

GAC Working Group Guidelines

Background	1
Purpose of the Guidelines	1
Establishment of a Working Group	1
Initiation	1
Call for Volunteers	2
Election of Leadership	2
Adoption of Initiation Documents	2
Roles and Responsibilities	2
Working Group Chair or Co-Chairs	2
Members	3
Operation of a Working Group	4
Workplan	4
Meetings	5
Working Group Outputs	5
Reporting to the GAC	6
Use of Sub-teams	6
Logistics	6
Closure of a Working Group	7
Term	7
Inactivity	7
Decision to Close a Working Group	7
Norms	7
Participation	7
Standards of Behavior	7
Annex A: GAC Working Group Proposal Template	9
Annex B: GAC Working Group Term of Reference Template	9
Annex C: GAC Working Group Work Plan Template	11

1. Background

The role of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) is defined in Section 12.2(a)(i) of the ICANN Bylaws, which provides that:

*The GAC should consider and provide advice on the activities of ICANN as they relate to concerns of governments, particularly matters where there may be an interaction between ICANN’s policies and various laws and international agreements or where they may affect public policy issues.*¹

Section 12.2(a)(iii) further provides that “the GAC may adopt its own charter and internal operating principles or procedures to guide its operations, to be published on the Website.”²

The GAC has developed its own Operating Principles to govern its operations. Under those principles:

*“The GAC Chair may call for the creation of Committees and Working Groups to address matters that relate to concerns of governments and where they may affect public policy issues. Accredited GAC representatives may designate advisers to serve on such committees.”*³

2. Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines cover the establishment, roles and responsibilities, operation and closure of GAC Working Groups. To encourage consistency and predictability in GAC work, GAC Working Groups should follow the procedures set forth in these guidelines.

3. Establishment of a Working Group

3.1 Initiation

A Working Group is established to address a particular issue or topic of concern to the GAC. Members or Observers of the GAC may propose, via email to the GAC mailing list, the creation of a Working Group in order to address a particular issue or topic. The GAC Chair may initiate a new Working Group based upon agreement from GAC Members.

As part of the initiation process of a Working Group, the proponent of the new Working Group,

¹ ICANN Bylaws, Section 12, available at [BYLAWS FOR INTERNET CORPORATION FOR ASSIGNED NAMES AND NUMBERS | A California Nonprofit Public-Benefit Corporation - ICANN](#)

² Ibid.

³ GAC Operating Principles – principle 27

in consultation with the GAC Chair, should submit a [Working Group Proposal](#) as per Annex A of these guidelines, including:

- A. A definition of the purpose of the Working Group; and
- B. Ensuring no overlap with existing Working Groups; and
- C. Proposed name of the WG.

The GAC Chair should then instruct GAC Support Staff to launch a call, via the GAC email list, for volunteers to join the new Working Group. For balanced participation, the GAC Chair may encourage members from underserved regions to join the new WG.

3.2 Call for Volunteers

GAC members who are interested in joining the WG should express their interest by responding to the call for volunteers email mentioned above. GAC Support Staff will provide the GAC Chair and WG Chair with a list of volunteers.

3.3 Election of Leadership

Upon the creation of a Working Group, the GAC Chair will initiate a call for volunteers from the Working Group to serve as Chair/Co-Chairs of said Working Group. After an informal consultation with volunteers and with GAC Leadership, the GAC Chair will appoint a Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs.

3.4 Adoption of Initiation Documents

All GAC Working Groups must develop the following documents:

- A. A Terms of Reference; and
- B. A Work Plan.

The templates for these documents can be found under Annex B and C to these Guidelines.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Working Group Chair or Co-Chairs

The role of a Chair/Co-Chairs is to convene Working Group meetings, preside over Working Group deliberations, facilitate the process so that all member participants have the opportunity to contribute, and report the results of the working group to the GAC. The Chair/Co-Chairs should balance the time commitments of Working Group members with the need for an outcome, as the work plan is developed.

GAC Working Groups should strive to appoint a minimum of two co-chairs, if possible.

In their work, the Chair/Co-Chairs should organize the work of the Working Group around the Terms of Reference and Work Plan.

The Chair/Co-Chairs should make it clear that participation in the Working Group and/or sub-teams meetings is open to all GAC Members/Observers.

Following the establishment of a working group, the Chair/Co-Chairs will:

- A. Ask GAC Support Staff to create a mailing list and an online space for the Working Group.
- B. Prepare and circulate draft [Terms of Reference](#) (see Annex B) to the Working Group for review, comment and agreement, as noted in 3.4.
- C. Send the agreed Terms of Reference to GAC Membership for comment and/or endorsement.
- D. Prepare and consolidate a draft [Work Plan](#) (see Annex C) for the Working Group for review, comment and agreement.
- E. Send the agreed Work Plan to GAC Membership for comment and/or endorsement.

4.2. Members

GAC Working Group members must also be GAC Members unless agreed by the GAC Chair. Working Group members as a whole are expected to participate, contribute and drive the work of the Working Group. It is the responsibility of the Working Group Members to make sure that any initial drafts represent as much of the diversity of views as possible.

While GAC Support Staff may be asked to help in assembling initial drafts, the Working Group is responsible for driving the work.

Member roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- A. Contributing constructive input with ideas and knowledge to the activities of the Working Group; and
- B. Developing and reviewing Working Group outputs consistent with the Work Plan and actively and constructively participating in the decision making process.

4.3. Liaison

The GAC Working Group may appoint a member of the Working Group as a liaison to other working groups, SO/AC, as needed.

Liaison roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- A. Fulfill the liaison role in a neutral manner, monitor discussion and assist and report to the Chair and the Working Group as required.
- B. Provide the viewpoint and comments to other Working Groups, SO/ACs, etc, as directed by leadership or by agreement of the Working Group.
- C. Report back to the Working Group on a regular basis on the progress, question(s), queries, or procedure(s) of other Working Groups, SO/ACs, etc.

4.4. GAC Support Staff

ICANN GAC Support Staff will assist the Working Group and its Chair/Co-Chairs with the following:

- A. Creation of a mailing list for the Working Group.
- B. Creation of an online space for the Working Group.
- C. Organizing meetings of the Working Group.
- D. Supporting the creation of the Terms of Reference and Work Plan documents.
- E. Taking and maintaining the minutes of the Working Group.
- F. Preparing and circulating meeting notifications, agendas, minutes and any other meeting documents.
- G. Assist the Co-Chairs in the preparation of written briefings for GAC meetings.
- H. Organize meeting rooms and facilities management for GAC meetings (as directed by the Chair or Co-Chair)
- I. Communicate the creation of a GAC Working Group to other constituencies (as directed by the GAC Leadership)
- J. Ensure the Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs is aware of ICANN activities relevant to the activities of the Working Group

5. Operation of a Working Group

5.1 Workplan

Each GAC Working Group should develop and update its work plan annually.

5.2 Meetings

GAC Working Groups should generally meet prior to formal GAC meetings in order that the Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs are able to present the group's output to the GAC Plenary meetings.

GAC Working Group meetings should not be scheduled at a time that conflicts with a formal GAC session during ICANN meetings.

The Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs need to advise GAC Support Staff as per scheduling deadlines for ICANN Meetings.

5.3 Working Group Outputs

Working Group members will work together in a spirit of transparency, collaboration, and cooperation to earnestly strive towards reaching consensus outputs. Working Group Chair/s will work towards facilitating constructive exchange among Working Group members to reconcile possible different approaches, and to reach outputs that reflect the views of the Working Group to the most extent possible, taking into account the agreed Work Plan and relevant timelines. When varying views prove difficult to reconcile, Working Group Chair/Co-chairs will strive to fairly and accurately reflect all views, and where appropriate, identify areas where agreement could possibly be reached.

Before the WG produces an output for GAC consideration, the Working Group may wish to produce an Interim or draft output. The working group, at its own discretion, may publish an Interim or draft output, which will contain a review and analysis of the topics it considers relevant.

The consensus view of the members of the Working Group shall be articulated in the output. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair/Co-Chairs will seek to express the range of views of the WG's members.

Such output may be circulated to the GAC for comment, or may be published with a view to seeking input from the wider ICANN community and/or relevant stakeholders outside the community.

After revising an output, the working group may seek GAC endorsement or support for the output. In the event that the GAC does not support or endorse an output, the working group may, at its discretion, reconsider and/or revise the output.

Working Groups may also produce a range of other documents, but these will vary depending on the nature of the task that the Working Group is undertaking. Upon request, the GAC

Support Staff may be able to provide templates or other documentation to support other work of the Working Group.

GAC Working Group outputs are not to be considered GAC output until such time as it has been formally endorsed by the GAC.

5.4 Reporting to the GAC

For each GAC meeting, the Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs are encouraged to prepare written briefings for the GAC about the Working Group's progress, including next steps and timelines. These are to be provided in a format that permits them to be readily processed and distributed by GAC Support Staff as part of the overall briefing pack.

From time to time Working Groups may wish to discuss an issue with GAC Membership during a GAC meeting.

- A. If the purpose of the involvement is only to update GAC members on the progress of the Working Group, then the interim or draft output described in 5.3 should suffice;
- B. If the purpose of the involvement is to invite GAC input to a particular issue, question or recommendation by the Working Group, or to seek to make a Working Group output a consensus GAC document, then an appropriate time slot should be added to the agenda to enable this dialogue. This should aim to be determined as early as possible ahead of GAC Meetings, as broader ICANN meeting scheduling allows.

5.5 Use of Sub-teams

Where deemed needed, a Working Group Chair/Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Working Group, may decide to form sub-teams mandated with specific tasks and agreed timeframes, consistent with the Working Group's agreed Work Plan. The Working Group's Chair/Co-Chairs will seek volunteers and will coordinate with Working Group members to assign lead(s) who will coordinate the work of a formed sub-team.

5.6 Logistics

Each Working Group will have a dedicated mailing list. In addition, Working Groups will make use of Working Group pages on the GAC Website. Working Groups are free to make use of different document formats, but it might be helpful to come to an agreement, in advance, to ensure that all members are able to work with them.

To the extent possible, GAC Working Groups should use their assigned online space to facilitate the exchange of information and views.

When needed, the WG Chair/Co-chairs may request language service assistance to help WG members during the working process.

6. Closure of a Working Group

6.1 Term

GAC Working Groups will be initiated for terms agreed to by Plenary depending on the issue and the anticipated time necessary to effectively address it. If the term of a WG is decided at the outset, then it should be considered as part of the WG proposal referred to in section 3.1. The term of the Working Group, once agreed by Plenary, will dictate in part the terms of reference and timeline by which the Group will complete its activities. The Working Group may request an extension of its term, to be proposed to and agreed to by Plenary.

6.2 Inactivity

If the WG has been inactive for a prolonged period, the GAC Chair or a person designated by the GAC Chair will contact the Chair of the WG, to assess whether the WG should continue its work or needs to be closed.

6.3 Decision to Close a Working Group

In the event the Chair/Co-Chairs of the Working Group or the person designated by the GAC Chair is of the view that the Working Group needs to be closed, the GAC Leadership Team will be advised to close the Working Group.

At the initiative of the GAC Chair, regular and periodic review of Working Groups shall be carried out to identify any Working Groups which should be completed/closed/adjourned.

7. Norms

7.1 Participation

WG members are encouraged to actively participate in the WG's process (e.g. attending meetings, providing input) and should formally withdraw if they find that they can no longer meet this expectation; this is an assessment that each WG member should make individually.

7.2 Standards of Behavior

GAC Working Groups are expected to follow applicable [ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior](#).

Norms, standards of behavior, or similar guidelines that the GAC may adopt in regard to its work

will be considered as immediately applicable to GAC Working Groups and sub-teams where applicable.

Version Control

13/06/2022	GAC Working Group Guidelines Endorsed by GAC membership.
20/01/2020	Draft by GOPE WG Members.
24/02/2022	Updated version incorporating WG member input and feedback.
8/04/2022	Redlined version including review/input from GAC WG Chairs/Co-Chairs.
5/05/2022	Redline version updated following GOPE WG membership review/input.
25/05/2022	Updated version incorporating WG member input.

Annex A: GAC Working Group Proposal Template

Template - Working Group Proposal: **Proposed Title of WG**

Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) members/observers wishing to create a new GAC Working Group should submit a written proposal using this template to the GAC mailing list: gac@icann.org.

The focus of the working group will be **[provide overview of key focus areas]**

Objectives

[provide objectives of WG]

Overlap with GAC Working Groups

[state any potential overlap with GAC working groups or work efforts and why this proposal should be considered as a separate item]

Additional Information

[provide additional information as appropriate]

Annex B: GAC Working Group Term of Reference Template

Template - Terms of Reference: **Title of WG**

To follow are the Terms of Reference for an internal working group of ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC).

The focus of the working group will be **[provide overview of key focus areas]**

Objectives

[provide objectives of WG]

Working Group Members

The GAC's **[name of WG]** will be chaired/co-chaired by:

- **[list name and country]**.

All GAC representatives and observers are welcome to join the [name of WG]. Working group participants are expected to be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge or expertise about aspects of the objectives of the working group; and
- Commit to actively participate in the activities of the working group on an ongoing basis.

All participants will be listed in the working group's online workspace, and on the GAC website.

The working group will be assisted and supported by the GAC Support Staff.

Deliverables and Timeframes

As a first step the working group should establish and adopt an initial work plan and an associated schedule (timeline). Relevant activities may include:

- [list likely relevant activities of the WG]

The work plan should include the timing and methods for informing the GAC of progress made by the working group. As a minimum, the **Chair/Co-Chairs** of the working group shall update the GAC about the activities of the working group, and its progress towards meeting its objectives at each face-to-face GAC meeting. The initial work plan and schedule should be published on the web page of the working group. The **Chair/Co-Chairs** will be responsible for maintaining and updating the work plan and schedule, and for informing the working group and the GAC Leadership Team of the changes made to the work plan and schedule.

At the discretion of the **Chair/Co-Chairs** an email list may be established to aid the work of the group. Details of how to subscribe to the email list will be published on the web page of the working group.

Annex C: GAC Working Group Work Plan Template

GAC WORK PLAN TEMPLATE <Insert Name of GAC Working Group>

What (Task Name and Description)	Who	By When	Stakeholders	Output (i.e. Decision or Document of some type)
<i>Examples:</i>				
1. Develop Terms of Reference for WG	Fred Jones	XX/XX/X X	GAC CVC, GAC Members, Secretariats of all other SOs and ACs	Document endorsed by GAC
2. Review existing situation (regarding the matter under scrutiny, e.g. public safety or IGO engagement)	Mary Smith Pedro Rocca Sam Snarly	XX/XX/X X	Relevant stakeholders (regarding the matter under scrutiny, eg Red Cross, Islamic Council, FBI, GNSO, Registries)	Document describing current state of affairs and nature of any problem with that state
3. Research and Develop draft advice for the GAC on the matter under scrutiny	Fred Jones Sam Snarly	XX/XX/X X	GAC members	Draft advice to circulate for GAC discussion
4. Draft final advice from the GAC on the matter under scrutiny and circulate to achieve consensus	Fred Jones	XX/XX/X X	GAC members, GAC Chair and Vice Chairs,	A documented position of endorsement by the GAC at meeting X
5. Provide advice (on the matter under scrutiny) to the recipient (may be the Board, may be other SO or AC)	GAC Chair via Fred Jones	XX/XX/X X	GAC Chair, ICANN Board, GAC Support, other relevant SOs and ACs	Formal Advice provided to recipient (eg GNSO or ICANN Board)