

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

gTLD Application Types

What are the different types of generic Top Level Domains (gTLD)?

Applicants for new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) must decide whether to apply for a **general** or **specialized** gTLD. A general gTLD application is one that does not fall into one of the specialized application categories and is subject to a standard set of defined requirements. Applications for specialized gTLDs have specific requirements based on the application, string, or applicant type.

Specialized application categories:

Geographic Names - These applications are for gTLDs that represent specific geographic places such as cities, regions, or countries. These applications must meet specific criteria and require additional documentation including government support or endorsement to proceed through the evaluation process.

Reserved Names - These are applications for strings - or names - that have been set aside on ICANN's Reserved Name list (e.g., names of Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC), International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Governmental Organization (IGO), and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO)). Only eligible entities may apply for these strings by meeting specific qualifications.

Brand TLDs - These applications are intended for trademark holders that wish to apply for domains that match registered marks. These top-level domains are typically designed for exclusive use by the brand owner and their trademark licensees and are subject to Brand Eligibility Evaluation for trademark-based applications.

Community gTLDs - These applications are for gTLDs intended to serve clearly delineated communities that share identities, interests, or have other common denominators. These applications must follow criteria for the Registry Commitments Evaluation and have the option to participate in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) process to resolve contention with other applications.

Applications for Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and Variant Strings help support linguistic and script diversity on the global Internet. IDN gTLDs include one or more non-ASCII characters, while variant strings may be considered the “same” as another gTLD string based on specific script rules.

RESOURCES

[Applicant Guidebook Module 7.1 String and Application Types](#)

[Application Types FAQs](#)

[Applicant Guidebook Appendix 2: Materials Related to Geographic Names](#)

[New gTLD Use Cases](#)

[Geographic Names Topic Overview](#)

[CPE Topic Overview](#)

[New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Resources](#)

Applications from Governments and Inter-governmental Organizations often involve Geographic Name and Reserved Name gTLDs. These include special provisions in the Registry Agreement in the contracting stage of the process.

Applications from entities supported by the Applicant Support Program (ASP). Supported applicants benefit from reduced fees, auction bid credits, and other forms of financial and nonfinancial assistance and have additional contracting restrictions as part of the gTLD program requirements.

Key concepts and takeaways

Essential Planning Points:

- Early planning and preparation is strongly advised. Specialized applications require additional documentation, government support, or community backing that takes time to secure and may involve evaluation fees beyond the standard application process.
- It is important to understand that applications have specific restrictions (e.g., Community Applications and Geographic Names as mentioned above), and generic terms that cannot be used exclusively by the applicant for their own benefit. ([See Applicant Guidebook Module 3.1.7 on Closed Generics.](#))
- Applications may qualify for more than one specialized category, such as a Geographic Name application that is also a Community application, which may provide additional opportunities but also entails additional requirements.

Critical Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Insufficient preparation could lead to evaluation failures, particularly when applicants lack required documentation or proper support from relevant authorities or communities.
- Generic terms cannot be used exclusively for brand purposes, as this violates ICANN policy and will result in application rejection.

Why are there different types of gTLDs?

This framework encourages competition and innovation in the domain space while protecting the legitimate interests of communities, brands, and governments. It also serves to promote diversity by accommodating different languages, scripts, and cultural needs across the global Internet. It ensures appropriate governance structures for different types of domains and reflects the diverse needs of Internet users worldwide.

How does an application type fit into the application process?

Application Process Steps: Applicants must first choose what type of gTLD they would like to apply for during the initial submission phase.

- If applicants select a specialized type, they must complete additional requirements including supplementary documentation and fees where applicable.
- Comprehensive evaluations will take place, including automatic checks in the TLD Application Management System (TAMS) such as Geographic Name identification for all applications, and assessments based on the chosen application type.
- Some applications may need to proceed through additional evaluations if applicable, such as Community Priority Evaluation for community applications or Brand Eligibility Evaluation for trademark-based applications.

Important Process Considerations:

- Note that a request to change application type after initial submission may or may not be permitted, depending on the application type. For example, the designation of a Community gTLD or Geographic Name cannot be changed. Other application types can be modified using the Application Change Request process, if needed.
- The timing of specialized evaluations varies based on both the application type and specific circumstances of each case. The intention of providing the replacement string option is to avoid contention; therefore, the AGB provides two exceptions for when a replacement string cannot be used during the replacement period:
 - If an applicant's replacement string is identical to another applied-for string.
 - If an applicant's replacement string is identical to another applicant's replacement string.