

Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team ASP Sub-Track

Meeting #4

Applicant Support Program

6 December 2023, 14:00-15:30 UTC



Objectives & Agenda

1. Present a summary of the ASP inputs that inform basis of the program:
 - a. SubPro Final report
 - b. GGP outputs
 - c. GAC Advice & Issues of Importance
2. Share approach from research on other globally recognized programs and how this is informing approach to the ASP
3. Based upon inputs, confirm ICANN org's understanding of the basic premise of/reason for the ASP
4. Present and discuss proposed approach to ASP criteria

Inputs Informing Basis of ASP

Agenda Item 1

Inputs informing basic premise/reason for the ASP

SubPro Final Report

- **Affirmation 1.3:** The Working Group affirms that the primary purposes of new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS.
- **Rec 17.1:** “...The Working Group believes that the high-level goals and eligibility requirements for the Applicant Support Program remain appropriate...”
 - [From 2012 ASP website:](#) *ICANN seeks to **increase global diversity and representation** across regions within the new gTLD Program. The new gTLD Program has the potential to increase competition and choice in the domain name market, and it is important to ICANN community members to ensure that efforts are made to **minimize any competitive disadvantage for those in developing economies**. The Applicant Support Program is an initiative developed in addition to the New gTLD Program and it seeks to serve the global public interest by **ensuring worldwide accessibility to, and competition within, the new gTLD Program**. [emphasis added]*
 - *The Internet is a global resource, and the diversity, competition and innovation made possible by the new gTLD Program should **provide an inclusive opportunity for all to participate**. [emphasis added]*

Inputs informing basic premise/reason for the ASP

GNSO Guidance Process Draft Report

- Overarching interpretation of GGP outputs: provide fair and meaningful support to as many qualified applicants as possible, without prioritizing the worthiness of some applicants over others.

GAC Advice

- **ICANN77 Communique rationale:** “The GAC reaffirms the importance of increasing the number and geographical distribution of applications from underrepresented or underserved regions in future rounds of New gTLDs through the Applicant Support Program.”

Approach from research on other globally recognized programs

Agenda Item 2

Why Conduct Research?

The SubPro Final Report on Applicant Support includes **Implementation Guidance 17.7** that “...supports Recommendation 6.1.b in the Program Implementation Review Report, which states:

- “Consider **researching globally recognized procedures that could be adapted for the implementation of the Applicant Support Program.**”

Considering ASP is one of the first areas of policy implementation work, ICANN org initiated this research so that findings would be ready and available to consider during implementation.

Developing Guiding Research Questions

ICANN org conducted preliminary research to inform guiding research questions.

In doing so, it examined:

- Existing ICANN documents for themes (e.g., Program Implementation Review Report and SubPro Final Report).
- Best practices and academic literature to explore common areas where new entrants face potential barriers in application processes.

Guiding Research Questions

1. How does a Provider of Financial Support widen and deepen its applicant pool? That is, **how can it increase the number of qualified, diverse applicants** to its financial assistance program?
2. **What factors** do other Providers of Financial Support consider in **assessing an applicant's eligibility** for a financial assistance program, paying particular attention to the high-level criteria of public interest, financial need, and financial capability?*
3. What methods do other Providers of Financial Support employ to **equitably and objectively assess applications** from applicants of diverse backgrounds?
4. **What strategies** do Providers of Financial Support use to support applicant success **beyond the application process**?

*Public interest, financial need, and financial capability were the criteria used in the 2012 round (see [2012 Financial Assistance Handbook](#)). The rationale for Recommendation 17.1 states that “The Working Group believes that the high-level Applicant Support Program eligibility requirements from 2012 remain appropriate, namely that applicants must demonstrate financial need, provide a public interest benefit, and possess the necessary management and financial capabilities” (see [New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Final Report](#)).

Considered for this paper:

- Procedures of other financial assistance programs.
- Procedures of similar grant, loan, international development projects, and social investment programs aimed at promoting diversity.
- Best practice guidance materials.
- Peer-reviewed research.

The research findings, presentation, and report were presented during [ICANN78 Prep Week](#).

ICANN org understanding of basic premise for the ASP

Agenda Item 3

Based upon inputs, what is the purpose of the ASP?

Drawing from and integrating the previous the inputs, the purpose of the ASP might be summarized as:

To enhance the diversity, competition, and utility of the DNS (Affirmation 1.3)...by providing fair, meaningful financial and non-financial support with the aim of increasing the number and diversity of gTLD applicants—that may otherwise face barriers in applying to the gTLD Program.

Present and discuss proposed approach to ASP criteria

Agenda Item 4

Potential Barriers & Possible Solutions

Potential Barrier	Possible Solution (based upon research)
gTLD application fees, application consultant fees, applicant staff time	Provide meaningful, significant gTLD application fee reductions and access to free professional services to assist
Inaccessible application process (too complex hard to understand criteria)	Streamline the application process, system, criteria, and required documentation
Difficulty in defining and consistently applying criteria across diverse application pool (e.g., nonprofit vs small for-profit)	Create objective, clear criteria and indicators that reduce the need for subjective judgement calls and that take into account diverse applicant backgrounds

Proposed Changes in Structure of ASP Criteria

2012 Criteria Category	Proposed Next Round Criteria Category
n/a	Pre-screening
n/a	Due Diligence Exclusions
Financial Need	Financial Need
Financial Capability	Financial Stability
Public Interest Benefit	Eligible Entities, based upon Affirmation 1.3; not asking for intended string

Thinking Behind Proposed Changes

Pre-screening: to conduct background screen, legal compliance check, etc. to ensure applications proceeding to further evaluation pass basic checks for ICANN to do business with the entity.

Due Diligence Exclusions: to reduce risk of supporting an applicant that is misaligned with ICANN values, the community's intent for the program, or that presents significant reputational risk.

Financial Need: no change in criteria category

Financial Stability: lighter touch financial assessment aimed at reducing risk that many supported applicants struggle to pass gTLD Program Financial Capability evaluation; without requiring full financial evaluation up to 18 months prior to any other gTLD applicant.

Eligible Entities: to articulate entities reflective of Affirmation 1.3 that would be eligible to apply based upon objective, evidence-based criteria rather than qualitative, subjective assessment of the string and its public interest benefit.

Remaining Questions/Comments?

Next Meeting: Thursday 7 December 14:00-15:30 UTC