



85 | COMMUNITY
FORUM



2026 Round .Brand Applicant Journey and Q&A

9 March 16:30-17:30

Welcome Message

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Readiness Content Disclaimer

The authoritative source for all information about New gTLD Program: 2026 Round rules, evaluations, restrictions, processes, and systems is the English version of the [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook](#). All New gTLD Program: 2026 Round readiness and training content is supplementary to the Applicant Guidebook, and has been developed to provide a high-level summary of key topic areas of interest to prospective applicants and the broader ICANN community. In case of discrepancy, the Applicant Guidebook prevails.



New to the gTLD Program?

ICANN85 attendees **who are new to the New gTLD Program** are encouraged to review the foundation webinars below to build knowledge of the program. The webinars provide context for ICANN85 sessions.

	Introduction the 2026 Round	2026 Round applicant Journey Overview
LINKS	Recording and Presentation	Recording and Presentation
AUDIENCE	All prospective gTLD applicants.	All prospective gTLD applicants.
DESCRIPTION	Foundational information for anyone interested in learning about the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. The course is designed to equip those who are brand new to the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round to understand everything from generic top-level domains and strings, to the purpose of each stage of the applicant journey.	End-to-end view of 2026 Round application processing stages and milestones. The course creates context for ICANN Community stakeholders and applicants to understand the requirements of the application process, and the role(s) different groups play throughout.

New gTLD Program Sessions at [ICANN85](#)

New gTLD Program sessions at ICANN85 provide a **detailed view of the Application Submission process** and the **TLD Application Management System**, as well as sessions for **specific audiences and applicant types**. All times are in local time (IST).

ICANN85 SESSIONS

TOPICS:

AUDIENCE:

SAT 7 March
16:30-17:30

Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program

Prospective applicants to the RSP Program

SUN 8 March
16:30-17:30

IDN and Variant Applicant Journeys with Q&A

Prospective IDN and Variant gTLD applicants

MON 9 March
13:15-14:30

Application Submission Overview (PLENARY)

Prospective applicants to the New gTLD Program

MON 9-March
16:30-17:30

.Brand Applicant Journey with Q&A

Prospective .brand gTLD applicants

ICANN85 SESSIONS

TOPICS:

AUDIENCE:

TUES 10 March
13:15-14:30

TAMS Introduction & Demo (PLENARY)

Prospective applicants to the RSP Program

TUE 10-March
16:30-17:30

Geographic Names and Reserve Name Applicant Journeys

Prospective geographic names and reserved names gTLD applicants

WED 11-March
16:30-17:30

Community Applicant Journey with Q&A

Prospective community gTLD applicants

THU 12-March
09:00-10:00

Wrap up and Open Q&A

All prospective gTLD applicants

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

01

Introduction

Agenda

01

.Brand Application Type

Describe application and string types with examples of each.

02

.Brand Applicant Journey

Highlight aspects of the application process, including pre-submission preparation, application questions, conditional evaluations and fees, contention resolution, and contract requirements.

03

Resources and Support

Resources and support available to interested parties and potential applicants.

Session Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Better understand the requirements of applying for a .Brand gTLD.
- Identify and prepare application question responses specific to .Brand gTLDs.



01

Application and String Types

2026 Round Application Types

Application Type determines relevant preparation, application questions, conditional applications and fees, prioritization order, contention resolution options, and contract requirement.

General Applications

.link

A general gTLD application does not fall into one of the specialized categories and is subject to a standard set of defined requirements

Specialized Application Types

.Brand

.nike

Community

.eco

Geographic Name

.paris

Reserved Name

.redcross

Variant

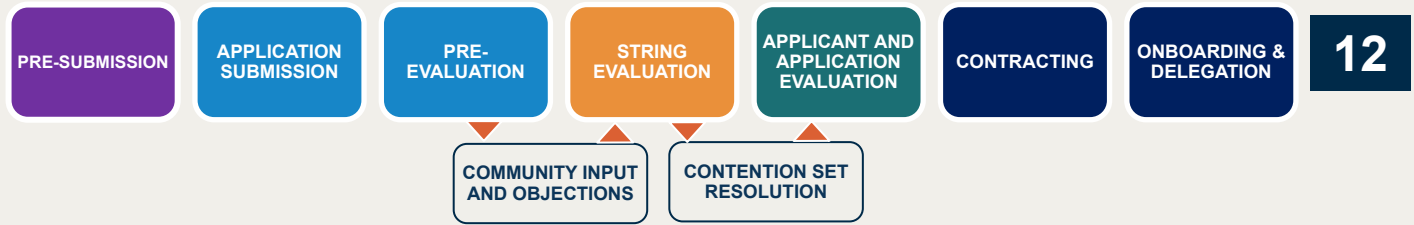
شبكة (gTLD)
شبكة (variant)

**Internationalized
Domain Name (IDN)**

.例子 (.example)

02

.Brand Applicant Journey



What is a .Brand TLD?

- An applicant has the ability to identify its application as a .Brand TLD. This application type is available for applicants seeking to use its company or brand name as a TLD.
- A .Brand TLD is a string that is identical to the textual elements (for example, a name, word, or phrase) of a registered trademark valid under applicable law, and which the applicant operates as a .Brand TLD.
- A detailed definition of a .Brand TLD can be found in Section 9.3 of Specification 13 of the Registry Agreement.

.Brand Eligibility Qualifications

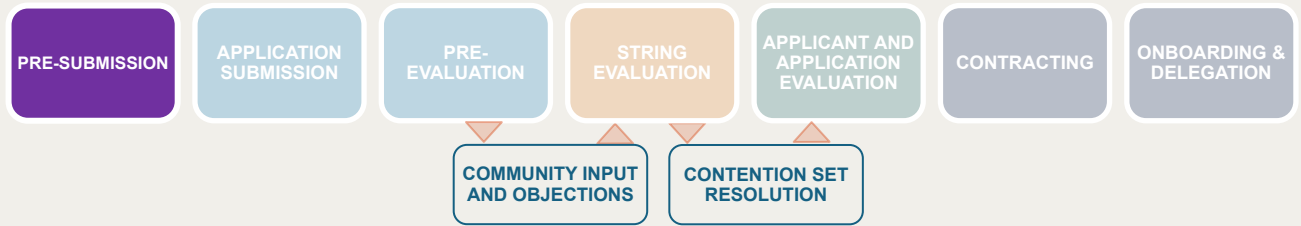
COMMUNITY INPUT
AND OBJECTIONSCONTENTION SET
RESOLUTION

Description:

- The .Brand designation permits a brand to operate a TLD with certain standardized modifications to the Registry Agreement tailored for brand proprietors or similar.
- To secure this classification, the applicant must establish that the TLD matches a registered trademark, recorded with Trademark Clearinghouse, and used in its business.

Note:

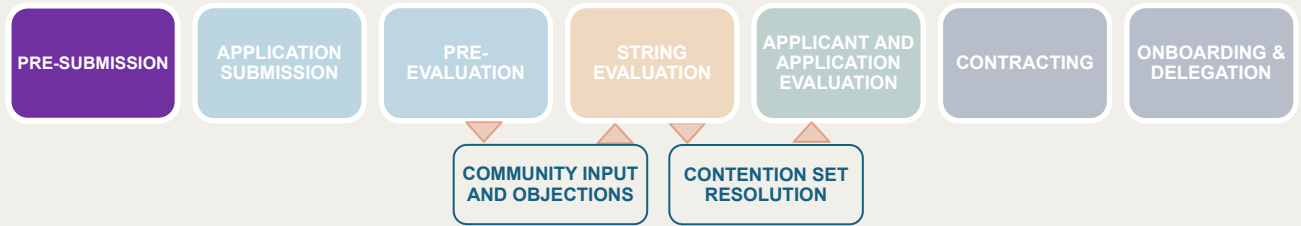
- .Brand TLDs (those that qualify for a Specification 13) are exempt from complying with requirements of Registry Operator Code of Conduct (CoC) (Specification 9), so Brand applicants do not need to apply separately for a CoC Exemption.



Pre-Submission

Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH)

- An applicant that plans to designate its applied-for string as a .Brand TLD should take preparatory actions well in advance of initiating the application to ensure it can demonstrate eligibility upon submission (e.g., including registration of its trademark).
- Because adding or adjusting the TMCH filings may take several months to complete and may involve fees paid directly to the TMCH, .Brand TLD applicants should carefully review their existing TMCH SMD files or acquire new SMD files as soon as practicable.



Pre-Submission

Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH)

- Ensure that any desired TLD labels are listed in <mark:label> elements in SMD files. Any string that a .Brand TLD applicant wishes to apply for must exactly match a <mark:label> element in a valid SMD dated prior to application submission.
- Ensure that any desired variant labels of the primary .Brand string are listed in <mark:label> elements in SMD files. All applied-for variant strings of a .Brand TLD must exactly match a <mark:label> element in a valid SMD dated prior to application submission.
- Ensure that the <mark:goodsAndServices> elements are correct, complete, and include a word that the applicant may want to use in a .Brand String Change pursuant to a .Brand String Change Request (see [Section 5.3](#)). Additional words used to augment the applied-for .Brand string should appear in a <mark:goodsAndServices> element of a valid SMD file dated prior to the submission of a .Brand String Change Request.

Application Submission

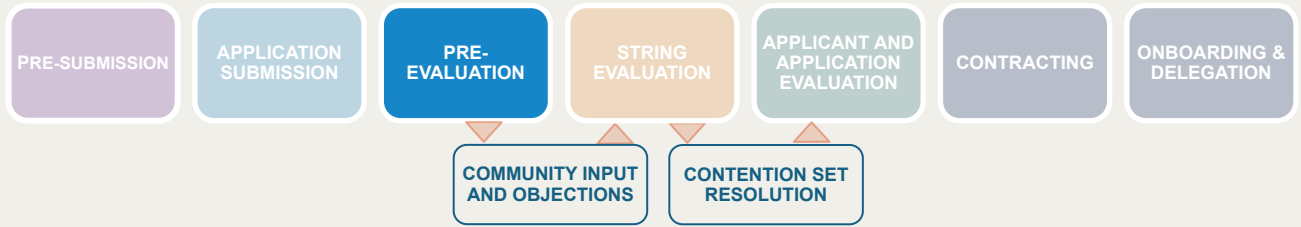
COMMUNITY INPUT
AND OBJECTIONSCONTENTION SET
RESOLUTION

Application Questions

- An applicant will be asked additional questions regarding the application for which it is applying as a .Brand TLD (for example, its brand/trademark).
- .Brand-specific application questions are found in Applicant Guidebook Appendix I, [Question Set 13](#), Questions 179-188
- An applicant will be asked to confirm that it is not intending to operate a “generic string” (as defined in Section 3(d) of Specification 11 of the Base RA) as an exclusive-use TLD.

Unique Documents Required

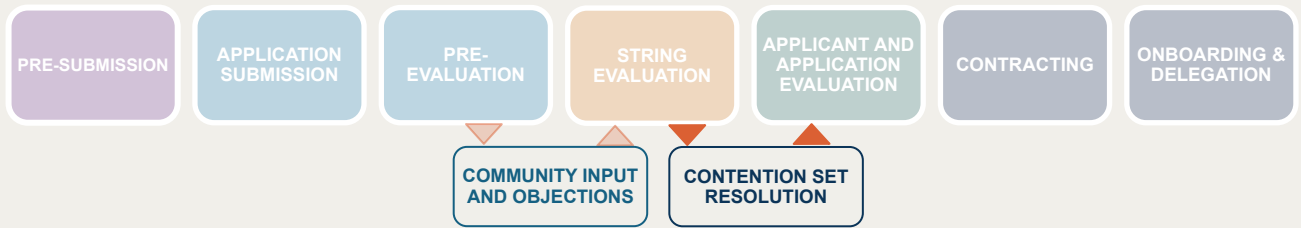
- An accurate and complete copy of the applicable trademark registration.
- Signed Mark Data (SMD) File(s).



Pre-Evaluation

Prioritization Draw

- .Brand applicants **do not** receive special status for prioritization in application processing.
- Participation in the Prioritization Draw is optional.



Contention

.Brand String Change Requests

- If an application is in contention with other applications for the same applied-for string, an applicant for a .Brand TLD may have the opportunity to request a change to its applied-for string to avoid contention.
- See Applicant Guidebook [Section 5.3 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.](#)

Requirements

- The proposed change must add one or more words to the applied-for string which appear in the description of goods and services of the applicant's Trademark registration or equivalent document.
- The new string must not create or expand a contention set.

Fees

- There may be re-evaluation fees associated with a .Brand String Change. More details will be shared when available.

Contention

COMMUNITY INPUT
AND OBJECTIONS

CONTENTION SET
RESOLUTION

Timing of .Brand String Change Request

- The change request will not be considered before the applicant has been successfully evaluated as qualifying for .Brand designation.
- .Brand String Changes can only be submitted up to **30 days following**:
 - The formation of contention sets after String Similarity Evaluation; or
 - The publication of a String Confusion Objection Panel Determination; or
 - Appellate Panel Determination involving the application subject to the .Brand String Change Request.

.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation

COMMUNITY INPUT
AND OBJECTIONSCONTENTION SET
RESOLUTION

What is it?

This evaluation confirms that the applicant meets the criteria for the .Brand TLD designations.

Fee:

USD 500



Required



Conditional



Optional

Application and String Type:



Standard



.Brand



Geographic



Community



Reserved



IDN



Variant

Eligible for Extended Evaluation?



Yes



No or N/A

Eligible for Challenge?



Yes



No or N/A

🎯 Scope of Evaluation

- 1a. The applied-for gTLD string must exactly match the textual elements of a registered trademark verified by the TMCH in the provided SMD files; or
- 1b. If the applicant changed its applied-for string using a [.Brand String Change Request \(Section 5.3\)](#), the final string must meet all of the requirements set forth therein.
2. The applicant and the final string must meet all of the requirements set forth in Specification 13 of the Base Registry Agreement.



What triggers it?

The applicant designates its applied-for string as a .Brand TLD



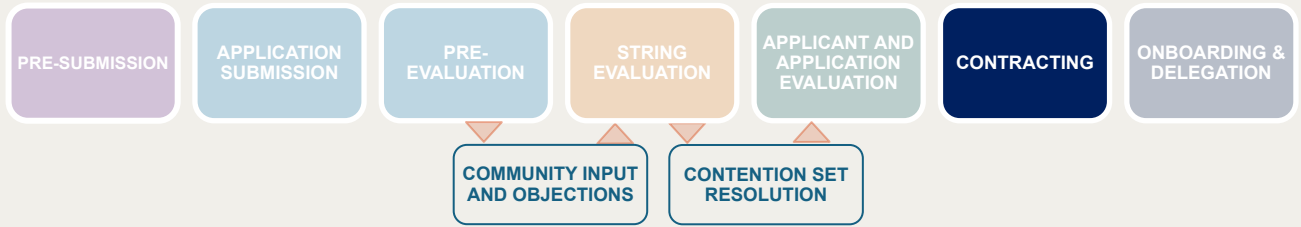
What are the potential outcomes?

The applied-for-string qualifies for .Brand TLD designation (the application goes forward), and has Specification 13 added to the applicable Base Registry Agreement, or the application is withdrawn or terminated



How long does it take?

Results are included with Applicant and Application Evaluation Results.



Contracting

Specification 13

- If eligible (based on results of .Brand Eligibility Evaluation), Specification 13 would be included in its Registry Agreement for execution.
- See details in Applicant Guidebook Section [1.2.15 Contracting](#)

03

Resources and Next Steps

.Brand TLD Resource Links

AGB Links (from the HTML version of the AGB:

- Appendix I, [Question Set 13](#)
- [7.3 Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation](#)
- [Section 5.3 String Contention and Contention Resolution Procedures.](#)
- [1.2.15 Contracting](#)

Other resources:

- [Application Types: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Topic Overview gTLD Application Types](#)

Key Applicant Resources

New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook

- The authoritative document outlining the rules and procedures of the 2026 Round.

New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Website

- Source of 2026 Round news, announcements, information, and resources.

ICANN Learn

- eLearning courses to build knowledge of ICANN and the DNS Industry.

Applicant Readiness Pathway

- Curated learning resources organized by phases and learning outcomes (coming soon)

2026 Round FAQs

- Frequently asked questions, organized by category.

ICANN Global Support

- Dedicated ICANN team available to answer inquiries and provide support throughout the application process. globalsupport@icann.org

New gTLD Program Webinars

- Register for future webinars, or access recordings of past events.

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

Question and Answer



Q&A

Submit further questions to: globalsupport@icann.org

Evaluation Survey

We kindly request you to take a few minutes to complete this brief feedback form.

A large, dark blue speech bubble with a white outline, pointing downwards. It is set against a light purple circular background. The word "Survey" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font inside the bubble.

Survey

Where to Direct Questions

General Program Questions

- Open public forums (ICANN meetings, webinars)
- Refer to New gTLD Program resources, including the AGB
- Email: globalsupport@icann.org

Application-Specific Questions

- After an application has been submitted, applicants may use the **Create Inquiry** button in TAMS.



Important: ICANN staff members have been directed not to field questions from individual applicants – whether by email, social media messaging, or in-person – in the interest of fairness, transparency, and equal access for all program participants.

gTLD

Thank you for your participation.

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