

Step-by-Step Guide: GNSO Council Prioritization Model PILOT

Introduction

During the [21 May Council Meeting](#), the GNSO Council agreed to progress on the proposed Prioritization Model and conduct it first as a pilot. Based on lessons learned from the pilot, the prioritization process could be adjusted as necessary.

The objective is to establish a structured and transparent process to help the GNSO Council compare potential work items/projects. The recommended approach is a multi-criteria scoring model, followed by Council discussion, and possible adjustment before any prioritization outcome is agreed upon.

Below is a (10 step) step-by-step guide based on the [prioritization model](#) provided to Council, which describes the process, criteria and other considerations needed to execute the prioritization exercise.

Strategic Considerations

The model works best if the Council keeps the following principles in mind as discussed in the [prioritization model](#).

- The scoring should be simple enough to administer. Too many criteria will create complexity without necessarily improving decision-making.
- The output of the scoring is just the first step. Council discussion and decision is still required.
- The process should be transparent. It should also not be so rigid that it becomes a procedural burden.

Step 1. Define the Scope of the Prioritization Exercise

The Council would first agree which projects are in scope for comparison. Only projects that are realistically available for prioritization should be included. Work/Projects already committed to, underway, or dependent on external sequencing should either be excluded or clearly marked as constrained. The model should compare work items/projects that the Council can actually sequence or influence.

Candidate projects for the PILOT:

1. RPMs Phase 2 (UDRP)
2. New gTLDs - Moving from Rounds to an Open Process
3. Expiration Policies
4. Transfer Dispute Resolution Policy
5. DNS Abuse - Additional items in Final Issue Report (**Please note:** this item would be a 2 step prioritization process. First, the Council needs to decide when to discuss and work on the DNS Abuse pending items as a whole and then prioritize the topics/issues within the Final Issue Report.)

However, for the purpose of the step-by-step guide we will use the following project examples (they do not relate to the projects above):

1. Project 1
2. Project 2
3. Project 3

Step 2. Agree on Evaluation Criteria

The Council would use a limited number of criteria that reflect strategic value and provide a common baseline understanding. The criteria should be agreed to and defined before scoring begins. Otherwise, groups may apply different assumptions, and the results will not be comparable.

The prioritization model should not just consider whether criteria are theoretically relevant, it should consider whether the criteria help the Council distinguish between projects in a meaningful and consistent way. Thus, some criteria are more suitable because they help answer whether a project should be prioritized. Adding too many criteria might risk double-counting similar concepts or introducing subjective judgments that may not improve the outcome and could make the PILOT and process more cumbersome.

For reference and background information as well as strategic estimates on all projects, the GNSO Council should consult the following document to help with their scoring:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xbH1ivmEyB3RN-C3hPmEux7o1BfiBQgjLx6-rdf5owE/edit?tab=t.0>

Therefore, the proposed criteria are the following:

Criteria	Baseline Understanding
Importance	Significance of the issue to ICANN's mission, the Internet's Unique Identifier System, and the community.
Community Demand	Level of demonstrated interest, expectation, or need from the overall community and your group.
Complexity	Expected policy, operational, legal, or other expertise, interdependencies, or risk
Resources	Expected level of effort on Council, community volunteers, ICANN org, etc.
Deliverability	Likelihood that meaningful outcomes can be achieved within the planning horizon.

Step 3. Establish a Standard Scoring Scale

A simple **1 to 5 scoring scale** is recommended because it is easy to apply consistently, and provides sufficient differentiation between projects without potentially creating a false sense of precision, as a scale from 1-10 could.

A score of **1** indicates that a project performs very poorly against a criterion or presents significant challenges, while a score of **5** indicates that it strongly satisfies the criterion and represents one of the

strongest candidates for prioritization. Scores of **2, 3,** and **4** reflect progressively stronger alignment with the criterion.

Score	Meaning
1	Very low/ very difficult
2	Low/ difficult
3	Moderate
4	High/ manageable
5	Very high/ highly favourable

For example:

- **Resources Scoring: 5** means easy to resource
- **Resource Scoring: 1** means very resource-intensive
- **Deliverability Scoring: 5** means likely delivery of timely outcomes
- **Deliverability Scoring: 1** means unlikely delivery of outcomes and/or lengthy duration

Step 4. Score Each Project Against The Criteria

Each SG/C/NCA scores each project. These scores below are illustrative only. The Council SG/Cs would need to actually score through the process.

For example, one SG scores the following:

Project	Importance	Demand	Complexity	Resource Feasibility	Deliverability	Total
Project 1	5	5	4	3	3	20
Project 2	3	2	2	2	4	13
Project 3	3	3	4	4	3	17

Step 5. Calculate Initial Results

Once each SG/C/NCA has completed its scoring, support staff compiles all submissions into an aggregated matrix.

The purpose of the aggregated matrix is to:

- Provide a transparent view of how different groups assessed each project.
- Identify areas of alignment and divergence.
- Create a common starting point for Council discussion.

Example Individual SG/C/NCA Scores:

Project	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	NCA
Project 1	20	18	12	13	19
Project 2	16	19	20	20	15
Project 3	15	17	18	18	14

Master Matrix (Average Scores):

Project	Average Score
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Project 1	18.0
Project 2	16.4
Project 3	16.4

Step 6. Interpret the Results and Conduct Structured Council Discussion

The Council would then review and discuss what the scores mean. A lower score would not necessarily mean a project lacks importance. It may mean the project is complex, resource-intensive, dependent on other work, or less likely to conclude quickly. For example, Project 1 may score highly on importance but lower on demand and timely delivery. That would suggest it remains significant but may not be the strongest near-term priority unless the Council is prepared and has capacity to deal with the complexity at the time. Similarly, Project 2 may not have the same demand as Project 3, but it may score well because it is more focused and deliverable. Hence, the Council needs to discuss and interpret the results.

Useful discussion questions could include:

- Where did groups score very differently? Where did groups score similarly?
- Are scores based on shared assumptions?
- Are dependencies or timing constraints missing?
- Does a high score reflect real readiness to deal with the project at this time?
- Does a low score reflect complexity rather than lack of importance?

Step 7. Targeted/Scoped Adjustments

Following discussion, groups may update scores if assumptions have changed or misunderstandings were clarified. Adjustments should be limited and transparent. The objective is not to negotiate a preferred ranking, but to improve the accuracy of the assessment.

Example:

If Council discussion reveals that Project 1-related future work has stronger demand than initially assumed, "Demand" might move from 3 to 4.

Step 8. Prioritization Outcome Statement/Doc

The final output could include both the ranking and explanatory context. The prioritization outcome document will not be replacing any of the current Project Management tools. The ADR will still remain, but it will be updated to flag the respective projects based on prioritization outcome.

Example outcome language:

Based on the scoring exercise and subsequent Council discussion, Project 1 and Project 2 appear to present the strongest near-term prioritization case, subject to resource availability and sequencing constraints. Project 3 and Project 4 remain viable candidates for focused review, while Project 5 remains important but may require further scoping before being advanced as a near-term priority.

Step 9. Standard Timeline for Prioritization Exercise (routine)

The exercise should be repeated periodically, for example around the Strategic Planning Session (SPS). Priorities may shift due to new data, implementation constraints, community input, external

dependencies, or changes in available resources. The model should therefore remain flexible and revisable. The SGs would receive the scoring opportunity 4-8 weeks in advance of the SPS and would have 4 weeks to complete the scoring to allow staff to prepare the outcome and overall matrix ready to be discussed during SPS (or other timing).

Step 10. Timeline for PILOT

For the purpose of the PILOT we would propose the following next steps:

- 1) Present the process/step-by-step guide to GNSO Council during the 10 June Meeting.
- 2) Prepare the PILOT scoring exercise to potentially start in July (announced during the Council meeting on 9 July).
- 3) Run the scoring exercise for SG/C/NCAs starting from 9 July until 13 August.
- 4) Staff to prepare an exercise overview starting 13 August and to be ready for the Council meeting on 10 September.
- 5) Council to discuss the outcome of exercise during the Council meeting on 10 September.