
GAC Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round

Session 7

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Session Objective

GAC Members continue preparing for the 2026 Round of New gTLDs, building on the Capacity Development Sessions preceding this session and recent discussions regarding GAC preparedness for the Next Round.

The session will focus on recent developments and upcoming milestones in the New gTLD Program: Next Round, including updates on implementation progress and the Applicant Support Program (ASP), followed by a discussion on practical considerations for GAC engagement as the application process advances.

The discussion will provide an opportunity for GAC members to exchange views on anticipated challenges, preparedness needs, and possible approaches to support effective GAC engagement ahead of future milestones in the Next Round.

Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

1. GAC Members to receive updates from ICANN org regarding recent developments in the New gTLD Program: Next Round, including implementation progress, projected milestones, and developments related to the Applicant Support Program (ASP).
2. GAC Members to discuss practical considerations for engagement in the Next Round, including anticipated challenges, support needs, and areas where further capacity development may be useful.

3. GAC Members to exchange views on approaches which could support effective and timely GAC engagement as the application process progresses, and identify whether additional discussions or guidance may be beneficial ahead of future stages of the Next Round.

Current Status and Recent Developments

New gTLD Program: 2026 Round – Status Update

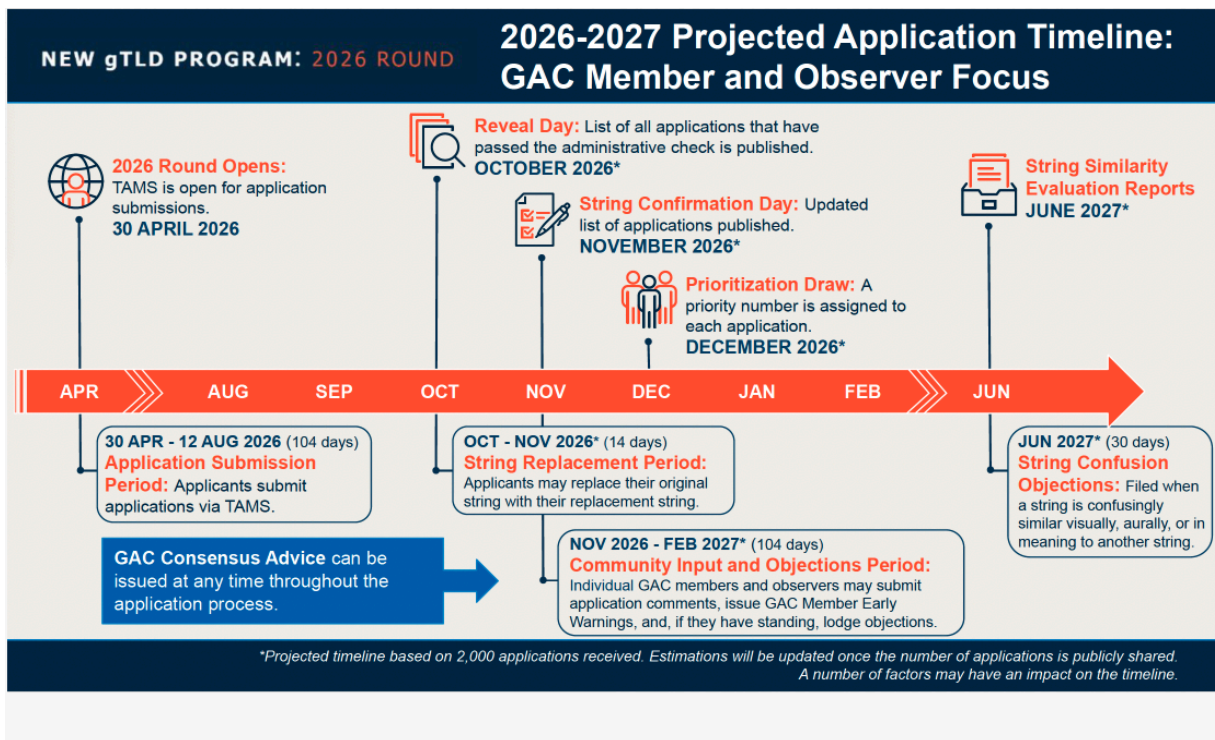
The application submission period for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round opened on 24 April 2026 and is expected to remain open for approximately 15 weeks, until 22 August 2026, subject to confirmation by ICANN org. Following closure of the application window, ICANN org will confirm projected dates for String Confirmation Day, Reveal Day, and subsequent stages of the evaluation process.

Following the opening of the application period, ICANN org continues to publish materials and guidance intended to support applicants and the wider community in understanding the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), evaluation processes, and opportunities for community input.

The Next Round timeline foresees several milestones of relevance to governments and GAC members, including:

- Application Submission Period (15 weeks);
- String Confirmation Day;
- GAC Early Warning period (104 days);
- Opportunities for Public Comments and Objections;
- Potential GAC Consensus Advice following publication of applications and progression through evaluation stages.

Projected timelines remain dependent on the number of applications received and may be updated by ICANN org.



Applicant Support Program

The Applicant Support Program (ASP) continues to advance following completion of the application period for support requests and associated evaluation processes.

The ASP was designed to support applicants from underserved regions and communities by reducing financial and non-financial barriers to participation in the Next Round. The program includes financial assistance, as well as access to guidance and support resources intended to facilitate participation.

ICANN org has continued developing supplementary materials to support applicants, including:

- [Applicant readiness materials](#), which were translated in the six ICANN languages, and published on the Next Round website
- the [ASP Application System User Guide](#),
- [ASP Applicant Checklist](#), and the
- [ASP Applicant Quick Start Guide](#).

The GAC has previously expressed interest regarding the effectiveness and accessibility of the ASP, including through exchanges with the Board and collaboration with ALAC. The session provides an opportunity for GAC members to receive updates regarding implementation and uptake of the program.

Applicant Guidebook (AGB) and Supporting Materials

Following the ICANN Board’s adoption of the final Applicant Guidebook at ICANN84, ICANN published the final version on 16 December 2025. The authoritative version of the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook, is available [here](#). To view the web version in html, [click here](#). The Guidebook is the essential roadmap to the program, providing interested parties with the application questions and all the information they need to apply for new gTLDs. It lays out the requirements to lead readers through application submission and evaluation processes.

Recognizing the complexity of the AGB and associated processes, ICANN org has continued developing complementary resources including:

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

Relevant Key Topic Overviews include topics such as geographic names, objections and appeals, Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) Early Warnings and Advice, and other mechanisms for community input.

Emerging Considerations for GAC Preparedness

Building on discussions held during Capacity Development Sessions and exchanges among GAC Leadership and Topic Leads, members may wish to consider practical aspects of GAC preparedness as the Next Round progresses.

Potential discussion areas include:

- anticipated challenges arising from the volume and complexity of applications;
- lessons learned from previous rounds and related GAC processes;
- support or capacity development needs identified by GAC members;
- practical approaches to facilitate timely and effective GAC engagement during future stages of the process;
- considerations regarding coordination and preparation ahead of periods of increased activity, including opportunities for community input and GAC deliberation.

The intention of these discussions is to support preparedness and identify potential areas where further capacity development or dialogue may be beneficial, while preserving the flexibility and member-driven nature of existing GAC processes.

Key Reference Documents

- [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook](#) (16 December 2025)
- Applicant Guidebook Resources - [Key Topic Overviews](#)
- [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Resources Page](#)

- [GAC Workbook: 2026 Round Community Input Actions \(March 2026\)](#)
- [Projected Timeline for GAC Community Input Actions \(2026 Round\)](#)

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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