

Current State:

The GNSO Council Standing Committee on ICANN's Budget and Operations (SCBO) is limited to comments on the annual budgetary cycle, and only as it relates to the GNSO Council's remit. Membership is limited to Councilors only, but participants from GNSO SG/Cs with relevant expertise are welcomed and as designated by their respective group's leadership team. The SCBO has typically operated from October to March of the following year for each budget cycle, producing comments for:

- PTI/IANA Operating Plan and Budget (Sep - Nov)
- ICANN Org five year operating and financial plan, including a specific fiscal year operating plan and budget (Dec - Mar)
- Five Year Strategic Plan (5 year cycle)

Each previous budget and planning cycle consisted of approximately ten meetings for the SCBO, not including any webinars hosted by the ICANN Org Finance and Planning team. Shortly after the Annual General Meeting and the reset of the GNSO Council, the roster for the SCBO is refreshed for both Councilors and Subject Matter Experts.

Issues:

- In recent years and broadly speaking, interest in planning and the budget has waned.
- Also in recent years, the comments from the SCBO have generally been high level given the agreements required across a variety of stakeholder interests and oftentimes, the comments simply emphasize or reiterate comments from the past.
- Participation from Councilors can be limited, with SG/C participants often engaging more than their Councilor counterparts, which can have a tendency to push discussion beyond the narrow remit of the Council's gTLD policy-making.
- As a result, some of the budgetary elements of interest, particularly from the SG/C participants, end up being more appropriately limited to SG/C comment, rather than for the Council.
- There is a lack of a consistent platform for the SGs/Cs to engage with the Finance and Planning team in a more formal capacity and more broadly across the GNSO.
- The planning and budget process is evolving to also include a phase to prioritize work for the coming fiscal year that is anticipated to occur prior to the release of the upcoming draft planning and budget documents; this sort of exercise does seem appropriately limited to just Council discussion.
- Timing, as a result of the bylaws, never allowed for the GNSO Council to formally adopt the comment, but were always submitted on behalf of the GNSO Council absent any objections.
- Prior drafts of comments submitted to the GNSO Council prior to deadlines received little to no additional input, most likely because the content was at such a high level.

Proposed Path Forward:

At a high level, as the SCBO already encourages participation from the SG/Cs, the intention is to embrace that dynamic. The newly envisioned SCBO would serve as an open, central forum (“town hall”) for the GNSO Council and all SG/Cs interested to collaborate as necessary with respect to ICANN's strategic and operational planning and budgetary processes. The charter would be amended to loosen membership requirements for broader participation by those interested. In that way, it would allow the GNSO Council and SG/Cs to:

- Interface with ICANN finance in a coordinated and more efficient manner to gather information, ask questions, etc; doing so is also envisioned to help in knowledge transfer and dissemination between and amongst the various GNSO groups.
- Discuss budgetary topics of interest amongst the GNSO Council and SG/Cs if desired.
- Coordinate on public comments when and only if applicable (e.g., if there is broad support to submit a comment that is in relation to the GNSO's role as a Decisional Participant in the Empowered Community).

However, it is important to also note what the newly envisioned SCBO will NOT do:

- **It will NOT prevent the GNSO Council or any SG/C from meeting individually and in order to develop its public comment.**
- **It will also NOT develop a singular GNSO public comment; the Council and SG/Cs must retain the ability to submit individual public comments, as they do now.**

A GNSO Council liaison to the SCBO will be responsible for socializing any foreseen issues that may impact the GNSO Council's remit as managers of the PDP and draft comments as necessary for consideration by the GNSO Council prior to submission. The liaison to the SCBO may invite interested Councilors to participate in the drafting process, if Council public comment is envisioned.

Provided there are no major objections from the GNSO Council and SG/Cs, GNSO Council leadership is proposing to put this proposed path forward into place this year, for the upcoming FY ICANN Budget and Operations public comment period. Leadership notes however that this change will be taking place prior to when the Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 – 2030 is anticipated to be considered by the community (e.g., at the end of calendar year 2023); therefore, it is worth considering the potential impacts of the proposed changes on the GNSO's engagement in that process.

Questions to consider:

- Will the format described increase participation of GNSO community members and increase engagement in the annual budget and planning process?
- Would the forum described disseminate information that is not already covered by accompanying webinars hosted by the Finance and Planning team in preparation for each budget and planning cycle? Also noting that as part of the comment cycle, there is

a two week period for the community to submit clarifying questions.

- Would the change of the SCBO negatively impact how GNSO community groups produce comments, based on past public comment cycles? If so, how?
- Would the change of the SCBO materially impede the Council's ability to submit comments to a budget and planning public comment proceeding, if one were warranted? If so, how?
- Would the change of the SCBO materially impede the GNSO's role as a Decisional Participant in the Empowered Community? If so, how?
- As a middle ground could a GNSO specific SCBO mailing list be maintained to disseminate appropriate information and used as a channel to allow for ad hoc engagement sessions when warranted?

Past Comments from the GNSO on the ICANN Org Operating Plans and Budget:

- FY23
 - GNSO Council
 - RySG
 - BC (late)
 - RrSG (late)
- FY22
 - BC
 - GNSO Council
 - RySG
 - NCSG
 - RrSG
- FY21
 - BC
 - GNSO Council
 - RySG
 - NCSG
 - RrSG
- ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025
 - BC
 - NCSG
 - GNSO Council
 - RrSG
 - RySG
- FY20 (SCBO final charter adopted October 2018)
 - Blacknight
 - BC
 - GNSO Council
 - RySG
 - IPC
 - NCSG
 - RrSG
- FY19 (SCBO interim charter adopted December 2017)
 - Blacknight
 - Registry Africa
 - Allegravita
 - GNSO Council
 - RySG
 - i2Coalition
 - RySG
 - IPC
 - Mark Monitor
 - NCSG
 - Radix
 - RrSG
 - DotAsia
 - BC
 - ISPCP
 - Several individuals associated with the GNSO

- FY18 (pre-SCBO)
 - RySG
 - CPH
 - RrSG
 - GNSO Council
 - BC
 - ISPCP
 - IPC
 - RDS Working Group