24 June 2024

RE: ALAC-GAC Joint letter regarding the Applicant Support Program

Jonathan Zuck, ALAC Chair
Nicolas Caballero, GAC Chair

Dear Jonathan and Nicolas,

Thank you for your recent joint ALAC-GAC letter to the ICANN Board and for your continued interest in making the New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLD) Program: Next Round (Next Round) Applicant Support Program (ASP) a priority. The Board agrees that Applicant Support is a critical component in fostering diversity, encouraging competition, and enhancing the utility of the Domain Name System (DNS) via new gTLDs. The ICANN community, Board, and organization have a collective interest in the success of the ASP—and the gTLD applicants it seeks to support in becoming registry operators.

With respect to the ASP Funding Plan, the Board notes that this was not published in April 2024. However, during the ICANN80 GAC Discussion: New gTLD Program Next Round, ICANN org shared the ASP budget estimate of US$10-16 million, as well as the fixed and variable cost estimates: $3.2 million and $6.8-13.8 million, respectively. The final estimated ASP costs are still under development in relation to the expected costs for the gTLD evaluation fee. In addition, the Board and org are following Implementation Guidance 17.13 from the SubPro Final Report to "...evaluate whether [ICANN] can provide funds (as they did in 2012) ..." The Board further considered the ASP funding plan, and in particular the question of the ICANN contribution during its June workshop prior to the ICANN80 Policy Forum. The Board is expected to share further information with the community shortly about the proposed approach. The Board also acknowledges that the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) issued ICANN80 advice about the ASP that will be addressed separately.

Regarding the ASP communications plan, the Board notes that ICANN org shared the Next Round Engagement and Communications Plan with the Implementation Review Team (IRT) on 16 May 2024.The Board very much appreciates the breadth of the GAC and At-Large Advisory Committee's (ALAC's) respective networks. It looks forward to supporting collaboration between the ICANN community and org in raising awareness about the ASP and the New gTLD Program: Next Round in underserved regions, in particular.

With regard to the commitments called for in the letter, each of these points have been addressed in community inputs and were part of Board consideration at ICANN80. Below are more specific responses to each point:

- **A commitment to alleviate financial burden to the maximum extent possible:** The Board understands that the community has provided input regarding the level of financial support available via the IRT and Public Comment on the Draft ASP Handbook. In addition, the Board notes that the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Guidance Process (GGP) for ASP was tasked with recommending a methodology for allocating financial support where there is inadequate funding for all qualified applicants. The Board adopted GGP recommendations related to this task at ICANN80.

- **A commitment to prioritizing outreach to applicants from global underserved regions:** The Board notes that the GNSO Guidance Process (GGP) for ASP Final Report provides a guidance recommendation on communications, outreach, and awareness that emphasizes underserved and developing regions and countries. While eligibility for the ASP, per the SubPro Final Report Recommendation 17.1, is not limited to applicants from particular locations, the Board acknowledges and supports the ICANN community in its commitment to raising awareness and conducting engagement in underserved regions as a top priority.

- **For a commitment to apply a holistic approach in facilitating adequate and needed support for ASP applicants** *and* **a commitment to supporting the longer-term success of ASP-qualified applicants:** the Board notes that these points relate to ICANN79 GAC Advice and that the full scope of support provided via the ASP is addressed by supplemental recommendation 17.2, which was adopted by the Board at ICANN80.

The Board extends its appreciation and gratitude to the SubPro ASP IRT Sub-track participants for their dedication to the ASP implementation process. With this input, along with the Public Comment contributions from the ICANN community, the Board is confident that the ASP Handbook will be further strengthened to be more accessible to diverse potential applicants.

The Board appreciates the GAC's and ALAC's desire to ensure that sufficient support is available should there be more applicants than anticipated. The Board expects that ICANN org will keep the Board informed of the number of applications received as well as level of support sought so that it is able to consider if/how additional support can be provided should this deemed to be necessary above what has been planned for to date.

The Board is especially grateful for the GAC's and ALAC's time and ideas in contributing to discussions on how the ASP and the next round of gTLDs can serve to evolve the DNS in ways that are inclusive and reflective of global diversity.

Sincerely,

Tripti Sinha
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)