailored interactions are crucial for effective engagement. Concerns are raised that a single session could dilute specific input or limit the depth of engagement.

Potential Updates to the Meeting Rotation Model

5. Prioritizing Economical Meeting Locations and Returning to Previous Locations

- *Rationale:* Carefully selecting locations in advance that offer economical travel, venue, and accommodation can achieve significant savings while maintaining regional inclusivity. Early identification, especially on a multi-year basis, enhances predictability, reduces logistical uncertainties, and lowers costs. Returning to previous locations can leverage established venues and cost efficiencies, potentially enabling multi-year contracts. Estimated potential savings range from 10-20% on meeting costs, potentially US\$400,000 - US\$800,000 per meeting.
- *Community View:* There is **broad support** for prioritizing cost-effective venues and returning to previous successful locations within regional rotation requirements. Many acknowledge the benefits of cost savings, logistical familiarity, and improved planning certainty. **Emphasis is placed on maintaining regional rotation, accessibility, visa facilitation, and safety.** Transparency in selection criteria and balancing repeat venues with opportunities for new locations are encouraged to maintain inclusivity and regional engagement. GAC and ALAC stress that savings should be reinvested in inclusivity, onboarding, and regional participation, and that **regional diversity must not be sacrificed for convenience or cost.**

Online vs. In-Person Meetings

6. Policy for Automatic Shift to Online-Only Meetings in Case of Force Majeur

- *Rationale:* Establishing a clear policy to automatically shift a meeting online if unforeseen circumstances necessitate moving from a planned venue could significantly mitigate the challenges

and high costs associated with relocating a venue at short notice. This would ensure continuity and minimize disruption. While certain costs (e.g., interpretation) might increase slightly, they are minimal compared to the significant costs of switching physical venues. Estimated potential savings exceed US\$4,000,000+.

- *Community View:* **Most support** a clear policy for shifting meetings online in case of unforeseen circumstances, emphasizing clear criteria, communication timelines, and robust technical infrastructure. **Concerns and safeguards** include warnings against making the shift truly “automatic” and stressing the need for high thresholds and community consultation before invoking the policy. GAC and ALAC agree that online should be a **contingency, not the default**, and that the impact on meeting objectives must be considered.

7. Converting One ICANN Public Meeting to Online-Only Every 4, 5, or 6 Meetings

- *Rationale:* Conducting an online-only meeting contributes to financial and environmental sustainability and leverages lessons from virtual meetings during the pandemic. Online meetings could also be scheduled to better accommodate specific time zones. Estimated savings from converting a hybrid meeting to virtual could amount to US\$3.6 million per meeting.
- *Community View:* **Some support** a regular online meeting for cost, environmental, or inclusivity reasons, but often with strong conditions and a preference for a rotational or pilot approach. GAC and ALAC suggest a **rotational model** (e.g., one virtual meeting every 4–5 meetings), with careful evaluation before permanent adoption. There is **strong opposition** from many, arguing that face-to-face engagement is **essential for trust, policy development, and the multistakeholder model**. They contend that virtual meetings cannot replicate the value of in-person interaction and informal “hallway conversations”.

8. Mixed-Model Meetings (Online Sessions + Optional In-Person Hubs)

- *Rationale:* Piloting this approach could potentially broaden participation and reduce costs.
- *Community View:* Views are **mixed and nuanced**. Some see value in piloting this approach if carefully designed to **avoid creating inequities**. Others are skeptical, citing risks of a **two-tier experience**, logistical complexity, and the potential for remote participants to be disadvantaged compared to those at physical hubs.

Additional Options and Suggestions

9. Cost-Saving Suggestions (Sponsorship, Fees)

- *Rationale:* To enhance financial sustainability. Suggestions include comprehensive sponsorship strategies, reducing non-essential in-person events, consolidating hotel arrangements, and exploring local partnerships. Potential savings from reducing networking receptions and coffee breaks unless sponsored are estimated at approximately \$365,000 annually or US\$120,000 per meeting. Introducing a conference registration fee was discussed but requires deeper analysis and raised significant concerns.
- *Community View:* There is **broad support** for optimizing sponsorship strategies and reducing non-essential in-person events. Suggestions include modest attendance fees *with waivers for those in need*, referencing practices by other organizations. Calls for better data and transparency on costs are frequent. GAC and ALAC urge that **savings be used to strengthen inclusivity, onboarding, and regional participation**, not solely to lower costs. Strong objections were raised regarding registration fees' potential adverse impact on less well-funded participants.

10. Session Prioritization

- *Rationale:* Implementing stricter criteria for session selection could streamline meetings.
- *Community View:* Several respondents recommend stricter criteria, suggesting that less critical or informational sessions be moved to online or Prep Week.

11. Thematic Clustering

- *Rationale:* Grouping sessions by theme could reduce redundancy and allow more focused engagement.
- *Community View:* This approach is suggested to reduce redundancy and allow more focused engagement.

12. Board "Open Hours"

- *Rationale:* Short, informal drop-in sessions are suggested to encourage broader participation and engagement between the Board and community members.
- *Community View:* These sessions are suggested to encourage broader participation.

13. Overarching Principles (GAC and ALAC Emphasis)

- GAC and ALAC stress that any changes must reinforce the **multistakeholder model**. **Inclusivity and Equity** are paramount; changes must be equitable, with consultation of affected groups, and benefits shared by all, not based solely on numbers or cost. They call for continual improvement of the **hybrid meeting experience** using the best available technology. Consideration of **environmental responsibility** is encouraged. Savings and efficiencies should be reinvested in **openness, inclusion, and onboarding** for new participants. **Transparency** in venue selection, scheduling, and policy changes is essential.

Immediate Next Steps

During ICANN83 in Prague, there will be a working session for the “How We Meet” Discussion Group. The session will focus on a review and discussion of the Public Comments received. As this will be a public session, there will be an opportunity for community members to observe the discussion and ask questions.

Annex: Summary Table

Option (as asked in the Public Comment Proceeding)	General Support	Yes	No
1.1. Do you or the group you represent support shortening the Community Forum by a day?	Yes	Individual: 6 Orgs/Govs: 4 SG/C/RALO: 3 SO/AC: 3 Total: 16	Orgs/Govs: 1 SG/C/RALO: 4 SO/AC: 1 Total: 6
1.2.a. Do you or the group you represent support moving the Public Forum and Geopolitical Forum earlier in the meeting, to the same day as the Welcome Ceremony and Executive Q&A session, to limit the need for the main ballroom to a single day?	Yes	Individual: 5 Orgs/Govs: 4 SG/C/RALO: 6 SO/AC: 4 Total: 19	Individual: 1 Orgs/Govs: 1 SG/C/RALO: 1 Total: 3
1.2.b. Do you or the group you represent support scheduling any community wrap-up sessions that may be needed in the final block at the end of the fifth and last day?	Yes	Individual: 6 Orgs/Govs: 5 SG/C/RALO: 5 SO/AC: 3 Total: 19	SG/C/RALO: 2 SO/AC: 1 Total: 3
1.2.c Do you or the group you represent support adding a new Board-community engagement session open to everyone, to discuss issues of broad common interest, to limit the need for the Board to discuss the same topics in isolation with individual groups?	Yes	Individual: 4 Orgs/Govs: 3 SG/C/RALO: 3 SO/AC: 4 Total: 14	Individual: 2 Orgs/Govs: 2 SG/C/RALO: 4 Total: 8
1.3. Do you or the group you represent have any suggestions for how a reduced 5-day Community Forum can also accommodate improved Board-community interactions while maintaining an adequate number of intra-community work sessions?	N/A		
1.4 Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic?	N/A		
2.1.a. Do you or the group you represent support prioritizing meeting locations that offer economical travel, venue and accommodation options while respecting the need to rotate ICANN Public Meetings across the various geographic regions, and on the understanding that this could mean returning to the same venue within a specific geographic region?	Yes	Individual: 5 Orgs/Govs: 5 SG/C/RALO: 6 SO/AC: 4 Total: 20	Individual: 1 SG/C/RALO: 1 Total: 2
2.1.b. Do you or the group you represent support returning to previous locations where this is feasible and within the geographical rotation requirement?	Yes	Individual: 6 Orgs/Govs: 5 SG/C/RALO: 7 SO/AC: 4 Total: 22	0

2.2. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic?	N/A		
3.1. Establish a policy to automatically shift an ICANN Public Meeting to an online format, should unforeseen circumstances arise that necessitate moving a meeting from a planned venue. Do you support this policy?	Yes	Individual: 5 Orgs/Govs: 5 SG/C/RALO: 6 SO/AC: 4 Total: 20	Individual: 1 SG/C/RALO: 1 Total: 2
3.2. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic?	N/A		
4.1. Do you or the group you represent support the option to convert one ICANN Public Meeting per year to an online format?	No	Individual: 4 Orgs/Govs: 1 SG/C/RALO: 1 SO/AC: 1 Total: 7	Individual: 2 Orgs/Govs: 4 SG/C/RALO: 6 SO/AC: 3 Total: 15
4.2.a Do you or the group you represent support conducting an online-only meeting once every few meetings (e.g., every fourth/fifth/sixth ICANN Public Meeting)?	No	Individual: 5 Orgs/Govs: 2 SG/C/RALO: 1 SO/AC: 2 Total: 10	Individual: 1 Orgs/Govs: 3 SG/C/RALO: 5 SO/AC: 2 Total: 11
4.2.b. Do you or the group you represent support starting with a pilot of a fourth ICANN Public Meeting in a calendar year, but holding this fourth meeting online?	No	Individual: 4 Orgs/Govs: 1 SG/C/RALO: 1 Total: 6	Individual: 2 Orgs/Govs: 4 SG/C/RALO: 5 SO/AC: 3 Total: 14
4.2.c. Do you or the group you represent support exploring a mixed-model where all the sessions are held online but attendees have the option of gathering in one physical location to maximize networking and relationship-building opportunities?	No	Individual: 2 Orgs/Govs: 2 SG/C/RALO: 1 Total: 5	Individual: 4 Orgs/Govs: 3 SG/C/RALO: 5 SO/AC: 2 Total: 14
4.3. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic?	N/A		
5. Do you or the group you represent have additional feedback and suggestions on how ICANN Public Meetings can remain financially sustainable without shifting costs to participants?	N/A		