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YVETTE GUIGNEAUX:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the ICANN Grant Program webinar on Thursday, December 1 at 15:00 UTC. My name is Yvette Guigneaux. Pamela Smith and myself will be your remote participation managers for this webinar. This webinar is being recorded and it will be posted online shortly after we conclude here.

This session, like all other ICANN activities, is governed by the ICANN expected standards of behavior, and the ICANN community anti harassment policy. If you have a comment or a question you would like addressed during the Q&A portion of our presentation, which will be at the end, feel free to raise your hand or you can follow the noted instructions that are in the chat. And now I will turn things over to the vice president of implementation operations, Giovanni Seppia.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Pamela. Thank you, Yvette. My name is Giovanni Seppia, vice president implementation operations department, and together with my colleague, Negar Farzinnia, senior director in my department, we'll run this webinar on the grant program.

This is the first grant program public webinar. There's going to be another webinar on the 7th of December at 6:00 AM UTC, and that is meant to serve the Asia Pacific stakeholders.

The implementation operations department is quite a new department at ICANN. It was created a couple of years ago within the office of the chief financial officer. And we are responsible for the implementation of

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Board-approved non-policy recommendations, as well as for the implementation of specific projects such as the enhancing the effectiveness of the ICANN multi stakeholder model, and the grant program.

With that said, we can move to the next slide that is about the webinar objectives. So during the first part of the webinar, we will provide you with the ICANN grant program background. Afterwards, and we will share information on the grant program preliminary design and key elements, which we have been working on during the past months.

Subsequently, the next webinar section will be about the first ground cycle and the tentative timeline for the activities to come, including the launch of the first call for application. The webinar will end with an overview of the activities that the implementation operations department, together with many colleagues as subject matter experts at ICANN Org is working on to make sure the design of the program is completed and the launch of the first call for application is going to happen in a timely manner.

With that said, I'd like to leave the floor to my colleague, Negar, who is going to walk us through the first two sections of this webinar. Thank you. Negar.

NEGAR FARZINNIA:

Thank you, Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, everyone. It's great to be here and have you on this webinar so we can tell you a little bit about the grant program, where we're at and what the next steps are. If we can go to the next slide, please.

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Thank you. I will start off by providing a bit of a background on this project. And then we'll go over some elements of the preliminary design and key features. So with that, let's move forward one more slide.

Wonderful, thank you. If you recall, as part of the 2012 new generic top-level domain program, any established entity could apply to form and operate a registry. In cases where more than one application was received for the same or similar top-level domain, ICANN encouraged applicants to resolve the contention that was generated amongst themselves.

In some cases, this was not possible. And for that, the applicant guidebook actually outlined a last resort mechanism which is an option that's operated by an ICANN authorized provider.

Of the overall 1930 applications, there is a total of 234 contention sets of which 16 to date have resulted in an auction of last resorts. And the proceeds of these auctions are referred to as auction proceeds.

As per the guidelines that were noted in the applicant guidebook, the proceeds from these auctions were set aside until the use of the ones were determined. Let's go to the next slide please.

Here we have a quick overview of the timeline of all the activities leading up to Board action. So in 2015, the ICANN Board and community started discussions regarding how best to determine the use of auction proceeds. These discussions ultimately led to the creation of a Cross Community Working Group on the new gTLD auction proceeds that was chartered by all of the supporting organizations and advisory committees across ICANN.

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This Cross Community Working Group started their work in January 2017 to develop a mechanism to allocate the auction proceeds. By September of 2020, the Cross Community Working Group finished their work and submitted their final report to the ICANN Board. And ultimately in June 2022, the Board accepted the recommendations from the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds and directed ICANN Org to develop the grant program. Let's go to the next slide, please.

Wonderful, thank you. The final report of the Cross Community Working Group on option proceeds includes 12 recommendations. It includes implementation guidelines, as well as some other related material to help the teams that are going to be moving this work forward. The 12 recommendations cover a myriad of information and areas of focus. All of them are listed here.

The highlights are mechanisms through which ICANN grant program could be established, the application tranches, safeguarding measures, conflict of interest provisions, independent project application evaluation panel, objectives of these proceeds' allocation, governance framework and audit requirements, reviews mechanisms, not just on the cycles, but on the overall program itself, ICANN Org and constituent parts applying for proceeds, and accountability mechanisms and appeal mechanisms along the way. So the recommendations cover a wide range of areas and are pretty comprehensive in their content. Next slide, please.

Of course receiving this final report, the Board reviewed the Cross Community Working Group's recommendations, the feasibility

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information related to those recommendations against the 2018 Board principles that was published, and an ICANN Org assessment document to help make an informed decision.

As a result of this review, on June 12 2022, the Board formally approved the recommendations and directed ICANN president and CEO or his designee to take all actions necessary that are directed within the Board's scorecard to ultimately implement an ICANN grant program, which should be aligned with ICANN's mission and based on sound governance practices.

The Board also requested ICANN Org to develop a preliminary design and an implementation plan, which ICANN Org completed and on which provided an update to the Board on 10th of October of 2022 as per the deadline that was set in the Board resolution by the Board. Let's go to the next slide please.

Okay, let's talk about some preliminary design and its key elements. Next slide please. Thank you. So the ICANN grant program is going to be carried out as a new department of ICANN Org under the authority of ICANN Org's chief financial officer and SVP of planning.

This department is going to be responsible for all aspects of the program and will manage all necessary resources, whether they're internal or external as it is anticipated that elements of the program are going to be outsourced where appropriate.

The grant program is going to be running and operating in a series of grant making cycles until the proceeds are depleted. During each cycle, the program is going to be using an independent panel to assess the

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projects and applications and determine the list of applications to be recommended to the Board to be awarded grants.

The Board will decide whether it will approve the full slate of applications recommended for funding by the panel in each cycle. And in taking that decision, it will consider whether the rules of the process were followed by the panel.

So to be very clear, the panel is the one that does the actual individual application assessment and evaluations. The Board is ensuring that the process and the guidelines that were set by a final report, by the implementation plan, those are followed by the independent panel to make sure everything is correct as it should be.

So some of the key considerations when designing the grant program and each of the grant cycles, or obviously transparency, safeguarding against conflict of interest, it's important to have diversity of the composition of the independent panel, as well as keeping in mind the geographical distribution of the grants. And these are just some of the elements, there's so many more items that go into the design of the grant program. Let's move to the next slide, please.

Here we have an overview of the phases within one cycle of grants. The program design sets out the steps required to conduct this full cycle. And it purposefully focuses for now on the first cycle of the program, with the intention that there may be refinements and improvements learned along the way that we have to make to the future cycles.

Overall, each cycle is going to include five phases. Phase one is going to be planning and setting up the cycle. Phase two is about application

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window opening and allowing everyone to submit their applications as they're interested. Phase three is about doing due diligence and assessment and evaluation of the applications and ultimately selecting a slate of applicants and applications. Phase four is when the grants are awarded and the selected applicants are notified. And last but not least, we have the post award and closure of this cycle. And I will talk about more details on each of these phases in the next few slides. So let's move forward, please.

For the first cycle, the planning is going to include implementation design of all the elements of the program, including setting up the grant department. This is already in progress. This is something we've already started working on and are in the midst of developing at the moment.

Planning for the grant cycles is going to include setting up outreach and awareness activities, and developing all program materials, not just for internal operations, but also documentation and material needed for applicants, and those for the panel that are going to be conducting assessment of the applications. We will also be setting up the said independent assessment panel and have to go through their onboarding prior to starting the first cycle. So the design and implementation of all of these elements have already started at all and or in progress. Let's go to the next slide and phase two.

During the application window, we will be launching the call for proposals and interested parties to submit their applications. This is an open window. And during this phase, we will still continue to do outreach and activities to ensure that everyone is still aware of the

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opportunities available for the grant program and that they can apply along with what the deadlines are.

Upon the conclusion of phase two, we will need to do evaluation of the application. So during this phase, during phase two, we will be setting up for conducting the activities we need to do for phase three. And with that, let's go to the next slide please.

Phase three of the grant cycle is going to be all about performing due diligence of the applications, evaluation and assessment. This includes eligibility review of the applications based on the defined criteria, assessment of the applications based on the guidelines provided and that's going to be conducted by an independent panel, and ultimately for the independent panel to be putting together a list of selected applications which the panel recommends to be funded.

This list of applications will then be submitted to the ICANN Board for its review. And in its review, the Board will consider whether the rules of the grant program were followed. And based on his findings, the Board will approve or reject the slate of the applications. Next slide please.

Thank you. Phase four of the grant cycle is going to center around awarding grants to successful applications. This includes not only informing the applicants about the outcome of their applications, but also publishing the list of successful applications. conducting contract negotiations, and most importantly disbursement of funds to the grantees. So there's a lot that's going to obviously happen in this phase as well. And with that, let's talk about the last phase of the grant cycle and go to the next slide, please.



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The fifth and last phase of the grant cycle is centering around the evaluation of each of the granted projects post implementation to ensure that the projects were implemented as proposed in the application, and that the grant funds were used as detailed in the application. This phase is going to incorporate reporting on the results, procedures and usage of funds for complete transparency, as well as a thorough review of each program cycle to ensure that the grant cycle functions as planned and expected, and to really determine if there are any areas of improvement to enhance the next grant cycle.

But in addition to the cycle review, we will also be conducting an overall program review every few cycles, and this is to ensure that the objectives of the grant program are being met, and really to assess the impact of the grant program in its entirety.

With that said, let me pass the presentation over to my colleague Giovanni to have him walk you through a few more details about the first grant cycle and the next steps.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Negar. Next slide, please. Next, please. So as Negar said, the program will operate in a series of grant cycles, and for each cycle are likely to run on an annual basis, and allocated portion of the available proceeds that will be made available for grants.

During the first cycle, 10 million US dollars will be made available for grants to successful applicants. The awards will range from 50,000 US dollars up to 500,000 US dollars, and the lower limit will allow smaller

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organizations to apply while the upper limit will mitigate possible risk and enable ICANN Org to learn from initial experience.

The grantees may apply for additional grants in future cycles, meaning that if an applicant is a successful applicant, and therefore becomes a grantee, and its project application is provided with the requested grant, in a future cycle, the same applicant can apply for further grants and therefore can submit other applications for other projects to be funded. If we can go to the next slide, please.

The next slide is probably the most wanted slide of this slide deck because it's about the tentative timeline for everything to move forward. And as you can see, the timeline is based on current estimated completion of different activities, including a phase one activities that are about the planning and the cycle setup. We expect those activity to last tentatively around 12 months. And that will make the phase two which is the phase of the application window when we will launch the first grant cycle to be happening around the first quarter or at least no later than the first quarter of 2024.

We have to say that we are working hard together with our colleagues at ICANN Org—implementation operations is working hard to make sure that things are moving forward smoothly according to standards and above all to deliver a top quality grant program. If we can go to the next slide please. And next.

So what we are currently working on is we are designing the various activities for each phase of the program. We are further investigating good practices to inform possible decisions. This is quite an important

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task to address both several Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds recommendations, and also the ICANN Board directions to ICANN Org to follow good practices whenever designing several program elements.

We also determine which activities will be outsourced and therefore preparing the necessary procedure and request for proposals. The implementation operations department together with ICANN Org subject matter experts has already compiled list of requirements for some elements of the program such as the helpdesk of the program, and also the application platform. And we are in the process of further evaluating those requirements before having made the decision about if to rely on internal resources or outsource these activities.

We are also going to produce soon the program literature. And this is an activity of paramount importance. And it's really a key activity of the program because certain elements of the program literature should be available well in advance before the first call for application is published so that possible applicants are informed and well informed about the rules of the program and also, for instance, some elements of the grant agreement that they will be requested to sign if they become a successful applicant and therefore a grantee.

We are also setting up the grant program department, as well as refining the risk assessment automatic and phase level. And in this case, we have already started working with the risk management team to identify and analyze any possible risk at different levels and different phases of the program to also ensure that mitigation measures are in place to mitigate those risk, those that have been identified to date.

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And also, we are producing a precise overview of the internal and external resources that are going to be needed to support the program and also to support the grant program department. And we are working to ensure cost optimization throughout the program. If we can go to the next slide, please.

We have already created a community wiki page that is dedicated to the grant program. This is the URL, and this can also be soon Org page about the grant program. Those pages will be populated with information as it becomes available. And therefore I would like to encourage you to stay tuned on those pages to receive updates.

As I said at the beginning of this webinar, this is the first webinar and we are planning to give more webinars in the future to continue to keep the community up to date with the development of the grant program and inform the community about next steps and the progress on the grant program development.

Before going to the Q&A session. I'd like to leave the floor to Xavier Calvez, the senior vice president planning and chief financial officer. Thank you.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Thank you, Giovanni and Negar. And thank you for the presentation and of course, after a few minutes, we will make sure that we address any questions that anyone has on this program.

Just wanted to say a few words to highlight a couple of aspects about this program. This is grant making, it is not a core activity of ICANN that

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is carried out as part of ICANN submission today. But it's a great opportunity to be able to do good. And obviously this is something we need to do carefully and do well, and obviously under all requirements and regulation that ICANN is subjected to.

It's also, for those of you who have participated to the development of the work of the CCWG that worked on this before know this, but this is also a program that is not intended to fund ICANN's ongoing activities that are in support of its mission, simply because this is one-time funds. This is not ongoing funding of ICANN that ICANN can continue to count on for the foreseeable future.

As a result, this is money that is not intended to fund ongoing ICANN activities. Because as Negar and Giovanni explained, the grant program will help distribute those funds until they are depleted. And at the end of those funds, once all those funds are going to be distributed, then the program will be terminated as this is not meant to be an ongoing activity and this is, as per and consistent with the CCWG recommendations to the Board which the Board has adopted. So we just wanted to make sure this is clear to everyone. And of course we welcome any questions, any comments on any part of this program, whether you have background in the work of ICANN on this topic or do not. We welcome any questions on the topic. Back to you, Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Xavier. So the floor is open for possible questions. And please bear in mind that we are still in the implementation design phase of the program. So excuse us if we may respond to some of the

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questions by saying that we are still working on it and therefore, we'll provide the update as it becomes available.

The last slide has two emails, my email and Negar's email, so feel free to drop us a line for a future question you may have after having talked about the program and also after some further considerations that you may have at the end of this webinar.

That said, the floor is open for questions, and Yvette and Pamela will help us to moderate the Q&A session. So thank you, Yvette and Pamela.

PAMELA SMITH:

Thank you, Giovanni. This is Pamela Smith, and I've been monitoring the chat. I'm going to help with the Q&A. We'll start off with our first question, which is in the chat: is there a possibility that registries and registrars will be invited to contribute in the grant corpus entirely on a voluntary basis?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you. I see the question is from S. M. Could you please just clarify what do you mean by grant corpus?

SIVASUBRAMANIAN MUTHUSAMY:

[inaudible] The total funds available to given away as grants, not just the \$10 million that is set aside for now but whatever money that ICANN has conceived to be given away as grants over a period of time. if there are commercial players who are ready and who are interested in doing some good work and rather than manage it themselves could contribute

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to ICANN's corpus fund, the total fund to expand the grants program to make it larger, to make it more useful, that's what I was asking.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you. It is my understanding that this grant program is for depleting the auction proceeds fund. And therefore we have not, let's say, planned to solicit additional funds from registries or registrar because the purpose of the grant program is really to use and distribute to successful applicants the funds accumulated during the auction proceeds. You can go to the next question.

PAMELA SMITH:

Thank you. I don't see any hands raised. So our next question is from the chat. Would At-Large and other end user organizations be eligible to apply for grants? One quick note, Giovanni before you answer, I do need to ask everyone to use the proper format for formatting your questions and your comments. And I will post those again in the chat right quick just so it's clear. Thank you, Giovanni.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you, Pamela, for reading the second question. So to be eligible, as Negar said, there are going to be some eligibility criteria for applicants. Among the eligibility criteria is that eligible applicants should be in an established organization that are not for profit in nature. There are some requirements that have to be met within the ICANN framework, because that is very specific framework and therefore, there's going to

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be specific information for possible applicants in terms of the eligibility that will be made available sooner.

PAMELA SMITH:

Okay, thank you, Giovanni. Our next question is again from S. M. How does ICANN's grant program treat conflict of interest? Does the program summarily exclude anyone from any of the AC/SO, staff, Board, serving or has served ICANN in the past from applying for a grant or disclose the conflict transparent and goes ahead with the evaluation with specific attention to the conflict? If the grant program were to summarily exclude everyone who has served the DNS in the past or present, it may in a sense be denying someone an opportunity available to everyone for the positive reason that he or she has served ICANN in a voluntary or other official role, instead of considering it as an added merit merely for optics.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Okay, quite a [structured] question. So I can say that we are currently assessing the different, let's say, elements to make sure that conflict of interest is properly assessed and taken into account at the different levels of the program, starting from the independent panel to the possible applicants, also, including the Org, internal and external. Everything is currently being investigated. So conflict of interest is certainly an element that we are going to address properly. And again, this is something that you will be updated on the dedicated grant program we Wiki page and Org pages.



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PAMELA SMITH: Next question is from Alan Greenberg in the chat. The CCWG final report found that a fundamental bylaw change might be necessary to ensure that grants decisions were not subject to appeal under ICANN accountability measures. Was this determined to be necessary?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Alan. I leave the floor to Xavier to address this question. Thank you.

XAVIER CALVEZ: Thank you, Giovanni. Quickly, so Alan is pointing out to one specific aspect of the work of the CCWG that occurred a few years ago that suggested in its recommendations that the grant program and the decisions pertaining to grant allocation to projects are excluded from the existing mechanisms that ICANN has already in place for challenge of any decisions that are taken by the organization and the Board. So that's the subject of Alan's question.

And we are evaluating this specific recommendation at the moment and evaluating the necessity—or not—to change the ICANN bylaws for that purpose. We are not yet concluded on this analysis in the sense that we're not yet convinced that it has to be done. But this is exactly something that is currently being evaluated to determine whether that change of fundamental bylaws would be necessary or if there are alternative mechanisms that can be put in place without a change to the bylaws. So more to come on that. We don't yet have the answer to your question, Alan, but that's one of those several topics that the team is working on at this moment to address. Thank you for raising it.

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PAMELA SMITH: Okay, the next question is from Josu Walino. What kind of topics or projects do you expect to fund through the grant projects for the community? Dissemination projects, technology development?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. Thank you for this question. So the Cross Community Working Group on Auction Proceeds identified already some areas where ICANN can support projects. And those areas are for instance supporting the evolution of structures that support the internet unique identifier system, providing, let's say underserved populations with capacity development and infrastructure support, advancing work related to open access and also addressing diversity, participation and inclusion. So those are some high-level elements that the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds has identified as possible areas for support and ICANN Org is working on those high-level areas to make sure they are a bit more detailed once they are included in the applicant guide and in the information that will be made public on the grant program community wiki and Org page.

PAMELA SMITH: Next question is from Anoop Kumar Prasad. He says, "Greetings. Can I apply on behalf of an incubation center?"

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Again, there are going to be some eligibility rules for applicants. This is a program that wants to be a global program. So we are not limited to not

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for profit based in US. But we are currently making sure that this is going to be something that is available to all not for profit as long as [inaudible] criteria. And therefore, when it comes to incubators, as long as they will meet the criteria for eligibility that we will set for applicants, that is an option that could be possible. Again, as long as the incubator meets the eligibility criteria.

PAMELA SMITH: The next question is from Harold Arcos. Some organizations end users as ONGs can apply for the grant program?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: I see that there's a lot of interest on the eligibility criteria, which is fully understandable. Again, we are working to make sure that all those kinds of questions are addressed and we make sure that the eligibility criteria for the applicant and the eligibility criteria for the application, as well as the evaluation criteria for the possible applications are published as soon as possible.

So again, please stay tuned on the grant program wiki page and Org pages to find out more. And we are sure that we're going to plan other webinars for the community as soon as more information becomes available.

PAMELA SMITH: Xavier, I see your hand is up.

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XAVIER CALVEZ:

Just to complement what Giovanni just said, there's logically a lot of interest in which we see here in this webinar about can I apply or can this type of organization apply? Hopefully you all understand that at this stage of development of the program, which as Giovanni said, is in the process of being designed, we cannot make any definitive on the fly, live decisions as to what organization can or cannot apply to the program. So I ask for your patience and your understanding as we develop the program. The questions, we are going to keep them because they are going to help us understand how we need to specify and define and document the eligibility criteria when we design the program, which therefore, it's very helpful to receive those questions. But please do understand that we cannot answer now any of those specific questions about types of entities or purposes of grants, because this is not what we do at the moment, that we can do at the moment. And these rules will be defined later.

And as a reminder, relative to what the grant will fund, this will be the result of applications, the result of the evaluation panel that will look at the grants and will then determine whether those grants are projects that can be funded.

So this is not ICANN staff today who can make that decision, and we also cannot speculate as to what the panel would consider that are good projects. And that speaks to the independence of the decisions from the decisions of staff, from the decisions of the Board, from the decisions of anyone else involved in the process. We want to make sure that it's the panel, the independent panel that evaluates the application in an independent fashion and therefore we cannot weigh in on those

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questions. And just wanted to make sure it's clear to everyone. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Xavier. Please, Pamela, go ahead.

PAMELA SMITH: The next question is from Oksana Prykhodko. Can the same person or organization submit more than one application?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Yeah, this is an element that we have considered in the preliminary implementation design phase. And, yes, we can already say yes to this question that an applicant can submit several proposals.

PAMELA SMITH: The next question is from Ahmed Abdelmoneim. Could you clarify the future plan from the Q1 2023 to Q4 2025?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Okay, so if I understand the question correctly, currently what we are doing is to design the various elements of the program, of the implementation of the program itself, as well as the launch of the first call for application. So this is something that is tentatively estimated to be completed in about 12 months. And therefore, we estimate the launch of the first call for application to take place no later than in the first calendar quarter of 2024.

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What we see is that as soon as the first call for application is launched, we will be in the position to see how long it has taken to launch that call and also to make sure that we are on track for the following steps, which are setting the evaluation of those projects that are going to be submitted at the end of the first call for applications, and also to review the first cycle as Negar has said in one of the slides, because that is part of the process. So each grant cycle will have to be reviewed and the outcome of the review process will inform possible refinements for future cycles. So this is, let's say, the next months that we have in front of us.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is from Jeffrey Neuman. Given that the .web TLD is still in dispute/litigation, has that money been taken out of the corpus and placed on reserve just in case the auction is overturned for any reason?

XAVIER CALVEZ:

Thank you, Jeff, for the question. Important question. So for those who do not know, the auction proceeds that we collected included the proceeds of an auction that appeared on .web. .web, that auction, that string, that TLD is currently the subject of a number of different proceedings that have been challenging the outcome of this auction that occurred several years ago.

So because of these ongoing procedures that are happening, that money is simply not available at the moment for distribution. And therefore, until the procedures are completely finished in that it

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appears that those funds then could become available, then those funds are not available for distribution and they are kept currently within the same pool of investments of the auction proceeds but we are not expecting at this moment that we would be distributing them. And we would only do that, distributing them for grantmaking, only if and when the procedures relative to this auction are completed in a manner that makes those funds then available for rent make. And that's not the case at the moment. And therefore we are not expecting at this moment to distribute those songs in the very near future. I hope that helps. Thank you.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is from Wolf-Ulrich Knoblen. Can we expect that the following cycles will be shorter than the first one, in particular the prep phase?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Yeah, absolutely. As I said, the planning phase that is currently expected to take about 12 months is quite extensive, because there are so many elements that we have to evaluate and take into account before reaching an informed decision on most of the program elements. So future phases will certainly have a planning phase much shorter. And also, one of the thoughts that we have had when going through the preliminary design is to make sure that at some point, there is a sort of calendar of course that is made available to the community.

Again, this is work in progress and it's for the future and it's a tentative thought that we have been having for the community to make sure that

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you organize yourself, in case you are not able to submit an application for a call, that you have already some clue about the possible timing in for the next call. Thank you.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is from S.M. I think I saw q1 2025 is the earliest period when a grantee will see the grant, even this \$10 million, perhaps a pilot. Why is it becoming a habit for ICANN to take years to do anything?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Thank you for the question. I do not recall to have seen that it's in q1 2025. The tentative timeline for launching the first call for application is no later than the first calendar quarter of 2024. And if that is going according to the plan, which we're really working on to make it—and eventually make it earlier. But after that, there will be a timeframe for the possible applicants to submit their applications. And there's going to be there for an application window, which we currently estimate in between 30 to 90 days. This is subject to a decision. So I'm just saying tentative timeframe for submitting the application window.

And afterwards, there is the evaluation timeframe for evaluating the submitted applications. And afterwards, there is the moment when the successful applicants are presented to the Boarder for the slate for approval by the Board. And once the Board has approved this slate and has confirmed that the evaluation has followed the procedures, there is going to be the moment when there's going to be the signature of the first grant agreements.



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So that said, we're really working hard to make things moving forward. At the same time, as I said earlier, we want to ensure that this is a top quality program. This is the first time that ICANN is launching a grant program so there are many elements to be double checked to make sure that things are going to run smoothly and there are no roadblocks while we are launching the program itself. So trust me that we are making all our best to launch the program in a timely manner to launch the first call for application as soon as possible. Thank you.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is from Bonface Wlataba. Great initiative by ICANN. I hope all the questions posed by the participants in this meeting can be compiled in an FAQ section so that everyone can gauge their eligibility.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for this important question. And indeed, all the questions that we have received today and have been addressed and not been addressed, they will be compiled in an FAQ that will be posted in a timely manner in the currently available grant program community wiki page. Next question, please.

PAMELA SMITH:

Thank you. Lavish Mawuena Mensah asks, can academic institutions like universities apply? What about governments, institutions?

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GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Again, this is part of what Xavier and I have said, that this is part of the eligibility criteria for applicants. This is something we are investigating. We want to make this program as global as possible. The not-for-profit requirement is a requirement that we currently have for eligibility of the applicants. Therefore, we are currently looking into these requirements. And we'll make sure that these requirements are fully explained and this information about the eligibility criteria for applicant is made available in a timely manner. So thanks again for your patience. Next question, please.

PAMELA SMITH: The next one is from Wolf-Ulrich Knoblen. How will the grants panel be established?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you, Wolf. So we are talking about an independent panel and we are investigating different options for the establishment of the panel. As there are several areas that have been mentioned by the Cross Community Working Group on auction proceeds that could benefit from grants, we believe there are going to be and might be several panels, each panel expert in one of these areas or one or more of the areas.

And the establishment of the panel is something that we are currently working on with internal expertise and also external expertise to make sure that it's a valid, sound and let's say conflict of interest-free independent panel.

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So again, information on the way the independent panel is going to be established and the kind of panel that is going to be established, this kind of information is also going to be made available on the grant program wiki as it becomes available and as we reach a decision about it. Thank you. Next question, please.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is from S.M. Why not form a structural separate foundation or trust, separate management, allow the entity sufficient independence and freedom to make it possible for the entity to begin awarding grants by the end of Q4 2022?

XAVIER CALVEZ:

As Judith has just written in the chat, the separate foundation was a not accepted option. There was support, As Judith is saying, for having an independent group to do it. But there was a decision to have this managed directly by ICANN, again, with all the independence and all the transparency that is needed at the level of the independent panel and across and throughout the program. Next question, please.

PAMELA SMITH:

The next question is also from Siva. What if the application confirms to the criteria but has the potential to earn revenues and profits if successful? Is there a design to broadband this not only as a grant program, but also as a benevolent investment or partner program to expect the awardee to eventually contribute back to the grant corpus?

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GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. It's a very interesting question. And honestly, it's one of the most requested question whenever there is an international and global grant program. So it's a very interesting question, because indeed, providing funding to any project may make the project take off considerably and eventually having profit for what was the applicant and became a grantee.

This is something that independent panel will evaluate as part of the, let's say, guide book that will make available to the independent panel. And this is indeed for, let's say, us to look into as one of the elements that we have, let's say in our checklist for the coming weeks to be checked, investigated, and afterwards to make an informed decision. Thank you. Next question, please.

PAMELA SMITH: And the next question is from Hiran Wijesinghe. Do you have any project template that we need to apply to the grant?

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. Yeah, indeed, part of the documentation that will be made available for applicants is an application form. Actually, the application form will be an online application form, you will be able to see the online application form within the applicant guide that we are also working on so that you will see what kind of information you're expected to provide when submitting the application. Thank you. Next question.

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PAMELA SMITH:

We are at the end of our chat pod questions and I don't see any raised hands. I understand there was a question in the chat that we may have missed. It was about if it's possible to apply for less than \$50,000. And this is a very good question. Currently, the thresholds that we have been thinking about is for between \$50,000 and \$500,000 that are the thresholds that we have been thinking about for the first cycle.

We believe that the lower limit should allow smaller organizations to apply. This is something that we have currently decided. However, again, this is something that we are still working on to make sure it's properly included and explained in the applicant guide, and also on the grant program community Wiki. So that's, again, also work in progress. And we'll make sure that this is properly addressed. And there's going to be FAQs about the thresholds as well that will be made available to possible applicants and to all the stakeholders. Thank you.

XAVIER CALVEZ:

And just to add to that, that as Giovanni was explaining earlier in the presentation, we have set these limits of 50,000 minimum and 500,000 maximum for the first grant cycle that we are seeing now. And we will repeat that later in the launch of the first cycle, that later cycle may allow us to either have a lower bottom limit or a higher top limit so as to be able to provide a broader type of applications.

But for this first cycle, we wanted to limit the size of the grants to those within those limits to make this first cycle a little bit more containable, a bit more simple, and containing less risks. But we may change those limits in the next cycles. And of course, the input that we're going to

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collect between now and then will help us understand whether that's something helpful and needed. Thank you.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: Thank you. Any further question?

PAMELA SMITH: No, Giovanni, there are no further questions in the chat and no raised comments. And I don't see any raised hands, either. So I think with that, we may have come to the end of the Q&A.

GIOVANNI SEPPIA: So with that said, thank you so much, Pamela, and thank you, Yvette, for all the logistic support to make this public webinar happen. As I said at the beginning, there's going to be a second session of this public webinar on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 6:00 UTC. And this webinar, all the FAQs that we have collected are going to be, let's say, structured and posted with answers on the ICANN community dedicated wiki page for the grant program.

I'd also like to thank all those who have attended the meeting, wherever you are. So thank you for having us during this hour. We'll continue to keep you updated. And thanks also to my colleague, Negar, who is working hard with me to make sure that the grant program and the first call for application move forward in a very timely manner. Thank you so much. I draw this meeting to a close. Thank you.

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XAVIER CALVEZ: Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you, Giovanni and Negar.

NEGAR FARZINNIA: Thanks, everyone.

XAVIER CALVEZ: Thank you, Pamela, and Yvette.

PAMELA SMITH: Thank you, Xavier, Giovanni and Negar. Have a great day, evening or afternoon everyone, wherever you may be.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**