

RSSAC ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW 2

Self-Assessment

PART ONE

Mission, Purpose, and Structure of the RSSAC

The three points that the Bylaws mandate in Article 4.4 to form the core of any organizational review

- *The goal of the review, to be undertaken pursuant to such criteria and standards as the Board shall direct, shall be to determine (i) whether that organization, council or committee has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure, (ii) if so, whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve its effectiveness and (iii) whether that organization, council or committee is accountable to its constituencies, stakeholder groups, organizations and other stakeholders.*

Specific language in the Bylaws, Article 12.2(c), describing the role of the constituency

- *Ask if your organization is adhering to ICANN's stated mission (Article 1).*
 - *Ask if your organization can improve in relation to the Bylaws and, if so, how.*
 - *How effectively does your organization fulfill its purpose?*
 - *To what extent is your organization accountable to the wider ICANN community?*
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1. The RSSAC welcomes the opportunity to assess itself ahead of the regular organizational review mandated by the ICANN Bylaws. This exercise allows the RSSAC to reflect on and evaluate important issues impacting its purpose, structure, accountability, and transparency. The RSSAC looks forward to working with the independent examiner, the ICANN Board Organizational Effectiveness Committee, and the Multistakeholder Strategy and Strategic Initiatives team throughout this process.
2. Since 2015 and in light of the IANA stewardship transition, the RSSAC has been engaging in a series of discussions on matters related to the future of the root server system. This work has informed much needed conversations about the continuity, accountability, and evolution of the existing model. There may be consequential repercussions for the RSSAC as a result of this work. But the RSSAC believes its function continues to have purpose in the ICANN community. Changes in structure may be needed, and the RSSAC will advise on this matter as discussions develop and consensus emerges.
3. For the purposes of its work as an advisory committee to the ICANN Board and community, the RSSAC is aligned with and accountable to its designated community as outlined in the ICANN Bylaws. The RSSAC Operational Procedures more specifically define the composition of the RSSAC to include voting primary representatives and alternate representatives from the root server

operator organizations, nonvoting representatives of the root zone management partner organizations, and nonvoting liaisons from reciprocating bodies. The RSSAC encourages its members to regularly report on their work to their organizations.

4. Accountability of DNS root server operators is a critical topic of work for the RSSAC. This topic is out of scope for the current organizational review; however, the RSSAC acknowledges the significant implications of these questions to its own structure and work, the ICANN Board and community, and the global Internet. Root server operators remain committed to providing resilient, stable, and secure DNS root service and to engaging with the ICANN Board, community, and organization via RSSAC.
5. In 2014, the RSSAC published “RSSAC000v1: Operational Procedures” to provide consistency and administrative guidelines for its work. The RSSAC reviews this document annually, building on its practical experience. The document has been revised twice to give greater clarity and generally ensure the document is aligned with requirements and expectations of the ICANN Bylaws, Board, and community.
6. The RSSAC takes seriously its work with the ICANN community in fulfillment of its purpose. Specifically, the RSSAC—through its advice development—supports the mission of ICANN to facilitate “the coordination of the operation and evolution of the DNS root name server system.” Since its restructure, the RSSAC has published 28 distinct documents ranging from advisories and reports to statements and public comment responses. Two publications have been subsequently revised as well.
7. The RSSAC produces publications in part for the benefit of and consumption by the broader Internet community. In support of this mission, the RSSAC holds public meetings for two principal purposes: 1) to report to the community on its activities and other significant issues; and 2) to receive from the community questions, comments, and suggestions. The RSSAC may elect to hold multiple public meetings when the RSSAC is studying a topic of interest over a long period.
8. The results of RSSAC votes (publication approvals, policy/position decisions, appointments, elections, etc.) are captured in minutes of each meeting, which are posted to the RSSAC website after the RSSAC approves the draft version for publication. The RSSAC shares its minutes with the RSSAC Caucus every month. The RSSAC notifies appropriate groups via its liaisons and/or support staff about any decisions or votes.
9. The RSSAC interacts most regularly with the ICANN Board and occasionally with the SSAC and the GNSO (mainly policy development working groups requesting input). The RSSAC also appoints a nonvoting liaison to the Nominating

Committee and participates in specific review teams and cross-community working groups as resources permit. Given the increasing importance of specific reviews and cross-community work, the RSSAC is proactively updating its operational procedures to ensure its processes facilitate participation in these efforts. The RSSAC Co-Chairs participate in discussions with other community leaders and ICANN organization executives as well. Despite significant operational responsibilities and a smaller community, the RSSAC is committed to having a renewed and appropriate presence in ICANN efforts.

PART TWO

Implementation of Recommendations from RSSAC Organizational Review 1

Assessment of the outcome of the previous review, especially the implementation status of the recommendations in the final report, and to what extent this successfully addressed the problems identified by the independent examiner

- *Which recommendations from the last review were implemented and how? Were any not implemented, is so, why not?*
- *Of the recommendations implemented, have they brought about the desired results? How is this measured or what are the proof points?*
- *Were all issues identified in the Final Report addressed? If so, how? If not, why not?*
- *Have periodic updates on implementations been provided?*
- *Is the organization's charter current, based on how the organization operates today?*

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1. The first review of the RSSAC from 2008/2009 produced several recommendations for improvement as adopted the ICANN Board in 2010. As a result of discussions among the root server operators, the RSSAC implemented significant structural changes in 2013 in response to recommendations 1-4 in the final report of the independent examiner.
 2. The most notable structural change was the launch of the RSSAC Caucus. The RSSAC Caucus of DNS experts broadens the base of technical expertise and experience available for RSSAC work. The RSSAC Caucus produces RSSAC documents such as reports and advisories. The RSSAC Caucus consists of the members of RSSAC as well as individuals who have expressed willingness to work on RSSAC documents. Each member of the RSSAC Caucus maintains a public description of his or her willingness and motivation to help produce the RSSAC documents, relevant expertise, and formal interests in the work area of the RSSAC.
 3. RSSAC Caucus membership consists of 86 members, 49 percent of whom do not work in root sever operations. The RSSAC Caucus adopts the RSSAC Operational Procedures as its own. RSSAC Caucus deliberations/discussions take place in person, via teleconference or on a public mailing list. The RSSAC Caucus forms work parties to advance advice development. These work parties are open to all RSSAC Caucus members.
 4. The ICANN Board approved bylaw amendments in July 2013 which reconstituted RSSAC. Each root server operator appointed a representative, and the twelve organizations were divided randomly into three classes of four organizations each to stagger terms of service. The RSSAC Operational Procedures provide for a streamlined appointment process to allow for continuity of representation and subsequent confirmation by the ICANN Board.

5. The RSSAC also implemented alternate representation for each root server operator. Alternate representatives improve the functionality of the RSSAC meetings by making it easier to establish a quorum, facilitate the ability for each root server operator to maintain continuity and stay current on the business of the RSSAC, and expand the depth of expertise discussing RSSAC business. Alternate representatives serve at the pleasure of their appointing organization.
6. The RSSAC established two co-chair roles and an election procedure for them. The RSSAC Co-Chairs are responsible for working with the RSSAC to suggest priorities, manage the general administration and budget of the RSSAC, and conduct all meetings of the RSSAC. The RSSAC Co-Chairs also represent the RSSAC to the public. The RSSAC Co-Chairs provide oversight for all RSSAC activities.
7. Though not aligned with the restructure proposals of the independent examiner, the RSSAC—in coordination with the ICANN Board and organization and the root server operators—embraced the spirit of the recommendations. Structural conversations continue within the RSSAC through its annual review of operational procedures and ongoing discussions about the evolution of the root server system.
8. As part of the restructure, the RSSAC confirmed its various liaison relationships as outlined in recommendation 5. The RSSAC welcomes incoming liaisons from the IAB and the SSAC. The RSSAC also established formal liaison relationships with the root zone management partners. The RSSAC welcomes incoming liaisons from the root zone maintainer (Verisign) and the IANA Functions Operator (Public Technical Identifiers).
9. All incoming liaison relationships are specified through mutual agreement between the appointing organization and the RSSAC. The liaisons are nominated by the appointing organizations using their own procedures and confirmed by a majority vote of the RSSAC. The liaisons act as conduits between the two bodies reporting on matters that need to be coordinated or communicated between the two bodies.
10. The RSSAC maintains outgoing liaisons to the ICANN Board and the Nominating Committee. After the IANA stewardship transition, the RSSAC established outgoing liaison relationships to the Customer Standing Committee and the Root Zone Evolution Review Committee. There are established selection procedures for all outgoing liaison roles. The RSSAC is currently working on a review process for its outgoing liaisons.
11. Transparency is important to the RSSAC, and recommendation 6 prompted a thorough and continuous examination of its meeting practices. The RSSAC provides public briefings on its publications and updates on its ongoing work at

every ICANN meeting. The RSSAC also briefs the ICANN Board during its joint meetings. Moreover, the RSSAC participates in a tutorial series organized by the Office of the ICANN CTO, presenting on root server operations. The RSSAC welcomes invitations to explain its publications or to conduct joint meetings with other groups. The RSSAC is currently evaluating the status of its work sessions at ICANN meetings which are currently closed.

12. The RSSAC holds regular, emergency, and public meetings. Regular meetings are closed to the public and are held to conduct the work of the RSSAC. Regular meetings occur once a month via teleconference. The RSSAC Co-Chairs may schedule a public regular meeting at their discretion. Emergency meetings are closed to the public and enable RSSAC to respond to extraordinary circumstances. Regular and emergency meetings are open only to members of the RSSAC and invited guests. Public meetings are used both to present the work of the RSSAC and to engage the broader Internet community as further explained in Part One, paragraphs 7 and 8. Since 2015, the RSSAC has also met twice per year at workshops.
13. The RSSAC discontinued the practice of convening at IETF meetings as part of its restructure and reengagement with the ICANN community. This also maintains a clearer separation between the advice development work of RSSAC and the technical activities of root server operators. The RSSAC Caucus, however, meets at every other IETF meeting and at every ICANN annual general meeting. This is a reflection of the diverse, technical composition of the group.
14. In response to recommendation 7, the ICANN organization has increased its staff support for the RSSAC. The current support staff consists of a senior director overseeing advice development work, a senior manager providing strategic support, a technical specialist assisting work parties, and an operations coordinator overseeing administrative tasks. All four support staff members have other responsibilities and allocate a portion of their professional time to this work ensuring comprehensive support for the RSSAC.
15. The ICANN organization has also standardized its budget resources in support of the RSSAC. Based on demand and practical experience since the restructure, the RSSAC receives travel support for six travelers to each ICANN meeting. This directly addresses recommendation 8. The ICANN organization also allocates budget resources for two RSSAC workshops per year and travel support for four RSSAC Caucus members to IETF meetings when the RSSAC Caucus convenes. The RSSAC appreciates the current levels of support from the ICANN organization and continually assesses its needs with support staff and executives as appropriate.
16. Overall, the outcomes of the first organizational review have been positive for the RSSAC. Planning for implementation of the recommendations and then implementation itself prompted significant conversations within the RSSAC.

These extended discussions galvanized the RSSAC to undertake a major restructure and to begin work on key topics related to the future of the root server system. The RSSAC looks forward to continuing its own evolution and contributing to the mission of ICANN.

PART THREE

Scope of RSSAC Organizational Review 2

Areas that will be covered within the scope of the forthcoming organizational review:

A. Fulfilment of mission, adherence to policies and procedures, and organizational support

- *Has RSSAC considered its current level of participation and effectiveness within ICANN, and potential for improvements?*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 6](#). The RSSAC would like to engage more broadly with the ICANN community; however, its narrow scope and limited resources limit these interactions to targeted efforts and responses to direct requests. Please also refer to [Part One, paragraph 9](#).

- *What developments can RSSAC bring about to enhance communication and understanding of its purpose within ICANN?*

Please refer to [Part Two, paragraphs 11 and 12](#) and [Part Three, section D](#).

- *How do RSSAC's operations enhance ICANN's mission?*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 6](#).

- *Are the decision-making procedures of RSSAC consistent over the years – if not, why is flexibility important and which procedures (if any) should remain constant?*

As noted in [Part One, paragraph 5](#) and [Part Two, paragraph 3](#), the RSSAC and the RSSAC Caucus both conduct their work according to the RSSAC Operational Procedures.

- *Other elements to assess:*
 - *Appropriate procedures, competencies and support in place*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 5](#); [Part Two, paragraphs 2-10](#); [Part Two, paragraph 14](#); and [Part Two, paragraph 15](#).

- *Participation and representation of RSSAC within ICANN*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 6](#) and [Part One, paragraph 9](#).

- *Continuous development*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 2](#); [Part Two, paragraph 7](#); [Part Two, paragraph 11](#); and [Part Two, paragraphs 15 and 16](#).

- *Alignment with ICANN's mission (as per Bylaws)*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 6](#).

B. Accountability and transparency

- *How can RSSAC's processes be improved, including but not limited to transparency and accountability?*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraphs 2 through 4](#) and [Part Two, paragraph 11 and 12](#).

- *Determine if RSSAC has clearly defined its stakeholders with respect to ICANN, and if it is accountable to them.*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraphs 2 through 4](#).

C. RSSAC composition, membership processes, and participation

- *Is any change in structure or operations desirable to improve RSSAC's effectiveness?*
 - *RSSAC Caucus*

After three years, there are certainly areas for operational improvements in the RSSAC Caucus. The RSSAC regularly discusses these topics and also invites input from the RSSAC Caucus. Any structural or operational changes to the RSSAC Caucus and its relationship with the RSSAC will require coordination between the two groups.

- *Liaison representation*

Per its operational procedures and as circumstances dictate, the RSSAC may establish new outgoing liaison roles or accept new incoming liaison roles that are not specifically stipulated in its operational procedures. These liaison roles may be established from time to time through mutual agreements between the RSSAC and the reciprocal body until the operational procedures are updated accordingly.

- *Is RSSAC operating optimally within ICANN based on the needs of the ICANN community?*

Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 6](#). The RSSAC would like to engage more broadly with the ICANN community; however, its well-defined scope and limited resources limit these interactions to targeted efforts and responses to direct requests. Please also refer to [Part One, paragraph 9](#).

- *Does the RSSAC Caucus enhance the work of RSSAC? If so, how? If not, how could it be improved?*

The RSSAC Caucus plays a vital role in developing technical advice (RSSAC001, 002, 003) and contributing to the broader work of the RSSAC (RSSAC023, 024, 026, 028).

- *Are RSSAC operations performed at a standard that is consistent throughout the Committee?*

As noted in [Part One, paragraph 5](#) and [Part Two, paragraph 3](#), the RSSAC and the RSSAC Caucus both conduct their work according to the RSSAC Operational Procedures.

- *Considering the nature of RSSAC's mission and the scope of its work, does representation in the current RSSAC structure appropriately match ICANN's core value of diversity, as stated in Article 3.1 of the Bylaws?*

The root server operator organizations, the root zone management partner organizations and reciprocating bodies determine their representatives to RSSAC. Therefore, the RSSAC is structurally limited in its consideration of diversity. RSSAC Caucus membership, however, is open to the global technical community—inclusive of all aspects of diversity—with the requisite technical background.

- *Should there be a limit to the number of terms an RSSAC member may serve?*

Given the mission of the RSSAC, experience and expertise is required to contribute to its work. Representation is ultimately a matter for each individual root server operator organization to consider. The current three-year terms provide an opportunity for root server operators to evaluate their representation in the RSSAC. The RSSAC may provide guidance on this matter in the future, taking into account its work and evolution.

D. Communication

- *Do RSSAC communications regarding the operation, administration, security, and integrity of the Internet's root server system satisfy the needs of the ICANN Board, and the larger ICANN community?*

Ultimately, this is a question for the ICANN Board and community to address. Through recent interactions between the RSSAC and the ICANN Board, the level of communications between the two groups is robust, and both groups appreciate the current relationship. Of course, the RSSAC would like to engage more broadly with the ICANN community; however, its well-defined scope and limited resources limit these interactions to targeted efforts and responses to direct requests. Please refer to [Part One, paragraph 9](#).

- *Are RSSAC's communications and its community channels – both among its members about its internal processes, and among the ICANN community about its role and function – adequate to assure understanding and legitimacy of its action? If not, how can it be improved?*

Presently, the RSSAC maintains several liaison relationships as outlined in [Part Two, paragraphs 8 through 10](#), and in its operational procedures. These liaisons serve as conduits between the RSSAC and the reciprocating bodies. The RSSAC has also committed itself to various transparency efforts as explained in [Part Two, paragraph 11](#). Together, these RSSAC communications and community channels promote greater understanding about the RSSAC and its work among the ICANN Board, organization, and community and the global Internet community. The RSSAC continually reviews its outreach and engagement.

- *Does RSSAC invite/permit/allow stakeholder communications on topics of mutual import to the root server system and ICANN?*

The RSSAC welcomes invitations to explain its publications or to conduct joint meetings with other groups. The RSSAC has established an email address to field questions from the public: ask-rssac@icann.org. Please also refer to [Part One, paragraph 9](#).

- *Is RSSAC operating in such a way that interested parties may easily locate and retrieve details of its standards, procedures, and safeguards?*

All RSSAC publications, including its operational procedures, and meeting minutes are published on the RSSAC website. Please also refer to [Part One, paragraph 8](#).

- *Does RSSAC have the necessary resources, knowledge, and processes in place to effectively engage with the ICANN Board and ICANN community?*

Please refer to [Part Two, paragraphs 2 and 3](#) and [Part Two, paragraphs 14 and 15](#).

E. Governance and management, effectiveness of execution

- *Does the ICANN Board provide timely responses regarding new RSSAC appointees?*

The RSSAC and the ICANN Board coordinate through their respective support staff and through the RSSAC Liaison to the ICANN Board on the appointment of RSSAC members. This process generally takes several weeks depending on the formal meeting schedule of the ICANN Board. Regardless, the RSSAC Operational Procedures allow for root server operator representatives to begin their terms of service immediately to allow for continuity of representation.

- *Should the process for defining prospective RSSAC Caucus candidates be modified?*

The RSSAC established the RSSAC Caucus Membership Committee to ensure that the RSSAC Caucus has a high-functioning and healthy body of technical experts in DNS root name service. To this end, the RSSAC Caucus Membership Committee has been tasked with conducting outreach efforts in relevant forums (ICANN, IETF, DNS OARC meetings, etc.) to broaden and diversify the membership of the RSSAC Caucus.

The RSSAC Caucus Membership Committee considers several points when reviewing applicants for the RSSAC Caucus. These include DNS community experience, DNS knowledge, and commitment to participate. The current recruitment process has worked well for the RSSAC, growing the Caucus to 86 members in three years.

The RSSAC Caucus Membership Committee will soon launch a membership survey to assess annually the state of the RSSAC Caucus. Any modifications to the process for defining prospective RSSAC Caucus candidates should come to the RSSAC for consideration at the recommendation of the RSSAC Caucus Members Committee with input from RSSAC Caucus members.

F. Evaluation and measurement of outcomes

- *Are RSSAC processes and membership adequate to properly advise ICANN regarding the root server system?*

Given its mission, the membership of RSSAC—consisting of representatives from the root server operator and root zone management partner organizations—is adequately scoped. The RSSAC Operational Procedures have brought discipline and consistency to the processes of the RSSAC, ensuring it functions efficiently and effectively.

G. Effectiveness of implementation of prior review recommendations

- *Have implementation steps been completed, or initiated, from the prior review? If not, why not?*

Please refer to [Part Two](#).

- *Has implementation been completed to a degree that allows/permits effectiveness assessment? If so, have the implemented recommendations from previous review efforts led to the desired improvements?*

Please refer to [Part Two](#).

RESOURCES

- [RSSAC webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Meetings webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Publications webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Caucus webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Caucus mailing list archive](#)
- [RSSAC Caucus Meetings webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Caucus Statements of Interest webpage](#)
- [RSSAC Caucus Work Party webpage](#)