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## 8.4 Communications

### 8.4.1 Introduction

New gTLD Program Communications refers to various communications activities executed prior to and throughout the life of the Program in support of the New gTLD Program Communications Plan. This section of the Program Implementation Review report discusses the implementation of this Plan.

### 8.4.2 Relevant Guidance

The following guidance is relevant to the topic of Communications and will be discussed in further detail in Sections 8.4.3 and 8.4.4 of this report:

- GNSO Implementation Guideline C: ICANN will provide frequent communications with applicants and the public including comment forums<sup>446</sup>
- GNSO Implementation Guideline M: “ICANN may establish a capacity building and support mechanism aiming at facilitating effective communication on important and technical Internet governance functions in a way that no longer requires all participants in the conversation to be able to read and write English.”
- GNSO Implementation Guideline O: “ICANN may put in place systems that could provide information about the gTLD process in major languages other than English, for example, in the six working languages of the United Nations.”
- ICANN Board Resolution 2011.06.20: Approval of the New gTLD Program<sup>447</sup>
- ICANN Board Resolution 2011.10.28.23-24: Budget Request – New gTLD Communications Plan<sup>448</sup>

### 8.4.3 Background

On 20 June 2011, the ICANN Board approved the New gTLD Program, and along with it the Draft New gTLD Communications Plan.<sup>449,450</sup> The goal of the Plan was to “increase likelihood of success

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<sup>446</sup> ICANN. (8 August 2007) ICANN Generic Names Supporting Organization Final Report Introduction of New Generic Top-Level Domains, Part A. Retrieved from <http://gns0.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm>

<sup>447</sup> ICANN. (20 June 2011) Approved Resolution | Meeting of the ICANN Board of Directors. Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2011-06-20-en>

<sup>448</sup> ICANN. (28 October 2011) Approved Resolution | Meeting of the ICANN Board of Directors. Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2011-10-28-en#3>

<sup>449</sup> ICANN. (20 June 2011) Approved Resolution | Meeting of the ICANN Board of Directors. Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2011-06-20-en>

<sup>450</sup> ICANN. (30 May 2011). New gTLD Communications Plan. Retrieved from <https://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/new-gtlds-communications-plan-30may11-en.pdf>

for the new gTLD program and to ensure that new gTLDs are communicated as clearly and comprehensively as possible – both the opportunities they present and the risks involved in applying for and operating one.” To achieve this goal, the Plan envisioned a global awareness campaign to raise awareness of the who, what, when, where and why of new gTLDs. The Plan laid out important aspects of the campaign, including key messages, tone and vision, and theme and audiences, which served as the basis for the development of all Program-related information. The Plan also outlined various communications channels and tools that could be used to disseminate information.

The core component of the Communications Plan entailed four key communications areas to be executed across four phases of the Plan. The four key communications areas were:

1. Coordinated campaign incorporating TV, radio, print and online advertising elements, customized by region.
2. Top-tier international press coverage.
3. Five major regional launches/road shows.
4. Social and other online media.

Table 8.4.i below provides a summary of the four phases of the Communications Plan.

*Table 8.4.i: Summary of the Four Phases of the Communications Plan*

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Phase 1 | <b>Pre-launch</b> – Defined as the four-month campaign period leading up to the official launch of the program signaled by the opening of the application period. |
| Phase 2 | <b>Launch</b> – Defined as the 60-day period when applications were accepted.   |
| Phase 3 | <b>Post-launch</b> – Defined as the time period between the close of the application period and the open of the next round.                                       |
| Phase 4 | <b>TLDs go live/in the root.</b>  |

The New gTLD Communications Plan further provided evaluation metrics to be collected such as website statistics, countries reached during regional launches, attendees at outreach events, applications received and social media monitoring.

## 8.4.4 Assessment

Though it included evaluation metrics, the communications plan did not define “success,” which makes it difficult to assess success of the Plan. As such, sections 8.4.4.1, 8.4.4.2, and 8.4.4.3 below provide an overview of activities performed during each phase and metrics collected during the execution of the Plan.

#### 8.4.4.1 PHASE 1: PRE-LAUNCH

The New gTLD Program launched when ICANN opened the application window on 11 January 2012 (see Section 1.1: Application Submission of this report).

During Phase 1 of the Plan, all four key communications areas were utilized. Regional launches/road shows and press coverage were the key activities during this Phase. There was significant growth in some social media activities with 1,300+ Twitter followers in October 2011 compared to approximately 400 one year prior. Some online advertising was also done to drive traffic to the New gTLD microsite, an ICANN website dedicated to the New gTLD Program. Although the Plan called for TV, radio, and print advertising, in order to gain synergy, efforts were directed toward getting media coverage for the road shows.

##### *Identity*

As called for in the Communications Plan, a New gTLD Program logo and style guide were developed and used on all online and offline New gTLD-related materials. The logo allowed for an effective way to brand the New gTLD Program.

##### *Content Development and Dissemination*

Prior to the opening of the application window (see Section 1.1: Application Submission of this report), key Program-related documents such as the Applicant Guidebook, the May 2010 New gTLD Program Budget,<sup>451</sup> and some public comment summaries and analyses were translated from English into the five other UN languages, in order to allow and encourage broad input into the Program. Knowledge base articles that educated interested parties about the Program requirements were also translated from English into the five other UN languages to better promote the Program.<sup>452</sup>

During this time, the content created focused on providing information about the business potential and risks of participating in the Program, the application process, and how to apply.<sup>453,454</sup> Content was available in the form of web page content,<sup>455</sup> videos,<sup>456</sup> PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets and FAQs,<sup>457</sup> and included messages consistent with the nine messages defined in the Communications Plan.

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<sup>451</sup> ICANN. (31 May 2010) New gTLD Program Explanatory Memorandum: New gTLD Budget. Retrieved from <https://archive.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/new-gtld-budget-28may10-en.pdf>

<sup>452</sup> ICANN. New gTLD Knowledge Base. Retrieved from <https://crm-gtld.icann.org/portal-icann/index.php?action=index&module=Home>

<sup>453</sup> ICANN. Program Materials. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/program/materials>

<sup>454</sup> ICANN. Benefits and Risks of Operating a New gTLD. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/benefits-risks>

<sup>455</sup> ICANN. New Generic Top-Level Domains. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/>

<sup>456</sup> ICANN. Videos. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/historical-documentation/matrix-videos>

<sup>457</sup> ICANN. Program Materials. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/about/program/materials>

After the opening of the application window, the majority of new Program content, such as announcements,<sup>458</sup> website pages, videos, and public comment materials,<sup>459</sup> was in English, as focus shifted to assisting applicants through the Program, which required application materials to be submitted in English (per Section 1.4 of the AGB).

All New gTLD content was centralized and housed on the New gTLD microsite ([newgtlds.icann.org](http://newgtlds.icann.org)), which was launched on 19 September 2011.<sup>460</sup> To drive traffic to the microsite, ICANN placed ads on Google’s ad network and launched a banner ad campaign targeted at senior-level marketing professionals between December 2011 and January 2012. The ad campaigns resulted in more than 5,500,000 impressions and drove more than 21,000 visitors from 136 countries in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America to the microsite. Ads in 10 of the 172 developing nations targeted with the Google online advertising campaign received click-through rates (rate of people who view the ad and click on it) above the industry average.

### Regional Events

Also in support of raising awareness of new gTLDs, ICANN did major launch events between August and December 2011 in each of the five ICANN regions as called for in the Communications Plan. The regional events allowed ICANN to connect with businesses, governments, and individuals in person in various countries to promote awareness of new gTLDs. Table 8.4.ii provides statistics of the regional events that occurred during this period.

*Table 8.4.ii: Statistics of the Five Regional Events*

| ICANN Region                   | # Countries Visited | # Events per Region | Total Attendees per Region |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Africa</b>                  | 3                   | 4                   | 725                        |
| <b>Asia/Australia/Pacific</b>  | 11                  | 14                  | 12,129                     |
| <b>Europe</b>                  | 17                  | 30                  | 5,230                      |
| <b>Latin America/Caribbean</b> | 3                   | 3                   | 5,700                      |
| <b>North America</b>           | 1                   | 1                   | 500                        |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 35                  | 52                  | 24,284                     |

The Communications Plan stated that “three countries [would] be visited per region, with major speeches, press conferences and outreach events held in each.” Except for the North America region, ICANN visited at least three countries in each region. During the regional events, the New gTLD Program received significant press coverage from major news outlets. For instance, the December 2011 Beijing Roadshow press conference attracted reporters from 46 media outlets over the Asia Pacific region. Another example was the January 2012 New York Roadshow when ICANN met with six United Nations correspondents of major wire services, followed by media interviews. Media outlets included Agence France Presse (AFP), Reuters, Associated Press (AP), The New York

<sup>458</sup> ICANN. Announcements. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/announcements-and-media/latest>

<sup>459</sup> ICANN. Comments and Feedback. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/program-status/comments>

<sup>460</sup> ICANN. (19 September 2011) Announcement: ICANN Launches New Online Information Center for New Generic Top-Level Domains. Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/news/announcement-2-2011-09-19-en>

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Times, Wired, AdWeek, The Huffington Post, and South-South News. In addition to these regional events, the ICANN CEO visited 16 countries, and other staff and ICANN Board members visited 38 countries.<sup>461</sup>

#### **8.4.4.2 PHASE 2: LAUNCH**

The Communications Plan defined Phase 2 as the period of 60 days when the New gTLD applications were being accepted. The AGB in fact defined the application window as a 90-day period. As discussed in Section 1.1: Application Submission of this report, the 90-day application window was extended by approximately 45 days.

Phase 2 heavily relied on social media and the microsite to promote the Program. During this phase of the Communications Plan, ICANN continued to add content to the microsite including videos, blogs, announcements regarding the New gTLD Program, and information about the TLD Application System (see Section 8.1: Program Processes, Systems, Resources of this report). The content continued to focus on the business potential and risks of participating in the Program, on how to apply, and on the Program's requirements, consistent with the defined messages in the Communications Plan.

As regional events concluded, ICANN shifted its focus to social media to drive traffic to the microsite and to raise awareness. Between 1 January and 30 July 2012, ICANN spent approximately USD 42,000 on Twitter Ads to promote its Twitter account, @ICANN. As a result, ICANN tweets had over 4,000 clicks, 2,000 re-tweets, and the number of ICANN's Twitter followers increased from approximately 8,000 to nearly 65,000. The countries with the highest number of @ICANN followers were Indonesia, Brazil, the United States, the Philippines and India. In January 2011, ICANN conducted two Twitter chat sessions. Combined, the chats resulted in more than 200 questions and comments regarding new gTLDs.

Other mechanisms utilized during this Phase to promote the Program included posting on ICANN's Facebook page and on LinkedIn. Postings on ICANN's Facebook page generated more than 28,000 views from December 2011 to January 2012. Postings on LinkedIn targeted Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) and brand marketers' groups, who would be affected by the New gTLD Program. Postings encouraged and spurred discussions about the benefits and risks associated with new gTLDs. Collectively, these groups had more than 160,000 members.

#### **8.4.4.3 PHASE 3: POST-LAUNCH**

Communications activities during Phase 3 continued to rely heavily on social media and road shows to promote the Program. In addition, ICANN increased media engagement and began reaching out to financial and industry analysts to raise awareness and educate them about the impending expansion of the DNS as well as the choice, competition, and innovation that expansion

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<sup>461</sup> R. Beckstrom (21 December 2011) New gTLD Roadshows [Blog]. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/blog/new-gtld-roadshows-21dec11-en>

will bring. Webinars as a communication channel used to support applicants were also introduced during Phase 3.

*Reveal Day*

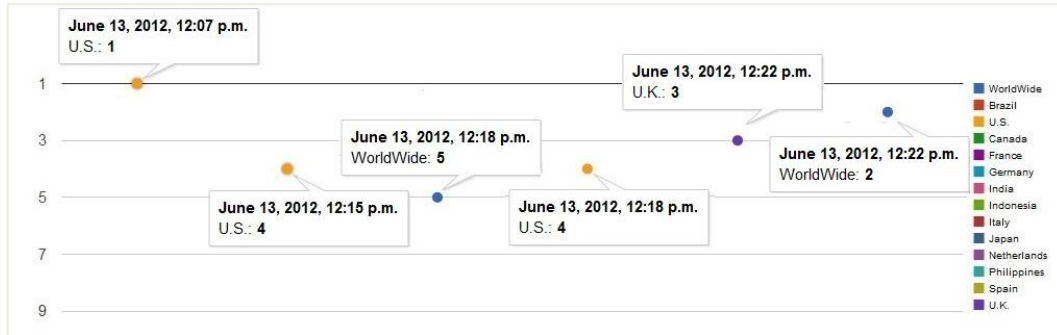
After the close of the application window on 30 May 2012, ICANN focused on promoting the next big milestone of the Program, Reveal Day.

To announce the applied-for new gTLDs, ICANN held a news conference in London on 13 June 2012, which had significant media coverage. There were over a dozen camera crews from major international broadcasts such as BBC, Al Jazeera, and CNN. The news conference was covered by worldwide news wires (e.g., Associated Press, AFP, Reuters), and was widely featured in the press, including in *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Times of India*.

The event was live-streamed on the Internet and the live video webcast was accessible at [icann.org](http://icann.org). The recording of the news conference was made available after the event.<sup>462</sup> The live webcast was intended to provide global access to the event, however, its reach to certain countries where bandwidth was limited was unknown.

On social media, #RevealDay was included on Twitter’s list of top trending topics worldwide, in the United States, and in the United Kingdom (see Figure 8.4.i).

Figure 8.4.i: Twitter Trending Topics Database (#RevealDay)



**Search results for #revealday:**

| Local     | Date/Time                 | #1                | #2                      | #3                    | #4             | #5                 | #6             | #7              | #8                 | #9             | #10                |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| WorldWide | June 13, 2012, 12:22 p.m. | #3Sonhos          | #revealday              | #PreguntasTontas      | Oh Harry       | Henry Hill         | Rise & Grind   | Horan Hump Day  | Holland vs Germany | Andy Schleck   | NSW                |
| U.K.      | June 13, 2012, 12:22 p.m. | #ExcusesToBreakUp | #MyFavoriteGagaPictures | #revealday            | Wayne Rooney's | Holland vs Germany | Henry Hill     | Hampstead Heath | Screw You          | Rebekah Brooks | Giroud             |
| U.S.      | June 13, 2012, 12:18 p.m. | #ThatOneFollower  | Henry Hill              | #AintNothingWorseThan | #revealday     | Rise & Grind       | Horan Hump Day | Burger King     | Bonanza            | Syria          | Casey Anthony      |
| WorldWide | June 13, 2012, 12:18 p.m. | #3Sonhos          | Lang Park               | Robbie Farah          | #origin3       | #revealday         | Oh Harry       | Horan Hump Day  | Henry Hill         | NSW            | Holland vs Germany |
| U.S.      | June 13, 2012, 12:15 p.m. | #ThatOneFollower  | Henry Hill              | #ExcusesToBreakUp     | #revealday     | Rise & Grind       | Happy Hump Day | Burger King     | Bonanza            | Casey Anthony  | Syria              |
| U.S.      | June 13, 2012, 12:07 p.m. | #revealday        | #ExcusesToBreakUp       | #ThatOneFollower      | Rise & Grind   | Henry Hill         | Horan Hump Day | Burger King     | Bonanza            | iOS 6          | Syria              |

\* - UTC Time

<sup>462</sup> ICANN. (13 June 2012) ICANN Reveal Day: New gTLDs and What's Next. Retrieved from [http://library.fora.tv/2012/06/13/ICANN\\_Reveal\\_Day\\_New\\_gTLDs\\_and\\_Whats\\_Next](http://library.fora.tv/2012/06/13/ICANN_Reveal_Day_New_gTLDs_and_Whats_Next)



Traffic on the microsite also peaked on Reveal Day at approximately 160,000 sessions and remained at that level for about 10 days. After this period, traffic returned to the average level of fewer than 3,000 sessions/day with occasional peaks not exceeding 15,000 sessions.

Early New gTLD Program budgets (see Section 8.3: Financial Management of this report) estimated 500 new gTLD applications.<sup>463</sup> In actuality, ICANN received 1,930 applications from 60 countries and territories, representing all of ICANN’s geographic regions. Table 8.4.iii shows a breakdown of applications received by ICANN region, based on the applicant’s country (i.e., answer to Question 2 of the application).

*Table 8.4.iii Applications by ICANN Region on Reveal Day*

| ICANN Region            | New gTLD Applications |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Africa                  | 17                    |
| Asia/Australia/Pacific  | 303                   |
| Europe                  | 675                   |
| Latin America/Caribbean | 24                    |
| North America           | 911                   |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>1,930</b>          |

Twelve percent of the total applications received (241) were applications for IDNs, community and/or geographic gTLDs. Table 8.4.iv provides a breakdown of application types. The breakdown shows unique count by application type. An application may be all three application types, which would be counted on each row of the table.

*Table 8.4.iv: Breakdown of Application Types*

| Type of New gTLD Applications | New gTLD Applications | % of Total Applications |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| IDN                           | 116                   | 6.0%                    |
| Community                     | 84                    | 4.4%                    |
| Geographic                    | 66                    | 3.4%                    |

### *Post Reveal Day*

After Reveal Day, communications became more targeted for the two audiences, applicants and the general public, including governments, trademark holders, communities, businesses, and Internet users. The general public needed to be kept informed of Program progress so that they could participate at relevant Program steps such as submitting a comment on a particular application for the evaluation panel’s consideration, filing a formal objection on an application, or participating in the GAC Advice process.

<sup>463</sup> ICANN. (1 May 2012) Draft FY13 Operating Plan and Budget. Retrieved from <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/proposed-opplan-budget-v1-fy13-01may12-en.pdf>

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Content that ICANN produced post-Reveal Day was more focused on the New gTLD Program's specific requirements and processes. Web pages on the microsite were created to provide detailed information regarding each Program process. Timelines, process documents, advisories, FAQs, and relevant forms were provided to applicants and those interested in the Program's transparency and predictability. ICANN also provided Program statistics such as application statuses, evaluation reports, and service metrics on the microsite. During this phase of the Program, all applicant-specific communications materials on the microsite were created in English, primarily to ensure timely dissemination of important Program information.

Beginning August 2012, ICANN began to hold applicant webinars to provide applicants with updates on various Program processes. By July 2015, ICANN had held 35 webinars on various topics. Webinars were recorded and posted to the New gTLD Program microsite.<sup>464</sup> Over the course of the 35 webinars, ICANN implemented some improvements based on applicants' feedback. For example, ICANN made an effort to accommodate different time zones by cycling webinar times to ensure no single region (APAC in particular) was excluded from live participation. Later, ICANN began holding two sessions for each webinar to accommodate multiple time zones. Additionally, ICANN provided 21-day advance notice on upcoming webinars, redesigned the webinars landing page, and used Twitter to provide updates to participants when technical issues arose during a webinar. Region-oriented webinars were also offered with information tailored to fit the needs of each region.

To continue raising awareness of New gTLDs with the general public, ICANN leveraged social media, engaged with the news media and analysts, and held road shows in all ICANN regions.

On social media, ICANN broadened its presence to include international platforms (e.g., Weibo) that allowed messages to be delivered in local languages. ICANN social media communications expanded to other languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Social media was an effective platform to raise awareness of new gTLDs. For example, many mainstream outlets (e.g., @TheNextWeb, @WSJ, @BBCWorld, @Mashable, @FayerWayer, and @ChannelNewsAsia) tweeted about the first new 'gTLD' delegations in October 2013. There were over 6,000 mentions of the first new gTLD delegations in October 2013 and nearly 30 million potential impressions.

While ICANN engaged with the news media throughout the Program, delegation of the first four new gTLDs on 25 October 2013 became one of the most widely covered ICANN news stories. There were over 400 news stories about the first delegations disseminated via online news outlets, print, radio, television and major blogs. A large number of mainstream news outlets from around the world covered the story, from the BBC, to The Moscow Times, to Japan Times, to The Times of India.<sup>465, 466, 467</sup> ICANN also conducted pre-briefings for international wire services Agence France

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<sup>464</sup> ICANN. Webinars. Retrieved from <http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/announcements-and-media/webinars>

<sup>465</sup> BBC. (23 October 2013) New top-level web domains announced by Icann. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-24637673>

<sup>466</sup> G. Moukine, The Moscow Times. (25 October 2013) Russia Leads With New Internet Domains. Retrieved from <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russia-leads-with-new-internet-domains/488444.html>

<sup>467</sup> Japan Times. (24 October 2013). Retrieved from



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Presse (AFP) and Associated Press (AP) before the delegation. Their stories were posted very quickly after delegations were announced, which translated to broad global pickup.

In 2013 and 2014, ICANN conducted briefing events with technology and financial analysts and their clients. Firms including Gartner, IDC, Forrester, Altimeter Group Citigroup, JP Morgan, Baird and Cowen Group attended the briefings.

ICANN organized small-scale roadshows offering educational sessions about ICANN, including the New gTLD Program, to applicants, registrars, registries, businesses, and the media. In 2014, ICANN held roadshows in Latin America in Mexico, Brazil, and Bolivia, and in the Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago. Each event had approximately 250 attendees and received press coverage from local media.<sup>468</sup>The event in Mexico was particularly successful; it garnered 87 pieces of coverage by national media. Following its success in 2014, ICANN held roadshows in 2015 in St. Lucia, Argentina, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, and Thailand. For the remainder of 2015, ICANN is planning to hold similar events in Colombia and other nations and regions.

#### **8.4.4.4 PHASE 4: TLDS GO LIVE/IN THE ROOT**

The Communications Plan defined Phase 4 as separate and distinct from Phase 3. In reality, Phase 4 and Phase 3 are concurrent because applications are processed in batches (see Section 1.2: Prioritization of this report).

### 8.4.5 Conclusion

New gTLD Program communications were executed in accordance with the Communications Plan. ICANN performed outreach to global regions to provide information about the Program and increase awareness. ICANN also developed tools to share information with applicants and the community, most notably the New gTLD microsite.

Although the success of Program communications during this application round is difficult to assess because “success” was not defined within the Communications Plan, there are lessons learned that should be taken into consideration for future rounds. In the 2012 application round, the New gTLD microsite was developed to house all New gTLD Program information. To increase accessibility and usability for future rounds, Program information should be consolidated into a single site with other ICANN information. Another consideration for future rounds is that ICANN’s Global Stakeholder Engagement team is much larger than it was before the 2012 application round, and this team should be leveraged to help promote awareness of the New gTLD Program within their respective regions/constituencies.

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/24/business/web-to-soon-see-addresses-in-chinese-russian-arabic/#.UmrVPSSROY>

<sup>468</sup> Articles from the Mexico and Bolivia editions can be found at <http://www.scoop.it/t/noticias-en-espanol-by-icann>. Articles from the Brazil edition can be found at <http://www.scoop.it/t/noticias-em-portugues>.

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In summary:

**8.4.a** Consolidate all next round program information into a single site and make information as accessible as possible

**8.4.b** Leverage ICANN's Global Stakeholder Engagement team to promote awareness of the New gTLD Program within their regions/constituencies