

Executive Summary

The goal of this paper is to examine the Holistic Review's (1) purpose, (2) scope, and (3) timing to inform the Pilot Holistic Review's discussion. This paper presents information from the [ATRT3's Final Report](#), the [Board's Score](#) approving ATRT3 Recommendation 3.5, and the current state of the [Continuous Improvement Program \(CIP\) Framework](#) to provide context for each topic. This paper aims to synthesize the available guidance in these areas and highlight a set of takeaways relevant to the PHR team's discussions.

1. Purpose of the Holistic Review

Although the purpose of the Holistic Review is not explicitly stated in ATRT3 Recommendation 3.5. In the Recommendation Rationale Checklist for Recommendation 3.5, ATRT3 considered a number of questions. Two questions which inform the understanding of the purpose of the Holistic Review are set out on p74:

What is the intent of the recommendation?

- Recommend changes to Specific and Organizational Reviews to address the issues of timing and cadence while also considering their effectiveness and relevance in the current context which includes a backlog of 345 recommendations from reviews and CCWG's awaiting implementation.
- Recommend the creation of a Holistic Review to allow a global view of the whole of ICANN.

What observed fact-based issue is the recommendation intending to solve? What is the "problem statement"?

- There are too many Specific and Organizational Reviews occurring simultaneously, some with limited effectiveness and relevance

Further, the following excerpt from ATRT3 suggests that the purpose and objectives for Organizational Reviews would transition to the Holistic Review along with two additional ATRT3 objectives:

"ATRT3 will recommend the creation of a new Specific Review in addition to the continuous improvement programs for each SO/AC. This new review would be a Holistic Review assessing all SO/ACs to ensure that the Section 4.4 Bylaws requirements are still being met for each but will also consider SOs/ACs as a whole as well as their interrelations." (ATRT3 Final Report, pg. 68)

The following are the purpose and objectives outlined in Section 4.4. PERIODIC REVIEW OF ICANN STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS of the ICANN Bylaws:

Purpose: "(a) The Board shall cause a periodic review of the performance and operation of each Supporting Organization, each Supporting Organization Council, each Advisory Committee (other than the Governmental Advisory Committee), and the Nominating Committee (as defined in Section 8.1) by an entity or entities independent of the organization under review."

Objectives:

- “(i) whether that organization, council or committee has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure,*
- (ii) if so, whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve its effectiveness and*
- (iii) whether that organization, council or committee is accountable to its constituencies, stakeholder groups, organizations and other stakeholders.”*

This information suggests that although ATRT3 recommended that Organizational Reviews be evolved into a Continuous Improvement Program, a Holistic Review would take over the Bylaws stipulated review of SOs/ACs and NomCom.

Takeaway: The CIP and Holistic Review together are intended to replace the Organizational Reviews as the mechanism for achieving the objectives in Bylaws Section 4.4.

2. Scope of the Holistic Review

The ATRT3 did not explicitly state a scope for the Holistic Review in its Final Report, instead it identified the following objectives for the Review:

- Review continuous improvement efforts of SO/AC/NC based on good practices.
- Review the effectiveness of the various inter-SO/AC/NC collaboration mechanisms.
- Review the accountability of SO/ACs or constituent parts to their members/constituencies (this will include an in-depth analysis of the survey results).
- Review SO/AC/NC as a whole to determine if they continue to have a purpose within the ICANN structure as they are currently constituted, or if any changes in structures and operations are desirable to improve the overall effectiveness of ICANN as well as ensure optimal representation of community views (but taking into consideration any impacts on the Board or the Empowered Community). (ATRT3 Final Report, pg. 22, 72)

Note: These objectives include the objectives listed for Organizational Reviews from Section 4.4 (a) i, ii, and iii of the Bylaws, and add objectives to review continuous improvement efforts and the effectiveness of inter-SO/AC/NomCom collaboration mechanisms.

Meeting Bylaws requirements for Organizational Reviews

To ensure that the requirements established under Section 4.4 of the Bylaws are still met, each SO/AC would need to be reviewed at a similar level of detail as existed under Organizational Reviews. To accomplish this, a Holistic Review would need data from the SOs/ACs and NomCom that speaks to each group's work as it relates to the Holistic Review objectives. ATRT3 appears to suggest this data come from CIP reporting.

In its Final Report, ATRT3 made the following statements:

- “Evolving the current Organizational Reviews into reviews of the continuous

improvement programs in each SO/AC (SO/AC Continuous Improvement Programs -SO/AC CIPs) to consider the results of the surveys of members/participants, assess the progress of the continuous improvement efforts (at least every three years), and produce a report which will feed into the Holistic Reviews.” (ATRT3 Final Report, Annex D, pg. 312)

- “At least [every three] years each SO/AC/NC will undertake a formal process to evaluate and report on its continuous improvement activities which will be published for Public Comment. This would allow the Holistic Review to consider a minimum of two assessment reports and related public comments for each SO/AC/NC.” (ATRT3 Final Report, pg. 23, 73)

Note: The data on SO/AC progress and member inputs was previously collected by independent examiners as part of Organizational Reviews.

CIP Development

The pilot to develop the CIP began in November 2023 with the formation of a Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG). The CIP-CCG published its Draft CIP Framework, defining the principles under which each SO/AC and NomCom would organize their continuous improvement efforts, on 21 November 2024. Understanding that a Holistic Review would use CIP reports as an input to its evaluation, the CIP Framework integrated the Holistic Review’s objectives into the CIP’s core principles. This approach is reflected in the following excerpt from the CIP Framework:

“Principles were designed to describe the objectives of the Continuous Improvement Program. The objectives of Organizational Reviews are already defined in the current ICANN Bylaws. Historically, ICANN Organizational Reviews have asked whether the Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee (NomCom) have a continuing purpose within the ICANN community. Using the Bylaws regarding Organizational Reviews as guidance, the CIP-CCG developed principles for the CIP.” (CIP Framework, pg. 7)

This integration would enable the SOs/ACs and NomCom to structure and report their continuous improvement work in a manner which provides the Holistic Review with all of the relevant, categorized data it would need to conduct its review (see ATRT3 Final Report pg 73).

The following table compares the objectives of the Holistic Review with the CIP Principles, color matching similar elements:

Holistic Review Objectives	CIP Principles
Review the effectiveness of the various inter-SO/AC/NC collaboration mechanisms.	5. The SO, AC, or NomCom collaborates to further the mission of ICANN and the effectiveness of the ICANN bottom-up multistakeholder model.
Review the accountability of SO/ACs or constituent parts to their	4. The SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable internally to its stakeholders and

members/constituencies (this will include an in-depth analysis of the survey results).	substructures (where applicable), and externally to the wider ICANN community.
Review SO/AC/NC as a whole to determine if they continue to have a purpose within the ICANN structure as they are currently constituted, or if any changes in structures and operations are desirable to improve the overall effectiveness of ICANN as well as ensure optimal representation of community views (but taking into consideration any impacts on the Board or the Empowered Community).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose. 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective. 3. The operations of SO, AC, or NomCom are efficient.
Review continuous improvement efforts of SO/AC/NC based on good practices.	

Takeaway: The scope of the Holistic Review builds on the scope previously established for Organizational Reviews in the Bylaws. CIP reporting and its subsequent Public Comment proceedings would produce the data needed for a Holistic Review to perform its assessments; this data was previously collected by independent examiners. This data is required for a Holistic Review to objectively perform its assessments, identify problems or opportunities requiring action, and draft recommendations.

3. Timing of the first Holistic Review

Although ATRT3 suggested a Holistic Review should be held every 7-8 years to allow for consideration of a minimum of two assessment reports and related public comments for each SO/AC/NC, it also suggested that the first Holistic Review be held within 12-months of the Board approving recommendation 3.5,

“The first Holistic Review should be undertaken within 12 months of the Board having approved this recommendation. ICANN org shall work with each SO/AC/NC to establish individual continuous improvement programs so these can be operational prior to the end of the first Holistic Review.” (ATRT3 Final Report, pg. 81)

ATRT3’s proposed multiyear timeline for the Holistic Review is reflected on page 82 of its Final Report.

The Board addressed ATRT3’s suggested timing in its approval of recommendation 3.5 stating,

“Subject to prioritization¹ and available resources, the Board directs ICANN org to initiate the first Holistic Review as a pilot, and operated pursuant to community-agreed Terms of

¹ ATRT3 Recommendation 5 called for the creation of a prioritization process for Review recommendations. The Board approved recommendation 5 on 30 November 2020 and work began on developing the pilot in quarter 1 of calendar 2021. The Holistic Review recommendation was prioritized by the community on 3 May 2022.

Reference and relevant elements of the Operating Standards for Specific Reviews. The Board notes that the ATRT3's recommended timeline of 12 months from Board approval does not appear feasible, but notes that this effort could be placed as a high priority in the prioritization work to allow it to proceed on a quicker time frame." (ATRT3 Final Recommendations Board Action Scorecard, pg. 7)

The Board additionally stated that it needed, "additional information in order to make an informed decision based on full understanding of what a Holistic Review would entail, including the resources needed to support it." It went on to identify the following information gaps to be addressed by the pilot:

- Guidance as to how Holistic Review teams should determine and prioritize its work areas in order to ensure effective review outcomes within the recommended 18-month timeframe.
- Proposed methodology for gathering and analyzing data to inform fact-based findings and recommendations.
- Articulation of necessary skill sets for Holistic Review team members required to achieve review objectives, which will later be included in the Operating Standards for Specific Reviews.
- Estimate of resources and budget required to complete the review effectively.
- Suggestions as to how various ICANN structures would be held accountable for implementing the recommendations coming from the Holistic Review, if directed to entities other than the ICANN Board or org.
- Determination of how future Holistic Review teams would measure the success of implementation and the success of a future Continuous Improvement Program. A Bylaws amendment to add this Review should complete after the first Holistic Review has concluded and the effectiveness of the Holistic Review pilot is assessed with the community. (ATRT3 Final Recommendations Board Action Scorecard, pg. 8)

Takeaway: The Board determined that the first Holistic Review should be run as a pilot to address information gaps.