

WORK TRACK 5 - Working Document

This document is being developed by staff under the direction of the Work Track co-leaders. The document is intended to summarize perspectives and key points raised in Work Track discussions and on the Work Track mailing list. At this time, the document does not attempt to evaluate the level of consensus in support of the different ideas and positions. Once the co-leaders have held consensus calls, information about consensus level will be added to the document.

This document is a work in progress and will continue to evolve. Additional content will be added as discussions continue. Work Track members are encouraged to insert comments if they feel that an important point raised in the Work Track has been missed or has not been captured sufficiently.

The high-level structure of this document follows the structure of sections included in the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group Initial Report (including material from Work Tracks 1-4). Headings a - g are the same as the headings used in the SubPro Initial Report.

a. What is the relevant 2007 policy and/or implementation guidance (if any)?

Recommendation 5: Strings must not be a reserved word.

Recommendation 20: An application will be rejected if an expert panel determines that there is substantial opposition to it from a significant portion of the community to which the string may be explicitly or implicitly targeted.

In the Final Report - Introduction of New Generic Top-Level Domains,¹ the discussion of Recommendation 5 references language in the Reserved Names Working Group Final Report². The relevant text of Reserved Names Working Group Final Report states:

There should be no geographical reserved names (i.e., no exclusionary list, no presumptive right of registration, no separate administrative procedure, etc.). The proposed challenge mechanisms currently being proposed in the draft new gTLD process would allow national or local governments to initiate a challenge, therefore no additional protection mechanisms are needed. Potential applicants for a new TLD need to represent that the use of the proposed string is not in violation of the national laws in which the applicant is incorporated.

However, new TLD applicants interested in applying for a TLD that incorporates a country, territory, or place name should be advised of the GAC Principles, and the advisory role vested to it under the ICANN Bylaws. Additionally, a summary overview of the obstacles encountered by previous applicants involving similar TLDs should be provided to allow an applicant to make an informed decision. Potential applicants should also be advised that the failure of the GAC, or an

¹ <https://gnso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/pdp-dec05-fr-parta-08aug07.htm>

² <https://gnso.icann.org/en/issues/new-gtlds/final-report-rn-wg-23may07.htm>

individual GAC member, to file a challenge during the TLD application process, does not constitute a waiver of the authority vested to the GAC under the ICANN Bylaws.

Reserved Names Working Group Final Report further states:

We recommend that the current practice of allowing two letter names at the top level, only for ccTLDs, remains at this time. Examples include .AU, .DE, .UK.

b. How was it implemented in the 2012 round of the New gTLD Program?

The first two versions of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) required that strings must consist of three (3) or more visually distinct characters and that meaningful representations of a country or territory name on the ISO 3166-2 standard must be accompanied by a letter of support or non-objection from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies).

The ICANN Board, at the urging of the ccNSO and GAC, directed staff to exclude country and territory names from delegation in version four of the AGB. Other geographic names, in section 2.2.1.4.2 of the AGB (see below), required a letter of support or non-objection, though for non-capital city names, the need for the letter was dependent upon intended usage of the string.

This implementation, described more fully directly below, was substantially different than the GNSO's policy recommendations.³

Section 2.2.1.3.2 String Requirements, Part III, 3.1 of the Applicant Guidebook states, "Applied-for gTLD strings in ASCII must be composed of three or more visually distinct characters. Two-character ASCII strings are not permitted, to avoid conflicting with current and future country codes based on the ISO 3166-1 standard."

According to Section 2.2.1.4.1 Treatment of Country or Territory Names, the following strings are considered country and territory names and were not available in the 2012 application round:

- i. it is an alpha-3 code listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.
- ii. it is a long-form name listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard, or a translation of the long-form name in any language.
- iii. it is a short-form name listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard, or a translation of the short-form name in any language.
- iv. it is the short- or long-form name association with a code that has been designated as

³ For an overview of the background on Geographic Names in the New gTLD Program, see: <https://community.icann.org/display/NGSPP/2017-04-25+Geographic+Names+Webinars?preview=/64077479/64083928/Geo%20Names%20Webinar%20Background%20Paper.pdf>

“exceptionally reserved” by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency.

v. it is a separable component of a country name designated on the “Separable Country Names List,” or is a translation of a name appearing on the list, in any language. See the Annex at the end of this module.

vi. it is a permutation or transposition of any of the names included in items (i) through (v). Permutations include removal of spaces, insertion of punctuation, and addition or removal of grammatical articles like “the.” A transposition is considered a change in the sequence of the long or short-form name, for example, “RepublicCzech” or “IslandsCayman.”

vii. it is a name by which a country is commonly known, as demonstrated by evidence that the country is recognized by that name by an intergovernmental or treaty organization.

Section 2.2.1.4.2 Geographic Names Requiring Government Support states that applications for the following strings must be accompanied by documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities:

1. An application for any string that is a representation, in any language, of the capital city name of any country or territory listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard.
2. An application for a city name, where the applicant declares that it intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name.
3. An application for any string that is an exact match of a sub-national place name, such as a county, province, or state, listed in the ISO 3166-2 standard.
4. An application for a string listed as a UNESCO region or appearing on the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings” list. In the case of an application for a string appearing on either of the lists above, documentation of support will be required from at least 60% of the respective national governments in the region, and there may be no more than one written statement of objection to the application from relevant governments in the region and/or public authorities associated with the continent or the region. Where the 60% rule is applied, and there are common regions on both lists, the regional composition contained in the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings” takes precedence.

c. What are the preliminary recommendations and/or implementation guidelines?

There has not been a consensus call on the following potential recommendations, but the following text proposed by the Work Track co-leaders has gone through two readings on Work Track calls:

2-character letter-letter combinations country codes (ISO 3166): The starting point is status quo, but narrowing it to geo-names by reserving all 2 letter-letter ASCII combinations for existing and future country codes. 2 character «letter-digit» are not geo-names and are therefore outside the scope of WT5.

- If 2-char letter-digit combinations were to be recommended (WT2 considering- reserved names), would be subject to string similarity review

Country and Territory Names:

3-character country codes (ISO 3166): Maintain the status quo, i.e. not available, and defer broader questions about which entity/entities can apply for these strings and how they may be treated (for instance, as a gTLD, a ccTLD or something else).

Long and short form of country and territory names (ISO 3166): Maintain the status quo, i.e. not available, and defer broader questions about which entity/entities can apply for these strings and how they may be treated (for instance, as a gTLD, a ccTLD or something else).

d. What are the options under consideration, along with the associated benefits / drawbacks?

[This section will be filled in as the WT gets closer to publishing the Initial Report]

e. What specific questions are the PDP WG seeking feedback on?

[This section will be filled in as the WT gets closer to publishing the Initial Report]

f. Deliberations

1. EXPERIENCES IN THE 2012 ROUND

The Work Track discussed both positive and negative experiences with the treatment of geographic names in the 2012 application round. It was noted that reflection on opportunities and challenges in the 2012 round can help the group identify areas that may require future policy development or implementation guidance. Note that the the positive experiences and challenges listed here were identified in relation to the process in general. Additional perspectives related to treatment of specific types of strings are discussed in greater depth later in this report.

1.1 Challenges

Work Track members identified several general issues based on the experience of applicants and other stakeholders in the 2012 round. Some Work Track members shared that many stakeholders wished for greater predictability, transparency and consistency in ICANN's implementation of the Applicant Guidebook. Some Work Track members believe that ICANN caused some of the confusion and uncertainty in the process of integrating GNSO policy recommendations, GAC advice, and concerns from specific stakeholders.

Under the 2012 Applicant Guidebook, certain applications for geographic strings required letters of support on non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities. Some Work Track members identified challenges with the support/non-objection process. For example, some applicants found it difficult to determine which relevant government/public authority was the appropriate point of contact for a letter of support/non-objection. In addition, some Work Track members noted that there was a perception that some applicants were required to make concessions to governments to obtain support/non-objection.

Work Track members raised that some applicants experienced outcomes that they felt were inconsistent with the Applicant Guidebook. For example, some applicants faced challenges in applying for strings that were not included as geographic names in the Applicant Guidebook but were considered to be geographic names by other parties involved in the process. Some applicants experienced what they considered to be a de-facto requirement to obtain support/non-objection for strings not included in the Applicant Guidebook.

Some stakeholders expressed that the support/non-objection requirement should have applied to a broader set of geographic terms. Others expressed that it should have applied to a smaller set of terms or should not have been a requirement at all. These perspectives are discussed in greater depth later in this report.

Some Work Track members have expressed that it would be helpful to examine cases where there were perceived problems in the 2012 round to determine the cause of these issues and potential improvements for the future. One Work Track member started a spreadsheet to track applications from the 2012 round that experienced issues with the process and associated mechanisms: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jPa4jdBgo8P2aC6G4pzLoFTfyocleon8qVD7Q9mlM5A/edit#gid=0>.

For proposals put forward by Work Track members on overall process improvements, please see section 6 “General Proposals.”

1.2 Positive Experiences

Work Track members discussed areas where they felt the program worked well for applicants and other stakeholders. In particular, several Work Track members pointed to the delegation of city names that continue to operate from the 2012 New gTLD round as success stories. Examples referenced by Work Track members included .tokyo, .london, .paris, .berlin, .amsterdam, .nyc, .hamburg, .koeln, .boston, .vegas, .moscow, .wien, .miami, .istanbul, .sydney, and .quebec. One Work Track members stated that the delegation and operation of these TLDs had positive effects on geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity of the TLD space.

In addition, some Work Track members expressed that they had positive experiences with the requirements included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. For example, a Work Track member involved

with the application for .Berlin indicated that the system of government support/non-objection worked well for the applicant. A Work Track member involved in the application for .london and the Wales domain shared some positive aspects of the support/non-objection mechanism, for example the fact that the process ensured that there was only a single applicant for these two TLDs. Following the initial work required to obtain the letters, subsequent delegations steps progressed relatively smoothly for these TLDs. Some Work Track members also expressed that governments had positive experiences with the support/non-objection mechanism. This mechanism is discussed in greater depth later in this section.

1.3 Process Review

In order to ensure that all members have a common understanding of process elements that were part of the 2012 round, the Work Track went through an exercise of reviewing and validating a draft map outlining the 2012 process. The process map included five elements:

1. Submitting Application
2. Geographic Names Review
3. Objections Mechanisms
4. String Contention
5. Contractual Elements

The map is available [here](#). The Work Track began to discuss if there might be future opportunities to improve or more effectively leverage elements of the process. Members expressed different opinions about whether the focus of future treatment should be on preventative mechanisms or curative mechanisms, while noting that the two are not mutually exclusive. More information about these different perspectives is included in section 3 “Intended Use” and section 4.2 “Role of National and Local Governments.”

A Work Track member supported the idea that a possible avenue of future work is to list the full range of protections and mechanisms available, both existing and hypothetical, for each of the five elements to get a better understanding of which combination will be most appropriate in the future and how to strike the right balance between these elements.

2. OVERARCHING ISSUES

2.1 Predictability

As discussed above, a number of Work Track members raised that predictability was an issue for applicants and other stakeholders in the 2012 round. Some Work Track members have stated that it is essential for the application and delegation process to be predictable for applicants and other parties in subsequent procedures. From this perspective, there should be clear, objective, fair, predictable and

fact-based policies and procedures for evaluating applications that all parties can understand and predict.

Work Track members have expressed different perspectives on ways to achieve predictability. For example, in one view, broader application of the support/non-objection mechanism is a means to reduce conflicts later in the application process or after delegation. From this perspective, the mechanism is beneficial for predictability.

From another perspective, the best way to ensure predictability is to have clear, transparent criteria that apply to all applications and to evaluate applications and objections based on objective standards, rather than leaving it up to individual governments to determine if applications are permitted to move forward.

As the Work Track considers options for the treatment of geographic names, the impact on predictability is one factor that the Work Track is considering.

2.2 Competition and Consumer Choice

Some Work Track members have raised that it is important for the New gTLD Program to promote competition and consumer choice. In this view, the New gTLD Program should support the expansion of TLDs and limit barriers to increasing the number of TLDs. From this perspective, ICANN should avoid unnecessary restrictions and only put in place rules or limitations if there is a clear reason to do so.

2.3 Security and Stability

From one perspective, it is also important to consider security and stability issues associated with .brands that coincide with geographic terms. From this perspective, governments and law enforcement agencies face challenges in combating fraud and criminal acts on the Internet. In this view, online crimes may be connected to broader criminal networks around the world. According to one Work Track member, trademark holders view the operation of .brands, including for strings that correspond to geographic terms, as a positive means to protect consumers and increase security and stability.

2.4 Cultural and Historical Interests Related to Geographic Names

Some Work Track members have raised that people and communities associated with a geographic location have a strong interest in the use of terms associated with that place. From this perspective, these interests are rooted in shared culture and history. In this view, the perspectives of people associated with a geographic location are essential in determining how and where a geographic name will be used in different contexts. From this perspective, the use of a string with geographic connotations in the DNS would have effects in the country where that place is located, and therefore there must be a voice in the process that represents the interests of the people.

Some Work Track members have expressed that TLDs with geographic connotations should be locally managed, marketed, and funded where possible. Others questioned the benefits of creating rules requiring such TLDs to be locally managed, marketed, and funded.

One Work Track member noted that there are significant differences between countries and cultures with respect to the treatment of geographic names. In some countries and cultures, end users and people connected to a geographic term think the use is very important. In other countries and cultures, this issue is less important. From this perspective, any solutions for future use should take into account the differences between countries and cultures.

Work Track members have noted that in some cases, there is an intersection between groups of people associated with a geographic location and the concept of “community” used in the 2012 application round. For example, one Work Track member stated that if a group of people associated with a geographic term such as a river, a mountain, a valley or a city name, they should have the first “right of refusal” for that string. It was noted that in the 2012 round, an application could be both a community application and a geographic application. If there was a contention set and the community-based application passed Community Priority Evaluation, this community-based application would have priority over other applications in the contention set. The Work Track considered that while there is a potential intersection between concepts of communities and geographic names, the processes and evaluation criteria related to the Community Priority Evaluation and Community Objections are being addressed in Work Track 3.

2.5 Law and Policy

The Work Track discussed different perspectives on the scope and applicability of law related to geographic names. In particular, there were strong disagreements regarding the extent to which national and local legal and public policy protections of geographic terms should be used as a basis for granting rights to governments and other actors in the New gTLD Program.

Work Track members referenced, but had different interpretations of Section 1.2 (a) of the ICANN Bylaws, which states: “In performing its Mission, ICANN must operate in a manner consistent with these Bylaws for the benefit of the Internet community as a whole, carrying out its activities in conformity with relevant principles of international law and international conventions and applicable local law, through open and transparent processes that enable competition and open entry in Internet-related markets.”

From one perspective, the rights and responsibilities of national and local governments with respect to geographic names are established in public policy and law instruments in different countries. From this perspective, delegation of TLDs with geographic connotations have impacts within the applicable country, and a legal challenge based on national law would have an impact worldwide. In this view, ICANN is obligated to follow applicable national and local laws and policies that give governments rights

and responsibilities over geographic names. One Work Track member cited GDPR as an example of a case where ICANN is making efforts to comply with local law.

One Work Track member expressed that a TLD associated with geography should be incorporated within the jurisdiction of the relevant government and subject to local law.

One Work Track member noted that ICANN policy is not always based in law. This member stated that in the 2012 round, there were program elements, rights, and rules that were created for policy reasons that were not explicitly rooted in law, for example Community Priority Evaluation, background screenings, GAC advice, and reserved names at the top level. From this perspective, it may be appropriate to provide rights to governments related to geographic names for policy reasons.

From another perspective, there is no clear basis to give governments special rights in the New gTLD Program with respect to geographic names. In this view, national and local law providing protection for geographic names does not give governments rights beyond those of other stakeholders in the context of the New gTLD Program, including the application process. From this perspective, national and local laws only apply in the jurisdiction where the applicant is located. In this view, the Work Track should look to international law as a basis for any recommendations related to geographic names. According to some Work Track members, there is no basis in international law for governments to assert that right to provide support/non-objection for certain strings, which some members consider to be a "veto" power over applications for these strings.

One Work Track member submitted for the Work Track's consideration her analysis [Applying International Law to the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook](#) and the book she wrote on the topic "[Protection of Geographic Names in International Law and Domain Name System.](#)"

Some Work Track members have also expressed that the implementation of the New gTLD Program must be consistent with freedom of expression rights provided under international law and reflected in the ICANN Bylaws and Principle G of the 2007 Policy. From one perspective, freedom of expression rights give applicants the right to apply for strings, including strings with geographic connotations. From another perspective, if a business controls a TLD with geographic connotations, and the people associated with that place later want to use that name as a TLD but are unable to do so, this may impact the free expression rights of the people connected to the geographic place.

One Work Track member noted that there is ongoing work in UNESCO and WIPO on cultural heritage / geographic names and ways to protect these terms internationally. Another Work Track member noted that there may be international law "in the making" at WIPO that work should be taken into account as ICANN develops policy.

Work Track members discussed the role of intellectual property law in relation to the delegation of strings that represent both a brand name and a geographic term. From one perspective, brand applicants have legitimate interests in a string that corresponds to a brand and is also associated with the name of a city or other geographic location. From this perspective, trademarks may evoke positive

associations and have "secondary meaning," which is the association between the mark and the attributes of the source or origin of the products and services. This secondary meaning (or "goodwill") in turn is a key component of the value and strength of the mark. From this point of view, some marks have long histories and significant value. Marks may be used in many countries and may be known by large numbers of people. From this perspective, under trademark law, trademark assets and rights are "owned" and controlled by particular parties.

In support of this view, one Work Track member raised that in order to operate a .brand registry, an applicant must produce a trademark registration certificate which shows consent of at least one government to use that trademark. In this view, an entity with a trademark registration for a term has a right to use that term. From this perspective, the term is used in connection with certain goods and services and has no geographic meaning.

From another perspective, trademarks offer a specific right in a specific jurisdiction for specific goods and services to legally stop another party from imitating a mark or confusing customers. In this view, the right is limited and curative in nature. It is focused on consumer protection and prevention of imitations. From this perspective, geographic names in general and city names specifically are not subject to rights by private parties. According to some Work Track members, "monopolization" of a city name by private parties is forbidden under laws pertaining to business names and trademark registration in a number of jurisdictions.

From one perspective, rights granted to geographic locations to protect geographic names are qualitatively different than intellectual property rights. In this view, civil rights are more general in scope and therefore more significant. In another view, the civil code of one country should not take precedence over the trademark code of another country. In this perspective, the narrower, more focused right should take precedence since it is less limiting of others.

One Work Track member suggested that it could be helpful to consider the treatment of geographic names in terms of the positive impact of brand status. For example, a TLD .perth might help anyone who has an interest in this term to register a name and use it as a way of establishing a geographic presence on the Internet that wasn't necessarily about a single location. Another Work Track member noted that if the group is considering geographic names from the perspective of brands, it is also valuable to consider rights that brands do not have. For example, trademark holders do not have the right to pre-emptively block the use of a word by another party.

Work Track members have referenced the following laws and legal cases:

- According to one Work Track member, cities have rights to protect their names under the Article 29 of the Swiss civil code. Provisions prevent the registration of business names and trademarks that solely consist of city names: "1 If a person's use of his or her name is disputed, he or she may apply for a court declaration confirming his rights. 2 If a person is adversely affected because another person is using his or her name, he or she may seek an order prohibiting such

use and, if the user is at fault, may bring a claim for damages and, where justified by the nature of the infringement, for satisfaction."

- One perspective is that this provision does not provide for prior restraint on speech but instead provides a means for settling disputes through the courts.
- Another perspective is that the law demonstrates that there is a public interest in protecting geographic names that government authorities can pursue.
 - A [case](#) based on Article 29 was referenced.
- One Work Track member mentioned a [case](#) regarding the TLD France.com as evidence that governments have rights under national law over the use of geographic names as TLDs.
- One Work Track members shared information about a case from the the High court in Italy related to a geographic name: Cass. n. 16022/2000. According to the Work Track member, under Italian law, the elected body (the mayor, the president of the regional council) of the corresponding name may act to protect the interest of the community it represents.
- A Work Track member shared a [link](#) to rules in the UK that prohibit registration of a trademark which may indicate a geographical origin.
- A Work Track member shared [UK rules](#) on what may and may not be a company name. According the to the Work Track member, a letter of non-objection is required in situations where an entity is effectively representing itself as associated with a region, government department, or regulated profession. UK laws regarding business names do not allow businesses to use a name or term which denotes (or might be confused with or denote) an official authority or body when there is no connection to that body.
- A Work Track member shared a [link](#) from German case law.
- One Work Track member referenced Article 38 of the Statue of the International Court of Justice as an authoritative codification of International Law sources. Art 38 requires the ICJ to apply: (a) international conventions [treaties] whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by states; (b) international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law by states; (c) the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations; (d) and in some cases judicial decisions and writings/teachings of the most highly qualified publicists (professors, experts, etc) as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law. According to this Work Track member, a local rule is an internationally binding norm only if it is also a general principle of law where clear and convincing evidence is provided that a local norm or practice is also a general and consistent practice of states and viewed as legally binding by those states, and thus binding customary law.

3. INTENDED USE

The Work Track devoted a significant amount of time to discussing terms that have multiple meanings, for example a word that matches the name of a place or multiple places and also has a generic, dictionary meaning and/or an association with a brand. Work Track members discussed whether the intended use of the string should be taken into consideration in the treatment of the application. Intended use was discussed in the context of city names and also in the context of potential geographic terms that were not included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook.

Some Work Track members provided examples of strings that could have geographic meaning associated with one or more places as well as brand and/or generic meaning:

City/town names:

- “Mars” is a town in Pennsylvania (USA) and a candy bar company.
- Towns in the United States: Flint, Golden, Granite, and Boulder.
- Cities in the UK: Bath and Ford.
- “Lincoln” is a town in Nebraska (USA), a car company, and a former US president.
- Nokia is company name and also the name of a city.
- There are many towns in the United States with the name Springfield. This is also the name of a rifle company and a musician, Rick Springfield.
- Berlin is a city name, the name an '80s rock band, the last name of composer Irving Berlin, and it is associated with four other live US trademark registrants.
- Sandwich could be a word used in the generic sense and is also the name of towns in the US and the UK.
- Hershey, PA in the United States was named after the chocolate company.
- Rock is the name of a town in Cornwall, England and a town in Australia and is also a dictionary word.
- Delhi is a capital city name (India), a town name (New York, USA), and a brand of bicycles.

Additional terms with potential geographic connotations mentioned by Work Track members:

- Rivers Murray, Darling, Clarence, and Brisbane in Australia correspond to generic terms.
- New is the name of a river in the United States passing through North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Save is the name of a river passing through Zimbabwe and Mozambique. New and save are also generic terms.

3.1 Does intended use matter?

Different views were expressed about whether intended use of a TLD should be taken into consideration in the application process. From one perspective, TLDs are a unique resource. If a string is delegated to one party, others who have an interest in that string are prevented from using it, potentially for a significant period of time or permanently. In this view, distinctions based on intended use are therefore not helpful. From this perspective, even if the intended use is non-geographic, the word still may have geographic connotations. In this view, it is important for governments or people associated with a place to be “at the table” for decisions about delegation, regardless of use, because of the unique nature of a TLD and the connotations of the word.

From another perspective, the unique nature of a TLD does not give a government primacy over the use of that TLD. From this perspective, if a string is being used in a generic or brand context, there is no basis for a support/non-objection mechanism related to the use of that string. The geographic meaning should not prejudice the use of the string in another context. In support of that position, a Work Track

member raised that there is a very large number of potential strings that could be delegated as TLDs. If one string has been delegated, a prospective applicant or other party can apply for an alternate string. For example, if a string matching a city name is delegated for another purpose, a government or other party interested in using <.city>, could apply for <.citygovernment>, <.citycouncil>, or <.citytourism>.

3.2 Intended use provisions in practice

In the 2012 round, applicants were required to obtain support/non-objection from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies) only if they declared that they intended to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name. Other applicants for strings corresponding to city names were not required to obtain support/non-objection. No dedicated enforcement mechanism was created in the 2012 round to address potential cases where an applicant did not declare that the TLD would be used primarily in association with a city name, but then operated the TLD as a city TLD. However, the Registry Agreement includes the following language: “All material information provided and statements made in the registry TLD application, and statements made in writing during the negotiation of this Agreement, were true and correct in all material respects at the time made, and such information or statements continue to be true and correct in all material respects as of the Effective Date except as otherwise previously disclosed in writing by Registry Operator to ICANN.” This provision provides a possible means for recourse if the applicant misrepresented information in the application.

Different perspectives were expressed with respect to possible mechanisms to ensure that an applicant who applies for a non-geographic TLD operates as a non-geographic TLD. From one perspective it is impractical and challenging to set objective criteria for evaluating intended use in the application process and difficult to enforce distinctions based on intended use. From this perspective, registrants may circumvent limitations on intended use and permit registration of domains that have geographic connotations with limited recourse. Some Work Track members expressed that obligations included in the contract between ICANN and the registry may have limited impact on what registrant do in practice.

From another perspective, it should be possible to establish intended use in the application process, especially in the case of .brands. Some Work Track members expressed that it should be feasible to put in place protections that help to ensure a non-geographic TLD does not mislead end-users or imply that it is an “official” TLD associated with a geographic place. From this perspective, applicants could make and be held accountable to uphold commitments on how the registry will operate and how names will be allocated. Applicants could also demonstrate a willingness to cancel names which are used in a manner outside the way the registry operator intended.

Some Work Track members raised the issue of potential consumer confusion. From one perspective, regardless of the intended use, consumers may be confused about the potential association of a string and a geographic term. From another perspective, it should be possible to create a standard against which to manage risks of confusion, for example by ensuring that the applicant does not represent that it is endorsed by a city or is the “official” TLD of a city when this is not the case. One Work Track member stated that .brands operate in such as manner that there should not be any confusion between a brand and TLD that is being operated in a geographic context.

3.3 Questions about Intended Use

Work Track members raised the following questions with respect to intended use:

- How to monitor and enforce domain names registrations according to "intended use" after delegation?
- What happens when the intended use changes through a modified business plan or the sale of a business?
- Does the system of public interest commitments work for this purpose?
- Is a better Specification 13 the way to solve "intended use" question?

3.4 One TLD, Multiple Uses?

The Work Track discussed that collaboration between different parties with different intended uses for a TLD could be a means of meeting the needs and interests of all groups. For example, one Work Track member suggested that different cities with the same name could collaboratively manage a TLD matching the name of the cities. A shared management model could eliminate contention for the string. If cities were able to cooperatively manage a TLD, they could share the costs, burdens, and risks, and help to ensure that there is sufficient demand for second-level registrations. From another perspective, such a model would be impractical. One Work Track member suggested that if there is more than one geographic location matching a string, these locations can be identified at a sub-level to differentiate.

Work Track members also discussed whether there may be opportunities for governments and applicants to come together and create opportunities for both parties to use the TLD according to their interests. Some Work Track members viewed this as a potential step following the provision of a support/non-objection letter. Others suggested that it might be possible to create incentives for such collaboration in place of a support/non-objection mechanism.

Questions raised:

- Are there ways to allow the delegation of the TLD and address the concerns of the impacted governments? Could this include agreements to allow the use of second level strings (or the reservation of second level strings) where there is an inherent association with the government / local community?
- For brand TLDs, there is a requirement currently that all registrations be registered to the brands (or their affiliates / licensees) in order to maintain their Specification 13 protections. Can there be an exception granted for ones that coincide with a geographic string where certain second level strings that are inherently geographic can be registered by others?

4. CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

The Work Track discussed the role of the GAC and the role of individual national and local governments in the evaluation of TLD applications. In the 2012 application round, the GAC, which is comprised of individual governments, could provide consensus advice on any application to the ICANN Board, as described in Module 3 of the Applicant Guidebook. Individual governments had two roles in the application process with respect to applications for geographic strings:

- A member of the GAC could provide an Early Warning on a New gTLD application, including but not limited to an application for a geographic name. This was a notice that an application was seen as potentially sensitive or problematic by one or more governments. An Early Warning was not a formal objection, nor did it directly lead to a process that could result in rejection of the application.
- For certain types of strings, applicants were required to provide a letter of support or non-objection from the relevant government(s) or public authority(ies).

4.1 Role of the GAC

Work Track members expressed different opinions about the role of the GAC with respect to the application process. From one perspective, the GAC plays a unique role in the ICANN context and governments represented in the GAC have a particular interest and stake in the treatment of geographic terms. From this perspective, the role played by the GAC in the 2012 round was appropriate.

From another perspective, the GAC has an advisory role to the Board and may collectively provide consensus advice, but the GAC does not have an operational role at ICANN. Individual GAC members may have distinct positions on individual applications, but the role of individual governments is different than the GAC acting as a whole through GAC advice. From one point of view, the GAC intervened in the evaluation process in a manner that was problematic and unfair during the 2012 round. From this point of view, the role of the Board and the GAC should be more clear and consistently applied in subsequent rounds of the application process, including with respect to applications for geographic names.

4.2 Role of National and Local Governments

Work Track members expressed different opinions about the role that national and local governments should play with respect to the application process for geographic terms.

From one perspective, geographic terms have political, historical, economic, social, and sometimes religious connotations for populations and communities associated with those terms. In this view, governments are representatives of the public interest and have responsibilities regarding the names of geographic locations as the primary identifiers in social, national, political and economic interactions and as identification of their peoples. The relevant governments/public authorities represent the interests of the people in a geographic region and have a responsibility to uphold the laws of that country. From this perspective, governments should have a special role in determining the use of strings associated with geography in the DNS. See the discussion of law and policy above for additional details related to legal aspects of this discussion.

In line with this view is the position that city names are subject to general/public interests represented by that city government. City governments act according to the laws and policies of the countries in which they are established and accountable under those laws and policies. Therefore, city governments should have the right to provide or withhold support/non-objection for applications associated with the names of cities.

While some Work Track members from governments have expressed support for this point of view, one Work Track member from a government noted that not all governments share concerns about protecting/restricting geographic names in the TLD context.

Some Work Track members have expressed that the rights of governments should be preventative rather than curative in nature. From this perspective, it is a significant burden on governments, some of whom are not aware of ICANN or its activities, to monitor the application process to see if an application of interest has been submitted. It is a further burden to monitor the operation of TLDs and take action if a TLD is not meeting commitments stated in the application.

From one perspective, governments do not always represent the interests of people and communities associated with a geographic location. In this view, there may be instances where the interests and positions of a national or local government diverge from the interests of the people associated with a given geographic location. There may be cases where people or a community associated with a geographic location would like to use a name associated with that place, but a national government does not support that use. An example used in discussion was a hypothetical application for .Kurdistan.

In support of limiting the rights given to governments with respect to geographic names, one Work Track member stated that ICANN policy has consistently disfavored reservations (other than for technical reasons), blocking rights and other systems that prevent a TLD (or second level domain) from entering the market. From this perspective, any list-based exclusionary right has undergone strict scrutiny and has been applied narrowly. The Work Track member also stated that ICANN policy-making process has traditionally favored curative rights over preventative rights. From this perspective, it is not unusual for different types of stakeholders to conduct monitoring related to gTLDs in which they are interested. In this view, the scale of the gTLD environment is relatively limited, and automated processes can assist with monitoring.

4.3 Distinction Between Support and Non-Objection

The Work Track discussed whether there was a meaningful distinction between a letter of support from a government or public authority and a letter of non-objection. From one perspective, support and non-objection are two different positions that a government may take with respect to an application. Some governments may lack a legal basis to provide support but may have a legal basis not to object. Therefore, it is useful for these concepts to remain distinct. From another perspective, letters of support and non-objection resulted in the same outcome for applicants in the 2012 round. Therefore, the distinction is not necessarily meaningful to applicants.

4.4 Alternative Structures for Consultations

The Work Track discussed whether there might be an alternative means of structuring consultations between applicants and governments. The following questions were raised:

- Can we have consultations where the ultimate outcome is not preordained, but still provide incentives for all of the parties to “come to the table” to express concerns, and also provide ways in which those concerns can be mitigated?
- Are there any other parameters that can be established to help guide consultations to prevent the perception as expressed by some that governments will try to extract payments in exchange for the right to be the registry of the TLD?

5. SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF STRINGS

While some Work Track 5 conversations focused on high-level principles, processes, and other issues related to treatment of geographic names in general, the Work Track also discussed treatment of specific types of strings included in the Applicant Guidebook and additional types of strings not included in the AGB.

5.1 Two-Letter Strings

The 2012 Applicant Guidebook specified that two-character ASCII strings were not permitted to be delegated, which was consistent with recommendations of the Reserved Names Working Group referenced in the 2007 Policy. This included combinations of two letters, combinations of two numbers, and combinations of a letter and a number. The Work Track noted that Work Track 3 of the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures PDP Working Group is considering single letter and single digit combinations and therefore focused on letter-letter combinations (for example .yz).

Some Work Track members provided input that there is a longstanding association between two-character letter-letter combinations and ccTLDs, which is rooted in early Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) Requests for Comments (RFCs). From one perspective, the current AGB rules restricting two-character letter-letter combinations as gTLDs has helped to make a clear distinction between the ccTLD space and the gTLD space. Work Track members further commented that reliance on ISO 3166-1 as a basis for two-letter country codes has historically worked well and offers a predictable system to use as a point of reference.

Work Track members identified additional benefits to leaving two-character letter-letter combinations unavailable as gTLDs:

- Two-letter combinations are available in case new two-letter codes are added to the the ISO 3166-1 list and new countries established that want a ccTLD. Work Track members noted that according to RFC 1591, the IANA is not in the business of what is and what is not a country.

- End users can see a clear distinction between ccTLDs and gTLDs, which may help to avoid confusion between the two.
- Provides an objective, consistent rule that is easy to apply.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to this approach:

- There is a possibility of opportunities lost in the gTLD space, although these are difficult to assess.
- From one perspective, some ccTLDs essentially operate as gTLDs without the restrictions associated with gTLDs, blurring the distinction between ccTLDs and gTLDs. From this perspective, TLDs are taking advantage of the assumption that all 2-letter TLDs are ccTLDs.

With respect to the provision of the AGB stating “Two-character ASCII strings are not permitted, to avoid conflicting with current and future country codes based on the ISO 3166-1 standard,” one Work Track member asked for clarification whether “to avoid conflicting” referred to concerns about typo variations and misdirected traffic or competition for ccTLD operators.

The Work Track noted that the Cross-Community Working Group of Use of Country and Territory Names as TLDs previously reached preliminary consensus in support of maintaining the 2012 treatment for two-character ASCII strings.⁴ Some Work Track members expressed support for recommending that 2012 treatment is maintained for two-letter strings. Based on Work Track discussions the Work Track leaders proposed language supporting continued reservation of two-letter strings. Proposed language is included in section c.

5.2 Country and Territory Names

As described in section a. above, no reserved geographic names were anticipated in the 2007 Policy. The 2012 Applicant Guidebook diverges from the policy and lists seven categories of country and territory names that were reserved and unavailable for delegation (see section b. for a list of these categories). The Work Track discussed, in general, the reservation of country and territory names on this list, as well as issues related to specific categories of country and territory names.

As an overarching issue applying to country and territory names, some Work Track members raised that it would be beneficial for countries to have an opportunity to apply for their country and territory names. Some Work Track members expressed that these names should not be delegated through the New gTLD process. From this perspective, delegation of country and territory names should only occur through local policy authorities. From another perspective, moving delegation of these strings to local authorities is inconsistent with the objective to provide clarity, certainty, predictability, and fairness for applicants.

Some Work Track members expressed support for the idea that it is outside of the scope of this Work Track to discuss broad questions about which entity/entities can apply for country and territory names and how these TLDs may be treated (for instance, as a gTLD, a ccTLD or something else).

⁴ <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/ccwg-ctn-final-paper-15jun17-en.pdf>

5.2.1 Alpha-3 code listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard

Work Track members identified the following benefits of reserving ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes:

- Avoids potential end user confusion related to the geographic connotations of these codes.
- Allows countries to protect codes with which many nations identify strongly.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to reserving ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes:

- There are potential missed opportunities for three-letter gTLDs, for example .can, .iot, .idn, .gin, .gum, .fin, .cub, and .pry.
- There is no opportunity for an applicant supported by the relevant country to move forward with an application.
- One Work Track member raised that ISO should not be the source of 3-character codes used by ICANN to identify geographic names.

The Work Track considered that the Cross-Community Working Group on Use of Country and Territory Names (CWG-UCTN) discussed extensively the treatment of 3-letter codes. An analysis of the different positions on this issue is available in the CWG-UCTN Final Report.⁵ The Work Track noted that the CWG-UCTN was unable to reach consensus on the future treatment of 3-letter codes.

From one perspective in the Work Track, this has historically been a challenging issue for the community to resolve and absent evidence that a different approach is supported, the 2012 Applicant Guidebook treatment should apply. From another perspective, there is no clear historical justification for maintaining reservation of these strings. Absent such a justification, these strings should be available for delegation.

The Work Track co-leaders put forward a proposal to maintain reservation of alpha-3 codes listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard. Please see section c. for proposed text.

5.2.2 Short-form or Long-form name listed in the ISO 3166-standard, or a translation of the short-form or long-form name in any language

Work Track members identified the following benefits of reserving short-form and long-form names:

- The ISO list provided an easy, predictable, and objective standard to follow.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to reserving short-form and long-form names:

- There are potential missed opportunities for gTLDs.
- There is no opportunity for an applicant supported by the relevant country to move forward with an application.

The Work Track discussed the implications of the text “in any language” included in this provision. Some Work Track members stated that the text “in any language” results in a very large number of reserved strings and does not provide a clear and objective list that can be used as reference. One Work Track

⁵ <https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/field-attached/ccwg-ctn-final-paper-15jun17-en.pdf>

member also noted that some languages are spoken by very few people, therefore reserving representations in all languages may not be appropriate. Work Track members suggested the following possible options as alternatives to “in any language”:

- Limit the list to the official UN languages.
- Create a list of languages using the official languages of each country and official UN languages.
 - Some Work Track members stated that it might be difficult to identify the official languages of each country.
 - One Work Track member suggested using as a starting point [Working Paper 54](#) of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).
- Develop a list using the [Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale and categorization based on Official Recognition](#).
- Create an exhaustive repository of all country names in all languages.

Some Work Track members expressed support for maintaining the current treatment for long-form and short-form country names, noting that this appeared to be an acceptable outcome in the 2012 round. The Work Track co-leaders put forward a proposal to maintain reservation of short-form and long-form names listed in the ISO 3166-standard and translations of the short-form and long-form names in any language. Please see section c. for proposed text.

5.2.3 Short- or long-form name association with a code that has been designated as "exceptionally reserved" by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency

The Work Track discussed benefits and drawbacks associated with reserving names in this category. Work Track members noted that these are similar to benefits and drawbacks identified for short-form and long-form names.

Some Work Track members expressed support for maintaining the treatment included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. From another perspective, it may be appropriate to eliminate this category, because the ISO standard does not include a definition for the term “exceptionally reserved.”

5.2.4 Separable component of a country name designated on the "Separable Country Name List", or is a translation of a name appearing on the list, in any language

The Work Track discussed benefits and drawbacks associated with reserving names in this category. Work Track members noted that these are similar to benefits and drawbacks identified for short-form and long-form names.

Some Work Track members expressed support for maintaining the treatment included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. It was noted that concerns regarding translation “in any language” that were discussed in relation to short-form and long-form names may also be applicable to this category.

5.2.5 Permutation or transposition

Work Track members raised several concerns about provisions related to permutations and transpositions in the Applicant Guidebook. According to the Applicant Guidebook, a string is reserved if “it is a permutation or transposition of any of the names included in items (i) through (v). Permutations include removal of spaces, insertion of punctuation, and addition or removal of grammatical articles like “the.” A transposition is considered a change in the sequence of the long or short-form name, for example, “RepublicCzech” or “IslandsCayman”.” Work Track members expressed that it is unclear from this text whether reservation of transpositions applied to categories of country and territory names beyond short-form and long-form names. There was general agreement that intent of the text was that only transpositions of short-form and long-form names were not allowed but transpositions of other forms of country and territory names were permitted. However, Work Track members pointed out that the text could also be interpreted to mean that transpositions of three-letter codes and other forms of country and territory names were also reserved.

Several Work Track members suggested that if similar provisions are included in the future, the text should be presented in a way that is easier to understand. One member noted that the terms “transposition” and “permutation” may be difficult for non-native English speakers to understand. Therefore, alternate terms may be more appropriate.

Work Track members further noted that because this provision does not reference a specific list, it may not be clear to applicants and other stakeholders which strings are covered by this provision.

One Work Track member raised that the examples used in the Applicant Guidebook relation to transposition, “RepublicCzech” and “IslandsCayman” do not appear to be terms that anyone would use. From one perspective, the group should consider removing this provision unless there is documented problem that it seeks to solve. Another member stated that “RepublicCzech” and “IslandsCayman” and similar strings are unlikely to be of interest as TLDs, therefore there is little harm in reserving the strings. One member suggested that individual governments should be asked which permutations should be reserved in connection with corresponding country or territory name.

Some Work Track members supported maintaining the treatment included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook.

5.2.6 A name by which a country is commonly known, as demonstrated by evidence that the country is recognized by that name by an intergovernmental or treaty organization

Work Track members identified the following benefits of reserving names by which countries are commonly known:

- There is some level of predictability associated with this provision because there are specific sources of these terms.
 - At the same time, the Work Track expressed some level of uncertainty about what may or may not be included, indicating that in practice this provision may not be completely straightforward for applicants and other stakeholders.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to reserving names by which countries are commonly known:

- There are potential missed opportunities for gTLDs.
- There is no opportunity for an applicant supported by the relevant country to move forward with an application.

Some Work Track members supported maintaining the treatment included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook.

One Work Track member suggested that as long as a country can provide substantial evidence that the country is recognized by a name, the term should be included under this category. The member also suggested adding “in any language” to this provision.

5.3 Geographic Names Included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook

5.3.1 Capital City Names/Other City Name

5.3.1.1 2012 Round

For capital city names and city names, there is divergence between the 2007 Policy and Implementation in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. The 2007 Policy anticipated that these strings would be available without any special requirements and did not mention a provision requiring support/non-objection. The 2012 Applicant Guidebook required support/non-objection from relevant governments or public authorities for all representations, in any language, of capital city names of countries and territories listed in the ISO 3166-1 standard and city names where the applicant declares that it intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name. From one perspective, the 2012 Applicant Guidebook provisions represent a compromise position in which different parties found a middle ground. From another perspective, the 2012 Applicant Guidebook only represents a compromise between the GAC and ICANN staff and therefore does not represent the needs and interests of all parts of the ICANN community.

Work Track members discussed that in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook the term “city” was not defined, which could be a source of uncertainty. At the same time, because support/non-objection was only required if the applicant intended to operate the TLD for purposes associated with the city name, the impact of this lack of precision may have been limited. Work Track members pointed out that there are different definitions of the term “city” and provided the following resources to illustrate this point:

- Black's Law Dictionary: Ill England. An incorporated town or borough which is or has been the see of a bishop. Co. Litt. 10S; 1 Bl. Comm. 114; Cowell. State v. Green, 126 N. C. 103'2, 35 S. E. 4G2. A large town Incorporated with certain privileges. The inhabitants of a city. The citizens. Worcester. In America. A city Is a municipal corporation of a larger class, the distinctive feature of whose organization Is its government by a chief executive (usually called “mayor”) and a legislative body, composed of representatives of the citizens, (usually called a “council” or

“board of aldermen,”) and other officers having special functions. *Wight Co. v. Wolff*, 112 Ga. 169, 37 S. E. 395.

- [“What is the difference between at city and a town?”](#) (Worldatlas.com)
- [“City status in the United Kingdom”](#) (Wikipedia)

Work Track members also raised the issue that some applicants experienced a de-facto requirement to obtain support or non-objection from a government or public authority for a string they did not intend to use for purposes associated with a city name. In the Applicant Guidebook, there was no requirement for applicants to obtain support/non-objection if the applicant intended to use the string in a generic or brand context. The cases of .spa and .bar are examples that were cited by Work Track members.

Work Track members noted that some applicants had difficulty in the 2012 round identifying the relevant governments and public authorities from which to obtain support/non-objection. From one perspective, if such requirements exists in subsequent procedures, it may be helpful to develop methods to assist applicants in connecting with the relevant governments and public authorities. Some Work Track members have suggested that GAC members could play a facilitative role. An additional proposal to establish an advisory panel or consultative role for the Geographic Names Panel is included in sub-section 6 “General Proposals.”

From one perspective, there were challenges in the 2012 round associated with resolving competing bids for a string associated with a city name, in particular if multiple applications had support or non-objection from relevant governments/public authorities. Some Work Track members felt that this may be any area for future refinement if the support/non-objection mechanism exists in subsequent procedures.

For non-capital city names, government support/non-objection was not required if the applicant intended to use the TLD primarily for purposes not associated with the geographic meaning of the string. Work Track members identified that some stakeholders experienced uncertainty about monitoring and enforcement related to the intended use commitment.

5.3.1.2 Themes

Work Track members considered whether it is beneficial to distinguish between capital city names and city names and whether these should be considered distinct types of geographic names. From one perspective, there is a meaningful difference between capital city names and other city names and these should be treated as two separate categories when considering future use. From another perspective, future treatment of city names should be considered more holistically, and these should not be considered categories with distinct treatment. Because capital city names and other city names were discussed together at various points during the Work Track conversations, the discussions are summarized in aggregate below. This does not indicate that there is consensus to treat all city names as a single category.

During discussions of capital city names and city names, several themes emerged. One major theme was whether law and public policy provided justification for requiring support/non objection by government authorities. The different perspectives on this issue are included above in section 2.5 “Law and Public Policy” and also mentioned briefly in the pros and cons below. Another theme was whether the context of use for a city name should determine whether support/non-objection is required. These points are mentioned briefly below and discussed in greater depth in section 3 “Intended Use.” Different perspectives were expressed regarding future treatment of capital city names and city names in relation to intended use:

- Some felt that support/non-objection should always be required for capital city names and city names regardless of intended use.
- Some felt that support/non-objection should always be required for capital city names and should only be required for city names if the applicant intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name (2012 Applicant Guidebook treatment).
- Some felt that support/non-objection should be required for capital city names and city names only if the applicant intends to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name.
- Some felt that support/non-objection should never be required for capital city names and city names.

An additional issue raised by Work Track members is that a single name may be associated with multiple cities. For example, Perth, Brisbane, and Sydney, are city names in Australia and also in England/Scotland/Wales. There are many towns and cities in the United States named Springfield. Some Work Track members felt that all cities associated with a name should have the opportunity to provide support/non-objection because they all have a connection with the string. Others favored a requirement for support/non-objection from a city government only if the intended use is in association with that specific city. As noted above, some Work Track members oppose support/non-objection requirements.

5.3.1.3 Benefits identified by Work Track members - support/non-objection

- Some governments found the mechanism worked well for them in the 2012 round.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that it is the role of governments to protect the public interest, and this mechanism allows government to protect the public interest and the interest of residents/communities.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that always requiring support/non-objection for city names, regardless of intended use, is consistent with a government’s rights and responsibilities under national and local law and public policy.
- In favor of always requiring support/non-objection for city names, regardless of intended use, some Work Track members have expressed that a TLD is a unique piece of real estate. From this perspective, even if a city is being used for a non-geographic purpose, there may be political, historical, economic, religious, and/or social connotations for the populations and communities affected, and this process allows government to act on those concerns.
- From one perspective, the support/non-objection mechanism provides flexibility for different solutions. Some governments may have a “laissez-faire” approach. Other governments may end

up participating in governance of the string or pursuing joint initiatives with applicants and other parties.

- Where there is a support/non-objection requirement, governments do not need to actively monitor the application process to determine whether ICANN is reviewing an application that the government may consider relevant.
- From one perspective, 60+ city TLD applications went forward with support/non-objection and there were few cases of objections for such strings in the 2012 round, demonstrating that many applications were able to proceed to delegation using this process. Some applicants expressed that they had a positive experience with the process.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that there are a number of success stories coming out of the 2012 round using the support/non-objection mechanism for example .tokyo, .london, .paris, .berlin, .amsterdam, .nyc, .hamburg, .koeln, .boston, .vegas, .moscow, .wien, .miami, .istanbul, .sydney, and .quebec. From one perspective, the delegation of these strings had positive effects on geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity.
- From one perspective, applicants have a more predictable process through the support/non-objection mechanism. By engaging with governments early in the process, they become aware early of any opposition by governments and therefore prevented legal conflicts.
- Some WT members have expressed that the support/non-objection requirement is a way to promote cooperation between different parties that have an interest in the string.
- Some WT members have expressed that the support/non-objection requirement, if limited to capital cities, offers some degree of predictability because the list of capital city names is based on an objective standard (ISO 3166-1).

5.3.1.4 Drawbacks identified by Work Track members - support/non-objection

Work Track members identified the following issues with the support/non-objection mechanism in connection with capital city names and city names:

- Some Work Track members have expressed that the support/non-objection mechanism creates financial and logistical burdens for applicants and a lack of predictability.
- From one perspective, it may be difficult to identify the relevant government(s)/public authority(ies) associated with a city.
- There is no definitive list of city names. From one perspective, if support/non-objection is required for city names regardless of use, and a name corresponds to multiple (or many) city names, it can be difficult for an applicant to determine where support/non-objection should be obtained.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that the support/non-objection mechanism causes rent-seeking and distorts markets.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that this process does not sufficiently take into account the rights of intellectual property rights holders.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that it is beneficial for there to be more TLDs, regardless of the intended use, and ICANN should eliminate unnecessary barriers to establishing

new TLDs absent evidence of harm.

- Some Work Track members have expressed that governments do not have a legal basis for claiming the right to provide support/non-objection, stating that national law and local law on the protection of geographic names is only applicable within the country in which the law exists.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that governments should not have special rights or privileges absent explicit justification under international law.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that the support/non-objection process violates the freedom of expression rights of applicants.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that there may be legitimate applications that a government opposes and that not all government represent the public interest.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that if a string is being used in a generic or brand context, there is no harm or risk of confusion and therefore support/non-objection process is not necessary.
- Some Work Track members have expressed that the application/delegation process can take time and city administrations may change, which could create unstable conditions for the applicant who is required to have government support/non-objection.
- From one perspective, engaging with governments early in the application process may reduce the competitive advantage for an applicant and encourage competing applications for the same string that might not otherwise have been pursued.

5.3.1.5 Proposals Related to Cities

- **Support/Non-Objection Requirement for Large Cities Only:** Create a list of cities larger than a certain size (for example larger than 500,000 inhabitants) and require support/non-objection, regardless of intended use, if the applied for string matches a name on this list. Variants: Base the support/non-objection requirement on the relative size of the city, for example the 10 largest cities in a country or the 3 largest cities in a sub-national region; apply the support/non-objection requirement only to cities that hold a certain percentage of a country's population. It was noted that a combination of these standards could also apply. The following lists were referenced as possible sources of cities:
 - ["World's largest urban areas"](#) (Mongabay)
 - ["The world's cities in 2016"](#) (United Nations)
 - ["Council of European Municipalities and Regions comments on ICANN's draft version 3 of the New gTLD Applicant Guidebook"](#) (ccre.org)

One of the benefits identified for this proposal is that by using a single list of cities as a point of reference, there is greater predictability in the process. For those who feel that it is more important to provide rules for areas with larger population, this approach offers such rules while limiting rules on strings that match smaller (to some, less significant) cities and towns. From another perspective larger cities do not inherently have different rights than smaller cities. For example, Paris, France does not inherently have greater rights to the term "Paris" than the city of Paris, Texas.

One Work Track member stated that if this proposal was adopted, there would need to be a procedure for revising the list of cities and a repository of exceptions to the list. According to the Work Track member, there are small places of significance for tourism, religious, cultural or historical reasons. From this perspective, these terms should require support/non-objection.

- **Objections-Based System:** Use a system of objections for all parties to raise issues with an application. In this proposal, the concept of affirmative non-objection is eliminated from the process. Applicants may include evidence of support in an application. Parties, including governments, may file objections to applications. Objections by all parties must refer to international law, domestic law, ISO standards or other objective measures that are relevant to the applicant and the application. Under this proposal, applicants take responsibility for ensuring that they submit applications which address those points and avoid an objection. Objectors pay to make the objection and submit any objections within appropriate time frames. Evaluators take objections into account in the evaluation and may discard objections. Variant: No geographic name gets priority unless it is a name recognized in international law or by some international body of standard setting. No geographic name gets priority if it is held by more than one geographic location.

In support of this proposal, some Work Track members have expressed that this process would be more fair and predictable for applicants because it uses objective standards for evaluation. Some Work Track members have expressed that it would be a significant burden on governments to monitor which strings are being applied for, especially because many city governments are not aware of ICANN or the new gTLD process. Some Work Track members feel that this proposal does not take into account public policy concerns that are not codified in law.

- **Priority for Small Cities:** Give small cities, towns, and geographic communities the first right to apply for a TLD associated with the place. It was noted that in the 2012 round an application could be both a community application and a geographic application. Community applications in contention that passed the Community Priority Evaluation received priority. Community Priority Evaluation and Community Objections are being addressed in Work Track 3.

5.3.2 Sub-National Place Names, Such as Counties, Provinces, or States Listed in ISO 3166-2

For sub-national place names, there is divergence between the 2007 Policy and Implementation in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. The 2007 Policy anticipated that these strings would be available without any special requirements and did not mention a provision requiring support/non-objection. The 2012 Applicant Guidebook required support/non-objection from relevant governments or public authorities if a string was an exact match of a sub-national place name, such as a county, province, or state listed in ISO 3166-2.

Work Track members identified the following benefits of requiring support/non-objection for these strings:

- There is some level of predictability, because there are specific sources of terms.
- From one perspective, the approach created incentives for applicants and relevant authorities to arrive at mutually accepted solutions.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to requiring support/non-objection for these strings:

- From one perspective, this approach creates a lack of predictability for applicants. It may be difficult for applicants to determine where to seek consent from governments.
- From one perspective, there may be tensions between communities associated with regions and the corresponding governments. In this view, a legitimate applicant could be punished or evaluated negatively because a government entity does not agree with the applicant's position or entitlement.
- One case raised was the example of .tata. From one perspective, a large multinational brand needed to obtain support/non-objection from a small province in Morocco that had not expressed interest in establishing a TLD related to that string. For some Work Track members, this is an indication that there is a problem with this provision.

Work Track members noted that it might be helpful to have additional conversations about future treatment of applications where a regional place name is also a country name. For example, Georgia is a country and a state in the United States.

Some Work Track members expressed support for requiring support/non-objection for these strings in subsequent procedures. Other Work Track members expressed concerns about this approach.

5.3.3 Strings listed as UNESCO Regions or Appearing on the "Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings" list.

For strings in this category, there is divergence between the 2007 Policy and the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. The 2007 Policy anticipated that these strings would be available without any special requirements and did not mention a provision requiring support/non-objection. The 2012 Applicant Guidebook required support/non-objection from at least 60% of the respective national governments in the region and no more than one written statement of objection.

Work Track members identified the following benefits of requiring support/non-objection for these strings:

- There is some level of predictability, because there are specific sources of terms.
- From one perspective, the approach created incentives for applicants and relevant authorities to arrive at mutually accepted solutions.

Work Track members identified the following drawbacks to requiring support/non-objection for these strings:

- From one perspective, there may be tensions between communities associated with regions and the corresponding governments. In this view, a legitimate applicant could be punished or evaluated negatively because a government entity does not agree with the applicant's position or entitlement.
- A Work Track member pointed to the case of .africa as an example of a string in this category that had challenges in the 2012 round using the support/non-objection process.

Some Work Track members expressed support for requiring support/non-objection for these strings in subsequent procedures. Other Work Track members expressed concerns about this approach.

5.4 Terms Not Included in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook

The Work Track discussed categories of strings that were not listed as geographic names in the 2012 Applicant Guidebook. Different perspectives were expressed on this issue. During the conversations on this topic, Work Track members referenced cases from the 2012 round where different parties had different perspectives on whether a term was geographic in nature and the resulting process caused uncertainty and costs for parties involved. These include .Thai, .GCC, .PersianGulf, and .Amazon, and .Patagonia.

From one perspective, there were names with geographic meaning that were not covered by the 2012 Applicant Guidebook definitions and rules and that should be included in the Applicant Guidebook as geographic terms in the future. From this perspective, it is desirable to create rules for a greater number of strings, because it will create more predictability in the process. The following types of strings were mentioned by Work Track members:

- Geographical features, such as mountains and rivers
- Sub-national and regional terms not included in the 2012 AGB
- Geographical indications
- Non-ASCII geographic terms not included in the 2012 AGB

For those who support rules additional categories of strings, the support/non-objection mechanism was mentioned as a possible path forward.

From another perspective, the best way to ensure predictability is to make sure there are explicit guidelines for applicants and that guidelines, policies, and implementation can be applied to any potential application for any kind of geographic term. From this perspective, applicants should, as the default, be given a path to success. The default should not grant rights to other parties to block applications.

One Work Track member provided the opinion that groups of people associated with a geographic feature or region should have an opportunity to apply for a corresponding TLD without facing unnecessary financial and logistical hurdles. For example, Australian aboriginal communities may wish to apply for relevant geographic terms to sell art in Australia and internationally.

In support of fewer restrictions/protections, one Work Track member noted that objections processes could be used to address cases where a substantial number of people associated with a geographic community opposed an application. In this proposal, the objection would have to be supported by a substantial portion of the geographic community described/implicated by the name and there would need to be a stated public policy reason for the objection.

In conversations about potential additional categories of strings, Work Track members discussed scope and applicability of law. Please see sub-section 3 “Law and Public Policy” for additional information about this discussion.

6. GENERAL PROPOSALS

Some Work Track members put forward proposals that do not apply specifically to a category of strings but address the treatment of geographic names more broadly:

- **Advisory Panel:** Provide an advisory panel that applicants could contact to assist in identifying if a string is related to a geographic location. The panel could consult in “hard cases” where it may be unclear to the applicant if the term is geographic. The panel could also help applicants identify which governments and/or public authorities would be applicable. Alternately, the geographic names panel, used to evaluate whether an applied for string was a geographic TLD in the 2012 round, could be made available to advise applicants before they submit applications.
 - From another point of view, the geographic names panel should have a focused mandate and rules should be sufficiently clear that there are no “hard cases.”
- **GAC Member Input on Geographic Sensitivities:** Leverage the expertise of GAC members to help applicants determine if a string is related to a geographic location. GAC members could also assist applicants in identifying which governments and/or public authorities would be applicable.
- **Repository of Geographic Names:** Maintain a list of geographic names reflecting terms that governments consider sensitive and/or important as geographic names. Countries could contribute terms to this repository.

g. Are there other activities in the community that may serve as a dependency or future input to this topic?

[This section will be filled in as the WT gets closer to publishing the Initial Report]