



Review of Reviews Cross Community Group (Reviews CCG)

ICANN87 (October 2026) Progress Overview

About the Process

The Review of Reviews Cross Community Group (Reviews CCG) brings together two members from each ICANN Supporting Organizations (SOs) and Advisory Committees (ACs), the ICANN Board and ICANN Organization (Org), as well as two Expert Advisors, and observers, to take a fresh look at the current reviews system.

With its [charter](#) approved by the Board in September 2025, the Reviews CCG is managing a fundamental evaluation of reviews set out by the ICANN Bylaws, as a whole system, including their implementation.

Work Plan Update to Accommodate Second Draft Report

The Reviews CCG issued its [First Draft Report](#) for [Public Comment](#) on 25 June 2026. During the comment proceeding, the CCG continued to advance its work, refining its thinking, testing and adjusting its design and approach as discussions progressed and issues were identified.

The Reviews CCG received a total of 23 Public Comments that included many suggestions for refinement.

Informed by ongoing discussions as well as input received, the Reviews CCG made substantive adjustments to the proposed reviews framework, evolving it considerably from the version originally published for comment.

While it was initially anticipated that the Final Report would be delivered in August 2026, the Reviews CCG notified its Nominating Groups on 12 August of its intent to produce a Second Draft Report to provide the community with an opportunity to consider the revised proposal before recommendations are finalized and submitted to the Nominating Groups.

The Reviews CCG sees a second Public Comment period as an opportunity to test its refined approach, to ensure that significant changes are subject to appropriate community understanding and scrutiny, but also to further strengthen the basis for the Final Report.

The Reviews CCG submitted a formal extension request along with the work plan to Nominating Groups on 5 October 2026. The revised work plan foresees publishing the Second Draft Report for public comment shortly after ICANN87.

To allow sufficient time for considering the input received in the second public comment and for preparation of our Final Report, the Reviews CCG requested an extension of the Reviews CCG's timeline for the delivery of the Final Report to ICANN88, March 2027.

Key Proposal Adjustments

Purpose of Reviews

The Reviews CCG took stock of the support for the definition received in the first public comment and confirmed its alignment on the notion that the definition should remain broad enough to be all encompassing within the remit of ICANN's Mission, Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values and Article 3 Transparency obligations.

For example, the Reviews CCG received commentary requesting that “end users effects” be reflected in the definition. Being more specific or narrowing down the definition may inadvertently set some constraints. The definition cannot thoroughly list all use cases, hence the importance of keeping it high-level.

The Reviews CCG concurred with the comment received that the use of “and complying with” in the former version¹ of the definition may potentially overlap with, and dilute focus on, the existing accountability mechanisms and tools for items of non-compliance (Request for Consideration, Independent Review Panel). The reference to “complying” has therefore been removed from the definition and replaced with “according to”.

The purpose of reviews is to assess whether ICANN is fulfilling its Mission according to its Bylaws, Articles, Commitments, Core Values, and Article 3 transparency obligations (“Transparency Obligations”) and, where needed, to recommend changes and/or improvements to ICANN's processes, procedures, and/or structures to ensure those goals.

Nature of Reviews

To address public comment suggesting that this be better defined, the Reviews CCG has further clarified that a review cannot interfere with, substitute for, or otherwise replace a policy development process. While a review may assess the effects or effectiveness of an existing policy, it should not be used as a vehicle to mitigate, relitigate, pre-empt, or influence matters of policy development. Where a review identifies an issue that may warrant policy development or policy changes, however, a review may recommend that the matter be considered by the appropriate Supporting Organization (SO). Any determination as to whether and how to initiate or pursue policy development would remain with the relevant SO according to their processes.

In response to some commentary, the Reviews CCG added the nuance that while a review should focus on existing and sufficiently established processes, tools, and mechanisms, it may assess processes, tools, or mechanisms introduced since the previous review where they have been in place for a sufficient period to allow for meaningful evaluation based on experience and evidence. Accordingly, ongoing pilots or initiatives that have not yet had sufficient time to

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demonstrate their effects should generally not be reviewed until they have concluded or reached an appropriate level of maturity.

Reviews Scoping Committee (RSC)

The Reviews CCG received public comments noting concern or seeking greater clarity regarding the RSC's authority, roles and responsibilities, as well as the transparency requirements applicable to its work.

In response, the Reviews CCG has further clarified in its Report that the RSC is a coordinating body that makes recommendations for Supporting Organization (SO) and Advisory Committee (AC) endorsement. The Reviews CCG also tested the proposed Reviews system through a series of stress tests to verify that the RSC's functions remain appropriately confined to this coordination role and do not encroach on the responsibilities or decision-making of SO/ACs.

In light of the concerns in the public comment on transparency requirements for the RSC, the Reviews CCG further emphasized these requirements and articulated operational considerations in a clearer way. Beyond transparency, the Reviews CCG clarified the RSC would operate based on consensus, and the expectation that its members would bring synthesized views from their groups while remaining open to discuss other views.

To address public comment, composition adjustments were also made to convert the ICANN Board and ICANN org roles into liaison roles when taking part in discussions. Representation expected from SO/ACs was also clarified.

Responsibilities of the RSC were adjusted to match the broader refinements made to the proposal. Additional criteria were also defined in an effort to further address public comment. For example, as part of its works, the RSC must now verify a minimum capacity requirement of 5/7 SO/ACs for a review to be initiated, noting that opposing initiation does not prevent subsequent participation in conducting the review.

In response to public comment, a clarification was also made to note that while the RSC might be responsible for use of resources, it operates within the confines of ICANN's budget, and is respectful of ICANN's fiduciary obligations.



Reviews System

In response to public comment that underlined the importance of avoiding duplication and of remaining mindful of resources and bandwidth, the Reviews CCG has adjusted the system to remove the proposed mechanism for prodding the Registration Directory Service Review (RDS), Security, Stability and Resiliency (SSR) Reviews, aspects of the New gTLD Program (formerly Competition, Consumer Trust, Consumer Choice (CCT) Review), and Reviews of Reviews under the On-Demand Review framework.

In light of comments received related to SSR and RDS and their close connection to ICANN's core mission, and the concern that these may not be clearly scheduled for review, the Reviews CCG has made it clearer that these aspects are addressed through the Accountability and Transparency (ATR) by creating a clearer pathway for such issues to be considered. The ATR now includes three dedicated scoping slates: one for ATR, one for SSR, and one for RDS. This approach avoids having separate scheduled full-blown reviews while ensuring that matters falling under each of these areas have a regular, variably-scoped and clearly defined pathway for inclusion in the scope of the ATR.

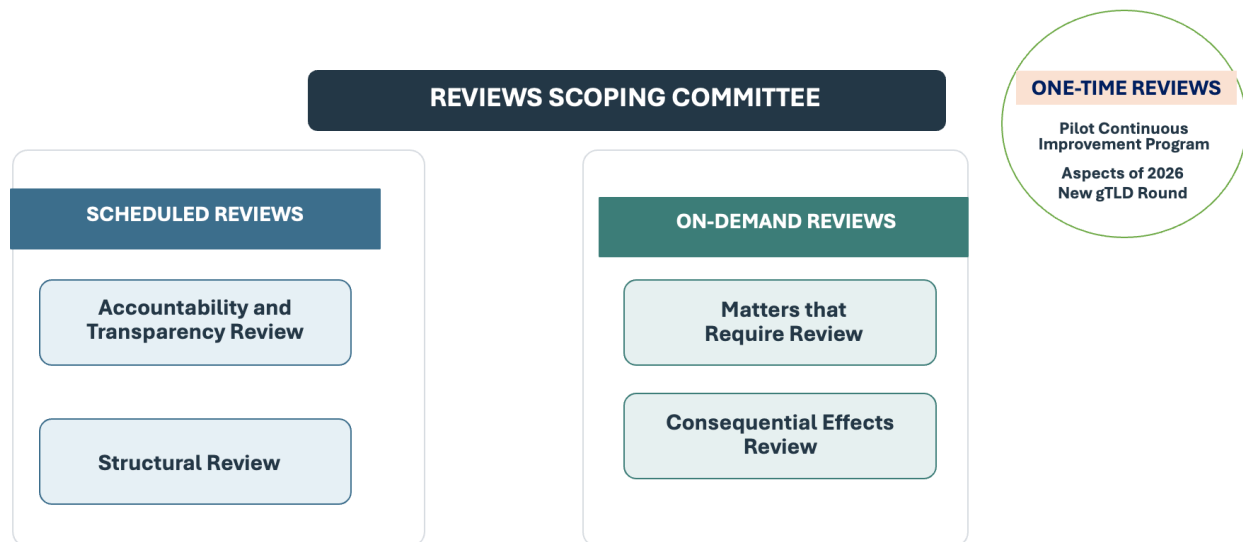
Aspects of the New gTLD Program, on the other hand, was moved to the One-Time Review category, and given a fixed schedule as opposed to a prodding mechanism, recognizing the comments highlighting the importance of this review. As it is tied to the 2026 round, the Reviews CCG elected to put this under One-Time Review, to be initiated 2 years after the first delegation in the 2026 round. In the future, any review related to another specific round can be initiated under On-Demand, as appropriate.

The CCG also introduced a dedicated mechanism for periodically assessing the need for a Review of Reviews: beginning with the second ATR under the refreshed system (ATR2), the ATR would consider whether such a review is warranted and, where appropriate, recommend that one be convened.

The scope of the One-Time Review and any Review of Reviews convened through this mechanism would be developed through a scoping process modeled on the approach established for ATR, providing greater consistency and predictability across the refreshed reviews system.

Recognizing the requests received in the public comment, the Reviews CCG also added a recommendation that there be a budget line or lines for reviews added to ICANN budgets, and clarified that the existing requirements in Bylaws related to the Annual Reviews Implementation Report remains.

The adjusted proposed system of reviews is as follows:



Accountability and Transparency Review

The Reviews CCG made adjustments to the ATR focus to more clearly encompass the commitments with respect to RDS, and SSR. This was in recognition of comments received in the public comment period and at ICANN86 on the importance of preserving regular, scheduled opportunities to consider matters relating to RDS and SSR given their significance to ICANN's Mission.

While these elements were covered by the ATR focus given their tie to ICANN's mission, commitments and core values, which is the core of the ATR mandate, the Reviews CCG acknowledged the need to more clearly articulate this opportunity and as such, has structured the ATR to now include three dedicated avenues for scoping: Accountability and Transparency, Registration Directory Services (RDS), and Security, Stability, and Resiliency (SSR).

This approach is intended to fully replace the separate "prodding" of these reviews recommended in the First Report, in recognition of the:

- duplication with the mandate of the ATR, as these topics are rooted in ICANN's mission, commitments and core values
- uncertainty over which process to use to address a particular issue
- Fragmentation of prioritization and resource planning
- Repeated demands on SO/ACs and other participants
- Overlapping reviews or inconsistent recommendations.

This consolidated approach allows the community to consider general ATR, SSR and RDS priorities together at the beginning of each five-year ATR cycle. At the same time, the use of separate slates, and, where appropriate, separate review sub-teams, ensures that SSR and RDS issues receive appropriate visibility, expertise and attention.

In response to public comment emphasizing the importance of effective implementation of review recommendations and the need for mechanisms to ensure appropriate follow-through, the Reviews CCG has made the assessment of progress in implementing review

recommendations a standing item within the Accountability and Transparency Review (ATR) focus.

The Review of Reviews was previously proposed as a prodded review under the On-Demand Review framework. To simplify the overall reviews system while preserving a scheduled opportunity to assess its effectiveness, the Reviews CCG instead proposes that the ATR consider whether there is a need to initiate a Review of Reviews under On-Demand. This approach embeds a regular checkpoint within the scheduled ATR process, while allowing a Review of Reviews to be undertaken when warranted. To ensure that sufficient time and experience have accumulated under the refreshed reviews system to enable a meaningful assessment, this mechanism would only become available from the second ATR conducted under the new system onward.

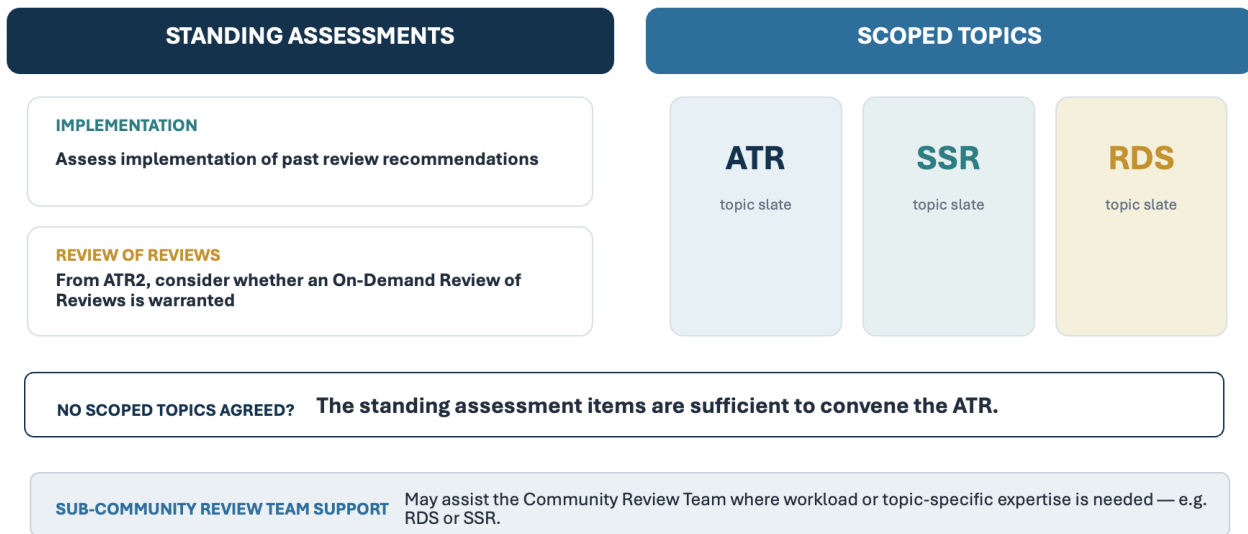
The refreshed ATR benefits from a combination of standing assessment items and scoped items, resulting from a scoping exercise designed to frame the review. This approach promotes clarity, community buy-in, and alignment on the review's objectives and scope prior to its launch.

If SO/ACs cannot agree on any scoped topics, the standing assessments, currently defined as the implementation assessment item and consideration of RoR, are sufficient to warrant an ATR.

In recognition that three slates may create more workload than anticipated and require specific scoped expertise, the Reviews CCG now recommends the RSC may make a recommendation on whether the ATR should happen through one single community review team or be supported by a sub community review team because of workload or if scoped topic expertise is needed. The sub community review team is a new concept.

Through the work of the subgroup on timelines, the Reviews CCG has refined the total duration of the ATR to be 18 months with 12 months for the review.

In clarifying when the clock starts for initiating the ATR, the Reviews CCG also considered the public comments calling for safeguards on implementation slippages. Specifically, the Reviews CCG clarified that the five-year period for initiating the scoping process for the next ATR begins on the date the Board concludes its action on the Final Report of the preceding ATR. If the Board has not concluded its action within 12 months of receiving the Final Report, the five-year period will instead begin 12 months after delivery of the Final Report to the Board.



Structural Review

In an effort to streamline the system, the previously proposed multi-phase approach has been now streamlined into a single, integrated Structural Review process.

To take on the suggestion that it should make an effort to avoid duplication, the Reviews CCG has decided it would leverage the existing annual horizon scan conducted as part of ICANN's strategic planning process to help inform its assessment of relevant external developments. This, however, would not preclude the Structural Community Review Team from seeking additional external expertise or advice where appropriate.

In response to the ask for definition of what the Structural Review is to tackle, the purpose and scope of the Structural Review have been further defined around three core questions:

- Are there external factors or developments that may warrant structural change?
- Are there internal factors or developments that may warrant structural change?
- What would be the potential consequences or implications of any such structural change?

The Reviews CCG also determined that the internal assessment and the Consequential Effects Review are inherently interconnected, as a meaningful assessment of internal factors requires consideration of the consequences and effects of the existing structure, and vice versa.

There was significant discussion in the Reviews CCG on the recommended cadence for Structural Review. Given the magnitude of changes that may result from a Structural Review, there is strong preference on maintaining the 15-year cadence with one Member, representing the Generic Names Supporting Organization, relaying the Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers (ISPCP)'s view that it should be every 10 years, with the Structural Review initiated prior to ATR.

By consolidating the Structural Review into a single phase and leveraging the annual scan, the Review is expected to be completed within 18 months.

Deferrals of Scheduled Reviews

To address public comment emphasizing the need to prevent review deferrals from being overly extended, the Reviews CCG has introduced a cap on a cumulative duration of deferrals. A review may be deferred a maximum of two times, but the combined duration of both deferrals cannot exceed 18 months. There is no prescribed duration for either individual deferral, though it is recommended that the first deferral be long enough to resolve the underlying issue.

Thresholds

The subgroup that worked on stress testing the proposal assessed the impact of abstentions on thresholds and whether adjustments needed to be made. To preserve the integrity of the system, the Reviews CCG decided that abstentions should have no procedural impact and instead emphasized the importance of positive endorsement, thereby solidifying the requirement for appropriate support from SO/ACs on any decision related to reviews.

The Reviews CCG also included a clarification that any thresholds should be adjusted if the total number of SO/ACs change in the future.

On-Demand Review

To avoid duplication and address public comment, the Reviews CCG sought to simplify the On-Demand Framework by removing the prodding mechanism as noted in sections above.

While the Consequential Effects Review is being maintained as is, to address commentary received, the Reviews CCG agreed to articulate a clearer set of criteria that trigger the need to initiate this Review (namely SO/AC independent or On-Demand restructuring).

Under other matters that require reviews, the Reviews CCG also explored the suggestion in public comment to set limits on re-submission(s) of issue(s) previously rejected by the RSC (maximum number of submissions, minimum duration in between, or increased number of supporters), but ultimately decided against imposing such a restriction, recognizing that some groups may identify emerging issues earlier than others and that these issues may only become more broadly apparent over time. There is, however, a requirement for clear rationale on resubmitting and if rejected.

Community Review Team (ATR and On-Demand)

To address public comments raising concerns about the size and composition of review teams, the proposed composition was adjusted from three representatives to up to three representatives from each participating SO/AC. This decision was also informed by the input the Reviews CCG members received from their respective groups.

Moreover, the Reviews CCG clarified that while the review team is working through consensus, in the event there is a vote, each participating SO/AC would have one vote irrespective of the number of members on the review team.

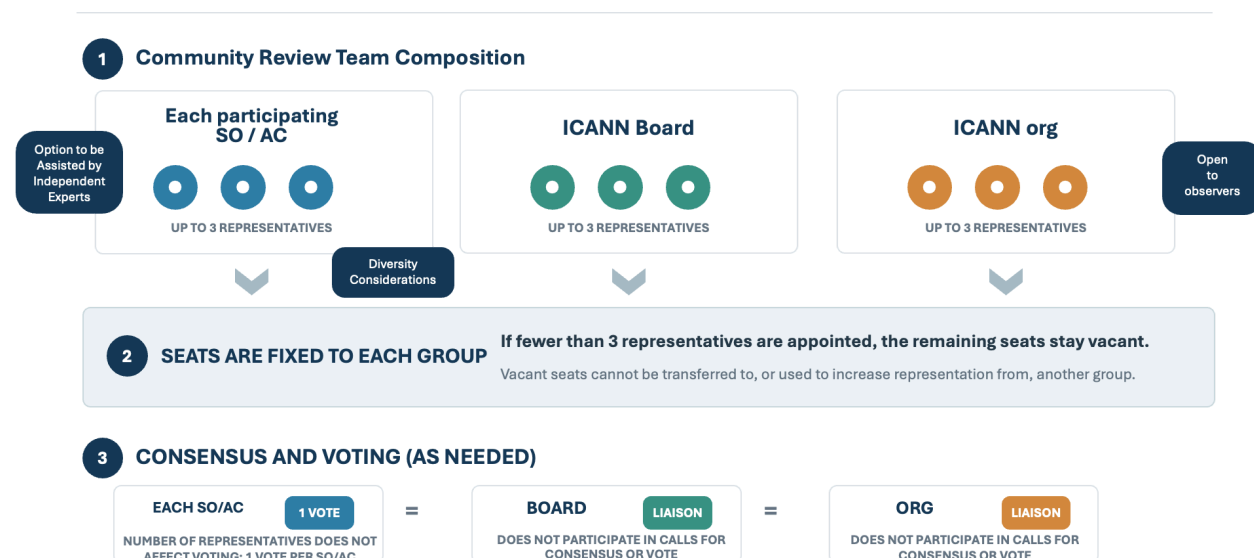
The composition section was also revised in response to feedback received that the ICANN Board and org participation should take part in review team discussions in a liaison capacity.

In light of some commentary, the Reviews CCG also included an ask that the SO and ACs be mindful of diversity in appointing their representatives.

To address public comment, the Reviews CCG note that Review team members are expected to represent the views and perspectives of their respective groups, including by maintaining regular liaison with those groups and reporting back on the review team's work. Community review team members should bring synthesized views to the review team. The Reviews CCG further noted that at the same time, members should engage constructively in the review process, remain open to different perspectives, and be prepared to adjust their positions as discussions evolve in pursuit of consensus.

Transparency requirements would be applicable, including the requirement for participants to submit a Statement of Interest.

Observers would be able to participate in the review process, and in discussions at the discretion of the leadership team.



To address public comment, the requirement for a draft report to be published for Public Comment was added.

The Reviews CCG also determined that Community Review Teams are expected to prioritize their recommendations and clearly identify which should be considered as a package and which should be considered on a standalone basis, allowing SO/ACs and the Board to indicate their support at the appropriate level towards the end of the process.

In developing its recommendations, the Community Review team will receive implementation feasibility considerations from ICANN org and is expected to work with ICANN org on

developing a practical implementation timeline, including clear milestones and deadlines for implementation.

As noted in the ATR related section above, the RSC may recommend the use of a sub community review team.

Structural Community Review Team (Structural Review)

To address public comments raising concerns on the lack of clarity surrounding the use of a Community Liaison Group for former Phase 1 and the use of Cross-Community Working Groups for Phases 2 and 3, the Reviews CCG decided to recommend a Structural Community Review Team, and to enable larger cross community collaboration recommends it comprises up to five representatives for each SO/AC, two liaisons for Board and two liaisons for org.

Existing transparency requirements would continue to apply, including a requirement for participants to submit a Statement of Interest.

Observers would also be able to participate in the review process, and in discussions at the discretion of the leadership team.

Specificities of the Structural Community Review Team need further discussion.

Timeline

The Reviews CCG has defined some clarifications on sequencing of reviews. Notably, the two scheduled Reviews cannot run concurrently but implementation of one can be ongoing while the other is initiated. An On-Demand Review or One-Time review may run alongside a scheduled Review based on a feasibility assessment that includes minimum capacity requirements and available project funds.

The Reviews CCG also determined that the ATR should be the first scheduled review to begin given that an ATR is already envisaged under ICANN's Bylaws and that it will take some time for a Structural Review to be designed and added to the Bylaws. The Second Draft Report will note that a member representing the GNSO, is relaying the Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers Constituency (ISPCP)'s view that Structural Review should come prior to ATR.

Final Review Report

The proposed framework now includes a clearer process for community endorsement and Board consideration of review recommendations. Once a review is completed, the Final Report would be sent simultaneously to the ICANN Board and SO/ACs.

SO/ACs would have two months to indicate whether they endorse each recommendation (or package of related recommendations). A recommendation would require the support of at least five of the seven SO/ACs to meet the proposed community support threshold. Where a

recommendation does not receive the required level of support, the Community Review Team or Structural Community Review Team may consider the feedback received and, where appropriate, produce a Supplementary Report for consideration alongside the Final Report.

In parallel, the Board would publish the Final Report for Public Comment in accordance with its usual procedures. In considering the recommendations, the Board would take into account the Final Report, any Supplementary Report, input received through Public Comment, and the level of support expressed by the SO/ACs. Depending on the subject matter of a recommendation, the Board may also seek evidence of support from a particular SO or AC with a direct interest in, or responsibility for, the matter concerned.

The proposed framework also establishes defined timeframes for Board consideration. The Board would have three months to consider recommendations arising from an ATR, On-Demand, or One-Time Review, and four months for recommendations arising from a Structural Review. This timeframe would begin at the conclusion of either the Public Comment period or the two-month SO/ACs endorsement period, whichever occurs later.

To address public comment seeking clearer timeframes around Board consideration of review outputs or of implementation timelines, the Reviews CCG noted that, to strengthen accountability, if Board consideration extends beyond these timeframes, it would be expected to provide a formal update to the community six months after receipt of the Final Report and every three months thereafter until its consideration is complete.

Mutual Acceptable Solution

To address public comment, a process has been introduced where the Board decision is to reject an endorsed² recommendation or charter that triggers consultation to find a mutually acceptable solution, and in case of failure, the Board may only reject by a vote of no less than 60%.

To reach the Reviews CCG

The Reviews CCG anticipates publishing its Second Draft Report for Public Comment shortly after ICANN87. In the meantime, should you wish to provide input for the Reviews CCG's consideration ahead of publication, please send it to inputonreviews@icann.org. See the [Review of Reviews page](#) for more information.

² To be discussed 60% Board vote required where the Board is minded to accept a non-endorsed recommendation.