



## Preliminary Stage for Letters of Intent (LOI)

1. This preliminary stage would allow potential applicants to first submit a LOI that identifies and describes in some detail the gTLD, how it is intended to be used, target market, and how it will be operated. The results of this stage will have numerous benefits to the community, the applicants, and to ICANN.
2. The cost of this stage should be minimal. There will be some administrative costs that need to be considered, and the fee adjusted accordingly. But the fee should be cost recovery based and justifiable as such. This step could also result in the creation of the applicants application account.
3. This stage would be a mandatory step for anyone intending to apply for a new gTLD. In fact, only the participants of this stage would be allowed to submit an actual application later. A set period of time would be allowed for this stage, perhaps 30-days. All LOIs would be kept confidential until the LOI period closes.
4. Once the LOI period closes, all LOIs are made available for public comment and objection for a period of time, 30-60-days. This could be done by providing a typical public comment forum, and also allowing for a separate submission of a Notice of Intent to Object (NIO), the required content of a NIO needs to be discussed further. All comments and NIOs would be made public.
5. There would be short period after the comment/NIO period closes, perhaps 10-days, during which the potential applicants may post a public response if they choose.
6. At the completion of the LOI stage, potential applicants will have to decide whether they believe moving forward with a full application is still desirable.
7. At this point, the application round opens allowing only those who submitted LOIs to complete full applications if they still choose to move forward. **NO NEW APPLICANTS WOULD BE ALLOWED.** The process (and application cost) continues from here as currently defined in the Applicant Guidebook or as it may be refined based on recent public comments.
8. Benefits to the community:
  - a) Allows the entire community to see what new gTLDs may be proposed;
  - b) Provides an opportunity for registrants to express their support, concerns, and objections;
  - c) Allows IP stakeholders to identify potential conflicts and make them known through NIOs.
  - d) Allows Governments, NGOs, and civil society to identify potentially objectionable strings and provide comments or NIOs.

- e) Allows registrars, resellers, and hosting and application providers to see what may be coming and begin to prepare for it as necessary.
- f) Allows the technical community to submit concerns or questions regarding affects on the DNS, possible security issues, and affects on other critical applications.

9. Benefits to the Applicants:

- a) Allows them to better evaluate the real costs that will be associated with their application - costs of objections, possible auction if there are multiple applicants;
- b) Allows them to see if there are community based competitors for their string;
- c) Allows for evaluation of initial public perception, concerns, questions regarding their intended gTLD;
- d) Gives them an opportunity to fine tune their applications as they may deem necessary, or alternatively, to pull out without incurring any additional costs.

10. Benefits to the ICANN Staff:

- a) Allows for resource planning – level of work for evaluators, potential for objections, potential for string contention, etc.;
- b) May help to identify security and stability issues that Staff and evaluators will need to prepare to examine;
- c) Will invoke confidence of the community by providing a transparent and open process through which all stakeholders may play a part;
- d) May result in the more contentious strings not continuing on with the actual application process.

11. There are no doubt other benefits not identified above. There will be objections to such a preliminary stage such as it delaying the process, discouraging potential applicants from continuing, etc. This should all be considered before any decision is made to include this preliminary stage, and prior to finalizing exactly how it will work. However, I am confident that the mechanics can be adjusted to overcome any concerns and that the overall benefits will far outweigh any concerns that cannot be fully addressed.