

WHOIS REVIEW TEAM: Budget Request for a Consumer Research Study

TO: ICANN Board
FROM: WHOIS Review Team
SUBJ: Budget Request
DATE: 12 May 2011

Background

The Affirmation of Commitments in Section 9.3.1 states: "ICANN will organize a review of WHOIS policy and its implementation to assess the extent to which WHOIS policy is effective and its implementation meets the legitimate needs of law enforcement and promotes consumer trust."

The WHOIS Review Team has developed an outreach plan to gather input and facts from all the various stakeholders in ICANN. For most stakeholder groups, that input is obtained using "traditional" ICANN mechanisms; reaching out to the stakeholder groups themselves through email and in-person at ICANN meetings. However, in order to evaluate consumer trust, we must reach out beyond ICANN's boundaries.

Section 4 of the AoC states: "ICANN and DOC recognize that there is a group of participants that engage in ICANN's processes to a greater extent than Internet users generally." This wider group must also be polled to determine to what level they trust the Internet and specifically ICANN's role in establishing that trust.

Budget Request

We have concluded that we need to undertake a consumer research study, using a third party with expertise in that area. The objective is to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of WHOIS policy and its implementation as it relates to promoting consumer trust.

Information has been gathered to confirm that such a study can be conducted within the timeframe of our current project review. It is estimated that we need 90 days to:

- Develop and issue an RFP;
- Allow 30 days for RFP responses;
- Evaluate and select a firm;

-Negotiate a contract for the proposed work.

The actual study would require another 60 days to conduct and report results. If we move forward without undue delay, we would plan to sign a contract in July 2011 and have results reported to us in September 2011.

Estimates are that the cost of such a study would be less than \$125,000 and that cost would be incurred in the next fiscal year.

The methodology that would be used would be based on best practices for this type of consumer research. We have been advised that the recommended approach would involve a two-step process. The first step would be individual interviews with a representative sample of consumers. The insights and data gained from these interviews would then be used to construct a questionnaire appropriate for our objective.

The questionnaire would then be distributed based on a global scope with at least ten key countries and 100 – 150 responses per country.

Cost Variables

Variables in the cost estimate are:

- options for language translation versus English language;
- number of key countries selected;
- number of responses desired for the questionnaire survey.

The estimated cost could be reduced to \$60,000 if:

- English language is used exclusively;
- the minimum of 10 key countries are selected;
- the minimum of 100 responses per questionnaire survey is used;
- the minimum number of individual interviews is 10.

We believe that the quality of the study would be diminished if English language only is used. Therefore, we are recommending the higher cost estimate although we would certainly make every effort to conserve this expense.

Authorization to Proceed

In addition to the WHOIS Review work, we believe that this consumer research study would also support a strategic goal of ICANN as stated in the 2010 – 2013 Strategic Plan: “to strengthen consumer trust in the domain name registration system.”

In view of the above information, we ask the Board to approve this budget request not to exceed \$125,000 in the next fiscal year. We respectfully ask for authorization to proceed as quickly as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, thin tail extending to the right.

Emily Taylor
Chair,
WHOIS Review Team