

New gTLDs: Applicant Support

Attachment

DRAFT SARP (Support Applicant Review Panel) Process Document

Current Situation and Recent Developments

ICANN is advancing the Board approved Applicant Support Program. [The Applicant Support criteria, process and draft handbook](#) are posted for comment. The public comment period closes 10 Jan and the program will be finalized as soon as practicable after that.

Modifications to the TLD Application System (TAS) have been made to accommodate Applicant Support applications.

The next phase requiring attention is the recruitment of the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP). This independent panel will be composed of experts responsible for the evaluation of the support applications. A rough draft solicitation for panel members is attached. It has been co-written with consultants, Access Partnership, and it follows JAS recommendations.

Process for Configuring SARP and Implementing Program

After refinement: discuss the draft solicitation with the JAS sub-group and the Board working group in a teleconference.

Target a SARP with the following characteristics (but remain flexible to change depending on circumstances). The SARP should be comprised of panelists from each of the following groups:

- Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) community
- Supporting Organizations (SO's) and Advisory Committees (AC's)
- At-large volunteers
- Outside experts

The SARP (as a whole) will need to have expertise in these areas:

- Running a small business
- Operating in developing economies
- Serving in the public interest
- Financial experience or expertise to analyze business plans
- Knowledge of domain names (or the domain name industry)
- Experience managing a domain name registry service

Draft: New gTLDs: Applicant Support

- Awarding grants

Close the public comment process. Review potential changes. Publish the final handbook (Jan 2012).

Initiate an effort to solicit additional funds (complete by November 2012 – the date the funding notifications are made).

Rationale for Implementation Plan

The SARP solicitation draft is aligned with the JAS WG Final report. Working the final details with the JAS sub-group and Board committee follows the Dakar Meeting Board resolution.

We know of no reason to depart from the JAS recommendations on the SARP Panel at the present time. However, if such reasons arise (such as conflicts of interest or a recognized lack of a required area of expertise), there is the flexibility to amend the composition of the SARP.

The proposed timeline follows previously published timelines. The key application, evaluation and publication milestones track to the new gTLD program launch to facilitate the process for applicants and avoid misinterpretation.

SARP costs can be funded out by ICANN. That and the recommendation to compose SARP as a volunteer panel allows funds to be fully dedicated to the support applicants. If panel members are compensated (e.g., an exception might be necessary for certain expert) the costs are expected to be in the low \$100,000's.

Comments to the program will be carefully reviewed and changes incorporated where feasible.

SARP (Support Applicant Review Panel) Process Document ("Draft SARP Solicitation")

[Note: the following draft document describes the elements to be contained in the solicitation for SARP volunteers.]

OVERVIEW

The Applicant Support Program, conceptualized by ICANN volunteers through the Joint Applicant Support Working Group, seeks to serve the global public interest by ensuring worldwide accessibility to, and competition within, the New gTLD Program. This program offers qualified candidates the opportunity to pay a reduced evaluation fee of USD 47,000 instead of the full evaluation fee of USD 185,000.

Applicant Support Program applications will be evaluated against the established criteria by an independent panel of volunteer experts: the Support Application Review Panel (SARP). This discussion memorandum outlines a process and timeline for selecting and training SARP evaluators.

SECTION I: TIMELINE

Support applications are due 12 April 2012, after which ICANN will require two weeks to undertake an initial administrative completeness check of all applications prior to posting. Once this process is complete for all first round applicants (May/June 2012), the SARP must be prepared to review Support Applications and determine which best meet the criteria for financial assistance.

The following timeline should ensure adequate time for recruiting, selecting and training SARP panelists based on the gTLD and Support Program timelines outlined below.

- **January 2012:** Development of process, evaluator criteria and application, SARP handbook, and training materials; SARP opportunity announced and advertised; recruitment of SARP candidates
- **February 2012:** SARP application submission period
- **March 2012:** SARP applications reviewed by ICANN
- **April 2012:** SARP notified of selection; SARP training period
- **May-October 2012:** SARP review of support applications
- **November 2012:** SARP informs ICANN of its decisions

SECTION II: SARP COMPOSITION

Evaluators should be volunteers from the ICANN community or outside experts who are knowledgeable about the new gTLD process, potential gaming patterns and the general needs

Draft: New gTLDs: Applicant Support

and capabilities of likely Support Program applicants. It is important that the SARP be able to evaluate Support Program candidates against the public interest and financial need criteria. The SARP should be comprised of panelists from each of the following groups:

- Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) community
- Supporting Organizations (SO's) and Advisory Committees (AC's)
- At-large volunteers
- Outside experts

The SARP (as a whole) will need to have expertise in these areas:

- Running a small business
- Operating in developing economies
- Serving in the public interest
- Financial experience or expertise to analyze business plans
- Knowledge of domain names (or the domain name industry)
- Experience managing a domain name registry service
- Awarding grants

ICANN should especially pursue the candidacy of individuals who carry multiple qualifications across multiple designated categories and areas of expertise.

Time Obligations

SARP volunteers must be able to commit a certain amount of time to review the Support Program applications both independently and during SARP virtual meetings and conference calls. Volunteer panelists would be required to make the following estimated time commitments:

- **April 2012:** 2-3 hours per week to complete the training modules
- **May – October 2012:** The total amount of time will depend on the number of applications received. However, it is estimated that it will take 3-5 hours per week to review applications, plus time for a bi-weekly virtual meeting.
- **November 2012:** SARP may require a final day-long review meeting, which may be in-person or virtual, to agree on final award candidates.

SECTION III: SARP CANDIDATE PROFILE

As noted above, the members of the SARP should be balanced in their knowledge, experience and geographic representation and collectively capable of reviewing and scoring applications against all criteria, and of selecting the candidates who most merit financial support. While

outside experts may be consulted during the application review process, only SARP members may decide upon or vote on final award recipients.

The actual number of SARP members will be based on the expected number of applications for financial support. For now, it is estimated that the number of evaluators required will range from 13 to 31. There will also be a Chairperson for the SARP, who will not participate on a team, but will serve as the Administrator and final decision maker.

Because of the voluntary nature of SARP participation and the expected time commitment between April – November 2012, in addition to identifying 13-31 panelists as voting SARP members, ICANN will maintain a pool of 5 alternates who may step in for any absent SARP member or in case a conflict of interest should arise.

Additionally, ICANN will identify a pool of non-voting, specialized experts in relevant fields, who would be called upon as needed by SARP to offer expert information on particular countries or regions, to provide advice and perspective regarding certain business models or practices, to offer specific insight on particular technical questions, etc. These experts might be identified/named by ICANN or selected from among those applying to be members of the SARP.

To further help candidates understand the obligations of SARP members; guidance materials will be developed and posted on the ICANN website alongside the Support Candidate Guidance.

Identification of Evaluators

A request for volunteer reviewers should be announced in conjunction with the Applicant Support Program information or shortly thereafter. The ICANN gTLD team will work to raise awareness about the SARP opportunity and to invite interested, qualified persons to apply. The SARP online application window will open on 1 February 2012.

SARP candidates will be asked to submit credentials through an online application process. Applications will be evaluated and sorted with an eye to diversity of experience, position, and locus. A top-level due diligence will also be performed on each candidate to ensure the basic veracity of the Curriculum Vitae and to filter out gamers or those who appear to have a conflict of interest. Candidates may be asked to sign non-disclosure agreements with ICANN.

Candidate evaluators should be required to (1) submit a resume/CV; and (2) respond to a short questionnaire. Questions may include, but are not limited to:

1. Are you able to dedicate the amount of volunteer time needed?
2. Will you undertake necessary training to review applications?
3. If necessary, would you be able to travel for up to 5 working days if required?
4. What best describes your relationship to ICANN: a member of the GNSO community, an SO and/or AC, an at-large member of the ICANN community, or an outside expert? Please explain.

5. What experience or expertise, if any, do you have in the following subjects:
 - running a small business;
 - operating in developing economies;
 - serving in the public interest;
 - financial or business planning;
 - providing a domain name registry service; and/or
 - awarding grants?
6. Would you be willing to be a consulting expert without voting rights if you are unable to commit the full time needed for participation?
7. Have you read the one-page description of duties?
8. Please describe any specific subject matter expertise relevant to the gTLD program and/or the Applicant Support Program requirement of evaluating financial need and benefit to the public interest.
9. Will you agree to sign a Non Disclosure Agreement and Conflict of Interest Declaration?

The members of the SARP and reserve group will be selected from a pool of those who submit applications or expressions of interest via the ICANN website. Final numbers for each group will be decided based on the number of support applications. Panelists will be selected based on the SARP criteria outlined above. ICANN will determine the final list of panelists and reserve group participants.

SECTION IV: EVALUATOR TRAINING

Once the SARP is identified, members will be required to participate in an online training module during the month of April, which will provide guidance on the gTLD program overall and on the Applicant Support Program criteria and scoring system. The SARP will also receive a briefing from appropriate ICANN community members to help identify possible gaming scenarios. Members who do not complete this training would not be able to serve.

Method of Training

Training will be provided through an interactive presentation or online interactive format. A method for tracking training activities would be included to ensure SARP members complete the training. This format allows for maximum flexibility and convenience by allowing the evaluators to train independently. In addition, small interactive online forums will be organized to allow members to begin to meet one another, to exchange thoughts and concerns, and to posit procedural and technical questions with the facilitators and, where necessary, with ICANN staff.

SECTION V: SARP RESPONSIBILITIES AND RECOMMENDED WORKING METHODS

In general, the SARP's working methods will be, as much as possible, transparent, predictable, and consistent with the need to adhere to the highest standards of probity. Conflicts of

interest, either self-declared or perceived, will be governed by standard rules of procedure that would require recusal or withdrawal. Where this is not possible, facilitators and ICANN staff will reserve the right to establish a new procedure to address the particular situation in conformance with the high standard demanded of the process.

Responsibilities

The role of the SARP is to evaluate Support Program applications against the established public interest, financial capabilities and financial need criteria – but not to weigh relative merits of overall gTLD applications. The SARP will evaluate all Support Program applications and come to agreement on how each application scores relative to the criteria. The scoring of the three main criteria will be based on information provided in the Applicant Support application. The SARP may also rely on the new gTLD Application, public comments, and independent research to reach informed scoring decisions. Only SARP members would vote on the scoring of applicants.

The SARP panelists will work independently through the scoring process as much as possible. They will enter their votes directly online as they work with individual applications.

Working Methods

The SARP evaluators will be divided into teams of five to seven panelists with the goal of ensuring that each team has a diversity of expertise in the various subject matter areas. One team member will serve as the captain and be responsible for the operations of the team and reporting the scores.

Each team will review a portion of the overall applications. The teams can determine how they would like to conduct their work, either by dividing up the questions among the members or to discuss each question together to determine the score. It is expected that teams will take advantage of the broad expertise on their team, and not have just one person consider an entire application.

Evaluation of Applications

Just one team will review an application during the evaluation. The team will review an application (A) to determine if it meets the basic threshold and (B) to provide it a score. Each criterion would have a minimum ‘threshold’ of points required for an applicant to be considered for support. The categories and threshold level of points are contained in the ‘Draft New GTLD Financial Assistance Handbook.’

Once a team has evaluated an application and awarded points to each of the criteria, the team will then decide if an applicant (A) meets the threshold and (B) total number of points awarded.

(A) Meeting the Threshold:

The team will declare that an applicant meets the threshold if it receives a sufficient number of points in each and every criterion. If an application does not receive the minimum number of points in each criterion, then it would not proceed further in the consideration. For those applications that have met all of the thresholds, they would be considered 'qualified' support applicants.

(B) Overall Point Score

The team will determine the overall point score of each application by totaling the number of points awarded to the applicant. That amount will be considered the applicant's total score for that support application.

Allowance of Clarifying Questions

Questions to clarify the meaning, intention, or relevance of information in an application will not be permitted during the scoring process. The evaluators will score the application based on the data submitted. There will be no contact between evaluators and applicants during the process.

Evaluation of Amended Applications

An amended application should follow the same process as the original application. The amended application would be reviewed as if it were a new application (this assumes amendments are made to an application rejected early in the process during the completeness check e.g., one that may have been missing answers or correct data). ICANN would make sure that the database development teams understand that they may need additional rows for amended data and additional report parameters to allow for secondary records for an applicant.

Identifying Awardees

Once all of the applications have been evaluated, the ones that meet the thresholds will be considered 'qualified' and will move to the next part in the process.

Awards will go to the highest scoring applications. The number of awards will depend on the amount of funds available to be distributed. Currently, the available funds for award are \$2million, which would translate into fourteen awardees. If additional funds are made available before the 1 November 2012 deadline, then additional applicants can receive awards.

Depending on the number and quality of applications received, and the amount of available funding, the SARP may need to establish which of the high-scoring applicants most merit financial support.

Draft: New gTLDs: Applicant Support

If there is a tie among applicants who have the same total overall score, the Team captains, along with the Chairperson of the SARP, will decide which of the competing applicants will receive an award.

The award decisions by the SARP will be considered final and there will be no processes for appeal.