

GAC Capacity Development Sessions

Session 2 and 3

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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 sessions are planned, with a clear focus on enhancing understanding of the application process and available community input mechanisms, while also facilitating practical and interactive exchanges among GAC members on topics such as Early Warnings, GAC Advice, and national approaches to preparing for the next round.

As part of ongoing efforts to support GAC preparedness for the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, the Capacity Development Sessions (CDS) at ICANN86 aim to enhance members’ understanding of the application process, evaluation procedures, and available community input mechanisms, while also providing practical opportunities to discuss how governments may engage as the application process progresses.

Building on previous GAC capacity development activities focused on the Next Round, the sessions will combine informational updates with interactive discussions to support preparedness for future stages of the process, including GAC Early Warnings, GAC Advice, and other opportunities for GAC engagement.

The sessions are also intended to facilitate experience-sharing among GAC members regarding national approaches, anticipated challenges, and practical considerations for organizing work related to the Next Round.

Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

1. GAC Members to receive updates and capacity development support regarding the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round, including application procedures, evaluations, and opportunities for community input.
2. GAC Members to participate in practical discussions and exchanges on GAC Early Warnings, GAC Advice, and approaches to preparing for and engaging in the Next Round at the national level.
3. GAC Members to identify areas where further support, guidance, or capacity development activities may be useful to facilitate preparedness for future milestones in the New gTLD Program: Next Round.

Current Status and Recent Developments

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.

Since 2025, the GAC's capacity development activities have primarily focused on topics related to the New gTLD Program: Next Round. The objective is to enhance the GAC's understanding of the relevant issues and processes, and to help GAC delegates prepare for the 2026 Next Round.

In preparation for ICANN86, GAC Support coordinated with GAC Topic Leads and the ICANN org Next Round team to develop a progressive approach to capacity development activities:

- **Capacity Development Session 1 (CDS1):** focused on enhancing understanding of the application process and opportunities for GAC and community input; and
- **Capacity Development Session 2 (CDS2):** designed as a practical and interactive session to explore approaches to GAC engagement and preparedness through examples, discussions, and experience-sharing.

This approach reflects input received from GAC Leadership and Topic Leads regarding the value of practical discussions and opportunities to explore differing perspectives and levels of preparedness among GAC members.

ICANN86 Capacity Development Sessions

Capacity Development Session 1

2026 New gTLD Program: Application Process, Evaluations, and Community Input

This session will begin with a status update on the 2026 Round of the New gTLD Program, followed by an overview of the key stages of the application and evaluation processes and available opportunities for community input, including public comments, GAC Early Warnings, GAC Advice, objections, and appeals. The session will include interactive elements, including polls and examples, with a view to supporting understanding of practical implications for governments and GAC members and allowing ample time for discussion and questions.

Capacity Development Session 2

GAC Readiness for the 2026 New gTLD Program: Practical Perspectives and Exchanges

Building on the first session, this practical and interactive session will feature smaller group exchanges on Early Warnings, GAC Advice, and national approaches to organizing work related to the New gTLD Program Next Round.

The session will use flip charts/posters to facilitate discussions, including scenario-based exchanges on GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice, as well as experience-sharing on how governments are preparing for the next round.

Key Reference Documents

- [ICANN86 Plenary Session on New gTLDs Next Round](#)
[note: Until the session has taken place, the briefing will be published for GAC members' access only]
- [New gTLD Program website](#)
- [ICANN Policy Development Accelerator workspace](#)

Document Administration

Title	ICANN86 GAC Session Briefing - GAC Capacity Development Sessions
Distribution	GAC Members (before meeting) and Public (after meeting)
Distribution Date	Version 1: 22 May 2026