

Middle East Space
ICANN63
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Monday 22 October 2018

Statement
Applicant Support Program for the new gTLD Subsequent Procedure

We, the Middle East (ME) community members participating in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' (ICANN) 63 public meeting in Barcelona, Spain, and attending the Middle East Space session on Monday 22 October 2018, discussed the Applicant Support Program for the new gTLD subsequent Procedure.

We consider the applicant support as a very important tool for underserved regions, such as the Middle East and Adjoining countries, and disadvantaged communities to have a chance to apply for new gTLD strings. We are aware of the failure of the Applicant Support Program (ASP) for the 2012 round that wasn't efficient and didn't permit to support any applicant. We also understand that it failed because the too tough eligibility criteria developed by the community were too tough under the pressure of those who always frighten us that the program will be gamed if we put flexible criteria.

The awareness in ME region about the opening of the 2012 new gTLD application round and the availability of the applicant support program was limited as we can notice that most of the very few ME applications came from the countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and most of them are submitted by International companies operating in the GCC or through expat consultants.

We believe that to be accessible for applicants in need of support, the ASP for subsequent rounds should satisfy the following requirements:

- The applied for TLD must serve an underserved region and/or an underserved community wherever it is located.
- Support shouldn't be limited to the elimination (or reduction) of application fees although it is of great importance, but must be extended to other kind of support such as:
 - application writing fees, related attorney fees, and ICANN registry-level fees
 - pre-application support, including longer lead times to create awareness, encouraging participation of insightful experts who understand relevant regional issues and potential ramifications on the related business plans, along with the tools and expertise on how to evaluate the business case, such as developing a market for a TLD
 - mentorship on the management, operational and technical aspects of running a registry making use of existing registries/registrars within the region to develop in-house expertise to help ensure a viable business for the long term
 - Etc.
- Applicants for support who do not meet the requirements of the ASP should be provided with a sufficient period of time that does not unreasonably delay the program, but permit the applicant to pay the additional application fee and transfer to the normal application process because many ME countries have in place monetary laws that control over the source of the

money and how much and to whom it is transferred to.

- In case of string contention, the application that passed the support criteria and got qualified for ASP must have the priority for the string.
- Outreach and awareness raising are a key factor for the success of an ASP. Real outreach for the new gTLD program itself should be undertaken seriously in areas where underserved people live, and so must be the ASP.
- If gaming of the ASP is proven, the concerned application should be rejected from the current round and the applicant should be denied to apply for new gTLDs for 10 years (or the 2 upcoming consecutive rounds).
- One of the indicators of the success of an Applicant Support Program is that it leads to a significant number of supported applications

That is said, we believe that the underserved regions and communities deserve to have a dedicated round exclusively for them to be able to apply for and get their preferred string

We further more would like to highlight that the experience of 2012 shouldn't be a reason for giving up and abandoning the efforts of supporting applicants from underserved regions and/or communities in need of assistance to apply for and operate a new gTLD.