

First consultation on a 2-year planning process

Introduction

During the FY19 planning process, various conversations on the planning process dealt with the challenge of dedicating sufficient time and resources to plan ICANN's activities.

These discussions have included the idea of extending the planning process beyond its current 15-month duration to offer more time for community engagement into more extensive activity planning processes. This idea had also been discussed during the IANA Stewardship transition.

As mentioned by Cherine Chalaby, Board Chair, and Göran Marby, President and CEO, ICANN org is initiating the process of evaluating a 2-year process as a mechanism to address the need.

Our plan is to consult the ICANN community in two steps.

Step 1: Consultation Paper - Problem Definition, in this step, we raise questions on a number of topics with the intent to collect community input and views on ICANN's planning process in order to get a common understanding of the current issues we looking to solve in ICANN's planning process.

Step 2: Consultation Paper – Solution Definition, in this step, the input and views from Step 1 will be used, along with input from the Board and ICANN org, to develop a high-level approach for planning, that may reflect a 2-year planning process, that will then be offered offer for a second public consultation.

The remainder of this document constitute the first Consultation Paper – Problem definition.

Section 1 Framing the Issue

In this section, we frame the planning issue under the following five headings: Why, What, Who, What and When.

Why?

Over the past 5 years, ICANN has offered an annual planning process that contains several community and public engagement opportunities: at least 2 webinars, at least 2 open budget working group meetings (At ICANN meetings), a public comment process, to engage with the Community on what ICANN expects its operating plan and budget to be during the upcoming fiscal year.

While this process allows access to detailed and comprehensive information on the Operating Plan and Budget, and engagement and interaction on this information, it includes very little opportunity to define and discuss the activities that ICANN (Org, Board, Community) will carry out prior to including such activities into the operating plan and quantifying the costs of such

activities in the budget. The engagement primarily happens once a complete draft Operating Plan and Budget has been developed.

Most of the on-going activities of ICANN result from abiding to its bylaws, from past Board decisions, or from contracted obligations. However, future trends potentially impacting ICANN, evolution in the topics requiring policy development, progress of on-going ICANN activities (policy development processes, reviews, working groups,..), all need to be taken into account to plan activities, define priorities and, as a result, allocate resources to suit the anticipated needs. In ICANN's multistakeholder environment, this is a time-consuming process that needs to be designed to reflect the mode of operations of a broad range of participants.

What?

Over the past 2 years, at various occasions, the simple idea of extending the time spent to plan has been raised. If one year is not enough, can we extend the planning process to 2 years? This document is therefore intending to initiate the process to describe what a 2-year planning process could be.

Who?

This document was produced by ICANN's Planning group (which includes representatives of the Finance, Operations and MSSSI departments).

The planning process involves:

- the ICANN Organization: CEO, Executive management and department managers, Finance.
- the ICANN Board: the Board Finance Committee, who is delegated from the Board the direct oversight of the Org throughout the planning process until board approval, the Board who receives the Operating Plan and Budget for approval, along with consideration of public comments received.
- the ICANN Community: who participates on a voluntary basis to the various opportunities of engagement of the planning process. The participation can come from various special purpose groups formed within a supporting organization or advisory committee, or from individual community members who participate to various opportunities offered and may submit verbal and/or written comments. The SO/AC leaders do not currently play a formal role in the process, but could be part of a future process in a more formal fashion.
- the public: members of the public that may not be involved in the ICANN community, but have interest in ICANN's planning process and participate to various engagement opportunities offered and may submit comments (usually written).

When?

The review and communication of a 2-year process is expected to be carried and completed by June 2019.

How?

Using this memo as a basis for the first phase of consultation, ICANN org would be reviewed and discuss the topic with the Board Finance Committee, and then produce a draft 2-year planning process which would be the subject of a second phase of consultation. Once a draft

document is updated with the input received from the BFC and the Board, ICANN org will organize various engagement sessions with the community, likely a webinar and working group discussion at ICANN 64.

Section 2 Questions to the Community

The purpose of this section is to obtain community input in order to help ICANN org understand the magnitude of the planning issue and obtain a common understanding if a 2-year planning cycle is the right solution.

Q1 - Does the community agree that the yearly planning cycle does not provide sufficient time for community extensive input and interaction on the operating plan and budget?

Q2 - Does the community believe that more time for planning provides more transparency?

Q3 – How and who should set ICANN’s priorities?

- The current ICANN strategic plan does not prioritize the 5 strategic objectives, they are equally important.
- Should parts of the strategic plan be prioritized of the 5 years it applies to?
- From the strategic trends exercises conducted with several community organizations during 2018:
 - “there is no prioritization, everything is #1 and nothing is #1”
 - “are the community priorities aligned with ICANN mission/vision?”
 - “Focus on technical functions as a priority and avoid allowing budget constraints to negatively affect them”
- Appendix: notes from the cross-community session on “Who sets ICANN priorities?” held during ICANN 59 in Johannesburg.

Q4 – Should policy development and implementation activities be integral to the planning cycle?

For the purpose of better using the limited availability of the community stakeholders, already stretched, and to appropriately allocate ICANN’s support resources, policy development needs and activities could be considered during the planning process:

- Should the policy development activities be planned?
- What should be planned collectively by the SO/AC, if anything?
- What should be planned by the GNSO and ccNSO?

Q5 - What activities, other than policy development, should be planned and by whom?

Examples:

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- Reviews
- Cross community working groups,
- Engagement activities outside ICANN meetings,
- ...

Q6 - Should the planning process include a formalized dedicated phase to plan for SO/AC activities? If so, how many years should be planned for?

Process questions:

- Would it be beneficial to insert, in the early part of the planning process, a phase of activity planning resulting in a document submitted for a first public comment period, and follow it by an operating plan and budget development phase which would be the subject of a second public comment period?
- What are the barriers to community engagement in the planning process?
 - Lack of available time?
 - Complexity of the information produced?
 - Complexity or length of the planning process?
 - Lack of relevance or interest?

Appendix

Notes from the Cross Community Session “Who Sets ICANN’s Priorities?”

ICANN 59 Johannesburg 28 June 2017

Background

This was a cross community session proposed by the ccNSO. The Adobe Connect recording of the session (and, in due course, transcript) can be found [here](#).

The session was chaired by Thomas Schneider (GAC). Moderators were Jordan Carter (ccNSO) and Chuck Gomes (GNSO). There were two panels: one dealing with who sets ICANN priorities (Alan Greenberg ALAC; Katrina Sataki ccNSO; Xavier Calvez ICANN Chief Finance Officer) and dealing with possible improvements (Patrik Falstrom SSAC; Cherine Chalaby ICANN Board; James Bladel GNSO).

A summary of the cross-community session at ICANN 56 (Helsinki) on ICANN workload scheduling and management (published on the GAC website at the time) is attached.

Who sets ICANN’s priorities?

Formal processes for setting ICANN priorities are the Five-Year [Strategic Plan](#) and [Five-Year Operating Plan](#), supported by the Annual Operating Plan and Budget. These do have some transparency and accountability through the public comment process and the Empowered Community structure. However, the 5-year plans are set at a very high level and do not seem to influence (or be influenced by) workload realities at the SO/AC and individual volunteer levels.

The published list of [ICANN Projects](#) was noted (as it was at relevant sessions at ICANN 56) but this does not seem to have any priority-setting role.¹

SOs and ACs currently set their own priorities in a variety of ways. Several noted that the cross-community nature of nearly all ICANN work means that their workload is affected by initiatives from elsewhere in the community (including ICANN Org) over which they may have little control. There is no coordination mechanism for priority-setting or workload adjustment across different parts of the community. It was noted that a semi-formal consultation among heads of SOs/ACs immediately before ICANN meetings had been done previously but not recently.

Several participants noted that “not all stakeholders are equal” and the work of ACs tends to be driven by SOs. For example, the decision of the GNSO to pursue a PDP on new gTLD policies and procedures (with a view to further release of TLDs as soon as possible) impacts workloads and

¹ The projects listed here are under the Strategic Plan reflect the work of ICANN Org, not that of SOs and ACs.

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priorities for nearly all other parts of the community. A related point is that the interests of the GAC and ALAC tend to be community-wide.

There was agreement that genuinely urgent matters do get dealt with (for example, the IANA transition) but this has not helped individual groups set their own priorities.

It was noted that the problems are multiplied for participants from developing countries with limited resources and capacity.

The net result has been multiple parallel processes, work overload, a volunteer base that is not renewing, barriers to participation in ICANN processes and a feeling in many parts of the community that they have no means of prioritising work to address these problems.

How can priority-setting be improved?

The following suggestions were raised in discussion:

- The ICANN CEO will look at options for some form of SO/AC coordination group and will report back to SO/AC leaders. He also noted that work has started on a new long-term financial planning process that may well affect priorities.
- There was a range of views on a possible role for the ICANN Board. Some felt it was the Board's responsibility to address a common problem across the community. Others argued that an active role for the Board in setting community priorities would be inconsistent with the Board's responsibilities as custodian of broader community interests.
- PDPs could seek input from the rest of the community on a more targeted basis rather than put a wide range of questions out for comment as a single process.
- Longer deadlines for comment on issues would help.
- The GNSO will be considering its first strategic plan in early 2018 and there may be opportunities for community input on this.
- A new approach would be to try to allocate the 16 days per year of community face-to-face time to specific areas of agreed common interest (such as the approach taken to geographic names for ICANN 59) rather than trying to deal with multiple issues at once.
- "Learning to say 'No, not right now' " should not be in conflict with any ICANN values or processes.
- SOs and ACs could look at ways of getting out of the cycle of responding to draft ICANN budgets and strategic plans and become more pro-actively involved in their formulation.
- A cross-community session at ICANN 60 on lowering barriers to meaningful engagement in ICANN processes should be considered.