

GNSO Small Team Plus Discussion - Recommendation 17.2

ICANN org Applicant Support Program Team

Kristy Buckley

27 November 2023



Objectives & Agenda Items

- Learn more about GNSO Small Team Plus ideas for Rec 17.2
- Share highlights from research on other globally recognized programs and how this is informing approach to the ASP
- Review other relevant inputs being considered in exploring options to expand the scope of support
- Share ideas under exploration for following the intent of Rec 17.2
- Engage in discussion with the GNSO Small Team Plus to identify areas of synergy and explore potential next steps

Exploring Findings from a Survey of Other Global Programs: **Background and Research Design**

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.

What research findings present opportunities for further exploration re: the Applicant Support Program?

Applicant Pool: Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Exploring ways to engage in efforts to better understand the needs of target groups (e.g., working with local partners, conducting research with potential applicants, collecting feedback surveys).
- Considering how to tailor outreach information to target audiences.
- Exploring opportunities to streamline the ASP application process.
- Considering optional information sessions to provide additional application information and guidance.
- Exploring ways to facilitate connections between pro bono service providers and potential applicants to provide capacity development and application support.

Eligibility Criteria: Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Exploring opportunities to define public interest benefit to align with the objectives of the ASP.
- Assessing opportunities to streamline the process to evaluate public interest benefit (e.g., asking for a narrative describing the applicant's public interest benefit or for proof that they belong to an identified target group).
- Exploring transparency in determining financial need by sharing the method or threshold for determining actual financial shortfall and identifying targeted underserved markets.
- Consider potential to assess other organizational capacity areas, in addition to finances, to determine capability.
- Aligning risk-tolerance with the goals of the ASP.

Evaluating Applications: Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Exploring possibilities to utilize differentiated review panels with specific expertise regarding eligibility criteria.
- Considering the development of training materials for review panel members.
- Exploring the possibility of an administrative review process to streamline application evaluation.
- Considering ways to clarify the scoring scheme used to assess applicants.
- Exploring ways to design an evaluation matrix that is simple but still gives appropriate weight to important eligibility criteria/elements.
- Considering how to clarify program priorities to determine appropriate means of distributing available funds to qualifying applicants (**Note: this was a guidance recommendation from the GNSO Guidance Process on ASP**).

Ongoing Applicant Support

What strategies do organizations use to ensure applicant success beyond the application process?

Key strategies include:

- Financial Support
- Non-financial Support
- Mixed Support

Ongoing Support: Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Exploring opportunities to support the ongoing financial needs of supported applicants, like reducing ongoing fees or connecting applicants to other financial opportunities available.
- Consider possible opportunities to support the capacity needs of supported applicants, e.g., through a knowledge network for new entrants.
- Exploring possibilities to provide comprehensive ongoing support that covers multiple aspects of a supported applicant's ongoing needs.

Ongoing Applicant Support

Financial Support

Ongoing financial support can be given directly by the Provider of Financial Support (through follow-on grants) or indirectly by connecting grantees to other organizations in the Provider's network.

Non-financial Support

Funders can provide non-financial support through:

- Technical assistance in specific areas (e.g., strategic planning, marketing and communications, executive coaching, etc.).
- Knowledge networks.

Mixed Support

Funders can provide both financial and non-financial support.

Integrating other Inputs

GGP for ASP & Intent of Rec 17.2

Related GNSO Guidance Process Recommendations

GNSO Guidance Process (GGP) for ASP drafted recommendations to define success for the ASP. These (currently) include:

- Guidance Recommendation 5: Of all successfully ***delegated*** [emphasis added] gTLD applications, the goal is that a certain percentage of them should be from supported applicants.
- Guidance Recommendation 6: ICANN org to investigate the extent to which supported applicants that were awarded a gTLD are still in business as a registry operator after three years.

These recommendations indicate success of the ASP will be measured in terms of how qualified supported applicants fared in both the gTLD Program evaluation process and in the first three years of business as a RO.

- How could expanded support from the ASP, in light of Rec 17.2, best reflect this guidance?

Research Findings + Intent of Rec 17.2

Taking into account research findings from other globally recognized programs and the GGP draft recommendations, how could ICANN org best support:

- potential ASP applicants?
 - *e.g., raising awareness to expand and diversify applicant pool*
- qualified supported applicants?
 - *e.g., developing understanding and capacities to apply for gTLD*
- supported gTLD applicants?
 - *e.g., resources and tools to navigate gTLD Program*
- supported applicants that become Registry Operators?
 - *e.g., ~3yrs resources and support for ongoing SSR of new ROs that were supported applicants*

Options Under Exploration to Meet Intent of Recommendation 17.2

Offer Training “ASP Fellowship” & Mentorship

Qualified supported applicants enrolled in a training program to develop capacity and understanding of the gTLD Program requirements. Post-gTLD application, supported applicants can sign up for a community mentor.

Considerations:

- Does not provide same immersive ICANN fellowship experience
- Entities that apply late to ASP will not have much time to benefit from fellowship prior to submitting a gTLD application
- Still risk in convening potential applicants
- Business confidentiality risks in mentorship program, mitigated post-gTLD application
- + Provides direct experience, orientation, and training
- + Creates support network for applicants
- + Improves understanding and access to available resources
- + Expands scope of non-financial support
- + Protects business confidentiality of ASP applicants
- + Reduces risk of capture/unfriendly competition exposure
- + Provides upfront and medium-term support

Provide dedicated team of Application Counselors

ICANN org could manage a team of contracted Application Counselors for supported applicants. This may include translation, financial modeling advisors, technicians (similar to [AccessNow Digital Security Helpline](#))

Considerations:

- Significant potential for conflicts of interest, liability risks, or accidental sharing of information
- Unlikely to cover all applicant needs (in scope or quantity)
- + Does not require supported applicants to pay service providers upfront and wait for reimbursements
- + Ensures quality control, background screening, and NDAs with a set of hand-picked counselors on contract
- + Idea and cost for 7 Application Counselors was in ODA
- + Reduces ability to game; no money exchanged with applicants

Cover Initial Base Registry Operator Fees

[Reducing or eliminating base Registry Operator \(RO\) fees](#) (see link)(\$25k USD/yr) for the first 3 years (or < threshold of DUMs) of a supported applicant serving as a Registry Operator.

Considerations:

- Varying community views (e.g., GAC support; GNSO no consensus)
- Introduces some complexity to the RO fee structure and invoicing
- + Expands scope of financial support to other fees ICANN charges
 - o Note: reflects ICANN77 GAC Advice 3.a.ii
- + Provides longer-term support in line with research findings
- + Research indicates other global programs are more successful with ongoing support to applicants
- + Reduces ability to game; no money exchanged
- + Reduces fixed fees in the short term
- + Provides additional time to execute respective RO launch plans
- + Savings applicants receive from ICANN fees could be used to cover RSP costs

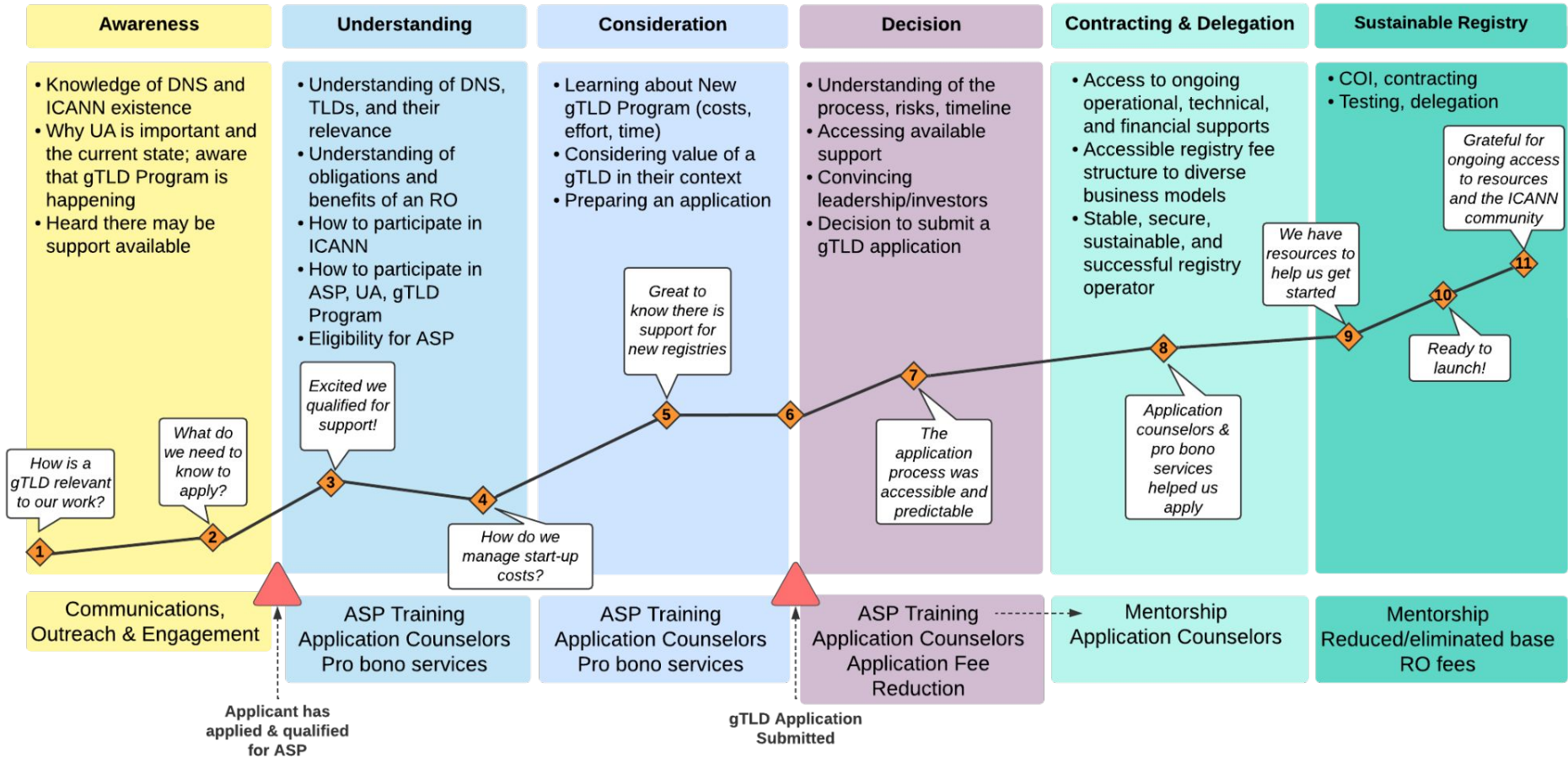
Combination of Support

To expand the scope of support in relation to Rec 17.2, ICANN org proposes to work collaboratively with community to explore options to:

- Offer qualified supported applicants an ASP-Fellowship
- Provide a dedicated team of Application Counselors
- Cover initial Base Registry Operator Fees

Support Across ASP Applicant-RO Journey

Example ASP Applicant Journey



Appendix

Assumptions

- Additional support provided only to qualified applicants after applying to the Applicant Support Program.
- The ASP application submission period opens 18 months prior to gTLD application submission period. See timeline slide in Appendix for reference.
- ASP applications will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.
- Results of ASP application evaluation will be communicated to applicants as they become available.
- ASP applicants that apply and qualify early will have more time to benefit from non-financial supports (pro bono services, fellowship).

Engage with ICANN



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