YESIM SAGLAM:	Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone. Welcome to the APRALO Policy Forum webinar two on the topic, next round of new gTLDs, a primer on applicant support taking place on Thursday, 23rd of November 2023 at 06:00 UTC. We will not be doing the roll call for the sake of time, however, all attendees both on the Zoom room and on the phone bridge will be recorded after the call. I would like to remind all participants to please mute your lines when not speaking to prevent any background noises. Also, please make sure you state your name when taking the floor for transcription purposes. Questions or comments will be covered at the end of this webinar once the presentation is over. Please mark your questions in the chat as I've noted and I'm going to share it once again with you here. Thank you all for joining and now I would like to leave the floor over to Justine Chew, Chair of APRALO Policy Forum Working Group. Over to you Justine. Thank you very much.
JUSTINE CHEW:	Thank you very much, Yesim and welcome everyone. Thanks for showing up. I was hoping to have a small group but it doesn't matter, the more the merrier. And apologies for starting late. I had a little bit of a technicality problem with my computer with the slides. So anyway, let's get into it. If we could just keep, I'm happy to welcome comments as we go along and you can pop them in the chat. But for the sake of time, I will keep all questions to the end once I've gotten through my

presentation, which shouldn't take more than half an hour anyway. And we've got at least half an hour for questions and discussions.

I would do welcome comments and questions because these are the inputs that we would like to have in order to feed back into various other avenues. And the avenues that I'm referring to, it will become apparent when I go through the presentation itself. So let's go.

So this is the second webinar in the series that we're doing on a new gTLD program. So the first webinar, we ran it in September. So that was webinar number one. I'm just going to do a little very, very short recap on that next. But suffice to say, this is webinar number two and we're going to be focusing on applicant support. But even within this particular webinar or rather the topic of applicant support, I'm proposing to split it into two webinars. In fact, so this is the part one of webinar two and part two will come at some point in time. And the reason for that will also become apparent when I speak a little bit more.

So today we're going to be covering part one and part one itself encompasses three sections. And when I said part two, when I said this applicant support program, we're going to tackle topics by two parts. The second part has got to do with actually examining the implementation of the applicant support program for the next round by ICANN Org that's being done by ICANN Org at the moment. So today we're going to concentrate on the three sections of part one. A background on what happened in 2012 round for applicant support. What are the policy recommendations that have been adopted by the board for applicant support specifically that will be implemented for the

next round. And also what is left because there are still parallel activities happening that would impact the implementation of the applicant support program for the next round. And this is why I said the feedback on this webinar and also the series is important, because whatever comments or questions that you'll be bringing up throughout my presentation or even during the discussion and Q&A is input for what we need to take into consideration when we are looking at the implementation of policy recommendations that have already been approved by the board, as well as some of the other work that is still pending that would impact that implementation.

Okay, so I mentioned that this is the second webinar of the series. The first one we did, as I said, in September, earlier this year, and I'm not going to go through what we carried on in that or what we conducted in that webinar because you can listen to the recording. But suffice to say it was to do an overview of the new gTLD program and how that program actually impacts end users, individual end users. And this is my little virtual assistant. So you can please feel free to catch up on the webinar recordings for webinar number one and also later for this particular webinar. And you will also see that in the agenda wiki, right at the bottom, there's a whole long list of documents and resources that are provided that will help you sort of navigate through the history or the chronology of what's going on with subsequent procedures, as well as applicant support. Okay, so feel free to browse through those resources. They are hyperlinked, so they will take you to various documents that contain relevant information.

So again, as I said, we're just going to be zooming on the basics of applicant support today. From a philosophical perspective, the stated goal of the applicant support program, and this is in the words of ICANN themselves, right, is that the applicant support program is an initiative which seeks to serve the global public interest by ensuring worldwide accessibility to and competition within the new gTLD program. Okay, so that's the philosophical aspect of it.

Practically speaking, the program is meant to assist potential new gTLD applicants with seeking both financial and non-financial support. Okay, so just bear that in mind. And participation is by way of, as I said, financial or non-financial assistance. The financial aspect of it is that any applicant who applies to be an applicant support applicant and qualifies as such would then receive, generally speaking, would receive a reduced evaluation fee of $47,000. And that subsidy is drawn from what is called the applicant support fund. In the 2012 round, and this is all about the 2012 round, by the way, in the previous round, that particular applicant support fund stood at $2 million.

From a non-financial assistance point of view, the applicants are meant to be able to access pro bono services relevant to anything to do with a startup of a gTLD registry. And it's through something called the applicant support directory.

Now, in terms of what makes an applicant qualify for the fee reduction, the financial aspect of it is that they look at three criteria. And the first one is that the applicant must demonstrate that they have a financial need for this support. Second one is what they plan to do must provide

a public interest benefit. And the third criteria is that they need to possess necessary management and financial capability to remain as a going concern. Going concern is legal in business speak for being still operating and not shuttered. And you can find, obviously, more detailed information in that URL that I provided at the bottom. So this is all information drawn from ICANN's sub website on applicant support.

So in terms of how the applicant support program details were communicated to potential applicants, it was through something called the new gTLD financial assistance handbook. And in fact, for the next round, there's going to be something akin to this, whether it's going to still have the same name or not, that's something that implementation has to deal with. But suffice to say, it would encompass something like this. All right. Now, in terms of what's contained in the financial assistance handbook, it has kind of two large groups of criteria or eligibility. One is a general criteria and there are limitations or constraints that would prevent an applicant from being able to apply to become an applicant support applicant. So these are some of the criteria that would limit the ability for an applicant to become an applicant support applicant. And then on top of that, if you satisfy the general eligibility criteria, then when you submit your application to become an applicant support applicant or applicant support qualifier, there is an evaluation process for that. And the evaluation looks at three specific criteria sets. So I mentioned this before earlier to do with public interest firstly, the financial need secondly, and also that you have to show that you are able to be an ongoing concern after you get the TLD, which is the financial capability side of things. So I'm not going to go into

detail in terms of all these sets of criteria. You can read them in your own time. Some of them are quite self-explanatory anyway. But the interesting thing is that there is a scoring mechanism that applies for the three specific criteria sets. And it is such.

So what happened was that if you can only qualify to become an applicant support applicant, qualifier, I should say, is if you meet the threshold for all three of these criteria sets. So meaning to say that when you're being evaluated under the public interest limb, you would need to have scored five out of a maximum nine points. You would also need to have scored three out of a maximum five points under the financial need limb and at least one point for the financial capabilities limb. So these are not mutually exclusive. You have to satisfy all three, but in terms of the minimum threshold score.

This diagram you will find in the financial assistance handbook, by the way. And it will tell you the process that was used to receive and also evaluate applicants for applicant support. This is what happened last time around in 2012. We don't know yet at this point in time whether this process or the specifics of this process is going to be replicated for the next round. That's something that's still being developed as we speak. So you can feel free to look at this in your own time.

What I wanted to actually focus on is more on the award notification, the three possible paths of an outcome of evaluation, which is that if you are found to be qualified and you are selected to become an applicant support recipient, then your application would move on to the

next phase of evaluation, which is called the initial evaluation. And then certain processes would then apply.

The second path that is possible would be that under step 10B, which is highlighted in blue, is that if you are considered as qualified with no award of fee reduction, then you still have an option of whether you want to continue or withdraw. If you continue because you are deemed to have not qualified to receive the subsidy, then you still have to top up whatever the balance, the fee that you were supposed to have paid if you didn't become an applicant support qualifier. Or you can choose to withdraw and get your $42,000 back, which was the sort of like a deposit or the initial part of the fee that you have to pay anyway to submit your application to begin with. And the third path is step 10C, which is if you are considered as not having qualified, then you will get a refund, but then your application cannot proceed. So it will end there. So that is what happened for the 2012 round. This particular path 10C has been amended for the next round, and you'll see this later, to say basically that if you don't qualify for applicant support, you can still convert your application to a standard fee and you just pay whatever the balance was and your application will continue to be evaluated as a standard application.

So I'm not seeing any comments or questions at this moment, which is a good sign, I guess. If I can just get my computer to cooperate with me today. Okay, so how the evaluation was actually done is through a panel, right, and the panel was called the Support Applicant Review Panel, or SARP for short. And the panel was comprised of five people, and the five people were selected through an open call for expression of

interest in the community. And how they were selected was actually done by ICANN and that's not privy to us. So community don't have a role in selecting the, or didn't have a role in selecting the five people that made up the SARP. But they, I think they had a role in looking at the criteria of the people that they wanted. And the five people had that comprise the SARP had varying backgrounds. So some people were of business orientation, some people were from a grant community, that sort of thing. So it's not, it's not stereotyped to one kind of person with certain skills. They looked at a broad range of skills.

And in terms of what the SARP could do, obviously they would look at the string application, the string application. They would also look at public comments and they could conduct their own independent research if they wanted to. And in scoring the three criteria sets, as I mentioned before, the public interest, financial need and financial capability, the SARP also rank the applicants because you know how I said that that they would have to score based on these three criteria sets. So in terms of the actual final score that each applicant gets, right, they may range between say 7 to 15 or whatever the number is. So that will tell you the order by which the applicants came in, in terms of qualifying. And that was important because, and it still might be important because if you think about the applicant support fund being limited, right, then how do you manage such that the fund is going to be divided equitably amongst the people that qualify, amongst the applicants that qualify.

So in the 2012 round it was stipulated that the final funding decisions was to ensure that those who receive the fee reduction will be the ones

that tended to amplify most the benefit of what they were trying to do. And in terms of as I said before, there were three paths that an applicant could end up with, either number one, qualified or awarded fee reduction, qualified and awarded fee reduction. So which means that the balance of $185,000 would be waived. They would have just paid the $47,000 to submit application and they wouldn't have to pay the rest of it. The second path would be that they qualified but they were not awarded the fee reduction. In which case, and they could, as I said before, they could either choose to pay the balance and continue, or they could withdraw and get the $42,000 back as a refund. Now, if you qualify and you are not awarded a fee reduction, that doesn't mean that you don't actually get a benefit. You just don't get the financial assistance part of it. You will still be able to avail yourself to the non-financial assistance, which is the pro bono services. And the third one, as I said before, if you found not to have qualified for applicant support, then the application cannot proceed and you will get the $42,000 refund. And there's an exception here. So if you were found to have committed willful gaming, then the $42,000 can be confiscated, so to speak. And this is part of why the criteria and the thresholds for qualifying for applicant support were so high, because there was this intense fear of gaming, willful gaming. Next slide, please.

Okay, so I said before about pro bono services and something called the Applicant Support Directory. So in the 2012 round, what happened is apart from financial assistance, there was also the non-financial assistance portion of it, the pro bono services, which is basically service providers offering their services to successful applicants on a pro bono

basis. And how ICANN Org did it last time around was they basically asked the applicants, "Hey, what do you need?" And they asked potential service providers, "Hey, what can you provide?" And they came up with two lists but they did not facilitate any connections between the two. They just left it to the applicants to approach the people who were offering services to find out, "Hey, what can you do for me? What's your terms?" and that sort of thing. So there was no facilitation on the part of ICANN Org. And as you can see from the two lists, you see what was sought by applicants and what was offered by the service provider. So you can do a comparison. And from here, this is also part of what we have inputted into our proposal as to how to deal with applicant support resources in terms of pro bono services. And I'll come to that later. Next slide, please.

Okay. So in terms of, this is the roundup of the applicant support as it happened for the 2012 round. And hindsight is always great, 2020 vision. So in terms of evaluating the program, what happened and the good and bad of it, I will just summarize to say that there were only three applicants who applied for applicant support out of the last round. And it's due primarily to the fact that there was too little, too late communication about the program itself. Right? So if you don't spread the news early enough and wide enough, then obviously you're going to be limiting your pool of candidates. And this is why it's important that and everybody, I believe everybody in the community believes, also agrees that communication is very important. So we need to be able to communicate to potential, both potential applicants and also potential service providers who want to offer their services to applicants that

there is this program and this program is going to be run such and such a date. And this is what we need. And this is what we're looking for. So all those details are being still developed by ICANN Org as part of the implementation process. And we know that it's something that at large itself is looking forward to, because we know that we have our networks where we can spread this information in order to help promote the program a little bit more for the next round.

And as I tried to allude to before, the evaluation criteria was a bit too daunting. And apart from not having enough candidates applying, we then put on top of that, even higher barriers to entry, which ended up outweighing the goal of the program to begin with. So I talked about the fear of gaming. So there was, there were people within the community who were so afraid that applicants are going to gain this program, that they put very high criteria, very high barriers to entry or to succeed in getting applicants support. So it's sort of like a cost benefit thing. So you make something too hard to get, then you're not going to get very many people to, that will succeed. But at the same time, you're by virtue of having communicated the program so late, the pool of candidates to begin with was so small that it would be hard pressed for us to make a success of the program. And ended up that only one applicant out of the three actually succeeded in qualifying for applicant support. And there was also comments about the fact that the, I said the two lists the list of support that applicants were looking for, and the list of service providers that were offering services. There was no facilitation. And so there was one comment to say that if ICANN ORG were to try and do some facilitation, like some matchmaking, that may have helped as well.

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We don't know. I mean, this is a retrospective, but it's something that the GAC is also asking for to try and get a bit of matchmaking going. So that's all about the 2012 program. What can we look forward to in the next round? Next slide, please.

Right, so just a preface to say that if you are new to subsequent procedures and you don't know what subsequent procedures is about, all I will tell you is that it's basically the set of rules and procedures that will govern how the next round of applications is going to be run and evaluated. It will go into the extent of determining what string can be applied for, who can apply, how can you apply, what fees are payable and what fees are refundable. Yes, there are components which can be refunded if you don't make a certain cut or you withdraw, for example. The terms and conditions by which you would have to meet say declare certain things, or you would have to commit to certain obligations.

Also, the idea about the subsequent procedures is that we were trying to plug in gaps and lacunae from the previous round, and hopefully we would have gotten it a bit more airtight for the next round, less, fewer problems that would crop up during the application process itself. And all these rules are actually captured within what's called the Applicant Guidebook or AGB. AGB is the acronym that you always hear. AGB, AGB, AGB. And the important thing to note is subsequent procedures do not apply to legacy TLDs. They do not apply to TLDs that are, gTLDs that are already delegated, means that they are already in the root. They don't apply to any gTLD applications that are still unresolved from the 2012 round and from memory, I think there's only two left in that category. And they certainly don't apply to country code TLDs. Because as we all

know, country code TLDs is in the realm of the ccNSO, the Country Code Name Supporting Organization, in which case each country sovereignty has a role in it, so we can't provide for that. And we're talking when subsequent, when we say subsequent procedures, it's only dealing with generic top-level domains and not CC top-level domains. Next slide, please.

Right, so this is just a high-level overview of the process by which we would follow from arriving at consensus policy to actually launching. So we know that the GNSO consensus policy has been settled in 2021 by virtue of the final report, recommendations in the final report. And these recommendations, I believe there are 98 of them, and that's not including implementation guidance, yeah? It's just in recommendations. All of them have been dealt with by the ICANN board in batches throughout ICANN 76, 77, and 78. And we know that out of 98 of those recommendations, only 10 have not been adopted. And I will come back to what's happening with those 10. So the rest of them have been adopted, and they have either gone into or are in the process of going into implementation. And implementation is led by ICANN Org through the Global Domains and Strategy Department, GDS. So it's taken out of the community's purview, but the community still participates in that process by inputting into the applicant guidebook, or what we call the draft applicant guidebook at this point in time, which is why it's still important for us to monitor what's going on in the IRT, the Implementation Review Team. And at this point in time, the draft applicant guidebook is targeted to be completed by May 2025. We don't know whether that's feasible or not, but I guess we're going to try. And

after that, it still has to go to the ICANN board for approval. And after approval, then it gets published, and obviously, publication of it has to precede the launch of the next round. And I will get into this a little bit down the track, but the publication of it has to happen quite a considerable time before the application window is opened in order to give applicants enough time, or potential applicants enough time to go and do their research, get the plans together, and actually put the application in draft mode kind of way before you can actually put it into the form in the application system.

And the application guidebook is important because, as I said before, it functions as the Bible, or the rulebook, the guidebook. The guidebook, which is basically a rulebook that can tell, that determines what anyone can do in terms of applying for a gTLD. And things like all sorts of processes will go in there. It's quite elaborate. The old guidebook, the previous guidebook was, I can't remember, I think it was about 300 pages long. And the next applicant guidebook could be longer, could be shorter, we don't know yet. We're still in the process of working through that. But in theory, the guidebook will provide the full framework of how to run the application and evaluation process for the next round, in theory.

We're hoping that SubPro has done such a good job that, as I said, we're hoping that there isn't any more gaps or lacuna that we have to, that the next process will experience. But in the event that happens, we have also provided four processes to address those kinds of things, or those kinds of gaps. And that's covered under topic two, the predictability framework. Next slide, please.

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Right, so just an overview of what are the recommendations, the policy recommendations, the consensus policy recommendations that have been approved by the board so far. Within applicants, the topic of applicant support, there are 19 altogether, including implementation guidance. I think it is 11, I forget the number, but as we go through the slides, you'll figure it out. Sorry, I got too many stats in my head. Right, so I'm going to go through the ones that have been approved. And I will also talk to you about the one, the single one that has not been adopted by the board.

So just going through the ones that have been approved so far, recommendation 17.1 basically reinforces the fact that applicant support program will continue to happen for the next round. So it says that fee reduction must continue for selected applicants. And in parallel, recommendation 4.1, which is under a separate topic of SubPro, topic four, it also reinforces that applicants eligible for applicant support is recognized as an applicant type. So you begin to see that the topics are in some manners, they interlock so you can't necessarily see one topic in isolation. You have to look across the 41 topics of SubPro and see the interlocking or the interfacing, the interconnect between certain recommendations. So this is an example of one of those. And then further, in addition to the financial, the fee reduction, it's recommended that new types of financial support be introduced. And this is things like the bid credit multiplier, if applicant support qualifier ends up being in auction of last resort, if they were, if someone else was applying for the same string then it falls into what's called a contention set. You're basically competing for the same string. And then, so it would go to an

auction to resolve that contention. And if you were applicant support qualifier, then you'll be entitled to some kind of bid credit or multiplier, if you were to participate in that auction. There's also the recommendation to provide, to facilitate non-financial assistance, the pro bono assistance I talked about. It would probably be similar, if not, tighten up for the next round, okay. ICANN also must conduct outreach and awareness raising for both potential applicants, as well as potential pro bono service providers, okay. And they have done this. I know that ICANN has done this. They did quite extensive research, and they in fact, introduced that research in a session during ICANN 78. Next slide, please.

Okay, the next recommendation that was approved is 17.3. And I'm going to try and fly through this a bit faster in order to get to Q&A. So 17.3 talks about improving outreach, awareness raising, application evaluation, making the application evaluation and the program evaluation and usability of the program better, improving on those things. And tied to recommendation 17.3 is a bunch of IGs, which stands for implementation guidance. So all these IGs 17.4 up to 17.10 relate to recommendation 17.3. So IG 17.4 talks about the outreach and awareness raising. So I said before that for the next round, it's going to be delivered in advance of the application window. And specifically, commencing no later than the communications period. And again, a related implementation guidance from a separate topic, topic 13.13 is that the topic 13 deals with communications. So IG 13.3 says that the communications period will have to be open or will have to be issued or done at least six months before the application submission period. So

now, so you look at it together. So there's going to be a period of at least six months between the applicant support program information going out and the opening of the window. And in fact, it could end up being more than six months if I can proposition wins in the day. And important for at large community is IG 13.5. And this is obviously, the call for this has been replicated over and over and over again. So it's there, it's a implementation guidance, but it's there, it's going to be done, which is that whatever applicant support program information that eventually come up from the implementation process, it should leverage, we should use, we should leverage the global stakeholder engagement teams and the various SO and the ACs to share the information. So I'm sorry, but the IG says that, but obviously when we talk about ACs, we're also talking about At-Large community, the RALOs. So there's definitely going to be a role for all the ALSes, all the individual members of each RALO to talk about and promote the applicant support program.

Moving on to 17.5, I'll just skip ahead. There was this dedicated IRT that was meant to be established to look into certain implementation elements and the ones that are highlighted in blue on the screen, such things. Moving on, next slide please. Recommendation 17.11 asks ICANN basically to consider leveraging on same procedural practices used by other panels, including publication of process documents and documentation of rationale. So it's just basically to improve or to reinforce the transparency of how the program is implemented, how the program is done with full declaration of information and full disclosure of information.

recommendation 17.2 says that ICANN Org should, so must develop a plan for funding the ASP and should look at whether the amount of funding is enough and if not, then additional funding should be raised. But more importantly , hat whatever funding amount that is put out for applicant support, it should be determined beforehand and communicated beforehand. Beforehand, I'm talking about before the application round, so that everybody knows what is the pool of money that is being potentially distributed or being utilized to support the applicant support program.

17.4 talks about seeking funding partners. So if ICANN Org were to find that $2 million or whatever amount that the board decides isn't enough to support a successful version of the applicant support, then they should be looking at funding partners to supplement.

17.15, I talked about bid credit earlier, so that's that, so it's in there again. 17.6, conduct research to determine the exact nature and amount of the bid credit multiplier or the other mechanism that's used for the auction of last resort. So that's also part of the research I believe that the ICANN board has asked Ops to do in terms of the auction side of things.

And 17.7 is interesting because the subsequent procedures PDP working group or at least the recommendation says that if you were to apply for applicant support and you qualify, then we don't want you to disappear. And we don't want you to be able to sell off that registry to someone and make a profit. And that is part of the gaming fear that people had that some applicants would use this as a stepping stone and then flip

the registry to get a profit. So therefore there are restrictions put in place, being suggested to be put in place that if you are an applicant support qualifier, then you're expected to run that TLD as a registry for at least three years. So there would be no assignment and no change of control for at least three years. Next slide please.

And coming to the last two that were approved by the board, I mentioned this earlier before, 17.18 recommendation talks about unless the SARP, the support applicant review panel, sorry the word panel is missing there, thinks that there was willful gaming to be had, then the applicant that was not awarded applicant support won't be eligible for getting a refund. But they would still be eligible to convert their application to a standard application and they just pay the balance fee, whatever that balance fee is, and just carry on. It wouldn't be, the application wouldn't be disqualified as it was in the 2012 round. And I talked about the financial assistance handbook already, just say 17.19 just says that whatever the handbook or the successor or the version of whatever that comes out that incorporates, that sorry, that encompasses the terms and conditions of the applicant support program that has to go into the applicant guidebook. And I believe in the next round, there are plans to actually even issue it before the applicant guidebook. Okay, next slide please.

Coming to the recommendation that was not approved by the ICANN board, as I mentioned there was one, only one that strictly relates to applicant support, which is 17.2. And I believe that we have kind of talked extensively about 17.2 in numerous CPWG, the consolidated policy working group calls. In fact, ALAC came up with a proposal to try

and help revise 17.2 to make it more palatable to the board for adoption later on. And 17.2 deals with the expanding the support, the resources to applicant support to not only the fee reduction in terms of the application fee, but to also cover things like application writing fees, attorney fees, things that you would require services for, if you were an applicant, to help you put your application together. And the board basically didn't adopt it, not that they didn't like the idea of it, but they had problems with the way that 17.2 was worded. In a sense, they had two concerns. One was that it was too prescriptive, as in, because it mentioned applicant writing fees and attorney fees, and it says such as, so does that mean that it stops at those two kinds of services or are there more? And then if there are more, are we expecting ICANN to provide all of them? So there were concerns about that. And the second thing was fiduciary concerns, because if ICANN were to pay service provider fees, like, for example, the application writing fees, then it's a bit strange because ICANN is also at the same time assessing and evaluating the application, what is the output of the writing exercise. So, you're kind of approving and paying at the same time, which raises fiduciary concerns. So, there has to be a way to split those things into more arm's length transaction so that ICANN is not paying the service provider, but the service provider might get paid in some other mechanism, some other way, but just not directly by ICANN.

I mentioned the reworking of 17.2. So that's happening through the GNSO council, specifically through something called the SubPro Pending Recommendation Small Team. There's a mouthful. So, we just call SubPro Small Team, which as of next week will be expanded into what

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we call Small Team Plus. So there will be from ALAC at least, I'm on the small team by virtue of being the I volunteer as part of GNSO council anyway. And from next week onwards, Small Team Plus will include one subject matter expert and an alternate from each AC, SO, SG, C that want to participate. So, AC, advisory community, meaning ALAC, GAC, SSAC whoever wants to participate can nominate a subject matter expert and alternate. SGs is stakeholder groups that's pertaining to the Generic Names Supporting Organization. Constituencies also under generic names supporting organization. So as far as we're concerned, we're just ALAC. So ALAC is going to have a subject matter expert and an alternate put on to the Small Team Plus to support. And the three of us will hopefully gang up together and get through our proposal.

And there is also a set of recommendations that I just want to touch on, which the board did not approve. And these are the ones to do with challenges and objections. And the reason why I mention it, because they allow for challenges to evaluations of applicant support, or at least the recommendation did. So beforehand in the 2012 round, once the evaluation is given out, there is no means by which the applicant can appeal or challenge the evaluation. So we thought that was a bit hard or difficult. Right. And we were in the process of introducing the ability to challenge for other types of evaluation. Like string similarity evaluation and all the other types of evaluation. So there was no particular reason why applicant support applicants wouldn't be in that category to be eligible to challenge certain determinations. If they fail, for example, then they will be told why they failed and then they might want to challenge based on a misunderstanding or something or other. But the

important thing is that we wanted applicants support applicants who failed their evaluation to be able to have the opportunity to challenge that evaluation. And same with objections. So I'm not going to go into specific details, but the challenge and the objection mechanisms, the recommendation for those have not been adopted by the board. So now the small team is also working around how to make those provisions available, but in a more amicable way and more acceptable way to the board. Next slide, please.

Okay, so this is the third section of the part one. I just want to highlight some of the parallel processes or activities are still which are still ongoing, which will impact the implementation of applicant support. So some of these things, as of today, I mentioned already the small team plus we're going to be discussing applicant support recommendations 17.2 as of next week on 27th of November. And then we'll also be looking at the set of recommendations for the challenges and appeals. Also, at the same time, the SubPro IRT, which stands for subsequent procedures implementation review team that has been meeting since May of this year. But there is now a sub track specifically for applicant support and that track sub track is starting to meet on the 30th of November. Also, I mentioned this earlier as well, GDS, Global Domains and Strategy Department of ICANN, they are going to come and talk to the small team plus on their ideas about how to implement applicant support, given all the recommendations and all the research that they've done so far. And they, in fact, alluded to a preview of this in ICANN 78. The session link is on the screen, as you see. So feel free to review that recording.

And the GNSO guidance process on applicant support. This is a process or kind of like a working group that was also set up under GNSO. And I'm not going to go into specifics. If you want to know, I believe Maureen gave a very good and detailed update of it in the CPWG call from yesterday. So please feel free to listen to that recording as well. And the reason why I don't really want to touch on it is because the recommendations aren't final yet. I think they're still working through the public comment responses. So let's not talk about that until we know what is final. Next slide, please.

I'm coming to the end of my presentation very soon. Yep. Oh, that's it. Great. Okay, so question time, I guess. Next slide. Okay, so I have a bunch of questions. So the first question was from Laxmi, who asks, what are the things going to consider or considered by ICANN in order to assign the weightage for each criteria evaluation process and why? Okay, so I can't tell you the answer to that. It's still being developed as we speak. And that's going to go into part of our querying in the IRT, the implementation review team applicant support track, because as I said, GDS, the Global Domains and Strategy Division is going to come and talk to us about how they see the implementation of the applicant support program being done. And that would include the kind of questions that you are asking. So sorry, I can't answer that at the moment.

The second question is from Maureen. Only five people evaluate all the applications from the people wanting applicant support. Or is that just for applicant support? But still, there could be hundreds of people applying. So the five people I'm talking about is the five people that made up the SARP, the Support Application Review Panel. So all the

applicants and the applications will go to these five people or went to these five people in 2012 for evaluation to see whether they qualify and how much they qualify. We don't know at this point in time whether SARP is going to remain as is. So again, that's one of the question marks that we need to look into.

The next question is from Amrita. Were the pro bono service providers in the last time from across the globe or only from the US? From memory, it was not only from the US. But I don't know that there were a lot from say, South Asia or from our region. I think they were mainly from the US and from Europe, if I'm not mistaken. But I can dig up the information and relay that to you after the call maybe. It's all in the website anyway.

The next question is from Fidya. Is there a maximum opportunity quota for a particular applicant to apply for the ASP in the case that they have applied before and failed? And on the case that they have received the support, are they allowed to reapply? Yes. So it is based on the applicant. There is no limitation. If you say, for example, the only applicant that succeeded last round was .Kids Foundation, I think the entity. So there's nothing stopping .Kids Foundation from applying again. But obviously, they would have to find the right string and find the right arguments to support it, to support a new applicant. And by the way, the notion is that a particular applicant can put in multiple submissions for multiple strings, for example. But if they qualify as applicant support, then the benefit only pertains to one application. So they can't say, for example, if I put in an application to be applicant support qualifier, and I get it, I'm qualified, and then I subsequently put

in applications for three different strings, then I can only say that I am only allowed to use my benefit for one particular application, not all three strings or one string. But it is a little bit complicated because the qualification is actually the applicant, not so much the string. So you're assessing the applicant, not so much the string. I'm not quite sure how it's going to work exactly. So that's one of the questions I had in my mind in terms of-- and this is something that we're definitely going to look into when the IRT meets on the subtract, in terms of the connection between the applicant and the actual string that they apply for. My understanding is the evaluation is based on the applicant and not so much the string. So I think I kind of have answered your question.

A second question from Laxmi is, during surfing the new gTLD ICANN website, I guess, I found word "innovative new gTLD." Please share some examples of innovative new gTLDs. I don't think that's my job. I think that's out of scope for this particular webinar. But I do believe there are case studies in the new gTLD program website. So do have a look at that and see. If you can't find the link, then just drop me an email and I'll find it for you and share it with you. But I believe they have got some case studies as to what they mean by the kinds of applicants and strings that are kind of more desirable, I guess, or innovative or whatever.

So the next question is from Faheem. What is the timeline for the application process from submission to approval? So I'm going to try and break this question down into two, because as I understand it-- and this is what we are understanding from the IRT-- the application window for entities who are interested in becoming applicant support qualifier

will proceed before the actual application round for strings open. So I can opt once to be able to identify ASP qualifiers before the application for strings even open. So in terms of that particular window, the first application process to identify who will qualify for applicant support, that is being proposed to run 18 months before the application window for strings actually happen. And then the application window for strings is currently targeted for April 2026. Targeted. We don't know at this point in time whether we're going to meet that deadline. And I see Alan Barrett on the call, so he might want to make a comment on that. But my understanding is those are the target dates that we are all trying to strive for. And the last question that I had was from Shah, which is, once any applicant get refused, will they get a second chance to apply again with feedback why the application was not being accepted? So if I understand your question correctly, you don't reapply because the window-- oh, okay. That's an interesting question. So let me think about this. So if we say the application window for applicant support qualifying is from x to z. So if you put in a submission at the beginning of x, and then you find that you were determined as not qualified, can you put in another application to replace the earlier one? The answer to that is I don't know, because it depends on whether the application process or the evaluation process happens at the end or throughout the program. And we have no idea at this point in time. That's something that GDS is still working out.

Okay. So that is the extent of the questions that were put into chat. I'm happy to answer any other questions that people might want to verbalize. I would say that it's kind of boring for you guys to listen to me

talk. I get tired of listening to myself talk. So can someone please talk to me? Ask your questions or even provide comments in terms of what else-- what kind of information that you want to know, what questions you want answered. Because if I can answer them, I will answer them. If I can't answer them, I will tell you that I can't answer them. And it's possibly going to be input for me and Cheryl to take back and find the answer in IRT when we are sitting in IRT meetings. And also, I welcome comments in terms of how we structured the webinar, whether you think this works, whether you think it's terrible, how can we be more interactive, whether it's too superficial, too high level, too detailed. Any comments is most welcome. You can put them in the chat or you can verbalize them or you can even post a comment in the wiki as a comment if you have access to confluence. Great. So I see two hands now. Satish, please go ahead.

SATISH BABU: Thanks, Justine. This is a very interesting webinar. I think we should continue the series of webinars focusing on the next round. I had a question regarding IDN variants and the variant set. Is there any impact of bringing in variants into the equation vis-a-vis application support? Thanks.

JUSTINE CHEW: Okay, thanks for that question. At the moment, no, because as I said, my understanding is the evaluation for applicants is based on the applicant itself, not the string that's being applied for. So we know that variants are tied to the string. So I think the simplified answer would be

no, there shouldn't be any impact. If things don't turn out that way or if my understanding is incorrect or if in the meantime, GDS has reconsidered their position, then we will definitely keep an eye on that and we will be reporting back on that. Shah, you have your hand up.

SHAH RAHMAN: Hi, this is Shah for the record. This is a great presentation, actually, when your presentation, many things have been cleared. But I just have a comment or you can take as input. I'm from Bangladesh. So far I know, well, many of the developing countries are also thinking on this new gTLD. They're thinking about options open for the new gTLD. But my thinking is that as you said, many applications may have appeared in this process. But I think there should be for the entrepreneur, those who are startups or could be a foreign entrepreneur in the countries, they could have that chance. So if we can think about them, then maybe the developing countries, entrepreneurs get that opportunity to participate in the application.

JUSTINE CHEW: Okay, I think I got the gist of what you were saying. Your audio was quite bad. And I don't know the slide number. So Yesim, you're going to have to help me out here and scroll backwards. It would be the shot that has the three, sorry, the two blue boxes. Yep, stop. Okay. So Shah, if you see one under the public interest limb of the specific criteria set, it talks about being run by a local entrepreneur or not-for-profit, item seven. So I think there is reference to what you're suggesting there as part of the evaluation criteria. Now, again, I have to qualify to say that

this is what happened in 2012. We don't know whether it's going to remain the same for the next round. My understanding is that in terms of SubPro recommendation, we have said that essentially it should remain similar for the next round in terms of how the applicant support program and the evaluation criteria and those sort of things are set up. Okay, so any other questions? I don't think I saw any more in... Okay, Satish asked his question verbally, so that's fine. So no other questions? Anyone has any comments about, as I said before, you find this too high level, too detailed? Any other things that you want an answer on that we might try and cover in part two? Please feel free to tell us. I work on the basis of input. So I can only tell you what I think about certain things and I can tell you facts, obviously, but I also need input in terms of what you want to know, what you want answered. And as I said before, if you have a question that we do not yet have an answer on, or it's something that we are definitely keeping an eye on in terms of implementation during the IRT call, then that is also very valuable to us. I guess I speak for Cheryl as well, that these things are things that we want to be able to then relay back or ask GDS for an answer because it would be totally relevant. Because it's community input, really. We just have to work within the confines of what has been recommended and approved in terms of consensus policy recommendation.

Okay. So if no one else has questions or comments, we can finish early, I guess, unless we want to take a picture. I suppose it's always good to take a picture. So if I can impose on people who can, to turn on their cameras so that we can take a picture of your beautiful and handsome faces for prosperity. Thank you very much for spending your morning,

afternoon, evening with me. Appreciate it. I'm always trying to spread information, spread knowledge, share whatever I know, and also collect input as I say. It's very important that we have this community process and this sharing of knowledge both ways, by the way, both ways. So very appreciative of the fact that you've signed up for the webinar and turned up. And thank you so much for your comments and questions. Okay. So who's taking photos? I presume it's Yesim. Okay, great. So thank you so much. Again, if you have questions or comments, please keep them coming. You're not limited to just this particular webinar. I'm sure you'll find a way to get them to me and Cheryl. As I said, email's great. You can contact staff if you don't know how to reach Cheryl and myself. Or you can post it in the wiki agenda. If you have access to Confluence, you can always post a comment. And yes. So good day to everyone.

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