Preparation for 2026 SPS

11 December 2025

Role of Council

The role of the GNSO Council as Manager of the PDP

Overview: Role of Council

From the Bylaws: “The GNSO Council is responsible for **managing the policy development process of the GNSO**. It shall adopt such procedures (the "GNSO Operating Procedures") as it sees fit to carry out that responsibility”

At a high-level, what does this entail?

Overview: Role of Council

SCOPING

- Scoping teams to assess and confirm common understanding of the ‘problem’
- Requesting an Issue Report
- Reviewing the Issue Report and deciding whether to initiate a PDP / adopt Charter

MANAGING the PDP

- Using tools available to ensure the work is proceeding according to the communicated work plan; the Council and PDP holding each other mutually accountable
- Mitigating issues as they arise

Overview: Role of Council

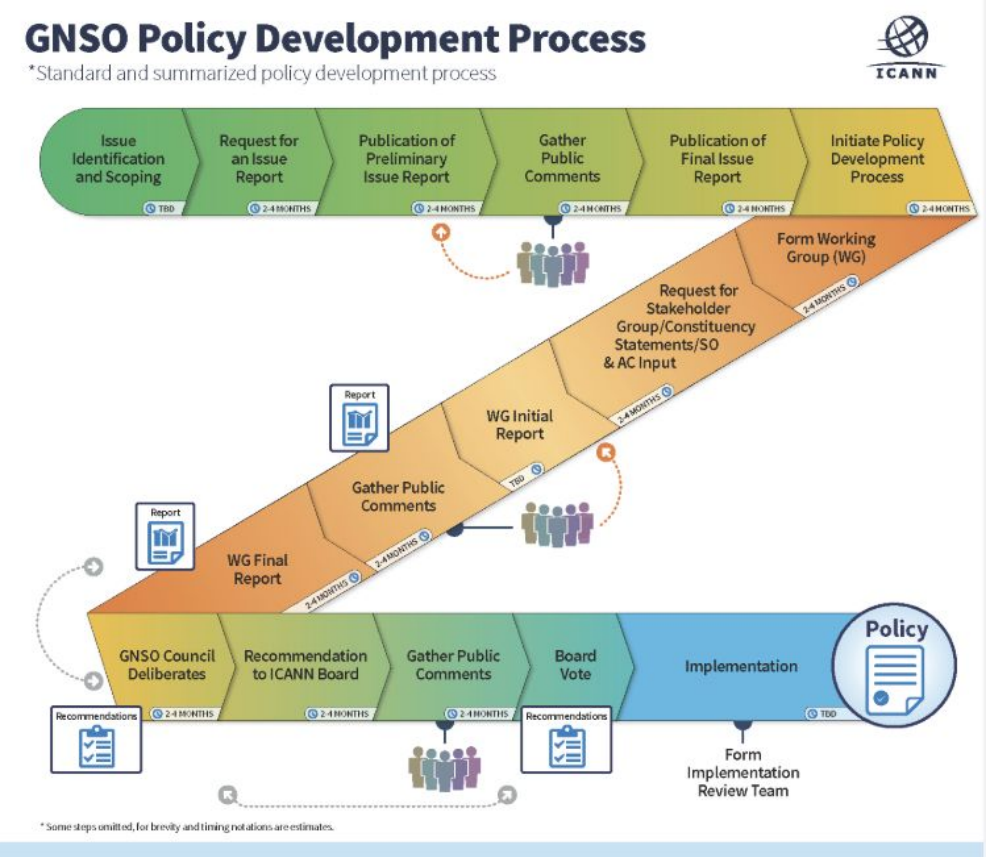
CONSIDERING FINAL REPORT

- Voting to adopt the recommendations
- Sending Recommendations Report to the ICANN Board

SUPPORTING BOARD CONSIDERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- If helpful, briefing the ICANN Board on Council-adopted recommendations prior to Board consideration
- Providing a Council liaison to the IRT / resolving issues that are escalated to the Council

Overview: Role of Council



Role of Council

Picket Fence

Overview: Role of Council: Picket Fence

The mission of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (“ICANN”) is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet’s unique identifier systems … (the “Mission”). Specifically, ICANN:

- Coordinates the allocation and assignment of names in the root zone of the Domain Name System (“DNS”) and coordinates the development and implementation of policies concerning the registration of second-level domain names in generic top-level domains (“gTLDs”). In this role, ICANN’s scope is to coordinate the development and implementation of policies:

- For which uniform or coordinated resolution is reasonably necessary to facilitate the openness, interoperability, resilience, security and/or stability of the DNS including, with respect to gTLD registrars and registries, policies in the areas described in Annex G-1 and Annex G-2; and

- That are developed through a bottom-up consensus-based multistakeholder process and designed to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet’s unique names systems.

Overview: Role of Council: Picket Fence

ANNEX G-1

The topics, issues, policies, procedures and principles referenced in Section 1.1(a)(i) with respect to gTLD registrars are:

- issues for which uniform or coordinated resolution is reasonably necessary to facilitate interoperability, security and/or stability of the Internet, registrar services, registry services, or the DNS;
- functional and performance specifications for the provision of registrar services;
- registrar policies reasonably necessary to implement Consensus Policies relating to a gTLD registry;
- resolution of disputes regarding the registration of domain names (as opposed to the use of such domain names, but including where such policies take into account use of the domain names); or
- restrictions on cross-ownership of registry operators and registrars or resellers and regulations and restrictions with respect to registrar and registry operations and the use of registry and registrar data in the event that a registry operator and a registrar or reseller are affiliated.

Overview: Role of Council: Picket Fence

ANNEX G-1 EXAMPLES

- principles for allocation of registered names in a TLD (e.g., first-come/first-served, timely renewal, holding period after expiration);
- prohibitions on warehousing of or speculation in domain names by registries or registrars;
- reservation of registered names in a TLD that may not be registered initially or that may not be renewed due to reasons reasonably related to (i) avoidance of confusion among or misleading of users, (ii) intellectual property, or (iii) the technical management of the DNS or the Internet (e.g., establishment of reservations of names from registration);
- maintenance of and access to accurate and up-to-date information concerning registered names and name servers;
- procedures to avoid disruptions of domain name registrations due to suspension or termination of operations by a registry operator or a registrar, including procedures for allocation of responsibility among continuing registrars of the registered names sponsored in a TLD by a registrar losing accreditation; and
- the transfer of registration data upon a change in registrar sponsoring one or more registered names.

Overview: Role of Council: Picket Fence

ANNEX G-2

The topics, issues, policies, procedures and principles referenced in Section 1.1(a)(i) with respect to gTLD registries are:

- Issues for which uniform or coordinated resolution is reasonably necessary to facilitate interoperability, security and/or stability of the Internet or DNS;
- functional and performance specifications for the provision of registry services;
- security and stability of the registry database for a TLD;
- registry policies reasonably necessary to implement Consensus Policies relating to registry operations or registrars;
- resolution of disputes regarding the registration of domain names (as opposed to the use of such domain names); or
- restrictions on cross-ownership of registry operators and registrars or registrar resellers and regulations and restrictions with respect to registry operations and the use of registry and registrar data in the event that a registry operator and a registrar or registrar reseller are affiliated.

Overview: Role of Council: Picket Fence

ANNEX G-2 EXAMPLES

Examples of the above include, without limitation:

- principles for allocation of registered names in a TLD (e.g., first-come/first served, timely renewal, holding period after expiration);
- prohibitions on warehousing of or speculation in domain names by registries or registrars;
- reservation of registered names in the TLD that may not be registered initially or that may not be renewed due to reasons reasonably related to (i) avoidance of confusion among or misleading of users, (ii) intellectual property, or (iii) the technical management of the DNS or the Internet (e.g., establishment of reservations of names from registration);
- maintenance of and access to accurate and up-to-date information concerning domain name registrations; and
- procedures to avoid disruptions of domain name registrations due to suspension or termination of operations by a registry operator or a registrar, including procedures for allocation of responsibility for serving registered domain names in a TLD affected by such a suspension or termination

Responsibilities of Council

Question 1

Is the primary remit of the Council clear?

Question 2

Are the roles and responsibilities of the Council understood?

Question 3

Are the boundaries of the picket fence for policy development understood?

Role of SPS

Evolution of the Council's Role in Managing PDPs and How the SPS Has Helped Identify Those Improvements

Why does the SPS exist?

Issues arising in PDPs…and the Council being caught off guard

- **Problematic membership dynamics in certain PDPs**: inadequate representation, disrespectful engagement, uneven distribution of work
- **Problematic PDP leadership dynamics**: belief that leadership needed to be representative, which is contrary to the role of the Chairs as a neutral facilitator
- **PDPs taking up to 5 years to complete**: overly expansive charters, PDPs missing deadlines, Council finally seeing issues in the Final Report

The GNSO as a Decisional Participant in the Empowered Community

- Needing to navigate the GNSO's role in the EC

SPS: In the beginning…

The GNSO as a Decisional Participant in the EC

- Identifying a need: develop the Guidelines and Templates to allow the GNSO to serve as a Decisional Participant

The Council Becoming an Effective Manager of the PDP

- Councillors building bridges to allow them to work together better
- Recognizing that the Council lacked tools to properly manage PDPs, especially identifying and mitigating issues at an early stage
- Recognizing that the Council lacked visibility into its full portfolio of work/upcoming work

SPS: Where are we now? (1 of 2)

- Full suite of Guidelines and Templates developed for the GNSO as a Decisional Participant in the EC

The Council Launched and Completed PDP 3.0

- Developed different membership models
- Established expectations for WG members and the Chair
- Developed the Consensus Building Playbook *because reaching consensus is not easy*
- Developed the Program and Project Management toolkit, which gave rise to:
  - Mutually agreed PDP work plans
  - Accountability at the PDP member/leadership and Council levels
  - On-time delivery of work!

SPS: Where are we now? (2 of 2)

- The Council (and other interested parties) can see the full slate of work, as well as upcoming Council decision points b/c of the PMT
- By addressing some of these issues, space has been created to:
  - Put the “strategic” in the SPS - looking at hypotheticals and continuing to evolve the Council’s toolkit
  - Enhancing relationships with the community, especially the Board
  - Working towards “board-ready” recommendations
  - Focus on continuous improvement
  - Dedicated Small Teams to quickly progress Council work

Council Tools

Overview of What is Available to the Council

Council Tools

- Seek to ensure there is a shared understanding of the tools available to Councilors to:
  - **Serve** as a Councilor
  - **Prepare** for Council meetings
  - **Manage PDPs** in an effective manner
- Explore what might be missing, can be improved, is not used, etc.

Council Tools

Some Existing Mechanisms

- **Process:** Councilor Onboarding
- **Dedicated F2F Time:** Strategic Planning Session (SPS)
- **People:** Relying on incumbent Councilors, your appointing SG/C, and support staff members

Council Tools: How to stay up to date?

Some Existing Tools

- Action Decision Radar (PDP 3.0)
- Project List (PDP 3.0)
- GNSO Council Liaison to the PDP / IRTs - presentations to Council
- Councilors can participate in PDPs
- Prior to Council meetings: reminders from staff
- Prior to ICANN meetings
  - GNSO Policy Briefing
  - GNSO Webinar

How to better ensure positive PDP outcomes (1 of 2)

Some of the methods

- Councilors staying current - all of the aforementioned ways
- Narrow/focused scoping of efforts (PDP 3.0)
- Org liaisons to PDPs / Board liaisons to PDPs
- Input during the PDP phase from the Board / Org liaisons
- Formal public comment from Org and potentially Board
- Encouraging your SG/Cs to provide public comment
- Integrating consideration of impacts to GPI, HR, Consensus Policies

How to better ensure positive PDP outcomes (2 of 2)

Some of the methods

- **ENGAGEMENT:** Between Councilors, their SG/Cs, and their members in PDPs to stay informed and provide input along the way

- **BRIEFINGS:** from WG leaders to Council (and potentially to Board upon Council adoption), especially when Final Reports are delivered
  - In other words, being engaged along the way, adjusting as necessary, and avoiding surprises at the end…

PDP 3.0: Recalling past work

Goal: Ensure clear expectations for deliverables and manageable scope of work; ensure a standardized set of materials for tracking progress

Council Charter WG

PDP Charter, with clearly defined mission, scope, objectives & deliverables

WG Manage Project

- Timeline
- Work Plan
- Action Item
- Project Plan
- Fact Sheet

Council Track WG Progress

- Project List
- Action / Decision Radar

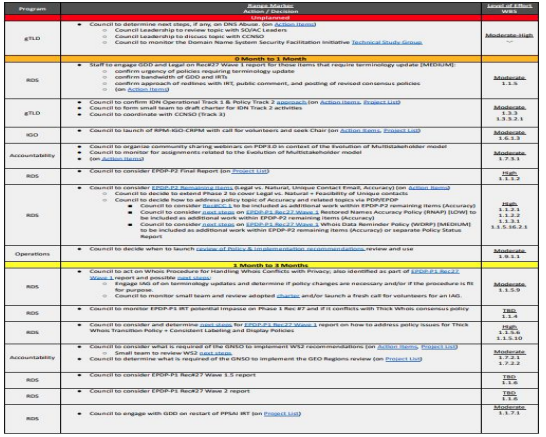
- **Status and Condition**
  - Allows early warnings
- **New Tools**
  - Continuation of PDP 3.0 efforts in managing larger programs, bandwidth & resources (Improvement #17)

Council's Tools to Monitor PDPs and Look Ahead

Projects List

- Holistic overview of all projects at the Council level.
- Focuses on change during the period: what is currently being worked on, what work is planned, and what work has been completed.
- Also seeks to identify key risks/mitigations.

Action Decision Radar (ADR)



- Forward-looking snapshot from the PMT to help the Council (and broader community) plan for coming months.

Are these the right tools?

For returning Councilors, what is your experience? Do the tools help you to prepare for Council meetings? If not, why? Should we start using the Council meeting agenda time?

Do Councilors understand which tools are most important to review on a regular basis?

Are improvements needed? Is there anything missing entirely?

Are there things that Councilors never use? If so, why?