

GAC Advice Response Form for Applicants



The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) has issued advice to the ICANN Board of Directors regarding New gTLD applications. Please see Section IV, Annex I, and Annex II of the [GAC Beijing Communiqué](#) for the full list of advice on individual strings, categories of strings, and strings that may warrant further GAC consideration.

Respondents should use this form to ensure their responses are appropriately tracked and routed to the ICANN Board for their consideration. Complete this form and submit it as an attachment to the ICANN Customer Service Center via your [CSC Portal](#) with the Subject, “[Application ID] Response to GAC Advice” (for example “1-111-11111 Response to GAC Advice”). All GAC Advice Responses must be received no later than 23:59:59 UTC on 10-May-2013.

Respondent:

Applicant Name	Dot Online LLC
Application ID	1-856-67717
Applied for TLD (string)	online

Response:

Dear Sir/Madam,

Applicant Comments on the Beijing GAC Communiqué

This letter is submitted in response to the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) Communiqué issued on 11 April 2013 (the “Beijing Advice”). Section (I) focuses on the publication of the “Safeguards Applicable to all New gTLD’s” (the “Safeguards”) as contained in Annex 1 of the Beijing Advice. Section (II) focuses specifically on those safeguards “intended to apply to particular categories of new gTLDs” (the “IP Safeguards”) as contained in Annex 1 of the Beijing Advice.

(I) Applicant Comments on the “Safeguards Applicable to all New gTLD’s”

In short, we find it disconcerting that the GAC chose to step beyond its agreed remit and issue the broad, generic Beijing Advice covering all new gTLD applicants. Module 3 of the Applicant Guidebook, states that “the process for GAC Advice for New gTLDs is intended to address applications that are identified by governments to be problematic, e.g., that potentially violate national law or raise sensitivities.” We believe the provision of the Beijing Advice covering all new gTLD applications constitutes a material change to the scope and purpose of the Advice which was to have been provided. We see no reason why the Beijing Advice was not confined to targeting specific applications as originally (and reasonably) expected.

We, and no doubt others, are understandably aggrieved at the continued shifting landscape, one which is quite outside the conditions under which our application was submitted.

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That being the case, we are faced with a choice. The new gTLD program has been subject to repeated and substantial delays and the present issue threatens to add to such by at least a further 3-6 months were the Beijing Advice to be rejected in whole or in part.

Conversely, to avoid delay, we are being asked to agree to provisions in the Registry Agreement (“RA”) that appear at first instance to be both ill-defined and over broad. The RA itself now rather resembles a contract of adhesion – we are in the territory of take it or leave it. Faced with such, we have no option but to agree to the Safeguards in part as further described below.

However, we would flag that such agreement and response is made under duress.

Safeguards

Provided below is further detail on the particular Safeguards and our anticipated adherence or otherwise.

1. WHOIS verification and checks

Any requests from the GAC for additional safeguards regarding WHOIS should be addressed by the Board through the work being undertaken by the Expert Working Group on gTLD Directory Services. As this work will ultimately feed into a Board-initiated GNSO Policy Development Process (PDP) to serve as a foundation for the GNSO’s creation of new consensus policies and requisite contract changes, this is the more appropriate mechanism for addressing the GAC on this issue. We do not consider it appropriate that the Board would acquiesce to this GAC request while fully aware that policy work on this very sensitive issue is currently underway and that the outcome will be enforced on successful new gTLD applicants through the Registry Agreement.

We would also note that the rationale underpinning this Safeguard is already adequately addressed by the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification appended to the new Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) that all Registrars are required to execute prior to selling any new gTLDs. Such requires detailed verification and checking of WHOIS data, making the Safeguard redundant. On this basis, we do not propose to agree to the application of such in relation to our TLD.

2. Mitigating abusive activity

We agree to the application of such to our TLD.

3. Security Checks

We cannot agree to this Safeguard. Put bluntly, Registry Operators are not, and never have been charged with policing the internet, nor should they be.

In addition, Registry Operators do not have the expertise to carry out the requested “technical analysis”. Indeed, only a handful of expert companies globally might have such expertise and the cost of employing such would be prohibitive and again beyond the bounds by which our gTLD Application was submitted.

Quite apart from the above, the Safeguard contains sufficient elasticity of wording as to be rendered meaningless.

4. Documentation

In view of the comments above concerning Safeguards 1 and 3, this Safeguard is redundant.

5. Making and Handling Complaints

As a Registry Operator, we are already required under the terms of the RA to maintain a point of contact as stipulated in order to receive complaints of the type indicated.

We are willing to agree to the application of such to our TLD on the basis that it is acknowledged that the bar of complaint “handling” is met by our referring such to the appropriate authorities or third party arbiters.

6. Consequences

We agree to the application of such to our TLD.

Registry Agreement

In light of the above, the key question to be considered is how the Safeguards might be incorporated into the RA. At all costs, we must avoid any further delay, including another round of public comments on the inclusion of new text in the RA.

We have considered at length how to achieve such and would respectfully submit that consideration be given to the utilisation of the Public Interest Specification at Appendix 11 of the RA.

Whilst to do so risks the potential for frivolous third party complaints regarding such, it would afford us the opportunity to agree to those Safeguards we are able to and which are not covered elsewhere, whilst avoiding a further round of public comments and the attendant delay.

If ICANN were so minded, we would be willing to consider wording of the following order:-
“Registry Operator will adhere to the following “Safeguards Applicable to all New gTLD’s” as defined by the Governmental Advisory Committee in Annex 1 to its communique dated 11 April 2013:-

- Safeguard 2
- Safeguard 5
- Safeguard 6”

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Having explained above that Safeguards 1 and 4 are redundant, such would mean that adherence only to Safeguard 3 is not agreed on the basis of what we consider to be eminently reasonable arguments above.

We trust that the above middle ground will be acceptable to you and once again respectfully request that paramount in this instance be the avoidance of any further delay.

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(II) Response to IP Safeguards “intended to apply to particular categories of new gTLDs”

The GAC identified ".online", our applied for string, within "Category 1", as a string linked to a regulated or professional sector. Specifically, the GAC included .discount within its list of strings associated with "Intellectual Property".

We agree with the GAC's assessment that .discount is "likely to invoke a level of implied trust from consumers", as ICANN's rigorous oversight will undoubtedly create a high expectations of trustworthiness for all new gTLDs. With a key mission of ensuring "a stable and unified global internet", ICANN is entrusted with a task of significant global importance. By balancing intellectual property protection and community interests, consumer protection, and DNS stability, ICANN clearly expects the new gTLD program to meet or even exceed the trustworthiness that permeates all other ICANN endeavors.

However, we respectfully, yet strongly, disagree with the GAC's contention that .online carries a high level of risk associated with consumer harm. ICANN developed numerous new rights protection mechanisms, including the Trademark Clearinghouse and Uniform Rapid Suspension System, all of which we expect to implement. ICANN and the registry community devoted significant time and effort towards developing mechanisms that would insulate consumers from nearly all risks presented by the new gTLD program. We also intend to implement a robust copyright enforcement policy, in addition to the trademark protections discussed above. These new processes and policies will ensure that .online provides great levels of consumer protection, surpassing even that afforded by existing TLDs.

Moreover, we recognize the importance of intellectual property rights and other consumer vulnerabilities, and plans to place great weight on protecting these interests. As stated in our application for .online, Thomas Brackey, of Freund & Brackey LLP and our General Counsel, has extensive experience litigating international intellectual property rights. His ongoing relationship with us will help to ensure that we are a leader in protecting consumers and their intellectual property rights. We will be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Additionally, adequate legal protections already exist, with the DMCA and Berne Convention offering significant protections to consumers around the world.

Further, we are perplexed as to why .discount was identified within the list of gTLDs linked to regulated or professional sectors. The term "online" is a simply a generic word, with no inherent ties to any regulated industry, let alone a professional "intellectual property" industry or sector. In our view, .online is a truly generic TLD, much like .com, meaning that an associated website is simply on the Internet. This bears no relationship to "intellectual property", and

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Accordingly, we respectfully disagree with the GAC's advice that .online warrants additional IP Safeguards for its connection to some intellectual property industry or sector.

IP Safeguards

Provided below is further detail on the particular IP Safeguards and our anticipated adherence or otherwise.

1. Acceptable Use Policy

We agree to the application of such to our TLD.

2. Required Notification

We will use reasonable efforts to require registrars at the time of registration to notify registrants of the specifications in our acceptable use policy, provided that such efforts do not impact the appeal of .online to registrars.

3. Security Measures for Collecting Sensitive Data

We agree to the application of such to our TLD.

4. Relationship with Relevant Regulatory Body

We are unaware of any relevant regulatory body or industry self-regulatory body with oversight over any group that may be impacted by .band

5. Single Point of Contact

We will comply with all WHOIS requirements adopted by ICANN, which in their expected form, should satisfy most if not all GAC concerns. To the extent that these require registrations to provide an up-to-date point of contact for notifications of complaints or reports of registration abuse, we will agree to the application of such to our TLD.

We trust that the above described position will be acceptable to you and once again respectfully request that paramount in this instance be the avoidance of any further delay.

Yours faithfully,
Dot Online LLC