



87

ANNUAL  
GENERAL  
MEETING



# GAC Discussion on New gTLDs

Session 11

# Agenda

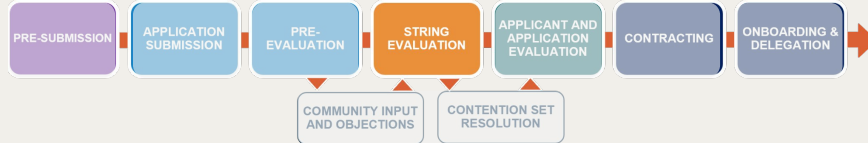
1. **Introduction** - Marco Hogewoning
2. **Safeguard Assessment** - Ariel Liang, ICANN Org (15 Minutes)
3. **GAC Open Discussion on New gTLD Program: 2026 Round** - GAC Members (40 Minutes)
4. **Wrap-up** - Marco Hogewoning (5 Minutes)

**NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND**

**gTLD**

# Safeguard Assessment

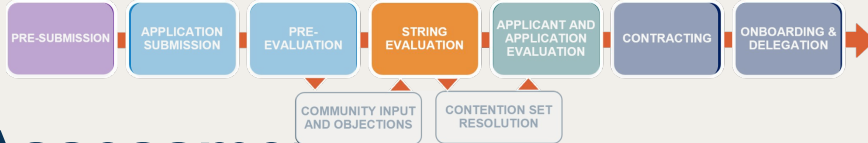




# NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

## Background & Context

| <u>2013 GAC Advice – ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <u>2014 ICANN Board (New gTLD Program Committee) Resolution &amp; Implementation</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <u>2021 SubPro Policy Recommendations</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The GAC advised that <b>additional safeguards</b> should apply to <b>broad categories of new gTLD strings</b> and be subject to <b>contractual oversight</b></p> <p><b>Safeguards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WHOIS verification and checks</li> <li>• Mitigating abusive activity</li> <li>• Security checks</li> <li>• Documentation</li> <li>• Making and handling complaints</li> <li>• Consequences</li> </ul> <p><b>Category 1 Strings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on consumer protection, sensitive strings, and regulated markets</li> <li>• Particularly strings likely to invoke consumer trust or create heightened risks of consumer harm</li> </ul> | <p>The Board accepted GAC Advice, adopted a framework, and directed its implementation</p> <p>Created <b>10 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments (PICs)</b> in RA Specification 11</p> <p>Created <b>four risk-based string groups:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regulated Sectors / Open Entry requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions</li> <li>2. Highly Regulated Sectors / Closed Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions</li> <li>3. Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment</li> <li>4. Inherently Governmental Functions</li> </ol> <p>Established <b>mapping of specific set of Safeguard PICs to each string group</b></p> <p>Group 1 → PICs 1–3   Group 2 → 1–8   Group 3 → 1–9   Group 4 → 1–8 &amp; 10</p> <p><b>Classified relevant 2012 Round strings under the four string groups</b></p> | <p><b>Affirmation 9.3</b> Affirm the NGPC framework to apply Safeguard PICs to new gTLD strings deemed applicable to highly sensitive or regulated industries</p> <p><b>Rec 9.4</b> Include in the AGB a process to determine if a string falls into one of the four groups defined by NGPC</p> <p><b>IG 9.5</b> Applicant may self identify</p> <p><b>IG 9.6</b> An evaluation panel to be established for this purpose</p> <p><b>IG 9.7</b> Conduct this evaluation after the Application Comment Period</p> <p><b>Rec 9.8</b> Relevant Safeguard PICs for applicable strings must be integrated into the RA</p> |



# 2026 Round Safeguard Assessment

*Same Framework, More Structured Process*

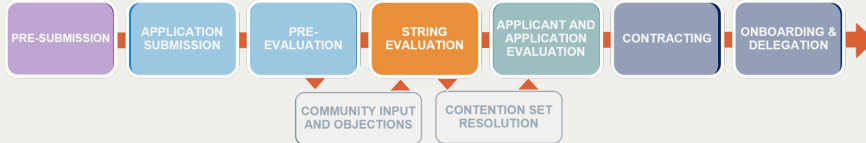
## What remains the same

- **Same substantive Safeguard PIC framework** carried forward from the 2012 Round (see [AGB Section 7.8.2.2](#))
- **Same 10 Safeguard PICs** addressing consumer protection, regulated sectors, sensitive uses, and related risks
- **Same four risk-based string groups**
- **Same mapping of Safeguard PICs to string groups**
- Applicable Safeguard PICs continue to become **contractual obligations in RA Specification 11**

## What is new / strengthened for 2026 Round

- **Applicant input:** All applicants answer Safeguard Assessment questions that help inform, but do not determine, the string group classification
- **Independent expert assessment:** A dedicated external evaluation panel – Mirror Group – evaluates each applied-for string against the AGB framework
- **Global, contextual interpretation focused on meaning:** Considers how a reasonable person would understand the string, including literal and informal meanings across languages, regions, and cultures
- **Community input:** Application comments, GAC / other community input relevant to the assessment are considered by evaluation panel before final determination
- **Structured methodology:** String is assessed against established criteria, supported by rationale, secondary review, calibration, and consistency checks
- **Timing and transparency:** Occurs within String Evaluation stage, which is expected to take about 180 days; results will be published as part of the String Evaluation reports

# Annex



# 2026 Round Safeguard Assessment Framework [\(AGB 7.8.2.2\)](#)

## Regulated Sectors/Open Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions

**Group 1:** Strings invoking consumer trust but with heightened risks.

- String is likely to invoke a level of implied trust from consumers
- String is likely to carry heightened risks of consumer harm
- String is associated to a generally open sector, but may require limited registration

**2012 Round Examples:** *.kid, .degree, .audio, .town*

**Required Safeguards: 1-3**

## Highly-Regulated Sectors/Closed Entry Requirements in Multiple Jurisdictions

**Group 2:** String is associated with an industry where licensing or accreditation is required by local, regional, or national governments. This typically involves an assessment of qualifications, regular inspections, and ongoing government oversight

**2012 Round Examples:** *.cash, .bet, .abogado, .earth, .care*

**Required Safeguards: 1-8**

## Potential for Cyber Bullying/Harassment

**Group 3:** String's implied or actual meaning could result in gTLD being used to facilitate harassment or cyberbullying

**2012 Round Examples:** *.fail, .gripe, .sucks, .wtf*

**Required Safeguards: 1-9**

## Inherently Governmental Functions

**Group 4:** String is associated with a function that is inherently in the domain of government, such as military branches

**2012 Round Examples:** *.army, .navy, .airforce*

**Required Safeguards: 1-8 and 10**

## Safeguard Public Interest Commitments ([AGB Section 7.8.2.2](#))

1. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to comply with all applicable laws, including those that relate to privacy, data collection, consumer protection (including in relation to misleading and deceptive conduct), fair lending, debt collection, organic farming, disclosure of data, and financial disclosures.
2. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars at the time of registration to notify registrants of the requirement to comply with all applicable laws.
3. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring that registrants who collect and maintain sensitive health and financial data implement reasonable and appropriate security measures commensurate with the offering of those services, as defined by applicable law.
4. Registry Operator will proactively create a clear pathway for the creation of a working relationship with the relevant regulatory or industry self-regulatory bodies by publicizing a point of contact and inviting such bodies to establish a channel of communication, including for the purpose of facilitating the development of a strategy to mitigate the risks of fraudulent and other illegal activities.
5. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to provide administrative contact information, which must be kept up-to-date, for the notification of complaints or reports of registration abuse, as well as the contact details of the relevant regulatory, or industry self-regulatory, bodies in their main place of business.
6. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring a representation that the registrant possesses any necessary authorizations, charters, licenses and/or other related credentials for participation in the sector associated with the TLD string.
7. If Registry Operator receives a complaint expressing doubt with regard to the authenticity of licenses or credentials, Registry Operator should consult with relevant national supervisory authorities, or their equivalents regarding the authenticity.
8. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring registrants to report any material changes to the validity of the registrants' authorizations, charters, licenses and/or other related credentials for participation in the sector associated with the TLD string in order to ensure they continue to conform to appropriate regulations and licensing requirements and generally conduct their activities in the interests of the consumers they serve.
9. Registry Operator will develop and publish registration policies to minimize the risk of cyber bullying and/or harassment.
10. Registry Operator will include a provision in its Registry-Registrar Agreements that requires registrars to include in their Registration Agreements a provision requiring a representation that the registrant will take reasonable steps to avoid misrepresenting or falsely implying that the registrant or its business is affiliated with, sponsored or endorsed by one or more country's or government's military forces if such affiliation, sponsorship or endorsement does not exist.

## Relevant Resources

- [ICANN46 Beijing Communiqué](#) (11 April 2013)
- [ICANN Board Resolution](#) (5 February 2014)
- [NGPC Implementation Framework](#) (5 February 2014)
- [2012 Round Website](#) (GAC Advice: Category 1 Safeguards)
- [Final Report on the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Policy Development Process](#) - Topic 9: Registry Voluntary Commitments / Public Interest Commitments
- [AGB Section 7.8.2 Safeguard Public Interest Commitments](#)
- [2026 Round Website: Safeguard Assessment](#)
- [ICANN Announcement: Safeguard Assessment Provider for 2026 Round](#) (20 August 2026)
- [Application Question Set 10: Safeguard Assessment/Mission and Purpose](#)

# NEW gTLD PROGRAM: 2026 ROUND

gTLD

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# GAC Discussion - New gTLD Program: 2026 Round

Marco Hogewoning

# Timeline for GAC Members and Observers

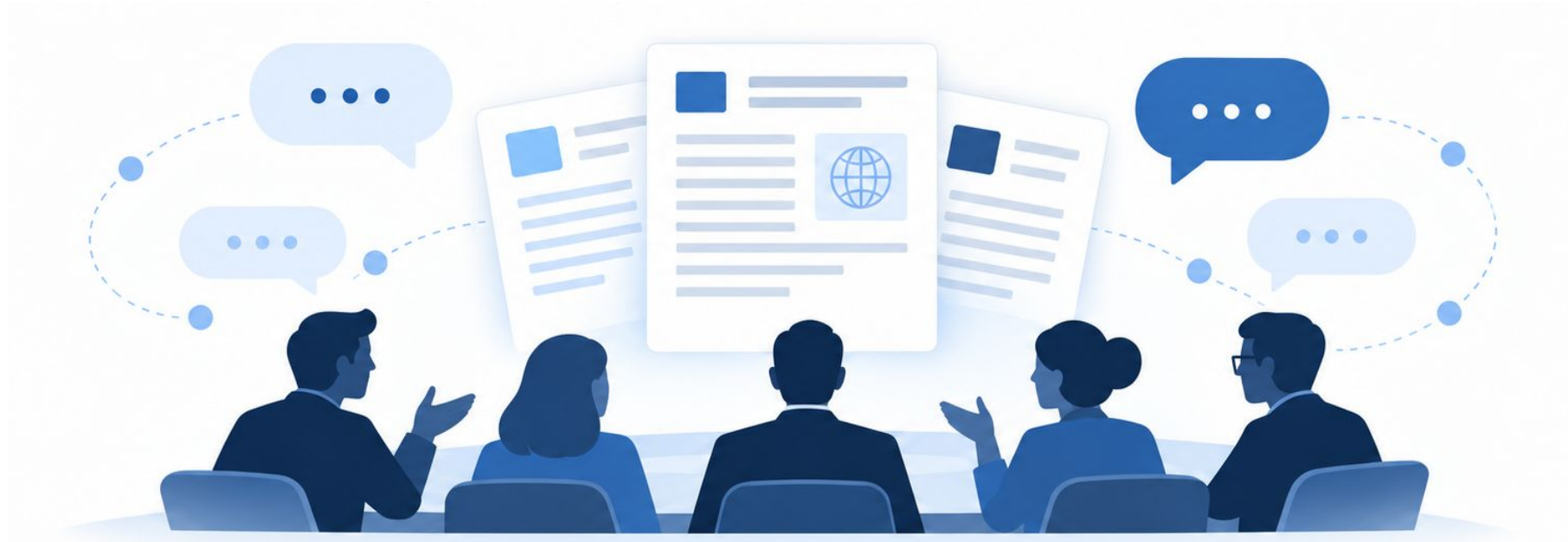
What is published now is a preliminary view of everything present in the system.

## Next Steps:

- String Confirmation Day: **17 November 2026**
- Community Input, including Early Warnings, Singular/plural notifications and objections: **17 November 2026 - 16 March 2027**
- **GAC Consensus Advice: may be issued at any time**, as determined by the ICANN Bylaws and GAC Operating Principles - this includes advice on new gTLDs

# GAC Open Discussion

## New gTLD Program: 2026 Round



# Wrap-Up

## Next steps?