

Success Look Like?

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ICANN70 | Virtual Community Forum – At-Large Policy Session 3: Applicant Support: What Does Success Look Like?  
Wednesday, March 24, 2021 – 10:30 to 12:00 EST

YESIM NAZLAR:

Hello, and welcome to At-Large Policy Session 3 “Applicant Support: What Does Success Look Like?” My name is Yesim Nazlar, and I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and follows the ICANN expected standards of behavior.

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With that, I will hand the floor over to Jonathan Zuck. Over to you, Jonathan. Thanks so much.

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Success Look Like?

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JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks, Yesim. Jonathan Zuck here, the Vice Chair of Policy for the ALAC and the At-Large. We're here today to discuss the applicant support program. For those who are new and don't know who that is, it was a program that we developed to try and assist applicants from underserved regions to participate in the 2012 round of applications for new gTLD strings. So my job in this session is to give a little bit of a background of timeline of what took place, and I'm a little bit afraid of doing so because everyone's memory is different and very personal.

I remember well being on an expedition with National Geographic and talking to a photo editor for the magazine, and I found it necessary to describe the process by which I got each photograph. It was on the Zodiac, before light, and then I made landfall on St. Andrews island at dark before the penguins and sea lions awoke, and then I hung upside-down from a tree for three hours. Of course, the photo editor stopped me and he said, "I can't see any of that in this photo."

So one of the biggest challenges for me as a photographer is to sufficiently objectify my work so that I can discuss it. I think that's a challenge that we have as well. We seem so focused on what the process was and who gets the credit and who is to blame and the melodrama of the work we do.

What I'm hoping in this session we can do is really get past that and be forward-looking and just think about what it is that we might be able to

Success Look Like?

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accomplish with a new Applicant Support Program and what those objectives might look like.

So, with that caveat in mind, I'll get started. We're going to start talking about applicant support and what does success look like. I'll start with a small timeline of what's gone on before, briefly. In 2012, this is basically what the situation was in terms of the registries that existed around the world. Then there was a Board resolution that was calling on the community to develop a sustainable approach to providing support to applicants requiring assistance in applying for and operating gTLDs. To accomplish this, the Joint Applicant Support Working Group was formed.

In the end, the only support that was made available was application support. There was talk of a foundation that would be created potentially, but it was basically a discount on the application fee. And there was some non-financial support in the form of a kind of matchmaking program between those who wanted assistance and those mentors willing to provide pro bono assistance.

The targets were linguistic and indigenous and underserved regions. They were three UN regions in particular that were targeted for application assistance: the so-called lesser developed countries, the landlocked underserved countries, and finally the underserved island nations, which were the areas which were focused on the previous Applicant Support Program.

Success Look Like?

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And a fairly complex process of evaluation was put into place to apply for these funds, and very important rule was established that, if you didn't make it through this process, you had to cease your application altogether, which many believed was a disincentive to participating in the program.

At the time, the ALAC commented on the program and suggested that there was insufficient operational support for new applicants and probably too broad a target to accomplish any concrete outcomes. The GAC made similar comments at the time.

So, if we look at the 2012 round, again, this is what the map looked like. If we look at what it looked like after the 2012 round, you can see there's a whole lot more registries around the world as a result of the 2012 round. So, given the objective to have more competition, more consumer choice. that goal was accomplished, but if we look back at the regions that we were attempting to target with the Applicant Support Program, you can see the dots don't fall inside of it. So, objectively speaking, it didn't lead to an increase in registries within those target regions that have been specified by the program.

I was part of the CCT-RT or the review team on competition, choice, and consumer trust that was also tasked with evaluating the Applicant Support Program, and we basically regarded the program as a failure. Part of the difficulty of the difficulty as regarding it as a failure was there weren't concrete objectives associated with it. Since the objective was just to make it easier for applicants, it's possible that we did and that that wasn't the cause of no new registries in those regions. But we did

Success Look Like?

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some analysis and believe that there was more targeted marketing required, more operational assistance—so assistance after the application itself, a managed mentoring program instead of one that was just online matchmaking that never amounted to anybody talking to anyone, and clear objectives. Clear goals are needed in order to both form the program and to evaluate it after the fact.

So this is what we're looking at again today. Briefly, this is the new Applicant Support Program. Christa is on the call to correct this, etc. I'm sure I'm not doing it just, but it was an attempt to just make an overview of what the program looks like going forward—the recommendations that came out of the Subsequent Procedures Working Group. It has expanded [at dollars] beyond the application cost, expanding it to all regions and looking at so-called middle-development applicants, so that it's a broader base and potentially broadening the net that might allow us to get more applications, and the removing that all-or-nothing requirement.

There's still no ongoing support after the applicant process. The additional support is legal fees and things like that related to the application but still not application support afterward. And the details are waiting on implementation.

At the same time, the work group did say that high-level goals and eligibility requirements for the Applicant Support Program remain appropriate. In other words, there's a recognition by the Subsequent Procedures Working Group that objectives and goals are necessary.

Success Look Like?

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They believed it should be in the hands of the implementation team to define them.

So what we're trying to do in this conversation is to begin to think about what that might look like, since that conversation has to still take place.

Some of the possible metrics that were proposed by the Subsequent Procedures Working Group is a number of outreach and follow-up communications, level of awareness of the new program, the level of interest expressed, the number that considered applying, the number of actual applicants, diversity of the applicant pool, the number of pro bono assistance providers, the number of approved registrants, the number of registrants and regional TLDs, the number of domains in regional new TLDs, approval rate, and the success of launched gTLDs.

So those were some of the metrics that were put out there as possible measures, but none of them had associated with them a specific objective. So what we're trying to do in this conversation is see if we can define some concrete—or begin to—objectives for an applicant support program so that, at the next round, we've expressed those goals as policy rather than just as a function of implementation because that's what's going to allow us to fund the program appropriately and to judge it when the next CCT review team is impaneled.

So we have some lovely and talented panelists who talk to you about the Applicant Support Program, including Christa Taylor, Dave Kissoondoyal, Andrew Mack, and Edmon Chung. Hadia Elminiawi will

Success Look Like?

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be managing the discussion. So without further ado, I would like to pass the microphone to Hadia.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Jonathan. So, as you said, the Applicant Support Program during the first round was considered a failure. However, again, what does the failure of the program mean? So is it because we don't have any successful applications? Is this the definition of a failure of the program?

So I think the first thing we need to think about is, what do we mean by the failure or success of the Applicant Support Program? Then, after we define what that means, we need, as Jonathan just said, to put the targets for ourselves, like metrics. Those are like metrics that tell us that we are on the right track, that we are doing the right thing, instead of being surprised by a failure.

So I guess those are the two things that we need to focus on. One, does what the success of the program look like? Is it only how many successful applications we have? Does this actually determine how successful the program is? Then, second, what are our targets and the metrics? And what are the benchmarks?

So let's start. We have our speakers happy to help with us today: Becky Burr (ICANN Board Director), Edmon Chung (CEO of DotAsia), Dave Kissoondoyal (ALAC-AFRALO member), Andrew Mack (Principal Founder of AMGlobal Consulting), and Christa Taylor (Founder and CEO).

Success Look Like?

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So, without wasting any more time, let's go to our speakers, and let's pose our first question to them. What should be our goals to this program? We start maybe with Becky, if you could take the floor.

BECKY BARR:

Thank you. Welcome to everybody, and thank you, Hadia and Jonathan, for inviting me to participate in this. The applicant support feature of the new gTLD subsequent procedures proposal is very important. I think, as the Subsequent Procedures Working Group said, the goal is to support the expansion of the domain name space, including, in particular, competition and innovation in areas where the financial burdens associated with that may be a roadblock. So we all have seen, in the 2020 round, thousands of new gTLDs coming online. We want to make sure that that space is available for use for expansion for innovation and for competition globally and not just in areas where, for example, we already have a lot of registries located. It also can support the expansion of IDN top-level domains. So it's really just making sure that the DNS is a tool for everyone.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you, Becky. The other question would be, what does the success of the program itself look like? Is the number of successful applications the only measure of how successful the program is?



Success Look Like?

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BECKY BARR:

No. I don't think that [...] It's unfortunate that we don't have a really good sense of why there were not more applications in the last round. Was it because the assistance was limited to the application fees itself? Was there a need for more of the pro bono non-financial assistance? Was there concern about the ongoing financial viability of a gTLD subject to the ICANN transaction fees? All of those questions are questions that we don't have answers to. So I think it's important, as Jonathan has indicated and as the SubPro PDP indicated, that there needs to be metrics, and we need to define success more broadly than simply the number of applications or the number of successful applications.

I like the list of potential metrics for success or measures of success that Jonathan and Ashley ran through. I think most of them make sense. The question really is, are we successful in getting funds and support beyond simply funds to those who have a good idea, want to bring it to the marketplace or to the community in a non-commercial way, and need a little help?

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you, Becky. As Jonathan showed us in his presentation, the New gTLD Program was able, actually, to open new opportunities, innovation, and internationalization. However, the question here is, were those opportunities inclusive? And were applicants who lacked the financial means or maybe some other kind of means but had innovative gTLD ideas deprived from the opportunity to be there? I

Success Look Like?

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guess this should be our way at looking at it, right? So we want this process to be an inclusive process.

So what are your thoughts in this regard?

BECKY BARR:

Well, I think that the problem is we don't have data from the 2012 round to answer many of the questions. I think we have to imagine, as I do, that there were people with good ideas out there in the 2012 round who didn't feel that they had the broad array of resources that you need to bring a new gTLD to the market. As you mentioned, it's not just financial. It's not just the cost of the application. It's the expertise in putting an application together, any kind of intellectual property protection that need to go along with bringing something like that to the marketplace, the technical skills, and the business skills. And I suspect that there were people out there who had good ideas but, for one reason or another, didn't feel that they had sufficient support for those ideas.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

In your opinion, was the awareness and the outreach conducted during the first round sufficient? And what did this outreach effort actually get us to or yield?

BECKY BARR:

I have to confess that I am not personally absolutely familiar with the amount of outreach. I certainly heard people, including in the chat as

Success Look Like?

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we're talking right now, suggest that outreach could be better and could be expanded. I think, of course, ICANN's awareness about ICANN itself has increased, as have the activities around the RALOs and the like, pretty significantly since 2012. So we may be in a different situation. But the bottom line is it's hard to imagine that we couldn't do a better job in terms of outreach.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Becky. One last thing. You saw the metrics that Jonathan put up there. I think, moving forward, we do need to have targets, right? We need to know that we are on the right track. We need to define the road to success, and that road should have milestones. And as we hit those milestones, we know we are on the right path and we are going forward in the right direction. So what would those milestones look like to you?

BECKY BARR:

Well, I think the first milestone is creating the group that is going to come together to develop a communications plan, and that communications plan would need to take into account the regions and the different types of venues where you would want to get the message out, the number of events, and the kinds of communities that would be targeted for information about this.

Then I would think that the communications plan itself should have targets with respect to working back from the opening of the application window. Where do you want to be? What communities do

Success Look Like?

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you want to be speaking to? How often? In what capacity? And in what ways? And then work back from there as part of the communications plan.

I do think it's worth noting that, of course, ICANN has a more developed communications infrastructure than it did in 2012. It has more sophisticated expertise and it has more experience. So I think there are resources that can help with it.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Becky. Goran is saying the next round can be seen as giving an opportunity for non-English speaking people to be there. How do we measure that? So how do you think we measure that?

BECKY BURR:

Well, I do think that Goran is absolutely correct that one of the most important target communities for this kind of application support is universal acceptance and the ability to have IDNs for cultural communities around the world. So I don't know what the precise metric is, but I would think that IDNs and cultural communities around the world would be a critical focus for the Applicant Support Program.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Becky. I would like now to go to Edmon. I'm not sure ... Is Edmon with us?

Success Look Like?

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EDMON CHUNG: I'm here, if you can hear me.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yes. Great. Thank you, Edmon. So you were one of the successful ...DotKids was one of the successful applications. So let me start by asking you, first, how did you find the application process itself? And were the good things about it and what were the challenges? And what do you think, going forward, can happen better?

EDMON CHUNG: Thank you, Hadia. And thank you for having me on this panel. I'm very interested to share my experience and I'm looking very much forward to having applicant support going forward as well.

So I guess one of the main challenges that Jonathan maybe didn't mention that I think was very interesting ... We at DotAsia have been supporting DotKids' application throughout the process. We're still supporting DotKids' application, and it's been waiting for ICANN, for the registry agreement, for quite a number of months now. But in any case, the interesting thing that I found when I was helping review the application was that there is a component where the applicant needs to be desperate enough or poor enough to be a worthy applicant for support. On the other hand, you have to be resourceful enough to operate a TLD.

I understand the motivation for that and I also understand that it's very important that there are resources to operate a TLD. However, that

Success Look Like?

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formulation or that formula really means that, at the end of the day, you will have to have a very deep understanding or relationship with the existing players in order to be able to be successful.

If you look back at the three applications that came in for applicant support, all three were actually supported by very longtime participants at ICANN at that time. I don't know how much of the information ... You probably should have the information. You can look at it. That is a symptomatic problem because it was designed so well in a way that we wanted to make sure that the security and stability and all those kinds of things were in place. We lost track of the most important part, which is to introduce new players and to help new players come into this space.

So I know that Jonathan said we shouldn't look too much back. I'll say one more part and then I'll look into the future a little bit. Jonathan mentioned that the Board created a resolution, and the Joint Application Support started working. That's actually not quite the initial history. For those of you who can go back further enough, originally the Joint Applicant Support Working Group was a joint effort by the GNSO and ALAC. The GNSO, after some time, backed out of it. I was actually on the council at that time. The GNSO said, "We don't want to talk about this applicant support anymore."

I remember Avri was the person who was leading the effort and saying, "Are we going to stop this?" I was sitting there in the council open meeting and saying, "Well, just because the GNSO doesn't want to

Success Look Like?

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continue, ALAC could pick up the ball and continue.” That was part of the experience as well.

So ALAC actually took the ball and continued to run with it, and, later on, the GAC got involved and the Board got involved. Then, finally, the Applicant Support Program actually was put in place.

So, now, looking forward, I think the ALAC actually has a role to play, even going forward, and one of the things that is quite important, I think, is that we now, with the SubPro policies in place ... The implementation part is where the details come in and that’s where it’s really important. While I applaud, actually, some of the good, clear directives for supporting other facets of funding new applicants, I think there needs to be some consideration on support for ongoing operations in order for us to be able to attract new players through this program, both in terms of serving other languages, as Goran is saying, but also in terms of attracting really newcomers that would be willing to put their effort into putting the application in and running a TLD.

The implementation details are what’s going to make a difference. In the last round, a lot of times there was a scoring mechanism, but some of the scores were mutually exclusive. So, if you get this score, you won’t get that question/scores. Those kinds of things need to be considered.

So one last thing that I will say is that there was what was called the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP). That was put together with this panel to evaluate whether an applicant could get the support or not. I

Success Look Like?

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think that features need to stay. That feature was quite important because, versus, for example, the Community Evaluation Panel, which evaluation whether an applicant was a representative of the community or not—the SARP versus the CEP—the SARP actually included ICANN community members versus the CEP, which did not include ICANN community members. The SARP (Support Applicant Review Panel) was better able to understand the spirit behind—and the nuances of—the ICANN policies, whereas the EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit), as professional as they were, lacked the sensitivity from the community. Then the panels were not allowed to interact with the applicant. That also created an issue.

So I think, in creating the implementation process, we really need to consider what panels to put together to evaluate these applications and introduce an element where the ICANN community can be part of it because, without that—just look at the community priority evaluation—that, I think, is another big failure, although we’re also supporting DotSpa, for example. That is hopefully going to launch. That is a community TLD. But if you look back at the process, you can see that, with the SARP (Support Applicant Review Panel)—that includes ICANN community members—the evaluation can be done with the nuances that the entire policy development process put in place, whereas the community priority evaluation was not able to do that.

So I’ll stop here and see if there is ... Hopefully that—





Success Look Like?

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HADIA ELMINIAWI: Edmon, yeah, I would like to give the floor to Jonathan. Jonathan, please go ahead.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thanks. I just want to speak up briefly. I think that's great information, but I also feel we've been beating up on the Applicant Support Program now for the last eight years. You presented to the Subsequent Procedures Working Group the same information.

So my concern is that we're already jumping in to how we should redesign the program, and we still don't have an objective for the program. I think that we need to figure out, if success looks like an actual successful application that results in a string being allocated, then that's one program. If the metric really is just more people being aware of the gTLD and more people applying because it's just going to take time, then that's a different design. So I guess I fear that, if we spend our time just already digging back into how we should be designing the program, we're missing the lens through which we should evaluate the program design and the funding that might be required to implement it.

So I really want to encourage folks to be trying to look forward and say, "Here's what I think we ought to be able to accomplish with an applicant support program," and see if we can start that conversation and then work backwards to what the design might look like.

I hope that's helpful.

Success Look Like?

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HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you, Jonathan. I totally agree. The first thing we need to be able to think about is based on what do we say this is a failure [with] and what do we say this is a success [with]. I think the targets are very important now.

So, going forward, we need to put those targets for ourselves in order to know that we are on the right track. So, for example—that’s to you, Edmon—if we say that awareness and outreach, for example, is a target, is one of the metrics, how do we measure that? When do we say that we did this right or we need to do more? And, also, if, for example, we set diversity as a target or metric, how do we measure this? How do we say, “Yes, we have done enough in that direction,” or, “We need to do more”? So one thing we need to do is to define those targets. The second thing we need to do is actually figure out how to measure those targets. So, Edmon, any thoughts on that?

EDMON CHUNG:

Those are very good questions but very difficult questions. Even if you ask a multinational on advertising, maybe sometimes it’s a difficult measure. Of course, the measure at the end of the day of whether we would ultimately call the program a success or failure is going to be based on what applications actually came in and tried to apply and what applications actually got them.

But I think, before we get into that revealing of results of things, there are two things to think through. One is the actual outreach itself. Last

Success Look Like?

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time, certainly for certain ... this time period was just too short. The whole application process was all already in process, and then only then was the Applicant Support Program actually put in place. By the time it was actually put in place, there was only a couple months to outreach.

So I think the time is important, but the focus of that ... Again, I do agree with Jonathan that we should look forward, but in some ways, you got to look back to look forward.

I also believe that IDNs—of course, IDNs are something that are dear to me ... I think different IDNs/top-level domains are going to need this type of support.

I also think that the thinking from SubPro that it's not so much about the region but actually about an applicant with good ideas but who won't be able to get in because of different reasons [is] the focus. So it's not necessarily only the global south or the underdeveloped region but actually people who have great ideas that can bring the TLD [forward] but just lack some resources. I think that's an important part.

I guess, finally, one part of the measure needs to be ... Just as I mentioned, at the end of the day, we don't know whether an advertising campaign works or not until we get the customers coming. But this time around, I think another thing that we need to measure is what the applicants that decided to apply for applicant support felt how the program was designed and whether it worked for them—not only just

Success Look Like?

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whether they got it or not but at least whether they were willing to try or not.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you for that, Edmon. I would just quickly say that maybe just the number of applications received or the number of successful applications is not actually enough to determine whether the program is actually successful or not. That's just a thought.

I will stop here and go now to Dave. I believe Dave has a presentation for us. Again, we are looking not only to define targets and metrics, but also, those targets are going to help us to know that we are moving in the right direction. We don't want, in the end, to say, "Oh, this failed." We don't want to be surprised. So we need to have indicators. That's the main purpose of this session: to define the success and look for indicators. So, Dave, please go ahead.

Dave?

DAVE KISSOONDOYAL:

Sorry. I was muted. Thank you, Hadia, for bringing me here as a panelist. The new gTLDs' first round in 2012 tried to address the impact of high applications fees. That was \$185,000 USD on applicants from underserved regions and communities. The goal was to assist applicants who need support to apply for and to operate the new gTLDs. This goal remains valid today and is of utmost importance.

Success Look Like?

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Of course, we can have other goals, like to increase the number of applications and to increase the number of [inaudible]. However, we need to find metrics [to measure them] as mentioned already by the ALAC in the letter to the report on the SubPro.

Can you move to the next slide, please? I will not go on this slide. It has already been mentioned by Jonathan.

Next slide, please.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

So, Dave, if you just excuse me, could we possibly have this as a chat more than slides, more than going through the slides?

DAVE KISSOONDOYAL:

Okay. So let me try to answer the questions asked earlier. We have [two sets] of metrics to measure the success of the program, but if we do not have applicants or if we do not have successful candidates, then the program is of no use. So it is important that, when we have any program ... Like in the last program, where he had secured funds for 14 applicants. Yet, we got only three applicants, out of which one got awarded and no support for any of them.

So it is important in our metrics. We mentioned that, if we get additional funding from ICANN [on] the metrics ... We mentioned that, in this program, we need to have support for 25 applicants, as an example.

Success Look Like?

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On the metrics also we mentioned that, out of the 25 applicants, our success rate has to be 60, 70, or 80%. So these metrics [have really to be spelled out].

And then we have seen that there has been no new policy guideline. We have the JAS Working Group’s report. We have been working on this support program from that report. But there has been no update, except for the SubPro report on the Applicants Support Program, but not any specific policy guidelines that is going to lead specifically to the Applicant Support Program.

Then I would like to point out also that—

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Dave, if I could stop you here and ask you something, one of the targets you put for the success of the program itself is the number of applications received. For example, you say, for this program to be successful, we need, for example, at minimum, 25 applications. As an example. So that’s a metric for the program itself, but how do we know—I’m not going to actually argue this—that what we are doing will lead us to this? So what are our milestones that we should tick to know that we are moving in the right path and going to our target, which is the 25 applications? We don’t want to , at the end of the program, say, “Oh, we only received that.” What should we be doing to reach that?

Success Look Like?

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DAVE KISSOONDOYAL: Communication is very important. We need to have a clear communications strategy. We need to do outreach, and then we need to reach underserved areas and communities. So it has to be well-targeted—the program—to be successful. We have to clearly define that, okay, we have the goal—we have to have a goal of reaching 25 applications—so how are we going to reach that goal? So we need to define the metrics: communication, outreach and even—I don't know—ICANN meetings. So we need a clear cut communication program.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: I would also argue here that, for example, the number of applications in itself isn't really a good enough target or goal because the Applicant Support Program goals are to, for example, increase global diversity and representation across regions. So what if those 25 applications do not include diversity? Then actually the program did not meet its goals.

Also, the program also aims to increase competition and choice in the domain name market. So, again, you could have those 25 applications but still not increase the competition or choice in the domain name market.

So, again, when defining the success of the program itself, we need to give it a lot of pause. That's one thing.

The other thing is that we need to move in the right direction and we need to be doing the right things. We need also to define those milestones.

Success Look Like?

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DAVE KISSOONDOYAL: Yeah, absolutely. For example, we have an objective to reach, out of the 25 applications, 50% of underserved areas. We need to have IDNs. We need to have language diversity. So all these we have to clearly define out of the 25 applicants. We do not want it to be in the first round, where we get applicants from Europe and the USA only.

So I think, to be able to make it successful, we have to define the metrics, and then we have to define clearly, as Jonathan mentioned in his introduction, all the metrics, all the goals, and then how we are going to reach them.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Dave. Let me go now to Andrew. So, Andrew, the same question goes to you. So what does, actually, the success of the program look like? And then what are the metrics that we need to have in place in order to know that we are moving in the right direction? And how do we measure them?

ANDREW MACK: There we go. Can you hear me now?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yeah.



Success Look Like?

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ANDREW MACK:

Thank you, Hadia. I've really taken a look at this from almost every perspective. I was on the initial JAS group through the whole brutal two-and-a-half years or whatever it was when we worked on this. It was a great group effort, but it was a really, really hard piece of work in part because we didn't, I think, make some of these clarifying decisions early on. We started off with the desire to do more and the desire to do better, which is a great starting point, but maybe got caught in the weeds a little bit too much. So I think what Jonathan is trying to do right now is extremely important. We really, really need to begin with the end in mind, then the way that we get there will become much more obvious.

Becky, some of the things that you mentioned, just to frame this, I think are actually known facts. We went ahead and did a project as part of work for the CCT-RT that I definitely recommend that people who want to know about this take a look at. We studied this. We interviewed people from all around the world who didn't apply, as well as some people who did apply from the global south. A lot of the things that people are talking about—I promise to talk more slowly—around communications, around visibility of the program, are absolutely true. What we found were that there were some other bigger issues around communication with whom and communications in which language.

But part of the challenge was that we just started off almost too broadly when we were communicating about the program. We started off talking generally having to introduce ICANN as a community, having to introduce the New gTLD as an entity, and having to introduce what the process was behind taking advantage of it. I agree that there weren't

Success Look Like?

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anywhere near the resources that were necessary in order to support applicants both in the process and then through the process.

To Edmon's point, it's not just about getting to the starting gate. In my mind, it doesn't matter how many applications there are. It's certainly better if there are more, and, certainly, we should, as a community, desire to have a much better and broader representation, but it doesn't matter ... If the things that we're putting forward are not viable, then, in my mind, that's a miss for the community because what we've done is we've taken a number of people who maybe know us less and who are putting forward their good efforts, their expectations—we're, if anything, raising their expectations—if we're not there to support them on the way in and on the way through, then I think we're really doing only half of the work that we need to do.

So, I guess, to the first point, volume matters but volume on the backend—successful applications that actually do something, that create a community, that are viable for the medium- to the long-term. I don't think that just getting a larger number of people who fill out the forms ... So what? I don't think it's meaningful for the community, and ultimately that isn't meaningful to the audiences we are hoping to serve with application support.

So that would be my end goal: to create more viable community-facing and viable global-south-facing opportunities.

We talked a lot in the initial JAS group about who should be eligible for support. What [Calvin] said earlier I think is really true. There is a sense

Success Look Like?

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of that, on one hand, we're saying, "We want you to be poor but not so poor that you can't operate." Well, that's a hell of a thing to be asking of someone. I think it also skews in the direction of groups that may or may not have the financial wherewithal and the sophistication to run an online community.

So it comes to one of the biggest questions that we heard in the research that we did when we were looking at this as part of our work for CCT-RT, which is that there were no real business templates. They were no models, whether it's for a linguistic community, for a business community from the global south, whether it's for something that was looking at trying to solve problems for an NGO or a cultural community. We now think about what makes a successful gTLD, a sustainable gTLD. What we saw when we were talking to people is that starting with a white sheet of paper or an empty e-mail, if you'll use the online equivalent, wasn't good enough. It wasn't good enough because the small number of people who actually knew enough to do the application, to interface with this community, didn't even have the tools to sell it up the line to a decision maker in their own organization or to the public.

So we're at this situation where I believe that I would measure success in terms of the gTLDs that actually get built and are used. I would look at it and say, "The best applicant support that we can offer them is to start off with what we've already learned and help bring people closer to the point where they can make a go/no-go decision that we can support them in by helping to create some models for them based on what's

Success Look Like?

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already been successful.” It doesn’t mean we’re involved in running the TLD. It doesn’t we’re involved in running the business or the community for them, but at the very minimum, get them a framework that they can worked with. They don’t have to start from scratch.

So that’s number one.

Number two, that also channels our ability to communicate much more effectively. I think part of what we struggled with was trying to communicate to whom. We’re communicating to everybody and nobody at the same time and just having a big ... [They] mentioned the number of times that we tweeted that we were here and that we were there. This is not it.

So, look, I think that we can do much more, in part based on what we already learned. I want to start there. Without question, we need much, much more in-language stuff and in-language communication sa one of the things that came out very distinctly from our conversations in Latin America, where there are a number of English speakers but we really weren’t able to tap the communities in part because some of the decision makers aren’t English speakers and too much of the work took place in English.

So those are a number of different things. I highly recommend everyone take a look at what we had. Certainly, there were issues around decision-making in terms of time—not having enough time—and there were some questions about whether the markets would ready and questions about are we going to confuse the people that we’re trying to

Success Look Like?

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reach with a new string? But we've learned so much. Let's start farther forward. That would be my strongest recommendation. And let's support people throughout the process and start off with the end goal in mind that we're going to get more people over the finish line with a viable product. That would be my greatest hope because that's ultimately what's going to provide value to the people and choices to the people that we're trying to serve.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Andrew. What you say is very important: communication with whom? And who are the actual potential gTLD applicants? To me, also, this is the big thing that we need to figure out here.

So I lead a center called the Domain Name System Entrepreneurship Center, and one of the objectives of this center when it was first established was to actually raise awareness and outreach to potential TLDs and then start educating them and helping them throughout their process.

The main problem here was always, who do we reach out to? Who are the potential gTLDs? So that's one question.

Then the other question to you is in relation to the last round. Did we actually have good ideas for gTLDs that did not go through? Or we just didn't? That maybe could lead us to think, "Okay, so maybe that's one more thing we need to work on." So please go ahead.

Success Look Like?

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ANDREW MACK:

First of all, almost nobody applied using applicant support, right? It was too complex. Timing was wrong. The kind of support was not adequate, for sure. But, in looking at just the lack of response from the global south more generally, there's clearly an awful lot that didn't happen that needed to happen.

Now, the challenge is that, in communications, you can't boil the ocean. You can't communicate with everyone on everything. So we can educate the users on ICANN and TLDs and how you could use a TLD and all these kinds of things? I don't think it's possible. I think that was part of the challenge: we tried to do too much and we tried to go too broadly in our communication.

You can narrow that in two ways, I think. One is by having targeted outreach in language, in region, and reaching people strategically that way. But I really feel that having business models/templates explaining to people, "Okay, so if you have this idea, here's a way to implement it," changes the conversation completely because then that allows them to say, "Well, do I have that kind of idea? And if I do, okay, there's a way that potentially we might be able to put that into the field." That goes from being conceptual to being potentially worth talking to us about, worth talking to ICANN support again, much more quickly and much more efficiently.

I do firmly, firmly believe that we should have targets, and I firmly, firmly believe we should have metrics. Anything we are not measuring we are not carrying about. But we can't leave it to the universe as our audience. It just won't happen.

Success Look Like?

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So, if we have good learnings that we can push forward, that's one of the things we should be leading with. If one of the groups that we are trying to reach is a language community, great. There are a bunch of language communities that are already out there. We know from them. Those are the people who can frankly be very helpful in terms of designing and pushing forward a template that says, "Are you like this? If you are like this, hey, you don't have to start from the idea stage." That gives someone the ability to say, "I'm a language community. I want to do what they've done." Okay, that's a better conversation to have. That's one where our resources, if we're going to put resources behind it, can be much more likely to be successful. That make sense?

Anyway—

JONATHAN ZUCK:

It does, Andrew. Thanks. I think we should probably try to move on to Christa, who I think, in the Subsequent Procedures Working Group, was the principal shepherd of this topic. So, Christa, if you've got a sense of what you think are reasonable goals for the program going forward, we'd love to hear from you.

CHRISTA TAYLOR:

I'm just going to take one little quick step back, and I'm not going to deflect [this]. But through the Subsequent Procedures and discussions that happened there, I'd like to mention just a couple quick things. One of the major discussions or a bunch of the major discussions we've had were: what were the some of the ways we could improve it? One of the

Success Look Like?

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discussions that came out of that is—one of the major deterrents—was that there wasn't an option to move to the standard process. So we've changed that now, which is a big item.

The second one was that there was, which we've already heard, insufficient lead time. We want to give a longer lead time and provide more local resources who understand the local issues and can relate to potential applicants on the ground.

Some of the points that came up were that it's not okay just to fly in people who are from a different area who might not understand the local issues there to apply. And then I think Goran asked the question of, how do we make it easier? One of the items that also arose during Subsequent Procedures was, "Let's make it a one-stop place to make it easier for applicants." They were getting lost on potentially the website and figuring out where to go and how to do it.

So I'm just taking that step back there because I know that came up a few times.

Jumping into the goals, I agree with what's already been said. Sure, it's the number of applications. It's the types of applicants. Then I'd like to add in that, in the public interest benefit, we actually state distinct cultural, linguistic, ethnic communities, as well as communities with a defined social need. So we're kind of balancing all these different things. So I would add in there that perhaps it's also the quality of registrations versus the mission of that registry.



Success Look Like?

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So, jumping a little to the left there, the program needs to help people [catch fish]. So we need to have the resources that support the applicants in a timely, meaningful manner. That's through the different stages as well—so evaluating whether to participate, writing and submitting the application, the potential options, the assistance there at the launch, and perhaps operational support. So having all that information there is great.

What you see in some of the metrics are that we kind of expanded at the time. We don't want to just measure the number of applications, but also how do we measure some of the lead-in milestones? That was brought up. So, hence, perhaps the outreach and a bunch of then other metrics help capture that to give us better insight for future rounds.

Then I'm going to jump to that we also need to teach ourselves how to fish better. So one of the aspects that came up in the Subsequent Procedures discussion was: "We have this great community within ICANN. Let's give the materials and let's have the training sessions for our own outreach and let's plug into that network, the international organizations, and provide the resources to help improve the outreach efforts.

Then, just on another kind of tangent, we can do all this outreach in the world, which would be great, except we still need to have a really clear value proposition on registry ownership. It needs to be clear and it needs to be enticing. What's the ROI versus the risk? If you're in an underdeveloped region, that's still a lot of money. So I think working on those templates and working on what that value prop is is going to be

Success Look Like?

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key, if we're going to spend the money and the resources, if they understand there's some kind of pot of gold at the end—whatever that pot of gold might be. I'm not saying it has to be financial.

Then there's a whole educational component on raising funds. If they exceed the maximum bidding credits, well, then what happens? Do we have some kind of resources that will help them with that? Anything there that kind of supports their business ideas?

Then, also, jumping again, there's the innovative business models. Innovation is great, except they require a lot more resources. Going back to Edmon's point of you have to be poor enough and also be more resourceful. So this is even more critical when it comes to innovation because it's really difficult to just into a developed ecosystem and try to convince people to help you with your new innovation. So I guess from my perspective that's a really critical point because it takes so much time and effort.

Then I just have one other little method to show. I have a slide that I just did up. If we can display that, that would be great. Awesome. So this is more for, I think, conversation and to help, hopefully, people to think about it. It's along the lines of, how do we define success? We're touching upon it: what are our goals? What's our mission? What is that we're hoping to get out of this? It is just the number of applications?

But we're missing that other perspective of that there needs to be some kind of financial lens that's applied to this. So, if we look at perhaps the different areas, hopefully we can maybe target some of our focus. So

Success Look Like?

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we might have those that have a very specific purpose—i.e., there's more qualitative benefits associated with their TLD and their mission. Then we have some of the other ones that might ... We had the ones obviously in the middle that have more of a balance. Then we have the other ones to the right, where perhaps they might have a higher volume, for instance, and still could be risky but also could help with the innovation aspect.

So it's a balance of all of those, but hopefully, by looking at the different areas, we can focus into where those applicants might be and then how to communicate to perhaps list different groups, depending on what those groups might be, and then go in from there.

So that was more of a thought-provoking type. What is our measuring stick? Is it ROI? Is it their mission? Then how do we rebalance it? Because we can do all this but they still have to be financially sustainable. What is that metric? Do we want that to last for three years? Is it ROI? Is it registration revenue? Is it break even? What is the goal?

I don't think we've really discussed the financial part of it. Yes, we want to do all these great things, but it also needs to make financial sense to at least a certain degree.

So I hope that at least helps out a little bit and then also gives some food for thought on discussions.

Success Look Like?

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HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Christa. Definitely, the financial aspect is a very important one. When you are talking about these criteria, you need to be poor enough but not too poor that you're not able to provide to your registry in a stable, secure, and reliable manner. So the answer to this is actually the financial aspect because, if you're poor enough but your application is successful and you can actually pitch your idea to an investor who would like to be with you on that, then you jump this hurdle that you do not have the means to operate a successful registry because you could actually bring in partners with you to do that.

I also wanted to ask you ... Last round, there were also pro bonos offered. So applicants could potentially get help or assistance in application writing and assistance throughout the application process itself. So I was wondering ... I think this was not used at all, but, again, I would to hear more from you in this regard.

CHRISTA TAYLOR:

Well, I was actually one of the people who put my name on the list. I can say I did get a couple people who did outreach. So if they didn't move forward after that ... And I was more than willing to help them on the financial perspective on things. I'm not sure why they did or did not proceed. It wasn't through a lack of wanting to help.

So I think, going back, it needs to be a continuum. You can't just have one person who jumps in here and one person who jumps in there. You need a real continuous process to help them go from Stage 1 to 2 to 3 to 4 to make sure that there's no gaping holes that impact their decision

Success Look Like?

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and to make sure you've got a really great team. I think, through the Subsequent Procedures, that's what we're hoping for. How that comes together is part of the implementation.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you, Christa. I give the floor to Jonathan and then we have some poll questions. Jonathan?

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks, Hadia, and thanks for managing this conversation. I'd like, if I could, to ask a question of all the panelists as almost a binary question. If we're given then choice of having a widespread outreach program trying to reach as many people as possible and that are metrics are associated with that—in other words, we get out early, we reach a lot of people, more people are aware of ICANN, of the community, of the New gTLD Program—but it doesn't result in a successful application, that's Alternative A. Or we target all our efforts at a smaller number of regions or even business sectors or something like that that's designed specifically to have a successful application and a delegated string. So the world as a whole isn't that much better informed, but we have, say, two successful applicants that have delegated strings. Which of those outcomes would you prefer from the Applicant Support Program?

I would just love to just go around the room to get that. So I guess I'll just in order. So, Becky? I don't know you don't speak for the Board. I'll caveat that for you. But just personally, which of those outcomes would you prefer from the new Applicant Support Program?

Success Look Like?

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BECKY BURR:

I think nothing speaks more loudly than an example, so I would go with the second approach. A couple of successful applications that brings some innovation and demonstrates what the TLDs can do for the community would be where I come out. But it's a really hard question.

And just to say it's a really hard question because it presumes we know about where the successful applications will come from. That's the issue.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Definitely. And it wasn't meant to be an easy question. I wasn't trying to bias anybody by asking it because I think both are reasonably objectives. One might be a longer-term objective and one is a nearer-term objective in a way.

Edmon, what would your answer be to that?

EDMON CHUNG:

I guess I would incline a little bit more to the latter, the second option, with the target audience. That being said, we need to do a little bit of the first one. I'm a little bit greedy, but a bigger part of the effort should be on the target audience. I mentioned it in chat. I think it should be useful. In order to actually do the TLD program, even if we say we outreach for nine months or a year, it's still difficult for someone fresh to think through everything. So targeting people who are in the peripheral may be friends of ALSes, may be the [use] programs, may be

Success Look Like?

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the NextGen Program and Fellows. Those might be fruitful for us because, as we know, the process itself is quite complex.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thanks, Edmon. Dave, what would your answer to that question be?

DAVE KISSOONDOYAL: I would like to go with Option 2 because you can have the best program in the world, but if it is not benefitting the community, what's the use of it? In Option 1, you can have outreach, but it's a long-term goal, whereas, for the second option, it's a goal that you see the results of instantly. So my preference would be with Option 2. Thank you.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thanks, Dave. Andy, we talked a little bit about your study, where you actually made an effort to identify what we call cohorts of the people that were successful applicants from the developed world—the well-served world, if you will. That could potentially be a mechanism by which we tried to do some sectoral targeting, etc. What do you think your answer would be to that question? Which outcome would you prefer to see as a measure of success of the Applicant Support Program?

ANDREW MACK: For sure, the answer is 2. We should judge ourselves by what actually comes through and serves users. I think that there a level which we

Success Look Like?

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should push a little bit more communication with. A little bit of what might be considered part of your Option 1 I would go for. I would do more communication generally but more very specifically targeted communication. I think trying to explain to everyone the entire ICANN ecosystem—it's just too broad and it's not meaningful to a lot of people. So if we're looking for the front part of #2, it would be some targeted communication looking at what we've already got and saying, "Okay, here are some people that have already applied. Here are some models that can be used," and then using that as a launching point into #2.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks, Andy. Christa?

CHRISTA TAYLOR:

I'm going to be difficult and say C, where we don't want to be too general. We don't want to be too specific, and we definitely want more than two applications. But the point is there. I think, by targeting different sectors—not just one sector but a variety of sectors—would be really helpful. And figure out who's going to be the most likely to participate. So let's do it really smartly and see what we can do.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks for indulging me, guys. Hadia, back to you for your poll.



Success Look Like?

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HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Jonathan. Yes, indeed, there's wide agreement on Option 2 or 2 and 3.

So we have questions now. So that's the first. The Applicant Support Program seeks to increase global diversity and representation across regions and ensure efforts are made to minimize any competitive disadvantages for those in developing countries, increase competition choice in the domain name market, or all of the above. That's for all the participants to answer. So you can choose 1, 2, 3, 4 or all of them.

YESIM NAZLAR: Hadia, please let me know when you would like me to end the poll and display the results.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Okay. Can you display the results? Can we go to the second question, please?

YESIM NAZLAR: Sure. Let me end the poll.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yeah.

YESIM NAZLAR: Would you like me to share the results?

Success Look Like?

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HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Yes, please. Please do.

So all of the above: 73%. That's really good.

So let's have our next question. The Applicant Support Program assists potential new gTLD applicants seeking financial support, non-financial support, or both.

Can we display the results, please?

Okay. 92%--

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET:

Can you give time for people to answer, please?

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Okay. So can we have the next question, please? Applicants to the program must demonstrate public interest benefit, financial need, necessary management, and financial capabilities, or all of the above.

Okay. So I see Sebastien saying, "None of the above." And Calvin is also saying, "None of the above."

Sebastien, would you ... Let's go to the next question and then, if we have time, I will give the floor to ... So all the above: 69%.

Could we have the next question, please? Applicant Support Program success indicators could include number of applications received,

Success Look Like?

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number of applications qualifying for support, diversity of applicants, diversity of public interest, or all of the above. You can choose or more or all of them.

SEBASTIEN BACHOLLET: No, you can't.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Okay. So I thought you could. So I was under the impression that, for all of the questions, you could choose any of them, some of them, or all of them. Could we see the answers?

So 62% are saying, "All of the above."

So we have only minute left. So, Jonathan, I will give you back the floor. Thank you all for this very interesting and productive discussion.

JONATHAN ZUCK: Thanks. I'll join Hadia in thanking all of our panelists for taking time to be a part of this At-Large session. We're very excited to get this conversation going. Applicant support is one of the key issues for the At-Large community with respect to a future round. So we wanted to have our own session to begin to think about what the At-Large community thinks would be rational goals for such a program so we can provide input for the implementation team that will be taking up the design of this applicant support program.

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Success Look Like?

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So I want to thank all the speakers for coming and all the participants for paying attention and being a part of the poll. This is just the beginning. This is a long conversation, but thanks for helping us get it started.

**[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]**