
ICANN85 Mumbai | CF – GAC Capacity Development Session (1 of 2)
Saturday, March 7, 2026 – 15:00 to 16:00 IST

MODERATOR

Recording in progress.

Welcome to the ICANN 85 GAC Capacity Development on new gTLD Next Round session on Saturday, March 7th, at 03:00 PM local time. 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 remember to state your name for the record and the language you will be speaking in case you are speaking a language other than English. Please speak at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation. I will now hand the floor over to Ken-Ying Tseng and Karel Douglas. Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you. Good afternoon, good morning, and good evening, everybody. I am Karel Douglas from Trinidad and Tobago. I am also

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one of the co-chairs of the Underserved Regions Working Group, and it is a pleasure to be here. I am actually at a table, so if you are not seeing me, apologies.

As you know, this is an extremely important exercise. Capacity building serves the purpose of bringing everybody up to speed as to what is taking place. In this case, of course, it is the second round for the new gTLD applications. As per usual, we have some fantastic speakers with the intention of bringing you up to speed as to what is taking place.

I am not going to do the introductions; I will leave that to my colleague, Ken-Ying. It is our intention that during this process, there will be as much lively interaction as possible. We hope that there will be some time at the end of this so persons could ask questions. If there is anything that is of concern, by all means, we do hope that you will have the opportunity to have those questions answered. I will pass it on to my colleague, Ken-Ying, who will do the introductions. Thank you.

KEN-YING TSENG

Thank you, Karel. My name is Ken-Ying Tseng, and I am from Chinese Taipei. I am also one of the topic leads for the Next Round, so it is my honor to be here to help everyone with these capacity development and building activities. On my left-hand side, we have Jared, Lars, and Kristy. Each of them are the experts for the new gTLD Next Round applications. For the benefit of the new GAC

members, maybe each of you can do a short introduction of yourself later.

Today's first section will cover the application timeline, an overview of the publicly available information, and an overview of different gTLD application types. We will also provide an overview of the actions that GAC members and observers can take during the new gTLD applications, as well as the useful resources available to all GAC members and the community. As Karel said, we hope that we will have some time for interaction, questions, and answers. Now, I will give the floor to our expert, Kristy.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Sure. Thank you very much, and thanks everyone for having us here today. Maybe before we go into the presentation, the three of us can just briefly introduce ourselves. My name is Kristy Buckley. I am a Senior Director with the new gTLD program. Many of you might recognize me as the lead for the Applicant Support Program, or ASP, which has been a popular topic of discussion among the GAC for some years now. I also am the lead of the readiness work that ICANN is doing in preparation for the new gTLD program.

This is mainly focused on the human aspects of change and preparing people—whether they are applicants, community members, evaluators, vendors, or staff—for the roles and responsibilities that they are going to have in the upcoming 2026 round. Our team is working on training, content development, and resources to help all of those different audiences prepare for the

round. With that, I will turn it over to Lars and then Jared, and then we will get into the presentation. Thanks.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thanks, Kristy. Thanks, Ken-Ying. Thank you for having us. My name is Lars Hoffmann. I am the Deputy Lead for the new gTLD program. Marika, the lead, is in the audience here as well. I will be talking a little bit about the initial stages of the applicant journey. With that, I am going to pass it on to Jared.

JARED ERWIN

Thanks, Lars. Hi, everyone. My name is Jared Erwin. I am also a Senior Director on the program, working with Lars on his team. I have been involved with the work on the Applicant Guidebook and developing that with the IRT. I have worked on a lot of these topics that we are going to talk about today and implementing them in the AGB. I will turn it back to Kristy to talk us through the agenda.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thank you, Jared. If we can go to the next slide. I am happy to take questions or comments as we go through the slides today and make it more interactive. I know there was a question about whether we could stand with the roving mics and be among you all. I myself am a little bit too jet-lagged to do that today, but we will try our best to keep it lively and interactive, so please do not hesitate to ask any questions that you might have.

Today we will be reviewing content that we included in the GAC workbook on community input timelines and actions for GAC members and observers. We recognize that the GAC has a unique role, as well as opportunities, in relation to new gTLD applications for the 2026 round. ICANN's role is to support readiness for the GAC and the broader community, as well as applicants, staff, and vendors.

The workbook, which is on the GAC website, has been created specifically for the GAC with the objective of providing a structured approach and contextual information of community input timelines and actions. This establishes a baseline for the GAC to develop relevant processes and procedures on GAC member or observer actions on new gTLD applications.

If we go to the next slide, we will review the agenda, which takes us through the five different sections of that workbook. The original plan for today was to present the GAC workbook in detail so that the second capacity development session could be used for the GAC members to really go through it and use it in a workshop. I understand that due to travel difficulties, we have shifted a little bit, so the second capacity development session will be focused on RSP instead.

We still strongly encourage our GAC members and colleagues to take a look at the workbook to see if you can find time to use it as an available resource. Maybe there are other future conversations

where you want to use that workbook to workshop some of the conversations that you would like to have.

Today we have a focus on the application timeline. I know this is a strong topic of interest for the GAC, so Lars will talk about that. We will focus on the entity, financial, operational, and application information that will be made publicly available so the GAC has an understanding of what is going to be public and when. Jared will cover different types of gTLD applications, for example, geographic names or community gTLD applications.

Then we will provide an overview of the actions that GAC members and observers, either individually or collectively, can take in relation to new gTLD applications. We have access to resources available to support the GAC's role in community input, objections, and appeals, which I will cover at the end. With that, I will give the floor to Lars to walk us through the timeline on the next slide. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Kristy. We have the timeline slide here, which stretches from April this year until June next year to give you an overview of the initial stages. Many of these are of particular importance or relevance to the GAC. I am going to walk you through this step by step. If there is any question at any time, feel free to interrupt me and raise your hand. Alternatively, you can also ask any questions at the end.

The next big milestone will be the 30th of April this year, which is the date that we are planning to open the application system. That will then allow applicants to start filling in their applications. The application period will stay open for 15 weeks, or 104 days, which brings us to a closure date of the 12th of August, 2026.

There is no advantage or disadvantage to submitting applications early or later; you are not going to be processed earlier if you submit earlier. However, we still very much encourage applicants to submit as soon as possible. One of the reasons behind that is that the payment of the fees will be due upon receipt of the invoice, but no later than seven days after the closure of the window. In other words, the more closely applicants submit to the 12th of August, the smaller the timeframe is to submit the payment. We know international transfers sometimes can take some time, so we are very conscious of that and we will be sure to communicate that to the applicants throughout.

Once the application window closes, there are a lot of administrative checks that have to happen in the background. I just spoke about the payments, but there are other administrative steps as well that we have to do. The period between the closure of the window and the reveal day in mid-October is a non-fixed period. We are currently estimating that reveal day will take place in October. We estimated about eight to nine weeks for that administrative period to take place.

As you can imagine, the timing will depend to a significant degree on the volume and types of applications we receive. If we get significantly more than 2,000 applications, which is the assumption we have made for the purpose of these timelines and for the design of the round, that period could very well take longer. If there are significantly fewer, then it could obviously take less time than October. Our assumption for now is 2,000 applications. If it is around that figure, which it was in 2012 as well, then we are looking at reveal day in October 2026.

What is reveal day for those of you who may be a little bit new to the process? Reveal day is the moment when all the public-facing information from the applications is published. This means the world gets to see not only the strings that have been applied for, but also who the applicants are behind those strings and where they are based. All the public-facing questions that were answered in the application will be revealed that day. If you are interested in more details regarding those questions and answers, they are all listed in the Applicant Guidebook. It is also marked there which of these will be publicly facing, so it is a good way to prepare for that time when the cards will be flipped.

Then we have a period between October and November, which is a 14-day string replacement period during which applicants may replace their original string with their replacement string if they are eligible to do so. As a quick recap, applicants will be allowed at no additional cost to submit an alternative string to their originally

applied-for string. For example, if you apply for .example, you can also apply for .secondexample.

On reveal day, you can see the landscape of the other applied-for strings. If you think you may be in contention, or you find you are in contention because someone else applied for that same string, you have the opportunity to forsake your application for that and select your replacement string instead. This replacement string concept came out of a Board-GAC consultation to minimize the chances of contention sets being formed. Switching to your replacement string is limited insofar as it must not create or join another contention set. If someone else has applied for .secondexample as their primary string, you are not allowed to use that as your replacement string because you would join another contention set by doing so. Those rules are explained in more detail in the Applicant Guidebook. I see a hand from Tracy.

TRACY HACKSHAW

I have a timeline question on what you just spoke about. The ICANN meeting at the end of the year is October 17th to 22nd. Is it likely that the reveal day will be before or after that meeting? Additionally, I am gathering from the timeline that the early warning process cannot start until the string replacement period happens. This is more of a planning question for if we were to do some activities, scenarios, and training. Is it reasonable to assume that we can still be doing scenarios and training during the ICANN meeting from the 17th to the 22nd?

LARS HOFFMANN

That is a very good question. If you do the exact math from August 12th and add nine weeks on top of that, you come up just short of the meeting in Oman. This means that at that point, we would have had the reveal day but not the string confirmation day yet. We are aware of that timeline. We cannot commit to a day because it will depend on the amount of applications. We want to have reveal day as soon as possible, but the meeting is an important event in the ICANN calendar. Having the reveal date just after that or having the string confirmation period during that time may not be the right thing to do. We are looking at seeing if we can have the reveal day beforehand to allow the GAC and other community members to take a look at these applications, but we cannot commit to that yet.

If reveal day happens before the meeting, the GAC would know the universe of applied-for strings and replacement strings. While you would not be sure whether an applicant is going to stick to their original string or switch to their second string, you can have a conversation about potential concerns. During the string confirmation day, the strings are fixed. Applicants have either switched to the replacement string or stuck to the original one. No more changes are possible. At that moment, the community input and objection period starts.

This is the period where the GAC can issue early warnings, which can be issued by individual GAC members. If you choose to do it as a group or the GAC as a whole, that is absolutely up to you. Once

the early warning is issued, there is an encouraged dialogue between the GAC member and the applicant to resolve that concern. The GAC can also issue consensus advice. The process there is well known, and nothing changes with regard to the next round. The GAC usually does that during ICANN meetings or intersessional meetings.

If reveal day happens after the meeting because there are too many applications, then you would not know what is applied for during the meeting. Your triaging would then have to happen either in between meetings or during the March 2027 meeting. During the community input and objections period, objections can be raised against applicants. These are dealt with through independent dispute resolution providers. If those are upheld, there is a chance those applications will not be able to proceed.

Once that 104-day period is over, we move into string evaluation. Before that starts, we anticipate the prioritization draw will take place in December 2026. That draw determines the order in which applications are evaluated. There is no priority for string similarity evaluations, but individual evaluations occurring after that will be based on the priority number.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Can you give some clarity as to what "anytime journey application process" means in the blue box?

LARS HOFFMANN

I glanced over that when I talked about the input period. The GAC can issue advice on matters of public interest per the bylaws. Aspects of the new gTLD program may fall under that. We saw that in the 2012 round as well. The GAC can issue advice on relevant aspects of the new round, whether on issues surrounding the conduct of the round or individual applications. That advice can be issued at any time by the GAC on any relevant aspect of the program.

KEN-YING TSENG

For the benefit of the new GAC members, can you explain more about the blue box? You said that the consensus advice from the GAC can be issued at any time throughout the application process. How long is the application process? Is there an ending time for the GAC to take action?

LARS HOFFMANN

That is a good question. There are still a very few applications pending from the 2012 round due to litigation. We are currently estimating that even the complex cases will be processed by the end of 2030. As long as there are applications out there, the round is technically still open, and therefore you could issue advice on those. There is no specific ending day.

KEN-YING TSENG

Julia, can you read other questions? I see that Australia and Norway have some questions.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Yes. Australia asked for a sense of how long it would take for a TLD from this round to be delegated. What might it be for a domain that does not receive any objections, early warning, or advice versus one that does?

LARS HOFFMANN

For those strings that we refer to as golden path applications—meaning no objections, no contention, and no issues during evaluation—we estimate it will take about 14 to 18 months after string confirmation day to be delegated. In the last round, those that received objections or GAC advice took significantly longer. We cannot resolve GAC advice or make objections go away more quickly; those processes have to play out. For those, the timeline could be two to three years or even longer. However, we have designed the program so that string evaluation happens first to establish contention sets. Those that do not prevail in contention will not undergo many of the evaluations, which should reduce the average time to delegation.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Norway asked at which stage in the timeline the geographic names panel should assess. Marika replied in the chat that there is an initial assessment on all strings during the string evaluation period. For those identified as geographic names, the review happens during application evaluation after string evaluation.

JARED ERWIN

Now we will get into the detail of the different aspects of the program. Here you can see an overview of the different types of information that will be publicly available on reveal day. All of this information is in Appendix 1 of the Applicant Guidebook. I will highlight a few pieces. Regarding the entity, information available includes the name, type of entity, jurisdiction, and whether they are an existing registry operator. Contact information, physical addresses, parent companies, officers, and directors will be made available.

Also, responses to questions relating to financial and operational planning will be made available. Applicants fall into different profiles depending on what type of entity they are, such as a top 25 company or a government entity. They will be asked slightly different questions, and the responses to those questions regarding their self-certification or operational planning will be made public depending on the applicant type. Information about the application itself will also be available, including the string name, scripts, variants, what type of application it is, and whether there are any public interest commitments or registry voluntary commitments.

Next slide, please. Here are the different types of applications. The general type will likely be the bulk of applications for non-specialized gTLDs. Other types include IDNs and variant strings. IDN gTLDs are those that have one or more non-ASCII characters.

Variant strings are those that might be considered the same as another string based on script rules, such as traditional and simplified Chinese characters. An applicant can apply for a new primary IDN along with its variants, or variants of an existing gTLD.

Next slide, please. Geographic names represent specific geographic places such as cities, regions, or countries. These applications must meet specific criteria and require government support or endorsement to proceed. All strings are evaluated by a geographic names panel to determine if they are geo names. If they are, they undergo a later evaluation where the applicant must show government support.

Reserve names are set aside for intergovernmental organizations like the Red Cross or the Olympics. Only those specific entities are eligible to apply for those strings. .brand TLDs are for trademark holders seeking domains that match their registered trademarks. These are typically for exclusive use by the brand owner. Community gTLDs serve a particular community based on shared identities or interests. These applicants must include a specification 12 in the registry agreement listing their commitments to that community. If a community applicant is in contention, they have the option to participate in community priority evaluation. We will have more sessions on these specific types over the next week.

JARED ERWIN

The next couple of slides relate to the actions GAC members and observers can take regarding applications. Application comments can be submitted by anyone to bring issues to the attention of ICANN, applicants, and evaluators. This period opens following string confirmation day and stays open for 104 days. There is also a 30-day comment period if there is a brand string change request. While comments have no direct impact on the application, the information may be used by evaluators.

The next action is a singular/plural notification. This is used if someone identifies a string that is the singular or plural form of another string or a delegated TLD. This notification period opens for 30 days after the string confirmation day.

MARCO HOGEWONING

On the singular/plural notifications, is there any automated process as well? Will you only rely on somebody pointing it out before this applies?

JARED ERWIN

We would only respond to a notification of singular or plural. During the objection period, parties with standing may file an objection based on grounds such as string confusion, legal rights, limited public interest, or community objection. GAC members and observers with standing may also file objections. This occurs for 104 days following the announcement on string confirmation day. Objection determinations can be appealed in this coming round.

LARS HOFFMANN

Australia asked how we will find out if a string replacement has happened. All string changes would be announced on the string confirmation day after the two-week replacement period.

MARIKA KONINGS

There is an identifier in the string ID that shows if someone has used their replacement string, so there is a way to see that in the list of strings.

JARED ERWIN

GAC member early warnings are an early indication that an application is potentially problematic. This must include a written explanation of the concerns and how the applicant may address them. This period occurs for 104 days following the string confirmation day. While there is no direct impact on the application, it is a signal that it could be subject to GAC consensus advice.

GAC consensus advice is ICANN bylaws mandated and should include clearly articulated rationale. While it can be submitted at any time, it is encouraged during that 104-day period to allow the Board to consider it before applications enter the evaluation phase.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

This is a summary of the resource materials available. We have the GAC workbook on community input, timelines, and actions, the Applicant Guidebook, and key topic overviews which are high-level summaries on topics like objections and appeals. We also have gTLD use cases that tell the story of existing gTLDs as educational resources.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

There is a question in the chat about whether applicants should submit their files in English only. The answer is yes.

TRACY HACKSHAW

We intended to do the case study analysis after this session using the workbook, but we are not doing that now. The use cases linked on the screen are quite useful. I encourage GAC members to use the workbook and previous use cases as reference points to get some experience with what might happen in the coming round. We will try to do that scenario activity at some point in the next few months. Kristy, can you remind me if those materials will be produced in multiple languages, including the GAC workbook?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Some are translated on the website. If there is a request from the GAC for the workbook, we want to be responsive to demand. We also have a process for submitting requests to translate materials into languages beyond the GAC languages, such as Thai or Hindi.

JORGE CANCIO

I wanted to raise an issue that could be further explored for GAC colleagues regarding objections. There are different grounds: legal rights, limited public interest, and community. Under legal rights, you might have a national legal basis to object to a name protected under your national or regional law. Sometimes we do not reach consensus advice because there are different opinions in the GAC, and we need full consensus for that. An early warning might not be enough to trigger a reaction. It would be a good use of our time to prepare this in more detail for GAC members so it is part of the workbook in a more digestible fashion rather than just linking to the AGB.

KEN-YING TSENG

Thank you for the valuable comment. We will work together on that. There is one last question about whether an application rejected in the previous round can be submitted again.

MARIKA KONINGS

Rejected is not quite accurate. For those that were not delegated in 2012, applicants can apply again. It is recommended that they review why the strings were not successful to avoid a repeat of those reasons. It is time for our break. Please come back in 30 minutes. Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

If you are in contention with .example, or in fact you are because somebody else applied for that, you have the opportunity to forsake your application for that and move on and select your replacement string, and therefore switch your application to .secondexample. Just one more point, Tracy, and then I will go to you.

This replacement string concept came out of a Board GAC consultation to minimize or reduce the chances of contention sets being formed. In addition to that, I will say, however, that switching to your replacement string is limited insofar as that must not create or join another contention set. If somebody else has applied for .secondexample as their primary string, you who have chosen .secondstring as your replacement string are not allowed to use that because you would join another contention set by doing so. Those rules are also in more details and probably more eloquently put in the Applicant Guidebook as well. I had a hand there from Tracy. Tracy.

TRACY HACKSHAW

Thank you. Tracy Hackshaw, UPU. I have a timeline question on what you just spoke about. The ICANN meeting at the end of the year is October 17 to 22. This is more of a speculative question. Is it likely that the reveal day will be before or after that meeting? That is one.

Two, I am gathering from the timeline that the early warning process cannot start until the string replacement period happens.

This is more of a planning question, actually. If we were to do some activities, scenarios, and so on, is it reasonable to assume that the ICANN meeting from October 17 to 22, we can still be doing scenarios and training? It is more of a question along those lines. Thanks.

LARS HOFFMANN

Thank you, Tracy. That is a very good question. The reveal day, at the moment, if you do the exact math from August 12 and add 54 days, which is what we said, I think nine weeks on top of that, I believe you come up just short of the meeting in the autumn in Oman, meaning that at that point we would have had the reveal day, but not the string confirmation day yet.

We are aware of that timeline. As I said, we cannot commit to a day because it will depend on the amount of applications, and we obviously want to have reveal day, on the one hand, as soon as possible. People will want to know. On the other hand, the meeting, as you say, is really an important meeting in the ICANN calendar. Having the reveal day just after that or the string confirmation period during that period may or may not be the right thing to do.

At the moment what we are looking at is seeing if we can have the reveal day beforehand to allow not just the GAC, who are obviously interested in that, but also other community members to take a look at these applications. We cannot commit to that because we do not know what we do not know at this moment. If the reveal day

does happen before the AGM this year, that would mean that during the community input period is the next point it would start. The GAC would know the universe of applied-for strings and also of replacement strings. While you would not be sure whether I am going to stick to my .example string or whether I am going to switch to my .second string, you can have a conversation on .example. If that applicant switches to .secondexample, then we have concerns, so we will wait for what happens and in that case, we may issue an early warning.

Whether you wanted to communicate that is for the GAC to decide. I am not sure whether or not that is appropriate. But that information nevertheless is out there, and people cannot change their strings or replacement string at that moment at all. They cannot bring up a surprise other replacement string at the moment anymore.

I am going to move on a little bit in the timeline and get back to the point you made. As Tracy said, on string confirmation day, the strings are fixed. You either have applicants who have switched to the replacement string, or they are stuck to the originally applied for string. No more changes either back or forwards are possible. You cannot say later that you actually want to go to your replacement string. That window has closed forever.

At that moment, the community input period and objection period, which you see at the very bottom from November to February 27, starts. That is the period where the GAC can issue early warnings,

which are warnings that can be issued by individual GAC members. If you choose to do it as a group of GAC members or even the GAC as a whole, that is absolutely up to the GAC how you want to organize it. In principle, each GAC member by themselves can issue an early warning on an application. There is an internal process that you are already working on.

Once the early warning is issued, there is an encouraged dialogue between the GAC member or members and the applicant to resolve that concern. The GAC can also issue consensus advice. The process there is well known in this room, and nothing changes with regard to the next round. The GAC is usually in the business of doing that during ICANN meetings. If there was an intersessional meeting for the GAC that were to happen, you obviously could do that as well. That is the GAC process, kind of unrelated to the next round.

If the reveal day were to happen after the ICANN meeting simply because there are so many applications that it is not feasible to do it beforehand, then during the AGM meeting this year, we would not have a sneak peek as staff. This is very much kept behind closed doors for all the obvious reasons. You would not know what is applied for, and so then your triaging that you talked about would then essentially have to happen either in between the two meetings or, depending on the timeline, it still could happen in the Lisbon meeting in March 2027.

During that period, the community input objections period, in addition to GAC early warning, there also can be objections being

raised on applicants. These are then dealt with through independent dispute resolution providers. The details of that are also in the Applicant Guidebook. The objection can be raised depending on standing. There are different types of objections that can be raised. If those are upheld, there is a chance that those applications will not be able to proceed if there is an objection brought against them and upheld.

Once that period is over, another 104 days, just like the applications admission period, we are moving into string evaluation where the strings are evaluated on string similarity and other aspects. Before that starts, during the replacement period and input period, we anticipate the prioritization draw takes place in December 2026. That draw will determine in what order the applications are evaluated. That evaluation happens after the string evaluation. As you can imagine, all the applications and strings will be compared to one another for string similarity. There is no priority there. After that, the evaluations will then be based on the priority number per the prioritization draw. That is very similar to the process that took place in 2012, in fact. I am going to stop here. It brings us to the end of the timeline. I see another question from Tracy. Tracy, please.

TRACY HACKSHAW

In the blue box, can you give some clarity as to what "anytime during the application process" means?

LARS HOFFMANN

I glanced over that when I talked about the input period. The GAC consensus advice is a bylaws mandated or defined process. The GAC can issue advice on matters of public interest, obviously, per the bylaws. Aspects of the new gTLD program may very well fall under that. We have seen that in the 2012 round as well. The GAC can issue advice on relevant aspects of the new round, whether it is on issues surrounding the conduct of the round or on individual applications. We have seen both cases during the last round, and so we are expecting that to play out similarly during the future round. That advice, unlike the early warning, can be issued at any time by the GAC on any relevant aspect of the program. That is your role in the multi-stakeholder model. Thank you.

KEN YING TSENG

I have another question about the blue box. For the benefit of the new GAC members, can you explain more about how the consensus advice from the GAC can be issued at any time throughout the application process? How long is the application process? Is there an ending time for GAC to take action?

LARS HOFFMANN

That is a good question. There are still applications that are pending from very few, but there are still a couple pending from the 2012 round. Well, yes, I mean, there could have been litigation, I believe. In theory, I guess, and I do not want to encourage anything

here, the GAC could probably issue advice on that as well, I suspect. The question is: how long is a piece of string? We are currently estimating that the applications, even the complex cases, will be processed by the end of 2030. That is our estimation for that round. May there be stragglers after that? Maybe. Maybe we are finishing a little bit before that with all the evaluations? Possibly. But essentially, as long as there are applications out there, the round is technically still open, and therefore you could issue advice on those.

KEN YING TSENG

So there is no specific ending day on that, depending on how soon ICANN can finish the process?

LARS HOFFMANN

Correct. If we got five applications, then the round might finish in 2027. That would be the last moment. I do not think we will get only five, but if we get 20,000 applications, this may well run until 2030 or 2035. We just do not know at the moment.

KEN YING TSENG

Thank you.

LARS HOFFMANN

I am not in the Zoom room. Can someone read those out if they are on this, please?

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Some of them have been answered. This is Julia, if you want me to read it? Yeah, of course. Okay, so from Ingram in Australia: "On timelines, can you give us a sense of how long it would take for a gTLD from this round to be delegated? What might it be for a gTLD that does not receive any objections, early warning advice, versus one that receives objections or early warning advice?"

LARS HOFFMANN

That is a very good question. Thank you. We estimate, and the timeline is also in the guidebook, that for those strings that we informally refer to as golden path applications—no objections, not in contention, no issues popping up during the applicant or application evaluation, such as background check, financial evaluation, et cetera—it probably will take about 14 to 18 months after reveal day to be delegated or after string confirmation day to be delegated.

What we saw in the last round was that those applications that did receive objections, GAC advice, or were in contention took significantly longer. These are processes that ICANN cannot influence. We cannot resolve GAC advice more quickly or magically. We cannot make an objection go away or go more quickly. There are processes that have to play out. For those, the timeline could well be looking at two or three years, or even longer. It is absolutely a reasonable scenario based on the 2012 experience.

Having said that, I think some of the processes and the way we have designed the program will hopefully mean that things will go a little bit more quickly. You may recall the last time the contention resolution happened at the very end. So all the applications were evaluated for everything, and then the contention was resolved.

This time around, we're doing the string evaluation first to establish contention sets, and then we're going to resolve the contention, meaning that those that do not prevail in the contention will not undergo many of the evaluations. Therefore, we estimate that the average across all the applications from application to delegation, that time will be reduced. But by how much is difficult to anticipate. Based on 2012, as I said, we're thinking between 24 and 36 months for those that fall at least into one of these categories. If somebody hits every single snag, an objection, a GAC advice, or is in contention, then it may well take a longer time. Thanks.

KEN-YING TSENG

Julia, can you read other questions? I see that European Union, Norway has some question.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Yes, thank you. I see that Marika has replied in the chat as well. The last question from Norway is: at which stage in the timeline should the geographic names panel assess? Do you want me to read Marika's response as well?

KEN-YING TSENG

Yes, please.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

Marika replied, "There is an initial assessment on all strings during the string evaluation period. For those that are identified as geographic names, the geographic names review happens during application evaluation after string evaluation."

KEN-YING TSENG

Okay. I hope that is clear. Jora can proceed with your presentation.

LARS HOFFMANN

Yeah. I will pass it on to Jared.

JARED ERWIN

Thanks. Thanks, Lars. Thanks, Ken-Ying. I think we can go to the next slide, please. Now we will get into a little bit more detail of the different aspects of the program that Lars covered on a wholesale basis. Here, and Lars was also just referring to this in regards to Reveal Day, is which information will be made available about applicants and applications after Reveal Day. Here you can see an overview of all the different types of information that will be publicly available. All of this information, including what will be made public, is in Appendix 1 of the Applicant Guidebook, which contains the application questions. The full list of questions that will be asked of all applicants is there, and it also lists out which

questions and the responses to those questions will be publicly available.

I am not going to go through all of this for the sake of time, but I will just highlight a couple of pieces of information that will be made available in regards to the entity, meaning the applicant itself. The information that will be available includes information about the name, the type of entity, the jurisdiction for that entity, whether it is an existing registry operator, contact information, physical address, email address, and information about parent companies, officers, and directors. Also, the responses to the questions relating to financial and operational planning or aspects of the applicant entity will be made available. You can see there that there are different profiles the applicants will fall into as they conduct their application, depending on what type of entity they are. They will have different questions asked of them. For example, whether they are from a top 25 company or if they are a government entity, they will be asked slightly different questions, and then the responses regarding their self-certification or operational planning will be made available, again depending on which type of applicant it is.

Regarding the application information, each applicant can submit an application or multiple applications, which may or may not be the same types of strings. The information about the application submitted by those applicants will also be available, including the string name, scripts, and variants, and what type of application it is. We are going to go through those different types in the next slides. Also, we will see whether there are any public interest

commitments or registry voluntary commitments. Again, all of this is in Appendix 1 of the Applicant Guidebook. I am not seeing any questions, but feel free to ask as we go. I am going to go ahead to the next slide.

Here we get into the different types of applications that might be submitted. This information is likely useful to the GAC as they are planning their processes for when the round opens and for when applications are revealed, so they have an understanding of the different types of strings that might be applied for. Of course, there is a general type. This is really where probably the bulk of applications will fall for any non-specialized gTLDs which have separate requirements based on that type. It is likely that most will fall into that general category. In terms of other types of strings, these include IDNs and variant strings. Of course, here there is a great focus on IDNs and diversifying the global internet. This will be one of the application types. IDN gTLDs are those that have one or more non-ASCII characters. Variant strings are those strings that might be considered the same as another gTLD string based on different script rules. The easiest example is the difference between traditional and simplified Chinese characters, which might be considered variants of each other. An applicant can apply for either a new primary IDN along with its variants, or, if they are an existing registry operator, they may apply for variants of an existing gTLD as long as it is the same legal entity as the registry operator.

Here are a few more types. We have geographic names, reserve names, .brand TLDs, and community TLDs. Geographic names are

gTLDs that represent specific geographic places such as cities, regions, or countries. These applications must meet specific criteria and require additional documentation, including government support or endorsement to proceed through the evaluation process. In relation to the question asked in the Zoom chat, there is really a two-stage process for geographic names. There is string evaluation, which is the initial geographic assessment where all strings will be evaluated by a geographic names panel to determine if it is a geographic name. If it is a geographic name, it would also go through the geographic names application evaluation, which comes at a later stage in the process where the applicant must show they have government support or endorsement for that particular name.

For reserve names, these are strings or names that have been set aside on the ICANN reserve name list. These are generally the names of intergovernmental organizations, such as those related to the Red Cross, Red Crescent, or the Olympics. The only entities eligible to apply for those names are the ones that qualify as the actual entity of that name. Only those entities may apply for those strings. There is a set of requirements and a reserve name evaluation to determine that the entity applying for that name is actually eligible to have it.

.brand TLDs should be fairly self-explanatory. Those are the applicants seeking to apply for a .brand TLD related to their brand. It is intended for trademark holders who want to apply for domains that match their registered trademarks. These are typically

designed for exclusive use by the brand owner and their trademark licensees. Again, there is a special brand evaluation to determine whether they are qualified to have that domain based on their registered trademark.

For community gTLDs, these are cases where an applicant is applying for a gTLD intended to serve a particular community based on shared identities, interests, or other common denominators, factors, or features. These applications must follow criteria for the registry commitments evaluation, as each community gTLD applicant must include what is called a Specification 12 in their registry agreement. This lists the commitments to that particular community and the registration criteria for that particular gTLD that must be evaluated through RCE. Also, if a community applicant is in contention, they would have the option to participate in community priority evaluation to potentially resolve that contention through that evaluation based on its community status. I should plug that we are going to have a few sessions on geographic names, .brand names, and community gTLDs over the next week where we will go into more detail about these different types of applications and their requirements.

I am not seeing any hands. I did see a question in the chat about objection procedures, but I think Marika has answered that as well. So I am going to go ahead to the next slide. This switching of gears covers the next couple of slides regarding the different types of actions GAC members and observers can take in regards to different applications and any concerns with those applications.

This relates to the Community Input Period that occurs after String Confirmation Day, which Lars was just talking us through on the timeline. That period is open for 104 days, and during that period, there are different actions that can be taken. The first is the application comment. Application comments can be submitted by anyone, including GAC members and observers, but also anyone else who may have a concern about a particular application. This allows concerned parties to bring issues to the attention of ICANN, but also other applicants and evaluators looking at those applications. They would use the comment form to communicate those concerns regarding a particular applicant or application that has been submitted. Again, that period for submitting those comments opens following String Confirmation Day and would be open for 104 days.

There is also a period open for 30 days that would allow a .brand string change request or other application change requests. Another application comment period is opened after those two kinds of events if there is a .brand string change request or an application change request. In some cases, if a brand is in contention with another applicant, they do have the option to change their string. That new string they decided to change to would be subject to a comment period. In terms of the outcome of a comment received, there is no direct impact on the application, but, as the Applicant Guidebook states, this information provided via the application comment form might be used by evaluators as they are looking at applications and reviewing those.

The next action that could be taken is a singular plural notification. Again, this could be submitted by anyone, but also GAC members and observers. This is a case where someone has identified a string that is either the singular or plural form of another string or a delegated TLD that is being attempted to be applied for or has been applied for. In such a case, an individual or entity has the opportunity to submit a notification to ICANN to inform them of such a case. This period for singular plural notifications opens for 30 days after the String Confirmation Day.

KEN-YING TSENG

Sorry. Go ahead. Marco has raised his hand online, so maybe we let Marco speak up.

MARCO HOGEWONING

Thank you, colleagues. As I mentioned in the chat, this is a mighty useful slide. On the singular plural notifications, is there any automated process as well? Some of these are probably easy to detect. Or will you only rely on somebody saying this is a singular plural issue before this applies? Thank you.

JARED ERWIN

Thanks, Marco. Yes. We would only respond to a notification of a singular plural, so the latter of which you stated. Okay.

KEN-YING TSENG

How long do you have now? Eleven minutes.

JARED ERWIN

Eleven minutes. Okay. I think we are almost done, though. So just maybe the next slide. Sorry, it was slow on Zoom.

Okay. This is the objection period where parties with standing may file an objection based on different grounds: string confusion, legal rights, limited public interest, or community objection. GAC members and observers that have standing may also file objections. Again, this is happening for 104 days following the announcement on string confirmation day.

For string confusion, another period would be open following the publication of updated contention sets after string evaluation is completed. Also, after a brand string change request, which I was just referring to, another objection period would also be open for 30 days after a brand string change request.

The outcome here is, of course, that an independent dispute resolution panel would determine whether the application can proceed, if it could proceed only with modifications, or if it could not proceed at all. In contrast to the last round and this next round, or this coming round, the objection determinations can be appealed. There are objections and appeals, which are all, of course, detailed in the Applicant Guidebook.

I am just looking at a question in the chat from Ingram, Australia: "How will we find out if a string change replacement has happened? Will changes to strings be somehow announced?" I think, actually, do we know the answer? Looking at my team. Justin, do we know how we will find out if a string change replacement has happened? I think this is in reference to the replacement period, right?

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah.

JARED ERWIN

Yeah. So all those string changes would be announced on—sorry, I am catching up to the question—I think on string confirmation day. So after the two-week replacement period, if someone has changed their string in that period, then it would be announced via the string confirmation day.

I was not sure if the question was also asking about a brand string change request. I think the answer to that would be if someone did change their string via a brand string change request, application change requests are made publicly available, and there is a comment period. Whenever that string change request goes through and there is a comment period that is opened, it would be essentially announced at that time. Hopefully that—sorry, Marika has something to add.

MARIKA KONINGS

Yeah, we are kind of just chatting between ourselves here because I think, as well, the proper question is how can that be easily identified? My understanding is that there is an identifier in the string ID that shows if someone has used their replacement string. So there is a way to see that in the list of strings. I am hoping I am saying that correctly, Justin.

JARED ERWIN

Great. Thank you. Okay. Next slide; I know we just have a few more minutes. The next slide is probably of particular interest here, which are the GAC member early warnings and the GAC consensus advice, though Lars already went through this.

Again, GAC members and observers have the opportunity to file individual GAC member early warnings, which is an early indication that an application is potentially problematic for various reasons, depending on whatever the string is and who is filing the early warning. If an early warning is filed, this must include a written explanation describing why the early warning was submitted and how the applicant may address the GAC member's concerns. GAC members should be prepared to provide any contact details for communication with the applicant.

Again, this period occurs for 104 days following the string confirmation day. It is also important to note that for GAC member early warnings, there is no direct impact on the application, but it is a signal, of course, to that particular applicant regarding that

application that it could potentially be subject to consensus advice by the GAC.

In the case of consensus advice, of course, as Lars mentioned, this is ICANN bylaws mandated. The reasons, the why, and the how are described in the ICANN bylaws. It is also important to note that if there is consensus advice about an application or the round in general, it should include clearly articulated rationale and be limited to the scope set out in the ICANN bylaws.

Here again, as it was discussed based on a question from Tracy, the GAC can submit advice at any time according to the bylaws. However, it is encouraged during that 104-day period following string confirmation day in order to allow the Board to consider it during the evaluation process before those applications go into that evaluation phase. Again, it could happen at any time at the GAC's discretion.

The outcome here, of course, is that, per the bylaws, the Board will consider that GAC consensus advice and the GAC's articulated rationale regarding those applications or whatever it may be, acting in accordance with the bylaws on that particular advice. Back to Kristy for resources. Thank you.

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Thanks, Jared. Hopefully this has been helpful and comprehensive for the GAC in terms of what we have covered. This is really intended to just be a summary slide of the resource materials that

we have available, many of which were mentioned during the presentation.

The one that was most focused on was that GAC workbook, Community Input Timelines and Actions. There is a link to that on the GAC website that I posted in the chat. It is available here in the slide deck. We also pointed to, of course, the Applicant Guidebook, the AGB. There is an HTML version of that.

We also have key topic overviews, which are high-level summaries of topics of interest. It is not intended to replace the AGB—that is the authoritative source—but if you are looking for a high-level briefing on something like community input, objections, and appeals, that is available on the website, for example.

We did get some questions from the GAC leadership in preparation for this session about examples, case studies, et cetera. That is not something that ICANN staff can provide for the GAC, but we did include here the gTLD use cases, which tell the story of existing gTLDs, including considerations and business impact. They are intended as educational resources in case those are helpful examples for the GAC as a resource. With that, I will see if there are any final questions before we wrap. Thank you.

KEN-YING TSENG

Yeah, we still have a few minutes, so if you have any questions, please raise your hand.

JULIA CHARVOLEN

This is Julia. There is a question in the chat. Marika just answered, so... it was, "Should applicants submit their application files in English only?" And the answer is correct.

KEN-YING TSENG

Okay. English only. Any other questions? Tracy, please.

TRACY HACKSHAW

So while we wait for questions, maybe I could just say that we intended, as many of you know, to do the case study analysis after the session using the workbook as a guideline. We are not doing that now, but as Kristy said, the use cases that are on screen, the link there, are quite a few use cases. When I went through them, I saw they could be good reference points.

I would like to encourage GAC members to take the workbook and perhaps use the previous use cases and apply a lens to get some experience or some thinking as to what might happen in the coming round. Try and practice that way. We are still going to try and do that scenario activity at some point during the next few months for sure, because we won't be dropping the ball on that.

In the meantime, it is good practice to click on that use case link and see. I think there are about 12; there are quite a few use cases there that are quite useful, no pun intended. Use the workbook to apply the lens. What type of gTLD is it? Is it sensitive, or was it sensitive, et cetera? Keep that in mind, and you may have questions based around that. If we compile those questions, that will be a

good activity to discuss in the GAC and maybe even to ask ORG to assist with answering some of the questions that may come up when you apply that lens.

Kristy, can you remind me if those materials will be produced in multiple languages, including the GAC workbook?

KRISTY BUCKLEY

Excellent question, Tracy. When you say "those materials," do you mean all of them listed here? Okay. Some of them are translated on the website, but I cannot remember off the top of my head which ones are.

The GAC workbook, if there is a request from the GAC, I think we want to be responsive to demand without wasting resources in translating things that people are not going to use. It would be great to hear what resources would be really valuable and useful for the GAC to get translated.

We also have the new gTLD program in your language as well. So if it is beyond the GAC languages, for example, and you want to have something translated into Thai or Hindi, that is something that we have a process for. You can submit a request for that, and we can work with the community to get that translated. Thanks.

KEN-YING TSENG

Thank you, Kristy. I think Jorge has some questions, please.

JORGE CANCIO

Hello. I hope you hear me okay. This is Jorge Cancio, Swiss representative, for the record. I just wanted to raise one issue that could be further explored and also prepared in a digestible fashion for GAC colleagues, and this is the recourse to objections.

The objections have different grounds: legal rights, limited public interest, and community, if I get that right. All of them, to a certain extent, could be relevant to GAC colleagues. I can imagine that under legal rights, maybe you might have a national legal basis to object to a name that is not a gTLD in the sense of the AGB, but might be protected under your national law, your regional law, or whatever.

Maybe you do not reach a consensus advice because there are different opinions about that issue in the GAC. As we know, we need full consensus to issue a GAC consensus advice. On the other hand, a GAC early warning might not be enough to trigger a reaction with the applicant.

I think it would be a good use of our time, of our support staff, and also of our colleagues from ORG to prepare this in more detail for GAC members so that it is part of this GAC workbook—not just as it is now, where it is just linking to the different parts of the AGB, but in a more digestible fashion. Thank you.

KEN-YING TSENG

Thank you, Jorge, for the valuable comment. I think the GAC staff and ICANN will work together on that. In the chat room, there is

maybe one last question about if an application has been rejected in the previous round, can it be submitted again?

MARIKA KONINGS

I think I was just drafting a response to that. This is Marika, for the record. I do not think "rejected" is the accurate word. I think those that were not successful—some may have decided themselves to withdraw or indeed did not pass required evaluations—but the response is yes.

For those that were not delegated in 2012 or that are still in the process of an active application, because there are still a few, applicants can apply for those strings again. But it is probably important or recommended that applicants review why those strings were not successful to avoid any kind of repeat of reasons for why those applications did not proceed.

KEN-YING TSENG

Thank you. It is time for our break. Thank you everyone, and we are going to discuss further on capacity building for the new gTLD in the next section. It is about RSP and ASP, so please come back in 30 minutes. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]