GULTEN TEPE

Welcome to the GAC Capacity Development Session New gTLD Program Next Round Session on Saturday, 25th of October. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted in the proper form in the Zoom chat pod.

Interpretation for this session will include all six UN languages and Portuguese. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in the Zoom room. Please state your name for the record and the language you will be speaking, when speaking a language other than English. And please speak at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. I'll now hand the floor over to Tracy Hackshaw. Tracy?

TRACY HACKSHAW

Hello, hello. Welcome to this afternoon's Capacity Development Session. I'm Tracy, and I hope today we're going to have a very interactive session. Before I even begin, in the spirit of giveaways, I have some giveaways here for people who ask questions. These

are RFID protective cards, and these are data blockers, so if you ask a question, you get one. Yeah? How about that? Good.

Also, if you are not English-speaking, please put on your headsets because you can get translation or interpretation, I should say. All right? So, no empty looks, no blank looks today. Put your headsets on if you don't speak English so you can get the value of the session today. All right? We agree? Can I get an amen? All right. Fair enough. Good enough.

All right. So, welcome to this Capacity Development Session at ICANN84. I'm the co-chair of the Underserved Regions Working Group with my colleague, Karel Douglas, who is remote. Today, assisting me will be Thiago, one of the vice-chairs of the GAC, and we are looking today to look at the next round of new gTLDs. I'm one of the topic leads for that program. And we found that working together face-to-face to get this information to you is probably the best way to do it. The sessions are developed with the intent to increase knowledge in your particular jurisdictions, in your areas, and for you to really internalize what's happening here.

We're trying to design an interactive session for you to ask the questions you need to ask. This is not going to be a download session. It's going to be an interact, talk to you, let's hear what you have to say, interact with us type of session. We think you should be the ones who are really driving the process of the Capacity Development Session. We have topic leads, subject matter experts from ICANN org will be helping us. And for this meeting and

subsequent ones, just to remind you, we are focusing on the next round in 2025.

So, based on your iteration and your discussions, we are focusing on this going forward. And we have one session now, one right after, and a third one tomorrow. And this next round session and the one after is designed to assist you with the plenaries that are happening this afternoon and tomorrow morning. So, informing you for your discussions at plenaries. So, it's not the same session. This is going to be the building of capacity, building of knowledge, understand what's happening, and the plenaries for the discussion, if you see what I'm trying to get at.

Now you are asking questions, engaging, right? You're asking stuff of, oh, what's happening? What don't I understand? Does this data make sense? Help me understand what's happening here. All right. So, I hope these sessions will be useful to you. I'm going to stop talking now and hand it to my colleague, Thiago, who is going to give us the introduction to the rest of the session. Over to you, Thiago.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you so much, Tracy. All right, all right, all right. Are you guys ready to learn a little bit about the new round and the ASP? Did you bring Esther's enthusiasm this morning? Yes? Thank you. I'm going to help out Tracy in this work. Obviously, you're always used

to Karel. I guess I have a little bit more hair than Karel, but trying to do the same job that he was doing here.

So, as Tracy mentioned, the capacity development is here to help us out, understand a little bit more of what we are going to do during the next round. What is our role? What tools do we have in order to consult and to voice our opinions during this new round? Obviously, we have a previous round to have learned from, and there is also a lot of development that has taken place during this round that we have learned and that we have participated and we know what we can do. In order to do that, we have here colleagues from ICANN org that are going to help us out, delve a little bit more into the different issues. And we have, during this ICANN meeting, a lot of plenary sessions dedicated to it.

So, we're going to have presentations that are going to be followed by Q&As. We can decide here if we want to have questions immediately after something important is mentioned, or do we want to let them finish the presentation and then have questions. But it's really important for questions to be asked. There are, like I mentioned before, there are no stupid questions. There are no ignorance here. What we need to do is to ask questions so we can have them explain things better in different languages, and how many other times that we need to hear.

So, without further ado, let me give the floor to ICANN staff Kristy Buckley, Jared Irwin, Elisa Busetto, and Ariel Liang to take us through the readiness plan of the applicant journey. And finally

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we'll dive into the public interest commitments and registry voluntary commitments with Ariel Liang. Kristy, you have the floor.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Don't forget, we have giveaways for questions. Please.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Okay. Greetings, everyone. My name is Kristy Buckley. Many of you know me from ICANN's Applicant Support Program, or ASP. I also lead the readiness team for the New gTLD program, which is what I'll be talking to you about today. Oh, I can't see the slide. Next slide, please. No, sorry, the previous slide with the agenda. Thank you so much.

So, today I'll share what the work is and the approach that we have taken to ensuring that key stakeholders, such as the GAC, are prepared to participate in the next round. As shared by the policy team, GAC members have a substantial role to play in the next round. I'll preview the plan for GAC members specifically and give you a sneak peek of the readiness resources we will have for you in 2026. Next slide, please.

This section of the presentation focuses on the overall approach to next round readiness. Thank you. When we say readiness, we are describing the work that goes into making sure that key stakeholders have the required knowledge and ability to play their role in the next round. The four primary groups of stakeholders

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with a role are applicants, of course, the community, ICANN staff, and vendor evaluators, so those that are doing the evaluations.

We have three main objectives for those stakeholder groups. So, first, in order to participate in the next round, stakeholders must build their knowledge of the application process and the systems. Second, readiness resources have to be flexible and sustainable in order to meet the various audiences where they are based upon their learning pathways. Lastly, we must enable consistent and predictable processing and evaluation. So, as we plan the readiness resources, these are the three objectives that we're trying to achieve. Next slide.

As we build readiness content, so this is the material, the information that we're developing, the box on the left here, we're focusing on three main things. Foundational information and concepts, then the application stages, processes, and evaluations, and lastly, the application system and application comments forum. My colleagues will speak in a few moments a bit more about those aspects.

The two boxes on the right indicate how we plan to deliver that content, so there's two main pathways there. First is through virtual courses, so, for example, ICANN Learn resources and webinars, and the second is through reference resources in a variety of different formats that are available on demand to be used by stakeholders and GAC members at any time. So, for example, this might include system guides, topic overviews, frequently

asked questions, and micro-videos, as you see in those boxes on the right. Next slide.

How are we planning to support GAC readiness? It's something that we noted in the GAC's Prague communique. It was an issue of importance, and it's one that we've been working with policy staff and GAC leadership on preparing. So, this next slide talks a little bit about that background context. So, the GAC leadership shared its perspectives on GAC readiness related to the next round, and based upon that input, we've put together a framework and a general timeline that hopefully reflects the GAC's interests. And, of course, we are here today to hear your feedback. We would love to hear feedback that you might have on the proposed approach.

As you can see on the slide, the areas of interest fall into three categories.   For GAC members that are new to ICANN, and I understand there might be 50 or some-odd new GAC members at this meeting since Prague, so there's a few of you, the aim here is to build understanding of ICANN and the DNS industry. In terms of preparing current GAC members for the new gTLD program next round, we're preparing a timeline to identify key dates, such as reveal day, and other milestones that GAC members should be aware of.

We're providing resources about the fundamentals of the next round program, as well as the applicant journey, which my colleagues will speak on in just a minute, and we're developing resources to enhance understanding of the applicant guidebook,

specifically topics of interest to governments. So, for example, geographic names, objections, and public interest commitments, or registry voluntary commitments. Lastly, we're aiming to provide readiness resources to support effective GAC participation in the next round. So, for example, the process for reviewing applications and submitting early warnings. Next slide.

Now we'll zoom in a little bit and look at the readiness pathway we're proposing for GAC members. Recognizing that you will have new members, as I mentioned, not only now, but joining the GAC in years to come, this pathway reflects the full journey. So that first phase on the left starts with learning about ICANN, the DNS industry, policymaking, and the GAC's role, incorporating existing ICANN learned resources to do so. Once that foundation is set, Phase 2 focuses on the next round program in general, and then the different stages of the application journey. That context sets the stage for in-depth information on GAC consensus advice, and how that advice might shape the direction of the next round program.

In Phase 3 of the GAC's readiness journey, as the application process kicks off, each stage in that process brings new processes and evaluations. So, for example, when GTL, the application submission date, closes, GAC members may have an interest in understanding the community input, objections, and appeals process, and the role that GAC plays in reviewing applications and issuing early warnings. Finally, in phase four on the right, we'll have readiness information on processes that could impact GAC

members. For example, some changes to applications trigger an additional GAC early warning review window. Next slide, please.

So, especially for those of you that might be interested in learning more about ICANN, the DNS industry, and the GAC's role within the multistakeholder model, we have curated a view of the resources that might be useful to you, depending on where you are and what you're interested in learning. While many of our next round learning resources are in development, here we've highlighted some of the resources that are currently available to learn, and resources about the specific role of the GAC in consensus advice and early warnings.

In future ICANN meetings, we'll update this view, adding in recordings of webinars and links to new resources as they become available. We note here that many delegates are probably already aware of this information, but some delegates may wish to revisit it, and we mostly just want to highlight that there are plenty of resources to explore, and staff is always happy to help. Next slide.

This is where I wish I had a laser pointer. We tried. It doesn't quite show up on the screen. So, if we take that GAC readiness pathway that I just talked about, and translate it into calendar milestones, this is what it might look like. First, a little caveat that this calendar is subject to change, but it does reflect plans as of today. As I mentioned, Phase 1 of the GAC readiness journey focuses on ICANN and those resources are available now. Starting in January, Phase 2 will offer webinars and recordings focused on building

knowledge of the next round and the applicant journey. ICANN85 will continue capacity development efforts with a deep dive on GAC consensus advice.

At that point, we'll move to Phase 3, focusing on stage-specific readiness. At ICANN 86, the focus will be on the work that's happening then, so hopefully application submission and pre-evaluation. And by ICANN87, application submission will be over, and we'll prepare the GAC for its role in community input, objections and appeals, and specifically submitting early warnings. A few additional things to note here. The webinars that are mentioned will be recorded, so in case you can't attend them live, you can look at those links on the website. Most of these are public webinars designated with the orange diamonds, with the GAC advice webinar being the exception, which is indicated by a teal diamond. Lastly, the graphic is illustrative. It has some best guesses as the time periods, but we could see some shifts in when the application processing activities occur. Next slide.

So, you might be wondering, what are all the different readiness resources available now? So, in addition to the curated list of ICANN Learn courses that we shared on the GAC readiness pathway, this slide summarizes a number of the other resources that we have available. So, we have, of course, the Next Round website, which is really the best place to start for general information, as well as deeper dives on specific areas of interest. The website is updated very regularly with frequently asked questions, or FAQs. Those are being created on a regular basis, and

we also have key topic overviews that are about one- to two-page briefings on topics of interest. Examples here include community input and objections, appeals, GAC advice, and early warnings.

For those interested in learning more about ICANN, the DNS industry, as I mentioned, we have a number of ICANN Learn courses available, and links will be available in this presentation. And if you'd like to see an example of some of the micro video recordings that we'll have coming out for training, or system user guides, please visit the Applicant Support Program, or ASP resources page, and we will have more of those micro videos and system guides coming out in 2026. Lastly, in the new year, we will be launching a number of Next Round webinars on topics that are of interest and timely to the process, as we prepare for the round to open, and throughout the application and evaluation process. Next slide, please.

As I mentioned at the start, readiness entails preparing different stakeholder groups. While I've mainly focused here on the GAC, we have pathways for different audiences and stakeholders participating in the next round. And I wanted to give the GAC an example of the gTLD applicant readiness pathway. So this pathway is to ensure applicants are prepared to apply for a GAC. And I'll talk a little bit about what that process looks like and what resources are available to support them through that.

This relates very closely to the Applicant Support Program capacity development, as it's a sort of continuous process through the ASP

all the way through to applying for the next round. Similar to the GAC readiness pathway that I showed earlier, this content will be rolled out in phases to help meet gTLD applicants where they are in their understanding.

Last slide, I think. Oh, no. Thank you. So in terms of next steps, as I mentioned at the start, if you have suggestions that can help us build more effective readiness plans for any of our stakeholders, but particularly for the GAC, please reach out or, as Tracy mentioned, raise a question or a comment here and he has some prizes for doing so. We also note here that the GAC policy team and the next round readiness team will continue to share more information and resources as they are available, with a focus on upcoming ICANN meetings, as noted in that timetable. We kindly ask the GAC to keep an eye out for more information about the next round webinars, as well as the schedule for 2026.

That concludes my portion of the presentation today. Thank you so much for your attention and for the opportunity to come and speak with you today. With that, I believe I'll turn it to Chris, unless you want to pause for questions.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you so much, Kristy. Let's pause and see if we have questions here from the audience who are dying to get some of that card protector. I know you want it. I know you have questions. Feel

free, raise your hands. Jorge is thinking. He has a question. We have here Marco. Go ahead, Marco.

MARCO HOGEWONING   I am one of the other topic leads and caretaker of this topic, so I'll forfeit my rights to goodies, but thank you, Kristy. Really wonderful presentation.

Thinking about what you said and GAC readiness and barring that there might actually be GAC members or GAC observers thinking of applying for a gTLD on their own. I think one of the key and critical functions of the GAC will be, of course, towards the evaluation process of those applications. In terms of prioritizing, it's probably, well, at least looking from my own perspective as a GAC participant to really try to get to grips with the evaluation mechanism. How does that work? At what point does the GAC intervene or can the GAC intervene?

As far as I now see, a lot of the materials that are there and, of course, rightly so, are focused on you are going to apply for a domain name. For future work, I would recommend focusing a bit more towards the GAC's mandate of actually looking at those strings that have been applied for, for instance, and then the SSAC session later this week will also touch a bit on string similarity, for instance, which I think is a really important topic. Any materials that can help us understand those kind of, also sometimes rather technical topics would be really appreciated. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY   Thanks so much, Marco, for that question. My colleagues on the next round will be briefly touching on this in the next section of the presentation, but also, I think later this afternoon there's a deeper dive on where and when and how the GAC has a role to play in the application review. Thanks.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you, Kristy. Jorge, for the record.

JORGE CANCIO   Thank you. Hello, Jorge Cancio and Switzerland. And for the record, thank you, Kristy, for the presentation. Thank you, Thiago, for volunteering me. But basically, we have a question, a real question. And I guess this might be also of interest to other colleagues. We are planning to have some sort of awareness-raising event for stakeholders back in Switzerland. So we were wondering whom do we specifically contact from your team to make this happen, to really get them prepared and informed on the basics of the new round.

Also, for those who might not be applying, but might be affected by others applying, especially IP rights holders. So I was wondering whether you can elaborate on that and give us a point of contact. Thank you.

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KRISTY BUCKLEY

Sure. Thanks so much, Jorge. So I would say if it's a sort of engagement or awareness-raising event, maybe starting with Chris Mondini, if I can pick on him, as the Europe Global Stakeholder Engagement Representative. And then, Chris, depending on the topics that you're interested to learn more about or do a deeper dive on, Chris can reach out to our team of subject matter experts to pull in the ones that are relevant and can speak to those topics. Does that sound okay? Thank you.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you. I was going to say that we're delving into already the next topic, but we have a few more minutes and I think we have questions. And let me see. I have a bird telling me that maybe we have a question from Martina.

MARTINA BARBERO

Thank you, Thiago. And thanks to the bird as well who conveyed my question. But it's more of a curiosity, but I'm familiar with some of the material for the potential applicants. But I don't know it all. So it's a question to you whether in the material for applicants, there's also something on how to address GAC early warnings and GAC consensus advice. Because I think one of the key for collaboration between the applicants and the GAC next round will be not only for the GAC to be aware of the tools to address concern, but also, on the other hand, for the applicants to know that if there is an early warning from one or more GAC members, this is what

they can do. Or in case of consensus advice, that's what they can legitimately think about.

KRISTY BUCKLEY   Absolutely. That's a great question and segue to our next section of the presentation, which focuses on the applicant journey. I think we're going to emphasize the main topics and roles for the GAC, but it does include from the applicant side, what they're going to experience, when they're going to experience and resources on how to respond and manage that process.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you, Kristy. That's correct. So we're going to have one more question, but just so you know, we have afterwards, we're going to talk about our outreach. And I think that's going to respond to a lot of the comments that Jorge had. And finally, the applicant journey, which I think also will respond to your question. So please, we have another question from our colleague.

ANDREAS DLAMINI   Andreas from Eswatini. I'm not sure whether you're still going to cover it, but it's to do with the finances as to the costs, how much the costs it will be. And also, what kind of infrastructure do you need to prepare if you, I mean, to put yourself in a good position to apply?

KRISTY BUCKLEY	Excellent question. In terms of the cost, there's a section of the applicant guidebook that outlines. I don't remember the page number off the top of my head. The base gTLD evaluation fee is $227,000. And there are conditional evaluation fees related to that. For applicants that might need financial support, there is, of course, the applicant support program, which is still open until the 19th of November. So we encourage people to take a look at that. And maybe we can again touch upon some of the other aspects of the applicant piece during the next section of the applicant journey. Yeah. Okay.
THIAGO DAL TOE	Thank you. And we have one final question. Our colleague from India.
T. SANTHOSH	Thank you, Thiago. This is Santosh for the record. So during the morning session, it was mentioned that only four people who are there in this room were present during the 2012 round. Now, as we are going to the 2026 second round, there should be a capacity building program for the GAC early warnings as well as the GAC consensus advice. So capacity building for the present GAC colleagues who would like to know that what is the process to be followed and how they can contribute as well as provide inputs respective to their countries on the particular string, which is related to the gTLD. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you for the question. I might point to available resources. So I would say that there are more resources coming out for the GAC. But as I mentioned earlier in the presentation, we do have some key topic overviews right now available on the website. And perhaps we can put a link to that page in the Zoom chat. But some of the ones that are currently available include objections and early warning. So those might be available or be helpful to look at now. And we'll roll out additional materials, including webinars for GAC members on those particular topics in the new year.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you, Kristy. And I think that the topic that Santosh mentions is because this morning we were reviewing our strategic objective. And we mentioned that part of our objective is under the new gTLD round is actually to bring more knowledge to the GAC members so they understand what they have to do whenever the new round launches. And we have our work to do. So thank you so much. I think we have another question. A final question before we move to the next topic.

EMMANUEL GABSA

Thank you very much. I'm Gabsa from Cameroon. I had two worries. The first one concerns the applicants. I don't know whether the group has taken care of the support and equity especially concerning developing countries and smaller

organizations. And then secondly, I wish to ask what are security issues as well as evaluation transparency has been taken care of as concerns the complexity of the new round of the country of the generic top-level domains. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Okay. In terms of equity around developing countries or smaller organizations, this is something that was considered by the community in the policy development process. And they put together, or they made a policy recommendation to have an applicant support program to help provide financial and non-financial support for entities that might need it in order to apply for a gTLD. So that's available. It's currently open. We're seeing pretty good interest in that so far, which is fantastic to see and good regional distribution. I will provide a status update on that this afternoon at the 4:30 session.

In terms of the security piece, I might turn to my other colleagues to address that later in the session. But I would say that we are doing everything we can in terms of the security of the application system, in terms of ensuring that the rollout of new gTLDs maintains the security and stability of the domain name system. So I don't know if that answers your question entirely, but yeah, does that answer it, or did you have a clarification? It's okay. All right. Thank you.

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THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you so much, Kristy. Thank you. Appreciate it. Yeah, a big round of applause to her, please. So now that we have a little bit more knowledge on the readiness plan, we're going to move into the additional outreach from the GSE team. We hear, Chris, that you have a plan you have been implementing and you have some metrics. Could you please share with us, with this committee, what those are and where have you been spreading the word?

CHRIS MONDINI

Thank you, Thiago, for that kind introduction and the question. Hi, I'm Chris Mondini. I'm based in Brussels. I am on the stakeholder engagement team responsible for the greater European region. And I have so much to tell you and so little time.

To your question, Thiago, about the activities and the metrics and all the places that we've been in the world and the IRT review, the implementation review team gets this report, which is then a snapshot version, comes out to the GAC every month. And I will refer you all again to that. Happy to discuss it if there are questions.

And then there was an earlier question about engagement with specific groups, with specific interests. And I wanted to give a recognition to one of your vice chairs, Marco, who is really a best practice, I would say. I had the honor to spend a day with him in The Hague, in his capital, where he brought together existing gTLD operators, potential applicants and all the different categories of people who might be interested to raise awareness of the program among his colleagues and also among his community and really to

establish himself as a conduit and a source of information to be the link to this process that you're all part of from his country.

And that's really what I want to talk to you about today. We're going to do a quick letter writing campaign. So I just have two slides. And this is something when the ICANN meeting is finished and you've returned home, we will be asking for your help. But it should not take very much of your time or very much effort. And it's designed very much to help all of you. So the I should have started with the what, but the when is after this meeting. So don't worry about it until you get home.

The what is my team and my colleagues, who I will call up in a moment in all of the regions, have come up with a two-page PDF letter that describes the new gTLD program and at a very high level some of the ways that the governments are invited to participate and really how we need the attention of the governments on the program.

The idea is that it would go to the senior most officials that you tell us about, that you give us an instruction to send this letter to. So it would have come from an ICANN regional vice president to the head of a department, a minister, a digital ambassador. It can be to multiple people if it will help you when you get home to your capitals. And you will, of course, receive a simultaneous copy of this letter. So it will go to minister or secretary X and a copy to you at the same time.

And the idea is to I'll tell you on the next slide the purpose of the exercise. But the how is after this meeting with help from the GAC support team, we will send you a form where you tell us who you would like us to send this letter to. We'll send you a copy of the wording of the letter and it will be personalized. So the ones in Europe will come from me to whoever you indicate they should go to with a copy to you. And if you need a translation, either a formal translation or an informal courtesy covered note translation, our language service team is standing by to provide that as well. And over the course of November, we hope to produce these letters and send them out to you and that the people that you instruct us to send them.

The next slide tells us what we hope this will accomplish. Now, first of all, we hope this will show, as mentioned in the letters, that this group over many years has been working very hard in the development of this program and to remind senior officials of ICANN's role to announce the gTLD program and really at a high level explain how governments can participate, what's coming next in the year ahead during the application process.

And then finally, what I would like to do here. It reminds them that they're represented in the GAC and it identifies the regional vice presidents like me, the staff who I'm going to ask to come up, come up to the front, please. Sorry, you guys, I should have warned you. Come up to the front just so I can introduce you. I heard that there are a number of new people here, and I really think that these colleagues of mine, if you don't know them already, will be able to

help you in any way that's useful. They're here all week with me and they will also be people signing these letters. So Naela Sarras, North America, Save Vocea for Oceania and the Pacific, Baher Esmat, based in Istanbul for the Middle East, Rodrigo de la Parra for Latin America and Caribbean, and Samiran Gupta in Asia, Asia-Pacific.

So these are your ICANN vice presidents and the stakeholder engagement team. If you want to have events in your country like Marco did, speak to one of us. If you have a specific audience you want to reach that you need materials for, speak to one of us. If you need us to appear on a Zoom and tell you about the next gTLD program, speak to one of us. We would be delighted to hear from you. We have had so much great, I would say, collaboration and team spirit between this body and this team. And we're really grateful and happy to be here for you. So I can answer any questions if there's time.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you so much, Chris. Thank you for our G team. We know Rodrigo is from Latin America. He's cold, clearly. And G, Chris, I can see you're giving us more work. That letter is going to incite a lot of questions in our country, right? And they're going to ask us, what is that? What is the new gTLD about? Questions about the outreach and engagement and the two-page letter that is going to be sent to our countries. Have you guys thought about how to respond to

your government? We have a question. The little bird tells me from Argentina, Marina. Where are you?

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS

Here, here. Thank you very much, Thiago. Here is Marina from Argentina, for the record. And I would like to delve into one of the questions that was previously formulated as regards the required infrastructure in order to apply for a gTLD. And as far as I'm concerned, the AGV doesn't refer specifically to required infrastructure, right? Just generally to technical conditions or something like that. Is that right? Thank you very much.

CHRIS MONDINI

I'm going to pass to one of our colleagues, because you're right about technical requirements. But your specific question of what's in the guidebook, I'll either pass or defer to anybody who would like to weigh in. Marika, may I ask you?

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks, Chris. This is Marika Konings. Hi, everyone. So I think a very important point indeed, because obviously the applicant guidebook sets out what everyone needs to do and align with in filling out their applications, the fees they need to pay to submit the application. But obviously, any applicant also needs to have the infrastructure either in place or through a third-party provider to run a registry. So I think that's very important to know.

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It's also the registry service provider evaluation program is doing a technical part of the evaluation. So every applicant is expected to select and either they provide that service themselves or it's and they will also need to have to pass the RSP program or work with an evaluated RSP to provide those services. This is to ensure that indeed that technical capability exists to run the technical part of the requirements. So I hope that helps.

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS   Thank you very much.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Any more questions? Yes, Ian.

IAN SHELDON   Thank you. Ian Sheldon, GAC Australia. I think this is a fantastic initiative. I think writing to senior members of government is an excellent idea. I'm wondering if you had any advice on how we might be able to catch the softball you throw in briefing up line to our senior officials on this ICANN thing and the next round. It's a topic we've discussed a lot in the Asia-Pacific region. How do we best brief our senior officials? And how do you underscore the gravity of what's happening over the next 18 months or so? Have you given any thought to materials you might be able to provide to bookend this conversation?

CHRIS MONDINI

Thank you very much for that question and for the positive response to the idea. The micro answer to your question is along with letter is the gTLD fact sheet with the link to the materials. It doesn't really answer your question. What I've seen around the world as I've worked with GAC members in their capitals is there's a big variation of the to what extent GAC member is able to convene, explain, gather and so forth.

So this is another opportunity, I would say, where GAC members are connected to their regional vice presidents who know this program well to talk about the specific circumstance in your capital. You may be very well established as the person in your capital that manages everything on Internet policy or you may be assigned this role. And it's something that's a new topic that you've you're covering because I was also a civil servant for many years. So I know that sometimes you're thrown into something completely new.

So to the extent that we can create something bespoke and tailored for you, as I said, those colleagues of mine that I brought up, we're available. If you can get us on a Zoom call or pull us into a meeting or just have a conversation to ask your specific question on a country specific context. We really want to help you to be successful. So I'm really glad that you raised the question. I don't think there's a one size fits all because it's such a diverse group. But thank you for raising it.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you so much, Chris. Given that we're 10 minutes behind schedule, let's move on to our applicant journey where we're going to have Jared, Ariel and Elisa explaining to us a little bit about this journey and we'll get more questions afterwards. Who's stepping up to the hot mic?

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Thiago. Hi, everyone. My name is Lars Hoffmann. The team will come up in just a second, I think we are going to line up like the Dalton brothers. That's a Belgian reference to Lucky Luke. I don't know if you know them. And we'll see how that works out. By height, that's right. I don't think you're standing next to me, Ariel, I've got bad news for you. I'm joking. So we have a couple of minutes, I think, to talk about the applicant journey. We're being waved through here. Coming to light, Chris. Sunday is tomorrow. So can I see the next slide, please? I'll be as quick as I can. I've got a couple of slides, I can see it here as well. Yes, almost like a teleprompter.

So just a couple of general information about who can apply. These are legal entities. Basically, that means individuals in their own capacity cannot apply for gTLD in the next round. The application period is going to open in April next year. We've been, to no great surprise, been feeling questions when exactly that will open. Closer or further away? Closer. And we will disclose that as soon as possible. It will be April. I think we are set on that.

And we are going to do that by the end of this year at the latest. I think late November, early December, we'll have that finally figured out, as well as the period of how long the window will be open. It's not that we are trying to be secretive about this. We just want to kind of line this up in a way that it makes sense also to line this up with the ICANN meetings.

You saw the first slide from Kristy here with the community input period. So hopefully we can make the window in the length of period that gives the community the maximum amount of time to be together while the strings are already out in the public. So you can discuss these as you see fit. The fee amount to apply. The question came earlier as well. I think Kristy answered that $227,000. There are potentially additional fees depending on what you're going to apply for. So some of the evaluations will require additional evaluation fees. Not all of them, but some of them do.

And then how you apply, unfortunately, is more than just sending in an email. We are building with a big team. Most of them are not here. They are in LA and all over the world as well, the intake system or the application management system, TAMS, is another ICANN acronym that we'll add to the soup, and that's essentially the system where people not only can go in to apply, but also those who are interested in specific applications or groups of applications will be able to go into the system and see the status of specific applications, including whether they have received GAC

early warning, for example, or GAC advice as well. The next slide please.

This is a very small diagram. I won't walk you through this, but I encourage you when you have 5 minutes or maybe 50 to take a look at this in a little bit more detail to kind of understand at a high level, and although it looks detailed, it is at a high level, how the application journey works. I would have been told very firmly that I don't have a lot of time to talk about this, but what I will say here, you see on the very left, it's difficult to see on the screen, I agree with that, you have the string confirmation day, so at that moment the strings that are applied for are finalized, and then we go through different evaluation periods, string evaluation, and then the applicant and application evaluation.

The next slide will show what that entails, and you see in the bottom left here, the turquoise square is where the community input period and objection period happens. And my colleagues will talk about in just a second. And then the, you know, with salmon colored square there on the bottom right, is where the contention resolution happens, so when people applied for two or more strings that are either identical or confusingly similar, and that will then take place via an ICANN auction, unless there is a community application which, if confirmed as such, will have priority.

One more slide, I won't walk you or mention all of these evaluations either, these are all the evaluations that the string will go through. Some of these are mandatory, others are optional, so as you can

imagine, a brand eligibility evaluation will only happen if you want to be or are a brand TLD, and so some of these applications will not go through. What I will say, every application will go through a names identification evaluation, and that is just to make sure that there's not somebody who applied for a string that is or could be perceived as a geographical name or identifier without being conscious about that, and obviously if there are, then they would have to go through the geographic name review in the application evaluation to make sure it's the right applicant applying for the right string.

I hope I didn't give too much of a time, I'll pass it on to Ariel, I think, next, is that right? No, I've been told.

ELISA BUSETTO

So this is just to give you an overview on how the application submission happens. So, in order to be able to submit an application, we need to have an ICANN account, and then we have to fill out a questionnaire with a number of questions on organization information as well as application information. At this point, they will also have to select their strings or replacement strings, but we will talk about this more in detail later. And before submission, some checks will already be performed on the selected strings, and applicants will either not be able to proceed with their application if there is a match, or they will be asked to provide additional information.

Certain checks will also be performed on the string, certain technical standard checks, and this is called the DNS stability review. And again, if the string fails any of these tests, the applicant won't be able to proceed with their application. So, already before submissions, there's a number of evaluations that are being performed. And next slide, please.

And here's an overview of everything that happens before evaluation starts, so following the end of the application submission period, ICANN will perform certain administrative checks and will prepare for reveal day. Reveal day is the day in which all applications and strings, including replacement strings, are published.

At this point, the applicants will have the chance to choose a replacement string, if they so wish, and if they indicated a replacement string in their application, following which there will be another administrative review, and then string confirmation day will happen, and at this point, the final strings will be published. And applicants won't be able to change them unless there's their brand and they meet certain requirements.

And at this point is when the community input period will start, which is where the GAC will also be able to start providing their input. And following string confirmation day, I believe around after 30 days, the prioritization draw will happen, and applicants will have the opportunity to choose to participate in this draw, which will indicate the priority order in which applications will be

processed. And I think now I'll hand it over to, oh no, it's still me, to myself.

THIAGO DAL TOE   We have about three minutes left on this panel, if we can.

ELISA BUSETTO   So just to say that about community input and specifically what the GAC can say. Next slide please. We will talk about this more in detail later, but here you can see how the community can provide their inputs via comments, GAC member early warnings, consensus advice, and this specifically for you, but also singular priority notifications and objections, but we will talk about this in the next session. And next slide please.

ARIEL LIANG   This is Ariel. I'll talk very quickly about string evaluation. This phase of the program comes after the string confirmation day, and it's basically to check whether apply for string meet some of the mandatory requirements for the program. And it has five components. First is the String Similarity Evaluation, that's to ensure the strings are not visually similar to each other. For Geographic Name Identification, it's basically to flag which apply for string may be considered geographic name. For Safeguard Assessment, it's to determine which strings may fall into one of the high-risk groups, so it will require a set of safeguard public interest

commitments to be included in its registry agreement, and we will have a deep dive into that later.

Singular Plural Notification evaluation is basically to check the strings whether they are singular and plural form of the same word in the same language, but this evaluation will only come after a notification that ICANN receives from the public regarding those strings. And finally, the Name Collision Initial Assessment, it's another check to see which string may be at a high risk for name collision, but then the actual substantive evaluation comes later. So that's string evaluation. Next slide, please.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Let's see one question. Let's see if we have questions from the floor, and let's take some if we have for what has been presented already. No? No questions? We got it.

PETER EAKIN

Hello, I'm Peter. Very quickly, Lars gave a good overview of what string contention is and how it occurs and occurs in different parts of the applicant journey. Some new features and changes from the last round, a very high profile one is that now all forms of private resolution of contention sets are prohibited. This was a practice that was accepted in the previous round but is no longer. Next slide, please.

Yes, so there are some returning features from the previous round and some new ones. The first on the slide is a new feature,

replacement string, as Elisa sort of walked us through. Applicants can, if they want to, designate another string alongside the original choice of string, and then we'll have 14 days after reveal day to decide if they want to switch. Importantly, if they do, they can't switch back.

CPE is a returning or community priority evaluation, as most of you might know. This is an evaluation that's conducted by a third-party panel to determine whether a community-based applicant qualifies to get priority in the contention set, and this was also a prominent feature of the last round. Another new feature is for brand applicants, is a top brand string change request. So, subject to certain conditions, these applicants can make a slight modification to their string in order to escape contention. And finally, if all else has failed to resolve contention, the set will be resolved through a new gTLD auction. So, thank you.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you. I think we have questions from the floor. Santosh?

T. SANTHOSH   Thank you, Thiago. So, the question is, as early mentioned by Mundini, that we will be, the ICANN will be writing the letter to the government higher official. Now, in India, with the help of Mr. Samiran Gupta, we have conducted a three-stakeholder engagement with different companies. So, what we need to tell to the CEO, chief executive officer of the companies, Indian

companies, or any country companies, what is the amount? Is it $227,000, or it is more than that? There is no clarity on that. Yeah. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you for the question. So, there is a fee overview in the applicant guidebook that lists all the amounts that could potentially be due. I think the message is that the application fee for an applicant who does not or has not applied and does not qualify for the ASP applicant support program, the fee is $227,000. And then it depends what type of string they would be applying for. So, if, for example, they would be applying for a brand TLD, then they would have to undergo an evaluation whether they actually qualify for a brand TLD, because it does come with certain perceived benefits, I'm going to say. And so, that evaluation would then be charged on top of the evaluation fee.

However, that amount is only due once the evaluation takes place, so not at the time of application. But you can see in the applicant guidebook, and I don't know if we have an overview of the fees for the next session, we'll be sure to share that as well. So, you see on the page where the numbers are listed, so you can share that with the stakeholders in India and beyond, obviously, as well. Thank you.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you for the question, Santosh. Thanks, Lars. Peter, I do have a question, really quick question. So, basically, you apply with one string and then you have another replacement string. What if my replacement collisions or has a contentious with another one? Could that happen, and what is the process to solving that conundrum?

PETER EAKIN

It's a good question. It could happen, and that's one of the conditions attached to the use of a replacement string. You can only use it if it is not identical to another string or another replacement string. The point of replacement string is to reduce the instances of contention using a string which is identical to another one, which obviously is contrary to that goal. So, that's one of the situations where you couldn't use replacement string.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Do you have examples of these replacement strings that we could have? An example so we can--

PETER EAKIN

Well, it could actually be anything. It doesn't have to be related to your original string.

THIAGO DAL TOE	Yes. So, thank you. We have 10 minutes left on the session. Thank you so much. We're going to move into Jared for PICs and RVCs. Yes or no? There's something else? Okay.
ARIEL LIANG	So, this is Ariel. I will do the PIC, RVC-related slides, I guess. Thank you for my team. Yes. Next slide, please.

So, just a quick foundational setting why we're talking about this topic, because they've become into existence because of the GAC. In the 2012 round, the GAC issued Beijing advice. Basically, they raised some concerns with strings that may be in highly regulated industries or sensitive. So, they raised concern how to address that. As a result of addressing the GAC advice, something called the public interest commitments come into existence. It's basically to introduce some way to make sure the strings are run in the secure and transparent manner in the interest of the public and the registrant.

So, quickly, we have a few types that I think folks here want to know. One is called the mandatory public interest commitments. These are the things that every registry operator needs to have for every single string. So, basically, there's a bunch of safeguards or things that need to commit to in order to run their string for the benefit of the public.

And then another type is called safeguard public interest commitments. We quickly mentioned that during the string

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evaluation. These are a set of contractual obligations that only apply to certain strings if they deemed, for example, in a regulated industry or have a possibility for cyberbullying or they're related to inherent government functions. Then they need to have these contractual obligations in their registry agreement to safeguard the interest of the public so that nothing bad happens, hopefully.

And the third type is the registry voluntary commitments. These are not required or mandatory commitments for registry operators. It's more like something they propose they want to include in their registry agreement. So, why would somebody want to do that? So, for example, if there's an objection with regard to the string or if there's a GAC advice that raised concerns with the string, then the applicant may want to introduce some commitment to address those concerns.

But the tricky thing about this one is that they have to go through an ICANN evaluation to make sure they are compatible with the ICANN bylaws and they have to meet a set of criteria in order to be contract ready. So, that's a very interesting topic. We actually spent a lot of time on last year during a plenary session. So, that's the side note.

And then fourth type of commitment is called the community registration policies. These are only applicable for community gTLD applications. And then they may have commitments relating to, for example, who can be eligible registrant to register domain name under their TLD or what kind of second level domain name

they can have for that TLD. So, these are also commitments that have to go through the ICANN evaluation to make sure they're appropriate for the registry agreement. Next slide, please.

And I want to kind of quickly go through this one because this is probably more relevant to the applicant. So, basically, this is the evaluation to evaluate registry voluntary commitments and community registration policies. Basically, the applicants have to pay a one-time fee in order to get these commitments evaluated. It's only, it's not only, but it's $15,000 one-time that can cover all of these, but also it could include several rounds of review, but we'll, ICANN will only charge them once to take care of this part.

And the key point is there are five criteria these commitments or policies have to meet. And the one most important criteria that the ICANN community spend a lot of time on is about whether content-related restrictions can be included in those commitments. And the Board resolution in Kigali said, no, we cannot have any commitments that touch content issues. So, that's something applicants should be very aware of.

And another key takeaway is that the evaluation of these commitments itself will not determine whether the concern from the third party has been addressed by the applicant. So, ICANN is not in a position to evaluate, for example, whether the GAC advice has been addressed by this voluntary commitment. It's more about looking at whether they can be included in the contract for, between ICANN and the applicant.

And lastly, ICANN will also expect to engage in some kind of negotiation with the applicant to make sure the final agreed language of these commitments can be included in the registry agreement. So, the applicant won't be on its own to figure out how I draft this commitment so that ICANN approve, ICANN will, in a way help, in a way help to make sure they understand the evaluation criteria and help suggest language for that to be included in the RA. Next slide, please.

So, this is the criteria for registry commitment evaluation. There are five of them. And I'll quickly mention that just for your foundational understanding for that. One is they must clearly state what commitments must be implemented. It's not something like may be implemented, perhaps likely be implemented. It's more like a mandatory kind of requirement. They have to do this.

Second is they must be drafted in a clear, detailed manner that can be mutually understood by ICANN and applicant. They also have to be objective and measurable. So these languages actually come from the policy and then we'll try to adhere to that too. And third criteria is they must specify any applicable limitations. So, for example, the applicant may say we will have this commitment for X number of years or-- oh, sorry, is that my time?

THIAGO DAL TOE   Do we have much, much more left in, because we have questions on the floor already.

ARIEL LIANG   Oh, so maybe just this one slide then.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Yeah.

ARIEL LIANG   Because this is actually why we're talking to the GAC about this. Because GAC may issue advice asking, for example, this applicant must have this registry voluntary commitment in order to address our advice. So, there's maybe a situation where the GAC and the Board, they will look at the GAC advice and Board actually agree with the GAC. Then this application cannot proceed with the RVC. Then this thing will become really, really important because this RVC even is called registry voluntary commitment. It's no longer voluntary anymore. They have to be a condition necessary for the application to move forward.

And then also, if it's approved by ICANN, this commitment cannot be removed or changed before contract execution. So, the key takeaway, I think I want to say is that it does seem like a really good, useful tool for the GAC to make sure these applications are protecting the interest of the public and registrants. But also, I want to notice it's not really a silver bullet to resolve all of the issues or problems because RVC themselves have to adhere to all these criteria in order to be approved by ICANN.

And the content-related issue is very sticky and it's not something that can be addressed by RVC. And the better channel may be, for example, the GAC or the government, they work out some private solution to a problem or try to resolve the issue outside of the registry agreement. And then the applicant themselves can include their own registration policy, but it's not included in the RA, but just outside as a separate agreement or a separate policy, then they can address those issues.

So, the last thing I want to say is, I guess, it's a very important topic for the GAC, but it's also a tricky thing to use. So, with that, I will stop.

THIAGO DAL TOE   Thank you so much, Ariel. We have one final question on this session. Jorge, please brief.

JORGE CANCIO   I'll try. Jorge Cancio, Switzerland. Just thank you very much for the explanations. I already can see and my lawyer hat pops up that there might be many implications because, of course, the process of approval of the RVC is a two-party process between ICANN and the applicant, but there is a third-party interest. For instance, a GAC member who issues an early warning or the GAC itself issuing a consensus advice. So, I guess we might need to still talk more about this on how to involve or include that third-party interest

element into the two-party conversation on the contract. Thank you.

ARIEL LIANG

So, thank you, Jorge. I completely agree with your observation. The RVC review is between applicant and ICANN, but ICANN is not in the position to evaluate third-party concerns. So, how to make sure the third-party concern is addressed is tricky. And I think in the AGB, we included some language, for example, suggesting, you know, figuring out applicants, whether your RVC could indeed address the third-party concern before you bring it forward for ICANN to evaluate.

So, for example, I'm not an expert for GAC early warning, but I think there's some communication channel possible between, for example, the government that raised the early warning to communicate with the applicant to figure out whether the applicant could do something in terms of RVC so that have that issue addressed first, and then bring it back to ICANN for evaluation. But we can definitely talk more about that, and I would love to hear your ideas and suggestions how we can make this process efficient and effective.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Any other hand? Final question? No? Well, thank you guys so much. A round of applause to all the help we got here. Thank you,

thank you. And I guess, Julia, this is the end of our session, right?

Thank you, guys.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]