

SSAC Comment on the ICANN FY13 Budget: Impact on SSAC Productivity



A Comment from the ICANN
Security and Stability
Advisory Committee
(SSAC)
08 June 2012

Preface

This is a Comment from the Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) regarding the draft FY13 ICANN GLOBAL Operating Plan and Budget (<http://www.icann.org/en/about/financials/proposed-opplan-budget-v1-fy13-01may12-en.pdf>)

The SSAC advises the ICANN community and Board on matters relating to the security and integrity of the Internet's naming and address allocation systems. This includes operational matters (e.g., matters pertaining to the correct and reliable operation of the root name system), administrative matters (e.g., matters pertaining to address allocation and Internet number assignment), and registration matters (e.g., matters pertaining to registry and registrar services). The SSAC engages in ongoing threat assessment and risk analysis of the Internet naming and address allocation services to assess where the principal threats to stability and security lie, and advises the ICANN community accordingly. The SSAC has no official authority to regulate, enforce or adjudicate. Those functions belong to others, and the advice offered here should be evaluated on its merits.

The contributors to this Comment, reference to the committee members' biographies and statements of interest, and committee members' objections to the findings or recommendations in this report are included at end of this Comment.

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1. We Question Decreased Support for SSAC

In summary, ICANN's proposed Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Operating Plan and Budget decreases ICANN's overall support for the Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC). This is a surprising situation given SSAC's role, and confusing considering that ICANN has budgeted overall increases for engagement and increasing participation across ICANN. There is a high risk that the SSAC will lose effectiveness due to lack of support from ICANN, and the SSAC requests reconsideration in dialog with ICANN management. We also question the rationale behind the denial of one of our funding requests for the SSAC's standing annual retreat, which SSAC uses for strategic planning and work sessions attended by our volunteers. We would like: restoration of the retreat funding; to receive travel support for ten members per ICANN meeting as included in the current draft budget; and we would like to see a few improvements to address the lack of SSAC Administrative Committee face-to-face meetings and logistical issues during ICANN meetings, which inhibit the effectiveness of the SSAC. This will involve an addition of perhaps \$95,000 to the current draft budget.

We believe the funds are available given ICANN's \$23.3 million operating surplus and \$52 million reserve fund. In the past few years the SSAC has become more effective and it has received positive comments from the ICANN Board for its work. Nonetheless the SSAC has been historically under-funded. For example, SSAC members received travel support for the first time in 2012, while members of other SO/AC groups have enjoyed travel support for many years.

Granting the SSAC's modest requests will help fulfill many of the goals that ICANN has stated for its FY13 budget:

- "Ensure excellency in the management of DNS Stability, DNS Security, IP addresses and parameters"
- "Effectively support SO/AC and Board increasing activities"
- "Support Law Enforcement engagement with Community"
- "Advance Whois database policy and procedures"
- "Evolve ICANN meetings"

2. How the SSAC Operates and Why Budget Support is Critical to the SSAC's Productivity

The Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) advises the ICANN community and Board on matters relating to the security and integrity of the Internet's naming and address allocation systems. The SSAC produces documents according to an internal process that is built upon creation of work parties that each develop a document that the SSAC reviews and approves. Until 2010, the SSAC published around four documents each year, although in 2011 this number increased to six. In 2012 the SSAC had planned to increase production to eight documents per year. However, the proposed reduced

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budget allocation in the FY13 budget for SSAC support will have an impact on the SSAC reaching its goal of eight publications and it may not even be able to produce six documents. For reference, the [SSAC Operational Procedures](#) that describe the SSAC's method of work are available on the SSAC web site.

A simple description of how the SSAC has operated over the years is through a combination of telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings. The SSAC holds monthly teleconferences and the SSAC Administrative Committee (the Chair, Vice Chair and Liaison to the ICANN Board) hold weekly teleconferences as their primary meeting method. In addition, when the SSAC leadership was based in the United States on the east coast it held monthly face-to-face meetings. The full Committee has held a yearly retreat since 2009 and have met face-to-face three times per year at the IETF and also at the three ICANN meetings.

In its request for allocations in the ICANN budget in FY11, FY12, and FY13 the SSAC has continued to request support for the annual retreats and face-to-face meetings at the IETF, as well as limited face-to-face meetings of the SSAC Administrative Committee. These requests have focused on allocating more time to meet at ICANN meetings to retain the effectiveness of the work parties, to encourage SSAC members to attend the ICANN meetings by requesting travel support, and to ensure a more effective use of ICANN and SSAC members' time and money. Beginning in FY12 the SSAC received travel support for five SSAC members to attend each ICANN meeting (the Chair, Vice Chair, and three SSAC members). The ICANN FY13 budget includes travel funding for ten SSAC members to attend ICANN meetings.

The proposed budget for FY13 denied funding for the annual SSAC retreat. Neither the FY12, nor FY13, budgets included funding for face-to-face SSAC Administrative Committee meetings outside of ICANN meetings. Although there is more funding for travel of SSAC members to the ICANN meetings proposed in FY13 as noted above, the lack of funding for the retreat and Administrative Committee face-to-face meetings represents a net loss of funding, and means that the SSAC and Administrative Committee will need more time to meet at ICANN meetings, which greatly increases the challenge of finding time to schedule these meetings during the already full ICANN meeting schedule. The challenge is influenced by the shared staff resources (SSAC does not have a dedicated staff resource) and the SSAC Board Liaison being committed to Board activities throughout the meeting.

The Chair of the SSAC has the responsibility to fulfill the Board and community's requests and expectations and to deliver results as effectively as possible. This may conflict with ICANN's process of developing a consensus for the budget in the community. When ICANN decreases the budget allocation for the SSAC's activities that affects the SSAC Chair's ability to fulfill his duties to the ICANN Board and the community.

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The proposed allocation for the SSAC in the FY13 budget will have the following impact on the SSAC's ability to do its work effectively:

1. The SSAC must be able to have meetings at ICANN meetings whenever it is suitable for the SSAC, such as full days of meetings, which must include full staff support. Currently SSAC meeting scheduling is constrained by the fact that it does not have dedicated staff at all times.

This proposed budget change will increase the need for staff support at ICANN meetings, which in past years the SSAC was able to avoid by having monthly SSAC Administrative Committee meetings and yearly retreats. Moreover, it is important to note that the SSAC needs knowledgeable staff to run its meetings. These tasks cannot be handled by temporary staff or by SSAC members without staff support. Thus, the question is how to handle the increased request to have staff support, as well as to ensure that SSAC members, including those who have commitments to other ICANN activities, e.g., the Board of Directors and other SO/AC groups, will be able to attend SSAC meetings during ICANN meetings?

2. In 2009, 2010, and 2011 the SSAC held a retreat over the course of two full days where the Committee had detailed and lengthy discussions on various topics, including inviting non-SSAC members (at their own travel expense) and ICANN staff including the CEO. If there is no funding for the SSAC retreat in FY13:
 - a. This will result in a net loss of work time and productivity that *cannot* be made up at the three annual ICANN meetings. Most SSAC members have multiple obligations, and cannot manufacture more time during the intense thrice-a-year ICANN meetings. On the other hand, our volunteers are willing to block out time for our retreat at a time away from the main ICANN meetings. Eliminating our retreat is a disincentive for members to keep involved in ICANN at the level they have generously committed themselves to.
 - b. At the ICANN meetings the SSAC must have the use of a dedicated room during the ICANN meetings that can hold all 37 members of the SSAC plus room other Supporting Organization (SO) and Advisory Committee (AC) members to join the SSAC. Thus far the SSAC has accepted going to other SO and AC meeting rooms to meet with them, but for FY13 the SSAC should have the ability to host these groups, or to at least have that option.

So, the second question is how can ICANN ensure that the SSAC will receive increased room allocation at the upcoming ICANN meetings (after Prague)?

3. It also is important for the SSAC meeting room at ICANN meetings to be set up as requested: a U-shape with additional seating for guests. At the ICANN meeting in Costa Rica and at the meeting in Brussels the seating was theater style. The SSAC works collaboratively during its meeting so the U-shape is essential.

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Moreover, services such as coffee and the availability of meals should be nearby to enable the SSAC to work as efficiently as possible. This was not the case in Costa Rica. If the SSAC can no longer have a retreat, then the SSAC should have access to the same services as the other SOs and ACs, including room layout, coffee, and meals in the room or nearby.

So, the third question is whether the SSAC can get the resources it needs at ICANN meetings to enable it to work most effectively?

4. The SSAC Administrative Committee includes the SSAC Liaison to the ICANN Board and historically this Committee has met at monthly face-to-face meetings. In recent budget requests the SSAC requested support for face-to-face meetings at ICANN meetings and a goal of three other face-to-face meetings, a reduction from 12 meetings per year to 6. However, because the Board Liaison must attend Board meetings during ICANN meetings and the SSAC support staff are shared with the GNSO the SSAC has been unable to schedule Administrative Committee face-to-face meetings at ICANN meetings during the tenure of the current Chair.

So, the last question is how ICANN can ensure that the Administrative Committee can meet face-to-face at ICANN meetings and elsewhere so that it can provide effective leadership and direction to the SSAC?

To summarize, there is a high risk that the SSAC is losing its effectiveness due to lack of support from ICANN. In the past few years the SSAC has become more effective and it has received positive comments from the ICANN Board for its work. In particular, the lack of SSAC Administrative Committee face-to-face meetings, incorrect room layouts for SSAC meetings, and logistical issues during ICANN meetings inhibit the effectiveness of the SSAC.

One potential problem with the current budget allocation mechanism (that has been pointed out by others) is that there is no clear indication of which requests are **new** requests, and which requests are **repeated** requests. The SSAC tried to make this distinction clear in our request for support in the FY13 budget. In particular, the SSAC made it clear that the retreat and SSAC Administrative Committee meetings were repeat requests and that the retreat had been funded for three years. The SSAC also noted the potential impact on productivity. Nonetheless, ICANN did not approve the SSAC's requests. If the proposed budget is approved without funding for the retreat and the SSAC Administrative face-to-face meetings the SSAC Chair will be forced to report to the ICANN Board that the SSAC's productivity will decrease in FY13.

From 2002 until 2010 the SSAC has held monthly face-to-face Administrative Committee meetings and in 2009, 2010, and 2011 it held yearly retreats. From 2002 until 2009 SSAC had dedicated administrative support. Although in FY12 ICANN provided travel funding for 5 SSAC members with a proposed increase to 10 in FY13, that support does not make up for the lack of a retreat or face-to-face Administrative Committee

meetings. Until ICANN can ensure that the SSAC has increased support for additional meetings at ICANN meetings the lack of face-to-face meeting opportunities will continue to have a negative impact on SSAC productivity.

3. Rationale for Decrease Unclear

In rejecting funding for the SSAC annual retreat, ICANN gave this rationale: “No other groups have exclusive annual community-only meetings outside of ICANN Public Meetings. Could be an every-other-year event. Trading this off for increased SSAC member travel funding in FY13.” (page 73)

This statement seems to be incorrect. We respectfully point out that there are actually several analogous meetings funded by ICANN for other groups, involving travel and venue costs and significant participation by ICANN staff. These include:

- Regional meetings, such as the recent North America Registry-Registrar meeting, last held 17-18 May 2012 in Los Angeles. (<http://blog.icann.org/2012/05/update-los-angeles-north-america-registry-registrar-meeting/>). According to ICANN, “These regional events are a chance for ICANN staff and representatives from gTLD registries and ICANN-accredited registrars to meet informally to discuss topics important to our industry and business relationships. These events happen regularly and in different locations around the world. Previous events, for example, took place in Tokyo, Munich, Toronto, and Rome. It is a great opportunity to exchange ideas, learn and network. The regional event model was introduced in 2006 as an educational opportunity for ICANN and its contracted parties to share information about registry and registrar operations within the domain name industry.”
- Accountability and Transparency team meetings, which allow community members to perform planning and produce work products on topics such as WHOIS, the Affirmation of Commitments (AoC), and the [Security, Stability, Resiliency of the DNS](#).
- The Global Annual Symposium on DNS Security, Stability and Resiliency, planned and funded by ICANN in cooperation with other stakeholder organizations.
- ICANN has provided support for various special-purpose meetings that were of closed membership, such as the IPC’s Implementation Recommendation Team (IRT).

The SSAC retreat is a rare opportunity for the SSAC’s volunteer membership to focus on strategic planning and creating work products. It is a good value, and in keeping with ICANN gatherings such as those mentioned above. Our requests in this Comment merely seek to return SSAC support to a functional level.

4. Acknowledgments, Statements of Interests, and Objections, and Withdrawals

In the interest of greater transparency, these sections provide the reader information on three aspects of our process. The Acknowledgments section lists the members who contributed to this particular document. The Statements of Interest section points to the biographies of the Committee members and any conflicts of interest, real, apparent, or potential, that may bear on the material in this document. The Objections and Withdrawals section provides a place for individual members to disagree with the content of this document or the process for preparing it.

4.1 Acknowledgments

The committee wishes to thank the following SSAC members and ICANN staff for their time, contributions, and review in producing this Report.

SSAC Members

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4.2 Statements of Interest

SSAC member biographical information and Statements of Interest are available at: <http://www.icann.org/en/groups/ssac/biographies-08may12-en.htm>.

4.3 Objections and Withdrawals

There were no objections or withdrawals