

Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice Review Team (CCTRT): Terms of Reference

1. The Affirmation of Commitments

The Affirmation of Commitments signed on 30 September 2009 between ICANN and the U.S. Department of Commerce (the “AoC”) contain specific provisions for periodic review of four key ICANN objectives, including “promoting competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice.”¹

Under the AoC, ICANN agreed to ensure that as it contemplates expanding the top-level domain space, the various issues that are involved (including competition, consumer protection, security, stability and resiliency, malicious abuse issues, sovereignty concerns, and rights protection) will be adequately addressed prior to implementation. In AOC Section 9.3, ICANN has committed that “when new gTLDs (whether in ASCII or other language character sets) have been in operation for one year, ICANN will organize a review that will examine the extent to which the introduction or expansion of gTLDs has promoted competition, consumer trust and consumer choice, as well as effectiveness of (a) the application and evaluation process, and (b) safeguards put in place to mitigate issues involved in the introduction or expansion. ICANN will organize a further review of its execution of the above commitments two years after the first review, and then no less frequently than every four years. The reviews will be performed by volunteer community members and the review team will be constituted and published for public comment, and will include the following (or their designated nominees): the Chair of the GAC, the CEO of ICANN, representatives of the relevant Advisory Committees and Supporting Organizations, and independent experts. Composition of the review team will be agreed jointly by the Chair of the GAC (in consultation with GAC members) and the CEO of ICANN. Resulting recommendations of the reviews will be provided to the Board and posted for public comment. The Board will take action within six months of receipt of the recommendations.”

This document sets forth the terms of reference that the CCTRT will use to carry out its duties under the AoC.

The goal of the CCTRT is to assess the impact of the expansion of the DNS marketplace on competition, consumer trust and consumer choice. In addition, this review shall examine the effectiveness of the application and evaluation process used for the 2012 round of gTLD applications, and the effectiveness of the safeguards enacted to mitigate issues involved in the introduction of new gTLDs. The Program Implementation Review, a series of self-assessments examining the effectiveness and efficiency of ICANN’s implementation of the New gTLD Program. The review defines effectiveness as, “to what degree the process (of implementing the New gTLD Program) was successful in producing desired results/achieving objectives.” The CCTRT will analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to produce recommendations for the ICANN Board to consider and adopt.

¹ The full text from the Affirmation of Commitments, #3 is: This document affirms key commitments by DOC and

ICANN, including commitments to: (a) ensure that decisions made related to the global technical coordination of the DNS are made in the public interest and are accountable and transparent; (b) preserve the security, stability and resiliency of the DNS; (c) promote competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice in the DNS marketplace; and (d) facilitate international participation in DNS technical coordination.

This inaugural review will lay the groundwork for recurring reviews, which the AoC requires no less frequently than every three years, subject to potential revision of the ICANN bylaws. Those recurring reviews will play an important role in assessing how ICANN continues to meet its commitments in the areas of competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice. This first review will examine the initial impact of the New gTLD Program (the Program) in these three areas.

2. Background

ICANN has anticipated this review since the AoC was signed with the U.S. Department of Commerce in 2009. Since that time, the ICANN Board has turned to the community for its input on metrics that may be used for data-based recommendations. To that end, the ICANN Board tasked the GNSO and ALAC to propose metrics in December 2010. In June 2011, at the ICANN meeting in Singapore, a working group was formed to come up with recommended metrics for the CCT review. The working group's goal was to provide the ICANN Board with definitions, measures, and targets that could be useful to the CCT review team. In December 2012, the group presented the board with a document detailing 70 recommended metrics, with proposed definitions and three-year targets.

The ICANN Board formed the IAG-CCT in September 2013 to review those recommended metrics and make recommendations to the review team based on an evaluation of the feasibility, utility and cost-effectiveness of each of the proposed 70 metrics. The group first met in November 2013, via conference call, then in-person at the ICANN 48 meeting in Buenos Aires. In March 2014, the IAG-CCT made an interim recommendation to commission a survey of Internet users and registrants to gauge their sense of trust and choice, and an economic study on gTLD pricing and marketplace. The ICANN Board adopted those recommendations.² In September 2014, the IAG-CCT submitted its final recommendations³ to the ICANN Board, which adopted those recommendations in February 2015.⁴ Those recommendations included the collection of 66 metrics related to competition, consumer trust and consumer choice. The IAG-CCT also revised the original recommendations from the GNSO-ALAC working group.⁵

3. Framework

ICANN's commitment to promoting competition, consumer trust and consumer choice within the New gTLD Program requires a clear understanding of the Program's history and its role in ICANN, followed by a focused examination of its development and implementation. As one of the four key objectives to be evaluated as part of the AoC, the CCT review will also help frame how ICANN may approach future rounds of new gTLDs.

a. Scope

² See: <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2014-03-27-en#2.c>

³ See: <https://community.icann.org/display/IAG/IAG-CCT+report>

⁴ See: <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2015-02-12-en#1.e>

⁵ See:

<https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/48349551/Combined%20GNSO%20and%20ALAC%20Advice%20REVISED1.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1418865491000&api=v2>

This review shall assess the New gTLD Program's impact on competition, consumer trust and consumer choice. This includes reviewing the implementation of policy recommendations from the launch of the program through delegation and on to general availability. To conduct the evaluation, review team members may be asked to review data derived from processes related to the program, as well as broader inputs on marketplace indicators and consumer trends and feedback from the community. While these other inputs are not related to this particular review, the findings and information produced from these may be useful to the CCTRT's work. For those efforts for which this review is critical, to complete their work, the CCTRT shall endeavor to issue its findings and recommendations in a timely manner such that those efforts may take these into consideration. Efforts under way that will rely on the findings and recommendations from this group may follow its progress on the CCTRT wiki page: <https://community.icann.org/display/CCT/Competition%2C+Consumer+Trust+and+Consumer+Choice>

b. Data and Metrics

With the ICANN Board's February 2015 adoption of the IAG-CCT's 66 recommended metrics for collection, ICANN staff has been continuously gathering and publishing data related to most of these metrics on the ICANN website: <https://www.icann.org/resources/reviews/cct/metrics>

The February 2015 Board resolution also noted that the IAG-CCT, in its final report, set aside a group of metrics to be revisited by the CCTRT, when it began its work, as they required additional contextual analysis, or might require additional resources to capture the data. These metrics are noted in Table 4 of the IAG-CCT final report (<https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/48349551/IAG-CCT%20Final%20report.docx?version=1&modificationDate=1418863127000&api=v2>). ICANN staff may provide their recommendations on feasibility for internal data collection and resources required for metrics that may require external data gathering.

c. ICANN Evaluation Reports

The AoC mandates an examination of the effectiveness of the application and evaluation processes used in the 2012 round of gTLD applications, including ICANN's implementation of the policy recommendations made for the New gTLD Program. To help inform the CCTRT, staff has compiled and published the Program Implementation Review report to provide staff perspective on the execution of the New gTLD Program, as well as incorporating feedback from stakeholders including applicants, service providers and other community members.⁶

Finally, the review will also consider the effectiveness of safeguards enacted to mitigate abuse. This is understood to include a review of the rights protection mechanisms that were implemented in the program, as well as other efforts to mitigate DNS abuse (such as the various Public Interest Commitments incorporated into Registry Agreements). Reports produced on these topics will provide detailed insight to help the CCTRT enhance its recommendations and establish a proposed order of

⁶ See: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/reviews/implementation/draft-program-review-16sep15-en.pdf>

priority for implementation, as recommended by Recommendation 9 of the CCWG-Accountability proposal.⁷

d. Definitions

An assessment of this type requires a common understanding of the terms associated with the review: consumer, competition, consumer trust and consumer choice.

Consumer: Consumers generally fall into two categories: (i) Registrants (and potential registrants); and (ii) Internet Users who make use of domains through DNS resolution, such as by navigating to a URL or sending an e-mail. Actual Internet users and registrants, and potential registrants. As such government agencies and businesses qualify as consumers as well.

Consumer trust: The confidence Consumers have in the function, reliability, safety, security, and authenticity of the domain name system. This includes (i) trust in the consistency of name resolution; (ii) confidence by Internet users that they can safely navigate to a domain name to find and safely use the site they intend to reach; (iv) confidence that a TLD registry operator is fulfilling the Registry's stated purpose; and (v) confidence by a Registrant in a domain's registration process and life cycle.

Consumer choice: The range of meaningful options arising from new entrants and innovations over incumbent offerings available to Consumers for domain names (including in their preferred languages and scripts.)

Competition: The rivalry between two or more parties in the domain name ecosystem (including but not limited to registries, registrars, resellers, registry service providers and registrants) acting independently to secure the business of a third party by offering innovative products and services and or the most favorable terms.

Relevant Market: For the purpose of this review, the CCTRT shall consider the competitive effects, costs, and benefits of the introduction of new gTLDs on the international domain name market place, which also includes legacy gTLDs and ccTLDs. Furthermore, the team may explore the impact of the new gTLD program on the broader "internet identity" (social media, WIX, etc.) market. However, competitive dynamics in the domain name ecosystem unrelated to the introduction of new gTLDs are not in the scope of this review. The review team may break down the overall market by sector or region for its review and recommendations.

4. Process

CCTRT work will be conducted in English via teleconference calls, Adobe Connect web meetings and in person.

⁷ See:

<https://community.icann.org/display/acctcrosscomm/Final+Report?preview=/56989168/57999559/Rec%209%20-%20AOC%20reviews%20-%201st%20reading.pdf>

a) Communications and transparency

- i. Teleconferences will be recorded, subject to the right of a member of the CCTRT to take the discussion “off the record.” Face to face meetings will be streamed, to the extent practicable and subject to the right of a member of the CCTRT to take the discussion “off the record.” Wherever a meeting is taken “off the record,” however, the record shall reflect this decision, as well as the underlying considerations that motivated such action.
- ii. The CCTRT will endeavor to post (a) action items within 24 hours of any telephonic or face to face meeting; and (b) streaming video and/or audio recordings as promptly as possible after any such meeting, subject to the limitations and requirements described in subsection (i) above.
- iii. The CCTRT will maintain a public website, <https://community.icann.org/display/CCT/Competition%2C+Consumer+Trust+and+Consumer+Choice>, on which it will post: (a) minutes, correspondence, meeting agendas, background materials provided by ICANN, members of the RT, or any third party; (ii) audio recordings and/or streaming video; (b) the affirmations and/or disclosures of members of the CCTRT under the CCTRT’s conflict of interest policy; (c) input, whether from the general public, from ICANN stakeholders, from ICANN staff or Board members, governments, supporting organizations and advisory committees, etc. Absent overriding privacy or confidentiality concerns, all such materials should be made publicly available on the CCTRT website within 2 business days of receipt.
- iv. Email communications among members of the CCTRT shall be publicly archived automatically via the CCT-review email cct-review@icann.org.

b. ICANN Staff Input

CCTRT staff will facilitate additional data gathering and coordinate dialogue with additional staff to provide expertise regarding certain elements of the program or its operations, as appropriate. To inform the CCTRT’s work, staff will also solicit outside expertise as requested by CCTRT members and as budget and resources permit.

ICANN staff may provide written responses to any questions posed by the CCTRT, and/or provide input to the CCTRT in connection with issues that the CCTRT did not raise but which, in the estimation of staff, are relevant to the work of the CCTRT.

ICANN staff will also provide draft review team guidelines and procedures developed with Board oversight, to assist the CCTRT in its deliberations to cover additional topics beyond those identified in this Terms of Reference.

c. Community Consultations

Staff will also assist the CCTRT leadership at their request with materials, meeting arrangements and facilitating outreach with other ICANN supporting organizations and advisory committees and the ICANN Board, as well as individual community members through comment periods, questionnaires and surveys. The CCTRT will explore other avenues for outreach to the public to engage and collect inputs with respect to this review. This may include community sessions both in person at ICANN meetings or online in Adobe Connect web sessions or any other agreed technology that is convenient to all members, and has the requisite capabilities such as recording of sessions.

5. Work of Review Team

a. Decision-making within the CCTRT

Under the AoC, the CCTRT is to make recommendations regarding how the New gTLD Program impacted competition, consumer trust and consumer choice.

The CCTRT will seek, but will not require, full consensus with respect to such recommendations. To the extent that the CCTRT is unable to achieve consensus with respect to any such recommendations, its reports and recommendations will reflect the variety and nature of the CCTRT views. (See GNSO types of consensus as noted in Section 3.6 of the [GNSO Guidelines](#) for examples.)

Any conflicts of interest that may affect the views of a CCTRT member must be disclosed and addressed in accordance with the conflict of interest policy discussed above. The CCTRT will ensure that all documents are full consensus documents i.e. they accurately reflect the discussion held.

b. Meetings

- i. Face to Face Meetings: The CCTRT intends to hold its meetings concurrent with ICANN meetings and as needed to advance and complete its review. The CCTRT shall meet in person in (a) Los Angeles on 22-23 February 2016; in Marrakech on 9-10 March 2016; and on additional dates as needed.
- ii. Telephonic Meetings: In between face to face meetings, the CCTRT and/or working groups of the CCTRT shall conduct regular telephonic meetings. All such meetings shall be publicly noticed on the CCTRT wiki as far in advance as possible, and agendas for each such meeting will be published no fewer than 2 days in advance.

c. Reporting

- i. Members of the CCTRT are, as a general matter, free to report back to their constituencies and others with respect to the work of the CCTRT, unless the information involves confidential information.

- ii. While the CCTRT will strive to conduct its business on the record to the maximum extent possible, members must be able to have frank and honest exchanges among themselves, and the CCTRT must be able to have frank and honest exchanges with stakeholders and stakeholder groups. Moreover, individual members and the CCTRT as a whole must operate in an environment that supports open and candid exchanges, and that welcomes re-evaluation and repositioning in the face of arguments made by others.
- iii. Accordingly, the CCTRT will retain the authority to determine that an interaction will be held under the Chatham House Rule: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."⁸
- iv. Members of the CCTRT are volunteers, and each will assume a fair share of the work of the team.
- v. Members of the CCTRT shall execute the investigation according to the plan, based on best practices for fact-based research, analysis and drawing conclusions.
- vi. Where appropriate, and with the consensus of the CCTRT, ICANN staff will be used to provide administrative support services related to travel, meeting logistics, and technology. To preserve the independence and integrity of the CCTRT, however, ICANN staff will perform substantive tasks (i.e., report drafting, etc.) with respect to the work of the CCTRT, as requested. If necessary, the Chair and Vice Chairs of the CCTRT shall propose an approach to providing appropriate support to the CCTRT efforts.

d. Participation

- i. Members could be assisted by parties outside the CCTRT and ICANN staff when necessary (e.g. for translation purposes) although the emphasis must remain on direct interaction between the named members. CCTRT Observers should not intervene themselves, nor should they be able to substitute for a member who is unable to participate. This applies to conference calls as well as face-to-face meetings. Remote participation possibilities should be provided in cases where a member is unable to attend a face-to-face meeting. Independent experts are deemed to be full Members of the CCTRT.

⁸ See <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chathamhouserule> for more information

This rule was developed by the UK "Royal Institute of International Affairs" (whose home is at Chatham House in London) "with the aim of providing anonymity to speakers and to encourage openness and the sharing of information. It is now used throughout the world as an aid to free discussion. Meetings do not have to take place at Chatham House, or be organized by Chatham House, to be held under the Rule".

- ii. The CCTRT leadership i.e. Chair [and Issue Leads] of the working group will coordinate the work of the CCTRT, and will serve as full participants in the substantive deliberations of the CCTRT and in the development of the CCTRT'S deliverables. All members of the CCTRT will have equivalent voting rights.
- iii. External Experts (if applicable). The External Experts are third parties that may be engaged with to support the CCTRT work. These experts would be those engaged aside from the independent experts, who were chosen to participate in the review. Selection of the experts to support the work of the CCTRT will follow ICANN procurement processes and be conducted by an open ICANN RFP. The RFP will be based upon the criteria and expertise that the CCTRT has determined.

e. Tools /Means of Communications

The CCTRT will endeavor to use online communications capabilities to further its work. In particular, the RT will use Adobe Connect meeting rooms in connection with its telephonic meetings. The materials available in these settings will be made available to the public in keeping with open and transparent processes and the policies contained in this methodology.

f. Indicators/Metrics

A set of indicators of competition, consumer trust and consumer choice has been adopted by the ICANN Board for consideration in this review.

The CCTRT may identify a methodology for analyzing these metrics. In addition, the CCTRT shall take into account reports created to support review of Program Implementation, Rights Protection Mechanisms, and safeguards against DNS abuse. In addition, the CCTRT may identify other sources of data it wishes to help inform in its review.

Finally, the CCTRT may request additional data or reports be generated to support unanticipated aspects of the review.

6. Deliverables

a. Interim Recommendations

The CCTRT might make interim recommendations to the GNSO and/or Board to launch new policy development initiatives, or further implementation work on existing policies, in tandem with the review where there is full consensus among the RT to do so.

b. Findings

The CCTRT will present and document its findings on the degree to which the new gTLD program did or did not enhance overall competition, consumer trust and consumer choice in the gTLD space. Further, the CCTRT will present and document the successes and challenges experienced by the community in the application process and the attempt to mitigate the adverse consequences of the new gTLD program.

c. Final Recommendations

- i. The CCTRT will endeavor to post its draft prioritized recommendations in December 2016 in order to solicit public comment. Recommendations should be clear, concise, concrete, prioritized and implementable.
- ii. The recommendations will fall into two categories: those which can be implemented directly by staff and those which require further policy development by the community.
- iii. These recommendations will be limited to those designed to
 - Enhance competition, consumer trust and consumer choice in the gTLD marketplace; or
 - Improve elements of the application and evaluation processes; or
 - Advance efforts to mitigate abusive activity in the DNS
- iv. The team will document the rationale it has employed for any individual recommendation, and where possible, provide a quantitative target or metric for measurement of the recommendations' success.

d. Recommendations to next Review Panel(s)

Based on substantive review of its work, the CCTRT will provide recommendations regarding the procedures and conduct of future reviews as called for in the AoC. To facilitate the collection of this feedback, a survey will be conducted of all CCTRT members to gather information on the process, methodology and procedures used (so that the next CCT Review may be conducted using these lessons learned.) (so that lessons learnt are available to subsequent CCT Review Teams)

7. Conflicts of Interest

The CCTRT has adopted the conflict of interest policy set forth in Attachment A to this Methodology. All member declarations submitted in accordance with the conflict of interest policy will be made public and posted on the CCTRT website.

At every meeting the CCTRT members confirm if declaration has changed.

8. Timeline

The Review Team will issue the draft report for public comment in December 2016 and solicit input from the Community and stakeholders.

The Review Team will review the comments received on its draft recommendations and refine the report with the goal of producing the final recommendations by April 2017.