
ICANN86 | Prep Week – Board Engagement with the Community
Thursday, May 21, 2026 – 20:00 to 21:00 CEST

WENDY PROFFIT

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the ICANN Board Engagement session with the Community. The topic is Next Steps for Community Code of Conduct Regarding Statements of Interest. My name is Wendy Proffitt, and I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

Interpretation for this session will include English, French and Spanish. If you would like to speak during the session, please raise your hand and zoom. When called upon, unmute your microphone to speak and please keep your comments, questions and remarks to one to two minutes maximum.

Please also state your name for the record, including the language you will speak if it's other than English. And speak at a reasonable pace for our scribes and interpreters. I will now hand the floor over to the chair of the ICANN Board of directors, Tripti Sinha.

TRIPTI SINHA

Thank you, Wendy. Welcome, everyone. And thank you for joining us online today. I'm pleased to once again open this community

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Board engagement session in advance of our policy forum meeting ICANN86, which will soon be held in Sevilla.

This discussion provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen our collaboration and continue working together on issues that are critical to ICANN and its future. During the 60-minute plenary session, which Greg DiBiase and I will co-lead on behalf of the Board, we will focus on the impact of the Community Code of Conduct and how the SOAC groups and the community more broadly address statements of interest and related practices. We will also explore the community's views on possible next steps, including what additional actions may be needed from the SOs and ACs and ICANN Org to further support the integration and implementation of the code.

We very much look forward to hearing your input and perspectives on these key aspects and questions. We will spend 45 minutes in the discussion and we will use the remaining time to summarize your thoughts. With that, let me now pass the floor to Greg, who will get us started. Greg.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, Tripti. So, yeah, as Tripti mentioned, we'll be discussing the Participant Code of Conduct concerning statements of interests. And this is really a central priority for the Board. Transparency in the policymaking process is foundational to ICANN's bottom-up model. We need to be sure that the process is

working as intended and that really all community members are committed to this idea of transparency when they're participating.

So, backing up a little bit to give some background. For a long time, the statements of interest policy were specific to the various supporting organizations and advisory committees. The SOs and ACs had their own Statement of Interest or Statement of Interest policy. Beginning in 2023, many in the community started noting disadvantages to this disparate system, right, that there wasn't one central policy that the community could look to. The Board and ICANN heard calls that it would be helpful to have a common standard from which the community could work with. And so, ICANN and the Board took that back.

We developed this policy, put it out for Public Comment, incorporated feedback, and then in September of 2025, we published the Code of Conduct concerning statements of interest. And I think at the heart of this policy, it's really a disclosure policy, right? So, there's a relatively simple premise. Community members who choose not to disclose an affiliation must refrain from actively participating in the relevant ICANN group or activity in which they would be representing that affiliation in some capacity. And that really is a safeguard on the transparency of the policymaking process.

So, after publishing this policy, we sent out a call to the community to update their SOIs for the SOACs themselves to look at the code and see how they could adapt their processes. But now we want to

dig a little deeper. Sometime has gone by since it's been published. Folks have had an opportunity to update their SOIs. And considering how much the Board has invested in this, we wanted to take some time to understand, is it effective? How can we improve this process?

So, we came up with these two discussion questions, rather broad on purpose to solicit community feedback. The first is, has there been any noticeable impact of the community Code of Conduct on how your SOAC group or the community in general handle statements of interest? And then second, what does the community believe is needed as next steps, either from the SO/ACs themselves or ICANN Org to support further integration and implementation of the code? So, I think I'll stop there and open up the floor to start the discussion. Alejandra, please.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO

Hi, everyone. This is Alejandra Reynoso. I wanted to, well, let you know what has happened in the ccNSO regarding the Code of Conduct. We already had a Statement of Interest guideline that the council adopted in 2023. And when the Code of Conduct, well, was adopted, we started working on comparing notes and check whether we had everything covered.

And we updated our guideline with minor things that we were missing. So, since we adopted our own guideline, well, the impact has been, I would say, medium in the sense of now at every Working Group session or council session, we do ask whether there is any

update to the Statement of Interest. To remind people to keep it up to date and, well, to let anyone know if there's been any changes. So, by now, we have this as a habit. So, this is good.

But the main thing that I think is important to discuss is a way of keeping the SOIs more manageable. Because as mentioned by Greg before, each SO/AC has its own version of SOI and, therefore, our own mechanisms. And in the ccNSO, we do it fairly manually.

And we do, well, I would say it's not as easy to update and to remind people other than, well, every time that we mentioned this. Like, it's not impossible to do, but it's harder to keep track if there were, let's say, something that the community member could have at its own disposal to check on its own, update it, and just push a button and say, okay, I either confirm or update my SOI in a more automated fashion. So, there we go. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, Alejandra. We really appreciate the effort of the ccNSO and kind of being a leader here and doing those updates. I guess my quick follow-up question would be automating it and having a better, like a more efficient wiki that your community has. Can you provide a little more detail on what the mechanism would be there?

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO

Well, sure. Right now, we do have a Google Form that we fill out, and then this Google Form, it's printed into a PDF and published by

the Secretariat in our website. So, that's the way it goes. But, for example, we had a little bit of a brief discussion while updating this that it would be maybe something that could be added to the ICANN profile. It's a simple form with the information, and each person could go by themselves, logging, updated it, and that would be it. And then we could have that linked in a more-easy fashion. That's a thought.

GREG DIBIASE

Great. Thank you. Before I go to Claire, I think Tripti had a follow-up question as well.

TRIPTI SINHA

Yeah. Thank you, Greg. Alejandra, just a real quick question, and maybe you sort of answered it by responding to Greg. You said the impact has been medium. So, if you could elaborate a little bit on that. When you say medium, that means you might have expected the impact to be higher. Can you in some way differentiate what you wanted it to be and what it could be, so that we have better clarity? Thanks.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO

Yeah. Well, I was thinking a little bit on the top of my head on how to measure that. But, let's say having this now implemented in each and every Working Group and council as a standard point, at first, it took some effort for people to remember to do this. But, by now, it's a habit. So, that's why I was tempted to say medium to

low in the sense of the additional effort afterwards. We do have all the SOIs filled and published. I wouldn't say I had any more expectations than that, other than remind people to keep them updated. I hope this clarifies.

TRIPTI SINHA

Okay. All right. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE

Thank you, Alejandra, for fielding two follow-up questions. I think you partially answered one of the questions in the chat, which was curious if any SOs or ACs have identified practical challenges of implementing, at least. Maybe that's a different question than interpreting. Claire, I see your hand next.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Hello. Yes, this is Claire Craig, for the record. And, I am going to speak to what happens at the ALAC and the At-Large community. So, in general, we do have a template where anyone who's participating in elections or volunteering are asked to complete a SOI and submit it.

And, that is generally done. What we have found is that, since the implementation of the new policy, we have started to ask persons at every meeting, at most of our meetings and our Working Group meetings, if there are any updates to their SOIs, so they can state it verbally at the meeting. It doesn't happen at all meetings, however, and that is one of the issues we have to ensure that this is

something that happens on a regular basis and just happens as part of the normal way of doing business.

With respect to the next steps, however, we believe that, for ALAC, so there are next steps for ALAC and At-Large, and we believe that there are some next steps for the ICANN Org as well. So, the SOIs should be created and reviewed and updated when a participant joins Working Groups, when they take part in leadership roles, or if they're submitting Public Comments in a representative capacity, if they receive funding or support related to participation, if they change employers or clients, or intervene on issues where their interests differ from what is on their SOI.

We also believe that the Code of Conduct should be supported by some regular capacity development and training initiatives within our At-Large structures to ensure that there is accessibility and that there is understanding. Now, and we also think that it is important for us to ensure that nobody feels unintentionally discouraged from participating because they have to do the SOIs.

Now, from the Org point of view, we believe that the Org can support these initiatives of the SOs and ACs by harmonizing the SOIs' expectations to include basic minimum requirements, and we recognize that all SOs and ACs may have different goals and different objectives, but having a basic framework would help, especially since persons may have to do different SOIs if they are participating, for instance, in a PDP with a GNSO, and they have to

do something else for the ALAC, and there may be a laser on another SO/AC.

We also believe that the chairs and the community leaders need clear procedural guidelines, noting that the current policy gives chairs primary responsibility for enforcing in the groups that they lead, including the ability to take proportional actions such as warnings and temporary removal from participating in channels.

However, chairs should not be expected to act as investigators or compliance officers, and they need to clear path, escalation paths, models, language examples for doing so. We also believe that what we want to know as well, and I think the policy is not clear on this, what happens if there is a situation where the chair's affiliation is in question? So, these are some of the things that we spoke about, and we would like to see some more work being done moving forward. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE

Thank you, Claire. A lot of helpful suggestions there. Real quickly, on the standard template, I think the code provides like a sample, but you'd like something more, or for us to consider something more formal, like a formal standard template for SOIs?

CLAIRE CRAIG

Yes, that's what we're thinking, that there should be some basic formal standard template for all, and you could build on it if you require new or different information that everyone doesn't need.

But ICANN Org should say this is the standard. At least this is the basic minimum that should be included in your SOIs.

GREG DIBIASE

Thank you. Tripti?

TRIPTI SINHA

Yes, thanks. I have a follow-up question as well, Claire. If I heard you correctly, you said you don't believe the chair should be involved in enforcing this, and we should have clear escalation processes. Did I understand that correctly?

CLAIRE CRAIG

No, no, no. Sorry. I don't know what's happened to my voice. Not that the chair should not be responsible for enforcing, but the chair should not be responsible for investigating, and the chair should not act as a compliance officer, so that there should be other mechanisms in place to have the chair to do the job that needs to be done.

TRIPTI SINHA

Okay.

CLAIRE CRAIG

Because there may also be situations, and this is one of the things that we stressed, where what happens if it is the chair that there is an issue with respect to compliance?

TRIPTI SINHA Okay, understood. Thank you for that clarification.

CLAIRE CRAIG You're welcome. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE Thank you, Claire. Great suggestions, and two really great things to think about regarding education and support for the chair, as well as some open questions surrounding their enforcement. Other questions?

GISELLA GRUBER Greg, we have one in the chat from Avri. I don't know if you want to read it out loud, or I'd be happy to.

GREG DIBIASE I'm happy to read it.

GISELLA GRUBER Go ahead.

GREG DIBIASE As a consultant who is always looking for gigs, I often have brief relationships with potential employers. I know their interests and do have a choice of supporting them or not at ICANN.

I keep thinking it is a potential conflict of interest, but generally cannot disclose that one, if interviewing hard enough to get employer to mention after the contract, and in fact needs to be part of the contracts. But it is possible for someone to color their opinions, to police a potential employer, but not one of my habits, but I see the opportunity.

Does this mean that consultants should never participate in ICANN policy discussions because they may be interviewing with someone that they cannot mention? I don't think it would extend that far. And this is just, I guess, my personal opinion, unvetted by the rest of ICANN, but I think it's specific to actual participation in an ICANN activity in which you are supporting or involved with an affiliate that you might have to disclose.

So, it seems like an interview would be before that point in which you're actually participating. Avri, does that make sense to you?

AVRI DORIA

Sorry, I wasn't intending to talk. Of course, I'm normally not intending to talk, Avri speaking. No, because when interviewing, you're certainly not employed, but there is an instinct to please the person that you're interviewing with. Maybe I'm the only one that that's ever occurred to, but certainly when I was an employer hiring, I almost always saw the tendency that, yeah, people would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear.

People would do. So, when I'm participating in groups, as I always do, and I participate without a care for who may or may not hire me, I am aware that my actions, my statements, my whatever, can prejudice things one way or another. There's no money exchanging hands, except maybe a job at the end of the rainbow. So, there is an opportunity for me, and it's something that there's also the opportunity after an employer rejects you to try to get even with them by then going against their interests.

So, we have these relationships. They may end up financial relationships. They may, therefore, affect how someone argues a case. We don't do that much voting, what represents a case, but what have you. And so, I've never stopped myself from talking because I've tried to make sure. I've tried to make sure that people knew I'd be totally uncooperative with them, whether they hired me or not, and just having that as my personality trait. But it always occurred to me that maybe consultants shouldn't be participating at all because we're always selling ourselves. And this is part of the package we're selling. Thanks.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks. Tripti, did you want to respond?

TRIPTI SINHA

Yeah, I just wanted to add a few thoughts. I don't think you should stop participating. I think the spirit of this is full disclosure. As long

as you disclose it, then that can be put in context and how you participate in what you offer.

AVRI DORIA

But you can't disclose it. You don't disclose who you're interviewing with. I understand this is not the problem the lawyers had that you can't constrain because of NDA. No, get it in the contract, make sure the NDA allows it, and that's fine. This is when you're interviewing for someone, do you really go and disclose everyone you're interviewing to possibly have a job with?

Does everyone, whether on the Board or elsewhere that's interviewing for a new job, disclose who they're interviewing with? Should they? Should that indeed be the standard that when you've got a task at ICANN, you may not even interview elsewhere without disclosing that you're interviewing? I've understood in the past that real senior folk don't like to disclose who they're interviewing with before they're signed, sealed, and delivered. So, I'm not sure that disclosure of who you're interviewing with is a solution that you want to apply universally.

TRIPTI SINHA

Okay, I understand what you're asking now, Avri. Thanks.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, Avri. And I guess I think it's who do you represent, not who do you want to represent, but maybe instead of me giving a final answer on this, we'll take that back as a corner case to consider as

we continue to evolve our materials on the subject. But yeah, an interesting case to consider.

AVRI DORIA

By the way, I think it's a corner case for every one of us that's a consultant and any one of us that interviews for a job while we're functioning for ICANN.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, Avri. Other questions or comments?

GISELLA GRUBER

Hi, Greg, I do see another one in the chat from, sorry if I get your name wrong, from ICANN Fellowship, Maciej Piasecki. I hope I didn't mangle your name. They ask, would you say being active as a soldier in the volunteer Home Guard, as many STEM professionals are here in Poland, needs to be disclosed? It could be very sensitive.

GREG DIBIASE

I don't know if I have a clear answer to that. I think it would be if it was relevant to your participation in ICANN, but I think it's disclosure if it's relevant to your participation. If it's something completely separate, I'm not sure that would be required. But I think that's another type of question that we can take back to think about. Anyone else?

GISELLA GRUBER

León had a comment. I don't know if you want to say it out loud, León. Also, Godsway has raised his hand.

LEÓN FELIPE SÁNCHEZ

Thanks, Wendy. Yeah, what I posted in the chat is that I think that actual and potential conflicts of interest are relatively easy to identify and to deal with. What I found in my experience is that perceived conflicts of interest are extremely difficult to identify and to isolate and to deal with. Because, of course, we're talking about perception. So, to what extent a perceived conflict of interest should constrain an individual from taking part in discussions.

I think this goes back or ties back to maybe a little bit of what Avery was saying. If you're trying to get hired by some company and you're trying to, so to speak, please that company with your views so that you can increase your opportunities of getting hired, does that become a perceived conflict of interest, a potential? So, what are we speaking about here? So, as I posted in the chat, I think it would be both healthy and helpful to have this discussion at a community level to try to define these questions or try to find answers to these questions about perceived conflicts of interest.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, León. That's an interesting point. And I would also note, I think this is about disclosure more than it is necessarily about a

conflict of interest, right? You're disclosing something that may be relevant to this, your participation within ICANN. Godsway?

GODSWAY KUBI Yes, please confirm if I'm audible.

GREG DIBIASE Yes, you're a little faint, but I think I can hear you.

GODSWAY KUBI Am I audible now?

GREG DIBIASE Yes.

GODSWAY KUBI All right. So, this is Godsway Kubi for the record. Yeah, so I think my concern or my comment kind of touch on the agenda too. That speaks on, you know, I realized that many newcomers, you know, actually join ICANN without fully understanding some of these community norms and governance expectations. So, I wanted to just get a quick one on maybe what ICANN is doing to better integrate some of this awareness of the Code of Conduct into the newcomer engagement and particularly when it comes to the fellowship onboarding process as well.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks. I'm relatively sure that's part of the onboarding process, but that's something that can always be improved. So, we can take that back to make sure that that's a priority when onboarding and capacity building activities. Sébastien?

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET

Thank you. Sébastien Bachollet speaking. One question, one comment. For the question, who is in charge of finalizing if there is a potential conflict of interest? In my comment, it would be great to have one single place where a Statement of Interest is put, even if in the sheet you have different places where if you participate to one group or another, you may add information, but it would be great to have one single Statement of Interest for the whole organization. Thank you very much.

GREG DIBIASE

I'm sorry, ask that question one more time. Who's in charge of like adjudicating whether someone has?

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET

Who has at the end decided that you are in a perceived conflict of interest?

GREG DIBIASE

So, I think everyone has a responsibility to disclose. If someone believes that someone has failed and their obligation disclosed, they can take that to the relevant chair of what the supporting

organization or a Working Group, whatever it's relevant for them to identify if their participation is warranted or more disclosure is necessary. I think that is the basic model on the second question yet noted. I think that could be helpful.

And I think that's something that other community members have noted as well that that we're moving away from disparate groups and a central place could be helpful. But I'll note, Avri's disagreement on a single need for a source of a single source of discourse. I see value in the various perspective and the forms provided.

Yeah, I think there could be a world where that different groups have different forms but perhaps, they're accessible in a certain way that's simpler for all the community. Okay, thank you both for that. Any other questions or comments? Okay. Tripti, do we have notes to discuss or --

TRIPTI SINHA

Well, there's some more comments in the chat if you'd like to -- yeah.

GREG DIBIASE

Great. From Anne says, I think the new Code of Conduct is interpreted as applying in Working Groups and committees. However, on the GNSO council, I believe that councilors are viewed as representing the overall interests of their respective C's and SGs,

so SOI remain general except where a councilor is employed by an entity.

So, I think that's right, Anne. I think there can be several levels. There can be your SOI on council, but potentially further disclosure on a specific Working Group if I'm understanding you correctly. Okay. So, I think that's all, very helpful feedback for us to take back. And we can work on providing what we've learned in this session. Tripti, do you have other questions for the group?

TRIPTI SINHA

So, before we adjourn, we still have slightly less than half an hour left, but we were looking for feedback. Is there anything else anyone would like to say? Otherwise, we will summarize the discussion and close the meeting out. Any other pressing items that you'd like to put before us?

GREG DIBIASE

Claire?

CLAIRE CRAIG

Yes, thanks for this opportunity. This is Claire Craig again. I think and it was said in the chat, I think part of the main problem is the fact that there may be a number of statements of interest that people may have to complete depending on where they are functioning. And keeping all of those up to date can be a bit of a problem.

So, I think some more care and attention needs to be paid to that. How the process can be simplified as well as and Alejandro spoke about it at the beginning. How do we ensure that we keep our statements of interest up to date? Even with this exercise, I went back and had to look at mine to see if I updated it. You know, with information that because I'm now on this new PDP, did I put that in it?

What information should I put and those kinds of things? And we generally don't remember to do it. And even if you do it verbally, do you go back and update the document with the necessary information? And someone recently mentioned in a chat that I was in that when they looked at persons who are in various Working Groups, they found that many of them were not updating their SOIs.

So, I think that's something that we really need to look into to ensure that it gets updated regularly. There was something about it being updated every two years. That may not be enough, depending on which groups you're participating in. So, I just wanted to emphasize that point. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE

Thank you, Claire. That's a great point and something I think we need to stay cognizant of. Alan, you're next.

ALAN GREENBERG

Thank you very much. This is neither a question nor urgent, but it was the thought that's triggered by the previous discussion. Until about 10 years ago, an AC or SO chair was selected by their group to be the chair of their group and be responsible for how it ran and so on and so forth. Starting about 10 years ago, ICANN started imposing or assigning whatever responsibilities to chairs other than taking care of their own groups.

Chairs may be responsible for selecting, in the previous world, the members of review groups. Here, we were talking about they're responsible for enforcing the Code of Conduct. And there's a whole host of other things that chairs are now responsible for outside of managing their own group. And I'm not quite sure the implications of that. I can think of a few, and I don't really want to go into it here. But I think it's something we want to think about as we go forward.

That the chairs that used to be just the chair of the GNSO or GNSO Council or the ALAC now have a host of other responsibilities. And I think there are implications in that, in both how we select them and how we treat them in other ways. And something to think about that I don't think I've ever heard discussed before. Thank you.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, Alan. I think that's a great point. And I think it harkens back to an earlier comment on educational materials for a chair too, right? If they're going to have this responsibility to potentially say that more disclosure is warranted. And maybe we need to be

thinking about how we can better support them. Yeah, I think that's a great point.

ALAN GREENBERG

Moreover, I don't think it's documented anywhere. Unless the previous chair gets you off in a corner and tells you, most of it comes as a big surprise when you're appointed.

GREG DIBIASE

Right. Thanks, Alan. Okay. Thanks, everybody. So, a lot of interesting points. Some of the things I heard were keeping SOIs organized and easier to update. They may be hard to access across groups. Some really interesting points on the chair's role here, how chairs can be supported. What happens if in a situation in which a chair may not be fully disclosing the extent of their affiliation.

So, I think that's an interesting case we can take back. The corner cases that Avri described and maybe not defined employment, but perspective employment and what implications those could have. And I know staff is taking notes on other things that were picked up as well. Anything else from other members of the Board?

TRIPTI SINHA

Greg, I would add the point that Alan just made, which is that the role of the chair has, over time, given them more responsibilities. And that should be documented somewhere so that when

someone steps into the role, they understand the scope and scale of their responsibilities.

And there's another comment in chat from Anne that when Public Comments are being prepared, that's another place where you can identify clients and customer interests when contributing towards that.

GREG DIBIASE

So, I think that is part of the policy, if I'm not mistaken, that these things should be disclosed. But I'd need to take another look. But we can take that back. Well, Tripti, maybe I'll turn it back to you if I see no other questions.

TRIPTI SINHA

Well, yes, that's right. I don't see any more hands or any more comments. Well, thank you everyone for participating. We've received some good input. It's been interesting and constructive. And it's important that we continue to engage on this and other essential topics over the coming months.

So, again, thank you all for participating. And we look forward to seeing you soon in Sevilla. Safe travels to those who are attending in person. And we'll see you online, if not.

GREG DIBIASE

Thanks, everybody.

TRIPTI SINHA

Bye.

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