

Request for Proposals for WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies

*** Deadline for applications 30 November, 2010***

1. Introduction

1.1. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is an internationally organized, non-profit corporation responsible for coordinating critical Internet resources. These include Internet Protocol (IP) address space allocation, protocol identifier assignment, generic (gTLD) and country code (ccTLD) Top-Level Domain Name System (DNS) management, and root server system management. As a private-public partnership, ICANN is dedicated to preserving the operational stability of the Internet; to promoting competition; to achieving broad representation of global Internet communities; and to developing policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes.

As part of its work, ICANN develops policy for WHOIS services that provide public access to data about registered domain names. The extent of data collected at the time of domain name registration, and the ways such data can be accessed, are specified in agreements established by ICANN for domain names registered in gTLDs.

For example, ICANN requires accredited registrars to collect and provide free public access to the name of the registered domain name and its name servers and registrar, the date the domain was created and when it expires, and the contact information for the domain name's Registered Name Holder, technical contact and administrative contact. Anyone can obtain this data by using a WHOIS client to send an RFC 3912-formatted query to TCP port 43, or by submitting a web form query to a WHOIS server. Data is returned in an unspecified human-readable form, predominately but not exclusively represented in US-ASCII.

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) is responsible for developing and recommending to the ICANN Board substantive policies relating to gTLDs. The GNSO Council is now exploring several extensive studies of WHOIS and has asked ICANN to estimate the cost of conducting several studies proposed by members of the ICANN community and Government Advisory Committee.

1.2. Pursuant to the above request, ICANN seeks to engage independent research organizations to undertake one or more proposed WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies. The information outlined below illustrates the scope of work and the criteria for selection.

1.3. This document should be read in conjunction with the Terms of Reference for WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies document (also found at <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/whois/index.html>). Read together, these two documents provide the materials necessary to respond to this Request for Proposals ("RFP") for WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies.

2. Objectives

2.1. WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies are designed to explore and analyze a sample of relay and reveal requests sent for Privacy/Proxy-registered domain names to document how they are processed and identify factors that may promote or impede timely communication and resolution.

Currently, each Proxy or Privacy service provider has its own independently-developed practices for handling these requests. There is no common format for submitting requests and no central repository for tracking them. The highly diverse and distributed nature of these practices has made it difficult to even assess the effectiveness of related ICANN policies. The objective of this exploratory study is therefore to help the ICANN community better understand how communication relay and identity reveal requests sent for Privacy/Proxy-registered domain names are actually being handled today.

2.2. ICANN will provide the successful candidate with background documentation and reports pertaining to these and other WHOIS studies. Applicants are encouraged to explicitly identify any assumptions or dependencies they may have with respect to support required from ICANN and other organizations.

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In particular, these studies will explore a large, broad sample of actual relay and reveal requests, to be supplied by individuals, businesses, first responders, complaint centers, and law enforcement agencies across the globe that volunteer to participate in this study. For each submitted request, researchers will then solicit secondary input from the associated Privacy/Proxy service provider and Registrar to determine if the request was received, relayed, responded to, or otherwise acted upon.

Possible study participants are listed in the Terms of Reference. Applicants are invited to comment and elaborate upon these possible data sources, challenges that would need to be resolved, viable methods for soliciting and interacting with study participants, and any dependencies on ICANN to facilitate this interaction.

2.3. If ICANN elects to conduct WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Relay & Reveal Studies, they are not likely to begin until 2011. Applicants are requested to propose timelines that reflect tasks and durations without requiring a specific start date. A full project timeline will be developed before the study is launched. It is anticipated that a key milestone will include presentation of preliminary study findings at an upcoming ICANN public meeting. Final study findings will also be posted for public review and comment.

2.4. Research organization(s) that conduct these studies are expected to have detailed knowledge of and experience with conducting conceptually similar large, geographically-diverse surveys and studies about Internet services and domain name use. Familiarity with DNS, WHOIS, and Privacy/Proxy registration services is also required, including policies regarding access to and permissible use of domain name registration data.

3. Tender Scope and Conditions

3.1. Taking note of the Terms of Reference, applicants should provide the following:

3.1.1. Statement of Suitability. The Statement of Suitability must include a detailed outline of the applicant's ability to perform this work, including references and examples of past research projects, publications, and other relevant information. Preference will be given applicants who can demonstrate experience conducting Internet surveys and research studies in general and DNS, WHOIS, and Privacy/Proxy services in particular.

3.1.2. Work Approach. The Work Approach needs to detail the way in which the applicant would respond to the Terms of Reference, providing details about how the specified study would be conducted. Applicants are encouraged to elaborate upon the study definitions summarized in the Terms of Reference as needed to quantify effort, enumerate assumptions, and identify dependencies.

The successful candidate will be expected to interact with ICANN via email, conference calls, and video conference to refine proposed study methodologies, finalize input sources/participants, and review study progress. The successful candidate will be expected to present draft study findings in person at one of ICANN's public meetings.

3.1.3. Team Curriculum Vitae. The response must include Curriculum Vitae for key personnel who will lead and conduct each study, showing each individual's suitability for the proposed work. Given the nature of these studies, the successful candidate will need to apply staff with specific skills to certain tasks (e.g., a team familiar with domain name registration processes, ability to communicate with non-English speaking participants).

3.1.4. ICANN Contract Compliance. Applicants should warrant that they are willing to operate under a non-disclosure agreement.

3.1.5. Schedule and Fees. The proposal should include a work schedule, including key milestone dates and a statement of proposed fees. Fees should be inclusive of related project expenses, including (but not

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limited to) electronic, postal, and telephone communication; computer hardware, software, and services; and travel costs.

3.2. **Deadline / Requirements:** By November 30, 2010, interested applicants should submit proposals by email to rfpwhois@icann.org to the attention of Liz Gasster, Senior Policy Counselor, ICANN Policy Department. A confirmation email will be sent for each proposal received.