

4.2.14 Support for Applicants From Developing Countries

• 4.2.14.1 Explanation of Subject

In an effort to increase global diversity and representation across regions within the New gTLD Program, the ICANN community developed the Applicant Support Program (ASP)¹. The ASP sought to provide financial and non-financial support to applicants from developing economies, thereby reducing competitive disadvantages that may prevent them from participating in the New gTLD Program. The ASP is also in support of Implementation Guideline N, which states:

ICANN may put in place a fee reduction scheme for gTLD applicants from economies classified by the UN as least developed.

The ASP was the implementation of the final report delivered by the Joint SO/AC New gTLD Applicant Support Working Group (JAS WG), chartered by the GNSO and the ALAC². The ASP provided financial and non-financial support via three mechanisms:

- Financial assistance in the form of a reduction in the new gTLD evaluation fee (i.e., \$47,000 USD as opposed to \$185,000 USD) for applicants meeting qualifications.
- Pro bono services via the Applicant Support Directory, which was created to connect potential applicants who wish to establish a new public interest gTLD registry in their community with organizations who wish to offer either financial or non-financial assistance.
- Establishment of a funding mechanism for the ASP, which received \$2,000,000 USD in seed funding.

• 4.2.14.2 Questions and Concerns Related to Subject

The topic of support for applicants from Developing Countries received considerable attention from members of the DG. Members noted that of the 1930 complete applications received by ICANN, only three applied for financial assistance via the ASP program, with a single application meeting the criteria³. DG Members were concerned with the lack of usage of the Applicant Support Program and identified a number of possible reasons that may have contributed to the limited number of applications for the ASP program:

- The measures introduced to prevent gaming of the ASP may have discouraged possible applicants.

¹ Applicant Support Program page available here: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support>

² Joint SO/AC New gTLD Applicant Support Working Group (JAS WG) Final Report available here: <http://gnso.icann.org/drafts/jas-final-report-13sep11-en.pdf>

³ Applicant Support Program review results: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support/sarp-results-20mar13-en.pdf>

- There was a short trajectory from the JAS WG Final Report, implementation of the recommendations, and the launch of the New gTLD Program, inclusive of the ASP.
- The lack of, or otherwise inadequate, outreach efforts for the ASP.
- The lack of financial support beyond the application fee reduction for other aspects of the program, like objections, string contention resolution, post-delegation operations, and other expenses associated with running a gTLD registry.

Some DG Members provided suggestions on how to address some of the issues identified above, hopefully increasing utilization of the ASP or similar program, such as:

- Improving the outreach for the ASP as well as improved outreach in general for the New gTLD Program in Developing Countries.
- Creating a round dedicated to applicants from Developing Countries, which is discussed in greater detail in section 4.2.16 on Application Submission Limits.
- Making the assistance more comprehensive, so that it extends beyond just the application fee reduction.

With only three ASP applications out of a total of 1930 applications, it is clear that usage of the ASP was minimal. However, there may be a number of reasons why this may be the case. A possible PDP-WG on New gTLD Subsequent Procedures should seek data in understanding why usage was limited, as it will help inform the development of any updated solutions. The PDP-WG may also want to consider identifying success criteria for the program related to communications, funds made available, usage of the program, and other factors.

- *4.2.14.3 Relevant Guidance*

- Implementation Guideline N
- Joint SO/AC New gTLD Applicant Support Working Group (JAS WG) project page: <http://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/inactive/2011/jas>
- Applicant Support Program page - <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support>

- *4.2.14.4 Rationale for policy development*

Support for applicants from developing countries was identified in Implementation Guideline N, but the substantive recommendations are found in the JAS WG Final Report, together with the Board working group that developed an implementation model. In its resolution to approve the ASP, the ICANN Board noted that not all JAS WG recommendations were accepted⁴.

⁴ ICANN Board Resolution approving the ASP and directing staff to complete implementation: <https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2011-12-08-en#1.1>

A possible PDP-WG on New gTLD Subsequent Procedures may want to review the existing Implementation Guideline and consider possible additional recommendations to improve the support for applicants from developing nations. Work to support this effort may include identifying recommended support mechanisms, evaluation criteria, clear objectives, success criteria, and other elements. Given the interest in the subject within the DG and the wider community, this subject may warrant policy development.

Finally, the ASP was identified in ICANN Board guidance on initial input on areas for possible policy work⁵.

⁵ Ibid