

World Intellectual Property Organization
Rules for New gTLD Dispute Resolution for String Confusion Objections (“WIPO
Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution”)

(In effect as of January 1, 2026)

1. Scope of WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution in Relation to ICANN Objection Procedure

- (a) Set out below are the applicable WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution as referred to in Section 4.5.8 Objection Filing and Process and Appendix 3 Materials Related to Objections and Appeals: Dispute Resolution Service Providers Rules, provided in the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook (“Applicant Guidebook”) approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (“ICANN”) on October 30, 2025. The WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution are to be read and used in connection with the ICANN Objection Procedure (“Objection Procedure”) which provides the basic framework for the four categories of objections (as provided in Appendix 3 Materials Related to Objections and Appeals: ICANN Procedure) arising from Applications under ICANN’s New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.
- (b) The version of the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution applicable to a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure is the version in effect on the day when the relevant Application for a new gTLD is submitted (as referred to in Article 24(b) of the Objection Procedure).

2. Definitions

Terms defined in the Objection Procedure shall have the same meaning in the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution. Words used in the singular shall include the plural and *vice versa* as the context may require.

3. Communications

- (a) Subject to Article 6 of the Objection Procedure, except where otherwise agreed beforehand with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (“Center”), and subject to the discretion of any appointed Panel, any submission to the Center or to the Panel shall be made by electronic mail (email) using sco@wipo.int.
- (b) In the event a party wishes to submit a hard copy or other non-electronic submission prior to Panel appointment, it shall first request leave to do so from the Center; the Center shall, in its sole discretion, then determine whether to accept the non-electronic submission. After Panel appointment, parties are referred to Article 6(a) of the Objection Procedure.

4. Submission of Objection and Response

- (a) In accordance with Articles 7 and 8 of the Objection Procedure, the Objector shall transmit its Objection using the Objection Model Form set out in Annex A hereto and posted on the Center's website and shall comply with the Center's Filing Guidelines set out in Annex B hereto and posted on the Center's website.
- (b) In accordance with Article 15 of the Objection Procedure, the Applicant shall transmit its Response using the Response Model Form set out in Annex C hereto and posted on the Center's website and shall comply with the Center's Filing Guidelines set out in Annex B hereto and posted on the Center's website.
- (c) An Applicant subject to a String Confusion Objection claiming that the relevant string(s) are similar to another applied-for string and that decides to accept that its string(s) will be placed in a contention set and not file a Response is requested to inform the Center of this decision as soon as possible so that the Objection can be resolved and all parties informed.

5. Center Review of Objections

- (a) In accordance with Article 9(d) of the Objection Procedure if an Objection is dismissed due to the Objector's failure to remedy an administrative deficiency, there shall be no refund of any DRSP Fee paid by the Objector pursuant to Article 14 of the Objection Procedure and Paragraph 10 of the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution.
- (b) If an Objector submits a new Objection within ten (10) calendar days of closure of a proceeding as provided in Article 9(d) of the Objection Procedure and Paragraph 5(a) of the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution to remedy an administratively deficient Objection, such new Objection may be accompanied by a request for a DRSP Fee waiver, in whole or in part, for the Center's consideration in its sole discretion.

6. Appointment of Case Manager

- (a) The Center shall advise the parties of the name and contact details of the Case Manager who shall be responsible for all administrative matters relating to the dispute and communications to the Panel.
- (b) The Case Manager may provide administrative assistance to the parties or Panel, but shall have no authority to decide matters of a substantive nature concerning the dispute.

7. Consolidation

- (a) In accordance with Article 11 of the Objection Procedure, the Center may, where possible and practicable, and in its sole discretion, decide to consolidate Objections by appointing the same Panel to decide multiple Objections sharing certain commonalities. In the event of consolidation, the Panel may render an individual Panel Determination for each Objection. However, if Objections against Applications that are in direct contention are consolidated, at the discretion of the Panel a single Panel Determination may be issued explaining the contention pursuant to Article 11(b) of the Objection Procedure.
- (b) A party may submit a consolidation request pursuant to Article 11(d) of the Objection Procedure. Any such consolidation request shall be provided within seven (7) calendar

days of the publication of the Objection Announcement. Any consolidation request thereto shall be limited to 1,500 words in length.

- (c) The Center shall make a proposal regarding consolidation within fourteen (14) calendar days of the publication of the Objection Announcement. The Center shall not be required to state reasons for its decision.
- (d) In the case of consolidated Objections, the applicable reduced Panel fees are specified in Annex D hereto and posted on the Center's website.
- (e) Pursuant to Article 11 of the Objection Procedure, in weighing the benefits that may result from consolidation against the possible prejudice or inconvenience that consolidation may cause, the Center in reaching its decision concerning consolidation, may take into account, *inter alia*, the following non-exclusive factors:
 - (i) Whether the Objections concern the same or similar TLD(s);
 - (ii) Whether the same Objector files Objections concerning multiple TLD applications;
 - (iii) The scope of evidence relied on by an Objector or Applicant in any Objection or application;
 - (iv) Any other arguments raised in any consolidation request, or challenge thereto;
 - (v) Panel availability to accept appointment.
- (f) A party may challenge the Center's decision to consolidate two or more Objections pursuant to Article 11(d) of the Objection Procedure. Any challenges of the consolidation decision shall be submitted within seven (7) calendar days of the Proposal of Consolidation. Any challenge to consolidation thereto shall be limited to 1,500 words in length.
- (g) The Center shall decide on the party's challenge within fourteen (14) calendar days of the Proposal of Consolidation and issue a Notice of Consolidation. The Center, in its discretion, may extend relevant deadlines affected by the Center's determination of any challenge.
- (h) The Center's decision on any challenge to consolidation of multiple Objections for Panel Determination by the same Panel is of an administrative nature and shall be final. The Center shall not be required to state reasons for its decision.
- (i) Objections based upon different grounds, as summarized in Article 11(c) of the Objection Procedure, shall not be consolidated.

8. Panel Appointment Procedures

- (a) The Center will maintain and publish on its website a publicly-available List of Panelists who may be available for Panel appointment.
- (b) Pursuant to Article 12(b) of the Objection Procedure, there shall be a one-person Panel unless all the Parties agree to the appointment of a three-person Panel.
- (c) In the event of a one-person Panel, the Center shall in its sole discretion appoint a one-person Panel from its List of Panelists, and in accordance with the specified qualifications established by Article 12(c)(i) of the Objection Procedure.

- (d) In the event all the Parties agree to the appointment of a three-person Panel, any such agreement shall be communicated to the Center via joint letter within ten (10) calendar days of the publication by ICANN of the Objection Announcement as referred to in Article 10(a) of the Objection Procedure or the Center's final determination on consolidation.
- (i) If Objections are not consolidated, and if the parties have communicated their agreement on the appointment of a three-person Panel, within five (5) calendar days of such communication each party shall separately submit to the Center (notwithstanding Article 6(b) of the Objection Procedure) the names of three (3) candidates from the Center's List of Panelists, in the order of their respective preference, for appointment by the Center as a Co-Panelist. In the event none of a party's three (3) candidates is available for appointment as a Co-Panelist, the Center shall appoint the Co-Panelist in its sole discretion.
 - (ii) In the event of consolidation in accordance with Paragraph 7 of the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution, the Objectors or Applicants, as the case may be, shall jointly submit the names of the three (3) candidates from the Center's List of Panelists in order of preference (i.e., one list on behalf of all Objector(s) and one list on behalf of all Applicant(s)). If the Objectors or Applicants as the case may be do not jointly agree on and submit the names of three (3) candidates within five (5) calendar days of the parties' communication to the Center on their agreement to the appointment of a three-person Panel, the Center shall in its sole discretion appoint the Co-Panelist.
 - (iii) The third Panelist, who shall be the Presiding Panelist, shall absent exceptional circumstances be appointed by the Center from a list of five (5) candidates submitted by the Center to the parties. The Center's selection of a Presiding Panelist shall be made in a manner that seeks to reasonably balance the preferences of each party as communicated to the Center within five (5) calendar days of the Center's communication of the list of candidates to the parties.
 - (iv) Where any party fails to indicate its order of preference for the Presiding Panelist to the Center, the Center shall nevertheless proceed to appoint the Presiding Panelist in its sole discretion, taking into account any preferences of any other party.
 - (v) In accordance with Article 12(f) of the Objection Procedure, in cases where there may be indirect contention that results from a String Confusion Objection, the Center may appoint the same Panel to decide the Objections.
 - (vi) Election of a three-person Panel will impact the applicable fees due from the Parties, including filing fees. Upon confirmation of a three-person Panel request by both Parties the Center shall request payment of the applicable fees as set out in Annex D hereto and posted on the Center's website.

9. Panel Impartiality and Independence

- (a) In accordance with Article 12(d) of the Objection Procedure, any prospective Panelist shall, before accepting appointment, disclose to the Center and parties any circumstance that might give rise to justifiable doubt as to his/her impartiality or independence, or confirm in writing that no such circumstance exist by submitting to the Center a *Declaration of Impartiality and Independence* using the form set out in Annex E hereto and posted on the Center's website.
- (b) If at any stage during a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure, circumstances arise that might give rise to justifiable doubt as to a Panelist's impartiality or independence, the Panelist shall promptly disclose such circumstances to the parties and

the Center.

- (c) A party may challenge the appointment of a Panelist if circumstances exist which give rise to justifiable doubt as to the Panelist's impartiality or independence. A party may challenge a Panelist whom it has appointed or in whose appointment it concurred, only for reasons of which it becomes aware after the appointment has been made.
- (i) A party challenging a Panelist shall send notice to the Center and the other party, stating the reasons for the challenge, within five (5) calendar days after being notified of that Panelist's appointment or becoming aware of circumstances that it considers give rise to justifiable doubt as to that Panelist's impartiality or independence.
 - (ii) The decision on the challenge shall be made by the Center in its sole discretion. Such a decision is of an administrative nature and shall be final. The Center shall not be required to state reasons for its decision. In the event of a Panelist's removal, the Center shall appoint a new Panelist in accordance with the Objection Procedure and these WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution.
 - (iii) The Center's communication to the parties informing its decision to maintain a Panelist or the Center's communication of the appointment of a new Panelist shall be considered as "Conflict Mitigation" for the purposes of Article 13(c) of the Objection Procedure.

10. Fees

- (a) The applicable fees for the Objection Procedure for String Confusion Objections are specified in Annex D hereto and posted on the Center's website.
- (b) After the Panel Determination has been rendered or a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure has been terminated, the Center shall provide an accounting to the parties of the payments received and, in consultation with any Panel, return any unexpended balance of the applicable fees to the parties.

11. Confidentiality

- (a) A party invoking the confidentiality of any information it wishes or is required to submit in any String Confusion Objection proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure, shall submit the request for confidentiality to the Center for the Panel's consideration, stating the reasons for which it considers the information to be confidential. If the Panel decides that the information is to be treated as confidential, it shall decide under which conditions and to whom the confidential information may in part or in whole be disclosed and shall require any person to whom the confidential information is to be disclosed to sign an appropriate confidentiality undertaking.
- (b) Further to Article 6(b) of the Objection Procedure, except in exceptional circumstances as decided by the Panel and in consultation with the parties and the Center, no party or anyone acting on its behalf shall have any *ex parte* communication with the Panel.

12. Negotiation and Mediation

- (a) Further to Article 20 of the Objection Procedure, prior to the Panel rendering its Panel Determination in a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure, the parties may inform the Center that they wish to participate in negotiations and/or mediation to attempt to resolve the

dispute and may request the Center to administer the mediation. In such event, unless both parties agree otherwise, the WIPO Mediation Rules shall apply *mutatis mutandis*. On request from the parties, and absent exceptional circumstances, the Center's mediation administration fee shall be waived. In the event a Mediator is appointed, the Mediator's fee is specified in Annex D hereto and posted on the Center's website.

13. Effect of Court Proceedings

- (a) The Objector and Applicant shall include in any Objection or Response relevant information regarding any other legal proceedings concerning the TLD. In the event that a party initiates any legal proceedings during the pendency of a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure, it shall promptly notify the Center.
- (b) In the event of any legal proceedings initiated prior to or during a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure, the Panel shall have the discretion to decide whether to suspend or terminate such proceeding under the Objection Procedure, or to proceed to a Panel Determination.

14. Termination

- (a) If, before the Panel renders a Panel Determination, it becomes unnecessary or impossible to continue a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure for any reason, the Panel may in its discretion terminate the proceeding.
- (b) If, prior to Panel appointment, it becomes unnecessary or impossible to continue a proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure for any reason, the Center in consultation with the parties and ICANN, may in its discretion terminate the proceeding.

15. Panel Determination

Notwithstanding provisions of Article 22(f) of the Objection Procedure, the Panel Determination shall solely be provided in electronic format.

16. Amendments

Subject to the Objection Procedure, the Center may amend these WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution in its sole discretion and in consultation with ICANN; any amendment would be in force as of its publication.

17. Exclusion of Liability

Except in cases of willful misconduct or gross negligence, a Panelist, the World Intellectual Property Organization and its staff shall not be liable to any party or ICANN for any act or omission in connection with any proceeding conducted under the Objection Procedure and the WIPO Rules for New gTLD String Confusion Objections Dispute Resolution.