

From: Dhruv Dhody, IAB Chair
Date: October 16, 2026
To: ICANN Board of Directors
Cc: Russ Weinstein
Subject: Proposed Root Server System Governance Framework

Hello,

The IAB sent a liaison statement regarding the Proposed Root Server System Governance Framework to the ICANN Board for consideration: <https://datatracker.ietf.org/liaison/2288/> [datatracker.ietf.org]

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Wishing you a great ICANN meeting in Bali.

Thanks,
Dhruv
IAB Chair (for the IAB)

The Proposed Root Server System Governance Framework

The IAB appreciates ICANN's dedication to safely and strategically evolving the Root Server System governance framework. However, the IAB has serious concerns with where things currently stand.

The proposed governance structure appears to codify a framework that lacks the operational capability to hold the Root Server Operators (RSOs) accountable, while simultaneously positioning the RSOs for systemic funding and functionally guaranteed operational longevity. Crucially, we believe that the proposed structure does not sufficiently address the suggestions made in RSSAC0037 and RSSAC0038.

While the IAB recognizes the intent behind a phased rollout, we believe that deferring crucial structural and procedural questions to later phases creates a material risk. Specifically, once the core Governance Structure is established, the community may find itself with insufficient oversight and transparency mechanisms, a limited ability to provide future public comment and, thus, limited practical opportunities for course correction. To ensure the long-term stability, accountability, and integrity of the Root Server System, these core concerns *must* be meaningfully addressed *prior* to the initial establishment of the proposed governance council.

To safeguard the Root Server System as robust infrastructure devoted to the global public good, the IAB believes that the transition into the initial phase of the governance model should be conditioned on the following structural reforms:

1. **Integrate Other Stakeholders Including Technical Community, Civil Society & End-Users:** The root server system affects more than those having "direct operational dependency", and so there should be offered formal representation from other stakeholders, for example, ALAC, the IETF/IAB, the GAC, the GNSO (NCSG/CSG), and the RIRs, to balance interests.
2. **Reduce RSO Representation:** To avoid capture, or the perception of capture, organize the voting structure so that each group (RSOs, the TLDs, and others) has an equally weighted vote. As is, the RSOs hold fifty percent of the voting power, which seems counter to the stated RSSAC058 goal C1 of defining "appropriate decision-making mechanisms".
3. **No "double-dipping":** Organizations should not have representation in multiple groups - for example, an RSO which also operates a ccTLD or gTLD should not be able to vote multiple times.
4. **Establish a Binding Independent Review Process (IRP):** Form a neutral, external

panel (independent of the Council) to hear appeals regarding operator designation, removal, and performance suspension before the Initiation Phase begins.

5. **Checks and balances:** Provide a mechanism equivalent to the empowered community's check on the ICANN Board, but for the Council.
6. **Solve the Funding Model Pre-Establishment:** Require a concrete, diversified, and binding funding plan—that protects against donor capture—*before* the Council is chartered, rather than deferring it.

We also wish to register our *significant concerns* regarding the handling of public comments submitted during the recent consultation on the “[Functional Model for Root Server System Governance](#)”. A significant portion of the substantive feedback offered by the community appears to have been ignored on a practical level by deferring action to subsequent implementation stages—namely, the Initiation Phase, Establishment Phase, and Governance Phase—rather than being addressed in the most critical first step in defining a foundational model.

If the ICANN Board accepts and proceeds with the GWG plan as it exists now, the community writ large will be able to raise concerns about the legitimacy and effectiveness of the multistakeholder model for the Root Server system. This is too important of a core internet function to proceed with the current plan.