Next Generation Registration Directory Services Policy Development Process

What is this about?
Following the publication of the Expert Working Group's Final Report on Registration Directory Services (RDS), the ICANN Board and GNSO considered how to use this report as input to a GNSO Policy Development Process (PDP) and agreed to this framework which sets out the proposed approach for the policy development process. The next step is the publication of a Preliminary Issue Report, which is expected to be published prior to the ICANN meeting in Buenos Aires, following the ICANN Board reaffirming 'its request for a Board-initiated GNSO policy development process to define the purpose of collecting, maintaining and providing access to gTLD registration data, and consider safeguards for protecting data, using the recommendations in the [EWG] Final Report as an input to, and, if appropriate, as the foundation for a new gTLD policy'.

Why is this important?
Comprehensive 'Whois' policy reform remains the source of long-running discussions within ICANN. Any discussion of 'Whois' – hereafter called gTLD registration directory services – typically includes topics such as purpose, accuracy, availability, privacy, anonymity, cost, policing, intellectual property protection, security and malicious use and abuse. Although ICANN's requirements for domain name registration data collection have undergone some important changes, after more than 12 years of GNSO task forces, working groups, workshops, surveys, and studies the policy is still in need of comprehensive reforms that address the significant number of contentious issues attached to it.

What is the current status of this project & Expected Next Steps?
During its meeting on 26 April 2015, the ICANN Board confirmed its request for a Board-initiated GNSO PDP on this topic. Staff is in the process of preparing the Preliminary Issue Report, which is expected to be published for public comment prior to the ICANN meeting in Buenos Aires.

Background
Pursuant to an ICANN Board Resolution during a Special Meeting on 8 November 2012, the Board directed the CEO to launch a new effort to redefine the purpose of collecting, maintaining and providing access to gTLD registration data, and consider safeguards for protecting data, as a foundation for new gTLD policy and contractual negotiations. Moreover, the Board directed the preparation of an Issue Report on the purpose of collecting and maintaining gTLD registration data, and on solutions to improve accuracy and access to gTLD registration data, as part of a Board-initiated GNSO policy development process. The Board then went on to pass a resolution that led to the creation of the Expert Working Group; the Board referred to this as a 'two-pronged approach' that is based on 'broad and responsive action' in relation to the reform of gTLD Registration Data.

With regard to the PDP, the Board specifically called out two topics in its request: **purpose** and **accuracy**. With regard to purpose, at a minimum the most basic purpose, which is commonly

accepted, is that gTLD registration data allows domain name holders to be contacted. However, who would be granted the right to access the data under what circumstances and contact the holder and by which means, is a set of difficult follow-up questions that need to be answered. In relation to accuracy, there are many data elements in the Whois database required under the Registry Agreements and the Registrar Accreditation Agreements; if only one of these data fields is incorrect, does that mean the Whois information is inaccurate? And how can the accuracy of data be verified and/or measured, especially considering that, if data is not accurate, the purpose of gathering the data might be questionable in the first place.

How can I get involved?
The Preliminary Issue Report will be published for public comment (see https://www.icann.org/public-comments#open-public). Everyone is encouraged to provide input to inform the subsequent steps of the PDP.

Where can I find more information?

- Board resolution on Next Steps for the EWG Final Report on Next Generation Registration Directory Services: https://www.icann.org/resources/board-material/resolutions-2015-04-26-en#1.f
- Board-GNSO Process WG proposed approach: https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/49359634/EWG-Process%20Group%20Final%20Framework%202-4-15.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1428939851000&api=v2
- EWG Final Report: https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/final-report-06jun14-en.pdf

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