usTLD Stakeholder Council Annual Report

On April 22, 2015, Neustar and the usTLD Stakeholder Council ("Council") held the first usTLD Public Stakeholder Town Hall ("Town Hall"). The purpose of the Town Hall was to solicit broader feedback from users with interests in the .US top-level domain to guide further policy discussion and work by the Council, as well as to encourage continued public participation in the activities of the Council.

The Town Hall had fifty attendees, inclusive of nine members of the Stakeholder Council and twelve Neustar employees, fifty of whom had pre-registered for the conference.

Planning

Planning for the usTLD Public Stakeholder Town Hall was led by the Council Secretariat and the usTLD Stakeholder, Council with the support of the Department of Commerce. During its January, February, March and April meetings, as well as through ongoing listserv discussion, the Council worked collectively to establish the Town Hall discussion topics and meeting structure, review the Town Hall presentation materials and agenda, develop preparatory materials, and assess input received through the Public Survey circulated in advance of the Town Hall as an input to guide discussions.

The Council determined that the meeting should cover a two hour period, and three discussion topics, leaving a time at the end to discuss any additional topics of interest to the community. The Council determined to hold the meeting through Adobe Connect given its features (including chat, polling, and Q&A), as well as the software's familiarity to users within the ICANN and Internet policy community. The Council sought to schedule the call mid-week to maximize availability, as well as to avoid major religious and school holiday periods. 1p.m. to 3p.m. was selected in order to be convenient to participants from both the East Coast and West Coast.

The Council held a run-through two days in advance of the Town Hall to work through any issues. At the meeting, it was determined that the number of speakers should be kept low to improve flow between the slides and agenda items. The Council also decided to introduce additional slides summarizing the input received to the Public Survey circulated in advance of the Town Hall.

Publication

The Town Hall was publicized by the Secretariat and the Stakeholder Council through the following channels:

- Blogs Published in Circle ID, Domain Name Wire, About.us, .US Policy Blog, and Neustar Blog;
- Targeted emails sent to the following communities: registrars, delegated managers, Internet Society members, state chief information officers;
- Word of mouth publicity at Internet policy-related events;
- Circulation of business cards with event details; and
- Social media (Twitter/Facebook).

Agenda

The Stakeholder Council covered three agenda items during the meeting:

- *Me, you, and .US, The .US brand and how it can support your community or business;*
- *Stakeholder Participation at the Local Level, Participation in .US as a window for participating in Internet governance; and*
- *Beyond kids.us: The next generation of youth engagement and participation in .US.*

Each topic featured discussion questions that were circulated to registered attendees in advance of the meeting. The input received for each issue is described below.

Me, you, and .US
The .US brand and how it can support your community or business

Shane Tews, the Stakeholder Council Vice Chair, led a presentation that focused on the current target communities for promoting the .US top-level domains, examples of successful websites within each identified segment, strategies for how registrants were using .US, and high-level registrant trends in .US.

The target areas and examples that were covered during the meeting included:

- *Community organizations, chapter-based organizations, and grassroots campaigns (FWD.us, the United States Forrest Service, and GovTrack.us);*
- *Small businesses (Zoom and Famo.us); and*
- *International businesses targeting the American Marketplace (Muji, Uniqlo, Cartier, Shell, MSNBC, and IKEA).*

In reviewing uses of .US across these and other registrants, a number of use cases were uncovered for the TLD, including:

- *Providing an online home for local governments and educational institutions;*
- *Providing an opportunity for businesses to emphasize their United States origins;*

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- *As a "domain hack" where the full domain spelled a word ending in 'u' and 's';*
- *Representing the word "us"; and*
- *As a tool for taking users to U.S.-specific content.*

Ms. Tews also discussed relevant findings from the Public Survey, including the concern that was raised by multiple respondents that, while .US had a presence and association across some local governments and schools and national organizations, it was not being leveraged by individuals for personal use.

Crystal Peterson, Neustar Director of Channel Marketing also presented on ongoing initiatives that Neustar was undertaking to promote .US to the small business community, including mail campaigns to registered businesses that did not currently have a website and participation at the 2015 Small Business Expo.

The presentation culminated in a discussion around three questions:

- *Does the .US "brand" depicted here align with your perceptions of .US and of how it should be promoted?*
- *What activities would improve registrant and user experiences with .US?*
- *Why did you choose .US?*

A participant raised the suggestion to promote alternative uses of .US (such as "domain hacks") in foreign markets, to entities that were eligible under Nexus Category III.

Several respondents also expressed concerns around the impact of the introduction of the .US Nexus Policy to registrations in .US. These included confusion around which registrants were eligible under Nexus Category 3. One respondent suggested in the chat that a shift in the Nexus requirement should cover both policies and how the domain name is marketed, given that one of the major uses of the domain name is international in nature. Another concern was about the first Nexus category, and the fact that it effectively excluded millions of residents in the United States that were neither citizens nor permanent residents. One participant suggested in the chat that an additional Nexus category should be introduced to cover registrants with an expressed interest in the United States.

Tom Barrett discussed some of .US registrations, including one that was used as a homepage for his extended family to share information.

One respondent suggested that, rather than restricting outreach to domestic Chambers of Commerce, the Council and Neustar's marketing team could equally look to build relationships with Chambers of Commerce abroad. This could drive utilization by entities abroad with business interests in the United States.

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Stakeholder Participation at the Local Level
Participation in .US as a window for participating in Internet governance

Karen Rose led presentation of the second agenda topic, tailored at increasing stakeholder participation in the activities of the Council and .US Policymaking at large. The presentation surveyed some of the opportunities currently available to the public to participate in .US policy development including: participation in monthly meetings, public comments on Council recommendations, and participation at local events and workshops.

The presentation also raised policy issues and opportunities raised within the Public Survey, which highlighted the Nexus Policy and Privacy/Proxy restriction as potential topics for review and suggested some interest in the introduction of additional labels (e.g. IDNs and 1- and 2-character domains to the namespace).

A survey was conducted to see what the highest-interest topics were for participants in the Town Hall. The results were:

- Privacy/Proxy Restriction – 45.4% (10 votes)
- .US Nexus Policy – 31.8% (7 votes)
- Locality Namespace – 18.1% (4 votes)
- Introduction of IDNs (0 votes)
- Other – 4.6% (1 vote)

The results supported the high-interest in the Nexus Policy and Privacy/Proxy Restriction unveiled in the Public and Council surveys and comments raised during the open floor.

During the discussion segment a recommendation was made to create a public list to relay updates about .US to stakeholders who were interested in participating in .US Policy Development. The recommendation saw strong support from participants and Councilors, and Mr. Harris advised that this would be taken up at the next Council meeting.

Beyond kids.us
The next generation of youth engagement and participation in .US

Tom Barrett presented on the last agenda topic which addressed the current status of the kids.us third-level namespace brought about in 2002 by an act of congress, the suspension of the domain in 2012, and recommendations of the Kids.us Education Advisory Committee to maintain the existing suspension but look for opportunities for .US to promote educational and kid-friendly online experiences outside of the kids.us namespace.

Discussion turned to initiatives and partnerships that could be undertaken or engaged by the Council to advance the original goals of kids.us.

A participant raised the kids.gov site, and whether something similar could be launched on .US. The secretariat responded that the prevention of hyperlinking outside of kids.us prevented such an initiative from being launched under the existing kids.us policy rules, and that while the initial

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act permitted the suspension of the namespace it would be a very challenging undertaking to modify the policies around kids.us. Another participant responded suggesting that .US should not be looking to imitate efforts that were being carried out successfully elsewhere as those efforts were likely to be duplicative and unnecessary. The secretariat supported this suggestion and pointed to recommended operating principles by the Kids.us Education Advisory Committee that suggested that efforts undertaken by the Council should either look to needs not being met by other offerings, or to support existing projects and efforts.

Open Floor

The Town Hall then turned to an Open Floor discussion of additional topics of interest to the community.

A question was raised about how the registration purpose was validated. The Council secretariat responded with a description of spot checks that were carried out at registration for select domain names, on a monthly basis, and pursuant to complaints, and that additional documentation about what was accepted pursuant to these checks was available on the Neustar website.

An additional policy of concern that was brought up by multiple participants was the requirement that the name-servers for .US domain names be based in the United States, a requirement that was incompatible with Anycast servers which are geographically distributed.

A participant raised the question of the respective roles of Neustar, the Stakeholder Council, and the Department of Commerce in setting policy for the .US Top Level Domain. The secretariat responded that the Council was authorized to make policy recommendations that would go, first, to Neustar to determine whether the recommendations were consistent with the Council's scope of work, and then to the Department of Commerce for consideration and potential approval. While Department of Commerce would remain the ultimate authority for setting policies for the .US Top Level Domain, one of the goals of the Council and associated public input procedures, would be to provide a thorough vetting of policy recommendations before they were provided to the Department of Commerce and the Department of Commerce would seriously consider policy recommendations brought forward through the Council process. The Secretariat also referred to the Council Charter which set forth further details for how recommendations and informal advice from the Council would be developed, reviewed by Neustar, and brought forward to the Department of Commerce.

A participant raised the "Seven Dirty Words" policy, questioning both whether the policy was actively enforced by Neustar and whether the policy ran against the goal of free expression on the Internet and raised concerns around content restriction. The Secretariat responded that the policy was still actively enforced by the Council and that similar policies were deployed across may TLDs. Several respondents expressed a shared concern with the policy, and the Council chair responded that these concerns would be given further consideration by the Stakeholder Council.

A participant suggested that the restriction to ASCII registrations was not

Concerns were raised about the across-the-board ban on Privacy and Proxy restrictions, noting that some registrants would have legitimate safety related concerns in disclosing personal information in WHOIS data. Discussion pivoted to the interaction between these restrictions and enforcement of the Nexus Policy, which requires that Neustar be able to confirm a registrant's WHOIS details. The Secretariat affirmed that Nexus enforcement, as well as implications for trust and law enforcement, were considerations that would have to be taken into account in any discussion of modifying or doing away with the Nexus requirements.

Councilor Phil Corwin raised an issue related the usTLD Rapid Suspension Policy (usRS), specifically the standard that domains ought to have been registered *or* used in an infringing manner, as opposed to being both registered and used in such a manner, the standard for the New gTLD Uniform Rapid Suspension Policy. He also raised concerns about a recent usRS decision in which insufficient reasoning had been provided for the suspension of the domain name. The Secretariat responded that it and the Council would take these concerns under advisement and look into the particular case at issue.

Discussion turned to the SWOT assessment, which set forth strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the .US domain. A discussion ensued about whether the shift of governments from the .US locality space to .GOV was a threat to the top level domain. While some participants believed that this drew a clearer distinction from and market for .US vis-à-vis the .GOV TLD it was also acknowledged that this drew away a number of active sites in the .US namespace, and it was unclear whether this shift could, at a later date, also extent to local governments, which today remain on .US. Bryan Britt of the Stakeholder Council noted that most such state governments had not given up their .US locality domains and that some were still using the .US space, so in instances the delineation between the two TLDs was remained unclear. A similar debate was taken up around whether the launch of city TLDs could detract from .US and whether the individuals and entities that would be interested in registering in these highly-localized domains overlapped with those that would otherwise register a .US domain.

Recommendations

The Council should consider the following recommendations brought forward during the Town Hall to guide future marketing of the .US TLD:

- Marketing alternative usages of .US, such as domain hacks, particularly to potential users in foreign markets;
- Strategies to drive increased usage by individuals for personal use; and
- Outreach to international Chambers of Commerce in addition to current initiatives with national Chambers of Commerce to promote .US to registrants eligible under Nexus Category III.

The Council should also consider the following policy issues and recommendations brought up during the Town Hall in its future discussions:

- The Seven Dirty Words Policy and potential implications for freedom of speech on the Internet;

- The appropriateness of the requirement that name servers be located in the United States, given the high usage of Anycast servers;
- Introduction on non-ASCII registrations in .US.
- Revisions to Nexus Category III to improve clarity to foreign registrants with interests in registering in .US;
- Introduction of an additional Nexus Category to permit registration by individuals or entities with interests in the United States;
- Revisions to Nexus Category I to enable registrations by United States registrants that were neither United States citizens nor permanent residents;
- The ban on Privacy/Proxy services in .US and implications for the safety and privacy of .US registrants;
- The interaction between the Privacy/Proxy restriction and enforcement of the .US Nexus Requirements; and
- Potential activities to educate the public about cyber risks and cyber bullying.

Other initiatives which were raised in planning for the Town Hall, but could not be carried out due to time or other constraints should remain on the Council radar, either in planning for future Town Halls or other .US events. Some such suggestions include:

- A presentation by one or more .US registrants;
- Hosting a contest to identify unique uses of the .US TLD;
- Providing tips and tricks for how existing users could better leverage their .US domain names.

One challenge that persists is how to garner participation by .US registrants that are not otherwise participants in the domain name industry.

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Annex 1: Town Hall Attendees

Full Name	Affiliation	Referree
Alex Deacon	MPAA	Councilor
Alex Park	State of Michigan	NASCIO Email
Ana Guzman	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Becky Burr	Neustar	
Bryan Britt	Beltane Web Services	Councilor
Carla Borelli	Neustar	Domain Name Wire
Catapano	ICANN	ISOC Email
Christian Zouzas	US	Twitter
Christopher Wilkinson	Personal Capacity	Domain Name Wire
Cory Lancaster	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Crystal Peterson	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Donovan Goode	Microsoft	Cory Lancaster
Doug Robinson	NASCIO	Councilor
Elisa Cooper	MarkMonitor	Councilor
Eric Brunner-Williams		ISOC Mailing
Fernando Espana	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Fiona Alexander	NTIA	Beth Bacon
Gerard Ashton		Internet Search
Greg Shatan	Intellectual Property Consistency	Twitter
James Bladel	GoDaddy	Councilor
James Gannon	Cyberinvasion Ltd	Stephanie Duchesneau
Jeremy Pesner	General Services Administration	Stephanie Duchesneau
Jiboko		
Jim Prendergast	Galway Strategy Group	Stephanie Duchesneau
Jocelyn		
John Hoffman	State of Texas, Department of Information Resources	
John Poole	DomainIT	Email
John Spengler	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
John Spengler	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Judith Hellerstein	Hellerstein & Associates	Stephanie Duchesneau

Judy Song Marshall	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Karen Rose	ISOC	Councilor
Ken Hansen	Zhongguo Ventures LLC	Domain Name Wire
Lori Ann Wardi	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Manuel Haces	NIC Mexico	Linkedin
Mason Cole	Donuts	
Max Menius	Menius Enterprises	Domain Name Wire
Michael Lambert	Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center	Delegated Manager Email
Michele Neylon	Blacknight	Councilor
Michelle King	King Consults	Stephanie Duchesneau
Nicole Helay	GoDaddy	Registrar Email
Paul Goldstone	Co.com	
Peter Dengate Thrush	IGF	
Phil Corwin	Virtulaw	Councilor
Rebecca		
Roli Points	GoDaddy	Registrar Email
Sarah Bourne	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	NASCIO Email
Scott Smith	RokMe	Circle ID
Stacy Cheney	NTIA	Beth Bacon
Stephanie Duchesneau	Neustar	Council Secretariat
Sue Schuster	Neustar	Stephanie Duchesneau
Tom Barrett	Encirca	Councilor
Tom Scopazzi	Artemis	