New gTLD Program Applicant Support Program Handbook

Guide to Applying for Assistance in the New Generic Top-Level Domains Program: Next Round

9 August 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1. ICANN and its Mission

The mission of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is to help ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet, you need to type an address – a name or a number – into your computer or other device. That address must be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world. ICANN was formed in 1998 as a nonprofit public-benefit corporation with a community of participants from all over the world.

1.2. The Applicant Support Program

ICANN developed the Applicant Support Program (ASP) as part of its New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program. The ASP is a global program that is intended to provide financial and non-financial assistance to eligible entities that demonstrate need and wish to apply for and operate a gTLD in the Domain Name System ("DNS"). As noted in Section 4: Applicant Eligibility and Evaluation Categories, eligible entities are nonprofits/charities/nongovernmental organizations; intergovernmental organizations; indigenous/tribal communities; small businesses that are social enterprises or operating in a less-developed economy.

As part of the New gTLD Program: Next Round, the ASP is designed to be in line with Affirmation 1.3 of the Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process: “The Working Group affirms that the primary purposes of new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS.” More details about eligibility criteria and the types of entities that can qualify for support are provided in Section 4: Applicant Eligibility and Evaluation Categories.

1.3. Handbook Objectives

This handbook establishes the rules for applicants seeking assistance to apply to the New gTLD Program. It provides a guide to the application process and includes information regarding deadlines, criteria, and evaluation processes.

Please note that the New gTLD Program: Next Round will be in development during the ASP application submission period. ASP applicants are therefore encouraged to review previously published New gTLD Program resources as well as the ongoing community work on the New gTLD Program: Next Round in the interim. These resources will inform interested parties about the estimated costs and draft requirements of applying to the New gTLD Program: Next Round and enable these parties to make an informed decision about whether to apply to the New gTLD Program.

These resources include:

1. New gTLD Program website
2. Draft New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook Materials on the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team (IRT) Wiki Workspace

3. New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook: Note that the Applicant Guidebook for the New gTLD Program: Next Round is being updated in consultation with the Implementation Review Team. Based upon updated policy recommendations outlined in the Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process, the Guidebook serves as the official roadmap for applicants in the program.
4. The 2012 version of the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook (for historical reference).

? Please address any questions regarding the ASP or ASP Handbook to: globalsupport@icann.org.

1.4. Terms and Conditions

All ASP applicants should read and must agree to the terms and conditions for the ASP application process. Please refer to the terms and conditions on the ASP website for more details. (Also see Section 4.6: Restrictions.)

2. Overview

The Internet is a global resource. One critical part of its infrastructure is the Domain Name System (DNS), which makes this vast network navigable. The DNS enables us to use easy-to-remember names instead of Internet Protocol addresses (series of numbers) to reach a website. The ASP aims to serve the global public interest by fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the DNS. In addition to meeting other evaluation criteria (e.g, financial need, financial viability) ASP applicants must qualify as one of the five eligible entity types: 1) nonprofits/nongovernmental organizations/charities; 2) intergovernmental organizations; 3) indigenous/tribal organizations; 4) micro or small business social enterprise; 5) micro or small business operating in a less-developed economy.

The intent of the ASP is to make the New gTLD Program application and evaluation processes and fees more accessible to entities that would like to operate a registry but would otherwise be unable to apply, because of financial and resource constraints. ASP applicants that qualify will receive percentage-based reductions on the base gTLD evaluation fee and other gTLD evaluation fees, as outlined in Section 2.1: New gTLD Program Evaluation Fees.

2.1. Support Available to Qualified ASP Applicants

The ASP will provide qualified applicants (also referred to in the Handbook as “supported applicants”) the opportunity to pay reduced New gTLD Program evaluation fees (see Section 2.1: New gTLD Program Evaluation Fees). Supported applicants also will have access to a package of non-financial support to assist them in submitting a gTLD application.

This handbook outlines the financial and non-financial assistance that ***supported*** ASP applicants may receive. The package includes:

1. An ASP training program.
2. Access to *pro bono* (volunteer) service providers* that have agreed to volunteer their services to supported applicants.
3. Resources and information for potential applicants to better understand the New gTLD Program, what it means to operate a gTLD, and how to participate in ICANN’s multistakeholder community.
4. Access to Applicant Counselors to help answer questions about the gTLD application process and provide guidance on where to find available resources.
5. A 75-85% reduction in New gTLD Program evaluation fees for supported applicants.
6. A bid credit applied to supported applicants participating in contention resolution procedures established in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook, which could occur if two or more applications are placed in contention sets. The type of support will be determined as part of the implementation of SubPro Final Report Topic 35 (see pp. 173-182). Further detail around this will be included in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook.
7. Reduced base Registry Operator fees, should the supported applicant prevail in the gTLD program evaluation and proceed to contracting and delegation.

**Pro bono service providers are independent from ICANN. Pro bono services are not endorsed or contracted by ICANN, though ICANN may play a facilitative role in making supported applicants aware of the services available, should applicants seek to utilize them. ICANN is working to identify service providers that have made themselves available and will provide a list of those vendors to supported applicants.*

Reduction of New gTLD Program Evaluation Fees

Qualified ASP applicants will be eligible to receive ***a 75-85% reduction in New gTLD Program evaluation fees***, as outlined in Table 2.

New gTLD Program Evaluation Fees

Table 2. New gTLD Program: Next Round evaluation fees with ASP reduction fees for qualified ASP applicants

New gTLD Program Financial Support and Evaluation Fees	Reduction for Qualified ASP Applicants
New gTLD Program base evaluation fee reduction	at least 75%; up to 85%
Other applicable conditional evaluation fees as defined in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook.	at least 75%; up to 85%
Bid credit	The type of support will be determined as part of the implementation of SubPro Final Report Topic 35. (see pp. 173-182). Further detail around this will be included in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook.

Please see the resources page of the ASP website for information regarding the ASP Funding Plan, including the number of applicants that ICANN org anticipates being able to support within the available budget.

2.2. Evaluation Phases and Categories

This section describes the assessments that are performed to evaluate an application:

1. **General business due diligence**
2. **Public responsibility due diligence**
3. **Financial need**
4. **Financial viability**
5. **Applicant is an eligible entity**

The evaluation will be conducted in two phases as outlined below. Phase 2 evaluation will be conducted by a third-party vendor managing a Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP).

Phase 1: All ASP applicants must pass the general business due diligence process in order to move to Phase 2.	1. **General business due diligence:** This pre-screening includes: ✔️ Legal compliance check; ✔️ Confirming that all required documentation has been submitted; ✔️ Confirming that the applicant meets the New gTLD Program: Next Round eligibility criteria noted in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook; and ✔️ Background screening. ***Applicants that do not pass the general business due diligence pre-screening will not be considered for Phase 2 ASP evaluation***. Applicants that pass general business due diligence will proceed to Phase 2 evaluation.
Phase 2: All ASP applicants will be evaluated against the following evaluation categories (see Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart)	2. **Public responsibility due diligence:** ✔️ Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law (see Section 4.2: Public Responsibility Due Diligence); and ✔️ Applicant is not affiliated with an existing gTLD Registry Operator and/or another prospective gTLD applicant in the Next Round that would not meet the ASP criteria. 3. **Financial need:** The applicant could not otherwise afford to

apply to the New gTLD Program without financial hardship.

4. **Financial viability**: The applicant demonstrates a plan to cover the unsupported portion of the base gTLD evaluation fee and upon qualifying, will submit a deposit.

5. **Eligible Entity Categories:** The entity applying for support meets at least one of the eligible entity categories and indicators, as articulated in Section 4.5: Eligible Entity Categories.

2.3. ASP Evaluation vs. gTLD Evaluation

Qualifying for the ASP does not automatically result in an approved application for a new gTLD. The ASP and the New gTLD Program have two distinct application processes, each with their own requirements and evaluations. All gTLD applicants will need to pass those requirements, regardless of any previous evaluations conducted for the ASP.

Relevant application information from the ASP Application System is anticipated to be available for use in the gTLD Application System when supported applicants begin their new gTLD application process.

All new gTLD applicants–supported or not–are required to submit a completed application for a new gTLD, which requires demonstration of the technical, operational and financial capabilities needed to operate a gTLD. ASP applicants will be able to use their user account for the gTLD Application Program and transfer relevant information related to the applying entity. Applicants that ***apply for, but do not qualify for, support are still welcome to submit a new gTLD application***, but would be required to pay the full gTLD evaluation fees.

3. Applicant Support Program Timeline

ICANN currently plans to accept ASP applications between 19 November 2024 to 19 November 2025. Applications will be evaluated and results shared with applicants on an ongoing basis. Application processing times can vary between 12 - 16 weeks. This encompasses the time from application submission to conditional results (prior to receiving deposit payment).

Translations of required documents, seeking responses to clarifying questions, and/or responding to change requests will result in longer processing times (up to approximately 21 weeks, depending on the number of documents requiring translations and applicant response times).

Applicants that qualify for the program will be notified of their conditional approval, and will be changed to fully approved after confirmation of deposit, and will have 30 days to submit their deposit on their gTLD application. Exceptions for extenuating circumstances may be made on a case-by-case basis on the 30-day period. Upon receipt of payment, conditionally-approved applicants will be notified of their final approval, along with further instructions on financial and non-financial support. This process can take up to 12 weeks depending on the time deposit is received and confirmed.

ASP applicants are strongly encouraged to apply early for the following reasons:

1. ICANN has budgeted support for up to 40 applicants at an 85% fee reduction. Should demand exceed this amount, the fee reduction can be reduced to 75% to support up to 45 supported applicants. However, it is important to recognize program resource limitations.
2. Since ASP evaluations will be conducted on an ongoing basis, the first applicants to apply and qualify for support will be able to take advantage of the resources available. Those that apply after the available resources have been expended may have to wait until future cycles of the program.
    a. Example: an ASP applicant that applies and qualifies for support by April 2025 will have a full 12 months to take advantage of the non-financial support prior to the gTLD application submission period.
3. To take advantage of available support and resources to assist with preparing a gTLD application. For example, New gTLD Program applicants need time to negotiate with Registry Service Providers (RSPs) in advance of submitting a gTLD application and may want to utilize pro bono (volunteer) services available. Access to additional non-financial support will be most beneficial if the supported applicant has adequate time to utilize those resources.
4. To avoid a situation where the results of an applicant's ASP evaluation are pending during the gTLD application submission period. This may cause the applicant to have to pay the full gTLD evaluation fee to meet the deadline while waiting for the results of the ASP evaluation. Should the applicant later qualify for support, ICANN org would refund the applicant's supported portion of the gTLD evaluation fee.

Table 1. ASP Timeline and Key Dates (*Note: Dates are subject to change*)

Date	Description
19 November 2024	The application submission period for ASP opens. ● Applicants register, upload application documentation, and submit information necessary to be assessed in each of the five evaluation categories. ● Applications that pass General Business Due Diligence are sent to the Support Applicant Review Panel of third-party evaluators for review. ● Applicants receive evaluation results generally 12-16 weeks after their application is confirmed to be complete. ● ***As noted in Section 4.10: Restrictions, applicants are not permitted to re-apply for support within the current round of new gTLD applications.*** *(This does not preclude applicants from applying to the ASP associated with future new gTLD program application rounds.)*
19 November 2025	● The application submission period for ASP closes; no additional ASP applications will be accepted for this round.
April 2026	The New gTLD Program: Next Round application submission period opens **Note:** The gTLD application submission period is expected to be open for 12-15 weeks.

Submission of ASP Deposit

Applicants that qualify for support will be required to submit a USD 2500 deposit on their gTLD application. The applicant will be "conditionally approved" pending receipt of this deposit. The deposit must be submitted to ICANN within 30 days of receiving notice of their results. The deposit serves as the last step in the ASP evaluation process, and once received, the applicant moves from "conditionally approved" to "fully approved" and becomes a qualified ASP applicant (per Financial Viability criteria and indicators). The deposit also signals the applicant's intention to apply for a new gTLD. Submitting a deposit will grant the supported applicant access to the package of financial and non-financial support available. Also see Section 6.4: Evaluation Results and Appendix 2.

Exceptions to this timing may be made on a case-by-case basis. If an applicant has qualified for support *but does not intend to submit a gTLD application*, it is critical for that applicant to communicate this to the ASP as quickly as possible so that support can be made available for other eligible applicants.

The ASP application submission period is twelve months. The deadline for submitting ASP applications is 19 November 2025, or about five months prior to the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period. ICANN org retains the option to modify the ASP application

submission period and will communicate the extension accordingly so that applicants and prospective applicants are aware. Example scenarios for when ICANN may consider extending the ASP application submission period include: 1) fewer than 40 applicants have fully qualified for support; 2) there is remaining budget and some ASP applications are in progress but have yet to be submitted for evaluation.

The intent is for all ASP applicants to have the results of their evaluation before applying to the New gTLD Program. Depending on the volume of ASP applications received in the final weeks of the application submission period, applicants may not know whether they have qualified for support in advance of the gTLD application submission period opening. See Table 1 and Figure 1.

ICANN org and the evaluators will make every effort to evaluate ASP applications and communicate results as quickly as possible. In the case that an ASP applicant is still waiting for its results, the applicant may need to submit a gTLD application and pay the base gTLD evaluation fee and other gTLD evaluation fees. The ASP applicant would be eligible for the applicable refund should the applicant qualify for support. ICANN will ensure that any refunds are processed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Figure 1. High-Level Flow of ASP and gTLD Program Timelines

*The new gTLD application submission period is projected to open April 2026 for 12-15 weeks. Dates are subject to change.

4. Applicant Eligibility and Evaluation Categories

The ASP is designed to provide financial and non-financial support to qualified candidates, as defined in the criteria and indicators below. ASP criteria are distinct from the criteria for approval of a New gTLD Program application, which are oriented toward determining applicants' capabilities to successfully operate a gTLD registry (See: New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook).

The ASP application requires documents and responses to questions to demonstrate that the applicant meets all program criteria and requirements. (Also see Section 3: Applicant Support Program Timeline and Appendix 3 for more information on documents submitted in a language other than English.)

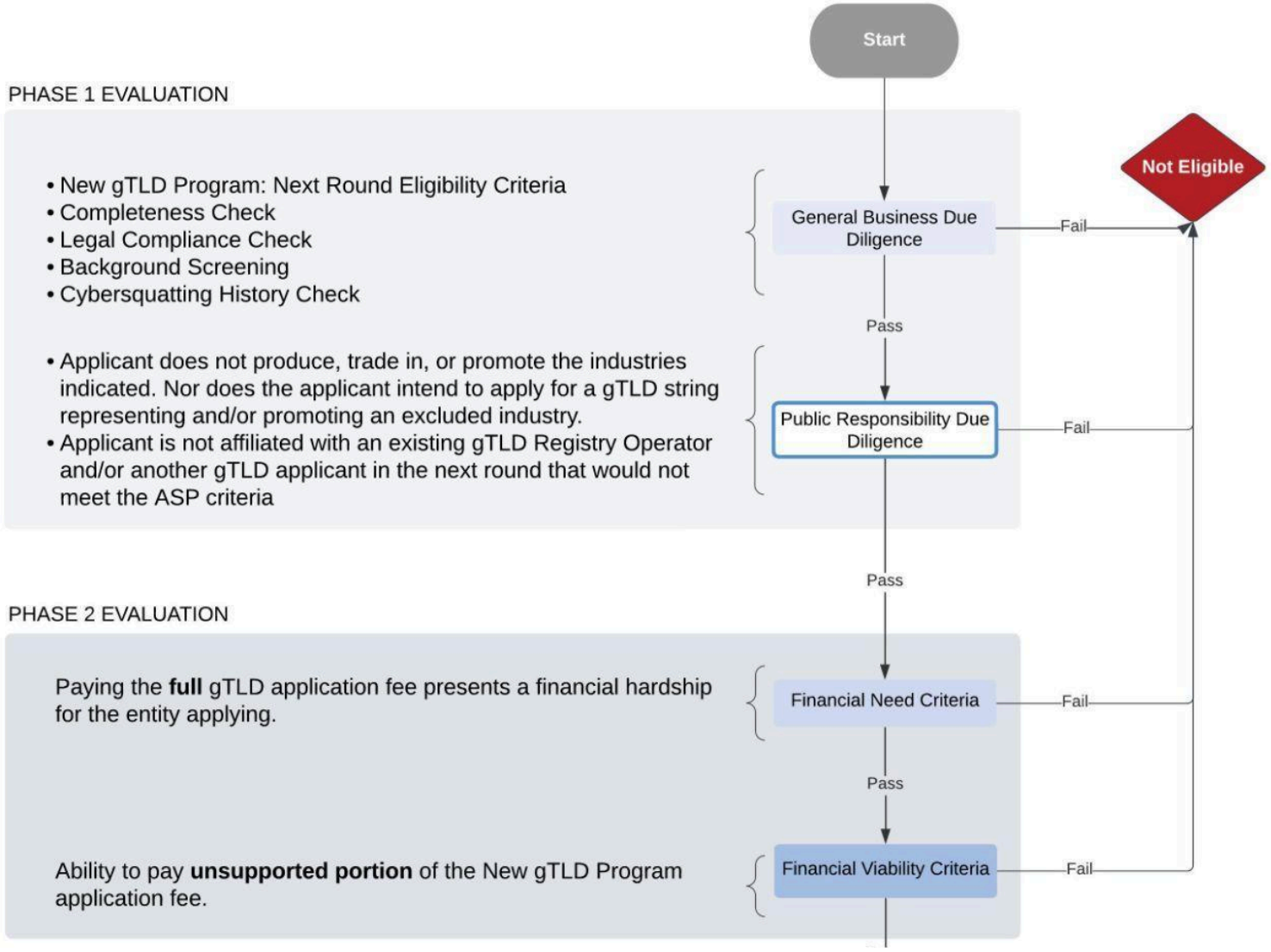
As noted, **ASP applicants are advised not to submit information about their intended New gTLD Program application string when applying to the ASP.** This will help protect the confidentiality of applicants' business information in advance of the opening of the application submission period for the New gTLD Program: Next Round.

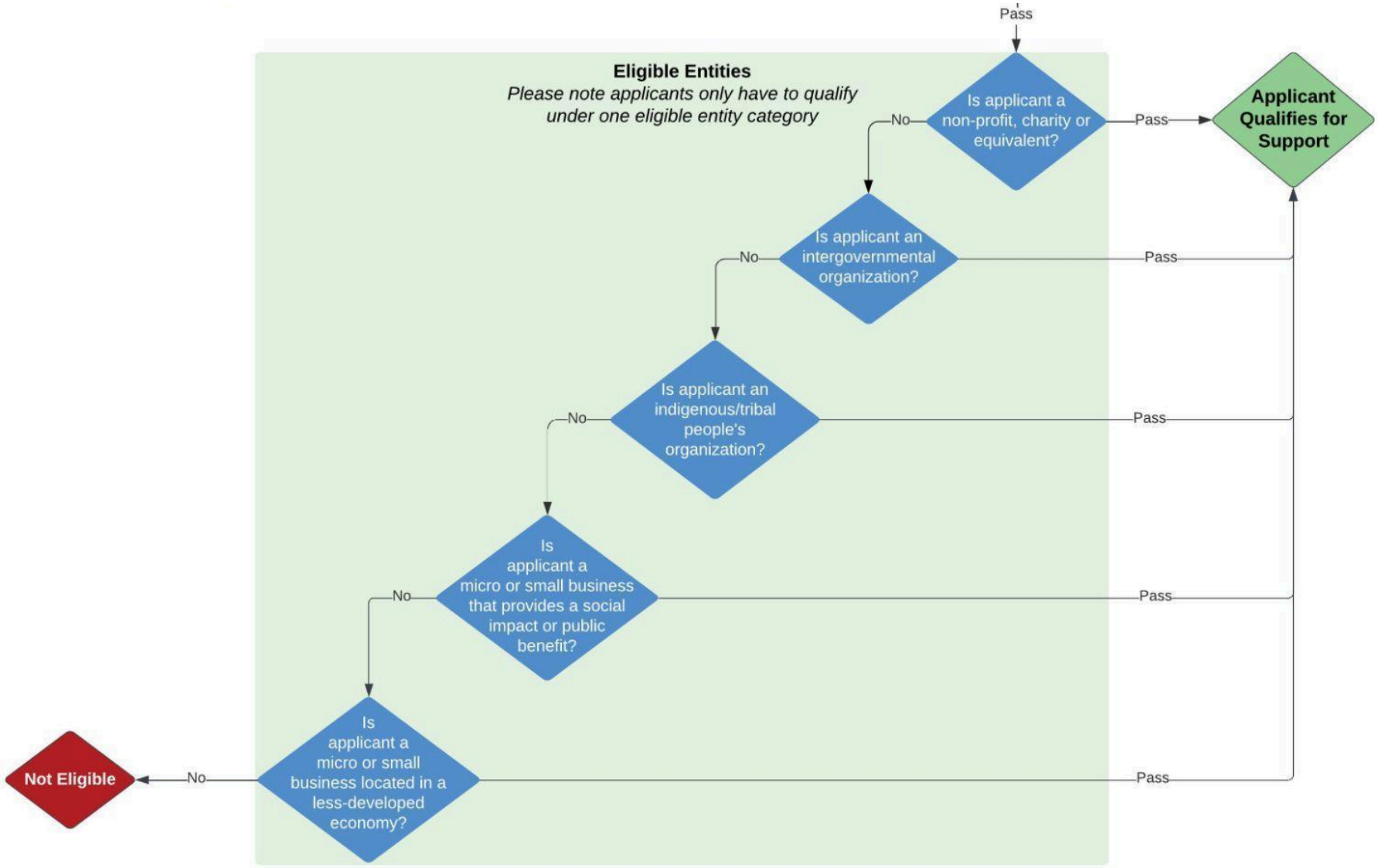
The next section provides an outline of the ASP evaluation criteria categories. This includes a description of each criterion and indicators that the evaluators will assess, and the questions which applicants will be asked in the ASP Application System. This section also lists required documentation, where applicable. The criteria are slightly different in nature but where applicable, each section is organized in the following manner.

EXAMPLE

1. Criterion name
    a. Criterion description application question (where applicable, some criterion do not have associated questions).
    b. Instructions and documentation (if any are required for that application question).
    c. Indicators, where applicable, for meeting eligibility requirements.

Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart





*Please note: Evaluations and processes shown are not necessarily sequential

4.1. General Business Due Diligence

4.1.1. Legal Compliance Check

Applicant acknowledges that ICANN must comply with all applicable laws including U.S. laws, rules, and regulations. One such set of regulations are the economic sanctions administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. These sanctions have been imposed on certain countries, as well as on 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 from OFAC 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.

4.1.2. Completeness Check

The applicant must submit a complete application to the ASP Application System. ICANN org conducts a review of each ASP application to determine if all required responses and documentation have been submitted before proceeding to a background screening.

If any required documents are missing, ICANN org will inform the applicant and allow them to submit those materials. The application will not be further evaluated until it is complete.

4.1.3. New gTLD Program: Next Round Eligibility Check

Applicants must meet eligibility criteria as noted in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook.

ICANN conducts a review of each submitted ASP application to confirm that the applicant meets eligibility criteria before the application proceeds to background screening.

New gTLD Program: Next Round Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicant and individuals named within the Organizational Account Record must be in good corporate standing under their applicable laws and regulations.
- Applicant and individuals named within the Organizational Account Record must confirm that they are free and absent of:
    - Convictions of any crime related to financial or corporate governance activities, or judgements 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.

- Disciplinary actions by any government or industry regulatory body for conduct involving dishonesty or misuse of funds of others within the last ten years.
- Convictions of any willful tax-related fraud or willful evasion of tax liabilities within the last ten years.
- 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.
- Convictions of any crime involving the use of computers, telephony systems, telecommunications or the Internet to facilitate the commission of crimes;
- Convictions of any crime involving the use of a weapon, force, or the threat of force;
- Convictions of any violent or sexual offense victimizing children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities;
- Convictions within the last ten years of the illegal sale, manufacture, or distribution of pharmaceutical drugs, or been convicted or successfully extradited 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.
- Convictions or been successfully extradited for any offense described in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (all Protocols);
- Convictions of aiding, abetting, facilitating, enabling, conspiring to commit, any of the listed crimes above; and
- Entrance of a guilty plea as part of a plea agreement or has a court case in any jurisdiction with a disposition of Adjudicated Guilty or Adjudication Withheld (or regional equivalents) within the respective timeframes listed above for any of the listed crimes.
- 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.
- Involved in any administrative or other legal proceeding in which allegations of intellectual property infringement relating to registration or use of a domain name have been made against the applicant or any of the individuals named in the Organizational Account Record respectively, within the last 10 years.

4.1.4. Background Screening

ICANN org directs a third-party vendor to conduct a background screening on the applicant and other relevant parties identified in the application. ICANN org assesses the outcome of the background screening and determines if an application may proceed in the application process.

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.

The application requires applicants to provide information on the legal establishment of the applying entity, the identification of directors, officers, partners, and major shareholders of that entity as well as the ultimate parent and/or individuals with control of the applicant. “Major shareholders” shall be those holding at least 15% of shares.

Background Screening Criteria

ICANN, in compliance with local laws and regulations, will perform background screening to ensure the applicant meets the eligibility criteria (see Section 4.1.3: New gTLD Program: Next Round Eligibility Check). 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 any entity with or including any individual not meeting the eligibility criteria listed below will be disqualified from the program.

Background Screening Results

Based on the outcome of the background screening, ICANN reserves the right to approve or not approve an application to proceed in the application process. For example, a final and legally binding decision obtained by a national law enforcement or consumer protection authority finding that the applicant was 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 may cause an application to be rejected. ICANN may also contact the applicant with additional questions based on information obtained in the background screening process.

See New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook for more information.

4.2. Public Responsibility Due Diligence

Criterion 1: Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law.

Application Question: (a) Does the Applicant produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law?

Indicators:
The applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law.

Activities that 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; or
- A determination that the entity produces or trades in activities that would be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law.

See pages 3-21 through 3-22 of the gTLD Applicant Guidebook, Version 2012-06-04: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf

Criterion 2: Applicant is not affiliated with an existing gTLD Registry Operator and/or another prospective gTLD applicant in the next round that would not meet the ASP criteria.

Application Question: (a) Is the applicant an affiliate of an existing gTLD Registry Operator and/or another prospective gTLD applicant in the next round that would not meet the ASP criteria?

Indicators:
The applicant is not an affiliate of an existing gTLD Registry Operator, a Registry Service Provider (RSP), and/or another prospective gTLD applicant in the next round that would not meet the ASP criteria. Note that a relationship with a back-end Registry Service Provider (RSP) is expected and permissible; the RSP cannot have control over the ASP applicant entity, per the definition of “affiliate”.

"Affiliate" means a person or entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, or in combination with one or more other persons or entities, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified, and "control" (including the terms "controlled by" and "under common control with") means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of securities, as trustee or executor, by serving as an employee or a member of a board of directors or equivalent governing body, by contract, by credit arrangement or otherwise."

See section 2.9 of ICANN's Base Registry Agreement - approved 21 January 2024: https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement

4.3. Financial Need

Criterion 1: Paying the full base gTLD evaluation fee presents a financial hardship for the entity applying.

Application Question: (a) How would funding support from ICANN enable the applicant to apply for a new gTLD, and how would paying the full base gTLD evaluation fee present a financial hardship?

Instructions:
Describe in a narrative statement how funding support from ICANN would enable the applicant to apply for a gTLD and why paying the full base gTLD evaluation fee presents a financial hardship.

Indicators:
The answers should correspond with your financial documentation, description of funding, revenue, cash and cash equivalent sources, including profit and loss and balance sheet, if applicable. (See Appendix 1 for a narrative statement template.)

(b) Provide financial documentation in support of (a).

Instructions:
Upload complete, audited financial statements for the two most recent fiscal years for the applying entity. Where audited statements cannot be provided, provide either 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 and include the following:

- Signed statement from third-party accounting firm
- Balance sheet
- Profit and loss statement
- Statement of cash flow
- Statement of equity
- Notes to the financial statements

As noted above, financial statements must be prepared by a third-party accounting firm based on one of three types: Audit report, review report, or compiled report. If a complete set of “audited” financial statements are not provided, the applicant must provide a statement clarifying whether the set of financial statements submitted have been “reviewed” or “compiled” and why audited statements were not provided, explicitly stating what accounting standards were used to prepare the financial statements provided. The applicant should also include an explanation of why the financial statements submitted were chosen for submission and are the most appropriate set of financial statements to review.

The New gTLD Program: Next Round will have similar requirements as noted above.

Indicators:
To be eligible for consideration, the applying entity cannot, in any of the past two years, have reported:

- In excess of USD 5 million revenue per annum from all sources as reported in their annual profit and loss statement.
- In excess of USD 5 million Cash and Cash Equivalents (CCE) as reported in their financial year end balance sheets.

If the entity was not in operation for two years, the financials for the most recent years will be considered. Financial reporting not in USD shall be converted to USD using current exchange rates. Moreover, by applying to ASP, the applicant asserts that it does not have in excess of USD 5 million in unreported or unrealized commitments for financing.

The applying entity must not be majority (more than 50%) owned or controlled (defined in Section 4.2 Criterion 2 indicator) by an entity that does not meet the Financial Need criteria.

For operating entities, the cost of the base gTLD evaluation fee is greater than or equal to 5 percent (or > 1/20) of the organization's annual revenue; for non-operating entities, cash and cash equivalents cannot exceed USD 5 million.

Example: If the base gTLD evaluation fee is USD 250 thousand, the applicant must demonstrate that this amount is greater than or equal to 5% its annual revenue; therefore the applicant's annual revenue cannot exceed USD 5 million.

4.4. Financial Viability

Criterion 1: Ability to pay the unsupported portion of the New gTLD Program base evaluation fee and other gTLD evaluation fees.

Application Question: (a) How does the applicant plan to pay the unsupported portion of the new gTLD Program base evaluation fee and other gTLD evaluation fees?

Instructions:
Describe, in a narrative statement or funding plan, how the applicant plans to cover the unsupported portion of the base gTLD evaluation fee. (See Appendix 1 for a narrative statement template.)

Indicators:
A USD 2500 deposit will be required once the applicant has been notified that it has passed evaluation and conditionally qualifies for support.

See Section 3: Applicant Support Program Timeline for information about requirements to submit a deposit.

4.5. Eligible Entities Categories

The eligible entity categories identified below are not mutually exclusive. Should the ASP applicant fit into multiple eligible categories, the applicant is encouraged to submit necessary documentation for all applicable eligibility categories so it may be evaluated accordingly, as resubmissions are not allowed (see Section 4.6: Restrictions). Note, however, that **ASP applicants are only required to meet the eligibility criteria and indicators for <u>one</u> of the eligible entity categories listed**. Please note that once the applicant selects its eligible entity type(s) and proceeds with the application, the selection is final and cannot be changed later in the process.

Submitting documentation for multiple entity types does not negatively impact the applicant's eligibility (i.e., if an applicant submits documentation for two entity categories and qualifies for one but does not qualify for another, the applicant still passes the "Eligible Entity" evaluation category). See additional examples below.

> ***Applicant Example 1***: If the applicant is a nonprofit/charitable organization and an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organization, it may submit documentation to demonstrate eligibility for either category or for both categories. The applicant only needs to meet the criteria and indicators for one entity type to pass the "Eligible Entity" evaluation criterion.
>
> ***Applicant Example 2:*** If the applicant is a small-business social enterprise and principally located in a less-developed economy, it may submit documentation to demonstrate eligibility for either or for both categories. The applicant only needs to meet the criteria and indicators for one entity type to pass the "Eligible Entity" evaluation category.

4.5.1. Eligible Entities - Nonprofits, Charities, or Equivalent

To qualify as a nonprofit, charity, or equivalent organization, the applicant needs to determine which of the three criteria (1, 2, or 3) best describes the entity applying. Then respond to **<u>one</u>** of the three criteria below by following those instructions.

Criterion 1: The organization must be a registered, recognized nonprofit, nongovernmental, and/or charitable organization with relevant regulatory authority.

Application Question: (a) Is the applicant a registered, recognized nonprofit, nongovernmental, and/or charitable organization with a relevant regulatory authority?

> **Instructions:**
> Upload a formal document or certificate from relevant regulatory authorities, acknowledging the applicant's charitable status if the applicant answered "Yes" to this question.

Some governments recognize charities/nonprofits. Therefore, documentation may be submitted to demonstrate nonprofit/charitable status. See example of Local NGO Definitions.

-OR-

Criterion 2: The organization must have a current, valid Equivalency Determination certificate completed by a qualified tax practitioner.

Application Question: (b) Does the applicant have a current, valid Equivalency Determination certificate completed by a qualified tax practitioner?

Required only if the requested documentation in (a) is not provided.

Instructions:
Upload a current, valid Equivalency Determination certificate completed by a qualified tax practitioner. This is required if a formal document or certificate acknowledging the applicant's charitable status is not available. A qualified tax practitioner may be an attorney, accountant, or other licensed professional with credentials certifying their expertise in making this type of determination.

An equivalency determination is a good faith determination that a non-U.S. organization is the equivalent of a U.S. public charity. See NGOSource resource for more information.

-OR-

Important Note: If the applicant is applying as a nonprofit, charitable organization, or equivalent but does not meet the nonprofit/charitable organization criteria (1) or (2), then Criterion 3 with questions (c) - (i) are required.

Criterion 3: If the applicant does not meet a) or b) requirements, then it needs to respond to the following questions c) through i) to determine nonprofit / charitable status.

Application Question: (c) Does the applicant certify that it is organized for charitable purposes by showing that it has recognized legal status in its respective country?

Instructions:
Applicants will upload governing documents for question (h) in the ASP Application System.

Indicators:
Confirm that the applicant is organized for charitable purposes. Applicant's governing documents will be reviewed to confirm this statement.

Application Question: (d) If applicable, does the applicant certify that it is primarily engaged in activities that are charitable, defined as at least 85% of its overall operational resources, are dedicated to accomplishing one or more charitable objectives?

Instructions:
Applicants will upload governing documents for question (h) in the ASP Application System.

Indicators:
Confirm that the applicant is primarily engaged in activities that are aimed at serving a substantial community benefit or cause or social welfare, defined as at least 85% of its overall operational resources – including direct program expenditures but also time and overhead – are dedicated to accomplishing one or more socially beneficial objectives. The applicant's governing documents will be reviewed to confirm this statement.

Application Question: (e) If applicable, does the applicant certify that on dissolution, its assets will be transferred for charitable purposes?

Instructions:
Applicants will upload governing documents for question (h) in the ASP Application System.

Indicators:
Confirm that the applicant's assets, upon dissolution, will be transferred for charitable purposes. The applicant's governing documents and/or applicable local legal requirements will be reviewed to confirm this statement.

Application Question: (f) If applicable, does the applicant certify that it does not engage in political activities or political campaigns for public office, including supporting political campaigns, raising funds for political candidates, making campaign contributions, publicly supporting or opposing political candidates, posting partisan messaging online, comparing the applicant's stance on an issue to a political candidate's views?

Instructions:
Applicants will upload governing documents for question (h) in the ASP Application System.

Indicators:
Confirm the applicant does not engage in political activities or political campaigns for public office, including supporting political campaigns, raising funds for political candidates, making campaign contributions, publicly supporting or opposing political candidates, posting partisan messaging online, comparing the organization's stance on an issue to a political candidate's views.

Note: This does not include general advocacy activities such as sharing best practices, success stories, model legislation examples, providing objective analysis and research, coalition building, hosting events, signing petitions, recruiting volunteers, among other activities.

The applicant's governing documents will be reviewed to confirm this statement. Governing documents will be required in (h).

Application Question: (g) If applicable, does the applicant certify that its net assets do not benefit any private persons or non-charitable organizations and is not an affiliate for a for-profit entity?

Instructions:
Applicants will upload governing documents for question (h) in the ASP Application System.

Indicators:
Confirm that the applicant's activities do not benefit private persons or non-charitable organizations and the applicant is not an affiliate of a for-profit entity.

For the avoidance of doubt this is not intended to refer to the provision of support to third parties, for example grants, goods or services, made in the ordinary course of the performance of the applicant's charitable or public benefit mission.Applicant's governing documents will be reviewed to confirm this statement.

Application Question: (h) Provide governing documents that describe the applicant's purpose and powers, that demonstrate the applicant is prohibited from engaging in non-charitable activities, except as an insubstantial part of its activities.

Instructions:
Upload governing documents that describe the applicant's purpose and powers, that demonstrate the applicant is prohibited from engaging in non-charitable activities, except as an insubstantial part of its activities.

Indicators:
Governing documents (and actual activities) must:

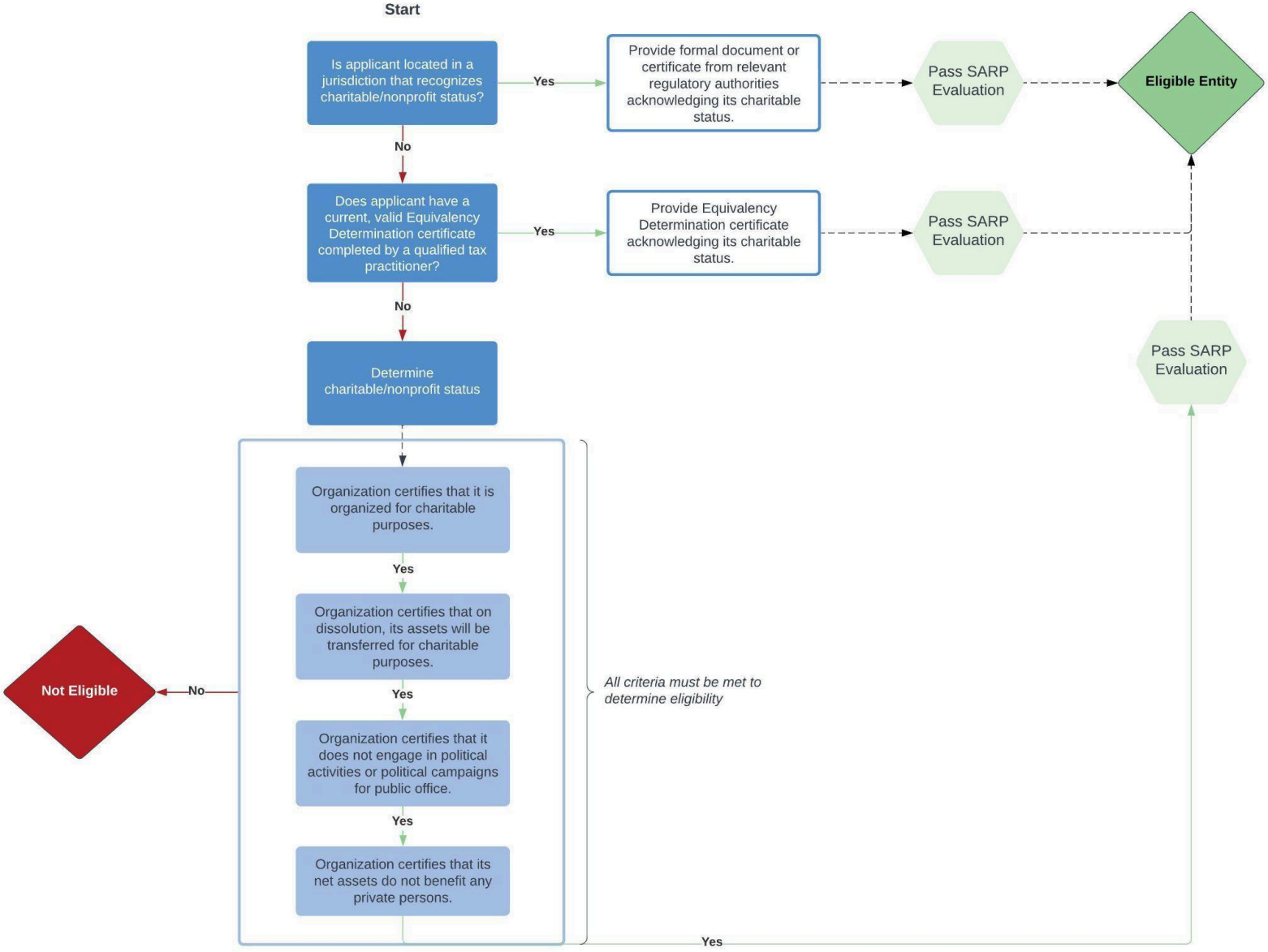
- Describe purposes and powers.
- Prohibit the organization from engaging in non-charitable activities, except as an insubstantial part of its activities.
- Support the statements made in this application.

Application Question: (i) If applicable, provide any relevant ancillary documents such as annual reports or program brochures.

Instructions:
Upload relevant ancillary documents. Ancillary documents may include items such as:

- Annual reports
- Program brochures
- Organization website

Figure 3. Eligible Entity Determination: Nonprofits, Charities, or Equivalent



4.5.2. Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

Criterion 1: Entity applying is an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO).

Application Question: Can the applicant confirm it is an IGO? If yes, provide the required documentation.

Instructions:
Upload required documentation to indicate the entity applying is an IGO.

Indicators:
An IGO is defined as: (i) an 'Intergovernmental organization' having received a standing invitation, which remains in effect, to participate as an observer in the sessions and the work of the United Nations General Assembly; or (ii) a Specialized Agency or distinct entity, organ or program of the United Nations.

A visual depiction of the United Nations system is available here, including its Specialized Agencies and various programs:
https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/un_system_chart.pdf

See also: Final Report of the Expedited Policy Development Process on Specific Curative Rights Protections for International Governmental Organizations (IGOs):
https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/generic-names-supporting-organization-council-gnso-council/epdp-specific-crp-igo-final-report-02-04-2022-en.pdf

4.5.3. Eligible Entities - Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' Organizations

Criterion 1: Entity is an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organization.

Application Question: (a) Can the applicant confirm it is an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' Organization? If yes, provide the required documentation.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating indigenous/tribal organization status (e.g., official registration as an indigenous organization, and/or recognition by national or international indigenous rights organizations).

-OR-

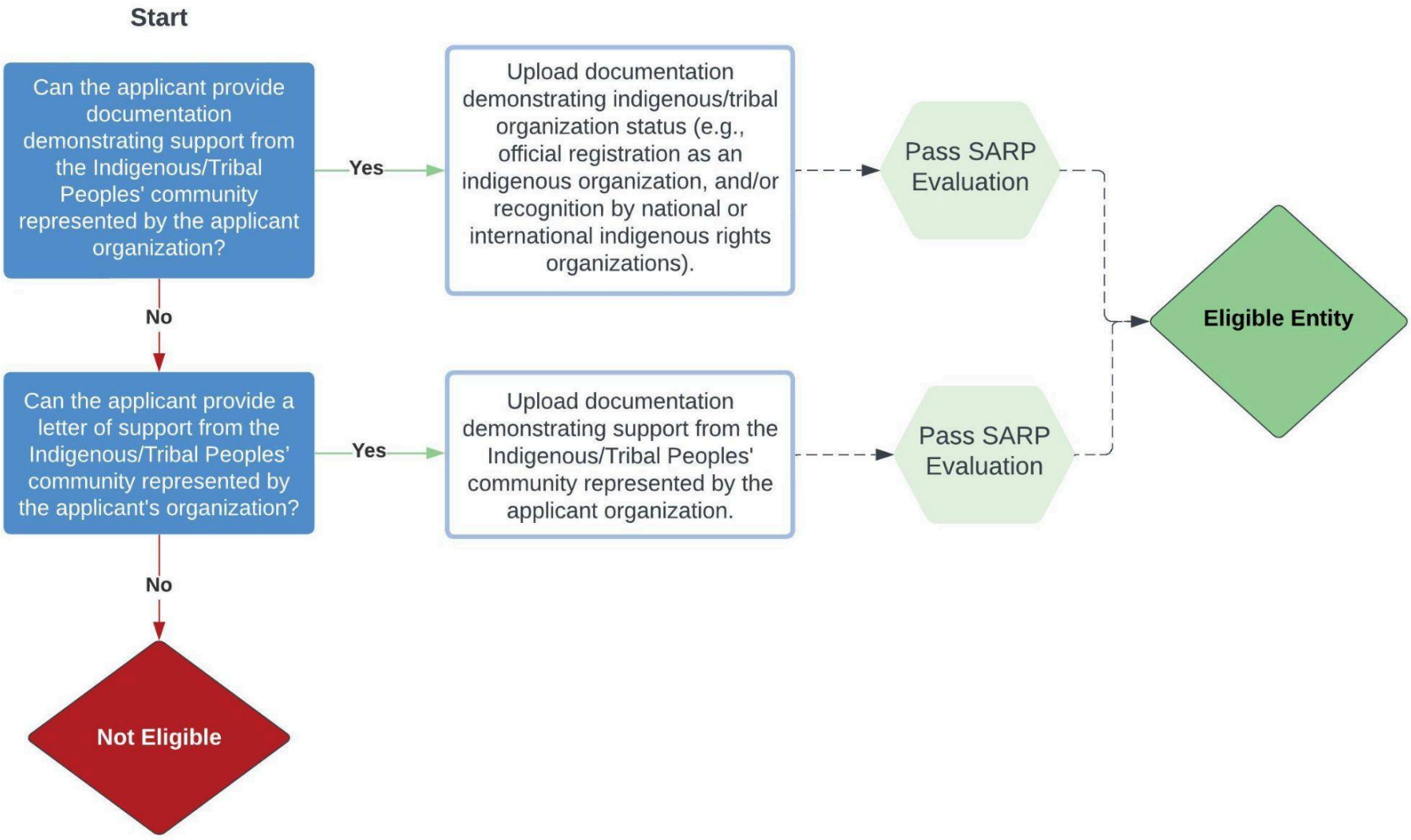
Application Question: (b) Provide a letter of support from the Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' community represented by the applicant organization.

Required only if the requested documentation in (a) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating support from the Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' community represented by the applicant organization.

For Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organizations that do not have official recognition from a relevant authority, it may be possible to apply under a different "Eligible Entity" type. For example, a nonprofit organization or a micro or small enterprise that either provides social impact/public benefit or is principally based in a less-developed economy.

Figure 4. Eligible Entity Determination: Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' Organizations



4.5.4. Eligible Entities - Social Impact or Public Benefit Micro-or Small-Sized Business

Criterion 1: Entity is a social enterprise, social impact, or public interest benefit enterprise.

Application Question: (a) Is the applicant incorporated/registered and/or certified as a benefit or social enterprise in the entity's principal place of business? If yes, provide the required documentation.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating registration as a social enterprise or public benefit business.

A social impact business is a business whose primary purpose is the common good as demonstrated through its legal founding documents and whose principal business activity is directly related to accomplishing that stated social or environmental purpose. See examples:

https://dpw.lacounty.gov/contracts/SocialEnterprise.aspx
https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/all-about-social-enterprise/

A public benefit corporation is a corporation created to generate social and public good, and to operate in a responsible and sustainable manner. See examples:

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/public_benefit_corporation
https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/corporations/download/notice-regarding-benefit-corporations.pdf

B Corporation Certification: https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/certification/

-OR-

Application Question: (b) If applicable, provide legal founding documentation to indicate a stated commitment to primary social or benefit purpose.

Required only if the requested documentation in (a) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload legal founding documentation demonstrating a stated commitment to social impact or public benefit purpose, such as Articles of Incorporation, Articles, Notice of Articles or equivalent, or annual assessment reports publicly posted, listing social or public benefits provided in the previous year

Required only if the applicant does not have documentation of the organization being

certified as a benefit corporation or registered and recognized by a relevant regulatory authority in the company's principal place of business as a social enterprise or public benefit company.

Application Question: (c) If applicable, provide required documentation to indicate that the applicant's operations are directed at pursuit of stated social or benefit purpose.

Required only if the requested documentation in (a) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating that the applicant's operations are directed at the pursuit of stated social or benefit goal/purpose, such as:

- Selection of a third-party standard the public/social benefit the enterprise plans to measure itself against and a public statement to that effect.
- Publicly stated rationale for selecting the chosen third-party standard.
- Annual assessment report against the selected third-party standard (self-assessment or third-party assessment).

Required only if the applicant does not have documentation of being certified as a benefit corporation or registered and recognized by a relevant regulatory authority in the company's principal place of business as a social enterprise or public benefit company.

Application Question: (d) If applicable, provide required documentation to indicate that the applicant's financial surpluses are primarily reinvested in the stated benefit purpose, rather than being primarily driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders and owners.

Required only if the requested documentation in (a) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating that the applicant's financial surpluses are primarily reinvested in the stated benefit purpose, rather than being primarily driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders and owners. Applicants are encouraged to submit all relevant documentation deemed appropriate to establish this criterion has been met. Examples of documentation to demonstrate adherence with this criterion include:

- Documentation including annual reports, impact assessments, or case studies that indicate how financial surpluses are being used to fulfill the stated social or public benefit objectives.
- Social or public benefit impact measurement and reporting that assess and quantify the social or public benefit outcomes achieved with the financial surpluses.
- Ratio of surplus allocation indicates that a majority (> greater than 60 percent of revenue or profits) went to programmatic activities aimed at achieving the entity's stated social or public benefit objectives.

Required only if the applicant does not have documentation of being certified as a benefit corporation or registered and recognized by a relevant regulatory authority in the company's principal place of business as a social enterprise or public benefit company.

Criterion 2: Entity is a micro- or small-sized business

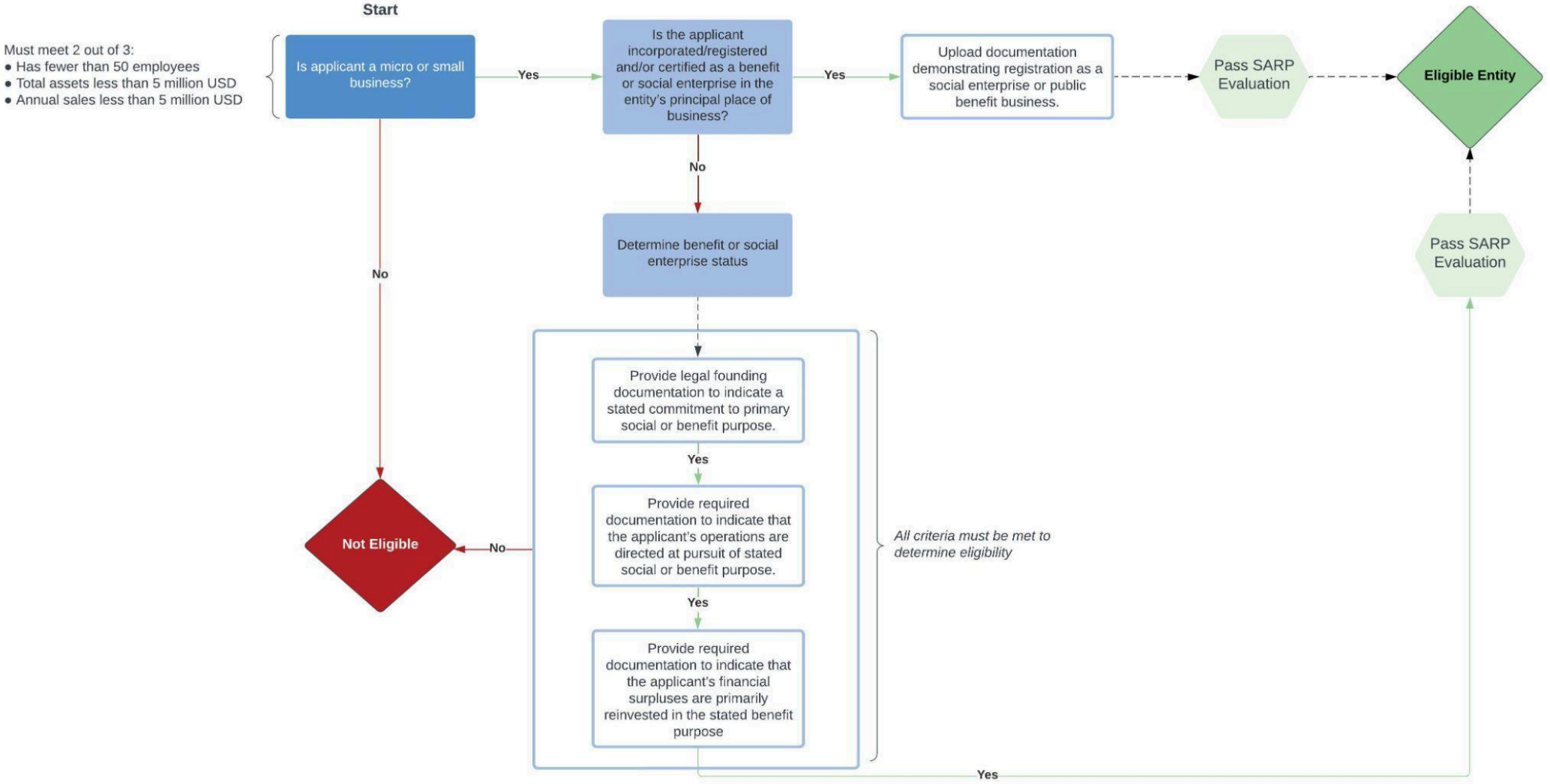
Application Question: (e) Does the applicant meet the criteria to be considered a micro- or small-sized business? If yes, provide the required documentation.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload the required document demonstrating the applicant is a micro- or small-sized business. The applicant must meet at least two out of the three indicators below:

- Has fewer than 50 employees
- Total assets is less than USD 5 million
- Annual sales less than USD 5 million

There is no universal definition for micro or small business. Definitions vary from country to country. The indicators provided here are intended to reflect the most common thresholds from other global and regional funding institutions.

Figure 5. Eligible Entity Determination: Social Impact or Public Benefit Micro-or Small-Sized Business



4.5.5. Eligible Entities - Micro- or Small-Sized Business from a Less-Developed Economy

To meet this requirement, the applicant must answer "yes" to questions (a) and (b) together, or questions (c) and/or (d) together, or questions (e) and (f) together and yes to question (g).

If the applicant answers "yes" to any of the pairings noted above, the ASP Application System will not prompt them for the remaining questions until question (g).

Criterion 1: Entity's principal place of business is from a country/territory/region that has a less-developed economy.

Application Question: (a) Is the applicant's principal place of business located in one of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies?

Instructions and Indicators:
Confirm that the applicant's principal place of business is from a less-developed economy, as defined by the World Economic Situation and Prospects report published by the United Nations in 2023 (see Statistical Annex with country classifications):
https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-2023/.

Principal place of business is defined as the place where a corporation's officers direct, control, and coordinate the corporation's activities. The principal place of business cannot be a Post Office Box. This will be determined as the location in which the largest volume of the corporation's operations is located and a supermajority (80%+) of the corporation's officers are located. "Officers" refers to the 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

Application Question: (b) Is more than 50 percent of the company owned by residents from one or more of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies? If so, please submit the corresponding evidence.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload the documentation demonstrating proof of stakeholder residence confirming more than 50 percent of the company is owned by residents from one or more of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies.

Examples of documentation demonstrating proof of residence include utility bills such

as electric, water, or gas.

Extenuating circumstances to accommodate situational hardships that force relocation of business will be assessed on a case by case basis and will require a narrative statement outlining the extenuating circumstances.

-OR-

Application Question: (c) Is the applicant's principal place of business located within Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' lands?

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating proof that the applicant's principal place of business is located within Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' lands.

AND/OR

Application Question: (d) Is the applicant an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples'-owned business? If yes, provide the required documentation.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation demonstrating that the applicant is an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples'-owned business, such as an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' Organization status, or a letter of support from the corresponding Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' community.

-OR-

Application Question: (e) Describe how the applicant's principal place of business is located in a less-developed economic area as demonstrated by globally recognized, verifiable, established proxy indicators.

Required only if the requested documentation in (a), (b), (c) and (d) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Describe how the applicant's principal place of business is located in a less-developed economic area demonstrated by globally recognized, verifiable, established proxy indicators.

The applicant should provide localized data that demonstrates disadvantage in keeping with the less-developed economic area criteria outlined above.

Application Question: (f) Is more than 50 percent of the company owned by residents from a less-developed economic area as demonstrated by globally recognized, verifiable, established proxy indicators?

Required only if the requested documentation in a), (b), (c) and (d) is not provided.

Instructions and Indicators:
Upload documentation confirming more than 50 percent of the company is owned by residents from a less-developed economic area as demonstrated by globally recognized, verifiable, established proxy indicators.

Examples of documentation demonstrating proof of residence include utility bills such as electric, water, or gas.

Extenuating circumstances to accommodate situational hardships that force relocation of business will be assessed on a case by case basis and will require a narrative statement outlining the extenuating circumstances.

Criterion 2: Entity is a micro- or small-sized business.

Application Question: (g) Does the applicant meet the criteria to be considered a micro- or small-sized business? If yes, provide the required documentation?

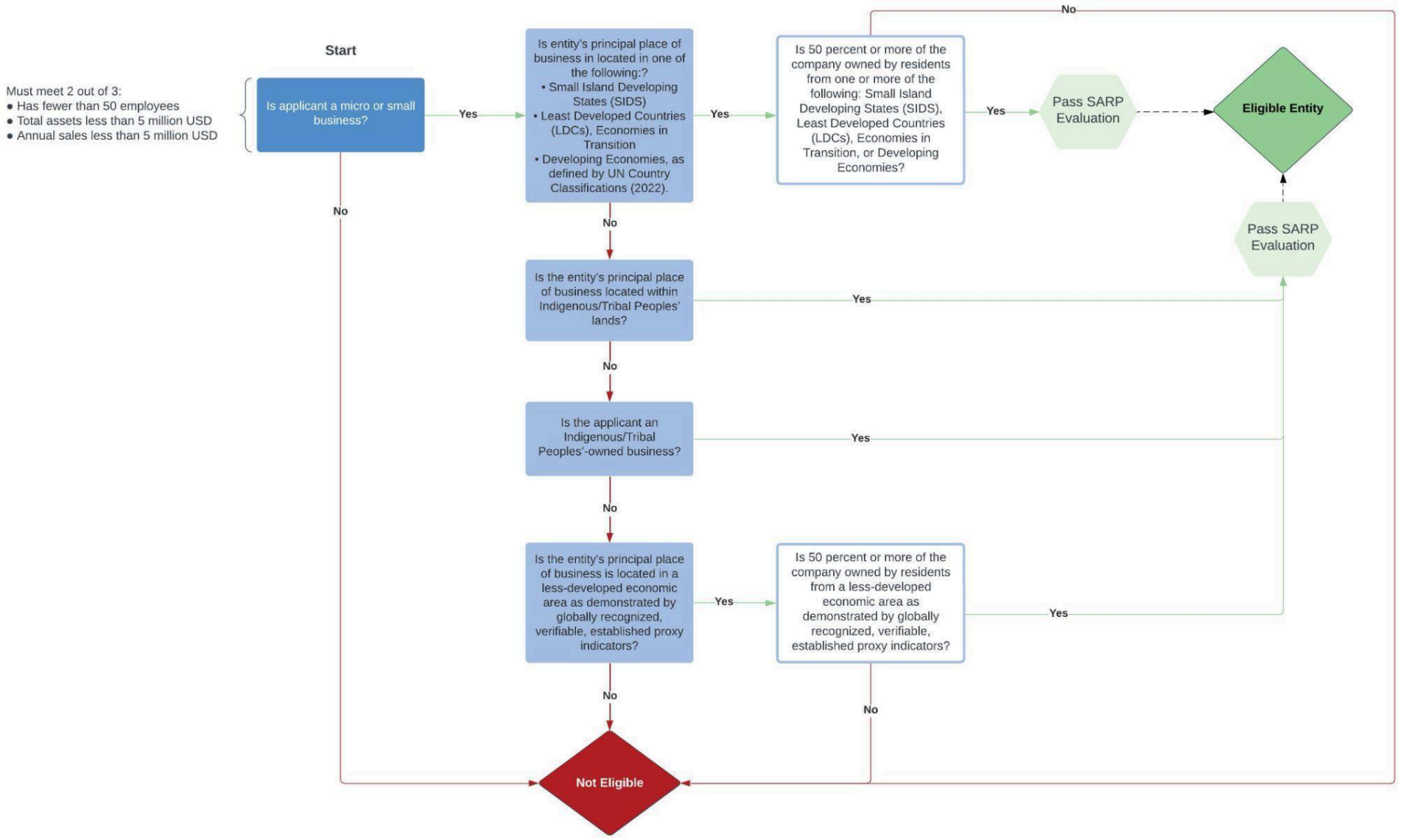
Instructions:
Upload the required document demonstrating the applicant is a micro- or small-sized business.

Indicators:
The applicant must meet at least two out of the three indicators below:

- Has fewer than 50 employees
- Total assets is less than USD 5 million
- Annual sales less than USD 5 million

There is no universal definition for micro or small business. Definitions vary from country to country. The indicators provided here are intended to reflect the most common thresholds from other global and regional funding institutions.

Figure 6. Eligible Entity Determination: Micro- or Small-Sized Business from a Less-Developed Economy



4.6. Restrictions

The following restrictions will be employed in applying for and receiving applicant support.

4.6.1. ***ASP applicants are not permitted to re-apply or re-submit an application to the ASP***.

- For information on restrictions related to application change requests, please see Section 5.1: Changes to ASP Applications.

4.6.2. Qualified supported ASP applicants will receive a 75-85% reduction on gTLD evaluation fees relating to ***one gTLD application only***.

4.6.3. Supported applicant entities that apply to the New gTLD Program will be restricted to one gTLD application submission.

- Applicants interested in applying for TLD variants (determined by using the RZ-LGR tool) are advised to consult the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook. To follow the decision-making process on this topic, please see the community page.
- For instance, .example in simplified Chinese: [.样例] and in traditional Chinese [.樣例]

4.6.4. If a supported applicant applies for a new gTLD string (the name the applicant applies for) that is counter to public responsibility (see Section 4.2: Public Responsibility Due Diligence) their support may be withdrawn.

4.6.5. All gTLD applicant strings may be subject to the limited public interest objection; string confusion objection; community objection; or legal rights objection in the New gTLD Program: Next Round.

4.6.6. Supported applicants that progress to delegation will be restricted from assigning the Registry Agreement or from any Change of Control for a period of three years. Assignments that become necessary for the following reasons shall be permitted:

- Assignments due to the TLD being unable to meet its financial obligations and unable to secure financing or restructure operations to carry out operations in the short-term.
- Assignments due to death or retirement of a majority shareholder.
- Assignments due to EBERO.
- Assignments to affiliates or subsidiaries.
- Assignments required by competition authorities.

  All assignments after such time shall be governed under the then-current Registry Agreement standard provisions; provided that any Assignment or Change of Control after the third (3rd) year, but prior to the seventh (7th) year, shall require the applicant to repay the full amount of financial support received through the ASP Program, including application fees and any bid credit, multiplier, or related benefits, plus an additional ten percent (10%).

5. Applicant Support Program Application Process

ICANN org anticipates deploying new systems to implement the New gTLD Program. Such systems will be built with the principles of "privacy by design." This means that personal data would be processed with the highest data protection principles (for example, only processing personal data that is necessary to be processed, storing such data only for as long as necessary, and limiting access to the data to those parties who require access to perform a specific New gTLD Program-related function).

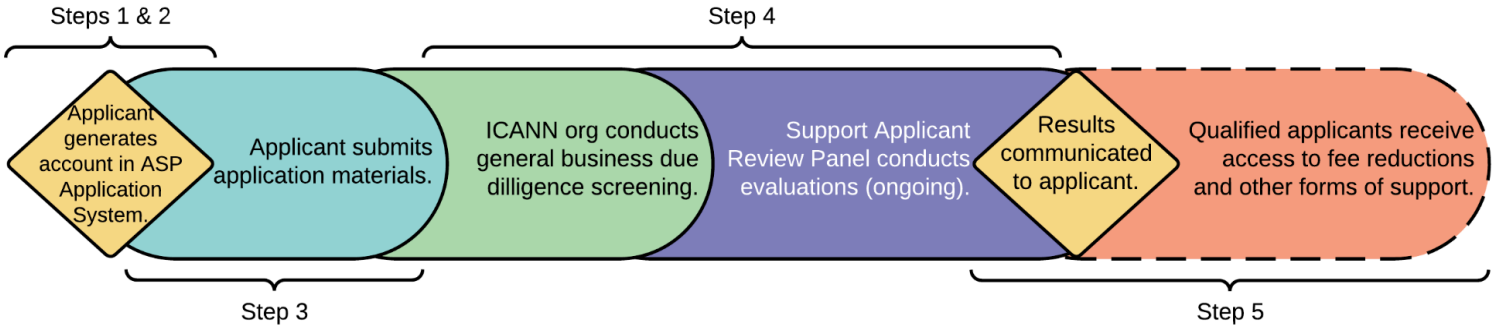
As part of implementation, ICANN org will evaluate which service providers supporting the New gTLD Program require access to the data processed during each New gTLD Program process or phase of the New gTLD Program (e.g., application submission, initial evaluation, objections). As part of this evaluation, ICANN org will conduct due diligence reviews and enter into data processing agreements or arrangements with third-party providers, as needed. Also, ICANN org will explore whether any such personal data should also be encrypted, pseudonymized, or anonymized.

Personal data processed for the New gTLD Program will be deleted when it is no longer needed for stated purposes, subject to legal requirements, while taking into account ICANN org's overarching mandate to operate to the maximum extent feasible in an open and transparent manner consistent with procedures designed to ensure fairness. Any Personal Information (as defined in the ICANN Privacy Policy) collected, used, submitted or transmitted in connection with the ASP Evaluation will be processed only for lawful purposes and consistent with the purposes for which it was collected. Such Personal Information will be processed in accordance with the New gTLD Program Personal Data Privacy Statement and ICANN Privacy Policy.

ASP Application Process

There are several phases to the ASP application process, outlined in Figure 7 and described in further detail.

Figure 7. Sequencing of Applicant Support Program Preparation, Evaluation, and Results



The outline below provides an overview of the stepwise process for the ASP application using the ASP Application System. In addition to this overview, potential ASP applicants will also have access to an ASP Application System User Guide.

Applicant generates account in ASP Application System.

Step 1: Register

a. Go to https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/asp/apply to register for the ASP.
b. Receive registration confirmation.

Step 2: Access application materials

a. Either log in to the ASP Application System to access the application form directly; OR
b. If an applicant wishes to work on the application responses offline, the ASP application information and system user guide can be downloaded from the ASP website.

Applicant submits application materials. Please note only applications submitted through the ASP Application System will be considered for evaluation.

Step 3: Submit application

a. Log in to the ASP Application System to:
    i. Fill out required application questions. Applicants do not need to complete the application in a single session, the ASP Application System allows applicants to save their answers prior to submission and work in multiple sessions if needed.
    ii. Upload required and relevant supporting documentation.
    iii. Review and confirm the application is complete and all supporting documents have been uploaded.
b. Submit the finalized ASP application.
    i. Applicants will be able to confirm submission of the application and track the application status directly in the ASP Application System. Applications may not be updated after being submitted except by going through the change request process (see Section 5.1: Changes to ASP Applications).
    ii. If issues with the application process arise, submit an inquiry in the ASP Application System for support.

> ***Important note:*** ASP applicants are advised ***not*** to submit information about their intended New gTLD Program application string when applying to the ASP. This is to protect the business confidentiality of applicants' information in advance of the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period.

ICANN org conducts general business due diligence screening and SARP conducts evaluations.

Step 4: Evaluation process

a. ICANN org reviews submitted application for completeness.
b. ICANN org may contact the applicant if submitted materials are incomplete, unclear, or inaccessible.

> Note that providing application documentation in languages other than English may extend the timeline for evaluation. Applicants are requested to provide the original documentation along with the English translations, if available, when submitting documentation in a language other than English. If applicants use a certified or equivalent translation service, they will be asked to indicate the service used (see Appendix 3).
>
> The processing time will be extended at least 2-4 weeks based upon the total volume of documents provided in a language other than English. **Please note that while the ASP is more flexible regarding translated documents, the New gTLD Program: Next Round may require certified translations of non-English documents.**

c. ICANN org manages the general business due diligence evaluation. Background screenings will be conducted by a third-party vendor managed by ICANN org. The applicant and its references may be contacted as part of this step.
d. Applications that pass pre-screening are shared with the third-party vendor to conduct subsequent evaluations. ICANN org will relay clarifying questions raised by the SARP evaluators to the ASP applicant.
e. The evaluation process is designed to be completed generally within 12–16 weeks.

> ***Important note:*** Note: the period between the end of ASP application submission period and the start of the gTLD application submission period is an estimated 20-24 weeks. Submitting an ASP application close to the deadline could potentially create delays in receiving ASP evaluation results prior to the gTLD application submission period. This risk increases if the applicant receives clarifying questions from ASP evaluators or is delayed in submitting an ASP deposit.

Results are communicated to applicants and qualified applicants receive access to fee reduction and other forms of support.

Step 5: Evaluation results

a. ASP applicants will be notified via email of application status changes and when evaluation results are ready. ASP applicants are directed to log into the ASP Application System to review evaluation results.
b. If qualified, the applicant will receive information regarding the portfolio of available support (see Section 6.6: Support Allocation for Qualified Applicants).

c. If the applicant does *not* qualify for support, they may:
    i. Request Extended Evaluation (see Section 6.5: Extended Evaluation); or
    ii. Proceed in submitting a standard New gTLD Program application and pay the evaluation fees in full.
d. All applicants wishing to submit a gTLD application may refer to the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook for detailed information about the New gTLD Program application process, requirements, and submission.

5.1. Changes to ASP Applications

Applicants may request changes or updates to their applications throughout the processing and evaluation period. This may include submitting missing documentation and/or replying to clarifying questions. In general, all applicants must update ICANN org within a timely manner, no more than 15 business days of any material changes to information previously submitted on their application.

Change Request Determination Criteria

In evaluating each change request, all available information is considered against the seven criteria below. The weight of each criterion may vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on the facts and circumstances surrounding the change request and the application. Determination of whether changes will be approved will balance the following factors:

1. **Explanation** – Is a reasonable explanation provided?
2. **Evidence that original submission was in error** – Is there evidence to support an assertion or claim that the change is only made to merely correct an error?
3. **Cause for Change** – Is the change being made in response to a third party input, or organizational change (e.g., changes to the organization name or mailing address)?
4. **Precedents** – 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** – What impact, positive or negative, would the change have on third parties, including other applicants? Does the change affect other third parties materially? Would permitting it have a change on other applicants? Would allowing the change be construed as fair to the general community? Would disallowing the change be construed as unfair?
6. **Materiality** – Would the change affect the evaluation score or require re-evaluation of some or all of the application?
7. **Timing** – Does the timing interfere with the evaluation process in some way? ICANN reserves the right to require a re-evaluation of the application in the event of a material change. All re-evaluations will be conducted using the established criteria.

After an ASP application is submitted, changes to the application will need to be submitted via an application change request. All application change requests during or after evaluation will be assessed to determine whether re-evaluation is needed, depending on the nature of the changes. The types of changes include:

Type of Change	Impact
Administrative Change (non-material)	An organization account change which does not have any material impact on an application's ability to pass one or more evaluation areas. Examples of these non-material administrative changes can include, but are not limited to, updates to an applicant's website URL, mailing address, adjustments to primary users, and banking information.
Administrative Change (material)	An organization account change which involves one or more updates that may affect an applicant's ability to pass one or more evaluation areas and may require a re-evaluation. Examples of material administrative changes can include, but are not limited to, changes to named individuals on the organization account, ownership changes, and ultimate control information.
Application Change (non-material)	An application response change which does not have any material impact on an application's ability to pass one or more evaluation areas. Examples of non-material application changes can include, but are not limited to, correcting typos and responding to clarifying questions.
Application Change (material)	An application response change which may affect an application's ability to pass one or more evaluation areas and may require a re-evaluation (please see Section 4.6: Restrictions to understand the limitations around material application changes).

As noted in Section 4.6: Restrictions, ASP applicants are not permitted to re-apply or re-submit an application to the ASP once the results of the ASP evaluation are complete.

Application Withdrawal

An applicant may withdraw its ASP application at any time, from the point of application submission throughout the application submission period. Once an application has been withdrawn, it may not be resubmitted.

If an applicant qualifies for support, but no longer intends to submit a gTLD application, they are required to notify ICANN org via the ASP Application System. The ASP deposit submitted to ICANN can be refunded once ICANN receives notification that the supported applicant no longer intends to submit a gTLD application. ICANN will ensure that any refunds are processed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

6. ASP Application Evaluation

The evaluation of ASP applications will take place in two phases:

1. ICANN org-managed General Business Due Diligence Screening evaluation.
2. Third-party vendor-managed evaluation.

ICANN org will utilize the ASP criteria and indicators to conduct the General Business Due Diligence screening. After an ASP applicant has passed the General Business Due Diligence screening, the application will be shared (confidentially through the ASP Application System) with the third-party vendor solely for the purpose of conducting subsequent evaluations.

As described in the proceeding section, the third-party vendor is responsible for convening SARPs. These panels are composed of vendors with the necessary expertise to assess the ASP criteria categories.

6.1. Support Applicant Review Panels

A third-party vendor to ICANN will administer and manage the ASP evaluations after applicants pass ICANN's General Business Due Diligence screening. The third-party vendor will establish SARPs composed of experts to conduct evaluations against the remaining criteria categories: Section 4.2: Public Responsibility Due Diligence, Section 4.3: Financial Need, Section 4.4: Financial Viability, and Section 4.5: Eligible Entity Categories. The third-party vendor will be required to comply with ICANN's Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Guidelines for the New gTLD Program: Next Round (see New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook). The panelists assigned to each application in the ASP Application System will be required to attest that there are no conflicts of interest in evaluating the application.

The vendor will ensure that the assembled reviewers have the relevant knowledge and experience required to provide high-quality, well-informed evaluations, and do not have a conflict of interest that would disqualify them from providing this service without bias. The vendor will also have the capability to formulate SARPs that are diverse in terms of geography, language, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Recognizing that the ASP criteria categories are distinct and may require different evaluative capabilities, the third-party vendor may establish several SARPs to fully assess the applicant. Organizing the evaluation in this way is consistent with research findings on other globally recognized programs (for more information see Section: Review Panels (pg. 40) of the Survey of Globally Recognized Procedures for Financial Assistance Programs.)

The SARP will conduct evaluations on the ASP applications it receives from ICANN org and submit application evaluation results to ICANN org on an ongoing basis. Evaluations will be

conducted on a pass/fail basis against each required criterion and its related indicators (see Section 2.2: Evaluation Phases and Categories).

6.2. Assessment

To qualify for support, applicants must meet all criteria, based upon the identified criterion indicators, and required documentation and will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis. See Figure 2 for a high-level flowchart of the evaluation process.

Evaluation of the criteria against applicants' documentation is at the sole discretion of the SARP. The SARP may review the applicant's website, social media accounts, principal place of business, annual reports, governing documents, and information pertaining to applicable proxy and/or localized eligibility definitions in relation to the eligibility criteria and indicators. The SARP also may ask clarifying questions of applicants, if necessary, to verify an application and supporting documentation.

6.3. Clarifying Questions

As noted, the SARP, via ICANN org, may ask clarifying questions of ASP applicants. Applicants will have the opportunity to provide responses to questions from panelists should they arise; any changes to the application will need to be submitted via an application change request. To ensure that applications are processed in a timely manner, all applicants will be encouraged to respond to clarifying questions as quickly as possible but no later than 21 calendar days after receiving the clarifying question, as this may affect the queuing process of applications (see Section 6.6: Support Allocation for Qualified Applicants).

Recognizing that English is the authoritative language for all ICANN business and that all gTLD applications will need to be submitted in English, the ASP is following this standard for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. As a result, ASP applicants' responses to clarifying questions must be submitted in English.

6.4. Evaluation Results

ASP applications will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Applicants will receive the results of evaluation generally within 12-16 weeks of submitting a complete application. In receiving evaluation results, applicants will be notified that they either:

1. Qualify for support based upon meeting the evaluation criteria.
    a. Applicants will receive instructions on how to submit a USD 2500 deposit to ICANN, to be paid within 30 days of receiving ASP evaluation results.
    b. After the deposit is submitted within the required timeframe, applicants will receive instructions on how to apply their discount when they submit a gTLD application.
        i. **If an applicant does not submit a deposit within 30 days of receiving ASP evaluation results, the application will be put on hold and may risk disqualification from the ASP.**
2. Do not qualify for support and are provided with an explanation of why they did not meet required criteria.
    a. Applicants that do not qualify for support may:

i. Request Extended Evaluation (see Section 6.5: Extended Evaluation); or
ii. Proceed to the standard new gTLD application and pay the full evaluation fees. Please note that this is a significant change from the 2012 round, wherein applicants that applied for support and did not qualify were not allowed to proceed with a standard application for the New gTLD Program.

6.5. Extended Evaluation

ASP applicants that do not pass the Phase 2 evaluation may request an extended evaluation. During extended evaluation, the SARP may seek clarification or additional information from ASP applicants to determine final evaluation results. ASP applicants have 21 calendar days to provide the requested information. If those responses do not satisfy the Phase 2 eligibility requirements, the applicant will not qualify for support.

6.6. Support Allocation for Qualified Applicants

Following application submission, General Business Due Diligence Screening, and Phase 2 SARP evaluation, ICANN org will notify applicants of their ASP support eligibility. Following the SARP evaluation, applicants that qualify for support will receive a welcome package outlining the portfolio of financial and non-financial support available. Note that all support, with the exception of access to Applicant Counselors, is for supported applicants only.The welcome package will include information about:

6.6.1. An ASP training program.
6.6.2. Access to pro bono service providers that have agreed to volunteer their services to supported applicants. Pro bono service providers are independent from the ICANN organization; their services are not endorsed or contracted by ICANN org. However, ICANN org may play a facilitative role in making supported applicants aware of the services available, should applicants seek to utilize them. ICANN org is in the process of identifying service providers and will make a list of those vendors available to supported applicants.
6.6.3. Resources and information for potential applicants to better understand the New gTLD Program, what it means to operate a gTLD, and how to participate in ICANN's multistakeholder community.
6.6.4. Access to Applicant Counselors to help answer questions about the gTLD application process and provide guidance on where to find available resources.
6.6.5. A 75-85% reduction in New gTLD Program evaluation fees for supported applicants.
6.6.6. A bid credit applied to supported applicants participating in contention resolution procedures established in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook. The type of support will be determined as part of the implementation of SubPro Final Report Topic 35. (See pp. 173-182). Further detail around this will be included in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook..

6.6.7. Reduced base Registry Operator fees, should the supported applicant prevail in the gTLD program evaluation and proceed to contracting and delegation.

Minimum and Maximum Fee Reductions

The level of ICANN fee reduction is expressed in a percentage of the evaluation fees. Qualified applicants will be notified of the percentage amount of the minimum level of fee reduction they will receive as a part of their support. ***All ASP recipients will receive the same percentage minimum fee reduction***. See Table 2.

In the event that the SARP evaluation for all ASP applicants has been completed and ASP support funds remain available, supported applicants may receive – in addition to the minimum fee reduction already communicated – an additional percentage fee reduction up to 85%. ***Any additional fee reduction percentage will be distributed equally across all qualifying applicants***.

Application Queuing

ASP Applications will be queued for processing on an ongoing basis in the order that they are submitted in the ASP Application System. In the event that ICANN org's ASP budget is exhausted during the ASP application submission period, ***ICANN org may pause processing further ASP applications and will communicate updates to applicants accordingly.*** Please note that ICANN may reset an application's place in the processing queue if the applicant fails to complete necessary steps within the expected timeline, such as responding to clarifying questions or submitting the ASP deposit.

Should supported applicants decide they ***no longer plan to submit*** an application for a new gTLD, ***the supported applicant must communicate this to ICANN org as soon as possible and prior to the gTLD application submission period***. This may allow additional applications for support to be evaluated for eligibility. It may also allow qualifying applicants that were waitlisted to receive support.

7. Additional Information

7.1. Program Evaluation and Reporting

To provide for continual improvement of the program, applicants that receive support will be required to participate in future research relating to the impacts of the ASP and effects of fee reductions.

7.2. Additional Resources

1. Applicant Support Program website
2. New gTLD Program website

Appendix 1: Example Templates for Narrative Statements

A. Financial Need

The Financial Need statement should include responses to the following questions:

1. How would funding support from ICANN enable your organization to apply for a gTLD?

2. Why would the full base gTLD evaluation fee present a financial hardship?

The answers should correspond with financial documentation and description of funding, revenue sources, cash and cash equivalents.

Documents:

- Two years of most recent audited financial statements, including profit and loss, and balance sheet, if available. If not available or more than 12 months old, most recent financial statements even if unaudited.

B. Financial Viability

1. Describe your organization's plans to pay the unsupported portion of the base gTLD evaluation fee via a narrative description and/or funding plan.

The answers should correspond with financial documentation and description of funding, revenue sources, cash and cash equivalents.

Documents:

- Two years of most recent audited financial statements, including profit and loss, and balance sheet, if available. If not available or more than 12 months old, most recent financial statements even if unaudited.

Appendix 2: Submitting the Financial Viability gTLD Deposit

To submit the USD 2500 deposit please follow the below instructions. Submitting the deposit is the final step in completing the Financial Viability evaluation. The deposit is required to advance from “conditionally approved” to “fully approved” status.

1. After the applicant receives notification of conditional approval for support, the applicant will also soon receive an invoice from ICANN org for the USD 2500 deposit.
2. Along with the invoice, the applicant will receive instructions for how to pay the invoice. The instructions will include the ICANN bank account information for deposit.
3. Applicants submitting a deposit should note that the payment received by ICANN must be in US dollars. This does not require the applicants to have a USD denominated account.
4. If the applicant is converting from another currency, the applicant is expected to pay all banking fees and cost to convert currency to USD. The full amount in USD must be received by ICANN. Applicant is responsible for all transaction fees and exchange rate fluctuation.
    a. ICANN will not cover these costs.
    b. Any short payment of these fees will be invoiced and may delay progression of the application process until the full amount has been paid.
5. Payment must be made via wire transfer, ACH, International Swift payment, or other method approved by ICANN for this service. Checks and credit card payments are not accepted. These methods also manage currency conversion.

Appendix 3: Translation of Supporting Documentation

If the applicant submits one or more English documents that were translated from a non-English original document, the applicant has the option to submit a certificate of translation (certificate of translation accuracy) for each translated English document. Properly submitted certified translations may enable faster review and processing of your applicant support materials. For properly attested certified translations, ICANN will perform a review of your original source documents and the certified English translation to confirm that they are accurate and complete. In all other cases where a certificate of translation is not provided for a document, ICANN will translate your original source documents to English for subsequent review and processing.

At a minimum, the certificate of translation should be written in English and include:

1. A statement of the translator's qualifications.
2. A statement affirming the completeness and accuracy of the document.
3. Identification of the translated document and language.
4. The translator's name, signature, and date.

Most professional translators and translation agencies should be able to provide a certificate of translation for the work they perform. The certificate of translation does not need to be notarized.

A sample certificate of translation accuracy can be found at https://www.atanet.org/client-assistance/what-is-a-certified-translation/.

A certificate of translation, if provided, should be submitted for each English translated document. It can be submitted as a Word document or a PDF.