

The Board thanks the Review of Reviews Cross Community Group for the opportunity to comment on its Draft Report. The Board appreciates having the inclusion of two Board members in this important discussion and commends all participants for their efforts to address the Board's [19 May 2025 resolution](#) for a community dialogue to develop a shared understanding of the areas and issues for which reviews will enhance ICANN's accountability, transparency and effectiveness.

The Board offers the following observations for consideration as the proposal is being refined and finalized. The Board welcomes the rationale sections provided in the Draft Report and the explanation of how the proposed mechanisms relate to one another. The Board also welcomes work to illustrate the proposal through flowcharts and believes a timeline would be helpful to help visualize the proposed system.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board appreciates the significant effort that has gone into designing the Reviews Scoping Committee (RSC) as a collaborative mechanism intended to bring together the Community, Board, and Organization in the planning and coordination of future Reviews. The Board believes this collaborative approach has the potential to improve prioritization, scoping, and overall sustainability of the Reviews system.

The Board also believes that the Final Report would benefit from more clearly defining the governance architecture surrounding the RSC. The Board recommends more clearly distinguishing the institutional roles played by the various participants throughout the Reviews lifecycle.

Reviews are intended to evaluate ICANN's accountability and effectiveness as a multistakeholder system, and therefore appropriately involve contributions from the Community, Board, and Organization to an appropriate extent. While participants may work collaboratively throughout much of the process, each contributing part ultimately carries distinct governance responsibilities.

The Board welcomes participation in the Reviews system, so long as its role does not deviate from its governance responsibilities or conflict with its defined role as a Board. The Board's participation in the RSC or on review teams should account for this balance as part of the overall community process.

The Board encourages the Final Report to more clearly describe how respective responsibilities interact throughout the lifecycle of a Review, including how collaborative participation in scoping and conducting Reviews complements the Board's separate responsibility to consider Review recommendations in accordance with the ICANN Bylaws and its fiduciary obligations.

The Board notes that, throughout the Draft Report, its anticipated role appears to vary depending upon the particular review. The Board also understands it would be expected to be engaged throughout the review efforts.

The Board encourages the Final Report to clarify the level of desired engagement by the Board and distinguish between:

- participation in identifying and scoping potential Reviews;
- participation in conducting Reviews;
- decisions relating to initiation, prioritization, or deferral of Reviews; and
- the Board's responsibility to consider recommendations resulting from those Reviews.

The Board believes this clarification is important both for governance, to preserve confidence in the independence of the Reviews system, and to support an effective, accountable and sustainable review system.

With clarifications provided, the Board will assess and determine whether the proposed role is compatible with its governance responsibilities and fiduciary obligations, ensuring that any decision aligns with its statutory duties, oversight role, and commitment to acting in the best interests of the organization and its stakeholders.

The Final Report should also clarify which decisions of the RSC are advisory, which establish thresholds for progressing work, and which remain reserved to the Board, SOs, ACs, or ICANN org in their respective roles. Explicitly identifying these decision points would strengthen transparency and assist the community in understanding how the various participants collectively support the Reviews framework.

The Board suggests that the Final Report more clearly articulate the decision-making architecture of the RSC, including which stages are advisory, which are threshold-setting, and which are reserved to the SO/ACs, Board, and Org respectively. The Board supports collaborative participation in the scoping and development of reviews, but believes the framework should clearly distinguish between participation in the design of a review and the later consideration of its outputs. For example, the Draft Report contemplates Board participation in aspects of review scoping and deliberation through the RSC and Community Review Teams, while also assigning the Board responsibility for considering resulting review charters and recommendations. Similarly, the Board participates alongside other institutions in the development of Reviews, while certain threshold decisions are reserved to other participants.

The Board does not necessarily question these allocations of responsibility but encourages the Final Report to articulate the governance rationale that underpins them and how they collectively support the Reviews framework.

The Board also suggests that the report make clear that endorsing the initiation of a review should reflect a shared commitment by all participating groups to actively contribute throughout the Review process. The Board believes this shared commitment is important to ensuring Reviews remain well-informed, balanced and effective.

Clear Purpose and Appropriate Scope

The Board encourages further attention to the revision of the purpose statement within the Draft Report. The Board encourages the community to consider whether the revised purpose statement alters the fundamental role of Reviews within ICANN's accountability framework. In particular, the introduction of language relating to determining compliance may blur the distinction between periodic organizational reviews and established accountability mechanisms designed to address allegations of non-compliance. While Reviews may examine broader or systemic compliance issues, the Board notes that any concerns of non-compliance should be raised swiftly, and not held for a review scoping exercise.

Accountability & Transparency Review (ATR)

The Board notes that the proposed Accountability and Transparency Review is intentionally broad and appears to become the principal periodic review through which many aspects of ICANN's accountability framework may be examined. The Board supports the objective of creating a more integrated Reviews system and reducing unnecessary duplication among Reviews.

Given this expanded role, however, the Board believes the Final Report would benefit from further articulation of how the scope of an ATR will remain appropriately focused and proportionate over time. While the RSC and feasibility assessment are important mechanisms for identifying overlap with existing initiatives, the Board also believes the review methodology itself should support disciplined prioritization, evidence-based analysis, and clear boundaries for the matters that are ultimately included within the Review.

The Board believes these additional methodological considerations will help ensure that future ATRs remain repeatable, manageable, and capable of producing focused recommendations that meaningfully strengthen ICANN's accountability.

Structural Review

The Structural Review represents the most significant new mechanism proposed in the Draft Report. Given the potential of this new Review, the Board believes the Final Report would benefit from further articulation of its intended purpose, scope, and boundaries. A clearly defined review objective will help the community understand both what the Structural Review is intended to accomplish and, equally importantly, what it is not intended to do.

In particular, additional clarity is needed on:

- What question is the Structural Review fundamentally intended to answer?
- What characteristics or outcomes is the Review expected to evaluate?
- What evidence or analytical framework should be used in reaching conclusions?
- What kinds of recommendations are contemplated, and what matters fall outside the intended scope of the Review?

Providing greater clarity on these foundational elements will help support a common understanding among future Review Teams, participants, and the broader community, while promoting consistency across future Structural Reviews. The Board believes that clearly defining the purpose of the Structural Review is also important because the intended accountability model should naturally flow from that purpose. The relationship between review findings, institutional autonomy, and implementation should therefore be an explicit part of the proposed design rather than an implication left to future implementation.

The Board encourages further consideration of the relationship between Review findings, community ownership of structural change, and implementation of resulting recommendations. The Draft Report appears to contemplate circumstances in which a Structural Review may identify opportunities or the need for structural change, while the affected body ultimately determines whether to implement those recommendations. The Board does not suggest that any particular implementation model is required, nor that meaningful accountability always requires implementation of each such recommendation, but encourages the CCG to confirm that even when recommendations are declined this is done with a measure of accountability to the entire community.

Finally, the Board believes that the methodology for conducting a Structural Review will be particularly important to its long-term success. Given the breadth of issues that may be considered, the Board encourages the Final Report to identify common methodological principles that will promote objective, evidence-based, and proportionate analysis while allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to the particular issues under consideration.

The Board also notes that the proposed approach references a draft CCWG framework that has not yet been adopted by the SOs and ACs. The Board encourages consideration of whether the Reviews framework should depend upon a methodology that remains under development. Establishing a clearer methodology that takes into account the inputs of those groups under examination could ultimately support a refinement of the review team composition.

Provisions on Specific Reviews

The Board notes the explicit statement under 3.2.2.1 of the Draft Report that “issues that fit under SSR, RDS and CCT can be reviewed through scheduled ATRs and as agreed by the community through On-Demand Reviews.” The Board is unclear as to why existing Specific Reviews in the ICANN Bylaws need to be called out as periodic topics of reviews with additional process overhead in the On-Demand Framework when these issues are explicitly provided for in the scheduled ATR as well as through the On-Demand review outlined in Section 3.2.3.

The Board supports an approach that reinforces the community's role in determining review priorities, ensuring that the Reviews framework remains responsive to evolving needs and areas of greatest significance. It is essential for the reviews system to ensure there are no duplications with other processes and initiatives but also, as noted above, within the reviews system itself. The Board is concerned that identifying these reviews separately may inadvertently duplicate processes already contemplated through the ATR and On-Demand Framework.

Conclusion

The Board believes the Draft Report establishes a strong foundation for a modernized Reviews framework. Throughout its review of the Draft Report, the Board has considered not only the individual mechanisms being proposed, but also the characteristics of the Reviews system as a whole. As the Final Report is developed, the Board encourages the Reviews CCG to continue testing the proposal against the objectives that initiated this work: whether the recommended framework is demonstrably simpler, clearer, more proportionate, more repeatable, and more sustainable than the current Reviews system. The Board believes that making this assessment explicit will assist the community in evaluating the proposal as an integrated framework rather than as a collection of individual mechanisms. The observations above are offered in the spirit of assisting the community in refining a Reviews system that is clear in its governance, proportionate in its design, sustainable in its operation, and effective in strengthening ICANN's accountability over the long term.