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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PTI FY26 Operating Plans and Budget

Preamble

On December 17th 2024, the Public Comment proceeding opened for the PTI FY26 Operating Plans & Budget. An At-Large workspace was created in preparation for this Public Comment submission. The ALAC-At-Large Operations Finance and Budget Working Group (OFB-WG) reviewed the provided reference materials and relevant webinars. They decided it would be in the interest of end users to develop and submit an ALAC Public Comment Statement.

Workspace:

<https://community.icann.org/display/alacpolicydev/At-Large+Workspace%3A+Draft+PTI+FY26+Operating+Plan+and+Budget>

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Ratification Record

On December 17th 2024, the Public Comment proceeding for the PTI FY26 Operating Plans & Budget opened. [A Drafting Team was finalised on January 8th](#). The lead Cheryl Langdon-Orr; Drafter(s): Pari Esfandiari; Satish Babu and Claire Craig commenced a review of the reference documentation (including the relevant ICANN Presentations and webinars) and commenced prepared points for OFB-WG consideration for drafting and initial drafting of a possible Public Comment for ALAC endorsement. The ALAC At-Large OFB-WG confirmed that it would be in the interest of end users to develop and submit an ALAC statement for this Public Comment proceeding at the OFB-WG's call on January 23, 2025. The Drafting Team progressed with

document development for the initial ALAC statement for OFB-WG consideration and ALAC endorsement.

Executive Summary:

The At-Large Advisory Committee (The ALAC) has reviewed the PTI FY26 Operating Plan and Budget and recognizes that there are sufficient allocations in key areas. However, the ALAC has identified several gaps where the budget may be insufficient.

Concerns include the need for dedicated funding for:

- Proactively assessing emerging risks (alternative namespaces, AI, next-generation authentication).
- Staff development in emerging technologies (AI, quantum computing).
- Community engagement with underserved groups.
- Academic collaboration and research on emerging risks.

The ALAC recommends enhancements to the budget to address these gaps and align with the IANA 2030 Strategy. These enhancements focus on academic engagement, alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and proactive risk mitigation. By incorporating these recommendations, ICANN and PTI can better position themselves as leaders in global Internet governance, address the evolving needs of end-users, and maintain trust, stability, and inclusivity in the Internet ecosystem.

Introduction:

On February 6th, the draft statement was shared with the OFB-WG for review and input. On February 9th, the At-Large Public Comment Statement was finalized. The ALAC Chair, Jonathan Zuck, requested that the ALAC ratify the Public Comment in a vote between February 10-13th before submission to the ICANN Public Comment feature by staff on February 14th.

On February 12th 2025, staff confirmed the online vote resulted in the ALAC endorsing the statement with 15 out of 15 votes in favor. 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions. Please note that 100% of ALAC members participated in the poll. The ALAC members who participated in the poll are (in alphabetical order by first name): Aziz Hilali, Bukola Oronti, Claire Craig, Eunice Alejandra Perez Coello, Emilia Zalewska-Czajczynska, Jonathan Zuck, Kathleen Scoggin, Natalie Tercova, Judith Hellerstein, Justine Chew, Lilian Ivette De Luque, Pari Esfandiari, Raihanath Gbadamassi, Satish Babu, Shah Zahidur Rahman]. You may view the results here: <https://tally.icann.org/cgi/results?e=5f6befe303c>

End-User Impact

As stated in the call for Public Comment regarding the PTI FY26 Operating Plans & Budgets, The OFB-WG has regularly prepared, as one of its key work products, responses to these plans in the past and sees the end-user impact through the lens of vested interest by the ALAC-At-Large commentary and community input into the plans for the fiscally responsible management and operations of ICANN going forward.

Initial points discussed and agreed upon by the Working Group as a basis for consensus on this Call for Public Comment:

Please also see our OFB-WG workspace and ALAC endorsement of Comment regarding the [Draft PTI Strategic Plan covering 2025 to 2030](#)

Regarding the [Draft PTI FY26 Operating Plan and Budget](#), the OFB-WG proposes, based on presentation(s) by [ICANN Staff on January 9th](#) and the [Drafting Team on Jan 23rd](#), OFB-WG calls, that the ALAC - At-Large response to the Call for Public Comment on the draft notes [strong support/consensus] focuses primarily on the following agreed point:

- Support the increase in the PTI Budget for FY26, but as usual, ask if the amount (\$0.4M) is sufficient to achieve the FY IANA and PTI strategic planning.

The ALAC Comments on the PTI FY26 Operating Plan and Budget

The ALAC provides the following comments on the **PTI FY26 Operating Plan and Budget** based on the priorities and recommendations outlined in the **IANA 2030 Strategy: Draft PTI Strategic Plan covering 2025–2030**. These comments aim to ensure that the FY26 Plan aligns with IANA's long-term goals of **Innovation, Operational Excellence, and Community Engagement** while addressing risks, leveraging opportunities, and maintaining trust among end-users.

1. Innovation and Future-Proofing IANA Operations

The FY26 Plan outlines valuable initiatives, including enhancements to the Root Zone Management System (RZMS) and improvements in cryptographic key management.

However, to align with **Goal 1.1 of the IANA 2030 Strategy**, these activities should explicitly prioritize the proactive assessment of emerging technologies and the implementation of innovative solutions. This includes addressing advancements such as alternative namespaces, AI, and next-generation authentication methods to ensure IANA's continued relevance and leadership in a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem.

The ALAC Recommendations:

- Incorporate a detailed plan to actively monitor and assess alternative namespaces (e.g., blockchain-based domains) and ensure interoperability with the DNS.
- Expand innovation efforts to include AI-driven tools for operational efficiency and enhanced decision-making.
- Ensure that new technological solutions align with global Internet governance principles and end-user needs.

2. Operational Excellence and Staff Development

The FY26 Plan highlights initiatives like third-party audits, process improvements, and customer engagement surveys to achieve operational excellence. While commendable, the plan must go further to address emerging challenges and align with **Goal 2.3 of the IANA 2030 Strategy**, which calls for comprehensive staff development to maintain operational resilience and expertise in new and evolving technologies.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Expand staff training programs to include hands-on workshops on emerging technologies such as AI, cybersecurity, and new authentication standards.
- Develop a robust skill development plan to address the unique challenges of managing critical Internet infrastructure and ensure workforce resilience.
- Establish KPIs that measure the impact of training programs on operational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction.

3. Community Engagement and Inclusivity

The FY26 Plan outlines stakeholder engagement activities with key groups, such as top-level domain managers and RIRs. However, this approach must be broadened to include non-traditional and underserved stakeholders, as emphasized in **Goals 3.1 and 3.2 of the IANA 2030 Strategy**, highlighting the importance of enhancing relationships

with non-traditional stakeholders and improving communication strategies to foster inclusivity.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Increase outreach efforts to underserved regions and diverse stakeholder groups, particularly end-users who rely on the stability and security of the DNS.
- Include educational initiatives that raise awareness about the risks and opportunities associated with alternative namespaces, ensuring these efforts reach non-technical audiences.
- Introduce engagement metrics to assess the effectiveness of community outreach and identify areas for improvement.

4. Academic Engagement for Research

The IANA 2030 Strategy underscores the importance of **innovation and forward-looking solutions**, which require active collaboration with the academic community. The FY26 Plan should incorporate mechanisms to engage research institutions, particularly those focused on emerging technologies, to ensure IANA remains at the forefront of innovation and anticipates future challenges.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Establish partnerships with academic and research institutions to conduct in-depth studies on emerging risks, such as those posed by alternative namespaces, AI, and quantum computing.
- Use these collaborations to develop evidence-based strategies and solutions that align with IANA's mission and enhance its leadership in global Internet governance.
- Create a framework for regularly integrating academic research findings into IANA's operational and strategic planning processes.

5. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

IANA's role in maintaining the stability and interoperability of the Internet is critical to achieving several **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, such as **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure** and **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**. However, the FY26 Plan does not explicitly link its initiatives to these global goals.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Explicitly align IANA's technical and operational efforts with relevant SDGs to highlight its contributions to global sustainable development.
- Promote digital inclusion through increased engagement with underserved regions and communities, supporting **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**.
- Report on how IANA's initiatives, such as operational excellence and innovation, contribute to global goals, reinforcing its role as a leader in fostering a secure, inclusive, and innovative Internet.

6. Visibility and Accountability of the PTI Board

The FY26 Plan does not address the visibility of the PTI Board, which is underscored in the IANA 2030 Strategy for building trust and demonstrating accountability. ALAC has consistently raised concerns about the limited engagement of the PTI Board in ICANN meetings, which represents a missed opportunity to enhance transparency and foster trust.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Introduce public sessions at ICANN meetings where the PTI Board interacts directly with the community, including At-Large representatives.
- Regularly update stakeholders on the PTI Board's decisions and progress toward achieving strategic goals.

7. Risk Mitigation and Resourcing

The IANA 2030 Strategy emphasizes the importance of proactively assessing emerging risks and aligning resources to effectively mitigate potential challenges. While the FY26 Plan includes contingency budgeting, it falls short of explicitly addressing resource allocation for managing critical risks, such as those posed by alternative namespaces, technological advancements, increasing operational demands, environmental impact, and political upheavals.

The ALAC Recommendation:

- Allocate specific resources to monitor and address risks posed by alternative namespaces and other emerging technologies, political trends, and environmental disasters.
- Consider cooperation with relevant scientific and academic bodies.
- Ensure adequate staffing and funding to implement mitigation measures, avoiding delays in reaching strategic objectives or meeting community expectations.
- Establish a clear risk assessment framework to identify, prioritize, and address potential challenges to IANA's operational stability and reputation.

The ALAC Comments Specifically on PTI FY26 Budget

The ALAC has reviewed the PTI FY26 Operating Plan and Budget, acknowledging sufficient allocations in key areas such as operational excellence, core operations, governance, technical services, stakeholder engagement, including travel and meetings, and shared services with ICANN, which collectively ensure the stability and efficiency of IANA's functions.

However, the budget may fall short in addressing some gaps outlined below. Bridging these is crucial to ensuring complete alignment with the strategic objectives of the IANA 2030 Strategy.

1. Proactive Assessment of Emerging Risks: While the FY26 Plan includes \$0.5 million in contingency funds, the budget does not explicitly allocate resources to address emerging risks, such as alternative namespaces, advancements in AI, and next-generation authentication standards.

The ALAC Comment: Proactively addressing these risks requires dedicated funding for research, collaboration with innovators, and the development of mitigation strategies. The current budget does not cover these critical activities comprehensively.

2. Staff Development in Emerging Technologies: While the budget includes funding for staff training, it does not explicitly allocate resources for comprehensive skill development in emerging technologies like AI and quantum computing.

The ALAC Comment: To future-proof IANA's operations, additional funding is needed to expand training programs that address the unique challenges of managing critical Internet infrastructure in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

3. Community Engagement with Underserved Groups: The budget for stakeholder engagement focuses on established groups like TLD managers and RIRs, with limited emphasis on outreach to non-traditional and underserved stakeholders.

The ALAC Comment: While the current budget supports meaningful engagement with traditional stakeholders, additional resources are needed to expand outreach efforts, particularly in underserved regions and diverse end-user communities. This would align with the IANA 2030 Strategy's goals of inclusivity and equity.

4. Academic Collaboration and Research: The budget does not explicitly allocate resources for collaboration with academic and research institutions on emerging risks like AI, quantum computing, and alternative namespaces.

The ALAC Comment: Dedicated funding for academic partnerships would enable IANA to anticipate future challenges and develop evidence-based strategies, ensuring its continued leadership in Internet governance.

Conclusion

The ALAC acknowledges the strong foundation in the FY26 Operating Plan and Budget but recommends a few enhancements to align with the priorities of the IANA 2030 Strategy. By incorporating these recommendations—particularly in academic

engagement, alignment with SDGs, and proactive risk mitigation— we believe ICANN and PTI can better position themselves as leaders in global Internet governance. These efforts will address the evolving needs of end-users while maintaining trust, stability, and inclusivity in the Internet ecosystem.