

ICCF Services Director's Report to Congress; 2025

Austin Lockwood, ICCF Services Director, August 2025

Dear friends,

It has been a difficult year for development, as the need for financial restraint has significantly limited many of the projects that I would like to have worked on, we have completed nothing more than essential work and maintenance, and I have deliberately not proposed any major website development work with these concerns in mind. I do, however, have every confidence that the financial measures proposed by the Executive Board will put ICCF on a much firmer financial footing in years to come if accepted by the member federations, and I hope that you, as delegates, will give me more freedom to propose some significant new developments for our website in 2026 and beyond.

Austin Lockwood

Major Projects

Website Redesign

I mentioned this project in my report to Congress for 2024, however with the need to restructure ICCF finances, I have not proposed a budget for website development to this year's Congress.

The issue has not gone away, our website is approaching fifteen years old, which is ancient in the fast-moving world of the Internet. Compare our dated website with the modern slick interfaces of Chess.com or Lichess and the issue becomes immediately apparent, our website is old, it looks old, and we are competing against modern providers with software development budgets many thousands of times greater than ours, commercial budgets that we can only dream about.

I am not suggesting that we should compete directly with the large generic chess websites, to do so would be impossible for a non-commercial organisation like ICCF, and our market is highly specialised – we focus on a very specific product appealing to a very small minority of chess players – no more than a few thousand worldwide, but we do what we do very well and we should continue to focus on that market. However, we can no longer depend entirely on tired and outdated tropes like “*FIDE recognition*”, or “*official titles*” to market ourselves, retain players, and attract new players. We need to spend some tens of thousands of Euros to present a modern and attractive image, our website is the window to ICCF.

I will spend some time to prepare a proposal for the 2026 Congress to invest in significant future website development, and hope that ICCF has the financial stability in coming years to be able to realise this investment.

Website Hosting

Our website is currently hosted on a virtual machine, rented from a UK based hosting company. In recent years, the cost of this hosting has increased significantly, and the level of support offered by the company has decreased.

Many modern websites are now hosted "*in the cloud*" using a network of virtual servers with technology from, for example, Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services, or Google Cloud. Key benefits include decreased costs, and reliability and stability of scale.

We are currently analysing our current website software to determine its compatibility with cloud hosting services, with a view to moving to an appropriate service before the end of the year. There will be a short-term impact of around ten thousand Euros as we will need to make some changes to the application, but overall, we estimate the annual savings to be in the region of between three and four thousand Euros.

Financial Reporting

The project to automate reports and invoices for the ICCF Finance Director, which I reported on last year, is now complete, and we were able to save the Finance Director considerable time and effort when generating the invoices for member federations for 2024.

2024 Congress Proposals: Implementation Review

2024-001a Redefine "Fixed Rating"

Changes to the ratinglist were applied as described by the proposal

2024-001b Guidelines for Tournament Entry Rating Requirement

Entry criteria for tournaments with ratings restrictions were updated in the software, as described by the proposal

2024-002b Allow the use of the Tournament Management Committee for Tournaments Requiring a Level Two TD

The software was updated to allow the selection of the TMC for events requiring a Level 2 TD.

2024-003 Rules Director

No update of the website software was required.

2024-004 Financial Reports -- Review and Approval

No update of the website software was required.

2024-020 Defining "isolated player"

No update of the website software was required.

2024-021 Procedure for player transfer from MF represented to isolated player status

No update of the website software was required.

2024-022 When a player never starts playing in an event

Games are no longer cancelled when either of two things happen: (1) no moves are made by a player in an event and the player gets an ETL, or (2) the TD in a non-server tournament enters a result and checks the checkbox "no move made in the tournament".

2024-023 Time limit for responding to request for transfer

No update of the website software was required.

2024-024 Requiring use of all ICCF rules for any rated event

The software was updated to require ICCF rules for all rated events starting from 1st January 2025.

2024-025 Determining the flag for isolated players

The rating commissioner now has a button "Edit flag country" for players showing the international flag.

On the player details page, if the player represents "International" and has a different flag set, this flag is shown instead of the international flag.

2024-026 Clarifying the rules for multiple-flag events

Country of residence is no longer included in eligibility checks.

2024-027 A more positively oriented code of conduct for players

No update of the website software was required.

2024-028 A more positively oriented code of conduct for tournament organizers

No update of the website software was required.

2024-029 Allowing TDs to move reflection time in triple block events

The TD (or the backup TD if the TD is on leave), or the members of the TMC, now have access to the "Manage Bank" screen.

2024-030 If proposal 2024-045 is approved

No update of the website software was required.

2024-031 A more positively oriented code of conduct for team captains

No update of the website software was required.

2024-042 Approve Isolated Player Support Office Budget for 2024-2025

No update of the website software was required.

2024-045 Prediction Criterion as Optional First Tiebreak Rule

Prediction Criterion is now deployed to the website and available to use as a tiebreak for individual tournaments.

2024-046 Awarding of titles

No update of the website software was required.

2024-047 No entry fee for advanced players in world championships

No update of the website software was required.

2024-049 Updated rules after implementing the new rating system

No update of the website software was required.

2024-053 2025 ICCF Congress - Offer to Host – Budapest

No update of the website software was required.

Other Work Completed Since the 2024 Congress

- #1554 New Accounting System
- #1991 Gift DE event registration to someone else
- #2011 Add an option for the TO to hide the number of waiting registered players on the New Events Page
- #2129 Simplify creating an event
- #2145 Replace CK Editor with Summernote
- #2146 HTML sanitization with Summernote
- #2153 Allow transfer of event registrations in case of non-strict rating restrictions
- #2176 One new field for countries table
- #2177 Allow registrations to be marked as "Bye"
- #2196 Add validation to prevent multiple imports of the same rating list
- #2198 Email link on game page
- #2202 100 rating point rule for replacements should not apply if the reason for replacement is "allocation correction"
- #2205 Links to Congress Documents
- #2228 Update scheduled maintenance task to also delete application log files
- #2238 Updated text for death notification
- #2239 Only active adjudicators cannot be members of the TMC
- #2247 Remove Twitter link on homepage
- #2252 Disable "Payment confirmed" and "Bye" buttons after tournament started
- #2253 Tournament result message cut off if there are many winners
- #2255 Add new suspension reasons

- #2262 Text update about team tie breaking rule
- #2265 Change to substitution rules

Various bug fixes not detailed here.

Financial Spending (January – July 2025)

NB: These figures represent spending to date for 2025, not for the entire year. Development and testing costs typically increase in Q4 as Congress proposals are implemented, please refer to *“Evaluation and Costing of the 2025 Congress Proposals”* below for an estimate of those costs.

- Maintenance: €8,370
- Development: €6,975
- Testing: €800.25
- Hosting: €6,500
- Amazon Web Services (Email, storage, domain management): €600

Evaluation and Costing of the 2025 Congress Proposals

2025-030 Organization of a New Chess 960 Event

No website development work necessary.

2025-031 Reimplementation of the Pan American Team Championship

No website development work necessary.

2025-032 Creation of a Biennial Highest Rated Tournament

No website development work necessary.

2025-033 Time Control Clarification and Adjustment (Time Control A: No Carryover)

The estimated cost of implementing this option on the website is €600.

2025-034 Cumulative Time Limit Adjustment (Time Control B: 50 Days Carryover)

The estimated cost of implementing this option on the website is €600.

2025-035 Change to Official ICCF Time Control - Option B - 10 moves in 40 days

This option is already available, so there would be no development cost.

2025-036 Change to Official ICCF Time Control - Option C - Triple Block

This option is already available on the website, so there would be no development cost.

2025-037 Change in Official ICCF's Time Control

The proposer states that "Changes would need to be implemented in the ICCF server software", however these changes are not specified. The software already supports the Triple Block time control, so no estimate has been made for implementation.

2025-038 Change the Number of Open Tournaments a National Federation may Run up a Year

No website development work necessary.

2025-039 Include Qualification Routes for European and ROW Finals into the Individual World Championship Cycle

No website development work necessary.

2025-040 Adding a New Time Control

Assuming that time is measured exactly (and not counted in full days, as the classical time control), then implementing this proposal would be simply a matter of allowing some new parameters for the Triple Block time control. Estimated cost of implementation €300.

2025-041 Allow Direct Invitations for Invitational Tournaments

No website development work necessary.

2025-042 Updating the Regulations of the ICCF Disciplinary Committee

No website development work necessary.

2025-043 Enlargement of the Number of Members of the Disciplinary Committee

No website development work necessary.

2025-050 Multiple Accounts by an Individual

There is no website development work implied directly by this proposal, so the cost is zero.

However the development of detection software may prove to be necessary in the future, the cost of this work will be estimated as the specification is developed.

2025-051 Counting ICCF Thematic Tournaments Towards the IA title

Although the proposer has indicated that no website development work would be necessary to implement this proposal, the website software does count games towards the IA title, so there is a small change in the requirements. Estimated cost of implementation €300.

2025-052 Balancing the TMC with Opportunities for Level 1 and 2 TDs to become IAs

Estimated cost of implementation €300.

2025-053 Correcting the Rule Related to the Resetting of Clocks

No website development work necessary.

2025-054 Making Rated International Team Events and Rated National Team Events Consistent

No website development work necessary.

2025-055 Deleting Reference in ICCF Rules to Retroactive Leave

No website development work necessary.

2025-056 The Option to Vote "Not in Favor" of an Unopposed Candidate (Requires 2/3 Votes)

The election of personnel is not conducted through the online voting system, so no website development work would be necessary.

2025-057 Approval of MF-Sponsored Opens and Invitationals

No website development work necessary.

2025-058 "Rated" Means Allowing Computer Use

No website development work necessary.

2025-059 A New Solution for the Games of the Deceased

The estimated cost of re-implementing the adjudication system on the website as specified by the proposal is €1,200.

2025-060 Similar Rules for World CC Championship and European/RoW Championship

No website development work necessary.

2025-061 Suspension of ICCF Players Representing Russia

No website development work necessary.

2025-062 Suspension of ICCF Players Representing Belarus

No website development work necessary.

2025-063 Introduction of New ICCF Award - ICCF Presidential Citation

As the proposal does not include showing this award on the recipient's profile page, no development costs are anticipated. If there is a future proposal to show this award on the profile page, then there would be a cost implied.

2025-070 Offer to Host the 2026 ICCF Congress in Manila, Philippines

No website development work necessary.

2025-071 ICCF Congress - ICCF Contribution

No website development work necessary.

2025-072 Offer to Host the 2026 ICCF Congress in Germany

No website development work necessary.

2025-080 Review and Approve the Financial Reports and Plan

No website development work necessary.

2025-081 Allocate Free Entries to Isolated Players

No website development work necessary.

2025-082 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 1 - Elimination of Prize Money

No website development work necessary.

2025-083 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 2 - Elimination of Award of CCE/CCM Medals

No website development work necessary.

2025-084a ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 3 - Congress Scope Changes

No website development work necessary.

2025-084b Limit the Allowance for EB-Members and Commissioners

No website development work necessary.

2025-084c Replace the Closing Banquette at Congress with a More Casual "Finger Lunch".

No website development work necessary.

2025-085 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 4 - Add a Major ICCF Open Every Year

No website development work necessary.

2025-086 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 5 - Direct Entry (DE) Rebate to Member Federations

No website development work necessary.

2025-087 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 6 - Member Federation (MF) Open Changes

No website development work necessary.

2025-088 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 7 - Changes to Membership Fee

No website development work necessary.

2025-089 ICCF - Financial Proposals - Action 8 - Member Federation (MF) Free Games on the Server

No website development work necessary.

2025-090 Increase the Start Fees by 50 % in ICCF Tournaments

No website development work necessary.

2025-091 Generating Revenue by Sponsoring

The estimated cost of implementing the button, linking the button to the PayPal and Stripe payment processors, updating the accounting reports and the ratinglist, and displaying the new icon on the ratinglist is €2,400.

2025-092 Generating Revenue by Donations

The estimated cost of updating the PayPal and Stripe checkout process, updating the accounting reports and the ratinglist, processing refunded entries, and displaying the new icon on the ratinglist is €2,400.

Acknowledgements

Once again, I would like to thank all members of the Services Committee, the Helpdesk Team, the Qualifications and Ratings Teams, and the Webmaster Team for their support. I also thank our professional consultants, Martin Bennedik and his son Max for yet again providing ICCF with an exceptional level of professional service.

Rydym yn Ffrindiau – Amici Sumus

Appendix I: Services Committee Membership 2025/26

Ex Officio Members

- **Austin Lockwood (WLS), ICCF Services Director (Chair)**
- Mats Larsson (SWE), Deputy Services Director and Helpdesk Manager
- Eric Ruch (FRA), ICCF President
- Michael Millstone (USA), ICCF General Secretary
- Uwe Staroske (GER), ICCF World Tournament Director
- Tom Biedermann (USA), ICCF Entry Commissioner
- Dennis Doren (USA), ICCF Rules Director
- Jason Bokar (USA), ICCF Marketing Director
- ICCF Finance Director (vacant)

Ratings Commission

- **Phill Beckett (ENG), Ratings Commissioner**
- Austin Lockwood (WLS)

Qualifications Commission

- **Manfred Frerichs (GER), Qualifications Commissioner**
- Austin Lockwood (WLS)
- Matjaž Pirš (BUL)

Helpdesk Team

- **Mats Larsson (SWE), Helpdesk Manager**
- Austin Lockwood (WLS)
- Michael Millstone (USA)
- Phill Beckett (ENG)

Webmaster Team

NB: The Webmaster team is responsible to the ICCF Marketing Director for website content but associated with the Services Committee for technical support.

- **Mariusz Wojnar (POL)**

General Membership

- Gerhard Binder (GER)

Independent Professional Consultation

- Martin Bennedik
- Max Bennedik