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ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING



28 October 2025

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

gTLD

String Evaluations: DNS Stability, String Similarity, and Variant String

28 October 2025



Agenda

01 Applicant Journey

- ✓ **Pre-Submission String Validations:** DNS Stability Review (1.2.1.8.3)
- ✓ **String Evaluation:** Similarity Evaluation (1.2.4.1)
- ✓ **Application Evaluation:** Variant String Evaluation (1.2.11.8)

02 DNS Stability Review (3.1.8.3)

03 String Similarity Evaluation (7.10)

04 Variant String Evaluation (7.6)

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

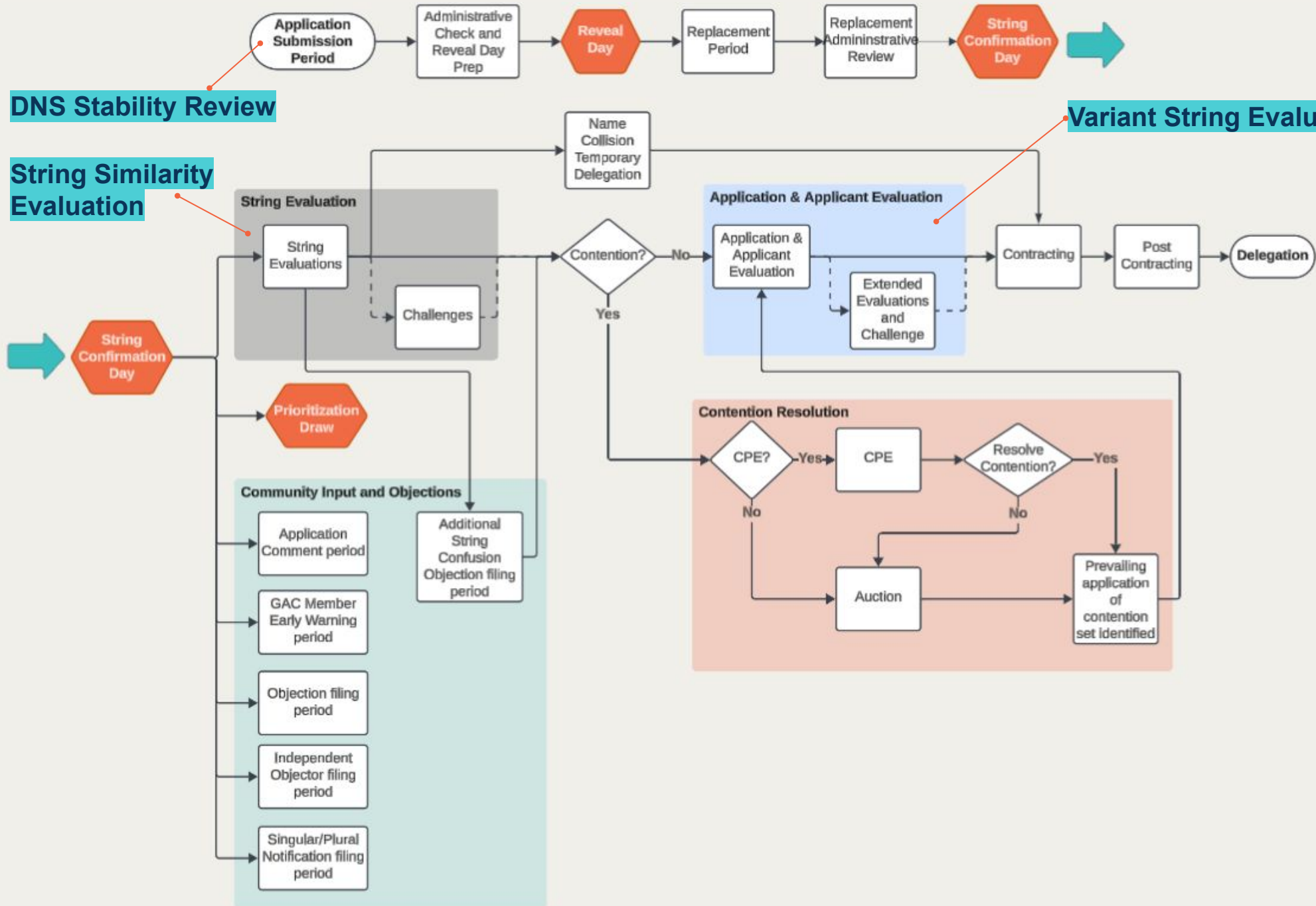
01

The Applicant Journey

DNS Stability Review

String Similarity Evaluation

Variant String Evaluation



02

DNS Stability Review

DNS Stability Review | AGB Section 3.1.8.3

This review assesses whether an applied-for string will adversely affect the security or stability of the Domain Name System (DNS) and comply with DNS and other relevant standards, as described in **Section 3.1.8.3 DNS Stability Review**.

The DNS Stability Review includes a check for compliance with the applicable Root Zone Label Generation Rules. If the string fails any of the tests, the applicant will not be able to submit their application.

All these checks are automated and integrated into the application management system.



DNS Stability Review Requirements

AGB Section 3.1.8.3

- 1 The ASCII label must either be an NR-LDH or a valid A-label as described in section 2.3 of RFC 5890.
- 2 The NR-LDH label must consist entirely of letters (alphabetic characters a-z) in accordance with section 2.1 of RFC1123.
- 3 IDN gTLD strings must comply with IDNA2008 (RFCs 5890-5893) and all standards-track RFCs that update IDNA2008.
- 4 IDN gTLD strings must comply with the applicable Root Zone Label Generation Rules.
- 5 If a gTLD string is a variant string of either an existing gTLD in the root zone or an applied-for primary gTLD, it must be an allocatable variant string of that primary gTLD.

Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR)

AGB Section 3.1.8.3.1

1

Applicable RZ-LGR Version and Scripts and Languages Supported

RZ-LGR Version 6 will be used, which supports 27 scripts (see [RZ-LGR-6](#)).

2

Unsupported Script Applications

Applicants will not be able to submit an application for a string in a script not integrated into RZ-LGR-6.

3

Choosing Primary and Variant Strings

When selecting the primary string, applicants should consider the corresponding allocatable and blocked variant strings that will be created.*

4

Outcomes

The RZ-LGR will be applied to a primary string to determine if it is valid as a TLD.

The RZ-LGR will be applied to a variant string to determine if it is an allocatable variant string of the primary string.

*The LGR Tool by ICANN at <https://lgrtool.icann.org> can be used to determine allocatable variant strings for a primary string.

Challenging Validation

AGB Section 3.1.8.4

In cases where an applicant believes they are being prevented from submitting an application because the pre-submission string validations have been incorrectly applied or miscoded, they can file a challenge no later than 14 days prior to the close of the application submission period.

For example, there was an error in the automated DNS Stability Review tool calculation and it caused the applicant to fail the DNS Stability Review.

This challenge mechanism does not apply for scripts not supported by the RZ-LGR.

The Challenge Panel will communicate the result of the Pre-Submission String Validations within five days of an applicant filing the challenge.



Q&A

DNS Stability Review

03

String Similarity Evaluation

String Similarity Evaluation | AGB Section 7.10

The objective of the String Similarity Evaluation is to prevent user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from delegation of visually similar strings. Strings or their variant strings must not be visually similar to an existing TLD or its variant strings, or a Blocked Name or its variant strings as in **Section 7.10 String Similarity Evaluation**.

“Visually Similar” in this context means visually confusing strings, specifically “strings so visually similar that they create a probability of user confusion if more than one of the strings is delegated into the root zone.”



Scope of the Evaluation

AGB Section 7.10

Categories for Comparison		The applied-for string		
		Primary string	All allocatable variant string(s)	All blocked variant string(s)
- Existing gTLD - Applied-for string from previous round(s) of the New gTLD Program still in process - Existing ccTLD - Requested IDN ccTLD - Another applied-for string - Blocked Name - Reserved Name (TBC by GNSO) - Any two-Character ASCII	Primary String	Yes	Yes	Yes*
	All allocatable variant string(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes*
	All blocked variant string(s)	Yes*	Yes*	No

Evaluation Determinations

AGB Section 7.10

1. String Visually Similar to an existing gTLD or its variant string.
 2. String Visually Similar to an applied-for string in previous rounds of the New gTLD Program and still in process or its variant string.
 3. String Visually Similar to an existing ccTLD or its variant string.
 4. String Visually Similar to a requested IDN ccTLD or its variant string.
 5. String same as another applied-for string or its variant string.
 6. String Visually Similar to another applied-for string or its variant string.
 7. String Visually Similar to a Blocked Name or its variant string.
 8. String Visually Similar to a Reserved Name or its variant string (TBC by GNSO).
 9. String Visually Similar to a two-character ASCII string or its variant string.
 10. String not Visually Similar to any of these categories listed.
- 

Evaluation Challenge

AGB Section 7.10.4

If an applicant believes the String Similarity Evaluation Panel made a factual or procedural error then the applicant may file a challenge.

The evaluation challenge will be assessed under a “clearly erroneous” standard of review. Specifically, the Evaluation Challenge Service Provider must accept the String Similarity Evaluation Panel’s evaluation determination unless:

- (1) the panel failed to follow the established evaluation procedures, or
 - (2) failed to consider or solicit necessary material evidence or information.
- 

Exception for .Brand TLDs

AGB Section 7.10.5

If an applied-for string has met the criteria to be qualified as a Brand TLD and this applied-for Brand TLD is found similar, and therefore is either unable to proceed or put in a contention set, then the Brand TLD applicant will have the opportunity to change their string. The rules for the string change for Brand TLD applications can be found in [Section 5.3 Brand String Change Requests](#).



String Similarity Evaluation Data - Public Comment Open

ICANN recently published the String Similarity Evaluation (SSE) Data to be used by the SSE Tool, as described in the initial version of String Similarity Review Guidelines developed and [published for Public Comment](#) in 2024.

Open Public Comment Proceeding: [ICANN Seeks Input on String Similarity Evaluation Data](#)

- Closes: 4 December 2025

As per the Guidelines, the SSE Data and SSE Tool will help guide the SSE Panel, which will make its own independent determinations on string similarity.



Q&A

String Similarity Evaluation

04

Variant String Evaluation

Variant String Evaluation Criteria

AGB Section 7.6

RZ-LGR determines variant strings. An applicant seeking one or more allocatable variant strings of an applied-for primary IDN or existing gTLD must provide justification for the necessity of each variant string.

This justification will be evaluated by a panel using **a general standard of reasonableness** based on four criteria.



Variant String Evaluation Criteria

AGB Section 7.6

Variant string evaluation criteria:

1. The meaning or intended meaning (for non-dictionary words) of each of the applied-for variant strings is consistent, as demonstrated by sources provided by the applicant.
 2. The variant string is recognized as equivalent by the intended user community.
 3. The benefits and the user communities who will gain from the introduction of the applied-for variant string.
 4. Steps the applicant will take to minimize the operational and management complexities of the variant string and resulting variant domain names that impact registrars, resellers, or registrants.
- 

Evaluation Determinations

AGB Section 7.10

The applicant must meet each criterion for each applied-for variant string to proceed in the Program. The evaluation outcome of any one applied-for variant string will not impact the evaluation outcome of a primary applied-for IDN or any other applied-for variant string in the application.

The ability to manage the applied-for variant strings along with the applied-for primary IDN or the existing gTLD will be evaluated from both a technical and operational perspective as described in the RSP Evaluation Program.



Q&A

Variant String Evaluation

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gTLD

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