

Annex 7 – Staff Accountability Sub- Group Final Report and Recommendations – CCWG-Accountability



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Introduction

This document is the product of the Work Stream 2 Staff Accountability Sub-Group. The group conducted its work in line with the mandate set out in the Work Stream 1 report (see Supplement, Part VI).

The group adopted the definition of “accountability” used by the Board and organization in its development of the Board resolution on delegated authorities, passed in November 2016. Accountability in this context is defined, according to the NETmundial multistakeholder statement, as “the existence of mechanisms for independent checks and balances as well as for review and redress.”

The focus of this group was to assess “staff accountability” and performance at the service delivery, departmental, or organizational level, and not at the individual, personnel level.

The group’s work was a combination of problem-centered analysis as well as solution-focused exploration, with the goal of identifying any gaps to address as part of an effort to create a comprehensive system of checks and balances, based on the assessment of tools and systems currently or newly in place. The group considered the roles and responsibilities of ICANN’s Board, staff, and community members and the links between them; sought input on issues or challenges relating to staff accountability matters; and assessed existing staff accountability processes in ICANN.¹

In general, these efforts revealed an extensive accountability system both within the ICANN organization as well as in the mechanisms of review and redress afforded the community, including the Board’s role, the Empowered Community Powers, Complaints Office, and Office of the Ombuds. The group found that many of the issues or concerns identified by the group will benefit from simply making existing mechanisms more transparent. The group has identified a few important changes that will further enhance these accountability mechanisms. The changes proposed are designed to work with existing systems and processes, and to help establish mechanisms to support continuous improvement within the ICANN system.

Note: A description of the process followed by the sub-group is presented in a separate document, which also includes the worksheets used in the process of developing the recommendations

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Vqz7RDHgazhZfIVyv5tzAbtQfgLACqV-wGD7xPX9-w8/edit?ts=5a0488e3>).

¹ This report is using the agreed-upon usage for the ICANN organization (which includes all full, part-time, and contracted staff), ICANN Board, and ICANN community. The term ICANN, when used alone, refers to the trinity of ICANN Organization, ICANN Board and ICANN community.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. The primary role of those who work for ICANN – the “ICANN staff” or the “ICANN organization” – is to execute the strategy and plans adopted by the ICANN Board. They do the day-to-day work of the organization, working with the ICANN community in many cases to do that work.
2. This staff role is distinct from the roles of the ICANN Board and ICANN community.
3. The ICANN Board is made up of people from within and beyond the ICANN community. It is the formal governance body. It is responsible for the usual set of governance functions, and is integral to maintaining and developing ICANN as an open and accountable organization.
4. The ICANN community is the stakeholder groups and individuals who participate through its processes in advancing ICANN’s mission. They are co-producers in much of ICANN’s work. The community are not governors and are not staff; their involvement in ICANN is generally voluntary from ICANN’s point of view.
5. Formally speaking, staff accountability is through the Chief Executive to the ICANN Board.
6. Informally speaking, relationships between and among staff, Board, and community are integral to the successful work of the ICANN system. ICANN needs to hold staff accountable for succeeding in those relationships and in dealing with any problems.
7. In thinking about staff accountability, the important point is that collaboration is essential to ICANN’s success. The community needs to be sure, when appropriate, that ICANN staff will be congratulated and thanked when things are working well, and also to be sure, when appropriate, that staff are held accountable through the usual set of Human Resources (HR)² and performance management approaches where things don’t go well. Formal and informal systems need to be working together to achieve this.
8. Clear delegations and open, well-communicated process for resolving issues will help generate certainty and clarity and ensure that issues if they arise are dealt with well. Such an approach also generates important information and feedback for ICANN, allowing it to evolve and improve over time.
9. An ICANN document, “**ICANN’s Delegation of Authority Guidelines**³,” sets out more detail of the respective roles of ICANN’s Board, CEO, and staff, and how these interact. It was first published in November 2016. The organization has been improving the clarity of this over time as it has matured, and this document will continue to evolve over time.

² In this document HR is used in its Human Resources, i.e. personnel, meaning

³ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/delegation-of-authority-guidelines-08nov16-en.pdf>

Issues

The Staff Accountability Sub-Group reached out to the larger community to identify occasions on which there has been concern about accountability issues related to staff. The sub-group received descriptions of various issues, including copies of messages sent to the Board, individual written statements and verbal comments during meetings. As this Staff Accountability process is about improving the processes and culture associated with staff accountability at the service delivery, departmental, or organizational level, the group did not identify individuals and does not identify specific incidents in this report.

After the elements involved in the group's assessment were collected and discussed, the following themes emerged, which the group determined are of a sufficiently systemic nature and should be addressed by the community.

Underlying issues or concerns, identified through the group's analysis:

- ① **Lack of broad and consistent understanding of the existence and/or nature of existing staff accountability codes of conduct and other mechanisms.**

The work of the CCWG-Accountability noted a lack of understanding of how the organization sets department and individual goals, how those goals support ICANN's mission and strategic goals and objectives, and how the community might be able to provide constructive input into the performance of ICANN services, departments, or individuals they interact with.

Also identified was an inconsistent understanding of the expectations related to the development of public comment staff reports, or other substantive response to community feedback.

- ② **Lack of an effective diagnostic mechanism to clearly identify and then address accountability concerns between community and organization.**

One of the overriding themes of the group's work was addressing the challenge that much of the evidence provided was general or anecdotal in nature. There was broad consensus that there were concerns in the community, but it was difficult to single out the key sources of the concern. The group noted in its discussions that there was no established approach for measuring the satisfaction or relationship "health" of the overall community and of its respective components with respect to service delivery at the departmental or organizational level

The work of the group identified a consistent theme of the desire for a safe forum for expressing concerns regarding organizational performance in a less formal or alarmist fashion than the current mechanisms of sending "formal" correspondence directly to the Complaints Office, CEO, or Board. Another consistent theme was the concern about how to best address perceived inconsistencies or concerns regarding implementation of community recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on these underlying issues or concerns, the group is proposing the following recommendations.

1. To address the lack of understanding of the existence and/or nature of existing staff accountability mechanisms the following actions should be taken:
 - a. The ICANN organization should improve visibility and transparency of the organization's existing accountability mechanisms, by posting on icann.org in one dedicated area the following:
 - I. Description of the organization's performance management system and process.
 - II. Description of how departmental goals map to ICANN's strategic goals and objectives.
 - III. Description of the Complaints Office and how it relates to the Ombudsman Office.
 - IV. Organization policies shared with the CCWG-Accountability during the course of the WS2 work.
 - V. ICANN Organization [Delegations](#) document.
 - VI. The roles descriptions included in this overall report.
 - VII. Expectations and guidelines regarding the development of staff reports for public comments, or staff response to community correspondence.
 - b. The ICANN organization should also evaluate what other communication mechanisms should be utilized to further increase awareness and understanding of these existing and new accountability mechanisms.
2. To address the lack of clearly defined, or broadly understood, mechanisms to address accountability concerns between community members and staff members regarding accountability or behavior:
 - a. The ICANN organization should enhance existing accountability mechanisms to include:
 - I. A regular information acquisition mechanism (which might include surveys, focus groups, or reports from the Complaints Office) to allow the ICANN organization to better ascertain its overall performance and accountability to relevant stakeholders.

The group notes that several new mechanisms are now established, but have not yet been exercised enough to determine effectiveness or potential adjustments. The evaluation mechanism proposed here would be helpful in determining effectiveness of these recent mechanisms before creating yet more mechanisms that may turn out to be duplicative or confusing for the organization and community.

II.

Results of these evaluations should be made available to the community.

- b. Consistent with common best practices in services organizations, standardize and publish guidelines for appropriate timeframes for acknowledging requests made by the community, and for responding with a resolution or updated timeframe for when a full response can be delivered. The ICANN organization should include language in the performance management guidelines for managers that recommends people managers of community-facing staff seek input from the appropriate community members during the organization's performance reviews. Identification of appropriate community members, frequency of outreach to solicit input, and how to incorporate positive and constructive feedback into the overall performance review should be at the discretion and judgement of the personnel manager, with appropriate guidance from HR as necessary. Such a feedback mechanism should be supplemental to the existing mechanisms available to the community to provide input on ICANN staff performance, including direct communication to specific staff members, their personnel managers, senior executive staff, Board Directors, and the Complaints Officer.
3. The ICANN organization should work with the community to develop and publish service level targets and guidelines (similar to the Service Level Agreement for the IANA Numbering Services) that clearly define the services provided by ICANN to the community as well as the service level target for each service. In this context:
- a. ICANN should work with the community to identify and prioritize the classes of services for which service level targets and guidelines will be implemented, and to define how service level targets and guidelines will be defined.
 - b. Develop clear and reasonable guidelines for expected behavior between the ICANN organization and the community for those newly identified activities.
 - c. Develop and publish the resulting service levels, targets, and guidelines in a single area on icann.org. These targets and guidelines should also inform any regular information acquisition mechanism described in Recommendation 2 of this report.

The structure and specific timing of this effort should be determined by the ICANN organization (but be substantially underway before the end of 2018). We suggest that representatives of ICANN's executive team, the ICANN Board, and SO/AC Leadership participate in this effort to ensure a constructive dialogue across all parts of the ICANN community. This work should be, and be seen as, a genuine chance for collaboration and improved relationships between the Board, organization and community.

Thank you to the ICANN organization for their collaboration in preparing this work. Staff accountability is of vital concern to the leaders of any organization; the recommendations here are designed to be enhancements of a system that is generally believed by many to be working well.

