

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.

It is important that participants read this paper before the session, in particular if they are new to the program. 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 60 to 90 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 (individual vote for top three priorities).

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.

Results from last year

The following list of trends is the result of the 2020 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	2020 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] There is increasing pressure from the community for ICANN to address “DNS abuse” issues; however, questions remain – with no clear consensus – about what constitutes “DNS abuse”, and about what ICANN’s role should be in relation to “DNS abuse”.	X
Unique Identifier Systems	[1.07] The rapid evolution of emerging identifier technologies 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] The increasing use of internationalized and generic domain names is an opportunity for ICANN to be proactive about universal acceptance, as appropriate within its mission.	
Geopolitics	[3.7] There is an increased effort by national and regional governments as well as intergovernmental organizations and other types of initiatives to regulate or legislate the Internet. This trend has the potential to lead to actions threatening the operability and openness of the Internet and increases the complexity of ICANN operations and policy development.	X

Governance	[3.1] COVID-19 pandemic-related disruption is accelerating the community's interest to evolve ICANN's multistakeholder model to be agile in the face of change and to support equitable, efficient processes for effective decision-making.	X
	[1.01] There is a continued necessity to fulfill transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and openness obligations.	
	[1.03] There is increasing community awareness about the Empowered Community's powers and responsibilities and how those are exercised.	
	[1.04] Heightened public 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. The ease of spreading misinformation through social media, traditional media and other channels further impacts clarity about ICANN's role.	
	[1.10] As community discussions become more complex and technical, there is increasing demand from non-technical stakeholders to better understand technical topics. At the same time, uncertainty is growing among technical stakeholders about where and how to make their voices heard.	
Financials	[1.02] The level of risk for ICANN's long-term funding is increasing in the face of changes in the marketplace, developments around the expansion of the gTLD name space, and the onset of a global recession/depression.	X
	[1.14] Prioritization is becoming more critical, to continue to support the growing needs and demands of ICANN's global community	

The full conclusions from last year's exercise can be found in this [Strategic Outlook Trend Report](#).

Timeline of Strategic Outlook Process

