

17 June 2014

Mr Akram Atallah  
President, Global Domains Division  
ICANN

cc: Dr Stephen D. Crocker, Chairman, Board of Directors  
Mr Fadi Chehadé, President and CEO, ICANN

VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. Atallah,

**Re: NTAG, RySG and BRG Feedback on GDD Services**

In Singapore, the New TLD Applicant Group (NTAG) and the Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG) engaged in a constructive interaction with the ICANN Board and senior management regarding the services delivered by ICANN's Global Domains Division (GDD). During the session, we were requested to provide further feedback. This letter satisfies that request.

A super-majority of RySG and NTAG members support the concerns and recommendations in this letter. This includes existing registry operators, new registry operators and new gTLD applicants that are RySG and NTAG members.

Overall, we believe that ICANN needs to focus on developing the people and processes that result in excellent service delivery. While the detailed points below will hopefully improve current issues in GDD processes, the GDD needs leadership that is focussed on meeting customer needs. This leadership would benefit from having reasonable metrics that decide whether or not that is actually happening. Reporting like this could then be a basis for incentives for GDD staff that can affect them. Whatever the approach to resolving issues is, the overall goal of excellent delivery should be paramount.

As metrics are a crucial part of these roles, the RySG and NTAG would welcome the opportunity to work with ICANN to develop agreed upon metrics that jointly define both successful service delivery and product management. We also believe that these metrics should be measured by an independent body that reports back to the contracted parties to ensure that such metrics are being achieved.

Specifically, rather than provide ICANN with a GDD score or report card, we elected to go a step further. We have identified key urgent areas for improvement and provided detailed suggestions for making those improvements. The goal is a notable improvement in registry operator and/or applicant satisfaction with GDD implementation.

To achieve this, during May 2014, the NTAG and the RySG jointly convened a working group to gather applicant and registry operator feedback on GDD performance. The group asked members to identify specific issues of concern, to prioritise and classify them, and also to suggest ideas for resolving them. In addition, the Brand Registry Group (BRG), independently consulted its membership directly and provided a consensus suite of eight recommendations (see Annex 1) some of which overlap. Five key areas for improvement were identified:

1. Implement reliable and usable service platforms;
2. Assign an account manager to each applicant and/or registry operator;
3. Commit to standard service levels especially for response times, progress updates on open issues, and escalation. Publicly report on performance;
4. Improve GDD communications, notably the ICANN website and webinars; and
5. Implement a reliable Registry Services Evaluation Process (RSEP).

In October 2012 at the opening ceremony of the Toronto meeting, Fadi Chehadé (as ICANN's new CEO) unveiled his vision for ICANN management delivery and identified four key objectives, one of which was "operations excellence". In Mr Chehadé's own words:

*"We must raise the level of operations excellence at ICANN. We will not scale without this. We will not do our basic work without this. ...we must optimize our services to the growing number of registries and registrars. They come to ICANN to get their business done. It is our job to get their work done for them. And that needs to be raised to a new level of excellence".*

Our contracts with ICANN contain strict service levels and consequences for failure to meet them. The correspondence we receive from ICANN usually stipulates clear timelines for us to respond. In stark contrast, we found the term "black hole" used in five survey responses (out of a total of 39) as there is no measurable performance commitment or requirement on the part of ICANN nor is there anyone tasked with ensuring that ICANN's obligations are being met.

The IANA stewardship transition represents a crossroads for ICANN and the issue of ICANN accountability has become more important than ever. At this critical juncture, ICANN must improve its service delivery to demonstrate that it is accountable at least to its direct users as well as customers, namely, registry operators and registrars.

## Approach and Summary of Findings

A survey was employed as the core mechanism to elicit feedback from NTAG and RySG members regarding the GDD. The survey was considered to be a success with 39 responses received. Members were able to submit more than one response. The survey was designed to elicit constructive feedback regarding areas of the GDD that could be improved with a focus on solutions and not problems. In addition, the BRG provided a consensus suite of recommendations that further buttress this research. As such, the feedback has been presented in this letter as implementable recommendations. We trust that this approach will facilitate the prompt improvement of services provided by the GDD.

The responses indicate a general view that the GDD can improve customer service. The majority of feedback therefore relates to measures aimed at ensuring that the GDD's first and foremost focus is customer service. The responses also describe interactions that identify a lack of responsiveness and collaboration from ICANN to registry operators. An increase in the level of respect ICANN shows its registry operator customers and the adoption of a more collaborative approach are measures identified in the responses to improve the relationship between ICANN and registry operators.

## Recommendations Set 1

The implementation of the following recommendations is proposed to address the various concerns identified by NTAG and RySG members regarding the GDD. Please see also Recommendations set 2 (BRG) in Annex 1.

**1. Reliable and Usable Service Platforms.** Specifically, Implement a Bug Report and Feature Request System for the GDD Portal and apply 'fixes' to the GDD Portal to improve usability/performance

The responses demonstrated that the GDD portal is suffering from implementation issues and perhaps some design flaws. It has become quite evident to registry operators and applicants that ICANN does not yet seem to have effective product management in place. Tools do not seem to undergo the scrutiny of someone who is channelling user needs into a set of requirements, improvements or fixes that engineers can develop against.

A formal product manager role for each major tool and/or process would help. If that person is clearly identified and can accept end-user feedback, issues like those described in this letter may not arise or could be more quickly resolved. That person(s) will have product management experience at scale.

The responses identified a number of fixes to the GDD portal that can be implemented to improve its usability. As these suggestions are likely to evolve over time, we recommend the implementation of a Bug Report and Feature Request System for the GDD portal. This system will provide the GDD with continual feedback regarding the portal from its users and ensure that updates to the portal reflect the needs of users. The requests should be made public (bugs should remain private until assessed for security risks).

Requests should also be assigned states, which describe the GDD's current assessment of the request. There should be two possible terminal states: will implement/won't implement. Should ICANN choose not to implement a request, ICANN must provide an explanation of the reasoning behind that decision. All requests should be addressed within 3 months.

Pending the implementation of this system, the responses identified the following improvements that should be implemented in the GDD portal:

- A. Addition of an 'Awaiting ICANN Input' case status. This status can be updated automatically once the registry operator provides input on a case with 'Awaiting Customer Input' status. Alternatively, registry operators should be granted the option to select this status on cases.
- B. Introduction of a feature that increases the severity of cases based on the length of time since last response from ICANN. This will mitigate the risk of cases slipping into a 'black hole'.
- C. Introduction of a feature that allows registry operators to flag the severity of cases created. The level of severity should be defined by reference to the timeframe it must be resolved in and should be based on the level of harm to the registry operator's business.
- D. Introduction of a feature that allows registry operators to escalate cases to the designated Account Manager (described in a recommendation below). The survey responses also conveniently define the levels of escalation of such a feature.
- E. Introduction of a feature that requests the registry operator's feedback on the resolution of the case upon the case being closed/resolved. This feature can include scorecards on parameters such as timeliness, effectiveness and overall satisfaction. Where a low score is provided, the registry operator will be invited to re-open or escalate the case. Scores should be reported appropriately to encourage continual improvement of customer service.
- F. By default, hide all cases with status 'Closed' and 'Resolved' in the case list view whilst maintaining the option to manually view these cases.
- G. Addition of an option to remember the preference of a user regarding the number of preferred cases viewed per page. The default is currently 10 and while the option exists to select a higher number, this selection cannot be saved.

- H. Implementation of a notification system, similar to the CSC portal, which generates an email to the registry operator when a comment is made on a case.
- I. To articulate preferred/tested browsers so that users do not experience glitches or unexpected behaviour. The survey responses suggest that JavaScript compatibility and behaviour appears to be particularly problematic. While we are unable to validate the exact cause of problems our respondents experienced, respondents identified the desire to at least be informed of known working combinations of operating systems and browsers with the GDD portal.
- J. Implementation of mechanisms to streamline the efforts of registry operators of multiple TLDs.
- K. Addition of the contact details for the relevant GDD staff member in all cases.
- L. Consideration of closed beta tests to trial new features. Registry operators expressed a keen willingness to partake in closed beta tests. The responses helpfully recommend some parameters for these tests.
- M. The ability of a nominated party to provide technical information for the ONBIR portion of the GDD. Currently the registry operator provides this information, which is highly complex and technical. That leaves our respondents in a position where they must either receive intensive and complicated coaching to submit this information or they must provide their credentials to their back end registry operator. Neither alternative is very practical and the second option is not behaviour that should be encouraged through the lack of effective system capabilities.
- N. Providing a printable version of the Contact Information Page.
- O. Consideration of the addition of an API that allows registry operators to streamline integration of cases and alerts with the registry operator's existing ticketing systems. The API should cover the various ICANN controlled systems to provide an overall picture of the status of the TLD (e.g. a "health check"). Integration will enable registry operators to act faster and experience an improved quality of service.

As part of the metrics recommended in this letter, ICANN should carefully track the performance of the service platforms that it maintains including, but not limited to, the GDD Portal, the CSC Portal, the Centralized Zone Data Service (CZDS), and the Registrar Contact Information Database. These metrics should include uptime, number of reported bugs, time taken to fix reported bugs, notice periods for planned downtimes, and time taken to notify affected parties of unplanned downtimes or security breaches. The required service level across each of these metrics should be made known to the contracted parties and tracked or audited by an independent party. Given the criticality of such services to the day-to-day business operations of contracted parties, these service platforms should be held to the highest standards for uptime and comparably high standards across all other metrics. Further, the NTAG and the RySG are seriously concerned about a number of previous technical issues or security failures across ICANN platforms including the TAS leak and, recently, the

CZDS failure. An independent body should be called upon in the case of security breaches or other system failures to certify that appropriate steps are being taken to correct the identified security or other technical weaknesses, as well as to ensure that the proper actions are being taken to notify and provide remedy to affected parties.

Finally, it must be noted that some responses indicated that the point of contact information provided in the GDD portal is not being utilised by ICANN staff e.g. compliance or finance. This compromises operational predictability and defeats the purpose of collecting and consolidating data from registry operators.

Implementation of this recommendation will necessitate the deployment of resources to provide enterprise level technical maintenance of the GDD portal to ensure its scalability and usability.

## **2. Assign an Account Manager to each Registry Operator and/or Applicant**

*Note: Also identified by BRG members (see Annex 1 recommendation 4).*

Whilst the GDD portal has been deployed by ICANN as the primary tool to communicate with registry operators, its use is inappropriate and inefficient at times when a personalised service is required. The responses indicated that accessibility of GDD staff remains to be an issue with many registry operators unaware of who they should contact, or how, when the need arises. These respondents pointed to the lack of any information identifying a GDD staff member in correspondence. The responses also made reference to the titles of members of the Registry Services team (Product Managers) as indicative of the team's misaligned focus on products instead of customers.

In order to provide a holistic approach to customer service, the GDD portal must be complemented by Account Managers who are supported by knowledgeable subject matter experts. We recommend that every registry operator be assigned an Account Manager upon execution of the Registry Agreement. The Account Manager will serve as the registry operator's single point of contact at ICANN for instances where the use of the GDD portal is inappropriate or when escalation from such is required. There should be diversity in Account Managers in terms of geographical location and spoken languages to ensure the provision of a service tailored to the specific needs of registry operators. The deployment of Account Managers will inject a much needed dose of customer service into the GDD by facilitating the delivery of a personalised service to registry operators.

As discussed as far back as 2011 at the Registry/Registrar meeting in Los Angeles with then-ICANN staff Kurt Pritz, the Account Managers must also have the authority to resolve issues and not merely serve as a "liaison" between other ICANN departments and registry operators. Merely having a single-point of contact that serves as a conduit of information is not enough. That person MUST have the authority to resolve issues that come up or at least drive those issues towards a timely successful resolution.

### 3. Clearly Defined Public Responsiveness and Communications Practices and Reporting

*Note: Also identified by BRG members (see Annex 1 recommendation 3)*

The responses indicate a general view that the GDD is suffering from poor customer service, specifically with respect to the time taken to respond to registry operators. The responses indicate that the delays experienced are not commensurate with the amount of effort required by the GDD; one member reported a wait time of three weeks, including multiple follow up emails, to receive an acknowledgement of a request. It must be stressed that registry operators rely on ICANN to, in the words of Mr Chehadé, 'get their business done'. Delays in resolving an issue may be justified, complete radio silence on the part of the GDD cannot. It is critical that the issue of responsiveness is addressed promptly.

In order to address these concerns and promote operational predictability, we recommend that the GDD:

- A. Define and publish Performance Metrics;
- B. Publish a monthly report on its delivery of services against the Performance Metrics and where those metrics are not met, provide an explanation detailing any corrective and preventative actions taken; and
- C. Implement measures to ensure that staff remuneration (at the very least the bonus component) is linked to the Performance Metrics.

This effort will require the GDD to define and commit to timelines for its services. In some cases, this will necessitate the clarification of GDD processes. The responses identified the crucial need for the GDD to define and commit to timelines for the following services and functions:

- D. The time taken for the GDD to respond to GDD portal cases with status 'Awaiting ICANN Input'.
- E. The time taken for the GDD to respond to submissions made from the Bug Report and Feature Request System and to fix identified bugs.
- F. The time taken to respond to, and resolve, a case in the GDD portal or the CSC portal. All open cases should be updated at least once a week and an effort made to provide substantive and transparent updates.
- G. The time taken to publish correspondence on the ICANN correspondence page. The responses described long delays in the publication of correspondence and identified the lack of published guidelines regarding such.

- H. The time taken to evaluate the completeness of a RSEP request. A number of responses identified the crucial need for clarification of the RSEP to ensure its alignment with the Registry Services Evaluation Policy.
- I. The time taken for an Account Manager to respond to its registry operator customer and resolve issues noting the time-sensitive nature of some of the registry operator's obligations e.g. implementation of URS request.
- J. The time taken to complete each of the steps in the Change Request Process.
- K. The number of cases that have required escalation or re-opening before being resolved.

This recommendation, along with that to assign Account Managers are perhaps the most critical recommendations that necessitate prompt implementation as they have the potential to address a broad range of concerns by maintaining an open line of communication between the GDD and registry operators whilst promoting operational predictability. These recommendations will promote transparency in the GDD and maintain a culture of operational excellence.

#### **4. Improved GDD Communications, Notably the ICANN Website, GDD Webinars and Availability Across Time Zones.**

A number of responses related to the GDD webinars - the primary mechanism deployed by the GDD to interact with registry operators. These responses recommended the implementation of measures to promote consistency in webinars conducted by the GDD.

Members want to see a consistent, predictable approach to scheduling webinars, question and answers handling, and presentation of updates. As slides are often general updates, we propose that ICANN publish them in advance of the webinar. That way, instead of simply reading the slides, each slide can be used to answer questions on that topic following a short introduction. A web form with a confirmation of receipt will ensure that ICANN has a one-stop shop for applicants to submit questions and to easily manage question submission windows.

We encourage ICANN to seek ideas for current topics from registry operators and applicants in advance of the webinars, perhaps via the RySG/NTAG ExCom. ICANN should consider inviting a number of applicants (perhaps a different random sample) following each call to debrief and take suggestions for improvement.

Specific measures identified by members include:

- A. All webinar announcements to include a high level summary of the topic and allow for questions to be submitted in advance of a clearly stated deadline.
- B. Publication of timelines for submitting questions in advance that will then be addressed in the webinar.
- C. Use of a web form to collect questions prior to webinars.



- D. Questions and responses should be open to the public and included in the slides in a Q&A section of the webinar.
- E. Publication of webinar slides should be simultaneous with or in advance of the beginning of the webinar.
- F. Publication of timelines for the release of audio and responses to unanswered questions.
- G. Consistency in the length of webinars.

**5. Implement a Reliable RSEP Procedure.** Ensure timely and effective service based on a clearly explained process.

For the last few months RSEP requests from registry operators have experienced some or all of the issues identified below:

- A. Lack of timeliness. The RSEP Policy implies a 15-day period for ICANN to review a proposed service, and in many RSEPs this has not been adhered to. In some cases RSEP reviews have extended to several months. The ICANN Registry Services team acknowledged some delays and committed to adhering to the policy. Unfortunately this did not happen in some cases. ICANN has acknowledged issues with the RSEP and pledged to resolve them. We particularly highlight the importance of timeliness as this work is completed.
- B. Lack of effectiveness. Many registry operators proposing RSEPs for extending IDN (Internationalized Domain Names) support experienced extensive back-and-forth with ICANN during the completeness review. Registry operators would prefer to have clear guidance on how they should proceed to provide these services. Both ICANN and registry operators would benefit from more effective guidance that reduces transaction cost.
- C. Lack of process. RSEP Policy specifies a single public comment period. Until 2013 these were only posted at the RSEP comment page (<http://forum.icann.org/lists/registryservice/>). Many newer RSEPs have been posted at the new RSEP page <http://www.icann.org/en/registries/rsep/> and then again at <https://www.icann.org/public-comments>. Since both of these pages are public and receive comments from all stakeholders, the effect of this double posting was two rounds of public comments when only one was defined in policy.

We understand ICANN is taking steps to improve and streamline the RSEP. We fully support this effort and look forward to updates on how these improvements address these and other concerns that may arise. The number of RSEPs can be expected to increase substantially in the coming years. Scalability of these and other processes will continue to be a key issue. Performance monitoring and a constructive on-going dialogue with registry operators – early in the process before problems arise - may help avoid challenges like this in the future.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The RySG and NTAG identified four key areas for GDD improvement. Improve the GDD portal, assign account managers, provide better certainty, and improve regular communications.

In addition, the BRG consensus also calls for an improved and customised applicant guidebook, improved customer service, and simpler, better organized communications across all platforms.

We believe that, once implemented, these recommendations will significantly improve the service that registry operators and applicants receive from the GDD. Naturally, new issues or challenges may arise. We advise the GDD not to see this effort as a 'one-off', but rather as the beginning of a regular and sustained effort to build efficiency and trust.

As such, our approach to the next steps in this process is as follows:

1. We invite the GDD to attend the RySG meeting at ICANN 50 in London to discuss these two sets of recommendations.
2. We ask ICANN to present a plan to address these recommendations in advance of the July 23rd RySG conference call.
3. We will establish a public tracking tool to monitor ICANN progress on implementation of these recommendations.
4. We will work with ICANN to establish formal, ongoing GDD service delivery and product management metrics and an issue-tracking tool.

We thank ICANN for its willingness to listen and hope our feedback and recommendations will go some way to help improve ICANN service delivery.

Sincerely,

Keith Drazek, Chair  
Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG)

Jacob Malthouse, Chair  
New gTLD Applicant Group (NTAG)

## Annex 1: Recommendations Set 2 (Brand Registry Group)

### Improving service to domain name applicants

June 2014

#### Background

At ICANN49 Singapore Akram Atallah, President of ICANN's Global Domains Division (GDD), invited the New TLDs Applicant Group (NTAG) and others to provide feedback on issues of customer service. The Brand Registry Group (BRG) has since joined a discussion group to coordinate that feedback, and this paper is the BRG's input to that group. The BRG's feedback covers over-arching issues relevant to both the current and future rounds and some specific issues that may be corrected in the short-term.

#### 1. Applicant Guidebook

The Applicant Guidebook (AG) suffers from a fundamental problem. It was written for two separate audiences.

The first audience was an internal one of ICANN's policy-development body the Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO). The guidebook attempted to explain how GNSO policy was being implemented. As a result it included history and background.

The second audience was an external one, the domain name applicant who was interested only in the process of how to apply.

As a result of trying to speak to two audiences, it failed both. From the applicants perspective, the guidebook is:

- overly long
- confusing
- duplicative
- poorly indexed.

#### Consequences of a confusing Applicant Guidebook

The confusing nature of the AG had two negative consequences.

1. Applicants were confused and asked ICANN more questions than necessary

2. ICANN staff were confused and sometimes did not know the answers. Sometimes unless a question was absolutely precise, a response was an unhelpful repetition of the text from the AG.

**Recommendation 1.** Write a new Applicant Guidebook now stripping out background, and create a step by step guide for applicants. Number and index the guidebook consistently.

## **2. Customisation of the Applicant Guidebook and other materials**

With respect to the Registry aspects of owning and operating a domain name, applicants may elect to appoint a Registry Services Provider to (a) assist with the Registry aspects of the application and/or (b) to execute some or all of the Registry aspects of the launch and operational phases. It follows therefore that the audience for ICANN documentation will cover a range in the depth of knowledge that an applicant should need to acquire. ICANN materials could be much better structured if this situation was better recognised in its documentation. Keep it simple for the end customer.

**Recommendation 2.** Improve the customisation of documentation to differentiate between the registry operator, and third-party providers of registry, back-end technical and financial services.

## **3. Certainty in response times**

A key success factor for any service-provider responding to a client is certainty in timing. Both parties, can work with problems if there is certainty as to when they will be addressed. BRG members report wait times of 3 weeks without acknowledgement. Such certainty is lacking in the GDD's responses to domain name applicants.

**Recommendation 3.** Acknowledge all enquiries within 24 hours of receipt with an estimate of the actual time frame to provide a substantive response. That time frame should be adhered to and used as a performance metric.

## **4. Client Services Manager**

In other fields, a client paying a service fee in the hundreds of thousands would expect a dedicated and named Client Services Manager.

**Recommendation 4.** Allocate a named Client Services Manager to each applicant.

## **5. Troubleshooting and new issues**

In the absence of our recommendation for a dedicated client services manager (which would meet the same objective), when there is a failure of service (such as an overly long time lag to respond) or new issues to raise it would help to have a series of subject specific points of contact to address

the issue. Focusing all troubleshooting and new issues through the Vice President, DNS Industry Engagement, has issues of scale.

**Recommendation 5.** Create a series of subject specific points of contact for troubleshooting and new issues.

## **6. Acronyms**

Both the Applicant Guidebook, continued ICANN advisories, and staff presentations at ICANN meetings are replete with acronyms. (The homepage of ICANN's new website on the day of writing had 6 undefined acronyms (IANA, NTIA, DNSSEC, ALAC, gTLDs, AOC). The landing page of ICANN's applicants portal contains 8 undefined acronyms (gTLD, PIC, GAC, EW, IE, EE, PDT, IDN). Brand Registry Group members have been at a number of ICANN presentations where speakers have talked in acronyms the whole time and informal audience feedback is that sessions are wasted because audiences have had no idea what was being discussed. Often, the golden rule of any external communication using acronyms is ignored. If you must use them, always define them upon first use. Only a handful of acronyms are so well known they do not need to be defined.

**Recommendation 6.** Define acronyms on first use and where appropriate frequently provide links to a glossary.

## **7. New gTLD Customer Service Center (CSC)**

Questions asked of the CSC which are posted are not indexed according to subject or date asked so other applicants seeking the same information have to trawl through everything. This is inefficient for both applicants and staff.

**Recommendation 7.** Index by subject and date all published questions to the Customer Service Centre.

## **8. Improved website logic and navigation**

It is often challenging to find information on the ICANN site. Typically a user has to go to a number of different places to find what they are looking for. For example, GAC advice, ICANN decisions and Customer Service Centre requests may all be found in different places. This may also have the effect that a user misses something because they didn't know they needed to look for it.

**Recommendation 8.** Associate all relevant material relating to a particular application in one place on the website.

## About Us

The Brand Registry Group (BRG) is an independent membership organisation of owners of a top-level domain name that matches their existing brand. The turnover of the respective groups behind these domain names is some \$880 billion. The BRG is registered by Royal Decree as an international not-for-profit under Belgian law. It represents members' common interests and offers services paid for from fees.

## Annex 2: RySG/NTAG Member Survey Responses

### Response 1

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Currently, there are four [known] statuses for GDD cases: "Resolved", "Closed", "In Progress", and "Awaiting Customer Input". The final one does not change, even if customer inputs the requested information. This should automatically change OR the customer should have the option to change the status to "Awaiting ICANN Input".*

**Improvement**

*Update the GDD status codes to appropriately reflect the actual case status. Allow registries the option to choose the correct status code.*

### Response 2

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*The sheer number of GDD cases can quickly get out of control; "Closed" and "Resolved" cases do not need to be loaded every time one accesses the list of cases.*

**Improvement**

*Hide all "Closed" and "Resolved" cases as a default upon going to the case-list view. Have the option to view "Closed" and "Resolved" cases manually rather than automatically.*

### Response 3

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*While it is nice to be able to choose the number of records the case-view (or TLD-view) page loads, the default is 10. If one wishes the default to be 25, 50, or 100, one has to make that choice each time the page loads. The page should remember the default number once a user has chosen it.*

**Improvement**

*Create an option to lock the preferred number of records per page, rather than having to change each time the page loads.*

**Response 3**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Cases can easily slip into a "black hole" where no response from ICANN are forthcoming. This may be because, as they age, their urgency diminishes on the back end. This can be solved by instructing the system to increase urgency of cases that have had no response from ICANN and/or by adding an option for users to change the case status from "In Progress" to "Awaiting ICANN Response". This can also be solved by a commitment from ICANN to respond within a certain amount of time.*

**Improvement**

- 1. The GDD system should increase the urgency of cases based on their age-since-last-response-from-ICANN so that registries' concerns do not get lost.*
- 2. Add the option of "Awaiting ICANN Response" as a status code and allow registries to change the status of a case.*
- 3. ICANN should commit to replying to every open case at least once a week with an update. Note that "we are still investigating" is not an update and the update should be substantive ("We have received an answer from one department but now legal has to review it because we're scared." is equally unacceptable but at least it might be truthful).*

**Response 4**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*RSEP Process*

**Description**

*RSEP timing. While ICANN began to address what timing Registries can expect in the last RySG meeting, they did not commit to a set time frame for evaluating the completeness of a RSEP request.*

**Improvement**

*Set defined timeframes, e.g. ICANN will respond to a Registry within 5 business days regarding whether the RSEP request requires additional information or is incomplete.*

**Response 5**

**Importance**

*Medium*



**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to Applicants*

*ICANN Operations is not as responsive as one would like. Francisco is a great asset, but he appears to have too many things on his plate and is often a bottleneck for technical issues.*

**Improvement**

*Provide points of contact for other ICANN operations that are qualified and able to respond to registry problems. If necessary, hire other operations staff to provide assistance in ironing out the various technical problems the GDD is facing and continues to face.*

## Response 6

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*General feedback*

*GDD portal is not easy to manage for registries with multiple TLDs. There have been multiple bugs and it takes days/weeks to iron out the problems.*

**Improvement**

*Hire more operations folks to make sure it is functioning as expected.*

## Response 7

**Importance**

*Low*

**Category**

*GDD Communications (e.g webinars)*

**Description**

*General feedback*

*URS policy documents are not clear on how whether a registry or registrar is expected to facilitate renewal of a URS suspension at the request of a winning complainant.*

**Improvement**

*ICANN should publish further guidelines regarding URS.*

## Response 8

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Certainty for applicants/registries*

*Speed up the Communication process between ICANN staff and GDD users (aka customers, aka Registries). It takes days and in one case over a week for a response.*

**Improvement**

*Speed up the communication between customer Care Staff, registry department and the GDD users.*

## Response 9

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*The GDD should send out notification E-Mail each time a comment was made in a GDD case or about information about new work items.*

**Improvement**

*Implementing a E-Mail notification System like the CSC already has.*

## Response 10

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*One major issues in our applications for .reise and .versicherung is that it seems that some data i have entered in the forms (registry contact data) were not submitted to the GDD staff.*

*The notification that the submitted information is incomplete (which is weird because no-one can submit the form without all fields filled) takes approx. a week.*

**Improvement**

*Check the whole interface and Forms for Browser compatibility (eg. java script interpretation) In our case, i used Opera and maybe that was the cause of the issue.*

*Provide suggestions of browsers which one should use in order to guarantee non-glitching communication.*

**Response 11**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*No single account. 2 separate accounts one for each of our 2 registry agreement signed TLDs, related to 2 different email addresses. So we have to login and logout to shift from one TLD to the other.*

**Improvement**

*Verification prior to creating the registry account. Anticipate issues to provide a single unique account to each registry.*

**Response 12**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*As a general point, response times from the CSC have been very poor recently. I have had to wait up to three weeks, including multiple chases, to receive even an acknowledgement of requests submitted through the CSC. Some of these have been relatively simple to resolve, such as confirming receipt of a letter of credit, making the wait time even less excusable. A delay in resolving an issue is one thing, but complete radio silence is not an acceptable level of service.*

**Improvement**

*I am not sure where the problem lies. It may be a resourcing issue or an organisational issue, but whatever it is it requires some attention and additional funding if necessary, as applicants deserve a better service. I have had to resort to escalating my questions to ICANN staff directly.*

**Response 13**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*The Registry Contact Information for our TLD was incorrect and trying to update the data fields to the correct data was a trying and frustrating experience. When we tried to update the data fields, the information would revert to the old, incorrect data. If we tried to start-over, again the old incorrect data would reappear. There was simply no method to update it to the correct data. After several hours of trying to update a simple contact information form, we finally gave up and submitted a case to customer support. Customer support turn response time was fast which we appreciated.*

*Eventually, we ended up submitting the information via a document whereby ICANN staff updated all of the data fields and we simply approved the information.*

**Improvement**

## Response 14

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*GDD is like a black hole. There is no clear timeline when an inquiry/issue will be responded to or addressed.*

**Improvement**

- 1. GDD should set and publish performance metrics, including timelines to address or resolve different types of inquiries or issues;*
- 2. GDD should publish a monthly report on its delivery of services against those metrics; and*
- 3. GDD staff's remuneration (or at least the bonus component) should be linked to meeting those metrics.*

## Response 15

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*No staff name identified and no phone number provided in ICANN's correspondence.*

**Improvement**

*Provide name and phone number of staff member who is competent and authorized to make decisions and preferably in the same or close time zone as the applicant/registry and speaks the local language.*

**Response 16**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*Registry POC updates in GDD Portal are being ignored and updated contact information is not shared or used by staff of GDD or other departments, including Compliance, Finance or CZDS.*

**Improvement**

*Use the latest POC data in the GDD portal as provided/updated by registries.*

**Response 17**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*I would like to have a name, email address and phone number attached to cases that are open in the GDD portal. The process now is to post something, wait a day for a response, post a response, wait a day for a response, etc. It's not always conducive to solving issues, especially issues or questions that are complex or nuanced. I'd like to be able to open a ticket, but then have a conversation with a real human being about the ticket that was opened.*

**Improvement**

*Make sure that each ticket in the GDD portal has a personal contact that can be reached by the registry if there are follow-up questions or additional information that need to be provided.*

**Response 18**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*When printing eg the Contact Information Page, not the whole telephone numbers or addresses are on the printed paper.*

**Improvement**

*Please provide a printable page.*

**Response 19**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*After using the "Save" Button some information just entered was deleted and we had to insert the data again.*

**Improvement**

**Response 20**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Communications (e.g webinars)*

**Description**

*There needs to be consistency to GDD webinars and this should sync up with an effort to provide consistency to all ICANN webinars (such as those held by compliance as well).*

**Improvement**

*All webinar announcements should include a high level summary of what will be addressed and allow for questions to be submitted in advance, with a clearly stated deadline (There was no clear deadline for May 21 GDD webinar and ICANN staff claimed it had received no questions from the NTAG, which were in fact submitted two days prior.)*

*There should be clearly communicated timelines to release slides and audio.*

*There should be a clearly communicated deadline to release responses to all questions that were submitted and not answered during the webinar.*

*There should be consistency to the length of the webinar. The GDD Webinars recently replaced the Applicant update webinars. The applicant update webinars ran an hour and a half and the GDD webinar was inexplicably cut down to an hour - timing should reflect content and by the level of questions that were submitted and not answered 1 hour was clearly not enough time to address the current reality of applicants and registries.*

## Response 21

### Importance

*Medium*

### Category

*GDD Communications (e.g webinars)*

### Description

*Good business practice*

*There is a lack of responsiveness and teamwork between ICANN and contracted parties. The most pertinent example I can think of is the delays and denied requests on behalf of ICANN with respect to new Registry outreach. The New Registry welcome kit has been an unequivocal failure and there seems to have been weeks of silence on ICANN's part.*

*I think another pertinent example is that the RySG Secretary, Cherie Stubbs, made a simple request to have ICANN send out an introduction to new registries re: the RySG, or provide contact details to allow her to do so. The latter request was denied and I'm not sure of the status of the former. There is no reason ICANN should withhold this information from the Secretary given that it is publicly available and denying the request comes across as simply disrespectful to her and the RySG's time since it leaves Cherie to manually extract contact details for all new registries. This is unacceptable.*

### Improvement

*Treat us with the respect we deserve regarding timeliness and collaboration on seemingly simple matters.*

## Response 22

### Importance

*High*

### Category

*Operations*

### Description

*There is a complete disregard for timelines and no operational excellence tied to defining and meeting timelines*

*We have seen a simple change request take around 4 months, with all inquiries to ICANN being simply returned as "This is still under review" or "We will update soon" or otherwise blanket statements that have no information or binding action.*

*We endeavoured to change our claims dates, which seems to have presumptive approval as ICANN requires only 4 days notice to update. We were only given approval a week later after escalating this issue to ICANN leadership.*

*The RSEP issue has been plagued by a complete disregard for consensus policy timelines, and even though ICANN has moved the markers on this matter and redefined the process after the fact, ICANN continues to miss the mark by days.*

**Improvement**

*Develop a culture of operational excellence around timelines and manage resources effectively, also, it should be noted that there are no known repercussions or procedures for dealing with missed timelines.*

*ICANN should provide an explanation for any missed timeline; the steps that are taken to ensure it is not repeated; and detail any preventative actions to ensure the issue is not repeated.*

## Response 23

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Communications (e.g webinars)*

**Description**

*A lack of reporting over missteps and statuses by the GDD.*

*Glitches such as CZDS or failures such as the RSEP "black hole" should be addressed in a uniform manner. We should expect to see a description of the issue; how the issue is being solved; when the issue will be solved or when we can expect a further update; and finally any preventative steps that will be implemented to avoid the issue in the future.*

**Improvement**

*The manage by crisis model that was best demonstrated by the TAS glitch continues to plague ICANN. Transparency and operational predictability are important remedies to this.*

## Response 24

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

**Description**

*The GDD needs to improve its contingency planning and scaling of operations.*

*Too often we have heard the response that the team was not properly trained, resources, or staffed in general to fulfil their responsibilities in a timely or effective matter.*



*The RSEP issue is but one example, wherein an anticipation that RSEPs would increase as the number of registries increased would have eased the backlog, especially given the fact that ICANN had recommended the RSEP as the process to use to free 2 character domain names in private talks with our registry*

**Improvement**

*Response times related to basic CSC issues have decreased dramatically and this seems to be a good example of ICANN responding to scaling issues in an effective manner. Be more thorough in its contingency and operational planning.*

**Response 25**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Certainty for applicants/registries*

*The status of the Work items change without any notification or call to action, nor any instructions on further steps. Unclear if there is a problem, what needs to be done or is it just a system glitch.*

**Improvement**

*We should be sent email notification if there are new cases or work items change their status.*

**Response 26**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Certainty for applicants/registries*

*Cases for multiple TLDs are piled in Cases all in one place. No clear distinction one from another.*

**Improvement**

*The case and the TLD it applies to should be made clearer.*

**Response 27**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*We are not receiving notification emails every time ICANN adds a comment on a case?*

**Improvement**

*Any indication that something new has been added to the case (on Cases page), next to the case will help attract attention to act on it asap. Ideally we receive notification of new action taken on all cases on the GDD.*

**Response 28**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Responsiveness to applicants/registries*

*Communication and avoiding black holes.*

**Improvement**

*Open and straightforward communication with registries regarding any unexpected holdup in the contracting and delegation process.*

**Response 29**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*The new GDD portal does not function at the level expected from a commercial enterprise. Our staff routinely works with ICANN staff to debug the GDD portal technical issues. Further, the GDD portal as it is currently designed does not streamlined and does not scale easily for registries with multiple TLDs.*

**Improvement**

*Train and/or hire more technical staff that is capable of running and maintaining a complex portal. Work with registries to determine what customer facing changes should be made.*

**Response 30**

**Importance**

*Medium*

**Category**

*RSEP Process*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*The RSEP process is not at all clear. Once a request is submitted, it falls into a black hole into which registries have no visibility regarding whether the RSEP is considered complete, when it is being reviewed by ICANN, or what the outcome of the RSEP process is expected to be. The RSEP process is not being followed. Rather than a collaborative process between the registry and ICANN, the RSEP process has become lopsided where registries are forced to wait for months to have their requests considered. New gTLD registry operators are being treated differently than incumbent registries.*

**Improvement**

*Clarify the phases of the RSEP process so that the language aligns with the RSEP Policy more closely. Publish a specific timeline between phases. Work openly with registries to ensure that RSEP requests are processed in a timely manner as required under the RSEP policy documents.*

## Response 31

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

**Description**

*Ability to mark severity of cases via GDD portal (has to be tied to level of damage to the customer business)*

**Improvement**

*Flag of severity of the case (has to be tied to level of damage to the customer business)*

*1 - default (with reaction in 2-3 business days, minor issue, not affecting business operations).*

*2 - reaction of 1-2 business days, minor issue, creating difficulties in conducting business.*

*3 - reaction of 24 hours, major issue, affecting business, but not critical.*

*4 - serious harm, short reaction is suggested (<8-12 hours), business critical.*

*Will allow staff to sort out most important cases (from perspective of the business and from the PR point of view the same time)*

## Response 32

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*Ability to escalate cases from the GDD portal is missing*

*Ability to escalate the case (jump one level of severity) OR in situation of Unsuccessful Resolution of the closed/resolved case*

**Improvement**

*Escalation system would help to avoid sending e-mails to effectively do the same (to start escalation via other means of communication), and information from those e-mails will most probably be lost (in GDD system it will be available to service managers to simplify work on resolving similar cases in the future occasions) also it would allow GDD to see quality of case resolution (strictly internal information, helps in understanding of what goes on on a big scale).*

*In Escalation Form, Field "Reason" is a must, and if it describes that situation went to next level of damage to the business OR if significant time spent without a result - then proceed with the escalation.*

*i.e. After escalation of LVL1 -> it goes to LVL 2 and e-mail is dropped to a supervisor of the service team*

*LVL2-> LVL3 and e-mail dropped to head of department.*

*To escalate LVL3 - a phonecall must be done in addition to the form (text of the form says \_\_\_ after submitting this form - please make a call to .... numbers).*

*LVL3-> LVL4 and e-mail dropped to one of the officers.*

*After an escalation case goes to another service manager (previous one already failed to reach the goal at this point).*

*Note: Suggested levels of severity:*

*1 - default (with reaction in 2-3 business days, minor issue, not affecting business operations).*

*2 - reaction of 1-2 business days, minor issue, creating difficulties in conducting business.*

*3 - reaction of 24 hours, major issue, affecting business, but not critical.*

*4 - serious harm, short reaction is suggested (<8-12 hours), business critical.*

**Response 33**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*Absence of Feedback form for closed/resolved cases*

**Improvement**

*On resolution of the case - short feedback form with option to escalate and reopen (useful for those cases, which were closed/marked as resolved without resolution of the subject of the case).*

*Suggested scorecard ( to be tuned to fit ideas of GDD):*

*case was resolved in a timely manner 1 – 5*

*case was resolved effectively 1 – 5*

*case reached customer goal 1 – 5*

*overall customer satisfaction 1 – 5*

*May be few fields more ... but not too many, and one text field with "suggestions or notes if any".*

*Small score after a scorecard being filed would invite to option of reopening/escalating the case.*

*To make this working ... some small good things should be done to those who has good average score (service managers).*

**Response 34**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*Ability to test new ideas without damage to the business, PR image*

*Absence of the procedure of Beta testing of new tools*

*We all would be happy to help GDD to test developed tools for customer service, for us it is way easier to devote some of our time to tests than to lose more time on fixing it on a fly in not fully functioning tool.*

**Improvement**

*I suggest Closed beta tests (all invited, some chosen (different types of TLDs (Brands, generic, community, GEO), IDNs ... to have variety) with actual tests only after NDA execution ... so in the end - things are tested, info is kept to the GDD).*

*It would rise customer satisfaction level by avoiding live beta tests on customers*

**Response 35**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*Customer Service (e.g. CSC)*

**Description**

*Efficiency of GDD services*

*Lack of knowledge transfer in the process of creation of new teams.*

**Improvement**

*Creation of an internal wiki (ICANN staff only, may be even restricted to some departments, like CSC or GDD and CSC) where they share knowledge of what issues raised and how they were resolved - it is required to pass the knowledge between ICANN teams (after old teams were disbanded and new teams were created - we had to transfer our part of knowledge to new ones ... more than once).*

*May be tied to the system of cases in GDD portal.*

**Response 36**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Communications (e.g webinars)*

**Description**

*Certainty for applicants/registries*

*Absence of the tool to collect preliminary questions prior to webinars.*

**Improvement**

*Creation of the webform with clear deadlines (one for date/time, the other for number of questions) will simplify collection of the questions prior to webinars and remove the issue with "too late, too many" questions which are not answered during the webinar/ not added to FAQ etc.*

**Response 37**

**Importance**

*High*

**Category**

*GDD Portal*

**Description**

*The information that must be provided by a registry operator in the ONBIR is very technical and complex. It assumes a certain level of knowledge that most individuals responding to the form simply do not have. This increases the margin for error. The registry operator is then left with two options 1) provide credentials to a third party 2) receive training.*

**Improvement**

*Allow the back end registry operator to provide the technical information required in the ONBIR.*

## Response 38

### Importance

*High*

### Category

*URS*

### Description

*We received emails from the URS Service Provider that did not meet the requirements specified by ICANN and subsequently compromised our ability to meet those requirements. This happened on a number of occasions and demonstrated a disconnect between ICANN and its service providers regarding ICANN's requirements. Being able to reach someone at ICANN should have been simple in this situation especially given the time sensitive nature of the subject matter. We had to employ a bit of 'guess work' in figuring out who to contact. Unfortunately, the situation repeated itself as the root cause of the problem wasn't addressed by ICANN in a timely manner.*

### Improvement

*Provide registry operators with a single point of contact at ICANN that be reached at all times.*

## Response 39

### Importance

*High*

### Category

*GDD Processes*

### Description

*We sent correspondence to ICANN that was not posted on the ICANN correspondence page for some time. We sent a number of reminders to ICANN. Writing to ICANN is not an insignificant undertaking and in doing so there is an expectation that the correspondence will be acknowledged, posted and ultimately that the correspondence will receive a formal response. This is a reasonable expectation for an organization that prides itself on being transparent and accountable.*

### Improvement

*Publish guidelines regarding the practice of posting correspondence on the ICANN correspondence page. These guidelines should specify timeframes for doing so also.*