

UA EAI Working Group Meeting

12 December 2023

Attendees

Mark Svancarek

Nitin Walia

Anna Bagdasaryan

Guðrun Poulsen

Harsha Wijayawardhana

Jim DeLaHunt

John Levine

Krislin Goulbourne-Harry

Kunle Olorundare

Arnt Gulbrandsen

Seda Akbulut

Yin May Oo

Meeting Agenda:

1. Welcome and roll call
2. Review the new version3 of [SOW for FY24 Action Item E2.1](#) Make it easier to experiment with a self-hosted working EAI systems (without COI issues)
 - a. (Older version [SOW for FY24 Action Item E2.1](#))
 - b. [EAI Self-Certification Score Generator](#) to go along with the SOW (completed spreadsheet)
3. Developing a [5-year action plan](#) for EAI WG to achieve the [UASG's 5-year strategic plan](#) [to be discussed offline on mailing list]
4. How could the WG help for the upcoming UA-Day
5. AOB

Meeting recording: [Link](#); password E9P?OY=7a^

Meeting Notes

Seda started with presenting the updates of SOW as a priority topic.

Agenda#2: Review the new version3 of SOW for FY24 Action Item E2.1

Mark said the tricky part of the SOW was the gap between what was decided to do and the available tools in the market are not open-sourced, some of them were third-party owned or proprietary.

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For this task, it needs a vendor to create solutions of self-hosting email systems which could exchange emails with internationalized email addresses through open-sourced components. Mark asked Jim and Nitin to share comments for 2 minutes each.

Nitin said he initially thought it required email service providers to provide free EAI-ready email software globally, especially for those who would like to test UA readiness issues. Based on initial assumption, WG listed down a few service providers who could offer a self-hosting platform for any domains. The revised SOW suggested a different combination of tools (cluster of components) to create their own platform of EAI. This solution might limit users to specific types of solution instead of letting the user try multiple platforms. The emails exchanged with Jim and Nitin were about that.

Jim said this is a kind of demand and supply paradox, for the existing email services or systems to see what they might be missing. The more changes we give people to try on different parts, it would be better to persuade bigger organizations. It would be valuable to make it easier to experiment with working EAI systems. Now there are two different ways to offer, one is to make somebody else host a system, and another is to self-host. Since there are vendors who provide email system hosting and Jim (as a user of Xgen free-version) appreciates those. There are also people who would like to experiment hosting their own email systems. This SOW is a helpful option for these people. According to the ICANN's policy on not favoring one proprietary software or tool over another, WG would avoid solutions to be open-sourced. The policy was not in written form although the staff consulted WG by suggesting to stick to the open-sourced tools.

Jim would like to know how ICANN solved these conflict of interest problems previously. It would be good to know more about ICANN boundaries. In general, SOW should focus on making the experiment easier.

Mark thanked Nitin and Jim, and clarified that the focus is on the self-hosting system, and helping people to use services that are hosted online by commercials or ICANN or any other entity would be outside the scope of this work item.

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Mark checked with everyone to make sure that the scope of this SOW is focused on the self-hosting environment, and not any other experiment of using any other hosting services.

Responses in the Chat on this matter:

Jim: The “self-hosted” constraint was added to this work item due to the ICANN limits, if I recall correctly.

Kunle: It will facilitate experimentation by system admin.

Experimenting means you want to find out what you don’t know or suspect but testing is to confirm conformity to established standards or already known guidelines

Mark reviewed the SOW and said if there is a need to go by multiple SOWs, it would be possible. This allows experimentation with a Linux server, however, cloud services or different platforms may not enable the experiment.

John said it would be for a self-hosting system on a Linux server, and it would be as good as Azure or AWS or Google services, which could be configured in a few minutes. WG could provide a preconfigured image for experimenters to try. For a non-freeware environment, there would be a lot more to set up. John’s main concern was to pick the combination of softwares and then we can get feedback from the people who could find different combinations of what was already running. He would not put a lot of work into it (making the SOW) because it was not clear how useful it would be, and suggested allowing mix and match.

Mark asked how hard it would be for hosting a domain name. John answered it would be the Registrar. Mark explained that the request was to come up with at least two configurations, and more price for more combinations of solutions. Mark shared that it would be interesting to provide more than one configuration. Mark asked the WG for some comments.

Jim agreed with Arnt’s suggestion “Done is better than perfect”.

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Nitin said it would be for all scenarios, since there would be people who would not use their own hosting servers. Nitin was fine with using any third party hosting platform or software tools for user's convenience. Nitin shared that most users would like to use a cloud-hosting (not-self-hosting) environment as it would be an easier choice for them. The second point is that professional email service people would be able to support better solutions which already exist, while open-sourced solutions would need the experimenter to start from scratch.

Jim clarified for Nitin that what he was thinking was not the solution WG was looking for. This experiment would be about self-hosting, whereas the SOW is limited to self-hosting, where the vendor can provide solutions but not the hosting service or sharing the software. Nitin said this SOW would be limiting the experimenter to be tech-savvy. Jim said this is not to encourage beginners to compete with the existing market of their softwares. WG can only provide experiments only with open-source tools due to ICANN policy.

Harsha asked

- 1) how would the emails be changed for different languages and scripts
- 2) if there were any hosting services online, which users can just use a ready-made.

Harsha said one would need to have their own DNS and be required to know complicated configurations. For example, a cPanel server would need configurations, and Harsha asked how to continue.

Mark said these questions look like client side vs hosting side, and by tying these together we may be defeating ourselves. Secondly, there are a lot of third parties providing email hosting services for personal domain names. Mark also referred to the chat that it would not need to be running forever. Mark said some people would like to experiment with the open-source components to design an email hosting service or to build an operating server as a learning phase, while some people would like to test on commercially available products.

Jim added that it was difficult to imagine an email service provider allowing private domain addresses, but there are facts saying that it would be possible from the two different service providers.

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Mark said for some service providers, it would be seen as a free advertising opportunity, and it would be debatable for going against the rules. Jim asked for more information about ICANN policy and the nature of the obstacle. Seda provided the link to the article in the chat. Mark said it is more for the gain of the entire industry but not as individuals or one certain name. Mark suggested the approach of breaking the SOW into two parts.

Mark tried to get everyone on the same page by explaining about the initial idea of the SOW, and the deliverables now are limited to servers. Jim said the experiment needs to run on both server and client. Jim said that could be easy, and the hardest challenge would be bypassing the corporate email services which were set up without EAI in mind. In order for them to test out the upgrade to EAI-ready email server, we need to demonstrate EAI-ready examples.

Mark said we could do experiments on CoreMail, QQ, Xgen and such, whereas the policy could allow the experimenting. Nitin pointed out that similar case studies were done before. Mark said that would be not about offering or supporting them but more like a guide on how to get things done on their tools.

Mark said the vendor could come up with their own list and do the case study, however, pointing people to relate to the case studies with configurations, it could be debatable with the policy. Looking into case-study examples, a report from THNIC explained that Xgen had solutions before using them. The previous case study did not mention specific configurations in detail. Mark wanted to confirm if that kind of case studies would be allowed in future. Seda confirmed that sharing success stories of how to configure tools to fit in with EAI-readiness is allowed. We do not recommend specific products to be used as a solution, without intending to be advertised or favored. Multiple solutions for UA issues could be shared through hackathons as well. Seda explained that this SOW sounds like directing the clients to private organizations to use specific products, and there could be licensing issues. ICANN should be concerned about the public opinion and appear on the fairness side as not favoring any individuals.

Mark said the example case study looked like marketing material to him, but WG would be comfortable at this level of self promoting.

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Seda reminded WG that there was no conflict of interest policy in place a few years ago. Thus, some case studies in the past could be different from expectations. Some outdated case studies could be taken down. Mark requested to leave it as a history without taking it down.

Nitin said regarding the conflict of interest, all the case studies were conducted in a way of promoting the products. Nitin shared his understanding of the purpose of this project. Ultimately, anyone could search on the internet for UA solutions nowadays. Before creating this SOW, the initial idea was to list down the service providers which can offer a test scenario for the users. The aim was to share the tech website links of the service providers, and find a vendor to allow the users to have a test environment. After that, the inventory of tools would be shared on the UASG website as a reference.

Jim agreed with the original intention of this task. Jim proposed making the SOW into two parts, one is for testing the open tools and self hosting, and the other for doing the measurement case study kind of tools analysis from EAI perspective using the service from providers. Jim would like to know clearly of the restriction.

Harsha said there are testings going on with two service providers for like 8 months. ICANN did sponsor the initial phase, but when commercial parties were involved, the testing was done without ICANN support.

Wrapping up the meeting, Mark said that Jim's advice on following up with RFC conformance to a variety of software products. Commercial products could be mentioned and compared in those case studies and publish the results. The more details would be discussed at the next meeting.

Note: There were a few edits in the SOW document added by Jim in the document.

Chat Highlights

Seda:

Regarding the policy Jim refers, this may be helpful :

<https://archive.icann.org/en/accountability/frameworks-principles/legal-corporate.htm#legal>

Revised version :

<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/articles-en#:~:text=This%20Corporation%20is%20a%20nonprofit,for%20charitable%20and%20public%20purposes>

"It is not organized for the private gain of any person"

Jim :

I do not expect vendor to host the email services. This SOW is for _SELF_-hosting. Ie hosting by experimenter.

Nitin :

Then How UASG will do case studies of EAI ready solutions? and also done in past

Jim :

Great question. I would love ICANN to answer this.

Seda :

I think the purpose of case studies is sharing success stories. Not to recommend people to experiment with their service.

Another consideration is that the service should be continuous beyond the contract period and should not depend on the operation of a private organization.

Nitin :

All past reports did till now by UASG talk about so many private service providers , all these reports were done by contracted contractors only for Level 1 and Level 2 status

Jim :

I am doing EAI address experimentation through <https://www.datamail.in/> . The address uses the provider's domain name. It would not surprise me if a provider could offer service under the user's own domain name.

Nitin :

u can have it on your own domain

Jim :

The email provider Proton offers to work under the user's own domain name. So other providers probably also offer it as well. Source:
<https://proton.me/blog/custom-email-domain>

Nitin :

How a service provider will have private gain when they are offering FREE to UASG , Infact they will support ICANN in this imitative by investing from there end.

Seda :

The first gain the client, I suppose.

Nitin :

😊 services are already available online anyone who want to test can reach such service providers

Is ICANN for its own use only using Opensource solution? are they not using private services?

AOB (The next meeting)

Mark confirmed that the meeting would be held at the same time next week.

Next meeting: Tuesday, 19 December 2023, 15:00 UTC

Action items:

No.	Action Item	Owner
1	Inform the WG for the new meeting time	Yin May
2	Review the updated SOW from the mailing list	WG
3	Check with relevant teams for the not promoting proprietary tools	Seda