
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – 2026 Round: 2026 Round Application Submission Overview
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KRISTY BUCKLEY

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Please note that the chat sessions are being archived and are governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, the Community Anti-Harassment Policy, and the Community Participation Code of Conduct, which I will now post into the chat. And with that, I will hand it over to Lars Hoffmann to kick us off. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Kristy. My name is Lars Hoffmann, and I'm kicking this off, apparently. Welcome, everyone. If I see some spaces at the table, please feel free to join. Anybody can ask questions. You can obviously come up as well, but don't be shy. The next slide, please. Kristy, next slide. Oh, well, that's my name. One more, please. Thank you. Content Disclaimer, we have these for all the next round sessions. Everything we say here should really be correct.

But in case there's any discrepancies, and surprisingly with the AGB, then obviously that is the authoritative source. The guidebook is available online, a PDF, and there's what I think personally, a very helpful HTML version as well. So, be sure to consult that obviously in case of any questions or doubts. The next, please. Thank you. For those who have not attended some of the webinars we've run in the past, there's some links here in the slide deck. I don't know whether we can paste that into the chat as well.

We have an introduction webinar and an application journey overview. Slightly biased, but I think both of them are quite helpful. So, if you want to take a look at those, if you haven't seen them, I

can recommend that. The next slide, Kristy. Oh, Renate, I'm so sorry. Hi, Renate. This is just a slide for me so I know where I am. So, we are on Monday, 9th of March, quarter past one. These are the other sessions there as well that are coming up this week. The next slide, please. Thanks.

And with that, I think I'll pass it over to Jared. Still me. All right. One more, please. It's a lot of intro slides. So the objective here, kind of understanding some of the eligibility criteria for the 2026 round. Also really, I think, driving home that early preparation is really critical. We said this ever since the guidebook was finalized in Dublin at the 84 meeting. The application questions are in the application guidebook.

Those are the questions that you'll find in the application system as well. There's not going to be any surprises there. So, if there's any questions you have around those questions or anything else, you can always reach out to ICANN's global support. But we hope that we can answer some of those questions you might have during this and any other sessions during this week.

We're going to talk about some of the components here, including fees timelines and resources required. And also, hopefully after this, you feel better prepared to navigate the submission period when it comes and also be prepared in what we are now, the pre-submission period, where you can think about the questions, register service provider selections, if applicable, name collision

risks, and universal acceptance as well are topics that we'll be touching.

And hopefully, you'll be able to prepare and complete the process in TAMS and the TLD application management system, including system access, required system sections validations, and also what to expect after submission. You will probably have seen as well there's a more hands-on demonstration of the system, I think, during the session tomorrow. And with that, I do pass it on to Jared. Thanks.

JARED ERWIN

Thank you. Hi, everyone. This is Jared Erwin. Just to introduce myself, you might recognize me from working with the Implementation Review Team as part of Lars' team working with the IRT and also on the Applicant Guidebook and getting that developed and published. And now moving into more operational work in regards to opening and conducting the 2026 round.

So, in this next section of the presentation, I'm going to talk about some of the pre-submission, things to think about or look out for as really maybe now folks are thinking about applying for New gTLD and what that might entail and some factors to consider as folks consider that decision.

Next slide, please. So yeah, where are we in the journey? So, this is what we're calling pre-submission. So this is the phase before you really even begin to work on the application in the system and

submit that. So again, some things to think about as you prepare your materials for eventual submission, application submission. And you can see the other stages of the application process there, many of which will be either discussed today or in other sessions throughout the week. Some different aspects of the program and other big parts of the program and what to look out for. Next slide, please.

So, here we're looking at why prepare, which I think is probably maybe self-explanatory hopefully, but why you should prepare. But really, we're trying to drive home the point that preparing early helps you really consider some big factors and the decision to apply for a new gTLD and what that takes and making sure that your organization has considered all those different factors and challenges potentially, which we're going to talk about in a couple of slides.

So again, this is really to just confirm that your organization is ready to apply, that you've understood all the application questions, which are in the Applicant Guidebook, Appendix 1. All of those are listed out. So that is, of course, a great resource to look at as you consider applying and preparing to apply.

This is the time to gather the required documents and stakeholder details that will be put in either responses to the questions or into the application system as you're submitting your application, which I think Justin is going to talk about some of those things.

And then also this is a pretty important one too, is who is going to be working in the system from your organization and what roles those individuals would be performing on behalf of your organization as they actually click the buttons in the system and submit the application.

And then of course another big one is the planning for fees and approvals and making sure things are ready to go in terms of submitting payment for your application. And of course, this is all kind of helping you ensure that there's no delays once we are into the submission window, the application submission period, and making sure that things go as smoothly as possible for your application.

Next slide, please. Sorry, I would just, and I guess folks will help me with the chat if there are questions, but feel free to ask questions as we go along. So here are some of the major requirements of an application including some compliance and legal readiness and obligation matters, the costs, and then evaluations to consider. So on the compliance and legal readiness side, applicants must be a formed legal entity, and that organization must be prepared to agree to the program's terms and conditions, which are also listed in the AGB, of course, Appendix 10, I think.

It is important to note that individual persons cannot apply. The applying entity must already legally exist and again a formed legal entity, which is the same as the last round. In terms of cost, the applicant, the entity must be prepared to pay the \$227,000 fee, the

gTLD evaluation fee, which covers an application for one primary string and up to four variants. And on top of that would be conditional fees related to special types of applications for specialized evaluations.

So, again, that is the base fee for one primary string and up to four variants. There are a couple of exceptions to note here to the base fee. If you are an existing registry operator of an existing gTLD and you are applying for up to four variants of that existing gTLD, that fee is waived. And then, of course, applicants that have been approved for the Applicant Support Program would also not be required to pay that full evaluation fee.

In terms of evaluations to be prepared for, there are different types of evaluations. So, there's string evaluation, so looking at the string itself and compliance with various requirements to be in the root, essentially. And then on the other side, there are evaluations related to the type of application. For example, a brand TLD or community TLD participating in CPE, Community Priority Evaluation.

And then on the applicant side, there are financial and operational evaluations, as well as a background screening. And again, there's other conditional evaluations, which I sort of just alluded to, related to your application type brand, for example.

Okay, next slide, please. Here is kind of a high-level look at some of the major challenges that applicants should be prepared to face should they decide to submit an application. So of course, this

goes heavily into decision making on applying and how to apply and what to prepare for.

So, firstly the complexity and timeline, as we know from the last round, the process is a complex one to evaluate the application and there are multiple stages of evaluation for applicants and applications which require extensive documentation for all sorts of things to show that an applicant is ready to operate a gTLD and potentially that occurs over a multi-year timeline.

Another challenge is that there may be more than one application for a particular string, so applicants should be prepared to be in contention. So, this is of course when there are two or more parties that apply for the same string or a confusingly similar string, those are put into contention sets which must be resolved through either CPE, Community Priority Evaluation, if there's a community applicant in the set or through ICANN auction.

Of course, ICANN and the community have taken care to try to limit the contention through various means, such as the replacement string, but applicants should still be prepared to be in contention and the requirements to get out of that. Another complex part of the program, which is both complex but also potentially costly are objections and appeals. So, any applicant should be prepared to be involved in some kind of objection because these could be filed by any parties withstanding.

And these objections require additional steps, could potentially push an applicant into contention through string confusion

objection, may require modifications to the application depending on the outcome of the objection, and may even prevent an application from moving forward, again, based on the outcome of an objection. And as I mentioned, this may also or would potentially require additional significant fees to be involved in an objection proceeding.

And of course, lastly, there on the right, technical readiness and infrastructure. Applicants must coordinate with and select and approved registry service provider and you may be aware of the RSP evaluation program. You can find more information about what it means to select an RSP and who those are through that program, but applicants should be ready to select that RSP and ensure that it's in place to support the registry and provide the necessary services to run a gTLD. Okay, I think we can go to the next slide.

So, here, a high-level overview of some of the expertise needed to apply. So, ICANN here is suggesting the assembling of a multidisciplinary team to ensure that applicants are able to address legal, technical, financial, and operational challenges and requirements. You can see here then a little bit more detail on what that means for each of those areas, what kinds of expertise might be required.

So for example, under legal and expertise in IP law or domain name law, contract law, as well as dispute resolution, just referring to objections, those are all areas where an applicant should be

prepared to have expertise. And the financial area for planning and projections, budget development, cost analysis, sustainability modeling, strategic expertise, so, strategy and positioning, market analysis, brand management, community engagement.

For example, for a community TLD ensuring that an applicant has sufficiently engaged with that community, has the support of that community that they are intending to apply for on behalf of technical, which we just talked a little bit about, but ensuring that there's expertise in DNS operations, registry, technical requirements, name collision mitigation, cybersecurity, infrastructure, architecture, operational readiness, registry operations management, RSP selection, abuse handling, customer support, business continuity.

And finally, policy and governance, ensuring that there's expertise on an applicant's team related to different ICANN policies, the multi-stakeholder process generally, public interest commitments, and rights to protection mechanisms.

Okay, I think next slide, and we might be on to the next section. Yeah, which I'll turn over to Lars to talk about fees.

LARS HOFFMAN

Thanks, Jared. The next slide, please, Renate. Thank you. So, the information here, I think, presented previous meetings as well. So those of you who've been following this roadshow for a while now, there's no surprises here. Neither good nor bad. The evaluation

fee has been set at around \$27,000. There's an exception, obviously, for successful applicants that are supported through the Applicant Support Program.

They receive reduced fee. There's also varying gTLD applicants that meet specific criteria that may pay or will pay less than that, or in fact, I think nothing in some cases. Obviously, applicants will have to demonstrate long-term operational funding capacity through the operational and financial evaluations of the program.

So, relevant information will be required during the application process. There's additional fees that, sorry, additional information about the fees, additional fees come on the next slide. The fee will be due upon receipt of the invoice, which will be generated following the submission of the application, but no later than seven calendar days after the closure of the application window, which is going to be the 12th of August at 23:59 UTC. The payment received by ICANN must be in United States dollars as well.

The applicant is responsible for all conversion costs, transaction fees, and exchange rate fluctuations. That aligns as well with what happened in the 2012 round. And so, payments must be made via wire transfer, ACH, which I just Googled quickly as the Automated Clearinghouse. I was not very familiar with that as a non-American. International SWIFT payments, checks and credit cards are not accepted.

There's conditional valuation fees. Some of these have been I think subject of some discussions. I don't think a lot has changed. I'm

going to ask Jared a little bit in a moment where we are on CPE, but wait for that question there, Jared. We have the brand eligibility qualification, so Spec 13 for the insiders, \$500 we estimate for that. The code of conduct exemption is \$400.

The community priority evaluation, so if you apply as a community and then you opt in to undergo the CPE, will be between \$50,000 and \$80,000. This is based on estimations that we receive through RFIs, et cetera. This is a pass-on fee, so the actual fee or cost by the provider is what will actually be charts to the applicants. Jared, do we have a timeline roughly when we exit the final stages?

JARED ERWIN

Yes, the RFP, the Request for Proposal process to identify a vendor for CPEs at its very end, and I'm hopeful that we can announce a vendor and a fee soon in the next couple of weeks, hopefully.

LARS HOFFMAN

Thank you. The geographic name review including, if necessary, any extended evaluations. There will also be a pass-through fee once the vendor is in place. We have committed in the guidebook that that fee will not exceed \$12,000. So, if the vendor were to charge more, then ICANN will absorb those costs. The name collision high mitigation plan is estimated between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

Again, the actuals will be charged. We'll get to that as well. There's a special refund as well if people or applicants decide not to go

through with that, obviously. The re-evaluation resulting from a change request may also lead to fees. This obviously depends what re-evaluation is necessary, and that's then the fee that will be applicable there. And then we have the registry commitment evaluation, which we estimate, no, which we set at \$15,000. That is not an estimate.

However, for community TLDs who will always require a registered commitment, the fee will be deducted from the actual CPE valuation fee. The next slide, please. Thanks, Renate. So, there's other costs that may occur in the program. These are valuation fees, objection appeals, these are provided by third party dispute resolution providers, there's fees as well that are applicable for that. I believe those are already in the public domain.

Auction-related costs may occur if you're in a contention set and you prevail in an auction, obviously. The registry service provider fees may be applicable. That's obviously a fee that is unrelated to ICANN, but applicants must select an RSP or seek approval to operate as one through the RSP evaluation program and those also come with associated fees. Maybe to preempt a question, while you can select an RSP at the outset of your application, you can also indicate that you want to select an RSP later on and then put in a change request at some point when we get to that evaluation stage.

So, that is up to the individual applicants how they want to proceed there, logistically speaking. And then obviously there may be

translation and certification costs. So, therefore, please keep in mind the documents that are submitted in languages other than English should or must be accompanied by a certified translation.

KRISTY BICKLEY

We have a hand.

LARS HOFFMANN

We have a hand?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Jim Prendergast, yeah.

LARS HOFFMAN

Please.

JIM PRENDERGAST

Yeah, thanks, Lars. Just back to those two slides ago where you had all the, I think it was just a slip of the tongue or just old habit, but you said the Spec 13 costs are expected to be or estimated to be \$500. That's a fixed fee.

LARS HOFFMANN

\$500. I'm sorry. Yes, that's right. It is the slip of the tongue. Thank you, Renate. If you can go forward. Elaine's hand is up as well. Elaine, please.

ELAINE PRUIS

Thank you, Lars. It's Elaine Pruis. I think you just said on the previous slide that as an RSP, you can select sooner or later. If you select it later or change which RSP you've selected, does that incur an application change cost?

LARS HOFFMAN

Yeah, thanks, Elaine. Thanks. That's helpful clarification. It is not because we have not evaluated the RSP. If you were to select an RSP, we evaluated that, and then for some reason you want to change that, that may incur costs potentially. I could imagine, even though I also don't think that because the RSP is pre-selected, so you should be able to do that without a cost. But if you select it later, I'm going to look into that, Elaine.

The second question, if you have selected one and then you want to change to another whether that incurs a cost, I don't know. If you select one later and have not selected one on the outset, that certainly will not incur a cost. I hope that's helpful. Thanks. And we have noted the question on switching the RSPs around. Thanks. Renate, I think one more, two more maybe. One more. Thanks.

Yeah, the refund schedule. Again, nothing has changed there since we discussed this in the IRT and what it says in the guidebook. We have three refund windows with a caveat at the bottom. We'll get to that. The first window, you will receive a 65% refund if you withdraw for any reason until 10 days after string confirmation day.

So, that is after the period where people have the chance to choose to switch to the replacement string. Then there is a second window that starts obviously on the 11th day after string confirmation day until the start of the application and applicant evaluation. That window will be different for different applicants because those in contention, that time will come a lot later than for those who are not in contention.

That window gives a 35% refund. And the third window is once we have started the applicant and application evaluation, which is a 20% refund. You see below the U.S. dollar amounts that that equates to with the caveats, there's a little asterisk there, that is for fully paying applicants. So, if you're an ASP applicant, you will receive 65% of the money that you have paid out of pocket, so that will not equate to \$147,550. As it says at the bottom, the application can be thrown at any time. No, it's fine Renate. And then the refund can be requested according to this schedule.

Next slide, please. Thank you, Renate. There's also other refund scenarios, so we have committed to a volume refund. If you receive more than 1,000 applications, and I believe they are fully paid applications, and therefore have recovered the implementation costs, a volume refund will be available for all paid applications who opt in to receive the refund.

There may be a refund as a result of material changes, meaning that if the Board makes a change to the Applicant Guidebook that is material, the Board will then determine at the same time what

refund will be given to applicants, and that may very well differ from the refund schedule we just shared on the slide before.

And then I alluded to that earlier, we have the high risk of name collision, and so if applicants decide to withdraw as a result of a high risk of name collision, they are eligible to receive a 100% refund at that time, regardless of, well, I mean, there's a moment when that takes place, obviously, during the string evaluation, but at that moment, they can withdraw and receive their refund.

Any more questions on this section before I pass it on? Hands are going up, I see, unsurprising. I'm going to take them as I see them. Ashley, Karen, and Amadeu, sorry. A moment.

AMADEU ABRIL

Amadeu Abril from CORE. I have a question regarding the fees, another one regarding TAMS. I don't know whether it's the moment now to ask that, the second one. Regarding the fees, the payment of the community policies evaluation doesn't come at the very beginning, I understand. It only comes at the time of the application evaluation. Is that correct?

LARS HOFFMANN

Yes. So, you will indicate that you're a CPE at the emission time. You may not in contention. Therefore, you may not have to undergo CPE. It's a contention resolution mechanism, really. And so, then you will not have to pay any fees for that.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. Sorry. And the other question, besides that, I want to thank you for having the HTML version. It's much more useful for me than the big PDF, really.

The question on TAMS is regarding the users. If I take the RRSP evaluation example as a base, I hope that TAMS will be more flexible in allowing more users and adding users without having long change requests, because at the end of the day here, there are many different parts that need to be reviewed, but probably by different professionals inside each group, and probably will need all of us, more users, being able to that and to save things, not only just one or two primary users. So, I hope that this system will be more flexible in managing that. Thanks.

LARS HOFFMANN

We are operating on a strict no spoiler policy, and this is going to be part of, I think, Justin's bit in a moment, but I think it's looking good for you. And I think Jared wants to correct me a little bit.

JARED ERWIN

Sorry, yes, be a little bit pedantic, but I think it's an important distinction regarding community and CPE. So, when you submit your application, you indicate whether you are a community applicant or not, but at that time, you are not indicating that you will do CPE or it's not even clear that you have to do CPE because you don't know if you're in contention yet. That comes later.

And again, that's an optional contention resolution mechanism that you will be asked about if you want to participate once it's clear you're in contention. So, just wanted to clarify, community applicant, you indicate that at the beginning, but that doesn't mean you're going to do CPE. Thanks.

LARS HOFFMANN

And even if you are in contention, you would theoretically decide not to undergo CP and instead go to an auction if that's what you wanted to do. But you have to remain a community TLD, obviously. Ashley, and then Karen.

ASHLEY ROBERTS

Thank you; Ashley Roberts. So, you can get the invoice for payment of the application fee once you've submitted the application. Is it still the plan that you can request some sort of pro forma invoice earlier than that once you've actually registered in TAMS?

MARIKA KONINGS

Thanks. So, this is Marika. I don't know if you had a chance to look at the FAQ on fees, because we've already included there a sample invoice that provides already a lot of information. So, we're hoping that that will help applicants as they prepare. Obviously, if anything further is needed, you can always reach out to globalsupport@icann.org, but we've tried to already accommodate because we know that some need kind of a sample invoice to facilitate payment.

LARS HOFFMANN

Karen.

KAREN DAY

Thank you, Lars. This is Karen Day. I have two questions. One tags on to Ashley's question about the fee payment. I noticed on your slide, it said a payment is due upon generation of the invoice or at the latest, seven days after the close of the application window.

If you happen to apply early in June and you get your invoice in June, do you then still have until August 12th to make the payment? Or is it still, as I had previously understood it, that if you submit your application in June and generated that invoice in June, the payment needs to be to ICANN within seven days of the generation of that invoice?

LARS HOFFMANN

So, while we strongly encourage you to make the payment sooner than the last possible day for technical reasons alone, the answer is the second one. So, if you submit it on the 30th of April, it's due upon receipt, but no later than seven days after. So, you have in theory then, not in theory, you will have in practice up until the 19th of August, whether you submit on the 30th of April or on the 12th of August.

KAREN DAY

Okay. Thank you. My second question. Oh, sorry, Marika.

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks. If I can just add one, we do strongly encourage applicants not to wait until the last minute to submit their payment, because we do have a hard deadline, seven days after close of the application window. If the fee has not been received, the application will not proceed.

KAREN DAY

Thank you. On the refund, on the voluntary bulk volume refund, why did ICANN, this is a direct question from a client, why did ICANN opt to make that a opt-in process rather than an automatic, if you've a fully paid application and there's a bulk refund, you get it. And if you forget to check that box on the last question or something goes awry with the check process, where does the money going that you have waived?

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks. This is Marika again. I can answer that question. So, this is a mandatory question, so it's not an option for an applicant to forget taking it. They'll have the option yes or no. And the reason why we're asking is that applicants in certain jurisdictions may not be able for tax or local law reasons to receive payment from ICANN.

We've seen that at least in the 2012 round, and it's also something we discussed in the IRT. So, that is why it's set up that way. But as I said that we've made the question in such a way that an answer has to be chosen, so you can choose yes or no, but you won't be

able to forget, because otherwise you won't be able to submit your application.

KAREN DAY

And if the applicant, because they cannot receive a refund, chooses no, is that going to go into the grant program, that money go in the grant program?

MARIKA KONINGS

It will stay within the overall new gTLD program budget, because of course, we've made certain estimations and assumptions. So, it will kind of tally up until the end where we see where we're at against the budget we've set. And obviously, if there's a surplus, and I hope you all have seen that the paper that the Board recently adopted as well on deficit or surplus for the round, it would basically go into planning and implementation of future rounds and costs for that. So, it doesn't go somewhere else.

LARS HOFFMANN

I think there were some questions in the chat, but Marika, I think you answered those already. So, unless there's any other questions in the room, I'll pass it on to Justin. Oh, we have one from Jared. The other one.

JARED FATH

Hello, Jared Fath for the record. I had a question about fees and refunds for CPE. So, somebody else in your contention set decides

to do CPE, and so you don't even get to go to auction and you don't even get to do a bid for the TLD, do you get a full refund or the percentile?

LARS HOFFMANN

You fall under the refund schedule as pointed out here. You will obviously see on reveal day whether or not there is somebody who's likely in your contention set or isn't your contentious because it's the same string. So, at that moment, you can hedge your bets whether you want to stay in and see if they pass CPE. That's not a guarantee obviously either, it's an evaluation that people can fail, but there is no special dispensation for those who decide to stay and get a different refund than the schedule, the schedule will apply.

JARED FATH

Okay. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you. Amadeu.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay, I have two questions. I don't know whether they belong to this session. You tell me they don't. The first one is regarding applicants for a brand TLD. In many cases, the trademark arrangement within a group is that a certain subsidiary owns all the trademarks, and therefore they have the SMDs, but perhaps the

applicant is the parent company or a different company in the same group that want to be the applicant for the TLD.

But the SMD will be at the name of this other subsidiary or parent, depending on how they are organized. In this case, it's not clear to me how this has to be handled in order to apply there, because the handbook assumes that the applicant is the owner of the trademark, being the same company, not just the part of the same group. So, how is this handled?

JARED ERWIN

This is specifically about a brand application. Right now, I guess maybe to point out the definition of a brand TLD is also included in Specification 13. And so, part of what's in that Specification 13 today also includes the concept of a trademark holder being of an affiliate. So, that seems appropriate if so long as in your example, they're an affiliate.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. My second question is regarding the code of conduct, which is one of the models of the Applicant Guidebook. Is this the session or is there any other somewhere else that they should ask that question?

JARED ERWIN

This is Jared. We don't have a session specifically on code of conduct, but we do have a session later today on brand TLDs actually. I think we talked briefly about the code of conduct in that

presentation. You're happy to ask the question now or wait till this afternoon?

AMADEU ABRIL

No, I'm just asking whether I should ask. I could ask the question about the code of conduct here or there is any other session and it would be more appropriate.

JARED ERWIN

Yeah, I think if you want to ask now, I think.

AMADEU ABRIL

Okay. So, my question is my understanding of the code of conduct is that in selecting who are the many different evaluators for the many different parts you need and objectors, there is general rule, avoidance of conflict of interest, not only of actual conflict of interest, but also it clearly says that apparent conflict of interest.

In that case, I understand that companies should not be in this procedure on both sides of the fences. So, the code of conduct deals with the case of an auditor, let's say KPMG is selected for the financial evaluation, but then they have a customer that's also an applicant. This probably would happen. They should make clear that they have a conflict in that concrete case.

On the contrary, I would expect that people that are involved in submitting and writing applications professionally, that is, applicants, existing registry operators, existing RSPs, and

consultants writing applications, should not be at the same time on the other side of the fence as evaluators. Is that correct, that assumption? Or it could happen that, say, Amadeu Abril could be the community policy evaluator for other entities or, I don't know, Rollins-Masler could be the evaluator for the geographic letter support, et cetera, et cetera, for other applications.

I am curious about that because I haven't got a clear response of how clear the fence between being on one side and the other will be. Thanks.

JARED ERWIN

Thanks, Amadeu. This is Jared again. Sorry, I understand your question to be more about conflict of interest. Code of conduct also refers to Specification 9. I thought that's what you were referring to, so, sorry for that misunderstanding.

So, conflict of interest is addressed in the AGB as well and Appendices 7 and 8 I believe where we fully list out how that is to be handled with vendors and subcontractors, and all of our vendors will have to go through a conflict of interest check to ensure there's no situation like the one you described.

So, I believe if I've understood your scenarios correctly, that that should be covered by that conflict of interest check. Also invite other folks from the team to -- So, hopefully that alleviates concern or answers your question.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

This is Kristy. Just for the sake of time, we still have a number of slides to cover, and some of the questions are maybe even more relevant to other sessions that we have coming up in the week. So, if it's okay to proceed with the remaining slides, we do have a Q&A session at the end assuming that there's time, and we also have a Q&A pod, so we're taking those questions and we're trying to answer those directly in the Q&A pod. Thanks.

LARS HOFFMAN

Maxim, we saw your questions. I know I asked you to paste in the chat. We'll move through the presentation, but we'll get back to you with answers on those if that's okay with you. We've got them noted. Justin.

JUSTIN HO

Oh, thanks. Lars. This is Justin Ho. I'm an application process manager for the program. I'm here instead for Yuko Yokoyama who's in charge of operationalization for the program and I act as her deputy. So, Lars said no spoilers but he and Jared have stolen my thunder for quite a number of items, so I will do my best not to repeat too much stuff, but if I am please someone let me know.

So, this section, we're kind of what do you need to get ready for application submission. So, Renate, could you go to the next slide, please? So, these, you can kind of think of them as a little bit of a repeat, but hot tips before the round opens. So, make sure you refer to the Applicant Guidebook. Look at the, more specifically,

Appendix 1 of the AGB, you'll kind of see based on the type of or how you want to operate the TLD, the type of string, your financial profile, what types of questions you're going to have to answer.

And based on that and getting a head start in drafting these responses, you'll most likely identify things that might be missing. So, if you do it early, you'll be able to see, oh, I need so-and-so type of expert to help me pull something together. So, you'll have more than enough time to get that ready. Next slide, please. So, this is selecting RSP. All applicants need to select an RSP for their individual applications.

It's necessary for us to ensure that there is appropriate, you as applicant, you have this selected appropriate RSP can pass technical operations um checks and or can run the TLD reliably. So, there's two options available to applicants. You can choose a pre-selected RSP, or if you want to act as your own RSP, you would have to go through the RSP evaluation program. So, you may have already gone through it as part of the earlier window or you can try to do that as part of this window.

So, that's also something if you do want to do that, you need to please look at the RSP handbook and make sure you've done all that homework. So, I'm just taking a look at my notes to see if I'm repeating anything. Yes, it was mentioned earlier, you can select a you don't have to select RSP right away, you can submit an application change request to do that later, and we'll get back to you guys if you have to pay for a change request. Next slide, please.

So, the most important thing for your application is the string. So, we highly recommend that you check your applied-for string against the reserve name list, block names, already delegated strings, and other non-permitted strings. Additionally, there's the name collision observatory. So, we highly recommend that you go to this page, put in your string, and see if there's any indicator that there could be a name collision. If there is, your application would most likely need to go through the name collision high risk mitigation plan review.

So, that's something you would definitely need to plan for ahead of time. Next slide, please. Okay, we're to application submission now. So, kind of just giving a little preview about this. Tomorrow there's going to be some more demos, so this is kind of feeding into that. So, definitely, please, come tomorrow.

Next slide, please. So, the first thing for application submission is you need to have an ICANN account. We use that to using the probably the wrong terminology, but kind of authenticate that you are who you say you are. You need the ICANN account to access TAMS. And as part of your organization for your application, you're able to designate or you have to designate two primary users and you're able to invite up to five additional users. I'm going to touch upon like what they can and can't do later on in this deck.

Next slide, please. So, Universal Acceptance, I think maybe for those who aren't aware, it's definitely a core principle of the program, and I think it's an ongoing work for ICANN to ensure that

devices and software that connect to the internet or they accept all domain names and addresses regardless of the language script and how long other aspects of your TLD, like length.

So, TLD operators are going to be responsible for UA readiness for their particular registry, and I think there's a notice in the middle of the page saying that just signing an RA, our registry agreement with ICANN doesn't guarantee that your TLD will be universally accepted by all the software and devices in the world. It's something that applicants need to review and prepare for and work towards as part of their TLD startup launch sunrise plans.

So, more homework for you as an applicant. Next slide, please. Yeah, and as part of the becoming or entering TAMs and kind of submitting or drafting, submitting applications, you need to adhere to the terms and conditions. There's a little snippet of the terms and conditions. I forget exactly which appendix it is. I want to say 10 in the AGB, but that's another piece of homework. Please review that. Make sure that you as the applicant, you're comfortable with that, that the users you pick to represent you as the applicant, you're happy with them, you've delegated the appropriate authority to them to act on your behalf.

On the right side of the screen, there's a good faith intent. That's something that applicants need to attest to, that they're applying to operate a TLD in good faith and trying to operate it to the best of their ability.

Next slide, please. So, hard to get the picture of it. It'll be a little clearer in a later slide, but basically, after you get into TAMS, you fill out organizational information relevant to you as an applicant entity as you start the actual application. You're going to be prompted with three options. You'll see a little screenshot there. One is, what would we had last time? You just want the one string with no variants. Another option, you want your string with variants, like Lars said, with the fees. You can have up to four included with the base fee.

Okay. I'm sorry, yeah, Jared asked me to explain a variant. So, for the purposes of the 2026 round, variants are applicable for IDNs or International Domain Names. These would be strings in non-Latin, non-ASCII scripts like Hindi or Chinese. So, I'm going to use Chinese as an example. Within your script, there could be variants of that. So, an example of Chinese, like maybe I want a specific string in traditional Chinese, but there's an allocatable variant in simplified Chinese. In this case, I could apply for them and I could just mark that I want both versions of that word in the Chinese script.

All right. Hope that answers the question that was from the chat. And then the last one on the bottom is, this is more specific to 2012 round or successful applicants in the 2012 round who are now registry operators. They are able to apply for allocatable variants of their delegated string, and they don't need to pay a fee for that.

Next slide, please. So, this is a slide about the application users and the kind of access and powers they have. You'll see that the

primary users, they can do everything. They create their organizational accounts, they invite, essentially you can think of as they're the ones who make material changes to the application. And these additional users, they're limited. They cannot make changes, they cannot withdraw the application, but they're able to go in, draft portions of application responses. They can draft responses to clarifying questions, but it's up to the primaries to go in and hit send. So, it's kind of, you have helpers.

Next slide, please. So, these are pre-submission string validations. So, very similar to what I mentioned earlier about, do your homework, check your strings, this is where the TAMs will see if you basically did your homework. So after you select what type of application you want, you're going to type in your desired string. TAMs will check that string against these types of areas, like is it a delegated string, block name, reserve name, is it adhered to DNS stability criteria, and if it passes all these checks, you're allowed to move on to the next step of the application. If it does not, you will get an error message and you're not allowed to proceed with that string.

You'll see on the right-hand side that there is, I think, string entry challenges. So, if you think ICANN did something wrong, maybe there's like a technical issue that's making that come up or maybe you know we missed something, you're able to submit this challenge. ICANN will review the challenge and we'll come back to

you and say, yes, you're right, we made a mistake and we're fixing it.

And once it's fixed, you can you know go back in and fill out the application, or we could say, sorry, that was wrong no or you're wrong. Well, we will say it a lot nicer than that, like, what you submitted was a block name, and you cannot proceed with that. But I do want to implore you that there's 14 days. There's a time limit for that. The last two weeks of the application window, you're not allowed to do this.

But I do want to implore everyone, please start early. Get it in there, make your organization, play with the, play is not the right word, but please try out that string entry. Just see that's working so that you have ample time to complete your application review and do all the diligence that you need to do. Question.

RONALD SCHWAERZLER

This is Ronald Schwaerzler. I have a question on these users, primary user and the others. Can you have that slide?

JUSTIN HO

Can we go back I think one slide, please?

RONALD SCHWAERZLER

Yeah, this one. For the All users, these are the other fives that you can assign them. Is it possible, for the clarifying questions part, to save the clarifying questions by these five users? Because it was

not in the RSP evaluation. Only the primary had the capability to answer questions, and there was no safe mode, which was an unusable thing.

So if I read it correctly, the primary can trigger the process of clarifying question, then the alternate can answer the clarifying questions, can save the clarifying question, and the primary then has to submit it. Sorry, it has to be that way. It was not on the RSP evaluation. Is it correct?

JUSTIN HO

I believe that's correct, but I do want to follow up with Eduardo.

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Yeah. So, we're leaving all of the features or the ability to impact the application, including the response to clarifying questions to the primary users only, because these are the ones that can speak on behalf of the application, even for clarifying questions as well. So, yes, while additional users may help draft answers, submission is only available to primary users, and it will be different than what we had in the other two programs. Draft and save.

RONALD SCHWAERZLER

The additional users may draft and save.

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Right, but it's not the same as submitting.

RONALD SCHWAERZLER

Submit is, okay.

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Draft and save.

JUSTIN HO

All right. Sorry, was there?

LARS HOFFMANN

I just want a quick little time check. We have, I think, just 15 minutes left.

JUSTIN HO

All right. I guess I'll try to get through as quickly as possible and maybe we can get to a question or two. Renate, would you mind going to the next slide, please? So, this slide, I'm trying to think of the best way to do this. I would want to say it's kind of listing what types of information you have to provide as part of your organization account, which is the section one and two.

I won't read it, but that's listed there. You need to provide all the information first before you can get to your application, the actual how you want to operate the string and all the information that's listed on section three. So, I think that is the big takeaway, but you'll see also in the orange boxes that most documents must be uploaded in PDF format.

There's a 5-megabyte limit, so please plan accordingly. Please, please, please, once again, I will always say this, look at Appendix 1 of the Applicant Guidebook because there is a specific column talking about whether or not your responses will be publicly posted. So, please make sure your responses to these questions, you do not put anything confidential. We're not checking that.

We're not going to ask you is this confidential, but we're just going to post it on reveal day, so please don't put anything confidential on anything that's publicly posted. Please, go to the next slide.

LARS HOFFMANN

Eduardo, you were raising your hand?

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Yes. Very short. The input for the organization, if I put that in, can I then immediately start doing an application or do I have to wait until the organization has been cleared like it was in the RSP program?

JUSTIN HO

No, it's a good question. You need to make sure all the required fields in the organization account are filled out. So, there's like a validation before you're going to be allowed to hit the start application button.

EDUARDO ALVAREZ

Okay, but it can immediately, let's say on April 30, I put in the organization with all the attachments, and on May 1st, I can start putting in the string and the variants and whatever I want?

JUSTIN HO

Yep. Thank you for the question. Yeah, I'll make note of that. So, this is a kind of piecemeal or this is like a fuller view of kind of the piecemeal information I've been mentioning. The top kind of chevrons in the light blue organizational questions, financial capability, operational questions. It's another view. It's a little more specific. It's combining information from appendix one kind of saying, if you look at it, compare that against this, questions 1 through 48. And then whatever is in the app, your financial profiles, you need to provide that up front before you can get to the darker blue section for application questions.

Just a note, there's like a little diamond for your financial profiles. Please, do your homework to see what type of financial profile your U.S. applicant fall under, because that determines what type of documentation and questions, you'll need to provide answers for. But after you provide all that stuff, you'll be immediately able to go to the application questions. You can see there's like general application questions that we're going to ask you.

Then there are quite a number based on how you want to operate, your type of string, that's going to be specific to those types of characteristics. And you also see at the very end, there's the attestation, attestation is the right word, but opt-in for the volume

refund. And like the good faith, I'm just going to say attestation, I don't know if that's the right way to refer to it, at the end of the application. Next slide, please.

So, this is about a replacement strings. So, I guess replacement strings is to help you as an applicant potentially avoid contention. You can kind of select, this is my backup. If I don't get my primary string, this is the backup that I would be happy with operating. And within the system, after you've completed the initial, I'm going to call it a primary application. That's not the official term, but after you've completed that, you're prompted about submitting a replacement string.

If I remember correctly, you're able to copy it, and then just replace the string information. So, it'll be easier. You don't need to necessarily go through and manually copy and paste everything. And a reminder that after the submission, after the admin period, after reveal day, there's going to be a 14-day period where you can decide if you want to go with your original string or your replacement string. There are checks in place that prevent you if another applicant also wants to operate your replacement string. Then in that case, you are locked into your original string.

Also, another consideration, once you make that selection, there's no going back. You cannot submit a change request to say, actually, I don't want a replacement string, I want my original. You are stuck with that one. So, please plan accordingly.

Next slide, please. Yep, so this is more of a timeline. Try to put everything that has been mentioned today into, well, a timeline. So, starting April 30th, you can do all that, create the organization accounts, submit your applications, submit payments.

Once that window closes, it's an admin period. I think like Marika mentioned, there's seven additional days. The first seven days of the admin period, you'll still be able to submit payment. So, during that period, ICANN's doing a number of administrative checks, confirming payments, just on our end, making sure everything is working as intended. Once that period ends, it triggers reveal day.

So, that's when we publish all public portions of applications on the public page, and anyone can take a look at that, that's when you can start assessing, do I want to go with my replacement string, Additionally, it's also where we are publishing our first, I'll say first pass at the direct contention set. So, that's when we will be direct telling you, review this document and please do not engage in prohibited communications with other people who have applied for your same string.

But yeah, after the replacement period, we have the string confirmation day that's estimated sometime in November. That's when we update our application or the public page to show that you know this is the finalized list of applied for strings that will move forward to string evaluations and the community input period items like public comments and objections and GAC early warnings.

And then within 30 days of the string confirmation day, we're going to have the prioritization draw event. So, that's in a nutshell, that whatever your prioritization draw number that you receive from that event, it will be relevant for the application and applicant level evaluations, not the initial string evaluations. So, it's quite a ways down because I mentioned in other sessions this string evaluations, all strings are being evaluated at the same time. So, I'm trying to see if I missed anything.

Next slide, please. What to expect after submission. So, I know there's a lot of questions about billing and all of that. So, after you hit submit, your designated billing contact will receive an invoice for the base or for the gTLD application fee. And after ICANN receives payment, we will confirm, if I remember correctly, through TAMS. If I'm wrong, please someone tell me I'm wrong.

And like I mentioned earlier, tied to that, timeline view, we're going to publish, we're going to -- well, sorry, before the publishing, that kind of admin period, it's expected to be relatively quiet. ICANN is not expecting to engage with applicants on that, and we're just doing our internal work. There is potential that we might reach out and ask questions, but expectation is not to do that. So, after submission, there's kind of unlocks, I don't know what the right word is, like features in the system.

You're able to start to submit inquiries. ICANN staff it within the system. You can kind of see what tasks are pending. For example, if it's during that string replacement period, you can go in and you

can see that, oh, I have a pending task to select my string during this period. You can see how things are kind of progressing for your application. And the last bullet there about application change requests, that opens up starting on the string confirmation day.

So, we're not accepting application change requests prior to the string confirmation day. And I think one big note I probably should have mentioned earlier, what you can't do after submission. So, after you submit your first application, your organizational information is locked. So, that means that you can't necessarily go back and make those changes. So, one thing to make sure is as you're filling out your organizational account, you can go back and change things around.

And once that's completed, as you're filling out your application, you can still go back and change things around in your organization account. But once you hit submit on the application, it will be locked and you cannot change that until the string confirmation day unless there's, well, yeah. So, TAMS is going to be the mode in which we communicate with applicants.

You'll be receiving email updates or notifications through email, if there's like a pending task or ICANN is reaching out to you via inquiries. But I think that's generally it for this slide. Renate, if you don't mind going to the next. Oh, awesome. I can pass this on to Jared, I believe.

JARED ERWIN

Yes, that is me. Just to wrap us up here with various resources that are available for everyone to peruse as they prepare for the opening of the round and a lot of things that we've mentioned today already. So, of course, the Applicant Guidebook is the authoritative document for all of the rules and procedures of the round and is available in both PDF and HTML format on the website.

And to echo Amadeu, the HTML is a really useful version I guess of the AGB that staff uses as well, so highly recommend checking that out. But of course, the PDF is the authoritative one. There's also, of course, the website, which is where the Applicant Guidebook is found, but the website has a wealth of information around the program and all facets of the program.

There's some readiness information coming soon for applicants. We'll be able to look at curated learning resources organized by the different phases of the program. We also have, of course, our dedicated global support team which is available to answer any questions and we encourage you or would implore you to send any questions you have about the program through global support, and we'll get you the response that you need hopefully.

ICANN Learn where e-learning courses are available to build knowledge about ICANN generally and the DNS industry. Also on the next round website, sorry the 2026 round website, we have the FAQs, several of which we've linked in the chat today. So, again, that should be a great resource for you as you prepare. And then the webinars that Lars mentioned at the beginning are also

available to review from ones that we've already conducted, and of course, future ones will be there as well. Next slide please, Renate.

So, just to reiterate, I think unfortunately, we don't have much time for any more Q&A, and we've answered questions that we've gone today. But if you do have any further questions, again, we would ask you to send those through global support. As ICANN staff, we've generally been directed to -- unfortunately, we're not able to field direct questions from applicants about their application or any other kind of detailed information about the program and what to do or not do, things like that.

And whether by email or social media or in person, we've been directed not to field those questions. So, we would ask you to send them through global support so that we can consider them properly and make sure that we're providing the same information to all applicants or potential applicants. And I think that's it.

Also, please feel free to take us, we would ask you that you take the survey about our session today and provide any feedback that you wish on today's session. So, thanks again. And we'll see you again later in other sessions. Thank you. I think we can close the session. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]