



84

ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING



GAC Capacity Development Session on New gTLD Program Next Round (1/2)

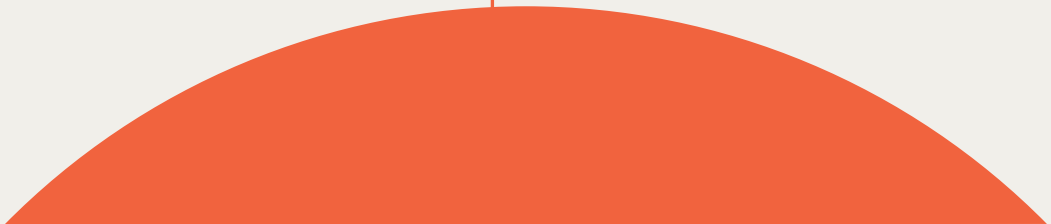
25 October 2025

1. Welcome and Introduction
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3. Additional Outreach to Governments
4. The Applicant Journey
 - Applicant Journey Overview
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 - Community Input, Objections, and Appeals
 - String Evaluations
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 - Contracting
5. Dive In: PICs, RVCs, and Community Registration Policies

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Readiness Plan

Readiness Topics

- 
- 01 Next Round Readiness Approach**
 - ✓ Readiness Plan Objectives
 - ✓ Content and Delivery
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 - ✓ GAC Readiness Outcomes
 - ✓ GAC Readiness Calendar - 2026
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Next Round Readiness Approach

Readiness Plan Objectives

Build the required knowledge and ability for applicants to apply for new TLDs, the Community to understand Next Round responsibilities, and for ICANN staff and evaluation vendors to process and evaluate applications successfully.



Knowledge Building and Skills Development

Build knowledge of application stages, processes and evaluations, and skill using application systems to enable participation in the Next Round.



Flexible Delivery and Reinforcing Resources

Develop training modules and materials in formats that enable flexible delivery and sustainable reinforcement of learning outcomes.



Consistent and Predictable Processing and Evaluation

Integrate role, process, and system training to ensure applicants have a consistent, predictable experience throughout their journey.

Readiness Resources Content and Delivery

Readiness content is in development to provide easy-to-use resources in formats that support different learner types and our goals of flexible delivery and sustainable reinforcement of learning outcomes.



BUILDING CONTENT

Content to complement Next Round process and policy documents is in development and will encompass:

- **Foundations, Context, and Concepts**
- **Application Stages & Processes**
- **Application Systems (TAMS & ACF)**



VIRTUAL COURSES

In-depth learning touch-points conducted by subject matter experts designed to inform and educate on key topics.

- **ICANN Learn** training modules for foundational knowledge-building
- **Next Round Webinars + Recordings** highlighting key stages of the applicant journey and application process



QUICK REFERENCE RESOURCES

Self-service learning content and resources to meet audiences where they are and guide their individual journey.

- **System Guides** for technical process documentation
- **Topic Overviews** on specific key topics of interest
- **FAQs** regularly updated with new questions and topics
- **Microvideo** resources of common system tasks

GAC Readiness Plan Preview

Background Context

Readiness plans for GAC reflect direction from the [Prague Communiqué](#) as well as GAC Leadership requests to the Next Round Program provided in August. This included requests for written materials, factsheets, as well as live capacity development sessions and webinars to support a structured program.

Key areas of interest expressed by GAC Leadership include:

**GAC
Members
new to
ICANN**

Build understanding of ICANN and the DNS Industry including access to ICANN resources, DNS ecosystem, ICANN bodies and policy making.

**Preparing
GAC for the
Next Round**

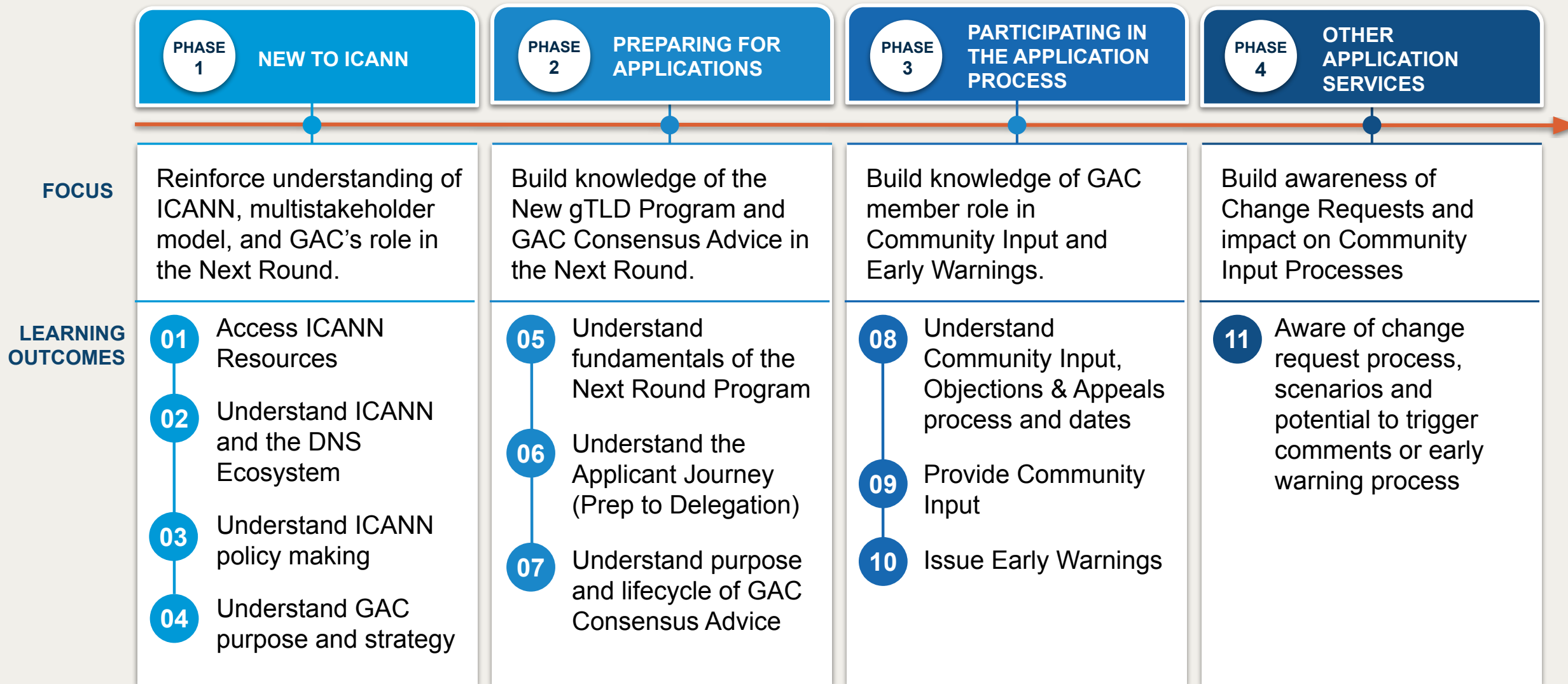
Prepare GAC Members for the New gTLD Program including key dates and milestones, fundamentals of the Next Round, the Applicant Journey, and Applicant Guidebook topics of interest.

**Supporting
GAC
participation**

Support GAC participation in community input, submitting Early Warnings, and GAC Consensus Advice.

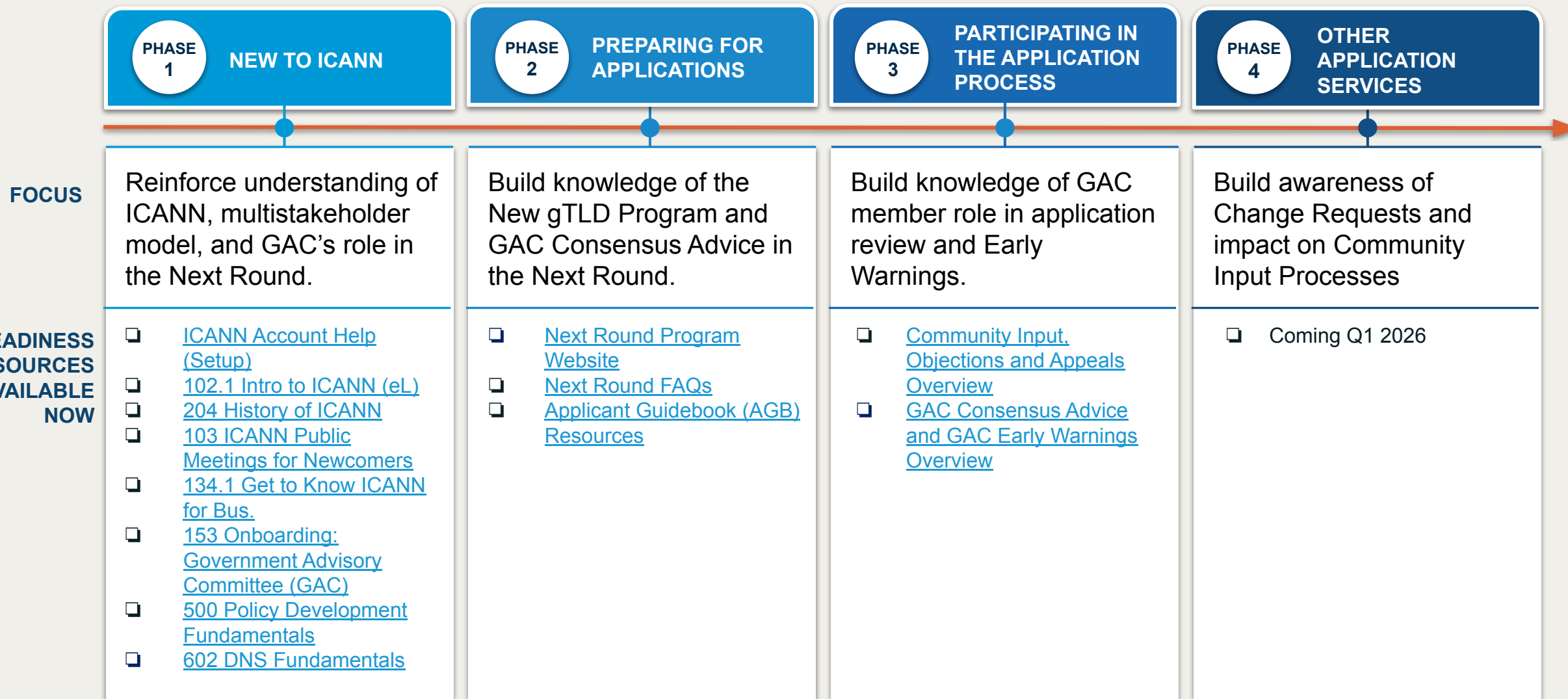
GAC Readiness Pathway

GAC members benefit from general information about ICANN and the Next Round Program, as well in depth knowledge of the Applicant Journey, and the GAC role in Consensus Advice, Community Input, and Early Warnings.



Readiness Resources Available Now

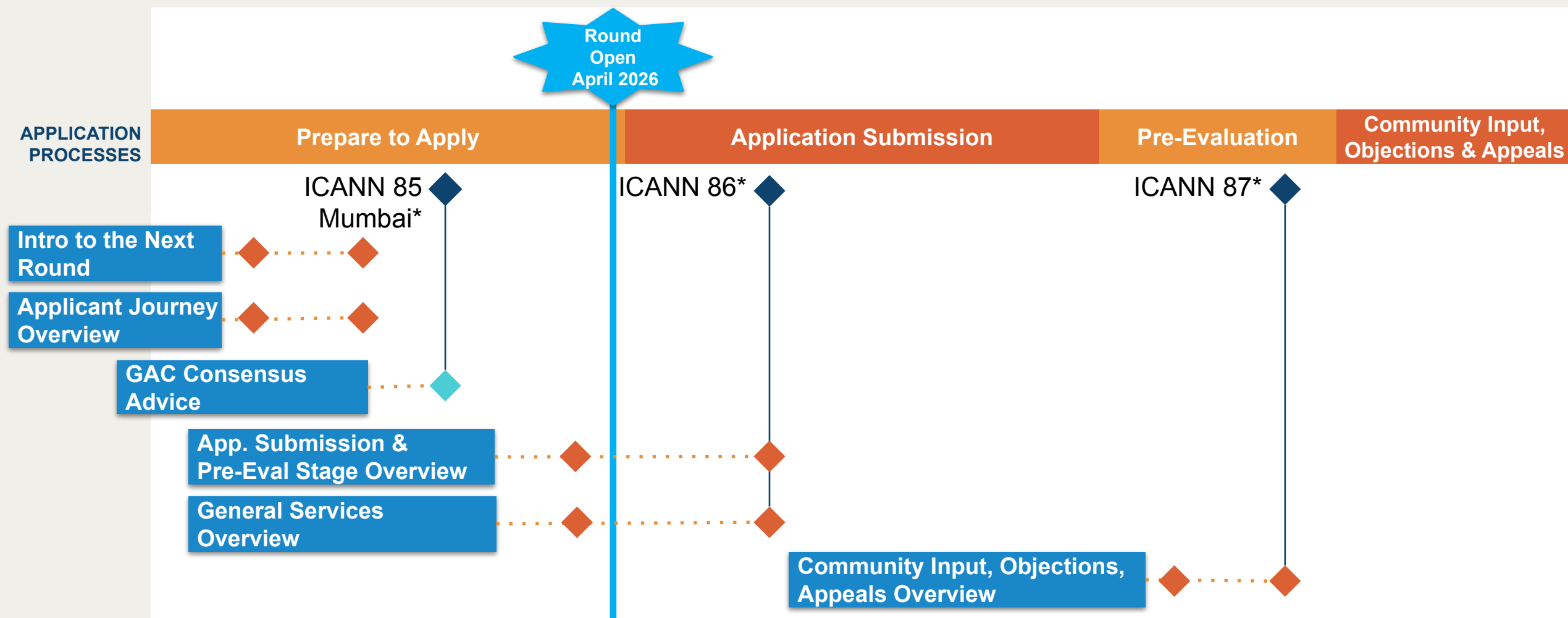
A variety of resources are available now to assist existing and new GAC members build their knowledge of the Next Round. New resources are in development and will be launched as they become available.





GAC Readiness Calendar 2026

GAC Members utilize public Next Round webinars and recordings supplemented by GAC-specific readiness efforts at ICANN Meetings. (Note: Some dates are approximate and subject to change.)



*ICANN is planning to utilize ICANN meetings to deliver training where appropriate. Specific content is illustrative and may change.

Snapshot of Readiness Resources Now Available

Click on the text to access the resources below. Note, must be logged into your ICANN Learn account to go directly to each course.

General Information

- [Next Round Program Website](#)

FAQs

- [Next Round FAQs](#)
- [Applicant Support Program \(ASP\) FAQs](#)
- [Registry Service Provider \(RSP\) FAQs](#)
- [gTLD Evaluation Fee FAQs](#)
- [Application Types FAQs](#)

Key Topic Overviews

- [AGB Resources \(NEW topics coming soon!\)](#)
- ★ [Community Input, Objections and Appeals](#)
- ★ [GAC Consensus Advice and GAC Early Warnings](#)

ICANN Learn

- [ICANN Account Help \(Setup\)](#)
- [102.1 Intro to ICANN](#)
- [204 History of ICANN](#)
- [103 ICANN Public Meetings for Newcomers](#)
- [134.1 Get to Know ICANN for Business](#)
- ★ [153 Onboarding: Government Advisory Committee](#)
- [500 Policy Development Fundamentals](#)
- [602 DNS Fundamentals](#)

System Guides and Microvideos

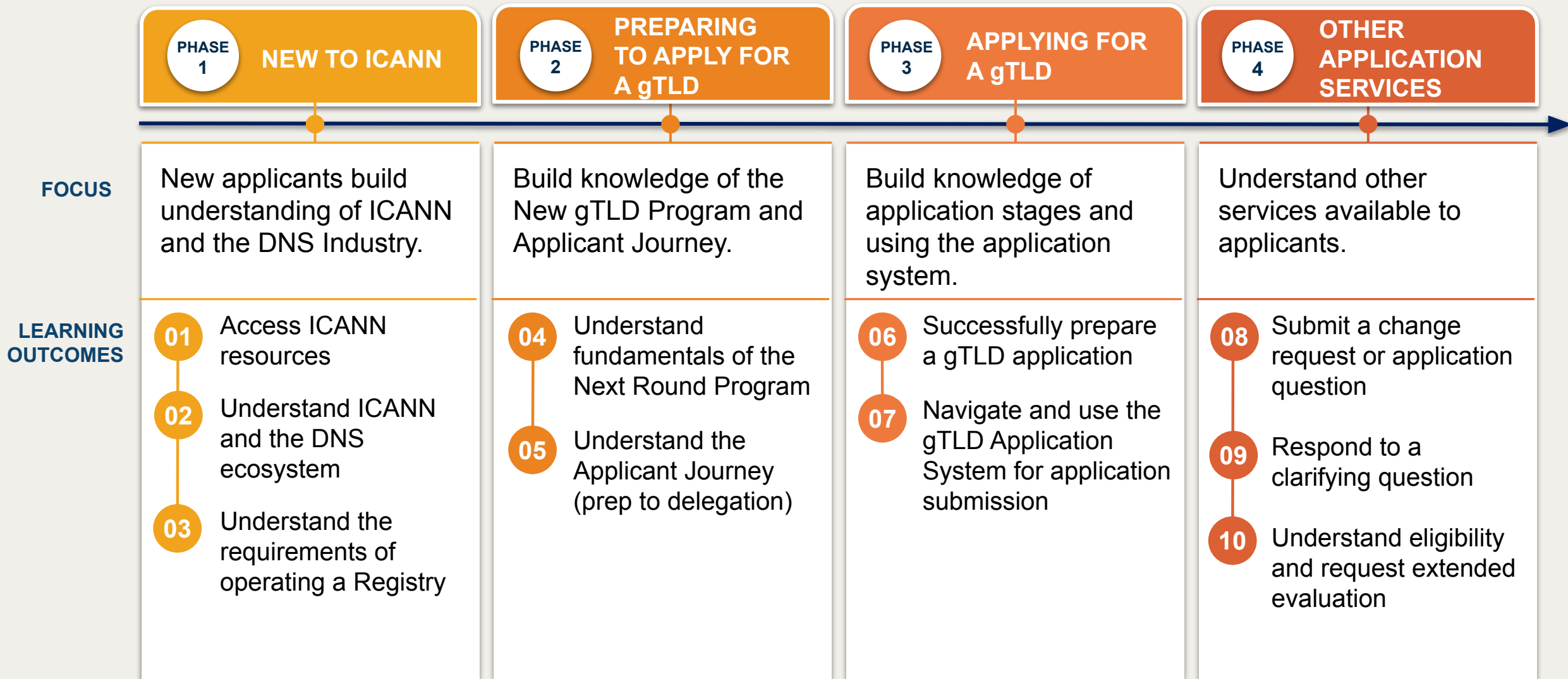
- [ASP Resources](#)

Next Round Webinars

- [Coming in 2026!](#)

gTLD Applicant Readiness Pathway

gTLD applicants require knowledge of ICANN and the Next Round Program, as well in depth knowledge of the Applicant Journey, specific evaluations, and the ability to use the gTLD Application System.



Next Steps

- Readiness team is looking for feedback on proposed GAC learning outcomes (on slide 11) and planned support for GAC members in preparation for the Next Round.
- The GAC Policy Team & Next Round Readiness Teams will share more information and resources periodically, focusing on ICANN meetings to communicate that information.
- Look for more information on the webinars late in 2025.

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Additional Outreach to Governments

ICANN Org Letter Writing to Governments re Next Round

WHEN - During the month of November 2025 (after ICANN84)

WHAT - 2-page PDF Letter about the Next Round from ICANN Regional VP

- to senior government officials in relevant departments
- following GAC member instructions
- With simultaneous copy to relevant GAC members

HOW -

- Letter draft and instructions request to be sent to GAC members (via form)
- Personalised PDF letters produced according to incoming instructions
- Translations prepared, if requested
- Letters emailed by RVPs to officials - with GAC member copied

ICANN Org Letter Writing to Governments re Next Round

WHY

- Express gratitude for the hard work of GAC members in developing the policy
- Announce the gTLD program and remind about ICANN's technical mission
- Assist GAC members to facilitate coordination within their capitals
- Outline how governments can participate in reviewing gTLD applications
- Remind how governments can work with their GAC member to raise concerns or questions

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The Applicant Journey

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

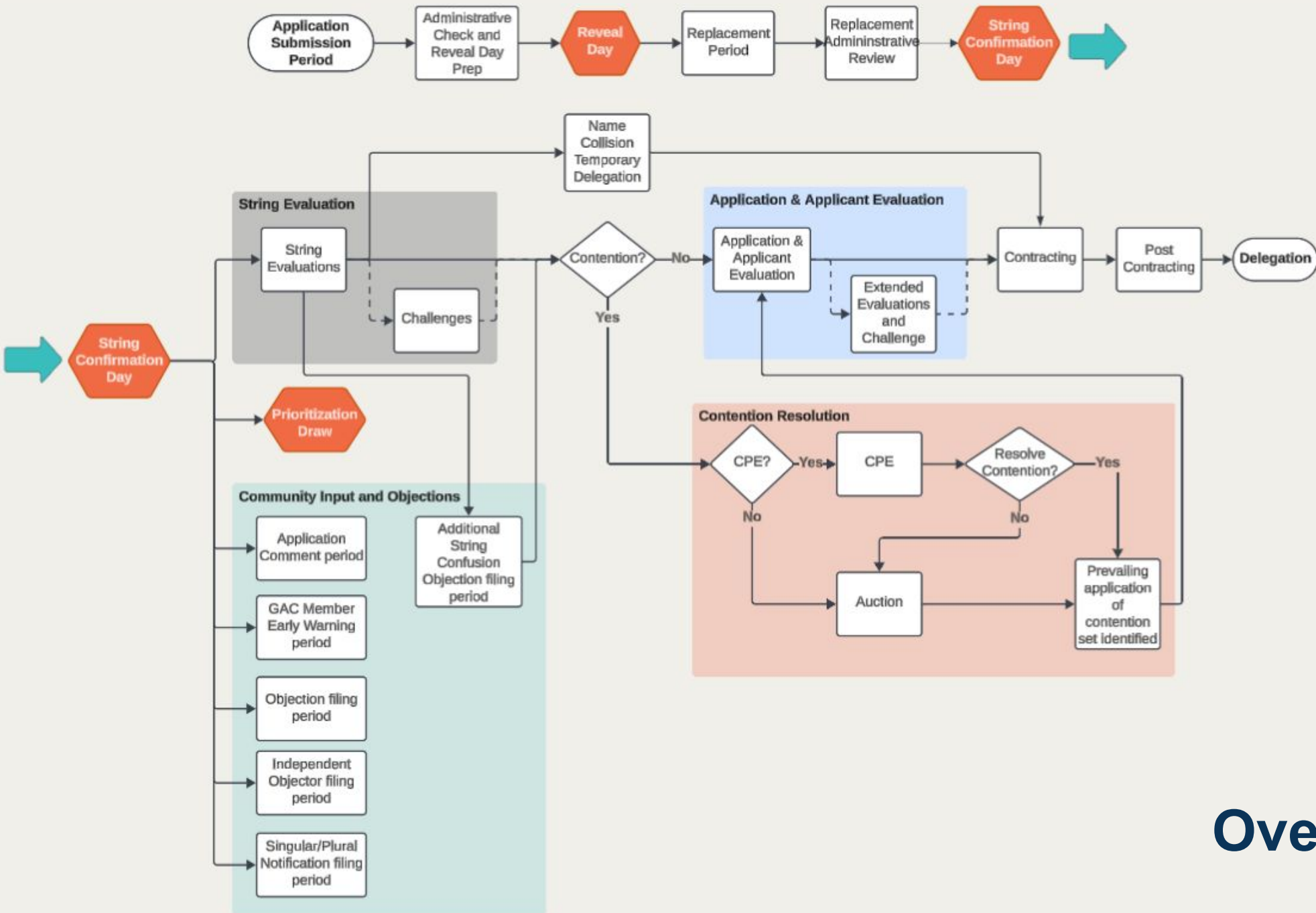
How much?

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

How?

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





Overview

Evaluations

STRING [7]

DNS Stability Review

Blocked Names
Identification

Reserved Name
Identification

Geographic Names
Identification

Name Collision Initial
Assessment

Safeguard Assessment

Singular/Plural Notification
Evaluation

String Similarity Evaluation

APPLICATION [7]

RSP Review

Geographic Name Review

Reserved Names Review

Name Collision High-Risk
Mitigation Plan Evaluation

Code of Conduct
Exemption Evaluation

Registry Commitment
Evaluation

.Brand TLD Eligibility
Evaluation

Variant String Evaluation

APPLICANT [6]

Background Screening

Financial and Operational
Evaluation

Submission to Prioritization Draw

Application Submission

- 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

Blocked Names Identification [3.1.8.1]

If the string is found to be identical to a Blocked Name, the applicant will not be able to submit its application

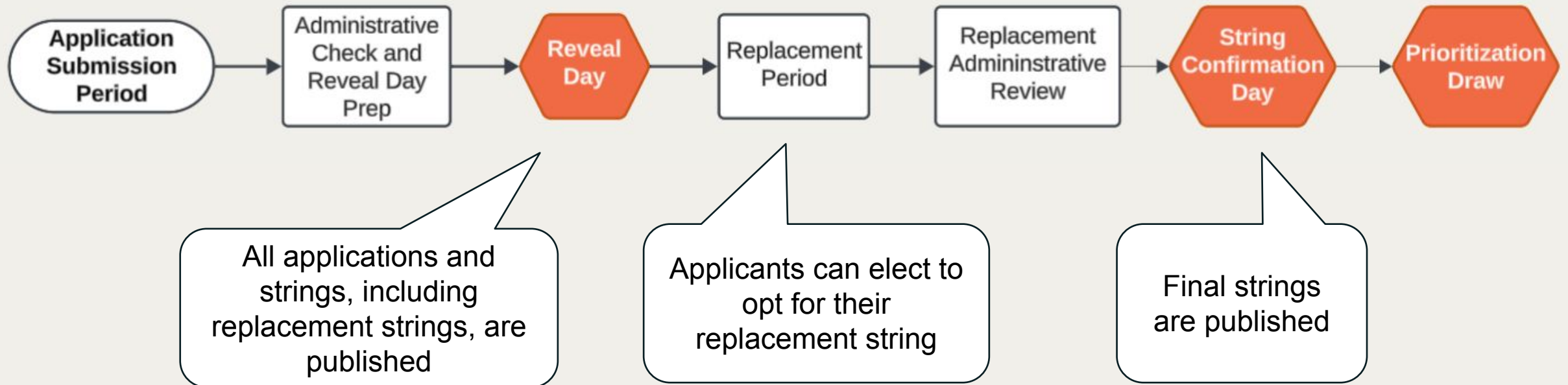
Reserved Name Identification [3.1.8.1]

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 [3.1.8.1]

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

Pre-Evaluation Processes



Community Input, Objections, and Appeals

Overview [4]

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**

String Evaluations

String Similarity Evaluation	Aims to prevent user confusion and loss of confidence in the DNS resulting from the delegation of Visually Similar strings
Geographic Names Identification	Identifies which strings may be considered a Geographic Name
Safeguard Assessment	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
Singular/Plural Notifications Evaluation	Determines if certain strings represent the singular and plural forms of the same word in the same language, if ICANN receives such notification
Name Collision Initial Assessment	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

Contention and its Resolution

String Contention Overview [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, such as:
 - 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
- All forms of **private resolution of contention sets** are **prohibited**

String Contention Prevention and Resolution [4]

- **Replacement Strings:** As part of their applications, all applicants can designate a “replacement string” alongside their original choice of string to reduce the chances of ending up in contention
- **Community Priority Evaluation:** Evaluation conducted by a third-party panel, which determines whether a community-based application fulfills the criteria identified in the AGB in order to receive priority in the contention set
- **.Brand String Change Requests:** Subject to certain conditions, applicants for .Brand TLDs can change their string in order to avoid contention
- **New gTLD Auction:** To resolve contention sets that were not eliminated earlier in the application process (for example, through objections or applicant withdrawals) or resolved by CPE

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 [7.9]

Geographic Names Review verifies supporting documentation for any application for a string determined to be a Geographic Name during String Evaluation [7.5.3.2.1]

Reserved Names Review determines whether the appropriate organization has applied for the reserved string and will verify the supporting documentation [7.2.2.2]

.Brand TLD Eligibility Evaluation assesses whether the applicant meets the criteria for a .Brand TLD designation [7.3]

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

Variant String Evaluation assess the justification for each applied-for variant string [7.6]

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 [7.4]

Name Collision High-Risk Mitigation Plan Evaluation reviews Plan for strings that were deemed to present a high risk of Name Collision [7.7.5]

Registry Commitments Evaluation assesses RVCs and/or Community Registration Policies proposed by the applicant for inclusion in the Base RA [7.8.3.2]

Applicant Evaluations

Applicant Evaluations

- **Background Screening [6.1]**

- 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 [6.2]**

- 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
- Applicants will be evaluated at the organization level; any financial information provided should cover all applications being submitted.

Contracting

Contracting [1.2.15] and Post-Contracting [1.2.16]

An applicant that successfully completes all the relevant stages must execute a Registry Agreement 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 to contracting. New registry operators must delegate their TLD within one year from the date of Registry Agreement execution, except as described in Base Registry Agreement Section 2.19.

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 TLD
- **Spec 14:** Information on variant strings
- **Art 7:** Special Provision Relating to Intergovernmental Organizations or Governmental Entities

05

Dive In:

PICs, RVCs, and Community
Registration Policies

Different Registry Agreement Commitment Types

Mandatory Public Interest Commitments	Safeguard Public Interest Commitments	Registry Voluntary Commitments	Community Registration Policies
Uniform commitments to protect registrants and Internet users broadly	Standardized commitments to promote public interests in high-risk gTLDs	Customized commitments to overcome third-party concerns (e.g., GAC Advice, objection) or provide additional safeguards	Customized conditions upon Community gTLD registrants concerning eligibility, naming selection, etc.
All gTLDs must have	gTLDs classified in four risk-based groups must have	Any gTLD applicant has the option to propose	All Community gTLDs must have
Automatically included in each RA, Specification 11	All applicants to answer questions subject to Safeguard Assessment; applicable Safeguard PICs to be included in applicable RA, Spec 11	Any applicant to submit RVC subject to Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE); approved ones to be included in applicable RA, Spec 11	All Community gTLD applicants to submit Community Registration Policies subject to RCE; approved ones to be included in applicable RA, Spec 12 (and be considered for scoring in CPE)

Registry Commitments Evaluation

What It Is

- Conditional evaluation to review proposed RVCs and Community Registration Policies and ensure they are **enforceable under the ICANN Bylaws & can be included in RA** as contractual obligations

When It Occurs

- Typically conducted during **Application Evaluation** before contracting, but may happen earlier if an RVC or Community Registration Policy is on the **critical path** for the application to proceed
- Initiated after the **fixed, one-time payment** for RCE is received (**USD \$15,000 per application**)
- Estimated to take **2-3 months** to complete, absent exceptional circumstances

How It Works

- Must meet **five criteria** to be approved – in particular, anything that **restricts content** in the applied-for gTLD string will be rejected
- Evaluation will **NOT** determine whether proposed commitments addressed **third-party concerns**
- ICANN and applicant may **negotiate** to reach agreement on proposed contractual language

Registry Commitments Evaluation Criteria

1

Must clearly state what commitments “must” be implemented

2

Must be clear, detailed, mutually understood between the applicant and ICANN, objective, and measurable

3

Must specify any applicable limitations

4

Should not duplicate or be contrary to requirements under applicable law, ICANN agreements, or ICANN Consensus Policies or Temporary Policies

5

Must be compatible with ICANN’s Bylaws

RVC to Overcome GAC Consensus Advice

When It Occurs

- GAC advises the Board and the Board accepts the Advice – an application cannot proceed without an RVC approved by ICANN
- Two Scenarios: 1) Existing RVC submitted in initial application; 2) New or amended RVC submitted as Application Change Request

Why It Is Special

- Not purely “voluntary” – condition necessary for application to proceed
- Must be approved by ICANN via Registry Commitments Evaluation (RCE)
- Once approved, cannot be materially changed or removed prior to contract execution absent extraordinary circumstances

How It Works

- ICANN reviews and approves the RVC through RCE
- Both original and negotiated versions of RVCs published for comment period for public review
- Final determination rests with the Board – to determine whether GAC concern must be addressed and whether the RVC suffices

NEW gTLD PROGRAM: NEXT ROUND

gTLD

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