

# ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

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## Governmental Advisory Committee Comments Regarding ICANN FY26-30 Operating & Financial Plan and ICANN FY26 Operating Plan & Budget

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### Introduction

The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the ICANN FY26-30 Operating & Financial Plan and the ICANN FY26 Operating Plan & Budget published on 17 December 2024 (see - <https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/proceeding/icann-fy2630-operating-financial-plan-icanniana-fy26-op-plans-budgets-17-12-2024>). GAC members have reviewed ICANN org’s draft planning documents and herein provide comments regarding aspects of the draft documents that are applicable to ongoing and future GAC activities.<sup>1</sup>

### General Comments

The GAC thanks the ICANN org Finance Team for continuing to evolve and improve the detail and scope of information provided to the community in the draft operating plan and budget materials. Over the past few years, the GAC Leadership has continued to observe improvements to the format and detail of the extensive materials made available for community review as well as the information provided during direct opportunities for community information sharing with the ICANN org Finance Team.

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<sup>1</sup> This comment is made on behalf of the entire GAC. It has been subjected to review of the GAC membership and is intended to complement, but not replace, any input that may be provided on the ICANN FY26-30 Operating & Financial Plan and ICANN FY26 Operating Plan & Budget by individual GAC members.

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As the ICANN community prepares for a new five-year strategic operating cycle, these comments look to confirm expectations and aspirations that the GAC has for certain programs and initiatives that will support the continued relevance, transparency and accountability of the multistakeholder model and the contributions that governments make to that ecosystem.

## Specific GAC Comments – Community/Government Engagement and Service

The GAC acknowledges the apparent careful coordination within and between both the ICANN FY26-30 Operating & Financial Plan and the ICANN FY26 Operating Plan (hereinafter Draft FY26-30 O&FP - <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/draft-op-financial-fy26-30-opplan-fy26-2024-en.pdf>) and the ICANN FY26 Operating Plan and Budget (hereinafter Draft FY26 Budget - <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/draft-budget-fy26-2024-en.pdf>). The documentation allows readers to see how the organization’s strategic and operating initiatives are being addressed over the course of both one-year and five-year operating plan periods. This coordination is important in providing assurances to governments that particular areas of GAC interest are preserved as important organizational operational priorities that will be adequately resourced over the next one and five-year periods.

As the GAC has shared in previous public comments, community outreach and engagement are critical aspects of the GAC’s strategic priorities for the next 4-year period (see <https://gac.icann.org/activity/gac-strategic-planning>). The GAC has consistently signaled in previous public comments that the funds dedicated to community travel support are a valuable resource that enables the committee to assure in-person delegate participation in GAC meetings. This support has been particularly helpful in assuring the participation and engagement of GAC representatives and delegates from underserved regions around the world.

### *i. Constituency Travel*

The GAC notes that the Draft ICANN FY26 budget maintains the number of travel seats for each ICANN community at FY25 levels (see Draft FY26 Budget at page 23). It is reassuring to see this support commitment retained for FY26. As signaled by the committee in previous public comments, it is hoped that these travel slots can be expanded by the GAC and other communities during future budget years within the FY26-FY30 period to reinforce the value of in-person participation in community-wide events like the ICANN Public Meetings. The GAC views future consideration of a ten percent increase in travel support as reasonable and consistent with the forward-looking ICANN Five-Year Strategic Plan.

## ii. High Level Government Meeting Support

The ability to hold a sixth and seventh GAC High Level Government Meeting (HLGM) during the FY26-30 period is a critical aspect of the GAC's planning during the next five years. The GAC is pleased to note that the Draft FY26-30 O&FP notes the importance of holding "periodic High-Level Government Meetings" (see Draft FY26-30 O&FP at p.83). Consequently, the GAC seeks assurances that the Draft FY26 Budget accounts for travel support expenditures associated with a potential HLGM during the fiscal year. This line item has been specifically identified in some past ICANN fiscal year budgets and the GAC Leadership is currently collaborating with the ICANN Governmental Engagement Team to consider the best options available for the committee's next HLGM in FY26 or beyond. The committee believes that flexibility to hold an FY26 HLGM should be retained in the budget to meet this potential expectation.

Currently, the Draft FY26 budget (see page 24) identifies three public meetings for FY26, but the expected expenses for each meeting do not specify the rationale behind the dollars allocated for each meeting (noting that the GAC travel support apportionments for the three public meetings throughout the year differ by as much as 13% from meeting to meeting).

In the interests of preserving organizational resource flexibility to conduct a potential HLGM during FY26, the GAC asks that the total travel support budgeted for GAC travel slots be retained throughout the year and that any budget savings realized from the ICANN84 and ICANN85 meetings not be reverted or re-apportioned elsewhere by the ICANN org Finance Team until after it is clear whether or not an HLGM will be held in FY26. As the best-practice lead time for HLGM planning is 12 months, the potential need for the preservation of budgeted funds in FY26 should be clear by the end of the 2025 calendar year.

## *iii. Other Community Events*

The GAC appreciates that the Draft ICANN FY26 Budget also reflects an intention to support "Other Community Events" (see Draft FY26 Budget at page 24). This budget support recognizes the GAC's intention to potentially expand capacity development activities throughout the FY26 year and will help the GAC to address the challenges and opportunities presented by a dynamic committee membership roster - enabling the committee to effectively on-board new

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participants while regularly informing all committee participants about DNS topics of high interest to governments around the world.

Planning ideas that have so far been explored in this regard include opportunities to conduct focused-regional engagement events (at least one pilot program in FY26), and the potential leveraging of ICANN regional DNS forums that have previously been held on a community-wide level. The GAC Leadership also intends to continue to conduct its annual strategic planning meetings to help shepherd the current committee strategic plan, oversee implementation of those plans, and develop future strategies to support the work of governments in ICANN.

## Closing

The GAC appreciates that ICANN org recognizes the importance of government participation in and contributions to the work of ICANN. It is encouraging to see those priorities reflected in the planning and budgeting documents. The committee looks forward to contributing to future comment opportunities as they relate to ICANN's finances and other operations-related proceedings.

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