

Workshop 150: The Multi-Stakeholder Model and the Evolving gTLD Space

Background Paper

gTLD stands for generic top-level domain. It is what Internet users see as Internet extensions such as .com, .info or .org, and they are part of the structure of the Internet's domain name system.

Among the core values that guide the decisions and actions of ICANN is *"introducing and promoting competition in the registration of domain names where practicable and beneficial in the public interest."* One way of achieving that is by expanding the domain name space to allow for new top-level domains to be introduced. The New gTLD Program is designed to yield more consumer choice, stimulate competition, empower innovation, and generate more cultural diversity and new business opportunities around the world.

Two rounds of introducing more gTLDs took place in 2000 and 2003, and resulted in 15 additional gTLDs. Policy development discussions in the community on a long-term process for adding new gTLDs were completed by the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) in 2007, and recommendations were adopted by the ICANN Board of Directors in June 2008. ICANN worked with the community on implementing this policy, until June 2011 when the implementation plan was approved by the Board.

The New gTLD Program is a major initiative that reflects the intensive participation of many stakeholder groups and individuals. In working out the details of the Program, the multi-stakeholder collaborative process proved to be a rich source of expertise and a reliable methodology for resolution of complex and far-reaching global issues.

The application submission period opened on 12 January 2012. On 13 June 2012, ICANN revealed the applied-for new gTLDs and who had applied for which strings. A total of 1,930 applications were received, of which 66 were geographic name applications, and 116 were for IDN strings in scripts such as Arabic, Chinese, and Cyrillic. Applications were received from 60 countries and territories (noted according to ICANN's geographic regions: 911 from North America; 675 from Europe; 303 from Asia Pacific; 24 from Latin America and the Caribbean; and 17 from Africa). The full list of applied-for new gTLD strings and application information is available on ICANN website⁸.

The opening of the gTLD space creates additional opportunities for the multi-stakeholder model to be strengthened with increased participation and capacity to build on existing provisions for the namespace, in keeping with ICANN's responsibility to serve the global public interest. It also presents a number of opportunities: potential for innovation, increased diversity of scripts, languages, regional and community representation in the DNS, and increased competition and consumer choice. The range of opportunities expand for developing countries as

well, as one key element of the New gTLD Program is the support of applicants from developing countries by means of financial and non-financial resources.

This workshop will provide a review of present developments in ICANN's work in the gTLD namespace, as well as a discussion on emerging issues and how the multi-stakeholder model can respond to meet these in the future. It will include a description of the current status of the New gTLD Program, including an update on the evaluation process for the applications received during the submission period.

The workshop will also highlight the potential opportunities of the New gTLD Program in introducing top-level domains in multiple languages and scripts, and discuss how Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) could contribute effectively to the development of a more inclusive, and multi-lingual Internet.

Resources:

1. Basic TLD information:
<http://www.icann.org/en/resources/registries/about>
2. New gTLD Program: Frequently Asked Questions in multiple languages:
<http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/customer-service/faqs>
3. New gTLD Program Factsheet: <http://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/factsheet-new-gtld-program-oct09-en.pdf>
4. Applicant Guidebook documentation:
<http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/historical-documentation>
5. Glossary of terms: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/glossary>
6. Applicant support program FAQ:
<http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/faqs>
7. Learn more about IDNs: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/idns>
8. List of applied for new gTLD strings: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/program-status/application-results/strings-1200utc-13jun12-en>