**IANA Transition Planning Proceeding in Fine Internet Style**

Hundreds of individuals from across the Internet community have spent countless hours over the last several months crafting plans for the transition of the stewardship of the IANA functions from NTIA to the global multistakeholder community. The fruits of that labor have become highly evident within the past weeks, as two out of three components of the transition plan obtained community consensus while the third continued its intensive progress.

When the IANA Stewardship Transition Coordination Group (ICG) initially convened in July 2014, one of our first key decisions was to vest the responsibility for developing transition plans not in the ICG itself, but in the global community of individuals interested in and affected by the IANA functions. We recognized the existence of three distinct communities of interest aligned to the three main categories of IANA functions: domain names, numbering resources, and protocol parameters. In September 2014, we put a call < <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/rfp-iana-stewardship-08sep14-en.pdf> > out to these “operational communities” to develop plans for the transition. We set a target deadline of January 15, 2015 for submission of these plans to the ICG.

We are pleased to report that we have received transition plans from the protocol parameters community and the numbering community, and that the naming community’s work continues to advance.

The January 15 target has been a source of some angst among those who feel that more time is needed for fulsome debate of the plans. But a more thorough understanding of the role of that milestone in the broader transition planning timeline < <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/icg-process-timeline-07jan15-en.pdf>> (graphical version here < <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/icg-process-timeline-graphic-10sep14-en.xlsx> >) that the ICG set out last summer should alleviate these fears.

Taking heed of both the September 30, 2015 expiry date of the NTIA contract and the statements of Assistant Secretary of Commerce Larry Strickling about the potential for the contract to be extended, the ICG made completion of the transition by September 30 an explicit goal of the transition planning timeline. We recognized that meeting this goal would be challenging, but we also felt that the Internet community was up to the challenge, that setting target deadlines spurs people to action, and that the timeline included sufficient flexibility to adapt to new developments along the way. All of these beliefs have been borne out in practice over the last several months.

First, the efforts of the individuals in each of the operational communities have been nothing short of extraordinary. Over a period of just a few months, each community has crafted an initial draft transition plan, iterated through multiple versions taking a wide array of input into account, and worked to form consensus around details and sub-details. Participants are waking up in the middle of the night on a regular basis to join conference calls with those located on the other side of the globe, traveling long distances to intensive in-person meetings, and spending whole weekends dealing with calls, emails, analysis, and drafting. I fear the ICG may be blamed for ruining more than a few winter holiday vacations, because the effort did not let up in any way during the final few weeks of 2014. The naming community had no less than eight hours of conference calls over the first weekend after the holiday period. As I said: the Internet community was and is up to the challenge, and there is no question that target deadlines have been a motivating factor.

By the same token, the ICG recognizes that consensus takes time to form and that some of the communities have thornier issues to tackle than others. The naming community is currently discussing whether it needs to revise its timeline and expectations for when it may deliver a transition plan to the ICG. The ICG is watching this discussion closely and will analyze how this may affect the rest of the transition planning work. We have no interest in receiving a plan that is incomplete or that lacks community consensus, now or later.

It is also important to recognize that there are many steps left in the process of finalizing the transition plan, including further opportunities for public input. The ICG has specified a five-step assembly and finalization process < <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/iana-transition-assembly-finalization-24dec14-en.pdf> >. We are currently in Step I, which involves evaluating each of the plans individually to ensure that they are complete, clear, consistent with the NTIA transition criteria, and that they were developed openly and inclusively. These evaluations are already being conducted for the numbering and protocol parameters plans. Once these evaluations are concluded to our satisfaction, we will move on to checking the plan components for workability and consistency with each other and assembling them all into a single draft plan which will be put out for public comment.

Thus, the assembly and finalization process has many built-in checks to ensure that the final plan is of the highest quality, addresses feedback from anyone who chooses to provide it, and represents community consensus. No one should assume that the process is over because the January 15 deadline has passed – indeed reviewing the steps that remain and the time they could take explains why the ICG set January 15 as the initial plan submission deadline to begin with.

Those who are unfamiliar with the bottom-up, multistakeholder process of decisionmaking that has characterized the Internet’s development since its inception may look askance at how the transition planning process is proceeding. The cacophony that results from running open, inclusive processes where anyone is invited to contribute ideas and where those ideas are debated on their merits in full public view may seem unnatural or disconcerting to those accustomed to tightly controlled decisionmaking conducted behind closed doors. But the Internet and its governance have never operated that way.

The IANA transition planning process is proceeding just as it should, in the image of the Internet itself. The dedication that the Internet community has demonstrated to this process has reaffirmed the ICG’s confidence that a high-quality, consensus-based transition plan will be successfully delivered to NTIA within a time frame acceptable to all.