

POLICY ISSUE BRIEF

EN

New gTLDs

If you would like more information on this issue or about how to get involved in ICANN policy development activities, please e-mail the ICANN Policy Development Department at policy-staff@icann.org.

This is a basic introduction to *New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs)*, an important area of Internet policy development that continues to be addressed by the ICANN community's bottom-up, consensus based, policymaking structure. It is designed to accommodate newcomers to ICANN, as well as ICANN issue veterans, who may be unfamiliar with *New gTLD* issues. Whether a newcomer or veteran, we encourage you to go beyond this introduction and learn more about the work of the ICANN community. We have included URLs to additional information on *the New gTLDs Program*, as well as other topics that we reference as we discuss the issue.

We also invite you to receive regular updates on ICANN policy development activities via e-mail by subscribing to the monthly ICANN *Policy Update*. To subscribe, simply visit the ICANN subscriptions page at <http://www.icann.org/newsletter/>, enter your e-mail address, and click on the ICANN *Policy Update*.

International participation and collaboration are essential to the success and effectiveness of ICANN's policy development activities today, but success in the future will not be possible without the commitment of volunteers like you from around the world. Whether you represent the Internet interests of a nation, a group of individual Internet users, a company, or an organization that would like to become more involved in the issues, there is a place for you at ICANN where you can help shape the future of the Internet.

Thank you for your interest and participation.



ICANN

New gTLDs

What is a TLD?

Every computer connected to the Internet has a unique numeric IP address that allows it to be identified by other computers, but it would not be very practical for people to try to remember thousands of IP addresses when navigating the Internet. The domain name system (DNS) replaces IP addresses with easier to remember domain names, usually comprised of a series of letters, separated by dots. The part to the left of the last “dot” is the known as the second-level domain, and the part to the right is the *top-level domain* (TLD). For example, in the website address www.icann.org, the TLD is *.org* and the second-level domain is *icann*.

There are different types of top-level domains (TLDs), with some used for specific purposes. For example, there are currently 240 two-letter country code TLDs (ccTLDs), which identify a country or territory. For example, an address ending in *.de* corresponds to Germany, while *.fr* corresponds to France.

A generic top-level domain (gTLD) can, in some cases, identify the nature of an organization operating a specific website. For example, a website with a *.org* address can indicate a non-commercial organization, although there is no requirement that it does. There are currently 20 gTLDs in use. You can see the entire list of gTLDs by visiting <http://www.iana.org/gtld/gtld.htm>.

There are also different kinds of gTLDs. For example, an *unsponsored* gTLD, like *.com* or *.info*, is intended for general use and is operated under ICANN policies. A *sponsored* gTLD, by contrast, is intended for use by a specific community, like *.coop* is used by cooperative organizations. Policies for a sponsored gTLD are formulated in part by the organization or community that sponsored its

creation.

How are new gTLDs created?

As the number of people using the Internet for various purposes has increased, so has the demand for new gTLDs. Since 2000, there have been several new gTLDs added to the DNS, including general purpose domains such as *.info*, and more specialized domains, such as *.mobi* for mobile phone users and *.aero* for the aviation industry.

ICANN is responsible for the process of introducing new gTLDs. The priority is to ensure that new gTLDs are awarded, in a fair and transparent process, to organizations that can effectively manage them on behalf of Internet users. ICANN has held two application rounds in the past, one in 2000 and another in 2004, when organizations were invited to propose new gTLDs.

Who is responsible for new gTLDs?

The responsibility for operating each gTLD is delegated to a specific organization. Depending on the kind of gTLD, these organizations are referred to as registry operators, sponsors or delegees.

Each new gTLD must be proposed by an organization, which will launch and administer it if approved. To be selected to operate a new gTLD, the organization must satisfy ICANN that, among other criteria, it has strong technical abilities, a sound business plan and a commitment to implement ICANN policies effectively.

Once selected to operate a new gTLD, the proposing organization will be asked to sign a Registry (or Sponsorship) Agreement with ICANN and agree to comply with consensus policies approved by the Board.

Anyone can apply to operate a new gTLD,

New gTLDs

including organizations that already operate other TLDs, and applicants that may have been unsuccessful in previous application rounds.

ICANN encourages community inquiries on the gTLD process. Questions may be sent to newgtld@icann.org. Questions and answers can be viewed at <http://www.icann.org/topics/new-gtld-strategy-faq.htm>.

When can I apply for a gTLD?

ICANN views the process for the introduction of new gTLDs as vital to promoting choice and competition in domain registration services, while ensuring that the security, stability and global interoperability of the Internet is maintained.

If you have an idea for a new gTLD, you can submit it during the next application period.

ICANN anticipates launching a new round for gTLDs this year. The precise process and timeline for introducing new gTLDs is being developed now. ICANN's Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) created the proposed policy to guide the introduction of new gTLDs through its bottom-up, multi-stakeholder policy development process. The questions addressed in the development of the new gTLD policy involve technical, economic, operational, legal, public policy, and other considerations. The intended result is a straightforward, fair, and efficient process for allocating new gTLDs.

ICANN is now at a transition point, moving from completion of policy development work to a focus on implementation plans, and will be able to proceed to full implementation pending approval of the GNSO policy recommendations by ICANN's Board. The Board is considering the GNSO's recommendations along with a report on implementation issues prepared by Staff. After the

Board has approved the GNSO's policy and directed Staff to implement it, ICANN will announce the date of the open application round for new gTLDs.

Potential applicants for new gTLDs will be able to download an information guidebook (referred to as a *Request for Proposals*) from the ICANN website describing step by step the criteria and processes that must be followed in order to be considered for a new gTLD. This guidebook also will include details of the application fee, which will be levied to cover the costs of the New gTLD Program.

The application process will be web-based, and ICANN will post detailed information about the timeline and the process, and conduct international outreach to raise awareness well in advance of the deadline for filing an application.

Want to learn more?

For more information on ICANN's New gTLD Program, please visit <http://icann.org/topics/new-gtld-program.htm>. Questions about this program should be sent to newgtld@icann.org.

For more information about the New gTLD policy recommendations of the GNSO, the policy making body of ICANN concerned gTLDs, please visit <http://gnso.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds/>.