Project Overview for the Public Relations Agency RFP

Request for Proposal

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ICANN

1   Introduction

1.1   About this Document

This document provides an overview of the Request for Proposal (RFP) regarding an awareness campaign in support of ICANN's proposed upcoming expansion of generic top-level domains (gTLDs). It provides background and pertinent information regarding the requirements for the respondents. The RFP itself is comprised of this as well as other documents that are hosted in the ICANN sourcing tool (SciQuest/Jaggaer). Indications of interest are to be received by emailing PR-Agency-RFP@icann.org. Proposals should be electronically submitted by 23:59 UTC on 3 September 2021 using ICANN's sourcing tool, access to which may be requested via the same email address as above.

1.2   About the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was established in 1998 as a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation acting in the global public interest as the trusted steward of the Internet's system of unique identifiers. ICANN's mission is to help ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet. It is a unique organization in that it coordinates the address mechanisms for the Internet; it coordinates the management of the top-level domain system; and its structure is inclusive, bringing together individuals, noncommercial stakeholder groups, industry, and governments from around the globe to participate in the development of policy related to its mission.

To reach another person on the Internet, you need to type an address – a name or a number – into your computer or other device. Every device on the Internet has a unique address, made up of a complicated string of numbers called an "Internet Protocol (IP) address", so that it can be found by other devices.

ICANN helps coordinate the Domain Name System (DNS), which was designed to make the Internet accessible. IP addresses are hard to remember, yet names are memorable. The DNS uses letters rather than numbers, and then links a precise series of letters (a domain name) to a precise series of numbers (IP address). Without coordination of the DNS, the concept of one global Internet could not exist.

A domain name comprises two elements: before and after "the dot." The part to the right of the dot – such as "org", "photography", or "barclays" – is a top-level domain (TLD). In left-to-right scripts such as Arabic, the TLD comes before the dot. One company, a registry, oversees all domains ending with that TLD and has access to a full list of domains directly under that name, as well as the IP addresses with which those names

are associated. ICANN manages the contractual relationships with each registry. These contracts provide a consistent and stable environment for the Domain Name System and for the Internet.

Policy Development
ICANN supports the Internet users of the world. It builds trust through serving the public interest and incorporating the transparent and effective cooperation among stakeholders worldwide to facilitate its coordination role. A fundamental part of ICANN's mission is to coordinate policy development to govern the technical aspects of the Internet.

No one person, organization, or government controls the Internet. At the heart of ICANN's policymaking is what is called a "multistakeholder model"; a community-based, consensus-driven approach to policymaking. Unlike more traditional, top-down governance models, this decentralized governance model brings together individuals, industry, noncommercial, and government representatives from around the world to discuss, debate, and develop policies about the technical coordination of the Internet's Domain Name System on an equal level. The idea is that Internet governance should mimic the structure of the Internet itself – borderless and open to all.

ICANN has no direct competitors.

See www.icann.org for more information.

2   Scope

2.1   Project Objective

ICANN has two immediate objectives:

1. To raise awareness that nearly half of the world's population is unable to access the Internet in their own script, using their own keyboard. There is also a need to continue to share factual information and heighten awareness of the lack of diversity on the Internet and the language barrier in the countries and regions where it is anticipated that many of the next billion users will come from: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Internet is both global and local, but for it to be truly interoperable and diverse, we must further internationalize the Domain Name System (DNS) to promote linguistic diversity on the Internet, including through gTLDs.
2. Support the ICANN community's ongoing efforts to encourage software developers and back-end providers to adopt Universal Acceptance so that all domain names, regardless of length, language, or script, will work in all Internet-enabled devices and applications. Create further awareness and educate software developers and email

providers about the need to upgrade their systems and services to ensure they will work in the continuously expanding and evolving domain name space by adopting Universal Acceptance, making it possible for all email addresses and domain to be accepted in all Internet-enabled devices and applications.

Specific Deliverables:
- Messaging Development
  - Speeches
  - FAQs
  - Case Study Development
  - Presentations
  - Talking Points
- Media Relations Planning and Execution
  - Outlet and journalist identification
  - Relationship development
  - News release and media kit development
  - Pitching
- Media Training
- Tradeshow and Event Outreach and Support
- Project Management/Reporting
  - Weekly updates
  - Media coverage tracking
  - Measurement

Target Audiences
- Governments and Municipalities
- Back-end Providers/Software Developers/Technology Providers
- Civil Society
- Business
- Registries and Registrars
- Cultural and Educational Institutions

Target Media
- Business
- Social
- Tech
- Trade

Geographies
This is a global campaign with emphasis in:
- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America

2.2   Background

The New gTLD Program is an ICANN initiative that enables the expansion of the DNS. Launched in 2012, the New gTLD Program introduced new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) to enhance innovation, competition, and consumer choice.

The New gTLD Program made it possible for communities, governments, businesses, and brands to apply to operate a gTLD registry. Through the program, the number of gTLDs increased from 22 to more than 1,280. This expansion encouraged a more strategic use of the Internet by allowing users to shop, communicate, or access the Internet using a gTLD that more closely aligns with their language, geography, identity, community, or brand.

Today, there are more than 5 billion users on the Internet – over half of the world's population – with the potential to expand to billions more. Those users have access to all TLDs, the majority of which are in English script. At the same time, the majority of the world does not speak English as a first language or use American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters in daily life. There are billions of people who prefer to read and write in Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, Devanagari, or other non-Latin scripts.

Many of the things Internet users do online are local; human nature clusters us into communities. Having access to any website in the world at a click gives us all enormous opportunities, but we also want and need local information. The power of the Internet comes from being a single, interoperable Internet that is easily accessible, globally, and locally. This is ICANN's remit and our responsibility as a global nonprofit organization serving the public interest.

ICANN has a responsibility to implement policies relating to the Internet's unique identifier system. ICANN, with the guidance of the community, is working to support an inclusive and multilingual Internet that will enable people to navigate the Internet in their own language and using their own keyboard. This enables the formation of truly local online communities, where individuals can interact online using their own scripts, languages, and cultures.

For more than two decades, the ICANN community, and volunteers around the world have been working together to internationalize the Domain Name System (DNS) to promote linguistic diversity on the Internet. Initially, this work has focused on the introduction of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), making it possible for people around the world to connect with their communities through domain names in local languages and scripts such as Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, and Devanagari.

One of the issues that ICANN, community volunteers, and industry-leading software and email service providers are working to resolve is ensuring the Universal Acceptance (UA) of all domain names and email addresses in all Internet-enabled devices and

applications. This requires back-end providers to upgrade their systems and services to ensure they will work in the continuously expanding and evolving domain name space.

Adoption of UA has been slow, but it is necessary to achieve the goal of true local access and global interoperability.

Expanding Current Availability of gTLDs
ICANN, at the direction of the community, is preparing to open the next round of TLDs through a new application window. This will include a multiyear communications approach that culminates with the round launching in four to five years. There is continued demand for more top-level domain names from current stakeholders and untapped demand from underserved populations. During the 2012 application window, 50 percent of all applications were submitted from North America and 35 percent came from Europe. Fewer than 15 percent of the applications came from Africa, Asia Pacific, and Latin America combined.

Further expansion of gTLDs may have the added benefit of creating more opportunities for the next billion users across multiple languages – including choice, competition, and innovation in both established and developing geographies and industries. Using Africa as an example, only 5 percent of people in Africa were able to connect to the Internet at the time of the last round. Today, the connectivity in the region has grown more than sevenfold to 35 percent of the population. Attracting more registries in the region can help incentivize investment in Internet infrastructure. Although this is not the reason ICANN is tasked with launching a new round of applications, it is a distinct benefit to local accessibility.

3   High-Level Selection Criteria

The decision to select a provider as an outcome of this RFP will be based on, but not limited to, the following selection criteria:
- Global footprint; staffed offices outside of the United States
- Capability and proven success in the key geographies
- Proven ability to meet deadlines
- Portfolio of similar past work
- Office of Foreign Assets Control clearance
- Rate sheet
- Financial health
- Mitigation of any conflicts of interest
- Value-added services

4   High-Level Business Requirements

The provider must be able to adhere to the complete list of business requirements as listed in SciQuest/Jaggaer. A summary of the key business requirements is listed below:

- Must have offices outside of the United States.
- Must have experience conducting full-service, international public relations awareness campaigns on key issues of public interest importance. Must be able to provide statement of experience detailing a minimum of three recent, relevant projects in similar conditions. Must have prior experience conducting international awareness campaigns.
- Must have resources to conduct media relations in Africa, Asia Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Must have resources in the primary countries being targeted in this campaign.
- Must have demonstrated capability and success in strategic communications planning, media relations, social media, collateral development, and brand management.
- Must have demonstrated cultural awareness and global know-how.
- Must have a balance of senior, mid-level, and junior staff to assign to the project.
- Must have the resources and capacity to maintain a multiyear project with staff continuity.
- Nonprofit and IGO experience preferred.

5   Project Timeline

The following dates have been established as milestones for this RFP. ICANN reserves the right to modify or change this timeline at any time as necessary.

Activity	Estimated Dates
RFP published	9 August 2021
Participants to indicate interest in submitting RFP proposal	20 August 2021 by 23:59 UTC
Participants submit any questions to ICANN	20 August 2021 by 23:59 UTC
ICANN responds to participant questions	25 August 2021
Participant proposals due	3 September 2021 by 23:59 UTC
Evaluation of responses	7 September - 8 October 2021
Final evaluations, contracting, and award	11 October - 12 November 2021

6   Terms and Conditions

General Terms and Conditions

1. Submission of a proposal shall constitute each respondent's acknowledgment and acceptance of all the specifications, requirements and terms and conditions in this RFP.

2. All costs of preparing and submitting its proposal, responding to or providing any other assistance to ICANN in connection with this RFP will be borne by the respondent.

3. All submitted proposals including any supporting materials or documentation will become the property of ICANN. If respondent's proposal contains any proprietary information that should not be disclosed or used by ICANN other than for the purposes of evaluating the proposal, that information should be marked with appropriate confidentiality markings.

Discrepancies, Omissions and Additional Information

1. Respondent is responsible for examining this RFP and all addenda. Failure to do so will be at the sole risk of respondent. Should respondent find discrepancies, omissions, unclear or ambiguous intent or meaning, or should any question arise concerning this RFP, respondent must notify ICANN of such findings immediately in writing via e-mail no later than ten (10) days prior to the deadline for bid submissions. Should such matters remain unresolved by ICANN, in writing, prior to respondent's preparation of its proposal, such matters must be addressed in respondent's proposal.

2. ICANN is not responsible for oral statements made by its employees, agents, or representatives concerning this RFP. If respondent requires additional information, respondent must request that the issuer of this RFP furnish such information in writing.

3. A respondent's proposal is presumed to represent its best efforts to respond to the RFP. Any significant inconsistency, if unexplained, raises a fundamental issue of the respondent's understanding of the nature and scope of the work required and of its ability to perform the contract as proposed and may be cause for rejection of the proposal. The burden of proof as to cost credibility rests with the respondent.

4. If necessary, supplemental information to this RFP will be provided to all prospective respondents receiving this RFP. All supplemental information issued by ICANN will form part of this RFP. ICANN is not responsible for any failure by prospective respondents to receive supplemental information.

Assessment and Award

1. ICANN reserves the right, without penalty and at its discretion, to accept or reject any proposal, withdraw this RFP, make no award, to waive or permit the correction of any informality or irregularity and to disregard any non-conforming or conditional proposal.

2. ICANN may request a respondent to provide further information or documentation to support respondent's proposal and its ability to provide the products and/or services contemplated by this RFP.

3. ICANN is not obliged to accept the lowest priced proposal. Price is only one of the determining factors for the successful award.

4. ICANN will assess proposals based on compliant responses to the requirements set out in this RFP, responses to questions related to those requirements, any further issued clarifications (if any) and consideration of any other issues or evidence relevant to the

respondent's ability to successfully provide and implement the products and/or services contemplated by this RFP and in the best interests of ICANN.

5. ICANN reserves the right to enter into contractual negotiations and if necessary, modify any terms and conditions of a final contract with the respondent whose proposal offers the best value to ICANN.