

APRICOT 2026 Fellowship Report

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Being selected as an APRICOT Fellow was both exciting and a little overwhelming at first. Turns out, it gave me the chance to learn from experienced operators, talk with individuals from different countries, and think about how our everyday work contributes to a safer and more reliable Internet.

For the masterclass, I selected *Practical Cybersecurity for Internet Operators*, delivered by instructors Mr. Philip Paeps, Mr. Tashi Phuntsho, and Mr. Warren Finch.

Days 1–3: Practical Cybersecurity for Internet Operators

The three-day cybersecurity masterclass was intense and focused on real-world operational problems rather than abstract theory, which made the learning practical and immediately relatable.

Early in the training, we were encouraged to think like attackers. We discussed social engineering tactics, predictable account naming patterns, and weaknesses in legacy systems such as SS7. One thing that stood out to me was how often security failures come from simple operational gaps rather than complex exploits. As we moved forward, we looked at infrastructure protection across different layers of the network.

Day 2 focused on wireless and routing security fundamentals. The wireless segment explored authentication methods, roaming considerations, and the limitations that come with radio-based networks. The MANRS principles were discussed as a shared responsibility among operators, along with practical measures such as uRPF and proper eBGP filtering to reduce spoofed traffic and routing risks.

On Day 3, we configured uRPF in strict mode during lab exercises. The session on Remotely Triggered Black Hole (RTBH) filtering showed how backbone-level mitigation can reduce the impact of DDoS attacks. We also worked with RPKI and route origin validation and discussed the risks associated with incorrectly configured ROAs. Configuring routers to communicate with RPKI validators during the lab helped me understand how origin validation works in real operational environments.

Outside the classroom sessions, informal conversations with participants were equally valuable. Listening to their experiences and challenges made me realize how interconnected our work is, regardless of geography.

Day 4: Skills Workshop

The fourth day shifted from technical work to professional skills. The workshop focused on public speaking and policy development through group activities. One exercise required us to present a technical scenario while also reflecting on its broader impact. I found this particularly useful because it challenged us to communicate complex ideas in a clear and relatable way.

The facilitators William Stockbridge, Aftab Siddiqui, Terry Sweetser, and Robbie Mitchell shared insights drawn from real experiences, which made the sessions engaging and practical.

Conference

Beyond the training sessions, the conference itself was a highlight. Meeting people from different countries and hearing their experience feel instantly relatable, and many conversations provided me with insightful information. The social evening, with music, dance, and relaxed conversations, helped break the ice and build genuine connections. Among the sessions, I also attended the Women in Tech panel, where issues such as representation, confidence barriers, and access to opportunities were discussed openly.

Reflections and Future Plans

This fellowship helped me better understand how infrastructure-level controls are implemented in operational networks. Working in cybersecurity, this perspective helps connect defensive analysis with the routing and architectural decisions that influence security outcomes.

In the coming weeks, I plan to share key takeaways with my colleagues and hope to stay engaged with the local community, npNOG, to continue learning and contributing.

The APRICOT Fellowship was more than a training opportunity. I am sincerely grateful to the organizers, mentors, sponsors, the fellowship committee, including John Rattray, and my fellow participants for making this experience truly meaningful.

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