

# ICANN | GAC

Governmental Advisory Committee

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## Governmental Advisory Committee Comments Regarding the Final Proceeding for Proposed Language for the Draft Next Round Applicant Guidebook

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The ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Final Proceeding for Proposed Language for the Draft Next Round Applicant Guidebook (AGB) opened on 30 May 2025<sup>1</sup>. GAC members have reviewed the proposed language and herein provide general comments in that regard.<sup>2</sup>

The GAC thanks the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team and ICANN org for the multiphase approach to drafting of Applicant Guidebook Language, providing the GAC and other members with multiple opportunities to review and provide input prior to the publication of the complete AGB. The GAC recognizes that this is the final proceeding on proposed language for the Draft Next Round Applicant Guidebook now submitted in full for comment.

GAC Topic Leads have found that the Applicant Guidebook language is in accordance with SubPro PDP WG Recommendations and no inconsistencies across sections of the AGB were found. Accordingly, the GAC supports the draft language of the full AGB as it aligns with the SubPro PDP WG Recommendations, provided that some outstanding issues are addressed in the final text as noted below.

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<sup>1</sup> See public comment proceeding:  
<https://www.icann.org/en/public-comment/proceeding/final-proceeding-for-proposed-language-for-the-draft-next-round-applicant-guidebook-agb-30-05-2025>

<sup>2</sup> This comment was prepared by the Committee's leadership and is made on behalf of the entire GAC. It has been subjected to review of the GAC membership and is intended to complement, but not replace, any input that may be provided on the Final Proceeding for Proposed Language for the Draft Next Round Applicant Guidebook by individual GAC members.

**The GAC has noticed (section 2.3.2) a significant increase in some of the fees associated with Conditional Reviews.** For instance the Community Priority Evaluation Fee, which estimate has increased considerably compared to the 2012 round. The GAC recommends that ICANN provides more transparency regarding the structure and components that have led to the current estimates and the origin of the differences compared to the 2012 round. The GAC believes that such transparency would also provide more predictable outcomes for Applicants.

**Furthermore, with respect to the evaluation of Geographic Names (section 6.5)** the GAC seeks clarifications as regard the justification for the introduction of additional fees in comparison to the 2012 round where a similar procedure was in place. In addition, the GAC is of the opinion that the AGB text as proposed introduces some ambiguity in the role of the Geographic Names Panel (GNP) and the application of the fees associated with their conditional review. The Committee's understanding of the current text is that the additional fee will apply to all strings considered a geographic name, even in such cases where authenticity of supporting documents can and will be confirmed by the relevant GAC representative as described in section 6.5.3.2, and that any Extended Evaluation by the GNP would not introduce any additional fees for the applicant. The GAC seeks confirmation of this understanding and, if correct, would recommend: i) a clear explanation of the cost items that would justify additional fees in the range of \$18,000 USD – \$25,000 USD; ii) a differentiation of the fees between regular applications and those subject to additional reviews and an Extended Evaluation.

**In regard to section 3.2 GAC Member Early Warnings,** the GAC recommends to adjust the text to specify “GAC members and observers” where relevant, in order to include the Intergovernmental Organisations (IGO) that are registered as GAC Observer who were already part of such process in the 2012 round. To remove any ambiguity, we also suggest changing the bracketed expansion of “relevant parties” to also say “GAC members and observers” instead of the current “GAC members and governments”.

Further to this point, the GAC believes the process could be clarified and strengthened by more clearly specifying that GAC representatives and their alternates are entitled to submit GAC early warnings on behalf of a GAC Member or Observer, following the procedure agreed within the GAC.

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It has been beneficial for the GAC to be represented in the Subsequent Procedures Implementation Review Team (IRT) and to therefore take part in the discussions of the draft Applicant Guidebook and previous public comment proceedings. This has been important in keeping the wider GAC informed of developments.

The GAC is grateful to ICANN org for this opportunity to share the committee's perspective on the Final Proceeding for Proposed Language for the Draft Next Round Applicant Guidebook (opened on 30 May 2025) and the committee looks forward to contributing to potential future discussions relating to this matter as needed and actively preparing for the next round of new gTLDs.

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