How to optimize the involvement of the audience in the ccNSO members meetings?

1. Purpose of this document

To meet the needs and expectations of the ccNSO members and broader community, the ccNSO members meeting should have a relevant agenda, with an appealing format. In this document we will list a number of options to assist the session chairs and presenters at the ccNSO Members Meetings, to optimize the involvement by the audience.

2. Introduction

1.1 About the ccNSO Members Meeting

The ccNSO Members meeting consists of a mixture of updates and consultation rounds, depending on the purpose of the session. The aim of the ccNSO Members Meetings is:

- to brief the community on the current and upcoming work items for the ccNSO within the overall ICANN environment
- inform and discuss topics that are relevant to ccTLDs and other interested parties
- to consult the ccTLD community on the direction of travel regarding certain topics
- allow for skill building and knowledge sharing among ccTLDs

The room where the ccNSO members Meeting is held has a classroom style layout, for about 150 people. The lay-out of the room is fixed on a per-day basis and cannot be changed. A classroom style layout is the best match for the ccNSO members Meetings, due to the number of participants and the venue requirements. There is a head table with microphones, roving microphones in the room and one microphone stand in the front.

The ccNSO Secretariat uploads the slides into AdobeConnect, ahead of the meeting start. AdobeConnect is being used to display the slides in the physical room and is used for remote participation as well. Remote participants can hear, but cannot address the room, unless they type questions or interactions in the chat room. Based on the instructions, questions or comments can be lead out loud by the ccNSO Secretariat.

The audience typically consists of ccNSO members, ccTLD managers that are not a member of the ccNSO, and other interested parties from within the ICANN environment. Some attendees participate by simply attending the meeting, others are more engaged and add to the conversation.

1.2 Overview of the levels of involvement

Here is a list of 3 levels of involvement for the ccNSO Members Meeting. Each level of involvement requires greater levels of participation by the meeting participants and a greater role for the session chair.

1. **Presenting & Reporting**
    This is a one-way activity, where the audience merely sits and listens. This is the lowest level of involvement. The process for the session chair is straightforward and is mainly limited to introducing the speakers and keeping track of time.

2. **Limited participation**
    The audience participates by answering questions, or via "room temperature"-type of consultations. During the Q&A for instance, when comments and questions can be raised, the audience is a participant in the meeting, but on a limited basis. Other ways to involve the audience via limited participation, could include for instance a show of cards, or "voting with your feet"-style polling.
    The role of the session chair is to ensure this type of participation happens in a seamless manner, and each person who wants to ask a question is given that opportunity, if the schedule allows this.

3. **Extensive Discussion**
    These type of sessions demands sustained concentration and effort by the audience. When participants to the ccNSO Members Meeting are engaged in extensive discussion, the session chair takes a more active role in guiding the conversation to surface other viewpoints. When discussions are aimed at seeking alignment and a commitment by the participants, the role of the session chair is crucial to develop shared understanding.
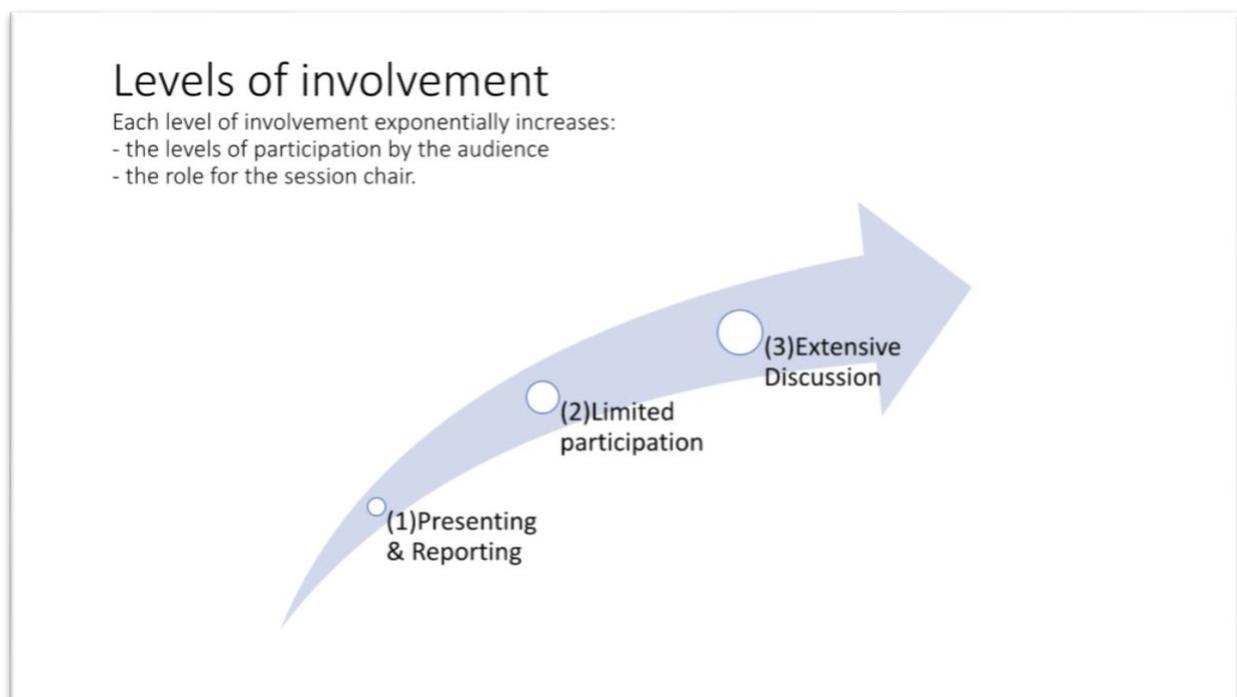
Important remark:
Planning for the appropriate level of involvement when inviting participants to a meeting is crucial. An appropriate amount of time for dialogue is needed: this normally means reducing the scope of the meeting and\or the number of speakers.
Advance preparation is key, and when planning the format of a session, the deadlines imposed upon staff by ICANN's meetings team should be taken into account, e.g. booking of material such as flip-charts, room layout etc.

1.3   Tips and tricks to increase the level of involvement

Even though some of the sessions have as a main focus to merely update the community present on a number of topics without consultations (e.g. updates on the work achieved and the upcoming work items), presenters are invited to make their presentations as engaging as possible.

The MPC recently developed "tips & tricks for presenters" to help them delivering good presentations. On top of those basic tips and tricks, such as "do not read from your slides, do not pack your slides with information", presenters and session chairs could consider the following options to increase the engagement with the audience:

Questions

Most presentations leave the audience in "listening mode" most of the time. The Q&A makes perfect sense to give the participants a voice and allow for some unscripted interaction with the speakers. However, to date, Q&A sessions are considered almost a necessary evil, and they are not seen as an opportunity to engage. Due to audience inactivity and the quality of the incoming questions, the added value of the Q&A is often rather low.

Possible alternatives:

- **The speaker opens with a question.**
  When it comes to presentations, most of us are used to being talked to, rather than being asked to share our own thoughts. Opening with a question turns this idea on its head. The speaker can ask the audience what they'd like to get out of the session or why they came. You can poll the group for their opinion about a topic. Ask a question, and then wait in silence for someone to answer, to get the conversation started.

- **allow for questions from the audience throughout the presentation.**
  Q&A at the end is the exact opposite of an interactive presentation. Presenters could be upfront if they want the audience to chime in with thoughts or questions, or they can even ask questions to the audience themselves, during the presentation

- **Presenters can invite the audience to type questions in the Adobe connect chat room**, for those that feel uncomfortable to walk up to the microphone. If questions come in during the presentation, the moderator/speaker does not need to wait for raised hands at the end.

- **Do an inverse Q&A.**
  An inverse Q&A is when the speaker poses a question to the audience, asking them to discuss it with the person sitting next to them. A good question is, "For you, what was a key take-away from this session? What might you do differently going forward?" This approach allows everybody to have their say. It also helps them network with each other in a natural manner.

- **Ask for reactions, not just questions.**
  As you open the floor for questions, specifically say "What are your reactions to all this? Questions are great, but you are also welcome to just share an observation, it doesn't have to be in the form of a question."

- **Have people vet the questions in groups.**
  An alternative to the inverse Q&A is to ask people to find good questions in groups. Simply say, "Please spend a minute or two in small groups and try to find a good question or a reflection you think is relevant for everybody." The moderator/session chair can walk around the room and listen as people talk. If the moderator hears an interesting reflection, ask them to bring it up during the joint discussion, or the moderator brings it up themselves.

- **Share a final story after the Q&A.**
  Given that even the best-run Q&A session is unpredictable, it is best to have the Q&A as the *second*-to-last element. The session chair could stop the Q&A part a few minutes before the end and shares one final example. That way, even if the Q&A part falls flat, you can still end your session in a dynamic manner.

Measuring temperature

- The speaker or session chair asks a short straightforward question, and the audience can respond via the "**temperature of the room**" cards. Green for agreement, yellow for neutral or do not know (depending on the instructions), red for disagreement.

- **voting with your feet.**
  The presenter asks the audience max 4 questions. (e.g. how difficult do you think it is to overcome this particular challenge?) Individuals from the audience move to an area of the

room to indicate their answer. Can be repeated at the end of the session, to measure shifts in opinion.

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Discussions

- **Discussions in small groups / break-out sessions**
Smaller groups gather around white-boards/ flip-charts, or otherwise gather around a note-taker. If you want the whole audience to come back together and share what they learned during those conversations, it's likely that a spokesperson will naturally arise from each group; meaning the people who aren't comfortable chiming in on a large scale don't have to. The best thing about this strategy? The previously-reserved attendees will have a little more confidence to speak up when they know the rest of their group is there to jump in if needed.

- **Fishbowl**
Gather about 3 individuals at the centre of the room (i.e. the head table), to discuss a particular topic. One extra seat for a member of the audience, who wants to step into the fish bowl and ask questions or make comments. 1 moderator/facilitator needed.

- **World Café**
Groups of people discuss a topic at several tables/corners of the room, with individuals switching tables periodically and getting introduced to the previous discussion at their new table by a "table host". Finally, the results of all groups will be reflected on in a common plenum session.

- **Moderated panel discussion**
Invite three to five experts or community leaders to a moderated discussion on a particular issue. Panelists will discuss the issue with each other by asking questions or reacting to the views and opinions of other panel members. Provide time to answer questions from the audience.
The panel session typically lasts for 60-90 minutes.

- **Town hall / Forum**
Town hall meetings are similar to panel discussions but allow for more participation from the audience. An issue expert, community leader, or panel of authorities may kick off the discussion before community members ask questions. Or you might consider bringing together diverse groups of participants to discuss an issue with each other, rather than inviting a special guest to answer questions.

3. Links

Below you will be able to find some useful articles with further tips and tricks for both presenters and session chairs. Source: Harvard Business Review Group

About HBR: Harvard Business Review is the leading destination for smart management thinking. Through its flagship magazine, books, and digital content and tools published on HBR.org, Harvard Business Review aims to provide professionals around the world with rigorous insights and best practices to help lead themselves and their organizations more effectively and to make a positive impact.

- Four ways to fix the Q&A session:
  https://hbr.org/2014/08/four-ways-to-fix-the-qa-session

- Good presentations need to make people uncomfortable:
  https://hbr.org/2016/09/good-presentations-need-to-make-people-uncomfortable

- A checklist for more persuasive presentations:
  https://hbr.org/2016/10/a-checklist-for-more-persuasive-presentations

- 6 ways to reduce the stress of presenting:
  https://hbr.org/2015/08/6-ways-to-reduce-the-stress-of-presenting

- How to moderate a panel discussion:
  https://hbr.org/2018/12/how-to-moderate-a-panel-discussion