

Terms of Reference-

IANA role in ccTLD Disaster Recovery Study Group

Draft - June 2025

Adopted by Council [insert date]

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1. Introduction

The IANA has informed the ccNSO Council of several concerns including issues relating to IANA's role with respect to disaster recovery of ccTLDs.

In May 2025, the PGA WG recommended the ccNSO Council to establish a Study Group to explore and advise the ccNSO Council on the role of IANA, if any with respect to disaster recovery of ccTLDs.

The rationale for this recommendations is:

- There is no current role for IANA, but participants seem interested in exploring this.
- Because there is no current role, there is no existing policy to have to account for - a relatively "blank page" study can occur.
- There is significant public interest in ccTLDs being resilient and available even when disaster strikes, so discerning whether IANA has a role in this can help with ICANN's overall support of a stable and secure Internet.

Following the recommendation of the PGA, the ccNSO Council decided to set-up a Study Group as suggested.

2. Purpose of the Study Group Disaster Recovery

The study group is established by the ccNSO Council to provide to the ccTLD community, the ccNSO Council a comprehensive overview of the issues and the scope of the issues associated with IANA's role, if any, with respect to disaster recovery of ccTLDs.

If deemed appropriate, the Study Group is expected to make recommendations to the ccNSO Council on whether any new policy, interpretation, or practice are needed as potential next steps.

3. Scope of activities

Generally, disaster recovery for a ccTLD is considered wholly the responsibility for the ccTLD manager and its local community to address. However, when it is not addressed, parties often look to IANA for mechanisms for disaster recovery, and IANA is expected to do what it reasonably can to address threats to the operation of a ccTLD.

The Study Group is tasked with exploring key questions surrounding what, if any, requirements should be established around IANA's role in ccTLD disaster recovery and/or the ability to sustain ongoing operations of the domain in the case of disaster or non-compliance with global policies.

Another area of disaster recovery is where ccTLD managers have sought to make private arrangements with IANA on special procedures to perform in such emergencies. In essence, the ccTLD manager would seek to pre-define a set of conditions under which IANA would seek to recognize another party to manage the domain, through mutual agreement.

With respect to this second area of private arrangements, the Study Group is tasked to explore mandate and implementation clarity. Understanding and setting out the types of arrangements IANA can and cannot engage in would increase transparency.

The Study Group may develop guidance about the IANA's role in ccTLD disaster recovery and the sorts of private arrangements it can and cannot enter into. IANA could agree to abide by such an output, which it would be involved in creating, and on which the policy framework is silent.

In exploring the issues and current practices, and developing practices to guide both IANA and ccTLDs the Study Group is strongly encouraged to engage with the ccNSO TLD-Ops

Committee and other parties or groups which are active in this area and considered relevant.

However, in exploring the issues and developing practices the Study Group must avoid stepping into how ccTLD are run, and by doing so overstepping the remit of ccNSO.

If appropriate, the Study Group may make recommendations to the ccNSO Council regarding the need for new practices to support improvements in these areas.

4. Working method & Deliverables

The Study Group is expected to:

- Scope and further detail its work, deliverables and working methods. In doing so the following is considered important:

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Study the issue from multiple perspectives, i.e.

- I. From IANA's perspective
- II. From a ccTLD manager perspective
- III. From other ICANN SO/AC perspectives

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Identify current guidance, practices and methods, with a focus on whether practice is suitably backed up by policy or not, and whether there are any gaps in practice

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Seek data and factual documentation to scope the issue

- If deemed appropriate and necessary, conduct sessions at ccNSO meetings or virtually between the ICANN meetings, to inform the community of its progress and seek views of the community.
- Provide a final report of its findings to the ccNSO Council by [insert date]

Detailing the working method, deliverables and timelines are considered important to ensure progress can be monitored and timely completion is ensured.

5. Reporting

The Chair of the Study Group will report regularly through email or in person to the ccNSO Council and the ccNSO membership and ccTLD community.

6. Membership and chairs

Membership of the Study Group is open to representatives of all ccTLD managers (whether members of the ccNSO or not). At least one of the WG members should be a ccNSO Councillor.

The ccNSO Council appoints the members of the WG.

ccTLD regional organizations may nominate a liaison to be confirmed by the ccNSO Council.

The Chair of the Study Group may invite other ICANN Supporting Organisations (SO) and/or Advisory Committees (AC) or constituencies to appoint a participant. The chair and vice-chair of ccNSO TLD-ops steering committee are invited to participate ex-officio.

It is expected that IANA staff will be involved with this work as experts. The Chair of the Study Group may also request other ICANN Staff to participate in (part of) a meeting of the Study Group as Experts.

The Chair may invite individuals with expert knowledge in an area the Study Group is discussing (experts).

Liaisons, Participants and Experts participate on an equal footing in the deliberations and sessions of the Study Group with Members, unless the Chair of the Study Group explicitly requests Liaisons, Participants and/or Experts to refrain from actively participating in a specific meeting. Participants or Experts shall not participate in the process of seeking out and fostering involvement and input from ccTLD managers.

Other members of the broader community may attend meetings of the WG that are designated as “open” as Observer. However, Observers are not expected to participate actively in the proceedings of the WG.

The list of members, liaisons, participants, experts and observers is published on the relevant ccNSO webpage by the ccNSO Secretariat. The members archive is kept for five years after closure of the WG.

Staff support. Support is provided by ICANN's ccNSO Support staff.

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group. The ccNSO Council will appoint one of its Councillors as chair, and invite the Study group to nominate a vice-chair from among its members. The vice-chair has to be formally appointed by Council.

The Chair will manage ongoing activities and ensure an appropriate working environment by:

- Promptly sharing the relevant information with the entire WG.
- Planning the work of the WG in order to achieve its objective and lead the WG through its discussions.
- Monthly assess and report on progress of the WG on the various activities and on achieving the objective of the WG.
- Keeping track of participation.

The Vice-Chair will work in close cooperation with the Chair and take on any responsibilities of the Chair, when so requested and all responsibilities in case of absence of the Chair.

7. Closure

The study group closes at the end of the ccNSO Council meeting the final report has been discussed by the ccNSO Council, but no later than the ccNSO Council meeting at ICANN86 (June 2026).

8. Miscellaneous

Review of Terms of Reference and activities of the Study Group. A review of this Terms of Reference and activities will take place when considered necessary by the Study Group or Council.

Update of the Terms of Reference. The Update of the ToR is effective after it has been adopted by the ccNSO Council and has been published on the ccNSO website. Before the Council adopts the amended ToR, the members of the Study Group need to express support for the changes. Before publishing the updated ToR, the ccNSO Secretariat will include the version number and insert the date of adoption.

Omission or unreasonable impact of the Terms Of Reference. If this ToR does not provide guidance, and/or the impact is unreasonable to conduct the business of the Study Group, the Chair of the Study Group, after consulting the members, will decide on the most appropriate remedy.

In addition to these Terms of Reference the Guidelines: ccNSO Collaboration Groups with Limited Scope (see: https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_47779/guidelines-collaboration-groups-30mar16-en.pdf) are applicable. In case of conflict between the Guidelines and the Term of Reference, these terms of reference prevail.

9. Background material

- [Final Report PGA WG](#)
- IANA's [Topic Areas for ccTLD Policy Reviews](#)
- [ccNSO TLD-Ops background material](#)