

.chess Mission and Purpose

"Chess" is the standard term for a two-player game on a checkered 64-square board, each commanding 16 pieces of six distinct types and unique movement rules, with the objective of checkmating the opponent's king via an inescapable threat of capture. The term is understood in essentially identical form across the world's major languages. Steelhead LLC ("Steelhead " or the "Registry"), applicant for the ".chess" gTLD, will serve the global community of chess players, clubs, federations, educators, event organizers, media producers, and commercial service providers by providing a dedicated namespace for these groups.

The chess community is among the largest identifiable interest communities in the world. Online chess platforms serve a large recreational base with major platforms reporting aggregate users in excess of 150 million. Scholastic and educational chess programs operate in schools globally. Beyond these are the game's commercial and creative constituencies: coaches and academies, publishers, equipment and electronic board manufacturers, tournament and event organizers, broadcast and commentary producers, streamers and content creators, and software developers building analysis, training, and engine technology. Survey data consistently places the number of people who play chess at least occasionally in the hundreds of millions worldwide.

Chess is unusual among global pastimes in that the game itself is unowned, freely playable, and culturally universal, and the institutions and businesses built around it are numerous, and geographically dispersed. However, there is no intuitive and unified TLD for these chess clubs, federations, coaches, and organizers to use. The .chess Registry is built to close that gap. It gives these constituencies a durable, portable digital identity to provide this community with a dedicated namespace. A dedicated .chess namespace will allow chess federations to establish coherent, verifiable identities; allow clubs and scholastic programs to be discoverable within their communities; allow coaches, academies, and content producers to build durable brands; and allow commercial service providers to reach the chess audience directly.

Intended Registrants and Users

Though .chess will be an open, generic top-level domain, intended registrants include, among others:: (i) chess players and enthusiasts; (ii) clubs and federations; (iii) educators; (iv) event organizers and media producers; and (v) service providers whose work materially serves the chess community. Users will include these registrants and the customers, partners, and end users who interact with them.

Activities to Achieve the Purpose

The Registry will operate as an open top-level domain with: a Sunrise phase for trademark holders; a Landrush phase; tiered pricing that keeps individual registrations affordable while discouraging misappropriation of strings associated with established institutions; anti-abuse monitoring aligned with the ICANN DNS Abuse Framework; and coordinated outreach to advancement offices and international higher-education networks. Names will be distributed through the ICANN-accredited registrar channel.

Sustainability Over Time

Sustainability rests on three durable pillars. First, populations of chess players, clubs, federations, educators, event organizers, media producers, and commercial service providers are substantial and growing. Second, both chess enthusiasts and the service providers around them exhibit multi-year tenure with their organizations, supporting strong renewal rates. Third, the Registry is capitalized to operate .chess for the required contractual term even under conservative demand scenarios. Surplus revenue will be reinvested in abuse mitigation, Universal Acceptance, and community outreach — reinforcing the long-term value of the namespace to the chess community it is intended to serve.
