

INFORMATION PAPER FOR APPLICANTS: NEW gTLD PROGRAM UPDATE

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Executive Summary

This paper is for information only and describes the work done since the last New gTLD applicant webinar on 9 August 2012. It contains a summary of application statistics, information on the process for changes to applications, and a reminder that 26 September 2012 is the last date to submit Application Comments.

The clarifying question pilot program is underway with 41 applications participating.

The issue of batching/metering applications drew 101 comments from members of the community, and a consultation on the issue is planned for 12 September 2012.

ICANN's meeting in Toronto this October will feature several sessions of interest to new gTLD applicants and others, including sessions on internationalized domain names, universal acceptance of top-level domains (TLDs), and more.

We've included a list of key program dates at the end for your convenience.

Application Statistics

As of 5 September 2012, applicants have notified us of their intent to withdraw seven applications from the New gTLD Program. Four applications have completed the withdrawal process:

.AND – Charleston Road Registry Inc.

.ARE – Charleston Road Registry Inc.

.EST – Charleston Road Registry Inc.

.KSB - KSB Aktiengesellschaft

No objections have been submitted.

Applicants have submitted a total of 57 application change requests.

Application Change Requests

We have received 57 application change requests. ICANN published a [process and criteria for evaluating application change requests](#) to ensure consistency, predictability and transparency.

Amended applications will be held for 30 days to allow for comments via the Application Comment Forum. Any approved changes will be publicly posted, unless those changes were made to the confidential portion of the application.

Application Comments

To ensure the public has the opportunity to comment on new gTLD application materials, the Application Comment Forum is open for contributions for program's duration. However, to be sure that comments are considered as the application is evaluated, it is important to submit them no later than Wednesday, 26 September 2012.

Comments are an important part of the evaluation process, and in cases where a comment has impacted scoring, evaluators will seek clarification from the applicant.

Evaluation Progress

At this time applications are being distributed to the evaluation panels (Financial, Technical, String Similarity, Domain Name System (DNS) Stability, and Geographic Names evaluation panels) in a way that keeps each panel fully tasked at a manageable and economical rate. Additionally, the applications are grouped to take advantage of similarities, such as those coming from the same applicant or having the same "back-end provider."

The following table indicates the work done to date. As posted previously, financial and technical evaluation panels (the most complex evaluations) are planning to reach a processing rate of 300 applications per month. We continue to look for efficiencies that will shorten the projected processing times.

Panel	Target Completion	Apps Assigned	Apps in Evaluation	Preliminary App Results ¹
Financial	Jun-13	602	461	141
Technical and Operations	Jun-13	602	475	127
Geographic Names	Nov-12 ²	all	476	65
String Similarity ³	Oct-12	all	824	585
Registry Services	Jan-13	all	all	0
DNS Stability	Oct-12	all	all	0

¹ These numbers represent completed applications or applications with queued clarifying questions. They are subject to change due to application comments and/or change requests.

² Geographic Name evaluation is targeted to be completed by Nov-12, but applicants will receive more time to supply the letters of support.

³ String Similarity statistics are based on unique string counts, not total applications.

Clarifying Question Pilot

ICANN's pilot program to test the effectiveness of "clarifying" questions rolled out on Friday, 31 August. Evaluations done to date indicate that most applicants will be required to respond to one or more clarifying questions. More than 40 applicants volunteered to participate in the pilot program, designed to ensure questions developed by the evaluators are clear, concise and consistent.

The volunteer participants have two weeks to review the sample clarifying questions and provide answers, and are asked to submit their answers no later than Monday, 17 September at 23:59 UTC. Clarifying questions sent through the pilot process are actual questions based on the review of applications. However, responses sent through the pilot process will not be treated as part of the application and will not be counted toward the evaluation scoring. Participants will be issued official clarifying questions through TAS, which may or may not be different from the pilot clarifying questions, at a later time. Pilot participants need not take formal actions to obtain documentation such as letters of credit, security policies or financial statements at this time. Those that did not volunteer for the pilot program will not have their application processing impacted.

Evaluators only issued clarifying questions when more information was needed in order to give the applicant a passing score. If an application needs additional points overall to pass evaluation, the evaluators are directed to issue clarifying questions on all responses that can earn a score of two points.

Areas generating the most common clarifying questions include:

- Technical evaluation requirements:
 - EPP extension documentation for IDNs (Question 25)
 - Complete security policy (Question 30)
 - Complete DNSSEC practice statement (Question 43)
- Financial evaluation requirements:
 - Sufficient evidence for conservative costs (Question 47)
 - Sufficient evidence of conservative funding/revenue, particularly segregation of funds (Question 48)
 - Financial instrument must be unconditional (Question 50)

101 Comments on Batching/Metering Received

Members of the community posted more than 100 comments on how ICANN should manage the evaluation process flow. Addressing possible solutions for batching or metering, the comments were posted for the 29 July – 19 August comment period. You can view the comments received at <http://mm.icann.org/pipermail/newgtld-input/2012/thread.html>.

Batching and/or metering are necessary for management of the application evaluation process and meeting root zone scaling requirements. These methods would also enable the release of evaluation results to applicants according to a predictable schedule.

Much of the input received suggests different ways for prioritizing evaluation or delegation by category, such as priority for internationalized domain names (IDNs), geographic names or community applications. Also suggested were prioritizing uncontested new gTLDs, those from developing countries, those promoting diversity, those in the public interest, closed registry, brands and those that are true generics. Other suggestions included offering applicants the opportunity to opt-out or to select their own timing; grouping like applications together; prioritizing by readiness to contract or launch; round robin selection by category or regions; or prioritizing by number of clarifying questions.

A consultation on batching/metering will be held on Wednesday, 12 September.

New gTLD Sessions in Toronto

The New gTLD Program will be the focus of several sessions during ICANN's meeting in Toronto, Canada, 14-19 October 2012. In addition to update sessions on batching/metering and the overall program, staff will host a workshop on the IDN label rule set process and an update on the IDN Variant project, which was created to build requirements for dealing with variant character issues in Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, Devanagari, Greek and Latin scripts. Other sessions include ones on the universal acceptance of all TLDs, Uniform Rapid Suspension and planning for the next round of new gTLDs. Two sessions will focus on different aspects of the Trademark Clearinghouse: one on sunrise and general registrations and the second about rules on word mark and matching rules implementation. For more information, go to the meeting web site at <http://toronto45.icann.org/>.

Key Dates – Subject to change

26 September 2012	Application Comment Period closes
October 2012 (or shortly thereafter)	Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) Early Warning expected
12 January 2013	Objection Period closes
April 2013	GAC communicates considerations on GAC Advice
June/July 2013	All initial evaluations complete (seeking additional efficiencies).