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# The Latest Update on the New gTLD Program

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*By Jamison Arterton*

It has been a long time since we had any notable updates on the gTLD process to report.  However, after a slow start, the new gTLD program is now in full swing.  On March 22, 2013, ICANN released the first round of Initial Evaluations to the general public. This was the first major milestone of the gTLD program.  As a reminder, there are three possible outcomes of this Initial Evaluation:   **1) Pass**: the application was found to be consistent with the requirements in the Applicant Guidebook and can advance to the next phase; 2)  **Eligible for Extended Evaluation**: additional information was requested by the Financial, Technical/Operational, Registry Services, or Geographic Names evaluation panels; or 3) **Ineligible for Further Review**: the application was determined not to meet the relevant criteria in the Applicant Guidebook.  The next round of Initial Evaluations was released on May 24, 2013, bringing the total number of passing applications to 433.  ICANN has also announced that it has ramped up to releasing the results of these Initial Evaluations  in batches of 100 prioritized applications per week.

The most recent results of the Initial Evaluations are available here.
**https://gtldresult.icann.org/application-result/applicationstatus/viewstatus**

Applicants that passed the Initial Evaluations have now moved onto the contracting phase and pre-delegation testing to determine whether the applicant meets the technical requirements of the program.  However, applicants in string contention will need to wait for the string it is in contention with and resolve that contention before proceeding.

This current progress, however, could potentially be hindered if ICANN choses to implement the recent recommendations from the Governmental Advisory Committee ("GAC"). On April 11th, the GAC released its Beijing Communique, outlining recommendations for new TLDs.  Among the numerous recommendations of the new TLD program, the GAC recommended the following:

1. The GAC identified several strings that it      recommended should not proceed beyond the Initial Evaluation phase.

2. The GAC requested a written briefing about the      ability of the applicant to alter the string applied for in order to      address the GAC's concerns.

3. The GAC suggested that ICANN reconsider its position      on singular and plural strings, since the inclusion of both could lead to      potential user confusion.

4. The GAC recommended six new safeguard should apply to      all new gTLDs, including WHOIS verification and checks, mitigation of      abusive activities, procedures for maintaining documentation, procedures      for handling complaints and stringent consequences for violation of the      requirements.

5. The GAC further advised that ICANN should carefully      consider community feedback on applications from interested groups.

6. The GAC recommended that ICANN should develop clear      policies for handling applications for strings such as .WTF, .GRIPE,      .SUCKS, .FAIL in order to reduce cyber bullying and misuse.

The full text of the GAC's recommendations is available  **here.**

For now, however, ICANN appears to be on track to complete Initial Evaluations on all applications by August 2013 and to roll out the first new gTLDs by the end of July.

# Authors

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