

New gTLD Report



Q1 2026

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Letter From the Editor

Welcome to the new and improved New gTLD Report for Q1 2026!

Why new and improved, you may ask? This edition marks our first report released since Com Laude formally completed the acquisition of Markmonitor in January this year. Markmonitor, Com Laude, and FairWinds form the newly created Markmonitor Group.

This report kicks off with an interview featuring Stuart Fuller, Senior Vice President, Commercial, at Markmonitor Group. He shares his unique insights into the domain space and some interesting experiences from the 2012 Application Round of ICANN's New gTLD Program; it's a timely conversation considering the Next Round opens for applications on April 30th. Read the article to learn his thoughts on the 2026 Round and how Markmonitor Group's people and extensive experience guide and support applicants seeking their own dotBrand or open TLDs.

The second article examines the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), focusing on its issuance of Early Warnings and Advice on select applications during the 2012 New gTLD Program Application Round. While the GAC and its processes may differ somewhat in 2026 from 2012, analyzing its past actions may yield valuable insights to inform successful applications come April.

The third article dispenses some Next Round-related policy updates from the recently completed ICANN85 Community Forum meeting in Mumbai, India. Find out more about ICANN's TLD Application Management System (TAMS), preparations from different groups in the ICANN Community to provide feedback in the Next Round, and adoption of the final Base Registry Agreement for the 2026 Round.

We end the report with information about the remaining 2026 public ICANN meetings. I warmly welcome you to enjoy this quarter's report. Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Chris Niemi
Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Markmonitor

Domain Industry Spotlight: Stuart Fuller, Corporate Domain Name Governance Expert, on the dotBrand Opportunity

Learn about dotBrand domains, the opportunities they present, and how to determine if applying for your own is a feasible business decision through the eyes of two industry veterans serving the world's biggest brands. In this interview, Chris Niemi, New TLD Project Manager, sits down to interview Stuart Fuller, Senior Vice President, Commercial, both of Markmonitor Group.

View our domain industry spotlights from previous editions of the New gTLD report to learn about other key players, such as in this focus on the Registry Service Provider (RSP), also known as the BackEnd Registry Operator (BERO), in this feature on the Brand Registry Group¹ (BRG), or this interview with a well-known Data Escrow Agent².



Stuart Fuller

Senior Vice President, Commercial
Markmonitor Group



Chris Niemi

Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Markmonitor

2026 marks a big year in the domain industry as ICANN’s New gTLD Program: Next Round application window is set to open on April 30th.

In anticipation of that application window opening, I am excited to speak with another of the industry’s longest-tenured and most experienced individuals, Stuart Fuller, who is also my new colleague³. Stuart leverages his decades of industry experience to drive strategic domain name portfolio and governance discussions within our enterprise clients’ organizations, helping them realize cost and time savings while prioritizing their brand and its online protection.

Chris Niemi [CN]: Hi Stuart, thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Not that long ago, we might have sat down across the table from one another as industry competitors. But that’s no longer the case, and today, I’m glad we get to work together under the Markmonitor Group to deliver the best in corporate domain name solutions and services for our global clients.

What are you responsible for at Markmonitor Group, and where does ICANN’s Next Round fit into the scope of your role?

Stuart Fuller [SF]: I am Senior Vice President, Commercial for Markmonitor Group. I lead a team of senior industry veterans and advisors, all of whom have been in the industry and helping clients since the first round of ICANN’s New gTLD Program was conducted in 2012, and for many, since the early 2000s.

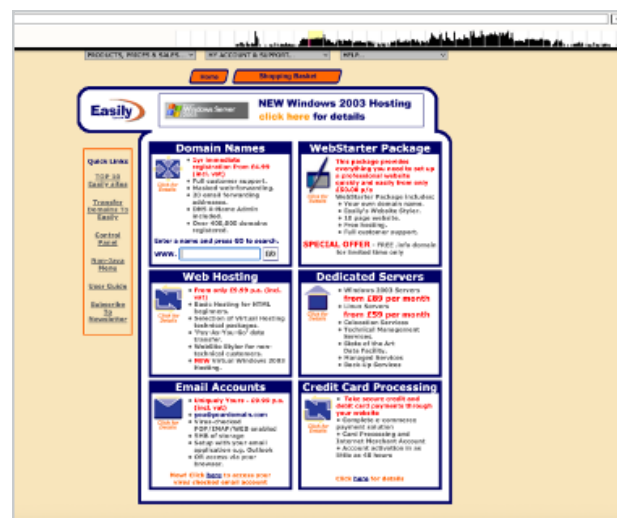
The core focus of my team’s responsibilities has been on dotBrand. We help established clients and brands seeking ad hoc consultations determine the feasibility of a potential dotBrand application, examining everything from “Are your use cases and business reasoning sound?” to “Are you technically and financially prepared?” and everything in between. There’s a great deal of opportunity in dotBrand domains: revenue growth, new business, potential upsells, sales enablement, on-demand marketing campaigns, and all across a range of products, verticals, and industries.

We built our dotBrand offering and ensured we were entering the 2026 round in the best possible shape: by addressing client needs and questions with informative messaging and a suite of products and services in place. I felt it was really important to be very vocal as early as possible in the market to drive interest in this incredible opportunity among prospects and existing customers, which is what we’ve done.

As part of Markmonitor Group, we have the right resources and the right people to support companies and organisations through every stage of their dotBrand journey. And for many of us, the next round could be the last time we see such an opportunity in our working life – a real once-in-a-generation moment. Certainly, now that we’re part of a wider organization (Com Laude, Markmonitor, and FairWinds make up the Markmonitor Group), we’re seeing the rewards of that work through what we’re doing today with our clients. It is a very exciting time.

CN: How long have you been involved in the dotBrand space and the domain industry as a whole?

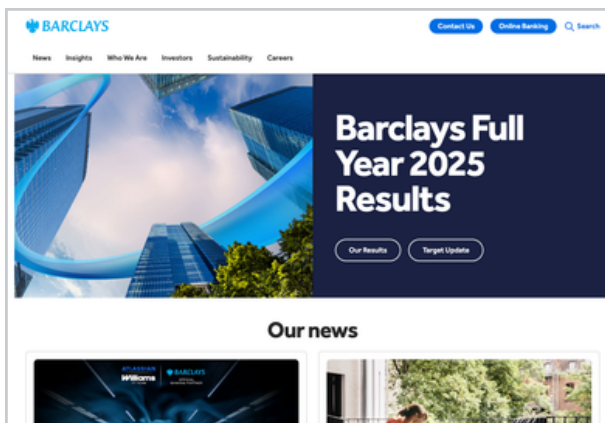
SF: I started off in a telesales role, selling primitive data networking (by today’s standards) which gave me a great understanding of internetworking and the digital world. Aside from one year where I was working on commercial partnerships in the football world, my whole career has been in technology.



easily.co.uk in January 2005

I got my first role within the domain industry in 2005, managing the retail registrar Easily, who were part of GroupNBT. GroupNBT then became NetNames, where I cut my teeth in the reseller, hosting, brand protection, corporate domain management, and, finally, the TLD world.

During the first application round at NetNames, we had a team of four that handled the applications for some major global brands, and almost every single one of them actively uses their TLD today; that's something we're really proud of, that we went into those conversations with a "this is a net proactive use" mindset. In fact, one of our first round applicant clients, Barclays, was the first brand to move away from a .com domain.



home.barclays

Monash University was the first dotBrand to go live, and Philips was one of the few brands to apply for and operate a Chinese internationalized domain name, or IDN, version of their brand name. We had a really great team; everyone in that team is still involved in the dotBrand space to this day, albeit at different companies.

CN: Wow.

SF: Now, I've got former colleagues at our competitors, CSC, GoDaddy Registry, and Team Internet, and everyone is still involved, and I'd like to think that's because we really believe in the program and see the benefit of the dotBrand space. It's fair to say that since 2012, we've all been champions of having a second round. And here we are, 66 days (at the time of the interview), I believe it is, until the round opens

and we are fully immersed in preparations. So yeah, 2012 was great, and we certainly hope the next round is even better.

CN: Do you have any more memorable 2012 Round stories that you can share?

SF: I have a couple to share.

One of the really interesting ones – and I'm not going to mention the company name, all I will say is they were a dotBrand or Brand TLD, and they had a really good generic word as their string – they came to us really late, really, really late, probably a couple of weeks before the window closed.

They had ruled out applying for a dotBrand months before, and then someone at the C-level heard about it and said, "No, we have to apply."

It doesn't matter about the cost; we have to apply!" Then we did the application for them. Obviously, it was a tricky one to work out because it was such a well-known word, yet also a very famous brand. As you will remember, there was no such thing as a Specification 13-governed dotBrand application back in 2012, so we feared there would be more than one application for their desired string, but there wasn't, and everyone was delighted that we pulled it off successfully.

Then, about 18 months later, we were asked by our new contact at that company (seeing as the person we had worked with on the original application had moved on) to present on the dotBrand TLD to their organisation's Senior Leadership Team.

So, myself and a colleague, we went into this meeting, and about 20 minutes through the presentation about potential use cases, one of the senior people in the room stops us. He says, "Okay, it's a great story, and I'm sure a lot of companies are going to really eat this up, but it's not for us." And we sort of looked confused and said, "Um... but you own this." And he looked around the room, and he said, "What do you mean we own it?" We said, "Well, you've bought this. You've signed a contract, and you've paid

your money already.” The meeting ended quickly, and we have no idea what happened afterward. It was quite an interesting moment and summed up a lot of sentiments in many boardrooms a decade ago.

Another brand we worked with enacted a brilliant plan to launch two programs in alignment with each other: their dotBrand and a major digital transformation project. Part of that work, driven by a motivated internal champion, was to create an active use strategy for their dotBrand.

We planned everything meticulously and conducted workshops with their staff from all over the organisation to discuss naming conventions and URL structures for their new dotBrand TLD.

They wanted everyone's opinion on one thing:

“Describe how you would write that URL” — and it was discussing things like, “What should the URL be for product x in America? Is it going to be usa.brand/product?” They did all this work; it was really brilliant. And the one thing that nobody thought of happened the day after they switched from their.com to their new TLD.

That day came... and their search engine rankings disappeared.

At the time, there wasn't a process that effectively told Google and the other search engines that the home page had moved. *[Editor's note: This complete disappearance from the SERPs is no longer a concern, provided the now-defined processes are followed correctly.]* You couldn't really do anything with regard to redirects like you can now; this was just a proper move. So, over the course of a couple of weeks, we all worked really closely, especially with Google.

What was great was that Google, which had obviously applied for a significant number of its own new TLDs, hadn't gone through this process itself yet either. They had the right people in the room who were able to effectively create a policy, which was then put in place, so that we

were able to migrate other clients relatively quickly. We developed a process to follow, and that process is still in place today.

CN: So, to come back to the present, if an organization is considering applying for a dotBrand in ICANN's New gTLD Program: Next Round Application Window (April 30–August 12, 2026), what should it be doing now?

SF: Ohhhh... panicking?

But seriously, no, we try to stress that organisations need to have thought about this already. They need to have planned. Making an application is obviously a huge commitment. It's time, it's resources, it's money. We have no idea when the opportunity might arise again. And they need to be sure that there are no risks, there are no speed bumps, nothing lurking under the bed, so to speak.

One of the things we developed about a year ago was a feasibility and landscape study.



Initially, the feasibility study looked at six different potential risks to a dotBrand or any TLD application, actually. And over time, it's evolved, and now we'll look at nine risk categories because there are various other elements that we think are really important to consider. And what we'll do is go back to that organization, give them a report, and say, “Okay, if you submit an application based on the information shown here today, you've got a very good chance of your TLD being successfully evaluated.” Or, “We have found these risks,” with the idea that the earlier they receive the report, the easier it will be to mitigate some of those risks.

And we've worked with a couple of clients where we've unearthed quite big risks that have enabled them to get ahead of the game and try to mitigate those, before they make a very big application fee payment. So, definitely, that feasibility study is useful.

It's also quite important for organizations that aren't sure and aren't getting executive buy-in. What the feasibility study will do is give them something tangible they could take to whoever asks, in six months' time or nine months' time, when the window's closed, as to why we didn't apply for their own TLD, as their competitors may have. It's a paper that says, "We evaluated this strategic opportunity, identified these risks, and as a result, decided not to pursue an application," to justify the business and brand decision to anyone who asks about it. That's definitely what any curious, committed, or cautious brand should be doing right now.

Brands should also be thinking about budget because there is a significant upfront fee of \$227,000 for ICANN, which has to be paid by the 19th of August, 2026, so companies have to think about how they're going to actually pay that money, in terms of process flow, purchase orders, invoices, things like that. And effectively work backwards from there, and then try to understand what processes need to be in place.

Lots to plan for and be considerate of when deciding on whether or not to apply.

CN: What are the benefits of owning a dotBrand that a potential applicant should consider when making the "apply or don't apply" decision?

SF: There are so many potential considerations for a dotBrand.

In 2012, it was really a defensive play for many applicants. The Internet was still a scary place for organizations – though it's become less scary over time (I think).

Back in 2011–2012, there was a lot of concern about brand protection and about someone else registering a TLD that infringed on the brand.

Many of those applications' use cases were defensive, which is one of the reasons there are still many TLDs applied for back in 2012 that aren't being actively used.

On the topic of active use: in some cases, there's an assumption that brands have no active use of their dotBrand TLD, but only because it isn't externally visible to public audiences. Actually, one of the biggest use cases that could determine whether a company applies is how it could use the dotBrand for internal addressing and naming infrastructure, as our good friends at Microsoft do. That's one of the ways they use their TLD. And there are other organizations that have been using their dotBrands for internal infrastructure, email addressing, and things like that.

And if you want a really good example of this, we actually saw it just yesterday when we were coming over to the US and accessing the in-flight Wi-Fi. To do so, you had to use what looked like a valid URL, but it was actually using a TLD that didn't exist, aside from within their own internal infrastructure.

CN: What? Tell me more.

SF: Yep! Again, the TLD does work for their internal networking. So, you can create whatever you want internally, but where you want to have that internal-external crossover, that's where you need a dotBrand.

And a really good use case is internal infrastructure, internal networking, and obviously, you then have the security posture of using a dotBrand. A brand can then say, "If it's not our brand name to the right of the dot, then you know it isn't really us." It's a security signal. You can use it for email. It certainly can help you start reducing the number of defensive domains you may have in a portfolio.

You then start thinking about marketing and URL structures, about starting fresh and creating a brand-new naming infrastructure going forward – getting rid of those really long URLs. And then, the simple security considerations around

setting your own rules for each domain: encryption and preload lists, DMARC, all those things that you can start doing because you own the infrastructure, and you're not relying on a third party, and that's where the dotBrand opportunity is really, really big.

CN: Are there any challenges in the application process that can be foreseen before applying? What can an applicant do to plan ahead and find solutions to those challenges?

SF: In every application, there may be a risk, and there are some challenges. Now, for a dotBrand holder, you need a trademark, and, interestingly enough, we've worked with a number of potential applicants who didn't have one... because they didn't realize they needed one. That adds a little bit of jeopardy to the situation where they need to go and try to register a trademark in time for the application. Fortunately, the rules are that you need a single trademark; it doesn't matter where it is, it just needs to be there, so you know that's not too much of an issue for most organizations.

I hope — fingers crossed, touch wood — we're not going to see the challenges that we saw in 2012 with a window opening, then shutting because of issues with the portal. And then reopening again, and then delays, and all those things. I hope that, given it's been 14 years, a lot of those things have been ironed out. The last 18 months have been quite smooth, and things have happened on schedule. I think that's a really good sign.

So yes, there will be challenges. We know there will be challenges. Part of the work we do with all our clients is to try and unearth those challenges so that we've got a mitigation plan for them should they occur.

CN: What kind of dotBrand services can the Markmonitor Group provide in this space?

SF: It's brilliant that we've now got the three organizations — Com Laude, Markmonitor and FairWinds Partners — really coming together, creating a single set of solutions for our clients.

We're in a really enviable position compared to the rest of the market because we truly offer an end-to-end solution.

We offer vital consulting services, feasibility studies, and help brands develop use-case scenarios that go beyond defensive brand protection, especially given the availability of better-suited defensive measures, such as new blocking services introduced since 2012.

We help brands by doing the application writing and the application submission, both of which are huge tasks and work in and of themselves. We can then provide that evaluation support all the way through to delegation, and then at delegation, what our brand holders need is both a registrar and registry service provider (RSP) — we can do that too now.

Com Laude, through a brand we've created called DotBrand Limited, is one of ICANN's accredited RSPs that successfully passed evaluation. So, we've got the front-end registry management, which includes the portal where clients can register domains, and the ICANN compliance piece, which we're effectively handling on behalf of our clients.

We're able to offer that as a one-stop shop for our clients, and we think that's a really strong thing. They don't have to look at multiple vendors or operators; everything can be in one place, with one team and one infrastructure. It just makes it simple for them.



CN: What sets the Markmonitor Group apart from other providers in the space?

SF: I mean, aside from that end-to-end solution, which I do think is really important, just look at the experience on our team. I think there is about 150 years' experience. Between you and me, we've got 40 years. Ashley Roberts has 19 years; Alexandra Zins, 10 years; Susan Payne, more than 15 years — she's not only head of the GNSO Council at ICANN, but also worked on the brand application for BBC when she worked there back in 2012. She was on that side of the fence and lived through the last round as an applicant.

It's our individual and collective experiences that set Markmonitor Group apart. We've got some fantastic clients. Really great case studies. To me, it's about the quality of the people we've got and the fact that we're also motivated to really make this work and to see our clients succeed. I mean we get so excited if you see a dotBrand "in the wild," and that's a really nerdy thing. It also sets us apart. That's important.

CN: I know you are intimately involved with football (soccer, for our American readers) — can you draw any parallels between "the beautiful game" and the domain industry or the dotBrand space?

SF: I can. I don't think it's necessarily just about soccer — there are these huge parallels with sport. If you think about the most successful teams in any sporting arena and some of the values that they demonstrate, it's all about standards, it's all about ownership, it's all about legacy. So those three things on their own are really, really vital. If you think about a football or soccer club, the badge means everything because it's more than just the players. It's more than the manager. It's more than the ground. It's about history. It's about trust.

A dotBrand is a company's badge on the Internet. It's not borrowed; it's something they have. It's not a .com that's owned by somebody else. It's about your brand, your top-level domain. Your rules, your space, and it's about

legacy. So, what are you going to do with that dotBrand? Without sounding too much like Al Pacino, it's the whole nine yards. I think you need to think about the fact that a dotBrand isn't a one-game wonder. This is something you put in place today to build a championship-winning brand in years to come, through those three things: standards, legacy, and ownership.

CN: Before we wrap this up, is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

SF: Why haven't you applied for a dotBrand yet?

CN: Mic drop!

SF: It's exciting times.

We're all very excited about what the next few months have in store. There's no bad idea for a dotBrand, and I think every organization should at least have a conversation about it. And we know some of those conversations will be "it's too expensive," "it's not for us," and similar. But sometimes you need to flip the conversation and ask, "What's the cost if we don't apply?" And that's one of the things we, as a group of experts, can strategically evaluate for your brand.

CN: Thanks for your time today, Stuart, it was great to learn more about your history as well as hear some great stories about the space. Here's to the Next Round and the future of dotBrands!

For more information on dotBrands or the Next Round, please visit

<https://www.markmonitor.com/dotbrand/> or reach out to [Stuart](#) or [Chris](#) directly.

¹ <https://www.brandregistrygroup.org>

² <https://www.denic-services.de/en/services/data-escrow>

³ <https://www.markmonitor.com/news/com-laude-acquires-markmonitor-corporate-domain-registrar>

Deep Dive: GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice in the 2012 Round

By: [Chris Niemi](#) and [Ashley Roberts](#)

As discussed in a 2025 blog post¹, the Governmental Advisory Committee² or GAC is “the voice of Governments and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) in ICANN’s multistakeholder structure.” While that blog post goes into detail on the differences between the 2012 Applicant Guidebook and the 2026 Applicant Guidebook in regard to GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice, this article discusses the specific activities of the GAC in the 2012 round, specifically in relation to TLDs that we would now consider dotBrands.

A few notes before we begin:

- Some definitions: Per the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), a GAC Early Warning “provides the applicant with an indication that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic, for example, by potentially violating national law or raising sensitivities, which must be specified in the Early Warning notice. An Early Warning is a notice only and does not have a direct impact on the application. However, applicants should take Early Warnings seriously, as these signal the likelihood that the application could later be the subject of GAC Consensus Advice or of an objection.”³

Also, per the AGB, “GAC Consensus Advice on new gTLD applications is intended to address applications that are identified to be problematic, such as those that may potentially violate national law or raise sensitivities...The Board will consider the GAC Consensus Advice on applications in accordance with the Bylaws. The Board will make a decision on the advice, and based on that the application may either: proceed; may proceed with certain modifications (see Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 below); or, may not proceed at all.”⁴

For more information about the respective processes, please see the AGB directly

- A disclaimer: Please note that this is not legal advice; the GAC’s activity is reviewed within a broader concept of the overall 2012 New gTLD Program and as an information-gathering exercise to show potential themes that could have effects on the 2026 Next Round. For legal advice in this area please consult your internal counsel or experienced outside counsel who are familiar with this space.

- The GAC is not a static organization; membership changes and representatives of the countries can also change regularly. Of the current members⁵, GAC membership stands at 184 Member States and Territories, and 41 Observer Organizations⁶. As such, the GAC of the 2013–2014 time period (which this analysis primarily covers) will be different than the GAC of 2026 and following.
- Studying the GAC and its behaviors and activities inside of the ICANN community is a nuanced and thoughtful effort that can be a full-time job for a trained policy professional! Keeping that in mind, the scope of this piece it to point out some selected GAC activities in the 2012 application round, discussed primarily in the GAC Communiqués in the 2013–2014 time period (specifically, from ICANN46 (Beijing⁷), ICANN47 (Durban⁸), ICANN48 (Buenos Aires⁹), ICANN49 (Singapore¹⁰), and ICANN50 (London¹¹)).
- Specification 13 to the Registry Agreement was not approved until 2014¹² after the 2012 Round was closed, so dotBrands did not formally exist until after that time. Prior to that a ‘rough approximation’ of a dotBrand was when a TLD was granted an Exemption from the Registry Operator Code of Conduct in Specification 9. In this article we’ll refer to TLDs as dotBrands with the idea that they would have met one of these requirements during their application process.
- At the time of writing, not all of the links to the 2012 GAC Early Warnings appear to resolve to active pages; a message has been sent to ICANN to see if this can be addressed.
- The GAC recently published the ICANN85 GAC Communiqué – Mumbai, India¹³, where the GAC noted that EWs, objections, and the next round are front of mind as it “continued discussions of its process to submit GAC Early Warnings that will be finalized prior to the launch of the Next Round, which includes consideration of the time needed for the GAC Chair and GAC Support staff to process and transmit Early Warnings to ICANN org. Furthermore, it was requested that said workbook be complemented with plain and digestible information about the possibility for GAC Members and Observers of using the Objections provided for by the Applicant Guidebook (AGB).”

With that out of the way, let’s get to it.

2012 ICANN Application Round Statistics¹⁴

<p>1930</p> <p>Total Applications</p>	<p>494</p> <p>Registry Agreements with Specification 13</p>
<p>1257</p> <p>Executed Registry Agreements (completed contracting)</p>	<p>80</p> <p>Registry Agreements with Code of Conduct Exemption</p>

GAC Early Warnings (EW) Issued in the 2012 Round¹⁵: 187

Percent of Total Applications that had EWs: 9.7%

Number of GAC EWs that were issued to dotBrand registry applications: 7

TLDs affected:

.TLD	Applicant	EW Reason	Eventual Application Status
.amazon	Amazon EU S.à r.l.	Cultural/Geographic	Active TLD
.delta	Delta Air Lines, Inc.	Geographic	Active TLD
.epost	Deutsche Post AG	Competition	Terminated TLD
.patagonia	Patagonia, Inc.	Cultural/Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.shangrila	Shangri-La International Hotel Management Limited	Geographic	Active TLD
.travelersinsurance	Travelers TLD, LLC	Competition	Active TLD
.香格里拉 (Shangrila)	Shangri-La International Hotel Management Limited	Geographic	Active TLD

Percent of EWs that were issued to dotBrands: 3.7%

GAC Advice Issued in the 2012 Round:

Applications that were given advice specifically in the ICANN46-50 Communiqués: 24

.TLD	Applicant	Advice Reason	Eventual Application Status
.amazon*	Amazon EU S.à r.l.	Cultural/Geographic	Active TLD
.yun	Amazon EU S.à r.l.	Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.アマゾン*	Amazon EU S.à r.l.	Cultural/Geographic	Active TLD
.亚马逊*	Amazon EU S.à r.l.	Cultural/Geographic	Active TLD
.halal	Asia Green IT System Bilgisayar San. ve Tic. Ltd. Sti.	Cultural/Religious	Not Approved

.TLD	Applicant	Advice Reason	Eventual Application Status
.islam	Asia Green IT System Bilgisayar San. ve Tic. Ltd. Sti.	Cultural/Religious	Not Approved
.persiangulf	Asia Green IT System Bilgisayar San. ve Tic. Ltd. Sti.	Cultural/Geographic	Not Approved
.spa**	Asia Spa and Wellness Promotion Council Limited	Geographic	Active TLD
.thai	Better Living Management Company Limited	Cultural/Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.date	dot Date Limited	Consumer Protection	Active TLD
.africa	DotConnectAfrica Trust	No Government Approval	Will Not Proceed
.ram	FCA US LLC.	Cultural/Religious	Withdrawn Application
.gcc	GCCIX WLL	IGO Match	Not Approved
.广州	Guangzhou YU Wei Information Technology Co., Ltd.	Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.深圳	Guangzhou YU Wei Information Technology Co., Ltd.	Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.vin	Holly Shadow, LLC	Geographical Indications (GI)	Active TLD
.wine***	June Station, LLC	Geographical Indications (GI)	Active TLD
.zulu	Minds + Machines Group Limited	Cultural/Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.patagonia*	Patagonia, Inc.	Cultural/Geographic	Withdrawn Application
.indians	Reliance Industries Limited	Cultural/Geographic	Withdrawn Application

*dotBrand TLDs

**Two other applications were given Advice; this listing is the third application which eventually addressed the Advice and was awarded the TLD

***There were three total applications given Advice; this listing is the application which eventually addressed the Advice and was awarded the TLD



209 Unique TLDs given GAC Advice in the ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué†

†some were included in multiple subcategories of Category 1

Category 1: Consumer Protection, Sensitive Strings, and Regulated Markets:

183 TLDs

Made up of the following subcategories:

Subcategory	TLDs
Financial	45
Intellectual Property	45
Health and Fitness	22
Professional Services	18
Children	10
Corporate Identifiers	10
Gambling	6
Environmental	5
Misc.	5
Charity	4
Cyber bullying/harassment	4
Education	3
Generic Geographic Terms	3
Inherently Governmental Functions	3

8 of these were dotBrands:

.TLD	Applicant	Subcategory	Eventual Status
.cashbackbonus	Discover Financial Services	Financial	Withdrawn Application
.mutuelle	Fédération Nationale de la Mutualité Française	Financial	Terminated TLD
.netbank	Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Financial	Active TLD
.payu	MIH PayU B.V.	Financial	Terminated TLD
.travelersinsurance	Travelers TLD, LLC	Financial	Active TLD
.beats	Beats Electronics, LLC	Intellectual Property	Active TLD
.tvs	T V SUNDRAM IYENGAR & SONS LIMITED	Intellectual Property	Active TLD
.play	Charleston Road Registry Inc.	Children	Active TLD

Later these Category 1 TLDs were reclassified when the ICANN Board's New gTLD Program Committee (NGPC) adopted an implementation framework¹⁶ for GAC Category 1 Safeguard Advice:

Updated Safeguards	Sectors
Regulated Sectors/Open Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions (Category 1 Safeguards 1-3 applicable)	132
Highly-regulated Sectors/Closed Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions (Category 1 Safeguards 1-8 applicable)	44
Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment (Category 1 Safeguards 1-9 applicable)	4
Inherently Governmental Functions (Category 1 Safeguards 1-8 and 10 applicable)	3

Category 2: Restricted Registration Policies: Exclusive Access:

61 TLDs

[Editor’s note: These would be precursors to the ‘closed generic’ concept that was defined a bit later of ‘dictionary words’ that had been applied for, but to be held by a registry for use by itself alone.]

.antivirus	.financialaid	.movie	.tunes
.app	.flowers	.music	.video
.autoinsurance	.food	.news	.watches
.baby	.game	.phone	.weather
.beauty	.grocery	.salon	.yachts
.blog	.hair	.search	.クラウド [cloud]
.book	.hotel	.shop	.ストア [store]
.broker	.hotels	.show	.セール [sale]
.carinsurance	.insurance	.skin	.ファッション [fashion]
.cars	.jewelry	.song	.家電 [consumer electronics]
.cloud	.mail	.store	.手表 [watches]
.courses	.makeup	.tennis	.書籍 [book]
.cpa	.map	.theater	.珠宝 [jewelry]
.cruise	.mobile	.theatre	.通販 [online shopping]
.data	.motorcycles	.tires	.食品 [food]
.dvr			

Zero dotBrands were represented in the identified Category 2 TLDs

Responses to GAC Advice

“Applicants were afforded a 21-day period in which to respond to GAC advice, as outlined in the Applicant Guidebook. The ICANN Board New gTLD Program Committee <considered> applicant responses in formulating its response to GAC advice.”¹⁷

Category 1 Responses Beijing¹⁸

- Total Responses from TLD Registry Operators: 728
- Total Responses from dotBrand Registry Operators: 57[^]
- dotBrands as percent of respondents: 7.8%

Category 1 Responses Durban¹⁹

- Total from TLD Registry Operators: 150
- Total Responses from dotBrand Registry Operators: 4
- dotBrands as percent of respondents: 2.7%

Category 1 Responses Buenos Aires²⁰

- Total from TLD Registry Operators: 136
- Total Responses from dotBrand Registry Operators: 4[^]
- dotBrands as percent of respondents: 2.9%

Category 2 Applicant Responses²¹

- Total from TLD Registry Operators: 186
- Total Responses from dotBrand Registry Operators: 0
- dotBrands as percent of respondents: 0%



[^]Note that the bulk of respondents were from TLDs not explicitly mentioned in the original Beijing Category 1 Advice.

So, what does it all mean?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Just under 10% of all applications were issued GAC Early Warnings. Of these, only seven dotBrands were issued EWs. The three reasons were:

- a. Cultural/Geographic
- b. Geographic only
- c. Competition

If you have a brand name that has any potential crossover with a geographical or cultural term associated with a country or region, beware and plan accordingly.

2. Of the 24 TLDs/applications that were specifically called out with GAC Advice, the same advice as above holds: do your homework on any geographical or cultural connections to the trademark in your potential dotBrand so you can get ahead of this issue and prepare how to address it.

For Open TLDs, the registry operator should be especially sensitive to cultural and religious terminology as well as issues that might be important to governments such as the Geographical Indications (GI) issue with the wine TLDs.

3. As for what became known as the Safeguard categories, be wary of whether your TLD may be associated with a regulated industry and potentially be ready to proactively address any concerns around your TLD by defining strong registration processes and anti-abuse policies. This should be intuitive for a dotBrand but be prepared, nonetheless.

4. In this round, the 'closed generic' concept is not allowed; that said, if you have a trademark for your brand that might look like a dictionary word in other contexts (e.g., "sky" or similar), as long you have legitimate usage of the trademark in the market, it can qualify as a dotBrand TLD.

5. Be vigilant in watching for GAC EWs and Advice and consider being as proactive as possible in responding to GAC Advice even if it does not mention your TLD by name. Making sure that you communicate to the GAC that as a registry operator you take their concerns seriously is important.

NEXT STEPS

While time is getting short with the 2026 Round opening on April 30, it is still not too late to consider applying for your own dotBrand TLD. The experts at Markmonitor Group are ready and waiting to assist you in delivering all the services that you will need as an applicant. The immediate one that comes to mind is for us to execute a Feasibility Study for you as it addresses trying to pre-identify any risks with your brand/potential TLD that could lead to the GAC EWs and Advice described above. Reach out today as we can help you get started with this process – there isn't a moment to lose!

¹ <https://www.markmonitor.com/blog/the-icann-draft-applicant-guidebook-agb-the-future-is-now>

² <https://gac.icann.org>

³ <https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-gtld-program-2026-round-applicant-guidebook-current-en.pdf> Section 4.2, p.91-92

⁴ <https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-gtld-program-2026-round-applicant-guidebook-current-en.pdf> Section 4.2, p.93-94

⁵ <https://gac.icann.org/about/gac-members>

⁶ <https://gac.icann.org/minutes/ICANN84%20GAC%20Minutes.pdf>

⁷ <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann46-beijing-communicue>

⁸ <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann47-durban-communicue>

⁹ https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann53-buenos-aires-communicue?language_id=1

¹⁰ <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann49-singapore-communicue>

¹¹ <https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann50-london-communicue>

¹² <https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-meeting-of-the-new-gtld-program-committee-26-03-2014-en>

¹³ https://gac.icann.org/contentMigrated/icann85-mumbai-communicue?language_id=1

¹⁴ <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/program-status/statistics>

¹⁵ <https://gtldresult.icann.org/application-result/applicationstatus>; select 'Has GAC EW' Filter

¹⁶ <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/resolutions-new-gtld-annex-2-05feb14-en.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/gac-advice/beijing46>

¹⁸ lbid

¹⁹ <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/gac-advice/durban47>

²⁰ <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/gac-advice/buenosaires48>

²¹ <https://newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/gac-advice/cat2-safeguards>

Policy Corner:

Updates from ICANN85 on the 2026 Round of New gTLDs Applications

By: [Alexandra Zins](#)

ICANN85 Basics

What happened?

The ICANN85 Community Forum is the first in-person meeting of ICANN's three-meeting annual cycle for 2026. The meeting happened 7–12 March 2026 in Mumbai, India, and included time for "internal work of the Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees (SO/ACs), cross-community interaction, and plenary sessions on topics of community-wide interest"¹.

Next Round Basics

What is happening?

On 30 April 2026, ICANN will begin accepting applications for an upcoming round of New gTLDs², the first time since 2012 that ICANN has offered this opportunity. The application window, which is projected to close on 12 August 2026, will allow for organizations to apply to operate a gTLD of their choice, whether it be a dotBrand where all domains are held by the brand owner, or an open gTLD where domains are sold to registrants.

ICANN85 News on the TLD Application Management System (TAMS)

What happened?

ICANN85 saw the debut of the TLD Application Management System (TAMS), the online portal by which applications will be submitted, via prerecorded video demonstrations. Although the system is not yet accessible by users on even a trial basis, ICANN instead provided insights into how TAMS will operate in relation to the applications themselves, including:

- All organizational and financial information must be completed prior to any of the actual gTLD application details and responses can be filled out. TAMS will not allow for changes to be made once this information is submitted, and any updates will have to be filed with a formal change request.

- Any supporting documents submitted in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation and a certificate of translation. The certificate must include: the translator's qualifications; a statement affirming the completeness and accuracy of the translation; identification of the translated document and its original language; and the translator's name, signature and date.
- Additionally, ICANN has opted to utilize generic proforma invoices to pay for the \$227,000 application fee and will not issue them addressed to individual applicants. These fees are due upon submission of the application and no later than seven calendar days after the close of the application window (anticipated to be 19 August 2026). However, early payment can be made by including the application ID (generated by TAMS) in the payment notes.

Why does this matter?

TAMS is an essential piece of infrastructure for this round of application. With the 30 April application window quickly approaching, ICANN has been working to ensure that TAMS will be a stable and secure environment to handle the amount of activity that the system will assuredly experience in the first several days, to the point where any current feedback given at this point will unlikely be added to the system before it goes into production.

ICANN Community Approach to Feedback on Upcoming Applications in Mumbai

What happened?

The Government Advisory Committee (GAC) worked on capacity building and alignment on how to provide feedback on the upcoming round in the form of Early Warnings and Consensus Advice. The GAC also discussed holding intercessional meetings and sharing procedural documentation ahead of the next round, with noted interest in Community Priority Evaluation procedures and dotBrand string change evaluations.

The Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group (NCSG) communicated throughout ICANN85, that they will likely be conducting human rights impact assessments (HRIAs) on certain applications and Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs). However, it is unclear what would prompt the NCSG to focus on a particular application or RVC.

The At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) is aligning with its internal groups – the gTLD Applications Review Group (gARG) and Regional At-Large Organizations (RALOs) – in preparation for any objections in the upcoming round, to file a formal objection on the basis of Limited Public Interest (whereas an applied for string is contrary to generally accepted legal norms or morality) or Community objections (whereas an applied for string may target a significant portion of the community).

Why does this matter?

All applicants will face scrutiny from the community on their applications. Understanding the risk of community feedback is important in pre-application strategy development.

Further, understanding the modes and criteria that the various stakeholder groups within the ICANN community will use to review and assess applications should inform how applicants draft and submit their applications.

ICANN Board Adoption of Base Registry Agreement at the end of ICANN85

What happened?

In the ICANN Board Meeting on 12 March that closed out the ICANN85 Meeting, the ICANN Board approved the New gTLD Program: 2026 Base Registry Agreement³ and directed “the President and CEO, or his designee(s), to take all necessary steps to incorporate the 2026 Base RA into the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.”⁴

Since adopting the new policy recommendations for the 2026 round of new gTLD applications, ICANN has been working to update the base Registry Agreement that applicants will sign if they are awarded a TLD. The changes to the Registry Agreement are driven both by the updates to new gTLD policies and operational efficiencies.

The Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG) has participated in discussions with ICANN Staff for the last 18 months to shape the changes in the Registry Agreement. The terms of this new Base Registry Agreement will only apply to the TLDs awarded in the 2026 round, though ICANN has signaled that they would like to align the 2012 Registry Agreement and the 2026 Registry Agreement eventually. To do so, ICANN would need to initiate the Global Amendment process and gTLD registries will be asked for a consensus vote to accept the new agreement.

Why does this matter?

The Base Registry Agreement is a standard contract with little room for negotiation by the registry operator. All applicants should review the text of the newly adopted Base Registry Agreement and determine if the terms are acceptable before moving forward with their application for a gTLD.

Summary

With 1,407 on-site participants and 663 virtual participants⁵, ICANN85 was a busy meeting that brought the Internet Community to Mumbai. A team of Markmonitor Group members attended both in-person and virtually to bring you these policy updates with the Next Round about to open in mere weeks. Look for us at other public meetings and for our insights on the Next Round and other policy issues in the domain space!

आपण पुन्हा भेटेपर्यंत!

(“Until we meet again!” in Marathi, one of the regional languages⁶ spoken in Mumbai).

¹ <https://meetings.icann.org/en/meetings/icann85>

² <https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2>

³ <https://itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/registry-agreements/base-registry-agreement-12-03-2026-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.icann.org/en/board-activities-and-meetings/materials/approved-resolutions-regular-meeting-of-the-icann-board-12-03-2026-en>

⁵ <https://x.com/ICANN/status/2032105655943745640>

⁶ <https://mumbaisuburban.gov.in/en/languages>

Get Involved



Interested in Getting More Involved With ICANN and Policy Work?

Consider joining the following groups (as relevant to your business):

ICANN Business Constituency, icannbc.org

Intellectual Property Constituency, ipconstituency.org

Brand Registry Group, brandregistry.group.org

Upcoming ICANN Meetings

ICANN86 Policy Forum

 Seville, Spain

 8–11 June 2026

ICANN87 Annual General Meeting

 Muscat, Oman

 17–22 October 2026



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Should you need any further information or assistance,
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