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FORUM



# ICANN's Annual Strategy Review

Environmental Scan Session

# Environmental Scan Session

The goal of the session is to surface insights, challenge assumptions, and identify areas that may require deeper discussion and follow up. The session is not intended to revise the strategy or resolve problems.

## Session Instruction:

- Stay at the strategic level, not operational level
- Speak from evidence and experience
- Make space for different perspectives
- Focus on strategic implications from a longer term horizon

# External Environmental Trends / Assumptions

## **Technological developments, Security, and Trust in the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems**

The unique identifier systems continue to be influenced / impacted by technological developments. On one hand, some technological advancements may present opportunities to strengthen the security and resilience of the Unique Identifier Systems; on the other hand, some may fragment trust, or perhaps challenge the universality of the Unique Identifier Systems.

# External Environmental Trends / Assumptions

## AI impacts on ICANN and the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

AI operates at a much higher speed, how will that impact the multistakeholder model of ICANN? If bad actors can use AI to generate and register domain names for malicious purposes faster than previously available techniques, how will that impact ICANN and the IANA functions? AI tools make it possible to generate public comments, draft policy language, respond on mailing lists, and engage in community processes at a scale and speed. Will bad actors abuse ICANN's MSM consensus-based processes with AI assistance?

# External Environmental Trends / Assumptions

## DNS Marketplace

There is uncertainty about the potential success or failure of certain new gTLDs in the near future, due to the fact that some participants in the 2012 round faced challenges in gaining user adoption, limited market demand for their offerings, etc. The 2026 round new gTLDs may bring further challenges and risks in this area, or may show new opportunities, such as stronger branding, more inclusivity of other languages and scripts, and enhanced innovation in digital identity.

Additionally, evolving user preferences, such as the increase in usage of AI and the popularity of apps could change the way society uses domain names, and that could impact the demand for domain names.

Finally, the rise of alternative naming systems raises some strategic questions, such as how will those impact user experience and trust in the DNS? How governance, stability, and user clarity of the Domain Name System can be maintained in these evolutions mentioned above?

# Internal Environmental Trends / Assumptions

## ICANN's Multi-Stakeholder Model (MSM) - Community Growth, Structures

The current ICANN community includes a substantial number of long-standing participants. Recognizing the benefit of having experienced veterans actively engaged in policy work and leadership, has to be balanced against encouraging knowledge transfer, the need for younger and motivated policy participants, and future leaders. This presents a strategic inflection point for ICANN - how can the community intentionally cultivate the next generation of participants, so they don't just inherit the MSM, but strengthen it for the future?

Transforming interest in ICANN into active, sustained and informed participation in ICANN's community structures and policy processes remains a challenge. At the same time, ongoing technological developments and the complexities of ICANN's current structure present important opportunities to innovate, strengthen engagement, and further enhance the resilience of ICANN's MSM.

# Internal Environmental Trends / Assumptions

## ICANN Ecosystem Processes and Procedures

ICANN's policy processes are increasingly perceived as complex and process-heavy, with few incentives for consensus and timely decision making. This can be a deterrent to participation, especially by newcomers.

The community has expressed difficulties with finding volunteers willing to commit the time and resources to participation at ICANN. At the same time, the community's workload remains high and requires SOAC groups to find a balance between outreach to and onboarding of newcomers with focusing on getting the work done.

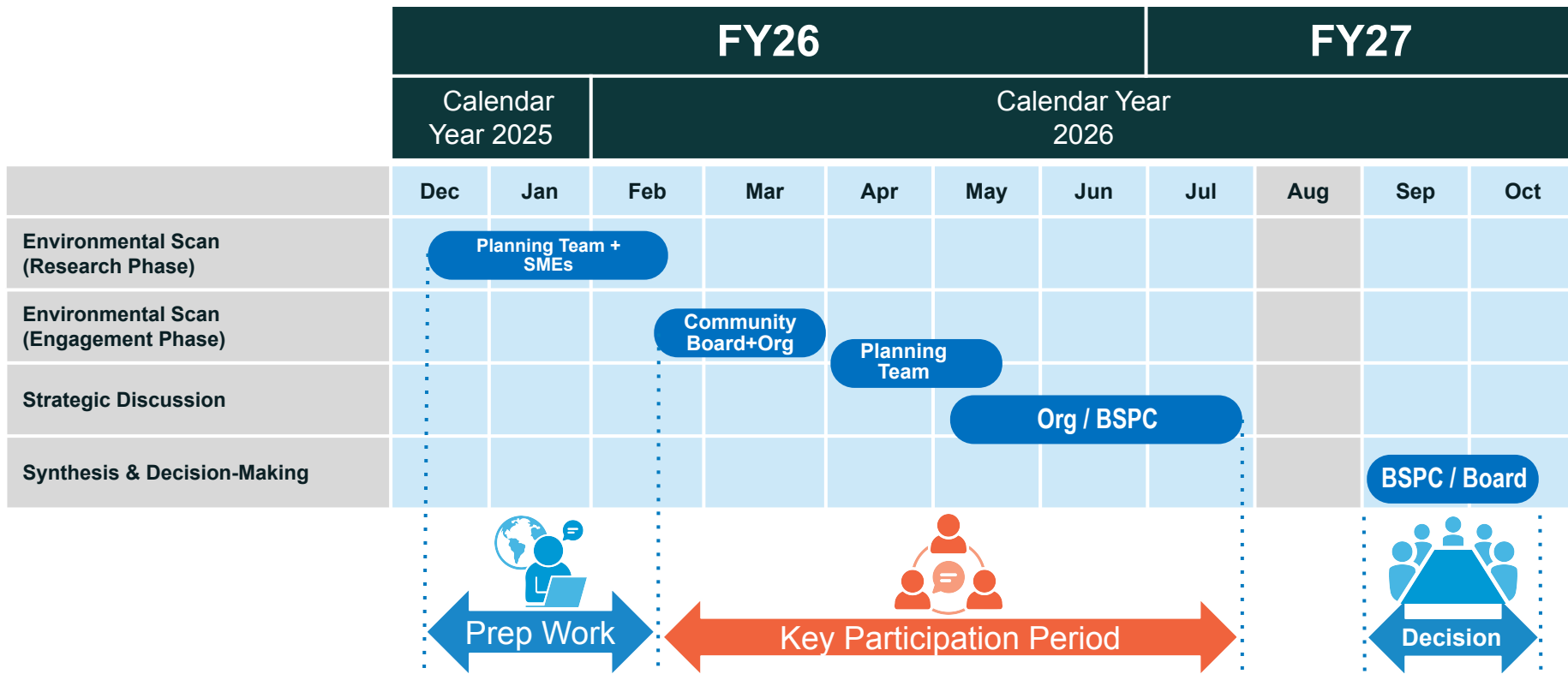
Stakeholder groups grapple with finding a balance between inclusivity and effectiveness. While broad participation in ICANN processes strengthens legitimacy and diversity of input, the increasingly large working groups addressing increasingly complex issues can slow progress and strain resources. Funding constraints, uneven stakeholder capacity, and varying levels of policy expertise - particularly within civil society and among newer MSM participants - add another layer of complexity.

Ultimately, legitimacy is not measured by participation alone, but also by delivery - completing policy recommendations by the community, timely Board decisions, and effective implementation. How can ICANN strengthen its legitimacy not only through who participates, but through what it delivers and how effectively policies are implemented?

# Other Trends / Assumptions

**Any other external and or internal trends based on your observations?**

# Annual Strategy Review Timeline



# Appendix

# ICANN's Strategic Plan for FY26-30

## Vision and Strategic Objectives

ICANN's 2030 Vision: As the trusted steward of the Internet's unique identifier systems, ICANN is dedicated to strengthening the single, globally interoperable Internet for all.

1

Evolve and Promote ICANN's Multistakeholder Model to Sustain Its Inclusive Approach to Internet Governance

2

Enhance Organizational Excellence

3

Collaborate with Relevant Stakeholders to Evolve the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

4

Strengthen the Stability and Security of the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems



# ICANN FY26-30 Strategic Objectives



# FY26-30 Strategic Plan

## Strategic Objective 1: Evolve and Promote ICANN's Multistakeholder Model to Sustain Its Inclusive Approach to Internet Governance

Strategic Goals	Strategies
<b>1.1 Ensure Inclusive Stakeholder Representation and Enhance Collaboration.</b>	1.1.1 Integrate new stakeholders into ICANN community groups as needed.
	1.1.2 Enhance collaboration among community groups.
	1.1.3 Foster an appealing environment for the next generation.
	1.1.4 Develop a new generation of leaders.
	1.1.5 Increase and broaden participation, particularly from underrepresented communities.
<b>1.2 Enhance the Agility and Effectiveness of Policy and Advice Development.</b>	1.2.1 Reduce complexity and create incentives to encourage active participation.
	1.2.2 Establish a proactive framework to ensure early involvement and avoid unexpected outcomes.
	1.2.3 Proactively engage with governments, regulators, intergovernmental organizations, and other public policy stakeholders.
	1.2.4 Incorporate flexibility and agile methodologies into the policy and advice development and implementation life cycle.
<b>1.3 Expand Strategic Alliances to Advocate for the Multistakeholder Model of Internet Governance.</b>	1.3.1 Demonstrate that ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance remains the right model for delivering ICANN's mission.
	1.3.2 Strengthen collaborative efforts to promote the multistakeholder model of Internet governance.

# FY26-30 Strategic Plan

## Strategic Objective 2: Enhance Organizational Excellence

Strategic Goals	Strategies
<b>2.1 Pursue a Sustainable Future.</b>	2.1.1 Improve institutional agility and adaptability.
	2.1.2 Preserve ICANN's financial sustainability.
<b>2.2 Enhance ICANN's Global Presence and Impact.</b>	2.2.1 Evolve the hybrid workforce model and optimize regional office utilization.
	2.2.2 Embed ecological responsibility into ICANN's operations.

# FY26-30 Strategic Plan

## Strategic Objective 3: Collaborate with Relevant Stakeholders to Evolve the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

Strategic Goals	Strategies
<b>3.1 Facilitate Digital Inclusion.</b>	3.1.1 Promote the advancement of Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names.
	3.1.2 Proactively collaborate with all relevant external parties to promote Universal Acceptance.
	3.1.3 Cultivate consumer choice, competition, inclusivity, and innovation.
<b>3.2 Evolve the Assessment of, and Responsiveness to, Technological Developments.</b>	3.2.1 Evolve ICANN's understanding of the identifier systems landscape, and adapt as needed.
	3.2.2 Collaborate with technical community entities, such as the Internet Engineering Task Force, Regional Internet Registries, and root server operators, to understand new technologies.
<b>3.3 Deliver and Enhance the IANA Functions to Meet Evolving Community Needs.</b>	3.3.1 Continue to reliably deliver the IANA functions.
	3.3.2 Ensure that the IANA functions are properly resourced.

# FY26-30 Strategic Plan

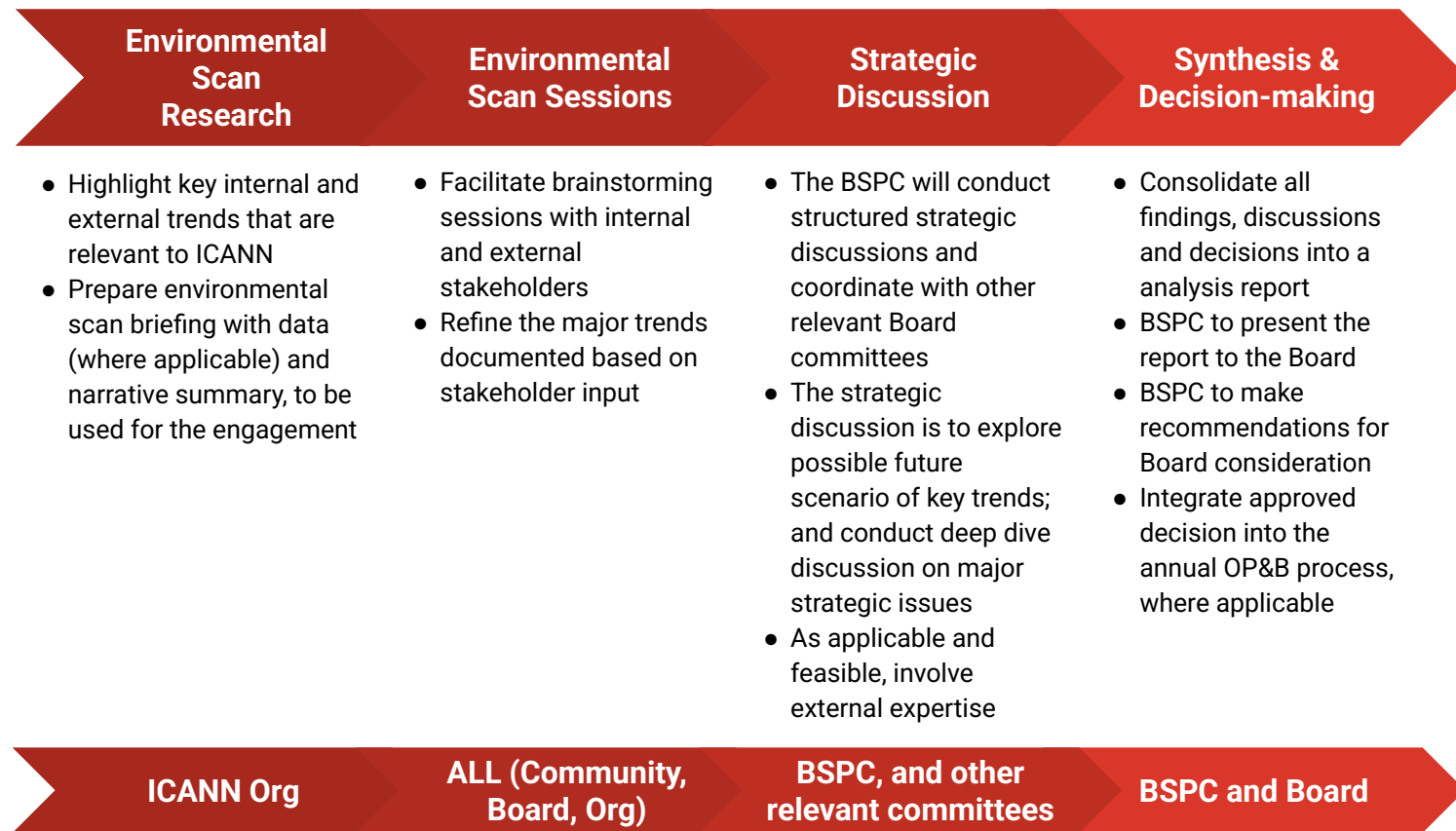
## Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen the Stability and Security of the Internet's Unique Identifier Systems

Strategic Goals	Strategies
<b>4.1 Strengthen Partnerships with Relevant Stakeholders to Reinforce the Shared Responsibility of Ensuring Secure and Stable Internet's Unique Identifier Systems.</b>	4.1.1 Continue to provide and participate in trusted forums that convene relevant stakeholders.
	4.1.2 Identify and mitigate security threats to the Internet's unique identifier systems.
	4.1.3 Increase ICANN's coordination and collaboration with the numbers community for secure, stable, and resilient numbering and routing systems.
<b>4.2 Strengthen DNS Root Server System.</b>	4.2.1 Continue to enhance the governance and technical evolution of DNS root server operations and services.
	4.2.2 Increase the robustness of the root zone generation, distribution services, and processes.
	4.2.3 Support coordinated plans to address DNS Root Server System attacks.

# What is the Annual Strategy Review Program

- The Annual Strategy Review program is designed to strengthen ICANN's agility and adaptability by systematically reviewing both our external environment and internal capabilities
- This program is one of the Strategic Initiatives for FY26-30
- The program provides a structured way to assess whether our Strategic Plan remains aligned with current realities
- The Board Strategic Planning Committee oversees this program on behalf of the Board
- The review concludes with a BSPC recommendation to the Board on whether updates to the Strategic Plan are needed, to reflect changes in the external environment and ICANN's internal capability

# Annual Strategy Review Multi Year Process



# What is the Annual Environmental Scan

- The "Environmental Scan" is one of the steps of this program. The objective of the environmental scan session is to validate, refine, and enrich the environmental scan through inclusive stakeholder engagements
- The environmental scan sessions will be conducted with both internal and external stakeholders

# How to Prepare for the Session

- All participants should review the pre-reading report with a focus on how it challenges or reinforces our current Strategic Plan
- Come prepared to share observations and questions
- All participants are encouraged to come to the session with brief written notes, if feasible

# What to Expect During the Session

- The goal of the session is to surface insights, challenge assumptions, and identify areas that may require deeper discussion and follow up. The session is not intended to revise the strategy or resolve problems.
- As such, we encourage all participants to:
  - Stay at the strategic level, not operational level
  - Speak from evidence and experience
  - Make space for different perspective
  - Focus on strategic implications, not operational fixes

# What to Expect During the Session

- The team will provide some guiding questions in the pre-reading materials, such as:
  - Which external trend(s) or internal factor(s) have the greatest impact on our strategy? and where are you personally seeing evidence of this?
  - Which current strategic objective, goal, or strategy feels most at risk or hardest to execute?
  - What challenges or constraints might ICANN be underestimating?
  - What early signals should we be paying more attention to?
  - What would surprise us most if this trend / factor accelerated?
  - Where might we be systematically optimistic?
  - If we were wrong about one thing, what would it most likely be?

# What to Expect During the Session

- To make the best use of all participant time together, we have streamlined the session format
- Rather than starting with silent, in-session, self or group reflections using sticky notes (as we've done in the past), we are asking participants to come prepared based on the pre-read materials
- This allows us to move directly into verbal reflections and discussion during the session, enabling us to hear insights from more participants within the given time frame
- The goal is to keep the session focused and efficient while still capturing a broad range of perspectives

# What to Expect After the Session

- After the environmental scan sessions, the planning team will review and consolidate all inputs shared by participants
- These will be organized into summary materials for the Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC), to use in the next stage of this program - Strategic Discussion.
- The BSPC will conduct scenario-based planning, and / or issue-based planning
- The BSPC will prepare recommendations to the Board on whether the Strategic Plan remains relevant as it is, or whether adjustments or changes are needed.
- Communications and engagements will occur throughout the entire process.

# ICANN Operating Plan: Strategic Initiatives (pg. 1 of 3)

#	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGIC PLAN	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
1	Pilot Holistic Review	Concluded per Board resolution 19 May 2025				
2	Continuous Improvement Program, an evolution of ICANN's Organizational Reviews	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
3	Improving Stakeholder Representation	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
4	Improve Cross-Community Collaboration	Plan	Execute	Complete		
5	Improving Community Engagement and Retention	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
6	Academic Engagement Plan	Execute	Complete	Shift to Continuing Operations		
7	New Skills and Leadership Training for the Community	Plan	Execute	Execute	Complete	
8	Developing Pathways to Community Leadership	Plan	Execute	Complete	Shift to Continuing Operations	
9	Coalition for Digital Africa	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
10	Facilitating Consensus in Policy and Advice Development	Plan	Plan/ Execute	Execute		
11	Improving ICANN Hybrid Meetings	Execute	Complete			
12	Advice Consideration Process Improvements	Execute	Execute	Complete		
13	Geopolitical Monitoring and Engagement	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Shift to Continuing Operations
14	Policy Development and Implementation Process Improvements	Plan	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
15	Evolving Communications on ICANN's Multistakeholder Model	To Initiate Planning				
16	WSIS+20 Review Project and Outreach Network	Complete				

# ICANN Operating Plan: Strategic Initiatives (pg. 2 of 3)

#	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGIC PLAN	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
17	Improving ICANN org agility	To Initiate Planning				
18	Annual Strategy Review Program	Execute	Execute	Complete		
19	Evaluating ICANN's Funding Structure	To Initiate Planning				
20	Improving Forecasting and Financial Planning	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
21	Enhancing ICANN's Fiscal Responsibility	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
22	Evolving ICANN's Hybrid Working Model	Execute	Execute	Complete		
23	Ecological Responsibility	Execute	Execute	Complete	Shift to Continuing Operations	
24	Universal Acceptance	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Shift to Continuing Operations
25	New gTLD Program	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
26	Identify Opportunities to Enhance the Stable and Secure Operations of Unique Identifiers	To Initiate Planning				
27	Evolve Understanding of the Identifier System Landscape	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Shift to Continuing Operations
28	Technological Development Assessment and Responsiveness	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Shift to Continuing Operations
29	Implement an IANA Long-Term Sustainability Plan	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete

# ICANN Operating Plan: Strategic Initiatives (pg. 2 of 3)

#	STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGIC PLAN	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
30	Regional Events Redesign	Execute	Shift to Continuing Operations			
31	Security Risk Identification and Mitigation	Execute	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete
32	Increase ICANN's Coordination and Collaboration with the Numbers Community	To Initiate Planning				
33	Implementation of the Recommendations of the RSS Governance Working Group (RSSGWG)**	Execute	Execute			
34	Redundancy and Accessibility of Root Zone Generation and Distribution	To Initiate Planning				
35	Support Coordinated Plans to Address DNS Root Server System Attacks	Execute	Execute	Execute	Complete	Shift to Continuing Operations

Legend	
<b>To Initiate Planning</b>	Determine at a high level what is needed for the project to be successful. There are no resources assigned yet.
<b>Plan</b>	Plan all tasks and deliverables needed for timely project completion. Project Management resources have been allocated, and cross-functional resource needs are being evaluated.
<b>Execute</b>	Complete all tasks and deliverables needed to finish the project. Resources budgeted to meet project deliverables.
<b>Complete or Shift to Continuing Operations</b>	Activity moves to steady state and continuing operations.