

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### About the Program

#### **1.1 What is the new gTLD Program?**

The new gTLD program is an initiative that will enable the introduction of new gTLDs (including both ASCII and IDN) into the domain name space.

#### **1.2 Why are new gTLDs being introduced?**

One of ICANN's key commitments is to promote competition in the domain name market while ensuring Internet security and stability. New generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) help achieve that commitment by paving the way for increased consumer choice by facilitating competition among registry service providers. Soon entrepreneurs, businesses, governments and communities around the world will be able to apply to operate a Top-Level Domain registry of their own choosing.

#### **1.3 Will the introduction of new gTLDs change how the Internet operates?**

The increase in number of gTLDs into the root is not expected to affect the way the Internet operates, but it will, for example, potentially change the way people find information on the Internet or how businesses plan and structure their online presence.

#### **1.4 How many new gTLDs are expected?**

There is no way of knowing the exact number of applications ICANN will receive nor how many of these applications will qualify and become gTLD registries. Market speculations have varied widely. The process to evaluate applications is being constructed to economically accommodate a wide range.

#### **1.5 Is there a limit to how many new TLDs can go into the root per year?**

Yes. Currently there is a maximum limit of 1000 new gTLDs that can be delegated per year.

#### **1.6 How are IDNs related to gTLDs?**

IDNs will be a type of new gTLD. IDN is an acronym for Internationalized Domain Name. IDNs are domain names with characters other than the Latin: a, b..., z; 0, 1,..., 9; and "-".

IDNs have been delegated as country code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs) in the Fast Track process and will be delegated as new gTLDs.

Such domain names could contain characters with diacritical marks as required by many European languages, or characters from non-Latin scripts; for example, Arabic or Chinese. IDN top-level domain names will offer many new opportunities and benefits for Internet users around the world by allowing them to establish and use top-level domains in their native languages and scripts.

#### **1.7 Is applying for a new gTLD the same as buying a domain name?**

No. Nowadays, organizations and individuals around the world can register second-level and, in some cases, third-level domain names. (In a URL such as maps.google.com, "google" is a second-level name and "maps" is a third-level domain.) They simply need to find an accredited registrar, comply with the registrant terms and

conditions and pay registration and renewal fees. The application for a new gTLD is a much more complex process. An applicant for a new gTLD is, in fact, applying to create and operate a registry business supporting the Internet's domain name system. This involves a number of significant responsibilities, as the operator of a new gTLD is running a piece of visible Internet infrastructure.

### **1.8 Is this the only opportunity to apply for a new gTLD?**

No. ICANN's goal is to launch subsequent gTLD application rounds as quickly as possible. The exact timing will be based on experiences gained and changes required after the first round is completed. The goal is for the next application round to begin within one year of the close of the application submission period for the initial round.

### **1.9 How and when can I see which gTLD strings are being applied for and who is behind the application?**

Approximately 2 weeks after the application submission period closes, ICANN will post the public portions of all applications received, including applied-for strings, applicant names, application type, mission/purpose of proposed gTLD, and other public application data.

### **1.10 Is ICANN initiating the New gTLD Program to make money?**

ICANN is a not-for-profit organization and this is a not-for-profit initiative. The program is designed to be self-funding. It is possible ICANN will over-collect or even under-collect for this first round of applications. If the fee collection exceeds ICANN's expenses, the community will be consulted as to how that excess should be used. For detailed information on the New gTLD Program budget, please refer to the New gTLD Budget Explanatory Memorandum at:

<http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/explanatory-memo-new-gtld-program-budget-22oct10-en.pdf>.

### **1.11 I have an idea for a new gTLD. Can I register my idea with ICANN in advance of the next application period?**

No, ICANN does not accept reservations or pre-registrations of new gTLDs. ICANN also does not endorse any third parties to do so.

### **1.12 Can I pre-register a second-level domain name?**

Be wary of anyone who claims to be able to reserve your place in line for a second-level registration for one of these new gTLDs. Not only can no one predict which TLDs will be available, but the new TLD operator may choose not to sell second-level registrations.

### **1.13 Can I reserve my trademark as a gTLD?**

No, ICANN does not accept reservations or pre-registrations based on trademarks. But registries will be required to operate sunrise or intellectual property claims services for the protection of trademarks. See section 5.4.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for details.

### **1.14 Is the upcoming application process going to be the same as for the previous new gTLD rounds in 2000 and 2003-4?**

The application process will not be the same. The GNSO recommendations are intended to create a standing policy to guide the opening of a gTLD application round as well as the continuing procedures. Although this new implementation may share some similarities to the previous rounds, they are not identical.

### **1.15 If my application was not selected or not approved in the 2000 or 2004 rounds, can I reapply in the upcoming round?**

Yes.

**1.16 Will applicants who participated in the previous gTLD application processes receive special treatment in future rounds?**

Applicants from the Year 2000 or 2004 rounds who re-apply will be required to meet the full set of evaluation criteria as established in the *Applicant Guidebook*. A partial fee credit may be available to the applicants of the round held in 2000. A maximum of one credit may be claimed for any new gTLD application submitted according to the processes in the *Applicant Guidebook*. The eligibility for this credit is determined by ICANN on a case by case basis. For more details, see Section 1.5.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

**1.17 Will applicants operating alternate root systems be given preferential treatment in future rounds?**

No. All applicants that submit an application would be equally eligible for a particular TLD string. ICANN is committed to a single, authoritative public root for the DNS and to the management of that unique root in the public interest according to policies developed through community processes. Please see ICP-3 for more information on alternate roots.

**1.18 How will the rights of trademark holders be protected in the process?**

First, an objection-based process will enable rights holders to demonstrate that a proposed gTLD would infringe their legal rights. In the event that the legal rights objection is successful the application will not proceed. Second, applicants for new gTLDs will be required to describe in their applications the rights protection mechanism, which must meet certain minimum standards as described in the *Applicant Guidebook*, they propose for second-level registrations. Third, all new gTLDs must ensure that second-level registrations are subject to ICANN's Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), a process that has worked well to protect rights for many years.

Finally, ICANN has been working closely with the trademark community to find additional solutions to potential issues for trademark holders in implementing new gTLDs. Currently those additional solutions include a trademark clearinghouse, the uniform rapid suspension system (URS), and a trademark post delegation dispute resolution procedure (PDDRP).

The Trademark Clearinghouse will provide a centralized location for storage and authentication of trademark information. This data is used to support services enabling protection of relevant names in various registries. The URS is being added as a complement to the UDRP and provides a faster and less expensive process for resolving clear-cut cases of infringement. And the PDDRP will be available under which a rights holder may bring a complaint if they believe a registry is actively engaging in infringing behavior.

**1.19 If someone applies for a TLD that is a brand name or a trademark that does not belong to them, will the brand or trademark owners be notified by ICANN?**

At this time, ICANN is not contemplating a notification system. ICANN is conducting global public outreach to educate the community on what their responsibilities are, as well as what the formal objection mechanism and timeline is, before the program launches. ICANN will publish the list of all applications received after the application submission period closes, and will continue to publicize the objection process and deadlines.

**1.20 Does this application process cover new ccTLDs also?**

No. Information on procedures for establishing ccTLDs is available at <http://iana.org/cctld/cctld-establishment-procedures-19mar03.htm>. However, anyone, including ccTLD operators, may apply to operate a new gTLD.

### **1.21 Where can I find more information about the Program?**

Visit the New gTLD website at <http://icann.org/newgtlds>.

### **1.22 Will there be a publicly available web site where the new gTLD application information will be made available?**

Yes. Approximately 2 weeks after the close of the application window, ICANN will post the public portions of all applications on its website.

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## **Application & Evaluation Process**

### **2.1 Who can apply for a new gTLD?**

Any established public or private organization that meets eligibility requirements anywhere in the world can apply to create and operate a new gTLD Registry. Applicants will need to demonstrate the operational, technical and financial capability to run a registry and comply with additional specific requirements.

### **2.2 How do I apply for a new gTLD?**

Any established public or private organization anywhere in the world can apply to create and operate a new generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) registry. Applicants will need to demonstrate the operational, technical and financial capability to run a registry and comply with additional specific requirements. Please refer to the *Applicant Guidebook* for detail information on the application process, including the application questions in Module 2, attachment 2.

Please note that applying for a new gTLD is not the same as buying a domain name. An applicant for a new gTLD is, in fact, applying to create and operate a registry business supporting the Internet's domain name system. This involves a number of significant responsibilities, as the operator of a new gTLD is running a piece of visible Internet infrastructure.

The application window is expected to open on 12 January 2012 and close on 12 April 2012.

The evaluation fee is US\$185,000. Applicants will be required to pay a US\$5,000 deposit fee per requested application slot when registering. The deposit will be credited against the evaluation fee. Other fees may apply depending on the specific application path. See the section 1.5 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for details about the methods of payment, additional fees and refund schedules.

When the application round opens, candidates will apply via an online application system called TAS - TLD Application System.

### **2.3 Can I apply for more than one gTLD?**

Yes. Each gTLD applied-for string requires its own application.

### **2.4 Can I apply for any kind of gTLD or are there any specific restrictions?**

ICANN has a set of specific technical rules that apply to all proposed gTLD strings. For example, an application for a string composed entirely of numbers will be rejected. If an applicant chooses an IDN gTLD, additional technical requirements apply. There is also a list of reserved gTLD names that are unavailable for general use. Furthermore, applicants for a gTLD that is a geographic name must meet additional requirements. All the specific restrictions are outlined in section 2.2.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

## **2.5 Can I simply reserve a gTLD and decide later whether or not to use it?**

ICANN expects all new gTLDs to be operational. One of the reasons ICANN is opening the top-level space is to allow for competition and innovation in the marketplace. The application process requires applicants to provide a detailed plan for the launch and operation of the proposed gTLD. gTLDs are expected to be delegated within one year of signing a registry agreement with ICANN.

## **2.6 Is there going to be a Sunrise Period for trademark owners to submit new gTLD applications?**

No. Trademark owners may apply during the general application period.

## **2.7 What will happen during the application window and how long will it last?**

The application window is expected to open on 12 January 2012 and close on 12 April 2012. Applicants will use a dedicated web-based application interface named TLD Application System (TAS) to apply, where they will answer questions and upload supporting documents. TAS will only be available when the application window opens.

## **2.8 How long will the evaluation process take?**

First let's define the "evaluation process" as starting at the point when the application window closes. There are several stages that an application may pass through prior to a final determination being rendered. Those stages are Administrative Check, Initial Evaluation, Extended Evaluation, String Contention, Dispute Resolution and Pre-delegation. The shortest path for a successful application is to pass Administrative Check (lasting 2 months), Initial Evaluation (lasting 5 months) and then move to Pre-delegation (lasting approximately 2 months) without any Objections filed or String Contention concerns. In this case the evaluation process could take as little as 9 months to complete. On the other hand if an application does not pass Initial Evaluation and elects Extended Evaluation and/or is in the Dispute Resolution or String Contention stages then the evaluation process could take up to 20 months to complete (or longer in the event that unforeseen circumstances arise). Please refer to Section 1.1.3 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for detailed information on timing estimates.

## **2.9 How will gTLD applications be assessed?**

Independent, third-party, expert panels will evaluate applications against criteria and requirements outlined in the *Applicant Guidebook*.

## **2.10 What happens if there are multiple applications for the same string?**

It is not feasible for two or more identical top-level strings to exist in the Internet's domain name system. Each domain name must be unique. If there are two or more applications for the same string, the *String Contention* procedures would come into effect. The same would apply in cases where two or more strings are considered to be confusingly similar. The processes proposed by ICANN to deal with the identical and/or similar strings are described in detail in the *Applicant Guidebook*. Applicants always have the opportunity to resolve contention by a mutually agreeable settlement amongst themselves.

## **2.11 If I want to apply for two similar or related TLDs, for example, ".thing" and ".thething" would that be two applications or one? And if two, do I have to pay \$185,000 for each?**

If an applicant applies for .thing and .thething, those would be considered two separate applications. (Applicants should note carefully that the application process is currently designed to not allow two strings that are "confusingly similar" to each other to both be delegated into the DNS - please refer to the full text of the *Applicant Guidebook* for details.) If both applications were approved, they would result in two separate

TLDs. Each application will be treated individually and there is no discount on application fees based upon the filing of multiple applications.

### **2.12 Can a New gTLD name contain numbers or dashes?**

The ASCII label for a new gTLD name must consist entirely of letters (alphabetic characters a-z).

### **2.13 Can a New gTLD name be 2 letters?**

Applied-for gTLD strings in ASCII must be composed of three or more visually distinct characters. Two-character ASCII strings are not permitted, to avoid conflicting with current and future country-codes based on the ISO 3166-1 standard.

### **2.14 Can I apply for country name under the New gTLD Program?**

Applications for strings that are country or territory names will not be approved, as they are not available under the New gTLD Program.

### **2.15 What happens after a new gTLD application is approved?**

Once an application is deemed to satisfy the criteria outlined in the *Applicant Guidebook* and passes all evaluation and selection processes, including objection processes and final approval, the applicant is required to execute a registry agreement with ICANN and pass technical pre-delegation tests before the new gTLD can be delegated to the root zone. Refer to Module 5 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for information on the transition to delegation processes.

### **2.16 What are the evaluation panels?**

The evaluation process will count on the expertise of a variety of panels that were selected by ICANN through a call for Expressions of Interest. Members of these panels are required to abide by the established Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest guidelines included in the *Applicant Guidebook*. The main evaluation panels are:

**String Similarity Panel** - assesses whether a proposed gTLD string is likely to result in user confusion due to similarity with any reserved name, any existing TLD, any requested IDN ccTLD, or any new gTLD string applied for in the current application round. This occurs during the String Similarity review in Initial Evaluation. The panel may also review IDN tables submitted by applicants as part of its work.

**DNS Stability Panel** - reviews each applied-for string to determine whether the proposed string might adversely affect the security or stability of the DNS. This occurs during the DNS Stability String Review in Initial Evaluation.

**Geographical Names Panel** - reviews each application to determine whether the applied-for gTLD represents a geographic name, as defined in the *Applicant Guidebook*. In the event that the string represents a geographic name and requires government support, the panel will review and verify that the documentation provided with the application is from the relevant governments or public authorities and is authentic.

**Technical Evaluation Panel** - reviews the technical components of each application against the criteria in the *Applicant Guidebook*, along with proposed registry operations, in order to determine whether the applicant is technically and operationally capable of operating a gTLD registry as proposed in the application. This occurs during the Technical/Operational Reviews in Initial Evaluation, and may also occur in Extended Evaluation if necessary and if elected by the applicant.



**Financial Evaluation Panel** - reviews each application against the relevant business, financial and organizational criteria contained in the *Applicant Guidebook*, to determine whether the applicant is financially capable of maintaining a gTLD registry as proposed in the application. This occurs during the Financial Review in Initial Evaluation, and may also occur in Extended Evaluation if necessary and if elected by the applicant.

**Registry Services Panel** - reviews the proposed registry services in the application to determine if any registry services pose a risk of a meaningful adverse impact on security or stability. This occurs, if applicable, during the Extended Evaluation period.

### **2.17 What happens if more applications are received than expected?**

If the volume of applications exceeds expectations, applications will be processed in batches. The first batch will be limited to 500 applications and subsequent batches will be limited to 400 to account for capacity limitations due to managing extended evaluation, string contention, and other processes associated with each previous batch.

### **2.18 How long will I have to wait for my TLD to go into the root?**

Depending on what batch you are assigned to, it will then follow the timeline outlined in section 1.1.3 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

### **2.19 If I apply for .thing, would the translation of the term thing in other languages also be protected in the new gTLD?**

Each applied-for gTLD string requires its own application. ".thing" would be one application. A translation of ".thing" in Arabic characters, for example, would be another application.

### **2.20 If I plan on using an outsourced registry service provider, must I answer questions 24 through 44 on Technical & Operational capability?**

It should be noted that the applicant will be the responsible party for meeting the requirements of the Registry Agreement. Evaluations are performed on the applicant's technical and operational plans and not on third-party service providers that the applicant may engage. As such, applicants are responsible for ensuring that their applications are complete and accurate. All questions must be answered for a complete application. Applicants choosing to outsource one or more parts of their registry operations will still need to provide the full details of the technical arrangements.

### **2.21 Can I simply provide the name of the registry service provide that I plan on using and not answer questions 24 through 44 on Technical & Operational capability in detail?**

No, all questions must be answered. ICANN will be evaluating the applicant's technical and operational plan. As each application is unique, ICANN encourages applicants to work with any preferred service providers to determine the technical and operational requirements necessary to support the proposed business model and provide answers appropriately.

### **2.22 Where can I find the ICANN's Registry Transition Process that is referenced in the Registry Agreement?**

The New gTLD Program Explanatory Memorandum on gTLD Registry Transition Processes is posted on the ICANN website at <http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-transition-processes-clean-30may11-en.pdf>.

### **2.23 Is an excel file of the financial projection templates available?**

The excel file of the financial projection template can be found on the New gTLD website at <http://icann.org/newgtlds>.

**2.24 Can I provide hyperlinks to online information as references, answers, or appendices?**

No. ICANN will not accept hyperlinks to online information as part of the response unless specifically requested or called for in the question. The entire application should be self-contained. Evaluation panels will only consider information provided within the allotted space in TAS for a particular question (plus attachments for those questions where ICANN explicitly asks for them) as the applicant's response.

**2.25 Is there any prohibition or penalty for an organization to provide letters of support to multiple applicants seeking the same string under a community designation?**

There are no restrictions that would prevent an organization from providing a letter of support for multiple applications. However, potential impact to the outcome of criterion 4 community priority evaluation should be considered by the applicants.

**2.26 If I am both a registry operator of a new gTLD and an ICANN accredited registrar, and want to issue domain names for internal use only, must I develop an EPP connection?**

Yes. All gTLD registry operators are required to offer EPP, and there is no provision in the base agreement for exemptions from this requirement based on limitations on who can register in a TLD.

**2.27 Will ICANN consider reducing the ratings of financial institutions for the continued operations instrument given recent financial market conditions?**

ICANN will review our credit ratings requirement in light of prevailing market conditions.

**2.28 What are acceptable forms of valid proof of legal establishment?**

Note that the proof of legal establishment is based on the applicant's legal form and jurisdiction. Acceptable forms of valid proof of legal establishment include Articles of Incorporation and Articles of Association. As documentation may vary by jurisdiction, ICANN has built flexibility into the program to accommodate documentations from various jurisdictions.

**2.29 To receive a score of “2 - exceeds requirements” to question #47, applicants are asked to provide estimates derived from actual examples of previous or existing registry operations or equivalent. Where can I find examples of existing registries operations? Is the benchmarking report posted at <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/benchmarking-report-15feb10-en.pdf> considered sufficient?**

Applicants may reference the said Benchmark study above. However, answers based solely on this report are not necessarily sufficient for a score of 2. The applicant should demonstrate the analysis behind its estimates, the source of its examples, and how the examples used are comparable to the applicant's proposal. Many TLD registries make some operational information publicly available; ICANN encourages applicants to explore such resources.

**2.30 To receive a score of “3 - exceeds requirements” to question #50, applicants are asked to demonstrate that the financial instrument is secured and in place to provide for on-going operations for at least three years in the event of failure. When must the financial instrument be in place?**

The financial instrument must be secured, in place, and submitted with the application to receive a score of “3 - exceeds requirements.”



### **2.31 Can economic enterprises qualify as communities in the sense of the community priority evaluation criteria?**

There is no provision in the Applicant Guidebook for an application to “qualify” as a community. The designation of an application as community-based is entirely at the discretion of the applicant.

A community priority evaluation may occur as a result of string contention. Where an applicant goes through community priority evaluation, according to the criteria in Module 4 of the *Applicant Guidebook*, an application meeting the threshold score of 14 will be awarded priority in the contention set.

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## **TLD Applicant System (TAS)**

### **3.1 Will there be a TAS demo prior to the opening of the application window?**

Yes. A TAS interactive demonstration is being made available in advance of the application window. Check <http://icann.org/newgtlds> for updates and to see whether it is available. The demonstration will allow users to click through the various TAS screens but will not allow data entry.

### **3.2 When will I have access to TAS?**

TAS will be available when the application window opens, which is currently expected to be on 12 January 2012, and not before. You can access TAS only after registering.

### **3.3 How will I access TAS?**

A link to TAS will be provided on the ICANN website at <http://icann.org/newgtlds> when the application window opens, which is expected to be on 12 January 2012.

### **3.4 What formats will TAS allow for the input of text?**

TAS supports Unicode or plain text. Hyperlinks or stylized, formatted text, drawings or diagrams, cannot be included in line with text. Supporting visuals will be allowed as attachments.

### **3.5 Will there be a fill-able table in TAS for the financial projections?**

No. ICANN will make available a downloadable template in TAS for the completion of the financial projections. Applicants will then be able to upload the completed template back into TAS.

### **3.6 How will I embed or attach graphics to my application?**

Graphics, images, tables, diagrams may be uploaded as attachments. ICANN strongly recommends that applicants label all graphics, images, tables, diagrams and attachments appropriately and reference them in their responses.

### **3.7 Is there a limit in the number of characters/words for each response?**

Yes. Every response is limited to a certain number of characters based on guidance provided in the Applicant Guidebook. One page approximately equates to 4,000 characters (including spaces). Character limitation are by question, not by application. Applicants cannot transfer unused characters from one response to another. Applicants may not use attachments to extend their text response.

### **3.8 Will I be timed-out or logged-off while completing an application?**

For security purposes, TAS is programmed to detect inactivity and will automatically log off users after a defined period of time. Please note that any data that have not been saved when the system logs a user off will be lost. A user who is actively working in the system should not be kicked off.

### **3.9 Will TAS allow bullets, dashes, numberings?**

TAS supports Unicode or plain text only. Applicants may use hyphens and numbers as plain text only.

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## **Objection & Dispute Resolution**

### **4.1 How can I object to an application?**

Approximately 2 weeks after the close of the application window, ICANN will post the public portions of all applications that have been received on our website. At this time, the formal objection period will begin and will last for approximately 7 months. Formal objections using pre-established Dispute Resolution Procedures (DRP) may be filed on any of the following grounds:

- String confusion
- Legal rights
- Community
- Limited public interest

In all but exceptional circumstances, objections will be administered by independent Dispute Resolution Service Providers (DRSP), rather than by ICANN. Refer to Module 3 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for more information on objection procedures.

### **4.2 How much does it cost to file an objection?**

At the time an objection is filed, the objector is required to pay a filing fee in the amount set and published by the relevant Dispute Resolution Provider (DRSP). If the filing fee is not paid, the DRSP will dismiss the objection without prejudice. After the hearing has taken place and the panel makes its expert determination, the DRSP will refund the advance payment of costs to the prevailing party.

For details, see Sections 1.5.2 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

There will also be costs involved in preparing an objection, which should be taken into account.

### **4.3 What can I do if someone applies for a string that represents my brand or trademark?**

You can file an objection with the DRSP selected to administer "legal rights" objections. Details about these procedures, such as who has standing, where and how objections are filed, and how much objections will cost can be found in Module 3 of the *Applicant Guidebook* and the related New gTLD Dispute Resolution Procedure. You must pay close attention to the objection deadlines that are publically available on ICANN's website.

### **4.4 What are the estimated costs associated with registering a trademark with the proposed Trademark Clearinghouse?**

The costs are not currently known. We expect to request proposals from service providers of which cost will be a key component in determining the appropriate provider.

#### **4.5 Will ICANN prevent the registration of objectionable or racist extensions?**

Consistent with the policy advice on new gTLDs, all applied-for strings could be subject to an objection-based process based on Limited Public Interest grounds. This process will be conducted by the qualified DRSP utilizing standards drawing on provisions in a number of international treaties. In addition to Limited Public Interest objection, the GAC may also submit to ICANN a formal GAC advice on any application. The process for GAC Advice on New gTLDs is intended to address applications that are identified by governments to be problematic, e.g., that potentially violate national law or raise sensitivities.

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### **Fees & Timelines**

#### **5.1 When can I apply for a new gTLD?**

The application window is expected to open on 12 January 2012.

#### **5.2 How much is the evaluation fee?**

The evaluation fee is estimated at US\$185,000. Applicants will be required to pay a US\$5,000 deposit fee per requested application slot when registering. The US\$5,000 will be credited against the evaluation fee. Other fees may apply depending on the specific application path. See the section 1.5 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for details about the methods of payment, additional fees and refund schedules.

#### **5.3 Are there any additional costs I should be aware of in applying for a new gTLD?**

Yes. Applicants may be required to pay additional fees in certain cases where specialized process steps are applicable, and should expect to account for their own business start-up costs. See Section 1.5.2 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

#### **5.4 Will ICANN offer refunds?**

Yes, refunds will apply in specific circumstances. Details about refund conditions are specified in section 1.5.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook*.

#### **5.5 If I withdraw my application, will I get a refund?**

In certain cases, refunds of a portion of the evaluation fee may be available for applications that are withdrawn before the evaluation process is complete. An applicant may request a refund at any time until it has executed a registry agreement with ICANN. The amount of refund will depend on the point in the process at which the withdrawal is requested. Please refer to section 1.5.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for a schedule of refunds.

#### **5.6 If my application does not get approved, will I be refunded the \$185,000 application fee?**

A full refund of the application fee is not available. Any applicant that has not been successful has the option of withdrawing its application at the end of Initial Evaluation or Extended Evaluation for a partial refund. Please refer to section 1.5.1 of the *Applicant Guidebook* for a schedule of refunds.

#### **5.7 Are there any ongoing fees once a gTLD is approved by ICANN?**

Yes. Once an application has successfully passed all the evaluation steps, the applicant is required to sign a New gTLD Agreement (also called Registry Agreement) with ICANN. Under the agreement, there are two fees: (a) a fixed fee of US\$6,250 per calendar quarter; (b) and a transaction fee of US\$0.25. The latter does not

apply until and unless more than 50,000 transactions have occurred in the TLD during any calendar quarter or any four calendar quarter period. Please refer to section 6.1 of the New gTLD Agreement in the *Applicant Guidebook*.

**5.8 According to the Registry Agreement, payment of fees is due by the 20th day following the end of each calendar quarter. Will an invoice be sent to the registry every quarter? If yes, what is the timing of the invoices?**

It is expected that registry operators abide by the terms and conditions set forth in the Registry Agreement, including paying relevant fees in a timely manner, regardless of whether ICANN issues invoices.

**5.9 Does ICANN require that the registry-level fee payments be made by the applicant that it entered into contract with, or could another party (such as a back-end registry service provider) provide the payment?**

No. Registry-level fee payments can be made by any party on behalf of the registry, so long as it is feasible for ICANN to reconcile and apply payments correctly.

**5.10 One of my clients would like me to handle all of the contracts on their behalf. Do any scenarios exist in which a party may execute a Registry Contract on behalf of a Registry Operator?**

No. ICANN will only enter into an agreement with the applicant. There's no provision for Party X to enter a registry agreement with ICANN designating Party Y as the registry operator.

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**Applicant Guidebook**

**6.1 What is the "Applicant Guidebook"?**

The *Applicant Guidebook* provides a step-by-step procedure for new gTLD applicants. It specifies what documents and information are required to apply; the financial and legal commitments; and what to expect during the application and evaluation periods. The *Applicant Guidebook* can be found at <http://icann.org/newgtlds> [PDF, 4.81 MB]

**6.2 When will the final Applicant Guidebook be available?**

The Board-approved version of the Applicant Guidebook can be accessed at <http://icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/rfp-clean-30may11-en.pdf>. As approved by the ICANN Board of Directors, this Guidebook forms the basis of the New gTLD Program. ICANN reserves the right to make reasonable updates and changes to the Applicant Guidebook at any time, including as the possible result of new technical standards, reference documents, or policies that might be adopted during the course of the application process. Any such updates or revisions will be posted on ICANN's website.

**6.3 Why is ICANN asking for so much information from the applicants?**

One of ICANN's core missions is to preserve the security, stability and global interoperability of the Internet. Future new gTLD registries are expected to comply with ICANN's contract and follow all best practices and standards to ensure this mission is fulfilled.

**6.4 I understand that ICANN will only make available the Applicant Guidebook in English (official version), Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic. Will ICANN allow other independent parties to translate the Applicant Guidebook into a language outside of the 6 UN languages mentioned?**

Yes, the Applicant Guidebook may be translated from the official English version into multiple languages under the following conditions:

1. Provide attribution to the source (ICANN's English version of the Applicant Guidebook)
2. Use the materials in context; and
3. Do not use the materials in a way that implies ICANN sponsorship or approval of your work. This includes not reproducing the ICANN logo separate from where it may appear within the materials.

In addition, the following disclaimer must appear in a prominent position on the translated version, in the same language as the translated document: "This document is an unofficial translation not produced by or endorsed by ICANN and is for information only. The original and authoritative text (in English) may be found at: [link to the most recent English version of the Applicant Guidebook on the ICANN website]."

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## **gTLD History & Policy Development**

### **7.1 How are new gTLDs created?**

The decision to establish the New gTLD Program followed a detailed and lengthy consultation process with all constituencies of the global Internet community. Representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders -- governments, individuals, civil society, business and intellectual property constituencies, and the technology community --were engaged in discussions for more than 18 months. In October 2007, the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) --one of the groups that coordinates global Internet policy at ICANN -- completed its policy development work on new gTLDs and approved a set of recommendations. Contributing to this policy work were ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) and Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC). The ICANN Board of Directors adopted the policy in June 2008. A thorough brief to the policy process can be found at <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/>.

There are eight gTLDs that predate the formal establishment of ICANN as an organization. These are: **.com .edu .gov .int .mil .net .org .arpa**. ICANN held two previous application rounds, one in 2000 and another in 2003-4, where several proposals were submitted and evaluated. The gTLDs approved during the 2000 round are: **.aero .biz .coop .info .museum .name .pro**. The gTLDs approved during the 2004 round are **.asia .cat .jobs .mobi .tel .travel** You can find additional information about these previous application rounds at <http://icann.org/tlds/app-index.htm> (2000) and <http://icann.org/tlds/stld-apps-19mar04/> (2003-4). Applications received during these rounds were evaluated against previously-published criteria, and those applicants who were successful went on to sign TLD Registry Agreements with ICANN.

### **7.2 How did the new gTLD policy development process work?**

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) is responsible for creating policy applicable to gTLDs. The GNSO policy development process on new gTLDs was aimed at creating a standing policy to guide the ongoing introduction of new gTLDs. The GNSO Policy Development Process (PDP) is formally defined in the ICANN Bylaws (see <http://icann.org/general/bylaws.htm#AnnexA>). The GNSO's final report on the introduction of New gTLDs can be found here:

Part A: <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm> and

Part B: <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-partb-01aug07.htm>.

### 7.3 How are the GNSO's policy recommendations being implemented?

ICANN staff reviewed the 19 GNSO recommendations for the introduction of new gTLDs and developed a set of steps to put each of them into practice, while also being cognizant of the guiding principles and implementation guidelines. One of the main outputs of this implementation work is the *Applicant Guidebook*, which can be thought of as a roadmap for potential gTLD applicants.

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## Domain Name Basics

### 8.1 What is a domain name?

Every computer that accesses the Internet has a unique identifying address which is a string of numbers called an "IP address" (IP stands for "Internet Protocol"). As IP addresses are often difficult to remember, these numbers are transposed into characters or letters (the "domain name") and are what a user types in when searching for websites or sending an email.

### 8.2 What is the Domain Name System (DNS)?

The Domain Name System (DNS) helps users to find their way around the Internet. Every computer on the Internet has a unique address - just like a telephone number - which is a rather complicated string of numbers. It is called its "IP address" (IP stands for "Internet Protocol"). IP Addresses are hard to remember. The DNS makes using the Internet easier by allowing a familiar string of letters (the "domain name") to be used instead of the arcane IP address. So instead of typing 207.151.159.3, you can type www.internic.net. It is a "mnemonic" device that makes addresses easier to remember.

### 8.3 What is the difference between DNS name server availability and DNS service availability ?

**DNS name server availability** refers to the availability of each IP address of a particular name server listed as authoritative for a domain name. In other words, ICANN will keep a record per each IP address of each DNS server per the TLD, I.e., multiple records per TLD.

**DNS service availability** refers to the availability of the whole set of name servers for a particular TLD. For the service to be considered available at a particular moment, at least, two of the delegated name servers registered in the DNS must respond appropriately. I.e., one record per TLD, the whole DNS service.

### 8.4 What is a top-level domain (TLD)?

Every domain name around the world ends with a top-level domain (TLD); these are the 2 or more letters that come after the dot. There are currently two types of TLDs: generic top-level domain (gTLDs) such as .com, .mobi, and .info, and country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) such as .uk, .br, and .cn. A gTLD or a ccTLD is managed by a registry operator, an organization that maintains the registry database, including the nameserver information for names registered in the TLD.

### 8.5 What are second-level and third-level domain names?

The portion of the domain name that precedes the top-level domain is called the second-level domain name (for example, the "icann" in "icann.org"). There are also third-level domain names that appear before the second-level domain name and again are separated by a dot (for example, events.icann.org). Third-level domain names are also called sub-domains and are often used to categorize special sections of a website.

### 8.6 What is a gTLD?



gTLD stands for generic Top-Level Domain. (what Internet users see as an Internet extension such as .COM, .ORG, or .INFO) and they are part of the structure of the Internet's domain name system. The gTLDs are also sometimes called labels, strings, or extensions.

### 8.7 What is a ccTLD?

ccTLD stands for country-code Top-Level Domain and are two-letter, top-level domains that identify a country or territory. There are approximately 250 ccTLDs, for example: .ca for Canada, .jp for Japan, and .eu for the European Union. A listing of existing ccTLDs is available at <http://iana.org/domains/root/db/>.

### 8.8 What is an IDN?

IDN stands for Internationalized Domain Name. IDNs are domain names represented by local language characters, or letter equivalents. These domain names could contain characters with diacritical marks (accents) as required by many European languages, or characters from non-Latin scripts (for example, Arabic or Chinese). IDNs make the domain name label as it is displayed and viewed by the end user different from that transmitted in the DNS. To avoid confusion the following terminology is used: **The A-label** is what is transmitted in the DNS protocol and this is the ASCII-compatible (ACE) form of an IDNA string; for example "xn--11b5bs1di". **The U-label** is what should be displayed to the user and is the representation of the Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) in Unicode.

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## Miscellaneous

### 9.1 What is the process for submitting questions about new gTLDs?

ICANN encourages community inquiries on the gTLD process. Questions may be sent to [newgtld@icann.org](mailto:newgtld@icann.org). This FAQ will also be updated periodically based on questions received. Please also check the New gTLD page at <http://icann.org/newgtlds> and **Twitter** to find out about the latest developments.

### 9.2 If I apply for a TLD for my exclusive use and will only issue domain registration for internal use, must I use an ICANN accredited registrar?

Yes. Registry operators must use only ICANN accredited registrars in registering domain names. If a registry operator wishes to issue domain names, it must become an ICANN accredited registrar in order to do so.

### 9.3 If I want to register a gTLD solely for my own use, for example, solely for use by my company, partners, consultants, shareholders, auditors, etc., can I limit the issuance of second level domains to those individuals? Can I refuse to accept applications for second level domains from members of the public in general?

Yes. The applicant is responsible for setting the business model and policy for how they will use their gTLD, so long as the registry is in compliance with the terms of the registry agreement.

### 9.4 If I want to register a gTLD solely to promote my own brand and undertake my own marketing plans, can I refuse applications for second level domains from my competitors? Can I also refuse applications for second level domains from individuals who appear to be cybersquatters or scammers?

Yes. The applicant is responsible for setting the business model and policy for how they will use their gTLD, so long as the registry is in compliance with the terms of the registry agreement.

### 9.5 After delegation, if the applicant's business plan for the new gTLD were to change from the mission/

**purpose originally stated on question #18, would the now-gTLD operator be penalized?**

One of the reasons ICANN is opening the top-level space is to allow for competition and innovation in the marketplace. ICANN recognizes that business models may evolve as the market matures. ICANN will only hold TLD operators responsible for complying with the terms of the registry agreement.

**9.6 Will applications be categorized as “sponsored” or “unsponsored” in this New gTLD application round?**

No, applications will not be categorized as “sponsored” or “unsponsored” in this new gTLD application round. ICANN carried out 2 previous new gTLD application rounds. Sponsored and unsponsored TLDs were part of these 2 previous programs. These distinctions are not relevant to the New gTLD program. Under the New gTLD program, a community-based designation can be made on any application. Please refer to section 1.2.3 of the Applicant Guidebook for more information on community-based designation.



The information presented here about the application and evaluation process is the most up-to-date available. However, it is a high-level summary and is subject to change. For exact details about the program please review the actual text of the *Applicant Guidebook*.