

RSEP Guide

How to Submit a Registry Services Evaluation Policy Request

Version 3.1



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	DETERMINE THE TYPE OF RSEP REQUEST	3
3	STANDARD RSEP PROCESS	4
3.1	Consult with ICANN org	4
3.2	Submit RSEP Request	4
3.3	Completeness Check	4
3.4	ICANN Review	5
3.5	Preliminary Determination	5
3.6	Public Comment and ICANN Consideration (if required)	6
3.7	Final Processing	6
4	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	7
5	APPENDIX A	7
	Standard RSEP Request Form	7

1 Introduction

This document provides guidance for registry operators to submit requests under the Registry Services Evaluation Policy (RSEP) process. gTLD Registry Agreements identify the RSEP process as the mechanism for a registry operator to submit an RSEP request to ICANN organization to: (i) add a proposed Registry Service, (ii) modify an existing Registry Service, or (iii) remove a Registry Service. In accordance with the Policy, ICANN org evaluates a proposed Registry Service (proposed service) for potential significant security, stability, and competition issues. See the [RSEP Process Workflow](#) for a high-level graphic overview of the process.

When an RSEP request is approved, ICANN org must provide written approval to the registry operator in the form of an authorization document before the registry operator can deploy the service. An authorization document is typically a Registry Agreement amendment or a Free to Deploy letter. Examples are available in the table of submitted requests on the [RSEP Process](#) webpage.

2 Determine the Type of RSEP Request

There are two types of RSEP requests: (1) [Fast Track RSEP Request](#) and (2) Standard RSEP Request. The registry operator should determine the appropriate type based on the criteria below:

1. **Fast Track RSEP Request** - a streamlined process for certain *services* that have repeatedly not raised significant Security or Stability issues, have been approved before, and have standardized authorization language. Fast Track RSEP requests are intended to result in a shorter process duration, from submission to authorization, than a standard RSEP request. See the [Fast Track RSEP Process](#) webpage for instructions and the list of services available.

Note: If a registry operator wishes to modify the authorization language (the pre-approved amendment language or Free to Deploy letter) of a Fast Track RSEP request, then the standard RSEP process is required.

2. **Standard RSEP Request** - for any request that is not available through the Fast Track RSEP process, registry operators must submit a standard RSEP request as described in Section 3 of this guide.

3 Standard RSEP Process

3.1 Consult with ICANN org

To provide more predictability, ICANN org encourages registry operators to set up a consultation call prior to submission of a standard RSEP request. This step is not intended to create additional burden on the registry operator, but helps to determine whether an RSEP request is required and, if so, ensures that necessary information is provided in the request. This improves clarity, expedites the review process, and reduces the need for back-and-forth communication. This is also an opportunity for ICANN org to clarify any concerns with the registry operator that might arise in the formal review of the request and agree to the appropriate authorization language as quickly as possible. *Note:* reaching agreement to the authorization language does not imply any particular outcome of an RSEP request.

Please submit a General Inquiry case through the [Naming Services portal](#) to initiate the consultation. It is helpful that the registry operator provides draft responses to the RSEP request form ([Appendix A](#)) prior to the consultation.

3.2 Submit RSEP Request

1. Find the Standard RSEP Request service type under the title “RSEP (Registry Services Evaluation Policy)” in the [Naming Services portal](#).
2. Fill in the RSEP request form with full responses to all applicable questions. See the list of questions in [Appendix A](#) of this guide to prepare responses to the RSEP request form before submission. A complete submission provides substantive responses to all relevant questions, including a detailed description of the proposed service, a list and explanation of contractual provisions impacted by the new service (if any), and proposed amendment language (when an amendment is required).

Note: After submission, registry operator can withdraw a request at any point by submitting a comment in the Naming Services portal case.

3.3 Completeness Check

ICANN org operational service level target (SLT): **15 calendar days**
RSEP request is **not** published

In this phase, the RSEP request remains unpublished. To proceed to the next phase (Section 3.4, ICANN Review), the RSEP request must meet the following criteria.

1. Sufficient Information

The request must include sufficient information to enable ICANN org to make an informed preliminary determination during ICANN Review.

- ⦿ If ICANN org identifies that additional information is needed to conduct the evaluation and to be included in the published request, then ICANN org may consult with the registry operator and/or ask the registry operator to re-submit the request with additional information via the Naming Services portal case.

- ⦿ If re-submission is required, then the case will be set back to the **Request Submission** phase. After providing the requested information via the case, click “Submit” to send the updated request form to ICANN org.
- ⦿ If ICANN org determines a proposed service in an RSEP request does not qualify as a Registry Service as defined in the Registry Agreement, then ICANN org will notify the registry operator and close the request.

2. Agreement to Authorization Document

ICANN org’s evaluation and written approval in the form of an authorization document (**Registry Agreement (RA) amendment** or **Free to Deploy letter**) are required prior to the registry operator’s implementation of a proposed service. ICANN org and the registry operator must agree to the type of authorization document and, if an RA amendment is required, the amendment language.

If sufficient information is provided, but ICANN org and the registry operator have **not** reached agreement to the authorization document, then the Completeness Check phase will be paused for continued negotiation.

3.4 ICANN Review

Duration defined by the [Policy](#): **15 calendar days**
RSEP request is published on the [RSEP Process](#) webpage

Once ICANN org confirms the RSEP request is complete AND (a) ICANN org and the registry operator agree to the authorization language or (b) ICANN org grants a request to proceed, ICANN org will begin the 15-day review process to evaluate whether the proposed service raises significant security, stability, or competition issues according to the [Policy](#). The RSEP request is published on the [RSEP Process](#) webpage at the beginning of this phase.

Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA)

If the proposed service also requires changing the provider of a Critical Function (as identified in Specification 10, Section 6 of the [Registry Agreement](#)), then ICANN org will remind the registry operator that it is required to submit a [Material Subcontracting Arrangement \(MSA\) change request](#) once the RSEP request is approved. If an MSA change request is required, ICANN org will communicate with the registry operator on the appropriate next steps depending on the nature of the service.

3.5 Preliminary Determination

At the end of the 15-day ICANN Review, ICANN org will notify the registry operator of the preliminary determination on the proposed service. The preliminary determination will result in one of the following outcomes:

1. Approval of the RSEP request
2. Referral to the [Registry Services Technical Evaluation Panel](#) (RSTEP)
3. Referral to the appropriate government competition authority or
4. Referral to both the RSTEP and the appropriate government competition authority

RSEP requests that are determined to not raise significant security, stability or competition issues (outcome 1)—historically the majority of requests—proceed to **final processing**.

If ICANN org determines referral to the RSTEP, competition authority, or both is required (outcomes 2 - 4), then the registry operator must confirm if it wishes to proceed with the review process or withdraw the RSEP request. ICANN org will then follow the steps outlined in the [Policy](#) and [RSEP Implementation Notes](#). ICANN org will also reach out to the registry operator to discuss next steps and requirements.

Note: **Public comment and ICANN consideration** are required if the RSEP request is referred to the RSTEP, competition authority, or both (outcomes 2 - 4).

3.6 Public Comment and ICANN Consideration (if required)

Public Comment

A public comment period on a proposed authorization document resulting from the RSEP request is required if the proposed service was referred to the RSTEP or competition authority (or both) or is subject to the conditions for public comment of a **request to proceed** as outlined in the [RSEP Implementation Notes](#). ICANN org will inform the registry operator about the public comment period duration.

ICANN Consideration

Following the public comment period and any additional consultation between ICANN org and the registry operator or modification of the authorization document, approval of the RSEP request will be considered by ICANN org or referred to the ICANN Board. ICANN org will make this determination based on the circumstances of each RSEP request.

3.7 Final Processing

Once an RSEP request has been approved and ICANN org and the registry operator agree to the authorization document, ICANN org will initiate the authorization process **within 5 calendar days** of meeting those conditions by either:

- a. Issuing the agreed upon Free to Deploy letter to the registry operator or
- b. Initiating the Registry Agreement amendment execution process using the agreed upon amendment language

Upon receipt of a Free to Deploy letter or after the amendment to the Registry Agreement is executed by both the registry operator and ICANN org, the registry operator is authorized to deploy the requested service.

If the RSEP request results in an MSA change, then the [MSA change process](#) must be completed before the registry operator may deploy the approved service.

4 Additional Resources

Additional resources are available at the following links:

- ⦿ [RSEP Process](#) - information on current and previous RSEP requests
- ⦿ [RSEP Process Workflow](#) - high-level graphic overview of the RSEP process
- ⦿ [Fast Track RSEP Process](#) - instructions and list of services available with a simplified request form and streamlined process (example: Registry Lock)
- ⦿ [IDN Service: Add, Modify, or Remove](#) - information and standardized authorization language for the IDN Service
- ⦿ [RSEP](#) - the consensus policy
- ⦿ [RSEP Implementation Notes](#) - overview of ICANN org's implementation of the Policy

5 Appendix A

Standard RSEP Request Form

1. Proposed Service Description

- 1.1. Name of proposed service.
- 1.2. Provide a general description of the proposed service including the impact to external users and how it will be offered.
- 1.3. Provide a technical description of the proposed service.
- 1.4. If this proposed service has already been approved by ICANN org, identify and provide a link to the RSEP request for the same service that was most recently approved.
- 1.5. Describe the benefits of the proposed service and who would benefit from the proposed service.
- 1.6. Describe the timeline for implementation of the proposed service.
- 1.7. If additional information should be considered with the description of the proposed service, attach one or more file(s) below.
- 1.8. If the proposed service adds or modifies Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) languages or scripts that have already been approved in another RSEP request or are considered pre-approved by ICANN org, provide (a) a reference to the RSEP request, TLD(s), and IDN table(s) that were already approved or (b) a link to the pre-approved [Reference Label Generation Rules \(LGR\)](#). Otherwise, indicate "not applicable."

The most current IDN requirements will be used to evaluate a submitted table.

2. Security and Stability

- 2.1. What effect, if any, will the proposed service have on the life cycle of domain names?

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- 2.2. Does the proposed service alter the storage and input of Registry Data?
 - 2.3. Explain how the proposed service will affect the throughput, response time, consistency or coherence of responses to Internet servers or end systems.
 - 2.4. Have technical concerns been raised about the proposed service? If so, identify the concerns and describe how you intend to address those concerns.
 - 2.5. Describe the quality assurance plan and/or testing of the proposed service prior to deployment.
 - 2.6. Identify and list any relevant RFCs or White Papers on the proposed service and explain how those papers are relevant.

3. Competition

- 3.1. Do you believe the proposed service would have any positive or negative effects on competition? If so, please explain.
- 3.2. How would you define the markets in which the proposed service would compete?
- 3.3. What companies/entities provide services or products that are similar in substance or effect to the proposed service?
- 3.4. In view of your status as a Registry Operator, would the introduction of the proposed service potentially affect the ability of other companies/entities that provide similar products or services to compete?
- 3.5. Do you propose to work with a vendor or contractor to provide the proposed service? If so, what is the name of the vendor/contractor and describe the nature of the services the vendor/contractor would provide.
- 3.6. Have you communicated with any of the entities whose products or services might be affected by the introduction of your proposed service? If so, please describe the communications.
- 3.7. If you have any documents that address the possible effects on competition of the proposed service, attach the file(s) below. ICANN will keep the documents confidential.

4. Contractual Provisions

- 4.1. List the relevant contractual provisions impacted by the proposed service. This includes, but is not limited to, Consensus Policies, previously approved amendments or services, Reserved Names, and Rights Protection Mechanisms.
- 4.2. What effect, if any, will the proposed service have on the reporting of data to ICANN?
- 4.3. What effect, if any, will the proposed service have on Registration Data Directory Service (RDDS)?
- 4.4. What effect, if any, will the proposed service have on the price of a domain name registration? If additional information needs to be considered, attach one or more file(s).
- 4.5. Will the proposed service result in a change to a Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA) as defined by the Registry Agreement? If so, identify and

describe the change. Please note that a change to an MSA requires consent from ICANN org through the [MSA change request process](#). The RSEP request must be approved prior to submitting the MSA change request.

5. Authorization Language

- 5.1. A Registry Agreement (RA) amendment is required when the proposed service: (i) contradicts existing provisions in the RA or (ii) is not contemplated in the RA and, therefore, needs to be added to Exhibit A of the RA and/or as an appropriate addendum/appendix. If applicable, provide draft language (or a link to previously approved RA amendment language) describing the service to be used in an RA amendment if the proposed service is approved. If an RA amendment is not applicable, respond with “N/A” and provide a complete response to question 5.2.

For examples, you may refer to the [webpage](#) for standard RA template amendments for commonly requested Registry Services.

Helpful tip: the contractual language should include a concise description of the proposed service, conditions under which the service must be implemented, and/or updates to any provisions of the RA that are contradicted by the proposed service.

- 5.2. If the proposed service is permissible under an existing provision in the Registry Agreement, identify the provision and provide rationale. If not applicable, respond with “N/A” and provide a complete response to question 5.1.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. ICANN org encourages you to set up a consultation call through your Engagement Manager prior to submitting this RSEP request. This is to help ensure that necessary information is assembled ahead of time. Identify if and when you had a consultation call with ICANN org. If you did not request a consultation call, provide rationale.
- 6.2. Describe your consultations with the community, experts, and/or others. This can include, but is not limited to, the relevant community for a sponsored or community TLD, registrars or the registrar constituency, end users and/or registrants, or other constituency groups. What were the quantity, nature, and results of the consultations? How will the proposed service impact these groups? Which groups support or oppose this proposed service?

7. Other

- 7.1. Would there be any intellectual property impact or considerations raised by the proposed service?
- 7.2. Does the proposed service contain intellectual property exclusive to your gTLD registry?
- 7.3. Provide any other relevant information to include with the request.
- 7.4. If additional information should be considered, attach one or more file(s) below.

