

ICANN FY27–31 Operating & Financial Plan, ICANN/IANA FY27 Op Plans & Budget

SOPC welcomes an opportunity to provide comments on Draft PTI FY27 Operating Plan and Budget. The Strategic and Operational Standing Committee (SOPC) coordinates and strengthens ccTLD participation in ICANN and PTI's strategic, operational, and budgetary processes. The Committee may submit comments on its own behalf, not reflecting the view of the ccNSO, not of individual ccTLD managers and is mandated to submit Rejection Action Petitions on ICANN and IANA budgets and plans.

The SOPC notes that the PTI FY27 budget states that a considerable amount of work is expected for the 2026 round of ngTLDs. We would like to point out that this should not endanger the core systems of PTI and the other relevant Projects planned for FY 27. Any additional efforts from the upcoming new gTLD round that may affect other important outlined priorities should be addressed in due course.

It is the understanding of the SOPC that the PTI budget is part of the IANA budget which is part of the overall ICANN budget. SOPC appreciates the explanation provided by ICANN the PTI budget has its own contingency expense which is included in the ICANN Operations contingency but reserved for matters specific to PTI. However, given the criticality of the IANA Naming Function for ccTLDs and others, the SOPC reiterates this year again its suggestion to consider whether the PTI as a separate legal entity should maintain its own reserve fund, earmarked to ensure continuity of the Naming Function.

We are pleased to read that as part of the operational excellence efforts, employee development continues to be a high priority, including staff training, development, and knowledge transfer. (page 6.)

The SOPC welcomes and appreciates the section "PTI Budget Variance by Function" in the "Draft PTI FY27 Operating Plan & Budget" including the breakdown of expenses across the three core IANA functions. (page 13)

Upcoming activities, including the next gTLD round and ccPDP3-RM implementation, will significantly increase workload. These activities will place additional pressure on staffing and operational capacity. It is important to ensure adequate and sustainable resourcing to support these demands. On p 14 (Section PTI FY27 Planning Assumptions subsection Operations) we read: "*Resourcing analyses conducted as part of delivering a*

road map for the provision of long-term, sustainable IANA functions indicated that the IANA team size and management structure is no longer sufficient to meet community requirements.”

As FY27 budget does not foresee any increase in IANA team size, will this increase happen in FY28?

PTI expense amounts are small relative to the overall ICANN budget but they are essential for effective and reliable IANA services.

SOPC recommends:

- Provide greater clarity on cost allocation, explain the allocation methodology for Direct Shared and Shared Services costs (page 12)
- Improve transparency around shared services
- Identify and address potential risks related to budgetary dependencies

[Draft ICANN FY27–31 Operating and Financial Plan and Draft ICANN FY27 Operating Plan](#)

FY26–30 Strategic Initiatives & FY26 Strategic Initiatives

The SOPC welcomes an opportunity to provide additional comments on Draft ICANN FY27 Operating Plan and Budget. The Strategic and Operational Standing Committee (SOPC) coordinates and strengthens ccTLD participation in ICANN and PTI’s strategic, operational, and budgetary processes. The Committee may also submit comments on its own behalf, not reflecting the view of the ccNSO or individual ccTLD managers, and is mandated to submit Rejection Action Petitions on ICANN and IANA budgets and plans, as defined in the ICANN Bylaws.

In addition to the SOPC responses and comments to the Guided Submission questions, SOPC provides comments on specific Strategic Initiatives.

SOPC failed to identify the Strategic Initiative that covers the Management Framework Program. At ICANN84 meeting in Dublin, the ICANN Planning team presented to SOPC the initial steps of this project. The SOPC wonders what is the progress since that time. Have the specific measures that progress against the strategic initiatives and operational metrics/milestones been defined yet? – is the plan for these to be ‘approved’ along with the FY27 Budget so that measurement/reporting can begin at the start of the new fiscal year?

2. Continuous Improvement Program

SOPC members believe that independent reviewers would bring a different and more impartial perspective than relying solely on members of the community who are already involved in ICANN. Therefore, we suggest individual SO/AC's consider this approach when developing their Continuous Improvement programmes.

With respect to community involvement, the SOPC believes that the ccNSO must have fair representation. A good example was the active participation of the ccNSO appointees in the CIP Community Coordination Group, which concluded its work in July 2025.

3. Improving Stakeholder Representation

Despite efforts over time, some groups remain underrepresented, or do not participate at all in the ICANN community activities.

Generally, it may be important to attract other stakeholders - such as SmE, Universities and NGOs, including civil society organizations - that are not currently well represented. Greater participation from the Asia Pacific or Oceania region is also needed, as these regions remain under-represented in the ICANN community. A pilot program with SMEs and Universities could serve as a good starting point. Furthermore, ccNSO members have a close relationship with their respective local communities and can add great value to such initiatives.

Finally, It would be helpful to ensure that any frameworks developed or mechanisms implemented are also monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. This would help avoiding repeating ineffective methods and ensure that a broad range of participation gaps are addressed.

4. Improving Cross-Community Collaboration

The activities described in this item are based on - and similar to - the ones that have been undertaken in previous years. We believe it is important to identify gaps, and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of activities used to date to close those gaps. Additionally, an assessment on whether the methods to broaden participation need to change is helpful.

From an organizational excellence perspective, the implementation of a collaboration dashboard can help track metrics such as attendance rates, contribution diversity, etc; thus ensuring that collaboration leads to tangible results. Consider Baldrige Criteria or ISO standards.

5. Improving Community Engagement and Retention

The activities described in this item are based on - and similar to - the ones that have been undertaken in previous years. We believe it is important to identify gaps, and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of activities used to date to close those gaps. Additionally, an assessment on whether past methods need to change is helpful.

Furthermore, ccNSO members have a close relationship with their respective local communities and can add great value to initiatives aimed at bringing new participants to closing gaps for better collaboration.

6. Academic Engagement Plan

SOPC supports the enhancement and expansion of ICANN's engagement with academia and academic institutions to grow over time a pipeline of talent in internet governance, technology policy and technical skills from academic institutions. SOPC also supports seeking input from this community into policy development and engagement in ICANN's grant program.

Academic engagement has historically been difficult for the ICANN org and community. In this context, the proposed activities would benefit from being more complete and clearly defined.

Mapping and maintaining catalogs and databases of academic institutions should be undertaken as a bottom-up effort, in cooperation with ICANN org and specialized staff. These efforts must be global in scope, with a multilingual, multicultural perspective.

In setting specific diversity targets for the academic database, explicit priority should be given to institutions in underrepresented regions, especially in the Global South, to reflect and support the global nature of the Internet.

Outcome-based KPIs should focus on conversion and retention rates, rather than counting how many universities were visited.

7. New Skills and Leadership Training for the Community

In general, the SOPC is supportive of skill and leadership training. We note that there is no mention of allocation of funds for these training sessions.

Further, with respect to such training for community members, the SOPC believes that these activities must be developed as a bottom-up, need-based effort and in addition, not limited to SO and AC leaders, but also open to working group or committee leadership teams.

One possible approach is to pair interested academic cohorts directly with specific SOs or ACs, allowing them to participate as observers or pen-holders on working groups.

8. Developing Pathways to Community Leadership

The SOPC appreciates the need to develop community leadership. However we believe that this is first and foremost a responsibility of the community itself with the help of ICANN (both in terms of resourcing and designing programs etc.) In the view of the SOPC this is closely linked with Item 7. New Skills and Leadership Training for the Community

9. Coalition for Digital Africa

Enhancing the Internet infrastructure in developing regions is always a great initiative. ccTLD representatives from Africa should be involved in all these activities.

We are pleased to see among planned activities “Conduct capacity-development training for country code top-level domain (ccTLD) operators” but we believe that ccTLD involvement should be broader and need-based.

In addition, we wonder why such an initiative exists only for Digital Africa and not for other regions (i.e. Digital Latin America or Digital Asia Pacific/ Oceania or Caribbean)?

10. Facilitating Consensus in Policy and Advice Development

The SOPC appreciates the need for facilitation of consensus building. However, the manner in which it is proposed seems to be very ambitious and difficult to achieve. It is not clear enough to the SOPC how this will be implemented. In addition we note a strong link with item 7 and 8 above.

11. Improving ICANN Hybrid Meetings

The SOPC supports this initiative. The SOPC believes that further evolution of the meetings will be necessary to maintain the value of meetings. The SOPC awaits the implementation of the “How we meet” initiative and how that will improve the meetings. It does indeed seem to be the right way to consolidate / improve hybrid meetings.

12. Advice Consideration Process Improvements

Although Policy advice development is not a matter of the ccNSO, the SOPC is of the view that an advice consideration process will also positively affect the policy work of the ccNSO. The SOPC therefore generally supports this initiative.

13. Geopolitical Monitoring, Engagement, and Mitigation

Current focus seems to be at UN level in Geneva, New York and in Brussels. It would be helpful if this engagement was better spread regionally.

The SOPC believes that regular updates from an ICANN perspective are useful and should be continued at the current level. The SOPC also believes in regular engagement with specific groups - for example the ccNSO Internet Governance Liaison Committee - will optimize engagement and avoid duplication of efforts.

The SOPC supports the proposed proactive structured dialogues and direct engagement with policymakers to reduce risks and avoid unintended consequences of regulatory proposals. However, the SOPC also believes that at a minimum, related ccTLDs should be informed of such engagement, to avoid diverging messaging.

Broadly speaking, ccTLDs that are governmental entities are effective institutional bridges between ICANN and national governments. Bilateral engagement between ICANN and governments, supported by these ccTLDs, can significantly enhance policy dialogue, mutual understanding, and effective cooperation within the ICANN ecosystem.

14. Policy Development and Implementation Process Improvements

The SOPC supports the proposals under this initiative. The plans seem reasonable, assuming they do not interfere with the work of the different SO and ACs in this area. The SOPC warns against potential lack of capacity to achieve these and other improvements, for example under the continuous improvement program.

15. Evolving Communications on ICANN's Multistakeholder Model

WSIS+20 reaffirmed the multistakeholder model of Internet governance as essential for a secure, unified, and open internet.

The SOPC believes that ICANN itself as a multistakeholder organisation should keep highlighting its achievements and the value of its collaborative model.

16. WSIS+20 Review Project and Outreach Network

The U.N. General Assembly formally adopted the WSIS+20 Outcome Document that will guide the next phase of global digital cooperation. SOPC noted that the ICANN 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is ICANN's roadmap and commitment to continue to work with governments, international organizations, industry, civil society, academia, end users and the technical community to support a secure, interoperable, and globally

accessible Internet for all. SOPC appreciates ICANN's reporting on related past and future activities.

17. Improve ICANN Org Agility

It is not yet clear how this evaluation will be carried out. It will be important to conduct a broad consultation with the community to understand what is considered "agile" and to align mutual expectations—particularly within the ccNSO community, given its global representation.

18. Annual Strategy Review Program

The SOPC supports this initiative.

20. Improving Forecasting and Financial Planning (p 38) (p 138)

The SOPC supports ICANN org's intention to expand its understanding and knowledge of the potential impacts on the future funding.

We agree that accurate forecasting and planning are very important, but it is not clear why it is considered a Strategic Initiative? From the description it looks like Continuing Operations with no significant changes or development planned.

21. Enhancing ICANN's Fiscal Responsibility (p 39) (p 139)

The SOPC wonders what was the reason to rename the Strategic Initiative from previous "Ongoing Cost Control" to "Enhancing ICANN's Fiscal Responsibility"

While cost control is very important, it is not clear why it is considered a Strategic Initiative. From the description it looks like Continuing Operations with no significant changes or development planned

22. Evolving ICANN's Working Hybrid Model

The SOPC supports the initiative.

23. Ecological Responsibility

The SOPC supports this initiative. Given ICANN's unique position, the SOPC suggests that it may be enhanced to a broader initiative, capturing the Domain Name Industry could be enhanced with inputs from the ccNSO community.

Each ccNSO member could share info about carbon footprint and other relevant data to compare and complement what ICANN is doing.

24. Universal Acceptance

The SOPC supports this initiative. It is important to engage with all relevant parties, including larger Tech organizations and open-source communities. The latter are key partners in the full implementation of Universal Acceptance and the overarching goal of digital inclusion.

26. Identify Opportunities to Enhance the Stable and Secure Operations of Unique Identifiers

The SOPC views this as a critical initiative. While it understands that there is currently insufficient detail to fully describe it in the plan, the SOPC would nevertheless appreciate—and consider it helpful—if a high-level overview of the intended objectives and expected outcomes of this initiative could be provided, assuming the underlying assumption is correct.

28. Technological Development Assessment and Responsiveness

Partnering with the technical community to explore new technologies is an effective way to share knowledge and strengthen cooperation with technical stakeholders. Although KINDNS has been available for some time, its impact and benefits have not been systematically defined or measured.

OCTO publications: It is not clear if there is a formal engagement process regarding the intersection of community needs and documentation topics, but it could be an opportunity for the ccNSO (and other community organizations) to provide input to potential topics.

30. Regional Events Redesign

Cooperation and coordination with regional and local stakeholders should be strengthened in this area, since stakeholder engagement is always welcomed. However, where direct cooperation with local or regional stakeholders is not feasible for a specific

event, overlap and/or duplication of ICANN events with regional industry events should be avoided.

31. Security Risk Identification and Mitigation

A proactive approach is an effective way to enhance security within the ICANN ecosystem and among its stakeholders. The SOPC believes that the ccNSO community would welcome a discussion on a potential approach among ccTLDs to further strengthen member security and improve information and threat sharing.