

Leo Abruzzese
Director, Public Policy
The Economist Intelligence Unit
750 Third Avenue, 5th floor
New York, NY 10017

March 14, 2016

To: Russell Weinstein
Director, New gTLD Program
ICANN

In an effort to provide greater transparency on an administrative aspect of the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) process, The Economist Intelligence Unit is providing additional information regarding verification of letters of support and opposition.

Background

The CPE panel comprises a core team, which works on all CPE applications and interacts directly with ICANN, and several independent evaluators who are assigned to review specific applications in the first instance. The core team comprises a Project Manager, who oversees the CPE project, a Project Coordinator, who is in charge of the day-to-day management of the project and provides guidance to the independent evaluators, and other senior staff members, including The Economist Intelligence Unit's Executive Editor and Global Director of Public Policy. Together, this team assesses the evaluation results. Each application is assessed by seven individuals: two independent evaluators, and the core team, which comprises five people.

Each evaluator reviews the application and accompanying documentation, such as letter(s) of support and opposition. Based on this information and additional independent research, the evaluators assign scores to the four CPE criteria as defined in the Applicant Guidebook. Once the two evaluators have completed the initial evaluation for an application, the evaluation results are reviewed by the Project Coordinator, who checks them for completeness and consistency with the procedures of the Applicant Guidebook. The Project Manager and Project Coordinator, along with other members of the core team, meet to discuss the evaluators' results and to verify compliance with the Applicant Guidebook. Justifications for the scores are further refined and articulated in this phase.

Evaluation of letter(s) of support and opposition

As part of the CPE evaluation process, the two evaluators assigned to assess a specific application review the letter(s) of support and opposition. For every letter of support/opposition received, both of the evaluators assess the letter(s) as described in the Applicant Guidebook, section 4.2.3 *Criterion 4: Community Endorsement*.

Verification of letter(s) of support and opposition

The process of verification of letter(s) is an administrative task. Verification emails, where possible¹, are sent to every entity that has sent a letter(s) of support or opposition in order to validate the identity and authority of the sender. The verification email for letter(s) of support/opposition requests the following information from the author of the letter:

- Confirmation of the authenticity of the organization's letter.
- Confirmation that the sender of the letter has the authority to indicate the organization's support/opposition for the application.
- In instances where the letter(s) of support do not clearly and explicitly endorse the application, the verification email asks for confirmation as to whether the organization explicitly supports the community-based application.

For most evaluations, the verification is typically undertaken by one of the two evaluators assigned to the evaluation. However, for evaluations involving large numbers of letters of support or opposition, the EIU assigned its Project Coordinator, a senior member of the core team, to serve as Verification Coordinator and to take the purely administrative step of ensuring that the large volume of verification emails, as well as follow-up emails and phone calls, were managed efficiently.

The need for a Verification Coordinator arose in April 2014 when administrative issues related to the verification of letters of support were first identified. Specifically, a number of letter-writers provided support/opposition for more than one application, which were under CPE at the same time. The EIU attempted to contact the authors of the letters for each application separately. The EIU received complaints from the authors of the letters, who requested that they be contacted by a single individual. In May 2014 the EIU revised its verification approach to address the need for a single point of contact for verification.

In all cases, the results of the verification were communicated to both of the evaluators and throughout the entire core team to permit a full and complete evaluation consistent with the Applicant Guidebook.

Regards,



Leo Abruzzese

¹ Verification exceptions are noted on page 5 of the *CPE Panel Process Document* available here: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/cpe>