

Study Group on Capacity Building Report on Increased Participation

18.06.2012

Background

At the ICANN meeting in Costa Rica, the ccNSO Council held a meeting to discuss the ccNSO Workplan and the increasing workload, which the ccNSO is facing. At the subsequent ccNSO Council meeting on 14 March 2012, the ccNSO Council passed following resolution:

Resolution 72-02:

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to set up an informal study group to advise the Council on further steps to balance the increasing workload and the capacity of the ccNSO. The study group is requested to report to the Council by the ICANN Prague meeting and seek participation of members of the ccTLD community.

The members of the Capacity Building Study group are:

Fernando Espana, .us (Working Group Chair)
Ondrej Filip - Programme Working Group Liaison
Sokol Haxhiu, NomCom appointee to the Council
Dotty Sparks de Blanc, .vi
Hong Xue, NomCom appointee to the Council

The Group was supported by Bart Boswinkel and Gabriella Schitteck, ccNSO Secretariat.

Methodology

A set of questions were provided to the group by the ccNSO Chair Lesley Cowley, as guidance to what issues needed special attention:

- 1) Why did people who are currently members of WGs/Council Members etc get involved in the work of the ccNSO?*
- 2) How could we use these motivations to get more people involved?*
- 3) What are the barriers to people getting engaged?*
- 4) What could we do to address them?*
- 5) Why do some people join WGs, but then be inactive in that WG? What could we do to address these reasons and this situation?*
- 6) How could we better organise the work that people do for the ccNSO? Do participants get enough support/recognition in their home ccTLD or region for example?*
- 7) Looking at the work plan for the ccNSO, which areas might be easiest for new people to get engaged in and how might we encourage participation?*
- 8) Are there any changes to the way that we organise and divide our work that would make it easier for people to get engaged?*

Basing on the questions, the Study Group started its work by looking into the issue of increasing participation. It was felt that this topic had to be prioritised before solutions on how to distribute the increasing workload could be defined and presented. In the section "Next Steps" the Study Group has defined suggestions on how to move forward with these issues.

The aforementioned questions were used as a starting point to identify the following areas for improvement: Engagement, Keeping Engagement Alive, Review of Working Group Organisation.

The Study group primarily looked into working groups, as it considered working groups being the most important structure used by the ccNSO to organise its activities. However, the recommendations also apply for engagement in other structures, such as the Council.

1) Engagement

1.1 Reasons for Engagement

The Study Group analysed the motivation factors to become engaged in a working group.

Following elements were defined:

- A wish to contribute to its work and the belief that one is capable to do so;
- The wish to achieve a goal of mutual interest, knowing that it cannot be achieved alone;
- Psychological aspects: belonging to a group improves ones self-esteem and helps socialising with colleagues. Taking on a role in a working group can also be considered as a job challenge, which is a motivating factor for many people.

1.2) Barriers for Engagement

The Study Group also looked into what barriers there could be for people not wanting to join a working group:

- Mental barriers: New/inexperienced community members do not know what is expected from them and feel intimidated by working with more experienced colleagues;
- Skill barriers: The participant does not have the right profile sought for and/or does not feel he/she has anything to contribute with;
- Workload: Too many work engagements in the home arena, no spare time for community issues;
- Lingual barriers: Non-native English speakers feel that discussions are too hard to follow;
- Certain requirements for joining a working group: Limited number of participants; limits of participants per region.

1.3) Study Group Recommendations for Increased Engagement

Clarify Requirements, Expectations and Goals:

- The Council is recommended to make clear to community members what the Working Group requirements are and what experience is needed, so that people with the desired profile apply to the right Working Group.
- The Council is recommended to develop a description on what skillset is needed for the particular working group, which is to be published on the website.

However, the call for volunteers should also ensure that people that are interested in the topic, but lack experience, do not feel excluded;

- The Council is recommended to document general “Working Group Expectations”, which explains what is expected from a working group member. It should be easily accessible for community members and distributed when a new working group is set up;

Activate Engagement from Experienced Community Members:

- The Council is recommended to encourage established community members to actively approach and invite both new ccTLDs and inactive ccTLDs to get involved in a particular working group, if their profile meets the skill requirements;
- The Council is recommended to set up a “Mentor Programme”, where more established ccTLDs offer their guidance throughout working group work and ICANN meetings;

Avoid Restrictions:

- The Council is recommended to strive to avoid setting restrictions (such as numeric or geographic limits) when making calls of volunteers for the working groups.

The Council is recommended to review the charters of the active working group charters and consider whether the limits are necessary.

Simplify Language:

- The Council is recommended to request the working group Chairs to aim to keep the working language as simple as possible, both in speaking and writing.

Working group Chairs is recommended to constantly encourage and remind native English speaking working group members to be considerate and try to speak slow, using easy words;

2) Keeping Engagement Alive

2.1 Reasons for Ceasing Engagement in Working Groups

The Study Group looked into why some people cease their engagement in a working group, after their initial wish to be involved.

The Study Group believes that reasons for becoming inactive in a working group could be:

- The working group member feels alienated with the goal of the working group;
- The working group member feels alienated with the atmosphere in the working group;
- The working group members has lost track of where the working group is in its work and what its end-goal is;
- The work burden in the home arena has unexpectedly grown and does not leave time for community engagements.

2.2 Study Group Recommendations for Keeping an Active Engagement

Clarify and Increase Working Group Chair Responsibilities:

- The Council is recommended to encourage the working group chairs to keep good a work environment by:
 - o Ensuring to share relevant information with the entire working group;
 - o Benchmarking the goals of the working group regularly;
 - o Keeping track of which working group members ceased to participate and reach out to them, encouraging them to commit again.
- The Council is recommended to ask all working group chairs to provide an Assessment Report of their working groups – an overview of how active their working group members are and their thoughts on what they think the reason for the non-activeness (if any) could be;

Improve Information and Processes:

- Prior to the call for volunteers, the Council is recommended to make an estimation on how much time needs to be invested in the work of the working group, this shall be communicated in the call;
- The Council is recommended to define a “minimum engagement requirement” for working group participation, of which the working group members are aware and to which they need to commit to, and which shall be communicated in the call;
- The Council is recommended to put a formal “Resignation process” for working group members in place, applicable for each working group, so that the working group members know they can always resign, for example if the workload becomes too heavy;
- The Council is recommended to put a formal “Replacement process” in place, if the resigning working group member feels that a colleague from the ccTLD could pick up their role in the working group.

Make Further Research:

- The Council is recommended to request the ccNSO Secretariat to conduct a short survey where non-active working group members are asked for the reasons for their reduced participation;

3) Review of Working Group Organisation

The Study Group members looked into how the current Working Groups are structuring its work and whether this could be amended in order to encourage further participation.

Following recommendations were defined:

Balance Setup of Working Groups:

- The Council shall aim to obtain a balance of “experts” and less experienced ccTLDs within the Working Groups;

Break up Tasks:

- Working group chairs are recommended to break up the tasks of the working group into smaller parts and divide the tasks between the members, so that everyone gets involved. This should be done early in the process so that the Working Group Working workload doesn't seem overwhelming.
- The Council is recommended to review whether there are administrative elements across all working groups that are similar and repetitive, which could be structured and distributed amongst working group members.

Increase Use of Collaborative Tools:

- Chairs of working groups are recommended to improve the meeting efficiency by implementing and encouraging the use of facilitating collaborative tools, such as Adobe Connect or the WG Wiki. The ccNSO Secretariat shall assist in the development and broadening of the use of such tools, if needed.

Next Steps

This report only covers the aspect of “Increased Participation”, as there was not enough time to look into the issues of workload and its prioritisation.

The Study Group members are willing to continue their work, with the goal to deliver a next report to the Council by the Toronto meeting (14 – 19 October 2012).

The Study Group therefore asks the Council to:

- Extend the timeline of the Working Group to enable it to look into the full issue of workload and prioritisation, with the goal to deliver a report by the Toronto meeting;
- Make a call for additional volunteers to the Study Group amongst the Council members to enhance its work capacity.