

GAC Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round

Sessions #5 and #6

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Session Objective

GAC Members continue preparing for the next round of New gTLDs, building on the Capacity Development Sessions which precede these sessions, and further discussing topics of interest to governments.

The sessions will focus on briefings by GAC representatives and ICANN org to the GAC, the first one on an update on the Applicant Support Program (ASP), followed by a presentation from the geoTLD Group. The second session will include an update by ICANN org on the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) and timeline for the Next Round of New gTLDs, followed by a GAC discussion on the process for GAC Early Warnings. GAC members will also discuss GAC communiqué language on priority issues pertaining to new gTLDs.

Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

1. GAC Members to receive a status update on the Applicant Support Program from ICANN org, current applications status, and next steps in preparation for the next round of new gTLDs.
2. GAC Members to engage with the geoTLD Group on: the role of the Geographic Name Panel and the Geographic Names Review fee described in the draft AGB, geoTLD outreach activities and engagement with the GAC and capacity building related to geoTLDs.
3. GAC Members to receive an update from ICANN org on the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) including an update on the timeline for the next round of New gTLDs.
4. GAC Members to discuss and review the [GAC Process for Early Warnings](#) in preparation for the Next Round of New gTLDs, with the aim of finalizing it as part of the readiness steps for the next round.

Current Status and Recent Developments

Applicant Support Program and Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program

Since ICANN83, the [Applicant Support Program](#) (ASP) and the [Registry Service Provider \(RSP\) Evaluation Program](#) have continued to process applications received.

The Next Round Steering Committee sub-group [approved the first three ASP applicants](#) following detailed reviews of applicant and application evaluation results. Determination letters were sent to approved applicants after their deposits were received. The nonfinancial assistance provided to qualified applicants includes a “Supported Applicant Toolkit” that will onboard and guide supported applicants along a personal learning pathway.

The ASP ICANN org team continues to engage prospective applicants who may consider applying for the ASP program through a feedback survey that will gauge interest in applying. The team also ramped up its enhanced communications cadence with applicants in the pipeline, especially those who have not progressed in the process, to identify challenges and provide resources to assist them with next steps.

ICANN’s Communications team completed another ASP social media campaign to further raise awareness about the program among prospective ASP candidates. The Outreach team presented at a number of engagement events including: hosting a workshop with UNESCO and other expert panelists, a briefing with the Members of Parliament on the ASP at the Internet Governance Forum and is working with regional Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) teams to conduct additional outreach. For example, convening a webinar with APRALO and the APAC GSE team to introduce ASP and available pro bono service providers in the region; and hosting a workshop on the Next Round and ASP at the Indigenous Connectivity Summit. These webinars were recorded and made available to applicants as additional resources on the Next Round Website - [ASP Resources Page](#).

The ASP launched on 19 November 2024 and as of 23 September 2025 has:

- 42 applications **in draft** (applications that have been started but not yet submitted organization information);
- 42 **initiated** applications (applications that have submitted organization information);
- 3 **submitted** application (applications that have submitted application information for evaluation); and
- 1 application **withdrawn** by the applicant.
- 1 application has been “**conditionally approved**” (pending payment)
- 2 applications have been “**fully approved**” (payment received)

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

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 GAC and At-Large submitted a letter to the ICANN Board (15 August 2025) requesting an expedited review of the Applicant Support Program (ASP) in light of its critical role in ensuring equitable participation in the Next Round of New gTLDs. Following extensive bilateral discussions between the GAC and ALAC since ICANN83, the two committees shared concerns about the program's current trajectory, particularly given the limited time remaining in the application window and the low representation from underserved regions.

In response to the GAC and ALAC joint letter, the Board noted that with respect to the GAC-ALAC question about extending the ASP application submission period, ICANN org is working on a proposal to provide additional time for applicants currently in the application process to complete and submit their ASP applications.

This approach seeks to simultaneously address several issues:

- Giving qualified applicants certainty regarding their fee discounts (75–85%).
- Providing additional opportunity to utilize available resources and to support applicants as they finalize their applications.
- Reducing the risk of ASP evaluations overlapping with the April 2026 gTLD application window.
- Helping ICANN org manage resources to process applications efficiently.

On October 6th, ICANN [announced](#) that it had extended the submission deadline for the ASP to allow more time for applicants to complete the application process. Entities that enter information in the system by 19 November 2025 will now have until 19 December 2025 to submit a complete application. If an applicant does not enter organizational information in the system by 19 November 2025, they will be unable to proceed with their application in this round. The one-month extension ensures ICANN org has sufficient time to prepare internally and externally to open the gTLD application window as planned, i.e. no delay to the timeline for the new gTLD application process is anticipated.

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.

Applicant Guidebook

Following the close of the final Public Comment period on the complete draft of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) on 23 July 2025, ICANN org has been working with the Implementation Review Team (IRT) to review the 29 submissions received, which included 196 comments. At the time of writing, this review is nearing completion, which is expected to allow ICANN Board consideration of the AGB during its meeting at ICANN84. The AGB sets out the rules for new gTLD applications and is therefore a key element of the program. Recommendations from the ICANN community require that the AGB is available a minimum of four months before the opening of the new gTLD application window.

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.

Due to the complex nature of the AGB, and the fact it is a complex legal document which may be difficult to understand among those who are less familiar with ICANN and the Domain Name System, ICANN org is actively developing materials to help the wider community digest the AGB. ICANN org recognizes the need for supplemental, complementary materials to aid prospective generic top-level domain (gTLD) applicants in understanding the application requirements, and how to navigate the application and evaluation processes. This [content](#) is in the works as follows:

- [Key Topic Overviews](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Webinars and ICANN Meeting Sessions](#)

Key Topic Overviews

These documents provide succinct overviews of various AGB topics, relevant policies, and procedures, using plain language where practicable. The topics available now include replacement strings and replacement period, trademark protections, geographic names, Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) early warnings and consensus advice, objections and appeals, and community input. More topics are in development. These overviews can be found on the New gTLD Program: Next Round website on the [Applicant Guidebook Resources page](#).

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 Canada as a representative to participate in the process, and the**

United Kingdom as an alternate, to provide input to the IRT and report back to the broader committee on areas of importance to the GAC.

At the time of this briefing, ICANN org and the IRT have been reviewing the submissions received on the final public comment period on the complete draft of the AGB.

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](#).

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

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.

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](#).

Key Reference Documents

- [Board follow-up to GAC and ALAC joint Letter on the Applicant Support Program](#) (3 October 2025)
- [Board response to GAC and ALAC Letter on Urgent Review of the Next Round Applicant Support Program](#) (25 August 2025)
- [GAC and ALAC letter to Board on Urgent Review of Next Round Applicant Support Program](#) (15 August 2025)
- [ICANN Materials Provide Prospective New gTLD Applicants Clarity on Key Topics](#) (21 May 2025)
- Applicant Guidebook Resources - [Key Topic Overviews](#)
- [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>

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