

UNDERSTANDING THE COST OF ICANN PUBLIC MEETINGS Updated 30 October 2024

I. BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW:

In June 2018, ICANN org presented a proposal for cost savings related to ICANN Public Meetings to the SOAC Chairs at the ICANN62 Roundtable in Panama, covering the nine ICANN Public Meetings then planned for 2021 - 2023. Essentially, the plan called for meetings to be held in strategically identified locations, where we could realize the benefits of economical airfare, hotel, and venue costs.

Due to the onset of the pandemic, we conducted seven virtual ICANN Public Meetings between March 2020 and 2022. As such, the initial cost savings plan for the 2021 - 2023 hybrid meetings could not be fully realized. In June 2022, we resumed hybrid meetings, starting with ICANN74 in The Hague.

This document is a high-level update to the information that ICANN org presented in 2018. We shared an initial document with the community leaders in August 2024, to provide data on the actual cost to organize a hybrid ICANN Public Meeting as part of the community dialogue on how ICANN org can collaborate with the community to further streamline the meetings to achieve cost effectiveness while ensuring that ICANN org resources and support meet the ongoing needs of the community. This current document updates the data presented in August to reflect the additional analysis, based on data since obtained on ICANN Public Meetings that were held more recently.

II. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS:

Pre- and post-pandemic, the average costs of ICANN Public Meetings were and are:

- ICANN47-54: the average meeting cost was US\$3.95M.
- ICANN55-60: the average meeting cost was US\$4.06M.
 - The current ICANN Meetings Strategy was implemented in March 2016, starting with ICANN55 in Marrakech.
- ICANN61-66: the average meeting cost was US\$3.4M.
 - This lower cost is attributable to the lower-cost locations for this cycle: *Panama City US\$2.2m, Marrakech US\$3.1m and San Juan US\$3.3m.*
- ICANN74-80: the average meeting cost has increased to **US\$4.7M**.
 - As described further below, the average meeting cost for this set of meetings would have been substantially higher but for the reduced number of Funded Travelers to recent meetings.

Many factors affect the cost of an ICANN meeting, comprising "fixed costs" (i.e., linked to service demand) and "variable costs" (i.e., linked to a meeting location or venue).

The most common fixed costs are:

- Food & beverage
- Production costs & equipment (e.g., audiovisual rentals)
- Interpretation services & associated costs
- Technical/IT services & labor
- Health & safety
- Scribing & transcriptions
- Marketing & communications
- Transportation

Variable costs are directly linked to meeting location, and include airfares, hotel accommodation, and venue (e.g., meeting room rental) costs.

The most significant factors ICANN org has identified as determining whether meeting costs will be over or under US\$4M are air travel (accounting for US\$1M and more per meeting), hotel accommodation and venue costs (e.g., meeting room rentals). **In June 2018, ICANN org reported that forty-one percent (41%) of the cost of an ICANN Public Meeting was driven by service demand, while fifty-nine percent (59%) was driven by location and the associated costs of airfare, hotel, and venue.**

As of October 2024, ICANN org has calculated that **fixed costs have increased by thirty-one percent (31%)**, driven mostly by the cost of food and beverage, interpretation services and production costs, including audiovisual equipment. Currently, fixed costs account for forty-seven percent (47%) of the cost of an ICANN Public Meeting, while variable costs comprise the remaining fifty-three percent (53%).

There is, however, an **important caveat** to the fifty-three percent (53%) and US\$4.7M cost currently attributed to fixed costs incurred per meeting. Essentially, these numbers are a direct result of a substantial reduction in the post-pandemic number, and thus cost, of funded travelers (staff, contractors, community) to an ICANN Public Meeting. **Had the number of Funded Travelers remained at pre-pandemic levels, the current average cost of an ICANN Public Meeting would be significantly higher than the reported US\$4.7M, due to the overall increase in both fixed and variable costs.** Please refer to the next section for a breakdown of community travel costs to ICANN Public Meetings.

III. FUNDED TRAVELER & ATTENDEE COSTS:

Pre- and post-pandemic, the costs of funding community travel to ICANN Public Meetings are:

- **As of 2019** (Pre-pandemic, includes ICANN55-66):
 - Average of **290** Funded Community Travelers
 - Average cost per traveler: **\$3,338**
 - Includes airfare, hotel, per diem, visas, and similar costs
- **In 2024** (Post-pandemic, includes ICANN74-80):
 - Average of **243** Funded Community Travelers (average reduction of 47 travelers, or approximately 16%)

- Average cost per traveler: **\$4,196**
 - Includes airfare, hotel, per diem, visas, and similar costs

Post-pandemic, there has been a **twenty-five-point-seven percent (25.7%) increase in costs for Funded Travelers to ICANN Public Meetings.**

In terms of attendee costs (i.e., in-person participants), the **average cost per attendee at an ICANN Public Meeting - excluding variable costs associated with air fares, hotel and per diem for Funded Travelers - was US\$770 in 2018 and US\$1542 in 2024.** At the same time, while ICANN55-60 **averaged 1,995 in-person** attendees (including ICANN org staff, contractors, and community members), attendance since ICANN74 in 2022 has **averaged 1,299 in-person** attendees (including ICANN org staff, contractors and community members).

IV. SUMMARY

The actual types and categories of fixed and variable costs incurred for an ICANN Public Meeting has remained the same (as listed above); however, **inflation has been a significant post-pandemic factor in driving the costs higher than they used to be.** In particular, the average cost of supporting community travel to an ICANN Public Meeting has increased by twenty-five-point-seven percent (25.7%), and a sharp rise in other costs such as food and catering, interpretation services and equipment rentals has resulted in an increase in average fixed meeting costs by thirty-one percent (31%).
