

**NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND**

# Status Update: New gTLD Program: Next Round

New gTLD Program Team

24 May 2024



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## Program Owner's Statement

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On behalf of the entire New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program team, I'm happy to share with you this new format for our regular reporting on the status of implementation of the New gTLD Program: the Next Round.

In the first quarter of 2024, the program team made significant strides to establish a formalized structure for the new leadership team, implement an expanded governance model, and launch all next round projects. Highlights include:

- The Applicant Support Program (ASP) closed the [Public Comment](#) proceeding on the draft ASP Handbook, drafted a funding plan, and closed a Request For Proposals for support application review panelists (SARP).
- The Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program published the RSP handbook for [Public Comment](#), established a RSP evaluation fee, and completed the second phase of the RSP portal, the system that will be used to receive and process applications. The team also provided a demonstration of the portal to the Implementation Review Team (IRT).
- The Registry Service Testing (RST) project team published the Registry System Testing 2.0 specifications and Application Programming Interface (API) for [Public Comment](#).
- The gTLD Application Processing (GAP) project launched in February. This team is developing the design, infrastructure, and operationalization of the main round application process from submission through contracting, enabling an integrated end-to-end process and system design. In addition, the project is tasked with vendor strategy and sourcing for main round application processing. High-level timelines, budgets, and resource plans have been developed. Design of services and business processes has begun with resources from Workstream WS2 and WS3, in alignment with teams from WS1 and with AGB language. Initial planning for high-level technical capabilities with Engineering and Information Technology (E&IT) and Technical Services also has begun.
- The Next Round Base Registry Agreement project, which will evaluate and draft a new agreement for registries, also launched. Since then, the core team has been established and a summary of the proposed changes to the existing agreement has been drafted.
- The Next Round Website project team delivered a critical milestone for the program: the updated [New gTLD Program website](#), which will be used for the next and future rounds of new gTLD applications (see this [blog](#)). The initial rollout of the site features details and information for the RSP Program and the ASP. The majority of content on the website has been translated into the six ICANN languages.
- The Engagement and Communications project team was integrated into one project to provide alignment for outreach activities focused on the next round of new gTLDs. The project developed regional engagement plans and began assessing stakeholders and their informational needs by mapping these

audiences across all regions. In addition, development of a comprehensive communications and engagement plan is underway, which was shared with the IRT on 16 May 2024 for further input.

Delivery of the next round of new gTLDs is dependent upon critical support functions to provide capabilities to the program team. The integration of these functions into the overall program structure has provided additional visibility, ease of support, and alignment.

Suffice it to say there is a lot of work ahead of us, not to mention dependencies that must be resolved (see the Policy Implementation section for further details). With this foundational work in place, we are in a good position to build the rest of the structure in a timely manner, especially with the support you have been providing us during this critical time.

The team looks forward to answering any questions you may have during the ICANN Prep Week session: [New gTLD Program: Next Round -- Implementation Status Update](#) on 28 May 2024 at 18:00 UTC.

Sincerely,

Marika Konings  
VP, New gTLD Program Lead

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## Next Round Program Background

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### Program Overview

The New gTLD Program is a community-driven initiative enabling the continued expansion of the Domain Name System (DNS) through the introduction of new domain names. Among other goals, the program aims to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS.

The 2012 round of the program resulted in the addition of more than 1,200 new top-level domains (TLDs), including TLDs in various languages and scripts. TLDs are the characters found at the end of a domain name like .com, .org, and .net. For example, in the domain name www.icann.org, .org is the top-level domain.

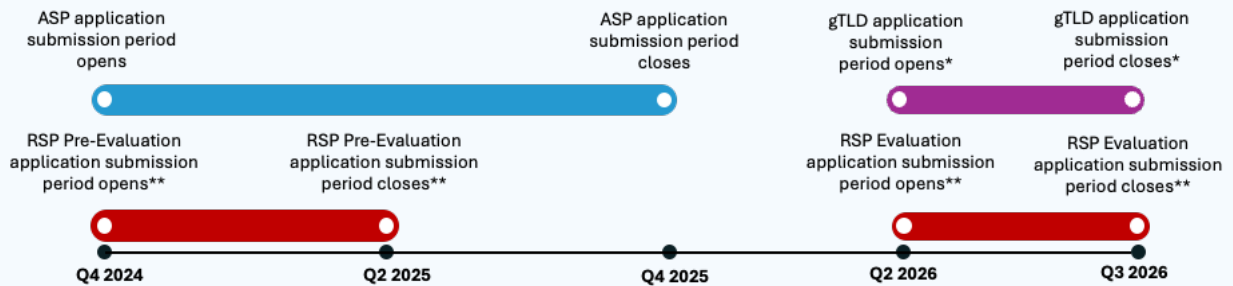
The New gTLD Program: Next Round will give businesses, communities, and other organizations the opportunity to apply for new gTLDs tailored to their community, culture, language, business, and customers. A gTLD can be a branding opportunity for a business, and the commercial opportunities are endless, allowing businesses in countries, entire sectors, or niche markets to develop a unique label on the Internet.

The next round of new gTLDs also offers opportunities to create a more multilingual and inclusive Internet – especially for the billions of people who speak and write in different languages and scripts and are yet to come online.

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) enable people around the world to use domain names and email addresses in local languages and scripts. These domain names give organizations, governments, and businesses the ability to reach citizens and customers in their preferred language or script.

Universal Acceptance (UA) of all domain names and email addresses, including new longer TLDs and those formed with IDNs, will facilitate the development of a multilingual Internet. Working to ensure the Universal Acceptance of these domain names and email addresses by all Internet-enabled applications and systems, and resolving the technical issues around UA, is important to delivering the benefits of the Internet to the billions of current and future Internet users.

## Program Timeline



\*The New gTLD application submission period is projected to open April 2026 for 12-15 weeks.  
 \*\* The two RSP Evaluation application submission periods are projected to open November 2024 and close May 2025 (pre-evaluation) and then open again April 2026 for 12-15 weeks.  
 Dates are subject to change.

## Program Budget

The financial budget shown below includes all implementation activities necessary to open the next round in the second quarter Q2 of 2026 and is sourced from the implementation plan published 31 July 2023. Work to distribute the budget across the projects that were recently launched is ongoing. In addition, the allocation of ICANN shared services has been applied to the program and a contingency amount has been set aside to address any unforeseen costs or changes to original estimates as the program progresses.

Implementation Budget - 2023 Q2 Through 2026 Q2				
USD in Millions	Avg FTE	Personnel Costs	External Costs	Total
Policy Implementation	8.5	\$5.9	\$2.8	\$8.7
Program Design	6.0	\$4.2	\$1.9	\$6.1
Infrastructure Development	10.5	\$7.2	\$10.6	\$17.8
Operationalization	6.7	\$4.7	\$2.9	\$7.5
Overarching Program Support	8.9	\$6.1	\$3.8	\$9.9
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>\$28.1</b>	<b>\$21.9</b>	<b>\$50.0</b>
Contingency	0.0	\$6.0	\$4.0	\$10.0
Shared Services	0.0	\$4.7	\$5.3	\$10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>\$38.8</b>	<b>\$31.2</b>	<b>\$70.0</b>

Key assumptions and considerations that affect the implementation budget above include:

- The application period will open in Q2 2026, and the above financials will cover implementation activities from Q2 2023 through Q2 2026
- In addition to this budget, the Board approved a budget of US\$9M for the Operational Design Phase that was spent from January 2022 to March 2023.
- This budget does not include any processing costs for the ASP or RSP programs which are planned to start in November 2024.

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## Next Round Program Update: Jan-May 2024

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### Progress Update

In the first quarter of 2024, the program team made significant strides to establish a formalized structure for the new leadership team, implement an expanded governance model, and launch all next round projects. Leads from each workstream, project, and supporting, with the support of their project managers, embarked on a program plan alignment exercise in January to develop detailed plans for each area of the program. These detailed plans were then integrated into a comprehensive, overarching plan and budget for the entire next round program.

The workstreams continued developing the policy and program design and fully integrated workstream resources into the newly formed projects.

The **Policy Implementation Workstream (WS1)** completed the first Public Comment proceeding on the AGB handbook and discussed new topics with the IRT including closed generics, IDNs, and dispute-resolution procedures after delegation. In addition, the [community consultation](#) on Public Interest Commitments/Registry Voluntary Commitments (PICs/RVCs) concluded at the end of March 2024.

The **Program Design Workstream (WS2)** completed an assessment of service design work to-date and aligned resources and service design components into the established project structure. All future WS2 updates will be embedded in project updates as the teams become more fully integrated.

The **Infrastructure Development Workstream (WS3)** made tremendous progress with the continued development of systems for project, including the ASP portal, the RSP portal, RST technical capabilities, the creation of the initial next round website. The team also developed technical capabilities that will be utilized across ASP, RSP, and throughout the next round application process. Like Workstream 2, future updates will occur in the context of project updates.

The **Operationalization Workstream (WS4)** partners with the policy development and program design workstreams to design operational processes and procedures

to support the delivery of next round capabilities. The workstream leverages standardized templates for training materials which will be used for training ICANN operations teams prior to the opening of the round. The WS4 team has also begun an assessment of staffing needs to support the processing of applications once the round is open.

Note that future updates for Workstream 2, 3, and 4 are expected to be embedded in the project updates as the teams become more fully integrated.

Work continues including the launch of several new projects.

- The ASP closed the [Public Comment](#) proceeding on the draft ASP Handbook, drafted a funding plan, and closed the [Request For Proposals](#) for SARP.
- The RSP Evaluation Program published the RSP Handbook for [Public Comment](#), established the RSP evaluation fee, and completed the second phase of the RSP portal, the system that will be used to receive and process applications.
- The RST published the Registry System Testing 2.0 specifications and API for [Public Comment](#).
- The team launched the GAP Project. This team is developing the design, infrastructure, and operationalization of the main round application process from submission through contracting, enabling an integrated end-to-end process and system design. In addition, the project is tasked with vendor strategy and sourcing for main round application processing. The project launched in February and high-level timelines, budgets, and resource plans have been developed. Design of services and business processes also has begun, with resources from WS2 and WS3, in alignment with teams from WS1 and with AGB language. Planning for high-level technical capabilities with E&IT and Technical Services has also been started.
- The Next Round Base Registry Agreement Project, which will evaluate and draft a new agreement for registries also launched. The core team has been established and a summary of the expected changes to the existing agreement is being created.
- The Next Round Website project team delivered a critical milestone for the program: the updated New gTLD Program [website](#), which will be used for the next and future rounds of new gTLD applications. The initial rollout of the site features detailed information for both the RSP Program and the ASP. The majority of content on the website has been translated into the six ICANN Languages (see this [blog](#)).
- The Engagement and Communications Project team developed regional engagement plans and began assessing stakeholders' informational needs across all regions. In addition, the team is in the process of developing a comprehensive communications and engagement plan, which was shared with the IRT on 16 May 2024.

The integration of critical support functions into the overall program structure has provided additional visibility, ease of support, and alignment.

- The Finance function developed detailed resource plans and budgets for each area of the program, including workstreams, projects, and supporting functions.

Allocation of budgets to the program areas strengthens financial controls for the program and improves line-of-sight to how decisions on scope and resources impact budgets.

- The Vendor Management team aggregated requests for vendors across the program, developed consistent processes for sourcing activities, and created additional internal controls for approval of vendor sourcing. This includes activities such as the ability to validate against newly developed project-level budgets. In addition, the team facilitated sourcing of multiple vendors including the ASP SARP RFP.
- Human Resources continued to provide support for filling critical roles and developed a streamlined hiring process and reporting.
- The Legal team continues to fulfill program needs and has embedded legal personnel across projects, where applicable, to provide guidance and support.

## Program Status Overview

The program management team developed automated dashboard reporting to provide consistent recording of the status of each key workstream and project within the program. The summary snapshot below is illustrative of the detailed reporting that will be provided to program leadership on an ongoing basis.

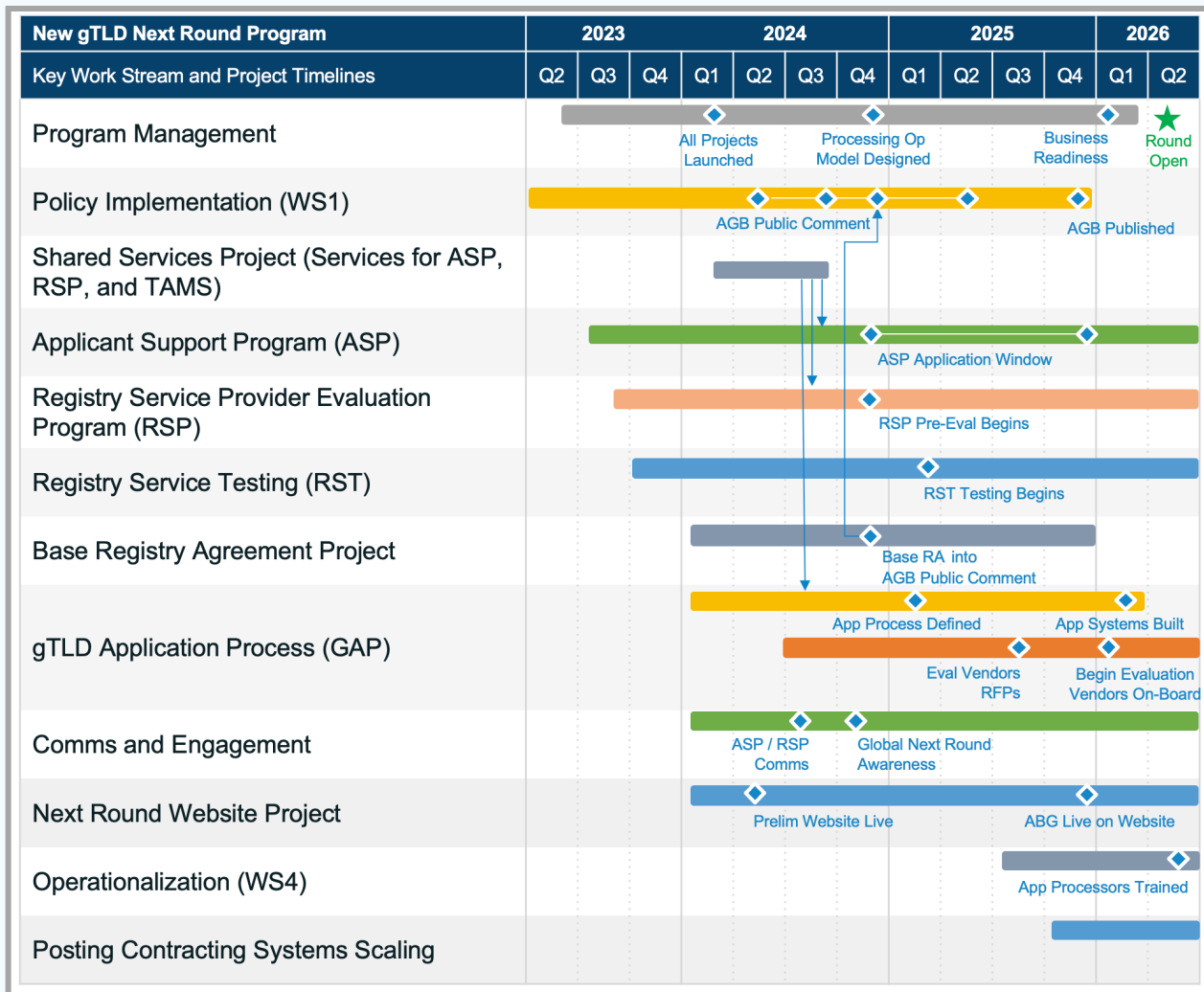
New gTLD Program: Next Round - Status Overview as of 1 May 2024						
Project/WS	Overall	Budget	Resources	Schedule	Scope	Status Summary
Overall Program	●	●	●	●	●	The overall program is progressing according to plan. The newly formed governance model is fully in place and all areas of the program have developed detailed plans to support the overall implementation plan. Risks are identified, with effective mitigation plans in place.
Program Management	●	●	●	●	●	A program delivery methodology was implemented for consistent planning and monitoring of program progress and status. Development of detailed budgets and schedules were completed.
WS1 -- Policy Implementation	●	●	●	●	●	The first Public Comment period was completed on 19 March 2024, and several new topics were discussed with the IRT including closed generics, IDNs, and dispute resolution procedures after delegation.

Registry Service Testing	●	●	▲	●	●	The team is still actively working to develop the RST 2.0 system, which is on track despite resource constraints due to loss of 1.5 full-time-equivalent staff. Team is mitigating the risk effectively.
Applicant Support Program	▲	●	●	▲	▲	The ASP Funding Plan Funding Plan has been reviewed by the Steering Committee, Board Finance Committee, and the Board Caucus. ASP system development is on track and the RFP for the ASP Evaluation Panel has been issued, with review of responses underway. Public Comment analysis work has begun and will continue through May.
Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program (RSP)	●	●	●	●	●	The development team has continued the UAT Testing of the RSP System, while the GDS Technical Services team has been preparing to update the RSP Handbook following the close of the Public Comments window.
Fee Structure Project	▲	●	●	▲	●	The project team has been overseeing the reviews and feedback of the ASP Funding Plan, managing the RSP fee development and approval, and drafting Next Round Fee assessments and calculations with Finance and the program core team.
gTLD Application Processing Project (GAP)	▲	●	▲	▲	●	The GAP Project launched and started development of service requirements and business processes utilizing a sprint-based approach. Mapping of technical capabilities with technical services has started as an input into system development estimating.
Base Registry Agreement	●	●	●	●	●	Core team meetings are in place for alignment and progression of work. Review of the summary of required changes from the Subsequent Procedures (Subpro) Final report, recommendations, and Omnibus are underway.

Engagement	●	●	●	●	●	Regional engagement plans and stakeholder mapping have been developed for each area in consultation with the Communications team and program leadership. Knowledge build-up on ASP and RSP is underway with regional GSE teams to support engagement efforts.
Comms	●	●	●	●	●	Comms is reworking new ASP and RSP decks and integrating a new visual look and feel that corresponds with the website relaunch. A thoughtful reflection was initiated on the last round with engagement and comms which resulted in a set of recommendations for communications going forward.
Website	●	●	●	●	●	The New gTLD website was launched on 1 May 2024 with a new branded look-and-feel which will be leveraged going forward. Additional functionality and content will be added going forward in preparation for ASP and RSP launches as well as overall awareness for the next round.
Shared Services for ASP, RSP, and GAP	●	●	●	●	●	The project team is working to develop technical services in parallel to ensure the project is completed on time. The focus this week has been on continuing development for the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) & Reporting Services.

# Program Detailed Schedule

The key work streams and projects have developed detailed schedules of work, including cross-project dependencies. This enables a holistic view of work across the program.



## Program Financial Update

Implementation efforts for the New gTLD Program: Next Round began in April 2023. On 27 July 2023, the Board approved a [resolution](#) that acknowledged receipt of the US\$70-million [Next Round Implementation Plan](#) and directed ICANN org to provide the Board with periodic updates on its progress. Thus far, the ICANN Board has approved US\$22 million in funding for implementation work:

- March 2023 [resolution](#) for US\$9 million to support work from April 2023 through October 2023.
- October 2023 [resolution](#) for an additional US\$13 million to support implementation work through June 2024.

Implementation work has been categorized into four workstreams, nine projects, and overall program management to better articulate and align efforts and costs with deliverables and milestones.

Since April 2023, an average of 57 staff have spent a fraction of their time working on the next round of the New gTLD Program. These allocations equate to an average of 28 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff. The 28 FTE translates to 50,468 work hours from April 2023 through March 2024. Professional services include expenses for outside contractor support, the global communications campaign, staff recruitment, and external vendors for business process design and market research.

## Program Financials To-Date – Actuals vs. Budget

New gTLD Next Round (USD in thousands)	Program to Date Actuals April'23 - Mar'24 (12 Months) Implementation Tranches #1 & #2		
	Actuals	Budget	Variance (Over) / Under
Personnel	\$6,273	\$6,617	\$344
T&M	\$204	\$247	\$43
Prof Svcs	\$5,029	\$5,381	\$352
Admin	\$268	\$586	\$317
Shared Services & Org Support	\$3,560	\$3,410	(\$150)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,335</b>	<b>\$16,241</b>	<b>\$906</b>
Average Staff - FTE	28.0	29.6	1.6

## Program Financials By Tranche of Funding

New gTLD Next Round (USD in thousands)	FY23 & FY24 Actuals April - October 2023 (7 Months) Implementation Tranche #1		
	Category	Actuals	Budget
Personnel	\$3,502	\$3,556	\$54
T&M	\$123	\$194	\$71
Prof Svcs	\$2,266	\$2,405	\$139
Admin	\$128	\$291	\$163
Shared Services & Org Support	\$2,352	\$2,337	(\$15)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,371</b>	<b>\$8,784</b>	<b>\$413</b>
Average Staff - FTE	25.8	25.4	(0.4)

New gTLD Next Round (USD in thousands)	FY24 Actuals November'23 - March'24 (5 Months) Implementation Tranche #2		
	Category	Actuals	Budget
Personnel	\$2,771	\$3,061	\$290
T&M	\$82	\$53	(\$29)
Prof Svcs	\$2,763	\$2,976	\$213
Admin	\$140	\$295	\$155
Shared Services & Org Support	\$1,209	\$1,073	(\$136)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,964</b>	<b>\$7,458</b>	<b>\$493</b>
Average Staff - FTE	31.2	35.7	4.5

Staffing for the next round of new gTLDs continues to increase as work progresses and required roles are identified and filled. The average external spend has increased significantly since April 2023 with incremental spend on external consultants for program management, program design, communications, and infrastructure development. It is anticipated that external expenditures will continue to increase for infrastructure development and program design. In December 2023 and January 2024, the ICANN Board approved contracts exceeding US\$500,000 per ICANN financial policies.

ICANN org will request the next tranche of funding to the ICANN Board during ICANN80.

## Program Financial Forecast

Over the next three months, April through June 2024, expenses for the next round of applications for new gTLDs are anticipated to steadily increase as staff is onboarded and systems development ramps up. Staffing projections initially estimated six new hires between April and June 2024. Given that staffing will not occur at the rate planned, it is anticipated that staffing costs will be lower than planned but will be offset by incremental professional services from external vendors. In addition, incremental expenses will be incurred for infrastructure and development costs, which were [approved by the Board](#) in December 2023. Overall, it is anticipated that an incremental US\$2million will be spent over the current run rate of program costs, with an additional US\$1.1million available in contingency funds.

New gTLD Next Round (USD in thousands)	Forecast		
	April 2023 - June 2024 (15 Months) Implementation Tranche #1 & #2		
Category	Actuals Apr'23- Mar'24	Forecast Apr'24 - Jun'24	Projected Total Spend
Personnel	\$6,273	\$2,230	\$8,503
T&M	\$204	\$125	\$329
Prof Svcs	\$5,029	\$2,339	\$7,369
Admin	\$268	\$75	\$343
Shared Services & Org Support	\$3,560	\$795	\$4,355
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$15,335</b>	<b>\$5,564</b>	<b>\$20,900</b>
Contingency	-	\$1,100	\$1,100
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$15,335</b>	<b>\$6,664</b>	<b>\$22,000</b>
Staff Average FTE	28.0	41.3	32.0
Run Rate per Month	\$1,278	\$2,221	\$1,467

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# Workstream and Project Updates

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Pre-ICANN80 Status Update: New gTLD  
Program: Next Round January - May 2024

# Program Management

## What Is It?

Program management delivers capabilities to lead, govern, and enable the implementation of the New gTLD Program.

The New gTLD Program: Next Round governance structure takes into account the involvement and decision-making anticipated at multiple levels of the organization; the cross-functional nature of the project; and ICANN org’s commitment to accountability and transparency.

The New gTLD Program: Next Round leadership team has established governance structures to manage the project including a Steering Committee for oversight; program sponsors who set the strategic direction of the program and are accountable for its

success; a program leadership team, which provides day-to-day leadership of the program; and a program core team that delivers the work of the program within the various workstreams, projects and supporting functions.

Enabling the implementation of the program also includes the operating model and processes to monitor and control the program, including managing issues, mitigating risks, facilitating decision-making, monitoring performance, and managing controls to ensure delivery of the program within the defined scope, schedule, and budget. Lastly, management of organizational change will support and enable the readiness of ICANN personnel to deliver capabilities for the next round of new gTLDs.

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Next Round Program Management</b>												
Establish Program Operations	█											
Monitor and Control Program		█										
Design Processing Operating Model		█										
Manage Organizational Change and Readiness					█							

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

In January, the program kicked off an alignment exercise to create detailed plans for each area of the program to drive increased visibility and accountability at the workstream, project, and supporting-function levels. A common program delivery methodology and tool set were deployed to enable consistency of scope, schedule, resource plan, budget, risk, issues, and decision-making processes. The leadership and core teams came together for a planning workshop to drive alignment and cross-functional collaboration.

Following the creation of detailed plans, an integrated program-level timeline was developed to support improved tracking of the program’s critical path. In addition, a consolidated resource plan and budget was developed based upon detailed budgets from each workstream, project, and function.

Implementation of monitor and control processes across the program has started with the development of a decision-making framework to improve alignment and speed of decision-making, a contract approval process, and a process to track actual spending against budgets at the project and workstream levels.

Lastly, automated status dashboards were created for each area of the project to provide improved visibility to program performance. Roll out of additional monitor and control processes will continue through July 2024 and will include management of change control, training on effective risk and issue mitigation, and planning for operational readiness across the organization.

## What to Expect at ICANN80

An update on the overall status of implementation and program management will be provided during the ICANN80 Prep Week session: [New gTLD Program: Next Round - Implementation Status Update](#) on 28 May 2024 at 18:00 UTC.

## Policy Implementation (Workstream 1)

### What Is It?

Workstream 1 (WS1) is tasked with drafting the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) for the next round. This work is conducted in coordination with the IRT that assists the WS1 team in the drafting process by helping to ensure that the AGB language represents the wording and intent of the [Final Report on the New Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process](#) (Final

Report). The goal for WS1 is to complete a full draft of the IRT by May 2025 with Board approval and publication of the final AGB envisaged for no later than December 2025 (see also the IRT’s [Implementation Plan](#)). The timely publication of the AGB is a key dependency for ICANN to open the application window for the Next Round in April 2026.

Next Round Program Timeline	2023				2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Policy Implementation (WS1)</b>												
Draft Applicant Guidebook, Public Comment #1												
Draft Applicant Guidebook, Public Comment #2												
Draft Applicant Guidebook, Public Comment #3												
Final Public Comment and Publish Applicant Guidebook												

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

The first [Public Comment proceeding](#) on draft sections of the AGB closed on 19 March 2024. Ten Public Comments were submitted by stakeholders from across the community on the proposed language. Submissions tended to find that the proposed language was consistent with the [Final Report](#) outputs. There were also suggestions for amendments and/or clarification of the language on certain topics. All the Public Comments received will be carefully considered by ICANN org. Any changes required to the proposed language will be reviewed with the SubPro IRT.

Since ICANN79, four new topics were discussed with the IRT:

- Topic 13: Communications,
- Topic 23: Closed Generics<sup>1</sup>
- Topic 25: IDNs
- Topic 33: Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation

In addition, the language for the following sections was agreed to be ready for the second Public Comment proceeding, which is tentatively scheduled for September 2024:

- Topic 23: Closed Generics
- Topic 24: String Similarity Evaluations (subject to the Board's approval of IDN EPDP Phase1 recommendations)
- Topic 33: Dispute-Resolution Procedures After Delegation
- Root Zone Label Generation Rules

ICANN org, in collaboration with the IRT, finalized the draft language for the topics listed below following Public Comment:

- Topic 10: Applicant Freedom of Expression
- Topic 21: Blocked and Reserved Names
- Work Track 5: Geographic Names

Finally, since no input was received on the language for Topic 11: Universal Acceptance, the draft of the section is considered ready for the final draft of the AGB that will go out for Public Comment in May 2025.

The [community consultation](#) on PICs/RVCs concluded at the end of March 2024. ICANN org received [written input](#) from Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) stakeholder groups and constituencies, the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), and the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) on the proposed [framework](#) for implementing PICs/RVCs in the New gTLD Program: Next Round. The ICANN Board provided a two-week deadline extension to the community groups that did not or declined to respond, in the event they wished to reconsider the consultation request particularly concerning the Bylaws amendment issue. As a next step, the ICANN Board is expected to provide direction on the PICs/RVCs implementation approach during its

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<sup>1</sup> The outputs for Topic 23 were not adopted by the GNSO Council, and on 22 January 2024, the Board informed the chairs of the participating groups in the facilitated dialogue that “the Board has considered the GAC Advice and has determined that closed generic gTLD applications will not be permitted until such time as there is an approved methodology and criteria to evaluate whether or not a proposed closed domain is in the public interest.”

workshop in May 2024, taking into account the community input received via this consultation as well as the [ICANN79 plenary session](#) on PICs/RVCs.

## What Are the Remaining Key Dependencies?

There are several remaining dependencies related to implementation of the New gTLD Program: Next Round:

- Board consideration of the following dependencies:
  - IDN Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) Phase 1 and Phase 2 Final Reports
  - Name Collision Analysis Project (NCAP) Study 2
  - Supplemental recommendations (with the exception of Recommendation 24.3, which the GNSO Council is still considering)
- Board action on all outstanding Advice pertaining to the Next Round:
  - GAC: Auctions; Applicant Support (ICANN77 Communique)
  - SSAC: SAC114 (Comments on Draft Final Report)
- Board to agree on framework for:
  - PICs/RVCs
  - Contention resolution

## What to Expect at ICANN80

There will be three IRT sessions during ICANN80. These sessions will be open to all, and remote participation will be available.

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## Program Design (Workstream 2)

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### What Is It?

Program Design focuses on the development of business rules ICANN will need to apply to deliver the program in accordance with the approved policy recommendations and ultimately the AGB (as the outcome of WS1 policy implementation). The team will be deployed across the relevant projects that make up the program to provide input to the development of the AGB, document business rules and requirements to support systems development (WS 3) and ICANN's preparations for operating the program (WS 4). For more details please refer to

the Implementation Plan. Program Design (Workstream 2/WS2) provides operational input into the Policy Implementation (WS1) work, e.g. the AGB. Using the AGB, and applying operational understanding, the team will develop the business rules for how the program will function. These business rules get codified into what we call Service Requirements Documents (SRD) or Internal Procedure Rules (IPR) and become the basis for the operational processes and systems designs.

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

With the implementation of the updated program structure and governance in late Q4 of 2023, the Program Design Workstream scope has transitioned to the project structure to provide increased cross-functional alignment. Therefore, updates on progress for Infrastructure Development will be reflected in the individual project updates.

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## Infrastructure Development (Workstream 3)

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### What Is It?

Infrastructure Development (Work Stream 3) focuses on developing the capability to deliver processes through the creation of systems and tools. Service delivery of the processes is expected to be performed as a mixture

of system-supported and manual operations. In order to minimize system-build costs and maintain an accelerated timeline, ICANN org will balance the level of functionality that is built into the next round systems.

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

With the implementation of the updated program structure and governance in late Q4 of 2023, the Infrastructure Development Workstream scope has transitioned to the project structure to provide increased cross-functional alignment. Therefore, updates on progress for Infrastructure Development will be reflected in the individual project updates.

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## Operationalization (Workstream 4)

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### What Is It?

Operationalization focuses on the design of business processes, the development of procedures, and the hiring and training of resources to prepare ICANN org for the opening and operation of the New gTLD Program: Next Round. This includes the opening of the application submission windows and the processing of ASP, RSP Evaluation Program and new gTLD applications. The team is deployed across the relevant projects that make up the program. Based on business

requirements developed by Workstream 2 and in support of the infrastructure development (Workstream 3), the team designs and documents business processes and procedures. A good part of the effort in this workstream, such as developing procedures, hiring resources, training staff, and conducting operational program tests, will occur later in the implementation, once processes and systems have been developed.

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Operationalization (WS4)</b>												
Develop standards and templates	█											
Develop operational processes	█	█	█	█	█	█						
Develop operational training materials						█	█					
On-board and Train Next Round Application Processors									█			

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- Onboarding of two business process resources
- Resource planning and allocation across the relevant projects
- Ongoing work to analyze business rules and design and document processes focused on RSP, ASP and Shared Services, work is reflected in the relevant projects
- Support of User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of the first phase of the RSP Portal, system to be used to receive RSP applications
- Support of development of the ASP Portal, system to be used to receive ASP applications

## What Are the Remaining Key Dependencies?

- Availability of documentation of business rules (Workstream 2)
- Availability of ASP Portal (system to be used to receive ASP applications) and gTLD Portal (system to be used to receive new gTLD applications)

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# Applicant Support Program

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## What Is It?

The ASP was developed as part of ICANN’s New gTLD Program. The ASP is intended to make applying for a new gTLD or operating a registry more accessible to applicants who would be otherwise unable due to financial and resource constraints. The ASP is for gTLD applicants seeking financial and non-financial support.

The ASP application process is separate from the New gTLD Program

application, occurring before the application submission period for the New gTLD Program: Next Round begins. This timing ensures that support applicants have sufficient time to apply before the opening of the application submission period for new gTLDs.

Next Round Program Timeline	2023				2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Applicant Support Program (ASP)</b>												
ASP Handbook* and Program Design												
ASP Funding Plan												
ASP Application System Development												
ASP Prep for Operations and On-Board Panelist												

\*Timeline includes external dependencies

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- [Closed Public Comment on the draft ASP Handbook.](#)
  - [Published Public Comment Summary Report.](#)
  - Conducted Public Comment analysis for discussion with the ASP-IRT.
- [Closed Request for Proposals for SARP.](#)
- Completed initial system development for the ASP Application System.
- Drafted content for [ASP portion of new gTLD program website.](#)
- Developed ASP budget range and assumptions for sharing with the ASP-IRT.
- Developed ASP Communications & Engagement Plan for sharing with the IRT.
- Conducted further planning and implementation efforts related to the SubPro Final Report as well as the pending supplemental policy recommendations and GNSO Guidance Process for Applicant Support guidance recommendations, noting these are still pending Board consideration.

## What Are the Remaining Key Dependencies?

- Board consideration of supplemental policy Recommendations 17.2 and 32.1 as well as GNSO Guidance Process for Applicant Support guidance recommendations.
- gTLD application fee
- ASP Funding Plan, pending Board decision
- Completion of the following AGB topics:
  - Registrant Protections (any applicable updates to 2012 AGB language on New gTLD Program Eligibility, Cybersquatting History Check, and Legal Compliance Check)
  - Challenge mechanism for ASP
  - Auctions
    - Bid credit/multiplier, based on research
  - Terms and Conditions
- IDN EPDP Working Group Phase 1 decision on how many variants an applicant gets per string.

## What to Expect at ICANN80

An update on the overall status of implementation including ASP will be provided during the ICANN80 Prep Week session: [New gTLD Program: Next Round - Implementation Status Update](#) on 28 May 2024 at 18:00 UTC.

## Additional information

- [Draft ASP Handbook](#)
- [ASP IRT Sub-Track Workspace](#)
- [Applicant Support Program Website](#)

## Registry System Testing

### What Is It?

The RST 2.0 aims to evolve the current process used in the gTLD space. The RST 2.0 will streamline the current service by only implementing automated tests. Applicants will use RST 2.0 through an API in a self-testing design, minimizing the need for human intervention.

The project will develop an RST 2.0 Test Specification document outlining the details of the test plans, suites and cases. These materials will provide clear guidelines and expectations for the users of RST 2.0.

RST 2.0 will be used in the RSP Evaluation Program and during pre-delegation testing in the next round. RST 2.0 will also be used in day-to-day operations, for example, in the Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA) process.

RST 2.0 will support the latest consensus policies (e.g., the Registration Data Policy) and technical standards.

Being a completely automated system, RST 2.0 does not have limitations on the number of concurrent tests of the current Registry System Testing.

Next Round Program Timeline	2023				2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Registry Service Testing (RST)</b>												
Develop RST Test Specification for IRT and Public Comment												
RST System Development												
RST Internal Pilot												
RST Prep for Operations												

### What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- On 26 March 2024, ICANN org published the Registry System Testing 2.0 Test Specifications and API for Public Comment.
- ICANN org plans to publish the Public Comment report on 31 May 2024.
- ICANN org plans to publish the RST Specifications in June 2024.

## Additional information

[Registry System Testing 2.0 Test Specifications and API for Public Comments](#)  
[Registry System Testing 1.0 Specifications](#)

# Registry Service Provider Evaluation

## What Is It?

As part of ICANN’s New gTLD Program: Next 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.

The evaluation of RSPs is an important part of ICANN’s mission to help ensure a stable, secure, resilient Internet. RSPs offer critical services – such as DNS, Registration Data Access Protocol, and DNS Security Extensions,

among others – on behalf of a registry operator.

Through the RSP Evaluation Program, RSPs need only be evaluated once, regardless of the number of gTLDs they support. The program will evaluate RSPs both before and during the application process for new gTLDs.

All new gTLD applicants are required to use evaluated RSPs. A list of pre-evaluated RSPs will be made available before the gTLD application submission period opens.

Next Round Program Timeline	2023				2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Registry Service Provider Evaluation (RSP)</b>												
RSP Handbook and Program Design												
RSP System Development												
RSP Prep for Operations and On-Board Panelist												

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- On 13 March 2024, ICANN org published the RSP Handbook for Public Comments
- On 20 March 2024, the second phase of the RSP Portal (the system to be used to receive RSP applications) was completed
- ICANN org plans to publish the Public Comment report on 17 May 2024
- ICANN org plans to publish the RSP section of the New gTLD Program website early May 2024
- ICANN org plans to publish the RSP handbook in May 2024
- ICANN plans to share the RSP evaluation fee in May 2024

## What Are the Remaining Key Dependencies?

- Definition of the Terms and Conditions for RSP
- RST 2.0 being ready for the start of the evaluation period
- Board consideration of supplemental Recommendation 32.1
- Completion of the following AGB topics:
  - New gTLD Program eligibility requirements
  - Challenge mechanism for RSP
- Shared Services project - implementation of:
  - Background Screening Service
  - OFAC checks
  - Payments
  - Reporting

## Additional information

- [SubPro Final Report](#), especially Topic 6: Registry Service Provider Pre-Evaluation, Pages 29--34
- SubPro [Operational Design Assessment \(ODA\)](#)
- [ODA Assumptions](#)
- [Next Round Implementation Plan](#)
- [RSP Handbook -- Public Comments](#)

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## Shared Services

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### What Is It?

The Shared Services project plays a vital role in providing essential services across the three program systems supporting the next round of new gTLDs: RSP Evaluation System, ASP System, and gTLD application system. Its purpose is to develop the process and system implementation of various services shared across the three programs. Due to the shared requirements and the need for a cohesive approach within tight development timelines, these services will be developed as a unified effort.

This consolidated approach aims to reduce costs associated with individual implementations and ensure a

synchronized integration for optimal functionality as much as possible.

The centralized services being developed as part of shared services are: Shared Services will develop the necessary processes and tools needed to implement the following shared services: Legal Compliance Checks, Background Screening, Multifactor Authentication Recovery, Payment Processing and Reporting. Although the services are needed for all three program systems, priority will be given to the needs of the ASP and RSP programs given their timeline is closer (Q4 2024) than the gTLD Application Program (Q2 2026). For clarity, both ASP and RSP systems are expected to

be functionality-ready by Q2 2024; testing and operationalization come after that.

Ideally, the services should cater to the requirements of all three programs. However, if the timeline doesn't permit

a solution for all three, a simpler option is to first prioritize the needs of ASP and RSP for implementation. Services can be upgraded or extended as part of the gTLD Application Program implementation to accommodate this latter program's requirements.

Next Round Program Timeline	2023				2024				2025			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Shared Services Project</b>												
Develop Shared Services Tools and Capabilities												
Design Service Requirements and Processes for Shared Services												

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- The project formally launched in January, pulling together team members who were already in developing technical capabilities under the Infrastructure Development Workstream.
- Centralized components are in development to be leveraged by the RSP and ASP projects.
- A vendor that will provide a tool to assist with legal compliance checks has been selected and the contract signing is underway. Additionally, the team has moved forward with development activities within the necessary system environments.

## gTLD Application Processing Project

### What is it?

The GAP is the primary project delivering the processes, technology, and resources to manage the end-to-end application process, including receiving new gTLD applications, processing applications through evaluation and other program-related activities, and execution of registry agreements with eligible applicants. Originally, the scope of work for the GAP project was spread across

multiple initiatives but has since been combined to ensure consistency across the application process. The GAP project is broken down into three main tracks of work including the overarching evaluation vendor strategy, the design of the application processes and supporting technical infrastructure, and the sourcing and training of vendors that will deliver application evaluation capabilities.

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>gTLD Application Processing Project (GAP)</b>												
<b>Application Program Design and Systems</b>												
Design gTLD Application Processes												
Develop gTLD Application Systems												
<b>Application Processing Vendors</b>												
Develop Application Evaluation Vendor Requirements												
Conduct Requests for Proposals from Vendors												
On-Board and Train Vendors												

## What has occurred since ICANN79?

Launched in March 2024, the GAP project is a cross functional team, which has delivered the following results:

- A high-level project timeline, initial scope of work, detailed resource plan, and full project budget.
- Sourcing of additional critical project team members is underway with human resources and vendor management.
- Service requirements and business process flows that initially started under WS 2 have moved under the GAP project structure to enable cross-functional alignment between program design (WS2), operationalization (WS4), and policy implementation (WS1). The integrated teams are following an agile, sprint-based approach to speed delivery of requirements and improve cross-functional collaboration and alignment.
- Definition of technical capabilities has begun, with the technical infrastructure teams and system development vendors which will be a critical input into detailed planning and estimating of the development work.

## What are the remaining key dependencies?

NCAP Study 2 - Following the submission of the SSAC advice on the NCAP Study 2 (still pending), the ICANN Board will consider the advice. The Board decision on the SSAC advice relating to the NCAP Study 2 could have an impact on the scope, budget, and timeline of the GAP project.

## Base Registry Agreement

### What Is It?

The Base Registry Agreement (RA) is the formal written and binding agreement between the approved applicant and ICANN that sets forth the rights, duties, liabilities, and obligations of the registry operator for a specific gTLD, and its variants in some cases. ICANN org must be prepared to offer and enter into registry agreements with all successful new gTLD applicants, meaning that an agreement must be available in the AGB for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. This will allow the applicant to review and understand the obligations of a registry operator entering into a binding agreement for a gTLD with ICANN. The project scope for the New gTLD Program: Next

Round Base RA is to define all contractual obligations to be included in the base registry agreement which will be presented to successful applicants. This includes fulfilling applicable Subsequent Procedures Final Report outputs included in Topic 36. Other community work in progress is likely to impact the contract development process, including the implementation of recommendations from the Rights Protection Mechanisms PDP (Phase 1) and the IDNs EPDP. In addition, ICANN org is reviewing recommendations from the ICANN community, Board resolutions, and operational improvements to include in the newBase RA where applicable.

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Next Round Base Registry Agreement</b>												
Assess changes from last round agreement	█											
Update Registry Agreement and Public Comment			█									
Finalize Registry Agreement								█				

### What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

The Base RA Core Team has been established and a summary of the proposed changes created. The Base RA Core Team is reviewing each proposed change to understand the impact to registry operators and internal teams at ICANN org if those obligations are added to the RA, where in the RA the changes should be made, and how the updated language required is drafted.

Following a review of the proposed changes a draft of the RA redline will be created and proposed to be shared with the IRT in August 2024.

### What are the remaining key dependencies?

1. Board action on Recommendation 9.2 on PICs/RVCs
2. Board action on IDN EPDP Phase 1 and 2 Final Reports

## Post-Contracting

### What Is It?

The purpose of the post-contracting and operations project is to enable new registry operators to comply with various requirements that will enable them to launch their gTLDs.

Once new gTLD applicants have passed evaluation and signed a registry agreement with ICANN, they will have to be onboarded as registry operations in various ICANN systems and processes. Examples of these are: Naming Services Portal (NSP) (used to communicate with contracted parties, request services, maintain contacts, roles, etc.), Registration Reporting Interface (RRI) (used by registries to provide data escrow and transaction reports, which are used for billing purposes among others), Service Level Agreement Monitoring (SLAM) (to monitor performance requirements for registry services), Centralized Zone Download Service (CZDS) (where registries manage zone file access for requestors), Bulk Registration Data Access (BRDA) (where registries

provide ICANN org access to a copy of a subset of their registration database), Zone File Access (ZFA) (where registries provide ICANN org a daily copy of their TLD zone files, etc). Registries must also provide TLD startup information to ICANN org, e.g., sunrise, qualified launch period, general availability periods, etc.

Registries must also undergo pre-delegation testing (PDT), one of the use cases of the RST service. This is a prerequisite before they can ask for their gTLD to be delegated in the global DNS root zone. After passing PDT, registries can request delegation of their gTLD.

Registries will also register and undergo testing with the Trademark Database (TMDB), the backend for the Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH) service; they are required to integrate their systems during various launch periods.

### What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

Nothing to note at this time, this project is expected to begin 15 July 2026.

## Next Round Website

### What is it?

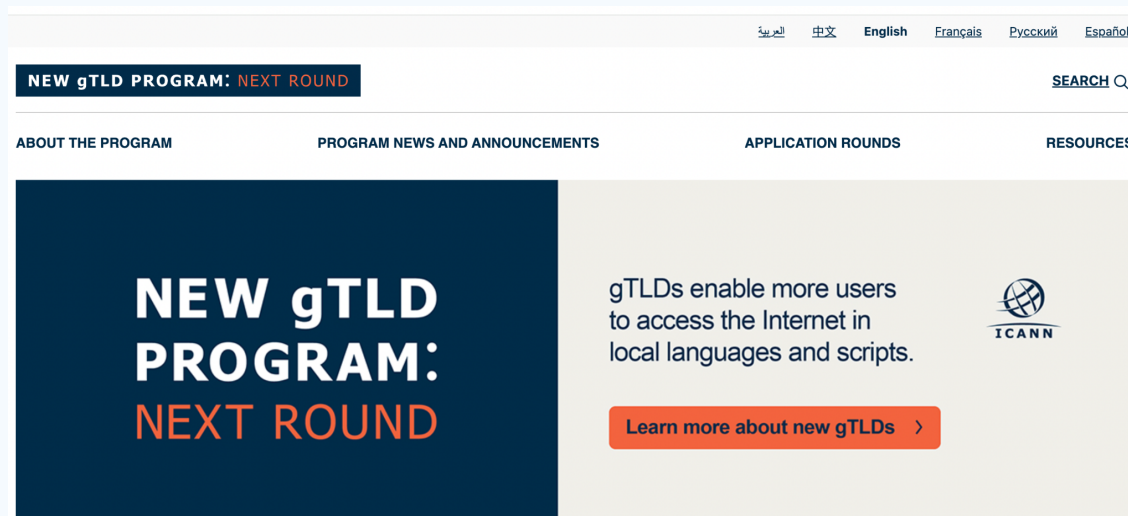
The [website](#) for the New gTLD Program will be a central source of information for the ICANN community as well as current and future new gTLD applicants.

The website includes information about the program, tools and resources for applicants, updates on program status, and information regarding a specific round (e.g., 2012 versus the upcoming round).

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>NxR Website</b>												
Initial Next Round Website												
Full Program Website Enabled												

### What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

ICANN org launched [newgtldprogram.icann.org](https://newgtldprogram.icann.org), the new [website](#) for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. The initial rollout of the site provides details and information about the [RSP](#) Evaluation Program and the [ASP](#). The website also includes all blogs and announcements that have been published in the past four years. The majority of content on the [website](#) is translated into the six ICANN Languages.



## The New gTLD Program

The New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program: Next Round is an ICANN initiative to enable the expansion of the Internet's Domain Name System (DNS) through the introduction of new top-level domains.



### Applicant Support Program (ASP)

The Applicant Support Program (ASP) is an initiative intended to provide financial and non-financial support for eligible entities that demonstrate financial need.



### Registry Service Provider (RSP)

The Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program will evaluate RSPs before the gTLD application window opening, thereby reducing duplicative work and testing.



### Applicant Guidebook (AGB)

The AGB for the next round is being developed in collaboration with the Implementation Review Team. The AGB is expected to be completed by May 2025.

## What Are the Remaining Key Dependencies?

The new [website](#) will be updated as new information becomes available including the Applicant Support (ASP) Handbook, the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), and more.

## Engagement and Communications

### What Is It?

ICANN org's Global Communications and Global Stakeholder Engagement teams are driving awareness and capacity development with the New gTLD Program: Next Round, the ASP and the RSP Evaluation Program.

Applications for these programs will begin in the 4th quarter of 2024. ICANN org has designed a global awareness campaign that encompasses different phases, each with a distinct focus and activities, all contributing to the overall goals of fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the DNS.

Collaboratively with Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE), Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) Technical Engagement, Government Engagement (GE) teams and the community, this team is working to identify target audiences and foster partnerships with local businesses, governments, and not-for-profit entities across the globe.

The objectives for these activities are to heighten awareness of ICANN and the importance of the DNS, to highlight the availability of IDNs and lay the foundation for a general understanding of UA. Through these aims, we are increasing the global diversity and geographic distribution of the gTLD applicant pool, including entity types, geographic distribution, languages, scripts, and business models.

Next Round Program Timeline	2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Communication and Engagement</b>												
IDN and UA Campaigns	█											
Local Engagement		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
ASP & RSP Communications			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Next Round Global Awareness				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█

## What Has Occurred Since ICANN79?

- Development of GSE Regional Engagement Plans.
- Initiated stakeholder mapping across all regions.
- The team has drafted an Engagement and Communications and Plan with input from regional vice presidents and engagement plans, which will be shared with the IRT for further input.
- Internal capacity-building for GSE teams, starting with a broad overview of the New gTLD Program: Next Round and details on the ASP and RSP programs. This is in preparation for the launch of awareness and engagement campaigns, currently planned for May 2024 onwards.
- Working collaboratively, the team also has begun discussions with applicants from the 2012 round to update previously published case studies, obtain testimonials, and support communication strategies.
- Creation of engagement materials, such as presentation decks, social media posts, specification documents, guides, and reports.

## NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND



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