NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

Application Comments Forum User Guide

String Confirmation Day

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ICANN

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Introduction

What is the Application Comments Forum?

The Application Comments Forum (ACF) allows users to submit and view comments on any new gTLD applications.

What are Application Comments?

Application comments are a mechanism for the public to bring relevant information and issues to the attention of ICANN, applicants, and evaluators.

When can Application Comments be submitted?

Comments can be submitted at any time starting on String Confirmation Day. The official comment window is open from 17 November 2026 to 16 March 2027. Application Change Requests that result in material changes to public portions of an application and .Brand String Change Requests will also be subject to a 30-day comment period. Comments submitted within these periods will be forwarded to the applicant and relevant evaluation panels.

Comments submitted outside of this period will be available for public review in the View Comments section of the forum.

Where can I find more information on Application Comments?

Section 4.1 Application Comments of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook specifies the information required from commenters as well as the workflow process for comments, depending on when they occur and if they are confidential or submitted publicly.

How does the ACF fit into the Applicant Journey?

The public has an opportunity to submit comments on posted applications on the ACF at any time following String Confirmation Day. Refer to Section 4.1 of the Guidebook for more information.

For a full overview of the applicant journey, see the New gTLD Applicant Journey.

About This User Guide

This user guide explains how all interested parties can use the ACF to find and submit New gTLD Program: 2026 Round application comments and applicant responses.

- Add a Comment - interested parties, including applicants, may comment on applications.

- Search all Comments - for comments submitted publicly, or a party's own comments whether confidential or public.
- View Comments - Anyone may view comments submitted publicly via the ACF.

> **Note:** This guide covers only the functionality of the ACF. The Application Publication and Statistics website can be used to determine which applications have open comment periods. See also Confidential Comments below.

Support

For help with questions not answered in this guide, contact globalsupport@icann.org.

Report Abuse

If you would like to report abuse or misuse of the ACF, please contact ICANN Global Support at globalsupport@icann.org.

Getting Started in the ACF

The ACF is publicly available; however, to submit a comment, commenters need to log in to an ICANN Account.

Log in or Create an ICANN Account

To log in to an ICANN Account to use the ACF:

- From the **View Comments** section of the Forum, click **Login** at top-right.
- Login to an existing ICANN Account.
- Create a new ICANN Account.

> **Note:** The ICANN Account Help page offers additional information and support for creating an ICANN Account.

Accept Terms of Use

On your first login to ACF, commenters are required to accept the **Terms of Use**.

To accept **Terms of Use**:

- Read the Terms of Use.
- Check the box next to **I Accept the Terms of Use.**
- Click **Continue.**

Set Up Profile

After accepting the **Terms of Use**, commenters are prompted to set up their ACF profile. In the profile, commenters indicate any affiliations with ICANN supporting organizations, advisory committees, or regional groups, and whether they have a relationship with any applicants or applications.

Edit Profile

After initial set-up, a commenter may edit their profile. Any comment made after the edits will reflect the updated responses.

To edit a profile:

- Click the commenter's name at top-right.
- Click **Settings.**
- Go to **the ACF Profile section** and click **Edit.**
- Edit responses to questions.
- Click **Save.**

> **Note: ACF Notification** settings can also be edited from the **Settings** page.

Navigate the Home Page - Site Header

The site header is located at the top of the ACF site and is available on every page. From the site header, navigate to:

- **Program Site** - the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round program website.
- **Applications** - the Application Publication and Statistics website, which lists all of the applications submitted in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, including information on applicants, applications, applied-for strings, and variants.
- **About** - overview of the purpose and use of ACF.
- **Help** - resources and support for ACF users.

Using ACF

ACF allows you to submit and view comments on any new gTLD application.

Refer to Section 4.12 of the Applicant Guidebook for detailed information on comment processes.

Confidential Comments

During official comment periods, if commenters have information related to confidential portions of an application that may not be appropriate to submit publicly, they can opt to submit a confidential comment. This confidential comment will only

be visible to ICANN, the applicant, and evaluators. To ensure transparency, this option can be used only for comments related to confidential portions of the application, and ICANN will review the comment before making it visible to the applicant and the relevant evaluators.

Comments Submitted Publicly

All comments not designated as a confidential comment are published to ACF, as are the applicant's responses to those comments. This applies to comments made during an official comment period, and when comment periods are closed, with the difference being that comments made during official comment periods are shared with evaluators.

Add a Comment

To ensure transparency and accountability, the submitter's full name (as collected through their ICANN Account), affiliation, and Statement of Interest (if applicable) will be displayed publicly as submitted and in real time, except for comments related to confidential portions of the application, as outlined in the Applicant Guidebook.

To submit a comment:

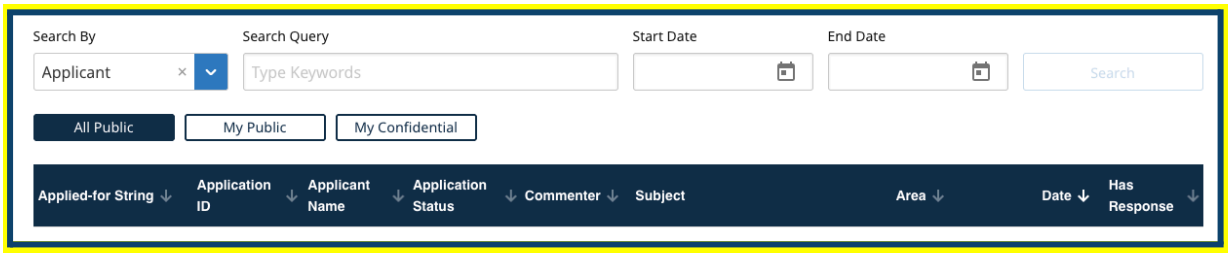
1. Go to the **View Comments** section of the ACF.
2. Click **Add Comment.**
3. Enter the **String and Variants** relevant to the comment.
4. If a confidential comment is desired during an official comment period, check the box **I am requesting my comment to be treated as confidential.**
5. Check the box to **Use the same information on my profile pertaining to my affiliation, statement of interest, relationships with applicant(s), and financial interest information.** If you do not check the box, you will be prompted to provide updated **Profile** information. See the Edit Profile section above for more information.
6. Select the **Applicant** related to the relevant string.
7. Select the **Area of Comment** of the application being commented on.

> **Note: Areas of Comment** are specific application evaluations or processes related to the comment. Go to the **Glossary** for definitions of each area.

8. Enter a **Subject** that summarizes the comment topic.
9. Provide a **Comment** and a rationale for your comment's relevance to the selected **Area.**
10. If desired, upload up to two PDF attachments under 5MB each in size.
11. Check the box to attest to the intent of the comment.
12. Check the reCAPTCHA box.
13. Click **Submit.**

View Comments

Anyone may view comments that were submitted publicly in the ACF via the View Comments section. An ICANN Account and ACF profile is not required to view comments. After logging in, users can view comments submitted publicly, as well as their own confidential comments.



Search all Comments

To search applications by keyword:

1. Go to the **ACF** home page.
2. Go to the **Search By** field and click the down-arrow.
3. Select an option from the menu to select the field to search (Applicant, Application ID, String and Variants, Commenter, Area, Application Status).
4. In the **Search Query** field, enter the desired keyword or select a value from the drop-down list.

To search by comment date range:

5. In the **Start Date** field click the calendar icon and select a date.
6. In the **End Date** field click the calendar icon and select a date.

To search applications using filters, select one of the comment filters:

- **All Public** - all comments submitted publicly appear.
- **My Public** - only a user's comments submitted publicly appear.
- **My Confidential** - only a user's confidential comments appear.

To sort comment search results alphabetically:

1. Go to the search results table.
2. Click a column header to sort the table alphabetically (A-Z) by that column.
3. Click again to sort the table reverse alphabetically (Z-A) by that column.

To display more than 10 results per page:

1. Go to the search results table.
2. Below the table, click the drop-down arrow next to **Items per page** to select a larger number of results to display.

Editing or Withdrawing a Comment

Once a comment is submitted, it cannot be edited or deleted by the commenter. If you need to correct or withdraw a comment, contact ICANN Global Support at globalsupport@icann.org. ICANN may remove or annotate comments in accordance with ICANN's Open Comment Forum Process and Standards.

Appendix: Areas of Comment

Below are high-level descriptions of the Areas of Comment, including references to the relevant section of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook, the authoritative source of information about the round.

- **String Similarity Evaluation** aims to prevent user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from delegation of visually similar strings. See Section 7.10.
- **Geographic Names Identification and Review** pertains to the identification of Geographic Names, determination whether a string is a Geographic Name, and verification of the required documentation. See Sections 7.5.3.1 and 7.5.3.2.
- **Reserved Names Review** is meant to verify whether the entity applying for a string that appears on the Reserved Names list is the entity for which the name was reserved and to review the required documentation. See Section 7.2.2.3.
- **Community Priority Evaluation** determines whether a Community Application fulfills certain specified criteria and can receive priority in a contention set. See Section 5.4.
- **Financial and Operational Evaluation** assesses whether an applicant has the financial and operational capacity to sustain the registry long-term and has implemented reasonable safeguards to ensure robust business operations and address abuse concerns. See Section 6.2.
- **Background Screening** aims to ensure that only established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing are eligible to apply for a new gTLD. See Section 6.1.
- **Variant String Evaluation** evaluates the justification for the selection of allocatable variant strings. See Section 7.6.
- **Safeguard Assessment** determines if an applied-for string is required to have specific safeguards related to consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets as contractual obligations in the applicable Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8.2.
- **Registry Commitments Evaluation: Registry Voluntary Commitments Evaluation** determines whether the proposed Registry Voluntary Commitment meets the specified evaluation criteria for ICANN's approval to include the commitment in Specification 11 of the Base Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8.3.2.
- **Registry Commitments Evaluation: Community Registration Policies Evaluation** assesses whether the proposed Community Registration Policies can be included in Specification 12 of the Base Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8.3.2.
- **Registry Services Provider (RSP) Review** verifies whether the applicant has selected one or more evaluated RSPs as part of its application and reviews

the selected RSP(s)' willingness and capacity to support the gTLD. See Section 7.9.

- **.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation** confirms whether the application meets the criteria for a .Brand TLD designation, for inclusion of Specification 13 to the applicant's Registry Agreement. See Section 7.3.
- **Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation** determines whether an applicant may be granted an exemption from the Registry Operator Code of Conduct included in Specification 9 of the Registry Agreement.
- **Objections:** Note that comments with the “Objections” area of comment will not be considered as formal objections and will not by themselves block an application from being evaluated. Objections must be filed with the relevant Dispute Resolution Service Provider following the process described in Section 4.5.
    - A **String Confusion Objection** can be filed on a claim by a party with standing that the applied-for primary string, its allocatable variant label, or its blocked variant label is confusingly similar visually, aurally, or in meaning to an existing TLD and/or another applied-for primary gTLD string and/or any of its allocatable or blocked variant strings.
    - A **Legal Rights Objection** can be filed by a party with standing on a claim that an applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) infringes on its existing legal rights.
    - A **Limited Public Interest Objection** can be filed by anyone on a claim that an applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) are contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law.
    - A **Community Objection** can be filed by an established institution associated with a clearly delineated community on a claim that there is well-substantiated opposition to an applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) from a significant portion of the community which the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeting.
- **Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation** determines whether a plan submitted by an applicant for a string on the Collision String List that has cleared contention correctly identifies the root cause of the collisions and has a high probability of being effective. See Section 7.7.5.
- **Other:** This category of comments will generally not be summarized, analyzed, or sent to the evaluation panels, and **will play no part in the evaluation process of an application**. They will be available for public review in the View Comments section of the ACF.

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