



GNSO WORKING GROUP GUIDELINES – SUMMARY

Please note that this document is a summary only!

Working Group Members are strongly encouraged to review the complete GNSO Working Group Guidelines, which are incorporated into the [GNSO Operating Procedures, Annex 1](#)

1. Objective

The objective of the GNSO Working Group Guidelines is to assist Working Groups to optimize productivity and effectiveness. It should be noted that the manner in which the output of a WG defined by these guidelines is used is not determined by these guidelines, but rather is determined by the charter of the WG and, if applicable, the relevant ICANN Bylaw definitions such as the Policy Development Process. This summary aims to provide an overview of the main elements of importance to Working Group members and therefore does not cover items related to the creation and establishment of Working Groups, such as chartering and formation, which are also covered in the [GNSO Working Group Guidelines](#).

2. First meeting of the Working Group

The first meeting of the Working Group should address the following issues:

- Introductions - members of the Working Group should be provided with the opportunity, at the start of the first meeting, to share information regarding interests, background, skills, experience, especially as related to any requirements in the Charter.
- Members of the Working Group should be informed that all Working Groups are normally expected to operate under the principles of transparency and openness, which means, inter alia, that mailing lists are publicly archived, meetings are normally recorded and/or transcribed, and Statements of Interest (SOIs) are required from Working Group participants which will be publicly posted.
- Election of the WG Leaders – Normally a Chair will be selected at the first meeting of the WG. A working Group may elect to have co-chairs, vice-chairs. Once selected, a working Group Chair will need to be confirmed by the Chartering Organization (CO).
- Items for review - At the first meeting of the WG or as soon thereafter as practicable, the following documents should be reviewed in order to ensure all members have a common understanding of the WG's mission, goals, objectives, deliverables, decision-making process and timeframes: Charter, Working Group Guidelines and any other documents relevant for the WGs discussion (e.g., Policy Development Process Guidebook, Issues Paper). It is required that WGs develop a work plan that outlines the necessary steps and expected timing in order to achieve the milestones set out in the WG Charter.

3. Working Group Member Roles and Responsibilities

The GNSO Working Group Guidelines outline the roles and responsibilities of the following standard WG roles: Chair, Co-Chairs or Vice-Chairs, Secretary, Liaison, Members and Staff.



4. Use of Sub-Teams

The WG may decide to employ sub-teams as an efficient means of delegating topics or assignments to be completed. Decisions made by sub-teams should always be shared with the larger working group and a call for consensus must be made to the entire WG.

5. Participation

Members of a WG are expected to be active participants, either on the WG mailing lists and/or in the WG meetings, although some might opt to take an observer approach (monitor mailing lists and/or meetings). The WG Chair is expected to make an assessment at the start of every meeting whether a sufficient number of WG members are present to proceed with the meeting and discussions.

6. Representativeness

Ideally, a Working Group should mirror the diversity and representativeness of the community by having representatives from most, if not all, CO Stakeholder Groups and/or Constituencies. The Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat and ICANN Staff, is continually expected to assess whether the WG has sufficiently broad representation, and if not, which groups should be approached to encourage participation. Similarly, if the Chair is of the opinion that there is over-representation to the point of capture, he/she should inform the Chartering Organization.

7. Process integrity

WG members should be mindful that, once input/comment periods have been closed, discussions or decisions should not be resurrected unless there is group consensus that the issue should be revisited in light of new information that has been introduced. Members are expected to participate faithfully in the WG's process (e.g. attending meetings, providing input or monitoring discussions) and should formally withdraw if they find that they can no longer meet this expectation. Public comments received as a result of a public comment forum held in relation to the activities of the WG should be carefully considered and analyzed. In addition, the WG is encouraged to explain their rationale for agreeing or disagreeing with the different comments received and, if appropriate, how these will be addressed in the report of the WG.

8. Individual/Group Behavior and Norms

ICANN's Expected Standards of Behavior are outlined in the ICANN Accountability and Transparency Framework, see <http://www.icann.org/transparency/acct-trans-frameworks-principles-10jan08.pdf> for further details.



9. Standard Methodology for Making Decisions

The Chair will be responsible for designating each position as having one of the following designations:

- **Full consensus** - when no one in the group speaks against the recommendation in its last readings. This is also sometimes referred to as **Unanimous Consensus**.
- **Consensus** - a position where only a small minority disagrees, but most agree¹.
- **Strong support but significant opposition** - a position where, while most of the group supports a recommendation, there are a significant number of those who do not support it.
- **Divergence** (also referred to as **No Consensus**) - a position where there isn't strong support for any particular position, but many different points of view. Sometimes this is due to irreconcilable differences of opinion and sometimes it is due to the fact that no one has a particularly strong or convincing viewpoint, but the members of the group agree that it is worth listing the issue in the report nonetheless.
- **Minority View** - refers to a proposal where a small number of people support the recommendation. This can happen in response to a **Consensus**, **Strong support but significant opposition**, and **No Consensus**; or, it can happen in cases where there is neither support nor opposition to a suggestion made by a small number of individuals.

The recommended method for discovering the consensus level designation on recommendations, as well as the procedure to be followed if there is disagreement in relation to the designation given to a position by the Chair, can be found in the GNSO Working Group Guidelines.

10. Appeal Process

Any WG member that believes that his/her contributions are being systematically ignored or discounted or wants to appeal a decision of the WG or CO should first discuss the circumstances with the WG Chair. In the event that the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the WG member should request an opportunity to discuss the situation with the Chair of the Chartering Organization or their designated representative.

In addition, if any member of the WG is of the opinion that someone is not performing their role according to the criteria outlined in the GNSO Working Group Guidelines, the same appeals process may be invoked.

11. Communication/Collaboration Tools

Each Working Group will have a dedicated mailing list. Working Group mailing lists are publicly archived (e.g., on the GNSO web site (<http://gnso.icann.org>)). In addition, WGs may make use of collaborative workspaces such as Wikis (see <https://community.icann.org>).

¹ For those that are unfamiliar with ICANN usage, you may associate the definition of 'Consensus' with other definitions and terms of art such as rough consensus or near consensus. It should be noted, however, that in the case of a GNSO PDP originated Working Group, all reports, especially Final Reports, must restrict themselves to the term 'Consensus' as this may have legal implications.



12. Briefings and Subject Matter Experts

If the WG determines that it needs additional educational briefings occurring upfront or as issues emerge during deliberations, it should identify its specific requests to the CO including subject matter(s), type(s) of expertise, objectives, and costs. If additional costs are involved, prior approval must be obtained from the CO.

13. Products and Outputs

The products and outputs of a Working Group may be prescribed by the Charter such as a report, recommendations, guidelines, self-assessment or defined by the process under which the WG operates (e.g., Policy Development Process). In addition, the Working Group might decide that additional products or outputs are required in order to carry out its Charter in an efficient and productive manner such as a statement of work or a project plan.

For further information, please see the GNSO Working Group Guidelines (see <http://gns0.icann.org/council/annex-1-gns0-wg-guidelines-07apr11-en.pdf>).