

**2024 usTLD Stakeholder Council
Annual Report**



*Prepared:
December 2024*

Annual Report of the usTLD Stakeholder Council comprised of approved minutes as of the required reporting period.

Contents

Q4-2023 Stakeholder Meeting.....	3
1Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting.....	7
2Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting.....	13
3Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting.....	18
2024 Town Hall	22

Q4-2023 Stakeholder Meeting

December 7, 2023

Welcome

Roll call and approval of September 2023 minutes

Attendees:

- Stakeholder Council: Dustin Loup, Judy Song-Marshall, Tom Barrett, Doug Robinson, Bryan Britt, Becky Burr, Alex Deacon, Michele Neylon, Bartlett Cleland
- Registry Services: Crystal Peterson, Kristin Johnson, Melissa Cohen, Fernando Espana, Kathy Nielsen
- NTIA: Susan Chalmers

DLoup: Motions to approve 3Q meeting minutes. BCleland motions and MNeylon seconds motion. Minutes approved.

Stakeholder & Administrator Updates

- Stakeholder Future Topics
- Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)
- Premium Names

CPeterson: Upon approval and alignment from the council on future topics, we will answer questions and provide any required background information.

MNeylon: For IDNs, it would be helpful to know what character sets you're interested in. In terms of technical implementation, what rules will you follow? What are you looking at for other scripts? Having been through this process for .IE, we had issues with vowels. Last we checked, they only have 100 IDNs registered.

CPeterson: We are approaching from the standpoint of .US - this is in the second level only, not opening up in the locality namespace. Languages we're looking to include are the top languages spoken in the U.S. We have noticed in other namespaces that generally it's about 1 to 2% of domains registered in the IDN. We will review the top 10 and top 5 languages and deliberate on what makes sense to implement. But initially our ask of the Stakeholder Council should IDNs be allowed in the namespace? From the technical perspective, we want to stay in best practices within the industry.

ADeacon: Before we dive into these, we need to understand why we'd do this. What is the impact of doing this? What are the risks to the TLD (Intended and unintended).

CPeterson: We want to bring that information forward to be able to deliberate whether IDNs should be implemented.

BBritt: I want to be part of the working group on that as I work with security. I'm all for being inclusive

for other languages but we don't want to add to workload on spoof addresses. How many are actual domains and how many are spoof domains?

MNeylon: It doesn't become an issue unless you allow it to be an issue. If you allow just any IDNs then that is when it becomes a problem. Certain characters and accents etc. look similar to others. They have had issues with that in Bulgarian. The issue we've seen is mostly around getting IDNs to work with software. We've seen reports and surveys that report this is a problem with support.

CPeterson: We want this type of discussion throughout our deliberation process.

DLoup: In preparation for our Q1 meeting, can we get Registry Services to summarize questions and concerns and come back with a set of questions you would like Stakeholder Services to consider on this topic for clear direction on our role and parameters for a working group.

ADeacon: On other topics. At the start of the year, I raised issue that .US is in the news quite a lot, negatively. Policy issues raised in the news are also a topic I wanted to put that out there for discussion. MNeylon: I am on policy group from .IE, and we have a standing topic about abuse. Taking certain types of approaches, DNS abuse should be a standing topic on the agenda. .IE has a number of things that are quite helpful.

CPeterson: It's a topic to continue to explore. We want to be sure we're in the full framework of our industry and how this also relates to the wider industry of domain names. .US isn't the only extension being targeted in the news. How do we help mitigate DNS abuse which will in turn benefit and improve .US.

ADeacon: I want to help improve issues with .US as it states in our Stakeholder responsibilities. Any improvements for .US would be welcome and result in better PR. It may be good for the broader DNS community.

BBurr: We should have this topic as a standing meeting topic going forward.

DLoup: I agree.

SChalmers: What makes a .US name a premium domain? Is there a definition there?

KNielsen: Premium names are names which have a higher value than a standard name. It's a name that is so generic, many people would covet this name. For example, hotels.us. Lots of companies would want that for their brand. Also, the shorter the name, the higher the value the domain tends to have.

CPeterson: From a registry perspective, .US has a lot of secondary market appeal in sales. In secondary market, names are purchased and then flipped to sell for a higher value.

DLoup: Any other topics before we move forward?

CPeterson: From a Registry Services perspective is there any disagreement to delving into all three?

MNeylon: We can have all three on the table.

DLoup: We'll have all three.

2024 Proposed Meeting Schedule

- Q1: February 22, 2024 at 12:00 pm Eastern Time
- Q2: May 23, 2024 at 12:00 pm Eastern Time
- Q3: September 12, 2024 at 12:00 pm Eastern Time
- TOWN HALL: October 31, 2024 at 12:00 pm Eastern Time
- Q4: December 12, 2024 at 12:00 pm Eastern Time

DLoup: Conflict with February and need to move up one week (approved to move to February 15).

MNeylon: Q2 May conflicts with industry meetings (approved to move to May 16)

CPeterson: We will revise the schedule and come back to Council via email for a final approval.

Q4 Marketing Update

NASA International Space Apps Challenge

Overview: An international hackathon for coders, scientists, designers, storytellers, makers, builders, technologists, and others in cities around the world.

When: Oct. 7-8, 2023

Participation:

- 57,900+ registered participants
- 150+ countries and territories
- 225 global events (virtual + in-person)

Activation:

- Domain scholarship for participants (good thru 10/31/23)
- Social media promotion
- Organic activation from local organizers

Sampling of domain registrations: firefly-project.us, science-interlinked.us, astroworlds.us, biorangers.us, and more! Biorangers.us is one of the 40 finalists for the program! Winners announced in January 2024.

Paid Advertising

Paid media drives awareness building and brand recall for the .US domain. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

Channels:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Paid Search

Highlights:

Q4 efforts slow in consumer outreach as we lean into channel marketing and promotions. Evergreen

campaigns continue through end of year with an increased focus on Paid Search to capture “in the moment” searches for domain registrations. Rates of conversion fairly comparable with social slightly ahead of paid search for the month due to increased focus on remessaging.

Social + Content

Content: 5x articles published

1. How to Launch a Cooking Blog that Stands Out
2. Create a Captivating Podcast Website: Tips for Design, SEO, and Engagement
3. Top SEO Techniques to Transform Your Website into a Revenue-Generating Online Business
4. .US Annual Town Hall 2023: Join the Discussion on the .US Top-Level Domain
5. INTERVIEW: Cultivating Resilience: WRASAP's Vital Support for Farmers and Farmworkers

Highlights:

- Social Media: (Facebook + Twitter)
- Reach: 47.2K
- Posts: 167 posts

Blog traffic:

Accounts for 46% of total organic traffic to the website and 30% of overall traffic
Blog traffic almost twice as likely to convert to a registrar lead on site.

Partnerships

Overview: Ongoing activations with key strategic partners supports brand equity for the .US TLD with entrepreneurial, tech and STEM audiences.

Startup Weekend

- Events – 37 (October)
- Includes Startup Wek
- Attendees – 6,504 (October)

Major League Hacking

- Events – 10 (October)
 - Includes Global Hack October
- Attendees – 7,014
 - Hack Morelos 12va Edicion
 - KnightHacks
 - Hack WashU
 - DubHacks
 - I-Hack
 - HackHarvard
 - Girls Hoo Hack
 - Technica Hacks
 - HackNC 2023
 - GreatUniHack

AOB & Closing

1Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting

May 25, 2023

- 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.

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 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-

2024 usTLD Stakeholder Annual Report

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?

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:

- 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?*
- *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.

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.

AOB & Closing

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

2Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting

May 30, 2024

- I. Welcome
- II. Roll call and approval of February 2024 minutes

Attendees:

Stakeholder Council: Ray King, Dustin Loup, Doug Robinson, Tom Barrett, Bartlett Cleland

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

NTIA: Stacy Cheney

DLoup: Motions to approve 2Q meeting minutes. BCleland motions and TBarrett seconds motion. Minutes approved.

DLoup: We are adjusting the order of the agenda to move marketing ahead of stakeholder updates for this meeting. As we did not have time to cover marketing in the last meeting, we will be reviewing all front half marketing updates.

Handed off to KJohnson

Q1 & Q2 Marketing Update

Bipartisan Tech Conference

.US was a proud sponsor of Next Century Cities, Bipartisan Tech Conference April 16 – 17 this year. Next Century Cities’ Bipartisan Tech Policy Conference provides local, state, federal, and Tribal officials, policy advocates, and residents the ability to connect for a day on Capitol Hill to elevate community perspectives about broadband and digital equity to federal legislators. Local elected officials and community advocates also share their challenges and successes while learning from broadband leaders nationwide.

The .US sponsorship included premier logo placement throughout the event and a dedicated mention during opening remarks. .US was the exclusive sponsor for the coffee break station, providing hot and cold brew coffee as well as branded materials such as cups, coffee sleeves, mints, water bottles and napkins.

Paid Advertising

2024 paid media strategy seeks to further drive conversion-based marketing with the introduction of Google’s Performance Max. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

Channels:

- Performance Max
- Paid Search

2024 usTLD Stakeholder Annual Report

- Facebook
- Instagram

Highlights:

- Creative refresh for 2024 including the development of new static and video ads to run across all paid media platforms. A total of 6 new videos produced as well as 12+ new static assets based on 2023 performance.
- Launched new Google Performance Max as part of bottom of funnel marketing efforts. Performance Max uses Google AI across bidding, budget optimization, audiences, creatives, attribution, and more. Initial results show performance in line with Paid Search results.

Creative Refresh

Added new creative into rotation for 2024 leveraging new carousel style ads which have proven to drive increased engagement. Regularly refreshing creative content is crucial to stay top-of-mind and maintain engagement.

- Keeps brand message and visuals relevant and engaging to the target audience.
- Avoids stagnation and keeps the audience interested in the brand.
- Allows for experimentation and testing, which leads to improved performance and increased ROI.
- Demonstrates a brand's adaptability and willingness to evolve, which can enhance its credibility and reputation in the marketplace.

Social Media and Content Highlights

Social media and content creation go hand in hand with driving community engagement, keeping a brand relevant, and contributing to brand loyalty and conversions. To support these goals, the first half of 2024 focused heavily on curating keyword-rich, SEO friendly blog material to connect with the SMB audience, as well as promoting content and conversations on social media (Facebook and X).

Content: 8 articles published (Jan. 1 – May 30)

- The Secrets to Converting Your Social Media Followers Into Repeat Customers
- Sequoia Films (sequoiafilms.us) is Building a Bi-Coastal Creative Agency on a Global Mission
- Boost Your Conversion Rates: Build a Website that Turns Visitors Into Instant Customers
- The SEO Glossary: The Top Terms to Know to Excel at Web Content
- How OKPrint.US is Bringing Bespoke Luxury Into the Printing World
- Your Step-by-Step Guide to Conduct Keyword Research
- ColumbusMark.us | Join Mark Levin's Country Adventures: A Lighthearted Look at Country Life
- A Creative Shoppportunity for Top Etsy Businesses in 2024

Highlights:

- Blog traffic:
 - Accounts for 40% of total organic traffic to the website and 41% of overall traffic
- Social Media: (Facebook + X)
 - Reach: 331K

- Posts: 422 posts

Partnerships

.US is a key sponsor as part of the Registry portfolio partnerships for tech and STEM organizations. Ongoing activations with strategic partners supports brand equity for the .US TLD with entrepreneurial, STEAM and innovative audiences.

- **Startup Weekend**
 - Events – 87 (Jan-April)
 - Attendees – 4,612
- **Major League Hacking**
 - Events – 78 (Jan-April)
 - Includes Global Hack Beginners Week
 - Attendees – 25,000+ (sampling of events)
 - SheHacks+ - 1/12/24
 - SB Hacks - 1/12/24
 - Hackville - 1/19/24
 - BoilerMake XI - 1/19/24
 - CruzHacks - 1/19/24
 - Rose Hack - 1/20/24
 - Hack BI VII - 1/20/24
 - HoyaHacks - 1/26/24
- Sampling of domain names registered:
 - liamdye.us, brandonmcdonald.us, mycoloringbook.us, thirdstreetjournal.us, endinghomelessness.us

KJohnson hands off to CPeterson

Stakeholder & Administrator Updates

Stakeholder Updates

Approval and sub-committees:

- Premium names
- Internationalized domain names

DLoup: These sub-committees are designed to answer high-level questions. If we have more questions during the review process that may impact our response we can pose these to Registry Services. Let's review Premium tiers now. Question to the council, do you think this is a topic that warrants interest and discussion? Are these the right set of questions? Let's open up to council.

TBarrett: I don't see premium names devaluing the namespace. The market will decide if it's worth doing.

CPeterson: As we look at proposing the implementation of premium names in the space, we want

insight and feedback from the stakeholder council on if this will be helping grow the space and enhancing the value of the TLD? If there are any questions we've missed, please let us know. Our current proposal, is around High-Low pricing models so this will not impact renewals.

TBarrett: This would be on the registrar to get pricing extensions for premium tiers for domains.

CPeterson: Yes, the registrars would have to do this if they want to sell premiums.

RKing: You first asked, should there be a premium tier sub-committee and if there is interest. I feel there is interest. In terms of these questions, they are good. They aren't the first three I would have asked. Most important question is how to maximize revenue. How do we balance against maximizing revenue?

TBarrett: A lot of registries announce they are releasing premium names. It might be tough to promote, because they will have to bid on these names.

DLoup: Of those here, RKing, thank you for raising your interest in participating in the Premium Names committee. Is anyone else interested in joining the sub-committee. We'll need three people to be a valid committee.

CPeterson: Let's put this out on email too. There are a couple of folks interested that aren't here.

DLoup: Before we proceed, TBarrett and DLoup would be interested. Are there any other concerns or adjustments needed before we proceed? Okay, we will move forward to form a Premium Names sub-committee and will address the three questions posed by Registry Service. A follow-up email will go out to solicit any other interested Stakeholder members to join.

DLoup: We have another topic for consideration. IDNs and evaluating if we should we introduce Spanish language characters? Also, should other languages be considered? My questions for the Stakeholder Council are, should there be a sub-committee for this? And are there other questions that should be considered?

TBarrett: Yes, this does warrant a sub-committee review.

RKing: It makes sense. Based on percentages, if we didn't do other language characters, we need to define why? Why aren't more languages covered? And what is the value it brings to the namespace.

TBarrett: Maybe the Registry can provide a breakdown of what registrant demand looks like?

DLoup: We are moving to approve the sub-committee for IDNs, conditionally based on three members interested in participating. We will meet to discuss other languages as well. In follow-up we will send out an update to the entire council, with the new subcommittees, asking who wants to volunteer. I'll schedule any meetings that we need to have and get the work underway.

CPeterson: We are looking to move forward with the approved sub-committee topics and are taking

2024 usTLD Stakeholder Annual Report

names for any Stakeholder members interested in joining either the Premium Names committee or the Internationalized Domain Names committee.

DNS Abuse & Mitigation

CPeterson: The 2024 anti-abuse metrics have been updated to reflect as of April 30, 2024. There are a total of 2,162 alerts which represents a very small percentage of total DUMs in the .US namespace. We have also included an abuse form on the about.us website, that allows report of abuse to be routed directly to our Registry team for further investigation.

AOB & Closing

3Q-2024 Stakeholder Meeting

September 12, 2024

- I. Welcome
- II. Roll call and approval of May 2024 minutes

Attendees:

- **Stakeholder Council:** Bryan Britt, Ray King, Bartlett Cleland, Doug Robinson, Michele Neyland, Dustin Loup
- **Registry Services:** Crystal Peterson, Kristin Johnson, Fernando Espana
- **NTIA:** Pearl Riseberg (first-half of meeting), Owen Fletcher (last-half of meeting)

Motion to approve 2Q meeting minutes. Second approval received.

CPeterson: Minutes are approved and move to Administrator updates.

Stakeholder & Administrator Updates

CPeterson: Introduces Administrator updates

- Town Hall: October 31, 2024 at 12pm ET
 - State of the Domain
 - Marketing Review
 - .US Brand Use-Case Feature
 - Administrator Updates
 - Stakeholder Council Updates
 - Q&A

CPeterson: Any feedback on the agenda or additional topics to include?
[no comments]

CPeterson: If there are no further comments we will lock in this agenda for the upcoming Town Hall. Kristin will be circulating materials for you to share on your networks and within your community for anyone interested.

KJohnson: We will have a blog post, an announcement on Circle ID, and social media tiles ready for you to share next week.

CPeterson: Thank you Kristin. Now to share updates on our abuse mitigation and security efforts. Security of the .US namespace remains a top priority for us as the usTLD Administrator. The most recent data from the end of July 2024 shows we are right under 2.25 million domains under management and have seen healthy growth in the namespace. One of the top considerations in maintaining a healthy namespace is looking at how to generate quality new creates that lead to first-time renewals. We focus on getting domain names into the right hands for end-users that keep them and renew.

CPeterson: Moving to the next slide, you can see year over year activity shows a 39% decrease in abusive alerts through 31 July 2024. Every alert receives a full investigation, and we look to analyse each category to better understand how to improve future mitigation.

CPeterson: Next we will take a look at the .US Locality tool.

.US Locality

CPeterson: In addition to the second-level .US namespace, Registry Services also oversees and manages the .US Locality Space. The second level is designated for states and US territories, based on the two-letter state and territory codes assigned by the U.S. Postal Service, and this space is further subdivided into localities. This tends to be 3rd, 4th, or 5th level domains. The administration of the usTLD Locality namespace is managed by entities and/or individuals called Delegated Managers who follow comprehensive technical and service requirements. Delegated Managers play a valuable role in the management of the usTLD Locality namespace.

CPeterson: Due to its historic and inherited legacy nature, the .US Locality has relied on paper documentation for information gathering and Registry Services has committed to reinvigorate and update the space by developing domain management tools that are self-service to end users. This tool, for both Delegated Managers and end-users, is what is called the Locality Tool.

CPeterson: Due to the complexities within the .US Locality Space, Registry Services has been building and refining this tool for several years. Development for this tool is currently in final stages.

CPeterson: We will transition to Dustin to share updates from our Stakeholder efforts.

Council Member Updates

DLoup: Thank you Crystal. I want to start off by announcing some council member changes. Alex Deacon and Sam Sokol have stepped down from the Council over the past few months. The Council remains strong with seven members, but we will be looking to bring in some new members over the next year.

Sub-Committee Updates

DLoup: Our two sub-committees are underway. The Internationalized Domain Names sub-committee have had an initial meeting and we are coordinating schedules for a Premium Names sub-committee kickoff call.

DLoup: If there is any additional interest from committee members in participating in either committee, please reach out.

CPeterson: As questions arise during the sub-committee discussions, we will make sure to have a Registry Services representative at the meetings to answer questions and follow-up with any requested information.

DLoup: We will make sure to note any further details or requested information from Registry Services in regard to our discussions. Thank you Crystal. Turning it over to Kristin for the Marketing updates.

Q3 Marketing Update

KJohnson: Thank you Dustin. I'll jump right in and take the Council through our Q3 marketing highlights.

4th Of July Promotions

KJohnson: 4th of July is annually our biggest promotion globally for .US and the Channel team account managers did a phenomenal job engaging .US retailers across the globe. Additional promotion and marketing efforts for .US included pricing specials, registrar website features, homepage promotions, registrar newsletter call-outs, social media tiles, and more.

KJohnson: Retail channel efforts were supported through end-consumer marketing ad campaigns and a creative refresh to garner excitement.

Paid Advertising

2024 paid media strategy seeks to further drive conversion-based marketing with the introduction of Google's Performance Max. Advertising consists of direct consumer outreach targeted to up-and-coming small business owners across a variety of media platforms to reach customers across all stages of the purchasing funnel.

Channels:

- Performance Max
- Paid Search
- Facebook
- Instagram

Highlights:

- Advertising continues to double down on proven channels, leaning into top performing audience targets and regularly refreshing creative to keep ads relevant.
- Google Performance Max has been the biggest winner for driving leads and .US registrations while supporting a multi-platform attribution approach for reaching new SMBs and growing awareness of the .US domain.

Social and Content

Content: 5x articles published

- Brand Interviews
 - *Mungo.us* – A South African textile company focused on ethical practices and sustainable production.
 - *Foto360.us* - Focuses on Real Estate Photography Across the US
 - *Textpledge.us* - A Michigan-based advocacy group focused on promoting personal accountability and raising awareness about critical societal issues like distracted driving.
- Educational Articles
 - Are Internet Cookies Actually Helpful For Your Small Business Website?
 - The Best Digital Marketing Strategies, Based on ROI

Highlights:

- Blog traffic:
 - Accounts for 41% of total organic traffic to the website and 53% of overall traffic
 - Over 75% of blog traffic from mobile devices
 - Top trending article for Q3, "The Best AI Tools for Small Businesses"

- Social Media: (Facebook + X)
 - Reach: 118K
 - Posts: 205 posts

AOB & Closing

2024 Town Hall

October 31, 2024

State of the Domain

- Overview of Domains Under Management
 - 2.2M domains under management in .US namespace (as of July 24)
 - 6% growth in total domains under management year over year
 - Locality domains total 12.5K (as of July 24)
- Accredited Registrars and Delegated Managers
 - 245 .US Accredited Registrars
 - 112 .US Delegated Managers (locality specific)
- DNS Abuses & Mitigation
 - New DNS abuse page added to www.about.us
 - DNS abuse center and portal for submitting abuse complaints
 - -39% YoY decrease in abusive alerts YTD thru 31 July
 - Internal analysis continues to refine metrics for registration to abusive use, type of abuse, and others
- Usage
 - 74% of .US namespace is considered “in use” based on the following usage categories: websites, parked pages, redirects, holding/coming soon and other
 - Top Hosting Companies for .US
 - GoDaddy
 - Namesilo
 - Cloudflare
 - Namecheap
 - Google Domains (now Squarespace)
 - .US Website Types
 - Brand
 - Ecommerce
 - Blogs
 - .US Fun Facts: .US Website Keywords – most frequent keywords found on developed .US websites (partial list below sourced from Domainsbot)
 - Cleaning
 - Home
 - Services
 - Repair
 - Garage

Marketing Review

- Students in STEM
 - Conrad Challenge - In its 18th year, the Conrad Challenge is a global innovation competition that challenges high school students to create products and/or services to address some of the most pressing global and local challenges. Founded by Nancy

Conrad, wife of the late Apollo 12 astronaut and third person to walk on the Moon, Pete Conrad, the Conrad Challenge was established to carry on Pete's legacy of innovation and entrepreneurship.

- The Challenge launched in August of this year and runs through April 2025. All participants in the program, are offered a .US domain and websites builder to launch their idea.
- Lean Gap - Currently in its 10th year Leapgap is an-intensive startup incubator that empowers and supports high school students to build their own real, scalable companies and non-profits. Every year, they receive more than 1,000 applications from over 20 countries, with only 80 students admitted to the program annually. The LeanGap program prides itself on offering small class sizes with a 1 on 1 approach for students to launch a real-world company.
 - All applicants, not only program attendees are offered a .US domain and website scholarship as part of this program.
- NASA International Space Apps Challenge - Space Apps is an international hackathon where teams engage with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's free and open data to address real-world problems on Earth and in space. An international hackathon for coders, scientists, designers, storytellers, makers, builders, technologists, and others in cities around the world.
 - All applicants, not only program attendees are offered a .US domain and website scholarship as part of this program.
- Global Partnerships
 - Major League Hacking- Powers weekend-long competitions to students around the world. A focus on invention competitions that teach computer science skills for developers.
 - Startup Weekend – Global innovation competition that focuses on entrepreneurship for university, post graduate students and entrepreneurs.
 - Bipartisan Tech Conference. Next Century Cities' Bipartisan Tech Policy Conference provides local, state, federal, and Tribal officials, policy advocates, and residents the ability to connect for a day on Capitol Hill to elevate community perspectives about broadband and digital equity to federal legislators. Local elected officials and community advocates also share their challenges and successes while learning from broadband leaders nationwide.
 - Sponsorship included opening remarks recognition, logo visibility at the event and online, social media highlights, and a full branded coffee bar for attendees.
- Who's Using .US?
 - Dedicated outreach efforts to the .US community for brand ambassador features.
 - Includes dedicated reels, written interviews published to the blog and social media features on Facebook and Twitter
 - Highlighted: mungo.us, parksproject.us, columbusmark.us
- Paid Advertising
 - Focus on reconnecting with Small Businesses. Launch of new assets on top performing platforms to drive engagement and brand awareness.

- Introduced Performance Max, a new AI-powered media platform that optimizes messaging to reach the audience
 - Paid platforms: Facebook, Instagram, SEM, YouTube, Performance Max
- Content Engine
 - Dedicated efforts for driving a steady drumbeat of content throughout the year.
 - Mix of educational, informational and user story content
 - SEO focus on keyword, high quality topical content
 - 17 Articles YTD
- Registrar Collaboration
 - Engaging with registrar and retail channels requires high-touch conversations, thoughtful negotiations, and meticulous planning to elevate the visibility of .US at the point of sale on these platforms.
 - Dedicated team focused solely on managing relationships and advocating for .US domains.

Guest Speaker - Naomi Riley, Founder and CEO, Text Pledge – [TEXTPLEDGE.US](https://textpledge.us)

- Text Pledge is a nonprofit in Greater Grand Rapids, MI, that seeks to change the world through 10 pledges focused on ending some of the worst social issues affecting communities, from distracted driving to gun violence.
 - Naomi Riley, is a consultant, motivational speaker, brain injury survivor and a figure for mental health in education reform for people with disabilities. As an advocate for neurodiversity and mental well-being, Naomi inspires a wide array of individuals, from top business owners, to policymakers, that support and celebrate every individual's potential to succeed. Through her founding leadership with the Text Pledge Project, she showcases how top societal epidemics and statistics harming communities can be diminished through a synergistic approach.
- Text Pledge is revolutionizing crisis prevention in schools, offering comprehensive curriculum to empower students to face modern challenges. The curriculum is tailored and offered to groups ages K through 12.
- Text Pledge offers various avenues for involvement, including:
 - Encouraging students to take pledges and engage with meaningful causes.
 - Providing educators with resources and tools suitable for students of all ages.
 - Allowing schools, churches, and nonprofits to register and collaborate with Text Pledge.
 - Inviting corporate sponsors to support community initiatives.
- The program includes digital and physical resources, with interactive curriculum materials available for students from kindergarten through high school. This approach emphasizes hands-on learning, conflict resolution, ethical AI use, and personal responsibility.
- By raising awareness, providing education, and encouraging accountability, Text Pledge is not just a campaign—it's a movement driving real, lasting impact.

Stakeholder Council Updates

- Stakeholder subcommittees created

- **Premium Names.** To raise awareness and use of the usTLD, Registry Services would make available to the public at a premium price certain high-value, highly-visible, premium .US domain names (“.US Premium Domains”). 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.
- **Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs).** To keep the .US domain relevant in the current market and to continue to gain awareness within its own population and through the foreign investment market desiring a relationship with the United States, Registry Services proposes the launch of additional IDN language tables within the .US namespace.

Q & A

- Q: How does .US define DNS abuse? Does it include CSAM or IP theft like the EU definition does?
 - A: Registry Services’ approach to combating DNS abuse is outlined in our official [statement on the website](#), which categorizes various forms of abuse, including botnets, malware, fast flux hosting, and CSAM. Intellectual property theft falls under registration rights and acceptable use policies, with dispute resolution mechanisms such as usRS or usDRP in place. Additionally, the policies address the illegal sale of pharmaceuticals and other forms of misuse. We encourage you to review our DNS abuse statement alongside registration rights and acceptable use policies on about.us for a comprehensive understanding.
- Q: Can you speak about the source of the data that backed up the slides around DNS abuse and the extent to which those are available?
 - A: Our DNS abuse statement is available in the Policies and Governance section of the about.us website. The details of the types of abuse monitored through internal investigations and third-party complaints are available there. We do not disclose proprietary tools or algorithms used to investigate the data. However, we can confirm that we look to meet industry standards with the feeds and alerts that we receive. Our website also includes links to the acceptable use policy and registration rules. These policies and tools demonstrate our comprehensive approach to identifying and preventing bad actors in the space.