

Root Server System Governance Working Group

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Overview

Since early June 2020, the RSS GWG has focused its discussions on reviewing two proposals for RSS governance:

1. The first proposal was “Root Server System Supporting Organization (RSSSO)”. The RSSSO would replace the RSSAC and be a member of the Empowered Community. The RSSSO would consist of the RSS Caucus to develop policy proposals (Strategy, Architecture, and Policy Function [SAPF]) and the RSS Council to manage the work of the RSS Caucus and activate root server operator review panels to perform the Designation and Removal Function when necessary. ICANN org would perform the Secretariat, Finance, and Performance Monitoring and Measurement Functions and sign contracts with root server operators.
2. The second proposal was “Public Root Services (PRS)”. This single-member Limited Liability Company would have its own Board of Directors, sign contracts or Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with root server operators that could include provisions for financial remuneration (i.e., Financial Function), and activate root server operator review panels to perform the Designation and Removal Function when necessary. PRS would have its own support staff to perform the Secretariat Function for the PRS Board and would decide to build or contract the Performance Monitoring and Measurement Function.

Current Status

The RSS GWG agreed that the RSSSO proposal was too heavyweight for its intended purpose despite its familiar ICANN community structures.

There was broad agreement in the RSS GWG to pursue the PRS proposal by:

- Making it more stakeholder-focused
- Building guardrails for binding PRS to implement the outcomes of the SAPF
- Establishing an appeals mechanism and clarifying the role of the ICANN Board
- Refining the role of the root server operator community
- Eliminating potential circular relationships
- Keeping it lightweight

A drafting team has been developing the PRS proposal in between RSS GWG teleconferences.

In its deliberations about the PRS proposal, the RSS GWG pursued three tracks: PRS Board, MoUs with root server operators, and SAPF.

1. The RSS GWG has only discussed the PRS Board in detail. The RSS GWG is considering two approaches to the purpose and composition of the PRS Board. The first approach is a narrow function of corporate governance that is more procedural. In this model, broad representation can be accomplished via the SAPF. The second approach is much like the current ICANN Board, which oversees the ICANN organization and seeks representation from the constituencies of the ICANN community.
2. The drafting team noted in its principles for MoUs that it is at the discretion of each individual root server operator whether financial arrangements are accepted. Financial remuneration will be made available to root server operators on a uniform basis. There are also provisions safeguarding sensitive information derived from DNS queries.
3. The drafting team intends for the SAPF to reflect the evolution and future of the Root Server System Advisory Committee. The SAPF will become the focal point of community-based policy for the evolution of the root server system, including technical architecture.

Next Steps

The RSS GWG will continue its regular cadence of teleconferences, further refining the PRS proposal. The drafting team will continue to write content for each track of the PRS proposal.