Guidelines for ICANN Org Global Domains & Strategy Liaisons to the Policy Development Process

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1. Background

This document provides an overview of the role of the Global Domains & Strategy (GDS) Liaison to the Generic Names Support Organization's (GNSO) Policy Development Process (PDP).[1]

The GNSO's PDP Manual encourages PDP Working Groups "to establish communication in the early stages of the PDP with other departments, outside the policy department, within ICANN that may have an interest, expertise, or information regarding the implementability of the issue."[2]

This communication typically occurs via ICANN org's Global Domains & Strategy (GDS) function. Accordingly, GDS often tasks a liaison (hereafter "GDS Liaison") to develop an understanding of and expertise in community discussions and, where appropriate, provide input to the PDP. ICANN org has developed guidelines for participation for these GDS Liaisons, which follows on the set of guidelines for Board Members serving as Liaisons to ICANN Community Groups.[3]

2. Determining the need for a GDS Liaison for a PDP Working Group

As noted above, the GNSO's PDP Manual encourages communication with functions within ICANN that may have expertise in a particular issue related to a PDP. In some cases, the Charter of a PDP Working Group may specify the need for a GDS Liaison. In cases where a GDS Liaison is requested, GDS will identify a liaison(s) taking into account the relevant subject matter and bandwidth on the team to identify the Liaison for a given effort. If specific criteria or characteristics are identified in the group's charter, GDS is expected to take these into account when identifying a liaison(s).

3. Role of the GDS Liaison

The GDS liaison is an interface between a PDP Working Group[4] and ICANN org. The following list provides a high level overview of the role of the GDS Liaison. The GDS Liaison is expected to coordinate the following activities with the ICANN org Policy Development Support Team (Policy Support), as appropriate. The GDS Liaison is expected to:

- Provide a central point of contact within ICANN org for a PDP Working Group to raise any implementation-related questions or concerns related to its work.
- Build GDS expertise in a PDP's subject matter.

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[1] Please note that these guidelines are specifically for GDS liaisons and should not be understood to be guidelines for other ICANN Org staff. Additionally, though elements in these guidelines may also be useful to other pre-policy (e.g., Scoping Teams) or policy making processes (e.g., within the Country Code Names Supporting Organization) or community work (e.g., for support of Review Team work), it is specifically designed to support GDS staff involved with the GNSO policy making process.

[2] See: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/op-procedures-24oct19-en.pdf.

[3] See: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/board-liaison-guidelines-31may21-en.pdf.

[4] While these guidelines are specifically designed for GDS staff involved in the GNSO policy making process, they may also be useful for GDS staff involved with other pre-policy processes, such as scoping teams, or other relevant activities within the ICANN community.

- Submit clarifying questions and advise the PDP Working Group on the clarity of policy recommendation language as it pertains to implementation.
- Where possible, provide the PDP Working Group with advance notice of any implementation-related issues or concerns and collaborate with relevant parties to attempt to address the issue. Such issues or concerns may be noted: at fixed milestones related to the PDP, such as at the time of completion of the Initial Report; or, in response to a request from the WG; and/or proactively when deliberations progress towards a preliminary outcome.
- Share information and updates on PDP work in progress, including questions and implementation-related issues, with affected functions within the organization.
- Prepare and provide analysis of the impact of policy recommendations on existing policies, as needed.
- Provide or coordinate the provision of relevant data or background information requested by the PDP Working Group.
- Answer direct PDP Working Group questions to the org during PDP Working Group calls.
- Collaborate with relevant ICANN org functions to provide responses to questions raised during PDP Working Group calls, as needed.
- Identify potential dependencies with ongoing PDPs, projects, or other ongoing community work that could have an impact on the implementability of policy recommendations.
- Liaise, as deemed appropriate and through appropriate governance channels (e.g., ICANN Board Caucus), with relevant ICANN Board member(s) or liaison(s) to identify any concerns regarding implementability of policy recommendations and/or whether they may be considered to not be in the best interest of the ICANN community or ICANN.[5]
- Provide information or estimates to the PDP Working Group regarding the budget and resources required to fulfill implementation requirements.
- Support the transition to the Operational Design Phase (ODP) and development of the Operational Design Assessment (ODA), where an ODP is undertaken.
- Support the transition from the PDP (and ODP, as applicable) to implementation following the approval of PDP Recommendations by the GNSO and ICANN Board.

4.   Participation of the GDS Liaison

The GDS Liaison will make every reasonable effort to follow the guidelines below when engaging with a PDP Working Group:

- Coordinate with relevant Policy Support Staff and/or PDP Working Group leadership to discuss the most appropriate options and timing for engagement and providing input (and the type of input), taking into consideration the stage of the PDP, urgency of the issue at hand, and maturity of the discussion.
- Create any necessary follow-up materials and coordinate the review of said materials with Policy Support Staff, Working Group Leadership and/or other ICANN org colleagues, as applicable.
- Coordinate with Policy Support Staff to identify details of any PDP Working Group request that may require written communication.
- Coordinate with Policy Support Staff to provide updates to the PDP Working Group on the status of the development of any written materials.

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[5] See also Section 3.1 of "Guidelines for Board Members Serving as Liaisons to ICANN Community Groups" (https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/board-liaison-guidelines-31may21-en.pdf).

- Send all materials via the designated forum for sharing information with the PDP Working Group (e.g., mailing list).
- Identify the appropriate timing of any formal input (e.g., ICANN org comment on a Draft Final Report) to ensure that sufficient time is allotted for the PDP Working Group to consider it in their discussions.
- Coordinate as appropriate with relevant third-party(ies) (e.g. vendors) to obtain relevant input and/or responses to questions from the PDP Working Group from the third-party and provide to the PDP Working Group.
- Coordinate any future work required of the third-party related to the PDP.

5.   Periodic Review

These guidelines are intended to function as an ongoing document, to be revised as best practices continue to be learned. To that end, it is recommended that these principles be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.