
ICANN83 | PF – GAC: Discussion on New gTLD Program Next Round
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JULIA CHARVOLEN

Hello and welcome to the ICANN83 GAC Session on New gTLD's next round on Monday 9 June at 11:45 UTC. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments submitted in the chat will be read aloud if put in the proper form.

Remember to state your name and the language you will speak in case you will be speaking a language other than English. Speak clearly and at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation, and please make sure to mute all other devices when you are speaking. You may access all available features for this session in the Zoom toolbar. With that, I will leave the floor over to Nicolas Caballero, GAC Chair. Thank you, and over to you, Nico.

NICO CABALLERO

Thank you very much, Julia. I would kindly ask tech staff to turn up the volume a little bit because I could barely hear you, Julia. I can hear my voice now, but I could barely hear you. So just in case, tech team, please turn up the volume a little bit.

So welcome, everyone. I hope you enjoyed your lunch. So, for the sake of time, we're going to be making some little changes, but for

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the sake of time and without further ado, I'll give the floor to Jorge Cancio from Switzerland for the introduction. Please go ahead, Jorge, the floor is yours.

JORGE CANCIO

So, hello, everybody. I'm Jorge Cancio from Switzerland, jumping in to help moderating this session on New gTLDs. So we had a lot of exchanges this morning on the capacity building session itself on these matters. So now we are going to have maybe a more formal overview of where we stand with the different work streams we have on this matter looking into the Implementation Review Team, the Applicant Support Program, the outreach and engagement activities, and then we will deep dive a little bit more on some GAC topics of interest on the New gTLD round, with some AOB at the end.

Just for all intervenants or participants in this session, we have to be extremely strict on the timing. And I will start with myself to be strict. So I think we can go directly to the second point.

LARS HOFFMAN

Do you mind if you can quickly give Karla the floor on the RA, because she has to run to a different meeting.

JORGE CANCIO

On what?

LARSS HOFFMAN

On the Registry Agreement.

JORGE CANCIO

Okay. So yeah, so we are improvising on the spot. But as I took only three minutes, we can have two minutes for Karla, who will introduce something. Thank you.

KARLA HAKANSSON

Thank you, Jorge, and I will be very quick. My name is Karla Hakansson. I'm on the GDS team, and I'm leading our internal team at Org to work on the next round base Registry Agreement that was posted for public comment last week, on June 4th. So if you haven't had an opportunity yet to look at that, I encourage you to do so.

But I did want to just let you know that we have a session planned for the 17th of June, which is next Tuesday, and that is to cover the Registry Agreement, basically a Registry Agreement 101. I understand that there are a lot of new members to the GAC and there are a lot of important details around the Registry Agreement that you'll want to know as you think about the next round base Registry Agreement. So we'll actually have two sessions.

One, we'll be scheduling a couple of weeks after, the one on the 17th of June. On the 17th, we'll be covering all the fundamentals of the Registry Agreement, and you'll have time to ask questions.

And then in the second session, we will go into more details around what is different between the existing Registry Agreement and what's being proposed in the next round Registry Agreement. So I hope to see many of you there and thank you for letting me make that plug.

JORGE CANCIO

Okay, thank you so much, Karla. So everyone, please, if you have interest, take part in that session and you will hear what's new with the HEB. Without further ado, I think we have now 10 minutes for the Implementation Review Team. I don't know whether it's Rida. Rida, you have the floor.

RIDA TAHIR

Thank you very much. My name is Rida, I'm from the GAC team for Canada, and we had a really excellent session this morning for capacity development on the Applicant Guidebook. So that makes my intro here very easy this afternoon. I'll provide a little background on the work we've been doing behind the scenes to get the guidebook ready in the Implementation Review Team for the next round.

So the IRT started its work in May 2023. It's been two years of very hard work from the team. And the GAC had appointed a couple of representatives at the time, myself from Canada, and we had Nigel from the UK as well for a long time. And since then, we've been going through the implementation plan to go through the

recommendations that were brought forward from this SubPro final report.

It's been a long journey and a number of milestones have been reached, but the next one is that the Applicant Guidebook has been completed and the complete draft is available for public comment right now. The idea is that the AGB will be published no later than December 2025 for the Board's approval, and I encourage everybody to please review the public comment that's open right now for this to see if there's any feedback that you could provide to the IRT.

Next slide. As I just mentioned, the public comment proceedings have been open for a while, with this now being the fourth and final one that we're doing for the complete AGB. It opened up a couple of weeks ago, the end of May, and it's going to be open until July 23rd. A reminder that when you're going through this draft, to focus on really the implementation of the recommendations that have come through.

It's not an opportunity to change the policy per se, but really to just review for inconsistencies and oversights and to make sure that the language aligns with the recommendations from the SubPro guidance. And I think with that, I can pass it over to Lars to tap into a little bit more of the substance of the material that we've been covering.

LARS HOFFMAN

Thank you so much for that. Yeah, I also wanted to very quickly acknowledge Nigel Hickson, who obviously sadly passed. He was a very active member of the IRT. I think he was a great asset to not just ICANN, but the wider multi-stakeholder model. He participated in 52 sessions for the IRT, really being a very dedicated member.

NICO CABALLERO

Lars, could you please speak closer to the microphone?

LARS HOFFMAN

I'm sorry. And he will stay in our memory, and I noticed there's also a little book over there where we can leave some thoughts about him, so I think that's very appropriate. Thank you for that. And with that, a quick overview of the IRT, the Implementation Review Team statistics. We've been active for just over two years now, you see that we started in May at 23. We had altogether over 170 meetings, and the overall membership lift stands at 123.

It remains an open group, although we're down the final furlong as they say. You're still welcome to join these calls, and obviously all the calls that we had are recorded and can be followed up on. Overall, we also had four sub tracks, you see that here on the left, they had a total of 32 meetings. This was about the ASP and the RSP geographic names as well, I think.

So there was a number of different work that went on and really great work from the community. Can I see the next slide, please?

I'm not sure who's running the deck. You see that here a few numbers, the Applicant Guidebook, it's out for public comment, 395 pages. It does sound like a lot, but the annex alone, I think, is 20 pages. We also have about close to 200 pages on the annex.

So it is long, it is detailed, it's a very complex program that requires some words, some diagrams, and some pages at the end of the day, but I think we've made it as concise and accessible as possible. We already had four public comment proceedings. Many of you individually, as representatives of the member states or the GAC as a whole, provided input to this.

So everything that is contained in the current draft has already been subject to public comment. So if you want the second public comment here, however, for the first time, obviously, the document as a whole, we got that as well. Numerous Board resolutions, adopting the recommendations from the GNSO, engaging with the council on some recommendations where the Board had some concerns, and also obviously dealing with GAC advice that was issued on some of the issues pertaining to the next round.

The next slide, please. Thank you. This is the timeline for the Applicant Guidebook and then the opening of the next round. This timeline has been consistent for the past, over two years now, and we're sticking by it, which I think is a good sign. We have just published, as I said, 30th of May, I was going to say a week ago, but maybe it's a little bit more, the draft Applicant Guidebook.

It'll be open for 54 days, which gets us to the 23rd of July. The public comment will close, we will not have any extensions. We have the same rule, if you want, soft rule, maybe, with the previous public comments, it worked very well. Then in August, we will, by we, I mean the Org, the team will work through the public comments, categorize them, provide them overview documents, and then share that with the Implementation Review Team to then review and discuss the comments that have come in.

What I will say, if you're planning to submit a public comment, the team has also published an overview of all the comments that have been received to date, which is also a very lengthy document, as you can imagine, and so to the extent that those comments have already been dealt with through previous public comment processes and reviewed with the IRT. Unless anything new surfaces, obviously, we will focus not on repeat of previously submitted comments, but on those that bring new issues, concerns, or input to the table.

And that hopefully will allow us to work thoroughly, but efficiently through the comments in the August to October timeframe. Oh, that's not me. The length is a little bit, three months seems very long as a period, but as you can imagine, it simply depends on whether we receive five comments or a hundred comments. So depending on that, the timing will obviously have to be adjusted.

And then, subject to that, when we finish the discussions with the IRT, we will then talk to the Board and the next round caucus to

prepare them for their adoption later on this year. We have an internal timeline that would see this happening during the next ICANN meeting as I again said, subject to the substance and the amount of comment that we receive.

But otherwise, our deadline remains, as it has been, to have the Board adopt the Applicant Guidebook no later than December this year, which then means that four months later, the round can open, which gets us to April 2026. And you see the second to last bubble there, navy blue the Applicant Guidebook translations and the ICANN languages will also occur no later than February 2026.

The team is already working on that, starting to translate the draft Applicant Guidebook, so that hopefully the red line translations for the finalization of the guidebook will happen earlier than February 26th, we're trying to minimize that gap to the extent feasible. The next slide, please. That's the overview. And with that, I'm passing it on to my colleague, Kristy.

NICO CABALLERO

Yeah, before I give the floor to Tracy, can we go back very quickly to slide number three? And thank you so much, Lars and Rida, for your presentation. As you can see, we have four main topics, IRT Applicant Support Program update being the second, outreach and engagement activities being the third, and then GAC topics of interest on New gTLDs, and after that, I'll open the floor for questions or comments for the sake of time.

So let's go back to slide number six, or is it seven? And with that, let me give the floor to Tracy Hawkshaw, who's going to be walking us through the ASP, the Applicant Support Program update. Tracy and Kristy, by the way. Kristy Buckley, welcome. Is it you or Tracy? Yeah, I'm sorry. Tracy, please go ahead first.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Thanks, Nico. I'm just going to give a quick reminder to the GAC about the recent developments on this matter. As you recall, there was a Board consultation with the GAC on this based on the ICANN80 communiques. And next slide, please. This was in 2024, and as you recall, the GAC was based on primarily the issues of Outreach & Engagement and how this would impact the level of applications coming into the ASP program.

Next slide, please. So, this compromise that was developed, as you can see on this slide, was that we'll have monthly reporting on the geographic distribution that should inform and impact quarterly adjustments to the ASP communications, Outreach & Engagement efforts.

And in particular, there was a sort of a negotiated point where after 20 qualified ASP applicants, the Board will then direct ICANN Org to look to see if there's any adjustments that should be made to the communications, Outreach & Engagement activities to target applications for developing countries and to determine if any additional funding should be needed.

The little issue that we're going to encounter here is that we haven't yet reached the 20 target, which is of concern in the first place. And the concern that is going to follow from this is that if they all come in a rush at the end of the ASP cycle, which is in November, this compromise position may be affected in terms of how do we deal with the adjustments to communications and outreach, et cetera, because it will be finished by then.

Next slide, please. So just to kind of understand how this is moving on, we talked about the RFE process, that evaluator is underway, et cetera. So we expect that evaluator to be in place already, to be looking at the applications and therefore fast tracking them through to accepted status. Next slide, please.

And based around all of this, we would just like to learn more from ICANN about any observed obstacles for this program. Since, it appears, according to what we are seeing, the application numbers appear to be quite limited or small, there are many in the pipeline, but they're not coming through to applied status.

And as time is running out, we want to understand what's happening here and understand why so many applications are at this not-completed stage, are still pending, and this is something I hope that we will address in today's session, including whether or not we can help with that, and the discussions we had from the last meeting, whether any work has been done between ICANN and the GSC teams and the GAC as to how to proceed and prospect this. With that, I think I'll hand over to Kristy for an update. Thanks.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks very much, Tracy. I'm Kristy Buckley. I serve as the lead for the Applicant Support Program, and I'll provide a status update and also a bit of more information about what we are doing to help applicants in the pipeline, so to speak. Next slide, please. Sorry, one back. I think we skipped one. Sure. Thank you.

Okay, so here is the so-called pipeline. We have 44 total in the pipeline, with one application being withdrawn at this stage. We, in fact, recently had four applications proceed to the phase two, or the external evaluator for that part of the application process. So we are seeing some movement in the pipeline.

The team has also put together a brief five-question survey for applicants that are in the process right now, and I'll touch upon that in a bit more detail in just a moment. These stages of the application are based on where the applicant is in the process. Once they submit the required information, ICANN processes the application according to our service level targets, which indicate the number of days that we have allocated for every step of the application processing.

So, for the majority of applications in the pipeline, ICANN is waiting on applicants to further develop their applications. The applications are not waiting on ICANN in order to proceed. Of the four submitted applications, folks have asked for some regional distribution on that, so we have three from Asia Pacific and one

from Europe so far. Next slide. So, this slide shows the regional breakdown of ASP applications.

The bar graph shows the total number of ASP applications in the region in green, with the blue bar representing the number of countries in that region that we're seeing applications from. So, for example, in the Africa one, we have seven applications in total for ASP, and this is across four different countries. For context, we've included the 2012 ASP application statistics. We have only had three applications for ASP in 2012, as you see here.

So we have exceeded that number significantly, although we do agree that we need to see them moving through that application process and hopefully qualifying. Next slide, please. So, recognizing that most ASP applicants are still in the early stages of their application. As I mentioned, the team developed a five-question survey to understand potential challenges, as well as the likelihood of them submitting an ASP application, and to give them an opportunity to ask the applicant counselor to reach out to them.

Based upon the responses so far, which are minimal, we actually sent a reminder to people to fill out the survey again last week. But what we're hearing so far, we're analyzing the challenges that people have identified, we are in the process of recording a tutorial webinar for applicants to help them better navigate the system and understand the documentation that's required. We've published the pro bono service provider and mentor list as a resource on the ASP website.

And we're creating tailored responses via the applicant counselor to highlight the available resources and to learn more about how to best help them in the process. And this includes pointing to publicly available information, but also extracting the relevant portions of that information and putting it directly in an email so that it's readily available and they can take action on the information and guidance that we're offering. In the communication to ASP applicants via the counsellor, we're also reminding them that the information that they're providing in their ASP application, when it comes time to apply for a gTLD, can be imported from the ASP application system to the gTLD application system.

So this means that they're not starting from scratch when they start a gTLD application, and the information and documentation that they're providing to apply for ASP will serve them later when they apply for a gTLD as well. Next slide, please. More broadly, the team is continuing to raise awareness about the Applicant Support Program. We still have about five months left of the application window being open.

This will include a new social media campaign starting soon, and we're continuing to work on applicant readiness and capacity development materials, including a welcome package for ASP applicants once they qualify, and a more comprehensive applicant onboarding and learning journey to prepare them for the gTLD

application process. So, this concludes the ASP portion of the update. I do have another section on readiness which I can go to.

NICO CABALLERO

So thank you so much for this, Kristy. At this point, and given the fact that we're doing fine in terms of timing, I can open the floor for questions or comments for five minutes, and then I'll get back to you, Kristy, if it's okay with you. So I think I saw a hand from the CTU. Was that an old hand CTU? Go ahead, please.

NIGEL CASSIMIRE

Thank you very much, Nigel Cassimire, CTU. I had taken it down because I noticed that Kristy was going to go into an explanation that might have answered my question, sort of. Two aspects, please.

There was mention of a monthly report that would be used, possibly to adjust the outreach plan and efforts. I'm wondering if that monthly report is in place and if it's something that's published publicly or not, number one. And then related to that, the 20 applicants that Tracy mentioned, there was a slide you put up that had 22, 24, and so on.

I'm wondering which is the number we should be looking at in respect of that when the 20-applicant threshold is reached. All right. So is the monthly report in place? Is it something that we can

see and look at? And number two, how close are we to that threshold of reviewing the outreach method? Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKEY

Thank you very much for those questions. So the first question around the monthly reporting, so yes, indeed, this is in place, and it takes place via a monthly report to the Implementation Review team or the IRT for subsequent procedures of the next round.

So every month, myself, Chris Mondini, Bob Ochieng, and others from the team report out to the IRT in terms of the communications, outreach engagement efforts, as well as providing status updates on the ASP and RSP programs and the program statistics. So those are available, we'll pull up the link and put it in the chat in just a moment.

There are recordings there available. We have also recently discussed following up on those monthly meetings with an email to everyone that wants to sign up for it, including GAC members, if you're interested, to just put the high-level information directly in the email. So screenshots of the slides shared so that you don't have to go to the ICANN Wiki, or sorry, the SubPro IRT page and look at the recording.

You can just get that email update. So that will be coming soon. With regard to your second question about the pipeline, so what Tracy referred to in the first 20, referred to the first 20 qualifying

applicants. So we haven't yet had any applicants qualify for ASP, although we do have four in the sort of last stage of the evaluation.

Once we hopefully hit 20 applicants that actually qualify for support, that would be more or less the halfway mark because we've budgeted to support up to 45 applicants total. So that would give an opportunity for us to look at the geographic distribution of the first 20 that have qualified, and that might inform any adjustments that we want to make to communications, outreach, engagement efforts, or indeed, the budget or allocation of support itself. Does that answer your question?

NIGEL CASSIMIRE

I guess it does, and it also highlights the concern that Tracy raised about time running out, and maybe if all the applications come towards the end, an adjustment wouldn't have much effect. What I could probably ask as well is that maybe you make use of, say, regional organizations like ourselves to help with the outreach methods, and we could also help to follow up in our areas to enhance the applications. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

That's a great point and it's something that I think we all acknowledge as part of human nature, is to wait until the last minute as much as we are encouraging them to submit as early as possible, mostly to take advantage of the resources that are available and to give themselves more time to prepare for a gTLD

application. But yes, I can look to my colleagues, Bob and Chris, to work with you all on assisting at the regional level. So thank you for that suggestion.

NICO CABALLERO

Thank you so much, Kristy. Thank you, CTU. We have time for two more very quick questions. Please try to keep them short, sweet, and straight to the point. I have India and Netherlands next. India, please go ahead.

SUSHIL PAL

Thank you, Chair. This is Sushil from India. The first one, I think the request, I think in the last meeting as well, the GSE has called for the country-level information on the details of the applicants. We again request for the country-level data of the applicants and also the details with regard to those which are commercial as well as non-commercial.

Because I think in that case, the countries actually can reach out proactively to understand and help out those applicants. Because otherwise, these statistics have got no meaning for us. These are pure numbers without any intelligence to help the countries to reach out to the applicants to help them to complete the process.

And apart from that, I think we welcome the release of the complete draft Application Guidebook, we compliment you for that. But, however, we still feel that, I think this further needs to be

supplemented with a few case studies and mock applications and other annotated samples to complete the process. Thank you.

NICO CABALLERO

Thank you, India. You don't have a specific question, as far as I can see, right? Do you?

SUSHIL PAL

Just one. I think, is the ICANN actually productively approaching those 2021? I think we saw that 20 applications have been drafted, 19 initiated. Is ICANN proactively approaching them or sounding those countries to help, or reach out to them as to why they are not completing those application process?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Yes, thank you for the question. And we have been briefing our GSE colleagues, so this is the Global Stakeholder Engagement Team, they're distributed throughout the world on the country distribution that we're seeing with ASP applications so that they have a sense of where there may be gaps, so to speak, in terms of where we're seeing applications from.

So the reason why we've been briefing them is because GAC members asked for this information and asked to work with Global Stakeholder Engagement colleagues in their countries and in their regions to support those ongoing outreach and engagement efforts. So we do encourage you to reach out to your regional vice

presidents in your region to get a better understanding of where you might be helpful.

Just a last point in terms of the types of entities that are applying, this is reported on the ASP Program Statistics page, where the information is available. So in some cases, if they've just started an application, maybe just put their name, an address, and we may not know yet if they're a non-profit or an Indigenous group, but where we do know that information, it's updated on the website on a monthly basis.

NICO CABALLERO

Thank you so much, Kristy. Thank you, India. One last question from the Netherlands. Please go ahead.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's Marco speaking for Netherlands. And then I think Kristy already answered most of my question, apart from outreach, where I'm as a government, really interested is to hear and learn whether there are any obstacles within my realm of influence that I can take away.

So I'm happy for this continuous reporting and overviews, and I would like to reiterate that if somewhere during this evolving process you do identify obstacles, please reach out to us and also do not hesitate to not wait for the next ICANN meeting, we're here to help, famous last word.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you very much for that offer and thank you very much to the GAC for your ongoing support. As you know, Nigel Hickson was a key champion of the Applicant Support Program, and for those of you that are newer to the GAC, we very much look forward to working with you and would appreciate your help in doing outreach, engagement, and helping applicants through the process. Thank you.

NICO CABALLERO

Thank you, Netherlands. Thank you, Kristy again. We have a question from Colombia. Julia, would you please read the question that's in the chat room?

JULIACHARVOLEN

Of course, Nico. Okay. In addition to the survey, is there any study review to understand the gap between regions, i.e., why is the LAC region so far behind others in the application numbers for the ASP?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Yeah, very good question. It's hard to know exactly why the numbers are where they are. I do know that our engagement colleagues and our communications teams have been working tirelessly in their regions to raise awareness around these opportunities within the Applicant Support Program. And we did, in fact, see some really significant uptick in the website statistics

last month from Brazil following the LACNIC event there. So I think sometimes it takes a little bit more time for interest and awareness in these programs to gain traction in certain regions. But our colleagues are working on their own and in consultation with GAC members as well to raise awareness about these. Thank you.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Kristy. Maybe we can follow with the readiness portion of it, but we are a little bit behind schedule. So if we can make it short, thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Okay, I will try to be short, but not fast. Thank you. So I am going to put on a different hat right now. So I think under the agenda, this readiness was listed under Applicant Support Program, but in fact, it is broader. It is really about readiness for the whole New gTLD program and the audiences that are impacted by that.

So the next slide just talks about readiness and what is it and why does it matter. If you can just press the button to animate, that would be great. So really, it's about preparing all affected audiences for the next round. If you just... yeah. So this is the organization and internal teams, individual staff, training them, making sure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to execute successfully on the next round.

It includes the vendors that are going to be participating in evaluation processes for this. It includes applicants, of course, and

thinking about how to create information that is accessible to diverse audiences, and delivering it in ways that will support them along each part of the application process and journey. And lastly, it, of course, includes ICANN community members. How are we orienting them to the roles and preparing them to effectively play those roles going forward?

As you saw earlier in the GAC session, there are a number of roles that the GAC in particular will play in the next round. So part of that is helping prepare you all for those roles as well. Next slide, please. Maybe one. Yeah, thank you. The readiness team's mandate is also, as I mentioned, to prepare applicants to successfully participate in the next round. And to do that, we're developing support plans across each step in the applicant journey.

So at the top of the slide here, the sort of rainbow arrows, you'll see the different high-level stages of that journey. And the idea is to ensure that applicants have the information, the knowledge, and the skills required to be successful in each of those steps. This starts with preparing for an application submission prior to April 2026, through to post-contracting steps, which are several years away still. The content will be provided in several formats which complement each other, but they do not replace the Applicant Guidebook as the authoritative source.

So on this side, here you'll see that we have key topic overviews. These provide summaries of complex Applicant Guidebook topics. We have published several of these already, and these are on the

website, we can provide the link in the chat. And we have plans to publish many more of these over the coming months. We also have frequently asked questions or FAQs. These are aimed at addressing common questions related to Applicant Guidebook topics. We'll also have webinars used to increase knowledge among more complex and new Applicant Guidebook topics, as well as the overall application process.

Finally, we'll have training provided where skill and ability is needed. Applicants will have access to these training materials related to the application system as the opening of the round approaches. Next slide, please. So this shows you a high level timeline of those materials under development. So you'll see, we have the topic overviews prioritized in batches, which I'll speak to in a moment. We have the FAQs, and those are primarily targeted towards applicants and community members.

The topic overviews in particular, I think, will be really helpful for GAC members. They provide really high-level briefings in one or two pages about topics in the Applicant Guidebook. We've put them on the website and they're also downloadable in a PDF, so you could print it out if you need to do a briefing. It's something that will easily provide a high-level overview of that information.

You'll also see the webinars happening starting in Q1 of 2026 for both the applicant journey and new applicants. This will also include, around that timing, the GAC advice and GAC early warning webinars, as well as an introduction to the SPIRIT or the ongoing

Implementation Review Team mechanism that will oversee the next round. Lastly, I have system training and resources available as we get closer to the application period opening.

Next slide, please. Okay, go fast, but slow. Okay, sorry to speak too fast. For the key topic overviews, here you'll see an example of what one of those might look like. And as I mentioned, they're in a PDF format, you can print them. We already have the first batch that was published before ICANN83, those are on the New gTLD program website resources page. And we have a second batch under development.

The approach is to provide succinct briefings in very simple language, wherever possible. And let's see what else is there. And again, I'll just lastly say that even though we are providing these high-level summaries and briefings, the authoritative source for all information around the new gTLD program really is that 375 or 95-page Applicant Guidebook. And with that, I'll see if there are any questions here.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Kristy. In the interest of time, we will switch directly to the next topic, which is related. I think we have an Applicant Support Program. Now we have the outreach and engagement activities, and now we are looking into precisely this with more depth. I don't know whether it's Tracy or it's Bob. Bob, directly. Hello, welcome. You have about five minutes if you can really boil

it down to the essentials. And sorry for putting pressure on you.
Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG

Thank you very much. Bob Ochieng, for the record. And I also serve in the Nexton program, leading the outreach and engagement work stream, together with my colleague, Chris Mondini, and I am sure we have been speaking to very many of you variously across the regions.

I also do probably recognize that there's been a lot of information shared since the morning, including in this panel, and a part of what I have here potentially has already been alluded to by my colleagues, so it would be pretty brief in the slides, but at the same time, these slides are available for you to download and read at your pace when you go back.

So we'll highlight a few statistics because this has been really important for us. I think one thing that we've been trying to do is to document and keep a record of our engagements across the regions. And remember, our engagement has been very regional. You'll be interacting with our GSE colleagues across your respective regions.

And what you see in front of you is just a snapshot in terms of what we have done so far in the outreach and engagement efforts. Happy to say that in the calendar year of 2024, that's January to December 2024, we had a total of 20 and four there about events

across all the regions. At that time, our main focus was on applicant support. In the last six months, almost up to 4th of June, we have almost matched the same number.

So in half of this year, 2025, we have done as much as we did in 2024. So this is real momentum that we've picked on outreach and engagement to try and deliver this number of events, in forums, in workshops. Some of them have been hosted by GAC reps in the room. And I must commend Nigeria, for example, I know Ronke is in the room, for hosting some of these workshops with us. Tanzania was one of them.

So we are actually doing this in partnership, and we'd reach out and still extend a hand for those of you who would want to host some of these workshops with us. Because we've noted that when we gather in small groups at a country level, sometimes the engagement is much more impactful. So please join us in this endeavor to really make this as effective and as local as possible.

And next slide. Again, that's just highlighting some of those key events, some of which are closer to you, and you might have participated in either of those since the last ICANN meeting. We are also highlighting some of the events that we'll be part of in the next few months. For example, we'll be at the Global IGF, where Christy will be facilitating a session on ASP.

And next slide. So to complement our on-ground outreach and engagement, we're working with our Comms colleagues, and they have already produced a lot of blogs, a lot of reports and

announcements that are available on our websites to complement the same awareness to really deepen and reach as much wider audiences as possible. And I invite you to read some of these blogs and announcements in detail.

Next slide. Maybe I have two more minutes to go. We have additional resources. One thing we've published, again, which takes a lot of effort and investment, are use cases. I think it's been said here many times that you really want to see clear use cases for different types of TLDs, be they geo names, be they brands, be they city names, how people have used these names from the last round to try and inform would-be applicants on how names could be used in a different way as they plan whatever applications are in 2026.

Next slide. So this is a very important slide for us. I think, especially from the GAC, a lot of requests have been made to really try as much as possible to create resources and material that can be used by the community to further support engagements if they could do it without us, or as they try to help. There's only so much that our staff, in terms of our footprint, we could reach. So this was really an invitation to the community, but they wanted material and content to use if they were to better support us in this engagement.

So we created a toolkit, which we've talked about variously. So to date, what you see here is, for example, the total downloads in terms of how this toolkit has been used. We have a toolkit that describes the next round, ASP, and also RSP in a lot of detail. It is translated in the seven languages that we do have, but we wanted

you to also see to what extent this material has been utilized. So what you see here on the left is, from a country perspective, how many visitors have gone to this material.

I think Kristy mentioned that we had quite a bit of activity in Brazil, where LACNIC, I think, was happening. On the right is your cumulative downloads in terms of numbers across the different materials on the website and in terms of the toolkit. So this was really to give you a perspective in terms of what you ask, vis-a-vis how this material is actually also being used by the community.

Next slide. So, lastly, I'll just highlight on ongoing activities. We still have quite a lot of work to do, especially from an ASP perspective. And, most importantly, speaking to foundations and development banks, for example, an area that we clearly need your help to introduce as well. Some of these institutions are more responsive to governments, for example, and therefore it's a partnership that we'd welcome as we try to also sensitize them about this program.

Next one. And lastly, and as mentioned by Kristy as well, we do a monthly, detailed update to the IRT. This was asked by the GAC. And in that session, we actually give a much broader and wider detail from RSP to ASP to the overall next round engagement across that month and to date. And this month, we'll be doing an update on Thursday as well. And we follow up that with a snapshot, a recap that we also share, especially with the GAC.

So if you are not able to attend those, these sessions are also recorded, and you can still listen to them at your own time. So we

welcome you to keep following that because this indeed is a joint effort and a partnership towards the launch of the next round. I guess that was five minutes, but happy to take questions. Thank you very much.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Bob, and thank you for helping us to catch up. Now we would open for two or three minutes for questions on this part of the session. And we had a question or an input from Ashwin, who is joining us online. I don't know if Ashwin you can participate? You are here. Okay, I saw you online. So please take the floor.

ASHWIN

SASONGKO

Yes, thank you. Yes, I'm here. I raised my hand in the cyberspace.

SASTROSUBROTO

First of all, it's about the ICANN activities in various countries and area. My short question is, how ICANN can support those type of activities in those various countries? Because not all countries are, what you call it, rich enough to support that, and not also the ICANN partner.

They may not be financially strong enough to make some sort of international activities like that. That's number one. But second is also to Kristy. Is it okay if I? Yeah. You guys, you are running the Applicant Support Program. What my question is, when you make the Applicant Support Program, do you only give support for the registry, the will-be registry, how to apply in accordance to the plan? Or you also give them the experience of the first launch of

gTLD and telling them, okay, don't apply for names that can be sensitive, can cause problems, and may take a long time for discussion, and so on, and so on. Thank you.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Ashwin. In the interest of time, we will take the other question we have in the room from Feng, from China, please. And then we will get back to short answers before we continue.

GUO FENG

Thank you, Jorge. Actually, I would like to share some very brief observations around this session's topic in general. The full draft of the Applicant Guidebook is a key document in the next round of the New gTLD program. I want to express my gratitude to the ICANN community and ICANN staff.

In particular, topic leads, namely GAC representative of Canada and UK, and others, deserve respect from this committee for their participation in the SubPro and IRT processes, for providing GAC input to those processes, and for keeping the GAC informed of a range of issues of concerns to the GAC in a timely manner. So, the draft guidebook has a large number of pages, with a total of almost 400 pages, and I believe that only a few community members are able to read through the full text for the time being and in the future.

So we would like to ask ICANN Org and GAC to give continuous assistance to GAC representatives, just as this morning's capacity

building session. In addition, we would like to call on the committee, GAC, to use this face-to-face meeting opportunity to review the GAC's concerns in the draft guidebook and to reiterate, if there is any, the GAC's concerns in the GAC communique and to form consensus advice through the meeting list discussions after this meeting and input them to the ICANN Board and ICANN Org. So that's it. Thank you for your attention.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Feng. And this is, in fact, a very good segue to the last point of the agenda of today. But before we go there, Kristy or anyone else, any reactions to Ashwin?

BOB OCHIENG

Thank you. Probably very briefly, on the first part of the question on whether and to what extent we have also extended resources or support with some of events. So we do quite a bit of that. Obviously, we do recognize that, we have limited resources, but within that, we have been trying to find a way of working, especially with our RVPs, where they recommend site partnerships, including sponsorships.

We can support in a limited way, probably not to the extent of travel support, but we have supported quite a number of events across different regions. Maybe my advice would be to work this through with the RVPs, I think Samiran in this case, and we'd be able to give you help. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks, Bob. And thank you very much for the question regarding applicants both supporting them in the ASP process, but also in the gTLD application process. So what you touched upon relates to two different things. So one is the ASP Capacity Development Program, so for supported applicants that qualify for support, we want to help build their capacity and understanding and ability to prepare to apply for gTLD.

At the same time, most of that is also going to be applicable to any new gTLD applicant around applicant readiness. So, yes, indeed, we are working on readiness materials to support their process for a gTLD application. Part of that includes recruiting pro bono professional service providers and mentors, which we have recruited, I think, to date, 33 of those so far. We actually have a new flyer available at the next round booth with more information about pro bono service providers and mentors.

We held an orientation for them recently, and the list is published on the website for ASP applicants and other new gTLD applicants that may need professional support. So that's an available resource to help them prepare and navigate not just an ASP application or a gTLD application, but the entire process. Thanks.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Kristy, for that further information. So we are a little bit behind schedule, so let's try to catch up. Now we have a point on

the agenda on GAC topics of interest on New gTLDs. I think it's the next slide. Thank you.

And here, if I may count, with Lars and I think also Elisa, to be as brief as possible, building on the discussions we already had during the capacity building session this morning. And if we can summarize the main points in eight minutes, I would be very thankful to both of you. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMAN

Challenge accepted, Jorge. All right, next slide, please. Elisa, I don't know if you in stage at the end. Yes, Elisa, over to you, you start. Go on.

ELSIA BUSETTO

Thanks. I'll try and be quick. I'm Elisa Busetto, and I'm working on the next round. Reporting to Lars and Marika's team. So we already looked into this topic this morning, so it's the community input, objections and appeals topic, Module Three of the Applicant Guidebook. And here we really try to focus on what the GAC can do.

We will probably repeat myself a little bit, but I will try to be quick. So, first of all, the GAC can issue consensus advice to any new gTLD applications at any time during the process. Whereas GAC members, governments or groups thereof have the possibility to issue GAC member early warnings, submit application comments,

submit singular, plural notifications, but also file objections and appeals should they not be successful in the objection they filed.

So all this can start happening on String Confirmation day, which is the day when all the applications and the final strings are published on the ICANN website. And if we can go to this next slide, please. Thank you. So, GAC consensus advice, as you know, is issued by the GAC according to ICANN's bylaws to address applications that are identified to be problematic.

And GAC consensus advice must state that it is advice, it should include a clearly articulated rationale, and really be limited to the scope set out in the bylaws provisions. And also, it should elaborate on any interaction between ICANN's policies and various laws and international agreements, or where they may affect public policy issues, and this is all specified in the Applicant Guidebook.

Applicants have the possibility to respond to GAC consensus advice within 21 days so that their response can be taken into account in the interactions with the Board. And if GAC consensus advice is accepted by the Board, it may prevent an application from proceeding or from proceeding unless specific modifications are made, such as mentioned earlier, the addition of a registry voluntary commitment.

And next slide, please. GAC member early warnings, on the other hand, they're issued by individual or groups of GAC members, and consensus is not required, so they're not based on the ICANN

bylaws. And they provide the applicants with an indication that the application is seen as potentially sensitive or problematic and might eventually be subject to GAC advice, but will not necessarily have to be subject to GAC advice, and it does not have a direct impact on the application.

The applicant can decide whether to act on this or to do nothing. So they can try and resolve the issue by, for instance, communicating with the GAC member who issued the GAC advice, or they may also decide not to do anything. GAC early warnings must also include a written explanation describing why the GAC early warning was issued, and the applicant may address it or not.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to communicate with relevant GAC members, but they don't have to. The GAC member early warning will also include a field indicating a contact point from the relevant GAC member so that applicants will not have trouble in reaching out to them. Next slide, please. GAC members can also submit application comments, if they so wish, via an ICANN managed platform, which is called the Application Comment Forum.

They don't have costs associated and comments are a mechanism for the public to bring any relevant information they wish to the attention of ICANN applicants and evaluators regarding specific applications. If a comment is submitted within 90 days of string confirmation day, such comment will be submitted to relevant evaluators, who may or may not take this comment into account

based on whether it is related to any of the specific evaluation criteria that the relevant evaluator is looking into.

There will be another application comment period open in case of material change requests, which will be made also available to evaluators for consideration. And next slide, please. Singular or plural notifications is another way the community can raise issues concerning a specific string in this case, and GAC members can also do that. It is based on the claim that an applied first string is a singular or plural form of another applied first string, a delegated TLD, or a string being processed from a previous round or a block name.

It must include evidence. There's no cost associated to submitting a singular or plural notification. And if a match is found, the evaluation will be carried out by ICANN. The relevant string or strings may be placed in a contention set, or the entire application prevented from proceeding if, for instance, it is found that it is a singular or plural form, or an already existing gTLD.

And next slide, please. I'll go fast. I'll sum it up. So last process is objections, which are filed by parties withstanding, and for more information on who these parties withstanding are, you can refer to the following slides on specific grounds, which are also listed in the following slides and they're administered by external dispute resolution service providers. These have costs associated, and it should be noted that independent objector may file limited public interest and community objections given certain conditions.

And if the objective prevails, the outcome of the objection is binding, and the relevant string may be placed in a contention set or the application prevented from proceeding. And unlike in the last round, the expert determination can be appealed. Maybe just a quick note before I give the floor to Lars, is that funding from ICANN is available to individual national governments in the amount of \$50,000 for objections and appeals.

And this will cover filing fees and advance payments of costs, with the guarantee that a minimum of one objection and appeal per government will be fully funded by ICANN where requested. So there will be a procedure available for national governments to be able to apply to get this funding to file objections and appeals. And I think we will skip the next couple of slides with more details on grounds and standing. But I see there's a question from Susan.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you, Elisa. We will take the question as soon as Lars uses his last one minute to go over the rest of the slides. I knew there were too many slides.

LARS HOFFMAN

It's the curse of ICANN, there's always too many slides, I think. One more slide, please, and I'll just stay here because we talked about the other topic, but I want to very quickly touch on the Registry Agreement commitments. These are essentially commitments that registries or applicants will have to make or would like to make

in order to provide safeguards or other reinsurances around their strings.

I think the main thing here I want to point out is the safeguard public interest commitments. These are based on some classification of the GAC actually provided in the last round. So these will apply going forward as well. This depends on the type of string and the sensitivity attached to it. There's different classifications here.

You can find it in the guidebook. And essentially, the applicant will be guided to this through the kind of application questions that they respond to, and then they will have to provide commitments that will be captured in what is referred to by us Anoraks as Spec 11 in the Registry Agreement. The next one here, the registry voluntary commitments, so these are customized commitments to overcome, for example, GAC advice.

So the GAC may say this application can't proceed or shouldn't proceed because of these reasons, unless the applicant commits to do X, Y and Z. And while a promise is nice, a commitment that is in the Registry Agreement is probably better. So there's the process for ICANN and the applicant to discuss these commitments, ensure they align with the bylaws, and then they would be implemented or included in the Registry Agreement.

And then, finally, we talked earlier, for those who were here, about community applications. In order to be a community applicant, you also have to provide certain policies to explain how you would

serve your specific community. And again, these commitments have to be codified in a registry quality commitment, and they will then also be included in the Registry Agreement permitting that they are enforceable under ICANN's bylaws. I'm going to leave it at this and pass it back to Jorge.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Lars. And the slides, they are available, or they will be available. And for the next time, we definitely need to have fewer slides and more time. But without further ado, we have our colleagues from the U.S. asking for the floor. Please, Susan.

SUSAN CHALMERS

Thank you, Jorge, and thank you to all colleagues for the presentations during this session. The GAC faces a major workload for the next round, and GAC representatives will need to review all applications for national concerns, and the GAC collectively will need to discuss applications, early warnings, and other matters. So, to the extent that we can, the committee should discuss how it should approach these discussions.

The United States has some reservations about the next round of new gTLDs. Specifically, we have concerns that expanding the DNS too broadly can lead to more spam and DNS abuse for everyone on the internet. Our concerns are not for a next round. In general, to be clear, we see value in certain categories of applications, such as

for geo TLDs and for internationalized domain names. In some cases, it makes sense to add new strings to the DNS.

But in light of the global phishing problem, which we will learn more about tomorrow, and some similar concerns, the United States is of the view that we should not expand the DNS too broadly. As the GAC did in 2013, we must consider how to limit this expansion appropriately to take into account public interest impacts. Thank you.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Susan, for that statement. I wonder whether there are any other interventions or questions to our panelists, comments, reactions? Just stopping one moment. And please staff, inform us whether there is any intervention. Nothing. Everything was clear. In any case, as Susan mentioned before, we have to get this band together, the GAC band, and to get prepared for the next round, to be prepared for this string.

What's the official name? String Celebration Day? String Confirmation Day? This will be an important day. And then it's when the deadlines start, when we have to be prepared and we cannot wait for that moment, which will happen sometime next year, in May, probably.

So I would invite you, colleagues, to approach either Rida or Tracy, or me or Benedetta from our support staff, because we need all hands on deck to get prepared, to really be prepared as far as

possible to have the GAC early warnings, the GAC consensus advice, to have all the processes in place, and this doesn't happen out of itself, it depends on our voluntary work.

So if you want to volunteer to participate in this effort, you are all very much invited. So I'll give you another chance to comment or intervene. Now I see a colleague from Egypt. Please, you have the floor.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you, Lars. This is Abdalmonem Galila for the record. Actually, my mind tries to combine both sessions, the first one since a couple of hours and this one. The term auction or auctioning needs a lot of clarification. What I mean here, what is the process to do an auction for names specifically?

Who will suggest the names in order to make an auction? ICANN, or a group of applicants, who will suggest some names in order to make an auction. If I am the winner of the auction, could I sell this domain name, this name to other buyers, other applicants? Something is missed here for the process for these auctions. Thank you.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much for that question. Do we have a quick reply from our ICANN Org colleagues? Lars, are you ready? Elisa is pointing at you.

LARS HOFFMAN Sorry, I answered actually a question from Tracy here. Could I have that repeated? I'm so sorry.

NICO CABALLERO So, Lars, the question basically is, if I am the winner of the auction, could I buy or could I sell this? Can you repeat the question, Egypt? Please go ahead.

LARS HOFFMAN I'm sorry.

ABDALMONEM GALILA The question, again, the term auction here, what is the process for doing an auction? Where does the auction start from transitioned names from the applicants, group of applicants, or these names will be transitioned first or barrier to the auction by ICANN? What is the terms and the conditions for doing an auctions for both ICANN and for both applicants?

LARS HOFFMAN Thank you for the question. So what I understood was that the question is about mechanism of the auction, like, what's the starting bit essentially, what is the role ICANN plays, and what the role the applicant plays or the applicants obviously play, because there must be more than one for there to be an auction.

So the auction will be conducted by an independent service provider, an auctioneer, essentially, as was the case in the 2012 round. The Board has also directed us to implement the same methodology as in the 2012 round. I don't have the link handy, but I'm happy to provide it by the GAC colleagues later on. There is some information on the methodology and the mechanics of these Auction Room, 2012, and in principle, that will apply again.

What happens at a very high level is that the starting base is zero, there is no minimum bid if you want, and the auctions are facilitated in, if you want, phases. And so the auctioneer will set, the first phase is up to, I'm making up a number now, \$1,000. And so, if more than one applicant bids \$1,000, they proceed to the second round of auction. And there the top bid, as determined by the auctioneer, is, for example, \$2,000.

And again, if more than one bids 2,000, you move to the third stage, and so on, and so forth, until only one applicant remains, and they will then pay what's called the exit bid, so the last bid of the second highest bidder. So that can happen in the first round, you bid \$1,000, I bid \$800. So you would be ready to go to the second phase, I am not, I only bid \$800. You win the round, you win the auction, and you proceed, and you will have to pay the \$800 that I bid as my, in that case, exit bid, if that makes sense.

And ICANN here does not come into the game, where ICANN is not part of these auctions. The funds of the auctions, like in the last round, will be put into an auction fund. It will be at the discretion

of the Board to determine how that is used. As you know, the funds from 2012, or as you may know, were used to a large degree for the ICANN's Grant Program.

Going forward, I think the Board will look at what to do with the auction funds depending on, I suspect, I don't want to speak for the Board, but you don't know how many auctions there will be, what the funds will be, and so that will be up for the Board to determine how to move forward with those funds. But it's not money that will go to ICANN or our operating budget or anything like that. I hope that's helpful. Thank you.

JORGE CANCIO

Thank you so much, Lars. Time is up. So I have to thank Elisa, Kristy, Tracy, Rida, Bob, Lars, and Benedetta and the whole team that put this together. And I think our chair, Nico, has an important announcement to make.

NICO CABALLERO

Well, not that important, it's actually a housekeeping announcement. We'll have a coffee break, a much-needed coffee break now, and right after that, we will be welcoming you at 3.30 for the next session on the community session, by the way. It's a community session on WSIS+20. So enjoy your coffee. Thank you so much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]