NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

Replacement String and the Replacement Period

What is a replacement string?

New gTLD applicants may choose to submit a second-choice TLD name when they submit their application. This second choice is called a replacement string, which is in addition to an applicant's first-choice TLD name, also referred to as the original or applied-for string. Designating a replacement string potentially provides a path to avoid contention with another party that is applying for an identical or confusingly similar string by giving applicants the ability to switch from their applied-for string to their replacement string based on their own assessment. Applicants will only be allowed to make this switch during the 14-day period following Reveal Day, when ICANN publishes the public-facing portions of all the gTLD applications it has received.

RESOURCES
[DRAFT AGB Module 4.1 on Replacement Strings](#)
Frequently Asked Questions (coming soon)
[New gTLD Program: Next Round Resources](#)

Key concepts and takeaways

- **Application period:** The new gTLD application period is scheduled to open in April 2026 and will run for 12 to 15 weeks, during which time applicants must submit their gTLD applications via ICANN's TLD Application Management System (TAMS).
  - Applicants that want to have an option to switch to a replacement string must include it in their application before the application submission deadline.
  - Applicants that do not designate a replacement string at the time of their application will not be able to make changes to their applied-for string during the replacement period.
- **Reveal Day:** This is the day, after the application submission period closes, that ICANN publishes the public-facing portions of all new gTLD applications, including, but not limited to, applied-for and replacement strings.
- **Replacement period:** The replacement period is open for 14 days following Reveal Day. Applicants that designated a replacement string in their original application must choose whether or not to use the replacement string during this time period. Applicants cannot change to their replacement string or switch back to their originally applied-for string after the replacement period ends.
- **String Confirmation Day:** Shortly after the replacement period ends, ICANN will announce String Confirmation Day, when the final list of applied-for strings is published.

Who can designate a replacement string?

Any entity may apply for one primary string and designate one replacement string with each gTLD application.

ICANN

Why designate a replacement string?

The option to apply for a replacement string potentially offers a path to avoid contention. After Reveal Day, on which applied-for gTLD strings and replacement strings are published, applicants will have a clear picture of identical strings in contention and strings that may be in contention at a later notification or evaluation period. At that time, applicants have the option to switch from their applied-for string to their replacement string, based on their own assessments.

How to select a replacement string

While there are different considerations when deciding on a replacement string, the following may be worth keeping in mind:
- The replacement string should be different enough from the original, applied-for string to avoid being found confusingly similar during string similarity evaluation or string confusion objection.
- Singular and plural versions of the same word (e.g., .EXAMPLE vs. .EXAMPLES) may still end up in contention.

When a replacement string can be used

During the replacement period, if an applicant chooses to switch to their replacement string, that string permanently and irreversibly replaces their original applied-for string. Under no circumstances can applicants make changes to the replacement string, or switch back to the originally applied-for string, after the replacement period ends.

When a replacement string cannot be used

The intention of providing the replacement string option is to avoid contention; therefore, the AGB provides two exceptions for when a replacement string cannot be used during the replacement period:
- If an applicant's replacement string is identical to another applied-for string.
- If an applicant's replacement string is identical to another applicant's replacement string.
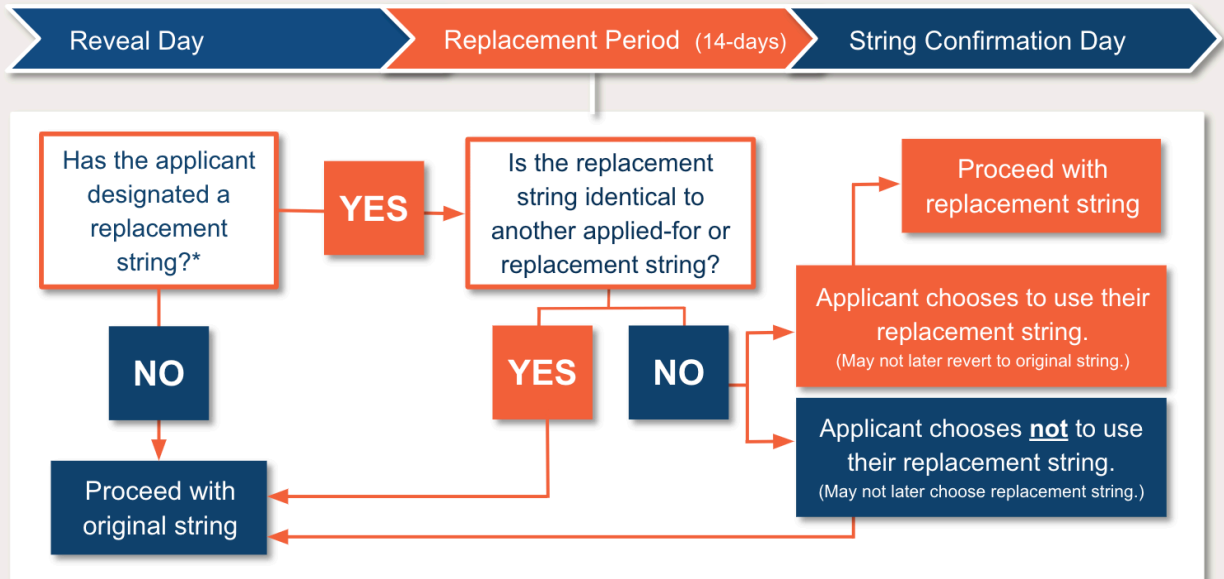
Contention sets

Although choosing a replacement string may help to avoid contention, it does not guarantee that the replacement string will not be subject to a contention set after String Confirmation Day. See also: DRAFT AGB Module 4.2 on String Contention and Contention Resolution

Replacement period process

Reveal Day | Replacement Period (14-days) | String Confirmation Day

Has the applicant designated a replacement string?*

YES → Is the replacement string identical to another applied-for or replacement string?

YES   **NO**

NO → Proceed with original string

YES → Proceed with original string

NO → Applicant chooses to use their replacement string. (May not later revert to original string.)

→ Proceed with replacement string

Applicant chooses **not** to use their replacement string. (May not later choose replacement string.)

→ Proceed with original string

* Designating and switching to a replacement string should not be confused with a Brand String Change Request, which is a separate process available only to applicants that are eligible for Brand TLDs. Please see the [DRAFT AGB Module 4.3 on Brand String Change Requests](#) for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
What happens if all applicants for an identical string switch to a replacement string?	If there are two or more applicants for an identical string and all applicants for that identical string are eligible to use their replacement string, and all applicants for that identical string decide to switch to their replacement string, the original string that all these applicants had applied for will not be used in that application round. Example: ● Applicant A and Applicant B apply for .flower. ● Both Applicants A and B decide to avoid contention over .flower and opt to use their replacements strings: .rose and .bloom. ● In this case, there would no longer be applicants for the .flower string. ● While .flower can be applied for in future rounds, applicants will not be able to switch back to their originally applied-for string on or after String Confirmation Day, even if at that point no one else is applying for that string.
Can an applicant add a replacement string after their application is submitted?	No. If an applicant does not include a replacement string in their original application, they cannot add one after they have submitted the application.
Can an applicant change their replacement string after their application is submitted?	No. Once an application is submitted, the original applied-for string or the replacement string cannot be changed.
If an applicant chooses a replacement string during the replacement period, can they change their mind?	No. If an applicant chooses to switch to their replacement string, it permanently and irreversibly replaces their original applied-for string.
Can a replacement string be used if the original applied-for string is not in contention?	Yes. The decision to choose a replacement string during the replacement period is at the applicants' sole discretion, based on their own assessment. Applicants will not be required to provide a rationale for why they did or did not opt to switch their applied-for string to their replacement string.
Does switching to a replacement string guarantee an applicant will not be in contention?	No. Using a replacement string does not guarantee that an applicant will not find themselves in contention at a later stage of the program. Contention sets can still be formed following String Confirmation Day during singular/plural notification, string similarity evaluation, and string confusion objection.