

Root Server System Governance Working Group (RSS GWG)

Report to the ICANN Board Root Server System Governance Caucus

January 2021

Overview

Since October 2020, the RSS GWG has focused its discussions on the financial considerations of its new organization (NewOrg) proposal.

The RSS GWG has agreed that:

- The RSS GWG is concerned only about the needs of the overall Root Server System (RSS) rather than the needs of an individual Root Server Operator (RSO). Sound and healthy funding of the RSS might enhance its stability, but it is not critical now given the decades of consistent root service. Funding intends to support a neutral, fair, and impartial root service infrastructure that allows RSOs to operate with the attributes of independence, autonomy, and integrity.
- Public Root Services (PRS) works as a conduit for the RSS to ICANN and interacts with ICANN. One way that PRS supports the RSS is by providing a grant program and making contingency arrangements for funding outside of the grant program.
- A grant program as the Financial Function would make available the same amount of funding from PRS to each RSO, and the amount may vary from year to year. The total amount available for the RSS and to an RSO would be determined by PRS within the framework of the ICANN budget process. The grant would be an expression of support for RSOs meeting service obligations to the global Internet community.
- The grant would be disbursed through annual installments over a three-year period, providing predictability to the RSOs and PRS. RSOs would have to give a two-year notice to join or leave the grant program.
- Receiving a grant would be preconditioned on an RSO having an agreement with PRS. Moreover, a commitment would exist from the RSO, regardless of its participation in the grant program, to perform according to community-developed service levels as determined by the Strategy, Architecture, and Policy Function (SAPF).
- Any RSO that accepts a grant from PRS would have to disclose how those funds support it. RSOs should have the option to cover expenses in various ways. Diversity of business and operational models of the RSOs is a strength of the RSS.
- This allows financial arrangements to be separate from the negotiation and enforcement of specific commitments such as Service Level Agreements, so that RSOs who may not receive direct funding will nonetheless be accountable for their performance as RSOs

Next Steps

There is no common understanding of how much it costs to operate global root service. Therefore, the RSS GWG will work with the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC) to identify an intermediary for requesting an estimate from each RSO about the scale of likely aggregate funding for the RSS.

The RSS GWG will merge the PRS, SAPF, and rationale for RSO funding papers into a single document. This new document will be shared with ICANN org and relevant communities for review ahead of Public Comment. The RSS GWG will continue its discussions, focusing on the Designation and Removal Function (DRF).