

ICANN Releases Draft Applicant Guidebook for New Generic Top-Level Domains

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The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ("ICANN"), the organization that is responsible for the allocation of Internet domain names and IP addresses, released draft policy documents regarding a new program that will permit organizations to create and operate generic top-level domains ("TLDs"). Currently, there are only 21 active generic TLD extensions (e.g., .com, .net, .org and .edu) and 249 country-code TLD extensions (e.g., .us, .uk, .de) in operation. Under ICANN's new initiative, applicants will be able to design and select a new domain that they feel is appropriate for their customers or for their target market. For example, the company "ABC" might choose to apply for and operate the ".abc" domain on behalf of itself.

ICANN's generic TLD expansion plan presents business opportunities, as well as risks, for trademark owners and others. Whether there is interest in operating a generic TLD, or whether there is concern about others operating such a generic TLD, trademark holders must understand the application process as well as the dispute resolution process by which ICANN will evaluate objections by existing rights holders to the establishment of new domains.

The draft policy document is available for review and comment on [ICANN's website](#). This document includes such policies as the initial US\$185,000 fee to initiate a new generic TLD, to evaluation and objection reviews and to dispute resolution processes for holders of confusingly similar trademarks.

The 45-day public comment period regarding this policy document ends on December 8, 2008.

For Further Information

If you have any questions regarding these regulations, including how they may affect your company, please contact a [member](#) of the [Information Technologies and Telecom Practice](#) or the lawyer in the firm with whom you are regularly in contact.