ICANN Grant Program

Status Update & Next Steps

1 December 2022

Webinar Objectives
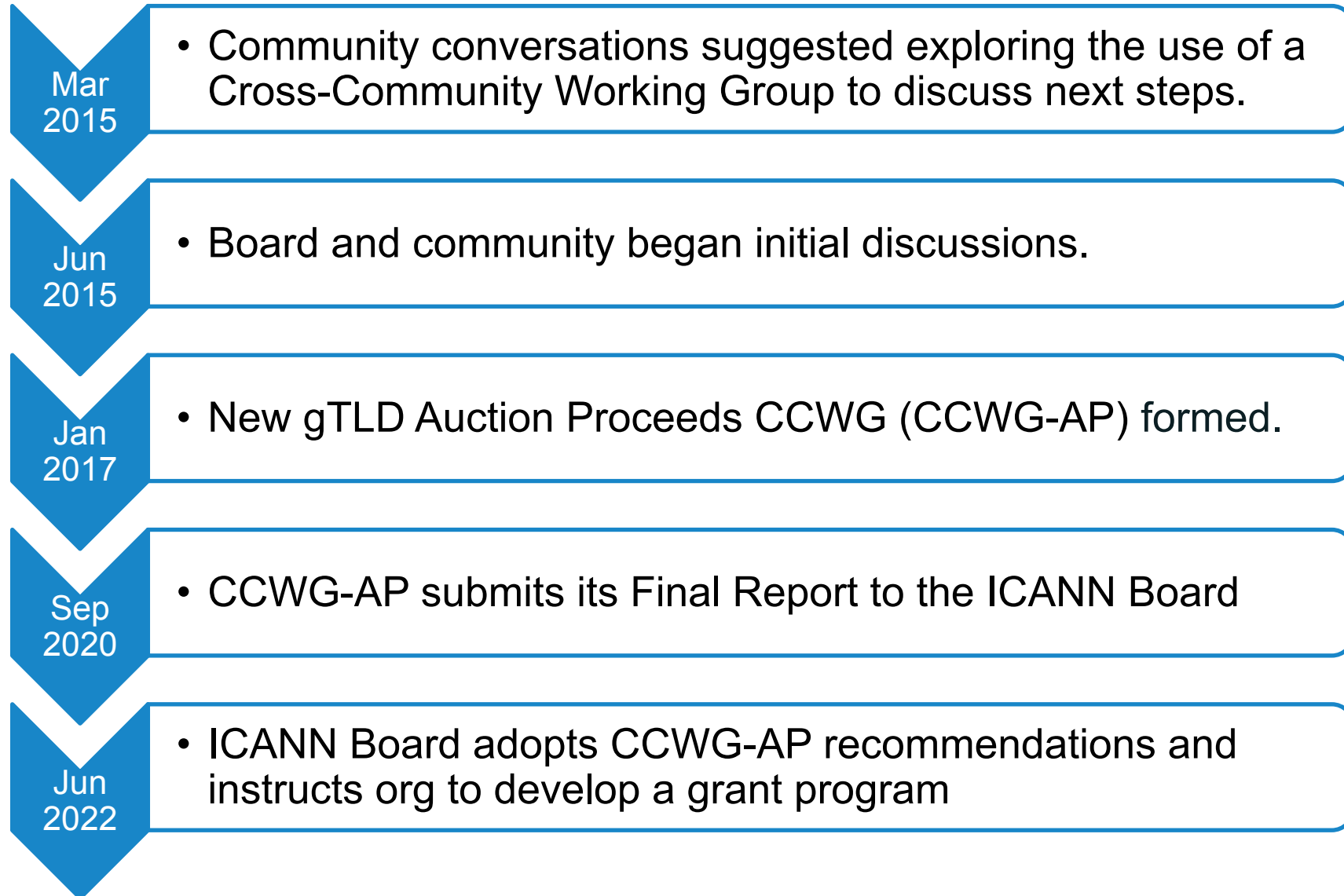
◉ Background on the ICANN Grant Program

◉ Grant Program Preliminary Design and Key Elements

◉ First Grant Cycle and Tentative Timeline

◉ Next steps

Background

New gTLD Auctions of Last Resort

- The New gTLD Program received 1,930 applications, resulting in 234 string contentions where two or more applicants applied for the same or similar top-level domains.

- To date, 16 of those contentions resolved through auctions of last resort, conducted by ICANN's authorized auction service provider.

- The proceeds generated from these auctions are referred to as the "New gTLD Auctions Proceeds" or "Auction Proceeds".

- As outlined in the Applicant Guidebook, "proceeds from auctions will be reserved and earmarked until the uses of funds are determined. Funds must be used in a manner that directly supports ICANN's Mission and Core Values and also allows ICANN to maintain its not for profit status."

Cross Community Working Group on Auction Proceeds

Mar 2015
- Community conversations suggested exploring the use of a Cross-Community Working Group to discuss next steps.

Jun 2015
- Board and community began initial discussions.

Jan 2017
- New gTLD Auction Proceeds CCWG (CCWG-AP) formed.

Sep 2020
- CCWG-AP submits its Final Report to the ICANN Board

Jun 2022
- ICANN Board adopts CCWG-AP recommendations and instructs org to develop a grant program

CCWG-AP Final Report

- 14 September 2020 - CCWG Final Report submitted to the ICANN Board for review and consideration.

- 12 recommendations along with implementation guidance and related materials for future parties involved in the process.

- The recommendations cover the following areas:
  - *Mechanism*
  - *Application Tranches*
  - *Independent Project Applications Evaluation Panel*
  - *Objectives of Proceeds Allocation*
  - *Safeguards*
  - *Conflict of Interest Provisions*
  - *Governance Framework and Audit Requirements*
  - *ICANN Accountability Mechanisms, Appeals, and ICANN Bylaw Change*
  - *Reviews (Mechanisms and Overall Program)*
  - *ICANN org / Constituent Parts Applying for Proceeds*
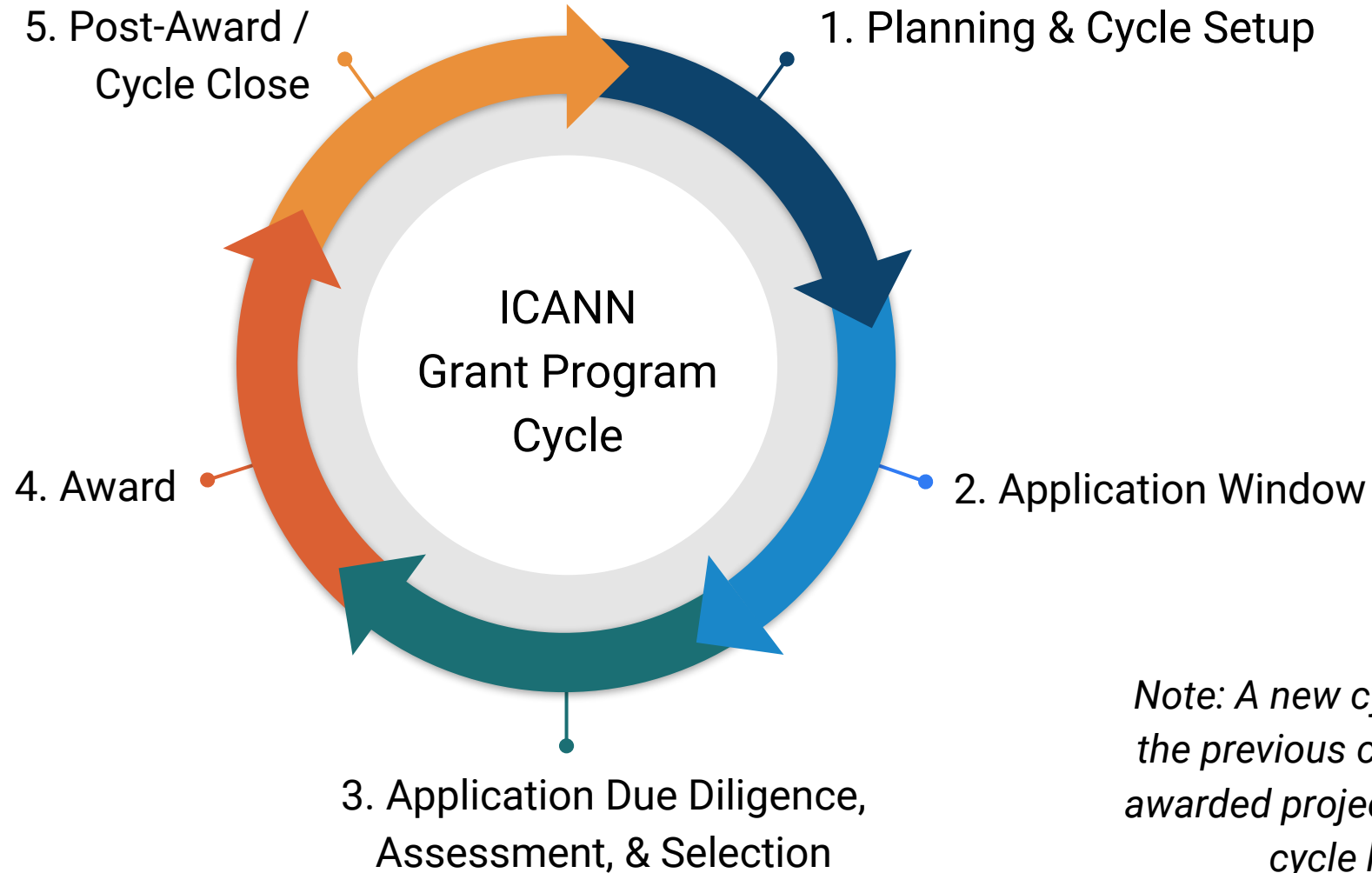
From Board Approval to Implementation Design

- The ICANN Board directed ICANN org to assess the CCWG-AP recommendations.

- On 12 June 2022 ICANN Board adopted the Final Report and directed ICANN org to produce the Preliminary Design and Implementation Plan for the Grant Program within 120 days.

- ICANN org completed the Preliminary Design and provided an update to the Board on 10 October 2022.

Preliminary design and key elements

Administration

◉ Program will be administered by a new department under the authority of the Senior Vice President, Planning and Chief Financial Officer.

◉ Some Program elements will be outsourced.

◉ There will be several grant cycles until the proceeds are depleted.

◉ Key considerations in the design of each cycle and the Program overall:

  ○ Transparency

  ○ Safeguards against conflicts of interest

  ○ Diversity elements with reference to the Independent Panel composition and the geographic distribution of the grants.

Program Cycle Overview

1. Planning & Cycle Setup

2. Application Window

3. Application Due Diligence, Assessment, & Selection

4. Award

5. Post-Award / Cycle Close

ICANN Grant Program Cycle

Note: A new cycle may start before the previous cycle closes or before awarded projects from the previous cycle have fully completed.

Phase 1. Planning and Cycle Setup

◉ Design the Program elements, including the Grant Program department and the first cycle, which ICANN has already started working on.

◉ Develop plan for outreach and awareness-building.

◉ Produce Program materials (for internal operations, for applicants, and for the assessment panel).

◉ Set up and onboard Independent Application Assessment Panel.

Phase 2. Application Window

- ◉ Launch the call for proposals.

- ◉ Open application window.

- ◉ Continue outreach activities.

- ◉ Finalize evaluation activities.

Phase 3. Application Due Diligence, Assessment and Selection

- **Eligibility Reviews** (based on eligibility requirements):
  - Administrative review.
  - Applicant eligibility review.
  - Application eligibility review.

- **Independent Panel Assessment and Recommendation:**
  - Assess applications according to the program goals, assessment criteria and guidelines.
  - Consolidate applications recommended to be funded.

- **Submission of selected applications to the Board.**

- **ICANN Board Review:**
  - Assess whether the rules of the Grant Program were followed.
  - Approve or reject the entire slate.

Phase 4. Award

◉ Inform applicant about the outcome of their application.

◉ Publish list of successful applicants, subject to data privacy checks.

◉ Contract between ICANN and grantees.

◉ Disburse funds.

◉ Ensure compliance with the Program rules.

Phase 5. Post-Award / Cycle Close

◉ **Project evaluation:**

○ Evaluating individual project outcomes, grant impact, and lessons learnt.

◉ **Reporting and Publication Processes:**

○ Upholding transparency on procedures, results, and usage of proceeds.

◉ **Verification Processes:**

○ Ascertaining proceeds have been used consistently with the application. Procedures may be customized according to the nature, size, and complexity of the project.

◉ **Cycle Review:**

○ Reviewing each Program cycle to ensure Program is functioning as intended and identify opportunities for improvement.

◉ **Program Review:**

○ Occurring between 2 to 5 cycles and ensuring that the goals and impact of the Program are being met. This review is distinct and separate from ICANN's Bylaws-mandated reviews.

First Grant Cycle and Tentative Timeline

First Grant Cycle

- Up to USD 10 million to be awarded overall.

- Awards range: from USD 50,000 up to USD 500,000.

- Award range and available funds are expected to expand in future cycles based on lessons learnt during the first cycle.

- Grantees may apply for additional grants in future cycles.

Tentative Timeline

Phase 1: Planning and Cycle Setup

All activities relating to planning the Program and preparing for the launch of the first cycle, including the implementation design, production of the Program literature and application platform

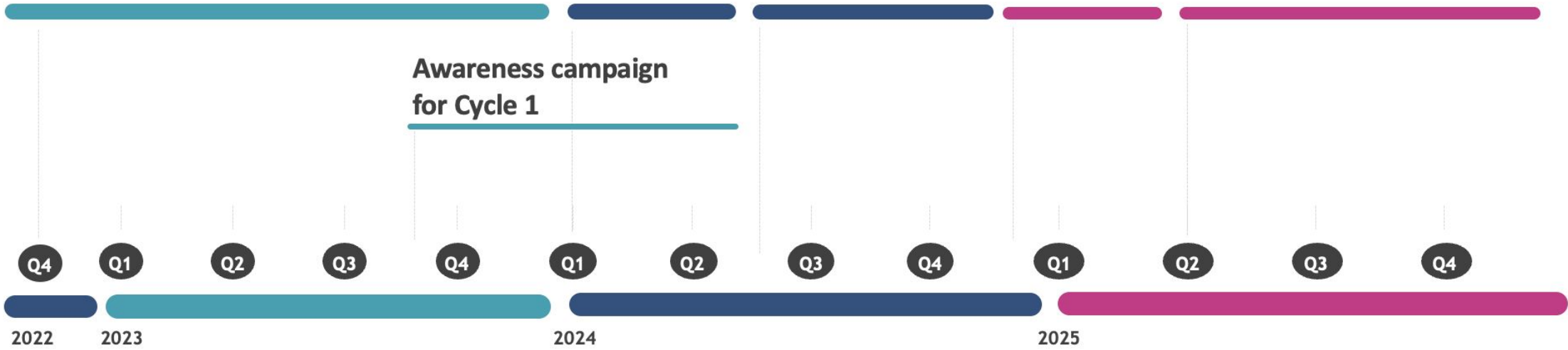**Phase 2: Application window**

Launch of the first Grant Cycle

Phase 3: Application due diligence, Assessment and Selection Process

Evaluation of applications and Board decision

Phase 4: Award

Publication of the applications, grant agreement negotiations

Phase 5: Post-Award

Disbursement of funds, grant monitoring

Awareness campaign for Cycle 1

Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4

2022 2023 2024 2025

Next steps

Implementation Design

The Implementation Design has started and is:

◉ Designing the various activities per each phase of the Program.

◉ Further investigating good practices to inform possible decisions.

◉ Determining which activities will be outsourced and therefore, preparing the necessary procedures and RFPs.

◉ Producing the Program literature.

◉ Setting up the Grant Program Department.

◉ Refining the risk assessment at thematic and phase level.

◉ Producing a precise overview of the resources and ensuring cost-optimization throughout the Program.

Stay Tuned

To learn more about this program and its implementation progress,

keep checking the dedicated wiki page:

https://community.icann.org/display/GP/ICANN+Grant+Program