At-Large Workspace: Evolving the Governance of the Root Server System

Public Comment Close	Statement Name	Status	Assignee (s)	Call for Comments Open	Call for Comments Close	Vote Open	Vote Close	Date of Submission	Staff Contact and Email	Statement Number
09 August 2019	Evolving the Governance of the Root Server System	ADOPTED 14Y, 0N, 0A	Alan Greenberg Fouad Bajwa Bastiaan Goslings	07 August 2019	08 August 2019	09 August 2019	13 August 2019	09 August 2019	Carlos Reyes carlos.reyes@icann.org	**AL-ALAC-ST-0819-02-01-EN**

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Brief Overview

Purpose: This Public Comment proceeding seeks feedback for evolving the governance of the Root Server System (RSS), including a proposed community-driven process.

Current Status: On 3 May 2019, the ICANN Board approved a resolution to begin Public Comment on this topic.

Next Steps: ICANN org will prepare a summary report of the Public Comment proceeding for the consideration of the ICANN Board as it determines next steps.

Section I: Description and Explanation

Following the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) stewardship transition, the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC) developed an initial framework to evolve the governance of the RSS. After three years of extensive work, the RSSAC published "RSSAC037: A Proposed Governance Model for the DNS Root Server System" (RSSAC037) in June 2018. RSSAC037 proposes five functions to provide governance, accountability, and transparency for the RSS and its Root Server Operators (RSOs). The RSSAC concurrently published "RSSAC038: RSSAC Advisory on a Proposed Governance Model for the DNS Root Server System" (RSSAC038). In RSSAC038, the RSSAC makes three recommendations for next steps to the ICANN Board.

As part of the ICANN Board's consideration of RSSAC037 and RSSAC038, ICANN org prepared a "Concept Paper on a Community-Driven Process to Develop a Final Model Based on RSSAC037" (Concept Paper). The Concept Paper proposes a governance model (Concept Model) based on RSSAC037. The Concept Model establishes three new groups: The Root Server System Governance Board, the Root Server System Standing Committee, and the Root Server Operator Review Panel. In addition to these groups, ICANN org would manage the Financial Function and Secretariat Function.

The Concept Paper also outlines a community-driven process to develop a final governance model for the RSS. This is in response to recommendation one from RSSAC038, which calls on the ICANN Board to "initiate a process to produce a final version of the Model for implementation based on RSSAC037." There are three phases in the community-driven process: Design, Consultation, and Implementation. During the implementation phase, there are two tracks. The Root Server System Governance Working Group (GWG) would lead the Structural Track to develop a final governance model, and ICANN org would lead the Administrative Track to plan for implementation of a final governance model. To launch this work, ICANN org has developed a draft charter and operating procedures for the GWG and a draft work plan for the GWG.

Section II: Background

Supporting the evolution of RSS governance contributes to the commitment of ICANN to strengthen the security, stability, and resiliency of the Domain Name System (DNS). It also enables direct interaction between the ICANN community and the RSOs. Furthermore, it ensures that global root service remains accountable and sustainable into the future.

Evolving the governance of the RSS will result in significant changes to the ICANN community and ICANN org. The community-driven process to develop a final governance model envisions considerable work and commitment of resources. Any budgetary and financial implications will be handled through ICANN processes that ensure accountability and transparency. Furthermore, the ICANN Board continues its evaluation and consideration of recommendations two and three from RSSAC038.

Section III: Relevant Resources

This Public Comment proceeding seeks feedback on RSSAC037, the Concept Paper, the draft charter and operating procedures for the GWG, and the draft work plan for the GWG. These documents provide a starting point for community discussions about evolving the governance of the RSS.

- RSSAC037: A Proposed Governance Model for the DNS Root Server System
- Concept Paper on a Community-Driven Process to Develop a Final Model Based on RSSAC037
- Root Server System Governance Working Group: Draft Charter and Operating Procedures
- Root Server System Governance Working Group: Draft Work Plan

Section IV: Additional Information

Several other RSSAC publications provide background about the RSS, RSOs, and global root service as context for the work of evolving the governance of the RSS.

- RSSAC042: RSSAC Statement on Root Server Operator Independence
- RSSAC030: RSSAC Statement on Entries in DNS Root Sources
- RSSAC024: Key Technical Elements of Potential Root Operators
- RSSAC023: History of the Root Server System
- RSSAC021: RSSAC Statement Concerning the Impact of the Unavailability of a Single Root Server
- RSSAC020: RSSAC Statement on Client Side Reliability of Root DNS Data
- RSSAC002v3: Advisory on Measurements of the Root Server System
- RSSAC001: Advisory on Service Expectations of Root Servers

Additionally, the RSSAC published reports from the six workshops where it developed RSSAC037 and RSSAC038.

- RSSAC034: Report from the RSSAC May 2018 Workshop
- RSSAC029: Report from the RSSAC October 2017 Workshop
- RSSAC027: Report from the RSSAC May 2017 Workshop
- RSSAC025: Report from the RSSAC October 2016 Workshop
- RSSAC019: Report from the RSSAC May 2016 Workshop
- RSSAC016: Report from the RSSAC September 2015 Workshop

The RSSAC also regularly provides informational sessions about its mission, structure, and workand tutorial sessions about root server operations.

Section V: Reports

FINAL VERSION SUBMITTED (IF RATIFIED)

The final version to be submitted, if the draft is ratified, will be placed here by upon completion of the vote.



FINAL DRAFT VERSION TO BE VOTED UPON BY THE ALAC

The final draft version to be voted upon by the ALAC will be placed here before the vote is to begin.



DRAFT SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION

The first draft submitted will be placed here before the call for comments begins. The Draft should be preceded by the name of the person submitting the draft and the date/time. If, during the discussion, the draft is revised, the older version(S) should be left in place and the new version along with a header line identifying the drafter and date/time should be placed above the older version(s), separated by a Horizontal Rule (available + Insert More Content control).

Final version 08 August 2019:



Draft submitted by Bastiaan Goslings on 23 July 2019:



Summary

The proposed evolution of the governance of the Root Server System in RSSAC037 is arguably one of the most significant, if not the most significant, processes in the history of ICANN.

The RSSAC and those who contributed to RSSAC037 are to be congratulated as is the ICANN Board for its response currently under discussion.

The ALAC strongly supports the overall proposal and appreciates the opportunity to comment on it.

The ALAC offers two specific comments:

- Section 4 of RSSAC037 discusses who the stakeholders of the RSS are. Absent from this list is the explicit mention of USERS (both individual as represented by At-Large and the rest of the users who rely on the RSS). Without those users, there would be no need for the RSS, as is emphasised a couple of times in RSSAC037. The ultimate ICANN model must encompass this and users should be explicitly represented on the the Root Server System Governance Board (RGB).
- The financial aspects of this proposal will be key to its success. At a time when ICANN's budgets are being subjected to significant constraint, the Concept Model will without doubt have a high and ongoing cost. It is unclear where the Board currently visualizes these funds will come from. Once cost estimates are established, there should be a study of possible sustainable funding options. As important as the RSS is, the new funding must not come at great cost to other Community and non-DNS industry based activity support by ICANN org. From that perspective it comes as somewhat as a surprise that ICANN.org is not mentioned as a stakeholder in Chapter 4 while

RRSAC037, 12 June 2018

Although it might seem obvious, the ALAC first of all thinks it is important to state, as RSSAC037 notes numerous times, that the DNS Root Server System (RSS) makes the DNS root zone available to all DNS *users* on the Internet. The RSS must therefore be a stable, reliable, and resilient platform for the DNS service to all these users.

Since its inception the RSS has lived up to that expectation, and according to RSSAC037 the principles that have enabled this success of the DNS root service should remain core principles going forward. The ALAC agrees with this.

Root Server Operators (RSOs) have always operated completely independently, under their own good will and funding, and without any direct oversight by the stakeholders of the DNS Root service. A service which has been provided solely based on historical trust and integrity.

The ALAC thinks RSSAC037 rightly establishes the fact that changes to the RSS governance model are required as developments over the years have led to:

'stronger needs for accountability, transparency, credible oversight, and continued scalability of the service to meet these demands. Stakeholders of the service must have accountability for its operation and assurance of its reliability and continuity.'

To achieve this, the RSS, according to RRSAC37, needs to evolve so it remains a reliable, resilient, and sustainable service in the face of increasing traffic and cyberattacks. Important parts of that evolution need to ensure that the operators of the RSS are accountable to their stakeholders, that robust processes exist to designate or remove operators, and that the operators have resources sufficient for its operation.

Delivery of the DNS root service indeed has essentially become a mandate for the RSOs, mostly unfunded by the non-RSO stakeholders of the service. The support and budget for providing the DNS root service comes from the RSOs' parent organizations.

The stakeholders of the RSS are the people, groups, and organizations that have an interest or concern in the proper operation of the RSS. The primary stakeholders of the RSS are, according to RSSAC037:

- Internet Architecture Board (IAB) / Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).
- ICANN community in the form of several of its constituencies.
- Set of current Root Server Operators (RSOs).

Reading chapter 4 it seems that ICANN.org is not considered a (primary) stakeholder with regard to the RSS. Which the ALAC finds strange.The RSOs' parent organizations are regarded as stakeholders.

During the past four decades, operational costs have increased with no commensurate funding for the operators from the service stakeholder beneficiaries. RSSAC037 concludes that those entities that the RSS enables, need to take responsibility in funding the service that they depend upon.

The ALAC thinks this argumentation makes sense, and the option is mentioned for operators that are financially self-sufficient to choose to opt-out of general funding. However for the ALAC it is unclear to what extent current costs are (too) high for RSO's, and what exactly the costs are for the respective RSOs to deliver and manage the DNS Root service. The ALAC appreciates that the RSSAC considers the proposed Model to be a starting point that requires 'further deliberation, thoughtful analysis, and input from a broader set of experts from the ICANN community and beyond', but more insight in the actual figures would help.

From RSSAC037 it is furthermore unclear who exactly should be responsible for providing the funding. A ball park amount is not referred to, 'fully loaded FTEs' are suggested to be used 'as the main cost indicator'. 12 of those FTE's are mentioned, as well as one year of operating fund on top of that for the start-up phase of the Model.

'An RSS fund should be created by sourcing funds from numerous entities, including the stakeholders and the ICANN community.' Numerous is rather vague, and looking at the list of primary stakeholders the only one that could probably afford the funding is the group of TLD operators. Where is ICANN.org in this picture? Again, it is not mentioned among (primary) stakeholders with regard to the RSS in RSSAC037. And that is ignoring the situation that ICANN.org operates as a RSO itself, which raises the question whether there is a potential source for a conflict of interest here.

A New Cooperation and Governance Model for the Root Server System, 23 April 2019

This concept paper, based on RSSAC037 and prepared by the ICANN organization (ICANN org), proposes to establish three new groups: The Root Server System Governance Board (RGB), the Root Server System Standing Committee (RSC), and the Root Server Operator Review Panel (RRP). These are in line with the functions that were envisaged in RSSAC037.

ICANN a.o. states that 'In addition to these groups, ICANN org could manage Financial and Secretariat Functions.' Furthermore from 3.4.2 ('The Administrative Track – Planning for Implementation') it seems apparent that ICANN.org will actually fund the implementation of the new Model. Where these funds will come from, from within the ICANN budget, remains unclear however. The process to estimate the costs is described in detail, but there is no referral to actual (estimated) numbers. Based on 5.5.3 of RSSAC037 (btw the ICANN.org concept paper refers to 5.3.3 in 3.4.2 but that presumably is a typo) the costs will be significant. Without further clarity the ALAC is concerned that this might come at a cost to other Community and non-DNS industry based activity support by ICANN org.

Draft submitted by Alan Greenberg on 21 July 2019:

This evolution of the governance of the Root Server System is arguably one of the most significant, if not the most significant, processes in the history of ICANN.

The RSSAC and those who contributed to RSSAC037 are to be congratulated as is the ICANN Board for its response currently under discussion.

The ALAC **strongly** supports the overall proposal and appreciates the opportunity to comment on it.

The ALAC offers two specific comments:

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