

ICANN Strategic Outlook Program: FY25 Trends Report

ICANN Planning Department
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Summary of Findings and Recommendations	3
2 Process & Methodology	7
2.1 Description of the Trends Identification Sessions	8
2.2 Trend Identification Sessions & Data Computation	9
2.3 Trend Analysis	9
2.4 Trend Impact Assessment	10
2.5 Conclusion and Actions Taken	10
3 Appendices	11
Appendix A Statistical Analysis	11
Appendix B Strategic Objective Trend Analysis	15
B.1 Security Trends	15
B.2 Governance Trends	18
B.3 Unique Identifier Systems Trends	20
B.4 Geopolitics Trends	22
B.5 Financials (and Domain Name Industry) Trends	23
Appendix C Trend Impact Assessment	25

1 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Tracking new and shifting trends affecting ICANN and the Internet is a critical first step in ICANN's strategic planning process. Each year, ICANN uses trend information to inform appropriate changes to the ICANN five-year strategic plan, operating plans (five-year or annual), and budget. This report provides a summary of ICANN's FY25 Strategic Outlook Program participated by ICANN organization (org), Board and the community. The Strategic Outlook Program is intended to inform the Board, executive team, and relevant ICANN staff about shifts in trends, risks, opportunities, that may affect how ICANN staff plans for the development of the annual Operating Plan and Budget. In addition, the FY25 Strategic Outlook program data will serve as part of the consultation input for the development of the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2030.

The Strategic Outlook Program began with trends identification sessions that took place in February through April 2023. Therefore, any subsequent topics discussed with the org, Board and Community since that time will be incorporated into the development of the next ICANN Strategic Plan for FY2026-2030.

For the FY25 planning process, ICANN convened 12 strategic outlook trend identification sessions with 207 participants from the community, Board, and org, and collected 1,048 data points. Participants were asked to consider trends, risks, and opportunities across five strategic objectives: security, governance, unique identifier systems, geopolitics, and financials. It should be noted that this data is collected at a point in time, influenced by people's perceptions and opinions, and recounted here as provided by the participants in the trend identification sessions. Inclusion of the statements in this report is intended to reflect the data collected and is not intended as an endorsement of any of those positions.

ICANN org conducted a thorough analysis of the data received from the trend identification sessions. The analysis includes assessing the trends, risks, opportunities, and potential impacts on ICANN. The synthesis of this analysis is a set of priority trends, related impacts, and associated strategic or tactical recommendations, summarized in the table below.

This paper also provides a description of the process of the strategic outlook program, methods used to conduct the analysis, the results of those analyses, and appendices with more details on the trend inputs received.

SUMMARY OF TRENDS, IMPACTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The FY25 trend identification sessions yielded a total of eleven trends. For six of the trends, no notable shift evolved when compared to the previous year. Five trends prompted ICANN org to either evaluate or consider evaluating short-term actions. When reviewing the past year, ICANN has actively undertaken numerous activities to address these trends, and the results have notably enhanced the strategic targeted outcomes outlined in the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025.

Looking forward to the upcoming fiscal year, ICANN remains dedicated to advancing these activities. It will continue to carry out the current and planned activities in the ICANN FY25 Operating & Financial Plan and ICANN FY25 Operating Plan & Budget's Operating Initiatives (Operating Initiatives) to be published for public comment in December 2023 as well as the Interim President and CEO Goals for Fiscal Year 2024 (CEO Goals).

Trend ID	Trend	Notable Shifts in the Trend	Assessment	Conclusion
DNS Abuse (Trend 1.15)	On Security: DNS abuse and DNS security threats are topics that continue to be widely discussed among the ICANN community. Recent efforts have further raised awareness and strengthened ICANN's approach to DNS Abuse across several dimensions, as it is a threat to Internet users' security and safety online. Items listed as DNS security threats are within ICANN's remit; however, many other examples of abuse that are discussed in some sectors of the community, while malicious, are outside of ICANN's remit because they pertain to content.	Positive comments have surfaced related to the proposed Base Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Registry Agreement amendments, the proposed Registrar Accreditation contract amendment and activities conducted to combat DNS abuse. This has the potential to positively impact overall efforts to enhance DNS Security Mitigation.	Ongoing activities aimed at addressing DNS abuse, including the Base gTLDs Registry Agreement and Registrar Accreditation contract amendment process and discussions on DNS abuse at the ICANN DNS Symposium show ICANN's progress toward achieving targeted outcomes laid out in the FY21-25 Strategic Plan, such as "ICANN, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, establishing and promoting a coordinated approach to effectively identify and mitigate DNS security threats and combat DNS abuse."	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the Operating Initiatives and CEO goals and report on progress. See section B.1 , additional observations on this trend. Moreover, please also see Section B.4 for GE and IGO engagement enhancement to mitigate potential risks that threaten ICANN's mission.
DNS Ecosystem Security (Trend 2.2)	On Security: DNS security threats remain a topic of focus. The realization of possible threats or actions could erode the public's trust in the Internet.	Trend remains consistent with the previous year.	There are multiple streams of work involved in the launch of KinDNS , a program supported by ICANN and relevant stakeholders to develop and promote a framework that focuses on the most important operational best practices or concrete instances of DNS security best practices.	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the activities in the Operating Initiatives and report on progress. See section B.1 , additional observations from ICANN org.
ICANN's Multistakeholder Model (Trend 3.1)	On Governance: Policy development is a foundational outcome of ICANN's multistakeholder community. Effective and efficient implementation support continues to be an ongoing activity to fulfill the policy-development process.	Complex policy development and implementation work continues, including the challenge of achieving consensus.	The ICANN multistakeholder model continues to face challenges including building consensus and engagement and participation within the policy-development process, as well as the implications of increased linkage to geopolitical risks. Nevertheless, the use of small teams like the Generic Names Support Organization (gNSO) Small Team and the efforts of the community led planning prioritization process show positive progress.	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the activities in the Operating Initiatives and report on progress. See section B.2 , additional observation of ICANN org.

Trend ID	Trend	Notable Shifts in the Trend	Assessment	Conclusion
Transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and openness (Trend 1.01)	On Governance: Inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and openness are key elements to the multistakeholder model and its legitimacy. Attracting, onboarding, and retaining active and effective volunteers in ICANN's technical and policy work remains critical.	Trend remains consistent with the previous year.	<p>Engagement Programs at ICANN provides the community with support and tools, including supporting stakeholder participation through ICANN for Beginners, NextGen@ICANN, the Fellowship Program, the Internet Access Reimbursement Program, and the Community Childcare Grants Pilot Program, among others.</p> <p>In addition, updates have been made to the ICANN org website through the Information Transparency Initiative (ITI). Additional enhancements are planned to govern, preserve, organize, and secure ICANN's public content and continue promotion of transparency and accountability.</p>	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals and report on progress, See section B.2 , additional observation of ICANN org.
Public Awareness of ICANN (Trend 1.04)	On Governance: The public's trust in the legitimacy of the multistakeholder model can be affected by the influence of parties who oppose it. There continues to be a need to further raise greater awareness of ICANN's role and remit.	Trend remains consistent with the previous year.	Given the consistent and stable nature of this trend when compared to last year, and as evidenced by the data collected, no significant shifts have been observed.	No change to the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals report on progress. See section B.2 , additional observation of ICANN org.
Emerging Identifier Technologies (Trend 1.07)	On Unique Identifier Systems: Alternative names are an evolution of the internet that may have relevance to the Domain Name System and ICANN's unique role with unique identifiers. ICANN will continue to build awareness and engagement with the community regarding alternative name spaces and emerging identifier technologies.	Trend remains consistent with the previous year.	<p>ICANN has established mechanisms to assess and provide unbiased insights on emerging technologies and alternative identifiers that extend beyond the DNS in alignment with the targeted outcome, "Mechanisms are established with which ICANN assesses new technologies and, when appropriate, embraces them."</p> <p>The Special Interest Forum on</p>	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals and report on progress, See section B.3 , additional observation of ICANN org.

Trend ID	Trend	Notable Shifts in the Trend	Assessment	Conclusion
			<p>Technologies (SIFT) allows a space to share, discuss and assess new technologies.</p> <p>ICANN has also published papers, e.g. OCTO-034 to discuss the challenges with alternative name systems and has open dialogue with alternative naming entities to discuss potential impacts to the DNS.</p> <p>ICANN will continue to raise awareness and engage with the community regarding alternative namespace and emerging technologies through the planned activities, and the effort led by the Board Technical Committee.</p>	
UA and IDNs (Trend 1.13)	On Unique Identifier Systems: Awareness of Universal Acceptance (UA) and Internationalized Domain Names (IDN) implementation helps to increase digital inclusivity through a multilingual internet.	Trend remains consistent with the previous year.	Working off the momentum created from UA Day to rally local, regional, and global stakeholders to spread awareness and encourage UA adoptions. ICANN is working with various groups, including USAG and UNESCO to track and measure progress. ICANN has also created a "Make your systems UA-Ready " webpage that shares UA test Frameworks and Materials, a EAI-Readiness Check, and Additional Resources and Case Studies.	No change to the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals and report on progress. See section B.3 , additional observation of ICANN org.
New gTLD Program (Trend 1.16)	On Unique Identifier Systems: The New gTLD Program: Next Round is a community-driven initiative enabling the continued expansion of the DNS through the introduction of new gTLDs.	There is much discussion about the launch of the New gTLD Program, as well as potential implications, to ensure that community needs are met.	Collectively, the ICANN org, Board, and community have achieved significant milestones throughout FY23 and FY24 and there are many tasks ahead for FY25. ICANN org has outlined plans to implement recommendations, develop	It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals and report on progress. See section B.3 , additional observation of ICANN org.

Trend ID	Trend	Notable Shifts in the Trend	Assessment	Conclusion
	<p>Among other goals, the program aims to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS. As it reaches the operationalization phase, efforts will continue to address open issues, such as continuing to build community contribution to policy development, ensuring a timely and transparent roll-out, the financial impact on ICANN's funds, the details of the applicant support program, and program demand.</p>		<p>new services relating to gTLD registry and ICANN accredited registrars, produce domain name marketplace indicators, and conduct other supporting analysis, etc.</p>	
<p>Legislation and Regulations (Trend 3.7)</p>	<p>On Geopolitics: Geopolitical and technical risks threaten the single interoperable internet and ICANN's mission. Building awareness and support for the multistakeholder model of Internet governance is critical to mitigate the risk of Internet-related legislative and regulatory initiatives, as well as top-down proposals for a multilateral replacement.</p>	<p>Ongoing IGO processes, initiatives, events, and statements made at the UN and other UN agencies and other relevant IGOs touch on ICANN's mission. There have also been conversations about a possible replacement of the Internet Governance Forum with a multilateral forum. There is a need to continue strengthening relationships with Internet ecosystem partners to mitigate risk of conflicting regulation and policy processes.</p>	<p>National and regional internet-related legislative and regulatory activity have increased and thus could impact the technical underpinnings of the Internet or the multistakeholder model.</p> <p>To combat these strategic risks, ICANN has increased its focus on the Geopolitics Strategic Objective and implemented a communications and engagement strategy.</p> <p>ICANN will also work with specific regions to collaborate directly with IGOs, governments and institutions regarding the importance of the technical community on legislation, regulation, policy and standard development. It has also developed and is implementing an ICANN strategy to address the WSIS +20 review process and explain the importance of the technical community.</p>	<p>It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the activities in the Operating Initiatives and CEO goals and report on progress. See section B.4, additional observation of ICANN org.</p>

Trend ID	Trend	Notable Shifts in the Trend	Assessment	Conclusion
<p>ICANN's Long-Term Funding (Trend 1.02)</p>	<p>On Financials: Although ICANN's current financial position appears stable, potential future shifts in the domain name registration market user behavior or challenges to the global economic climate may impact ICANN's long-term funding.</p>	<p>While last year's trends remain mostly true, it seems important to underline a few important shifts:</p> <p>Financial position is stable in terms of funding and expenses. ICANN plans for operating expenses to remain at or lower than budget funding, drawing from designated and available funding sources, as a result of careful cost control, and for ICANN's Reserve Fund to remain above its minimum target level.</p> <p>Potential future shifts, either in the domain name registration market user behavior or increased expenses/ challenges to the economic climate could impact ICANN's long-term financial position.</p>	<p>ICANN has successfully concluded two Operating Initiatives related to the Financial Strategic Objectives: improve the depth of understanding of the Domain Name market drivers that impact ICANN's funding, and ensure implementation of reserve fund replenishment to the minimum target level per the Board resolution.</p> <p>These efforts have led to the realization of several targeted outcomes outlined in the Strategic Plan, including reliable and predictable five-year funding projections, based on a sound understanding of the evolution in the domain name marketplace and realistic assumptions, utilizing data about the directions and trends in the market to effectively guide the organization, and building process and tools in place to effectively manage and control costs.</p>	<p>It remains a high priority in the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals and report on progress. See section B.5, additional observation of ICANN org.</p>
<p>Prioritization (Trend 1.14)</p>	<p>On Financials: Recognition continues that alignment in prioritization is needed across the ICANN ecosystem to enhance implementation and support the needs and demands of ICANN's global community.</p>	<p>Trend remains consistent with the previous year.</p>	<p>The community led planning prioritization framework showcases collaboration between the org, Board, and community, which contributes to the achievement of the strategic plan targeted outcome of "ICANN having the processes and tools in place to effectively prioritize and periodically re-prioritize its work".</p>	<p>No change to the Strategic Plan; continue to carry out the ongoing and planned activities in the FY25 Operating Plan and FY24 CEO goals report on progress. See section B.5, additional observation of ICANN org.</p>

2 Process & Methodology

The strategic outlook trend identification is an annual process, which ensures ICANN has a consistent way to:

- Identify and track trends;
- Prepare for opportunities;
- Mitigate or avoid challenges;
- Inform strategic and operational planning and prioritization.

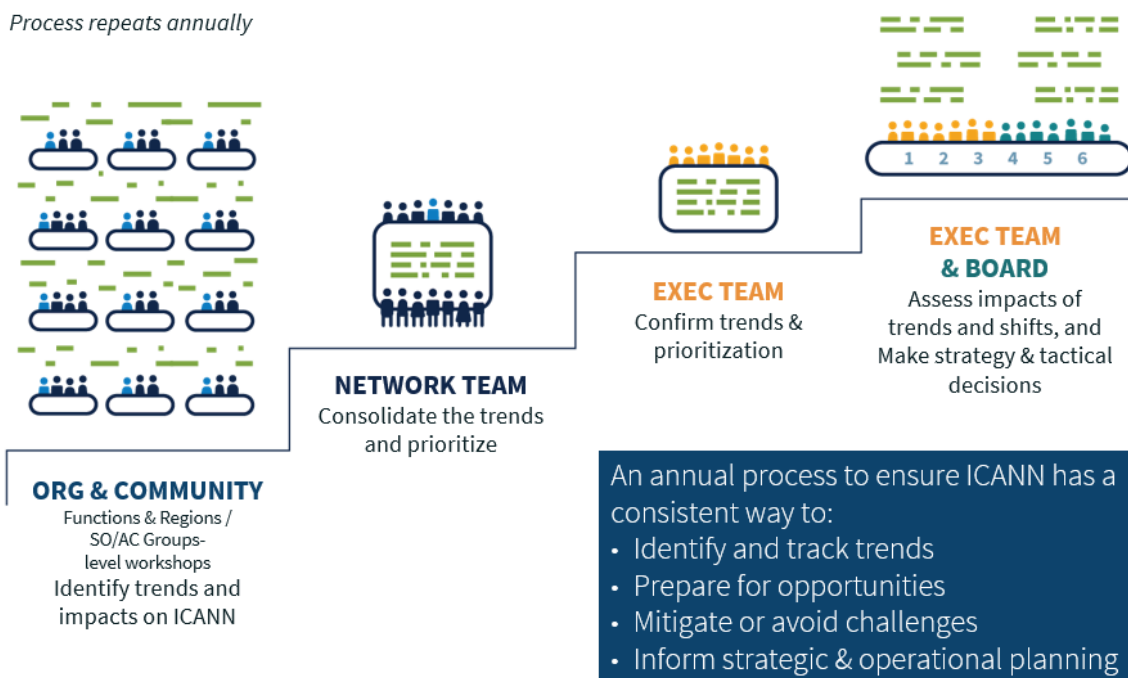
It is a joint effort among the organization, the community, and the ICANN Board to engage on emerging or evolving trends that affect ICANN. Trends indicate general directions in which things are developing or changing, that have or could have an impact on ICANN, its mission, its operations, or its ecosystem. Trends can be internal or external, organization-specific, community-related, or go beyond ICANN's ecosystem as ICANN does not operate in a vacuum.

The organization has found the exercise to be beneficial to help surface opportunities and challenges that lay ahead, inform planning, help with prioritization considerations, and risk management.

As a first step in the [strategic planning process](#), the community, ICANN Board, and ICANN org participate each year in strategic outlook trend identification sessions to discuss emerging trends that could affect ICANN. The trend identification process repeats annually to help inform ICANN's strategy in an ever-changing environment.

Strategic Outlook Process:

Process repeats annually



The ICANN Bylaws ([Section 22.5](#)) mandate ICANN to develop a five-year strategic plan, a five-year operating plan, and an annual operating plan. Every year, new trends or shifts in existing trends related to the operating plans (five-year or annual), the budget, or both are factored into the annual iteration of those plans, as appropriate.

2.1 Description of the Trends Identification Sessions

Participants from Board, ICANN org, and the community are divided into subgroups. All participants are engaged in a brainstorming exercise to identify and track the evolution of trends that may affect ICANN; participants were also asked to evaluate the impacts that these trends pose to ICANN, either in terms of threats or in terms of opportunities. Subgroups share their ideas with the larger group, and additional discussions follow, allowing participants to expand on areas of interest. At the end of the session, each participant is invited to vote for the top three priorities they believe ICANN should be focusing on.

This year, the sessions were structured around the five areas of focus of ICANN's Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2021 to 2025:

- **Security** – Relating to cybersecurity, Internet of Things (IoT) vulnerabilities, Domain Name System (DNS) security, root service reliability, resilience, interoperability, and DNS abuse.
- **ICANN's Governance** – Referring to ICANN's governance rather than Internet governance in general, ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency and accountability, inclusiveness, and openness.
- **Unique Identifier Systems** – Evolution of the unique identifier systems in the context of the development of their uses and their user base, considering external technology advancement (such as blockchain, IoT, and the rise of artificial intelligence), alternate roots, alternative infrastructures, Universal Acceptance, Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), and the new generic Top Level Domains program (gTLD).
- **Geopolitics** – Including the effects of legislation and regulation on ICANN, as well as other globalization topics such as the global reliance on the Internet, or Internet fragmentation.
- **Financials** – Including financial sustainability, financial responsiveness to changing industry economics, funding strategies, cost management, and prioritization.

Each session was initiated by reviewing previous year's trends with participants. Then, questions were asked about the relevance of last year's trends, any notable shifts, or new trends to consider as well as the impacts, opportunities, and priorities arising from those trends.

2.2 Trend Identification Sessions & Data Computation

Between February and April 2023, 207 participants (46% community, 9% Board, 45% org) participated in 12 trend identification sessions collecting 1,048 data elements. All sessions were held remotely and used Zoom breakout rooms and a Jamboard virtual whiteboarding solution to engage participants.

Following each session, results were summarized and shared with those participants to gather final feedback, where needed, before aggregating all results for further analysis. Inputs were also cataloged in a central repository by several criteria:

- **Strategic Objective:** *Security, ICANN's Governance, Unique Identifier Systems, Geopolitics, or Financials.*
- **Data qualification:** Data points were qualified as a trend, a risk, or an opportunity.
- **Number of votes** received: During each session, participants were asked to vote for what they thought ICANN should consider to be top priorities.
- **Topic:** The core issue primarily discussed in the statement. Each year, new topics may be introduced based on the inputs received while some previous topics may no longer be relevant.
- **Overarching trend** connected to the data element. Overarching trends are identified through consolidation and summarization of similar or related trend statements. Each year, overarching trends may be added, removed, or revised to reflect the evolutions observed.

In some cases, the previous year's overarching trend was no longer applicable and was retired; in other cases, data indicated a new overarching trend was needed to reflect an emerging trend.

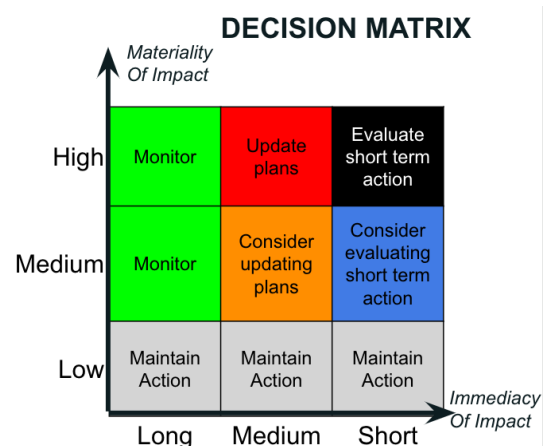
2.3 Trend Analysis

To analyze the trends, ICANN org formed a liaison network bringing together different subject matter experts from across the organization. For each Strategic Objective, the liaisons assessed trends, risks, and opportunities identified through the trend identification sessions and shared their observations. The analysis can result in either identification of new trends and / or notable shifts in previously identified trends and their impacts on ICANN. The analysis is based on the data collected from sessions conducted in February through April 2023. It should be noted that this data is collected based on participants' perceptions and opinions at a point in time. The analysis is appended to this paper in section 3 A and B.

2.4 Trend Impact Assessment

The following methodology was followed to conduct the assessment:

1. Identification of **notable shifts** in trends or new trends and their impact on ICANN.
2. Directional Data Model: determination of the **materiality** and the **immediacy** of the impacts of the new and or notable shifts in existing trends identified in the trend analysis. (Completed by org)
3. **Evaluation and recommendation** of the Strategic and Operating Plan



2.5 Conclusion and Actions Taken

On the basis of the recommendation of the Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC) as supported by ICANN org, and after careful consideration of the inputs received from the community, the Board will keep the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 to 2025 unchanged.

On 26 October 2023, the ICANN Board resolved that the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021 to 2025 as approved on 23 June 2019 shall remain in force and unchanged, with no restatement of the Strategic Plan needed at this time.

As highlighted in Section 1, some ongoing activities will continue to be emphasized and reflected in the FY25-29 Operating & Financial Plan and ICANN FY25 Operating Plan & Budget. This will be documented for community consideration. The FY25 trends will also serve as reference for the next iteration of the FY26-30 ICANN Strategic Plan.

3 Appendices

Appendix A | Statistical Analysis

Evolution of Strategic Objectives

The figure below provides an overview of how the focus of the strategic objectives have evolved in the past three years, based on the number of votes mapped to a specific trend, aggregated by Strategic Objective.

Over the past three years, the Governance Strategic Objective has continuously achieved the most votes. The Unique Identifier Systems Strategic Objective systems continues to gain compared to the past two years, and was comparable to the Geopolitics Strategic Objective for second in priority votes due to the increased focus on the New gTLD Program: Next Round. The Security Strategic Objective has stabilized as fourth position, capturing 14 percent of the priority votes for FY24 and FY25. The Financials Strategic Objective achieved the least number of priority votes and has remained similar percentage wise as previous years.

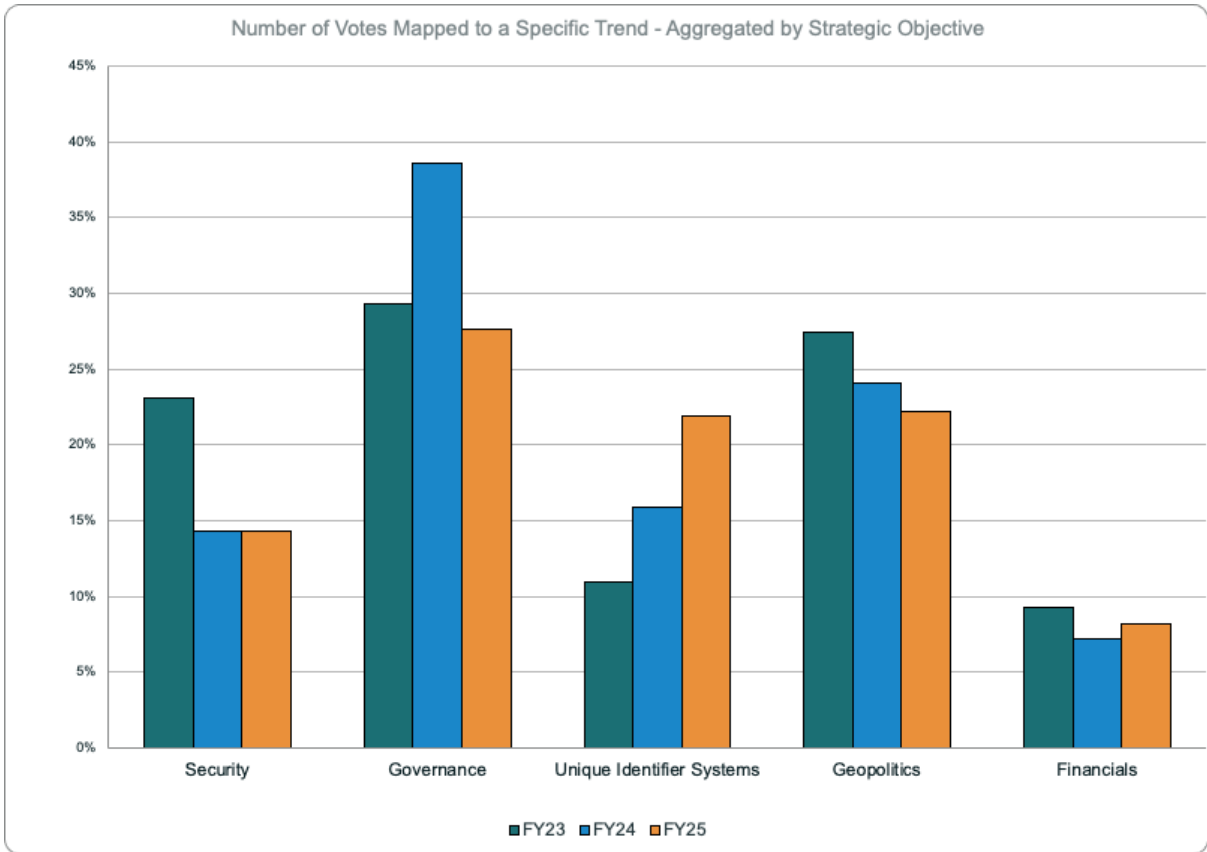


Figure 1: Evolution of Strategic Objectives Over Time.

Evolution of Top Priority Trends

Figure 2 below illustrates the trends that received the most votes in FY25, compared to their priority in the previous two years. It is calculated based on the ratio of the number of votes for each trend over the total number of votes for a given year.

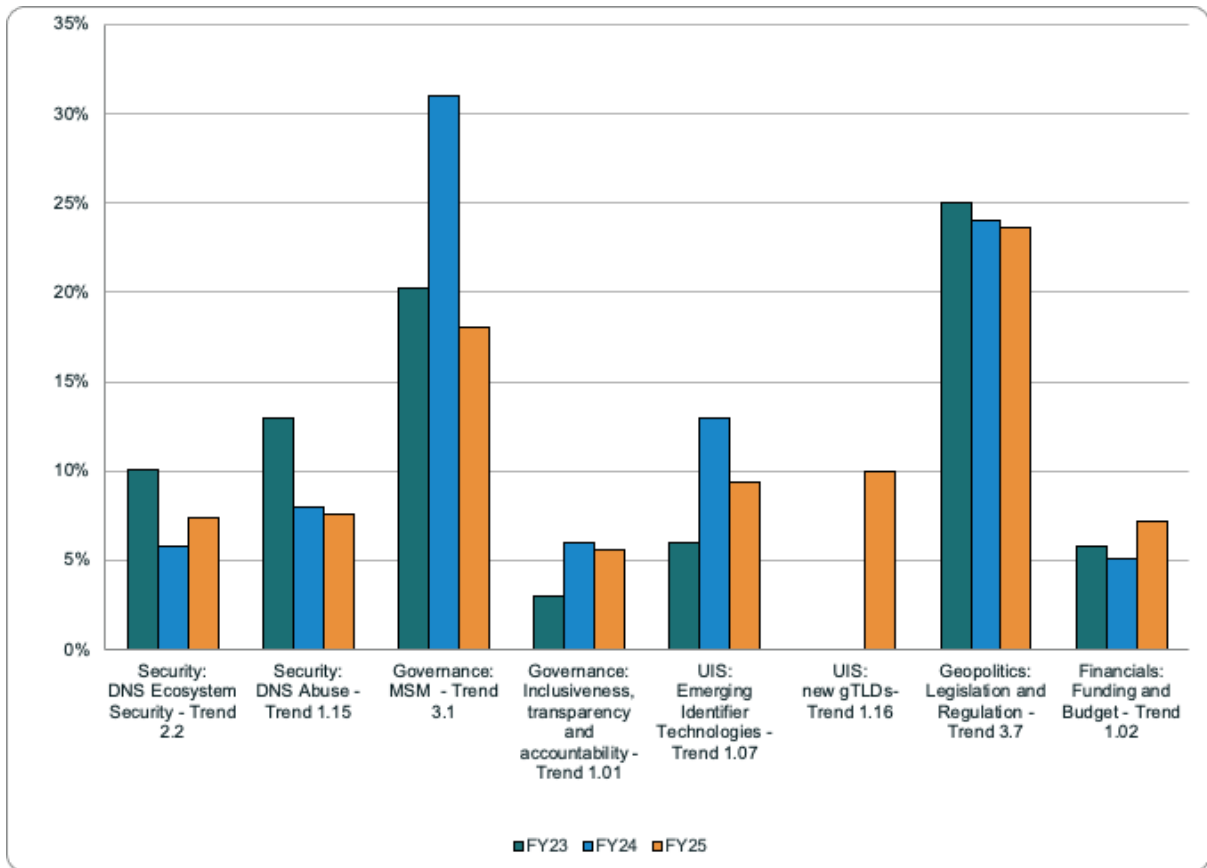


Figure 2: Evolution of Top Priority Trends

<i>Evolution of Top Priority Trends (left to right)</i>	Noteworthy Evolution
Security trend relating to DNS ecosystem security	Slight increase over FY24, still lower than FY23.
Security trend relating to DNS abuse	Decreased in year-over-year priority for the past years.
Governance trend relating to ICANN’s multistakeholder model	2nd top priority this year, a decrease from FY24.
Governance trend relating to inclusiveness	Relatively consistent for the past three years.
UIS trend relating to the emerging identifiers technologies	Priority varied during the past three years, decreased from FY24.
Unique Identifier Systems trend relating to the New gTLD Program	New priority for FY25, 3rd highest priority for FY25.
Geopolitics trend relating to legislation and regulations	Highest priority for this year. Priority level has remained high for the past three years.
Financial trend relating to impacts on ICANN’s funding	Slight increase in priority versus previous two years.

FY25 Trend Topics

The FY25 Trend Topics chart (**Figure 3**) presents the number of priority votes received by strategic objective (e.g., governance) and by topic (e.g., engagement and participation). This reflects the level of attention these topics received in FY25. Similar to FY24, the number of votes for the topics under the Governance Strategic Objective received the greatest volume of priority votes, followed by Geopolitics and Unique Identifier Systems in FY25.

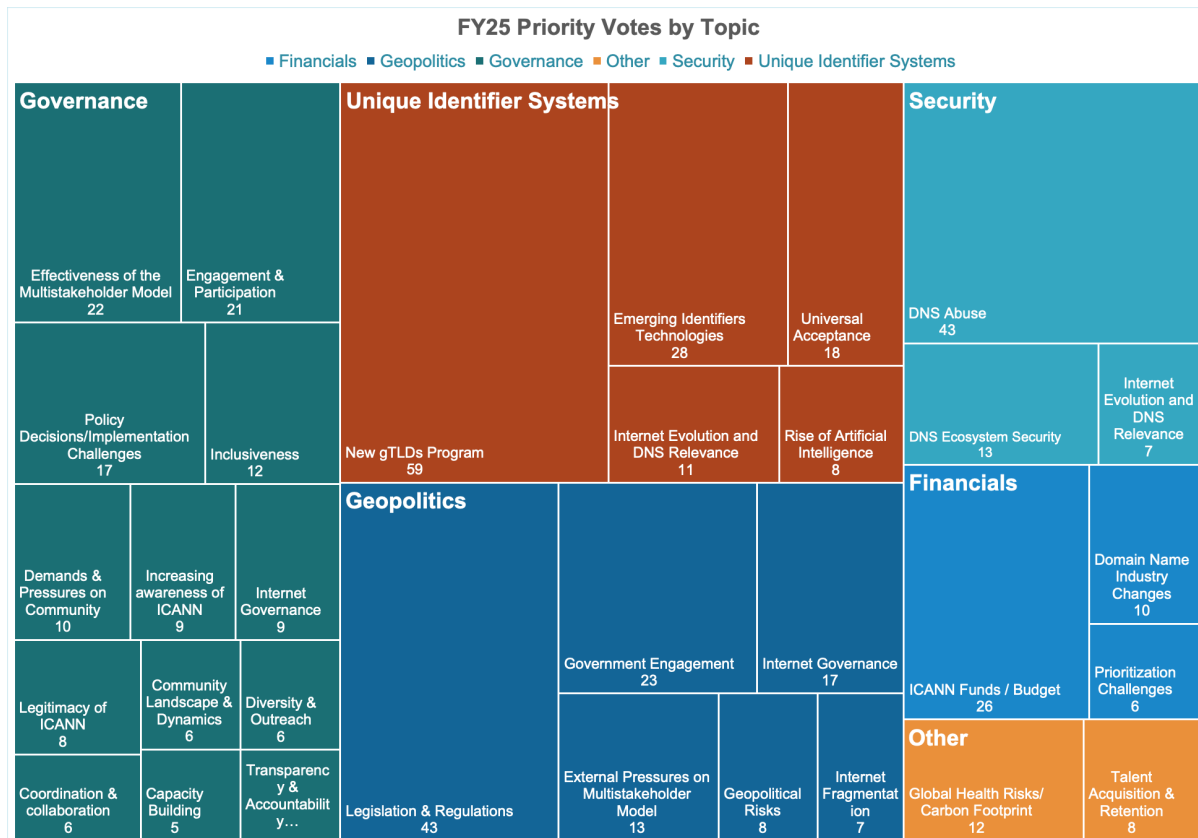


Figure 3: FY25 Trend Topics; 5 or more votes by topic shown on graph

To illustrate how this year's top topics compared to last year's, **Figure 4** shows a comparison ranked by the number of votes per topic. The *No. of Votes* column indicates the number of priority votes received related to that topic in a given year. The New gTLD Program and Legislation & Regulations were the top priorities for FY25.

Top-10 Topics by No. of Votes	FY25	FY24	FY23
new gTLDs Program	1	Not in top 10	5
Legislations and Regulations	2	5	1
DNS Abuse	3	3	2
Emerging Identifiers Technologies	4	2	7
ICANN Funds / Budget	5	Not in top 10	Not in top 10

Top-10 Topics by No. of Votes	FY25	FY24	FY23
Internet Governance*	6	Not in top 10	Not in top 10
Government Engagement	7	Not in top 10	Not in top 10
Effectiveness of the Multistakeholder Model	8	4	9
Engagement & Participation	9	6	3
Internet Evolution and DNS Relevance	10	Not in top 10	10

Figure 4. Top 10 Topics in FY25

Appendix B | Strategic Objective Trend Analysis

B.1 Security Trends

Summary of Trends Identified

- Related to Trend 1.15 on DNS abuse:
DNS abuse continues to be a top priority for the ICANN community and garnered half of the votes within the Security Strategic Objective. Recent efforts have further raised awareness and enhanced how ICANN approaches the issue of DNS abuse across several dimensions, as it is a threat to Internet user's security and safety online. There were many positive comments from participants with regard to the efforts of the [DNS Security Threat Mitigation Program](#), particularly as the proposed Base gTLDs Registry Agreement amendments, the proposed Registrar Accreditation contract amendment and other activities related to combatting DNS abuse have sent a signal to the broader community that ICANN is taking this topic seriously. Furthermore, contract amendments enabling ICANN's extended access to registrar data for research are in progress. Participants noted their opinions that ICANN needs to continue the balancing act on its involvement with DNS abuse and assess the amendments using the language "to prevent" versus "to mitigate".
- Related to Trend 2.2 on DNS ecosystem security threats:
DNS ecosystem security threats remain high and accounted for 15 percent of the votes within the Security Strategic Objective, as ICANN faces an increasingly challenging cybersecurity landscape. Participants noted that although digital trust solutions (DNS Security Extensions and Digital Identity) are powerful, they are underutilized or not well-understood. Participants continued to emphasize that stable root servers are critical in light of new technologies and sophisticated attacks. Privacy issues inherent to cybersecurity risks and its impact on ICANN were also discussed (*Please refer to Trend 3.7 under the Geopolitics Strategic Objective*).

Participants also discussed blockchain and other emerging technologies and potential impacts to the DNS. (*Please also see Trend 1.07 under the Unique Identifier Systems Strategic Objective*). Participants noted their opinions that ICANN needs to be aware of new standards and should keep engaging with the security community. There were suggestions to increase and effectively collaborate with relevant partners in the ecosystem in responding to the emerging technologies.

Suggested opportunities and risk mitigation

- Maintain momentum achieved in negotiations to focus on other DNS security threat mitigation in the areas not addressed. Continue awareness and education efforts.
- Continue regional interaction with regulatory and governmental bodies.
- Having a clear narrative and alignment on any issues with DNS security can build the public's trust.

Additional Observations from ICANN org

With regards to DNS Abuse, the proposed Base gTLDs Registry Agreements and the proposed Registrar Accreditation contract amendment process started in FY23 and will continue through FY24. In September 2023, discussions on DNS abuse were held at the ICANN DNS Symposium. These activities are enhancing the deliveries of the strategic targeted outcomes in the ICANN Strategic Plan for FY25, such as "ICANN, in partnership

with relevant stakeholders, establishing and promoting a coordinated approach to effectively identify and mitigate DNS security threats and combat DNS abuse.”

To continue addressing this trend and its shift, beyond the continuity of the previously mentioned activities, additional activities are planned for FY25, such as projects to build new tools to aid evolution of Domain Metrica, previously known as Domain Abuse Activity Reporting (DAAR), implementation planning to implement the new contract amendment, and enforcing contract compliance.

ICANN org is encouraging country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) to join the Domain Metrica project. ccTLD participation in Domain Metrica is completely voluntary and non-participation does not indicate a lack of interest in DNS abuse. Many TLDs already have their own monitoring in place. There are also efforts by ICANN org, such as training and outreach, to encourage ccTLDs to either take a more active role to mitigate DNS abuse or share data on DNS abuse, e.g. the Coalition for Digital Africa project.

With regards to DNS ecosystem security, there are multiple streams of work involved in the launch of [KinDNS](#), a program supported by ICANN and relevant stakeholders to develop and promote a framework that focuses on the most important operational best practices or concrete instances of DNS security best practices. Phase 1-4 of KinDNS is estimated to be completed in FY24. These phases include:

1. ICANN org will continue to advocate and promote DNSSEC.
2. Advocate and support Domain Metrica.
3. Expand technical training footprint through new virtual courses.
4. Continue to publish research papers.
5. ICANN Managed Root Server (IMRS) Clusters to increase the Root Server System infrastructure and more directly, those who run large networks, such as Internet service providers, data service providers, domain name registries and registrars, or even independent organizations that are working to secure a stable and resilient DNS infrastructure for geographic locations, including countries or regions.

ICANN org is actively monitoring and working with the community to mitigate potential emerging security risks, and further promotion of DNSSEC is needed. This work will be reflected in two operating initiatives in the FY25 Plans: Support the Evolution and strengthening of the Root Zone Management and Root Server System and Facilitate the DNS Ecosystem Improvements.

B.2 Governance Trends

Summary of Trend Identified

- Related to Trend 3.1 on ICANN’s Multistakeholder Model:
The predominant discussion in the Governance Strategic Objective among participants was on the topic of “Engagement and Participation.”

Participants expressed mostly positive comments about ICANN’s Public Meetings continuing to create meaningful and effective experiences for virtual and in-person attendees. Some participants noted their opinion that in-person engagement is needed to build participation and involvement. Some participants expressed concern that volunteer burnout continues and that there is not only a reliance on select community members, but that new volunteers may lack the experience, expertise, or willingness to actively participate in policy making.

The "Effectiveness of the Multistakeholder Model" continues to be discussed among participants. There were discussions of how the model should evolve, including the model's agility and the potential implications of the 2025 World Summit on the Information Society, which may impact ICANN's mission. *(Please also see Trend 3.7 under the Strategic Objective Geopolitics, which indicates the work of the ICANN org Government Engagement Team to educate and promote the ICANN's multistakeholder model.)*

"Policy Decisions/Implementation Challenges" continued to be widely discussed among participants. Some participants shared positive feedback, stating that it seemed ICANN was committed to getting things done in a more timely manner than previously, e.g, challenges were being removed and the use of small teams like the Generic Names Support Organization (gNSO) Small Team and the efforts of the community led planning prioritization process were steps in the right direction. However, others felt that the policy development processes (PDPs) were still progressing slowly and indicated that scrutiny will continue on ICANN's ability to make and implement decisions. Additional comments were made by participants that reaching consensus was still a challenge.

- Related to Trend 1.01 on transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and openness: The need for inclusiveness continues to be highlighted by participants, but many challenges remain to include all relevant interested stakeholders to ensure that the ICANN multistakeholder model reflects the evolution and needs of the broader Internet user base. Newcomer retention challenges were also mentioned by participants, as was the importance of finding ways to attract, onboard, and motivate volunteers, who are critical to ICANN's multistakeholder model.
- Related to Trend 1.04 on public awareness of ICANN: Public awareness about ICANN's remit and role in Internet governance continues to be discussed among participants. There was also some discussion surrounding the ICANN Grant Program *(Please also see Trend 1.02 under the Strategic Objective Financials)* and the New gTLD Program: Next Round *(Please also see trend 1.16 under the Strategic Objective Unique Identifier Systems)* providing visibility and awareness of ICANN.

Suggested opportunities and risk mitigation

- Outreach to build connections, strengthen relationships, and encourage broader participation.
- Showcase successful policy development and implementation work to build trust and showcase the legitimacy of ICANN and the multistakeholder model.

Additional Observations from ICANN org

With regards to the trend on ICANN's multistakeholder model, ICANN org is working to build participation and attendance within the community. The Customer Engagement System (CES) is being used to track specific projects (e.g. PDPs) and other activities (including ICANN meetings, planning, and ongoing operations) to evolve and strengthen the multistakeholder model to ensure efficient and effective policymaking.

In addition, there are numerous projects under the two operating initiatives on how to improve the MSM in the ICANN Operating Plan, such as the implementation of Work Stream 2 (WS2) of the Cross-Community Working Group on Enhancing ICANN Accountability (CCWG-Accountability) and the project to enhance the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model. These activities are further prioritized through two CEO Goals:

CEO Goal #2 that supports community readiness and consensus-building processes and CEO Goal #11 that introduces refinements in the review process to address this trend.

[Engagement Programs](#) at ICANN provides the community with support and tools, including supporting stakeholder participation through ICANN for Beginners, NextGen@ICANN, the Fellowship Program, the Internet Access Reimbursement Program, and the Community Childcare Grants Pilot Program, among others.

In addition, updates have been made to the ICANN org website through the [Information Transparency Initiative \(ITI\)](#), including an 'ICANN for Beginners' Section as well as New Community-Focused 'I Need Help' Pages. Additional enhancements are planned to govern, preserve, organize, and secure ICANN's public content and continue promotion of transparency and accountability.

ICANN org SMEs also recognized public interest in the New gTLD Program: Next Round and the Grant Program will bring visibility and awareness of ICANN's role in furthering a single, open, and globally interoperable Internet. Additionally, due to the increased linkage to the Geopolitics Strategic Objective, and org's plan to develop and implement a communications and engagement strategy surrounding the WSIS +20 Review outlined in CEO Goal #6, org will monitor progress of that CEO goal with relation to Public Awareness of ICANN.

B.3 Unique Identifier Systems Trends

Summary of Trend Identified

- Related to Trend 1.07 on the evolution of Emerging Identifier Technologies:
With the continual advancement of emerging identifier technologies, the perception of possible threat to the relevance of DNS and ICANN's role with unique identifiers through the IANA functions remains and was discussed by participants. While the driver behind the increasing interest and registration of alternative name spaces is undefined, several factors were raised, such as the general public's lack of knowledge of the DNS. There is ongoing interest in the alternative name spaces, which has seen an increase in registration of alternative root domains. The pace of digital innovation, particularly the topic of artificial intelligence, has increased, though it is unclear if there will be an impact to ICANN's remit.
- Related to Trend 1.13 on Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and Universal Acceptance (UA):
IDNs and UA are key to supporting a more multilingual and accessible Internet. Discussion surrounding IDNs and UA continued among participants, but the dialogue has shifted to the New gTLD Program: Next Round. The advancement in IDNs and UA is essential for greater inclusivity of language in the New gTLD Program: Next Round. Comments were expressed by participants, including adoption challenges and the need for targeted awareness and promotion of UA as a means of emphasizing digital inclusion.
- Related to Trend 1.16 on the New gTLD Program: Next Round:
With the [ICANN Board moving to begin preparations for the next round of new gTLDs](#), there was increased discussion surrounding the pending launch and implications by participants, to ensure the community needs would be met. Resource requirements, demand for new gTLDs, timing, applicant support, and the impact on ICANN's legitimacy were all discussed.

Suggested opportunities and risk mitigation

- Continue to study new technologies and explore the impact on the unique identifiers of the Internet, and share factual data with the wider community.
- Lean into engagement on topics such as digital inclusion and encourage adoption by software solution providers.
- Continue to effectively manage the New gTLD Program: Next Round to resolve potential concerns, delays, and Universal Acceptance to increase participation and pursue a strong, tailored communications campaign, and identify issues prior to them becoming problematic.

Additional Observations from ICANN org

With regards to the trend on Emerging Identifiers Technologies, some alternative name spaces are now functioning with different browsers, enabling access to a decentralized network not part of the Domain Name System (DNS). ICANN will continue to raise awareness and engage with the community regarding the [challenges with alternative name spaces](#).

ICANN has established mechanisms to assess and provide unbiased insights on emerging technologies and alternative identifiers that extend beyond the DNS in alignment with the targeted outcome, “Mechanisms are established with which ICANN assesses new technologies and, when appropriate, embraces them.”

The Special Interest Forum on Technologies (SIFT) allows a space to share, discuss and assess new technologies. Building ICANN’s awareness (knowledge, researching, engagement) continues to be important.

ICANN has also published papers, e.g. [OCTO-034](#) to discuss the challenges with alternative name systems and has open dialogue with alternative naming entities to discuss potential impacts to the DNS.

Looking forward to FY25, ICANN will continue to raise awareness and engage with the community regarding alternative namespace and emerging technologies through the planned activities, and the effort led by the Board Technical Committee.

With regards to the trend on Universal Acceptance (UA) and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), ICANN is using the momentum created from Universal Acceptance Day to rally local, regional, and global stakeholders to spread awareness and encourage adoptions. ICANN is working with various groups, including USAG and UNESCO to track and measure progress including:

1. [ICANN Identifier Technologies Health Indicators](#) to track Email Address Internationalization (EAI) support in mail servers, last report published July 2023.
2. [Universal Acceptance Steering Group \(UASG\) 047 Universal Acceptance-Readiness Report FY23](#) published September 2023 that indicates UA-readiness is a \$9.8+ billion opportunity.

ICANN has also created a [“Make your systems UA-Ready”](#) webpage that shares UA test Frameworks and Materials, a EAI-Readiness Check, and Additional Resources and Case Studies.

Additional emphasis has been added through CEO Goal #4: to enable and foster digital inclusivity through the next round of new gTLDs, IDNs, and increased awareness of the importance of UA. See the [ICANN77 session on digital inclusion](#) for additional information.

With regards to the trend on the New gTLD Program: Next Round, collectively, the ICANN org, Board, and community have achieved significant milestones throughout FY23 and FY24 and there are many tasks ahead for FY25. ICANN org has outlined plans to implement recommendations, develop new services relating to gTLD registry and ICANN accredited registrars, produce domain name marketplace indicators, and conduct other supporting analysis, etc.

ICANN also intends to expand the Applicant Support Program to increase diversity among applicants and create new opportunities to utilize the DNS. They are further made a priority through CEO Goal #12, to deliver the Board an overall framework that includes an implementation plan for the New gTLD Program: Next Round and a pathway to opening the application round.

B.4 Geopolitics Trends

Summary of Trend Identified

- Related to Trend 3.7 on Legislation and Regulations:
The level of concern among participants has grown as Internet-related legislation and regulations increase. The drivers and intentions behind Internet regulation varies from region to region. However, regardless of the intentions, there is the possibility that continued or increasing legislative and regulatory activity may lead to consequences that could impact the technical underpinnings of the Internet or the multistakeholder model.

Participants noted that geopolitics is an expanding space with extensive impact to global Internet users and the public interest, and involves multiple governing bodies and legislation. Participants discussed the idea that countries may perceive that ICANN and the domain name industry are not doing enough to resolve ongoing Internet-related concerns around privacy issues and cybersecurity risks (e.g., data protection, privacy, and end-user security). Participants concluded that despite the open, interoperable, and scalable design of the DNS, which has allowed ICANN and the multistakeholder model to support the growth of the Internet, many countries are continuing to increase their Internet-related initiatives.

In addition to discussing the role of governments in regulating the Internet, participants also noted that intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the International Telecommunication Union and other U.N. bodies, are developing new Internet-related resolutions and proposals that aim to tackle digital issues such as cybercrime, cybersecurity, personal data protection, e-commerce, and regulating social media platforms. The lack of coordination across these initiatives and the limited technical knowledge of the Internet among the negotiators of these initiatives could lead to the creation of regulations that have the potential to undermine the global, interoperable, and technical functioning of the Internet.

Suggested Opportunities and Risk mitigation

- Continue to share information and promote the ICANN multistakeholder model and its importance to maintaining a single, open, and interoperable Internet, particularly through the upcoming WSIS+20 by the U.N. General Assembly (2025).
- Continue to monitor and analyze legislative and regulatory activities to ensure that it has the necessary information and tools to address geopolitical issues and promote the multistakeholder model's policy and technical work.

Additional Observations from ICANN org

National and regional internet-related legislative and regulatory activity have increased and thus could impact the technical underpinnings of the Internet or the multistakeholder model. To combat these strategic risks, ICANN has increased its focus on the Geopolitics Strategic Objective and implemented a communications and engagement strategy. ICANN will also work with specific regions to collaborate directly with IGOs, governments and institutions regarding the importance of the technical community on legislation, regulation, policy and standard development. It has also developed and is implementing an ICANN strategy to address the WSIS +20 review process and explain the importance of the technical community.

These efforts are underway to address the threats to the Internet and the need for multilateral strategic analysis of the previously described legislation and regulations. They are further prioritized through CEO Goal #6 as WSIS+20 approaches in 2025.

B.5 Financials (and Domain Name Industry) Trends

Summary of Trend Identified

- Related to Trend 1.02 on ICANN's Long-Term Funding:

Several trends were discussed during the trend-identification session as having potential impact on ICANN's financials:

- Participants discussed the risk of potential market consolidation could impact ICANN's funding.
 - Participants expressed that due to global macroeconomic factors, economic uncertainty, and the need to meet increasing business requests and requirements, ICANN funds could potentially decrease.
 - Visibility of the ICANN Grant Program and the use of auction proceeds was also discussed.
- Related to Trend 1.14 on Prioritization:
Prioritization continues to be critical in supporting the needs and demands of ICANN org's global community. Due to the large volume and complexity of implementation work resulting from policy and review work, there is a need for ICANN to prioritize the implementation work. There was some concern raised by participants that compromises may have been achieved but are not practically implementable.

Suggested Opportunities and Risk Mitigation

- Conducting a sustainability analysis of the current monetization model.
- Participants suggested possibly increasing the fees ICANN receives for domains.
- Clear prioritization of strategy and workload was suggested.

Additional Observations from ICANN org

Reflecting on the past, ICANN org, the Board and the Community worked collaboratively to create and implement the community-led planning prioritization framework. This achievement enhanced the strategic targeted outcome under the Financials Strategic Objective related to ICANN stakeholders collaborating to define prioritization mechanisms, which ensure that cumulative workload is reasonable at any one time, and that ICANN priorities reflect the community's collective needs.

Looking forward to FY25, ICANN is committed to further evolve the community-led planning prioritization framework. Additionally, as the right opportunity arises, ICANN envisions expanding the scope of prioritization to encompass activities beyond the Board-approved implementation work.

With regards to the trend on ICANN's long-term funding, ICANN has successfully concluded two Operating Initiatives related to the Financial Strategic Objectives: improve the depth of understanding of the Domain Name market drivers that impact ICANN's funding, and ensure implementation of reserve fund replenishment to the minimum target level per the Board resolution. These efforts have led to the realization of several targeted outcomes outlined in the Strategic Plan, including reliable and predictable five-year funding projections, based on a sound understanding of the evolution in the domain name marketplace and realistic assumptions, utilizing data about the directions and trends in the market to effectively guide the organization, and building process and tools in place to effectively manage and control costs.

Appendix C | Trend Impact Assessment

The impact assessment framework used for the trends is available in the separate document entitled "ICANN FY25 Trend Impact Assessment (Appendix C)".



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