
Project Overview for the gTLD Application Lifecycle System RFI

Request for Information

27 January, 2023



1 Introduction

1.1 About this Document

This document provides an overview of the Request for Information (RFI) for the ICANN gTLD Application Lifecycle System. It provides background and pertinent information regarding the requirements for the respondents. The RFI itself comprises this document – the RFI Project Overview – as well as supporting documents that are hosted in the ICANN sourcing tool (SciQuest/Jaggaer). Indications of interest are to be received by emailing gTLD-App-Lifecycle-System-RFI@icann.org. Proposals should be electronically submitted latest by 23:59 UTC on 24 February 2023 using ICANN's sourcing tool, access to which may be requested via the same email address as above.

This sourcing event (RFI) is the first part of a two-stage sourcing process used to fully evaluate proposals for this initiative. This event is a Request for Information (RFI), which will be followed by a separate private Request for Proposal (RFP), using the same sourcing tool. The RFI is open/public (i.e. anyone may provide a response). The goal of the RFI is to identify prospective candidates that will be short selected to progress to the second stage of the evaluation (i.e. the RFP stage). The RFP will be a closed or invitation-only process. Evaluations from bids received during the RFP will ideally result in the selection of a provider for the initiative outlined.

Note that participation in this RFI does not automatically ensure selection to the RFP stage. Providers who qualify for the RFP will be notified separately and invited to join the RFP before the RFP is published.

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

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' (ICANN's) mission is to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems. To reach another person on the Internet, you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world.

See www.icann.org for more information.

2 Scope

2.1 Project Objective

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ("ICANN") seeks to evaluate vendors interested in supporting the implementation of a new enterprise system that will aid

ICANN staff in the collection and processing of applications for new generic Top Level Domains (TLDs).

2.2 Background

On 18 February 2021, the Generic Name Support Organization (GNSO) Council voted to approve the [New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process Final Report](#) (the "Final Report"). The Final Report contains Affirmations, Recommendations, and Implementation Guidance (collectively referred to as "Outputs"). On 24 March 2021, following the approval of the Final Recommendations, the GNSO Council transmitted its Recommendations Report to the ICANN Board.

On 12 September 2021, the ICANN Board directed the ICANN President and CEO to conduct an Operational Design Phase (ODP) to facilitate the Board's determination of the Final Report Outputs. The ICANN organization (org) delivered the resulting [Operational Design Assessment](#) on 12 December 2022.

The [ODP](#) process led the ICANN org to consider resurrecting the "gTLD Application Processing" infrastructure in support of future rounds of new gTLD applications. This infrastructure is a combination of people and processes, many of which rely on computerized information systems. This RFI focuses on the "systems" component of the people-process-systems triad.

A "system" to support future rounds of gTLDs does not exist within ICANN org.

ICANN org's preparations to support future rounds of new gTLDs requires an upfront commitment to design and build the operational infrastructure (people, processes, and systems) without the precise knowledge of and insight into the demand or the number of applications in the next and subsequent rounds. Therefore, to proceed, ICANN must develop a cost-effective and timely solution to stand up and operate the next round.

2.3 Project Scope

ICANN E&IT has scoped an enterprise system to support the Subsequent Procedures of the new GTLD program throughout the entire application's lifecycle; from submission, through processing, evaluation, commenting, contention resolution, contracting, testing and delegation of applications to the program. This system has users which include applicants, org staff, vendors and panels as well as the ICANN Community and the general public. These users have various needs for data entry, process or workflow support, data exchange and reporting.

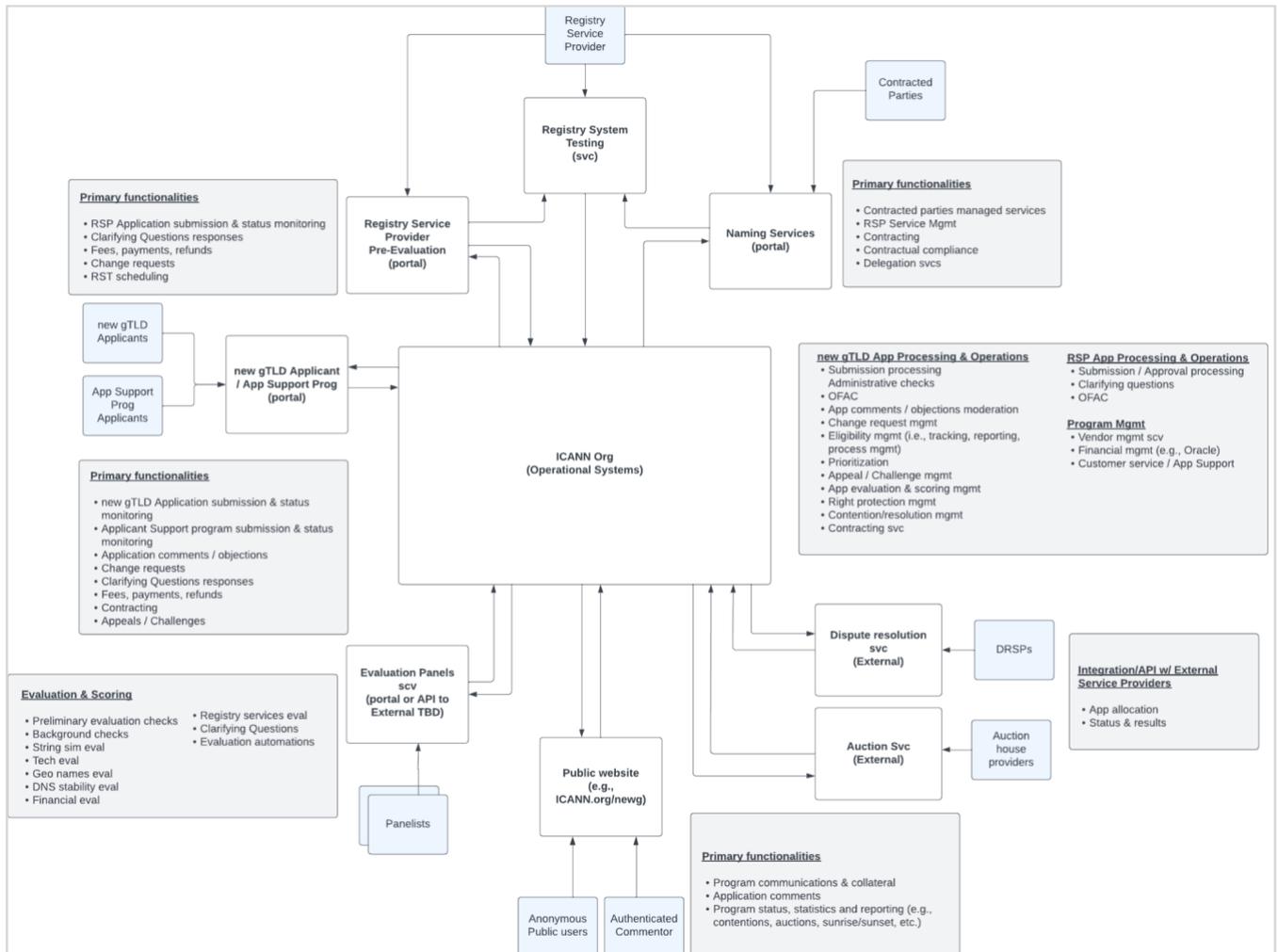
Scoping Assumptions

- ICANN org is developing a system that can be reused for multiple rounds.
- Systems should be developed to reduce manual efforts by staff, offer systemically-enforced, procedural guardrails to ensure consistency and quality,

low-effort reporting, and continually evolve. Such an approach can improve scalability of staff over time and reduce overall operational costs, even though it requires a larger initial investment.

- ICANN org will automate business activities and processes to a significant degree (i.e., business process management and orchestration) from initial application intake through contracting and delegation.
- ICANN org will devote resources and attention to enhancing the user experience from the previous round, incorporating lessons learned from past projects and best practices for both internal and external users.
- All systems will be Universal Acceptance (UA) compliant.
- The website ICANN.org is a multilingual-capable system, and informational content generated and published on that site can be translated into multiple languages; all other transactional systems are expected to be English-only.

A high level system diagram describing the interactivity between these actors and sub-systems can be seen below.



A brief description of the 18 services is described below:

#	IT Projects	Associated System(s)	Description
1	Appeal and Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems • Evaluation panels • Registry Service Provider (RSP) Pre-Evaluation system • Applicant Support System (ASP) 	Responsible for handling challenges and appeals for applicable decisions made.
2	Application Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public websites • Internal operation systems • New gTLD Applicant system • Evaluation panels 	Responsible for managing the end-to-end process for application comments: from public users comment to internal moderation and applicant response mechanisms.
3	Application Management	All systems	Responsible for handling the end-to-end process and user experience involving applying for, evaluating, approving, and long-running end-to-end process orchestration supporting gTLD applicant, RSP, and ASP users.
4	Applicant Support Program (ASP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems • Public Website • Appeals/Challenge Service 	Responsible for handling the end-to-end process and user experience involving applying for, evaluating, approving, and support-enabled capabilities for applicants in ASP.
5	Auctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External auction systems • Internal operation systems 	Responsible for integrating with auction service providers with ability to send application and contention set data, and receiving outcomes for processing and publication purposes.

#	IT Projects	Associated System(s)	Description
6	Clarifying Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems • Evaluation panels • RSP Pre-Evaluation system • ASP system 	Responsible for managing the back-and-forth communications between various users (e.g., evaluation panels, ICANN org, applicants) with respect to application questions.
7	Contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems • Public website 	Responsible for managing the end-to-end contracting process at an enterprise level: generating contracts based on templates and disparate data inputs, redlining and negotiation management, signature processing (i.e., digital and wet), and document storage/versioning.
8	Dispute Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External DRSP systems • Internal operation systems • Public website 	Responsible for integrating with dispute resolution service providers with ability to send application and dispute data, and receiving back resolutions for processing and publication purposes.
9	Evaluation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal operation systems • Evaluation panels • Appeals/Challenge service 	Responsible for managing application allocations to the various evaluation panels, tracking service level targets, outcomes, outputs, and various tools/automations with respect to each of the applicable evaluations.
10	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems 	Responsible for integrating with ICANN internal ERP to assist with managing fees, invoices, deposits, and refunds.

#	IT Projects	Associated System(s)	Description
11	Naming Services portal (NSp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSp • New gTLD Applicant system • Internal operation systems • RST 	Responsible for managing services with ICANN contracted parties; after contracting all new applicants, will transition to NSp, after which all application data will be frozen.
12	Public Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal operations systems • NSp • Public websites 	This is a website for gTLD communications, informational content, and status tracking and reporting coming from internal operational systems.
13	Reporting / Dashboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New gTLD Application system • RSP Pre-Evaluation system • ASP system • Internal operations systems • NSp • Public websites 	Responsible for generating the internal and external data and visual charting capabilities for all users within the ecosystem.
14	Round Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal operations systems 	Responsible for managing the current round, including opening and closing process phases, as well as centralized configurations for the round.
15	Registry Service Provider (RSP) Pre-Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSP Pre-Evaluation system • Internal operations systems • Evaluation Management • Public website • Appeals/Challenge Service 	Responsible for handling the end-to-end process and user experience involving applying for, evaluating, approving, and scheduling for Registry Service Testing and various support capabilities for RSP applications.

#	IT Projects	Associated System(s)	Description
16	Registry System Testing (RST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External RSP systems RSP Pre-Evaluation system Internal operations systems NSp 	Responsible for handling new and existing gTLDs by automatically testing and publishing results for RST, including escalation processing. Includes integration with NSp and RSP Pre-Evaluation service.
17	String Contention Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation Management Internal operation systems 	Responsible for generating and managing string contention sets.
18	Vendor Management	N/A	

Additional details for these projects can be found in the New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Subsequent Procedures Operational Design Assessment ([ODA](#)).

3 High Level Selection Criteria

The decision to select providers to move on to the RFP stage as an outcome of this RFI will be based on, but not limited to, the following selection criteria:

1. Platform capabilities
2. Experience and thought leadership
3. Technical environment & enterprise architecture standards
4. Approach to infrastructure and security
5. High-level/Ballpark pricing offered
6. Mitigation of any conflicts of interest
7. 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 the RFI portal. A summary of the key business requirements is listed below:

1. Low-code platform allowing regular users to go from a process to an application.
2. The platform should facilitate Interconnectivity between applications hosted in the same environment or external sources.

3. The platform should facilitate the creation of modern user experience (UX) over multiple native channels (web or mobile).
4. The platform should facilitate the development and management of simple to complex business process driven applications.
5. The platform should facilitate the design, configuration, test and maintenance of data structure and content.
6. The platform should be agile to deploy easily from business processes designs to workflow applications.
7. The Platform should allow the automation of business activities and processes to a significant degree.
8. The Platform should allow a seamless interaction with the applications, resuming and saving and enhancing the user experience as needed.
9. The Platform should protect the confidentiality and sensitivity of the data under that classification.
10. The Platform should provide a rich environment for real-time reporting and dashboard capabilities to gain knowledge and learn for the performance of the process.
11. Robust marketplace providing a multitude of components based upon their experience and understanding of their customers.

5 RFI Timeline

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

Activity	Estimated Dates
RFI published	27 January, 2023
Participants to indicate interest in submitting RFI proposal	10 February 2023, by 23:59 UTC
Participants submit any questions to ICANN via the Q&A Board in RFP portal	13 February 2023, by 23:59 UTC
ICANN responds to participant questions	17 February 2023
Participant proposals due by	24 February 2023, by 23:59 UTC
Evaluation of responses	March 2023
Follow-on RFP process starts	April 2023

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 RFI.
2. All costs of preparing and submitting its proposal, responding to or providing any other assistance to ICANN in connection with this RFI will be borne by the respondent.
3. All submitted proposals including any supporting materials or documentation will become the property of ICANN. If the 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.

4. By submitting your personal data, you agree that your personal data will be processed in accordance with the [ICANN Privacy Policy](#), and agree to abide by the electronic [Terms of Service](#).

Discrepancies, Omissions and Additional Information

1. Respondent is responsible for examining this RFI 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 RFI, 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 RFI. If respondent requires additional information, respondent must request that the issuer of this RFI furnish such information in writing.
3. A respondent's proposal is presumed to represent its best efforts to respond to the RFI. 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 RFI will be provided to all prospective respondents receiving this RFI. All supplemental information issued by ICANN will form part of this RFI. 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 RFI, 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 RFI.
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 RFI, 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 RFI 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