

ICANN Org's Readiness to Support Future Rounds of New gTLDs

Introduction

This informational paper is intended to document the current working assumptions used by ICANN org in planning for policy implementation and operational readiness for a subsequent round of new gTLDs. The goal in making these assumptions explicit is to surface any areas of misalignment and allow an informed discussion on any assumptions that should be added or adjusted to drive the work going forward. It is important to note that these planning assumptions were informed by the work of the PDP WG and are not solely based on their work as the outcome of the PDP WG have yet to be finalized. ICANN org has shared these assumptions with the Board and incorporated the Board's input. ICANN org now seeks to share these assumptions with community and provide an opportunity for feedback.

These assumptions are divided into multiple sections that include:

- Timeline to next round
- Expected volumes of applications and processing time
- Policy implementation
- Readiness activities
- Systems & tools
- Operational processes
- People
- Costs

Assumptions for Subsequent Procedure Planning

To support future rounds of new gTLDs, a new operational infrastructure (people, processes, systems) capable of supporting the program in a reliable, predictable, and sustainable manner must be put in place. Based on experience from the 2012 round, developing this infrastructure will be a significant undertaking requiring considerable time and effort. In addition to developing the operational infrastructure, ICANN org will need to work in consultation with the community on implementation of the policy recommendations stemming from the work of the Subsequent

Procedures PDP Working Group. A program communications and awareness building campaign as well as a program financial model will also need to be developed and executed.

Because ICANN org's readiness to support future rounds of new gTLDs requires an upfront commitment to design and build the operational infrastructure (people, processes, systems) without the precise knowledge of and insights into the demand and the number of applications in the next and subsequent rounds, assumptions must be made to determine the scope and level of investment. ICANN org has accordingly defined the following assumptions (informed by the work of the PDP WG, and not solely based on their work as the outcome of the PDP WG have yet to be finalized) for use in its preliminary planning work:

1. Timeline to Next Round

- 1.1. Board adoption of the policy recommendations from the Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group's final report is a dependency for the opening of the next application window.
- 1.2. Policy implementation, readiness activities and operational processes will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.

2. Expected volumes of applications and processing time

- 2.1. Guidance from the Board regarding assumptions for subsequent procedures is critical to ICANN org's planning for the next and subsequent rounds.
- 2.2. The application volume, in the next round, will be roughly the same number of applications as in the 2012 round: ~2,000 applications.
- 2.3. Ongoing application volume for subsequent procedures will be significantly lower.
- 2.4. Application prioritization will be required to effectively sequence application processing.
- 2.5. There will be no changes to the 1,000 TLDs/year maximum delegation rate.
- 2.6. For ongoing subsequent procedures, ICANN org assumes an annual application window of one to three months in duration, with subsequent application windows opening during the same timeframe, once per calendar year.

3. Policy Implementation

- 3.1. There will be changes to the program implementation, based on the preliminary recommendations of the three (3) initial reports published by the Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group.
- 3.2. Policy implementation materials are anticipated to include significant documentation, and be detailed and comprehensive, which were not included in the scope of the 2012 Applicant Guidebook.
- 3.3. Policy implementation materials will be developed with appropriate consideration of community input.
- 3.4. Policy implementation materials will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.

4. Readiness Activities

- 4.1. Operational infrastructure (people, processes, systems) will be established to support subsequent application rounds for the long-term introduction of new gTLDs, not just a single round.
- 4.2. Program readiness activities, including staffing, process design, systems development, and vendor procurement will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.

5. Systems & Tools

- 5.1. Systems and tools planning and design should be based on a clear understanding of program processes and requirements.
- 5.2. Systems and tools development will be completed prior to opening the next application round.
- 5.3. Technology investments are planned to be limited to only those capabilities needed to ensure the security, stability and consistency of application submission, processing and communications.
- 5.4. System testing, security testing and operational pilot testing to ensure systems and tools are fit for purpose will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.
- 5.5. Development of process and workflow management tools will be focused on solving for data-intensive activities and critical program functions in order to balance automation vs. manual tools.

- 5.6. Existing materials, systems, and tools will be leveraged as much as possible. Internal knowledge and expertise will be prioritized, and as little as possible will be outsourced.
- 5.7. All new systems and tools will be developed on one of the 3 principal ICANN org platforms: Oracle, Alfresco, or Salesforce.

6. Operational Processes

- 6.1. Well-defined operational processes are critical to smooth program operations and satisfactory applicant experiences.
- 6.2. Design and documentation of program processes will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.
- 6.3. Staff training on program processes and tools will be completed prior to the opening of the next round.

7. People

- 7.1. Proactive resource planning will be completed in order to adequately staff the program team to meet deadlines.
- 7.2. Org staff will be utilized to perform program management, program operations and program administration functions.
- 7.3. Org will outsource critical application functions such as application evaluation and objection processing, to expert firms with requisite subject matter expertise.
- 7.4. Org currently lacks sufficient staff to implement new policy and prepare to operate the next application round.
- 7.5. Additional staff will be hired based on needed skills and experience.
- 7.6. ICANN org will augment staff with temporary resources as needed to address peak workload for activities which are not expected to be sustained for at least 24 months.

8. Costs

- 8.1. The program will continue to operate on a cost-recovery basis; it will be funded from application fees collected.
- 8.2. Tracking of program readiness costs should begin as rapidly as possible, in order to capture development costs prior to the launch of the next round.

Comprehensive cost planning for program readiness and operations is critical to accurate reporting and management of costs.

Draft - For Discussion