**Compilation of questions from WHOIS-RDS2 Review Team and responses from ICANN org on accuracy related questions (2018)**

1. **Have there been any specific reports/documents on the implementation status of WHOIS ACCURACY PROGRAM SPECIFICATION in 2013 RAA?**

We take this question to mean implementation status of the Across-Field Address Validation provision of the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification in the 2013 RAA. In October 2017, ICANN org issued a [Request for Information](https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/request-for-information-address-validation-solutions-26-10-2017-en) seeking information regarding commercial services that focus on global address validation. The Request for Information is intended to educate ICANN org and its contracted parties on various tools in the marketplace that support physical address validation including geographic coverage, service availability and response times. Nine parties responded to the Request for Information. In January 2018, ICANN org published a [summary](https://community.icann.org/download/attachments/64063985/AFAV%20RFI%20Respondent%20Summary%20.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1515711638000&api=v2) of the responses. Currently, a sub-team of the Registrar Working Group along with ICANN org are working on formal criteria that both parties deem to be 'Technically and Commercially Viable' per the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification. The target for completion is set for late April. All documents related to the Across-Field Address Validation work is located on the [Across Field Address Validation WIKI page](https://community.icann.org/display/AFAV/Documents).

1. **Besides the WHOIS Accuracy Reporting System (ARS), are there any contractual compliance tools/measures for ICANN Org to trace the implementation of "WHOIS ACCURACY PROGRAM SPECIFICATION"?**

Compliance enforcement of the WAPS began for all registrars under the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) on 1 January 2014, or if the registrar entered into the 2013 RAA after that date, the effective date of the registrar’s RAA.

ICANN Contractual Compliance ensures compliant implementation of the WAPS by registrars through:

* **WHOIS inaccuracy complaint processing.** All WHOIS inaccuracy complaints processed for registrars under the obligations of the WAPS include demonstrating compliance with the terms of the WAPS. Registrars are required to remediate any deficiencies identified by ICANN, and failure to resolve issues during the informal resolution process will result in escalation to the formal resolution process (including notice of breach, suspension, and/or RAA termination). Some registrars have been issued enforcement notices for noncompliance with the WAPS. [Enforcement notices](https://www.icann.org/compliance/notices) and [enforcement notice reasons](https://features.icann.org/compliance/enforcement-notices) are published for the past 13 rolling months and repeated in the annual report for the enforcement reasons ([ICANN Contractual Compliance 2017 Annual Reports](https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/2017/enforcement-complaint-type)).
* **Contractual Compliance Registrar Audit Program.** Compliance with the obligations of the WAPS is part of the [2013 RAA Audit Plan](https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/audit-plan-2013-raa-31mar16-en.pdf). The majority of registrars under the 2013 RAA have completed the 2013 RAA audit. Registrars that have not been previously audited are eligible for audit in future audit rounds.
* **Targeted outreach**. ICANN Contractual Compliance has conducted targeted outreach for registrars and regions that were identified as opportunities to improve compliance with 2013 RAA obligations, including the WAPS. The [Compliance Outreach Activities webpage](https://www.icann.org/resources/compliance/outreach) provides additional information.
* **Metrics and Reporting.** ICANN Contractual Compliance publishes metrics and reporting for the past 13 rolling months at [ICANN Contractual Compliance Performance Reports](https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/2017/enforcement-complaint-type), including all WHOIS related complaints. In addition, the [Contractual Compliance Performance Measurement page](https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/report-list) includes monthly, quarterly and annual reports with additional granularity of data for WHOIS inaccuracy and related complaints.

For more information, please visit the [WHOIS-ARS page](https://whois.icann.org/en/whoisars).

1. **Any updates on the commercial feasible tools/services that focus on global address validation?**

ICANN just completed a Request for Information (RFI) and nine (9) responses were received. These responses contained updated information regarding current services available to complete across field address validation and verification. A summary of these nine responses are located on the Across Field Address Validation WIKI page.

ICANN’s GDD has hosted multiple sessions at recent ICANN meetings regarding this topic:

* + ICANN 61 GNSO: RrSG Meeting <https://61.schedule.icann.org/meetings/647700>
	+ ICANN 60 GNSO-Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) Meeting <https://icann60abudhabi2017.sched.com/event/CbIl/gnso-registrar-stakeholder-group-rrsg-meeting>
	+ ICANN 59 GNSO-Registrar Stakeholder Group Policy Meeting <https://icann59johannesburg2017.sched.com/event/B3pH/gnso-registrarstakeholder-group-policy-meeting>
	+ ICANN 58 GNSO Registrar Stakeholder Group Meeting <https://icann58copenhagen2017.sched.com/event/9npZ/gnso-registrar-stakeholder-group-meeting>
	+ ICANN58: ICANN GDD: Whois Validation Working Group <https://icann58copenhagen2017.sched.com/event/9nnE/icann-gdd-whois-validation-working-group-c>
	+ ICANN 57 GNSO Registrar Stakeholder Group Meeting <https://icann572016.sched.com/event/8cxt/gnso-registrar-stakeholder-group-meeting>
	+ ICANN 53 Whois Accuracy Specification Review Discussion <https://archive.icann.org/meetings/buenosaires2015/en/schedule/wed-whois-accuracy-review.html>
	+ ICANN 53 Registrars AFAV WG (Across-field Address Validation Working Group) (12 February 2015) <https://archive.icann.org/meetings/singapore2015/en/schedule/thu-registrars-afav.html>
	+ ICANN 52 Registrars AFAV WG (Across-field Address Validation Working Group) https://archive.icann.org/meetings/singapore2015/en/schedule/thu-registrars-afav.html
	+ ICANN 51 RrSG Meeting, Whois Address Cross-Field Validation Initiative https://archive.icann.org/meetings/losangeles2014/en/schedule/tue-ccnso- members/presentation-whois-validation-14oct14-en.pdf
	+ GDD Industry Summit, Registrar Breakout Session, Agenda included Across Field Validation https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/presentation-gdd-summit-registrar-breakout- session-10may17-en.pdf
1. **What is in common behind the bulk WHOIS inaccuracy complaint (3,199 tickets in 2017), i.e. sponsored by same Registrar, from same Registrant?**

Common elements of complaints submitted through the bulk WHOIS inaccuracy complaint tool vary, and can include:

* same Registered Name Holder (RNH)
* same WHOIS contact data
* domain names that are registered for suspected DNS abuse
* domain names that are allegedly engaging in trademark or copyright infringement

Where both the registrar and the RNH data is common across multiple complaints (whether submitted in bulk or individually), ICANN Contractual Compliance may bundle the complaints into one ticket for processing by the registrar.

*Background Information:*

ICANN Contractual Compliance provides a mechanism for bulk WHOIS inaccuracy complaint submissions, which allows a user to submit multiple complaints through a single file upload. Each user can submit up to 300 total complaints per week. The complaints are processed in the same method and queue for WHOIS inaccuracy complaints. Users of the bulk system must agree to mandatory terms of use, and their complaint quality is monitored by ICANN to ensure submission of complaints are within scope of the RAA and WHOIS requirements. There are currently approximately ten approved users for the bulk system, and within the ast six months, three were active users.

1. **What's the latest progress of WHOIS ARS Phase 3? Are there any means identified how to conduct identity validation?**

ICANN org has looked into identity verification or validation as part of the phase 3 work of the ARS, but was not able to identify any services that would meet the intent of identity verification.

1. **The road map of WHOIS ARS, e.g. when will the ARS cover the entire gTLD population, not only the sample selection?**

The ARS is based on a sampling methodology that was scientifically constructed with experts at the University of Chicago to be able to predict accuracy to a 95% confidence interval. This Quantitative Sample testing is a well-recognized and reliable way to review data on large data sets. There are currently no plans to extend the ARS to the full population of WHOIS records, however, we are exploring the feasibility of performing additional cycles, increasing number of records per cycle, reducing cycle time, and other areas where additional efficiency and effectiveness could be gained. Separately, ICANN org is [seeking](https://www.icann.org/news/announcement-3-2017-10-26-en) information regarding commercial services that focus on global address validation as part of the [Across-Field Address Validation](https://community.icann.org/display/AFAV) work.

1. **How would ICANN Org assess the achievement and impact of WHOIS ARS on reducing the WHOIS inaccuracy?**

ICANN Contractual Compliance’s participation in the WHOIS Accuracy Reporting System (ARS) is limited to providing guidance for RAA obligations regarding syntax and accuracy, and processing complaints generated by the WHOIS ARS. The WHOIS ARS is managed by ICANN GDD per the methodology published at <https://whois.icann.org/en/whoisars>. ICANN org publishes 2 ARS reports per year. For each report ICANN org polls a sample of about 200,000 records of which about 12,000 records are checked for syntax and operability accuracy. The 12,000 sample records is reflective of the entire WHOIS population. Potentially inaccurate records are identified through the syntax and operability checks sent to ICANN Compliance for follow-up.

The below table shows syntax and operability accuracy from December 2015 through December 2017 by ICANN region.



The table below shows the number of total compliance tickets created for each ARS cycle. The numbers for cycle 5 will be published soon. More information regarding ARS contractual compliance metrics can be found at <https://whois.icann.org/en/whoisars-contractual-compliance-metrics>.

1. **Does the Compliance Team attempt to identify patterns within ARS-detected inaccuracies to enable proactive remediation of underlying causes?**

ICANN Contractual Compliance attempts to identify patterns and systemic issues of noncompliance across all of the complaint types. Please note, the WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints created from the WHOIS Accuracy Reporting System (ARS) are processed in parallel with single and bulk submission of WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints.

1. **If a domain registration is suspended due to a reported or detected WHOIS inaccuracy, can the domain name be un-suspended without the inaccuracy being remediated?**

A registrar may un-suspend a domain name after confirming the existing WHOIS data is accurate. If a registrar suspends a domain name due to a reported or detected WHOIS inaccuracy to be compliant under the Whois Accuracy Program Specification (WAPS), the domain name should not be un-suspended without the inaccuracy being remediated under the terms of the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA).

To address situations where registrars have un-suspended the domain name without correcting the WHOIS data, ICANN Contractual Compliance conduct a proactive monitoring exercise referred to as WHOIS Quality Review (WHOIS QR). The team performs a WHOIS QR of WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints that were previously closed due to suspension of the domain name and identifies situations where the registrar may have un-suspended the domain name without correcting the WHOIS data. The team then follows up with the registrar to get more information.

1. **Does the WHOIS Quality Review (or any other program) audit how often un-suspension without accuracy remediation occurs? If so, for how long after suspension are those follow-up accuracy checks performed?**

WHOIS Quality Reviews are conducted every six months. For the WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints closed in 2017, there were five domain names out of approximately 1,400 that were in scope of the review that should not have been un-suspended by the registrar without further action. Contractual Compliance worked with these registrars to remediate the causes of noncompliance. Metrics regarding the WHOIS Quality Review complaints are reported at <https://features.icann.org/compliance>.

1. **Considering ARS compliance metrics: Why are the percentage of ticketed domains that end up being suspended or cancelled is increasing?**



Other than the metrics referenced above (and those which are reported at <https://whois.icann.org/en/whoisars-contractual-compliance-metrics>), ICANN Contractual Compliance has no additional information to suggest why domain names are being suspended or cancelled in response to WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints generated by the WHOIS ARS. The WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification to the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement requires a registrar suspend or cancel a domain name in certain circumstances.

1. **Is it known (or can it be determined from ARS-sampled data) how often Registrant Contact data elements such as Registrant email address, Registrant postal address, and Registrant telephone number are absent from WHOIS records for grandfathered domain names?**

WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints created from the WHOIS Accuracy Reporting System (ARS) are processed in parallel with single and bulk submission of WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints. ICANN Contractual Compliance tracks and reports based on Syntax, Operability and Identity; more information about each category can be found at this link - <https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/archives#annual-details> or on the WHOIS ARS reports. In addition, WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints are tracked for legacy and for new gTLDs. This data can be found in the monthly dashboards at this link: <https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/report-list>.

Contractual Compliance’s participation in the WHOIS ARS is limited to providing guidance for Registrar Accreditation Agreement obligations regarding syntax and accuracy, and processing complaints with inaccuracies identified by the WHOIS ARS. The WHOIS ARS program is managed by ICANN’s Global Domains Division.

1. **Why are a significant number of WHOIS Inaccuracy Complaints closed without any action being taken? What does Compliance treat as valid reasons for immediate ticket closure and are there any metrics for how often tickets are closed for each of those reasons?**

According to the ICANN Contractual Compliance 2017 Annual Reports <https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/2017/complaints-approach-process-registrars>, out of approximately 25,000 WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints received during 2017, approximately 12,000 were closed before contacting the registrar.

Common reasons for closing a complaint before a 1st notice is sent to the registrar include:

* The reporter not providing information requested to validate the complaint,
* The domain name is suspended when the complaint was received, or
* The complaint is outside of the scope of ICANN’s contractual authority (e.g., it is too broad or incomplete or is a request to change a registrant’s own domain name information).

While certain WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints are automatically closed by the complaint processing system (including complaints for country code top-level domains and suspended domain names), for those that are not automatically closed, Contractual Compliance will attempt to validate the information in the complaint or obtain more information before closing the complaint.

ICANN Contractual Compliance recently began reporting on closure reasons by complaint type, including those for WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints. These metrics are reported on a quarterly basis and the first quarter of 2018’s report is found at <https://features.icann.org/compliance/dashboard/2018/q1/registrar-resolved-codes>.

1. **What additional evidence in WHOIS Inaccuracy Complaints would Compliance find useful?**

Additional evidence in WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints that compliance might find useful if the reporter provides are listed below:

* Evidence of returned mail sent to the postal address listed in the WHOIS information
* Evidence of a bounceback or undeliverable email notification for email sent to the email address listed in the WHOIS information
* Evidence or explanation why the telephone number listed in the public WHOIS is not accurate
* Evidence or explanation why the person or entity listed in the public WHOIS does not exist or is not the registered name holder (RNH)
1. **Does Compliance do any analysis of WHOIS Inaccuracy trends? If not, why not? For example, would a policy be necessary to enable trend analysis?**

ICANN Contractual Compliance does attempt to identify patterns and systemic issues of noncompliance within and across all of the complaint types.This effort is useful in identifying trends of issues and most importantly in identifying opportunities to conduct outreach or additional proactive monitoring.

1. **It shows that one of Compliance activities is ICANN-initiated monitoring to take proactive actions. What kind of monitoring programs have been conducted or planned?**

Please provide more information on what “It” refers to, so that Contractual Compliance may provide an accurate response.

To address the question about the kind of monitoring programs – Proactive monitoring is ICANN’s effort to take initiative in identifying potential issues instead of waiting for issues to happen. Proactive monitoring actions, to list a few, are: the audit program, review of blogs and social media, observed behavior from complaints, WHOIS Quality Review, review related to the DNS infrastructure for example, usability and format of data escrow files, or the automated monitoring system to ensure compliance with Specification 10 of the Registry Agreement. Contractual Compliance reports on the proactive monitoring activities in the Quarterly and Annual Report published on ICANN.org under Report & Blogs.

1. **Is there any monitoring program to check some common grounds or linkages among ARS, Audit Program, public complaints received, e.g. from specific registrar, gTLD, region?**

As stated in the response to question 5 [*question 16 in this version*], ICANN monitors the observed behavior from complaints. For example, based on trends identified by Contractual Compliance (including review of WHOIS inaccuracy complaints submitted by the public and generated as a result of the WHOIS ARS), WHOIS Inquiry efforts were taken in 2016 that focused on registrars in China and Korea. These inquiries focused on issues with the 2013 RAA WHOIS Accuracy Specification Program (WAPS) requirements. These efforts continued for registrars in China, the United States, and other regions. Please refer to the annual update published at this link <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/annual-2016-31jan17-en.pdf>.

1. **For domains rechecked after suspension, what % are found to be unsuspended in total and the % that are still non-compliant?**

ICANN Contractual Compliance conducts a review of domain names subject to WHOIS Inaccuracy complaints that are closed based on the suspension of the domain names. For those domain names which are later found to be unsuspended and have the same WHOIS information, ICANN Contractual Compliance will follow up with the registrar to assess whether the registrar conducted the required verification and validation under the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification prior to unsuspending the domain name.

Of the suspended domain names reviewed for 2017, 4% were unsuspended and had the same WHOIS information. Upon following up with the registrar regarding these domain names, all registrars were able to demonstrate compliance by either providing the requested evidence required by the WHOIS Accuracy Program Specification or suspending the domain name again (where 0.4% of the unsuspended domain names were resuspended by the registrar).

1. **Is there a routine feedback process in place for Compliance to advise the ARS project of ARS-detected inaccuracies that were not ultimately found by Compliance to be inaccuracies (e.g., tickets generated because the state was missing in a country where states are not applicable)?**

Yes - there is a routine feedback process in place for ICANN Contractual Compliance to advise the ARS project of its findings. See <https://whois.icann.org/en/whoisars-contractual-compliance-metrics>.

1. **Does ARS have access to non-public data under the Temporary Specification?**

ARS does not have access to non-public data, and this will continue under the Temporary Specification.

1. **Is the WHOIS data that is sampled by ARS obtained from the Registrar or Registry?**

ARS obtains THICK data from the registries and THIN data from the registrars.

1. **for thick TLDs, since under GDPR much contact data is redacted?**

Because ARS does not currently access non-public data, there would be no change to ARS sampling methods under GDPR.