

## GAC Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round

### Sessions 9 & 10

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#### Session Objective

GAC Members to discuss matters pertaining to the New gTLD Program: Next Round, to identify issues of concern and thus assess whether language in the Communique and/or GAC advice should be issued at ICANN82 on GAC priority topics.

The session will focus on two briefings by GAC representatives and ICANN org to the GAC, the first one on the Implementation Review Team (IRT) state of play, followed by a status update following the roll-out of the Applicant Support Program (ASP). GAC members will then discuss draft Applicant Guidebook language (AGB) and policy matters of interest to the committee. GAC members will also discuss GAC communiqué language on priority issues pertaining to new gTLDs.

#### Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

1. GAC Members receive an update on the Implementation Review Team (IRT) in preparation for the next round of new gTLDs, including an overview of the draft Applicant Guidebook language out for public comment.
2. GAC Members receive a status update on the Applicant Support Program, current applications status, and next steps in preparation for the next round of new gTLDs.
3. GAC Members to discuss topics of interest on New gTLDs including (but not limited to):
  - a. GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice;
  - b. Application Fees and rebates;
  - c. New gTLD Program: Next Round Privacy Policy and Legal Compliance Check

#### Current Status and Recent Developments

Since ICANN81, an important milestone was reached with the opening of the [Applicant Support Program](#) (ASP) as well as the [Registry Service Provider \(RSP\) Evaluation Program](#) on 19 November

2024. Both of these programs play an important role in preparation for the opening of the new gTLD application window, which is planned for April 2026.

The Applicant Support Program is intended to make applying for a new gTLD and operating a registry more accessible to applicants that otherwise would be unable to do so due to financial and resource constraints. With more than 30 applications already received to date, the ASP ICANN org team has started the evaluation process and the first applicants are expected to receive their assessments by Q2 2025. For qualified applicants, additional services will be available such as pro-bono service providers, as they prepare for the opening of the gTLD application window. ASP applications can be submitted until 19 November 2025. GAC members will receive an update on the status of the ASP and ASP applications during the GAC plenary session on new gTLDs at ICANN82. They will also be an update on “outreach” efforts.

The RSP Evaluation Program assesses RSPs on technical aspects of operating a gTLD. RSPs offer critical services – such as DNS, Registration Data Access Protocol, and DNS Security Extensions, among others – on behalf of a registry operator. Through the RSP Evaluation Program, RSPs need only be evaluated once, regardless of the number of gTLDs they intend to support. The first list of successful RSP applicants will be published in December 2025. There will be another opportunity for RSPs to be evaluated through the program when the new gTLD application window opens.

The launch of these programs was supported by communications, readiness, outreach and engagement activities. More than 200 engagement sessions and webinars were held in various countries across the Middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific, and European regions. Additionally, outreach has been focused on encouraging companies to provide pro bono professional services (such as business consulting, financial services, application writing, and technical help) to supported applicants.

Communication materials were created to support these engagement activities, in combination with a targeted public relations campaign to raise awareness of these programs.

The next milestone on the path to open the new gTLD application window is the completion of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB). A fourth [Public Comment proceeding](#) was opened on 14 February 2025 to allow for community input on various AGB topics prior to the publication of the complete draft of the AGB for public comment by 31 May 2025.

The AGB is the translation of the community-developed policy recommendations into specific program rules and the requirements that an applicant will need to meet. The ICANN Board is expected to adopt the final AGB by December 2025. GAC members are actively participating in the Implementation Review Team (IRT) responsible for reviewing and developing AGB language with ICANN org (see below section on the IRT), and the committee has been consistently providing input to AGB related public comment proceedings.

Another critical-path milestone is the development of the new gTLD Base Registry Agreement (RA). The RA is the binding agreement between the approved gTLD applicant and ICANN that sets forth the rights, duties, liabilities, and obligations of the registry operator for a specific gTLD, and its variants in some cases. The New gTLD ICANN org team is working both with the Implementation Review Team (IRT) and the Registry Stakeholder Group (RySG) to review and finalize the RA for publication for Public Comment. The final version of the RA will be part of the final AGB that the ICANN Board will adopt.

## Background

On 16 March 2023, the Board [resolved](#) to instruct ICANN org to begin the implementation of all Final Report Outputs detailed in Section A of the "[Scorecard on Subsequent Procedures PDP](#)" (March Scorecard) and to make available resources required for the successful and timely opening of the next round of new gTLDs. The ICANN Board approved ninety-eight (98) recommendations contained in the Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process, and marked the remaining thirty-eight (38) recommendations as "pending".

The Board further directed ICANN org to deliver a comprehensive implementation plan to the Board no later than 1 August 2023, containing a work plan, relevant information for the Infrastructure Development stream, timelines and anticipated resource requirements to announce the opening of the next round of new gTLDs. ICANN org delivered the [implementation plan](#) for opening the next round of applications for new generic top-level domains (gTLDs), and on its [resolution](#) approved on 27 July 2023, the Board acknowledged receipt of the plan and directed ICANN org to provide the Board with periodic updates on its progress on program implementation, as well as to continue to prepare information for the Board Finance Committee on periodic requests for implementation funding as implementation work progresses through identified milestones. A [status update](#) on the New gTLD Program: Next Round was published by ICANN org on 24 February 2025.

The Board engaged with the GNSO Council on items marked as "pending", and following this interaction the GNSO Council transmitted to the Board the [New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Pending Recommendations - GNSO Council Clarifying Statement](#) (Clarifying Statement) on 5 September 2023, developed by the GNSO Council SubPro Small Team to address the Board's concerns on the pending Outputs. The GNSO Council noted the Clarifying Statement should be read as complementary to recommendations as stated in the Final Report and should be considered jointly with the Outputs for the purpose of implementation and operation of the New gTLD Program Next Round.

In September 2023, the ICANN Board published several documents of interest to the GAC pertaining to new gTLDs. Relevant sections of these documents are summarized below for GAC membership ease of reference.

- On 10 September 2023, the ICANN Board published the [September 2023 Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures PDP](#), i.e. an updated Board Scorecard on the SubPro PDP WG recommendations marked as "pending" in the Board Resolution on 16 March 2023.

- The Board also published on 10 September 2023 the [Board Scorecard on ICANN77 GAC Advice](#), outlining Board decisions following the issuance of GAC advice at ICANN77.
- On 21 September 2023, the Board published the [Board Scorecard on ICANN77 GAC Issues of Importance](#), outlining its comments and decisions on the GAC ICANN77 Issues of Importance following the Board-GAC Interaction on this topic.

The Board published on 26 October 2023 the [October 2023 Board Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures \(SubPro PDP\)](#), outlining Board decisions on pending recommendations from the SubPro PDP WG Final Report.

On 11 June 2024 the ICANN Board published the [June 2024 Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures Supplemental Recommendations](#). This June 2024 Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures Supplemental Recommendations (Supplemental Recommendations Scorecard) is intended to facilitate the Board's consideration of the [GNSO Council-approved Supplemental Recommendations](#).

GAC members may wish to review in detail the [Board Scorecard on the GAC ICANN81 Istanbul Communiqué: Issues of Importance](#) (29 January 2025), in response to the ICANN81 Kigali Communiqué, which includes responses to GAC Issues of Importance, to determine whether GAC action should be taken at ICANN81, either through a dialogue with the ICANN Board at the GAC/Board bilateral meeting and/or via the GAC Communiqué.

## 1. Implementation Review Team (IRT)

The Subsequent Procedures **Implementation Review Team (IRT)** commenced its work in May 2023 and is expected to draft the next applicant guidebook in preparation for the next round of new gTLDs. The GAC appointed a representative and an alternate to participate in the process, provide input to the IRT and report back to the broader committee on areas of importance to the GAC. **GAC members appointed to the IRT are: Canada (Representative) and UK (Alternate)**. ICANN org presented an updated [Implementation Plan](#) in September 2024 for the Implementation Review Team's input, including 291 outputs (comprising recommendations, affirmations, affirmations with modification, and implementation guidance) contained in the [Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedure Policy Development Process](#) that were adopted, adopted with GNSO Council-approved clarifications, or acknowledged by the ICANN Board in [March](#), [September](#) and [October](#) 2023. This version of the Plan also includes the four Supplemental Recommendations that were [adopted](#) by the Board in June 2024. It is expected that the AGB will be published no later than December 2025.

At the time of this briefing, ICANN org opened the fourth and final in a series of Public Comment proceedings that will seek input from the ICANN community on proposed language for the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. Specifically, ICANN org is looking for input from the community on whether the proposed language is consistent with the relevant outputs from the Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process. It should be noted that the proposed language has been developed in collaboration with the [Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team](#).

GAC members have consistently provided input to draft AGB language submitted for public comment, and are currently reviewing the fourth public comment proceeding to develop a GAC response.

**Specifically, ICANN org has published the following draft sections for input:**

- Subsequent Application Rounds (Topic 3: Applications Assessed in Rounds)
- Background Screening (Topic 22: Registrant Protections)
- String Similarity Review (Topic 24: String Similarity Evaluations)
- Internationalized Domain Names (Topic 25: IDNs)
- Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation (Topic 33: Dispute Resolution Procedures After Delegation)
- Registrar-Non-Discrimination / Registry/Registrar Standardization (Topic 37: Registrar Non-Discrimination / Registry/Registrar Standardization)
- Registrar Support for New gTLDs (Topic 38: Registrar Support for New gTLDs)
- Root Zone Label Generation Rules (Topic 25: IDNs)
- Closed Generics (Topic 23: Closed Generics)

Following review of the responses from this fourth part of AGB, further drafting, under auspices of the IRT will take place ahead of a final consultation on the whole Applicant Guidebook later in 2025.

More information from the IRT, as well as meeting recordings, and other material is available [here](#).

## **2. Applicant Support Program (ASP)**

The ASP launched on 19 November 2024 and as of 18 February 2025 has:

- 16 applications **in draft** (applications that have been started but not yet submitted organization information);
- 13 **initiated** applications (applications that have submitted organization information);
- 1 **submitted** application (applications that have submitted application information for evaluation); and
- 1 application **withdrawn** by the applicant.

Statistics can be found on the [ASP Program Statistics](#) webpage which is updated monthly.

Leading up to the launch, the ASP team supported the Board in its response to ASP-related [ICANN80 GAC advice](#), and held discussions on ASP Terms and Conditions with the Implementation Review Team (IRT), which were [published](#) on 15 November 2024.

The ASP ICANN org team created [Applicant readiness materials](#), which were translated in the six ICANN languages, and published on the Next Round website. Materials include:

- the [ASP Application System User Guide](#),

- [ASP Applicant Checklist](#), and the
- [ASP Applicant Quick Start Guide](#).

The ICANN org ASP team completed sourcing of the Support Applicant Review Panel (SARP) and selected a vendor; this was [announced on 10 February 2025](#). The sourcing process followed ICANN’s standard Requests For Proposal (RFP) process, with two rounds of RFPs issued to ensure a broad vendor pool and competitive pricing. The SARP vendor was selected after vendor interviews, an evaluation process, and reference checks. The contracting of the vendor was completed, and on-boarding and training is scheduled to begin in Q1 2025.

### 3. Next Round Website

The [website](#) for the New gTLD Program was launched following ICANN79, and it is expected to be a central source of information for the ICANN community as well as current and future new gTLD applicants. The website includes information about the program, tools and resources for applicants, updates on program status, and information regarding a specific round (e.g. 2012 versus the upcoming round). GAC members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the website to ensure they are up to date with materials and information related to the program which will be regularly posted here.

### Key Reference Documents

- [Board Reply to GAC Response to Board Update following Board-GAC Bylaws Consultation on ICANN80 GAC Advice](#) (29 January 2025)
- [GAC Response to Proposed Update to Recommendation 7 from the New gTLD Auction Proceeds Cross-Community Working Group](#) (20 January 2025)
- [GAC Response on the Board’s Proposed Path Forward on Auctions: Mechanisms of Last Resort/Private Resolution of Contention Sets in New gTLDs](#) (13 December 2024)
- [GAC ICANN80 Advice Follow-up on Outreach and Engagement Report](#) (11 December 2024)
- [ICANN81 Istanbul Communiqué](#) (18 November 2024)
- Board follow-up on Board-GAC Bylaws Mandated Consultation Processes on GAC Advice:
  - [Follow-up](#) on 3 September 2024 Board-GAC Consultation regarding ICANN77 GAC Advice Item 4.a.i (Auctions) (3 October 2024)
  - [Update](#) following Board-GAC Bylaws Consultation on ICANN80 GAC Advice on the New gTLD Applicant Support Program (ASP) (3 October 2024)
- [Board Action on ICANN80 GAC Advice](#) (29 July 2024)
- [ICANN Board Proposed Path Forward for the GAC Consensus Advice in the ICANN80 Kigali GAC Communiqué](#) (23 July 2024)
- [Board Scorecard on ICANN78 GAC Issues of Importance](#) (9 May 2024)

- [Board Action on ICANN79 GAC Advice \(5 May 2024\)](#)
- [Draft New gTLD Program: Next Round Applicant Support Handbook \(12 February 2024\)](#)
- [Board Action on ICANN78 GAC Advice \(21 January 2024\)](#)
- [Overview of Analyses of Costs and Benefits of a Next Round of the New gTLD Program \(22 January 2024\)](#)
- [GNSO Guidance Process \(GGP\) for Applicant Support Guidance Recommendation Final Report \(8 December 2023\)](#)
- [Implementation Framework for Content-Related Registry Commitments in the New gTLD Program: Next Round \(5 December 2023\)](#)
- [ICANN78 GAC Hamburg Communiqué \(30 October 2023\)](#)
- [October 2023 Board Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures \(SubPro PDP\) \(26 October 2023\)](#)
- [September 2023 Board Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures - 10 September 2023](#)
- [Board Scorecard on ICANN77 GAC Advice \(10 September 2023\)](#)
- [Board Scorecard on ICANN77 GAC Issues of Importance \(21 September 2023\)](#)
- [Scorecard: Subsequent Procedures \(SubPro PDP\) - 16 March 2023](#)
- [ICANN77 GAC Communiqué - 20 June 2023](#)
- [New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Operational Design Assessment - 12 December 2022](#)
- [GAC Consensus Collective Comment \(1 June 2021\) on GNSO New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Final Outputs for ICANN Board Consideration.](#)
- [Final Report on the new gTLD Subsequent Procedures PDP WG - 1 February 2021](#)

## Further Information

- GAC Policy Background Document on Subsequent Rounds of New gTLDs:  
<https://gac.icann.org/briefing-materials/public/gac-policy-background-new-gtlds-subsequent-rounds.pdf>

## Document Administration

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