

DOCUMENT FOR ccTLD WORKSHOP

Source: ICANN

Title: ICANN and the Global Internet

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has a well-defined mission: to coordinate the administration of the Internet's systems of unique identifiers (domain names, Internet protocol addresses, and protocol port and parameters numbers). In this context, ICANN also develops global policies as reasonably necessary to its main technical mission. In simplest form, ICANN's core mission is the stability of the Internet's naming and addressing systems. As a technical coordinating body, ICANN's mandate is not to "run the Internet." Rather, it is to oversee the management of only those specific technical managerial and policy development tasks that require central coordination: the assignment of the Internet's unique name and number identifiers.

Formed in October 1998, ICANN is a non-profit, private-sector corporation formed by a broad coalition of the Internet's business, technical, academic, and user communities. ICANN has been recognized by the U.S. and other governments as the global consensus entity to coordinate the technical management of the Internet's domain name system, the allocation of IP address space, the assignment of protocol parameters, and the management of the root server system.

ICANN operates according to a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DoC) and according to a separate agreement to operate the IANA. Under the MOU and the IANA agreement, ICANN handles matters relating to the domain name system's top-level domains, including any changes to be made to the DNS Root Zone File, subject to the final approval of the DoC. Under this agreed framework, a request for delegation, redelegation, authoritative name server changes, and so forth, are submitted to and processed by ICANN, and a final recommendation made to the DoC. ICANN is not a government or a regulator, but acts as an experienced, neutral, expert gatekeeper for the DNS root zone file, working closely with local Internet communities (including governments) to nurture responsive, accountable operation of generic and country-code top-level domain registries.

The reason for ICANN's formation was that in the past, many of the essential technical coordination functions of the Internet were handled on an *ad hoc* basis by U.S. government contractors and grantees, and a wide network of volunteers. This informal structure

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represented the spirit and culture of the research community in which the Internet was developed. However, the growing international and commercial importance of the Internet has necessitated the creation of a technical management and policy development body that is more formalized in structure, more transparent, more accountable, and more fully reflective of the diversity of the world's Internet communities. In a phased, co-operative process, ICANN has been assuming responsibility to coordinate the stable operation of the Internet in four key areas: the Domain Name System (DNS); the allocation of IP address space; the management of the root server system; and the coordination of protocol number assignment.

ICANN is a non-profit corporation with a 18-member volunteer Board of Directors drawn from all regions of the world. Its international Board has worked to pave the way for a smooth and stable transition from the present technical management system, which has been funded by the US government, to a new privatized and internationalized system. The Board's chairman is Dr. Vinton Cerf, Vice President of Internet Architecture and Technology for WorldCom, widely regarded as one of the fathers of the Internet. The other Directors have been drawn from a set of specialized technical and policy advisory groups, and through open, worldwide selection processes.

Subsequent to its reform, initiated in February 2002 and completed in December 2002, ICANN is now transitioning to a revised structure with a volunteer Board of Directors including 15 voting and 6 non-voting members. These Board members will be selected by the three supporting organizations and ICANN's the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee is composed of 22 members selected by the supporting organizations, the advisory committees, and the Board of Directors.

To accomplish its mission, ICANN fosters collaborative relationships with Internet stakeholders worldwide, including governments, infrastructure providers (such as country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) registries, generic top-level domain (gTLD) registries and registrars, IP address registries), Internet service and connectivity providers, the community of technical experts and architects, the private sector, business and non-commercial users, and a wide range of advocates, interest groups, and associations. ICANN is a global public/private partnership dedicated to operating in an open and transparent manner. There are no membership fees and anyone can participate in its work. In essence, ICANN is an open forum for building consensus.

Together with its Board of Directors, ICANN builds consensus through three supporting organizations which collectively represent a broad cross-section of the global Internet's business, technical, academic, non-commercial, and user communities. Each Supporting Organization has organised itself and defined its own rules. Each is representative of its own unique, specialized constituencies – and each incorporates processes that involve substantial public comment and discussion. These three supporting organizations are:

1. Generic Domain Name Supporting Organization -- The generic Domain Name Supporting Organization (GNSO) is concerned with policy development with respect to the Domain Name System as it affects generic top-level domains (gTLDs) such as .com, .net, .org, .biz, .info and others. The DNS makes possible the easy-to-remember names commonly used to identify Internet locations and resources. The domain name system translates domain names (like www.house.gov) into the IP address numbers that have been assigned to specific computers;
2. Address Supporting Organization – The Address Supporting Organization (ASO) is concerned with the system of IP addresses, such as 128.9.128.127, that uniquely identify the Internet's networked computers;

3. Country Code Domain Name Supporting Organizations (in process of formation) -- The Country Code Domain Name Supporting Organization (CCNSO) is concerned with global policy development as it relates to country code top-level domains, such as .jp, .uk, and .cn.

In fulfillment of its technical coordination role and in establishing global policy, ICANN also acts with the support of advisory committees that guide the Board on key issues of importance to the Internet community. In particular:

1. Governmental Advisory Committee -- The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) is composed of appointed representatives of national governments, distinct economies, multi-national governmental organizations, and treaty organizations. Its function is to represent the concerns of governments to the ICANN Board of Directors. The GAC operates as a forum for the discussion of governmental interests and concerns regarding matters of public policy. It publicly reports its findings and recommendations to the ICANN Board and the ICANN Nominating Committee.
2. At-Large Advisory Committee -- ICANN's At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) is responsible for considering and providing advice on the activities of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), as they relate to the interests of individual Internet users (the "At-Large" community). ICANN, as a private sector, non-profit corporation with technical management responsibilities for the Internet's domain name and address system, will rely on the ALAC and its supporting infrastructure to involve and represent in ICANN a broad set of individual user interests.

ALAC is establishing a network of self-organizing, self-supporting At-Large Structures throughout the world involving individual Internet users at the local or issue level. The At-Large Structures (either existing organizations or newly formed for this purpose) will self-organize into five Regional At-Large Organizations (one in each ICANN region – Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, and North America). The Regional At-Large Organizations will manage outreach and public involvement and will be the min forum and coordination point in each region for public input to ICANN.
3. The DNS Root Sever System Advisory Committee – The responsibility of the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC) is to advise the ICANN Board about the operation of the root name servers of the domain name system. The RSSAC considers and provides advice on the operational requirements of root name servers, including host hardware capacities, operating systems and name server software versions, network connectivity, and physical environment. The RSSAC is also examining and advising on the security aspects of the root name server system, and reviewing the number, location, and distribution of root name servers in light of the performance, robustness, and reliability of the overall system.
4. Security and Stability Advisory Committee -- At its November 2001 meeting, which focused on security issues, the ICANN Board directed the President "to appoint a President's standing committee on the security and stability of the Internet's naming and address allocation systems. The President is directed to develop a proposed charter, with at least a focus on risk analysis and auditing thereof, in consultation with the President's standing committee, and to submit it to the Board for its approval." At its meeting on 14 March 2002, the ICANN Board approved the charter of the ICANN Committee on Security and Stability. On 13 May 2002, the ICANN Board converted the President's Committee on Security and Stability to the Security and Stability Advisory Committee.
5. Technical Liaison Group -- The Technical Liaison Group (TLG) connects the Board with appropriate sources of technical advice on specific matters pertinent to ICANN's activities. The TLG consists of four organizations: the European Telecommunications Standards

Institute (ETSI), the International Telecommunications Union's Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). The role of the TLG organizations is to channel technical information and guidance to the Board and to other ICANN entities. This role has both a responsive component and an active "watchdog" component, to connect the Board or other ICANN body with appropriate sources of technical expertise and to act as an ongoing "watchdog" activity, to advise the Board of the relevance and progress of technical developments in the areas covered by each organization's scope that could affect Board decisions or other ICANN actions

The GAC and the ALAC participate in ICANN through appointing liaisons to the Board of Directors, the Nominations Committee, and to the supporting organizations, as well as by providing direct advice to the Board. The technical community is included by way of the Root Server System Advisory Committee, the Security and Stability Advisory Committee, and the Technical Liaison Group.

ICANN operates as an open, transparent, and consensus-based body that is broadly representative of the diverse stakeholder communities of the global Internet, which include business, civil society, academia, technical community, ccTLD and gTLD registries, registrars, and governments and distinct economies. All participants have equal access to materials and to participate – with discussions and decisions based on publicly posted documents, which are discussed, commented on, including through public web forums, by all stakeholders.
