

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.

Sessions will be hosted in Zoom, will NOT be recorded, and will be in English only (no interpretation due to the [breakout format](#)).

Participants will be encouraged to turn on their video for the brainstorming exercise.

Participants will collaborate in a virtual whiteboard (Jamboard from Google). Recommended web browser: Chrome.

1. Participants will be divided into subgroups (using Zoom's breakout rooms feature) 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 areas of focus, which are the five areas of focus of ICANN's strategic plan for fiscal years 2021 to 2025. The elements collected in previous years have helped identify these different focus areas:

- **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 FY23 (2021) 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.

Focus Areas	FY23 Trends Proposals	Top Priority
Security	[2.2] DNS ecosystem security threats remain high and have the potential to erode the public trust in ICANN's ability to fulfill its mission.	X
	[1.15] While discussions are continuing within the community over what constitutes "DNS abuse", ICANN is serving its role within its mission and looking for other opportunities to cooperate to address the broader matter of nefarious use of the DNS. ICANN continues to contribute technical knowledge and input to other parties that are developing solutions.	X
Unique Identifier Systems	[1.07] The continued evolution of emerging identifier technologies – at times promoted by governments – requires ICANN to be responsive to these changes and ensure that the unique identifier systems evolve and continue to serve the global Internet user base.	X
	[1.13] As the diversity of online participants grows, pressure to address universal acceptance issues is accelerating, to support a multilingual Internet.	
	[1.16] Some existing concerns are vocalized more loudly relative to the subsequent rounds of new gTLDs, as ICANN gets closer to implementation (NEW).	
Geopolitics	[3.7] Efforts to regulate or legislate the Internet continue to intensify, by some national governments and regional governmental bodies, as well as some global intergovernmental organizations, using legislation, policy initiatives, standards proposals and other types of initiatives.	X
Governance	[3.1] The prolonged virtual setting and an uneven return to a pre-pandemic participation environment are testing the ability of ICANN's multistakeholder model (MSM) to support efficient and effective engagement and decision-making.	X
	[1.01] While there is a continued necessity to fulfill transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and openness obligations, the prolonged virtual setting is exacerbating the challenges of attracting and onboarding newcomers.	
	[1.04] Heightened awareness of ICANN, coupled with a lack of understanding about its role, threatens legitimacy and public trust in ICANN and increases the need to communicate broadly on ICANN's role.	
Financials	[1.02] The continued consolidation of the DNS marketplace and the perceived lack of interest in the expansion of the gTLD name space, added to the rapid increase of Internet users shifting to relying on online platforms and the uncertainty of the current global economic climate may impact ICANN's long-term funding.	X
	[1.14] Prioritization is becoming more critical, to continue to support the growing needs and demands of ICANN's global community	

Timeline of Strategic Outlook Process

