
ICANN82 | Prep Week – New gTLD Program: Next Round Implementation Status Update
Tuesday, February 25, 2025 – 10:00 to 11:30 PST

RENATE DE WULF

Hello and welcome to the session New gTLD Program: Next Round Implementation Status Update. My name is Renate De Wulf and I'm the remote participation manager for this session.

Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior. During this session questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. We will read them aloud during the time set by the chair or moderator for this session.

If you'd like to ask your question or make your comment verbally, please raise your hand. When called upon you will be given permission to unmute your microphone. Interpretation for this session will include French and Spanish. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking in a language other than English. Please speak at a reasonable pace. All are welcome to use the chat. Private chats are only possible among panelists in the room's Zoom webinar format. Any message sent by the panelist or standard entity to another standard entity will also be seen by the session's hosts, co-hosts and other panelists. I will now hand over the floor to Marika Konings.

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MARIKA KONINGS

Thank you very much, Renate. We can go to the next slide, please. And the next one. Thank you very much. So welcome, everyone, to today's New gTLD Program: Next Round Implementation Status Update. As you just heard, my name is Marika Konings and I serve as the lead for the New gTLD program.

I'm joined here today by several of my colleagues, as you can see. But as you hopefully also know, it takes a village to deliver the program. So I also want to give a shout out to everyone across ICANN org who supports us in these efforts, as well as you. You are here with us, the ICANN community, who have worked tirelessly with us as well.

And as some of you may know, we run these webinars prior to every ICANN meeting in conjunction with the publication of the status update briefing, which I think will get posted shortly in this chat as well. And so on the one hand, we're trying to share with you here the latest information in relation to the status of implementation of the next round. And on the other hand, we also want to make sure that you have all the information you need to participate in next round related sessions at ICANN82.

An important milestone was reached most recently with the publication of the last set of application guidebook topics for public comment. And as part of our session today, Ariel will share more about that, as well as the next steps to get to the complete AGB. Following that, Yuko will give you an update on the gTLD application processing efforts, and Karla will be sharing the latest

on the base registry agreement. Before going to the Q&A session with the leads for the ASP and RSP programs, we'll also provide you with an overview of what to expect at ICANN82. So I think that concludes the welcome and introduction.

So I will now give you first a quick overview of the overall status of implementation. Jia, Yeah, thank you. Great. I know there's a lot of information on this slide, but I hope it conveys that there are many different elements that contribute to the implementation of the next round, with many of these projects being connected and in some cases interdependent of each other. I would like to really encourage you to review the status briefing if you are interested in reading further details on each of these projects, including recent and upcoming activities and deliverables.

One update that was made to this timeline is that the delivery of the Registry Service Testing or RST, which is one of the elements of the Registry Service Provider or RSP evaluation program, is delayed. However, at this point, we do not expect that this delay will impact the overall RSP timeline as the team had built in some buffer and we have added additional resources to the project to avoid further delays. But obviously, we are keeping a close eye to be able to deliver RST by mid-March to allow for testing. If we can go to the next slide, Jia. Thank you very much.

To further visualize some of the critical elements of the program, we've created this slide, which basically shows the critical path. In green, you will see the aspects of the program that have already

been delivered. In blue, some of the upcoming milestones. And in orange, those milestones that are currently at risk. And we'll get into more detail about that shortly. All this leads to the opening of the gTLD application window in April 2026. But I think it's important for everyone to remember that we're also already planning for the work that needs to happen after that. So that is the gTLD application processing phase.

This is also reflected, for example, in the post-contracting systems development box, which you see here, which is work that has already started to make sure all systems are ready to deal with new registries following contracting. So that may still sound some time away, but obviously some of the preparatory work takes time as well and needs to be planned in a timely manner. We go to the next slide, Jia.

I won't stay on this slide too long. I think we're posting the slides shortly after this webinar. But here are some further details that in conjunction with the slide I just showed you on the different key dependencies for the critical path, as well as what their current status is and timeline for delivery of those. Go to the next slide, Jia. Thank you.

So this shows the overall program status as well as those for each individual project. As I've also shared previously, we encourage the team to be forthcoming in their reporting on the different projects. Of course, it would be great to see everything in green, but having early indications of yellow, which represents low to medium risk,

and especially red, which represents high risk and likely blockers, allows us to put mitigation plans in place and work proactively with our sponsors and steering committee to avoid further impacts. At the program level, you see that we're currently reporting yellow or low-medium risk for schedule and resources, which basically is reflective of some of the stress we are feeling in some of the projects.

Looking, for example, at Work Stream 1, you also see here the low-medium risk indications for schedule and resources. It is important to note that this is the status update from ending in December, and obviously with the recent publication of the last set of topics for public comment, we are still on track from a schedule perspective.

But I think the team is also conscious that depending on the number of comments, as well as whether they bring forward substantive issues, that may require further consultations with the IRT and potentially the board caucus. That is still representing substantial work that needs to be done to be able to finalize the AGB for Board consideration by the end of this year. Again, this kind of indication of low to medium risk allows us to plan for that and take timely action and plan for basically all eventualities, hopefully.

For the gTLD application processing project, or GAP as we refer to it as well, we had already been reporting high risk or red for resources for some time now, but with some of the additional resource changes that occurred in January, this project is now overall at a high risk. As a result of the earlier status, we had already

been working on mitigation plans, but these have been now our top priority for the last few weeks and are resulting in a comprehensive back to green action plan.

As part of this action plan, we have undertaken some reorganization of the project team to be able to work more effectively and agile, and we've also added additional resources and done a detailed analysis of where and how we can potentially cut or delay scope without changing the date for the opening of the application window, as that would be the very last resort. We are, of course, working closely with our sponsors and Styrke on this, and we expect to have a clear action plan to get back to green in the next week. So if we can go to the next slide, Jia. Thank you.

So quickly shifting gears to the Applicant Support Program, or ASP, and the Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program, or RSP Program. First of all, I want to make sure that you stay with us until the Q&A portion of the webinar, because we have Christian and Gustavo here as the leads of this program to share some further details about the number of applications that have been received to date, as well as answer any questions you may have on those two programs.

I did want to highlight as part of the overall program update that following the successful launch last November, the team is now going through another stage gate exercise to determine whether we can exit the hyper-care state, which is basically the phase of high availability of resources and processes to address issues that

have come to light following launch, to move then to a steady state, which basically represents the normal operational support of the program. Go to the next slide, please.

This is just a quick reminder. The window for ASP applications remains open until the 19th of November. In parallel, the team is currently working on the development and rollout of non-financial support activities. And for RSP, the application window will close on 20th of May. But there will be another evaluation period that will run in parallel to the gTLD application window. And I think that's all I have on my end. And I'm handing it over to Ariel. Thank you.

ARIEL LIANG

Thanks very much, Marika. This is Ariel Liang speaking to you from Washington, D.C. I'm one of the ICANN work team members that's focusing on the Work Stream 1 part of the work for the next round. So for those who may not be familiar, the focus of Work Stream 1 is to develop the applicant guidebook or the AGB for the next round of the New gTLD program. And in simple terms, the AGB sets out a comprehensive set of rules, guidelines, and instructions for organizations and individuals who wish to apply for a New gTLD in the future. It provides detailed information about many key aspects of the program, such as the application process, the evaluation criteria, costs and fees, and so on.

The AGB is a critical rulebook for anyone interested in applying for a New gTLD. And it ensures transparency, consistency, and predictability throughout the program. And without it, ICANN cannot open the application window for the next round in April 2026. So to accomplish this work, ICANN has been working side by side with the communities, specifically the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team or the SubPro IRT in short. And in fact, I saw some of the members from the IRT in current webinar right now in the audience. Thank you for attending.

The IRT provides feedback and input to ICANN in drafting the AGB, making sure it conforms to the intent of the policy recommendations concerning the next round. So for those who may not be aware of those policy recommendations, there are 130 from the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures, policy development process, as well as dozens from the IDN expedited policy development process phase one. And I understand this is a lot of ICANN centric terms. And if you want to learn more about the policy development process and how domain name policies are developed, you're welcome to join the policy team's webinar tomorrow, I believe.

And as Marika mentioned, there are some exciting news regarding the work of Work Stream 1. The hard work has paid off because since February last year, ICANN started publishing chunks of the draft AGB topics to solicit input from the public. And in early February this year, we published the final trench of the AGB topics for public comment. This is a significant milestone because we're

getting very close to the finishing line of putting the entire AGB together.

And by the end of May, we plan to hold the fifth and final round of public comment proceeding for the draft AGB in its entirety. And after considering and incorporating community input, we aim to get the finalized AGB ready for Board consideration by the end of this year. While there still remain a lot of work ahead, everyone who contributed to the AGB development, especially those who are participating in the SubPro IRT should be really proud of what has been accomplished so far. And next slide, please.

And this slide basically provides some information about the IRT to those who may not be super familiar with. The IRT is comprised of 122 members around the world from almost every corner of the ICANN community and beyond. To date, the IRT held close to 150 calls, including those from its four subgroups.

More than 180 hours long of conversations took place, but this number is insignificant compared to the many more hours that members spent before and after each call for reading of documents, providing feedback and questions, and circulating their views on the mailing list. Without the commitment and diligence of the ICANN community, we cannot achieve this latest milestone. So I want to take this opportunity to thank the IRT members for all your hard work and being an amazing partner throughout the process. Next slide, please, Jia.

Finally, this third slide provides a very quick overview on the 14 AGB topics that are currently out for public comment. And this chunk includes many difficult ones or significant ones that future applicants may be keen on reading. To highlight a few applicants' journey, this topic outlines many key aspects were processed and requirements that applicant must follow for submitting a New gTLD application and getting it eventually approved by ICANN. And application fees, as its title suggests, covers fees associated with evaluations, refund policies, and other specific provisions applicable to certain type of applicants. And also application questions, which lists the specific questions that New gTLD applicants are expected to answer when submitting their application.

In addition, this chunk of AGB topics also includes some difficult ones that involved extensive consultation work with the community and ICANN Board outside of the IRT process, such as the registry voluntary commitments and contention set resolution. And as a reminder, this public comment period was scheduled to close on 2nd of April and welcome your review and input. And I will also drop a link in the chat to direct you to the public comments proceeding for more information. And with that, I believe the next is Yuko. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Actually, before-- yeah, thanks Yuko. Before we turn it over to you, I just wanted to pause to see if we have any questions. We'll open

the floor now for any questions on this section over the AGB or the state of implementation section that Marika covered earlier. Feel free to raise your hand. And I see a hand from Kroopa. Please go ahead.

KROOPA SHAH

Thank you, Samantha. I joined a few minutes late. But did I catch correctly that the RSD is delayed till March?

SAMANTHA MANCIA

For that, I'll turn over to Gustavo to answer. Please, Gustavo.

GUSTAVO LOZANO

Yeah. So, can you hear me?

KROOPA SHAH

I can hear you. Thank you, Gustavo.

GUSTAVO LOZANO

Perfect. So, back in November, we opened the door to potential RSP applicants and potential register operators to an OT&E environment. So, since November, we have the OT&E environment and people have been playing with the system, right? We expect to have, well, now we have 100% coverage of all the test cases. We are going to send an email soon to all the RSP applicants and register operators to share this good news. By mid-March, end of March, we expect to finalize the Q&A period for the system.

So, right now, if you go to the OT&E, you may find some bugs. By mid-March, late March, the number of bugs should be reduced substantially. So, that's the status. I don't know if it's clear. So, in other words, since November the contracted parties or potential RSP applicants and register operators, they have been able to play with the system. By mid-March, end of March, we expect to have, let's say, production ready code. That's the plan that we have right now.

KROOPA SHAH

Got it. Thank you so much, Gustavo. Thanks for the clarification.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Gustavo and Kroopa, for the question. Not seeing any other hands or questions in the Q&A pod. So, with that, I think we can hand it back over to Yuko. And as a reminder, if you do have questions along the way, feel free to pop those in the Q&A pod. Thank you.

YUKO YOKOYAMA

Thank you. Jia, can you go to the next slide, please? Hi. My name is Yuko Yokoyama, and I am the GAP project lead. GAP stands for gTLD, Application Processing. So the GAP project is basically covering from the application submission to contract execution, and everything goes in between. That would be inclusive of evaluation, contingency resolutions, objections, and all other fun parts of the program.

So, our goal of this project is to design an efficient and effective application processing framework that aligns with the policy recommendations. And some of the key areas of work for GAP project are to develop overall strategy of application processing, developing business requirements, processes, and procedures, developing system capabilities, which span across eight different systems, and to procure, onboard, and train all necessary vendors, notably dispute resolution service providers and variety of evaluation panelists. Next slide, please. Thank you, Jia.

So, here you see a high-level timeline, a little more detailed than the previous overall program timeline, but here is the GAP overall high-level timeline. So, we will be continuing to work on the overall strategy, and that obviously covers from big decisions to a very small one that's to the nitty-gritty procedure level.

Business requirements, we're foreseeing to conclude the stream of work by middle of this year. We're simultaneously building the system, utilizing the agile approach. But not to concern anybody, you see that system development goes beyond the opening of the round, but that is because not all system is needed to open the round.

So, for example, application publication system, which is notable, which is necessary for reveal day to publish all the public portion of the application, that is not needed until a little later after the close of the application submission window. So, because of that, some of the system development is bleeding beyond the opening of the

round, and that would allow us to utilize the resources appropriately without burdening the staff by doing everything at once.

And because of that, obviously, we can't develop all the business procedures without conclusion of the business system development. So, that's why there are some items that's going beyond the opening. Similar to that is the vendor work. Obviously, not all vendor needs to be in place at the time of the round opening. So, that's why some of the onboarding and training is bleeding over beyond the April of next year. Okay. Next slide, please. Thank you.

So, current status. So far, we have made a one big major milestone of developing the application processing application journey, which is a new way to process the application than the 2012 round. So, previously, we have evaluated all applications submitted, then we went into contingency resolution before going into contracting. So, the new application journey design, which was shared with IRT last year, late last year, is that we will be splitting the evaluation into two phases. First is the string evaluation, and the latter part is application and applicant evaluation. And the contingent set resolution will come in between those two evaluation elements.

The reason why we developed this new flow is to make more efficient use of time and resources by only having applications for strings that are not or are no longer in contingent to proceed to application and applicant evaluation. Previously, even if you are in

contingent set, everybody was evaluated. That wasn't really a good use of our resources.

And also, by conducting application and applicant evaluation, later in the process provides the opportunity for ICANN and its evaluators, the evaluation panelists, to plan and obtain resources on the actual number of applications submitted. This is a big mystery for all of us. If you're involved in the New gTLD program, we all know that we actually don't know whether to anticipate 500 or 5,000 applications. So, this is alleviating the huge risk of unknown factor. Next slide, please.

In terms of the progress so far, we've finished so far the 20 sprints completed for business requirements. And again, this work is expected to conclude by mid-year, and we are on track for that. In terms of systems, TAMS, this is a TLD application management system. So, this is the biggest system that we have to develop. We completed so far two build cycles, and we have four more cycles to go, and the total of six. We're not quite halfway done. And other seven systems are in various development stages.

In terms of vendor side, we are strategizing stage for vendor approach for evaluation panelists. In terms of some of the work done from other area is that we concluded the request for information for dispute resolution service provider, and the request for proposal is forthcoming near future. We are also starting to strategize on the quality control program to ensure that

our program is carried out in good quality, and this is something that we have also done back in 2012. Next slide, please. Thank you.

So, what's next? So, we are steadily working through our planned sprint work for both the business requirements and system development. We'll make sure to progress the work on the vendor sourcing, and we'll be sure to share the RFI and RFP calendar with the community when ready, and we'll be, of course, asking for your help in spreading the word so that we can gain more interest from a variety of potential vendors. We're also starting to work on the readiness side to ensure that we are ready to open in April, 2026. That includes communication plans, engagement effort, website readiness, and all the fun things. So, at this point, I'm going to stop here. This is the end of my slide. So, if there are any questions, I'm happy to take them.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you so much, Yuko. And again, we'll be opening the floor. So, if you would like to speak, please raise your hand, or if you have questions, please submit them in the Q&A pod. I did see one question come in from Vinny in the chat. What are the guidelines for the string evaluation? Yuko, I'm not sure if you're able to speak to this one.

YUKO YOKOYAMA

Thank you, Vinny. That is a bit of a broad question. So, I'm not sure if you have specific string evaluations in mind. For example, strings

are evaluated in a variety of ways. One big one would be string similarity evaluation to ensure that we don't put too similar or identical top-level domain into the roots. So, that's one of the main objectives for string evaluation.

But also, there are a variety of policies and technical requirements to ensure that we don't put a particular risky top-level domain into the roots. So, we're looking at string from different viewpoints. Vinny, I do see your hand up. So, perhaps you could provide clarification if I'm not answering your question.

VINNY ADJIBI

Thank you, Yuko. I think you tackled the main points. What I would like is, I don't know if there is any resource that explains all the type of string evaluations that are conducted. I think I'm more focused on the security risk of the strings rather than brand risk.

YUKO YOKOYAMA

Thank you, Vinny. Those details of the string evaluation is outlined in the applicant guidebook. Currently, the last portion is in public comment. So, I'm sure we can post a link to the applicant guidebook that would explain in detail, and that would include your particular interest of the security side of the string evaluation.

VINNY ADJIBI

All right. Thank you. I appreciate it.

YUKO YOKOYAMA

Thank you for your question.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Yuko and Vinny. Do we have any other questions? Anyone would like to raise their hand? If not, I think we can go ahead and pass it on to Karla for the next portion of the presentation. Thank you.

KARLA HAKANSSON

Hi, everyone. My name is Karla Hakansson. I'm with ICANN. If you could advance the slide, please.

Today, I'm going to be updating everyone in terms of the process and what we're doing to develop the Next Round Base RA and providing you with a sense of the scope and the review process that we've started really since ICANN81. The scope of the Next Round Base RA is focused on topics that are really only for the registry agreement. I've had a few questions that whether or not we're looking at the Registrar Accreditation Agreement, the RAA, and we're not as there were no impacts from the Subsequent Procedures final report.

What we are focused on for the registry agreement are the SubPro and Next Round Implementation updates. We've got policy updates that we're including in the registry agreement, as well as ICANN Board approved community recommendations. And then we also have operational updates that we have put together in the

RA that are intended to be ways to create processes more efficiently, not only for ICANN, but for registry operators as well. Next slide, please.

So, for the types of topics that we're looking at that are beyond the SubPro recommendations for policy, we're looking at the Registration Data Policy, IDN EPDP Phase 1. For this, we are including a new specification, which is Specification 14, and looking at the variant TLDs.

We're also looking at the Rights Protection Mechanisms, as well as updates to IGO and INGO. We have also included the recommendation from SSAC, which is SAC074, regarding incident reporting. We've evaluated the CCWG accountability recommendation regarding governing law, and then also looking at any of the RDS reviews in recommendation regarding safeguarding registration data as part of those Board approved community recommendations.

When we started the team internally to look at the updates that we would need for the registry agreement, and mind you, I should say that the baseline that we've been using is the current registry agreement, and from that, we've been developing the red lines as a part of the changes that we are suggesting or proposing for the next round RA. In the process of developing the team and working through these updates, there have been next round implementation updates that we've also factored into the registry agreement, and this includes updates to the Applicant Support

Program regarding reduced registry level fees in the first years, one through four, as well as broadening the assignment restrictions for ASP applicants.

Then, these are both things that have been approved since the team started on the updates for the registry agreement, and then the operational updates really look at updating current processes, so things that we've had in the registry agreement that are obsolete or that we need to update based on the updates that have been put in place since the RA was developed and launched in 2012. And then as I mentioned, we're looking at ways to create efficiencies not only for ICANN internally, but also for registry operators. Next slide, please.

So, a preliminary working draft of the registry agreement was made available to the IRT just prior to ICANN81, and that was shared with RySG during that timeframe. Our focus as far as the IRT and our meetings with IRT up to this point is really focused on the 24 updates that include those policy recommendations, SubPro recommendations, obviously, the Board-approved recommendations, and the next round implementation updates.

And we have focused our conversations on the operational updates for the discussions that we've been having with the registry stakeholder group. We've included, but we have a fulsome list of those talking points or the summary of the changes that we've been working through with both the IRT and the RySG. Since ICANN81, we've had multiple conversations both with the IRT and

the RySG to resolve so that we can prepare the registry agreement to go out for public comment. Next slide, please.

So, the steps to finalizing the next round RA is to continue the discussions with both the IRT and the Registry Stakeholder Group, both of which we have meetings set up for ICANN82. Then once we have a final proposed registry agreement, we will post for public comment. Following the public comment, we will take all those comments into consideration.

And then we'll have the same two paths of discussions where we will also meet with the IRT and the RySG again to factor in the comments that we've received and make any adjustments that are needed. We'll submit that final proposed agreement to the Board for review and approval. And then we will post the Next Round Base RA prior to the application window opening. And I think that is all for my section. If there's any questions, I'd be happy to address them.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you very much, Karla. Not seeing any questions in the pod. If anyone would like to raise a hand to ask Karla a question, feel free to do so now. Okay, seeing none, we'll let you go, Karla, and pass it over next to Lars to talk about what to expect at ICANN82. Over to you, Lars.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Sam. If we can see the next slide, please. Right, for those who are traveling to Seattle, here are the sessions that you can attend in person. Obviously, all of these will be available via Zoom links that become available, I think, shortly before the session starts on the meeting website. So you see here five sessions on this slide from Saturday to Tuesday. I think there's more on the next slide. There's-- oh, if you go back, sorry, we're just going to foreshadow the next slide, Jia. Thank you so much. Sorry.

We have a GAC capacity development session that's talking, I think, the GAC and those interested through the Next Round Champions Toolkit. Those are sources that are available publicly for the community to use when they do or when you do engagement or simply would like to know more about the Next Round program. These are mainly aimed at newcomers rather than seasoned experts of the Next Round.

On Sunday, there's a GAC discussion as well on the New gTLD program. I think the focus there will also be the ASP program, the Applicant Support Program, but other topics may feature there as well.

There's an NCSG issue forum that's also focused on the Applicant Support Program, on ASP, on the 11th, so that should be Tuesday. This is a session run by the NCSG. Then there's a session on String Similarity Evaluation in the New gTLD program. That's on Wednesday. Then the RSP Evaluation Program also gives updates

on the RSP program and the RST 2.0 the same day. The next slide, please, Jia. Thank you.

These are the IRT sessions that we're having in Seattle. I spoke about that. We had an IRT call earlier today. For those of you who've been on that, you've seen the overview here already. We have five sessions, the Base Registry Agreement, Karla will be back. Then we have the Community Input Objections and Appeals, a session led by my colleague, Elisa Busetto. Both of these are occurring on Saturday morning, Seattle time.

Then on Sunday, we'll talk about String Similarity Evaluation and the IDNs and the Root Zone LGR. On Tuesday, we have a subtrack of the IDN subgroup of the IRT that is occurring. Then on Wednesday, I think the TBC was actually just resolved before this call. On Wednesday, we'll talk about the security and stability, DNS stability and post-contracting. Francisco and team will lead that session.

Then on Thursday, rounding off the ICANN82 meeting, we'll have an update on the Outreach Engagement and Communications update. I think this is all. We have one more IRT session for those of you who are interested actually in the run-up, so there'll be one more session the day after tomorrow, also focused, I think, on the base array. With that, I saw Sam come back on. I'll pass it back to Sam. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you very much, Lars. I'm not seeing any questions about the ICANN82 schedules, so I think we can proceed to the next section, which is a Q&A with the ASP and RSP leads. I believe Kristy has a couple of slides to set the stage, and then we'll enter the Q&A portion. Feel free to, again, submit your questions in the Q&A pod or raise your hand if you'd like to take the floor. But first, I'll pass it over to you, Kristy.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you so much, Samantha. Hello, everyone. This is Kristy Buckley. I serve as the lead for the Next Rounds Applicant Support Program, otherwise known as ASP. We have a couple of updates that we wanted to share. If we can go to the next slide. Thank you.

This is showing the ASP application status as of the 19th of February. You can see here that we have 17 drafted, which means applications that have been started but that have not yet submitted organization information. We have 13 applications that are in the initiated stage, which refers to applications that have submitted the organizational information. Then we have one application that has been submitted and in review and that's been submitted for evaluation. We don't yet have any that have been conditionally or fully approved, but we do have one application that has been withdrawn by the applicant.

These stats are updated monthly on the website. I'm told that the numbers on the website don't exactly match these numbers here. So the slide is the most accurate one. We're working on getting the

website numbers updated due to a system reporting error, but those should be updated in the next day or so. Next slide, please.

We often get questions about the geographic distribution of the ASP applications that we're seeing so far. As Marika mentioned earlier in the presentation, the application period for ASP is open through November 19th of 2025, so we still have a number of months ahead of us. Here you see the breakdown by the numbers. On the left, you can see the regional breakdown of how many applications we have in each region, so three from Africa, nine from Asia Pacific, one from Europe, one from Latin America, Caribbean, ten from North America, and seven that are pending, which means that there is not enough information in the application yet to determine the geographic region of the applicant. Next slide, please.

Another question that we get is what's the geographic distribution within those regions? I think folks in the community want to make sure that if we are seeing nine applications from APAC region, for example, that they're not all coming from a single country. So the graph on the right hand side shows the distribution across the region. So in Africa, we have three applications in total, and that's across two different countries.

In APAC, nine applications in total across six different countries. Europe and Latin America are one for one. North America is 10 applications across two countries. So this shows some of the geographic distribution within the regions. And with that, I'll see if

there are any questions before turning it over to my colleague, Gustavo, for RSP.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you very much, Kristy. So again, feel free to raise your hand if you'd like to take the floor. I don't see any questions in the Q&A pod as of yet. I do have some questions that we've got commonly that I could help pose while we wait for others. So I know we have some ASP related materials. Which of those materials are available translated into the ICANN languages?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks, Sam. So, good question. It's definitely a frequently asked question. So we have a number of what's called ASP readiness materials. So these are materials that ICANN has developed to help prospective applicants prepare for the ASP application. So this includes obviously the handbook, which is the sort of comprehensive guide for applicants. It includes the applicant quick start guide, an applicant checklist, which provides an outline of all of the items and documentation that applicants might need.

We also have an ASP application system user guide, which is a step-by-step guide of using the application system and submitting the application. We also have an information sheet and a slide deck as well as the FAQs on the website. And those have all been translated into the ICANN languages. We have a number of links that we can

put into the chat for those translations. Oh, thank you so much, Samantha. Really helpful.

In more recent news, however, we are happy to share that we also are working on responding to the community's desire to have next round outreach materials available in languages beyond the ICANN languages. So to be responsive to this request, while taking into account ICANN's resource availability, we are preparing to launch the New gTLD in your language program, which will combine the use of current language services knowledge with AI technology, allowing the translations of existing materials into additional languages beyond the ICANN languages. And this is based on demand that we see from the community. We'll provide more information about that program during ICANN82. So stay tuned for that in Seattle.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Kristy. I do see some questions that have come in through the chat. I'll go ahead and read those out. But reminder to please, if you want your question read aloud, submit that through the Q&A pod. We have a question from Aditya. Are the names of the countries also shown in the ASP statistics page? And sort of related, I would guess, to your answer, Kristy, there was a question from Jeff. At what point in the process can ICANN see application information? Not sure how I feel about anyone seeing information prior to an application officially being submitted.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks for those questions. Really helpful. So the first question around the country level information, we in the handbook state that ICANN will maintain the business confidentiality for ASP applicants. And this is in large part because of the timing of the Applicant Support Program, which is launched 18 months prior to the opening of the New gTLD program. And so if we were to share information about what types of applicants we're seeing from exactly which countries, knowing that it's a relatively small universe that ICANN operates in, there could be some guesses as to who might be applying from those countries, and also what strings they might be interested in.

So it's something that we have said we're not planning to publish country level information, but we do provide that sort of geographic distribution within the regions. And we've also been working with our global stakeholder engagement regional vice presidents to share information with them about where we need to focus our efforts for communications outreach and engagement efforts. And I understand from our regional vice presidents that they're also willing to work closely with our At-Large colleagues in those regions to help gain outreach and interest and engagement in the program in some of the countries that we have not yet seen applications from.

To Jeff's question, so the application, there's no evaluation of the application until the application is submitted. We have different

stages in the ASP application process to show where applicants are in the pipeline. And there's some information that we can see from those different stages, including the geographic distribution of those as long as applicant has submitted that information. But Jeff, did you want to speak to your question?

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, and it may be an overall question, but it seems to me that if you had to submit applicant information separately and then hit submit, and you could see and get the statistics from there, I think that's fine. But if you can see applications or questions as they're in process, that's a little scary to me, thinking through the entire program. And the fact that you said, or you hinted at, you knew some of the strings based on the information you've seen already, to me that, again, it's not just an applicant support issue. It's kind of an overall issue that if people are just entering information in the system, but it's completely draft form, they should know if ICANN see that information, or if anyone can see that information.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Sure. Thanks, Jeff. Just to clarify my point earlier, we were saying the reason why we don't publish country-level information is because it's a small community, and you could guess who might be applying. And also because of the type of organization they are, what string they might be applying for. ASP does not ask for applicants' strings. And actually, we say explicitly in the handbook, please do not tell us your intended string, because it's not

information that we want to know in the Applicant Support Program.

YUKO YOKOYAMA

If I may chime in from the GAP side. Thank you, Kristy. And thank you, Jeff. As I believe your question extends beyond ASP, but actual New gTLD program side, as I mentioned before, the TAMS, the TLD Application Submission System has not been completely developed. But we do have in mind the privacy and confidentiality. So we are designing the system with a mindset that only absolutely necessary people would have some purview to the data. We haven't gotten to the point, but your point taken. And my understanding is that draft form, we probably should not have visibility into that. But just wanted to mention that from the New gTLD program side. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Yuko. I see a follow-up question in the chat from Todd. So ICANN can drafts in the regular application period prior to submission? I'm unclear on the answer. And then we'll turn it to Jeff.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

This is Kristy. So from the ASP side, I think Yuko has responded to that question in terms of who has access to the application system. So it's the same for the Applicant Support Program. Very few people and only on an as-needed basis with secure methods of

access have information to anything in the applicant support system, including any information that's entered as part of the application process.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Kristy. And now we'll turn to Jeff, who has a hand raised. Over to you, Jeff.

JEFF NEUMAN

Yeah, just as a finer point on that, and I know you guys need to move on. But last time around, there was a security breach. So applicants were able to see other applicants' information. Again, I think it was a glitch. I think it was the official term. But the point is that, and I would put in the view that I don't think anyone should ever see anything in draft form except for the applicant itself. That would include anyone at ICANN being able to access that, because that just creates more security risk in the system.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Jeff, for that comment. I see a hand from Kamiri [ph] as well. So I'll turn it to you. Kamiri, if you're able to unmute. Oh, there you go.

KAMIRI

Yes, I do have a question regarding the strings; what's going to happen if we have two or three requests for the same chain? What's going to be the situation?

SAMANTHA MANCIA Apologies. I don't think the translation has come through. Perhaps, Lars, one of my French speaking colleagues could help.

LARS HOFFMANN Yeah, I think Kamiri asked what would happen if two or three applications came through with the same strings. So essentially, two or more applicants applying for the exact same string. So you come on and go off. So I assume I got that more or less correctly.

JEFF NEUMAN I think you did.

LARS HOFFMANN Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA Thank you, both.

LARS HOFFMANN I'm going to answer in English. Those strings, Kamiri, would be in contention. So they would go either to an auction or the contention would be resolved if one applicant would be a community application and would successfully undergo the community priority evaluation and pass that. And then that application would prevail in the contention set.

In the next round, there's also the possibility of submitting a replacement string. So you would apply for, quote unquote, your string. You're given the option in the system to submit a replacement string. And there will be a period when the application window is closed and all applications are revealed. The public facing information is revealed to everyone. And when the applicants can see whether somebody else applied for the same string, and they are then given the option to switch the application to their replacement string.

If you would like more information on this, the draft language, so it's not finalized, but the draft language on this is out of public comment at the moment. So I think the team, oh, Elisa already obviously posted the link to that in the chat as well. I hope that's helpful. If there's anything else, please let us know. Thank you.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you very much, Lars. And to clarify, as Kristy mentioned earlier, the string is not asked for in the Applicant Support Program application. So that would only come into play when actually applying for a New gTLD during the New gTLD program. I saw we had another question in the chat from Nigel, which Kristy responded to in the chat. So thank you for that, Kristy. I think if we have no more hands, we'll go ahead and pass it on now to Gustavo to do the RSP, a couple of slides to update, and then we'll open it up for Q&A as well. Thank you. And over to you, Gustavo.

GUSTAVO LOZANO

Hi. Thank you, Sam. And let me share some really positive numbers on the RSP program. This has been updated up to February 14. So we have 22 applications in draft. This means that they have not clicked the submit button. So they are still working on the application. We have five applications in the opening time that were submitted, and we need to do the completeness check process. We have six that they have already went through the completeness check, and basically they already received the invoice.

We have six applications that are going through background checks. That means that they already paid, and we are working with our background screening provider on the background checks. And we have zero fully approved, but as today we have three. This is really good news, because this means that those three have gone through the complete process since drafting, completeness check, background checks, payment. Now they are fully approved, and they can submit their core applications, ID and service applications, ID and tables whenever they want. Next slide, please.

On the application side of things, we have applicants that are actively working on their applications. We have, as you remember, four types of core applications. Those are for main RSP, DNS RSP, DNSSEC, and proxy RSP. We also support additional registry services applications and ID and tables. And you can see the

numbers there. These are actually really good numbers, and we have six applicants working on their core applications, and they are also working on the additional registry services and IDNs. Next slide, please.

And this is the geographic representations that we have for all the RSP applicants. We have applicants from all the different ICANN regions, and you can see updated numbers. In about two weeks, you will see updated numbers on the website. So this is the geographic distribution. And with these statistics, and as I mentioned, these are really good numbers that we have in the program, I would like to open the floor to any questions that you may have.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Gustavo. Feel free to raise your hand if you'd like to ask a question aloud or to submit a question in the Q&A pod. And perhaps while we wait, I'll ask some frequently asked questions. So where can we get more information about the RSP program? For example, clarifications that have been provided since the publication of the RSP handbook?

GUSTAVO LOZANO

Yeah, this is a question that we have received a lot. And it's in the chat. We have the RSP program microsite. I'm going to post the link so you have access to that microsite. And what is important to mention on that microsite is the FAQ, because we're using the FAQ

as a way to communicate clarifications, right? So we have received a lot of questions from the different applicants regarding the criteria, regarding the background eligibility criteria, regarding the technical criteria.

So every time that we provide a response to an applicant that we believe that it's an important clarification for all the potential applicants, we try to publish right away an FAQ so that all the applicants have access to the information. So if you go to that microsite, I would like to point potential applicants to the FAQ, because those are being constantly updated as more clarifications are being provided.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, Gustavo. And I think you might have spoken to part of this question earlier in the presentation, but for the RSP program, when will the technical testing start and when do you plan to provide public access to an OT&E service for RST 2.0?

GUSTAVO LOZANO

Yeah, this is also a question that we have received a lot. Since November, we have an OT&E environment. This environment is available to all potential RSP applicants, to register operators, to anyone that is interested in playing with the system. This is the system that is going to replace RST. So also for current risk operators, it's important to start playing with this system.

At the bottom of that page that I just posted in the link, you can see how over time we have been progressing on supporting more and more in these cases. As of now, we have 100% coverage of all the test cases. So this means that if you go through the technical specification for this system and you go through all the hundreds and hundreds of test cases, all of them have been implemented.

We are going through the Q&A phase right now, also UAT, user acceptance testing. But the system is available, right? So if you want to play with it, you can play. And by mid-March, end of March, we expect to have what we call production ready systems. So this means the system, the code that has one through the full Q&A period, let's say, to be available to all potential applicants, again, in this OT&E environment so that people can start working on their own related to any changes that they need to do on their registry systems. So go to that link if you're interested in participating. We have instructions on how to request access to the OT&E. And well, there is a lot of information there on how to authenticate and what is the technical specification, so on and so forth.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you very much, Gustavo. I'm not seeing any other hands. We do still have some time. So if there are any questions for Gustavo or for Kristy related to RSP or ASP, feel free to raise your hand now. Give it a few moments. All right. If not, I guess we can wrap it up a little bit early today. And Marika, did you want to give any closing remarks?

MARIKA KONINGS

Thanks, Sam. No, maybe just to thank everyone for participating. I said there's a lot more information available in the briefing that we have published earlier this week. And of course, I hope to see many of you either in person or remotely during our sessions at the upcoming ICANN meeting. So with that, thank you very much, everyone.

SAMANTHA MANCIA

Thank you, everybody. Have a good rest of your day.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]