

## Draft Description: RSSAC structure and roles

### Overview

The “old” RSSAC had drafted and gotten consensus support among the root server operators for a revised structure for the “new” RSSAC, based on an “exec” made up of the Root Server Operators and the Root Zone Management partners, a “caucus” of formal members comprised of liaisons from other ICANN groups and interested members of the community, and a review/comment role for a wider interested public.

This document (to be attached) went into very little detail about the roles of these three structural components of the new RSSAC. In fact the most specific prescription it makes is on the composition of the Exec. As part of the process of bootstrapping a new, accountable, effective RSSAC, it falls to us as the initial Exec to fill in the rest.

This document is intended to add some detail to the roles of the components of the new RSSAC, and to provide some guidance for a companion document on RSSAC operating procedures.

Some basic principles suggest themselves:

1. RSSAC’s structure has to support getting work done within its charter (Bylaws citation) which is relatively narrow but has significant latitude for general DNS expertise. It exists to provide good quality, actionable advice to the Board of ICANN and the public within the scope of its charter.
2. RSSAC has the same obligations as other ICANN Advisory Committees, that its advice is not only to be of the highest quality but is to be generated in an open, transparent manner. In RSSAC’s case, this means (among other things) making certain that both root server operators and others with relevant interests and expertise are involved in generating RSSAC advice and can be held accountable for it.
3. We have found over time and experience that while its necessary to have voting mechanisms as a last resort in making sure that impasses can be resolved, ultimately results are of higher quality and enjoy wider support if they’re based in consensus. Accordingly, we will need voting procedures but it’s basic to the structure and workflow of RSSAC that work is not to advance without at least a strong attempt to make sure it enjoys consensus support in the Caucus, with part of the Exec’s role to include oversight that this requirement is met.

## The Exec

The Exec is defined and has been formed of named representatives from each root server operator organization, with observers from each of the Root Zone Management (RZM) partners—NTIA, IANA, and Verisign.

In accordance with the charter in the bylaws of ICANN, this initial Exec has elected co-chairs and formed work parties to draft this and other organizing documents.

The primary purpose of the Exec is administrative: it has ultimate responsibility for determining what work RSSAC takes on (by request from ICANN Board or staff, or by other community groups, or by RSSAC members), keeping that work moving, and finally determining that a work item has been completed, in accordance with the principles above, and may be sent as correspondence, posted publicly, or otherwise finalized as RSSAC work product.

The Exec is not intended as the primary nexus for producing analyses and recommendations. The responsibility for organizing work and getting it done rests with the Caucus (more below).

In order to do its work, particularly of making sure that RSSAC activities are completed with appropriate degrees of outreach and review, the Exec may also include liaisons from other ICANN constituencies or outside organizations such as the ICANN Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). The chairs also have discretion to invite outside experts and other guests as might be appropriate. Such liaisons and guests, like those to other ICANN ACs and working groups, are by default non-voting.

The Exec also oversees liaisons invited from RSSAC to other ICANN community groups, and helping to staff working groups drawn from multiple SO/ACs such as the AoC review teams.

Nothing in the rules for the Exec should prohibit Exec members or liaisons from participating in working parties of the Caucus. In fact it's anticipated that most of the meaningful opportunities to influence the output of the RSSAC will occur in the Caucus, not the Exec.

Summary on Role of the Exec: to decide what work RSSAC is to do, and determine when it is done. This may also entail getting a "stuck" task "unstuck" and being able to tell other groups what *\*isn't\** RSSAC's job. Inputs to this are requests or queries from the ICANN Board or staff, or the exec itself, or other ICANN SO/ACs, or the caucus or community. Results are documents commenting on an issue or answering a question, or rationales for declining to produce such documents.

The risk for the Exec is that, since it has specific representation from root server

operator organizations, it will drift into attempting to represent "the root server operators" or, worse, that it will be assumed to exist to do so, leading to the caucus and community believing themselves to be disenfranchised from decision-making authority within RSSAC. At the same time, there's also a risk it will see itself, or be seen by others, as having authority over root server operators and that its role is "telling root server operators what to do". Part of the role of the Exec is to navigate RSSAC between these inappropriate extremes, as it is expected to produce advice that root server operators, ICANN, and others will want to take but has no enforcement power over anyone.

## The Caucus

The RSSAC Caucus is envisioned as the bulk of the membership of RSSAC and the bulk of the resources for getting work done, both in substance and in a form that has consensus support.

Members of the caucus are interested, qualified members of the community-- DNS and other infrastructure experts, experienced technical and operations leaders for users such as ccTLD operators, academics with background and interests in analyzing areas such as appropriate metrics for root server performance, and people familiar with the policy and technical components of the larger ICANN community.

The RSSAC caucus will *\*not\** be an analog to the SSAC; its scope is significantly narrower and also significantly deeper; it's expected to generate not only insight but practical, operationally appropriate advice to root server operators, ICANN, and the community. The Caucus is the primary source of people to do the work of RSSAC, and members (including liaisons from other groups) should be prepared to roll up their sleeves and participate-- including disclosure of conflicts of interest, honoring requests for confidentiality on some particulars, etc.

The "gate" to get work out of a working group and submitted to the Exec as an RSSAC work product should be that it has consensus support from the responsible working group and the Caucus as a whole. Consensus, as we've all drilled on in the IETF context and elsewhere, doesn't mean unanimity, but it also doesn't mean things don't get published indefinitely because one important constituent or even a couple of particularly vocal individuals don't like it.

Exact membership criteria are a matter for the operating procedures discussion, but the Caucus is the primary mechanism for Exec members, the incoming liaisons, and others to participate in the work.

## Liaisons

RSSAC expects both to invite inbound liaisons from other bodies (not necessarily only ICANN-affiliated bodies) and to appoint outbound liaisons as invited by other bodies.

General liaison principles: Within ICANN's other SOs and ACs, the inviting body requests a liaison on a continuing basis and the organization sending the liaison appoints a person according to its own processes. RSSAC can request re-confirmation of that liaison in any basis it chooses; the ICANN Board uses an annual cycle for organizations sending liaisons to reconfirm them, but multiple ACs have decided that it makes sense for them to appoint liaisons for multiple-year terms in order to establish continuity and a base of knowledge on the part of the appointed person. There have also been working groups and task forces that invite inbound liaisons for the specific term set for those bodies to do the work they were convened to do, and end afterwards, such as annual Nominating Committees and review teams convened under the ICANN/DoC Affirmation of Commitments.

Typically also, in the ICANN community and commonly elsewhere, such liaisons are non-voting in the body to which they're sent but otherwise participate in the deliberations of the group.

## Inbound liaisons

RSSAC has historically invited liaisons from the IAB (Internet Architecture Board) and the ICANN SSAC, and has consensus to invite them to the new RSSAC. In addition, it is contemplated that other ICANN SOs or ACs will request, or favorably receive, similar invitations from RSSAC. Those bodies may appoint liaisons as their own processes dictate, who will participate in deliberations of the Exec as non-voting members. Per the discussion of the role of the Caucus, however, it's also noted in no uncertain terms that the Exec is not expected to be the place where such liaisons can make their largest contribution to the work of RSSAC. Inbound liaisons sent to RSSAC are expected to participate in the activities of the caucus as well as the Exec, just like other Exec members.

## Outbound liaisons

ICANN's bylaws include a non-voting liaison to the Board of Directors from RSSAC. RSSAC may also request or receive invitations to send liaisons to other groups. RSSAC will, as part of its operating processes, and in consultation with those inviting bodies, define selection and reporting guidelines for such liaisons.

## The community

RSSAC expects that there will be an important contribution to its work by interested people from the wider community, who may participate in its work as they wish.

While the caucus will be made of formally recognized members who may have agreed to specific commitments, as described above, there's a valuable role for a wider public presence in the work of RSSAC in reviewing work in progress, providing feedback on scoping work items, and recruiting members for more formal roles.

The mechanism for supporting public involvement is not obvious. We do note that one component is probably an open mailing list, publicly archived and open to any subscriber, with some enforcement of ICANN's Code of Conduct for participants. Another component should be a wiki or similar collaborative work environment on an RSSAC website.