

## GAC Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round

### Session #3

#### Contents

<a href="#">Session Objective</a>	p.1	<a href="#">Leadership Proposal for GAC Action</a>	p.1	<a href="#">Current Status and Recent Developments</a>	p.2	<a href="#">Key Reference Documents</a>	p. 5
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#### Session Objective

GAC Members continue preparing for the next round of New gTLDs, building on the Capacity Development Session which precedes this meeting, and further discussing topics of interest to governments.

The session will focus on two briefings by GAC representatives and ICANN org to the GAC, the first one on the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) 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 to receive an update on the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) including an overview of the draft Applicant Guidebook language out for public comment.
2. GAC Members to 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 receive an update on Outreach and Engagement Activities on the ASP and the Next Round of New gTLDs.
4. GAC Members to discuss topics of interest on New gTLDs including (but not limited to):
  - a. GAC Early Warnings and GAC Advice;
  - b. Public Interest Commitments/Registry Voluntary Commitments;
  - c. Contention Sets;
  - d. Replacement String;

## Current Status and Recent Developments

### Applicant Support Program and Registry Service Provider Evaluation Program

Since ICANN82, the [Applicant Support Program](#) (ASP) and the [Registry Service Provider \(RSP\) Evaluation Program](#) programs have continued their course, with the latter closing on 19 May 2025. (following a launch 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. As of 19 May 2025, four applications have been submitted for the ASP, with 41 more in various stages of the application process. 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 ICANN83. They will also receive an update on “outreach” efforts.

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

- 21 applications **in draft** (applications that have been started but not yet submitted organization information);
- 19 **initiated** applications (applications that have submitted organization information);
- 4 **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.

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 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

The next milestone on the path to open the new gTLD application window is the completion of the Applicant Guidebook (AGB), which was released for [public comment](#) in its entirety on 30 May 2025. The complete draft AGB language has been developed in collaboration with the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team and has gone through Public Comment previously. Input on this final Public Comment is sought on the complete draft AGB in its entirety and should be focused on:

- A review for inconsistencies across sections of the complete draft AGB
- Any new issues or oversights that have not been discussed previously

Having heard the feedback that the AGB should be made more accessible, ICANN org also has begun developing several tools intended to aid potential applicants in understanding the journey they would embark on, should they decide to apply, as well as anyone interested in the different aspects of the gTLD program.

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 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](#). GAC members will be briefed on these documents at ICANN83.

## 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 opened the fifth and final in a series of Public Comment proceedings that will seek input from the ICANN community on the complete draft language for the Applicant Guidebook (AGB) for the New gTLD Program: Next Round. Specifically, ICANN org is looking for input from the community on items that have not been addressed as part of previous Public Comment proceedings.

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

- [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>

## Document Administration

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