Continuous Improvement Program Framework

Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG)

July 2025

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This document presents revisions to the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) Framework. Revisions were informed by feedback received during the Public Comment proceeding and aim to enhance clarity around several key areas, including the flexibility of the CIP framework, the importance of transparency and accountability in the execution of the CIP, and the role of substructures, where relevant, in the CIP process.

To further address feedback received regarding implementation of the CIP, an appendix has been added to offer supplementary guidance and additional examples to support the Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, and the Nominating Committee execution of the CIP. These revisions are intended to reinforce a consistent, yet adaptable, approach to continuous improvement across organizational structures.

Background

Organizational Reviews are mandated by the ICANN Bylaws (Article 4.4). They assess ICANN's Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee (NomCom) to determine how effectively they operate, how well they achieve their purpose and how accountable they are to the ICANN multistakeholder model of governance. After two cycles of Organizational Reviews, the community identified challenges and opportunities to improve Organizational Reviews.

Challenge

There are community-perceived shortcomings in Organizational Reviews, which led to the development of the Third Accountability and Transparency Review (ATRT3) Recommendation 3.6. The perceived shortcomings include the understanding and competence of the Independent Examiners who have conducted Organizational Reviews and produced recommendations. The community has debated the quality of the Independent Examiner recommendations, and the volume of recommendations led to a backlog in implementing several recommendations.

In most cases, Independent Examiners avoided determining whether the organization has a continuing purpose and whether the organizational structure should be changed. Thus, most Independent Examiners' recommendations were intended to improve operational effectiveness and accountability.

ICANN previously received broad support from the community to defer the next scheduled Organizational Reviews, considering the need to plan for changes to the Organizational Review processes including implementation of the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP). Accordingly, the ICANN Board took action in June 2022 to defer the next cycle of Organizational Reviews. By June 2025, the Board will consider the progress made toward evolving Organizational Reviews to determine whether or not the Organizational Reviews should be resumed.

Solution

ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6 calls for Organizational Reviews to evolve into a Continuous Improvement Program. The Board directed ICANN org to work with the community to

develop a pilot Continuous Improvement Program before a Bylaws amendment is completed to ensure it yields the outcomes intended by ATRT3.

The language of ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6 states: "ICANN org shall work with each SO, AC, and the NomCom to establish a Continuous Improvement Program. Such a Continuous Improvement Program shall have a common base between all SOs, ACs, and the NomCom but will also allow for customization so as to best meet the needs of each individual SO, AC, and NomCom."[1]

The Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) will be flexible enough to enable each organizational structure within ICANN to utilize the CIP Framework to fit its unique needs. It will also have the common base needed to assess the health of each ICANN organizational structure in a predictable and consistent manner so that results can be understood holistically across the community.

ICANN org facilitated the formation of the Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG), convened in January 2024, with the goal of developing the CIP Framework for implementation of ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6. The CIP-CCG was tasked with:

1. Developing a shared understanding of the meaning of Continuous Improvement in the context of ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6,
2. Considering a range of methodologies for effective continuous improvement programs,
3. Agreeing on the methodology that is fit for ICANN's purpose, and
4. Formulating a CIP Framework, which each SO, AC, and NomCom will use.

The development of the Continuous Improvement Program results from implementing ATRT3 recommendations pertaining to Specific and Organizational Reviews. The Continuous Improvement Program outputs will serve as inputs for the Holistic Review in the evaluation of its objectives (below), provided the work on the implementation of ATRT3 Recommendation 3.5 advances as planned[2], eventually culminating in the incorporation of the Holistic Review in the ICANN Bylaws. The eventual Holistic Review would serve as checks and balances on the self-assessment and continuous improvement efforts by the SOs, ACs, NomCom and their constituent parts.

The Holistic Review objectives (as described in the ATRT3 Final Report, p. 22) are to:

1. Review the effectiveness of the various inter-Supporting Organizations/Advisory Committees/Nominating Committee (SOs/ACs/NomCom) collaboration mechanisms.

[1] See p. 72 of the ATRT3 Final Report.

[2] See Pilot Holistic Review Revised Terms of Reference (ToR) Public Comment proceeding. In January 2024, the ICANN Board agreed to proceed with Pilot Holistic Review with guidance to the Pilot Holistic Review Team, and to initiate consultation with SO/AC Chairs on the timing and potential deferral of the Fourth Review of Accountability and Transparency (ATRT4). ICANN also initiated a community consultation on the timing of ATRT4 to ensure efficient use of community resources. See April 2024 Board resolution to initiate the Pilot Holistic Review and timing of ATRT4. After consideration of community feedback, the Board resolved to conclude the Pilot Holistic Review on 19 May 2025.

2. Review the accountability of Supporting Organizations/Advisory Committees or constituent parts to their members and constituencies (this will include an in-depth analysis of the survey results).
3. Review SOs/ACs/NomCom as a whole to determine if they continue to have a purpose in the ICANN structure as they are currently constituted or if any changes in structures and operations are desirable to improve the overall effectiveness of ICANN as well as ensure optimal representation of community views (but taking into consideration any impacts on the Board or the Empowered Community).
4. Review continuous improvement efforts of SOs/ACs/NomCom based on good practices.

Research and Development

Several activities were completed to prepare for the successful development and launch of a Continuous Improvement Program (CIP). Reference the Continuous Improvement Project (CIP) home for ongoing updates.

ICANN org conducted preliminary research into tools for community consideration in developing a Continuous Improvement Program draft framework for assessment, as detailed in this document. The research involved looking at continuous improvement tools used by other organizations and uncovered that there is a broad range of continuous improvement tools because there is a broad range of types of organizations and use cases. ICANN org researched and analyzed various tools based on the five criteria noted below, and proposed the principles/criteria/indicators approach to the CIP-CCG. The CIP-CCG determined this approach to be the best fit for the ICANN community in the development of a Continuous Improvement Program.

Proposed Definition of Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is an ongoing process of identifying, analyzing, and making incremental improvements to systems, processes, products, or services. Its purpose is to drive efficiency, improve quality, and value delivery while minimizing waste, variation, and defects. The continuous improvement process is driven by ongoing feedback, collaboration, and data.[3]

Research Considerations

ATRT3 Recommendation 3.6 calls for the ICANN community to “evolve the content of Organizational Reviews into [a] Continuous Improvement Program in each SO/AC/NomCom.” It also states: “ICANN org shall work with each SO/AC/NomCom to establish a Continuous Improvement Program [that shares] a common base between all SOs, ACs, and the NomCom but will also allow for customization so as to best meet the needs of each individual SO/AC/NomCom.” ICANN org research looked for a solution that could provide:

[3] Source: BusinessMap.io.

- **Flexibility:** CIP Framework must offer flexibility for individualized fit to different structures.
- **Commonality**: Ensure a common base for assessing the health of various structures as articulated in the scope for Organizational Reviews as set forth at Article 4, Section 4.4 of the ICANN Bylaws.
- **Efficiency:** Seek an effective and efficient approach to avoid overburdening community resources.
- **Build on Existing Work:** Identify and build upon existing work to avoid duplicating efforts.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Understand what is working well and identify opportunities for improvement.

The CIP-CCG reviewed ICANN org's research and agreed the principles, criteria, and indicator framework were fit for purpose.

Objectives of ATRT3 Rec 3.6 and Bylaws Article 4.4

While the process may change — from Organizational Reviews led by Independent Examiners into a Continuous Improvement Program led by the ICANN community — the mandate is the same:

Organizational Reviews are anchored in Article 4.4. of the ICANN Bylaws to assess the effectiveness of ICANN's Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees[4], and the Nominating Committee. Organizational Reviews specifically assess: (i) whether that organization, council or committee has a continuing purpose in the ICANN structure; (ii) if so, whether any change in structure or operations is desirable to improve its effectiveness; (iii) whether that organization, council or committee is accountable to its constituencies, stakeholder groups, organizations and other stakeholders.

Understanding Principles, Criteria and Indicators

A Continuous Improvement Program following a principles-based approach is broken down into Principles, Criteria, and Indicators.

- **Principles** describe the objectives of the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) and define its fundamental goals.
- **Criteria** are the conditions that must be met to comply with a principle. A criterion is an element or set of conditions or processes by which a system characteristic is judged. Criteria define how a principle will be achieved without themselves being a measure of performance.
- **Indicators** define what the CIP will measure. Indicators are measurable states that allow assessing whether or not associated criteria are being met. Indicators are

[4] Currently, the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) is not subject to the Organizational Reviews as defined within the ICANN Bylaws.

flexible, and they can include metrics, assessments, and or new processes put in place to meet criteria.

Consistency is provided by having shared principles as the foundation for continuous improvement across SOs, ACs, and the NomCom. Flexibility is provided by the Principles, Criteria, and Indicators approach because each organizational structure can develop specific criteria for each principle and custom indicators, based on the chosen criteria, for its individual CIP framework.

Please note that an initial iteration of customized frameworks was developed by the respective groups led by the representatives to the CIP-CCG. Several representatives to the CIP-CCG volunteered their group's work on the framework to serve as illustrative examples of the framework's application (see p. 9).

Developing Principles

Principles were designed to describe the objectives of the Continuous Improvement Program. The objectives of Organizational Reviews are already defined in the current ICANN Bylaws. Historically, ICANN Organizational Reviews have asked whether the Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee (NomCom) have a continuing purpose within the ICANN community. Using the Bylaws regarding Organizational Reviews as guidance, the CIP-CCG developed principles for the CIP. At the ICANN79 Community Forum in Puerto Rico, CIP-CCG volunteers held their first hybrid working meeting. During this meeting, the group made substantial progress toward developing five common principles for the CIP. The CIP-CCG furthered its development of the principles in subsequent Phases of its work (see Appendix A, "CIP-CCG Roadmap" and "Phases of CIP-CCG Timeline"), including the description of the "bottom-up" ICANN multistakeholder model. In consideration of SO, AC, and NomCom accountability (as described in Principle 4), the CIP-CCG recognized that the work of ICANN also benefits the global Internet population. Further, in consideration of SO, AC, or NomCom collaboration to further the mission of ICANN (as described in Principle 5), the CIP-CCG emphasized the need for collaboration within and between SOs, ACs, and NomCom, including their substructures.

The CIP-CCG balanced the focus of Organizational Reviews on the structures (Supporting Organizations, Advisory Committees, and the NomCom) with the ATRT3 recommendation that the continuous improvement efforts by each structure also delve into their substructures, where applicable. The CIP-CCG acknowledged that the culture of continuous improvement is built from the "bottom-up" within the substructures where community members gather regularly to do their work. At the same time, the CIP-CCG concluded that the CIP Framework should apply at the organizational level (SO, AC, NomCom) to begin with. As the ICANN community continues working on how the overarching principles apply to each SO, AC, NomCom and their respective substructures, any necessary adjustments and fine-tuning to these overarching principles can evolve over time. For avoidance of doubt, the CIP-CCG encourages SOs, ACs, and NomCom to engage substructures in the development and implementation of their continuous improvement programs. Continuous improvement within

substructures is encouraged both collectively – in coordination with the structure– and individually, and should align with their respective CIP framework and charter.

The CIP-CCG adopted the following five overarching principles to be used by each SO, AC and NomCom to develop the criteria and indicators relevant to their groups (see "Developing Criteria and Indicators" for further information). The CIP-CCG envisions that the CIP Framework will be consistently applied across all structures while also providing the flexibility needed in recognizing the unique circumstances of each ICANN structure[5].

These overarching principles are as follows:

1. **The SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose.**
2. **The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective.**
3. **The operations of SO, AC, or NomCom are efficient.**
4. **The SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable internally to its stakeholders and substructures (where applicable), and externally to the wider ICANN community.**
5. **The SO, AC, or NomCom collaborates to further the mission of ICANN and the effectiveness of the ICANN bottom-up multistakeholder model.**

Developing Criteria and Indicators

Leveraging Existing Continuous Improvement Work

The CIP-CCG volunteers mapped the existing continuous improvement activities of their community structure/group to inform the CIP Framework, including the established principles, criteria and indicators relevant to their groups. The information was used to compile a database (see "CIP-CCG Existing Continuous Improvement Activities"), including information on identifying those activities, whether there are existing working groups involved in those activities, whether this information is publicly available, and examples of challenges and improvements related to continuous improvement in their structure.

This existing continuous improvement activity included content from a collaborative brainstorming from the hybrid meeting during the ICANN79 Community Forum. The group determined to use the "SMART" approach for indicators - i.e. an indicator or metric to measure or form a process for criteria, that should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound, (SMART). The CIP-CCG was also determined to utilize a minimum of 3-5 criteria for each group.

Guidance and examples for developing criteria and indicators can be found in Appendix B.

[5] Organizational structures with substructures include, for example: At-Large community and its At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and five Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs), as well as the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) and its stakeholder groups and constituencies. These Organizational structures have existing processes to address continuous improvement, which continue to evolve. ICANN org will also support the community by putting uniform processes and tools in place to help the community prioritize and implement improvements. See p. 9 for more detail.

Illustrative Examples of Draft Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) Framework

Several representatives to the CIP-CCG volunteered their group's work on the framework to serve as illustrative examples.

- At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)
- African Regional At-Large Organization (AFRALO)
- Asian, Australasian and Pacific Islands Regional At-Large Organization (APRALO)
- Nominating Committee (NomCom)
- Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC)

ICANN Community Engagement

All CIP-CCG volunteers consistently attended CIP-CCG meetings on a biweekly basis, with the majority of those attending 80% or more of meetings. CIP-CCG volunteers engaged consistently throughout the 2024 calendar year both within the CIP-CCG and with their respective groups to develop the draft framework, including criteria and indicators relevant to their groups. For example, one CIP-CCG representative noted "two and half months of continuous engagement and hard work with our group, including around 10 working sessions." Other representatives to the CIP-CCG formed their own subgroup to discuss and align on the Continuous Improvement Program and how it would be implemented within their own organizational structure.

Executing the Continuous Improvement Program

The work of the CIP-CCG is focused on formulating a CIP Framework, which each SO, AC, and NomCom will use. This represents a portion of the entire Continuous Improvement Program. Other aspects of the CIP include two self-assessment cycles to each include an **Assessment and Prioritization phase, Improvements phase, and Reporting phase**. The self-assessment cycle(s) will inform the Holistic Review, provided it will be supported by the ICANN community and approved by the ICANN Board.

Because the implementation of the Continuous Improvement Program by its nature is expected to be an iterative process, the execution of the next steps of the CIP following the adoption of the CIP Framework offers flexibility for the activities and the processes to evolve based on the needs of the SOs, ACs, NomCom, and their constituent parts where applicable. To support consistency in the execution of the CIP and promote transparency and accountability, SOs, ACs, and NomCom are encouraged to follow relevant Good Practices[6], including, but not limited to, transparency while developing the framework and documenting continuous improvement procedures and decision-making processes.

[6] See WS2 Final Report for Good Practices to promote SO/AC transparency and accountability.

The CIP Framework developed by the CIP-CCG is published for ICANN Public Comment before adoption by each SO, AC, and the NomCom, before the first CIP assessment period commences.

The CIP-CCG intends a CIP assessment cycle to take no longer than three years, with flexibility for each group to progress through the three phases of the CIP on a timeline that meets their needs within that period. The first CIP assessment cycle is estimated to begin in 2025 and is expected to conclude by the end of a three year period. The second assessment cycle is intended to begin after the conclusion of the first assessment (estimated to begin in 2028) and will similarly span a period of no more than three years. Together, these CIP assessment cycle(s) will inform the Holistic Review.

The three phases of each assessment cycle are broken down below:

- **Assessment and Prioritization Phase:** Conduct necessary data collection to identify areas that need improvement. Analyze the input and identify priority improvement work to be carried out by each SO/AC/NomCom.
- **Improvements Phase:** Carry out prioritized improvement work.
- **Reporting Phase:** Analyze the results achieved through improvement work, report progress and results achieved during the CIP assessment cycle. Prepare to carry out the next assessment cycle.

Figure 1 illustrates how the CIP Framework is expected to be implemented across assessment cycles.

Figure 1. CIP Cycle Implementation

Assessment and Prioritization Phase

During the Assessment and Prioritization phase SOs, ACs, and the NomCom will establish the cadence of work for the CIP assessment cycle, identify relevant criteria and indicators,

and gather information to support their assessment–which may include responses to the CIP Survey.[7]

The CIP Framework developed by the CIP-CCG will be used by each SO, AC, and the NomCom, to further assess their own continuous improvement activities in developing their individual CIP framework. The survey and prioritization activities defined within the CIP Framework will allow the SOs, ACs, and the NomCom to easily analyze input from their members/participants and prioritize improvements. Prioritization processes are in place for the SOs, ACs, and the NomCom to assess improvements from surveys and assessments utilizing the framework, to determine their feasibility given existing resources and evolving context. For additional information on implementation of the CIP assessment and prioritization activities, see Appendix B.

Improvements Phase

During the Improvements Phase, SOs, ACs, and the NomCom will implement identified improvements. Each organizational structure will work with its leadership and/or relevant working group for their planning and implementation.

ICANN org will support this phase by putting consistent processes and tools in place to help the community prioritize and implement improvements.

Reporting Phase

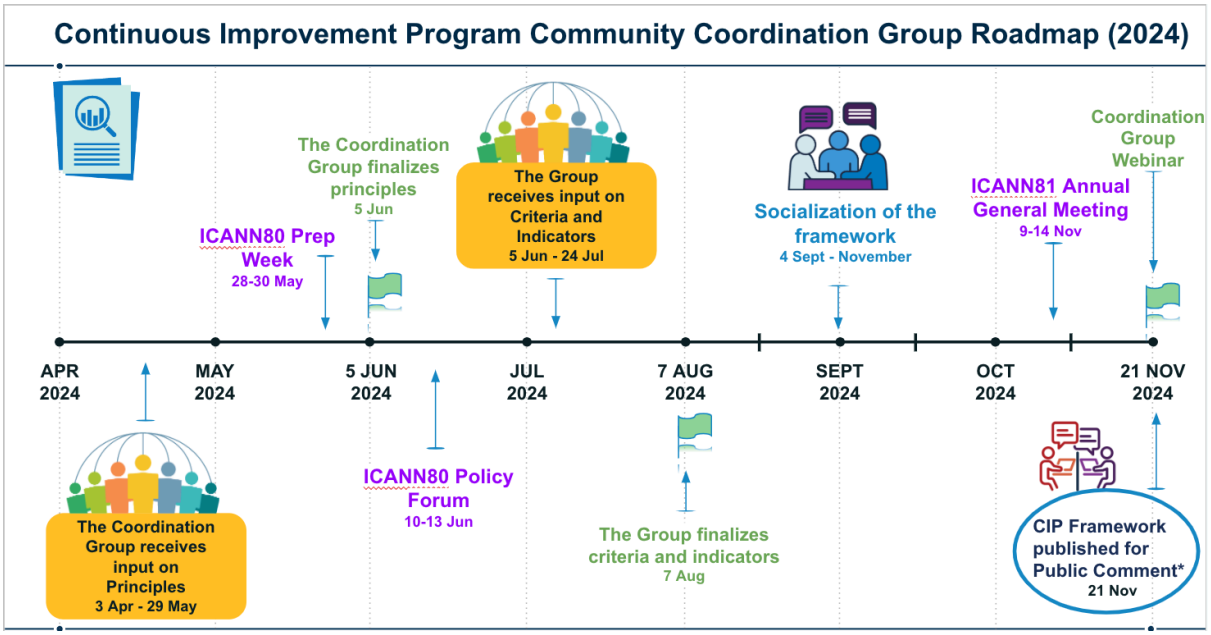
The reporting phase will entail the SOs, ACs, and NomCom publishing reports of what each uncovered, what improvements were implemented and what results were achieved over the preceding assessment cycle. The reports will be based on the CIP Framework and will be published for Public Comment. For additional guidance on reporting, see Appendix B.

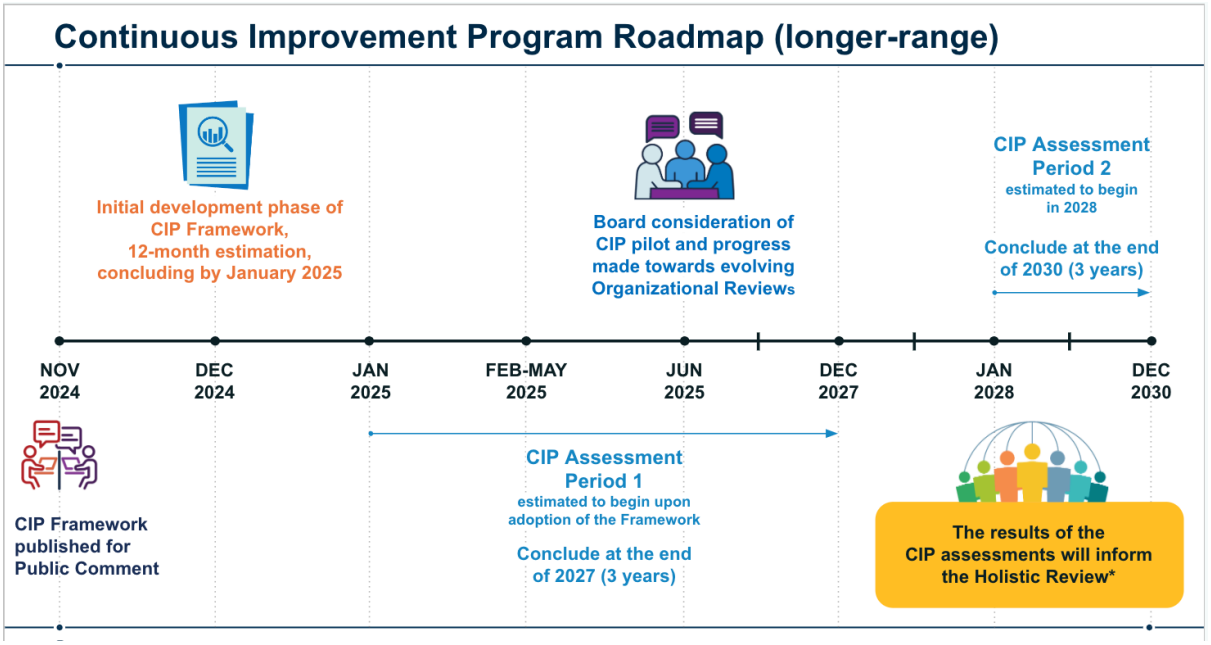
ICANN org will support this phase where appropriate, including the preparation of materials related to the Public Comment proceedings and summary reports.

The CIP-CCG acknowledges that several SOs and ACs have already identified subgroups within the structures to be responsible for leading the Continuous Improvement work, while others leveraged existing processes to report on the progress of this work. The CIP-CCG would like to encourage all groups to follow these good practices to help implement a culture of continuous improvement within ICANN.

[7] More information on the background and development of the CIP Survey can be found in Appendix A. Guidance to support the implementation of the CIP Survey can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A. CIP-CCG Process Overview





Phases of CIP-CCG Timeline

Phase 1 (January - March): The CIP-CCG made substantial progress toward developing principles for the CIP, which provide a common base for the assessment of the different ICANN community structures. The principles stem from Article 4.4 of the ICANN Bylaws describing objectives for Organizational Reviews.

Phase 2 (April - June): Community representatives went to their groups to inform them of the progress of the CIP-CCG and their work-to-date, including work the Principles, Criteria,

Indicators approach for the draft CIP framework, how the framework will be utilized in the (first) CIP assessment phase. **Ongoing CIP-CCG meetings and regular updates from the CIP-CCG representative (and alternate) were provided to community groups throughout 2024.**

Phase 3 (June - August): Having educated their structures on CIP-CCG progress on the Principles, Criteria, Indicators approach and how the process of the CIP will work, Community representatives organized working sessions with their community representatives to gather feedback on the Criteria and Indicators specifically for their group. **The CIP-CCG determined 3-5 criteria minimum for each group.**

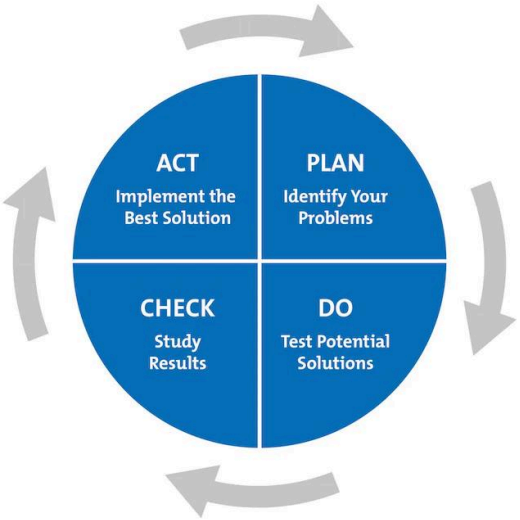
Phase 4 (September - October): Finally, community representatives worked with groups to reach consensus on Criteria and Indicators applicable to their organizational structures (this occurred after iterations of CIP-CCG meetings), and next steps for the Public Comment proceeding, CIP survey, and first CIP assessment utilizing the CIP Framework. **Draft CIP Framework published for Public Comment (est. 21 Nov 2024).**

Tools Assessed

ICANN org and the CIP-CCG assessed several different tools that could be applicable to executing ICANN CIP. These tools are useful because they provide the concepts, the methodology, and the processes needed to help each SO, AC, and NomCom execute the CIP in an effective and resource effective way. There are a wide variety of continuous improvement tools used by different organizations for different reasons.

- Plan-do-check act
- Lean
- Kaizen
- Six Sigma
- Total Quality Management
- ISO 9000
- EFQM Model
- Baldrige Performance Excellence
- Principle/Criteria Sustainability Framework

Figure 1: The Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle



Models provide different approaches for Continuous Improvement Program Framework design. The continuous improvement program models that ICANN org researched included a Standards Model, Principles Model, and Hybrid Model:

Standards Model (Example: Non-GMO verified label)

- Sets an expected standard of behavior based upon best practice.
- Community members are encouraged and supported in meeting the standard.
- Performance is independently evaluated to ensure it meets the standard.

Principles Model (Example: Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef)

- CIP is broken down into principles, criteria and indicators.
- Provides direction, but not detailed prescription to continuous improvement, offering opportunities to adapt to different contexts, changes in understanding, and various challenges.
- While principles are the same, flexibility is provided by allowing each stakeholder group to prioritize which criteria are most important to them, and also to develop their own indicators which they will use to track their progress.
- Performance is independently evaluated to ensure it meets the standard.

Hybrid Model (Example: World Fair Trade Organization)

- A hybrid model combines the benefits of uniformity provided by a standards-based approach and the flexibility of principles/criteria-based approach.
- The Hybrid models split continuous improvement into mandatory criteria that must be met (essentially standards that all stakeholders must meet) and continuous Improvement criteria to be met over time.

Findings

While all tools provide valuable perspective for the ICANN community to consider in the development of a Continuous Improvement Program, some were found to be more relevant to the ICANN community than others.

Tools that are process improvement-oriented include Plan-Do-Check Act, Lean, and Kaizen. Six Sigma is ideal for optimizing manufacturing of products in various industries. Several tools which provide prescribed quality management principles proved less flexible for the ICANN community, including Total Quality Management, ISO 9000, EFQM Model, and Baldrige Performance Excellence.

- The Baldrige Excellence Framework is a non prescriptive framework that empowers organizations to reach goals, improve results, and become more competitive.
- Kanban Framework is a popular framework for defining, managing, and improving services that deliver knowledge work. It helps organizations visualize work, maximize efficiency, and improve continuously.
- ISO 9000 is a set of quality management systems standards by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) that help organizations ensure they meet customer and other stakeholder needs within statutory and regulatory requirements related to a product or service.

Standards Model sets a clear standard which can be easily understood and easily applied. However, a standards model is rigid because it is pass/fail. It also typically requires a third party evaluator. In the case of ICANN, this would have limited the flexibility of the

organizational structures to design a CIP to meet their unique needs and it would have required a third party, which may not understand their structure(s), to evaluate if they have met a standard.

Principles Model creates consistency by establishing the same principles across stakeholder groups. It also provides the necessary flexibility by enabling stakeholder groups to prioritize criteria, and set their own indicators. **After assessing the principles model and real world examples of its application, this model was suggested to best suit the needs of an ICANN community Continuous Improvement Program via the CIP-CCG.**

Hybrid Model allows stakeholders to identify mandatory standards that must be met and does include some flexibility of a principles-based model. However, this model ultimately is more complex because it combines standards and principles approaches. Because this model requires agreement by stakeholders on a set of standards that must be met, it does not offer the flexibility that the CIP requires.

CIP-CCG Survey Development

ATRT3 recommendations call for an annual satisfaction survey of SO/AC members/participants. The results of the survey are intended to support the Continuous Improvement Program as well as provide input for the Holistic Review. Initially, ICANN org shared with the CIP-CCG that a third party would be recruited for the CIP Survey development work, utilizing the Supplemental Fund for Implementation of Community Recommendations (SFICR). However, as of 30 May 2024, a broader effort was established to evaluate costs and activities for ICANN, focusing on resource management, ensuring operational efficiency, and achieving financial sustainability. See the ICANN.org Blog: Organizational Changes to Ensure ICANN's Financial Stability and Sustainability.

As such, ICANN org informed the CIP-CCG of the plan to pivot from hiring a third party to utilizing existing ICANN org resources for the survey development. The CIP-CCG accepted the proposed resourcing plan, and ICANN org provided updates on the survey in progress at subsequent CCG meetings.

The CIP-CCG provided input into the design and target audience for the surveys, including:

- Who (or how) each SO, AC, and their substructures would envision distributing the survey.
- How to define active vs. inactive members and whether different types of surveys for each would be useful.

By including space for qualitative feedback, the survey will also gather input on opportunities for improvement of each SO, AC, the NomCom and their substructures, in order to fit their specific needs.

ICANN org will support the community by coordinating the reporting of results from the survey and assessment phase(s). Much like an employee engagement survey, this report would allow ICANN community members and constituents to view feedback on performance

and suggestions for improvement. By coordinating this work on behalf of the community, ICANN org will limit impact on community bandwidth and also design reporting to be uniform.

Other Resources

CIP-CCG Existing Continuous Improvement Activities
Continuous Improvement Program Home
Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG) Meetings
CIP-CCG Membership and Mailing List
ICANN Reviews Program Update (October 2024)
ICANN Continuous Improvement Program Makes Progress on a Draft Framework (March 2024)
ICANN Launches the Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (January 2024)
ICANN Reviews Program Update and Interim President and CEO Goal 11 (October 2023)
ICANN Organizational Reviews

Appendix B. Guidance for Implementation of the CIP

This appendix provides additional guidance to support ICANN organizational structures (SOs, ACs, and NomCom) in implementation of the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP). This appendix complements the CIP Framework document and acts as a high-level guide, by offering additional information, practical examples, and helpful considerations in the following areas:

This resource aims to meet the needs of the diverse ICANN community and ensure effective implementation of the CIP.

CIP Assessment Process

The CIP consists of three phases: assessment and prioritization, improvement work, and progress reporting. The **duration and timing of the phases of the CIP assessment cycle are designed to be flexible** and accommodate the needs of the organizational structures. However, each structure is **expected to report on progress before the end of each 3-year period**. Figure 1 offers high-level examples to demonstrate the flexibility of implementing the CIP assessment.

During the assessment and prioritization phase, each organizational structure develops their tailored criteria and indicators, plans for their assessment, collects and analyzes relevant data to assess their work, and identifies areas of improvement. To promote transparency and accountability of the CIP process, structures are encouraged to publish results from this phase on their dedicated CIP community wiki.

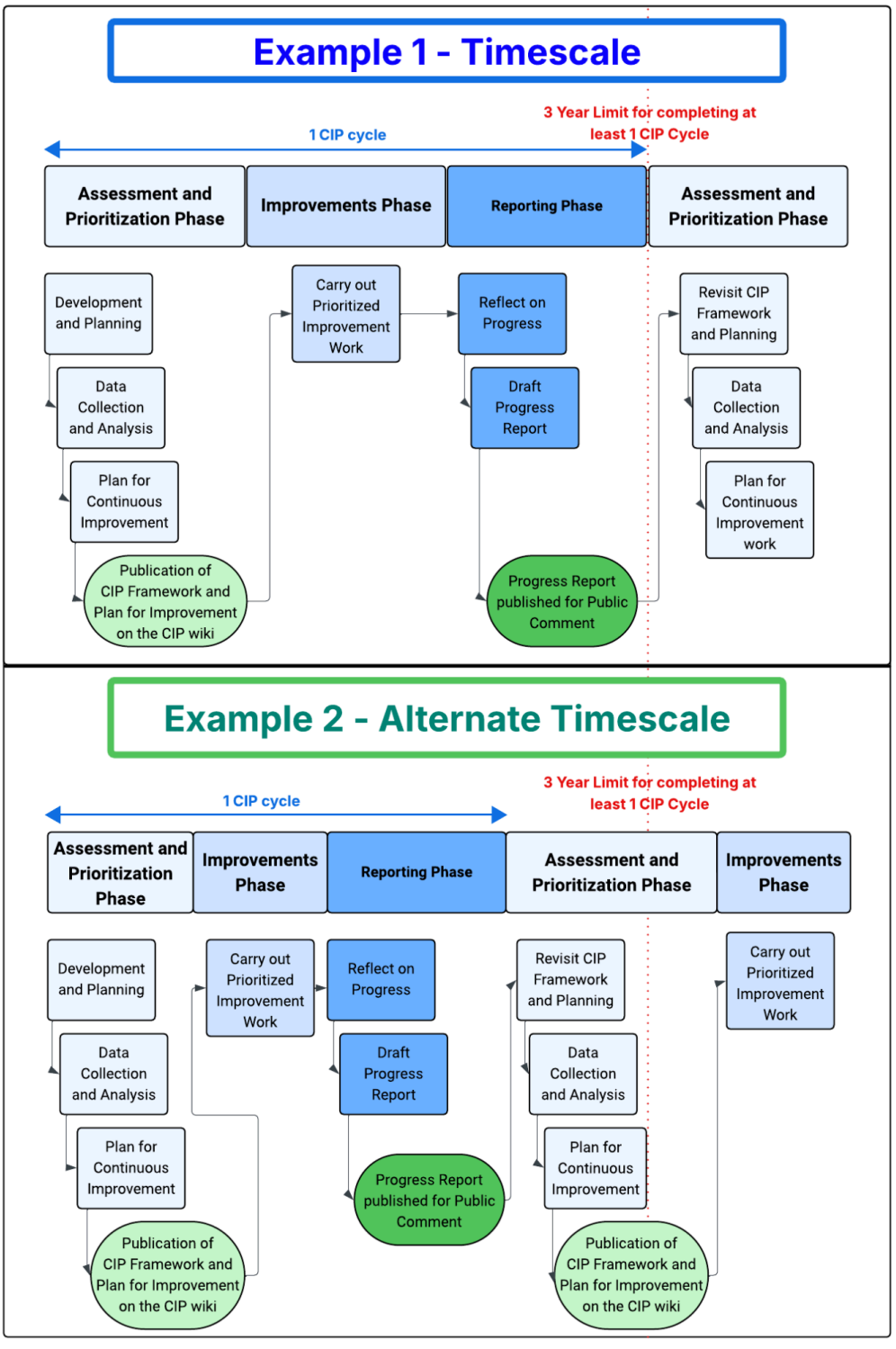
During the improvement work phase of the CIP, each organizational structure implements their prioritized improvement activities.

During the progress reporting phase of the CIP, each organizational structure reflects on the progress they achieved toward implementing continuous improvements and drafts a Progress Report. Progress Reports are to be published for Public Comment.

After an organizational structure has completed the three phases of the CIP assessment cycle, they may begin a new CIP assessment cycle. This cycle should build on the work and learnings of the previous cycle(s). Each organizational structure may begin a new cycle by adjusting their tailored criteria and indicators based on identified needs for continued improvement as noted in the Progress Report, feedback received during the public comment period, and any changes to the structure's priorities. Once developed, the organizational structure can develop an assessment plan based on changes to the criteria and indicators and continue with the CIP assessment as described above.

When developing their individual CIP, organizational structures may wish to consider ongoing work, like implementation of Work Stream 2 Recommendations or other improvement activities, to ensure efficient implementation of the program.

Figure 1. CIP Implementation Timeline



1. Assessment and Prioritization Phase

1.1 Development and Planning

The CIP Framework document offers a logic model to assess progress toward an established objective. In this model, principles define the broad goals guiding the assessment, criteria specify the key conditions that must be met to uphold those principles, and indicators serve as measurable markers of progress that provide the information to evaluate the need for improvement in a particular area. Each organizational structure's CIP assessment is grounded in the same five principles,[8] while criteria and indicators are tailored to the specific nature of the structure's work.

This section offers guidance, examples, and suggestions for developing tailored criteria and indicators and planning for a CIP assessment.

Identifying a CIP Working Group

During the assessment and prioritization phase, each organizational structure may wish to begin by identifying an existing or newly created working group within the structure to lead its CIP work. When identifying a working group, structures may wish to consider knowledge of ongoing community activities, familiarity with the CIP, understanding of processes of monitoring and evaluation, and the long-term nature of continuous improvement activities. To minimize bias in the CIP process, stakeholders involved in the CIP should adhere to relevant community commitments to diversity and inclusion and exercise a commitment to avoid conflicts of interest in their work.

Developing Criteria

Criteria are the conditions that need to be met in order to comply with a principle. The five principles noted in the CIP Framework describe the objectives of the CIP and define its

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[8] Based on the Principles, Criteria, Indicators approach, the Continuous Improvement Program Community Coordination Group (CIP-CCG) adopted the following five overarching principles based on the existing scope of Organizational Reviews, in accordance with the ICANN Bylaws:

1. The SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose.
2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective.
3. The operations of SO, AC, or NomCom are efficient.
4. The SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable internally to its stakeholders and substructures (where applicable), and externally to the wider ICANN community.
5. The SO, AC, or NomCom collaborates to further the mission of ICANN and the effectiveness of the ICANN bottom-up multistakeholder model.

fundamental goals. While these five principles are set and are intended to be applied across ICANN structures, how they are operationalized through criteria will differ.

Criteria are the specific, operationalizable conditions that define achievement of the principles. For example, Principle 2 states “The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective.” The criteria developed for this principle should help define what an effective structure would look like in practice.

For each principle, each organizational structure will have the flexibility to define 3-5 criteria that apply to their work. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the flexibility of the Framework by presenting two sets of criteria for the same principle – Principle 2. In these examples, the work and priorities of SO(1) and SO(2) are unique and the differences between the SOs lead to the development of specific criteria.

Table 1. SO(1) criteria for Principle 2

Principle 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective			
Criteria	**Indicators**		
SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose.			
SO(1) output is implemented in a timely fashion.			
SO(1) communications have produced the desired outcome.			
SO(1) is adaptable and refines its strategies to remain focused on its purpose.			

Table 2. SO(2) criteria for Principle 2

Principle 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective			
Criteria	**Indicators**		
SO(2) allocates resources in a way that supports its goals.			
SO(2) uses data to refine strategies and improve performance.			

SO(2) actively integrates stakeholder feedback into planning processes.			
SO(2) has effective communication channels that support successful implementation of projects.			

Approach

The organizational structure's CIP working group may wish to begin developing criteria by clearly **articulating the purpose of the principle** in the context of the organizational structure's work. The working group may also wish to **brainstorm key components of the work** that need to be met in order to comply with each principle. This helps ensure that all related criteria are meaningful, aligned, and actionable. To facilitate this process, the working group can begin by exploring questions like:

- Why is this principle important for our work?
- What does success look like for us if this principle is being achieved?
- How would we recognize this principle was not being met?
- What core dimensions of our work reflect the principle in action?
- What processes help us or could help us achieve this principle?
- What work do we or could we be engaging in regularly that supports this principle?
- How does this principle relate to our priorities and goals for the coming year(s)?

Key components of the structure's work that need to be met in order to comply with each principle may be clustered into themes for stakeholder consideration (e.g., meetings, communications, planning, feedback).

The working group may use these key components to **develop clear, specific criteria statements** that can be assessed or evaluated.

Considerations

When developing criteria, the working group may wish to consider the following, in no particular order:

- **Clarity:** Each criterion should be clearly worded. In cases where part or all terms of the chosen criterion are open to interpretation, they should be defined clearly to ensure alignment in understanding for current and future members of the CIP working group.
- **Relevance:** Each criterion should be directly related to the work of the SO, AC, or NomCom and the principle it supports. While a criterion may work for a certain ICANN structure it may not work in a different environment, highlighting the need to consider the relevance of the criteria toward its target.

- **Comprehensiveness:** When taken together, all criteria developed for a principle should seek to capture the essential elements to determine adherence to the principle.
- **Potential Challenges:** Working groups may wish to consider potential challenges or limitations in applying the criteria. Testing criteria by exploring indicators or potential data sources early can help ensure they are effective and realistic, and will help mitigate issues as the working group progresses in the implementation of their CIP.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** While organizational structures have the flexibility to define their CIP process, working groups are encouraged to involve other stakeholders (e.g., substructures, community leaders, SMEs) early in the process of defining criteria. This can help mitigate bias by ensuring a diversity of perspectives are considered and generate support of the proposed criteria. Having a clearly defined, participatory process (e.g., consultation calls, workshops, focus groups) invites the co-creation of criteria and ensures that the final decisions represent the needs of a structure's diverse stakeholders.

Refining Criteria

After a CIP cycle has concluded, the working group should consider reviewing how well the criteria captured the principles and whether they helped achieve the overall goals of the CIP assessment. The working group may wish to consider asking the following questions:

- Did the criteria help measure achievement of the principle?
- Were the criteria too broad? Or too narrow?
- Were there important aspects of the principle that were not addressed with the chosen criteria?

If the reflection on the criteria identifies opportunities for improvement, the working group should consider adjusting the criteria for subsequent CIP cycles. In addition, criteria should be updated to reflect changes in the environment, work, or priorities of the ICANN structure.

Example Criteria

Example criteria were provided to the CIP-CCG, which the groups considered as they worked with their stakeholders to identify criteria and indicators that were relevant and meaningful to their groups. The example criteria are provided below:

Principle 1: The SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose

- There is an agreement that the SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose. This may include assessing how each organizational structure contributes to ICANN's mission, “to help ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet.” This includes initiatives to advance ICANN’s mission; to combat domain name security threats, produce and offer capacity-building resources, and to expand and build a multilingual Internet.
- The organizational structure contributes to the global public interest, as described in the ICANN Articles of Incorporation (2016): “in recognition of the fact that the Internet is an international network of networks, owned by no single nation, individual or organization, (ICANN) shall, except as limited by Article IV hereof, pursue the

charitable and public purposes of lessening the burdens of government and promoting the global public interest in the operational stability of the Internet by carrying out the mission set forth in the (ICANN Bylaws). Such global public interest may be determined from time to time. Any determination of such global public interest shall be made by the multistakeholder community through an inclusive bottom-up multistakeholder community process."

- The organizational structure contributes to the ICANN Strategic Plan (FY21-25) objectives, especially the strategic objective to "Improve the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder model of governance."
- The SO, AC, or NomCom actively combats domain name security threats.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom actively works to expand and build a multilingual Internet.

Principle 2: The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective

- The structure has a working group or process to address their goals and priorities each year, in line with their purpose.
- Structures in place are accessible and clearly communicated.
- Structures help the SO, AC, or NomCom operate to meet its purpose.
- Process(es) is (are) in place for planning and prioritizing work.
- Process(es) is (are) in place for assessing and measuring output.
- Output has produced the desired outcome.
- Output is implemented in a timely fashion.

Principle 3: The operations of SO, AC, or NomCom are efficient

- The structure has a process for planning and setting priorities, and identifying relevant emerging issues to focus on within established timeframes.
- The structure assesses inputs related to their scope of responsibility.
- The structure develops and recommends outputs relevant to their purpose (policy development, support policies, leadership placement).
- The structure's outputs are implemented and implementation of outputs is monitored.
- Workloads are managed.
- The structure nurtures consensus within their constituency.
- The structure coordinates with ICANN SOs, ACs, Committees, and constituencies within the ICANN global multistakeholder community.
- There is an agreement that the structure operates efficiently overall.
- The structure has appropriate level of funding support.

Principle 4: The SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable internally to its stakeholders and substructures (where applicable), and externally to the wider ICANN community

- Adequate representation of the diversity of the global multistakeholder community within group membership and SO, AC, NomCom roles (Guided by ICANN Core Value 4).
- The SO, AC, and NomCom objectives align with planned objectives of ICANN as a whole.

- The SO, AC, and NomCom is accountable to the wider ICANN community, its organizations, committees, constituencies, and stakeholder groups in recruiting, developing, and maintaining membership needed to achieve its purpose.
- There is adequate support and resources for recruiting and onboarding newcomers to the SO, AC, or NomCom.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom offers capacity building opportunities for maintaining skill sets and technical expertise.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom maintains effective levels of active participation.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom structure maintains sufficient levels of transparency of information.
- The SO, AC, or NomComcommunicates and engages with its constituents and the broader multistakeholder community.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom has implemented prior review recommendations.
- Processes are in place to assess, prioritize, and implement suggestions for improvement received as outputs from the Continuous Improvement Program.
- There is an agreement among constituents that the SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable to the wider ICANN community, its organizations, committees, constituencies, and stakeholder groups.

Principle 5: The SO, AC, or NomCom collaborates to further the mission of ICANN and the effectiveness of the ICANN bottom-up multistakeholder model

- The SO, AC, or NomCom has a process in place for communicating and coordinating within the ICANN global multistakeholder community.
- The organizational structure meets regularly with the ICANN Board.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom regularly participates in SO/AC Leadership Roundtables and meetings organized at each ICANN Public Meeting.
- The SO, AC, or NomCom helps to improve overall communication, priority setting, and planning of SO/AC Leadership.

Developing Indicators

Indicators are measurable parameters that can be used to assess the degree to which a criterion has been met. They provide a way to quantify or qualify the degree of compliance with the related criteria and the progress of the organizational structure toward achieving the principles.

Properly developed indicators are crucial as they provide the data needed to confirm a criterion is fulfilled and the principle has been met. There are two types of indicators:

- **Process indicators** which assess and provide information about the scope and quality of activities implemented. Examples may include number of meetings, percent of reports submitted on schedule, etc.
- **Performance indicators** measure progress toward results or effectiveness of the work. These indicators are tied to goals or desired outcomes. Examples may include increases in satisfaction, percent of goals achieved, etc.

Approach

Indicators are directly related to the criteria identified by the organizational structure's CIP working group. The process of developing indicators involves defining concrete, measurable signs of progress or success for each criterion selected.

To begin developing indicators, the working group may wish to begin by **understanding the criterion** and brainstorming the means to assess progress toward success in the criterion. This may include conceptually exploring the components that make up the criterion. For example, if the criterion is "SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose," then SO(1) may identify the following as key conceptual components that could be explored for the criterion:

SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose

- Goal clarity
- Realistic targets when goal setting
- Goal alignment with the overall purpose

Once key components are identified, the working group may wish to **brainstorm input** to assess whether those components of the criterion are met in practice. For example, for goal clarity, SO(1) may identify the "presence of SMART[9] goals in planning documents" as possible input. See below for additional examples:

SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose

- Goal clarity
    - Input: Presence of SMART goals in planning documents
    - Input: Constituent feedback
- Realistic targets when goal setting
    - Input: Constituent feedback
    - Input: Satisfactory progress toward achieving goals
- Goal alignment with overall purpose
    - Input: Goals reference purpose
    - Input: Constituent feedback

The working group can use the input identified to **develop clear, SMART indicators**. Following the SMART approach can help ensure the indicators are actionable and trackable. In this process, the working group should avoid using vague terms like "good" or "adequate" and should strive to use precise language. For example, if the key area of input identified is "constituent feedback" then the working group could establish an indicator like "XX% of surveyed constituents agree that goals are clear." For the example above, possible indicators could include:

"SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose"

- Goal clarity
    - Input: Presence of SMART goals in planning documents

[9] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound

        - Possible indicator: XX% of strategic goals meet the SMART criteria.
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of reviewed plans in FY25 include clearly defined SMART indicators to assess progress.
    - Input: Constituent feedback
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of surveyed constituents agree that SO(1) goals are clear.
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of surveyed constituents report that they understand the SO(1)'s goals.
- Realistic targets when goal setting
    - Input: Constituent feedback
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of surveyed constituents agree that SO(1) sets realistic and achievable goals.
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of surveyed constituents agree that SO(1) timeframes and targets are reasonable.
    - Input: Satisfactory progress toward achieving goals
        - Possible indicator: By the end of FY25, XX% of goals outlined in the strategic plan will be on track or completed as scheduled.
        - Possible indicator: Quarterly progress reports will show at least XX% of project milestones are met within designated timeframes.
- Goal alignment with overall purpose
    - Input: Goals reference purpose
        - Possible indicator: XX% of strategic goals include reference to how they align with the SO's purpose.
        - Possible indicator: All goal-setting templates completed in FY25 include a section that articulates the connection to the purpose.
    - Input: Constituent feedback
        - Possible indicator: At least XX% of surveyed constituents agree that goals are aligned with purpose.

When developing SMART indicators, the working group may wish the consider the following:

- **Indicators should be *specific*.** Indicators should be clearly defined and focused on a specific aspect of the work. They should narrowly and accurately describe what needs to be measured, and should not include multiple measurements in one indicator.
- **Indicators should be *measurable*.** Indicators should establish the data that will be used to measure the criteria. Where relevant, they should be quantifiable and have a clear unit of measurement to establish the quantity or quality that would signal success. This allows for objective data collection and analysis.
- **Indicators should be *achievable.*** Indicators should be realistic and feasible given the available resources and data. Working groups should avoid setting overly ambitious targets that are unlikely to be met and should identify any constraints (resources, skills, data availability, etc) prior to finalization. Working groups can also consider using relevant research findings to establish informed targets (e.g., industry

standards). When developing indicators, working groups should consider that collecting data for the indicator should be simple, straightforward, and cost-effective.

- **Indicators should be *relevant.*** Indicators should be meaningful and have a clear relationship to the criteria it is being used to assess. Indicators should capture or measure a facet of the outcome that it is intended to measure.
- **Indicators should be *time-bound.*** Indicators should have a timeframe linked to them, such as the frequency with which they are collected or measured. This helps track progress and ensure accountability.
- **Stakeholder expectations.** While each organizational structure has the flexibility to define their CIP process, working groups are encouraged to consider gathering stakeholder feedback to set achievable and agreed upon targets. Stakeholder feedback can be gathered through stakeholder consultation processes (e.g., workshop, survey, etc).

Table 3. offers an example set of SMART indicators that may be developed given a set of criteria for Principle 2.

Table 3. Example Indicators

Principle 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective			
Criteria	**Indicators**		
SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its purpose.	XX% of the goals outlined in SO(1)'s FY25 Strategic Plan mention its purpose.	At least XX% of surveyed constituents understand how SO(1)'s goals aligned with its purpose.	SO(1) published at least 2 update reports tracking progress toward achievable goals in the last year.
SO(1) output is implemented in a timely fashion.	At least XX% of project milestones are completed by the scheduled deadline in FY25.	XX% of goals are on track for completion or completed as planned in FY25.	At least XX% surveyed constituents agree that SO(1) meets its objectives within the expected timeframe.
SO(1) communications have produced the desired outcome.	XX% of SO(1) communications follow established standards.	XX% of constituents agree that communications are effective.	SO(1) holds monthly meetings open to all constituents.
SO(1) is adaptable and refines its strategies to remain focused on its purpose.	XX% of budget revisions over the fiscal year include rationale linked to shifts in priorities.	Stakeholder strategy sessions are held at least twice (2) per year to inform potential shifts in direction.	XX% of constituents agree that SO(1) is adaptable and refines its strategies.

Documenting Criteria and Indicators

Documenting the tailored criteria and indicators is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability. This provides a shared reference for constituents and other stakeholders, helping them understand how principles, criteria, and indicators were applied to an organizational structure's CIP. Documentation also acts as an artifact that facilitates accountability in decision making, allowing CIP working groups to refer back to their priorities and track progress over time.

Documenting criteria and indicators consists of recording each criterion selected for each principle and all indicators chosen for each criterion. This information can be documented in a table format as shown in Table 4. CIP working groups may also use the template created by ICANN org.

Table 4. Example of how to document criteria and indicators

Criteria	Indicators		
Principle 1. The SO, AC, or NomCom is fulfilling its purpose.			
P1. Criterion 1	*P1. C1. Indicator 1*	*P1. C1. Indicator 2*	*P1. C1. Indicator 3*
P1. Criterion 2	*P1. C2. Indicator 1*	*P1. C2. Indicator 2*	*P1. C2. Indicator 3*
P1. Criterion 3	*P1. C3. Indicator 1*	*P1. C3. Indicator 2*	*P1. C3. Indicator 3*
P1. Criterion 4	*P1. C4. Indicator 1*	*P1. C4. Indicator 2*	*P1. C4. Indicator 3*
P1. Criterion 5	*P1. C5. Indicator 1*	*P1. C5. Indicator 2*	*P1. C5. Indicator 3*
Principle 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective.			
P2. Criterion 1	*P2. C1. Indicator 1*	*P2. C1. Indicator 2*	*P2. C1. Indicator 3*
P2. Criterion 2	*P2. C2. Indicator 1*	*P2. C2. Indicator 2*	*P2. C2. Indicator 3*
P2. Criterion 3	*P2. C3. Indicator 1*	*P2. C3. Indicator 2*	*P2. C3. Indicator 3*
P2. Criterion 4	*P2. C4. Indicator 1*	*P2. C4. Indicator 2*	*P2. C4. Indicator 3*
P2. Criterion 5	*P2. C5. Indicator 1*	*P2. C5. Indicator 2*	*P2. C5. Indicator 3*
Principle 3. The operations of SO, AC, or NomCom are efficient.			
P3. Criterion 1	*P3. C1. Indicator 1*	*P3. C1. Indicator 2*	*P3. C1. Indicator 3*
P3. Criterion 2	*P3. C2. Indicator 1*	*P3. C2. Indicator 2*	*P3. C2. Indicator 3*
P3. Criterion 3	*P3. C3. Indicator 1*	*P3 C3. Indicator 2*	*P3. C3. Indicator 3*
P3. Criterion 4	*P3. C4. Indicator 1*	*P3. C4. Indicator 2*	*P3. C4. Indicator 3*
P3. Criterion 5	*P3. C5. Indicator 1*	*P3. C5. Indicator 2*	*P3. C5. Indicator 3*
Principle 4. The SO, AC, or NomCom is accountable internally to its stakeholders and substructures (where applicable), and externally to the wider ICANN community.			
P4. Criterion 1	*P4. C1. Indicator 1*	*P4. C1. Indicator 2*	*P4. C1. Indicator 3*
P4. Criterion 2	*P4. C2. Indicator 1*	*P4. C2. Indicator 2*	*P4. C2. Indicator 3*
P4. Criterion 3	*P4. C3. Indicator 1*	*P4. C3. Indicator 2*	*P4. C3. Indicator 3*
P4. Criterion 4	*P4. C4. Indicator 1*	*P4. C4. Indicator 2*	*P4. C4. Indicator 3*
P4. Criterion 5	*P4. C5. Indicator 1*	*P4. C5. Indicator 2*	*P4. C5. Indicator 3*
Principle 5. The SO, AC, or NomCom collaborates to further the mission of ICANN and the effectiveness of the ICANN bottom-up multistakeholder model.			
P5. Criterion 1	*P5. C1. Indicator 1*	*P5. C1. Indicator 2*	*P5. C1. Indicator 3*
P5. Criterion 2	*P5. C2. Indicator 1*	*P5. C2. Indicator 2*	*P5. C2. Indicator 3*
P5. Criterion 3	*P5. C3. Indicator 1*	*P5. C3. Indicator 2*	*P5. C3. Indicator 3*
P5. Criterion 4	*P5. C4. Indicator 1*	*P5. C4. Indicator 2*	*P5. C4. Indicator 3*
P5. Criterion 5	*P5. C5. Indicator 1*	*P5. C5. Indicator 2*	*P5. C5. Indicator 3*

Planning for Assessment

CIP working groups can develop a plan to guide the assessment, offering a roadmap to clarify the direction of the CIP assessment and facilitate achievement of the CIP's objectives.

An assessment plan can include **what** data is needed; **how** that data should be collected; **when** that data will be collected; and **who** is responsible for collecting that data. The following may be considered in the process of preparing an assessment plan.

Data

As part of planning, working groups may wish to identify the data sources necessary to measure success against selected indicators. Different types of data are better suited to different indicators. Working groups can consider the benefits and limitations of each when identifying appropriate indicators.

Working groups can consider whether the data needs to be collected or it already exists:

- **Primary data**, or data that is collected first hand (i.e., surveys, interviews, focus groups) can be tailored to the needs of the CIP assessment, but can also be resource intensive.
- **Secondary data**, or existing data collected for another purpose (i.e., internal records), may be more readily available but may not be tailored to the needs of the CIP assessment.

Working groups can consider whether the data is quantitative or qualitative in nature:

- **Quantitative data**, or numeric data that can be counted or measured, is useful for measuring frequency, performance against targets, change over time, but does not provide information about the *why* and *how* behind processes.
- **Qualitative data**, or descriptive, non-numeric information, is useful for capturing perspectives, satisfaction, and provides nuance that numbers alone cannot, but may be time consuming to collect and analyze.

Various aspects of data quality and availability can be considered when identifying data sources. These include the following:

- **Relevance**: The data should be relevant and align with the indicator selected.
- **Accuracy**: The data should be consistently collected and free from errors or bias.
- **Precision or Completeness**: The data sources identified should provide sufficient information and, where necessary, gaps that could impact the assessment should be noted.
- **Timeliness:** The data collection should align with the assessment needs, including when the data was collected and/or how often it is collected.
- **Reliability**: The definitions and data collection methods should be consistent across data sources or time periods.

Working groups may also wish to consider **accessibility** and **resource constraints** when identifying data sources to facilitate an efficient and effective CIP assessment. This includes consideration for whether the data is already available, requires permission, or has legal restrictions and the financial and human resources required to collect the data.

Data Collection Methods

Once a data source has been identified, data collection methods or how the working group will go about collecting the necessary data may be noted. This includes considerations for whether the relevant data is already collected or if new data collection efforts are needed. Depending on the data needs of the assessment, the data collection methods may include feedback surveys, interviews, document review, or other forms of data collection.

Timeframe

After documenting the data and methods that are needed to execute the assessment, a timeframe for the data to be collected or the frequency of data collection, depending on the source, may be noted. This timeframe should be relevant for the indicator, the data source, and assessment goals. If tracking short-term changes, for example, monthly data may need to be collected. If tracking slow-changing indicators, yearly totals or averages may be sufficient. If collecting new data, especially through surveys or interviews, it is important to balance the need for frequent data collection with the burden on respondents and resources.

Responsible Party

A responsible party may be assigned to the task of collecting, analyzing, and/or recording the data. This helps ensure smooth execution of the assessment and supports transparency and accountability. When assigning data collection tasks, it is important to consider the following:

- **Expertise**: The assignee should have the necessary knowledge of the data, the indicators, and the data collection methods to collect the data.
- **Access**: The assignee should have access to the systems, records, or people required to gather the data.
- **Organizational Alignment**: The task should align with the assignee's current role and workflows. This can ensure that the assignee has the availability and capability to gather the necessary data.
- **Continuity and Sustainability**: Where possible, responsibilities should be embedded within existing group workflow and process to ensure data collection practices can be maintained over the long term.

While the organizational structure is responsible for the CIP assessment, ICANN org may be available to provide support. This support may include support from ICANN Policy support in gathering, storing, and reviewing documentation or support from ICANN GDS in developing and administering surveys and analyzing data. Once the working group determines what support is needed for the assessment, a request should be made through existing organizational mechanisms.

Documenting the Assessment Plan

Documenting the CIP assessment plan offers transparency throughout the implementation process. The information in the assessment plan can be documented in a table format as shown in Table 5. The working group may also choose to use the template created by ICANN org.

Table 5. Example of documenting the CIP assessment plan

	Target Value	Actual Value	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Notes
Principle 2. The structures of SO, AC, or NomCom are effective							
SO(1) sets clear, achievable goals aligned with its mission.							
XX% of the goals outlined in SO(1)'s Strategic Plan mention the purpose.	XX%		Strategic Plan	Document review	Once, Q2 2026	John Doe	
At least XX% of surveyed constituents understood how SO(1)'s goals aligned with its purpose.	XX%		Constituent perceptions	CIP Survey	Once, Q1 2026	Survey Development: ICANN org/CIP Working Group Data collection: Working group Data cleaning and summary: ICANN org Recording: Working group	
SO(1) published at least XX update reports tracking progress toward achievable goals in the last year.	XX%		Quarterly reports	Document review	Quarterly, Q2 2025 - Q2 2026	CIP Working Group	

1.2 Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection is at the heart of the CIP assessment. Data collection provides the information needed to measure performance against indicators, identify trends and patterns, and ensures transparency by demonstrating progress objectively. Data should be collected following the assessment plan established by the working group.

CIP Survey

Each organizational structure has the opportunity to administer a CIP Survey. ICANN org will support the development of the CIP Survey, which will be designed to capture feedback aligned with the 5 principles established in the CIP Framework. In addition, the survey will provide an opportunity to gather specific insights aligned with individual organizational structure CIP assessment plans.

The CIP Survey will be designed by ICANN org to include a set of standard questions used across all ICANN structures. Working groups may work with ICANN org to lightly tailor the survey to reflect the priorities of their individual CIP and collect specific feedback as identified in their CIP assessment plans.

Working groups will identify relevant target audiences for the survey.

Once the survey questionnaire has been developed and agreed by ICANN org and the working group, ICANN org will upload the survey questionnaire into the appropriate survey platform and provide the working group the relevant links for distribution. The survey will remain open for an agreed upon timeframe, not to exceed four weeks.

Once the survey is closed, ICANN org will clean and compile relevant data. ICANN org will provide the working group with cleaned, anonymized raw data, and a summary report with relevant tables and charts.

Data Tracking and Storage

Working groups may wish to consider maintaining a tracker or other centralized record of the data as it is collected. This tracker could include a notes or actions section that provides a living record of data collection progress for transparency and continuity. This could include information about when the data was last collected, whether data collection is complete for a specific indicator, or what data is still missing. Tracking data collection will facilitate a comparison of actual results with the targets established in each indicator. This can be tracked in the data assessment plan template or in a separate spreadsheet

Relevant data should be stored in a Google Drive. Data storage and retention practices should follow existing organizational policies and procedures to ensure compliance with data security privacy standards. Procedures should be documented to ensure sustainability and continuity of the CIP.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis will vary depending on the type of data collected. With quantitative data, for example, analysis typically involves calculating frequencies, percentages, or averages while qualitative data analysis involves identifying themes that reflect participant experiences or perspectives. Working groups should approach analysis systematically and transparently, using consistent coding methods and documenting decisions to ensure objectivity and validity of findings.

Once data has been collected and analyzed, working groups can **interpret the data to understand the meaning of the findings**. Working groups can compare actual values for each indicator to the established targets. In doing so, groups may wish to identify where actual values met, exceeded, or fell short of established targeted values.

While the organizational structure should lead the CIP assessment, including data analysis and interpretation, ICANN org may be available to provide additional support. This may include support from ICANN GDS with statistical analysis, data visualization, and interpretation, where relevant. As noted above, requests for support should be made through existing organizational mechanisms.

Working groups may choose to use the template created by ICANN org to facilitate data analysis and interpretation.

1.3 Planning for Continuous Improvement Work

To plan for improvement activities, working groups can start by **identifying priority areas of improvement**. To do so, they may wish to focus on areas where indicators fell short of established targets. Utilizing existing prioritization processes, working groups can rank areas of improvement for prioritized improvement work (e.g., P1-P4). This prioritization may consider whether an area is mission-critical, affecting multiple indicators across principles, or has been raised by stakeholders in the CIP Survey as an area that should be prioritized.

Once priority areas of improvement have been identified, working groups may wish to **brainstorm various improvement activities** that may be implemented to address prioritized areas of improvement. This can be accomplished as a workshop with the designated CIP working group, asynchronously through written feedback, or through broader stakeholder engagement in a focus group or discussion session with relevant constituents. These conversations may include discussion around the following questions:

- What is preventing the SO, AC, or NomCom from meeting the target in this area?
- What could be causing this issue?
- What barriers could be preventing success in this area?

- What change could lead to improvement?
- Are there existing practices or tools that can be utilized or strengthened to help make improvement?
- Have this or another SO, AC, or NomCom faced this kind of challenge before? What worked?
- Are there best practices or models we can follow?

Organizing ideas generated into themes may help the working group make sense of the information, identify common threads, and reduce duplication. This also helps turn ideas into actionable improvements.

To facilitate the process, working groups may wish to consider:

- **Diverse input:** Involving a diverse range of constituents in the process of brainstorming improvement activity ideas ensures that the improvements reflect a range of experiences, areas of expertise, and needs across the structure.
- **Generating a wide range of improvement activity ideas:** Encouraging a wide range of ideas allows the working group to uncover creative, unexpected, and innovative solutions to implement through continuous improvements.
- **Feasibility:** Assessing feasibility of improvement activity ideas helps ensure that selected improvements are realistic to implement given the current resources, timeline, and capacity available.

Effective implementation of improvement activities relies on thoughtful planning. Once improvement activities have been identified, working groups can plan for implementation. This includes identifying key tasks or work phases of implementation for each improvement activity. A detailed workplan can help guide execution. Work plans can clearly outline the specific tasks, target timelines, resources required, and team or individual responsible for each aspect of implementation. Using tools like Google Sheets, can help centralize planning, facilitate transparency, and reduce ambiguity.

When estimating resource needs through planning working groups can be better equipped to make necessary budget and resource requests through their structure's established processes. This may help ensure necessary resources are available to support successful implementation of improvement activities.

Suggested Milestone: Publication of Phase 1 Output

Working groups are encouraged to publish output from the Assessment and Prioritization phase of the CIP cycle on their organizational structure's dedicated CIP wiki. This can include their tailored criteria and indicators, areas of improvement identified by the working group, and agreed upon prioritized continuous improvement activities. Plans for implementing prioritized improvement activities may also be published. Publishing not only provides a checkpoint to assess whether CIP initiatives are on track, but offers an artifact to document the process.

2. Improvements Phase

2.1 Carrying out Improvement Activities

Project management **good practices should be adopted to track implementation of improvement activities**. This ensures accountability and facilitates reporting on progress made throughout the CIP cycle. Best practices include setting clear milestones, regular check-ins with responsible parties, and utilizing structured progress tracking tools. These tools can include shared tracking sheets that document status, achievements, delays, and adjustments to improvement activities.

3. Reporting Phase

Reporting is a critical component of the CIP assessment. Reporting fosters transparency, accountability, and learning. CIP reporting requirements have been established to promote consistency across structures and help working groups track progress, identify areas of improvement, and make informed decisions. There is **one required reporting milestone**–the Progress Report–to be published by the end of the third year of a CIP cycle.

3.1 Reflection on Progress

Prior to drafting the Progress Report, working groups should analyze progress achieved on planned prioritized improvement work. Areas to consider may include activities implemented, resources utilized, successes or areas where goals have been achieved, challenges or areas where barriers have been encountered in implementation of improvement activities, and next steps or recommendations for the next CIP cycle.

3.2 Progress report

The Progress Report offers transparency into how the working group implemented its organizational structure's CIP and facilitates accountability that the CIP is carried out as planned. Progress Reports also offer a clear record of the targets established and data collected by the working group to inform adjustments over time and ensure CIP assessments can be refined to improve effectiveness.

The Progress Report can build on the information published on the CIP wiki after the Assessment and Prioritization Phase, indicating the areas explored using the CIP Framework (i.e., criteria and indicators) and noting the areas of improvement identified in the assessment. The Progress Report should also provide a structured update on the progress of planned prioritized continuous improvements. ICANN org may be available to provide support in the process of analyzing progress and drafting the Progress Report. Requests for support should be made through existing processes.

Progress Reports are to be published for Public Comment and can follow the template provided by ICANN org.

4. Additional Resources

1. https://meera.seas.umich.edu/step3.html
2. https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/24531
3. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/evaluation-in-health-and-wellbeing-planning
4. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4592485/
5. https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/how-develop-indicators
6. https://registries.ncats.nih.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RaDaR_DataQualityControlChecklist.pdf
7. https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/UNEG%2520Norms%2520%2520Standards%2520for%2520Evaluation_WEB.pdf
8. https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/780ca41d-b02c-4071-9d82-5368dd11c853/hse-75-10792_x03.pdf.aspx
9. https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Indicators.pdf

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