

Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Review 2014 – Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Why is there a GNSO Review?

ICANN's [Bylaws](#) require that its structures, including the GNSO, be reviewed on a five-year cycle. According to the Bylaws, the goal of the review is “to determine (i) whether that organization has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure, and (ii) if so, whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve its effectiveness.”

This review is part of ICANN's commitment to continuous improvement, accountability and transparency. It uses mechanisms and measures to maintain public confidence in the viability, reliability and accountability of ICANN.

The GNSO Review addresses the new, improved approach to conducting reviews. It will inform the work on evolving ICANN's Review Framework, as part of the broader accountability discussion.

What is the scope of the GNSO Review?

Based on direction from the Board, the current review comprises of an examination of the GNSO's **organizational effectiveness** in accordance with the ICANN-provided objective and quantifiable criteria. The [Structural Improvements Committee](#) of the Board (SIC) is responsible for the oversight of ICANN's structural reviews.

Within the organizational effectiveness context, the review will focus on addressing areas such as purpose of the organization; its processes and means of conducting its work; and its outcomes. The operations of the GNSO Working Groups, the GNSO Council and the GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies will be evaluated. Structural topics are likely to come up as part of this work.

The current review will include an assessment of the effectiveness of structural changes that resulted from the last review, as it relates to the organizational effectiveness of the

GNSO. The 360 Assessment and interviews will provide the community with an opportunity to express their position on the GNSO structure.

Whether structural changes are needed and when such changes should be considered would be topics for discussion after the GNSO review is finalized, possibly during the implementation planning, depending on the nature of findings and recommendations.

What role does the Structural Improvements Committee of the Board play in the GNSO Review?

The [Structural Improvements Committee](#) (SIC) of the ICANN Board is responsible for review and oversight of policies relating to ICANN's ongoing organizational review process, as mandated by Article IV, Section 4 (Periodic Review of ICANN Structure and Operations) of ICANN's Bylaws. For more information see the [Charter](#) of the SIC. In addition to providing oversight, the SIC confirmed the Independent Examiner, will accept the final report and the implementation plan and prepare recommendations for Board action.

Will the review propose changes to the GNSO Structure?

While we cannot speculate what the outcome of the Review will be, the mandate outlined in the [Request for Proposal](#) does NOT include proposing a new structure.

Based on the scope of the review of the organizational effectiveness of the GNSO, the review will focus on addressing areas such as purpose of the organization; its processes and means of conducting its work; and its outcomes. The operations of the GNSO Working Groups, the GNSO Council and the GNSO Stakeholder Groups and Constituencies will be evaluated. Structural topics are likely to come up as part of this work.

The review and its requirements will be managed in a clear and scheduled process, empowering the GNSO and broader community to be a part of the solution and improvement efforts.

Who will perform the Review?

While an Independent Examiner will perform the review, the GNSO community also has an important role: performing a self-assessment, providing direct input and implementing improvements.

How was the Independent Examiner selected?

The selection of an Independent Examiner is done in accordance with the process defined in [SIC Systematization of Organizational Reviews Processes](#) and involves Organizational Review staff and the Structural Improvements Committee of the Board (SIC). A competitive bidding process was launched on 23 April with an open [Request for Proposal for Review of Generic Names Supporting Organization \(GNSO\)](#). Seven submitted proposals were carefully evaluated and the evaluation results and scores were presented for consideration and action by the ICANN Board Structural Improvements Committee (SIC). The selection criteria included: Knowledge and Expertise (including knowledge of ICANN), Qualifications of the Professional Team Assigned (including ability to act independently, without conflict of interest); Proposed Methodology; Ability to Deliver High Quality, Useful Report and Recommendations; and Costs.

Who has been selected as the Independent Examiner?

Westlake Governance Limited was selected as the Independent Examiner for the GNSO Review. [Westlake Governance](#) is a globally-focused, New Zealand-based consulting firm, serving clients from a wide cross-section of not-for-profit, commercial and government-owned sectors. The firm has performed reviews of ICANN's At-Large Advisory Committee ("ALAC") and the Root Server System Advisory Committee ("RSSAC"). (See [Announcement of Westlake Governance Appointment](#).)

How can individuals and groups within the GNSO structure get involved?

You can get involved in a variety of ways. For groups, a call has gone out to each GNSO

Stakeholder Group and Constituency to consider designating a representative to join the GNSO Review Working Party. Other Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees interested in joining the GNSO Review Working Party can appoint an observer.

Any interested individual is invited to provide direct input to the GNSO Review Working Party by contacting gnso-review-dt@icann.org and/or by participating in the 360 Assessment.

What is the 360 Assessment and how will it be used?

A new component within the organizational review, the 360 Assessment is designed to gather data for the Independent Examiner to use in the GNSO Review process and also may inform GNSO self-improvement efforts. This online tool will collect feedback from the GNSO community, other ICANN structures and community members, the Board and staff. The 360 Assessment questions have been developed based on criteria that will be used for the overall GNSO Review.

The 360 Assessment will be launched in August 2014 with a public announcement and all interested individuals are invited to participate.

The 360 Assessment has been formulated and implemented by the Independent Examiner. The GNSO Review Working Party has provided extensive feedback on the design and the questions, but the actual 360 Assessment will be conducted and implemented by the Independent Examiner with support from staff. The Independent Examiner used the feedback provided by the GNSO Review Working Party and other community members to formulate the 360 Assessment, ensuring that this tool collects adequate information from a broad group of people to meet the needs of data gathering for their review work. The data collected via the 360 Assessment will be summarized and analyzed by the Independent Examiner, and used as an input into their review work.

What happens to the information submitted as part of the 360 Assessment?

The Independent Examiner, Westlake Governance Limited (Westlake) has developed and is managing the 360 Assessment as an important component of the full review. Westlake will collate, analyze and summarize all responses, and will supplement the assessment survey with other methods of data collection including a review of documents and one-on-one interviews.

Individual responses will not be made available publicly. Your input will remain confidential to Westlake as the Independent Examiner. Additional information will be provided in the instructions accompanying the 360 Assessment.

What is the GNSO Review Working Party and what is its role?

The Structural Improvements Committee of the Board (SIC) has requested that a GNSO Review Working Party be assembled to act as a liaison between the GNSO, the Independent Examiner and the SIC. The Working Party will also provide input on review criteria and the 360 Assessment, coordinate interviews and objectively supply clarification and responses to the draft findings and recommendations. Once the final report is issued and the Board takes action on it, the GNSO Review Working Party is expected to coordinate with the GNSO community to prepare an Implementation Plan and champion implementation of improvement activities.

The membership of the GNSO Review Working Party includes members representing the diversity of the GNSO community. The activities of the GNSO Review Working Party are conducted in an open and fully transparent manner. Contact gnso-review-dt@icann.org for more information. See activities of the GNSO Review Working Party on their [wiki](#).

A call has gone out to each GNSO Stakeholder Group and Constituency to consider designating a representative to join the GNSO Review Working Party. The names of the proposed candidates were submitted to the GNSO Secretariat (gnso.secretariat@gnso.icann.org). Other Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees interested in joining the GNSO Review Working Party can appoint an observer. For more information, please see [GNSO Review: Forming GNSO Review Working Party](#).

What methods will the Independent Examiner use to collect data and information?

The Independent Examiner may use the following methods to gather information:

- Examination of available documentation, records, and reports;
- Outcomes from the 360 Assessment, an online mechanism to collect and summarize feedback from members of the GNSO structure, interested members from ICANN community and other structures, members of the Board and staff;

- Integration of Assessments of the Second Accountability and Transparency Review Team
- (See: Appendix A of the Second Accountability and Transparency Review Team Report and Recommendations); and
- Limited interviews, as needed.

The review methodology will involve collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide the Independent Examiner with a sufficient basis for formulating findings and recommendations. The online 360 Assessment will have places for free-form feedback in addition to collecting structured responses. The Independent Examiner will conduct one-on-one interviews to supplement information gathered through the 360 Assessment and review of documents as necessary.

How will individuals be selected for interviews with the Independent Examiner?

One-on-one interviews will be used to supplement other means of gathering information. Candidates for the interviews will be selected based on input and recommendations from the GNSO Review Working Party. Additional interviewees may be selected from individuals responding to the 360 Assessment.

What happens when the Independent Examiner completes the review?

Once the Independent Examiner collects sufficient information and formulates his/her analysis and preliminary findings, he/she will engage with the GNSO to validate the accuracy and completeness of findings and the usefulness and feasibility of draft recommendations. The Draft Report, reflecting clarification and responses from the GNSO, will be published for public comment. The report will be updated to reflect public comments and published in its final form. The final report, along with public comments, will be considered by the Board. After the Board takes action and accepts the report, the implementation phase will begin.

What's the timeline for the GNSO Review?

Activity	Dates
RFP published	21 April 2014
Briefing with GNSO (webinar)	7 May
GNSO to identify GNSO Review Working Party	19 May
Refine examination criteria	July
Public announcement of independent reviewer	23 June
Start of review work	23 June
Implement 360 assessment	August
Summary results from 360 Assessment	September
Draft Report 1	30 September
Clarification and rebuttal from GNSO	October
Draft Report 2	31 October
Public comment period	November – January 2015
Final Report	January 2015
Preparation of Implementation Plan	February – March 2015
Implement Recommendations	April 2015 – February 2016

Dates represent best estimates at the time the FAQs were updated and may change.

How will we know whether the recommendations made a difference?

The impact of implemented improvements will be tracked, measured and reported. In addition, all ICANN community members will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the implemented improvements through the 360 Assessment, which is expected to become a standard part of the organizational review process.

Have other questions?

Please email your questions to larisa.gurnick@icann.org or matt.ashtiani@icann.org.