

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

gTLD

Comprehensive Report on Prospective and Pipeline Applicants

Applicant Support Program

15 September 2025
Updated 17 October 2025



Introduction

Goals and Objectives

As established by the ICANN community, the goals of the next round of the New gTLD Program are to **foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the Domain Name System**. The Applicant Support Program (ASP) supports these goals by providing assistance to entities interested in applying for a gTLD that may lack the financial or technical resources to do so. Through the ASP, ICANN enables potential applicants to participate in the program and contribute to the evolving digital landscape through a new gTLD application. **ICANN plays an important role in raising awareness about the New gTLD Program: Next Round and the ASP** among prospective applicants and eligible entities to facilitate informed decision-making.

Program Criteria and Comprehensive Report¹

The **Comprehensive ASP Prospective and Pipeline Applicant Report** provides an overview of the activities and outcomes of ICANN org's efforts to-date as they align with the [SubPro Final Report](#) and [GNSO Guidance Process \(GGP\)](#) recommendations for program success. These two deliverables, combined with the [ASP Implementation Review Team \(IRT\)](#) and [ASP Handbook public comment proceeding](#), represent the multistakeholder community's guidance for designing, operating, and evaluating the ASP.

This report includes data on communications, outreach, and engagement efforts designed to create awareness of the ASP with prospective applicants; website statistics showing global utilization of online resources; and ongoing efforts to support eligible entities in the pipeline that have expressed interest in applying. The report documents policy outputs and guidance for the ASP, implementation activities conducted by multiple teams in ICANN to activate program objectives, outcomes realized to date, and a detailed inventory of completed initiatives.

¹ The report was updated on 17 October 2025 to consolidate information on Engagement Activities.

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Background Context

2012 New gTLD Program Statistics

The table below provides statistics from the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program and the number of ASP applications in that round.

Region	# gTLD Applications	# Countries/ Territories	# ASP Applications	# Countries	# Supported gTLD Applicants
Africa	17	4	1	1	0
Asia	303	20	2	2	1
Europe	675	23	0	0	0
S. America	24	8	0	0	0
N. America	911	2	0	0	0

The Applicant Support Program in 2012

Applicants seeking support in the 2012 Round were reviewed against three main criteria, according to the [New gTLD Financial Assistance Handbook](#):

- **Public Interest Benefit:** Offer demonstrable benefit to the public or suitable community group.
- **Financial Need:** Lack sufficient financial resources to pay for application fees or otherwise execute projects.
- **Financial Capabilities:** Able to manage funds and execute project, if successful.
 - Per the Applicant Support Handbook, Applicants that do not meet the threshold criteria for financial assistance are excluded from the New gTLD Program. However, those that meet the criteria for need and public benefit could pay the discounted gTLD evaluation fee and proceed in the new gTLD Program.
 - There was no mechanism for appeals.

Results from the 2012 Round

- **Three entities applied for the Applicant Support Program:**
 - .kids (Dot Kids Foundation)
 - .idn (Nameshop)
 - .ummah (Ummah Digital, Ltd).
- Results were [initially released](#) on 12 March 2013; however, in response to community feedback that the results were not sufficiently transparent, they were [updated](#) on 20 March 2013 with additional information.
- **One applicant prevailed** and met the three criteria: .kids (Dot Kids Foundation).

Policy Recommendations and Guidance

SubPro Final Report Recommendations

ICANN's Output Implementation Tracker (see [Appendix](#)) documents all 19 [SubPro Final Report](#) Policy Recommendations and Implementation Guidance related to Topic 17: Applicant Support issued for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. These recommendations originated from the ICANN Community's Policy Development Process and were subsequently adopted by the Board. ICANN utilized these Board-adopted recommendations as the basis for designing the Applicant Support Program, in collaboration with a dedicated [SubPro Implementation Review Team](#) (IRT).

GNSO Guidance Process for ASP

In addition to the SubPro Final Report outputs, the GNSO provided guidance to ICANN through its GNSO Guidance Process (GGP), offering further insights into measures of success for the ASP. As noted in its Final Report, "the GGP may provide interpretation or assist in providing clarity with regard to the implementation of GNSO policy recommendations." The GGP also "provides recommendations relating to the identification and prioritization of metrics, including indicators of success and those relating to financing the program when qualified applicants exceed allocated funds."

The table below summarizes the GGP recommendations, indicators of success, and measures of success. Complete descriptions, methodology, and rationale are available in the [GNSO Guidance Process \(GGP\) for Applicant Support Guidance Recommendation Final Report](#) and the [Board-adopted GGP guidance recommendations for the ASP](#).

GGP Recommendation		Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
1.	<p>Communications and Outreach/Awareness</p> <p>Increase awareness of the Applicant Support Program of the next round of gTLD applications among those who may need and could qualify for support.</p>	<p>Conversion rates proportionate with industry standards for online campaigns and in-person events, with specific metrics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Click-throughs • Inquiries • Requests to get more information • etc.
	<p>Implementation Guidance: Target potential applicants from the not-for-profit sector, social enterprises and/or community organizations from under-served and developing regions and countries. This should not exclude any entities from outreach efforts, such as private</p>	<p>Survey results about quality and clarity of information that are proportionate with industry standards, with specific metrics.</p>	<p>Results of the surveys about the quality of the information provided – whether the recipient understood the information, made an informed decision to consider pursuing further or walk away</p>

GGP Recommendation		Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
	sector entities from underserved and developing regions and countries, recognizing the goal is to get as many qualifying applicants as possible.		
2.	<p>"Business Case," also known as Applicant Understanding and Determining Need/Opportunity and Developing Application</p> <p>That the Applicant Support Program has cultivated pro bono services as well as ICANN-provided information and services to be available for supported applicants to inform their gTLD applications; that ICANN will communicate the availability of pro bono services and the parameters in which they are offered to potential supported applicants; and that supported applicants report that they found the information and services offered by pro bono providers to be useful.</p>	<p>Quantitative: A majority of Applicant Support Program applicants that access pro bono services indicate moderate to high satisfaction with those pro bono services and information.</p> <p>Qualitative: A majority of Applicant Support Program applicants that are surveyed about quality and usefulness of services, such as pro bono services, indicate how and why those services were useful to their application.</p>	<p>A majority of respondents that are surveyed about pro bono services indicated that the services and information that they received was useful to informing their gTLD application and/or assisting them through the application process.</p>
3.	<p>ICANN org set-up of Applicant Support Program for Success (in operational terms)</p> <p>That the Applicant Support Program has the necessary resources to achieve its goals based on the GGP Guidance Recommendation Report.</p>	<p>Qualitative: Survey results from event attendees, potential Applicant Support Program applicants, and actual Applicant Support Program applicants indicate a high degree of understanding about the Applicant Support Program and the gTLD Program application requirements.</p>	<p>"mentions", the quality of the coverage (e.g., reach, correct messaging, positive tone, appropriate outlet), and the geographic distribution of the coverage. Additional communications metrics that can be considered include social media statistics, website traffic, and event attendance (physical and online), inquiries, event registrations indicate awareness and have cultivated interest among potential applicants to get</p>

GGP Recommendation	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
		more information about the Applicant Support Program.
<p>4. Application Submission and Evaluation</p> <p>Make application materials and the application process timely and accessible to diverse potential applicants, with the aim of facilitating successful applications in the ASP among those who may need and could qualify for support.</p>	<p>ICANN Learn module/survey results show that a majority of applicants had a strong understanding of the application requirements and evaluation process.</p> <p>(noting that survey response rates from entities that ultimately chose not to submit an application may be quite low and difficult to measure).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of applicants that applied that indicated via survey or ICANN Learn module that they had a strong understanding of the Applicant Support Program application requirements and evaluation process. • Results of surveys about whether the applicant was successful or made an informed decision not to submit an application
<p>5. Contracting/Delegation</p> <p>Of all successfully delegated gTLD applications, the goal is that a certain percentage of them should be from supported applicants.</p>	<p>No fewer than 10, or 0.5 percent (.005), of all successfully delegated gTLD applications were from supported applicants.</p> <p>This should be considered a floor, not a ceiling, and ICANN should strive to exceed this minimum.</p>	<p>0.5 percent (.005) of successfully delegated gTLD applications are from supported applicants. Note that this percentage is not in relation to the number of strings applied for, rather the number of applications.</p>
<p>6. Ongoing Operations of the gTLD</p> <p>ICANN org to investigate the extent to which supported applicants that were awarded a gTLD are still in business as a registry operator after three years.</p> <p>Implementation Guidance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If supported applicants that were awarded a gTLD are not still in business as a registry operator after three years, ICANN org should 	<p>Number of supported applications that result in a delegated TLD and track operations over a designated time period, for example three years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of registrants of domain names registered in “regional” TLDs (e.g., TLDs focusing mainly on a local, limited market), keeping in mind that there are other barriers for registrants in developing countries to access domain names, such as inability to access online payment services and a lack of

GGP Recommendation	Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
<p>investigate barriers/challenges that failed registry operators experienced to help inform future aspects of Applicant Support Program and/or other capacity development new registry program.</p> <p>2. Following completion of a new gTLD round, ICANN org should collect data on the number of supported applications that resulted in a delegated TLD by region, and those that did not; track operations of those delegated TLDs for three years; and conduct of survey of the successful and unsuccessful supported applicants to determine which elements of the program they found useful or not.</p>		<p>local registrars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of domain names registered in “regional” new gTLDs compared to the number of Internet users in such regions. These numbers could be compared with the same numbers for Internet users and “regional” new gTLDs in developed regions such as Europe and North America.
<p>7. Interdependencies of Recs 7,8 & 9 Methodology for allocating financial support where there is inadequate funding for all qualified applicants: In the scenario that there is inadequate funding for all qualified applicants in the Applicant Support Program, the recommended methodology for allocating financial support should be for ICANN org to allocate limited funding by way of fee reduction equally across all qualified applicants, while not hindering the efficiency of the process. In this context the working group agreed to assume, for the sake of equity, that one application equaled one string. This recommendation is made in the context of no additional funding being made available.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

GGP Recommendation		Indicators of Success	Measures of Success
	However, the group recommends that ICANN org give high priority to and make every effort to provide additional funding so that all successful applicants are supported.		
8.	To mitigate the risk that the allocation of support under the Applicant Support Program could be diluted to the point of being unhelpful, ICANN org should designate a minimum level of support each qualified applicant must receive, and develop a plan if funding drops below that level.	n/a	n/a
9.	ICANN org should develop a flexible, predictable, and responsive Applicant Support Program in order to communicate the results of evaluation process and allow applicants to know their range of support allocations as early as possible in a transparent manner.	n/a	n/a

Program Goals and Objectives

In May 2024, in line with the [SubPro Final Report](#) Recommendation 13.2, ICANN published a [New gTLD Program: Next Round Engagement and Outreach Plan](#) that outlines a strategic approach to capacity development, communications, and outreach efforts with a focus on global inclusivity and supporting diverse participation in the next round of new gTLDs. ASP-specific targets include:

1. **Increase awareness** about the ASP among potential applicants, including brands, local and regional governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders interested in participating in the next round of new gTLD applications.
2. **Support participation** in the ASP, especially among underserved or underrepresented regions, by providing assistance, guidance, and resources to potential applicants throughout the application process.
3. **Support engagement** between potential applicants and industry stakeholders, the ICANN community, org, and Board through collaborative outreach efforts.
4. **Facilitate knowledge sharing** with industry associations, government agencies, community organizations, and contracted parties to amplify messaging, reach a wider audience and support effective engagement with the ASP and, more broadly, the next round of the New gTLD Program.

Additionally, ASP activities are aligned to relevant GGP recommendations via Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) segmented by three primary audiences: prospective applicants, applicants in the pipeline, and supported applicants. In the following sections, the report documents activities to-date to create awareness and increase interest among prospective ASP applicants, and to build knowledge for ASP applicants in the pipeline.

	Prospective Applicants		Applicants in the Pipeline	
OBJECTIVE	Expand our reach through targeted events and communications, effectively leveraging partner advocates in the ICANN Community.	Enhance prospective applicant touch-points through outreach channels and feedback mechanisms.	Actively support applicant movement through the pipeline with consistent correspondence and data-capture.	Address perceived barriers to entry with existing and additional resources and support mechanisms.
KEY RESULTS	Resulting in increased awareness of the ASP with eligible entities, particularly in underserved regions and countries.	Resulting in increased awareness and understanding of the ASP to enable informed decision-making on whether to apply.	Resulting in increased clarity of applicant interest and intent to apply to the ASP.	Resulting in increased movement through the pipeline from organization submitted to application submitted.

<p>KPIs</p>	<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event statistics • Social Media metrics • Website traffic 	<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-event survey • Email opt-ins 	<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging report • Email metrics • Correspondence engagement 	<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilization of Pro Bono Providers • Pipeline survey • ASP resources page views and downloads
<p>GGP ALIGNMENT</p>	<p><i>GGP 1: Applicant awareness</i> <i>GGP 2: Applicant understanding</i></p>		<p><i>GGP 2: Applicant understanding</i> <i>GGP 4: Application facilitation and support</i></p>	

Global Outreach to Prospective Applicants

Creating Global Awareness

Communications Reach Summary

Communications Summary (to date)		
Media Outreach	Potential reach across all articles published <i>Countries/territories: Brazil, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Türkiye.</i>	504 million
Paid Social Media Campaign #1	Total impressions <i>Targeting ASP-eligible entities: IGOs, Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organizations, small businesses, nonprofits/charities.</i> <i>Countries/territories: Brazil, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Türkiye.</i>	Facebook / Instagram: 14,448,840
		LinkedIn: 3,793,111
Paid Social Media Campaign #2	Total impressions <i>Targeting ASP-eligible entities: IGOs, Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organizations, small businesses, nonprofits/charities.</i> <i>Countries/territories: Australia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Türkiye.</i>	LinkedIn: 778,615

Engagement Events Reach Summary

Between the launch of ICANN's Outreach and Engagement Campaign in 2024 through late August 2025, ICANN hosted or participated in **456 events**. These events took place across all ICANN regions in 71 different countries/territories, with distribution concentrated in Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, and Asia-Pacific regions. The below map provides a breakdown of events by ICANN region.



To host or convene an event, or request an ICANN org speaker, the ICANN community is invited to contact their regional GSE Vice President, or use the [Speaker Request Form](#). A detailed list of all ASP and Next Round engagement activities and events can be found in the [Engagement Events for ASP and Next Round section](#).

Events Summary (as of 26 August 2025)		
Year	Total Number of Events	Of Total, Number of ASP-Specific Events
2024 (January through December)	204	71
2025 (January through August)	252	72

Total Countries/Territories Reached*	71	42
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**For virtual events, ICANN does not capture a unique country/territory, only the targeted engagement region. 27% of our events have been virtual, reflecting the regional focus.*



Engagement Activities and Focus

- **Industry partnerships** - Working with ICANN Community groups (e.g., Registry Stakeholder Group/New Top-Level Domain Applicant Group), Domain Name Association, and specific registries, like .AFRICA or .KIDS to respond to business and operational questions as they arise.
- **Targeted outreach** - Direct outreach to indigenous and tribal organizations, religious groups, civil society and philanthropic groups, NGOs, IGOs, local governments, and entrepreneurs in developing regions.
- **Events outside the ICANN / Internet Governance Ecosystem** - Such events include the Web Summit Brazil, U.N. Cities Day, Civil Voices Festival, Hackfest, All Tech is Human, Civic Hall, Indigenous Connectivity Summit.
- **Post-event surveys administered** via QR CODE following engagement activities to assess audience interest levels. This allows the capture of contact details of respondents, enabling periodic invitations to industry-related events and sharing of ICANN news and information.

Support for Applicants in the Pipeline

Supporting ASP Application Submissions

ICANN has increased its focus on applicants in the application pipeline.

Observations

Based on reporting to-date, ICANN has observed a number of challenges, including:

- Applicants are slow to progress through the pipeline, with many applicants staying at the very beginning phase of the application process.
- Difficulty identifying which applicants are curious and looking around in the system and which have a genuine interest in applying.
- Limited understanding of where applicants are getting stuck and how to guide them through the process.

Based on these observations, ICANN is focused on:

1. New reporting that can assess the stage and age of applications to gauge applicants' intent to apply.
2. A standardized communication cadence to support movement through the pipeline.
3. Feedback surveys to understand barriers that applicants may experience, which may be addressed with targeted improvements.

Applicant Pipeline Numbers (19 Aug 2025)

In August 2025, ICANN implemented a designation of “inactive” for ASP applications with more than 90 days of inactivity to provide a more accurate view of applications demonstrating ongoing interest or intent to apply (“active”). The “ASP Applicant Pipeline” represents the total number of applicants that have started the application process. The “Applicants by Status” breakdown shows applicant distribution throughout the application process, including those designated as inactive as of August 2025.

Following implementation of additional measures in May 2025, 64% of applicants have progressed from “Process Started” to “Organization Submitted” or beyond. Among applicants reaching the “Organization Submitted” stage, 19% have progressed to “Application Submitted” or “Conditionally Approved.” Data indicates consistent progression from “Started” to “Organization Submitted” during May through July, with August showing increased advancement into final stages. The first conditional approvals in August demonstrate pipeline maturation, with early applicants reaching completion phases.

ASP Applicant Pipeline	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025
Total Number of Applicants	45	56	61	80
Active Applications	–	–	–	50
Inactive (90+ days inactivity)	–	–	–	29
Withdrawn or Ineligible	1	1	1	1
Applicants by Status	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025
Started Process	21	25	26	18
Organization Submitted	19	26	29	26
Application Submitted	4	4	5	3
Conditionally Approved	0	0	0	3
Fully Approved	0	0	0	0
Inactive	–	–	–	29
Withdrawn or Ineligible	1	1	1	1
Total Number of Applicants (regardless of status)	45	56	61	80

Website Page Visits and Downloads

Statistics from 1 November 2024 through 21 August 2025.

ASP Website Statistics							
Page / Publication		Arabic	Chinese	English	French	Russian	Spanish
ASP Homepage	PV	71	203	99,019	161	83	314
ASP Handbook	PV	23	44	1576	41	16	71
	DL	0	0	506	11	1	0
ASP Resources	PV	23	41	739	25	20	20
ASP Info Sheet	DL	0	0	77	0	6	38
ASP Slide Deck	DL	6	6	82	17	9	48
Apply to the ASP	PV	21	36	1077	38	18	25
ASP FAQs	PV	28	65	856	26	29	30
ASP Program Statistics	PV	37	50	968	45	46	40
ASP Help	PV	4	18	175	7	8	12
ASP Terms and Conditions	PV	11	40	450	12	13	10

Global Support Inquiries

To date, ICANN Global Support has received 30 questions about the Applicant Support Program, all of which are answered by the Applicant Counselor. The inquiries centered on three areas: what entities / parameters qualify for support; the certificate of good standing; and how to define a less-developed economy.

Examples:

- Would you be able to elaborate on what your Application Support Program is? What are the requirements?
- What kind of documents are required for proof of good standing?
- Which countries or economies are those that fall within the least developed?

Based on the questions received, ICANN updated the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) on the website](#).

Pipeline Survey, Responses, and Actions Taken

A five-question Pipeline Survey was sent to all applicants in the ASP pipeline on 6 May 2025 with the following message:

Email Subject: *How can we help you finish your ASP Application?*

Survey Introduction: *This short, five-question survey to all applications that have been started in ICANN's Applicant Support Program (ASP). The survey is intended to help ICANN better understand barriers you may face in completing and submitting an ASP application. Your responses will inform ICANN's efforts to better support your ASP application.*

A reminder email was sent on 29 May 2025. To-date, four applicants have completed the survey; two submissions provided contact information and requested outreach from the ASP Applicant Counselor.

The response rate represents a limited sample size and may not reflect the experiences of all ASP applicants who did not complete the survey.

Survey Questions		Responses
1	<p>“I understand the steps I need to take to complete an ASP application, based on the information I have received so far.” <i>(Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Strongly disagree • Disagree • Disagree
2	<p>How likely are you to submit a complete application to the ASP? <i>(Multiple Choice + Comment Box)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very likely • Somewhat likely • Unsure / Not decided yet • Somewhat unlikely • Very unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Likely • Neither likely nor unlikely • Neither likely nor unlikely • Likely
3	<p>What barriers (e.g., system navigation, technical language, documentation challenges), if any, prevent you or others from continuing your ASP application? <i>(Multiple Choice + Open-ended — please write your answer below)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Navigation: Once you have saved the progress on an application (Not submitted yet) there is no way to continue the process, it's looked away, or if there is a way to continue with the application it's very hard to find. • Documentation Challenges • Legal documents challenge • Satisfying the right documents - trying to help someone - it is hard to register.
4	<p>Do you know how to contact ICANN with questions or to seek clarification about the ASP or your ASP application? <i>(Multiple Choice: Yes, No, I am not sure how to ask questions. + Comment Box)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Yes • I am not sure how to contact ICANN • Yes
5	<p>Would you like someone to reach out to you about your ASP application? If so, please provide your primary business email address (used in your ASP profile) and Organization name and/or, if assigned, your Org ID in the comment boxes so we may contact you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes (contact info provided) • No • Yes (contact info provided)

Actions Taken

Direct Applicant Contact | The Applicant Counselor contacted survey respondents who requested direct contact, providing resources and information to support completing their ASP application. Information provided included the [ASP Applicant Checklist](#) and the [ASP Application System Applicant User Guide](#) to address challenges identified in survey responses.

System and Documentation Updates | System-related challenges reported through the survey have been investigated, addressed, and resolved where applicable. The ASP System User Guide was updated to clarify instructions and to address a technical issue.

Early Access To Pro Bono Professional Services and Mentors | ICANN published the [pro bono professional services and mentor list](#) ahead of the originally scheduled date to provide resources to applicants in the ASP pipeline. (Publication was originally scheduled to coincide with the first ASP applicants qualifying for support). ASP applicants received the list of pro bono service providers via email with encouragement to contact them for assistance in completing their ASP applications.

Instructional Webinar Production | ICANN recorded an [introductory tutorial video](#) to orient ASP applicants to the readiness materials and resources. An [orientation webinar](#) was conducted for entities and individuals registered to volunteer their services, preparing them for contact with ASP applicants. Working collaboratively with pro bono service providers and mentors, ICANN recorded a webinar entitled "[Meet the Pro Bono Service Providers and Mentors](#)" to orient ASP applicants to the free resources and services available.

Continuous Monitoring | Consistent with the SubPro Final Report and GGP guidance, ICANN is conducting monitoring and evaluation activities including surveys to participants in ICANN engagement activities and a survey to all ASP applicants. Updates on this work were [presented to the GAC during ICANN82](#).

Inventory of Activities By Function To-Date

Communications

Educational Materials

The ICANN Communications team developed ASP-focused materials available in the six ICANN languages for inclusion in the [Next Round Champions Toolkit](#). These materials include:

- Info Sheet
- 101 Deck
- FAQs
- Pro Bono Services Info Sheet

The **New gTLD Program In YOUR Language** program enables additional translations of these materials into languages beyond the six ICANN languages through direct community requests. The program has received three requests for translated materials to date.

New gTLD [use cases](#) have been developed and published on the New gTLD Program website to showcase how gTLDs are being used by organizations around the world. Thirty-three use cases have been published.

Media Outreach

The Communications team conducted ASP-specific traditional media campaigns, with support from Burson, a global communications agency, in seven key countries/territories across the ICANN regions: Brazil, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Türkiye. The seven countries/territories were chosen in consultation with the Stakeholder Engagement team taking into account geographic distribution, market interest, and results from earlier Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Name-focused campaigns. The ASP campaigns operated from October 2024 to January 2025.

Earned Media Results Across the Seven Countries/Territories

- **174** media outlets engaged
- **279** total articles published
- **49** unique articles published
- **12** interviews conducted with ICANN Regional VPs
- **504** million: potential reach across all articles
- **Two** podcasts recorded

Country/Territory Results

Country/Territory	Articles Published	Potential Reach
Brazil	20	6,808,398
India	178	450,631,509
Kenya	13	200,000
Mexico	6	1,968,136
Nigeria	37	30,137,271
South Africa	12	47,500,000
Türkiye	13	275,065

Paid Social Media

Campaign #1 (4 November - 4 December 2024)

To complement traditional media outreach, ICANN conducted paid social media campaigns targeted at potential ASP applicants in the seven countries/territories listed above. Each post included messaging in local languages tailored to one of the four main ASP-eligible audiences in each country: IGOs, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' organizations, small businesses, and nonprofits and charities.

Combined Results Across All Countries/Territories

Platform	Total Impressions	Total Link Clicks	Average Click Through Rate (CTR)	Global Average (CTR)
Facebook and Instagram	14,448,840	482,529	2.99%	0.9%
LinkedIn	3,793,111	18,070	0.61%	0.44-0.65%

Campaign #2 (2-28 July 2025)

A second campaign targeting potential ASP applicants in local languages was conducted on LinkedIn in 10 key countries/territories: Australia, Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, and Türkiye.

Combined Results Across All Countries/Territories

Platform	Total Impressions	Total Link Clicks	Average Click Through Rate (CTR)	Global Average (CTR)
LinkedIn	778,615	9,987	1.99%	0.44-0.65%

Announcements and Blogs

Date	Type	Title
14 August 2025	Blog	First Candidates Receive Conditional Approval for Applicant Support Program
5 June 2025	Blog	Building Capacity and Increasing Access Through ICANN's ASP
10 February 2025	Announcement	ICANN Announces the Support Applicant Review Panel Provider for ASP
19 November 2024	Announcement	ICANN Opens Application Period for New gTLD Applicant Support Program
5 November 2024	Blog	ICANN Resources Available to Prepare Applicant Support Candidates
21 October 2024	Announcement	ICANN Seeks Mentors and Pro Bono Service Providers to Assist ASP Candidates
4 September 2024	Blog	ICANN Seeks Community Help in Outreach to Next Round Support Candidates
17 July 2024	Announcement	ICANN to Host Webinars on Applicant Support Program Outreach

Appendix | SubPro Final Report Output Implementation Tracker

Topic 17: Applicant Support

SubPro Final Report Output	ICANN Implementation
<p><u>Recommendation 17.1</u>: Implementation Guideline N from 2007 states: “ICANN may put in place a fee reduction scheme for gTLD applicants from economies classified by the UN as least developed.” The Working Group recommends that as was the case in the 2012 round, fee reduction must be available for select applicants who meet evaluation criteria through the Applicant Support Program. The Working Group further recommends new types of financial support for subsequent procedures that were not part of the Program in 2012, specifically, coverage of additional application fees (see Recommendation 17.2) and a bid credit, multiplier, or other similar mechanism that applies to a bid submitted by an applicant qualified for Applicant Support who participates in an ICANN Auction of Last Resort (see Recommendation 17.15 and Implementation Guidance 17.16 and 17.17). In addition, the Working Group recommends that ICANN facilitate non-financial assistance including the provision of pro-bono assistance to applicants in need. Further, ICANN must conduct outreach and awareness-raising activities during the Communications Period to both potential applicants and prospective pro-bono service providers.² The Working Group believes that the high-level goals and eligibility requirements for the Applicant Support Program remain appropriate. The Working Group notes, however, that the Applicant Support Program was not limited to least developed countries in the 2012 round and believes that the Program should continue to</p>	<p>This has been implemented via the new gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Support Program (ASP). The ASP provides qualified applicants with financial support including discounts on the new gTLD evaluation fee and other applicable conditional evaluation fees, a bid credit for supported applicants that participate in auction, and discounts on the base Registry Agreement fees for the first three years post-delegation. The ASP has also recruited pro bono professional service providers and mentors representing all service categories, regions, and ICANN languages. The ASP is open to all applicants regardless of location, so long as they meet other program eligibility criteria.</p>

² In the 2012 round, the pro-bono assistance program was implemented through the Applicant Support Directory: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/non-financial-support>

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<p>be open to applicants regardless of their location as long as they meet other program criteria. Therefore, the Working Group recommends the following language in place of Implementation Guideline N: “ICANN must retain the Applicant Support Program, which includes fee reduction for eligible applicants and facilitate the provision of pro-bono non-financial assistance to applicants in need.” The revised language updates the original Implementation Guideline to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acknowledge that the Applicant Support Program was in place in the 2012 round • include reference to pro-bono non-financial assistance in addition to fee reduction • eliminate the reference to economies classified by the UN as least developed, as the Program is not limited to these applicants. 	
<p>Supplemental Recommendation 17.2: The GNSO Council recommends expanding the scope of Applicant Support provided to Applicant Support Program beneficiaries beyond the application fee to provide access to an array of resources useful for the capacity building, planning, application, evaluation, pre-delegation and post-delegation phases of the lifecycle of the application. For the avoidance of doubt, this recommendation does not obligate ICANN to provide support for all phases of the lifecycle of the application process as well as the registry.</p>	<p>The ASP provides qualified applicants with financial support discounts on the new gTLD evaluation fee and other applicable conditional evaluation fees, a bid credit for supported applicants that participate in auction, and discounts on the base Registry Agreement fees for the first few years post-delegation. In addition to financial support, the ASP provides a capacity-development program for qualified applicants to help prepare them for developing a gTLD application and for navigating the gTLD application and evaluation processes. Planning for post-delegation capacity-development work is underway and aims to be complementary with other community-led initiatives such as the new TLD applicant group (NTAG).</p>
<p>Recommendation 17.3: The Working Group recommends that ICANN improve outreach, awareness-raising, application evaluation, and program evaluation elements of the Applicant Support Program, as well as usability of the Program, as proposed in the implementation guidance below.</p>	<p>ICANN with input from the ASP Implementation Review Team (IRT), made many improvements to outreach, awareness-raising, application, and program evaluation processes.</p>
<p>Implementation Guidance 17.4: Outreach and</p>	<p>Outreach and awareness-raising highlighting</p>

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<p>awareness-raising activities should be delivered well in advance of the application window opening, as longer lead times help to promote more widespread knowledge about the program. Such outreach and education should commence no later than the start of the Communications Period.³</p>	<p>the ASP began in 2024. Targeted regional plans executed by the Stakeholder Engagement team began in May 2024 focused exclusively on ASP-eligible entity categories in less-developed regions (i.e., not Europe or N. America) for the first six months, followed by outreach on ASP and Next Round starting in January 2024.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.5</u>: A dedicated Implementation Review Team should be established and charged with developing implementation elements of the Applicant Support Program. In conducting its work, the Implementation Review Team should revisit the 2011 Final Report of the Joint Applicant Support Working Group⁴ as well as the 2012 implementation of the Applicant Support program.</p>	<p>A dedicated ASP-IRT sub-track was convened to contribute to the design and implementation of the ASP.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.6</u>: Outreach efforts should not only target the Global South, but also those located in struggling regions that are further along in their development compared to underserved or underdeveloped regions. In addition, the evaluation criteria for Applicant Support must treat those applicants similar to those currently set forth in Criteria #1, Section 4 (Operation in a developing economy) of the Financial Assistance Handbook.⁵</p>	<p>Outreach efforts for ASP have covered all ICANN regions. In more developed regions and countries, outreach has focused on ASP-eligible entities such as non-governmental organizations, non-profits, charities, indigenous peoples organizations, IGOs, and small social enterprise businesses.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.7</u>: The Working Group supports Recommendation 6.1.b in the Program Implementation Review Report, which states: “6.1.b: Consider researching globally recognized procedures that could be adapted for the implementation of the Applicant Support Program.”⁶</p>	<p>The ASP Team conducted research and published “Survey of Globally Recognized Procedures for Financial Assistance Programs.” Research findings were also presented to the GNSO Guidance Process (GGP) for ASP.</p>

³ For additional recommendations regarding the Communications Period, please see Topic 13: Communications.

⁴ <http://dakar42.icann.org/meetings/dakar2011/presentation-jas-final-report-13sep11-en.pdf>

⁵ See <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/financial-assistance-handbook-11jan12-en.pdf>, pg 12.

⁶ The detailed description of this recommendation in the PIRR states: “In regards to the development of criteria and processes, the community may wish to research globally recognized procedures that could be adapted for the implementation of a financial assistance

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<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.8:</u> In implementing the Applicant Support Program for subsequent rounds, the dedicated Implementation Review Team should draw on experts with relevant knowledge, including from the targeted regions, to develop appropriate program elements related to outreach, education, business case development, and application evaluation. Regional experts may be particularly helpful in providing insight on the development of business plans from different parts of the world.</p>	<p>The ASP-IRT members represent diverse regions and stakeholder groups across the ICANN community. As it relates to evaluating ASP applications, ICANN issued an RFP and contracted a third-party evaluation vendor. The vendor has evaluation panelists around the world with diverse experience.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.9:</u> The dedicated Implementation Review Team⁷ should seek advice from experts in the field to develop an appropriate framework for analysis of metrics to evaluate the success of the Applicant Support Program. The Working Group identified a non-exhaustive list of potential data points to support further discussion in the implementation phase. The Working Group anticipates that the dedicated IRT will consider how these and other potential metrics may be prioritized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awareness and Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ number of outreach events and follow up communications with potential applicants ○ level of awareness about the New gTLD Program/Applicant Support Program ○ number of enquiries about the program/level of interest expressed/number that considered applying ○ number of applicants 	<p>The GNSO Guidance Process for ASP was tasked with defining success metrics for the program. The GGP issued nine guidance recommendations that were adopted by the Board. The ASP Team uses the SubPro Final Report and the GGP recommendations as the basis for its post-program evaluation work.</p>

program (e.g., World Bank programs). Additional [research] may also be undertaken to better understand the needs of the target market and their obstacles to becoming registry operators (e.g., infrastructure, training). This information would help to design a program to better meet the needs of the target market.”

⁷ Although the Working Group discussed a separate IRT, this could also be achieved through a dedicated Work Stream or Track of the overall New gTLDs Implementation Review Team. The important concept here is that there is a dedicated team of knowledgeable and diverse experts in this niche area that understand the unique nature of financial and non-financial support for those in need.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ first-time applicants versus repeat applicants ■ applicants submitting a single application versus portfolio applicants ■ applications based on pre-existing trademarks ○ diversity and distribution of the applicant pool: geographic diversity, languages, scripts ● Other Elements of Program Implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ number of ICANN staff members and contractors supporting the Applicant Support Program ○ number of service providers offering pro-bono assistance and value of assistance offered/provided ○ number of applicants accessing/using pro-bono assistance ○ number of approved applicants for financial assistance ○ number of applicants who received bid credits, multiplier, other and were successful in auction ○ the value of the bid credits, multiplier, other ○ number of applicants who withdrew from auction ○ number of applicants who entered into a business combination or other forms of joint ventures ○ length of time before any change of ownership occurred ● Success of Launched gTLD: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The number of registrants of domain names registered in “regional” TLDs (e.g., TLDs focusing mainly on a local, limited market), keeping in 	

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<p>mind that there are other barriers for registrants in developing countries to access domain names, such as inability to access online payment services and a lack of local registrars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The number of domain names registered in “regional” new gTLDs compared to the number of Internet users in such regions. These numbers could be compared with the same numbers for Internet users and “regional” new gTLDs in developed regions such as Europe and North America. 	
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.10</u>: The dedicated Implementation Review Team should consider how to allocate financial support in the case that available funding cannot provide fee reductions to all applicants that meet the scoring requirement threshold.</p>	<p>The GNSO Guidance Process for ASP was tasked with defining a methodology for allocating financial resources should there be more demand than budgeted for. The GGP issued nine guidance recommendations; recommendation numbers 7, 8 and 9 relate to financial support allocation. The GGP recommendations were adopted by the Board.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 17.11</u>: The Working Group supports Recommendation 6.1.a in the Program Implementation Review Report, which states: “Consider leveraging the same procedural practices used for other panels, including the publication of process documents and documentation of rationale.”⁸</p>	<p>The ASP published the ASP Handbook, intended for applicants; as well as the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP) Evaluation Guide, intended for the third-party evaluation vendor.</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 17.12</u>: ICANN org must develop a plan for funding the Applicant Support Program, as detailed in the Implementation Guidelines below.</p>	<p>ICANN developed an ASP Funding Plan, which was adopted by the Board.</p>

⁸ The detailed description of this recommendation in the PIRR states: “Regarding execution of the program, in this round, the SARP was an independent panel that defined its own processes, procedures, and final reports. The SARP’s work was performed earlier than the other New gTLD Program evaluation panels, and based on lessons learned from the implementation of other panels, ICANN should consider whether additional guidance should be provided to the SARP regarding publication of their processes, final report format, and documentation of rationale.”

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<p><u>Implementation Guideline 17.13</u>: ICANN org should evaluate whether it can provide funds (as they did in 2012) or whether additional funding is needed for the Applicant Support Program in subsequent rounds.⁹ The amount of funding available to applicants should be determined and communicated before the commencement of the application round.</p>	<p>The ICANN Board sought community input on the use of auction proceeds to pay for up to half the direct costs of supported applicants that go on to apply to the gTLD program. The remaining funds are supported through cost-recovery, per SubPro Final Report affirmation.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guideline 17.14</u>: ICANN org should seek funding partners to help financially support the Applicant Support Program, as appropriate.</p>	<p>In its correspondence on the SubPro PDP Draft Final Report, the Board notes “this would change the role of ICANN, as ICANN is not a grant-seeking organization. Alternatively, ICANN org’s Pro Bono Assistance Program could facilitate introductions to industry players or potential funding partners to the applicants.”</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 17.15</u>: If an applicant qualifies for Applicant Support and is part of a contention set that is resolved through an ICANN Auction of Last Resort, a bid credit, multiplier, or other similar mechanism must apply to the bid submitted by that applicant.</p>	<p>Supported applicants that verify continued eligibility to receive financial support and that participate in auction will have access to a bid credit, per Table 4-10 in the draft AGB.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.16</u>: Research should be conducted in the implementation phase to determine the exact nature and amount of the bid credit, multiplier, or other mechanism described in Recommendation 17.15. Research should also be completed to determine a maximum value associated with the bid credit, multiplier, or other mechanism.</p>	<p>ICANN contracted a third-party auction expert vendor to conduct research on the nature of the bid credit, multiplier, or other mechanism. The findings and options from that research were presented to the IRT. Based on this research and the SubPro Final Report rationale, ICANN proposed a bid credit and conducted research on other auction mechanisms with bid credits, in order to determine an appropriate level for the credit. This research was presented to the IRT.</p>
<p><u>Implementation Guidance 17.17</u>: If the applicant getting Applicant Support prevails in an auction, there should be restrictions placed on the applicant from assigning the Registry Agreement, and/or from any Change of Control for a period of no less than three (3) years. This restriction seeks to prevent gaming of the Applicant Support Program</p>	<p>Per the ASP Terms & Conditions and the Next Round draft Registry Agreement, ICANN has implemented this restriction and, following consultation with the ASP-IRT, applied it to all supported applicants (not just those that prevail at auction).</p>

⁹ See Topic 15: Application Fees for implementation guidance regarding use of excess application fees resulting from establishment of a fee floor to fund the Applicant Support Program and other New gTLD Program elements.

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<p>whereby an applicant transfers its ownership of a registry to a third party in exchange for any form of financial gain. However, assignments that become necessary for the following reasons shall be permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assignments due to the TLD being unable to meet its financial obligations and unable to secure financing or restructure operations to carry out operations in the short-term ● Assignments due to death or retirement of a majority shareholder ● Assignments due to EBERO ● Assignments to affiliates or subsidiaries ● Assignments required by competition authorities <p>All assignments after such time shall be governed under the then-current Registry Agreement standard provisions; provided that any Assignment or Change of Control after the third (3rd) year, but prior to the seventh (7th) year, shall require the applicant to repay the full amount of financial support received through the ASP Program, including application fees and any bid credit, multiplier, or related benefits, plus an additional ten percent (10%).</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 17.18:</u> Unless the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP) reasonably believes there was willful gaming, applicants who are not awarded Applicant Support (whether “Qualified” or “Disqualified¹⁰”) must have the option to pay the balance of the full standard application fee and transfer to the standard application process. Applicants must be given a limited period of time to provide any additional information that would be necessary to convert the application into one that would meet the standard criteria (e.g., showing how the applicant for financial and other support could acquire the requisite financial backing and other support services to</p>	<p>Per Section 2.3 of the ASP Handbook, “Applicants that apply for, but do not qualify for, support are still welcome to submit a new gTLD application, but would be required to pay the full gTLD evaluation fees.” Per the ASP Terms & Conditions, “If Applicant is found to have abused the intent of the Applicant Support Program, Applicant may be excluded from participation in the New gTLD Program entirely.”</p>

¹⁰ See <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/financial-assistance-handbook-11jan12-en.pdf>.

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<p>pass the applicable evaluation criteria). That said, this limited period of time should not cause unreasonable delay to the other elements of the New gTLD Program or to any other applicants for a string in which its application may be in a contention set.</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 17.19</u>: The Financial Assistance Handbook¹¹ or its successor, subject to the changes included in the above recommendations, must be incorporated into the Applicant Guidebook for subsequent rounds.</p>	<p>The ASP Handbook will be appended to the final Applicant Guidebook.</p>

¹¹ The Financial Assistance Handbook from the 2012 round is available at:
<https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/financial-assistancehandbook-11jan12-en.pdf>

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