



**Comments on ITEMS
Organisational Review of ICANN's
Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO)
September 15, 2010**

The Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) is the not-for-profit corporation responsible for operating the .ca country code top level domain. CIRA is a member of ICANN's country code Name Supporting Organisation (ccNSO) and a member of CENTR, an association of Internet Country Code Top Level Domain Registries. CIRA is pleased to have the opportunity to provide comments on the ITEMS Organisational Review of ICANN's Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO).

We would like to begin by making the general comment that, throughout the report, there are numerous proposals to incur more costs in an attempt to address various issues within the ccNSO. However, a Financial Contributions Working Group has recently been formed, which has as its mandate to assist in resolving how much and how ccTLDs contribute financially to ICANN. We do not agree with increasing resources for any recommendation in the report until the ccTLD contributions issues have been sorted out.

CIRA would also like to address some comments reproduced in the report, directly critiquing the ccNSO chair (not the function, but the person). These comments are unreasonable, given the current circumstances and structure of the ccNSO, and the time, energy and expertise demands on the ccNSO chair. As well, comments on personnel are not appropriate in a review of organisational effectiveness and structure.

We have included comments on specific recommendations below.

Recommendation 1

The ccNSO should consider the adoption of alternative, consensus-based, lighter and faster policy development mechanisms: a) A comments mechanism would allow the ccNSO to provide a prompt response to a request from ICANN's Board or another Supporting Organisation. b) A position paper mechanism would allow the ccNSO to elaborate common Statements on relevant ccTLD issues in a way that reflects the general position of the ccTLD community. The fast tracked comment mechanism as with the position paper mechanism would be non-binding to ccNSO members.

CIRA Comment

We disagree with developing a new prescriptive process, and believe that the range of mechanisms currently in place fill the needs raised in the report. Some examples include:

- Direct letters to the ICANN Board, Chairman or staff, from the Chair of the ccNSO or the ccNSO Council;
- Draft papers developed by Working and Study Groups that are released for public comment and communicated to other SOs and ACs;
- Written commentary developed by an individual member (typically on an issue where they have particular expertise) that is circulated to all members for refinement and adoption;
- Face-to-face or teleconference discussions among the ccNSO Council or members;
- Face-to-face or teleconference discussions with the ICANN Board or staff; and
- Calls for member comment sent to the membership or posted on the ccNSO website.

Recommendation 2

Consider the translation into the main UN languages of key documents concerning and produced by the ccNSO (Bylaws, the Rules and Guidelines document, major Policy papers) of a brief summary of ccNSO position paper.

Recommendation 3

Due to the significant cost of translating documents on a regular basis we suggest that the task of translating all documents related to the ccNSO's activity could be carried by the ccNSO membership itself. This could be facilitated by the setting up of a multilingual wiki (as used by Wikipedia). In this way, the translation of documents would become the responsibility of the linguistic communities themselves, and there need be no limit to the number of languages that documents could be translated into. If such a mechanism were adopted we would also suggest the appointing by the Council of a "linguistic community manager" for each language who would have responsibility to check the accuracy of the translations.

CIRA Comment

We agree that availability of translated documents is important to increasing transparency, accountability and participation. However, the notion of the members taking on the costs or duty of translating documents could be practically and logistically challenging. A more thorough consideration of options and methodology is needed.

Recommendation 4

The ccNSO staff should regularly engage in outreach activities to enlarge membership / better communication with non-members. ICANN should increase resources in order to propose attractive and value-added services for the ccTLD community. These value added services would require a dedicated "online community manager" whose responsibilities it would be to attract new members, especially from underrepresented regions.

CIRA Comment

We consider that the ccNSO is already moving in the right direction with respect to recruiting new members, and that as interest and trust in ICANN improves, we are certain a similar rise in participation in ccNSO will occur.

As well, we advocate a mentorship program among members, especially councillors. For example, councillors could be shadowed during one ICANN meeting by new members (or anyone who is interested in such a program). This could ease the transition for new members and encourage increased participation.

ITEMS Comment/Recommendation

Relations with other constituency groups could also be reinforced. We draw special attention to global cc registrars and registrants many of whom operate on a global basis, in coordination with their national ccTLD Manager. Both constituencies are likely to be affected by ccTLDs policies, and both are already represented within the ICANN system. Registrars are represented within the GNSO through the 'Registrar Stakeholder Group', one of the six constituencies of the GNSO, and Registrants are represented in GNSO by "Commercial and businesses" constituency. Within GNSO, both constituencies play an active part to play in policy-shaping regarding gTLD issues. A working group could be setup in order to formalize coordination processes with registrars and registrants represented in GNSO, especially those who operate on a global basis.

Recommendation 6

When ccNSO develops a policy which could impact the activity of registrars and registrants, ccNSO should be able to collect their position.

CIRA Comment

Generally "ccTLD policies" are subject to national policy development processes, and consultation with the global registrar and registrant interest groups represented in the GNSO does not make sense in national policy development.

With respect to ccNSO policy development, existing mechanisms for consultation with the GNSO sufficiently facilitate the engagement of registrars and registrants.

ITEMS Comment/Recommendation

The ccNSO website is an essential source of information regarding the activities of the organisation yet the current version of site is outdated-looking and offers little functionality. A thorough redesign of the site is under way and we have obtained plans for the rationalisation of the site's architecture with the addition of new features. In addition to these, we recommend the introduction of user-friendly social networking tools e.g. to allow regional, language or script-based sub-groups to form and exchange and RSS feeds.

Improvements could also be made to the individual “profile pages” to allow members to enter and keep their profile information up to date.

Recommendation 7

Beyond the ongoing improvement of the website, we recommend the implementation of a collaborative networking tool allowing ccNSO to create subgroups based on thematic, regional, linguistic grounds. Such a tool could include wiki, agenda, project management functions and allow members to update their own contact details within the register of all ccNSO participants. Articulation of this collaborative tool with existing mailing lists has to be studied. Such a tool would be helpful for the animation of the ccNSO community as well for attracting new members. Animation of such a tool requires “community management” capabilities.

CIRA Comment

We agree that the website should be the central, online meeting place of the ccNSO and be an information coordination mechanism. Ongoing discussion could be advanced with the ccNSO website. We advocate using existing tools (such as adobe connect) and social networking tools (such as twitter, youtube and facebook) and not commit to any more spending until the ccTLD Contributions issues have been sorted out.

Recommendation 10

ccNSO should consider clarifying of the respective roles of the Council and the Chair in the ccNSO Rules and guidelines.

CIRA Comment

CIRA agrees that the respective roles of the councillors and chair should be clarified. We believe that this accomplishment may also assist in recruiting new councillors and would address the ITEMS report’s concerns with the lack of candidates.

Recommendation 11

The ICANN Expenditure Analysis by Stakeholder Interest Area represents a major progress in term of understanding the allocation of ICANN budget towards ccTLD and ccNSO operations. In the interests of the members of the ccNSO and the broader ccTLD community, we recommend the institution of a permanent Finance Liaison (a designated member of the Council) whose responsibility will be to act as a gobetween with ICANN’s Finance Department and to ensure complete transparency regarding this issue and any other budgetary matters linked to the activities of the ccNSO and ccTLDs. The next release of ICANN Expenditure Analysis by Stakeholder Interest Area could be an opportunity to reduce the “perception gap”.

CIRA Comment

We disagree with the recommendation for a Finance Liaison. The Strategic and Operational Planning Working Group facilitates open and direct discussion with the CFO of ICANN and providing comments to ICANN on its budgeting and planning process.

Recommendation 12

The ccNSO should develop and publish annually a policy road map for the next two to three years to act as a strategy document for current and upcoming policy work and as a general marketing tool for information purposes within and outside the ICANN community.

CIRA Comment

We agree with this recommendation. A 2-3 year strategic road map would assist with setting objectives, task distribution, and performance measurement.