NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

gTLD

New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook

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ICANN

Applicant Guidebook Version History

The table below provides an overview of the version history of the Applicant Guidebook. The latest version of the Applicant Guidebook (top row of the table) is the authoritative version.

Table VH-1: Applicant Guidebook Version History

Version Number	Date	Overview of Version
V2-2026.04.24	24 April 2026	Authoritative version of the 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook with minor revisions from V1-2025.12.16. For more detail, see full list of changes.
V1-2025.12.16	16 December 2025	Final version of the Applicant Guidebook as per ICANN Board Resolution 2025.10.30.12.[1]
V0-2025.10.30[2]	30 October 2025	ICANN Board adopted version of the Applicant Guidebook (see ICANN Board Resolution 2025.10.30.12).
Draft	30 May 2025	Draft version of the Applicant Guidebook posted for Public Comment.[3]

[1] See ICANN Board Resolution 2025.10.30.12: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-30-10-2025-en#section2.d. For details on changes made in this version, see Overview of Changes: https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/SPIR/pages/543752261/6.+Applicant+Guidebook+Drafts.

[2] The version number has been updated to V0. Going forward the numbering scheme for versions will be: V#-YYYY.MM.DD.

[3] See Public Comment on Draft Applicant Guidebook: https://www.icann.org/en/blogs/details/icann-opens-public-comment-on-draft-applicant-guidebook-30-05-2025-en.

Preamble

As enshrined in the ICANN Bylaws, the mission of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is to "ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems" and further directs ICANN to coordinate the "allocation and assignment of names in the root zone of the Domain Name System (DNS)." Further, one of ICANN's commitments is to "preserve and enhance the administration of the DNS and the operational stability, reliability, security, global interoperability, resilience, and openness of the DNS and the Internet."

Iterations of the New gTLD Program have been conducted to introduce new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) over time. As a result of the New gTLD Program round in 2012, ICANN added over 1,200 new gTLDs to the Internet's namespace, including gTLDs in various languages and scripts. This expansion has helped foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS. The New gTLD Program creates a means for prospective registry operators to apply for new gTLDs, offering new options for consumers in the market and creating significant potential for new uses and benefits to Internet users across the globe. The DNS is expanding again with the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round (2026 Round). The 2026 Round sets out to encourage a competitive environment in the DNS market, including increased choice for end-users and communities, as well as creating a more inclusive Internet by encouraging the adoption of universal acceptance and furthering the use of TLDs in multiple languages and scripts.

The 2026 Round has its origins in carefully deliberated policy development work by the ICANN community. The 2012 Round was implemented based on 19 policy recommendations[4] put forth by the Generic Names Supporting Organization in 2007. The 2026 Round, the rules for which are provided in this Applicant Guidebook, is based on over 300 outputs (Affirmations, Affirmations with Modification, Recommendations, and Implementation Guidance) from the Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process[5] (SubPro Final Report) as well as the outputs of the Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) on Internationalized Domain Names, Policy Development Process (PDP) Review of All Rights Protection Mechanisms in All gTLDs, PDP IGO-INGO Access to Curative Rights Protection Mechanisms, and PDP Protection of IGO and INGO Identifiers in All gTLDs.

These outputs represent the collective efforts of representatives from a wide variety of stakeholder groups (governments, individuals, civil society, business and intellectual property constituencies, and the technology community) over the last several years.

[4] See Board action on these recommendations: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular meeting-of-the-icann-board-singapore-20-06-2011-en.
[5] See the SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

Their work considered the 2012 Round and potential changes to the 2026 Round. In March 2023, the ICANN Board adopted a subset of the SubPro Final Report outputs and directed ICANN to begin the work of implementing them. In July 2023, ICANN produced an implementation plan that set out the work required over the next three years, including the development of this Guidebook and the numerous systems and processes required to bring the 2026 Round to life and open the application submission window for a new generation of potential registry operators.

This Guidebook outlines the rules and procedures for the 2026 Round and leads applicants through the process of becoming registry operators. The Guidebook also includes relevant information for ICANN community members seeking to participate in the 2026 Round.

All parts of the ICANN ecosystem collectively look forward to the innovation that will come from the 2026 Round.

For current information, timelines, and activities related to the New gTLD Program, visit: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

Executive Summary

ICANN was founded in 1998 as a nonprofit public benefit corporation. ICANN's mission directs it to coordinate the allocation and assignment of names in the root zone of the Domain Name System and is committed to introducing and promoting competition in the registration of domain names. The New gTLD Program is an ICANN initiative to enable the expansion of the Internet's DNS and has been designed to ensure security and stability of the DNS, promote competition in the DNS, and encourage transparency and community participation.

The SubPro Final Report[6] outputs adopted by the ICANN Board, which cover 41 different topics related to the New gTLD Program, are the product of diverse participation in the gTLD policy development process. In consultation with the ICANN community, ICANN has implemented several changes to the 2026 Round.

Some key differences from the 2012 Round include:

- Applicant Support Program (ASP): The ASP is intended to make the 2026 Round accessible to applicants that want to apply for a new gTLD or operate a registry but face financial and resource constraints. Improving upon the 2012 ASP, qualified applicants may expect to receive percentage-based reductions on the base gTLD evaluation fee and other gTLD evaluation fees. Additionally, they will have access to a training program, pro bono (volunteer) service providers, applicant counselors, and, in cases of string contention resolution, a bid credit to be used in an auction. See Appendix 11 Applicant Support Program.

- Contention Resolution: Since the 2012 Round, contention resolution and the use of private resolution, including via private auctions, have been discussion points within the ICANN community. In consultation with the community, ICANN has implemented certain restrictions and features, described in this Guidebook, to ensure that applicants have a bona fide (good faith) intent to operate an applied-for gTLD. A notable new feature is the opportunity for applicants to submit a replacement string along with their original choice of string, reducing string contention and expanding name diversity in the DNS. See Module 5 Contention Set Resolution.

- Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs): IDNs play a crucial role in fostering diversity in the DNS by allowing domain names to be represented in characters beyond traditional ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). Label Generation Rules are currently available for the following twenty-seven scripts: Arabic, Armenian, Bangla, Chinese (Han), Cyrillic,

[6] See the SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

Devanagari, Ethiopic, Georgian, Greek, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Hebrew, Japanese (Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji [Han]), Kannada, Khmer, Korean (Hangul and Hanja [Han]), Lao, Latin, Malayalam, Myanmar, Oriya, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, Thaana, and Thai. See Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names.

- Predictability Framework: The Predictability Framework ensures efficient and transparent management of unexpected issues that may arise during the course of implementing the Program by engaging with the Standing Predictability Implementation Review Team to address changes based on their impact to ICANN's operations of the New gTLD Program or applicants. See Appendix 6 Predictability Framework.
- Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program: This Program has been developed to reduce the cost and time involved in evaluating new gTLDs by separating the technical assessment of operating a gTLD from the application for the gTLD label. Through the RSP Evaluation Program, RSPs may only need to be evaluated once, regardless of the number of gTLDs they intend to support. See Appendix 12 Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program.

This Guidebook was developed collaboratively through community input, with ICANN leading the initiative. In consultation with an Implementation Review Team[7] that was composed of ICANN community volunteers, ICANN implemented the selection criteria, evaluation, and allocation processes for gTLDs, and the contractual conditions required for new gTLD registry operators. This work reflects the iterative development of the Guidebook through Public Comment[8] periods. Meaningful community input has directly influenced revisions to the draft. In parallel, ICANN has established the resources needed to successfully launch and operate the Program.

[7] See information on the Implementation Review Team: https://community.icann.org/x/pQM5Dg.
[8] See information on ICANN Public Comments: https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment.

Document Overview

The Applicant Guidebook is comprehensive, consisting of seven modules and 12 appendices. Its structure is designed to guide potential applicants through the entire application process. The modules listed below are organized sequentially, where possible, providing the steps from application submission through evaluation. For a summary of all the rules and procedures for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, readers are directed to Module 1 The Applicant Journey.

More information regarding the flow and contents of each module is found below:

- Module 1 The Applicant Journey: Offers a broad overview of all requirements of the New gTLD Program, including: eligibility requirements, fees, and application and string types. Applicants will also find information regarding application stages, process overview, posted materials, lifecycle timelines.
- Module 2 General Information: Provides foundational information relevant to every applicant, including: languages and translation of supporting documentation, universal acceptance of domain names, applicant freedom of expression, security and stability, legal compliance, data privacy and protection, accountability mechanisms, and subsequent application rounds. It also includes information about frequently asked questions and support for general inquiries and system- and application-specific questions.
- Module 3 Application Submission: Covers the submission process, administrative check, fees and payments, application statuses, reveal day, string confirmation day, application queuing and prioritization, and application change requests.
- Module 4 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals: Describes the different ways the community and relevant parties can participate in the New gTLD Program, including: application comments, Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) member Early Warnings and GAC Consensus Advice, Singular/Plural Notifications, and potential objections during the application lifecycle.
- Module 5 Contention Set Resolution: Explains contention and how contention is resolved, including: replacement strings, Community Priority Evaluation, and ICANN Auction.
- Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures: Describes evaluation procedures relevant to the applicant (applying entity), including background screening and financial and operational evaluations.
- Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures: Describes string and application types, and provides an overview of evaluation procedures relevant to the application, including: Blocked and Reserved Names, .Brand TLD

Eligibility Evaluation, Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation, Geographic Names Review, Internationalized Domain Names, Name Collision, Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments (including Community Registration Policies), Registry Service Provider Review, and String Similarity Evaluation.

- Appendices: The Guidebook includes numerous appendices, which provide additional detailed information on an array of topics relevant to applicants:
    - Appendix 1: Application Questions
    - Appendix 2: Materials related to Geographic Names
    - Appendix 3: Materials related to Objections and Appeals
    - Appendix 4: Base Registry Agreement
    - Appendix 5: Templates for Standard Financial Profile
    - Appendix 6: Predictability Framework
    - Appendix 7: Conflict of Interest
    - Appendix 8: Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers
    - Appendix 9: New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Privacy Policy
    - Appendix 10: Terms and Conditions
    - Appendix 11: Applicant Support Program
    - Appendix 12: Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program

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Module 1 The Applicant Journey

This module provides a comprehensive overview of the entire experience of a new gTLD applicant, from initial application submission to potential delegation. The process is intricate and multi-staged, encompassing technical, financial, and operational evaluations.

This applicant journey is designed to equip prospective applicants with essential information about each stage, including submission, pre-evaluation, community input, evaluation, string contention, dispute resolution, and contracting.

By offering a clear roadmap, this module guides applicants through the complexities of the application process, ensuring they are prepared for every step toward securing a new gTLD.

1.1 Pre-Submission Information

1.1.1 Eligibility

Only legal entities such as corporations, organizations, and institutions as well as governmental, non-governmental, and inter-governmental entities may apply for a new gTLD. Applications from individuals or sole proprietorships will not be considered. Additionally, applications from or on behalf of entities that have not yet been formed, or applications that assume the future formation of a legal entity (such as a pending joint venture) will not be accepted.

1.1.2 Fees

Applicants are required to pay the full gTLD evaluation fee of USD 227,000 for each application, with exceptions for those that qualify for the Applicant Support Program (ASP) and applicants for variant applications that meet the criteria described in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments. The fee is due upon receipt of the invoice, and complete payment must be received by ICANN no later than seven days after the close of the application submission period. If the applicant has not paid the gTLD evaluation fee within this seven-day period, the application will generally not be processed any further and will be canceled.

All applicants, including those that qualify for ASP,[9] may be required to pay additional fees for conditional evaluations. For example, this applies if an applicant seeks for its application to be designated as a .Brand TLD or wishes to have a Registry Voluntary

[9] A qualified ASP applicant will receive the same percentage reduction as it received on the gTLD evaluation fee. Before granting this reduction, ICANN will request that the ASP applicant verify continued eligibility to receive further financial support. See also ASP Terms and Conditions: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/tandcs.

Commitment added to its Registry Agreement. If an applicant fails to pay for a conditional evaluation, depending on the type of conditional evaluation, the applicant may be asked to submit an Application Change Request to remove that section of its application to proceed. Otherwise, required conditional evaluations must be paid on time to avoid disqualification. More information can be found in the Section 3.3 Fees and Payments section.

1.1.3 Terms and Conditions

All applicants must agree to the TLD Application Terms and Conditions New gTLD Program: 2026 Round in order to submit their applications (see Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions, which applicants are encouraged to read in full).

1.1.4 TLD Application Management System

Applications must be submitted electronically through the TLD Application Management System (TAMS). Paper applications will not be allowed. Applicants are encouraged to consult the TAMS User Guide on the New gTLD website[10] for guidance on how to use the system to ensure proper understanding prior to submitting an application.

1.1.5 Good Faith Intent

Applications must be submitted with a *bona fide* ("good faith") intent to operate the gTLD. Applicants must affirm a bona fide intent to operate the gTLD for all submitted applications in TAMS (see Question Set 21 in Appendix 1 Application Questions). ICANN reserves the right to disallow an application from moving forward if it determines that the application was not submitted in good faith.

1.1.6 Universal Acceptance

Universal Acceptance aims to ensure that all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems should accept all domain names and email addresses, regardless of script, language, or TLD length. For more information on Universal Acceptance in the New gTLD Program, see Section 2.3 Universal Acceptance of Domain Names and Email Addresses.

1.1.7 Applicant Support Program

Applicants who would like to apply for a new gTLD and operate a registry can apply to the Applicant Support Program (ASP). If eligible, supported applicants may receive

[10] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

financial and non-financial support. See the ASP section on the New gTLD Program website[11] for more information and updates.

1.2 Application Stages

This section describes the stages that an application passes through during the application submission window and once submitted. While some stages apply to all applications submitted, others occur only under specific circumstances. This section offers a high-level, non-comprehensive overview of the various processes. For complete information, applicants and other parties should refer to the relevant Applicant Guidebook sections.

1.2.1 Application Submission

***Expected Duration**: 105 days*

1.2.1.1 Creation of an ICANN Account

Before accessing TAMS to submit their application, applicants must register for an ICANN user account on the ICANN Account website[12] and enable multi-factor authentication.

1.2.1.2 Application Submission Period

The application submission period is expected to open no later than 23:59 UTC on 30 April 2026 and remain open for 105 days, closing on 12 August 2026 at 23:59 UTC. To be considered, all applications must be submitted by the close of the application submission period, as the system will not allow for late submissions. Applicants are encouraged to submit their completed applications as soon as practicable after the application submission period opens. Waiting until the end of this period to begin the process will not provide sufficient time to complete all the necessary steps and submit a complete application on time.

Applicants must pay their gTLD evaluation fee upon receipt of the invoice, and no later than seven days after the close of the application submission period for their application to be considered, as described in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

After submitting their application, applicants will not be able to make any changes outside the processes described in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests. Application Change Requests can only be submitted after String Confirmation Day.

[11] See the ASP page on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp.
[12] See the ICANN Account website: https://account.icann.org/login.

1.2.1.3 Application Questions

The application will consist of the following sections to be completed upon user registration:

1. Organization Information
2. Financial Information
3. gTLD Application Information

To complete the application, users must answer a series of questions and provide supporting documents, as required. The system will validate that all mandatory fields include a response before applicants can submit their application. See more information in Section 3.1.3 Application Questions as well as Appendix 1 Application Questions.

1.2.1.4 Strings in an Application

Each application is for one gTLD and may include one or more of its allocatable variant strings, as applicable. An application may also be for one or more allocatable variant strings of an existing gTLD.[13]

1.2.1.5 Replacement String Selection

To potentially reduce the instances of string contention, as part of their application, applicants may also elect to submit replacement strings, as described in Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

1.2.1.6 Application and String Types

As described in Section 3.1.6 Application and String Types, certain application types may require differential treatment according to the nature of the application, string, or applicant.

The different types of applications include the following: General, Community, Geographic Name, Reserved Name, .Brand TLD, Internationalized Domain Name (IDN), Variant of Existing gTLD, Primary IDN TLD including one or more Variants, Category 1 Safeguard, and applications from governments, IGOs, and supported applicants (Government/IGO Applicant and Applicant Support application types).

In addition, certain strings will initiate specific processing and evaluation procedures: Geographic Names, IDN TLDs, Reserved Names, and Strings Subject to Category 1 Safeguards.

[13] See Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names for information on variant strings.

1.2.1.7 Closed Generics

The ICANN Board has resolved that applications for exclusive use strings (closed generics[14]) will not be approved unless and until an approved methodology and criteria are established to evaluate whether a proposed closed generic domain would serve the public interest. See Section 3.1.7 Exclusive Use Strings (Closed Generics).

1.2.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations

Certain validations (see Section 3.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations) on the primary and variant strings, including replacement strings, are automatically incorporated into and implemented via TAMS. If a string fails one of the validations or a match is found, the applicant will receive an error or warning message in TAMS explaining the detected issues and will not be allowed to proceed and submit its application or will have to provide additional documentation. Applicants will be able to enter their string in TAMS to check whether there is a match.

1.2.1.8.1 Blocked Names Identification

Certain strings, referred to as "Blocked Names", are not available for delegation. During the application drafting process, the system will automatically verify whether the applicant's entered string and any applicable variant strings appear on the Blocked Names list. If so, the applicant will not be able to move forward with that string and must select a different one in order to continue the application. For more information, see Section 3.1.8.1 Blocked Names Identification.

1.2.1.8.2 Reserved Names Identification

Certain strings, known as "Reserved Names," are available as gTLDs only through a verification process. These names are designated for specific entities, referred to as "Limited International IGO-INGOs," which are the only parties eligible to apply for them. ICANN maintains the Reserved Names list, compiled from various sources, and requires relevant entities to provide appropriate documentation. During the application drafting process, the system will automatically verify whether the applicant's entered string and any applicable variant strings appear on the Reserved Names list. If the string is found on this list, the exception process will be initiated, during which the applicant will be prompted to upload documentation demonstrating that it is the entity for which the name is reserved. For more information, see Section 3.1.8.2 Reserved Names.

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[14] For clarity, in the context of this section, "generic" is not a reference to the differentiation between a generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) and a country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD), as defined in RFC 1591 (https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc1591). Rather, this is a reference to the distinction between the use of a word or term that denominates or describes a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things, as opposed to distinguishing a specific brand of goods, services, groups, organizations or things from those of others.

1.2.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review

This review assesses whether an applied-for string will adversely affect the security or stability of the Domain Name System (DNS) and comply with DNS and other relevant standards, as described in Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review. The DNS Stability Review includes a check for compliance with the applicable Root Zone Label Generation Rules. If the string fails any of the tests, the applicant will not be able to submit its application.

1.2.1.9 Registry Service Provider Selection

All applicants are required to identify one or more evaluated Registry Service Providers (RSPs), evaluated via the RSP Evaluation Program[15] that the applicant intends to use if the applied-for string or strings proceed to delegation. The list of evaluated RSPs can be found on the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Application page.[16]

As part of its application submission, the applicant is encouraged to identify the RSPs it intends to use and the Registry Services it intends to offer in the proposed gTLD(s), but the applicant may choose to specify the RSPs just before Application Evaluation.

Applicants may also engage external third-party RSPs or seek ICANN's approval to deliver critical registry services themselves as RSPs through the RSP Evaluation Program. See Section 3.1.10 Registry Service Provider Selection.

1.2.2 Pre-Evaluation Processes

1.2.2.1 Administrative Check and Preparation for Reveal Day

***Expected duration**: Eight weeks*

Following the close of the application submission period, ICANN will perform necessary administrative due diligence and verify whether the evaluation fees have been received. ICANN will review the list of submitted applications and place applications for identical strings into contention sets in preparation for Reveal Day.

The administrative check is expected to be completed for all applications in a period of approximately eight weeks, subject to the overall application volume. In the event of a high volume of applications such that it prevents ICANN from processing all applications within the designated period, ICANN will post an updated timeline as soon as feasible.

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[15] See the RSP page on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp.

[16] See the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Application page on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp/rsp-applications.

1.2.2.2 Reveal Day

Absent extraordinary circumstances, ICANN expects to publish the list of all applications that have passed the Administrative Check on Reveal Day no later than nine weeks following the close of the application submission period. This list, which will be posted on the New gTLD Program website,[17] will include the relevant applied-for strings and any variant and replacement strings, if applicable. The public portions of each application will also be made available. A list of contention sets containing applications for identical strings will also be published on the website. See Section 5.2.4.1 Contention as a Result of Applications for Identical gTLD Strings for more information. Certain communications and activities will be prohibited starting on Reveal Day; for more information, refer to Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities.

1.2.2.3 Replacement Period

***Expected duration**: Two weeks*

Once applicants have access to the full list of applied-for strings, as well as any variant strings and replacement strings, they will have the opportunity to replace their applied-for string with their replacement string. Applicants that have selected an eligible replacement string will have a 14-day Replacement Period to notify ICANN via TAMS of their intention to replace their original applied-for string with the replacement string identified in their application. See Section 5.1 Replacement Strings for more information.

1.2.2.4 String Confirmation Day

On String Confirmation Day, ICANN will post an updated list of applications and their chosen strings (whether original or replacement, as noted above). A list of updated contention sets will also be published.

1.2.2.5 Prioritization Draw

A Prioritization Draw is expected to be held no later than 30 days after String Confirmation Day. The Draw will determine the Priority Number of an application and the general order in which it will be processed by ICANN, as described in Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw.

1.2.3 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals

Starting on String Confirmation Day, the community will have the opportunity to provide input as described below.

[17] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.

1.2.3.1 Application Comments

***Expected duration**: 104 days following String Confirmation Day; 30 days following Application Change Requests*

The general public will be able to post application comments to the Application Comment Forum, as described in Section 4.1 Application Comments. ICANN will share these comments and any responses with the evaluators assigned to the relevant applications. Only the comments and responses received during the comment windows (104 days following String Confirmation Day and 30 days following applicable Application Change Requests[18]) will be considered by the evaluation panels.

1.2.3.2 GAC Member Early Warnings

***Expected duration**: 104 days following String Confirmation Day*

Members and observers of ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) may issue GAC Member Early Warnings within the 104 days following String Confirmation Day, as described in Section 4.2 GAC Member Early Warnings.

1.2.3.3 GAC Consensus Advice

The GAC can provide GAC Consensus Advice to the ICANN Board on any application, as outlined in the ICANN Bylaws and as described in Section 4.3 GAC Consensus Advice.

1.2.3.4 Singular/Plural Notifications

***Expected duration**: 30 days following String Confirmation Day*

Within 30 days of String Confirmation Day, the public can notify ICANN about:

- Applied-for strings representing singular or plural versions of the same word in the same language.
- An applied-for string being a singular or plural version of a:
    - Delegated string
    - String still being processed from previous new gTLD round
    - Blocked Name

For more information, refer to Section 4.4 Singular/Plural Notifications.

[18] See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for more information.

1.2.3.5 Objections and Appeals

***Expected duration of objections filing period**: 104 days following String Confirmation Day*

***Expected duration of appeals filing period**: 15 days following objection determination to file notice of appeal; 15 days to file appeal*

In the 104 days following String Confirmation Day, parties with standing may file objections against specific applications, which will be evaluated by a panel of expert(s). Objections may be based on four grounds: string confusion, legal rights, limited public interest, and community.

The party that does not prevail in an objection has a limited opportunity to appeal the decision. The non-prevailing party must notify the Dispute Resolution Service Provider (DRSP) of its intent to appeal within 15 days following the issuance of the objection determination. Subsequently, the non-prevailing party has an additional 15 days from the notice date to file the appeal and pay the required fees.

Objections and appeals are filed directly with DRSPs identified by ICANN. Both filing and processing these involve costs for the parties. See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals for more information on costs and procedures.

1.2.4 String Evaluation

***Expected duration**: 180 days*[19]

String Evaluation focuses solely on the evaluation of the applied-for strings and their allocatable variant strings. This process starts after String Confirmation Day and is expected to take 180 days. String Evaluation will partially overlap with the period during which the community can provide their input on the applications, as described in Module 4 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals. String Evaluation consists of the five elements described below, each of which will be assessed concurrently. String Evaluation, unlike Application and Applicant Evaluation, does not follow the priority order.

1.2.4.1 String Similarity Evaluation

The String Similarity Evaluation will be performed by an expert panel with the objective of preventing user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from

[19] The indicated durations refer to a simple and standard application which is part of the first priority batch, is not subject to GAC Consensus Advice, objections, or conditional evaluations, is not in contention, and does not have any other issues. See Section 1.5 Lifecycle Timelines for individual evaluation timelines as well as the applicable Guidebook sections.

delegation of Visually Similar[20] strings, as described in detail in Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation.

1.2.4.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment

The Name Collision Initial Assessment aims to identify strings with a high risk of name collision, as described in Section 7.7 Name Collision. If a string is found to be high-risk, the applicant will have an opportunity to submit a Mitigation Plan for evaluation, which will allow the application to proceed if approved. Otherwise, the string will be added to the Collision String List, and the application will not proceed. The section also includes information on Temporary Delegation, which is an additional process applicable for strings not initially identified as high-risk.

1.2.4.3 Safeguard Assessment

The Safeguard Assessment will determine if an applied-for string will be required to have specific safeguards as contractual requirements in the applicable Registry Agreement as it relates to consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets. More information is found in Section 7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments.

1.2.4.4 Geographic Names Identification

As part of the Geographic Names Identification, a panel will review all of the applied-for strings and identify which strings may be considered a Geographic Name, as described in Section 7.5 Geographic Names. This is separate from the more substantive verification process called Geographic Names Review that would take place as part of Application Evaluation.

1.2.4.5 Singular/Plural Notifications Evaluation

ICANN will review the materials submitted as part of the Singular/Plural Notifications process and will determine whether certain strings represent the singular and plural forms of the same word in the same language. See Section 4.4.3 Outcome of Singular/Plural Notifications.

1.2.5 Temporary Delegation

Strings that were not identified as potentially high-risk as described in Section 7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment will undergo Temporary Delegation. Temporary Delegation can start as soon as the Name Collision Initial Assessment has been concluded, even if other evaluations that are part of String Evaluation are still being

[20] "Visually Similar" means visually confusing strings, or "strings so visually similar that they create a probability of user confusion if more than one of the strings is delegated into the root zone".

performed, and will follow the priority order, if applicable. During Temporary Delegation, the applied-for gTLD string will be delegated to DNS nameservers managed by ICANN in order to collect data about the volume and nature of DNS traffic for that string.

The duration of Temporary Delegation will be defined as part of the Name Collision process and criteria. Should it be found that a string is high-risk, it will be removed from the root zone and the applicant will have an opportunity to submit a Mitigation Plan for evaluation, which will allow the application to proceed if approved. Otherwise, the string will be added to the Collision String List. See more information in Section 7.7 Name Collision. The conclusion of Temporary Delegation is not necessary for other processes, such as Application and Applicant Evaluation or contention set resolution, to start. However, an application will be able to proceed to contracting only when Temporary Delegation is concluded and the Mitigation Plan is implemented, if applicable.

1.2.6 Publication of String Evaluation Reports and Contention Sets

Once the String Evaluation is completed, String Evaluation Reports for all applications, as well as an updated list of contention sets, will be posted to the New gTLD Program website.[21]

1.2.7 String Confusion Objections and Identification of Potential New Contention Sets

***Expected duration**: 30 days following publication of initial list of contention sets*

As described in Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals, once String Evaluation has been completed and an updated list of contention sets published, there will be a second 30-day submission window for String Confusion Objections only. Applications that received a String Confusion Objection may create additional contention sets depending on the DRSP's determination. Should new contention sets be created, they will be published to the New gTLD Program website.[22]

1.2.8 Community Priority Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*

Once all contention sets have been finalized (that is, changes are no longer possible to the composition of the set, other than when an applicant withdraws its application) and all applications in the contention set are eligible to proceed to contention resolution, Community Applicants in contention may elect to go through Community Priority

[21] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.
[22] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.

Evaluation (CPE).[23] CPE is an independent analysis conducted by an expert panel that determines whether a Community Application fulfills the CPE criteria. If an application meets the CPE criteria, it will receive priority in the contention set. More information on the process and criteria can be found in Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation.

1.2.9 ICANN New gTLD Auctions

ICANN will hold auctions to resolve string contention among applicants for new gTLDs. If an auction winner is ineligible to execute or does not execute a Registry Agreement with ICANN, ICANN may, at its discretion, offer the auction runner-up, if any, the opportunity to proceed with its application. More information can be found in Section 5.6 ICANN New gTLD Auction. For additional information regarding eligibility for contracting, see Section 1.2.15 Contracting. See also Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures and Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures for other applicable evaluations which a winning applicant must complete after a New gTLD Auction in order to proceed to contracting.

1.2.10 Applicant Evaluation

Applicant Evaluation occurs after the application has either (a) passed String Evaluation and is not part of a contention set, or (b) passed String Evaluation and has prevailed in the contention set. It is conducted in parallel with Application Evaluation based on the application's priority number, unless other processes prevent the application from proceeding. See Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures.

Applicant evaluation consists of two mandatory assessments, detailed below:

1.2.10.1 Background Screening

➔ *Mandatory*

Background screening is in place to protect the public interest in the allocation of critical Internet resources by ensuring that only established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing are allowed to operate a new gTLD. ICANN reserves the right to deny an otherwise qualified application based on findings from the background screening process. See Section 6.1 Background Screening.

1.2.10.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation

➔ *Mandatory*

The Financial and Operational Evaluation assesses whether an applicant has the financial and operational capacity to sustain the registry long-term and has

[23] Community Priority Evaluation (Section 5.4) and ICANN New gTLD Auction (Section 5.6) only apply to applications that are part of a contention set.

implemented reasonable safeguards to ensure robust business operations and address abuse concerns.[24] See Section 6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation.

1.2.11 Application Evaluation

***Expected Duration**: See Section 1.5 Lifecycle Timelines*

Application evaluation comprises the evaluations described below. Among these, only the Registry Service Provider Review is mandatory for all applications. The Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE) is mandatory for all Community Applications, but conditional for other applications.

1.2.11.1 Registry Service Provider Review

➔ *Mandatory*

ICANN will verify whether the applicant has selected one or more evaluated RSPs as part of its application. If not, Extended Evaluation is available for an applicant to provide the requested information regarding the chosen RSP(s). See Section 7.9 Registry Service Provider Review.

1.2.11.2 Geographic Names Review

➔ *Conditional*

A Geographic Names Panel will verify the relevance and authenticity of the supporting documentation for any application for a string determined to be a Geographic Name during the String Evaluation process, as described in Section 7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review.

1.2.11.3 Reserved Names Review

➔ *Conditional*

The Reserved Names evaluation process will determine whether the appropriate organization has applied for the reserved string and will verify the supporting documentation, as described in Section 7.2.2 Reserved Names.

[24] All previous ICANN gTLD application rounds included financial as well as technical and operational evaluation. Based on experience and feedback from the 2012 Round, most technical and operational evaluation and due diligence has been moved to the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program, as these functions are performed by one or more contracted RSPs. However, a very small number of technical and operational questions cover the applicant's operations (that is, not the operations of a contracted RSP) and therefore remain in the main round application under financial and operational evaluation.

1.2.11.4 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*

An applicant for a string that ICANN has deemed to present a high risk of Name Collision and has resolved contention may submit a High-Risk String Mitigation Plan for review. This plan will be reviewed by technical experts (see Section 7.7.5 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation).

1.2.11.5 Registry Operator Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*

The Registry Operator Code of Conduct (included in Specification 9 of the Registry Agreement) is a set of guidelines for the registry operator relating to certain and limited operations of a registry. If an applicant proposes to register all domain names in the gTLD exclusively for the registry operator's own use or for use by its affiliates, and wishes to waive the protection for itself and its affiliates, ICANN may grant an exemption to the Code of Conduct provided the gTLD is not a generic string (see Section 3.1.7 Exclusive Use Strings ("Closed Generics")) and the registry operator meets the exemption criteria (see Section 7.4 Registry Operator Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation).

1.2.11.6 Registry Commitments Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*[25]

As described in 7.8.3.2 Registry Commitments Evaluation, each Registry Voluntary Commitment proposed by the applicant and each Registry Agreement Community Registration Policy ("Community Registration Policy") proposed by the applicant for a Community gTLD for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement will be assessed by ICANN and published for an application comment period.

1.2.11.6.1 Registry Voluntary Commitments Evaluation

Each proposed Registry Voluntary Commitment (RVC) will undergo an ICANN evaluation. The objective of this evaluation is to determine whether the proposed RVC meets all the evaluation criteria as set out in Section 7.8.3.2 Registry Commitments Evaluation for ICANN's approval to include the commitment in Specification 11 of the Base Registry Agreement.

[25] RCE is mandatory for Community Applications, as Community Registration Policies proposed for inclusion in Specification 12 of their respective Registry Agreements are a required element for all Community Applications. RCE is conditional for the other application types.

1.2.11.6.2 Community Registration Policies Evaluation

Community Registration Policies, which all Community Applicants must propose during application submission, are subject to ICANN evaluation and approval before they can be included in Specification 12 of the Base Registry Agreement. More information can be found in Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies.

1.2.11.7 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*

The purpose of the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation is to confirm that the application meets the criteria for a .Brand TLD designation. A successful designation will result in Specification 13 being added to the applicant's Registry Agreement, provided the applicant successfully completes all phases of evaluation. See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation.

An applicant for a .Brand TLD that is found in contention has the option to change its string and avoid further contention resolution procedures by completing a .Brand String Change Request, subject to the requirements set out in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Requests.

1.2.11.8 Variant String Evaluation

➔ *Conditional*

An applicant seeking one or more allocatable variant string of an applied-for primary IDN or existing gTLD must justify the need for each applied-for variant string. This justification will be evaluated by a panel based on a general standard of reasonableness. See Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation for more information. Variants will be included in Specification 14 of the Base Registry Agreement.

1.2.12 Clarifying Questions

***Expected duration**: Seven days for administrative questions; 21 days for substantive questions*

During each Application and Applicant Evaluation,[26] the respective evaluation panel may issue clarifying questions if it requires additional information to complete its evaluation, if it intends to fail an applicant, or if any of the application comments it considered may have an impact on the evaluation of the application. Applicants will have seven days to respond to administrative clarifying questions[27] and 21 days to respond to substantive clarifying questions. If the applicant fails to respond within that

[26] Clarifying questions will not be issued for String Evaluations.
[27] Administrative clarifying questions will concern the completeness of the information and attachments submitted.

defined period, the applicant may forfeit the opportunity to address any issues found by the evaluation panel.[28]

1.2.13 Publication of Application and Applicant Evaluation Reports

Application and Applicant Evaluation reports will be compiled after all required evaluations specific to an application are completed and will be published on a rolling basis.[29] Certain processes, such as Application Change Requests, contention, or objections, may affect the timing of the publication of the reports.

1.2.14 Extended Evaluation and Evaluation Challenge

An extended evaluation or evaluation challenge is available for certain evaluations, as described below. There are no conditional fees associated with either process.

1.2.14.1 Extended Evaluation

Applicants that are unable to resolve issues through clarifying questions may be eligible to enter extended evaluation, which provides additional time and interaction to address outstanding concerns regarding a specific evaluation. Applicants may request extended evaluation within 15 days of notification of their Application and Applicant Evaluation results. Extended evaluation is conducted by the same set of evaluators who initially conducted the relevant evaluation. Where applicable, an evaluation panel may issue additional clarifying questions as part of extended evaluation.

The following evaluations can be subject to extended evaluation:

Table 1-1: Evaluations Subject to Extended Evaluation

Evaluation	Relevant Guidebook Section
Background Screening	Section 6.1 Background Screening
Financial and Operational Evaluation	Section 6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation
Registry Service Provider Review	Section 7.9 Registry Service Provider Review
Geographic Names Review	Section 7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review
Reserved Names Review	Section 7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Review
Variant String Evaluation	Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation

[28] Clarifying Questions may also be issued as part of Community Priority Evaluation. See Section 5.4.6.1 CPE Clarifying Questions.

[29] Applicants will be evaluated in Application and Applicant Evaluations based on the priority number of their application (see Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw), but the publication of these results is based on the completion date of the evaluations.

1.2.14.2 Evaluation Challenge

The evaluation challenge mechanism allows applicants to challenge an evaluation result based on claims of procedural, factual, or system error in the automatic validations run by TAMS that may have led to an incorrect evaluation outcome. While applicants can provide documentary evidence of a perceived factual or procedural error, they are not allowed to submit any new information that would constitute a material change to the original application. Typically, the challenge mechanism does not provide for clarifying questions.

The challenge mechanism is subject to a "quick look" assessment. The panel may dismiss the challenge based on one or more of the criteria below:

- The challenge is not filed on one of the accepted grounds.
- The party filing the challenge is not the applicant.
- Insufficient or no evidence is provided to support the challenge.
- The challenge is far-fetched, clearly invented, or contrary to common sense.
- Duplicate or repeated challenges on the same ground for the same evaluation are filed by the applicant.
- Other facts that may clearly show that the challenge is manifestly unfounded or an abuse of the right to challenge.

See Table 1-2: Evaluations that Qualify for Challenge for an overview of the evaluations that qualify for a challenge, the deadline for requesting it, and the grounds.

Table 1-2: Evaluations that Qualify for Challenge

Evaluation	Deadline for Filing	Grounds for Challenge
Pre-Submission String Validations *Section 3.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations*	No later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period.[30]	The automatic validations have been incorrectly applied or miscoded: • **Blocked Names Identification:** A system error in the automated Blocked Names Identification process resulted in an applicant's string being incorrectly classified as a Blocked Name. Consequently, the applicant was unable to proceed to submission. See Section 3.1.8.1 Blocked Names Identification. • **Reserved Names Identification**: A system error in the automated Reserved Names Identification process resulted in an applicant's string being incorrectly classified as a Reserved Name. Consequently, the applicant was

[30] Any challenge submitted after this point will not be accepted and applicants are therefore advised to start their application(s) as soon as possible and submit any challenges no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period. This applies to Blocked Names Identification, Reserved Names Identification, and the DNS Stability Review.

Evaluation	Deadline for Filing	Grounds for Challenge
		able to proceed to submission only by providing the requisite supporting documentation as specified for Reserved Names exceptions. See Section 3.1.8.2 Reserved Names Identification. • **DNS Stability Review**: A system error in the automated DNS Stability Review tool calculation and the identified system error caused the applicant to fail the DNS Stability Review. Consequently, the applicant was unable to proceed to submission. This challenge mechanism does not apply for scripts not supported by the RZ-LGR (see Section 3.1.8.3.1.2 Unsupported Script Applications). See Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review.
String Similarity Evaluation *Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation*	21 days after the issuance of the string evaluation result.	The String Similarity Evaluation Panel made a factual or procedural error when it determined that the applicant's applied-for string (and/or variant strings, if any) is Visually Similar to: 1. An existing gTLD, a Blocked Name, a two-character ASCII string AND the application cannot proceed in the Program OR 2. Another applied-for gTLD AND the application was placed in a contention set.
Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation *Section 4.4.3 Outcome of Singular/Plural Notifications*	21 days after the issuance of the notification that the application has been placed in a contention set based on a validated Singular/Plural Notification.	The Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation Panel made a factual or procedural error when it determined that an applicant's applied-for string is the singular or plural form of: 1. An existing gTLD, a Blocked Name, a two-character ASCII string, or a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round and cannot proceed in the Program OR 2. Another applied-for gTLD AND and the application was placed in a contention set. OR, the panel made a factual or procedural error when it determined that the dictionary submitted to document the singular/plural claim does not meet the criteria established in the Guidebook.
Community Priority Evaluation *Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation*	21 days after the issuance of the CPE result.	The CPE Panel made a factual or procedural error when it determined that an applicant did not meet the criteria to obtain priority over other competing applications for the same and/or similar string.

Evaluation	Deadline for Filing	Grounds for Challenge
Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation *Section 7.7.5 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation*	21 days after the issuance of the evaluation result.	The evaluation panel of technical experts made a factual or procedural error when it determined that the Mitigation Plan (a) does not correctly identify the root cause of the collisions or (b) does not have a high probability of being effective.

The Challenge Panel will communicate the result of the Pre-Submission String Validations within five days of an applicant filing the challenge. For the other evaluations listed in the table above, the Challenge Panel will communicate the result within 30 days of an applicant filing such a challenge.

For more detailed information on each evaluation and challenge type, see the sections linked in the table above. Each evaluation section provides additional details regarding the challenge process and its outcomes.

1.2.15 Contracting

***Expected duration**: Applicant must complete contracting no later than 90 days following the date of invitation to contracting*

An applicant that successfully completes all the relevant stages outlined in this section must execute a Registry Agreement with ICANN to be eligible for the delegation of its applied-for string (and any variant strings, where applicable) into the DNS root zone. Applicants that pass the Application and Applicant Evaluation will be invited to provide additional contracting information, including the authorized signatory. At that time, applicants must also confirm that the statements and representations contained in the application and supplemented throughout the application process (including any documents or written materials submitted in connection with the application) remain true, accurate, and complete in all material respects as required by Section 3.8 Application Change Requests and the Terms and Conditions of this Guidebook (Appendix 10).

In parallel, ICANN will seek confirmation from an applicant's identified RSP that it acknowledges plans to support that particular applicant and gTLD.

The Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4) is the product of extensive community consultation. ICANN will only consider modification to the agreement in extraordinary circumstances, such as unique legal, jurisdictional, or regulatory issues that would legally prevent an entity from executing the Base Registry Agreement as-is. Applicants that request to negotiate limited amendments to the Base Registry Agreement will be required to provide a rationale justifying the need for such changes, along with a redline of the requested changes. Applicants must submit a negotiation request to

ICANN as soon as possible in the process and no later than 15 days following the date of its invitation to contracting.

Where applicable, a Registry Agreement will include the following based on an applicant's response to the application questions and evaluation results:

- Public Interest Commitments, including Registry Voluntary Commitments and Safeguards, are included in Specification 11.
- Community Registration Policies are included in Specification 12.
- Information on .Brand applications are included in Specification 13.
- Information on variant strings are included in Specification 14.
- Special Provision Relating to Intergovernmental Organizations or Governmental Entities are included in Article 7.

Absent extraordinary circumstances, applicants are required to execute the contract within 90 days from the time they are invited to start the contracting process.

1.2.16 Post Contracting

This Post-Contracting section provides new registry operators with resources to understand the requirements of launching and operating their gTLDs.

After successfully passing evaluation and signing a Registry Agreement with ICANN, the former new gTLD applicant's operation of the gTLD will be governed by this Registry Agreement, which outlines the obligations between the registry operator and ICANN. Registry operators must complete onboarding activities for various ICANN systems and processes in accordance with the applicable Registry Agreement. This onboarding is critical for ensuring compliance with contractual obligations and operational responsibilities. New registry operators must delegate their TLD within one year from the date of Registry Agreement execution, except as described in Base Registry Agreement Section 2.19.

New registry operators are referred to the New gTLD Program website, which will provide comprehensive resources to help emerging registry operators navigate ICANN interactions and understand their contractual obligations. For additional information regarding delegation of gTLDs and the timeline for completion, review Section 1.2.15 Contracting and Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement.

1.2.17 Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation

Post-delegation dispute resolution procedures provide an avenue for pursuing complaints against a registry operator's conduct.

Sometimes, a complainant may be required to take specific steps to address its issues before filing a formal complaint. ICANN or qualified third-party providers administer

these dispute resolution procedures. An expert panel, if appointed, determines whether a registry operator is at fault and, if so, recommends remedies to ICANN.

Registry operators must comply with the dispute resolution mechanisms outlined in the Base Registry Agreement and agree to be bound by any determination by ICANN or the expert panel, and to implement and adhere to any remedies subsequently imposed by ICANN.

Currently, there are three post-delegation dispute resolution procedures:

1. **Public Interest Commitments Dispute Resolution Procedure (PICDRP):** The PICDRP addresses alleged complaints that a registry operator may not be complying with one or more Public Interest Commitments (PICs) or Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) in its Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies for further details about PICs and RVCs.

2. **Registry Registration Dispute Resolution Procedure (RRDRP):** The RRDRP addresses circumstances in which a Community gTLD registry operator allegedly deviates from the registration restrictions outlined in its Registry Agreement. A Community gTLD is operated for the benefit of a clearly delineated community. See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation for further details about Community Applications.

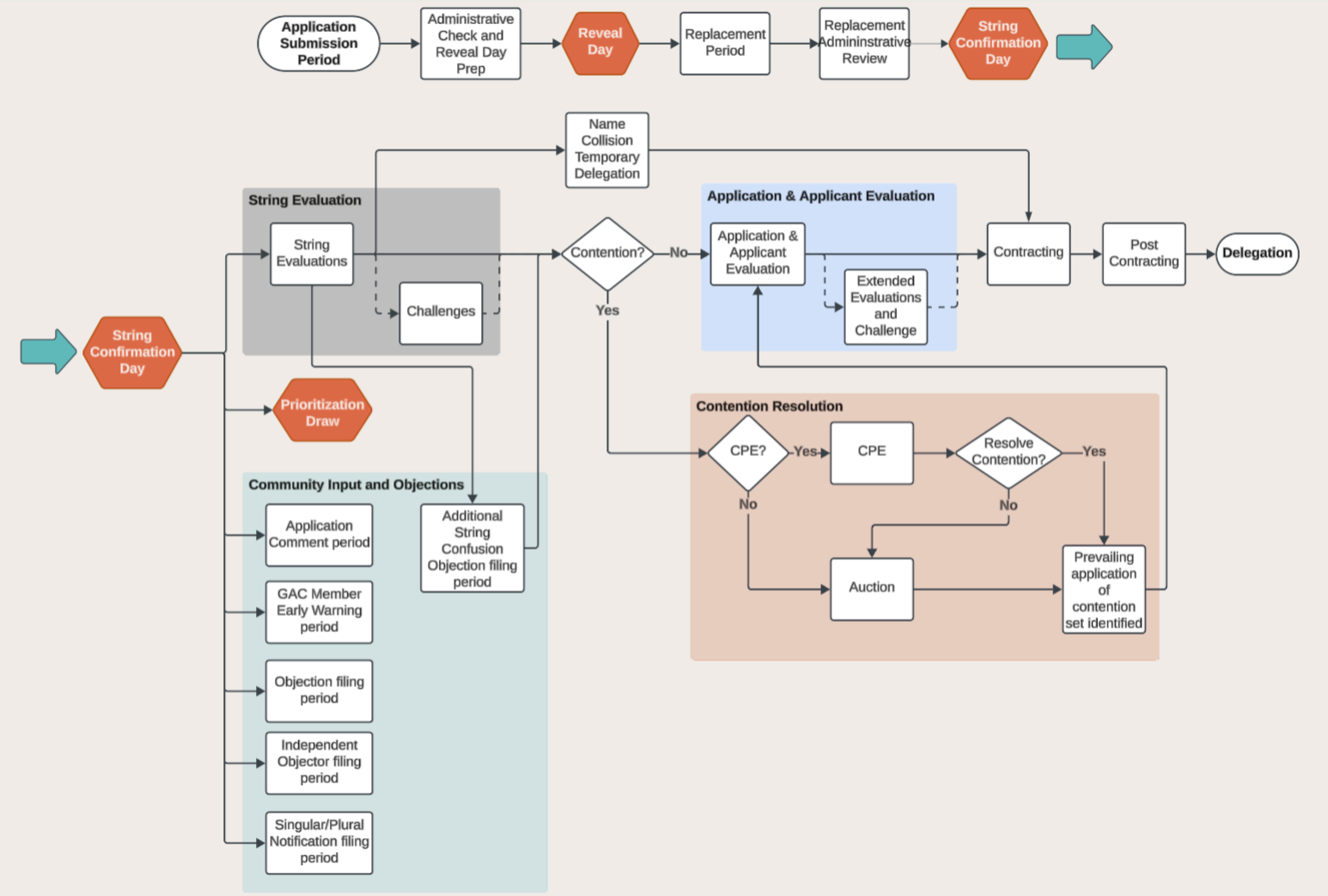
3. **Trademark Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure (TM-PDDRP)**: The TM-PDDRP generally addresses alleged complicity in trademark infringement on the first or second level of a gTLD. Among the three post-delegated dispute resolution procedures, only the TM-PDDRP is specifically intended to address trademark-related issues concerning registry operators. See Rights Protection Mechanisms[31] for further details about requirements for rights protection mechanisms for all gTLDs.

For more information about the scope of procedures, the roles of all parties, and the adjudication process with respect to these post-delegation dispute resolution procedures, see the Frequently Asked Questions on the New gTLD Program website,[32] as well as the Rights Protection Mechanisms (RPMs) & Dispute Resolutions Procedures (DRPs) information page.

[31] See the Rights Protection Mechanisms (RPMs) & Dispute Resolutions Procedures (DRPs) page on the ICANN website: https://www.icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators/services/rights-protection-mechanisms-and-dispute-resolution-procedures.
[32] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

1.3 Process Overview

Figure 1-1: Process Overview



1.4 Posted Materials

ICANN will post the following materials related to the submitted applications to the New gTLD Program website:

- Public portions of the applications
- Assigned Priority Number
- Application status and stage
- Applications with GAC Member Early Warnings and GAC Consensus Advice
- Statuses of objections and appeals
- Application Comments
- Changes to the public portion of the application due to Application Change Requests
- Evaluation result reports (String, Application and Applicant, and CPE)
- Name Collision Initial Assessment report
- Temporary Delegation report
- High-Risk Mitigation Plan and report
- Extended Evaluation and Evaluation Challenge reports
- Clarifying Questions (CQs) and Applicant's CQ Responses for the public portions of the applications
- List of contention sets
- CPE election status
- Auction status and results

1.5 Lifecycle Timelines

The table below provides a high-level estimation of the duration of each process in months, based on the number of applications submitted. The indicated durations refer to a simple and standard application that is part of the first priority batch, not subject to GAC Consensus Advice, objections, or conditional evaluations, and not in contention or facing any other issues. Applications in later priority batches may be held until their designated processing time. Applicants with applications requiring conditional evaluations or that are subject to GAC Consensus Advice or have otherwise more complex applications may experience longer processing times.

Table 1-3: Estimated Duration of Each Process

# Applications	Estimated duration in months[33]				
	Pre- Evaluation Processes	String Evaluations, including String Confusion Objection Period	Application and Applicant Evaluation	Contracting*	Total
500	2.5	6.5	3	2.5	14.5
1,000	2.5	7			15
1,500	2.5	7.5			15.5
2,000	2.5	8			16
3,500	4	10			19.5

**Estimated duration to complete onboarding and delegation will be provided at a later time.*

The table below provides an estimation of the duration of some of the conditional processes an application may be subject to.

Table 1-4: Estimated Duration of Some Conditional Processes

Process	Estimated duration in months
Application Change Requests	1-3[34]
Objections	4
Community Priority Evaluation	6
ICANN New gTLD Auctions	3
Other Evaluations	Varies depending on the evaluation element
Extended Evaluations, Evaluation Challenges, and Appeals	Varies depending on the nature of the appeal, challenge or the evaluation element

These tables do not cover all possible scenarios, and a number of factors may influence the duration of each process. Metrics on the various processes will be posted to the New gTLD Program website[35] and regularly updated.

[33] The estimated durations listed here represent the potential path for simple and standard applications part of the first priority batch, not subject to GAC Consensus Advice, objections, or conditional evaluations, not in contention, and not having any other issues, such as Application Change Request or challenge proceedings.
[34] The estimated duration for an Application Change Request is highly dependent on the type of change. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.
[35] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

Module 2 General Information

ICANN acknowledges the complexity of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round and has compiled guidance to address potential applicant questions. This module provides direct access to essential information and links to additional resources, enabling applicants and stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the Program.

Module 2 provides an overview of key topics, including:

- Information on languages and supporting documentation.
- Universal Acceptance.
- Security and stability.
- Legal compliance.

This module should serve as the primary reference point for applicants with general inquiries.

2.1 Resources and Help

There are a number of resources available for answering questions about the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round and the application process, as described below.

2.1.1 Frequently Asked Questions

ICANN has compiled a database of frequently asked questions (FAQs) to serve as a valuable resource for applicants. Access these FAQs by visiting the FAQ page on the New gTLD Program website.[36]

2.1.2 Support for General Inquiries

For general inquiries about the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, contact ICANN Global Support[37] or send an email to: globalsupport@icann.org.

ICANN Global Support has also put into place a dedicated Applicant Counselor to help answer questions about the application process and provide guidance on where to find available resources.

2.1.3 System and Application Specific Questions

To protect the security and privacy of applicant data, applicants with questions specific to their applications must submit an inquiry in TAMS. To submit an inquiry in TAMS, click the “View My Organization” link on the left side of the homepage. This will take

[36] See the FAQ page on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/resources/faqs.
[37] See ICANN Global Support: https://www.icann.org/en/help/talk-with-someone.

you to the “Organization Summary” page where you can click the “Create Inquiry” button at the top right.

To learn how to create an inquiry and for other helpful system related information, refer to the TAMS User Guide on the New gTLD Program website.[38]

As noted in Section 2.1.2, general inquiries regarding the New gTLD Program must be submitted via ICANN Global Support (globalsupport@icann.org).

2.2 Languages and Supporting Documentation

2.2.1 Applicant Guidebook and Materials

The Applicant Guidebook will be available in the ICANN languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.[39] The different language versions can be found on the Applicant Guidebook Homepage.[40] The English version is considered authoritative for the Applicant Guidebook and other documentation.

2.2.2 Language of New gTLD Applications

English is the primary working language for all ICANN business. All application materials must be submitted in English, except where expressly stated otherwise within an application question.

2.2.3 Language for Supporting Documentation for New gTLD Applications

For supporting documentation, applicants are requested to provide the original documentation. When submitting original documentation in a language other than English, applicants must provide:

1. Original documents.
2. English translations for each document.
3. A certificate of translation accuracy for each document.

The certificate of translation must be written in English and include:

1. Translator’s qualifications.
2. A statement affirming the completeness and accuracy of the translation.

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[38] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.
[39] See ICANN languages: https://www.icann.org/en/icann-acronyms-and-terms/icann-languages-en.
[40] See Applicant Guidebook Homepage: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/agb.

3. Identification of the translated document and its original language.
4. Translator's name, signature, and date.

Most professional translators and translation agencies can provide a certificate of translation, which does not need to be notarized. A sample certificate of translation accuracy can be found on the American Translators Association website.[41]

Properly submitted certified translations may expedite the review and processing of materials.

2.3 Universal Acceptance of Domain Names and Email Addresses

Universal Acceptance (UA) is a critical concept that aims to ensure that all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems should accept all domain names and email addresses, regardless of script, language, or TLD length. This approach allows Internet users to navigate and communicate online using domain names and email addresses that reflect their cultural and linguistic preferences.

2.3.1 Notice Concerning Issues related to the Universal Acceptance of Domain Names and Email Addresses Using New gTLDs

All applicants should understand that obtaining ICANN approval and entering into a Registry Agreement does not guarantee immediate, comprehensive Internet functionality. Past experience indicates that network operators may not immediately fully support new top-level domains, even when these domains have been delegated in the DNS root zone, as implementing changes may require third-party software modifications. Similarly, software applications sometimes attempt to validate domain names and may not recognize new or unknown top-level domains.

ICANN cannot mandate software acceptance of new top-level domains but does provide resources to help. ICANN publicizes valid top-level domains and has developed a basic tool to assist application providers in using current root zone data. ICANN encourages applicants to familiarize themselves with these potential integration issues and account for them in their startup and launch plans. Successful applicants may find themselves expending considerable efforts working with providers to achieve acceptance of their applied-for gTLDs.

[41] See American Translators Association website: https://www.atanet.org/client-assistance/what-is-a-certified-translation/.

For more detailed information, applicants should review the Universal Acceptance webpage[42] for background. Internationalized Domain Name applicants are encouraged to review the material concerning experiences with IDN test strings in the root zone.[43]

2.3.2 More Detailed Information on Universal Acceptance

ICANN and the community continue to advance UA readiness across the Internet ecosystem. ICANN publishes recent detailed information on Universal Acceptance on the Universal Acceptance webpage, including the latest annual UA-Readiness Report. This report covers the status of UA support in technology, including programming languages, email tools and services, network utilities, social networking applications, content management systems, authentication tools, and others. The report also includes information on the bug reporting and bug fixing efforts currently being conducted. Reporting on UA as well as technical training materials and guidance for making systems UA-ready can be found on the Universal Acceptance webpage. A provision on the technical feasibility of strings is included in Section 1.2 of the Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4).

2.4 Applicant Freedom of Expression

ICANN respects applicants' freedom of expression rights as protected by internationally recognized legal principles, including those defined in the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

While applicants may apply for available strings, this must be balanced against certain restrictions based on technical standards, Reserved Names lists, and other prohibitions detailed in the Guidebook, while being mindful of limitations to free expression. When assessing whether or not to file a Limited Public Interest Objection (Section 4.5.1.3), the Independent Objector(s) will consider freedom of expression alongside other relevant factors. Applications may be unsuccessful if the proposed string violates applicable laws or other rights, requirements, or prohibitions.

2.5 Security and Stability

The number of TLDs delegated in the DNS root zone should not increase by more than approximately five percent per month.[44]

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[42] See Universal Acceptance: https://icann.org/ua.

[43] See Report of the Successful Evaluations of Test IDN TLDs: https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/successful-evaluations-of-test-idn-tlds-31-1-2008-en.

[44] The SubPro PDP Final Report, in Implementation Guidance 26.4, states that: "The number of TLDs delegated in the root zone should not increase by more than approximately 5 percent per month, with the understanding that there may be minor variations from time-to-time." The

Applications will proceed based on the application priority order. The delegation process of a new gTLD into the root zone starts when the registry operator submits a delegation request once the new gTLD is ready.[45] Absent extraordinary circumstances, delegation requests will be processed in a first-come-first-served order until such time as any root zone change limits are reached. However, delegation requests of other types of TLDs[46] will have precedence over delegation requests of new gTLDs.

ICANN reserves the right to change the delegation rate in case of actual or potential DNS service instabilities as determined in ICANN's sole and reasonable discretion. Should such a change in the delegation rate be required, any affected applicants will be notified. Any delay on ICANN's part in a string's delegation shall not be counted against the registry operator's obligation to complete pre-delegation testing and procedures within the timeline as outlined in Article 2.20 of the Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4).

2.6 Legal Compliance

Applicant acknowledges that ICANN must comply with all applicable laws, including U.S. laws, rules, and regulations. One such set of regulations is the economic and trade sanctions program administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.[47] These sanctions have been imposed on certain countries, as well as individuals and entities that appear on OFAC's List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (the SDN List). ICANN is prohibited from providing most goods or services to residents of sanctioned countries or their governmental entities or to SDNs without an applicable U.S. government authorization or exemption. ICANN generally will not seek a license to provide goods or services to an individual or entity on the SDN List. In the past, when ICANN has been requested to provide services to individuals or entities that are not SDNs, but are residents of sanctioned countries, ICANN has sought and been granted licenses as required. However, applicant acknowledges that ICANN is under no obligation to seek such licenses and, in any given case, OFAC could decide not to issue a requested license.

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rationale for this Implementation Guidance states: "ICANN should honor the principle of conservatism when adding new gTLDs to the root zone...The Working Group suggests that number of TLDs delegated in the root zone should not increase by more than approximately 5% per month...Although the Working Group discussed operational and community concerns about the ability to evaluate new gTLDs, it noted that the recommendations under this topic relate only to the technical concerns of rating or capping the adding of new gTLDs to the root zone, from a Security and Stability risk assessed perspective." See SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf (page 119).

[45] See Section 7.7 Name Collision for more information regarding the process of delegation as it relates to name collision assessment.

[46] Including but not limited to: ccTLDs, IDN ccTLDs, and other TLDs not classified as generic.

[47] See OFAC website: https://ofac.treasury.gov/.

2.7 Accountability Mechanisms

ICANN has a commitment to accountability and transparency in all of its practices. ICANN considers these principles to be fundamental safeguards in ensuring that its bottom-up, multistakeholder model remains effective. The mechanisms through which ICANN achieves accountability and transparency are built into every level of its organization and mandate – beginning with its Bylaws,[48] detailed in its Accountability and Transparency Frameworks and Principles[49] (adopted by ICANN's Board in 2008) and annually reinforced in its Strategic and Operational Plan.[50] In order to reinforce its transparency and accountability, ICANN has established accountability mechanisms for review of ICANN actions. See ICANN Accountability Mechanisms[51] for more information.

2.8 Subsequent Application Rounds

ICANN anticipates future rounds of new gTLDs will take place at regular and predictable intervals without indefinite review periods. Except under extraordinary circumstances, application procedures will proceed without interruption unless the GNSO Council recommends a pause and the ICANN Board approves it.

The Board may initiate a new round even if prior application processing and delegation steps are incomplete. Applications for allocatable variant strings of existing gTLDs may also be submitted in the 2026 and subsequent rounds.

The Board will determine the timing for the next application round as soon as feasible, ideally by the second Board meeting after the following conditions are met:

1. Confirmation of the list of applied-for strings for the ongoing round and closure of the window for string change requests. This will provide applicants in a subsequent round with an understanding of which strings can be applied for.
2. ICANN has not encountered significant barriers in receiving and processing new applications.

Future reviews and policy development processes, including the next Competition, Consumer Choice & Consumer Trust (CCT) Review, should occur independently of subsequent gTLD application rounds. They must not stop or delay these rounds, except in extraordinary circumstances.

If any review outputs or policy development processes could materially impact application procedures, such changes will apply to the next application round following

[48] See ICANN Bylaws: https://www.icann.org/en/about/governance/bylaws#III.
[49] See Accountability and Transparency Frameworks and Principles: https://archive.icann.org/en/accountability/frameworks-principles/contents-overview.htm.
[50] See Strategic and Operational Plan: https://www.icann.org/en/about/planning.
[51] See ICANN Accountability Mechanisms: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/mechanisms-2014-03-20-en.

the adoption of the relevant recommendations by the Board. The implementation of these recommendations will be a prerequisite for the timing of the next application round.

2.9 Calendar Days and Timelines

Unless otherwise specified, the countdown period for all processes mentioned in the Applicant Guidebook will be in calendar days and will commence at 00:01 UTC the day after the announcement of the initiation of the process. Unless otherwise specified, all of the deadline times will be in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

2.10 Fundamental Obligations of Registry Operators in relation to Registrars

This section highlights registry operators' obligations related to their interactions with Registrars. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement for all registry operator obligations.

A domain name in a gTLD must be registered through an ICANN-accredited registrar, except under certain limited exceptions identified in the Base Registry Agreement that allow the registry operator to register a name to itself. See Section 2.9 of the Base Registry Agreement.

A registry operator must use a uniform agreement with all registrars authorized to register names by creating a Registry-Registrar Agreement (RRA) to define requirements for its registrars. The RRA must include certain terms that are specified in the Base Registry Agreement, and may include additional terms specific to the gTLD. A registry operator must provide advance notice of pricing changes to all registrars, in compliance with the time frames specified in the agreement. See Sections 2.9 and 2.10 of the Base Registry Agreement.

All registry operators are required to abide by the Registry Operator Code of Conduct, unless ICANN grants an exemption to an eligible registry operator that requests such an exemption.[52] The Registry Operator Code of Conduct requires the registry operator to provide non-discriminatory access to its registry services to all ICANN-accredited registrars that enter into and are in compliance with the RRA for the TLD. See Specification 9, Section 1(a) of the Base Registry Agreement.

Furthermore, the Registry Operator Code of Conduct requires registry operators that also provide registrar or registrar-reseller services to ensure that such services are offered through a legal entity separate from the registry operator, maintaining separate books of accounts. ICANN reserves the right to refer any application to the appropriate

[52] See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement Specification 9 and Specification 13, Section 7.1 String and Application Types, Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation, and Section 7.4 Code of Conduct Exemption Eligibility Evaluation for more information.

competition authority regarding any cross-ownership issues. See Specification 9, Section 2 of the Base Registry Agreement.

A registry operator should be aware that an ICANN-accredited registrar has no obligation to carry a gTLD or offer it to its customers in its product offerings. While registrars are encouraged to follow updates regarding the New gTLD Program in order to be aware of delegated gTLDs, it is at the registrars' discretion to evaluate whether to enter into an RRA with each registry operator.

ICANN will continue to provide support for gTLD registry operators as they launch and maintain registry operations. ICANN provides a point of contact for gTLD registry operators for assistance on a continuing basis. Registry operators may also wish to reference the registry operator website[53] and the Post-Contracting section of the New gTLD Program website[54] for more information.

ICANN's contractual compliance function conducts regular audits to ensure that gTLD registry operators comply with their agreement obligations and investigates any instances of noncompliance. See the Contractual Compliance webpage[55] for more information on current contractual compliance activities.

ICANN's Bylaws mandate that the organization act in an open and transparent manner, ensuring equitable treatment among registry operators. ICANN is responsible for maintaining the security and stability of the global Internet, and looks forward to a constructive and cooperative relationship with future gTLD registry operators in furtherance of this goal.

[53] See registry operator website: https://www.icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators.
[54] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.
[55] See Contractual Compliance webpage: http://www.icann.org/en/compliance/.

Module 3 Application Submission

This module outlines key milestones and expectations for submitting a new gTLD application, highlighting key aspects such as the submission period and limits, backup application process, and application queuing and prioritization.

Module 3 also covers additional essential topics, including:

- DNS Stability and Root Zone Label Generation Rules.
- Application and string types.
- Fees and payments.
- Change requests.

This information is designed to clarify the application process, enabling applicants to prepare thoroughly and navigate it with confidence.

3.1 Submitting an Application

3.1.1 Application Submission Period

The application submission period is expected to open no later than 23:59 UTC on 30 April 2026 and remain open for 105 days, closing on 12 August 2026 at 23:59 UTC.

To be considered, all applications must be submitted by the close of the application submission period, as the system will not allow for late submissions. Applicants are encouraged to submit their completed applications as soon as practicable after the application submission period opens. Waiting until the end of this period to begin the process will not provide sufficient time to complete all the necessary steps and submit a complete application on time.

Applicants must pay their gTLD evaluation fee upon receipt of the invoice, and no later than seven days after the close of the application submission period for their application to be considered, as described in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

After submitting their application, applicants will not be able to make any changes outside the processes described in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests, which can only be submitted after String Confirmation Day.

3.1.2 TLD Application Management System

Applications must be submitted electronically through the TLD Application Management System (TAMS). Paper applications will not be allowed. Applicants are encouraged to consult the TAMS User Guide on the New gTLD Program website[56] for

[56] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

guidance on how to use the system to ensure proper understanding prior to submitting an application.

3.1.3 Application Questions

The application will consist of the following sections to be completed upon user registration:

1. Organization Information.
2. Financial Information.
3. gTLD Application Information.

To complete the application, users must answer a series of questions listed in Appendix 1 Application Questions and will be asked to provide supporting documents, as required. The system will validate that all mandatory fields include a response before applicants can submit an application.

If an applicant intends to submit more than one application, TAMS will accept the Organization and Financial Information only once when creating the organization record in TAMS. For any additional applications that the applicant wishes to submit, TAMS will only prompt the applicant to input the gTLD Application Information.

This means that the Organization and Financial Information of the applying entity will be locked upon submission of the first application. Applicants should ensure that the Organization Information is correct and that the Financial Information accounts for all applications that the applicant intends to submit prior to submitting the first application.

After submission, the application cannot be modified for the duration of the application submission period. Following the application submission period, the applicant will have the opportunity to make changes to the application(s) per the procedures described in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.

3.1.4 Strings in an Application

Each application is for one gTLD and may include one or more of its allocatable variant strings, as applicable. An application may also be for one or more allocatable variant strings of an existing gTLD.[57]

3.1.5 Replacement String Selection

To potentially reduce the instances of string contention, applicants may also elect to submit replacement strings, as described in Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

[57] See Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names for information on variant strings.

3.1.6 Application and String Types

This section outlines the various application types for new gTLD applications, including general, community, Geographic Name, Reserved Name, .Brand, IDN, variant of an existing gTLD, Primary IDN variant of a new gTLD, applications from governments, IGOs, and supported applicants (Government/IGO Applicant and Applicant Support Applicant application types). Each type may have unique requirements and processing steps that an applicant should be aware of when submitting an application for these Section 7.1 String and Application Types.

The table below provides an overview of the various application types, as well as the specific areas where differing requirements may apply. For detailed information, see the sections linked in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Overview of Application Types and Key Differences in Handling

Type	Application, String, or Applicant	Processing Prioritization[58]	Contention	Additional Contract Requirements[59]	Conditional Fees[60]
General *Section 7.1.1*	N/A	Standard	Standard	N/A	None
Community *Section 7.1.2.1*	Application	Standard	May elect CPE	Spec 12	For RCE[61] and CPE[62]
Geographic Name *Section 7.1.2.2*	String, Application	Standard	Standard	None	Yes
Reserved Name *Section 7.1.2.3*	String	Standard	Standard	None	None
.Brand *Section 7.1.2.4*	Application	Standard	Standard late string change	Spec 13	Yes
IDN *Section 7.1.2.5*	String	Priority	Standard	None	None
Variant of Existing gTLD *Section 7.1.2.6*	Application	Priority	Standard	Spec 14	<= four variants: None > four variants: Yes

[58] This refers to "prioritization" as it relates to Application Processing (for example, priority in the order of processing during evaluation). See Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw.
[59] Applicants in all categories may adopt Registry Voluntary Commitments as part of Specification 11.
[60] See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.
[61] There is a fee for Registry Commitment Evaluation that must be conducted on Community Registration Policies that will be enshrined in Community Applicant's Specification 12. See Section 7.8.3.2.
[62] See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation.

Primary (IDN) + Variant of New gTLD *Section 7.1.2.7*	Application	Priority	Standard	Spec 14	<= four variants: None > four variants: Yes
Government/ IGO *Section 7.1.2.8*	Applicant	Standard	Standard	Alternate Provisions	None
Applicant Support[63] *Section 7.1.2.9*	Applicant	Standard	Bid Credit	Additional Provisions	None

3.1.7 Exclusive Use Strings (Closed Generics)

The Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4), defines generic as "a string consisting of a word or term that denominates or describes a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things, as opposed to distinguishing a specific brand of goods, services, groups, organizations or things from those of others." The base Registry Agreement describes "exclusive use" gTLDs as those that impose eligibility criteria that limit registrations exclusively to a single person or entity and/or that person's or entity's "Affiliates." Registry operators are prohibited from operating generic gTLDs for exclusive use. This is often referred to as a prohibition on "closed generic" TLDs. Examples of potentially generic strings include .tree and .banana, but it should be noted that these examples might also qualify as a .Brand TLD.

The ICANN Board has resolved that closed generic applications will not be approved unless and until an approved methodology and criteria are established to evaluate whether a proposed closed generic domain would serve the public interest. During the application process, each applicant will be required to affirm that it is not applying for, and does not intend to operate, a closed generic string.

.Brand TLDs do not describe a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things and are therefore not subject to the prohibition on closed generics. Section 9.3 of Specification 13 of the Base Registry Agreement[64] states that ".Brand TLDs are TLDs where: (ii) only Registry Operator, its Affiliates or Trademark Licensees are registrants of domain names in the TLD and control the DNS records associated with

[63] Applicants applying for Applicant Support are subject to the requirements and evaluations of the Applicant Support Program, which are separate from the requirements and evaluations of the New gTLD Program. See the ASP Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/handbook.

[64] The Board stated this in the GAC Advice – Hamburg Communiqué: Board Action (21 January 2024, https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/scorecard-gac-advice-hamburg-communique-board-action-21jan24-en.pdf), which the Board resolved to adopt on 21 January 2024 (https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-21-01-2024-en) in response to GAC Advice in the Hamburg Communiqué (30 October 2023, https://gac.icann.org/advice/communiques/public/ICANN78%20Hamburg%20Communique%CC%81.pdf?language_id=1).

domain names at any level in the TLD." See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation for more information.

3.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations

3.1.8.1 Blocked Names Identification

The system has built-in checks before allowing an applicant to proceed with its application. When an applicant fills in the name of the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether the applicant's chosen string, including any variant strings, appears on the Blocked Names list, as described in Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names. If the string is found on this list, the system will prevent the applicant from proceeding with that string. To continue with the application, the applicant must revise the entry and select a different string that is not blocked.

3.1.8.2 Reserved Names Identification

When an applicant enters the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether that string, including any allocatable variant strings, appears on the Reserved Names List. If it does, the exception process will be triggered, prompting the applicant to upload supporting documentation to demonstrate that they are the entity for which the name is reserved.

3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review

New gTLD strings must not adversely affect the security or stability of the DNS. The DNS Stability Review determines whether an applied-for gTLD string complies with DNS and other relevant standards. This evaluation includes verifying the string for conformance with the technical requirements specified for gTLD strings. Applications will not proceed unless these checks have been completed successfully.

The applied-for gTLD string must comply with the following requirements:

1. The ASCII label must either be an NR-LDH[65] or a valid A-label as described in section 2.3 of RFC 5890.[66]

2. The NR-LDH label must consist entirely of letters (alphabetic characters a-z) in accordance with section 2.1 of RFC 1123.[67]

3. IDN gTLD strings must comply with IDNA2008[68] (RFCs 5890-5893) and all standards-track RFCs that update IDNA2008.

[65] See RFC 5890 for description of relevant terms: https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc5890.txt.
[66] See RFC 5890: https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc5890.txt.
[67] See RFC 1123: https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc1123.html.
[68] See IDNA2008: https://www.unicode.org/reports/tr41/#IDNA2008. References to RFCs are as of the date of publication of this Guidebook.

4. IDN gTLD strings must comply with the applicable Root Zone Label Generation Rules.[69] See Section 3.1.8.3.1 Root Zone Label Generation Rules for additional information on RZ-LGRs and processing of applications.

5. If a gTLD string is classified as a variant string of either an existing gTLD in the root zone or an applied-for primary gTLD, it must be an allocatable variant string of that primary gTLD (see Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names). The RZ-LGR is the sole source for calculating the variant strings of the primary gTLD and their disposition values, whether allocatable or blocked.

The verifications described above are incorporated into and implemented via TAMS. This means that these verifications will occur automatically when the applicant enters the string into its application.

If a string fails one of the verifications described above, the applicant will receive an error message explaining the detected problems, and the application will not be allowed to proceed.

In Section 7.7 Name Collision and Section 2.5 Security and Stability, additional issues and requirements are described relative to stability and security reviews.

3.1.8.3.1 Root Zone Label Generation Rules

3.1.8.3.1.1 Applicable RZ-LGR Version and Scripts and Languages Supported

IDNs are important to enable a multilingual Internet. In order to ensure a secure and stable DNS, the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR)[70] were developed to determine the validity of applied-for primary strings in different scripts as well as their allocatable variant strings.

The DNS is for identifiers, not for writing a language or its literature, so the RZ-LGR is not expected to allow the full range of expression of any natural language in the DNS, nor is any generated string by the RZ-LGR required to be a word in a language.

The RZ-LGR version 6 will be used, which integrates the scripts and writing systems noted below[71] based on proposals developed by the community-based script generation panels (Generation Panels) and integrated by a list of expert reviewers (Integration Panel).

> Arabic, Armenian, Bangla, Chinese (Han), Cyrillic, Devanagari, Ethiopic, Georgian, Greek, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Hebrew, Japanese (Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji [Han]), Kannada, Khmer, Korean (Hangul and Hanja [Han]), Lao, Latin, Malayalam, Myanmar, Oriya, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, Thaana and Thai.

[69] See RZ-LGR: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/root-zone-lgr-2015-06-21-en.
[70] See RZ-LGR: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/root-zone-lgr-2015-06-21-en.
[71] See RZ-LGR-6 Overview and Summary for further details: https://www.icann.org/sites/default/files/lgr/rz-lgr-6-overview-23sep25-en.pdf.

The RZ-LGR contains a distinct LGR for each script or writing system. A writing system may contain more than one script, for example, the Japanese writing system consists of Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji (Han) scripts.

3.1.8.3.1.2 Unsupported Script Applications

The RZ-LGR will only validate strings in scripts or writing systems integrated into it. Applicants will not be able to submit an application for a string in a script not integrated into the applicable version of the RZ-LGR.

In such a case, the potential applicant should first work with the script community to integrate the relevant script into the RZ-LGR, following the RZ-LGR Procedure.[72] ICANN will support this process actively. The potential applicant may initiate this process with ICANN by emailing globalsupport@icann.org at any time. The applicant may be able to apply in a subsequent application period, if the relevant script has been integrated and made available in the applicable version of the RZ-LGR.

3.1.8.3.1.3 Choosing Primary and Variant Strings Using the RZ-LGR

The primary string is the main string submitted by the applicant, which must be valid as per the RZ-LGR calculation. Variant strings of the primary string are also calculated through the RZ-LGR, marked as either the allocatable and blocked variant strings. Collectively, the primary, allocatable and blocked variant strings are called a variant-string-set. For an existing gTLD, it is considered the primary string against which its variant-string-set will be calculated and submitted.

If the applicant is applying for a primary string, the applicant may also apply for additional allocatable variant strings of the primary string as part of a single application, but the applicant cannot apply for blocked variant strings of the primary string. A registry operator of an existing gTLD may also apply for allocatable variant strings of the gTLD in a single application, but cannot apply for blocked variant strings of the gTLD.

The choice of primary string (where primary is not an existing gTLD) within a variant-string-set will not change the total strings in the variant-string-set but it may change the subsets of allocatable and blocked variant strings within this set. Therefore, when selecting the primary string, applicants should consider the corresponding allocatable and blocked variant strings that will be created. The LGR Tool made available by ICANN at https://lgrtool.icann.org can be used to determine allocatable variant strings for a primary string.

[72] See the Procedure to Develop and Maintain the Label Generation Rules for the Root Zone in Respect of IDNA Labels: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/draft-lgr-procedure-20mar13-en.pdf.

3.1.8.3.1.4 Outcomes of Using RZ-LGR Calculations

The RZ-LGR will be applied to a primary string to determine if the primary string is valid as a TLD per the RZ-LGR.

The RZ-LGR will be applied to a variant string of a primary string or existing gTLD to:

1. Determine if the variant string is valid as a gTLD per the RZ-LGR.
2. Determine if it is a variant string of the primary string or the existing gTLD identified by the applicant.
3. Determine if it is an allocatable variant string of the primary string or the existing gTLD.

Strings that mix code points in LGRs for different scripts may be marked as invalid.

3.1.8.4 Challenging the Pre-Submission String Validations

In cases where an applicant believes it is being prevented from submitting its application or has to provide additional documentation because the pre-submission string validations have been incorrectly applied or miscoded, it will have the opportunity to file a challenge no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period,[73] as described in detail below:

- Blocked Names Identification: A system error in the automated Blocked Names Identification process resulted in an applicant's string being incorrectly classified as a Blocked Name. Consequently, the applicant was unable to proceed to submission. See Section 3.1.8.1.

- Reserved Names Identification: A system error in the automated Reserved Names Identification process resulted in an applicant's string being incorrectly classified as a Reserved Name. Consequently, the applicant was able to proceed to submission only by providing the requisite supporting documentation as specified for Reserved Names exceptions. See Section 3.1.8.2.

- DNS Stability Review: A system error in the automated DNS Stability Review tool calculation and the identified system error caused the applicant to fail the DNS Stability Review. Consequently, the applicant was unable to proceed to submission. This challenge mechanism does not apply for scripts not supported by the RZ-LGR. See Section 3.1.8.3 and Section 3.1.8.3.1.2 Unsupported Script Applications.

The Challenge Panel will communicate the result of the Pre-Submission String Validations within five days of an applicant filing the challenge.

[73] Applicants should be aware that any challenge submitted after this point will not be accepted and are therefore advised to start their application(s) as soon as possible and submit any challenges no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period. This applies to all Pre-Submission String Validations.

3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) are domain names represented by characters other than the ASCII characters (letters a-z, for top-level domains). Such domain names are formed using characters from a script outside of ASCII (for example, Arabic or Chinese).

ICANN expects a diverse set of applications for new gTLDs, including IDNs, creating significant potential for new uses and benefits to Internet users across the globe, as well as promoting choice and digital inclusion.

3.1.9.1 Rules for IDNs and Their Variants

An applied-for IDN must comply with IDNA2008[74] (RFCs 5890-5893)[75] and all of its successors. The IDN must also comply with the applicable version of the RZ-LGR. See Section 3.1.8.3.1 Root Zone Label Generation Rules.

An IDN can be represented in Unicode characters (called U-label) and its equivalent ASCII mapping prefixed by "xn--" (called A-label) as per IDNA2008. Applied-for IDNs (in U-label format) must be longer than a single character. This means that the U-label must have at least two code points with the General Category value[76] of 'L' as defined by the Unicode Standard. The code points with the General Category value of 'M' will not be counted toward the length for purposes of determining whether an applied-for IDN is a single character. For additional string requirements, also see Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review.

The RZ-LGR is the sole source to calculate the variant strings and their disposition values (allocatable or blocked) for all existing gTLDs and all applied-for primary strings.

The LGR Tool made available by ICANN can be used to determine allocatable variant strings for a primary gTLD or applied-for string.[77]

3.1.9.2 Application Submission of IDNs

An applied-for IDN that conforms to the mandatory string requirements, including IDNA 2008, as well as the RZ-LGR, can be submitted through TAMS. Where the RZ-LGR calculation during the algorithmic check deems an applied-for gTLD as "invalid" or "blocked" (for example, in case the applied-for string is a variant string), such

[74] See Relevant Standards, IAB Statements, and Reports: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/rfcs-2012-02-25-en.
[75] Also relevant are RFCs 5894-5895, which are informational documents providing background, explanation, and rationale for IDNA2008 as well as mapping characters for IDNA2008 respectively.
[76] See the Unicode Standard 16.0, which is the latest version as of the publication of this Guidebook. See Section 4.5 General Category: https://www.unicode.org/versions/Unicode16.0.0/UnicodeStandard-16.0.pdf (p. 221).
[77] See LGR Tools: https://lgrtool.icann.org/.

application for a non-conforming string will not be accepted by the application submission system. See Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review for a more complete list of checks performed. The applicant may challenge the RZ-LGR calculation by the application submission system. See Section 3.1.8.3.1 Root Zone Label Generation Rules.

3.1.9.2.1 Application Submission of New Primary IDN and its Variant Strings

An applicant can apply for a new primary IDN along with one or more of its allocatable variant strings. These variant strings will only be allocated to the same applicant as the primary IDN gTLD and must share the same back-end registry service provider while they are delegated.

Allocatable variant strings can be applied for from the set generated using the RZ-LGR. An application for an allocatable variant string cannot precede an application for its primary IDN gTLD. A primary IDN gTLD and any of its allocatable variant strings being applied for in the same round must be submitted through one application. After successful evaluation, the primary gTLD and its applied-for allocatable variant strings will be allocated to the same registry operator through one Registry Agreement. An applicant cannot apply for a blocked variant string of the new primary IDN, as calculated by the RZ-LGR. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments for details on application fees for allocatable variant strings.

Once the primary IDN gTLD is applied for, it cannot be changed, except for the applied-for primary string of a .Brand IDN gTLD application that has been placed in contention (see Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Requests).[78]

After submission of an application, the applicant may withdraw any of the applied-for variant strings from that application by submitting an Application Change Request (Section 3.8), but cannot add any other allocatable variant string not originally applied for in that application. If an applicant withdraws its application for a primary IDN gTLD, all applied-for variant strings will also be withdrawn.

3.1.9.2.2 Application Submission of Variant Strings of Existing gTLDs

An applicant can apply for variant strings of an existing gTLD only if it is the same legal entity as the registry operator for the existing gTLD. All variant strings must share the same back-end registry service provider as the existing gTLD while they are delegated. The back-end registry service provider must be approved through the RSP Evaluation Program.[79]

[78] As described in Section 5.1 Replacement Strings, applicants are encouraged to designate a replacement string alongside their original choice of string at the time of submission; using a replacement string is not considered a string change or an Application Change Request.
[79] See Appendix 12 Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program.

Allocatable variant strings of an existing gTLD can be applied for from the set generated using the RZ-LGR and must be submitted in a single application. After successful evaluation, the applied-for allocatable variant strings will be allocated to the existing gTLD registry operator. The registry operator will need to transition to the 2026 Round Base Registry Agreement, and the existing gTLD and all variant strings will be allocated through one Registry Agreement. An applicant cannot apply for a blocked variant string of an existing gTLD, as calculated by the RZ-LGR. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments for details on application fees for allocatable variant strings.

After submitting an application, applicants may withdraw any applied-for variant string but cannot add any other allocatable variant string not originally applied-for in that application.

3.1.9.3 Requirements and Processing

3.1.9.3.1 Prioritization of Processing of Variant Strings of Existing gTLDs

As a one-time exception, applications for allocatable variant strings of existing gTLDs from the 2012 Round will receive processing priority over all other applicants, including those IDN applicants that choose to participate in the prioritization draw. See Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw.

3.1.9.3.2 Multiple Applicants for the Same Primary String or its Variant Strings

If different applicants apply for strings from the same variant-string-set, then such applications will be placed in contention, and only one applicant will be selected through the contention resolution process. This means that applied-for primary strings and their applied-for allocatable variant strings will participate as a set in any contention resolution mechanisms, that is, Community Priority Evaluation (Section 5.4) or ICANN New gTLD Auction (Section 5.6) (see Module 5 Contention Set Resolution).

Any application for an allocatable variant string of an existing gTLD will be rejected if it is made by an applicant that is not the registry operator of that existing gTLD.

3.1.10 Registry Service Provider Selection

Applicants must specify which Registry Service Providers (RSPs) will deliver critical registry services if their application proceeds to delegation. The list of evaluated RSPs can be found on the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Applications page.[80]

Applicants may engage external third-party RSPs or seek ICANN's approval to deliver critical registry services themselves as RSPs through the RSP Evaluation Program.

[80] See the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Applications webpage: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp/rsp-applications.

Each RSP needs to only be evaluated once, regardless of the number of gTLDs it supports and receives qualification to provide specific Registry Services.

3.1.10.1 Expectations for RSP Selection When Submitting an Application

Applicants are encouraged to identify their RSPs and intended Registry Services upon submitting their application to avoid potential delays in processing. However, an applicant may also submit the application without specifying RSPs, choosing to do so just before Applicant and Application Evaluation.

Early selection of RSPs and Registry Services, ideally during preparation, is encouraged, as applicants may find it important to work closely with the selected RSPs during the application submission period to complete these parts of the application correctly.

If an applicant has not identified an RSP(s) to cover the required minimum critical registry functions by the time of the Applicant Evaluation Procedures (Module 6) and String and Application Evaluation Procedures (Module 7), Extended Evaluation may be selected to allow the applicant more time to provide the requested information from its chosen RSPs.

The applicant may specify or change its selected RSPs after submitting its application through the Application Change Request (Section 3.8) process.

During the contracting process, ICANN will seek confirmation from an applicant's identified RSP that it acknowledges plans to support that particular applicant and gTLD or gTLDs.[81]

3.1.10.2 Registry Functions and Types of RSPs

The Base Registry Agreement requires that registry operators support the following critical registry functions: Domain Name System (DNS), Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC), Extensible Provisioning Protocol (EPP), Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP), and Data Escrow. There are four types of RSPs, each delivering a set of unique functions necessary for the operation of the critical registry functions:

1. Main RSPs, which operate the registration database for a gTLD, undertake escrow of domain registration data, and operate the EPP and RDAP services for a gTLD. A gTLD can only have one Main RSP.

2. DNS RSPs, which operate one or more DNS servers for a gTLD. A gTLD may use multiple DNS RSPs.

[81] See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.

3. DNSSEC RSPs, which undertake the cryptographic operations necessary for DNSSEC. A gTLD can only have one DNSSEC RSP.

4. Proxy RSPs, which perform registration validation to comply with applicable local law in a given jurisdiction. This is an optional additional registry service that must be approved by ICANN in the RSP Evaluation Program.[82] A gTLD may use multiple Proxy RSPs, each of which provides access to a different jurisdiction.

An organization may be evaluated for one or more types of RSPs in the RSP Evaluation Program.[83]

During the application process, the applicant will be asked to provide the RSPs it intends to use, and the additional Registry Services, if any, it intends to offer in the proposed gTLDs. At a minimum, the applicant must provide a Main RSP, a DNSSEC RSP, and a DNS RSP.

3.2 Administrative Check and Preparation for Reveal Day

Following the close of the application submission period, ICANN will perform necessary administrative due diligence and verify whether the evaluation fees have been received. ICANN will review the list of submitted applications and place applications for identical strings into contention sets in preparation for Reveal Day.

The administrative check is expected to be completed for all applications in a period of approximately eight weeks, subject to the overall application volume. In the event of a high volume of applications that prevents ICANN from processing all applications within the designated period, ICANN will post an updated timeline as soon as feasible.

3.3 Fees and Payments

This section describes the fees to be paid by the applicant, including payment instructions.

3.3.1 gTLD Evaluation Fee

The gTLD evaluation fee is set so that ICANN can recover all applicable costs associated with the New gTLD Program. This approach ensures that the Program is fully funded and revenue-neutral, and will not be subsidized by contributions from other ICANN funding sources, including gTLD registry operator and registrar fees and

[82] See Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp.
[83] See Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp.

contributions from ccTLDs and Regional Internet Registries. ICANN has estimated that 2026 Round evaluations, contracting and delegation processes will continue through approximately 30 June 2030,[84] by which time all applications submitted are expected to have proceeded through these stages of the Applicant Journey (Module 1). The gTLD evaluation fee covers all required evaluations, including Extended Evaluation where applicable, during that time frame.

ICANN recognizes that exceptional cases may arise, requiring the extension of these services for a limited number of applications beyond the June 2030 time frame.

The gTLD evaluation fee is USD 227,000 per application for all applicants, except for those submitted by qualified Applicant Support Program (ASP) applicants and variant applications that meet the criteria below. The fee is due upon receipt of the invoice, and complete payment must be received by ICANN no later than seven days after the close of the application submission period. If the applicant has not paid the gTLD evaluation fee within this seven-day period, the application will generally not be processed any further and will be canceled. In the unlikely scenario of an ASP applicant still awaiting results of the ASP evaluation, the applicant may need to submit an application without payment. The application would be put on hold until the appropriate gTLD evaluation fee has been determined and payment has been received.

3.3.1.1 gTLD Evaluation Fee for Applications with Variant Strings

3.3.1.1.1 For New Applicants

The gTLD evaluation fee covers one application for a primary gTLD and up to four variant strings. If an applicant wants to apply for more than four variant strings under one primary string, the applicant must pay the USD 227,000 evaluation fee for each additional allocatable variant beyond the fourth variant. Additional fees for Conditional Evaluations (see Section 3.3.2) may apply.

3.3.1.1.2 For Existing gTLD Registry Operators from the 2012 Round

In this 2026 Round, a gTLD registry operator from the 2012 Round may apply for up to four variant strings of its existing gTLD with its application fee waived as a one-time exception. If applying for more than four variant strings, it will pay the full gTLD evaluation fee for each additional allocatable variant beyond the fourth variant. Additional fees for Conditional Evaluations (see Section 3.3.2) may apply.

[84] Based on 2,000 applications received.

3.3.1.2 gTLD Evaluation Fee for Qualified Applicant Support Program Applicants

Qualified ASP applicants will receive a 75-85% reduction of the gTLD evaluation fee. Therefore, the discounted gTLD evaluation fee for a qualified ASP applicant will range between USD 34,500 and USD 56,750 (including the USD 2,500 deposit submitted to confirm ASP financial viability). The exact amount will depend on the final number of qualified ASP applicants. ICANN will inform qualified ASP applicants that they qualify for a minimum of 75% discount, and the final discounted amount is expected to be shared 12-16 weeks after the close of the ASP application submission period. As indicated in Section 3.3.1.1 gTLD Application Fee for Applications with Variant Strings, the discount on the gTLD evaluation fee includes up to four variant strings. Supported applicants that apply for more than four variant strings will need to pay the USD 227,000 evaluation fee for each additional variant beyond the fourth.

3.3.2 Conditional Evaluations

In addition to the required evaluations covered by the gTLD evaluation fee, there are a number of conditional evaluations that applicants may elect or are required to undergo to obtain a specific status or exemption. The applicant fees for these conditional evaluations are also set to recover the costs associated with conducting these evaluations, which may be carried out or supported by third-party vendors. This will ensure that the Program is fully funded and revenue neutral, and will not be subsidized by contributions from other ICANN funding sources, including gTLD registry operator and registrar fees and contributions from ccTLDs and Regional Internet Registries. Selection of some of these conditional evaluations, such as Name Collision High-Risk String Mitigation Plan review, will only be available later in the evaluation process. For further details about what each of these evaluations entails, see the relevant sections that have been indicated in Table 3-2: Conditional Evaluations and Fees.

Applicants will be notified by ICANN when fees for conditional evaluations are due. This may be shortly after the close of the application submission period or at the time the evaluations take place. If an applicant fails to pay for a conditional evaluation, depending on the type of conditional evaluation, the applicant may be asked to submit an Application Change Request to remove that section of their application to proceed. Otherwise, required conditional evaluations must be paid on time to avoid disqualification.[85]

[85] For example, if an applicant fails to submit the fee for Community Priority Evaluation (CPE, Section 5.4) by the designated time, the applicant will forfeit the opportunity to participate in CPE but will still move to the next stage of contention resolution. However, if an applicant fails to submit the fee for Geographic Names Review (Section 7.5.3.2), it will not be allowed to proceed in the New gTLD Program. Once applicants have been invited to Applicant and Application Evaluations, applicants are eligible for the 20% refund of the gTLD application fee if they cannot proceed further in the New gTLD Program as described in Section 3.3.3 Refunds.

For evaluations marked with one asterisk (*), a qualified ASP applicant will receive the same percentage reduction as it received on the gTLD evaluation fee. Before granting this reduction, ICANN will request that the ASP applicant verify continued eligibility to receive further financial support (see also ASP Terms and Conditions).[86]

Name Collision High-Risk String Mitigation Plan Evaluation has been marked with two asterisks (**) and must be performed for each string that has been identified as a high-risk string. As a result, the conditional fee must be paid for each string in the set that has been identified as a high-risk string.

Table 3-2: Conditional Evaluations and Fees

Conditional Evaluation	Fees
.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation (Specification 13) *Section 7.3*	USD 500
Registry Operator Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation (Specification 9) *Section 7.4*	USD 400
Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)* *Section 5.4*	USD 52,936 In the event that the applicant participates in Community Priority Evaluation, this fee is payable to cover the cost of the panel's[87] review of that application.
Geographic Names Review* *Section 7.5.3.2*	This fee is payable to cover the cost of the panel's review of the application and will not exceed USD 12,000.
Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation** *Section 7.7.5*	In the event that the applicant decides to submit a Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan, this fee is payable to cover the cost of the panel's review of that application (currently estimated between USD 100,000 – USD 150,000). An applicant will be informed of the fee to be paid before having to confirm whether it wants to submit a plan.
Re-evaluations as a result of Application Change Requests* (if applicable, for example, background screening or string evaluation, in case of .Brand String Change Request)	Costs depend on what needs to be re-evaluated. The applicant will be informed following the submission of the Application Change Request on which additional costs, if any, may be applicable.

[86] See ASP Terms and Conditions: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/tandcs.
[87] See announcement regarding the vendor that will be conducting CPE: https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-announces-community-priority-evaluation-provider-for-2026-round-18-03-2026-en.

Section 3.8	
Registry Commitments Evaluation* (Specification 11 for RVCs and Specification 12 for Community Registration Policies) *Section 7.8.3.3*	USD 15,000 (one-time fixed fee, regardless of the number of Community Registration Policies and RVCs submitted per application). For applicants that proceed to CPE, this fee will be deducted from the CPE fee that is to be paid.

3.3.3 Refunds

3.3.3.1 gTLD Evaluation Fee Refunds

In certain circumstances, applicants may request a partial refund[88] of the gTLD evaluation fee originally paid to ICANN as part of the application process, as set out below. The refund amount will vary based on the stage of the process at which the withdrawal is requested or the application status changes to Terminated (see Section 3.9 Application Statuses).

The application process will include three distinct refund windows, as follows:

1. The first window spans from the receipt of the applicant's gTLD evaluation fee to ten days after String Confirmation Day, during which 65% of the gTLD evaluation fee paid is eligible for refund.

2. The second window covers the period from 11 days after String Confirmation Day until the start of the Application and Applicant Evaluation, with 35% of the gTLD evaluation fee paid eligible for a refund. An applicant will be notified when the Application and Applicant Evaluation is expected to be initiated. This notification will happen after the conclusion of the String Evaluation phase, or contention set resolution, if applicable.

3. The third window extends from the initiation of an Application and Applicant Evaluation up to the point at which the applicant enters into a Registry Agreement with ICANN, allowing for a 20% refund of the gTLD evaluation fee paid.

For further details on these windows and which evaluations and processes take place in these windows, see Module 1 The Applicant Journey.

Fees for conditional evaluations that have been paid but for which the evaluation has not started yet may also be refunded if the application status is categorized as Withdrawn, Will Not Proceed or Terminated.

[88] Volume refunds, if applicable, will be handled separately from application refunds and will not have an impact on the application refund amounts. See Section 3.3.3.2 Application Volume Refund.

3.3.3.1.1 Applicant Withdrawal

An applicant may withdraw an application at any time prior to its execution of the Registry Agreement with ICANN. An applicant that elects to withdraw its application is permitted to request a partial refund of the fees paid to ICANN, as set forth below. The refund request must be made as part of the withdrawal request. If the applicant does not request a refund at that time, it will forfeit the right to do so later.

3.3.3.1.2 Terminated Applications

ICANN will notify an applicant if its application will not proceed and has been assigned the Terminated status (see Section 3.9 Application Statuses). Upon receiving this notification from ICANN, the applicant may request a refund consistent with the refund window and percentage of the gTLD evaluation fee eligible for refund, as outlined below. To be eligible for a refund, the applicant must request a refund within 90 days of being notified of the Terminated status. Applicants that do not request a refund within this 90-day window will be considered to have forfeited their ability to request a refund.

3.3.3.1.3 Refund as a Result of Material Changes

Any applications that are withdrawn due to changes with a material impact to the Applicant Guidebook or Program processes as defined in the Appendix 6 Predictability Framework will be eligible for a refund. As part of its decision on any changes with a material impact to the Guidebook or Program processes, the ICANN Board will confirm applicant eligibility for a refund as well as the percentage of the gTLD evaluation fee paid that is eligible as a refund. An applicant that withdraws its application as a result of such changes must provide a formal declaration accompanied by supporting documentation to demonstrate that the change: (1) altered the status of its application, or (2) affected the outcome of the application's evaluation, or (3) had a non-trivial financial or operational impact on the applicant, or (4) had a non-trivial impact on the timeline of its application processing and evaluation.[89] Consistent with Section 3.3.3.1.1 Applicant Withdrawal, a request for a refund as a result of such a change must be made as part of the withdrawal request.

3.3.3.1.4 Refunds for Strings Identified as High Risk of Name Collision

An applicant that decides to withdraw its application within 90 days of its applied-for string being determined as high risk of name collision, and that does not submit a Name Collision High-Risk String Mitigation Plan for evaluation, is eligible to receive a refund of 100% of the gTLD evaluation fee paid. Any applications for strings that have been determined to be at high risk of name collision in a previous round or were not

[89] See Appendix 6 Predictability Framework for information regarding the process for the handling of unanticipated matters.

approved as a result of such determination will not be eligible for this refund (.HOME, .CORP, and .MAIL).

3.3.3.1.5 Refund When a String is Eliminated Because of IDN ccTLD Application Process

In instances where a gTLD applicant has obtained the support or non-objection from the relevant government or public authority, yet the gTLD application does not proceed due to Visual Similarity with a string requested in the IDN ccTLD application process, a full refund of the gTLD evaluation fee shall be issued to the gTLD applicant. This refund is applicable provided that the gTLD application was submitted prior to the publication of the successfully evaluated ccTLD.

3.3.3.2 Application Volume Refund

ICANN applied a conservative approach in estimating the recovery of implementation costs before receiving a single application. To ensure that implementation efforts are recovered, the portion of the gTLD evaluation fee pertaining to estimated implementation expenses was based on an assumption of 1,000 fully paid applications. As a result, a volume refund may be applicable if two conditions are met: 1) more than 1,000 applications are received; and, 2) the implementation costs for the 2026 Round have been recovered.

Applicants will be requested to indicate at the time of application submission whether they want to receive a volume refund, should one be applicable.[90] If the applicant does not select the option to receive a volume refund, it will be considered to have forfeited its ability to receive a volume refund. After Reveal Day, ICANN will notify applicants that have selected the volume refund option if one is applicable. The volume refund amount will be calculated based on the number of applications received and the final amount of costs incurred for implementation. Only paying applications for the 2026 Round will be eligible for the volume refund, with qualified ASP applications receiving a volume refund proportional to the amount of fee paid.

3.3.4 Fees Required in Some Cases

Applicants may incur additional fees and costs when specialized process steps are applicable. Further details can be found in the respective sections that cover these specialized processes. Those possible additional fees include:

- Objections and appeal costs. See Section 4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs.
- Auctions. See Section 5.6 ICANN New gTLD Auction.
- .Brand TLD String Change Request documentation verification. See Section 5.3 .Brand TLD String Change Request.

[90] See Question Set 22 in Appendix 1 Application Questions.

3.3.5 Fees During Registry Operations

For applicants that are successful in all application processes and become a registry operator, there are other fees they will need to pay as a registry operator. These are outlined in the Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement and include the registry fixed fee and registry-level transaction fees.

3.3.6 Payment Methods

Payments to ICANN must be made via wire transfer, Automated Clearing House (ACH), International SWIFT payment, or other method approved by ICANN for this service. Checks, cash and credit card payments are not accepted. Instructions for making a payment will be made available to applicants.

Payments to Dispute Resolution Service Providers should be submitted in accordance with the provider's rules. See Section 4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs.

3.4 Reveal Day

Absent extraordinary circumstances, ICANN expects to publish the list of all applications that have passed the Administrative Check, including the relevant applied-for strings and any variant strings and replacement strings (if applicable), to the New gTLD Program website[91] on Reveal Day, no later than nine weeks following the close of the application submission period. The public portions of each application will also be made available, alongside a list of contention sets containing applications for identical strings. Certain communications and activities will be prohibited starting on Reveal Day for applications in contention. See Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities.

3.5 Replacement Period

Once applicants have access to the full list of applied-for strings, as well as any variant and replacement strings, they will have the opportunity to replace their original applied-for string with their replacement string. Applicants that have selected an eligible replacement string will have a 14-day Replacement Period to notify ICANN via TAMS of their intention to replace their original applied-for string with the replacement string identified in their application. See Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

3.6 String Confirmation Day

On String Confirmation Day, ICANN will post an updated list of applications and their chosen strings (whether original or replacement, as noted above). An updated list of

[91] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.

contention sets made up of applications for identical strings will also be published. See Section 5.2.4.1 Contention as a Result of Applications for Identical gTLD Strings.

3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw

The Priority Number assigned to an application determines the general order in which ICANN processes the successive stages of the application process. Priority Numbers will also be used to determine the general order of the release of evaluation results and execution of Registry Agreements.[92]

Once assigned, an application's Priority Number will not change, nor can it be transferred between applicants or applications.

Specific rules apply to the prioritization of applications for IDNs. See Section 3.7.3 Prioritization of IDN Applications.

3.7.1 The Prioritization Draw

Application processing priority will be established by a Prioritization Draw event (the Draw), which will be a live event. During this event, each application entered into the Draw will have a physical paper ticket drawn manually from the pool of participating applications and will be assigned a Priority Number.

Participation in the Draw is optional. For details on how processing priority is assigned to applications not entered into the Draw, see Section 3.7.4 Applications Not Included in the Prioritization Draw.

3.7.2 Participation in the Draw

A Prioritization Draw is expected to be held no later than 30 days after String Confirmation Day. Tickets for the Draw will cost USD 100 and must be purchased in person; online purchases are not available. To participate in the Draw, an applicant, through a designated representative or proxy, must purchase a ticket in person for each application that the applicant wants prioritized.

Applicants cannot attend the Draw in person but can follow the live event virtually.

ICANN expects to announce full details of the Draw no less than 30 days in advance.

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[92] As noted in Section 3.7.5 Exceptions to Processing According to Priority Number below, "ICANN will aim to maintain priority order across the applications currently being processed at each application stage. However, this order may be affected by operational capacity and other application-related issues." Therefore, a lower Priority Number will not guarantee an earlier delegation, as factors such as challenges, Extended Evaluation, Contention Resolution, objections, appeals, Accountability Mechanisms, GAC Consensus Advice and others may have an impact on the timing of the application lifecycle.

Only one ticket may be purchased per application. If an applicant submits multiple applications, the applicant must buy a separate ticket for each application it would like to enter into the Draw.

3.7.3 Prioritization of IDN Applications

Applications entered into the Draw will be randomly drawn in groups of 500 until all applications have received a Priority Number. IDN applications will be prioritized in the Draw according to the following order and rules:

1. IDN applications for allocatable variant strings of 2012 IDN gTLDs.
    - As an exception for this application round, applications for allocatable variant strings of IDN gTLDs from the 2012 Round will be processed ahead of other new gTLD applications, including all other applications for IDN primary strings that have been entered into the Draw. These applications will be automatically included in the Draw without the need for applicants to purchase a ticket. These applications will be separated and drawn first.
2. Once all applications for variant strings of 2012 IDN gTLDs have been drawn, if there are fewer than 125 remaining IDN applications electing to participate in the Draw:
    - All IDN applications will be drawn first and assigned Priority Numbers before any non-IDN applications.
3. However, if there are 125 or more remaining IDN applications electing to participate in the Draw:
    - 25% (125) of the first group of 500 applications will be IDN applications, selected at random as part of the Draw. These selected IDN applications will then be drawn first and assigned Priority Numbers.
    - The remaining 75% (375) of applications in the first group to receive Priority Numbers will comprise both IDN and non-IDN applications. These will be randomly selected from the remaining pool of applications taking part in the Draw and will be drawn and prioritized at random.
4. For each subsequent group of 500 applications electing to participate in the Draw:
    - The first 10% of each group will be IDN applications selected at random, drawn first and prioritized, continuing until no IDN applications remain.
    - The remaining applications in each group will be randomly selected from the pool of remaining IDN and non-IDN applications, drawn and prioritized at random.

3.7.4 Applications Not Included in the Prioritization Draw

Applications not entered into the Draw will also be randomly drawn and allocated a Priority Number in groups of 500 applications, but only after all applications entered into the Draw have been drawn and prioritized. For example, if the final Priority Number allocated via the Draw is 1000, the lowest Priority Number an application not entered into the Draw can receive is 1001.

In each group of 500 applications, the first 10% must consist of IDN applications until there are no more left to draw. The remaining applications in each group will be selected at random and prioritized from the pool of remaining IDN and non-IDN applications.

3.7.5 Exceptions to Processing According to Priority Number

ICANN will aim to maintain priority order across applications being processed at each stage. However, this order may be affected by operational capacity and other application-related issues such as, but not limited to: objections, GAC Consensus Advice, Extended Evaluation, contention sets, ICANN Accountability Mechanisms, or processing holds due to Application Change Requests. Ongoing processing activities are likely to be paused until these processes have been completed. To avoid delays and ensure continued progress for other applications, ICANN will proceed with the next application in the priority order. Once ICANN determines that the issues affecting the paused application have been cleared, it will resume processing according to the assigned Priority Number.

3.8 Application Change Requests

This section describes the process for applicants to update inaccurate or outdated information in their application and to make other changes, as required. These Application Change Requests (ACRs) are reviewed by ICANN based on the change request determination criteria (see Section 3.8.2 Change Request Determination Criteria) and are subject to ICANN's approval.

Material ACRs will be published for a 30-day comment period, as described in Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes, giving the general public the opportunity to provide input.

3.8.1 Application Change Requests Overview

Applicants may request changes or updates to Organization, Financial or Application Information throughout the application processing, from String Confirmation Day through Registry Agreement execution.

If at any time during the Program information submitted in response to Application Questions (Appendix 1) or the Organization Information becomes untrue, inaccurate, or outdated following, for example, agreement between ICANN and the applicant as an outcome of an evaluation,[93] the applicant must submit an ACR promptly (and in any case within seven days of becoming aware of any fact or circumstance giving rise to such obligation). ICANN reserves the right to require a re-evaluation of the application in the event of a material change,[94] which could result in additional fees. Failure to notify ICANN of any change in circumstances that would render any information provided in the application false or misleading may result in the application not being allowed to proceed.

An applicant may request changes to many aspects of its application, as described in Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes. However, an applicant may not change the applied-for string, except in cases where the applicant has qualified as a .Brand TLD (see Section 7.3 .Brand Eligibility Evaluation) and is in contention. .Brand String Change Requests follow the process described in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request.[95]

Certain ACRs may require re-evaluations or other processes, as described in Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes, which may involve additional fees for the applicant. For more information on evaluations and fees, refer to Module 6 Applicant Evaluation, Module 7 String and Application Evaluation and Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

ACRs from supported applicants will also be considered in relation to the applicant's eligibility to receive further financial support via the Applicant Support Program. See the Applicant Support Program Terms and Conditions for more information.[96]

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[93] For example, following Registry Commitment Evaluation, a Community Applicant participating in Community Priority Evaluation is required to submit an Application Change Request that reflects the negotiated Registry Agreement language for the proposed Community Registration Policy.

[94] A material change is a change that will likely (1) change the status of an application; or, (2) change the outcome of an evaluation of an application.

[95] During the Replacement Period (Section 5.1.5), applicants that designated a replacement string as part of their application will have the opportunity to indicate to ICANN if they elect to replace their original applied-for string with their replacement string. This is not considered a .Brand String Change Request (Section 5.3) or an Application Change Request (Section 3.8).

[96] See the Applicant Support Program Terms and Conditions: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/tandcs.

3.8.2 Change Request Determination Criteria

When evaluating each ACR, ICANN will consider all available information against seven criteria, which were developed to allow necessary updates to applicant-specific information or applications while ensuring a fair and equitable process for all applicants. The weighting of each criterion may vary based on the specific circumstances of the change request and the application, including the applicant and the strings involved. Approval of changes will be determined by balancing the following factors:

1. **Correcting Submission Errors**: This criterion applies when the applicant requests a change to correct an error. The applicant must provide adequate information to support the request. Such requests are rare, but when submitted, this criterion carries significant weight.

   Is there evidence to support an assertion or claim that the change is requested for the sole purpose of correcting an error?

2. **Explanation**: This criterion requires that the applicant provide an explanation for the requested changes. If an explanation is not provided, the applicant is given an opportunity to remediate.

   Is a reasonable explanation provided?

3. **Cause for Change**:

   Is the change requested in response to third-party input, such as application comments, objections, GAC Consensus Advice, or GAC Member Early Warnings? Is the change requested to reflect an organizational change (for example, a change to the organization name or mailing address)?

4. **Precedents**: ICANN assesses whether approving the change request would set a new precedent, or align with previously approved similar requests. At this stage of the New gTLD Program, requests that would set a new precedent are unlikely to be approved.

   Is the change similar to others that have already been approved? Could the change lead others to request similar changes that could affect third parties or result in undesirable effects on the Program?

5. **Impact to third parties, including other applicants**: ICANN evaluates whether the change request materially impacts third parties, particularly other applicants. If a change could materially impact another applicant's status, this criterion is heavily weighted.

What impact, positive or negative, would the change have on third parties, including other applicants? Would it be fair to the general community? Would it create an unfair advantage or disadvantage?

6. **Materiality**: ICANN assesses how the change request will impact the application's status and its competing applications, the string, the contention set, and any additional Program processes such as Community Priority Evaluation. A material change will not automatically cause rejection but will influence the weight of other criteria.

   Would the change affect evaluation outcomes, string contention, or potentially lead to objections?

7. **Timing**: This criterion determines whether the timing of the change request impacts criteria 4 - 6 above. If timing is found to impact these criteria, it will be heavily weighted.

   Does the timing interfere with the application processing in some way?

Changes that result in material changes to public portions of the application will be subject to a 30-day comment period.[97] Changes that require a 30-day comment period will be posted on the New gTLD Program website where the updated information will be displayed.[98]

3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes

The table below presents a non-exhaustive list of potential ACR types, specifying whether the ACR is allowed, and detailing the necessary processes for each type. The table also differentiates between the two distinct workflows that different ACR types will trigger. More information can be found below in Section 3.8.4 Application Change Request Workflows.

Except what is included in the table, relevant evaluations, such as String and Application Evaluation Procedures (Module 7) and Applicant Evaluation Procedures (Module 6), will be performed again based on the specific areas affected by the ACR; this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The approval of application changes may depend on the specific facts and circumstances surrounding the ACR and the application, including the applicant and the strings involved. If an ACR's approval necessitates re-evaluation, an additional fee may be charged.

[97] See Section 4.1 Application Comments for more information on the comment period.
[98] See the New gTLD Program Website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

Table 3-3: Application Change Request Types and Required Processes

		Process required?				
Change Type	Allowed ?	Comment period	Registry Commitments Evaluation	Background Screening	Financial Evaluation	RSP re-evaluation
Workflow 1						
Changes to the applicant information[99]						
Changes to key individuals, such as Board members, officers/directors etc.	Y			Y		
Material changes to financial condition or related information	Y				Y	
Changes in the control of the applicant	Y			Y		
Changes to the administrative details associated with the application (for example, contacts, users, address, email, phone, website URL)	Y					
Changes to applicant's stock symbol	Y					
Changes to name of applying entity[100] *Note: Supporting documentation will be required*	Y					
Changes to other sections of the application						
Changes to mission/purpose of proposed gTLD	Y	Y				
Change of RSP	Y					

[99] ACRs submitted by supported applicants may require the applicant to be considered for eligibility to receive ongoing financial benefits of the Applicant Support Program. See Applicant Support Program Terms and Conditions: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/tandcs.

[100] This item refers to a simple name change of the applying entity only. It does not apply to changes in the applying entity itself such as the case of the application being assigned from a parent entity to a wholly-owned subsidiary.

		Process required?				
Change Type	Allowed ?	Comment period	Registry Commitments Evaluation	Background Screening	Financial Evaluation	RSP re-evaluation
Changes from any application type to another application type, excluding from or to Community applications	Y	Y				
Changes from or to Community applications	N					
Removal of variant(s)	Y					
Addition of a High-Risk String Mitigation Plan	Y	Y				
Workflow 2						
Community Registration Policy						
Agreed between applicant and ICANN during the Registry Commitment Evaluation: Material changes	Y	Y				
Other material changes to Community Registration Policies	N					
Non-material changes to Community Registration Policies	Y					
Registry Voluntary Commitments						
All RVCs						
Addition of RVC	Y	Y	Y			
Non-material changes to RVC	Y					
RVCs Pursuant to Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice						

		Process required?				
Change Type	Allowed ?	Comment period	Registry Commitments Evaluation	Background Screening	Financial Evaluation	RSP re-evaluation
(see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1)[101]						
Material changes to RVC	N[102]					
Removal of RVC	N[103]					
All RVCs Excluding the RVCs that are Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice (see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1)						
Proposed by applicant: Material changes	Y	Y	Y			
Agreed between applicant and ICANN during the Registry Commitment Evaluation: Material changes	Y	Y				
Removal of RVC	Y	Y				

3.8.4 Application Change Request Workflows

Different types of ACRs trigger different workflows, as described below. Specifically, absent extraordinary circumstances, ACRs will follow one of the two workflows below:

- Application Change Requests: Workflow 1: ACRs relating to all areas except Community Registration Policies and Registry Voluntary Commitments follow Workflow 1. See Section 3.8.4.1.
- Application Change Requests: Workflow 2: ACRs relating to Community Registration Policies and Registry Voluntary Commitments follow Workflow 2.

Each workflow is tailored to address the specific requirements and considerations associated with the respective types of ACRs. See Section 3.8.4.2.

3.8.4.1 Application Change Requests: Workflow 1

All ACRs, except those relating to Community Registration Policies and Registry Voluntary Commitments, will follow the workflow described below:

1. **Submission**: The applicant submits an ACR.

[101] See Section 7.8.3.2.3.1 Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice. The ACRs listed in this section of the table apply to RVCs that have already been approved by ICANN.
[102] Such material changes may be allowed in extraordinary circumstances.
[103] Such removal may be allowed in extraordinary circumstances.

2. **Administrative Review**: ICANN determines whether the ACR type is generally allowed, as outlined in the table in Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes. If the change is not permitted, ICANN will inform the applicant that the ACR is not approved.

3. **ICANN Review**: ICANN reviews the change request materials against the seven change request determination criteria above. If additional information is required, ICANN will request it from the applicant.

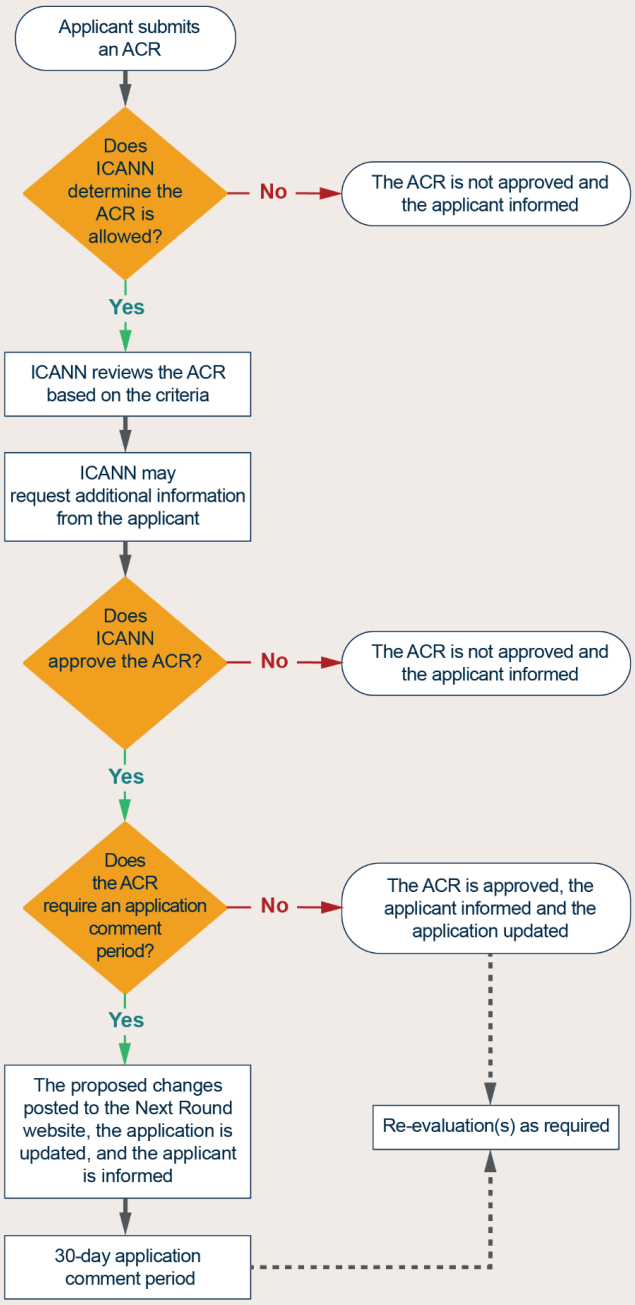
4. **Determination**: After completing the review, ICANN will inform the applicant of its decision in the following ways:

    a. If the ACR is not approved, the applicant will be informed.
    b. If the ACR is approved, the proposed changes will be posted to the New gTLD Program website, the application will be updated, and the applicant will be informed. Additionally, the applicant will be informed of one of the following outcomes:
        i. No comment period or re-evaluation is required (process ends here).
        ii. A comment period is required (see step 5).
        iii. A comment period and re-evaluations are required (see steps 5 and 6).

5. Comment Period: If a comment period is required, the ACR will be posted for a 30-day comment period. This period will allow time for the community to review and submit comments on the changed portion of the application.

6. Re-evaluation: ICANN will issue an invoice for re-evaluation, where applicable. Upon payment, ICANN will perform re-evaluation on the affected evaluation areas concurrently with the Comment Period.

Figure 3-1: Application Change Requests: Workflow 1



3.8.4.2 Application Change Requests: Workflow 2

ACRs relating to Community Registration Policies and Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) will follow the process described below.

1. **Submission**: The applicant submits an ACR.

2. **Administrative Review**: ICANN first determines whether the type of ACR is generally allowed, in accordance with the table in Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes. If the change is not permitted, ICANN will inform the applicant that the ACR is not approved.

3. **ICANN Review**: ICANN reviews the change request materials against the seven change request determination criteria above. If additional information is required, ICANN will request it from the applicant.

4. **Determination**: ICANN determines whether the change is material and takes the following steps:

    a. If not material, the proposed changes are posted to the New gTLD Program website, the application is updated, and the applicant is informed (process ends here).
    b. If material, see step 5.

5. **Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE)**: Material changes require an RCE.

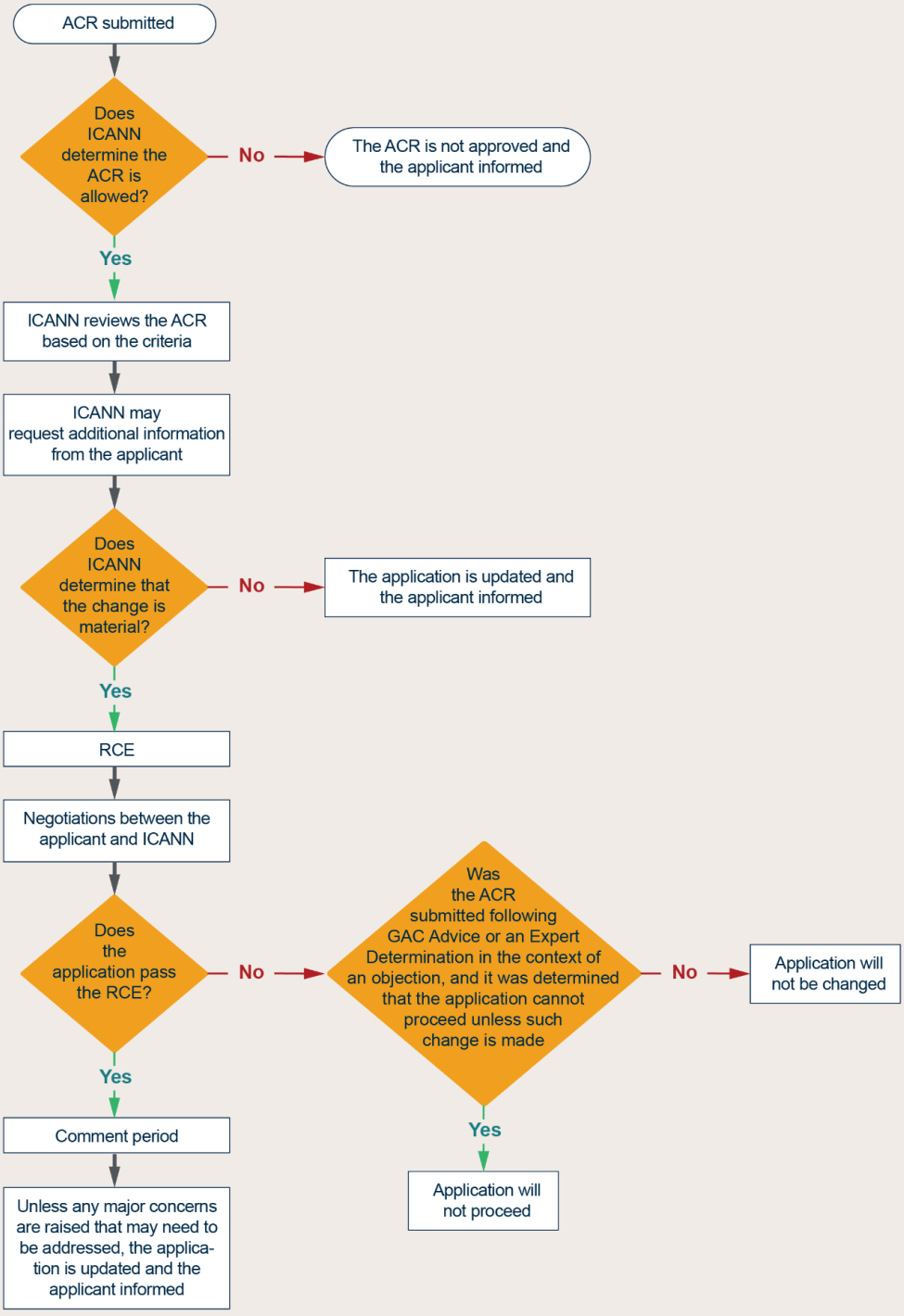
6. **Determination**: Upon completing the RCE, ICANN will make a determination regarding the requested change. The determination will result in one of the following outcomes:

    a. If the requested change passes RCE, proceed to step 7.
    b. If the requested change does not pass RCE, the application will not be updated as requested via the ACR and will proceed without the requested change.
    c. If the requested change does not pass RCE, or the change was requested following GAC Consensus Advice or a Panel Determination in the context of an objection, and it was determined that the application cannot proceed without the change, the application cannot proceed. See Section 7.8.3.4 RVC Additions, Changes, and Removals for more information on this type of RVC.

7. **Publication**: All submitted RVCs or Community Registration Policies will be published alongside their respective ICANN determination following the RCE. If the submitted RVCs or Community Registration Policies undergo any changes as a result of the negotiation between the applicant and ICANN in order to be approved by ICANN, the approved RVCs or Community Registration Policies will be published alongside the original version submitted by the applicant.

8. **Comment Period**: A 30-day comment period will be launched. ICANN reserves the right to re-initiate negotiations or discuss comments raised during this period with the applicant.

Figure 3-2: Application Change Requests: Workflow 2



3.9 Application Statuses

An application will have one of the following statuses:

- **Active**: The application is progressing in the New gTLD Program.
- **On hold**: The application has pending activities that may impact its progress, for example, accountability mechanisms or objections.
- **Withdrawn**: The application is voluntarily terminated by the applicant. This process is irreversible.
- **Pending Termination**: Application did not meet the criteria set forth in the Applicant Guidebook and cannot proceed further in the Program. An applicant is expected to withdraw its application within 60 days or ICANN may change its application status to Terminated.
- **Terminated**: The application will not continue in the Program and the Applicant has exhausted available appeals and challenges.[104]
- **Deactivated**: This status is assigned to any application that the applicant did not choose to proceed with following the Replacement String period. Such applications are no longer active in the program and will not advance to evaluation or delegation.
- **Contracted**: The Contracted status is assigned after the Registry Agreement is fully signed. The applicant then becomes a registry operator for the applied-for string or strings.
- **Delegated**: The TLD has been added to the DNS root zone.

[104] This is limited to challenges and appeals and does not include Accountability Mechanisms.

Module 4 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals

After String Confirmation Day, the community will have the opportunity to provide input in several ways during the time frames and according to the guidelines described in the sections below.

4.1 Application Comments

Comment mechanisms are part of ICANN's policy development, implementation, and operational processes. ICANN is committed to maintaining the Internet's operational security and stability. It also aims to promote competition and ensure broad representation of global Internet communities. ICANN develops policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes. In furtherance of these commitments, the public will have the opportunity to submit comments on posted applications.[105]

Applicants and commenters should be aware that application comments allow the public to bring relevant information and issues to the attention of ICANN, applicants, and evaluators. If a comment is relevant to specific evaluation criteria and is not patently frivolous, factually misleading, unreasonable, or vexatious, it may be taken into account in the course of the evaluation. If a comment includes factual claims, evaluators have the discretion to verify these facts and may request additional information from the commenter if needed.

A single application comment period applies to all applications, including Community Applications. Third-party comments on Community Applications must be submitted before the comment period ends to be considered during Community Priority Evaluation.[106]

4.1.1 How to Submit Application Comments

Comments will be posted on the Application Comment Forum (ACF), allowing all interested parties, including applicants, to review and comment on the applications.

To submit a comment, commenters will need to have an ICANN Account.[107] Commenters will be asked to indicate their affiliation and whether they have a

[105] Application comments are not to be confused with ICANN's Public Comment process: https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/about. While ICANN's Public Comment gives the ICANN community, Internet stakeholders, and the general public an opportunity to provide input on ICANN's work and policies, application comments relate specifically to applications for new gTLDs.
[106] As further described in Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation, applicants will also have the chance to attach letters of support to their application before submitting it.
[107] Read the ICANN Account Help Page for more information: https://account.icann.org/help.

relationship with any applicants or applications.[108] In addition, commenters will be required to specify the applications, strings, and specific evaluations and processes to which their comments relate. Attachments can be included along with their comments.

If commenters believe they 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 only be used 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. Should ICANN determine that the comment submitted confidentially refers to public portions of the application, the comment will not be accepted as confidential and the commenter will be asked to submit that comment publicly. ICANN will not process confidential comments received outside of official comment periods.

Any party posting comments must abide by the ICANN Terms of Service.[109]

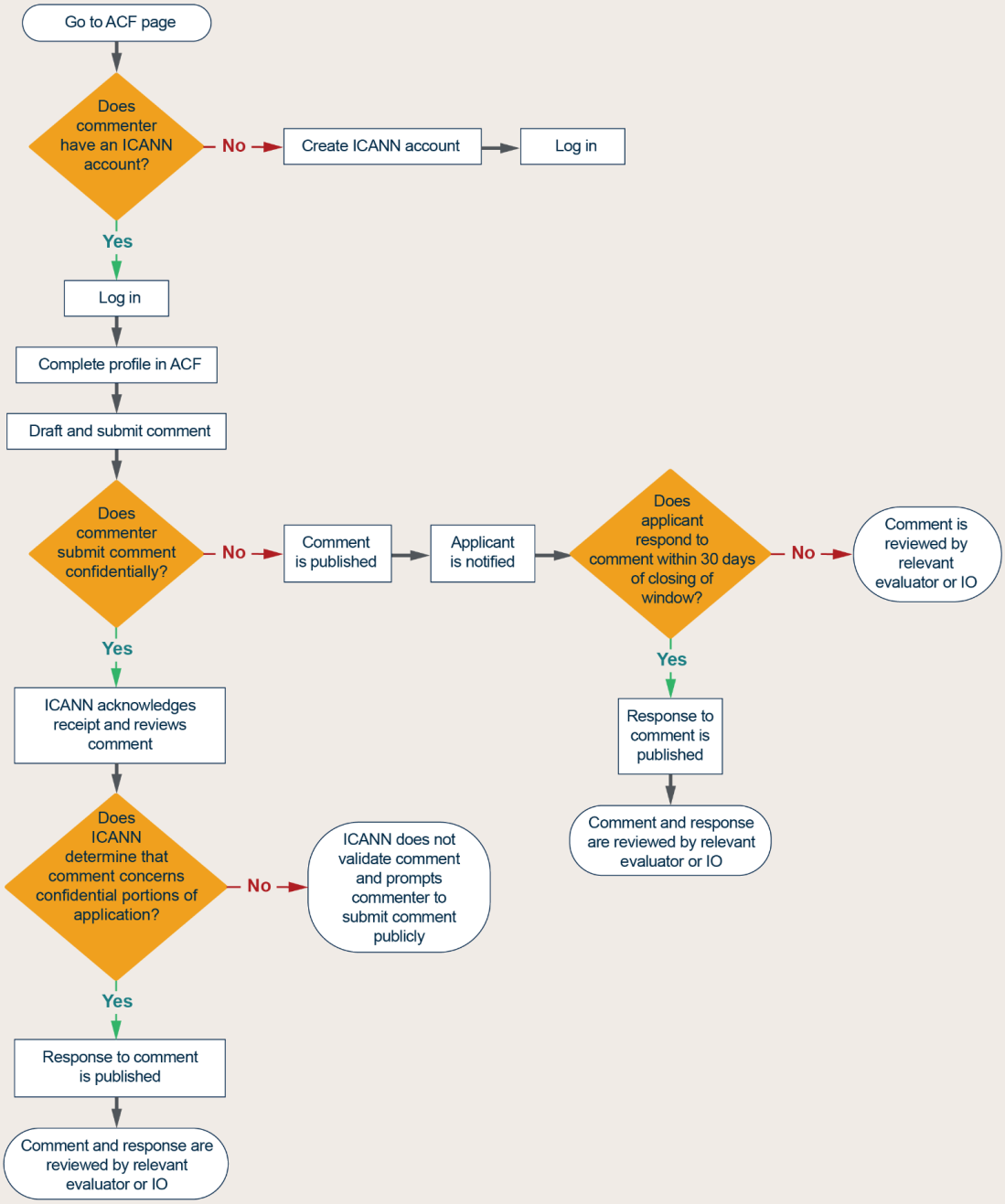
The flowchart below describes the process for comments submitted during application comment periods, as described in Section 4.1.2 Application Comments Timeline.

[108] An individual or entity or an individual or entity on whose behalf the commenter is filing their comment have a relationship with an applicant if they are:

- Employed by, under contract with, or affiliated with them; or
- Have a financial relationship with them; or
- The applicant is a family member, that is, your brother or sister (whether by the whole or half-blood), spouse (other than a spouse who is legally separated from the individual under a decree of divorce or separate maintenance), parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, in-law; or any of these in a step relationship or through legal adoption.

[109] See the ICANN's Terms of Service: https://www.icann.org/privacy/tos.

Figure 4-1: Application Comment Forum Submission



4.1.2 Application Comments Timeline

The ACF will remain open through all stages of the evaluation process, to provide a means for the public to bring forward any relevant information or issues regarding an application.

4.1.2.1 Application Comments Timeline after Application Publication

ICANN will announce the opening of the application comment period on String Confirmation Day. Only application comments received during the following 104 days will be considered by the evaluation panels, absent extraordinary circumstances. ICANN reserves the right to extend the comment period for one, some, or all applications.

Applicants that wish to respond to comments related to their application and ensure their response is available to evaluation panels can do so through the ACF, within 30 days following the end of the comment period.

4.1.2.2 Application Comments Timeline Following an Application Change Request or a .Brand String Change Request

As described in detail in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests, applicants may request to change or update their applications during the processing, evaluation and contracting stages. Changes that result in material changes to public portions of the application will be subject to a 30-day comment period, during which the community will have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have on the changes. A 30-day application comment period will also be opened following a .Brand String Change Request, as outlined in Section 5.3.3 .Brand String Change Requests and Input from the Community. The general public can opt in to be notified whenever an application comment period opens following an Application Change Request or .Brand String Change Request.

4.1.3 Application Comments in the Evaluation Process

ICANN will supply evaluators with the comments and responses related to the applications they will evaluate. Only those comments and responses received during the time periods described in Section 4.1.2.1 Application Comments Timeline after Application Publication will be considered by the evaluation panels. In case a comment may have an impact on an evaluation, a clarifying question must be issued to give the applicant the opportunity to respond to the comment. See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation and Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures for

more information on how application comments are integrated into the evaluation process.

4.1.4 Application Comments in the Dispute Resolution Process

Application comments have a very limited role in the dispute resolution process. A distinction should be made between application comments, which may be relevant to ICANN's task of determining whether applications meet the established criteria, and objections, which are handled through a separate process.[110]

An Independent Objector (IO) may consider application comments when making an independent assessment of whether an objection is warranted. The IO will be able to file an objection only if at least one comment in opposition to the relevant application was submitted.[111]

4.2 GAC Member Early Warnings

After applications are publicly posted on the New gTLD Program website,[112] members and observers of ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) may issue a GAC Member Early Warning (Early Warning) concerning an application.[113] An Early Warning provides the applicant with an indication that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic, for example, by potentially violating national law or raising sensitivities, which must be specified in the Early Warning notice.[114]

GAC Member Early Warnings should be submitted in the 104 days following String Confirmation Day, and must include a written explanation describing why the Early Warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the GAC member's concerns. GAC members should provide contact details for communication with the applicant. ICANN will notify applicants of Early Warnings as soon as practicable after receipt. Applicants that receive Early Warnings are encouraged to enter dialogue directly with concerned parties as soon as possible to address the concerns voiced. GAC consensus is not required for Early Warnings to be issued.

An Early Warning is a notice only and does not have a direct impact on the application. However, applicants should take Early Warnings seriously, as these signal the likelihood that the application could later be the subject of GAC Consensus Advice[115] or

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[110] See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals.
[111] See Section 4.5.4 Independent Objector.
[112] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.
[113] For more information on the GAC Early Warnings issued during the 2012 Round, see https://gac.icann.org/activity/gac-early-warnings.
[114] ICANN reserves the right to extend the period given for GAC members to provide Early Warnings.
[115] See Section 4.3 GAC Consensus Advice.

of an objection.[116] Evaluator panels may consider Early Warnings. As part of an Early Warning, a GAC member may indicate that its concern can only be addressed by the applicant withdrawing its application.

The GAC has not issued definitive guidance on what constitutes a sensitive string. However, during the 2012 Round, the GAC indicated that strings that could raise sensitivities include those that "purport to represent or that embody a particular group of people or interests based on historical, cultural, or social components of identity, such as nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, belief, culture or particular social origin or group, political opinion, membership of a national minority, disability, age, and/or a language or linguistic group (non-exhaustive)" and "those strings that refer to particular sectors, such as those subject to national regulation (such as .bank, .pharmacy) or those that describe or are targeted to a population or industry that is vulnerable to online fraud or abuse."[117]

During the 2012 Round, the GAC also issued advice on categories of strings that impacted several applications.[118] While this information pertains to the 2012 Round, applicants may wish to take this information into account when determining how to respond to an Early Warning.

To reduce the possibility of receiving an Early Warning or GAC Consensus Advice, all applicants are encouraged to identify potential sensitivities in advance of application submission, and to work with the relevant parties beforehand to mitigate concerns related to the application. While an Early Warning is a potential indicator that an application could be the subject of GAC Consensus Advice on New gTLDs, an Early Warning is not required for the GAC to issue Consensus Advice.

4.2.1 Other Mechanisms for GAC Members to Submit Concerns About an Application

While the Early Warning process is available for members of the GAC to submit their concerns about an application, it does not preclude concerned parties from using other mechanisms available to the public. These alternatives include utilizing the Application Comment Forum to communicate concerns, or communicating directly to applicants using the contact information posted in the application. For example, parties might

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[116] See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals.
[117] See https://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/gac-scorecard-23feb11-en.pdf.
[118] In the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué (https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communique), the GAC advised the ICANN Board that "strings that are linked to regulated or professional sectors should operate in a way that is consistent with applicable laws." The GAC proposed specific safeguards that would apply to a broad category of strings related to "consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets." As a result of the advice, additional safeguards were added to Specification 11 of the Registry Agreement. For these applications, these safeguards are mandatory requirements. See Table 7-2 under Section 7.8.2.2 Applicable Safeguard PICs by String Category for more information.

notify applicants that an applied-for gTLD string might be contrary to a national law, and try to address any concerns with the applicant. Note, however, that concerns submitted via these mechanisms do not constitute an Early Warning.

4.2.2 Options for Applicants in Receipt of GAC Member Early Warnings

Upon receipt of an Early Warning, an applicant wishing to continue with its application may meet with representatives from the concerned party or parties on the applicant's own accord or submit an Application Change Request (Section 3.8) to try to address the concerns.

Applicants may also elect not to take action and continue with their application as is. While applicants are generally encouraged to engage with the relevant GAC members to address any concerns raised, failure to do so may or may not result in GAC Consensus Advice.

Should an applicant decide to withdraw its application following an Early Warning, the refund schedule as outlined in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments will apply.

4.3 GAC Consensus Advice

The process for GAC Consensus Advice on new gTLD applications is intended to address applications that are identified to be problematic, such as those that may potentially violate national law or raise sensitivities.

4.3.1 Notice to Applicants regarding Receipt of GAC Consensus Advice

The GAC can provide advice to the ICANN Board on any application. While the GAC is encouraged to submit advice in the 104 days following String Confirmation Day, allowing the Board to consider it during the evaluation process, the GAC retains the ability to submit advice on a particular application or aspect of the New gTLD Program at any time.

GAC Consensus Advice must clearly state that it is GAC Consensus Advice, include a clearly articulated rationale, be limited to the scope set out in the applicable Bylaws provisions, and elaborate on any "interaction between ICANN's policies and various laws and international agreements or where they may affect public policy issues."

When the Board receives GAC Consensus Advice concerning an application, ICANN will publish the advice and notify the relevant applicants.

Upon notification via TAMS that an application is subject to GAC Consensus Advice, the applicant will have 21 days to submit a statement to ICANN in response to the GAC

Consensus Advice. This statement will be made available to the Board and the GAC to consider. In their statement, applicants may suggest amendments to the application intended to address the concerns. Applicants wishing to withdraw their application should refer to Section 3.3 Fees and Payments for more information on the withdrawal process and schedule of refunds.

The Board will consider the GAC Consensus Advice on applications in accordance with the Bylaws.[119] The Board will make a decision on the advice, and based on that the application may either: proceed; may proceed with certain modifications (see Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 below); or, may not proceed at all.

4.3.2 GAC Consensus Advice and Application Change Requests

Applicants are encouraged to explore solutions to address issues raised in GAC Consensus Advice regarding an applied-for string or application (see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1 Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice). For example, an applicant could consider incorporating relevant commitments into its registry policies, terms of use, or entering into a separate agreement with the third party. However, an applicant also is permitted to submit an ACR, which may include proposing the addition, removal, or modification of Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVC).[120]

4.3.3 GAC Consensus Advice and Registry Voluntary Commitments

The GAC, in its advice, might advise the Board that an application cannot proceed unless agreement is reached on a new or amended RVC that ICANN approves for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement (see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1 Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice). The applicant may elect to address the concern via an RVC in two different scenarios:

1. **Existing RVC:** An applicant believes that an existing RVC in its application addresses the concerns raised in the GAC Consensus Advice. The Board will determine whether the GAC's concern must be addressed and whether the existing RVC suffices.

[119] See the GAC Advice Consideration Process: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/gac-advice-process-handbook-06mar18-en.pdf Information on the voting threshold for the Board to reject GAC Advice is described in the ICANN Bylaws, Article 12, Section 12.2(a)(x): https://www.icann.org/en/governance/bylaws#article12

[120] See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests and Section 7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies.

2. **New or amended RVC**: An applicant files an ACR including the addition of a new or amended RVC to address GAC Consensus Advice**.** If the ACR is accepted and the Registry Commitment Evaluation approved, the Board will take the new or amended RVC into account. The Board will determine whether the concern raised in the GAC Consensus Advice must be addressed, and whether the new or amended RVC addresses the concern.

4.4 Singular/Plural Notifications

Some applicants may apply for strings that inadvertently or purposefully form meaningful words across different languages, and these words can have different meanings in different languages and may have singular and plural forms.

In order to reduce the risk of end user confusion, the delegation of singulars and plurals of the same word in the same language is prohibited, provided ICANN receives a notification and the notification is determined to be legitimate per the criteria below.

This section provides rules governing strings that represent singular and plural forms of the same word within a single language, irrespective of the applicant's intended language.

4.4.1 Singular/Plural Notifications Requirements

Anyone, including, but not limited to, applicants to the New gTLD Program, operators of delegated gTLDs, governments, and members of the general public, can raise concerns regarding singular/plural issues. Notifications can be submitted via the Singular/Plural Notifications page on the New gTLD Program website.[121] All legitimate[122] notifications received will be publicly archived.

When notifying ICANN of a singular/plural issue, the following information must be submitted:

- The basis for the notification, which must be one of the following:
    - The applied-for gTLD string that is the singular or plural form of the same word in the same language as another applied-for string in the same application round.
    - The applied-for gTLD string that is the singular or plural form of an existing gTLD, a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round, or of a Blocked Name.

[121] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.
[122] Notifications will not be considered legitimate if, for example, they do not include the required information, are not in line with the ICANN's Terms of Service (https://www.icann.org/privacy/tos), or are generated by automated systems or bots.

- Reference to a dictionary, published no earlier than 1 January 1970. For all international or national languages, the dictionary must be a published and authoritative reference work, produced by a reputable publishing house or institution. For all other languages, the dictionary, if not produced by a reputable publishing house or institution, must be recognized by the community using the language. For all languages, the following information from the dictionary needs to be included in the notification to ICANN:
    - Name of the dictionary
    - Name of the language
    - International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
    - Name of the publisher
    - Year and place of publication
    - Page number on which the word can be found
    - Name and address (physical or online) where the dictionary can be acquired or a public library where it can be accessed for evaluation.

To help ICANN in verifying the notification, the notifier must also submit images of the dictionary's ISBN, cover and imprint pages, and images of the pages on which the word in question is listed.

If a notification to ICANN lacks any of the required information and images listed above, ICANN may be unable to verify the claim. This could result in the string being processed without consideration of the identified singular/plural issue.

ICANN may independently verify the authenticity of the provided source material.

If there are two applied-for gTLD strings that represent words that are singular and plural forms of each other in the same language, but ICANN does not receive a notification, both strings will proceed without being put in a contention set. Equally, if an applied-for string is the singular or plural form of a delegated TLD, a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round, or a Blocked Name, the application for that gTLD string will proceed unless ICANN receives a notification as outlined in Section 4.4.1 Singular/Plural Notification Requirements.

4.4.2 Singular/Plural Notifications Filing Window

The Singular/Plural Notification period will occur during the 30 days immediately following String Confirmation Day. Absent extraordinary circumstances, notifications provided to ICANN outside the Singular/Plural Notification period will not be considered by ICANN.

4.4.3 Outcome of Singular/Plural Notifications

When a Singular/Plural Notification is issued, there are three possible outcomes for the affected applications, which are described below:

- **No Impact on the Application**: The singular/plural issue was not confirmed.
- **Strings Placed in Contention Set**: If it is confirmed that an applied-for gTLD string represents a word that is the singular or plural version of the same word of another applied-for gTLD string in the same language, then both strings must be put in contention to avoid end-user confusion.
- **Application Cannot Proceed**: If an applied-for string represents a word that is the singular or plural version of a delegated gTLD, a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round, or a Blocked Name, the application cannot proceed.

Once ICANN has reviewed the materials submitted, it will determine how to proceed with the relevant applications. Applicants will be notified of the outcome and it will be posted on the relevant application status pages.

4.4.4 Challenging the Singular/Plural Notifications Evaluation

Applicants have a one-time opportunity to challenge the results of a Singular/Plural Notification by filing through the application system within 21 days of notification. An applicant must submit all facts necessary to demonstrate the rationale for its challenge and must not use it to materially change its application by substituting new information for what was submitted in its original application. ICANN will review the challenge.

The review will determine whether ICANN made a factual or procedural error when it finds that:

1. The applicant's applied-for string is a singular or plural form of another applied-for string.
2. The dictionary submitted to document the singular/plural claim meets the criteria established in the Guidebook.

The challenge will be assessed under a "clearly erroneous" standard of review. Specifically, ICANN's determination will stand unless:

1. It failed to follow the appropriate procedures.
2. It failed to consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information.

ICANN will communicate the conclusions resulting from the challenge within 30 days of an applicant filing such a challenge.

4.5 Objections and Appeals

The general public, including other applicants, has the opportunity to file an objection on any application and have it considered before a panel of qualified experts. For an objection to be considered by a panel, it must be filed on specific grounds (see Section 3.5.1 Grounds for Objection and the party filing must have standing (see Section 4.5.2 Standing to Object). If an application is subject to an objection, the applicant will have an opportunity to file a response. All applied-for gTLDs and applied-for allocatable variant strings will be subject to the objection processes. Additionally, for String Confusion Objections only, blocked variant strings will also be subject to the objection processes.

Applicants are therefore encouraged to identify possible regional, cultural, intellectual property interests, or other sensitivities regarding gTLD strings and their uses before applying and, where possible, consult with interested parties to mitigate any concerns in advance.

The New gTLD Program includes mechanisms that allow for relevant parties to appeal an Objection Panel Determination of an objection (see Section 4.5.9 Appeals Filing and Processing).[123]

In filing an application or an objection, the applicant or objector respectively agree to accept the applicability of the Guidebook, the ICANN Objection and Objection Appeal Procedures, and the DRSP Rules.

Information on the criteria and procedures for filing and responding to objections and appeals, as well as on the dispute resolution process, can be found in this section of the Guidebook and in the relevant DRSP Rules (see Dispute Resolution Service Provider's Rules).

The table below provides definitions for the terms that will be used in this section.

Table 4-1: Objections and Appeals Definitions

Term	For Objections	For Appeals
Objector	Person/s or entity/ies that have filed an objection against an application	N/A
Appellant	N/A	Person or entity that was the non-prevailing Party to an

[123] As described in Section 4.3 GAC Consensus Advice, ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) has a designated process for providing advice to the ICANN Board on matters affecting public policy issues, and these objection procedures would not be applicable in such a case. The GAC may provide advice on any topic and is not limited to the grounds for objection.

		Objection and files an appeal to challenge the Panel Determination issued in an objection proceeding
Respondent	Applicant that responds to an objection	Party responding to the Appeal
Parties	Objector and respondent	Appellant and respondent
Objection Panel	One or three persons empaneled by a DRSP to adjudicate an objection	N/A
Appellate Panel	N/A	One or three persons empaneled by a DRSP to adjudicate an appeal
Objection Panel Determination	Decision issued by the Panel on an objection	N/A
Appellate Panel Determination	N/A	Decision issued by the Appellate Panel on an appeal
DRSP Rules	Additional rules of procedure of a particular DRSP applicable to objection proceedings	N/A
DRSP Appellate Rules	N/A	Additional rules of procedure of a particular DRSP applicable to an Appeal of a Panel Determination

The table below constitutes a high-level simplified overview to provide context for the detailed rules and procedures in this section. For full information and details, refer to the Guidebook sections below.

Table 4-2: Overview of the Objection Grounds, Parties with Standing, and Outcomes

Ground	Claim	Parties with Standing	Outcomes
String Confusion	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.	• An existing gTLD operator • An existing ccTLD operator or a Significantly Interested Party in the respective country or territory • An applicant in this application round	**If the objector prevails**: • Where the objector is another applicant, both the applicant's and objector's applied-for strings and their variant strings (if applicable) must be placed in the contention set. • Where the objector is an existing gTLD operator, an existing ccTLD operator, or a Significantly Interested Party in the respective country or territory, the application is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process. **If the objector does not prevail**, that application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding.
Legal Rights	An applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) infringes on its existing legal rights.	• A rights holder • An IGO meeting criteria for registration of .INT domain name	• If an objection against an applied-for primary string prevails, that application is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process. • If an objection prevails against one or more applied-for allocatable variant strings, the application for the primary string and any unaffected allocatable variant strings may proceed to the next stage, excluding the variant strings that have been rendered ineligible by the objection. • If the objection does not prevail, that application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding. • The panel, in extraordinary circumstances and as part of its Panel Determination, might determine that an application cannot proceed unless a new or modified RVC that is approved by ICANN is included in the applicable Registry Agreement.
Limited Public Interest	The 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.	Anyone	
Community	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.	Established institutions associated with clearly delineated communities	

4.5.1 Grounds for Objection

An objection can be filed only on four specific grounds: String Confusion, Legal Rights, Limited Public Interest, and Community. These grounds are described in more detail below.

4.5.1.1 Ground for Objection: String Confusion

A party with standing that believes that an applied-for primary string, its allocatable variant string(s), or its blocked variant string(s) are similar visually, aurally, or in meaning to an existing gTLD and/or another applied-for primary string and/or any of its allocatable or blocked variant strings may file a String Confusion Objection.

The only exception is that a blocked variant string cannot be claimed as similar to the blocked variant string of an existing gTLD or another applied-for primary string.

As mentioned above, String Confusion Objections may be filed not only based on visual similarity, but also aural similarity and similarity in meaning, as described in the section Section 4.5.10.1 Principles: String Confusion. The objector must clearly describe how it believes the strings are similar. For the case of visual similarity, the objector must refer to the Guidelines for visual String Similarity.

A String Confusion Objection may, if successful, change the configuration of the contention sets, resulting in the two applied-for gTLD strings being considered in direct contention with one another, as described in Module 5 Contention Set Resolution. The objection process will not result in the removal of an application from a contention set. If an applicant believes that its applied-for string should not be part of a contention set following the String Similarity Evaluation (see Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation), the applicant will have the opportunity to challenge such determination as described in Section 7.10.4 Challenging String Similarity Evaluation. More information on the possible outcomes can be found in Section 4.5.8.14 Panel Determination.

4.5.1.2 Ground for Objection: Legal Rights

A party with standing that believes that an applied-for gTLD string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant strings infringes their existing legal rights may file a Legal Rights Objection. A Legal Rights Objection may not be filed against non-applied-for allocatable variant strings or blocked variant strings.

4.5.1.3 Ground for Objection: Limited Public Interest

A party with standing that believes that the applied-for gTLD string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant strings are contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law may

file a Limited Public Interest Objection. A Limited Public Interest Objection may not be filed against non-applied-for allocatable variant strings or blocked variant strings.

4.5.1.4 Ground for Objection: Community

A party with standing that believes that there is well-substantiated opposition to an applied-for gTLD string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant strings from a significant portion of the community that the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeting may file a Community Objection. A Community Objection may not be filed against non-applied-for allocatable variant strings or blocked variant strings.

4.5.2 Standing to Object

As part of the dispute proceedings, all objections will be reviewed by a panel of expert(s) designated by the applicable Dispute Resolution Service Provider (DRSP) to determine whether the objector has standing to object. This review will occur as part of the Quick Look Review (see Section 4.5.8.7 Quick Look Review for Objections). Standing requirements for the four objection grounds are described below.

4.5.2.1 Standing to Object: String Confusion

The String Confusion Objection process allows specific stakeholders to challenge potential string confusion, provided that string confusion has not already been determined during the String Similarity Evaluation (see Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation). This means that an applicant would not have standing to object to another application with which it is already in a contention set. The following entities may submit a String Confusion Objection:

An existing gTLD operator may file a String Confusion Objection to assert that an applied-for primary string, an allocatable variant string of an applied-for primary string, and/or a blocked variant string of an applied-for primary string is similar to its existing gTLD string and/or its allocatable or blocked variant strings.

An existing ccTLD operator or a Significantly Interested Party[124] in the relevant country or territory may file a String Confusion Objection to assert that the applied-for primary

[124] For reference, the definition of Significantly Interested Parties reflects the one in Final Report ccPDP4 (https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/ccpdp4-final-report-23feb24-en.pdf), which is in turn derived from RFC 1591 (https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc1591.html). Significantly Interested Parties "include, but [are] not be limited to: a) the government or territorial authority for the country or territory associated with the ccTLD and b) any other individuals, organizations, companies, associations, educational institutions, or others that have a direct, material, substantial, legitimate, and demonstrable interest in the operation of the ccTLD(s) including the incumbent manager. To be considered a Significantly Interested Party, any party other than the manager or the government or territorial authority for the country or territory associated with the ccTLD must demonstrate that it [...] has a direct, material, and legitimate interest in the operation of the ccTLD(s)."

string, an allocatable variant string of an applied-for primary string, and/or a blocked variant string of an applied-for primary string is similar to an existing ccTLD string or its allocatable or blocked variant strings.

An applicant[125] in this application round may file a String Confusion Objection to assert that the applied-for primary string, an allocatable variant string of an applied-for primary string, and/or a blocked variant string of an applied-for primary string is similar to its applied-for primary string or its allocatable or blocked variant strings.

4.5.2.2 Standing to Object: Legal Rights

Below is a list of entities with the standing to file a Legal Rights Objection:

- A rights holder[126] may have standing to file a Legal Rights Objection. The source and documentation of the existing legal rights the objector is claiming are infringed by the applied-for gTLD must be included in the filing (for example, documentation regarding either registered or unregistered trademarks). For more information on which legal rights are covered, refer to Section 4.5.10.2 Principles: Legal Rights.

- An intergovernmental organization (IGO) is eligible to file a Legal Rights Objection if it meets the criteria for registration of a .INT domain name as described in IANA's .INT Policy & Procedures.[127] The specialized agencies of the UN and the organizations having observer status at the UN General Assembly are also recognized as meeting the criteria.

4.5.2.3 Standing to Object: Limited Public Interest

Anyone may file a Limited Public Interest Objection. Limited Public Interest Objections may only be brought on the grounds that the relevant string(s)[128] is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law. Objections brought on other grounds will be dismissed for lack of standing.

4.5.2.4 Standing to Object: Community

Established institutions associated with clearly delineated communities are eligible to file a Community Objection. The community named by the objector must be a

[125] The applicant could be an existing gTLD operator for other strings.
[126] A rights holder could be a trademark holder of a registered mark or an unregistered mark or, as appropriate, a trademark holder's licensee.
[127] See IANA's .INT Policy & Procedures: https://www.iana.org/domains/int/policy#:~:text=applying%20for%20the%20.-,int%20domain%20name,.and%20governed%20by%20international%20law.
[128] For the sake of readability, in this section, "relevant string(s)" refers to the string or strings a party files an objection against.

community strongly associated with the applied-for gTLD string in the application that is the subject of the objection.

To qualify for standing for a Community Objection, the objector must show both of the following:

- It is an established institution. Factors that may be considered in making this determination include, but are not limited to:
    - Level of global recognition of the institution.
    - Length of time the institution has been in existence.
    - Public historical evidence of its existence, such as the presence of a formal charter or national or international registration, or validation by a government, inter-governmental organization, or treaty. The institution must not have been established solely in conjunction with the gTLD application process.
- It has an ongoing relationship with a clearly delineated community. Factors that may be considered in making this determination include, but are not limited to:
    - The presence of mechanisms for participation in activities, membership, and leadership.
    - Institutional purpose related to the benefit of the associated community.
    - Performance of regular activities that benefit the associated community.
    - The level of formal boundaries around the community.

The dispute resolution panel will perform a balancing of the factors listed above, as well as other relevant information, in making its determination. It is not expected that an objector must demonstrate satisfaction of each and every factor considered in order to satisfy the standing requirements.

4.5.3 Dispute Resolution Service Providers

To trigger a dispute resolution proceeding, an objection must be filed by the posted deadline date, directly with the appropriate DRSP for each objection ground:

- String Confusion and Legal Rights: World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
- Limited Public Interest and Community: International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

The DRSP Rules, including information on fees and costs, can be found in Appendix 3 Objection and Appeal Materials. More details will be made available on the dedicated webpages on the New gTLD Program website,[129] WIPO,[130] and ICC[131] websites.

4.5.4 Independent Objectors

An objection to an application may also be filed by one of the three Independent Objectors (IOs). The IOs do not act on behalf of any particular persons or entities, but solely in the best interests of the public who use the global Internet. The objection filing window for objections lodged by IOs will begin at the same time as all other parties but will be open for seven additional days beyond the end of the objection filing window for the general public defined in Section 4.5.8.1 Objections Filing Window; IOs will only file objections during the initial objection filing window. Should their objections not prevail, IOs may appeal the relevant Panel Determinations.

To mitigate possible conflict of interest issues that may arise from having a single panelist serving as the IO, ICANN has established a standing panel of three IOs. Neither ICANN nor the ICANN Board has authority to direct or require the IOs to file or not file any particular objection.

If an individual IO determines that an objection should be filed, that IO will initiate and pursue the objection in the public interest. The IO may file objections against highly objectionable applications to which no objection on the same ground has been filed absent extraordinary circumstances.[132] The IO may only file objections on the grounds of Limited Public Interest and Community, notwithstanding the regular standing requirements for such objections.[133]

The IOs:

- Will have access to objections as they are being filed, prior to the Administrative Review, to ensure they are able to review objections prior to the relevant deadlines. The IOs shall treat all such information as strictly confidential and shall not disclose it to any third party.

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[129] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.
[130] See the String Confusion Objections page on WIPO's website: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/sco/.
See the Legal Rights Objections page on WIPO's website: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/.
[131] See the Objections page on ICC's website: https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/.
[132] The IO will describe such extraordinary circumstances in its objection. An example of such extraordinary circumstances could be an objection that would appear to a reasonable person to have been filed for the purpose of frustrating the IO's ability to file an objection.
[133] See Section 4.5.2 Standing to Object.

- Shall not object to an application unless at least one comment opposing the application has been made in the public sphere, in light of the public interest goal noted above.
- Will not have their objection considered if another objection on the same ground has passed the Quick Look Review, absent extraordinary circumstances.[134]
- Must consider application comments when making an independent assessment whether an objection is warranted. The IOs will have access to application comments received during the comment period.

4.5.5 Options in the Event of an Objection

Applicants of applications that are the subject of an objection have the following options:

- The applicant can contact the objector via the DRSP and work to reach a settlement with the objector, as described in Section 4.5.8.11.3 Settlement, which may result in withdrawal of either the objection or the application.[135]
- The applicant can file a response to the objection within the set time frame, as specified in Section 4.5.8.9 Responding to an Objection, and enter the dispute resolution process.
- The applicant can choose to withdraw the application, in which case the objector will prevail by default and the application will not proceed further.[136]

If for any reason the applicant does not file a response to an objection within the set time frame, the objector will prevail by default.

An applicant subject to a String Confusion Objection claiming that the relevant string(s) are similar to another applied-for string may decide to accept that its string(s) will be placed in a contention set and not advance with the objection proceeding by not filing a response. In such a case, the applicant is strongly encouraged to inform the DRSP as soon as possible in the process so that the objection can be resolved and all parties informed.

[134] The IO will describe such extraordinary circumstances in its objection.
[135] The applicant and objector may agree on a settlement requiring the applicant to submit an Application Change Request. There is no guarantee that the change request will be approved, and ICANN will not be involved in the settlement. For more information, see Section 4.5.8.12 Application Change Requests in the Objections Process.
[136] See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments for more information on refund and withdrawals.

4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs

The Objection and Appeal Procedures will require different payments to be submitted directly to the DRSPs at different times. Instructions as well as the amounts are indicated in the respective DRSP Rules.

- **Filing fees**
    - An objector will pay a filing fee at the time of submitting its objection. Should the objector fail to pay the fee as described in the respective DRSP Rules, the objection shall be dismissed. The objection filing fee will not be refunded under any circumstances.
    - A respondent (which is also the applicant) will pay a filing fee at the time of submitting its response to the objection. Should the respondent to the objection fail to pay the fee as described in the respective DRSP Rules, the objector will prevail. The response filing fee will not be refunded under any circumstances.
    - If an appeal is filed to an Objection Panel Determination, the appellant will pay a filing fee at the time of submitting its appeal to the DRSP. Should the appellant fail to pay the fee as described in the respective DRSP Rules, the appeal will be dismissed without prejudice. The appeal filing fee will not be refunded under any circumstances.
    - The respondent to an appeal will pay a filing fee at the time it responds to an appeal. Should the respondent to an appeal fail to pay the fee as described in the respective DRSP Rules, the response will be disregarded.

- **Advance payment:** Both parties to an objection or appeal will make an advance payment as instructed by the DRSP if the relevant objection or appeal passes the Quick Look Review. This may be either an hourly fee based on the estimated number of hours the panel will spend on the case (including review of submissions, facilitation of a hearing, if allowed, and preparation of a decision), or a fixed amount. In cases where disputes are consolidated and there are more than two parties involved, the advance payment will occur according to the respective DRSP Rules. The prevailing party in an objection or appeal proceeding will have its advance payment refunded (not the filing fee), while the non-prevailing party will not receive a refund and thus will bear the cost of the proceeding. In cases where objections or appeals are consolidated and there are more than two parties involved, the refund of costs will occur according to the DRSP Rules. Should neither party make the advance payment, the objection or appeal will be dismissed.

- **Additional costs:** In extraordinary circumstances, the DRSP may require the payment of additional costs as part of the objection or appeal process. Should

one of the parties fail to make the additional payment as described in the respective DRSP Rules, the other party will prevail and will be refunded the advance payment. Should neither party make the advance payment, the objection or appeal will be dismissed.

4.5.7 Objections and Appeals Funding Possibilities

To support the multistakeholder model, ICANN offers certain funding possibilities to the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) and national governments, as described below. Such funding is to cover costs payable to the DRSP and made directly to the DRSP, that is, filing fees and advance payment of costs, as described in Section 4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs; it does not cover other costs such as fees for legal advice. More information will be published on the Objections and Appeals page of the New gTLD Program website.[137]

- Funding for ALAC is contingent on publication by ALAC of its approved process for considering and making objections. At a minimum, the process for objecting to an application will require:
    - bottom-up development of potential objections,
    - discussion and approval of objections at the Regional At-Large Organization (RALO) level, and
    - a process for consideration and approval of the objection by the At-Large Advisory Committee.

  The ALAC Procedure for Filing Comments and Objections in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round can be found at https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/x/DwBAD.

- Funding from ICANN is available to individual national governments for one objection and one appeal.

4.5.8 Objection Filing and Processing

The information below provides an overview of the process by which objectors can file and respondents can respond to objections, as well as by which DRSPs administer dispute proceedings that have been initiated. For comprehensive information, see ICANN Objection Procedure. In the event of any discrepancy between the information presented in this module and the procedure, the procedure shall prevail. The rules and procedures of each DRSP specific to each objection ground, which are published in the Dispute Resolution Service Providers Rules, must also be followed.

[137] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

4.5.8.1 Objections Filing Windows

The general public, provided they have standing, as described in Section 4.5.2 Standing to Object, will have the opportunity to file objections during the following time frames:

- For 104 days, for all objection grounds, following the announcement on String Confirmation Day.[138]
- For 30 days, for String Confusion only, following the publication of updated contention sets once String Evaluation has been completed.
- For 30 days, for all objections grounds, in case of .Brand String Change, starting on the day the String Evaluation Reports are published, and only if the string evaluation is successful.[139]

More information can be found in Section 1.2 Application Stages and Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Requests.

4.5.8.2 Filing an Objection

The procedures outlined in this subsection must be followed by any party wishing to file an objection to an application.

- All objections must be filed electronically with the appropriate DRSP by the posted deadline date. Objections will not be accepted by the DRSPs after this date.
- All objections must be filed in English.
- Each objection must be filed separately. An objector wishing to object to several applications must file a separate objection and pay the accompanying filing fees for each application that is the subject of an objection, unless the objector is filing several objections against applications for the same string. If an objector wishes to object to an application on more than one ground, the objector must file separate objections and pay the accompanying filing fees for each objection ground.
- Objections are limited to 5,000 words excluding attachments.
- An objector must provide copies of all submissions to the DRSP associated with the objection proceedings to the applicant.

[138] The objection filing window for objections lodged by IOs will be open for seven additional days beyond the end of the objection filing window for the general public.
[139] Independent Objectors will not file objections in the case of .Brand String Change Requests.

Each objection must include:

- The name and contact information of the objector.
- A statement of the objector's basis for standing; that is, why the objector believes it meets the standing requirements to object.
- A description of the basis for the objection, including:
    - A statement giving the specific ground upon which the objection is being filed.
    - A detailed explanation of the validity of the objection and why it should be upheld.
- Copies of any documents that the objector considers to be a basis for the objection.

At the time an objection is filed, the objector is required to pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant DRSP.[140] If the filing fee is not paid within 10 days of the receipt of the objection, the DRSP will dismiss the objection without prejudice.

Should a party with standing wish to file a String Confusion Objection against an application for a string for which several applicants have applied, it may file an objection against one, some, or all applications for that string. If the objection is filed against several applications for an identical string, each applicant receiving an objection may file a response to the objection; if an applicant fails to do so, the objection will be upheld against the applications for which a response was not filed. The same panel will review all documentation associated with the objection, and each response will be reviewed on its own merits. The panel will issue a single determination identifying which parties prevail in the objection, where applicable.

4.5.8.3 Administrative Review of the Objection

Each DRSP will conduct an administrative review of each objection for compliance with all procedural rules within 14 days of receiving the objection and the filing fee. Depending on the number of objections received, the DRSP may ask ICANN for a short extension of this deadline. The administrative review includes the determination whether the objection was filed with the correct DRSP.

[140] Information on the objection fees in the 2012 Round is available here:
- WIPO: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/wipo-fees-11jan12-en.pdf.
- ICDR: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/icdr-fees-25may12-en.pdf.
- ICC: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/icc-expertise-rules-appx-iii-12jun12-en.pdf.

The possible outcomes of the administrative review are described below:

- If the DRSP finds that the objection complies with the procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, then the objection will be deemed filed, and the proceedings will continue.
- If the DRSP finds that the objection does not comply with procedural rules, the DRSP will notify the objector, who will have five days to rectify the issues identified.
    - If the objector rectifies the issues within the specified time frame, the objection will be deemed filed.
    - If the objector does not rectify the issues within the specified time frame, the objection will be dismissed.

4.5.8.4 Publication and Notification of the Objection

The DRSP will publish and regularly update a list on its website identifying all objections that have passed the administrative review, and notify ICANN. ICANN will then post on the New gTLD Program website[141] a notice of all objections that pass the administrative review. After an applicant has been notified that an objection is filed against its application, it may decide to withdraw its application for a new gTLD, in which case the objection would be dismissed.

4.5.8.5 DRSP Consolidation of Objections

Any party may propose the consolidation of objections within seven days of the publication of the objections, and the DRSP will have an additional seven days to propose consolidation to the relevant parties. It will be at the DRSP's discretion whether to agree to the proposal submitted by the parties.

In assessing whether to consolidate objections, the DRSP will weigh the efficiencies in time, money, effort, and consistency that may be gained by consolidation against the prejudice or inconvenience consolidation may cause. The DRSPs will endeavor to have all objections resolved on a similar timeline. It is intended that no sequencing of objections will be established.

If the DRSP proposes to consolidate certain objections, the parties will have seven days after the DRSP sends the notice of consolidation to submit any concerns to the DRSP about the proposed consolidation. The DRSP will consider the parties' submission and decide whether or not to consolidate the objections. The DRSP will inform the parties of the final decision regarding the consolidation within 28 days of the publication of the objections.

[141] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/.

4.5.8.6 Appointment of the Objection Panel

The DRSP will appoint a panel for each objection that passes the administrative review. The parties to a proceeding will be given the opportunity to mutually agree upon a single or a three-person panel, bearing the costs as described in Section 4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs. Absent agreement from all parties to have a three-person panel, the default will be a one-person panel.

A panel will consist of appropriately qualified experts appointed to each proceeding by the designated DRSP. Panelists must be independent of the parties to a dispute resolution proceeding. Each DRSP will follow its adopted procedures for requiring such independence, including procedures for challenging and replacing a panelist for lack of independence, as well as ICANN's Conflict of Interest (Appendix 7) and Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers (Appendix 8) policies.

The panel will consist of one or three panelists, ideally with the following expertise:

- **String Confusion Objections**: Experience in legal rights disputes, with at least one panelist knowledgeable about the relevant scripts.
- **Legal Rights Objections**: Experience in legal rights disputes.
- **Limited Public Interest Objections**: Recognized as eminent jurists of international reputation, with expertise in relevant fields such as social sciences, political science, sociology, health sciences, and others.
- **Community Objections**: Recognized as eminent jurists of international reputation, with expertise in relevant fields such as social sciences, political science, sociology, and others. Ideally, at least one of the panelists should understand or be knowledgeable about the relevant community.

Neither the panelists, the DRSP, ICANN, nor their respective affiliates, staff members, employees, directors, or consultants will be liable to any party in any action for damages or injunctive relief for any act or omission in connection with any proceeding under the procedures, except in cases of willful misconduct or gross negligence.

The DRSP rules will establish the procedures to raise and address conflicts of interest concerns with the assigned panel.

4.5.8.7 Quick Look Review for Objections

The Quick Look Review for objections is designed to identify and eliminate objections that are manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both.

An objection will be considered manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both in the following circumstances:

1. The objection is not filed on one of the accepted objection grounds or principles.
2. The party filing the objection does not have standing.
3. Insufficient or no evidence is provided to support the objection.
4. The objection is far-fetched, clearly invented, manifestly contrary to common sense, or so ambiguous that it is objectively impossible for the DRSP to make sense of it.
5. The objection spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies hatred based on intolerance toward a certain group.
6. Multiple objections on the same ground are filed by the same or affiliated parties against the same applicant in a manner that constitutes harassment of the applicant.
7. Other facts clearly show that the objection is manifestly unfounded and/or an abuse of the right to object.

The Quick Look Review represents the panel's first substantive task, providing a decisive determination on the objection. This review must be completed within 30 days of the panel's appointment, with the timeline starting after the resolution of any conflicts of interest challenges submitted by the parties involved.

The dismissal of an objection that is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both would be deemed a Panel Determination, rendered in accordance with Article 22 of the ICANN Objection Procedure.

If the Quick Look Review results in such a dismissal, the subsequent proceedings, including payment of the full advance of costs, will not take place.

4.5.8.8 Payment of the Advance Costs

Within ten days of completing the Quick Look Review, the DRSP will estimate the total costs and request full advance payment from both the objector and the applicant. Each party must make its advance payment within 20 days of the notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review and submit to the DRSP evidence of such payment.

The DRSP may revise its total cost estimate and request additional advance payments from the parties during the resolution proceedings. Additional fees may be required in specific circumstances, such as if the DRSP receives supplemental submissions or elects to hold a hearing.

If an objector fails to pay these costs in advance, the DRSP will dismiss the objection and no fees paid by the objector will be refunded. If a respondent fails to pay these costs in advance, the objector will prevail and no fees paid by the respondent will be refunded. The application will not be allowed to proceed.[142] Should neither party make the advance payment, the objection will be dismissed and no fees will be refunded.

[142] See Section 3.9 Application Statuses.

4.5.8.9 Responding to an Objection

After both parties have made the advance payment, the DRSPs will notify the respondent that it has 30 days to file a response to the objection after the transmission of the Quick Look Review results. DRSPs will not accept late responses. At the time a respondent files its response, it is required to pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant DRSP, which will be the same as the filing fee paid by the objector. If the respondent does not pay the filing fee within 20 days of notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, the response will be disregarded, which will result in the objector prevailing, and the application will not be allowed to proceed.[143]

If the respondent fails to file a response within the 30-day time limit, the respondent will be in default, deeming the objection successful. In this case, no fees will be refunded to the respondent. If the response is found to be non-compliant with the Objections Procedure and applicable DRSP rules, the respondent will have five days to correct it.

Respondents must adhere to the following guidelines regarding responses:

- All responses must be filed in English.
- Each response must be filed separately. If an applicant is responding to several objections, a separate response and accompanying filing fee must be submitted for each objection.
- Responses must be filed electronically.
- The maximum length for each response is limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments.
- Each respondent must provide copies of all submissions to the DRSP associated with the objection proceedings to the objector.

Each response filed by a respondent must include:

- The name and contact information of the respondent.
- A point-by-point response to the claims made by the objector.
- Any copies of documents that it considers to be a basis for the response.

4.5.8.10 Additional Evidence and Hearing

The panel may decide whether the parties shall submit any written statements in addition to the filed objection and response, and may specify time limits[144] for such submissions. To ensure disputes are resolved rapidly and at a reasonable cost, document production shall be very limited, if allowed at all, and solely at the request of the panel. Only where the panel deems necessary and appropriate, the panel may require a party to produce additional evidence or hold a virtual hearing, though disputes

[143] See Section 3.9 Application Statuses.
[144] The time limit should not exceed 30 days, unless the panel, having consulted the DRSP, determines that exceptional circumstances justify a longer time limit.

will usually be resolved without a hearing. Under no circumstances will an in-person hearing be held.

4.5.8.11 Mediation and Settlement

When objections occur, the parties may engage in mediation or negotiate settlements to resolve disputes as described below.

4.5.8.11.1 Mediation and Settlement Overview

The parties to a dispute resolution proceeding are encouraged — but not required — to participate in mediation aimed at settling the dispute. Each DRSP has experts who can be retained as mediators to facilitate this process, should the parties elect to do so, and the DRSPs will communicate with the parties concerning this option and any associated fees, which will be borne by the parties.

If a mediator is appointed, that person may not serve on the panel constituted to issue a Panel Determination in the related dispute. The parties are free to negotiate without mediation at any time, or to engage a mutually acceptable mediator of their own accord.

ICANN will at no stage be involved in the mediation.

4.5.8.11.2 Cooling-off Period

There are no automatic time extensions for conducting negotiations or mediation. However, the parties have the opportunity to submit a request for a cooling-off period to the DRSP according to its rules; such a request must be filed jointly by both parties. A cooling-off period is a period of time during which the filing and other deadlines will be paused. The DRSP or the panel, if appointed, will decide whether to grant the request.

Absent exceptional circumstances, the parties must limit the cooling-off period to 30 days. However, it must be noted that if the applicant files an Application Change Request (ACR) in response to concerns raised in an objection, the dispute resolution process might be put on hold for a longer time, if both parties agree and as described in Section 4.5.8.12 Application Change Requests in the Objection Process.

A cooling-off period can be requested at any time after the respondent has filed a response to the objection and before the issuing of the Panel Determination. The parties will have to bear any costs incurred by the DRSP prior to the cooling-off period.

4.5.8.11.3 Settlement

At any stage of the process, the objector and respondent can reach a settlement. There are two possible outcomes:

1. The objector withdraws the objection. In this case, unless subject to any other processes, the application will proceed.
2. The respondent/applicant withdraws its application.

Should the settlement require the respondent/applicant to submit an ACR, both parties should be aware that the change will not necessarily be approved. More information on ACRs in the objections process can be found in the section below.

If the parties agree on a settlement, they shall inform the DRSP, which shall terminate the proceedings, provided that the parties have satisfied their payment obligations. The DRSP shall also inform ICANN and the parties of the termination accordingly.

All settlements must abide by the rules in the Applicant Guidebook relating to the prohibition of private resolution of contention sets, as described in Section 5.2.3 Prohibition of the Private Resolution of String Contention by Applicants.

4.5.8.12 Application Change Requests in the Objections Process

Applicants have the opportunity to request amendments to their applications including, but not limited to, the addition or modification of Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs, Section 7.8.3) or Community Registration Policies (Section 7.8.4) in response to concerns raised in an objection, via an Application Change Request (ACR, see Section 3.8). Absent extraordinary circumstances, ICANN will not be involved in objection processes.

If an applicant submits an ACR after responding to an objection, it may request that the DRSP put the objection process on hold, provided the objector agrees, as described in Section 4.5.8.11 Cooling-off Period. If the DRSP considers the joint request legitimate, the dispute resolution process will be frozen until the ACR process and the corresponding re-evaluation (if necessary/applicable) conclude. If the applicant does not submit the ACR within 30 days of requesting a cooling-off period, the DRSP will resume the dispute resolution process. If the DRSP does not approve the request, the applicant will still be able to submit an ACR, but the dispute resolution process will not be put on hold.

The panel will have to consider the results of the ACR as part of its evaluation. It must be noted that, in this case, the panel might still determine that an application can proceed even if the ACR was not accepted. The objector and the applicant may also reach a settlement, as described in Section 4.5.8.11.3 Settlement.

4.5.8.13 Objections and Registry Voluntary Commitments

The panel, in extraordinary circumstances[145] and as part of its Panel Determination, might order that an application cannot proceed unless a new or amended RVC that is approved by ICANN is included in the applicable Registry Agreement. Such RVCs will be considered RVCs Pursuant to Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice (see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1 Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice). There are three different scenarios:

1. An applicant believes that an existing RVC in its application addresses the concerns raised in the objection. Should the panel determine that the concern has merit and that the already existing RVC will address it, in its Panel Determination, the panel will indicate that the RVC is an RVC Pursuant to Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice.

2. An applicant and the objector in a given objection proceeding reach a settlement that includes the addition of a new or the amendment of an existing RVC. In such cases, the applicant will have to file an ACR which, if accepted by ICANN, will be followed by a Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE). If the RVC passes the RCE, the objector will withdraw the objection upon the condition that the RVC will be considered an RVC Pursuant to Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice.

3. The panel determines that a new or amended RVC will address the concerns raised in an objection. In such an instance, the applicant will update the existing or draft a new RVC and file an ACR which, if accepted, will be followed by the RCE. If the RVC passes the ACR and RCE, in its Panel Determination, the panel will indicate that the RVC is an RVC Pursuant to Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice if the panel finds that the new or amended RVC would enable the applicant to overcome the objection. If the panel finds that the new or amended RVC does not resolve the objection, the objector will prevail.

4.5.8.14 Panel Determination

The DRSP's final Panel Determinations will be in writing and will include:

- A summary of the dispute and findings.
- An identification of the prevailing party.
- The reasoning upon which the Panel Determination is based.

[145] DRSPs should be aware that this option should be limited to extraordinary circumstances since by the time the Panel Determination is issued the parties will have already had the opportunity to attempt to agree on an RVC but failed or opted not to do so.

Unless the panel decides otherwise, each DRSP will publish all decisions rendered by its panels in full on its website.

The decision of the panel will be considered a Panel Determination, which ICANN will accept within the dispute resolution process.

The outcomes of String Confusion Objections may include the following:

- If the objector prevails:
    - Where the objector is another applicant, then both the applicant's and objector's applied-for strings and their variant strings (if applicable) must be placed in the contention set.
    - Where the objector is an existing gTLD operator, or existing ccTLD operator or a Significantly Interested Party in the relevant country or territory, the application (including primary and allocatable variant strings) is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process.
- If the objector does not prevail, that application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding.

The possible outcomes for Limited Public Interest, Legal Rights, and Community Objections are as follows:

- If an objection against an applied-for primary string prevails, then that application, including any applied-for variant strings of that primary string. is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process.
- If an objection prevails against one or more applied-for allocatable variant strings, the application for the primary string and any unaffected allocatable variant strings may proceed to the next stage, excluding the variant strings that have been rendered ineligible by the objection.
- If the objection does not prevail, then that application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding.
- The application cannot proceed unless agreement is reached on a new or modified RVC that is approved by ICANN. See Section 4.5.8.13 Objections and Registry Voluntary Commitments for more information.

After the panel renders its Panel Determination, the DRSP will refund the advance payment of costs to the prevailing party. If the Panel Determination indicates that the application cannot proceed unless agreement is reached on a new or modified RVC that is approved by ICANN, the objector will be considered as the prevailing party.

4.5.9 Appeal Filing and Processing

The non-successful party in an objection will have the opportunity to appeal a Panel Determination and such appeal would be considered under a clearly erroneous standard of review. The process for appealing to a Panel Determination is described in the ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure. In the event of any discrepancy between the information presented in this section and the procedure, the procedure shall prevail. The rules of each DRSP specific to each objection ground, which can be found in the Dispute Resolution Service Providers Rules, must also be followed.

4.5.9.1 Filing an Appeal

A party to an objection shall have 15 days from the date the Panel Determination is issued by the DRSP to notify the DRSP of its intent to appeal the Panel Determination (the Notice of Appeal). The Notice of Appeal must specify the elements of the Panel Determination that are being appealed and contain a brief statement of the basis for the appeal. The appellant will have 15 days from the date of filing the Notice of Appeal to file the appeal and pay the required fees. An appellant that wishes to appeal Panel Determinations from more than one objection proceeding must file separate appeals with the appropriate DRSPs.

The Notice of Appeal shall contain, among other details, the following information:

- The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the appellant.
- Identification of the underlying objection being appealed.
- A description of the basis for the appeal, including:
    - A statement of the ground upon which the appeal is being filed, as stated in Article 1 of the Objection Appeal Procedure.
    - An explanation of the validity of the appeal and reasons why it should be upheld.

The substantive portion of the appeal is limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit.

At the same time as the appeal is filed, the appellant shall pay a filing fee in the amount set in accordance with the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules and include evidence of such payment in the Notice of Appeal. If the filing fee is not paid, the appeal shall be dismissed without prejudice.

4.5.9.2 Administrative Review of the Appeal

The DRSP shall conduct an administrative review of the appeal to verify compliance with all procedural rules and inform the appellant, the respondent, and ICANN of the result of its review within 14 days of its receipt of the appeal. The DRSP may extend this time limit if necessary. If the DRSP finds that the appeal is in compliance with the Appeal Procedure, the appeal will be registered for processing. However, if the DRSP finds that the appeal is not in compliance, the DRSP may request that any administrative deficiencies be corrected within five days. If the deficiencies are not corrected within the specified time, the appeal will be dismissed.

4.5.9.3 Publication of the Appeal

Upon registering an appeal for processing, the DRSP shall post the following information about the appeal on its website:

- The proposed string to which the appeal is directed.
- The name of the appellant.
- A weblink to the Panel Determination from the underlying objection proceeding.
- The grounds for the appeal.
- The dates of the DRSP's receipt of the appeal.

4.5.9.4 Consolidation of Appeals

When two or more parties with aligned interests are eligible to appeal a Panel Determination, they may file a joint Notice of Appeal and proceed as a single appellant. If parties have filed separate timely notices of appeal, the DRSP may join or consolidate these appeals, either independently or upon a party's request within five days of the Appeal's publication on the DRSP's website.

In deciding whether to consolidate appeals, the DRSP shall weigh the benefits (in terms of time, cost, consistency of decisions, etc.) that may result from the consolidation against the possible prejudice or inconvenience that the consolidation may cause. The DRSP's determination on consolidation shall be final and not subject to further appeal.

4.5.9.5 Appointment of the Appeal Panel

The DRSP will appoint a panel for each appeal that passes the Administrative Review. The parties to a proceeding will be given the opportunity to mutually agree upon a single or a three-person panel, bearing the costs as described in Section 4.5.6 Objections and Appeals Costs. Absent agreement from all parties to have a three-person panel, the default will be a one-person panel.

A panel will consist of appropriately qualified experts appointed by the designated DRSP. Panelists must be independent of the parties involved in the dispute resolution proceeding. Each DRSP will follow its adopted procedures for requiring such independence, including procedures for challenging and replacing a panelist for lack of independence.

4.5.9.6 Quick Look Review for Appeals

The Quick Look Review for appeals is designed to identify and eliminate appeals that are manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both.

An appeal will be considered manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both in the following circumstances:

1. The appeal is not filed by the non-prevailing party to the objection.
2. Insufficient or no evidence is provided to support the appeal.
3. The appeal is far-fetched, clearly invented, manifestly contrary to common sense, or so ambiguous that it is objectively impossible for the DRSP to make sense of it.
4. The appeal spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies hatred based on intolerance toward a certain group.
5. The appeal constitutes harassment of the other party or the objection itself.
6. The appeal includes facts that clearly show that it is manifestly unfounded and/or an abuse of the right to appeal.

The Quick Look Review is the Appellate Panel's first task and is dispositive of the appeal. The Quick Look Review must be completed within 30 days of the panel appointment.

The dismissal of an appeal that is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both would be an appellate Panel Determination, rendered in accordance with Article 19 of the ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure.

4.5.9.7 Payment of the Appeal Costs

Within ten days of the publication of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, the DRSP shall estimate the total costs and request full advance payment from both parties. The parties will submit advance payment within ten days of the DRSP's payment request, providing evidence of payment. The DRSP may revise its estimate of the total costs and request additional advance payments from the parties during the proceedings.

If an appellant fails to pay these costs in advance, the DRSP will dismiss the appeal and no fees paid by the appellant will be refunded. If a respondent fails to pay these costs in advance, the appellant will prevail and no fees paid by the respondent will be

refunded. The application will not be allowed to proceed.[146] Should neither party make the advance payment, the appeal will be dismissed and no fees will be refunded.

4.5.9.8 Responding to an Appeal

The respondent may, but is not required to, file a response to an appeal within 30 days of the outcome of the Quick Look review. If a response is not filed, the Appellate Panel Panel will presume that respondent takes no position on the appeal.

If a response is submitted, it must include, among other information:

- The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the respondent.
- A point-by-point response to the statements made in the appeal.

The substantive portion of any response shall be limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit.

When the response is filed, the respondent shall pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant DRSP (which shall be the same as the filing fee paid by the appellant) and include evidence of such payment in the response. If the filing fee is not paid within 10 days of the notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, any response shall be disregarded and the Appellate Panel will presume that respondent takes no position on the appeal.

If the DRSP finds that the response does not comply with all procedural rules, the DRSP shall have the discretion to request that any administrative deficiencies in the response be corrected within five days.

4.5.9.9 Appeal Standards

The Appellate Panel shall apply the “clearly erroneous” standard of review for each category of appeal as established in the New gTLD Program. Under a clearly erroneous standard of review, the Appellate Panel must accept the Objection Panel’s findings of fact unless the Objection Panel failed to:

1. Follow the appropriate procedures; or
2. Consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information in the objection proceeding; or
3. Both 1 and 2.

The appellant bears the burden of proving that its appeal should be sustained in accordance with the applicable standard.

[146] See Section 3.9 Application Statuses.

4.5.9.10 Appellate Panel Determination

The Appellate Panel Determination will be in writing, identify the prevailing party and state the reasons upon which it is based. The Appellate Panel will take one of the following actions:

1. Reject the Appeal and uphold the Objection Panel Determination.
2. Substitute its own determination for the underlying Objection Panel Determination.

The Appellate Panel may not order a new objection proceeding or send the matter back to the original objection panel for corrections or further review.

The decision of the panel will be considered an Appellate Panel Determination, which ICANN will accept within the dispute resolution process.

The Appellate Panel Determination shall state the date when it is made, and it shall be signed by the Appellate Panel. If any panelist fails to sign the Appellate Panel Determination, it shall be accompanied by a statement of the reason for the absence of such signature.

The Appellate Panel Determination shall be published in full on the DRSP's website. Upon the conclusion of the appeal process, the Appellate Panel Determination shall become the final determination and not subject to further appeal.

4.5.10 Objection Principles

A panel will evaluate the merits of each objection using appropriate general principles, with specific adjudication principles detailed for each objection type. A panel may additionally reference relevant rules of international law in connection with the principles. An Objection or Appeal Panel Determination rendered in any round shall not constitute binding precedent. The objector bears the burden of proof in each case. The principles outlined below remain dynamic, subject to ongoing refinement through consultation with DRSPs, legal experts, and the public.

4.5.10.1 Principles: String Confusion

The String Confusion Objection process complements the String Similarity Evaluation (Section 7.10). While the String Similarity Evaluation is limited to Visual Similarity, String Confusion Objections may be filed based on any type of similarity — visual, aural, or in meaning.

A panel hearing a String Confusion Objection will consider whether the relevant strings are likely to result in string confusion. String confusion exists when a string so nearly resembles another that it is likely to deceive or cause confusion. For a likelihood of

confusion to exist, it must be probable, not merely possible that confusion will arise in the mind of the average, reasonable Internet user. Mere association, in the sense that the string brings another string to mind, is insufficient to find a likelihood of confusion.

4.5.10.2 Principles: Legal Rights

4.5.10.2.1 Legal Rights: Potential Use of the String

A panel presiding over a Legal Rights Objection will determine whether the applicant's potential use of the relevant string would:

1. Take unfair advantage of the distinctive character or the reputation of the objector's registered or unregistered trademark or service mark (mark) or IGO name or acronym (as identified in the treaty establishing the organization).

2. Unjustifiably impair the distinctive character or the reputation of the objector's mark or IGO name or acronym.

3. Otherwise create an impermissible likelihood of confusion between the relevant string and the objector's mark or IGO name or acronym.

4.5.10.2.2 Legal Rights: Trademarks

For trademark-based objections, the panel will consider the following non-exclusive factors:

1. Whether the relevant string is identical or similar, including in appearance, phonetic sound, or meaning, to the objector's existing mark.

2. Whether the objector's acquisition and use of rights in the mark has been bona fide.

3. Whether and to what extent there is recognition in the relevant sector of the public of the sign corresponding to the string, as the mark of the objector, of the applicant, or of a third party.

4. Applicant's intent in applying for the relevant string, including whether the applicant, at the time of application for the gTLD, had knowledge of the objector's mark, or could not have reasonably been unaware of that mark, and including whether the applicant has engaged in a pattern of conduct whereby it applied for or operates gTLDs or registrations in gTLDs which are identical or similar to the marks of others.

5. Whether and to what extent the applicant has used, or has made demonstrable preparations to use, the sign corresponding to the gTLD in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services or a bona fide provision of information in

a way that does not interfere with the legitimate exercise by the objector of its mark rights.

6. Whether the applicant has marks or other intellectual property rights in the sign corresponding to the gTLD, and, if so, whether any acquisition of such a right in the sign, and use of the sign, has been bona fide, and whether the purported or likely use of the gTLD by the applicant is consistent with such acquisition or use.

7. Whether and to what extent the applicant has been commonly known by the sign corresponding to the gTLD, and if so, whether any purported or likely use of the gTLD by the applicant is consistent therewith and bona fide.

8. Whether the applicant's intended use of the gTLD would create a likelihood of confusion with the objector's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the gTLD.

9. Whether the applicant's intended use of a common dictionary term that is also a trademark is intended to take advantage of such common meaning or targets a trademark.

4.5.10.2.3 Legal Rights: IGOs

In the case where a Legal Rights Objection has been filed by an IGO, the panel will consider the following non-exclusive factors:

1. Whether the relevant gTLD is identical or similar, including in appearance, phonetic sound or meaning, to the name or acronym of the objecting IGO.

2. Historical coexistence of the IGO and the applicant's use of a similar name or acronym. Factors considered may include:

    a. Level of global recognition of both entities.
    b. Length of time the entities have been in existence.
    c. Public historical evidence of their existence, which may include whether the objecting IGO has communicated its name or abbreviation under Article 6ter of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

3. Whether and to what extent the applicant has used, or has made demonstrable preparations to use, the sign corresponding to the gTLD in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services or a bona fide provision of information in a way that does not interfere with the legitimate exercise of the objecting IGO's name or acronym.

4. Whether and to what extent the applicant has been commonly known by the sign corresponding to the relevant gTLD and if so, whether any purported or likely use of the gTLD by the applicant is consistent therewith and bona fide.

5. Whether the applicant's intended use of the relevant gTLD would create a likelihood of confusion with the objecting IGO's name or acronym as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the gTLD.

4.5.10.3 Principles: Limited Public Interest

A panel hearing a Limited Public Interest Objection will consider whether the relevant gTLD string is contrary to general principles of international law for morality and public order.

Examples of instruments containing such general principles include:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
- Slavery Convention
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Convention on the Rights of the Child

These instruments above are included to serve as examples, rather than an exhaustive list, and vary in their ratification status. Additionally, states may limit the scope of certain provisions through reservations and declarations indicating how they will interpret and apply certain provisions. National laws not based on principles of international law are not a valid ground for a Limited Public Interest Objection.

Under these principles, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, but the exercise of this right carries with it special duties and responsibilities. Accordingly, certain limited restrictions may apply.[147]

[147] See Section 2.4 Applicant Freedom of Expression for more information.

The grounds upon which a gTLD string may be considered contrary to generally accepted legal norms relating to morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law are:

- Incitement to or promotion of violent lawless action.
- Incitement to or promotion of discrimination based upon race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion or national origin, or other similar types of discrimination that violate generally accepted legal norms recognized under principles of international law.
- Incitement to or promotion of child pornography or other sexual abuse of children.
- A determination that a gTLD string would be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law.

The panel will conduct its analysis on the basis of the gTLD string itself. The panel may, if needed, use as additional context the intended purpose of the gTLD as stated in the application.

4.5.10.4 Principles: Community

The four tests described here will enable a panel to determine whether there is substantial opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community from a significant portion of the community to which the string may be targeted. For an objection to be successful, the objector must prove that:

- The community invoked by the objector is a clearly delineated community.
- Community opposition to the application is substantial.
- There is a strong association between the community invoked and the relevant gTLD string.
- The application creates a likelihood of material detriment to the rights or legitimate interests of a significant portion of the community to which the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeted.

Each of these tests is described in further detail below. The objector must meet all four tests in the standard for the objection to prevail.

4.5.10.4.1 Community

The objector must prove that the community expressing opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community can be regarded as a clearly delineated community. A panel could balance a number of factors to determine this, including but not limited to:

- The level of public recognition of the group as a community at a local and/or global level.

- The level of formal boundaries around the community and what persons or entities are considered to form the community.
- The length of time the community has been in existence.
- The global distribution of the community (this may not apply if the community is territorial).
- The number of people or entities that make up the community.

If opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community by a number of people or entities is found, but the group represented by the objector is not determined to be a clearly delineated community, the objection will fail.

4.5.10.4.2 Substantial Opposition

The objector must prove substantial opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community within the community it has identified itself as representing. A panel could balance a number of factors to determine whether there is substantial opposition, including but not limited to:

- Number of expressions of opposition relative to the composition of the community.
- The representative nature of entities expressing opposition.
- Level of recognized stature or weight among sources of opposition.
- Distribution or diversity among sources of expressions of opposition, including:
    - Regional
    - Subsectors of community
    - Leadership of community
    - Membership of community
- Historical defense of the community in other contexts.
- Costs incurred by objector in expressing opposition, including other channels the objector may have used to convey opposition.

If some opposition within the community is determined, but it does not meet the standard of substantial opposition, the objection will fail.

4.5.10.4.3 Targeting

The objector must prove a strong association between the relevant gTLD string and the community represented by the objector. Factors that could be balanced by a panel to determine this include but are not limited to:

- Statements contained in the application.

- Other public statements by the applicant.
- Associations by the public.

If opposition to the applicant's proposed representation of the community by a community is determined, but there is no strong association between the community and the relevant gTLD string, the objection will fail.

4.5.10.4.4 Detriment

The objector must prove that the string creates a likelihood of material detriment to the rights or legitimate interests of a significant portion of the community to which the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeted. An allegation of material detriment based solely on the applicant's operation of the relevant gTLD string will not be considered substantive grounds for objection.

Factors that could be used by a panel in making this determination include but are not limited to:

- Nature and extent of damage to the reputation of the community represented by the objector that would result from the applicant's operation of the relevant gTLD string.
- Evidence that the applicant is not acting or does not intend to act in accordance with the interests of the community or of users more widely, including evidence that the applicant has not proposed or does not intend to institute effective security protection for user interests.
- Interference with the core activities of the community that would result from the applicant's operation of the relevant gTLD string.
- Dependence of the community represented by the objector on the DNS for its core activities.
- Nature and extent of concrete or economic damage to the community represented by the objector that would result from the applicant's operation of the relevant gTLD string.
- Level of certainty that alleged detrimental outcomes would occur.

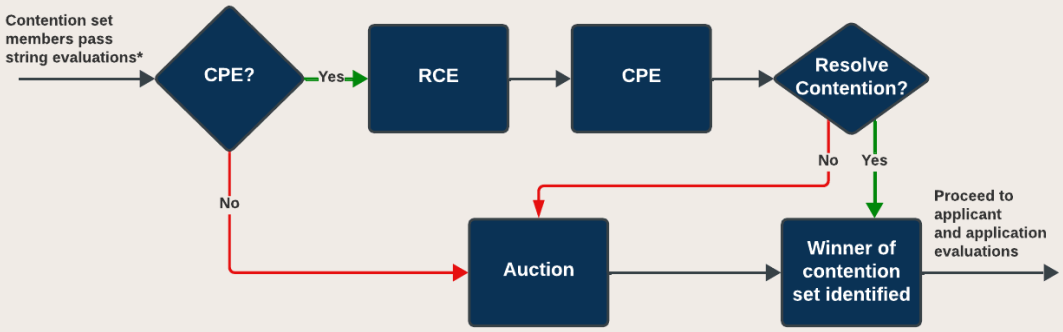
If opposition by a community is determined, but there is no likelihood of material detriment to the targeted community resulting from the applicant's operation of the relevant gTLD, the objection will fail.

Module 5 Contention Set Resolution

String contention occurs when one or more applied-for strings are identical or a variant to another string applied for by a different applicant, or are found to be similar visually, aurally, or in meaning.[148] These contending strings form a contention set.

This module describes contention, how and when it occurs, and the methods available to avoid or resolve it.

Figure 5-1: Contention Set Resolution Process



Contention sets composed of identical applied-for primary strings and/or their variant strings will be identified and published by ICANN on Reveal Day. These contention sets may be further identified or modified depending on the outcome of the applicable processes and evaluations described in Section 5.2.4 Contention Set Formation. ICANN will publish updated lists of contention sets at defined points in the application process (see Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures).

An application that has successfully completed all previous stages and is no longer in contention due to changes in the composition of the contention set may proceed to the next stage of the evaluation process.

A contention set is finalized once changes are no longer possible to its composition, other than when an applicant withdraws its application. The contention set will then proceed to contention resolution procedures, as described in Section 5.2.2 String Contention Resolution.

[148] See Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation and Section 4.5.1.1. Ground for Objection: String Confusion.

5.1 Replacement Strings

To potentially reduce the instances of contention, applicants are encouraged to designate a replacement string alongside their original choice of string. Applicants may designate only one replacement string per application. Using a replacement string is not considered a string change. String changes, which would occur after String Confirmation Day, are only available to .Brand TLD applicants, subject to the details in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request.

Designating a replacement string may provide applicants with the option to avoid contention before the list of applied-for strings is finalized (see Section 5.1.5 Replacement Period). An applicant can avoid contention in such cases by replacing its original applied-for string with its designated replacement string, subject to the conditions and criteria detailed in this section.

Applicants choosing to replace an applied-for string does not preclude the replacement string from being placed in contention at a later stage of the application process as a result of Singular/Plural Notification, String Similarity Evaluation, or String Confusion Objection. For example, if an applicant applies for .SNEEZE and elects to use its replacement string .AHCHOO, the applicant could later find itself in contention following a String Similarity Evaluation if another applied-for string, .ACHOO, is deemed Visually Similar. In such a case the applicant could not switch back to .SNEEZE and must remain in contention with .AHCHOO.

Following the publication of the list of applications on Reveal Day,[149] an applicant will be given 14 days (known as the Replacement Period) to review the published application information and notify ICANN if it elects to replace its original string with its replacement string in the application system, subject to certain conditions defined below.

Applications in which the original string is replaced will then proceed through the remaining application process stages using the replacement string. An applicant that opts for its replacement string will be unable to revert to its original applied-for string. An applicant that does not indicate its intention to use its replacement string during the Replacement Period forfeits this option and will proceed with its original applied-for string.

Applicants should be aware of the following:

- Due to the risk of creating new or adding to existing instances of contention, an applicant will not be allowed to use its replacement string if it is identical to the original applied-for string or replacement string of another applicant. This means that if an applicant's replacement string matches that of one or more

[149] See Section 3.4 Reveal Day.

other applicants, it will not be able to opt for its replacement string under any circumstance, even if those other applicants decide not to use them.

- Additionally, if an applicant designates a replacement string that is identical to another applicant's applied-for string, the applicant will also be unable to use it, regardless of whether the other applicant decides to switch to its replacement string.

5.1.1 Replacement String Eligibility

Any applicant, regardless of its applied-for string type (see Section 3.1.6 Application and String Types), can designate a replacement string as part of its application.[150]

While designating a replacement string is not compulsory, an applicant will be unable to retroactively designate a replacement string after submitting its application.

Applicants should also be aware that once an applied-for string is replaced, it cannot be reinstated, even if it would otherwise remain undelegated in that application round. Applicants should therefore be willing to operate a gTLD on the basis of the string that is finalized by ICANN at the end of the Replacement Period, whether it is their original applied-for or replacement string.

5.1.2 Designating a Replacement String

Applicants will have the option to designate a replacement string, including any applicable variant strings, when completing an application in the application system. The eligibility rules for replacement strings are the same as those that apply to all applied-for strings.

An applicant may have to supply additional information for its designated replacement string when completing the application, including answers to any string-specific application questions. This ensures alignment with its chosen replacement string and business model.

5.1.3 Additional Considerations for Designating a Replacement String

An applicant should be mindful when designating its replacement string, as the applicant will be prohibited from using a replacement string that is identical to another designated replacement string or original applied-for string. The purpose of designating

[150] The replacement string process is different from the String Change Request process available to eligible .Brand applicants. .Brand applicants are also free to designate a replacement string as part of their applications. A .Brand String Change Request is a separate outcome occurring later in the application process, detailed in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request.

a replacement string is to provide applicants with the opportunity to avoid contention and the associated resolution procedures; therefore, it should be chosen with this goal in mind.

Specifically, an applied-for string may enter contention if ICANN confirms, following a notification, that two strings are the singular or plural forms of the same word in the same language and are used in another application within the same application round (see Section 5.2.4.3 Contention Due to Singular/Plural Notification). To minimize this risk, applicants should choose a replacement string that is not simply the plural or singular version of the original applied-for string.

For example, if an applicant's original applied-for string is .EXAMPLE, designating .EXAMPLES as a replacement string may entail a risk of it being identified as a plural and placed in contention.

Failure to give careful consideration to the choice of replacement string may increase the risk of a string ending up in contention at a later stage of the application process.

5.1.4 Replacement Period

After the application submission window has closed, ICANN will perform an administrative check on all submitted applications. After this process has been completed, ICANN will publish non-confidential details of all applications for new gTLD strings on Reveal Day, including but not limited to:

- The list of applied-for strings
- The identity of the applicants
- The list of designated replacement strings
- A list of contention sets containing applications for identical strings

An applicant that designated a replacement string that is not identical to another applied-for or replacement string will have 14 days to review the published application information and notify ICANN if it elects to replace the original applied-for string with its replacement string. An applicant can do this by accessing its application on the application system and selecting the appropriate option. If an applicant does not take this action, its replacement string will not be utilized. The applicant will then continue through the remaining stages of the application process based on the original applied-for string.

If all applicants for a given string opt for their respective replacement strings, there may be no remaining active application for the original applied-for string.

For example, if Applicants A and B both apply for .EXAMPLE and decide to use their replacement strings to avoid contention, and no other applicant has applied for .EXAMPLE, there will be no remaining active application for .EXAMPLE.

The Replacement Period is subject to the general prohibition on private resolution and applicant collusion discussed in Section 5.2.3 Prohibition of the Private Resolution of String Contention by Applicants. Applicants may not discuss, directly or indirectly, their decisions regarding their replacement strings with each other, or propose or entertain proposals for any sort of compensation, financial or otherwise, to any applicant or related party in exchange for opting or not opting to switch to a replacement string.

5.1.5 String Confirmation Day

Once the Replacement Period has ended, ICANN will publish the finalized list of applied-for strings on String Confirmation Day (subject to any accepted .Brand String Change Requests). As no further string replacement is possible, any remaining instances of contention will be resolved using one or more of the alternative procedures described in Section 5.2.2 String Contention Resolution.

5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures

Contention occurs when one or more applied-for strings are:

- Identical to another applied-for string
- A variant of another applied-for string
- Notified as a singular or plural form in the same language
- Found to be similar visually, aurally or in meaning to another applied-for string

Contention may be identified during various stages of the application process from Reveal Day through the conclusion of the string evaluation and potential subsequent challenges, objections, appeals, and Singular/Plural Notifications processes.

Lists of new and updated contention sets will be published at the following points in the application process:

- Reveal Day
- String Confirmation Day
- Following the publication of Singular/Plural Notification results
- Following the publication of String Similarity Evaluation results
- Following the resolution of Objection/Appeal proceedings, as applicable
- Following a successful .Brand String Change Request, as applicable

5.2.1 Contention Types

5.2.1.1 Direct Contention

Two strings are in direct contention if they are identical to, a variant of, or similar visually, aurally, or in meaning to one another.

A direct contention situation can involve more than two applicants. For example, if four different applicants applied for the same gTLD string, they would all be in direct contention with one another, meaning only one can proceed to the applicant and application evaluation phases and potential contracting.

5.2.1.2 Indirect Contention

Two strings are in indirect contention if they are both in direct contention with at least one other string, but not with each other. It is also possible for multiple contention sets to overlap and be in contention with one another indirectly.

Figure 5-2: Direct and Indirect Contention Set Overview

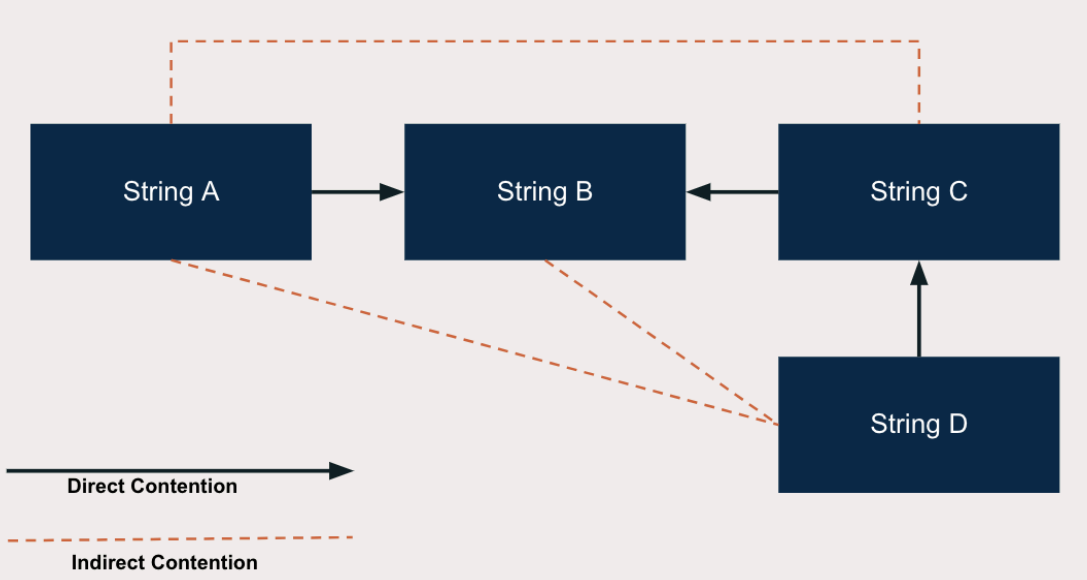
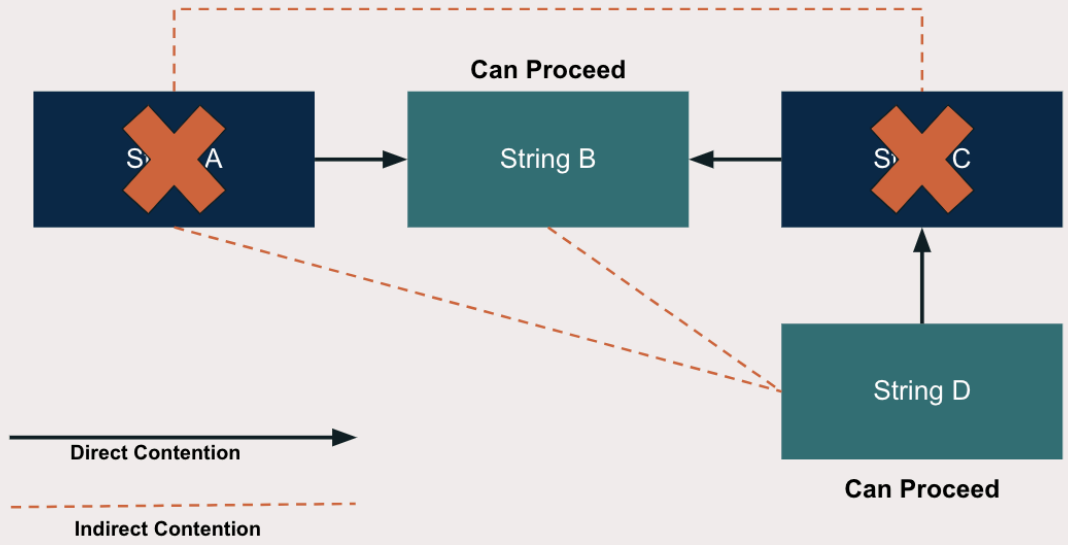


Figure 5-2 provides a simple example of direct and indirect contention. In Figure 5-2, Strings A and B are in direct contention and Strings B and C are in direct contention, whereas Strings C and A are in indirect contention. That is, strings C and A both contend with String B, but not with one another. In the same figure, while Strings B and C are in direct contention, String C is also in contention with String D. Strings A and D are therefore also in indirect contention as are Strings B and D.

In some cases, an applicant that is in indirect contention and that is not the outright winner of a contention resolution process may still continue to the Application and Applicant Evaluation phase. This means that more than one application in the contention set could potentially proceed towards contracting.

For example, in the scenario pictured in Figure 5-2, if String B wins the contention resolution process, Strings A and C are eliminated but String D can proceed, as String D is not in direct contention with the winner and both strings can coexist in the DNS without risk of user confusion. These results are depicted in Figure 5-3.

Figure 5-3: Example of Indirect Contention Set Resolution



5.2.2 String Contention Resolution

Determining which applications in a contention set will proceed to the Application and Applicant Evaluation phase and potential contracting for the contested string is known as contention resolution.

Contention sets can be formed, changed, and resolved during the application process as a result of the processes described in Section 5.2.4 Contention Set Formation. For qualifying .Brand TLD applicants only, the option to submit a .Brand String Change to avoid contention (and therefore avoid resolution procedures) is also available (see Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request).

Once contention sets are finalized, ICANN will administer two methods of contention resolution:

- Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)[151]
- An ICANN New gTLD Auction

Applicants prevailing in a contention resolution procedure, after completing applicable Application and Applicant Evaluations (see Module 6 Applicant Evaluation and Module 7 Application Evaluation), will proceed toward contracting of the applied-for gTLD. Alternative procedures apply to strings designated as high risk for Name Collision.[152] The time required for contention resolution will vary because some contention sets may be resolved by more than one process. For example, in the case of two applicants for the same string prevailing in CPE, an auction between these applicants may be necessary to resolve contention. The outcomes of CPE and auction processes will be published on the New gTLD Program website.

5.2.3 Prohibition of the Private Resolution of String Contention by Applicants

The New gTLD Program processes leading up to and including, where applicable, a New gTLD Auction (including any CPE that may occur prior to, and which could eliminate the need for, a New gTLD Auction) provide the only permissible path to contention resolution. Any other resolution methods, such as private auctions or joint ventures, or any other arrangement designed to resolve contention privately, are strictly prohibited. The contention resolution processes and restrictions are also in support of the bona fide (good faith) requirement (see Section 1.1.5 Good Faith Intent) to operate an applied-for gTLD and support the Program's goals of fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the DNS.

5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities

To prevent applicants from using methods not permitted in the Applicant Guidebook to resolve contention, the New gTLD Program includes rules prohibiting certain communications and activities as outlined in this section. ICANN intends that these rules setting forth prohibitions on certain communications and activities be interpreted broadly to cover all forms of impermissible conduct.

The New gTLD Program includes various points in time when contention sets are identified and updated as new information is available, namely: Reveal Day, String Confirmation Day, publication of Singular/Plural Notification results, publication of String Similarity Evaluation results, and resolution of Objection proceedings. See

[151] Available to eligible applicants with a Community Application that elect to participate.
[152] See Section 7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment.

Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures for more information.

Applicants (including their agents and affiliates) for strings in the same contention set are strictly prohibited from communicating, either directly or indirectly, with other applicants in that same contention set regarding their respective applications in contention, any strategies related to the in-contention string(s), or strategies to resolve contention.

Communications are prohibited from Reveal Day until the earlier of (1) the date a prevailing applicant signs a Registry Agreement for a specific contending gTLD string, or (2) the applicant withdraws the relevant application. The prohibition on "communicating directly or indirectly" includes public disclosures as well as private communications.

Examples of prohibited communications and conduct by applicants include, but are not limited to:

1. Discussing, offering, or accepting of money or other things of value (such as monetary gain or operational control provisions) for withdrawing an application.
2. Discussing or negotiating settlement agreements or post-auction transfer arrangements in any manner with another applicant in contention for the same string with respect to any contending strings.

The Applicant Guidebook restricts methods for resolving contention. However, applicants may communicate in the specific cases listed below. In such cases, they must take all commercially reasonable steps to prevent third parties from becoming intermediaries that could disclose information about their application or application portfolio to other applicants. These specific cases are as follows:

- Communications to third-party professional advisors, including counsel, consultants, financial advisors, or lenders.
- Communications during the course of obtaining consent or non-objection from a governmental authority for an application of a geographic name as described in Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
- Communications during the course of engaging with a governmental authority as a result of an application receiving a GAC Member Early Warning or GAC Consensus Advice.

ICANN recognizes that applicants may also be existing participants in the DNS ecosystem, such as existing gTLD registries, back-end registry service providers, or registrars.

Applicants may enter into various business arrangements with one another or affiliated entities that are not directly related to contending strings in the New gTLD Program.

These arrangements can include, but are not limited to, registry-registrar agreements, registry service provider agreements, as well as data escrow agreements.

Routine business communications do not violate the rule prohibiting private resolution of contention sets if they do not convey information related to applications or application strategies. These communication rules are designed to minimally disrupt routine business practices in the DNS ecosystem.

5.2.3.2 Exceptions

The New gTLD Program does not prohibit applicants from communicating directly or indirectly any information related to applications or application strategies:

- For strings that are not in contention.
- Occurring outside of the defined periods where communication is prohibited.

The New gTLD Program specifically permits applicants for strings in contention to communicate with one another during established periods as part of mediation or settlement discussions to resolve an Objection, provided that no settlement shall discuss or include as part of its terms exchange of money or other things of value, including any post-auction transfer arrangements for strings that were formerly in contention.

In the event that an applicant believes that a particular disclosure required by law or regulation will result in a potential violation of these rules, applicants are encouraged to consult with ICANN before making the disclosure.

5.2.3.3 Violation of the Rules Prohibiting Private Resolution of Contention Strings

Prior to signing a Registry Agreement or withdrawing an application, all applicants must certify compliance with the Guidebook, including these rules prohibiting private resolution of contention. An applicant is required to disclose to ICANN any potential violation on its part of these rules, and such disclosure must be promptly made after the applicant becomes aware of the violation. Also, applicants will be required to cooperate with any ICANN inquiry or investigation concerning a possible breach of these rules.

ICANN expressly reserves the right to take appropriate action against applicants for violation of the rules prohibiting private resolution of contention strings. Actions taken by ICANN in response to an applicant's violation of these rules could include:

- Disqualification from current and future New gTLD Program rounds
- Forfeiture of all evaluation and conditional evaluation fees
- Denial of refunds identified in the Guidebook
- Financial penalties for interfering with auction outcomes

- Legal action

ICANN may also report violations to the relevant authorities and address false claims of rule breaches.

5.2.4 Contention Set Formation

Contention sets can be formed under certain conditions during the application process as a result of the following:

- Applications for identical gTLD strings
- The outcome of the String Similarity Evaluation
- A successful Singular/Plural Notification
- A successful String Confusion Objection

An application can only be deemed not to be in contention once the string evaluation, dispute resolution, and appeal processes have concluded, and the outcomes of any .Brand String Change Requests are known, as described in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request. This is because any application that is altered or unable to proceed as a result of these processes might modify a previously identified contention set.

5.2.4.1 Contention as a Result of Applications for Identical gTLD Strings

On Reveal Day, all applications for identical strings or identical variants will be placed in contention with each other, forming a contention set. For example, if Applicant A and Applicant B both apply for .NEWGTLDSTRING, their strings would be contending strings, with only one application allowed to proceed to the Application and Applicant Evaluation phase and potential contracting.

Additionally, two or more applications with applied-for strings or variant strings identified by ICANN as variant strings of one another, as defined in Section 5.2.1 Contention Types, would also be considered in direct contention and placed in a contention set. For instance, if one applicant applies for String A and another applies for String B, and Strings A and B are variant TLD strings of one another (such as an IDN gTLD in simplified Han Chinese script and its variant IDN gTLD in traditional Han Chinese script, as specified in the Root Zone Label Generation Rules) then the two applications will be in contention.

Contention sets will begin to be published once the String Similarity Evaluation has been completed. Applicants should check the New gTLD website for details on contention sets.[153]

[153] Certain communications and activities will be prohibited starting on Reveal Day as described in Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities.

5.2.4.2 Contention as an Outcome of the String Similarity Evaluation

The String Similarity Evaluation Panel will review the entire set of applied-for strings and their applied-for variant strings to determine whether the strings proposed in any two or more applications are so Visually Similar that they would create a probability of user confusion if allowed to coexist in the DNS. The panel will make such a determination for the entire set of applied-for strings and their applied-for variant strings. One of the outcomes of the String Similarity Evaluation will be to place applications into a contention set once the panel has identified contention relationships, based on the confusability of the applied-for strings (see Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation).

5.2.4.3 Contention Due to Singular/Plural Notification

If ICANN confirms, following a notification, that an applied-for gTLD string represents a word that is either the singular or plural version of another applied-for gTLD string in the same language, both strings will be put in contention to prevent end-user confusion (see Section 4.4 Singular/Plural Notifications).

5.2.4.4 Contention Arising From a Successful String Confusion Objection

If an applicant files a String Confusion Objection[154] against another application[155] and the panel finds in favor of the objector, determining that user confusion is probable, both applications will be placed in direct contention and referred to a contention resolution procedure.

5.3 .Brand String Change Requests

If an application for a .Brand TLD is found in contention, the applicant will have the option to change the applied-for string to try to avoid further contention by submitting a .Brand String Change Request, subject to the requirements set out in this section.

5.3.1 Submitting a .Brand String Change Request

A .Brand String Change Request can only be submitted by an applicant for a .Brand TLD that is in contention with another application. If ICANN has not done so already, it will evaluate an application's eligibility for .Brand TLD designation upon receiving a

[154] See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals.
[155] For cases in which the String Confusion Objection is filed by an existing registry operator, refer to Section 4.5.8.14 Panel Determination.

.Brand String Change Request.[156] ICANN will not consider a .Brand String Change Request before the associated application has been successfully evaluated as qualifying for .Brand designation based on the applied-for string.[157] A .Brand String Change Request for an application that is found ineligible for the .Brand TLD designation will be rejected. See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation.

A .Brand String Change can only be submitted up to 30 days following:

- The formation of contention sets after String Similarity Evaluation; or
- The publication of a String Confusion Objection Panel Determination; or
- Appellate Panel Determination involving the application subject to the .Brand String Change Request.

If an applicant does not submit a .Brand String Change Request within the applicable 30-day period, the relevant application will proceed on the basis of the original applied-for .Brand string.

5.3.2 .Brand String Change Request Requirements

A .Brand String Change Request must satisfy the following requirements to be accepted by ICANN:

1. The proposed change must add one or more words to the applied-for string, subject to the following conditions:
    - The additional word or words must be added to the original string.
    - The additional word or words must appear in the description of goods and services of the applicant's Trademark Registration or equivalent document in the applicant's jurisdiction, submitted by the applicant in support of its application for a .Brand TLD.[158] Another Trademark Registration or equivalent document in the applicant's possession (or that of any of its Affiliates) may also be submitted in support of the .Brand String Change Request, if accompanied by legal confirmation that the submitted trademark is owned by the entity with the application and respective brand. ICANN reserves the right to verify any additional documentation submitted for this purpose. Additionally, should .Brand

[156].Brand TLD applicants that do not submit a .Brand String Change Request may also have their applications evaluated for Specification 13 designation at a later stage, depending on the outcome of the application process.
[157] The string change process for .Brand applicants is distinct from the replacement string process, which occurs earlier in the application process, prior to String Confirmation Day. .Brand applicants that choose to utilize their replacement strings will be evaluated for Specification 13 eligibility on that basis. See Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.
[158] In recognition of potential differences in documentation, terminology or language when evidencing Trademark Registration between countries and jurisdictions, ICANN will accept legal documentation equivalent to a Trademark Registration where this cannot be supplied.

TLD Eligibility Evaluation (see Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation) or re-evaluation[159] be required, any associated costs[160] will be borne by the applicant.

- No translations of words contained in the Trademark Registration will be accepted.

2. The new string with the added word or words must not create or expand a contention set.

If the new .Brand TLD qualifies for .Brand TLD designation and meets the requirements above, the .Brand String Change Request will be accepted for further processing as described in Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 and will be posted publicly.

5.3.3 .Brand String Change Requests and Input from the Community

A .Brand String Change Request will be subject to the community input and objection processes, as described in Module 4 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals.

The potential outcomes for the new .Brand TLD mirror those described in Module 4, with the exception of a new .Brand TLD that does not prevail in a String Confusion Objection or is subject to a confirmed Singular/Plural issue. In such cases, ICANN will revert the applicant to its original applied-for .Brand TLD, and the applicant will proceed to contention resolution, as described in Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

5.3.4 .Brand String Change Requests and String Evaluation

A .Brand String Change Request will be subject to String Evaluation, as described in Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures. The potential outcomes for the new .Brand TLD mirror those described in Module 7, with the exception of a new .Brand TLD that is found to be Visually Similar as per the procedures described in Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation. This is because the new string with the added word or words must not create or expand a contention set. In such a case, ICANN will revert the applicant to its original applied-for .Brand TLD, and the applicant will proceed to contention resolution, as described in Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

5.3.5 Impact on .Brand TLD Variants

Variants of applied-for .Brand TLDs must satisfy the same eligibility requirements as the primary applied-for .Brand TLD. The same requirements apply to any allocatable

[159] See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for information on required re-evaluations.
[160] See Section 3.3.2 Conditional Evaluations for information on fees associated with conditional evaluations.

variants of the new .Brand TLD. The applicant must use the RZ-LGR to identify a new set of allocatable variant strings based on its new .Brand TLD string.

5.4 Community Priority Evaluation

Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) is a method to resolve contention and is an option only available to Community Applications (see Section 7.1.2.1 Applications for Community gTLDs), a specialized application[161] type. It will only occur if a Community Application is in contention and the applicant elects to pursue CPE. The evaluation is an analysis conducted by independent experts. Applications that successfully complete CPE will automatically prevail in contention, unless more than one application in a contention set passes the evaluation. In such cases, Community Applications successful in CPE will proceed to an ICANN New gTLD Auction.[162]

In the 2007 GNSO Final Report on the Introduction of New Generic Top-Level Domains, Implementation Guidance F states that "[i]f there is contention for strings, applicants may: i) resolve contention between them within a pre-established timeframe[;] ii) if there is no mutual agreement, a claim to support a community by one party will be a reason to award priority to that application."[163] In the Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process (SubPro PDP Final Report), the SubPro PDP Working Group affirmed "the continued prioritization of applications in contention sets that have passed Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)."[164]

CPE is an independent analysis conducted by a third-party expert panel. The panel's role is to determine whether a Community Application fulfills the CPE criteria and should receive priority in the contention set. The scoring process looks at a set of criteria related to community establishment, the nexus between the community and applied-for string, registration policies, and community support. It is designed to identify qualified Community Applications while preventing false positives (awarding priority to unqualified applications for a coveted generic string) and false negatives (overlooking qualified Community Applications).

5.4.1 Eligibility for Community Priority Evaluation

As described in subsection Section 3.1.6 Application and String Types, an applicant will have the opportunity to designate its application as a Community Application[165] at its

[161] See Section 7.1.2 Specialized Applications.
[162] See Section 5.6 ICANN New gTLD Auction.
[163] See Final Report: Introduction of New Generic Top-Level Domains (8 August 2007): https://gnso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm.
[164] See Affirmation with Modification 34.1.
[165] An application may have more than one type, for example, an application could be both a geographic name and community. See Section 3.1.6 Application and String Types.

sole discretion. An applicant designating its application as a Community Application[166] is required to respond to a set of questions in the application form to provide relevant information about the community (see Appendix 1 Application Questions). The information provided by the applicant in response to the application questions will be used in CPE (and evaluated against the criteria described in Section 5.4.8 CPE Criteria).

In general, an applicant for a Community gTLD is expected to:

- Demonstrate a relationship with an organized community, as well as show how that identified community (see Section 5.4.2 Definition of Community and Identified Community) engages with its members; awareness of the identified community between members; the established presence and external awareness of the identified community, and show that the identified community has longevity.
- Have applied for a gTLD string strongly and specifically related to the identified community.
- Have proposed dedicated registration policies for registrants in its proposed gTLD, commensurate with the purpose of the identified community.
- Have its application endorsed in writing by one or more established institutions representing the identified community.

CPE will only occur if a Community Application is in contention (see Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures) and the Community Applicant opts to participate.[167] Applicants submitting Community Applications will be given the opportunity to opt into CPE once all applications in a contention set meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Completed string evaluation and all related processes (see Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures)
- All applicable objections and appeals are resolved (see Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals)
- All evaluation challenges, if applicable, are completed[168]
- Have no open, relevant application change requests (see Section 3.8 Application Change Requests)
- Have no pending accountability mechanisms (see Section 2.7 Accountability Mechanisms)

[166] Applicants for Community gTLDs are also required to submit written endorsements of the applied-for string from the community. If an applicant for a Community gTLD is also seeking one or more variant strings, the endorsements must also apply to the variant strings.
[167] CPE is one contention resolution method. However, to potentially reduce the instances of contention, an applicant is encouraged to designate a replacement string alongside the original choice of string. See Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.
[168] Available evaluation challenges are described in the respective evaluation sections of the Guidebook. See Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures and Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures.

5.4.2 Definition of Community and Identified Community

ICANN notes that the term "community" has evolved considerably from its Latin origin ("communitas" meaning "fellowship"), now emphasizing cohesion over mere commonality of interest. Although the SubPro PDP Final Report does not define community for purposes of CPE, it does note, in the context of community objections, that "a community should be interpreted broadly and will include, for example, an economic sector, a cultural community, or a linguistic community."[169]

As there is no singular definition of community provided by the SubPro PDP Final Report nor a defined list of "eligible communities," the CPE criteria employ measures that balance objectivity with flexibility, ensuring the criteria can accommodate the broad spectrum of ways that a community might be structured, managed, and viewed or supported by its members and outsiders.

The term "identified community," used throughout this section, refers to the community that an applicant, in its Community Application, claims to represent or on whose behalf it claims to be applying for a Community gTLD.

Any applicant can claim a relationship to a community in its application and designate it as a Community Application, committing to operate the gTLD according to a set of Registry Agreement Community Registration Policies (Community Registration Policies) that will be enshrined in the respective Registry Agreement. However, in cases where a Community Application is in contention with other applications (whether community or another type), a third-party panel is used to verify the community claim by the applicant.[170]

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[169] See Affirmation 31.1: "Subject to the recommendations/implementation guidance below, the Working Group affirms the following recommendations and implementation guidance from 2007[…]Recommendation 20: 'An application will be rejected if it is determined, based on public comments or otherwise, that there is substantial opposition to it from among significant established institutions of the economic sector, or cultural or language community, to which it is targeted or which it is intended to support.' [...] 'c) community – community should be interpreted broadly and will include, for example, an economic sector, a cultural community, or a linguistic community. It may be a closely related community which believes it is impacted.'"

[170] The SubPro PDP Final Report, in Affirmation 34.1, states that: "The Working Group further affirms Implementation Guideline H* from the 2007 policy… "Where an applicant lays any claim that the TLD is intended to support a particular community such as a sponsored TLD, or any other TLD intended for a specified community, that claim will be taken on trust with the following exceptions: (i) the claim relates to a string that is also subject to another application and the claim to support a community is being used to gain priority for the application; and (ii) a formal objection process is initiated." See SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf (page 163).

Accordingly, the panel will verify, based on evidence from the applicant[171] as well as the panel's own evaluation,[172] whether an applicant's claim on a community meets the CPE criteria defined in this Guidebook and whether the application is eligible to receive priority in a contention set based on its score.[173]

5.4.3 Conditional Fees for Community Priority Evaluation

Once the conditions in Section 5.4.1 Eligibility for Community Priority Evaluation are met, any applicant with a Community Application within a contention set will be notified of the opportunity to participate in CPE and will be requested to submit the required fees within 30 days of notification transmission (see Section 3.3 Fees and Payments). If the fees are not received within 30 days, the applicant will forfeit the opportunity to participate in CPE and will proceed to contention set resolution (see Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution).

Applications will be given priority numbers, which will be used to determine the general order of the release of evaluation results (as described in Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw). However, processing for CPE will largely be dictated by when an application and contention set become eligible, as noted above. Timing for CPE is also dependent upon Registry Commitment Evaluation (see Section 5.4.5 Community Registration Policies and Registry Commitment Evaluation).

5.4.4 Application Questions Related to Community Priority Evaluation

Applicants who designate their application as a Community Application will be asked to answer a series of questions specific to Community Applications.[174] The answers to these questions will be evaluated if the applicant elects to participate in CPE.

5.4.5 Evaluation of Community Registration Policies in Community Priority Evaluation

When submitting a Community Application, applicants must propose Community Registration Policies for inclusion in Specification 12 of the applicable Registry Agreements.[175] The CPE Panel will evaluate the approved Community Registration

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[171] See Appendix 1 Application Questions, specifically Question Set 7 for questions related to Community Applications.
[172] See Section 5.4.6 Role of the CPE Panel.
[173] See Section 5.4.7 Community Priority Evaluation Scoring.
[174] See Question Set 7 of Appendix 1 Application Questions.
[175] If an applicant for a Community gTLD desires for a Community Registration Policy to be scored in the CPE, it must propose such a policy for inclusion in Specification 12 of the

Policies (see Section 7.8.4) for consistency with the community objective of the application (see Section 5.4.8.3 Criterion 3: Registration Policies).

This differs from the Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE) (see Section 7.8.3.2), which verifies that applicant-proposed policies for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement are enforceable and compatible with the ICANN Bylaws. See instructions for Question Set 11 Registry Voluntary Commitments for the detailed requirements that guide the drafting approach of proposed Community Registration Policies that will be evaluated through the RCE.

Applicants should be aware that, absent extraordinary circumstances, RCE is estimated to take 60 to 90 days, and occurs before CPE begins.

5.4.6 Role of the Community Priority Evaluation Panel

CPE will be performed by a third-party expert panel appointed by ICANN. The panel's role is to determine whether a Community Application fulfills the CPE criteria and receives priority over other applications in the contention set. The applicant is expected to provide information and evidence about its identified community in its application (see Question Set 7 Community gTLDs). In making its determination, the panel will review the applicant's responses to the application questions to ensure all elements of the application are supported by evidence.

The panel may conduct limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate the application according to the criteria and verify the information provided by the applicant. The panel is expected to focus its limited independent research on the fact-checking required to verify information provided by the applicant. Additionally, as part of this research, the panel may consult with relevant community-related experts to gain insight into highly specialized or localized communities. The guidelines for each criterion in Section 5.4.8 CPE Criteria allow for the panel to consider how a criterion should be evaluated in the context of different types of communities.[176]

If the panel conducts limited independent research or consults with community experts, it must disclose the results of this research to the applicant and include a citation or link to such research in its evaluation. The applicant will have 30 days to respond before the evaluation decision is rendered. When conducting any such research, panelists are cautioned not to assume an advocacy role either for or against the applicant or application.

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applicable Registry Agreement when submitting an application for a Community gTLD. See Section 7.8.4.

[176] For example, the panel may consult with such experts to understand what "longevity" means in the context of different types of communities. See Section 5.4.8 CPE Criteria.

Additionally, panelists may issue Clarifying Questions and engage in written dialogue with applicants with applications undergoing CPE, as well as those that have submitted letters of opposition to Community Applications, in order to address potential issues (see Section 5.4.6.1 CPE Clarifying Questions).

5.4.6.1 CPE Clarifying Questions

The panel may issue CPE Clarifying Questions[177] to applicants for applications participating in CPE. Clarifying Questions may also be directed to a person or entity that submitted a letter of opposition to a CPE applicant. The applicant, or those who submitted a letter of opposition, will have 21 days to respond from the day after receiving a clarifying question. As described in Section 5.4.6 Role of the CPE Panel, the panel may conduct limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate the application, including for the preparation and issuing of Clarifying Questions.

5.4.6.2 Challenging CPE

If the panel determines that the application has not met the CPE criteria and the applicant believes there is a factual or procedural error, the applicant may initiate an Evaluation Challenge proceeding within 21 days from the date of transmission of the evaluation determination (see Section 1.2.14.2 Evaluation Challenges). The same CPE provider will review the challenge, using a different set of panelists to form a Challenge Panel, when practicable. If the Challenge Panel finds a factual, procedural, or system error, the application will be reevaluated by the Challenge Panel with those findings in mind. If no error is found, the application will continue to the next stage in the process of contention resolution. There are no additional fees associated with an Evaluation Challenge proceeding.

5.4.7 Community Priority Evaluation Scoring

The CPE Panel will review and score the Community Application against the four CPE criteria. An application must achieve a score of at least 75% (12 out of 16 points) to prevail in CPE. The sequence of the criteria reflects the order in which they will be assessed by the panel. The utmost care has been taken to avoid any "double-counting"; any negative aspect found in assessing an application for a criterion should only be counted once and should not affect the assessment for other criteria.

The scoring process is designed to identify qualified Community Applications, while preventing both “false positives” (awarding undue priority to an application that refers to a “community” construed merely to get a highly desired generic word as a gTLD string) and “false negatives” (not awarding priority to a qualified Community Application). This calls for a holistic approach, taking multiple criteria into account, as reflected in the

[177] CPE Clarifying Questions should not be confused with any other clarifying questions that might be issued to applicants during applicant or application evaluations.

process. The panel scores applications based on information provided in the application, plus other relevant information available, such as: responses to CPE Clarifying Questions, application comments, letters of support or opposition, or any limited research conducted by the panel, such as verifying information provided by the applicant with public information regarding the identified community.

A qualified Community Application receives priority over all directly competing applications, allowing it to advance while others cannot. This underscores the strict qualification criteria described below. A panel's failure to award community priority does not imply the community is inadequate or invalid; it simply indicates the application does not qualify to supersede all other contenders.

If a single Community Application in a contention set is found to meet the CPE criteria, that application will prevail and may proceed to the next step in the application process, subject to meeting all other Program requirements. Other applications in the contention set will be ineligible to proceed at that time.[178]

If more than one Community Application in a contention set is found to meet the criteria, these applications will proceed to an ICANN auction, while other applications in the contention set will be ineligible to proceed. If none of the Community Applications (as there could be more than one) in a contention set meet the CPE criteria,[179] then all of the applications in the contention set will proceed to an ICANN auction (see Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution).

ICANN anticipates that the CPE process will take approximately 180 days.

5.4.8 Community Priority Evaluation Criteria

CPE is based upon the panel's evaluation of the application against four main criteria:

- Criterion 1: Community Establishment (6 points)
- Criterion 2: Nexus between Proposed String and Community (4 points)
- Criterion 3: Registration Policies (2 points)
- Criterion 4: Community Endorsement (4 points)

5.4.8.1 Criterion 1: Community Establishment

Criterion 1 is used to evaluate the community as explicitly identified in the application. An application can receive up to six points for Criterion 1: two points awarded for the

[178] See Section 3.9 Application Statuses.
[179] An applicant self-identifies its application as a community; CPE does not determine community status. Additionally, as noted in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests, an applicant is not able to change its community status (that is, from a Community Application to a "general" application); it must remain a Community Application even if it does not pass CPE, and the Community Registration Policies must be included in the applicable Registry Agreement if the application proceeds to delegation.

organization sub-criterion, and one point for the engagement, awareness, established presence, and longevity sub-criteria.

The panel will address the following key questions to assess this criterion:

A. **Organization** (2 points): Is the applicant the organizing body for the community? If not, is the applicant able to demonstrate that the community is organized, with an organizing body(ies) relevant to the community or to each member category of the community? See Section 5.4.8.1.1.
B. **Engagement** (1 point): Is the applicant able to demonstrate that there is active engagement with community members? See Section 5.4.8.1.2.
C. **Awareness** (1 point): Is the applicant able to demonstrate awareness among and between community members of the identified community? See Section 5.4.8.1.3.
D. **Established Presence** (1 point): Is the applicant able to demonstrate external awareness of the community as well as an established presence of the community prior to the opening of the application submission period? See Section 5.4.8.1.4.
E. **Longevity** (1 point)**:** Is the applicant able to demonstrate the longevity of the community's pursuits, showing that they are enduring and sustainable rather than temporary? See Section 5.4.8.1.5.

5.4.8.1.1 Organization

Table 5-1: Criterion 1 - Organization

2 - Applicant is the organizing body for the identified community	1 - Identified community has evidence of organizing bodies	0 - Identified community has no evidence of organizing bodies
The applicant serves as the sole organizing body for the identified community and all its member categories, with exclusive responsibility for representing or administering the identified community.	The applicant is not the sole organizing body for the identified community, but is able to demonstrate that the identified community has an organizing body or bodies relevant to the identified community as a whole or relevant to each identified member category of the community. These organizing bodies may either represent or administer the identified community.	The applicant is not able to demonstrate that there is an organizing body or bodies relevant to the identified community or to each member category of the identified community.

- Guidelines for Organization:

    a. Is the applicant able to demonstrate that it is the sole organizing body for the identified community, whether to represent or administer it? If not, is the applicant able to demonstrate that there are organizing bodies relevant to the identified community?
    b. Is there one association dedicated to the identified community as a whole, or are there multiple individual organizations that represent, administer or are relevant to different segments or groups within the identified community?
        i. Multiple entities may administer or represent an identified community. An organization *representing* an identified community should be regarded with the same level of importance and legitimacy as one that *administers* the identified community.
    c. In support of providing evidence related to organization, the applicant should provide:
        i. An overview of the identified community structure, as applicable, and whether it is formal or informal:
            1. Formal communities typically have well-defined organizational structures and membership lists, such as economic communities or coalitions of nonprofit organizations.
            2. Non-formal communities may consist of self-identified members, or individuals, such as those in linguistic or cultural groups.
        ii. The names of relevant organizations.
        iii. Relevant leaders within the identified community, as applicable.
        iv. Information regarding how an individual would join the identified community, such as through paying membership fees, skill or accreditation requirements, or certifications aligned with community goals; or, any privileges or benefits entitled to members upon joining the identified community.
        v. Information regarding whether organizing bodies were established to administer or represent the identified community. Relevant information may include the mission statements of the identified organizing bodies.
    d. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant?
        i. Such research may corroborate the existence of bodies or groups that are relevant to the identified community, or, if applicable, evidence of the applicant acting on behalf of the identified community.

ii. The panel may review and verify[180] letters of support or opposition to better understand the organization of the identified community.
iii. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how the organization presents itself in different types of communities.

5.4.8.1.2 Engagement

Table 5-2: Criterion 1 - Engagement

1 - Demonstration of engagement activities	0 - Limited or no demonstration of engagement activities
Applicant is able to sufficiently demonstrate[181] its active[182] efforts to engage and connect with community members.	The applicant is not able to sufficiently demonstrate its active efforts to engage and connect with community members.

- Guidelines for Engagement:

a. As noted in the Organization sub-criterion, an identified community may have one or multiple organizations representing or administering it. In the same way, there may be one or multiple organizations or entities conducting engagement activities on behalf of the identified community.
b. In support of demonstrating active Engagement, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission:
   i. Offering support.
   ii. Sharing information.
   iii. Responding to specific community needs.
   iv. Fostering and strengthening relationships within the identified community.
   v. The inability to demonstrate recent Engagement-related activities may be an indicator of a community that lacks engagement.

[180] See Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for guidelines regarding panel verification of letters of support or opposition.
[181] Either as the organizing body itself or through the organizing bodies that it has identified as relevant to the community. In the latter case, the applicant, in submitting its application, may be acting as an "aggregator" for the identified community, obtaining the relevant information on and support from the community.
[182] Active engagement suggests that the identified community is engaging with community members at a defined frequency. The frequency of the activities may vary by community, but regardless of frequency, the applicant should show evidence of ongoing activities or efforts within the last two years. The inability to demonstrate recent and ongoing active engagement may be an indicator of an inactive community. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance and frequency of recent activity.

However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity.

c. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant?
    i. Such research may corroborate evidence regarding activities held by the identified community's organizing body(ies) (or the applicant itself).
    ii. The panel may review and verify[183] letters of support or opposition to better understand engagement activities of the identified community.
    iii. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how engagement may present itself in different types of communities.

5.4.8.1.3 Awareness

Table 5-3: Criterion 1 - Awareness

1 - Demonstration of awareness among community members	0 - No demonstration of awareness among community members
Applicant is able to demonstrate an awareness among and between the community members of the identified community and its various sub-groups or member categories.	Applicant is not able to demonstrate an awareness among and between the identified community and its various sub-groups or member categories.

- Guidelines for Awareness:

    a. Are community members aware of the existence of the identified community? Do community members recognize the identified community? The panel should take into account the nature of the identified community. For example, for some communities, awareness or recognition of a community and public acknowledgment of membership in such a community may be limited by national law. The panel should consider that awareness would be assessed differently for such a community.
    b. In support of demonstrating Awareness, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission:

[183] See Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for guidelines regarding panel verification of letters of support or opposition.

i. Surveys conducted.
ii. Records of activities involving a diversity of community groups, segments, or members.
iii. The inability to demonstrate recent Awareness-related activities may be an indicator of a community that lacks awareness. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity.

c. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant?
i. Such research may corroborate evidence of awareness among community members, including across different segments, such as participation in community activities or discussions in online forums.
ii. The panel may review and verify[184] letters of support or opposition to better understand awareness of the identified community.
iii. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how awareness may present itself in different types of communities.

5.4.8.1.4 Established Presence

Table 5-4: Criterion 1 - Established Presence

1 - Demonstration of established presence of the community	0 - No demonstration of established presence of the community
Applicant is able to demonstrate external awareness of the identified community, including that there was an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period.	Applicant is not able to demonstrate an external awareness of the identified community. There is no evidence of an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period.

- Guidelines for Established Presence:

a. There should be evidence of an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period. The identified community's existence should be verifiable, and individuals and groups outside of the identified community should be

[184] See Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for guidelines regarding panel verification of letters of support or opposition.

aware of it.[185] Awareness levels may vary based on the identified community's size, scope, or nature. For example, a large, global sports community should demonstrate worldwide recognition, while a small, regional linguistic community may only require evidence of localized awareness.

b. To demonstrate established presence and external awareness, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices from the two years leading up to application submission:
    i. Media or other public information regarding the identified community and its activities or members.
    ii. Discussion of the identified community in various fora, whether online or in person.
    iii. Evidence of partnerships or collaborations with groups outside of the identified community.
    iv. Evidence of the chartering or organization of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission window.
    v. Evidence of contributions (for example, cultural or scientific) to a larger society or population.
    vi. The inability to demonstrate an "established presence" may be an indicator of a community that lacks such presence. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity and how different communities might show presence.

d. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant?
    i. Such research may corroborate evidence of awareness of the identified community by those outside of it.
    ii. The panel may review and verify[186] letters of support or opposition to better understand external awareness of the identified community.
    iii. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how established presence may present itself in different types of communities.

[185] As noted in Section 5.4.7 Community Priority Evaluation Scoring, the panel should take care to avoid double-counting. While there may be some overlap in concepts across the criteria, each criterion should be scored separately and based on its respective guidelines. For example, while both External Awareness and Nexus relate to how outsiders perceive the identified community, they should be evaluated separately as they are distinct measures (that is, External Awareness: has the identified community been discussed in media? Nexus: Is the applied-for string a term used by outsiders to name the identified community?).

[186] See Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for guidelines regarding panel verification of letters of support or opposition.

5.4.8.1.5 Longevity

Table 5-5: Criterion 1 - Longevity

1 - Demonstration of longevity of the identified community's pursuits	0 - No demonstration of longevity of the identified community's pursuits
Applicant is able to demonstrate that the identified community's pursuits are enduring and sustainable.	Applicant is not able to demonstrate that the identified community's pursuits are enduring and sustainable.

- Guidelines for Longevity:

    a. Is the identified community a relatively short-lived congregation (for example, a group that is formed to represent a one-off event)? Is the identified community forward-looking (that is, will it continue to exist in the future)? The panel should keep in mind that longevity may differ based on the nature of the identified community. For example, in some countries or regions, the continued existence of certain communities may be threatened by national or international policies, and the panel should consider that longevity would be measured differently for such a community.
    b. To demonstrate longevity, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission:
        i. Evidence of recurring or scheduled activities that demonstrate continuity over time.
        ii. Documented records of past activities that demonstrate a long-standing tradition or practice.
        iii. Records of discussions emphasizing the identified community's enduring presence or its cultural significance.
        iv. The inability to demonstrate recent longevity-related activities may be an indicator of a community that does not demonstrate longevity. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity.
    c. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant?
        i. Such research may corroborate evidence of the identified community's past or planned activities and its ongoing presence, such as through information on community events or published articles about the community's presence.

ii. The panel may review and verify[187] letters of support or opposition to better understand longevity of the identified community.

iii. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how longevity may present itself in different types of communities.

5.4.8.2 Criterion 2: Nexus

Criterion 2 is used to evaluate the relevance of the applied-for string to the identified community. An application can receive up to four points for Criterion 2.

The panel will seek to answer the following core question in evaluating the applied-for string against this criterion:

> **Nexus** (4 points): Does the string match the name of the identified community or is it a well-known alternative of the identified community's name? Would the general public associate the string with the identified community?

Table 5-6: Criterion 2 - Nexus

4 - Full match	2 - Strong match	1 - Partial match	0 - Weak or no match
String matches the name of the identified community or is a well-known alternative name of the identified community. The general public would associate the string with the identified community.	String matches the name of the identified community or is a well-known alternative name of the identified community, but there may be other meanings of the string–while not in common usage–that the general public may associate with the string.	String partially matches the identified community or the community members but may have a commonly used meaning or connotation beyond the identified community that the general public may associate with the string.	String does not match or identify the community or has a weak association with the identified community. The general public would likely not associate the string with the identified community.

- Guidelines for Nexus:

  a. What is the name of the identified community? A reference to the name of the identified community is a reference to the established name by which the community is commonly known by others (that is, individuals

[187] See Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for guidelines regarding panel verification of letters of support or opposition.

outside of the community itself or from other relevant organizations,[188] such as established, official, quasi-official, publicly recognized institutions, or other peer groups). The name may be, but does not need to be, the name of an organization dedicated to any member category within the identified community.

b. Will the general public instinctively think of the identified community when thinking of the applied-for string?
c. Does the string identify a wider geographic or thematic remit than is related to the identified community? Does the string indicate a community of which the applicant is a part, but is not specific to the applicant's identified community?
d. Is the size or definition of the identified community consistent with the string?
e. If the applied-for string is an IDN, is the applied-for string in the language and script of use for the identified community?
f. Does limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion (for example, an Internet search) corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant regarding the string as it relates to the identified community?
    i. Such research may include verifying whether the applicant's responses to the application questions align with the mission statements of the relevant organizing bodies to understand the thematic remit of the identified community.
    ii. The panel may conduct limited research to help understand whether the string matches the identified community and is known by others. The limited research should also reveal whether there are repeated and frequent references to legal entities or communities other than the identified community referenced in the application.
    iii. The panel may review and verify letters of support or opposition to consider in balance how the identified community is known by either its members or those outside of it.
    iv. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how different types of communities are named or how they are known by others.

5.4.8.3 Criterion 3: Registration Policies

Criterion 3 is used to evaluate the applicant's registration policies as indicated in the application. Registration policies are the conditions that the future registry will set for prospective registrants, that is, those desiring to register second-level domain names

[188] See guidelines under Section 5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement for determining relevant organizations.

under the registry. An application can receive up to two points for Criterion 3: one point for eligibility, and one point for name selection.

The panel will seek to answer the following core questions when evaluating the application against this criterion:

A. Eligibility (1 point): Is eligibility for registrants restricted? Who is qualified to register a domain in the applied-for gTLD? Are there specific qualifications provided that entities or individuals must meet to be eligible as registrants by the registry?
B. Name selection (1 point): Do the applicant's policies include name selection rules? Are name selection rules consistent with the mission statement and articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD? What domain names are acceptable in the applied-for gTLD? Are there specific conditions provided that must be fulfilled for a second-level domain name to be considered acceptable by the registry?

5.4.8.3.1 Eligibility

Table 5-7: Criterion 3 - Eligibility

1 - Restricted	0 - Unrestricted
Eligibility is restricted to members within the identified community.	The identified community has an unrestricted approach to eligibility.

- Guidelines for Eligibility:

    a. What limitations are imposed on potential registrants?
    b. With respect to "Eligibility," the limitation to community members may involve formal membership or be fulfilled in other ways, depending on the structure and focus of the community at hand. Some informal communities may have different methods for determining membership in a particular community.
        i. For example, for a geographic location Community gTLD, a limitation to members of the community can be achieved by requiring documentation, such as a business license or proof of a local address to verify physical presence in the associated geographic location.

5.4.8.3.2 Name Selection

Table 5-8: Criterion 3 - Name Selection

1 - Consistent with community purpose	0 - Not consistent with community purpose
Policies include name selection rules[189] that are consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD.[190]	Policies do not include name selection rules consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD.

- Guidelines for Name Selection:

    a. Do the applicant's policies include name selection rules?
    b. Are the name selection rules consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD?
    c. If the applied-for string is an IDN, do the name selection rules permit eligible community members to register names in their own language and script, including any necessary variants?

5.4.8.4 Criterion 4: Community Endorsement

Criterion 4 is used to evaluate community support and opposition[191] to the application. An application can receive up to four points for Criterion 4.

The panel will seek to answer the following core question when evaluating the application against this criterion:

> **Support and Opposition** (4 points): Does the applicant have support from a majority of the identified community?[192] Does the applicant have any relevant[193] opposition, from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it?

[189] Name Selection means the conditions that must be fulfilled for any second-level domain name to be deemed acceptable by the registry.
[190] As detailed in the responses to the application questions (see Appendix 1 Application Questions).
[191] CPE, and the Community Endorsement criterion, is separate from the Community Objection process, which allows for a party with standing to object to an application on the basis 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 (see Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals).
[192] See "Guidelines for scoring of support or opposition" in this section for determining whether outside support is needed, or conversely, whether outside opposition should be considered.
[193] See "Guidelines for determining relevant organizations" in this section.

Table 5-9: Criterion 4 - Community Endorsement

4 - Applicant has majority support and does not have relevant opposition	3 - Applicant has majority support and has relevant minority opposition	2 - Applicant has majority support but also has relevant significant opposition	0 - Applicant does not have majority support
The applicant has demonstrated support with clear rationale from a majority of the identified community. The applicant does not have any relevant[194] opposition, from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it.	The applicant has demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community. However, the applicant has relevant minority opposition with clear rationale from either within the identified community or relevant organizations outside of it.	The applicant has demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community. However, the applicant also has relevant significant opposition with clear rationale from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it.	The applicant has not demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community.

- Guidelines for the scoring of support or opposition:

    a. To earn full points, the applicant must demonstrate that a majority of the identified community supports the applicant and that the applicant does not have any relevant opposition. The panel should evaluate the applicant's evidence on community size to determine whether there is majority support or significant opposition.
    b. There may be cases where the applied-for string carries more than one meaning or when an applicant has identified a community that is narrower than the scope suggested by the applied-for string. In those instances, the panel should consider whether the applicant can demonstrate relevant support or no relevant opposition from outside the identified community.
    c. The panel should consider any objections or comments from this application round noting opposition. While these will be assessed, they do not automatically influence the Opposition score, as the panel should consider whether the sources of opposition are clearly spurious, unsubstantiated, or filed for the purpose of obstruction.
    d. The panel should assess whether relevant organizations (for example, official, quasi-official, established, publicly recognized, or peer organizations) oppose the proposal, and if such opposition represents a

[194] See "Guidelines for determining relevant organizations" in this section.

minority or majority within the community. See guidelines below regarding relevant organizations.

e. Letters of opposition submitted against a Community Application must be considered in balance with documented support for the application.
f. The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into support, opposition, or organization (see guidelines related to relevant organizations below) as they relate to different types of communities.

- Guidelines for majority and minority support or opposition:

  a. Majority and minority are based on the size of the community as specified by the applicant. The panel should consider the applicant's evidence on the identified community's size to determine whether there is majority support or notable opposition.
  b. The applicant should clearly define its community, providing estimates of the total size and any sub-groups.
  c. The majority of the identified community may be determined by, but not restricted to, factors like headcount or the geographic reach.
  d. Applicants without evidence of support from a majority of the identified community will not receive points. In some cases, the panel may consider support from outside the community if the applied-for string has multiple meanings or the applicant has identified a narrower community than the scope suggested by the applied-for string.
  e. In some cases, an applicant may have majority support but significant opposition, especially when the community is divided or external parties oppose, such as when a string has multiple meanings. Despite substantial outside opposition, the applicant may still have strong support within the community.

- Guidelines for determining relevant organizations*:*

  a. The terms relevance and relevant refer to organizations, groups, or communities associated with the string. This means that support or opposition from communities not identified in the application but connected to the applied-for string would be considered relevant.
     i. As noted in "Guidelines for the scoring of support or opposition," there may be cases where the applied-for string carries more than one meaning or when an applicant has identified a community that is narrower than the scope suggested by the applied-for string. In those instances, the panel should consider whether the applicant can demonstrate relevant support or no relevant opposition from relevant organizations outside the identified community.

b. Limited research should help determine relevance and size of the objecting or supporting organization(s).
c. As noted in Section 5.4.8.1 Criterion 1: Community Establishment, there may be one organizing body mainly dedicated to a community or multiple entities dedicated to a community. The panel will consider the following questions in its evaluation:
    i. Are multiple institutions/organizations supporting the application, with documented support from institutions/organizations representing a majority of the overall identified community?
    ii. Does the applicant have support from the majority of the recognized community institution/member organizations?
    iii. Has the applicant provided full documentation that it has authority to represent the identified community with its application?
d. In considering relevant support or opposition, the panel should consider both the size of the group or groups expressing support or opposition as well as the relevance to the identified community or the string. For example, a letter of opposition from an organization claiming to represent millions but weakly connected to the community may carry less weight. In contrast, a letter from a small, closely connected group may be more relevant and impactful. The same principle applies to letters of support.

- Guidelines for reviewing the content of the documentation of support[195] or opposition:

    a. The documentation clearly expresses the organization's support or opposition for the identified community.[196]
    b. The documentation demonstrates the organization's understanding of the string being requested.
    c. The applicant's documentation is valid, confirming the organization's existence and the letter's authenticity.
    d. The documentation should contain a description of the process and rationale used in arriving at the expression of support or opposition. Consideration of support or opposition is not based merely on the number of comments or expressions of support or opposition received. Documentation lacking a clear rationale or substantive explanation for support or opposition will not be considered.

[195] An applicant for a Community gTLD and its allocatable variant string(s) is required to submit a written endorsement of its applied-for primary gTLD.
[196] The information provided by the applicant in response to Criterion 1: Community Establishment will play an important role in the panel's scoring of Criterion 4: Community Endorsement.

5.5 Contention Resolution for Geographic Names Applications

Due to the sensitivity of contention involving geographic names, their resolution is governed by specific rules.

The following list provides four detailed scenarios and procedures for resolving contention sets involving Geographic Name applications:

1. **Capital City Names**: As detailed in Section 7.5 Geographic Names, an application for a string that represents a name of the capital city of any country or territory listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard, in any language, will only pass the Geographic Names Evaluation if the Geographic Names Panel (GNP) confirms "that the applicant has provided the required documentation from the relevant governments or public authorities, and that the communication from the government or public authority is legitimate and contains the required content."[197] This means that any string that represents such a capital city name but is not supported by the relevant authority or authorities will not pass Geographic Names Evaluation. If an application for a string representing a capital city name, as defined above, is found to be similar visually, aurally or in meaning to another applied-for string (regardless of what string type that string is) then these strings are in contention and will proceed to contention resolution.[198]

2. **Similar .Brand and Geographic Names**: If an application for a Geographic Name string passes the Geographic Names Evaluation and is part of a contention set containing one or more non-Geographic Name applications (and no other applications supported by another government authority), the contention set will be resolved via contention resolution.

   Example: If two applications are submitted for .GENERICOPOLIS, one as a Geographic Name application for a city in Genericstan, and the other as a .Brand TLD application not intended to be operated as a Geographic Name, both will proceed to contention resolution if the applications pass all other applicable string evaluations.

3. **Support from the Same Government Authorities**: If two or more applications for strings that represent the same geographic location pass the Geographic Names Evaluation with documentation of support or non-objection from the

[197] See Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
[198] Contention will be resolved either by a Community Application that prevails in CPE, or by auction.

same relevant government or public authority,[199] as determined by the GNP, and also pass all applicable string evaluations, these applications will proceed to auction to resolve contention.

Example: If three applications for .GENERICOPOLIS have all received letters of support from the relevant government authority of *Genericopolis, Genericstan,* then all three will proceed to contention resolution.

4. **Support from Different Government Authorities**: If two or more contending applications for Geographic Name strings pass the Geographic Names Evaluation with documentation of support or non-objection from different relevant governments or public authorities,[200] as determined by the GNP, and also pass all applicable string evaluations, these applications will undergo Extended Evaluation by the GNP. If, during Extended Evaluation, the GNP determines that all of the different relevant authorities have issued support for or non-objection to the applications they support to proceed to contention resolution, then the contention set will be resolved via contention resolution.

   However, if the GNP determines that one or more relevant authorities have refused to support, or did not issue a statement of non-objection to contention resolution, then no application in the contention set can proceed. All applicants in the contention set will become eligible to receive refunds in accordance with the refund schedule (see Section 3.3 Fees and Payments).

   Example: Should ICANN receive two applications for .GENERICOPOLIS and one is supported by *Genericopolis, Genericstan* and the other one is supported by *Genericopolis, Genericland*, then the GNP will move these applications to Extended Evaluation. If, during Extended Evaluation, the GNP is satisfied that the supporting authorities of both *Genericopolis, Genericstan* and *Genericopolis, Genericland* support or do not object that “their” applications can proceed to contention resolution, then they will proceed accordingly. If the GNP is not satisfied that the supporting authorities of *Genericopolis, Genericstan* and *Genericopolis, Genericland* agree that these applications can proceed to contention resolution, then neither application can proceed, and applicants will receive refunds in accordance with the refund schedule.

5.6 ICANN New gTLD Auction

This section provides applicants a high-level overview of the principal features of an ICANN New gTLD Auction. A detailed set of auction rules and procedures, based on

[199] Applications for country names and capital cities are subject to specific rules. The example here is relevant for non-country names and non-capital cities per ISO 3166-1 standard. See Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
[200] *Ibid.*

those published for the 2012 Round,[201] along with an auction schedule, will be developed by ICANN in consultation with the auction provider and available no later than 60 days before the first auction.

5.6.1 Auction Overview

The auction is the final method for addressing contention which has not been eliminated previously in the course of the application process or resolved through CPE.[202] If CPE occurs and more than one application passes CPE, the successful CPE applications will also proceed to the auction to resolve the contention among the applications that received priority.

The auction is intended to resolve contention among applicants in a contention set for a new gTLD. Once the auction has concluded**,** only one of the participating applications in direct contention for an applied-for gTLD will be eligible to proceed towards delegation, pending the outcome of the Applicant and Application Evaluation and the successful execution of a contract for the applied-for gTLD.

5.6.2 Scheduling of Auctions

In general, auctions will be scheduled on a rolling basis as all applications in a contention set meet the following auction eligibility criteria:

- Completed string evaluation and all related processes (see Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures)
- All applicable objections and appeals are resolved (see Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals)
- All evaluation challenges, if applicable, are completed[203]
- Completed CPE, if applicable
- Have no open, relevant application change requests (see Section 3.8 Application Change Requests)
- Have no pending accountability mechanisms (see Section 2.7 Accountability Mechanisms)

The time required for contention sets to become eligible for auction will vary, depending on the duration of the above-mentioned processes.

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[201] For reference, and as an example, two sets of auction rules were published for the 2012 Round, covering both direct and indirect contention sets. See Rules for Direct Contention: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/rules-03nov14-en.pdf. See Rules for Indirect Contention: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/rules-indirect-contention-24feb15-en.pdf.

[202] See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation.

[203] Available evaluation challenges are described in the respective evaluation sections of the Guidebook. See Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures and Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures.

Applicants will be notified of the auction time and date via the application system at least 30 days before the auction date.

5.6.3 Auction Method

The auction will be conducted using the "ascending-clock, second-price" auction method, which was also used in the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program.[204]

In an "ascending-clock, second-price" auction:

- The auction price increases in a series of timed steps.
- As the price rises, participating bidders successively choose to exit from the auction.
- The auction concludes when only one bidder remains.
- The bidder with the highest bid will win the auction and pay the second-highest bid.
- Indirect contention sets will be resolved via a single auction, which may result in more than one winner (see Figure 5-3 Example of Indirect Contention Set Resolution).

5.6.4 Winning Bids Payments

Details regarding the requirements for winning bid payments will be outlined in the auction rules and procedures that will be published no later than 60 days before the first auction.

If the applicant of the application that prevailed in the auction, having paid its winning bid payment as detailed in the forthcoming auction rules and procedures, fails any of the Applicant Evaluation Procedures or String and Application Evaluation Procedures and cannot proceed, the applicant will receive a refund of its winning auction bid in addition to any applicable refund of its application fee. In such a circumstance, ICANN reserves the right to withhold any costs or fees that the auction provider has charged or will charge for their services.

If an applicant of the application that prevailed in the auction, for any reason, is ineligible to execute the Registry Agreement, ICANN may, at its option, offer the runner-up applicant the opportunity to proceed with its application. In such a case, the runner-up would be required to pay its exit bid to proceed. However, the runner-up applicant in a contention resolution process has no automatic right to an applied-for gTLD string if the first-place winner does not execute a contract for any reason.

[204] See p. 20 in Module 4 of the 2012 Applicant Guidebook: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/string-contention-procedures-04jun12-en.pdf.

5.6.5 Bid Credits for Applicant Support Program Applicants in Auctions

An applicant receiving Applicant Support as part of the Applicant Support Program (ASP) will receive a bid credit to increase its chances of winning an auction by providing a discount on the amount otherwise due on a winning bid.

In this application round, ICANN has set a level of bid credit at a maximum of 35%, not to exceed a monetary value of USD 1.75 million per application. The bid credit provides up to a 35% discount applied to the amount due to be paid by the winning supported applicant, as well as to any deposit that may be required according to the final auction rules. In the case that the winning price (second highest price) auction dues exceed USD five million (the threshold indicating Financial Need to qualify for support), the bid credit applied will be reduced in a phased approach (see Example 2 below and Table 5-10 Phase-out Bid Credit for Supported Applicants).

For example:

- **Example 1**: A supported applicant submits the highest bid of USD one million. Another application submits the second highest bid of USD 900,000. The winning supported applicant pays USD 585,000 (35% bid credit applied to the second highest bid of USD 900,000).
- **Example 2**: A supported applicant submits the highest bid of USD seven million. Another application submits the second highest bid of USD six million. The winning supported applicant pays USD 4.8 million (based on the phased approach indicated a 20% bid credit applied to the second highest bid of USD six million). See Table 5-10 for more detail.

Table 5-10: Phased-out Bid Credit for Supported Applicants for Winning Bids >5 Million USD

Winning price (second highest bid)	Bid credit applied	Cash equivalent of bid credit	Payment due by supported applicant
≤5m USD	35%	≤1.75m USD	≤3.25m USD
>5m-7m USD	20%	>1m-1.5m USD	4m-5.5m USD
>7-9m USD	10%	>0.7m-0.9m USD	6.3m-8.1m USD
>9m USD	0%	0	>9m USD

Full details of the bid credit procedures for eligible auction participants will be included in the ICANN New gTLD Auction rules and procedures.

Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures

Evaluating applicants for new gTLDs is vital for safeguarding end-users and organizations dependent on these domains. New gTLD Program applicant evaluation procedures confirm that prospective registry operators possess the necessary financial, operational, and technical capabilities to uphold this infrastructure and comply with ICANN policies.

Module 6 outlines the comprehensive assessment process, which includes:

- Conducting applicant background screenings.
- Reviewing financial statements and operational practices.
- Examining registry service provisions.
- Evaluating security policies and abuse mitigation strategies.

By thoroughly vetting potential registry operators, ICANN aims to maintain the integrity and reliability of the domain name ecosystem. This process supports ICANN's mission to maintain a secure, stable, and interoperable Internet.

6.1 Background Screening

ICANN has designed the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round to prioritize registrant protections. Beyond the features of the gTLD Base Registry Agreement and the implementation of data and financial escrow mechanisms, background screening serves as a crucial tool in safeguarding registrants. This process ensures only established legal entities, organizations, or institutions (for example, corporations) in good standing are eligible to apply for a new gTLD.

Background screening is in place to protect the public interest in the allocation of critical Internet resources. ICANN reserves the right to deny an otherwise qualified application based on findings from the background screening process.

6.1.1 Background Screening Procedures

6.1.1.1 Application Information

The application requires applicants to furnish details regarding the legal establishment of the applying entity,[205] along with the identification of its directors, officers, partners,

[205] Established entities (for example, corporations), organizations, or institutions in good standing may apply for a new gTLD. Applications from individuals or sole proprietorships will not be considered. Applications from or on behalf of yet-to-be-formed legal entities, or applications presupposing the future formation of a legal entity (for example, a pending Joint Venture) will not be considered.

and major shareholders,[206] as well as the ultimate parent or individuals with control of the applicant. The names and positions of individuals included in the application will be published as part of the application; other information collected about the individuals will not be published.[207] Any information shared as part of the background screening process and related to the criteria listed in Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria below will not be disclosed publicly by ICANN.

6.1.1.2 Publicly Traded Corporations

Publicly traded corporations that are listed and in good standing on any of the world's largest 25 stock exchanges (as determined by the World Federation of Exchanges) may be subject to a more limited background screening process (see Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria). The top 25 exchanges are identified based on domestic market capitalization reported at the end of the most recent year prior to launching the round.[208]

Before being listed on an exchange, an entity must undergo significant due diligence including an investigation by the exchange, regulators, and investment banks. As a publicly listed corporation, the entity is continuously scrutinized by shareholders, analysts, regulators, and exchanges. These requirements are expected to meet or exceed the eligibility criteria as described in Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria.

6.1.1.3 Background Screening Inquiry

ICANN will submit identifying information for the applicant (that is, entity, officers, directors, and major shareholders) to an international background screening service. The service providers will use the criteria listed in Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria and return results that match these criteria.

The inquiry is based on the applicant Organization information provided[209] during the application pre-submission phase (creating the Organizational Account Record, which includes information such as, for example, applicant information, primary and secondary contact information, and proof of legal establishment). An applicant is responsible for ensuring that its inclusion of any personal data from individuals or data from entities in the application complies with local laws and regulations. This may include obtaining consent from individuals or entering into specific agreements with legal entities. If requested by ICANN, applicants must demonstrate to ICANN or ICANN's background screening vendor that the data of entities or individuals named in

[206] "Major shareholders" shall be those holding at least 15% of outstanding shares (or equivalent equity).
[207] All data will be handled according to the Appendix 9 New gTLD Program Privacy Policy.
[208] See the domestic market capitalization in December 2025: https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics.
[209] See Appendix 1 Application Questions.

the Organizational Account Record, concerning background screening activities, is shared in compliance with local laws and regulations, which may include providing consents from individuals. See Question Set 4 Applying Entity Background and Organization in Appendix 1 Application Questions for questions related to Organizational Account Record.

6.1.1.4 Timing of Background Screening

Background screening will generally be conducted for all applicants as part of applicant evaluation. If there is a change in the application that requires additional or repeat background screening (for example, a change[210] in applying entity or change to major shareholders, officers, or directors of the applying entity), then this additional background screening on any changes or new information will occur during the contracting process (see Section 1.2.15 Contracting).

6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria

Background screening will be conducted at both the organizational and individual levels to confirm eligibility and assess risk. Information may vary based on the accessibility of data and local data protection laws. ICANN may take into account information received from any source if it is relevant to the criteria listed below and in compliance with local data protection laws, such as comments received via the Application Comment Forum (see Section 4.1 Application Comments).

ICANN, in compliance with local laws and regulations, will perform background screening to ensure the applicant meets the New gTLD Program Eligibility Criteria described in Section 6.1.2.1. The eligibility criteria are aligned with the "crimes of trust" standard sometimes used in the banking and finance industry. ICANN reserves the right to reject an application, even if the applicant is otherwise qualified, based on information uncovered during the background screening process.

In the absence of exceptional circumstances, applications from an entity that includes individuals who do not meet the eligibility criteria listed below will be disqualified from the Program.

6.1.2.1 New gTLD Program Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicant and individuals named within the Organizational Account Record must be in good corporate standing under their applicable laws and regulations.

2. Applicant and individuals named within the Organizational Account Record must confirm that they are free and absent of:

[210] See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for more information regarding application changes.

a. Convictions of any crime related to financial or corporate governance activities, or judgments by a court to have committed fraud or breach of fiduciary duty, or subject of a judicial determination that is the substantive equivalent of any of these within the last ten years.
b. Disciplinary actions by any government or industry regulatory body for conduct involving dishonesty or misuse of funds of others within the last ten years.
c. Convictions of any willful tax-related fraud or willful evasion of tax liabilities within the last ten years.
d. Convictions of perjury, forswearing, failing to cooperate with a law enforcement investigation, or making false statements to a law enforcement agency or representative within the last ten years.
e. Convictions of any crime involving the use of computers, telephony systems, telecommunications or the Internet to facilitate the commission of crimes.
f. Convictions of any crime involving the use of a weapon, force, or the threat of force.
g. Convictions of any violent or sexual offense victimizing children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities.
h. Convictions within the last ten years of the illegal sale, manufacture, or distribution of pharmaceutical drugs, or a conviction or successful extradition for any offense described in Article 3 of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.
Note: A past conviction for an offense that is no longer a criminal offense in the jurisdiction at the time of application shall not be considered.
i. Convictions or been successfully extradited for any offense described in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (all Protocols).
j. Convictions of aiding, abetting, facilitating, enabling, conspiring to commit, any of the listed crimes above.
k. Entrance of a guilty plea as part of a plea agreement or having a court case in any jurisdiction with a disposition of Adjudicated Guilty or Adjudication Withheld (or regional equivalents) within the respective time frames listed above for any of the listed crimes.
l. Systematic or repetitive engagement in cybersquatting, as defined in the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), Anti-cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA), or other equivalent legislation, or was engaged in reverse domain name hijacking under the UDRP or bad faith or reckless disregard under the ACPA or equivalent legislation. Three or more such decisions with one

occurring in the last four years will generally be considered to constitute a systematic or repetitive engagement in cybersquatting.

6.1.2.2 Applicant Onboarding Questions

An applicant must answer the following questions concerning the eligibility criteria, ensuring that all information provided complies with applicable laws and regulations:

1. Confirm to have read and understood the eligibility criteria and declare that neither the applicant nor any individuals named within the Organizational Account Record are subject to any of the above criteria that could impede eligibility.

2. Confirm that neither the applicant nor any of the individuals or entities named within the Organizational Account, whether in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control, have been subject to any decisions indicating involvement in cybersquatting, as defined in the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), Anti-cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA), or equivalent legislation. This includes engagement in reverse domain name hijacking under the UDRP or bad faith or reckless disregard under the ACPA or equivalent legislation within the last ten years. If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.

   Note related to question 2 above: Three or more such decisions with one occurring in the last four years will generally be considered to constitute a pattern.

   a. Confirm that neither the applicant nor any individuals named in the Organizational Account Record, either in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control, has been subject to a final determination by a dispute resolution provider or a court of competent jurisdiction for intellectual property infringement related to registration or use of a domain name within the last ten years. If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.
   b. Confirm that the applicant and individuals or entities named within the Organizational Account, either in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control, have not been subject to a final determination related to the Uniform Rapid Suspension System (URS) Policy or Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedures (PDDRP). If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.

6.1.3 Background Screening Clarifying Questions

If the background screening provider identifies any areas where the applicant has not met the criteria, clarifying questions may be issued to obtain additional information. To

ensure timely processing of applications, all applicants are encouraged to respond to clarifying questions as quickly as possible, but no later than 21 days after receiving the clarifying question.

6.1.4 Background Screening Results

Based on the background screening results, ICANN reserves the right to approve or deny an application progression in the process. For example, a final and legally binding decision issued by a national law enforcement or consumer protection authority, finding the applicant engaged in fraudulent and deceptive commercial practices as defined in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Protecting Consumers from Fraudulent and Deceptive Commercial Practices Across Borders[211] may lead to application rejection. ICANN may also contact the applicant with additional questions based on information obtained in the background screening process (see more in Extended Evaluation for Background Screening).

6.1.5 Extended Evaluation for Background Screening

If an applicant does not meet the background screening criteria, it may request an Extended Evaluation. During this process, the background screening provider may issue additional clarifying questions or request additional information to facilitate additional analysis. Applicants have 21 days to provide the requested information. If the applicant does not respond or its responses do not satisfy the background screening criteria, the applicant will not pass the screening.

6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation

The Financial and Operational Evaluation assesses whether an applicant has the financial capacity to fund the registry long-term, thereby ensuring DNS stability, and mitigating financial risks like revenue shortfalls or cost overruns, including for those managing multiple TLDs. This evaluation also mitigates risks to the security and stability of the DNS and overall Internet security, stability, and resiliency. The operational component ensures that the applying entity has reasonable safeguards in place to support robust business operations and effective handling of abuse concerns.

The Financial and Operational Evaluation is based on an applicant's responses to application questions (see 3.1.3 Application Questions and Appendix 1 Application

[211] See the OECE Guidelines for Protecting Consumers from Fraudulent and Deceptive Commercial Practices across Borders: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/oecd-guidelines-for-protecting-consumers-from-fraudulent-and-deceptive-commercial-practices-across-borders_9789264103573-en-fr.

Questions), which are determined based on the applicant profile model.[212] This model recognizes that different criteria are required for different types of applicants.

The evaluation occurs during the Applicant Evaluation phase described in this module (Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures). Financial and Operational Evaluation is performed at the applying entity level. If the applicant applies for multiple strings, the results of the Financial and Operational Evaluation performed at the applying entity level will apply to each of its strings.

A third-party evaluation panel will conduct the Financial and Operational Evaluation, assessing whether the applicant's responses satisfy the specific criteria for the applicant's profile.

Most financial information submitted by the applicant remains confidential; the application questions are individually marked as to whether the responses are published or remain confidential.

6.2.1 Execution of Evaluation

ICANN will assign each applicant one of four potential profiles based on its unique traits, determined by responses to the applicant profile selection questions.

The applicant will answer a series of "Yes" or "No" questions to determine the profile. Based on the applicant's responses, the TLD Application Management System (TAMS) directs the applicant to the questions specifically assigned to that profile. Below is the list of the questions in the order that they are asked:

1. Is the applying entity a governmental entity or an intergovernmental organization recognized in its jurisdiction? If "Yes," assign the Government profile.

2. Is the applying entity a current registry operator or an affiliated[213] entity of a current registry operator with one or more active Registry Agreements? If "Yes," assign the Registry Operator profile.

3. Is the applying entity a publicly traded company listed on any of the Top 25 Public Stock Exchanges or an Affiliated entity of a publicly traded company listed on a Top 25 Public Stock Exchange, as defined by the World Federation

[212] For purposes of the application questions and to ensure clarity, the term "applying entity" is used as opposed to "applicant." The "applying entity" is the legal entity (for example, the organization, company, etc.) to which the application will be attributed and that will act as registry operator upon successful completion of all application processes and the signing of the registry agreement with ICANN.
[213] As the term is used below, "Affiliate" is as defined in the template Base Registry Agreement (see Appendix 4).

of Exchanges and specifically included on ICANN's list dated (Month/Day/Year)?[214] If "Yes," assign the Top 25 profile.

4. If the applying entity is none of the above profiles, assign the Standard profile.[215]

6.2.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation Criteria

Based on an applicant's responses to the questions in Appendix 1 Application Questions and the profile assigned to an applicant, an applicant must meet different criteria for the evaluation. The three components of the evaluation are Financial Statements, Self-Certification, and Operational/Planning.

- **Financial Statements**: The applicant (except for those qualifying under the Government profile) must provide audited, reviewed, or compiled financial statements, prepared by a third-party accounting firm, for the applying entity that complies with the accounting standards required by the jurisdiction of the applying entity. Alternatively, the applicant may provide third-party audited, reviewed, or compiled statements from an ICANN-approved Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), prepared by a third-party accounting firm. A Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) is a legal entity that has at least 51% ownership in the applicant, directly or indirectly. Qualified Parent Statements (QPS) are audited financial statements from a QPE.
- **Self-Certification**: The applicant must provide a self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, or CFO of the applying entity. If financials are provided by a QPE, that QPE must co-sign the certification document. Self-certification statements may vary depending on the applicant's profile.
- **Operational/Planning**: The applicants must submit various operational and planning documents as required by its profile.

[214] See the domestic market capitalization in December 2025: https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics.
[215] If the applying entity falls into more than one category (for example, the existing Registry Operator and Top 25 profiles), then the first profile the applying entity qualifies for will be assigned (for example, the existing Registry Operator profile will be assigned first over Top 25).

Table 6-1: Overview of Financial Evaluation Requirements by Profile Type

	Requirements	Standard	Registry Operator	Publicly Traded on Top 25 Exchanges	Government
Financial Statements	Entity Statements	Required	Required	Required	
	QPE Statements	Alternative	Alternative	Alternative	
	Third-Party Audited, Reviewed, or Compiled	Required	Required	Required (Audited)	
	Government Commitment				Required
	Accounting Standard for the Jurisdiction of the Applicant	Required	Required	Required	
Self-Certification	Certified by CEO or CFO of Applicant and QPE, if Applicable	Required	Required	Required	Required
	Long-Term Funding	Required	Required	Required	Required
	Cash On Hand (per string, capped at USD 300,000)[216]	Required, USD 50,000 +25% App Fee			
	Good Standing			Required	
	Bound by Law of Jurisdiction	Required	Required	Required	Required
Operational Planning	List of Applied-For and Current TLDs, if applicable	Required	Required	Required	Required
	Forecast of DUMs for Year 1, 2, and 3	Required	Required	Required	Required
	Three-Year Operating Plan	Required			
	Good Standing for Registry Operators and Registrars				
	EBERO Event Administrative Check				
	DNS Abuse Plan / Security Policy and Plan				

[216] The required holdings scale for multi-string applicants: from a floor of USD 50,000 to a USD 300,000 cap. This limits the holdings required for Standard Applicants applying for multiple strings. For example, a Standard Applicant for a single string would be required to hold USD 50,000 plus 25% of the USD 227,000 application fee. A Standard Applicant for three strings would be required to hold USD 50,000 plus 25% of the USD 227,000 fee per each of the three strings.

6.2.3 Financial and Operational Evaluation Clarifying Questions

The evaluation panel may issue clarifying questions (CQs) to request additional information needed to sufficiently evaluate the application. Applicants are required to respond within 21 days following the date of issuance of the CQ.

6.2.4 Extended Evaluation for Financial and Operational Evaluation

An Extended Evaluation is a secondary review process available to applicants that do not pass Financial and Operational Evaluation. An applicant may request Extended Evaluation to provide clarifying information that addresses deficiencies in its initial application. To qualify, an applicant must formally elect to undergo Extended Evaluation after receiving its Financial and Operational Evaluation results. There is no fee associated with Extended Evaluation.

6.2.5 Financial and Operational Evaluation Instructions

The Financial and Operational Evaluation assesses an applicant's ability to fund registry start-up and long-term operations through four distinct profiles:[217]

- **Government Profile**: Applies to governmental entities or intergovernmental organizations within a recognized government's jurisdiction.
- **Registry Operator Profile**: Applies to current registry operators with active Registry Agreements or their affiliated entities.
- **Top 25 Public Stock Exchange Profile**: Applies to publicly traded companies on a Top 25 Public Stock Exchange, as defined by the World Federation of Exchanges list (as of December 2025),[218] or their affiliated entities.
- **Standard Profile**: Applies to applicants not meeting criteria for the other three profiles.

All applicants must complete "Security Policy and Planning" and "DNS Abuse" questions, in addition to profile-specific questions. ICANN will assign each applicant to a profile based on the criteria defined above in Section 6.2.1 Execution of Evaluation.

[217] For purposes of the Application Questions (see Appendix 1), the profiles are numbered as follows: Q1 is related to the Government profile; Q2 is related to the RO profile; Q3 is related to the Top 25 profile; Q4 is related to the Standard profile.
[218] See the domestic market capitalization in December 2025: https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics.

The Questions for each of the four applicant profiles in the Financial and Operational Evaluation are located in Appendix 1 Application Questions. Additionally, the templates used for the Standard profile are located in Appendix 5 Templates for Standard Financial Profile.

The following general instructions and guidelines apply to the Financial and Operational Evaluation:

- The applicant must answer all questions.
- The applicant must follow the instructions without exception and provide complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses.
- If, for any reason, the applicant believes a question does not apply to its profile, it must explain why.
- Once the application is submitted, the applicant cannot provide any additional information unless requested by ICANN or in response to an application comment. ICANN is not obligated to request any additional information or clarification of the submitted information.
- When asked "why," "describe," "explain," or "provide detail," the applicant must respond with content that demonstrates due diligence appropriate for the request. Most responses should consist of several paragraphs, but should not exceed two pages. Exceptions to this guidance are all types of financial statements, contracts, reference material, or any documentation that may require some additional content.
- All currency values must be in USD (United States dollars) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).
- For applicants submitting multiple applications, financial responses apply to all applications planned for this round. Applicants will complete Financial and Operational Evaluation (including templates) only once for their first application, providing aggregate information for all applied-for strings in the response.[219]
- Financial and Operational Evaluation is performed once per applying entity. One Financial and Operational Evaluation will consider all applied-for strings and their variant strings (if any) for a single applying entity.
- When completing the Financial and Operational Evaluation templates (Most Likely Scenario, Worst Case Scenario, etc), applicants must consolidate all Domains Under Management (DUMs) across all applied-for strings, including any variant strings. When providing expenses, including RSP expenses, applicants must consolidate all expected expenses across all applied-for gTLDs and variant strings.

[219] See Section 3.1.3 Application Questions.

Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures

The New gTLD Program: 2026 Round represents a critical evolution of Internet infrastructure. While enthusiasm for potential new domain name extensions is high, the string and application evaluation process is designed to safeguard DNS stability while addressing stakeholder concerns. Each string must be meticulously analyzed for uniqueness, clarity, and potential confusion with existing strings or trademarks to ensure it does not compromise overall DNS integrity.

For specific application types, the assessment of an applicant's community engagement and commitment to transparency and accountability is especially critical.

Module 7 outlines the assessment process, including:

- Overview of application types and handling methods.
- Examination of TLD types, like geographic names and internationalized domain names.
- Strategies to mitigate name collisions.
- String Similarity Evaluation.

This module provides a detailed look at this essential, carefully devised process to ensure DNS stability and security.

7.1 String and Application Types

Applicants may encounter different requirements and processing steps depending on the type of application or string they apply for. These variations can affect the following aspects:

- **Application Questions**: Some application types will require the applicant to answer specialized questions as part of its application (for example, questions related to an applicant's community objectives).
- **Prioritization**: Certain application types could receive priority in the prioritization draw (for example, an IDN).[220]
- **Evaluation**: The nature, focus, or goal of an application may require a specialized evaluation (for example, for a geographic name).

[220] See Section 3.7.1 Prioritization Draw for information regarding the draw, which will be held to determine the priority number of an application and the general order in which it will be processed by ICANN.

- **Contention**: Contention resolution procedures might be specialized depending upon the application type (for example, Community Priority Evaluation).
- **Registry Agreement**: Some application types may be considered exempt from certain provisions while others may be required to include specialized provisions in their Base Registry Agreements (for example, Code of Conduct Exemption).
- **Fees**: Additional evaluation or application fees may be required (for example, for conditional evaluations such as Community Priority Evaluation).

Applicants should review the information in this section to understand the potential for differing requirements for different application types.[221]

7.1.1 General Applications

A general application is one that does not fall into one of the application types defined in Section 7.1.2 Specialized Applications and is subject to the standard set of requirements defined throughout this Applicant Guidebook.

7.1.2 Specialized Applications

Specialized applications are those that may have different requirements based on the application (for example, an application for a Community gTLD), string (for example, an IDN), or applicant type (for example, an IGO or Applicant Support applicant). This section provides an overview of these specialized application types. An application may qualify for multiple designations simultaneously; for example, an application could be classified as both an IDN and a Community Application.

7.1.2.1 Applications for Community gTLDs

At the time of application submission, an applicant may designate an applied-for gTLD string as Community gTLD.[222] Such an applicant must operate the string for the benefit of a clearly delineated community (see Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation). Applicants submitting a Community Application will be subject to additional requirements throughout various stages of the application lifecycle, including the following areas:

- **Application Questions**: Applicants who designate their application as a Community Application will be asked to answer a series of questions specific to

[221] There may also be different requirements for application change requests, including what types of application designations can or cannot be changed. See Section 7.1.3 Changing Application Types below for more information as well as Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for full details regarding application change requests.
[222] An applicant cannot change its application either to or from a Community Application following application submission. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.

Community Applications.[223] The answers to these questions will be evaluated if the applicant elects to participate in CPE. See Appendix 1 Application Questions (Question Set 7 Community gTLDs).

- **Evaluation**: Evaluation of Registry Agreement Community Registration Policies ("Community Registration Policies") – through the Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE) – proposed for inclusion in the Registry Agreement regarding the operation of an applied-for Community gTLD will occur during application evaluation, unless the Community Applicant opts to participate in CPE, which is an option only available to Community Applications to resolve contention. If the applicant opts to participate in CPE, the RCE will occur earlier, before application evaluation, because this evaluation must occur before the application is eligible to participate in CPE. See Section 7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies.

- **Contention**: If in contention with other applications for the same string, the applicant may elect to participate in Community Priority Evaluation (See Section 5.4) and potentially an ICANN Auction. See Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.

- **Contracting**: The applicant must enumerate Community Registration Policies that are evaluated and approved by ICANN and, where relevant, evaluated during CPE, in Specification 12 of its Base Registry Agreement. See Section 1.2.15 Contracting. See also Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies below concerning the evaluation of Community Registration Policies.

- **Fees**: Should an applicant opt to participate in CPE, the applicant must pay an additional evaluation fee. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

ICANN will evaluate all Community Registration Policies proposed by applicants for Community gTLDs for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement during application evaluation. At a minimum, these policies must cover registrant eligibility and naming selection. The evaluation of the Community Registration Policies aligns with ICANN's approach to evaluating all supplemental commitments proposed by applicants using a uniform framework. More information about this framework is available in Section 7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies.

To be considered during CPE, proposed Community Registration Policies for inclusion in the Registry Agreement must be assessed in Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE) (before CPE). This ensures that the commitments can be mutually agreed upon

[223] An Application Change Request to change the community status of an application will not be allowed. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for information regarding allowable change requests.

between the applicant and ICANN for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement. If such commitments cannot be agreed upon, they will not be considered during CPE.

Any applicant designating its application as a Community Application will be required, if the application is approved, to include the Community Registration Policies agreed upon with ICANN during the application evaluation in Specification 12 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement. This requirement applies even if there are no contending applicants or an applicant with a Community Application chooses not to participate in CPE to resolve contention. In summary, approval of the Community Registration Policies is required not only for a Community Application to participate in CPE, but also to move forward in the application process after RCE. If there are no Community Registration Policies that can be approved by ICANN for inclusion in the Registry Agreement, the Community Application cannot advance – regardless of whether it is in contention or whether the applicant chooses to participate in the CPE.[224]

See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation for more information on Community Priority Evaluation and Section 7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies.[225]

There will also be a fee for the Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE) process for Specification 12 (see Section 3.3 Fees and Payments).

7.1.2.2 Applications for Geographic Names

An applicant may designate its application as a geographic name.[226] It is the applicant's responsibility to identify whether its applied-for gTLD string falls into any of the defined geographic names categories (see Section 7.5 Geographic Names), consult with the relevant governments or public authorities, and determine the level of government support required.

In addition, as part of initial string evaluation, ICANN will review all applications to determine whether an applied-for string qualifies as a geographic name, as described

[224] It is expected that an applicant and ICANN may negotiate the specific language of a Community Registration Policy in the course of the Registry Commitments Evaluation in order to identify proposed Registry Agreement language that meets the RCE criteria (see Section 3.8.4.2 Application Change Requests: Workflow 2). The applicant is required to submit an Application Change Request that reflects the negotiated Registry Agreement language for the proposed Community Registration Policy after receiving notification from ICANN. ICANN does not outright or automatically reject a proposed Community Registration Policy without any communication with an applicant. However, an applicant's failure to submit the requisite Application Change Request within the designated time period as defined in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests would result in a negative outcome of the RCE.
[225] See relevant instructions in Question Set 7 Community gTLDs in Appendix 1 Application Questions for the detailed requirements and suggested approach for drafting proposed Community Registration Policies, which will be evaluated through the RCE.
[226] See Section 7.5 Geographic Names for a full list of categories of strings that would qualify as geographic names.

later in this section. If an applicant does not self-designate its application as a geographic name but it is later identified as such by ICANN, the application will still be subject to the additional requirements for a geographic name. Applicants can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: The applicant will be asked additional questions regarding the geographic name for which it is applying. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Evaluation**: The applicant for a geographic name must submit documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant government entity. A Geographic Names Panel (GNP) will determine whether the applied-for string represents a geographic name, and verify the relevance and authenticity of the supporting documentation where necessary. See Section 7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review.
- **Fees**: There will be a conditional fee for the Geographic Names Review (Section 7.5.3.2). See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

7.1.2.3 Applications for Reserved Names

All applied-for gTLD strings are compared with both the Reserved and Blocked Names lists. While Blocked Names cannot be applied for, eligible entities may apply for a Reserved Name as defined in Section 7.2 Blocked and Reserved Names.[227] To apply for such a name, the applicant must follow the process defined in Section 7.2.2.2.1 Exception Process to Apply for a Reserved Name. Applicants submitting applications for a Reserved Name can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: An applicant will be required to answer additional questions regarding the Reserved Name for which it is applying. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Evaluation**: An applicant for a Reserved Name must submit documentation, including a Certification of Incorporation and a letter from the parent organization, along with documentation of support or non-objection, which may include a signed letter, if applicable. See Section 7.2.2 Reserved Names.

[227] The section details an exception process, which allows for applicants to apply for a name from the Reserved Names list. This process applies exclusively to Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC), International Olympic Committee (IOC), and International Governmental Organization (IGO) - International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) names.

7.1.2.4 Applications for .Brand TLDs

An applicant has the ability to self-designate its application as a .Brand TLD. This application type allows an applicant to use its company or brand name as a TLD.[228] A .Brand TLD is a string that is identical to the textual elements (for example, a name, word, or phrase) of a registered trademark valid under applicable law,[229] and which the applicant operates as a .Brand TLD.[230] Applicants submitting applications for a .Brand TLD should anticipate differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: An applicant will be asked additional questions regarding the application for which it is applying as a .Brand TLD (for example, its brand/trademark). See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Evaluation**: An application for a .Brand TLD will be reviewed to determine eligibility for obtaining .Brand TLD status.[231] See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation.
- **Contention**: If an application is in contention with other applications for the same applied-for string, an applicant for a .Brand TLD may have the opportunity to request a change to its applied-for string to resolve the contention. See Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.[232]
- **Contracting**: If eligible, Specification 13 would be included in its Base Registry Agreement for execution.[233] See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.
- **Fees**: There will be a conditional fee for the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

If an applicant for a .Brand TLD qualifies as a .Brand TLD, Specification 13 will be included in its applicable Registry Agreement and the applicant will also obtain a Code of Conduct (CoC) Exemption. However, in some cases, an applicant for a .Brand TLD may obtain a CoC Exemption but not be eligible for Specification 13.

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[228] For reference, see Specification 13 9.3(i) of Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4) for more information concerning .Brand TLDs and requirements.
[229] In cases of contention with other applicants a .Brand TLD applicant may have the opportunity to change its string to add a descriptor to the domain name, in which case the domain name may no longer be an exact match to the textual elements of a registered trademark. See Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Requests.
[230] It is not always the case that a string that matches a brand name will be operated as a .Brand. It is possible that an applicant applies for a string, which matches a brand name, not intending to operate as a .Brand TLD.
[231] In some cases, a .Brand TLD applicant may obtain a Code of Conduct (Specification 9) Exemption but not be eligible for Specification 13.
[232] See also Section 3.8 Application Change Requests regarding eligibility and evaluation requirements.
[233] As noted above, eligible applicants may also apply for a Registry Code of Conduct Exemption. See Section 7.4 Registry Operator Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation.

7.1.2.5 Applications for Internationalized Domain Names

Applicants will have the ability to apply for IDNs. Applications for IDNs must comply with the requirements defined in Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names, and applicants can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Prioritization:** Subject to the limits and requirements identified in Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw**,** applications for IDNs may receive priority in processing over applications for non-IDNs.

7.1.2.6 Applications for Variants of Existing gTLDs

Existing registry operators will have the opportunity to apply for allocatable variant strings of existing gTLDs.[234] Applications for these variant strings must comply with the requirements defined in Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names, and applicants can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: An applicant will be asked additional questions regarding the variant string it is applying for. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Prioritization:** Subject to the limits and requirements identified in Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw**,** applications for allocatable variant strings may be prioritized over applications for non-IDNs.
- **Evaluation**: An applicant for an allocatable variant of an existing gTLD will be subject to review by a panel and will be expected to provide justification for the need for the variant (for example, explanation of how the primary and variant strings are considered the same).[235] Additional requirements may include using the same RSP for the variant registry as the primary registry. See Appendix 1 Application Questions and Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation.
- **Contracting**: Specification 14 will be added to the Base Registry Agreement for execution. See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.
- **Fees**: Existing registry operators applying for allocatable variant strings of existing gTLDs will have the base application fee waived for up to four variant

[234] Applicants will also have the opportunity to apply for variants of “new” IDN TLDs. See Section 7.1.2.7 Applications for New IDN TLD Including One or More Variants.
[235] See Recommendation 3.5 of the Phase 1 Final Report on the Internationalized Domain Names Expedited Policy Development Process: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/policy/2023/correspondence/epdp-idns2-leadership-team-et-al-to-gnso-council-et-al-08nov23-en.pdf.

strings;[236] applications for more than four variant strings will incur additional fees. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.[237]

7.1.2.7 Applications for New IDNs Including One or More Variants

Applicants will have the opportunity to apply for a new IDN TLD plus its allocatable variant strings. Applications for a new IDN TLD and its allocatable variant strings must comply with the requirements defined in Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names and can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: An applicant will be asked additional questions regarding the IDN TLD and its allocatable variant strings for which it is applying. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Prioritization**: Subject to the limits and requirements identified in Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw**,** applications for IDN TLDs, including allocatable variant strings, may receive priority in processing over applications for non-IDNs.
- **Evaluation**: An applicant for a new IDN TLD and its variant strings will be subject to review by a panel and will be expected to provide justification in its application for the necessity of the variant (for example, explaining how the primary and variant strings are considered the same).[238] Additional requirements may apply, such as using the same RSP for the variant registry as the primary registry, as well as ensuring that the TLD types are consistent across the primary string and variant strings. See Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation.
- **Contracting**: Specification 14 will be added to the Base Registry Agreement for execution. See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.
- **Fees**: New applicants applying for a primary string plus its variant strings will not incur additional application fees beyond the base fee for up to four variant strings. However, applications for the primary string plus more than four variant strings will incur additional fees. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.[239]

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[236] *Ibid*. See Recommendations 3.11 and 3.12. The total number of variants that can be applied for is based upon the calculation in the RZ-LGR.
[237] *Ibid*.
[238] *Ibid*. See Recommendation 3.5.
[239] See Phase 1 Final Report on the Internationalized Domain Names Expedited Policy Development Process: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/policy/2023/correspondence/epdp-idns2-leadership-team-et-al-to-gnso-council-et-al-08nov23-en.pdf.

7.1.2.8 Applications from Intergovernmental Organizations or Governmental Entities

An application from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)[240] or governmental entities[241] will be accepted. Applicants in this category should consider the requirements for geographic names defined in Section 7.5 Geographic Names, as well as requirements for reserved names specified in Section 7.2 Blocked and Reserved Names. These applicants can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Application Questions**: These entities may be asked additional questions regarding their particular organizations. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
- **Evaluation**: Any such entity will be required to provide documentation to verify its status as an intergovernmental or governmental organization, as applicable. See Section 7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review and Section 7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Review.

7.1.2.9 Applications for Applicants Eligible for Applicant Support

Before the current round opened, prospective applicants had the opportunity to apply to participate in the Applicant Support Program. Applicants that applied to participate were evaluated based upon the criteria set forth in the Applicant Support Handbook. An application for Applicant Support is distinct from an application for a new gTLD. Applicants that receive Applicant Support must also meet the requirements and eligibility criteria for a new gTLD application, as defined in this Applicant Guidebook.

Eligible applicants for Applicant Support can expect to find differing requirements in the following areas of the application lifecycle:

- **Contention:** Applicant Support applicants participating in an ICANN Auction will receive a bid-credit. See Section 5.6.5 Bid Credits for Applicant Support Program Applicants in Auctions.
- **Contracting**: If an applicant successfully obtains Applicant Support and its application prevails in an auction, the applicant will be restricted from assigning the Registry Agreement, or undergoing any Change of Control for a minimum of three years. See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.

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[240] An IGO is an organization composed primarily of sovereign states, or of other intergovernmental organizations. IGOs are established by treaty or other agreement that acts as a charter creating the group. Examples include the United Nations, the World Bank, or the European Union. Source: Union of International Associations, https://uia.org/faq/yb3.
[241] Typically defined as a national government or any department, agency, or subdivision thereof with the relevant authority.

- **Fees**: An applicant qualifying for Applicant Support will be eligible to pay a reduced application fee as well as reduced conditional evaluation fees. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments as well as the Applicant Support Program Handbook for more information.[242]

7.1.3 Changing Application Types

In some cases, an applicant may wish to change its application type. This may or may not be permitted, based on the application type. For example, an applicant will not be permitted to change a Community gTLD designation. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests for more information regarding which changes to an application or string type may be permitted.

7.2 Blocked and Reserved Names Overview

Certain names are blocked and therefore not available for use as gTLD strings. The Blocked Names list is informed by a range of sources and inputs, as described below. Other names are reserved at the top level based on consensus policy and maintained on a list by ICANN.[243]

Note: In the 2012 Applicant Guidebook, the list called "Strings Ineligible for Delegation" is now referred to as the Reserved Names List, and the list previously called the "Top-Level Reserved Names List" is now known as the Blocked Names List.

As part of the Section 3.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations, all applied-for gTLD strings and their variant strings, are compared with both the Reserved and Blocked Names lists. This comparison ensures that the applied-for gTLD string does not appear on either list. Applicants will have the ability to enter a proposed string in TAMS to check whether it appears on either the Blocked or Reserved Names lists.

In addition, Blocked and Reserved Names that do not conform to the framework of DNS permissible characters will be converted into DNS labels that contain only letters, digits, and hyphens consistent with consensus policy.[244]

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[242] See Applicant Support Program Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/handbook.
[243] See outcome of PDP Protection of IGO and INGO Identifiers in All gTLDs for more information: https://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/igo-ingo.
[244] See DNS Label Conversion Rules under "Implementation Notes" for more information: https://www.icann.org/en/contracted-parties/consensus-policies/protection-of-intergovernmental-organization-and-international-non-governmental-organization-identifiers-policy/protection-of-igo-and-ingo-identifiers-in-all-gtlds-policy-21-02-2024-en.

7.2.1 Blocked Names

gTLD strings and their allocatable variants on the Blocked Names list are not eligible for application in the current round or in any future application round, as per consensus policy. However, the list does not apply to gTLDs that have already been delegated into the root zone.

The following gTLD strings and their allocatable variant strings are on the Blocked Names list (see footnotes for actual lists) and cannot be applied for:

- **Special-Use Domain Names:** These are specific strings reserved by technical standards for purposes inconsistent with delegation, as explicitly noted on IANA's Special-Use Domain Names Registry.[245,246,247]
- **Technical Standards:** See Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review for more details.
- **Country or Territory Names in relation to Geographic Names:** See Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
- **ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure**: These include, for example, ICANN's Supporting Organizations (SOs) and Advisory Committees (ACs),[248] Regional Internet Registries,[249] IETF bodies,[250] and system identifiers included through consensus policy.[251,252]

Table 7-1: ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure

ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure				
AFRINIC	GNSO	INTERNIC	NRO	TLD
ALAC	GTLDSERVERS	INTERNAL	PTI	WHOIS
APNIC	IAB	IETF	RFCEDITOR	WWW

[245] See Special-Use Domain Names: https://www.iana.org/assignments/special-use-domain-names/special-use-domain-names.xhtml.
[246] See RFC 6761: https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc6761.
[247] Note: ICANN will reserve translations of the terms "test" and "example" in multiple languages.
[248] See ICANN Community: https://www.icann.org/community.
[249] See Regional Internet Registries: https://aso.icann.org/about/aso-and-nro/rirs/.
[250] See IETF Groups: https://www.ietf.org/about/groups/.
[251] See Reserved Names Working Group Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/final-report-rn-wg-23may07.htm.
[252] As a result of SAC113 and subsequent work as directed by the ICANN Board, .INTERNAL was added to the Blocked Names list. See https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/security-and-stability-advisory-committee-ssac-reports/sac-113-en.pdf.

ARIN	IANA	IRTF	RIPE	
ASO	IANASERVERS	ISTF	ROOTSERVERS	
CCNSO	ICANN	LACNIC	RSSAC	
GAC	IESG	NIC	SSAC	
Note: The strings on the list are blocked only in the form included above.				

- **Other Non-Permitted Strings:**
  - Delegated TLDs.[253]
  - The gTLD strings which were applied for in previous gTLD rounds and that are still in process.[254]
  - Existing successfully evaluated ccTLDs.
  - Strings currently requested as IDN ccTLDs.
  - All other one- or two-letter ASCII strings.

7.2.1.1 Blocked Names Identification

When an applicant fills in the name of the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether the applicant's chosen string, including any variant strings, appears on the Blocked Names list. If the string is found on this list, the system will prevent the applicant from proceeding with that string. To continue with the application, the applicant must revise the entry and select a different string that is not blocked.

7.2.1.1.1 Blocked Names Identification Challenge

In cases where an applicant believes it is being prevented from submitting its application or has to provide additional documentation because a system error in the automated Blocked Names Identification process resulted in an applicant's string being incorrectly classified as a Blocked Name, and, consequently, the applicant was unable to proceed to submission, then the applicant will have the opportunity to file a challenge no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period[255] (see Sections 1.2.14.2 Evaluation Challenge and 3.1.8.4 Challenging the Pre-Submission String Validations).

7.2.2 Reserved Names

The Reserved Names evaluation process is divided into two parts: Reserved Names

[253] See Root Zone Database: https://www.iana.org/domains/root/db.
[254] 2012 Round New gTLD Program website: https://gtldresult.icann.org/applicationstatus/viewstatus.
[255] Applicants should be aware that any challenge submitted after this point will not be accepted and are therefore advised to start their application(s) as soon as possible and submit any challenges no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period.

Identification, an automated check that identifies whether an applied-for string appears on the Reserved Names list, and Reserved Names Review, which includes both the exception process for an applicant to apply for a Limited International IGO-INGO name and the verification of required documentation.[256]

The following Limited International IGO-INGOs strings are on the Reserved Names list and may be applied for through an exception process only by the relevant entity, provided it submits appropriate documentation as detailed in Section 7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Identification below:

- Names added based on recommendations from the IGO-INGO PDP Working Group[257] regarding the protections of IGO-INGO identifiers in all gTLDs,[258,259] including their allocatable variant strings, are eligible for delegation upon verification. These include: Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC),[260] International Olympic Committee (IOC),[261] and International Governmental Organization (IGO)[262] – International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) Names.[263]

7.2.2.1 Reserved Names Identification

When an applicant enters the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether that string, including any allocatable variant strings, appears on the Reserved

[256] As noted in Section 7.10.1 Scope of String Similarity Evaluation, per GNSO Council motion 20251113, "[t]he relevant identifiers [associated with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and the International Olympic Committee and the full names of specific International Governmental Organizations and International Non-Governmental Organizations] shall not be included in the String Similarity Evaluation in the New gTLD Program and such a relevant identifier shall not operate as a bar to an application for a confusingly similar string by another applicant, during evaluation." See the full GNSO Council motion: https://gnso.icann.org/en/council/resolutions/2020-current#20251113.
[257] See Policy Development Process for Protection of IGO and INGO Identifiers in All gTLDs for the scope of relevant names: https://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/igo-ingo.
[258] See Board Resolution 2014.04.30.03: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-of-directors-30-04-2014-en#2.a.
[259] See Board Resolution 2019.01.27.19: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-27-01-2019-en#2.d.
[260] See Red Cross names: https://www.icann.org/sites/default/files/packages/reserved-names/ReservedNames.xml#red-cross1. Note that this list–and the ones for IOC and IGO names–applies to second-level domain names but will also be repurposed to reserve those same names at the top level in the context of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. Reference the "Name" column of each list linked for the relevant names.
[261] See IOC names: https://www.icann.org/sites/default/files/packages/reserved-names/ReservedNames.xml#IOC.
[262] See IGO names: https://www.icann.org/sites/default/files/packages/reserved-names/ReservedNames.xml#IGOs.
[263] See "List of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council as at 31 December 2022": https://docs.un.org/en/E/2023/INF/5, found here: https://esango.un.org/civilsociety/displayConsultativeStatusSearch.do?method=search.

Names List. If it does, the exception process will be triggered, prompting the applicant to upload supporting documentation to demonstrate that they are the entity for which the name is reserved.

In addition to this check, the system will also verify whether the string is a variant of a Reserved Name. In such cases, the applicant will only be able to proceed if the Reserved Name itself is being applied for as the primary string, or if the applicant provides confirmation that it is the registry operator for the TLD matching the Reserved Name.

7.2.2.1.1 Reserved Names Identification Challenge

If an applicant believes that a system error in the automated Reserved Names Identification process resulted in its string being incorrectly classified as a Reserved Name, it may initiate an Evaluation Challenge. The challenge must be filed no later than seven days prior to the close of the application submission period.

ICANN will review the Evaluation Challenge. If ICANN determines that a system error led to the incorrect classification of the string as a Reserved Name, the system error will be corrected, allowing the application to proceed to the next appropriate stage in the process. If no error is found, the application will proceed, but must meet the Reserved Name criteria during the Reserved Names Review phase. There are no conditional fees associated with an Evaluation Challenge related to Reserved Names. Applicants are responsible for ensuring compliance with all Reserved Names requirements, even in cases of system error.

7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Review

7.2.2.2.1 Exception Process to Apply for Reserved Names

Applicants may request a string on the Reserved Names list through the exception process. During the Reserved Names Review, the panel evaluates the exception and verifies the applicant's supporting documentation to confirm they are the eligible entity to operate the reserved name. See Section 7.2.2 Reserved Names for the specific strings included on the Reserved Names list.

To apply for a Reserved Name through the exception process, applicants must submit the following types of documentation at the time of application:

- Certification of Incorporation and, if applicable, letter from parent organization.
- Documentation of support or non-objection including a signed letter from the relevant public authority (if applicable).

7.2.2.2.1.1 Verification of Submitted Documentation

If an applicant from one of the Limited International IGO-INGOs listed above uses the exception process to apply for a name from the Reserved Names list, including its allocatable variant strings, a verification process will be initiated. This process will confirm that the applicant has submitted satisfactory documentation establishing its eligibility to apply for that particular TLD. The verification process for the applying organization/entity will occur as part of the application evaluation phase.

ICANN may consult with the relevant authorities for further verification.

If applicable, for further assistance in determining who the relevant government or public authority may be for a request, the requester may wish to consult with the relevant GAC representative.[264]

7.2.2.2.2 Extended Evaluation for Reserved Names Review

An applicant that does not provide adequate documentation demonstrating its eligibility to apply for a TLD listed on the Reserved Names list will fail the Reserved Names Review.

However, if it is determined that an application does not meet the criteria identified for the Reserved Names Review, the applicant may request Extended Evaluation. During Extended Evaluation, Clarifying Questions may be issued to obtain additional information. To ensure timely processing, applicants will be encouraged to respond as soon as possible, but no later than 21 days after receiving the Clarifying Questions. If the additional information provided does not satisfy the Reserved Names criteria, the application will not pass the review and will not proceed.

7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

Applicants will have the ability to self-designate an application as a .Brand TLD. This application type allows a business or corporation to use its company or brand name as a TLD. See Section 3.1.6 Application and String Types.

7.3.1 Eligibility for .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

An applicant that seeks to designate its applied-for string as a .Brand TLD must undergo the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to confirm that the applicant meets the criteria for the .Brand TLD designation. Applications that pass the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation will have Specification 13

[264] See GAC membership list: https://gac.icann.org/about/gac-members.

added to the applicable Base Registry Agreement if the application proceeds to delegation. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement for Specification 13 terms.[265]

An applicant may request the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation in its application or via an Application Change Request. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.

7.3.2 Conditional Fee for .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

An applicant that requests the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation must pay an additional evaluation fee as specified in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments. The .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation will not be performed until ICANN receives the relevant fee.

7.3.3 Evaluation and Outcomes of .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

To qualify for a .Brand TLD designation, an applicant must provide one or more Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) Signed Mark Data (SMD) files. See the TMCH guidelines for eligibility requirements.[266]

7.3.3.1 Engagement with Trademark Clearinghouse Before Submitting a .Brand TLD Application

An applicant that plans to designate its applied-for string as a .Brand TLD should take preparatory actions well in advance of initiating the application to ensure it can demonstrate eligibility upon submission.

.Brand TLD applications must include one or more Trademark Clearing House (TMCH) Signed Mark Data (SMD) files in support of the .Brand designation. Because adding or adjusting the TMCH filings may take several months to complete and may involve fees paid directly to the TMCH, .Brand TLD applicants should carefully review their existing TMCH SMD files or acquire new SMD files as soon as practicable. .Brand TLD applicants should take the following steps in relation to the TMCH (where applicable) before applying for a .Brand TLD:

- A .Brand TLD applicant without a relationship with the TMCH or without SMD files covering the strings for which it wishes to apply should initiate the TMCH vetting.[267]

[265] Eligible applicants may also apply for a Code of Conduct (Specification 9) exemption as well as Section 7.4 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation.
[266] See Trademark Clearinghouse: https://trademark-clearinghouse.com/.
[267] See Trademark Clearinghouse: https://trademark-clearinghouse.com/.

- Ensure that any desired TLD labels are listed in <mark:label> elements in SMD files. Any string that a .Brand TLD applicant wishes to apply for must exactly match a <mark:label> element in a valid SMD dated prior to application submission.
- Ensure that any desired variant labels of the primary .Brand string are listed in <mark:label> elements in SMD files. All applied-for variant strings of a .Brand TLD must exactly match a <mark:label> element in a valid SMD dated prior to application submission.
- Ensure that the <mark:goodsAndServices> elements are correct, complete, and include a word that the applicant may want to use in a .Brand String Change pursuant to a .Brand String Change Request (see Section 5.3). Additional words used to augment the applied-for .Brand string should appear in a <mark:goodsAndServices> element of a valid SMD file dated prior to the submission of a .Brand String Change Request.

  If the words used to augment the applied-for string do not appear in a SMD file, it may still be possible to submit a .Brand String Change Request using alternate documentation. See Section 5.3.2 .Brand String Change Request Requirements.

7.3.3.2 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation Criteria

The .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation will be performed by a .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation Panel. An applicant seeking the .Brand TLD designation must demonstrate that the application meets the following criteria:

> 1a. The applied-for gTLD string must exactly match the textual elements of a registered trademark verified by the TMCH in the provided SMD files; or
>
> 1b. If the applicant changed its applied-for string using a .Brand String Change Request (Section 5.3), the final string must meet all of the requirements set forth therein.
>
> 2. The applicant and the final string (including all allocatable variant strings) must meet all of the requirements set forth in Specification 13 of the Base Registry Agreement. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement.

The applicant will be required in its application to self-certify affirming compliance with the criteria as set forth above and in Specification 13 of the Base Registry Agreement (see Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement). Additionally, the applicant must confirm non-generic usage in its application. See Question Set 13 .Brand TLD and Code of Conduct Exemptions in Appendix 1 Application Questions.

7.3.3.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation Clarifying Questions

ICANN may issue Clarifying Questions during the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation. Applicants will have seven days to respond to administrative clarifying questions and 21 days to respond to substantive clarifying questions. If the applicant fails to respond within that defined period, the applicant may forfeit the opportunity to address any issues found by the evaluation panel.

7.3.3.4 Results of .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

The results of the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation will be included in the Application and Applicant Evaluation Reports, as described in Section 1.2.13 Publication of Application and Applicant Evaluation Reports.

If an application passes the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation, Specification 13 will be added to the applicable Base Registry Agreement if the application proceeds to delegation.

If a .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation is not successful, the applicant may elect to continue with its application without the .Brand TLD designation, that is, without the addition of Specification 13.

If the .Brand TLD request is made outside of the application submission window by an Application Change Request, or an applicant wishes to withdraw its request for a .Brand TLD designation, a comment window will open for 30 days.

7.3.4 Challenges and Extended Evaluation for .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

Applicants will have the ability to resubmit the required documentation if the initial submission of such documentation is non-compliant. Because of this, extended evaluation or a challenge mechanism is not applicable for this evaluation.

7.3.5 String Contention and String Change

An applicant that successfully completes the .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation may be permitted to change its primary string to avoid string contention. See Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Request for more information regarding the procedures for a .Brand TLD String Change Request.

7.4 Registry Operator Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

Specification 9 of the Base Registry Agreement contains the Registry Operator Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to protect a gTLD's registrants. In some cases, an exemption from the Code of Conduct may be requested.

7.4.1 Eligibility for Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

If a registry operator registers all domain names in the gTLD exclusively for and to be used only by itself or its Affiliates, (as defined in Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement) and the registry operator would like to waive the protection for itself and its Affiliates, ICANN may grant the registry operator an exemption to the Code of Conduct, provided the gTLD is not a generic string (see Section 3.1.7 Closed Generics) and the registry operator can satisfy all exemption criteria. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement for Specification 9 text.

An applicant is permitted to request a Code of Conduct Exemption in its application or, after the submission of the application, using an Application Change Request. The request for Code of Conduct Exemption is open to the public for review and input via the application comment period (see Section 4.1.3 Application Comments in the Evaluation Process).

7.4.2 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation for Variant Strings

If an applicant applies for allocatable variant string(s) of an applied-for primary gTLD string and seeks the Code of Conduct Exemption, the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation will cover both the applied-for primary and variant strings.

7.4.3 Conditional Fees for Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

Applicants that request the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation must pay an additional fee, as specified in Section 3.3 Fees and Payments. The Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation will not be performed until the relevant fees are received by ICANN.

7.4.4 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation Criteria

The Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation will be performed by the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation Panel. The determination of whether ICANN will grant an exemption to the Code of Conduct will consist of a review of the assertions in the exemption request to verify that if the applicant becomes a registry operator, it will satisfy all three of the exemption criteria:

1. All domain name registrations in the gTLD and variant string(s), if applicable, will be registered to, and maintained by, Registry Operator for the exclusive use of Registry Operator or its Affiliates (as defined in the Base Registry Agreement);
2. Registry Operator will not sell, distribute or transfer control or use of any registrations in the gTLD and variant string(s), if applicable, to any third party that is not an Affiliate of Registry Operator; and
3. Application of the Code of Conduct to the gTLD and variant string(s), if applicable, is not necessary to protect the public interest.

An applicant requesting a Code of Conduct Exemption will be required in its application to self-certify affirming compliance with the criteria as set forth above. Additionally, mission and purpose statements must demonstrate non-generic usage. That is, in order to ensure that approval of a Code of Conduct Exemption will not conflict with Specification 11 of the Base Registry Agreement, which prohibits generic gTLDs and variant strings from being operated on an exclusive basis, the string must not be a closed generic as defined in Section 3.1.7 Closed Generics.

7.4.5 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation Clarifying Questions

ICANN may issue Clarifying Questions as part of the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation. An applicant will have seven days to respond to administrative clarifying questions and 21 days to respond to substantive clarifying questions. If the applicant fails to respond within that defined period, the applicant may forfeit the opportunity to address any issues found by the evaluation panel.

7.4.6 Results of Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

The results of the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation will be included in the Application and Applicant Evaluation Reports, as described in Section 1.2.13 Publication of Application and Applicant Evaluation Reports.

If an application passes the Code of Conduct Eligibility Evaluation, an exemption to the Code of Conduct will be granted.

If an application does not successfully complete the Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation, the application may continue with Specification 9 remaining in place.

7.4.7 Challenges and Extended Evaluation for Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation

Applicants will have the ability to resubmit the required documentation if the initial submission of such documentation is non-compliant. Because of this, extended evaluation or a challenge mechanism is not applicable for this evaluation.

7.5 Geographic Names

Applicants must carefully consider the interests of governments or public authorities concerning Geographic Names. The following sections outline the requirements and procedures that ICANN will follow during the evaluation process. An applicant should review these requirements even if it does not believe its intended gTLD string qualifies as a Geographic Name. All applied-for gTLD strings and their allocatable variant strings will be reviewed according to the requirements in this section, regardless of whether the application indicates it is for a Geographic Name.

The processing of Geographic Names comprises:

- **Geographic Names Identification**: a string-level check which is part of String Evaluation.
- **Geographic Names Review:** verification and substantive review of application responses for strings determined to be geographic. This review takes place during the application evaluation phase.

Additionally, an applicant for a Geographic Name string can apply for its allocatable variant strings. In such cases, all allocatable variant strings must adhere to the same application requirements and evaluation criteria as the associated primary Geographic Name string. Specifically, the same documentation requirements apply. See Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names.

7.5.1 Treatment of Country or Territory Names

Applications for strings that are country or territory names will not be approved.[268] A string is considered a country or territory name if it meets any of the following criteria:

[268] Country and territory names are excluded from the process based on advice from the Governmental Advisory Committee in past communiqués. These communiqués interpret Principle 2.2 of the GAC Principles regarding New gTLDs stating that strings which are a meaningful representation or abbreviation of a country or territory name should be handled through a ccPDP, and other geographic strings could be allowed in the gTLD space if in agreement with the relevant government or public authority.

1. It is an alpha-3 code listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.[269]
2. It is a long-form name listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard, or a translation of the long-form name in any language.
3. It is a short-form name listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard, or a translation of the short-form name in any language.
4. It is the short- or long-form name associated with a code that has been designated as "exceptionally reserved" by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency.
5. It is a separable component of a country or territory name designated on the "Separable Country and Territory Names List," or is a translation of a name appearing on the list, in any language. See Appendix 2 Materials related to Geographic Names.
6. Permutations and transpositions of the following strings are reserved and unavailable for delegation:

    a. Long-form names listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.
    b. Short-form names listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.
    c. Short- or long-form names associated with a code that has been designated as "exceptionally reserved" by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency.
    d. Separable component of a country or territory name designated on the "Separable Country and Territory Names List, or is a translation of a name appearing on the list, in any language."

    Strings resulting from permutations and transpositions of alpha-3 codes listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard are available for delegation, unless the strings resulting from permutations and transpositions are themselves on that list.[270]
7. It is a name by which a country is commonly known, as demonstrated by evidence that the country is recognized by that name by an intergovernmental or treaty organization.

7.5.2 Geographic Names Requiring Government or Public Authority Documentation

Certain types of applied-for strings, including their allocatable variant strings, are considered Geographic Names and must be accompanied by documentation of

[269] See ISO 3166-1 standard list: https://www.iso.org/obp/ui.
[270] Permutations include removal of spaces, insertion of punctuation, and addition or removal of grammatical articles like "the." A transposition is considered a change in the sequence of the long or short–form name, for example, "RepublicCzech" or "IslandsCayman."

support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities. These types are:

1. Strings that represent, in any language, the capital city name of any country or territory listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.

2. City names where the applicant declares that it intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name.

   City names can present challenges because they may also be generic terms or brand names, and they are often not unique. Unlike other types of Geographic Names, city names do not have established lists for objective references during evaluation. Thus, city names are not universally protected. However, the process does provide a means for cities and applicants to work together where desired.

   A city name application will be subject to the Geographic Names requirements (that is, will require documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities) if:

   a) It is clear from applicant statements within the application that the applicant will use the TLD primarily for purposes associated with the city name; and
   b) The applied-for string is a city name as listed on official city documents.[271]

3. Strings that are exact matches of sub-national place names, such as counties, provinces, or states, listed in the ISO 3166-2 standard.

4. Strings listed as UNESCO regions[272] or appearing on the Geographic Regions section of the "Standard country or area codes for statistical use (M49)".[273]

   Translations of regions included on the list mentioned above will be limited to the languages specified on that list. Region names that do not conform to the framework of DNS permissible characters will be converted into DNS labels that

[271] City governments with concerns about strings that are duplicates, nicknames or close renderings of a city name should not rely on the evaluation process as the primary means of protecting their interests in a string. Rather, relevant concerned parties may elect to file a formal objection to an application that is opposed by the relevant community, or may submit their own application for the string.
[272] The five regions recognized by UNESCO (in the six UN languages) include: Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean (as of May 2025).
[273] See Standard country or area codes for statistical use (M49): https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/ published as of December 2025.

contain only letters, digits, and hyphens as noted in the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR).[274]

For strings on these lists, documentation of support or non-objection will be required from at least 60% of the respective national governments in the region, with no more than one written objection to the application from relevant governments in the region or public authorities associated with the continent or the region.

When the 60% rule is applied and regions are common to both lists, the regional composition contained in the "Standard country or area codes for statistical use (M49)" takes precedence.

An applied-for gTLD string that falls into any of the types 1 through 4 listed above is considered to represent a Geographic Name. In cases of uncertainty, it is advisable for the applicant to consult with relevant governments and public authorities to enlist their support or non-objection prior to submission of the application. This proactive approach can help prevent possible objections and clarify any ambiguities concerning the string and applicable requirements.

Strings that include but do not exactly match a Geographic Name as defined in this section will not be considered Geographic Names. Therefore, they will not require documentation of government support or non-objection during the evaluation process.

For each application, the Geographic Names Panel will determine which governments or public authorities are relevant based on the inputs of the applicant, governments, and its own research and analysis. If there is more than one relevant government or public authority for the applied-for gTLD string, the applicant must provide documentation of support or non-objection from all the relevant governments or public authorities. It is anticipated that this may apply to the case of a sub-national place name.

It is the applicant's responsibility to:

- Identify whether its applied-for gTLD string falls into any of the above categories.
- Identify and consult with the relevant governments or public authorities.
- Identify which level of government support is required.

Note: The level of government and which administrative agency is needed for the filing of letters of support or non-objection is a matter for each national administration to determine. Applicants should consult within the relevant jurisdiction to determine the appropriate level of support.

[274] See Root Zone Label Generation Rules Version 6: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/root-zone-lgr-2015-06-21-en.

The requirement to include documentation of support or non-objection for certain applications does not preclude or exempt applications from being the subject of objections on community grounds (see Section 4.5.1.4 Ground for Objection: Community). Applications may still be rejected if objections asserting substantial opposition from the targeted community are successful.

7.5.2.1 Documentation Requirements

The documentation of support or non-objection should include a signed letter from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies). Recognizing that this will differ across jurisdictions, the letter could be signed by the minister responsible for domain name administration, ICT, foreign affairs, or the Office of the Prime Minister or President of the relevant jurisdiction or, alternatively, a senior representative of the agency or department responsible for domain name administration, ICT, foreign affairs, or the Office of the Prime Minister. To assist in identifying the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies) for a potential Geographic Name, the applicant may wish to consult with the relevant Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) representative.[275]

The letter must clearly express the government's or public authority's support for or non-objection to the application and demonstrate the government's or public authority's understanding of the string being requested and its intended use.

The letter should also demonstrate the government's or public authority's understanding that the string is being sought through the gTLD application process and that the applicant is willing to accept the conditions under which the string will be available, that is, entry into a Registry Agreement with ICANN requiring compliance with consensus policies and payment of fees. See Section 1.2.16 Post Contracting and Section 2.10 Fundamental Obligations of Registry Operators to Registrars for a discussion of the obligations of a gTLD registry operator.

A sample letter of support or non-objection from a government entity/public authority is available in Appendix 2 Materials related to Geographic Names.

Applicants and governments may conduct discussions concerning government support or non-objection for an application at any time. Applicants are encouraged to begin such discussions at the earliest possible stage, enabling governments to follow the processes that may be necessary to consider, approve, and generate a letter of support or non-objection. If the letter of support or non-objection is dated more than four months from the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period, a fresh letter of support or non-objection will be required. However, applicants should provide contact information for a designated person in case the Geographic Names Panel (GNP) needs clarification or has questions.

[275] See the GAC Membership: https://gac.icann.org/about/gac-members.

A government or public authority is under no obligation to provide documentation of support or non-objection in response to a request by an applicant. If support or non-objection is withdrawn during the application process, the application will fail the Geographic Names Review.

Applicants should be aware that ICANN has committed to governments[276] that, in the event of a dispute between a government (or public authority) and an applicant or, after delegation, a registry operator that submitted documentation of support from that government or public authority, ICANN will comply with a legally binding order from a court in the jurisdiction of the government or public authority that has given support to an application. If support is withdrawn through a legally binding court order, the applicant or registry operator will no longer have the necessary documentation, and the applicant will either not proceed in the respective next steps in the application process, or, should this occur after delegation, the Registry Transition Processes[277] referred to in the Registry Agreement will be followed.

7.5.3 Processing of Geographic Names

7.5.3.1 Geographic Names Identification

As part of the Geographic Names Identification, the Geographic Names Panel will review all applied-for strings to identify which strings may be considered Geographic Names. This process is distinct from and occurs before the more substantive verification process conducted during the Geographic Names Review, which occurs as part of Application (see Module 7) and Applicant Evaluation (see Module 6).

City names that do not fall under the categories defined in Sections 1, 3, and 4 of Geographic Names Requiring Government or Public Authority Documentation (see Section 7.5.2) will not be classified as Geographic Names during the Geographic Names Identification. However, if the applicant indicates an intent to use the applied-for string as a city name, as described in Section 2 of Geographic Names Requiring Government or Public Authority Documentation (see Section 7.5.2), the application will be evaluated by the Geographic Names Panel during the Application and Applicant Evaluation phase. This evaluation will include an assessment of the intended purpose and any required documentation.

[276] See 4 March 2011 ICANN Board Notes on the GAC New gTLDs Scorecard: https://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/board-notes-gac-scorecard-04mar11-en.pdf.
[277] See Registry Transition Processes: https://www.icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators/services/registry-transition-processes.

7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review

A Geographic Names Panel (GNP) will determine whether each applied-for gTLD string represents a Geographic Name, and verify the relevance and authenticity of the supporting documentation where necessary.

The GNP will review all applications received, not only those where the applicant has noted its applied-for gTLD string as a Geographic Name. For any application where the GNP determines that the applied-for gTLD string is a country or territory name (as defined in this module), the application will not pass the Geographic Names Review and will be denied. No additional reviews will be available.

For any application where the GNP determines that the applied-for gTLD string is not a Geographic Name requiring government support or non-objection (as described in this module), the application will pass the Geographic Names Review with no additional steps or fees required.

For any application where the GNP determines that the applied-for gTLD string is a Geographic Name requiring government support or non-objection, the GNP will confirm that the applicant has provided the required documentation from the relevant governments or public authorities, and that the communication from the government or public authority is legitimate and contains the required content. ICANN may confirm the authenticity of the communication by consulting with the relevant diplomatic authorities or members of ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee for the government or public authority concerned on the competent authority and appropriate point of contact within their administration for communications.

The GNP may communicate with the signing entity of the letter to confirm its intent and its understanding of the terms on which the support or non-objection for an application is given.

7.5.3.2.1 Extended Evaluation for Geographic Names Review

A Geographic Names Review will qualify for Extended Evaluation in the following instances:

- **Issues with Documentation Provided**: In cases where an applicant has not provided the required documentation, the applicant will be contacted and notified of the requirement, and given a limited time frame to provide the documentation. If the applicant is able to provide the documentation before the close of the evaluation period, and the documentation is found to meet the requirements, the applicant will pass the Geographic Names Review. If not, the applicant may elect Extended Evaluation where it will have additional time to obtain the required documentation; however, if the applicant has not produced the required documentation by the required date (at least 90 days from the date

of notice), the applicant will not have additional time or opportunities in the current application round to do so. The applicant may reapply in subsequent application rounds, if desired, subject to the fees and requirements of the specific application rounds. See Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures and Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures on Evaluation Challenges for more information.

- **Conflicting Support or Non-Objection for the Same Geographic Name**: As noted in Section 5.5 Contention Resolution for Geographic Names Applications, in the event that there is more than one application for a string that represents the same Geographic Name and has received documentation of support or non-objection from different government or public authorities, as determined by the Geographic Names Panel, these applications will also undergo Extended Evaluation. If, during Extended Evaluation, the Geographic Names Panel is satisfied that the supporting authorities of all relevant applications meet the required criteria, and agree that these applications can proceed to contention resolution, then they will either proceed to auction or to CPE, if one of the applications is a Community Application and elects to undergo CPE.

7.6 Variant String Evaluation

A variant string is considered the "same" as the main applied-for gTLD string or an existing gTLD ("primary string") by the script community as defined in the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR).[278] The set of rules in the RZ-LGR determines valid top-level domains and their variant strings.[279] An applicant seeking one or more allocatable variant strings of an applied-for primary IDN or existing gTLD must provide justification for the necessity of each variant string. This justification will be evaluated by a panel using a general standard of reasonableness based on the following criteria, in the context of the applied-for primary IDN gTLD or existing gTLD:

1. The meaning or intended meaning (for non-dictionary words) of each of the applied-for variant strings is consistent, as demonstrated by sources provided by the applicant.

2. The variant string is recognized as equivalent by the intended user community.

3. The benefits and the user communities who will gain from the introduction of the applied-for variant string.

4. Steps the applicant will take to minimize the operational and management complexities of the variant gTLDs and resulting variant domain names that impact registrars, resellers, or registrants.

[278] See RZ-LGR: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/root-zone-lgr-2015-06-21-en.
[279] See definitions for variant related concepts in the Glossary.

Commitments made by an applicant to minimize the noted operational and management complexities will form the basis of contractual requirements to be included in the applicable Registry Agreement.

The applicant must meet each criterion for each applied-for variant string to proceed in the Program. The evaluation outcome of any one applied-for variant string will not impact the evaluation outcome of a primary applied-for IDN or any other applied-for variant string in the application.

The ability to manage the applied-for variant strings along with the applied-for primary IDN or the existing gTLD will be evaluated from both a technical and operational perspective, as described in the RSP Handbook.[280]

7.6.1 Additional Application Requirements for Variant Strings

An applied-for variant string will be subject to the same application requirements and evaluation criteria as the associated primary applied-for IDN or existing gTLD. Specifically, the same documentation requirements apply to both the primary applied-for IDN and its applied-for variant strings. For purposes of clarity, an applied-for primary string and its applied-for variant strings will be evaluated together as a set but will require relevant documentation for each variant string, as needed.

With respect to the following three specialized application types:

- Applicants for community IDNs and their variant strings must submit the same endorsement for applied-for variant strings as needed for the primary IDN. If a community IDN is in contention (see Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures) and opts to participate in Community Priority Evaluation (CPE), then the community IDN and their applied-for variant strings will be evaluated together as a set (see Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation).
- An applicant for a Geographic Name IDN and its variant strings must submit documentation of support or non-objection to its applied-for primary string and applied-for variant strings from relevant governments or public authorities. That is, the requisite documentation of support or non-objection should reference both the applied-for IDN and its applied-for variant strings. See Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
- An applicant for an IDN applying as a .Brand and its variant strings is required to submit proof that its applied-for primary string and applied-for variant strings are identical to registered trademarks owned and used by the applicant. That is,

[280] See Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/rsp-handbook-03jun24-en.pdf.

any applied-for variant string must also show proof that it is identical to registered trademarks owned and used by the applicant. See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation.

7.6.2 Application for Variant Strings of Reserved Names List

When a Reserved Name is the primary string, only the organization associated with that Reserved Name (see Section 7.2.2 Reserved Names) is allowed to apply for its variant strings at the top level. Although the variant string does not need to be a Reserved Name, it is generated as a variant string of the Reserved Name using the RZ-LGR. An application for variant strings of a Reserved Name cannot precede an application for the Reserved Name, which serves as the primary string for generating the variant strings.

7.6.3 Additional Dependence of Variant Strings

All variant strings depend on their primary IDN for application evaluation. If a primary applied-for IDN is disqualified for any reason, as described in this section or other relevant sections of the Guidebook, then all the associated variant strings will also be disqualified. In such cases, the entire application will not be allowed to proceed.

However, if any applied-for variant strings are disqualified and not able to proceed, then the applicant must file an Application Change Request (ACR) to remove the disqualified applied-for variant string in order for the application to proceed. If the ACR is successful, the corresponding applied-for primary IDN and any remaining applied-for variant strings that are not disqualified will still be able to proceed.

7.7 Name Collision

The delegation of almost any new gTLD carries some risk of Name Collision. Name Collision refers to the situation in which a resource name that is intended to be resolved in one naming system[281] is inadvertently resolved in a different naming system, potentially leading to unexpected behavior such as communication being disrupted or redirected from its intended recipient.[282]

In order to assess and mitigate the risk for name collisions between the global DNS and other naming systems, ICANN has implemented the Name Collision Risk

[281] See RFC 9499, section 2: https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc9499.html#name-names.
[282] For examples of name collisions, see Section 2.2 of the Name Collision Analysis Project (NCAP) Study report: https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/download/attachments/99319865/ncap-study-1-report-19jun20-en.pdf.

Management framework, following recommendations from the Name Collision Analysis Project Study Two Report,[283] as directed by the ICANN Board on 7 September 2024.[284]

All applied-for gTLD strings must be assessed in this framework before being approved for contracting and delegation. This section describes this framework, and the procedures that will be used to assess and, if necessary, mitigate any Name Collision risks associated with such strings.

7.7.1 Applicant Access to Longitudinal Risk Data

Before the opening of the application submission period, ICANN will publish datasets related to all strings above a certain threshold of query volume that may help applicants to assess the risk of Name Collision.

The metrics for an applied-for string are only one of several factors, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, that will be considered when assessing the risk associated with that string.

Out of the approximately 1,400 unique strings that were applied for during the last round, only three (.CORP, .HOME, and .MAIL) were assessed to be high-risk.[285] Nevertheless, applicants should not assume that if the datasets indicate a low volume of Name Collision occurrences that the string will be assessed as safe to be delegated.

7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment

Each applied-for string and any allocatable variant strings will undergo the Name Collision Initial Assessment using relevant data sets that can be procured from, for example, root server logs, and DNS recursive server logs, using both volume and diversity of queries, origins, query names (labels), and query types; Identifier Technologies Health Indicators (ITHI)[286] data sets; and qualitative evidence that can help deduce the severity of harm. The purpose of this assessment, which will be conducted per the Name Collision Initial Assessment Operating Procedure,[287] is to preliminarily identify high-risk strings.

The Initial Assessment will take place following the String Confirmation Day (Section 3.6), and will be overseen by the Technical Review Team (TRT). ICANN will publish an Initial Assessment report describing the assessment, its methodology, and findings,

[283] See Name Collision Analysis Project Study Two Report: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/ncap-study-2-report-05apr24-en.pdf.
[284] See Board Resolution 2024.09.07.01: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-07-09-2024-en.
[285] For further information about how Name Collisions were managed during the last round, see https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/name-collision-2013-12-06-en.
[286] See Identifier Technology Health Indicators (ITHI): https://ithi.research.icann.org/.
[287] This procedure will be available on the New gTLD Program website.

once completed. A Public Comment period will be carried out for the report to allow the community to provide feedback on the methodology and findings.

7.7.3 Temporary Delegation and Final Assessment

Strings (including variant strings) that are not identified as high-risk during the Name Collision Initial Assessment (Section 7.7.2) will be queued for Temporary Delegation. Temporary Delegation will start once the Initial Assessment has been concluded, even if other evaluations that are part of String Evaluation are still being performed. The prioritization of Temporary Delegation will be determined based on the application's assigned priority number.[288] The duration of Temporary Delegation will be outlined in the Name Collision Temporary Delegation Operating Procedure.[289] The conclusion of Temporary Delegation is not necessary for other evaluations or contention resolution. However, an application will be able to proceed to contracting only when Temporary Delegation is concluded and the Mitigation Plan has been implemented (if applicable).

The rate at which strings will be temporarily delegated will be limited to ensure that the number of TLDs delegated in the DNS root zone does not increase by more than approximately five percent per month. It is expected that this rate limit corresponds to roughly 75 Temporary Delegations per month initially and will increase as more new gTLDs are temporarily delegated. However, as permanent delegations take precedence over Temporary Delegations, this number may vary from month to month.

During Temporary Delegation, the applied-for gTLD string will be delegated to DNS nameservers managed by ICANN in order to collect data about the volume and nature of DNS traffic for that string. Four different assessment methods for notification and data generation will be used during Temporary Delegation. These are outlined in the Appendix 2 of the Name Collision Analysis Project Study Two Report and are named: No Interruption (NI); Controlled Interruption (CI); Visible Interruption (VI); and Visible Interruption and Notification (VIN). The assessment will be overseen by the TRT, which consists of internal experts from relevant ICANN departments. The TRT will determine on a case-by-case basis which method or methods will be used for each assessment.

The TRT will evaluate the data collected during Temporary Delegation, which includes DNS queries to TLD servers, diversity of queries, origins, query names (labels), query types, etc., as well as data collected using the assessment methods, to determine whether the string will be:

1. Designated as high-risk, in which case the string will be immediately removed from the root zone.

[288] For details on how strings are assigned priority, see Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw.
[289] This procedure will be available on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

2. Eligible to proceed with the remainder of the application processing.

Irrespective of the outcome of Temporary Delegation, the TRT will produce a Temporary Delegation report outlining the findings, which will be published for applicants and other interested parties to review.

7.7.4 The Collision String List

ICANN will maintain a Collision String List, which is a list of strings which ICANN has determined to present a high risk of Name Collision.

An applied-for string will be added to the Collision String List if (1) the string has been identified as high-risk in the Name Collision Initial Assessment, or (2) the string has been identified as high-risk during Temporary Delegation.

7.7.5 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation

The applicant for a string on the Collision String List that has cleared contention may amend its application to add a High-Risk String Mitigation Plan, which will then be evaluated. This evaluation will be conducted per the Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation Operating Procedure[290] and is subject to an additional fee. See Section 3.3 Fees and Payments.

Applicants must submit an Application Change Request to add a Mitigation Plan within 90 days (extendable upon reasonable request up to 180 days) of (a) the designation of the string as High Risk or, if in contention, (b) contention resolution. If the Application Change Request is not submitted within this time frame, the application status will move to Terminated. See Section 3.9 Application Statuses.

The applicant will be provided with relevant data generated during the Initial Assessment or Temporary Delegation of the string to assist in developing the Mitigation Plan, subject to applicable data protection requirements. In cases where the data includes personal data and where technical safeguards, such as anonymization or aggregation, cannot be effectively applied, ICANN may request to enter into a Data Processing Agreement (DPA) with the applicant.

The Mitigation Plan submitted by the applicant must contain at minimum the following:

1. A summary of the findings from the Initial Assessment, and, if applicable, of the Technical Review Team's findings during Temporary Delegation.

[290] This procedure will be available on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

2. A Root Cause Analysis and any other relevant evidence, which identifies the underlying reasons why Name Collisions may occur for the string.

3. A Mitigation Plan, which outlines the specific preventative and corrective actions the applicant will take to mitigate the risk of Name Collisions, including any communication activities with affected end-users. Each mitigation action must have a specific time frame for implementation. The total time frame must not exceed two years.

The Mitigation Plan will be evaluated by a panel of technical experts, which may advise the applicant on possible improvements to it. In the event that amendments are required, a further 90 days will be allowed for such amendments. The evaluation will determine whether or not the plan (a) correctly identifies the root cause of the collisions and (b) has a high probability of being effective.

ICANN will publish the Mitigation Plan and the results of the Mitigation Plan Evaluation for comment. The panel will review any comments received, and take them into consideration, before making its final determination. Within the Mitigation Plan, applicants may identify sections that contain information which, if published, could undermine the effectiveness of the plan, such as where it might allow a malicious actor to interfere with mitigations, and mark these sections for redaction. If the panel agrees, the marked sections will be redacted before publication.

If the Mitigation Plan contemplates mitigation activities that take place before the delegation of the string, then the application will not proceed until those activities have taken place, and their effectiveness has been confirmed by the Evaluation Panel using the same criteria used during the Initial Assessment.

In cases where the Evaluation Panel determines that a mitigation measure must, for technical reasons, be implemented after the string is delegated for operation by the registry operator (after evaluation has been finalized), for example, if the Name Collision issues are limited to a second-level name that the registry agrees to never delegate, the application may be allowed to proceed with the remainder of the application processing as long as the applicant agrees to add the applicable requirements from the Mitigation Plan to its Registry Agreement.

If the Evaluation Panel finds that the Mitigation Plan (a) does not correctly identify the root cause of the collisions or (b) does not have a high probability of being effective, the application will not be allowed to proceed, and the application status will move to Terminated.

7.7.5.1 Challenging the Mitigation Plan Evaluation

The applicant will be given the opportunity to challenge the outcome of a Mitigation Plan Evaluation with respect to its own application if it believes the panel has made a factual or procedural error when it determined that the Mitigation Plan (a) does not

correctly identify the root cause of the collisions or (b) does not have a high probability of being effective. To initiate an Evaluation Challenge proceeding, the applicant must file a challenge within 21 days from the date of transmission of the evaluation determination. A Challenge Panel, consisting of different individuals responsible for the initial plan evaluation, shall conduct the challenge review.

The Evaluation Challenge will be assessed under a “clearly erroneous” standard of review. Specifically, the Challenge Panel must accept the Evaluation Panel's Determination unless the Evaluation Panel: (1) failed to follow the appropriate procedures, or (2) failed to consider/solicit necessary material evidence or information.

The Challenge Panel will communicate the result of the Challenge Proceeding within 30 days of an applicant filing such a challenge.

If the Challenge Panel finds a factual or procedural error, the Mitigation Plan will be reevaluated. The Evaluation panel will conduct the re-evaluation and provide the result to ICANN. ICANN will post the results and provide a 30-day comment period. After the comment period has ended, ICANN will consider all available information and take a final decision on whether to accept or reject the Mitigation Plan. If the plan is rejected, the application status will move to Terminated.

If the Challenge Panel does not find a factual or procedural error with the initial evaluation of the Mitigation Plan, the application will not be allowed to proceed and the application status will be moved to Terminated.

7.7.6 Interaction with Variant Strings

All applied-for primary strings, including the applied-for allocatable variant strings, will be assessed for Name Collision risk through the Initial Assessment and Temporary Delegation processes outlined above.

If either a primary string or allocatable variant string is found to be high-risk, then the application cannot proceed until the Mitigation Plan Evaluation process has been carried out. However, in the case of an allocatable variant string, the application may be amended to remove that string, allowing the amended application to proceed. Removal of an allocatable variant string may occur at any time as long as the application status has not been moved to Terminated.

7.8 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies

ICANN's Mission is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems.[291] The New gTLD Program supports this with many built-in protections, including robust evaluation of applied-for gTLD strings, applications, and operators, and enforcement of compliance with the Registry Agreement.

Public Interest Commitments (PICs), specifically the Mandatory PICs (see Section 7.8.1) and Safeguard PICs (see Section 7.8.2), are one important protection built into the New gTLD Program. Those PICs are binding Registry Agreement commitments in Specification 11, and ICANN enforces compliance with them. Mandatory PICs and Safeguard PICs are uniform across the relevant Registry Agreements, and were implemented in response to the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) concerns about applications in the 2012 application round. The primary issues addressed include consumer protection, intellectual property rights, and regulated market sectors such as financial, health, and charities.[292]

In addition to PICs, an applicant will be permitted to propose one or more Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) (see Section 7.8.3) to provide additional safeguards with regard to the operation of an applied-for gTLD string. An applicant may propose an RVC to address concerns that are not already addressed by Mandatory or Safeguard PICs or via other means. As set out in further detail in Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments, proposed RVCs are subject to a separate evaluation process, namely the Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE). ICANN will only approve a proposed RVC if: (1) the RVC meets the RCE criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3); and (2) the applicant and ICANN each agree that the proposed RVC, if included in the Registry Agreement, would be enforceable under the ICANN Bylaws and as a practicable matter. As with

[291] See ICANN Bylaws, Article 1, Section 1.1(a): https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article1.
[292] See more details in the GAC ICANN45 Toronto Communiqué: https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann45-toronto-communique, the GAC ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué: https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communique, and the subsequent ICANN Board resolution 2014.02.05.NG01: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-meeting-of-the-new-gtld-program-committee-05-02-2014-en; see more background on the GAC Consensus Advice and its impact on the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program: https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/gac-advice#gac-1-applicant-advisories.

PICs, RVCs (once approved and incorporated into the Registry Agreement) are binding commitments in Base Registry Agreement Specification 11.[293]

Both PICs and RVCs are subject to the Public Interest Commitments Dispute Resolution Procedure (PICDRP).[294]

As detailed in the Section 7.1 String and Application Types, an applicant may choose to designate an applied-for gTLD string as a Community gTLD. If the applicant identifies an applied-for gTLD string as a Community gTLD, it must propose Registry Agreement Community Registration Policies (see Section 7.8.4) for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement to be evaluated by ICANN by applying the RCE criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3).

7.8.1 Mandatory Public Interest Commitments

Mandatory PICs are included in every Registry Agreement. Mandatory PICs require each registry operator to implement measures to protect gTLD registrants and Internet users more broadly, and include obligations related to: mitigation of abusive activity; security checks; and transparency in operation. The Mandatory PICs are included in Specification 11 Section 3(a)-(d) of the Base Registry Agreement (see Appendix 4), namely:

a. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision prohibiting Registered Name Holders from distributing malware, abusively operating botnets, phishing, piracy, trademark or copyright infringement, fraudulent or deceptive practices, counterfeiting or otherwise engaging in activity contrary to applicable law, and providing (consistent with applicable law and any related procedures) consequences for such activities including suspension of the domain name.

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[293] In the Base Registry Agreements between ICANN and existing registry operators from the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program, the terms “Registry Voluntary Commitments” and “RVCs” did not exist and instead, the term “specific public interest commitments” was used (the terms “voluntary PICs” and “private PICs” were also used informally in the past). The 2026 Base Registry Agreement uses the term “specific voluntary public interest commitments” to refer to what we now call “Registry Voluntary Commitments” or “RVCs”. This approach conforms to the existing structure and phrasing of the Base Registry Agreement Specification 11, as well as ICANN’s Public Interest Commitments Dispute Resolution Procedure (PICDRP), which continues to be the dispute resolution procedure for addressing alleged complaints that a registry operator may not be complying with one or more Mandatory and Safeguard PICs, as well as future approved RVCs in its Registry Agreement going forward. See Specification 11 in Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement and Section 1.2.17 Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation.

[294] See the Public Interest Commitment Dispute Resolution Procedure (PICDRP): https://www.icann.org/picdrp-en.

b. Registry Operator will periodically conduct a technical analysis to assess whether domains in the TLD are being used to perpetrate DNS Abuse. Registry Operator will maintain statistical reports on identified DNS Abuse and the actions taken as a result of the periodic security checks. Registry Operator will maintain these reports for the term of the Agreement unless a shorter period is required by law or approved by ICANN, and will provide them to ICANN upon request.[295]

c. Registry Operator will operate the TLD in a transparent manner consistent with general principles of openness and nondiscrimination by establishing, publishing and adhering to clear registration policies.

d. Registry Operator of a "Generic String" TLD may not impose eligibility criteria for registering names in the TLD that limit registrations exclusively to a single person or entity and/or that person's or entity's "Affiliates" (as defined in Section 2.9(c) of the Base Registry Agreement). "Generic String" means a string consisting of a word or term that denominates or describes a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things, as opposed to distinguishing a specific brand of goods, services, groups, organizations or things from those of others.

For more information about Generic Strings, see Section 3.1.7 Closed Generics/Exclusive Generic Strings.

7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments

Safeguard PICs are provisions required in certain Registry Agreements, in addition to the Mandatory PICs included in all Registry Agreements.

ICANN classifies gTLDs needing Safeguard PICs into four risk-based groups:

- Regulated Sectors/Open Entry Requirements: Strings invoking consumer trust but with heightened risks.
- Highly Regulated Sectors/Closed Entry Requirements: Strings associated with industries requiring licensing or accreditation.
- Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment: Strings that could facilitate harassment.

[295] This item reflects the Base Registry Agreement Specification 11 Section 3(b) as amended on 5 April 2024. For the purpose of the Base Registry Agreement, "DNS Abuse" is defined as malware, botnets, phishing, pharming, and spam (when spam serves as a delivery mechanism for the other forms of DNS Abuse) as those terms are defined in Section 2.1 of SAC 115 - SSAC Report on an Interoperable Approach to Addressing Abuse Handling in the DNS: https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/security-and-stability-advisory-committee-ssac-reports/sac-115-en.pdf. See Section 4.1 on p. 2 of the 2024 Global Amendment to Registry Agreements: https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/registry-agreements/base-registry-agreement-global-amendment-05-04-2024-en.pdf.

- Inherently Governmental Functions: Strings associated with government domains.

See more detailed information and examples listed in the table under Section 7.8.2.2 Applicable Safeguard PICs by String Category.

If ICANN determines during evaluation that an applied-for gTLD string falls into one or more of the categories set out in Section 7.8.2.2 Applicable Safeguard PICs by String Category, the applicable Safeguard PICs (see Section 7.8.2.3) must be included in Specification 11 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement without modification.[296]

Safeguard PICs were developed and implemented in response to the GAC Consensus Advice in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué[297] and subsequent ICANN Board Resolution[298] during the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program.[299]

7.8.2.1 String Group Determination

In the application, the applicant must answer questions to assess which Safeguard PICs, if any, would be required in the Registry Agreement (see Question Set 10 Safeguard Assessment/Mission and Purpose in Appendix 1 Application Questions). The applicant's responses will be published with the application.

At the closure of an application comment period, ICANN will determine whether or not each applied-for gTLD string falls into one of the four Safeguard PIC groups. This determination concludes the evaluation and serves as input into the contracting procedure. It cannot be challenged under Extended Evaluation and Evaluation Challenges (Section 1.2.14), as it does not have an impact on the application's progression.

See Section 4.1 Application Comments for more information about application comment periods.

7.8.2.2 Applicable Safeguard PICs by String Category

ICANN will use the framework below to determine whether an applied-for gTLD string requires Safeguard PICs, and if so, which Safeguard PICs apply. The framework

[296] The Base Registry Agreement is the product of extensive community consultation. ICANN will only consider modification to the agreement in extraordinary circumstances, such as situations in which unique legal, jurisdictional, or regulatory issues would legally prevent an entity from executing the Base Registry Agreement as-is. See Section 1.2.15 Contracting.
[297] See ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué: https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communique.
[298] See ICANN Board resolution 2014.02.05.NG01: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-meeting-of-the-new-gtld-program-committee-05-02-2014-en.
[299] See Annex 2 of the ICANN Board resolution 2014.02.05.NG01: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/resolutions-new-gtld-annex-2-05feb14-en.pdf.

identifies the four string groups established in response to the GAC Consensus Advice in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué and provides description and relevant examples.[300] ICANN will apply Safeguard PICs to applied-for gTLD strings that are identified as falling within the groups of strings set out in the GAC's ICANN46 Communiqué.

The framework identifies which of the ten Safeguard PICs are applied to each of the four string categories.

Table 7-2: Safeguard PICs Framework

String Group No.	String Group	Description	Required Safeguards
1	Regulated Sectors/Open Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions	• String is likely to invoke a level of implied trust from consumers • String is likely to carry heightened risks of consumer harm • String is associated to a generally open sector, but may require limited registration *See the non-exhaustive list of strings identified by the GAC as falling within this group in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué.*[301] *Examples: .kid, .degree, .audio, .town*	1-3
2	Highly-Regulated Sectors/Closed Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions	String is associated with an industry where licensing or accreditation is required by local, regional, or national governments. This typically involves an assessment of qualifications, regular inspections, and ongoing government oversight *See the non-exhaustive list of strings identified by the GAC as falling within this group in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué.*[302] *Examples: .cash, .bet, .abogado, .earth, .care*	1-8

[300] The ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué (see https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communique) identified a non-exhaustive list of strings that were applied for in the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program and advised the Board that Safeguard PICs should apply to those applied-for strings. The GAC organized these identified strings into applicable sub-groups.
[301] See ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué: https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communique
[302] Ibid.

String Group No.	String Group	Description	Required Safeguards
3	Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment	String's implied or actual meaning could result in gTLD being used to facilitate harassment or cyberbullying *Example strings identified by the GAC as falling within this group in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué[303]: .fail, .gripe, .sucks, .wtf*	1-9
4	Inherently Governmental Functions	String is associated with a function that is inherently in the domain of government, such as military branches *Example strings identified by the GAC as falling within this group in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué[304]: .army, .navy, .airforce*	1-8 and 10

7.8.2.3 Safeguard PICs

The ten Safeguard PICs include requirements for registrants to comply with applicable laws, implement appropriate security measures, provide contact information, possess necessary credentials, and report material changes to credentials, among other obligations. The Safeguard PICs are outlined in the following table:

Table 7-2: Types of Safeguard PICs

Safeguard PIC	Safeguard PIC Text
1	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to comply with all applicable laws, including those that relate to privacy, data collection, consumer protection (including in relation to misleading and deceptive conduct), fair lending, debt collection, organic farming, disclosure of data, and financial disclosures.
2	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars at the time of registration to notify registrants of the requirement to comply with all applicable laws.
3	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring that registrants who collect and maintain sensitive health and financial data implement reasonable and appropriate security measures commensurate with the offering of those services, as defined by applicable law.
4	Registry Operator will proactively create a clear pathway for the creation of a working relationship with the relevant regulatory or industry self-regulatory bodies by publicizing a point of contact and inviting such bodies to establish a channel of communication, including for the purpose of facilitating the development of a strategy to mitigate the risks of fraudulent and other illegal activities.

[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.

Safeguard PIC	Safeguard PIC Text
5	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to provide administrative contact information, which must be kept up-to-date, for the notification of complaints or reports of registration abuse, as well as the contact details of the relevant regulatory, or industry self-regulatory, bodies in their main place of business.
6	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring a representation that the registrant possesses any necessary authorizations, charters, licenses and/or other related credentials for participation in the sector associated with the TLD string.
7	If Registry Operator receives a complaint expressing doubt with regard to the authenticity of licenses or credentials, Registry Operator should consult with relevant national supervisory authorities, or their equivalents regarding the authenticity.
8	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to report any material changes to the validity of the registrants' authorizations, charters, licenses and/or other related credentials for participation in the sector associated with the TLD string in order to ensure they continue to conform to appropriate regulations and licensing requirements and generally conduct their activities in the interests of the consumers they serve.
9	Registry Operator will develop and publish registration policies to minimize the risk of cyber bullying and/or harassment.
10	Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring a representation that the registrant will take reasonable steps to avoid misrepresenting or falsely implying that the registrant or its business is affiliated with, sponsored or endorsed by one or more country's or government's military forces if such affiliation, sponsorship or endorsement does not exist.

7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments

There may be circumstances in which the multitude of safeguards built into the application process and into the Registry Agreement, including the Mandatory and Safeguard PICs, do not completely address a specific issue with an application or proposed Registry Agreement. In these circumstances, an applicant may consider proposing an RVC to help resolve the potential issue.

An applicant's decision to propose an RVC is typically voluntary, except for those recognized by ICANN to resolve an objection or to address GAC Consensus Advice (see explanation in Section 7.8.3.2.3.1 Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice). These commitments will be contractually binding if approved and included in the Registry Agreement. RVCs may vary, potentially increasing commitments related to the public interest or codifying stakeholder commitments. An RVC could also institute safeguards that may help overcome a third-party concern with an applied-for gTLD string or application. For example, applicants could propose RVCs in response to Objections, GAC Member

Early Warnings or GAC Consensus Advice, application comments, or other issues that might otherwise negatively impact the application's evaluation process. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests and Module 4 Community Input, Objections and Appeals for further details about these topics.

An applicant may include a proposed RVC in its application or request to add one afterward via the Application Change Request process (see Section 3.8), which includes an application comment period and other conditions.

All proposed RVCs submitted with the application or as an Application Change Request will appear in the public application section, accessible on the New gTLD Program website[305], and be open to the public for review and comment during the application comment period (see Section 4.1 Application Comments).

7.8.3.1 Factors to Consider Before Proposing an RVC

Before deciding to propose an RVC, applicants are encouraged to review ICANN's Bylaws; relevant ICANN agreements, including but not limited to the Registry Agreement and the Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA); and the ICANN Consensus Policies and Temporary Policies. Applicants and any third parties that raise concerns about any applications should consider whether the pre-existing, standardized provisions could provide sufficient safeguards for the applied-for gTLD string, to avoid the need for the evaluation and implementation of a customized RVC.[306]

The ICANN community recommended that ICANN include the Mandatory PICs in each Registry Agreement and also include Safeguard PICs (where applicable) in Registry Agreements for strings identified during the evaluation process as falling within the four string groups set out in Section 7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments. In some cases, it may be possible for an applicant that is not required to implement the Safeguard PICs to propose to use one or more of the approved Safeguard PICs as an RVC to resolve issues or concerns raised regarding an applied-for gTLD string or application.

In addition, an applicant should consider whether the performance of a proposed RVC requires the operation of an additional Registry Service.[307] If so, the applicant shall engage its selected Registry Service Provider (RSP) to discuss the implementation of such an additional Registry Service, which must be evaluated through the RSP Program and approved by ICANN. If ICANN identifies a proposed RVC that requires

[305] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/.
[306] See the current ICANN Consensus Policies: https://www.icann.org/consensus-policies-en.
[307] Additional Registry Services refer to the services offered by a Registry Service Provider outside of the Critical Functions (that is, DNS Service, DNSSEC proper resolution, EPP, RDDS, and Data Escrow). See more explanation of the additional Registry Service under section 1.1A-D in the Registry Services Evaluation Policy (see https://www.icann.org/rsep-en). See details about the Critical Functions in Section 6 of Specification 10 in the Base Registry Agreement (Appendix 4).

the operation through an additional Registry Service, and such a Registry Service has not yet been approved for the applicant's selected RSP, then the RSP must seek ICANN's approval via the RSP Program before ICANN considers approving the proposed commitment as an RVC.[308]

Any proposed RVC that is incompatible with ICANN's Bylaws, policies, and agreements will not be approved, as explained in Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria.

An applicant is encouraged to consider whether there are other means, separate from the Registry Agreement, that could help resolve the issues raised regarding the applied-for gTLD string or application. For example, an applicant may consider addressing the concerns, possibly in consultation with the third party that raised the concerns, by including relevant commitments in the applicant's own registry policies, terms of use, or through a separate agreement between the applicant and the third party. Any such separate agreement shall not be enforced by ICANN, and any such third party shall not be a "third-party beneficiary" of the Registry Agreement with ICANN.[309]

7.8.3.2 Registry Commitments Evaluation

Each proposed RVC for each applied-for gTLD string (and its applied-for allocatable variant strings, if applicable) will be subject to ICANN evaluation and approval via the Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE). The purpose of the RCE is to determine whether a proposed commitment meets all the evaluation criteria as set out in RCE Criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3) for inclusion in the Registry Agreement.

Each Community Registration Policy proposed for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement will also be subject to the Registry Commitments Evaluation (see Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies). See Section 7.8.3.5 Proposed RVC for Variant Strings for more information regarding this evaluation for variant strings.

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[308] If the performance of an approved RVC requires the operation of an approved Registry Service, the commitment itself is expected to be included in Specification 11 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement, but the approved Registry Service is expected to be included in Exhibit A of the Base Registry Agreement.

[309] As a response to Question Set 20 Additional Information and Supporting Material in Appendix 1 Application Questions, an applicant can include additional information and supporting materials that may be of interest to the public or relevant to the application. For example, an applicant may include links to its separate agreements with a third party and its additional commitments outside the Registry Agreement. The applicant's responses to this question will be for informational purposes only, and will not be evaluated or binding on the applicant via the Registry Agreement. However, these responses will be open to the public for review and comment. Accordingly, applicants should carefully consider whether and what additional information they wish to disclose in response to Question Set 20. For example, it could be used by a third party to support an objection, but may also help address third-party concerns and avoid a potential objection.

In the application, applicants that wish to submit proposed RVCs and Community Registration Policies for inclusion in the Registry Agreement must answer a series of questions that are designed to facilitate ICANN's evaluation (see Appendix 1 Application Questions).

An applicant that submits RVCs or Community Registration Policies is required to pay a fixed, one-time payment that covers the cost of the Registry Commitments Evaluation. For details on fees associated with the RCE, see Section 3.3.2 Conditional Evaluations.

7.8.3.2.1 Applicants Must Identify Purposes for Proposed RVC

The applicant must provide background information to explain why its proposed RVC is relevant, important, and necessary in support of the application. ICANN will conduct a completeness check for this requirement when the RVC is proposed by the applicant, prior to the Registry Commitments Evaluation. This information will help to provide context for the proposed RVC and, in certain cases, could be useful if adjustments to the terms of the RVC are needed to meet the aims of the proposed commitment while also meeting the criteria for an RVC to be included in the Registry Agreement, as explained in Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria.

For example, if a proposed RVC responds to a third-party objection, the applicant should identify the specific objection and objector, provide the relevant references or links to the objection, and offer other pertinent details. These details could include, but are not limited to, how the applicant constructed the proposed RVC to address the concern, whether the applicant consulted with the objector in the development of the proposed RVC, and the means and systems in place to ensure compliance with the RVC.

7.8.3.2.2 General Rule: Registry Commitments Evaluation of Proposed RVCs Does Not Impact Application Progression

In circumstances other than those identified in Section 7.8.3.2.3 Exception: Registry Commitments Evaluation of Proposed RVCs Impacts Application Progression, the Registry Commitments Evaluation of proposed RVCs will not impact the ability of the application to proceed. Outside of these exceptional circumstances, the Registry Commitments Evaluation has no impact on the evaluation of an applicant's or application's ability to proceed to contracting, but merely determines whether the proposed RVC meets the criteria for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement if the application advances.

The evaluation will not determine whether the proposed RVC successfully addresses third-party concerns. Although ICANN may consider application comments and other inputs and may consult third parties during the evaluation, it will not typically involve third parties in this evaluation.

Applicants intending to propose an RVC to resolve an objection or other third-party concern are encouraged to engage with the concerned party or parties first. If they can agree on an RVC that addresses the issue before submitting an Application Change Request, it may prevent ICANN from evaluating a proposed RVC that the third party believes does not adequately resolve the concern regarding the applied-for gTLD or application. If an applicant proposes an RVC during objection proceedings to resolve an objection or third-party concern, and that RVC is approved by ICANN, the objector or other third party must separately decide whether and how to continue pursuing their concerns.

For example, if an application proposes an RVC to address an objection during the "cooling off" period, once the Registry Commitments Evaluation concludes — either approving or rejecting the RVC — the objector can then decide whether to continue pursuing the objection. To give another example, an applicant might propose an RVC as an Application Change Request after receiving a GAC Member Early Warning to reduce the risk of later receiving GAC Consensus Advice that could hinder the application's progress. In this case, the evaluation would not determine whether the proposed RVC would be likely to alleviate the concern raised in the GAC Member Early Warning, but approval of the RVC could inform GAC discussions on issuing Consensus Advice to the Board regarding the application or applied-for gTLD string.

If an applicant plans to propose an RVC as an Application Change Request to address a third-party concern, the applicant should keep in mind the relevant timelines and processes for objections, GAC Consensus Advice, GAC Member Early Warnings, application comments, etc., if it wants the RVC to be taken into account in those processes (see Module 4 Community Input, Objections, and Appeals). As noted above, all proposed RVCs that are submitted as an Application Change Request (see Section 3.8) are subject to an application comment period.

7.8.3.2.3 Exception: Registry Commitments Evaluation of Proposed RVCs Impacts Application Progression

The Registry Commitments Evaluation result for a proposed RVC can only impact the application's progression in two scenarios. See Section 3.9 Application Statuses to learn what to expect when an application is deemed unable to proceed.

7.8.3.2.3.1 Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice

If an RVC is recognized by ICANN for resolving an objection or addressing GAC Consensus Advice, it will be subject to heightened restrictions during the application process and after contract execution.

Although the RVCs proposed in this circumstance are labeled as "voluntary", ICANN recognizes that they are not solely proposed at the applicant's own discretion but are conditions necessary for the application to proceed.

An RVC must be approved by ICANN via the Registry Commitments Evaluation to resolve an objection or address GAC Consensus Advice. Without such approval, the application cannot proceed.[310] See Section 4.5.8.13 Objections and Registry Voluntary Commitments and Section 4.3.3 GAC Consensus Advice and Registry Voluntary Commitments.

Proposed RVCs to overcome objections or GAC Consensus Advice are open to the public for review and comment via an application comment period. If negotiations with ICANN lead to changes for approval, both the original proposal and the ICANN-approved versions will be published for comment. See more information in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.

Due to the specific purpose these RVCs serve, applicants and registry operators generally will not, absent extraordinary circumstances, be able to materially change or remove these commitments once they are approved by ICANN. These commitments are expected to be included in a separate subsection of Specification 11 to make clear that they are subject to heightened restrictions. See Section 7.8.3.4 RVC Addition, Changes, and Removals.

7.8.3.2.3.2 Situation 2: Application Change Request Required Following Rejection of Proposed RVC

If an applicant proposes an RVC in its initial submission, and it does not pass the Registry Commitments Evaluation, the applicant must file an Application Change Request to modify or remove the proposed RVC for the application to proceed. The Application Change Request will be reviewed by ICANN according to the published criteria (see Section 3.8).

Absent extraordinary circumstances, if the applicant does not submit an Application Change Request within 30 days of notification that the proposed RVC did not pass the evaluation, the application will not be permitted to proceed.

7.8.3.2.4 Registry Commitments Evaluation Timing and Result Notification

Regarding the timing of Registry Commitments Evaluation for proposed RVCs under Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice

[310] It is expected that an applicant and ICANN may negotiate the specific language of an RVC in the course of the Registry Commitments Evaluation in order to identify proposed Registry Agreement language that meets the RCE criteria (see Section 3.8.4.2 Application Change Requests: Workflow 2). ICANN does not outright or automatically reject a proposed RVC without any communication with an applicant.

(see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1) and proposed Community Registration Policies (see Section 7.8.4) submitted by Community Applicants participating in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE), the Registry Commitments Evaluation will be conducted as soon as possible after ICANN has received the applicable fee. ICANN acknowledges the importance of conducting the RCE in a timely manner to ensure that dependent processes can proceed without delay.

In all other cases, the Registry Commitments Evaluation is expected to occur later in the application process, prior to contracting, after the evaluation fee is received by ICANN.

Absent extraordinary circumstances, the estimated timeline for RCE is 60 to 90 days.

ICANN will publish and regularly update the RCE results of all submitted RVCs and Community Registration Policies on the New gTLD Program website and notify the respective applicants of the outcomes.[311]

7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria

ICANN will reject any proposed RVC that is not compatible with the ICANN Bylaws.[312] See criterion 5 in the table below for details.

ICANN will evaluate each proposed RVC based on the following criteria, and approval depends on meeting all of them. Applicants should follow the associated guidance and consider each criterion's relevance when preparing their RVC.

Each commitment in the Community Registration Policy (see Section 7.8.4) that is proposed for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement must also meet all of the Registry Commitments Evaluation criteria in order to be approved.

See instructions for Questions 150-155 in Question Set 7 Community gTLDs and Question Set 11 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) in Appendix 1 Application Questions for the detailed requirements that guide the drafting approach of proposed Community Registration Policies and Registry Voluntary Commitments that will be evaluated through the RCE.

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[311] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/.

[312] The five RVC evaluation criteria reflect this fundamental principle, which was recognized by the ICANN Board when it directed ICANN org to implement evaluation criteria and processes for the consideration of commitments proposed by applicants for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreements: "*In order to enter into any agreement, ICANN must believe that the proposed terms (including any public interest commitments) are being entered into in service of ICANN's Mission, which is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems*." (See rationale for ICANN Board resolutions 2024.06.08.08 – 2024.06.08.10: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-08-06-2024-en#section2.b).

As noted in Section 7.8.3.1 Factors to Consider Before Proposing an RVC, applicants may consider including certain commitments outside of the Registry Agreement, in vehicles such as the applicant's own registry policies, terms of use, or through a separate agreement between the applicant and a third party. Any such commitment not proposed for inclusion in the Registry Agreement will not be subject to the Registry Commitments Evaluation.[313]

Table 7-3: RVC Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Description	Guidance
1. **RVC must clearly state what commitments "must" be implemented.**	A proposed RVC must be a compulsory commitment or obligation and must clearly state what commitments the registry operator "must" implement, not what commitments the registry operator "may" or "might" implement.	• **Use definitive language**: Avoid qualifiers, and express certainty when describing the proposed RVC. State what the applicant proposes that the registry operator "must" do.
2. **RVC must be clear, detailed, mutually understood between the applicant and ICANN, objective, and measurable.**	Each RVC must clearly state what the RVC requires the registry operator to do. This level of detail in the RVC is necessary to ensure that the RVC is enforceable as a practicable matter. The RVC must be clear, so that in the event of a contractual compliance issue, the registry operator's actions can be measured against the objective language in the RVC to determine whether or not the registry operator complied with the RVC.	• **Be clear**: Use simple and straightforward language that is easy to understand. • **Be precise and specific**: Avoid vague or ambiguous statements that could lead to misunderstanding. • **Be detailed**: Specify which entity will be responsible for implementing the RVC; describe the actions, steps or tasks required to implement the RVC; outline the specific actions that the registry operator must take to fulfill the RVC. • **Consider registry operator's internal compliance monitoring**: Describe how the registry operator will monitor and assess its implementation of

[313] If the applicant believes such commitments not proposed for inclusion in the Registry Agreement may be of interest to the public or relevant to the application, the applicant may include these as a response to Question Set 20 Additional Information and Supporting Material in the Appendix 1 Application Questions for the public to review and comment. The applicant's responses to this question will be for informational purposes only, and will not be evaluated or binding on the applicant via the Registry Agreement. Accordingly, applicants should carefully consider whether and what additional information they wish to disclose in response to Question Set 18. For example, it could be used by a third party to support an objection, but may also help address third-party concerns and avoid a potential objection.

Criterion	Description	Guidance
		and compliance with the RVC.
3. RVC must specify any applicable limitations.	The applicant must provide details on whether, how, and why a proposed RVC is limited in time, duration, scope, or any other factors, if applicable.	• **Define any applicable limitations of the proposed RVC**: For example, if an RVC is time-limited, it must state if it will apply for the lifetime of the gTLD, only during a specified launch period, or for some other defined period.
4. RVC should[314] not duplicate or be contrary to requirements under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies.	An RVC should not duplicate obligations that would apply to the registry operator per the Registry Agreement, applicable ICANN Consensus Policies and Temporary Policies, or applicable law. An RVC will not be approved if it is contrary to applicable ICANN agreements and policies. The registry operator must be able to comply with the RVC while also complying with applicable ICANN agreements and policies. An RVC also must not prevent other parties' (for example, registrars') compliance with applicable ICANN agreements and policies.[315] If the performance of a proposed RVC requires the operation of an additional Registry Service, such a Registry Service must be evaluated through the RSP Program and approved by ICANN before ICANN considers approving the proposed commitment as an RVC.	• **Avoid duplication**: Before proposing an RVC, an applicant should carefully review provisions in the Registry Agreement, the Registrar Accreditation Agreement, as well as the ICANN Consensus Policies and Temporary Policies to see if there is already such an obligation. If so, the applicant should not propose the RVC. • **Enhancements to contract or policy obligations**: An RVC could enhance, supplement, or expand upon requirements in the Registry Agreement and other applicable obligations so long as the RVC is not contrary to those applicable obligations. • **RVC must apply alongside other contract and policy requirements**: An RVC cannot commit a registry operator to take actions that contradict requirements in

[314] The word "should" (as opposed to "must") is purposefully used in criterion 4. See RFC2119 Key Words for Use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels: https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc2119 ("*This word, or the adjective "RECOMMENDED", mean that there may exist valid reasons in particular circumstances to ignore a particular item, but the full implications must be understood and carefully weighed before choosing a different course*"). There may be circumstances in which an RVC that would duplicate requirements under applicable consensus policy or law could be approved at ICANN's sole discretion, for example, if this type of RVC is necessary to address GAC Consensus Advice.

[315] See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, the Registrar Accreditation Agreement: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/registrars/registrars-en, and the current ICANN Consensus Policies: https://www.icann.org/consensus-policies-en.

Criterion	Description	Guidance
		the Registry Agreement or applicable ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies. An RVC must not commit a registry operator to include terms in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that would require the registrars to take actions in violation of the Registrar Accreditation Agreement, applicable ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies, or applicable law.
5. RVC must be compatible with ICANN's Bylaws.	ICANN cannot approve an RVC that is incompatible with the ICANN Bylaws.	One area of particular focus under this criterion is whether a proposed RVC would restrict content or use of an applied-for gTLD string.[316] If a proposed RVC would put ICANN in a position of enforcing a registry operator's compliance with a restriction on content in the applicable gTLD, that proposed RVC will be rejected.[317] "Content" is the substance of a message being delivered, whereas non-content-restrictive factors could include, but are not limited to, how and when content is delivered and by whom. Differentiating between content-restrictive commitments and non-content-restrictive commitments in the context of RVCs involves understanding the

[316] See additional background information in the ICANN Board Resolution 2024.06.08.08 - 2024.06.08.10: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-08-06-2024-en#section2.b.

[317] The ICANN Bylaws state that "ICANN shall not regulate (that is, impose rules and restrictions on) services that use the Internet's unique identifiers or the content that such services carry or provide, outside the express scope of Section 1.1(a)...." (See ICANN Bylaws, at Article 1, Section 1.1(c): https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article1). Following extensive deliberation and community consultation regarding how the Bylaws impact the evaluation of RVCs, the ICANN Board determined that ICANN should exclude from the 2026 Round Registry Agreements "any RVCs and other comparable registry commitments that restrict content in gTLDs."

Criterion	Description	Guidance
		scope, focus, and impact of the commitments: **Scope**: Non-content-restrictive commitments could focus on operational, procedural, and technical aspects of the domain name registration and management, rather than specific content within the gTLD. **Focus**: Non-content-restrictive commitments could involve adherence to industry standards, registration eligibility requirements, and procedures that are not specific to content in the gTLD. **Impact**: Non-content-restrictive commitments could influence how domain names are managed and the operational environment in which they exist.

7.8.3.4 RVC Additions, Changes, and Removals

If a proposed RVC is added or modified after the application submission date and before the applicable Registry Agreement is executed, it shall be subject to the Application Change Request process, which includes an application comment period for material changes as set out in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests. For different types of application comment periods for proposed RVCs, see Section 3.8.3 Application Change Request Types and Required Processes.

Absent extraordinary circumstances, the RVCs pursuant to Situation 1: Commitments Made to Overcome Objections or GAC Consensus Advice (see Section 7.8.3.2.3.1) may generally not be materially changed or removed prior to contract execution.

ICANN does not currently have a process for registry operators to request modification to RVCs in Registry Agreements that have been executed. ICANN may propose a process for the community to provide its input with respect to registry operators requesting modification to RVCs following contract execution.

7.8.3.5 Proposed RVC for Variant Strings

If an applicant seeks allocatable variant strings of an applied-for primary string and plans to propose an RVC with its application or as an Application Change Request, the

proposed RVC must apply to both the primary and variant strings and undergo the same Registry Commitments Evaluation. This requirement also applies to the proposed Community Registration Policy for the applied-for primary and variant strings of a Community gTLD explained in Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies.

7.8.4 Community Registration Policies

Registry Agreement Community Registration Policies (Community Registration Policies) are Registry Agreement conditions that gTLD registry operators must impose upon registrants within Community gTLDs. When submitting an application for a Community gTLD (Community Application), applicants must propose Community Registration Policies for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreements. At a minimum, these policies must cover registrant eligibility and naming selection.

As with proposed RVCs for inclusion in the Registry Agreement, a Community Registration Policy proposed by an applicant for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement must be evaluated pursuant to the RCE criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3). Its evaluation outcome will affect whether a Community Application can move forward. Specifically, an applicant must have approved Community Registration Policies as a prerequisite in order for its application to participate in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE), an option only available to Community Applications to resolve contention.[318] Nevertheless, approval is required not only for a Community Application to participate in the CPE, but also to move forward in the application process after the RCE. In other words, if there are no Community Registration Policies that can be approved by ICANN for inclusion in the Registry Agreement, the Community Application cannot advance, regardless of whether it is in contention or whether the applicant chooses to participate in the CPE.[319]

A Community Registration Policy meeting RCE criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3) will be included in the applicable Registry Agreement if the applied-for string proceeds to delegation. See instructions for Questions 150-155 in Question Set 7 Community

[318] If an applicant for a Community gTLD desires for a Community Registration Policy to be scored in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE), it must propose such a policy for inclusion in Specification 12 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement when submitting a Community Application. Such a policy serves as a prerequisite to the application's participation in CPE (see Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation).

[319] It is expected that an applicant and ICANN may negotiate the specific language of a Community Registration Policy in the course of the Registry Commitments Evaluation in order to identify proposed Registry Agreement language that meets the RCE criteria (see Section 3.8.4.2 Application Change Requests: Workflow 2). The applicant is required to submit an Application Change Request that reflects the negotiated Registry Agreement language for the proposed Community Registration Policy after receiving notification from ICANN. ICANN does not outright or automatically reject a proposed Community Registration Policy without any communication with an applicant. However, applicant's failure to submit the requisite Application Change Request within the designated time period as defined in Section 3.8 Application Change Requests would result in a negative outcome of the RCE.

gTLDs in Appendix 1 Application Questions for the detailed requirements that guide the drafting approach of proposed Community Registration Policies that will be evaluated through the RCE. As with PICs and RVCs, an approved Community Registration Policy will be subject to ICANN contractual compliance oversight. Community Registration Policies included in the Registry Agreement are subject to the Registration Restrictions Dispute Resolution Procedure (RRDRP) and the Community gTLD Change Requests Procedure.[320]

Furthermore, operators of Community gTLDs may implement any additional registration policies outside of the Registry Agreement that are desired, so long as the policies are not contrary to requirements under applicable ICANN agreements and policies.[321]

7.8.5 ICANN Enforcement

ICANN will enforce compliance with PICs, RVCs, and Community Registration Policies evaluated and approved pursuant to the RCE criteria (see Section 7.8.3.3) and included in the Registry Agreement as any other contractual obligations. The PICDRP may be used to address alleged complaints that a registry operator may not be complying with one or more of its PICs or RVCs. The RRDRP may be used to address circumstances in which the operator of a Community gTLD allegedly deviates from the Community Registration Policies outlined in the Registry Agreement. See Section 1.2.17 Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation for further details about the PICDRP and the RRDRP.

7.9 Registry Service Provider Review

ICANN will verify whether the applicant has selected one or more evaluated RSPs as part of its application. If not, Extended Evaluation is available for an applicant to provide the requested information regarding the chosen RSP(s). ICANN will also review the willingness of the RSP(s) to support the gTLD, including their capacity to

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[320] See Registration Restrictions Dispute Resolution procedure (RRDRP): https://www.icann.org/rrdrp-en, and Community gTLD Change Requests Procedure: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/community-gtld-change-requests-en.

[321] If an applicant for a Community gTLD believes additional registration policies that the applicant plans to implement but does not propose to include in the applicable Registry Agreement may be of interest to the public or relevant to the application, the applicant may include these as a response to Question Set 20 Additional Information and Supporting Material in Appendix 1 Application Questions for the public to review and comment. The applicant's responses to this question will be for informational purposes only, and will not be evaluated (for example, it will not be considered in any applicable scoring during the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)) or binding on the applicant via the Registry Agreement. Accordingly, applicants should carefully consider whether and what additional information they wish to disclose in response to Question Set 20. For example, it could be used by a third party to support an objection, but may also help address third-party concerns and avoid a potential objection.

support the gTLD with any additional Registry Services. See Section 3.1.10 Registry Service Provider Selection.

7.10 String Similarity Evaluation

The objective of the String Similarity Evaluation is to prevent user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from delegation of visually similar strings. Strings or their variant strings must not be Visually Similar (defined below) to an existing top-level domain or its variant strings, or a Blocked Name or its variant strings as set out in more detail in Section 7.10.1 Scope of String Similarity Evaluation (see Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names). The variant strings are calculated using the applicable version of the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (see Section 3.1.8.3.1.1 Applicable RZ-LGR Version and Scripts and Languages Supported).[322]

An application is based on the primary applied-for string or existing gTLD. Each primary string is a member of and creates a variant-strings-set.[323] An application may contain one or more strings from the same variant-strings-set (see Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names), based on the applicant's choice and with other applicable constraints.[324] For any application, the String Similarity Evaluation is conducted using all the strings in the variant-strings-set even if many of these strings are not being applied for by the applicant, as per the details below.

"Visually Similar" in this context means visually confusing strings, specifically "strings so visually similar that they create a probability of user confusion if more than one of the strings is delegated into the root zone."[325] The String Similarity Evaluation will be conducted by an independent String Similarity Evaluation Panel. If the panel finds applied-for strings or variant strings to be Visually Similar, they will be marked and excluded from proceeding or form contention sets. The String Similarity Evaluation that occurs during String Evaluation complements the string confusion objection process. See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals.

7.10.1 Scope of String Similarity Evaluation

String Similarity Evaluation involves a preliminary comparison of each applied-for string and its variant strings to corresponding strings and variant strings in relevant

[322] See Root Zone Label Generation Rules: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/root-zone-lgr-2015-06-21-en.
[323] For any variant string, its primary string is used to determine its variant-strings-set by the Root Zone Label Generation Rules. The set contains the primary string, any allocatable variant strings, and any blocked variant strings.
[324] For example, an applicant can only apply for allocatable variant strings but cannot apply for blocked variant strings, as calculated by the Root Zone Label Generation Rules. See Section 3.1.9.1 Rules for IDNs and Their Variants.
[325] See Affirmation 24.2, New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Final Report, p.108: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

categories. The evaluation is conducted using all the strings in the variant-strings-set, regardless of whether the applicant applies for them, as detailed below. The comparisons are done to determine whether the strings are visually similar to the extent that it creates a probability of user confusion[326] following the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines (see Section 7.10.2.3).

For each application, the primary string (if not already delegated) and all allocatable variant strings[327] in its variant-strings-set will be compared with the following:[328]

- Existing delegated gTLDs and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.
- The gTLD strings that were applied for in the previous gTLD rounds and that are still in the process,[329] and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.
- Existing successfully evaluated[330] or delegated[331] ccTLDs and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.
- Strings currently requested as IDN ccTLDs[332] (see Section 7.10.3.3 Strings Similar to Successfully Evaluated or Delegated ccTLDs or Their Variant Strings) and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.
- Other applied-for gTLD strings in the current application round and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.

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[326] Such strings are referred to as Visually Similar.
[327] In the future, after the next new gTLD round, some of these allocatable variant strings will be allocated (and are included in this category).
[328] Per GNSO Council motion 20251113, "[t]he relevant identifiers [associated with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and the International Olympic Committee and the full names of specific International Governmental Organizations and International Non-Governmental Organizations] shall not be included in the String Similarity Evaluation in the New gTLD Program and such a relevant identifier shall not operate as a bar to an application for a confusingly similar string by another applicant, during evaluation." See the full GNSO Council motion: https://gnso.icann.org/en/council/resolutions/2020-current#20251113. See also Section 7.2.2 Reserved Names.
[329] These are strings that are not of the following status: "Withdrawn", "RA Terminated", or "Delegated." All strings in process from the 2012 new gTLD round are published at: https://gtldresult.icann.org/. See also Board Resolution 2025.09.14.05-2025.09.14.06 on Termination Procedure for Remaining 2012 Round Applications that were not Successful: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-14-09-2025-en#section1.c.rationale.
[330] For a list of all successfully evaluated IDN ccTLDs, see https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/string-evaluation-completion-2014-02-19-en.
[331] All top-level domains currently in the root zone can be found at https://data.iana.org/TLD/tlds-alpha-by-domain.txt (the list is updated regularly).
[332] Strings currently requested in the IDN ccTLD Fast Track process (see https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/fast-track-2012-02-25-en) or an IDN ccTLD policy, which may replace the IDN ccTLD Fast Track process. There may be a period where both IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process and an IDN ccTLD Policy may be running concurrently. In such a case, prospective IDN ccTLD strings from both these processes will be considered in scope.

- A subset of Blocked Names[333] and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.
- All other two-letter ASCII strings[334] and all of their allocatable and blocked variant strings.

In addition, for each application, all of its blocked variant strings in its variant-strings-set will be compared against the following:

- Existing delegated gTLDs and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- The strings that were applied for in previous rounds of the New gTLD Program and that are still in process,[335] and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- Existing successfully evaluated or delegated ccTLDs and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- Strings currently requested as IDN ccTLDs (see Section 7.10.3.3 Strings Similar to Successfully Evaluated or Delegated ccTLDs or Their Variant Strings) and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- Other applied-for strings in the current application round and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- A subset of Blocked Names[336] and all of their allocatable variant strings.
- All other two-letter ASCII strings and all of their allocatable variant strings.

As an exception to the comparisons listed above, during the String Similarity Evaluation, the String Similarity Evaluation Panel may decide to omit some comparisons with the blocked variant strings. Any such decision must be based on the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines that justify such an omission citing a low level of confusability between the scripts being compared.

The table below summarizes the comparisons the String Similarity Evaluation Panel will perform, based on the categories marked as “Yes.” As noted, the String Similarity Evaluation Panel may omit comparisons for gray shaded cells marked “Yes*” if it concludes the scripts are unlikely to be confused, following the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines (Section 7.10.2.3). The comparisons listed as “No” will not be performed.

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[333] The broader definition of Blocked Names is provided in Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names. For the purposes of String Similarity Evaluation, only two categories are applicable: (i) Special-Use Domain Names, and (ii) ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure. Other categories of Blocked Names listed will not be used in String Similarity Evaluation.
[334] All two-letter ASCII codes are reserved for country code assignment by the independent ISO 3166 Management Agency.
[335] A string from a previous round of the New gTLD Program will be in one of the following statuses: “Active”, “In Contracting”, “On-hold”, or “In PDT.” Also see the Application status page: https://gtldresult.icann.org/application-result/applicationstatus.
[336] The broader definition of Blocked Names is provided in Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names. For the purposes of String Similarity Evaluation, only two categories are applicable: (i) Special-Use Domain Names, and (ii) ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure. Other categories of Blocked Names listed will not be used in String Similarity Evaluation.

Table 7-4: Scope of Comparisons Performed by the String Similarity Evaluation Panel

Categories for Comparison		The applied-for string		
		Primary string	All allocatable variant string(s)	All blocked variant string(s)
• Existing gTLD • Applied-for string from previous round(s) of the New gTLD Program still in process • Existing ccTLD • Requested IDN ccTLD • Another applied-for string • Blocked Name • Any two-Character ASCII	Primary String	Yes	Yes	Yes*
	All allocatable variant string(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes*
	All blocked variant string(s)	Yes*	Yes*	No

**The String Similarity Evaluation Panel may omit comparisons for gray shaded cells marked "Yes*" if it concludes the scripts are unlikely to be confused, following the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines.*

7.10.2 Methodology of String Similarity Evaluation

7.10.2.1 Same Primary or Variant Strings

Both uppercase forms and lower case forms of ASCII letters are considered, and any permutation of the casing in a string may be used for String Similarity Evaluation, for example, "EXAMPLE", "Example," or "example."

Applications from different applicants with strings from the same variant-strings-set will be marked as the same by the String Similarity Evaluation Panel.

7.10.2.2 Batching of Strings

If batching is required, the String Similarity Evaluation will be completed on all applied-for strings prior to the establishment of evaluation priority batches. For applications identified as part of a contention set, ICANN will put all the strings in the contention set in the same batch according to the highest priority string in that contention set.

7.10.2.3 String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines

The String Similarity Evaluation Panel will conduct the evaluation as per the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines, which will be posted on the New gTLD Program website.

7.10.2.4 Process for String Similarity Evaluation Panel

The String Similarity Evaluation will be conducted by an independent String Similarity Evaluation Panel. All applied-for strings and their variants will be evaluated against other applied-for strings and their variants, existing gTLDs, and Blocked Names, as detailed in Section 7.10.1 Scope of the String Similarity Evaluation.

The String Similarity Evaluation Panel will conduct the String Similarity Evaluation in the following steps:

1. Compile the lists of strings for comparison:
    a. Existing gTLDs
    b. Applied-for strings in previous rounds of the New gTLD Program and still in process
    c. Existing ccTLDs
    d. Requested IDN ccTLDs
    e. Other applied-for strings
    f. Blocked Names
    g. Two-character ASCII strings
2. Consider all allocatable variant strings of the above strings using the RZ-LGR.
3. Consider all blocked variant strings of the above strings using the RZ-LGR which are in the same script (mixed script strings for Kana and Han scripts as allowed by the RZ-LGR).
4. Decide which blocked variant strings to omit from the evaluation, if any, and document the rationale for the decision. Any such decision by the panel must be based on the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines (see Section 7.10.2.3) on the basis of a low level of confusability between the scripts of strings being compared.
5. Identify strings in different applications but in the same variant-strings-set to determine contention sets caused by same strings or variant strings.
6. Conduct the comparison of the strings to identify any sets of Visually Similar strings based on the String Similarity Evaluation Guidelines (see Section 7.10.2.3), and document the analysis. Visual similarity tools are not used as input for this process, but the String Similarity Evaluation Panel may use automation and data provided by the respective script community to make the manual comparison process efficient.
7. Determine and document (along with rationale) the outcome of the String Similarity Evaluation.

7.10.3 Outcomes of String Similarity Evaluation

As noted above, the String Similarity Evaluation Panel will conduct the analysis and determine the String Similarity Evaluation outcomes. These outcomes, along with their rationale, will be based on similarity comparisons conducted for all applied-for gTLD strings (including their variant-strings-set), as per the details in this section. The possible outcomes are as follows:

1. String Visually Similar to an existing gTLD or its variant strings.
2. String Visually Similar to an applied-for string in previous rounds of the New gTLD Program and still in process or its variant strings.
3. String Visually Similar to an existing ccTLD or its variant strings.
4. String Visually Similar to a requested IDN ccTLD or its variant strings.
5. String same as another applied-for string or its variant strings.
6. String Visually Similar to another applied-for string or its variant strings.
7. String Visually Similar to a Blocked Name or its variant strings.
8. String Visually Similar to a two-character ASCII string or its variant strings.
9. String not Visually Similar to any of these categories listed.

ICANN will publish the outcomes of the String Similarity Evaluation on the Evaluation Results Page of the New gTLD Program website.

All strings from a variant-strings-set, comprising the primary string and all of its allocatable and blocked variant strings, will share the same outcome of the String Similarity Evaluation:

- If any applied-for string or any of its variant strings is not able to proceed or placed in a contention set due to Visual Similarity, then the applied-for string and all of its variant strings (that is, the entire variant-strings-set) will share the same outcome.

- In cases when an application in a contention set prevails, it applies to the entire variant-strings-set, and all strings in the prevailing application can proceed to the next stage of the application process. See Section 5.2.2 String Contention Resolution.

7.10.3.1 Strings Visually Similar to Existing gTLDs or Their Variant Strings

If any applied-for string or any of its variant strings is found to be Visually Similar to any of the existing gTLDs or any of their variant strings, the application will not be able to proceed, except in the case stated below.

The exception occurs when the applied-for string is an allocatable variant of an existing gTLD, is part of the same variant-strings-set as the existing gTLD, the applied-for string

is found to be Visually Similar to that existing gTLD or any of its variant strings, and the applicant is the same registry operator of that existing gTLD. In this case, the application can proceed with evaluation as a variant string.

7.10.3.2 Strings Visually Similar to Strings and Their Variants Still in Process from Previous Rounds of the New gTLD Program

If an applied-for primary string or any of its variant strings is Visually Similar to an applied-for primary string or any of its variant strings that have been held over from a previous application round and are still in progress, the newly submitted application will be put on hold until the outcome of the application from the previous round has been determined.

- If the application from a previous round of the New gTLD Program successfully completes evaluation and is eligible for entry into a Base Registry Agreement, the entire variant-strings-set of the newly applied-for primary string is ineligible to proceed in the application process.
- If the application from a previous round is withdrawn or fails evaluation, the newly submitted application is eligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process.

A new applicant is not allowed to apply for a string that is part of the same variant-strings-set as the string from the previous round of the New gTLD Program that is still in process.

7.10.3.3 Strings Visually Similar to Successfully Evaluated or Delegated ccTLDs or Their Variant Strings

If any applied-for string or any of its variant strings is found to be Visually Similar to any of the successfully evaluated or delegated ccTLDs or any of their variant strings, the gTLD application will not proceed.

7.10.3.4 Strings Visually Similar to a Requested IDN ccTLD

An IDN ccTLD string can be requested through the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process or its successor on a rolling basis.[337] The IDN ccTLD string application process is separate and independent from the gTLD application process. If an applied-for gTLD

[337] The ccNSO is currently working on the IDN cc Policy Development Process (ccNSO PDP4 (De-)Selection of IDN ccTLDs), which is intended to replace the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process. Once the IDN ccPDP4 policy is approved and implemented, it will provide another mechanism for IDN ccTLD applicants and will also be applicable here.

string is found to be Visually Similar to any requested IDN ccTLDs,[338] the String Similarity Evaluation Panel will report it as a conflict with a requested IDN ccTLD, without forming a contention set, since contention sets are only for applied-for gTLD strings. ICANN will take the approach below to resolving the conflict.

If an applied-for gTLD string is found Visually Similar to a requested IDN ccTLD, ICANN will determine the outcome based on the completion status of their respective evaluation processes. The scenarios are as follows:

- A gTLD application that has successfully completed all relevant evaluation stages, including dispute resolution and string contention, if applicable, and is eligible for entry into a Base Registry Agreement, will be considered complete, and therefore that gTLD application (primary string and applied-for variant strings, if applicable) would not be disqualified by a newly filed IDN ccTLD request. The IDN ccTLD applicant will be informed accordingly.

- A requested primary IDN ccTLD string that is validated[339] will be considered complete. Therefore, that IDN ccTLD string (primary IDN ccTLD string and requested variant strings, if applicable) would not be disqualified by a newly filed gTLD application.

In the case where neither application has completed its respective evaluation process, the gTLD application (including the applied-for variant strings, if applicable) will be put on hold while the IDN ccTLD request (including the requested variant strings, if applicable) undergoes evaluation. The hold could be for an undetermined period of time based on the IDN ccTLD applicant providing sufficient documentation and input to complete its evaluation process, as solely governed by the IDN ccTLD application evaluation process. The gTLD applicant will be informed accordingly of one of two outcomes:

- Upon successful completion of its evaluation, the request for an IDN ccTLD will prevail and the gTLD application will not be approved.

- If the requested IDN ccTLD is not successfully evaluated, or withdrawn by the IDN ccTLD applicant, then the IDN gTLD string may proceed with application evaluation.

If the gTLD applicant received relevant government or public authority support or non-objection but its application is eventually eliminated due to Visual Similarity with a

[338] A requested IDN ccTLD string is one that has been submitted to ICANN through the IDN ccTLD application system and is undergoing string evaluation.
[339] The term “validated” essentially means successfully evaluated. This term was initially defined in the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process Implementation and reaffirmed in the ccPDP4 Initial Report. See the “Validation of IDN ccTLD Strings & Variants” section in the ccPDP4 Initial Report for more details.

string requested in the IDN ccTLD application process, a full refund of the evaluation fee will be issued if the gTLD application was submitted before the ccTLD's publication.

An applicant is not allowed to apply for a gTLD string that is part of the same variant-strings-set as an applied-for ccTLD string that is validated.

7.10.3.5 Identical or Visually Similar Strings to Applied-for Strings and Their Variants

If any applied-for primary string and any of its variant strings are found to be Visually Similar to each other, and these strings are applied for in the same application, they will not be put in contention with each other and can proceed as primary and variant strings of each other.

If any applied-for string or any of its variant strings are found to be identical or Visually Similar to any other applied-for strings or any of their variant strings, the variant-string-sets[340] for these applications will be placed in a contention set by the String Similarity Evaluation Panel. A contention set contains at least two applied-for strings that are identical or Visually Similar to one another or their variants. See Module 5 Contention Set Resolution for more information on contention sets and contention resolution.

These contention sets will also include information on direct contention (string A is confusable with string B) or indirect contention through string Visual Similarity transitivity (string A is confusable with string B and string B is confusable with string C but string A and string C are not confusable) or string-variant Visual Similarity transitivity (for example, string A is confusable with string B-variant-1 and string B-variant-2 is confusable with string C but string A and string C are not confusable). Indirect contention can be resolved to allow both string A and string C to proceed in case string B cannot proceed, but if string B proceeds, neither string A nor string C can proceed.

7.10.3.6 Strings Visually Similar to a Blocked Name

If any applied-for string or any of its variant strings is found to be Visually Similar to any Blocked Name[341] or any of its variant strings, the application will not proceed.

[340] As defined in Section 3.1.8.3.1.3 Choosing Primary and Variant Strings Using the RZ-LGR.
[341] The broader definition of Blocked Names is provided in Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names. For the purposes of String Similarity Evaluation, only two categories are applicable: (i) Special-Use Domain Names, and (ii) ICANN, IANA, and IETF-Related Bodies and Internet Infrastructure. Other categories of Blocked Names listed will not be used in String Similarity Evaluation.

7.10.3.7 String Visually Similarity with a Two-Character ASCII String

If any applied-for two-character string or any of its variant strings is found to be Similar to any two-character ASCII string or any of its variant strings, the applied-for string will not proceed.

7.10.3.8 Outcomes of String Similarity Evaluation

The outcomes discussed above are summarized in the table below. If the string is deemed not Visually Similar to any of the strings from any of the categories, it can proceed to the next stage in the application evaluation process.

Table 7-5: Outcomes for the gTLD Application Due to the String Similarity Evaluation Performed by the Panel

	If the **applied-for string** or any member of its **variant-strings-set** is found to be:		
	Same as	**Variant of**	**Visually Similar to (but not a variant of)**
Existing gTLD	Application will not be accepted.	Application can proceed if existing registry operator is also the applicant.	Application cannot proceed.
Applied-for string from previous round(s) of the New gTLD Program still in process[342]	Application will not be accepted.	Application will not be accepted.	Application put on hold until the previous string completes evaluation. Application can proceed with evaluation if the gTLD string from the previous round is withdrawn or not successfully evaluated.
Existing ccTLD	Application will not be accepted.	Application will not be accepted.	Application cannot proceed.
Requested IDN ccTLD	Application will not be accepted if the IDN ccTLD string has been validated. Application put on hold while the ccTLD string undergoes evaluation.	Application will not be accepted if the IDN ccTLD string has been validated. Application put on hold while the ccTLD string undergoes evaluation.	Application can proceed if it has successfully completed all relevant evaluation stages, and is eligible for entry into a Base Registry Agreement at the time of

[342] These are strings that are not of the following status: “Withdrawn”, “RA Terminated”, or “Delegated.” All strings in process from the 2012 new gTLD round are published at: https://gtldresult.icann.org/. See also Board Resolution 2025.09.14.05-2025.09.14.06 on Termination Procedure for Remaining 2012 Round Applications that were not Successful: https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-14-09-2025-en#section1.c.rationale.

	If the **applied-for string** or any member of its **variant-strings-set** is found to be:		
	Same as	**Variant of**	**Visually Similar to (but not a variant of)**
			filing of the IDN ccTLD request. Otherwise, application put on hold until ccTLD evaluation is completed and application can proceed if Requested IDN ccTLD is withdrawn or not successfully evaluated.
Other Applied-for gTLD String	Application put in contention set.	Application not put in contention set if the other applied-for string is a variant string by the same applicant. Application put in contention set if other applied-for string is by a different applicant.	Application put in contention set.
Blocked Name	Application will not be accepted.	Application will not be accepted.	Application cannot proceed.
Two-Character ASCII String	Application will not be accepted.	Application will not be accepted.	Application cannot proceed.

7.10.4 Challenging String Similarity Evaluation

The String Similarity Evaluation may be challenged. If an applicant believes the String Similarity Evaluation Panel made a factual or procedural error – such as when it determined that the applicant's applied-for string (or a variant string) is Visually Similar and therefore either cannot proceed or should be placed in a contention set based on the cases listed above – then the applicant may file a challenge.

The evaluation challenge will be assessed under a "clearly erroneous" standard of review. Specifically, the Evaluation Challenge Service Provider must accept the String Similarity Evaluation Panel's evaluation determination unless: (1) the panel failed to follow the established evaluation procedures, or (2) failed to consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information.

The evaluation challenge can be made within 21 days from the date of transmission of the String Similarity Evaluation determination. The String Similarity Evaluation Panel will communicate the conclusions resulting from the Evaluation Challenge within 30 days of an applicant filing such a challenge.

If the String Similarity Evaluation Panel finds a factual, procedural, or system error, then the String Similarity Evaluation for the application will be reevaluated, taking into account the findings of the Evaluation Challenge.

If the String Similarity Evaluation Panel does not find any factual, procedural, or system error, then:

- If the challenge is based on a determination that an applied-for string is Visually Similar to an existing gTLD, any already applied-for string from a previous round of the New gTLD Program, any existing ccTLD, a requested IDN ccTLD that has been validated, any other two-character ASCII string, or any other Blocked Name, the application will not proceed further.
- If the challenge is based on a determination that an applied-for string is Visually Similar to another applied-for string, the application remains in the relevant contention set.

7.10.5 Exception for .Brand TLDs

If an applied-for string has met the criteria to be qualified as a .Brand TLD (see Section 7.1.2.4 Applications for .Brand TLDs), and this applied-for .Brand TLD is found Similar as per details in Table 7-5: Outcomes for the gTLD Application Due to the String Similarity Evaluation Performed by the Panel above, and therefore is either unable to proceed or put in a contention set, then that .Brand TLD applicant will have the opportunity to change their string. The rules for the string change for .Brand TLD applications can be found in Section 5.3 .Brand String Change Requests.[343]

[343] The .Brand String Change Request is separate from the replacement string process. See Section 5.1 Replacement Strings.

Appendix 1 Application Questions

A1.1 Overview

The applying entity[344] should prepare in advance to provide complete and correct answers to the questions described in this section.

Certain questions will be subjected to evaluation as described in the question matrix and elsewhere in this Guidebook. ICANN may share some or all of an application with third-party expert evaluators under contract with ICANN to evaluate the response against the stated criteria.

The applying entity is expected to follow the instructions carefully and provide complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses to all required questions.

A1.2 Application Questions in the TLD Application Management System

ICANN's TLD Application Management System (TAMS) will direct the applying entity to provide answers to the appropriate questions given the application type and other factors determined by the policies and procedures described in this Guidebook. The TAMS system uses a progressive or "wizard" approach to collect responses to application questions. TAMS will guide the applying entity to answer the questions necessary for its specific application; not every question will be required for every application.

As noted in Sections 1.2.1.3 and 3.1.3, the application will consist of the following sections to be completed (in this order) upon user registration:

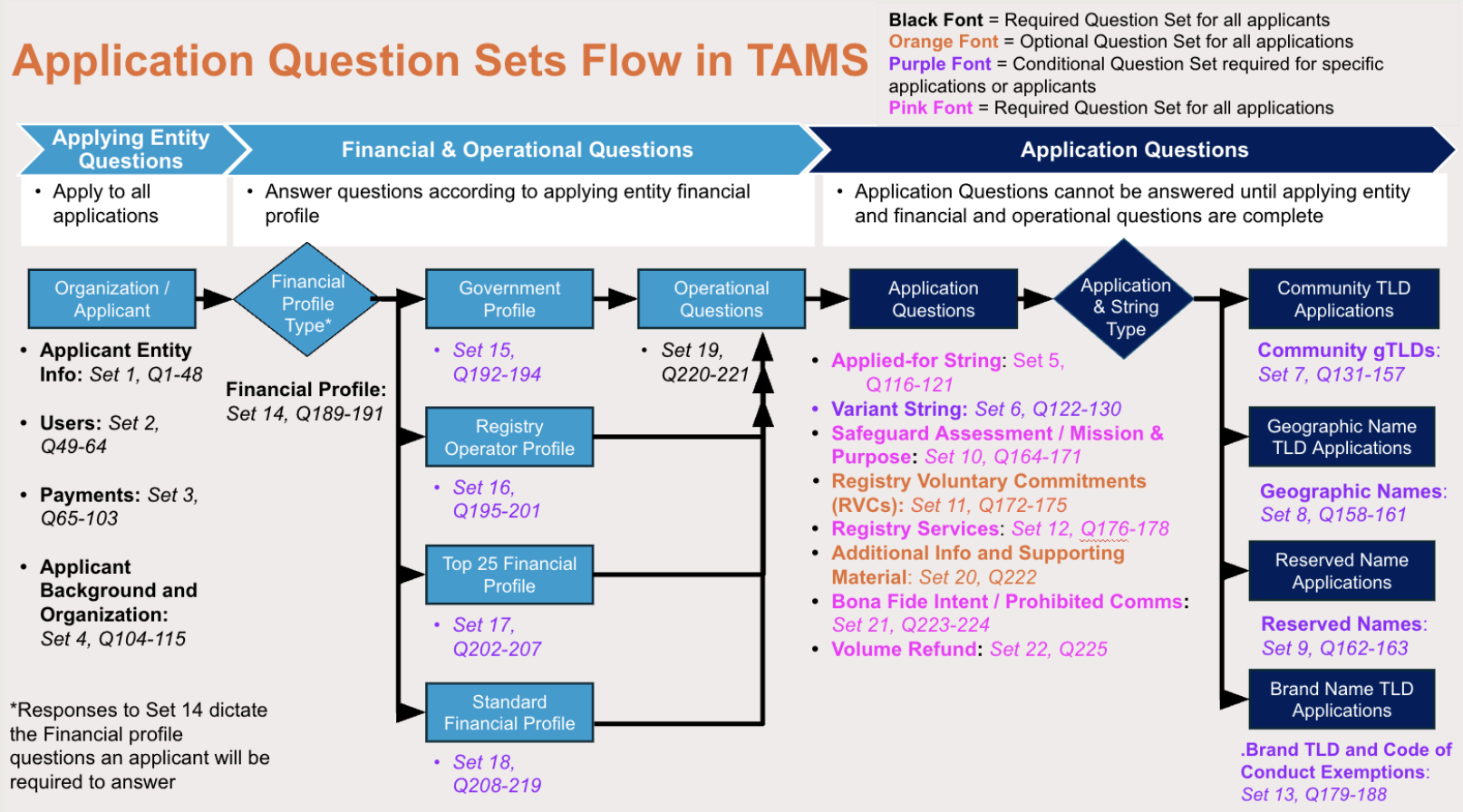
1. Organization Information
2. Financial Information
3. gTLD Application Information

To complete the application, the applying entity must answer a series of questions and provide supporting documents, as required. The system will validate that all mandatory fields include a response before the applying entity can submit its application.

[344] For purposes of the application questions and to ensure clarity, the term "applying entity" is being used as opposed to "applicant," which is used throughout the Guidebook. "Applying entity" is the legal entity (for example, the organization, company, etc.) to which the application will be attributed and that will act as registry operator upon successful completion of all application processes and the signing of the registry agreement with ICANN.

The graphic below provides an overview of the flow of questions in TAMS as it relates to the flow of questions and the question sets described in this Appendix (see Table A1-1).

Figure A1-1 Application Question Sets Flow in TAMS



The question sets in Table A1-1 also include the relevant TAMS question number or question set number to help map the application questions listed here to TAMS. As can be seen above, the specific order and question numbers differ slightly from how they appear in this section. Additionally, due to system requirements, some of the wording in the application questions listed here may differ slightly from the TAMS questions to conform to the system and the "wizard"-based approach.

A1.3 Guidelines for Filling out the Application

There are a few key guidelines to keep in mind when filling out the application. The applying entity should:

- Answer all organization and financial questions from the perspective of the applying entity.
- Include only Latin characters, accented letters, numbers, punctuation, and typographical symbols for all text fields.[345]
- Avoid adding titles, suffixes, or abbreviations in the full legal name fields unless they appear in the official documents for the individual or entity.
- See the list of ISO country codes at https://www.iso.org/obp/ui for all fields requesting a two-letter ISO country code.

Table A1-1 Application Question Sets and Descriptions

Set	Focus of Questions	TAMS Section Number and Name	Purpose	Applicable to
1	Applying Entity[346] Information	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information regarding the legal entity that would enter into a Registry Agreement with ICANN upon successful completion of all relevant application processes. The information collected is intended to be used for background screening.	All applying entity and application types
2	Users	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information related to the individuals who will have access to TAMS, manage the application, and receive	All applying entity and application types

[345] All application materials must be submitted in English, unless an application question specifically allows another language to be used.

[346] For purposes of the application questions and to ensure clarity, the term "applying entity" is being used as opposed to "applicant," which is used throughout the Guidebook. "Applying entity" is the legal entity (for example, the organization, company, etc.) to which the application will be attributed and that will act as registry operator upon successful completion of all application processes and the signing of the registry agreement with ICANN.

Set	Focus of Questions	TAMS Section Number and Name	Purpose	Applicable to
			inquiries.	
3	Payments	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects the requisite Information for invoicing, payments, and refunds.	All applying entity and application types
4	Applicant Background and Organization	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects the requisite Information for conducting the background screening checks.	All applying entity and application types
5	Applied-for String	TAMS.1. Primary String	This question set collects basic information regarding the string that is being applied for (for example, a-label, meaning, script).	All applying entity and application types
6	Variant String(s)	TAMS.2. Variant String	This question set collects basic information regarding any variants of the primary string that are being applied for.	All applying entity and application types that are also applying for a variant string
7	Community gTLDs	TAMS.3. Community	This question set collects information specific to Community gTLDs. See 7.1.2.1 Applications for Community gTLDs.	Applying entities for Community gTLDs
8	Geographic Names	TAMS.4. Geographic Determination	This question set collects information specific to Geographic Names. See 7.5 Geographic Names.	Applying entities for Geographic Names
9	Reserved Names	TAMS.5. Reserved Names	This question set collects information specific to Reserved Names. See 7.2.2 Reserved Names.	Applying entities for Reserved Names
10	Safeguard Assessment/Mission and Purpose	TAMS.6. Safeguard Identification	This question set collects information related to determining whether certain Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (Safeguard PICs) are required for the applied-for gTLD string (see 7.8.2.3 Safeguard PICs).	All applying entity and application types
11	Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs)	TAMS.7. Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs)	This question set collects information related to any Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) that the applying entity is submitting. See also Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments.	Applying entities wishing to submit RVCs

Set	Focus of Questions	TAMS Section Number and Name	Purpose	Applicable to
12	Registry Services	TAMS.8. Registry Service Provider	This question set collects information regarding any selected RSPs and the registry services that the applying entity intends to provide as a registry operator for the applied-for gTLD string.	All applying entity and application types
13	.Brand TLD and Code of Conduct Exemptions	TAMS.9. .Brand & Code of Conduct Exemptions	This question set collects information related to whether the applied-for gTLD string is a .Brand or if the applying entity is seeking a Code of Conduct exemption. See also Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation and Section 7.4 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation.	Applying entities for .Brand TLDs or wishing to limit registrations
14	Financial Profile Determination	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	Based on defined criteria and the responses of the applying entity to the questions below, ICANN will assign each applying entity one of the four financial profiles. See also Section 6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation.	All applying entity and application types
15	Government Financial Profile	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the government profile.	Applying entities in the “Government Profile”
16	Registry Operator Financial Profile	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Registry Operator profile.	Applying entities in the “Registry Operator Profile”
17	Top 25 Financial Profile	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Top 25 Profile.	Applying entities in the “Top 25 Profile”
18	Standard Financial Profile	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Standard Profile.	Applying entities in the “Standard Profile”
19	Operational Questions	TAMS.0. Applicant Organization Information	This question set collects additional information related to the operations of an applying entity.	All applying entity and application types
20	Additional Information and Supporting Material	TAMS.10. Additional Information and Supporting Material	This question set collects any additional information that the applying entity would like to provide, including any	All applying entity and application types

Set	Focus of Questions	TAMS Section Number and Name	Purpose	Applicable to
			supporting materials.	
21	Bona Fide Intent and Prohibited Communications	TAMS.11. Bona Fide Intent and Prohibited Communications	This question set contains attestations related to the applying entity's acknowledgment of bona fide intent and prohibited communications (see Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities).	All applying entity and application types
22	Volume Refund	TAMS.12. Volume Refund	This question set contains the applying entity's preference for the Volume Refund. See also Section 3.3.3.2 Application Volume Refund.	All applying entity and application types

Question Set 1: Applying Entity Information

This question set collects information regarding the legal entity that would enter into a Registry Agreement with ICANN upon successful completion of all relevant application processes. This information collected under this question set is intended to be used for background screening. Any material misstatement or misrepresentation (or omission of material information) may cause the application to be rejected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Applying Entity	1	Full Legal Name[347]	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the full legal name of the applying entity as it appears on the official registration documents. Do not use abbreviations.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Applying Entity	2	Doing Business As	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the name under which the applying entity is doing business, if different from the full legal name answered in Question 1. Such a name must be registered with appropriate local jurisdiction or public authority.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Applying Entity	3	Legal Entity Form/Business Structure	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the long form (no acronyms) of the legal entity form/business structure of the applying entity as it appears on the official registration documents. If the original script of the legal entity form/business structure is not English, ONLY provide its official English translation. No additional information should be provided as this will be used for the automatic population of the Registry Agreement. *Notes:* 1. Legal entity form/business structure refers to the type of business the entity is registered as. 2. Examples of legal forms/business structures may include "Corporation", "Limited Liability Company", "Public/Private Limited Company (Ltd.)", “Nonprofit”, “Government Entity”, “Intergovernmental Organization”, etc. 3. Natural persons and sole proprietorships do not qualify. 4. This is not the same as the full legal name of the entity.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

[347] For persons, TAMS will request the First Name and Last Name. For entities, TAMS will request the Full Legal Name.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Applying Entity	4	Jurisdiction	Yes	*Instructions:* The jurisdiction indicates the location in which the business of the applying entity is registered for legal and financial purposes. This is either 1) a country name, or a 2) state/territory name, depending on where the applying entity is registered. No additional information should be provided as this will be used for the automatic population of the Base Registry Agreement. Examples include "Delaware", "Germany", etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Applying Entity	5	Tax ID, Business ID, VAT Registration Number, or Equivalent	No	*Instructions:* Enter the number issued such as a Tax ID, Business ID, VAT Registration Number, or equivalent issued by the local jurisdiction.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Applying Entity	6	Issuing Authority	No	*Instructions:* Enter the name of the authority that issued the Tax ID, Business ID, VAT Registration Number, or equivalent as per answer to question 5.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Applying Entity	7	Legal Entity Identifier (LEI)	No	*Instructions:* Enter the Legal Entity Identifier (LEI), a 20-character, alpha-numeric code that uniquely identifies legal entities participating in financial transactions, for the applying entity, if available.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	Must be 20 alphanumeric (a-z, 0-9) characters
Applying Entity	8	Proof of Establishment	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide articles of incorporation/association/organization or other equivalent documents filed with the issuing authority (statutes, membership agreement, etc.) of the entity. 2. If the applying entity is a government body/organization or an intergovernmental organization, provide a certified copy of the relevant statute or governmental decision under which it has been established.	CR-1. Upload the appropriate documentation.	Upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Applying Entity	9	Proof of Good Standing	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a good standing certificate (or equivalent) that states that the applying entity is, among other things, compliant with annual filing requirements, active, not subject to any administrative orders or action against it, not in liquidation, is current on any required fees and dues, etc. 2. Where the authority that issues business registration documents in the applying entity's jurisdiction does not maintain documentation of good standing (or equivalent), such that the applying entity cannot provide this documentation, the applying entity must submit an affidavit drafted and signed by a notary public or a legal practitioner duly qualified in the courts of the applying entity's jurisdiction, declaring that the organization is established and in good standing.	CR-1. Upload the appropriate documentation. CR-2. Good standing certificate must be no more than six months old at the time of application submission.	Upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Applying Entity	10	Website URL	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the website URL of the applying entity, if available. *Notes:* A valid URL must start with 'http://' or 'https://' followed by the domain name (for example, "https://www.example.com").	CR-1. Enter a valid URL in the text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Entered text must be valid URL
Applying Entity	11	Is the applying entity an existing registry operator, ICANN accredited registrar, or an Affiliate of either?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Choose Yes or No. 2. Use the definition of Affiliate from the Base Registry Agreement (see Base Registry Agreement: https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement).	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected
Applying Entity	12	If "Yes", explain.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Specify if the applying entity is an existing registry operator, ICANN accredited registrar, and/or an Affiliate of a registry operator and/or registrar. 2. If the applying entity is an Affiliate, provide the details of such Affiliate relationship, including the name of the affiliated registry operator and/or registrar. 3. If the applying entity is an ICANN accredited registrar, specify the registrar ID number.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Applying Entity	13	Is the applying entity a back-end registry service provider (RSP), an ICANN-approved data escrow agent, an emergency back-end registry operator, a Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) service provider, an ICANN dispute resolution service provider, a Privacy or Proxy Service Provider, or a Reseller?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Choose Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected
Applying Entity	14	If the applying entity is an Affiliate of any of the entities listed in Question 13, explain.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Use the definition of Affiliate from the Base Registry Agreement (see Base Registry Agreement: https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement). 2. Provide the type of the provider and the name of the applicable entity of which the applying entity is an Affiliate.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in the text field.	4000 character limit
Stock and Exchange	15	Stock Symbol	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. If the applying entity is publicly traded, provide its stock symbol. 2. If the applying entity is traded under multiple symbols/tickers, provide the symbol of the entity's primary equity listing that has the most units outstanding.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Stock and Exchange	16	Stock Exchange	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. If the applying entity is publicly traded, select the Stock Exchange with which the applying entity is listed. 2. If the applying entity is traded on multiple exchanges, provide the exchange of the entity's primary equity listing.	CR-1. Select an option from the dropdown menu.	Choose one of the provided options.
Primary Business Phone	17	Phone Country Code	Yes		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Primary Business Phone	18	Primary Business Phone	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the primary business phone number without including the country code.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	Must be valid phone number format
Primary Business Email Address	19	Primary Business Email Address	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the primary business email address of the applying entity.	CR-1. Enter a valid email address in the text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Entered text must be valid email address.
Primary Business Address	20	Address Line 1	Yes	*Instructions:* Enter the street address (no PO Box).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Must be a physical address, no PO Box.
Primary Business Address	21	Address Line 2	Yes		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary Business Address	22	Locality	Yes	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary Business Address	23	State/Province/Region	Yes	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary Business Address	24	Postal Code	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary Business Address	25	Country Code of Location	Yes		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected.
Direct Parent Company	26	Full Legal Name	Yes	*Instructions:* If applicable, provide the full legal name as it appears on the official registration documents of the Direct Parent Company of the applying entity. Do not use abbreviations. *Notes:* *“*Direct Parent Company” means, with respect to an Applicant, the entity that directly possesses the power to direct the management and policies of such Applicant through the ownership of voting securities, as a general partner, as a managing member, by contract, or otherwise.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.Notes: CR-2. If this field is populated, all following questions in this subsection Questions 27-35**)** are required.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	27	Doing Business As	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the name under which the Direct Parent Company is doing business, if different from the full legal name answered in Question 26. Such a name must be registered with appropriate local jurisdiction or public authority.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Direct Parent Company	28	Legal Entity Form/Business Structure	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the long form (no acronyms) of the legal entity form/business structure of the Direct Parent Company as it appears on the official registration documents. If the original script of the legal entity form/business structure is not English, ONLY provide its official English translation. *Notes:* 1. Legal entity form/business structure refers to the type of business the entity is registered as. 2. Examples of legal forms may include "Corporation", "Limited Liability Company", "Public/Private Limited Company (Ltd.)", “Nonprofit”, “Government Entity”, “Intergovernmental Organization”, etc. 3. Natural persons and sole proprietorships do not qualify. 4. This is not the same as the full legal name of the entity.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	29	Jurisdiction	Yes	*Instructions:* The jurisdiction indicates the location in which the business of the Direct Parent Company is registered for legal and financial purposes. This is either 1) a country name, or a 2) state/territory name, depending on where the Direct Parent Company is registered. Examples include "Delaware", "Germany", etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	30	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Enter the street address (no PO Box).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Must be a physical address, no PO Box.
Direct Parent Company	31	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	32	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	33	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Direct Parent Company	34	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Direct Parent Company	35	Country Code of Location	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Ultimate Parent Company	36	Full Legal Name	Yes	*Instructions:* If applicable, provide the full legal name as it appears on the official registration documents of the Ultimate Parent Company of the applying entity. Do not use abbreviations. *Notes:* *"Ultimate Parent Company" means, with respect to an Applicant (and, if applicable, a Direct Parent Company), the top-level entity that directly or indirectly possesses the power to direct the management and policies of such Applicant (and, if applicable, a Direct Parent Company) through the ownership of voting securities, as a general partner, as a managing member, by contract, or otherwise. An Ultimate Parent Company is not controlled by any other entity. If there are no intermediary entities between the Applicant and the Ultimate Parent Company, the Ultimate Parent Company would be the same entity as the Direct Parent Company.*	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field. CR-2. If this field is populated, all following questions in this subsection (Questions 37-48) are required.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	37	Doing Business As	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the name under which the Ultimate Parent Company is doing business, if different from the full legal name answered in Question 36. Such a name must be registered with appropriate local jurisdiction or public authority.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Ultimate Parent Company	38	Legal Entity Form/Business Structure	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the long form (no acronyms) of the legal entity form/business structure of the Ultimate Parent Company as it appears on the official registration documents. If the original script of the legal entity form/business structure is not English, ONLY provide its official English translation. *Notes:* 1. Legal entity form/business structure refers to the type of business the entity is registered as. 2. Examples of legal forms may include "Corporation", "Limited Liability Company", "Public/Private Limited Company (Ltd.)", “Nonprofit”, “Government Entity”, “Intergovernmental Organization”, etc. 3. Natural persons and sole proprietorships do not qualify. 4. This is not the same as the full legal name of the entity.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	39	Jurisdiction	Yes	*Instructions:* The jurisdiction indicates the location in which the business of the Ultimate Parent Company is registered for legal and financial purposes. This is either 1) a country name, or a 2) state/territory name, depending on where the Direct Parent Company is registered. Examples include "Delaware", "Germany", etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	40	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Enter the street address (no PO Box)	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Must be a physical address, no PO Box.
Ultimate Parent Company	41	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	42	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	43	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Ultimate Parent Company	44	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Ultimate Parent Company	45	Country Code of Location	*No*		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected.
Ultimate Parent Company	46	Graphical Representation of Ownership	No	*Instructions:* Provide a graphical representation of ownership (for example, an organizational chart), which includes percentages of the associated entities or persons from the applying entity to the Ultimate Parent Company.	CR-1. Upload the appropriate documentation.	Upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Applying Entity	47	After reviewing the Base Registry Agreement, does the applying entity believe there are any unique legal, jurisdictional, or regulatory issues that would prevent the applying entity from executing the agreement as-is? As the Registry Agreement is a product of extensive community consultation, ICANN only considers modification to it in extraordinary circumstances.	No	*Instructions:* Choose Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Applying Entity	48	If the applying entity answered yes to the above Question #47, please briefly explain.	No	*Instructions:* Provide an explanation.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field. CR-2. Text allowed is 4,000 characters or less.	4000 character limit

Question Set 2: Users

This question set collects information related to the individuals who will have access to TLD Application Management System (TAMS), manage the application, and receive inquiries. Information for two (2) distinct Primary Users must be provided. Information for up to five (5) distinct Additional Users may be entered. Multiple Users repeat #49-64.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Primary User	49	Full Legal Name	No	*Instructions:* Enter the full legal name of the Primary User as it appears on their passport or government-issued ID. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. *Notes:* 1. Primary User is defined as the individual designated by the applying entity with the primary responsibility for management of the application, including responding to tasks in the TLD Application Management System (TAMS) during the various application phases. The Primary User listed should also be prepared to receive inquiries from ICANN and the public. 2. Information for two (2) Primary Users must be provided. 3. Information for up to five (5) Additional Users may be provided, if desired. Additional Users may access TAMS at a limited capacity to assist the Primary Users with respect to the application.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary User	50	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Enter the mailing address of the Primary User.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary User	51	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary User	52	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary User	53	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary User	54	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Identifying Information	55	Country Code of Business Location/Address	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected.
Identifying Information	56	Year of Birth	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	An option must be selected.
Identifying Information	57	Phone Country Code	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected.
Identifying Information	58	Phone Number	No	*Instructions:* Provide the business phone number of the user without including the country code.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	Must be valid phone number format
Identifying Information	59	Email Address	No	Instructions: A distinct email address for each user is required in order to protect the access to the system of the applying entity, should one of the users lose its credentials.	CR-1. Enter a valid email address in the text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Entered text must be valid email address.
Identifying Information	60	Country Code of Residence	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Identifying Information	61	Percentage of Shares	No	Instructions: Provide the percentage of shares of the applying entity owned by this user, in the numerical value form (for example, 15%, etc.).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Identifying Information	62	Organization Title in the Applying Entity	No	*Instructions:* Provide the title of this user with respect to the organization of the applying entity (for example, CEO, CFO, Director, etc.). If the user is not employed by the applying entity, indicate "contractor," "consultant," or equivalent.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Identifying Information	63	Does this user hold the position of Director, Officer, or some other position of significant influence? If yes, please list the title.	No	*Instructions:* 1. If the user holds a position of significant influence, please list the title in the space provided. 2. If not, type "Not Applicable"	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Identifying Information	64	Is this user a Signatory Officer of the applying entity?	No	*Notes:* A signatory officer is an individual authorized to sign legally binding documents on behalf of the applying entity.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected

Question Set 3: Payments

This question set collects the requisite Information for invoicing, payments, and refunds. Note, all banking information will be kept confidential; invoices will be issued prior to any payment necessary for the gTLD Application processing.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Payor	65	Full Legal Name	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide information on who will be making payments with respect to the application on behalf of the applying entity. 2. If the payor is a business, provide the full legal name as it appears on the official registration documents of the payor. Do not use abbreviations. 3. If the payor is an individual, provide the full legal name of the payor as it appears on their passport or government-issued ID. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. 4. If the payor is an individual, TAMS will also request the following information: country code of residence, title of the individual, and year of birth.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Payor	66	Doing Business As (If Applicable)	No	*Instructions:* If the payor is a business, provide the name under which the payor is doing business, if different from the full legal name answered in Question 65. Such a name must be registered with appropriate local jurisdiction or public authority.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field. CR-2. This field is only required if the payor is a business entity.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Payor	67	Legal Entity Form/Business Structure (If Applicable)	No	*Instructions:* If the payor is a business, provide the long form (no acronyms) of the legal entity form/business structure of the payor as it appears on the official registration documents. If the original script of the legal entity form/business structure is not English, ONLY provide its official English translation. *Notes:* 1. Legal entity form/business structure refers to the type of business the entity is registered as. 2. Examples of legal forms may include "Corporation", "Limited Liability Company", "Public/Private Limited Company (Ltd.)", “Nonprofit”, “Government Entity”, “Intergovernmental Organization”, etc. 3. Natural persons and sole proprietorships do not qualify. 4. This is not the same as the full legal name of the entity.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field. CR-2. This field is only required if the payor is a business entity.	255 character limit
Payor	68	Jurisdiction (If applicable)	No	*Instructions:* Answer this question if the payor is a business. The jurisdiction indicates the location in which the business of the payor is registered for legal and financial purposes. This is either 1) a country name, or a 2) state/territory name, depending on where the payor is registered. Examples include "Delaware", "Germany", etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field. CR-2. This field is only required if the payor is a business entity.	255 character limit
Payor Primary Business Address	69	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Enter the street address (No PO Box) of the primary business address of the payor.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Must be a physical address, no PO Box.
Payor Primary Business Address	70	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Payor Primary Business Address	71	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Payor Primary Business Address	72	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Payor Primary Business Address	73	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Payor Primary Business Address	74	Country Code of Location	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Financial Institution	75	Financial Institution Name	No	*Instructions:* Provide the name of the financial institution (for example, the name of a bank, credit union, investment firm, etc.).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	76	Beneficiary Name	No	*Instructions:* Provide the beneficiary name as it appears on the account in the financial institution listed in the answer to Question 75 bank account. A beneficiary is defined as the registered owner of the account being used for payment with respect to the application.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	77	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Provide the mailing address of the bank branch that is associated with the account information provided in the answers to Questions 85-90.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	78	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	79	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc. of the bank branch that is associated with the account information provided in answers to Questions 85-90.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	80	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc. (if applicable) of the bank branch which the applying entity will use to wire fees to ICANN and is associated with the account information provided in answers to Questions 85-90.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	81	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code of the bank branch that is associated with the account information provided in answers to Questions 85-90, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	82	Country Code of Location	No	*Instructions:* Choose the Country Code of the bank branch that is associated with the account information provided in answers to Questions 85-90.	CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Institution	83	Legal Entity Form/Business Structure	No	*Instructions:* Provide the long form (no acronyms) of the legal entity form/business structure of the financial institution as it appears on the official registration documents. If the original script of the legal entity form/business structure is not English, ONLY provide its official English translation. *Notes:* 1. Legal entity form/business structure refers to the type of business the entity is registered as. 2. Examples of legal forms may include "Corporation", "Limited Liability Company", "Public/Private Limited Company (Ltd.)", “Nonprofit”, “Government Entity”, “Intergovernmental Organization”, etc. 3. Natural persons and sole proprietorships do not qualify. 4. This is not the same as the full legal name of the entity.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	84	Jurisdiction	No	*Instructions:* The jurisdiction indicates the location in which the business of the financial institution is registered for legal and financial purposes. This is either 1) a country name, or a 2) state/territory name, depending on where the financial institution is registered. Examples include "Delaware", "Germany", etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	85	Transit/Domestic Routing Number	No	*Instructions:* Provide the Transit/Domestic Routing Number of the payor.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	86	IBAN	No	*Instructions:* Provide the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) of the payor, if applicable. *Notes:* IBAN consists of up to 34 alphanumeric characters, beginning with a two-letter country code, followed by two check digits used for security purposes. What comes next is a string of domestic banking details, referred to as Basic Bank Account Numbers (BBAN): the bank identifier code, Branch code (also known as Sort Code in UK), and the bank account number.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Institution	87	SWIFT Code	No	*Instructions:* Provide the SWIFT Code of the payor. The SWIFT Code is also known as Bank Identifier Code (BIC code). The code must be 8 or 11 alphanumeric [0-9,a-z] characters.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	Must be 8 or 11 alphanumeric [0-9,a-z] characters
Financial Institution	88	Account Number	No	*Instructions:* Provide the account number of the payor.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Financial Institution	89	Account Type	No	*Instructions:* Select an account type of the payor.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	An option must be selected
Financial Institution	90	Account Category	No	*Instructions:* Select the account category of the payor.	CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu. CR-2. Options are: Non-US, US Business, US Corporate, or US Personal.	An option must be selected
Billing Point of Contact	91	Full Legal Name	No	*Instructions:* Enter the full legal name of the individual serving as a Billing Point of Contact as it appears on their passport or government-issued ID. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. *Notes:* 1. The Billing Point of Contact is the individual designated with the billing related responsibility, such as making payments and handling refund related matters. 2. If the Billing Point of Contact is the same as one of the users as provided under Question Set 2, please re-enter the information of the user.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Billing Point of Contact	92	Address Line 1	No	*Instructions:* Enter the mailing address of the Billing Point of Contact.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Billing Point of Contact	93	Address Line 2	No		CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Billing Point of Contact	94	Locality	No	*Instructions:* Enter the city, village, municipality, etc.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Billing Point of Contact	95	State/Province/Region	No	*Instructions:* Enter the state, province, department, territory, prefecture, oblast, etc., if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Billing Point of Contact	96	Postal Code	No	*Instructions:* 1. Enter the postal code, if applicable. 2. If a postal code does not exist, type “Not Applicable”.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Billing Point of Contact	97	Country Code of Business Location/Address	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Billing Point of Contact	98	Country Code of Residence	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Billing Point of Contact	99	Year of Birth	No	.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	An option must be selected
Billing Point of Contact	100	Phone Country Code	No		CR-1. Select from a Dropdown Menu of Country Codes (taken from ISO list).	An option must be selected
Billing Point of Contact	101	Phone Number	No	*Instructions:* Provide the business phone number of the Billing Point of Contact without including the country code.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	Must be valid phone number format
Billing Point of Contact	102	Email Address	No		CR-1. Enter a valid email address in the text field.	1. 255 character limit 2. Entered text must be valid email address.
Billing Point of Contact	103	Organization Title in the Applying Entity	No	*Instructions:* Provide the title of this Billing Point of Contact with respect to the organization of the applying entity (for example, CEO, CFO, Director, etc.). If the contact is not employed by the applying entity, indicate "contractor," "consultant," or regional equivalent.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Question Set 4: Applying Entity Background and Organization

This question set collects the requisite Information for conducting the background screening checks.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Directors	104	List all directors of the applying entity.	Partial - Names Only	*Instructions:* Enter the full legal name, year of birth, country code of business, country code of residence, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), and title of all directors (that is, members of the applying entity's Board of Directors, if applicable). Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. *Notes:* The applying entity should be aware that the names of the individuals listed in response to this question will be published as part of the application. The contact information listed for individuals is for identification purposes only and will not be published as part of the application. Background checks may be conducted on individuals named in the applying entity's response to this question. Any material misstatement or misrepresentation (or omission of material information) may cause the application to be rejected. The applying entity certifies that it has obtained permission for the posting of the names and positions of individuals included in this application.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Officers/ Partners	105	List all officers & partners of the applying entity.	Partial - Names Only	*Instructions:* Enter the full legal name, year of birth, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of residence, and title of all officers and partners. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. *Notes:* 1. Officers are high-level management officials of a corporation or business, for example, a CEO, vice president, secretary, chief financial officer. Partners would be listed in the context of a partnership or other such form of legal entity. 2. The applying entity should be aware that the names of the individuals listed in response to this question will be published as part of the application. The contact information listed for individuals is for identification purposes only and will not be published as part of the application. Background checks may be conducted on individuals named in the applying entity's response to this question. Any material misstatement or misrepresentation (or omission of material information) may cause the application to be rejected. The applying entity certifies that it has obtained permission for the posting of the names and positions of individuals included in this application.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Material Shareholders	106	List all Material Shareholders	Partial - Names Only	*Instructions:* Enter the full legal name and contact information of all shareholders (individuals and entities) holding at least 15% of outstanding shares (or other form of equity), and percentage held by each. *Notes:* 1. For a shareholder entity, enter full legal name, the address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of business, jurisdiction, and legal form. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. 2. For a shareholder individual, enter the full legal name, the year of birth, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of residence, and title of all individuals. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit
Executive Responsibility	107	List Individuals with Executive Responsibility	Partial - Names Only	*Instructions:* For an applying entity that does not have directors, officers, partners, or shareholders, enter the full legal name, year of birth, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of residence, and title of all individuals having overall legal or executive responsibility for the applying entity. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Ultimate Control	108	Disclose Ultimate Control of applying entity	Yes	*Instructions:* Disclose any entities or persons, including any entities or persons providing Financing (if any), that exercise or have the ability to exercise (or will exercise or will have the ability to exercise) direct or indirect decision-making or management over the operations or policies (i) concerning the Application, or (ii) of the applying entity or any of its affiliates relating to this Application, whether by ownership interest, contractual rights or otherwise. For persons, enter the full legal name, year of birth, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of residence, and title of all individuals. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable. For entities, enter the full legal name, address, locality (for example, city, village, or municipality), country code of business, jurisdiction, and legal form. Enter the full legal name in the local script or language and provide the name of the script or language in English, if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit
Attestations	109	I have read and understood the New gTLD Program Eligibility Criteria in Applicant Guidebook Section 6.1.2.1 and declare that neither the applying entity nor any of the individuals named within the Organizational Account Record are subject to any of the Eligibility Criteria listed in Section 6.1.2.1.	No	*Instructions:* Confirm the statement using the checkbox.	CR-1. Box must be checked to proceed.	Box must be checked to proceed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Attestations	110	Confirm that neither the applying entity, nor any individuals or entities named within the Organizational Account in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control, have been subject to any decisions indicating involvement in cybersquatting, as defined in the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), Anti-cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA), or equivalent legislation. This includes engagement in reverse domain name hijacking under the UDRP or bad faith or reckless disregard under the ACPA or equivalent legislation within the last ten years.	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Attestations	111	If "No," please explain.	No	*Instructions:* If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Attestations	112	Confirm that neither the applying entity nor any of the individuals named in the Organizational Account Record – either in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control – has been subject to a final determination by a dispute resolution provider or a court of competent jurisdiction for intellectual property infringement related to registration or use of a domain name within the last ten years.	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Attestations	113	If "No" please explain.	No	*Instructions:* If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Attestations	114	Confirm that the applying entity and individuals or entities named within the Organizational Account, either in their current capacity or as part of a previous entity over which they had ownership or control, have not been subject to a final determination related to the Uniform Rapid Suspension System (URS) Policy or Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedures (PDDRP).	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Attestations	115	If "No," please explain.	No	*Instructions:* If unable to confirm, please provide an explanation.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 5: Applied-for String

This question set collects basic information regarding the string that is being applied for (for example, a-label, meaning, script). If the applying entity opts to designate a replacement string, it must answer the same set of questions for the replacement string from Question Set 5 on.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Primary String	116	Provide the applied-for gTLD string.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Enter ONLY the text of the applied-for string and no additional characters such as quotation marks, dots, or other punctuation. 2. If applying for an IDN, provide the A-label beginning with "xn--".	CR-1. Enter a valid TLD string in the text field.	Must be a valid TLD String.
Primary String	117	If the above string is an IDN, provide the U-label and code points for the above string.	Yes	*Instructions:* If applying for an IDN, enter the U-label and the list of code points. *Notes:* Code points must be in the form of "U+0000" separated by space.	CR-1. Required if IDN CR-2. Enter a valid U-label and code points in the text field. CR-3. Text (NOTE UTF-8)	Must be a valid TLD U-Label and code points.
Primary String	118	What is the meaning/definition of the applied-for gTLD string?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the meaning, or restatement of the string in English, that is, a description of the literal meaning of the string in the opinion of the applying entity. If there is no literal meaning in English (for example, a brand name or a proper noun without a translation) simply state "No English Translation". *Notes:* String meaning/definition is not evaluated, but is purely for informational purposes. Such information may prove to be useful during the comment submission phase of the Program.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Primary String	119	Script of String	Yes	*Instructions:* If an IDN, provide the script of the string (both in English and as referenced by the RZ-LGR/ISO 15924)	CR-1. Required if IDN CR-2. Choose from ISO 15924 Dropdown.	An option must be selected.
Primary String	120	Phonetic Representation	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide a representation of the string according to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). See IPA: https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/IPAcharts/common_files/pdfs/pdfs_IPA_charts_E/IPA_Kiel.pdf.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Primary String	121	As per Section 3(d) of Specification 11 of the Base Registry Agreement, a registry operator of a “generic string” may not impose eligibility criteria for registering names in the TLD that limit registrations exclusively to a single person or entity and/or that person’s or entity’s “Affiliates” (as defined in Section 2.9(c) of the Registry Agreement). “Generic string” means a string consisting of a word or term that denominates or describes a general class of goods, services, groups, organizations or things, as opposed to distinguishing a specific brand of goods, services, groups, organizations or things from those of others. Confirm that the applied-for string is not a “generic string” in which the applying entity intends to limit registrations exclusively to a single person or entity.	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm the statement using the checkbox	CR-1. Statement must be confirmed.	Box must be checked to proceed.

Question Set 6: Variant String(s) (Optional)

This question set collects basic information regarding any variants of the primary string (Question Set 5) that are being applied for. Loop over multiple variant strings if the string has multiple variant strings.[348]

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Variant String(s)	122	If applicable, provide the string that is the variant of the above gTLD string that the applying entity also wishes to apply for.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Enter ONLY the applied-for variant string and no additional characters such as quotation marks, dots, or other punctuation. 2. If applying for an IDN, provide the A-label beginning with "xn--". *Note:* 1. Variant strings are calculated using the applicable version of the Root Zone Label Generation Rules. See Applicable RZ-LGR Version and Scripts and Languages Supported for Guidebook details. 2. An applying entity seeking one or more allocatable variant strings of an applied-for primary IDN string or existing gTLD must provide justification for the necessity of each variant string. See also Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation.	**CR-1.** Enter a valid TLD string in the text field.	Must be a valid TLD String.
Variant String(s)	123	If the above string is an IDN, provide the U-label and code points for the above variant string.	Yes	*Instructions:* If applying for an IDN, enter the U-label and the list of code points. *Notes:* Code points must be in the form of "U+0000" separated by space.	CR-1. Required if IDN CR-2. Enter a valid U-label and code points in the text field. **CR-3.** Text (NOTE UTF-8)	Must be a valid TLD U-Label and code points.
Variant String(s)	124	Script of Variant String	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the script of the variant string (both in English and as referenced by the RZ-LGR/ISO 15924).	CR-1. Required if IDN CR-2. Choose from ISO 15924 Dropdown	An option must be selected.

[348] The numbering in TAMS will increment according to the number of variants being applied for. For example, the TAMS question numbers for the first variant will be 2.1.1-2.17, 2.2.1-2.2.7 for the second, and 2.3.1-2.3.7 for the third.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Variant String(s)	125	Is this variant string for an existing gTLD that is already operated by the applying entity or for a newly applied-for string in the 2026 Round?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select an option.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - existing gTLD/Newly applied-for string	An option must be selected.
Variant String(s)	126	What is the meaning/definition of the variant string?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the meaning or intended meaning (for non-dictionary words) of each of the applied-for variant string(s), including sources. If there is no literal meaning in English (for example, a brand name or a proper noun without a translation) simply state "no English Translation/Meaning." *Notes:* 1. String meaning/definition of variant strings are evaluated. 2. Applying entities can use multiple dictionaries in different languages to make their case.	CR-2. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Variant String(s)	127	Explain how the primary applied-for and variant strings are considered the same, including the meaning, by the relevant user communities.	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide at least three bona-fide examples to support the explanation (for example, evidence of trademark use by showing real world use cases).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload. See also Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Variant String(s)	128	Explain the benefits and the user communities who will benefit from the introduction of the applied-for variant string(s).	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Applying entities shall explain why one string is insufficient and two or more strings are necessary to satisfy regional, linguistic, or cultural drivers. 2. Identify the user communities served by primary and for each of the variant TLDs. 3. How are these user community needs reflected by differences or similarities in the design of the IDN tables offered for the primary and the each variant TLD?	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Variant String(s)	129	Describe the steps that the applying entity will take to minimize the operational and management complexities of variant gTLDs and variant domain names that impact registrars, resellers and/or registrants.	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide steps and descriptions that adequately demonstrate all defined criteria are met. See Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation and Section 3.1.9.2.1 Application Submission of New Primary IDN and its Variant Strings. *Notes:* Commitments made by an applicant to minimize the noted operational and management complexities will form the basis of contractual requirements to be included in the applicable Registry Agreement.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Variant String(s)	130	This applied-for string is not a “generic string” using the definition of "generic string" in Section 3(d) of Specification 11 of the Base RA (as described in Question 121).	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm the statement using the checkbox.	CR-1. Statement must be confirmed.	Box must be checked to proceed.

Question Set 7: Community gTLDs

This question set collects information specific to Community gTLDs. However, question 133 (Mission & Purpose) must be answered by all applying entities.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (General)	131[349]	Is this application for a Community gTLD?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Community (General)	132	What community will the applied-for string serve?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide the name of the community that the applying entity is committing to serve. 2. Describe the distinct aspects of the community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Mission & Purpose (**General, required of all applying entities**)	133	What is the mission and purpose of the applied-for gTLD?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Describe the mission and purpose of the applied-for gTLD, including the intended registrants and users, and the related activities that have been or will be carried out to achieve this purpose. 1a. If applying for a variant of an existing gTLD, please also describe the mission and purpose of the existing gTLD, including the intended registrants and users, and the related activities that have been or will be carried out to achieve this purpose. 2. Explain how this purpose is sustainable over time.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (General)	134	How would you categorize your community?	Yes	*Instructions:* Enter a category that best describes your community. Some examples of community categories could include, but are not limited to: activity-based and volunteer groups, online or social media groups, religious or political groups, diasporic communities, linguistic communities, celebrity or sports team supporters.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Organization)	135	What is the applying entity's connection to the community?	Yes	*Instructions:* Describe and provide evidence of the relationship between the applying entity and the identified community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

[349] In TAMS, this question will be asked as part of the initial set of application type questions to determine appropriate routing and subsequent question sets.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Organization)	136	How is the community organized? Are there one or multiple organizations ("organizing body") that represent or administer the community?	Yes	*Instructions:* Describe and provide evidence related to the community organization, any relevant organizing bodies, and any relevant leaders within the community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Organization)	137	Does the community have defined membership requirements, such as registration, licensing, or use of specific communication? Or, do community members self-identify as part of the community?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Describe any formal membership process, if there is one. 2. If there is no formal membership process, provide evidence related to how an individual can join the identified community (that is, "self-identify" as a community member).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Organization)	138	Where is the community located?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the primary location of the community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Community (Organization)	139	What is the estimated size of the community? This should take into account any regions listed in Question 138.	Yes	Instructions: 1. Provide the estimated size of the community. The size should be in number format (for example, "1,000,000 members"). 2. If the community is divided by group, region, sector, etc., this should include estimated size for each group.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit
Community (Organization)	140	What portion of the community do any organizing bodies represent or administer to?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide the estimated size of the community that is administered or represented by each relevant organizing body in the identified community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	255 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Engagement)	141	Do the organizing bodies demonstrate active and consistent efforts to engage and connect with the identified community and its members?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide evidence of any documented practices of community efforts to date. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Offering support; b) Sharing information; c) Responding to specific community needs; d) Fostering and strengthening relationships within the community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Engagement)	142	What is the role of the applying entity in the engagement efforts listed in Question 141?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Describe whether the applying entity has a role in any of the activities listed in Question 141. 2. If the applying entity does play a role, provide evidence of the applying entity's role. If the applying entity does not play a role, describe why this is the case.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Awareness)	143	Are community members aware of the identified community and each other?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide evidence that demonstrates that community members are aware of the identified community and the different member groups or segments within the identified community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Surveys conducted; b) Records of activities involving a diversity of community groups, segments, or members.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Awareness)	144	Are community members aware of the applying entity and its intention to apply for a Community gTLD?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide evidence of community members' awareness of the applying entity and its intent to apply for a Community gTLD. 2. If there is no such evidence, explain why not.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Established Presence)	145	Was there an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide evidence of the established presence of the community prior to the opening of the application submission period.	CR-1. Attach appropriate information in response to the question.	Upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Established Presence)	146	Are individuals and groups outside of the identified community aware of the existence of the identified community?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide evidence that demonstrates that individuals and groups outside of the community show an awareness of the identified community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Media or other public information regarding the community and its activities or members; b) Discussion of the community in various fora, whether online or in person; c) Evidence of partnerships or collaborations with groups outside of the identified community; d) Evidence of the chartering or organization of the community prior to the opening of the application submission window; e) Evidence of contributions (for example, cultural or scientific) to a larger society or population.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Longevity)	147	Are the pursuits of the identified community enduring and sustainable?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide evidence of the longevity of the community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Evidence of recurring or scheduled activities that demonstrate continuity over time; b) Documented records of past activities that demonstrate a long-standing tradition or practice; c) Records of discussions emphasizing the community's enduring presence or its cultural significance.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Nexus)	148	Does the string match the name of the identified community?	Yes	*Instructions:* Explain how the applied-for string matches the name of the community or is a well-known alternative name (whether long or short form) of the community.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Nexus)	149	Will the general public instinctively think of the community when thinking of the applied-for string?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Explain how the applied-for string clearly relates to or represents the community. 2. Explain whether the applied-for string has any other significant meaning beyond identifying the community or community members described in the application. The applying entity may wish to provide pertinent information regarding any particular geography, region, or themes that may be alluded to by the string, of which the community may or may not be a part.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Community Registration Policy - General)	150	Are you proposing to include one or more Community Registration Policies in the Base RA that are unique to the applying entity's applied-for Community gTLD?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No *Notes:* 1. Community Registration Policies are conditions that Community gTLD registry operators impose upon registrants within their gTLDs. 2. If you select "Yes" to this question, the applying entity is required to pay the conditional Registry Commitments Evaluation fee, and Community Registration Policies that are approved by ICANN will be scored in the CPE (if the applying entity elects to participate) and included in Specification 12 of the applicable Base RA. 3. If you select "No," then the application cannot proceed as a Community Application.	**CR-1.** Community applicants must propose, and obtain ICANN's approval of, at a minimum, Community Registration Policies concerning registrant eligibility and naming selection for inclusion in the Specification 12 of the applicable Base RAs. **CR-2.** Such policies serve as a prerequisite to a Community Applicant's participation in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE). See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) and Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation.	1. An option must be selected. 2. If "Yes," proceed to Question 151 (the next question) in this section. 3. If "No," a system warning will display "Without proposing a Community Registration Policy, your Community gTLD application cannot proceed and cannot participate in the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE)."

Community (Community Registration Policy - Eligibility; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	151	Please state a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to registration eligibility for community members.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. 2. Enter a single proposed Community Registration Policy with respect to registrant eligibility in each response field. Up to 10 Community Registration Policies can be submitted. 3. Follow this format to propose what the Registry Operator must do and/or must not do: a) “Registry Operator shall___”; and/or b) “Registry Operator shall not___”. 4. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to include in its Registry-Registrar Agreement for registrars ,: a) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall___”; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall not___”. 5. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to require registrars to include in the applicable Registration Agreements: a) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring ___"; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision prohibiting ___". 6. Include any objective measures that can be applied to demonstrate the Registry Operator’s compliance with the Community Registration Policy. For example: a) Registry Operator shall develop and implement a registration eligibility policy and publish this policy on its website no later than the date on which the TLD is delegated in the DNS.	**CR-1.** Submit only one action per response field. **CR-2.** The proposed Community Registration Policy must be compulsory, clear, objective, and measurable. The registry operator must not have discretion as to whether or not to perform the committed action or to change the policy. Clearly state what the registry operator must do, not what the registry operator “may” or “might” do. Use definitive language, avoid qualifiers, and express certainty when describing the policy.	4,000 character limit per response field. Applying entity will have the option to add additional response fields as needed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
				b) Registry Operator shall review the registration policy described in (a) at least once per year, and publish the results of such review (including any updates to the registration policy) on its website within thirty (30) days following the anniversary of the Effective Date. 7. If the Community Registration Policy is limited in time, duration, scope, or any other factors, specify the applicable limitations. For example, if a registrant eligibility restriction is time-limited, the applying entity must state if the restriction will apply for the lifetime of the gTLD, only during a specified period, or for some other defined period (such as, Registry Operator shall, for a period of x days from the Effective Date, ___). 8. See Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria for evaluation criteria that ICANN will apply for evaluating each proposed Community Registration Policy. *Notes:* "Eligibility" means the qualifications that entities or individuals must have in order to be allowed as registrants by the registry.		

Community (Community Registration Policy - Name Selection; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	152	State a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to name selection criteria or rules for the applied-for string.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. 2. Enter a single proposed Community Registration Policy with respect to name selection criteria or rules for the applied-for string in each response field. Up to 10 Community Registration Policies can be submitted. 3. These criteria or rules should align with the community objectives of the applied-for gTLD string. 4. Follow this format to propose what the Registry Operator must do and/or must not do: a) “Registry Operator shall___”; and/or b) “Registry Operator shall not___”. 5. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to include in its Registry-Registrar Agreement for registrars: a) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall___”; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall not___”. 6. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to require registrars to include in the applicable Registration Agreements: a) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring___"; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision prohibiting ___". 7. Include any objective measures that can be applied to demonstrate the Registry Operator’s compliance with the Community Registration Policy. For example: a) Registry Operator shall develop and implement a name selection rule and publish it on its website no later than the date on which the TLD is delegated in the DNS.	**CR-1.** Submit only one action per response field. **CR-2.** The proposed Community Registration Policy must be compulsory, clear, objective, and measurable. The registry operator must not have discretion as to whether or not to perform the committed action or to change the policy. Clearly state what the registry operator must do, not what the registry operator “may” or “might” do. Use definitive language, avoid qualifiers, and express certainty when describing the policy.	4,000 character limit per response field. Applying entity will have the option to add additional response fields as needed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
				b) Registry Operator shall review the name selection rule described in (a) at least once per year, and publish the results of such review (including any updates to the rule) on its website within thirty (30) days following the anniversary of the Effective Date. 8. If the Community Registration Policy is limited in time, duration, scope, or any other factors, specify the applicable limitations. For example, if a name selection rule is time-limited, the applying entity must state if the rule will apply for the lifetime of the gTLD, only during a specified period, or for some other defined period (such as, Registry Operator shall, for a period of x days from the Effective Date, ___). 9. See Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria for evaluation criteria that ICANN will apply for evaluating each proposed Community Registration Policy. *Notes:* "Name selection" means the conditions that must be fulfilled for any second-level domain name to be deemed acceptable by the registry.		

Community (Community Registration Policy - Other; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	153	State a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to an additional commitment besides registration eligibility for community members and naming selection criteria or rules for the applied-for string.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. 2. Enter a single proposed Community Registration Policy in each response field. Up to 10 Community Registration Policies can be submitted. 3. Follow the format to propose what the Registry Operator must do and/or must not do: a) “Registry Operator shall___”; and/or b) “Registry Operator shall not___”. 4. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to include in its Registry-Registrar Agreement for registrars: a) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall___”; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall not___”. 5. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to require registrars to include in the applicable Registration Agreements: a) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring___"; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision prohibiting___". 6. Include any objective measures that can be applied to demonstrate the Registry Operator’s compliance with the Community Registration Policy. For example: a) Registry Operator shall develop and implement a Community Registration policy and publish this policy on its website no later than the date on which the TLD is delegated in the DNS.	**CR-1.** Submit only one action per response field. **CR-2.** The proposed Community Registration Policy must be compulsory, clear, objective, and measurable. The registry operator must not have discretion as to whether or not to perform the committed action or to change the policy. Clearly state what the registry operator must do, not what the registry operator “may” or “might” do. Use definitive language, avoid qualifiers, and express certainty when describing the policy.	4,000 character limit per response field. Applying entity will have the option to add additional response fields as needed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
				b) Registry Operator shall review the Community Registration Policy described in (a) at least once per year, and publish the results of such review (including any updates to the registration policy) on its website within thirty (30) days following the anniversary of the Effective Date. 7. If the Community Registration Policy is limited in time, duration, scope, or any other factors, specify the applicable limitations. For example, if a commitment is time-limited, the applying entity must state if the rule will apply for the lifetime of the gTLD, only during a specified period, or for some other defined period (such as, Registry Operator shall, for a period of x days from the Effective Date, ___). 8. See Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria for evaluation criteria that ICANN will apply for evaluating each proposed Community Registration Policy.		
Community (Community Registration Policy; RCE Criterion 3)	154	Explain the rationale for any limitations to the Community Registration Policy proposed by the applying entity in Questions 151-153.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. If you are proposing any limitation to a proposed Community Registration Policy in Questions 151-153, please provide a rationale in this response field. Please see Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria. 2. If you are not proposing any limitation to a proposed Community Registration Policy in Questions 151-153, please type "Not Applicable" in this response field.	**CR-1.** Enter appropriate information in text field.	4,000 character limit

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Community Registration Policy; RCE Criteria 4 & 5)	155	Explain how the proposed Community Registration Policies of the applying entity meet the Registry Commitments Evaluation criteria 4 and 5.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide an explanation of how the proposed Community Registration Policies meet the Registry Commitments Evaluation criteria 4 and 5 using the considerations in the Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria. 2. Consider whether the proposed Community Registration Policy could be argued to be duplicative of a requirement under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies. There may be circumstances in which a Community Registration Policy that would duplicate requirements under applicable consensus policy or law could be approved at ICANN's sole discretion. If not duplicative, please explain why you believe the Community Registration Policy is not duplicative. If yes, please specify such a requirement and explain why you believe duplication in the Base RA is necessary. 3. Consider whether the proposed Community Registration Policy could be argued to be contrary to a requirement under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies. ICANN will not approve any Community Registration Policies that are found to be contrary to applicable laws, ICANN agreements and policies. Please share your views on this issue in the answer to this question. 4. Consider whether the proposed Community Registration Policy could be argued to be incompatible with ICANN's Bylaws. ICANN will not approve any Community Registration Policies that are found to be incompatible with the ICANN Bylaws. See background at the ICANN Board resolution 2024.06.08.08-2024.06.08.10. Please share your views on this issue in the answer to this question. 5. Consider whether the proposed Community Registration Policy requires the operation of an additional Registry Service. The applying entity shall engage its selected RSP to discuss the implementation of such an additional Registry Service, which must be evaluated through the RSP Program and approved by ICANN.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Community (Community Endorsement)	156	From where does the applying entity have the support to run the applied-for string on behalf of the identified community?	Yes	*Instructions:* Please provide evidence of support for the applying entity's application by attaching written endorsements from the organizing bodies relevant to the identified community (related to Question 136).	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Community (Community Endorsement)	157	Is there any opposition to the applying entity, application, or applied-for string that the applying entity is aware of? If yes, please explain.	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide an explanation of why opposition may or may not be relevant or how the applying entity intends to address or resolve the opposition, if applicable.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 8: Geographic Names

This question set collects information specific to Geographic Name applications.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Geographic Name (Geographic Application)	158[350]	Is the applied-for string a geographic name as defined by it being any one of the following: a) the capital city name of a country or territory listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard; b) a city name, where it is clear from statements in the application that the applying entity intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name; c) a sub-national place name listed in the ISO 3166-2 standard; or d) Strings listed as UNESCO regions or appearing on the Geographic Regions section of the "Standard country or area codes for statistical use (M49) (https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/)".	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Geographic Terms (Geographic Application)	159	Is the applied-for string the name of a city and, if so, is the intention to use the TLD primarily for purposes associated with the city name?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.

[350] In TAMS, this question will be asked as part of the initial set of application type questions to determine appropriate routing and subsequent question sets.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Geographic Terms (Geographic Application)	160	If answered yes to the previous question, how will the applying entity market and/or use the TLD primarily for purposes associated with the city name?	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide a description and examples of how the TLD will be used in relation to the city name.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Geographic Terms (Support and Non-Objection)	161	Provide letters of support or non-objection from relevant government entity or public authority.	No	*Instructions:* Attach documentation of support or non-objection from all relevant government entities or public authorities. *Notes:* See Section 7.5 Geographic Names for details of requirements for different types of geographical groups.	CR-1. Document Upload	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 9: Reserved Names

This question set collects information specific Reserved Name applications.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Reserved Name (Reserved Name)	162[351]	Is the applied-for string or any applied-for variant a Reserved Name per Section 7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Identification?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No CR-2. Selection is based on the applying entities's self-assertion of Reserved Name status.	An option must be selected.
Reserved Name (Reserved Name)	163	If the applied-for string or any applied-for variant is a Reserved Name, provide justification and supporting materials as required in Section 7.2.2.2.1 Exception Process to Apply for Reserved Names.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Where a parent organization exists, provide documentation of support from the parent organization including an illustration of its relationship to the applying entity. 2. Where a public authority oversees the applying entity's organization, provide documentation of support or non-objection including a signed letter from the relevant public authority.	CR-1. Document Upload	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

[351] In TAMS, this question will be asked as part of the initial set of application type questions to determine appropriate routing and subsequent question sets.

Question Set 10: Safeguard Assessment/Mission and Purpose

This question set collects information related to determining whether certain Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (Safeguard PICs) are required for the applied-for gTLD string. See Section 7.8.2.3 Safeguard PICs. Answers to these questions will inform assessment by ICANN on whether and which Safeguard PICs must be incorporated in the applicable Registry Agreement (RA) if the string proceeds to delegation. The answers themselves will not automatically make such a determination.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Safeguard Identification (Group 1)	164	Will people see a domain name as more trustworthy because it is registered in your TLD? Think about how people around the world will understand the TLD string(s) in the application, including literal and informal meanings in different languages and regions.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. 2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection	An option must be selected.
Safeguard Identification (Group 1)	165	Is it likely that consumers will face significant risks if domain names in the TLD(s) in the application are abused? Think about how people around the world will understand the TLD string(s) in the application, including literal and informal meanings in different languages and regions.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. 2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection for each consideration.	An option must be selected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Safeguard Identification (Group 2)	166	Would people generally think that this TLD will be used by entities that require strict licensing or accreditation to do business? Think about how the TLD string(s) in the application will be understood around the world, including both literal and informal meanings in different languages and regions.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. 2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection for each consideration.	An option must be selected.
Safeguard Identification (Group 2)	167	Would most people think that (domains in) the TLD(s) in the application are used for activities that require regular government reporting, inspections, and oversight in various countries? Think about how the TLD string(s) in the application will be understood around the world, including both literal and informal meanings in different languages and regions.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. 2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection for each consideration.	An option must be selected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Safeguard Identification (Group 3)	168	Could people reasonably believe that (domains in) your TLD will cause or lead to harassment, harm, aggression, complaints, criticism, distress, or embarrassment? Think about how the TLD string(s) in the application will be understood globally, including different languages and cultures.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. I-2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection.	An option must be selected.
Safeguard Identification (Group 4)	169	Would most people think that the TLD is used for something usually done by governments? Think about how the TLD string(s) in the application will be understood globally, including different languages and cultures.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. When answering the questions, apply criteria by considering the meaning of the requested TLD string in the following contexts: a. Literally as described in the application. b. Literally in any other language in which the string is a recognized word or phrase. c. Informally in any language or regional variant, where alternative meanings exist. I-2. If the proverbial “reasonable person” who understands the relevant context believes that the question should be answered ‘yes’, then the answer is yes.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection.	An option must be selected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Registry Voluntary Commitments (Safeguard Voluntary Selection)	170	Are you proposing to include one or more of the Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (Safeguard PICs) in the Base RA voluntarily regardless of ICANN's Safeguard Assessment outcomes?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No. *Notes:* 1. ICANN will evaluate whether an applied-for gTLD string requires one or more Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (Safeguard PICs) to be included in the Base RA). 2. In addition to the Mandatory Public Interest Commitments (PICs) that must be included in each Base RA, a subset of Base RAs must include Safeguard PICs based on ICANN's Safeguard Assessment. See Section 7.8.2.3 Safeguard PICs. 3. Applying entities for TLDs that are not found to require Safeguard PICs can elect to add them to the applicable Base RAs voluntarily to, for example, further their business objectives, help address issues or concerns that are raised or could be raised with respect to their applications, or avoid the need for the evaluation and implementation of customized Registry Voluntary Commitment (RVC). See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs).	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection.	1. An option must be selected. 2. If "Yes" is selected, proceed to the next question (Question 171). 3. If "No" is selected, skip to the next section (Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) - Question 172).
Registry Voluntary Commitments (Safeguard Voluntary Selection)	171	If Yes, which Safeguard PIC(s) are you proposing to include in the RA?	Yes	*Instructions:* Choose the applicable Safeguard PICs from the provided list (more than one option can be selected). *Notes:* 1. There are ten (10) Safeguard PICs. Applying entities may elect to incorporate one or more of the Safeguard PICs into the applicable Base RA by selecting one or more of the Safeguard PICs from this multiple choice list. 2. If any of the Safeguard PICs are selected, the selected Safeguard PIC(s) will be included as contractual obligations by the RA.	**CR-1.** Select at least one option if the answer to the previous question is "Yes."	At least one option must be selected if the applying entity answered "Yes" to the previous question.

Question Set 11: Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs)

This question set collects information related to any Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) that the applying entity is submitting. The decision to submit an RVC is typically voluntary, except for those recognized by ICANN to resolve an objection or to address GAC Consensus Advice. See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments for more information.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Registry Voluntary Commitments (General)	172	Are you proposing to include one or more Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) in the Base RA that are unique to your applied-for string?		*Instructions:* 1. Select Yes or No. 2. In addition to Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (PICs), an applying entity will be permitted to propose one or more Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) to provide additional safeguards with regard to the registry operator's operation of an applied-for gTLD string. See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs). 3. RVCs are separate from Community Registration Policies. See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) and Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies for more information. If you are applying for a Community gTLD, please submit the Community Registration Policies by answering Questions 150-155. However, if you propose to include additional Registry Voluntary Commitments in the RA beyond the Community Registration Policies, you may answer "yes" and proceed to answer the following questions. 4. You are encouraged to consider whether there are other means, separate from including commitment(s) in the Base RA, that could be used to further your business objectives or help resolve any anticipated or actual issue(s) raised regarding the applied-for gTLD string or application. See Section 7.8.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs). *Notes:* If you select "yes" to this question, you are required to pay the conditional Registry Commitments Evaluation fee, and commitments that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 11 of the applicable Base RA as specific voluntary public interest commitments as contractual obligations.	**CR-1.** Yes/No selection.	1. An option must be selected. 2. If "Yes" is selected, proceed to the next question (Question 173). 3. If "No" is selected, skip to the next section (Registry Services - Question 176).

Registry Voluntary Commitments (RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	173	State a specific Registry Voluntary Commitment (RVC) that is proposed to be included in the applicable Base RA.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Draft the Registry Voluntary Commitment (RVC) as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 11 of the applicable Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 11, Section 2 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. 2. Enter a single proposed RVC in each response field. Up to 10 RVCs can be submitted. 3. Follow this format to propose what the Registry Operator must do and/or must not do: a) “Registry Operator shall___”; and/or b) “Registry Operator shall not___”. 3. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to include in its Registry-Registrar Agreement for registrars: a) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall___”; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include the following provisions in its Registry-Registrar Agreement: Registrar shall not___”. 4. Follow this format to propose any specific requirement(s) that the Registry Operator commits to require registrars to include in the applicable Registration Agreements: a) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry- Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring___"; and/or b) "Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry- Registrar Agreement that requires Registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision prohibiting___". 5. Include any objective measures that can be applied to demonstrate the Registry Operator’s compliance with the Registry Voluntary Commitment. For example: a) Registry Operator shall develop and implement a Registry Voluntary Commitment and publish this commitment on its website no later than the date on which the TLD is delegated in the DNS. b) Registry Operator shall review the commitment described in (a) at least once per year, and publish the results of such review (including any updates to the registration policy) on its website within thirty (30) days following the anniversary of the Effective Date.	CR-1. Submit only one action per response field. CR-2. The proposed Registry Voluntary Commitment must be compulsory, clear, objective, and measurable. The registry operator must not have discretion as to whether or not to perform the committed action or to change the policy. Clearly state what the registry operator must do, not what the registry operator “may” or “might” do. Use definitive language, avoid qualifiers, and express certainty when describing the policy.	4,000 character limit per response field. Applying entities will have the option to add additional response fields as needed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
				6. If the Registry Voluntary Commitment is limited in time, duration, scope, or any other factors, specify the applicable limitations. For example, if a commitment is time-limited, the applying entity must state if the commitment will apply for the lifetime of the gTLD, only during a specified period, or for some other defined period (such as, Registry Operator shall, for a period of x days from the Effective Date, ___). 7. See Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria for evaluation criteria that ICANN will apply for evaluating each proposed RVC.		
Registry Voluntary Commitments (RCE Criterion 3)	174	Explain the rationale for any limitations to the commitment proposed by the applying entity in Question 173.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. If you are proposing any limitation to a proposed RVC in Question 173, please provide a rationale in this response field. See Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria. 2. If you are not proposing any limitation to a proposed RVC in Question 173, please type "Not Applicable" in this response field.	**CR-1.** Enter appropriate information in text field.	4,000 character limit.

Registry Voluntary Commitments (Background, RCE Criteria 4 & 5)	175	Why are the commitment(s) being proposed?	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide background information to explain why the commitment is relevant, important, and necessary in support of the gTLD application. See Section 7.8.3.2.1 Applicants Must Identify Purposes for Proposed RVC. 2. Consider whether the proposed commitment could be argued to be duplicative of a requirement under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies. There may be circumstances in which an RVC that would duplicate requirements under applicable consensus policy or law could be approved at ICANN's sole discretion, for example, if this type of RVC is necessary to address GAC Consensus Advice. If not duplicative, please explain why you believe the commitment is not duplicative. If yes, please specify such a requirement and explain why you believe duplication in the Base RA is necessary. 3. Consider whether the proposed commitment could be argued to be contrary to a requirement under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies. ICANN will not approve any commitments that are found to be contrary to applicable laws, ICANN agreements and policies. Please share your views on this issue in the answer to this question. 4. Consider whether the proposed commitment could be argued to be incompatible with ICANN's Bylaws. ICANN will not approve any commitments that are found to be incompatible with the ICANN Bylaws. See background at the ICANN Board resolution 2024.06.08.08-2024.06.08.10. Please share your views on this issue in the answer to this question. 5. Consider whether the proposed commitment requires the operation of an additional Registry Service. The applying entity shall engage its selected RSP to discuss the implementation of such an additional Registry Service, which must be evaluated through the RSP Program and approved by ICANN. 6. For further guidance on the aforementioned considerations, please see Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria. 7. [If the commitment is being proposed as an Application Change Request]: If the commitment is being proposed in response to an objection, GAC Member Early Warning, GAC Advice, or application comment, please provide a reference to the item to which the commitment responds.	**CR-1.** Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 12: Registry Services

This question set collects information regarding any selected RSPs and the registry services that the applying entity intends to provide as a registry operator for the applied-for gTLD string.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Registry Service Providers (RSP Use)	176	List the selected Registry Service Providers (RSPs)	No	*Instructions:* List all pre-evaluated RSPs this Registry intends to use. TAMS will prompt the following subquestions: 176.1 Please select a Main RSP. 176.2 Please select a DNS RSP. 176.3 Please select a DNSSEC. 176.4 [Optional] Please select a Proxy RSP. There is a limit of one Main RSP and one DNSSEC. There is no limit to DNS RSP and Proxy. If the IDN has variants, only level 3 RSPs may be selected. For more information about different types of RSPs, see AGB Section 3.1.10.2 Registry Functions and Types of RSPs. *Notes:* Applying entities are encouraged to identify their RSPs and intended Registry Services upon submitting their applications to avoid potential delays in processing. However, an applying entity may also submit the application without specifying RSPs, choosing to do so just before Applicant and Application Evaluation through the Change Request process. This will be one of the available options for response for this question.	CR-1. Check all relevant Providers from pick list.	At least one option must be selected.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Registry Services	177	List of Registry Services that will be used in the TLD	No	*Instructions:* List all Registry Services that will be used in this TLD. TAMS will prompt the following subquestions: 177.1 Select the Registry Services. The applying entity will select from a list of services that come from the selected main RSP. If no Main RSP is selected, the applying entity must choose "Will select later." 177.2 Will the applied-for variant TLDs, and, if applicable, supported IDNs, use the same registry services? The applying entity must choose yes or no. If the applying entity chooses no, the applying entity will finalize the details during contracting. *Notes:* 1. Registry Services must be supported by the pre-evaluated RSPs this Registry intends to use. 2. Applying entities are encouraged to identify their RSPs and intended Registry Services upon submitting their applications to avoid potential delays in processing. However, an applying entity may also submit the application without specifying RSPs, choosing to do so just before Applicant and Application Evaluation through the Change Request process. This will be one of the available options for this question.	CR-1. Check all relevant registry services approved for the selected providers from pick list.	At least one option must be selected.
Registry Services	178	Supported IDN Table Identifiers	No	*Instructions:* 1. If IDN registrations will be supported, select the supported IDN tables from the available list. Items included are based on the selected RSP's prior evaluation. 2. If an IDN Table is not available in the list, the applying entity should reach out to the RSP to obtain ICANN's approval.	CR-1. Check all relevant IDN Identifiers from pick list.	

Question Set 13: .Brand TLD and Code of Conduct Exemptions

This question set collects information related to whether the applied-for gTLD string is a .Brand (see Section 7.3) or if the applying entity is seeking a Code of Conduct exemption (see Section 7.4).

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
.Brand TLD Status	179	Are you applying for a .Brand TLD?	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
.Brand TLD Status	180	The applying entity confirms that the applied-for gTLD string meets the .Brand TLD criteria as described in Section 9.3 of Specification 13. The applying entity also confirms its understanding of contractual obligation to maintain .Brand TLD status and communicate changes in registration policies that could potentially disqualify the TLD as a .Brand TLD.	Yes	*Instructions:* Select Yes or No. *Notes:* If the applying entity selects “no,” it will be required to provide additional documentation describing which criteria is not met as well as a justification for the TLD to nonetheless qualify as a .Brand TLD.	CR-1. Yes/No selection.	
.Brand TLD Status	181	Submit Trademark Certificate.	Yes	*Instructions:* Attach an accurate and complete copy of the applicable trademark registration that forms the basis of the request for .Brand TLD qualification.	CR-1. Document Upload	Upload one document.
.Brand TLD Status	182	Submit Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) Signed Mark Data (SMD) files.	No	*Instructions:* Provide the Signed Mark Data (SMD) File. *Notes:* Provided SMD files should correspond to the applied-for string, and any additional SMD file(s) may be submitted for variant strings.	CR-1. Document Upload	

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
.Brand TLD Status / Code of Conduct Exemptions	183	The applying entity confirms that this applied-for string is not a “generic string” as defined in Section 3(d) of Specification 11 of the Base RA, which prohibits generic TLDs from being operated on an exclusive basis.	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm statement with a checkbox.	CR-1. Statement must be confirmed.	Box must be checked to proceed.
.Brand TLD Status / Code of Conduct Exemptions	184	No Specification 11 Conflicts	Yes	*Instructions:* Explain how the applying entity intends to operate the TLD such that there would not exist any such conflict with Section 3(d) of Specification 11.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Code of Conduct Exemptions	185	Does the applying entity request a Code of Conduct Exemption?	Yes	*Instructions:* This serves as an indication of intent to apply for an exemption to Specification 9 and that the applying entity is NOT requesting to be designated a .Brand TLD, pursuant to Specification 13.	CR-1. Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No	An option must be selected.
Code of Conduct Exemptions	186	The applying entity confirms all domain name registrations in the TLD will be registered to, and maintained by, registry operator for the exclusive use of the registry operator or its affiliate (as defined in the Base RA).	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm statement with a checkbox.	CR-1. Confirm statement with a checkbox.	Box must be checked to proceed.
Code of Conduct Exemptions	187	Confirm the registry operator will not sell, distribute or transfer control or use of any registrations in the TLD to any third party that is not an affiliate of registry operator.	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm statement with a checkbox.	CR-1. Confirm statement with a checkbox.	Box must be checked to proceed.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Code of Conduct Exemptions	188	Confirm and specify why the Application of the Code of Conduct to the applied-for string is not necessary to protect the public interest.	Yes	*Instructions:* Provide justification for why the Code of Conduct is not necessary to protect the public interest. This may include an explanation of how the TLD's operation under the exemption would serve the best interests of the registry operator, its stakeholders, and the broader Internet community, without adversely affecting the domain name ecosystem.	CR-1. Enter appropriate information in text field.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 14: Financial Evaluation Profile Determination

Financial evaluation has four profiles. Each profile has evaluation criteria specifically selected to determine if it has and is expected to have the financial resources to fund the registry's start-up and long-term operation. Based on defined criteria and the responses of the applying entity to the questions below, ICANN will assign each applying entity one of the four profiles.[352] The applying entity must answer financial related questions once, at the organization level. If the applying entity is submitting more than one application, the answers to financial questions must be inclusive of all applied for strings.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Profile Determination	189	Is the applying entity a governmental entity, an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO), or an International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) as defined in ICANN Consensus Policy?[353]	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes/No. If "Yes," assign the Government profile and answer Questions 192-194. If "No," proceed to the next question.	**CR-1.** The Government profile is for a governmental entity or an intergovernmental organization that is in the recognized government's jurisdiction.	An option must be selected.
Profile Determination	190	Is the applying entity a current registry operator with one or more active RAs, or an affiliated entity to an existing registry operator?	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes/No. If "Yes," assign the Registry Operator profile and answer Questions 195-201. If "No," proceed to the next question.	**CR-1.** The Registry Operator profile is for a current registry operator with one or more active RA, or an affiliated entity to an existing Registry Operator.	An option must be selected.

[352] If the applying entity falls into more than one category (for example, the existing Registry Operator and Top 25 profiles), then the first profile the applying entity qualifies for will be assigned (for example, existing Registry Operator profile will be assigned first over Top 25).
[353] See Consensus Policy on IGO/INGOs: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/igo-ingo-protection-policy-2024-02-21-en.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Profile Determination	191	Is the applying entity a publicly traded company on a Top 25 Public Stock Exchange, as defined by the World Federation of Exchanges and specifically included on ICANN's list from Market Statistics (https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics, as of December 2025), or an affiliated entity to the company listed on a Top 25 Public Stock Exchange?	No	*Instructions:* Select Yes/No. If "Yes," assign the Top 25 Public Stock Exchange profile, and answer Questions 202-207. If "No," assign the Standard profile and answer Questions 208-219.	**CR-1.** The Top 25 Exchange profile is for a publicly traded company on a Top 25 stock exchange or an affiliated entity to the company listed on a Top 25 stock exchange. Reference: Market Statistics (https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics, as of December 2025) **CR-2.** The Standard profile is for all other applying entities not qualified for one of the above profiles.	An option must be selected.

Question Set 15: Government Profile

This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the government profile as part of Question Set 14 (Financial Evaluation Profile Determination).

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Government Profile:** Self-Certification **(Q1.1-1)**[354]	192	**Q1.1-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document that commits government support on official letterhead from a proper authority, that the application for the gTLD(s) and its operation by the applying entity is permitted, and that represents and warrants: **SC1.1-1.1 -** That the applying entity is the recognized government of its jurisdiction and that the government has authorized the application(s) for applied-for gTLD string(s) or is a recognized intergovernmental organization with relevant authorization for its application(s) for applied-for gTLD string(s). **SC1.1-1.2 -** That the applying entity and/or an affiliate commits to the long-term funding required to operate all of the existing gTLDs (if applicable) and newly applied-for gTLD string(s) of the applying entity.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q1.1-1. 2. The document must include only the SC1.1-1.1 and SC1.1-1.2 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC1.1-1.1 and SC1.1.1-2 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC1.1-1.1 and SC1.1.1-2 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity and, if applicable, by the affiliate. **CR-4.** The two Self-Certification statements confirm that the applying entity: a) is the recognized government of its jurisdiction and has the authorization from the government to submit one or more applications. b) or an affiliate commits to the long-term funding required to operate all the existing gTLDs (if applicable) and newly applied-for gTLD string(s) of the applying entity.	Exactly one document required.

[354] The numbering refers to the different Financial profiles: Q1 is related to the Government profile; Q2 is related to the RO profile; Q3 is related to the Top 25 profile; Q4 is related to the Standard profile; and, Q5 is for Security (for example, DNS Abuse) questions.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Government Profile:** Operational/ Planning **(Q1.2-1)**[355]	193	**Q1.2-1 -** Provide a document with a list of the applying entity's current gTLDs (if applicable) and a list of all gTLDs for entities affiliated with the applying entity(if applicable). If the applying entity and affiliates have no current gTLDs, submit a document that confirms this.	Yes	*Instructions:* The document for Q1.2-1 must be a PDF.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** A document with a list of all of the applying entity's current gTLDs (if applicable) and a list of all gTLDs for entities affiliated with the applying entity (if applicable).	Must be a PDF.
Financial Evaluation - **Government Profile:** Operational/ Planning **(Q1.2-2)**	194	**Q1.2-2 -** Provide a document containing a list of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus a forecast for each string of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	No	*Instructions:* The document for Q1.2-2 must be an Excel (.xlsx) file.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** A document containing a list of all of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus, for each string, a forecast of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	The document must be an Excel (.xlsx) file.

[355] Financial statements are not required for the government profile. This means that the numbering in TAMS will differ from other financial profiles. That is, the questions will be organized as follows: 1.1. Self Certification; 1.2. Operational/Planning; 1.3. Security Policy; 1.4. DNS Abuse. For comparison, the questions for the Registry Operator profile are organized as follows: 2.1 Financial Statement; 2.2 Self Certification; 2.3. Operational/Planning; 2.4. Security Policy; 2.5. DNS Abuse.

Question Set 16: Registry Operator Profile

This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Registry Operator profile as part of Question Set 14 (Financial Evaluation Profile Determination).

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q2.1-1**)	195	**Q2.1-1 - For either the applying entity or a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity,** provide a) complete audited financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year and, if available, b) financial statements for the most recently ended interim financial period. Where audited statements cannot be provided, provide either the applying entity's reviewed or compiled financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year or interim period. All financial statements must be prepared by a third-party accounting firm. QPE statements must be audited.	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide all documents prepared by the third-party accounting firm providing financial statements for this financial evaluation. 2. Annual Reports are not acceptable. *Notes:* 1. A Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) is a legal entity that has at least 51% ownership in the applying entity, directly or indirectly. 2. Qualified Parent Statements (QPS) are Audited financial statements from a QPE.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Provide applying entity's audited financial statements prepared by a third-party accounting firm or a Qualified Parent Entity's (QPE) audited financial statements. **CR-3.** Where audited statements cannot be provided, provide either the applying entity's reviewed or compiled financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year or interim period. **CR-4.** Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or QPE, International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q2.1-2)**	196	**Q2.1-2 -** If a complete set of financial statements is provided by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity, the applying entity must provide a statement that clarifies how the QPE meets the definition of a QPE in the Financial Statements Instructions.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Clarify how the Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) meets the definition for providing financial statements as defined in the Financial Statements Instructions.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q2.1-3)**	197	**Q2.1-3 -** Provide a statement clarifying why the financial statements of the applying entity submitted as part of **Q2.1-1** were chosen for submission and are the most appropriate set of financial statements to review with respect to the proposed gTLDs.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Explain why the submitted financial statements were chosen for submission, referring to “the most favorable cash flow” - indicating a strong liquidity position and ability to meet its financial obligations.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q2.1-4)**	198	**Q2.1-4 -** Provide a statement stating what accounting standards were used to prepare the financial statements of the applying entity provided as part of **Q2.1-1** (for example, U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), or any nationally recognized accounting standard for the jurisdiction where the entity resides).	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** State what accounting standards were used to prepare the applying entity’s financial statements. a) Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Self-Certification **(Q2.2-1)**	199	**Q2.2-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, CFO, and/or equivalent officer of the applying entity. If financial statements are provided by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity, the CEO, President, CFO, and/or equivalent officer of the QPE must co-sign the certification document. The self-certification document must represent and warrant: **SC2.2-1.1 -** As of the submission date of the application, the applying entity is a current registry operator or an affiliated entity of a current registry operator with one or more active RAs. **SC2.2-1.2 -** The applying entity and/or a QPE will fund the startup and long-term operation of all of the applying entity's current gTLDs and applied-for gTLD strings. **SC2.2-1.3 -** The applying entity and/or its officers are bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately and the applying entity is in good standing in that jurisdiction.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q2.2-1. 2. The document must include only the SC2.2-1.1 through SC2.2-1.3 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC2.2-1.1 through SC2.2-1.3 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC2.2-1.1 through SC2.2-1.3 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity and, if applicable, by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE). **CR-4.** The three Self-Certification statements in the question confirm the applying entity: a) is a current registry operator or an affiliated entity of a current registry operator, b) commits to long-term funding for all current and applied-for gTLD strings, c) is bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately, and is in "good standing in that jurisdiction": filing annual reports, business licenses, and other required documents on time; paying required fees, taxes, and other financial obligations; maintaining proper registrations with local, state, and national authorities are current and accurate.	Exactly one document required.

Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Operational/Planning **(Q2.3-1)**	200	**Q2.3-1 -** Provide a document with a list of all of the applying entity's current gTLDs and a list of all gTLDs for entities affiliated with the applying entity (if applicable).	Yes	*Instructions:* The document for Q2.3-1 must be a PDF.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** A document with a list of all of the applying entity's current gTLDs (if applicable) and a list of all gTLDs for entities affiliated with the applying entity (if applicable).	Must be a PDF.
Financial Evaluation - **Registry Operator Profile:** Operational/Planning **(Q2.3-1)**	201	**Q2.3-2 -** Provide a document containing a list of all of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus a forecast for each string of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	No	*Instructions:* The document for Q2.3-2 must be an Excel (.xlsx).	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** A document containing a list of all of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus, for each string, a forecast of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	The document must be an Excel (.xlsx) file.

Question Set 17: Top 25 Profile

This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Top 25 Profile as part of Question Set 14 (Financial Evaluation Profile Determination).

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q3.1-1)**	202	**Q3.1-1 -** Provide a complete set of the applying entity's audited financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year and, if available, financial statements for the most recently ended interim financial period for the applying entity or a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) as defined in the Financial Instructions.	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide all documents prepared by the third-party accounting firm providing financial statements for this financial evaluation. 2. Annual Reports are not acceptable. *Notes:* 1. A Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) is a legal entity that has at least 51% ownership in the applying entity, directly or indirectly. 2. Qualified Parent Statements (QPS) are Audited financial statements from a QPE.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Provide applying entity's audited financial statements prepared by a third-party accounting firm or a Qualified Parent Entity's (QPE) audited financial statements. **CR-3.** Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or QPE, International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q3.1-2)**	203	**Q3.1-2 -** If a complete set of financial statements is provided by a QPE (Qualified Parent Entity) of the applying entity, the applying entity must provide a statement that clarifies how the QPE meets the definition of a QPE as defined in the Financial Statements Instructions.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Clarify how the Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) meets the definition for providing financial statements as defined in the Financial Statements Instructions.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q3.1-3)**	204	**Q3.1-3 -** Provide a statement clarifying why the applying entity's financial statements submitted as part of **Q3.1-1** were chosen for submission and are the most appropriate set of financial statements to review with respect to the proposed gTLDs.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Explain why the submitted financial statements were chosen for submission, referring to "the most favorable cash flow" - indicating a strong liquidity position and ability to meet its financial obligations.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q3.1-4)**	205	**Q3.1-4 -** Provide a statement stating what accounting standards were used to prepare the applying entity's financial statements provided as part of **Q3.1-1** (for example, U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), or any nationally recognized accounting standard for the jurisdiction where the entity resides).	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** State what accounting standards were used to prepare the applying entity's financial statements. a) Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Self-Certification **(Q3.2-1)**	206	**Q3.2-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, CFO and/or equivalent officer of the applying entity. If the applying entity's financial statements are provided by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), the CEO, President, CFO, and/or equivalent officer of the QPE must co-sign the certification document. The self-certification document must represent and warrant: **SC3.2-1.1 -** As of the submission date of the application, the applying entity is currently a listed member in one or more of the public stock exchanges identified on ICANN's list from Market Statistics (https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics , as of December 2025), including information on both the relevant exchange and the current registration ticker symbol. **SC3.2-1.2 -** The applying entity is in good standing with the public stock exchange in which it is a listed member.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q3.2-1. 2. The document must include only the SC3.2-1.1 through SC3.2-1.4 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC3.2-1.1 through SC3.2-1.4 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC3.2-1.1 through SC3.2-1.4 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity and, if applicable, by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE). **CR-4.** The four Self-Certification statements in the question confirm the applying entity: a) is a currently listed member in one of the public stock exchanges identified at Market Statistics (https://focus.world-exchanges.org/issue/december-2025/market-statistics, as of December 2025), b) is in good standing – in compliance with all rules and regulations for ongoing listing – with the public stock exchange of which the applying entity is a listed member. c) commits to long-term funding for all applied-for gTLD strings, d) is bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately and is in "good standing in that jurisdiction": filing annual reports, business licenses, and other required documents on time; paying required fees, taxes, and other financial obligations; maintaining proper registrations with local, state, and national authorities are current and accurate.	Exactly one document required.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
		SC3.2-1.3 - The applying entity commits to the long-term funding of all applied-for gTLD strings. **SC3.2-1.4 -** The applying entity and/or its officers are bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately and the applying entity is in good standing in that jurisdiction.				
Financial Evaluation - **Top 25 Profile:** Operational/Planning **(Q3.3-1)**	207	**Q3.3-1 -** Provide a document containing a list of all of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus a forecast for each string of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	No	*Instructions:* The document for Q3.3-1 must be an Excel (.xlsx).	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** A document containing a list of all of the applying entity's applied-for strings plus, for each string, a forecast of the number of Domains Under Management (DUMs) for Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 beginning after delegation.	The document must be an Excel (.xlsx) file.

Question Set 18: Standard Profile

This question set collects information related to applying entities that have been assigned the Standard Profile as part of Question Set 14 (Financial Evaluation Profile Determination).

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q4.1-1)**	208	**Q4.1-1 -** For either the applying entity or a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity, provide: a) the applying entity's complete audited financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year and, if available, b) financial statements for the most recently ended interim financial period for the applying entity or a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity. Where audited statements cannot be provided, provide either the applying entity's reviewed or compiled financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year or interim period. All financial statements must be prepared by a third-party accounting firm. QPE statements must be audited.	No	*Instructions:* 1. Provide all documents prepared by the third-party accounting firm providing financial statements for this financial evaluation. 2. Annual Reports are not acceptable. *Notes:* 1. A Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) is a legal entity that has at least 51% ownership in the applying entity, directly or indirectly. 2. Qualified Parent Statements (QPS) are Audited financial statements from a QPE.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Provide applying entity's audited financial statements prepared by a third-party accounting firm or a Qualified Parent Entity's (QPE) audited financial statements. **CR-3.** Where audited statements cannot be provided, provide either the applying entity's reviewed or compiled financial statements for the most recently closed fiscal year or interim period. **CR-4.** Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or QPE, International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q4.1-2)**	209	**Q4.1-2 -** If a complete set of financial statements is provided by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) of the applying entity, the applying entity must provide a statement that clarifies how the QPE meets the definition of a QPE as defined in the Financial Statements Instructions.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Clarify how the Qualified Parent Entity (QPE) meets the definition for providing financial statements as defined in the Financial Statements Instructions.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q4.1-3)**	210	**Q4.1-3 -** Provide a statement clarifying why the applying entity's financial statements submitted as part of **Q4.1-1** were chosen for submission and are the most appropriate set of financial statements to review with respect to the proposed gTLDs.	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Explain why the submitted financial statements were chosen for submission, referring to "the most favorable cash flow" - indicating a strong liquidity position and ability to meet its financial obligations.	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Financial Statements **(Q4.1-4)**	211	**Q4.1-4 -** Provide a statement stating what accounting standards were used to prepare the applying entity's financial statements provided as part of **Q4.1-1** (for example, U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), or any nationally recognized accounting standard for the jurisdiction where the entity resides).	No		**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** State what accounting standards were used to prepare the applying entity's financial statements. a) Acceptable accounting standards are: Nationally recognized accounting standards for the jurisdiction of the applying entity or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), International Financial Statements Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).	At least one required. Upload no more than 20 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Self-Certification **(Q4.2-1)**	212	**Q4.2-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, CFO and/or equivalent officer of the applying entity. If financial statements are provided by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE), the CEO, President, CFO, and/or equivalent officer of the QPE must co-sign the certification document. The self-certification document must represent and warrant: **SC4.2-1.1 -** The applying entity and/or a QPE will fund the startup and long-term operation of all applied-for gTLD strings and (if applicable) currently operated gTLDs of a QPE. **SC4.2-1.2 -** The applying entity or QPE has at a minimum of USD 50,000 plus 25% of the application base fee for each applied-for gTLD string in Cash and Cash Equivalents on the balance sheet of the provided financial statements, up to a maximum of USD 300,000, designated to support the startup and operation of all of the applying entity's applied-for gTLD strings.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q4.2-1. 2. The document must include only the SC4.2-1.1 through SC4.2-1.3 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC4.2-1.1 through SC4.2-1.3 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC4.2-1.1 through SC4.2-1.3 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity and, if applicable, by a Qualified Parent Entity (QPE). **CR-4.** The three Self-Certification statements in the question confirm the applying entity: a) commits to long-term funding for all current and applied-for gTLD strings, b) has at a minimum of USD 50,000 plus 25% of the application fee for each applied-for gTLD string in Cash and Cash Equivalents on the balance sheet of the applying entity provided financial statements , up to a maximum of USD 300,000, designated to support the startup and operation of all of the applying entity's applied-for gTLD strings. c) is bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately and is in "good standing in that jurisdiction": filing annual reports, business licenses, and other required documents on time; paying required fees, taxes, and other financial obligations; maintaining proper registrations with local, state, and national authorities are current and accurate.	Exactly one document required.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
		SC4.2-1.3 - The applying entity and/or its officers are bound by law in its jurisdiction to represent financial statements accurately and the applying entity is in good standing in that jurisdiction.				
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.1-1** - Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection)	213	**Q4.3.1-1 -** Populate and provide the Financial Evaluation Templates – MLS. The Most Likely Scenario (MLS) Financial Projection will quantify the applying entity's plans to build, fund, and operate the applied-for gTLD strings on an ongoing basis. The MLS projection focuses on funding and positive cash flow needed for the expected operating plan. Detailed instructions for populating the spreadsheet are in the Financial Evaluation Templates Instructions.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Most Likely Scenario (MLS) are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template - document.[356] *Note:* See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** The Most Likely Scenario (MLS) Projections Template has not been modified. **CR-3.** All required cells have data input. **CR-4.** Cash on Hand at Time of Application calculation is correct. **CR-5.** Cash and Cash Equivalents from the provided financial statement's balance sheet exceed the Cash on Hand at Time of Application. **CR-6.** All rows with data have sufficient relevant Comments content. **CR-7.** Projected Total Cash Flow is positive in Year 3.	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219.

[356] These instructions can be found on the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.2-1** - Operating Costs)	214	**Q4.3.2-1 -** Populate the Financial Evaluation Templates – MLS with the estimated startup and the first three years combined operating costs for all of the applying entity's applied-for gTLD strings. This cost should include Registry Service Providers (RSP) Services, administration, labor, facilities, marketing, etc. Any major variances (20% or greater) between years in anticipated ranges for expected costs must be briefly explained in the MLS Comments column of the Template.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Most Likely Scenario (MLS) are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Note:* See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2**. The Most Likely Scenario (MLS) Projections Template has not been modified. **CR-3.** All required cells for Operating Costs have data input. **CR-4.** All rows with input data have sufficient relevant Comments content as specified in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document (see Appendix 5). **CR-5**. Variances for 20% or more are Explained in Comments, **CR-6.** Provided Pre-evaluated RSP and all other outsourced contracts, LOIs, or proposals (except employment agreements). **CR-7.** Contracts, Letters of Intent (LOIs), and proposals costs are accounted for in the MLS Projections Template.	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.2-2** - Operating Costs)	215	**Q4.3.2-2 -** With the exception of employee agreements, provide all material outsourced Contracts, Letters of Intent (LOIs), and Proposals for the applying entity's operating costs.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Most Likely Scenario (MLS) are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Note:* See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Provided Pre-evaluated RSP and all other outsourced contracts, Letters of Intent (LOIs), or proposals (except employment agreements).	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.3-1** - Funding and Revenue)	216	**Q4.3.3-1 -** For projected revenue, describe the applying entity's strategy for using various pricing models for projected registration revenue, if applicable, such as auctions, premium naming, multi-year versus single-year registrations, etc. across all applied-for gTLD strings in MLS Comments.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Funding and Revenue are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Notes:* 1. Funding can be derived from several sources such as existing capital or proceeds/revenue from operation of a registry. 2. Funding resources must be adequately provided to produce positive cash flow by the end of the third year of operations. 3. See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR1.** Applying entity provided a strategy registration revenue that included all applied-for gTLD strings collectively, launch plans, market size and planned penetration goals, unique registry services, etc. **CR-2.** Applying entity clearly identified any other funding sources, amounts, and timing of use for each source.	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.3-2** - Funding and Revenue)	217	**Q4.3.3-2 -** Identify and document in MLS Comments any sources of capital funding required to sustain registry operations for the short-term and long-term, ongoing basis.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Funding and Revenue are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Notes:* 1. Funding can be derived from several sources such as existing capital or proceeds/revenue from operation of a registry. 2. Funding resources must be adequately provided to produce positive cash flow by the end of the third year of operations. See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity provided a strategy registration revenue that included all applied-for gTLD strings collectively, launch plans, market size and planned penetration goals, unique registry services, etc. **CR-2.** Applying entity clearly identified any other funding sources, amounts, and timing of use for each source.	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.4-1** - Contingency Planning)	218	**Q4.3.4-1 -** Using the Financial Evaluation Templates – Risk Assessment spreadsheet, document and provide the applying entity's assessment of the predefined and specific gTLD material risks to the successful operation of a combined set of all applied-for gTLD strings.	No	*Instructions:* Instructions for the Risk Assessment are provided in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Note:* See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** All required Risk Assessments were completed – Risk Scenario, Probably, Impact, Mitigation. **CR-3.** Any applying entity identified risks were assessed and documented in the Risk Assessment Template	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.
Financial Evaluation - **Standard Profile:** Operational Planning (**Q4.3.5-1 -** Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection)	219	**Q4.3.5-1 -** Populate and provide the Worst Case Scenario (WCS) projections as defined in the Financial Evaluation Templates – WCS. The projections must demonstrate that the applying entity's funding is adequate to produce positive cashflow for the startup period and the first three years of operations. Detailed instructions for populating the spreadsheet are in the Financial Evaluation Templates Instructions.	No	*Instructions:* The Instructions for the Worst Case Scenario (WCS) are in the Instructions - Financial Evaluation Template document. *Notes:* 1. The Worst-Case Scenario (WCS) Financial Projection will quantify the plans to operate the registry when events occur that negatively impact the ability to fund the applying entity's applied-for gTLD strings. 2. See Appendix 5 for Templates for Standard Financial Profile, which includes the following templates: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection, Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection, Risk Assessment Template, and Registration Projections Template.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** The Worst Case Scenario (WCS) Projections Template has not been modified. **CR-3.** All required cells have data input. **CR-4.** Cash on Hand at Time of Application calculation is correct. **CR-5.** Cash and Cash Equivalents from the provided financial statement's balance sheet exceed the Cash on Hand at Time of Application. **CR-6.** All rows with data have sufficient relevant Comments content. **CR-7.** Projected Total Cash Flow is positive in Year 3.	Upload the completed Financial Evaluation Template ONE TIME for Questions 213-219 as a part of the answer to Question 213.

Question Set 19: Operational Questions - All financial profiles answer

This question set collects additional information related to the operations of an applying entity.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Financial Evaluation: Security Policy and Planning **(Q5.1-1)**[357]	220	**Q5.1-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, CFO and/or equivalent officer of the applying entity. The self-certification document must represent and warrant: **SC5.1-1.1 -** The applying entity will appropriately protect confidentiality of data and prevent unauthorized access to data and services. **SC5.1-1.2 -** The applying entity will maintain a mature, appropriately funded and staffed security Program, following a recognized, modern security framework based on risk management (such as the ISO27000 series, COBIT, HITRUST CSF, legally required security frameworks, or equivalent). The security Program must be in place prior to delegation, and exist through at least the period of the Base RA. **SC5.1-1.3 -** The applying entity is aware of and has designed its systems and business to comply with the relevant privacy and security regulations for all countries in which it operates.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q5.1-1. 2. The document must include only the SC5.1-1.1 through SC5.1-1.3 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC5.1-1.1 through SC5.1-1.3 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC5.1-1.1 through SC5.1.1-3 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity. **CR-4.** The three Self-Certification Statements confirm that the applying entity: a) commits to its role in the protection of confidentiality of data in the applying entity's care, and prevention of unauthorized access to applying entity's services. b) has planned for and will budget to support the operation of the necessary security capabilities. c) has or plans to implement a recognized, modern security framework based on risk management such as the ISO27000 series, COBIT, HITRUST CSF, legally required security frameworks, or equivalent. d) has a plan to ensure appropriate staffing for its security capabilities. e) has designed operational practices and technical infrastructure to meet the security and privacy requirements it is subject to.	Exactly one document required.

[357] Within TAMS, Questions 220 and 221 are included with each financial profile and will be numbered according to that financial profile. For example, for the standard profile (Q4), this will be Q4.4-1 and Q4.5-2.

Financial Evaluation: DNS Abuse **(Q5.2-1)**	221	**Q5.2-1 -** Provide the applying entity's self-certification document, signed by the CEO, President, CFO and/or equivalent officer of the applying entity. The self-certification document must represent and warrant: **SC5.2-1.1 -** The applying entity will, no later than delegation of the Top Level Domain (TLD), establish a dedicated abuse point of contact responsible for addressing matters requiring expedited attention and providing a timely response to abuse complaints concerning any name registered in the TLD. **SC5.2-1.2 -** The applying entity will, no later than delegation of the TLD, establish, publish, and provide to ICANN the location of a mechanism for members of the public to submit reports of abuse in accordance with the current obligations of the Base RA and any Consensus Policies. **SC5.2-1.3 -** The applying entity has developed proposed measures for removal of orphan glue records for names removed from the zone when provided with evidence in written form that the glue is present in connection with malicious conduct (see Specification 6).	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. Provide a single document for Self-Certification question Q5.2-1. 2. The document must include only the SC5.2-1.1 through SC5.2-1.7 statements. 3. Do not modify any of the Self-Certification statements. 4. If the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC5.2-1.1 through SC5.2-1.7 statements, provide a document that explains why the applying entity cannot Self-Certify the SC5.2-1.1 through SC5.2-1.7 statements.	**CR-1.** Applying entity follows the Instructions without exception and provides complete, commercially reasonable, and good-faith responses. **CR-2.** Applying entity provides the Self-Certification document. **CR-3.** The document is signed by the applying entity. **CR-4.** The seven Self-Certification Statements confirm that the applying entity: a) will, no later than delegation of the Top-Level Domain (TLD), establish a dedicated abuse point of contact and provide a timely response to abuse complaints b) will, no later than delegation of the TLD, establish, publish, and provide to ICANN the location of a mechanism for members of the public to submit reports of abuse in accordance with the current obligations of the Base RA and any Consensus Policies c) has developed proposed measures for removal of orphan glue records for names removed from the zone when provided with evidence in written form that the glue is present in connection with malicious conduct (see Specification 6). d) has established and maintains policies on handling complaints regarding abuse. Such policies are posted publicly so that anyone can review the policies via the Internet and any other means deemed appropriate by the applying entity. The applying entity's policies at a minimum should contain appropriate confirmation of the receipt of the abuse report, the process of review of the report, and actions that will be taken if the applying entity confirms the report is legitimate.	Exactly one document required.

		SC5.2-1.4 - The applying entity has or will have at time of delegation, established policies for handling complaints regarding abuse. Such policies are to be maintained and posted publicly so that anyone can review the policies via the Internet and any other means deemed appropriate by the applying entity. The applying entity's policies at a minimum should contain appropriate confirmation of the receipt of the abuse report, the process of review of the report, and actions that will be taken if the applying entity confirms the report is legitimate. **SC5.2-1.5 -** The applying entity understands that DNS Abuse is Phishing, Malware, Botnets, Pharming and Spam (when used to deliver other forms of DNS Abuse). The applying entity understands and is prepared to contribute to the mitigation or disruption of DNS Abuse in domains in the TLD zone. **SC5.2-1.6 -** The applying entity's abuse response capabilities are resourced appropriately to ensure a timely and adequate investigation and response to reports of DNS Abuse. This includes capabilities to receive and evaluate evidence of DNS Abuse in reports, and to take action to stop or disrupt the DNS Abuse.			e) confirms that DNS Abuse is Phishing, Malware, Botnets, Pharming and Spam (when used to deliver other forms of DNS Abuse). The applying entity is prepared to contribute to the mitigation or disruption of DNS Abuse in domains in the TLD zone. f) will resource abuse response capabilities appropriately to ensure a timely investigation and response to reports of DNS Abuse, receive and evaluate evidence of DNS Abuse in reports, and to take action to stop or disrupt the DNS Abuse. g) is prepared to conduct periodic scans of its zone to identify if domains are being used to perpetrate DNS Abuse, and to maintain statistical reports of the scans, the findings, and actions taken.	

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
		SC5.2-1.7 - The applying entity is prepared to conduct periodic scans of its zone to identify if domains are being used to perpetrate DNS Abuse, and to maintain statistical reports of the scans, the findings, and actions taken.				

Question Set 20: Additional Information and Supporting Materials

This question set collects any additional information that the applying entity would like to provide, including any supporting materials.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Additional Information and Supporting Materials	222	If the applying entity wishes to provide any additional information or supporting materials that the applying entity believes may be of interest to the public or relevant to the application, please include them here.	Yes	*Instructions:* 1. An applying entity may use this response field to submit any additional, optional information or documentation that the applying entity believes enhances understanding of its application or may be of interest to the general public. This could include, but is not limited to, the applying entity's: a) Individual registry policies; b) Separate agreement with a third party to fulfill certain commitments; c) Terms of use; d) Additional registration policies not intended for RA inclusion; e) Other materials that clarify the applying entity's mission, values, or intended use of the gTLD. *Notes:* 1. This question is optional and for informational purposes only. 2. The information provided here will not be evaluated as part of the application, or be contractually binding on the applying entity. 3. All submissions to this question will be posted for the public to review and comment.	**CR-1.** Enter appropriate information in text field or optional document upload.	4000 character limit and/or upload no more than 10 pages, subject to acceptable file types.

Question Set 21: Bona Fide Intent and Prohibited Communications

This question set contains attestations related to the applying entity's acknowledgment of bona fide intent and prohibited communications.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Bona fide intent	223	By submitting this Application, the applying entity confirms that it is submitting this Application with a good faith ("bona fide") intent to operate the gTLD for which it has applied.	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm the statement using the checkbox.	CR-1. Box must be checked to proceed.	Box must be checked to proceed.
Prohibited Communications	224	By submitting this Application, the applying entity confirms that it has read and understands the provisions of Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities of the Applicant Guidebook regarding the New gTLD Program rules prohibiting certain communications and activities to prevent parties from privately resolving string contention among themselves.	Yes	*Instructions:* Confirm the statement using the checkbox.	CR-1. Box must be checked to proceed.	Box must be checked to proceed.

Question Set 22: Volume Refund

This question set contains the applying entity's preference for the Volume Refund. See Section 3.3.3.2 Application Volume Refund for more information.

Sub-section	#	Question	Public Posting	Notes/Instructions	Criteria	Input Field Requirements
Volume Refund	225	If an Application Volume Refund is available, does the applying entity elect to receive the refund?	No	*Instructions:* Select one of the following options: 1. The applying entity elects to receive the Application Volume Refund if one is made available. 2. The applying entity does not elect to receive the Application Volume Refund and understands that the applying entity forfeits a future request to obtain that refund if one is made available. *Notes:* ICANN has indicated the potential situation to offer an Application Volume Refund where more than 1,000 applications are submitted and implementation costs have been recovered; see Application Volume Refund.	CR-1. Select an Option.	An option must be selected.

Appendix 2 Materials Related to Geographic Names

A2.1 Checklist of Requirements

Applicants are required to submit the following documentation with their application, which will be verified through the Geographic Names Review (Section 7.5.3.2):

1. A signed letter of support or non-objection from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies).
    a. The documentation of support or non-objection should include a signed letter from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies).
    b. The letter must clearly express the government's or public authority's support for or non-objection to the applicant's application and demonstrate the government's or public authority's understanding of the string being requested and its intended use.
    c. The letter should also demonstrate the government's or public authority's understanding that the string is being sought through the gTLD application process and that the applicant is willing to accept the conditions under which the string will be available, that is, entry into a Base Registry Agreement with ICANN requiring compliance with consensus policies and payment of fees.
    d. The letter of support or non-objection should be dated no more than four months from the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period, otherwise a fresh letter of support or non-objection will be required.
2. Contact information for a designated person in case the Geographic Names Panel (GNP) needs clarification or has questions.

A2.2 Sample Letter of Support or Non-Objection from a Government Entity/Public Authority

[This letter should be provided on official letterhead]

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
12025 Waterfront Dr
Los Angeles, CA 90094
United States of America

Attention: New gTLD Program Team

Subject: Letter of support or non-objection for [Requested TLD]

This letter [confirms that the Government Entity/Public Authority fully supports][expresses the Government Entity/Public Authority's non-objection to] the application for [Requested gTLD(s)] submitted to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) by [Applicant] under the New gTLD Program. As the [Minister/Secretary/Title], I am authorized by the [Government Entity/Public Authority] to provide this formal letter of support. [Government Entity/Public Authority], through the [Department/Division/Office], is responsible for [brief summary of functions and responsibilities]. The [Government Entity/Public Authority] is confident in [Applicant's] capacity to manage the gTLD in a responsible and effective manner.

The [Government Entity/Public Authority] understands that the gTLD will be used to [Insert understanding of how the name will be used by the applicant. This could include policies developed regarding who can register a name, pricing model and management structures.].

The [Government Entity/Public Authority] supports the application for [Requested gTLD(s)], and understands that if it is successful, [Applicant] will be required to enter into a Base Registry Agreement with ICANN. In the event of a dispute between [Government Entity/Public Authority] and [Applicant], we understand that ICANN will comply with a legally binding order from a court within our jurisdiction.

[Optional] This application is being submitted as a Community Application. The [Government Entity/Public Authority] understands that the Registry Agreement between ICANN and the applicant (if successful) will incorporate the Community Registration Policies proposed in the application that are approved, as-is or with modifications, by ICANN. Following the delegation of the gTLD, if the [Government Entity/Public Authority] determines that the registry is not adhering to these registration policies, we may seek recourse through the Registry Restrictions Dispute Resolution Procedure (RRDRP).

[Optional] If this application is successful the [Government Entity/Public Authority] will enter into a separate agreement with the applicant. This agreement will define the terms of the [Government Entity/Public Authority] support for the operation of the gTLD, and any conditions under which that support may be withdrawn. ICANN will not be a party to this agreement, and its enforcement will rest solely with the [Government Entity/Public Authority].

The [Government Entity/Public Authority] understands that the Geographic Names Panel engaged by ICANN will conduct due diligence to verify the authenticity of this documentation. Should additional information be required, please contact [Name, Title, Contact Details] as the primary point of contact.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this application.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
[Full Name]
[Official Title]
[Government Entity/Public Authority Department]
[Contact Information]

A2.3 Separable Country and Territory Names List

gTLD application restrictions on country or territory names are tied to the property fields of the ISO 3166-1 standard. Notionally, the ISO 3166-1 standard has an “English short name” field which is the common name for a country or territory and can be used for such protections; however, in some cases this does not represent the common name. This list seeks to add additional protected elements which are derived from definitions in the ISO 3166-1 standard. An explanation of the various classes is included below.

Separable components of a country or territory name designated on the “Separable Country and Territory Names List,” or a translation of a name appearing on the list, in any language, will not be approved. See Section 7.5.1 Treatment of Country or Territory Names for more information.

Table A2-1: Separable Country and Territory Names List

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Abariringa	KI	Kiribati	C
Agalega Islands	MU	Mauritius	C
Åland	AX	Åland Islands	B
Aldabra Islands	SC	Seychelles	C
Alderney	GG	Guernsey	C
America	US	United States of America (the)	B
Amindivi Islands	IN	India	C
Amirante Islands	SC	Seychelles	C
Amsterdam Island	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Andaman Islands	IN	India	C
Anegada	VG	Virgin Islands (British)	C
Anjouan	KM	Comoros (the)	C
Annobón Island	GQ	Equatorial Guinea	C
Antigua	AG	Antigua and Barbuda	A
Antipodes Islands	NZ	New Zealand	C
Ascension	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	A
Ashore Island	AU	Australia	C
Auckland Islands	NZ	New Zealand	C
Austral Islands	PF	French Polynesia	C
Babelthuap	PW	Palau	C
Baker Island	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Banaba	KI	Kiribati	C

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Barbuda	AG	Antigua and Barbuda	A
Bassas da India	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Bear Island	SJ	Svalbard and Jan Mayen	C
Bequia	VC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	C
Bioko Island	GQ	Equatorial Guinea	C
Bird Island	VE	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	C
Bismarck Archipelago	PG	Papua New Guinea	C
Bolivia	BO	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	B
Bonaire	BQ	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	A
Bonaire	NL	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	C
Bosnia	BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	A
Bougainville	PG	Papua New Guinea	C
Brecqhou	GG	Guernsey	C
Brunei	BN	Brunei Darussalam	B
Burhou	GG	Guernsey	C
Cabinda	AO	Angola	C
Caicos Islands	TC	Turks and Caicos Islands (the)	A
Campbell Island	NZ	New Zealand	C
Cargados Carajos Shoals	MU	Mauritius	C
Caroline Islands	FM	Micronesia (Federated States of)	C
Caroline Islands	PW	Palau	C
Carriacou	GD	Grenada	C
Caribbean Netherlands	BQ	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	C
Cartier Island	AU	Australia	C
Chagos Archipelago	IO	British Indian Ocean Territory (the)	C
Chatham Islands	NZ	New Zealand	C
Chuuk	FM	Micronesia (Federated States of)	C
Clipperton Island	FR	France	C
Coco Island	CR	Costa Rica	C
Cocos Islands	CC	Cocos (Keeling) Islands (the)	A
Coral Sea Islands	AU	Australia	C
Cosmoledo Islands	SC	Seychelles	C
Crozet Archipelago	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Diego Garcia	IO	British Indian Ocean Territory (the)	C
Ducie Island	PN	Pitcairn	C
Easter Island	CL	Chile	C

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Efate	VU	Vanuatu	C
Emirates	AE	United Arab Emirates (the)	B
Enderbury Island	KI	Kiribati	C
Europa Island	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Falkland Islands	FK	Falkland Islands (the) [Malvinas]	B
Faroe	FO	Faroe Islands (the)	A
Farquhar Islands	SC	Seychelles	C
Fernando de Noronha Island	BR	Brazil	C
French Guiana	FR	France	C
French Polynesia	FR	France	C
French Southern Territories	FR	France	C
Funafuti	TV	Tuvalu	C
Futuna	WF	Wallis and Futuna	A
Galápagos Islands	EC	Ecuador	C
Gambier Islands	PF	French Polynesia	C
Gilbert Islands	KI	Kiribati	C
Glorioso Islands	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Gough Island	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	C
Grand Cayman	KY	Cayman Islands (the)	C
Grande Comore	KM	Comoros (the)	C
Great Britain	GB	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)	A
Grenadines	VC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	A
Guadalcanal	SB	Solomon Islands	C
Guadeloupe	FR	France	C
Heard Island	HM	Heard Island and McDonald Islands	A
Henderson Island	PN	Pitcairn	C
Herm	GG	Guernsey	C
Herzegovina	BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	A
Holy See	VA	Holy See (the)	A
Hoorn Islands	WF	Wallis and Futuna	C
Howland Island	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Inaccessible Island	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	C
Iran	IR	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	B
Jaluit	MH	Marshall Islands (the)	C
Jan Mayen	SJ	Svalbard and Jan Mayen	A
Jarvis Island	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Jethou	GG	Guernsey	C
Johnston Atoll	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Jost Van Dyke	VG	Virgin Islands (British)	C
Juan de Nova Island	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Juan Fernández Islands	CL	Chile	C
Kaliningrad Region	RU	Russian Federation (the)	C
Keeling Islands	CC	Cocos (Keeling) Islands (the)	A
Kerguelen Islands	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Kermadec Islands	NZ	New Zealand	C
Kingman Reef	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Kiritimati	KI	Kiribati	C
Kosrae	FM	Micronesia (Federated States of)	C
Kwajalein	MH	Marshall Islands (the)	C
la Désirade	GP	Guadeloupe	C
La Réunion	FR	France	C
Laccadive Islands	IN	India	C
Laos	LA	Lao People's Democratic Republic (the)	B
les Saintes	GP	Guadeloupe	C
Lihou	GG	Guernsey	C
Line Islands	KI	Kiribati	C
Little Sark	GG	Guernsey	C
Lord Howe Island	AU	Australia	C
Loyalty Islands	NC	New Caledonia	C
Macquarie Island	AU	Australia	C
Mahé	SC	Seychelles	C
Majuro	MH	Marshall Islands (the)	C
Malpelo Island	CO	Colombia	C
Malvinas	FK	Falkland Islands (the) [Malvinas]	B
Mariana Islands	MP	Northern Mariana Islands (the)	C
Marie-Galante	GP	Guadeloupe	C
Marion Island	ZA	South Africa	C
Marquesas Islands	PF	French Polynesia	C
Martim Vaz Islands	BR	Brazil	C
Martinique	FR	France	C
Mayotte	YT	France	C
McDonald Islands	HM	Heard Island and McDonald Islands	A

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Metropolitan France	FR	France	C
Midway Islands	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Minicoy Island	IN	India	C
Miquelon	PM	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	A
Mohéli	KM	Comoros (the)	C
Moldova	MD	Moldova (the Republic of)	B
Mount Athos	GR	Greece	C
Musandam Peninsula	OM	Oman	C
Navassa Island	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Negara Brunei Darussalam	BN	Brunei Darussalam	C
Netherlands	NL	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	B
Nevis	KN	Saint Kitts and Nevis	A
New Caledonia	FR	France	C
Nicobar Islands	IN	India	C
Nightingale Island	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	C
North Korea	KP	Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of)	C
Northern Grenadine Islands	VC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	C
Northern Ireland	GB	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the)	A
Northern Solomon Islands	PG	Papua New Guinea	C
Oecussi	TL	Timor-Leste	C
Oeno Island	PN	Pitcairn	C
Palestine	PS	Palestine, State of	B
Palmyra Atoll	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Penghu Islands	TW	Taiwan (Province of China)	C
Pescadores	TW	Taiwan (Province of China)	C
Phoenix Islands	KI	Kiribati	C
Pohnpei	FM	Micronesia (Federated States of)	C
Prince Edward Island	ZA	South Africa	C
Principe	ST	Sao Tome and Principe	A
Providencia Island	CO	Colombia	C
Rarotonga	CK	Cook Islands (the)	C
Redonda Island	AG	Antigua and Barbuda	C
Rio Muni	GQ	Equatorial Guinea	C
Rodrigues Island	MU	Mauritius	C
Rotuma Island	FJ	Fiji	C
Russia	RU	Russian Federation (the)	B

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Saba	BQ	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	A
Saba	NL	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	C
Sabah	MY	Malaysia	C
Saint Barthélemy	FR	France	C
Saint Croix	VI	Virgin Islands (U.S.)	C
Saint Helena	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	A
Saint John	VI	Virgin Islands (U.S.)	C
Saint Kitts	KN	Saint Kitts and Nevis	A
Saint Martin	FR	France	C
Saint Martin	MF	Saint Martin (French part)	B
Saint Paul Island	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	FR	France	C
Saint Pierre	PM	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	A
Saint Thomas	VI	Virgin Islands (U.S.)	C
Saint Vincent Island	VC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	C
Saint Vincent	VC	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	A
Saipan	MP	Northern Mariana Islands (the)	C
Sala y Gómez Island	CL	Chile	C
San Ambrosio Island	CL	Chile	C
San Andrés Island	CO	Colombia	C
San Félix Island	CL	Chile	C
Santa Cruz Islands	SB	Solomon Islands	C
Santo	VU	Vanuatu	C
São Tiago	CV	Cabo Verde	C
Sao Tome	ST	Sao Tome and Principe	A
São Vicente	CV	Cabo Verde	C
Sarawak	MY	Malaysia	C
Sark	GG	Guernsey	C
Savai'i	WS	Samoa	C
Sint Eustatius	BQ	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	A
Sint Eustatius	NL	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	C
Society Archipelag	PF	French Polynesia	C
Socotra Island	YE	Yemen	C
South Georgia	GS	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	A
South Korea	KR	Korea (the Republic of)	C
South Sandwich Islands	GS	South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands	A

Separable Name	Alpha-2 Code	ISO 3166 Short Name	Class
Southern Grenadine Islands	GD	Grenada	C
Southern Solomon Islands	SB	Solomon Islands	C
Stoltenhoff Island	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	C
Svalbard	SJ	Svalbard and Jan Mayen	A
Swain's Island	AS	American Samoa	C
Swan Islands	HN	Honduras	C
Syria	SY	Syrian Arab Republic (the)	B
Tahiti	PF	French Polynesia	C
Taiwan	TW	Taiwan (Province of China)	B
Tanzania	TZ	Tanzania, the United Republic of	B
Tarawa	KI	Kiribati	C
Tobago	TT	Trinidad and Tobago	A
Tongatapu	TO	Tonga	C
Tortola	VG	Virgin Islands (British)	C
Trindade Island	BR	Brazil	C
Trinidad	TT	Trinidad and Tobago	A
Tristan da Cunha	SH	Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	A
Tromelin Island	TF	French Southern Territories (the)	C
Tuamotu Islands	PF	French Polynesia	C
Turks Islands	TC	Turks and Caicos Islands (the)	A
Tutuila	AS	American Samoa	C
Upolu	WS	Samoa	C
Uvea	WF	Wallis and Futuna	C
Vanua Levu	FJ	Fiji	C
Vatican	VA	Holy See (the)	A
Venezuela	VE	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	B
Virgin Gorda	VG	Virgin Islands (British)	C
Virgin Islands	VG	Virgin Islands (British)	B
Virgin Islands	VI	Virgin Islands (U.S.)	B
Viti Levu	FJ	Fiji	C
Wake Island	UM	United States Minor Outlying Islands (the)	C
Wallis and Futuna	FR	France	C
Wallis Islands	WF	Wallis and Futuna	C
Wallis	WF	Wallis and Futuna	A
Yap	FM	Micronesia (Federated States of)	C

Methodology

This Separable Country and Territory Names List is produced by ICANN through analysis of the ISO 3166-1 standard, in accordance with the eligibility criteria below. This version of the list was produced based on the data published by ISO on 2025-05-05.

Codes reserved by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency do not have any implication on this list, only entries derived from normally assigned codes appearing in ISO 3166-1 are eligible.

If an ISO code is struck off the ISO 3166-1 standard, any entries in this list deriving from that code must also be struck.

Eligibility

- **Class A:** The ISO 3166-1 English Short Name is composed of multiple, separable parts whereby the country or territory comprises distinct sub-entities. Each of these separable parts is eligible in its own right for consideration as a country or territory name. For example, “Antigua and Barbuda” is composed of “Antigua” and “Barbuda.”
- **Class B:** The ISO 3166-1 English Short Name (1) or the ISO 3166-1 English Full Name (2) contains additional language that describes the type of country or territory the entity is, which is often not used in common usage when referencing the country or territory. For example, one such short name is “The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela” for a country in common usage referred to as “Venezuela.”
- **Class C:** The ISO 3166-1 Remarks column contains synonyms of the country or territory name, or sub-national entities, as denoted by “often referred to as,” “includes”, “comprises”, “variant” or “principal islands”.

Appendix 3 Materials Related to Objections and Appeals

ICANN Procedures

ICANN Objection Procedure

This Procedure applies to all proceedings administered by each of the Dispute Resolution Service Providers (DRSPs). Each of the DRSPs has a specific set of rules that will also apply to such proceedings.

Article 1. ICANN's New gTLD Program: 2026 Round

a. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has implemented a Program for the introduction of new generic Top-Level Domain Names (gTLDs) in the Internet.

b. The New gTLD Program: 2026 Round includes this Objection Procedure (the Procedure), pursuant to which disputes between an entity that applies for a new gTLD, or a primary gTLD and allocatable variant strings, and a person or entity that objects to that/those gTLD(s), are resolved.

c. Dispute resolution proceedings shall be administered by a Dispute Resolution Service Provider (DRSP) in accordance with this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules that are identified in Article 4(b).

d. DRSPs shall adhere to ICANN's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers (Appendix 8) and ICANN's Conflicts of Interest policy (Appendix 7).

e. By filing an Application or an Objection, an Applicant or Objector respectively accept the applicability of this Procedure, the 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook, and the applicable DRSP's Rules that are identified in Article 4(b). The Parties cannot deviate from this Procedure without the express approval of ICANN and from the applicable DRSP Rules without the express approval of the relevant DRSP.

Article 2. Definitions

a. The "Objector" is one or more persons or entities that have filed an Objection against an Application.

b. The "Respondent" is an Applicant that responds to an Objection.

c. The "Parties" are the Objector and the Respondent.

d. The "Panel" is a group consisting of one or three persons empaneled by a DRSP in accordance with this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules that are identified in Article 4(b) to adjudicate on an Objection.

e. The "Panel Determination" is the decision issued by a Panel on an Objection that is rendered in a proceeding conducted under this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules that are identified in Article 4(b).

f. The grounds upon which an Objection to a new gTLD may be filed, as set out in Section 4.1 Objections and Appeals of the Applicant Guidebook, are:

   i. String Confusion;
   ii. Legal Rights;
   iii. Limited Public Interest; and
   iv. Community.

g. "DRSP Rules" are the additional rules of procedure of a particular DRSP that have been identified as being applicable to Objection proceedings under this Procedure.

Article 3. Dispute Resolution Service Providers

The various categories of disputes shall be administered by the following DRSPs:

a. String Confusion and Legal Rights Objections shall be administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

b. Limited Public Interest and Community Objections shall be administered by the International Chamber of Commerce.

Article 4. Applicable Rules

a. All proceedings before the Panel shall be governed by this Procedure and by the DRSP Rules that apply to a particular category of Objection. The outcome of the proceedings shall be deemed a Panel Determination, and the members of the Panel shall act as panelists.

b. The applicable DRSP Rules are the following:

   i. For a String Confusion Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/sco/.
   ii. For a Legal Rights Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/.
   iii. For a Limited Public Interest Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage:

https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/.

iv. For a Community Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/.

c. In the event of any discrepancy between this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, this Procedure shall prevail.

d. The place of the proceedings, if relevant, shall be the location of the DRSP that is administering the proceedings.

e. In all cases, the Panel shall ensure that the Parties are treated equally in that each Party is given a reasonable opportunity to present its position.

Article 5. Language

a. The language of all submissions and proceedings under this Procedure shall be English.

b. Parties may submit supporting evidence in its original language, provided and subject to the authority of the Panel to determine otherwise, that such evidence is accompanied by a certified or otherwise official English translation of all relevant text.

Article 6. Communications and Time Limits

a. All communications must be submitted electronically as specified in the DRSP Rules. A Party that wishes to make a submission that is not available in electronic form (e.g., evidentiary models) shall request leave from the Panel to do so, and the Panel, in its sole discretion, shall determine whether to accept the non-electronic submission. In limited circumstances and if permitted by the DRSP, a Party may make a call with the DRSP to clarify administrative matters. Virtual hearings will only be allowed upon request of the Panel.

b. The DRSP, Panel, Objector, and Respondent shall provide virtual copies to one another of all correspondence (apart from confidential correspondence between the Panel and the DRSP and among the Panel) regarding the proceedings.

c. For the purpose of determining the date of commencement of a time limit, a notice or other communication shall be deemed to have been received on the day that it is transmitted in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Article.

d. For the purpose of determining compliance with a time limit, a notice or other communication shall be deemed to have been sent, made or transmitted if it is

dispatched in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Article prior to or on the day of the expiration of the time limit.

e. For the purpose of calculating a period of time under this Procedure, such period shall begin to run on the day following the day when a notice or other communication is received.

f. Unless otherwise stated, all time periods provided in the Procedure are calculated on the basis of calendar days.

Article 7. Filing of the Objection

a. A person or entity wishing to object to an application for a new gTLD may file an Objection, subject to standing requirements set out below. Any Objection to a proposed new gTLD must be filed before the published closing date for the applicable Objection Filing period.

b. The Objection must be filed with the appropriate DRSP as follows:

   i. A String Confusion Objection must be filed at https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/sco/.
   ii. A Legal Rights Objection must be filed at https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/.
   iii. A Limited Public Interest and a Community Objection must be filed at https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/how-to-file-an-objection/.

c. Objections must be filed as follows:

   i. An Objector that wishes to object to an application on more than one ground must file separate Objections with the appropriate DRSP(s).
   ii. An Objector who wishes to object to more than one application must file separate Objections to each application with the appropriate DRSP(s).
   iii. Should a Party with standing wish to file a String Confusion Objection against an application for a string for which several applicants have applied, it may file an Objection against one, some, or all applications for that string. In such a case, the string confusion DRSP may introduce a differential fee structure. If the Objection is filed against several applications for an identical string, the Applicant for each application receiving an Objection may file a response to the Objection; if the Applicant fails to file a response, the Objection will be upheld against those applications. The same Panel will review all documentation associated with the Objection, and each response will be reviewed on its own merits. The Panel will issue a single determination identifying which applications are in contention, where applicable.

d. Objections may be filed when ICANN announces the opening of an Objection window during the following time periods:

   i. For 104 days, for all Objection grounds, starting on String Confirmation Day.
   ii. For 30 days, for String Confusion only, following the publication of updated contention sets once String Evaluation has been completed.
   iii. For 30 days, for all Objections grounds, in case of .Brand String Change, starting on the day the String Evaluation Reports are published, and only if the string evaluation is successful.

Article 8. Content of the Objection

a. The Objection shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

   i. The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the Objector;
   ii. A statement of the Objector's basis for standing; and
   iii. A description of the basis for the Objection, including:
      I. A statement of the ground upon which the Objection is being filed, as stated in Article 2(f) of this Procedure;
      II. An explanation of the validity of the Objection and why the Objection should be upheld.

b. The substantive portion of the Objection shall be limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit. The Objector shall also describe and provide copies of any supporting or official documents upon which the Objection is based.

c. At the same time as the Objection is filed, the Objector shall pay a filing fee in the amount set in accordance with the applicable DRSP Rules and include evidence of such payment along with the Objection. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within 10 days of the transmission of the Objection to the DRSP, the Objection shall be dismissed without prejudice.

Article 9. Administrative Review of the Objection

a. The DRSP shall conduct an administrative review of the Objection for the purpose of verifying compliance with Articles 5-8 of this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, and inform ICANN of the result of its review within 14 days of its transmission of the Objection and the filing fee. The DRSP may extend this time limit for reasons explained in the notification of such extension. The administrative review includes the determination whether the Objection was filed with the correct DRSP.

b. If the DRSP finds that the Objection complies with Articles 5-8 of this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, the DRSP shall confirm that the Objection shall be registered for processing.

c. If the DRSP finds that the Objection does not comply with Articles 5-8 of this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, the DRSP shall have the discretion to request that any administrative deficiencies in the Objection be corrected within five days of the Objector receiving the request from the DRSP. If the deficiencies in the Objection are cured within the specified period but after the lapse of the time limit for submitting an Objection stipulated by Article 7(e) of this Procedure, the Objection shall be deemed to be within this time limit.

d. If the DRSP finds that the Objection does not comply with Articles 5-8 of this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, and the deficiencies in the Objection are not corrected within the period specified in Article 9(c), the DRSP shall dismiss the Objection and close the proceedings, without prejudice to the Objector's submission of a new Objection that complies with this Procedure, provided that the Objection is filed within the deadline for filing such Objections. The DRSP's review of the Objection shall not interrupt the running of the time limit for submitting an Objection stipulated by Article 7(e) of this Procedure.

e. Upon registering an Objection for processing, pursuant to Article 9(b), the DRSP shall post the following information about the Objection on its website: (i) the proposed application and string to which the Objection is directed; (ii) the names of the Objector and the Applicant; (ii) the grounds for the Objection; and (iv) the dates of the DRSP's transmission of the Objection.

Article 10. Notification

a. Within 30 days of the deadline for filing Objections in relation to gTLD applications in a given round, ICANN shall publish on its website all of the admissible Objections that have been filed (the Objection Announcement). ICANN shall also directly inform each DRSP of the posting of the Objection Announcement.

b. Upon publication of the Objection Announcement, each DRSP shall promptly send a notice to the respective: (i) Objector(s); and (ii) each Applicant with an application to which one or more registered Objections have been filed (Respondent) with that DRSP, that is, those that have passed the Administrative Review.

Article 11. Consolidation of Objections

a. Any Applicant or Objector may propose the consolidation of certain Objections within seven days of the publication of the Objection Announcement.

b. The DRSP, at its discretion, may elect to propose the consolidation of certain objections within 14 days of the publication of the Objection Announcement, weighing the benefits (in terms of time, cost, consistency of decisions, etc.) that may result from the consolidation against the possible prejudice or inconvenience that the consolidation may cause.

c. In the case of String Confusion, Objections against Applications that are in direct contention may be consolidated and a single Panel Determination will be issued explaining the contention. Objections based upon different grounds, as summarized in Article 2(f), shall not be consolidated.

d. In case the DRSP proposes the consolidation of certain Objections, the Parties shall have seven days after receiving the notice to submit any concerns to the DRSP about the proposed consolidation.

e. The DRSP shall inform the Parties of its final decision of consolidation (Notice of Consolidation) within 28 days of the Objection Announcement.

Article 12. Appointment of The Panel

a. The DRSP shall select and appoint the Panel within 40 days after the publication of the Objection Announcement or, where applicable, the Notice of Consolidation, and issue a Panel appointment notice to the Parties.

b. The default will be a one-person Panel, unless the Parties to the proceeding mutually agree upon a three-person Panel. The Parties will have to notify the DRSP via a joint letter within 10 days of the publication of the Objection Announcement or, where applicable, the Notice of Consolidation, should they wish to have a three-person Panel.

c. Specific qualifications of Panelist(s):

   i. In proceedings involving a String Confusion Objection, the Panelist(s) should have experience in Legal Rights disputes; at least one of the Panelists should have knowledge of the relevant script(s).
   ii. In proceedings involving a Legal Rights Objection, the Panelist(s) should have experience in Legal Rights disputes.
   iii. In proceedings involving a Limited Public Interest Objection, the Panelist(s) should be recognized as eminent jurists of international reputation, with expertise in relevant fields as appropriate; these may include, but are not limited to, social sciences, political science, sociology, health sciences, and others.
   iv. In proceedings involving a Community Objection, the Panelist(s) should be recognized as eminent jurists of international reputation, with expertise in relevant fields as appropriate; these may include, but are not limited to, social sciences, political science, sociology, and others. At

least one of the Panelists should ideally have understanding or knowledge of the relevant community.

d. All Panelists acting under this Procedure shall be impartial and independent of the Parties. The applicable DRSP Rules stipulate the manner by which each Panelist shall confirm and maintain their impartiality and independence.

e. Unless required by a court of law or authorized in writing by the Parties, a Panelist shall not act in any capacity whatsoever, in any pending or future proceedings, whether judicial, arbitral or otherwise, relating to the matter referred to Panel Determination under this Procedure.

f. In cases where there may be indirect contention that results from a String Confusion Objection, the same Panel will ideally preside over decisions relating to each relevant Objection. For example, if Party X files an Objection against "String A" claiming that it is similar to Party X's applied-for "String B", and Party Y files an Objection against "String B" claiming that it is similar to its applied-for "String C", the same Panel will ideally have to precede over both determination, as a potential result is that "String A" and "String C" are in direct contention with "String B" and indirect contention with each other (String A → String B ← String C).

g. The DRSP Rules will establish the procedures to raise and address conflicts of interest concerns with the assigned panel.

Article 13. Quick Look Review

a. Each Panel shall conduct the Quick Look Review of the Objection for the purpose of identifying and eliminating Objections that are manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both.

b. The criteria the Panel will use to determine whether the Objection is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both are the following:

i. The Objection is not filed on one of the accepted Objection grounds.
ii. The Party filing the Objection does not have standing.
iii. Insufficient or no evidence is provided to support the Objection.
iv. The Objection is far-fetched, clearly invented, manifestly contrary to common sense, or so ambiguous that it is objectively impossible for the DRSP to make sense of it.
v. The Objection spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies hatred based on intolerance towards a certain group.
vi. Multiple Objections on the same ground are filed by the same or affiliated Parties against the same Applicant in a manner that constitutes harassment of the Applicant.
vii. Other facts that may clearly show that the Objection is manifestly unfounded and/or an abuse of the right to object.

c. The Quick Look Review must be completed within 30 days of the Panel appointment or conflict mitigation, should conflicts of interest issues be raised by the parties.

d. The dismissal of an Objection that is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to object, or both would be a Panel Determination, rendered in accordance with Article 22 of the Objection Procedure.

e. The DRSPs will publish the results of the Quick Look Review on their respective websites and notify the respective Applicants and Objector(s) and Respondent(s) of said results.

Article 14. Costs

a. Each DRSP shall determine the costs for the proceedings that it administers under this Procedure in accordance with the applicable DRSP Rules. Such costs shall cover the fees and expenses of the members of the Panel, as well as the administrative fees of the DRSP (the Costs).

b. Within 10 days of completing the Quick Look Review, the DRSP shall estimate the total Costs of an Objection proceeding and request each Party to pay, in advance, the full amount of the estimated Costs to the DRSP. If the Parties agree on a three-person Panel, the Costs of the dispute will increase.

c. Each Party shall make its advance payment of Costs within 20 days of the notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review and submit to the DRSP evidence of such payment. The DRSP may revise its estimate of the total Costs and request additional payments from the Parties during the proceedings.

d. Failure to make an advance payment of Costs shall lead to the DRSP issuing a procedural Determination as follows:

   i. If the Objector fails to make the advance payment of Costs, its Objection shall be dismissed and no fees that it has paid shall be refunded.
   ii. If the Respondent fails to make the advance payment of Costs, the Objection will be deemed to have been sustained and no fees that the Respondent has paid shall be refunded.
   iii. If both Parties fail to make the advance payment of costs, the Objection shall be dismissed and no fees that the Objector and Respondent have paid shall be refunded.

e. Upon the termination of the proceedings, after issuance of the Panel Determination, the DRSP shall refund to the prevailing Party, as determined by the Panel, its advance payment(s) of Costs.

Article 15. Response to the Objection

a. The Respondent shall file a Response to each Objection (the Response) within 30 days of being informed of the results of the Quick Look Review pursuant to Article 13(e).

b. The Response must be filed with the appropriate DRSP, using a model form made available by that DRSP, with copies to the Objector.

c. The Response shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

   i. The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the Respondent; and
   ii. A point-by-point Response to the statements made in the Objection.

d. The substantive portion of the Response shall be limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit. The Respondent shall also describe and provide copies of any supporting or official documents to the DRSP upon which the Response is based.

e. At the same time as the Response is filed, the Respondent shall pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant DRSP (which shall be the same as the filing fee paid by the Objector) and include evidence of such payment in the Response. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within 20 days of the notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, the Respondent shall be deemed to be in default, any Response disregarded, the Objection shall be deemed successful, and the DRSP shall issue a procedural Determination.

f. If the DRSP finds that the Response does not comply with Articles 15(c) and (d) of this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules, the DRSP shall have the discretion to request that any administrative deficiencies in the Response be corrected within five days of the Respondent receiving the request from the DRSP. If the administrative deficiencies in the Response are cured within the specified period but after the lapse of the time limit for submitting a Response pursuant to this Procedure, the Response shall be deemed to be within this time limit.

g. If the Respondent fails to file a Response to the Objection within the 30-day time limit or cure the deficiencies in the Response within the period specified in Article 15(f), the Respondent shall be deemed to be in default, the Objection shall be deemed successful, and the DRSP shall issue a procedural Determination. No fees paid by the Respondent will be refunded in case of default.

Article 16. Representation and Assistance

a. The Parties may be represented or assisted by persons of their choice at their own costs.

b. Each Party or Party Representative shall communicate the name, contact information and function of such persons to the DRSP and the other Party (or Parties in case of consolidation).

Article 17. Additional Written Submissions

a. The Panel may decide whether the Parties shall submit any written statements in addition to the Objection and the Response, and it shall fix time limits for such submissions.

b. The time limits fixed by the Panel for additional written submissions shall not exceed 30 days, unless the Panel, having consulted the DRSP, determines that exceptional circumstances justify a longer time limit.

Article 18. Evidence

In order to achieve the goal of resolving disputes over new gTLD applications rapidly and at reasonable cost, procedures for the production of documents shall be limited and only required at the request of the Panel. Specifically, the Panel may require a Party to provide additional evidence and may specify time limits, which should not exceed 30 days, unless the Panel, having consulted the DRSP, determines that exceptional circumstances justify a longer time limit.

Article 19. Hearings

a. Disputes under this Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules should be resolved without a hearing, unless the Panel decides, on its own initiative or at the request of a Party, that exceptional circumstances make a virtual hearing necessary. Under no circumstances will an in-person hearing be conducted.

b. In the event that the Panel decides to hold a virtual hearing:

   i. In order to expedite the proceedings and minimize costs, the hearing shall be conducted by videoconference only.
   ii. The hearing shall be limited to one day, unless the Panel decides, in exceptional circumstances, that more than one day is required for the hearing.

Article 20. Negotiation and Mediation

a. The Parties are encouraged, but not required, to participate in negotiations or mediation at any time throughout the dispute resolution process aimed at settling their dispute amicably.

b. Each DRSP shall administer mediation proceedings, if requested by the Parties, under its respective rules and procedures.

c. A person who acts as mediator for the Parties shall not serve as a Panelist in a dispute between the Parties under this Procedure or any other proceeding under this Procedure involving the same gTLD.

d. The conduct of negotiations or mediation shall not, in and of itself, be the basis for a suspension of the dispute resolution proceedings or the extension of any deadline under this Procedure. Upon the joint request of the Parties, the DRSP or (after it has been constituted) the Panel may grant the extension of a deadline or the suspension of the proceedings.

e. Absent exceptional circumstances, such extension or suspension shall not exceed 30 days and shall not delay the administration of any other Objection. An exception to the 30-day extension will be granted if both Parties agree that the Applicant/Respondent will file an Application Change Request to ICANN and they communicate their decision to the DRSP via a joint notification. In such a case, the proceedings will be suspended until 15 days after the publication of the results of the Application Change Request.

f. If, during negotiations and/or mediation, the Parties agree on a settlement of an Objection proceeding, the Parties shall inform the DRSP. The DRSP, in turn, shall terminate the proceedings, subject to the Parties' payment obligations under this Procedure having been satisfied, and inform ICANN and the Parties accordingly.

Article 21. Principles

a. For each category of Objection identified in Article 2(f), the Panel shall apply the principles that have been defined by ICANN.

b. In addition, the Panel may refer to and base its findings upon the statements and documents submitted and any rules or principles that it determines to be applicable.

c. The Objector bears the burden of proving that its Objection should be sustained in accordance with the applicable principles.

Article 22. The Panel Determination

a. The DRSP and the Panel shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the Panel Determination is rendered within 45 days of the receipt of the Response or any additional written submissions or the hearing, if any. In specific circumstances such as consolidated cases and in consultation with the DRSP, if significant additional documentation is requested by the Panel, a brief extension may be allowed at the discretion of the DRSP and Panel.

b. The Panel shall submit its Determination in draft form to the DRSP so that the DRSP may review and confirm that the Panel Determination is in the proper form, unless such DRSP review is specifically excluded by the applicable DRSP Rules. Any changes proposed by the DRSP to the Panel, if any, shall address only the form, and not the substance or outcome, of the Panel Determination. The final Panel Determination shall then be communicated to the DRSP, which in turn will communicate that Panel Determination to the Parties and ICANN.

c. When the Panel comprises three Panelists, the Panel Determination shall be made by a majority of the Panelists.

d. The Panel Determination shall be in writing and shall state the reasons upon which it is based.

e. The outcomes of the String Confusion Objection can be as follows:

    i. If the Objector prevails:
        I. Where the Objector is another Applicant, then the entire variant string set in both that application and the Objector's application must be placed in a contention set.
        II. Where the Objector is an existing gTLD operator or existing ccTLD operator/a significantly interested Party in the respective country or territory, the application (including primary and allocatable variant strings) is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process; or
    ii. If the Objector does not prevail, that entire application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding.

f. The possible outcomes for Limited Public Interest, Legal Rights, and Community Objections are as follows:

    i. If an Objection against an applied-for primary gTLD string prevails, then that entire application is ineligible to proceed to the next stage of the application process; or
    ii. If an Objection against only one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) in an application prevails, then the application for the applied-for primary gTLD string and other unaffected applied-for

allocatable variant string(s) may proceed to the next stage of the application process without the applied-for allocatable variant string(s) that are rendered ineligible by the Objection; or

I. If the Objection does not prevail, then the entire application may proceed to the next stage of the application process, unless other processes prevent it from proceeding; or

II. The application cannot proceed unless agreement is reached on a new or modified RVC that is approved by ICANN.

g. The DRSP will refund to the prevailing Party of its advance payment(s) of Costs pursuant to Article 14(f) of this Procedure and any relevant provisions of the applicable DRSP Rules. Should the Panel Determination indicate that the application cannot proceed unless agreement is reached on a new or modified RVC that is approved by ICANN, the Objector will be considered as the prevailing Party.

e. The Panel Determination shall state the date when it is made, and it shall be signed by all members of the Panel. If any Panelist fails to sign the Panel Determination, it shall be accompanied by a statement of the reason for the absence of such signature.

f. In addition to providing electronic copies of its Panel Determination, the Panel shall provide a signed hard copy of the Panel Determination to the DRSP, unless the DRSP Rules provide otherwise.

g. Unless the Panel decides otherwise, the Panel Determination shall be published in full on the DRSP's website.

h. The non-successful Party in an Objection will have the opportunity to Appeal a Panel Determination and such Appeal would be considered under a clearly erroneous standard of review. The process for appealing to a Panel Determination is described in the ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure.

Article 23. Exclusion of Liability

In addition to any exclusion of liability stipulated by the applicable DRSP Rules, the following shall not be liable to any person for any act or omission in connection with any proceeding conducted under this Objection Procedure, except in cases of willful misconduct or gross negligence: the Panelist(s) or their employees, the DRSP or its employees, ICANN or its Affiliates, Board members, staff members, employees, agents and consultants.

Article 24. Modification of the Procedure

a. ICANN may from time to time, in accordance with its Bylaws and by following the processes described in the Predictability Framework, modify this Procedure.

b. The version of this Procedure that is applicable to an Objection proceeding is the version that was in effect on the day when the relevant Application for a new gTLD is submitted.

ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure

This Procedure applies to all proceedings administered by each of the Dispute Resolution Service Providers (DRSPs). Each of the DRSPs has a specific set of rules that will also apply to such proceedings.

Article 1. ICANN's New gTLD Program

a. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has implemented a Program for the introduction of new generic Top-Level Domain Names (gTLDs) in the Internet, in accordance with Terms and Conditions set by ICANN (the New gTLD Program).

b. The New gTLD Program includes a New gTLD Dispute Resolution Procedure (Procedure), pursuant to which disputes between an entity that applies for a new gTLD and a person or entity that objects to that gTLD on the grounds of: String Confusion, Legal Rights, Limited Public Interest, and Community (an Objection) are resolved.

c. The New gTLD Program also includes a limited right for relevant parties to seek an Appeal of a Panel Determination issued in an Objection proceeding in accordance with this ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure (the Appeal Procedure). A party to an Objection wishing to challenge a Panel Determination may file an Appeal (Appeal).

d. An Appeal provides a one-time basis for all relevant parties to challenge a Panel Determination issued in an Objection proceeding based on a claim that the relevant Objection Panel: (1) failed to follow the established Procedure; (2) failed to consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information submitted by the Parties; or (3) both (1) and (2), and as a result, the Appellant should have prevailed in the relevant Objection proceeding.

e. An Appeal of a Panel Determination issued in an Objection proceeding shall be administered by the same Dispute Resolution Service Provider (DRSP) that administered the underlying dispute and in accordance with this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules that are identified in the ICANN Objection Appeal Procedure.

f. DRSPs shall adhere to ICANN's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers (Appendix 8) and Conflict of Interest policy (Appendix 7).

g. By filing an Application or an Appeal, an Applicant or an Appellant respectively accept the applicability of this Procedure, the 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook, and the applicable DRSP's Rules that are identified in Article 4. The Parties cannot deviate from: (i) this Appeal Procedure without the express approval of ICANN; or (ii) from the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules without the express approval of the relevant DRSP.

Article 2. Definitions

a. The "Appellant" is a person or entity that was the non-prevailing Party to an Objection and files an Appeal to challenge the Panel Determination issued in an Objection proceeding.

b. The "Respondent" is the party responding to the Appeal.

c. The "Appellate Panel" is a group consisting of one or three persons empaneled by a DRSP in accordance with this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Rules that are identified in Article 3(b) to adjudicate on an Appeal.

d. The "Appellate Panel Determination" is the decision issued by the Appellate Panel on an Appeal.

e. "DRSP Appellate Rules" are the additional rules of procedure of a particular DRSP that have been identified as being applicable to an Appeal of a Panel Determination issued in an Objection proceeding.

Article 3. Dispute Resolution Service Providers

The various categories of Appeals shall be administered by the following DRSPs:

a. Appeals of String Confusion and Legal Rights Objection Panel Determinations shall be administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

b. Appeals of Limited Public Interest and Community Objection Panel Determinations shall be administered by the International Chamber of Commerce.

Article 4. Applicable Rules

a. All proceedings before the Appellate Panel shall be governed by this Appeal Procedure and by the DRSP Appellate Rules that apply to a particular category of Appeal. The outcome of the proceedings shall be deemed an Appellate Panel Determination, and the members of the Appellate Panel shall act as panelists.

b. The applicable DRSP Appellate Rules are the following:

   i. For a String Confusion Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/sco/.
   ii. For a Legal Rights Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://www.wipo.int/amc/en/domains/lro/t.
   iii. For a Limited Public Interest Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/.
   iv. For a Community Objection, the applicable DRSP Rules are posted on this webpage: https://iccwbo.org/dispute-resolution/dispute-resolution-services/adr/icann-new-gtld-dispute-resolution/.

c. In the event of any discrepancy between this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, this Appeal Procedure shall prevail.

d. The place of the Appeal proceedings, if relevant, shall be the location of the DRSP that is administering the proceedings.

e. In all cases, the Appellate Panel shall ensure that the Parties are treated equally in that each Party is given a reasonable opportunity to present its position.

Article 5. Language

The language of all submissions and proceedings under this Appeal Procedure shall be English.

Article 6. Communications and Time Limits

a. All communications must be submitted electronically. A Party that wishes to make a submission that is not available in electronic form shall request leave from the Appellate Panel to do so, and the Appellate Panel, in its sole discretion, shall determine whether to accept the non-electronic submission. In limited circumstances and if permitted by the DRSP, a Party may make a call with the DRSP to clarify administrative matters. Virtual hearings will only be allowed upon request of the Panel.

b. The DRSP, Appellate Panel, Appellant, and Respondent shall provide copies to one another of all correspondence (apart from confidential correspondence between the Appellate Panel and the DRSP and among the Appellate Panel) regarding the proceedings.

c. For the purpose of determining the date of commencement of a time limit, a notice or other communication shall be deemed to have been received

on the day that it is transmitted in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Article.

d. For the purpose of determining compliance with a time limit, a notice or other communication shall be deemed to have been sent, made or transmitted if it is dispatched in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Article prior to or on the day of the expiration of the time limit.

e. For the purpose of calculating a period of time under this Appeal Procedure, such period shall begin to run on the day following the day when a notice or other communication is received.

f. Unless otherwise stated, all time periods provided in this Appeal Procedure are calculated on the basis of calendar days.

Article 7. Filing of the Appeal

a. A non-prevailing party to an Objection shall have 15 days from the date the Panel Determination is issued by the DRSP in the Objection proceeding to provide notice to the DRSP of its intent to Appeal the Panel Determination (the Notice of Appeal). The Notice of Appeal must specify those elements of the Panel Determination that are being appealed and must contain a brief statement of the basis for the Appeal.

b. The Appellant will have 15 days from the date of filing the Notice of Appeal to file the Appeal and pay the required fees as established in Article 8.

c. The DRSP shall provide notice to the relevant parties and ICANN of the receipt of the Appeal when the filing requirements have been satisfied as specified in Article 7(a) and (b).

d. The Notice of Appeal and all subsequent documents concerning the Appeal must be filed with the appropriate DRSP, using a model form made available by that DRSP (if applicable), with copies to the Respondent.

e. The electronic addresses for filing the Notice of Appeal shall be provided in the DRSP Appellate Rules.

f. An Appellant that wishes to appeal to Panel Determinations from more than one Objection proceeding must file separate appeals with the appropriate DRSP(s).

Article 8. Content of the Appeal

a. The Appeal shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

   i. The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the Appellant;

ii. Identification of the underlying Objection being appealed; and
iii. A description of the basis for the Appeal, including:
I. A statement of the grounds upon which the Appeal is being filed, as stated in Article 1 of this Appeal Procedure;
II. An explanation of the validity of the Appeal and why the Appeal should be upheld.

b. The substantive portion of the Appeal shall be limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit.

c. At the same time as the Appeal is filed, the Appellant shall pay a filing fee in the amount set in accordance with the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules and include evidence of such payment along with the Notice of Appeal. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within 15 days of the Notice of Appeal, the Appeal shall be dismissed without prejudice.

Article 9. Administrative Review of the Appeal

a. The DRSP shall conduct an administrative review of the Appeal for the purpose of verifying compliance with Articles 5-8 of this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, and inform the Appellant, the Respondent and ICANN of the result of its review within 14 days of its receipt of the Appeal. The DRSP may extend this time limit for reasons explained in the notification of such extension.

b. If the DRSP finds that the Appeal complies with Articles 5-8 of this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, the DRSP shall confirm that the Appeal shall be registered for processing.

c. If the DRSP finds that the Appeal does not comply with Articles 5-8 of this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, the DRSP shall have the discretion to request that any administrative deficiencies in the Appeal be corrected within five days of the Appellant receiving the request from the DRSP. If the deficiencies in the Appeal are cured within the specified period but after the lapse of the time limit for submitting an Appeal stipulated by Article 7(a) of this Appeal Procedure, the Appeal shall be deemed to be within this time limit.

d. If the DRSP finds that the Appeal does not comply with Articles 5-8 of this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, and the deficiencies in the Appeal are not corrected within the period specified in Article 9(c), the DRSP shall dismiss the Appeal and close the proceedings, without prejudice to the Appellant's submission of a new Appeal that complies with this Appeal Procedure, provided that the Appeal is filed within the deadline for filing such Appeal. The DRSP's review of the

Appeal shall not interrupt the running of the time limit for submitting an Appeal stipulated by Article 7(a) of this Appeal Procedure.

e. Immediately upon registering an Appeal for processing, pursuant to Article 9(b), the DRSP shall post the following information about the Appeal on its website: (i) the proposed application and string to which the Appeal is directed; (ii) the name of the Appellant; (iii) a weblink to the Panel Determination from the underlying Objection proceeding; (iv) the grounds for the Appeal; and (v) the dates of the DRSP's receipt of the Appeal.

Article 10. Record on Appeal

a. The Record on Appeal will consist of:

   i. the original papers and exhibits filed in the Objection proceeding; and
   ii. the transcript of Objection proceedings, if any.

b. The Parties will cooperate with the DRSP in compiling the Record on Appeal, and the DRSP will provide the record to the Appellate Panel.

Article 11. Consolidation of Appeals

a. When two or more parties are entitled to Appeal an Objection Panel Determination, and their interests make joinder practicable, they may file a joint Notice of Appeal. They may then proceed on Appeal as a single Appellant.

b. When the Parties have filed separate timely Notices of Appeal, the Parties shall have five days of the Record on Appeal to propose the consolidation of certain Appeals.

c. The DRSP shall have 10 days of the Record on Appeal to notify the parties of their decision whether to consolidate certain Appeals (Notice of Consolidation).

d. In deciding whether to consolidate Appeals, the DRSP shall weigh the benefits (in terms of time, cost, consistency of decisions, etc.) that may result from the consolidation against the possible prejudice or inconvenience that the consolidation may cause. The DRSP's determination on consolidation shall be final and not subject to further Appeal.

Article 12. The Appellate Panel

a. The DRSP shall select and appoint the Appellate Panel within 45 days of the Record on Appeal or, where applicable, the Notice of Consolidation.

b. There shall be a one-person Appellate Panel, unless the Parties to the proceeding mutually agree upon a three-person Panel, bearing the costs as described in Objection and Appeal Fees and Costs. The Parties must notify the DRSP via a joint request within 10 days of the deadline for the parties to propose consolidation or the Notice of Consolidation should they wish to have a three-person Appellate Panel.

c. All Appellate Panelists acting under this Appeal Procedure shall be impartial and independent of the parties. The applicable DRSP Appellate Rules stipulate the manner by which each Panelist shall confirm and maintain their impartiality and independence.

d. The applicable DRSP Appellate Rules stipulate the procedures for challenging a Panelist and replacing an Appellate Panelist.

e. Unless required by a court of law or authorized in writing by the Parties, an Appellate Panelist shall not act in any capacity whatsoever, in any pending or future proceedings, whether judicial, arbitral or otherwise, relating to the matter referred to Panel Determination under this Appeal Procedure.

Article 13. Quick Look Review

a. Each Appellate Panel shall conduct the Quick Look Review of the Appeal for the purpose of identifying and eliminating Appeals that are manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both.

b. The criteria the Appellate Panel will use to determine whether the Appeal is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both are the following:

   i. The Appeal is not filed by the non-prevailing party to the Objection.
   ii. Insufficient or no evidence is provided to support the Appeal.
   iii. The Appeal is far-fetched, clearly invented, manifestly contrary to common sense, or so ambiguous that it is objectively impossible for the DRSP to make sense of it.
   iv. The Appeal spreads, incites, promotes, or justifies hatred based on intolerance towards a certain group.
   v. The Appeal constitutes harassment of the other party or the Objections itself.
   vi. The Appeal includes facts that clearly show that it is manifestly unfounded and/or an abuse of the right to appeal.

c. The Quick Look Review must be completed within 30 days of the Appellate Panel appointment or conflict mitigation, should conflicts of interest issues be raised by the Parties.

d. The dismissal of an Appeal that is manifestly unfounded, an abuse of the right to appeal, or both would be an Appellate Panel Determination, rendered in accordance with Article 19 of the Objection Appeal Procedure.

e. The DRSPs will publish the results of the Quick Look Review on their respective websites and notify the respective Appellants and Respondents of said results.

Article 14. Costs

a. Each DRSP shall determine the costs for the proceedings that it administers under this Appeal Procedure in accordance with the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules. Such costs shall cover the fees and expenses of the members of the Appellate Panel, as well as the administrative fees of the DRSP (the Costs).

b. Within 10 days of the publication of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, the DRSP shall estimate the total Costs and request each Party to pay, in advance, the full amount of the estimated Costs to the DRSP. If the Parties agree on a three-person Panel, the Costs will increase as described in Objection and Appeal Fees and Costs.

c. Both Parties shall make its advance payment of Costs within 10 days of receiving the DRSP's request for payment and submit to the DRSP evidence of such payment.

d. Failure to make an advance payment of Costs shall lead to the Panel issuing an Appellate Panel Determination as follows:

   i. If the Appellant fails to make the advance payment of Costs, its Appeal shall be dismissed and no fees that it has paid shall be refunded.
   ii. If the Respondent fails to make the advance payment of Costs, the Appeal will be deemed to have been sustained and no fees that the Respondent has paid shall be refunded.
   iii. If both Parties fail to make the advance payment of costs, the Appeal shall be dismissed and no fees that the Appellant and Respondent have paid shall be refunded.

e. The DRSP may revise its estimate of the total Costs and request additional advance payments from the Parties during the proceedings.

Article 15. Response to the Appeal

a. The Respondent may, but is not required, to file a response to an Appeal (the Response). The Response, if filed, shall be filed within 30 days of the outcome of the results of the Quick Look Review.

b. The Response must be filed with the appropriate DRSP, using a model form made available by that DRSP, with copies to the Appellant.

c. If a Response is not filed, the Appellate Panel will presume that Respondent takes no position on the Appeal.

d. The Response, if filed, shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

   i. The names and contact information (address, telephone number, email address, etc.) of the Respondent; and
   ii. A point-by-point response to the statements made in the Appeal.

e. The substantive portion of any Response shall be limited to 5,000 words, excluding attachments. Attachments are not a method to provide additional arguments or evade or circumvent the prescribed word limit.

f. At the same time as the Response is filed, the Respondent shall pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant DRSP (which shall be the same as the filing fee paid by the Appellant) and include evidence of such payment along with the Response. In the event that the filing fee is not paid within 10 days of the notification of the outcome of the Quick Look Review, any Response shall be disregarded and the Appellate Panel will presume that Respondent takes no position on the Appeal.

g. If the DRSP finds that the Response does not comply with this Article 15 and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules, the DRSP shall have the discretion to request that any administrative deficiencies in the Response be corrected within five days of the Respondent receiving the request from the DRSP. If the administrative deficiencies in the Response are cured within the specified period but after the lapse of the time limit for submitting a Response pursuant to this Appeal Procedure, the Response shall be deemed to be within this time limit.

h. If the deficiencies in the Response are not corrected within the period specified in Article 15(g), the Appellate Panel will presume that the Respondent takes no position on the Appeal.

Article 16. Representation and Assistance

a. The Parties may be represented or assisted by persons of their choice.

b. Each Party or Party representative shall communicate the name, contact information and function of such persons to the DRSP and the other Party (or Parties in case of consolidation).

Article 17. Oral Argument

Appeals under this Appeal Procedure and the applicable DRSP Appellate Rules will be determined upon the written documents submitted by the Parties and will be resolved without oral arguments.

Article 18. Standards

a. The Appellate Panel shall apply the "clearly erroneous" standard of review for each category of Appeal as established in the New gTLD Program. Under a clearly erroneous standard of review, the Appellate Panel must accept the Objection Panel's findings of fact unless the Objection Panel failed to: (1) follow the appropriate procedures, (2) consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information in the Objection proceeding, or (3) both (1) and (2) and, as a result, the Appellant should have prevailed in the relevant Objection proceeding.

b. The Appellant bears the burden of proving that its Appeal should be sustained in accordance with the applicable standard.

Article 19. Appellate Panel Determination

a. The DRSP and the Appellate Panel shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the Appellate Panel Determination is rendered within 35 days of the deadline for filing a Response. In specific circumstances such as consolidated cases and in consultation with the DRSP, a brief extension may be allowed.

b. The Appellate Panel shall submit its Appellate Panel Determination in draft form to the DRSP so that the DRSP may review and confirm that the Appellate Panel Determination is in the proper form, unless such DRSP review is specifically excluded by the applicable Appellate Rules. Any changes proposed by the DRSP to the Panel shall address only the form, and not the substance or outcome of the Appellate Panel Determination. The final Appellate Panel Determination shall be communicated to the DRSP, which in turn will communicate that Appellate Panel Determination to the Parties and ICANN.

c. When the Appellate Panel comprises three Panelists, the Appellate Panel Determination shall be made by a majority of the Appellate Panelists.

d. The Appellate Panel Determination shall be in writing, shall identify the prevailing Party and shall state the reasons upon which it is based. The Appellate Panel shall take one of the following actions: (1) reject the Appeal and uphold the Objection Panel Determination, or (2) substitute its own determination for the underlying Objection Panel Determination. The Appellate Panel may not order a new Objection proceeding or send the matter back to the original Objection Panel for corrections or further review.

e. The Appellate Panel Determination shall state the date when it is made, and it shall be signed by the Panelist(s). If any Panelist fails to sign the

Appellate Panel Determination, it shall be accompanied by a statement of the reason for the absence of such signature.

f. In addition to providing electronic copies of its Appellate Panel Determination, the Appellate Panel shall provide a signed hard copy of the Appellate Panel Determination to the DRSP, unless the DRSP Appellate Rules provide otherwise.

g. Unless the Appellate Panel decides otherwise, the Appellate Panel Determination shall be published in full on the DRSP's website.

Article 20. Finality of Appeal

Upon the conclusion of the Appeal process, the Appellate Panel Determination shall become the final determination and not subject to further Appeal.

Article 21. Exclusion of Liability

In addition to any exclusion of liability stipulated by the applicable DRSP Rules, the following shall not be liable to any person for any act or omission in connection with any proceeding conducted under this Appeal Procedure, except in cases of willful misconduct or gross negligence: the Appellate Panelist(s) or their employees, the DRSP or its employees, ICANN or its Affiliates, Board members, staff members, employees, agents and consultants.

Article 22. Modification of the Appeal Procedure

a. ICANN may from time to time, in accordance with its Bylaws and by following the processes described in the Predictability Framework, modify this Procedure.

b. The version of this Appeal Procedure that is applicable to an Appeal is the version that was in effect on the day when the relevant application for a new gTLD is submitted.

Objections and Appeals Timelines

Note: *These are simplified overviews indicating the maximum number of days each process should take, absent extraordinary circumstances. The actual timelines are subject to change based on a number of factors, including, but not limited to, particularly complex cases and the request of cooling-off periods and virtual hearings.*

Figure A3-1: Objections Timeline (in days)

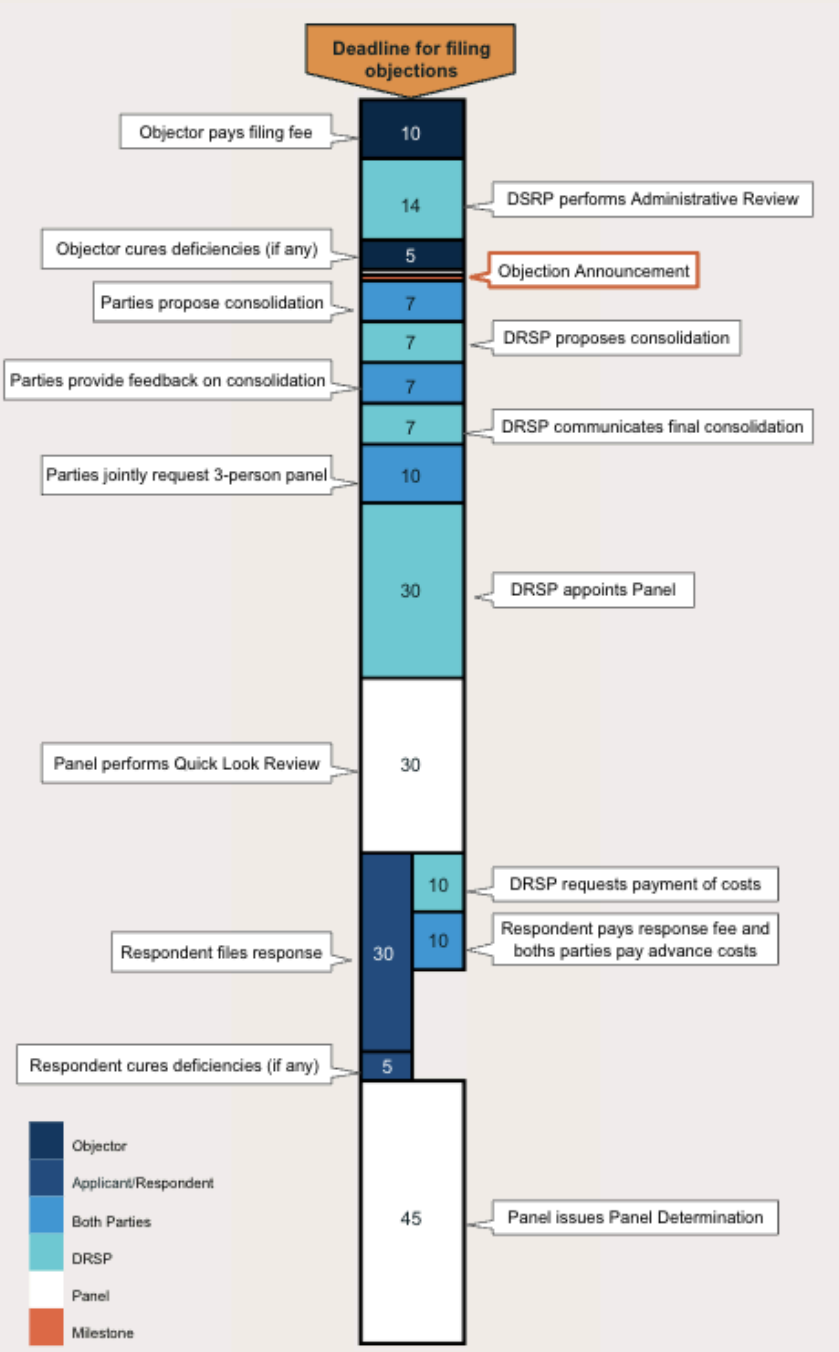
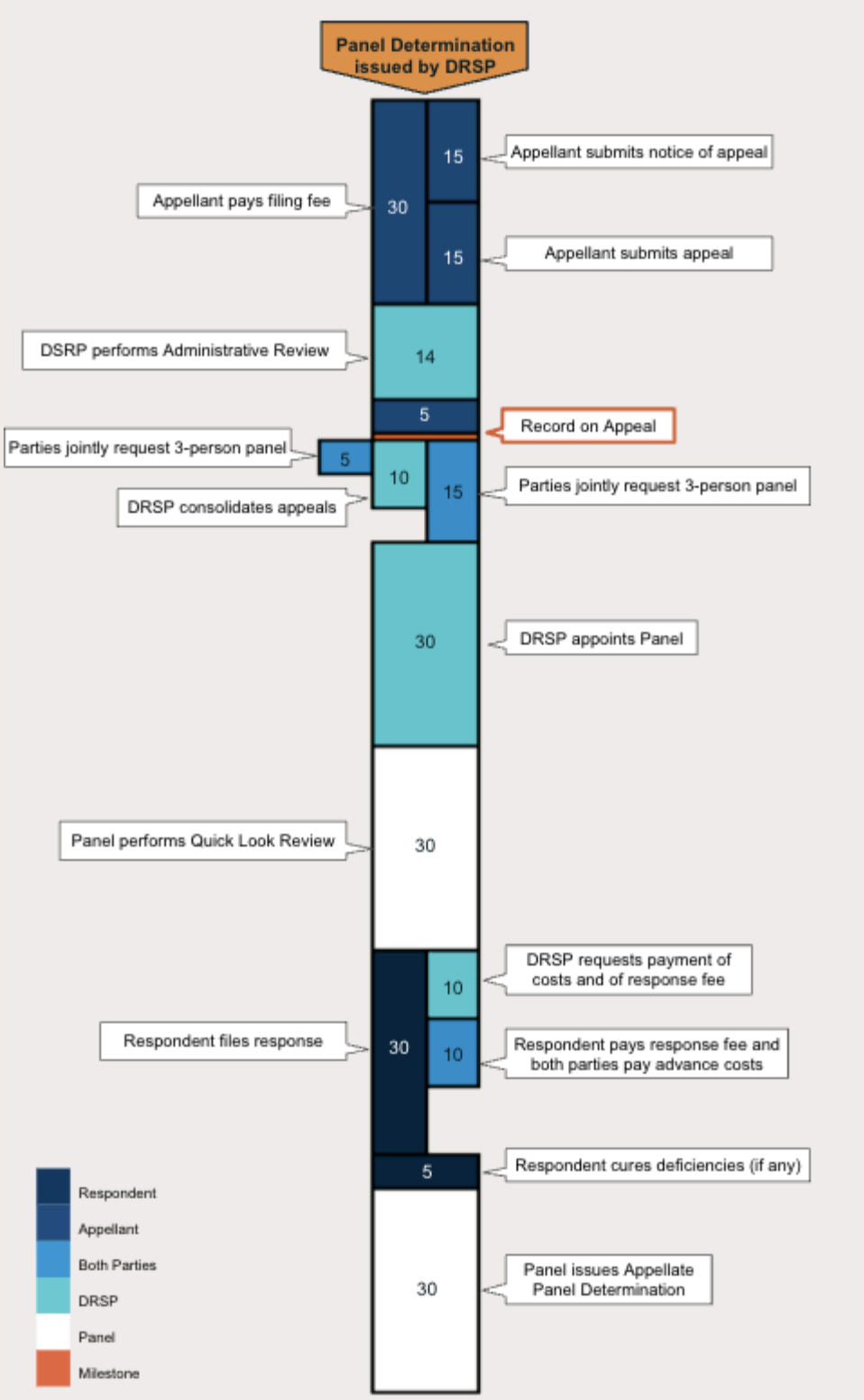


Figure A3-2: Appeals Timeline (in days)



Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement

The 2026 Base Registry Agreement is posted here: https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/registry-agreements/base-registry-agreement-12-03-2026-en.pdf.

Appendix 5 Templates for Standard Financial Profile

An applicant's financial information will be collected to evaluate whether an applicant has the financial capacity to fund the registry long-term, thereby ensuring DNS stability, and mitigating financial risks like revenue shortfalls or cost overruns, including for those managing multiple TLDs. Applicants are expected to provide information such as, but not limited to, projected cash inflow, projected cash outflow, risk assessment, and domain name registration projections. Applicants may review the information and instructions on how to complete the templates on the New gTLD Program website.[358]

The applicant (except for Government profile) must provide audited, reviewed, or compiled financial statements, prepared by a third-party accounting firm, for the applying entity that complies with the accounting standards required by the jurisdiction of the applying entity. Alternatively, the applicant may provide third-party audited, reviewed, or compiled statements from an ICANN-approved Affiliate, prepared by a third-party accounting firm.

See more in Section 6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation.

[358] The applicant will be asked for these templates in Question Set 18. The applicant will be expected to upload these templates as one document to address questions 213-219.

Table A5-1: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection

Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection					
The Most Likely Scenario (MLS) projections must be completed using currency in United States Dollars (USD) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).					
Currency Used	**Start-up Period**	**Commencement of Operations**			**Comments**
[Insert Currency Here]		**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	
Projected Cash Inflows					
Forecasted Registration Volume					
Registration Revenue					
Funding source 1					
Funding source 2					
Cash on Hand at Time of Application					
Total Cash Inflows					
Projected Cash Outflows					
Capital Expenditures					
Capital Expenditure Category-1					
Capital Expenditure Category-2					
Outsourcing Operating Cost					
Registry Service Provider					
Service & Provider-2					
Service & Provider-3					
All Other Cash Outflows					
Total Cash Outflows					
Projected Net Cash Flow					
Projected Total Cash Flow					

Table A5-2: Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection - SAMPLE

Most Likely Scenario Financial Projection - SAMPLE					
The Most Likely Scenario (MLS) projections must be completed using currency in United States Dollars (USD) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).					
Currency Used	**Start-up Period**	**Commencement of Operations**			**Comments**
[Insert Currency Here]		**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	
Projected Cash Inflows					
Forecasted Registration Volume		11,007	21,007	28,007	
Registration Revenue		116,000	195,000	250,000	
Funding source 1	1,200,000	-	-	-	
Funding source 2		50,000	50,000	50,000	
Cash on Hand at Time of Application	300,000	-	-	-	
Total Cash Inflows	1,500,000	166,000	245,000	300,000	
Projected Cash Outflows					
Capital Expenditures					
Capital Expenditure Category-1	40,000	-	-	-	
Capital Expenditure Category-2	-	-	-	-	
Outsourcing Operating Cost					
Registry Service Provider	10,000	210,000	232,000	250,000	
Service & Provider-2					
Service & Provider-3	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	
All Other Cash Outflows	50,000	250,000	210,000	210,000	
Total Cash Outflows	112,000	472,000	454,000	472,000	
Projected Net Cash Flow	1,388,000	(306,000)	(209,000)	(172,000)	
			Projected Total Cash Flow	**701,000**	

Table A5-3: Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection

Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection					
The Worst Case Scenario (WCS) projections must be completed using currency in United States Dollars (USD) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).					
Currency Used	**Start-up Period**	**Commencement of Operations**			**Comments**
[Insert Currency Here]		**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	
Projected Cash Inflows					
Forecasted Registration Volume					
Registration Revenue					
Funding source 1					
Funding source 2					
Cash on Hand at Time of Application					
Total Cash Inflows					
Projected Cash Outflows					
Capital Expenditures					
Capital Expenditure Category-1					
Capital Expenditure Category-2					
Outsourcing Operating Cost					
Registry Service Provider					
Service & Provider-2					
Service & Provider-3					
All Other Cash Outflows					
Total Cash Outflows					
Projected Net Cash Flow					
Projected Total Cash Flow					

Table A5-4: Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection - SAMPLE

Worst Case Scenario Financial Projection - SAMPLE					
The Worst Case Scenario (WCS) projections must be completed using currency in United States Dollars (USD) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).					
Currency Used	**Start-up Period**	**Commencement of Operations**			**Comments**
[Insert Currency Here]		**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	
Projected Cash Inflows					
Forecasted Registration Volume		6,007	11,507	16,007	
Registration Revenue		71,000	99,000	138,000	
Funding source 1	700,000	-	-	-	
Funding source 2	-		50,000	-	
Cash on Hand at Time of Application	300,000	-	-	-	
Total Cash Inflows	1,000,000	71,000	149,000	138,000	
Projected Cash Outflows					
Capital Expenditures					
Capital Expenditure Category-1	40,000	-	-	-	
Capital Expenditure Category-2	-	-	-	-	
Outsourcing Operating Cost					
Registry Service Provider	50,000	210,000	210,000	210,000	
Service & Provider-2					
Service & Provider-3	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	
All Other Cash Outflows	-	200,000	120,000	120,000	
Total Cash Outflows	102,000	422,000	342,000	342,000	
Projected Net Cash Flow	898,000	(351,000)	(193,000)	(204,000)	
			Projected Total Cash Flow	**150,000**	

Table A5-5: Risk Assessment Template

Risk Assessment				
Risk Category	**Risk Scenarios**	**Probability Assessment[359]**	**Impact Description**	**Mitigation Strategy**
Reduced Funding				
Human Resources				
Regulatory				
Material Deviation from Expected Activity Volume				
Catastrophic Technical Failure				
Other Unique Portfolio Risks				
Applicant Specific Risk				
Applicant Specific Risk				

Table A5-6: Registration Projections Template

Registration Projections									
The [MLS / WCS] projections must be completed using currency in United States Dollars (USD) or the nationally recognized currency for the jurisdiction of the applicant or Qualified Parent Entity (QPE).									
[Insert Currency Used]	**Year 1 Forecast**			**Year 2 Forecast**			**Year 3 Forecast**		
TLD	**Registration Volume**	**Average Registration Fee**	**Premium Fees**	**Registration Volume**	**Average Registration Fee**	**Premium Fees**	**Registration Volume**	**Average Registration Fee**	**Premium Fees**
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

[359] The categories are: minimal, low, medium, high, and very high.

Appendix 6 Predictability Framework

ICANN has established a Predictability Framework to manage operational processes for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, to ensure efficient and transparent handling of unexpected issues. When unanticipated matters arise, ICANN org will engage with the Standing Predictability Implementation Review Team (SPIRT)[360] based on the potential impact:

- For changes with material impact[361] on applicants, ICANN org and the SPIRT have to agree on a permanent solution.
- For changes with non-material impact on applicants, ICANN org will inform the SPIRT of such changes, but will not consult the SPIRT.[362]

Key limitations of this framework include:

- It is not a mechanism to develop policy.
- It does not restrict the ICANN Board's ability to take Program-related actions or take action on any particular application.
- It does not take precedence over GNSO policy recommendations adopted by the ICANN Board.
- It does not impede the GNSO Council's policy development or guidance processes (see ICANN Bylaws Annexes A, A-1, A-2).[363]
- It does not limit advisory committees' (including GAC) ability to provide advice in accordance with ICANN's Bylaws Article 12.[364]

ICANN will document all changes (as described in A6.2 Description of Changes) to the Program in a publicly available change log. In addition, for non-minor operational changes, ICANN will inform all applicants directly.

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[360] See the SPIRT Charter: https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/gnsocouncilmeetings/pages/111115935/SPIRT+Charter+Drafting+Team+2023-2024?preview=/111115935/111122728/Charter%20for%20the%20SPIRT_FINAL_Adopted%20by%20GNSO%20Council_08-08-2024.pdf.
[361] See Section A6.5 Definition of "Material Impact" for Predictability Framework.
[362] ICANN will notify applicants if material changes made to the Program have an impact on applicants.
[363] See Annexes A, A-1, and A-2 of the ICANN Bylaws: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#annexA.
[364] See Article 12 of the ICANN Bylaws: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/governance/bylaws-en/#article12.

A6.1 Parties Involved in the Framework

The following parties are involved in administering this framework, with roles and responsibilities specific to its implementation:

1. **Applicants**: All entities that applied for a new gTLD in the current Program round.
2. **GNSO Council**: The chartering entity of the SPIRT, consulted as described below.
3. **ICANN org**: Program operator committed to ensuring the continued and effective operation of the Program.
4. **ICANN Board**: Maintains its roles and responsibilities as detailed in the ICANN Bylaws.
5. **SPIRT**: Collaborates with ICANN org and GNSO Council to address and review non-minor operational changes, including potential policy modifications.

To facilitate ongoing communication and Program management, ICANN and the SPIRT will conduct regular standing calls as necessary to discuss potential Program changes and implementation challenges.

A6.2 Description of Changes

For the purpose of this framework, Program changes are classified in three distinct categories:

- A minor operational change refers to any modification during the ongoing round of the Program that can be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations and does not have a material impact on applicants.
- A non-minor operational change is a change during the ongoing round of the Program that can be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations and has a material impact on applicants.[365] ICANN org and SPIRT have to agree on a permanent solution. If an agreement is not reached within 30 days, or more urgent action is necessary to the operation of the program, ICANN can implement a temporary solution to be replaced with the solution of ICANN and SPIRT once agreed.
- A policy change is a change during the ongoing round of the Program that cannot be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy

[365] See also Section 3.3.3.1.3 Refund as a Result of Material Changes for more information.

recommendations.[366] Policy changes for ongoing rounds would only occur in extraordinary circumstances where the Program's continuation is at risk if the change were not executed. If a policy change is necessary, the Board, ICANN org, and the GNSO Council in consultation with the SPIRT will identify an appropriate solution that secures the Program's continuation and establishes a suitable implementation process.[367] Any collaboration between the Council and the SPIRT in this context is outside this Framework and is governed by the SPIRT Charter.

A6.3 Procedural Steps to Initiate and Execute a Change

The change request flow chart outlines the procedural steps the Advisory Committee (AC), GNSO Council, ICANN Board, and ICANN org take if they determine a change to the Program is required.

A6.3.1 Change Request

There are four paths that a change request can take:

- **Path 1**: ICANN org determines a change is required to the Program, ICANN org applies the Predictability Framework and proceeds with the steps outlined in the Change Execution flowchart.
- **Path 2**: The ICANN Board determines a change to the ongoing round of the Program is required. The ICANN Board directs ICANN org to implement the change. If implementation requires a change to the ongoing round of the Program, ICANN org applies the Predictability Framework and proceeds with the steps outlined in the Change Execution flowchart.
- **Path 3**: SPIRT determines a change to the ongoing round is required, the SPIRT collaborates with the GNSO Council to inform ICANN org. If ICANN org determines a change to the ongoing round is needed, ICANN org applies the Predictability Framework and proceeds with the steps outlined in the Change Execution flowchart. If ICANN org determines, contrary to the SPIRT, that no change is required to the ongoing round, the SPIRT confers with the GNSO Council. If the GNSO Council determines a change to the ongoing round is required, the GNSO Council engages with the ICANN Board. If the ICANN

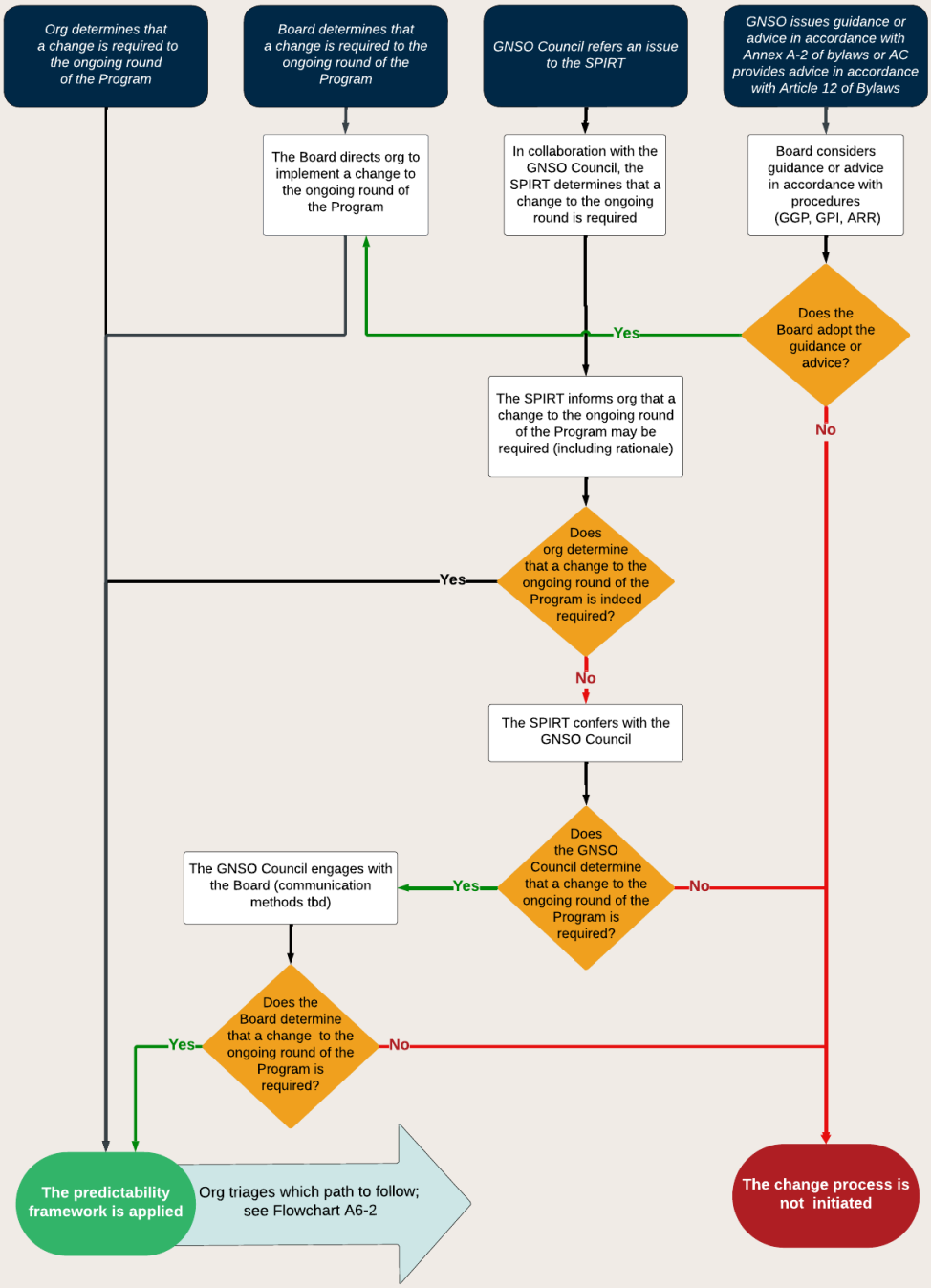
[366] Policy recommendations and affirmations are the Board approved recommendations contained in the 2007 Introduction of New Generic Top-Level Domains (https://gnso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm#_Toc43798015) and 2021 New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process (https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf) Final Reports.

[367] This is separate from any policy development the Council would like to undertake for future rounds whether based on the circumstances above or for any other reason.

Board determines a change to the ongoing round is needed, the ICANN Board directs ICANN org to apply the Predictability Framework and proceeds with the steps outlined in the Change Execution flowchart.

- **Path 4**: GNSO Council or AC approve and submit guidance or advice to the ICANN Board, and the ICANN Board, after its consideration, adopts the guidance or advice. The ICANN Board directs ICANN org to implement the change. If implementation requires a change to the ongoing round of the Program, ICANN applies the Predictability Framework and proceeds with the steps outlined in the Change Execution flowchart.

Figure A6-1: Change Execution Flowchart 1[368]



[368] GGP = GNSO Guidance Process. See: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/annex-5-ggp-manual-19sep24-en.pdf
GIP = GNSO Input Process. See: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/annex-3-input-process-manual-19sep24-en.pdf
ARR = Action Request Register. See: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/board-advice-process-flowchart-31jul23-en.pdf

A6.3.2 Change Execution

The Change Execution flow chart documents three primary scenarios for Program modifications:

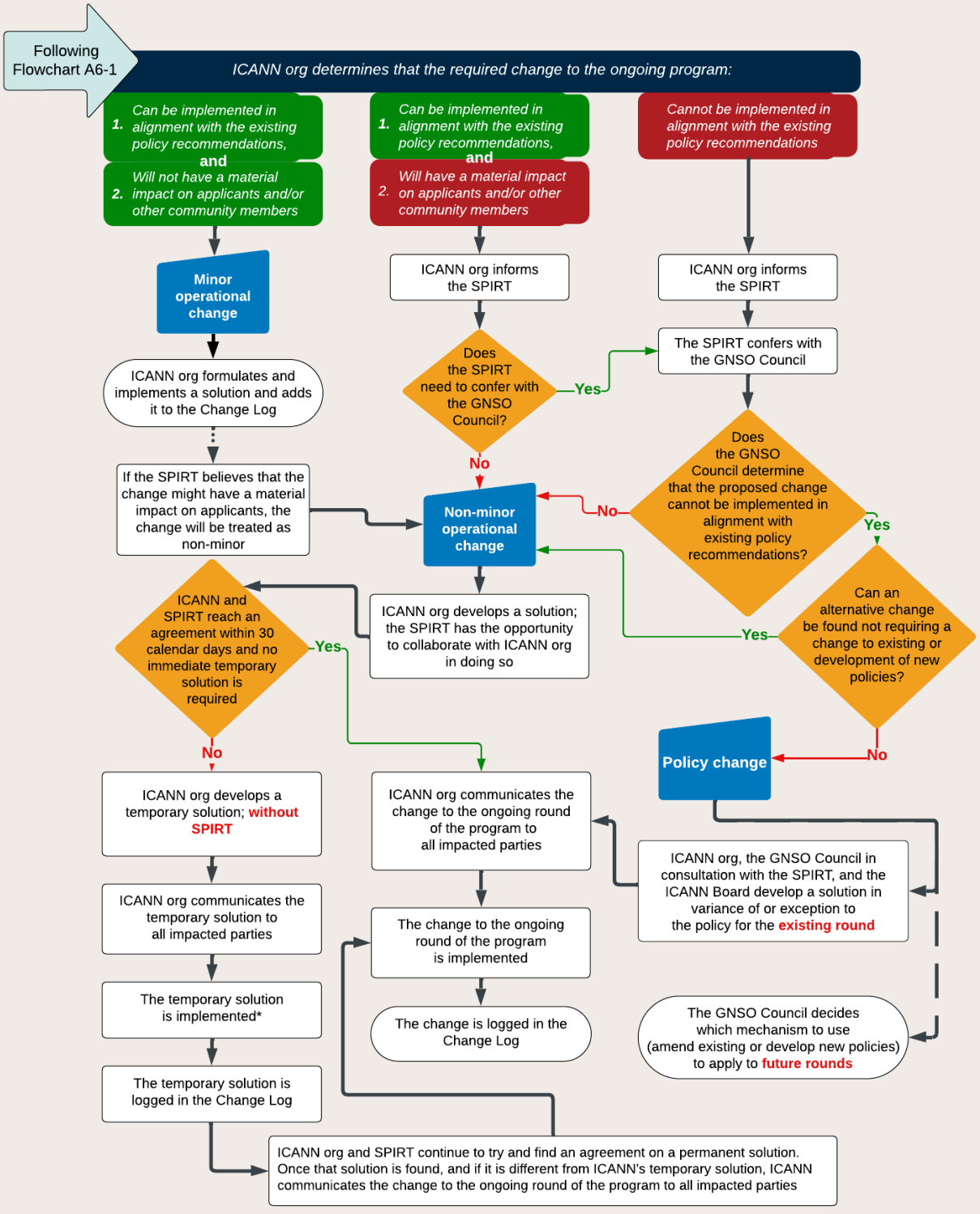
1. When ICANN org determines that a required change can be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations and will not have a material impact on applicants,[369] it is classified as a 'minor operational change.' In such cases, ICANN org will add the changes to the change log as soon as feasible, preferably before implementation.

2. For changes in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations that will have a material impact on applicants, ICANN classifies these as 'non-minor operational changes.' ICANN will inform SPIRT and follow the subsequent steps in the change execution flow chart. Once implemented, ICANN will notify applicants about any non-minor operational changes.

3. When ICANN org determines that the required change cannot be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations, ICANN org will inform the SPIRT. The SPIRT will then confer with the GNSO Council. Should the GNSO Council determine that an alternative change, which does not require a change of existing policy, cannot be found, the change is considered a 'policy change' and the subsequent steps in the change execution flow chart will be followed.[370]

[369] For reference, the definitions of a non-material change and a material change are defined in Section A6.5 Definition of "Material Impact" for Predictability Framework.
[370] Under extraordinary circumstances, there could be a recommendation that the New gTLD Program be halted for a communicated amount of time. In such a case, the triggering mechanism and rationale for recommending this extraordinary action must be provided to the GNSO Council for its consideration.

Figure A6-2: Change Execution Flowchart 2



*Should the inability of the SPIRT and ICANN org to agree on a permanent solution continue for another 30 days after the implementation of the temporary solution, then ICANN org's temporary solution will continue to be used. ICANN org will work with the SPIRT to make the GNSO Council aware of the impasse and work towards a permanent solution with the GNSO Council.

A6.4 Change Log

ICANN org will document all changes to the Program in a publicly available change log and will set up a publicly archived mailing list for all parties that wish to be notified of Program changes. For non-minor operational changes, ICANN org will inform all applicants directly. Should a change relate to sensitive or security-related issues, information will be redacted as necessary.

ICANN org will add any minor operational changes to the Change Log within five business days after implementing it.

If, against the determination of ICANN org, a member of the SPIRT believes that a change that ICANN classified as a minor operational change, might have a material impact on applicants, the SPIRT will have the opportunity to raise this with ICANN org on the designated SPIRT mailing list or during one of the SPIRT-ICANN org standing calls. If ICANN org and the SPIRT determine that the change does have a material impact on applicants, the change will be treated as non-minor and ICANN and SPIRT will align on a mutually agreeable permanent solution; until such a solution is found, ICANN's initial solution will remain in place.

A6.5 Definition of "Material Impact" for Predictability Framework

In the context of Predictability Framework, "material impact" refers to the implementation of new procedures or operations for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round or changes to ICANN's existing procedures or operations that will likely: (1) change the status of an application, (2) change the outcome of an evaluation of an application, (3) have a non-trivial monetary or operational impact on applicants, or (4) have a non-trivial impact on the timeline of application processing, up to the point of delegation.

Appendix 7 Conflict of Interest

The following information outlines how ICANN ensures that its contracted entities and individuals — collectively referred to as "service providers" — are free from conflicts of interest during application evaluation, objection, and dispute resolution for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. Service providers include:

- Evaluation panel firms and individual evaluators appointed by the panel firm to conduct an evaluation.
- Dispute resolution service providers and dispute resolution panelists.
- Independent objector firms and independent objectors.

A7.1 Prior to Contracting with Service Providers

To ensure a thorough evaluation and selection process, ICANN follows these steps before entering into contracts with service providers:

1. Service providers for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round are selected through ICANN's standard procurement process.
2. Call for Expression of Interest, Requests for Proposals, and Requests for Information are issued to solicit qualified service providers to perform activities including evaluation, and dispute resolution.
3. Certain services may require more than one service provider to perform a particular Program activity. This approach allows ICANN to address any conflict of interest issues.
4. ICANN requires potential service providers to provide background information, including information about their parent companies, a list of their top customers, and references.
5. To be considered, potential service providers must demonstrate to ICANN's satisfaction that there are no material conflicts, as per the Conflict of Interest Guidelines described in Appendix 8 Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers at the time of the bid and that the service providers have controls in place to ensure new or changed resources do not have conflicts.
6. ICANN conducts conflict reviews before contracting with service providers. However, conflicts may still arise once applications are submitted, as a service provider might have a conflict with one or more applicants.

A7.2 Contracted Service Providers

Once a service provider is selected, ICANN follows these steps to ensure compliance and alignment with its Conflict of Interest policies:

1. If selected, the service provider enters into a contract with ICANN.
2. Prior to allocating any applications to service providers, ICANN requires that service providers perform conflict of interest checks for all evaluators in accordance with the Guidebook requirements, and to provide ICANN with the results. ICANN considers these results when allocating applications.
3. Contracted service providers and individual evaluators must comply with and document acknowledgment of their understanding of ICANN's Conflict of Interest policies and guidelines, as outlined in the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers of the Guidebook.[371]
4. Service providers are required to complete and submit a “Contractor Conflicts of Interest Disclosure” Form annually. This form helps ICANN identify potential or actual conflicts of interest involving business and family relationships between ICANN, its directors, liaisons, officers, employees, and contractors, as well as with any particular applicant for which the service provider is responsible for evaluating. Additionally, this form is designed to facilitate compliance with disclosure obligations described in ICANN’s Conflicts of Interest Policy.
5. If the service provider is an entity, an authorized representative must complete the Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Form, providing responses to the best of their knowledge in an individual capacity.
6. The completed Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Form is sent to ICANN by the service provider.
7. ICANN reviews the Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Form to make sure it aligns with its existing conflicts of interest policies and guidelines.
8. If there are any material changes during the current year in the information provided in the Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Form, the service provider should promptly notify ICANN.
9. In addition, the service provider on its behalf and behalf of all individual evaluators, must agree to revise and update the Conflicts of Interest Disclosure Form whenever circumstances require such revisions, and, at a minimum, on an annual basis.

[371] The Conflict of Interest Guidelines in the Guidebook define the minimum standards with which Service Providers have to comply.

10. If conflicts of interest are identified that do not embody ICANN's mission and purpose, ICANN may seek resolution according to the negotiated terms regarding termination in the service provider's agreement. However, if a conflict is identified for individual panel member(s) and not an entire service provider, and that conflict can be mitigated in some way, such as prohibiting that individual panel member from access to any information provided by ICANN and from participation in the matter for which the conflict has been identified, ICANN may enter into an agreement to ensure such mitigation measures. In such case, ICANN may not necessarily terminate the service provider's agreement itself.

A7.3 Subcontractors

To manage subcontractors effectively, ICANN implements the following steps to ensure compliance with its conflict of interest policies:

1. ICANN requires that third-party subcontractors of a service provider be disclosed and approved before they can provide services.

2. The contractor agreement includes a standard provision that prohibits engaging other individuals or third-party subcontractors on a project or granting them access to the confidential information provided by ICANN. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis if approved by ICANN.

3. If an exception is approved, ICANN will provide revised language to use for the contractor's agreement along with a checklist of required documents, such as a non-disclosure agreement and a conflict of interest disclosure form.

4. ICANN will review the completed documents to ensure compliance with existing ICANN's conflicts of interest policies and guidelines.

Appendix 8 Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers

These guidelines are designed to ensure that all service providers operate with integrity, impartiality, and transparency throughout the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round application evaluation, objection, and dispute resolution processes. The following sections detail the ethical standards, conflict of interest procedures, and confidentiality requirements that service providers must adhere to, ensuring the fair and objective assessment of all applications.

A8.1 Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Guidelines

A number of independent experts and groups play a part in performing the various reviews in the evaluation process. These guidelines apply to the following experts and groups, known as service providers:

- Evaluation panel firms and individual persons appointed by the panel firm to conduct an evaluation.
- Dispute resolution service providers and dispute resolution expert Panelists.
- Independent objector firms and independent objectors.

A8.1.1 Code of Conduct

The New gTLD Program Code of Conduct aims to prevent conflicts of interest and unethical behavior by service providers for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. For purposes of clarity, “Service Providers” means in this case those entities and individuals performing services related to evaluation and dispute resolution processes such as: evaluation firms or persons appointed by evaluation firms; dispute resolution providers or expert panelists appointed by dispute resolution providers; or, independent objector firms and independent objectors appointed by independent objector firms. The Applicant Guidebook outlines the principles of this Code but does not limit the legal and ethical requirements and obligations service providers must follow.

Service providers’ legal requirements and ethical obligations begin upon acceptance of their appointments. They must act as competent, impartial professionals during the application evaluation, objection, and dispute resolution processes. Compliance with equity and high ethical standards is expected, ensuring objectivity, integrity, confidentiality, and credibility. Unethical actions, or even the appearance of conflicts of interest, are not acceptable.

If a service provider withdraws before completing the application evaluation or objection and dispute resolution processes, it must take reasonable steps to protect the

interests of the involved parties, including returning evidentiary materials and maintaining confidentiality.

A8.1.1.1 Principles

Service providers are expected to be guided by the following principles in carrying out their respective responsibilities.

A8.1.1.2 Bias

Service providers shall:

- Not advance personal agendas or non-ICANN approved agendas in the evaluation of applications or objection proceedings.
- Examine facts as they exist and not be influenced by past reputation, media accounts, or unverified statements about the applications being evaluated or the matters at issue in the objection proceeding.
- Exclude themselves from participating in the evaluation of an application or an objection proceeding if, to their knowledge, there is some predisposing factor that could prejudice them with respect to such evaluation or proceeding.
- Exclude themselves from evaluation activities or objection proceedings if they are philosophically opposed to or are on record as having made criticisms about a specific type of applicant, application, or matter at issue in the evaluation or the dispute resolution proceeding.
- Conduct themselves in a way that is fair to all parties and not be swayed by outside pressure, public clamor, and fear of criticism or self-interest. Service providers should avoid conduct and statements that give the appearance of partiality toward or against any applicant, application, or party to the objection proceeding.

A8.1.1.3 Compensation/Gifts

Service providers shall not request or accept any compensation whatsoever or any gifts of substance[372] from the applicant being reviewed, anyone affiliated with the applicant, or any party or party affiliate involved in the objection proceeding. If in doubt, a service provider should err on the side of caution by declining gifts of any kind. Note, however, that during an objection proceeding, an applicant that is the Objector or Respondent is required to submit payment directly to the applicable dispute resolution service provider (DRSP) to cover the applicant's share of administrative expenses and fees of the members of the Objection Panel. Accepting this payment does not mean an objection panelist is in violation of the Code of Conduct in this section. See the Dispute

[372] Gifts of substance would include any gift greater than USD 25 in value.

Resolution Procedures document contained in the Applicant Guidebook for more information about fees and payments.

A8.1.1.4 Conflicts of Interest

Service providers shall act in accordance with Appendix 8 Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers.

A8.1.1.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial in application evaluations and objection proceedings. Service providers must access sensitive information to conduct these processes while ensuring confidentiality of all information from ICANN, applicants, objectors, and other sources, except when legally required or authorized by ICANN. Confidential information includes materials related to applications, evaluations, analyses, and other documents prepared by ICANN staff or evaluators, which must be kept confidential as specified in the Applicant Guidebook, unless law or judicial processes dictate otherwise (see Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions).

A8.1.1.6 Data Protection and Privacy

All service providers are required to comply with the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round's data protection principles (see Appendix 9 New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Privacy Policy).

A8.1.1.7 Affirmation

All service providers must read and certify in writing their understanding and agreement to comply with this Code before participating in any evaluation or objection proceeding.

A8.2 Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers

Service providers may employ numerous staff across various countries and serve many clients, some of whom are prominent within the registry and registrar community. To prevent inappropriate influence and ensure objective evaluations, ICANN has implemented Conflict of Interest guidelines and procedures for service providers. Service providers must ensure that all appointed entities and individuals:

- Acknowledge and understand the Conflict of Interest guidelines.
- Agree to comply with these guidelines.
- Disclose any business relationships related to ICANN's New gTLD Program: 2026 Round from the past six months.

Where possible, ICANN will identify and secure primary and backup providers for evaluation and dispute resolution. In conjunction with service providers, ICANN will identify conflicts and re-assign applications as appropriate to secondary or contingent third-party providers to perform the reviews.

A8.2.1 Guidelines

Service providers must adhere to the following minimum standards.[373] A fundamental principle is that they must remain impartial and independent of the applications, applicants, and involved parties from the time they accept their appointment throughout the application evaluation or objection processes.

A service provider should decline an appointment or, if the evaluation or objection proceeding has already begun, refuse to continue to act if there are any doubts regarding their impartiality or independence, whether these doubts existed prior to or arose after their appointment.

If there are facts or circumstances that cast doubt on a service provider's impartiality or independence, they must disclose these, as applicable, to ICANN, the applicants or the panel firm prior to accepting the appointment or as soon as they learn of them. Any doubt as to whether any service provider should disclose certain facts or circumstances should be resolved in favor of disclosure.

While it is impossible to anticipate all potential conflicts of interest, a service provider should evaluate whether the existing facts and circumstances would lead a reasonable person to conclude that there is an actual or potential conflict of interest. If conflicts of interest are found to exist, ICANN will work with service providers to reassign applications as appropriate.

The following text outlines boundaries set for service providers and their immediate family members.

Service providers and Immediate family members:

- Must not be under contract, have or be included in a current proposal to provide professional services for or on behalf of the relevant applicants or any parties to an objection proceeding during the compliance period, which begins upon acceptance of the appointment.
- Must not currently hold or be committed to acquire any interest in a privately-held applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.
- Must not currently hold or be committed to acquire more than 1% of any publicly listed applicant's or any parties to an objection proceeding outstanding equity securities or other ownership interests.
- Must not be involved or have an interest in a joint venture, partnership or other business arrangement with the applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.

[373] These Guidelines do not apply to applicants, which are covered under separate Codes of Conduct. See Specification 9 of the 2026 Base Registry Agreement in Appendix 4.

- Must not have been named in a lawsuit with or against the applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.
- Must not be a:
    - Director, officer, or employee, or in any capacity equivalent to that of a member of management of the applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.
    - Promoter, underwriter, or voting trustee of the applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.
    - Trustee for any pension or profit-sharing trust of the applicant or any parties to an objection proceeding.

Service providers also maintain their own conflict of interest procedures with which Panelists are required to comply.[374]

A8.2.3 Definitions

Panelist: An evaluation panelist or a DRSP-appointed panelist is any primary, secondary, and contingent third-party panelist engaged by a service provider to review a new gTLD application or consider any objections relating to a new gTLD application.

Immediate Family Member: Immediate family member is a spouse, spousal equivalent, or dependent (whether or not related) of an evaluation panelist, a DRSP-appointed panelist, or an independent objector.

Professional Services: Professional services include legal services, financial audit, financial planning and investment, outsourced services, and consulting services such as business, management, internal audit, tax, information technology, and registry and registrar services.

Service Providers: Individuals and entities providing services or supporting processes for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, including but not limited to the application evaluation or objection processes.[375]

A8.2.4. Code of Conduct Violations

Any breaches of the Code of Conduct by service providers, whether intentional or not, shall be reviewed by ICANN. If necessary, ICANN may recommend corrective actions. Such breaches could lead to the removal of the individual or provider responsible, in accordance with relevant contractual provisions.

If ICANN determines that a service provider has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the results of that provider's review for all assigned applications may be

[374] See Appendix 8 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Guidelines of Service Providers.
[375] For example: evaluation firms or persons appointed by evaluation firms; dispute resolution providers or DRSP-appointed panelists; or, independent objector firms and independent objectors appointed by independent objector firms.

discarded. Consequently, the affected applications will be reassigned for review by new service providers.

Applicants with concerns about service providers should communicate through the defined support channels (see Section 2.1 Resources and Help). Members of the general public with concerns regarding the Code of Conduct (that is, non-applicants) can raise them via ICANN's Global Support Center (globalsupport@icann.org).[376]

[376] See also the Accountability Mechanisms established in the ICANN Bylaws: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/mechanisms-2014-03-20-en.

Appendix 9 New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Privacy Policy

ICANN is committed to respecting and appropriately protecting the personal data it processes, including when sharing this data with others.

This privacy policy sets out how ICANN collects and uses personal information provided by or collected from individuals as part of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. This policy, which specifically pertains to the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, is supplemented by the ICANN Privacy Policy[377] which contains the more general provisions. In the event of a conflict between the two, the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Privacy Policy (New gTLD Program Privacy Policy) prevails.

If you have any questions about this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy, contact privacy@icann.org.

This New gTLD Program Privacy Policy covers the following key topics:

- A9.1 Definitions
- A9.2 Data Controller
- A9.3 Personal Information Processed
- A9.4 Use of Personal Information – Purposes and Legal Bases
- A9.5 Sharing of Personal Information
- A9.6 International Transfers
- A9.7 Security
- A9.8 Retention
- A9.9 Exercise of Data Subject Rights
- A9.10 Required Personal Information
- A9.11 Minors
- A9.12 Revisions
- A9.13 Exhibit 1: Data Subject Rights Under the GDPR

A9.1 Definitions

"**Authorized User**" means any other users authorized by ICANN to access the 2026 Round Portals. This includes, but may not be limited to ICANN staff and Independent Application Assessment Panelists.

"**Applicant**" means the organization designated as the “applicant” in the 2026 Round Application that has been submitted or will be submitted by the Applicant.

"**Applicant User**" means the User accessing and completing the 2026 Round Application on behalf of the Applicant.

[377] See ICANN Privacy Policy: https://www.icann.org/privacy/policy.

"**Application**" means the application submitted for new gTLDs under the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. For more information on Application, refer to the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook (Applicant Guidebook), the Registry Service Provider (RSP) evaluation process Handbook (RSP Handbook) the Applicant Support Program (ASP) Handbook (ASP Handbook).

"**Data Subject**" means the identified or identifiable natural person to which the Personal Information is relating.

"**EU Standard Contractual Clauses**" means the standard contractual clauses for the transfer of personal data to third countries pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/914 of 4 June 2021).

"**GDPR**" means the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC.

"**2026 Round Portal**" or "**Portals**" means any online new gTLD application management portal(s) for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, as specified by ICANN.

"**ICANN Account**" means the account that allows access to certain ICANN services, including the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, so that account holders can manage their information such as name, email, and password, using only one set of login credentials.

"New gTLD Program: 2026 Round" means the ICANN initiative to enable the expansion of the Internet's Domain Name System (DNS) through the introduction of new generic top-level domains.

"Evaluation Panels" means any independent panel of subject matter experts ("Panelists") that is provided access to the Portals for the purpose of evaluating the 2026 Round Application as set forth in the Applicant Guidebook, RSP Handbook and ASP Handbook.

"Other Applicable Data Protection Law" means any applicable local and national data protection law of a third country.

"Processing" means any operation or set of operations which is performed on Personal Information or on sets of Personal Information, whether or not by automated means, such as collection, recording, organization, structuring, storage, adaptation or alteration, retrieval, consultation, use, disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available, alignment or combination, restriction, erasure or destruction.

"**User**" means any individual using any 2026 Round Portal, either as an Applicant User or as an Authorized User.

Defined terms not explicitly defined in this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy shall have the meanings assigned to them in either the ICANN Privacy Policy or ICANN's New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook.

A9.2 Data Controller

ICANN operates the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round and processes Personal Information in this context as an independent data controller. ICANN's headquarters is located at 12025 Waterfront Drive, Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90094-2536, USA. For inquiries, ICANN can be contacted at privacy@icann.org.

A9.3 Personal Information Processed

This section outlines the various stages of an application's lifecycle during which Personal Information is processed.

Application Submission: Participation in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round involves the collection and use of an applicant's Personal Information, such as full name, postal address, telephone number, and email address. The complete list of data elements required for submitting an application, which may or may not include Personal Information depending on the type of application, can be found in the sources listed below. Some fields are optional or not required depending on the application type:

- For the Registry Service Provider (RSP) evaluation process, refer to the RSP Handbook[378] (Evaluation Processing Stages).
- For the Applicant Support Program (ASP), refer to the ASP Handbook[379] (ASP Application Evaluation).
- For the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round applications, refer to the Applicant Guidebook (see Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures).

Administration: ICANN requires updated Personal Information about the applicant's directors and officers, and other relevant personnel, such as full name, year of birth, city, and country code of residence. ICANN and its service providers use this information to conduct necessary background checks and other evaluations. If the applicant is selected, they may be asked to confirm the validity and accuracy of the data submitted during the application process.

[378] See RSP Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/rsp-handbook-27mar25-en.pdf.
[379] See ASP Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/next-round-asp-handbook-09aug24-en.pdf.

Background Screening Information: For background screenings, ICANN processes various types of information, including applicant entity information, applicant entity users and contacts information, ultimate control contacts information, and applicant Personal Information. This includes confirmation, and where necessary, additional explanation, that the applicant is free from convictions, disciplinary actions or other measures as further specified in Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria.

Moreover, ICANN processes Personal Information from applicants contained in reports issued by third-party sources conducting background screenings based on publicly available information. This is done for due diligence, reputation checks, and Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) checks (see Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions).

In certain circumstances, the results of initial background checks may require ICANN to request additional Personal Information to complete necessary background checks or other Program application evaluations. Personal Information is also processed to maintain an accurate history of application processing and changes.

Sensitive Personal Information: ICANN does not collect sensitive Personal Information (e.g., personal medical or health information, racial or ethnic origin, or political opinions) in connection with the Program. Applicants will be notified if such sensitive Personal Information is necessary, such as to conduct further background checks.

ICANN Account: Applicant Users may access the 2026 Round Portals through their ICANN account. The processing of Personal Information contained in the ICANN account is described in general terms in the ICANN Privacy Policy.[380]

Through their ICANN account, the Applicant Users' following Personal Information will be processed:

- First and last name.
- Applicant User email address.

Logging Applicant Information for Usage Information and IT Security Purposes: To help understand how Users interact with the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round portals, information such as action history, information requested or rejected, User selections, log files, performance logs, diagnostic reports, pages or content viewed, searches conducted, pages requested, websites visited before using the 2026 Round Portals, and the dates, times, and durations of the users' visits, will be collected by the portals' provider.

Personal Information from the Evaluators, Panelists and Independent Objectors: The following Personal Information from all evaluators, panelists, and Independent Objectors, will be processed:

[380] See ICANN Privacy Policy: https://www.icann.org/privacy/policy.

- First and last name.
- Email address.
- Curriculum Vitae (CVs).

All Types of Personal Information: The categories of personal information described above may be processed by ICANN for analytics related to reporting on the usage of the 2026 Round Portals. Any Personal Information will be pseudonymized or anonymized, if and to the extent required under applicable laws. Only anonymized results of these data analytics will be shared with members of the ICANN community and the public, as described in Section A9.5 Sharing of Personal Information of this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy.

This policy does not replace the privacy policies of third-party service providers that may apply to the processing of the same data, nor does it establish joint-controller relationships with such third-party service providers.

A9.4 Use of Personal Information - Purposes and Legal Bases

ICANN processes the Personal Information described in Section A9.3 Personal Information Processed of this policy to manage and administer the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round effectively and to streamline the application submission and receipt process. This may include Processing for the purpose of reporting on the usage of the 2026 Round Portals. Personal Information from Users is also logged for the purpose of ensuring the operational stability and security of the 2026 Round Portals.

If and to the extent the GDPR applies, ICANN relies on the legal basis of Art. 6 (1) lit. f) GDPR, which allows ICANN to Process Personal Information when it is necessary for ICANN's or a third party's legitimate interest, unless otherwise specified in this policy. ICANN will carefully assess the necessity of processing under Article 6(1)(f) GDPR to ensure it does not override the interests and/or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject whose data is being processed, as required by law. References to GDPR legal bases are also intended to encompass equivalent legal bases under other applicable data protection laws.

Where the GDPR does not apply, ICANN will comply with the relevant applicable data protection laws.

As allowed by these laws, ICANN processes background and third-party background screening information for background screenings, as further described in Section 6.1.2 Background Screening Criteria of the Applicant Guidebook, based on its legitimate interest in maintaining the security and stability of the Internet and protecting registrants (Art. 6 (1) lit. f) GDPR).

A9.5 Sharing of Personal Information

ICANN will not sell or otherwise share any Personal Information with third parties for marketing purposes. ICANN also will not share any disclosed Personal Information that

reasonably identifies disclosers with third parties for their independent use except when: (i) ICANN has the discloser's permission, (ii) is doing so at the discloser's direction, (iii) it is required to comply with ICANN's legal obligations, (iv) as permitted by applicable law, or (v) as otherwise described in this policy. For more information on how ICANN shares Personal Information, refer to Section 5 of ICANN's Privacy Policy.[381]

Service Providers: ICANN shares the Personal Information described in this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy in Section A9.3 Personal Information Processed with third-party service providers that process the Personal Information on ICANN's behalf (as data processors) or in their own capacity (as data controllers). A list of these service providers and their locations is available on the New gTLD Program website.[382]

Public Sharing: In line with its principles of transparency and accountability, ICANN will publish the applicant's name and relevant gTLD information on ICANN's website. While this information is not typically considered Personal Information, it may contain Personal Information.

Consultants and Advisors, Government Authorities and Agencies: To the extent necessary; ICANN may share the Personal Information described in this New gtLD Program Privacy Policy in Section A9.3 Personal Information Processed with technical and business consultants, as well as financial and legal advisors, government authorities and agencies as further described in Section 5 of ICANN's Privacy Policy.[383] Additionally, where GDPR applies and the processing of Personal Information is necessary for ICANN to comply with a legal obligation, the legal basis for such processing will be Article 6(1) lit. c) GDPR.

A9.6 International Transfers

When applying for a new gTLD or using a 2026 Round Portal, the Applicant User is directly transferring its own Personal Information to ICANN in the United States. Such transfer of Personal Information that relates to the Applicant User is not considered an international transfer under Chapter V of the GDPR, as the Personal Information is directly collected from the Applicant as the Data Subject under Art. 3 (2) GDPR.

When the Applicant submits Personal Information of third parties into the 2026 Round Portal (as contained in Applications or information related to Applications), this Personal Information is transferred to ICANN in the United States and from the United States possibly also to other countries outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) where ICANN staff and third party service providers are located. A list[384] of ICANN offices are available and respective locations of the third parties are linked under Section A9.5 Sharing of Personal Information of this policy.

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[381] See Section 5 of ICANN Privacy Policy: https://www.icann.org/privacy/policy/#5.
[382] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/resources/sourcingtimeline.
[383] See ICANN Privacy Policy: https://www.icann.org/privacy/policy/#5.
[384] See list of ICANN offices: https://www.icann.org/locations.

Such transfers are safeguarded by suitable transfer mechanisms, including EU Standard Contractual Clauses. A copy of these safeguards can be obtained upon email request to privacy@icann.org.

Pursuant to the Terms and Conditions in Appendix 10 made available by ICANN, from time to time Applicants must also represent and certify that they have obtained the necessary permissions or consents for the sharing and publication, where applicable, of any Personal Information included in the Application and in the materials submitted with the Application. This obligation includes ensuring that any Personal Information subject to cross-border data transfer restrictions under applicable laws, which would be submitted in the Application via the 2026 Round Portal that is operated by ICANN in the United States, is in compliance with applicable laws. This would require the Applicant to implement any necessary transfer safeguards under such laws (e.g., EU Standard Contractual Clauses), prior to submission.

A9.7 Security

ICANN will use reasonable industry standard safeguards, which may include physical, procedural and technical measures, to protect against the unauthorized disclosure of Personal Information it collects and holds. ICANN will take reasonable steps to ensure that Personal Information collected is complete and relevant to its intended use, which includes, when required or appropriate and feasible, obtaining written assurances from third parties that may access your Personal Information that they will protect such information with safeguards designed to provide a level of protection equivalent to those adopted by ICANN.

ICANN cannot represent, warrant, or guarantee that information processed in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round or the 2026 Round Portal will be free from unauthorized access by third parties, loss, misuse, or alterations. While ICANN will take reasonable and appropriate security measures to protect against unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration or destruction of Personal Information received, ICANN DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL LIABILITY FOR UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS OR USE OR COMPROMISE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT PERMITTED BY APPLICABLE LAW. USERS ARE ADVISED THAT THEY SUBMIT PERSONAL INFORMATION AT THEIR OWN RISK.

A9.8 Retention

ICANN will retain Personal Information generally in accordance with its archival practices and as required by law.

ICANN will retain Personal Information only for the time required to fulfill the purposes set out in Section A9.4 Use of Personal Information-Purposes and Legal Bases. However, where ICANN is required by law to retain Personal Information longer or Personal Information is required for ICANN to assert or defend against legal claims, ICANN will retain the Personal Information until the end of the relevant retention period

or until the claims in question have been resolved. More details about the retention periods applicable will be available on the New gTLD Program website.[385]

A9.9 Exercise of Data Subject Rights

Individuals (Data Subjects) may be entitled to the following rights, in each case as permitted under applicable data protection law:

- Obtain access to information about the Processing of Personal Information;
- Object to certain Processing;
- Request information portability.
- Have their Personal Information rectified, deleted, or otherwise restricted in terms of Processing.

Users may also be entitled to withdraw any consent given with prospective effect with respect to the Processing of their Personal Information.

Individuals can exercise these rights or learn more about ICANN's processing of Personal Information by sending a request to privacy@icann.org. All requests are subject to identity verification. ICANN will respond to requests promptly, and within the legally required time frame. Certain Personal Information may be exempt from such requests under applicable law.

If individuals are dissatisfied with ICANN's response or believe their Personal Information is not processed lawfully, they may contact or lodge a complaint with the competent supervisory authority or seek alternative legal remedies.

A specific description of data subject rights applicable under the GDPR is attached to this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy as A9.13 Exhibit 1: Data Subject Rights Under the GDPR.

A9.10 Required Personal Information

Applicants must provide the Personal Information described in Section A9.3 Personal Information Processed (under the Subsection "Personal Information from Applicants"), including the details needed to complete the "Applicant User Account Setup Form" and the "Application Form." Failure to provide this information will prevent submission of the application.

A9.11 Minors

Portal users must be of legal age (at least 18 years or the applicable minimum legal age). ICANN does not knowingly collect any personal information from users who do not meet the minimum age requirements.

[385] See the New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/privacy-policy.

A9.12 Revisions

ICANN reserves the right to change the New gTLD Program Privacy Policy at any time. Any changes we make will be posted on ICANN.org with the most recent revision date identified. The date this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy was last revised is identified at the top of the page. Users are responsible for periodically monitoring and reviewing any updates to this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy. Continued participation in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round following amendments indicates acknowledgment of these changes. For material changes to the way ICANN collects, uses, or shares Personal Information, ICANN will endeavor to provide notice of disclosures of Personal Information before implementation, such as by posting a prominent notice on the ICANN.org website.

A9.13 Exhibit 1: Data Subject Rights Under the GDPR

Individuals (Data Subjects) whose Personal Information is Processed in the context of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round pursuant to the GDPR have the following Data Subject rights, as provided for under the GDPR, subject to limitations under the GDPR and otherwise applicable law.

Personal Information is referred to as "Personal Data" in this Exhibit.

- A Data Subject has the right to obtain confirmation as to whether Personal Data relating to itself are being Processed by ICANN and, where that is the case, the right to access the Personal Data and a copy thereof (Art. 15 (1) and (3) GDPR).
- If ICANN Processes inaccurate Personal Data, the Data Subject has the right to rectification (Art. 16 GDPR).
- In some cases described by law, a Data Subject may request the erasure of Personal Data concerning the Data Subject or the restriction of Processing (Art. 17 and 18 GDPR).
- If Processing is based on the Data Subject's consent within the meaning of Art. 6 (1) lit. a) GDPR and/or Art. 9 (2) lit. a GDPR, the Data Subject may withdraw consent at any time (Art. 7 (3) GDPR), which will not affect the lawfulness of Processing based on consent before its withdrawal. ICANN informs the Data Subject separately if ICANN requires the Data Subject's consent for the processing of their personal data for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes not covered by this New gTLD Program Privacy Policy.
- If Processing is based on the Data Subject's consent within the meaning of Art. 6 (1) lit. a) GDPR and/or Art. 9 (2) lit. a GDPR, or on a contract pursuant to Art. 6 (1) lit. b) GDPR, and the data Processing is carried out by automated means, the Data Subject has a right to receive the Personal Data concerning the Data Subject in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format and the

right to transmit those data to another controller without hindrance from the controller to which the Personal Data have been provided (Art. 20 GDPR).

- Data Subjects have the right to object, on grounds relating to their particular situation, at any time to Processing of Personal Data concerning them based on Art. 6 (1) lit. e) or f) GDPR (Art. 21 (1) GDPR). Data Subjects may object to the Processing of their Personal Data on the basis of Art. 6 (1) lit. f) GDPR for direct marketing purposes at any time (Art. 21 (2) GDPR), without stating grounds relating to the Data Subject's particular situation. However, ICANN does not Process Data Subjects' Personal Data for this purpose.

- Furthermore, Data Subjects have the right to lodge a complaint with the competent data protection supervisory authority. Data Subjects can, for example, contact the supervisory authority in the EU Member State of their habitual residences, places of work or places of an alleged infringement. The lead supervisory authority responsible for ICANN is the:

  Autorité de la protection des données - Gegevensbeschermingsautoriteit (APD-GBA)
  Rue de la Presse 35 – Drukpersstraat 35
  1000 Bruxelles - Brussel
  Tel. +32 2 274 48 00
  Fax +32 2 274 48 35
  Email: contact@apd-gba.be
  Website:
  https://www.autoriteprotectiondonnees.be
  https://www.gegevensbeschermingsautoriteit.be

For questions or complaints about ICANN data processing, contact privacy@icann.org. To exercise rights or learn more about ICANN data processing, send a request to privacy@icann.org.

Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions

By submitting this application for a generic Top Level Domain ("gTLD") (and any variant strings thereof identified on such application) through ICANN's online interface (this "Application"), applicant (including all parent companies, subsidiaries, affiliates, agents, contractors, employees and any and all others acting on its behalf) (collectively, "Applicant") agrees to the following terms and conditions ("Terms and Conditions") without modification. Applicant understands and agrees that these Terms and Conditions are binding on Applicant and are a material part of this Application.

1. Applicant warrants that the statements and representations contained in this Application (including any documents or written materials submitted in connection with the Application) are true, accurate, and complete in all material respects as of the date hereof and, as supplemented pursuant to Section 1, throughout the application process, and that ICANN may rely on those statements and representations fully in evaluating this Application. Applicant agrees to promptly (and in any event within seven (7) days of becoming aware of any fact or circumstance giving rise to such obligation) notify ICANN in writing of any material inaccuracies or material changes in any information, documents or written materials submitted in response to the Application Questions in Appendix 1 or Clarifying Questions in connection with this Application. Applicant acknowledges that failure to notify ICANN may result in rejection of this Application without a refund of any fees paid by Applicant at ICANN's discretion. Applicant acknowledges that any material misstatement or misrepresentation (or omission of material information) or failure to notify ICANN of any material inaccuracies or material changes may, in ICANN's discretion, provide cause for ICANN to reject this Application, including without a refund of any fees paid by Applicant.

2. Applicant warrants that it is duly organized, validly existing and in good standing (or the equivalent) under the laws of the jurisdiction under which it is organized. Applicant further warrants that it has the requisite organizational power and authority to submit this Application on behalf of Applicant, and is able to make all agreements, representations, waivers, and understandings stated in these Terms and Conditions, to comply with the requirements of the New gTLD Program Applicant Guidebook ("Applicant Guidebook") and to enter into the form of the Registry Agreement as posted with the Applicant Guidebook or as subsequently updated from time to time by ICANN as described in Section 9 of these Terms and Conditions.

3. Applicant acknowledges and agrees that ICANN has the right to determine not to proceed with any and all applications for new gTLDs, including this Application, and that there is no assurance that any additional gTLDs will be created. The decision to review, consider, and approve an application to

establish one or more gTLDs and to delegate new gTLDs after such approval is entirely at ICANN's discretion.

4. Applicant agrees to pay all fees that are associated with this Application. These fees include, but are not limited to, the evaluation fee (which is to be paid in conjunction with the submission of this Application) and any conditional evaluation fees, if applicable. Applicant acknowledges that the initial fee due upon submission of this Application is only to obtain consideration of this Application. ICANN makes no assurances that this Application (or any other application) will be approved or will result in the delegation of a gTLD proposed in an application. Applicant acknowledges that if it fails to pay fees within the designated time period at any stage of the application review and consideration process, Applicant will forfeit any fees paid up to that point and this Application will be canceled. Except as expressly provided in the Applicant Guidebook, Applicant will not be eligible for a refund or all or any portion of the fees associated with this Application. If Applicant is notified by ICANN that it is eligible for a refund of all or a portion of the fees associated with this Application and Applicant fails to request such refund within the time period identified by ICANN in the Applicant Guidebook, Applicant will forfeit its eligibility for such refund.

5. Applicant shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless ICANN, and any ICANN affiliates, subsidiaries, directors, officers, employees, consultants, evaluators, and agents (collectively, the "ICANN Affiliated Parties") from and against any and all third-party claims, damages, liabilities, costs, and expenses, including reasonable legal fees and expenses, arising out of or relating to: (a) ICANN's or an ICANN Affiliated Party's consideration of this Application, and any approval, rejection or withdrawal of this Application; and/or (b) ICANN's or an ICANN Affiliated Party's reliance on information provided by Applicant in this Application and on Applicant's representations and warranties herein.

6. Applicant hereby releases ICANN and the ICANN Affiliated Parties from any and all claims by Applicant that arise out of, are based upon, or are in any way related to, any action, or failure to act, by ICANN or any ICANN Affiliated Party with respect to this Application including in connection with ICANN's or an ICANN Affiliated Party's review of this Application, investigation or verification, any characterization or description of Applicant or the information in this Application, any withdrawal of this Application or the decision by ICANN to recommend, or not to recommend, the approval of Applicant's Application. APPLICANT AGREES NOT TO CHALLENGE, IN COURT OR IN ANY OTHER JUDICIAL FORA, ANY DECISION MADE BY ICANN WITH RESPECT TO THIS APPLICATION, AND IRREVOCABLY WAIVES ANY RIGHT TO SUE OR PROCEED IN COURT OR ANY OTHER JUDICIAL FORA ON THE BASIS OF ANY OTHER LEGAL CLAIM AGAINST ICANN AND ICANN AFFILIATED PARTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE APPLICATION. APPLICANT

ACKNOWLEDGES AND ACCEPTS THAT APPLICANT'S NONENTITLEMENT TO PURSUE ANY RIGHTS, REMEDIES, OR LEGAL CLAIMS AGAINST ICANN OR THE ICANN AFFILIATED PARTIES IN COURT OR ANY OTHER JUDICIAL FORA WITH RESPECT TO THE APPLICATION SHALL MEAN THAT APPLICANT WILL FOREGO ANY RECOVERY OF ANY APPLICATION FEES, MONIES INVESTED IN BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE OR OTHER STARTUP COSTS AND ANY AND ALL PROFITS THAT APPLICANT MAY EXPECT TO REALIZE FROM THE OPERATION OF A REGISTRY FOR THE GTLD; PROVIDED THAT APPLICANT MAY UTILIZE ANY ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM SET FORTH IN ICANN'S BYLAWS FOR PURPOSES OF CHALLENGING ANY DECISION MADE BY ICANN WITH RESPECT TO THE APPLICATION. APPLICANT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ANY ICANN AFFILIATED PARTY IS AN EXPRESS THIRD-PARTY BENEFICIARY OF THIS SECTION 6 AND MAY ENFORCE EACH PROVISION OF THIS SECTION 6 AGAINST APPLICANT.

7. Applicant gives ICANN permission to use Applicant's name in ICANN's public announcements (including informational web pages) relating to Applicant's Application and any action taken by ICANN related thereto. Applicant hereby authorizes ICANN to publish on ICANN's website, and to disclose or publicize in any other manner, any materials submitted to, or obtained or generated by, ICANN and the ICANN Affiliated Parties in connection with this Application, including evaluations, analyses and any other materials prepared in connection with the evaluation of this Application; provided, however, that information will not be disclosed or published to the extent that the Applicant Guidebook expressly states that such information will be kept confidential, except as required by law or judicial process. Access to confidential information shall be limited to those individuals and entities who need access to complete the review process, including individuals within ICANN, ICANN Affiliated Parties, and any third parties conducting application evaluations or providing dispute or appeals services. Except for information afforded confidential treatment, Applicant understands and acknowledges that ICANN does not and will not keep the remaining portion of this Application or materials submitted with this Application confidential.

8. Applicant represents and certifies that it has obtained the necessary permission or consents for the sharing and publication, where applicable, of any personally identifying information or data included in this Application and in the materials submitted with this Application. Applicant acknowledges that the information that ICANN posts may remain in the public domain for a period permitted under applicable law, including in perpetuity where necessary to satisfy ICANN's transparency obligations. Applicant confirms that it has informed such individuals of the processing of their personally identifying information or personal data as required under applicable data protection laws. Applicant acknowledges that ICANN will handle personal information or data collected in

accordance with its New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Privacy Policy[386], which supplements the Privacy Policy[387], both of which are incorporated herein by this reference. If requested by ICANN, Applicant will be required to obtain and deliver to ICANN and ICANN's background screening vendor any consents or agreements of the entities and/or individuals named in this Application necessary to conduct these background screening activities as permitted under applicable law. In addition, Applicant acknowledges that, in order to allow ICANN to conduct thorough background screening investigations:

a. Applicant may be required to provide documented consent for release of records to ICANN by organizations or government agencies;
b. Applicant may be required to obtain specific government records directly and supply those records to ICANN for review;
c. Additional identifying information may be required to resolve questions of identity of individuals within the Applicant organization and/or individuals identified in the Application;
d. Applicant may be requested to supply certain information in the original language as well as in English; and
e. Applicant may be required to obtain the permission or consent of individuals whose information will be disclosed to ICANN in connection with this Application.

9. Applicant understands and agrees that it will acquire rights in connection with a gTLD only in the event that Applicant enters into a Registry Agreement with ICANN, and that Applicant's rights in connection with such gTLD will be limited to those expressly stated in the Registry Agreement. In the event this Application for the gTLD that is applied for herein is approved, Applicant agrees to enter into the Registry Agreement with ICANN in the form published in the Applicant Guidebook or as updated from time to time by ICANN. (Note: ICANN reserves the right to make reasonable updates and changes to the form Registry Agreement in the Applicant Guidebook during the course of the application process, including but not limited to as the possible result of new policies that might be adopted during the course of the application process). Applicant may not resell, assign, or transfer this Application.

10. Applicant authorizes ICANN to:

    a. Contact any person, group, or entity to request, obtain, and discuss any documentation or other information that, in ICANN's sole judgment, may be pertinent to this Application; and/or
    b. Consult with persons of ICANN's choosing regarding information in this Application or information otherwise coming into ICANN's possession, provided, however, that ICANN will use reasonable efforts to ensure that

[386] See Appendix 9 New gTLD Program Privacy Policy.
[387] See ICANN Privacy Policy: https://www.icann.org/privacy/policy.

such persons maintain the confidentiality of information in this Application that this Applicant Guidebook expressly states will be kept confidential.

11. For the convenience of Applicants around the world, certain application materials published by ICANN in the English language have been translated into certain other languages frequently used around the world. Applicant recognizes that the English language version of the application materials prepared by ICANN (of which these Terms and Conditions is a part) is the version that binds the parties, that such translations are non-official interpretations and may not be relied upon as accurate in all respects, and that in the event of any conflict between the translated versions of the application materials and the English language version, the English language version controls.

12. Applicant agrees that by submitting this Application, Applicant is agreeing to execute waivers or take similar reasonable actions to permit law and consulting firms retained by ICANN in connection with the review and evaluation of this Application to represent ICANN adverse to Applicant in the matter.

13. ICANN reserves the right to make reasonable updates and changes to this Applicant Guidebook and to the application process, including the process for withdrawal of applications, at any time by posting notice of such updates and changes to the ICANN website, and where relevant, inline with the Predictability Framework, including but not limited to as the possible result of new policies that might be adopted or advice to ICANN from ICANN advisory committees that is adopted by ICANN during the course of the application process. Applicant acknowledges that ICANN may make such updates and changes and agrees that this Application will be subject to any such updates and changes. In the event that Applicant has completed and submitted its Application prior to such updates or changes, and Applicant can demonstrate to ICANN that compliance with such updates or changes would present a material hardship to Applicant, then ICANN will work with Applicant in good faith to attempt to make reasonable accommodations in order to mitigate any negative consequences for Applicant to the extent possible consistent with ICANN's mission to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems.

14. By submitting this Application, Applicant agrees to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including those economic, financial, and trade restrictions imposed, administered or enforced by the U.S. government, including but not limited to those administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control[388] (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury (“Economic Sanctions”). Applicant also agrees to immediately notify ICANN if Applicant, or any of the persons or

[388] See Office of Foreign Assets Control: https://ofac.treasury.gov/.

entities listed in this Application, become the subject of any Economic Sanctions.

15. By submitting this Application, Applicant confirms that it is submitting this Application with a bona fide (good faith) intention to operate the gTLD for which it has applied, and that Applicant has read and understands the provisions of Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities of the Applicant Guidebook regarding the New gTLD Program rules prohibiting certain communications and activities to prevent parties from privately resolving string contention among themselves. Furthermore, Applicant confirms that it has read and understands that ICANN may, in its sole discretion, pursue the remedies set forth in Section 5.2.3.3 Violation of the Rules Prohibiting Private Resolution of Contention Strings of the Applicant Guidebook arising from any breach of Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities of the Applicant Guidebook, and Applicant agrees to cooperate with any ICANN inquiry or investigation concerning a possible breach of Section 5.2.3.1 Prohibited Communications and Activities of the Applicant Guidebook.

16. These Terms and Conditions shall be subject to the law of the State of California.

Appendix 11 Applicant Support Program

For information regarding the Applicant Support Program (ASP) and the ASP Handbook on the New gTLD Program website, see:

- Homepage: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp
- Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/handbook

Appendix 12 Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program

For information regarding the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program and the RSP Handbook on the New gTLD Program website, see:

- Homepage: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp
- Handbook: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp/handbook

Glossary

The glossary below provides the meaning of and, if applicable, acronyms for terms that may commonly appear in the Applicant Guidebook. Terms have been sorted in alphabetical order for easy reference. This list is non-exhaustive.

Table G1: Glossary

Term	Acronym	Meaning
2012 Round		The application round of the New gTLD Program that opened in 2012.
2026 Round		The round of the New gTLD Program that opened in April 2026 and is the subject of this Applicant Guidebook.
A-Label		An "A-label" is the ASCII-Compatible Encoding (ACE) form of an IDN string. An A-label begins with the prefix "xn--", followed by a string that is a valid output of the Punycode algorithm [RFC3492], with a maximum of 59 ASCII characters in length.
Accountability Mechanisms		Mechanisms established in the ICANN Bylaws that enable review and reconsideration of ICANN's actions (see Section 2.7 Accountability Mechanisms). These mechanisms are: the Empowered Community, Reconsideration, the Independent Review Process, and the Ombudsman.
Administrative Check and Preparation for Reveal Day		A manual process that performs administrative due diligence (see Section 3.2 Administrative Check and Preparation for Reveal Day) and verifies whether the evaluation fees have been received as well as provides time for ICANN to prepare for Reveal Day (see Section 3.4 Reveal Day).
Advice		Input to the ICANN Board provided by an Advisory Committee.
Advisory Committee	AC	A formally recognized body, under the ICANN Bylaws[389], charged with advising the ICANN Board on policies within ICANN's mission and scope. The Bylaws recognize four ACs: the At-Large Advisory Committee, the Governmental Advisory Committee, the Root Server System Advisory Committee, and the Security and Stability Advisory Committee.
Affirmations		Affirmations from the SubPro Final Report[390] indicate that the Working Group believes that an element of the 2012 New gTLD Program was, and continues to be, appropriate, or at a minimum acceptable, to continue in subsequent procedures.

[389] See ICANN Bylaws: https://www.icann.org/en/governance/bylaws.
[390] See SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Affirmations with Modifications		Similar to affirmations, as described in the SubPro Final Report, but used in cases where the Working Group recommends a relatively small adjustment to the 2012 New gTLD Program's policies or implementation.
American Standard Code for Information Interchange	ASCII	A character encoding standard for representing a particular set of 95 (English language focused) printable and 33 control characters – a total of 128 code points.
Appeals Process	Appeal	A mechanism that allows for relevant parties to appeal an Objection Panel Determination of an objection. See Section 4.5.9.1 Filing an Appeal.
Applicant		An entity that has applied to ICANN for a new gTLD by submitting its application during the application submission period.
Applicant Evaluation		Applicant Evaluation occurs after the application has either (a) passed String Evaluation and is not part of a contention set, or (b) passed String Evaluation and has prevailed in the contention set. It is conducted in parallel with Application Evaluation (see Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures) based on the application's priority number, unless other processes prevent the application from proceeding. Applicant evaluation consists of two mandatory assessments: Background Screening and Financial and Operational Evaluation. See Sections 6.1 Background Screening Section 6.2 Financial and Operational Evaluation.
Applicant Guidebook	AGB	The gTLD Applicant Guidebook, describing the requirements of the application and evaluation processes.
Applicant Support Program	ASP	A separate program from the gTLD application process, it offers a reduction in ICANN fees related to the New gTLD Program to qualified applicants with demonstrated financial need. See Appendix 11 Applicant Support Program.
Application		An application for a new gTLD lodged in connection with the terms and conditions of the Applicant Guidebook. An application includes the completed application questions, any supporting documents, and any other information that may be submitted by the applicant at ICANN's request. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
Application Change Request	ACR	Applicants have the opportunity to request changes to their applications including, but not limited to, the addition or modification of Registry Voluntary Commitments or Community Registration Policy, in response to concerns raised in an objection, via an Application Change Request. See Section 3.8 Application Change Requests.
Application Evaluation		Application evaluation includes the following evaluations: Registry Service Provider Review, Geographic Names Review, Reserved Names Review, Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation, Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation, Registry Commitment Evaluation (including Community Registration Policies Evaluation),

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation, and Variant String Evaluation. Among these, only the Registry Services Provider Review is mandatory. See Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures.
Application Priority		Each application will receive a priority number via the Prioritization Draw (see Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw). The priority number establishes the order of processing for all applications in a round.
Application Questions		The set of questions to which applicants provide responses. In the 2012 Round it was included as an attachment to Module 2 of the Applicant Guidebook. See Appendix 1 Application Questions.
Application Round		The complete succession of stages for processing the applications received during one application submission period for gTLDs. The terms and conditions of the Applicant Guidebook are for one application round (see Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions). Any subsequent application rounds will be subject to updated guidebook information (see Section 2.8 Subsequent Application Rounds).
Application submission period		The time range during which applications may be created and submitted. See Section 3.1.1 Application Submission Period.
Application system		A system that allows applicants to securely submit information required to apply for one or more components of the New gTLD Program. This may include Applicant Support Program applicants, Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation applicants, and gTLD applicants. See TLD Management System (TAMS).
Applied-for gTLD string		A string that is the subject of a gTLD application.
Background Screening		Background screening protects the public interest in the allocation of critical Internet resources by ensuring that only established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing are allowed to operate a new gTLD. See Section 6.1 Background Screening.
Base Registry Agreement	Base RA	The form of registry agreement with ICANN that successful gTLD applicants would enter into prior to delegation of a new gTLD. It sets out the legal, operational, technical, and other obligations for a registry operator managing a gTLD, as well as ICANN's corresponding rights and responsibilities. Based on the evaluation result and individual circumstance of each gTLD, one or more specifications can be added to the Base Registry Agreement. The Base Registry Agreement is the product of extensive community consultation. ICANN will only consider modification to the agreement in extraordinary circumstances, such as unique legal, jurisdictional, or

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		regulatory issues that would legally prevent an entity from executing the Base Registry Agreement as-is.
Blocked Names		Certain strings, including their allocatable variant strings, that are not eligible for application or delegation in any future gTLD round under existing policy. Blocked Names are not subject to exception processes and cannot be applied for by any entity. See Section 7.2.1 Blocked Names.
Blocked Names Identification		When an applicant fills in the name of the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether the applicant's chosen string, along with any applicable variant strings, is a Blocked Name.
.Brand TLD		A designation for a TLD that is operated by and for an entity under its trademarked name as outlined in the entity's Registry Agreement with ICANN. See Section 7.7 .Brand Eligibility Evaluation and Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement. To qualify as a .Brand TLD, a registry operator must apply for the .Brand TLD designation and the brand's trademark must be recorded in the Trademark Clearinghouse.
.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation		The .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation confirms that the applicant meets the criteria for a .Brand TLD designation. A successful designation will result in Specification 13 being added to the applicant's Base Registry Agreement, provided the applicant successfully completes all phases of evaluation. See Section 7.3 .Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation.
CCT Final Report		The Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice Review Final Report[391] dated 8 September 2018.
Clarifying Question	CQ	An evaluation panel may issue clarifying questions to obtain more information from an applicant. See Section 1.2.12 Clarifying Questions.
Closed generic		According to the SubPro Policy Development Process Working Group's Final Report, a closed generic is "a TLD representing a string that is a generic name or term under which domains are registered and usable exclusively by the registry operator or its affiliates." See Section 3.1.7 Closed Generics/Exclusive Generic Strings.
Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation		If an applicant proposes to register all domain names in the gTLD exclusively for the registry operator's own use or for use by its affiliates, and wishes to waive the protection for itself and its affiliates, ICANN may grant an exemption to the Code of Conduct (Specification 9 of the Base Registry Agreement), provided the gTLD is not a generic string and the registry operator meets the exemption criteria. See Section 7.4 Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation.

[391] See Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice Review Final Report: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/cct-rt-final-08sep18-en.pdf.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Collision String List		A list of strings maintained by ICANN which ICANN has determined to present a high risk of Name Collision (see Section 7.7 Name Collision).
Community		ICANN follows a multistakeholder model in which individuals, non-commercial stakeholder groups, industry, and governments collectively called the ICANN community, play important roles in its community-based, consensus-driven, policy-making approach.
Community application		An application for a gTLD string with an intended use of being operated for the benefit of a clearly delineated community.See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation. Such a designation is entirely at the discretion of the applicant. An applicant designating its application as a community must be prepared to substantiate its status as representative of the community it names in the application.
Community Objection		An objection made on the grounds that there is substantial opposition to a gTLD application from a significant portion of the community to which the gTLD string may be explicitly or implicitly targeted. See Section 4.5.10.4 Principles: Community.
Community Priority Evaluation	CPE	A process by which to resolve string contention, which may be elected by a Community Applicant. See Section 5.4 Community Priority Evaluation.
Community Registration Policies		Registry Agreement Community Registration Policies (“Community Registration Policies”) are policies required for Community Applications to include in the applicable Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies.These should define, at a minimum, who can register in the applied-for gTLD and under what conditions a second-level domain name can be accepted by the registry. Community gTLD registry operators may have additional registration policies outside of the Registry Agreement, so long as they are not contrary to requirements under applicable ICANN agreements and policies.
Community Registration Policies Evaluation		Proposed Community Registration Policies are also subject to ICANN evaluation and approval before they can be included in Specification 12 of the Base Registry Agreement. See Section 7.8.4 Community Registration Policies.
Community gTLD		A Community gTLD is operated for the benefit of a clearly delineated community.
Consensus policy		A policy created through the GNSO policy development process listed in Annex A of the ICANN Bylaws[392]. A list of current consensus policies is available on the Contracted Parties website[393].

[392] See Annex A of the ICANN Bylaws: http://www.icann.org/en/general/bylaws.htm#AnnexA.
[393] See Contracted Parties website: http://www.icann.org/en/general/consensus-policies.htm.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Contention		The situation in which there is more than one application for an identical or Similar string. See Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.
Contention set		A group of applications that were determined to be identical or similar visually, aurally or in meaning to other applied-for gTLD strings as per String Similarity Evaluation or after a String Confusion Objection.
Controlled interruption		A state that newly delegated gLTDs need to establish for at least 90 days during which a specific response is provided for all queries to that top-level domain to help users understand that a Name Collision has occurred. See Section 7.7 Name Collision.
Country Code Top-Level Domain	ccTLD	The class of top-level domains reserved for use by countries, territories, and geographical locations identified in the ISO 3166-1 Country Codes list. See Root Zone Database[394].
Delegation		The process through which the root zone is edited to include a new TLD, and the management of domain name registrations under the TLD is turned over to the registry operator.
Dispute Resolution Service Provider	DRSP	An entity approved by ICANN to adjudicate dispute resolution proceedings in response to objections. See Section 4.5.3 Dispute Resolution Service Providers.
DNS Stability Review		The DNS Stability Review uses an automated system designed to review all applied-for primary and variant strings. See Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review. This evaluation ensures all strings conform to the mandatory string requirements, specifically DNS and hostname requirements, IDNA 2008 requirements for IDNs, and the RZ-LGR. Applicants are warned if the string does not meet these requirements and can request a review of the automated assessment.
Domain name		A unique string of letters consisting of two or more levels (for example, john.smith.name) maintained in a registry database.
Domain Name System	DNS	The global hierarchical system of domain names.
Domain Name System Security Extensions	DNSSEC	DNSSEC secures domain name lookups on the Internet by incorporating a chain of digital signatures into the DNS hierarchy.
Evaluation Challenge		A mechanism that allows an applicant to challenge certain evaluation results based on a system, factual or procedural error.
Evaluation Panel		A panel that has expertise in the area that is being reviewed (for example, String Similarity Evaluation Panel). Evaluation panels use the community-established criteria to assess whether or not an applicant has met the criteria.

[394] See Root Zone Database: http://iana.org/domains/root/db/.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Existing TLD		A string included on the Root Zone Database[395] list.
Extended Evaluation	EE	Extended Evaluation allows applicants an additional time period to pass evaluations begun in Initial Evaluation. The second stage of evaluation is applicable for applications that do not pass Initial Evaluation, but are eligible for further review. See Section 1.2.14.1 Extended Evaluation.
Extensible Provisioning Protocol	EPP	A protocol used for electronic communication between a registrar and a registry for provisioning domain names.
Final contention set		Final contention sets come as a result of a String Similarity Evaluation. See Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation.
Final Report on the New gTLD Program Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process	SubPro Final Report	The Final Report[396] on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process, dated 20 January 2021.
Finalized contention set		A contention set that meets the following auction eligibility criteria: ● Complete string evaluation ● Complete all applicable objections, appeals, and challenges ● Complete CPE, if applicable ● Have no open change requests ● Have no pending accountability mechanisms
Financial and Operational Evaluation		The 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 Financial and Operational Evaluation.
Future Rounds		The New gTLD Program assesses applications in rounds. Future rounds (or “subsequent application rounds”) refers to all rounds that will occur after the 2026 Round. See Section 2.8 Subsequent Application Rounds.
GAC Consensus Advice on New gTLDs		Advice provided to the ICANN Board by the GAC in relation to one or more gTLD applications. See Section 4.3 GAC Consensus Advice.
GAC Member Early Warning		A notice issued by the GAC concerning a gTLD application indicating that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic by one or more governments. See Section 4.2 GAC Member Early Warnings.

[395] See Root Zone Database list: http://iana.org/domains/root/db.
[396] See Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-20jan21-en.pdf.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Generic Names Supporting Organization	GNSO	ICANN's policy-development body[397] for generic TLDs, which developed the policy recommendations for the introduction of new gTLDs.
Generic top-level domain	gTLD	The class of top-level domains that includes general-purpose domains such as .com, .net, .edu, and .org. This class also includes domains associated with the New gTLD Program, which includes names such as .futbol, .istanbul, and .pizza, and names in other alphabets and languages. ICANN coordinates the development of the rules and policies that govern the registration of domain names within gTLDs.
Geographic Name		A generic top-level domain and its allocatable variant label(s) is a Geographic Name if it meets any of these criteria: It is the name (in any language) of a capital city of any country or territory listed in the ISO3166-1 standard; it is the name of a city where the applicant declares that it intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with that name; it is an exact match of a sub-national place name such as a county, province, or state listed in the ISO3166-2 standard; or of a name listed as a UNESCO region[398] or appearing on the UN Geographic Regions section M49.[399] Each category has different qualifications. See Section 7.5 Geographic Names.
Geographic Names Identification		As part of the Geographic Names Identification, a panel will review all of the applied-for strings and identify which strings may be considered a Geographic Name, as described in Section 7.5 Geographic Names. This is separate from the more substantive verification process called Geographic Names Review (Section 7.5.3.2) that would take place as part of Application Evaluation.
Geographic Names Panel	GNP	A panel of experts charged by ICANN with reviewing applied-for TLD strings to identify, and confirm required documentation for, geographic names.
Geographic Names Review		A verification and substantive review of application responses for strings determined to be geographic. This review takes place as part of Application Evaluation. See Section 7.5.3.2 Geographic Names Review.
Governmental Advisory Committee	GAC	The GAC constitutes the voice of Governments and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) in ICANN's multistakeholder structure. Created under the ICANN Bylaws, the GAC is an advisory committee to the ICANN Board. The GAC's key role is to provide advice to ICANN on issues of public policy, and especially where there may be an interaction between ICANN's activities or policies and national laws or international agreements.
gTLD Application Fee		The fee due from each applicant to obtain consideration of its application.

[397] See GNSO webpage: https://gnso.icann.org/en.
[398] See UNESCO World Heritage List: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/&order=region.
[399] See Geographic Regions section M49: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
High-Risk Mitigation Plan		Section 7.7.5 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation outlines the specific preventative and corrective actions the applicant will take to mitigate the risk of Name Collisions, including any communication activities with affected end-users. Each mitigation action must have a specific time frame for implementation. The total time frame must not exceed two years.
ICANN Auction		An auction conducted by ICANN according to the string contention procedures.
ICANN Board		The body that reviews policy recommendations developed by the ICANN community and sends approved policies to the ICANN organization for implementation. The Board[400] also performs strategic oversight for ICANN org, ensuring that the organization acts within its mission and operates effectively, efficiently, and ethically.
ICANN Community	"The Community"	ICANN follows a multistakeholder model in which individuals, non-commercial stakeholder groups, industry, and governments, collectively called the ICANN community, play important roles in its community-based, consensus-driven, policy-making approach.
ICANN organization	org/ICANN org	The entity[401] that implements the ICANN community's recommendations at the direction of the ICANN Board.
ICANN-accredited registrar		An entity that has entered into a Registrar Accreditation Agreement[402] with ICANN. The registrar has access to make changes to a registry by adding, deleting, or updating domain name records.
Implementation Guidance	IG	One of the outputs from the SubPro Final Report. In this case, the Working Group strongly recommends the stated action, with a presumption that it will be implemented, but recognizes that there may exist valid reasons in particular circumstances to not take the recommended action exactly as described. However, the party to whom the action is directed must make all efforts to achieve the purpose behind the recommended action (as expressed in the rationale and the recommendation to which the implementation guidance is linked, if applicable), even if done through a different course. In all cases, the full implications must be understood and carefully weighed before choosing a different course. Implementation guidance commonly refers to how a recommendation should be implemented. Implementation guidance typically uses the term "should," indicating that the Working Group expects the action to take place, noting the caveats above.
Implementation Review Team	IRT	An Implementation Review Team is a voluntary ICANN community team that reviews proposed implementation plans as drafted by ICANN org and checks for

[400] See about the Board: https://www.icann.org/en/board/about.
[401] See ICANN org website: https://www.icann.org/.
[402] See List of Accredited Registrars: https://www.icann.org/en/accredited-registrars.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		consistency with ICANN Board-approved GNSO recommendations. The team also answers questions and gathers clarifications from ICANN org as needed. It provides advice on technical and operational details concerning the recommendations in question.
Independent Objector	IO	A party selected by ICANN to act solely in the best interests of the public. The Independent Objector (see Section 4.5.4 Independent Objectors) may file objections to applications on the grounds of Limited Public Interest (see Section 4.5.1.3 Ground for Objection: Limited Public Interest) and Community (see Section 4.5.1.4 Ground for Objection: Community).
Intergovernmental Organization	IGO	An IGO is an organization composed primarily of sovereign states or of other intergovernmental organizations. IGOs are established by treaty or other agreement that acts as a charter creating the group. Examples include the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union.
Internationalized Domain Name	IDN	A domain name in which one or more of its strings contain characters other than ASCII letters, digits, or hyphens. Because IDNs support the use of Unicode characters, they can include characters from local languages and scripts. For example, 실례.테스트, is a domain name composed entirely of Hangul characters.
Internet Assigned Numbers Authority	IANA	The suite of Internet coordination functions relating to ensuring the assignment of globally unique protocol parameters, including management of the root of the DNS and the Internet Protocol address space. The IANA functions are delivered by Public Technical Identifiers, an affiliate of ICANN.
Legal Rights Objection		An objection filed on the grounds that the applied-for gTLD string infringes the existing legal rights of the objector. See Section 4.5.1.2 Ground for Objection: Legal Rights.
Limited Public Interest Objection		An objection filed on the grounds that the applied-for gTLD string is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law. See Section 4.5.1.3 Ground for Objection: Limited Public Interest.
Main Registry Service Provider	Main RSP	The main Registry Service Provider provides at least Extensible Provisioning Protocol and Registration Directory Services, and generates and sends data escrow deposits to the approved data escrow agent for the gTLD.
Mandatory Public Interest Commitments	Mandatory PICs	Mandatory Public Interest Commitments (see Section 7.8.1 Mandatory Public Interest Commitments) are rules or guidelines mandated by ICANN that a registry operator for a gTLD must adhere to, in order to protect the public interest and consumer rights. These are often implemented in response to concerns raised by the GAC.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Name Collision Analysis Project	NCAP	In 2017, the Board directed SSAC to establish NCAP to conduct studies related to name collision, which refers to the situation where a name that is defined and used in one namespace may also appear in another. Users and applications intending to use a name in one namespace may actually use it in a different one, and an unexpected behavior may result where the intended use of the name is not the same in both namespaces. The circumstances that lead to a name collision could be accidental or malicious.
Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation		An applicant for a string that ICANN has deemed to present a high risk of Name Collision and has cleared contention may submit a High-Risk String Mitigation Plan for review. This plan will be reviewed by technical experts. See Section 7.7.5 Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation.
Name Collision Initial Assessment		The Name Collision Initial Assessment aims to identify strings with a high risk of name collision, as described in Name Collision. See Section 7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment. If a string is found to be high-risk, the applicant will have an opportunity to submit a Mitigation Plan for evaluation, which will allow the application to proceed if approved.
Naming Services portal	NSp	An online service available through the ICANN website that provides a central location for contracted parties (for example, contracted registry operators and accredited registrars) to conduct business with the ICANN organization. The portal helps streamline operational processes and is customized with community-requested features such as case tracking, multiuser company access, and structured workflows. Users can ask questions, submit information, and request approvals through the portal.
Naming System		See RFC 9499, section 2: https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc9499.html#name-names.
Objection		An objection filed with a Dispute Resolution Service Provider in accordance with that provider's procedures. See Section 4.5 Objections and Appeals.
Objector		A person or entity that has filed an objection against a new gTLD application with the appropriate DRSP.
Organizational Account Record		The organizational information collected during the application pre-submission phase. This information includes, but is not limited to, applicant information, primary and secondary contact information, and proof of legal establishment. See Question Set 4 Applying Entity Background and Organization in Appendix 1 Application Questions for questions related to Organizational Account Record.
Outputs		The affirmations, policy recommendations, and

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		implementation guidance stemming from the Final Report.
Personally Identifiable Information	PII	Any representation of information that permits the identity of an individual to whom the information applies to be inferred.
Pre-Submission String Validations		Validations on the primary and variant strings, including replacement strings, are automatically incorporated into and implemented via TAMS. See Section 3.1.8 Pre-Submission String Validations.
Preliminary contention		All identical string applications on Reveal Day (see Section 3.4 Reveal Day) will be considered to be in preliminary contention.
Program Implementation Review Report	PIRR	A report produced by ICANN org in 2016 which is a collection of staff experiences during the operational implementation of the 2012 Round in the New gTLD Program.[403]
Public Interest Commitment Dispute Resolution Procedures	PICDRP	The PICDRP is a dispute resolution mechanism that, in certain cases, utilizes an evaluation panel. For those gTLDs with Registry Agreements that incorporate the PICDRP, the procedure is available to any party harmed by a registry operator's failure to comply with its PICs. The PICs and the PICDRP are one of the safeguards for the community created as part of the 2012 New gTLD Program.
Public Interest Commitments	PICs	Public Interest Commitments are binding obligations that gTLD registry operators have with the Internet community under their contracts with ICANN org. They are subject to compliance oversight and enforcement by ICANN org. (See also PICDRP and RVCs.)
Registrar	Rr	An organization through which individuals and entities (registrants) register domain names. During the registration process, a registrar verifies that the requested domain name meets registry requirements, and submits the name to the appropriate registry operator. Registrars are also responsible for collecting required information from registrants and making the information available through RDDS.
Registration Restrictions Dispute Resolution Procedure	RRDRP	A formal procedure that gives established institutions a way to resolve disputes related to the registration restrictions in the Registry Agreement for gTLDs.
Registry	Ry	The authoritative master database of all domain names registered in each top-level domain. The registry operator keeps the master database and also generates the zone file that allows computers to route Internet traffic to and from top-level domains anywhere in the world.
Registry Agreement	RA	The contract between ICANN and the registry operator of a designated gTLD which defines the rights, obligations,

[403] See 29 January 2016 Program Implementation Review: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/program-review-29jan16-en.pdf.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		and provisions for the registry operator to operate the gTLD. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement.
Registry Commitments Evaluation	RCE	Each submitted RVC or Community Registration Policy proposed for inclusion in the applicable Registry Agreement is subject to this evaluation by ICANN to determine whether it meets all criteria set out in this AGB. See Section 7.8.3.2 Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Registry Operator	RO	The organization that maintains the master database (registry) of all domain names registered in a particular TLD. ROs receive requests from registrars to add, delete, or modify domain names, and they make the requested changes in the registry. An RO also operates the TLD's authoritative name servers and generates the zone file. This information enables recursive name servers across the Internet to translate domain names into Internet Protocol addresses, so devices on the Internet can connect to one another.
Registry Service Provider	RSP	A registry service provider refers to an entity providing certain technical operations for a registry operator.
Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program		This program allows registry service providers to be evaluated once for the services they intend to provide to applicants. Successful applicants will become pre-approved for the 2026 Round. Applicants that incorporate a pre-approved RSP into their applications will not need to undergo a technical evaluation as long as the RSP remains pre-approved.
Registry Services Evaluation Policy	RSEP	The policy that governs the evaluation of proposed registry services by a registry operator or applicant.
Registry Services Technical Evaluation Panel	RSTEP	A group of experts in the design, management, and implementation of the complex systems and standards-protocols used in the Internet infrastructure and DNS. RSTEP members are selected by its chair. All RSTEP members and the chair have executed an agreement requiring that they consider the issues before the panel neutrally and according to the specified definitions of security and stability.
Registry Voluntary Commitments	RVCs	RVCs are generally optional commitments applicants may propose to overcome third-party concerns with an applied-for gTLD string, or to promote public interest, community trust, or additional safeguards with regard to the operation of the gTLD. After being approved by ICANN following the Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE), they are expected to be included in the Base Registry Agreement Specification 11 as contractual obligations.
Reserved Names		Certain strings, including their allocatable variant strings, that are generally unavailable for registration because they are set aside for specific entities. Reserved Names include those associated with certain international and intergovernmental organizations (Limited International

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		IGO-INGOs). These names may be applied for only by the relevant entity through an exception process, which requires appropriate documentation as outlined in the applicable procedures.
Reserved Names Identification		When an applicant fills in the name of the applied-for string, the system will automatically check whether the applicant's chosen string, along with any applicable variant strings, appears on the Reserved Names list. See Section 7.2.2.2 Reserved Names Identification.
Reserved Names Review		The Reserved Names evaluation process will determine whether the appropriate organization has applied for the reserved string and will verify the supporting documentation, as described in Reserved Names. See Section 7.2.2.3 Reserved Names Review.
Rights Protection Mechanism	RPM	A mechanism that helps safeguard intellectual property rights in the Domain Name System. RPMs include the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy, Uniform Rapid Suspension, and Trademark Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution Procedure.
Root zone		The root zone database represents the delegation details of top-level domains, including gTLDs and ccTLDs. As manager of the DNS root zone, IANA is responsible for coordinating these delegations in accordance with its policies and procedures.
Safeguard Assessment		The Safeguard Assessment will determine if an applied-for string will be required to have specific safeguards as it relates to consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets. See Section 7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments.
Safeguard PIC		Safeguard PICs were developed and implemented in response to the GAC Consensus Advice in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué and subsequent ICANN Board Resolution during the 2012 Round of the New gTLD Program. ICANN classifies gTLDs needing Safeguard PICs (see Section 7.8.2.2 Applicable Safeguard PICs by String Category) into four risk-based groups: Regulated Sectors/Open Entry Requirements: Strings invoking consumer trust but with heightened risks; Highly Regulated Sectors/Closed Entry Requirements: Strings associated with industries requiring licensing or accreditation; Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment: Strings that could facilitate harassment; Inherently Governmental Functions: Strings associated with government domains.
Script		A collection of letters and other written signs used to represent textual information in one or more writing systems. For example, Russian is written with a subset of the Cyrillic script; Ukrainian is written with a different subset. The Japanese writing system uses several scripts.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation		ICANN will review the materials submitted as part of the Singular/Plural Notifications process and will determine whether certain strings represent the singular and plural forms of the same word in the same language. See Section 4.4 Singular/Plural Notifications.
String		The string of characters comprising an applied-for gTLD or its variant string.
String Confusion Objection		An objection filed on the grounds that the applied-for gTLD string is confusingly similar to an existing TLD or to another applied-for gTLD string in the same round of applications. See Section 4.5.1.1 Ground for Objection: String Confusion.
String Contention		The scenario in which there is more than one qualified applicant for the same gTLD or for gTLDs that are so confusingly similar that they create a probability of user confusion if more than one of the strings is delegated into the root zone. See Section 5.2 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.
String Evaluation		String Evaluation (see Section 1.2.4 String Evaluation) focuses solely on the evaluation of the applied-for strings and their allocatable variant strings. String Evaluation consists of five elements, which will be assessed concurrently: String Similarity Evaluation (see Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation), Name Collision Initial Assessment (see Section 7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment), Safeguard Assessment (see Section 7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments), Geographic Names Identification (see Section 7.5 Geographic Names), Singular/Plural Notifications Evaluation (see Section 4.4 Singular/Plural Notifications).
String Similarity Evaluation		String Similarity Evaluation (see Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation) determines Visual Similarity of gTLD applications against other gTLD applications, as well as existing TLDs, previously applied-for gTLDs and ccTLDs that are still in those processes, Blocked Names (see Section 7.2 Blocked and Reserved Names Overview), and any two-character ASCII string (that is, a potential future ccTLD).
Subsequent Procedures	SubPro	Introduction of new gTLDs beyond the 2012 Round. Related to the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process and the Final Report[404] which included the set of outputs related to the 2026 Round of the New gTLD Program.
Temporary Delegation		Strings (including variant strings) that are not identified as high-risk during the Initial Assessment (see Section 7.7.2 Name Collision Initial Assessment) will be queued for Temporary Delegation (see Section 7.7.3 Temporary

[404] See Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
		Delegation and Final Assessment). Temporary Delegation will start once the Initial Assessment has been concluded, even if other evaluations that are part of String Evaluation are still being performed. The prioritization of Temporary Delegation will be determined based on the application's assigned priority number.
TLD Application Management System	TAMS	A system that allows applicants to securely submit information required to apply for one or more components of the New gTLD Program. This may include Applicant Support Program applicants, Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation applicants, and gTLD applicants.
Top-Level Domain	TLD	Top-level domains (TLDs) are the names at the top of the DNS naming hierarchy. They appear in domain names as the string of letters following the last dot, such as "NET" in www.example.net. The TLD administrator controls what second-level names are recognized in that TLD. The administrators of the root domain or root zone control what TLDs are recognized by the DNS.
Trademark Clearinghouse	TMCH	A mechanism designed to help protect the rights of trademark holders. The Trademark Clearinghouse verifies and records rights information from all over the world. This verified information is used during domain name registration processes, especially when new gTLDs launch.
Trademark Database	TMDB	The Trademark Database is part of the Trademark Clearinghouse. It provides an interface for registries and registrars via which they can meet the requirements of certain Rights Protection Mechanisms.
Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy	UDRP	A policy for resolving disputes arising from alleged abusive registrations of domain names (for example, cybersquatting), allowing expedited administrative proceedings that a trademark rights holder initiates by filing a complaint with an approved dispute resolution service provider.
Uniform Rapid Suspension	URS	An expedited administrative procedure that rights holders can initiate for certain types of domain name disputes. The URS procedure is a tool for quickly addressing clear-cut cases of trademark infringement.
United Nations official languages	UN6 languages	The six languages used by the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, and Russian.
Variant String Evaluation		An applicant seeking one or more allocatable variant strings of an applied-for primary string or existing gTLD must justify the need for each applied-for variant string. This justification will be evaluated (see Section 7.6 Variant String Evaluation) by a panel based on the criteria specified in the relevant IDN EPDP Phase 1 policy recommendation. Successfully evaluated variant gTLDs will be included in Specification 14 of the Base Registry Agreement. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement.

Term	Acronym	Meaning
Variant String		A string considered “same” as another string by the relevant script community, and, therefore, generated as a variant of a primary string according to a particular set of Label Generation Rules (LGR). For top-level, Variant String of another string is defined by the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR).
Variant-string-set		The primary, allocatable and blocked variant strings together are called a variant-string-set. For an existing gTLD, it is considered the primary string against which its variant-string-set will be calculated and submitted. For the top-level, a Variant-string-set is created by applying the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR) to the primary string.
Visual Similarity -or- Visually Similar		Visual Similarity occurs when two or more strings are Visually Similar such that they would create a probability of user confusion if allowed to coexist. See Section 5.2 Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.
Working Group	WG	A temporary group formed by a Supporting Organization or Advisory Committee to solve a specific problem or carry out a particular assignment.
Zone File		A file on an authoritative name server that defines the contents of a zone in the Domain Name System. Resource records (RRs) in a zone file identify the IP addresses of the hosts (for example, web servers, mail servers) and name servers within the name server’s zone. A zone file can also contain other types of RRs (such as ones containing digital signatures) as determined by the zone owner. The RRs in a zone file enable an authoritative name server to respond definitively to DNS queries about the contents of a zone.

Index by New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Final Report Topic

The index below provides links in the Applicant Guidebook and to relevant external links for each topic discussed in the SubPro Final Report.[405] The index has been arranged by Final Report topic and is non-exhaustive.

Topic #	Final Report Topic	Applicant Guidebook Module (Non-Exhaustive)
Overarching Issues		
1	Continuing Subsequent Procedures	• Section 2.8 Subsequent Application Rounds
2	Predictability Framework	• Appendix 6 Predictability Framework
3	Applications Assessed in Rounds	• Section 2.8 Subsequent Application Rounds
4	Different TLD Types	• Section 1.2.1.6 String and Application Types
5	Application Submission Limits	• Section 1.2.1 Application Submission
6	Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation	• Module 7 String and Application Evaluation Procedures
7	Metrics and Monitoring	• Metrics will be reported on: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en
8	Conflicts of Interest	• Appendix 7 Conflict of Interest • Appendix 8 Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Service Providers
Foundational Issues		
9	Registry Voluntary Commitment/Public Interest Commitments	• Section 1.2.11.6.1 Public Interest Commitments, Registry Voluntary Commitments, and Community Registration Policies
10	Applicant Freedom of Expression	• Section 2.4 Applicant Freedom of Expression
11	Universal Acceptance	• Section 2.3 Universal Acceptance of Domain Names and Email Addresses
Pre-Launch Activities		
12	Applicant Guidebook	• New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en • ICANN Public Comments: https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment
13	Communications	• New gTLD Program website: https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en
14	Systems	• Next Round Implementation Plan: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/new-gtld-next-round-implementation-plan-31ju

[405] See the SubPro Final Report: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf.

Topic #	Final Report Topic	Applicant Guidebook Module (Non-Exhaustive)
		I23-en.pdf
Application Submission		
15	Application Fees	• Section 3.3 Fees and Payments
16	Application Submission Period	• Section 1.2.1.2 Application Submission Period
17	Applicant Support	• Appendix 11 Applicant Support Program
18	Terms and Conditions	• Appendix 10 Terms and Conditions
Application Processing		
19	Application Queuing	• Section 3.7 Order of Application Processing and Prioritization Draw
20	Application Change Requests	• Section 3.8 Application Change Requests
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21	Reserved Names	• Section 1.2.1.8.1 Blocked Names • Section 1.2.1.8.2 Reserved Names
22	Registrant Protections	• Section 1.2.10.1 Background Screening
23	Closed Generics	• Section 3.1.7 Exclusive Use Strings (“Closed Generics”)
24	String Similarity Evaluations	• Section 1.2.4.1 String Similarity Evaluation
25	Internationalized Domain Names	• Section 3.1.9 Internationalized Domain Names
26	Security and Stability	• Section 2.5 Security and Stability
27	Applicant Reviews	• Module 6 Applicant Evaluation Procedures
28	Role of Application Comment	• Section 1.2.3.1 Application Comments
29	Name Collisions	• Section 1.2.4.2 Name Collision
Dispute Proceedings		
30	GAC Consensus Advice and GAC Member Early Warnings	• Section 1.2.3.2 GAC Member Early Warnings • Section 1.2.3.3 GAC Consensus Advice
31	Objections	• Section 1.2.3.5 Objections and Appeals
32	Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism	• Section 1.2.14.2 Evaluation Challenge • Section 1.2.3.5 Objections and Appeals
33	Dispute Resolution Proceedings After Delegation	• Section 1.2.17 Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation
String Contention Resolution		
34	Community Applications	• Section 1.2.8 Community Priority Evaluation • Section 1.2.11.6.2 Community Registration Policies
35	Auctions: Mechanisms of Last Resort / Private Resolution of Contention Sets	• Section 5.2.3 Prohibition of the Private Resolution of String Contention by Applicants • Section 5.6 ICANN New gTLD Auction
Contracting		

Topic #	Final Report Topic	Applicant Guidebook Module (Non-Exhaustive)
36	Base Registry Agreement	• Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement
37	Registrar Non-Discrimination / Registry/Registrar Standardization	• Section 2.10 Fundamental Obligations of Registry Operators to Registrars
38	Registrar Support for New gTLDs	• Section 2.10 Fundamental Obligations of Registry Operators to Registrars
Pre-Delegation		
39	Registry System Testing	• Registry System Testing Version 2.0: https://www.icann.org/en/contracted-parties/registry-operators/registry-system-testing/registry-system-testing-rst-version-20-23-10-2024-en
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