
ICANN82 | CF – GNSO: NCSG Issue Forum
Tuesday, March 11, 2025 – 13:15 to 14:30 PST

ANDREA GLANDON

Hello and welcome to the NCSG Issue Forum. My name is Andrea and I am a Participation Manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand and zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute and zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record and speak at a reasonable pace. I will now hand the floor over to Rafik. You may begin.

RAFIK DAMMAK

Okay. Thanks, Andrea, and thanks to those who are joining us here and remotely for this NCSG Issue Forum. So, I want to welcome you and just maybe to kind of introduce quickly the session. So, this is a kind of continuation of a meeting or session we had in the previous ICANN meetings to talk about the Applicant Support Program and try to introduce more about the topics and to go in more details, more concrete details. So we'll have a quite packed agenda for today and we'll leave that more to Pedro to introduce.

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So, just want to welcome everyone and I will pass now to think Juan and Wisdom to speak for NCUC and NPOC.

WISDOM DONKOR

Thank you very much. My name is Wisdom Donkor, the Chair for NCUC. For NCUC, we are very happy to collaborate on this particular Issue Forum and then a big thanks to Pedro and then the EC who put in more of their time into preparing this particular agenda. So, without wasting much time, Rafik, you can come in now.

JUAN MANUEL ROJAS

Thank you everyone. Welcome. Thank you for being here. My name is Juan Manuel Rojas. I am the NPOC Chair and it is very enthusiastic to have all these interesting people here in this session and I think it's all for now, I think that's all for now. Thank you very much.

PEDRO LANA

Hi, everyone. So, I would like to welcome everyone here and start by explaining what we are trying to do with this series of Issue Forums, which is diving into the Applicant Support Program and the New gTLD, the Next Round of New gTLDs. So, we can have people from the non-commercial community learning by teaching and also understanding how the whole process goes.

So, when non-commercial entities are applying for these programs, they can reach out for the non-commercial stakeholder group and

its members to have some guidance on what are the specifics that non-commercial entities should be concerned about, what are the step-by-step, because we understand that as it is, even with the great amount of efforts that we have with the handbook and the materials that are being provided to explain, it's still really hard to understand what to do and having someone to be with them as they go on will be really interesting, will be really important.

So in the first Issue Forum back in ICANN81, we delved into the ASP handbook itself, going into the details of what were the requirements, what were the points that people should look upon, what were the gaps that we already identified. We had a collaborative effort with me, Katie, Bolo, Michaela, Frank, Hoda and Emmanuel, so we would like to give a shout out to them. It was a really interesting session and now we'll also have another round of collaborative efforts and I hope that this is a great session as the last one was.

So with that, to talk about the difference between the ASP and the Next Round, which is something that we already did on the previous Issue Forum, but it's really fundamental to what we're going to do, I would like to pass the floor to Kathy.

KATHY KLEIMAN

And Andrea, could we have the next slide, please? So, wait, do that. Are you sure you have the newest version? There's a new version up in the cloud. Okay, terrific. And then I'll just start talking it through. First, it's a pleasure to see everybody here. So, I'm Kathy Kleiman and I go back forever in ICANN. What we're going to do,

what Pedro and I are doing briefly, is a summary of what we did in Istanbul, which is, just so you know, it's confusing to people, especially those in civil society and working with indigenous peoples and tribes, that there are two applications that they have to do in order to participate in the New gTLD process.

One is the Applicant Support Program, but that's just the gateway. Really what they're preparing for is the New gTLD application, which is, so it's two different things and we found that a lot of people didn't know that. So in the last, in Istanbul, we did the Applicant Support Program and everyone took a piece of the handbook and broke it down. Today we're going to talk a little bit more about the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook. And if I had my slides, you'd see I actually posted a copy of the cover of the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook from 2012. And the reason why is we can't post the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook for 2024 because it's not done yet.

The last sections are up for Public Comment now. And for those who don't know, NCSG participates actively in the SubPro Implementation Review Team and in the edits and the comment process on this. We're trying both to make sure the Applicant Guidebook corresponds to the policies created by the working group, by the policy development process, and is also very, very readable. We're very concerned about readability. Okay, so we can skip this. We now know there are two applications coming up.

Next slide, Andrea, please. Just to show, again, we're talking about the 2012 Applicant Guidebook, but these were some of the sections

in the index that civil society, if they want to be New gTLD applicants in the Next Round, indigenous peoples, tribes are really going to have to go through the evaluation process, the evaluation questions and criteria. There could be objections, which is a very time-intensive arbitration process, New gTLD dispute resolution procedures, string contention.

There's a lot they have to do, plus, ultimately, delegation. And I'm not going to go into these. I just wanted to show what the table of contents is, that this is a complicated process that our New gTLD applicants are entering. Next slide, please. So, this is a very high-level slide, but touching briefly on two things that New gTLD registries will have to do, and one is to be in charge of legal and administrative functions of a registry, and the other is technical and operational duties. I will discuss both of these a little bit more as we go, but for the New gTLD application, kind of writ large, you have to lay out your plans very clearly, very accurately, and as persuasively as possible, and Namra and others will be helping us.

The Next Round, if I understand correctly, will open in early 2026. Is that right? And so, our goal today is to talk about these duties and people, companies, friends who can help us with some of these responsibilities, and with that, I hand it to our next speaker, Emmanuel.

EMMANUEL VITUS

Thank you very much, Kathy and Pedro. So, what I will do, my exercise is basically to update you on the statistics so that we have an idea of who is applying and from what region, and as a non-

commercial stakeholder group, we see whether our people are there. If they are not there, what can we do to get them there? So, next slide, please. So, these are the statistics. I think that's the data as of 19th, no, 28th February, so I think it's a month ago.

In the African region, we have two applications. In the Asian Pacific region, we have five applications. In the EU, zero at the moment. Latin America, one. North America, four. Pending, eight in total, 20. So, I have one minute. What I will do basically is, I mean, this statistic, what does it mean basically? It just means that one reflects the total amount of application per category received, I mean, per date.

So, you can see they put in draft, initiated, submitted. So, what does it mean concretely? It means it's a process. So, some people, they are in their drafting process. So, in the system, you can see that people are drafting the application. So, that's what we have there as 20. Those who have actually initiated their process but not submitted their company information and those kinds of things are 10. And those who have actually completed the submission process, we have one.

So, what is interesting here is in all those figures that you can see there, from the non-for-profit and non-commercial community, we only have one application. So, that is something that we have to, I mean, really look at what can we do, what is our strategy as non-commercial group to get our people to start this process as soon as possible. Thank you.

PEDRO LANA

And with that, we would like to pass it forward to Namra and Frank. I think Namra will lead, right?

NAMRA NASEER

Thank you, I'm Namra. I am from NCUC, North American representative. Frank and I will be covering this section. It's about exploring the public portions of the New gTLD applications from the 2012 round and some of the applicant responses that are public. Okay. Just to give a basic overview of the New gTLD program, the purpose essentially was to expand the DNS namespace, foster competition, and enable innovation according to the applicant guidebook. It went through several evaluation phases, including string reviews, technical financial assessments, and objection periods.

And the gTLDs were categorized into certain categories, including brand gTLD. There are some examples right there, open gTLDs, and also community gTLDs. This is a very surface level kind of a diagram that explains the stages of processing from the previous round, the application submission period that it goes into administrative completeness check. And then there is objection filing and initial evaluation. Some applications, if they go through the initial evaluation, they will simply transition to delegation. Others may require enhanced evaluation.

There is a dispute resolution period, and there is also a string contention period where, and this is like the more enhanced

version of review and evaluation, and then eventually leading to delegation. The application requirements from the previous round were, one, it has to be legal entities, background checks for criminal or cyber-squatting history. The fee at the time was \$185,000 USD, and it was nonrefundable if rejected. I believe the fee will be higher this time.

Key documents that were required from the applicants include proof of legal establishment, their financial statements, and also community endorsements if it's a community New gTLD. And the evaluation criteria included technical operation capability, their financial stability, can they do it, and maintain this financially, DNS security issues, and also string uniqueness. So what does a New gTLD application include? Basically, it includes two main sections, private sections and the public sections. Today, we will be just covering public sections that are available online. Anyone can go and review those. But in the private sections, it includes technical and security plans, their financial and business models, and de-registry operations. In the public sections, it tells you their name, email.

I have included some screenshots. Frank will be covering those. But what applied for gTLD, is there, what's the mission and purpose, very important for NCSG. It includes three subsections of the section, like the question 18. And then the registration policies, who can register, whether it's open, whether it's restricted, or whether it's just brand only. And then geographic considerations.

Why it matters. In most-simplest terms, to define the GTLD's intent and safeguards against abuse, again, an issue very important for NCSG. This is the section 18 of previous round. It may be numbered differently in this guidebook, but it included basically three sections. So, 18a, describe the mission and purpose of your proposed gTLD. It's an open-ended question, and I will share a summary of the responses from the applicants, but they were quite detailed.

And sometimes the language can be vague, so that is why this is an interesting area to look into. 18b, how do you expect that your proposed gTLD will benefit registrants, internet users, and others. And then it kind of drills down into several other six questions to get a more thorough understanding of the mission and purpose. And then 18c, what operating rules will you adopt to eliminate or minimize social costs? Again, further broken down into three sections, but just to get an understanding of what happens if there is a price escalation.

Are there any contractual commitments? What are the costs and benefits for registrants? All of these questions, answers to which are very important for everyone involved, and also for NCSG. I'll let Frank take over now. He will just go through briefly, like we just picked three examples, and he will talk more on that. And he's joining us online.

FRANK ANATI

Okay, thank you, Namra. I hope everyone can hear me loud and clear.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Yes, we can. Thanks, Frank.

FRANK ANATI

Okay, that's great. So, it's nice here in Ghana. So, let me expand on the Brand gTLD. So, we have those BMW, that's the first Brand, and this is a sample of the actual application. It has application ID, the string itself does BMW, the applicant's prioritization number, address, website, the primary contact, phone number, and email. So, can we go to the next slide, please?

So, the Brand, the BMW, has the mission to establish the BMW as a secured and controlled digital space for BMW dealers, partners, and customers. BMW operates the BMW as a single gTLD. So, these are the mission, the expected benefits are for those BMW gTLD to aim for is to create trust, security, and user-friendly online space for customers, and they have the operating rules. So, BMW's single registrant model uses a secure, Brand-controlled environment for users, eliminating the third-party domain conflicts, and minimizing risk associated with fraud and misuse. Can we go to the next slide, please?

So, the next slide is an open gTLD, which is the sample of the slide. It's the same, just that this is an open namespace. So, can we go to the next slide, where I talk more about it? So .ACTOR has the mission. So the .ACTOR gTLD provides an open and accessible

online space for actors, theaters, and industrial professionals, fostering visibility, networking, and brand security. They have the expected benefits. Anyone can register at the domain. It's an open registration, and that's good for us. And they have other benefits and the operation rules.

So, trademark holders get priority. That's the operating rules. Then also, conflicts are resolved by auctions, and that's another operating rule, and that is more friendly to us as a community. And there are also discounts, multiyear, and bulk registrations available. Can we go on to the next? So, the last one is the community-based gTLD, which is the music. .music, and it has the same format, just like the other ones that I've talked about. Can we move to the next slide? Okay. So, .music, community gTLD's mission is to aim to create a trusted, safe online space for global music community, supporting artists, industrial professionals, and organizations, while protecting intellectual property, promoting music education, and fostering legal music distribution.

And the benefits, expected benefits, if you subscribe to .music, is exclusive to the music community with strict validity to prevent misuse, enhance trust and visibility for artists and industrial professionals, and support innovation, offering primary channels, and a potential song registration. Then the operating rules are structured domain allocation, sunrise period for trademark holders, community-based registration system, competitive prices with potential bulk and multiple discounts. So, these are some of

them. And can we move on? So, I hand over to Bolu to continue.
Thank you.

BOLUTIFE ADISA

Thank you very much, Frank. For the record, this is Bolu. Bolutife Adisa, but Bolu is what everyone calls me in the community. I'll be talking about the non-financial assistance that the ASP provides for applicants. And I also have a special guest with me that would also be sharing more. But please, next slide. So, these are a bunch of things that were extracted from the ASP guidebook. But before we go into all that, I think our guests will talk more on that.

I'd to mention the role in which the non-commercial stakeholder group community has played in getting us all these amazing benefits. I think the community has really fought, I would say fight, because it took a long negotiation and arguments and advocacy on high levels in order to achieve all of these benefits for non-profit organizations, indigenous communities, and all. And I would also mention special thanks to Kathy. She has been on the topic for a long time. And also, a lot of other community members that really contributed to this.

So, we have all of these amazing benefits, but I would not go into it because we have a special guest. Next slide. We have Christy Buckley, the Outreach and Digital Inclusion director from ICANN itself, who would share with us some of the things that ICANN has for applicants for the ASP. Over to you, Christy.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you very much for having me. This is Christy Buckley, for the record. And I serve as the lead for the Next Rounds Applicant Support Program. So, NCSG invited us here today to talk a little bit more about the non-financial aspects of the support. So, there are a few elements of that that I will expand upon today. If we go to the next slide, I'll just quickly review the agenda.

So, before we go into the package of support, I did want to just provide an update on the application statistics and the geographic distribution of those, as well as the timeline at a high level. And then we'll go into the package of support, including a deeper dive on the capacity development program, as well as pro bono service provider recruitment and what we're seeing so far in the registrations on that. And then if there's time, we can open it up for questions and discussion.

So, quickly on the status update. Next slide. If you attend the monthly IRT calls that Bob and Chris run, you may have seen these already. There will be updated application statistics this Thursday on the Thursday session for the IRT. So, if you want to see the latest numbers, please join us for that. Next slide. So, this is a snapshot of where the numbers were as of the 19th of February. The reason why it's the 19th is because we opened the ASP for applications on the 19th of November. So, the monthly cadence is the 19th of every month. And we update this both via the IRT, but also on the website. If you go to the ASP section of the website, under program statistics, you'll see the latest numbers there.

So, as you can see, we have 31 in total. And the geographic distribution at a high level across Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America. And then pending just means that they've like started an application, but we don't yet have enough data to know exactly what region that they're from. And then we highlight here just a number of outreach and engagement efforts, our communications efforts. And then what might be of most interest to NCSG is the readiness tools and resources.

So these are materials that are designed to help prospective ASP applicants better prepare to apply for support and navigate the application process in the application system. So, there you'll see an applicant quick start guide, the applicant checklist, so like all the documentation that they might need to complete the application, as well as a system user guide. So, that has step-by-step instructions on how to navigate the application system.

We also have a number of recorded demos on using the application system that are available on the website. So, those are up as well. You might have heard mention, and again, on the Thursday IRT session, we'll go into detail about the New gTLD program in your language. We've had a number of requests about the translation versions of these materials and having those available. So, we have translated those readiness materials into the ICANN languages. And we're working with our language services team to offer more translations of materials on demand. So working in collaboration with the community to crowdsource translations, but also some AI tools. So, it's not as perfect as our wonderful language services do,

but it will go a long way towards getting a lot of these materials available in other languages.

Next slide, please. So, there was a table earlier that just showed the pipeline. So, this is maybe just a more colorful version of that. So you can see the number of applications in the process. We don't yet have any that have been conditionally or fully approved. That just means that they either haven't submitted their full application yet, or it's still going through the evaluation process. But we do expect to have those evaluation results for the first few in the coming weeks.

On the geographic distribution, this is one that we get a lot of questions about. So, the next slide will show you a little bit more detail about what we're seeing across those regions. So, you'll see the green bar. It's hard to see the colors here. But the green bar on the left shows the total number of applications received. And the blue bar next to that shows across how many countries. So, for example, in Africa region, we have three applications in total across two different countries.

In APAC, we have nine total across six different countries. And so, this slide is intended to show the geographic distribution within regions, because one of the questions we were getting is, okay, so you may have nine applications from APAC, but does that mean that they're all from one country, for example? So, this is intended to show that, yeah, the distribution they're in. We have received a number of questions about whether or not we can show the exact countries that we're seeing applications from. And in the ASP

handbook, some of you might have noted that we are aiming to protect business confidentiality for supported applicants. And just recognizing that the ICANN community and the industry itself can be small at times. Oh, yes, you had a question.

We thought that someone might be able to make a reasonably educated guess as to who might have applied from a country if we list that. And then you could also guess potentially the string that they're going to apply for. So, it just kind of gets into this slippery slope. So, we're trying to provide the geographic distribution on a regional basis. But, Kathy, yeah.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Christy, we so appreciate your being here. And we know we're covering a huge amount of material in a short period of time. Is there any way we could focus on the non-financial support in the Applicant Support Program, just that section in particular?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Sure.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Because I know you have a much more, because I heard your briefing yesterday in the GAC. Awesome. And people can find it, and maybe you can share the slides with us. But that's kind of the particular slice we're looking at is, how do you prepare your applicant, your New gTLD application? And Marike was with us last time and kind of indicated that there were plans in place. And I

know a lot more work has been done now. So, I think if we could focus, that would be awesome.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

Sure. So, Andrew, if you could advance to the ASP package of support. Yeah, I'm sorry. Yeah, yes.

TAPANI TARVAINEN

So, Tapani Tarvainen, NCSG. Do we know if there are any non-ASCII domains in the applicants, especially Latin with accents of other diacritics or non-Latin characters?

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

So, the Applicant Support Program does not ask for the string when people apply. So, we wouldn't know. And in fact, we say in the handbook, please do not tell us your string, because then I can would have to maintain business confidentiality of that for 18 months prior to the New gTLD application. So, we don't know what strings people are applying for, but good question. On the package of support, if you go to the next slide, this outlines, you might have seen this in the ASP funding plan. On the left, you have the financial support, which includes the discount in the base gTLD evaluation fee, as well as applicable conditional fees.

If you want to see which conditional fees we are proposing for the reduction, you can see that in the draft applicant guidebook that's out for Public Comment. Same thing for the bid credit, the proposal for how that would work is in the draft AGB out for Public

Comment. And then we also have a reduced base registry agreement fees for the first four years post-delegation. The support applicant that becomes a registry operator would have reduced fees there.

On the non-financial side, the focus here is really what we're calling a capacity development program. You may have seen in earlier iterations of this, we call it like an ASP fellowship, but to avoid confusion with our existing fellowship programs, we've just renamed it a Capacity Development Program. And that includes training materials, applying for a gTLD, becoming a registry operator, access to the applicant counselor who is already available and on board, as well as access to the volunteer professional service providers that are offering pro bono services and mentors.

We also imagine that as part of this, there will be a number of virtual touch points throughout the applicant's life cycle. So, if you go to the next section, I'll dive a little bit more deeply into the capacity development program. So, the next slide will show you sort of a map of the framework that we've put together. So, the idea is that we're pulling together a variety of tools and resources because we recognize that different people have different learning styles.

So, some will learn better from reading something. Some might work better using a video tutorial or joining a webinar, for example. And we have here listed also like when they qualify for support, that they would receive a welcome and onboarding package. And so,

this would be a toolkit to help them navigate that process in preparing to apply and submit a gTLD application.

We note here that, and this came out a couple of weeks ago when we did a workshop to kind of flesh this out, that the capacity development work for ASP very quickly sort of evolves into gTLD applicant readiness overall. And as you might recall with the pro bono service provider list, it's not something that is exclusive to support applicants, right? So, the ASP IRT said, yes, please go and recruit pro bono service providers, but don't have it behind locked doors. We want anyone that could benefit from using pro bono service providers to be able to contact them and ask for that support.

Now what we have done for support applicants is they get, once they're fully confirmed as being qualified, they'll get a letter that shows that and we've asked the pro bono service providers to prioritize them. So, however many hours they have, however many applicants they can support, they should be providing that support to qualified support applicants first and foremost. And so, what you'll see here is that we're trying to come up with a specialized sort of package of support and capacity development for support applicants, while also recognizing that a lot of prospective gTLD applicants could use this in their own readiness and preparation.

And so, yeah, we'll have self-directed learning content. A lot of that is just pulling on the ICANN Learn trainings, but we recognize that there's so much information that we already have. And in addition to the ASP handbook, in addition to the applicant guidebook, it's

an overwhelming amount of information. So, our team is preparing to curate that information to come up with a kind of guided syllabus to help people step-by-step, here's where you are in your journey, here are the resources and tools that we recommend you using, so that we're not just sending them to ICANN Learn with several dozen courses and wishing them luck on that.

We also envision having special topic sessions. So, this is, you could imagine certain topics in relation to the AGB, like if they're a community priority applicant, for example, or if they're a geographic names applicant, we may want to have a special topic session, like a webinar on that to do a deeper dive with people to better understand that. Of course, we've got the ICANN meetings, which offer great opportunities for people to learn more, as well as we hope community and stakeholder groups that may be willing to open their doors a little bit and invite people in as well, including NCSG, we hope, yeah.

Okay, and with that, I'll move to the next slide, which talks a little bit about the learning objectives. So, and we ran these by the GAC, but also the ASP IRT. So, we put together these five learning objectives when we mapped out what is it that we want people to be able to do or understand as a result of doing this capacity development program.

So, the first is we want them to be able to identify and locate and navigate the New gTLD program information, the applicant guidebook, and any other resources that are available. We want them to understand those requirements, just as you guys have

recently laid out on your previous slides, and be able to explain this information to others in their own organization, their own company, for example. We also want them to be able to make informed decisions about how to obtain and allocate resources and prepare a gTLD application.

And then lastly, we would like them to follow opportunities and participate in ICANN meetings and the multi-stakeholder process, especially opportunities to engage in Next Round activities. And then lastly, we want them to understand what it takes to serve as a gTLD registry operator, including how to connect and learn from existing registry operators as appropriate.

So, that's what we've mapped out as what we're aiming for as a result of this capacity development program. And then the next slide just talks a little bit about what we've mapped out so far in terms of that supported applicant toolkit. So, this would be available in that welcome package that we provide to supported applicants, and this would be a mix of learning content. So, as I said, a sort of curated roadmap to help them navigate the existing materials that we have, including system guides, ICANN Learn trainings, knowledge articles, and importantly, FAQs, which are pretty popular. And we get a lot of questions, so it's good to have consistent answers for everyone.

And then we've also imagined, again, virtual touch points. So, this could be through the applicant counselor, but also those special topic sessions like webinars that I mentioned earlier. And then lastly, ICANN community introduction. So, guidance on becoming

part of the ICANN community and the broader internet ecosystem, as well as navigating ICANN meetings and accessing pro bono services. And then the next slide does a deeper dive on the learning content, just to give you an example of what we would imagine there.

So, you'll see the sort of three phases here in the orange boxes. So, there are new supported applicants. So, what they need to do there is understand ICANN and the DNS ecosystem. So, we have a number of topics and learning content that we would fall under that phase of the learning journey, if you will. Then we have preparing and submitting a gTLD application. So, what it means to become an RO, the financial, the technical, and operational aspects, ongoing responsibilities, and of course, submitting a complete and competitive gTLD application.

KATHY KLEIMAN

It is clear we should have just spent the entire session on your section. Can we ask how many more slides you have and maybe issue the invitation to come back with an apology for being rude? We were thinking of this as kind of short bites at the apple. And you've got this deep dive of material that all of this has been done, we think, in the last few months. So, congratulations. Thank you. And we're excited to see it.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY

Yeah, we can. I mean, the next one is just about an overview of the applicant counselor role, what they can and can't do in terms of

their scope. And then otherwise, I just had some slides in the pro bono services. But you can take a look at those. And I'm happy to answer any questions that you have. And feel free to continue on with other parts of your agenda if you need to.

KATHY KLEIMAN Could we invite you back?

CHRISTY BUCKLEY Sure, absolutely.

KATHY KLEIMAN After we review this and then have questions, because in many cases, we become the Q&A people for our communities. So, I'd love a round of applause for Christy.

CHRISTY BUCKLEY Thank you very much.

KATHY KLEIMAN Thank you. And back to Pedro. And thank you and apologies.

PEDRO LANA Thanks, Christy. And I think that in the end, we can also come back if we have enough time. And I would like to pass the floor to Gbééré, which is online, so we can start working on the registry service providers part of the session. Gbééré, please.

GBÉÉRÉ ACHILLE EYE

Thank you, Pedro. I hope everyone can hear me.

PEDRO LANA

Yes.

GBÉÉRÉ ACHILLE EYE

Yeah. Good evening from Benin. I'm Gbééré Achille. And I'll be taking us through the definition of a registry service provider, also known as a back-end service provider. So first, as much as Kathy mentioned earlier, when we talk about gTLD, there are different types of duties, like legal and administrative, and technical and operational. So, when we talk about registry service provider, it's a technical entity that acts as a third party and offer the service technical management of a gTLD to a registry operator. And we have four different types of registry service provider, depending on the type of technical service they are providing to the operator. Next slide, please.

So I mentioned registry operator and registry service provider. So, a registry operator is the legal entity responsible for a gTLD domain. And the registry service provider on this side is the technical entity that deals with everything that has technical aspects, the infrastructure, DNS, the security of the domain, and the data, the registration data, and all those services. And just an example from my country, Benin, we are talking about gTLD, but this example is ccTLD.bg, which is the country code of my country. The legal entity that is responsible for that gTLD is the regulation

authority, that's ASIC. But the technical aspect of that domain is managed by a business entity, a technical one, that's named Genesis. So, next slide, please.

KATHY KLEIMAN

So Gbééré is passing it back to me. Thank you, Gbééré. Anything else you wanted to say?

GBÉÉRÉ ACHILLE EYE

Yeah, I just wanted to mention that there are other-- I mean, the same applies to gTLDs as an example. So, we have other RSPs that provide technical services to gTLD registry operators. So, back to you, Kathy. Thanks.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Thank you, Gbééré. And thank you for the remote participation. Thanks to everybody who's presenting remotely. So, we're just going to dive a little more deeply in this section. In this I wrote, I did not take it from anything just so different things that registries, the registry itself is responsible for. It signs the contract with ICANN, right? So, it's going to hold the legal and contractual responsibilities for the Top-Level Domain with ICANN, with the internet community, with the world. The registry will be marketing the TLD, administering it, setting the cost, signing the contracts with the registrars, the ICANN accredited registrars in the case of a gTLD. Paying the fees to ICANN is a registry that Christy touched on briefly.

Setting DNS Abuse policies to the extent they want to go above and beyond the policies that we set as consensus policies. Next slide, please. We touched on this briefly in Istanbul, and now we're going to do it again more deeply and with expertise that's in the room and online. So, registry operators have very, very deep technical and operational duties, really fundamental.

So what we shared in Istanbul was, and I'll read it here, the role of the registry operator within the internet ecosystem is to keep the master database of all domain names registered in each Top-Level Domain and generate the zone file that allows computers to route the traffic to and from TLDs anywhere in the world. And that zone file is really the map of the domain name to the IP address of the name servers so that anyone in the world can find the websites, the email server, and the other things we associate with the domain name.

Domain names are just mnemonics for IP addresses, a certain subset of IP addresses. But this is kind of the core of the registry operator technical and operational responsibilities. And this, next slide, please, this is hard. Right? This is hard. So, some gTLD registries, not all, but some turn to friends to help them with technical and operational work while still maintaining their role as the legal and policy head of the TLD.

Next one. And this process of turning to a friend to help with the technical and operational process is getting easier. ICANN has issued something called the Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program Handbook. And so, what Gbээрэ was showing you that

you can have, we'll call it the registry operator, but also a back-end registry service provider. And the term back-end has been cut off, but that's a picture of those words in there, back-end registry service provider. This is the technical and operational expert, and they may work with lots of other TLD registries. They may even have their own top-level domains, but they're going to be the experts in the technical and operational.

And in the first round, everyone had to apply separately and again and again for even if you were using the same registry service provider. Now ICANN has created, we're not allowed to call it a certification, but that's the closest word to it. Some, ICANN, you can apply ahead of time, and ICANN will, next slide please, will test and evaluate and ensure that the back-end service provider meets certain, actually very high, technical and operational requirements to provide technical services to TLD registries, is doing this evaluation now. And if an organization, a company passes the evaluation, then there's a publish list and you'll be able to see publicly that ICANN has done this evaluation and that this entity has passed.

So, if you're applying for a New gTLD, and last time in Istanbul, we all picked a civil society organization, an indigenous people's tribe that we were kind of representing for the purpose of this session. So, I urge you to think about that again. And so now these entities that we may be part of, we may be advising in our communities, can do what Namra showed you, talk about the mission and purpose, they're setting that. But for technical and operational things, they can say, hey, I've signed up with an RSP who will be

providing these services for me, and ICANN, they've already passed your evaluation process.

Next slide, please. And it is my great pleasure to introduce to you two registry service providers who, we actually called a number of them, and you guys confirmed that you were seeking certification from ICANN, you were seeking that you were applying through the RSP handbook. And so, it is my great pleasure, and I urge you to introduce yourself, to introduce Identity Digital, and Kroopa is with us in the room, and Amadeu with CORE is online and joining us late at night from Spain. And now I turn to you and the slides that you have so generously shared with us. Amadeu, I think you're first.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. Is my microphone on?

KATHY KLEIMAN

It is loud and clear.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay, thanks a lot. So, good evening from Barcelona, Catalonia. It's not so late, it's 10pm, so it's still workable this time. And I guess you have my slides on the screen, Kathy?

PEDRO LANA

Yes, I do, Amadeu.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. So, my name is Amadeu Abril, but that's not my fault, it was my parents' choice. And I work for CORE, CORE Association, which is, as the name says, an association. And CORE stands for Council of Registrars. So, we are a membership association, we don't have shareholders, we are a not-for-profit association based in Switzerland, whose members are all of them, registrars, be that, registrars or resellers or ccTLD of registrars in different parts of the world. And we run registry services and other services. We have three of these on our own.

We are courageous or crazy, depending on how you would judge that, because our own three TLDs, all of them are IDNs, two in Cyrillic script, one in Arabic script. And then we are registered service providers for a couple of dozen TLDs of all the types that were mentioned before, home-brand TLDs, some open and restricted TLDs. But I would say that even if we have not intended it, probably because of our history and tradition, and that we started in 2000 in the first round with .aero and .museum, we have somehow been specialized of seeing us specializing in community-based TLDs, in sponsored TLDs, in difficult TLDs, that is TLDs that are not your plain, simple TLD that has a price, marketing and no other concerns.

So we are a registered service provider. So, what do we do? Next slide, please. There is a graphic somewhere there. By the way, if you ever wondered how blind people make presentations, this is the way. No fancy things, outdated graphics, just text without backgrounds, features, any type of graphic fanciness or any effect. This is an old graphic I had somewhere that describes many of the

things we do, many of the things that the registry typically does internally, connecting to the registers and different interfaces, connecting to the wall. There are some parts missing, very important. Zone file generation, I think, is not there. Communicating with the main servers is not there. I think that the scroll is not reflected there. ICANN monitoring is not there.

So, there are lots of things. It's much more complex than that. And that's just one part that's replicated in different places. Look, at the end, you don't want to know the details. What do you want to know? Next slide, please. Is that any RST has to provide you two basic things. This is the minimum. First, it has to work. It has to run your TLD. And second, it has to be icon compliant. I think that FUPA, we'll also talk about that. There are SLAs, there are minimum things you have to do in a certain way. And ICANN measure that. Well, any RST must guarantee you in their agreement that they will do that for you.

Kathy has said that we are now through an evaluation process where ICANN will guarantee. Okay, you're quite optimistic, Kathy. The RST evaluation process is basically a sort of ISO audit in which you have lots of procedural questions. How do you do this? And who you warn if this happens? But as far as technical things go, I mean, they are much more focused on other parts. It's really organizational and procedural thing and process, process, process. Which is not bad, but it's only a part of it. And the funny part is that after doing this and paying for this, we'll still will need to set up the system for testing for each individual application before it goes live.

So, we are not, you are escaping from submitting a technical application part, questions 24 to question 43 in 2012, but we are not escaping from the pre-validation test, even if now it will have a different name, which is surprising, especially when, for instance, you submit five brand applications that are exactly the same, still you will need to pass five times the same evaluation, which is something we don't understand, except that it seems as one other device to raise costs in a very artificial way for new applicants. Okay. This is not the only way, indeed, that we seem to be trying that.

So, these are the two things that we all are supposed to do one way or another, but then what else? Next slide, please. Indeed, look, if you come to Seattle and you rent a car to go to the ICANN meeting and three days later or five days later, you go back and back home and we'll leave the car in the airport, you probably only care about price. Now, if that you're buying that car or instead of going to Airbnb for a place to stay for the ICANN meeting, but you're instead buying a house for you and your family, probably you will check many different things.

So, the first thing is, okay, price, but what's included in the price? This is not completely standard. Some registry providers will provide you, let's say, all-inclusive prices and other people say, well, this is the basic price, but if you want these other things like a German car or Mercedes, oh, here you have the car, but you want a spare tire or a radio system, no, this is an extra thing, right? So, this

also happens here. You need to check what's included whether name servers, for instance, are included or not.

They should, whether doing the report swiping, which is mandatory, is included, but we've seen contracts in which they were not included in 2012. Then this has been evolving, thanks God, right? But you need to check what's included in the price, right? And what do you want for that price, right? Now, the special thing you need to check about price is support. Is support all-inclusive or you have a cap of hours or emails per year, per month, per week, you can send on top of that, there is a fee. These are things that the base price would be very simple to analyze, but all these things need to be taken into account.

And let me give you an extreme example. In 2012, we were involved in three objections, two string contentions and one community objection and one community priority evaluation. Let me tell you that all this was like consuming. We need all the work for our customer to the registries that were not yet registries. So, we wrote all the papers, will be that defendant on some cases or claimant. We want all the cases, but I can tell you that if that was externalized to a law office and all the administration of that, plus all the delays, three to four years of delay, of delays covered by this, well, the amount, the invoice for the registries would have killed them. So, simple.

So, in our vision, for instance, we say, well, all this comprises, we were doing this somehow, our own Applicant Support for community-based TLDs. We wouldn't do that for a Brand TLD. You

understand what I mean? Because then they are there to defend their trademark and they are a business that's not there to live out of the registrations, but to protect their intellectual property, their brand, their presence, and they understand rising for these services while other people wouldn't. Okay.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Amadeu?

AMADEU ABRIL

Yes?

KATHY KLEIMAN

One minute warning, please. And then please, please stay with us for questions because we're sure people will have them. Thank you.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. So, the other thing is flexibility. Will this TLD tell you, well, this is the price, but do you work the way I work with all the TLDs? Will it allow you for special services, special needs? And as I said, support, support, and support. Who will do the accounting? Who will do the support to the register? Do you need that?

It also depends whether you are a DNS person or a DLD that came here and know how it works, whether you're a DLD that registered, came here to make money from the DLD, or for instance, you are here basically to deal with a community like many of our

customers. Last slide, please. Oh, second last. So, oh, can you read me the title? Because I don't know where we are now.

KATHY KLEIMAN

What no, no, no. Thank you so much, Amadeu. What no RSP can provide. Decision-making, oversight, relations with your community.

AMADEU ABRIL

Exactly. So, the previous slide, what the kind of things, lots of things that depending on your needs, you will need to negotiate with your RSP to see whether they can also provide that, or perhaps you already have, or you have by a third party, you have support from other parties that will handle your relationship with ICANN or whatever, right?

Now, there are three things that you cannot, two and a half, that you cannot delegate at any case. The first one is decision-making. For instance, you should not allow your RSP to tell you, well, we only work with complete data set or with minimum data set, registration data, right? So, you, if you want to work with us, this is it. We make technical decisions that have policy implications because we want to treat all the TLDs the same way, which will mean, certainly, reduced fees. But you need to make the decisions in anything that relates to the policy, to the pricing center. Never give up on that, okay?

The second thing, you need to keep oversight on the registers. And the third one is, only if you are a community-based TLD, you need

to keep, sorry for using that word, but you will forgive European white men to say evangelization. If you are a community TLD, the relationship with the community is on you. Nobody else, no RSP with technical knowledge, we can support you. Kroopa can support you. But when you're addressing, if you're the radio, the radio wants to talk to the radio entities. When you're the sport, they want to talk to the sport federations regarding this and not just a technical provider. Okay, thanks a lot and sorry for taking too much time.

PEDRO LANA

Thank you. And to go direct to our next speaker, please, Kroopa.

KROOPA SHAH

Hello, can you hear me? It's better. Okay, perfect. Okay, hi, everyone. My name is Kroopa Shah and I am the vice president for Registry Services at Identity Digital. I've been part of the industry now for over 20 years. I'm very happy to be here to support you all. Next slide, please.

Let me tell you a little bit, just a teeny bit about Identity Digital. Some may not know who we are. We are an internet infrastructure company that empowers brands and individuals to own their identities online through descriptive domains such as .info, .live, .pro. We support over 460 TLDs worldwide, whether it's gTLDs, Brands, ccTLDs, community TLDs, etcetera. We provide a variety of services, but for today, I'm going to focus on registry services. But before I get into what registry services are and what a provider

does, let me tell you a little bit about what is an RSP at a very high level.

So, think about the internet. Actually, if you could stay on the previous slide, that would be great. Think about the internet as an airspace, okay, where all domain names are planes that need to travel from one place to another. And the plane needs to reach a destination. The destination is the website, and it needs to take a specific flight plan, an IP address, to help it get to its destination. And that's where a registry services provider comes in. We are the air traffic control, or I like to think of us as the air traffic control of the internet, as we support domain names, planes, to use a flight path to get to their destination or the IP address, to a resolving website. Next slide, please.

So, RSPs essentially are critical for the safe and secure operation of the internet. As an RSP, Identity Digital operates the master database of names, and we provide standard compliant turnkey services in alignment with the SLAs and requirements that are outlined in the registry agreements with ICANN. So, this could include providing technical infrastructure, the master database of names, as I just said, 24-7 global support. We are also responsible for providing 100% DNS uptime, DNSSEC support, security services, and connecting TLDs to a global network of registrars, and then enabling those registrars to register and manage their domain names in the TLDs that we currently support.

In addition, registry services providers also provide comprehensive reporting, DNS Abuse services, and many like ours keep abreast of

changing legal and policy environments so that we can leverage that knowledge to support TLDs in the ever-changing environment that we are in. Essentially, RSPs manage all the technical and complex aspects of managing a TLD to enable the TLD to operate, to grow, to flourish. Next slide, please. This is a snapshot of our global DNS network, but it provides you with an overview of the breadth that is required to support a worldwide network. But what does it take to really operate an RSP?

Next slide, please. So, operating an RSP is complex, as I've said, and it's not as simple as buying a domain name, and Amadeu actually touched upon that previously. But think of it, again, as buying a house versus renting. There are complexities. There are increased costs. It involves setting up robust, scalable, secure infrastructure so that the TLD can operate continuously without interruption. It includes setting up services like 24-7 global support because the Internet doesn't sleep. And so, registrars are in all corners of the world, and they could require support at any given time. And so, having that 24-7 global support is important for registrars.

Now, secondly, ICANN has very stringent technical and operational requirements for TLD operators, DNS uptime, security, stability, and without an experienced RSP, a TLD applicant may face challenges in meeting those requirements and even potentially facing penalties. And then, lastly, without the operational support provided by RSP, issues such as system outages, DNS interruption, DDoS attacks, those types of issues would be harder to manage,

right? And this could lead to frequent downtime, eventually all leading to reputational damage for the TLD.

So, now that I've said all this, what should, in my opinion, what should you look for when you look for an RSP? Next slide, please. So, number one, experience in launching and supporting TLDs, right? Migrating back-end services can be difficult. It could cause service outages, et cetera. So, when you pick a back-end, when you pick an RSP, you want to make sure that they have experience launching and supporting TLDs, brand TLDs, gTLDs, not ccTLDs, I'm sorry, geoTLDs, community TLDs, et cetera. Check the provider's reference. That's what I would recommend that you do as you're selecting an RSP because you'll be amazed and astonished at the large variety in both service quality as well as the references.

Thirdly, ask your provider for a record of their technical compliance with SLAs. All the RSPs are required to be compliant with specific SLAs that are outlined in their registry agreements with ICANN. Ask them for their technical record. And prioritize DNS uptime for your TLD because your TLD is going to be an important asset for you and 100%uptime is going to be key to its success. Now, Identity Digital is currently going through the process to be pre-evaluated for the Next Round based on the process that Kathy briefly outlined earlier. And we are we're planning to be part of the published list in December of this year.

We're going to be ready to provide services to a variety of different types of TLDs. And we've been doing this for a number of years now. And we want to leverage that expertise to support the Next

Round of TLDs that that comes on. So, last slide, please. So, with this, I'm going to turn it back to Kathy and team to sort of perhaps do Q&A here. Thank you for having me here again. And I'll be available to chat after the session or at the Identity Digital booth on the seventh floor. Come look for me. We can have a more detailed discussion. Thank you.

PEDRO LANA

Thanks, Kroopa. Thanks, Amadeu. Those were both great presentations. It helped us understand much more of the whole situation and what people really need to look on when searching for an RSP. And we are actually joining now the Q&A to the RSPs and the Q&A to the previous speakers. So, we have time for, I believe, two questions, maybe three. We have one online, but I would like to search if there's a question on the room before reading it. Peter, would you like to read it or should I read it for you? I know there was some problems before.

TAIWO PETER

Yes.

PEDRO LANA

Oh, sorry. Please.

TAIWO PETER

Can you hear me?

PEDRO LANA	Yes.
TAIWO PETER	Oh, okay. Awesome. Thanks for giving us all the technical details.
KATHY KLEIMAN	Peter, we can't hear you. Can you go closer to your microphone, please? And very slow.
TAIWO PETER	Okay, I can actually talk.
TAIWO PETER	I don't know why. So, can you hear me now?
PEDRO LANA	Yeah, please. If you can't, I will read it for you. But please go on.
TAIWO PETER	Okay. Can you hear me better? Is it better now?
PEDRO LANA	Yes.
TAIWO PETER	Okay. So, I just wanted to thank the presenter for giving us an overview of the registry technical system. But my question is, from your experience, how can community-driven registry services

sustain their operation in terms of the technical deployment and management of the registry system? Because we're looking at, we're a non-profit organization, so we advocate for non-profit organizations. And we wanted to know the level of finances and operational costs that a community-driven registry will be looking at, and how they can sustain their operation. And the second question that I would like to ask, because- Sorry.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Only one question, Peter.

TAIWO PETER

Okay, great.

KATHY KLEIMAN

And then we'll go back in the queue. Thanks. So, you want to talk about cost. How much does it cost to have, to work with an RSP?

AMADEU ABRIL

The answer is, how much money do you have? No, but seriously, it's very difficult, but there are good news there. Let me tell you that a lot of registries have been sold because they were not profitable, or the registry wanted to get out. But this is not what has happened with community-based TLDs.

In our experience, community-based TLDs, especially when they are not for a community, but from a community, that run from entities that are accountable and representative of the community,

have done a fairly good job, also because they have support. But our advice has always been, well, try to get the upfront costs, like the ICANN evaluation costs, et cetera, from some kind of sponsors, and then try to survive with your own registrations. If you equate the ICANN evaluation cost into it it's very difficult to recover that money, no matter what the registry service provider does in the next five years or six years or whatever.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Thank you, Amadeu. And of course, to be fair among competitors, wonderful competitors, Kroopa, would you like to answer the question?

KROOPA SHAH

Thank you for the question. There are a variety of strategies that you could use to ensure that on an operational basis, you're able to cover your cost. It's really going to depend on your TLD, the requirements, and what you're doing on an ongoing basis. Your application costs are likely going to be the highest.

Your provider costs are going to be comparatively lower than your application costs. And like Amadeu suggested, there's a variety of different costs. It's very difficult to put a number in it. But again, happy to talk offline and discuss further how we could support you or how others could support you as well in helping you maintain those costs. Thank you.

PEDRO LANA So, a quick check around the room if anyone has another question.

KATHY KLEIMAN Including questions for Christy?

PEDRO LANA Yeah, if we don't have another here, I think we can go back to the second question that Peter had. Peter, are you with us?

TAIWO PETER Yes. Yeah. Thank you. Just thanks for giving us an explanation on that. Still wanted to know because we want to know different costs that is applicable if you can just tell us. Like, it's hard to put a number on that. But we wanted to know because we want to be able to advocate these. Because those are the questions that we get from non-profit organizations.

So, if you can explain further on that. So, just wanted to like ask why you're elaborating on that. The second one that I wanted to touch on what Cathy actually raised that they turn to friends for technical implementations. So, what are the mechanisms that are in place for turning to friends because we don't want because these are data, registering data that we don't want people to have access to. So, are there mechanisms in place to address this? So, that's my second question. Thank you.

KATHY KLEIMAN

So, you want to know about protection of registrant data by the back end in your gTLD? Peter?

TAIWO PETER

Yes.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Okay. So, maybe briefly, and I know we've only got one minute. So, Kroopa, we'll start with you. Amadeu, you're on deck for quick answers to privacy issues and protecting registrant data. As you know, in civil society, some of our organizations are not so popular with their governments.

KROOPA SHAH

I'll give a very quick answer because of the time restriction here. We are currently compliant with the data privacy policies within the European community, the GDPR, et cetera. And so, I guess, depending on the community that this TLD would be part of, we would have to sort of determine what those privacy restrictions would be and how we could support you in securing the registrant data. I'm sorry, I don't have a deeper answer than that right now. Thank you.

AMADEU ABRIL

To add to that, also the same line that Krupa says, just remember, the RSP is a data processor working for you. So, you will decide in the registry, I mean, will decide how data is treated and what are the privacy levels of protection here. Beyond that, we are in

Switzerland, and Swiss courts are not very cooperative with foreign courts when it comes regarding personal data. But this is not the whole guarantee. The real thing is we don't take decisions on that. We take technical measures and operational measures, but you make the call and you make the decisions.

KATHY KLEIMAN

We have learned so much. I'm going to hand it back to Pedro. Just a huge thanks for our guest speakers today. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for sticking with our crazy timeframes on this. And back to Pedro.

PEDRO LANA

One minute over time, I would just like to thank all our speakers, internal and external, and we will probably continue this conversation while we still have this process going. Thanks.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay, but not tonight with me. Bye-bye. Ciao, ciao. Thanks.

ANDREA GLANDON

You may stop the recording.

KATHY KLEIMAN

Thank you, everyone, for participating remotely.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]