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AT-LARGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE Review of Reviews Draft Report

Preamble

On 25 June, the Public Comment proceeding opened for the Review of Reviews Draft Report. An At-Large workspace was created in preparation for this Public Comment submission. The At-Large Operations, Finance and Budget Working Group (OFB WG) analyzed the Reviews of Reviews Draft Report and decided it would be in the interest of end users to develop and submit an ALAC Public Comment Statement.

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Ratification Record

On 25 June, the Public Comment proceeding opened for the Review of Reviews public comment. On July 2, Jonathan Zuck, Nkoro, N.E., Adebunmi Akinbo, Christabel Mebaghandu, Justine Chew, Pari Esfandiari and Bukola Oronti discussed the comments for the ALAC statement during the OFB-WG call. The At-Large OFB- WG decided it would be in the interest of end users to develop and submit an ALAC statement for this Public Comment proceeding. Jonathan Zuck, Nkoro, N.E., Adebunmi Akinbo, Christabel Mebaghandu, Justine Chew, Pari Esfandiari and Bukola Oronti volunteered to draft the initial ALAC statement for the OFB-WG consideration and ALAC endorsement.

On 16 July, the initial draft statement was shared with the OFB-WG for review and input. On 30 July, the At-Large Public Comment Statement was finalized. The ALAC Chair, Jonathan Zuck,

requested that the Public Comment Statement be ratified by the ALAC before submission to the ICANN Public Comment feature.

On July 30th Staff launched a Consensus Call to ratify the ALAC statement. The Consensus Call ended on 02 August. Staff confirmed ALAC endorsing the statement with full consensus.

Accountability and Suitability are the Primary Objectives

The primary purposes of ICANN's review system are to strengthen accountability to the global Internet community and to ensure ICANN remains the ideal organization to manage the DNS. Here are some specific issues that remain to be addressed by the CCG.

1. Participation Thresholds May Marginalize End-User Concerns

Comment: The On-Demand Review Framework requires a minimum of two SO/ACs to jointly propose a topic and a minimum of five SO/ACs to endorse it before a charter reaches the Board (Sections 3.2.2.4, 3.2.3.4). Deferrals of the ATR and Structural Review similarly require agreement from five SO/ACs, rising to six for a second deferral (Sections 3.1.1.5, 3.1.2.4). At-Large is one of 7 SOs and ACs and has historically found it difficult to build the cross-group coalitions these thresholds require on end-user issues — such as WHOIS/RDS access or consumer redress — that other groups may not prioritize in the same way. A threshold designed to filter out narrow or frivolous requests risks also filtering out the topics that matter most to individual end users but least to contracted parties or governments.

Recommendation: ALAC recommends either (a) a lower or alternate threshold for topics with demonstrated individual end-user impact, or (b) a procedural guarantee that any topic ALAC formally raises through its own internal process receives a scoping slot — subject to the same duplication and feasibility screening applied to all other topics — without requiring five-SO/AC endorsement as a precondition.

2. Deferral Provisions Could Extend Accountability Timelines by Up to Thirty Months

Comment: Both the ATR and the Structural Review permit up to two deferrals each: a first deferral of up to eighteen months and a second of up to twelve months (Sections 3.1.1.5, 3.1.2.4). Combined with the existing twelve-month Board action window following delivery of a review report, this could add approximately thirty months to a scheduled accountability review. Given that the ATR already occurs only once every five years, ALAC is concerned that stacked deferrals could make an already infrequent accountability check meaningfully less predictable.

Recommendation: ALAC recommends a hard ceiling on cumulative deferral across both deferral opportunities combined — for example, capping total slippage at eighteen months

rather than the currently possible thirty — and recommends that the RSC's deferral rationale be published for Public Comment before the deferral takes effect, rather than only reported afterward.

3. Board and ICANN Org Move From Approving Review Outcomes to Shaping Review Scope

Comment: Under the Affirmation of Commitments and the Bylaws framework developed through the IANA transition, ICANN's Board held a defined, backend role in the review process: it received review teams' final reports and acted on recommendations within six months, but did not participate in defining what a review would examine. The Draft Report changes this. The RSC includes one seat each for the ICANN Board and the ICANN org, which participates in every scoping cycle from the topic-slate stage onward (Section 2.3). The feasibility and resourcing assessment that can narrow or eliminate a topic before Public Comment (Section 3.1.1.4, step 4) is conducted with ICANN org support staff, and charter drafting is likewise supported by ICANN org (Section 3.1.1.4, step 7). Formally, Board and org hold a minority of RSC seats — roughly two of fifteen — but the feasibility analysis and charter language that determines which topics survive flows through the party under review. This is of particular concern for the ATR and the Structural Review specifically, since these are the two reviews that examine the Board's and org's own compliance and structure.

Recommendation: ALAC recommends that the Board and ICANN org participate in RSC deliberations concerning ATR and Structural Review scoping as advisory, non-voting members, with their feasibility and resourcing input published separately from SO/AC-driven topic selection. For On-Demand and Consequential Effects reviews, where the subject matter is less self-referential, full voting participation raises fewer concerns.

4. Implementation Review Teams Add Continuity, But No Consequences for Non-Implementation

Comment: The CCG's own fact-finding recorded community feedback describing “an overly complex and fragmented reviews system, contributing to inefficiency, delays, backlog and significant community burden,” and an explicit call for “mechanisms to ensure that review outputs are implemented” (Appendix C). ALAC agrees this has been a persistent and legitimate complaint. The Draft Report's proposed remedy — Implementation Review Teams modeled on the Policy Development Process, plus RSC monitoring of implementation progress (Section 4) — provides valuable continuity and continued expert engagement, but stops short of enforceable consequences. The existing six-month Bylaws requirement addresses only the Board's decision on recommendations, not the completion of implementation. The RSC “should consider” whether a future ATR should review prior implementation (Section 3.1.1.2) — discretionary language, and even if adopted, this check would occur only once every five years. No public, standing implementation-status dashboard is required. ALAC also notes that the Implementation Review Team model is borrowed from the Policy Development Process, where

implementation ultimately flows into binding contractual language enforceable by ICANN Compliance; review recommendations, by contrast, are advisory input into ICANN org's own internal operations, without an equivalent enforcement backstop.

Recommendation: ALAC recommends that the Final Report define: (a) an actual implementation completion deadline for accepted recommendations, distinct from the Board's six-month decision window; (b) a standing, publicly accessible implementation-status dashboard, updated on a fixed cadence, covering every accepted recommendation across all review types; (c) a mandatory, rather than discretionary, review of prior implementation as part of each ATR, potentially supplemented by a more frequent interim public status report; and (d) a defined escalation mechanism — such as automatic eligibility for On-Demand review scoping, or a mandatory public Board explanation — triggered when an accepted recommendation remains unimplemented beyond a specified threshold.

5. Review Framework Requires Measure of Success

Comment: Built into the proposed framework is an additional “review of reviews” to assess the ultimate suitability of the framework. The time to determine the measures of success is now, including both qualitative and quantitative metrics that can be collected along the way and used by the future RoR CCG. The current effort suffers from the lack of such measures now. No rigorous evaluation of the current framework or the reviews that have taken place was undertaken but would have been possible with some framework for assessing the existing system of reviews.

Recommendation: Establish clear guidelines and metrics to measure the success of the proposed framework. Define the success of the framework and the measures of that success, such as percentage of recommendations accepted by the Board, implementation scoring, perhaps done by ATR, timing and budget adherence by review teams, etc.

Conclusion

The ALAC believes the Reviews of Reviews Draft Report represents a significant and welcome evolution of ICANN's accountability framework.

The ALAC supports the overall direction of the proposed reforms and believes they provide a stronger foundation for improving implementation, reducing unnecessary duplication, and making ICANN's review system more strategic and sustainable.

At the same time, the ALAC encourages continued attention to preserving accountability, limiting overreach by the Board and ORG, supporting meaningful volunteer participation, and ensuring that the interests of Internet end users remain central to ICANN's accountability framework. Finally, the proposed framework must be thorough in its handling of implementation. Implementation has been the greatest challenge to accountability under the current system of reviews and deserves significant reform in the new one.

End-User Impact

ICANN's reviews are one of the principal mechanisms through which the multistakeholder community evaluates whether ICANN continues to operate in an accountable, transparent, effective, and responsive manner. Although the review system may appear procedural, its effectiveness has direct implications for Internet end users because it influences how well ICANN identifies, addresses, and learns from issues affecting the Domain Name System and the broader public interest.

The ALAC believes that a review framework which balances efficiency with accountability, strengthens implementation, promotes institutional learning, and preserves meaningful end-user participation will ultimately improve ICANN's ability to respond to issues that matter to Internet users worldwide.

From an end-user perspective, the refreshed review framework must continue to provide meaningful opportunities for issues affecting Internet end users to receive appropriate consideration, even where they may not initially attract broad cross-community support. This includes matters relating to trust, transparency, accessibility, competition, security, DNS stability, and the overall public interest.

The ALAC therefore supports a refreshed review framework that not only improves the efficiency of ICANN's review system but also strengthens its legitimacy, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of the global Internet community.