

## GAC Capacity Development Sessions

### Sessions 5 & 6

#### Contents

<a href="#">Session Objective</a>	p.1	<a href="#">Background</a>	p.1	<a href="#">Current Status and Recent Developments</a>	p.1	<a href="#">Key Reference Documents</a>	p.2
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#### Session Objective

In the effort to continue supporting the GAC’s readiness for the opening of the New gTLD Program Next Round application process, a series of GAC Capacity Development activities are planned. This includes a pre-ICANN85 Capacity Development [webinar](#) (17 February 2026) and two GAC Capacity Development sessions at ICANN85.

With a clear focus on the GAC’s role and practical engagement ahead of reviewing GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice at ICANN86, the pre-ICANN85 webinar serves as an interactive entry point, setting the policy and governmental context before moving into program fundamentals. The ICANN85 Capacity Development sessions will build directly on the webinar and focus on what GAC members need in order to engage meaningfully.

#### Background

GAC capacity development sessions (CDS) are built to provide an opportunity for GAC members to learn the basics or increase their knowledge on aspects of the ICANN multistakeholder model, its structure, and operations. It is also an opportunity for GAC attendees to become acquainted with different ICANN community groups in order to facilitate future dialogue, and to share experiences and best practices to enhance GAC internal collaboration on various ICANN matters.

In light of the high engagement demonstrated by members, the Underserved Regions Working Group (USRWG) and GAC Leadership continue exploring new modalities to enhance capacity development initiatives intersessionally and at ICANN meetings.

#### Current Status and Recent Developments

For 2025 and 2026, capacity development activities of the GAC will mostly focus on topics related to the New gTLD Program Next Round. The objective is to raise the GAC’s awareness on the different issues and processes, to help GAC delegates prepare for the next round of new gTLDs.

Additional capacity development sessions on issues that the committee wishes to discuss in plenary, can be added to the ICANN Meeting GAC schedule, upon consideration by GAC Leadership.

At ICANN85 in Mumbai, the agendas for the capacity development sessions taking place on Saturday 7 March 2026 will cover the following topics:

### **ICANN85 Agendas for GAC Capacity Development Sessions on New gTLD Program Next Round**

#### **Saturday, 7 March 2026**

##### **Session 1: From awareness to readiness: the GAC's role**

**(15:00-16:00 local time)**

This session will build directly on the 17 February 2026 webinar and focus on what GAC members need in order to engage meaningfully.

- A short, visual overview of the GAC's role across the application lifecycle (including timing for comments, GAC Early Warnings, and GAC Advice)
- High-level introduction to the three forms of GAC input (comments, GAC Early Warnings, GAC Advice)
- Introduction to **application types** and what governments should be attentive to, using visual excerpts from actual 2012-round applications, showing how a geographic name, reserved name, community application, or .brand application appears in practice.

##### **Session 2: Practical exercise – application review case studies**

**(16:30-17:30 local time)**

This session will be fully exercise-based and led by GAC Topic Leads.

- Break-out groups organized by application type, using real-world [case studies](#) from the 2012 round
- Each group will review multiple applications within the same category, supported by:
  - Visual application summaries
  - Use-case examples (e.g. how the string is intended to be used, by whom, and for what purpose)
- Each group will review multiple applications within the same category and discuss:
  - What stands out from a government perspective
  - Questions or concerns that arise
  - Potential public policy considerations
- Groups report back to plenary to share observations and lessons learned

## Key Reference Documents

- [ICANN85 GAC briefing on New gTLD Program Next Round](#)  
[note: Until the session has taken place, the briefing will be published for GAC members' access only]
- [Pre-ICANN85 GAC Capacity Development Webinar](#)
- [New gTLD Program Next Round website](#)
- [ICANN Policy Development Accelerator workspace](#)

## Document Administration

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