
ICANN84 | AGM – String Evaluations in the Next Round: DNS Stability String Similarity and IDN Variant Justification
Tuesday, October 28, 2025 – 10:30 to 12:00 IST

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Hello and welcome, everyone, to the string evaluation in the Next Round, DNS Stability, String Similarity, and IDN Variant Justification. My name is Pitinan Kooarmornpatana, and I am a participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment policy.

Please observe the following guidelines to participate in this session. I will also post them in the chat for your reference. Only question posted in the Q&A pod will be read aloud during the session as time permit and when directed by the Chair of the session. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand in Zoom or otherwise as directed. When speaking, please state your name for the record and speak clearly for moderated pace. I will now hand the floor over to Sarmad Hussain. Sarmad, over to you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN Thank you, everyone, for joining. Can we move to the next slide, please? So in this session, we are going to give you an overview of three of the evaluations among a longer list of evaluations, which are done for the Next Round of the new gTLDs. And what we'll do

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is we'll present or share with you what is in the applicant guidebook, and then open the floor for questions and answers.

So that's sort of the format of this session. Next slide. We'll be covering the three evaluations, which we'll be covering include the DNS stability review which is done during the submission process, the strings similarity evaluation and variance string evaluation. If you can go to the next slide.

So, this is an overall chart which shows the applicant journey, and the three evaluations which we will be talking about in this session as you can see occur at different places in the process. The DNS stability review occurs at the very start at the application submission stage. Then the string similarity evaluation occurs during the string evaluation stage which is later on. And the variant string evaluation occurs during the application and applicant evaluation stage. So, these three evaluations occur at different stages of the applicant journey. Next slide, please.

So, to talk about the first one, DNS Stability Review, I'll request Francisco to please present the details and then take any questions. What we'll do is for each of them, we'll take questions for that particular section right after it is presented, and then we'll move on to the next one. So, Francisco, please.

FRANCISCO ARIAS

Hello, everyone. This is Francisco Arias. My team in ICANN deals with technology related to gTLD registries and registrars, and so on

that regard, we are involved in the DNS Stability Review. So this DNS Stability Review is one that existed in the previous round. The big difference this time is that last time it was done through a panel that was reviewing the strings after they have been submitted.

This time, the plan is to have the application system to check for this and other things that can be automated in a fully automated way. So, as the applicant types the string, that will be one of the first things they are asked to do. They click next, and then the check on the instability and other checks as I mentioned before, that can be automated, will be done.

And so, the applicant will have immediate feedback on the string, and they will also have the opportunity to challenge that if they think that the system is doing something that it should not. So that's as a high level, what this is about.

On the more detailed view, DNS instability is about checking for compliance with the relevant standards. The standards that are checked are described in that section that is shown in the screen, 3.1.8.3 in the applicant guidebook, and I'm going to describe them in the next slide what are those checks that are being done. Sorry, can we go back?

Besides those DNS standards, there is also automated check that is done on the Root Zone LGR. As you may know, the strings, if someone wants to apply for an IDN TLD they need to comply with

the Root Zone LGR, and so that is going to be checked as part of that automated setup test. Next slide, please.

So, the checks that are done specifically for DNS stability, as I said, there are more checks that are done in an automated way. But specifically talking about DNS instability, first one is the ASCII label has to be what is formally called a Non-Reserved Letter, Digit, Hyphen name; this is the formal name for the old type of TLDs, com, net, org, biz, info, et cetera, the type of TLDs that were only ASCII. And so, this is just the formal term that is defined in the RCs from the ITF. So, it's either pure ASCII TLD or it's ASCII map IDN TLD, which is called an A level. That's the formal name defined in the RFC from the ITF for IDNs.

There is a reference to the specific section of the RFC where you can find the definition for those terms. So, that's the first check on the ASCII mapping, if it's an IDN or the TLD itself. If it's not an IDN, they need to comply with those requirements. The next requirement is regarding TLDs that are ASCII that are not IDNs.

There is a further restriction that is coming from an all RFC1123 that says that TLDs have to be alphabetic only. So, it can only include letters from A to Z. Again, this is for the non-IDN TLDs. Tier one, if it's an IDN, the string has to comply with the IDNA2008 standard, it's a series of RFCs. And so, that's the tier check that is done on the applied for strings.

The fourth check is, as I mentioned before, checking that the string complies with the Root Zone LGR. It has to be one of the, I believe,

27 or so scripts that are supported by the Root Zone LGR version six, which is the latest. And so, the call points have to be from those, et cetera, et cetera. And the last check that is done is if the gTLD string is a variant of an either an existing gTLD or an applied for primary gTLD, it has to be an allocatable variant.

In the Root Zone LGR, not only defines the variants, but also where the variants can be allocatable or if they are block. Block variants, you cannot apply for them, they're just not available. And it's important to know that whether a variant is allocatable, block depends on the choice of the primary string, but more than that later. Next slide.

Here are precisely the checks done related to Root Zone LGR and the reference to the section in the applicant guidebook where you can find more details about it. As I mentioned before, this is the-- the Root Zone LGR version six is where it's going to be used. That's the latest version that was recently published, and 27 scripts are supported.

You can find them in the link that is in the slides in case the applicant intends to submit an application for a string that is not-- they cannot submit an application for a script that is not supported by the Root Zone LGR version six.

And as I mentioned before, also, it makes a difference which string you choose as your primary. If you intend to apply for a string and variance, it's important that you choose the right string to be your

primary because that can affect whether certain variants are locatable or blocked.

And as I mentioned before, block variants, you cannot apply for them. And I believe we're not seeing the full slide because there is a link to the Root Zone LGR in the slide so that you can go and check for that. You can do that in advance. You can know what are the checks. Oh, it's in the chat. Thank you. Thank you so much. I think that covers this slide. Can we go to the next?

So as I mentioned before, all of these will be automated, and it's before you are even able to submit the application, this is one of the first questions. What is the string or strings that you intend to apply for? And as an applicant, you're going to get feedback immediately about any issues that there might be with the string you intend to apply for or strings.

So in case an applicant believes that they're prevented from submitting a valid application, a valid string, then they can submit a challenge to this. The system will offer the option for them to do that. However, because there is a time for us to process those challenges, we are introducing a limit for when those challenges can be done.

And so, you need to submit that challenge at least 14 days before the close of the application period. We hope that that should be more than enough time for people to put their strings in their potential applications. So, I encourage you, if you're intending to apply for a gTLD, that you do early the check on the string in the

system, even if you need more time to submit the rest of your applications, the system will offer the functionality to save so that you don't have to submit everything at once.

One important thing to mention here is the challenge does not apply for scripts not supported by the Root Zone LGR, those are simply not available and there is no mechanics to challenge. And we intend for the challenge panel to communicate the results of that pre-submission string within five days of the application applicant filing the challenge. And that's it regarding DNS stability. Questions. I see one hand. Do you mind?

BILL JOURIS

I'm sorry. Is that five business days or five straight calendar days?

FRANCISCO ARIAS

Calendar days, yes.

VIVEK GOYAL

Okay. I have two questions. The validation tool that you mentioned, which is automated, can that be made available much before the round opens so that it's easier for us who are trying to get people to apply can check as we talk to them whether what they're planning to apply works or not.

Second question is, if I applied for a string and somebody applies for another string, which ends up being a variant of my string, do I

get priority because I applied first and that one is considered variant and or not allowed?

FRANCISCO ARIAS

On the first question, as I mentioned before, the Root Zone LGR is available there, so for IDN strings, you can check the validity and where the variant you intend to have will be allocatable. So, that's already available there. For the other checks, fortunately, at the moment, there is no plan to make available the rest of the automated checks available. So far, the plan is to release the system in time for the opening of the window.

There is so far no plan to make it available before to do these checks. Now, the specifications of what is going to be checked are in the applicant guidebook and should not be a surprise to anyone. It's the same requirements as before, just that it's a valid TLD string. So, we're hoping that that is a kind of check that people that know DNS can do on their own. That's I'm afraid the answer at the moment.

VIVEK GOYAL

Whom should I write to, to request for that tool be made available earlier?

FRANCISCO ARIAS

I'm sorry.

VIVEK GOYAL Whom should I write to request for that tool be made available earlier?

FRANCISCO ARIAS I can pass the request, yes.

SARMAD HUSSAIN So, basically all the strings, to your second question, all the applications which are applied during the application window will then be evaluated together. There is no precedence given to anyone who applies during the application window before anybody else. They're all considered applications which are being submitted at the same time.

VIVEK GOYAL So, maybe I heard it wrong, but you said this tool will check for variants with the strings that have been applied. It'll not only the previous ones, which are already delegated.

SARMAD HUSSAIN So, yes, basically this particular tool is only checking the validity of the string as per the requirements which were shared. So, it's not checking against other strings, it's actually only checking whether the string an applicant is submitting conforms to the DNS stability standards and the other requirements which have been listed.

Are there any other questions for Francisco? Just to share that we've shared the link in the chat. There is a root zone, sorry, an LGR

tool, which is available by ICANN. It has been available for many years now, where you can actually, if you have an IDN string, you can actually go and check whether it conforms to the Root Zone LGR version six now.

So, version six also has been uploaded in that tool. So, that tool is already available, and that's different from the application system, which will be brought online obviously at a later stage.

FRANCISCO ARIAS

Okay. Thank you very much, and I apologize, but I have to leave. I have a [00:18:24 - inaudible] meeting.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Okay. So, then, we'll move on to the next section. So, I'll request Pitinan to provide a quick overview of the String Similarity Evaluation, and then we'll take questions on String Similarity Evaluation.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA

Thank you, Sarmad. So, for the String Similarity Evaluation, this is based on the AGB section 7.10. So, the objective of the String Similarity Evaluation is to prevent the user confusion so that not two string that are visually similar are delegated into the root zone. And we focus on the visually similar in this context because it's based on the AGP in this context.

So this is similar step from the previous round, but the major change is for this round, we also allow for the variant string. So when the applied-for-string being compared with the other set of strings, for similarity is also covered the variants of it. So, the variant is obviously, so for the applied for string itself is also being compared by the primary string or allocatable variant, and also some of them will be into the block variant as well.

And in the existing list of string to be compared with, also the primary allocatable and block variants, you can see in this chart the ones that not being compared is the blocked variant versus block variants.

The category of list that the applied for string will be compared to, the list is there, so the existing gTLDs. Also, the applied for string gTLD, which may be remaining from the previous round, we also compare this with the existing ccTLD which mean also cover the ASCII and IDN ccTLD. In some case, during the time of application open, if you have the requested IDN ccTLDs pending, they will be compared with that as well. And obviously, another applied for strings will be compared.

We also compare with the blocked names. And also, for the reserve name that one note is still being confirmed by the GNSO. So, we are waiting for the direction whether this will be in the scope or not, and we finalize after the direction. And also, this will be compared with any two-character ASCII because it may be reserved for the ccTLD. So, with this scope of comparison, the possible

determination by the string similarity evaluation panels are these 10 possible ways.

Obviously, it can be visually similar to existing gTLDs or its variant string. It can be similar to applied for from the previous round and its strings. It can be similar to existing ccTLDs or its variant string. It can be similar to the requested IDN ccTLDs and its variant string.

For the category of applied for string, because it can be two determinations. One is actually the same as the other applied for strings in this round or its variant, and also it can be similar. And then for the other categories, it can be similar. And obviously the last one, the determination can be also the string is not visually similar with any other categories.

For the challenge, the evaluation challenge is also in the AGB, you can check section 7.10.4. If the applicant believe that the string similarity evaluation panels made factual or procedural errors, the challenge can be filed, and it has to be in the two conditions. It's whether the panels fail to follow the evaluation procedures or failed to consider any materials that has been presented to them. Then there's some exception for .brand TLDs.

If the applied for string is met as the criteria to be a brand TLDs, and if it's found to be similar, the applicants will be able to change the string into this process. And just one last slide is right now the string similarity evaluation data is being published for public comment.

This is ongoing and is closing on 4th of December. So, it covered all the 27 scripts that are in the Root Zone LGR version six. So, I would like to invite all of you to take a look and also provide feedback. So, with that, I'm open for question. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. Yes, Vivek, please.

VIVEK GOYAL

If in the first round of a string was delegated, and since then it has been surrendered, in which bucket will it lie? Will it be checked against similarity or not?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

So, if the string is considered to be in process, or if what you're saying is that it was in process, but it was, "you said surrendered," which means that it has been pulled out of the process and it's no longer considered part of an applied for string. If there's no reservation on those strings, then it can actually be applied for. I will need to check with the team which processes those strings to see whether there are any limitations set on that particular string for some years, for example, before it can be applied for.

If there are no limitations set, then obviously it can be applied for. But that's something I guess we'll need to check with the relevant team which processes those strings. At this time, I don't have a clear answer to that question.

VIVEK GOYAL

Thank you. My question is another one, but that is also worth checking. My question is, if the string was actually delegated, the registry kept it for a few years, but has now surrendered it, will that be checked against in part of similarity, or can somebody apply for that?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Same answer, I'll have to check and get back to you. So, what we need to, I guess, understand is that in either of those processes, if there is some level of requirement that that string cannot be reallocated for a certain number of years, then of course, it will remain not eligible for application. But if there is no such condition, then it can actually be applied for. But I do not know the answer to that, and I'll have to check with the relevant team.

VIVEK GOYAL

But as of now, those things are not part of similarity checks.

SARNAD HUSSAIN

If they are to be held for whatever reason, then they will be part of the list, which is provided for the similarity review data. But again, I think that it really needs to be checked by the relevant team. Thank you. But a good point, and we'll take a note and go back to the team and clarify it. We have Ashley.

ASHLEY ROBERTS

Thank you. Ashley Roberts. Would you mind going back a couple of slides to the one with the table on it? Sorry if you said this and I missed it, but some of the yeses have got asterisk. What do they represent?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

So, the gray areas or the yeses with the asterisk, they're not explained here, but they're explained in the actual AGB text. Is where the panel has flexibility to choose whether they want to go through all the list of those similarity checks, or they think that the two scripts are not similar enough that they can actually skip those. So, those are the areas where panel has some flexibility based on their own judgment.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA

Yeah, we have one question in the Q&A from [00:28:01 - inaudible]. How does the string similarity evaluation panel determine whether two strings are visually similar, especially when dealing with different scripts or languages?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Right. So, the policy states that the users should find the two strings with a probability of confusion, not just possibility of confusion, and that is obviously the direction which will be passed on to the panel as well, which will make that determination. As Pitinan shared, we've actually published some initial data from the

script experts for all the 27 scripts which categorizes this into a five-point scale.

We encourage you to go and read that document, which provides an overview and then also provides the data on how the visual similarities categorized in those five levels. And then which character or characters are considered similar to each other that will give you some level of understanding on how some of this evaluation can be done.

But at the end of the day, this data, the strings, they will all be passed to the panel. Panel will obviously be asked to determine their own mechanism to make that call. It is an independent panel which will make these determinations. And I guess we'll be working with the panel to make sure that they do it in a systematic way.

But at the end of the day, they will further in some ways, based on what is already published for the strings evaluation data, they will further develop their internal guidelines to do that evaluation. So, some of those details obviously are left to the assessment of the panel itself. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA We have Sophia. Would you like to take the mic?

SOPHIA FENG This is Sophia Feng, ZDNS for the record. So, regarding the string similarity revelations, I have questions in terms of different

categories of applications. For example, if a brand TLD applied, and it is a little similar to the already applied streams, is there any difference in the assessments and criteria regarding whether they are similar depending on what different kinds of categories they are?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

The assessment criteria is visual and it'll be the same for all the kinds of comparisons. There is no difference as far as the assessment criteria is concerned, that will be uniform across the categories. The only thing as we were presented for brands, for example, if they're found similar, they have an additional, I guess, opportunity at that level, at that stage to suggest an alternate string. So, for brands, there's a special case, otherwise. But that's only to change the string. As far as the assessment criteria is concerned, that will remain the same for all kinds of strings. Thanks.

SOPHIA FENG

Got it. So, another following question is, there's a challenge to the string similarity results, and that challenge is only applies to the processes or is it's applied to, for example, the brand has well known or I notice awarenesses and would not confuse with a generic word, is that would be a valid kind of reason to challenge it?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

I can only speak for the spring similarity evaluation challenge, and that is purely on visual basis and on the process as we shared. There may be other opportunities, I'm not sure in the process. But from a spring similarity evaluation perspective, it's only a visual challenge and based on the process.

SOPHIA FENG

Okay, thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA

Bill, go ahead.

BILL JOURIS

Yeah, this is Bill Jouris for the record. You speak of the similarity review panel. Has a process been developed for how you will populate that panel, how you'll decide who's on it, that sort of thing? Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

There is going to be an RFP. There was an RFI, which was floated already, and I think later this year, there is an request for proposals where we have different vendors who could apply. And I would encourage you to look at the details in that RFP as it's published. It does highlight some of the requirements for the panel as have been also included in the policy. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Sophia, can I check. Is that a new hand?

SARMAD HUSSAIN So, there are no more questions. Yes, please.

ROB GOLDING Rob Golding for the record. Whilst the bulk of this is about the similarities between the strings of gTLDs and ccTLDs, as the lady mentioned, is there any protection in there for people applying for similar things to existing, well-known regularly fished brands?

For example, could somebody legitimately apply for .paypal or .aplay, which is visually similar to something that gets millions of abuse complaints every single day, most of which are then dumped by law enforcement on the contracted parties? Would it be a way of this group evaluating that, or would this be a case of petitioning ICANN to get them onto a reserve list, or are we just going to go Hulk Hogan and let people have whatever they want?

SARMAD HUSSAIN I guess I am not very clear about the kind of strings you're suggesting. If these are strings which qualify otherwise based on whatever the limitation or constraints of the application string are, they would go through the process. I'm sorry, I'm not very familiar with the larger process of what can be applied for. But from a string similarity evaluation process perspective, if there is a string which is eligible to apply, and it comes through this process, this is only looking at visual similarity. Anything beyond that is not in the

scope of string similarity evaluation. Any other questions? Please. Yes, please.

VIVEK GOYAL

Sorry I'm taking so much of your time.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

That's why we are here. Please, go ahead.

VIVEK GOYAL

Is there some logic as to there should be at least two different change and at least two different characters for it to be considered not visually similar, or even if there's a difference of just one character, say PayPal and PayPaly, like just one character difference? In some cases, it would be considered visually similar in some cases, not considered visually similar.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

So, visual similarity is very dependent on the script you're using, and also the character, what kind of character it is and how it-- so, if you look at the string similarity guidelines, which we posted almost a year ago, and we'll be posting another version of that for public comment soon, there are also other considerations which we are considering, like uppercase form or underlying form, which can sometimes change the way characters look.

So, there's no hard and fast rule on what is similar or what is not similar. We have some very specific guidelines that it has to be

visual and it has to be probable. And I think that those are the guidelines which have been passed down to us through the policy development process, through the recommendations, and those are the ones which we actually will be focusing on implementing obviously through this panel.

And this really needs to be done through an independent panel. So, this is not something which ICANN will be doing. We'll be actually putting a panel together, which will make these determinations. And these will obviously be script dependent, as I said.

VIVEK GOYAL

So in the end, the determination will be subjective to that panel. So, the panel thinks it is similar, right?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Yes, it is eventually the determination of the independent panel.

VIVEK GOYAL

And there's a possibility to challenge that?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Yes, from a procedural perspective, if you can go to that slide, there is an evaluation challenge mechanism. This comes from the AGB as well, and those are the ways you can challenge it. You cannot challenge it in any way you prefer, but those are the limited challenges which are available.

VIVEK GOYAL

Just thinking out loud here and I know it is fortune telling as Maxim has written, but five people might look at it and say, yes, it's similar. There are a hundred people who might look at it and say, no, it's not. So, can you challenge on that basis?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

So, I think that is one of the reasons we are doing some homework upfront. And if you can go to that section on string similarity evaluation data. So, what we've tried to do is that, to make it a little more transparent and more predictable, what we've done is we've actually gone through all the different... Sorry, this is not showing up properly.

But what we've done is we've gone to experts from all these different 27 scripts and asked them to identify any similar code points or code points or characters, and we've put that out there for everybody to review. And it is currently open for public comment, so please go and take a look. And it includes not just Latin script, but also all the 27 scripts, which are covered for the applications.

And the reason for doing this now is to bring more predictability and transparency into the process. So, if you think something's missing or something's over, I guess going over what should not be similar, for example, is being considered similar, please give us that feedback. This data will eventually be shared with the panel and

they will actually look at this or look at their independent analysis, but in the context of this feedback, which has been provided. Yeah.

SOPHIA FENG

Okay. Sophia, again for the record. So, regarding the SSE tool, I don't have enough time to read the whole material, but just for my knowledge, the SSE tool is only for the evaluation team to assess it.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Yeah.

SOPHIA FENG

And is this possibility that there will be sort of way for the applicant to check the similarity beforehand regarding with the existing applied TLD?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

No. So, the short answer is no. There was a suggestion that we make the SSE tool available for the community as well. That suggestion is with us. We were checking with the, as we shared earlier as well, we are checking with our ENIT team. Currently, there are many high priority tasks, as you may know, to get the systems for the application and Next Round gTLD application up and running.

So those are high priority tasks. If we do find time at some point that we can publish this tool publicly, we will make it available. But at this time, this tool is really just intended to be for the panelists.

So the data is available, so you can potentially manually run through that data to see whether there is any potential conflicts, but the tool, unfortunately is not going to be available unless we find time to publish it. Thank you.

SOPHIA FENG

Yeah, I really understand the limited time and all the efforts you put into this project, but it just is for the applicants and for the strings and to actually smooth out processes will be really, really useful if there is something can compare with the previous already applied strings to avoid the contentions towards similarity and save a lot of times for the applicants.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Yes, points well taken and we will try to see if we can make the tool available. It's just a matter of completing the higher priority task first.

SOPHIA FENG

Got it. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Okay, I think let's move on to the next segment on Variant String Evaluation. So, this is another evaluation which we'll be covering in this session. Next slide, please. So, the Root Zone Label Generation Rules or RZ LGR for short determines what are variant strings given and applied for string.

And an applicant can actually apply for one or more of the allocatable variant strings which are generated through the Root Zone LGR based on the primary string of an applied-for primary or an existing gTLD. But the policy says that when such an allocatable variant is applied for, the applicant must provide justification for each of those variant strings which are being applied for. And the justification will be evaluated by an independent panel using what has been termed in the policy as a general standard of reasonableness based on four criteria.

Next slide, please. So, each of the allocatable variant strings which are applied for, will be reviewed against these four items or criteria, which has been, again, defined through the policy recommendation. The first one says that 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. So, the applicant will need to share that if they're applying for a variant string, it has the same meaning or intended meaning as the primary string because variant is supposed to be "the same string by definition."

The second criteria is that the variant string is recognized as equivalent by the intended user community. So, for each variant, the applicant has to identify which user community the variant is intended for, and for that particular intended community, it is really recognized as an equal and string to the primary.

The third one is more on the motivation for applying for that particular variant and for focuses on the benefits for the user community who will gain from the introduction of the applied-for variant string. And then the final one is more of a technical constraint rather than a social linguistic kind of constraint where the applicant will-- it will indicate the layers which the applicant will take to minimize the operational and management complexities of variance strains and resulting variant domain names that impact registrars, resellers, and registrants.

So, the motivation behind it is that if you have variants at the top level, and then also variants at the second level, then you may actually end up generating many different domain names against a single domain name, which is applied for. So, if you have three domain, three variants at second level and three variants at the top level which are allocatable, then you end up for each domain name, you end up with nine different domain names, which are registrant and registrar needs to manage.

And that number can go up to theoretically hundreds, and that creates a management challenge. So, the registry operator or the applicant would need to share how they would minimize the operational management complexity in such cases. Whatever their business model is, it's obviously up to them to suggest what the solution is. So, all of these four questions are going to be evaluated by an independent panel. Next slide, please.

And each allocatable variant must get a yes on each of those four questions by the evaluation panel for that variant to proceed. If there is a no for any one variant on any of those questions, that variant cannot proceed, but the other variants can proceed. So, each variant is going to be evaluated independently of other variants applied for within the same application, and each of them will need to get the four yeses to proceed.

And of course, from the last requirement, which is the technical requirement on how domain names which are eventually registered will be minimized if there's a technical administrative solution being proposed, that obviously would need to be supported by the corresponding RSP as well, because that's a technical implementation mechanism.

Next slide, please. So, that's sort of an overview of what a variant string evaluation is. Again, this will be done by an independent panel. And we can stop here and open up for questions. Yes, please, Vivek.

VIVEK GOYAL

First of all, thank you so much for the session. I think string similarity is something that everybody who's working to get people to apply for the Next Round is really struggling against, because the challenge is you work with companies or businesses today, as of today, to get them ready so that they can apply it then.

The challenge with the string similarities, you work so hard and take them to that stage, and then you realize that there's a challenge. So, anything you and your team can do now, either through tools or information, or if it's possible for us to send you strings and confidentiality and you tell us yes, it currently is similar to this one and will not go through. Anything you can do right now to help us make the determination much earlier than actually the window opening will be very helpful. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. So, I think the string similarity evaluation data which we have already published is a very significant step in that direction. Because even if the tool is not there, you can actually run this sort of dry run this, that's a computing term for it, but you can dry run your string through that data to really figure out if it is-- that's what the tool is also going to be doing.

It's actually going to be using this data to figure out whether it collides for example, or is potentially similar to some other existing gTLD string or some other ccTLD string. Of course, other applied-for strings, there is no mechanism to do that, that will obviously have to be done at runtime. But you can run your string, but we have to be very careful here, and I want to give a very clear disclaimer that this data which you use is only indicative.

At the end of the day, it is an independent evaluation of an independent panel. So, even if the data is saying yes, the panel can say no, and if the data is saying no, the panel can say yes. So, at the

end of the day, it is really the determination of the panel and that is how the process is set up.

And there is no mechanism to predict accurately on what the panel is going to say, but the data is there to give some indication of what is in store, of course. But again, eventually the determination of panel can override what the data is saying, and panel eventually is the final determinant. Thank you.

VIVEK GOYAL

Thank you. And look forward to answers to the strings which have been either taken back or were in progress and are now not in progress. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Sure. If possible, can we take up your email address to communicate on that as well? Thank you. Any other questions on Variant String Evaluation? If not, then I think we can close the session early and give you all some time back. Thank you all very much for joining, and we'll close the session. Thank you.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Please stop the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]