

# BOARD PAPER – A Remote Participation only ICANN Public Meeting

## Engineering approach, focus and considerations

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Board Paper is being prepared to be presented to the ICANN Board ahead of the planned call scheduled for Wednesday, February 19, 2020. It is an informational paper. The paper is intended to assist the Board to make an informed decision as it pertains to a “Remote Participation-only” ICANN Public Meeting.

While the timing of this paper is just ahead of ICANN67, with circumstances being fluidly altered by the Covid-19 situation, the assertions and arguments proposed in this paper are equally applicable for any ICANN Public Meeting (like the GDD Summit, for example).

Preliminary comment to an RP-only ICANN meeting: ICANN has long offered Remote Participation capabilities, as an adjunct to in-person meetings. As such, offering Remote Participation, per se, is not new. What is new is the prospect of offering Remote Participation - only for one of the thrice-a-year ICANN Public Meetings, and at scale.

As a result, it is safe to say that ICANN Org staff and its regularly recruited contractors have the know-how to provision an Remote Participation -only meeting. They do not have the muscle-memory to ensure a flawless Remote Participation -only meeting at scale. It is noteworthy that this is a FIRST for ICANN Org. And the act of delivering such an Remote Participation -only meeting will start building up muscle-memory, if a similar need is expressed in the future.

The ICANN Meetings Technical Services (MTS) team is a tried and trusted “war horse”. It is that team’s perspective that an Remote Participation -only meeting can be reasonably expected to succeed, subject to several considerations.

The rest of this paper sets out our definition of success, along with our recommendations; and the considerations which have gone into ensuring such a success.

## DEFINING SUCCESS

**Centering an Remote Participation -only meeting:** Even more so than at an off-site meeting, wherein remote participation is managed and monitored from a “control center”, an RP-only meeting demands a stable location – with high bandwidth, redundant infrastructure, adequate space, knowledgeable staff and appropriate facilities - to establish, manage and monitor proceedings.

The Los Angeles (LA), USA, headquarters (HQ) for ICANN provides one such location to center an Remote Participation -only meeting. ICANN’s LA HQ has all of the above attributes PLUS it is relatively large, offering many meeting rooms. This sort of roominess is required to set up an effective control center.

**Focus of an Remote Participation -only meeting:** The focus of an RP-only meeting is multifold. At a minimum, it is a focus:

- 1 On the experience of the receiver
- 2 On the experience of the Remote Participation Manager
- 3 On overall participation: ICANN has a choice, and therefore, the Board has a decision to make
- 4 On transcription and translation (Language services)

To complete the picture, each of these is briefly detailed below.

- 1 On the **experience of Remote Participation -only meeting at the receiver end** (as in, for example, a community-member located at a distance from the control center):
  - a. The user should have an Internet-capable device (Smartphone, Tablet or PC), with a connection to the Internet. Such a client machine should have access to bandwidth of at least 1.5 Megabits per second (Mbps).
  - b. Users should have access to Zoom – so that they can participate in Zoom sessions, which underpin ICANN meetings.
  - c. Zoom provides integrated telephony in over 100 countries around the world.
  - d. Ideally, users should leverage Zoom telephony to dial-in (if bandwidth is somewhat limited to less than 1.5 Mbps).
  - e. If these options fail, the fallback for users is a dial-up telephone line.
  - f. Users can choose to dial-IN or, with prior notification, be dialed-IN by an Operator (this last option is the MOST expensive option. Costs are directly proportional to the length of the call and the distance between users and LA).
- 2 On the **experience of an Remote Participation -only meeting at the sender end** (as in, for example, an ICANN Org staff member located in the control center, with presentation material):

- a. Ideally, the ICANN Org staff member (aka “RP Manager”) is collocated with a Meetings Technical Services technician
  - b. Ideally, they are leveraging the infrastructure of the LA Office
  - c. The fallback for RP Managers is to be located “anywhere else”.
  - d. To work well from “there”, the Remote Participation Manager will need:
    - i. A tried and trusted ICANN-provided MacBook or iMac
    - ii. With VPN
    - iii. Zoom
    - iv. Good bandwidth (at least 1.5 Mbps)
- 3 On **participation overall**: ICANN has a choice here:
- a. We could stick to the schedule already published, so that the meetings are timed according to Cancun times.
    - i. This choice optimizes participation from the LATAM region – as the in-person meeting was designed to...
    - ii. HOWEVER, bear in mind that Cancun is 3 hours ahead of LA
    - iii. Meaning - meetings scheduled for 8 AM Cancun time imply a 5 AM start to the day in LA for everyone who supports meetings
    - iv. Also bear in mind that the clock springs forward mid-meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>, reducing the time differential to 2 hours between Cancun and LA
    - v. That said, this option optimizes participation from the LATAM region
    - vi. Capacity-wise, the LA HQ has room to host 8 parallel sessions at any time.
    - vii. If the meeting runs 4 days long, this gives ICANN: 4 days x 8 hours x 8 parallel sessions = 256 session-hours for scheduling
    - viii. Based on the content of sessions, we could pare back on the number of sessions to utilize the above 256 session-hours
  - b. We could alter the schedule, so that the meeting is timed at the an “optimal” (as yet to be defined) period of 5 hours in LA.
    - i. This choice gives ICANN an opportunity to maximize participation from around the world
    - ii. To maximize participation, we will need to schedule a single 5 hour session
    - iii. Capacity-wise, we can still schedule 8 parallel rooms
    - iv. If the meeting runs 5 days long, this gives ICANN: 5 days x 8 parallel rooms x 5 hours per session = 200 session-hours
    - v. We “MAY” be able to handle a spill-over hour at either end – if the reason for it is clearly articulated, justified etc etc
    - vi. If we choose this option, the sessions will have to be carefully cherry-picked

Both these options have a knock-on impact on physical logistics (transportation from and to hotel/s, food arrangements, building access, security etc.)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Our STRONG preference is to stick with the hours already advertised for the Cancun meeting, optimizing the sessions to not exceed the 256 session-hours envelope

#### 4 **On transcription and translation** (Language services)

- a. Transcription: During ICANN Public Meetings, many sessions have a display-feed reflecting the spoken word in written English. This is often called RTT – for Real-Time Transcription. In the Remote Participation -only option, this service will be available as advertised for all applicable sessions
- b. Translation: During ICANN Public Meetings, whenever we offer translation, one can see 2-seater booths for bi-directional simul-translation. For large forums – like the public forum – ICANN offers this service in the so-called “UN 6” pack of languages. This is THE SINGLE MOST COMPLEX aspect of technical set up for ICANN Public Meetings
- c. The sophistication required for Translation in “UN 6” at the same time as executing to an Remote Participation -only meeting is a daunting challenge.
- d. Every additional language for Remote Participation -only increases the complexity of setup exponentially
- e. It concurrently exponentially increases the risk of a poor experience
- f. As such, we propose:
  - i. (IDEALLY) Offering NO Translations for any session
  - ii. (Fallback) Offering translation in ONLY Spanish for selected sessions
  - iii. (Next fallback) Offering translation in ONLY Spanish for all sessions
  - iv. (Then fallback) Offering translations in “UN 6” for selected sessions
  - v. (Last fallback) Offering translations in “UN 6” for the usual sessions

**RECOMMENDATION:** Our STRONG preference is to offer NO translation services for any session, falling back – worst-case - to (ii), respecting the regional language preference

#### CONSIDERATIONS:

Many **technical and people considerations** have been baked into the above definition of success. They include:

- a. Bandwidth in the LA HQ: ~has been determined to be adequate
- b. Licensing for additional Zoom users: ~has been assessed and an order is pending – as this paper is being written – for additional licenses
- c. Telephony capacity with Adigo: ~has been confirmed as available at an additional cost
- d. Infrastructure to host an RP-only meeting: ~has been determined to be adequate
- e. Power needed for an RP-only meeting: ~has been assessed as being adequate
- f. Backup and redundancies for bandwidth and power: ~have been assessed as being adequate

- g. Staffing and Contractor availability for an LA HQ Remote Participation -only meeting: ~have been assessed as being available and adequate
- h. Extended availability of Contractors, if the Remote Participation -only meeting extends beyond the currently advertised schedule: ~has been assessed. Most Contractors are available, though not all, past the 11<sup>th</sup> of March

**Other considerations** to host a successful Remote Participation -only meeting include:

- a. Teams of people needed from functions other than E&IT: SVPs heading other functions are assessing their functional requirements to successfully host such an Remote Participation -only meeting
- b. Lodging for people expected to fly into LA for an RP-only meeting: The Meetings team is canvassing local Hotels for suitable accommodation
- c. Transportation from and to Hotel/s: This is work-in-progress. This can only be finalized if a decision is made to host an Remote Participation -only meeting, so that ICANN Org can enter into needful contracts
- d. Access to building facilities beyond typical hours of operation: Like #c above, this can only be finalized after a set of firm decisions have been made
- e. Availability of physical security in the building: Like #d – Ditto
- f. On-site Health and Safety for staff and Contractors during an Remote Participation-only meeting: Like #d – Ditto
- g. Food and beverage services for Remote Participation-support staff during an RP-only meeting: Like #d – Ditto
- h. Conference rooms' availability for an Remote Participation-only meeting: All scheduled meetings will be preemptively annulled if a decision is made to host an Remote Participation-only meeting
- i. Impact on on-going projects: In the event of an Remote Participation-only meeting, the impact on previously scheduled work in the LA HQ will likely be adversely impacted. Said impact will have to be absorbed, likely hand-in-hand with unforeseen delays to project deliverables and deliveries
- j. Attendance of ICANN Org staff during an Remote Participation only meeting: This is a subject which will be studied in greater detail after a decision is made. All ICANN Org functions have access to Zoom and Slack for remote collaboration today

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**Board Brief Update – COVID-19**  
**18 Feb 2019**

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Dear Board Members:

In preparation for today's Special Meeting of the Board - 19 February 2020 - 20:00 UTC / 12:00 PST / 21:00 CET and as requested, please find the attached report on ICANN67 and COVID-19: Community Reactions (Round Two).

I was asked to reach out to Community leaders to ask their views following the Tuesday Community information Call and to obtain any further updates (or any other concerns) from groups about travel to Cancun for ICANN 67.

A summary is below and the actual comments contained in the attached report.

## Summary

--We have received feedback from 14 community groups, which is reproduced below.

--A lot of them report that their communities are prepared to go to Cancun.

--They express appreciation for ICANN org's provision of information regarding measures being taken to both monitor the situation as well as to ensure, as much as possible, the health and safety of all attendees while on-site in Cancun.

--A few community leaders mention that some individual members of their groups had expressed concerns about attending and, as a result, there may be reduced attendance from some groups (e.g. IPC, RySG, perhaps some self-funded travelers who decide to cancel or whose employers may impose travel restrictions).

--The main concerns appear to focus on the possibility of a quarantine should an attendee be diagnosed with the virus during the meeting and the Mexican government's current lack of travel restrictions regarding travelers from certain countries.

--Ultimately, it appears that the community supports continuing with the meeting as long as there is clear information about the logistics (including the state of preparedness of the Cancun and Mexican health and government authorities) as well as all the precautionary measures that ICANN org plans to take while on-site.

Best regards, David

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# ICANN67 and COVID-19: Community Reactions (Round Two)

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# ICANN67 and COVID-19: Community Reactions (Round One)

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