
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – How it Works: Policy at ICANN from Idea to Implementation
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JENNIFER BRYCE

Hello, everyone, and welcome to How It Works - Policy at ICANN from Idea to Implementation. My name is Jennifer and I am the participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

Please observe the following guidelines to participate in this session, and I've also posted these in the chat for your reference too. Only questions posted in the Q&A pod will be read aloud during the session as time permits and when directed by the chair of the 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. Thank you. And I will now hand the floor over to Daniel.

DANIEL GLUCK

Thank you so much, and I want to welcome everyone here in the room, online, watching the recording in the future. Thanks for joining us for this pilot How It Works session, ICANN Policy from Initiation to Implementation. So, we're going to try to walk you

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guys through how ideas become tangible items, and I think it's going to be a pretty fun time.

But again, this is a pilot presentation, so if there's anything that comes to your mind about how we could do this better, please let us know. It's an interactive session, so if you have any questions, Jennifer laid out how we could do that. Raise your hand in the Zoom room, Q&A pod, whatever works for you works for us, and that's how it works. How it works is a technical engagement series.

There have been a few over the course of the week, including a different how it works on policy. I think that was on Sunday. This is trying to expand on that, give a different perspective on how, you know. I don't want to keep saying how it works and how things work, but it works, so I'll keep doing it. There's a lot of minutia going on at ICANN meetings, a lot of things that if you're new to the program and new to our sort of ecosystem that aren't really familiar, that's what we're trying to break down for people that would like to learn more.

So, we're here for that now and I'm going to introduce now I guess the people that are going to help us get through this process. We'll start here with Karen from GDS, Mary from Policy, I guess I shouldn't use acronyms, I'm at the How It Works session. Karen from Global Domains and Strategy, Mary from the Policy Development Support Team, and then Kim from the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority and PTI, Public Technical Identifiers.

So, we're going to try to start with a bit about the 2026 round of new gTLDs. That is a hot button policy for this meeting, it's been a hot button policy for a few meetings now, and will probably be in the future I'm guessing. So, we're going to start off with this example of how this round came to be from initial ideas into what it is today and what it'll look like tomorrow.

And then we'll go into some more hypotheticals and what this could look like in the future. Let's say you have your own idea and you want to turn it into a policy or something along those lines. That's how we can try to get you to a place where you feel a bit more comfortable there. So, starting off with the 2026 round, we know that in the past, we have had more new gTLDs.

So, it's not just .com, .org, whatever, there was an expansion at some point. And that's our I guess our initial idea is how do we expand the root zone, add more domain names, how do we do that?

So, I guess we'll start with the idea. An idea forms, that's a little seed that gets planted into the ground and then implementation is further up in the tree and then all of our leaves after that or I guess delegation into the root zone, probably too big of a word to use there. So yeah, I guess, Mary, this is for you now as someone coming from policy, what's going on here? Was there an idea at some point? How did this come to place?

MARY WONG

Thanks, Dan. And before I get started, since you're talking about being comfortable, and I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable, but it's kind of awkward that I'm talking and there's people behind me. Since there's plenty of room at the table, I invite people to join us here and those that come later are just going to sit in the uncomfortable seats because up here you have chargers and water as well.

So, if you would like to, I think there's more than enough room. You're very welcome. Thank you, and I think I also see people who are not absolute beginners, which I think will be good because we all started at ICANN, all of us started at a point where our knowledge of ICANN was probably not where it is now. All of us came from different backgrounds, different ages, different experiences, and then if we're here at ICANN to participate in policy development, we might come at it from different angles, different perspectives, different interest groups.

And Dan your first question to me was let's talk about the idea, how does something surface as a potential policy topic and then it gets brought through this whole process? We have a few slides, but we're not going to talk to the slides because that's like the worst thing you could possibly do, especially after lunch. But we think it will be useful as a visual aid. And the reason that I'm leading off is because, as Dan said, he and I work for the Policy Development Support Team.

So, if you engage in policy work at ICANN, you'll probably see Dan and me and our colleagues in the policy development phase of the work. And that's the first phase. Then obviously once that development phase is complete, and as Dan said, hopefully many of you have were at the previous session which was really about the fundamentals of policy making at ICANN. I don't want to downplay it, but that's not what we're focusing on today.

So, let's assume that the policy work has been completed at the community level, and I'll say that obviously we're focusing on gTLD policy today. So, it would be policy work that's completed through the Generic Name Supporting Organization or the GNSO and its processes brought to the Board. The Board obviously then has a fiduciary duty under our bylaws to take a look at what is being recommended by the community. Hopefully the Board likes what it sees.

It considers that what the community has spent time working on and thinking about and reaching consensus on because that's really the key, that we have a wide variety of stakeholders that were able to reach agreement and saying this is the policy we recommend, the Board adopts it, and then directs ICANN Organization to implement the adopted policy, which is where Karen and her team would come in, and then ultimately if we're talking about new gTLDs, Kim and his team would come in as part of implementation to delegate the new gTLD into the root zone.

So, that's why we're here. That's the entirety of the cycle. But starting at the beginning, and I'm going to put in a visual that explains a lot, but isn't particularly pretty to look at. You may have seen it before. And depending on who you talk to, this is sometimes referred to as the Z or the Zed, for those of you from the more anglophonic countries like myself. I know why it's called the snake, but I don't think it's a very apt or good description.

But I'm just saying it because you might hear people talk about it informally. And this is basically a more detailed representation of the prior diagram, which reflects the entirety of the policy lifecycle. And we're not going to go through all of that because there are a lot of steps. But it's important that you have this as a reference point, particularly if you're following a policy development process, and there's one or two going on right now. In fact, one that just kicked off in the GNSO this week, and you want to see where things are at any stage. You have these materials, you have this diagram.

The other thing that I want to highlight is that while it is community-developed policy, and there is always a working group that is chartered by the GNSO Council so that they know what they're supposed to be doing, they know their problem statement, they know their scope of work, they know the expected deliverables, and they have a project plan with a timeline, their work is subject to what we call public comments.

So, at various stages in this cycle, the proposals will be published to the world. for anyone to comment. And that really ensures that

the process is robust, that the process is inclusive, and that if there are viewpoints or data points that are necessary or relevant, that there are opportunities for people outside of the ICANN ecosystem to provide that input as well. So, I want to put that as a big takeaway before we get into the details. Should I just stop sharing or just leave it up there? Because I'm not really going to talk about this diagram anymore.

DANIEL GLUCK

Leave it up there.

MARY WONG

Okay. So, the next round of new gTLDs. I think everybody knows that the aim is to launch or to open the next round next month in April. And so, in a way we're sort of going back in history because, Dan, I haven't forgotten your question, which is what was the idea and take us through the story. I'm not sure that this is really the best example. I think when Kim and Karen and I were talking about it, there were many examples that we could have picked because the GNSO and the ICANN community has engaged in quite a lot of policy development processes over the years.

Obviously, the reason why the next round is the topic, it is the topic du jour, the topic of the day, because of the imminent launch, but also because it is probably one of the biggest projects that ICANN and the community have embarked on. One thing that I think is important to know, and you may know it already, is that this is

obviously not the first time we've expanded the gTLD space. There's been a couple of other times in the history of IACAN where that has happened. What this means for policy initiation is that this policy that we are going to see come to fruition when we launch the next round did not start from a blank slate.

It did not start from a group of people saying, oh, what would happen if we had more new gTLDs? We did have a previous round of expansion of gTLDs, which you may know, took place or was launched in 2012, so more than 10 years ago, and going through implementation and so forth. And as a result of that round, and it's obviously more than 10 years since that round, we went from what was something like two dozen generic top-level domains to over 1,000 today.

So, what we will see next month is obviously an addition to that thousand. But as I said, it's important to know that the policy that we will see in fruition next month did not come from a blank slate. It started from the fact that there was already a policy in place for what we call the 2012 round, the last round.

So, what the work was to bring us up to the 2026 round was to actually review the existing policy from 2012 to see what needed to be changed as a result of lessons learned through the process, to see what might need to be added or updated because of the changes in the industry, because of changes in consumer behavior and expectations, and because of changes in technology.

So, first things first, that means that when you start a policy in ICANN, in this case the GNSO, it could be on a topic that the community has not touched before, brand new topic, or it could be on a topic where there's already an existing policy, which was the case here. The process is the same, but obviously you're starting from a different point. So, the first point in this was looking at what was already in place for the last round.

Why and when did we start to do this? I think it's probably the obvious next question. And I apologize if anybody was trying to follow and couldn't hear a word of what I just said. So, in the last round, which I will say the 2012 round, just to make it clear, our board of directors had basically committed to a future round. We didn't commit to when that future round would be or what it would look like, but it was very clear that there would be a future round, and so now we're here.

And so, that really was the initiation point that you could not use the past policy 10 years ago and simply say, we don't need to look at it, we'll just launch the next round. So, the impetus for the policy development for this coming round was to start with what we had then, and like I said, looking at lessons learned, looking at changes in behavior and consumers in the industry and technology.

The process is very similar. There is a report or sometimes a series of reports that is done by the ICANN staff through research, through looking at different sources, and what that does is it then produces a set of potential questions that can be considered as part of a new

policy development process. And it also certifies, and there's a process to do that, we don't have to get into it, that what is being proposed to be studied is within the scope of ICANN's mission and remit.

Because as you can imagine, there's a lot of things that you can look at that make sense for policy. Many of you probably come to us from the broader internet governance space. There's lots and lots of issues. But with ICANN, we have a specific mission and remit. So, even if something is super interesting and the whole world is talking about it, if it's not part of our bylaws and the mission, we simply cannot extend that scope. So, a very, very important part of the scoping phase, the starting phase of any policy development process, whether it's new or whether it's looking at existing policy, is to scope it and make sure it is within ICANN's remit and make sure there's a problem statement that the community understands and agrees on.

The charter for the working group that's then formed by the GNSO Council, should the GNSO Council, which is made up of community groups who send their elected representatives, not ICANN staff, not the Board, but it's a community-based group, they take a look at the reports and the proposals and the recommendations to start or not to start a policy review or a policy process, they take a vote.

Now if they vote to initiate the process, then a lot of what was done in that scoping exercise would go into what we call the PDP charter. And that really is the constitutional document, if you like, for the

work to follow. So, it's critical that at the start of the work, like I said, everyone understands the problem statement, which we have gone through, review and a vote, that everyone understands what is the scope of the work that's to be undertaken, and that what are the expected deliverables and in what timeline.

And if you start to observe the GNSO Council today, you will see that a lot of its discussions at this early phase really focus on getting clarity on those things. Dan, I'm going to stop here and see if you or anyone has questions. or if there's something I should expand on or stop talking about.

DANIEL GLUCK

And of course, I'd like to see if anyone here has questions before I get to mine. I'm not seeing anyone in the room with a hand. Anyone in Zoom? Nothing? All right, so at this point, how many people are involved? For this process, I'm assuming it was a large amount of people that were working on this together, right? Is that usually the case, or is that?

MARY WONG

There's many ways I can answer that question. I think, first of all, like I said, I emphasize that the policy topic has to be within ICANN's remit, so that's another takeaway. But like I also said, even within that remit, there are many issues that the community can look at, but we are also a community of volunteers. So, there is a prioritization exercise that the GNSO Council has to go through to,

first of all decide what is the priority topic? We're done with the next round, so now we're moving on to DNS abuse, for example.

So, there is that decision-making body, which is sort of a gatekeeper, if you like, when I mentioned the GNSO Council, which is made up of elected representatives from the various stakeholder groups, including registries, registrars, non-commercial actors, and so forth. But I'm going to take your question as leading to when they form the working group, like how many people actually work on the policy?

So I'll say that there's no minimum, there's no maximum. And I think Karen can speak to this, we've actually tried various methods and mechanisms. And I also want to now insert another takeaway, which is that it's very, very important. You all know this. I mean, you probably recite it and you probably look at it and say, why do you keep saying it? We keep saying it because it's very, very important.

That the policies that come out of the community are, first of all, community developed, second of all, consensus-based or consensus-driven, and third of all, multi-stakeholder. So, there's a little bit of a tension or a challenge, if you like. Like you could theoretically basically say, look, since we've decided this is a priority issue, maybe because it involves internet security or something, it impacts a lot of people in the world.

Let's just have a big working group and anyone in the world can sign up and do work. And there's merits to that approach. Or we

could say, and we have said that this is an important topic but it's also perhaps a very highly technical topic. So, it makes sense that the working group then be comprised of stakeholders from different sectors but with a certain level of expertise so that they don't have to do that.

So, essentially then the decision that the council has to make is not actually about size, it's about composition and representation. And that number varies depending on either the complexity of the work, or the interest amongst the community. Does that answer your question?

DANIEL GLUCK

So, this would be the area where someone that is new to the process in the community, this is where they would most likely be able to contribute to the process.

MARY WONG

Yes and no. Ask me a simple question next time. Oh wait, he thinks those are the softball ones. Okay, I guess I'm in danger. Again, the community has evolved in some ways, and like I said, the GNSO is probably the most active in terms of policy work that it starts and that it completes. So, it's gone through various models. What seems to be quite effective, to try and hit all the things I said earlier, is that recently they've adopted what they are calling a representative model rather than an open model.

And by representative, they mean that all the supporting organizations and advisory committees, and we all know what those are, as well as the stakeholder groups and constituencies within the GNSO itself, will be invited to send representatives to form the working group. The exact numbers, again, it depends because you want to be representative, but it's also important that you also have a group that has knowledge and is able to work nimbly, and sometimes having too large of a group can be quite difficult to achieve progress and consensus.

And so that's why I say yes and no. It's yes in the sense that it involves just about every stakeholder group within the ICANN ecosystem that is interested in participating. And some groups may choose not to. Some groups may say this is really not something that impacts us, so, we'll wait it out. But in order to be selected as a participant in the working group. Typically, if the GNSO Council is using a representative model, you would either have to be a member of that group or invited or affiliated. But before I get back to you, that doesn't mean that you are fully excluded.

I mentioned public comment opportunities earlier. What has also happened is that in recognition of the fact that a representative model is necessarily small-ish, there are mechanisms for becoming an observer to the PDP working group so you can follow the work. Like I said, there are opportunities to provide input. And certain groups, it's not just observers.

You can be a participant without being a full-fledged member is probably the easiest way I'll put it. So, the answer is a bit it depends, but right now, the working model is representative with the possibility of being an observer or providing feedback in some other way.

DAVID MARGLIN

David Marglin, outside counsel. So, I understand that when you have a working group, they're responsible for the public comments and incorporating the public comments and the observer comments and whatever, and it's representative. What is the relationship if we go back in time between the gathering of public comments up at the preliminary issue report into the publication of final issue report and the public comments at the working group stage?

For example, if you didn't comment at all or why does it even matter that much the public comments up above since you're gonna get another bite at the apple down at the working group and it seems like that's a more important place if I've understood what you're saying where the input is more -- well, you can explain to me the symbiotic relationship between the two please.

MARY WONG

Thank you. That's a great question. And what I'll start by is by saying that the purpose of the comment at various stages is different. So, at the initial issue report, the preliminary issue, that's

really the first time, and I mentioned that this is prepared by ICANN staff. It talks about what the problem statement could be. It talks about what the scope of a policy development process, should the GNSO council decide to start one, what the scope could look like and what are the questions it could answer.

And that's the public comment that's being invited, like, did we get it right? Are there things that maybe should be in that are not in? Are there things that are being overemphasized? So, that first public comment phase informs the scoping. Then based on those comments, the final issue report is prepared. One of the questions that you didn't ask, but I think it's kind of a follow-up question is, how different does the final issue report look from the preliminary issue report?

Sometimes not very different, not because there were no comments or input, but because the comments and input might, for example, say, we support that you look at this issue and here's a couple of specific questions within that issue you could look like. There are times where it could look quite different because the broader community might say we think this topic is important, but you're looking at the wrong issue right, or you're trying to do too much, you're trying to take tackle a big issue and you're not going to get this done unless you do it in, I suppose, colloquially you could call it, more bite-sized pieces.

And to relate it back to the next round, which is really the story we were supposed to be telling, it was a very big topic. It is a very big

topic, because if you think about expanding the gTLD space, there's issues from whether you're infringing on legal rights to security concerns to public policy if certain gTLDs are sensitive, culturally, or things like that. And I will say that again, remember that I said for this policy development process, it didn't start from a blank slate, it started from the previous policy.

The previous policy recommendations were actually quite general in nature in the sense that if any of you come from, say, the multilateral world or international laws, you know that when governments negotiate treaties, it's kind of like general principles, it's not a whole lot of detail. So, then the saying goes, the devil is in the details. Then a lot of those details get worked out in implementation. And I want to give a shout-out to Karen, because Karen was essentially the person that got us through the 2012 round.

So, as a result of Karen and her team, we have over 1,000 new gTLDs. So, if you want to have a conversation, there's lots of interesting things we can talk about. But for this round, the upcoming 2026 round, there was a very deliberate decision to provide more detail, if I can say, in the policy recommendations. That doesn't mean that less work is done in implementation, but the implementation work is clearer and you know up front what you need to do.

So, if you actually take a look at the final recommendations from the last round, the 2012 round, to the final recommendations that

is informing this current round, you'll see that they look very different in detail and you even see that the number of topics are much larger in this most recent round and the working group in producing its final report also gave implementation guidance.

Then to get to the second part of your question, just to make sure I don't forget it, there is the public comment later on. The working group has done a lot of the work. It is actually mandatory that they publish their initial report for public comments. And typically, this would be preliminary recommendations. So, the work would have been quite substantive and substantial, but we're not at a stage where the community can say, we've agreed on all this and this is the text.

And if you look at several of the policy development processes, you will see that these initial reports sometimes take different forms. You might have a working group that is very well aligned, and they've reached a stage where they say, we're about done, we're pretty much in agreement, but we do need to do this for public comment to make sure we haven't missed anything. On the other hand, sometimes you have a working group that says, we have agreement on some of these things but we don't have agreement on some other proposals.

You might actually have two or three very divergent viewpoints, in which case the public comment can then help the working group figure out what should be the most appropriate path to take. So, I hope that answers your question.

DAVID MARGLIN

More than answers it, thank you.

DANIEL GLUCK

And tomorrow I believe there will be the publication of a summary report from the Latin Script Diacritics initial report, so it's a different policy. Yeah, it should be published tomorrow. So, if you want to, I guess, current picture in time, see where things are and then track it over the next couple of months, that's a good place to check that out. But I guess where we -- oh, sorry.

JENNIFER BRYCE

Yeah, if it's all right, I'll read a question from the chat here. "How is knowledge retained and newcomers brought on board with these working groups especially from volunteers in the different groups compared to those that come to these working groups as paid participants from the different organizations with vested interest in ICANN activities?"

MARY WONG

Wow. I think there's several questions in one. I'm not sure I'm going to be able to hit all of them. What I heard in the question included basically a disparity of knowledge, whether it's a knowledge of the ICANN processes or knowledge of the policy topics itself. And I'm just looking around in case Jen jumps in and

says, no, that's not what it was. I'm also hearing that it may be complex for newcomers to find a way through the process.

And there was, I think, part of the question, which is that for some participants in the ICANN ecosystem, it's part of their jobs, because they work for a registry operator, they work for a registrar, or they're a consultant to companies. And so, the reason why they participate in ICANN is that's kind of their job and their career.

And there may then be some sort of disparity between someone who has that ability to participate and who essentially makes their living from policy work and someone who is either new or who is really doing this part-time while juggling a full-time job that may have nothing to do with the DNS and ICANN. I'll say that it's a reality in the sense that the ICANN ecosystem is made up of very, very different groups and individuals.

Like I said at the beginning, I know some of you may have missed that, we all come to ICANN with different backgrounds, with different interests, we all come to ICANN maybe saying, this is a really important issue to the interest I represent or a very important issue to me. For example, in our At-Large community, there are individual members and I think even our Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group, they're individuals, whether they're students, academics and the like.

So, I think what we need to then ensure and what I can say that the GNSO Council tries to ensure is a few things. One, that all perspectives are heard. in the process. That goes back to your

question earlier. And I do want to emphasize that if you are not a member of a PDP working group because you are not a member of an ICANN constituency, or you put your hand up but there were not enough spaces or number of hands, there are other ways you can put your feedback in.

So, that's really important that there are mechanisms to try to make sure that we have that. There are also groups that will conduct webinars, ICANN does courses to try to upskill those who are interested but maybe newer to this particular topic. What I'll say though is that it's become a little bit of, I think the word might be a trope, that you are at an advantage if you know more because you've been around at ICANN longer, and therefore you're always going to be, I guess, one step ahead.

Similarly, I think that there's sometimes a sense that, well, if your job means that you are paid to come to ICANN and advocate for a certain position, then you are, again, at an advantage. I think it might seem that way, and especially for those who are newer, it might seem like I'm never going to get there because I'm doing this part-time or this person has 20 more years of experience. There are ways you can overcome it. I think from ICANN as the organization, I said that there's programs and things that we do.

What I will say is that I was one of those people. I'm not saying I know a lot now, but I definitely know a bit more than I did when I started. And I started as an individual volunteer in the non-commercial space, and there were a lot of people that I was

completely intimidated by, and then you had to kind of go up against them. So you sort of have to figure out, okay, I know what I know. I can talk about what I know. I just don't need to talk about all this stuff I don't know until I know it. Not everyone's experience is the same, but I don't want this to be a discouraging thing for those who have that perception.

DAVID MARGLIN

Now we're intimidated by you.

MARY WONG

Then clearly you don't know me very well.

JENNIFER BRYCE

Thank you so much, Mary. There is a hand raised in the room, so Aviral, if you can, unmute yourself, or if you're in the room, please go ahead and ask your question. Thank you.

AVRIL KAINURA

Hi, I'm Aviral Kaintura for the record. So, I had a question regarding public comments. So, as we all know, the public comments are really important in the policy development phase. So, I had a question regarding how are these comments actually weighted or acted upon, because there can be an instance where a lot of these comments are given by one particular interest group, and they might have their own agenda in mind that can shift the policy into their interest. So, how do we balance the comments from one

interest group and other interest group if the number of comments are lower?

MARY WONG

So, what I'll say is that I love these questions, because you're giving me all the talking points that I plan to hit and that our team had planned to hit. So, first of all, I'll say that just as it's mandatory to have public comments at various phases in the process, it is also mandatory for that PDP working group to consider all comments received. I'm going to give a nod here to Dan because Dan actually runs ICANN's public comments team.

He runs a very tight ship. He makes sure that we open and close proceedings on time. You look at him, you think he's easy to get around, he's not. But it is mandatory. So, you could get five comments. One of the things you said, maybe there's very few and maybe they all embody a certain viewpoint. You might get 5,000 comments. Sorry, you gotta figure out a way to look at all 5,000.

Thank goodness for technology and tools. But yes, sometimes it may be that the public comments that come in only come in from one or two sectors, maybe because they're the only ones that feel that their interests were not taken sufficiently into account by the working group. In my experience, and I'll look to my colleagues to see if they share the same experience, we have working groups that are very conscious of why we do public comments.

So, even if the public comments are few and they only represent one or two viewpoints, I have never seen an instance where the working group says, oh, this is what the community feels. Therefore, we have to amend our recommendations to reflect that viewpoint. There's a couple of other safeguards. One is that by the time we get to public comments. If you have a group that's well scoped, well charted, and mind you, I didn't talk about the role of the GNSO Council.

The GNSO Council is not the working group. The GNSO Council is essentially the management body. They vote on which policy topics should be subject to a policy process, they vote on the recommendations, they manage the overall workload, they make sure that there's enough inclusiveness in all these working groups. But these groups don't just go off and do their thing.

They have to regularly report to the GNSO Council. So, there's basically built-in points along the way where if something feels off, there's opportunities to course correct. And the other thing I'll say is that it's very important then that whoever leads these working groups, whoever chairs them, whether you're a vice chair or a chair or a co-chair or whatever mechanism they choose, are of people who have those skills, and if they don't have those skills, we can provide the training to have those skills to make sure that the group is well balanced and that the recommendations do consider various viewpoints.

So, having spoken about that and having talked about the GNSO Council, I think I've kind of sped to the end of the policy development phase.

DANIEL GLUCK

I think so. I mean, let's tie it back real quick to the 2026 round, because -- so, tying it back to the 2026 round, we're looking at the top bar here, and that's going from like 2015 to 2018, and then that 2018 is like around the time of the initial report and then we go all the way down at the bottom to when the final report gets submitted and that is 2021. We move all the way over to where we are in, I guess, implementation now. So, it can be a long process but it's not always a long process, correct?

MARY WONG

Thanks, Dan. Yes, it can be a long process and it's not always a long process. Sometimes it feels longer than it is, but there are reasons for that. And one very big reason is exactly what we just discussed. Basically, the safeguards, the backstops along the way, the pauses for comment, for consultation. And there is a perception, not always unjustified, but there's a perception that policy development I can take too long.

When I hear that, I don't get defensive, I was like, too long implies that there's a standard, that you should always complete your policy development work within whatever, one year, three years. It's not that simple because if you have a complex topic that is also

very broad that needs to be broken up, that work is going to take longer than a policy development process that is very narrowly focused and targeted on one problem statement.

And I say that because we have very good examples of both. The next round was a very complex, broad, I would say series of topics. Like I said, starting from fairly general principles from the last round to trying to develop much more detailed principles and guidance for each topic. And I forget how many topics. I want to say it was like 76. I know there were a lot of recommendations. They had five work tracks in the next round policy development process.

Each work track had a chair and had like a sub working group. Then they had to come together in plenary to look at all the things. And within each work track there were maybe a dozen topics or so. So, that is much bigger and more complex than for example in topic anyway. I'm not saying that the process is less complex. But then the DNS abuse PDP that just kicked off this week at this meeting because that policy development process is deliberately designed to focus only on one narrow topic.

So, the intent is that that should go faster because it's more focused. So, that's my answer that certain things have to take a longer time because of the breadth and complexity of the topic, but it sometimes also means that you have to allow some of the perspectives to really take its time across the community.

If you've got one group that says perspective A is the only answer, and you've got another group that says perspective B, which is completely opposite, is the only answer, you need that time, we're all human beings, to understand where each other's coming from, to maybe give and take a little bit, or to even just end up disagreeing. But you cannot rush that process of consensus. It simply is the way it is.

ASTEWAY NEGASH

Yeah, thank you. This is Asteway Negash for the record. I think if we're talking about a GNSO PDP, I think in a very recent experience, we have seen that the GNSO has collaborated with the ccNSO on the DNS abuse PDP for the first time, I think in a very long time. And that seems to be very commendable, if you will, because the ccNSO seems to have gained some traction on the issue with the working group that they already have within their council.

And that seems like a very recommendable thing because two different constituencies or two different supporting organizations actually coming together in a PDP process. Can you tell me a bit more about this and what are the possibilities for future interactions of this kind in the future?

MARY WONG

I can start and I'm going to invite my colleagues to jump in because Kim, I think you work with the ccTLDs in a different way from the policy team. But I'll say that over the years there's certainly been a

lot of collaboration across different community groups, starting with information exchange and information sharing. In fact, it's the first time that the ccNSO as an ICANN supporting organization has sent representatives to participate in a GNSO policy development process.

That's significant not just because it's the first time but because the two supporting organizations as you know have very different remits. But that speaks to the universality of the topic which is DNS abuse mitigation. And the ccNSO does have its own study group or yeah, I think it's standing committee, excuse me, on DNS abuse.

They do not have a policy process currently on DNS abuse mitigation because their view on DNS abuse mitigation is that it is on a country-by-country basis, but they do have that group that shares best practices and information. And on the GNSO decided topic, it is something of sufficient relevance to see ccTLDs that they've sent a representative. But, Kim, do you want to talk about the ccTLDs and some of the collaborations that you do?

KIM DAVIES

Yeah, so I think part of the dynamics in the ICANN space is that we're working with shared resources and it's not just in the context of CCs and Gs working in a common namespace. We see this in other parts of our community as well that you have different groups vying for a position on a particular topic but there is opportunity to work together.

I think my experience has largely been bespoke. I think there's been a recognition of the problem early on and identification of who needs to be at the table to have a discussion to make sure everyone's perspective is there. One thing that I'm very familiar with on the ccTLD side is a lot of the policies that the ccNSO develops requires government perspective. And the ccTLD operators themselves typically lack that perspective.

So, if you actually look at the charter of a lot of the policy work that the CCs have done in the past, they're actually joint ccNSO GAC working groups. So, if GAC is at the table, ccTLDs are at the table. So, I think there's no one size fits all. I think generally there's an appreciation of who needs to be a voice in the process and the process is adapted to support those different perspectives.

DANIEL GLUCK

So, Mary, you told us that we've gone through all those recommendations and worked tracks there. The GNSO Council has approved it, they sent it to the Board. Board says, okay, let's do it.

MARY WONG

Well, that's a bit of an exaggeration. So, should we talk a little bit about the role of the Board and then what that means for implementation, which Karen's now dealing with? So, I think it's really important to remember what the role of the Board is in this, right? Yes, of course, they're the decision makers, but the Board does not create policy. The community creates policy. Can the

Board request that the committee consider creating policies? Yes, they can.

There is a mechanism under the bylaws by which the Board can request that the GNSO Council do that first issue report that I talked about. And actually, other community groups within the ICANN structure can do the same. The governments could say, we want to request an issue report from the GNSO on X topic. But when the policy process ends, we have a set of community about policy recommendations, they do get sent to the Board who then have to decide are those recommendations in the best interest of ICANN and the ICANN community.

This is in the bylaws itself. I will say, and I'm pretty confident saying it that it would be extremely rare, it has been extremely rare that things go all the way down the Z and at the end, the Board says, oh my gosh, this is totally not in the best interest or any interest, it doesn't happen. But the Board is also not a rubber-stamping body. They do have to go through that exercise and what you sometimes see, which sometimes contributes to this perception that it takes a long time, is the Board asks questions.

They're like, well, why does the policy do this and not that? They also would look to ICANN staff to do an implementation or a feasibility analysis. Everything from how much is this going to cost? How long is it going to take? And Karen will talk a little bit more about that. A lot of these things should take place before the Board comes to make a decision. And over the years, over time, we have

actually, through lessons learned, realized that it actually is good if, for example, during the policy development phase, the working group has a sense. Like, if you're going down a certain direction, it would be kind of good to know it's going to be super expensive.

So, maybe some of the feasibility analyses, not all of it because things are still very preliminary, but a sense of things that was done. So, I would say that the Board is not ever caught by surprise, but they do ask questions. And in the case of the massive policy development process in the five work tracks that is now the next round, the Board adopted most of the recommendations, but there was one or two that gave rise for concern, and they brought those back to the GNSO.

There was a lot of consultation, and under the bylaws, there is a process where if the board despite the consultation basis, this is not really in the best interest, the GNSO council can she go back and redo it, which is what happened. So, they did what they called supplemental recommendations that went back to the board gets adopted and it goes into implementation.

That may be too much process but it's really key because that's happened, and people should not take that as some indication the failure of the multi-stakeholder model is built into the multi-stakeholder model.

DANIEL GLUCK

It's a very careful process and a lot of people care a lot, so you try to get it right as much as you can and the people who have to then take all of those inputs and make it as perfect as possible so that it can become tangible are the implementation teams. So, I guess we get to speak to Karen now to get some insight on what I guess exactly it means to implement policies.

So, the Board's involved, hypothetically they've been proved some of the final policy recommendations, what does it look like? Does the community get involved? We've heard a couple of roadblocks from the policy side. Are there any on the implementation side also?

KAREN LENTZ

Sure. Thank you, Dan. So, what my team works on is implementation of the Policy recommendations that have come through the multi-stakeholder process. So, we're assuming now we're at the end of this Z that Mary talked about. And the way I kind of describe what I do when I talk to people is bringing the consensus work of the ICANN community into reality.

And so, for example, I might have an idea that I want coffee, but unless I have beans and water and some form of heat, I probably can't have coffee. So, if we think about the 2026 round of the new gTLD program, Mary described the process of looking at the getting question of do we want another round which everyone ultimately agreed that, yes, we did and what do we want to keep or change

from what existed in the last time that we had an application process.

So, this particular set of policy recommendations is probably one of the most complicated that we could talk about because this implementation includes a variety of different kinds of work products or outcomes. So, what are we implementing? So, some of it is on paper. So, the recommendations are saying, ICANN, you need to evaluate applications for their technical plans. Are they going to create any risks to the security or stability of the domain name system by some of the things they might be proposing to do in their application?

And so, writing down all of the requirements. If you're going to apply for a new gTLD, here are the things that ICANN is going to be looking for. Explaining to the applicants, this is the information that you'll need to have. If it happens that your application falls into this particular category, here are these different rules that apply. So, a lot of what we do in implementation is writing.

And in this case, with the new gTLD program, the requirements are the Applicant Guidebook. So, you may have seen this Applicant Guidebook or heard it referenced, but this is one of the key outputs of the policy recommendations. They're manifested in this set of rules and procedures that govern the application process. Another part of implementation is what I will call the operational aspects.

So, the recommendations are saying ICANN, we think you should accept more applications for gTLDs and you should evaluate them

for all of these different types of requirements so that means as an organization we need to figure out what we need to be able to do that. So, we're trying we're thinking about things like infrastructure.

Do we have enough people? Do we have the right kind of expertise? We have you know applications coming in hopefully from all over the world, from different types of businesses or other non-profits academic, a variety of things. So, are we set up to be able to handle all of those tasks that we need to do to evaluate applications.

One of the big interesting things that was discussed quite a bit in planning for this round is how do we plan for that when we don't know how many applications that there will be? Because if you're trying to make sure that you have the capability to process the applications according to what we put in the guidebook, that's very different if it's 20 applications versus 5,000. So, part of this operational planning is also what we do in implementation, which is working across different parts of the organization to make sure that we're ready when we open for applications to process them.

And then, also within the sort of big umbrella of implementation can be some very technical work. Sometimes policies are making recommendations for new standards, new updates to a protocol that a registry or registrar use to talk to each other, things like that. And in this case with the recommendations for the 2026 application round, there's been a lot of development of the application system.

So, actually building a technical interface that allows applicants to go in, enter all of their information, and then submit and continue to track their application through the process. So, that's the big, you know when I use the word implementation, it includes a lot of different kinds of work and a lot of different kinds of outcomes. So, you asked Dan about the community and how the community is involved.

So on the screen, you see the consensus policy implementation framework, and this governs how we go about implementing policies with the ICANN community. And as Mary did, I won't describe the whole slide. But particularly the middle phases there, we talked about planning and part two. The middle part that we call analyze and design is very, very much a community effort.

So typically, when we receive a new set of policy recommendations, we form what is called an Implementation Review Team or IRT. So if you hear people talking about an IRT meeting or an IRT call, that's what we're talking about. And so, this is a group of volunteers that is helping us as an ICANN team implement a set of policy recommendations. Often there's some overlap between this group and the group of people who worked on the policy recommendations, which makes sense. But sometimes there are different skill sets or different areas of interest in implementation versus policy.

So if I work at a particular company, the person I might send to a policy working group would be someone who is working in a legal

type of role or operational type of role, whereas someone who would be interested in implementation might be someone who's maybe customer facing or someone who is focused on business operations or technical operations of a group. So, usually, an Implementation Review Team is open. So, it's open to any interested person who wants to join. And the work that we or the way that we tend to work with an IRT is to be very iterative.

I talked about the Applicant Guidebook and whatever policy we're working on most likely are one of our first steps as a draft is a first draft. So, you gave us this set of recommendations. We went through what was being recommended, turned it into what we understand, the set of requirements would be in practice, and then we ask for comment. So, that's really what I would call the heart of how we do implementation at ICANN, because that process really brings to the surface what needs clarifying.

So it might have been clear to the policymakers, but it maybe didn't translate to what the first draft looked like, or conversely something that we believe we see in the recommendations is sometimes missing context, or people who were involved in the policy development are able to provide some more background and context to what was intended. Part of also what an IRT does is to identify if any of the implementation plans that we put forward are inconsistent with the policy recommendations.

This fortunately doesn't happen very often because we work very hard to implement what the community decided and

recommended to happen. And sometimes if it happens that it can't be implemented exactly as a group recommended, that's something that we transparently go back to the group to say. We know you said this. This is the closest we could get. Here's why. And have that discussion. In the event that we got it completely wrong, there are escalation processes to have that guidance as far as telling the implementation team this is not coherent or this is not consistent with what was intended by the working group.

And then finally, another aspect of working with an IRT is kind of like you would do on any project team, and that you're kind of collectively working on a lot of complex problems, and different people are able to bring insights that you wouldn't have had otherwise. And particularly with the 2026 round, a lot of what the IRT talked about was outreach and communications.

So, we're opening up for applications, we want there to be a diverse and a multilingual namespace, but how do we get the word out beyond people who happen to be at the ICANN meeting? How do we share the opportunity? How do we share what sort of groundwork would be needed to get involved in an application?

And so, I would say in the case of the 2026 round, the IRT was very instrumental in identifying, here are some great channels, here are some great events that would be able to help to connect ICANN's work to more people. Maybe I'll pause there and then you -- you asked about roadblocks, but I'll see if there's any other questions or comments first.

DANIEL GLUCK

How does everyone feel about this? This is something that's going on today. This is like a current process. Is this something that you guys have been reading about? Is it anything that you've been seeing, looking at, taking a look at the notes? How does everyone feel about the implementation phase? Any comments, questions? I think we have a hand.

ASTEWAY NEGASH

I'll apologize beforehand because it has nothing to do with policy, but I am a bit interested about the TLD application management system. What are the new features that it's bringing on that are in progress right now that actually makes it updated from the 2012 round? What should we expect? I know that it should be ready by April 2026, I guess. Can you update us? Thank you.

KAREN LENTZ

Thank you. So, I'm afraid I'm not the right person to answer that. As Dan noted at the beginning, we're intending to focus here on the processes and how things work. There are several next round or 2026 round sessions here. There is also a booth, and if you want to talk to us afterward, we can connect you with the right people who can talk about the system or give you more details on that.

DANIEL GLUCK

So, there are the implementation that comes up with written requirements, operational design, and then the technical

approach. At the end of the day, implementation, we're done. We've gotten through this work and hopefully very soon. And we've gotten through this work, and let's say I'm interested in this, I would like to eventually see something tangible out of this.

So, we've taken the seed from policy and the Applicant Guidebook, is that our sapling that has come from that? That's something tangible that we can interact with? Is that something that comes from most of implementation? Is there always something that community will have access like that to?

KAREN LENTZ

Usually, yes. Almost always there's a written artifact of some kind. Sometimes that's all there is. Sometimes it's updating, it's a process for dispute resolution or it's a process for transferring names or something where the output of an implementation project is a set of rules and requirements that other people are operating.

In this instance, when we're talking about the new gTLD program, we are operating a lot of processes, and so, this example is somewhat unique, but I can say that the process is pretty much the same regardless of the topic, everything that I talked about in terms of going through with the IRT and coming up with a few drafts of something and an ultimate outcome.

And public comment which we talked about earlier also features and implementation. So at the end there is also that opportunity,

and I will say honestly that's one of the things that I enjoy most at ICANN is reading public comments because it almost always makes the work better. It's like giving your work to another set of eyes who hasn't been looking at it for six months, they're going to find things that are kind of missing or that can be elaborated on. So, yeah, but usually there's a focus on drafting and getting to a product like that.

DANIEL GLUCK

So we have our product, we've gotten through our initial idea, our initial policy idea. That's what Mary described. We have something that's going on today, our implementation, we have our book, I'm an applicant, I submit everything, it goes through all of the different things that the implementation phase has created, and then we finally get to Kim, because Kim's going to help us put, I guess, leaves on the tree. I guess our top-level domains, that's the delegation phase.

KIM DAVIES

Thanks. I was trying to think of how to continue the analogy and I would perhaps look at it that we've gone from a seed to something that has been cultivated in a greenhouse and it's ready for the outside world. And once you've planted something in the ground outside, what do you need to think about? You need to think about irrigation, you need to think about tree trimming, you need to keep

that thing alive forever right or closest to and I think with a lot of policies and in this example with new gTLDs.

We need to make it something viable and robust for the long term. And a big part of that is what we do to take it out of that launch phase, in this case receiving applications, processing them, evaluating them, but once it's evaluated that any individual new TLD is viable, we need something to turn it into reality, and that's where certainly we're not unique in that area but my team has a role to play.

For those not familiar with IANA, we operate the DNS root zone which is the official database of what is a TLD, and that's kind of like when we put it in that place, that is when a TLD becomes reality. Now, with that all said, I think it's easy to look at what Mary talked about and what Karen talked about as highly distinct phases, and to a certain extent they are. There's clearly a moment in time when a policy is approved and therefore it then becomes eligible for implementation.

But I would suggest that where Karen's job ends and mine starts, there's a lot of blending between the two processes, because certainly we're involved now in this implementation phase, because just like many other parties, we have to build tools and systems and understanding of the policy in order to successfully operate it. So, I think our work begins in this implementation phase, perhaps not right at the beginning of that flowchart we saw a few minutes ago, but certainly towards the middle and the end,

because we need to be ready for that day one when things are switched on.

And what does being ready mean? I think we need to have some of the tools and systems in place to, we heard the question about the application system. The application system, once that system it's been deemed eligible, it has to transfer the relevant data into my team system so that it can become a customer. And then our team system will be the permanent system that that customer will use moving forward when they're actually now a TLD operator.

They will log into IANA's system, we will be the place that they go to when they need to manage their top-level domain once it exists. And it's such a system that we need to develop. I mean, we have to think about staffing. When we have, let's say, a thousand more top-level domains than we do today, each one of those new top-level domains is a new customer of my team. And what do customers do? Sometimes they need support, sometimes they need to call a help desk, and all of that takes time and resources.

So, we will need to ramp up our operations by hiring staff training staff and so forth in order to support the new top-level domain. So I know we're basically at the end of the sessions. I'm keeping my piece a little bit brief, but really, it's incumbent on us as sort of the operational phase once we've gone through the full implementation of the policy is really to do all those permanent things that will just have to always be there.

Keeping the root zone operating with that new top-level domain in it, monitoring things, raising awareness within the community of challenges that we're facing on an ongoing basis, because as you would have heard, no one has a crystal ball, and even the best conceived policy, there will be issues that might arise when it makes contact with the real world. And so, part of the work that we do is reporting back to the community. This is what we're seeing. with operationalization.

One example that I will give is there's always this concern that if you make the root zone too big, there might be operational challenges. And I think the whole community is very interested to know what are we seeing in terms of day-to-day operational real-world usage that might require some kind of remedial actions.

So by us communicating back to the community, it sort of brings that process full circle and it allows the policy community to consider what the world is seeing and whether the policy needs some adjustment or tweaking or if there is to be a subsequent round, maybe the rules of that next round need to be adjusted based on our new learnings and new understandings.

So yeah, there's a whole bunch of work to be done, just permanently day-to-day work. And it's not just my team, to be clear. I mean, there's no more work to be done than the actual operator of a TLD. If you've just gone through this whole process and you're now running a top-level domain, well, congratulations,

you now run a piece of critical infrastructure and that's a lot of work.

So there's a lot of parties in the community, all the way from the TLD operator to us to other parts of ICANN, for example, contractual compliance, making sure the top-level domain operator does their job. All this needs to happen, and it's the end of a very long, laborious process that we've learned about today.

DANIEL GLUCK

Yeah, as an homage to the 2026 run, we've taken a bit of a circuitous route to go from our initial idea of how do we get more top-level domains to formal policies, to implementing, to what Kim was just talking about and continuing on through the future. There are tons of places to get involved throughout the way, and I think that's one of the main takeaways I would take is that there's always going to be space in the ICANN community for things like that. And I want to make sure we get time for at least a few questions, and I see we have very exciting questions here.

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

So, my name is Anup Kumar Prasad. I am from India. So, I am seeking guidance on evaluating alignment of a new idea with ICANN's objectives and policies. Could experts share insights or point to relevant resources?

DANIEL GLUCK

Can you repeat that last part?

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Oh, yes. Like I'm seeking guidance on evaluating an idea that can be aligned with the ICANN's objectives and policies. Could any of you share insights or point to relevant resources? Because when you say about that policy implementation part, so I'm looking for an idea that can align with ICANN.

DANIEL GLUCK

Are you specifically asking if your idea has to align with ICANN's strategic objectives?

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Yes.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER

You are talking about seeking resources for --

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Relevant resources, yes.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER

Something like resources.

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Do we have any roadmap or something that --

DANIEL GLUCK

I guess -- I'm sorry.

KIM DAVIES

I think what I'm hearing the question is, he has an idea he thinks that is appropriate to bring to ICANN, and it's like, what's the first step in validating that this is an idea that should belong in the ICANN space? Is that...?

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Exactly.

MARY WONG

I think it's hard to answer that in the abstract. I'm not asking you to share confidential information in this public forum as everything is recorded. I would say that if it is something that might seem to require policy development, because that's the only thing I can speak to, obviously, like I said earlier, there's the question of whether this is something, like you said, aligns with ICANN.

Is that within ICANN's mission or remit? This is a great forum. There's a lot of people around here who can tell you a lot about what examples are and what examples are not, they're not always that obvious. If it is something that seems ripe for policy development, then obviously it becomes a question of where. So, if it's something that impacts country codes, then it goes to the

ccNSO. If it's more of a gTLD-related thing, then it goes to the GNSO.

And then that's where, again, getting to know people in this space, joining a community group, surfacing it right here because there are, like Dan was saying, there's a lot of, I hate to say competing priorities, but it's not just resources, it is also community time and attention, and everything's a priority depending on who says what it is.

So, it's also about finding that support within that community, and basically, because there might be other people who say, you know what, we've been thinking about that too, we just need to bring it to the GNSO and say, this impacts business, this impacts how registrars do business in certain regions.

So, finding that support and then bringing it up within those channels, and I'm speaking for the GNSO, but it's true if it's a country code matter, it goes through the ccNSO as well. If it's a matter that involves public policy, then obviously, the Government Advisory Committee is the place where you bring it to your national representative, et cetera. I hope that's helpful.

ANUP KUMAR PRASAD

Thank you.

JENNIFER BRYCE

Thank you, everybody, for your participation and for your great questions. We're going to finish this session now. Of course, feel

free, if you see people in the hallways, you can always grab them and ask questions. Thanks so much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]