

1. INTRODUCTION

This document explains the basis, scope and structure of Te Kāhui Raraunga Turst's .aio TLD policy suite. It accompanies the appended policies and is intended to support the preparation of the .aio TLD application for the ICANN New gTLD Program: 2026 Round.

The document explains why the appended policies have been selected, how they operate together and why other policies commonly published on generic top level domain (gTLD) registry websites are not reproduced in this suite.

The appended policies are intended to provide the substantive registry rules needed to protect the purpose and integrity of the .aio TLD namespace at launch. Other relevant obligations will need to be implemented separately, including through the Registry-Registrar Agreement, registrar registration agreements, registry procedures and technical systems. The policy suite does not replace those instruments.

2. ICANN REQUIREMENTS, REGISTRY POLICY AUTONOMY, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE APPLICATION

The authoritative requirements for the 2026 Round are contained in the current Applicant Guidebook, the form of Base Registry Agreement approved for the round, its specifications, applicable Consensus Policies and Temporary Policies, and other binding ICANN requirements. Successful applicants will enter into a Registry Agreement that defines the registry operator's rights and obligations and the technical and operational standards for operating a top level domain (TLD). These requirements establish a mandatory baseline. They do not, however, prescribe every rule governing participation in a particular namespace.

Subject to the Registry Agreement, applicable ICANN policy and law, a registry operator may adopt additional requirements and restrictions that are consistent with and appropriate to the purpose of its TLD. However in the context of the 2026 round, this policy autonomy must be exercised consistently with any community commitments made in its application and embodied in the Registry Agreement.

3. INDUSTRY TRENDS AND EVIDENCE BASE

The appended policy suite has been informed by the 2026 Round materials, commentary on the 2012 application round, comparative review of registry policy suites and engagement with .aio TLD.

The research indicates that registry policies are most effective when the principal obligations are consolidated into a manageable number of documents, abuse requirements are stated clearly, registration-data obligations are aligned with the

current ICANN framework, and enforcement processes are transparent, proportionate and capable of consistent administration.

Community-oriented and culturally specific TLDs also demonstrate the value of eligibility requirements, nexus or intended-use commitments, restrictions on misleading use, and culturally protective naming controls.

4. ASSUMPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

The policy suite is developed assuming that .aio TLD will operate as a dedicated, limited-purpose community namespace rather than a general-purpose open gTLD. Its policies must therefore protect the .aio TLD mission, give effect to the relevant community's authority to define participation, and establish requirements that are clear, measurable and capable of consistent administration through registry and registrar processes.

.aio TLD's instructions and community inputs are the starting point for the policy design. Comparative research and industry practice may inform drafting, but do not displace those instructions.

The policy suite is confined to registry-level domain-name governance. The test applied here is whether a standalone .aio TLD instrument is necessary to state a registry-specific rule, implement a .aio TLD community commitment, or provide a registry-controlled process that is not adequately supplied by an existing binding instrument. It does not purport to replace binding ICANN policies, contractual instruments or specialist operational documentation.

The following are excluded:

Registry-Registrar Agreement. The Registry-Registrar Agreement is the contract through which the registry imposes relevant obligations on registrars and requires appropriate flow-down to registrants. It must be prepared separately and reviewed against the final Registry Agreement, the registry service model and applicable law. The policies inform that agreement but are not a substitute for it.

Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy and Uniform Rapid Suspension system. The Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) is an ICANN Consensus Policy and the Uniform Rapid Suspension (URS) is an ICANN-mandated rights-protection mechanism. They apply through the ICANN contractual framework and their own rules. Reproducing or redrafting them as .aio TLD policies would risk inconsistency and could imply a power to amend instruments that .aio TLD must apply as issued. The suite therefore refers to them where relevant but does not restate them.

Registration Data Policy and privacy materials. The Registration Data Policy is an ICANN Consensus Policy applying directly to gTLD registry operators and ICANN-

accredited registrars. .aio TLD will nevertheless require separate implementation documentation, including any data-protection agreement, privacy notice, disclosure procedure, retention schedule and internal controls required by the ICANN policy and applicable privacy law. Those documents concern legal compliance and operational processing rather than the community-registration rules addressed by this suite.

Other ICANN and operational materials. Data escrow specifications, registry continuity arrangements, DNSSEC practice statements, registry service provider procedures, incident-response plans, technical service documentation and detailed complaints manuals are excluded because they are governed by ICANN requirements or require specialist legal, privacy, security or operational input. Organisational policies not specific to domain-name governance, including employment, procurement, supplier, ESG and corporate risk policies, are also outside scope.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The policy-development process requires a clear distinction between technical-operational responsibilities and community-governance authority.

InternetNZ serves as the primary drafter of the registry policy suite and is responsible for developing the mechanisms by which policies are administered and enforced. This includes registrar flow-down requirements, compliance processes, technical standards, registry operations, and alignment with applicable ICANN requirements.

.aio TLD and the relevant community authorities retain responsibility for defining the substantive values, eligibility requirements, naming principles, cultural safeguards, and broader policy objectives of the TLD. These inputs establish the community mandate that the registry policies are intended to reflect and protect.

This allocation of responsibilities creates a practical policy development model. .aio TLD and its community determine the purpose, scope, and substantive criteria of the namespace, while InternetNZ translates those requirements into a coherent policy framework and drafts the individual policies.

6. .AIO TLD POLICY SUITE

6.1 Policy Objectives and features

The appended policy suite contains the registry-specific instruments required to express the .aio TLD community-registration model and its launch.

.aio TLD is intended to operate as a dedicated community namespace. The suite must therefore do more than regulate ordinary registration mechanics. It must support Indigenous community self-identification, cultural connection, collective benefit and

the authority of the .aio TLD community to determine participation in the .aio TLD namespace. Those objectives are implemented through five connected functions: eligibility; name selection; validation; acceptable use; and compliance and operational enforcement.

6.2 Proposed Policy Taxonomy

The policies have been consolidated where possible so that each document has a distinct function and the suite can be read as a whole.

The following are included:

.aio TLD Registration Policy. The .aio TLD Registration Policy states who may register, the evidence and attestations required, the pre-registration validation process, name-selection requirements, continuing obligations and available compliance measures. It is the key feature of the community-registration model.

.aio TLD Reserved and Restricted Names Policy. The .aio TLD Reserved and Restricted Names Policy gives effect to ICANN reserved-name requirements and establishes .aio TLD controls for operational, legal, community and culturally significant or sensitive names. A separate policy is justified because these controls may apply independently of ordinary eligibility review and may require distinct approval or allocation processes.

.aio TLD Acceptable Use Policy. The .aio TLD Acceptable Use Policy states prohibited uses and the registry's reporting, assessment and enforcement framework. It supplements ICANN's DNS Abuse baseline by recording .aio TLD-specific obligations concerning community integrity, impersonation and misleading use.

.aio TLD Internationalised Domain Name Policy. The .aio TLD Internationalised Domain Name Policy sets the registry rules for IDN labels, tables, variants and technical validation. It is required because IDN implementation depends on registry-specific language or script choices and must operate consistently with ICANN IDN requirements and the .aio TLD naming framework.

.aio TLD Launch Policy. The .aio TLD Launch Policy establishes the start-up sequence, Sunrise, Trademark Claims, any pre-registration phase, allocation and contention rules, publication requirements and launch enforcement arrangements. These matters are time-limited but require a clear public instrument before launch.

.aio TLD Sunrise Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy. The .aio TLD Sunrise Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy provides the required mechanism for challenging failures to comply with .aio TLD's Sunrise allocation and registration rules. It is separate from the UDRP, URS and Trade Mark Clearing House (TMCH) procedures because its scope is limited to Sunrise compliance and registry implementation.

The appended policies should be read together with the final Registry Agreement, Registry-Registrar Agreement, registrar registration terms, applicable ICANN Consensus Policies and operational procedures. Where a binding ICANN requirement applies directly, that requirement prevails. Where .aio TLD has adopted a more specific community rule that is consistent with ICANN requirements, the .aio TLD rule forms part of the conditions for registration and use.

.AIO TLD Launch Policy

Version 1.0 - Effective 11 August, 2026.

Introduction

This Policy governs the launch of the .aio TLD top-level domain.

Interpretation

In this Policy:

“Applicant” means a person or entity applying for a .aio TLD Domain Name.

“Application” means a complete and technically valid request submitted under this Policy.

“Authorised Reviewer” means .aio TLD or its nominee appointed to conduct eligibility and name-selection review.

“Claims Notice” means the notice required where an applied-for label matches a Trademark Clearinghouse record.

“Claims Services” means the ICANN-required Claims Notice and rights-holder notification services.

“.aio TLD” means Te Kāhui Raraunga Charitable Trust as registry operator for the .aio TLD top-level domain.

“.aio TLD Domain Name” means a second-level domain name in the .aio TLD top-level domain.

“General Availability” means the period following launch in which available names may be registered by eligible Applicants.

“ICANN Requirements” means the .aio TLD Registry Agreement, applicable Consensus Policies, Temporary Policies, Trademark Clearinghouse Requirements and other binding ICANN requirements.

“Pre-Registration Phase” means any optional pre-launch process for non-binding requests before Sunrise.

“Registrar” means an ICANN-accredited registrar authorised by .aio TLD.

“Registrant” means the person or entity recorded as holder of a .aio TLD Domain Name.

“SMD File” means a valid Signed Mark Data file issued through the Trademark Clearinghouse.

“Sunrise-Eligible Rights Holder” means a person holding a valid SMD File and satisfying this Policy.

“Sunrise” or “Sunrise Period” means the ICANN-required period before General Availability for Sunrise-Eligible Rights Holders.

“Trademark Clearinghouse” or “TMCH” means the repository and service supporting Sunrise and Claims Services.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This Policy applies to every Applicant, Registrant and Registrar participating in launch and must be read in conjunction with the relevant .aio TLD policies, applicable Registration Agreement, and binding ICANN requirements.

2. Launch phases

- 2.1 The launch will comprise:
- a. Pre-Registration Phase: An optional qualified launch programme, subject to the final terms and condition being published by .aio TLD before it begins;
 - b. Sunrise Period: A mandatory launch period, conducted in accordance with applicable ICANN requirements, this Policy, and .aio TLD's other published registration policies.
 - c. General Availability: The registration phase during which available domain names are allocated to eligible applicants in accordance with the published .aio TLD registration policies
- 2.2 .aio TLD will operate an End-Date Sunrise for 60 calendar days.
- 2.3 .aio TLD may operate a Pre-Registration Phase before Sunrise.
- 2.4 General Availability will begin only after Sunrise applications and any resulting contention have been resolved or placed into the applicable resolution process.

3. Requirements applying to every Application

- 3.1 Every Applicant must:
- a. satisfy an Eligibility Category in the .aio TLD Registration Policy;
 - b. select one Eligibility Category and provide the required binding eligibility and intended-use attestations;
 - c. provide complete and accurate registration information and any supporting information reasonably required under the applicable .aio TLD policy, provided that a Sunrise Applicant must also provide a valid SMD File;
 - d. select a name having a clear and reasonable connection to the selected Eligibility Category or attested intended use;

- e. attest that the name complies with the .aio TLD Registration Policy and Reserved and Restricted Names Policy; and
 - f. comply with all technical, availability and ICANN Requirements.
- 3.2 Every Application must pass the availability, technical, eligibility and name-selection checks applicable to its launch phase before activation.
- 3.3 .aio TLD may conduct pre-allocation review where required by a published .aio TLD policy.
- 3.4 An applied-for name on a Reserved or Restricted Names List, or otherwise matching published restricted-name criteria, must be dealt with under the Reserved and Restricted Names Policy.
- 3.5 An Application creates no right to allocation or registration.
- 3.6 A name may be unavailable because it is reserved, restricted, previously allocated, subject to a valid Sunrise Application, withheld under published policy or unavailable under ICANN Requirements.

4. Registrar obligations

- 4.1 .aio TLD must require each Registrar, through the Registry-Registrar Agreement, to include in its Registration Agreement the Applicant and Registrant obligations in the .aio TLD Registration and Acceptable Use Policies, including attestations, evidence, continuing compliance and enforcement consequences.

5. Pre-Registration Phase

- 5.1 A pre-registration request is non-binding, creates no right to a .aio TLD Domain Name and is subordinate to a valid Sunrise Application for the same name.
- 5.2 Any fees paid in connection with a pre-registration request for a .aio TLD Domain Name that is reserved, restricted, withheld or otherwise unavailable shall be refunded in accordance with the published refund policy.

6. Sunrise Period

- 6.1 .aio TLD must give the notice of commencement required by the then-current ICANN Requirements and will operate Sunrise as an End-Date Sunrise for 60 calendar days.
- 6.2 No Sunrise Application will be allocated before the end of that period.
- 6.3 A Sunrise Applicant must apply through a Registrar, provide a valid SMD File, apply for a label permitted by that SMD File and satisfy the published .aio TLD registration requirements that apply uniformly to Sunrise registrations.

- 6.4 .aio TLD must validate each Sunrise Application by confirming the SMD File, the permitted label, technical validity, availability and compliance with applicable published policies.
- 6.5 If more than one valid Sunrise Application is received for the same name, .aio TLD will resolve contention through a transparent, non-discriminatory process published before Sunrise begins.
- 6.6 The process may include comparative assessment against published criteria and, if qualifying Applicants remain tied, an auction or another objectively administered tie-break.
- 6.7 A valid Sunrise Application takes priority over any pre-registration request for the same name.
- 6.8 .aio TLD must publish and maintain the .aio TLD Sunrise Dispute Resolution Policy. .aio TLD will not use that policy to determine the validity of a Trademark Record, which must be challenged under the applicable TMCH Validation Provider procedure.

7. Claims Services

- 7.1 .aio TLD must provide Claims Services for the period and in each launch phase required by then-current ICANN Requirements.
- 7.2 Where a requested label matches a TMCH record, the Registrar must present the required Claims Notice in real time and obtain affirmative confirmation before registration.
- 7.3 The applicable rights holder must receive the required TMCH notification if registration is completed.

8. Publication and changes

- 8.1 No later than required by ICANN, .aio TLD must publish this Policy, launch dates, Sunrise and Claims periods, allocation and contention rules, the Sunrise Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy and all other required startup information.
- 8.2 .aio TLD may amend this Policy before launch to complete dates and operational details. After Sunrise begins, .aio TLD must not materially alter Sunrise eligibility, allocation or dispute rules except as permitted or required by ICANN Requirements or applicable law.

9. Complaints, audits and enforcement

- 9.1 .aio TLD must investigate credible complaints concerning eligibility, name selection, acceptable use or launch compliance and may conduct risk-based

post-registration audits. Unless immediate action is required to address DNS Abuse, legal harm or material community harm, .aio TLD must give the Registrant not less than 14 calendar days to respond.

- 9.2 .aio TLD may reject or hold an Application and may suspend, lock, delete or decline renewal of a registration where compliance is not established. .aio TLD may take another proportionate measure where permitted.

10. Records

- 10.1 .aio TLD must retain material applications, attestations, evidence, validation outcomes, complaints and enforcement records for the applicable period specified in .aio TLD's Privacy Policy, subject to applicable laws.