

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

gTLD

Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) Vendor Evaluation Guide

DRAFT

CPE Evaluation Guide

24 March 2026



Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide clear direction for the evaluation vendor selected to conduct Community Priority Evaluations (CPE) under ICANN's New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. It establishes evaluation standards, roles, timelines, and reporting expectations to ensure transparency, fairness, and consistency across all evaluations.

Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) serves as a resolution mechanism in cases of contention where at least one applicant has declared their application as “community-based.” This process determines whether such an applicant qualifies for priority in contention resolution.

Scope of Work

The evaluation vendor will be responsible for:

- Conducting **independent, consistent, and transparent evaluations** of community-based applications in string contention sets.
- Applying the **CPE criteria and evaluation guidelines** as defined in the Applicant Guidebook (Guidebook).
- **Documenting** and **justifying** scoring decisions with clear evidence.
- Providing **determinations** to ICANN org within agreed timelines.

The scope includes initial assessment of the application, clarification of information provided by the applicant in its application (if required), independent research to verify information provided by the applicant, review of application comments or letters of support or opposition, consultation with community experts, and final determination. Note that, while objections and appeals (see Guidebook [Section 4.5](#)) fall outside the vendor's scope, the vendor will administer Evaluation Challenges related to CPE.

Evaluation Objectives

The objective of Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) is to fairly and consistently determine whether an application for a community-based gTLD meets the criteria for priority in contention resolution as explained in Guidebook Section 5.4. Evaluations are conducted with transparency, impartiality, and adherence to ICANN's accountability principles, while ensuring timely delivery to support the overall progress of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Scope of Work	2
Evaluation Objectives	2
Process Overview	3
High-Level Process Diagram	4
Overview of Evaluation Criteria	4
Decision Outcomes in Contention Sets	4
CPE Evaluation Challenge	5
Roles and Responsibilities	6
Role of Evaluator	6
Role of Vendor	6
Role of ICANN	6
Evaluation Panel: Activities and Timeline	7
Evaluation Panel Activities	7
Evaluation Guidance	9
CPE Evaluation Criteria	9
Scoring Rubrics for CPE Criteria	10
I. Criterion 1: Community Establishment	10
II. Criterion 2: Nexus	17
III. Criterion 3: Registration Policies	20
IV. Criterion 4: Community Endorsement	22
A. Considerations for Criterion 4: Community Endorsement	24
Reporting Results	26
Required Deliverables	26
Resources	27
Appendix 1: Relevant Application Questions	28
Appendix 2: Sample Letter of Support	36

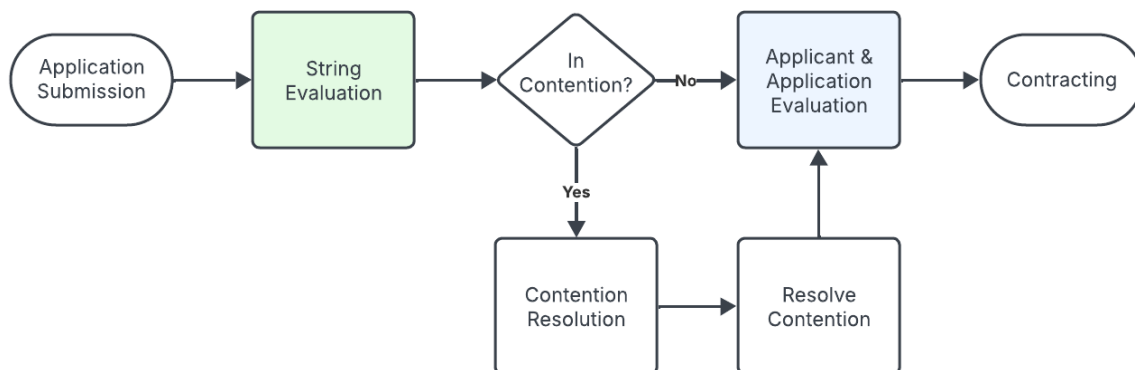
Process Overview

Community Priority Evaluation (CPE) is a mechanism to resolve string contention, described in full detail in Section 5.4 of the Applicant Guidebook (Guidebook). It will only occur if an application for a community-based gTLD (community-based application) is in contention and the applicant elects to pursue CPE.

Evaluators are tasked with conducting independent, evidence-based evaluations following ICANN's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest rules (see Appendices 7 and 8 of the Guidebook).

High-Level Process Diagram

Below is a high-level process diagram showing how the evaluation fits into the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round. For a detailed process flow, see [Figure 1-3](#) of the Guidebook.



Overview of Evaluation Criteria

The Guidebook defines four criteria against which community-based applications will be evaluated should the applicant choose to participate in CPE:

1. [Community Establishment](#) – Does the applicant clearly and formally represent an established community? (6 points)
2. [Nexus between Proposed String and Community](#) – What is the strength of the relationship between the applied-for string and the identified community? (4 points)
3. [Registration Policies](#) – Does the application include registration policies for eligibility and naming selection that align with the community purpose? (2 points)
4. [Community Endorsement](#) – Is the applicant able to show support from recognized community institutions and a lack of substantial opposition? (4 points)

Applicants must achieve at least 12 of the 16 total points above to prevail. For additional details on evaluation criteria, view the [Evaluation Guidance](#) section of this guide.

Decision Outcomes in Contention Sets

As noted above, CPE is a contention resolution mechanism. An application that prevails in CPE achieves priority in the contention set. This means that:

- If one community-based application meets the CPE criteria → **that application prevails**; others are ineligible.
- If more than one community-based application meets the criteria → qualifying applications proceed to an ICANN **auction**.
- If none meet the criteria → all applications in the contention set proceed to **auction**.

CPE Evaluation Challenge

The Guidebook permits applicants to challenge the outcomes of evaluations (Evaluation Challenges) in some cases, including for CPE (see Guidebook [Section 5.4.6.2](#)).

If a CPE Evaluation Challenge is filed, the CPE provider will use a different set of panelists to form a Challenge Panel. If the Challenge Panel finds that a factual, procedural, or system error occurred during CPE, the application will be reevaluated with those findings in mind. If no error is found, the application will continue to the next stage in the process of contention resolution. Results will be communicated within 30 days of an applicant filing such a challenge.

Roles and Responsibilities

This Roles and Responsibilities section defines the responsibilities and expectations of all parties involved in CPE.

Role of Evaluator

The role of the evaluators (CPE Panel) is to:

- Conduct independent, impartial, and consistent application of CPE criteria.
- Document rationale and evidence for each scoring decision.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of applicant information.
- Complete evaluations within agreed timelines.
- Document engagement of any relevant community experts consulted during evaluation and ensure proper disclosure of such engagement in a research report.
- Verify that any documentation of support or opposition meets the threshold of relevance and legitimacy.

Role of Vendor

The role of the vendor, as facilitator of the evaluators, is to:

- Facilitate calibration sessions across evaluators (and panels if relevant) to align scoring judgements and improve consistency in evaluations.
- Cooperate with ICANN-designated Quality Assurance provider to ensure consistency of evaluations and adherence to documented processes.
- Respond to ICANN-generated suggestions for process improvements.

Role of ICANN

The role of ICANN is to:

- Provide evaluators with orientation, training, and scoring guidance.
- Facilitate communication between the vendor and applicants (for example, clarification questions).
- Ensure compliance with program requirements.
- Publish evaluation results.

Evaluation Panel: Activities and Timeline

The role of the evaluation panel (CPE panel) is to determine whether a community-based application fulfills the CPE criteria and, as a result, whether it will receive priority in the contention set. In making its determination, the CPE panel must review the applicant's responses to the application questions to ensure all elements of the application are supported by evidence. The CPE panel may also conduct limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate the application.

Evaluation Panel Activities

ICANN anticipates that the CPE process will take approximately 90-180 days from the time that the CPE panel begins its evaluation until the publication of evaluation determination, depending on the complexity of the evaluation.¹ The following steps apply to each case assigned to the evaluation vendor:

Activity	Description	Justification for Activity
Assignment of Case	Upon contention referral, application assigned to the evaluation panel.	Guidebook-specified
Conflict of Interest Screening	Vendor screens evaluators for conflicts of interest and determines panel composition.	Guidebook-specified
Clarification Questions (if needed)	The panel may issue CPE Clarifying Questions to applicants for applications participating in CPE. Clarifying Questions may also be directed to a person or entity that submitted a letter of opposition to a CPE applicant. The applicant, or those who submitted a letter of opposition, will have 21 days to respond from the day after receiving a clarifying question. (Module 4, Section 4.4.5.1)	Guidebook-specified
Review of Evidence	Evaluators document their review of application content, exhibits, and supporting documentation as aligned with CPE criteria. The panel may conduct limited independent research to fact-check applicant information. This can include consulting relevant experts on specialized or localized communities.	Guidebook-specified
Criterion-by-Criterion	Panel applies scoring rubrics to each	Guidebook-specified

¹ As a reminder, community applicants participating in CPE must complete Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE) prior to completing CPE. See Guidebook [Section 7.8](#).

Activity	Description	Justification for Activity
Review	criterion using the Guidebook framework. Draft rationales and evidence citations prepared.	
Consensus & Quality Assurance	Panel convenes to reconcile scoring, as required, calibrate decisions, and ensure internal consistency.	Recommended
Final Report Submission	Vendor submits final report to ICANN, including scores, rationales, and evidence citations.	Guidebook-specified
Publication	ICANN publishes the evaluation result on the program website	Guidebook-specified

Evaluation Guidance

Evaluators (the CPE Panel) must apply the Guidebook criteria according to the following principles:

- **Objectivity:** Avoid bias and conflicts of interest.
- **Consistency:** Apply scoring evenly across all applications.
- **Transparency:** Clearly explain reasoning and cite evidence.
- **Confidentiality:** Safeguard applicant materials and deliberations.
- **Accountability:** Ensure evaluations can withstand independent scrutiny.

Each criterion must be assessed independently against defined rubrics, with evaluators required to base their scoring on the applicant's responses to the application questions, supporting documentation submitted, and any clarifications provided. Evaluators may also conduct limited independent research should this be deemed necessary to verify or corroborate information provided by the applicant, or to review letters of support or opposition, or to consult with community experts to better understand the criteria in the context of a particular community. This approach promotes objectivity, reinforces accountability, and ensures that results are defensible and aligned with ICANN's program goals.

CPE Evaluation Criteria

CPE is conducted against four criteria totalling a maximum of 16 points (note that some criteria are broken down into sub-criteria). To prevail, an application must score at least 12 out of 16 points (75%).

Criterion	Points	Guidebook Section	Description
1 - Community Establishment	6	5.4.8.1	Applicant has identified an organized, established, recognized community with longevity
2 - Nexus	4	5.4.8.2	Applicant has chosen a string that closely identifies the community
3 - Registration Policies	2	5.4.8.3	Applicant has proposed eligibility and name selection policies
4 - Community Endorsement	4	5.4.8.4	Applicant has support from a majority of the identified community

Scoring Rubrics for CPE Criteria

I. Criterion 1: Community Establishment

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
Organization (2 points) Is the applicant the organizing body for the community? If not, is the applicant able to demonstrate that the community is organized, with an organizing body(ies) relevant to the community or to each member category of the community? See Section 5.4.8.1.1	In support of providing evidence related to Organization, the applicant should provide: • An overview of the identified community structure, as applicable, and whether it is formal or informal • The names of relevant organizations • Relevant leaders within the identified community, as applicable • Information regarding how an individual would join the identified community or any privileges or benefits entitled to members upon joining the	2: Applicant is the organizing body for the identified community 1: Identified community has evidence of organizing bodies 0: Identified community has no evidence of organizing bodies	• Is the applicant able to demonstrate that it is the sole organizing body for the identified community, whether to represent or administer it? • If not, is the applicant able to demonstrate that there are organizing bodies relevant to the identified community? • Is there one association dedicated to the identified community as a whole, or are there multiple individual organizations that represent, administer or are relevant to different segments or groups	• Is limited independent research required?² If yes, see following questions. If no, provide rationale for why not. • Does limited independent research (for example, an Internet search) deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant? • Such research may corroborate the existence of bodies or groups that are relevant to the identified community, or, if applicable, evidence of the applicant	Examples include: • Review of documentation provided by the applicant • Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from limited independent research • Any clarifying questions and responses • Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

² As per Guidebook [Section 5.4.6](#): “The panel may conduct limited independent research deemed necessary to evaluate the application according to the criteria and verify the information provided by the applicant. The panel is expected to focus its limited independent research on the fact-checking required to verify information provided by the applicant. Additionally, as part of this research, the panel may consult with relevant community-related experts to gain insight into highly specialized or localized communities.”

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
	identified community Information regarding whether organizing bodies were established to administer or represent the identified community		within the identified community? Multiple entities may administer or represent an identified community. An organization representing an identified community should be regarded with the same level of importance and legitimacy as one that administers the identified community.	acting on behalf of the identified community. - The panel may review and verify letters of support or opposition to better understand the organization of the identified community. - The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into how the organization presents itself in different types of communities.	
Engagement (1 point) Is the applicant able to demonstrate that there is active engagement with community members?	In support of demonstrating active Engagement, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: - Offering support - Sharing information - Responding to specific community needs - Fostering and strengthening relationships within	1: Demonstration of engagement activities 0: Limited or no demonstration of engagement activities	- An identified community may have one or multiple organizations representing or administering it. In the same way, there may be one or multiple organizations or entities conducting engagement activities on behalf of the identified community. - The inability to demonstrate recent Engagement-related	Is limited independent research required? If yes, see questions described above. If no, provide rationale for why not.	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant - Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from limited independent research - Any clarifying questions and responses - Memos of expert-discussions,

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
	the identified community		activities may be an indicator of a community that lacks engagement. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity.		confirmed with the expert
<u>Awareness (1 point)</u> Is the applicant able to demonstrate awareness among and between community members of the identified community?	In support of demonstrating Awareness, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: • Surveys conducted • Records of activities involving a diversity of community groups, segments, or members	1: Demonstration of awareness among community members 0: No demonstration of awareness among community members	• Are community members aware of the existence of the identified community? • Do community members recognize the identified community? • The inability to demonstrate recent Awareness-related activities may be an indicator of a community that lacks awareness. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the	Is limited independent research required? If yes, see questions described above. If no, provide rationale for why not.	Examples include: • Review of documentation provided by the applicant • Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from limited independent research • Any clarifying questions and responses • Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
			relevance of recent activity. For example, for some communities, awareness or recognition of a community and public acknowledgment of membership in such a community may be limited by national law. The panel should consider that awareness would be assessed differently for such a community.		

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
Established Presence (1 point) Is the applicant able to demonstrate a global external awareness of the community as well as an established presence of the community prior to the opening of the application submission period?	To demonstrate Established Presence and external awareness, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices from the two years leading up to application submission: • Media or other public information regarding the identified community and its activities or members • Discussion of the identified community in various fora, whether online or in person • Evidence of partnerships or collaborations with groups outside of the identified community • Evidence of the chartering or organization of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission window • Evidence of contributions (for example, cultural or	1: Demonstration of established presence of the community 0: No demonstration of established presence of the community	• There should be evidence of an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period. • The identified community's existence should be verifiable, and individuals and groups outside of the identified community should be aware of it. • The inability to demonstrate an "established presence" may be an indicator of a community that lacks such presence. However, the panel should take into account different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity and how different communities might show presence. • Awareness levels may vary based on	Is limited independent research required? If yes, see questions described above. If no, provide rationale for why not.	Examples include: • Review of documentation provided by the applicant • Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from limited independent research • Any clarifying questions and responses • Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
	scientific) to a larger society or population		the identified community's size, scope, or nature. For example, a large, global sports community should demonstrate worldwide recognition, while a small, regional linguistic community may only require evidence of localized awareness.		
<u>Longevity (1 point)</u> Is the applicant able to demonstrate the longevity of the community's pursuits, showing that they are enduring and sustainable rather than temporary?	To demonstrate Longevity, the applicant should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: - Evidence of recurring or scheduled activities that demonstrate continuity over time - Documented records of past activities that demonstrate a long-standing tradition or practice - Records of discussions emphasizing the identified	1: Demonstration of longevity of the identified community's pursuits 0: No demonstration of longevity of the identified community's pursuits	- Is the identified community a relatively short-lived congregation (for example, a group that is formed to represent a one-off event)? - Is the identified community forward-looking (that is, will it continue to exist in the future)? - The inability to demonstrate recent longevity-related activities may be an indicator of a community that does not demonstrate longevity. However, the panel should take into account	Is limited independent research required? If yes, see questions described above. If no, provide rationale for why not.	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant - Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from conducted web searches, live or archived, or limited independent research - Any clarifying questions and responses - Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
	community's enduring presence or its cultural significance.		different types of communities in evaluating this sub-criterion and the relevance of recent activity. The panel should keep in mind that longevity may differ based on the nature of the identified community. For example, in some countries or regions, the continued existence of certain communities may be threatened by national or international policies, and the panel should consider that longevity would be measured differently for such a community.		

II. Criterion 2: Nexus

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
<u>Nexus (4 points)</u> Does the string match the name of the identified community or is it a well-known alternative of the identified community's name? Would the general public associate the string with the identified community?	To demonstrate Nexus, the applicant must show that the string matches the name of the identified community or is a well-known alternative name of the identified community. To demonstrate Nexus, the applicant must show that the general public would associate the string with the identified community.	4 - Full match: String matches the name of the identified community or is a well-known alternative name of the identified community. The general public would associate the string with the identified community. 3 - Strong Match: String matches the name of the identified community or is a well-known alternative name of the identified community, but there may be other meanings of the string—while not in common usage—that the general public may	- What is the name of the identified community? - A reference to the name of the identified community is a reference to the established name by which the community is commonly known by others (that is, individuals outside of the community itself or from other relevant organizations, such as established, official, quasi-official, publicly recognized institutions, or other peer groups). - The name may be, but does not need to be, the name of an organization dedicated to any member category within the identified community. - Will the general public instinctively	- Is limited independent research required? If yes, see following questions. If no, provide rationale for why not. - Does limited independent research (for example, an Internet search) deemed necessary to evaluate this criterion corroborate the evidence provided by the applicant regarding the string as it relates to the identified community? - Such research may include verifying whether the applicant's responses to the application questions align with the mission statements of the relevant organizing bodies to understand the	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant - Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from conducted web searches, live or archived, or limited independent research - Any clarifying questions and responses - Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
		associate with the string. 2 - Partial Match: String partially matches the identified community or the community members but may have a commonly used meaning or connotation beyond the identified community that the general public may associate with the string. 1 - Weak or No Match: String does not match or identify the community or has a weak association with the identified community. The general public would likely not associate the string with the identified community.	think of the identified community when thinking of the applied-for string? - Does the string identify a wider geographic or thematic remit than is related to the identified community? - Does the string indicate a community of which the applicant is a part, but is not specific to the applicant's identified community? - Is the size or definition of the identified community consistent with the string? - If the applied-for string is an IDN, is the applied-for string in the language and script of use for the identified community?	thematic remit of the identified community. - The panel may conduct limited research to help understand whether the string matches the identified community and is known by others. The limited research should also reveal whether there are repeated and frequent references to legal entities or communities other than the identified community referenced in the application. - The panel may review and verify letters of support or opposition to consider in balance how the identified community is known by either its members or those outside of it. - The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain	

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
				insight into how different types of communities are named or how they are known by others.	

III. Criterion 3: Registration Policies

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
Eligibility (1 point) Is eligibility for registrants restricted? Who is qualified to register a domain in the applied-for gTLD? Are there specific qualifications provided that entities or individuals must meet to be eligible as registrants by the registry?	To demonstrate Eligibility, the applicant must provide documentation of limitations imposed on potential registrants. The limitation to community members may involve formal membership or may be achieved by requiring certain documentation tied to the community.	1: Eligibility is restricted to members within the identified community. 0: The identified community has an unrestricted approach to eligibility.	- Who is qualified to register a domain in the applied-for gTLD? - What limitations are imposed on potential registrants? - Are there specific qualifications provided that entities or individuals must meet to be eligible as registrants by the registry? - With respect to “Eligibility,” the limitation to community members may involve formal membership or be fulfilled in other ways, depending on the structure and focus of the community at hand. Some informal communities may have different methods for determining membership in a particular community. - For example, for a geographic location Community gTLD, a limitation to members of the community can	<i>The Guidebook does not foresee that independent research will be required for review of Eligibility because of the binary nature of the criterion—the applicant has either restricted eligibility or it hasn’t.</i> <i>However, should the panel determine that additional information is required, it should document this and follow the same approach as with Criteria 1, 2, and 4.</i>	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant - Any clarifying questions and responses

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
			be achieved by requiring documentation, such as a business license or proof of a local address to verify physical presence in the associated geographic location.		
Name selection (1 point) Do the applicant's policies include name selection rules? Are name selection rules consistent with the mission statement and articulated community-based purpose of the applied-for gTLD? What domain names are acceptable in the applied-for gTLD? Are there specific conditions provided that must be fulfilled for a second-level domain name to be considered acceptable by the registry?	To demonstrate Name Selection , the applicant must provide documentation of the applicant's name selection rules.	1: Policies include name selection rules that are consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD. 0: Policies do not include name selection rules consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD.	- Do the applicant's policies include name selection rules? - Are the name selection rules consistent with the articulated community purpose of the applied-for gTLD? - If the applied-for string is an IDN, do the name selection rules permit eligible community members to register names in their own language and script, including any necessary variants?	<i>The Guidebook does not foresee that independent research will be required for review of Name Selection because of the binary nature of the criterion—the applicant either has name selection rules or it doesn't.</i> <i>However, should the panel determine that additional information is required, it should document this and follow the same approach as with Criteria 1, 2, and 4.</i>	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant - Any clarifying questions and responses

IV. Criterion 4: Community Endorsement

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
<u>Support and Opposition (4 points)</u> Does the applicant have support from a majority of the identified community? Does the applicant have any relevant opposition, from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it?	To earn full points, the applicant must demonstrate that a majority of the identified community supports the applicant and that the applicant does not have any relevant opposition. The panel should evaluate the applicant's evidence on community size to determine whether there is majority support or significant opposition. The applicant should clearly define its community, providing estimates of the total size and any sub-groups.	4: Applicant has majority support and does not have relevant opposition. The applicant has demonstrated support with clear rationale from a majority of the identified community. The applicant does not have any relevant opposition, from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it. 3: Applicant has majority support and has relevant minority opposition. The applicant has demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community.	See table below.	- Is limited independent research required beyond the review of letters of support³ or opposition? If yes, see following questions. If no, provide rationale for why not. - Is limited research required to help determine relevance and size of the objecting or supporting organization(s)? - The panel may consult with relevant community experts to gain insight into support, opposition, or organization as they relate to different types of communities.	Examples include: - Review of documentation provided by the applicant, including letters of support - Review of letters of opposition - Downloaded and dated webpages or documents from conducted web searches, or limited independent research - Any clarifying questions and responses - Memos of expert-discussions, confirmed with the expert

³ See [Appendix 2](#) for a sample letter of support.

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
		However, the applicant has relevant minority opposition with clear rationale from either within the identified community or relevant organizations outside of it. 2: Applicant has majority support but also has relevant significant opposition. The applicant has demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community. However, the applicant also has relevant significant opposition with clear rationale from either within the identified community or from relevant organizations outside of it.			

Evaluation Guidance	Applicant Requirements	Rubric	Considerations	Independent Research	Panel Documentation
		0: Applicant does not have majority support. The applicant has not demonstrated majority support with clear rationale from the identified community.			

A. Considerations for Criterion 4: Community Endorsement

Concept	Considerations
Support or Opposition	- There may be cases where the applied-for string carries more than one meaning or when an applicant has identified a community that is narrower than the scope suggested by the applied-for string. In those instances, the panel should consider whether the applicant can demonstrate relevant support or no relevant opposition from outside the identified community. - The panel should consider any objections or comments from this application round noting opposition. While these will be assessed, they do not automatically influence the Opposition score, as the panel should consider whether the sources of opposition are clearly spurious, unsubstantiated, or filed for the purpose of obstruction. - The panel should assess whether relevant organizations (for example, official, quasi-official, established, publicly recognized, or peer organizations) oppose the proposal, and if such opposition represents a minority or majority within the community. See guidelines below regarding relevant organizations. - Letters of opposition submitted against a Community Application must be considered in balance with documented support for the application.
Majority or Minority	- Majority and minority are based on the size of the community as specified by the applicant. The panel should consider the applicant's evidence on the identified community's size to determine whether there is majority support or notable opposition. - The majority of the identified community may be determined by, but not restricted to, factors like headcount or the geographic reach.

Concept	Considerations
	• Applicants without evidence of support from a majority of the identified community will not receive points. In some cases, the panel may consider support from outside the community if the applied-for string has multiple meanings or the applicant has identified a narrower community than the scope suggested by the applied-for string. • In some cases, an applicant may have majority support but significant opposition, especially when the community is divided or external parties oppose, such as when a string has multiple meanings. Despite substantial outside opposition, the applicant may still have strong support within the community.
Relevant Organizations	• The terms relevance and relevant refer to organizations, groups, or communities associated with the string. This means that support or opposition from communities not identified in the application but connected to the applied-for string would be considered relevant. • There may be one organizing body mainly dedicated to a community or multiple entities dedicated to a community. The panel will consider the following questions in its evaluation: ◦ Are multiple institutions/organizations supporting the application, with documented support from institutions/organizations representing a majority of the overall identified community? ◦ Does the applicant have support from the majority of the recognized community institution/member organizations? ◦ Has the applicant provided full documentation that it has authority to represent the identified community with its application? • In considering relevant support or opposition, the panel should consider both the size of the group or groups expressing support or opposition as well as the relevance to the identified community or the string. ◦ For example, a letter of opposition from an organization claiming to represent millions but weakly connected to the community may carry less weight. In contrast, a letter from a small, closely connected group may be more relevant and impactful. The same principle applies to letters of support.
Documented Support or Opposition	• The documentation clearly expresses the organization's support or opposition for the identified community. • The documentation demonstrates the organization's understanding of the string being requested. • The applicant's documentation is valid, confirming the organization's existence and the letter's authenticity. • The documentation should contain a description of the process and rationale used in arriving at the expression of support or opposition. Consideration of support or opposition is not based merely on the number of comments or expressions of support or opposition received. Documentation lacking a clear rationale or substantive explanation for support or opposition will not be considered. • If the panel issues a clarifying question to the sender of a letter of support or opposition, and that clarifying question is not responded to, the panel may take this into account as it considers the content and rationale of the letter.

Reporting Results

Reporting Evaluation Results is the final stage of the CPE process and provides the official record of the panel's determination. The evaluation vendor is responsible for producing a comprehensive report that documents the scores assigned to each criterion, the rationale for those scores, and the supporting evidence considered. These reports must demonstrate transparency, consistency, and adherence to the Guidebook criteria and guidelines, while maintaining applicant confidentiality. In addition to the final evaluation report, the vendor is expected to provide logs of clarification requests, quality assurance reviews, and any issues escalated during the evaluation to ICANN. ICANN will review the deliverables described below for completeness, then publish the report to ensure accountability and to inform the resolution of contention sets.

Required Deliverables

Deliverable	Description
Final Evaluation Report	• Detailed scoring for each of the four criteria (Community Establishment, Nexus, Registration Policies, Community Endorsement). • Rationale for each score and whether the applicant met the threshold for priority (≥ 12 points). • Rationale for conducting or not conducting any limited independent research along with citations for any such research in the report and a separate document prepared for applicant response. This should also include explanation and overview of any consultation conducted with community experts.
Clarification Log	• Record of all clarification requests issued to the applicant. • Applicant responses and how they were factored into scoring
Quality Assurance (QA) Log	• Documentation of internal peer review and panel calibration. • Corrective actions taken to address any inconsistencies.
Escalation Log (if applicable)	• Record of issues elevated to ICANN during the evaluation. • Resolution outcomes or pending matters.
Summary Reporting	• Aggregate reporting on evaluation volumes, timelines met, and systemic issues encountered. • Materials to assist ICANN with monitoring vendor performance.

Resources

This Resources section includes references and links to relevant supplementary documentation:

- [Applicant Guidebook Homepage](#): Provides the latest version of the Applicant Guidebook.
- [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Webpage](#): Provides general information about the 2026 Round.
- [Frequently Asked Questions Page](#): Provides information on various Guidebook topics.
- [Application Types FAQ Page](#): Provides information on Community Applications.
- [CPE Key Topic Overview](#): Provides an outline of key concepts and takeaways about CPE.

Appendix 1: Relevant Application Questions

The following are the relevant application questions that will be asked of all applicants applying for a Community gTLD. These questions can be found in Appendix 1 of the Guidebook, Question Set 7. The CPE panel will only review responses to these questions in the case where a Community Applicant is in contention and has opted to participate in CPE. See Guidebook [Section 5.4.1](#).

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (General)	131	Is this application for a Community gTLD?	<i>Instructions:</i> Select Yes or No.	<i>In the TLD Application Management System (TAMS), this question will be asked as part of the initial set of application type questions to determine appropriate routing and subsequent question sets.</i>
Community (General)	132	What community will the applied-for string serve?	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Provide the name of the community that the applying entity is committing to serve. 2. Describe the distinct aspects of the community.	<i>Though not tied to a specific sub-criterion, the response to this question will add to the panel's understanding of Criterion 1: Community Establishment.</i>
Mission & Purpose (General, required of all applying entities)	133	What is the mission and purpose of the applied-for gTLD?	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Describe the mission and purpose of the applied-for gTLD, including the intended registrants and users, and the related activities that have been or will be carried out to achieve this purpose. 1a. If applying for a variant of an existing gTLD, please also describe the mission and purpose of the existing gTLD, including the intended registrants and users, and the related activities that have been or will be carried out to achieve this purpose. 2. Explain how this purpose is sustainable over time.	<i>Though not tied to a specific sub-criterion, the response to this question will add to the panel's understanding of Criterion 1: Community Establishment.</i>

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (General)	134	How would you categorize your community?	<i>Instructions:</i> Enter a category that best describes your community. Some examples of community categories could include, but are not limited to: activity-based and volunteer groups, online or social media groups, religious or political groups, diasporic communities, linguistic communities, celebrity or sports team supporters.	<i>Though not tied to a specific sub-criterion, the response to this question will add to the panel's understanding of Criterion 1: Community Establishment.</i>
Community (Organization)	135	What is the applying entity's connection to the community?	<i>Instructions:</i> Describe and provide evidence of the relationship between the applying entity and the identified community.	<i>See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.</i>
Community (Organization)	136	How is the community organized? Are there one or multiple organizations ("organizing body") that represent or administer the community?	<i>Instructions:</i> Describe and provide evidence related to the community organization, any relevant organizing bodies, and any relevant leaders within the community.	<i>See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.</i>
Community (Organization)	137	Does the community have defined membership requirements, such as registration, licensing, or use of specific communication? Or, do community members self-identify as part of the community?	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Describe any formal membership process, if there is one. 2. If there is no formal membership process, provide evidence related to how an individual can join the identified community (that is, "self-identify" as a community member).	<i>See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.</i>
Community (Organization)	138	Where is the community located?	<i>Instructions:</i> Provide the primary location of the community.	<i>See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Note that "location" should be described in accordance with the type and features of the community identified—for example, "location" could be in multiple countries or regions or in digital spaces only.</i>

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Organization)	139	What is the estimated size of the community? This should take into account any regions listed in Question 138.	Instructions: 1. Provide the estimated size of the community. The size should be in number format (for example, “1,000,000 members”). 2. If the community is divided by group, region, sector, etc., this should include estimated size for each group.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Organization)	140	What portion of the community do any organizing bodies represent or administer to?	Instructions: Provide the estimated size of the community that is administered or represented by each relevant organizing body in the identified community.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Engagement)	141	Do the organizing bodies demonstrate active and consistent efforts to engage and connect with the identified community and its members?	Instructions: 1. Provide evidence of any documented practices of community efforts to date. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Offering support; b) Sharing information; c) Responding to specific community needs; d) Fostering and strengthening relationships within the community.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Engagement)	142	What is the role of the applying entity in the engagement efforts listed in Question 141?	Instructions: 1. Describe whether the applying entity has a role in any of the activities listed in Question 141. 2. If the applying entity does play a role, provide evidence of the applying entity's role. If the applying entity does not play a role, describe why this is the case.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Awareness)	143	Are community members aware of the identified community and each other?	Instructions: 1. Provide evidence that demonstrates that community members are aware of the identified community and the different member groups or segments within the identified community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Surveys conducted; b) Records of activities involving a diversity of community groups, segments, or members.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Awareness)	144	Are community members aware of the applying entity and its intention to apply for a Community gTLD?	Instructions: 1. Provide evidence of community members' awareness of the applying entity and its intent to apply for a Community gTLD. 2. If there is no such evidence, explain why not.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Established Presence)	145	Was there an established presence of the identified community prior to the opening of the application submission period?	Instructions: Provide evidence of the established presence of the community prior to the opening of the application submission period.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Established Presence)	146	Are individuals and groups outside of the identified community aware of the existence of the identified community?	Instructions: 1. Provide evidence that demonstrates that individuals and groups outside of the community show an awareness of the identified community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices, which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Media or other public information regarding the community and its activities or members; b) Discussion of the community in various fora, whether online or in person; c) Evidence of partnerships or collaborations with groups outside of the identified community; d) Evidence of the chartering or organization of the community prior to the opening of the application submission window; e) Evidence of contributions (for example, cultural or scientific) to a larger society or population.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Longevity)	147	Are the pursuits of the identified community enduring and sustainable?	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Provide evidence of the longevity of the community. 2. The applying entity should provide documentation of the following practices which should have occurred within the two years leading up to application submission: a) Evidence of recurring or scheduled activities that demonstrate continuity over time; b) Documented records of past activities that demonstrate a long-standing tradition or practice; c) Records of discussions emphasizing the community's enduring presence or its cultural significance.	See Rubric for Criterion 1 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Nexus)	148	Does the string match the name of the identified community?	<i>Instructions:</i> Explain how the applied-for string matches the name of the community or is a well-known alternative name (whether long or short form) of the community.	See Rubric for Criterion 2 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.
Community (Nexus)	149	Will the general public instinctively think of the community when thinking of the applied-for string?	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Explain how the applied-for string clearly relates to or represents the community. 2. Explain whether the applied-for string has any other significant meaning beyond identifying the community or community members described in the application. The applying entity may wish to provide pertinent information regarding any particular geography, region, or themes that may be alluded to by the string, of which the community may or may not be a part.	See Rubric for Criterion 2 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Community Registration Policy - General)	150	Are you proposing to include one or more Community Registration Policies in the Base RA that are unique to the applying entity's applied-for Community gTLD?	Instructions: Select from Radio Buttons - Yes/No Notes: 1. Community Registration Policies are conditions that Community gTLD registry operators impose upon registrants within their gTLDs. 2. If you select "Yes" to this question, the applying entity is required to pay the conditional Registry Commitments Evaluation fee, and Community Registration Policies that are approved by ICANN will be scored in the CPE (if the applying entity elects to participate) and included in Specification 12 of the applicable Base RA. 3. If you select "No," then the application cannot proceed as a Community Application.	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Community (Community Registration Policy - Eligibility; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	151	Please state a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to registration eligibility for community members.	Instructions: 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. –Truncated. See Guidebook for full set of notes–	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Community (Community Registration Policy - Name Selection; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	152	State a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to name selection criteria or rules for the applied-for string.	Instructions: 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Base Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. –Truncated. See Guidebook for full set of notes–	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Community Registration Policy - Other; RCE Criteria 1, 2 & 3)	153	State a specific Community Registration Policy with respect to an additional commitment besides registration eligibility for community members and naming selection criteria or rules for the applied-for string.	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Draft the Community Registration Policy as proposed contract language. Policies that are approved by ICANN will be included in Specification 12 of the applicable Registry Agreement and will be subject to enforcement by ICANN Contractual Compliance. See Appendix 4 Base Registry Agreement, Specification 12 for drafting approach. Consider the usage of defined terms and the definitions of such terms in the 2026 Round Base RA. –Truncated. See Guidebook for full set of notes–	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Community (Community Registration Policy; RCE Criterion 3)	154	Explain the rationale for any limitations to the Community Registration Policy proposed by the applying entity in Questions 151-153.	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. If you are proposing any limitation to a proposed Community Registration Policy in Questions 151-153, please provide a rationale in this response field. Please see Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria. 2. If you are not proposing any limitation to a proposed Community Registration Policy in Questions 151-153, please type "Not Applicable" in this response field.	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Community (Community Registration Policy; RCE Criteria 4 & 5)	155	Explain how the proposed Community Registration Policies of the applying entity meet the Registry Commitments Evaluation criteria 4 and 5.	<i>Instructions:</i> 1. Provide an explanation of how the proposed Community Registration Policies meet the Registry Commitments Evaluation criteria 4 and 5 using the considerations in the Section 7.8.3.3 Registry Voluntary Commitments (RVCs) Criteria. –Truncated. See Guidebook for full set of notes–	See Rubric for Criterion 3 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations. Please also note Guidebook Section 7.8 for full details on Registry Commitments and Registry Commitments Evaluation.
Community (Community Endorsement)	156	From where does the applying entity have the support to run the applied-for string on behalf of the identified community?	<i>Instructions:</i> Please provide evidence of support for the applying entity's application by attaching written endorsements from the organizing bodies relevant to the identified community (related to Question 136).	See Rubric for Criterion 4 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.

Relevant Criterion	#	Question	Applicant Guidebook Notes/Instructions	Additional Guidance related to CPE
Community (Community Endorsement)	157	Is there any opposition to the applying entity, application, or applied-for string that the applying entity is aware of? If yes, please explain.	<i>Instructions:</i> Provide an explanation of why opposition may or may not be relevant or how the applying entity intends to address or resolve the opposition, if applicable.	See Rubric for Criterion 4 for requirements for applicant documentation and panel considerations.

Appendix 2: Sample Letter of Support

[This letter should be provided on official letterhead]

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
12025 Waterfront Dr
Los Angeles, CA 90094
United States of America

Attention: CPE Panel

Subject: Letter of support for [Community Applicant Name] Application for [Requested TLD] Community

- [Introduction of supporting entity, e.g., name, location, size, overview of members]
- [Connection of supporting entity to identified community]
- [Connection of supporting entity to community applicant]
- [Rationale for supporting community applicant, e.g., benefits of having the identified community supported by a TLD which would be operated by this particular applicant]

Thank you for the opportunity to support this application.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Full Name]

[Official Title]

[Contact Information]

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND



@icann



facebook.com/icannorg



youtube.com/icannnews



flickr.com/icann



linkedin.com/company/icann



instagram.com/icannorg



newgtldprogram.icann.org >