

Strategic Outlook Trend Identification Session

Briefing Paper

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide context to participants as they prepare for their Strategic Outlook Trend Identification Session.

The paper is intended to be read before the session, and it is especially helpful for those that are new to the Strategic Outlook trends identifications process. The content of this paper will **not** be repeated at the time of the session.

Background

The Strategic Outlook Trend Identification process is part of ICANN's Planning process. Each year, ICANN org, Board, and the community participate in a series of sessions to identify and discuss trends that could affect ICANN's mission and operations. Everyone is invited and encouraged to participate, as each of us has valuable knowledge and insights that we want to capture.

Why Should I Participate?

When you participate in a strategic outlook trends session, you have the opportunity to contribute to ICANN's current and future planning efforts. Your feedback will help us monitor, update, or re-confirm the trends that may impact ICANN's mission and operations. Your feedback is taken and factored into the annual iteration of ICANN plans as appropriate. Significant shifts could also result in adjustments to the strategic plan. The conclusions from last year's exercise can be found in this Strategic Outlook Trend [Report](#).

What to expect during the session?

This is a highly interactive session, which should take approximately 120 minutes, depending on group sizes.

1. Participants will be divided into subgroups and will engage in a brainstorming exercise to:
 - Identify and track the evolution of trends that may affect ICANN.
 - Evaluate the impacts that these trends pose to ICANN, either in terms of threats or in terms of opportunities.
2. Subgroups will share their ideas with the larger group, and additional discussions will follow, allowing participants to dive deeper into areas of interest.
3. At the end of the session, each participant will have the opportunity to weigh in on top priorities that ICANN should be focusing on.

The brainstorming exercises are structured around five strategic objectives, which are identified in ICANN's strategic plan for fiscal years 2021 to 2025. The elements collected in previous years have helped identify these strategic objectives:

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives for Fiscal Years 2021–2025

Taking into account the external impacts on the global growth and evolution of the Internet, the DNS, and other unique identifier systems ICANN helps coordinate, the following five strategic objectives are identified for the fiscal years 2021–2025 to enable ICANN to continue to fulfill its mission and achieve its new vision:



Strengthen the **security** of the Domain Name System and the DNS Root Server System.

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Address **geopolitical issues** impacting ICANN's mission to ensure a single and globally interoperable Internet.

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Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of **governance**.

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Ensure ICANN's long-term **financial** sustainability.

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Evolve the **unique identifier systems** in coordination and collaboration with relevant parties to continue to serve the needs of the global Internet user base.

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- **Security** – relating to cybersecurity, Internet of Things vulnerabilities, DNS security, root service reliability, resilience and interoperability, DNS abuse.
- **ICANN's Governance** – referring to ICANN's governance rather than Internet governance in general, ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency and accountability, inclusiveness and openness.
- **Unique Identifiers System** – evolution of the unique identifiers system in the context of the evolution of its uses and its user base, considering external technology advancement (such as blockchain, IoT, rise of artificial intelligence etc.), alternate roots, alternative infrastructures, universal acceptance, and IDNs.
- **Geopolitics** – including effects on ICANN of legislation and regulation, and other globalization topics such as the global reliance on the Internet, or the Internet fragmentation.
- **Financials** – including financial sustainability, financial responsiveness to changing industry economics, funding strategies, and cost management.

Questions posed to participants

Participants will be asked to contribute to the brainstorming by answering the following questions:

- **On Trends:**
 - Are there new trends that need to be considered?
 - Do the previous years' trends still apply? Any noticeable shifts?

- **On Trends Impacts:**
 - What impacts do you foresee for ICANN, by when?
 - What are Risks or Threats associated with these trends for ICANN?
 - What are some Opportunities or Suggested Actions?
 - How might the trends affect ICANN’s strategic objectives?
- **On Priorities:**
 - Considering the trends, risks, and opportunities identified, which do you suggest as top priorities for ICANN to consider?

Results from last year

The following list of trends is the result of the FY24 (2022) trend identification sessions and trend assessment. The trend numbers (e.g., [2.2]) reference previous years’ trends and allow tracking of how trends evolve over the years.

Trends indicated ‘top priority’—those that emerged through statistical analysis and were elevated by the Network Liaison team.

Strategic Objectives	FY24 Trends	Top Priority
Security	[2.2] Issue relating to Domain Name System security threats remains a topic of focus. This includes the issue of any potential to erode the public trust in the Internet.	X
	[1.15] The topic of DNS abuse and DNS security threats continues to be widely discussed within the ICANN community. Progress within the community to agree on the definition of the problem and the correct mechanism toward solutions has been slow. Items listed as DNS security threats are within ICANN’s remit; however, many other examples of abuse discussed in some sectors of the community, while malicious, are outside of ICANN’s remit as they pertain to content.	X
Unique Identifier Systems	[1.07] There is a perception that alternative namespaces could potentially threaten the relevance of DNS and the IANA functions are putting pressure on ICANN and requiring ICANN to be more responsive to the emerging identifier technologies.	X
	[1.13] As ICANN is getting closer to launch the next round of New gTLDs, pressure to address UA issues continues to increase to support a multilingual Internet.	
	[1.16] There are perceived concerns of whether the New gTLD SubPro can solve some of the outstanding issues, such as inclusivity, affordability, geographical diversity and security for the benefit of the global internet users and public interest.	
Geopolitics	[3.7] Efforts to regulate or legislate the Internet continue to intensify, and the current geopolitical landscape has added pressure. This could lead to policy fragmentation within the internet ecosystem.	X
Governance	[3.1] The continued challenges associated with complex policy development and implementation work are testing the ability of ICANN’s multistakeholder model to support efficient and effective decision-making processes.	X
	[1.01] Inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and openness remain the key elements of the ICANN’s multistakeholder model. The prolonged, mainly virtual settings challenge the process of attracting and onboarding active and effective volunteers in ICANN’s technical and policy work. Ensuring a truly inclusive and accessible model remains critical to ICANN’s multistakeholder model within the current landscape.	X

	[1.04] The public's trust in the legitimacy of the multistakeholder model (MSM) can be affected by the influence of parties who oppose it. There continues to be a need to create greater awareness of ICANN's role and remit and the legitimacy of the ICANN MSM through public communications.	
Financials	[1.02] Although ICANN's current financial position is promising, the shift of user behavior to rely on online platforms, the uncertainty of the global economic climate, and upcoming implementation costs may impact ICANN's long-term funding	
	[1.14] Prioritization and implementation is becoming more critical to continue supporting the needs and demands of ICANN's global community	

Timeline of Strategic Outlook Process

