

# **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  
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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:

- The 2012 version of the [New gTLD Applicant Guidebook](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [Applicant Support Process](#) [link goes to 2012 version; will be appended to the ASP handbook once the updated version is ready]
- [\[Link to New gTLD Program website\]](#)
- [Draft New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Guidebook Materials on the](#)

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

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[Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team \(IRT\) Wiki Workspace](#)

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

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## 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 fee 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. The ASP is not intended to provide support to entities that were created by, are affiliated<sup>2</sup> with other persons or entities, or those that have ongoing funding/investment. 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

Recognizing that some potential applicants for the New gTLD Program may not be able to pay the full application fee given other costs associated with establishing and running a registry, the ASP is intended to provide qualified candidates the opportunity to pay reduced evaluation fees for the New gTLD Program application – a [XX-85%] reduction of the US\$[X] application fee. Some applicants also may desire access to professional services to assist in the developing and submission of their New gTLD Program application. ICANN org is working to identify service providers now and we will provide a list of those vendors who have made themselves available to qualified supported applicants. Qualified supported applicants may be eligible to receive additional non-financial support that becomes available after the ASP opens.

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

- A [XX-85%] reduction in New gTLD Program application fees for qualified supported applicants.
- A [bid credit or multiplier, TBD] applied to supported applicants participating in an ICANN Auction of Last Resort<sup>3</sup> as a result of contention with other gTLD applicants.

Commented [1]: Global comment to IRT: exactly which application/evaluation fees to be articulated and confirmed.

Commented [2]: Comment to IRT: research still under way on this. IRT will be updated once implementation proposal(s) are available.

The non-financial support that qualified candidates may receive includes:

<sup>2</sup> 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, 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.” (See: <https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement>)

<sup>3</sup> 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>

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- 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 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.
  - [Application Counselors]
  - An ASP training program
  - Reduced or eliminated 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 Categories

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

- **General Business Due Diligence:** This pre-screening includes a legal compliance check, background screening, and cybersquatting history check, confirming that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria noted in the Applicant Guidebook 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 further ASP evaluation.
- **Public Responsibility Due Diligence:** The applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote the industries indicated in the list of exclusions (see [Public Responsibility Due Diligence](#)), nor does the entity intend to apply for a gTLD string representing an excluded industry.
- **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 gTLD application fee without experiencing financial hardship.
- **Eligible Entities:** The work of the entity applying for support is primarily focused on public interest contributions (see [ICANN's Global Public Interest Framework](#)).

## 2.3. ASP vs. gTLD Program Evaluation

ASP applications will be evaluated by a Support Application Review Panel (SARP) — a function that will be performed by a third-party vendor to ICANN. 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 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 pay the required fees to submit a New gTLD Program application.

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### 3. Applicant Support Program Timeline

Entities seeking support through the ASP will have an opportunity to submit an application [from Q4 2024 to Q1 2026]. 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.<sup>4</sup>

The ASP application submission period is [16 months]. The deadline for submitting ASP applications is [2 months] prior to the start of the New gTLD Program application submission period. The intent is for all ASP applicants seeking support to receive evaluation results before applying to the New gTLD Program. See [Table 1](#) and [Figure 1](#) below.

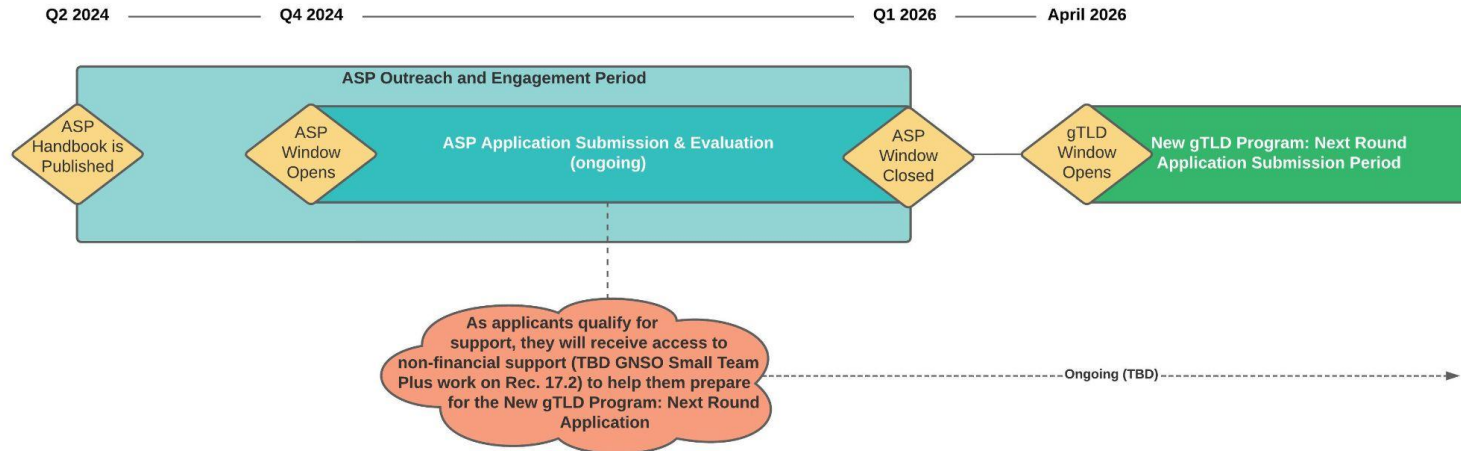
**Table 1.** ASP Timeline and Key Dates.

Date	Description
Q4 2024	The ASP opens to receive applications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants register, upload their application documentation, and submit the information necessary to be evaluated across the five evaluation categories.</li><li>• Applications that pass General Business Due Diligence are sent to the Support Applicant Review Panel of independent, third-party evaluators for review.</li><li>• Applicants receive the results of their evaluation [generally 12-16 weeks] after their application is confirmed to be complete and submitted.</li></ul>
Q1 2026	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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

**Figure 1. High-Level Flow of ASP and gTLD Program Timelines.**



Please note that the ASP application submission period is open up to **two months** prior to the beginning of the New gTLD Program application submission period and applying early may benefit applicants. For example, New gTLD Program applicants may need time to negotiate with Registry Service Providers (RSPs) in advance of submitting a gTLD application. ICANN will publish a list of pre-evaluated RSPs six months prior to the opening of the New gTLD Program application submission period. It may be helpful for gTLD applicants to know whether they have qualified for support prior to negotiating an agreement with an RSP.

In addition, qualified supported applicants will have access to a list of pro bono professional service providers to help them develop a gTLD application. The earlier a supported applicant has access to pro bono services, the more time they will have to utilize those services to inform the development of their gTLD application. Similarly, access to additional non-financial support will be most beneficial if the supported applicant has adequate time to utilize available resources.



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## 4. Reduction of New gTLD Program Application Fees

Qualified ASP applicants that successfully complete the General Business Due Diligence and Public Responsibility Due Diligence screenings, and that meet the eligibility criteria will be eligible to receive a [XX-85%] reduction in New gTLD Program Application fees, as outlined in [Table 2](#) below.

**Commented [3]:** Global comment to IRT: exactly which application/evaluation fees to be articulated and confirmed.

### 4.1. New gTLD Program Evaluation Fees

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

New gTLD Program Application Fee/Cost Description	Reduction for Qualified ASP Applicants
New gTLD Program Application base fee reduction	[XX-85%]
Other applicable fees within the New gTLD Program	[XX-85%]
Auction [bid credit/multiplier] [TBD - based upon further research]	[TBD]

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## 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. The 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. [\[refer to available New gTLD Program materials\]](#)

The ASP application requires submission of documents and responses to questions in order to demonstrate that the applicant has met all program 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.

AGB Eligibility Criteria	Applicant must meet eligibility criteria as noted in the Applicant Guidebook for the next round. It is anticipated that the next round eligibility criteria will closely follow the <a href="#">2012 Applicant Guidebook</a> (Module 1, page 21).	<p>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.</p> <p><u>New gTLD Program Eligibility:</u> 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.<sup>5</sup></p>
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 for pass/fail TBC]
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.

<sup>5</sup> 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)
<p><u>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.</u></p>	<p>Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote <u>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]</u>: 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incitement to or promotion of violent lawless action;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Incitement to or promotion of child pornography or other sexual abuse of children; or</li> <li>• A determination that the entity produces or trades in activities would be contrary to specific principles of international law as reflected in relevant international instruments of law.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p><u>Definition of “affiliation” from the Registry Agreement:</u> “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, 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</p>

**Commented [4]:** Comment to IRT: following the ASP-IRT feedback on this criterion and indicators in December, ICANN org has made suggested edits to incorporate the IRT's input. These are in suggestion mode to show the proposed edits.

**Deleted:** Applicant does not produce, trade in, or promote the industries indicated. Nor does the applicant intend to apply for a gTLD string representing and/or promoting an excluded industry.

**Deleted:** Limited Public Interest Objection – The applied-for gTLD string is contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order that are recognized under principles of international law”

**Deleted:** the following industries. Nor does the applicant intend to apply for a gTLD string representing:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Firearms/weapons
- Gambling
- Adult entertainment
- any product or activity deemed illegal under multiple jurisdictions or international conventions and agreements.
- Additional

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

	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. <sup>77</sup>
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### 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.	<p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would funding support from ICANN enable your organization to apply for a gTLD?</li> <li>• Why would the full base gTLD application fee present a financial hardship?</li> </ul> <p>The answers should correspond with your financial documentation and description of funding and revenue sources.</p> <p><u>Documents:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
	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.	

### 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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Submit [X percentage or \$X USD fixed amount] deposit toward the base gTLD application fee</li> <li>OR</li> <li>2. Submit [10%] of the [\$X USD] deposit with a</li> </ol>	<p>Please describe how your organization plans to cover the remaining base gTLD application fee without experiencing financial hardship, as evidenced by a deposit.</p> <p>If your entity cannot</p>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement>

	<p>narrative statement. Narrative should include plans for acquiring the remaining amount of funding necessary to apply at least six months prior to the start of the gTLD application submission period [Month/Year].</p> <p>NOTE: ASP applicants that withdraw are eligible to receive a refund.</p>	<p>demonstrate the ability to pay the remaining base gTLD application fee without financial hardship as described, please submit a funding plan and accompanying narrative to describe how the entity plans to meet these financial requirements.</p> <p>Determined by submitting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audited financial statements; and</li> <li>• Current financial statements.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
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## 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). Please see [Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart](#).

### 5.5.1. Nonprofits, charities, or **equivalen**:

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

**Commented [5]:** Question for IRT: The IRT asked for clarification about applicants that might fall into multiple eligible entity categories. Does this chapeau paragraph address this feedback?

Also, the IRT asked org to include use-cases--does this paragraph cover that, along with the reference to Figure 2 or are we looking for more concrete examples such as: Applicant is a nonprofit Indigenous organization and then walk through how they would apply? Per the chapeau paragraph highlighted here, org is suggesting that applicants that meet multiple eligibility categories are encouraged to submit all relevant supporting documentation. Is there further instruction that would be helpful to provide here?

**Commented [6]:** Confirm with experts whether all criteria are required to determine equivalency

required to assess equivalency.		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
1. Registered, recognized nonprofit, nongovernmental, and/or charitable organization with relevant regulatory authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓</li> <li>Applicant submits a formal document or certificate from relevant regulatory authorities acknowledging its charitable status. Additional documentation providing relevant governing and financial documentation in criteria 2.i through 2.vi may be requested by ICANN org.</li> </ul>	ICANN will accept 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. If your organization does not currently have a valid ED certificate, ICANN will make available a third-party vendor who can provide a determination based upon criteria 2.i - 2.vi below. .
2.i The organization must certify that it is organized for charitable purposes, and/or that local law requires it to operate exclusively for charitable purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization must certify that it is organized for charitable purposes, and/or that local law requires it to operate exclusively for charitable purposes.</li> <li>Governing documents must describe purposes and powers.</li> <li>Governing documents must prohibit the organization from engaging in non charitable activities, except as an insubstantial part of its activities.</li> </ul>	Governing documents and self-declared information provided by the organization
2.ii The organization must operate exclusively for charitable purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization must certify that it is primarily engaged in activities that are charitable.</li> <li>The organization's governing documents (and actual activities) must support the same.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governing documents and self-declared information provided by the organization.</li> <li>Ancillary documents such as annual reports, program brochures, or websites may also be reviewed.</li> </ul>
2.iii The organization must show evidence that its assets will be used for charitable purposes in perpetuity.	Nonprofit established for at least 18 months prior to applying to the Applicant Support Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization must certify that on dissolution, its assets will be transferred for charitable purposes, AND</li> <li>The organization's governing documents or local law must support this.</li> </ul>
2.iv Lobbying and politics	The organization's activities	The organization must certify

**Deleted:** Organizations within the United States (U.S.) must have a 501(c)(3) determination from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) **OR**

**Commented [8]:** Checking with experts: Why is one exclusive and the indicator is primarily?

**Commented [9]:** Checking with experts: 18mos may be too long for start-ups

	cannot influence legislation ("lobby") more than an <b>insubstantial</b> amount. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization cannot intervene in political campaigns for public office.</li> </ul>	that it does not engage in substantial lobbying <sup>8</sup> or intervene in elections, AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization's governing documents (and actual activities) must support the same.</li> <li>Ancillary documents such as annual reports, program brochures, or websites may also be reviewed.</li> </ul>
2.v Private benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization's activities cannot benefit private persons or non charitable organizations.</li> <li>Not an affiliate of a for-profit entity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization must certify that its net assets do not benefit any private individuals or insiders, AND</li> <li>The organization's governing documents (and actual activities) or local law must support the same.</li> </ul>
2.vi Public support: to be considered a public charity, entity must show that at least one-third of its funding comes from "public" sources or as revenue earned from its charitable activities. Public sources meaning sources other than individual donors, companies, and private foundations.  This does not apply to certain religious organizations, hospitals, medical research organizations, and educational institutions (universities or schools) that qualify as public charities; they do not need to meet minimum public support requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should have at least 33 1/3 percent public support (at least one-third of its support must be from "public" sources.</li> <li>Public support is calculated over a five-year period.</li> <li>In some instances if an organization has less than 33 1/3 percent public support but more than 10 percent, relevant facts and circumstances must establish that the organization operates similarly to a publicly supported charity.</li> <li>If the organization is less than five years old, it must submit financial information from its date of formation (including a short year). It must also project financial information for the remaining years in order to provide a total of five years for the analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five fiscal years of financial information (does not need to be audited)</li> <li>If the organization is less than five years old, it must submit financial information from its date of formation (including a short year). It must also project financial information for the remaining years in order to provide a total of five years for the analysis.</li> </ul>

**Commented [10]:** Checking with experts: Define these terms: insubstantial/substantial and reference points

**Commented [11]:** Comment & Question to IRT: Based upon the ASP-IRT feedback in December, ICANN org has incorporated the EPDP on Specific Curative Rights Protection Mechanisms for IGOs definition here. However, org suggests omitting the first optional indicator (i) for three reasons:  
1) evaluating whether an IGO has international legal personality is a difficult, time-consuming process that requires expert opinion;  
2) there are very few experts that provide this type of evaluation; and  
3) if the IGO meets either or both of the other two indicators then the UN has done the evaluation of the IGO already for it to enjoy observer status or be on the list of UN programs, agencies, etc. Indicators (ii) and (iii) provide a basis for the SARP's objective evaluation, rather than relying on the SARP to find a qualified expert and waiting for their opinion on evaluating indicator (i). Does this seem acceptable as a proposed path forward to the IRT?

5.5.2. Intergovernmental organizations		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document

<sup>8</sup> See NGO Source definitions on "lobbying" and "substantial": <https://www.ngosource.org/blog/lobbying-by-us-public-charities-and-their-foreign-equivalents>



Entity applying is an Intergovernmental Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental Organization (IGOs) defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(ii) 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</li> <li>(iii) a Specialized Agency or distinct entity, organ or program of the United Nations.<sup>10, 11</sup></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is an Intergovernmental Organization, per the indicators provided.
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**Formatted:** Outline numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: Bullet + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

**Deleted:** "nation-state level organizations created by treaty or convention"<sup>9</sup> ¶  
Recognized by the United Nations as a specialized agency or organizations having observer status at the U.N. General Assembly. ¶

**Optional:** Applicant has a .int domain name for a presently eligible IGO, demonstrating it is an IGO and verified through IANA. ¶

¶ From EPDP on Specific Curative Rights Protection Mechanisms for IGOs: ¶

¶ "IGO Complainant" refers to:

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**Deleted:** (i) an international organization established by a treaty, and which possesses international legal personality; or ["and"]

5.5.3. Indigenous/tribal people's organizations		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
Entity is an indigenous/tribal peoples' organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official registration as an indigenous organization, certification from relevant authorities, and/or recognition by national or international indigenous rights organizations<sup>12</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Applicant entity provides documentation to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) by the indigenous peoples' community/ies must be enclosed with the application form. This should be a letter of the beneficiary community signed by the leader/s</li> </ul>	Please submit required documentation per the indicators provided.

**Commented [12]:** Comment to IRT: ICANN org added this footnote in response to the IRT's feedback in December.

<sup>10</sup> 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](https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/un_system_chart.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> 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-qns-council/epdp-specific-crp-igo-final-report-02-04-2022-en.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> 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.

	<p>and representatives of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The people providing consent to the project need to be the representing institutions of the communities where the project will be implemented, and their name, role, address and telephone number will need to be included on the FPIC document in order for ICANN and its partner organizations to verify the information with the indigenous peoples' communities. Consent is the expected outcome of the consultation, participation and collective decision-making process by the local communities. It is the mutual agreement reached, documented and recognized by all parties.</li> </ul>	
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5.5.4. Social Impact or Public benefit micro or small sized business		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
<b>1. Entity is a social enterprise, social impact<sup>13</sup> or public interest benefit<sup>14</sup> enterprise</b>	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated/registered as a benefit or social enterprise in the entity's principal place of business</li> </ul>	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators

<sup>13</sup> 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](#)

<sup>14</sup> 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](#)

<p>social enterprise or public benefit company</p> <p><b>OR</b> certified as a Benefit Corporation.</p> <p><b>OR</b> meeting below criteria 2.1 through 2.iii</p>	<p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified <a href="#">Benefit Corporation</a>.</li> </ul>	<p>provided.</p>
<p>2.i Commitment, in legal founding documents to primary social or benefit purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stated commitment, in legal founding documents such as Articles of Incorporation, Articles, Notice of Articles, or equivalent, to primary social impact or public benefit purpose.</li> <li>• Company must exist for at least 18 months prior to submitting an ASP application and report annual revenue.</li> <li>• Annual assessment reports publicly posted, listing social or public benefits provided in the previous year.</li> </ul>	<p>Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.</p>
<p>2.ii Operations directed at pursuit of stated social or benefit goal/purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of a third-party standard the public/social benefit the enterprise plans to measure itself against and a public statement to that effect.</li> <li>• Publicly stated rationale for selecting the chosen third-party standard.</li> <li>• Annual assessment report against the selected third-party standard (self-assessment or third-party assessment).</li> </ul>	<p>Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.</p>
<p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation including annual reports, impact assessments, or case studies that indicate how financial surpluses are being used to fulfill</li> </ul>	<p>Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a social impact or public interest benefit enterprise, per the indicators provided.</p>

Commented [13]: Checking with experts: Reconsider time requirements here, consistent with charitable status criteria as well.

owners.	<p>the stated social or public benefit objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social or public benefit impact measurement and reporting that assess and quantify the social or public benefit outcomes achieved with the financial surpluses.</li> <li>• Ratio of surplus allocation indicates that a majority (&gt; greater than 60 percent of revenue or profits) went to programmatic activities aimed at achieving the entity's stated social or public benefit objectives.</li> </ul>	
<b>3.i Entity is a micro or small sized business</b>	<b>Entity must meet two out of three indicators (employees, assets, and sales)<sup>15</sup></b>	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a micro or small enterprise, per the indicators provided.
3.ii Micro, Small	<p>Fewer than 50 employees</p> <p>Total Assets are less than <b>[9?]</b> million USD</p> <p>Annual Sales are less than <b>[9?]</b> million USD</p>	

**Commented [14]:** Comment to IRT: In December the ASP IRT provided feedback that the \$3m USD indicator threshold may be too low here. The medium sized thresholds are \$15m USD. Taking IRT feedback into account, ICANN org suggests here taking the average between \$3m and \$15m to define the maximum revenue and sales size for small businesses. We look forward to discussing this with the IRT.

<b>5.5.5. Micro or small sized business from a less-developed economy</b>		
Criterion	Indicator(s)	Question / Document
<b>Entity is a micro, or small sized business</b>	<b>Entity must meet two out of three indicators (employees, assets, and sales)</b>	Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity applying is a micro or small enterprise, per the indicators provided.
Micro, Small	<p>Fewer than 50 employees</p> <p>Total Assets is less than <b>[9?]</b> million USD</p> <p>Annual Sales is less than <b>[9?]</b> million USD</p>	

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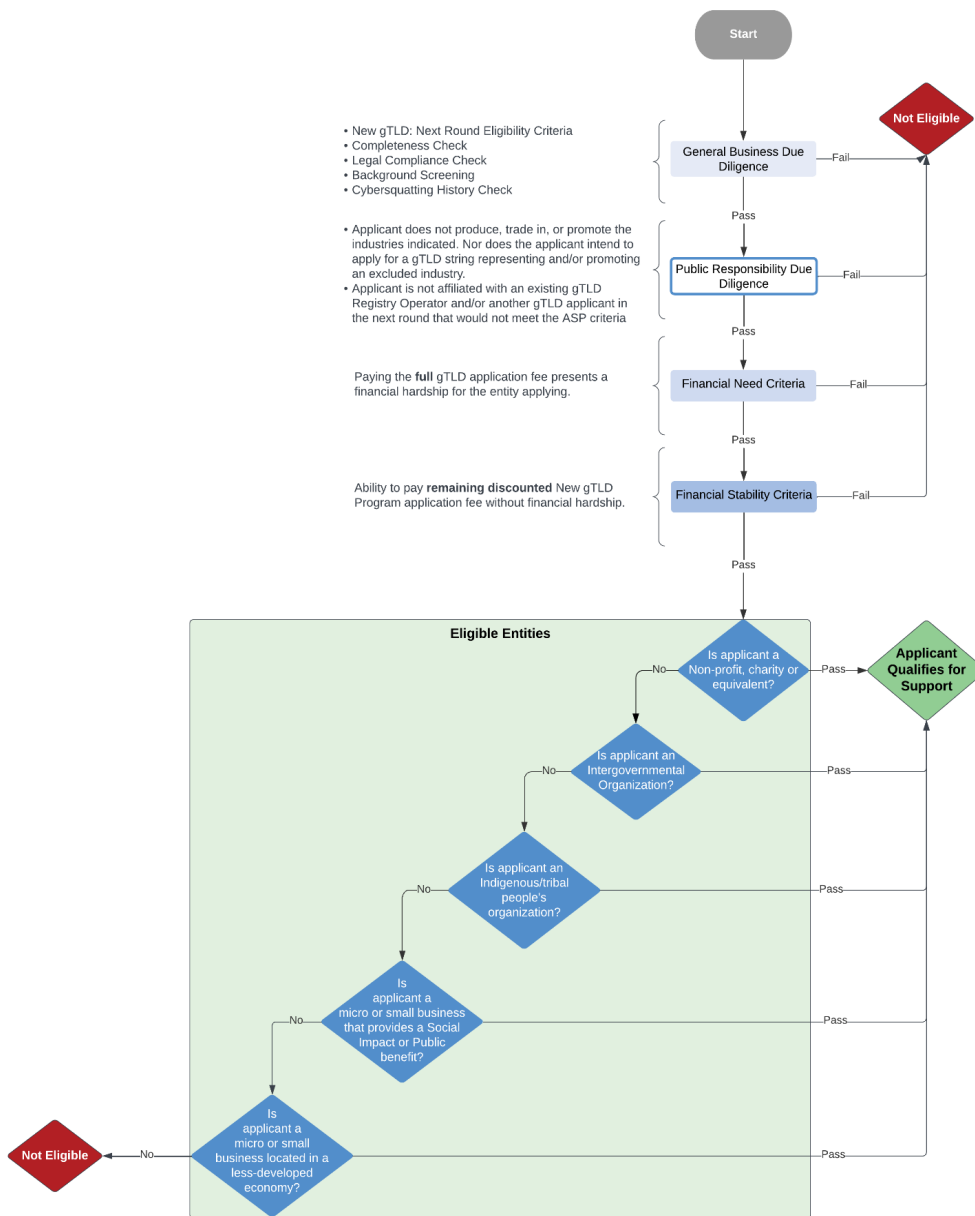
<sup>15</sup> There is no universal definition for micro or small business. Definitions vary from country to country. The indicators provided here are intended to reflect the most common thresholds from other global and regional funding institutions.

<p><b>Entity’s principal place of business is from a country/territory/region that has a less-developed economy</b></p> <p><u>GAC’s definition of under-served</u>: “An under-served region is defined as one that: Does not have a well developed DNS and/or associated industry or economy; and/or Has low awareness within its government of ICANN, ICANN’s role and functions and policy processes and the way that these policies affect it.”</p>	<p>Principal place of business must be located in one of the following: Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Economies in Transition, or Developing Economies, as defined by U.N. Country Classifications (2022).</p> <p>Principal place of business is defined as “the place where a corporation’s officers direct, control, and coordinate the corporation’s activities.”</p> <p>Determined as the location in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the largest volume of the corporation’s operations is located; and</li> <li>• the largest number of the corporation’s top executives is located.</li> </ul>	<p>Please submit required documentation to indicate the entity’s principal place of business is in a less-developed economy, per the indicators provided.</p>
	<p>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...<b>[submitting identification/showing identification on a short video interview]</b></p>	<p>Please submit required documentation per the indicators provided.</p>

**Commented [15]:** Comment for IRT: Note that GAC definition seems to be focused on the objectives of informing engagement and outreach activities: <https://gac.icann.org/working-group/gac-working-group-on-underserved-regions-usrwg>

It’s unclear how this definition (e.g., does not have a well-developed DNS or has low awareness of ICANN) could be translated into clear, objective indicators for a third-party evaluator to assess.

Figure 2. High-Level Eligibility Flowchart.



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

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## 5.6. Restrictions

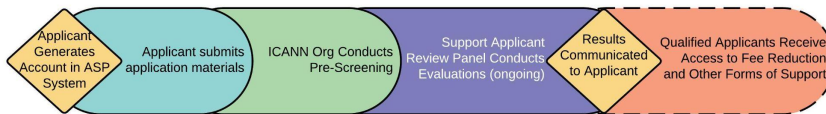
- ASP applicants that qualify for support will receive the [XX-85]% gTLD application fee reduction on *one gTLD application only*. [Those applicants applying for a string may at the same time apply for up to four variants, pending IDN ePDP Working Group Phase 1 approval].

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## 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.

### Register.

1. Go to [\[URL\]](#) to complete the registration for the ASP.
2. Receive registration confirmation.

### 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

### Submit Application.

1. Log in to the Applicant Support Program System to:
  - a. Fill out application questions in the Applicant Support Program System<sup>16</sup>.
  - b. Upload required and relevant supporting documentation.
  - c. Review and confirm that the application is complete and all supporting documents have been uploaded.
2. Check email for confirmation of your ASP application submission.
  - a. Email [globalsupport@icann.org](mailto:globalsupport@icann.org) if you experience challenges or do not receive an email confirmation of your submission.

### Evaluation Process

1. ICANN org reviews submitted application for a completeness check.
2. ICANN org may contact you if application materials are incomplete, unclear, or inaccessible.

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<sup>16</sup> Please note only applications submitted through the Applicant Support Program System will be considered for evaluation.



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3. 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.
  4. 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.
  5. The evaluation process is designed to be completed generally within [12–16] weeks.

#### Evaluation Results

1. 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.
2. If qualified, the applicant will receive information regarding the portfolio of support available (see Section 7.5).
3. If the applicant does not qualify for support, they may:
  - a. [submit a challenge/appeal request—TBD depending outcome of that topic]
  - b. Proceed in submitting a standard New gTLD Program application and pay the application fees in full.
4. 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 of any material changes to information previously submitted on their application.

[After an applicant’s ASP evaluation begins, the application will be locked, meaning that changes to responses flagged for evaluation would be postponed until after the evaluation is completed.] Material changes to an ASP application may need to be re-evaluated by ICANN org and the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP).

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## 7. ASP Application Evaluation

The ASP application evaluation will occur in two phases:

1. ICANN org-conducted General Business Due Diligence Screening evaluation.
2. Independent third-party vendor-conducted eligibility 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 with the independent third-party vendor to conduct subsequent evaluations. The 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 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<sup>17</sup>.

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**).

### 7.2. Scoring

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.

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<sup>17</sup> For more information see Section: Review Panels (pg. 40) of the [Survey of Globally Recognized Procedures for Financial Assistance Programs](#).

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Application and evaluation of the criteria against applicants' documentation is at the sole discretion of the SARP. The SARP also may [conduct independent research<sup>18</sup> 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 asking 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; however, they will not be permitted to make any changes to the application. 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 [XX-85%].
  - 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 appeal 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 fee.<sup>19</sup>

### 7.5. Support Package 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:

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<sup>18</sup> [Definition pending]

<sup>19</sup> 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."

Commented [16]: Q to the IRT: Better way of framing this section? It's essentially the resource allocation method, but this seems like an awkward phrase to put into an applicant-facing handbook. Other ideas?

- The percentage of gTLD application fee reduction available
- Pro bono service providers that volunteer their services to supported applicants. Pro bono service providers are not endorsed or contracted by ICANN org.
- [Application Counselors
- An ASP training program
- Reduced or eliminated 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 fee. [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 1. 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 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 processing ASP applications and communicate that available funds have been exhausted.]

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/appeal mechanism for ASP TBD]

**Commented [17]:** Comment to IRT: for more information on this, ICANN org presented materials to the GNSO Small Team  
Plus: <https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/278856303/ICANN%20org%20presentation%20-%20GNSO%20Small%20Team%20Plus%20Recommendation%2017.2.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1701113603000&api=v2>

**Commented [18]:** Note to IRT: this bracketed section reflects 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. In the meantime, we wanted to share draft thinking based upon org's current understanding of the final draft GGP recommendations.

For more information on the GGP recommendations, see:  
<https://gns0.icann.org/sites/default/files/policy/2023/correspondence/ggp-team-et-al-to-gns0-council-et-al-08dec23-en.pdf>

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

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## 9. Additional Information

### 9.1. Application comment period process - TBC

### 9.2. Appeals Process – TBD pending topic

### 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

Commented [19]: Links to be added as available

- New gTLD Program Next Round Applicant Guidebook:
  - Glossary of commonly used terms in the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook
- Applicant Support Program:
  - Events:
  - Trainings:
  - Resources:
- New gTLD Application System:
- New gTLD Program website