

Background ccNSO ICANN78 Guidelines Review Committee Workshop

The Open Space session workshop aims to explore and develop a shared understanding of what continuous improvement and Continuous Improvement (CIP) framework means for the ccNSO.

In this background note, we will address the following:

- Why is the ccNSO GRC organizing the workshop at ICANN78?
- What is Continuous or Continual Improvement about?
- Methods and tools to undertake continuous improvement
- What was suggested by ATRT3
- How does continuous improvement relate to innovation?

Why is the ccNSO GRC organizing the workshop now at ICANN78?

Since 2008 - initially through an ad-hoc Council group and since 2016, mainly through its Guideline Review Committee (GRC) - the ccNSO has worked on occasional improvements of its processes and procedures. The GRC is now focusing on developing a framework for continuous improvement.

The Third Accountability and Transparency Review Team (ATRT3) issued two recommendations closely related to the continuous improvement of the ccNSO, and the broader community for that matter. [Recommendation 3.5](#) calls for the creation of the [Holistic Review](#), a new "Specific Review" to assess the continuous improvement efforts, collaboration and accountability mechanisms, and the continued purpose of ICANN's SOs, ACs, and NomCom. [Recommendation 3.6](#) calls for the evolution of Organizational Reviews into a Continuous Improvement Program for the SOs, ACs, and the NomCom.

The Board approved these two recommendations in November 2020, and deferred all Organizational Reviews to allow for the implementation of ATRT3 recommendations. Having indicated that both recommendations are of high priority to the community, implementation is now underway. Therefore, there is an immediate need to understand the implications of continuous improvement and the development of a CIP framework for the ccNSO.

In 2025, the Board will consider the progress made by the ccNSO and other SOs and ACs with respect to a CIP framework to determine whether to resume the Organizational Reviews.

What is Continual or Continuous Improvement about?

There are various definitions of continuous improvement and – related – ways to organise it, methods and tools. [Continual or Continuous Improvement](#) is described as the ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once.

Continual Improvement is the broader concept that refers to general processes of improvement and encompasses "discontinuous" improvements—that is, many different approaches, covering different areas.

Continuous improvement is a subset of continual improvement, focusing more on linear, incremental improvement within an existing process. Some practitioners also associate continuous improvement more closely with statistical process control techniques.

The improvement process is not limited to quality initiatives. Improvement in business strategy, business results, customer, employee and supplier relationships can all be subject to continual improvement. Put simply, it means “**getting better all the time**”.

In general, the key features of continual improvement process are:

- **Feedback:** The core principle of continual process improvement is the (self) reflection of processes
- **Efficiency:** The purpose of continual improvement process is the identification, reduction, and elimination of suboptimal processes
- **Evolution:** The emphasis of continual improvement process is on incremental, continual steps rather than giant leaps

Methods and tools to undertake continual or continuous improvement

Among the most widely used tools for the continuous improvement model is a four-step quality assurance method—the [plan-do-check-act \(PDCA\) cycle](#):

- **Plan:** Identify an opportunity and plan for change.
- **Do:** Implement the change on a small scale.
- **Check:** Use data to analyze the results of the change and determine whether it made a difference.
- **Act:** If the change was successful, implement it on a wider scale and continuously assess your results. If the change does not work, begin the cycle again.



Other widely used methods of continuous improvement are a statistical method like [Six Sigma](#), [Lean](#), [Kaizen](#), [Total Quality Management](#) and related [ISO9000](#) , or the [EFQM Model](#). Each of these methods differs in its emphasis on employee involvement and teamwork, work to measure and systematize processes, reduce variation, defects, and cycle times, each of these methods differs in its objectives and impact, organizational embedding: each comes with its own pros and cons.

What was suggested by ATRT3 in 2020 (and adopted by the Board) to include in the continuous improvement program?

In its [Final Report the ATRT3](#) recommended that ICANN org shall work with each SO/AC/NomCom to establish a continuous improvement program. Such a continuous improvement program shall have a common base between all SOs, ACs, and the NomCom but will also allow for customization so as to best meet the needs of each individual SO/AC/NomCom and their constituent parts.

According to the ATRT3 all SO/AC/NomCom shall have implemented a continuous improvement program within 18 months of this recommendation being approved by the Board. These continuous improvement programs will include:

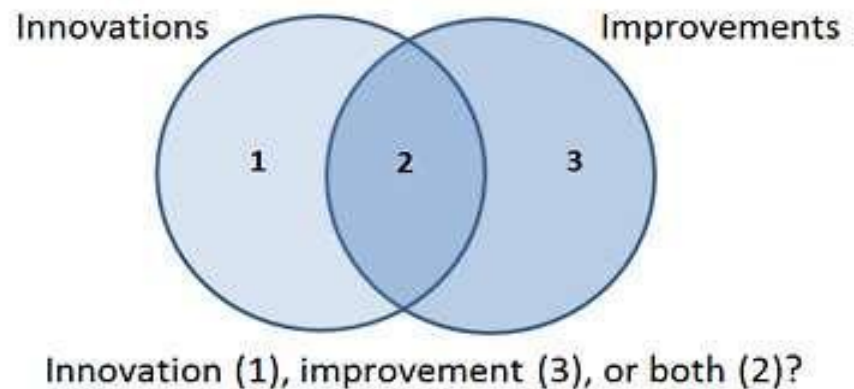
- Annual satisfaction survey of members/participants - Each SO/AC/NomCom shall perform a comprehensive annual satisfaction survey, or equivalent mechanism, of its members and participants. The focus of the survey should be on member and constituent's satisfaction (and issue identification) vis-a-vis their respective SO/AC/NomCom, but can also include satisfaction with ICANN org services such as staff support, travel services, translation services, etc.
 - For SOs and ACs that are composed of sub- structures, this should apply to their individual sub- structures and the results of all sub-structures shall be aggregated to generate a result for the given SO or AC.
 - The results of these would be public and used to support the continuous improvement program as well as input for the Holistic Review. If the survey results note a significant issue this shall be the trigger to initiate appropriate measures to deal with any such issues.
- Regular assessment of continuous improvement programs - At least every three years each SO/AC/NomCom will undertake a formal process to evaluate and report on its continuous improvement activities which will be published for Public Comment. This would allow the Holistic Review to consider a minimum of two assessment reports and related public comments for each SO/AC/NomCom.
 - Details of the assessments will be defined during the elaboration of the continuous improvement program with each SO/AC/NomCom. If the SO/AC/NomCom desires and the budget permits, the assessment can be conducted by an independent contractor or by having an intensive one to five-day workshop.
 - The Board should publish at least every three years a summary of its continuous improvements over that period. These reports would be used as input for the Holistic Review.
- Funding of the continuous improvement for SO/AC/NomCom. This continuous improvement program is not meant to be a cost reduction activity vs current overall costs of Organizational Reviews over a 5-year period. ICANN shall ensure that, as a minimum, the same overall budget is available for the continuous improvement efforts of the SO/AC/NomCom.

How does continuous improvement relate to innovation?

Continual or continuous Improvement is closely related to Innovation. The latter can be described as the ways an organization updates, changes, and improves its internal processes, manufacturing techniques, and management methods. Innovations must meet certain criteria to be successful, including meeting customer needs, return on investment

requirements, improving employee satisfaction, and product quality. Innovations help introduce new concepts, knowledge, products, services, and processes into organizations and the outside marketplace.

Innovation adds value, and a successful innovative solution will likely be the one that improves the process and/or its output. But *innovation* and *improvement* are often referred to in tandem. However, not all improvements are innovations, while most innovations are improvements. There *are* some innovations that are not improvements. The relationship looks like the figure below.



The underlying presumption is that *the contribution of continuous or continual improvement combined with innovation add more to the organization's value proposition than any other approaches.*