

The New gTLD Program: Next Round Implementation Plan

31 July 2023



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Executive Summary

The ICANN Board [requested](#) that ICANN org deliver an implementation plan for opening the next round of the New generic top-level domain (gTLD) Program no later than 1 August 2023. This document provides this plan, building on:

- The [Final Report](#) on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures (SubPro) Policy Development Process.
- The [New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Operational Design Assessment \(ODA\)](#).
- The [Overview of Work Necessary to Complete Program Development](#) provided to the Board at ICANN77.
- The [plan](#) for the remaining pending recommendations.
- The [methodology and work plan](#) for the Implementation Review Team (IRT).
- The [plan and timeline](#) for policy work on closed generics.
- The [project plan](#) for Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) Working Group (WG) charter questions with an impact on the Applicant Guidebook for the next round of the New gTLD Program (AGB).

Based upon the Board-approved recommendations¹ from the SubPro Final Report, ICANN org plans to build the capabilities to deliver these recommendations through requirements defined in the AGB.² These capabilities will allow for organizations to apply to operate a new gTLD. **The next round of the New gTLD Program will focus on diversity and inclusivity of the Domain Name System (DNS), including universal acceptance of new gTLDs as well as the inclusion of more IDNs.**

The next round will also include the [Applicant Support Program](#), which is intended to provide financial and non-financial assistance to qualified applicants, helping to reduce barriers for potential gTLD applicants that may find the application fee prohibitive or lack the professional contacts or resources needed when starting a new registry.

Additionally, based on the recommendations, ICANN org will develop a separate technical evaluation program to test potential Registry Service Providers (RSPs). The [RSP Evaluation Program](#)³ aims to bring efficiencies to the evaluation process by performing the technical

¹ “Board-approved recommendations” are any “Recommendations” or “Affirmations with Modification”, as defined in the SubPro Final Report, which the Board has adopted. Generally, the Board does not take formal action on “Implementation Guidance.” As such, when referring to recommendations in this document, it should be understood to mean both “Recommendations” and “Affirmations with Modification”.

² References to the AGB in this document should be understood to refer to the AGB for the next round of the New gTLD Program unless otherwise stated.

³ Please note that this document uses RSP Evaluation instead of RSP Pre-Evaluation term used in the SubPro Final Recommendation report, as the RSP could undergo evaluation during the gTLD application process per the SubPro Final Recommendation 6.3.

evaluation only once per RSP, as opposed to multiple times to a given RSP identified as such in multiple applications. The program also allows for applicants to select an RSP that has already been evaluated.

ICANN org has divided the work to develop these capabilities and programs into key [program elements](#) and [primary projects](#).⁴ The program elements represent ICANN org functions such as Communications and Engineering & IT that are critical to the work of implementing the next round. The primary projects represent the work to develop the processes and procedures for the next round of the New gTLD Program. The primary projects map to the modules of the AGB and include: application submission and processing, application evaluation, objections, contention resolution, contracting and post-contracting, and the ASP and RSP programs. For each of these elements and projects, ICANN org has identified the [potential timeline](#) for completion of and dependencies for that work.

Based on its assessment of the key elements and projects, **ICANN org has developed an overall timeline for implementation that spans three years. A crucial driver of this timeline is the [Policy Implementation](#) work stream, which will culminate in completion of the AGB.** This work is estimated to require two years, concluding in May 2025. The two-year timeframe is sensible and realistic, as this period will encompass work on numerous and far-ranging recommendations and dialogue with the Implementation Review Team on the development of content.

ICANN org expects the [program development work](#) to open the next round to take three years overall. Two years of this work can be conducted in parallel with Policy Implementation work described above. After completion of the AGB, ICANN org expects it will take one year to complete this program development work. This timeline is based on the considerable planning and assessment ICANN org has done to date. This timeline also takes into account lessons learned from the 2012 round regarding time required to complete the AGB and complete system testing.

With this timing in mind, ICANN org anticipates that the AGB will be finalized in May 2025, which enables the application round to open in Q2 2026 (with the goal of April 2026). This estimated timeline is subject to the completion of the AGB⁵; any delays to the timeline of the Policy Implementation work stream will cause delays to the opening of the next round application submission period.

⁴ See: [Appendix C: Program Structure](#).

⁵ It should be noted that a complete draft of the AGB is not required for the Program Development work streams to begin. As sections of the AGB are completed over the course of the IRT timeline, the implementation work will progress accordingly from Policy to the Program Development stages of implementation. However, a complete draft of the AGB is required for Program Development work to conclude, hence the dependency of the completion of the AGB on the overall implementation timeline.

Additionally, **this timeline is contingent upon the resolution of several [dependencies](#)**, including open issues related to pending recommendations and community work (e.g., dialogue on closed generics) as well as public comment on and Board approval of the AGB. Each of these dependencies carries the risk that if it is not resolved by the prescribed time, it could extend the overall implementation timeline. ICANN org has also noted there are some operational and strategic dependencies for the first delegation of gTLDs in the next round, such as updates to the systems required to support registry operators (e.g., Service Level Agreement Monitoring).

While best efforts have been made to identify all dependencies and risks, not all can be reasonably foreseen until development and/or operations have begun. Accordingly, the timelines and milestones in this document represent ICANN org's best estimate at this time and may be subject to change. Additionally, it should be noted that the cost estimates contained in this implementation plan should be understood as inputs to the Board and are pending the Board's approval.

As noted in the Board's March 2023 resolution, **the successful completion of this work to open the next round will require the collective commitment, considerable resources, and effort from the ICANN Board, the ICANN community, and ICANN org**. In the coming months, ICANN org will begin—or continue, as applicable—the implementation work identified in this implementation plan. As requested by the Board, ICANN org will publish implementation status updates at least two weeks prior to every ICANN meeting.

Objective of this Document

The Board [requested](#) that ICANN org deliver an implementation plan no later than 1 August 2023. This document presents this plan.

The Board noted in its [16 March 2023](#) resolution that the implementation plan would require, by the end of ICANN77, the completion of a [plan](#) for the remaining pending recommendations, a [methodology and work plan](#) for the Implementation Review Team (IRT), a [plan and timeline](#) for policy work on closed generics, and a [project plan](#) for IDN EPDP WG charter questions with an impact on the AGB for the next round. Since completing these deliverables, as well as the [deliverable](#) requested by the Board regarding the work necessary to complete Program Development on 15 June 2023, ICANN org has worked to develop the requested implementation plan.

This document includes relevant information related to all identified work streams and program and project elements for implementation of the next round, including timelines for completion, cost and resource requirements, system and tool requirements, communications requirements, and dependencies.

Policy Implementation

The draft IRT Implementation Plan⁶ provides an overview of the implementation efforts to be undertaken for the 98 outputs contained in the Final Report that were adopted by the ICANN Board. The plan has been prepared by ICANN org and will be updated as the Board acts on the remaining 38 recommendations currently designated as ‘pending.’ ICANN org is taking the lead in the process and is piloting an “Open + Representative Model” based on the [GNSO’s PDP 3.0 model](#). The expected deliverables of the Policy Implementation work stream center on the development of processes for the New gTLD Program: the AGB for the next round, the Applicant Support Program, and the Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program.

After the adoption of the 98 outputs, the [IRT](#) was launched and the first [meetings](#) were held, focusing on the IRT Implementation Plan and timeline, as well as some of the Final Report topics. ICANN org is providing the IRT with draft policy language and implementation-related questions for each of the topics, based on the text of the outputs, and discussing them with the group during meetings. Some of the outputs are expected to require updates to the base Registry Agreement; those updates will also be provided to the IRT. As of July 2023, the IRT has more than 80 [members](#) including participants, representatives, and alternates. A [mailing list](#) and a [Wiki workspace](#) have been set up to ensure transparency.

According to the current work plan, ICANN org expects the IRT will conclude its work and a final draft of the AGB will be available by May 2025. However, it must be noted that this estimation is based on the assumption that all dependencies (as detailed in [Timeline Dependencies](#)) are resolved with an appropriate amount of time for ICANN org to work with the IRT to transpose the outcomes into AGB requirements.

Program Development

As noted above, Program Development contains three work streams that occur after Policy Implementation. These three work streams—Program Design (Work Stream 2), Infrastructure Development (Work Stream 3), and Operationalization (Work Stream 4)—consist of the activities related to building the operational capabilities within ICANN org to deliver the policy recommendations from the SubPro Final Report.

While the four work streams are noted as categories of activities, the work for each of the nine projects listed in [Primary Projects](#) represents a number of Final Report topics, business processes, or system functions and thus comprises all of the work streams. That is, the work within each project will progress from Policy Implementation through Operationalization.

⁶ See: <https://community.icann.org/x/tQM5Dg>.

The language in the AGB for the next round will spell out the policy requirements that are to be included in the implementation of the next round. While successful implementation of the New gTLD Program is dependent on each work stream completing work sequentially and in a timely manner, ICANN org has opted to conduct as much of the work in a parallel manner as possible. A delay in any work stream may negatively impact the overall timeline.

Program Design

Program Design (Work Stream 2) takes the requirements developed during Policy Implementation and incorporates them into documented processes. Some processes already exist and need to be updated, while others are new and need to be developed. These processes include those required to support the program, such as receiving and processing new gTLD applications, and internal business processes, such as user account creation and payment processing.

All of the processes will be designed based on the requirements developed during Policy Implementation and will also incorporate legal, business, or operational requirements to ensure ICANN org complies with all applicable regulations and obligations including the Bylaws. There are more than 60 processes identified to date and the work of developing and documenting initial drafts of these processes is expected to take approximately six months, completing in Q1 of 2024. Additional effort will be needed to update processes as language is developed for the AGB. Development of business requirements for individual use cases⁷ will occur within each of the primary projects.

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure Development (Work Stream 3) focuses on developing the capability to deliver processes through the creation of systems and tools.⁸ 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. There are two groupings of systems that ICANN org anticipates developing for the next round of the New gTLD Program⁹:

- Four new primary systems expected to take considerable time to develop and test (i.e., Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program, Applicant Support Program (ASP), Registry Service Testing and Top-Level Domain Application Management System).

⁷ A 'use case' refers to a specific instance of a process. In a large program such as the New gTLD Program, a process may be used many times. Each specific instance of a process may differ as the specific requirements, systems, resources for a particular use case can vary.

⁸ "Systems" generally refer to large-scale mechanisms that administer multiple services in support of the application lifecycle, e.g., a "TLD Application Management System." A "tool" generally refers to a small-scale mechanism that assists an individual in carrying out a particular process step, e.g., spreadsheets with calculations and macros.

⁹ For more information about the systems involved, see the [Engineering and IT section](#) in Program Elements below.

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- A number of existing systems that require updates and enhancements to support the next round will be used.

While systems represent a large share of the cost and effort of Infrastructure Development, the development of tools to support manual processing operations is critical as well. Some of the work related to processing applications in the next round is expected to be delivered manually; developing tools to streamline and standardize this work occurs during this phase. Work on systems has already begun starting with a 'proof of concept' to test a vendor and software platform led by the Engineering and IT (E&IT) team. Additional development work will continue as system specifications are developed from the Program Design work described above. Completion of systems development will require time after the AGB is finalized to allow for changes that might have occurred during discussions with the IRT as well as time for testing to identify any software bugs or security issues.

Operationalization

Operationalization (Work Stream 4) contains all the tasks and activities required to start operations for the next round. This includes creating the internal procedures to deliver program services from the processes, systems and tools developed by the prior two work streams. After procedures are finalized, training materials will be developed, and operational staff will be hired and trained. Operational testing of all the different pieces of the program is performed prior to the opening of the next round application submission period in order to validate procedures and training methods.

Also during this time, operational vendors, such as those that perform the evaluations, will be selected using ICANN org's procurement process. ICANN org estimates that as many as 30 vendors will be needed to support the next round. Selection, negotiation, and onboarding of vendors represents a substantial effort for the org. Once vendors are contracted, the vendor will require time to train their resources for operationalization within ICANN org's operational structure.

Additionally, for evaluations supported by multiple vendors, an alignment and normalization exercise will be performed to ensure that all vendors obtain the same results when evaluating. A robust quality assurance process will be developed, as well, to monitor and review the performance and results of program delivery. Operationalization work is expected to begin well before the opening of the next new gTLD application submission period. Operationalization work will begin approximately one year before the opening of the Applicant Support Program and the RSP Evaluation Program.

Next Round Timeline

In the [Program Development](#) overview provided to the Board at ICANN77, ICANN org estimated that the work involved in implementing the next round will take three years to complete. As

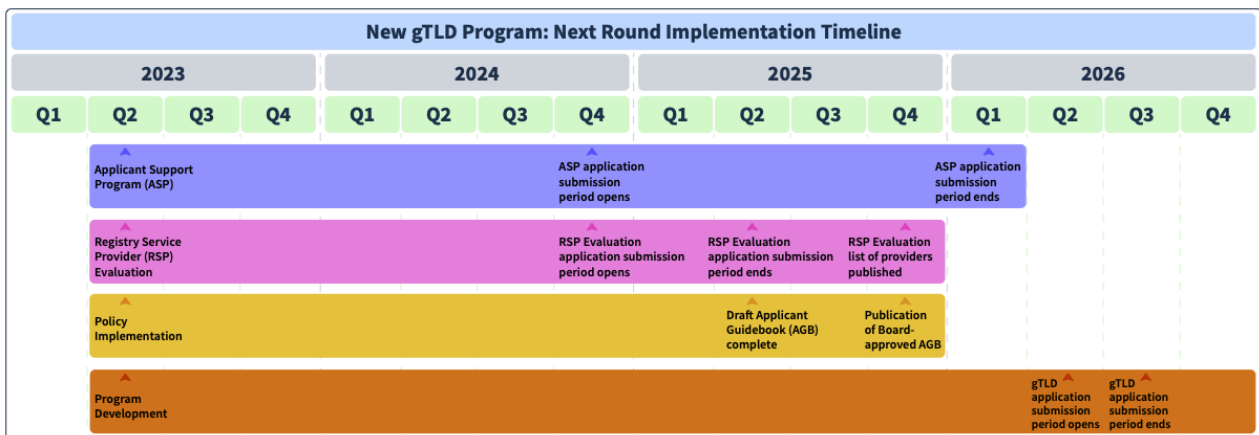
stated above, a crucial driver of the overall timeline is the Policy Implementation work stream, which will culminate in completion of the AGB. This work is estimated to require two years, concluding in May 2025.

ICANN org expects the program development work to open the next round to take three years overall. Two years of this work can be conducted in parallel with Policy Implementation work. ICANN org expects it will take one year beyond the completion of the AGB to complete the program development work.

ICANN org anticipates that the AGB will be finalized in May 2025, which enables the application round to open in Q2 2026 (with the goal being April 2026). This timeline is contingent upon the resolution of several dependencies, including open issues related to pending recommendations and community work (e.g., dialogue on closed generics), which is explored in detail in the next section. Given these [dependencies](#), ICANN org found the best approach for establishing the estimate of the opening of the next round application submission period was to continue to use quarters as was done in the [Program Development Overview](#) and the [Operational Design Assessment \(ODA\)](#) and to provide a goal for a specific month within the quarter.

A high-level overview of the key milestones, as well as the different work streams contributing to the opening of the next round application submission period, can be found in [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1. High-Level Timeline for Implementation of the Next Round¹⁰



¹⁰ This graphic represents the general timeline to the opening of the next round gTLD application submission period. ICANN org notes that there is program development work related to, for example, operational [dependencies](#) for the first gTLD delegation, that will continue past the opening of the next round. See [Appendix D](#) for detailed timelines and Gantt charts that contain this additional information, including [Figure D1. Comprehensive Timeline](#).

ICANN org believes that this timeline provides the best balance of predictability to potential applicants while allowing ICANN org to meet all the goals of the next round¹¹ and the Board-approved recommendations of the SubPro Final Report (e.g., regarding new entrants to the Program, IDNs, or Universal Acceptance).

Timeline Dependencies

The timeline for implementation of the next round of the New gTLD Program is contingent upon the resolution of multiple dependencies. These dependencies¹² can be sorted into the following groups: dependencies for the completion of the AGB; dependencies for the opening of the next round application submission period; and operational or strategic dependencies for first gTLD delegation.

Dependencies for the AGB

As noted in the [Program Development overview](#), each of the nine primary projects¹³ has a set of dependencies related to pending recommendations and ongoing community work as shown in Table 1. These dependencies must be resolved in order for ICANN org to be able to develop a complete draft of the AGB.

Table 1. Dependencies and Pending Recommendations

Primary Project	Dependency and/or Pending Recommendations ¹⁴
1. New gTLD Program Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic 3: Applications Assessed in Rounds (Pending Affirmation 3.1, Recommendations 3.2, 3.5-3.7)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic 9: Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs)/Public Interest Commitments (PICs) (Pending Recommendations 9.1-9.2, 9.4, 9.8-9.10, 9.12-9.13, 9.15)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic 18: Terms & Conditions (Pending Recommendations 18.1, 18.3-18.4)

¹¹ See: <https://www.icann.org/newgtlds-next-round-en>.

¹² ICANN org also notes the risk assessment completed as part of the Operational Design Phase (ODP) and which is contained in the ODA. Through this assessment, ICANN org identified several risks related to various aspects of the New gTLD Program: Next Round, including funding, human resources, and legal-related risks. ICANN org will manage and review these risks on an ongoing basis and updates will be made as implementation progresses. It should be noted that while best efforts have been made to identify all risks, not all can be reasonably foreseen until development and/or operations have begun. See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf> (p. 77-82).

¹³ See [Program Structure](#).

¹⁴ As noted in the Subsequent Procedures PDP Scorecard (<https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/scorecard-subpro-pdp-board-action-16mar23-en.pdf>).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 23: Closed Generics • Ongoing Community Work: Board Facilitated Dialogue on Closed Generics between GNSO, GAC, and ALAC¹⁵ (and any follow-on policy development as applicable)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 30: GAC Consensus Advice and GAC Early Warning (Pending Recommendations 30.4, 30.5-30.7)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Pending Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10)
2. Applicant Support Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 17: Applicant Support (Pending Recommendation 17.2)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Pending Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing Community Work: GNSO Guidance Process (GGP)¹⁶
3. Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 6: Registry Service Provider Evaluation (Pending Recommendation 6.8)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Pending Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing Community Work: Expedited Policy Development Process on Internationalized Domain Names¹⁷
4. Application Submission and Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 16: Application Submission Period (Pending Recommendation 16.1)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 19: Application Queuing (Pending Recommendation 19.3)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 29: Name Collisions (Pending Recommendation 29.1) • Ongoing Community Work: Name Collision Analysis Project¹⁸
5. Application Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 22: Registrant Protections (Pending Recommendation 22.7)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 24: String Similarity Evaluation (Pending Recommendations 24.3, 24.5)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 26: Security and Stability (Pending Recommendation 26.9)

¹⁵ See: <https://gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/policy/2022/correspondence/gnso-council-et-al-to-fouqart-08mar22-en.pdf>.

¹⁶ Initiation of the GNSO Guidance Process on Applicant Support. 25 August 2022. <https://gnso.icann.org/en/council/resolutions/2020-current#202208>.

¹⁷ See: <https://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/idn-epdp>.

¹⁸ See: <https://community.icann.org/display/NCAP/NCAP+Discussion+Group>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 29: Name Collisions (Pending Recommendation 29.1) • Ongoing Community Work: Name Collision Analysis Project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing Community Work: Expedited Policy Development Process on Internationalized Domain Names
6. Objections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 31: Objections (Pending Recommendations 31.16-31.17) • Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Pending Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10)
7. Contention Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 34: Community Applications (Pending Recommendation 34.12) • Topic 35: Auctions (Pending Recommendations 35.3, 35.5) • Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Pending Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10)
8. Contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing Community Work: Expedited Policy Development Process on Internationalized Domain Names
9. Post-Contracting and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic 29: Name Collisions (Pending Recommendation 29.1) • Ongoing Community Work: Name Collision Analysis Project

Regarding these dependencies and in response to the [16 March 2023 Board resolution](#), ICANN org and the GNSO Council provided the Board with information regarding relevant work plans and timelines including: a [plan](#) for the remaining pending recommendations; a [methodology and work plan](#) for the Implementation Review Team (IRT); a [plan and timeline](#) for policy work on closed generics; and, a [project plan](#) for IDN EPDP WG charter questions with an impact on the AGB for the next round.¹⁹ As discussed above, these work plans are predicated upon the ability of ICANN Board, org, and community to collectively meet the respective milestones.

Dependencies for the Opening of the Next Round Application Submission Period

There is work that cannot be completed until after completion of the AGB but must be resolved prior to the opening of the next round application submission period. These include activities related to:

- **Final approval of the AGB** will require approximately ten months for a Public Comment period on the final draft and Board approval. The Public Comment period is fixed for at least 45 days, plus time for ICANN org to review and update the AGB as appropriate. Subsequent Board action is dependent upon the Board’s review of the AGB and the

¹⁹ Please note the latest information regarding the work plan and timeline for the IDN EPDP here: <https://community.icann.org/display/gnsocouncilmeetings/Final+Proposed+Agenda+2023-07-20>.

Board’s schedule for consideration. ICANN org also notes SubPro Final Report Affirmation with Modification 12.3, which states: “The commencement of the application submission period will be at least four (4) months after the issue of the Applicant Guidebook and ICANN will promote the opening of the applicant round.”

- **Program development.** While some of this work will occur in parallel with Policy Implementation work and drafting of the AGB, there is some work that cannot be completed until after there is a complete draft of the AGB.²⁰ These activities, such as updates to business processes or systems, are described in the [Program Development Overview](#) provided to the Board at ICANN77.
- **Publication of the results of the Applicant Support and RSP Evaluation Programs.** These programs are essential to a successful New gTLD Program. The results of these two programs must be known prior to the opening of the next round application submission period, as they may have an impact on applicants for a new gTLD.
- **Communications and Awareness-Raising Campaigns.** The GNSO Working Group noted in Recommendation 13.2 the need for an “effective communications strategy and plan” and stated in Implementation Guidance 13.3 that these “should begin at least six (6) months prior to the beginning of the application submission period.” See [Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach](#) for more information.

Operational Dependencies for First Delegation

ICANN org notes a set of operational dependencies for the delegation of new gTLDs coming from the next round. These include:

- Technical Onboarding modernization
- Registration Reporting Interfaces
- Controlled Interruption monitoring
- File transfer services
- Service Level Agreement Monitoring
- Centralized Zone Data Service
- Naming Services Portal
- Trademark Clearinghouse

Strategic Dependencies for First Delegation

ICANN org notes a set of strategic dependencies for delegation of the gTLDs coming from the next round. While these dependencies are not needed to open the next round and may not be tied directly to the policy or the AGB, they are related to ICANN’s strategic goals and should be in place prior to first delegation. These include:

²⁰ See Footnote 5.

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- Development of a notification service for Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) protections²¹
 - Development of a International Non-governmental Organization (INGO) claims service²²
 - Universal Acceptance readiness for ICANN org systems
 - Registration data policy implementation

Program Elements

While all functions of ICANN org will play support roles during the implementation of the next round, four functions will perform significant cross-cutting roles in supporting the implementation work across projects and work streams. These functions have been defined as “Program Elements,” whose key objectives and considerations for implementation are described in this section.

Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach

Communications are a key aspect of the work related to the implementation of the next round. This work can be conceptualized as falling into two main areas: “awareness-raising,” and engagement and capacity development.

The communications strategy for the next round represents a critical underpinning of ICANN org’s work that will support engagement, capacity development, and efforts at responsiveness undertaken by other ICANN org functions and programs. These include ICANN’s Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE), Government and Intergovernmental Organization Engagement (GE), as well as its Global Domains and Strategy (GDS) programs on Universal Acceptance (UA) and IDNs. Coordinated collaboration across these functions will ensure that their efforts in future new gTLD rounds are comprehensive and mutually reinforcing across multiple scales, regions, languages, and stakeholder groups.

Awareness-Raising

Recommendation 13.2 focused on the need for an effective communications strategy and plan to support the primary purposes of new gTLDs, which are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS. The GNSO Working Group stated in Implementation Guidance 13.3 that the activities outlined in the communications plan should begin no less than six months before the opening of the next round application submission period. However, ICANN org believes that timeline is too short, and has developed a multiphased communications campaign to support the next round for a longer period.

²¹ See:

<https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-22-10-2020-en#2.b> and

<https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/botterman-to-ismail-23feb21-en.pdf>.

²² See: <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/ingo-claims-system-specification-2018-01-16-en>.

The first phase, which launched in March 2023 and leveraged the global UA Day events,²³ focuses on raising awareness of the importance of UA and IDNs within developing countries and among target audiences (see more below). The campaign will focus on encouraging those who develop and deploy software tools and applications to become UA-ready. These efforts will also provide an understanding of how both local and global access via the DNS is a benefit. This first phase is expected to continue for a 12-15 month period, and will be executed in a series of mini campaigns.

The second phase of the campaign will generate local and global awareness of the next round, including reasons to apply, and will set expectations about the application process. It is scheduled to begin 18 months before the application submission period for the next round opens and will leverage a multi-channel approach. The campaign will be customized for unique audiences and will highlight the ASP and RSP Evaluation Program. Both phases will be a collaborative effort involving ICANN's Global Communications, GSE, and GE teams.

Communications Plan Objectives

The GNSO Working Group recommended that the communications plan be developed with timeliness, broad outreach, and accessibility as key priorities. In terms of reach, the SubPro Final Report specifically addresses the importance of creating early awareness with as many potential applicants as possible around the world and ensuring that potential applicants know about the program in time to apply. Based on this, the objectives of the Communications Plan include:

1. To heighten awareness of ICANN and the importance of the DNS.
2. To lay the foundation for a general understanding of UA and highlight the availability of IDNs.
3. To raise awareness about the opportunities created by the next round of gTLDs.

The planned two-phase approach allows ICANN org to begin to create awareness with a focus on specific developing countries and audiences for whom digital inclusivity is critical. UA and the availability of IDNs will be of importance to these audiences and a potential gateway to building interest in applying for a gTLD. This phase sets the stage for Phase 2.

Audiences

Key audiences include but are not limited to technology developers and decision makers, governments and ministries, small and mid-sized enterprises, large businesses, entrepreneurs, brands, investors, researchers, academia, and civil society, including non-governmental organizations.

²³ See: <https://www.icann.org/resources/press-material/release-2023-03-09-en>.

Based on the recommendation that broad outreach and accessibility be key priorities, a series of mini campaigns, which include a mix of countries and audiences, were established through Global Communications' consultation with GDS, GSE, and GE.

The countries were sequenced according to several factors, including infrastructure, Internet penetration, local script availability, synergies within regions or communities, and external factors such as government elections, economics, and high-level global events.

Additional criteria for defining these campaigns included:

- The relevance of UA and, specifically, groups affected by the lack of UA implementation.
- The interest in and capacity to apply for a new gTLD on the basis of desire to create a community, brand, or label on the Internet.
- Commercial opportunities.
- Desire among governments and communities driving demand for IDNs and UA.
- Creation of a community based around culture, interest, or preference, rather than for an economic benefit.

Core Messaging

Everyone, regardless of their background, culture, language, or location, should be able to make full use of the Internet. The DNS is expanding to support more scripts in domain names and email addresses, by making new TLDs available. All actors that are developing applications and operating services online are encouraged to ensure their systems are updated and able to support all these domain names and email addresses.

Many people around the world are currently excluded from experiencing the full benefits of the Internet simply because they're unable to use a domain name or email address in their language and script. Some software, applications, and services remain outdated and are unable to handle domain names in all scripts, causing access problems for millions of Internet users.

UA is the concept that all domain names should be treated equally. UA is a technical necessity that ensures that all valid domain names and email addresses can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. There is a global effort underway to create greater awareness of UA to make this a reality.

IDNs make the Internet accessible to a wider range of users, in a secure manner, and accommodate a greater diversity of languages and scripts from those in use around the globe.

ICANN will soon be opening a new round of applications for new top-level domains, opening the door to a more diverse and inclusive way for people and organizations to manage their presence and identity on the Internet.

Tactics

To reach a global audience and address the GNSO's Final Report recommendations and implementation guidelines, ICANN org will implement a variety of tactics, including media relations, event participation, and collateral development, such as infographics, website content, social media assets, and presentation materials.

ICANN org will conduct comprehensive media outreach to select media outlets, including local, regional, and national print, digital, radio, television, and social media outlets, to garner favorable coverage.

Event participation and speaking opportunities will supplement the media relations campaign. To support these efforts, resource materials and documentation for the next application round must meet the needs of different audiences, stakeholders, and communities, and should be evergreen.

A cross-functional team composed of Global Communications, GSE, and GE, will engage with identified and prioritized target markets, sectors, and audiences in selected geographic regions. These tailored campaigns are preceded by audience identification and include outreach and media engagement, in addition to speaking opportunities.

Outreach to influencers will be conducted to secure endorsements, advocacy, and engagement to help raise awareness for UA, IDNs, the next round, and ICANN in general.

Additionally, ICANN org expects to conduct outreach to relevant private-sector entities and individuals to foster collaboration and secure endorsement of the next round. Outreach to governments will aim to secure endorsements from key decision makers. The ICANN community will also play an important role in communicating information about the next round.

High-level Timeline and Milestones

The following provides a high-level timeline²⁴ of the work described above.

- March 2023: Phase 1 kicked off in conjunction with UA Day.
- April–September 2023: Coordination between teams to develop stakeholder mapping and mini-campaign timelines and activities.
- August 2023: First mini-campaign to launch. Evaluation and assessment will lead to improvements in future campaigns.
- September 2023–December 2024: Mini campaigns continue.
- June–May 2025: Introduce ASP and RSP Evaluation into messaging.
- January 2026–June 2026: Phase 2, next round global awareness campaign.

²⁴ See also: [Figure D2. Communications Timeline](#)

Engagement and Capacity Development

Affirmation 1.3 of the Final Report under Continuing Subsequent Procedures states: “The primary purposes of new gTLDs are to foster diversity, encourage competition, and enhance the utility of the DNS,” based on the rationale that “fostering consumer choice, consumer trust and market differentiation should continue to be primary focal points for the New gTLD Program.” In addition, the Final Report and the Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice Review Final Report²⁵ provides compelling evidence that improved outreach, communications, accessible content, engagement, and responsiveness are necessary to foster global engagement in future rounds. Engagement and capacity development for the next round will entail strategic consideration of how to best leverage ICANN org’s relationships across the Internet ecosystem in service of the above-mentioned aims. In terms of timing for the engagement and capacity development work described below, ICANN org expects this to align with Phase 2 of the communications and outreach plan described in the section [above](#).

Engagement and Capacity Development Plan Objectives

The objectives of the Engagement and Capacity Development Plan are to work proactively with potential applicants to foster understanding and build knowledge about the New gTLD Program, its relevance to their work, and the requirements for applying. Applying for a gTLD is a major undertaking that requires significant investments in time and resources. For most potential applicants, making an informed decision to prepare and submit an application will require access to, and engagement with, detailed information about the New gTLD Program and its requirements. Many potential applicants will need deeper engagement and further capacity development to reach a degree of fluency with the gTLD industry and understand how the DNS could be relevant to their work and what they would need to prepare to apply for a gTLD.

Key Stakeholders and Audiences of the Engagement and Capacity Development Plan

Key stakeholders or audiences include anyone that has a potential interest in learning about the next round. ICANN’s engagement functions will be prepared to respond to interest that emerges as a result of the global communications campaign while at the same time proactively engaging the target audiences identified by the communications strategy.

Recognizing that ICANN org has limited resources and limited time to conduct engagement and capacity development for the next round, the stakeholder-audience approach is two-pronged and based upon the communications strategy described in the previous section. ICANN’s engagement functions will be prepared to respond to general interest globally and to proactively engage within the target audiences and regions specified by the communications strategy.

Engagement and Capacity Development Approach

Working in close collaboration with the Global Communications team to ensure alignment with the communication strategy, ICANN org’s engagement functions (GSE, GE, GDS, and OCTO

²⁵ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/cct-rt-final-08sep18-en.pdf>.

Technical Engagement) will identify local, national, regional, and global events that present opportunities to engage with target audiences. ICANN org will also identify opportunities to host events, webinars, and training to build understanding of the next round and provide a chance for potential applicants to ask questions. For example, some audiences may be particularly interested in learning more about the geographic names evaluation process, community priority evaluation, or Registry Service Provider Evaluation aspects of the next round. ICANN org’s engagement functions will work to identify interests among target audiences to inform a tailored approach to engagement and capacity development.

The team will also assess gaps in understanding to inform the development of training and capacity development materials. The development of training and capacity development materials will be informed by inputs from regional knowledge and research, observations from the [TLD Operating Model Study](#), [Africa DNS Study](#)²⁶, and initial responses to the upcoming [Middle East DNS Study](#). While ICANN org aims to provide consistent information across all audiences, it is expected that there will be varying levels of understanding about the DNS and the next round. ICANN org will conduct engagement activities with those target audiences, including stakeholders, and regions, and/or communities as articulated by the communications strategy.

Much of the outreach and engagement strategy and efforts relies on different types of informational material, including enduring or “evergreen” content, time-sensitive content, and tailored content to meet specific audience needs. Accordingly, it will be important to plan and have resources in place to generate New gTLD Program: Next Round content to meet the needs of different audiences, stakeholders, and communities.

ICANN org will deliver information to these audiences virtually and at in-person events, and, when feasible, in local languages or with interpretation. The substantive focus of these events will include educating potential applicants and identified stakeholders about ICANN org and its mission of security, stability and resiliency; how ICANN develops technical Internet policy via a multistakeholder model; opportunities in the DNS ecosystem (including the via the next round of the New gTLD Program); and the impact of the digital economy in relation to the target audience(s).²⁷

²⁶ See also:

<https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/coalition-for-digital-africa-to-launch-study-of-continents-dns-landscape-11-01-2023-en>.

²⁷ As noted in the ODA, ICANN org will also work with the community to amplify education efforts. Strategies will include an emphasis on the ASP, access to resources, and asking various parts of the community to play a role in engaging underserved stakeholders across diverse regions. Tactics will also include briefings to governmental and intergovernmental organizations with a focus on UA, IDNs, and the ASP.

These communications, outreach, and engagement-related mechanisms will comprise part of a comprehensive support system across the lifecycle of the next round of the New gTLD Program and through future rounds. Fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the DNS (Affirmation 1.3) requires consideration of the entire end-to-end experience – from raising awareness of ICANN and the new gTLD program among potential applicants and stakeholders to ensuring equitable access to information and resources post-delegation.

Program Element 2: Engineering and IT / Systems

Over the years, ICANN org has made significant strides in maturing its IT delivery processes, placing a strong emphasis on advancements in testing and information security functions. As the E&IT team prepares for ICANN's next round of the New gTLD Program, it is essential to take into account the valuable lessons learned from the 2012 round.

During the previous round, various vulnerabilities and issues came to light, including security breaches, technical glitches, user experience challenges, communication gaps, and scaling problems. These exposed the need for significant improvements in several areas, including enhancing security measures, streamlining system operations, creating more user-friendly interfaces, establishing effective communication channels, and ensuring scalable infrastructure.

E&IT recognizes the critical importance of conducting extensive security and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) to ensure a successful and resilient process for the upcoming round. Thorough security testing helps identify and rectify vulnerabilities in the system before it goes live, safeguarding sensitive information and minimizing the risk of data breaches. Rigorous UAT testing allows E&IT to address technical glitches and optimize system performance, ensuring applicants experience a seamless and efficient application process with reduced delays and frustrations. Involving potential users in UAT provides valuable feedback, enabling the development of an intuitive and user-friendly interface that enhances applicant satisfaction and engagement. Extensive testing also facilitates the establishment of clear and responsive communication channels between applicants and ICANN org, ensuring that critical issues are promptly addressed and applicants receive the support they need throughout the process.

In addition to UAT, comprehensive load testing verifies the system's ability to handle a high volume of applications, even during peak periods, avoiding potential performance degradation and downtime. These factors have significantly influenced the extended testing time frames on the project schedule. E&IT understands the importance of allocating ample time for testing to thoroughly address the identified issues and ensure the new systems are resilient and reliable.

By learning from the past and conducting thorough testing, E&IT aims to create a resilient, efficient and robust platform to meet the needs of applicants throughout the process. The commitment to extended testing is essential to deliver a highly secure, streamlined, and user-friendly gTLD program, ultimately contributing to a successful and sustainable next round.

Overarching Goals for the Next Round

Taking into account those lessons learned as well as the requirements for the next round, E&IT has assessed the need for systems and tools to support the process. E&IT aims to streamline the application process, enhance the user experience, and increase efficiency using industry best practices. These goals have been identified for systems and tools in the next round:

- **User-Friendly Interfaces:** Improve the application process through intuitive interfaces for applicants, evaluators, and ICANN org.
- **Cost-Effective Process Automation:** Automate activities such as validation, verification, and evaluation processes to improve efficiency and accuracy.
- **Robust Security Measures:** Ensure data protection, prevent unauthorized access, and mitigate cyber threats.
- **Privacy by Design:** Incorporate privacy considerations into system design.
- **Scalability for High-Volume and Low-bandwidth Demand:** Develop systems that can handle a large volume of applications and accommodate future growth; address the needs of applicants from low-bandwidth areas.

Approach to Systems for the Next Round

To meet these goals, E&IT intends to:

- Identify candidate platform(s) or technologies.
- Build a working prototype using the “best fit” candidate platform - TLD Application Management System minimum viable product (MVP).
- Finalize platform(s) or technologies selection.
- Refine the level of effort for remaining program elements based on the latest available documentation.

Key Considerations for Systems for the Next Round

To ensure the success of the development of systems and tools for the next round, E&IT has identified the following key considerations:

- **Scalability and Flexibility:** Design systems and tools that can handle a large volume of applications and accommodate future growth.
- **Limit Custom Coding, Leverage Low-Code Capabilities:** Minimize costly custom coding by utilizing lightweight low-code capabilities, reducing development time and costs, and ensuring maintainability.
- **Emphasize Feature Reuse:** Prioritize the reuse of existing components for efficient and consistent systems and tools, minimizing redundancies and providing a cohesive user experience.
- **Security by Design:** Incorporate security measures early in the design and development process, integrating secure coding standards, threat modeling, and regular security audits throughout the lifecycle.

Phases of Work for Systems for the Next Round

The work to develop systems for the next round will occur in four general phases, aligned with Work Stream 3 (Infrastructure Development) as described in the [Program Development Overview](#):

Figure 2. Phases of Systems Work²⁸



1. **Functional Design Specification (Requirements Gathering):** Identify key functionalities and features required through engagement with ICANN org business owners.
2. **System Design and Development:** Develop a robust system design and initiate software development based on requirements. Adopt an iterative and prioritized approach, creating foundational components for potential reuse to ensure efficiency and consistency across services.
3. **Testing and Quality Assurance:** Conduct rigorous testing to ensure reliability, stability, and security. All services will undergo testing and review for quality and security before release.
4. **Training, Documentation, and Rollout:** Develop comprehensive training materials and documentation to support users in effectively utilizing the systems and tools.

Dependencies for Systems for the Next Round

Finally, E&IT acknowledges the following dependencies that must be resolved:

- **Funding and Resources:** Allocate adequate resources for development, deployment, and maintenance of systems and tools based on guidance.
- **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Ensure that the design and functionality of systems and tools align with legal and regulatory frameworks for compliance.
- **Technology Platform Selection:** Choose an efficient and consistent technology platform for building the required systems and tools.
- **Requirements:** Develop business processes and requirements definitions prior to actual system builds (refer to Work Stream 2 in the [Program Development overview](#) and also in the [Program Development section](#) above).

Program Element 3: Finance

Future rounds of the new gTLD program will provide new platforms for innovation and change that will stimulate competition and increase choice for a variety of Internet users and

²⁸ See also: [Figure D4. Infrastructure Development Timeline](#).

communities. Significant to this effort is the investment necessary to develop an efficient and effective program that addresses community needs, ensures that qualified applicants are able to secure gTLDs, and operates on a revenue-neutral and cost-recovery basis.

Implementation Financials and Budget

The financials below cover implementation and all the activities necessary to progress the four core work streams through to the opening of the application period in Q2 2026. In addition, overarching program support for resource and development efforts that are not directly tied to a [work stream](#) but support the overall implementation (e.g., Finance and Human Resources) have also been included. These financials can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Next Round Implementation Budget

Implementation Budget - 2023 Q2 Through 2026 Q2				
USD in Millions Work Stream	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
Sub-Total	40.6	\$28.1	\$21.9	\$50.0
Contingency	0.0	\$6.0	\$4.0	\$10.0
Shared Services	0.0	\$4.7	\$5.3	\$10.0
Total	40.6	\$38.8	\$31.2	\$70.0

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

- The application period will open Q2 2026, and the above financials will cover implementation activities from Q2 2023 through Q2 2026.²⁹
- In addition to this budget, the Board approved a budget of \$9M for the ODP that was spent from Jan 2022-Mar 2023.
- Application volume will be in line with the 2012 round, i.e., approximately 2,000 applications.
- The implementation financials include increased support as well as outreach and awareness activities for the ASP in order to provide increased opportunities compared to the 2012 round.

²⁹ Affirmation 15.4 states that the application fee is to be based on a cost-recovery model. The fee will recover costs related to both implementation and operation of the next round. The latter set of costs (operational) are not pictured here.

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- The implementation financials include funding for the design and development of the RSP Evaluation Program.
 - The fees for RSP Evaluation Program applicants are planned to be on a cost-recovery basis and will offset the funds needed for the RSP Evaluation Program.
 - The implementation financials include a USD \$10M contingency (defined as undesignated expenses) for hard to predict and unforeseen costs.
 - A portion of the shared services that provide a baseline set of services in common with the rest of ICANN org³⁰, which help ICANN org to deliver on all aspects of the next round, will be allocated to the next round budget.
 - ICANN org will request funding for implementation incrementally to help ensure that no delays result from lack of operational readiness activities.

The implementation budget provides coverage for all activities related to the opening of the next round application submission period of new gTLD applications, including but not limited to:

- Funds necessary to prepare for awareness activities related to the ASP.
- Developing application evaluations.
- Completion of the AGB.
- Community awareness and outreach campaigns.
- Designing and developing the processes and systems necessary to process applications.
- The formation of the RSP Evaluation program.
- Staff resources, outside services, timeline dependencies, and risk associated with bringing the program to the point where ICANN org is ready for the opening of the next round application submission period.³¹

A number of these activities are expected to take some months to complete and there is a risk that delaying their start may delay the opening of the next round application submission period. ICANN org will use sound business practices while exercising fiscal prudence by balancing expenditures against completing a number of these activities on an efficient timeline.

Staff and External Resources

ICANN org estimates that 60 current staff and 29 new hires will participate in implementation work related to the next round, which equates to 40.6 full time equivalent staff (FTE) over the duration of implementation. In addition, ICANN org estimates that temporary contractors will be utilized during the duration of implementation in order to support the core work streams and overall project management. External costs of USD \$21.9 million is estimated for outside resources for systems and tools, contractor and third party vendor services, outreach and

³⁰ Examples of these functional services that ICANN org provides include human resources, finance, and administration.

³¹ See Finance section of ODA: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf> (p. 37-44).

awareness campaigns, legal services, language services, and studies on the DNS in emerging markets. Shared services support for baseline services such as payroll and facilities usage is estimated at \$10M over the course of implementation. ICANN org has also reserved \$10M for contingency to cover hard to predict and unforeseen expenses.

Funding sources

Recommendation 15.3 of the SubPro Final Report states that only “actual costs directly related to the implementation of the New gTLD Program” should be included in the application fee. ICANN org will include all costs associated with the next round implementation from Q2 2023 through Q2 2026 in the cost recovery model and application fee. Furthermore, the application fee will incorporate any unforeseen and risk event costs.

The Next Round Implementation budget will need to be funded via existing ICANN funding sources until application fees are collected. The primary funding sources will be:

- Remaining application fees from 2012 Round
- Supplement Fund for Implementation of Community Recommendations (SFICR)
- Excess from Operations

Further detail regarding these funding sources and amount to be used is shown in [Table 3](#). The table also shows the likelihood that these funds will be used.

Table 3. Funding Sources

Likelihood	Funding Sources	USD in Millions
100%	Current Operating Fund Excess	\$20
100%	Available SFICR Funds	\$12
90%	Investment Gains on New gTLD Funds	\$3
80%	Available Funds from 2012 New gTLD Application Fees	\$20
70%	Projected Operations Excess in Future Years (\$5M/Yr)	\$15
Total		\$70

A less desired option would be borrowing from existing funding sources such as the Auction Proceeds or Reserve Fund. However, this is not recommended or needed based on the projections above.

Process for Requesting Funds

ICANN org is recommending the Board approves the \$70M Implementation Budget in tranches.

ICANN org would submit approximately four to six requests for funding over the course of the three-year implementation period, and funding requests would range from \$10-\$15M. Funding requests would accompany operational updates that highlight operational progress and achievements of implementation work. ICANN org is currently utilizing the \$9M budget approval from March 2023, as these funds were intended to cover work through October 2023. ICANN org recommends a new funding request of approximately \$10-\$15M be presented in October 2023. ICANN org will review funding requests with the BFC prior to seeking Board approval.

Procurement

As noted in section 4.3 and Appendix 10 of the SubPro ODA, vendor expenses are expected to make up a large part of the costs to build and operate the next round of the New gTLD Program. The total number is expected to exceed 30 vendors. ICANN will use our established procurement procedures to identify and contract with these vendors. Selecting a vendor can often take several months, particularly when a Request for Proposal (RFP) is performed. Procuring this level of vendor resources will be a challenge. In order to minimize this work and to best address the overall cost, ICANN org will develop a vendor procurement strategy that will consider price, timing, and operational requirements.

gTLD Application Fee

The application fee will be set on a cost-recovery basis and will ensure that the next round of the New gTLD Program is fully funded and is not subsidized by existing ICANN funding sources (i.e., gTLD registries and registrars, ccTLD contributions, and Regional Internet Registry (RIR) contributions). ICANN org expects to have determined a potential range for the application fee by the time outreach for the ASP begins, as this information will be critical for potential applicants. Additionally, ICANN org expects that a program application fee will be determined before completion of the AGB. This timing will also help to ensure that all cost elements are appropriately accounted for and collected.

Applicants may be required to pay additional fees in certain cases, where specialized process steps are applicable. Such fees include the Dispute Resolution Filing Fee, the Technical Evaluation and Technical Testing Fee (if not using a pre-approved registry service provider), and the Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) fee. For additional evaluation fees, the applicant will be advised of the cost before initiating the review. However, in a situation where an applicant is working with a third party, such as a dispute resolution provider in the objections process, the fees are not New gTLD Program fees and will depend on the number of services required. Information about fees and refunds for the dispute resolution processes will be provided before the commencement of the application submission period.

Dependencies

The implementation budget is dependent on a variety of inputs across the four work streams in terms of requirements and scope. In addition, if the implementation timeline were to change significantly, it could affect the financial estimates and projections. Finance procedures will be

dependent on certain system upgrades and development in order to process the anticipated volume of application fees and refunds.

Program Element 4: Human Resources (HR)

Preparation for the opening and operation of the next round puts significant pressure on ICANN org. ICANN org must ensure the timely availability of human resources required for executing the program without significant disruption to the continuity of ICANN org's day-to-day operations.

As a principle, any permanent hiring must only be for projected long-term resource requirements, and the greatest care should be taken to avoid the organizational and financial cost of over-hiring that may result in future redundancy. Short-term staff needs (e.g., for additional staff required to fulfill specific tasks or projects within a limited duration, or requirements for specialized skills or expertise) should be filled through temporary hires or contractors to avoid any risk of surplus at the end of the project.

For the next round, ICANN org has identified three key resource requirements, including: staffing, onboarding and training, and facilities, which are explained in more detail below.

Staffing

Advance notice of hiring requirements are critical to ensure resources are available when needed. Target time to hire permanent staff is around 3.5 months from a job posting to securing acceptance of an offer by a candidate. However, planning for the timing of hiring must also take into account the significant time needed for onboarding and training staff to become fully operational (some complex requirements can take more than six months).

In many cases, internal transfers are the more efficient option based on the needs for specialized experience, but time is nevertheless needed to ensure backfill hires can be made (temporary or permanent depending on the situation) to avoid disruption to operations.

Temporary staff or contractors can be acquired within a few weeks, depending on the requirement, using existing vendors with already secured agreements.

ICANN org ensures that all resource requirements are properly evaluated prior to hiring approval in order to control cost and headcount levels vis-a-vis budget, and to ensure the proper allocation of resources. These measures ensure that ICANN org has adequate resources to accomplish its strategic and operational goals while also ensuring fiscal responsibility, maintaining headcount stability without disruptions to existing operations, and avoiding over-hiring.

In preparation for the upcoming demands, ICANN org's talent acquisition team has been bolstered with additional temporary and specialized staff. ICANN org seeks to improve the speed of hiring by using diverse sources of job applicants such as online career portals, select agencies and head-hunters, and staff referrals. ICANN org has also revamped its online career page, which contributes to improved efficiency of hiring. ICANN org prioritizes internal hiring as part of its strategy to support career development and knowledge retention. To ensure diversity, quality, and consistency of hiring decisions, all hiring managers also undergo interviewing skills training.

Onboarding and Training

A structured approach to onboarding is key to ensuring new resources are effectively integrated so they can quickly become productive. This includes an introduction to ICANN org's culture, philosophies, processes, policies, procedures, and benefits for permanent hires. This approach fosters retention and engagement, as it helps new hires feel like valued members of the team, which can instill a commitment to ICANN org's mission and success. All new hires undergo a structured onboarding program that is shared by HR and the hiring function, including activities such as introductory training to provide an overview of ICANN org; explanation and acknowledgement of key policies; assignment of a dedicated ambassador (peer staff member) to help with navigating the organization and teams; and a meet and greet with Executives.

Facilities

Based on projected staff need, estimated space requirements have been defined considering:

- Workstations and private office needs.
- Meeting, collaboration, and co-location space needs.
- Common areas.

If required, ICANN org has secured an option to lease additional office space near the org's Los Angeles office to accommodate additional staffing requirements. However, no additional cost commitment will be made without careful and ongoing evaluation of current space usage versus the anticipated phasing of resource needs.

Dependencies

ICANN org has identified some dependencies and risks as they relate to human resources for the next round. These include:

- The availability of skilled human resources to implement and operate future rounds of the new gTLD program is highly dependent on the timely availability of skilled human resources. Ensuring that resources are in place when needed will require careful program planning to account for time to hire and train staff.
- Successful delivery of the program on schedule is also dependent on minimizing the risk of any disruption to the continuity of ICANN org's day-to-day operations, e.g., impacts of transfers on existing staff.

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- The justification for permanent hiring must always be based on a careful assessment of the ability to transition to long-term operational needs. The use of temporary staff where appropriate to cover short-term needs provides flexibility and mitigates the organizational and financial cost of over-hiring.

Primary Projects

ICANN org has organized the work to implement the next round into nine primary projects. These primary projects map to the AGB modules for the next round. Each project will move through each of the four work streams outlined in the [Program Development](#) section above as well as in the [Program Development Overview](#) provided to the Board at ICANN77. This section includes an overview of each of the projects and the key considerations, milestones, and dependencies for each project.

Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations

The New gTLD Program Foundations project comprises a series of overarching sub-projects, along with the common processes that ICANN org must have in place before the next round application submission period opens and are used throughout the application lifecycle. Many of the New gTLD Program Foundations will resemble the processes implemented for the 2012 round, but will also incorporate all approved and applicable SubPro Final Report recommendations.

Overarching sub-projects of the New gTLD Program Foundations lay the groundwork for the opening of the next round application submission period. These include sub-projects that will last the duration of the New gTLD Program and sub-projects that do not belong to any particular primary projects detailed below. Overarching sub-projects include but are not limited to: registry system testing, the name collision risk evaluation mechanism, and development of the New gTLD Program website.

As described in the SubPro ODA,³² the common processes are introduced in New gTLD Program Foundations to reduce duplication in subsequent projects and demonstrate how common processes will be reused while providing a consistent and predictable experience for applicants. While common processes will be developed as a part of this project, there may be differing use cases that require their own particular solution. Any specific use case solution will be developed within the corresponding project where that particular use case is housed. For example, the application submission process for Project 3: RSP Evaluation Program and Project 4: Application Submission and Processing will be developed in their respective projects. Common processes include but are not limited to: application processes, evaluation panels, application systems, and refunds.

³² See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf>, pg. 195.

Timeline

The timeline for Project 1 comprises parallel work related to the development of the various processes described above. This work is expected to begin in Q3 2023 and continue until Q2 2026. See [Figure D5](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

Due to the broad scope of the New gTLD Program Foundations project, completion of the project is contingent upon several external dependencies and Board resolution on a variety of pending SubPro Final Report Recommendations. The external dependencies include the community's completion and Board consideration of recommendations or advice stemming from the IDN EPDP, NCAP Study 2, and the ALAC-GAC-GNSO Council dialogue on closed generics (and any follow-on policy development as applicable). Resolution is also needed for pending SubPro Final Report recommendations on the following topics: Applications assessed in Rounds, RVCs/PICs, Terms and Conditions, GAC Consensus Advice and GAC Early Warning, and Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism. See [Timeline Dependencies and Risks](#) as well as [Appendix E](#) for more information and details on dependencies.

Project 2: Applicant Support Program

The ASP "...is an initiative developed in addition to the New gTLD Program and it seeks to serve the global public interest by ensuring worldwide accessibility to, and competition within, the New gTLD Program."³³ The ASP provides support for potential gTLD applicants that may find the application fee prohibitive and may need access to professional services to inform their application development and submission. The ASP is intended to provide a reduction in the gTLD application fee and facilitate access to professional service providers willing to volunteer their time to advise qualified supported applicants (aka: pro bono services).³⁴

The working model for the ASP estimates that applicants will be able to apply for fee reduction support as early as 18 months before the New gTLD Program application submission period opens. The ASP application is separate from the new gTLD application and requires information about the applicant's organization, demonstrated financial need, and how the entity's work is related to public interest benefit.³⁵ However, the ASP application will not request information related to the string for which the applicant intends to apply. As such, the [communications, awareness-raising, outreach, and engagement efforts](#) related to ASP (and [RSP](#), below) will need to commence at least six months prior to ASP opening, or 24 months prior to the new gTLD application submission period opening.³⁶

³³ See: <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/candidate-support#financial-assistance>

³⁴ Recommendation 17.1: "...ICANN must retain the Applicant Support Program, which includes fee reduction for eligible applicants and facilitate the provision of pro-bono non-financial assistance to applicants in need..."

³⁵ Rationale for Recommendation 17.1

³⁶ Related to Recommendation 17.3, IG 17.4, and IG 17.6 in the SubPro Final Report.

Qualified applicants are expected to be eligible for reduced ICANN fees related to the New gTLD Program, a curated list of pro bono and/or reduced-cost service providers to assist with the development of applications and related content such as registry policies, and a bid credit or multiplier if the supported applicant participates in an ICANN Auction of Last Resort.³⁷ Applicants seeking support will be notified whether they qualify prior to the New gTLD Program application submission period opening.

ICANN org expects to open the application submission period for Applicant Support in advance of the New gTLD Program application submission period to allow time for ICANN org to identify the number of applicants requesting support and to consider how to allocate financial support³⁸ (e.g., high demand for Applicant Support may inform further budget allocations and/or the selection of additional pro bono providers).³⁹ This would also prevent applicants from paying a new gTLD application fee before they know whether they qualify for support. The Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP) will evaluate ASP applications.⁴⁰ ICANN org envisions the SARP will be convened as an independently contracted third party that conducts the review and evaluation of applications for support, based upon public interest benefit and financial need criteria, and research of similar global procedures.

Additional work related to implementation of the Applicant Support Program

ICANN org notes several sub-projects to the Applicant Support Program primary project. These include projects related to:

- **Pro bono services:** ICANN org is soliciting⁴¹ professional service providers willing to volunteer their time and/or provide reduced-fee services to qualified supported applicants. Professional pro bono services may include: business plan development,

³⁷ Recommendation 17.1.

³⁸ See Implementation Guidance 17.10: “The dedicated Implementation Review Team should consider how to allocate financial support in the case that available funding cannot provide fee reductions to all applicants that meet the scoring requirement threshold.”

³⁹ This also relates to GNSO Guidance Process Task 6, which states: “Recommend a methodology for allocating financial support where there is inadequate funding for all qualified applicants.” Additionally, ICANN org notes the GAC advice regarding the ICANN Auction of Last Resort in its ICANN77 Washington, D.C., Communique:

<https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann77-washington-d-c-communique>.

⁴⁰ Final Report footnote 102: The detailed description of this recommendation in the PIRR states:

“Regarding execution of the program, in this round, the SARP was an independent panel that defined its own processes, procedures, and final reports. The SARP’s work was performed earlier than the other New gTLD Program evaluation panels, and based on lessons learned from the implementation of other panels, ICANN should consider whether additional guidance should be provided to the SARP regarding publication of their processes, final report format, and documentation of rationale.”

⁴¹ See:

<https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/icann-seeks-pro-bono-service-providers-for-applicant-support-program-01-06-2023-en>.

business consulting, marketing and communications, operations, translation services, financial services, and legal services. ICANN org will provide a list of contact information for pro bono/volunteer professional services to qualified supported applicants that they may contact to make arrangements. As part of the Outreach and Engagement Plan, ICANN org may also facilitate events that allow supported applicants to meet pro bono service providers.

- **Vendor and IRT relations:** ICANN org will engage several vendors for the design of ASP criteria, the ASP process, and to conduct the ASP application evaluations. All public-facing ASP materials such as the ASP Handbook and relevant sections of the Applicant Guidebook will be reviewed by a professional editor to check for accessibility of materials to diverse audiences, especially non-native English speakers, and to facilitate translation of ASP materials into the six U.N. languages. All public-facing ASP materials will be shared with the IRT for feedback in advance of being finalized.
- **Communications and Outreach:** The SubPro Final Report made clear the importance of awareness-raising activities in relation to the ASP.⁴² Since the ASP is scheduled to open 18 months prior to the New gTLD Program application submission period, the communications and outreach activities to raise awareness about ASP will need to commence six months prior to the opening of the ASP application submission period (see also [Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach](#)).
- **Engagement, Training, and Capacity Development:** In addition to awareness-raising, the SubPro Final Report emphasizes the need for education and training among potential applicants. In conjunction with the communications and outreach efforts, ICANN's Global Stakeholder Engagement team will conduct engagement, training, and capacity development activities among potential applicants— in advance of both the ASP and the new gTLD application submission period⁴³ (see also [Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach](#)).

Timeline

As noted above, ICANN org expects to open the ASP to receive applications for support 18 months prior to the opening of the next round application submission period, and close the application submission period for the ASP two months prior to the opening of the new gTLD application submission period. The ASP application submission period will be open to receive applications for approximately 16 months. Project planning for the ASP has already begun and the ASP is expected to open in Q4 2024. See [Figure D6](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

There are several dependencies related to the ASP, the resolution of which could affect overall timing of implementation of the ASP. These dependencies include:

⁴² Recommendation 17.3, IG 17.4, and IG 17.6 in the SubPro Final Report.

⁴³ See also: [Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach](#).

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- **Recommendation 17.2:** Recommendation 17.2 is still under consideration by the Board. Recommendation 17.2 states: “The Working Group recommends expanding the scope of financial support provided to Applicant Support Program beneficiaries beyond the application fee to also cover costs such as application writing fees and attorney fees related to the application process.” See the [plan and timeline](#) for pending recommendations for more information.
 - **The GNSO Guidance Process (GGP):** The Board anticipates guidance from the Working Group on implementation of certain SubPro Final Report outputs relating to Applicant Support, including: Recommendation 17.3, Implementation Guidance 17.5, Implementation Guidance 17.8, Implementation Guidance 17.9, Implementation Guidance 17.10. The GGP on Applicant Support is expected to complete its work, including Public Comment and Final Report, by December 2023.
 - **Topic 32: Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism (Recommendations 32.1-32.2, 32.10):** Similar to several other primary projects, as described in this document, Topic 32 is also a dependency for ASP as the recommendations are still pending. Applicants for the ASP that do not qualify for support may have the opportunity to challenge or appeal the evaluation decision. Therefore, the limited challenge/appeal mechanism will need to be developed prior to the evaluation decisions being made for ASP applicants.

Project 3: Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program

The Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program (“RSP Program”) aims to ensure RSPs (or the registry operators themselves if acting as their own RSP) have the proper technical qualifications for running a TLD. The RSP Program builds on the Technical Evaluation and Registry Services evaluation processes from the 2012 round. Per SubPro Final Recommendation 6.2, the RSP Program aims to bring efficiencies to the evaluation process (as compared to the 2012 round) by performing the technical evaluation only once per RSP (as opposed to multiple times to a given RSP identified in multiple applications). Similarly, the registry services evaluation will be performed on RSPs, so that gTLD applicants (potential future registry operators) can select from pre-evaluated registry services of their RSP without having to have those services evaluated. Per SubPro Final Recommendation 6.3, RSP candidates will have the option to be pre-evaluated (i.e., before the new gTLD application submission period), or undergo RSP evaluation during the new gTLD application process.

Submission of RSP applications for pre-evaluation is expected to open for a period of between two and six months, beginning approximately 18 months before the new gTLD application submission period. In support of consistency and transparency, ICANN org expects to publish a list of all pre-evaluated RSPs at one time, six months before the gTLD application submission period opens.

During RSP evaluation, each RSP applicant will undergo an evaluation similar to what constituted Technical Evaluation in the 2012 round. Additionally, RSP candidates must specify the registry services for which they would like to be evaluated on. The RSP applicant must provide all applicable information, submit the application, and pay applicable fees promptly. For the technical evaluation and each service, the RSP applicant must supply responses to applicable questions and those responses will be evaluated against established criteria. RSP applicants that do not receive a passing score will not proceed to technical testing.

RSP applicants need to pass technical tests to demonstrate their capabilities. An RSP applicant must pass all applicable technical tests to be pre-evaluated. An RSP applicant must pass both the evaluation and testing to appear on the pre-evaluated RSP list for the round. Per SubPro Final Recommendation 6.3, gTLD applicants will have the option to select non-pre-evaluated RSPs; these RSPs will undergo RSP evaluation during the gTLD application evaluation process.

Per SubPro Final Recommendation 6.8, the RSP Evaluation program will be funded by those seeking evaluation on a cost-recovery basis. Elements of the program that are found to be common with other programs (e.g., gTLD application program, Applicant Support Program) will have their costs shared between the relevant programs.⁴⁴

As described in Appendix 15 of the [New Generic Top-Level Domain \(gTLD\) Subsequent Procedures Operational Design Assessment \(ODA\)](#), besides RSP evaluation, the following additional technical elements are envisioned for a new gTLD application:

- All new gTLDs will undergo registry system testing (RST) before being delegated⁴⁵. The new Registry System Testing (RST) design will only contain automated evaluation components that are dependent on the gTLD. ICANN org will offer an Application Programming Interface (API) for registries/RSPs to provide any input data and run RST. RST Results will be provided automatically. There will be an escalation process for when the registry/RSP believes there is an issue with RST as opposed to their capabilities.
- If the registry operator is expected to have privileged access to the RSP's system, the gTLD applicant must describe the security practices (e.g., National Institute of Standards and Technology or NIST Special Publication 800-63B) related to credential management that will be implemented or provide proof of a security certification showing that an Information Security Management System (e.g., ISO 27001) has been implemented for the processes that require privileged access to the RSP's systems.

⁴⁴ See [Program Element 3: Finance](#).

⁴⁵ See [Project 9: Post-Contracting and Operations](#).

Timeline

Development of the RSP Evaluation program is planned to take approximately 18 months. As mentioned above, the application submission period for RSP candidates is going to be between two and six months. Evaluation of applicants is expected to take six months, followed by publication of the list of pre-evaluated RSPs. After that, the program will be ready to evaluate RSPs if necessary during the gTLD application processing time.

The work in the RSP Evaluation program has the following main focus areas:

- RSP guidebook production
- Process design
- System development
- Communications plan
- Operationalization (internal and with evaluation panels)
- Reception and evaluation of applications

See [Figure D7](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

The RSP Evaluation program shares some processes with the other programs (for example, payment systems). These shared processes are called “Common Processes” and are discussed in [Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations](#). The development of these common processes must be accomplished on the timeline required by the RSP Evaluation program, which means that they will need to be implemented well before the gTLD application submission period opens.

Additional dependencies may have an impact on the timeline for implementation of the RSP Program. These include:

- **IDN EPDP:** The ongoing IDN EPDP, which may impact requirements for the evaluation of RSP applicants, for example, with regards to the IDN variant TLDs and the handling of IDNs at the second level.⁴⁶
- **Recommendation 6.8:** “[c]ost of the [RSP Evaluation] program should be established during the implementation phase by the Implementation Review Team in collaboration with ICANN org.” After the Board [communicated](#) their concern about recommended roles and responsibilities during the implementation process, the GNSO Council began considering a [clarifying statement](#) that would recognize ICANN org as responsible for establishing the fees, in consultation with the IRT. However, this would still limit the ability to set the final RSP application fee until the work on the IRT related to RSP Evaluation is completed.

⁴⁶ See [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on dependencies.

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- **Recommendation 32.1:** Similar to several other primary projects described in this document, Topic 32 is also a dependency for the RSP Evaluation Program, as the recommendation specifically indicates this applies to RSP Evaluation. This Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism will be implemented as a separate project from RSP Evaluation because it requires a different set of expertise and applies to several evaluations and procedures.⁴⁷ The RSP Evaluation program will not be fully implemented until this mechanism is in place.

Project 4: Application Submission and Processing

This project, outlined in Figure 2, marks the start of the new gTLD application process and lifecycle. ICANN org will develop timing and rules for the submission period to allow users to create accounts, create applications, input information, submit applications, and manage their applications within the application system.

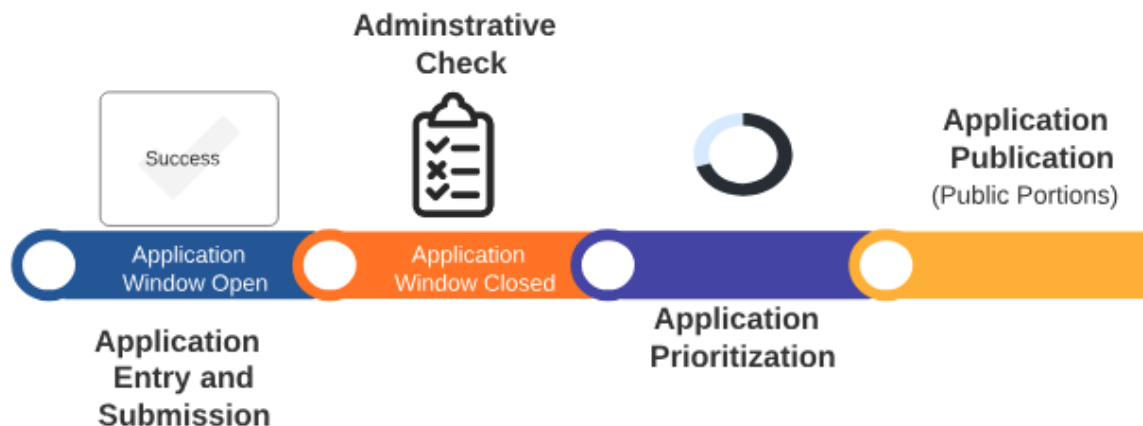
Project 4 will also determine how information in submitted applications will be reviewed and processed after the application submission period closes. ICANN org will develop general business and program-specific system validations, such as incorporating string similarity review into the administrative completeness check, in order to establish which strings are similar and create contention sets.

Additionally, a number of 2012 round evaluations will be split, with string-level portions of an evaluation carried out during the application submission and processing phase, and substantive portions carried out during the evaluation phase of the next round. For example, the geographic names evaluation conducted during the 2012 round will be split into the geographic string check, which is a string-level review conducted during the application submission and processing phase of the next round of the program, and the geographic verification, which is a substantive review of submitted application responses conducted during the evaluation phase of the next round of the program.

ICANN org will develop a prioritization draw process, as specified by Recommendation 19.3, and iterate on the logistical approach used in the 2012 round. Completed applications will be prioritized and public portions of the applications will then be published alongside an announcement to all accepted applicants, the ICANN community, and the general public.

⁴⁷ See [Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations](#).

Figure 3. gTLD Application Submission Process



Timeline

The timeline for Project 4 comprises parallel work related to the development of the various processes described above. This work is expected to begin in Q4 2023 and continue until Q1 2026. See [Figure D8](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

Successful implementation of Project 4 is dependent on several external dependencies and Board resolution on a variety of pending SubPro Final Report Recommendations. The external dependencies include the community’s completion and Board consideration of recommendations or advice stemming from the IDN EPDP, NCAP Study 2, and the ALAC-GAC-GNSO Council dialogue on closed generics (and any follow-on policy development as applicable). Resolution is also needed on pending SubPro Final Report recommendations on the following topics: application submission period, application queuing, string similarity evaluation, and name collisions. See [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on dependencies.

Project 5: Application Evaluation

Application evaluation is the process to determine whether an applied-for gTLD will meet the criteria of evaluation. ICANN org will develop the process and criteria for assessing both the applied-for string and the applicant entity’s capabilities. The evaluation phase of the program begins after publication of the completed applications. Evaluations requiring review of submitted comments on specific applications will be performed once the Community Action Period⁴⁸ has concluded.

⁴⁸ The Community Action Period, formerly Application Comments and the Objection Filing Period, is a 90-calendar-day period in which the community may take a number of actions such as submitting comments, filing objections, and issuing GAC Early Warnings.

Applicants that do not pass certain evaluation areas will be eligible for extended evaluation. This mechanism offers applicants additional time to submit additional information to address reasons for failure. Additionally, the Final Report recommends that applicants and other stakeholders with standing will be able to challenge the outcome of some evaluations through the Limited Challenge Mechanism (this recommendation is currently pending Board consideration).

Similar to the 2012 round, ICANN org will engage third-party firms as evaluation panels to review applications using processes and criteria to be defined in the next round's AGB. The evaluation panels will define their own procedures to execute the AGB processes and to support consistent and high-quality evaluations across all applications. A rigorous quality control program will be put in place to ensure that the AGB and the evaluation panels' procedures are followed.

Development for criteria of each evaluation area has begun and will be completed during implementation. Certain evaluations are required for all applications, while others are based on the type of applicant or application. Each evaluation may have different types of review depending upon the type of applicant and application. The SubPro ODA⁴⁹ listed and defined the majority of the following evaluation areas:

Mandatory Evaluations

- Background screening, financial review, name collision

Conditional Evaluations

- Geographic review, Community Priority Evaluation, .Brand (Specification 13) review, code of conduct (Specification 9) exemption review, RVCs review, closed generics review

Timeline

The timeline for Project 5 comprises parallel work related to the development of the various processes described above. This work is expected to begin in Q4 2023 and continue until Q2 2026. See [Figure D9](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

Successful implementation of Project 5 is dependent on several external dependencies and Board resolution on a variety of pending SubPro Final Report Recommendations. The external dependencies include the community's completion and Board consideration of recommendations or advice stemming from the IDN EPDP, NCAP Study 2, and the ALAC-GAC-GNSO Council dialogue on closed generics (and any follow-on policy development as applicable). Resolution is also needed for pending SubPro Final Report recommendations on the following topics: RVCs/PICs, Registrant Protections, String Similarity Evaluation, Security

⁴⁹ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf>, pg. 218-219.

and Stability, Name Collisions, Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanism, and Community Applications. See [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on dependencies.

Project 6: Objections

Objections are a dispute resolution process designed and limited to protect certain rights and interests. Objections may only be submitted during the Community Action Period. The objections process will be similar to the processes developed in the 2012 round but will incorporate suggested changes from approved and applicable SubPro Final Report recommendations. There are a limited set of objection categories and objectors must have standing, as defined during implementation, in order to object to a particular application. ICANN org will be contracting one or more dispute resolution providers to adjudicate the objection proceedings. ICANN org will also engage an independent objector or panel of independent objectors who will have the standing to file certain objections based solely on the best interest of the public, who use the global Internet on the grounds of limited public interest and community. As described in Affirmation 31.4,⁵⁰ the four objection categories include: string confusion objection; legal rights objection; limited public interest objection; community objection.

Timeline

The timeline for Project 6 comprises parallel work related to the development of the objection process described above. This work is expected to begin in Q1 2024 and continue until Q2 2026. See [Figure D10](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

Successful implementation of Project 6 is dependent on the Board's decision on Recommendations 32.1, 32.2, and 32.10. The Board stated in its 16 March 2023 scorecard that it is unclear whether the pending limited challenge/appeal mechanism recommendations could "be designed in a way that does not cause excessive, unnecessary costs or delays in the application process."⁵¹ Implementation of Project 6 also requires Board action on recommendations related to RVC/PICs, which impact the Board's subsequent decision on pending Recommendations 31.16 and 31.17. See [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on dependencies.

Project 7: Contention Resolution

Contention resolution refers to methods for resolving contention sets. As mentioned in Project 4, contention sets are determined during the string similarity review of the application evaluation process. Contention resolution, once achieved, allows for the affected applicant to proceed to the contracting phase of the application lifecycle. Methods for contention resolution will be

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf>, pg. 224.

⁵¹ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/scorecard-subpro-pdp-board-action-16mar23-en.pdf>, pg. 42.

similar to the processes used in the 2012 round and will incorporate suggested changes from approved and applicable SubPro Final Report recommendations. Similar to the 2012 round, the next round will employ the following contention resolution methods: Community Priority Evaluation; self-resolution; auction of last resort.

In addition to the aforementioned methods, Recommendations 20.6 and 20.8—both of which were accepted as part of the Board’s 16 March 2023 resolution—add new methods for contention resolution. Recommendation 20.6 allows for “application changes to support the settling of contention sets through business combinations or other forms of joint ventures,” while Recommendation 20.8 allows, under certain circumstances, for .Brand applicants to change their applied-for string as a result of and in an attempt to resolve contention. These new methods of contention resolution may require ICANN org to develop additional steps to reassess applied-for strings to ensure program requirements are still met.

Timeline

The timeline for Project 7 comprises parallel work related to the development of the contention resolution processes described above. This work is expected to begin in Q4 2023 and continue until Q2 2026. See [Figure D11](#) for a detailed timeline.

Dependencies

Successful implementation of contention resolution requires Board discussion and resolution on pending recommendations related to community applications. The dependency around community applications is related to Recommendation 34.1 2, which describes the scope of the terms of the agreement that will be published for Public Comment.

The Board’s decision on pending SubPro Final Report recommendations on auctions continues to be a point of interest for ICANN org, Board, and community. The SubPro Final Report did not provide policy recommendations on private auctions, which are referred to in auction-related recommendations. ICANN org is currently working with an auctions expert to better understand and mitigate concerns about private auctions.⁵²

As mentioned in Project 6, there are concerns that a limited challenge/appeal mechanism will not be able to be designed and implemented in a way that “does not cause excessive,

⁵² The GAC issued consensus advice regarding auctions in the ICANN77 Washington, D.C., Communique. The GAC advised the Board: 1) To take steps to avoid the use of auctions of last resort in contentions between commercial and non-commercial applications; alternative means for the resolution of such contention sets, such as drawing lots, may be explored, and 2) To ban or strongly disincentivize private monetary means of resolution of contention sets, including private auctions. For additional information, see: <https://gac.icann.org/advice/communiques/ICANN77%20Washington%20D.C.%20Communique.pdf>, pg. 12.

unnecessary costs or delays in the application process.”⁵³ See [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on dependencies.

Project 8: Contracting

Contracting is the process by which applicants who have successfully completed all required New gTLD Program steps enter into a Registry Agreement (RA) with ICANN org to operate the applied-for string as a gTLD. The contracting process will be based on the processes developed for the 2012 round but will incorporate all approved and applicable SubPro Final Report Outputs including Topic 36. Other community work is likely to impact the contracting process, including completing implementation of the recommendations from the Rights Protection Mechanism PDP (Phase 1) and the EPDP on IDNs.

Timeline

The timeline presented below incorporates elements for both this project and Project 9: Post-Contracting and Operations. The timeline for Projects 8 and 9 comprises parallel work related to the development of the described processes. Development of the processes and criteria to support the contracting phase is expected to begin in Q1 2024 and continue until Q2 2026, with some work related to supporting new and higher numbers of contracted registry operators (e.g., Centralized Zone Data Service or CZDS) continuing through Q2 2027 (the expected timeframe for the first delegation). See [Figure D12](#) for a detailed timeline. ICANN org will continue its efforts to identify and begin drafting necessary updates to the base Registry Agreement and its Specifications during this phase. Such efforts will in some cases be informed by AGB text developed in consultation with the IRT.

Dependencies

A critical dependency for the contracting process is the creation of an updated base Registry Agreement along with any updates or additions to the Specifications. The work to update the agreement is planned to occur during the IRT, which is already underway. However, it should be noted that some community work (e.g., IDN EPDP) is still underway on various topics and working groups and delays in either outputs or the decision-making process present a risk to the overall IRT timeline as well as completion of an updated base Registry Agreement.

Project 9: Post-Contracting and Operations

For the purpose of Project 9, the scope of “Post-Contracting and Operations” is limited to the processes by which ICANN org supports the newly contracted registry operator to launch the gTLD in accordance with the Registry Agreement. Specifically, the activities include onboarding,

⁵³ See: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/scorecard-subpro-pdp-board-action-16mar23-en.pdf>, pg. 42.

delegation, and TLD startup, as described in the ODA⁵⁴ in Sections 6.7.2, 6.7.3 and 6.7.4, respectively. The timeline for this project is included with the timeline for Project 8.

The specific requirements for these aspects are assumed to be largely the same as the current base Registry Agreement. However, the actual requirements may evolve during the IRT work to update the current agreement. This segment of activity received two Affirmations in the Final Report in Topic 40 - both of which support the above assumption.

Also included in Project 9 are updates and enhancements to the systems used by contracted parties to comply with provisions of the agreements and monitoring of the service level requirements of contracted parties. These are grouped in the Operational Dependencies section of the timeline and include improvements to onboarding a gTLD, the registration reporting interface, controlled interruption monitoring, file transfer services, the service level agreement monitoring system, the Centralized Zone Data Service (CZDS), and the Naming Services portal to the extent it interfaces with other systems.

Timeline

The timeline for implementation of Project 9 is tied to Project 8. See [Figure D12](#) for a detailed timeline

Dependencies

Several dependencies are shared with Project 8, as described above, but all largely culminate in an updated base Registry Agreement that will contain all of the specific obligations on both parties. Accordingly, until that finalized agreement is available, much of this work cannot start or finish. However, the project timeline above demonstrates the plan to conduct parallel work to develop processes and systems (as described in [Work Stream 3](#)) to support the launch of more than 1,000 gTLDs. Topic 29: Name Collisions, however, may introduce some additional operational aspects depending on Board action. SubPro Final Recommendation 29.1 is currently awaiting Board action pending the results of the Name Collision Analysis Project (NCAP).

ICANN org will continue to provide services to contracted parties in accordance with their agreements. Depending on the final state of the updated Registry Agreement, some services may need to be created, updated, or deprecated. ICANN org will make such changes as needed as part of its normal operating mechanisms. Some additional staff may be required to manage additional registry operators but specifics will become available only after the base Registry Agreement is finalized and the numbers of potential contracted parties are known.

⁵⁴ <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf>, pages 238 through 240

Conclusion and Next Steps

In the coming months, ICANN org will begin—or continue, as applicable—the implementation work identified in this plan. As requested by the Board, ICANN org will provide public implementation status updates at least two weeks prior to every ICANN meeting. Additionally, in the lead-up to ICANN78, ICANN org will be reviewing the need for additional funding, as requested by the Board in its March 2023 resolution: *“prepare any request for implementation funding beyond 31 October 2023 to be submitted to the BFC in a timely manner, so that the committee can make a recommendation to the Board for its consideration at the ICANN78 Public Meeting.”*

As noted in the Board’s March 2023 resolution, the successful completion of the work described in this document to open the next round will require the collective commitment, considerable resources, and effort from the ICANN Board, the ICANN community, and ICANN org. The information provided in this document represents ICANN org’s best estimate for the opening of the next round application submission period, based on current information. As additional information becomes available as to the outcomes on pending policy recommendations and the possible optimization of processes, ICANN org will continue to support these efforts and update the relevant plans as required.

Appendix A: Background

The New gTLD Program is an initiative organized by ICANN to expand the Internet's Domain Name System (DNS). The New gTLD Program was first opened in 2012, resulting in more than 1,000 new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) being added to the DNS. On 17 December 2015, the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council initiated a Policy Development Process and chartered the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Working Group (SubPro PDP WG). The SubPro PDP WG was tasked with determining what, if any, changes should be made to the New gTLD Program.

On 1 February 2021, the SubPro PDP WG published its [Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process](#) (Final Report), which contained more than 300 outputs for the ICANN Board to consider. On 12 December 2022, ICANN org transmitted the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures [Operational Design Assessment](#) (ODA) to the Board. The ODA contained an analysis to inform the Board's consideration of whether the Final Report outputs are in the best interest of the ICANN org and ICANN community.

On 16 March 2023, the Board took action on the Final Report outputs and provided guidance on how to proceed. The Board approved resolutions [2023.03.16.04 – 2023.03.16.15](#). The resolutions adopted a number of Final Report outputs, detailed in the Board's 16 March 2023 [Scorecard](#), and outlined the steps required to open the next round of applications for the New gTLD Program.

The resolutions noted there are four separate yet interdependent implementation streams—Policy Implementation, Program Design, Infrastructure Development, and Operationalization—that require completion before opening the next round of applications for the New gTLD Program. In addition to the work included in the aforementioned implementation streams, the Board requested that ICANN org deliver an implementation plan to the Board no later than 1 August 2023. The Board stated that the implementation plan required the satisfactory completion of the following four deliverables by the last day of the ICANN77 Public Meeting (15 June 2023)⁵⁵:

1. A [plan and timeline](#) as agreed upon by the ICANN Board and the GNSO Council for consideration and resolution of all outputs contained in [Section B of the Scorecard](#);
2. A working methodology and Implementation Review Team (IRT) [work plan and timeline](#) as agreed upon by ICANN org and the GNSO Council;
3. A GNSO Council project [plan and timeline](#) for policy work, or an alternate path, on how to handle closed generics for the next round of new gTLDs; and

⁵⁵ The deliverables are linked in the subsequent text and can also be found here: <https://www.icann.org/newgtlds-next-round-en>.

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4. A [project plan](#) from the GNSO Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP) Working Group (WG) identifying all charter questions that will impact the next Applicant Guidebook, along with considerations to ensure a consistent solution on IDN Variant TLDs with the ccPDP4 on IDN ccTLDs (in accordance with prior Board [Resolution 2019.03.14.09](#)), and a timeline by when the IDNs EPDP WG will deliver relevant recommendations to the GNSO Council.

The Board also requested ICANN org to “provide, by the last day of the ICANN77 Public Meeting (15 June 2023), relevant information regarding the work necessary to complete the Program Design, Infrastructure Development, and Operationalization streams,” i.e., the work to take place after Policy Implementation. ICANN org provided this deliverable to the Board on 15 June 2023, and it can be found [here](#). The deliverable included an overview of the implementation work streams as well as a high-level timeline to the opening of the next round application submission period. The implementation plan contained in this document builds on that timeline.

Appendix B: Working Model and Assumptions

This section describes the working model on which the plans and estimates in this document are based and builds on the model provided in the [Program Development overview](#). This model is shaped by the 2007 GNSO Recommendation 1 on the introduction of new gTLDs, as affirmed by the GNSO Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group in its Affirmation 27.1:

ICANN must implement a process that allows for the introduction of new top-level domains. The evaluation and selection procedures for new gTLD registries should respect the principles of fairness, transparency, and non-discrimination. All applicants for a new gTLD registry should therefore be evaluated against transparent and predictable criteria, fully available to the applicants prior to the initiation of the process. Normally, therefore, no subsequent additional selection criteria should be used in the selection process.

The model accordingly calculates that the complete process, criteria, fees, and other relevant information will be included in the AGB and available to applicants before they apply. The Operational Design Assessment described some possible alternative models that might reduce the wait-time to open the next round by developing some program components after the opening of the next round application submission period; these are not reflected in the working model, as they would not provide the transparency and predictability sought in the Final Report.

Because the volume of applications is unknown, and there are elements still pending action, this section documents where ICANN org has made planning assumptions, for the purposes of a common working model that can be used by all parts of the team. This working model may further evolve based on additional decisions or information.

1. What is the scope of recommendations to be implemented under this model?

The working model includes all of the Board-approved Final Report outputs to date. Where outputs are in a pending status, ICANN org has used the working assumptions described in number 6 below.

2. What is the end-to-end implementation time under this model?

See [Timeline](#) and [Dependencies](#) sections above.

3. What are the application submission limits under this model? What assumptions about demand underpin this model?

In accordance with Affirmation 5.1⁵⁶, there are no application submission limits under this model. However, the program's processing capacity and schedule will be determined according to the volume of applications received. The working model assumes application volume will be similar to the 2012 round, with ICANN org receiving approximately 2,000 applications and delegating roughly 1,200 gTLDs.

4. What systems and tools are assumed to be developed under this model?

ICANN org will build systems and tools⁵⁷ to support the capabilities needed to implement the application lifecycle's processes and dependency services. Resources for the program's systems and tools will be focused on areas with high volume and high visibility covering applicants requesting applicant support and managing their TLD applications, RSP applicants going through evaluation, and downstream processes for ICANN org staff to manage applications from initial processing through contracting. For a more detailed breakdown of those systems, please refer to [Program Element 2: Engineering and IT](#).

5. How will costs be managed under this model?

Costs will be managed with a pre-established ceiling for development. Development costs will be tracked before and after receiving application fees. For a more detailed breakdown, see [Program Element 3: Finance](#).

6. What assumptions are being made regarding pending recommendations under this model?⁵⁸

With the understanding that these outcomes could change, as these pending recommendations are still under discussion, the following assumptions have been made regarding pending recommendations for planning purposes. See also the [GNSO Work Plan and Timeline for SubPro-Related Activities](#).

- **Topic 3 (Applications Assessed in Rounds):** The model assumes that ICANN org holds at least one application round based on the Final Report recommendations and at the same time the GNSO Council and the Board will engage to “explore a shared vision for the long-term evolution of the program.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ [Affirmation 5.1](#): In the 2012 application round, no limits were placed on the number of applications in total or from any particular entity. The Working Group is not recommending any changes to this practice and therefore affirms the existing implementation.

⁵⁷ “Systems” generally refer to large-scale mechanisms that administer multiple services in support of the application lifecycle, e.g., a “TLD Application Management System.” A “tool” generally refers to a small-scale mechanism that assists an individual in carrying out a particular process step, e.g., spreadsheets with calculations and macros.

⁵⁸ See also [Timeline Dependencies](#) for more information on the pending recommendations.

⁵⁹ See: <https://mm.icann.org/pipermail/council/2023-July/027060.html>.

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- **Topic 6 (RSP Pre-Evaluation):** The model assumes that the RSP Evaluation Program recommendations are implemented and that costs to implement and operate the RSP Evaluation Program are subject to the cost-recovery principle of the New gTLD Program.
 - **Topic 9 (RVCs/PICs) | Topic 24 (String Similarity) | Topic 31 (Objections):** The model assumes that recommendations related to RVCs/PICs are accepted and that ICANN will only accept those PICs/RVCs that are enforceable and within ICANN’s Mission as set out in the ICANN Bylaws.
 - **Topic 9 (GAC Safeguards):** The model assumes that safeguard assessments will be conducted via a panel.
 - **Topic 16 (Application Submission Period):** The model assumes that the application submission period is between 12 and 15 weeks, “absent ‘extenuating or extraordinary’ circumstances,” as recommended in the Final Report.⁶⁰
 - **Topic 17 (Applicant Support):** The model assumes that the Board approves the outcome of the GGP on ASP, and will instruct ICANN to implement the guidance, along with the final report outputs, for the next round.
 - **Topic 18 (Terms and Conditions):** The model assumes that an updated version of the Terms and Conditions from the 2012 round, which includes the covenant not to sue, continues to be used and that the Board’s ability to act on a particular application will not be changed from the 2012 round.
 - **Topic 19 (Application Queuing):** The model assumes that applications are queued according to the formula recommended in the Final Report.
 - **Topic 22 (Registrant Protections):** The model assumes that the requirements for a Continued Operational Instrument or successor mechanism are in place for all applicants, and that the mechanism could include different requirements for different types of TLDs.
 - **Topic 26 (Security and Stability):** The model assumes that emojis in domain names are prohibited per technical standards.
 - **Topic 29 (Name Collisions):** The model assumes that the current Name Collision Management Framework, which was approved in July 2014, remains in use.⁶¹
 - **Topic 30 (GAC Consensus Advice and Early Warnings):** The model assumes that the Early Warning mechanism remains in place and that the GAC may provide advice on applications in line with its remit in the ICANN Bylaws.
 - **Topic 32 (Limited Challenge/Appeal Mechanisms):** The model assumes there is a challenge/appeals mechanism and the exact nature of the mechanism is subject to the outcome of Board and GNSO council deliberations.

⁶⁰ Recommendation 16.1: “The Working Group recommends that for the next application window and subsequent application windows, absent “extenuating or extraordinary” circumstances, the application submission period must be a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 15 weeks in length.”

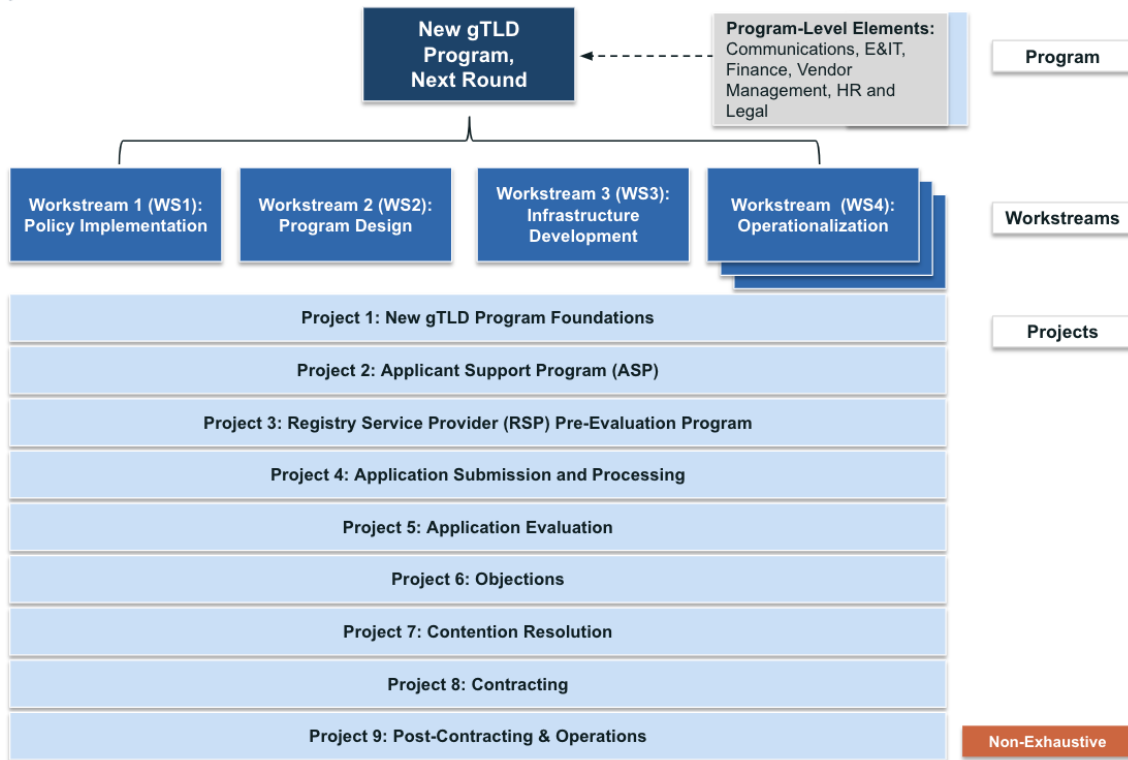
⁶¹ See also [Timeline Dependencies](#).

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- **Topic 34 (Community Applications):** The model assumes that Community Priority Evaluation, where it occurs, is performed by a service provider and that no confidential information between ICANN and a third-party is published for public comment.
 - **Topic 35 (Auctions):** The model assumes auctions of last resort will take place with a statement of bona fide intent and a transparency disclosure as noted in the accepted recommendations on auctions.

Appendix C: Program Structure

ICANN org has organized⁶² the implementation work for the next round of the New gTLD Program into four interdependent implementation work streams, nine primary projects, and four program elements, as shown in [Figure C1](#) below.

Figure C1. Program Structure



Work Streams

In the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures ODA, ICANN org identified four implementation stages of work, which were then structured as implementation work streams during the implementation planning. The work captured within these work streams will require completion before opening the next application round of the New gTLD Program. As the implementation work progresses, the structure may evolve to include additional work streams, as warranted.

- **Policy Implementation (WS1):** Development of the AGB.

⁶² For more information on the governance structure, please see the ODA: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-oda-12dec22-en.pdf> (p. 83-89).

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- **Program Design (WS2):** Development of internal processes and structure with respect to the application lifecycle.⁶³
 - **Infrastructure Development (WS3):** Development of systems and tools in support of the application lifecycle.
 - **Operationalization (WS4):** Preparation to operate the program prior to the opening of the next round application submission period. This includes capacity development to support the application lifecycle.

See more on the work streams in [Program Development](#).

Primary Projects

Along with the work streams represented in [Figure C1](#), ICANN org has further organized the work into nine primary projects. These primary projects generally map to the AGB modules for the next round. Each project will move through each of the four work streams outlined above.

- [Project 1](#): New gTLD Program Foundations
- [Project 2](#): Applicant Support Program (ASP)
- [Project 3](#): Registry Service Provider (RSP) Evaluation Program
- [Project 4](#): Application Submission and Processing
- [Project 5](#): Application Evaluation
- [Project 6](#): Objections
- [Project 7](#): Contention Resolution
- [Project 8](#): Contracting
- [Project 9](#): Post-Contracting and Operations

Program-Level Elements

While all functions of ICANN org will play various support roles during the program implementation phase, four sets of functional activities will perform significant cross-cutting roles in supporting the implementation work across projects and work streams. These select functions have been defined as the Program-Level Elements:

- [Program Element 1](#): Communications and Outreach
- [Program Element 2](#): Engineering and Information Technology (E&IT)
- [Program Element 3](#): Finance
- [Program Element 4](#): Human Resources:

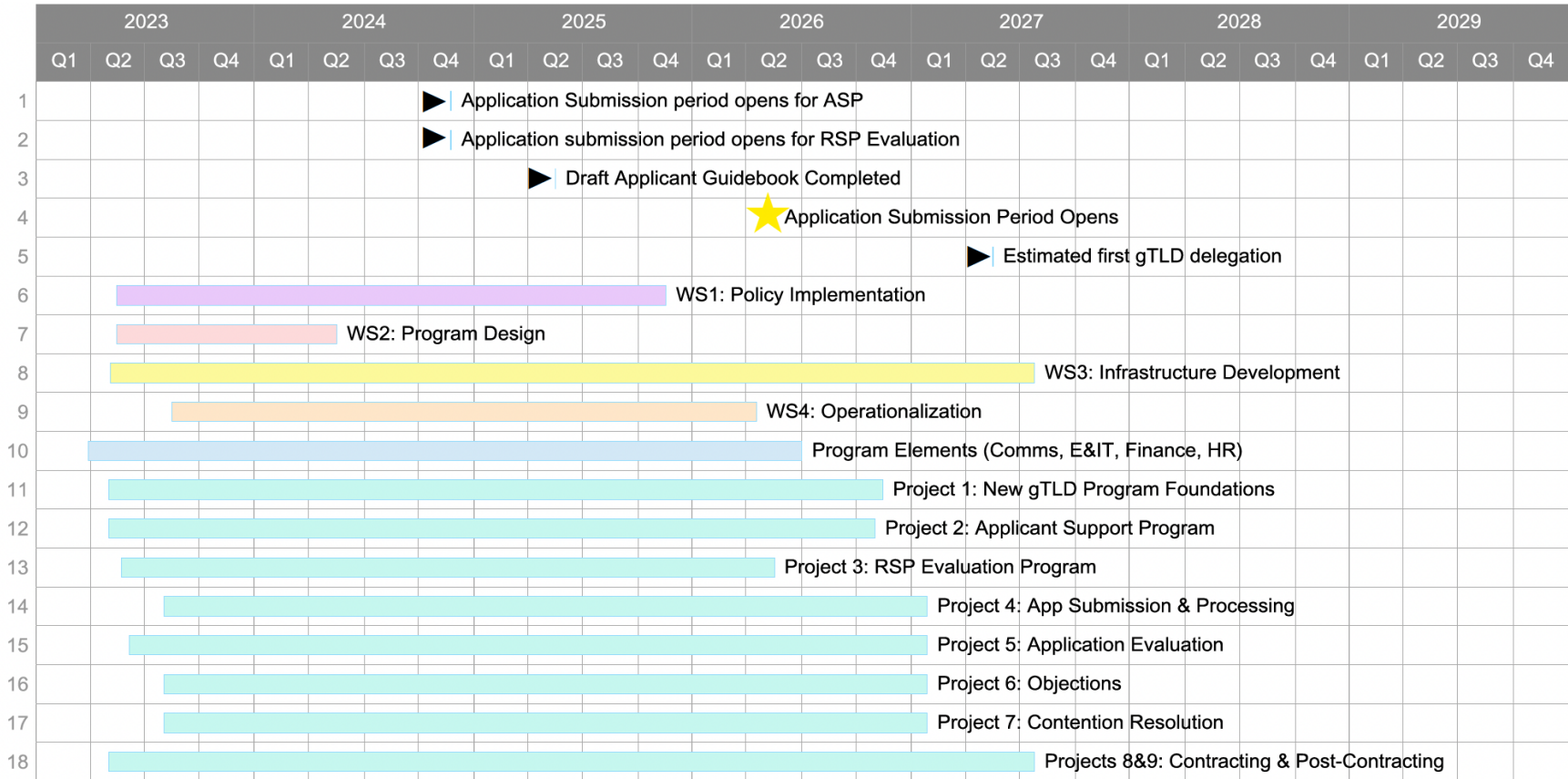
⁶³ The application lifecycle is the overall process by which an application to operate a top-level domain (TLD) is submitted, evaluated, contracted, and delegated to the DNS root zone. This can also include processes for applications that are not approved, withdrawn, and/or do not proceed to contracting and delegation.

Appendix D: Project Timelines

This appendix provides several timelines related to the work identified in the implementation plan, including:

- [Comprehensive Timeline](#)
- [Communications Timeline](#)
- [Key AGB and Policy-related Milestones](#)
- [Systems and Tools Timeline](#)
- [Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations Timeline](#)
- [Project 2: ASP Timeline](#)
- [Project 3: RSP Evaluation Program Timeline](#)
- [Project 4: Application Submission and Processing Timeline](#)
- [Project 5: Application Evaluation Timeline](#)
- [Project 6: Objections Timeline](#)
- [Project 7: Contention Resolution Timeline](#)
- [Projects 8 and 9: Contracting and Post-Contracting Timeline](#)

Figure D1. Comprehensive Timeline



- [Return to Next Round Timeline](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D2. Communications Timeline

Task Name	2023				2024				2025				2026				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1 UA Day Global Media Campaign	◆																
2 Stakeholder Mapping Development (Country/Target Audience)		■															
3 Messaging Book Development Complete		◆															
4 Social Media Campaign Development Complete			◆														
5 Phase 1 Comms Implementation - Rolling 3-month Mini Campaigns			■														
6 Tech Developers, Africa, APAC, LAC			■														
7 APAC, Middle East, South America				■													
8 Governments, IGOs, APAC, LAC					■												
9 Africa, APAC, Middle East						■											
10 Africa							■										
11 Global Campaign: Domain Name Registries, Tier1 Media, Brands/Business Community								■									
12 ASP Awareness Campaign						■											
13 RSP Evaluation Program Awareness Campaign							■										
14 Phase 2 Next Round Global Awareness Campaign									■								
15 AGB publication announced																◆	
16 Application Submission Period Opens - Announcement																◆	

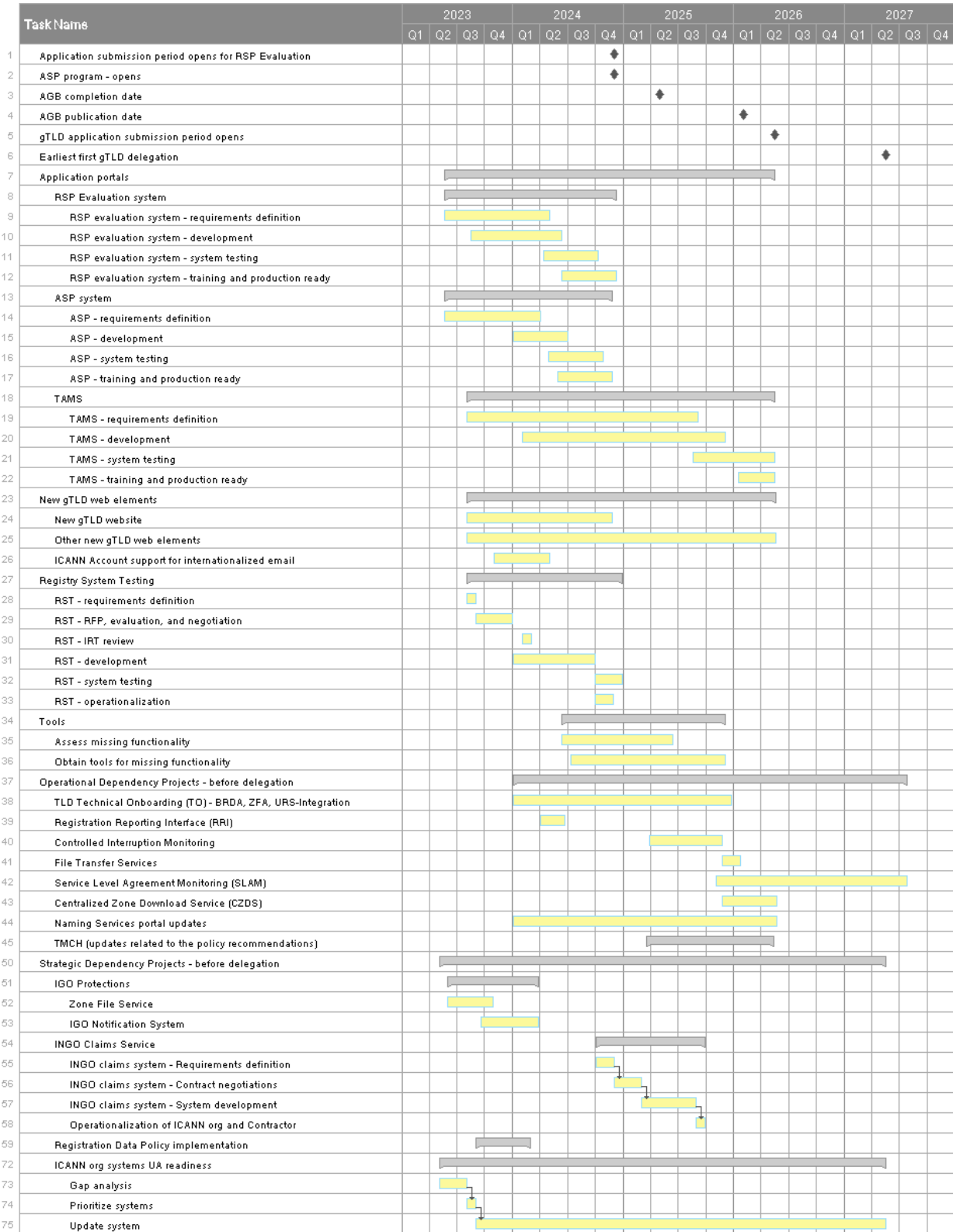
- [See also: Program Element 1: Communications and Outreach](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D3. Key AGB and Policy-related Milestones

Task Name	2023				2024				2025				2026			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1 IRT Implementation Work Plan		◆														
2 IRT begins		◆														
3 Begin of draft applicant guidebook language shared with IRT			◆													
4 Council provides Clarifying Statements for all applicable recommendations			◆													
5 Board to resolve on first batch of recommendations for which the Council has provided Clarifying Statements			◆													
6 Board to resolve on recommendations that it does not adopt			◆													
7 Preparation & Chartering for Closed Generics EPDP begins***				◆												
8 IDN EPDP Phase 1 Report delivered to GNSO Council****				◆												
9 Board to resolve on all remaining recommendations for which Council has provided Clarifying Statements				◆												
10 Board to resolve on all recommendations that the Council has amended					◆											
11 IDN EPDP Phase 2 Initial Report published for public comment****					◆											
12 Closed Generics EPDP Initial Report***						◆										
13 ASP ready						◆										
14 RSP ready						◆										
15 Foundational AGB Modules complete						◆										
16 IDN EPDP Final Report delivered to GNSO Council****							◆									
17 Closed Generics EPDP Final Report delivered to GNSO Council***								◆								
18 Draft Applicant Guidebook Completed									◆							
19 AGB public comment begins									◆							
20 Org and IRT review public comments										◆						
21 Publication of Board approved AGB											◆					
22 Application Submission Period Opens												◆				

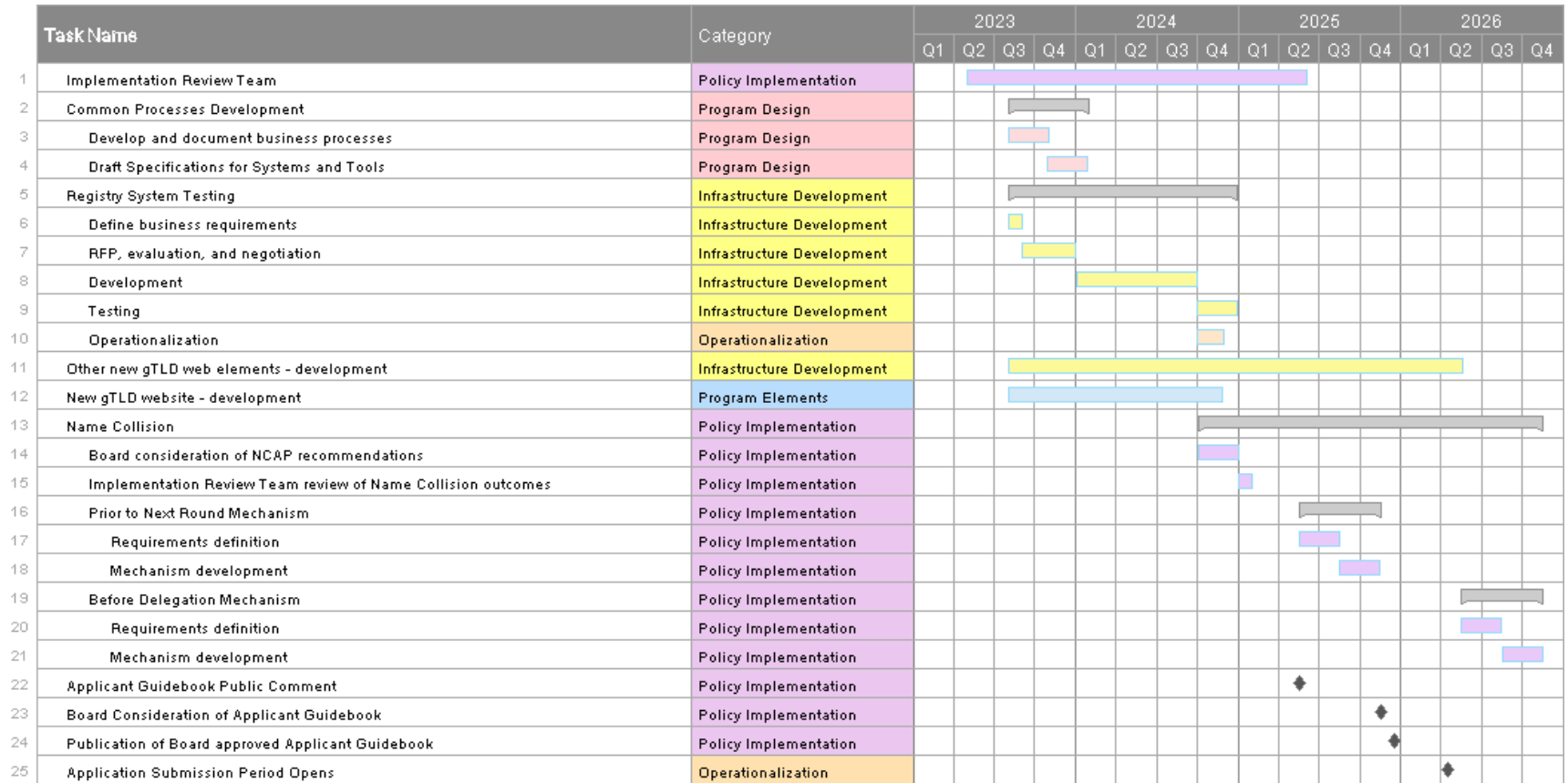
- *** (Closed Generics): Based on work plan and timeline described here: <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/subpro-icann77-deliverable-15jun23-en.pdf>
- **** (IDN EPDP): Based on work plan and timeline described here: <https://community.icann.org/display/gnsocouncilmeetings/Final+Proposed+Agenda+2023-07-20>
- [See also: Policy Implementation](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D4. Systems and Tools Timeline



- [See also: Program Element 2: Engineering and IT](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D5. Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations Timeline



- [Return to Project 1: New gTLD Program Foundations](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D6. Project 2: ASP Timeline

Task Name	Category	2023				2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1 Obtain and Train resources (including vendors)	Operationalization																
2 Develop and document business processes (ASP system)	Program Design																
3 Draft ASP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
4 Define business requirements (ASP system)	Infrastructure Development																
5 Preparation for Comms & Outreach; Engagement & Capacity Development	Program Elements																
6 Implementation Review Team review of ASP materials	Policy Implementation																
7 GNSD Guidance Process on ASP Report Finalized	Policy Implementation																
8 Council Consideration of GGP on ASP Outputs	Policy Implementation																
9 Board Consideration of GGP on ASP Outputs	Policy Implementation																
10 Public Comments on ASP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
11 Finalize ASP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
12 Recruit Pro bono service providers	Operationalization																
13 ASP Handbook and Materials Published	Policy Implementation																
14 Publish ASP Materials in UNE	Program Elements																
15 Comms & Outreach; Engagement & Capacity Development	Program Elements																
16 User training and production ready work of the ASP portal	Infrastructure Development																
17 Application Submission period opens for ASP	Operationalization																
18 Evaluation of applications for ASP	Operationalization																
19 Pro bono resource list provided to qualified supported applicants (ongoing)	Operationalization																
20 Application submission period closes for ASP	Operationalization																
21 gTLD application submission period opens	Operationalization																
22 ASP Program Evaluation and Review	Program Elements																

- [Return to Project 2: Applicant Support Program](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D7. Project 3: RSP Evaluation Program Timeline

Task Name	Category	2023				2024				2025				2026			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1 Draft RSP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
2 Develop and document business processes (RSP program)	Program Design																
3 Define business requirements (RSP portal)	Infrastructure Development																
4 Development of the RSP portal	Infrastructure Development																
5 Implementation Review Team review of RSP materials	Policy Implementation																
6 Public comments on RSP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
7 RFP, evaluation, and negotiation with panelist organizations for the RSP program	Operationalization																
8 Develop communication plan for the RSP program	Program Elements																
9 Finalize RSP Handbook	Policy Implementation																
10 System testing of the RSP portal	Infrastructure Development																
11 RSP Handbook and Materials Published	Policy Implementation																
12 Operationalization of ICANN org and panelist organizations for the RSP program	Operationalization																
13 User training and production ready work of the RSP portal	Infrastructure Development																
14 Execution of communication plan for the RSP program	Program Elements																
15 Application submission period opens for RSP Evaluation	Operationalization																
16 Reception of applications for RSP	Operationalization																
17 Contracts signed with panelist organizations for the RSP program	Operationalization																
18 Application submission period closes for RSP Evaluation	Operationalization																
19 Evaluation of applications for RSP	Operationalization																
20 List of pre-evaluated RSPs is publicly available	Operationalization																
21 Six-month period to allow gTLD applicants to select a pre-evaluated RSP	Operationalization																
22 gTLD application submission period opens	Operationalization																

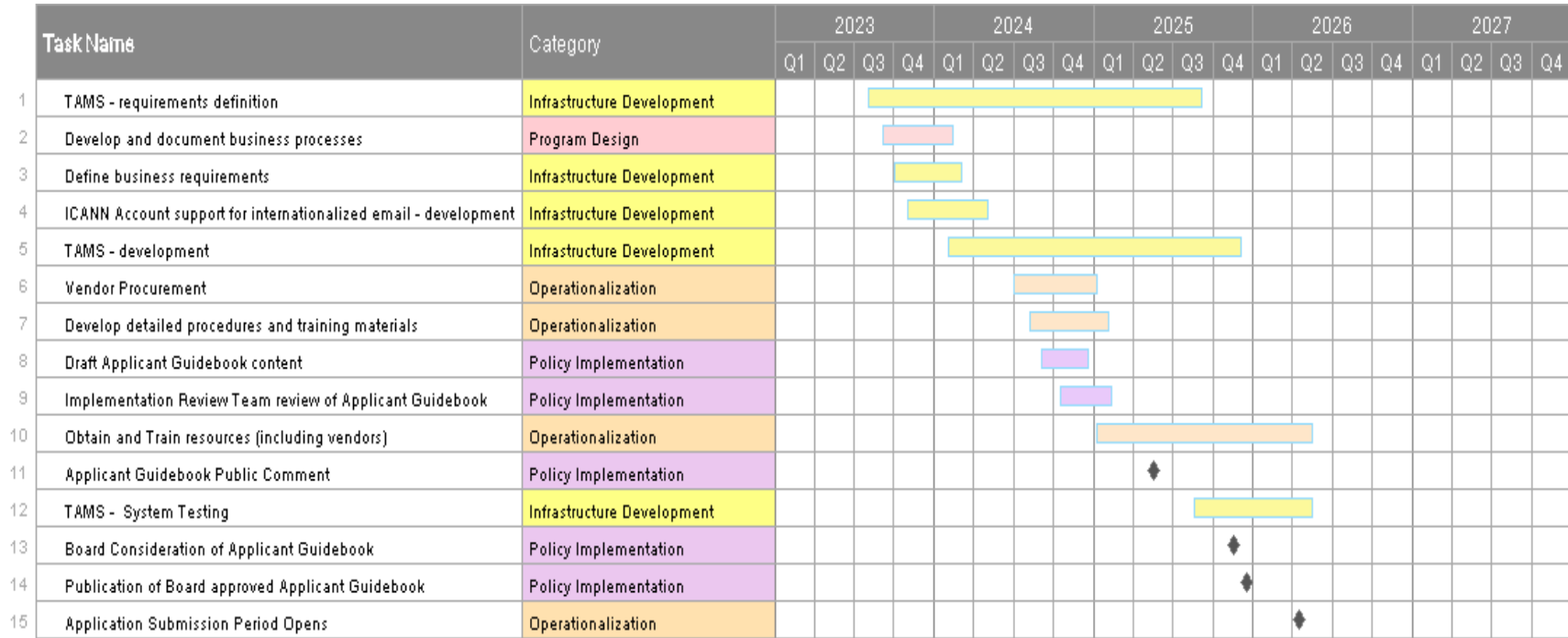
- [Return to Project 3: RSP Evaluation Program](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D8. Project 4: Application Submission and Processing Timeline

Task Name	Category	2023				2024				2025				2026				2027				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1 TAMS - requirements definition	Infrastructure Development																					
2 Develop and document business processes	Program Design																					
3 Define business requirements	Infrastructure Development																					
4 ICANN Account support for internationalized email - development	Infrastructure Development																					
5 TAMS - development	Infrastructure Development																					
6 Vendor Procurement	Operationalization																					
7 Develop detailed procedures and training materials	Operationalization																					
8 Draft Applicant Guidebook content	Policy Implementation																					
9 Implementation Review Team Review of Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
10 Obtain and Train resources (including vendors)	Operationalization																					
11 Applicant Guidebook Public Comment	Policy Implementation																					
12 TAMS - System Testing	Infrastructure Development																					
13 Board Consideration of Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
14 Publication of Board approved Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
15 Application Submission Period Opens	Operationalization																					

- [Return to Project 4: Application Submission and Processing](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D9. Project 5: Application Evaluation Timeline



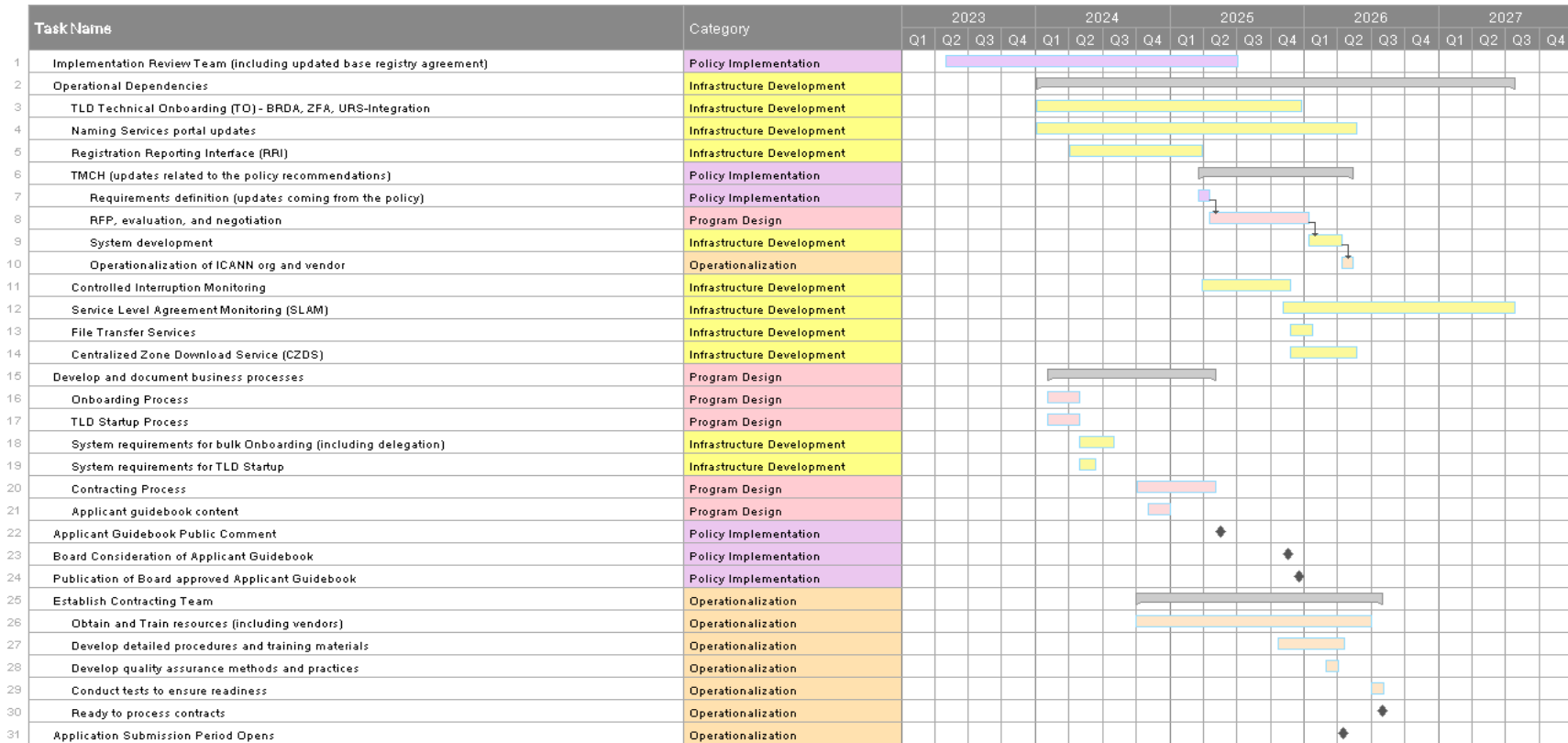
- [Return to Project 5: Application Evaluation](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D10. Project 6: Objections Timeline

Task Name	Category	2023				2024				2025				2026				2027				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
1 TAMS - requirements definition	Infrastructure Development																					
2 ICANN Account support for internationalized email - development	Infrastructure Development																					
3 Develop and document business processes	Program Design																					
4 Define business requirements	Infrastructure Development																					
5 TAMS - development	Infrastructure Development																					
6 Vendor Procurement	Operationalization																					
7 Develop detailed procedures and training materials	Operationalization																					
8 Draft Applicant Guidebook content	Policy Implementation																					
9 Implementation Review Team review of Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
10 Obtain and Train resources (including vendors)	Operationalization																					
11 Applicant Guidebook Public Comment	Policy Implementation																					
12 TAMS - System Testing	Infrastructure Development																					
13 Board Consideration of Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
14 Publication of Board approved Applicant Guidebook	Policy Implementation																					
15 Application Submission Period Opens	Operationalization																					

- [Return to Project 6: Objections](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)

Figure D12. Projects 8 and 9: Contracting and Post-Contracting Timeline



- [Return to Project 8: Contracting](#)
- [Return to Project 9: Post-Contracting and Operations](#)
- [Return to Top of Appendix D](#)



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