

# Terms of Reference - IANA Public Records Study Group

Draft June 2025

Adopted by Council - [insert date]

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## **1. Introduction**

The IANA has informed the ccNSO Council of several concerns including issues relating to the accuracy of the IANA WHOIS, the continued need for such a WHOIS service, and how to ensure its accuracy.

In May 2025, the PGA WG recommended the ccNSO Council to establish a Study Group to explore and advise the ccNSO Council on:

- The purpose of IANA public records
- The expected accuracy of the IANA public records
- The enforcement and/or graduated compliance options

The rationale for this recommendations is:

- The quality of the data in the IANA records is assumed to be a matter of significant public and community interest - it is to everyone's benefit for this data to be accurate and up to date.
- How to keep the data accurate and up-to-date will generate consideration of steps to be taken when it is not, and such consideration will help inform the future consideration of other issues. In other words, it is a foundational discussion that helps deal with other matters more efficiently later.
- This is the issue that in an operational sense gives IANA most concern, and so dealing with it first will help IANA be more efficient.

Following the recommendation of the PGA, the ccNSO Council decided to set-up a Study Group as suggested.

## 2. Purpose of the Study Group IANA Public Records

The study group is established by the ccNSO Council to provide to ccTLD community, the ccNSO Council a comprehensive overview of the issues and the scope of the issues associated with:

- The purpose of IANA public records
- The expected accuracy of the IANA public records
- The enforcement and/or graduated compliance options

If deemed appropriate, the Study Group is expected to make recommendations to the ccNSO Council on whether any new policy, interpretation, or practice are needed as potential next steps.

## 3. Scope of activities

The Study Group is tasked with exploring key questions surrounding the purpose, accuracy, and potential compliance mechanisms related to IANA public records. Specifically, the Study Group will examine:

### A. Purpose of IANA Public Records

Currently, no formal policy framework governs the publication of IANA public records. The structure of these records—such as the contact model—largely stems from legacy arrangements predating ICANN.

The Study Group will investigate:

- What data is published by IANA, and why?
- What is the intended purpose of each type of record?
- Are these records still necessary in their current form?
- Should additional types of records be maintained by IANA to better serve ccTLD managers?

As part of this effort, the Study Group is encouraged to consult with ccTLDs to determine whether there are other record types that would be useful.

### B. Expected Accuracy of IANA Public Records

The Study Group will assess:

- How important is the accuracy of these records?
- Why might accuracy matter—or not?
- What is the current level of accuracy, based on a reasonable-effort assessment?

### C. Compliance and Enforcement Options

Assuming a standard of accuracy is desirable, the Study Group will explore:

- What should happen when inaccuracies are not corrected?
- What mechanisms exist today to enforce compliance? (Currently limited to requesting updates or, in extreme cases, revocation for cause.)

- Are there additional or graduated enforcement tools that could help improve compliance without resorting to drastic measures?

If appropriate, the Study Group may make recommendations to the ccNSO Council regarding the need for new policies, interpretations, or practices to support improvements in these areas.

#### **4. Working method & Deliverables**

The Study Group is expected to:

- a. Scope and further detail its work, deliverables and working methods. In doing the following is considered important:
  - Study the issue from multiple perspectives, i.e.
    - i. From IANA's perspective
    - ii. From a general ccTLD manager perspective
    - iii. From other ICANN SO/AC perspectives
  - Identify current policy, interpretation of the policy and current practice, with a focus on whether practice is suitably backed up by policy or not, and whether there are any gaps in practice
  - Seek data and factual documentation to scope the issue
  - If deemed appropriate and necessary, conduct sessions at ccNSO meetings or virtually between the ICANN meetings, to inform the community of its progress and seek views of the community.
  - Provide a final report of its findings to the ccNSO Council by [insert date]

Detailing the working method, deliverables and timelines are considered important to ensure progress can be monitored and timely completion is ensured.

#### **5. Reporting**

The Chair of the Study Group will report regularly through email or in person to the ccNSO Council and the ccNSO membership and ccTLD community.

#### **6. Membership and chairs**

Membership of the Study Group is open to representatives of all ccTLD managers (whether members of the ccNSO or not). At least one of the WG members should be a ccNSO Councillor.

The ccNSO Council appoints the members of the WG.

ccTLD regional organisations may nominate a liaison to be confirmed by the ccNSO Council.

The Chair of the Study Group may invite other ICANN Supporting Organisations (SO) and/or Advisory Committees (AC) or constituencies to appoint a participant.

It is expected that IANA staff will be involved with this work as experts. The Chair of the Study Group may also request other ICANN Staff to participate in (part of) a meeting of the Study Group as Experts.

The Chair may invite individuals with expert knowledge in an area the WG is discussing (experts).

Liaisons, Participants and Experts participate on an equal footing in the deliberations and sessions of the Study Group with Members, unless the Chair of the Study Group explicitly requests Liaisons, Participants and/or Experts to refrain from actively participating in a specific meeting. Participants or Experts shall not participate in the process of seeking out and fostering involvement and input from ccTLD managers.

Other members of the broader community may attend meetings of the WG that are designated as “open” as Observer. However, Observers are not expected to participate actively in the proceedings of the WG.

The list of members, liaisons, participants, experts and observers is published on the relevant ccNSO webpage by the ccNSO Secretariat. The members archive is kept for five years after closure of the WG.

**Staff support.** Support is provided by ICANN’s ccNSO Support staff.

**Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group.** The ccNSO Council will appoint one of its Councillors as chair, and invite the Study group to nominate a vice-chair from among its members. The vice-chair has to be formally appointed by Council.

The Chair will manage ongoing activities and ensure an appropriate working environment by:

- Promptly sharing the relevant information with the entire WG.
- Planning the work of the WG in order to achieve its objective and lead the WG through its discussions.
- Monthly assess and report on progress of the WG on the various activities and on achieving the objective of the WG.
- Keeping track of participation.

The Vice-Chair will work in close cooperation with the Chair and take on any responsibilities of the Chair, when so requested and all responsibilities in case of absence of the Chair.

## **7. Closure**

The study group closes at the end of the ccNSO Council meeting the final report has been discussed by the ccNSO Council, but no later than the ccNSO Council meeting at ICANN86 (June 2026).

## **8. Miscellaneous**

Review of Terms of Reference and activities of the Study Group. A review of this Terms of Reference and activities will take place when considered necessary by the Study Group or Council.

Update of the Terms of Reference. The Update of the ToR is effective after it has been adopted by the ccNSO Council and has been published on the ccNSO website. Before the Council adopts the amended ToR, the members of the Study Group need to express support for the changes. Before publishing the updated ToR, the ccNSO Secretariat will include the version number and insert the date of adoption.

Omission or unreasonable impact of the Terms Of Reference. If this ToR does not provide guidance, and/or the impact is unreasonable to conduct the business of the Study Group, the Chair of the Study Group, after consulting the members, will decide on the most appropriate remedy.

In addition to these Terms of Reference the Guidelines: ccNSO Collaboration Groups with Limited Scope (see:

[https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield\\_47779/guidelines-collaboration-groups-30mar16-en.pdf](https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_47779/guidelines-collaboration-groups-30mar16-en.pdf)) are applicable. In case of conflict between the Guidelines and the Term of Reference, these terms of reference prevail.

## **9. Background material**

- [Final Report PGA WG](#)
- IANA's [Topic Areas for ccTLD Policy Reviews](#)
- [Overview of ccTLD related IANA policies & Practices](#)