

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

gTLD

Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program

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85 | COMMUNITY
FORUM



Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program

Agenda

01 Introduction

02 Interested in Applying?

03 RSP Evaluation Process Overview

04 Best Practices and Guidance from the RSP Evaluation Team

05 Resources for Potential RSP Applicants

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

01

Introduction

Readiness Content Disclaimer

The authoritative source for all information about RSP Program including rules, evaluations, restrictions, processes, and systems is the English version of the [RSP Handbook](#). All New gTLD Program: 2026 Round readiness and training content is supplementary to the RSP Handbook, 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 RSP Handbook 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	<p>Foundational information for anyone interested in learning about the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>End-to-end view of 2026 Round application processing stages and milestones.</p> <p>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.</p>

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 New gTLD 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

What is the Purpose of Registry Service Providers (RSPs)?

Registry Service Providers: Perform critical registry services on behalf of a Registry Operator (RO). This may be the same entity as the RO itself or may be a third party to whom the RO subcontracts those services.

RSPs may offer additional registry services to those required by default in the Registry Agreement.

1

Domain Name System (DNS) Service

Connects the IP address to the domain name to allow users to navigate the Internet.

2

Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC)

Allows the authentication of responses to domain name lookups.

3

Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP)

Designed as replacement for WHOIS; Enables public access to domain name registration data.

4

Extensible Provisioning Protocol (EPP)

Allows for electronic communication between registrar and registry for provisioning domain name registrations.

How Does the RSP Evaluation Program Relate to the New gTLD Program?

The **New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLD) Program** is a community-driven initiative to enable the continued expansion of the Domain Name System. Starting 30 April 2026, businesses, communities, governments, and other organizations can apply for new gTLDs.

All gTLD applicants are required to identify one or more evaluated RSPs via the RSP Evaluation Program, that the gTLD applicant intends to use if the applied-for string or strings proceed to delegation.

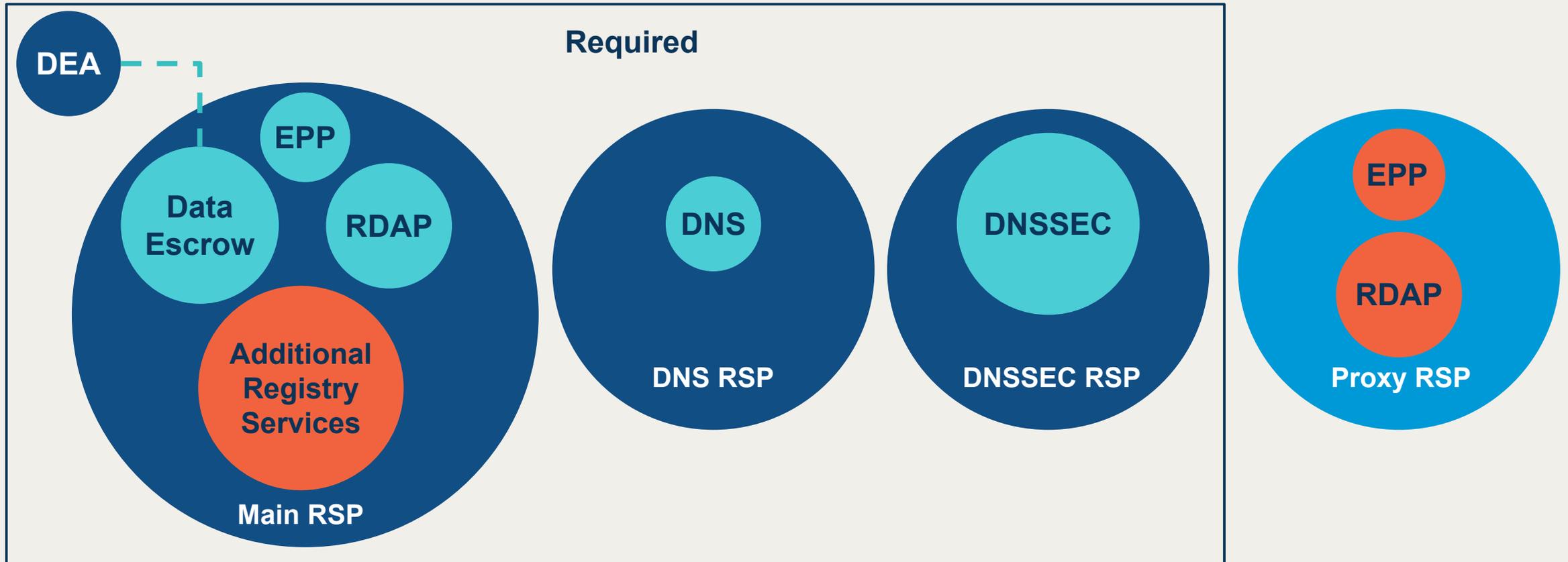
As part of its application submission, the gTLD applicant is encouraged to identify the RSP(s) it intends to use and the Registry Services it intends to offer. However, the gTLD applicant may choose to specify the RSP(s) just before the gTLD application is evaluated.

gTLD applicants may also seek ICANN's approval to deliver critical registry services themselves as RSPs through the RSP Evaluation Program.

gTLD applicants should review the [List of Evaluated RSPs](#) as several organizations have already been evaluated as part of the RSP Program **pre-evaluation submission period** that ran from 19 November 2024 to 20 May 2025. ICANN will re-open the application submission period for RSP Evaluation in parallel to the gTLD application submission period.

How Does the RSP Evaluation Program Relate to the New gTLD Program?

Each gTLD applicant must identify at least one RSP for each critical registry service.



About the RSP Evaluation Program



As part of ICANN's New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program: 2026 Round, the RSP Evaluation Program is intended to reduce the cost and time involved in evaluating new gTLDs by separating the assessment of the technical aspects of operating a gTLD from the application for the gTLD label.

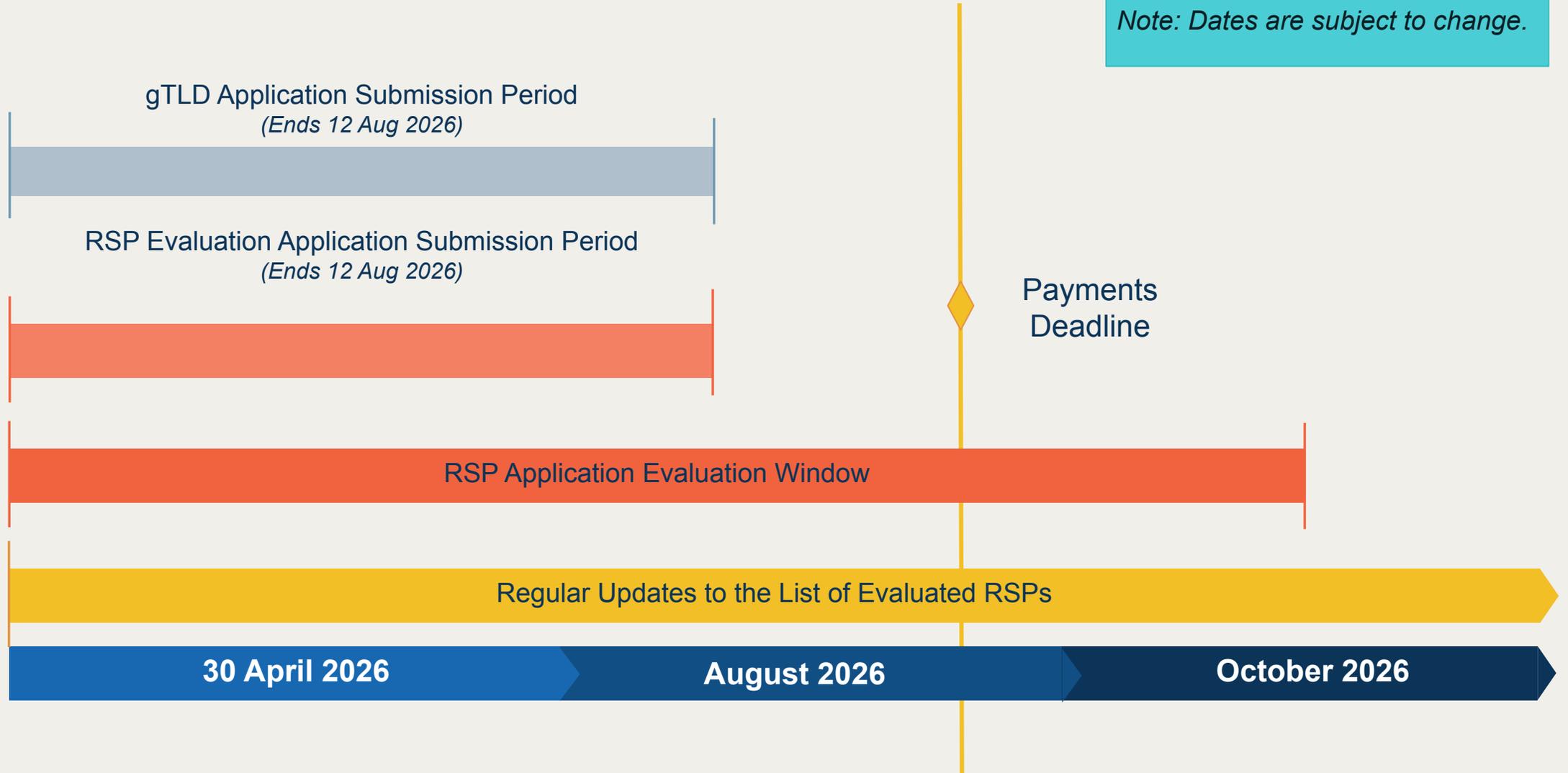
Through the RSP Evaluation Program, RSPs need only be evaluated once, regardless of the number of gTLDs they support.

All organizations must successfully clear evaluation through the RSP Evaluation Program in order to be eligible to offer services to a registry operator for any gTLD awarded during the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

A comprehensive list of available resources related to some of the critical technical services provided to gTLDs by RSPs can be found on the [Apply to the RSP Program](#) webpage.

RSP Evaluation Program and 2026 Round Timeline

Note: Dates are subject to change.



02

Interested in Applying?

Key information for prospective RSP applicants.

Who Should Apply to the RSP Evaluation Program?



Existing RSPs who did not submit an application in 2025 and new entrants.

Eligibility requirements for applicant organizations are defined in section 3.1 of the [RSP Handbook](#).

All organizations must successfully clear evaluation through the RSP Evaluation Program in order to be eligible to offer services to a registry operator for any gTLD awarded during the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

What Should My Organization Do Before Applying?

- 1 **Read the entire RSP Handbook.** Becoming an RSP requires time and monetary commitment.
- 2 **Determine which type(s) of RSP application(s) is right for your organization.** An RSP applicant may apply for each type of RSP (Main, DNSSEC, DNS and Proxy).
- 3 **Carefully read the technical questions for the type of RSP(s) your organization will apply for** and determine if your organization can adequately provide answers to all of them.
- 4 **Carefully read the Registry System Testing (RST) 2.0 Specifications** as your systems will be tested as part of the RSP evaluation.
- 6 **Gather all necessary information about your organization** as required by ICANN to conduct legal compliance and background screening, as described in the [RSP Handbook](#). Identify the specific users in your organization who will submit the application(s).
- 7 **Read the RSP FAQs.** Additional insights for applicants based on commonly asked questions and issues that other applicants have experienced.

A more comprehensive list can be found on the [Apply to the RSP Program](#) page of the 2026 Round Website.

Additional Information About the RSP Evaluation Program

RSP Evaluation Fee and Process:

- **The current RSP fee is: USD 92,000.** Per policy requirements, the fee is set to recover costs of the program.
- **An RSP may be evaluated to offer one or more types of RSP service for a single fee.**

Types of RSPs:

- **Main** (EPP, RDAP, Data Escrow)
- **DNS** (DNS Service)
- **DNSSEC** (DNSSEC Signing)
- **Proxy** (Registration Validation per Applicable Law with Proxy)

A **Main** RSP may be evaluated for one or more additional registry services (including IDN tables).

About Additional Registry Services



- A Main RSP may offer a portfolio of pre-approved additional registry services, including Internationalized Domain Name support.
- New gTLD applicants must identify the additional registry service(s) they plan to use in their gTLD registry agreement from the menu offered by the RSP.

Note: gTLD applicants are not required to utilize every additional registry service offered by the Main RSP.

Paths to Additional Registry Services Evaluation:

1

[Fast-Track Registry Services](#) are automatically approved for all Main RSPs.

2

An incumbent RSP may also offer any registry service that they currently provide to a gTLD.

3

A process similar to the Registry Services Evaluation Policy process is available for all other registry services.

About Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)



RSPs may be pre-approved to offer support for the following types of IDN services:

- 1 Non-variant TLDs with non-variant IDNs in the second-level.
- 2 Non-variant TLDs with variant IDNs in the second-level.
- 3 Variant TLDs with variant IDNs in the second-level.

Evaluation includes criteria regarding IDN support in technical evaluation and technical tests.

All IDN tables (including those previously approved) will be reviewed during the RSP Evaluation with the exception of [Second-Level Label Generation Rules with Full Variant Set](#), which will be automatically approved.

03 RSP Evaluation Process Overview

About the RSP Evaluation Process



Applying to the RSP Evaluation Program:

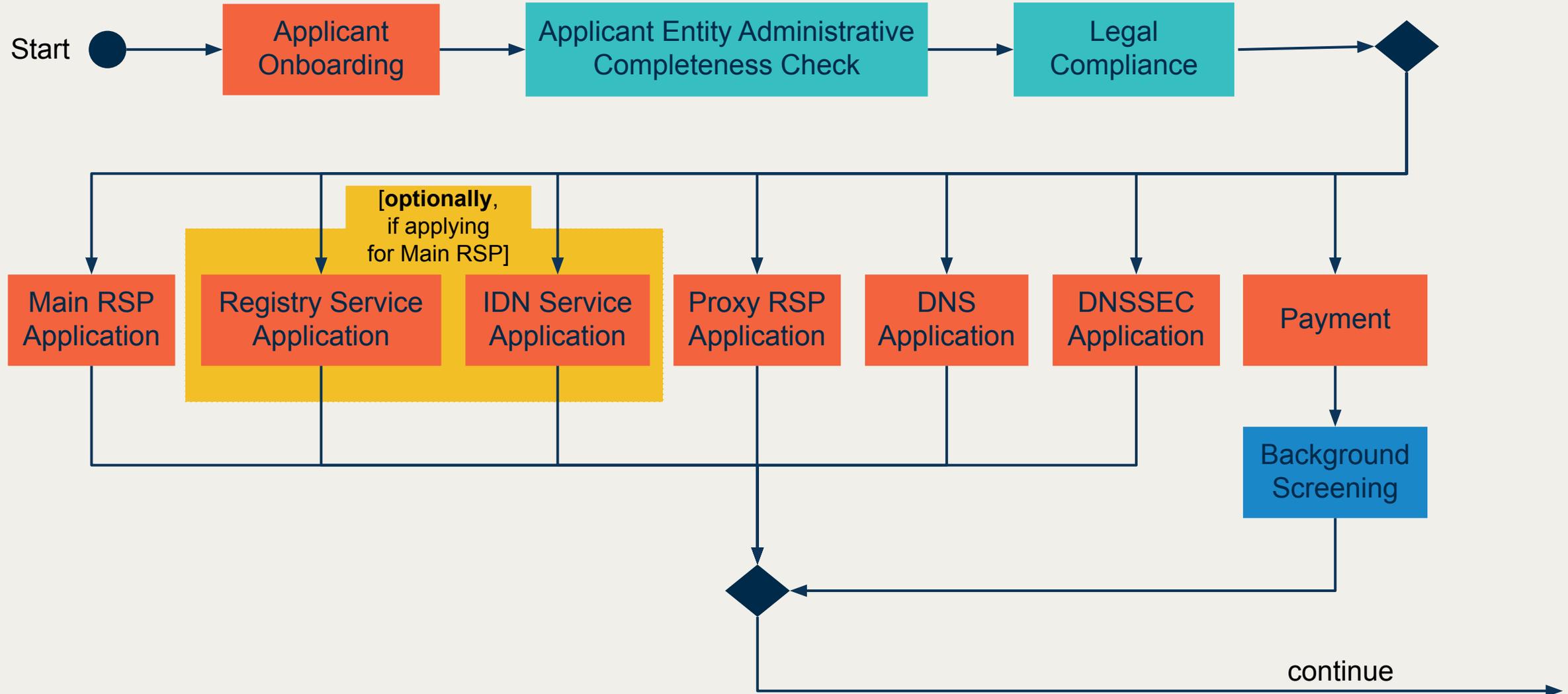
- All RSP applications must be completed using the [RSP Portal](#).
- To access the RSP Portal you must have an ICANN account at <https://account.icann.org>.
- Once you have access to the portal, you need provide information about your organization including details such as address, shareholders, etc.
- An applicant can start drafting its RSP applications pending payment.
- Once payment is cleared and your organization is confirmed, you can submit your RSP applications to be evaluated.

Completing Your Evaluation:

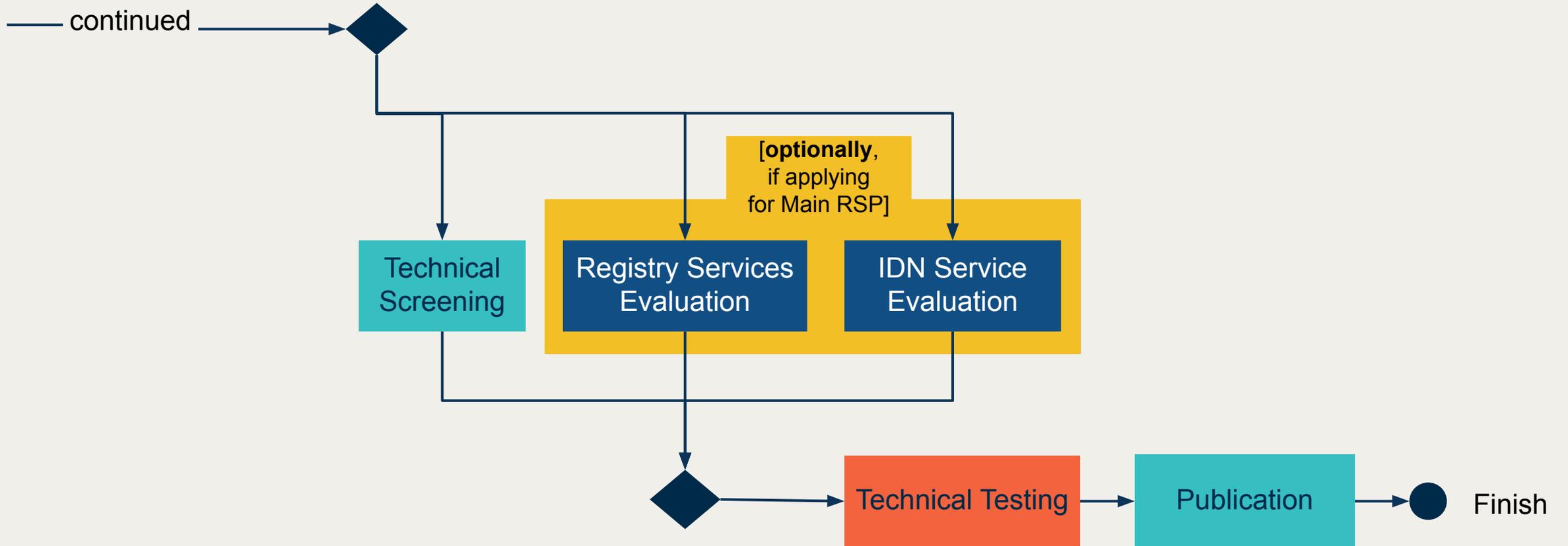
- To complete the evaluation process, RSP applicants must go through two phases of technical evaluation – technical screening (i.e., documentation review) and technical testing (RST v2.0).

The following slides showcase the process flow and provide additional information about the two parts of RSP Evaluation.

RSP Evaluation Process Flow



RSP Evaluation Process Flow (continued)



About RSP Evaluation Technical Screening



- Technical evaluation is conducted by providing answers to a set of application questions via the [RSP Portal](#).
- About the questions included in Appendix A of the [RSP Handbook](#):
 - Each RSP application type has a specific set of questions.
 - Every question must be answered.
 - Questions are graded on a pass/fail basis requiring a 100% pass rate.
 - More than 50% of questions are a yes/no answer.
 - **All questions must have a pass grade to clear Technical Screening.**



Evaluators will determine if answers provided are adequate.



Applicants will be able to clarify information upon request.

About RSP Evaluation Technical Testing



- The RSP Evaluation Program uses Registry System Testing (RST) v2.0 for technical testing.
- About RST v2.0:
 - Automated testing using an API.
 - Provides an OT&E environment to allow applicants to prepare for live tests.
 - Introduces support for testing the following:
 - RDAP (using the RDAP Conformance Tool);
 - DNSSEC algorithm rollovers;
 - Minimum RPMs (support for the TMCH and the EPP Launch Extension).
 - Defines specific test plans for each type of RSP.
 - For additional information please see the following resources:
 - [RST-API Specification](#) - This resource describes the RESTful interface to ICANN's Registry System Testing platform.
 - [Test Specifications](#) - This resource describes each test plan, suite and case in the RST service, as well as the input parameters required for each; relevant resources; data providers; and the errors that may occur during testing.

What Happens When an Organization Clears RSP Evaluation?



RSP applicants will receive a notification via email upon clearing technical screening or technical testing. The latest status of their application can be found in the [RSP Portal](#).

Applicants who have cleared technical screening will have the status of their application published on the [List of Evaluated RSPs](#) along with the current status of their technical testing.

Once both technical screening and technical testing have been cleared successfully, the RSP applicant will have cleared RSP evaluation, and can be selected by a gTLD applicant as an RSP for the gTLD.

Once gTLD applicants have disclosed the RSPs that will support them, each evaluated RSP will receive a list of gTLD applicants that selected them.

- Each evaluated RSP must confirm which gTLD applications it has enough capacity for and will support.
- gTLD applicants will be notified if the evaluated RSP they select is unwilling to provide RSP support.
- ICANN org will share any additional registry services selected by the gTLD applicant with the Main RSP.



The published list of evaluated RSPs includes applicants that have:

- Cleared both technical screening and technical testing.
- Cleared technical screening, but are still in the process of clearing technical testing.

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04

Best Practices

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

The following best practices relate to the RSP Evaluation Program and the application process.

Timeout

The [RSP Portal](#) has a 4 hour timeout limit so it is suggested that you save your work periodically.

Respond to Clarifying Questions (CQs)

- Respond promptly to questions raised by the Evaluation team to ensure the fastest resolution of pending items.
- You will be limited to one active change request per application.
- Once a change request is accepted, it will override the previous answer.

RSP FAQs

- Periodically re-read the FAQs, as they provide valuable information and may have already addressed your questions.
- The RSP FAQs can be found [here](#).

Accepted Language

Applications must be completed in English.

Any documentation not in English will need to be translated before being uploaded in the [RSP Portal](#) and some may require a certified translation.

Using LLMs

During the evaluation of RSP applications in the pre-evaluation period, some responses appeared to have been enhanced by large language models (LLM). *If using LLMs, carefully review the responses generated by an LLM as we frequently found hallucinations in responses.*

Yes or No Questions

- Some questions will require an answer of Yes or No.
 - A response of Yes achieve an automatic pass.
 - A response of No does not mean a failing score, but requires the RSP Applicant to provide an explanation for such response.

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

RSP Data Transfer Questions

- There are four types of core applications: Main, DNS, DNSSEC and PROXY. Some questions ask about the interaction (e.g., data transfer) between these types of RSPs. Even if your organization will apply for all the types and have already defined internal mechanism for interacting between them, you must describe how your systems will interact with external parties. For example, in addition to describe any internal transfer mechanisms:
 - In a Main RSP response, you should describe how unsigned zoned data is transferred to an external DNSSEC RSP.
 - In a DNSSEC RSP response, you should describe how zones are transferred from an external Main RSP and to an external DNS RSP.
 - In a DNS RSP response, you should describe how zones are transferred from an external DNSSEC RSP.

Capacity Related Questions

Some questions require the applicant to provide information about its capacity. When providing a response, a realistic upper limit is required. Please don't specify that your infrastructure supports unlimited transactions.

The following questions are related to capacity:

Main	DNSSEC	DNS	Proxy
MAIN.13.1. DUMs per TLD	DNSSEC.7.1. DUMs per TLD	DNS.9.1. DUMs per TLD	PROXY.10.1. DUMs per TLD
MAIN.13.2. Maximum TLDs	DNSSEC.7.2. Maximum TLDs	DNS.9.2. Maximum TLDs	PROXY.10.2. Maximum TLDs
MAIN.13.4. Maximum Capacity	DNSSEC.7.4. Maximum Capacity	DNS.9.4. Maximum Capacity	PROXY.10.4. Maximum Capacity

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

The following best practices relate to **Main RSP Applications**.

EPP Extensions

- MAIN.5.10. EPP Extensions requires the applicant to provide the EPP extensions that it supports.
 - EPP extensions are identified using an XML namespace URI and/or a reference to a specification (RFC or other online document).
 - The following examples are not EPP extensions: urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:eppcom-1.0, urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:domain-1.0, urn:ietf:params:xml:ns:tmNotice-1.0

RDAP Extensions

- MAIN.6.11. RDAP Extensions requires the applicant to provide the RDAP extensions that it supports.
 - RDAP extensions are identified using an identifier token and/or a reference to a specification (RFC or other online document)
 - The following example is not an RDAP extension: rdap_level_0
 - The [2019 gTLD Profile](#) is now obsolete and must not be supported.

EPP Status Codes

Several questions require the applicant to provide information about the status codes supported in EPP.

- The supported EPP status codes MUST be consistent with the rules laid out in RFC 5731 and RFC 3915, and (if applicable) RFC 5732 and RFC 5733.
 - e.g. “ok” cannot be combined with any other status code.

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

EPP and RDAP Status Code Mappings

- Several questions require the applicant to provide the mappings between EPP and RDAP status codes and this MUST comply with RFC 8056. Examples of these questions are:
 - MAIN.8.2. EPP and RDAP Status Values
 - MAIN.9.1. URS
 - MAIN.10.2. Domain Registration Values
 - MAIN.10.3. Nameserver Registration Values
 - MAIN.10.4. Contact Registration Values

URS

- MAIN.9.1. URS requires the applicant to provide information about their ability to support Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) proceedings.
 - Applicants should carefully read the [URS Technical Requirements](#) before preparing their response.

Hashing Algorithms

- MAIN.4.18. Hashing Algorithms requires applicants to describe the hashing algorithms used for the storage of customer credentials.
 - The purpose of one-way hashing algorithms is to secure sensitive data (such as passwords and authInfo codes) so that a compromise of the database does not compromise those credentials.
 - Hashing algorithms such as SHA-256 are optimized for performance, and are not suitable for password hashing unless combined with a unique salt and many (hundreds of thousands) iterations.
 - Specialized password hashing algorithms such as Argon2 and bcrypt are often much more secure.
 - Applicants should consult [OWASP's guidance](#) on password storage while preparing their responses.
 - Responses should include the parameters used, such as salt length, iterations, and work factors, when hashing passwords.

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

The following best practices relate to **DNSSEC RSP Applications**.

FIPS 140-3

- DNSSEC.3.9. FIPS 140-3, please consider that the standard FIPS 140-3 is different from FIPS 140-2. Some HSM models may be able to support FIPS 140-3 with a firmware update.

DPS

- DNSSEC.4.1. DPS, if you have a DPS from a previous round, it's likely that it requires updates regarding:
 - New algorithms
 - Obsolete RFCs

The following best practices relate to **DNS RSP Applications**.

Anycast Support

- The program requires that 2026 round gTLDs only support Anycast. If you offer a Unicast DNS service (in addition to Anycast) for other types of TLDs (e.g., ccTLDs), please don't add information about it as this would likely trigger a CQ.

RSP Evaluation Processes | Best Practices from the Evaluation Team

The following best practices relate to **Technical Testing**.

Onboarding to the RST v2.0 OT&E

- Onboard to the RST v2.0 OT&E as early as possible, and “rehearse” the tests you will need to pass after clearing technical screening.
 - Information about access to OT&E can be found here: <https://icann.org/resources/registry-system-testing-v2.0>
- OT&E testing is free. Test early, test often!

RST v2.0 Test Specifications

- Carefully read the [RST v2.0 Test Specifications](#) that are relevant to the type(s) of your RSP application(s), the technical standards they are based on, and the definitions of the input parameter(s) they need.

Client authentication

- Client access is authenticated using TLS with client authentication. TLSA DNS resource records (see RFC 6698) are used to provide a mechanism to link the client certificate to an identity.
 - Information about authentication can be found in the section “**Authentication and Access Control**” of <https://icann.org/resources/registry-system-testing-v2.0>.

04

Resources for Potential RSP Applicants

RSP Resources for Potential RSP Applicants

Please visit the [RSP Website](#). It is the entry point for the RSP Program and the centralized location for all RSP resources and updates.

Where to Direct Questions:

General Program Questions

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

Application-Specific Questions

- After an application has been submitted, applicants may use the **Create Inquiry** button on the [RSP Portal Website](#).
- Once you are an RSP applicant, please submit your questions through the RSP portal.



Important: ICANN staff are directed not to field questions from individual applicants via personal email or social media to ensure fairness and equal access for all participants.

Question and Answer

Questions pre-submitted to the ICANN Global Support Team will be answered first, then Q&A questions from the audience will be answered.

Themes:

- Context / Background
- The RSP Evaluation Application Process
- Support and Resources



Submit further questions to: globalsupport@icann.org

Evaluation Survey

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



NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

gTLD

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