
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – GNSO: RrSG Outreach - Strategies for Registrar Accreditation and Participation
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DEVAN REED

Hello, and welcome to the RrSG outreach meeting on outreach strategies for registrar accreditation and participation session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy, and the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct concerning statements of interest. Please observe the following guidelines for this session. I will also note them in the chat for your reference. Only questions posted in the Zoom chat identified as a question will be read aloud during this session as time permits and when directed by the chair of this session. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand in Zoom or otherwise as directed. When speaking, please state your name for the record and speak clearly at a moderate pace. And now, I will hand the floor back over to you. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Devan. Good morning, afternoon, evening, everyone, and welcome. For those that are here in the room, we definitely have plenty of space at the table, so please feel free to move on up here if you would like. Thank you. I work for Squarespace Registrar and am also a member of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. Within the Registrar Stakeholder Group, I serve as the chair for the

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outreach team, one of the many subgroups within our membership.

This team is made up of other RrSG members, and there are two objectives we aim for. One is increasing the engagement of registrars within the ICANN community, and two is promoting the Registrar Stakeholder Group itself to gain more ICANN-accredited registrars as members. What we want to do today is try to have a goal of bridging the gap in accreditation, understanding the landscape of being a registrar from firsthand experience from some of our panelists who have joined us today, and then to also showcase some of the RrSG's resources, offerings, and benefits of being a member.

What you see on screen here is our agenda today. We are first going to have a presentation with Howard Li from ICANN Org, who will speak about becoming an ICANN-accredited registrar. Then we will move on to a discussion with some of our registrar members from the region. They will speak firsthand on how they became accredited registrars and what it is like being a member of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. At the same time, we will also have some polling questions. It is a Registrar Stakeholder Group staple. We will ask some questions to the audience, and we hope to have your participation.

With that, if we can move on to the next slide, we will start with our first polling question. What is your primary reason for attending this RrSG session today? Is it to learn about becoming an ICANN-

accredited registrar, learn about participation in ICANN as a registrar, learn about and increase my network of registrars in the AP region, simply understand more about the RrSG, or other? Note, if you do select other, it would be helpful to understand what that is, so we hope to hear from you. We have someone who wants to speak. Sarah, go ahead.

SARAH WYLD

Hello, this is Sarah. I selected other because I came to see if there are non-members who might be interested in membership, and maybe I could help them. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Very appreciated, Sarah. This is Eric again for the transcript. I think one of the things the outreach team is looking for are ways to connect. One of the benefits of being an RrSG member is that we have a registrar program, which is where we try and get more experienced RrSG members connected with folks that maybe are not as familiar. That could definitely be some of the leads to that. All right, so we will get the results and close the poll.

Look at this. The results are spread across pretty evenly. I did see a little more in the other category, with thirty percent being the lead. I would be curious if there is anyone else that would like to speak to that. I realize I should check the Zoom room. Are there any hands? I see one from Michele. Please go ahead.

MICHELE NEYLON

Thanks, Eric. It is Michele for the record. First off, I think I half misread what the topic of the session was, so that is part of the reason I am here. Secondly, I tend to attend RrSG-related sessions anyway. Similar to Sarah, I suppose if there were non-members, then persuading them that the one true way was the one true way would be something that I would be looking at. However, when I came into the room I was like, "Oh Christ, we are all going to be talking to each other." Maybe that is not the worst thing, but not exactly what I was hoping for.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Michele. I think one of the things we have been struggling with is the opportunity to keep reinforcing the conversation. Hopefully, one of the outputs from this is that if there is an interest to keep doing this, then maybe they will gain some traction and we will have more faces joining that will not always be the same ones you are used to seeing. All right, let's go ahead. For the sake of time, we will move on, and we will begin our next section with having Howard speak about becoming an ICANN-accredited registrar. Howard, are you there? Would you like to take over, please?

HOWARD LI

Yeah. Can you guys hear me?

ERIC ROKOBAUER

We sure can. Thanks.

HOWARD LI

Cool. Thank you, Eric. And good afternoon to everyone in Mumbai. This is Howard Li from ICANN, who is leading the Registrar Accreditation Program. I am more than happy to give a brief overview of ICANN's registrar accreditation process. I will try to be quick only because I have only five minutes. Today we will briefly cover these five areas. First is the ICANN's contracted party global distribution, the consideration for applying to be an ICANN registrar, application overview, applicant's capitalization considerations, and the registrar ICANN fees. Next, please.

Thank you, Hongfu. Thank you, Tom. This is how ICANN's contracted party is distributed by region as of March 01st this year. It is based on their public addresses. We currently have about 1,100 gTLDs and 3,031 active IANA IDs globally. The registrar base has continued to grow. We will see the base of gTLDs grow through the next round. In the APAC region, we have about 183 gTLDs and 800 IANA IDs. Please note some IANA IDs belong to one registrar family, so the distinguished registrar count is much less. With about 4.8 billion people in the region, which is more than half of the global population, we see there is still potential for growth. Next, please.

When deciding to apply to be an ICANN registrar, there are certainly some considerations, including the cost-benefit analysis. Some costs may include ICANN-related fees, registry-related fees like deposits, compliance costs, and so on. Some benefits may include branding improvements, direct connection with the registries,

participating in important ICANN activities, and so forth. Ultimately, it is a business decision that the applicant has to make. Next slide, please.

For the registrar application, there are mainly four parts. The first part is the administrative check, where we check proper documentation and conduct background screening. The second part is the business overview, where we will assess the proposed registrar business and its staffing level. The third part is the operational and technical capacities, where we will evaluate the robustness of the applicant's registrar system. The last part is the contractual and policy requirements, where we will check and ensure the applicant's understanding of the rules.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Howard, are you there? We may have just lost Howard. Just so everyone knows, Howard may have dropped, so we may move on. If he comes back, maybe we can have him continue. I think the next slide looks like...

HOWARD LI

Sorry. Did I... Am I back?

ERIC ROKOBAUER

You are back. Welcome back.

HOWARD LI

I do not know what happened.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Technical difficulties happen all the time. Please go ahead. Continue, Howard.

HOWARD LI

Basically, the last part of the contractual policy requirements is where we ensure the applicants understand the requirements and are able to comply. It is not a one-submission with a pass-or-fail process. There will be a back and forth with clarifying questions. Anything that we have a doubt about during the review, we will send back with those CQs, the clarifying questions. The applicant will be given opportunities to address those concerns to satisfaction. We can move to the next.

Capitalization. A lot of people are interested in this one. There are specifics on applicants' capitalization requirements. In principle, applicants should demonstrate they have access to at least US \$70,000 or equivalent in their local currency in their working capital. However, we do accept capital with a lesser amount in certain cases. The 2015 Underserved Region Initiative listed out detailed criteria and waived the requirement of the commercial general liability insurance. Can you guys still hear me?

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Yep. Hear you just fine.

HOWARD LI

We waived the requirement of the commercial general liability insurance requirement. One particular criteria is factors in furtherance of ICANN's underserved region initiatives, such as targeting domain name registration services to an underserved market region where costs might be lower. It is a very legal term, but basically, it means if your local e-commerce environment where costs are low warrants lower funding to start up and operate a registrar business, we can accept a lower amount of capital funding. Nevertheless, applicants still need to demonstrate their funding is adequate to run a stable registrar business as they propose. Next slide, please.

As mentioned earlier, there are certain ICANN fees involved to be an ICANN registrar. There are four types of fees. First is the one-time application fee, which is non-refundable. It is \$3,500 per application. Second is the annual accreditation fee. It is \$4,000 per year per accreditation. Third is the quarterly variable fee. Currently, it is about \$120 per quarter for most registrars and about \$370 for registrars with more names or performing in drop catch.

Those with fewer domain names will automatically get a discount. The last one is the transaction fee. It is \$0.20 per transaction year for any new registration, renewal, or inbound transfer. When you renew a domain name for two years, then it is two transaction years. Next slide, please. I am getting to the end of my part. For any questions, please email accreditation@icann.org, and we are

standing by to serve you. We also publish resources on our website to help you. We strongly encourage you to study those materials when you consider applying to be an ICANN registrar. Thank you, and back to you, Eric.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you so much, Howard. I appreciate that. I do want to open up for anyone. If you have questions for Howard, feel free to do so. Michele, you have your hand up. I do have one question, Howard. You brought up where there is that kind of back-and-forth engagement. Is that something that is common? If it does happen, are there efforts to try and address that?

HOWARD LI

It is almost all the time. For almost every application, there are some CQs coming back and forth. It is normal.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

I would be curious if there are ways we can improve that. I am thinking if the Registrar Stakeholder Group could figure out ways to create some resources to help support in any way. Maybe that is something we can take off as an action item to help.

HOWARD LI

Sure. Especially for the contractual part. In the application form, besides the question, we have a note section that links to our website and the policies or contractual requirements. We see the

application process as a way of helping the registrar get familiar with what they are getting into. If the registrar can go and read the requirements and understand them, it will be much easier for them to get it right in the first place.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Great. Thanks, Howard. I see Michele and Volker, and then we will stop it there so we can move on to our agenda. Please go ahead.

MICHELE NEYLON

Thanks. This is more for those who are not ICANN-accredited right now who might be watching or listening to this session. While ICANN has reduced or removed the insurance requirement, some of the registry operators may have insurance requirements of their own. When you go through the process of getting accredited, it is like ICANN is giving you the rubber stamp, but then you have to get accredited with the registries.

Some of them are very simple. Sign up online, hand over a few details, maybe put a bit of a deposit down. Others do go into the depths and start asking you for copies of corporate incorporation documents and a whole load of other things, including ringing me at 05:00 AM, which I thought was great fun.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thanks for that call out, Michele. Volker, please go ahead.

VOLKER GREIMANN

Volker Greimann speaking. Financial considerations are one part, and I think it is very helpful that ICANN is doing its best to make sure that registrars can jump those hurdles, especially when they come from regions that might be a little bit disadvantaged in the value of their currencies or similar issues. However, the contractual requirements that come from the compliance perspective are also quite substantial.

It should probably be said that if you have never sold a domain name before in your life, then directly becoming an ICANN-accredited registrar is going to be very overwhelming with regard to the things that you have to do, how you treat your customers, what kind of services you have to provide, but also which kind of emails and notifications you have to send and how to basically comply with all the different regulations which are not only contained in the RRA, which is already full of requirements, but also in various policies that we also have to follow.

From that perspective, it is recommendable that before you get accredited, you try becoming a domain reseller for a while to see how this works, what kind of duties your registrar is able to do, and what kind of duties you can take over for yourself. Just get a feel for the business, the obligations, and the things that the registrar does for you and your customers, and then look at becoming an accredited registrar of your own. Transferring those domain names that you have registered as a reseller over to your own

accreditation is usually the question of a small bulk transfer that is accomplishable in short order.

In the meantime, you have the ability to gain a lot of experience and volume of domains that makes it more economical to be an accredited registrar in the long run. Some wholesale registrars will even allow you to use your own accreditations as part of being a reseller with them.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you for all that insight, Volker. Appreciate that.

HOWARD LI

Just to follow up on Volker's point, on our ICANN Learn platform, we have courses for the registrar to take. Anyone who is interested in being a registrar and wants to get a sense of what those requirements are can create an ICANN account, log on to the ICANN Learn platform, and take those courses. That is another way for everyone to learn.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thanks, Howard. Fabrizio, I see your hand is up. One of our panelists has something to add. Please go ahead.

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- FABRIZIO FARINA Hi, good afternoon to everyone. I hope all of you are good. Actually, I was planning to come, but unfortunately all the flights from Dubai are fully loaded.
- ERIC ROKOBAUER Fabrizio, I am sorry to interrupt. It is a little hard to hear you. Maybe the microphone can be a little louder?
- FABRIZIO FARINA Let me check. Can you hear me now better? Is it better now?
- ERIC ROKOBAUER I do not think so. Try one more time. Maybe connectivity issues. We can come back to you in a couple more minutes. Or maybe we can also add your comments in the chat.
- FABRIZIO FARINA I will try to fix and then maybe.
- ERIC ROKOBAUER Appreciate that. Thank you again, Howard. We are going to move on to our next section, which is a panel discussion. Fabrizio, Mohit, Hongfu, and Anu are joining us to speak to some of their own experiences being a registrar and an RrSG member. We will go through some questions and ask them to share from their perspectives. At the same time, we will also have some poll questions for the audience. Next slide, please.

The first question is: did you have any challenges with accreditation as an ICANN registrar? Fabrizio, I am not sure if your mic is good. In lieu of that, I am not sure if there is anyone online or here that recently got accredited that could speak to this. If not, we can certainly move on to the next question and come back to it. What are challenges or common misunderstandings around being a registrar and participating in ICANN from the AP region? Mohit, is that something you could speak to for us?

MOHIT KAMBLI

Sure. Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me on the panel today. My name is Mohit KamblI. I work as the head of domains at Ultrahost Inc. We are an ICANN-accredited registrar, and I have been involved with the Registrar Stakeholder Group collectively for three years. Earlier in my career, I represented a different registrar on this stakeholder group, but now I am back in this group representing my current organization.

Coming to your question, Eric, when people talk about becoming an ICANN-accredited registrar, one thing that often surprises newcomers is that it is not just about obtaining an accreditation. The requirements themselves are quite clear, but the real challenge is ensuring that your organization is operationally ready. That includes technical readiness, compliance processes, and understanding the ongoing obligations under the RAA. For example, registrars need to implement services like RDAP, which stands for Registration Data Access Protocol, maintain the process

for handling non-public registration data requests, which are called NPRD requests, and also comply with more of the operational requirements, such as regular domain registrations and data escrow deposits.

From new registrars, especially entering the system for the first time, there can be a little bit of a learning curve in understanding the full scope of the responsibilities. Another area of challenges we have seen mostly in the Asia-Pacific region is around the perception of ICANN participation itself. Some registrars might assume that participating in the ICANN process or policy discussions requires a very large organization or a dedicated policy team. In reality, that is not always the case. Even smaller or regional registrars bring extremely valuable and operational perspectives to the table.

The DNS system is very diverse, and a registrar operating in different markets helps ensure that the policies work in practice across different regions. That is also aligned with ICANN's multi-stakeholder model, where different parts of the community come together to work towards the same mission. There is also a perception that participation in ICANN requires a significant amount of time and commitment. While ICANN can certainly seem complex at first, the participation can actually scale depending on the time and resources that the organization has available. Speaking from my example, many registrars can start by simply following the discussion and by joining the mailing list. The RrSG has a very interesting mailing list. You can attend occasional

meetings like this and gradually become more involved as you become more familiar with the process. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Mohit. I appreciate that you called out the sizing of the registrars and how big this can be. That is one of the benefits of the Registrar Stakeholder Group. If you become a member, there is an opportunity to get many resources and get connected to learn more. Regardless of your size, there is a chance that you can work with others that can help give more detail. Thank you. Does anyone else want to add challenges or misunderstandings from being a registrar in the AP region? I do not see any hands in Zoom.

We will move on to the poll question. What do you feel is the biggest hurdle for registrar growth in the AP region today? Is it costs of maintaining accreditation, legislative compliance complexities, current registrar competition, or other? If you have other, we would be curious to hear what that is and share with the group. Let's go ahead and close. Legislative compliance complexities takes the lead with over fifty-five percent. That makes sense. That is certainly an important topic, especially with shifting regulatory landscapes that we are all dealing with. Maybe our panelists can also speak to this and how they approach it. Thank you for answering this question. There was an 'other'. Does anyone want to speak to that?

HONGFU MENG

Greetings, everyone. This is Hongfu speaking for the record from NetChinese, a Taipei-based registrar. I selected 'other' because beyond just the legislative and compliance complexities, there is also the technical aspect, which was not listed on this. That is why I put 'other', because I want to have that included. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Hongfu. Fabrizio, we got you back. See if the mic works.

FABRIZIO FARINA

Hi. Good afternoon. Sorry to everyone. I would like to apologize because I did not come. I was planning to come, but unfortunately there are no flights from Dubai right now. You know the situation, I think. I have only one question right now. I am a registrar since almost one year. My only issue is reaching some registries that do not answer. We send emails, we try to call, but they do not answer. For example, we are experiencing some issues with the Abu Dhabi registry that is not answering us. What is your suggestion in this case?

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Fabrizio. That is a very good question. If there is an issue trying to reach registries, my experience has been connecting with other registrar members in your network to see if anyone knows someone at that registry who can help facilitate a conversation. We also have the mailing list within the RrSG that could help with that. If you are an RrSG member, you can message on the mailing list.

You have direct access to ask those questions. Michele, I see your hand is up. Please go ahead.

MICHELE NEYLON

This is Michele for the record. If it is an issue with a gTLD registry, a lot of us would probably have contacts with most of them. If it is a ccTLD, my go-to is that I have a few contacts in the ccTLD world, and I would ask if they know a human with a pulse who might actually answer an email. Sometimes IANA listings could be very generic, and you might not get a response, whereas if you've got an introduction to somebody, it can help.

The member list is very good for that kind of thing. Over the last twenty years, I have used that to ask if anyone has a connection in a specific registry. That is very helpful, which is yet another reason why if you are a registrar, you should join the stakeholder group.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Lovely, Michele. Thank you very much. I could not agree more. Fabrizio, do you have anything else to add?

FABRIZIO FARINA

No, sorry. It is done. Thank you so much.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

No worries. We are happy to have you and glad you are being safe. Fabrizio, now that we have got your mic working, you were recently accredited. Is there anything else you want to speak to?

FABRIZIO FARINA

Everything was okay. My journey for accreditation was really fine. We also joined the RrSG stakeholder group. I am learning day by day and participating in some of the meetings that are going on weekly. I spoke some time ago with Owen, and it was a pleasure to talk to him. Everything is helpful on your side. We are trying to grow in this market, but hopefully we will try to grow in the global market. Everything was smooth. I want to thank Zoe because she was really helpful in the process to start. Thank you so much for everything.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

That is excellent. Thank you, Fabrizio. We are excited to have you as an RrSG member. Eventually, as you get more familiar, we can get you in some of our subgroups. Let's move on to the next audience poll. What aspect of the accreditation process concerns you the most? Is it liquid capital requirements, technical implementation involved, ongoing compliance and auditing, or other?

MICHELE NEYLON

Sorry, Eric, it is Michele. As I am not from the APAC region, am I allowed to answer this?

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Yes, absolutely. We are looking for participation from all registrars. We will close that. Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON

I put down 'other'. In terms of ongoing accreditation, I would point to two things. One is ongoing compliance and auditing, which can be an absolute pain. I genuinely feel sorry for people in the compliance team because sometimes they are being asked to audit something, and it is not that they are doing this intentionally just to make our lives miserable. Most of the time, I actually like a lot of the compliance people, but it is a pain.

The technical implementation is also something that I would flag because it is quite hard when you are using a combination of bespoke applications and off-the-shelf software to make changes within a timeline that is being set by an external third party. My company has fifty-ish staff, heading towards sixty. I do not have unlimited resources, so trying to balance day-to-day stuff that is literally paying the bills—like sorting out credit card payments and botched registrations—and then trying to implement some funky, weird little quirky thing to comply with some oddly worded subparagraph of a contract that we missed because we did not know it was there, is a major pain. When you are talking to people in this space, sometimes they have a wonderful idea for how to fix

a problem, but it is hard to do that operationally. We are retail and going direct, so it is a pain.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Michele. I agree. It is good to call out that there are varying sizes and business models. Having to voice that is one of the jobs of the RrSG. Sarah, go ahead.

SARAH WYLD

Thank you. This is Sarah. I want to voice a bit of reassurance to somebody who might be a new registrar. There are humans working for ICANN compliance, and sometimes they can be reasonable if one has a human conversation with them. I used to work at a different registrar before I was at Tucows. One day I got a phone call from somebody working in ICANN compliance and they said, "You are on your third notice for a breach of the transfer policy. Why are you not responding?"

I said, "We have not received that email. What is happening?" We had a conversation about where they were notifying us and what emails I was watching. We did not get breached in the end. We worked it out, fixed the problem, and made sure to watch that email address in the future. A human conversation happened, and that resolved the problem. There are requirements to follow that we need to know about, but we should not feel like it is impossible. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Sarah. Owen?

OWEN SMIGELSKI

Thanks, Eric. This is Owen Smigelski. For those who do not know, I spent seven years working at ICANN compliance before I escaped to greener pastures at a registrar. On the third notice, the registrar liaison was copied, and they would contact the registrar outside of compliance. That was a check to make sure because communications go missing. While some people, I will not say names, Michele, would think that compliance's goal was to just breach people, they did not want to do that. They wanted to do everything to make sure that they got the registrar into compliance.

I am just teasing Michele because he happens to be sitting across from me. Compliance people are human. They are nice. I am surprised to hear that Michele says he actually generally likes them. If you have a problem, like if a fix is going to take you six or nine months, work with compliance and give them a plan. They are not going to just say that is too long. Generally, the more collaborative and cooperative a registrar was and willing to work together, they would completely understand why. It needs to be a collaborative thing.

When we do make these policy changes, it does cost money even for a smaller registrar or a larger registrar. That takes us away from things that make us money and help the business operate. Unfortunately, that is just a cost of doing the business. But it is

something I want to flag, as I know the community is always excited to give us new obligations and responsibilities to do. Every single thing that is being proposed—whether it is urgent requests, a new DNS abuse PDP, or things like that—are additional costs for registrars to comply.

In underrepresented regions, that can be a big, difficult thing. That is one of the things I have really tried to stress and talk to with the community. We can do this, but realize that there is a consequence and a cost to this, and that might actually drive some businesses away from being a registrar. I remember when the 2013 RAA came into place, ICANN lost a lot of accredited registrars. A lot of them went to become resellers because it was just too complicated for them to go through all of the processes of going from the 2009 to the 2013 RAA. Big changes can potentially drive out registrars. Thanks.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Owen. Michele, take your hand, and then we will move on.

MICHELE NEYLON

I think one of the things that is often missed by those who are asking for more KYC or more compliance with X, Y, and Z is that there is a balance there. As a small business having a particular view on the world, I do not want to enable bad actors or certain types of activities on our platforms, but I am not the internet police.

Asking us to implement certain things might work, but there is an assumption that all domains are sold in the same way.

I remember years ago when I was involved in a PDP, and there was a Russian registrar there who said they sold domains in shopping malls. They had booths in shopping malls, and people registered the domain that way in an offline fashion. It is a bit quirky, but it is perfectly legitimate. If you look at some of the brand registrars, not all of those domains are going to be sold via a website. It could be that they are emailing a list of domains to their account manager. There is a multitude of ways of doing that. People are saying we need to all use a particular thing to check something else, and while that sounds like a really good idea, I do not know how the hell to do that.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Michele. Interesting about buying domains in a mall. That is fascinating. Bringing it back to the question about compliance and auditing. You heard some RrSG members talking about their experiences in working with compliance directly. For those who are not members, another subgroup we have is the compliance subgroup, which directly engages the compliance team. If you are interested in joining, you can get better insight and work with compliance directly and ask questions.

Let's move on to the next panel question. What are the benefits of being an ICANN-accredited registrar? Anu, is this something you could answer for us, please?

ANU SOMARAJAN

Yeah, sure. Thank you, Eric. Hello, everyone. This is Anu from Name.store for the record. Thank you for having me on this panel. Name.store, formerly known as Dotserve, has been an accredited registrar for over twelve years now. Very recently, we joined the RrSG group. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of the group. We are still catching up with things. Over the time we have been accredited, we have seen quite a few advantages of being ICANN-accredited, but I would say there are four key benefits that stand out the most.

The first and probably the most significant one is a direct relationship with ICANN and the registries. As an ICANN-accredited registrar, you get the ability to work directly with the registry systems and ICANN instead of relying on third-party resellers or intermediary registrars. This direct access gives you much greater operational control and transparency, allowing registrars to manage domain registrations and their transfers, renewals, or even the compliance processes much more efficiently without depending on external parties.

The second big benefit, I believe, is trust and credibility. ICANN accreditation is globally recognized, and it signals to the broader internet community that registrars operate under internationally

accepted standards and policies. Customers know that an accredited registrar must follow strict contractual obligations and data protection policies and compliance requirements. That level of credibility becomes a strong competitive advantage and helps build stronger relationships and trust with customers.

Another important aspect is industry influence. ICANN-accredited registrars are not just service providers, but they are also stakeholders in the governance of the domain name system. Also through the RrSG, registrars can participate in policy discussions, working groups, and community initiatives that actually shape the future of a domain ecosystem. In other words, registrars have a voice in decisions that affect how domains are registered, managed, and secured globally.

Finally, there are cost efficiencies and long-term financial benefits. While becoming accredited does require some initial investments and operational commitment, over time it can lead to better financial control and improved margins. Accreditation also gives the registrars more flexibility around pricing strategies and service innovations. That additional control can support stronger long-term business sustainability and growth. ICANN accreditation is not just a technical certification. It is also really a strategic step for organizations that want to actively participate in and contribute to the global domain name ecosystem. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Anu, and happy to have you as an RrSG member. I look forward to working with you more. All right, let's move on to our next polling question. As a registrar, what is your current level of participation within the ICANN community? Is it absolutely none, sometimes participate in ICANN meetings, regularly participate in ICANN meetings, sometimes participate in both RrSG and ICANN meetings, or do you regularly participate in both RrSG and ICANN meetings?

We will give about thirty seconds for folks to answer. Sixty percent here today regularly participate in both RrSG and ICANN meetings. That is great. It helps showcase the value of meeting together. Hopefully we can figure out more things to offer new members and those looking to become registrars. We are on a ten-minute time check. It is the end of day five for ICANN 85. We are going to go over some Registrar Stakeholder Group benefits and resources.

You can see on the slide some of the benefits of being a member. There is a mailing list that is dedicated only and specific for the Registrar Stakeholder Group members. It is a private mailing list where you can talk together and ask questions of one another. We attend Registrar Stakeholder Group meetings, including a biweekly membership call online. There are subgroup meetings that take place, focused on specific topics like compliance or RRA amendment reviews. Any RrSG member can join.

Voting is very important and affects registrars and the influence with the ICANN contracts. Having a voice in developing policy

impacts registrars' businesses and customers. The biggest benefit I find is the ability to network. It is huge. A registrar joining this group can get direct connection with some of the folks you heard today, like Volker, Michele, and Owen. There is a lot of experience here, and it is truly helpful to start meeting other people in the ICANN community. Next slide, please. We have nine minutes. We have another question. Hongfu, I'd love to ask you what the benefits have been for you being a RrSG member.

HONGFU MENG

Hi, everyone. This is Hongfu speaking for the record. There's a lot of benefits to being an RrSG member. One of them is the fabulous notes from Zoe during ICANN meetings. I know that the stakeholder group has recently updated our RrSG website portal. This is very helpful for me, especially with the council and stakeholder group meetings going on. Everything is there, so it is a very useful resource to have. The RrSG is a great family to be part of. We're all very friendly and helpful. Whenever someone reaches out, there is always a good response coming back from our stakeholder group family. Those are some of the best reasons to be with the RrSG. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you so much, Hongfu. Volker, I see you have a hand. Do you want to go real quick?

VOLKER GREIMANN

Something that Hongfu said bears repeating because it is very important. We may all be competitors here, but there is nary an industry in the world where there is so much cooperation in a positive way as in helping each other and sharing the same pain and trying to alleviate that pain together as in the Registrar Stakeholder Group. That does not devolve into the non-permitted range of collusion. It is more like the collegial atmosphere and spirit that is pervasive in this community, and I think that alone is worth the membership fees.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Love it, Volker. Absolutely. Plus a thousand for that. In addition to all that, the portal is something we recently put out there for members. The RrSG will put out resources that anyone can use. We recently put out a guide for registrars to participate in ICANN policy work. We will make explainers for certain policies, like transfers, and last year we made explainers about the registration data policy.

There is also the Abuse Contact Identifier Tool, or ACID. That is available for the public on the RrSG website. RrSG funds this tool, and it is a way of finding out who the registrar and hosting provider is for a domain name so you can forward that contact to whoever is looking for those groups. Thanks, Mohit, for putting the link in the chat. Switching to what is specifically available for the RrSG members, we have an observer program. This started last year.

Those interested in becoming a RrSG member can join these calls for up to six months to see it firsthand.

One that is close to my heart is the Registrar program. This is something where we get new RrSG members connected to like-minded RrSG members. If you are someone heavily focused on compliance matters, we'll try and get you with another RrSG member who is heavily involved in compliance. Mohit, do you want to go ahead?

MOHIT KAMBLI

I am a part of the first Registrar program that kicked off in Hamburg. I got a mentor who is my mentor still. His name is Jonathan, and he is part of our Registrar Stakeholder Group. I really encourage newly accredited registrars and new members to join because I literally did not know anything about RrSG or how things worked. Now I know everything, I must say. Every day is a learning day, but I am grateful for that relationship. Member up, people!

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thanks for that, Mohit. Sarah.

SARAH WYLD

This is Sarah Wyld from Tucows. From the other direction, I have been a mentor, and I have really enjoyed it. I have learned so much from my two mentees. They are people who I maybe would not have connected with if we did not have something to bring us together. Once we did, we discovered we had a lot in common, and

we have a friendship as well as a professional relationship. It really expanded my world.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you, Sarah. Francesca.

FRANCESCA EZOBELE

I just wanted to add to what Eric said. I have been part of the Registrar program, and I learned so much. It has brought me this far. I want to say a very big thank you officially to Sarah for being my mentor. Today I stand as the RrSG secretary because she has been there. Thank you.

ERIC ROKOBAUER

Thank you. I love to hear that. One last thing we want to add here is brand new. The Registrar Stakeholder Group is now offering a discount program for our membership fee. This is for eligible ICANN-accredited registrars that have financial barriers, typically due to financial disadvantages caused by their country's economy. It is a discount and not a subsidy or sponsorship that is being paid for by the RrSG or other members. It is a seventy-five percent discount on the annual fee. What you see listed are some of the requirements to be eligible for the program. If there are ICANN-accredited registrars that are interested in taking this up, please apply. Any ICANN-accredited registrar can apply. It does not have to be current RrSG members. Thank you, Zoe.

We do not have time for the poll. I want to make sure we get this plug in. For those in Mumbai, we are going to have an outreach table in the Jasmine Hall exhibition area tomorrow through the entire morning. Myself and other RrSG members will be there to answer any questions folks may have about being an ICANN-accredited registrar or being a member of the RrSG. Please come visit. It will not be hard to find us. We may even have some decorations to keep the spotlight out. I want to thank Howard, Anu, Mohit, Fabrizio, and Hongfu. Thank you to everyone who spoke. I appreciate it, and hopefully this is something we can keep recurring. Thanks again for joining us. Take care.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]