

Universal Acceptance Initiative

An Abridged Roadmap

Introduction to the Roadmap

Setting the Scene

The **Universal Acceptance** initiative is an effort to address potential user issues and obstacles observed in the use of new Top Level Domains, issues and obstacles rooted primarily in assumptions based on the TLD. This abridged roadmap, an outcome of the *JIG Final Report on Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs¹* plus other work, presents a proposal, based on community input to date, as to how ICANN's energy, resources, and actions should be applied as part of the initiative.

The abridged roadmap emphasizes ICANN's multi-stakeholder model by limiting its scope to ICANN's role and possible actions. Identifying and addressing the issues and obstacles require work and collaboration among many stakeholder groups who have documented their activity independently. ICANN views its primary role as one of active coordination and facilitation, acting as a catalyst in connecting relevant stakeholders with each other and with parties who are in a position to remove these obstacles. The vision includes implementing a 'corporate memory' as a central information depository of progress.

Creating a Sense of Urgency

The primary goal of ICANN's own efforts is to "create a sense of urgency", that is, to motivate stakeholders to take proper independent action. ICANN's efforts should be educational and pro-active, advocating activity that is needed to achieve universal acceptance. ICANN's main role will be the organization connecting those facing obstacles with those that can remove them.

The Goal

The goal of "domain names in a TLD must be useable in applications regardless of the written script, and length or newness of the TLD" roughly captures the observed issues and obstacles driving the discussion of universal acceptance. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the use of names in the IDN TLDs, combining all of the challenges mentioned in the goal as well as touching areas of concerns of generic and country-code TLDs. Registration of names must work, protocols must work, and services/applications impacting the user must work; work also in the sense that

¹<https://ccnso.icann.org/announcements/announcement-18nov13-en.htm>

domain names and the identifiers built on them are useable in administratively permitted ways. Included in this goal is the usability of internationalized email addresses (RFC 6530).

Introduction to the Initiative

The Context

Preliminary investigations into universal acceptance have given a high-level picture of the challenge. The list of issues and obstacles as documented by stakeholders is highly dynamic. New entries in the list appear and some entries get solved without regard to any pre-determined calendar. Besides being dynamic, the list of what to solve is diverse and sometimes overlapping. Hence teams of stakeholders involved are necessarily dynamically formed, diverse and sometimes overlapping. This is not a project in the sense of traditional project management; a set of deliverables and milestones are replaced with plans for continuous engagements with stakeholders.

The Stakeholders

The roster of stakeholders is quite long. Members of the domain name industry and associations are one set of stakeholders, other sets include application software vendors and service providers, protocol and operations standards bodies, system and network operators, security practitioners, and, of course, end-user communities. This is a large and disjoint group with no obvious forum for cooperation.

The Gap

In such a context, there is role to play for an active facilitator. There is a need to capture the list of issues and obstacles as well as successes. There is a need to capture lessons learned by one team and act as a resource to the next team. At times there will be a need for a catalyst in the deployment of solutions.

Elements of the Roadmap

Sustaining Momentum

The actions of ICANN, towards creating a sense of urgency, will focus on sustaining momentum (as it grows) of communications and collaborations among stakeholders involved with universal acceptance. When teams disband lessons of what was done to reach a conclusion is often forgotten leading to the next team to re-learn the same lessons and thus slowing progress and draining forward momentum. Fostering sustainable relationships among stakeholders will be the best way to serve the

teams that are involved in the dynamic issues and obstacle space, and helping to create the needed forums for research and work.

ICANN's Role

ICANN's role as part of the initiative is to foster relationships among stakeholders involved with universal acceptance issues, whether the stakeholders are aware of the situation or not, i.e., conduct outreach where it is warranted. ICANN will have one of its focuses on the domain name registration ecosystem to ensure that it, as an enabling sector has adopted universal acceptance. This is a natural starting point, not only as an enabling sector but one where ICANN has existing relationships.

As it is not simply satisfactory that domain names work, ICANN will promote internationalized email as a way to enable full functionality of IDN TLDs. Although the standards for internationalized email are documented, deployment of the technology has reportedly not been progressing.

To build a corporate memory of the progress toward universal acceptance, ICANN meeting sessions will be scheduled in which stakeholders can come to present and/or exchange concerns related to universal acceptance, provide on-line tools, share experiences and solutions with each other.

ICANN will also develop a means to accept reports of problems, as well as successes, to pass information amongst stakeholders for resolution. ICANN will engage stakeholders in the effort to exchange information on universal acceptance, whether this is seen as informational or a means to gain insight into issues and obstacles. ICANN will develop a means to accept reports of problems, as well as successes, to pass information amongst stakeholders for resolution.

One of ICANN's capabilities is to act as a catalyst in raising awareness of the issues in order to derive needed solutions. ICANN will actively engage software developer and service providers on the topic of universal acceptance, providing information on the topic as well as addressing specific issues and obstacles. The aim of this effort will be to further awareness and universal acceptance of new TLDs in general and IDNs.

To “create a sense of urgency” ICANN recognizes that it is important and plans to peer with relevant stakeholders at the decision maker levels. Exchanges of information are not sufficient without the attention of decision makers.

Call To Action

ICANN is welcoming comments on the roadmap described. Suggestions to help foster universal acceptance will be appreciated as well as expressions of interest in the topic. Please send comments and suggestions to tld-acceptance@icann.org.