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ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING



GAC Capacity Development (2 of 2) GAC Readiness for the 2026 Round

17 October 2026 | 13:15-14:30 WITA / 05:15-06:30 UTC

ICANN87 GAC Capacity Development Session 2 (75 mins)

1. Introduction (5 mins)

Christine Arida, GAC CDWG Co-Chair

2. Community Input and Processes (45 mins)

Elisa Busetto, George Sarkisyan, Eduardo Alvarez

3. GAC Readiness Materials (5 mins)

Benedetta Rossi

4. GAC Takeaways (10 mins)

Marco Hogewoning

5. Closing Remarks (10 mins)

Christine Arida

Readiness Content Disclaimer

The authoritative source for all information about New gTLD Program: 2026 Round rules, evaluations, restrictions, processes, and systems is the English version of the [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook](#). All New gTLD Program: 2026 Round readiness and training content is supplementary to the Applicant Guidebook, and has been developed to provide a high-level summary of key topic areas of interest to prospective applicants and the broader ICANN community. In case of discrepancy, the Applicant Guidebook prevails.



Presenters

Elisa Busetto

New gTLD Program
Application Community Input Stage Lead

George Sarkisyan

New gTLD Program
String Evaluation Stage Lead

Eduardo Alvarez

Director, Technical Services Operations

Objective: Understanding the actions GAC Members and Observers individually or collectively can take on new gTLD applications.

GAC Members and Observers can take action as follows:

1. Application Comments (anybody)
2. Singular/Plural Notifications (anybody)
3. GAC Member Early Warning (GAC Members and Observers)
4. Objections (parties with standing)
5. GAC Consensus Advice (GAC)

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

01

Application Comments

GAC Member and
Observer Actions

Application Comments

ACTION	SUBMITTER	DESCRIPTION	SYSTEM/TOOL	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOME
Application Comments	Anyone, including GAC Members and Observers	Bring issues to the attention of ICANN, applicants and evaluators	Application Comment Forum; ICANN account required	Comments may be submitted at any time following String Confirmation Day but will be considered by evaluators in the following time periods: - For 104 days following String Confirmation Day (<i>17 November 2026 - 16 March 2027</i>) - For 30 days following a .Brand String Change Request or certain Application Change Requests	No direct impact on applications but may be considered by evaluators

Application Comment Forum (ACF)



WHAT IS ACF?

- A public, online platform.
- Launches on String Confirmation Day.
- The general public, businesses, and stakeholders can submit and review Application Comments on active applications.
- Evaluators and panels review the submitted comments to inform their assessment of each application.

ACF Website Home Page

NAVIGATION AND USE

- 1 **Links** to New gTLD Program website, Application Publication and Statistics Site, About ACF and ACF Help
- 2 **Add new comments**
- 3 **Search by field and keyword**
- 4 **Search by comment submission date**
- 5 **Sort comments**
- 6 **See comment details** by clicking the hyperlink

The ACF website will be available on String Confirmation Day.

The screenshot shows the ACF Application Comment Forum interface. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for Program Site, Applications, About, and Help. Below this is a blue 'Add Comment' button. The main content area contains introductory text about the forum's purpose and rules. A search section allows filtering by field and keyword, and by date. A table of comments is displayed with columns for Applied-for String, Application ID, Applicant Name, Application Status, Commenter, Subject, Area, Date, and Has Response. The table lists three comments, with the first one highlighted by a red box and a callout number 6.

Applied-for String ↑	Application ID ↑	Applicant Name ↑	Application Status ↑	Commenter ↑	Subject ↑	Area ↑	Date ↑	Has Response ↑
xn--fjqz24b (快乐) 1 Variant	D2612T-T66946-R	Dev	Active	Dongmei Cao	My confidential comment to kuailie	Geographic Names Identification and Review	28 Sep 2026	
testgeolabel	MC2695T-T85800	Mega Corp	Active	Dongmei Cao	Testing Comment without attachment	Financial and Operational Evaluation	28 Sep 2026	
xn--hxadibn3ab13cr8d (названия) 1 Variant	12661T-T67079	18541854	Active	Dongmei Cao	Testing comments with ng21	Background Screening	28 Sep 2026	

ACF Website

ADD COMMENTS

- 1 Enter relevant string or variant and applicant
- 2 Define the interest you have in the application
- 3 Select the relevant evaluation or process
- 4 Add a subject
- 5 Add comment
- 6 Upload up to 2 PDF attachments under 5MB
- 7 Submit comment

All fields required unless marked as optional

String and Variants Applicant

1 Type String and Variants for Applicants Select...

☒ Use the same information on my profile pertaining to my affiliation, statement of interest, relationships with applicant(s), and financial interest information.

Please define the interest you have in this specific application.

2

Area

3 Select...

Subject

4 Subject

Comment

5 Provide comment and rationale for comment's relevancy to selected panel or objection ground.

Please upload up to 2 attachments along with your comment. Each file must be in PDF format and under 5MB in size. (optional)

6 Choose a File (5MB Max)

☐ I confirm that this comment is submitted in good faith and to the best of my knowledge. I also confirm that, where applicable, I have the authority to represent the p whose behalf this comment is submitted.

This reCAPTCHA is for testing purposes only. Please report to the site owner if you are seeing this.

☐ I'm not a robot

7 Submit Comment

02

Singular/Plural Notifications

GAC Member and
Observer Actions

Singular/Plural Notifications

ACTION	SUBMITTER	DESCRIPTION	SYSTEM/TOOL	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOME
Singular/Plural Notifications	Anyone, including GAC Members and Observers	Identify if an applied-for string is the singular or plural form of another applied-for string, an existing gTLD, a string being processed from a previous new gTLD round, or a Blocked Name	A form available on the New gTLD Program website	For 30 days immediately following String Confirmation Day	Triggers Singular/Plural Evaluation, may prevent application from proceeding or place it in a contention set

Singular/Plural Notification Form

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Singular/Plural Notification Form

Singular/Plural Notification Requirements

The [Applicant Guidebook \(AGB\), Section 4.4](#) provides the requirements for submitting a Singular/Plural Notification. For additional information on Singular/Plural Notifications, for details on the required information, process, and timelines for notification and evaluation, please carefully read the relevant FAQs:

- [The Singular/Plural Notification FAQs](#)
- [The Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation FAQs](#)

For regular updates throughout the Singular/Plural Notification submission window, please check the [Singular/Plural Notification Wiki page](#). Once the submission window closes, the final list of submissions will be published on the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round website.

How to Submit

Download the PDF and fill in all **required fields**. Email the completed form and attachments to 26r-singular-plural-notifications@icann.org. The total size of an email, including all attachments, **should not exceed 25 MB**. If attachments exceed the 25 MB limit, please submit a second email with the same subject line including part 1 of 2 and 2 of 2 (see example below). Please do not submit sensitive personal information. **Incomplete submissions will not be considered.**

You must include additional attachments or supporting materials with your submission. For attachments in response to specific questions, include the question number and field name in the name of the attached document.

For example: "7-place-of-publication.jpeg"

Where appropriate, a URL may be provided to identify or access supporting material, in addition to the required supporting images. For each of the fields below, provide the information requested, upload image(s) of the relevant page, and if applicable, the URL. **General Note:** For supporting images from a printed dictionary, please attach clear photos. For supporting images from an online dictionary, please attach screenshots and provide the relevant URL. **Email Subject Line:** Please submit the form with this Subject Line in your notification email: "Singular/Plural Notification, String1, String2".

Standard example: "Singular/Plural Notification, cactus, cacti"

Example of multiple emails: "Singular/Plural Notification, cactus, cacti, part 1 of 2" and "Singular/Plural Notification, cactus, cacti, part 2 of 2"

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Singular/Plural Notification Form

Singular/Plural Notification Details

1. I am submitting a singular/plural notification about the following strings:*

String 1:*

A. Please select one of the following options. This is a(n):*

- ☐ Existing gTLD.
- ☐ String being processed from a prior application round.
- ☐ Blocked Name.
- ☐ New gTLD application.

B. If new, add Application ID #s (Optional):

C. Number (singular or plural):*

String 2:*

A. Please select one of the following options. This is a(n):*

- ☐ Existing gTLD.
- ☐ String being processed from a prior application round.
- ☐ Blocked Name.
- ☐ New gTLD application.

B. If new, add Application ID #s (Optional):

C. Number (singular or plural):*

2. Name of the dictionary:*

- A. Dictionary name:*
- B. Filename for image of dictionary name (attach image file):*
- C. URL of dictionary name (if applicable):

3. Language in native script:*

Please provide the name of the language of the pair of strings in of the pair of strings in this notification:

- A. Language name (in native script):*
- B. Language (in English):*

4. International Standard Book Number (ISBN):*

- A. ISBN:*
- B. Filename for image of ISBN (attach image file):*
- C. URL of ISBN (if applicable):

Helpful Resources:

- [Singular/Plural webpage](#)
- [Singular/Plural Notification FAQs](#)
- [Singular/Plural Notification Evaluation FAQs](#)
- [Applicant Guidebook \(AGB\), Section 4.4](#)

03

GAC Member Early Warnings

GAC Member and Observer Actions

GAC Member Early Warnings

ACTION	SUBMITTER	DESCRIPTION	SYSTEM / TOOL	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOME
GAC Member Early Warnings	Filed individually or collectively by GAC Members and Observers	Early indication that an application is potentially problematic. • Must include a written explanation describing why the Early Warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the GAC member's concerns • GAC members should provide contact details for communication with the applicant	GAC Member Early Warning Form	For 104 days following String Confirmation Day (17 November 2026 - 16 March 2027)	No direct impact on application but signals that it could become subject of GAC Consensus Advice

Early Warnings from the 2012 Round are published here: <https://gac.icann.org/activity/gac-early-warnings-2012>

GAC Member Early Warning Form

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GAC Member Early Warning Form

By submitting a GAC Member Early Warning, you agree to abide by ICANN's electronic [Terms of Service](#) and acknowledge that the personal data you submit on your behalf or on behalf of (an) other individual(s) will be processed in accordance with [ICANN's Privacy Policy](#). For more information about ICANN's data protection practices and our processing of your personal data, please refer to the [ICANN Privacy Policy](#).

The submitter(s) must acknowledge that the email address(s) provided will be made available to the relevant applicant(s), who is/are encouraged to enter into dialogue directly with concerned parties as soon as possible to address the concerns voiced.

A GAC Member Early Warning can be submitted by one or several GAC Members and/or Observers. All fields are mandatory.

Date of Submission	
Submitter(s) Information	
GAC Representative(s) full name(s) <i>If this Early Warning is supported by more Members or Observers, list all Representatives here.</i>	
Government(s)/Organization(s) <i>If this Early Warning is supported one or more Members or Observers, list all relevant Governments/Organizations here.</i>	
Contact information for each of the submitting Members <i>At a minimum an email address is required.</i>	

- Published on dedicated [wiki page](#)
- Early Warnings can be submitted by sending an email to 26r-gac-ew@icann.org
- GAC Policy Support team will provide additional information, including the process for submitting Early Warnings
- Applicants will be notified of Early Warnings affecting their application

04

Objections

GAC Member and Observers Actions

Objections

ACTION	SUBMITTER	DESCRIPTION	SYSTEM / TOOL	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOME
Objections	Filed by parties with standing; GAC Members and Observers may have standing Independent Objectors can also file Objections	Object to application on grounds of: 1. String Confusion; 2. Legal Rights; 3. Limited Public Interest; 4. Community.	Use of relevant Dispute Resolution Service Provider processes: WIPO and ICC Procedures	Objections may be submitted: • For 104 days, for all objection grounds, following the announcement on String Confirmation Day (17 November 2026 - 16 March 2027) • For 30 days, for String Confusion only, following the publication of updated contention sets after String Evaluation is completed. • For 30 days, for all objection grounds, in case of .Brand String Change, starting the day the String Evaluation Reports are published, and only if the string evaluation is successful.	Panel appointed by the Dispute Resolution Service Provider determines whether the application can proceed, can only proceed with modifications, or cannot proceed at all; the Panel Determination can be appealed.

String Confusion

The applied-for primary string, its allocatable variant label, or its blocked variant label is **confusingly similar visually, aurally, or in meaning** to an existing TLD and/or another applied-for primary gTLD string and/or any of its allocatable or blocked variant strings

- An existing gTLD operator
- An existing ccTLD operator or a Significantly Interested Party in the respective country or territory
- An applicant in this application round

Legal Rights

An applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) **infringes on its existing legal rights**

- A rights holder
- An IGO meeting criteria for registration of .INT domain name

Limited Public Interest

The applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) are **contrary to generally accepted legal norms of morality and public order** recognized under principles of international law

- Anyone

Community

There is **well-substantiated opposition** to an applied-for string and/or one or more applied-for allocatable variant string(s) from a **significant portion of the community** which the string may be **explicitly or implicitly targeting**

- Established institutions associated with clearly delineated communities

Funding to File Objections and Appeals

- National governments may request funding from ICANN to fund **one objection and one appeal**, subject to certain conditions
- To submit a request, the national government must complete a form and send it to ICANN at a dedicated email address within specified deadlines
- ICANN will perform necessary due diligence and inform the national government of the result
- ICANN's funding is only to cover the DRSP filing fees and costs (**not** legal fees or similar)
- ICANN will make payments directly to the DRSP and will not refund any payments made by national governments to the DRSPs or other parties

Detailed instructions and downloadable forms can be found at
<https://newgtldprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/applicant-journey/community-input/objections-appeals/national-governments>

Independent Objectors

- Standing panel of 3 individuals or entities selected by ICANN not acting on behalf of any particular persons or entities, but solely **in the best interests of the public** who use the global Internet
- May only file **Limited Public Interest** and **Community** objections
- Must consider **application comments** and shall not object to an application unless at least **one comment opposing the application** has been made
- Will not have their objection considered if another objection on the same ground has passed the Quick Look Review, absent extraordinary circumstances
- Will only file objections in the **111 days** following String Confirmation Day
- **May appeal** the relevant Panel Determinations

05

GAC Consensus Advice

GAC Member and
Observer Actions

GAC Consensus Advice

ACTION	SUBMITTER	DESCRIPTION	SYSTEM / TOOL	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOME
GAC Consensus Advice	Submitted by the GAC to the Board via consensus	Provides advice to ICANN Board, including related to applications which are seen as sensitive or may violate national law. Must clearly state that it is GAC Consensus Advice, include a clearly articulated rationale, be limited to the scope set out in the applicable Bylaws provisions, and elaborate on any “interaction between ICANN’s policies and various laws and international agreements or where they may affect public policy issues.”	GAC Communiqué	Ongoing throughout the application process	The ICANN Board will consider the GAC Consensus Advice on applications in accordance with the Bylaws

Refer to GAC Communiques from [ICANN46](#) (Beijing) to [ICANN54](#) (Dublin) for examples of advice from the 2012 Round.

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Poll Time!

Can GAC Observers submit GAC Member Early Warnings?

- a. Only if they have the support of a GAC Member
- b. No
- c. Yes
- d. Only if the GAC reaches consensus

Can GAC Consensus Advice have an impact on an application?

- a. Yes, if accepted by the Board as per ICANN's Bylaws
- b. No, but evaluators may take GAC Consensus Advice into account when performing their evaluations
- c. Only if issued during this ICANN meeting
- d. Only if issued in Adelaide between 30 October and 4 November 2027

Can GAC Members and Observers submit application Comments now?

- a. Yes, via the Application Comment Forum
- b. No, they can only submit comments starting on String Confirmation Day
- c. Yes, by emailing the GAC Chair with Lars in copy
- d. No, only other applicants can submit application comments

How can national governments apply for funding to file objections and appeals?

- a. By sending a registered letter to ICANN's office
- b. By paying for the fees first, and then requesting a refund from ICANN
- c. By waiting until after the deadline for filing objections and then emailing Elisa
- d. By strictly following the procedures published on the New gTLD Program's website

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gTLD

Thank You

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GAC Readiness Materials Overview

Benedetta Rossi - ICANN org

GAC Readiness Materials: 2026 Round

Purpose

- Support timely and coordinated GAC engagement as the 2026 Round progresses
- Help Members and Observers navigate application review and available GAC mechanisms
- Provide practical operational guidance without creating new procedures

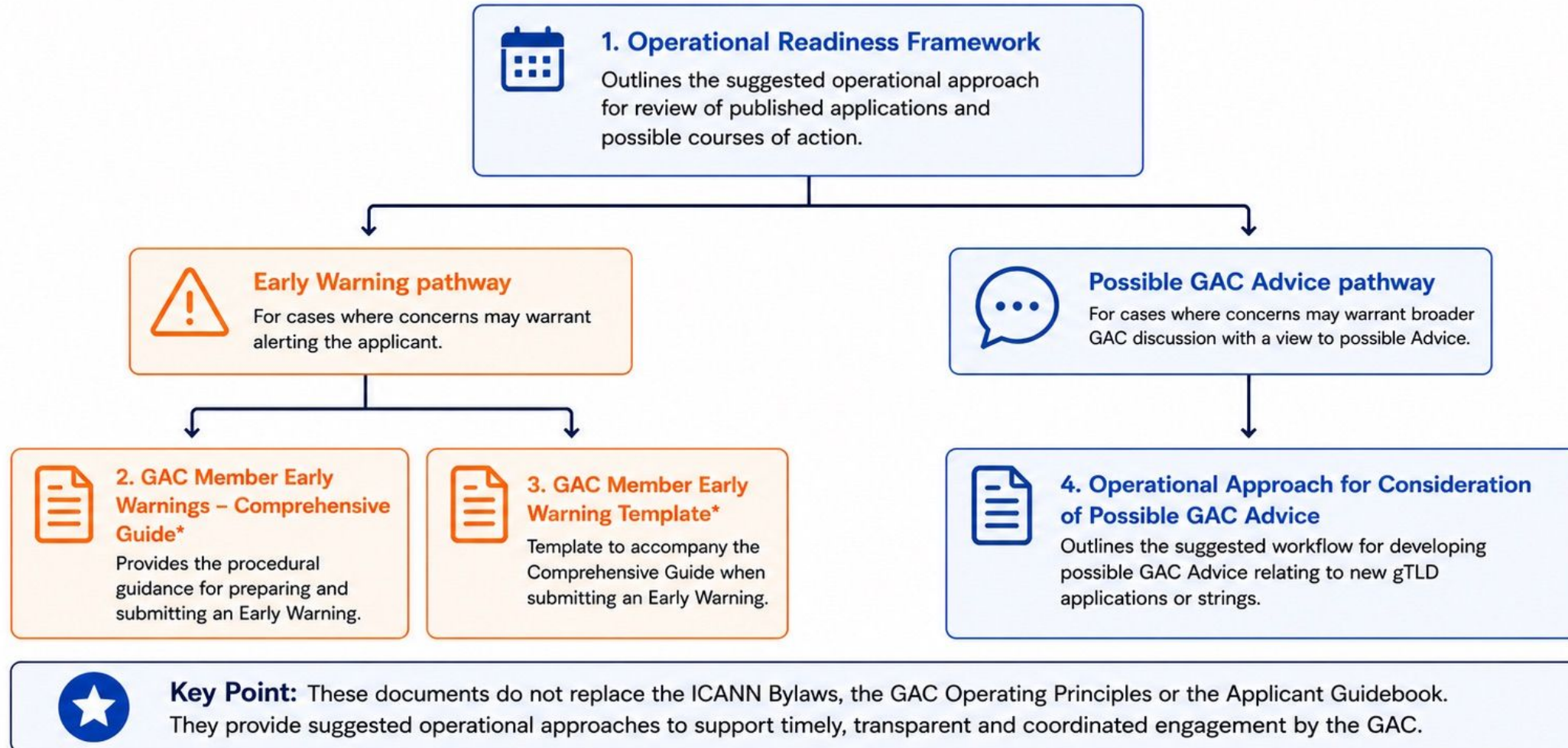
What was developed

- An overarching **Operational Readiness Framework**
- Supporting materials for **GAC Member Early Warnings**
- An operational approach for **possible GAC Advice**

Operational Guidance: How the Documents Work Together

GAC Review of New gTLD Applications (2026 Round)

Operational guidance package – how the documents work together

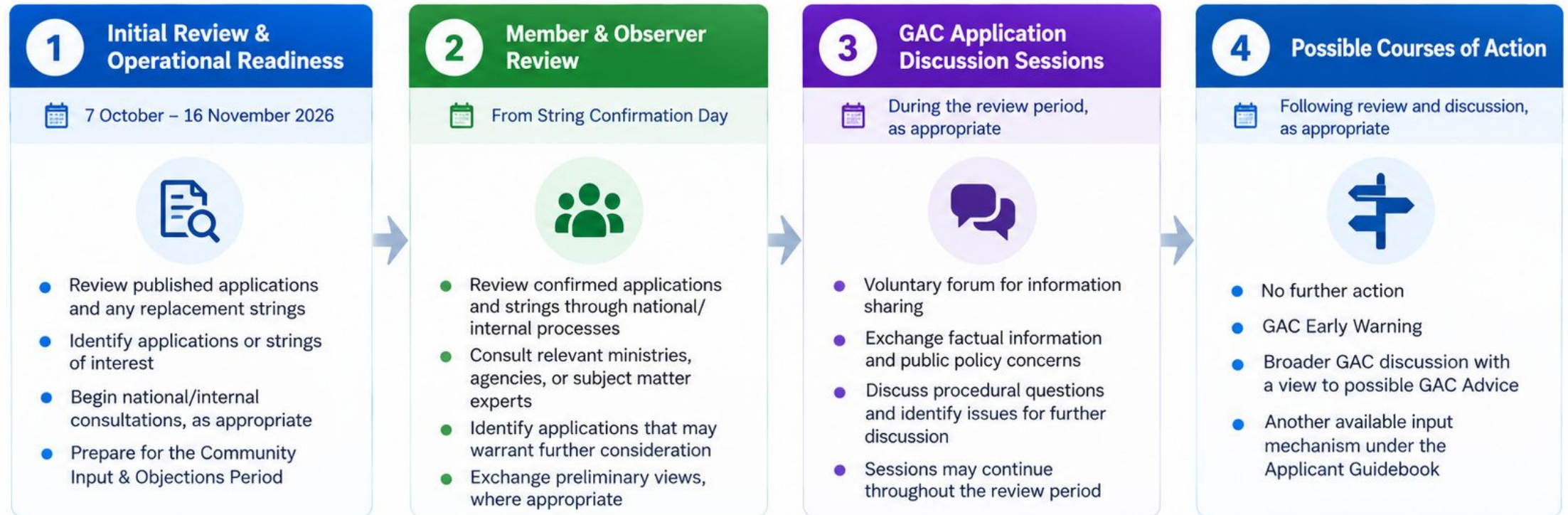


* The Early Warning Guide and Template have been reviewed and approved by the GAC and are included here for completeness.

Operational Readiness Framework - Phased Approach

GAC Review of New gTLD Applications (2026 Round)

Operational Readiness Framework – Phased Approach



Key Point:

This framework supports timely, transparent and coordinated GAC engagement. It does not replace the ICANN Bylaws, the GAC Operating Principles, or the Applicant Guidebook, and does not create any additional GAC decision-making mechanism.

GAC Capacity Development Takeaways

Marco Hogewoning

GAC Takeaways from CDS

Capacity Development Sessions – Key Messages

- The GAC has several opportunities to engage during the Next Round, including Early Warnings, GAC Advice, objections, and public comments.
- Members identified value in further practical exchanges and capacity development as the application process advances.

Question for Members:

What lessons or preparedness considerations emerging from the Capacity Development Sessions should inform the GAC's work on the New gTLD Program: 2026 Round?

Government Preparations for 2026 Round

Questions for Discussion

- What preparations have governments undertaken since the applications publication?
- What challenges do governments foresee in reviewing applications and engaging with GAC processes?
- What lessons from the 2012 round remain relevant today?
- What good practices can members share with colleagues?