DRAFT

Request for Proposals for WHOIS and Consumer Trust Research

**\* Deadline for applications 25 July, 2011\***

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 its 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.

1.2. ICANN has made commitments in an Affirmation of Commitments with the U.S. Department of Commerce related to WHOIS. In Section 9.3.1: “ICANN additionally commits to enforcing its existing policy relating to WHOIS, subject to applicable laws. Such existing policy requires that ICANN implement measures to maintain timely, unrestricted and public access to accurate and complete WHOIS information, including registrant, technical, billing and administrative contact information. One year from the effective date of this document and then no less frequently than every three years thereafter, 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.”

Based on this commitment, ICANN organized a WHOIS Review Team which began its work in January, 2011. The WHOIS Review Team is comprised of volunteer community members and includes designated nominees by the Chair of the Government Advisory Committee and the CEO of ICANN, representatives of the relevant Advisory Committees and Supporting Organizations, experts and representatives of the global law enforcement community and global privacy experts. Resulting recommendations from the WHOIS Review Team will be provided to the Board and posted for public comment. The Board will take action within six months of receipt of the recommendations.

1.3. Pursuant to the above mandate to review WHOIS policy, the WHOIS Review Team seeks to engage an independent consumer research organization to undertake data collection and analysis of consumer trust as it relates to the commitment to provide unrestricted and public access to accurate and complete WHOIS information as described above.

1. **Objectives**

2.1. The overall objective for seeking independent research is to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of WHOIS policy and its implementation as it relates to promoting 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,

input is obtained using “traditional” ICANN mechanisms; reaching out to the stakeholder groups themselves through email and in-person at ICANN meetings.

2.2. Section 4 of the Affirmation of Commitments 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.” The WHOIS Review Team has concluded that 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.

2.3. The WHOIS Review Team is planning to prepare its findings and recommendation in September, 2011. The results of this research are viewed as a critical input for that task. Therefore, interested parties are asked to submit applications no later than 25 July, 2011. The intention is to select a firm and begin the research work by the 15th of August, 2011.

**3. Terms of Reference**

3.1. The first deliverable required is to construct or formulate appropriate questions and provide recommendations on an optimum representation of consumer characteristics given the objectives.

Examples of these characteristics are: consumers who do and do not own a domain name, who use the Internet, who have used or not used WHOIS data, etc.

3.2. The second deliverable is to perform surveys on a global scope in multiple languages, compile and analyze the results and report findings. A minimum of ten (10) key countries is required and must include countries in the Asia Pacific region, the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Africa. The surveys must collect a minimum of 100 responses per country. Surveys should be conducted in the language that is predominant for each country.

**4. Tender Scope and Conditions**

4.1. 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 global consumer research related to using the Internet.

4.2. 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 research would be conducted. Applicants are encouraged to elaborate upon the research tasks as needed to quantify effort, enumerate assumptions, and identify dependencies.

The successful candidate will be expected to interact with the ICANN WHOIS Review Team via email, conference calls, and video conference to refine proposed research methodologies, finalize input sources/participants, and review research progress.

4.3. Tools or Resources.

The response must include descriptions of the tools and resources and any other relevant capabilities that will be used to carry out the research work.

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

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

3.2. **Deadline / Requirements:** By July 25, 2011, interested applicants should submit proposals by

email to rfpwhois@icann.org to the attention of xxxxxxxx. A confirmation email will be sent for each proposal received.