



i2Coalition Public Comment Response on “How We Meet: An Initial Project Report”

The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition) represents companies that build and maintain core Internet infrastructure, including web hosts, DNS operators, cloud providers, and data centers. As a tech business association grounded in operational expertise, we offer the following feedback on ICANN’s evolving approach to public meetings.

General Position

We urge ICANN to preserve the full schedule of three in-person public meetings per year. These meetings are essential to the integrity of the multistakeholder model. They provide critical venues for cross-community dialogue, operational alignment, and consensus-building among diverse stakeholders, including those in the private sector who ensure the functioning of the global Internet.

Virtual meetings cannot substitute for the trust-building, nuance, and spontaneous collaboration that happen in person. This is especially true for technical and operational stakeholders, who must engage across their particular silos to ensure Internet stability and interoperability. Virtual meetings can ensure continuity of ICANN’s work when in-person meetings are not an option (for example, due to a pandemic), however, they cannot fully replace the significantly higher levels of productivity associated with in-person meetings.

Concern About Bypassing Community Process

The multistakeholder model must not be undermined by cost-saving decisions made without community consensus—decisions about the format, frequency, and structure of ICANN’s public meetings must remain community-driven. The current “How We Meet” proposal bypasses long-standing community processes that are in place to deliberate changes of this kind and magnitude.

We are deeply concerned that this process is being driven unilaterally by ICANN Org, rather than through the existing community-led mechanisms that established ICANN’s meeting structure. We do not support efforts—intentional or not—that sidestep the transparent, bottom-up procedures ICANN was designed to uphold.

Topic 1: Shortening the Community Forum

While we do not actively advocate for shortening the Community Forum, we recognize there is interest in exploring a five-day format. If it should be decided to do so, we urge ICANN to treat this as a limited pilot—implemented for no more than two years and subject to a formal community review process to assess whether key engagement objectives are still being met without the sixth day.

We also see value in proposals to rethink certain sessions, such as replacing bilateral meetings between the ICANN Board and individual stakeholder groups with a single, community-wide dialogue focused on a specific topic (Option C). This could serve as a catalyst for broader rethinking of the block schedule and reduce redundancy in the overall meeting structure.

However, any such changes must arise from a transparent, community-led discussion—not as unilateral cost-saving decisions. Agenda reform should not happen in isolation from a broader examination of other ICANN meeting types and associated costs.

Topic 2: Economical Meeting Locations

We support prioritizing accessible, cost-effective venues that respect geographic rotation. Reusing proven venues within regions is sensible and facilitates advanced planning. However, care must be taken to avoid undermining regional engagement and outreach by over-consolidating meeting locations.

Topic 3: Automatic Shift to Online if Relocation Required

We support a clear policy to shift to virtual meetings in the event of an unforeseen relocation. This kind of contingency planning is wise and preserves continuity without excessive cost.

Topic 4: Converting One Public Meeting to Virtual

We strongly oppose converting any of the three ICANN Public Meetings to a virtual-only format. These meetings are foundational to ICANN's accountability and effectiveness. Reducing them would weaken the model for global Internet governance that ICANN claims to champion.

Instead of cutting one meeting, ICANN could explore other virtual forums or workshops to enhance participation year-round, without replacing in-person engagement.

Potential Updates to Funding & Sponsorship Strategy

We support ICANN's pursuit of revising the sponsorship strategy for its meetings. Expanding opportunities to sponsor lower-cost items such as receptions or coffee breaks prove

useful in helping to mitigate some of the increasing costs associated with hosting in-person meetings and merits further exploration.

Conclusion

i2Coalition stands firmly behind the principle that ICANN meetings policy must be governed by the community, not by top-down administrative mandates. The three annual public meetings are essential Internet governance infrastructure, not optional programming. We support continued community dialogue on cost and efficiency, but this must be done through the proper bottom-up mechanisms that define ICANN's legitimacy.

We look forward to working with ICANN and fellow stakeholders to preserve and strengthen these essential global forums.