



To: Tripti Sinha, ICANN Board Chair, and members of the ICANN Board

From: Mason Cole, ICANN BC Chair
Steve DelBianco, BC Vice Chair for Policy Coordination

Date: 12-Aug-2024

Subject: ICANN Business Constituency (BC) response to [Board request for input on Applicant Support Program Use of Auction Proceeds](#)

Dear Tripti and members of the ICANN Board,

The BC supports a new gTLD Applicant Support Program (ASP) as a way to help businesses to participate as registries and to create more choices for businesses who would register domains in new gTLDs. That's aligned with the BC mission to advocate for ICANN policies that promote "competition in the supply of registry and registrar and related services".

The BC has participated in previous comment periods to shape applicant support programs in the 2012 and subsequent new gTLD expansions. In the 2012 Round, we were disappointed in communication and marketing efforts, and in the small number of applicants participating compared to the number of total participants. Although the subsequent ASP mentions mentoring and other assistance, we would ask what research ICANN has done and what plans are in place to improve outcomes of the ASP in the subsequent round.

As a result of the small number of participants in the 2012 round, we have advocated in the subsequent round ASP for some improvements: targeted and sustained communications and marketing; more advice to applicants on whether and how to apply; advice to applicants to evaluate whether and how they could operate a registry if their application were successful; and we advocated strongly that *business organizations* be eligible for applicant support, since businesses are more likely to have the experience to operate a successful registry that would offer new alternative domains for business registrants.

While the BC does support the board's proposal to use of 5 million USD from prior auction proceeds, we offer two further thoughts on the use of auction funds:

First, the 2012 Applicant Guidebook, section 4-19 provided sensible guidance for use of auction proceeds to support new gTLD applicants:

"Possible uses of auction funds include formation of a foundation with a clear mission and a transparent way to allocate funds to projects that are of interest to the greater Internet community, such as grants to support new gTLD applications or registry operators from communities in subsequent gTLD rounds, the creation of an ICANN-administered/community-based fund for specific projects for the benefit of the Internet community, the creation of a registry continuity fund for the protection of registrants (ensuring that funds would be in place to support the operation of a gTLD registry until a successor could be found), or establishment of a security fund to expand use of secure protocols, conduct research, and support standards development organizations in accordance with ICANN's security and stability mission."

We ask if Org has considered implementing those ideas from its own Applicant Guidebook for the 2012 round, from which came the present auction proceeds being used here.

Second, to avoid giving the impression that the ASP is a performative exercise, we suggest applying explicit accountability to the management of funds used to support applicants in subsequent rounds. This approach will also help Org develop stronger discipline in designing and advocating such programs in the future.

The BC stands ready to explain and explore improvements to the Applicant Support Program and other elements of subsequent expansions of gTLDs.

Sincerely,

Mason Cole
Chair, ICANN Business Constituency

Steve DelBianco
Vice Chair for Policy Coordination, ICANN Business Constituency