

RDS-WHOIS2 RT Subgroup Report: Plan & Annual Reports

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Subgroup Report:
Plan & Annual Reports

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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (IF ANY)

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1 Topic

Subgroup 1 - WHOIS1 Rec 15-16 Plan & Annual Reports is tasked with investigating, analyzing, and drafting recommendations (if needed) to address the following Review objective:

Consistent with ICANN's mission and Bylaws, Section 4.6(e)(iv), the Review Team will (a) evaluate the extent to which ICANN Org has implemented each prior Directory Service Review recommendation (noting differences if any between recommended and implemented steps), (b) assess to the degree practical the extent to which implementation of each recommendation was effective in addressing the issue identified by the prior RT or generated additional information useful to management and evolution of WHOIS (RDS), and (c) determine if any specific measurable steps should be recommended to enhance results achieved through the prior RT's recommendations. This includes developing a framework to measure and assess the effectiveness of recommendations, and applying that approach to all areas of WHOIS originally assessed by the prior RT (as applicable).

The specific [WHOIS1 Recommendation](#) to be assessed by this subgroup appears below:

Recommendation 15: Detailed and Comprehensive Plan

ICANN should provide a detailed and comprehensive plan within 3 months after the submission of the Final WHOIS Review Team report that outlines how ICANN will move forward in implementing these recommendations.

Recommendation 16: Annual Status Reports

ICANN should provide at least annual written status reports on its progress towards implementing the recommendations of this WHOIS Review Team. The first of these reports should be published one year, at the latest, after ICANN publishes the implementation plan mentioned in recommendation 15, above. Each of these reports should contain all relevant information, including all underlying facts, figures and analyses.

To address this review objective, the subgroup agreed to:

- ⦿ Cross check with other subgroups about whether the Action Plan properly addressed the WHOIS1 recommendations; and
- ⦿ Assess the effectiveness of the already-published WHOIS Annual Reports (e.g., relevance of provided information, quality of the underlying facts).

2 Summary of Relevant Research

To conduct its research, all members of this subgroup reviewed the following background materials, posted on the [subgroup's wiki page](#):

- ⦿ [WHOIS Review Team \(WHOIS1\) Final Report](#) (2012) and [Action Plan](#)
- ⦿ [WHOIS Review Team \(WHOIS1\) Implementation Reports](#), including
 - ⦿ [Executive Summary of Implementation Report](#)
 - ⦿ [Detailed implementation Report](#)
- ⦿ WHOIS1 Implementation Briefings on Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 15, 16: [PPT](#), [PDF](#)
- ⦿ [Answers to RDS-WHOIS2 Questions on Implementation Briefings](#)

- Documents cited in briefing on Recommendations 15-16 include
 - [ICANN Five Year Strategic Plan](#)
 - [ICANN FY 2017 Operating Plan and Budget](#)
 - [Action Plan](#) adopted by the Board
 - [2013 WHOIS Annual Report](#)
 - [2014 WHOIS Annual Report](#)
 - [2015 WHOIS Annual Report](#)
 - [2016 WHOIS Annual Report](#)

In addition, this subgroup agreed to base its analysis in part upon Subgroup 1 key findings for all other WHOIS1 Recommendations, to be posted here:

<https://community.icann.org/x/3ARyB>

Finally, the subgroup applied the RDS-WHOIS2 review team's [agreed framework](#) to measure and assess the effectiveness of recommendations,

3 Analysis & Findings

3.1 Detailed and Comprehensive Plan

The ICANN Board adopted an [Action Plan](#) to implement the [first](#) WHOIS Review Team recommendations on 8 November 2012, which outlined the ICANN Board's proposed action items to address WHOIS1 recommendations respectively, and the rationale behind those action items. To implement Rec #15, according to the Action Plan, the Board agreed that gTLD WHOIS should be a strategic priority and directed the CEO to incorporate a work plan for the improvement of WHOIS into the operating plan.

In [FY 2013 operating plan and budget](#), WHOIS Program was the fourth budgeted project (\$969K) within ICANN, after IDN Variant Management Projects (\$1,250K), New Compliance System/CRM (\$1,200K), and Enhance Multi-lingual strategy (\$980K). A list of various types of Whois initiatives were included in the WHOIS Program, including implementation of [first](#) WHOIS Review Team recommendations regarding measures to increase accuracy, crafted studies to inform the implementation of these recommendations and a roadmap for additional WHOIS accuracy initiatives, technical work on the WHOIS protocol, and synthesis with contractual compliance activities and reporting.

The [FY14 Operating Plan and Budget](#) had a totally different reporting format, and there was no indication of budget and resources associated with WHOIS Program. WHOIS work was reflected in 'The WHOIS core function/service & improvements Portfolio' in ICANN's annual operating plan and budget of [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#) respectively, and in 'Registration Data Services (WHOIS) Portfolio' under objective 2.1 'Foster and Coordinate a Healthy, Secure, Stable, and Resilient Identifier Ecosystem' in [FY 2018 operating plan and budget](#), with only total budget indication.

Going through the above ICANN's Annual Operating Plan and Budget, it's hardly to say a work plan has been incorporated into the operating plan. There was no mapping between budget and the [Action Plan](#). As such, it was not clear to this subgroup to what extent the budget and resources had been allocated to implement WHOIS1 recommendations. There was no further development of the Action Plan with milestones, expecting deliverables and/or respective deadlines in the operating plan. Assuming that the annual operating plan is a overarching document for all ICANN objectives and activities, and WHOIS improvement is only a small part of it, it's impossible to include all details of the comprehensive implementation plan, but there are no further traces of such an implementation plan in

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WHOIS1 Implementation Briefings provided by ICANN Org and the background materials posted on the [subgroup's wiki page](#).

3.2 Annual Status Reports

The implementation of the Action Plan was summarized [as part of](#) WHOIS annual reports. ICANN published the first [WHOIS Improvements Annual Report](#) on 4 Nov 2013. The Report provided an overview of the WHOIS1 recommendations and implementation activities, as well as links to deliverables for each implementation activity. The Annual Reports on WHOIS Improvements for [2014](#), [2015](#) and [2016](#) were produced by ICANN separately afterwards, which outlined the [activities](#) of all WHOIS policy related working streams. In each of the annual report, all implementation activities regarding the Board approved action plan were enumerated with links to deliverables.

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The WHOIS Improvements Annual Report provides the overview of the WHOIS policy development, and could serve as a good reference of what has been done to improve Whois. So far, all the published WHOIS Improvements Annual Reports were activity-based rather than outcome-based, and there was no the relevant information of figures and analyses included as recommended by Rec #16. There has been no review about the effectiveness of the implementation of the Action Plan in addressing the WHOIS1 recommendations as well.

The annual report for 2016 was published till 1 September 2017, [and there has been no annual report afterwards. According to clarifications pertaining to operating plan and annual report provided by ICANN Org, the annual report for 2016 showed completion of implementation of WHOIS1 recommendations, thus there will be no further annual reports.](#)

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4 Problem/Issue

Taking into account of [Subgroup 1 key findings for all other WHOIS1 Recommendations](#), to this subgroup, the plan and [annual report were](#) not organized in a methodical way. The implementation of several WHOIS1 recommendations (e.g. Strategic Priority, Data Accuracy) failed to meet the objectives. Some action items went a long way towards achieving the intended [objective](#), e.g. Identify accuracy check of WHOIS ARS project, Across-Field Address Validation provision of the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification in the 2013 RAA, and have not yet been addressed. There has been a prolonged process to regulate and oversee privacy and proxy service, which is still ongoing till today. There has been no effectiveness review and measurable outcomes of the implementation. As a result, to what extent Whois has been improved over the years is not clear.

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5 Recommendations

[To be completed for each recommendation - if any - suggested by the subgroup]

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Recommendation: The ICANN Board should develop [guidelines](#) for plan and report [on implementing recommendations](#). Feasibility study (budget, resources, etc.) and risk management should be introduced into planning stage. The [annual](#) report should follow a well-designed template to reflect the measurable outcome, and give insight into the execution of plan.

Findings: See problem/issue above.

Rationale:The intention behind this recommendation is to ensure that the plan and report on implementation of recommendations generated by this Review Team be pragmatic and efficient.

Impact of Recommendation: Given plan and annual report is regular activity of ICANN anyway, this recommendation will not impose extra workload for ICANN, while the whole community will benefit from the implementation of this recommendation.

Feasibility of Recommendation: the challenging part would be the decision-making process behind feasibility study and risk management.

Implementation:
ICANN should take the lead to develop the guideline. A well-defined guideline and template will be a benchmark for implementation activities. The envisioned implementation timeline should be within 6 months.

Priority: [If only 5 recommendations could be implemented due to community bandwidth and other resource constraints, would this recommendation be one of the top 5? Why or why not?]

Level of Consensus