DRAFT New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Support Handbook

Guide to Applying to the Applicant Support Program of the New Generic Top-Level Domain Program: Next Round

ICANN org

12 February 2024

Bracketed Text Dependencies Color Coding

Category	Color
Dependency on AGB Topic	
Sections still under development by the ASP team	
Other external dependencies	

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1. Introduction

1.1. About ICANN and its Mission

ICANN's mission is to help ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet, you need to type an address – a name or a number – into your computer or other device. That address must be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world. ICANN was formed in 1998 as a nonprofit public-benefit corporation with a community of participants from all over the world.

1.2. About the Applicant Support Program

The Applicant Support Program (ASP) is an initiative developed as part of ICANN's New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program and is intended to provide financial and non-financial support for eligible entities that demonstrate financial need.

The ICANN organization seeks to implement community-developed policy to "...retain the Applicant Support Program, which includes fee reduction for eligible applicants and facilitate the provision of pro-bono non-financial assistance to applicants in need..." As part of the gTLD Program: Next Round, the ASP is designed to be in line with Affirmation 1.3 of the [Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process](): "The Working Group affirms that the primary purposes of new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS."

1.3. Objectives of This Handbook

This ASP handbook was developed to establish the rules for those seeking financial and non-financial support to apply to the New gTLD Program. It is meant to be a step-by-step guide to applying for such support and includes information on application deadlines, criteria, processes, and evaluation.

Because the New gTLD Program: Next Round will be in development during the ASP application submission period, ASP applicants are encouraged to review previously published resources in the interim. This will allow potential applicants to better understand what the New gTLD Program: Next Round application process will require and thus make an informed decision about applying to the program. Resources include:

- [Draft New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook Materials on the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team (IRT) Wiki Workspace]()

- [New gTLD Applicant Guidebook: Next Round]

- [Link to New gTLD Program website]

- The 2012 version of the [New gTLD Applicant Guidebook](#)[1] (for historical reference; please refer to the above two resources for up-to-date information about the Next Round)

Links to other materials can be found within this document. Please address any questions regarding the ASP or ASP Handbook to: globalsupport@icann.org.

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[1] Please note that the Applicant Guidebook for the New gTLD Program: Next Round will be updated in consultation with the Implementation Review Team. The Guidebook will serve as the official roadmap for applicants in the program, based upon updated policies outlined in the [Final Report](#).

2. Overview

The Internet is a global resource. The ASP aims to serve the global public interest by fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the Domain Name System.

The intent of the ASP is to make the New gTLD Program application and evaluation fees[2] and process accessible to entities that would like to operate a registry and which would otherwise be unable to apply because of financial and resource constraints. Should an applicant that applies for support be found to have abused the intent of the program, that entity and all individuals associated with its application may be excluded from participation in the New gTLD Program in perpetuity (Also see [Section on Restrictions as well as Terms & Conditions–sections under development].

2.1. Supports Available to Qualified ASP Applicants

The ASP is intended to provide qualified candidates the opportunity to pay reduced New gTLD Program application and evaluation fees (see Section 4) and have access to a package of non-financial support to help inform supported applicants' preparations in submitting a gTLD application.

This handbook outlines the financial and non-financial support that qualified applicants may receive. Which include:

- [An ASP training program (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2)]
- Access to pro bono (volunteer) service providers that have agreed to volunteer their services to supported applicants. Pro bono service providers are independent from the ICANN organization. Pro bono services are not endorsed or contracted by ICANN org, though ICANN org may play a facilitative role in making qualified supported applicants aware of the services available, should applicants seek to utilize them. ICANN org is working to identify service providers and will provide a list of those vendors that have made themselves available to qualified supported applicants.
- Resources and information for potential applicants to better understand the New gTLD Program, what it means to operate a gTLD, and how to participate in ICANN's multistakeholder community.
- [Access to Application Counselors (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2)]
- A [50-85%] reduction in New gTLD Program application and evaluation fees [which fees TBC] for qualified supported applicants.
- A [bid credit or multiplier–TBD pending research results] applied to supported applicants participating in an ICANN Auction of Last Resort[3] as a result of contention with other gTLD applicants.

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[2] ASP applicants that qualify for support will receive percentage-based reductions on the base gTLD application fee as well as applicable gTLD evaluation fees, as outlined in Section 4.1.

[3] The exact kind of auction support will be determined as part of the implementation of SubPro Final Report Topic 35. See pp. 173-182: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf

- [Reduced or waived base Registry Operator fees, should the supported applicant prevail in the gTLD program evaluation and proceed to contracting and delegation. (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2))]

2.2. ASP Evaluation Phases & Categories

To qualify for support, applicants must demonstrate that they meet criteria across the following categories:

Phase 1:

- **General Business Due Diligence:** This pre-screening includes a legal compliance check, background screening, and cybersquatting history check, confirming that the applicant meets the New gTLD Program: Next Round eligibility criteria noted in the New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook [Next Round AGB Section X.X.; for historical reference, please see Eligibility from 2012 AGB in Section 9. Additional Resources] for the next round and that all required documentation has been submitted. Applicants that do not pass the General Business Due Diligence pre-screening will not be considered for Phase 2 ASP evaluation. Applicants that pass General Business Due Diligence will proceed to Phase 2 evaluation.

Phase 2: All ASP applicants will be evaluated against the following evaluation categories (see Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart)

- **Public Responsibility Due Diligence:** Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law (see Public Responsibility Due Diligence).
- **Financial Need:** The applicant could not otherwise afford to apply to the New gTLD Program without financial hardship.
- **Financial Stability**: The applicant demonstrates a stable financial standing and the ability to pay the remaining base gTLD application fee without experiencing financial hardship.
- **Eligible Entities:** The entity applying for support meets at least one of the eligible entity criteria and indicators, as articulated in Section 5.5.

2.3. ASP vs. gTLD Program Evaluation

Qualifying for the ASP does not automatically result in an approved new gTLD application. All New gTLD Program applicants–supported or not–will be required to submit a completed New gTLD Program application, which requires demonstration of the technical, operational, and financial capabilities needed to operate a gTLD. Applicants that apply for, but do not qualify for, support are still welcome to submit a New gTLD Program application which would entail paying the full gTLD application fee and any applicable evaluation fees.

3. Applicant Support Program Timeline

Entities seeking support through the ASP will have an opportunity to submit an application [from Q4 2024 to Q4 2025]. ASP applications will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Applicants should expect to receive results of their evaluation within [12-16 weeks] of submitting a complete application. This estimate of the time frame for evaluation assumes a complete application is submitted and no additional information from the applicant is required to evaluate the application. Additional, unplanned interactions with the applicant will extend this timeframe estimate. Also, please note that evaluating applicant documentation in languages other than English may take longer.[4]

Once ASP applicants receive evaluation results, applicants that qualify for support will be required to submit a [$2500 USD] deposit on their gTLD application. The deposit needs to be submitted to ICANN within 90 days of receiving ASP evaluation results in order to confirm the applicant's ability to receive the gTLD application and evaluation fee reductions. Also see Section 7.4 Evaluation Results.

The ASP application submission period is [12 months]. The deadline for submitting ASP applications is [6 months] prior to the start of the New gTLD Program application submission period. Though, ICANN org retains the option to extend the ASP application submission period and will communicate the extension accordingly so that applicants and potential applicants are aware. The intent is for all ASP applicants seeking support to receive evaluation results before applying to the New gTLD Program. Though, depending on the volume of ASP applications received in the final weeks of the ASP application submission period, applicants may not know whether they have qualified for support in advance of the gTLD application submission period. See Table 1 and Figure 1 below.

> **Important Note**: ASP applicants are strongly encouraged to apply early for support:
>
> 1. to take advantage of available support and resources to assist with preparing a gTLD application. For example, New gTLD Program applicants need time to negotiate with Registry Service Providers (RSPs) in advance of submitting a gTLD application and may want to utilize pro bono (volunteer) services available. Access to additional non-financial support will be most beneficial if the supported applicant has adequate time to utilize available resources; and
> 2. to avoid a situation where the results of the applicant's ASP evaluation are still pending during the gTLD application submission period. This may cause the applicant to delay its gTLD application submission to wait for the results of the ASP evaluation, or to pay the full gTLD application fee if the ASP evaluation process experiences delays due to an overwhelming

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[4] For any documentation submitted in a language other than English, applicants will be required to provide the original documentation along with the English translations, if available. If applicants use a certified or equivalent translation service they will be asked to indicate the service used. For all documentation provided in a language other than English, the processing time will be extended based upon the volume of documents. This is typically two to four weeks longer, but may be longer depending upon the volume of content, the type of documentation provided, and whether translations provided for the non English documents.

number of applications submitted at the end of the ASP submission period. [ICANN org and the evaluators (SARP) will make every effort to complete ASP application evaluations in advance of the gTLD application submission period beginning so that ASP applicants receive ASP evaluation results in advance of their gTLD application submission. In the case that an ASP applicant waiting for ASP evaluation results submits a gTLD application and pays the base gTLD application fee, the ASP applicant may be eligible for a refund should the applicant qualify for support.]

Table 1. ASP Timeline and Key Dates.

Date	Description
[Q4 2024]	The ASP opens to receive applications. ● Applicants register, upload their application documentation, and submit the information necessary to be evaluated across the five evaluation categories. ● Applications that pass General Business Due Diligence are sent to the Support Applicant Review Panel of independent, third-party evaluators for review. ● Applicants receive the results of their evaluation [generally 12-16 weeks] after their application is confirmed to be complete and submitted. As noted in Section 8, applicants are not permitted to re-apply for support. ● Qualified applicants submit a [$2500 USD] deposit to ICANN within 90 days of receiving ASP evaluation results.
[Q4 2025]	The application submission period for ASP closes; no additional ASP applications will be accepted for this round.
[Q2 2026]	The New gTLD Program application submission period opens.

Figure 1. High-Level Flow of ASP and gTLD Program Timelines.
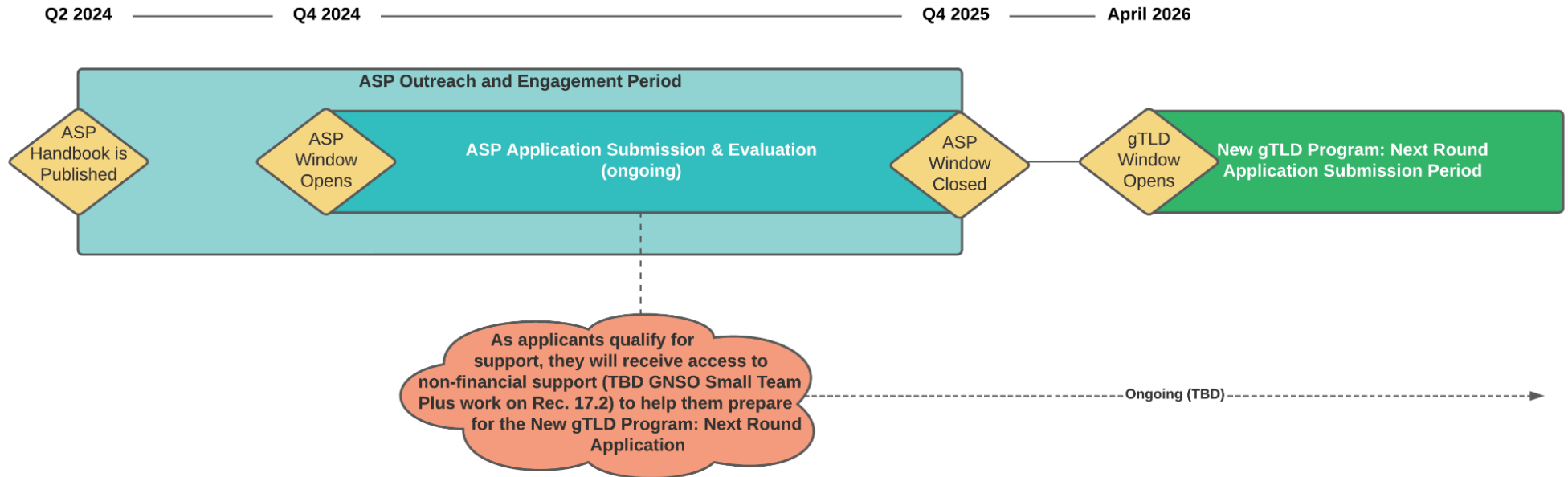
4. Reduction of New gTLD Program Application and Evaluation Fees

Qualified ASP applicants will be eligible to receive a [50-85%] reduction in New gTLD Program application and evaluation fees, as outlined in Table 2 below.

4.1. New gTLD Program Application and Evaluation Fees

Table 2. List of New gTLD Program Application and Evaluation Fees with Relevant ASP Fee Reductions for Qualified Applicants.

New gTLD Program Application and Evaluation Fee/Cost Description	Reduction for Qualified ASP Applicants
New gTLD Program Application base fee reduction	[at least 50%; up to 85%]
[Other applicable evaluation fees within the New gTLD Program]	[at least 50%; up to -85%]
Auction [bid credit/multiplier] [TBD - based upon further research]	[TBD]

[Please see Appendix 1. for information regarding the ASP Funding Plan including the expected number of supported applicants.]

5. Applicant Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria

The ASP is designed to provide financial and non-financial support to qualified candidates, as defined in the criteria and indicators below. ASP criteria are distinct from the criteria for approval of a New gTLD Program application–which are oriented toward determining applicants' capabilities to successfully operate a gTLD registry (See: [New gTLD Applicant Guidebook: Next Round]).

The ASP application requires applicants to submit documents and responses to questions in order to demonstrate that the applicant meets all program criteria and requirements. As noted above, **ASP applicants are advised not to submit information about their intended New gTLD Program application string when applying to the ASP.** This is to protect the business confidentiality of applicants' information in advance of the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period.

5.1. General Business Due Diligence

All Applicants		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Legal Compliance Check	Applicant must pass a legal compliance check.	The organization, country, regime, entity, and individuals are not listed on the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control's (OFAC) List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (the SDN List).
Completeness Check	Applicant must submit a complete application to the ASP system.	ICANN org conducts a review of each ASP application to determine if all required responses and documentation have been submitted before the application proceeds to background screening. If required documents are missing, ICANN org follows up with the applicant to inform them and allow them to submit required materials. The applicant cannot proceed to further evaluation without a complete application.

All Applicants		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
New gTLD Program Next Round Eligibility Criteria	Applicant must meet eligibility criteria as noted in the New gTLD Program Next Round Applicant Guidebook [LINK, once available]. [It is anticipated that the next round eligibility criteria will closely follow the 2012 Applicant Guidebook (Module 1, page 21).]	ICANN org conducts a review of a submitted ASP application to confirm that the applicant meets eligibility criteria before the application can proceed to background screening. New gTLD Program Next Round Eligibility Criteria: established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing may apply for a new gTLD. Applications from individuals or sole proprietorships will not be considered. Applications from, or on behalf of yet-to-be formed legal entities, or applications presupposing the future formation of a legal entity (for example, a pending joint venture) will not be considered.[5]
Background Screening	Applicant must pass a background screening.	ICANN org directs a third-party vendor to conduct a background screening to confirm that the applicant is an entity that ICANN org can do business with [Exact indicators pending Next Round AGB. It is anticipated that the next round eligibility criteria will closely follow the 2012 Applicant Guidebook (1.2.1).]
Cybersquatting History Check	Applicant must pass a cybersquatting history check.	ICANN org directs a third-party vendor to check whether the applicant or individual named in the application was engaged in cybersquatting as defined in the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), Anti-cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA), or has violated other equivalent legislation, or was engaged in reverse domain name hijacking under the UDRP, or bad faith or reckless disregard under the ACPA or equivalent legislation.

[5] See: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf (p. 1-21)

5.2. Public Responsibility Due Diligence

All Applicants	
Criterion	Indicator(s)
Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law	Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote an industry/string that is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law, as described below. 2012 AGB Exclusions [may be updated in Next Round AGB]: Entity is engaged in activities that may be considered contrary to generally accepted legal norms relating to morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law are: • Incitement to or promotion of violent lawless action; • Incitement to or promotion of discrimination based upon race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion or national origin, or other similar types of discrimination that violate generally accepted legal norms recognized under principles of international law; • Incitement to or promotion of child pornography or other sexual abuse of children; or • A determination that the entity produces or trades in activities that would be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law.[6]
Applicant is not affiliated with an existing gTLD Registry Operator and/or another gTLD applicant in the next round that would not meet the ASP criteria.	Exclusion of affiliation with an existing gTLD Registry Operator and/or another gTLD applicant in the next round that would not meet the ASP criteria. Definition of "affiliation" from the Registry Agreement: "For the purposes of this Agreement: (i) "Affiliate" means a person or entity that, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, or in combination with one or more other persons or entities, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the person or entity specified,

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[6] See: https://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf (pp. 3-21 - 3-22)

All Applicants	
Criterion	Indicator(s)
	and (ii) "control" (including the terms "controlled by" and "under common control with") means the possession, directly or indirectly, of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a person or entity, whether through the ownership of securities, as trustee or executor, by serving as an employee or a member of a board of directors or equivalent governing body, by contract, by credit arrangement or otherwise."[7]

5.3. Financial Need

All Applicants		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Paying the full base gTLD application fee presents a financial hardship for the entity applying.	Cost of the subsidized base gTLD application fee ([X%] of the [$X] USD fee) is greater than 20 percent of the organization's annual revenue. *OR* The applicant demonstrates – through submission of a budget with funding designations, financial statement, and narrative statement – that the full base gTLD application fee presents a financial hardship.	Questions: • How would funding support from ICANN enable your organization to apply for a gTLD? • Why would the full base gTLD application fee present a financial hardship? The answers should correspond with your financial documentation and description of funding and revenue sources. Documents: • Two years of most recent audited financial statements, including profit and loss, if available. If not available or more than 12 months old, most recent financial statements even if unaudited.

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[7] See: https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement

5.4. Financial Stability

All Applicants		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Ability to pay remaining discounted New gTLD Program base application fee without financial hardship.	Submit narrative statement. Narrative should include plans for acquiring the remaining amount of funding necessary to apply for a gTLD within 90 days of qualifying for ASP support.[8] NOTE: ASP applicants that withdraw are eligible to receive a refund.	Please describe how your organization plans to cover the remaining base gTLD application fee without experiencing financial hardship, as evidenced by a deposit. Determined by submitting: ● Audited financial statements; and ● Current financial statements. ● If the applicant cannot demonstrate (via its submitted audited and current financial statements) its ability to pay the remaining gTLD application evaluation fees without causing financial hardship, the applicant must submit a funding plan for acquiring resources within the indicated timeframe to pay the remaining gTLD application evaluation fees.

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[8] Please see Section 7.4 for information about requirements to submit a deposit.
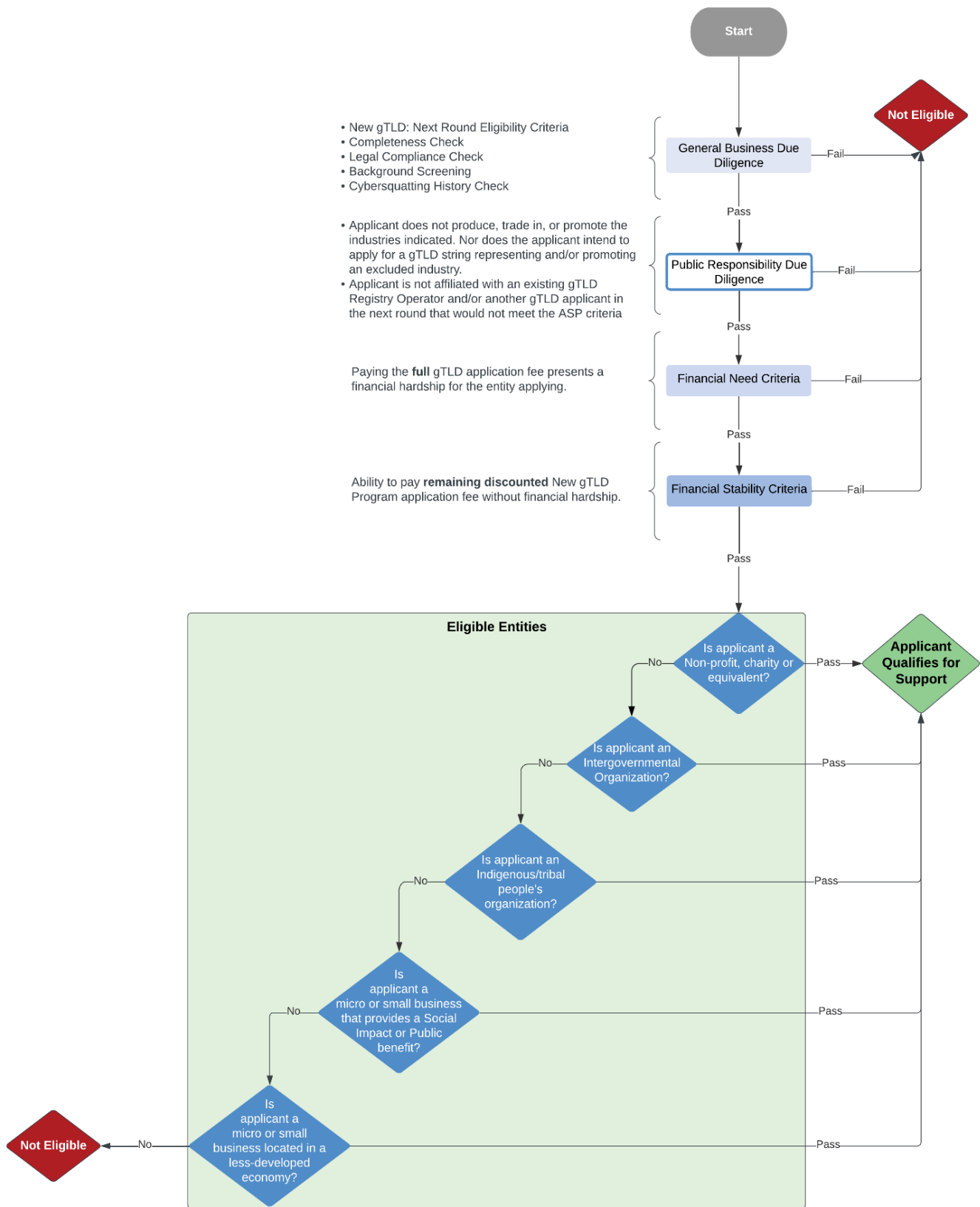
5.5. Eligible Entities

Note that the categories for eligible entities identified below are not mutually exclusive. Should the ASP applicant fit into multiple eligible categories, the applicant is encouraged to submit required documentation for all applicable eligibility categories, so they may be evaluated accordingly. Note however, ASP applicants are only required to meet the eligibility criteria and indicators for one of the eligible entity categories listed to qualify under this criteria category (Eligible Entities). Submitting documentation for multiple entity types does not negatively impact the applicant's eligibility (i.e., if an applicant submits documentation for two entity categories and qualifies for one but does not qualify for another, the applicant still passes the "Eligible Entity" evaluation category). See additional examples below.

> *Applicant Example 1*: if the applicant is a nonprofit/charitable organization and an Indigenous/Tribal Peoples organization, it may submit documentation to demonstrate eligibility for either entity or for both entities. The applicant only needs to meet the criteria and indicators for one entity type to pass the "Eligible Entity" evaluation category.
>
> *Applicant Example 2:* if the applicant is a small business social enterprise and is principally located in a developing economy, it may submit documentation to demonstrate eligibility for either entity or for both entities. The applicant only needs to meet the criteria and indicators for one entity type to pass the "Eligible Entity" evaluation category.

Please see Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart.

Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart.

*Please note: Evaluations and processes shown are not necessarily sequential

5.5.1.   Nonprofits, charities, or equivalent:
Some governments endorse charities/nonprofits. Therefore, charitable status documentation may be submitted to demonstrate charitable/nonprofit status. In the absence of existing documentation demonstrating nonprofit/charitable status, alternative documentation may be required to assess equivalency.

Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
1. Registered, recognized nonprofit, nongovernmental, and/or charitable organization with relevant regulatory authority.	Applicant submits a formal document or certificate from relevant regulatory authorities acknowledging its charitable status. If the applicant does not have a formal document or certificate as described in the above indicator, additional. documentation providing relevant governing and financial documentation in criteria 2.i through 2.vi may be requested by ICANN org.	ICANN will accept a formal document or certificate acknowledging the applicant's charitable status or a current, valid Equivalency Determination (ED) certificate completed by a qualified tax practitioner. A qualified tax practitioner may be an attorney, accountant, or other licensed professional with credentials certifying their expertise in making this type of determination. In the absence of these documents, please see criteria 2.i through 2.vi.
2.i The organization must certify that it is organized for charitable purposes, and/or that local law requires it to operate for charitable purposes.	• The organization must certify that it is organized for charitable purposes, and/or that local law requires it to operate for charitable purposes (via Localized Eligibility Definitions). • Governing documents must describe purposes and powers. • Governing documents must prohibit the organization from engaging in non charitable activities, except as an insubstantial part of its activities.	Governing documents and self-declared information provided by the organization.
2.ii The organization must operate primarily for charitable purposes.	• The organization must certify that it is primarily engaged in activities that are charitable, defined as at least 85% of its overall operational resources – including direct program expenditures but also time and overhead – are dedicated to accomplishing one or more charitable objectives. • The organization's governing	• Governing documents and self-declared information provided by the organization. • Ancillary documents such as annual reports, program brochures, or websites may also be reviewed.

5.5.1.   Nonprofits, charities, or equivalent:

Some governments endorse charities/nonprofits. Therefore, charitable status documentation may be submitted to demonstrate charitable/nonprofit status. In the absence of existing documentation demonstrating nonprofit/charitable status, alternative documentation may be required to assess equivalency.

Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
	documents (and actual activities) must support the same.	
2.iii The organization must show evidence that its assets will be used for charitable purposes in perpetuity.	See required documentation.	• The organization must certify that on dissolution, its assets will be transferred for charitable purposes, **AND** • The organization's governing documents or local law must support this.
2.iv Political Engagement	• The organization's activities cannot be aimed at political engagement activities or intervening in political campaigns for public office. Such activities include: supporting political campaigns, raising funds for political candidates, making campaign contributions, publicly supporting or opposing political candidates, posting partisan messaging online, comparing the organization's stance on an issue to a political candidate's views. Note: This does not include **general advocacy** activities such as sharing best practices, success stories, model legislation examples, providing objective analysis and research, coalition building, hosting events, signing petitions, recruiting volunteers, among other activities.	• The organization must certify that it does not engage in political activities or political campaigns for public office, **AND** • The organization's governing documents (and actual activities) must support the same. • Ancillary documents such as annual reports, program brochures, or websites may also be reviewed.
2.v Private benefit	• The organization's activities cannot benefit private persons or non charitable	• The organization must certify that its net assets do not benefit any private individuals or

5.5.1. Nonprofits, charities, or equivalent:
Some governments endorse charities/nonprofits. Therefore, charitable status documentation may be submitted to demonstrate charitable/nonprofit status. In the absence of existing documentation demonstrating nonprofit/charitable status, alternative documentation may be required to assess equivalency.

Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
	organizations.[9] • Not an affiliate of a for-profit entity.	insiders, **AND** • The organization's governing documents (and actual activities) or local law must support the same.

5.5.2. Intergovernmental organizations

Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Entity applying is an Intergovernmental Organization	• Intergovernmental Organization (IGOs) defined as: (i) an 'Intergovernmental organization' having received a standing invitation, which remains in effect, to participate as an observer in the sessions and the work of the United Nations General Assembly; or (ii) a Specialized Agency or distinct entity, organ or program of the United Nations.[10],[11]	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is an Intergovernmental Organization, per the indicators provided.

5.5.3. Indigenous/tribal people's organizations

Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Entity is an indigenous/tribal peoples' organization.	• Documentation demonstrating indigenous/tribal organization status (e.g., official registration as an indigenous	Please submit required documentation per the indicators provided.

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[9] For the avoidance of doubt this indicator is not intended to refer to the provision of support to third parties, for example grants, goods or services, made in the ordinary course of the performance of the applicant's charitable or public benefit mission.

[10] A visual depiction of the United Nations system is available here, including its Specialized Agencies and various programs: https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/un_system_chart.pdf.

[11] See: Final Report of the Expedited Policy Development Process on Specific Curative Rights Protections for International Governmental Organizations (IGOs): https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/generic-names-supporting-organization-council-gnso-council/epdp-specific-crp-igo-final-report-02-04-2022-en.pdf

5.5.3. Indigenous/tribal people's organizations		
Criterion	**Indicator(s)**	**Question / Document**
	organization, and/or recognition by national or international indigenous rights organizations[12] **OR** ● via a letter of support from the indigenous/tribal community	

5.5.4. Social Impact or Public benefit micro or small sized business		
Criterion	**Indicator(s)**	**Question / Document**
1. Entity is a social enterprise, social impact[13] or public interest benefit[14] enterprise	As exemplified in the below indicators.	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.
Registered and recognized by a relevant regulatory authority in the company's principal place of business as a social enterprise or public benefit company **OR** certified as a Benefit Corporation. **OR** meeting below criteria 2.1 through 2.iii	● Incorporated/registered as a benefit or social enterprise in the entity's principal place of business **OR** ● Certified [Benefit Corporation.](#)	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.
2.i Commitment, in legal founding documents to primary social or benefit	● Stated commitment, in legal founding documents such as	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact

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[12] For Indigenous/Tribal Peoples' organizations that do not have official recognition from a relevant authority, it may be possible to apply under a different "Eligible Entity" type. For example, a nonprofit organization or a micro or small enterprise that either provides social impact/public benefit or is principally based in a less-developed economy.

[13] A business whose primary purpose is the common good as demonstrated through its legal founding documents and whose principal business activity is directly related to accomplishing that stated social or environmental purpose. [LA County Consumer & Business Affairs; CauseLabs;](#) [Social Enterprise UK](#)

[14] A public benefit corporation is a corporation created to generate social and public good, and to operate in a responsible and sustainable manner. [Cornell Law.](#) [MA Benefit Corporation](#)

5.5.4. Social Impact or Public benefit micro or small sized business		
Criterion	**Indicator(s)**	**Question / Document**
purpose	• Articles of Incorporation, Articles, Notice of Articles, or equivalent, to primary social impact or public benefit purpose. • Annual assessment reports publicly posted, listing social or public benefits provided in the previous year.	or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.
2.ii Operations directed at pursuit of stated social or benefit goal/purpose	• Selection of a third-party standard the public/social benefit the enterprise plans to measure itself against and a public statement to that effect. • Publicly stated rationale for selecting the chosen third-party standard. • Annual assessment report against the selected third-party standard (self-assessment or third-party assessment).	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.
2.iii Financial surpluses are primarily reinvested in the stated benefit purpose, rather than being primarily driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders and owners.	• Documentation including annual reports, impact assessments, or case studies that indicate how financial surpluses are being used to fulfill the stated social or public benefit objectives. • Social or public benefit impact measurement and reporting that assess and quantify the social or public benefit outcomes achieved with the financial surpluses. • Ratio of surplus allocation indicates that	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.

5.5.4.	Social Impact or Public benefit micro or small sized business	
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
	a majority (> greater than 60 percent of revenue or profits) went to programmatic activities aimed at achieving the entity's stated social or public benefit objectives.	
3.i Entity is a micro or small sized business	**Entity must meet two out of three indicators (employees, assets, and sales)[15]**	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a micro or small enterprise, per the indicators provided.
3.ii Micro, Small	- Fewer than 50 employees - Total Assets are less than 5 million USD - Annual Sales are less than 5 million USD	

5.5.5.	Micro or small sized business from a less-developed economy	
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Entity is a micro, or small sized business	**Entity must meet two out of three indicators (employees, assets, and sales)**	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a micro or small enterprise, per the indicators provided.
Micro, Small	- Fewer than 50 employees - Total Assets is less than 5 million USD - Annual Sales is less than 5 million USD	

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[15] There is no universal definition for micro or small business. Definitions vary from country to country. The indicators provided here are intended to reflect the most common thresholds from other global and regional funding institutions.

5.5.5. Micro or small sized business from a less-developed economy		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Entity's principal place of business[16] is from a country/territory/region that has a less-developed economy	a. Principal place of business must be in one of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies[17] ***OR*** b. Principal place of business is: (i) located within indigenous/tribal lands; **or** (ii) an indigenous/tribal owned business as indicated via documentation demonstrating indigenous/tribal organization status **OR** a letter of support from the indigenous/tribal community. ***OR*** c. If the applicant does not meet indicators a) or b) it can submit a narrative statement indicating that the principal place of business is located in a less-developed economic area demonstrated by globally recognized, verifiable, established proxy indicators.[18]	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity's principal place of business meets indicators a, b or c, and aligns with the definition for "principal place of business."

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[16] Principal place of business is defined as "the place where 'a corporation's officers direct, control, and coordinate the corporation's activities.'" The principal place of business cannot be a Post Office Box. This will be determined as the location in which the largest volume of the corporation's operations is located and a supermajority (80%+) of the corporation's officers are located. "Officers" refers to the high-level management officials of a corporation or business, for example, a CEO, vice president, secretary, chief financial officer. Partners would be listed in the context of a partnership or other such form of legal entity.

[17] As defined by U.N. Country Classifications (2023).

[18] The applicant should provide localized data that demonstrates disadvantage–keeping in mind the primary purposes of new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS. The importance of increasing global geographical distribution was also underscored in the ICANN's Government Advisory Committee June 2023 Communique. Examples include localized data related to dimensions of poverty, like health (e.g., under-5 mortality), education (e.g., average years of schooling), and living standard (e.g., household income) or low levels of internet penetration (e.g., a rural area as defined by the OECD).

| 5.5.5. Micro or small sized business from a less-developed economy		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
	51 percent or more of the company is owned by residents from one or more of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies, as defined by UN Country Classifications (2022) as indicated by…[submitting identification/showing identification on a short video interview]	Please submit required documentation per the indicators provided.

5.6. Restrictions

- ASP applicants that qualify for support will receive a [50-85]% reduction on gTLD application and evaluation fees relating to *one gTLD application only*. [Supported applicant entities that apply to the New gTLD Program will be restricted to one gTLD application submission.] [Those applicants applying for a string may at the same time apply for up to four allocatable TLD variants (determined by using the RZ-LGR tool), pending Board consideration of the IDN ePDP Phase 1 Final Report[19]].
    - For instance, .example in simplified Chinese: [.样例] and in traditional Chinese [.樣例]
- ASP applicants are not permitted to re-apply or re-submit an application to the ASP once the results of the ASP evaluation are complete.

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[19] [ADD footnote to explain this and how it will work within ASP.]

6. Applicant Support Program Application Process

The figure below provides a high-level overview of the ASP phases.

Figure 3. Sequencing of Applicant Support Program Preparation, Evaluation, and Results
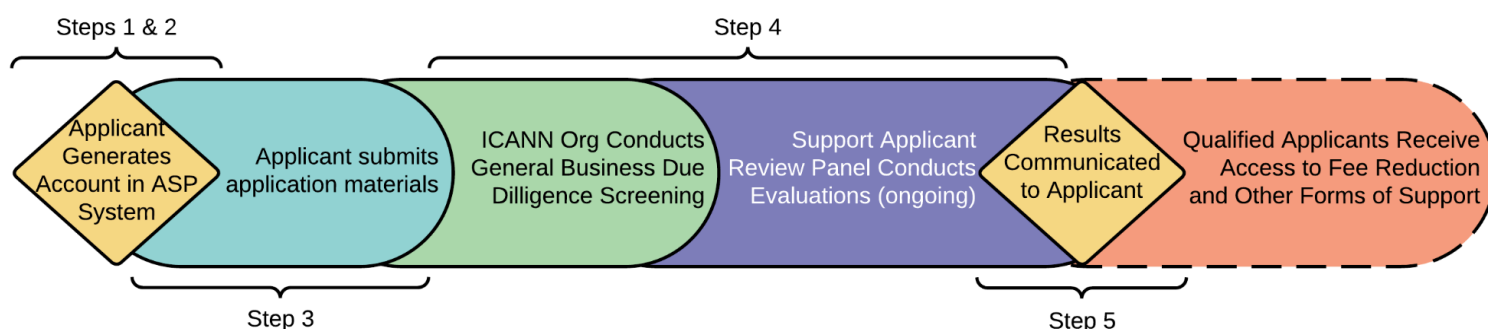
The outline below provides an overview of the stepwise process for the ASP application using the ASP application system. [Note re: business confidentiality of ASP system under development].

1. Register.
    1. Go to [URL] to complete the registration for the ASP.
    2. Receive registration confirmation.

2. Access application materials.
    1. Either log in to the Applicant Support Program system to access materials OR
    2. If an applicant wishes to work on their application offline, they may download the following forms from the ASP section of the website [URL]:
        a. Instructions packet for the ASP application
        b. ASP application template

3. Submit Application.
    a. Log in to the Applicant Support Program System to:
        i. Fill out application questions in the Applicant Support Program System[20].
        ii. Upload required and relevant supporting documentation.
        iii. Review and confirm that the application is complete and all supporting documents have been uploaded.
    b. Check email for confirmation of your ASP application submission.
        i. Email globalsupport@icann.org if you experience challenges or do not receive an email confirmation of your submission.
    Note: ASP applicants are advised **not** to submit information about their intended New gTLD Program application string when applying to the ASP. This is to protect the

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[20] Please note only applications submitted through the Applicant Support Program System will be considered for evaluation.

business confidentiality of applicants' information in advance of the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period.

4. Evaluation Process
   a. ICANN org reviews submitted application for a completeness check.
   b. ICANN org may contact you if application materials are incomplete, unclear, or inaccessible.
   c. ICANN org manages the general business due diligence evaluation. Background and cybersquatting screenings will be conducted by a third-party vendor, managed by ICANN org; the applicant and its references may be contacted as a part of this step.
   d. Applications that pass pre-screening are shared with the third-party vendor to conduct subsequent evaluations. ICANN org will relay clarifying questions raised by the SARP evaluators to the ASP applicant.
   e. The evaluation process is designed to be completed generally within [12–16] weeks.

5. Evaluation Results
   a. ASP applicants will be notified via email of application status changes and when evaluation results are ready. ASP applicants are directed to log into the Applicant Support Program System to review evaluation results.
   b. If qualified, the applicant will receive information regarding the portfolio of support available (see Section 7.5).
   c. If the applicant does not qualify for support, they may:
      i. [submit a challenge request–TBD depending outcome of that topic]
      ii. Proceed in submitting a standard New gTLD Program application and pay the application and evaluation fees in full.
   d. All applicants wishing to submit a gTLD application may refer to the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook for detailed information about the New gTLD Program application process, requirements, and submission.

6.1. Changes to ASP Applications

Applicants may change or update their applications throughout the processing and evaluation period. This may include submitting missing documentation, or adding results of checks performed as part of General Business Due Diligence. In general, all applicants will be required to update ICANN org in a [timely manner-DEFINE] of any material changes to information previously submitted on their application.

[After an applicant's ASP evaluation begins, changes to the application will need to be submitted via an application change request. [Material changes- to be defined; ICANN org to add description for what can or cannot be changed once an application is submitted]] to an ASP application may need to be re-evaluated by ICANN org and the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP). As noted in Section 5.6, ASP applicants are not permitted to re-apply or re-submit an application to the ASP once the results of the ASP evaluation are complete.

[ICANN org to add withdrawals language here once available]

7. ASP Application Evaluation

The ASP application evaluation will occur in two phases:

1. ICANN org-managed General Business Due Diligence Screening evaluation.
2. Independent third-party vendor-managed evaluation.

[ICANN org will utilize the ASP criteria and indicators to conduct the General Business Due Diligence Screening evaluation. After an ASP applicant has passed the General Business Due Diligence Screening, the application will be shared, confidentially through the ASP Application System, with the independent third-party vendor solely for the purpose of conducting subsequent evaluations.].

As described in the proceeding section, the third-party vendor is responsible for convening SARPs, composed of experts necessary to assess the ASP criteria categories.

7.1. Support Applicant Review Panels

A third-party vendor to ICANN will administer and manage the ASP evaluations after applicants pass ICANN's General Business Due Diligence Screening evaluation. The third-party vendor will establish SARPs composed of relevant experts to conduct evaluations against the remaining criteria categories: public responsibility due diligence, financial need, financial stability, and eligible entities. The third-party vendor will be required to comply with ICANN's Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Guidelines for the New gTLD Program: Next Round [Link to current draft]

The vendor will ensure that the assembled reviewers have the knowledge and experience required to provide high-quality, well-informed evaluations, and do not have a conflict of interest that would disqualify them from providing this service without bias. The vendor should also have the capability to formulate SARPs that are diverse in terms of geography, language, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Recognizing that the ASP criteria categories are distinct and may require different evaluative capabilities, the third-party vendor may establish several SARPs to fully assess the applicant. Organizing the evaluation in this way is consistent with research findings on other globally recognized programs[21].

The SARP will conduct evaluations on the ASP applications it receives from ICANN org and submit application evaluation results to ICANN org on an ongoing basis. Evaluations will be conducted on a pass/fail basis against each required criterion and its related indicators (see Section 5).

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[21] For more information see Section: Review Panels (pg. 40) of the Survey of Globally Recognized Procedures for Financial Assistance Programs.

7.2. Assessment

To qualify for support, applicants must pass all criteria, based upon the identified criterion indicators and required documentation. Applications will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis according to each required criterion and related indicator(s). Please see Figure 2. for a high-level ASP evaluation flowchart.

Application and evaluation of the criteria against applicants' documentation is at the sole discretion of the SARP. The SARP also may [conduct independent research[22] that may include reviewing the applicant's website, principal place of business, and online documentation in relation to the eligibility criteria and indicators, video conferencing interviews, site visits–*still TBD*], and ask clarifying questions of applicants, if necessary, to verify an applicants' documentation and application.

7.3. Clarifying Questions

As noted, the SARP, via ICANN org, may ask clarifying questions of ASP applicants. Applicants will have an opportunity to provide clarification and answers to questions from panelists should they arise; [any changes to the application will need to be submitted via an application change request.] To ensure that applications are processed in a timely manner, all applicants will be encouraged to respond to clarifying questions within [six] weeks.

7.4. Evaluation Results

ASP applications will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Applicants will receive the results of their evaluation generally within [12-16 weeks] of submitting a complete application. In receiving evaluation results, applicants will be notified that they either:

1. Qualify for support based upon meeting the evaluation criteria.
   - results will also indicate the fee reduction available [50-85%].
   - applicants will receive instructions on how to submit a [$2,500 USD] deposit to ICANN, to be paid within 90 days of receiving ASP evaluation results
   - once the deposit is submitted within the required timeframe, applicants will receive instructions on how to apply their discount when they submit a gTLD application.
2. Do not qualify for support and are provided with an explanation of areas where they did not meet required criteria.
   - Applicants that do not qualify for support may:
     - [submit a request for challenge and request their application to be re-assessed by the SARP–TBD] ; or
     - proceed to the standard New gTLD Program application and pay the full application and evaluation fees.[23]

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[22] [Definition pending]

[23] Note: This is a significant change from the 2012 round, wherein applicants that applied for support and did not qualify were not allowed to proceed with a standard application for the New gTLD Program. The 2012 Financial Assistance Handbook states (see Section: Evaluation Fees, p. 5): "Candidates that are "Disqualified," i.e., do not meet the threshold criteria described below, will be excluded from the New gTLD Program. If the application is disqualified, USD 42,000 of the evaluation fee will be refunded unless the SARP reasonably believes there was willful gaming."

7.5. Support Allocation for Qualified ASP Applicants

ICANN org will notify applicants of their ASP support eligibility following application submission, General Business Due Diligence Screening, and evaluation by the SARP. Applicants that qualify for support following the SARP evaluation will receive a welcome package outlining the portfolio of financial and non-financial support available. The welcome package will include information about:

- [An ASP training program (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2)]
- Access to pro bono (volunteer) service providers that have agreed to volunteer their services to supported applicants. Pro bono service providers are independent from the ICANN organization. Pro bono services are not endorsed or contracted by ICANN org, though ICANN org may play a facilitative role in making qualified supported applicants aware of the services available, should applicants seek to utilize them. ICANN org is working to identify service providers and will provide a list of those vendors that have made themselves available to qualified supported applicants.
- Resources and information for potential applicants to better understand the New gTLD Program, what it means to operate a gTLD, and how to participate in ICANN's multistakeholder community.
- [Access to Application Counselors (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2)]
- A [50-85%] reduction in New gTLD Program application and evaluation fees for qualified supported applicants.
- A [bid credit or multiplier–TBD pending research results] applied to supported applicants participating in an ICANN Auction of Last Resort[24] as a result of contention with other gTLD applicants.
- [Reduced or waived base Registry Operator fees, should the supported applicant prevail in the gTLD program evaluation and proceed to contracting and delegation. (Pending Board consideration of the community's supplemental policy recommendation (17.2))]

Minimum and Maximum Fee Reductions

The level of ICANN fee reduction expressed in a percentage of the application and evaluation fees. [[ICANN org's current interpretation of the SubPro Final Report outputs and the GNSO Guidance Process (GGP) for ASP recommendations The latter still needs Board consideration.] Qualified applicants will be notified of the percentage amount of the minimum level of fee reduction they will receive as a part of their support. All ASP recipients will receive the same percentage minimum fee reduction. See Table 2. List of New gTLD Program Application Evaluation Fees & Relevant ASP Fee Reductions for Qualified Applicants.

In the event that the SARP evaluation for all ASP applicants has been completed and ASP support funds remain available, qualified supported applicants may receive – in addition to the

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[24] The exact kind of auction support will be determined as part of the implementation of SubPro Final Report Topic 35. See pp. 173-182: https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/file/field-file-attach/final-report-newgtld-subsequent-procedures-pdp-02feb21-en.pdf

minimum fee reduction already communicated – an additional percentage fee reduction up to [85%]. Any additional fee reduction percentage will be distributed equally across all qualifying applicants.

In the event that ICANN org's budget for minimum fee reduction is exhausted during the ASP application submission period, ICANN org may pause accepting new ASP applications and communicate that available funds have been exhausted. Complete applications submitted before the pause on new applications will proceed through evaluation and support will be allocated [in the following order/manner–TBD].]

Should qualified supported applicants decide they no longer plan to submit an application for a new gTLD, the supported applicant is required to communicate this to ICANN org prior to the gTLD application submission period. This may allow additional applications for support to be received and evaluated for eligibility.

[Challenge mechanism for ASP TBD]

8. Terms and Conditions [TBD AGB T&Cs]

9.   Additional Information

9.1.   Application comment period process - <mark>TBC</mark>

9.2.   Challenge Process – <mark>TBD pending topic</mark>

9.3.   ASP Program Evaluation and Reporting

To provide for continual improvement of the program, applicants that receive support will be required to participate in future research relating to the impacts of the ASP and effects of fee reductions.

9.4.   Additional Resources *[links to be added as available]*

1. New gTLD Program Next Round Applicant Guidebook:
   a. Glossary of commonly used terms in the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook
2. Applicant Support Program:
   a. Events:
   b. Trainings:
   c. Resources:
3. New gTLD Application System:
4. New gTLD Program website
5. 2012 New gTLD Program Applicant Guidebook (AGB) Eligibility Section 1.2.1
   a. **1.2.1 Eligibility**: Established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing may apply for a new gTLD. Applications from individuals or sole proprietorships will not be considered. Applications from or on behalf of yet-to-be formed legal entities, or applications presupposing the future formation of a legal entity (for example, a pending Joint Venture) will not be considered. ICANN has designed the New gTLD Program with multiple stakeholder protection mechanisms. Background screening, features of the gTLD Registry Agreement, data and financial escrow mechanisms are all intended to provide registrant and user protections. The application form requires applicants to provide information on the legal establishment of the applying entity, as well as the identification of directors, officers, partners, and major shareholders of that entity. The names and positions of individuals included in the application will be published as part of the application; other information collected about the individuals will not be published. Background screening at both the entity level and the individual level will be conducted for all applications to confirm eligibility. This inquiry is conducted on the basis of the information provided in questions 1-11 of the application form. ICANN may take into account information received from any source if it is relevant to the criteria in this section. If requested by ICANN, all applicants will be required to obtain and deliver to ICANN and ICANN's background screening vendor any consents or agreements of the entities and/or individuals named in questions 1-11 of the application form necessary to conduct

background screening activities.

6. ICANN will perform background screening in only two areas: (1) General business diligence and criminal history; and (2) History of cybersquatting behavior. The criteria used for criminal history are aligned with the "crimes of trust" standard sometimes used in the banking and finance industry. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, applications from any entity with or including any individual with convictions or decisions of the types listed in (a) – (m) below will be automatically disqualified from the program.

   a. within the past ten years, has been convicted of any crime related to financial or corporate governance activities, or has been judged by a court to have committed fraud or breach of fiduciary duty, or has been the subject of a judicial determination that ICANN deems as the substantive equivalent of any of these;

   b. within the past ten years, has been disciplined by any government or industry regulatory body for conduct involving dishonesty or misuse of the funds of others;

   c. within the past ten years has been convicted of any willful tax-related fraud or willful evasion of tax liabilities;

   d. within the past ten years has been convicted of perjury, forswearing, failing to cooperate with a law enforcement investigation, or making false statements to a law enforcement agency or representative;

   e. has ever been convicted of any crime involving the use of computers, telephony systems, telecommunications or the Internet to facilitate the commission of crimes;

   f. has ever been convicted of any crime involving the use of a weapon, force, or the threat of force;

   g. has ever been convicted of any violent or sexual offense victimizing children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities;

   h. has ever been convicted of the illegal sale, manufacture, or distribution of pharmaceutical drugs, or been convicted or successfully extradited for any offense described in Article 3 of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988[25];

   i. has ever been convicted or successfully extradited for any offense described in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (all Protocols)[26],[27];

   j. has been convicted, within the respective timeframes, of aiding, abetting, facilitating, enabling, conspiring to commit, or failing to report any of the listed crimes above (i.e., within the past 10 years for crimes listed in (a) - (d) above, or ever for the crimes listed in (e) – (i) above);

   k. has entered a guilty plea as part of a plea agreement or has a court case in any jurisdiction with a disposition of Adjudicated Guilty or Adjudication Withheld (or regional equivalents), within the respective timeframes listed above for any of the listed crimes (i.e., within the past 10 years for crimes listed in (a) – (d) above, or ever for the crimes listed in (e) – (i) above);

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[25] http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/illicit-trafficking.html
[26] http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html
[27] It is recognized that not all countries have signed on to the UN conventions referenced above. These conventions are being used solely for identification of a list of crimes for which background screening will be performed. It is not necessarily required that an applicant would have been convicted pursuant to the UN convention but merely convicted of a crime listed under these conventions, to trigger these criteria.

l. is the subject of a disqualification imposed by ICANN and in effect at the time the application is considered;

m. has been involved in a pattern of adverse, final decisions indicating that the applicant or individual named in the application was engaged in cybersquatting as defined in the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP), the AntiCybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA), or other equivalent legislation, or was engaged in reverse domain name hijacking under the UDRP or bad faith or reckless disregard under the ACPA or other equivalent legislation. Three or more such decisions with one occurring in the last four years will generally be considered to constitute a pattern.

n. fails to provide ICANN with the identifying information necessary to confirm identity at the time of application or to resolve questions of identity during the background screening process;

o. fails to provide a good faith effort to disclose all relevant information relating to items (a) – (m). Background screening is in place to protect the public interest in the allocation of critical Internet resources, and ICANN reserves the right to deny an otherwise qualified application based on any information identified during the background screening process. For example, a final and legally binding decision obtained by a national law enforcement or consumer protection authority finding that the applicant was engaged in fraudulent and deceptive commercial practices as defined in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Protecting Consumers from Fraudulent and Deceptive Commercial Practices Across Borders6 may cause an application to be rejected. ICANN may also contact the applicant with additional questions based on information obtained in the background screening process. All applicants are required to provide complete and detailed explanations regarding any of the above events as part of the application. Background screening information will not be made publicly available by ICANN.

[Appendix 1: ASP Funding Plan]