



18 November 2009 - Expression of Interest proposal sent to ICANN

At the last ICANN meeting in Seoul, South Korea last month, the ICANN board agreed to a proposal from a group led by Mind+Machines' Jothan Frakes that suggested to launch a call for Expression of Interest in new top level domains, like .sport. As is usual, ICANN submitted the proposal to public comments.

The whole process of drafting the final request for proposals have been going on for years. At the same time, potential applicants and their communities are getting nervous that it gives the impression that nothing moves ahead. This may not be true, because there are some very complicated issues that still need to be resolved. At the same time, it poses problems.

For ICANN, the main issue is to quantify the number of proposals that can be expected. If it needs to hire staff and experts to evaluate these proposals, it needs to know how many proposals will be submitted.

For applicants like us, we need to send out clear signals to our communities that we are serious, in order to be able to raise the necessary funding to apply for our TLD later on. We also need to know if there are going to be similar proposals submitted by other groups. This will give us a chance to settle our differences and submit one proposal, rather than several.

This is why we joined a working group that has submitted a proposal to ICANN, asking for them to launch a call for Expression of Interest in applying for a new top level domain. This proposal suggests among others to:

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ask for a deposit, in order to avoid frivolous submissions. The deposit would then be deducted from the application fee later on.

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Only allow applications coming from the groups that have formally expressed their interest. This will force all the potential applicants that have not yet made their interest public to come out of the woods.

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Publish the results of the call, so that groups can form alliances ahead of the application window.

Overall, we think the proposal of this working group is balanced and we hope it will be accepted by the ICANN board at its 20th December meeting.