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POLICY
FORUM



Welcome and Introductions

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NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND


GAC Capacity Development

9 June 2025 | 08:45-10:15 UTC | 10:45-12:15 CET



gTLD

Agenda

1. Introduction
 2. Applicant Journey Overview
 3. Submission to Prioritization Draw
 4. Community Input, Objections, and Appeals
 5. Contention and its Resolution
 6. Application Evaluation
 7. Applicant Evaluations
 8. Contracting to Delegation
 9. Next Round Sessions at ICANN83
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Applicant Journey Overview

General Information [1.1]

Who?

Legal entities such as corporations, organizations, and institutions as well as governmental, non-governmental, and inter-governmental entities can apply for a new gTLD

When?

Applications can be submitted starting in **April 2026** for 12-15 weeks

How much?

The gTLD application fee is of **USD 227,000** + conditional fees where applicable

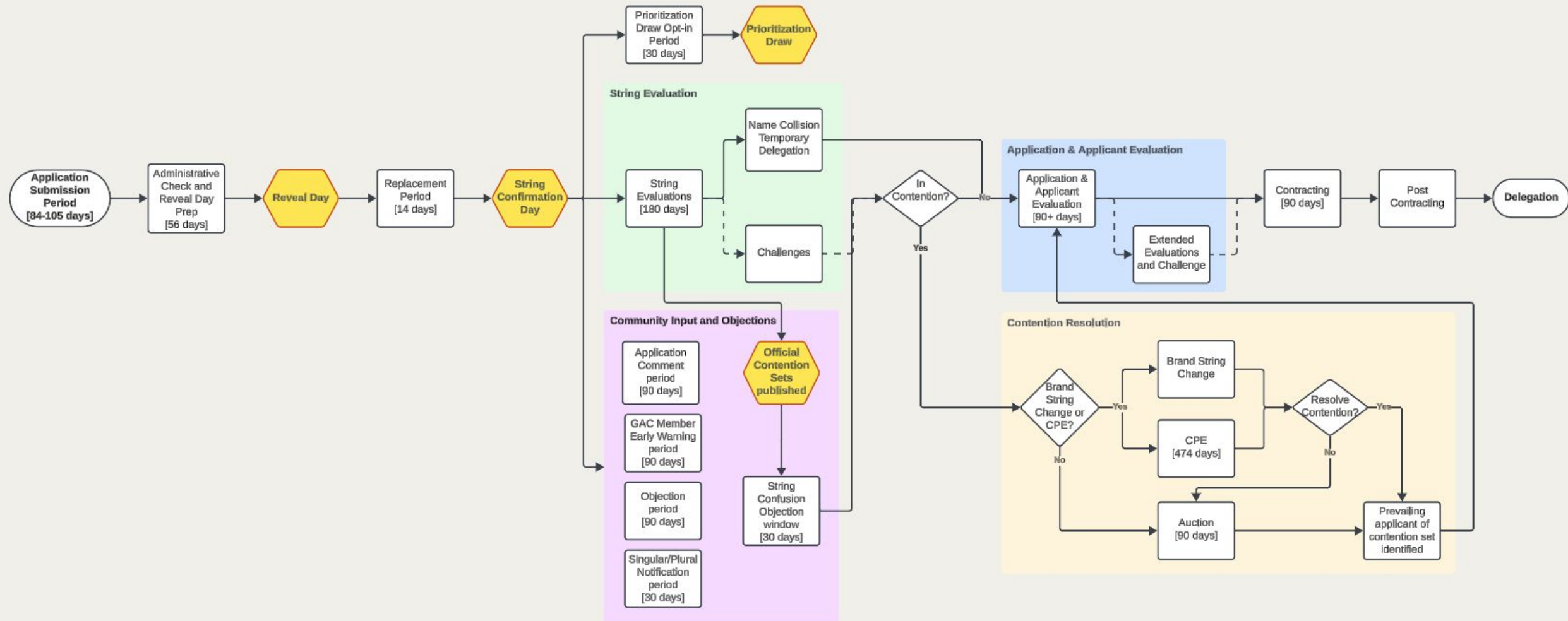
How?

Applications are submitted via the TLD Application Management System (**TAMS**)



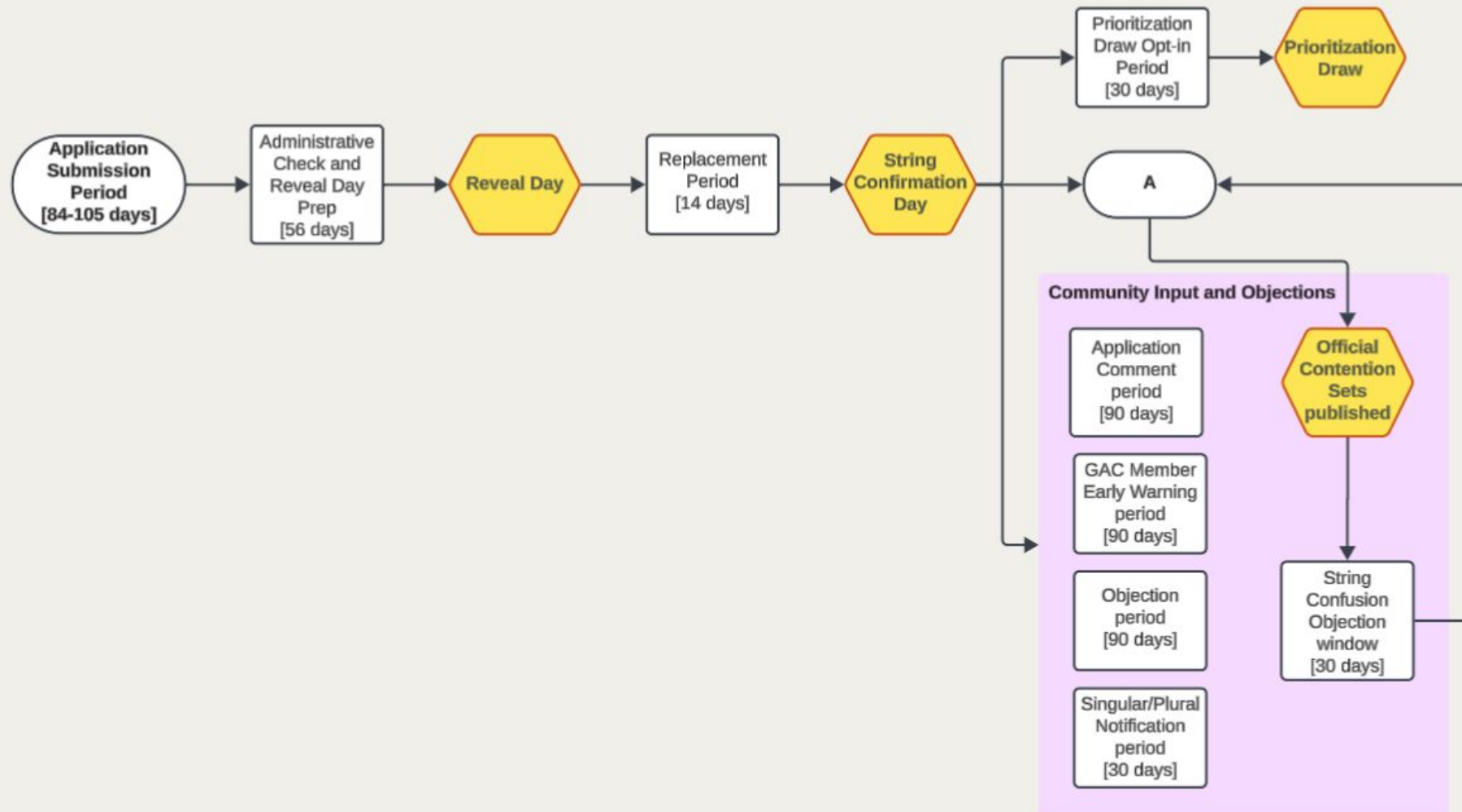
Applicant Journey

Submission to Delegation



Applicant Journey

Submission to Prioritization Draw



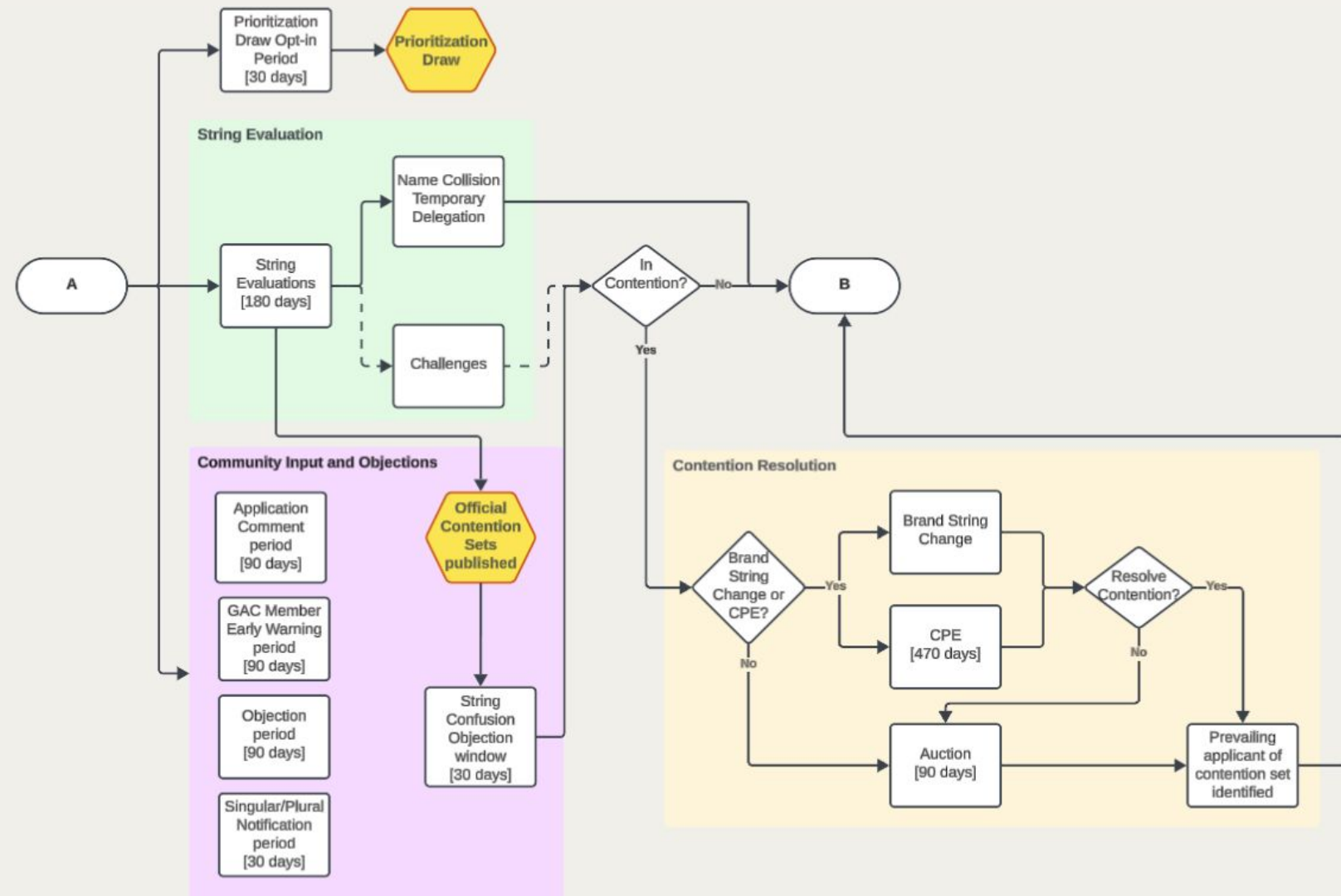
Applicant Journey

String Evaluation & Contention Resolution

String Evaluations

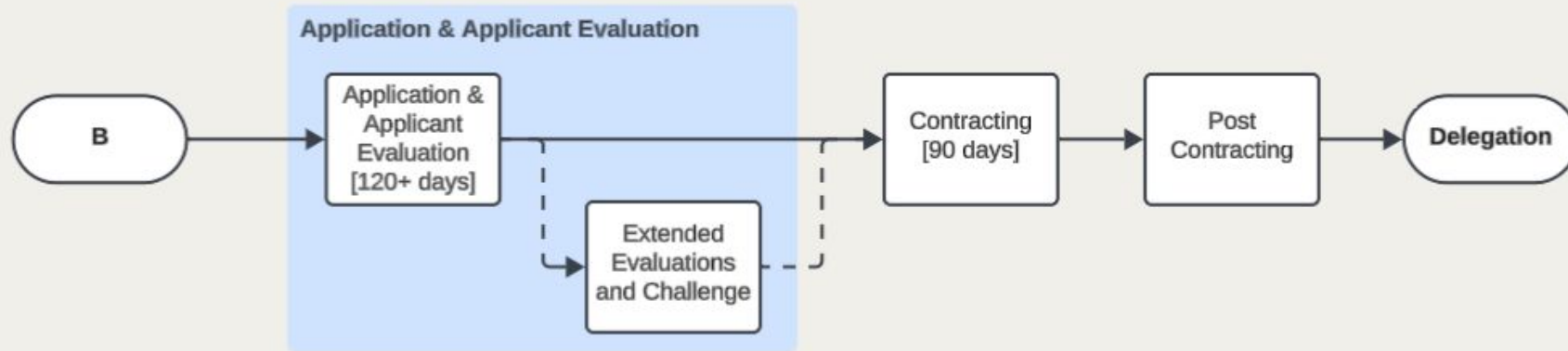
- Blocked Name Identification*
- DNS Stability Review*
- Other Non-Permitted Names Identification*
- Geographic Names Identification
- Name Collision Initial Assessment
- Reserved Name Identification*
- Safeguard Assessment
- Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation*
- String Similarity Evaluation*

* Eligible for challenge



Applicant Journey

Application & Applicant Evaluation to Delegation



Applicant Evaluations

- Background Screening*
- Financial and Operational Evaluation*

Application Evaluations

- Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation (Specification 13)
- Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation (Specification 9 Exemption)
- Geographic Names Review*
- Name Collision High-Risk String Mitigation Plan**
- Registry Commitment Evaluation (RCE)
 - Community Registration Policies Evaluation (Specification 12)
 - Registry Voluntary Commitment Evaluation

- Reserved Names Review*
- Registry Services Provider (RSP) Review*
- Variant Eligibility Evaluation*

*Eligible for extended evaluation or challenge

**Mandatory for applications for high-risk strings

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Submission to Prioritization Draw

Application Submission [2]

- Creation of an **ICANN account**
- Completion of **application questions**: Organization Information + gTLD Application Information
- Selection of **string(s)** and **replacement string(s)**

Pre-Submission String Validations

Identification of Blocked Names and of Other Non-Permitted Strings

If the string is found to be identical to a Blocked Name or another non-permitted string, the applicant will not be able to submit its application

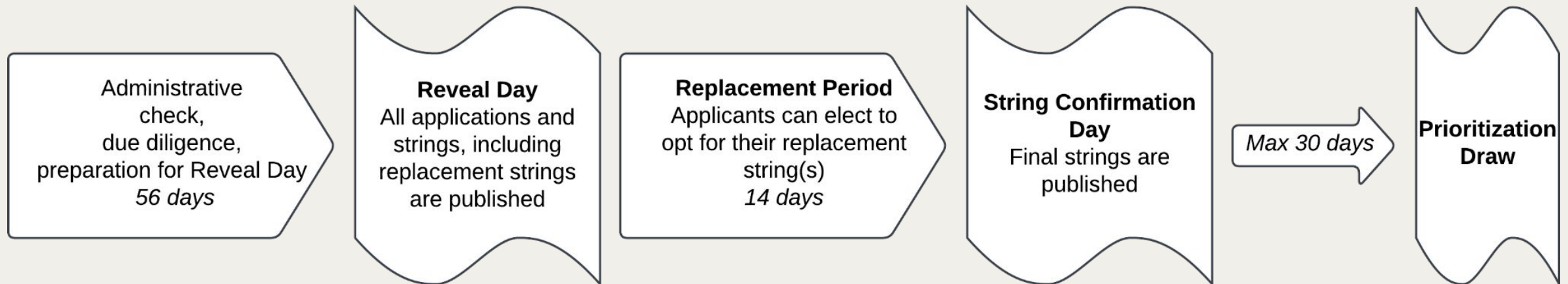
Reserved Name Identification

If the string is found to be identical to a Reserved Name, the applicant will have to upload certain documentation to be able to proceed

DNS Stability Review

If the string fails certain technical tests, the applicant will not be able to submit its application

Pre-Evaluation Processes [2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7]



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Community Input, Objections, and Appeals

Overview [3]

Starting on **String Confirmation Day**, the community will have the opportunity to provide input as follows:

- The general public will have the opportunity to submit **application comments**
- GAC members can decide to issue **GAC Member Early Warnings**
- The GAC may issue **GAC Consensus Advice**
- The general public will have the chance to submit **singular/plural notifications**
- Parties with standing will be able to file **objections**, the determinations of which can be **appealed**

ACF opens on String Confirmation Day and stays open for the duration of the Program
Comments submitted within **90 days after String Confirmation Day** and within **30 days of specific Application Change Requests** will be available to evaluators for consideration

Application Comments

[3.1]

- Mechanism for the public to bring relevant information and issues to the attention of ICANN, applicants, and evaluators regarding specific applications
- Do not have a direct impact on applications but may be taken into account by the relevant evaluators if submitted during the specified time frames
- Public* and posted on an ICANN-managed platform—the Application Comment Forum (ACF)
- Do not have costs associated
- Applicants may respond to comments

*unless they refer to confidential portions of an application

GAC Member Early Warnings [3.2]

- Issued by individual or groups of GAC members
- Provide the applicant with an indication that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic
- Do not have a direct impact on the application but may signal the likelihood that the application could be the subject of GAC Consensus Advice or of an objection
- Must include a written explanation describing why the Early Warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the GAC member's concerns
- Applicants are encouraged to communicate with relevant GAC member(s)

GAC Consensus Advice [3.3]

- Issued by the GAC according to ICANN's Bylaws
- Must include a rationale
- Intended to address applications that are identified to be problematic
- Applicants may respond within a specified time frame
- If accepted by the ICANN Board, may prevent an application from proceeding, or from proceeding unless specific modifications are made

Singular/Plural Notification [3.4]

- Submitted by the general public
- Based on claim that an applied-for string is the singular or plural form of another applied-for string, a delegated TLD, a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round, or a blocked name
- Must include evidence
- Does not have costs associated
- If a match is found, the relevant string(s) may be placed in a contention set or the application prevented from proceeding

Objections and Appeals [3.5]

- Filed by parties with standing
- On specific grounds
- Administered by external Dispute Resolution Service Providers
- Have costs associated
- An Independent Objector may file Limited Public Interest Objections given certain conditions
- If the objector prevails, the relevant string(s) may be placed in a contention set, or the application prevented from proceeding or may only proceed with specific modifications
- The expert determination can be appealed

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String Evaluations

Geographic Names

Identification [6.5.3.1]

Identifies which strings may be considered a Geographic Name

Singular/Plural Notifications Evaluation [3.4]

Determines if certain strings represent the singular and plural forms of the same word in the same language

Safeguard Assessment [6.7.2]

Determines if an applied-for string will be required to have specific safeguards as contractual requirements in the applicable Base Registry Agreement as it relates to consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets

String Similarity Evaluation [6.10]

Has the objective of preventing user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from the delegation of visually similar strings

Name Collision Initial Assessment [3.4]

Identifies strings at high risk of Name Collision. If a string is found to be high-risk, the applicant will have an opportunity to submit a Mitigation Plan for evaluation, which will allow the application to proceed if approved; otherwise, it will be added to the Collision String List, and the application will not proceed.

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Contention and its Resolution

Contention [4]

- Contention occurs when **one or more applied-for strings** are **identical, similar to**, or a **variant of another string** applied for by a different applicant
- Strings in contention form a **contention set**, which can be identified at various stages of the application process, e.g.:
 - Identical strings on Reveal Day
 - Notified as **singular/plural versions** of the same word in the same language
 - Found **confusingly similar** by an expert panel

No Private Resolution [4.2.3]

- The ICANN Board has **prohibited all forms of private resolution of contention sets** in the Next Round, including private auctions and post-application joint ventures.
- Applicants for strings in the same contention set are **strictly prohibited from communicating directly or indirectly with other applicants in that same contention set**, as well as sharing any information about their applications for contested strings with other applicants. The AGB details the timing and duration of this prohibition, including the limited exceptions.
- ICANN may **take action against applicants for violation of the rules** prohibiting private resolution of contention strings. Examples of potential actions and penalties are described in the AGB, including disqualification from the next and future New gTLD Program rounds.

Replacement Strings [4.1]

- As part of their applications, all applicants can now **designate a “Replacement String” alongside their original choice of string** to avoid contention before the list of applied-for strings is finalized
- Applicants will be given **14 days** following Reveal Day - the **“Replacement Period”** - to notify ICANN if they elect to replace their original string with their Replacement String, so long as it is **not identical to the applied-for string or Replacement String of another applicant**
- Applicants who opt for their Replacement String will be **unable to revert to their original string** and **may still be placed in contention at a later stage** of the application process

Brand String Change [4.3]

- Applicants in contention for Brand TLDs can also change their string to avoid contention resolution procedures by submitting a **Brand String Change Request** in the **30 days** following:
 - The formation of contention sets after String Similarity Evaluation, or
 - The publication of a String Confusion Objection Expert Determination, or
 - Appellate Expert Determination involving the application subject to the Brand String Change Request.
- Certain **requirements** need to be met for a Brand String Change to be accepted
- If the new string passes string evaluation, the application will be subject to an additional period for:
 - Objections
 - Application comments
 - Singular/plural notifications

Community Priority Evaluation [4.4]

- CPE is an independent analysis conducted by a third-party panel, which determines whether a community-based application fulfills the CPE criteria and should receive priority in the contention set
- Applicants designating their applications as community-based are required to respond to a set of questions in the application form to provide relevant information about their community which will be used in CPE if they elect to participate
- A community applicant can but is not required to participate in CPE
- Applicants are evaluated against 4 main criteria: (1) Community Establishment, (2) Nexus between proposed string and community, (3) Registration Policies, (4) Community Endorsement
- An applicant who is successful in a CPE evaluation will get priority in their contention set and come out as the prevailing applicant
- If there are multiple successful CPE applicants for the same string, they will go to an ICANN New gTLD Auction

New gTLD Auction [4.6]

- The New gTLD Auction will resolve contention sets that were not eliminated earlier in the application process or resolved by CPE
- Auctions will be scheduled on a rolling basis and conducted using the “**ascending-clock, second-price**” auction method, as was the case in the 2012 round of the new gTLD Program
- A detailed set of auction rules and procedures, based on those published for the 2012 Round, and an auction schedule will be developed by ICANN in consultation with the auction provider and made **available no later than 60 days** before the first auction
- To increase their chances of winning at auction, applicants receiving Applicant Support as part of the Applicant Support Program (ASP) will receive **a maximum bid credit of 35% up to a monetary value of USD 1.75 million per application**. The maximum bid credit will be reduced in a phased approach once the winning auction price (second highest price) exceeds USD 5 million

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Application Evaluations

All Application Evaluations are Conditional with the exception of the RSP Review, which is mandatory

RSP Review verifies whether the applicant has selected one or more evaluated RSPs as part of its application **[6.9]**

Geographic Name Review verifies supporting documentation for any application for a string determined to be a Geographic Name during String Evaluation **[6.5.3.2.1]**

Reserved Names Review determine whether the appropriate organization has applied for the reserved string and will verify the supporting documentation **[6.2.2.2]**

Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation reviews Plan for strings that were deemed to present a high risk of Name Collision **[6.7.5]**

Code of Conduct Exemption Evaluation is for applicants proposing to register all domain names in the gTLD exclusively for RO's own use or for use by its affiliates **[6.4]**

Registry Commitment Evaluation assesses RVCs and/or Community Registration Policies proposed by the applicant for inclusion in the Base RA **[6.8.3.2]**

Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation has the purpose to assess whether the applicant meets the criteria for a Brand TLD designation **[6.3]**

Variant String Evaluation assess the justification for each applied-for variant string **[6.6]**

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Applicant Evaluations

Applicant Evaluations

- **Background Screening [5.1]**

- In place to protect the public interest in the allocation of critical Internet resources by ensuring that only established corporations, organizations, or institutions in good standing are allowed to operate a new gTLD
- ICANN reserves the right to deny an otherwise qualified application based on findings from the background screening process.

- **Financial and Operational Evaluation [5.2]**

- Assesses whether an applicant has the financial and operational capacity to sustain the registry long-term and has implemented reasonable safeguards to ensure robust business operations and address abuse concerns

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Contracting to Delegation

Contracting [1.2.15]

An applicant that successfully completes all the relevant stages must execute a Base RA with ICANN to be eligible for the delegation of its applied-for gTLD (and allocatable variant strings, where applicable) into the DNS root zone and must complete contracting no later than **90 days** following the date of invitation

Where applicable, a **Base Registry Agreement** will include the following based on an applicant's response to the application questions and evaluation results

- **Spec 11:** Public Interest Commitments, incl. Registry Voluntary Commitments and Safeguards
- **Spec 12:** Community Registration Policies
- **Spec 13:** Information on Brand applications
- **Spec 14:** Information on variant strings
- **Art 7:** Special Provision Relating to Intergovernmental Organizations or Governmental Entities

Opening Questions

1. What are the key learnings you gained from the presentation?
2. What challenges, if any, do you see for GAC members in playing their role within the Applicant Journey?

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

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Next Round Sessions at ICANN83

Date	Time UTC	Time CEST	Name	Link
9-Jun-25	11:45-13:00	13:45-15:00	GAC: Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round	https://sched.co/246Qr
10-Jun-25	07:00-08:15	09:00-10:25	NCSG Membership Meeting	https://sched.co/246YJ
10-Jun-25	08:45-10:15	10:45-12:15	RySG:BRG: DotBrand Use Cases/Insights for Next Round	https://sched.co/246XF
10-Jun-25	13:30-15:00	15:30-17:00	RySG GeoTLD Group Membership Meeting	https://sched.co/246Yz
11-Jun-25	07:00-08:15	09:00-10:15	String Similarity Evaluation in the New gTLD Program: Next Round	https://sched.co/246ZT
11-Jun-25	08:45-10:15	10:45-12:15	At-Large Plenary 1: Unravelling The Next Round of New gTLDs for Community-Based Top-Level Domains Applicants	https://sched.co/246Xp
11-Jun-25	13:30-15:00	15:30-17:00	BC Membership Work Session	https://sched.co/246YV
12-Jun-25	13:30-15:00	15:30-17:00	SubPro IRT Work Session (2 of 2) Outreach and Engagement	https://sched.co/246Zc

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