About

The ZA Central Registry is the nonprofit organization that manages the .capetown, .durban, and .joburg generic top-level domains (gTLDs).

gTLD use case
ZA Cities - .joburg

Category
geo

Registry Operator
ZA Central Registry

Contact

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What motivated you to apply for a new gTLD?

The motivation to apply for ZA Cities was rooted in a strategic vision to ensure that South Africa's digital identity would be managed by South Africans, for the benefit of South Africans. The intention was to safeguard our national digital sovereignty by ensuring that domain names associated with iconic South African cities such as .joburg, .capetown, and .durban would fall into the hands of local operators with purely patriotic motivations. The opportunity was to take proactive control of these assets, align them with local priorities, and use them as tools to promote economic development, tourism, innovation, and civic pride.

How are you using the gTLD?

The Registry is using our gTLDs— .joburg, .capetown and .durban— as a tool for building local digital identity, for fostering trust, and driving engagement among businesses and residents alike. Our strategy focuses on three pillars:

- Local Brand Empowerment - We actively promote ZA Cities as a way for local businesses, organisations and individuals to showcase their local pride and connect authentically with their community. This has proven effective in the tourism, retail and cultural sectors.

gTLD

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Learn more at:
newgtldprogram.icann.org

How are you using the gTLD? (continued)

- Digital Ecosystem Development - By partnering with local governments and municipalities, we'd like to integrate ZA Cities into local economic development initiatives. This helps encourage adoption among SME's and entrepreneurs and strengthens the visibility of their content.

- Storytelling - We aim to increase storytelling through dedicated case studies, community spotlights, announcements, owned SEO optimised content on our platforms to drive credibility and visibility. The stories are used to inspire others and position ZA Cities as a smart choice for anyone doing business in the region.

What were some of the considerations you made before applying?

Given that geographic gTLDs—such as city or regional domain names— require governmental endorsement, we initiated a comprehensive outreach campaign to engage with the mayors and relevant municipal authorities of the cities - Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. This stage was crucial not only for obtaining the formal letters of support required, but also for ensuring long-term alignment between the public image of these cities and the proposed digital brand architecture. Each mayor's endorsement signaled a strong vote of confidence in our credibility and capability to manage a domain namespace representing their city.

In parallel with these high-level discussions, we demonstrated our readiness to deliver. These commitments included detailed presentations of our technical capacity, operational strategy, and marketing vision. Furthermore, a marketing and communications plan was developed to illustrate how we would drive awareness, adoption, and ensure long-term viability of the domain. This included identifying key user groups, crafting value propositions for potential registrants (such as local businesses, cultural institutions, and tourism boards), and mapping out multichannel promotional tactics.

gTLD

How has your organization benefited from operating a gTLD?

The greatest benefit of owning ZA Cities has been the ability to create a trusted, unified digital identity for South African cities. It's more than just a domain—it's a platform for local pride, economic development, and digital innovation. We've empowered businesses, institutions, and individuals to clearly signal where they belong and who they serve—boosting trust, discoverability, and engagement. It has positioned us as a digital leader and given us the tools to support our community in ways that weren't possible before.

How has having a gTLD changed or impacted your business?

Owning ZA Cities has delivered significant strategic and reputational benefits for our organization. Having ZA Cities has elevated our role in the ecosystem - from being a service provider to a digital enabler for the cities. ZA Cities has been a catalyst for growth, innovation, and deeper community engagement, transforming us from a registry to a local digital brand.

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– Lucky Masilela, CEO of the ZA Central Registry, Registry Operator

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