

DRAFT
Assessment Report

ICANN ccNSO Review

15 February 2019



Meridian Institute
Connecting People to Solve Problems

About Meridian Institute

Meridian Institute is a trusted third-party not-for-profit organization that helps people solve complex and controversial problems, make informed decisions, and implement solutions that improve lives, the economy, and the environment. As experts in multistakeholder processes, we design and manage collaboration, providing services such as facilitation, strategic planning, and research and analysis to inform decision-making. Drawing from over two decades of experience, we help people develop and implement solutions across a wide range of sectors, including science and technology, climate change and energy, agriculture and food systems, oceans and freshwater, forests, and health. As a neutral third-party, we bring people together to listen to one another, build trusted working relationships, and forge consensus.

Report Authors

Mallorie Bruns, Senior Mediator and Program Manager

Kristy Buckley, Senior Mediator and Program Manager

Annika Freudenberger, Project Assistant

Table of Contents

About Meridian Institute	2
Acronyms	5
Executive Summary	6
Introduction to the Review	7
Methods	7
Findings Continuing Purpose of the ccNSO	13
ICANN Legitimacy	14
Contributions to ICANN Governance	15
Policy Development	16
Internet Functionality & Stability	17
Community of Practice & Knowledge Exchange	19
Findings Structure & Operations	21
Activities and Procedures	21
Working Groups and Committees	23
Regional Organizations	24
ccNSO Council	24
Support from the ccNSO Secretariat	28
ICANN Meetings	28
Barriers to Participation	29
Orientation and Onboarding	32
Findings Accountability	34
Transparency of Information	34

Decision-Making in the ccNSO 35

Accountability of the ccNSO Council..... 36

Independent Reviews 39

ICANN to ccNSO and ccNSO to ICANN Accountability 39

Remaining Accountability Matters..... 40

Concluding Remarks 41

Appendices 42

Appendix 1 | Interview Guide..... 42

Appendix 2 | Survey Questions 43

DRAFT

Acronyms

AC	Advisory Committee
AFTLD	Africa Top Level Domain Organization
ALAC	At-Large Advisory Committee
APTLD	Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association
ccNSO	Country Code Name Supporting Organization
ccPDP	Country Code Policy-Development Process
ccTLD	Country Code Top-Level Domain
CCWG	Cross Community Working Group
CENTR	Council of European National Top-Level Domain Registries
COP	Community Onboarding Programme
DN	Domain Name
EC	Empowered Community
FOI	Framework of Interpretation
GAC	Governmental Advisory Committee
GNSO	Generic Name Supporting Organization
gTLD	Generic Top-Level Domain
IANA	Internet Assigned Numbers Authority
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
IDN	Internationalized Domain Names
IFRT	IANA Function Review Team
LACTLD	Latin American and Caribbean ccTLDs Organization
MSSI	Multistakeholder Strategy and Strategic Initiatives
PTI	Public Technical Identifiers
RALO	Regional At-Large Organization
RWP	Review Working Party
SG	Stakeholder Group
SO	Supporting Organization
SOPC	ccNSO Strategic and Operational Planning Standing Committee
SSAC	Security and Stability Advisory Committee
TechWG	Technical Information Gathering/Sharing Working Group

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the second Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) independent organizational review. The review assesses whether: 1) the ccNSO has a continuing purpose in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) structure; 2) whether changes in its structure or operations could improve its effectiveness; and 3) whether it is accountable to its constituencies, stakeholder groups, organizations, and other stakeholders.

Pending input from the Review Working Party (RWP) and the broader ccNSO and ICANN communities, the content of this report will serve as the basis for further discussion and exploration to inform future recommendations on continuous improvement in relation to the findings. Meridian Institute plans to present the findings at ICANN64 and facilitate gathering of further input from the community on suggestions for addressing key findings.

Meridian Institute, the Independent Examiner, is using a multi-modal approach to data collection and analysis to conduct the ccNSO review. This included conducting 45 targeted stakeholder semi-structured interviews with ccNSO members and participants as well as members of other Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and bodies within the ICANN ecosystem. We also conducted an online survey, which received 78 complete responses from 111 individuals. Interview and survey data were fact-checked and supplemented through a document review process.

This report contains some important and valuable findings from the ccNSO and surrounding community on how it fulfills its purpose, manages its structure and operations, and strives for accountability. Based upon the findings, our overall determination is that:

- the ccNSO has a strong continuing purpose;
- there do not seem to be significant needs to make structural or operational changes; and
- the ccNSO is accountable to its constituencies, including its members.

Within these categories, more nuanced findings are presented in detail regarding challenges the ccNSO faces in each area, the organizations' strengths as perceived by its members, and how it fulfills its many roles and responsibilities. Recommendations for continuous improvement based on these findings will be presented in the ccNSO review Final Report.

Introduction to the Review

Section 4.4 of the ICANN Bylaws mandates that an independent review of each Supporting Organization (SO) and Advisory Committee (AC) be conducted every five years. This is the second organizational review in the ccNSO's history. Due to the ccNSO's heavy workload, this review was deferred from its intended launch in August 2017.¹

In accordance with the Bylaw review guidelines, this review assesses:

- (i) whether [the ccNSO] has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure;
- (ii) if so, whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve [the ccNSO's] effectiveness; and
- (iii) whether [the ccNSO] is accountable to its constituencies, stakeholder² groups, organizations and other stakeholders.

This draft **assessment report** has been published to solicit feedback from the ICANN community. Feedback from these public consultations will be incorporated into a **final report**, which will contain both this assessment and recommendations. These recommendations will be informed by the assessment findings, suggestions provided during the interview and survey phases of the review, and suggestions provided during public consultations at ICANN64. A draft final report will be published for a 40-day public comment period in May and June 2019.

Methods

A multi-modal approach to data collection and analysis has been used to conduct the ccNSO review which includes the following methods:

1. Review of documentation related to the ccNSO's mission, functions, and operations
2. Review of documentation related to ccNSO processes and activities since the last ccNSO review
3. An online survey among existing and former ccNSO participants and members
4. Semi-structured interviews with a subset of former and existing ccNSO members and participants
5. Data validation
6. Regular reporting to the RWP

¹ Deferral of the Second Review of the Country Code Name Supporting Organization (ccNSO). (2017, September). Retrieved from <https://features.icann.org/deferral-second-review-country-code-name-supporting-organization-ccnso>.

² An individual, group or organization that has a direct or indirect interest or stake in a particular organization; that is, a given action has the ability to influence the organization's actions, decisions and policies to achieve results.

Throughout the process, we have ensured data validation for factual integrity through document review and regular reports to the Review Working Party (RWP). We anticipate RWP feedback on the draft report to help validate the findings and inform any edits in advance of the report's public release.

Document Review

The following documents were carefully reviewed as part of the data analysis to assess the ccNSO's activities and processes against the stated mission, functions, operations, and processes provided in the documents.

- ICANN Bylaws
- ccNSO Rules of Procedure and Guidelines
- ccNSO statements and responses
- Working Group and Committee documents
- Letters to the ICANN Board of Directors (ICANN Board) and other SOs/ACs
- Previous draft and final reports from ccNSO reviews

Additional documents that relate to the ccNSO's function, structure, and operations have been reviewed throughout the data collection and analysis stages to validate information.

Interviews

Meridian conducted 45 targeted stakeholder semi-structured interviews³ with ccNSO members and participants as well as members of other SOs, ACs, and bodies within the ICANN ecosystem. The rationale for this approach was to ensure the collection of ample, in-depth, qualitative data from diverse constituencies.

Thirty-nine structured, one-hour interviews were conducted at ICANN63 in Barcelona, Spain in October 2018. Six interviews were conducted in October and early November over the phone with individuals who did not attend ICANN63. Of these, 35% of respondents were female, 65% male (*Figure 1*); regional breakdown had 33% of interview

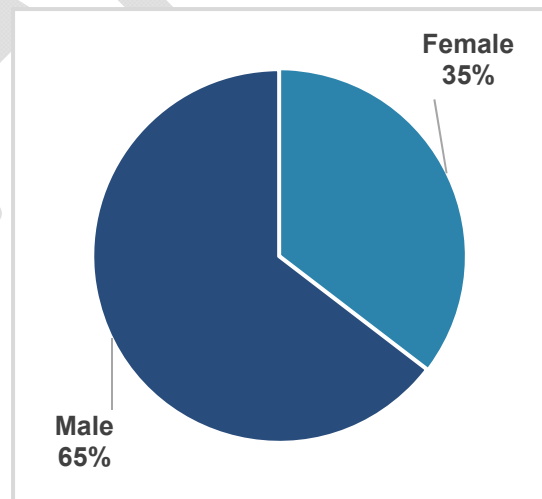


Figure 1. Interview respondents by gender. N=48

³ We interviewed 48 individuals total, as a few individuals chose to hold joint interviews with a colleague.

respondents from Europe; 25% from Asia Pacific; 15% from Africa; 15% from Latin America/Caribbean, and 12% from North America (Figure 2 *Error! Reference source not found.*).

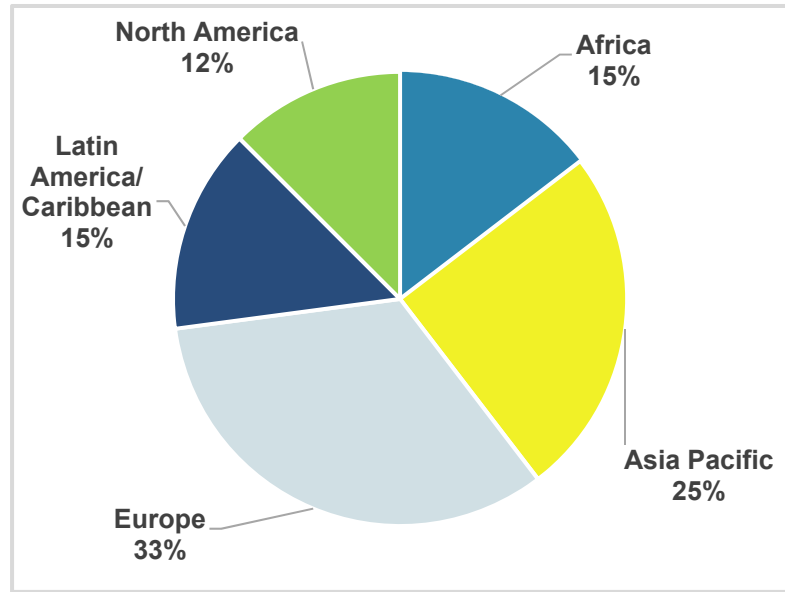


Figure 2. Interview respondents by region. N=48

The Multistakeholder Strategy and Strategic Initiatives (MSSI) staff at ICANN was responsible for announcing and promoting interview opportunities. Primary means were through an announcement at icann.org and direct email outreach to all ICANN SO/AC/SG/C leaders, the ICANN Board, and ccNSO. All interview requests were granted. The breakdown of respondents by affiliation is provided in Figure 3 with Country Code Top-Level Domain

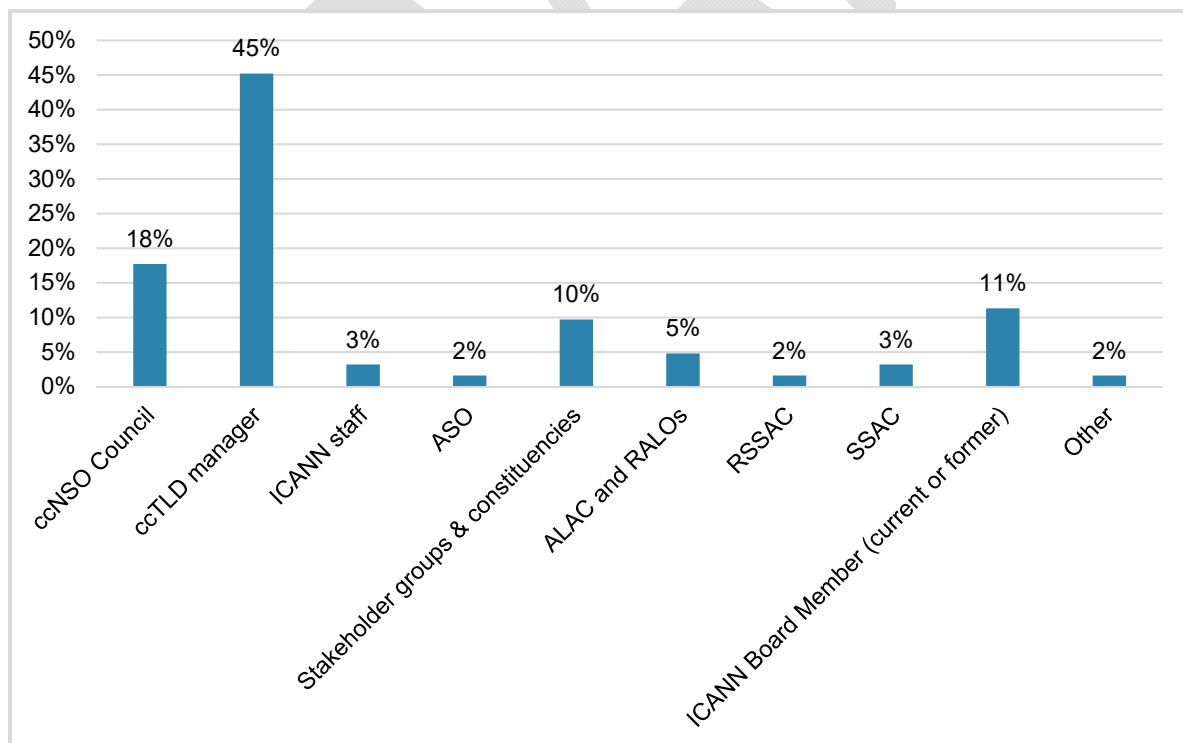


Figure 3. Interview respondents by ICANN affiliation. N=48 (Interview respondents categorized by the ICANN affiliation(s) provided to the Independent Examiner by MSSI. Although individuals may fall into more than one category, they were only categorized by the affiliation(s) provided by MSSI).

(ccTLD) managers comprising 45% of interview respondents followed by 18% of respondents affiliated with the ccNSO Council.

Meridian Institute used Microsoft OneNote, a qualitative data analysis tool, to analyze interview data through open and axial coding. Data were categorized into main themes then further analyzed to identify core concepts. Observed emerging trends were used to develop survey questions, allowing Meridian to follow-up and gain deeper insight on interview data.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted to capture a broader set of responses in addition to the interviews. The survey was open from 26 November 2018 to 11 January 2019 and received 78 complete responses from 111 respondents (a 70% completion rate). The survey was created on the online service SurveyMonkey; respondents were able to pause at any time during the survey and return to complete the questions later. Respondents could optionally provide their names, but all identifying information was kept confidential.

Similar to the announcements about interview opportunities, MSSSI staff distributed the survey through announcements on icann.org, direct email outreach to the ccNSO and all ICANN SO/AC/SG/C leaders, and via social media.

The core survey was comprised of 16 questions. One additional question was posed to ccNSO participants (observers/non-members); two additional questions were posed to ccNSO members and ccNSO Councillors only; and three questions were posed to ccNSO members, ccNSO Councillors, and ccNSO participants (observers/non-members) only. Survey questions were both quantitative (employing a Likert scale) and qualitative, offering opportunities for respondents to provide narrative commentary. The survey questions were reviewed by RWP members to help ensure clarity of the instructions and questions.

The demographics of the survey results trended similarly to the interviews, with 35% female; 59% male, and 6% preferred not to say (Figure 4). By geographic region, 27% of respondents were from Europe; 23% from Latin America/Caribbean; 22% from Asia Pacific; 16% from North America; and 12% from Africa (Figure 5). In terms of respondent tenure in the ccNSO, 38% have been engaged for >10 years; 29% for 3-5 years; 19% for 0-2 years; and 14% for 6-9 years (Figure 6). In terms of affiliations, 35% of survey respondents identified as ccNSO members; 17% from stakeholder groups and constituencies; 14% from At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs); and 13% from the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) (see Figure 7 for full breakdown).

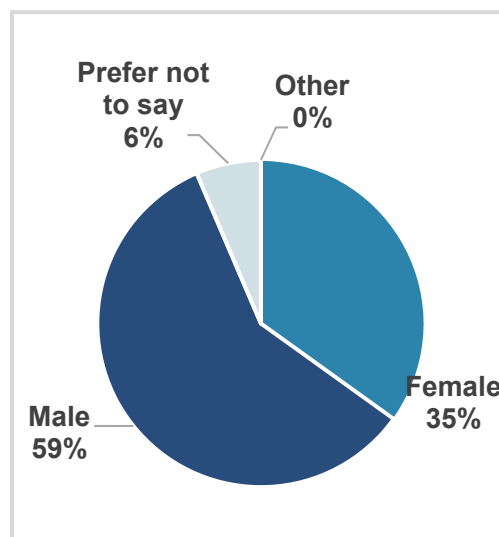


Figure 4. Survey respondents by gender. N=108

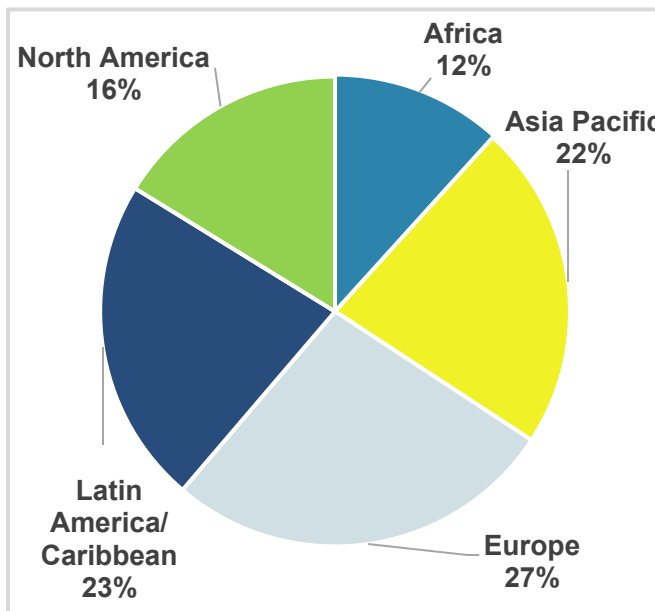


Figure 5. Survey respondents by region. N=111

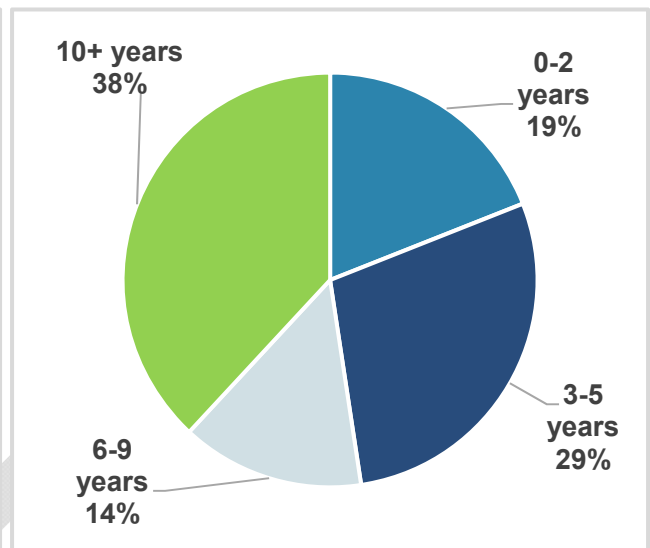


Figure 6. Survey respondents by length of participation in the ccNSO. N=42 (Question posed to ccNSO members and ccNSO Councillors only)

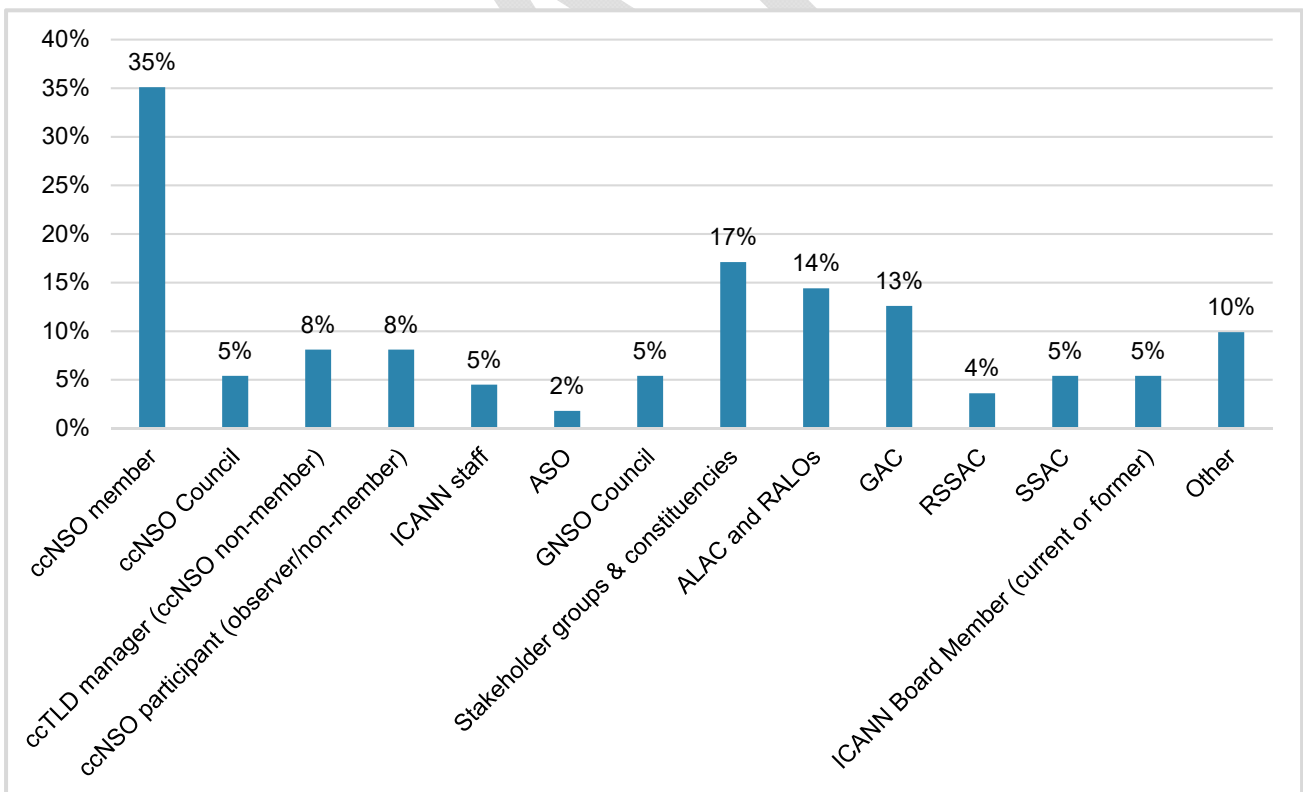


Figure 7. Survey respondents by ICANN affiliation. N=111 (respondents able to select more than one option)

Weighting Data

As discussed with the RWP prior to the development of the report, we relied primarily on survey data to provide a means to quantifiably validate findings from the qualitative interviews. Given the length of the survey and advice from the RWP to make more questions qualitative, we were limited in the number of interview topics and subtopics we could quantifiably validate. Consistent with our proposed methods for the review, we arrived at specific topics / themes, as well as sub-topics / sub-themes in the report, based on our coding and categorization process for qualitative interview data.

The subtopic categories outlined in the report are a result of coding interviews and categorizing data into similar themes. The themes are based upon multiple respondents' views and the nuanced differences of those views are characterized within each sub-section.

References to respondent statements and views are of course not indicative of consensus. There were wide ranging views even on topics of similar nature and respondents were unaware of others' views given the individual nature of interviews and surveys. However, where possible, we have provided a rough sense of how many respondents shared a particular view through the use of quantifier terms. Where only one person expressed a particular viewpoint, we have noted it as such.

Findings | Continuing Purpose of the ccNSO

The clear majority of interview and survey respondents affirmed that there is a continuing purpose for the ccNSO and pointed primarily to its value as a forum for cross-community/industry dialogue on a range of operational issues for country codes such as technical, legal, or commercial matters. As seen in *Figure 8*, 79% of survey respondents believe “Information sharing/cross learning” is the most important function and purpose of the ccNSO. “Policy development” was named by 68% of respondents, a second significant and well-recognized purpose of the ccNSO.

“The ccNSO is a collection of individuals who are doing the work and exchanging experiences to help each other out.” – Interview respondent

The ccNSO also provides a platform for the ccTLD community⁴ to actively participate in ICANN’s multistakeholder governance model. Respondents shared their belief that the ccNSO makes it possible for coordinated and efficient dialogue between the ccTLD community and various ICANN constituencies, SOs, and ACs. By participating in the ccNSO, ccTLD managers work together to identify their community’s top needs, interests, concerns, priorities, and recommendations so they may be communicated in a unified voice to other ICANN

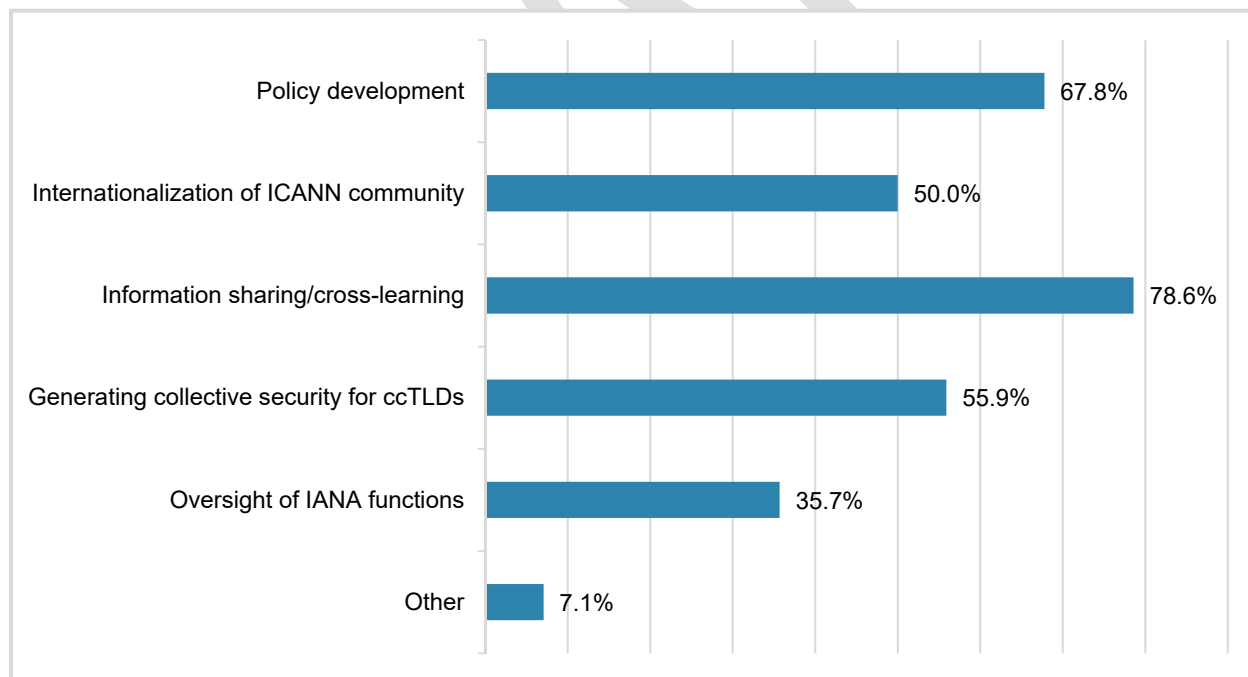


Figure 8. Survey Question: Which of the following functions and purposes of the ccNSO are most important from your experience and perspectives? N=84 (respondents able to select more than one option).

⁴ For purposes of this report, defined as the broad set of stakeholders that are involved in management, technical, and administrative support for ccTLDs.

constituencies. If the ccNSO did not exist, some fear the importance of the ccTLD community – and understanding of their unique needs – compared to the Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) community, may be forgotten.

One individual stated there is no need for the ccNSO; and a handful of respondents raised questions about what additional value they receive from participating. There was acknowledgement among many respondents, including those who affirmed its value, that the ccNSO needs to more clearly articulate why people should prioritize participation in the ccNSO, particularly as a member as opposed to a non-member.⁵ Even those who actively participate in the ccNSO expressed a need to clearly articulate the value of participation in order to convince or continue receiving support from superiors in their local communities and/or employers, given the time commitment required to participate in ICANN and the ccNSO.

Many respondents identified the ccNSO's principal vulnerability as lack of active contribution (including from volunteer-fatigue). Interviewees emphasized that the ccNSO must improve its recruitment of new and younger people given that most of its participants have been involved for a long period of time. Another question posed in this regard is whether ccTLD managers are the only audience for the ccNSO, or if there is a broader set of stakeholders that could be recruited for participation as members, non-member participants (for example, to contribute on Working Groups), or observers. Additional feedback on barriers to participation and areas for improvement regarding outreach and engagement are explored in the following sections.

Those who affirmed the ongoing value of the ccNSO identified four reasons for continuing purpose: that the ccNSO: 1) brings added legitimacy to the ICANN community; 2) provides a platform for the country code community to participate in ICANN governance; 3) contributes to ICANN policy-development; and 4) helps to ensure the Internet continues to function properly for and by country code operators, including for the IANA function. Findings related to each of these categories are explored below.

ICANN Legitimacy

ICANN's mission is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems⁶, of which country code domains are an important component. Voluntary participation of ccTLD managers in the ccNSO legitimizes ICANN as a global organization that has the right and responsibility to manage the Internet. As one respondent said, without the participation of the ccTLD community, "ICANN would be a trade organization for contracted parties in the [Generic Name Supporting Organization] GNSO."

⁵ Any ccTLD manager may participate in Working Groups and attend ccNSO meetings, regardless of membership status. Certain privileges, such as voting or nominating Council candidates, are limited to members only.

About. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about>.

⁶ ICANN Bylaws, Article 1, Section 1.1(a). (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article1>.

The ccNSO helps to uphold the multistakeholder model of ICANN that is built on open dialogue between constituencies. ICANN defines a Multistakeholder Model as,

“an organizational framework or structure which adopts the multistakeholder process of governance or policy making, which aims to bring together the primary stakeholders such as businesses, civil society, governments, research institutions and non-government organizations to cooperate and participate in the dialogue, decision making and implementation of solutions to common problems or goals.”⁷

Some respondents added that within their own country, they were viewed with increased legitimacy in their country code management because of their participation in a global process such as ICANN.

Contributions to ICANN Governance

Many respondents described the ccNSO as a space for the ccTLD community to track and discuss decisions made by ICANN that could impact them, positively or negatively. ccNSO members participate in final votes regarding the recommendations of the ccNSO to the ICANN Board.⁸ These recommendations pertain to policies concerning ccTLD operators, which elevates the needs of the ccTLD community to ICANN decision-makers. The ccNSO Council also nominates individuals to fill two seats on the ICANN Board.⁹ In addition, the ccNSO is a decisional participant in the Empowered Community (EC), the mechanism under California law through which SOs and ACs can organize to legally enforce community powers and rules within ICANN.¹⁰ Through its representative on the EC Administration,¹¹ the ccNSO helps raise concerns regarding actions of the ICANN Board or organization and improve their accountability. Additional information regarding the ccNSO’s participation in ICANN Governance mechanisms is provided in the section on Structure and Operations.

In addition, any ccTLD manager can join one of the ccNSO’s key Working Groups, the ccNSO Strategic and Operational Planning Standing Committee (SOPC). The role of the SOPC is to “coordinate, facilitate, and increase participation of ccTLD managers in ICANN and Public Technical Identifiers (PTI’s) strategic and operational planning processes and related budgetary

⁷ Multistakeholder Model. (2015, November). Retrieved from https://icannwiki.org/Multistakeholder_Model.

⁸ Frequently Asked Questions, How can I influence ICANN policies through the ccNSO? (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccns0.icann.org/en/about/faqs.htm#influence>.

⁹ ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.3(i). (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article10>.

¹⁰ Empowered Community. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/ec>.

¹¹ Empowered Community Administration. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/ec-administration-2017-05-25-en>.

processes.”¹² Other ccTLD managers and the ccNSO Council are also invited to provide input to the SOPC, providing opportunities to ccTLD community to participate in ICANN decision-making, planning, and accountability.

Policy Development

By definition, the ccNSO is a policy-development body within ICANN.¹³ This is a vital function for the ccNSO when it comes to developing policies on topics requiring global coordination, such as the matter of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), which was the topic of multiple former ccNSO Working Groups.¹⁴ Any policy recommendations must fall within ICANN’s mission and the ccNSO’s policy scope, defined in Annex C of the ICANN Bylaws, and be based on public input and comment.¹⁵

Some respondents pointed out that despite what is written in the ICANN Bylaws regarding the ccNSO’s policy-development mandate, policy-development is not a role that the ccNSO plays frequently given the sensitive relationship between country codes and ICANN. “ICANN does not have contract authority to take compliance action against ccTLD operators.”¹⁶ Country code policies regarding registration, accreditation of registrars, and WHOIS are determined and managed within countries reflecting each nation’s unique legal systems and cultural contexts.¹⁷ This is quite different from ICANN’s mandate regarding gTLDs, where ICANN is responsible for developing and implementing policies through a bottom-up, consensus-based multistakeholder process and gTLDs are required to adhere to ICANN policies through their contractual Registry Agreements with ICANN.¹⁸ According to the Bylaws, the only ICANN

¹² Call for volunteers: ccNSO Strategic and Operational Planning Standing Committee (SOPC). 2019, January). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-3-21jan19-en.htm>.

¹³ ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.1. (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article10>.

¹⁴ ccNSO IDN PDP Working Group 1. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups/ipwg1.htm>.

¹⁵ ccNSO Policy Development and Implementation. (2018, February). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ccnso-pdp-handbook-06mar18-en.pdf>.

¹⁶ About ccTLD Compliance. (2012, February). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/cctld-2012-02-25-en>.

¹⁷ About ccTLD Compliance. (2012, February). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/cctld-2012-02-25-en>.

¹⁸ ICANN Bylaws, Article 1. (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article1>.

Registry Agreement. (2014, January). Retrieved from <https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/agreements/agreement-approved-09jan14-en.htm>

policies that strictly apply to ccNSO members are those developed through the Country Code Policy-Development Process (ccPDP).¹⁹

Internet Functionality & Stability

Another identified primary purpose of the ccNSO is to help ICANN with Internet functionality for country codes. There are 249 ccTLDs, of which 171 are members of the ccNSO.²⁰ Having the ccNSO as a formally recognized framework for engagement between the ccTLDs is important for ICANN as an organization so that it may provide good customer service for a key stakeholder group in the Domain Name (DN) space. The ccNSO helps to ensure that ccTLD managers can serve their local Internet communities.

IANA Function

One respondent claimed that the “fundamental interface” between the ccNSO and ICANN is the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA); many respondents made similar comments. IANA is the institution that runs TLDs.

“The fundamental interface between the ccNSO and ICANN is IANA.” – Interview respondent

In addition to other responsibilities, it performs administrative and technical functions associated with root zone management, ensures consistent protocols in the management of domain names, and processes assignment of ccTLDs in accordance with established policies.²¹ Membership in the ccNSO is not a condition for accessing IANA services.²² To become a member of the ccNSO, however, one must be a ccTLD manager – a designation approved and formalized through IANA.²³

The ccNSO, as the body within ICANN created for and by ccTLD managers, has advised ICANN and IANA on policies and functions relevant to the ccTLD community. It participated in the Cross Community Working Group (CCWG) to develop an IANA Stewardship Transition Proposal on Naming Related Functions when the IANA functions transferred from its historical contract with the United States Government to ICANN’s stewardship (through affiliate PTI) in

¹⁹ ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.4(j). (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article10>.

²⁰ ICANN Geographic Regions. (2019, January). Retrieved from <https://meetings.icann.org/en/regions>, and <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about/members.htm>.

²¹ Cross Community Working Group (CWG) Charter. (2014 August). Retrieved from https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46247/draft-charter-ccwg-iana-stewardship-21aug14-en.pdf.

²² ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.4(c). (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en#IX>.

²³ ccNSO Application for Membership. (2018). Retrieved from <https://forms.icann.org/en/ccnso-membership>.

2016.²⁴ In addition, the ccNSO developed a Framework of Interpretation (FOI) to provide guidance to IANA regarding issues of delegation, transfer, and retirement of ccTLDs where no clear policy existed for IANA to exercise. On a more regular basis, through the standing Technical Information Gathering/Sharing Working Group (TechWG), the ccNSO monitors and gives feedback to IANA on its services, provides information to the ccNSO and ccTLDs on issues relevant to IANA, and facilitates discussions within the ccNSO on issues relating to IANA.²⁵

Technical and Security Support

In addition to policy Working Groups, the TechWG provides the ccTLD community with advice and shares information on technical and operational aspects of managing a ccTLD.²⁶ It has a history of organizing a technical, cross-community workshop (Tech Day) at ICANN meetings, at which experienced and new people “meet, present and discuss technical topics related to registry and DNS work and security.”²⁷ While most respondents that spoke of Tech Day and the technical presentations provided during ccNSO meetings had positive views, there was a minority perspective shared that the presentations and sessions are not all that useful.

The ccNSO has devoted considerable time working to identify problems and solutions for specific technical matters. The ccNSO Secretariat provides administrative support for a Standing Committee of TLD-OPS, “an incident response community for and by ccTLDs and brings together people who are responsible for the operational security and stability of their ccTLD.”²⁸ TLD-OPS covers more than 65% of all ccTLDs and, through its Standing Committee, is fully governed by the ccTLD community. The Committee consists of ccTLD managers and liaisons from additional ICANN constituencies including the Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC), IANA, and ICANN’s security team.²⁹ Through TLD-OPS, ccTLD managers

²⁴ Cross-Community Working Group to Develop an IANA Stewardship Transition Proposal on Naming Related Functions. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups/iana-stewardship-naming.htm>.

IANA Functions Stewardship Transition. (2016). Retrieved from https://icannwiki.org/IANA_Functions_Stewardship_Transition.

Public Technical Identifiers (PTI). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://pti.icann.org/>.

²⁵ Charter, ccNSO Working Group, 2009-10-28. (2009, October). Retrieved from https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_11148/tech-wg-charter-28oct09-en.pdf.

²⁶ ccNSO Technical Working Group. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups/techwg.htm>.

²⁷ Call for Presentations-Tech Day at ICANN63. (2018, August). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-21aug18-en>.

²⁸ TLD-OPS: ccTLD Security and Stability Together. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/resources/tld-ops-secure-communication.htm>.

²⁹ TLD-OPS: ccTLD Security and Stability Together. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/resources/tld-ops-secure-communication.htm>.

may run workshops on specific security topics like disaster recovery and emergency response, and the group maintains an electronic mailing list. A few interviewees applauded the group and the information it shares as one of the most valuable new components of the ccNSO (TLD-OPS was chartered in September 2017).

Community of Practice & Knowledge Exchange

Although it is not formalized as a mandatory function of the ccNSO in the ICANN Bylaws,³⁰ the majority of respondents acknowledged the importance of the ccNSO in providing a peer-to-peer forum for the ccTLD community to share experiences, knowledge, and best practices.

“Sharing knowledge and information is more than just “important.” It is critical to building stability in the Internet by communicating, collaborating, and even building consensus on how we can improve and do things well.”
 – Survey respondent

The value of this function for members is evidenced by the survey question “Why did you join the ccNSO?,” for which the most common response was “Opportunity to network/build

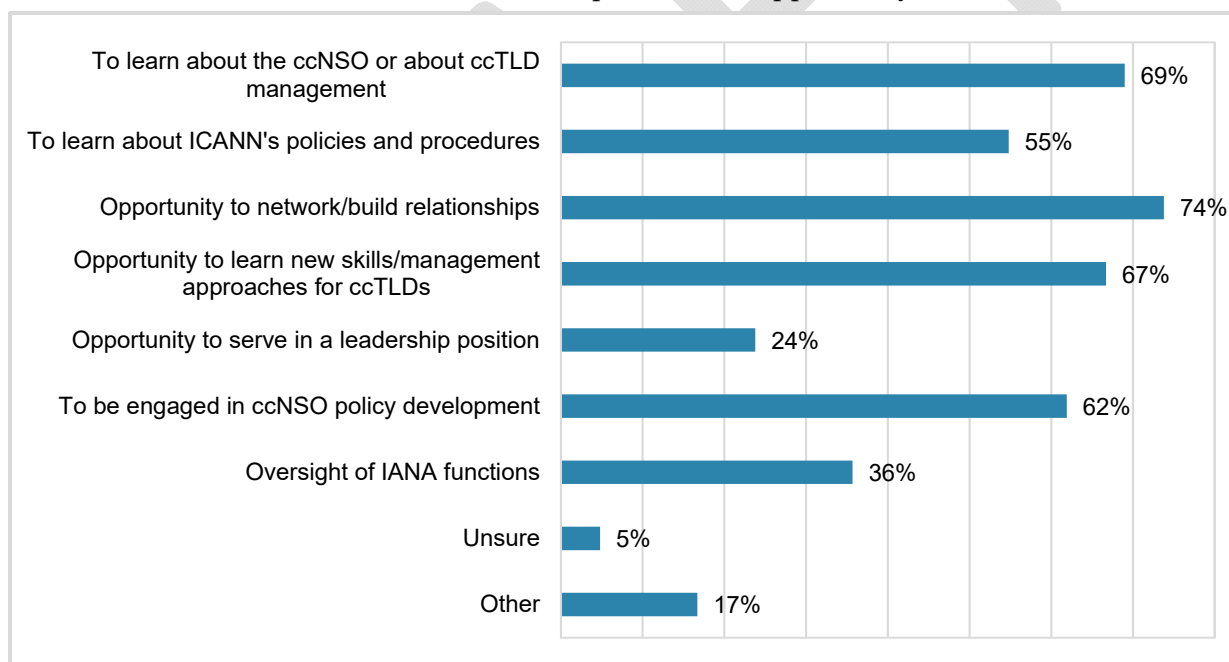


Figure 9. Survey Question: Why did you join the ccNSO? N=42 (Question open to ccNSO members and ccNSO Councillors only; respondents able to select more than one option)

³⁰ Although the ICANN Bylaws state that the ccNSO’s primary purpose is to be a “policy-development body” – a function that, in itself, helps ICANN (particularly through IANA) improve the administration and functionality of ccTLDs – the Bylaws note that the ccNSO may also engage in other activities, such as “seeking to develop voluntary best practices for ccTLD managers, assisting in skills building within the global community of ccTLD managers, and enhancing operational and technical cooperation among ccTLD managers.”

relationships” (Figure 9). In interviews, members described the value of being part of a diverse community of ccTLD operators from around the world, from small to large ccTLDs and from those with a long history of ccTLD management to newer registry operators. Through the relationships and platform that the ccNSO provides, members can collaboratively improve their technical and management capacities and better respond to developments in the industry.

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with how the ccNSO facilitates information and knowledge exchange (Figure 10). Although interviewees overwhelmingly praised these functions as well, some noted that most knowledge exchange currently happens infrequently and on an ad hoc, interpersonal basis and wished the ccNSO provided more formal platforms. Even though the ccNSO cannot impose guidelines for ccTLD management, interviewees emphasized that it can still serve as a facilitator to help ccTLD managers learn from each other and reach consensus. In addition, many interviewees felt that the ccNSO is underutilizing the formal opportunities that already exist for community building and knowledge exchange, such as social media, the website, and ICANN meetings.

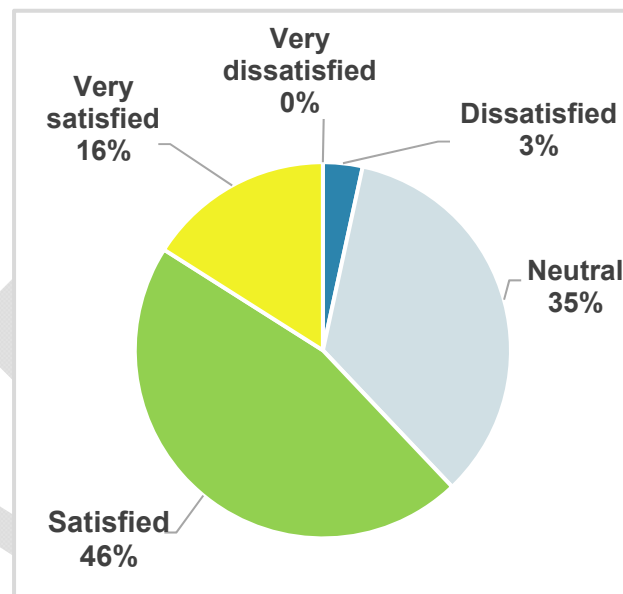


Figure 10. Survey Question: To what extent are you satisfied with how the ccNSO facilitates information and knowledge exchange? N=87

“[The ccNSO] provides a safe space where people are open to listening to each other and say what they are doing without fear of being judged.” – Interview respondent

Members observed that an emerging and important purpose of the ccNSO for knowledge exchange is linked with its culture. As a mission-driven organization, the ccNSO provides an opportunity for country code operators to communicate and network in a “non-competitive space”. The ccNSO environment is welcoming and one

of collegiality, collaboration, and respect. One interviewee shared, “[The ccNSO] provides a safe space where people are open to listening to each other and say what they are doing without fear of being judged.” Another said, “It has a culture of trying to work together for common benefit.”

Findings | Structure & Operations

As described in the *Continuing Purpose* section, the ccNSO fulfills a range of formal and informal purposes. As one of the multistakeholder organizations within ICANN, it also balances duties to its members, ICANN, and other ACs and SOs. Effective structure and operations are critical to ensuring the ccNSO can successfully achieve and balance these responsibilities. Overall, this review found that no major changes are needed in the ccNSO's structure and operations. However, findings do show opportunities for continuous improvement in this area and are detailed in the following sections. Beyond structure and operations, respondents and particularly ccNSO members expressed very positive views overall regarding the organizational culture of the ccNSO—which influences structural and operational effectiveness in a collaborative membership-based organization. As seen in *Figure 11*, 76% of survey respondents expressed satisfaction or high satisfaction with the organizational culture of the ccNSO.

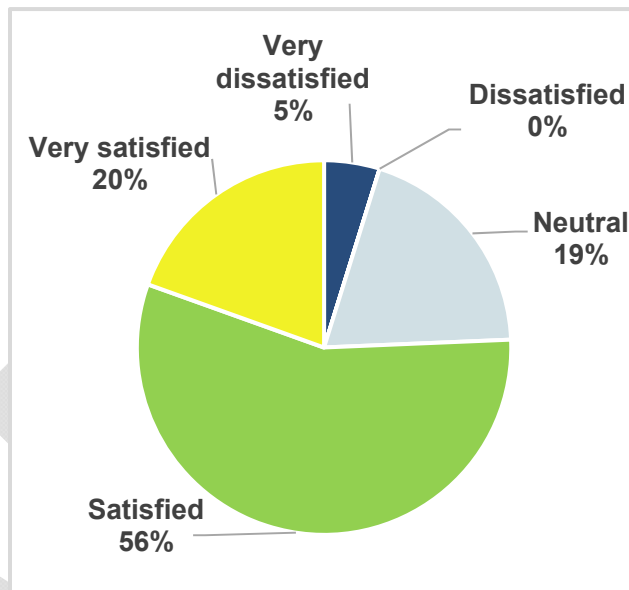


Figure 11. Survey Question: To what extent are you satisfied with the organizational culture of the ccNSO (i.e., what we do as a group and how we do it)? N=41 (questions open to ccNSO members, ccNSO Councillors, and ccNSO participants (observer/non-members) only)

Activities and Procedures

The ccNSO is primarily structured and governed by a few sets of documents:

- *ICANN Bylaws* (last amended June 2018). Article 9, Annex B, and Annex C establish the formal purpose, structure, and scope of the ccNSO. The Bylaws were adopted by the ICANN Board of Directors.
- *ccNSO Rules* (adopted by the ccNSO Council in 2004). This short document establishes rules regarding meetings, voting, and other key official procedures.
- *Guidelines*. Guidelines reflect the practices and working methods of the ccNSO. They are intended to be a more flexible and evolving governance mechanism than the Bylaws or the Rules. They are adopted by the ccNSO Council, and many are subject to the Council's periodic review. Guidelines should be adopted in accordance with the Bylaws.

Overall, members perceive this structure to be capable of supporting the ccNSO's operations while remaining lightweight and flexible. An exception noted by some interviewees are the Bylaws: certain provisions are outdated and difficult to adhere to today but are difficult to change. For example, according to Section 18.7, the ccNSO must appoint one non-member ccTLD to a seat on the IANA Function Review Team (IFRT). Requirements such as this one have

been difficult to meet as the number of non-member ccTLDs decreases.³¹ Some respondents also noted that the Rules are difficult to change, as it depends on a quorum of at least 50% of ccNSO members, of which 66% must vote in favor.³²

Policy Development

Annex B of the ICANN Bylaws establishes the ccNSO's Policy-Development Process (PDP), and Annex C delineates the scope of issues that fall under the ccNSO's policy making purview. The PDP is a complex and long process that can be initiated by at least seven ccNSO Councillors; the ICANN Board; a Regional Organization; an ICANN SO or AC; or at least 10 members of the ccNSO. A proposed policy must progress through multiple steps (including votes by the ccNSO membership, ccNSO Council, and ICANN Board), a process praised by some interviewees who view the votes and other steps as safeguards to ensure that a policy is legitimate and has substantial support.

Other interviewees described the PDP as slow, overly complex, and inefficient, and as a result, the ccNSO has rarely pursued it: only one PDP has successfully reached implementation stage in the ccNSO's history (2005-2006, PDP on ccNSO ICANN Bylaws).³³ The ccPDP on IDN ccTLD³⁴ advanced through to a Council ratification vote, but ICANN Board vote was deferred by mutual agreement in favor of implementation of an IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process. A third PDP on ccTLD retirement is currently in progress.³⁵ Certain members expressed concern that, due to the challenges of the PDP, the ccNSO has been neither proactive in its policy making activities nor effectively responsive to policy needs and real-world events.

Over time, the ccNSO has turned to other mechanisms to clarify and develop policies. One such example is the FOI, which the ccNSO used to provide guidance to IANA, ICANN, and the ccTLD community on the delegation and transfer of ccTLDs – issues for which the guidance was unclear or nonexistent in existing policies RFC 1591, ICP-1, and GAC Principles 2000 and 2005. The FOI mechanism mirrored aspects of the PDP in its extensive consultations with the

³¹ There are 249 registered ccTLDs; 171 are ccNSO members.

ICANN Geographic Regions. (2019, January). Retrieved from <https://meetings.icann.org/en/regions>.
ccNSO Members. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about/members.htm>.

³² Rules of the ccNSO, version 1. (2004, December). Retrieved from https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_25723/ccnso-rules-dec04-en.pdf.

³³ PPD on ccNSO ICANN Bylaws. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/policy/bylaws>

³⁴ ccNSO IDN PDP Working Group 1. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups/ipwg1.htm>

³⁵ Policy-Development Process (PDP) Retirement Working Group. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups/pdp-retirement.htm>

ccNSO community; Working Group recommendation; and ccNSO Council and ICANN Board votes.³⁶

Working Groups and Committees

The ccNSO is currently comprised of 12 active Working Groups and Committees,³⁷ which are formed by the ccNSO Council and are open to any ccTLD manager (member or non-member). Participation in Working Groups is a primary way that members may engage in the substantive work of the ccNSO and contribute to decision-making. Working Groups also reduce the burden on the Council as they fulfill research, planning, writing, and other tasks that would otherwise fall on Councillors. However, a few interviewees observed that many Working Groups struggle to remain motivated and organized internally: they largely rely on the engagement and leadership of a common set of members, who are facing burnout³⁸ and competing demands. Yet, insufficient members respond to calls for volunteers. As a result, respondents shared that the responsibility to guide and push Working Groups has unduly fallen on the ccNSO Council Chair.

The ccNSO also participates on numerous CCWGs, committees focused on topics of relevance to multiple bodies within the ICANN community and comprised of representatives from multiple ICANN SOs and ACs. CCWGs facilitate communication between ICANN constituencies and stakeholder groups, allow them to provide input on common issues, and promote “vertical ICANN accountability.” As one interviewee described, CCWGs are “vital to a healthy, robust, accountable, transparent, evolving ICANN.” Although ccNSO participation on CCWGs is important for protecting the ccNSO’s interests in ICANN’s multistakeholder structure, the limited pool of willing and engaged volunteers has been a challenge for appointing ccNSO representatives to CCWGs.

A few respondents critiqued the lack of transparency in appointing Working Group members, who are approved by the ccNSO Council following self-nomination. If more candidates apply than needed, Councillors compile a ranking of their top five candidates. Councillors send their lists to the ccNSO Secretariat and to the Council Chair and Vice-Chair, the overall ranking is calculated by the Secretariat, and the aggregated ranking is shared with the Council for final approval. Although the ranking process should be based on the Selection Criteria identified in

³⁶ Charter FoI WG, Update charter for Adoption 7 June 2011. (2011, June). Retrieved from https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_26567/charter-foi-wg-07jun11-en.pdf.

Final Report FOI WG. (2015, February). Retrieved from

https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46795/foi-final-resolutions-11feb15-en.pdf.

Framework of Interpretation Working Group (FOIWG), Final Report. (2014, October). Retrieved from

https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46435/foi-final-07oct14-en.pdf.

³⁷ Working Groups. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/workinggroups>.

³⁸ Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or excessive activity.

the Guideline on ccNSO Working Groups,³⁹ a few of the ccNSO Councillors interviewed explained that those criteria are vague and not all Working Groups require any information beyond a nominee's name. In some cases when a single candidate received both high and low scores, no discussion ensued to reconcile the differences or determine appropriate qualifications. It is worth noting that while this point is referenced in the *Structure and Operations* section of the findings, the perceived lack of transparency around the selection process also has implications for *Accountability*.

Regional Organizations

Regional Organizations are not a formal entity within ccNSO or ICANN structures, yet they have served a valuable purpose in the ccNSO. Regional Organizations are not-for-profit associations founded by and for ccTLD registries. Independent from the ccNSO, they are open to both member and non-member ccTLDs. In accordance with Section 10.5 of the ICANN Bylaws, the ccNSO may designate a Regional Organization for each ICANN Geographic Region. The Regional Organizations that are recognized by the ccNSO are the Africa Top Level Domain Organization (AFTLD); Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association (APTLD); Council of European National Top-Level Domain Registries (CENTR); and Latin American and Caribbean ccTLDs Organization (LACTLD).

Regional Organizations provide a forum for exchanging information, building technical and leadership capacity, and discussing regional policy issues. Interviewees repeatedly highlighted their value in the ccNSO ecosystem, as they help create a strong sense of community and offer more geographic- or language-specific resources than the ccNSO is able to provide. Smaller ccTLDs often participate to a greater degree in Regional Organizations than in the ccNSO. Future ccNSO leaders (such as potential Council candidates) are often identified and nurtured through Regional Organizations. They also provide an opportunity for the ccNSO to keep non-member ccTLDs informed of ICANN activities and to recruit new members.

ccNSO Council

As established in the ICANN Bylaws, the role of the ccNSO Council is to administer and coordinate the affairs of the ccNSO and manage its policy-development process. The ccNSO Council, which is led by the Council Chair and Vice Chair, consists of:

- Three Councillors appointed by the ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom) to serve three-year terms, which are staggered one year apart.

³⁹ Guideline: ccNSO Working Groups. (2016 March). Retrieved from: https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_47785/guidelines-working-groups-30mar16-en.pdf.

- Fifteen Councillors appointed by ccNSO members.⁴⁰ Each of ICANN’s five Geographic Regions (Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, and North America) are each represented by three Councillors.⁴¹ Regional Councillors are elected to three-year terms, and the election cycles for the three councillors within a region are staggered one year apart.

Over half – 59% – of survey respondents said it was “Very important” or “Somewhat important” to explore possible efficiencies in the structure and operations of the ccNSO Council (Figure 12). Many comments were also provided during the interview phase that support this view, which are described below. Respondents suggestions on how to enhance efficiency will be explored in a subsequent report which includes recommendations based upon these findings.

Size and Structure of the Council

Interviewees shared mixed views on whether the size and structure of the Council impede or promote effectiveness. Some interviewees expressed that 18 seats are insufficient to represent the full diversity of the ccNSO.

Others discussed how the number of Councillors is too large. Some regions struggle to fill their three seats with qualified and interested candidates. There is also a perception amongst members that not all Councillors are active and engaged (discussed further in the “Accountability” section), and the size of the group facilitates a lack of participation among some Councillors. Separately, one interviewee suggested the current size of the Council is a financial strain to the ccNSO. The ccNSO provides travel funding to three Nom-Com appointed

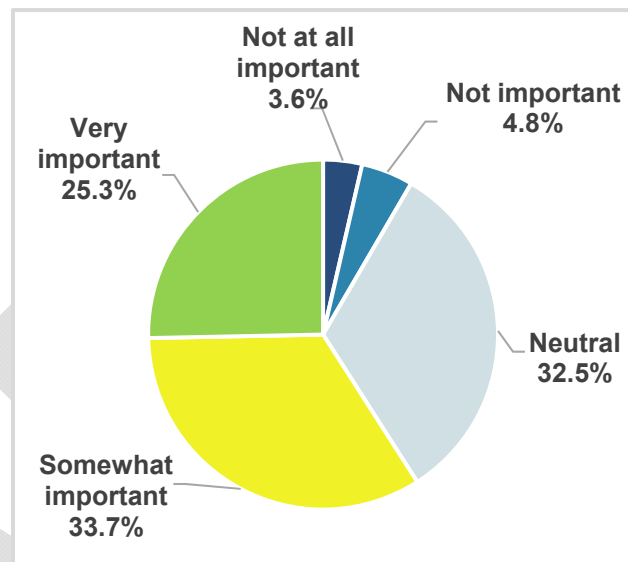


Figure 12. Survey Question: How important do you think it is to explore possible efficiencies in the structure and operations of the ccNSO Council? N=83.

⁴⁰ A candidate for the ccNSO Council must be nominated and seconded by ccNSO members in the region they wish to represent.

⁴¹ Candidates to the ccNSO Council do not need to be residents or citizens of a country within the region they seek to represent.

Call for Nominations to the ccNSO Council. (2018, September). Retrieved from

<https://ccnso.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-11sep18-en>.

Guideline: ccNSO Council Election Procedure, Draft Version 03. (2017 August). Retrieved from

<https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/guideline-ccnso-council-election-procedure-31aug17-en.pdf>.

ICANN Geographic Regions. (2018, January). Retrieved from <https://meetings.icann.org/en/regions>.

Councillors and one Councillor from each region each ICANN meeting;⁴² this is expensive to the organization and to the Councillors who do not receive travel funding. Although the Council meets regularly via conference calls,⁴³ ICANN meetings are venues for productive face-to-face meetings and for member-Councillor interaction.

Interviewees supported having a Council primarily comprised of regionally-elected seats, as country and region affiliation typically correlates⁴⁴ to an individual's identity in the ccNSO community. Geographically-variant differences in members' priorities and perspectives should be reflected in Council deliberations. However, concerns were raised regarding ccNSO rules on the regional affiliations of Councillors: currently, Councillors "need to be neither resident in the region nor a citizen of a country within the same region in which they stand for election."⁴⁵

There were varying perspectives regarding the NomCom seats. One viewpoint supported having NomCom appointees – as it is a defined and official opportunity for ICANN and non-ccTLD representation in the ccNSO. The other objected to the NomCom seats due to a perceived lack of transparency and accountability: some interviewees suggested that the NomCom appointees are not as involved in the activities of the Council as their regionally-elected colleagues and criticized the lack of ccNSO input in the selection process. The latter point is also noted in the *Accountability* section.

Any individual can offer a candidate recommendation on the NomCom website,⁴⁶ and the ccNSO holds one seat on the NomCom.⁴⁷ Prior to launching the yearly selection process, the

⁴² ccNSO Travel Funding Guideline, Version 3. (2016, April). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/2016-12/travel-funding-07apr16-en.pdf>.

⁴³ Role of the Council. (2019). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about/council/role.htm>.

⁴⁴ ccTLD managers are not necessarily residents or citizens of the country whose country code they manage. IANA ccTLD Delegation and Transfer Guidelines state that a ccTLD manager must be a resident of, or incorporated in, the country associated with the ccTLD, unless formally decided otherwise by the relevant government or public authority. In addition, according to the ICANN Bylaws, managers of ccTLDs that are members of the ccNSO are referred to as ccNSO members "within" the Geographic Region where the ccTLD is incorporated, regardless of the physical location of the ccTLD manager. Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain(ccTLD). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.iana.org/help/cctld-delegation>

⁴⁵ Call for Nominations to the ccNSO Council. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-11sep18-en>.

⁴⁶ How to Suggest and Encourage Someone to Become a Candidate. (2019). Retrieved from <https://forms.icann.org/en/groups/nomcom/suggest>.

⁴⁷ One of the 15 voting delegates on the NomCom is reserved for a ccNSO member. The other delegates represent the Address Supporting Organization (ASO) (1); the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) (7); the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) for Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) (1); and the At-Large Advisory Committees (ALAC) (one per region, 5 total).

NomCom offers focused consultations with the organizations and bodies to which NomCom appoints individuals in order to inform the NomCom about desired skillsets;⁴⁸ for example, in November 2018, the NomCom prepared for its upcoming appointment cycle by soliciting updates or changes to the ccNSO skillset/criteria from the ccNSO Council Chair, and the two groups intend to meet at ICANN64.⁴⁹ However, candidate information is kept confidential throughout the selection process; as such, the deliberations, records, and communications of the NomCom regarding specific candidates are not released publicly.⁵⁰ Further information about the NomCom's process, Operating Procedures, and Code of Conduct can be found on its website.

The ccNSO cannot reject a NomCom nominee, an issue that a few interviewees raised. When the ccNSO Council unanimously disapproved of a NomCom nominee in 2017, it published a resolution in opposition but had to rely on the nominee's voluntary resignation and the selection of a new Councillor by the NomCom.⁵¹

Councillor Diversity

Many interviewees and some survey respondents worried that the ccNSO is not benefitting from new ideas, energy, and creativity due to limited diversity in its leadership. This can partially be linked to the lack of competitive elections and incumbent advantages (discussed in the "Accountability" section) that prevent "new blood"⁵² from entering the Council. Respondents also observed that a similar set of individuals volunteer for most leadership positions in the ccNSO. Interviewees described that this is in part a result of the amount of time these positions demand: smaller or lesser-funded ccTLDs do not have the capacity to dedicate time to the ccNSO. Interviewees also described the difficulty of building visibility and leadership experience without the alliances, mentorship, and knowledge that comes from years spent in the ccNSO; again, smaller and lower-resourced ccTLDs face challenges entering into positions of leadership in the ccNSO, as do newer members. ccTLD managers who are younger in age also face these obstacles, an increasing challenge for an organization that must foster a new generation of leadership to sustain itself into the future.

2019 ICANN Nominating Committee. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/nomcom2019>.

⁴⁸ ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom) Operating Procedures 2019, Section 7. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/nomcom2019-procedures-2018-12-07-en#A7a>.

⁴⁹ Description of ccNSO position and requirements. (2018, November). Retrieved from <https://ccso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/ashcraft-to-sataki-20nov18-en.pdf>.

[Ext] RE: Description of ccNSO position and requirements. (2018, December). Retrieved from <https://ccso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/sataki-to-ashcraft-12dec18-en.pdf>.

⁵⁰ ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom) Operating Procedures 2019, Section 7. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/nomcom2019-procedures-2018-12-07-en#A7a>.

⁵¹ Nominating Committee's Selection to the ccNSO Council (2017, September). Retrieved from <https://ccso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/sataki-to-nomcomm-29sep17-en.pdf>.

⁵² The concept of bringing new blood into an organization is a reference to new people who are likely to improve the organization with new ideas and enthusiasm.

Support from the ccNSO Secretariat

While this review does not cover the ccNSO Secretariat, many respondents referenced the important role it plays in the structure and operations of the ccNSO. The ccNSO Secretariat is currently comprised of four staff members appointed by ICANN. The staff provide administrative and communications support to the ccNSO, as well as advice and support to Working Groups and the ccNSO Council on process and substantive matters. In an organization that is challenged by volunteer fatigue and information overload, the Secretariat provides important assistance, order, and continuity.

Interviewees particularly value the individual who has taken on a leadership role for the ccNSO Secretariat team – the Senior Director for ccNSO Policy Development Support – who is seen by members as a stable, highly experienced, and trusted member of the organization. One interviewee described him as “more than a staff support for the ccNSO; in many respects he is a general manager that executes, chases, and moves things along.” Despite frequent praise, interviewees raised concerns about the extent to which the ccNSO relies on an individual for institutional knowledge and leadership. As someone seen as a backbone of the ccNSO nearly since its inception, members expressed concern that this vast institutional knowledge is not recorded elsewhere and creating this redundancy may present a significant challenge. Over one-third of survey respondents agreed that there is a need to strengthen the security, stability, and resilience of the Secretariat’s long-term redundancy for institutional knowledge (Figure 13).

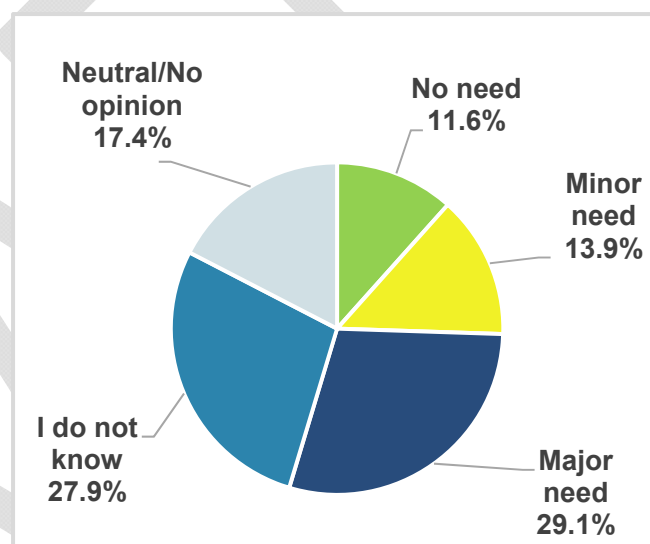


Figure 13. Survey Question: To what extent, if any, do you see a need for enhancing the security, stability, and resilience of the ccNSO Secretariat’s institutional knowledge? N= 86.

ICANN Meetings

Interviewees and survey respondents identified ICANN meetings as valuable opportunities to exchange information and build community within the ccNSO. Tech Day was a frequently-highlighted event. Members view Tech Day as one of the strongest ways the ccNSO serves a broader purpose within ICANN as a community for knowledge exchange. Respondents’ expressed desire to expand Tech Day-like opportunities; they noted that there is potential for increased knowledge exchange, rather than one-way sharing, during and outside ICANN meetings, and for sessions on a wider variety of topics (e.g., legal, policy, and technical issues).

While individuals appreciated time reserved for the ccNSO at ICANN meetings (notably on Constituency Day), some cautioned that the ccNSO can become too siloed at ICANN meetings, to the detriment of communication, knowledge exchange, and relationship-building across SOs

and ACs. In particular, these comments arose in the context of the ccNSO-GNSO interface. Many interviewees discussed the wealth of knowledge and best practices that could be shared between ccTLD and gTLD communities – even given their many differences – but these exchanges are limited even when they occur. Many members also wished that, within its own membership, the ccNSO offered more opportunities for Regional Organizations to provide updates, exchange best practices, and generally foster relationships to bring together the worldwide community surrounding the ccNSO.

Members appreciated the variety of activities and learning groups that they can attend throughout the week of ICANN meetings, including those mentioned above. However, a few critiqued the lack of innovation in how the ccNSO designs its portion of ICANN meetings, which one member described as “cut and dry;” the ccNSO often follows a similar schedule of events and organizes similar types of activities, and as a result some respondents observed that enthused engagement and productive interactions are waning over time.

Barriers to Participation

As a collaborative multistakeholder organization, the ccNSO relies on the engagement and contributions of its members to run activities and represent the interests of ccTLDs within ICANN. In response to the survey question, “To what extent are you satisfied with the opportunities for individuals to gain visibility and/or to actively engage within the ccNSO?” 51% of respondents answered “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” (Figure 14). Yet, this doesn’t always translate to active participation in the ccNSO: 44.7% of survey respondents agreed with the statement: “Yes, I have opportunities to engage [in areas of work that interest me and/or that I think are important], **but I am not very engaged**” (Figure 15). As alluded to in the prior sections, there are perceived barriers to participation in the ccNSO and opportunities to make improvements to facilitate more active participation.

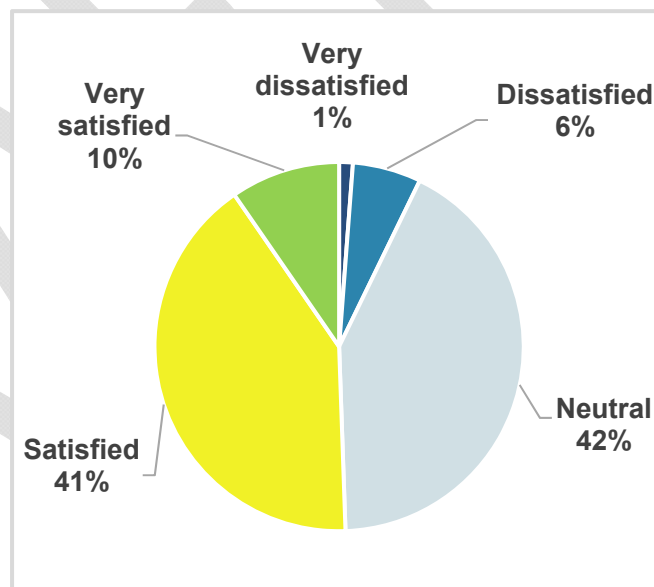


Figure 14. Survey Question: To what extent are you satisfied with the opportunities for individuals to gain visibility and/or to actively engage within the ccNSO? N=83

Financial and Time Constraints

Many respondents attributed their limited participation in the ccNSO to a lack of financial resources, specifically pertaining to attending in-person meetings. Multiple interviewees shared that many smaller ccTLD operators lack the resources that larger ccTLDs have to travel to in-person meetings (three per year). Some individuals indicated that with more travel support, it would be possible for them to attend ICANN meetings and participate more in the ccNSO. The ccNSO currently funds up to 12 people per meeting, of which eight are Councillors. Remaining funds are prioritized for those who “actively contribute [to the ccNSO] but would not be able to do so without travel funding.” Members who are new to the organization and have not yet had the opportunity to contribute can apply for the ICANN Fellowship Programme and receive travel support as a Fellow.⁵³

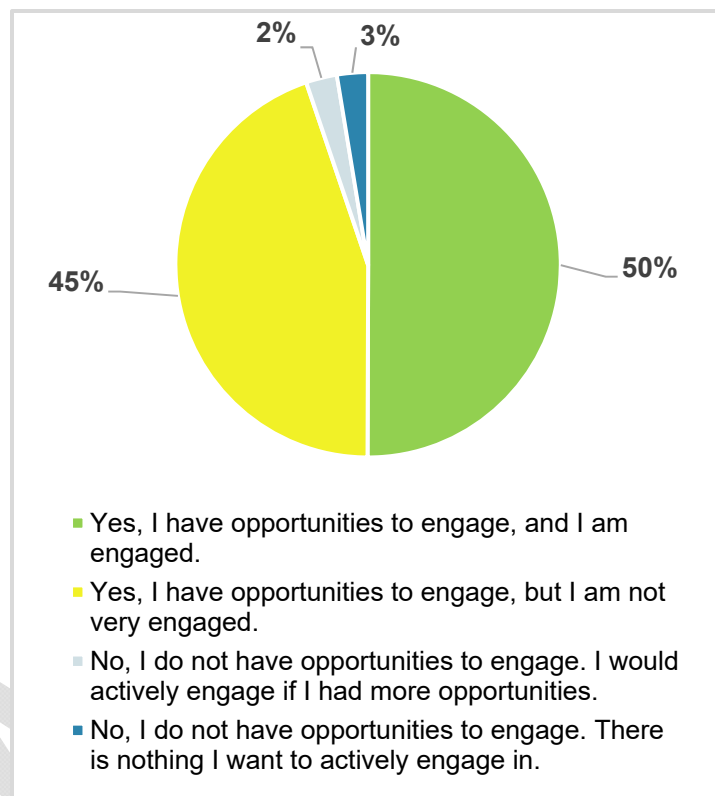


Figure 15. Survey Question: Within the ccNSO, do you feel that you have opportunities to actively engage in areas of work that interest you and/or that you think are important? N=38 (Question open to ccNSO members, ccNSO Councillors, and ccNSO participants (observer/non-members))

When it comes to the costs of participating in meetings, one identified alternative is to conduct meetings virtually. One interviewee asserted that other ICANN ACs and SOs make better use of this option. However, some shared their opinions that when people are away from their daily routines and physically at a meeting, it is easier for them to focus on ccNSO matters; and that remote meetings are simply not as valuable as those that are in-person.

Time is another key resource that members must dedicate to the ccNSO. The organization is reliant upon people volunteering their time and expertise to fulfill its functions, but members struggle to find sufficient time to participate in the ccNSO. Multiple members shared the view that an unfair burden is placed on smaller ccTLD operators because they do not have large teams to distribute staff coverage at ccNSO / ICANN assignments, calls, and meetings. For many members, taking time away from one’s regular obligations and responsibilities in order to

⁵³ ccNSO Travel Funding Guideline, Version 3. (2016, April). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/2016-12/travel-funding-07apr16-en.pdf>.

participate in the ccNSO is not easy and may not even be appropriate. As one interviewee put it, ccTLD managers “should be serving the local [Internet] community; attending ICANN meetings should come as a lesser priority.” Another interviewee shared that, in the early days of the ccNSO, ccTLD operators considered it in their interest to participate, but over the years that attention has dwindled and along with it, their participation. ccNSO participants may also face turnover among their superiors: a new supervisor(s) may not support continued engagement in the ccNSO from a time or financial perspective.

As a result of these limits in diversified participation, a small number of individuals are conducting most of the work to keep the ccNSO operating, many of whom face periodic or chronic burnout as a result. Yet, without the engaged and consistent participation of members, the operations of the ccNSO become less efficient.

Interpersonal Communication Challenges

A few interviewees attributed interpersonal communication challenges as obstacles to a more participatory, inclusive, and efficient ccNSO. Some described how they occasionally withdraw from ccNSO conversations because of unmediated differences in communication styles. A communication style is descriptive of how people communicate verbally and nonverbally; for instance, some interviewees described being quieter and have difficulties being heard in conversations dominated by individuals with louder, more direct, and/or more aggressive communication styles. Notably, communication styles and norms vary across cultures. While one interviewee commended the Chair of the ccNSO Council for working to manage and overcome these differences in such a cross-cultural organization, many interviewees expressed frustration that a small but loud minority is still frequently able to dominate the discourse.

Practical Considerations

Time Zones

In order to accommodate participation by individuals in a wide range of time zones, ccNSO calls are scheduled at different times on a rotating basis. As a result, there are occasions when ccNSO participants are asked to participate outside of regular business hours including at times in the middle of the night, which understandably hinders one’s ability to participate.

Language

While many respondents characterized the ccNSO community as an inclusive environment, many respondents expressed a belief that the ccNSO caters to the anglophone community and, by not providing written and verbal information in multiple languages, prevents active participation by a broader set of stakeholders. Even with English-speaking skills, discussing highly technical issues in a fast-paced environment such as the ccNSO can be a major challenge without English fluency in such topics.

Unfamiliar Topics

In response to a survey question on barriers to participation, a respondent stated, “I have a lot of things to learn before I could be part of ccNSO volunteering.” Another noted, “Some groups and topics look very overwhelming from the outside and have been going on for years.” A few interviewees who identified themselves as technical experts and do not consider themselves newcomers, described their discomfort and/or disinterest working on the policy-side of the ccNSO: as one shared, “engaging in policy discussions requires new capacities you have to learn.” As exemplified in these comments, some may have the desire to participate more actively but feel they do not have sufficient understanding of the issues to do so which presents additional barriers to participation.

“The ways of the ccNSO appear quite mysterious, even to insiders (much like a lot of ICANN!). Everything is very complicated and full of jargon. Unless you were around since the beginning of ICANN it’s hard to fathom why things are as they are. This is a huge barrier to participation for newcomers.” – Survey respondent

Orientation and Onboarding

As with the majority of volunteer-based organizations, the ccNSO faces a perpetual challenge in engaging newcomers and retaining them over the long-term as active participants. As many interviewees noted, a significant barrier to participation is the amount of information that new members must absorb, such as technical knowledge, cultural norms, rules and procedures, and history of the ccNSO. Both the ccNSO and ICANN at-large aim to facilitate onboarding and orientation through a variety of resources, including:

1. A “Quick Guide to the ccNSO” available on the Newcomers/Onboarding page of the ccNSO wiki.¹
2. A ccNSO orientation webinar offered through the ICANN | Learn portal.⁵⁴
3. An interactive Newcomer Day held at ICANN meetings to introduce newcomers to ICANN.
4. Concise videos, fact sheets, and explanations about posted on the Newcomers page of the ICANN website.⁵⁵
5. “How it works” sessions on technical topics offered at ICANN meetings. Open to both new and returning ICANN participants, they can provide opportunities for newcomers to learn about key technical matters.

Notably, none of these resources are highlighted or clearly linked to on the ccNSO’s website.

⁵⁴ ICANN | LEARN. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://learn.icann.org/#/login>.

⁵⁵ I Am New to ICANN – Now What? (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/newcomers>.

Many interviewees described current formal onboarding/orientation opportunities as insufficient, particularly for smaller ccTLDs and ccTLD representatives that are replacing less engaged predecessors. Survey respondents shared a more positive assessment: 42% were “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied” with the ccNSO’s onboarding/orientation opportunities, 48% were neutral, and only 10% were “Dissatisfied” (Figure 16). One person noted that ICANN at-large has been more intentional and successful at helping newcomers bridge barriers to entry than the ccNSO. For example, ICANN offers a Fellowship Programme to engage individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities in ICANN through meeting travel support, mentorship, skill-building, and networking sessions.⁵⁶

In response to low newcomer retention rates and feedback describing the inadequacy of current onboarding resources, in December 2018 – after the conclusion of the interview phase of this review – the ccNSO established the ccNSO Community Onboarding Programme (COP), a year-long onboarding and mentorship program based on an ICANN-wide COP piloted between 2016 and 2018.⁵⁷

Interviewees identified two other gaps in the ccNSO’s orientation and onboarding programming. First, there is a lack of support for “not-so-new-newcomers,” or members who may be seeking further information or involvement months or years after joining (a few interviewees shared that even after one or two years of participating in the ccNSO, they still felt like newcomers given the steep learning curve). Secondly, ccNSO Councillors do not receive much training and orientation on Council roles, responsibilities, and procedures.

“When I started attending ICANN meetings I felt I was just dumped into it, nothing was explained at all, there was no induction process and I just had to make my own way and work it out as best I could. It is really important that new individuals are helped when they start attending if they are to be able to assist the community.” – Interview respondent

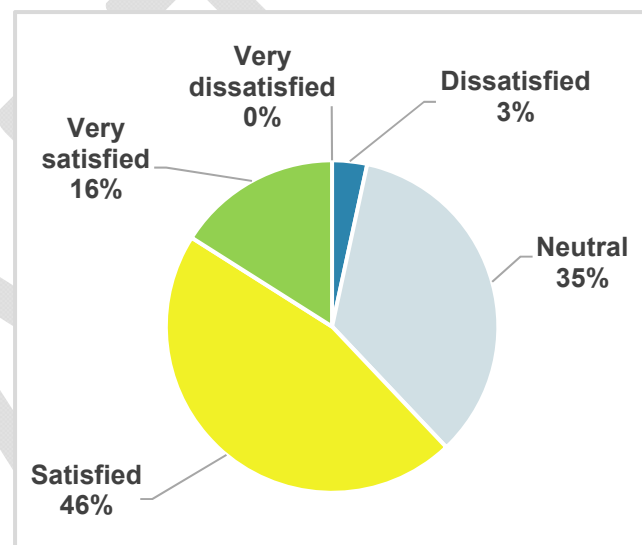


Figure 16. Survey Question: To what extent are you satisfied with the ccNSO’s onboarding/orientation opportunities for individuals? N=82

⁵⁶ ICANN Fellowship Program. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/fellowshipprogram>.

⁵⁷ Terms of Reference: ccNSO Community Onboarding Programme (ccNSO COP), Version 1. (2018, December). Retrieved from <https://ccns0.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/ccns0-cop-06dec18-en.pdf>

Findings | Accountability

The accountability of the ccNSO is a key issue interwoven with topics of *Continuing Purpose* and *Structure and Operations*. Many respondents recognized and commended the ccNSO's improvements on openness, transparency, and accountability in recent years, with some particularly praising the ccNSO's new openness to non-members. ccNSO members know each other quite well and have trusted relationships, which helps create a culture of peer-to-peer accountability. However, some respondents expressed uncertainty on what formal accountability mechanisms the ccNSO has in place—not perhaps a challenge for accountability itself but the perceptions of accountability. Accountability and transparency measures are an integral part to the ongoing functioning of the ccNSO, and two-thirds of survey respondents noted that there is a minor or major need to enhance the ccNSO's transparency and accountability (*Figure 17*).

Some respondents indicated that the way the ccNSO functions and communicates is difficult for both newcomers and long-time members to understand (discussed in *Structure and Operations*), which presents additional challenges in terms of perceptions of transparency and accountability. Respondent observations on the strengths and weaknesses of the ccNSO's accountability practices and mechanisms are discussed in this section.

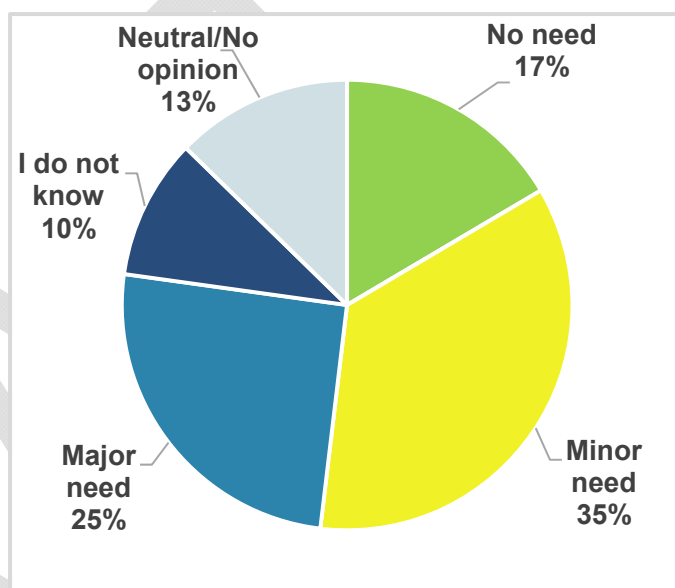


Figure 17. Survey Question: To what extent, if any, do you see a need for enhancing the ccNSO's transparency and accountability? N=79

Transparency of Information

Overall, a majority of respondents described a high degree of information transparency: materials including ccNSO meeting recordings, minutes, Working Group meeting notes, Council decisions, processes, and official letters are all posted online and publicly accessible. ccNSO meetings are open to anyone, regardless of membership status, which helps foster a sense of transparency. An "Activity Summary" page⁵⁸ on the ccNSO website is updated monthly with all activities that have occurred in the past month and links to further information about each.

The ccNSO Council, in collaboration with the ccNSO Secretariat and in consultation with members, also develops and publishes work plans on a monthly and yearly basis. These documents outline upcoming priorities and plans on a range of activities, including

⁵⁸ ccNSO Activity Summary. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/resources/activity-summary-2019-en.htm>.

administrative, policy-related, community-oriented, and more. The monthly work plans also describe progress towards key milestones and identify which Council members have taken lead responsibility for given activities. Yearly work plans are drafted by the Secretariat, with input from Working Groups and Committees, and are approved by the Council. Monthly work plans are drafted by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Council but do not require approval.

Although the work plans are highly detailed, they are difficult to read, primarily due to formatting and limited narrative explanation. Monthly work plans are not updated monthly on the ccNSO website. Interviewees did not mention the existence of the work plans, yet many described a lack of awareness about the activities of the Council in addition to a perceived lack of transparency on the Council's work. The workplans have the potential to be a tool for information-sharing, member participation, and transparency, but as currently operationalized and disseminated, fall short in meeting these objectives.

In relation to this point, some respondents observed that while information is available online, users may have challenges in readily finding specific information on the ccNSO website or understanding the materials that are posted. Although the ccNSO website hosts a digital library of documents that includes a search function, the amount of information can be overwhelming and specific content may be difficult to find. Some respondents noted that items on the website are frequently moved to new locations, adding to confusion about where to find information. They also noted that the website is not particularly navigable or user-friendly due to its outdated design. If information is not conveyed clearly, not only is it a barrier to participation, it also undermines accountability among ccNSO participants, staff, and leadership if they cannot understand key information and decisions.

Decision-Making in the ccNSO

As some respondents observed, there are regular updates and communications, opportunities to provide input, elections, and community-based debate where different views can be shared freely – all of which facilitates member engagement in the management and operations of the ccNSO, increasing the organization's accountability to its members. Working Groups are also an environment wherein ccNSO members may express their opinions amongst each other and determine what the clear and concise set of recommendations are that the community wants to provide in a common voice, before they reach the Council. Prior to making a decision (on more significant, non-administrative matters), the Council commonly solicits member input, such as by gauging the "mood of the room"⁵⁹ – a semi-formal tool for assessing member agreement at ccNSO meetings.

⁵⁹ If the Chair of a session or a presenter consider it relevant and appropriate, the ccTLDs present at a meeting (in person and remotely) may be called to express on a specific topic their sentiment or the "mood of the room." An expression of sentiment or "mood" may neither be interpreted as, nor does it replace a formal vote or other formal expression of

Most respondents indicated that these and other consensus-based processes of the ccNSO provide a strong decision-making approach because it allows everyone to have a sense of ownership. Although, one respondent indicated that it proves difficult for the ccNSO to develop a consensus view due to the diversity of its membership. The need for membership-wide votes as part of PDPs, for instance, has been a challenge for organizational effectiveness and efficient procedures even as it has been an important tool to engage members in decision-making and increase the organization's accountability to its members.

Accountability of the ccNSO Council

Overall, the clear majority of those interviewed and surveyed thought the Council was accountable as an institution. This collective view is reflected in the words of one respondent: "Through our representatives, we are in touch with what is happening in the organization. If we feel that the council isn't making good decisions, we can make that explicit and influence the organization to do it right. [I] haven't ever felt there's a disconnect between the ccNSO leadership and what the ccTLDs want. It is accountable."

In contrast and worth noting, one respondent thought the Council should take a much less active role and that the ccNSO should be purely member driven—perhaps a different interpretation from what others currently see as member-driven through entities like Working Groups with significant leadership from the elected Council.

A few respondents thought the ccNSO Council could be more transparent to other SOs/ACs and the ICANN Board. The ICANN Bylaws state that non-voting Council liaisons to the ccNSO Council may be appointed by the GAC, the ALAC, and Regional Organizations. Non-voting observers to the Council may be appointed by any SO.

Quality and Consistency of Engagement

Organizational accountability is, in large part, based upon individual accountability, and many members feel this is where the ccNSO falls short. Their perception of ccNSO's accountability is heavily influenced by their observations of Councillor participation and individual accountability to their constituents. Many members

"Through our representatives, we are in touch with what is happening in the organization. If we feel that the council isn't making good decisions, we can make that explicit and influence the organization to do it right. [I] haven't ever felt there's a disconnect between the ccNSO leadership and what the ccTLDs want. It is accountable." – Interview respondent

preference. The Secretariat will hand out "temperature measuring cards" (red, yellow, and green sheets) to one representative per ccTLD and ensure the sense of remote participants are taken into account as well.

Guideline: ccNSO Meetings (2016, March). Retrieved from

https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_47781/guidelines-council-meetings-30mar16-en.pdf

perceive that only a subset of the 18 Councillors are actively fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

Many of those interviewed recognized the voluntary nature of the Councillor roles and observed that Councillors are trying to do their best given limited time they may have to engage. Still, they expressed frustration and concern that there is a lack of consistent Councillor leadership. Many respondents observed that Councillors frequently miss Council meetings, which at times can delay votes that require a higher quorum.⁶⁰ As one interviewee said, “We have deadlines to meet. We expect 18 preferences, not 12” (another interviewee alleged the number of highly engaged Councillors is closer to three to six). Not all participate actively in Working Groups or other activities. To some, this was identified as a structural and operational problem: there are no criteria or qualifications for becoming a ccNSO Councillor, and the Council may be too large. Others emphasized this is a cultural problem: the ccNSO Council struggles from burnout and lack of motivation amongst its leaders. The result is a Council that is not as effective and efficient in its operations and as accountable to its constituents due to limited engagement.

Council Elections

A primary Council accountability mechanism is the election process, but this was reported by some respondents as an underutilized tool. In the past five years (2015-2019), only two of 30 Council seats received more than one nominee.⁶¹ Members are not able to vet their Councillors without an election process, and candidates have little incentive to prove their qualifications or share a platform of ideas if running unopposed. The same issue holds for re-elections: Councillors are frequently re-elected due to a lack of opposing candidates and, as some interviewees suggested, a lack of interest amongst their constituents: many members invest little in the affairs of the ccNSO if they do not perceive a significant problem. There are no term limits for ccNSO Councillors.

⁶⁰ Attendance. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about/council/attendance.htm>.

⁶¹ The ccNSO Council Elections. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/it/about/elections/council.htm>.

Member Veto Power

All Council decisions are subject to the possibility of members' veto. The 2004 Rules of the ccNSO state that a ratification vote on a ccNSO Council decision can be triggered within seven days of publication of the Council's decision by 10% or more of the ccNSO members.⁶² This procedure has never been employed. A few interviewees indicated that this rule has become a challenge as the ccNSO has grown to 171 members: the 10% threshold is much more difficult to meet today, particularly in a seven-day window, than it was when the rule was instituted (in 2004, the ccNSO had 45 members).⁶³ This view may not be representative: only 8% of survey respondents agreed that the current threshold is too high; approximately one-third had no opinion or did not know; and a few respondents wrote that they did not know of the existence of this rule—another indicator of lack of understanding about these mechanisms which can be detrimental to perceptions of ccNSO accountability (Figure 18).

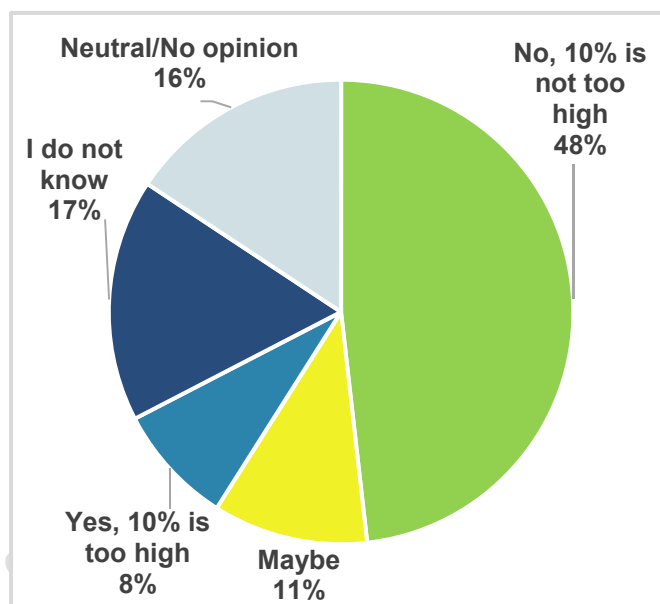


Figure 18. Survey Question: Do you think that the 2004 ccNSO rules, which require 10% or more of the members to call a vote to veto a Council decision within 7 days of publication, is too high a threshold for a group with over 170 current members? N=83

Other Council Accountability Mechanisms

To increase transparency and accountability regarding Council activities and Councillor participation, the ccNSO has implemented other measures such as public attendance logs of Council meetings (posted online since 2016).⁶⁴ Minutes of Council meetings must be posted publicly per the ICANN Bylaws,⁶⁵ and draft Council agendas must be published at least seven days in advance of a Council meeting, although the Council may adjust the draft agenda between the time of publication and meeting.⁶⁶ Some respondents observed that this happens

⁶² Rules of the ccNSO, Version 1. (2004, December). Retrieved from https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_25723/ccnso-rules-dec04-en.pdf.

⁶³ ccNSO Membership overview. (2018 November). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/membership-12nov18-en.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Attendance. (2018). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/en/about/council/attendance.htm>.

⁶⁵ ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.3(n). (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article10>

⁶⁶ Guideline: ccNSO Council Practices, Version #1. (2017, January). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/2017-04/guidelines-council-practices-09feb17-en.pdf>.

frequently, and those updated agendas are not sent in advance to members. While respondents did not see this as an immediate challenge, they expressed concern that it could set a precedent within the ccNSO and other ICANN bodies, thereby eroding transparency and accountability over time and across the system.

ICANN and ccNSO rules have established formal procedures for removing Councillors for serious causes that are not resolved through mediation. A ccNSO Councillor may be removed by:

- 66% of the ccNSO Council if the Councillor has not attended three consecutive Council meetings without sufficient cause or for grossly inappropriate behavior (Article 10.3(f), ICANN Bylaws)
- a majority of ccNSO members in the Councillor's geographic region following a vote initiated by at least 25% of the ccNSO members from that region (ccNSO Elections Procedures, enacted in August 2017)⁶⁷
- a three-quarter majority vote of all ccNSO Councillors (ccNSO Elections Procedures)

Independent Reviews

Some respondents underscored the importance of continuing to have independent reviews in order to continue meeting the ccNSO's goal of being accountable to the community. "Independent reviews are an important accountability mechanism that should be preserved because it allows time for members to reflect on what they do and why," a respondent shared. Upon the completion of the last review in 2010, the RWP provided its recommendations for implementation of the review's recommendations,⁶⁸ and a final detailed ccNSO Improvements Implementation Project Plan was published in 2013 to provide a status update.⁶⁹ The review process is in itself transparent and oriented towards gathering the reflections and recommendations of the community, amplifying the role of independent reviews as a tool for member engagement, bottom-up input on continuous improvement measures, and accountability.

ICANN to ccNSO and ccNSO to ICANN Accountability

Many respondents characterized one of ccNSO's main roles and functions as sharing respective responsibility for keeping ICANN accountable to the global multistakeholder Internet

⁶⁷ Guideline: ccNSO Council Election Procedure, Draft Version 03. (2017, August). Retrieved from <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/guideline-ccnso-council-election-procedure-31aug17-en.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Review of the Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) Final Report of the ccNSO Review Working Party. (2011, March). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ccnso-review-wg-final-report-04mar11-en.pdf>.

⁶⁹ ccNSO Improvements Implementation Project Plan. (2013, September). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/improvements-implementation-plan-11sep13-en.pdf>.

community through the ccPDP and the ccNSO's participation on the ICANN Board, on the NomCom, and through the Empowered Community (EC). As one interviewee described this, the ccNSO has the responsibility to be a "good citizen" within ICANN. A respondent shared an example of this accountability role, describing when the ccNSO raised concerns about ICANN's annual budgeting process to allow for comparison across different fiscal years. This feedback was eventually taken on board by ICANN staff and now other SOs are more actively engaged in ICANN's budgeting transparency and accountability.

Remaining Accountability Matters

The following topics were frequently raised by respondents but fall outside the scope of this review. As such, they are mentioned here as notable topics of interest amongst the community, but we, the Independent Examiner, will not be providing any recommendations and have not considered these comments in our analyses of the findings.

ccTLD Best Practices

Many respondents encouraged the ccNSO to take on a greater role in establishing and disseminating best practices related to ccTLD management and administration. One commonly-mentioned example was to improve the way that ccTLD managers report their affiliations; this recommendation arose from concerns with the lack of transparency around the overlap between ccTLD managers who also manage gTLDs. Respondents recognized that any such standards would need to be voluntary, and ccTLDs would have no obligation to adhere to them, but would foster a sense of public awareness and transparency. ccTLDs have no contractual obligation to be accountable to ICANN, other ICANN stakeholder groups, or the ccNSO, beyond adhering to codes of conduct that are a condition of membership.⁷⁰

ccTLD Financial Contributions to ICANN

While the financial contributions of ccTLDs to ICANN are explicitly outside of the scope of this independent review, a clear majority of respondents brought up the topic of financial contributions in relation to questions about accountability. Therefore, it may be an important conversation for the ccNSO to continue having, in whatever form the ccTLDs see fit, given the emphasis put on the topic over the course of this review by many respondents from within the ccNSO. A Guideline for Voluntary Contributions of ccTLDs to ICANN was passed in November 2013, which includes a provision to review the Guideline after a minimum period of five years.⁷¹ That minimum five-year period has now eclipsed, and as such this is an issue likely to be revisited by ICANN and the ccNSO.

⁷⁰ ICANN Bylaws, Article 10, Section 10.4. (2018, June). Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article10>

⁷¹ Guideline for Voluntary Contributions of ccTLDs to ICANN. (2013, November). Retrieved from: https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_42805/guidelines-cctld-contributions-27nov13-en.pdf.

Concluding Remarks

This report contains important and valuable findings from the ccNSO and surrounding community on ways the organization can fulfill its purpose, improve its structure and operations, and enhance its accountability. Based upon the findings, our overall determination is that 1) the ccNSO has a continuing purpose; 2) there do not seem to be significant needs to make structural or operational changes; 3) the ccNSO is accountable to its constituents, including its members and the broader ICANN community.

While no significant changes are required, there are opportunities for the organization to continuously improve as it works to achieve the three objectives above. Meridian will develop recommendations for improvement based upon findings in this Assessment Report, heavily informed by continued engagement with the ccNSO and ICANN communities at ICANN64.

Appendices

Appendix 1 | Interview Guide

Note: Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion, so interview questions varied slightly to allow opportunities for follow-up questions.

Introduction: Demographic questions

1. Name⁷²
2. Affiliation(s) (gender/region/sector)
3. Involvement and role(s) within ccNSO: please describe your engagement with the ccNSO and your understanding of ccNSO's role within ICANN.
 - a. *Length of engagement*
 - b. *Past or current roles*
4. Are you involved in any other ICANN Supporting Organizations, councils, or committees or processes? If so, which ones?

Objective 1: Whether the ccNSO has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure

5. What purposes or functions does the ccNSO provide, based upon your experience and observations?
6. Which of those purposes or functions do you see as most important and why? Least important and why?
7. From your perspective, keeping in mind the ccNSO's Bylaws and policy-development process, what, if any, additional purposes or functions could the ccNSO be providing? (*Potential follow-up questions: Why are those important/how feasible are they to implement?*)

Objective 2: Whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve the ccNSO's effectiveness

8. In what ways are the ccNSO's structure and operations most effective and why? Least effective and why?
9. From your perspective what, if any, structural and/or operational changes of the ccNSO would enhance its effectiveness and why? (*keeping in mind that final recommendations should adhere to the SMART criteria; What would be the intended effectiveness outcomes of those changes?*)

⁷² Interviewee names have been kept confidential by the Independent Examiner, and other demographic information is only reported in the aggregate. Quotes or summaries included in the report are not attributed to particular respondents.

Objective 3: Whether the ccNSO is accountable to its organizations, committees, constituencies, and stakeholder groups

10. How would you describe the ccNSO's accountability to its constituencies and stakeholder groups?
11. What ccNSO accountability mechanisms should be preserved and/or expanded?
12. What, if any, new or additional accountability measures could the ccNSO pursue? *(Do you have specific suggestions for how it could improve its accountability?)*

Wrap-Up

Do you have any final questions or is there anything we have not asked you that you wished we had? *(If so, please discuss).*

Appendix 2 | Survey Questions

Demographic Information

1. Name: *(Providing your name is optional as the survey is confidential; however, we encourage you to provide your name so that we may ensure we do not receive duplicative answers and so we may follow-up with questions of clarification, as needed)* [Comment box]
2. Gender: [Multiple choice: Male, Female, Other, Prefer Not to Say]
3. Region: [Multiple choice: Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America / Caribbean, North America]
4. Role(s): *(Choose all that apply)* [Multiple choice: ccNSO member, ccNSO participant (observer/non-member) ccTLD manager (ccNSO non-member), ccNSO Council, ICANN staff, ASO, GNSO Council, Stakeholder Groups & Constituencies, ALAC and RALOs, GAC, RSSAC, SSAC, ICANN Board member (current or former), Other [+ Comment box for elaboration on specific roles]

[Survey structure: ccNSO members and Councillors were automatically directed to questions 5-9; ccNSO participants (observers/non-members) were automatically directed to questions 6b-9; all others skipped questions 5-9 and were automatically directed to question 10]

Questions for ccNSO Participants

5. *[Note: seen by ccNSO members and Councillors only]* How long have you been involved in the ccNSO? [Multiple choice: 0-2 years 3-5 years 6-9 years 10+ years]
6. *[Option A, seen by ccNSO members and Councillors only]* Why did you join the ccNSO? *(Choose all that apply)* [Multiple choice: to learn about the ccNSO/ccTLD management, to learn about ICANN's policies and procedures, opportunity to network/build relationships, opportunity to learn new skills/management approaches for ccTLDs,

opportunity to serve in a leadership position (for example, on the ccNSO Council, participate in work groups, on the ICANN Board), to be engaged in ccNSO policy development, oversight of IANA functions, Unsure, Other (*Please elaborate*) + Comment box]

[Option B, seen by ccNSO non-member participants only] Please describe your motivations for not joining as a member of the ccNSO. [Comment box]

7. Do you feel that you have opportunities to actively engage in areas of work that interest you and/or that you think are important? Yes, I have opportunities to engage. No, I do not have opportunities to engage. I would actively engage if I had more opportunities. No, I do not have opportunities to engage. There is nothing I want to actively engage in. Other (*Please elaborate*) [Comment box]
8. What would make you more likely to volunteer within the ccNSO? [Comment box]

The following question was developed based upon comments, suggestions, and concerns received by interviewees.

9. To what extent are you satisfied with the ccNSO's organizational culture (i.e., what we do as a group and how we do it)? [Rating scale: 1-Very dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Satisfied, 5-Very satisfied]
- a. What ideas, if any, do you have to enhance the ccNSO's organizational culture? [Comment box]

Continuing Purpose

10. Which of the following purposes of the ccNSO are most important from your experience and perspective? (*Choose all that apply*) [Multiple choice: Policy development, Internationalization of ICANN community, Information sharing/cross-learning, Generating collective security for ccTLDs, Oversight of IANA functions Other: (*Please elaborate*) + Comment box]

The following questions were developed based upon comments, suggestions, and concerns received by interviewees.

11. To what extent are you satisfied with how the ccNSO facilitates information and knowledge exchange? [Rating scale: 1-Very dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Satisfied, 5-Very satisfied]
- a. What additional ideas, if any, do you have for facilitating information and knowledge exchange within the ccNSO? [Comment box]

12. To what extent, if any, do you see a need for enhancing the security, stability, and resilience of the ccNSO Secretariat's institutional knowledge? [Rating Scale: 1-No need, 2-Minor need, 3-Major need, 4-I do not know, 5-Neutral/No opinion + Comment Box]
 - a. What ideas, if any, do you have for addressing this? [Comment box]

Structure & Operations

The following questions were developed based upon comments, suggestions, and concerns received by interviewees.

13. How important do you think it is to explore possible efficiencies in the structure and operations of the ccNSO Council? [Rating scale: 1-Not at all important, 2-Not important, 3-Neutral, 4-Somewhat Important, 5-Very Important]
 - a) What ideas, if any, do you have for enhancing the efficiency of the ccNSO Council's structure and operations? [Comment box]
14. To what extent are you satisfied with the ccNSO's onboarding/orientation opportunities for individuals? [Rating scale: 1-Very dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Satisfied, 5-Very satisfied + comment box]
15. To what extent are you satisfied with the opportunities for individuals to gain visibility within the ccNSO? [Rating scale: 1-Very dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Satisfied, 5-Very satisfied]
 - a. What ideas, if any, do you have for enhancing opportunities for individuals to gain visibility within the ccNSO? [Comment box]
16. Do you think that the 2004 ccNSO rules, which require 10% or more of the members to call a vote to veto a Council decision within 7 days of publication, is too high a threshold for a group with over 170 current members? [Rating scale: 1-No, 10% is not too high, 2-Maybe, 3-Yes, 10% is too high a threshold, 4-I do not know, 5-Neutral/No opinion + Comment Box]
 - a. What suggestions, if any, do you have for addressing this? [Comment box]

Accountability

The following questions were developed based upon comments, suggestions, and concerns received by interviewees.

17. To what extent do you see the growing overlap between ccTLD and gTLD managers (for example, a single company manages both gTLDs and ccTLDs and participates in both the ccNSO and GNSO) as a challenge for accountability and transparency? [Rating Scale: 1-Not a challenge, 2-Minor challenge, 3-Major challenge, 4-I do not know, 5-Neutral/No opinion + Comment Box]

18. To what extent, if any, do you see a need for enhancing the ccNSO's transparency and accountability? [Rating Scale: 1-No need, 2-Minor need, 3-Major need, 4-I do not know, 5-Neutral/No opinion + Comment Box]

a. In what ways, if any, could the ccNSO better enhance transparency and accountability? [Comment box]

19. In what ways, if any, could the diversity and rotation of **individuals** in the ccNSO Council be enhanced? [Comment box]

20. In what ways, if any, could the level of engagement of individual ccNSO Councillors be made more consistent? [Comment box]

*Former Text: What are ways to improve the diversity of participation of the ccNSO Council **and/or** the level of engagement of ccNSO Councillors? [Comment box]*

[Final Page](#)

Optional: If you have any additional comments related to the three criteria of the ccNSO review (continuing purpose, structure and operations, and accountability), please share them in the space below. [Comment box]

Meridian Institute

Washington DC Office

1800 M Street NW, Suite 400N
Washington, DC 20036
202.354.6440

Colorado Office

PO Box 1829
105 Village Place
Dillon, CO 80435
970.513.8340

Website: www.merid.org

Twitter: [@MeridOrg](https://twitter.com/MeridOrg)



Meridian Institute

Connecting People to Solve Problems