

February 24, 2010

Dear Rod and Peter,

A vote on EOIs appears likely to be taken in Nairobi. Assuming the Board votes in favor, we want to call your attention to a very important related aspect – the start of the communication period. This window, according to the staff recommendation, should last “at least four months.” It could go longer.

ICANN should communicate the new gTLD program thoroughly, and the communication should begin as soon as possible following a favorable vote on EOIs. To anyone who wants participation in the gTLD program to be broad and diverse, even a period longer than four months is a good thing – as long as it starts as soon as possible.

Minds + Machines and gTLD applicants are well aware of the potential for the communications period to be yet another excuse for delay. Therefore, in the event of a favorable vote on EOIs, we urge you to direct the staff to begin the communications period “as soon as possible” so that the staff may begin implementation. In our view, it is imperative to keep the communications period from becoming another political football.

You will probably hear from opponents of new gTLDs that the communications period should not be launched until DAG4 is published, or even later. But how could alerting potential applicants to the program, and keeping them aware of changes, be in any way a bad thing? We accept that the EOI start date may come after DAG4, but the communications period should begin as soon as possible.

95% of the DAG is known. The 5% which is not known will be known in a matter of months. Subject to the Board approving EOIs, ICANN should reach out to prospective applicants to involve them in the process.

Pushing the communications plan start date back until after the June meeting in Brussels means that the EOI window will start in November 2010, and will not end before January 2011. ICANN will receive no EOI information in 2010, and another year will have passed with no start to the new gTLD program – a black eye to ICANN and the likely loss of many qualified applicants.

In summary, we very much hope that the ICANN board approves the EOI, and if it does, we urge the Board to direct ICANN staff to start its communications effort as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Fred Krueger
Antony Van Couvering