

1Q-24 usTLD Stakeholder Meeting Agenda
February 15, 2024 | 12pm Eastern Daylight Time



February 15th 2024

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I. Welcome

II. Roll call and approval of December 2023 minutes

Attendees:

Stakeholder Council: Bryan Britt, Becky Burr, Alex Deacon, Michele Neylon, Bartlett Cleland, Tom Barrett, Doug Robinson, Sam Sokol

Registry Services: Crystal Peterson, Kristin Johnson, Melissa Cohen, Fernando Espana, Kathy Nielsen

NTIA: Stacy Cheney

Dustin Loup, .US Stakeholder Chair, was unexpectedly unable to attend the 1Q-24 meeting. Consequently, CPeterson assumed the role of meeting leader.

CPeterson: Motions to approve 4Q meeting minutes. BCleland motions and MNeylon seconds motion. Minutes approved.

III. Stakeholder & Administrator Updates

Council Member Updates

CPeterson: Judy Song-Marshall has resigned from the Stakeholder Council due to competing professional responsibilities. We thank Judy for her service and contributions to the usTLD.

Stakeholder Future Topics

- Premium Names
- Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)

Premium Domain Name Plan

CPeterson: Registry Services is seeking Council input on a Premium Domain Name Plan to enhance the integrity of the .US namespace and adapt to the evolving domain landscape. Our objective is to reassess premium name offerings, inclusive of a registry pricing tier program and direct to consumer super premium portfolio. This effort is driven by the growing trend among registries, including ccTLDs, to integrate premium programs into their pricing structures. By revisiting our premium name strategy after 7 years, we aim to support the vitality of the .US namespace and foster growth opportunities. Given the level of investment, buyers of high value premium domain names typically put these names to good use – building web properties that are heavily marketed and promoted. This is beneficial to the entire

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namespace, getting coveted names circulated and in use with a benefit to the Registry to continue its marketing and branding activities.

CPeterson: The Premium Domain Name Plan would make available to the public at a premium price certain high-value, highly-visible, premium .US domain names (“.US Premium Domains”), some of which are currently designated as “reserved” (including one- and two-character .US domain names), and others that would be newly designated as such. The premium domain plan would consist of two (2) sub-programs of registry pricing tiers sold via EPP through registrars and a registry managed super premium portfolio sold directly to end-users.

Throughout the plan, all policies and restrictions regarding two-character state and territorial abbreviations or numbered domain names are recommended to still be in effect. **This will preserve and maintain the usTLD locality namespace and zipcode.us project.**

The questions to the Stakeholder Council are:

- *Will the launch of registry premium tiers within a defined high/low price model devalue the utility of the usTLD namespace?*
- *Will it affect the stable management of the usTLD?*
- *Does it affect negatively any renewals of current usTLD domain name holders?*

MNeylon: Why are certain labels not available? Besides the 2-character requirement.

CPeterson: We have one and two characters reserved but certain 2-characters are reserved to maintain and handle the locality space.

BBritt: We need to consider the risk of the U.S. establishing a new territory or zipcode and the need for additional 2-characters which are not currently reserved within the locality but might need to be in the future. We should have the ability to pull back 2-character domains which are in locality space.

CPeterson: To restate the concern, you are saying should new state or territory be defined, that was not previously present, for example, XX.US, that Registry Service would need to have the ability to recall that domain from the premium portfolio, due to the fact that it’s now part of locality space.

BBritt: It’s really postal codes which are the main concern. If a new postal code extension is created.

BBritt (via chat): Since the locality space is the 2-letter postal codes, it's not so much that a state splits, but if the Post Office creates any additional two-character postal codes, say, for a military base, then that retroactively becomes a premium and would be recalled from any current registrant.

DRobinson (via chat): I assume the reserved state postal code names used by state/local government are grandfathered under this proposal?

BBritt (via chat): They are already reserved.

ADeacon (via chat): Can you please provide the list of reserved names under .us?

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MCohen (via chat): <https://www.about.us/fags> The list can be found here. Click the embedded link under "found here".

ADeacon: Are all the reserved names in this list being moved to premium?

CPeterson: No, there would be a full review and recommendation made to NTIA for which names remain reserved and which would be recommended for a premium tier or super premium list. Some names may also be recommended to remove completely.

BBritt (via chat): The list of prospective premium names should remain internal confidential, because if it becomes public, a domain speculator can grab them all.

ADeacon: How are these premium tiers selected. How does a label get marked as premium?

CPeterson: Our Director of Premium Names, KNielsen, oversees these efforts across our portfolio of TLDs. She can provide an explanation of how these lists are derived. I am going to hand it over to KNielsen to answer your question.

KNielsen: There are several factors that are taken into consideration when developing a premium name list. We have 10+ years of historical data we leverage to build a library of terms that have shown to be high-value and high-demand.

ADeacon: You're saying that Registry Services manages the list.

KNielsen: Correct. Registry Services decides on the list of names deemed premium, however we are not adding names on the fly. The list will be released as one update after final determinations are made. If we need to have an inventory update at some point, then we would announce this to customers.

ADeacon: It makes me uncomfortable because it showcases separation of classes. What value does premium names bring to .US?

CPeterson: The ability to standardize prices across the portfolio is what Registries aim to do.

TBarrett (via chat): Would the release of these reserved names be subject to a Sunrise period?

CPeterson: That is a great question. At first blush, no. We're not looking to have brand names marked as premium, but the list is not fully developed. For example, hotel.us would not go through a sunrise. In reviewing all of the reserve list, some names would be pulled off. Let us take that question back and flesh it out.

MNeylon: How are you defining "registrant"? I ask because what if there is a corporate restructure or a major holding group wants to transfer their domain to a new entity that is still under their corporate umbrella but under a different legal name?

TBarrett (via chat): Existing names need to expire and be deleted before the new premium pricing kicks in on existing names. It's not a new registration so premium pricing does not apply.

CPeterson: The transfer cost would be the same as renewal. The expectation and practice would be at the same standard as other domains everywhere.

TBarrett: The release of this Premium list would categorize the domains into one of these states:

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- names that are currently reserved
- names that are registered
- names that are not registered but available

BBurr (via chat): What's the relationship between premium names and abuse? I think, in fact, that the more expensive names are, the less likely you are to have abuse.

MNeylon (via chat): Becky - there isn't any.

TBarrett (via chat): Becky – agreed.

TBarrett (via chat): There are two issues to address here: 1. releasing reserved terms: YES/NO and 2. at what price (Std/Premium).

MNeylon: Also the “how.”

Noting; the premium names discussion was tabled yet no final approval was provided. The engaging discussion would indicate that the Council will develop a sub-committee for further discussion. During the next scheduled Stakeholder Council meeting a full approval will be requested.

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)

CPeterson: We believe it is our responsibility as the usTLD registry operator to play an active role in helping to keep the Internet a stable, secure engine for creativity, innovation and economic development for those with interests in many facets of the United States community and culture. While the content of a website can appear in any language, the domain name system has historically been limited to the characters used in English (or ASCII). Since the United States is made up of different cultures and backgrounds, this can present a significant barrier to Internet access for many people and cultures. Internationalized Domain Names can be an important building block towards creating a truly multilingual Internet.

Our objective is to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in domain naming through Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), which allow the use of characters from various languages. Recognizing the linguistic diversity within the United States, as highlighted by the [2022 American Community Survey](#) conducted by the US Census Bureau, where English, Spanish, and Chinese are the most spoken languages at home. English leads at approximately 80%, followed by Spanish at 13%. Given that English and Spanish combined encompass approximately 93% of the total U.S. population according to census data and other statistics, we propose to introduce or enable Spanish language characters in our domain offerings. Beyond Spanish, the usage of other languages in the U.S. drops to less than 1%. However, should there be significant growth beyond this threshold, we will consider revisiting our strategy to potentially incorporate additional languages.

The questions to the Stakeholder Council are:

- *Is Registry Services ensuring needs of current domain name holders are considered with the introduction of IDNs?*

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- *Are we improving the utility of the usTLD namespace by introducing Spanish characters into the naming system?*
- *Is the stable and secure management of the usTLD platform upheld with the limited character set of the proposed language?*
- *Should any other languages be considered?*

MNeylon: How do you plan to facilitate? For example, for existing companies, brands and registrants with matching names.

CPeterson: Good question. For current nameholders, we can address if there will be a pre-registration period before? Or could there be a previous registration period so that we can match the IDNs?

TBarrett (via chat): What is the estimated level of interest or projected revenue from selling IDN.US domains?

ADeacon (via chat): I think level of interest is a more interesting/relevant question for the council. Level of interest = demand.

MNeylon (via chat): Politically it's a good idea. Sunrise - pre-registration = good idea IMHO. For the record I'm in favor of IDNs for Spanish speakers.

BBritt (via chat): I do like limiting available characters to a small set of languages, rather than all of them. If it's one language or others, I like that it's just not all characters.

ADeacon (via chat): Are there any laws/regulations in the US requiring support of non-ascii characters? (no need to answer this now - but wanted to put it on the record.)

CPeterson: The questions are not meant to be answered here. We would need to pull in sub-committees to fully discuss a game plan, under the purview of stakeholder council. From within IDNs, we want to ensure we're keeping a stable and secure objective. We also want to maintain a good relationship within the community. Based on our internal reviews the current ASCII limitations may present a barrier to certain names being registered. Our objective is to enhance the accessibility through certain IDNs. Upon review of recent Census data, the top three languages used in the U.S. are English, Spanish and Chinese. We propose to introduce Spanish language IDNs only.

Noting; the IDN discussion was tabled yet no final approval was provided. The engaging discussion would indicate that the Council will develop a sub-committee for further discussion. During the next scheduled Stakeholder Council meeting a full approval will be requested.

DNS Abuse & Mitigation

CPeterson: 2023 anti-abuse reporting shows a total of 11,112 cases investigated throughout the year. And SURBL ranks .us number twenty on their list representing 0.2% of the total namespace. Registry Services continues to invest in security as a top priority for the namespace. Current efforts include conversations with InfoBlox as well as partnering with Netcraft and the DCAI (this is set up around DNS abuse).

MNeylon: This is all very positive.

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ADeacon (via chat): The question we should be asking is why the abuse rate for .US is higher than other ccTLDs (it shouldn't be IMO).

BBritt (via chat): That's what I was thinking... 0.2% seems small, is it a much larger percentage than, say, .org, .cc, .biz(?)

ADeacon (via chat): We should compare apples to apples (i.e. .us vs other ccTLDs). Not gTLDs like .zip or .icu or .xyz....

CPeterson: That is a topic I think would be good for the Stakeholder Council. Going forward, we want this to be an ongoing discussion. It would be great to get perspective from others as well. If we could reach out to the .IE TLD and get insight there. How are they mitigating abuse? I may contact you (MNeylon) offline to go over what we can bring to the council.

MNeylon (via chat): Mick from .ie would be a good person. Also talk to CENTR members.

CPeterson: We are over time and haven't reviewed 1Q Marketing. (KJohnson) are you comfortable sending out a recap or combining for the next meeting?

KJohnson: I am happy to present both 1Q and 2Q marketing efforts during our next meeting.

IV. AOB & Closing

Next scheduled meeting 17 May 2024 (*subsequently rescheduled to 30 May 2024*).