4.2.5 Applicant Guidebook

- *4.2.5.1 Explanation of Subject*

The Applicant Guidebook (AGB) is effectively the implementation of GNSO policy recommendations from the its 2007 Final Report, although at the time, it was referred to as the Request for Proposal (RFP).

> *This policy development process has been designed to produce a systemised and ongoing mechanism for applicants to propose new top-level domains. The **Request for Proposals (RFP)** for the first round will include scheduling information for the subsequent rounds to occur within one year. After the first round of new applications, the application system will be evaluated by ICANN's TLDs Project Office to assess the effectiveness of the application system. Success metrics will be developed and any necessary adjustments made to the process for subsequent rounds.*

The development of the AGB, as it became known, was intended to act as a roadmap to potential applicants and other parties interested in the process. The development of the AGB was iterative, integrating public comment and feedback received through other channels into its numerous incarnations, as is noted in the Preamble to the AGB:

> *ICANN's work next focused on implementation: creating an application and evaluation process for new gTLDs that is aligned with the policy recommendations and provides a clear roadmap for applicants to reach delegation, including Board approval. This implementation work is reflected in the drafts of the applicant guidebook that were released for public comment, and in the explanatory papers giving insight into rationale behind some of the conclusions reached on specific topics. Meaningful community input has led to revisions of the draft applicant guidebook. In parallel, ICANN has established the resources needed to successfully launch and operate the program. This process concluded with the decision by the ICANN Board of Directors in June 2011 to launch the New gTLD Program.*

The AGB served as the guide for staff in developing operational processes and procedures.

- *4.2.5.2 Questions and Concerns Related to Subject*

The AGB was developed over the course of several years, countless volunteer hours, with numerous iterations and explanatory memoranda, and much debate in public comments, during ICANN meetings, online fora and other channels. As a result, it is a piece of documentation that represents bottom up, multi stakeholder compromise and as such, is unlikely to be considered perfect by all parties, as compromise generally requires concessions.

In the deliberations of the DG, the views exchanged on the AGB were diverse. As the AGB was a singular document intended to support the program, it was likely foreseeable that there would

be sections that may be less relevant to certain parties than others. The AGB provided the requirements to be considered by applicants, consultants, back-end providers, registrars, rights holders, governments, and others interested in the program.

Some members of the DG suggested partitioning the AGB into distinct, audience driven sections, believing that it may improve readability and understanding of rules. Others suggested that the AGB could be made more process-driven, providing step-by-step instructions. Still, others even suggested that the AGB was the wrong vehicle for implementation of the policy entirely, although an alternative was not suggested.

As a result of the many program reviews being performed by various facets of the community, it remains likely that there will need to be revisions to the AGB. In addition, in the event that there are substantive changes to the existing New gTLD policy, the AGB must be adjusted accordingly to reflect those changes. Any changes to the AGB for subsequent procedures must be subject to community discourse, as occurred in the past.

- *4.2.5.3 Relevant Guidance*

    o   Current AGB - http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/historical-documentation

- *4.2.5.4 Rationale for Policy Development*

The DG did not anticipate policy development work in regards to the Applicant Guidebook, although it could be necessary if there is broad support for an alternate vehicle for implementation of the new gTLD policy. A potential PDP-WG on New gTLD Subsequent Procedures may want to consider providing implementation guidance, particularly around the structure of the AGB, for consideration by ICANN in developing the next AGB, though modifications to the AGB (provided the AGB remains as the implementation vehicle) would presumably remain an iterative, community-inclusive process.