

GAC Early Warnings (2026 Round)

Comprehensive Guide

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Note: In case of discrepancy between this document and the [New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook](#) (Applicant Guidebook), the Applicant Guidebook will prevail. For information on GAC Member Early Warnings, refer to [Section 4.2](#) of the Applicant Guidebook.

1. Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

GAC Member Early Warnings (EWs) are notices from one or more GAC Members and/or Observers expressing that a New gTLD Program application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic (for example, due to national laws, cultural sensitivities, or public policy concerns). These warnings aim to:

- Alert applicants that concerns have been identified and that further scrutiny may follow (including the possibility of GAC Consensus Advice or an objection at a later stage).
- Encourage voluntary dialogue between the applicant and the submitting GAC Member(s) or Observer(s), where appropriate.
- Align with ICANN's multistakeholder model by balancing technical governance with public interest concerns.

1.2 Key Distinctions

- Non-binding: Unlike GAC Consensus Advice, Early Warnings do not constitute formal recommendations to the ICANN Board and do not require agreement or consensus from the full GAC or its leadership to be submitted.
- Flexibility: Unlike Consensus Advice, EWs require no GAC-wide agreement, enabling swift action by individual GAC Members and Observers.

2. Eligibility and Roles

2.1 Eligible Entities

- GAC Members and Observers.
- GAC Early Warnings may be submitted jointly by one or more GAC Members and/or Observers.

2.2 Responsibilities

- Submitters: Provide a clear rationale, why the Early Warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the concern, where applicable.
- GAC Members and observers should provide contact details for communication with the applicant. ICANN will notify applicants of Early Warnings as soon as practicable after receipt. Applicants that receive Early Warnings are encouraged to enter into dialogue directly with concerned parties as soon as possible to

address the concerns voiced, if applicable. GAC consensus is not required for Early Warnings to be issued.

- GAC Leadership/GAC Support Team: Verify that submissions satisfy minimum formality completeness requirements (e.g., submitter status and inclusion of required elements).
- ICANN org distributes Early Warnings to the relevant applicant(s) and publishes them publicly on the GAC website.

3. Timeline and Critical Deadlines

- GAC Member Early Warning submission period: 17 November 2026–16 March 2027 (104 days following String Confirmation Day¹) (as per AGB Section 4.2).
- ICANN's end-of-year office closure from 19 December 2026 to 4 January 2027 has already been factored into this period.

4. Submission Process

4.1 Step-by-Step Workflow

1. Drafting:
 - a. Use the “EW Template”, (provided as an Annex), ensuring inclusion of:
 - i. TLD.
 - ii. Detailed rationale (e.g., conflict with “Country X’s Cultural Heritage Act” or similar rationale, etc.).
 - iii. Proposed mitigation steps (e.g., community consultation requirements, etc.).
 - iv. Submitter contact details.
2. Submission:
 - a. Email to “26r-gac-ew@icann.org” with subject line: ***EW_[TLD]_[GAC Member]***.
3. Review:
 - a. The GAC Chair and GAC Leadership, with help from the GAC Support Team if requested, review the submission for procedural completeness (i.e. confirms it is submitted by a GAC Member or Observer and includes a rationale and how the applicant may address the concern, if applicable).
 - b. The review will be completed in up to 5 business days following receipt of the submission.

¹ String Confirmation Day is 17 November 2026. On that date, ICANN will post an updated list of applications and their chosen strings (whether original or replacement). A list of updated contention sets will also be published. Refer to Section 3.6 String Confirmation Day of the Applicant Guidebook for more information.

- c. The review is limited to procedural completeness and does not assess or endorse the substance of the Early Warning.

4. Publication:

- a. Once the review for procedural completeness is complete, the GAC Chair/GAC Support Team forwards, as soon as practicable and no later than the 16 March 2027, the Early Warning to ICANN org for distribution to the relevant applicant(s).
- b. Early Warnings may be collated and published in accordance with ICANN procedures applicable to the 2026 Round.

5. Content Requirements

5.1 Mandatory Elements

- Each Early Warning must include:
 - Submitter information and contact information;
 - Application information, (including the relevant application ID(s), applicant name(s) and string(s);
 - Rationale, including why the Early Warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the concern, if applicable;
 - Contact information.

6. Relationship to Other Community Input Mechanisms

- Early Warnings do not constitute formal recommendations to the ICANN Board and do not automatically lead to further action. GAC Members and Observers may subsequently raise concerns through other mechanisms, including GAC Consensus Advice, the Application Comment Forum, Objections or direct engagement with applicants, where appropriate.

7. Key Resources

- Early Warning Template <https://bit.ly/4hAowo6>
- New gTLD Program: 2026 Round Applicant Guidebook: <https://bit.ly/4yojpyy>