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Effectiveness of ICANN's Multistakeholder Model Evaluation Methodology

Evaluating to improve

The ICANN's Multistakeholder Model (MSM) has evolved considerably over the past two decades to accommodate the developments of the DNS and Internet industry ecosystem.Monitoring and evaluating the processes being implemented or changes being made is of paramount importance to ensure the effectiveness of this model. Monitoring and evaluation should thus be included throughout the multistakeholder process, involving all participants in reflecting on progress, analyzing it against their own objectives and milestones, drawing lessons, and applying these lessons to future work, practices and decisions.

Objective vs. Subjective Evaluations

Given the nature of the changes and work tracks that will need to be implemented to help improve the effectiveness of the Multistakeholder Model, evaluation methods can be objective or subjective. For example, assessing whether implementation of a given action is on track and/or completed is measurable and objective. However, assessing whether consensus is better understood because of new tools, such as PDP 3.0, is more subjective and may be answered differently by the various stakeholders.

Reflective and Formal Monitoring

Reflective monitoring[1] is a continuous process that can take place in all phases of work throughout the Multistakeholder Model. It is a valuable resource and the best way to learn about what is working, what isn't, and what we should change.

Formal monitoring is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing and using information to track a project's progress toward reaching its objectives.

While formal monitoring involves research and data gathering, reflective monitoring will help us think about what we are doing (outcomes/result), how we are doing it (process), and how the lessons learned can be used to improve future work.

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[1] A participative process of gaining an insight into the progress of a project or project and translating the findings back into the design of the project or project or any follow-up activities in order to improve future work.

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Why is 'Evaluation' Helpful?

Evaluation can help us:

1. Understand a process or project, including its goals and objectives, how the project will meet its goals and how we will know if it has met its goals or not.
2. Understand and verify the the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the impact of processes or projects in the ICANN environment.
3. Assess if processes or projects are running as originally planned.
4. Produce data and/or verify results that can be used by the community for future projects.
5. Produce valid comparisons between projects to eventually decide which should be retained, e.g., in case of possible constraints.

How to Conduct an Evaluation

The proposed evaluation methodology described below consists of the following ten steps:

1. Defining what needs to be evaluated
2. Engaging with stakeholders
3. Determining evaluation feasibility
4. Defining evaluation
5. Designing appropriate methods of measurement and procedures
6. Developing an evaluation plan
7. Collecting data
8. Processing data and analyzing results
9. Interpreting results and eventually, sharing them with the stakeholders
10. Applying evaluation findings

These steps help provide a structure to design and implement evaluation plans that apply to different work tracks, processes, and objectives across the ICANN ecosystem.

STEP 1: DEFINING WHAT NEEDS TO BE EVALUATED

Purpose: to develop an assessment of what should be evaluated with clearly-defined goal(s), strategies, activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Step 1 addresses whether an evaluation should be carried out given available information and current context. The goal is to begin with a clear description of what is to be evaluated (e.g. work track, process, task, etc.).

STEP 2: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Purpose: to build support for the evaluation by engaging stakeholders

This step involves identifying key stakeholders, understanding their interests and expectations, and engaging them in a review of objectives to develop the evaluation. It's helpful to make a list of groups (SO/ACs, ICANN Board, ICANN organization) and/or individuals with an interest in the evaluation. Stakeholders can help:

- determine and prioritize key evaluation questions,
- facilitate data collection,
- implement evaluation activities,
- increase credibility of analysis and interpretation of evaluation information, and
- ensure evaluation results are followed up and eventually, used for other processes/projects.

STEP 3: DETERMINING EVALUATION FEASIBILITY

Purpose: to assess available resources for evaluation and whether the project is ready to be evaluated.

Evaluation can be time-consuming and/or expensive. Resources include funds, time, in-kind support, approval/review processes (if needed) and timeline for implementation and completion. When assessing evaluability, it's important to consider whether:

- there is clarity on the project to be evaluated and why we are doing an evaluation
- the evaluation will be useful
- buy-in is high and outcome will shape existing and/or future processes/projects
- adequate resources are available
- timing is right

This information can be used to make a decision about whether conducting the evaluation is feasible and necessary as well as to further define the evaluation.

STEP 4: DEFINING EVALUATION

Purpose: to help identify and determine questions to meet the evaluation goals.

It would be beneficial to involve as many stakeholders as possible to ensure there is diversity of viewpoints and interests. Elements to consider include: stage of development (e.g., planning, implementation, or completion stage), evaluations already completed, decisions needed, stakeholder interests, and resources. Also important at this stage is considering the type of evaluation needed. Evaluations could be goal-based, process-based, or outcome-based.

Goal-Based

Often projects are established to meet one or more specific goals and result in a specific output. In essence, an output is what is created at the end of a process. Outputs could be training classes

offered, new process that's been designed, etc. Output measures do not address the value or impact of the goals that have been achieved.

Outputs-based evaluations assess the extent to which projects are meeting predetermined goals or objectives. Questions to ask when designing an evaluation to see if the goals have been reached are:

1. How were the project goals (and objectives, if applicable) established? Was the process effective?
2. What is the status of the project's progress toward achieving the goals?
3. Will the goals be achieved according to the timelines specified in the project implementation or operations plan? If not, then why?
4. Are there adequate resources (funds, resources, etc.) to achieve the goals?
5. How should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals?
6. How should timelines be changed (if timelines need to be changed it's important to understand why efforts are behind schedule before timelines are changed)?
7. How should goals be changed (it's important to understand why efforts are not achieving the goals before changing the goals)? Should any goals be added or removed? Why?
8. How should goals be established in the future?

Process-Based

Process-based evaluations are geared to fully understanding how a project works, including achieving the results. These evaluations are useful if projects are long-standing and have changed over the years, there are complaints or concerns about the project, or there appear to be large inefficiencies in delivering the project. They are also useful for accurately portraying how a project truly operates (e.g., for replication elsewhere).

There are numerous questions that might be addressed in a process evaluation. These questions can be selected by carefully considering what is important to know about the project. Examples of questions to ask when designing an evaluation to understand and/or closely examine the processes in a given project, are:

1. On what basis do stakeholders decide that a project is needed?
2. What is required of participants in order to deliver this project?
3. How are participants trained about how to deliver on this project?
4. How are participants selected to come into the project?
5. What is the general process that participants go through to deliver the project?
6. What do participants and stakeholders consider to be strengths of the project?
7. What do observers consider to be strengths of the project?
8. What typical complaints are heard from participants or stakeholders?
9. What do participants or stakeholders recommend in order to improve the project?
10. On what basis do participants or stakeholders decide that a given project is no longer needed?

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Outcome-Based

An outcome is the level of performance or achievement that occurred because of the activity within a specific project. Outcome measures are a more appropriate indicator of effectiveness. Outcomes quantify performance and assess the success of the process. An outcome-based evaluation hels to find out if the right activities are in place to achieve the desired outcomes.

Questions to ask when designing an outcomes-based evaluation include:

1. How well did the project work?
2. Did the project produce or contribute to the intended outcome(s) in the short, medium and long term?
3. For whom, in what ways and in what circumstances? What unintended outcome(s) (positive and negative) were produced?
4. To what extent can changes be attributed to the project?
5. What were the particular features of the project and context that made a difference?
6. What was the influence of other factors?

STEP 5: DESIGNING APPROPRIATE METHODS OF MEASUREMENT AND PROCEDURES

Purpose: to identify the most feasible and credible methods to use and how data will be collected.

Items to consider for this step are purpose, evaluation questions, feasibility of data access, reliability of data, who will use data, stakeholder expectations, and what is already being captured. The goal is to develop a data collection plan that includes: what to measure (indicators), when to collect data (before/after/both), how to collect data (qualitative/quantitative/both) and from whom to collect data.

STEP 6: DEVELOPING AN EVALUATION PLAN

Purpose: to identify specific evaluation activities, tasks, roles, resource allocations, and deadlines.

Evaluation plans detail how projects, processes, or initiatives will be monitored and evaluated, and how results will be used, providing transparency to stakeholders. A data collection matrix can be part of the evaluation plan. A matrix generally includes information gathered from previous steps: evaluation questions, indicators, methods, data sources, timelines, roles and responsibilities, and how data will be analyzed.

STEP 7: COLLECTING DATA

Purpose: to collect credible evidence to answer each evaluation question - results and recommendations depend upon data quality.

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This step requires developing data collection tools (survey, interview guide, etc.) and procedures as well as training data collectors, if needed. There are various methods and tools available for collecting data. The following table provides an overview of the major methods used for collecting data during evaluations.

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Questionnaires, surveys, checklists	To quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people. This method is particularly useful for assessing subjective evaluations.	- Anonymous - Inexpensive to administer - Easy to compare and analyze - Able to collect high volumes of data.	- Partially correct feedback - Wording can bias client's responses - Impersonal - Sampling expert might be needed - Not providing full picture
Interviews	To fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, or learn more about their answers to questionnaires	- Full range and depth of information - Relationship building with participants - Flexible with participants	- Time-consuming - Difficulty to analyze and compare - Costly - Interviewer can bias participant's responses
Documentation review	To understand how project operates without interrupting the project; could be review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.	- Comprehensive and historical information - Not-affecting the project's development - Information already exists - Few biases about information	- Time-consuming - Info may be incomplete - Need to be quite clear about what info is being sought - Data limited to what already exists
Observation	To gather accurate information about how a project actually operates, particularly about processes	- View operations of a project as they are actually occurring - Adaptable to events as they occur	- Difficulty to interpret the observed behaviors - Possible complexity to categorize observations - Possible influence on behaviors of project participants - Eventually expensive

Focus groups	To explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.	- Quickly and reliably common impressions - Possibly efficient way to get more range and depth of information in short time - Eventually conveying key information about projects	- Responses might be hard to analyze - Need good facilitator - Difficulty to bring together a group (6-8 people)
Case studies	To fully understand or depict participant's experiences in a project, and conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases	- Clear information on participant's experience in project input, process and results - Powerful means to portray project to outsiders	- Usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe - Depth of information, rather than breadth

STEP 8: PROCESSING DATA AND ANALYZE RESULTS

Purpose: to enter data, check quality and consistency of data entry and analyze data to identify evaluation results.

The goal is to implement strategies to review data quality during and after data collection. Once data has been collected, it must be organized in a format that can be summarized and analyzed by conducting statistical analysis of quantitative data and identifying themes in qualitative data.

When analyzing data (whether from questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc.), it's important to always start from review of the evaluation goals, i.e., the reason the evaluation was undertaken in the first place. This will help organize the data and focus the analysis. For example, if the goal was to improve a given project by identifying its strengths and weaknesses, the data can be organized into project strengths, weaknesses and suggestions to improve the project. If conducting an outcomes-based evaluation, the data can be categorized according to the indicators for each outcome.

STEP 9: INTERPRETING AND DISSEMINATING RESULTS

Purpose: to interpret and share evaluation findings, engaging stakeholders so that they can help identify possible recommendations.

It's important to anchor the interpretation to the original evaluation questions. One way to do this is to create a list of recommended actions that address the outcomes and use this information to create the materials to communicate the findings. Presentation of findings can

take many forms such as a written report, slide show presentation, and/or as a short informational video. Visual aids can be powerful methods for communicating evaluation results. Results should be made available to various stakeholders and audiences.

STEP 10: APPLYING EVALUATION FINDINGS

Purpose: to use the evaluation results.

The findings resulting from evaluation should result in some recommendations for improving a project, process, or initiative. Its' important to review these recommendations and lessons learned with stakeholders to identify actionable outcomes and discuss what has been learned from conducting the evaluation and next steps to incorporate results.