Allowing specific communities to be served by a relevant TLD

The Applicant Guidebook provided for applications for new gTLDs to be designated as serving a specific community, and a criteria and process for Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) was established to determine whether the community gTLD should be awarded priority in a contention set. Of the 84 community-based applications a very large majority (some 75%) did not prevail in CPE, in part because of the assessment by the external independent evaluator(the Economist Intelligence Unit) of whether or not the applicant(s) adequately represented the specific community. but also due to reconsideration and IRP processes.[1]

Having noted the disproportionate number of failed applications for the community-based applications, and the queries on the process raised by the GAC and other interested parties, the CCT review team considered the ICANN Ombudsman's Own Motion Report[2]. That report assessed both the Application Guidebook information and the process for assessing applications. While it found that the process outlined in the Guidebook was not unfair to applicants, the processing of applications could have been clearer and while there had been no inherent unfairness there is certainly room for improving the process in the future, both to ensure a better rate of success of community applications and to ensure that expectations of applicants were not unnecessarily tried.

The following section (5) addresses the applications for new gTLDs that raised objections from specific communities[3]. It should be noted here that formal objections could be filed against any application on community grounds, even if the application had not been made as a community application, even though the community-based application was intended to be a limited category[4].

Given the assessment carried out by the Ombudsman's Own Motion Report, the information on community-based objections, and the interest raised by the ICANN community regarding the relative lack of success of community-based applications, which were an area where the community had intended to provide a special entry for communities to gTLDs of particular interest and use for them, *a thorough review of the 2012 Applicant Guidebook process for community-based applications should be carried out and improvements made to address and correct the concerns raised before a new gTLD application process is launched*.

---

[1] Applications had to show an ongoing relationship with a clearly delineated community, the string itself had to be specifically related to the named community and had to have dedicated registration and use policies for registrants, and the application had to be endorsed by the named community.

[2] ICANN Ombudsman – Own Motive Investigation of 13 October 2015 on the process of evaluating community-based applications.

[3] Of the 62 community objections raised, the ICC found in favour of the community in 12 gTLDs, the objectors failed for 31 gTLDs, and objections were dropped for 19 gTLDs.

[4] The Applicant Guidebook indicates that "community-based applications are intended to be a narrow category, for applications where there are unambiguous associations among the applicant, the community served and the applied for gTLD string". (Version 4 June 2012 page 1-28)