

4 September 2026

ICANN BOARD PAPER NO. 2026.09.06.1a

TITLE: **Contract for Information Transparency Platform
Next Generation**

PROPOSED ACTION: **For Board Consideration and Approval**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

ICANN is seeking Board approval for a ^{Confidential a Negotiation Information} contract to deliver the next phase of the Information Transparency Platform (ITP) Confidential Negotiation Information through a modernized platform architecture known as ITP Next Generation. Because this contract is expected to have Confidential Negotiation Information, Board approval is required per the [ICANN Contracting and Disbursement policy](#).

Staff is seeking a ^{Confidential a Negotiation Information} contract for a total not to exceed Confidential Negotiation Information to secure favorable terms and resources, and the breakdown of this contract by fiscal year is roughly Confidential Negotiation Information.

The contract will provide the specialized engineering, quality assurance, and content management resources required to implement the modernized architecture, complete the remaining platform migration, and transition the platform toward steady-state operations. As part of this strategy, ICANN will progressively reduce reliance on specialized third-party development resources through knowledge transfer, architectural simplification, and increased internal ownership over the life of the contract.

ICANN STAFF AND BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE (BFC) RECOMMENDATION:

ICANN staff and the Board Finance Committee recommend that the Board authorizes the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to take all steps necessary to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a ^{Confidential a Negotiation Information} contract for Information

Transparency Platform (ITP) Next Generation support services
Confidential Negotiation Information

4 September 2026

PROPOSED RESOLUTION:

Whereas, ICANN continues to modernize the Information Transparency Platform (ITP) to improve operational efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and provide a sustainable digital publishing platform supporting ICANN's mission.

Whereas, implementation of the ITP Next Generation architecture requires specialized engineering, quality assurance, and content management expertise.

Whereas, ICANN staff and Board Finance Committee have recommended that the Board approve this resolution.

Resolved (2026.09.06.XX), the Board authorizes the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a ^{Confidential Negotiation Inform} contract ^{Confidential Negotiation Information} for ITP Next Generation support services ^{Confidential Negotiation Information}

Resolved (2026.09.06.XX), specific portions of this resolution shall remain confidential for negotiation purposes pursuant to Article 3, Section 3.5(b) of the ICANN Bylaws until the President and CEO determines the information may be publicly released.

PROPOSED RATIONALE:

Background: The Information Transparency Platform (ITP) is ICANN's strategic digital publishing platform responsible for managing, organizing, and delivering public information across ICANN's web properties. Since 2017, the ITP has established the foundation for structured content management, multilingual publishing, taxonomy management, and a modern content delivery capability supporting ICANN's public-facing websites. As the platform has matured, ICANN has evaluated both the technology architecture and the long-term operating model to identify opportunities for further improvement.

ITP Next Generation: ITP Next Generation is the next evolution of the platform. Rather than extending the existing implementation, ICANN has developed a new architectural approach focused on simplifying the platform while preserving the significant investment

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already made. The strategy, which enables ICANN to complete the remaining ITP roadmap while simultaneously improving the long-term sustainability of the platform, is designed to:

- Simplify the technology architecture supporting digital publishing.
- Reduce operational complexity and ongoing maintenance effort.
- Improve delivery speed for future digital initiatives.
- Reduce reliance on multiple enterprise software platforms.
- Lower long-term software licensing and operational costs.
- Establish a scalable foundation capable of supporting future ICANN web properties.

Strategic Benefits: ITP Next Generation delivers benefits extending beyond completion of the current implementation. The modernized architecture is expected to:

- accelerate delivery of new content capabilities and website enhancements;
- simplify platform operations through a reduced technology footprint;
- reduce ongoing software licensing costs through platform consolidation;
- lower operational and maintenance overhead;
- decrease long-term dependence on specialized third-party development resources;
- provide a scalable foundation supporting future ICANN digital initiatives; and
- improve the overall sustainability and maintainability of ICANN's public digital services.

Collectively, these improvements position the platform to deliver greater value while reducing the total cost of ownership over time.

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Although the investment represents continued delivery of the ITP program, the Next Generation strategy is expected to reduce future operating costs through: (i) lower software licensing costs; (ii) reduced platform complexity; (iii) reduced maintenance effort; (iv) decreased third-party development dependency; and (v) improved operational efficiency. These efficiencies establish a more sustainable long-term operating model while preserving the investments already made in the platform.

The ITP supports ICANN's mission by providing a secure, scalable, and efficient platform for publishing information to the global Internet community in the public interest by improving the sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of ICANN's digital publishing services while enabling continued transparency and access to multilingual information.

This action has a fiscal impact that will be incorporated into approved and planned budgets.

This action is expected to have a positive impact on the security, stability, and resiliency of ICANN's digital publishing platform and supporting infrastructure.

This is an Organizational Administrative Function and does not require public comment.

Submitted by: Sally Newell Cohen, SVP Communications
Date Noted: 4 September 2026
Email: sally.newellcohen@icann.org

ICANN BOARD PAPER NO. 2026.09.06.1b

TITLE: Engineering & IT Strategic Staff Augmentation Services Contract

PROPOSED ACTION: For Board Approval

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

ICANN is seeking Board approval to extend its strategic Engineering & IT staff augmentation services for a 33 month period through June 2029. Board approval of this contract is required because it is for Confidential Negotiation Information. Per the [ICANN Contracting and Disbursement policy](#) the Board must approve any expenditures that will exceed US\$750,000.

While ICANN maintains a strong internal engineering organization, staff augmentation remains an important component of its workforce strategy by providing flexible access to scalable delivery capacity, and global operational coverage that would be difficult and less cost-effective to maintain through permanent staffing alone. The proposed contract will provide continuity across multiple Engineering & IT products and services while supporting ongoing organizational transformation and evolution of ICANN's long-term workforce and sourcing strategy.

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ICANN STAFF AND BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE (BFC) RECOMMENDATION):

ICANN staff and the Board Finance Committee recommend that the Board authorize the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to take all steps necessary to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a 33 month Engineering & IT staff augmentation services contract Confidential Negotiation Information

PROPOSED RESOLUTION:

Whereas, ICANN requires specialized engineering, quality assurance, content management, and technical resources to augment internal Engineering & IT capability in support of strategic initiatives and ongoing operational services.

Whereas, staff augmentation provides flexible access to specialized expertise while enabling ICANN to efficiently scale engineering capacity based on evolving business priorities.

Resolved (2026.09.06.xx), the Board authorizes the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to enter into and make disbursements in furtherance of a

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contract with the preferred vendor for Engineering & IT staff augmentation services

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Resolved (2026.09.06.xx), specific portions of this resolution shall remain confidential for negotiation purposes pursuant to Article 3, Section 3.5(b) of the ICANN Bylaws until the President and CEO determines that the information may be publicly released.

PROPOSED RATIONALE:

Engineering & IT delivers and supports a diverse portfolio of technology products, enterprise platforms, digital services, cybersecurity capabilities, and operational systems that enable ICANN to fulfill its mission. To support this portfolio, ICANN combines internal technical expertise with strategic staff augmentation, providing access to engineering, quality assurance, content management, and technical skills that complement internal capabilities.

Engineering & IT has adopted a workforce model that balances staff internal capability with targeted external expertise. This approach enables ICANN to:

- rapidly scale engineering capacity as priorities evolve;
- access technical expertise that may not be required on a permanent basis;
- provide extended operational coverage across global time zones;
- respond efficiently to changing project demands;
- reduce delivery risk across multiple concurrent initiatives; and

- maintain financial flexibility by aligning external resources with business demand.

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The proposed

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contract provides strategic value beyond additional staffing capacity. Key benefits include:

- flexible engineering capacity that scales with organizational demand;
- access to specialized software engineering, quality assurance, and content management expertise;
- improved responsiveness through extended global operational coverage;
- cost-effective access to technical resources;

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- reduced delivery risk across ICANN's technology portfolio.

Collectively, these capabilities strengthen Engineering & IT's ability to deliver technology services efficiently while maintaining operational resilience.

The proposed contract will have a fiscal impact of an amount

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and that impact has been incorporated into approved and planned

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budgets.

Maintaining sufficient engineering capacity through a balanced workforce strategy is in the public interest because it supports the organization's ability to deliver secure, reliable, and resilient technology services in furtherance of ICANN's mission.

The proposed contract has a fiscal impact that has been incorporated into the FY27 Budget and future financial planning.

Maintaining appropriate engineering and operational capacity contributes positively to the security, stability, and resiliency of ICANN's technology services and supporting infrastructure.

This is an Organizational Administrative Function and does not require public comment.

Submitted by: Andre Abed, CIO & Head of Engineering & IT
Date Noted: 12 August 2026
Email: andre.abed@icann.org

ICANN BOARD PAPER NO. 2026.09.06.1c

TITLE: Professional Services Contract for Enhanced On-call Support Model for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round

PROPOSED ACTION: For Board Approval

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Board is being asked to approve an additional contract for an enhanced on-call support model for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. The key terms of the contract include development and support through July 2027, Confidential Negotiation Information Per the [ICANN Contracting and Disbursement policy](#) the Board must approve any expenditures that will exceed US\$750,000.

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Confidential Negotiation Information

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BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE (BFC) RECOMMENDATION:

The BFC recommends that the ICANN Board authorize the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a contract not to exceed Confidential Negotiation Information for additional system development and support needed for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION:

Whereas, ICANN has a continued need for third-party professional services to develop system

functionality, ensure timely incident response, maintain system stability, and support critical business processes.

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Whereas, the BFC recommended that the ICANN Board pass the following resolution.

Resolved (2026.09.06.xx), the Board authorizes the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a contract Confidential Negotiation Information

Confidential Negotiation Information in the aggregate, for system development and support needed for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

Resolved (2026.09.06.xx), specific items within this resolution shall remain confidential for negotiation purposes pursuant to Article 3, section 3.5(b) of the ICANN Bylaws until the President and CEO determines that the confidential information may be released.

PROPOSED RATIONALE:

Confidential Negotiation Information

Confidential Negotiation Information

Accordingly, the BFC recommended that the ICANN Board authorize the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to enter into, and make disbursements in furtherance of, a contract extension **Confidential Negotiation Information** for system development and support needed for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

This decision is in the furtherance of ICANN's mission and in the public interest as it is meant to support the security, stability and resiliency of the domain name system (DNS) by ensuring that there is adequate system functionality and other support needed for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

This decision will have a fiscal impact, but the impact has already been accounted for in the FY27 budget and will be for future budgets as well.

As noted above, this action is intended to have a positive impact on security, stability and resiliency of the DNS.

This is an Organizational Administrative Function that does not require public comment.

Submitted by: Xavier Calvez
Position: SVP, Planning and CFO
Date Noted: 12 August 2026
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ICANN BOARD PAPER NO. 2026.09.06.2a

TITLE: ICANN's 2026 Annual Strategy Review

PROPOSED ACTION: For Board Consideration and Approval

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The five-year Strategic Plan establishes a vision and a set of strategic objectives in service of ICANN's Mission. Tracking new and shifting trends affecting ICANN and the Internet is a step in ICANN's strategic planning process. The Board, through the Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC), oversees the Annual Strategy Review Program to identify relevant trends and events that inform ICANN's strategic planning efforts. The objective of the Annual Strategy Review Program is to ensure that the Strategic Plan is on track and remains relevant and to evaluate if any strategic adjustments are necessary.

After its review of the outcomes of the Environmental Scan sessions conducted between February and April 2026, the BSPC recommends that the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 - 2030 does not need to be updated to address these trends. For transparency and responsiveness to community dialogue, the BSPC further recommends that, when taking this decision, the Board identifies how the key trends are to be addressed during implementation of the Strategic Plan, even though changes to the Strategic Plan itself are not warranted.

BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Board Strategic Planning Committee has evaluated the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 against the ICANN 2026 Annual Strategy Review Report and recommends that no restatement of the Strategic Plan is needed at this time. This recommendation to maintain the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 without changes is based on the BSPC's assessment that the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 continues to meet ICANN's needs.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Whereas, the Board, through the Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC), oversees the ICANN's Annual Strategy Review Program ("Strategy Review") to identify relevant trends and events that inform ICANN's strategic planning efforts. As part of the 2026 Strategy Review, eight environment scan sessions were held in February through April 2026, with

nearly 210 participants from the community, Board and ICANN organization. The objective of the Strategy Review is to ensure that the Strategic Plan is on track, remains relevant, and to evaluate if any adjustments to the Strategic Plan are necessary.

Whereas, the BSPC, supported by ICANN org, reviewed and analyzed the results of the key emerging trends collected from the environmental scan sessions and considered any impacts on ICANN. The results are recorded in the ICANN 2026 Annual Strategy Review Report.

Whereas, the BSPC recommended to the Board, after review and analysis of the key emerging trends, that ICANN's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 does not need to change at this time.

Resolved (2026.09.06.xx), the Board affirms that the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 to 2030, as approved on 13 March 2025 shall remain in force and unchanged.

PROPOSED RATIONALE:

On 13 March 2025, the Board [adopted](#) the [ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 to 2030](#) and directed that as part of the ongoing annual planning cycle with the community, new trends or shifts in existing trends be evaluated to ensure that the Strategic Plan is on track and remains relevant. These efforts are conducted through the ICANN Annual Strategy Review Program. The Board, through the Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC) oversees the annual ICANN Annual Strategy Review Program to identify relevant trends and events that inform ICANN's strategic planning efforts. The Board's action today confirms that the current Strategic Plan remains relevant and on track and does not need to be modified.

Who Was Consulted and What Was Raised?

As part of the ICANN Annual Strategy Review Program, eight environment scan sessions were held between February and April 2026, with nearly 210 participants from the community, Board and ICANN organization. The BSPC, supported by ICANN org, reviewed and analyzed the results of the key emerging trends collected from the environmental scan sessions and considered any impacts on ICANN. On the basis of the analysis of the insights collected in these environmental scan sessions, the BSPC discussed the impact of these trends on ICANN's Strategic Plan. The BSPC identified that the high-level strategies within the Strategic Plan still remain relevant and appropriate to allow ICANN to address these trends.

A 2026 key emerging trend raised in all sessions with the Community is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impacts on ICANN, the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems, and ICANN's Multistakeholder Model. The Board discussed that AI posed both risks and opportunities for ICANN. Other frequently raised trends included factors that could have the potential to result in shifts in the Domain Name System Marketplace such as the increase the popularity of apps and other name spaces that will have long-term impacts on registrars, registries, and the market. The full results are recorded in the ICANN 2026 Annual Strategy Review Report.

What Factors did the Board Find Important?

The Board considered the range of emerging trends and how those are addressed in the Strategic Plan. The Board also considered how the operational work of ICANN org to deliver on the Strategic Plan, including the [Five Year FY27–31 Operating Plan](#) support the achievement of the strategies. The emerging trends are reflected across several Strategic Objectives, Goals and Strategies. A mapping of how the 2026 emerging trends are reflected in the FY26–30 Strategic Plan is provided as a supplemental resource.

With the universal emphasis on monitoring the impacts from AI, the Board confirmed not only that the Strategic Plan remains relevant to address this, but also that these strategic priorities are already translated into operational efforts for ICANN that specifically address AI. In the Five Year FY27-31 Operating Plan and the FY27 Organizational Objectives there is planned work to monitor AI and a number of technologies that are currently emerging, as these technologies might either become integrated components of the global DNS system, complement it, or provide a similar role in other domains.

This resolution is not expected to have a fiscal impact on ICANN, though changes to FY28 ICANN's Operating Plan, if any, might have an impact once approved. This action is expected to have a positive impact on the security, stability and resiliency of the domain name system (DNS) as it continues to support ICANN's strategic work in this area.

This resolution serves ICANN's mission in ensuring a secure and stable operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems. The ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030

builds upon ICANN's mission so that it may continue to effectively fulfill its strategic vision and meet new and continuously evolving challenges and opportunities.

This resolution is in the public interest as the Strategic Plan guides ICANN's activities and informs ICANN's operating plans and budgets to fulfill its mission and vision for fiscal years 2026 through 2030. The Strategic Plan serves the public interest by articulating the path towards a new vision to be a champion of the single, open, and globally interoperable Internet. The Strategic Plan complies with ICANN's commitments and is guided by ICANN's core values.

This is an Organizational Administrative Function that has been subject to community consultation as noted above and is not requiring further public comment.

REFERENCE MATERIALS:

- ICANN 2026 Annual Strategy Review Report
- ICANN 2026 Strategy Review Mapping of Emerging Trends to the FY26–30 Strategic Objectives and Goals

Signature Block:

Submitted by: Amitabh Singhal

Position: Member of the ICANN Board, Chair of the Board Strategic Planning Board Committee

Date Noted: 31 August 2026

Email: amitabh.singhal@board.icann.org



2026 Annual Strategy Review Report

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A. Mapping of the Trends to the FY26–30 Strategic Objectives and Goals

B. Environmental Scan Sessions Summary

1. Introduction

A thorough understanding of the environmental impacts on an organization is a critical element of an effective strategic planning process. The Annual Strategy Review is focused on [ICANN's Strategic Plan](#). The Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC) oversees this program on behalf of the ICANN Board. The BSPC appreciates the involvement of the community and stakeholders in this process.

The 2026 Annual Strategy Review Report provides a summary of the input received from the eight environmental scan sessions held with stakeholders across the ICANN ecosystem from February to April 2026. The objective of these sessions was to identify the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats, that could affect ICANN's ability to fulfill its mission or to achieve its strategic vision set forth in [ICANN's Strategic Plan](#).

The environmental scan sessions were divided into two key sections: external and internal factors. The external environmental scan examined factors that could impact ICANN's mission or performance. The internal environmental scan focused on ICANN's strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation is not from an operational point of view but from a strategic point of view.

The data collected during these sessions was at a point in time, based on participants' perceptions and opinions, and is recounted here as provided by the participants in the environmental scan sessions. Therefore, any subsequent topics discussed with the ICANN organization (org),

Board, and community since that time will be incorporated into the next strategy review process. Inclusion of the statements in this report is intended to reflect the data collected and is not intended as an endorsement of any of those positions.

Following the sessions, the trends were presented to the BSPC, which reviewed and discussed the trends. The BSPC reviewed each trend to assess any impact on ICANN's ability to fulfill its mission or to achieve its strategic vision set forth in [ICANN's Strategic Plan](#).

The analysis of the key emerging trends, related impacts, and assessment of how the trends are addressed in the Strategic Plan are separated into two sections in this report. The first section is the Assessment and Conclusions of Key Emerging Trends. These were the trends that were discussed by participants in every session and are considered a notable shift from previous years. The second section describes additional trends that were mentioned in one or more sessions but do not have any notable shift from previous years.

All trends were discussed and evaluated to confirm how the strategies within the Strategic Plan address these trends. ICANN will continue to carry out the planned activities in the Strategic Initiatives in the [FY27–31 Operating Plan](#) and the [FY27 Organizational Objectives](#) and report on progress.

2. Assessment of Key Emerging Trends

2.1 Artificial Intelligence Impact on ICANN and the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

Participants raised the point that continuous innovation in technology may cause potential disruptions that impact the Internet. Disruptions may arise from various sources, such as emerging technologies, changes in user behavior, cybersecurity threats, or unforeseen events.

Technological advancements may present opportunities to strengthen the security and resilience of the unique identifier systems; others may fragment trust or perhaps challenge the universality of the unique identifier systems.

A significant technology shift highlighted by participants in all of the sessions was the impact of artificial intelligence (AI). Specifically, large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and its counterparts, and a subset of machine learning known as "generative artificial intelligence." The discussion confirmed that AI poses both a risk and an opportunity for ICANN.

Participants flagged that the escalating challenges associated with AI, malware proliferation, and cybercrime collectively contribute to a decline in trust within the digital ecosystem. Pressure to regulate content, combat disinformation, and address Domain Name System (DNS) Abuse may impact ICANN's policies and operations.

Participants focused on the impact of AI on the DNS, the identifier ecosystem, and ICANN's mission.

Participants observed shifts related to the unique identifier systems:

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- There is an impact of AI on the DNS traffic itself. LLMs and agentic AI systems interact with the Internet differently than human users do.
 - AI agents might require identifiers, and those identifiers might use domain names. If so, there could be unforeseen effects on registries and registrars because of the potential large number of agents and their capabilities.
 - AI may impact future identifier systems.
 - The potential for AI to accelerate and automate DNS Abuse represents a meaningful shift in the threat landscape.
 - AI-generated Contractual Compliance complaints to ICANN are longer and more complex. The reliance on AI to generate complaints can also introduce inaccuracies where precision matters. Complaints sound very convincing and take additional time to process and analyze.
 - A pressing concern is the use of AI to scale malicious activity.
 - LLMs can make it significantly easier to generate convincing phishing content, create impersonation sites, or craft targeted social engineering campaigns.
 - While DNS Abuse is being accelerated and facilitated by AI technology, the defenses to counteract DNS Abuse are also using AI.
 - This includes proposals at the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to use the DNS as a discovery mechanism for AI agents.

Additionally, participants said that not all new AI website builders are Universal Acceptance (UA) compliant and do not accept Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), so this trend can impact UA work. In addition, participants noted the possibility of unexpected side effects of AI on IDNs and UA that ought to be explored in further research.

ICANN published a [blog on AI](#), noting that AI does not change ICANN's core mission or the fundamental architecture of the DNS, and that ICANN closely observes the emergence and development of technologies, including machine learning. But like any significant technology shift, it does have implications for the ecosystem ICANN operates in, and some of those implications deserve careful attention.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

The impact of artificial intelligence on ICANN and the Internet's unique identifier systems trend maps to two Strategic Objectives and related Strategic Goals in the FY26–30 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Objective 3. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to evolve the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 3.1 Facilitate digital inclusion.
 - Strategic Goal 3.2 Evolve the assessment of, and responsiveness to, technological developments.
- Strategic Objective 4. Strengthen the stability and security of the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 4.1 Strengthen partnerships with relevant stakeholders to reinforce the shared responsibility of ensuring secure and stable unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 4.2 Strengthen the DNS root server system.

2.2 Artificial Intelligence Impact on ICANN's Multistakeholder Model

Participants discussed both the risks and opportunities of AI on participation in ICANN. AI could impact the ICANN multistakeholder model (MSM) by changing how the community participates in ICANN.

- Participants noted that AI can assist those who are trying to contribute by distilling large amounts of information and helping them fine-tune their research or comments.
- Participants also expressed concern that AI could reduce meaningful participation overall as there may be distrust from other participants in whether participation is authentic or manufactured by AI. Participants noted that someone could use information provided by AI to draft comments, statements, questions, or define a position, which would push AI deeper into ICANN processes, and this access could be a potential risk.

Participants discussed how AI impacts ICANN's MSM and how AI tools may affect the policymaking of ICANN.

- It was observed that any evolution of the governance model around policymaking would require community design.
- AI could make it possible to generate public comments, draft policy language, respond to mailing lists, and engage in community processes at a scale and speed that could be disruptive to ICANN's consensus-based processes. This may impact trust in the MSM if participation can be automated.
- AI could disrupt community processes such as Fellowship Program applications or applications for the Grant Program if submissions are generated by AI. The usage of AI could increase the volume of eligible and ineligible applications, leading to higher workload and resource demand. This could delay eligible applications being identified and selected.
- In addition to generative AI, there is also analytical AI, which could allow ICANN to collect and analyze more information on the DNS marketplace and help ICANN have more information as to whether its mission of consumer competition and trust is being achieved.

Participants expressed concerns about how AI is now the leading reason companies give for cutting jobs (see this [June 2026 article](#)). This may lead to a lower number of contracted parties, which would impact ICANN's funding.

Increasing discussions on the future of AI regulation and governance has put a spotlight on whether an MSM approach might be appropriate for those efforts. Questions on the effectiveness of the ICANN MSM and whether this model could be adopted by other ecosystems could provide an opportunity for ICANN to further promote the MSM, or it could pose the risk of ICANN being asked to take action outside of its remit.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

The impact of artificial intelligence on ICANN's multistakeholder model trend maps to the following Strategic Objective and related Strategic Goal in the FY26–30 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Objective 1. Evolve and promote ICANN's multistakeholder model, to sustain its inclusive approach to Internet governance.
 - Strategic Goal 1.2 Enhance the agility and effectiveness of policy and advice development.

2.3 Domain Name System Marketplace

Participants discussed factors that could have the potential to result in shifts in the DNS marketplace.

Participants discussed technologies that could alter traditional methods of navigating the Internet through domain names and noted that the increase in AI and the popularity of apps could change the way society uses domain names. This means that people are using domain names and the Internet in new and different ways.

Participants discussed how AI agents, the unbundling of services, and low-margin structure could result in a rapid decline in registrars (see this [LinkedIn article](#)).

Participants noted that other name spaces will have long-term impacts on registrars, registries, and the market. The trend is to evaluate how these will be integrated into the DNS and if they should be integrated. The point is whether integration means uniqueness or compatibility.

Participants noted that there is a gap between social media apps in comparison to registered domain names. Previously, there was concern about social media usage replacing the use of registered domain names. However, participants discussed an opportunity related to enhancing trust in the DNS by means of protections in registered domain names. The pros and cons of social media applications vs. registered domain names as they relate to content regulation and verifying complaints were discussed by participants, who noted that there are key differences between having a page on social media and a registered domain name. With regards to social media, the enforcement over content lies in the hands of the social media company. With a website, there are more checks and balances to protect content and end users from unverified takedowns.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

This trend maps to the following Strategic Objective and related Strategic Goal and Strategy:

- Strategic Objective 3. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to evolve the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 3.2 Evolve the assessment of, and responsiveness to, technological developments.
 - Strategy: 3.2.2 Collaborate with technical community entities, such as the Internet Engineer Task Force, Regional Internet Registries, and root server operators, to understand new technologies.

ICANN is forming a new [technical study group](#) to understand the implications of integrating a gTLD name with the same name in an alternative naming system. A thorough assessment of the potential impact on the security and stability of the DNS must be conducted before moving forward with this type of new registry service. This aligns with ICANN's mission of ensuring the stable, secure, and unified operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems.

3. Additional Trends Discussed Without Notable Shifts From Previous Years

3.1 The Future of Unique Identifier Systems

Participants discussed the impact of the future of where Internet standards are developed and the impact on ICANN.

- Society is increasingly using proprietary technology for digital usage, and this impacts standards.
- There is a risk to ICANN's relevance if standards are developed or adopted outside the IETF, which may have already started.

Participants discussed unique identifiers and cryptography, highlighting that some breakthroughs on quantum computing are happening faster than anticipated. Quantum computing could have an impact on cryptography.

Participants said the perception of low Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC) adoption may lead to a lack of trust in the DNS.

Participants noted that the rise of alternative naming systems raises some strategic questions, such as how they impact user experience and trust in the DNS.

Participants noted that blockchain introduces a decentralized and tamper-resistant ledger, making it more challenging for malicious actors to manipulate or compromise domain information compared to the centralized DNS. There is a potential opportunity to explore how blockchain technology can be leveraged to strengthen the security of domain names, addressing concerns related to hacking, domain hijacking, and other cyberthreats associated with traditional domains. However, users suggested that different approaches to DNS security could be a sign of fragmenting trust.

Participants commented that there is a risk involved with ICANN not having a place for discussions about blockchain. Is ICANN following the evolution of unique identifiers technology, or is ICANN a DNS organization? If ICANN considers integration between alternative name spaces and the DNS, then it needs to define what that means and what that may look like.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

This trend maps to two Strategic Objectives and related Strategic Goals in the FY26–30 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Objective 3. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to evolve the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 3.2 Evolve the assessment of, and responsiveness to, technological developments.
- Strategic Objective 4. Strengthen the stability and security of the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 4.2 Strengthen DNS root server system.

Similar to the assessment of the impact of AI, this trend, like any significant technology shift, could have implications for the ecosystem ICANN operates in, and some of those implications deserve careful attention through the ongoing monitoring that is done by ICANN.

3.2 Domain Name System Abuse

Participants discussed [DNS Abuse](#) in the context of AI, noting the risk that bad actors could use AI maliciously to register domain names.

In addition, AI was mentioned as an opportunity to combat DNS Abuse by detecting maliciously used domain names and to perform research on how DNS Abuse is happening, to what extent, across what regions, who the actors are, and so on.

Participants voiced that the pressure to regulate content, combat disinformation, and address DNS Abuse may impact ICANN's policies and operations. Some of these areas are outside of ICANN's remit.

Participants mentioned that the Generic Names Supporting Organization Council voted to initiate two separate policy development processes on DNS Abuse mitigation.

Assessment of the How Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

This trend maps to the following Strategic Objective and related Strategic Goal:

- Strategic Objective 4. Strengthen the stability and security of the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 4.1 Strengthen partnerships with relevant stakeholders to reinforce the shared responsibility of ensuring secure and stable unique identifier systems.

ICANN provides updates on this trend on the webpage for the [DNS Abuse Mitigation Program](#).

3.3 The New gTLD Program: 2026 Round

Participants said that the 2026 Round seeks to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS.

Participants noted that there is uncertainty about the potential success or failure of certain new gTLDs in the future, as some participants in the 2012 Round faced challenges in gaining user adoption, limited market demand for their offerings, etc.

In addition, the participants said that the 2026 Round will impact participation and community dynamics. One participant commented that the 2026 Round processes are all about offering competition and consumer choice, and if the potential population of Internet users does not have reliable power infrastructure, that's going to have a significant effect on the end users' choice to get involved.

The 2026 Round of new gTLDs may bring further challenges and risks in this area, or may show new opportunities, such as stronger branding, more linguistic inclusivity, and enhanced innovation in digital identity.

Depending on the kinds of applications, there may be a geopolitical impact in relation to the ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee and government relations. If there is strong dissatisfaction in one community group or region, this will result in both operational and political outcomes.

Assessment of the How Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

This trend maps to the following Strategic Objective, Strategic Goal, and Strategy:

- Strategic Objective 3. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to evolve the Internet's unique identifier systems.
 - Strategic Goal 3.1 Facilitate digital inclusion.
 - Strategy 3.1.3 Cultivate consumer choice, competition, inclusivity, and innovation.

The New gTLD Program: 2026 Round is being implemented by ICANN org in line with community-developed policy recommendations, enabling the expansion of the DNS. The work to implement the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round began in April 2023. The application window opened on 30 April 2026 and closed on 12 August 2026.

3.4 Geopolitical Trend Factors

Some of the environmental scan participants believed that digital sovereignty is a concern that could impact the technical underpinnings of the Internet or the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, leading to internet fragmentation.

Although the [outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society 20-year review](#) in 2025 yielded support for the use of the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, participants noted that the fragmentation of the Internet is increasingly viewed as an operational method for pursuing digital sovereignty.

Participants said that governments may introduce new laws that conflict with ICANN's policies or go beyond what DNS is meant to do.

In addition, participants raised regional or global conflicts as a potential threat to the stability of the Internet and underscored the need for ICANN to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes while preserving the integrity, interoperability, and accessibility of the DNS.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

The trend maps to the following Strategic Objective, Strategic Goal, and Strategy:

- Strategic Objective 1. Evolve and promote ICANN's multistakeholder model, to sustain its inclusive approach to Internet governance.
 - Strategic Goal 1.3 Expand strategic alliances to advocate for the multistakeholder model of Internet governance.
 - Strategy 1.3.2 Strengthen collaborative efforts to promote the multistakeholder model of Internet governance.

The risk of regional or global conflicts is a trend related to external environmental factors. These risks are not directly within ICANN's control and therefore do not belong as stand-alone "managed risks" in the organizational risk register with mitigation plans. These types of risks sit in the category of "externally driven systemic Internet ecosystem risks" that are monitored and influence strategy, rather than risks that are directly mitigated through internal control design or operational response plans.

3.5 ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model – Community Growth, Structures

Participants said that ICANN's MSM requires active, sustained, and informed participation, and ICANN's community structures and policy processes remain a challenge.

Participants noted that the current ICANN community includes a substantial number of longtime participants. They recognized that the benefit of having experienced community members who are actively engaged in policy work and leadership has to be balanced with encouraging knowledge transfer, the need for new and motivated policy participants, and future leaders.

Participants said that ICANN's policy processes are increasingly perceived as complex and process-heavy, with few incentives for consensus and timely decision-making. This can be a deterrent to participation, especially for newcomers.

Participants said that while broad participation in ICANN processes strengthens the legitimacy and diversity of input, increasingly complex issues can slow progress and strain resources. In addition, funding constraints, uneven stakeholder capacity, and varying levels of policy expertise within the community can affect the policy development outcomes. Stakeholder groups grapple with finding a balance between inclusivity and effectiveness. ICANN's participation targets should be driven by what ICANN is trying to achieve.

Assessment of How the Trend Is Addressed in the Strategic Plan

This trend remains consistent with the previous strategy review. This trend represents a health check of the ICANN's MSM, which is a follow up from the [closeout report of the Enhancing the Effectiveness of ICANN MSM project](#) in February 2025.

This trend maps to one Strategic Objective and related Strategic Goal in the FY26–30 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic Objective 1. Evolve and promote ICANN's multistakeholder model, to sustain its inclusive approach to Internet governance.
 - Strategic Goal 1.2 Enhance the agility and effectiveness of policy and advice development.

3.6 Internet Infrastructure

Participants discussed the topic of Internet infrastructure. The expanding gap in digital access, characterized by disparities in broadband and device availability, caused concern among participants about uneven participation and fragmentation in critical Internet infrastructure, particularly as it relates to the Small Island Developing States and developing nations and if those countries are unable to improve their Internet infrastructure.

Another geopolitical trend cited was escalating concerns surrounding intentional infrastructure sabotage threatening Internet stability.

Participants raised concerns over the concentration of infrastructure, noting that when it is not distributed adequately, there is a risk. If there is a huge concentration and an outage

occurs, there could be widespread effects. Economy of scale makes concentration appealing; however, there should be redundancies and backups.

Assessment of the Trend

This trend is related to external environmental factors. These risks are not directly within ICANN's control and therefore do not belong as stand-alone "managed risks" in the organizational risk register with mitigation plans. These types of risks sit in the category of "externally driven systemic Internet ecosystem risks" that are monitored and influence strategy, rather than risks that are directly mitigated through internal control design or operational response plans.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

On the basis of the recommendation of the BSPC as supported by ICANN org, and after careful consideration of the inputs received from the community, the Board will keep the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 unchanged.

On 6 September 2026, the ICANN Board resolved that the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030 as approved on 13 March 2025 shall remain in force and unchanged, with no restatement of the Strategic Plan needed at this time.

As highlighted in this report, the ongoing activities related to the emerging trends will continue to be emphasized and reflected in the fiscal year Operating and Financial Plan.

5. Appendix

A. Mapping of the Trends to the FY26–30 Strategic Objectives and Goals

[Link to publication of the mapping table](#)

B. Environmental Scan Sessions Summary

From February through April 2026, the organization held eight environmental scan sessions to receive input from the staff, the Board, and the community on external and internal trends that ICANN should evaluate. Approximately 210 participants attended these sessions.

#	Session	Participants	Date
1.	Org Session – Key Planning Liaisons	Org Staff	17 February 2026
2.	Executive Session	Executives	19 February 2026

#	Session	Participants	Date
3.	Community Session 1 (Prep Week) – Informational	Community	24 February 2026
4.	Board Session (at ICANN85)	Board	7 March 2026
5.	Community Session 2 (Public Session at ICANN85)	Community	10 March 2026
6.	ALAC Session (at ICANN85)	Community	8 March 2026
7.	ccNSO SOPC Session (at ICANN85)	Community	8 March 2026
8.	ISPCP	Community	27 April 2026



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