



Review of Reviews Draft Report

Review of Reviews Cross Community Group

25 June 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3
Executive Summary	3
Section 1 - Proposed Definition of Purpose of Reviews	5
1.1 Rationale	5
1.2 Definition	5
Section 2 - Reviews Scoping Committee (RSC)	5
2.1 Rationale	5
2.2 Focus	5
2.3 Composition	6
Section 3 - Proposed Refreshed Reviews System	6
3.1 Scheduled ICANN Reviews	7
3.1.1 Accountability and Transparency Review	7
3.1.2 Structural Review	11
3.2 On-Demand Review Framework	14
3.2.1 Rationale	14
3.2.2 SSR, RDS, CCT and Review of Reviews	14
3.2.3 Other Matters that Require Review	17
3.2.4 Consequential Effects Review	19
3.3 One-Time Review	20
3.3.1 Rationale	20
3.3.2 Focus	21
Section 4 - Implementation of Review Outcomes	21
Section 5 - Implementation of Refreshed Reviews System	22
Appendix A - Background	23
Appendix B - Methodology	24
Appendix C - Fact-Finding	28

Preface

About the CCG

The Review of Reviews was [chartered](#) to “manage a fundamental evaluation of the following reviews set out in the ICANN Bylaws, as a whole system, including their implementation, and propose a refreshed system of reviews”¹.

A total of 20 [members](#) participate in the Reviews CCG:

- 2 members from each ICANN Supporting Organization (SO) and Advisory Committee (AC);
- 2 members from ICANN Board ;
- 2 members from ICANN org;
- 2 [Expert Advisors](#) identified by the Reviews CCG.

The Reviews CCG welcomes 57 [observers](#) who contribute to discussions and drafting.

About the Draft Report

The Draft Report represents the conclusion of the third phase of work of the Review of Reviews Cross Community Group (CCG). The proposed refreshed system of reviews presented in this report is intended to reflect the input, feedback, and perspectives gathered throughout the first three phases. Further background information is available in [Appendix A - Background](#).

The publication of this Draft Report marks the beginning of the Public Comment phase.

What's Next

The Final Report will be developed, taking into account the comments and input received during the Public Comment Period and through other avenues, as appropriate. The feedback will be carefully reviewed and considered to ensure that the Final Report reflects a broad range of perspectives and addresses the issues and concerns, if any.

The Final Report will be submitted to Nominating Groups for confirmation of support and submitted to the ICANN Board, along with the documentation of support, for next steps.

Executive Summary

The Review of Reviews Cross Community Group (Reviews CCG) was chartered to conduct a fundamental evaluation of ICANN’s review system as a whole, including the effectiveness of existing reviews, their implementation, and the extent to which the current framework continues to meet the needs of the ICANN community. Drawing on extensive community engagement, fact-finding and analysis, the Reviews CCG concludes that ICANN should retain a strong review system, while modernising how reviews are initiated, scoped, coordinated and implemented.

The Reviews CCG recommends replacing the current collection of periodic reviews with a refreshed framework built around two scheduled reviews, supported by a flexible

¹ <https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/CDOR/pages/454459443/Charter>

On-Demand Review framework. The proposed model is intended to strengthen accountability, improve strategic oversight, make more effective use of community and organisational resources, and ensure that reviews remain focused on issues of greatest importance to ICANN and its mission.

One of the scheduled reviews is the **Accountability and Transparency Review (ATR)**. The Reviews CCG found a clear and continuing need for a dedicated review mechanism that assesses whether ICANN is fulfilling its Mission and complying with its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values and Transparency Obligations. The ATR would continue to serve as ICANN's primary accountability review while also providing an opportunity to examine issues currently addressed through the existing Specific Reviews where appropriate. Rather than relying on a predetermined scope, each ATR would be preceded by a structured, community-driven scoping process to ensure that review topics are timely, relevant and supported by the community.

The other scheduled review is a new **Structural Review**, reflecting the Reviews CCG's conclusion that questions relating to ICANN's institutional design deserve dedicated consideration separate from accountability matters. This review would periodically assess whether ICANN's structures, governance arrangements and interactions remain fit for purpose in light of changes to ICANN itself and the broader external environment, and whether structural or operational improvements should be considered.

Recognising that important issues do not always arise according to a fixed timetable, the Reviews CCG also recommends establishing an **On-Demand Review Framework**. This framework would provide a structured mechanism for the community to initiate focused reviews where a clear need exists, while maintaining appropriate thresholds and safeguards to ensure that reviews are proportionate, well justified and supported by the community. In recognition of the importance of the current Specific Reviews, the framework also includes regular opportunities to determine whether focused reviews of those subject areas are warranted before the next scheduled ATR.

A central feature of the refreshed framework is the establishment of a **Reviews Scoping Committee (RSC)**. The Reviews CCG recommends that this standing committee coordinate review planning and scoping across the review system. The RSC would work with the community, ICANN org and the Board to identify review topics, assess feasibility, evaluate resource implications, coordinate review timing, and develop review charters. By introducing structured planning before reviews commence, the RSC is intended to improve the quality, focus and efficiency of reviews while reducing duplication and avoiding unnecessary pressure on community resources.

The Reviews CCG also places significant emphasis on improving implementation. Under the proposed framework, implementation of review recommendations would receive greater oversight through future ATRs, continued involvement of community review teams during Board consideration of recommendations, dedicated implementation review teams to oversee solution development, and ongoing monitoring by the RSC of implementation progress, dependencies and resource planning.

Overall, the proposed framework preserves the community's ability to hold ICANN accountable while introducing a more strategic, flexible and sustainable approach to reviews. It retains the essential strengths of the current system, addresses many of the challenges identified through experience with existing reviews, and provides mechanisms to ensure that reviews remain relevant, well scoped, efficiently managed and focused on delivering meaningful improvements.

Implementation of the refreshed reviews framework will require amendments to the ICANN Bylaws to establish the new review model and supporting governance arrangements.

Section 1 - Proposed Definition of Purpose of Reviews

1.1 Rationale

Significant consideration and deliberation have gone into the development of the proposed definition, supported by multiple opportunities for community input and discussion throughout the process.

While the Reviews CCG carefully evaluated a range of perspectives and approaches, there was agreement to maintain a clear and streamlined overarching definition and structure with the necessary specificity and detail grounded within the individual reviews being recommended, allowing each review to remain appropriately tailored to its particular purpose, scope, and objectives.

1.2 Definition

The purpose of reviews is to assess whether ICANN is fulfilling its Mission and complying with its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values, and Article 3 transparency obligations (“Transparency Obligations”) and, where needed, to recommend changes and/or improvements to ICANN’s processes, procedures, and/or structures to ensure those goals.

Section 2 - Reviews Scoping Committee (RSC)

2.1 Rationale

To support a more strategic, sustainable, and efficient review process overall in the future, the Reviews CCG recommends the establishment of a standing committee (here titled Reviews Scoping Committee, or RSC) to serve as a central coordination mechanism across the refreshed ICANN Reviews framework. The Reviews CCG views this as a mechanism to support transparent cross-community planning for Reviews and avoid issues experienced with the current Reviews framework that includes fixed cadences based on time.

2.2 Focus

The Reviews Scoping Committee would function as a process management body for review scoping activities across the refreshed ICANN Reviews framework, screening review topics against established criteria, assessing dependencies, overlapping initiatives and ongoing work and then sending its recommendations to the SOs and ACs for endorsement.

In addition to coordinating review scoping activities, the RSC would assess resource availability and timing considerations, ensuring effective prioritization across the broader review landscape.

The RSC would play a key role in identifying situations where deferrals of scheduled reviews may be justified under the applicable framework and criteria or necessary in order to maintain operational feasibility.

The RSC would act as a liaison among the community, ICANN org, and the ICANN Board on matters related to review planning and scoping, including coordination with ICANN org regarding feasibility, operational, timing, and resource assessments.

The RSC would be the body that confirms whether applicable SO and AC support thresholds and procedural requirements have been satisfied. It would submit SO and AC endorsed scoped review topics, supporting rationale, and proposed charters to the ICANN Board for consideration and action.

Through this coordination role, the RSC would be responsible for the effective management and coordination of resources associated with the review process.

The Reviews CCG recommends the creation of a charter for this committee, which is expected to conduct its work through open and transparent deliberations and to maintain transparency with respect to meetings, documentation, timelines, rationale, and outputs, consistent with ICANN's Transparency Obligations.

The RSC is accountable to the broader community it serves and may be reviewed, as part of the Review of Reviews, to ensure that it remains effective and transparent. The RSC is subject to ICANN's established accountability mechanisms and processes to the extent such mechanisms and processes apply.

2.3 Composition

The RSC is envisioned to comprise:

- A representative from the leadership of each Supporting Organization ("SO") and Advisory Committee ("AC");
- A representative from the ICANN Board;
- A representative from ICANN org; and
- Leadership from the immediately preceding relevant review effort for the Accountability and Transparency Reviews.

The representatives on the RSC will act on behalf of their group, voicing their group's views in committee discussions, coordinating liaison activities, and ensuring that relevant information, updates, and feedback are communicated accurately and in a timely manner.

Section 3 - Proposed Refreshed Reviews System

Drawing on the findings and input collected throughout the engagement during the phases of work, the Reviews CCG recommends a three-pillar framework for ICANN Reviews that includes two scheduled reviews - the Accountability and Transparency Review and a

Structural Review - complemented by an On-Demand Framework. Additionally, the Reviews CCG recommends a one-time review related to the CIP².

The issues and areas covered by Specific Reviews currently articulated in Section 4.6 of ICANN Bylaws would continue to be called out in the Bylaws, but mechanisms to conduct these would evolve as follows:

- The Accountability and Transparency Review would continue as part of the scheduled assessment of whether ICANN is fulfilling its Mission and complying with its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values, and Transparency Obligations.
- Security, Stability and Resiliency of the DNS (“SSR”); Registration Directory Service (“RDS”); and Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice (“CCT”) would continue to be considered by the RSC:
 - As topics within the scope of the Accountability and Transparency Reviews described above, and
 - Through periodic opportunities, mandated in the ICANN Bylaws, to conduct focused reviews of specific topic(s) under these headings.

The Organizational Reviews articulated in Section 4.4 of ICANN Bylaws are considered superseded by the CIP pilot and not significantly addressed in these recommendations. The Reviews CCG [charter](#) provides that: “The CCG will not evaluate the Continuous Improvement Program itself, but will take account of its work and will consider how it can best contribute to the broader system of reviews.”

3.1 Scheduled ICANN Reviews

3.1.1 Accountability and Transparency Review

3.1.1.1 Rationale

The findings demonstrate a clear and continuing need to retain a dedicated review mechanism focused on accountability and transparency, recognizing these principles as fundamental pillars of ICANN’s multistakeholder model. This review plays a critical role in strengthening community trust, ensuring effective oversight, and promoting continuous improvement across the organization and its processes. Maintaining a robust accountability and transparency review framework is therefore essential to preserving confidence in ICANN, supporting informed participation by the community, and ensuring that ICANN remains responsive, transparent, and accountable in carrying out its mission.

3.1.1.2 Focus

The overall scope of the Accountability and Transparency Review (ATR) is intentionally broad and variable, within set boundaries, assessing:

- how ICANN has delivered on its Mission and is complying with its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values, and Transparency Obligations. This includes the topics

² ICANN’s Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) is a community-led framework that is being run as a pilot. It is intended to replace periodic external Organizational Reviews with continuous, internally managed assessments of ICANN structures, including Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee (NomCom). The CIP was recommended by the Third Accountability and Transparency Review Team (ATRT3).

of existing Specific Reviews³ covered under Section 4.6 of ICANN Bylaws together with previously approved recommendations from past ATRs;

- issues listed as Accountability and Transparency Review assessment areas in Section 4.6 (b) (ii) and (iii) of the ICANN Bylaws, with the exception of items of a structural⁴ nature, now covered through the scheduled Structural Review, and the termination or amendment of other periodic reviews, now addressed through the Review of Reviews;

In evaluating whether ICANN is fulfilling its Mission and complying with its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values, and Transparency Obligations, ATR reviews will assess the outcomes and progress achieved in respect of goals set out in planning documentation, recommend improvements where necessary, and identify key development areas that may strengthen ICANN's effectiveness in support of its Mission.

Each review is achieved by examining specifically scoped, community-prioritized existing procedures and processes, and cannot be used as a vehicle for mitigating, relitigating or influencing ongoing processes.

The RSC should consider whether the ATR should review implementation of prior ATR review outputs and the effectiveness of deployed solutions as a scope item.

This review originates from the existing ATR⁵ but also encompasses the topics for other Specific Reviews set forth in Section 4.6 of the current Bylaws. The refreshed ATR benefits from a focused scoping exercise designed to frame the review. This approach promotes clarity, community buy-in, and alignment on the review's objectives and scope prior to its launch.

3.1.1.3 Cadence

The Accountability & Transparency Review is a scheduled review conducted once every five years, calculated from the Board resolution dealing with the previous ATR recommendations but in any event no later than 12 months from the delivery of the ATR report to the Board.

The community may decide to defer, as appropriate, based on a recommendation from the RSC. Refer to Section 3.1.1.5 'Process to Defer' for more information.

3.1.1.4 Scoping Process

³ ICANN's execution of its commitment to enhance the operational stability, reliability, resiliency, security, and global interoperability of the systems and processes, as covered through the review described in Section 4.6 (c) of ICANN Bylaws; the assessment of the effectiveness of the then current gTLD registry directory service, as noted in Section 4.6 (e), and assessment of competition, consumer trust and consumer choice tied to the introduction of new gTLDs, as foreseen under Section 4.6 (d).

⁴ "the extent to which the Board's composition and allocation structure meets ICANN's present and future needs" and "assessing the role and effectiveness of the GAC's interaction with the Board and with the broader ICANN community, and making recommendations for improvement to ensure effective consideration by ICANN of GAC input on the public policy aspects of the technical coordination of the DNS". These items are addressed in the Structural Review.

⁵ The essence of the existing Specific Reviews (Registration Directory Service Review, Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice, and Security, Stability and Resiliency of the DNS) is built into, and reflected in ICANN's mission, commitments, and core values. These areas also benefit from a separate opportunity for review within the on-demand framework that entails a cadenced process.

The scoping process is conducted as follows:

1. Slate of topics

- At the time mandated in the Bylaws, the RSC asks leadership of SO/ACs and Board representatives to reach out to their groups requesting suggestions of topics.
- Each SO/AC and the Board use their own process to solicit topics (e.g. SO could set up an ATR topic working group).
- Using a designated template, each SO or AC leadership, and Board, settle on an initial slate of up to three topics they believe have consensus in their group. Any suggested topic should be documented with a rationale.

2. Opportunity for input and refinements

- With all initial slates now posted, the RSC considers the full set of preliminary submissions. RSC members work with their organization (i.e., SO, AC, Board) and each other, to potentially fine tune their own slate, and identify areas of overlap. Any proposed refinements should be underpinned by rationale.

3. RSC discussions and production of initial shortlist

- RSC members, representing views of their SO/ACs and Board, bring their final slates.
- Using open and transparent deliberations, and assisted by relevant support staff, the RSC meets to review and rationalize the topics to create an initial shortlist. Overlapping topics are streamlined.
- Topics are tested against the following criteria:
 - i. In scope of ICANN's Articles, Mission, Commitments, Core Values, and Transparency Obligations set out in the ICANN Bylaws and previously approved ATR recommendations
 - ii. No duplication of existing work or initiative
 - iii. Not a topic for policy development
 - iv. Topic specified with enough precision to define what would be reviewed

4. Feasibility and resource assessment of initial shortlist

- The RSC, working with relevant support staff, assesses the feasibility of reviewing the shortlisted topics including the level of effort required, necessary data collection, dependencies, expertise or skills that would be desirable for each, the need for professional services, budget and timing constraints and produces a shortlist for comment. Depending on resourcing parameters, the set of topics could be affected.
- The RSC considers whether deferral is needed and appropriate. Should the SO/ACs agree that deferral is needed, the process to defer, as outlined in Section 3.1.1.5 below, is activated.

5. Consultation on shortlisted topics

- The RSC releases the shortlist⁶ of topics for Public Comment, along with the accompanying rationale, and the associated resourcing ramifications.

6. **Alignment on topics and community endorsement**

- Taking into account Public Comment received, the RSC agrees on the proposed final set of topics and sends them to each SO and AC for endorsement.
- As long as five SO and ACs agree on a set of topics, the charter is drafted and sent to the Board.
- Where there is partial agreement (i.e., at least five groups agree on some but not all topics), the charter is drafted based on the agreed topics.
- If the RSC does not reach agreement on any set of topics, the scoping discussion may continue.

7. **Charter Drafting and Delivery to Board**

- The RSC drafts the charter accordingly, using a standard Accountability and Transparency Review charter document populated with the agreed set of topics. The RSC drafting is supported by ICANN org, and in consultation with supporting SO/ACs. When complete, the RSC submits the charter and supporting materials to the Board for action.

3.1.1.5 Process to Defer

1. **RSC Recommendation to Defer**

- In the event the RSC recommends the deferral of the Accountability and Transparency Review, the recommendation for deferral must be clearly justified and time-bound.
- The RSC would be expected to provide a structured recommendation to the community that includes:
 - A clear rationale. The rationale should explain based on scoping criteria why the ATR is being deferred, including considerations such as budget constraints, competing or ongoing work, pros and cons of the delay, or timing conflicts with other reviews;
 - A proposed deferral period;
 - A future start date or window.

2. **Submission to SO/ACs for Agreement**

- The recommendation is then submitted to the SO/ACs for agreement.
- Agreement for the deferral would need to be reached across five SO/ACs, reflecting a community-based decision.
- A graduated threshold approach may be applied for successive deferrals to make repeated deferrals progressively more difficult. For example:
 - First deferral: requires agreement from five SO/ACs
 - Second deferral: requires agreement from six SO/ACs

⁶ Topics that are not included in the shortlist could be potentially considered for an On-Demand Review in so far as a given topic meets the criteria and thresholds articulated in the process to convene an On-Demand Review.

While deferral is permitted through the agreed process and threshold when necessary, the following safeguards ensure that it cannot be postponed indefinitely:

- A maximum of two deferrals can be accommodated
- A maximum duration of a first deferral is 18 months and a second deferral is 12 months⁷
- The first deferral should be long enough to resolve the underlying issue, reducing the need for a second deferral.

3.1.1.6 Review Effort

The review is conducted by a Community Review Team, with the option to be assisted by experts, with conclusions and recommended actions, if any, to be provided to the ICANN Board.

The Community Review Team would consist of:

- three representatives from each ICANN SO and AC;
- three representatives from the ICANN Board; and
- three representatives from ICANN org.

Representation would be fixed on this basis. If a participating SO/AC, Board, or ICANN org group appoints fewer than its allotted representatives, the unfilled seats would remain vacant and could not be reassigned or used to increase representation from any other group.

The representatives will act on behalf of their group, providing representation in review team discussions, liaising with their group to share progress, and ensuring that relevant information, updates, and feedback are communicated accurately and in a timely manner.

The Community Review Team is expected to conclude its work within 12 months. The Final report would be submitted to SOs and ACs for formal sign-off before submission to the ICANN Board for consideration.

3.1.2 Structural Review

3.1.2.1 Rationale

Although structural review discussions have previously taken place, and community groups have ways to evolve their structures, the Reviews CCG believes there is an ongoing need for a regular, structured mechanism for assessing the ICANN construct to identify potential gaps and areas for enhancement.

The Reviews CCG considers that it is essential to have a review fully dedicated to structure and recommends that structure related discussions be kept separate from the ATR focus.

3.1.2.2 Focus

⁷ Depending on the length of the delay and environment change, the scoping process may need to be fully repeated.

The Structural Review (SR) focuses on the structure of ICANN, as a whole including interrelationship among its different parts, and is carried out in three phases⁸:

Phase 1 - External Landscape Assessment

During this phase, an assessment of the external landscape⁹ is undertaken to identify, research and evaluate external factors that may have an impact on the structure of ICANN as a whole including its architecture with individual bottom-up SOs and ACs with their predefined roles and responsibilities.

Phase 2 - Internal Landscape Assessment

Informed by the External Landscape Assessment, the intent of Phase 2 is to investigate any existing or longstanding issues, and to determine whether:

- a) the overall ICANN structure is fit for purpose for ICANN to achieve its mission;
- b) any changes in structures and operations are desirable to improve the overall effectiveness of ICANN in support of ICANN's Mission (including introduction of new structures, merging or phasing out of existing structures);
- c) communication and interactions in each part of ICANN and between all parts of ICANN are effective.

Results or outcomes of CIP work, depending on whether the pilot is assessed as a success and confirmed to proceed (refer to One-Time Review for more information) could be used as a resource.

As a preamble to phase 3, changes to the Board structure may be proactively discussed.

Where recommendations are for changes to an existing SO or AC structure, those recommendations are advisory and are sent to that SO or AC for consideration. The SO or AC will consider the relevant advisory recommendations and indicate within a set period of time, whether it accepts or rejects any or all of them, along with a rationale.

Based on the Phase 2 recommendations and the responses of the SOs and ACs to the advisory recommendations, a proposed new structure for ICANN's SOs, ACs, and NomCom is developed for discussion in Phase 3.

Phase 3 (if deemed necessary) - Consequential Effects Review

The RSC coordinates agreement on the need for a Consequential Effects Review with the SO/ACs based on the Phase 2 outcomes.

Where the Consequential Effects Review takes place, informed by the outcomes from Phase 2, including any proposed new SO, AC, or NC structure, the Cross-Community Working

⁸ Depending on the success of the pilot Continuous Improvement Program (CIP), outcomes arising from the groups' continuous improvement efforts may help inform this work.

⁹ The Reviews CCG suggests that incorporating an external landscape assessment into the strategic planning cycle may be useful, and could inform the Structural Review effort.

Group conducts an assessment of the overall ICANN structure (including of the Board) to determine whether changes are required to accommodate the recommendations from Phase 2.

The Final report would be submitted to SO and ACs for formal sign-off before recommendations are delivered to the ICANN Board for consideration. The Board decision on the recommendations will be open to all Bylaws defined accountability measures.

3.1.2.3 Cadence

The cadence for Structural Reviews is set to every [15 years]¹⁰, calculated from the Board resolution dealing with the previous Structural Review recommendations but in any event no later than 12 months from the delivery of the Structural Review report to the Board. This review is deferrable subject to community agreement. Refer to 3.1.2.4 'Process to Defer' for more information.

For issues requiring immediate attention, a targeted review of a structural nature may be scoped and initiated under the On-Demand framework, subject to the relevant thresholds being met. Where significant structural changes are implemented, sufficient time should be allowed for those changes to be embedded before initiating an on-demand review of structural nature.

3.1.2.4 Process to Defer

While deferral is permitted when necessary, it must be time-bound and justified. The Structural Review cannot be postponed indefinitely, or be open-ended. Deferrals, however, should be long enough to resolve the underlying issue, reducing the need for repeated deferrals.

1. RSC Recommendation for Deferral

- Following the External Landscape Assessment, the RSC may assess whether there are reasons to recommend deferral. If so, it would submit a recommendation to the community that includes:
 - A clear rationale. The rationale should explain why the review is being proposed for deferral, including considerations such as budget constraints, competing or ongoing work, pros and cons of the delay, or timing conflicts with other reviews;
 - A proposed deferral period;
 - A future start window.

2. Submission to SO/ACs for Agreement

- The recommendation is then submitted to the SO/AC community for agreement. Agreement for the deferral would need to be reached across five SO/ACs, reflecting a community-based decision.

¹⁰ The Reviews CCG would specifically welcome input on the proposed cadence to help inform ongoing discussions on timing. A member and some observers notably suggest a 10-year window.

- A graduated threshold approach may be applied for successive deferrals to make repeated deferrals progressively more difficult. For example:
 - First deferral: requires agreement from five SO/ACs
 - Second deferral: requires agreement from six SO/ACs

While deferral is permitted when necessary, the following safeguards ensure that it cannot be postponed indefinitely:

- No deferral can be considered before the External Landscape Assessment is concluded
- A maximum of two deferrals can be accommodated
- A maximum duration of a first deferral is 18 months and a second deferral is 12 months
- The first deferral should be long enough to resolve the underlying issue, reducing the need for a second deferral.

The external landscape may change during a deferral period. If a Structural Review is delayed for a significant period (for example, 18 months to two years), there may be a need to revisit or update the landscape assessment, particularly if the original rationale for deferral was based on conditions that have evolved.

3.1.2.5 Review Effort

Phase 1 will be conducted by external experts, working together with a Community Liaison Working Group, with no specific representation requirements, while phases 2 and 3 will be conducted by a Cross-Community Working Group, using existing practices.

The Reviews CCG recommends establishing defined time limits for each phase of the work.

Conclusions and recommended actions, if any, are provided to the ICANN Board and/or community groups.

3.2 On-Demand Review Framework

3.2.1 Rationale

Establishing an on-demand review framework provides the system with the flexibility to direct attention and resources toward the matters of greatest importance and urgency as circumstances evolve.

3.2.2 SSR, RDS, CCT and Review of Reviews

3.2.2.1 Rationale

Issues that fit under SSR, RDS and CCT can be reviewed through scheduled ATRs and as agreed by the community through On-Demand Reviews. However the Reviews CCG recognizes the importance of those issues, and hence recommends a Bylaws-mandated

process to determine on a specified cadence whether there are any issues that fit under SSR, RDS and CCT that need to be reviewed before the next regularly scheduled ATR and, if so, to scope such reviews. The CCG recommends that Review of Reviews should be dealt with using the same Bylaws mandated process.

3.2.2.2 Focus

Categories include:

- SSR - ICANN's execution of its commitment to enhance the operational stability, reliability, resiliency, security, and global interoperability of the systems and processes;
- RDS - assessment of the effectiveness of the then current gTLD registry directory service;
- CCT¹¹ - Aspects of gTLD Round which derives from the assessment of competition, consumer trust and consumer choice review tied to the introduction of new gTLDs.
- Review of Reviews: this review is derived from a component of the existing ATR¹² and is intended to audit the review system to assess whether it is performing as intended and is still fit for the purpose of enhancing accountability and transparency.

3.2.2.3 Cadence

The RSC will undertake the Bylaws mandated process to determine whether to convene reviews of these issues before the next regularly scheduled ATR using the following calendar:

- 2 years after Board action on Accountability and Transparency Review recommendations: rotating between SSR and RDS.
- every ten years: Review of Reviews.
- Within two years of the first delegation in the current round of new gTLDs and thereafter as an On-Demand review under section 3.2.3 below: CCT.

3.2.2.4 Process

The process is conducted as follows:

- 1. Seeking a slate of topics and gauging interest in conducting a review**
 - At the time mandated in the Bylaws, the RSC asks leadership of SO/ACs to reach out to its group for any issues that fit under the designated subject of SSR or RDS or CCT that need to be reviewed before the next regularly scheduled ATR.
 - Each SO or AC uses its own process to solicit interest and identify a slate of up to three topics, if any, using a designated template.

¹¹ Currently referred to as CCT in alignment with the Bylaws language but intended to be broadened to aspects of new gTLD round.

¹² "The Accountability and Transparency Review Team may recommend to the Board the termination or amendment of other periodic reviews required by this Section 4.6, and may recommend to the Board the creation of additional periodic reviews".

- Each SO or AC leadership determines the level of consensus for conducting a review effort under the designated heading and slate of topics. Any suggested topic should be documented with a rationale.
- 2. Compilation of Issues**
 - Using open and transparent deliberations, and assisted by Support Staff, the RSC compiles the set of issues received from SO/ACs.
 - 3. Request for Support**
 - The SO/ACs are requested to consult on the compilation of issues using their designated process.
 - Should there be support for a review of any of the issues by a minimum of two SO and/or ACs after due consultation, the RSC considers the proposed review issues.
 - In the event of insufficient interest, the process will be closed and a closure report issued. The SO/AC may, as appropriate, resubmit its topic(s) for a later review.
 - 4. RSC checks proposed review issues**
 - The RSC examines the list of proposed review issues and conducts the following screening:
 - No duplication of existing work or initiative;
 - Not a topic for policy development;
 - Topic specified with enough precision to define what would be reviewed;
 - When the topic was last reviewed/assessed to ensure meaningful timing;
 - Confirmation that the suggested topic or issue has not already been covered by the ATR within the ongoing five-year cycle, and is not part of the recommendations under current consideration or implementation.
 - 5. Feasibility and resource assessment of proposed review issues**
 - The RSC, working with Support Staff, assesses the feasibility of reviewing the issues, including the level of effort required, necessary data collection, dependencies, expertise or skills that would be desirable for each, the need for professional services, budget and timing constraints.
 - 6. Consultation on proposed review issues and associated documentation**
 - The RSC releases the proposed review issues for Public Comment, along with the accompanying rationale, and associated resourcing ramifications.
 - 7. Alignment on proposed review issues for community endorsement**
 - Taking into account Public Comment received, the RSC agrees on the proposed final set of **proposed review issues** and sends to each SO and AC for endorsement.
 - If supported by a minimum of five SO and ACs, the RSC proceeds with the final step.
 - 8. Charter Drafting and Delivery to Board**
 - With support from ICANN org, the RSC drafts the charter accordingly and submits it, along with supporting materials, to the Board for action.

3.2.2.5 Review Effort

The Review is undertaken by a Community Review Team that includes:

- three representatives from each ICANN SO and AC;
- three representatives from the ICANN Board; and
- three representatives from ICANN org.

Representation would be fixed on this basis. If a participating SO/AC, Board, or ICANN org appoints fewer than its allotted representatives, the unfilled seats would remain vacant and could not be reassigned or used to increase representation from any other group.

The representatives will act on behalf of their group, voicing their views in review team discussions, liaising with their group to share progress, and ensuring that relevant information, updates, and feedback are communicated accurately and in a timely manner.

The Community Review Team is expected to conclude its work within 12 months. The Final report would be submitted to SO and ACs for formal sign-off before submission to the ICANN Board for consideration.

3.2.3 Other Matters that Require Review

3.2.3.1 Rationale

A mechanism should exist for reviews to be convened when emerging circumstances indicate that there is a pressing need for a review that cannot wait until the next regularly scheduled ATR or Structural Review.

3.2.3.2 Focus

The topic meets the criteria for a review, specifically one that does not involve policy development, and cannot be adequately addressed through other processes.

While a review cannot replace a policy development process, it is possible that a review could make recommendations that Policy should be considered in regard to a particular matter.

Review topic may also be a topic raised during the Accountability and Transparency scoping process, or emerge as a topic of review from an Accountability and Transparency Review process or the Structural Review.

3.2.3.3 Cadence

While there is no cadence associated with the on-demand system for matters that require review, there is a process to follow that includes a determination from the RSC based on a set of criteria. The RSC is responsible for ensuring no duplication of efforts, the timing is appropriate and the availability of adequate resources and bandwidth to conduct the suggested on-demand review.

3.2.3.4 Process

The process to conduct an on-demand review of a matter is as follows:

1. Suggested topic and charter

- The topic can be requested by the community or ICANN Board.

- The process requires a minimum of two SO and/or ACs raising a suggested topic, in the format of a charter using a designated template, that contains a clear narrow scope for the review.
- Should the Board raise a topic, a minimum of two SO and or ACs need to support the request.

2. SO/AC consultation and interest

- The RSC invites SO/ACs to share interest in conducting a proposed review.
- Through RSC representatives, each group is requested to confirm interest.
- If supported by a minimum of five SO and/or ACs after due consultation, the RSC moves to discussion.

3. RSC discussion and screening

- Using open and transparent deliberations, and assisted by Staff, the RSC meets to conduct the following screening:
 - no duplication of existing work or initiative;
 - Not a topic for policy development;
 - Topic specified with enough precision;
 - When the topic was last reviewed/assessed to ensure meaningful timing;
 - Confirmation that the suggested topic or issue has not already been covered by the ATR within the ongoing five-year cycle, and is not part of recommendations under current consideration or implementation.
 - Confirmation that a topic could not be covered by a scheduled review, in a timely way.

4. Feasibility and resource assessment

- Groups supporting the proposed review submit a proposed charter to the RSC.
- The RSC, working with Staff and in light of the proposed charter, assesses the feasibility of reviewing the shortlisted topics, including the level of effort required, necessary data collection, dependencies, expertise or skills that would be desirable for each, the need for professional services, budget and timing constraints.

5. Public Comment Consultation

- The RSC releases the proposed topic and charter for Public Comment, along with the accompanying rationale, and associated resourcing ramifications.

6. Alignment on final charter for community endorsement

- Taking into account Public Comment received, the RSC agrees on the final charter and sends to each SO and AC for endorsement. If supported by a minimum of five SO and ACs, the RSC proceeds with the final step.

7. Delivery to Board

- The RSC submits the charter along with supporting materials, to the Board for action.

3.2.3.5 Review Effort

Matters that require On-Demand Review are undertaken by a Community Review Team that includes:

- three representatives from each ICANN SO and AC
- three representatives from the ICANN Board
- three representatives from ICANN org.

Representation would be fixed on this basis. If a participating SO/AC, Board, or ICANN org appoints fewer than its allotted representatives, the unfilled seats would remain vacant and could not be reassigned or used to increase representation from any other group.

The representatives will act on behalf of their group, voicing their views in review team discussions, liaising with their group to share progress, and ensuring that relevant information, updates, and feedback are communicated accurately and in a timely manner.

The Community Review Team is expected to conclude its work within 12 months. The Final report would be submitted to SO and ACs for formal sign-off before submission to the ICANN Board for consideration.

3.2.4 Consequential Effects Review

3.2.4.1 Rationale

SO/ACs may independently consider restructuring at any time, independently of the Structural Review. Such change, however, cannot unilaterally change the relationship with the rest of the community.

The Consequential Effects Review is a safeguard to ensure that changes to interdependent relationships are not made single-handedly and are not made without broader community agreement.

While analogous to Phase 3 of the Structural Review, this review offers an opportunity to conduct the assessment in a timely fashion, without having to wait until the next scheduled Structural Review.

3.2.4.2 Focus

This review provides a mechanism for the ICANN community to transparently consider the impacts of structural changes on the broader ICANN system and make recommendations for how affected mechanisms should be adjusted (including for example, Board composition, Empowered Community composition and processes, Nominating Committee processes, ICANN Bylaws).

3.2.4.3 Cadence

There is no cadence associated with this review. Rather, the Consequential Effects Review follows on, as an On-Demand Review, from either:

- (a) an On-Demand Review of an SO or AC; or
- (b) internal structural changes undertaken by an SO or AC.

3.2.4.4 Process

Approval of proposed changes by the relevant SO or AC automatically tasks the RSC to determine whether a Consequential Effects Review is needed.

Where a Consequential Effects Review is determined to be necessary, this review will be scheduled based on existing bandwidth and timeframes of other review work. For example, if an SO or AC has completed a restructuring effort and a Consequential Effects Review is needed, the RSC could recommend that the Consequential Effects Review begin once any existing active review work is complete.

3.2.4.5 Review Effort

The Consequential Effects Review is undertaken by a Community Review Team that includes:

- three representatives from each ICANN SO and AC;
- three representatives from the ICANN Board; and
- three representatives from ICANN org.

Representation would be fixed on this basis. If a participating SO/AC, Board, or ICANN org appoints fewer than its allotted representatives, the unfilled seats would remain vacant and could not be reassigned or used to increase representation from any other group.

The Community Review Team would use the same process and methodology as for Phase 3 of the Structural Review.

The representatives will act on behalf of their group, voicing their views in review team discussions, liaising with their group to share progress, and ensuring that relevant information, updates, and feedback are communicated accurately and in a timely manner.

The Community Review Team is expected to conclude its work within 12 months. The Final report would be submitted to SO and ACs for formal sign-off before submission to the ICANN Board for consideration.

The final outcome of this Review will be subject to comment and submission to the Board as a recommendation. The Board decision on the recommendations will be open to all Bylaws defined accountability measures.

3.3 One-Time Review

3.3.1 Rationale

The Review CCG had initially foreseen the inclusion of a review intended to assess the results of SO, AC, and NomCom's CIP as they relate to each SO/AC/NC and to each other:

- to confirm CIPs were completed in adherence to Framework:
- test CIP outputs to ensure conclusions are supported
- compare CIP outputs to identify good practices that may be beneficial to groups or serve to enhance collaboration
- ensure actions are followed through on as intended

Recognizing that the CIP remains a pilot initiative, the Reviews CCG concluded that it would be premature to develop a reviews framework predicated on its long-term success or to presume successful outcomes in advance.

Instead, the Reviews CCG recommends conducting a one-time assessment of the pilot CIP to evaluate its effectiveness and to determine whether the initiative should continue, and how the results of future CIPs could be integrated into the broader reviews framework as appropriate in the future.

3.3.2 Focus

The Reviews CCG recommends¹³ a one-time review of the CIP pilot, at the conclusion of the first cycle, to inform whether the CIP initiative should be continued, discontinued, or refined. At that point in time, a determination could then be made on how the CIP results should be used and reviewed in the future, as appropriate.

Section 4 - Implementation of Review Outcomes

The Reviews CCG recommends the relevant Review Team would remain active until Board action on their Final Report, to help preserve context, and support accountability. The Reviews CCG recommends maintaining the existing Bylaw requirement for the Board to take action on a final review report within six months.

To streamline and strengthen the implementation of review outcomes, the Reviews CCG recommends the use of Implementation Review Teams (IRTs), similar to the approach used in the policy development context, to support oversight and continuity throughout the implementation phase.

This approach would enable continued community engagement and provide a mechanism for individuals with subject-matter expertise to remain actively involved following completion of the review.

The recommendation does not alter the existing expectations regarding reporting and transparency; rather, the same level of reporting, tracking, and public accountability would continue to apply.

Implementation efforts would also be strengthened through the oversight and coordination role of the Reviews Scoping Committee, which would monitor and document progress, dependencies, resource considerations, and overall implementation planning across the review framework. Implementation of Review recommendations is subject to ICANN's established accountability mechanisms/processes to the extent such mechanisms and processes apply.

¹³ The one-time review supersedes the "CIP assessment" previously proposed by the Reviews CCG. The Reviews CCG decided against developing a system reliant on a programme that remains in pilot phase.

Section 5 - Implementation of Refreshed Reviews System

The Reviews CCG anticipates that an Implementation Review Team (IRT) will be required to support the implementation of the proposed refreshed reviews system. It is also expected that amendments to the Bylaws will be necessary to reflect the updated framework.

Charters will need to be developed for the scheduled reviews that align with scope.

Operating standards governing the functioning of the foreseen community review team will also need to be established. The Reviews CCG notes that a set of draft updated operating standards for conducting Specific Reviews may be leveraged to support this work.

draft

Appendix A - Background

Building on years of discussion¹⁴ on finding ways to streamline ICANN reviews to make them more sustainable, the ICANN Board, after consultation with the community at ICANN82, [directed](#) ICANN Staff, on 19 May 2025, to begin work to design a review program that better serves the community's needs and is fit for purpose. As a first step, the ICANN Board called for a community dialogue to develop a shared understanding of the areas and issues that would enhance ICANN's accountability, transparency, and effectiveness.

To address this, leaders of ICANN's SO/ACs convened to develop a [charter](#) that was formally signed off on in August 2025, and subsequently [approved](#) by the ICANN Board on 5 September 2025.

The Reviews Cross Community Group (Reviews CCG) brings together [members](#) from ICANN's SO/ACs, ICANN Board, ICANN Staff, two [expert advisors](#) selected by the Reviews CCG, as well as [observers](#). The Reviews CCG is tasked to perform "a fundamental evaluation" of reviews set out in the ICANN Bylaws, "as a whole system, including their implementation, and propose a refreshed system of reviews". Areas of focus include:

- Periodic review of ICANN structure and operations (section 4.4);
- Annual Review (section 4.5);
- Specific Reviews (section 4.6);
- Previously conducted Reviews; and
- Reviews that have previously been formally recommended.

As noted in the charter, the Reviews CCG is not evaluating the pilot [Continuous Improvement Program](#) itself, but is to "take account of its work and consider how it can best contribute to the broader system of reviews".

The Reviews CCG work is informed by [data received from ICANN](#) Staff on Specific Reviews and Organizational Reviews, as well as considerations, research, and conclusions of the [Third Accountability and Transparency review](#), which it considers a point of reference in its work.

The Reviews CCG conducts its work in a transparent fashion and welcomes observers to contribute to plenary call and subgroup discussions, as directed by Co-Chairs. Additionally, it has an open email address any interested individual can use to [provide input](#) on the work. The Reviews CCG also conducts outreach sessions at ICANN meetings, organizes webinars and issues status updates on its [work space](#) to keep the public apprised of progress and collect feedback.

¹⁴ Refer to Sections 2 of the *Information on ICANN Specific Reviews V3* and *Information on ICANN Organizational Reviews V2*. See background materials page on the Reviews CCG work space.

Appendix B - Methodology

Per its charter, the Reviews CCG operates on a consensus-based decision-making methodology, with members acting in their individual capacity.

Deliberations are facilitated by three Co-Chairs, selected from within the CCG membership, who are responsible for presiding over discussions and ensuring that the process remains bottom-up, consensus-driven, and supports balanced participation.

While the final endorsement of any proposals remains with the Nominating Groups, that comprise ICANN Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees (SO/ACs), ICANN Board and ICANN org, the CCG is expected to develop outputs through consensus among its members.

Members of the Reviews CCG [agreed](#) to formally commence activities on 16 September 2025, adopting a cadence of weekly plenary calls. Meeting times rotate across a set of time slots to accommodate participants in different time zones. Since the initiation of activities, the group convened a total of 34 plenary calls.

In addition to plenary sessions, several time-limited subgroups and small groups were established to advance specific workstreams. A small number of volunteers were requested to join each subgroup, and observers were welcome to attend.

The work of the Reviews CCG is supported by ICANN staff, who hold weekly calls with the co-chairs.

All calls are recorded and posted on the Reviews CCG Wiki.

Working through Charter Phases

The charter articulates four phases of work. In adherence to the charter, in the first phase of its work, the Reviews CCG focused on gathering facts, facilitating dialogue, and reporting the results of those conversations. The main community engagement from this phase took place at ICANN84 with a [Draft Purpose of Reviews](#) for the public to consider.

In the second phase of its work, the CCG built on the feedback received to develop a refreshed system of reviews designed to meet both current and future needs. This initial design included proposals regarding the purpose, need, scope, and frequency of future reviews, and aimed to ensure that the overall review system, and the implementation of Board-approved recommendations, would be effective, efficient, and trusted. This preliminary design for the future reviews system was shared with the community at ICANN85 in the format of a [Draft Proposal Outline](#) to support further dialogue.

As part of Phase 3, the Reviews CCG shared the [Refined Outline](#) with the Nominating Groups to solicit feedback and assess whether the work was progressing in the appropriate direction.

The feedback received on the Refined Outline informed the development of the [Initial Draft Report](#) that was released for discussion at ICANN86.

Subgroups

To support efficient progress and ensure focused deliberations, the Reviews CCG organized its work through a set of six dedicated subgroups, each tasked with advancing specific areas of the project.

This approach enabled parallel workstreams, facilitated deeper subject-matter discussions, and improved the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Reviews CCG's efforts.

Consistent with the commitment to transparency and accountability, all subgroup activities, discussions, and outputs were fully documented, recorded, and made publicly available.

- Subgroup on **Strategic Plan** - The [subgroup](#) on Strategic Plan was established to perform mapping against the ICANN Strategic Plan and the ICANN Annual Report. A total of 4 CCG members volunteered to participate, and the subgroup met 5 times between 9 December 2025 and 27 January 2026.
- Subgroup on **Accountability and Transparency Review** (previously called the Scoping and Prioritization Process for Bucket A Review) - The [subgroup](#) was established to define the process for scoping and prioritization for the Accountability and Transparency Review, including safeguards to limit the duration of the scoping exercise and defining its purpose. A total of 7 CCG members volunteered to participate, and the subgroup met 4 times between 31 March 2026 and 9 April 2026.
- Subgroup on **Structural Review** - The [subgroup](#) on Structural Review was established to define triggers and thresholds for initiating or concluding a Structural Review, with a focus on simplification; to define the impact and authority of recommendations, including procedures for their consideration, adoption, and implementation as appropriate; to assess how the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) feeds into the Structural Review; and to define its overall purpose. A total of 5 CCG members volunteered to participate, and the subgroup met 3 times between 1 April 2026 and 13 April 2026.
- Subgroup on **On-Demand Review** - The [subgroup](#) on On-Demand Review was established to elaborate the processes for requesting and convening an on-demand review and to define its purpose. A total of 7 CCG members volunteered to participate as well as observers, and the subgroup met twice on 2 and 9 April 2026.
- Small Group on **Definitional Work** - The [small group](#) on definitional work was established to define key terms such as “policy” in the context of on-demand review and “public interest”; to clarify expectations regarding the use of “rationale” throughout the proposal; and to address any additional definitional issues required to remove ambiguity. A total of 6 CCG members volunteered to participate as well as observers. The group collaborated on the [draft document](#) via the mailing list.
- Small Group on **Review Timing** - The [small group](#) to elaborate on review timing was established to define principles for the periodicity of reviews while ensuring sufficient flexibility; to define conditions under which accountability and transparency reviews may be deferred; and to recommend intervals for initiating reviews on specific topics. A total of five CCG members volunteered to participate, as well as observers. The group met once on 29 April 2026 and also collaborated on the [draft document](#) via the mailing list.

Engagement

As part of its fact-finding and community input process, the Reviews CCG gathered feedback through a series of structured engagement opportunities held during Prep Week and ICANN meetings, as well as through standalone webinars, blogs, and liaison work with Nominating Groups.

- On 14 October 2025, the Reviews CCG released the [Shaping the Future of ICANN Reviews: Join the Conversation at ICANN84](#) blog to give visibility to its plans for ICANN84, and during [ICANN84 Prep Week](#), on 15 October 2025, [introduced](#) its planned activities and outlined upcoming opportunities for community engagement, which set the stage for deeper discussions.
- At ICANN84, the CCG held two plenary sessions ([27](#) and [30](#) October 2025) that served as interactive forums to collect community perspectives on a [draft purpose of reviews statement](#), key focus areas, and potential improvements. The Reviews CCG used the collaboration tool *Menti* in the first session to support interactive engagement and dialogue. In addition to these plenaries, the CCG participated in various community sessions to discuss its work and gather additional feedback.
- To continue engagement beyond the ICANN84 meeting, and further inform its fact-finding, the CCG hosted two [webinars](#) on 18 November 2025, inviting participants to reflect on the successes and challenges of past reviews and to share ideas for a more effective, transparent, and accountable review system.
- The Reviews CCG released a [Reviews CCG Progress/Status Update](#) blog on 18 December 2025 reporting on the buckets of reviews the Reviews CCG is envisioning for the system.
- During [Prep Week of ICANN85](#), the Reviews CCG delivered an update on the status of its work on 23 February 2025, setting out the envisioned buckets, and on 3 March 2026 released the [Draft Proposal Outline](#) with an accompanying [explanatory note](#).
- At ICANN85, the Reviews CCG hosted an [outreach session](#) on 12 March 2026 and participated in various community sessions to discuss its work and gather additional feedback. This session, along with additional meetings with community groups during ICANN85, provided further opportunities for iterative feedback. Participants were able to ask questions, comment on specific elements of the proposal, and provide input on both the substance and the overall process.
- To support the request for input the Refined Outline that was released on 18 April 2026 with a request for input from Nominating Groups, the Reviews CCG hosted [two webinar sessions](#) on 5 May 2026.
- On 21 May 2026, the Reviews CCG shared an update, during the [ICANN86 Prep Week](#), on its work leading up to the Draft Report, and offered clarifications in response to input and questions received on its [Refined Outline](#).
- On 3 June 2026, a blog titled [Draft Principles to Enable the Evolution of ICANN Reviews](#) was released to share draft principles from the phase 1 discussion.
- On 4 June 2026, the Reviews CCG released an [Initial Draft Report](#) in time for discussion at the ICANN86 meeting in Seville. On 8 June 2026, the Reviews CCG presented the proposal in the Initial Draft Report and collected feedback.

- The engagement activities are complemented by an open door policy, where anyone interested in the Reviews CCG work may sign to [become an observer](#).
- [Written feedback](#) on work may also be provided to the Reviews CCG at any point in time through the inputonreviews@icann.org email address. There is a standing item on the Reviews CCG agenda that offers an opportunity for contributors to take the Reviews CCG through their comment(s), as needed.
- The Reviews CCG has a standing item on its agenda for members to report on liaison work with their Nominating Groups and any input they may have.

Appendix C - Fact-Finding

Findings

The Reviews CCG devoted significant time during its first phase to assessing what had proven effective and ineffective in prior occurrences of Specific and Organizational Reviews, while also incorporating lessons learned from those experiences. This work further leveraged on the conclusions of the Third Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT3), which had already identified a clear need for change in the reviews.

The feedback from the ICANN84 Reviews CCG plenary sessions and related webinars highlights several key themes and findings regarding the purpose and future design of ICANN's review system. A central theme that emerged was the need to clearly redefine the purpose of reviews, while maintaining rigor in ICANN's accountability framework. Participants emphasized that the system should be grounded in ICANN's Bylaws and Mission, in compliance with its Commitments and Core Values.

Reviews should also ensure accountability and transparency through bottom-up oversight, and there should be commitment to continuous improvement. There was a call for a clearer, shared understanding of why reviews are conducted, alongside a more forward looking and less procedural approach that emphasizes meaningful outcomes.

Another major theme is the complexity of the current review system. Feedback points to an overly complex and fragmented reviews system, contributing to inefficiency, delays, backlog and significant community burden. Participants called for simplification and balance through more tightly scoped, focused, review efforts that are adaptable to the current environment and needs, with fewer recommendations as well as adequate resourcing and clearer prioritization of issues.

Accountability and transparency also remain central to the discussion on reviews. Reviews are seen as essential to ICANN's accountability framework, but participants stressed the need for increased transparency in both how reviews are conducted and in terms of outcomes. At the same time, there is concern that reviews should not bypass established ICANN processes or become parallel governance mechanisms.

Themes around scope, timing, and participation emerged strongly. Participants highlighted the need for better defined scope setting, more predictable and time bound reviews, and improved coordination to reduce overlapping workloads. There was also emphasis on strengthening inclusiveness, particularly by engaging newcomers and improving diversity in the composition of cross community groups, supported by clearer outreach and communication.

The discussion at ICANN85 reflected broad agreement on the need for a simpler, more practical, and sustainable reviews system. Participants emphasized that reviews should avoid unnecessary complexity and instead focus on clear objectives, lessons learned, and being a meaningful tool for the evolution of ICANN. Ensuring that the system remains manageable in terms of workload and resource requirements was seen as critical.

Participants also highlighted the need for mechanisms to ensure that review outputs are implemented. At the same time, the system should remain flexible in terms of timing, while incorporating appropriate safeguards to ensure processes are used in good faith and to prevent capture, alongside separate requirements for strong accountability and transparency structures.

Clarity and structure were seen as essential to an effective reviews system. Each review should have a clearly defined and distinct purpose, with narrow scoping to avoid overlap and inefficiency. Participants noted that a one size fits all approach would not work given organizational diversity, and that reviews need to be adaptable to different contexts. Strong accountability and transparency mechanisms, particularly for SO/AC leadership, were highlighted, alongside the inclusion of relevant technical and external expertise. A longer-term, predictable cadence, especially for structural reviews, was also noted.

From a design perspective, participants emphasized the need for a system that is easy to understand, including for external audiences. Clear articulation of the purpose of each review type was seen as important to avoid duplication or overlaps, with support for automatic triggers rather than reliance on requests.

Conflict of interest provisions were considered essential, and routine reporting was suggested to lighten the review workload.

In relation to scoping, there was support for community involvement, alongside relevant expertise (depending on the type of review) and safeguards to mitigate the risk of bias toward the status quo. Participation from both the Board and the organization was seen as important.

Across review categories, themes included reducing delays and review overlap, strengthening safeguards in the self-evaluation processes, focusing structural reviews on significant issues with clear indicators, and that the Review of Reviews could review one subset of reviews rather than all of them.

For On-Demand reviews, there should be strict triggering criteria, such as analysis of evidence, justification of urgency, and non-duplication certification, along with capacity and workload checks.

Principles

Building on the extensive input received during the community dialogue regarding the characteristics of an effective review process, the Reviews CCG aligned on a set of guiding principles that underpin its proposed framework:

- Reviews should be simple, clear, focused on core issues.
- Reviews should be responsive, adaptable, and proportionate to the current environment and circumstances.
- Reviews should be tightly scoped, targeted, and manageable through efficient prioritization.
- Reviews should be time-bound with a meaningful cadence.
- Reviews should produce tangible and practical results with clear outcomes that aim to facilitate change where called for.



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