

ICANN Proposed Solution re ASP Financial Need Eligibility Criteria - SPIRT Notification

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ICANN Proposed Solution: Interpretation of ASP Financial Need Eligibility

To better reflect the global nature of the program and promote equitable consideration across diverse economic contexts, ICANN proposes to provide updated guidance to the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP) on how to interpret the Financial Need criteria and indicators. This updated interpretation includes an allowance of up to 15% to the USD \$5 million Financial Need threshold, helping ensure that variations in funding environments, currency exchange rates, and inflation are more fairly accounted for.

The proposed solution will be reflected in the [SARP Evaluation Guide](#) Financial Need criteria and indicators.

Objectives

- 1) Provide a degree of flexibility on the SARP’s interpretation of Financial Need criteria and indicators to:
 - a) alleviate currency conversion volatility, while still maintaining consistent and predictable outcomes; and
 - b) recognize some eligible entities have multi-year funding arrangements and fluctuations.

Who is Impacted

- To date, no applicants have been disqualified due to not meeting the Financial Need criteria.

- Applicants that may have exceeded the USD\$5 million threshold in the previous two years based on financial documentation submitted, but are still within 15% allowance.

Impact:

Applicants that may have exceeded the USD\$5 million threshold in the previous two years based on financial documentation submitted but are still within the 15% buffer would be eligible to qualify for support in the case that they Pass all other ASP criteria categories (recall that all ASP criteria categories must be a “Pass” in order for the applicant to receive an overall evaluation result of “Pass”).

Based upon ASP application processing to date, this proposed solution is not anticipated to impact a majority of ASP applicants.

Change Classification & Timing:

Type 2: Non-minor operational change (see [appendix](#)).

Please provide guidance within 7 calendar days, including whether the SPIRT believes additional time is needed to come to an agreement on the proposed solution. ICANN requests that the SPIRT provide any feedback on list by **11 May 2026**.

Appendix

Background on Proposed Solution

The [ASP Handbook](#) and the [SARP Evaluation Guide](#) did not address whether or how to consider funding environments, currency exchange rates, and inflation in interpreting the Financial Need criteria and indicators. Based upon currency exchange changes, inflation, and funding fluctuations within applying entities, ICANN proposes to provide additional indicators to the SARP on how to interpret the Financial Need criteria.

Per [Appendix 6](#) of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), "ICANN has established a Predictability Framework to manage operational processes for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, to ensure efficient and transparent handling of unexpected issues. When unanticipated matters arise, ICANN org will engage with the Standing Predictability Implementation Review Team (SPIRT)".

As this matter was not previously anticipated, ICANN is bringing this issue to the SPIRT per the Predictability Framework.

Timing for Feedback from the SPIRT

The SPIRT [charter](#) notes "When ICANN org notifies the SPIRT of the type of change considered by ICANN org, the SPIRT shall endeavor to provide guidance, if any, within seven (7) calendar days or as otherwise required to maintain the operation of the Program if it disagreed with the decision"

Non-Minor Operational Change Definition and Execution

[A6.2](#): "A non-minor operational change is a change during the ongoing round of the Program that can be implemented in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations and has a material impact on applicants. ICANN org and SPIRT have to agree on a permanent solution. If an agreement is not reached within 30 days, or more urgent action is necessary to the operation of the program, ICANN can implement a temporary solution to be replaced with the solution of ICANN and SPIRT once agreed."

[A6.3.2, Execution](#): "For changes in alignment with the existing Board-approved policy recommendations that will have a material impact on applicants, ICANN classifies these as 'non-minor operational changes.' ICANN will inform SPIRT and follow the subsequent steps in the change execution flow chart. Once implemented, ICANN will notify applicants about any non-minor operational changes."

Definition of "Material Impact for Predictability Framework"

[A6.5](#): "In the context of Predictability Framework, 'material impact' refers to the implementation of new procedures or operations for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round or changes to ICANN's existing procedures or operations that will likely:

- (1) change the status of an application,
- (2) change the outcome of an evaluation of an application,
- (3) have a non-trivial monetary or operational impact on applicants, or
- (4) have a non-trivial impact on the timeline of application processing, up to the point of delegation.”