
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – At-Large Preparations for 2026 Next Round of New gTLD Applications
Wednesday, March 11, 2026 – 10:30 to 12:00 IST

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Hello, welcome, everyone, to the At-Large Preparations for 2026 Next Round of New gTLD Applications. My name is Michelle DeSmyter. I'm the Remote Participation Manager for today's session. Please note that this session is being recorded and governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation for today's session will include English, French, and Spanish. If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom.

On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak, if speaking a language other than English, and please speak at a reasonable pace. And with this, I will now hand the floor over to Amrita Choudhury, APRALO Chair.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much, Michelle, and good morning, everyone, to those in the room and greetings to the others online. And welcome

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to this session. If you look at the agenda, what we plan to do in this session is, as you're aware, for the 2026 Next Round of the new gTLDs, the At-Large committee has the ability to file comments in support of or in opposition to the applications for the New gTLD strings and to file objections against application for New gTLD strings on limited public interest or community grounds.

And this session will actually help to provide a bit more information on what's happening, what would be the procedure, the timelines, and then we'll have some discussion, if there are any comments or questions from anyone, and the next steps.

And today, the people who would be speaking here include Hannah Frank. She would be giving an overview of what the application review group and RALO coordination should look like for this process. Dev, who is online, would be speaking on the procedure flow, and we would have a discussion on the guidelines for reviewing applications and how to participate by Hannah and Alan. Alan is also online, and then you can share your comments, and Hannah would share the next steps.

And with that, perhaps we could have an overview of what the timeline looks like at this point of time. Can we have the next slide? And do note, these are all tentative timelines. Please do keep it in mind that the application window for the Next Round is supposed to open on 30th April. The application window closes on 12th August.

Then ICANN checks, processes the applications, and it is estimated that from September, the timeline will start. There would be a reveal day, the string confirmation day, the application and comment period, comment or objection period, and then the deadlines to file objections.

Typically, it is 104 days, but this is just to give you an overview of what the timelines will look like, but it is subject to change. Can we go to the next slide? And I think I will pass it on to Hannah to share a bit more about the gTLD application review group.

HANNAH FRANK

Thank you so much, Amrita. This is a huge challenge to me. This is my first time, so please be kind. Thank you. Well, the log objection procedure, please, next slide. Oh, looks really bad. I guess this is a PDF document.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Can we look at the presentation slide, if possible, because this is a bit garbled here. Would it be possible to showcase the slides?

HANNAH FRANK

Okay. Okay.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

And she may be a bit -- and we will be kind to you, Hannah, don't worry. The reason we also want to discuss this is because we expect the ALAC members and the RALO members to go back to

their communities, discuss and come up with volunteers, because could be comments, not only objections, which can be filed, and this is very crucial. So, anything being discussed, we would like you to percolate it. And that's the reason why we want to have this discussion. Are the slides up?

MICHELLE DESMYTER

One moment, please.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

This gap is also like the gap we were expecting. By now, we would have more information about how the process is going to be, but hopefully by Seville, we'll have more. So, we do get these lags.

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Apologies. And, Hannah, we're having you promoted as well while we get -- I did PDF the slides, so apologies. One moment.

HANNAH FRANK

Sorry. If you, Michelle, you can share that slide. I am looking at the others.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Michelle, can you promote me? Then it will be easier for Hannah, right? Hannah, because you want to look at your notes. If you can promote me, I will share the slides.

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Perfectly. Thank you. One moment. Please promote Amrita. Thank you, Amrita. Please go ahead.

HANNAH FRANK

Oh, that looks better. Yeah, okay. Now, it's better. As part of the work preparing the At-Large community for the Next Round, let me begin by introducing the role of the At-Large gTLD Applications Review Group, or gARG, as the acronym says. As many of you know, the Next Round of the New gTLD program may involve a significant number of applications. Because of this, the At-Large community will need a structured way to review those applications and identify potential concerns in a timely manner.

The purpose of the gARG therefore, to support the At-Large community in conducting an initial review of applications when they are published. This group may help identify applications that raise potential community objections or limited public interest concerns. It may also support the drafting of comments for ALAC consideration and submission and, where appropriate, assist in preparing potential objections statements.

The gARG may also monitor responses to ALAC comments and help assess whether escalations to a formal objection may be appropriate. However, the gARG does not operate in isolation. It works closely connected with the broader At-Large community.

So, let's now look a bit more closely at how this coordination works in practice. Please, next slide. Okay, thank you. Thank you, Amrita. As you may see, the review process involves coordination between this group, the gARG, the RALOs, and ALAC. The gARG helps initiate the review process by identifying potential concerns that may arise from specific applications.

Once potential concerns are identified, these are typically brought into discussion within RALOs and the broader At-Large community. This step is particularly important because the RALO provides regional expertise, perspectives, and approaches. These different regions may have different experiences, cultural contexts, or sensitivities related to particular strengths, and these discussions help ensure that this review reflects the diversity of the entire At-Large community.

Based on these discussions, the community may decide whether further analysis is needed and whether comments should be prepared for ALAC consideration. Ultimately, the ALAC remains responsible for the final consideration and any formal decision regarding the submission of comments or objections.

The next slide will help us to illustrate how this coordination works in practice. So, thank you, Amrita, for the next slide. So, here, as you can see, this image depicts how the gARG, the RALOs, and ALAC interact in a coordinated bottom-up process throughout the review of applications. The process typically begins with the gARG

supporting the initial review of applications once they become available.

Through this review, the group may identify applications that raise concerns, potential concerns, for example, where there may be a strong association with a particular community or where public interest consideration may arise. These potential concerns are then discussed within the RALOs, where regional perspective will help inform the analysis and ensure that the review reflects the diversity of our At-Large community.

Based on these discussions, comments or concerns may be then brought to the ALAC for consideration and possible action. With that overview of how gARG, RALOs, and ALAC coordinate their roles, I will now hand over to Dev that he will walk us through the detailed procedure workflow for developing comments and possible objections. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Dev, over to you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Thank you. This is Dev Anand Teelucksingh. And a very good morning to everyone and good afternoon, good evening to all those remotely, as I am. I'm here to talk about the ALAC comment and objection procedure. And so, some of you may be thinking, why have a procedure? Because isn't this going to be like how ALAC responds to Public Comments? The ALAC gets a penholder, the

penholder drafts something, there's a first draft, everybody comments, you know the routine. And then the ALAC by itself votes on the statement.

But that's not the case because what happens is that in the Applicant Guidebook, under section 4.5.7 to be exact, is this paragraph. Funding for the ALAC is contingent on publication by ALAC of its approved process for considering and making objections. And at a minimum, the process for objecting to an application will require a bottom-up development of potential objections, discussion and approval of objections at the RALO level, and a process for consideration and approval of the objection by the ALAC.

So hence, that's the reason why we have worked to develop a procedure that will satisfy these requirements, if we were to file an objection, so that we can get funding from ICANN.

So, the ALAC can file objections on two grounds. Limited public interest objection, where the string is considered contrary to generally accepted norms of morality and public order. And community objection, and there is substantial opposition to the gTLD application from a portion of the community to which the gTLD string may be implicitly or explicitly targeted.

Now, perhaps the next agenda item may touch more on this, but regarding the community objection, the ALAC tried to, well, request from the ICANN Board to be given the same standing to object as the independent objector panel. But the ICANN Board has, well,

declined to do that, meaning that we would have to prove ourselves that we are the community being affected, which severely limits our ability to file successful community objections. But comments are not restricted to these areas.

And the independent objector can, in fact, take, can look at the comments, and from that, file objections based on limited public interest or community objection. So, the procedure will be, so I just want to show that the procedure is going to show how we submit comments before the application comment period deadline, and to be able to file formal objections within the objection period. So, it's not just objections alone.

So this slide, I'm going to show the timeline, and I'm just trying to highlight one key aspect, given that the reveal day and string confirmation day may be, has not finalized yet. In fact, in the chat, it was suggested that it's potentially that string confirmation day may be in mid-November or early November. But in either case, reveal day, ICANN publishes the list of New gTLD applications, and they apply for strings and replacement strings, and then there's 14 days.

There is a string confirmation day, you know, after which applicants may have changed their applications based on, you know, contention or withdrawal, whatever, or change their string. And the string confirmation day, the ICANN posts that updated list of applications.

So, that starts off two things, the application comment period and the objection deadline, which runs concurrently, which was different from the 2012 round, and it's 104 days. So, that means that really for the ALAC to really submit comments, we have a total of 118 days for which to review the gTLD applications in order to generate comments and or objections.

So with that in mind, what happens is that the intent is for reveal day, the gARG, which will be, must have been formed before then because a call has gone out much earlier. The review and comment process will be that the gARG, the RALOs, ALAC, CPWG, they will raise concerns and discuss gTLD applications on community or limited public interest grounds.

And the idea was being that the gARG members would bring this, if it's happening within a RALO call or RALO mailing list or whatever, the gARG members from that region would bring it up to the gARG for further discussion. So, that timeline happens throughout the 118, close to the 118 days.

So if there's an issue that comes up regarding a gTLD application, the question is asked by the gARG, okay, are there enough considerations which raise concerns on community or limited public interest grounds? And if the answer is yes, then the gARG members with no conflict of interest, I think, again, the conflict of interest will be brought up in the next agenda item, will then draft the comments on those identified applications, and that will be reviewed by the gARG, the RALOs, and the ALAC.

All right. So, after the drafting of the comments, the ALAC then decides, does it support submitting the comment on those identified applications? And if it is that the ALAC votes yes, then the ALAC submits the comment to the application comment forum, again, within the 118-day timeline. And so,

So once that happens, the ALAC then, in consultation with RALOs, decides whether to draft a formal objection to the identified applications. And if that decision is yes, then the gARG members, again, with no conflict of interest, will then draft objection statements in the format prescribed by the Applicant Guidebook. And then, all the RALOs would then consider whether to approve those objection statements.

So all the five RALOs will now consider the objection statements, and by whatever method they choose to approve the statements, whether they have a vote, whether it's within the RALO Board, the RALO chair alone does it. So, RALOs need to have an understanding of what process they plan to use, if and when we have to consider objection statements. But by whatever process the RALOs do so, if three or more RALOs approve the objection statements, then the ALAC then votes to file the objections.

And if the ALAC votes to file the objection statements that were supported by the three RALOs, then the ALAC files the objection in coordination with ICANN to pay the relevant fees and so forth.

Now, if three or more RALOs do not approve the objection statement, the objection statement is not filed. And therefore, the

ALAC cannot consider that objection statement if it is not supported by three or more RALOs. And after the filing, the penholders after the objection deadline would be assisting the ALAC in responding to any correspondence related to objection filing.

So, next slide. Right, and this illustrates some of the work that the gARG and the ALAC may have to do after the objection is filed. As there's a particular timeline for how the objections is heard by the dispute resolution service provider. But ultimately, a decision is rendered by the panel that's put together by the dispute resolution service provider.

And once we receive the decision, well, if we prevail with the decision, I guess, well, thumbs up, I guess. But if not, the decision has to be circulated to the ALAC and gARG for discussion. Now, we have 15 days from that when the determination has been delivered to us to decide whether we need to file a notice to file an object, an appeal.

And so, we want to try to do that within the first week, within the seven days, in order to give potentially as much time to draft the appeal. So, if the leadership team decides to, and the gARG decides to appeal the decision, the ALAC files notice of appeal, the appeal is drafted. And before the deadline of 30 days from the panel determination, the ALAC decides whether to file the appeal.

And if so, then it files the appeal. And if not, then the ALAC withdraws the notice of the appeal. All right. And so, I think that covers the whole process part aspect of it.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

I can take questions now or wait till the end. Up to you, Amrita.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Yeah, there was, I think Marika wanted to make some points on the timeline. So, I will just bring her in because it's related to what we have been presenting so far. Marika, if you would like to speak up.

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks, Amrita. Hi, everyone. My name is Marika Konings. I'm the lead for the New gTLD program. I made a comment in the chat as well. I noted that some of the timing on the slide that was shared does not align with the timing that we've shared. So, probably helpful to clarify that. Just want to be clear at the outset, the timings that we currently have in the Applicant Guidebook and that we've been talking about as well here this week are projected timelines.

These are based on our assumption of receiving 2,000 applications and the work that is required in taking those applications to reveal

day and string confirmation day. If those numbers are significantly different, the timing will obviously change as well.

So, we expect to confirm shortly after we know the number of confirmed applications what the dates for those milestone events are. But having said that, based on 2,000 applications, we're currently projecting that reveal day may happen before the October ICANN meeting. So I think the first two weeks of October, which then would take a string confirmation day to the beginning of November. Because although the string replacement period is two weeks, it will likely take us a little bit of time as well then to reconcile who has changed update list, update contention sets. So, I hope that helps.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Marika. And I would want you to stay here just in case anyone has any questions. Anyone has any questions for Dev? You've not understood? Understood. Please feel free to ask. We want it to be an interactive session. Any questions? Justine, yes.

JUSTINE CHEW

This is Justine for the record. So, thank you for the clarification, Marika, because within the SubPro IRT, we were always talking about 14 days, that 14-day thing between reveal day and string confirmation day. So, I accept the fact that, you know, that subject to change, but we were just working on the assumption that that was the information given to us.

MARIKA KONINGS

Thanks, Justine. And just to confirm, string replacement period is 14 days. I'm just talking about the time that ICANN may need after the end of that period to kind of see what has changed. We need to update the contention set list. So, before we have string confirmation day, there may just be a bit more time for us to do that work. So, but the period for replacement string is two weeks. That hasn't changed.

JUSTINE CHEW

Sure. Thank you. And you notice that the timeline slide that we had, we did make a note that it's estimated it's EST there. So, we will take note to update those timelines. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Justine and Marika. Anyone else or anyone online has any questions? And there are no stupid questions. Yes, please go ahead, Jonathan.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Well, since you said there's no stupid questions, then I'll feel free. I'm still curious about the outcome of the standing issue that Hannah raised and that we asked to have the same standing as the independent evaluator, but didn't get that. And so, I'm wondering what the implications are of that for the types of objections that we're able to proceed with, because it's never going to be a case

when the At-Large as an organization is an affected party. And I'm sorry, Hannah, I know you're just starting in this role.

HANNAH FRANK

You can ask questions. So, of course, that's why we are here. Can you repeat, please, again, the question?

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

And do not, Alan and Dev have their hands. Do you want them to give an attempt or do you want to respond first? Okay.

JONATHAN ZUCK

Yeah.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Okay, okay. So, Dev, you go first and then Alan.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

Thank you. This is Dev Anand Teelucksingh. So, regarding the community objections, because we don't have the same standing as the independent objector, it means that to do a community objection, unless we were the community implicitly or explicitly targeted, would we have standing to object. So, that really curtails the feasibility of filing a community objection, unless it met that exact circumstance.

But as I mentioned, the goal is to really submit comments, because the independent objector does have automatic standing to file

community objections. And they can respond to; they can look at the comments on the application comment forum to decide whether to file a community objection.

So, I think that is where our strength should be pushed for, to submit the comments. And if there's a serious concern about a community that is unfairly, that we consider unfairly targeted or doesn't meet the other four tests of the community objection, we can submit a comment related to that. And then hopefully the independent objector can, either one or two things, the independent objector can take that up or the applicant can respond to the comment and either reassure us or not.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Dev. Alan, do you want to add on to that comment?

ALAN GREENBERG

Yes, I do. Thank you. I mean, obviously we can't say what the panel will decide, but the Applicant Guidebook makes it clear that for an objection to be accepted and for it to have effect, that the objector has to, for a community application, has to be able to show that they are representing or impacted by this particular issue. Which, in any reasonable way, means unless we're objecting about a TLD, which impacts internet users in general, or ICANN at large, we probably will not be successful in that objection.

Now, we did go to the Board and say, we think we're wasting your money if we put objections in and then are not deemed to have

standing. The Board didn't say you don't need that level of dispensation, essentially. The Board simply said that the PDP didn't recommend it, therefore they can't take that action.

So, we're stuck between a rock and a hard place in that we probably will need to be able to prove that we're representing the community for an objection to be sustained. And therefore, that's why in this process we're focusing much more on the comments than on the objections themselves. It is conceivable we'll file an objection, but the odds are probably against us being successful. So, that's not where we're putting the major part of our effort right now. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Alan. Any comments? Okay, Satish, go ahead.

SATISH BABU

Thanks, Amrita. Satish, for the record, I'm a kind of newcomer into this, and I have this question as to what happens if the end user community does have an objection. We cannot take it on as ALAC because we don't have the kind of position to do that. So are we supposed to go through the independent objector or the GAC to kind of raise either such a route available for us, or do we just sit on it? I mean, basically ignore it. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Who wishes to respond to this question? Alan

ALAN GREENBERG I'll respond. Yeah, it's Alan. We can't go through the independent objector. We have no path directly other than to make a comment, and the independent objector can only file an objection if there is a comment. Therefore, that might be the trigger which causes the independent objector to file an objection. Similarly, the GAC has no right [inaudible - 00:32:21].

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Thank you, Alan. Should we now move into the procedure, which I think Alan is supposed to share, and Hannah?

ALAN GREENBERG Hannah's starting.

HANNAH FRANK I will go first.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY But I do see Dev's hand. Dev, do you want to say something, or is it an old hand?

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH I think Alan answered the question correctly. But just to say that regarding the application comment forum, you just need an ICANN, as I understand it, and maybe Marika could confirm this. The idea is that you need an ICANN account, and you can then write your

comment independently of the At-Large if you wanted to do so. And again, that comment can be read by the applicant, and maybe the applicant could be persuaded, oh, I need to change my application to reflect this in some way, or the independent objector can take it on. That's it.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Dev, and Marika has shared the link to the response from the Board regarding the issue of standing on the Zoom room. So, if you're there in the chat, you can look at it. And with that, I pass it on to Hannah.

HANNAH FRANK

Thank you so much. Thank you for the questions and for the answer of Dev and Alan. Well, and thank you, Dev, for the guidelines with the workflow. As we have seen, the process outlines how comments and potential objections may move through the At-Large structures. And the next question then becomes how do we actually review applications and identify potential concerns.

So, in the next few slides, thank you, Amrita, we will look at some practical guidelines that may help our community to develop comments, and when appropriate, consider possible objections. So, the At-Large review of New gTLD applications is guided by the two formal objections ground defined in the ALAC procedure. We have this is the first community objections, which applies when

there is a substantial opposition from a clearly identifiable community that may be targeted by the apply for string.

The other one is the limited public interest objection, which applies when the apply for string may be contrary to generally accept legal norms related to morality and public order under the principles of international law. I guess this one was mentioned by Dev before, too. Structuring the reviewing guidelines around these two objections, you can see on the screen, helps ensure that any concerns raised during the review process are aligned with the established ALAC procedure and supported by evidence gathered during the review.

At the same time, the reviewers may also consider additional elements or additional considerations, such as the adequacy of say words or any registry commitments proposed by the applicants that may help address or mitigate potential concerns.

Community input through application comments. Before considering objections, it is important to remember that the first opportunity for community input comes through the application comment period. During this period, members of the community can submit comments highlighting observations or concerns related to specific applications.

These comments can draw the attention to issues affecting communities and users or potential public interest considerations. In many cases, comments serve as the early sign-on that a particular application may require closer attention. They also

allow the community to document concerns and provide useful information to evaluation panels reviewing the application.

In some situations, concerns raised through comments that may later support the consideration of formal objections. When we talk about application evaluation considerations, when reviewing applications, several considerations may help guide the analysis.

One important factor is community identification, where there is a clearly identifiable community associated with the applied forestry. Another key consideration is the level of opposition that may exist within that community. It is also important to examine the strength of the association between the applied forestry and the community and whether the application accurately reflects that relationship.

Finally, the community may consider whether the application could create potential harm, such as reputational, economic, social, or end-user-related harm. These considerations can help structure the review process and support evidence-based input from the community.

Here, in SSI, we are related to the application evaluation considerations. The applications are in English, so it is fair that English proficiency may be required. Here, it needs to consider the potential conflict of interest that may exist regarding the members of the future gARG.

Now, I will hand over to Alan that will develop the next few slides.
Thank you very much.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Before Alan comes in, I think there is a comment on the reasons why the objections were denied in the last round. Jared has shared the link in the chat. Alan, over to you. Sorry for interrupting.

ALAN GREENBERG

No problem at all. You do have another question, though. Amrita, you do have a hand up.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Yes, okay. Mohit, you have your hand up. Do you have a question?

MOHIT RAIZADA

Yes, hi. I just want to check. You talked about the level of opposition on the objection. How do you establish what is the strength of the opposition? Is it like a written petition? Is it like a poll? What is the evidence requirement for how you establish what is the strength of the opposition by the community?

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you. I will ask Marika if you can address the question, which Mohit has.

MARIKA KONINGS

I'm going to pass it over to Jared, who I think has got a position to answer this one.

JARED ERWIN

Yes. Unfortunately, I'm going to ask you to repeat your question, though. I was in and out. Thank you.

MOHIT RAIZADA

Yes, hi. My question is, how do you establish the level of opposition? For example, if there is a complaint from a community, what objective metric is there available that you can say that 50% of the community disagrees, 40%? What is the metric that is available?

JARED ERWIN

In my own head, I'm potentially conflating things here because there's also community priority evaluation where there is a mechanism via CPE to, I guess, quantify the level of opposition. But that's separate from the objection process, the community objection process. And I believe there are criteria. I was going to try and look it up very quickly.

I don't know off the top of my head, but I believe and I thought I saw some maybe it was on the previous slide. But I believe the AGB does talk more about what opposition looks like in the context of a community objection and how that might be assessed. So, I would

I can try and look briefly, maybe put something in the chat. But yeah, sorry, I can't be more helpful right now.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Thank you, Jared. And with that, I pass it on to Alan.

ALAN GREENBERG Thank you very much.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Alan, your audio is a bit choppy.

ALAN GREENBERG Is this any better?

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Yes.

ALAN GREENBERG Okay. This slide is sparse in words, but is huge in impact.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Alan, there is a noise.

ALAN GREENBERG Is this any better?

MICHELLE DESMYTER

Much better.

ALAN GREENBERG

Okay, I'll start again. This slide is very sparse in words, but is an impact and importance. It is huge. The last round had close to 2000 applications. We are predicting, as Marika mentioned, 2000 this time, but we really have no idea what the number of applications will be.

If you look at the length of each application, that's a lot of words. So, we are going to need a large number of people working on this overall process to be able to review them. Yes, we are going to have a small committee, the gARG, which will be charged with doing this. But there's no way it can do it itself. So, we are presuming and hoping that we will have significant involvement within the RALOs.

We will be producing guidelines over the next couple of months for what we want the RALOs to do to try to ramp up their involvement in this process. And it's going to be critical. So, clearly the RALOs will have to put people on the various committees that we have. They are also going to have to review anything that comes out of the committee. If the formal committee decides that we probably want a comment on something, we're expecting input from the community on whether this indeed has merit.

Ultimately the ALAC will have to decide, but that implies the RALO people on the ALAC will have to decide. Similarly, there are going

to be issues that are going to be regional in intent, that something will be particularly sensitive in a given RALO, a given region, and they're likely to be the ones that are going to have to raise it.

It may or may not get overall acceptance from within the At-Large, in which case, of course, a RALO can submit their own comments. As we pointed out, pretty much anyone can submit a comment. But if we want it to be done by the ALAC, by At-Large, then we're going to have to generate interest both within that RALO and other RALOs.

The bottom line is, if this process is going to be successful, we're going to need a lot of people involved, far more than we tend to have involved in a comment that normally goes in to a PDP or something. As Dev mentioned, it's not as simple as what we normally do in simple comments. We're going to need a lot of people involved. The massive work that we're looking at is huge.

If you look at what happened last time, as I said, there were almost 2,000 applications. There was a total of almost 13,000 comments made. Some of these are very substantive. Some of them are rather flippant and throwaway comments by someone putting something in. It's worth looking at some of them and trying to understand what we mean by a comment, what kind of thing is likely to be acted on.

If you look at the results of the comment process last time around, we had applications that were withdrawn, and they were withdrawn to a large extent because it was clear that there was

huge disagreement in the community about whether an application like that should be approved.

We certainly had registry commitments that were made to address issues, and lastly, comments led to objections by the independent objector. So, to review, we are looking for application review that will be done both by the gARG and by RALOs and by individuals. We are going to have to have substantive community discussion. That's likely to be more than a month, than a weekly CPWG meeting.

As both Marika and Dev mentioned, we're looking at some very tight time frames to make some of these decisions. We are going to have to have people drafting the comments, and obviously only one or two people draft something, but we need substantive involvement of the community to review them and make sure that they say what we intend to say.

The ALAC will have to consider these and vote on it. And then, of course, if we get to the point where we actually decide that we believe we have sufficient standing and a sufficient case, we could be filing formal objections. So, it's a complex process, as one of the earlier slides showed. There're arrows that go in pretty much every direction, because this is going to have to be a process with feedback, with iterations to come up with products that we can be proud of.

And I'm finished with what I was going to say, and I see Marika had her hand up.

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Alan. I just want to say I really appreciate the work and thinking that the ALAC team is already putting into this, because indeed, I think it's really helpful for communities to be prepared for what's coming. You have your processes in place, but I did want to mention that, of course, your process, as you get to a possible formal objection, then also will need to align with ICANN's process for how we manage those.

And I think Jared had a couple of comments that may be helpful as you kind of think through, and again, especially that connection from where you hand things over to us to make sure that there's no disconnect, for example, in timing or other aspects. So, Jared.

JARED ERWIN

Yeah, thanks, Marika, and hi, everyone. My name is Jared Erwin. I'm on Marika's team. I'm not the SME for this process. The SME is Elisa Busetto, but she's not here. But, yes, she is currently working on our procedures, so on the other side of things, so how we will connect with the ALAC on any objections that they file. But some things that Elisa has noted for consideration are, since the objection would have to come through an individual, as it can't be submitted as a body, as the ALAC is not a legal entity per se, so the objection does come through an individual.

So, considering who that individual is and who's submitting it, I think is an important consideration also for funding and what ICANN has to do in terms of legal compliance of who they're funding, so that's something to consider.

Timing, of course, is a big consideration, so not wanting to submit your objection at the last minute, if possible. Doing that earlier, of course, is advisable. I think also there's perhaps a suggestion on our end for when the strings are available after reveal day and string confirmation day, that perhaps the ALAC can connect with ICANN Org staff on next steps, perhaps, and procedures at that point to ensure that everything is aligned and running smoothly. So, that was another suggestion there.

Let me just check my notes. There was something else, but I think those were the major considerations that we wanted to mention for right now, so hopefully that's helpful. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Jared. I do have Sébastien, Justine, Alan, who wants to respond, comment, question, so I'll go to Sébastien first.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET

Thank you very much. You say that it needs to be an individual, and then you say that because ALAC have no legal standing, is it individual or it's a legal standing that is important? Because we are an organization within At-Large who have legal standing. Therefore, if it's a need or legal standing, we have that, but it's

different to an individual. Therefore, I would like very much to understand what you mean by ALAC is no legal standing. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Sébastien. Justine, and then Alan.

JUSTINE CHEW

I don't know if Jared or Marika wants to add on to what I have to say. Maybe there's some confusion. This is Justine. The position is that the ALAC has standing to file comments as anyone does. Comments are not limited to us, but insofar as objections is concerned, we do have standing to file an objection. We have funding to file an objection because objection requires fees, but in terms of when the panelist looks at the objection, they will have to check whether we've met certain requirements in order to be heard or not. I think this question about standing is a little bit convoluted because we've got standing to file and standing to be heard, which is two different things. And if I may just take this opportunity to ask a question.

Given that Marika pointed out earlier that there is an extra time between when the 14 days of string replacement ends and when the string confirmation day happens, so we're not looking at potentially 104 days for preparing ourselves. We are looking at when the strings are revealed plus the 14 days for string change

plus how much ever time ICANN Org takes to get to string confirmation day.

So, I think, and it could be my fault because I didn't consider the fact that ICANN Org may need to have time to get to string confirmation day. So, we do have extra time now to look at all the applications. The only difference is at string confirmation day, that is when we see the full and final list of strings or replacement strings that are being applied for.

So, we can start the work already. And then when we come to string confirmation day, we will have affirmative knowledge of what strings are actually being applied for and whether it's replaced or not. So can I get a confirmation that that is the case?

JARED ERWIN

Yes. So I think maybe if I heard you correctly, Justine, I think maybe you were switching reveal day and string confirmation day. So, there is a period of time to get to reveal day that is kind of subject to the number of applications. And then from reveal day to string confirmation day, there's a two-week replacement period. So, that's 14 days plus the 104 days starting at string confirmation day for the application community input period when application comments are filed, but also objections. So, the 118 days I think is more fixed. It's just the time. Marika?

MARIKA KONINGS I'm just saying there will be a bit of time between end of replacement period and before we have string confirmation day for us to pay attention.

JARED ERWIN Okay. Sorry. Yes.

MARIKA KONINGS And again, we don't anticipate that that will be months. That will be likely a short period, but I just want to set expectations that the moment we close the replacement window is not when we immediately expect to be able to release string confirmation day.

JUSTINE CHEW So, potentially we could have more than 114 days. Thank you.

MARIKA KONINGS If I could add maybe on the previous question, because I think and hopefully Jared can pardon me if I'm wrong, I think the question is not so much about who has standing, but the person who files needs to be an individual for payment purposes and for legal compliance checks. So, you may want to think about who that is so that you don't encounter any issues potentially there. So, I think that's the point we're making on who the submitter is on the file.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY Okay. Let me go to Alan once and then -- oh, Jared.

JARED ERWIN

There we go, sorry. It's more about payment, Sébastien. I think I probably was confusing the institution of the ALAC can, of course, file an objection, but for payment purposes, it's from an individual. So, that's why for funding, I don't know that and maybe we can take this offline to confirm for sure, but I don't know that we are funding the ALAC as a legal institution. We're funding technically an individual. But again, we can take that offline to confirm for you.

JUSTINE CHEW

If I can just jump in there, I don't think that concerns us too much because if ALAC were to file the comment or sorry, if ALAC were to file an objection, ICANN Org will take care of the objection fee, however the process is. So, don't worry about that.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you. Alan.

ALAN GREENBERG

Yeah, thank you very much. My recollection is last time we filed an objection; it was technically filed by the chair of the ALAC on behalf of the ALAC. There are issues of liabilities that have to be addressed, but that's how it was done last time. That may or may not be the way it was done next time.

As Justine said, ICANN is covering the fees. Whether they're going to give us the money so we can pay it, I suspect ICANN finance

doesn't work that way. If they'd like to give me personally the money so I can file it, I'd be delighted. I may or may not use it that way.

It may be my retirement fund. But seriously, in terms of legal entity, the ALAC is a legal entity. It is under California law and unincorporated association. That's the basis in which we can be part of the empowered community. But in any case, those are details that will have to be worked out between ICANN legal. And I don't think that we need to be concerned with them. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much, Alan. And do you want to continue to the next slide? Hannah, please go ahead.

HANNAH FRANK

Okay. Thank you so much, Alan, for developing the previous slides. So, could you please go to the next slide?

Okay. This is on forward and this session was more educational, as you said, Amrita. And I will develop why the community engagement is important in the next few steps. The effectiveness of this review process depends very much on the participation of the broader at large community.

So, the diversity of these larger structures will allow us to bring regional, as we say in many, many slides before to bring regional perspective, local knowledge into the review of this application. This is particularly important because new, new gTLD applications

may affect communities in different, different ways across regions. So, active participation from the community. Will aim to ensure that concerns affecting end users, local community, regional economies can be properly identified and discussed.

In that sense, community engagement is not only about participation. It is, I guess, also about ensuring that the review process reflects the diversity and experiences of internet users around the globe. So, looking ahead, there are a few next steps that will drive us prepared for the Next Round.

So, thank you, Amrita for the next slide. A next step, each trailer will be invited to nominate two or three members and attorneys to participate in this group. Volunteer will help support the review of gTLD applications and contribute their expertise to the community discussions. We are also setting clear expectations regarding participation, including anticipating workload, transparency, regarding conflicts of interest and a working proficiency in English, given that the application materials are primarily in English.

Looking ahead, discussions on this topic will continue of course, during ICANN86, where we expect to further engage with the community and continue preparing for the Next Round of applications.

Well, to conclude, the upcoming round of New gTLDs represent an important opportunity, not only for the evolution of the domain name system, but also for communities and regional economies around the world. Ensuring minimum participation from this At-

Large community will therefore to be the key to help reflect the perspectives and the interest of internet user during this process. So now thank you so much for your listening and I know we'll go to you, Amrita. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much. And now we are open for questions. Anyone? The RALOs, if you have some questions, what is it you need to inform your member, your ALSs, individual members, what support do you need? You know, because if concerns have to come, you also need to tell your community how they think. And I do see Hadia's hand. Yes, Hadia.

ALAN GREENBERG

Amrita, there are also questions in the question pod.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

We will just take it. I'll go to Hadia once, and then we'll take the questions in the pod.

HADIA ELMINIAWI

This is Hadia Elminiawi for the record, AFRALO Chair. So, thank you Amrita, Hannah, Alan and Dev for this great presentation, informative presentation. And I think AFRALO, or actually this is what we have scheduled. We have scheduled the capacity building webinar about this topic. And the reason we're doing that, because

we are going to call for members to join. And we would like the community to know what this is about before we do so.

We have scheduled a capacity building webinar for April. I don't know if this is too early. And of course, we would like the presenters to come from this group. So, maybe Dev, Alan and the rest. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much for this, Hadia. And if you could send in your request early, perhaps having someone share, because people will need more information. And I do see Laura. And after that, I would go to the question which was shared. Many people may not have seen, and Justine has responded to it, but we will also have it read out. Laura, first to you.

LAURA MARGOLIS

Thank you, Amrita. And thank you for the detailed presentation. And regarding your question, how will we transmit this to our communities, ALSs? I think it's quite challenging to do that, to be honest. It's quite challenging today to engage the ALSs. So, I have no idea how we will transmit this information to them and make them participate. Just a comment. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Absolutely. It is difficult, but it is not for everyone, but a few may be interested. So, getting them motivated and giving them right information and feeding them over time, that information is

important. And that is why perhaps as RALOs, if you can go back, look at your drawing Board, look at who may be interested in your region, and trying to motivate them, because it's no point cribbing about it after the ship has sailed. Rather, if we want to do something now, we should be doing. Justine, you want to say something?

JUSTINE CHEW

Yes, this is Justine. So, that's a fair comment, Laura. This group hasn't, or at least leadership hasn't figured out how the model would work yet. We're just presenting the overall information about timelines and the process that we have come to an agreement on, the procedure itself, because that's something that we needed to inform ICANN Org as a requirement.

So, I think moving forward, I suspect the best way to do it is RALO by RALO. For example, Hadi has already offered the opportunity for some of us to go and speak to AFRALO, and they're prepared to organize a specific webinar for it, as far as I understand it.

So, that could be the same approach with RALO. And I would add that you have an added advantage that Hannah is in the group and Hannah is from your region. So, you could potentially look to her for a lot of guidance in the future. Thank you.

LAURA MARGOLIS

Okay, thank you. I know Hannah is in our group, but that was not the point. I was going to another thing. But yes, of course, we will

organize and get all the information and, well, see if we can get some people interested in participating. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Laura. And we can always share. Yesterday, Claire was saying about synergies. For example, if AFRALO is doing a webinar and some people from other regions can participate in here, why not if we can promote it so that there is sharing of resources, if the time permits.

So, the question which an anonymous participant had placed on in the Q&A pod was, given the nature of the procedure, will there be sufficient time to submit the objections within the 104 days? And, Justine, do you want to share what you responded to?

JUSTINE CHEW

Yes. So, thank you for the question. Whoever may have put it in there is anonymous, so I don't know. I don't know if you have a practice of taking anonymous questions, but that's all right.

So I think I responded by way of staff putting something in the pod as well. But, okay, so these 104 days is outcome of consensus decision, community consensus decision. We have tried, when I say we, I'm talking about At-Large, we have tried as strongly and as repeatedly as possible to express a concern about the timeline.

And I tell you that it was originally 90 days, and we managed to get an extension of an extra how many other days it is, 10 days, I think it was, 14 days. Okay, so we raised it through the implementation

review team Working Group that this was a concern. And obviously that particular Working Group discussed the merits of it, and we came to kind of a consensus that it would be 104 days rather than 90 days. So, it is what it is.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you. And then we had another question, which was, will the requirement of three or more RALOs need to agree to the objection statement make it difficult to raise region-based or community-based claims given they may have only regional impact?

JUSTINE CHEW

Okay, and the answer that I provided in the part as well is that, personally speaking, I don't think that is an issue because insofar as the way at large works across the RALOs, we have always done it collaboratively. So, I don't think that it would rise to a situation where, for example, one region does not support it because it's not an issue in that region. Personally, I don't think that would be an issue.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Justine. And Lance, I do see your hand, your temp card up. So, over to you.

LANCE HINDS

Thank you, Chair. Not to spend too much time on this at the moment because of where we are, but in view of the fact that there

is going to be training and there's going to be webinars and stuff like that, is it at all possible to have a cross-RALO or RALO-wide evaluation template, which would make the assessments a little more uniform and probably make life a little easier in the decision-making? I don't know. I'm just guided as to whether that is possible. Thank you, Chair.

HANNAH FRANK

Thank you, Lance. Well, we have the guidelines that are so practical, and, yeah, it is supposed to be developed workshops, webinars. And, you know, we are working in conjunction and with synergies between ALAC, At-Large Community, the RALOs, and this new group that will be formed. However, you know that all this issue, this topic, the community will continue discussing as we move forward in preparing the Next Round.

But, yeah, because, you know, we have different, the RALOs all have different necessities, perspectives, realities. However, I need to, that we need to, I think I consider that we need to set up one criteria to all the RALOs and the community has the same guidelines, the same strategies in order to carry out these objections and comments. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Hannah. We have quite some time. If anyone has any questions, comments, anything from behind the room or some information which you think is needed, because no one seems to

be having any questions, actually. Oh, John. Yes, sorry, I thought you were --

JONATHAN ZUCK

I know that RALO leadership doesn't always love hearing from me on this, but when we talk about trying to get out to ALSs and things like that, I think the thing to start doing right now today is literally put together a phone list of all of your ALSs and start calling them one by one and find out if they're interested at all in this and if they are, what pieces of this they might be interested in based on the business that they're in.

Is it security? Is it privacy? Is it a generalized organization like ISOC? And if so, who would be the person to reach out to? So, that the point at which this is something you're trying to run by the ALSs as a specific TLD, you're not trying to do a blast out to your list, which I agree with Laura, it will be a pointless exercise.

The only way it works is if you have that level of intimacy with your ALSs and you know who's interested in what and who within the organization should be reached out to under what circumstances and then only reach out to those people for individual objections. And I think that process should start today. Just not today, but when you get home, one by one, call the ALSs. There aren't that many, even in the large, the biggest ones. Find out what they're interested in.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Jonathan. Alan, over to you.

ALAN GREENBERG

Yeah, thank you. On the same subject. Look, we know this is going to be difficult. There's a lot of work, just the sheer number of applications we're expecting is large. We know it's going to be difficult to get people involved and we need to come up with some sort of methodology.

As Lance pointed out, maybe one of the answers is templates, but I think Jonathan's comment of getting to the people is the critical one. And I think at the RALO level, we have to remember that we can't presume the formal representative of an ALS is the person who's going to be interested in this.

The reason we have ALSs is because they have membership. We need to get to the membership and try to find the number of people who actually have an interest in a particular subject, be it security, be it other things, and try to reach them. And if we can recruit a small number of people from each RALO, we're going to be well farther ahead than we are right now. But it will take effort on the RALO's part to identify and reach those people. And that's why we're starting now, not three months from now. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you so much, Alan. Laura, you have your hand up.

LAURA MARGOLIS

Yes, thank you, Amrita. Just one comment. I totally agree with Alan's comments and Jonathan too. Maybe we could prepare, I don't think it was Lan's idea, something to work on all the RALOs, like a survey, something like that, to identify specific persons that could be interested. Because, as you said, not everyone will be, and we need to go directly to the possible ones. So, maybe we could work on something together, a tool, I don't know what, to work on that. Okay, thank you.

JUSTINE CHEW

This is Justine. I will say it right now. We always have this tension between what the ALAC wants to do and what the RALO wants to do. So, I'm going to play this lightly. We are prepared, and when I say we, I'm talking about ALAC, we are prepared to work with the RALOs on how you want to approach this. So, the team, the Small Team that has been set up to do the work is a cross-RALO thing. It's not an ALAC thing.

Although it's an ALAC subcommittee, it's an ALAC Small Team. But the work is being done. The way we hope that all the RALOs will approach it is to use standard guidelines. So, the work on the guidelines is ongoing. So, it's not going to be the case that the RALO is going to take one section or whatever. Everybody is going to be looking at the same set of guidelines and applying the same guidelines.

The piece that we require RALO to do is what Jonathan is asking for. Can the RALOs reach out to your members to see who is

interested in this sort of work so that we can at least identify the RALO members that can make up the gARG, the g-A-R-G, because that's a requirement. Each RALO must have at least two or three members in the gARG for this to work. But that's not to say that other people in the RALO that are interested and are not members of the gARG can't work on that. No, that's not the case.

And perhaps what we can do, consider within a team, is maybe we can come up with a little infographic or something that we can share with the RALO leadership. And you use that to reach out to your members and say, hey, this opportunity for engagement is coming up. This is what it kind of looks like. And then if you're interested, please let us know, and then you can grab onto that.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Justine, for this. And Alan just reminded us that RALOs also have individual members, not only ALSs, and some of them may have interest in this topic. So, as in this is an opportunity to work together, we could make the best use of our strengths. Anything else, Hannah, you want to add?

HANNAH FRANK

Yeah, thank you. Let's remind us that to get into all of the guidelines and all the information we provide today and we develop, we have been working, I don't remember exactly, but during 2025, we formed the Small Team. This Small Team was part

of the OFB Working Group, the Small Team on objections procedure.

We have a very large group of people who joined from the different RALOs. Their perspective was taken into account into this draft and the final presentation before this. And we informed about the confirmation of the group before getting into the nearly gARG. So, yeah, so hope that the people who went to participate of the previous Small Team of the sub scoring and the workflow team could have more experience, probably, and it's welcome to join and provide their perspective, regional mindsets and thoughts. Thank you.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Hannah. Alan or Dev, one-minute last words from you?

ALAN GREENBERG

I don't think there's anything other than we have a lot of work to do and we hope to have a lot of people involved in it. Thank you.

DEV ANAND TEELUCKSINGH

This is Dev. I'll just echo Alan's comment. And, yeah, regarding the ideas, we're getting a scorecard, infographic, those ideas are being worked on. So, hopefully we'll get something out soon. And if you want to be part of that team, you know, join the Small Team via the OFB. Thanks.

AMRITA CHOUDHURY

Thank you, Dev. And I think as a closing statement, what our speakers mentioned is important that you should watch out for more updates on the gARG work, opportunities how the community can participate. We also have to work at the RALO level. And most importantly, passing on the information with the RALOs. If we don't have the information, we know who our resource people are. You know, they can always help us in sharing the right information and, obviously, encouraging volunteers who are committed to participate in the process.

With that, I think we can give back six minutes of the ICANN meeting time to you. And thank you very much, everyone, for joining this session and to the interpreters. Thank you so much.

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