# 1   Introduction

This Work Plan summarizes several sets of reviews and activities that are anticipated to take place with respect to ICANN's New gTLD Program. This is an update to the draft Work Plan published in September 2014. This revision reflects updates to activities underway and planned to continue over the course of 2015-2016. Information on New gTLD Program reviews can also be found at http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/reviews.

The GNSO policy recommendations that are the foundation of the Program provided that ICANN should introduce new gTLDs in rounds, until the scale of demand is clear. ICANN opened a process for gTLD applications in January 2012, and the 1930 applications received were published in June 2012.

As of this writing, 404484 new gTLDs have been delegated. A total of 1,168 applicants have been invited to contracting. Of those applications in string contention sets, 4931% remain subject to contention resolution procedures, forecast to be completed by the third quarter of 2016. ICANN anticipates contracting to be completed by the end of 2016, and pre-delegation testing by early 2017, before completing all the new delegations by mid-2017.

Program Status
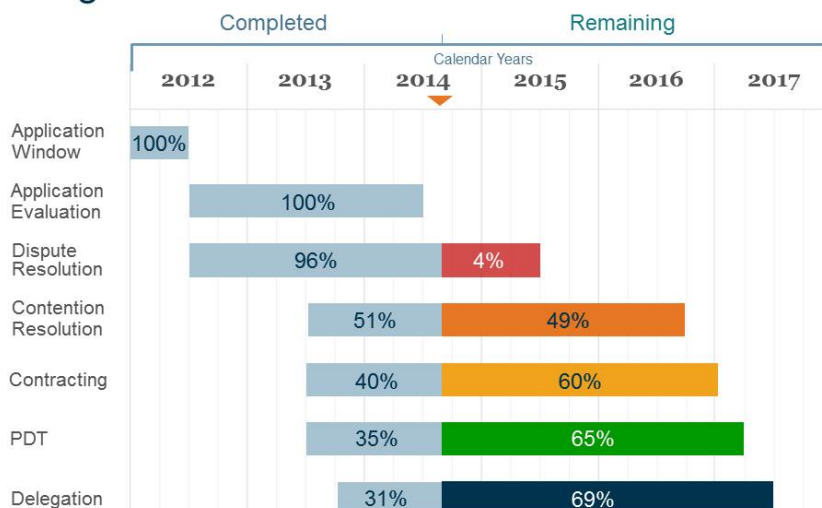
Note: This graphic depicts forecast completion dates based on current program operations; forecast dates are subject to change

Program Timeline
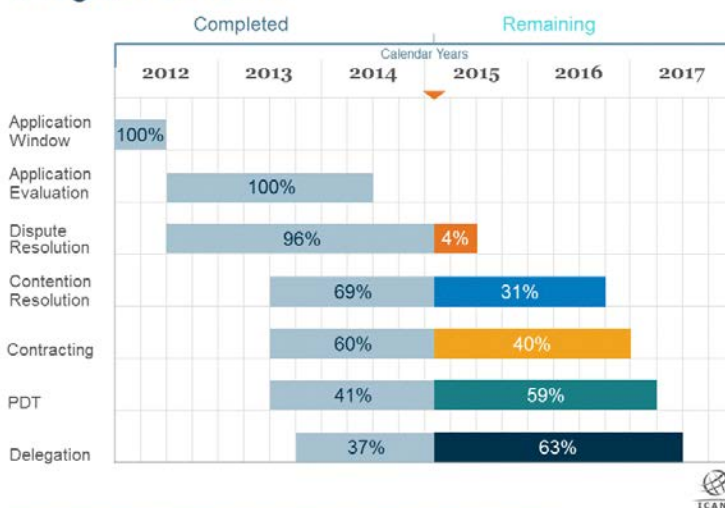
Note: This graphic depicts forecast completion dates based on current program operations; forecast dates are subject to change

Application processing detail, reports, statistics, and announcements are available at http://newgtlds.icann.org/en/.

On 7 February 2012, ICANN's Board of Directors passed a resolution reaffirming a ~~second~~future round of applications in the New gTLD Program, and noting that ICANN is

committed to opening ~~a second~~an additional application window for the New gTLD Program as expeditiously as possible.

The gTLD Applicant Guidebook also provided that ICANN's goal is to launch subsequent gTLD application rounds as quickly as possible, noting that the exact timing would be based on experiences gained and changes required after the completion of the ~~first~~2012 round, and stating a goal for the next application round to begin within one year of the close of the application submission period for the current round.

This updated draft Work Plan is being published to describe the work required prior to initiating a subsequent application period for the New gTLD Program, taking into account the assessments anticipated in development of the Program. ICANN expects to continue to work collaboratively with the stakeholder community to refine the Work Plan as needed and to address all milestones required for moving forward with the Program.

1.1 ICANN

The mission of The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ("ICANN") is to coordinate, at the overall level, the global Internet's systems of unique identifiers, and in particular to ensure the stable and secure operation of the Internet's unique identifier systems. In particular, ICANN:

1.   Coordinates the allocation and assignment of the three sets of unique identifiers for the Internet, which are

   a. Domain names (forming a system referred to as "DNS");

   b. Internet protocol ("IP") addresses and autonomous system ("AS") numbers;

   c. Protocol port and parameter numbers.

2.   Coordinates the operation and evolution of the DNS root name server system.

3.   Coordinates policy development reasonably and appropriately related to these technical functions.

1.2   About the New gTLD Program

1.2.1   Program Development

New gTLDs have been in the forefront of ICANN's agenda since its creation. The New gTLD Program is designed to open up the top level of the Internet's namespace to enhance competition, innovation, and consumer choice.

Prior to the introduction of the New gTLD Program, the namespace consisted of 22 gTLDs and over 250 ccTLDs operating under various models, with designated "registry operators." The registry operator is responsible for the technical operation of the TLD, including all of the names registered in that TLD. The gTLDs are served by over 900 registrars, who interact with registrants to perform domain name registration and other related services. The New gTLD Program created a means for prospective registry operators to apply for new gTLDs, and create new options for consumers in the market.

The Program has its origins in carefully deliberated policy development work by the ICANN community. In October 2007, the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)—one of the groups that coordinate global Internet policy at ICANN—formally completed its policy development work on new gTLDs and approved a set of 19 policy recommendations. Representatives from a wide variety of stakeholder groups—governments, individuals, civil society, business and intellectual property constituencies, and the technology community—were engaged in discussions for more than 18 months on such questions as the demand,

benefits and risks of new gTLDs, the selection criteria that should be applied, how gTLDs should be allocated, and the contractual conditions that should be required for new gTLD registries going forward. The culmination of this policy development process was a decision by the ICANN Board of Directors to adopt the community-developed policy in June 2008. A thorough brief to the policy process and outcomes can be found at http://gnso.icann.org/issues/new-gtlds.

ICANN's work next focused on implementation: creating an application and evaluation process for new gTLDs that was aligned with the policy recommendations and provided a clear roadmap for applicants to reach delegation, including Board approval. This implementation work is reflected in the drafts of the Applicant Guidebook that were released for public comment, and in the explanatory papers giving insight into rationale behind some of the conclusions reached on specific topics. Meaningful community input led to multiple revisions of the draft Applicant Guidebook.

In parallel, ICANN worked to establish the resources needed to successfully launch and operate the program. This process concluded with the decision by the ICANN Board of Directors in June 2011 to launch the New gTLD Program.

1.2.2   Program Goals

The program was created in anticipation of a diverse set of applications for new gTLDs, including IDNs, creating significant potential for new uses and benefit to Internet users across the globe. Goals included:

Enhanced Competition and Consumer Choice

Principle C of the GNSO policy recommendations indicated that the Program has the potential to promote competition in the provision of registry services, to add to consumer choice, market differentiation, and geographical and service-provider diversity. Principles of competition indicate that more players in the marketplace lead to greater competition, which can result in cost savings and improved service levels.

With greater specificity in top-level domain names, consumers may also face a less confusing web space. In addition, the ability to offer new gTLDs in multiple scripts (internationalized domain names, or IDNs) provides new opportunities for non-Latin-script-based language users. An internationalized web presence may allow more communities around the globe to engage in the Internet in potentially more meaningful ways.

Building on the importance of shared community that comes from greater choice, consumers may also feel enhanced trust in the new gTLDs. As with the IDNs that provide access to the Internet in many local languages, geographic or other restrictions for registering domain names in new gTLDs may create a greater sense of community and trust.

Innovation

Expanded real estate for domain names supports creation of new markets for innovative business models. Creating space for innovation is a critical element for ensuring public benefit from new gTLDs. Limiting restrictions surrounding new gTLDs can encourage the development of new or differentiated services that may not have previously existed under legacy TLDs and put competitive pressure on established gTLDs. Because future innovation is difficult to predict, preserving an open marketplace where new ideas harnessing the power of the DNS can thrive is particularly important.

Enhanced Protections

The New gTLD Program includes several measures to support more secure registries, including strengthened Whois requirements, background checks for a history of adverse UDRP decisions or criminal activity for registry operators, establishing a registry point of contact for abuse complaints, and required implementation of DNSSEC in all new gTLDs. These protections, which were not previously required, were a key part of developing the Program.

Strengthened trademark protections are another significant feature of the New gTLD Program. While trademarks are vital assets to rights holders, they also serve as important road markers for consumers, who rely on trademarks to ensure they are reaching a trusted business or other destination online, rather than a fraudulent or spoofed site. ICANN has mandated a set of minimum rights protection mechanisms for all new gTLD registries, covering both TLD launch activities and ongoing operations.

Part of acting in line with public responsibility and the spirit of the Program is undertaking a comprehensive review of the program to assess its performance in light of the goals, and to inform the continued dialogue in the ICANN community on the goals and operation of the Program.

1.3 About this Work Plan

This Work Plan document outlines the major work areas expected to take place, and states the primary goals in conducting each set of activities. Each initiative contains a brief description of the subject areas covered, as well as the expected methodology. An initial set of the anticipated major milestones is included in each area; a combined overall timeline to provide a comprehensive view of the activities is included in Section 78. It should be noted

that these activities are highly interactive, and the connections between tracks of work are noted where particularly relevant.

The Work Plan is intended to outline the foreseen activities without unduly prescribing the detail or task-level steps involved in a process. The Work Plan anticipates new developments and work streams in the bottom-up process and expects these to be taken into account. Work planning is a dynamic process, and adjustments may be expected, to account for new priorities and to anticipate and respond to emerging issues with the resources available.

It is noted that in the course of these activities, the Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees will continue their ongoing work, according to their individual processes. Some of these activities may have an impact on reviews of the Program or on ICANN policy going forward. To ensure that all relevant dependencies and connections are accounted for, an important part of executing the Work Plan will be to ensure continued support for the bottom-up activities that will help inform these steps, as well as close communications and coordination with all involved stakeholders. ICANN encourages interested stakeholders to provide amplification on any issues or areas that should be included as part of this Work Plan.

2   Program Implementation Reviews

New gTLD Program implementation represented significant work by members of the community (including applicants), multiple service providers, and ICANN staff. Having been part of an application round under the Program, each of these stakeholders has experiences gained and input to offer for future rounds. It is anticipated that experience gained from these processes will be captured from these stakeholders to serve as a basis for the consideration of future procedures.

In performing these reviews, ICANN staff will self-assess the execution of Program processes along a set of dimensions (further discussed in Section 2.2 of this Work Plan). The reviews will also incorporate feedback from evaluators, and input received from the applicants and community, as appropriate. To the extent ~~feasible~~relevant, analysis of available Program metrics will be used to inform the reviews~~, which will enable establishment of a basis of comparison going forward~~.

The Program Implementation reviews are anticipated to be an ~~on-going~~ongoing process that will inform ICANN staff's work toward the development of future procedures. ICANN anticipates publishing the review's findings in June 2015.

2.1 Goals

- Assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Applicant Guidebook, and application and evaluation processes.
- Assess the operational aspects of the New gTLD Program in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and other areas.
- Facilitate community discussion of review areas, where relevant.
- Propose possible implementation or operational changes in certain areas based on assessments and analyses performed.

2.2 Summary of Activities

~~To help streamline ICANN's ability to contribute implementation review inputs to design of a future process, this Work Plan identifies a proposed set of focus areas. Focus areas are intended to enable advancement of the work by ensuring that complex issues and related topics are considered together, and allowing resources to be focused on the areas where significant levels of work are anticipated.~~

A preliminaryTaking into consideration the proposed focus areas described in the prior draft version of this Work Plan, staff has developed a set of review areas. These review areas are grouped by category and have been organized to correspond generally to the structure of the Applicant Guidebook. Each review area will be assessed and documented as part of a larger report.

Below is a list of focusthe categories and a brief description of what each will cover:

1. **Application Processing**: this category will review the processes associated with submitting, processing, changing, and withdrawing an application.

2. **Application Evaluation**: this category will review the seven evaluation streams (Background Screening, DNS Stability, String Similarity, Registry Services, Geographic Names, Technical Capability, and Financial Capability).

3. **Objection/Dispute Resolution**: this category will review the processes associated with the four objection grounds, dispute resolution procedures, and GAC Advice.

4. **String Contention**: this category will review the processes associated with Community Priority Evaluation and ICANN auctions.

5. **Contracting and Transition to Delegation**: this category will review the processes associated with contracting and transition to delegation, including Pre-Delegation Testing (PDT).

6. **Applicant Support Program**: this category will review the processes around the Applicant Support Program.

7. **Continued Operations**: this category will review the processes associated with continued operations, including Continuing Operations Instruments (COIs) and the Emergency Back End Registry Operator (EBERO) program.

8. **Program Operations**: this category will review the processes associated with Program operations, including customer service, systems, staffing, vendor management, and communications.

Below is a working list of review areas is belowgrouped by category:

	Review Category		Review Area
1	Application Processing	1.1	Application Submission
		1.2	Initial and Extended Evaluation
		1.3	Prioritization
		1.4	Application Change Requests
		1.5	Application Withdrawal
2	Application Evaluation	2.1	Background Screening
		2.2	String Similarity
		2.3	DNS Stability
		2.4	Geographic Names
		2.5	Technical Capability
		2.6	Financial Capability
		2.7	Registry Services
3	Objection/Dispute Resolution	3.1	GAC Advice
		3.2	Objection and Dispute Resolution Process
4	String Contention	4.1	Community Priority Evaluation
		4.2	Auctions
5	Contracting and Transition to Delegation	5.1	Contracting
		5.2	Transition to Delegation
6	Applicant Support Program	6.1	Applicant Support Program
7	Continued Operations	7.1	Continued Operations
8	Program Operations	8.1	Program Processes, Systems, Resources
		8.2	Vendor Management
		8.3	Communications & Customer Service
		8.4	Financial Management

To guide and help support a consistent analysis of each area, a set of pre-determined dimensions has also been identified for consideration. To guide the analysis, each review areas above will be ~~looked at~~assessed along the following dimensions:

1. **Efficiency**: to what extent resources (time, effort, cost) were well used for the intended purpose.
2. **Effectiveness**: to what degree the process was successful in producing desired results/achieving objectives.
3. **Fairness**: to what extent decision-making was consistent, objective, and adhered to documented policies and procedures.
4. **Predictability**: to what extent the Program process/procedures/timelines provided predictability.
5. **Security and stability**: to what extent the process/procedure/framework supported security and stability of the DNS.
6. **Alignment to policy and implementation recommendations:** to what extent the Program criteria, requirements, and execution adhered to GNSO policy recommendations and the Applicant Guidebook.

The identification and review of these areas of program implementation are an initial phase that will lead to working with the community to develop and design a subsequent application process. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, one or more ~~focus~~review areas may become a set of parallel projects with dedicated project leaders, to take each set of issues through consultation with the relevant experts, community participants, staff, and vendors, and lead the process for discussion of proposals and solutions with the community. For example, the consultation and expertise necessary on financial evaluation would differ from that needed to consider communications and outreach, and these streams of work could proceed in parallel.

It is envisioned that the outcome will be a roadmap to guide staff in the design of the needed systems and processes to support subsequent application rounds or procedures.

2.3 Anticipated Major Milestones

- Publication of initial analysis of ~~focus~~review areas
- Feedback or public comment period
- Project proposals and updates

3 Root Stability

Consistent with its mission supporting the security and stability of the Internet's system of unique identifiers, of which the DNS is one, ICANN will undertake an examination of the Program's impact on the DNS root ~~zone.~~system.

3.1 Goals

- Ensure a thorough review of the impact of the Program on the security and stability of the DNS.
- Identify ~~any additional~~what steps ~~that~~, if any, should be undertaken as a prerequisite to adding more TLDs to the root zone.
- Identify ~~any~~what steps ~~that~~, if any, should be undertaken by the community going forward to assess the state of the root zone on an ongoing basis.

3.2 Summary of Activities

A review of the Program for security and stability impact is a previous commitment based on GAC advice and other discussions. Specifically, ICANN committed to review the effects of the New gTLD Program on the operations of the DNS root ~~zone~~ system, and to postpone delegations in a ~~second~~future round until it is determined that the delegations in the ~~first~~2012 round have not jeopardized the root ~~zone~~ system's security or stability.

~~Meeting this requirement will include substantial data analysis as well as consultation with RSSAC/root server operators and SSAC. This will support consideration of the rate of change, coordination, and monitoring measures for the first round of gTLD delegations, with the objective of identifying whether any new considerations should be applied to support root stability as the program moves forward.~~On 20 November 2014, the Root Server System Advisory Committee published RSSAC002, *RSSAC Advisory on Measurements of the Root Server System*. RSSAC002 identifies and recommends an initial set of parameters for monitoring a baseline of activity and trends in the root server system. The data recommended to be collected will be taken into consideration as one basis for evaluating the impact of the New gTLD Program on the security and stability of the root zone. ICANN is currently developing Terms of Reference for this review.

3.3 Anticipated Major Milestones

- Establishing study Terms of Reference
- Completion of study report
- Feedback or public comment period

4 Rights Protection

A key feature of the New gTLD Program is the introduction of several new rights protection mechanisms for the new space, including the Trademark Clearinghouse, Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) system, and Post-Delegation Dispute Resolution ~~Procedure~~Procedures.

The work described in this section, including the initial analysis in progress, is intended to support consideration of rights protection in multiple fora, as this is expected to remain a key feature of the Program.

4.1 Goals

- Perform a thorough assessment of the effectiveness of rights protection mechanisms in meeting the intended objectives.
- Consider the interaction of rights protection mechanisms with other elements of the Program.
- Support identification of areas where additional policy development or implementation improvements may be considered.

4.2 Summary of Activities

Review of the rights protection mechanisms relates to various planned activities, as described in this section. As a precursor to this review, staff is currently working to compile and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on the usage of all rights protection mechanisms. This includes, for example:

- Compilation and analysis of statistics provided by third-party providers (for example, geographic distribution of Clearinghouse records, outcomes of URS proceedings).
- Coordination among service providers and ICANN to identify the issues and questions most raised in customer service submissions.
- Soliciting feedback from users of the effectiveness of these processes to meet rights protection objectives.
- This review and analysis will be published for comment, and will be updated and revised based on feedback.

The GNSO's Special Trademark Issues group recommended that ICANN conduct a review of the ~~Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS)~~URS system one year after the first date of operation, as well as publishing examination statistics for use in the review of the URS. Additionally, the GNSO has previously requested an Issue Report on the status of rights protections, to be delivered 18 months after the delegation of the first new gTLD, to help inform its discussions of whether to initiate policy work in this area:

20111215-1: RESOLVED further, the GNSO Council requests a new Issue Report on the current state of all rights protection mechanisms implemented for both existing and new gTLDs, including but not limited to, the UDRP and URS, should be delivered to the GNSO Council by no later than eighteen (18) months following the delegation of the first new gTLD.

Based on the delegation date of the first new gTLD in October 2013, this Issue Report would be expected in April 2015. A potential deferral of this Issue Report for an additional six months is under consideration in the GNSO. The URS review thus should be available to inform the Issue Report. Note, however, that the motion is comprehensive and oriented toward all rights protection mechanisms, including but not limited to the UDRP and URS.

As noted above, staff is gathering this data now so that it can be publicly available and taken into account before the Issue Report is delivered.

Additionally, in May 2011, the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) provided advice to the Board that:

> The GAC now proposes that a comprehensive post-launch independent review of the Clearinghouse be conducted one year after the launch of the 75th new gTLD in the round. The GAC advises that this review should examine whether the aims, functionality and operation of the Clearinghouse would benefit from incorporating the current GAC proposals as well as any unforeseen questions and issues that may arise following the launch of the round. The GAC advises that the following specific questions should be included in the review's terms of reference:
>
> With regard to the issue of non-exact matches (i), the GAC notes that the Board's principal argument against acceptance of the GAC's advice is that the automation of the TM Claims and sunrise services would not allow the inclusion of non-exact matches. The GAC therefore recommends that the request for proposal (RFP) that ICANN will issue to potential Clearinghouse providers includes a requirement that the

candidate assess whether domain names that include a mark at the beginning or the end of an applied for second level domain could be included in the services. Secondly, the GAC advises the Board to direct the post-launch review to establish whether the automated system should be enhanced to include key terms associated with the goods or services identified by the mark, and typographical variations identified by the rights holder.

In the light of the experience gained from the initial period of the operation of the Clearinghouse, in relation to the GAC's advice on extending the operation of the Clearinghouse beyond 60 days after each gTLD launch (ii), the GAC advises that the review should include: a) a consultation with registry providers, registrants and rights holders on the benefits or otherwise of extending the period of the Clearinghouse notifications beyond 60 days; b) an analysis of the impact of the operation of the Clearinghouse notifications on the commercial watch services market; c) an assessment of the likely resource requirements for extending the operation of the Clearinghouse notifications to potential registrants for the life of each new registry.

Following on the statistics and analysis done as described above, ICANN will engage a third party to perform an independent review on the areas identified and other areas. Based on the suggested timeframe of one year from the 75th new gTLD, this review is targeted for February 2015, which will also enable consideration of the rights protection mechanisms across a number of TLDs of multiple types.

Finally, it is noted that the effectiveness of the safeguards developed for the Program is an area specified for examination to be undertaken by the Review Team on Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice to be convened under Section 9.3 of the Affirmation of Commitments. The work described in this section will also be an input to that process, as discussed in Section 6 below.

4.3 Anticipated Major Milestones

- Publication of ~~initial statistics and analysis~~draft RPM Review report
- ~~Feedback or public~~Public comment period
- Delivery of Issue Report to GNSO
- Established terms of reference for independent review of Trademark Clearinghouse
- Independent report on Trademark Clearinghouse

5 GNSO Policy Development

The GNSO is responsible for developing and recommending to the ICANN Board substantive policies relating to generic top-level domains.

The GNSO passed a motion in June 2014 specifying a number of previous commitments and noting that the GNSO Council believes that it has a continuing interest and role to play in evaluating the experiences of the ~~first~~2012 round and proposing policy recommendations, if necessary, for changes to subsequent rounds.[1]

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[1]**1. Whereas**, in 2005, this Council of the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) began a policy development process to consider the introduction of new gTLDs, which resulted in the creation of certain policy recommendations for the launch of a new gTLD application process; and,

2.   Whereas, in September 2007, this Council adopted the policy recommendations from the GNSO policy development process and forwarded them to the ICANN Board of Directors; and,

3. **Whereas**, in June 2008, the ICANN Board adopted the GNSO's policy recommendations for the introduction of new gTLDs and directed staff to develop an implementation plan for a new gTLD introduction process; and

4. **Whereas**, in September 2009, ICANN and the U.S. National Telecommunications Information Administration entered into an Affirmation of Commitments ("AOC") in which ICANN committed to organize a review of certain aspects of the introduction and expansion of gTLDs (AOC, at Section 9.3); and,

5. **Whereas**, in its April, 2011 Communique, ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee ("GAC") asked (at p.6) for a "comprehensive post-launch independent review of the [Trademark] Clearinghouse [to] be conducted one year after the launch of the 75th new gTLD in the round;" and,

6. **Whereas**, in June 2011, the ICANN Board approved an Application Guidebook ("AGB") for new gTLDs and authorized the launch of the New gTLD Program; and,

7. **Whereas**, the AGB provided that it was intended to govern "the first round of what is to be an ongoing process for the introduction of new TLDs" (Application, Module 2); and,

8. **Whereas**, Section 1.1.6 of the AGB ("Subsequent Application Rounds") provided that "ICANN's goal [was] to launch subsequent gTLD application rounds as quickly as possible" and promised to base the timing of subsequent rounds on "experiences gained and changes required after this round is completed" with a "goal…for the next application round to begin within one year of the close of the application submission period for the initial round.;" and

9. **Whereas**, the first round application submission period closed in June, 2012; and,

10. Whereas, the Council believes that it has a continuing interest and role to play in evaluating the experiences of the first round and proposing policy recommendations, if necessary, for changes to subsequent rounds;

The motion called for formation of a discussion group to discuss the experiences gained by the ~~first~~2012 round of new gTLD applications and identify subjects for future issue reports, if any, that might lead to changes or adjustments for subsequent application procedures.

The motion also invited the New gTLD Program Committee (NGPC) of the ICANN Board of Directors to provide input into the GNSO Council discussion to identify areas that it believes may be appropriate for discussion for an evaluation of the current gTLD application round and/or for possible adjustments for subsequent application procedures. A Board resolution providing support for work on future rounds, and which included a list of topics for consideration by the Discussion Group, was passed 17 November 2014.

Now therefore, it is resolved:

1. The GNSO Council creates a new Discussion Group to discuss the experiences gained by the first round of new gTLD applications and identify subjects for future issue reports, if any, that might lead to changes or adjustments for subsequent application procedures; and,

2. ICANN invites the New gTLD Program Committee of the ICANN Board to provide input into the GNSO Council discussion to identify areas that it believes may be appropriate for discussion for an evaluation of the current gTLD application round and/or for possible adjustments for subsequent application procedures; and,

3. The GNSO Council requests a status report from ICANN Staff on the current progress of (a) the New gTLD program generally; (b) ICANN's anticipated timeline and work plan for the review specified in Section 9.3 of the Affirmation of Commitments; (c) ICANN's work to date on any evaluation of the first round; (d) the work to date on the post-launch independent review of the Trademark Clearinghouse; and (e) ICANN's current projection for a timetable for subsequent rounds.

The motion also requested a status report from ICANN staff in response to certain topics, which ~~is being provided under separate cover.~~was provided in September 2014.

The Discussion Group has been formed and its proceedings are available at http://gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/non-pdp-new-gtld.

As an outcome of that process, the GNSO may elect to initiate the policy development process (PDP) in one or more areas intended to apply to future application procedures. Should any new policy advice be developed and adopted, this will be implemented as required at that time.

6   Competition, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Choice Review

The Affirmation of Commitments was signed in September 2009 by the U.S. Department of Commerce and ICANN. It provided for periodic review of four key ICANN objectives and progress toward achieving them:

- Ensuring accountability, transparency and the interests of global Internet users;
- Preserving security, stability and resiliency of the DNS;
- Promoting competition, consumer trust and consumer choice; and
- Whois policy.

Section 9.3 of the Affirmation of Commitments provides that:

> ICANN will ensure that as it contemplates expanding the top-level domain space, the various issues that are involved (including competition, consumer protection, security, stability and resiliency, malicious abuse issues, sovereignty concerns, and rights protection) will be adequately addressed prior to implementation. If and when new gTLDs (whether in ASCII or other language character sets) have been in operation for one year, ICANN will organize a review that will examine the extent to which the introduction or expansion of gTLDs has promoted competition, consumer trust and

consumer choice, as well as effectiveness of (a) the application and evaluation process, and (b) safeguards put in place to mitigate issues involved in the introduction or expansion. ICANN will organize a further review of its execution of the above commitments two years after the first review, and then no less frequently than every four years. The reviews will be performed by volunteer community members and the review team will be constituted and published for public comment, and will include the following (or their designated nominees): the Chair of the GAC, the CEO of ICANN, representatives of the relevant Advisory Committees and Supporting Organizations, and independent experts. Composition of the review team will be agreed jointly by the Chair of the GAC (in consultation with GAC members) and the CEO of ICANN. Resulting recommendations of the reviews will be provided to the Board and posted for public comment. The Board will take action within six months of receipt of the recommendations.

This provision covered both the planning for the program with the community and the retroactive look at the results so that lessons can be captured. It also accounts for the long view, such that recurring reviews will be executed: Like the other reviews called for by the Affirmation, the Competition, Consumer Trust and Consumer Choice (CCT) review is intended to be a regularly recurring review.

Note that while the U.S. Department of Commerce, which is the co-signator on ICANN's Affirmation of Commitments, is in the process of transitioning its stewardship of the IANA functions to the multistakeholder community, ICANN remains committed to fulfilling its obligations in the Affirmation.

Planned activities to support each of these areas are described in more detail below.

6.1 Goals

Section 9.3 of the Affirmation of Commitments incorporates an examination of three subject areas:

a. The extent to which the introduction of gTLDs has promoted competition, consumer trust and consumer choice.

b. The effectiveness of the application and evaluation process.

c. The effectiveness of safeguards put in place to mitigate issues.

6.2 Summary of Activities

The Review Team will be constituted, as provided for in the Affirmation of Commitments, with volunteer community members, and will include the following (or their designated nominees): the Chair of the GAC, the CEO of ICANN, representatives of the relevant Advisory Committees and Supporting Organizations, and independent experts. Composition of the Review Team will be agreed jointly by the Chair of the GAC (in consultation with GAC members) and the CEO of ICANN. The Review Team will independently plan its work and schedule. — ICANN currently anticipates the Review Team to be formed in Q3 of 2015.

Resulting recommendations from the Review Team will be provided to the Board and posted for public comment. The Board will take action within six months of receipt of the recommendations. Note that the recommendations may take different paths (e.g., some could relate to policy issues and would be recommended for going through the policy development process in the GNSO).

Preparations to inform the Review Team's work areas are described below.

6.2.1   Promotion of competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice

Consideration of ways to assess competition, consumer trust, and consumer choice has been underway in the community for some time. The Board of Directors passed a resolution in 2010 requesting advice from the ALAC, GAC, GNSO and ccNSO on establishing the definition, measures, and three-year targets for those measures, for competition, consumer trust and consumer choice in the context of the domain name system.

In preparation for an effective evaluation of the program's impact on competition, consumer trust and consumer choice, the Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO, responsible for developing policy applicable to gTLDs) and the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC, responsible for representing the interests of end users) recommended a set of possible metrics to contribute to this review.

The 70 metrics the GNSO and ALAC recommended were forwarded to an Implementation Advisory Group (the IAG-CCT), which ~~is currently working to evaluate~~completed its evaluation of each of those metrics on its feasibility, utility and cost-effectiveness before making a final recommendation to the Board ~~(expected in October 2014).~~in October 2014. The Board is expected to take action on these recommendations at ICANN 52 in Singapore in February 2015.

These metrics vary in scope. For example, some use in-house data to tabulate domain names registered in new gTLDs, with geographic, linguistic and other breakdowns; relative incidences of compliance complaints; and the relative share of second-level domain names that are registered in both legacy and new gTLDs. Others require outside data sources to measure elements such as traffic in new gTLDs, and reported incidents of malware, spam and botnets. Others are more complex, such as a qualitative study to examine new gTLD operators' adherence to their mission and purpose as stated in the application to their actual practices.

The IAG-CCT determined that a subset of the metrics was best evaluated using a consumer survey. To capture an accurate baseline of end user attitudes and opinions before the new gTLDs saturate the domain space, ICANN will conduct a globally representative survey. In November 2014, ICANN engaged Nielsen to conduct the survey of Internet users and domain name registrants representing ICANN's five geographic regions. The ~~baseline~~survey will be ~~taken~~fielded in ~~late 2014~~February 2015 with a baseline report expected by April 2015. A follow-on survey will be

conducted one year later to gauge changes in consumer trust and sense of choice in the DNS.

Trust will be measured by asking for users' experiences with phishing, malware and spam, as well as experience in navigating the DNS, including reaching intended destinations online, and relative preference for mobile applications and other software that do not display URLs, like QR codes. Perceived sense of choice will be gauged based on questions establishing respondents' understanding of how the DNS operates, including eligibility restrictions in TLDs, and general public awareness of the New gTLD Program. Taken together, these multiple metrics will offer a multi-faceted picture of consumer trust based on opinion research, hard data on registrations in the new gTLDs as compared to legacy TLDs and ccTLDs, as well as on abusive activity in the DNS.

A second subset of metrics aims to measure competition in the new gTLD space based on an analysis of pricing data and other, non-price-related indicia. These two metrics were deemed sufficiently important to capture an accurate baseline of data before new gTLD prices begin to affect the marketplace. To that end, ICANN will engage a qualified firm to conduct an economic study, with a target start date in ~~November 2014.~~February 2015. The study will have two primary aims: gauge the pricing practices for domains in new gTLDs against those in the legacy space; and provide a qualitative analysis of other non-price competition indicators, like technical or other business innovations. Given the sensitivities surrounding the publication of pricing data, ICANN will work closely with the selected vendor to ensure that price data is aggregated and anonymized, such that the analysis cannot be used to engage in collusion or other market manipulation.

As a whole, these three sources will provide the CCT Review Team with several inputs to explore the impact of the New gTLD Program. The data from the metrics, as well as anecdotal and other reports on experiences with the New gTLD Program will help

provide information on the results of this round of new gTLD delegations. It is anticipated that the data will inform the deliberations of the CCT Review Team; however, whether and to what degree it relies on this data will be entirely within the discretion of the Review Team.

6.2.2   Effectiveness of the application and evaluation process

The Review Team is also charged with assessing the effectiveness of the application and evaluation process. This may be informed in part by a set of program implementation reviews. The work described in section 2 above will provide an input to the Review Team in this area.

6.2.3   Effectiveness of safeguards put in place to mitigate issues involved in the introduction or expansion

The Review Team is charged with assessing the effectiveness of safeguards put in place to mitigate issues in the New gTLD Program.

A set of new protections were required of all new gTLD registry operators. The previous analysis on rights protections described in Section 4, as well as additional quantitative and qualitative data to be gathered in relation to abuse prevention mechanisms in the Program, are planned to be available to help inform this element of the Review Team's considerations.

6.3 Anticipated Major Milestones

- Establishment of Review Team
- Draft Report
- Public comment ~~or feedback~~period
- Final Report

7   Related Advisory Committee Activities

As these reviews proceed, a number of ICANN's Advisory Committees are undertaking work which is anticipated to result in advice or other contributions to the assessments of the Program and the development of future application rounds.

7.1   Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)

The GAC has created a Working Group on Future gTLD Rounds with three primary work streams:

1. Geographic names: In August 2014, the GAC Working Group published a draft paper, "The protection of geographic names in the new gTLDs process." The paper, which GAC members discussed at ICANN 51 in Los Angeles, was a result of a GAC recommendation at the ICANN 47 meeting in Durban that ICANN refine the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) for future rounds with regard to the protection of terms that carry national, cultural, geographic and religious significance. The paper notes that the current AGB establishes that it is in applicants' interest to consult with relevant governments and public authorities to enlist their non-objection to applied-for strings that may fall into this category. However, GAC members have expressed concern that such consultations did not happen in some cases and so are working to reach consensus on GAC advice to update the AGB with new language to address this issue. During the discussion at ICANN 51, GAC members agreed to discuss the proposal in more detail at a community session at ICANN 52 in Singapore.

2. Support for applicants from developing countries: GAC members have expressed concern that not enough support was offered to applicants from

these countries. Future advice may be more detailed with how support may be enhanced.

3.   Community priority: As another area of interest, some GAC members have expressed interest in extending the use of Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) for contention resolution. In its Los Angeles Communiqué from the ICANN 51 meeting, the GAC urged the Board to consider implementing an appeal mechanism in the current round for applicants who wish to contest a CPE panel's decision, noting that "The GAC has concerns about the consistency of the CPE, following the rejection of a number of applications."

Also in its Los Angeles Communiqué, the GAC advised the ICANN Board that all program reviews should be complete within appropriate and realistic timeframes before embarking on a next round.

## 7.2 At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)

In related advice published in November 2014, the ALAC supported the GAC's proposal to include more specific advice about geographic names in the AGB.

7.3 Security & Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC)

The Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC) has convened a Work Party to review all SSAC advice issued relating to the requirements and procedures used for the 2012 gTLD application round, and to evaluate the follow-up actions and considerations for future rounds. The Work Party will review documented New gTLD Program requirements and consider additional technical issues to review.

8. Estimated Timelines

Using the ~~initial~~ estimates for activities described in this Work Plan, below is a rough timeline for the currently planned activities.
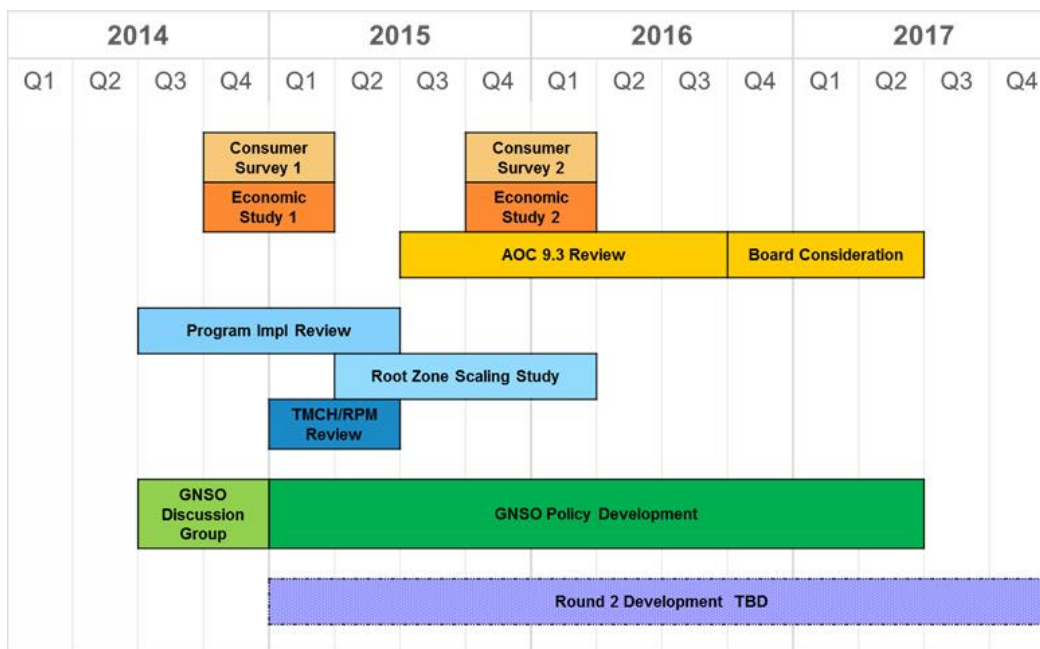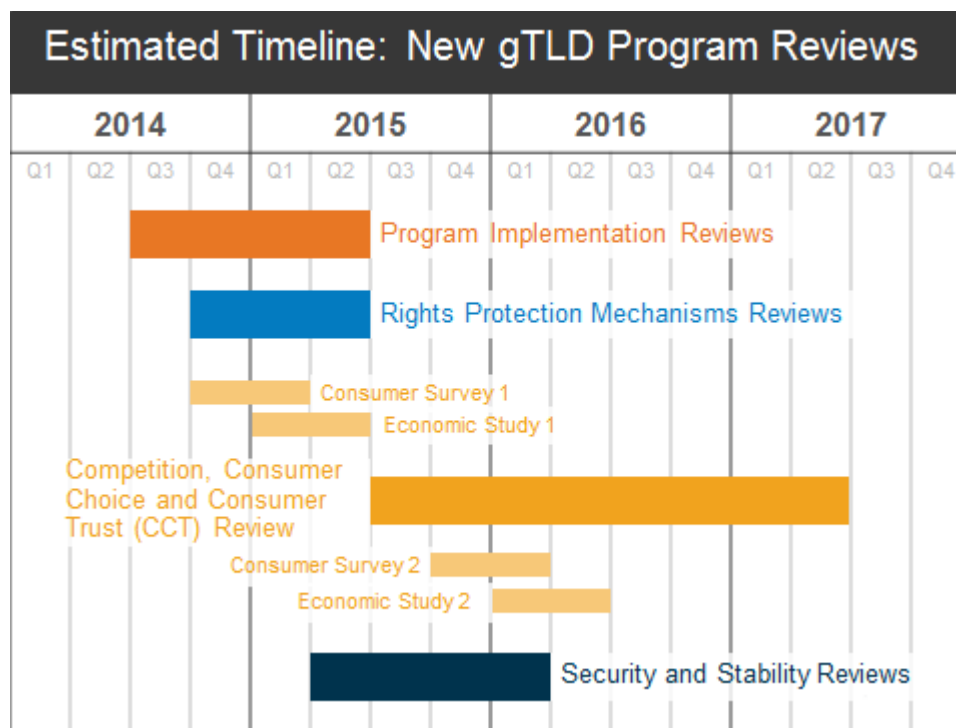
Notes on the basis for the estimates used in the timeline are also provided in the table below:

Preparations for CCT Review	
Consumer Survey	RFP for survey vendor published July 2014. ~~Procurement~~ Engaged vendor to begin work in ~~process~~October 2014. Study ~~targeted to begin~~ design began in Q4-2014, with ~~follow~~survey fielding expected in Q1-2015 and baseline data available in Q2-2015. Follow-on study to be conducted 1 year later. ~~Outcomes~~Final outcomes targeted by Q2-2016.
Economic Study	RFP published September 2014. Procurement in process. Study targeted to begin in ~~Q4 2014~~Q1-2015, with follow-on study 1 year later. ~~Outcomes~~Final outcomes targeted by Q2-2016.

CCT Review Team Process	
CCT Review Team Process	
Review Team Process	The process of convening a Review Team, as called for in section 9.3 of the Affirmation of Commitments is projected to begin in Q3-2015. –This will enable the availability of baseline metric data for consideration, as well as comparison data as one input to the team's analysis. Additionally, reports on the rights protection and program implementation reviews will be available. Finally, the bulk of TLDs are expected to have been delegated and launched in the marketplace at this time, enabling consideration of a variety of TLD types (for example, IDNs, geographically-oriented TLDs, community-based TLDs, brand-related TLDs) to support more detailed analysis. Based on the timelines of previous Review Team processes, a rough estimate for this process is that the convening of the team occurs across 3-5 months, a draft report is issued within 6-9 months, and a final report is issued within 3-6 months from the draft. The Board vote then must take place within 6 months of when the recommendations are delivered.
Program Reviews	
Root Stability	This study is projected to begin in Q2-2015. This will enable consideration of the delegation process as well as the performance of the root zonesystem with greater numbers of TLDs.

Rights Protection	An initial paper analyzing the use of rights protection mechanisms in the Program is to be available in ~~Q4 2014~~Q1-2015. This will be refined and updated after a public comment period and a revised report available in ~~Q1~~Q2-2015.

This will support delivery of an Issue Report to the GNSO as requested by ~~Q2~~Q4-2015. This will also be an input to the independent review of the Trademark Clearinghouse projected to begin in Q2-2015.

This will also be an input to the CCT Review Team as noted above. |
Program Implementation	Program Implementation reviews are under way currently, and are projected to be completed in Q2-2015. This analysis will be published for review and comment, and will also serve as an input to the CCT Review Team.
~~Policy Development~~	
~~Discussion Group~~	~~The discussion group is under way currently and currently projected to complete its work in Q4 2014.~~
~~Policy Development Processes~~	~~Following the output of the discussion group, the GNSO may elect to initiate policy development processes on one or more areas identified in its review. The timeframes involved will depend on the policy work undertaken.~~
~~Next Round Development~~	

~~Development work~~	~~Based on completion of the Program Implementation Reviews, some work could begin as early as Q1-2015. The timeline for completion of development work is also dependent on outcomes of other work taking place as described here.~~

As additional community work milestones are established and communicated, these will be added to the Work Plan so they are accounted for in planning and scheduling.

Depending on the recommendations resulting from the reviews described here, some discussion of development work toward the next round may proceed upon completion of the various reviews. Under the current estimated schedule, the earliest possible timeframe that these discussions could begin is Q3-2015. The timeline for completion of development work is also dependent on outcomes of other work taking place as described here.

9. Next Steps

ICANN is publishing this revised draft Work Plan in anticipation of ~~a~~continued community ~~discussion to occur based on this initial draft Work Plan~~discussions, and based on this feedback and discussion, will work to refine activities and to add additional work streams as needed.