

# How We Meet: Reviewing the Implementation of the ICANN Public Meetings Strategy

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## ccNSO Council Submission

<https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/proceeding/how-we-meet-reviewing-the-implementation-of-the-icann-public-meetings-strategy-09-04-2025/submissions/ccnso-council-19-05-2025>

## Public Comment Proceeding

<https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/proceeding/how-we-meet-reviewing-the-implementation-of-the-icann-public-meetings-strategy-09-04-2025>

### Instructions:

*Thank you for participating in this Public Comment proceeding. To streamline the feedback process, we are using a guided submission form that presents specific questions related to key options outlined in the "How We Meet" project report. The goal of this form is to gather targeted input on practical options for improving ICANN Public Meetings, including meeting structure, rotation models, hybrid capabilities, and cost-efficiency.*

*Please review each question carefully and provide your responses in the designated elds. You may respond to as many or as few questions as you wish, based on your expertise and interest. Your feedback will be reviewed by the "How We Meet" Discussion Group and incorporated into the next phase of analysis to refine recommendations for discussion at ICANN83 in June 2025. Clear, concise answers are encouraged to ensure your input can be effectively considered.*

## TOPIC #1: Shorten the Community Forum by one day (i.e., reduce its duration to a five-day meeting).

### RATIONALE:

Optimizing meeting room usage based on actual demand and adjusting the meeting schedule accordingly, to realize efficiency gains and enhance opportunities for Board-community interactions.

### QUESTIONS:

1.1. Do you or the group you represent support shortening the Community Forum by a day?

Yes

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*We support the proposal to shorten the ICANN Community Forum by one day. This adjustment could help consolidate the use of the main ballroom and related logistical resources into a single day, potentially reducing overall cost and operational complexity. It may also help to front-load the meeting with high-profile sessions, generating early momentum. However, several important considerations must be addressed:*

- **Safeguarding core functions:** While cost-efficiency and logistical improvements are valuable, ICANN meetings are central to community-driven policy development, governance, and trust-building. Any structural changes should not undermine the ability of the community to meaningfully participate, collaborate, or engage—particularly given the global and diverse nature of the ICANN ecosystem.
- **Support for parallel scheduling of plenary sessions:** The ccNSO supports the flexibility to hold plenary and cross-community sessions in parallel with other meetings—especially when the topics are not universally relevant i.e target different audiences. This ensures that Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees can continue their work without being unnecessarily disrupted by sessions that do not concern them directly.
- **Full use of Prep Week:** Informational briefings, policy updates, and other sessions not requiring in-person decision-making should be shifted to Prep Week wherever possible. This would ease the in-person schedule and help preserve time for interactive discussions during the Community Forum.
- **Maintaining consistency across ICANN meetings:** Recognizing the differences between the Community Forum, Policy Forum and Annual General Meeting, the ccNSO Council strongly supports a standard, high-level block schedule for each of the 3 kinds of ICANN meeting formats to ensure predictability and ease of planning across the community.
- **Inclusive decision-making:** Finally, we strongly urge ICANN to ensure that all parts of the community are adequately consulted before any structural changes are implemented. Broad input is essential to maintaining trust and ensuring that changes reflect the needs of the entire ecosystem.

**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/No/Other open-ended response**

**Yes**

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*This adjustment could help consolidate use of the main ballroom and related logistical resources into a single day, potentially reducing overall cost and operational complexity. It may also help to front-load the meeting with high-profile sessions, generating early momentum.*

*In particular the Geopolitical Forum, having an information sharing nature, seems more suitable to be a standing item in the Prep Week agenda, rather than an in-person session. This would avoid congestion and/or allow flexibility during the first meeting day.*

**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

**No**

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*Wrap-up sessions are valuable, but their impact is already limited by falling attendance toward the end of the meeting. If Wednesday becomes the final day, we expect that issue to shift, not resolve.*

**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**

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*We support the creation of an inclusive session to foster strategic dialogue between the Board and the community. This could become a valuable anchor point in the schedule, especially if it is open, structured, and focused on timely, cross-cutting issues. Careful curation of the agenda will be key.*

**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?**

**Yes**

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*In 2022 the ccNSO opted to have meetings with ccTLD-related Board members at each Community Forum, and with the full Board at every Annual General Meeting (AGM). This approach has proven to be effective in maintaining strong interactions between the Board and the community, and allowing for different meeting formats and respecting Board members' time. It may serve as a useful model for other communities to consider.*

*Other suggestions to consider:*

*Use virtual briefings or written exchanges ahead of the Community Forum, enabling more productive in-person discussions. Follow-up could also occur post-event to extend engagement beyond the 5-day limit.*

*Allocate a specific time slot within the schedule for multi-stakeholder dialogue, including Board participation. This preserves intra-community time while ensuring space for inter-community and Board interactions.*

**1.4 Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic? (8000 chars limit)**

**TOPIC #2: Within the meeting rotation requirement, prioritize meeting locations that offer economical travel, venue, and accommodation options; where feasible, return to previous locations for predictability and to allow for multi-year planning.**

**RATIONALE:**

By carefully selecting locations in advance that offer economical options for all in-person attendees, significant savings can be achieved while maintaining regional inclusivity. Early identification of specific locations, especially on a multi-year basis, will facilitate predictability in advance planning for all attendees, reduce logistical uncertainties, and lower costs associated with identifying and preparing new venues.

**QUESTIONS:**

**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**

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*We support the proposal to prioritize ICANN Public Meeting locations that offer economical travel, venue, and accommodation options—provided that this continues to respect the principle of regional rotation. We recognize that returning to certain venues within a region may provide cost savings and logistical efficiencies. However, such*

*decisions should be made with community inclusivity, equitable access, and long-term flexibility in mind.*

*We acknowledge that selecting meeting venues with favorable pricing for travel, accommodation, and facilities can significantly reduce the financial burden on ICANN org and on community participants. This is particularly valuable for ensuring participation from lower-resourced stakeholders, including small ccTLD operators, and technical community members from developing countries.*

*Allowing ICANN org to plan meetings well in advance—possibly through multi-year agreements with proven venues—can also support more efficient budgeting and reduce administrative overhead. When venues are known ahead of time, both the organization and community members are better able to plan and allocate resources accordingly.*

*While we support the idea of returning to cost-effective venues within a region, this must not come at the expense of the regional rotation model or intra-region accessibility. The rotation across and within ICANN's geographic regions is a critical part of ensuring global inclusivity and fostering trust among diverse stakeholders. It allows communities from different parts of the world to engage directly, often for the only time in a given cycle, and it ensures that ICANN is perceived as a globally representative institution. It must be recognised that some regions—such as Asia Pacific—are extremely large and internally diverse. Within-region selection must therefore consider intra-regional accessibility and equity. A venue in one part of a region may still be prohibitively difficult or expensive to access for others within that same region (e.g., Pacific island states or landlocked developing countries), and may be in a time zone that does not even support on-line attendance. Returning to the same inequitable venue repeatedly within a region would reinforce existing barriers to participation.*

*For any venue to be considered a viable repeat location, it must satisfy a broad range of criteria beyond cost. The most critical include:*

- ***Accessibility:*** *The venue should be a regional or international travel hub, and should be situated within the region so as to allow equitable access for all people in the region including underserved populations.*
- ***Affordability:*** *Lodging, meals, and transportation should be reasonably priced to support participation from a broad cross-section of stakeholders.*
- ***Visa accessibility:*** *Attendees should be able to obtain visas without unreasonable delay, cost, or discrimination. Visa refusal rates and processing timelines should be part of the assessment.*
- ***Safety and stability:*** *Locations must be assessed for political, environmental, and public health risks to ensure the safety of all participants.*

*Returning to a previously used venue should be based on demonstrated success, not simply contractual convenience. If a location has proven to be poorly accessible, inequitable in terms of intra-region accessibility, expensive for attendees, or problematic in terms of visas or infrastructure, it should not be used again—regardless of potential cost savings. A poor venue, when repeated, compounds existing participation gaps.*

*We note that while long-term planning and multi-year contracts can deliver important benefits, global conditions—such as political unrest, health crises, or economic shifts—can change rapidly. Therefore, while we support the principle of planning ahead,*

*ICANN org must retain the flexibility to reassess and change venues if local or global circumstances require it.*

*Finally, decisions on meeting locations must continue to be informed by community input. Input from the Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees, and from community participants across all regions, can provide vital insight into the lived experience of attending meetings in specific locations. ICANN org must ensure that any venue selection process includes transparent criteria and feedback loops to capture these perspectives.*

**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

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*While we support the idea of returning to cost-effective venues within a region, this must not come at the expense of the regional rotation model. The rotation across ICANN's geographic regions is a critical part of ensuring global inclusivity and fostering trust among diverse stakeholders. It allows communities from different parts of the world to engage directly, often for the only time in a given cycle, and it ensures that ICANN is perceived as a globally representative institution. At the same time, we recognize that some regions—such as Asia Pacific—are extremely large and internally diverse. Within-region selection must therefore consider intra-regional accessibility and equity. A venue in one part of a region may still be prohibitively difficult or expensive to access for others within that same region (e.g., Pacific island states or landlocked developing countries). Simply returning to the same venue repeatedly within a region may inadvertently reinforce existing barriers to participation.*

*For any venue to be considered a viable repeat location, it must satisfy a broad range of criteria beyond cost. The most critical include:*

- **Accessibility:** *The venue should be a regional or international travel hub, and should be situated within the region so as to allow equitable access for all people in the region including underserved populations.*
- **Affordability:** *Lodging, meals, and transportation should be reasonably priced to support participation from a broad cross-section of stakeholders.*
- **Visa accessibility:** *Attendees should be able to obtain visas without unreasonable delay, cost, or discrimination. Visa refusal rates and processing timelines should be part of the assessment.*
- **Safety and stability:** *Locations must be assessed for political, environmental, and public health risks to ensure the safety of all participants.*

*Returning to a previously used venue should be based on demonstrated success, not simply contractual convenience. If a location has proven to be poorly accessible, expensive for attendees, or problematic in terms of visas or infrastructure, it should not be used again—regardless of potential cost savings. A poor venue, when repeated, compounds existing participation gaps.*

**2.2. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic? (8000 chars limit)**

- *Although we support the idea of returning to venues based on demonstrated success, we think it is important to consider that over time circumstances may change, and make a once successful venue less ideal. For example, visa requirements, air transport connections among countries and other conditions change over time and across regions.*
- *Further we strongly advise the rotation of timezones should include rotation of timing of Prep Week sessions.*

**TOPIC #3: 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.**

**RATIONALE:**

Such a policy would significantly mitigate the challenges associated with relocating a meeting venue at short notice.

**QUESTIONS:**

**3.1. Do you or your group support this proposed policy?**

Yes

No

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*We support, in principle, the establishment of a clear policy to automatically shift an ICANN Public Meeting to an online format when unforeseen circumstances necessitate relocation from a planned venue. However, this support is conditional on the development and implementation of appropriate safeguards to ensure that such decisions are transparent, justified, and proportionate, with full consideration for the investments and expectations of the global community.*

*The ccNSO recognizes the importance of ensuring that ICANN Public Meetings take place as scheduled—whether in person, hybrid, or online. These meetings are fundamental to the multistakeholder model, enabling policy development, information-sharing, accountability, and community coordination. In the face of serious unforeseen circumstances—such as natural disasters, geopolitical instability, public health emergencies, or venue-related breakdowns—a fallback to an online meeting format is preferable to cancellation or indefinite postponement. Remote participation, while not equivalent to in-person interaction, ensures continuity of process and preserves community momentum.*

*ICANN has faced such decisions before, including changes to meeting venues due to security risks (e.g., Zika virus or regional unrest). These decisions, although made on a case-by-case basis, show the value of having a clear, structured framework that supports timely and coordinated transitions to alternative formats. Codifying such a*



*process as policy brings predictability and accountability to a situation that can otherwise be unclear or reactive.*

*While we support having a mechanism for transitioning to online formats, the ccNSO stresses the importance of implementing guardrails to prevent overuse or misuse of this policy. There are legitimate community concerns that an automatic shift could be used as an "easy way out"—for instance, in cases where a venue may be logistically difficult or more expensive, but not truly unviable. To avoid undermining trust and community confidence, the policy must include:*

- *Clear, objective criteria for what constitutes “unforeseen circumstances.”*
- *Transparent decision-making, including disclosure of risk assessments and engagement with SO/AC leadership.*
- *Commitment to in-person or hybrid meetings as the default, with online-only meetings as an exceptional fallback.*

*To minimize disruption and confusion, ICANN should publicly communicate in advance how potential venue issues will be handled. If more than one venue is pre-approved for a particular meeting (e.g., a primary and a backup), this information should be shared—at least in principle—with the community. This level of transparency can reassure stakeholders that backup options exist and will be considered before transitioning to a virtual format.*

*ICANN community members—especially those from resource-constrained regions—often make significant investments to attend meetings, including securing travel funding, visa appointments, and time away from other obligations. An abrupt shift to an online format can result in wasted time, lost funds, and diminished morale. Therefore, the threshold for invoking the online meeting policy must be high, and the decision must be communicated as early as possible.*

*The ccNSO supports the notion that meetings should proceed regardless of format. When challenges arise with the physical venue, a hybrid model (where a smaller in-person component is maintained for those already present or able to attend, while others participate remotely) may offer a middle ground. While not always feasible, this option should be considered when complete cancellation or virtual-only participation would significantly harm the integrity of the meeting.*

*Meeting sponsors also make financial and logistical commitments tied to the physical event. Abrupt shifts can impact their engagement and willingness to sponsor future meetings, particularly when venues are changed late in the process. Where possible, contracts and communication with sponsors should anticipate such scenarios, and ICANN org should work proactively to retain sponsor value even in altered meeting formats.*

**3.2. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic? (8000 chars limit)**



## **TOPIC #4: Convert one ICANN Public Meeting to a virtual-only (i.e., online) format.**

### **RATIONALE:**

Conducting an online-only Public Meeting contributes to financial and environmental sustainability while leveraging lessons learned from the seven ICANN virtual meetings during the pandemic, to optimize online tools and formats for meeting efficiency. Additionally, if some meetings are organized online rather than in-person, these meetings can be scheduled to accommodate specific time zones, which would otherwise be impractical for in-person meetings due to various constraints outlined in the 2014 meeting location selection criteria.

### **QUESTIONS:**

#### **4.1. Do you or the group you represent support the option to convert one ICANN Public Meeting per year to an online format?**

Yes

**No**

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*While hybrid participation models have significantly improved inclusivity and accessibility, the ccNSO does not support the permanent conversion of one ICANN Public Meeting per year to a fully online format.*

*From the ccNSO's perspective, in-person meetings remain essential to the functioning of the ICANN multistakeholder model. They foster informal exchanges, trust-building across stakeholder groups, resolution of tensions, and a deeper sense of shared purpose—all of which are much harder to replicate in virtual-only settings.*

*Concerns raised during internal ccNSO discussions emphasized that treating online meetings as equal substitutes for physical ones risks gradually eroding the connective tissue of the community. Over time, this could contribute to fragmentation, reduced engagement, and diminished effectiveness in policy development and coordination efforts.*

#### **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)?**

Yes

**No**

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*From the ccNSO's perspective, in-person meetings remain essential to the functioning of the ICANN multistakeholder model. They foster informal exchanges, trust-building across stakeholder groups, resolution of tensions, and a deeper sense of shared purpose—all of which are much harder to replicate in virtual-only settings.*

*Concerns raised during internal ccNSO discussions emphasized that treating online meetings as equal substitutes for physical ones risks gradually eroding the connective tissue of the community. Over time, this could contribute to fragmentation, reduced engagement, and diminished effectiveness in policy development and coordination efforts.*

**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?**

Yes

**No**

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*The ccNSO does not support the introduction of a fourth ICANN Public Meeting—whether in-person or online—due to significant concerns around workload, disruption to current planning cycles, and the broader impact on the community's capacity to engage meaningfully.*

*Introducing a fourth meeting, even as a virtual pilot, would impose an unreasonable burden on the community. Although the current cadence of three meetings per year strikes the right balance, it already represents a major time and resource commitment, particularly for volunteer-based groups. Many stakeholders are stretched to balance ICANN work with professional and personal obligations. Adding another formal meeting would not only risk burnout, but could also dilute participation and lower the quality of engagement across all meetings.*

*In addition, the current meeting schedule is built around a well-established implementation rhythm. Injecting a new milestone mid-cycle could disrupt this momentum, potentially causing confusion or overlap in timelines and deliverables. It risks creating process fatigue without adding meaningful value.*

*Furthermore, for many in the community—especially those from the contracted parties—there is already a de facto fourth meeting: the Contracted Parties Summit. This existing commitment already consumes planning time and attention, making the addition of another ICANN-wide meeting, even virtually, both redundant and logistically difficult.*

*While we understand the intention behind proposing more opportunities for engagement, a better approach would be to strengthen the effectiveness and inclusivity of existing meetings and virtual touchpoints—rather than expanding the calendar with another event.*

**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?**

Yes

**No**

Please explain your answer (8000 chars limit):

*While the ccNSO Council appreciates the intent to balance virtual participation with opportunities for in-person interaction, we do not support pursuing a model where all sessions are held online but attendees are invited to gather in a single physical location.*

*This approach risks creating a two-tiered experience and raises several practical, logistical, and equity-related concerns. Those able to travel to the physical location may benefit from informal networking and face-to-face engagement, while those participating remotely would be relegated to a second-tier, less immersive experience—despite all sessions being officially "online." This undermines the principle of equal participation that is central to ICANN's multistakeholder model.*

*Additionally, concentrating community members in a physical venue without the structure and planning of a full in-person meeting may create confusion around expectations, roles, and outcomes. Such a hybrid-in-name-only format may generate more complexity rather than less, especially regarding session facilitation, time zone challenges, and technical requirements.*

*From a workload perspective, this model could also be as demanding—if not more so—than a traditional meeting, without delivering the same level of work progress or relationship-building benefits.*

*While we support continued innovation in meeting formats and virtual participation tools, the ccNSO Council believes that any future model must ensure both equitable access and meaningful engagement for all participants, regardless of location.*

**4.3. Do you or the group you represent have other suggestions or feedback relating to this topic? (8000 chars limit)**

*We suggest exploring the possibility of holding additional meetings such as the Contracted Parties Summit in conjunction with the ICANN Policy Forum (the mid-year, shorter meeting) or the Community Forum. Combining these types of events could reduce overall travel and meeting load for community members—particularly for those who participate in many of them. From an operational standpoint, combining these types of meetings may allow for more efficient use of resources, including venue costs, interpretation, technical support, and staff coordination.*

*Furthermore, the exploration of more efficient use of venues and existing ICANN facilities (such as hosting events in ICANN offices or co-locating meetings) are welcome steps.*

**OTHER TOPICS**

**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? (8000 chars limit)**

*The ccNSO welcomes the opportunity to comment on ICANN org's "How We Meet" proposals. The views expressed in this submission are those of the ccNSO Council and ccNSO appointees to the ICANN community discussion group only. They are not necessarily those of the ccNSO members, nor of the ccTLD community at large, nor of individual ccTLD managers.*

*From the ccNSO Council's perspective, discussions about ICANN's meeting strategy should be guided first and foremost by the purpose and value of convening the global multistakeholder community, and related (review of) the meeting strategy to achieve the purpose and value—not solely by considerations of financial efficiency. ICANN Public Meetings are essential forums for building trust, fostering consensus, enabling cross-community dialogue, and sustaining the legitimacy of ICANN's bottom-up model.*

*While cost efficiency is an important factor, it should not overshadow the foundational role these meetings play in supporting an effective and representative multistakeholder process. That said, the ccNSO Council - as well as the ccNSO Strategic and Operational Planning Committee (SOPC) in its comments to the ICANN Strategic Plans and Operating Plan Frameworks - acknowledge and support responsible cost-saving measures that do not compromise community participation or engagement. For example, the reduction in the number of non-essential ICANN org staff attending Public Meetings and the exploration of more efficient use of venues and existing ICANN facilities (such as hosting events in ICANN offices or co-locating meetings) are welcome steps. These kinds of actions can help streamline operations while preserving the core function and integrity of ICANN meetings.*

*Ultimately, the guiding question should not be how to save money or simplify logistics, but how to sustain and strengthen the processes that make ICANN's model credible and inclusive in an evolving global context. This is a different question to the question underpinning this consultation, and would require a different community process to answer it.*