



Domain Name Chronicle # 2

By JJN Solutions, LLC

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ICANN 82 Community Forum



The [ICANN 82 Community Forum](#) was held in Seattle, Washington USA from March 8 – 13, 2025. The week-long meeting was the first ICANN meeting this year and focused on a number of issues including new gTLDs, Domain Name Registration Data, and a discussion about reviews and how we meet.

ICANN’s New CEO Debut

ICANN 82 was also the first official ICANN meeting with its new President and CEO, Kurt Erik “Kurtis” Lindqvist, who began his term in December 2024. Kurtis has more than 30 years of experience in the business development of Internet Service Providers

and worldwide network carriers.

Kurtis thanked the community for the warm welcome he has received to date before touting ICANN’s unique multistakeholder model and that there will be important discussions this year on the future of Internet governance at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) 20-year review.



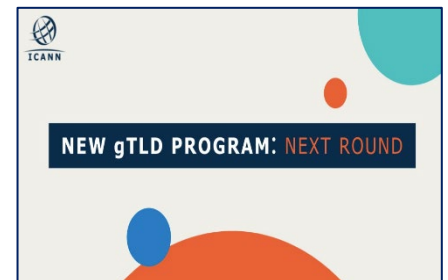
[ICANN Facebook Post 12-13-2004](#)

One of ICANN’s key areas of focus in the coming years will be improving the policy development process to ensure that implementation concerns are addressed earlier. “A more robust, predictable, and streamlined

approach will help us make progress faster while maintaining ICANN’s commitment to bottom-up, community-driven decision-making,” he said during the Welcome Ceremony.

Inching Closer to New gTLDs

One of the most widely discussed topics at the recent ICANN meeting — as well as at several prior meetings — was the next round of new gTLDs, which



remains on track to launch in April 2026. The good news is that ICANN is still expected to meet that target date.



Application Fees are Set



What's the Price Tag on a New gTLD?

When we [released the first issue of the JJN Solutions Domain Name Chronicle](#), ICANN had projected the application fee for the next round of gTLDs would fall somewhere between **\$208,000 and \$293,000**. Now, that number is official: **\$227,000 per application**.

So, what's covered in that six-figure fee? The base application fee includes several key evaluations: background screening, financial assessment, DNS stability review, and string similarity review.

But keep in mind—this price tag does not include additional services like community priority evaluations, geographic name reviews, brand exemption requests, code of conduct exemptions, or re-evaluations triggered by changes to the application or applicant (such as new officers or entity restructuring). Those will cost you extra.

← Refunds? Yes, But Timing Is Everything →

ICANN has also introduced three refund windows for the upcoming application round. Here's how they break down:

- **65% refund:** Available from the time ICANN receives your evaluation fee up to 10 days after String Confirmation Day ([see p.4](#)).
- **35% refund:** Kicks in from day 11 after String Confirmation Day until the start of the Application and Applicant Evaluation phase (see p.5).
- **20% refund:** Offered if an applicant withdraws before entering into a Registry Agreement with ICANN.

Bottom line: planning, timing, and strategic foresight are going to be critical if you're stepping into the 2026 gTLD round.

We'll continue to track updates and dig deeper into best practices for preparing a successful application—so stay tuned!

Registry Service Providers (RSPs): One Evaluation to Rule Them All

Registry Service Providers (RSPs)—also known as Registry Back-End Providers—are the technical backbone of the domain name system. They're responsible for delivering the essential infrastructure and services that keep a top-level domain (TLD) running smoothly.

Some RSPs also serve as the **Registry Operator** (i.e., the entity that contracts with ICANN to operate a specific TLD). For example:

- Verisign acts as both the Registry Operator and RSP for .com and .net.
- Identity Digital performs both roles for extensions like .services, .solutions, and .ninja.

However, many Registry Operators choose to outsource their technical operations to third-party RSPs. For instance:

- Dot Hip Hop, LLC, the operator of .hiphop, partners with Tucows Registry Services for its backend needs.
- Other well-known RSPs include CentralNic, GoDaddy Registry, and Nominet.

Lessons from 2012: Avoiding Redundancy

Back in the 2012 gTLD round, ICANN evaluated each application separately—even when multiple applications used the same RSP. As a result, companies like Neustar, Inc. (now part of GoDaddy Registry) had their RSP services reviewed 350 separate times. This repetitive process was time-consuming, inefficient, and unnecessarily duplicative.

To fix that, the Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process (SubPro PDP)—co-chaired by JJN Solutions Founder Jeff Neuman—introduced a more streamlined solution: evaluate each RSP once, regardless



of how many TLDs they support. All new gTLD applicants will be required to use a pre-evaluated RSP, and ICANN will publish a list of eligible providers ahead of the application window.

✔ Evaluation Status

The **RSP Evaluation Program** officially launched in **November 2024**. As of **February 2025**, **23 applicants** have submitted some or all of the required materials. While ICANN has not disclosed the names of the applicants, early participation reflects a healthy global mix—with representation from the Asia-Pacific, European, and North American regions. Notably, there is only one applicant each from the African and Latin American regions.

Applicant Support Program Begins

As part of its commitment to broaden participation in the domain name space, ICANN launched the [Applicant Support Program \(ASP\)](#) to help reduce financial and



resource barriers for prospective gTLD applicants. The goal? To make applying for and operating a registry more accessible to those who might not otherwise be able to participate—particularly from underserved or under-resourced regions.

The ASP provides both financial and non-financial assistance, and the current application window opened on November 19, 2024, and is expected to close on May 24, 2025 (please confirm updated deadlines on ICANN’s site).

As of March 21, 2025, ICANN has received 18 draft applications, but only two have been formally submitted and are under review. This slow pace isn’t entirely surprising, given the detailed nature of the application process and the extensive

disclosures required.

While the program was primarily designed to benefit applicants from the developing world, the majority of submissions so far have come from North American and Asian regions.

Applicants who qualify for support won’t receive a free ride—but they will see a significant discount. Successful ASP participants are still responsible for paying 15–25% of the standard application fee, which comes to \$34,050–\$56,750.

And what happens if a supported application ends up in a contention set and proceeds to an ICANN-administered auction? ICANN offers a bid credit of up to 35%. For example, if the auction closes at \$2 million, the supported applicant would only be responsible for 65% of that total—or \$1.3 million.

In short: the ASP is a welcome initiative, but it still requires a serious commitment—both in preparation and in potential cost.



The Applicant Journey Part I: Application through Initial Evaluation

During the current ICANN public comment period on draft excerpts of the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook (the bible for new gTLD applicants), ICANN published a document called “[The Applicant Journey](#).” This 19-page document provides a very high-level overview of the application process for new gTLDs. We highly recommend reading this document first when considering whether to apply for a new gTLD, as the process is not for the faint of heart



The Application

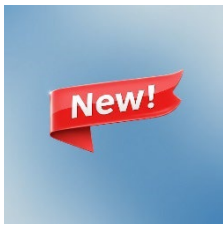
In a nutshell, when you initially apply for a new gTLD, you’ll be asked a fairly large set of questions about your organization’s background, financial situation, directors, officers, the string you wish to apply for, and the purposes for which you seek the string. If you are applying for an Internationalized Domain Name (IDN)—a



string that uses characters in a non-ASCII script (e.g., .인터넷, the Korean word for 'Internet')—there may be additional questions on variants of that string. For simplicity, we'll leave the topic of IDNs there for now, but feel free to contact us with any questions!



The Replacement String



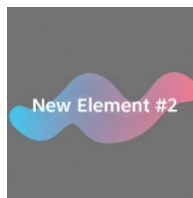
In your new gTLD application, you will be asked whether you want to include a “replacement string” for the one you originally applied for. This is a new feature of the program, not available in the

2012 round. The goal is to minimize string contention and maximize approvals. If other applications are submitted for the same string, you may elect to switch to your replacement string—provided no one else has applied for it. However, even if you make the switch, there’s no guarantee that your replacement string won’t end up in a contention set (e.g., singular vs. plural). Sound confusing? It is.



Reveal and String Confirmation Days

Roughly 8 weeks after all applications are submitted, ICANN will publish a list of all applied-for strings (and their replacement strings) along with the public portions of each application—this is known as Reveal Day. Applicants with replacement strings will have 14 days to decide whether to switch. After this, ICANN will publish an updated list reflecting those choices—called String Confirmation Day.



Prioritization Draw, Comments, Warnings, Objections, Oh My!

In order to determine the order in which applications To determine the order of review, ICANN will hold a Prioritization Draw. At the same time, the public can submit comments on any application—these must be submitted within 90 days of String Confirmation Day to be considered by evaluators.

Governments may also issue an “Early Warning” if they foresee raising objections via GAC Advice. While GAC Advice doesn’t automatically doom an application, it often creates a steep uphill battle.



Finally, third parties with standing can file formal objections to an application. These include:

- legal Rights Objections – Trademark concerns
- String Confusion Objections – Similarity to existing or applied-for strings
- Community Objections – Applications opposed by relevant communities
- Limited Public Interest Objections – Strings deemed contrary to international legal norms

Name Collision and Temporary Delegation



ICANN will conduct a Name Collision Initial Assessment to identify strings with a high risk of name collision.

This issue arises when network infrastructure has been misconfigured to mimic a TLD, causing unintended traffic redirection if that string is delegated. Although rare, if a string is found to be high risk, the applicant must propose a mitigation plan. As a





precaution, ICANN will temporarily delegate all low-risk strings to itself to monitor for potential harm before final approval.



Publication of Evaluation Reports and ID of New Contention Sets

Once the above steps are completed, ICANN will publish the string evaluation reports and the outcomes of any string confusion objections. This will result in the final formation of contention sets—groups of applications for the same or similar strings, including singular/plural variations.



What happens next?

In the next JJN Solutions Newsletter, we will cover the next steps from Contention

Resolution to Delegation.

ICANN Announces Meeting Locations

ICANN just announced its meeting locations for ICANN 85, to be held in March 2026, and ICANN 88, in March 2027. They will be in Mumbai, India and Lisbon, Portugal respectively.

FUTURE ICANN MEETINGS

- ICANN 83 June 10-13, 2025 Prague
- ICANN 84 Oct. 24-30, 2025 Muscat
- ICANN 85 Mar. 7-12, 2025 Mumbai
- ICANN 86 June 8-11, 2026 TBD
- ICANN 87 Oct. 17-22, 2026 TBD
- ICANN 88 Mar. 13-18, 2027 Lisbon



Don't forget to listen to Jeff Neuman, Todd Ryan and David Michaels every Tuesday at 3 pm Eastern / 12 pm Pacific on X (formerly Twitter). For more information on the Domain Name Law Show, go to <http://www.dnlshow.com>



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JJN Solutions, LLC is a legal & policy consultancy advising clients on domain name disputes, portfolio management, Intellectual Property, entertainment law, licensing, litigation, and contract negotiations.



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