



**Comment of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC) on  
Draft ICANN Strategic Plan and Operating Plan Framework for FY26-30**

**17-Sep-2024**

The Business Constituency (BC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the [Draft ICANN Strategic Plan and Operating Plan Framework for FY26-30](#)

**Part A: Draft Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 - 2030**

**Section 1: Vision**

1. How well does the vision statement align with your expectations or the needs of the community?

Very well

Somewhat well

Not well

The Business constituency appreciates the efforts made by ICANN org, the community and the Board to cast their attention forward to the coming 5 years. We support the statement in the Strategic Plan introduction that “ICANN recognizes the Internet’s ever-expanding role in broadening global communication, commerce and community” to be a fundamental of the path forward.

The vision statement generally aligns with community needs. That is “ICANN is dedicated to strengthening the single, globally interoperable Internet for all”.

**Section 2: Strategic Objectives**

1. Are the strategic objectives clearly stated and easy to understand?

Yes

No

The strategic objectives in the ICANN FY26-30 Strategic Plan are clearly stated and generally easy to understand. They are articulated in a way that aligns with ICANN's

mission and long-term goals. Each objective is accompanied by specific strategies, indicators of progress, and potential risks, which help clarify the intended outcomes and the steps ICANN will take to achieve them.

We appreciate the Strategic Objectives Evolution comparison which illustrates the progression of priorities and initiatives in the FY21-25 Strategic Plan and how the FY26-30 Strategic Plan builds continuity while recognizing that the future presents new challenges.

2. Do the strategic objectives adequately address the key issues and challenges facing ICANN?

Yes

No

SO2: The strategic objectives outlined in the plan to Enhance Organizational Excellence effectively address the need for greater adaptability, financial sustainability, global presence, and ecological responsibility. The focus on enhancing policy development and governance processes is crucial for maintaining ICANN's relevance in a rapidly evolving internet landscape. Overall, these objectives provide a solid foundation for ICANN's continued success.

SO3: Focus of 3.1 to Facilitate Digital Inclusion by promoting advancement of Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names is a key requirement to ensuring a global inter-operable Internet through the future. The BC wishes to ensure that ICANN addresses Latin Script Diacritics which are an important component of both UA and IDN adoption.

We also note that SO 3.1.3 is to Cultivate Consumer Choice, Competition, Inclusivity and Innovation. These are all keys to success for commercial and business entities operating on the Internet. The Internet needs to be a trustworthy place for consumers and commerce to meet; and relies on the reduction, and elimination, of bad actors engaged in deceptive practices through various methods, to achieve this. Mitigating DNS abuse must continue to be a priority for ICANN in building this trust.

It is also noted in 3.2 that a Progress Indicator under Evolving the Assessment of, and Responsiveness to, Technological Developments is that the "DNS remains the leading trusted platform for the Internet's naming system." This is countered by the Strategic Risk that ICANN is "unable to adjust to the changes in the identifier landscape". While both are

fairly stated, BC urges ICANN to protect the DNS on which business has been built over the history of the Internet.

S04: Strengthening the Security of the Unique Identifier Systems is vital, and the described partnerships and meetings with relevant stakeholders is understood. The BC notes, among these specifically stated relevant stakeholders, that it commits to continue to host the ICANN Contracted Parties Summit. We understand this in the context ensuring the technical security and stability of the internet, but we wish to highlight that this significantly expensive gathering should not be to the exclusion of gathering other like-minded participants of the multi-stakeholder community such as NCPH from being called together to discuss common good for the Internet in other non-security focused fora related to DNS health and prosperity. Another way to strengthen the security of the Unique Identifier System is by supporting the global adoption of the IPv6 protocol by the year 2030.

3. Are there any additional strategic objectives that need to be added, removed, or modified?

Yes

No

The current strategic objectives are strong, but as noted above attention must be given to several matters. These include Latin Stript Diacritics as part of UA and IDN and continued focus on mitigating DNS Abuse that erodes trust in the Internet. Indeed, an important step to addressing the DNS abuse issue is for ICANN to support the campaign for the global switch-over to IPv6 only by the year 2030.

Also, while engaging relevant stakeholders to address security issues is important, so too is engaging with other community members, such as NCPH, to ensure the overall health of the multi-stakeholder model. (within 1.3)

We also urge ICANN to ensure that “DNS remains the leading trusted platform for the Internet’s naming system.” while building understanding and monitoring emergence of technologies like AI and blockchain, particularly as they relate to **DNS management**. ICANN must remain at the forefront of Internet evolution and is prepared for future developments in the Internet ecosystem.

### Section 3: Strategic Goals

1. Are the strategic goals clearly defined and aligned with the strategic objectives?

Yes

No

SO2: Yes, the strategic goals are clearly defined and aligned with the strategic objectives. Each goal directly supports the corresponding strategic objective, offering actionable steps to achieve the broader vision. For example, the goals related to improving institutional agility and financial sustainability are aligned with enhancing ICANN's adaptability and preserving resources. Similarly, the focus on evolving the workforce model and embedding ecological responsibility aligns with the objective of strengthening ICANN's global impact. The inclusion of progress indicators and risk assessments further reinforces this alignment, ensuring clarity and accountability.

2. Is the breakdown of strategic objectives into strategic goals helpful to understand how the objectives will be achieved?

Yes

No

SO2: Yes, the breakdown of strategic objectives into strategic goals is highly beneficial for understanding how the objectives will be achieved. This detailed approach provides a clear roadmap of actionable steps required to meet each objective. By specifying strategic goals, it becomes easier to identify the specific actions, resources, and timelines necessary for implementation. Additionally, this breakdown facilitates monitoring and evaluation, as progress can be tracked against these goals, ensuring that the overall strategic objectives are being effectively pursued and achieved.

3. Are there any strategic goals that need to be added, removed, or modified?

Yes

No

We propose strategic goal 3.1.4 **Support for the campaign for IPv6 only Network by 2030**

Apart from the above, the BC recognizes that the FY26-30 Strategic Plan and Operating Plan Framework is a broad overview of expected focus for the coming years. It is also noted that this will be reviewed on an annual basis and accompanied by each year's Operating Plan and Budget.

While the current strategic goals are comprehensive, a review should be conducted on an ongoing basis to ensure they fully address emerging challenges and opportunities. It may be beneficial to consider adding goals that focus on adapting to rapid technological advancements and increasing global engagement, particularly in underrepresented regions. Additionally, any goals that overlap or are no longer relevant should be modified or removed to streamline the strategic plan and enhance its effectiveness.

#### Section 4: Strategies

1. Are the strategies provided for each strategic goal clear and actionable?

(  ) Yes

(  ) No

The strategies provided for each strategic goal are somehow clear and actionable, with steps outlined for achieving the goals. However, ensuring that each strategy includes measurable outcomes and clear timelines would further enhance their clarity and effectiveness. Additionally, regularly reviewing and updating these strategies in response to evolving circumstances will help maintain their relevance and impact.

We wish to highlight the Strategic Risk associated with Goal 1.1 which is to Ensure Stakeholder Representation and states that “Current community members frequently rotate between positions within SOs and ACs that could hinder new participants from ascending to leadership roles. This may discourage participation, particularly among newer members. “ This Strategic Risk does not include a corresponding progress indicator or strategy for overcoming the risk.

Strategy 1.2.1 to Reduce Complexity and Create Incentives to Encourage Active Participation uses the phrase “agile methodologies.” However, the corresponding discussion of Progress Indicators and Strategic Risks uses the phrase “Enhance the Agility...”. “Agile methodologies” are project management frameworks, while “agile” is simply an adjective. The use of the two different sets of words is confusing and may be misinterpreted. If ICANN plans to use agile methodologies within the community, there will need to be significant educational, coaching and supervisory resources devoted to that task. Any budget associated with these plans needs to contain a line item for this significant change in the way projects are managed within ICANN.

It means some governments in the UN system wanted to move the work of ICANN to ITU or create a new UN institution for its function due to lack of understanding of what ICANN does. Hence, the need for ICANN to be proactive and engaging at all UN fora to ensure that

all concerned governments participate in the GAC and if they don't at least understand its performing its role excellently.

2. Are the strategies appropriate and effective for achieving the strategic goals?

Yes

No

SO2: The strategies appear to be appropriate and effective for achieving the strategic goals, as they address key areas needed for success. They align with the overall objectives and consider various factors impacting the goals. However, to ensure maximum effectiveness, it is crucial to continuously evaluate their impact and adapt them based on emerging trends and challenges. This will help maintain their relevance and effectiveness in achieving the strategic goals.

3. Are the progress indicators associated with each strategy adequate for tracking progress?

Yes

No

The BC recognizes that the ongoing inputs for 5 year and one year Operating Plan and Budget will address the Strategic Objectives, Goals and associates strategies in more specific detail.

For now, the progress indicators associated with each strategy are generally adequate for tracking progress, as they provide measurable and specific metrics relevant to the strategic goals. They include a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, which help assess both performance and impact. However, it is essential to regularly review and refine these indicators to ensure they accurately reflect progress and adapt to any changes in the strategic landscape. This will ensure that progress tracking remains effective and aligned with the goals.

4. Do the strategic risks identified for each strategy seem comprehensive and realistic?

Yes

No

SO1:No comment

With exception of those identified elsewhere in this document, the strategic risks identified for each strategy appear comprehensive and realistic, as they cover a broad range of potential challenges that could impact the achievement of the strategic goals. They address various factors such as institutional agility, financial sustainability, and global presence, providing a thorough overview of potential obstacles. However, it is crucial to continually assess these risks and update them as new threats or opportunities emerge to maintain a proactive approach to risk management.

5. Do you have any suggestions for additional strategies, progress indicators, or improvements to the existing ones?

Yes

No

S04: While Strategic Objective 4 deals with the Strengthening the Security of the Unique Identifier Systems, and Goal 4.1 attends to partnerships to ensure the secure and stable Internet, one Strategic Risk stands out that extends as a concern for all aspects of the future of ICANN: "Domain abuse continues to Grow". Addressing DNS abuse in its broadest sense could be considered its own Strategic Objective. Incorporating support for the campaign for the global adoption of IPv6 only by 2030 is desirable.

## Part B: Draft Operating Plan Framework for Fiscal Years 2026 - 2030

### Section 5: Operating Plan

1. Are the key activities outlined in the operating plan clearly defined and understandable?

Yes

No

S02: The key activities in the operating plan are clearly defined and understandable. They provide actionable steps supported by measurable indicators, making it easy to track progress and assess effectiveness.

2. Do you agree with the phasing approach for each strategy?

Yes

No

SO2: The phasing approach for each strategy is well-structured, allowing for gradual implementation and continuous assessment. It ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and that any necessary adjustments can be made along the way to improve outcomes. This phased method supports sustainable progress toward the strategic goals.

3. Are any key activities too ambitious or unrealistic?

Yes

No

In evaluating key activities that may be considered ambitious, it is essential to look at objectives such as **integrating new stakeholder groups** (1.1.1) and **broadening participation from underrepresented communities** (1.1.5). These activities involve significant global outreach and require coordination with diverse communities that may have varying levels of engagement with ICANN. These activities are ambitious due to their scope, complexity, and potential reliance on external factors, such as regional political and socio-economic environments, which can make achieving full inclusion and engagement challenging.

Integration of agile methodologies of Strategic Goal 1.2 is an extremely complex process. Successful implementation of agile into an organization requires that the entire organization support the transition, and that almost all aspects of the organization utilize agile: methodologies are not “pick and choose.” Using agile will require significant commitment on the part of the community to use a project philosophy that may be unknown to them. To use this philosophy, members of the community must commit to using it and learning a management style that has a steep learning curve.

This comment also applies to item 1.2.4. It is not sufficient to train staff on agile methodologies. The community must also be trained and function as the agile project management philosophy requires. It is likely the few community members are familiar working with agile.

Strategy 1.3.1 to Demonstrate that ICANN’s Multi-Stakeholder Model of Governance remains the Right Model to Deliver ICANN’s Mission should also include surveys outside of ICANN to assess other perspectives on ICANN’s governance model.

4. Are there any strategies that are not adequately addressed in the Operating Plan?

Yes

No



SO2: It seems that **environmental responsibility** (2.2.2) is mentioned as a key focus but may not be adequately detailed in the Operating Plan in terms of specific, actionable steps for embedding ecological sustainability into ICANN’s operations. The strategies for integrating environmental concerns could be expanded further with clearer objectives, timelines, or specific metrics to track progress, ensuring that this initiative is actionable and effectively monitored.

5. Are there any overlaps or redundancies in the proposed key activities that could be streamlined?

Yes

No

There are potential overlaps between the activities related to **community engagement and leadership development** (1.1.3 and 1.1.4). Both strategies aim to attract and retain new volunteers while fostering leadership growth within the ICANN community. Streamlining these activities by integrating volunteer retention, leadership development, and engagement into a unified framework could make the approach more efficient and reduce redundancy.

Additionally, the strategies for **enhancing multi stakeholder collaboration (1.1.2) and expanding strategic alliances (1.3.2)** could also overlap. Both involve strengthening collaboration across stakeholders, which might benefit from consolidation to ensure more focused, cohesive efforts.

## Part C: Other General Comments

### Section 6: Other Comments

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the draft Strategic Plan?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Unsatisfied

Very Unsatisfied

Generally speaking, the collaboration that has taken place so far across the multi-stakeholder community has resulted in good observations for Strategic Planning for the period FY26-30. BC acknowledges and appreciates the process and the opportunity for all stakeholders to have contributed to its development.

2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the draft Operating Plan?

(  ) Very Satisfied

(  ) Satisfied

(  ) Neutral

(  ) Unsatisfied

(  ) Very Unsatisfied

The FY26-30 Operating Plan identifies, in broad terms, what ICANN and the community sees on the horizon for the next five years. Given that we have not yet seen a 1 year FY26, nor do we know whether new issues will emerge as we see each subsequent year, this operating plan has addressed the issues raised through its consultations which have been included the environmental scan, community engagement, strategy development and now public comment, as described on page 25 of the Strategic Plan document.

3. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for improving the Strategic Plan or Operating Plan?

To improve the Strategic Plan and Operating Plan, consider the following suggestions:

**Incorporate New Stakeholders:** Develop specific mechanisms to include underrepresented communities and stakeholders, particularly in less engaged regions like Africa and Asia.

**Enhance Agility:** Emphasize the need for flexible strategies that can adapt to emerging trends and technologies.

4. Other General Comments

As a way to foster the engagement of the global Community who have the oversight stewardship of ICANN, it is imperative that ICANN continues to support outreach especially to the developing and least developed economies to continually strengthen its Multi-stakeholder model and bring fresh volunteers into the community.

Also, it is the BC's consideration that ICANN supports the IPv6 only network by 2030 in order to reduce the spate of DNS abuse - a major concern of the BC.

Finally, The BC emphasizes the importance of financial sustainability for ICANN, focusing on its critical role in managing the global Domain Name System (DNS). It outlines two key points:

1. Regular Evaluation of Funding Structure (Section 2.1.2): The BC suggests that ICANN must continuously assess and adapt its funding mechanisms to stay responsive to industry changes. This includes reducing operational expenses to align with declining revenues and ensuring cost-control measures are in place.
2. Financial Stability and Leadership of DNS (Section 3.2): The BC highlights that ICANN's financial health is essential for maintaining its position as the leading trusted platform for the internet's naming system. A balance must be struck between managing costs and securing adequate resources to maintain the reliability and trustworthiness of the DNS.

This comment was drafted by Tim Smith, Segunfunmi Olajide, David Snead, and Jimson Olufuye.

It was approved in accord with the BC Charter.