
ICANN81 | Prep Week – New gTLD Program: Next Round Implementation Status Update
Wednesday, October 30, 2024 – 9:00 to 10:30 PM TRT

RENATE DE WULF: Recording in progress. Hello and welcome to this session. My name is Renate de Wulf and I'm the participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Portuguese. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, unmute your microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak, if speaking in a language other than English, and speak at a reasonable pace. I will now hand the floor over to Marika Konings.

MARIKA KONINGS: Thank you very much, Renate, and hello everyone. Welcome to the latest edition of our new gTLD program implementation update. My name is Marika Konings and I'm the new gTLD program lead. I'm joined here today by several of my colleagues, but I think it's important to recognize that the implementation of this program is truly a cross-functional effort, with colleagues from almost all parts of ICANN contributing to the delivery of the program. At the same time, it's also a real partnership with the ICANN community, and in particular the implementation review team, who are supporting us in our efforts to deliver this program in line with the intent of the policy

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recommendations and timeline that we have set up for ourselves. Renate, if we can go to the next slide, and the next one, please, or it's Jia.

So, for today's agenda, I will first give you a brief overview of the overall state of the program, followed by some deep dives on some of the specific elements of the program, namely the Applicant Guidebook, or AGB, the Applicant Support Program, also known as ASP, the Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program, RSP, and finally, a brief overview of the ASP, the Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program, RSP, and the work that's being undertaken in relation to outreach, engagement, and applicant readiness. There will be an opportunity to ask questions after each segment, and we also have carved out some time at the end of our presentation for questions. Of course, also feel free to use the chat to share any comments or questions you may have, and we'll take note of those and try to answer those as best as we can. Go to the next slide, Jia.

As we move to the overall program status update, I wanted to point you to the briefing document that we published that provides you with further details on the overall status of implementation, but also for each of the projects, work streams, and functional support areas. And I'm hoping that one of my colleagues has already put the link in the chat for those who may not have had a chance to review this yet.

For those of you that have joined the previous edition, this slide may look familiar. It provides an overview of the overall program organization with a governance model at the top and the different work streams, projects, and functional support areas underneath. What may

be helpful to call out is that compared to the last version, we've now added a project for name collision following the board's adoption of the SSAC advice on this topic. Furthermore, the readiness team launched in July of this year and is focusing on both applicant as well as internal ICANN organizational readiness. Go to the next slide, Jia.

On this slide, you will see the overall program status. I think it's important to note that we have been very clear with the team that yellow and red are not necessarily bad. Of course, we prefer everything to be green, but we'd rather have an honest assessment of where things stand so we can assess the risks and put mitigation plans in place, instead of being surprised when things suddenly do not go as planned. I know that the yellow and red may jump out, but there's also a lot of green here, which means that for most of the projects and work streams, work is progressing as planned. The overall program also remains on track, but we are flagging some risks in relation to schedule and resources that could affect the overall status if not addressed adequately.

As you will note, this is the status as of 30th of September. I think it's important to point out that we have been working hard over the last few weeks to work through the reasons for the delays that were encountered by the registry service testing project, as well as the shared services project. Based on those efforts, I think we're able to change the status for RST to yellow. I think shared services is almost back to green, meaning that the impact on other projects that are dependent on the deliverables of these two projects are expected to have been minimized. There is still some risk, but as I said, we've put mitigation

plans in place that have given us the confidence that we're able to reduce the impact of these delays, so that these do not have a trickle-down effect on other projects, such as RSP that Gustavo will tell you more about in a second. You will find more details on the different issues, risks, as well as the mitigation plans in the pre-ICANN 81 status update. Could we go to the next slide, please, Jia?

As you're already getting highlights from the work that's happening on the Applicant Guidebook, ASP, RSP, and the Comms Engagement and Applicant Readiness Projects, I thought I would just highlight a couple of other areas where significant work is also being undertaken. First of all, we confirmed the expected gTLD evaluation fee last month, which is an important piece of information for those considering whether to apply. Significant progress is also being made on the Base Registry Agreement, which is the agreement that new registry operators will need to sign once they have passed all the evaluations. Review of the updates to the Base Registry Agreement will also be a topic of focus for the Implementation Review Team at ICANN 81. A lot of work is also happening in the gTLD Application Processing, or GAC, projects, which is where the systems and processes are being designed that allow for the submission and subsequent processing of applications. A total of 10 systems and 6 integrations to other existing systems have been identified as needing to be developed, with the TLD Application Management System, or TAMS, being the main one.

Last but not least, the team has also spent significant time and effort working through the GAC advice that was received following ICANN 80 on ASP and contention resolution, including supporting consultations

that were held between the Board and the GAC on this advice. Before my colleagues dive further into the details of the different aspects of the program, I just wanted to give you a quick reminder of the different timelines that we're working towards. As you will see, both ASP and RRSP are planning to open for applications right after ICANN 81, with the gTLD application window expected to open in April 2026. And with that, I think I'm handing it back to Sam to see if there are any questions about this particular section of our update.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Marika. I'm not seeing any questions in the chat as of yet. If there's anyone who would like to ask a question, please feel free to raise your hand now or to type it in the chat. Otherwise, I think we can move on to the next section. Seeing no hands, I'll hand it over to Lars to talk about the AGB. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN:

Thank you so much, Sam. Hello, good morning, good afternoon, good evening, everyone. Jia, I could see two slides down, please. Thank you so much. Yeah, as Sam just said, I'm giving a quick overview of the work that's being done in what we call internally Workstream 1 policy implementation. Workstream 1 is essentially tasked as part of the program to draft the applicant guidebook for the next round. We're assisted in doing that by the SubPro implementation review team, who's helping us, the members, helping us to ensure, as you see on the slide here, to ensure that the applicant guidebook language meets the intent of the policy recommendations that are contained in the SubPro

final report and that were adopted by the board, obviously. The publication of the AGB, of the applicant guidebook, is a key dependency for ICANN to open the application window for the next round.

The current timeline for that sees the opening occurring in April 2026. We have a policy recommendation that states that the applicant guidebook needs to be published at least four months before the round opens. This means that you see the timeline below there, that the applicant guidebook will need to be published no later than December 25 for the window to then open in April 26. I just referred here to the end of that timeline. I'll quickly walk everybody through it. The implementation review team.

The IRT, as I said, is assisting Org, ICANN Org, in putting together the guidebook. That work is done mostly in accordance with the different topics that are contained in the final report, of which there are, I think, 42 altogether. There's additional content as well that features in the applicant guidebook, but that's what the work is generally centered around. And those 42 topics are not discussed all at once, but piecemeal, if you want. And so a first chunk of those topics or issues were published for public comment earlier this year. A second separate chunk of topics was just published for public comment last month. The window closed nine days ago, my calendar tells me here. And then we have a third, and possibly, actually, we just spoke to the IRT about this, a fourth public comment, just because we want to get as much out as possible in December. And then maybe we have a couple of topics we'll put out for public comment in January 2025. The goal is to have every topic at least out for public comment once, before we then put the

whole applicant guidebook out for public comment in May 2025. So we have a complete draft at that point, but everything that's essentially published in May as part of that draft will have been already published for public comment at least once. And then between May and December 25, public comment is open. We'll review the public comments with the IRT, and then the board will approve the guidebook no later than December, so we can publish the guidebook.

Below that is just a few explanations for the acronyms. I think I went through those. So if I can see the next slide, and I promise I won't spend as much time on the next few slides. There's some statistics here on the implementation review team. This is an open group. Anybody can join. So if you would like to, there's the email up here on the slide. You can also ping me or any of the folk you see on this call, or speak to us if you are at ICANN 81, if you want to join. There's a special working methodology that's applied to the IRT. I won't go into those details, but we actually have to use this so everybody who participates is an equal participant, and every voice is very much welcome. The next slide, please.

There's an overview here of the topics that have been working on as part of the third public comment that I just talked about in December. You see this here. Some of these topics have not yet been discussed with the IRT. The last four here, you see them in the November row at the bottom, meaning that some of these topics also, maybe some of them that are currently being discussed, may be pushed to a fourth public comment in January. That will not impact the overall timeline, however. I'm just going to do a very quick – I don't want to say going

rogue, but I just want to have a quick shout out. I saw a couple of IRT members in the participants list here. It's really been a great pleasure working with the community and with the IRT since May 24th. I think we've been working together. There's a lot of flexibility being shown. The team, Marika pointed this out, takes a village, is working really hard to get some of these remaining complex topics to the IRT to discuss. That takes a lot of work on the org side, and the IRT has really shown a lot of flexibility. We're not always able to share everything with as much advance as we would like, but the discussions and the overall community work together with the org, I think, has been really exemplary. Others may disagree, but from my perspective, it's been a great pleasure. Thank you for that. The next slide, please. Thank you.

This is, I think, the last one. A quick overview of the sessions that are coming up in Istanbul. You see this here, No Rest for the Wicked. We have five sessions with the IRT, and in fact, the IRT sub-track with the IDNs, the international domain names, are also meeting in Istanbul. These are all one- to one-and-a-half-hour meetings. The big emphasis will be on the base registry agreement. The first draft of that will be shared with the IRT, in fact, in the coming days, so people can read the document before we have the face-to-face discussions. Then we'll also talk about contention set resolution. It's about auctions, replacement string, brand string change. Those topics fall under that heading, and then about community priority evaluations as well. There have already been discussions on both of those two topics in the IRT, and so for those of you who have not participated, please, if you would like, it may be beneficial to maybe listen to the recording, so look at the transcript of those calls. You can find it all on the wiki of the IRT. And with that, I think

my segment has come to an end. I'm sorry if I took too long. Sam, it's back to you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Lars. Again, we'll give an opportunity to open it up for questions, so if you'd like to raise your hand, please feel free to do so now. I haven't seen any new questions in the chat, but lots of lovely comments about participation in the IRT, which is great to hear. If we have no questions again, I'll go ahead and hand it over to Kristy Buckley to talk about my favorite subject, the Applicant Support Program. Over to you, Kristy.

KRISTY BUCKLEY:

Many thanks, Samantha. Hello, everyone. Kristy Buckley here. I serve as the lead for the next round's Applicant Support Program, and you can go to the next slide. Thank you so much. And I think some days I wonder if it's everyone's favorite subject, but thank you all for joining, and we have a couple of updates for you of work that we've completed since ICANN 80. So, we published the ASP Handbook in all ICANN languages, and we noted here when these slides were created that we were expecting board consideration of the Handbook at ICANN 81, but in fact we went sooner than that, so the board considered the ASP Handbook last week and has approved that Handbook, so we have one less agenda item for them at ICANN 81.

We have also completed development of the ASP Application System, so that's the form that people are going to use to apply and submit an application to ASP. Development of that is complete. As you all are

hopefully aware, we launched communications, engagement, and outreach efforts for ASP, which several of my colleagues will talk a bit more about in a few minutes, and that included convening three regional webinars, as well as translating ASP materials and publishing the Champions Toolkit, which hopefully you have all seen online and had an opportunity to utilize that. We also saw board adoption of the Supplemental Policy Recommendations 17.2 and 32.1, as well as the GNSO Guidance Process, or the GGP, for ASP Guidance Recommendations. Those were also approved by the board. We also did a public comment on the draft to inform the final version of the ASP Terms and Conditions, and that's something that we are continuing to work on with the full IRT. You should see a red line later this week. Next slide.

Additional items completed since ICANN 80. We finalized the ASP Funding Plan per the board resolution. This was based also on community input to use up to 5 million U.S. dollars from the 2012 Auction Proceeds Fund, and that would cover up to half the cost of direct support to qualified applicants. The board and the GAC also held a consultation on the GAC's ICANN 80 advice related to the Applicant Support Program, and we've also been doing a lot more work to develop the non-financial support aspects of the ASP. So, this includes further articulation of the Applicant Counselor role, development of the pro bono services recruitment, and development of a capacity development or training program. We're also in the midst of vetting bidders for serving as the vendor for the Support Applicant Review Panel, which is the evaluator that will assess Phase 2 of the ASP evaluation. Next slide, please.

So, I know you've all seen many timelines, including ones related to the Applicant Support Program. In light of some of the questions that we've received, in the last few months and specifically some questions from the GAC regarding wanting to better understand when different supports for ASP would be coming online or under development. So here you see three timelines. The first one in dark blue at the top is when we anticipate the applicant support program to open to receive applications and that's slated for the 19th of November in just a couple of weeks. That will be open for 12 months and we anticipate that that will close next year at the same time in November. And that's about six months prior to the new gTLD program next round opening in Q2 of 2026. I think it's April 2026.

And then you'll see in the orange bar that the last many months, we've been developing materials for the applicant counselor as well as training materials. Those are well underway and we plan to have those materials available for kind of public consumption in the start of 2025. That's also when we will be posting the pro bono services that have volunteered to be on that list and we're currently doing recruitment of those as you might have seen in a recent announcement. And then lastly the blue bar just shows ASP communications and outreach which is ongoing throughout that ASP evaluation period because we've created a long runway for people to be able to apply for the for support and we want to continue raising awareness and interest in that program over the course of that period. And with that we can go to the next slide.

So looking forward in terms of what to expect at ICANN 81 and beyond that right after ICANN 81 we know that we are anticipating the launch

of the applicant support program and the RSP which is very exciting and many thanks to the folks that have contributed to working on that. We wouldn't be where we are without you all contributing quite significantly to this program. We will have continued work on the following AGB topics so this is related to contention resolution and we know there's a discussion needed around the bid credit which was a policy recommendation that if a supported applicant ended up in an ICANN auction at last resort a bid credit or multiplier or similar mechanism might apply. But in light of ongoing discussions around contention resolution we anticipate continued work around that topic.

In the coming weeks we will also identify and contract a vendor to manage the support applicant review panel or SARP and again we're looking to open up at ASP for applications on the 19th of November. We have also included a few links for information and we're working on a blog to come out in the next week or so with additional information on ASP and applicant readiness which my colleagues will talk about in a few minutes. And with that I think I hand it back to you Samantha.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Kristy. Again we're going to open it up for questions. So if you would like to ask a question now about the applicant support program, feel free to raise your hand. I have not seen anything come in the chat. But seeing no hands again I'm gonna move things along and we'll hand it over to Gustavo to talk about the registry service provider evaluation program.

GUSTAVO IBARRA:

Hi, Gustavo here. I'm the lead for the registry service provider evaluation program and also the lead for the registry system testing 2.0 and the shared services project that Marika mentioned in previous slides. Next slide please.

So, regarding the RSP evaluation program, as you may know, we published the first version of the RSP handbook back in June 2024. Several weeks ago, we also published three addendums that were sections pending in the handbook. One is the eligibility criteria for applicants, the other is the code of conduct, and the final one is the terms and conditions. For several weeks, potential RSP applicants have had all the information they need in order to apply to the program. We know that a few folks have been reading through all the documents because we have received questions about the criteria, and I want to mention that any clarification that we need to do to the criteria, we are going to make those clarifications publicly available by using the FAQ. So, if you go to the RSP microsite and access the FAQ, you will find clarifications that we have been providing to those who asked those questions.

It's also important to mention that we continue with the development of the RSP application system. We are just in the final touches at this point because, as you know, we are going to open on November 19th. But, like any other system, we are doing the final polishing, let's say, to be able to have a system that is friendly to use, easy to use, and user-friendly. We have two webinars with really good participation and really good questions. In fact, from those webinars, we got input and published a minor version of the RSP handbook to change some of the

criteria based on that input that we received from the webinars. So, please go through all these documents. If you have any questions, please reach out to ICANN, and if we believe that something should be changed in the handbook, we will make the change. We are open to any feedback, and we have reacted to that feedback as we received it. Next slide, please.

So, these are the important dates for those of you that are interested in applying to the program. By the end of the week of November 4th, we are expecting to publish what we call the second level LGRs with full variant sets. These LGRs are for those interested in offering IDN registrations at the second level domain name, and they are optional to use. But, if you want to use them, then you're going to be automatically pre-approved for those IDN tables. As I was mentioning before, we are going to open the RSP evaluation period on November 19th. We are going to close the period in May 2025, and once we close the period, we're going to start doing the evaluations. We may start going through the evaluations, obviously, as we receive them because we want to be sure that we are capable of having enough bandwidth to review all of the applications. But that's when the official evaluation period is going to start. Then, in December 2025, we expect to publish the first version of the evaluated list of RSPs—so the list of those RSPs that have been evaluated for the utility program—and we're also going to publish which registry services they have been evaluated to and also which IDN tables. We are also going to make publicly available the public portions of the RSP applications. As was mentioned before, there is going to be a second RSP evaluation period for those that were not pre-evaluated,

and it is going to go concurrently with the utility evaluation program. And with that, next slide, please.

These are some interesting links, and I just want to mention one last thing: we're still working on the RST OT&E, that's registry system testing—the operational and test environment. We expect to have the system available in the next few weeks, and it's very important for those that are interested in applying in the RSP program to start playing with this system right away because, after technical evaluation as we review the answers to those questions in the handbook, we are going to start doing RST, or registry system testing, which is an automated system. But, RSP applicants, your infrastructure should be capable of going through RST. And with that, I'm going to hand back to Sam.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Gustavo. So, we'll open it up again for questions. If anyone would like to ask a question verbally, please feel free to hold up your hand and raise it now. I'm just scrolling through the multitude of links in the chat. I'm not seeing any questions that were submitted there. I guess everybody's saving theirs for the end—no worries. So now, we'll go ahead and pass it over to Janelle. We're going to be discussing outreach, engagement, and applicant readiness, and Janelle's going to kick us off with the readiness.

JANELLE MCALISTER:

Thank you, Samantha. I'm happy to introduce the applicant readiness, which is a new part of the next round program. Our purpose is, if we can go to the next slide, to ensure the next round stakeholders are equipped

with the knowledge and skills for successful participation in the new gTLD program. We will achieve this by creating education, training materials, and knowledge-building resources tailored to various types of participants and learning types. Our goal is to develop content to enhance knowledge and ability, equip participants with detailed documentation and requirements to enable successful applications, evaluations, operations, and sustainability. Our expected outcome will result in impacted groups being ready for the application windows, adoption of new processes and systems, confidence in executing steps in the application and processing deliverables. If we can go to the next slide.

Thank you. So, our key accomplishments since ICANN 80, as I mentioned, this is a new team that was created within the last few months that is primarily made up of a change management lead, an external readiness lead, and a content developer. And we are currently focused on developing training materials for the ASP and RSP application windows, including ASP applicants who may be new to the gTLD space. And our expected outcomes are changes in impacted groups are appropriately identified, simple and easily accessible tools to provide support for both ASP and RSP applicants. And we have key upcoming activities. We're doing a training needs analysis and content mapping for all impacted groups. And over the next two weeks, we have three resources that will be published for the applicant support program. And if we can go to the next slide.

The first material that we will publish is an applicant systems guide. So, this will walk applicants through the new software being launched for

the ASP program. We'll also be delivering an ASP quick start guide that gives a broad overview of the ASP program and what to expect. And then the third deliverable that we'll be launching next week is an ASP checklist. So, this will allow applicants to have a checklist of everything they need to prepare in order to submit their application when the application window opens. Then beyond that, current applicant readiness content that's being developed is an ASP supported applicants toolkit. This will be a comprehensive access to the tools, resources and support mechanisms to prepare for their gTLD application. So, again, this is for ASP applicants who have gone through the evaluation process. We'll also be given a toolkit as part of the ASP program. And then as we get closer to the main application round opening, we'll publish additional materials including new gTLD applicant guides, system guides and other materials to simplify the complex support in all aspects of the new gTLD program. We will also have learning pathways for our applicant capacity development throughout the program. And with that, I'll now turn it over to Chris Mondini, our VP of engagement.

CHRIS MONDINI:

Hi, and thank you, Janelle. It's very exciting to see all that's in store for people who are contemplating applying and all the tools you'll be providing to help them be ready for that. Of course, we on the engagement and the communications team are busy doing the outreach to attract those applicants to bring them to you. And I want to take a few minutes with my colleague, Bob Ochieng, to review the steps that we've been taking and our plans for the coming months. In

accordance with what we put out in May of this year in terms of a strategy and based on our community guidance, we have been focusing almost exclusively on applicant support program target entities and again, entirely in the development area. And again, entirely in the developing and underserved regions. This will continue to be our focus through the rest of this calendar year.

And we are doing that work through my counterparts around the world, the global stakeholder engagement team. There are eight of us regional vice presidents and we have developed targeting matrices for our regions based on data that we received from prior campaigns where we believe that there is a high likelihood of interest and ability among applicants from these regions. Of course, we are spread around the world, but we're not located everywhere and we're relying very heavily on our ICANN community to help us to refine target lists and to identify and reach other entities who may have interest in applying under the applicant support program. And of course, along the way, our communications colleagues are creating all of the materials and media outreach, including a champions toolkit that Bob will discuss a little bit later that I'm excited for all of you to be able to use.

The next slide is a review of our step-by-step approach. Again, we selected a lot of markets based on data that we had received from prior campaigns. We actually compiled a list in the hundreds of targeted entities in the categories that are eligible for applicant support. And these are not, as you would understand, necessarily entities that know about ICANN or gTLDs or the domain name marketplace. So we are in effect reaching out to them directly to explain how they may be

interested while at the same time approaching event organizers to join conferences that are beyond the usual ICANN community that might already be aware of these opportunities. And as I mentioned before, we are conferring with our ICANN community in the regions very much with Governmental Advisory Committee members, members of our At-Large community and members who are leaders of other supporting organizations, advisory committees located around the world. We are really grateful for all of the help and guidance we've received from them.

We have launched targeted media campaigns and a series of webinars, and I continue to put out materials. The media campaigns will become increasingly visible in the coming months, including paid social media campaigns, articles, interviews, television, radio, and other media to reach these audiences. The next slide has just a few highlights of some of the milestones, including the community webinars and some of the conferences beyond the ICANN community where we have been present. In these meetings, we are, again, approaching ASP-eligible entities, asking for help and how to reach them, asking for parties who may wish to participate in the role of pro bono service providers to eligible applicant support applicants. And I should mention that we are indeed doing some outreach for the Registry Service Provider Program, and we are having some calls with people in the industry to help us also refine our messaging and make sure that we're reaching audiences that would benefit the most from a gTLD. We're raising awareness of the program and relying on our readiness team and actors in the sector to guide those that might be interested in taking future steps.

The next slide is, again, some upcoming milestones that are coming up. I've mentioned already that we're implementing a number of regional and country-based engagement plans and media plans, and one thing that I'm very excited about is we will soon be publishing use cases or case studies of gTLDs from the last round in collaboration with their operators to give real concrete examples of how gTLDs might be used. And you've heard from Janelle already on all the tools we're building for applicants who want to take the next step. I'm going to turn now to Bob Ochieng to just round out the session before we take questions.

BOB OCHIENG:

Thanks. Thank you very much, Chris. So we really underscore the fact that a successful engagement on the next round will really require a collaboration and a partnership with you, the community. And therefore, we are very keen and intentional in inviting you to join our capacity-building and outreach and engagement efforts for the next round to really make this truly a partnership between the org and you, the community, to reach out over and beyond what we can do just as an org. So we would like to really extend an invitation to partner with you, the community, and really want to urge you to send whatever ideas you do have to us using this email address, engagement.newgtldprogram@ICANN.org, and share with us your ideas and also share resources about the program within your networks. And this is why in the next slide we have very intentionally worked to provide material and content that will address and really enable you at your own time and effort to have material that you can share with your networks in a toolkit that we are calling a champions

program. So if you're interested in playing a role in the next round to really support our engagement efforts beyond what ICANN staff would be able to reach, please do check out our champions toolkit. It is available on the next round website. It is available in the UN languages. You can choose whichever language is convenient for you. And this toolkit contains a number of materials. You will find therein flyers, presentations. These presentations are both in PDF formats, but also in PowerPoint formats. And I should point out that the PowerPoint versions include speaker notes. So that gives you context on each of the slides. So please access this content. If you do have feedback on that, we are happy to receive it. You also have options to request at the same time speakers from ICANN. The intention is really to make this as self-directed as possible, so that you can go over and beyond what other staff can reach in collaboration with our GSE network across the regions led by our VPs. And whenever you need support, or you have questions, we have provided a feedback form under the champions toolkit. We also provided a form to request for a speaker. And therefore, we really want this to be a partnership between us and yourselves, the community, to ensure we cover everyone that really needs to get this information about the next round. So please join us in this engagement effort, and we'd be happy to work with you.

With that, I think we can take questions for this particular section on outreach engagement for anyone. And I think I saw Nitish.

NITISH REDDY:

Hi, Bob and Chris. I'm Nitish from India. I'm here for the first time at ICANN as a NextGener. So my question is, what are the current efforts?

I see you mentioned Mr. Sameer and Gupta is taking care of the Indian outreach program. But I wanted to know in specific, is there any other outreach programs out there? How can I be a part of it? And also, right now, India has been growing as a vibrant startup ecosystem. Like, let's say in the last round, SBI, a large financial institution has gotten its gTLD. And it's been able to use it right now and secure itself from a lot of cybersecurity-related issues. In a similar way, there are a lot of startups with the financial resources. Let's say there's a startup XYZ, ABC XYZ. And they want to apply for their gTLD.ABCXYZ. They have the financial resources. So will there be any restriction on, let's say, only a certain number of gTLDs or from a certain industry would be allowed? Or is it open for everyone? Let's say from India, if you get 10,000 applications, would I be okay granting all of them? Yeah, that's my question. So I would like to sum it up two ways. One, how can I be a part of this? And in reaching out to startups, I'm a bit active there. And the second thing is, will ICANN review different varied sectors of applications which it receives in large numbers would be okay with? Yeah.

CHRIS MONDINI:

Thank you, Nitish, for your comments and your question. Indeed, there isn't a restriction anticipated. And in fact, India is a very exciting place as far as the program is concerned. Samiran, our regional vice president for Asia Pacific, who's based in New Delhi, is in fact already very hard at work talking to some of the same sectors that you've mentioned, but also to the ASP-eligible entities. Through many of our partnerships with either business associations or ministries of the Indian government,

we're reaching also to charities and philanthropic organizations, as you said, the vibrant startup culture, and also really well-known, world-renowned Indian brands, we think all of whom have an interest in gTLD applications. In terms of outreach, we will connect you with Samiran. If you are in Istanbul, please meet with Bob and me and Samiran. We can also go over the Champions Toolkit, if you would like to make presentations among your own networks. In terms of the media campaign on social and in mainstream media, after Diwali is when that will begin to be launched in India. So in November, you'll see much more, probably after the ICANN meeting, you'll notice that gTLDs are actually something that people have heard of if the campaigns go well. So we're really grateful for your enthusiasm and stand prepared to help get you engaged and involved. As we said, it's a team effort. Thanks.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

And I see Marika noted in the chat, to add to Chris's response, there's no limit on the number of applications, but applicants will need to meet all requirements and pass all required evaluations before being able to enter into a new gTLD agreement. If there are multiple applications for the same string, there are processes in place to resolve that contention. All right. Go ahead, Bob.

BOB OCHIENG:

Yeah, I was just mentioning that for Nitish, probably, consumption, so Samiran has organized an event with the government of India on the 5th of November. This event will be hybrid, obviously, and I'm happy to

obviously link you up and you could attend this particular session. It will be on ASP engagement.

SAMANTHA MANCIA: Thank you, Bob. All right. So now we are opening it up for questions on any portion of the presentation. So feel free to raise your hand. Anne, over to you.

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: Thank you, Sam. It's Anne Aikman-Scalese. I'm a council liaison to the IRT for SubPro. And my question is on ASP program. It's a question I've asked before, relates to the section which discusses webinars with respect to outreach. And the question is about whether ICANN has prepared a more detailed webinar that is accessible to all that will summarize eligibility requirements specifically, and that will also talk about the high costs of operating a new gTLD for 10 years and the need to get a registry service provider and just, you know, an informative webinar that doesn't depend entirely just on a one-on-one contact with somebody in ICANN. Thanks.

SAMANTHA MANCIA: Thank you, Anne. And I see Kristy has her hand, so I'll turn it over to her to respond.

KRISTY BUCKLEY: Thanks very much, Samantha. And hello, this is Kristy Buckley for The Record. Thank you, Anne, for your question. So, I wrote in the chat just

that we do have the sort of current champions webinar kit, which we have presented at various regional webinars, and that is continuing. And we're starting to get more specific requests to come and present that. I agree that once we've raised sort of awareness or a kind of general interest about the program, that people are going to want the next level of detail. So that's something that we can work with the readiness team on developing.

With regard to the longer term costs, this actually came up on a call earlier this week and we're working with our account services team to explore who has the expertise that could best speak to those kind of long-term or operating costs of running a registry and how do we leverage that knowledge in the capacity development and readiness materials that we're developing for all applicants and including supported applicants. So yeah, that's something that we are exploring. I don't know that it would necessarily be something that ICANN would create content on, but we are looking to leverage the expertise of people that are in that space and can speak to that. Does that answer your question?

ANNE AIKMAN-SCALESE: Yeah, thanks Kristy. It just strikes me again, that opening up applications on November 19th, that it might not be desirable to have a situation where you're flooded with applications by people who don't yet have any understanding of what their long-term responsibilities would be. And so when we say, well, it might not be ICANN who talks about how much it costs to operate a new gTLD for 10 years and what your other obligations are gonna be, I think that unless you're briefing

people on that aspect from the beginning, you could have a lot of applications that get stalled down the way because people will say, well, I didn't really understand all that was involved here. And so I really would, once again, as you know, I've been mentioning this in ASP Subtrack several times, I've mentioned it in the IRT meeting. Unless we tell people what to expect, we could have a lot of applications that are later withdrawn and that would not be good for ICANN. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Anne and Kristy. I see we have a hand from Hadia. So I'll turn it over to you, Hadia, if you'd like to take the floor.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much. And my question is in relation also to outreach, but with regard to the applicant support program. And I do know that you have a champion kit that you mentioned, but I was also wondering if there is a possibility to have regional-specific workshops to explain more the applicant support program, how you could apply for it. We know that the applicants are served as first come first served. And of course, applicants that would apply in the beginning would have better chances than those applying later in the summer. And that's why I was thinking maybe of like regional workshops for regions that would need it. I was also thinking of how could we have a feedback loop from users, from end people, so that we know whether our applicants know whether our awareness and outreach activities or efforts are good enough or not. And if they need to be improved in what aspects do they need to be improved? So the feedback loop is not limited, of course, to

the applicant support, but to awareness about the entire program.
Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you very much, Hadia. I think I'll turn to Chris perhaps to speak on the outreach and engagement, if that's okay, Chris.

CHRIS MONDINI:

Yes, of course. Thank you, Hadia. And I will say indeed what you've described has been a bit of our approach with regard to, for example, a regional ASP webinar with country-based webinars or even live meetings that have been taking place, largely led by members of the ICANN Stakeholder Engagement Team. But given that there is the Champions Toolkit and you can request a speaker wherever you are at this moment, if you want to gather 10 people that are potential audience, we absolutely can next week do a virtual workshop with them. So this is an open invitation for any community member to either use the materials themselves to conduct your own workshops or invite Bob, me, Kristy, an expert to join as well. That Champions Toolkit does also include a feedback form. So when you hold such an event where you are, you can give us what you've learned. And at the same time, even with every one-on-one call, approach to entities or with conferences, we collect internal notes and feedback on things like, which are the messages that are resonating? What are the most commonly asked questions about qualifying? Are there many questions about the costs of running a registry? Are there many questions about who exactly is eligible? So we are indeed already internally using our

community engagement system to provide feedback across the team and of course, refining it. Also, I just want to say that on a monthly basis under the auspices of the IRT, the Outreach Engagement and Communications Project Team and Readiness Team are providing more details on the meetings held and the feedback received. And you are all invited to those open meetings. It's an excellent way to receive your ideas, feedback and your leads. So thank you for your enthusiasm for helping in the effort.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you very much, Chris. If there's anybody else who would like to raise their hand and take the floor, please feel free to do so now. We have had some questions come in the chat that have been answered, but I'll read some of those out in the meantime for the awareness of the group. So right after the RSP portion, Nitish asked, could you please elaborate on the auto-approval? And Gustavo noted that the IDN LGRs are published at a link that was provided in the chat. They will not go through IDN table review. RSP applicants using them will only need to show that their infrastructure and support IDNs at the second level for the specific LGR in RST. We also had a question in the chat from Anne about developing webinars. This I think we spoke to verbally as well. So I'll skip that one for now. We had a question earlier in the chat from Nitish as well, who was curious to know about the steps taken for the Indian geography and how one can take part in participating in the outreach. And Bob noted that our engagements in India are led by the regional VP for India, Samiran Gupta, and offered to connect them. And I think that pretty much covers the chat questions that we had. If there

are any more questions, please feel free to type them into the chat now or raise your hand if you'd like to take the floor. Oh, I'm sorry, I see a hand now from Joe. Over to you, Joe.

JOE ALAGNA:

I think that there's a lot of really cool things happening in this round as compared to last time, one of them being all the outreach. But I have a question that I think is an important consideration that I haven't seen addressed. And that is, as we do this outreach, are we balancing the opportunity with the risk as we message to these people? As a company that is trying to do well and making some great progress as a registry service provider, I guess what I wanna say is, it feels to me like we're all excited, especially people in this room about the new gTLD program. And we wanna share that message with people around the world. But I think that it's important to balance and in our messaging, make sure that we're pointing out the risks. Just because somebody has a new TLD or applies for a new TLD, I think they're going to be brought into a world that is so much more competitive than it was in 2012. And also more costly.

My question is, I think we have to be careful as we present this to new applicants to make sure that they understand that running a TLD is not just getting a TLD and automatic success. I don't know, I haven't really watched it close enough to see if that part of the message is being shared. I just thought I'd bring that up for discussion.

SAMANTHA MANCIA: Thank you very much, Joe. I think I'll turn it over to Chris to answer this one.

CHRIS MONDINI: Hi, and I invite my colleagues to chime in. Thank you very much for the question, Joe. It also, I think, speaks to Anne's question about the costs of running a registry. The costs and the risks are significant. Of course, from an ICANN perspective, Marika had alluded already in the chat to the risk of the stability, security, and resilience based on how well we implement technically and technologically. But I think you're referring really to business risk for those that end up running a registry. And indeed, all of our outreach, engagement, and communications really is designed to raise awareness of the program and to inform who's eligible to participate in the program. But it really stops at the moment of the decision process that an organization goes through in terms of developing a business plan, developing a risk model, developing a cost-benefit analysis, and so forth. And as you know, there are many different business models. Some registries are registering names for income. Some are used for internal purposes. Some may be used for community and membership purposes. This speaks a little bit to Anne's question. The costs may be slightly different. The revenues may be slightly different for each one. And that's really not for ICANN, the organization, to go into with any detail. But I'm really pleased that we've worked very collaboratively through our global services that work with the contracted parties that are already in the marketplace, with groups like the GeoTLDs, for example, that run the various regions and city-named TLDs, or work with the brand registry group, work with the domain

name association. These are independent external parties and bodies that know the answers to these questions. And our registry stakeholder group within ICANN has also been very supportive of understanding that there's a role for them as an industry to raise – to really inform of the costs and risks and, I think, the considerations that you're mentioning. So you alluded to things that we're doing that we had not really done in the last round and previous rounds. And one of them, I will say, is working both with our readiness team and registry operators in the marketplace to provide some kind of a hand-off, hand-holding resources that these entities will not make an application in an uninformed way. It doesn't serve the DNS or ICANN, the purposes of the program, and we certainly don't want to raise false expectations. So it's great that you've reminded all of us of this, and we have taken into account – and I think you'll see much more of this collaborative work with the private sector to help advise potential applicants in the coming weeks and months. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Okay. Thank you, Chris and Joe. Do we have any more hands? Anyone else? I see a comment from Anne in the chat which I will read aloud. These risks and costs should be covered because the program won't succeed unless potential applicants get trained on risks and costs. We don't want ASP-qualified applicants to end up withdrawing applications because they had no idea how complex this system is. They should have access to a webinar for this purpose before applying and to counselors for this purpose after applying. I see a hand from Kristy. Over to you.

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- KRISTY BUCKELY: Thanks, Samantha, and thank you, Anne. Noted, and I just want to refer to the GNSO guidance process for ASP that, if I recall correctly, discussed this at length. One of their guidance recommendations, Guidance Recommendation 1, talks about how the goal is to qualify as many applicants as possible, and once they qualify, to educate them on what it takes to apply for a gTLD, what it takes to run a registry operator, and to help them make an informed decision about whether or not they're going to apply. That was our understanding about the guidance from the GGP on ASP. We would look to get people interested in the applicant support program, interested in applying for a gTLD, and then develop their capacity to understand how to build a strong gTLD application and how to prepare themselves to be a registry operator. I think we're saying the same thing, it's just maybe a slightly different order according to the guidance from the GNSO guidance process. Thanks.
- SAMANTHA MANCIA: Thank you, Kristy. I see we have a hand now from Nigel Hickson, so over to you, Nigel.
- NIGEL HICKSON: Yes, thank you very much, and good afternoon, good evening. Thank you so much for this session, which is really, really excellent and puts us in a really good frame of mind for Istanbul, so really, really positive, and it's great to see the amount of work that's been done. So this question really is, I mean, I wouldn't call it cheeky, but I'm looking for a subjective view really. Chris Mondini has outlined the Constructive Engagement

Program, which the Global Stakeholder Engagement Team participated in. Other teams in ICANN, including the Government Engagement Team, of course, have been also discussing applicant support or discussing the gTLD program in general at conferences and seminars, and other people in ICANN, no doubt, have also been doing this as well, as well as, no doubt, in the Contracted Parties House and lots of other people. So I just want to get a sense of the appetite there is for new gTLDs. Now, I know this is exceptionally difficult. I'm not asking for numbers or anything like that, but I just detected a degree of enthusiasm in people I've spoken to. I speak to people on the bus and the train and anywhere, really. Mostly they're not interested in new gTLDs, but in talking to stakeholders, there does seem to be some interest. So I'll stop now.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Yeah. Thank you, Nigel. I think I might call on Lars for this one.

LARS HOFFMANN:

Thank you. Nigel, first of all, you and I should share a bus route, I feel. We'd have a lot of fun together. But look, no, on the numbers, it's a good question. Obviously there was a strong support from the community to launch the program. In fact, I think almost everybody on the IRT will tell you that it should have launched a lot sooner than 2026. But obviously, there was the PDP and then implementation that took place. So there is an expectation that there is pent-up demand. But the exact number of this, on the org side, we have no additional inside other. I don't think I'm giving too much away. We are, though, to that. We have a booth at

the ICANN 81 meeting in Istanbul. Bob and Chris and others will be present there. And we're actually trying to get a sentiment from the community there and see how much people think, how many applications we will get. So we'll do a little guessing game on that to see who's the oracle amongst the ICANN community to see how many applications we'll get when the window opens. And maybe the average of that gives us a data point that at least gives an indication on this, but we have not done any concrete market research on this.

SAMANTHA MANCIA:

Thank you, Lars. All right, is there any other questions? Feel free to raise your hand or pop it into the chat. Speak now or forever hold your peace. Okay, seeing none, I think we can wrap it up. Marika, did you want to give any closing remarks?

MARIKA KONINGS:

Just to thank everyone for joining us here and this really great discussion and questions that we got. Just to call out to everyone, make sure to attend the sessions we also have planned at ICANN 81, either in person or remotely. For all the sessions, remote participation will be available as well. So really looking forward to seeing everyone there in person or virtually. So thanks everyone and have a nice rest of your day.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]