



22 June 2011

Heather Dryden
Chair, Governmental Advisory Committee
Senior Adviser to the Government of Canada

Dear Heather,

We are delighted to share the news that, with the approval of a Registrant Identification Study on 9 June 2011, the GNSO has approved four significant studies of gTLD Whois. You may recall that in April 2008, the Government Advisory Committee recommended that ICANN initiate studies on various aspects of Whois. <http://www.icann.org/en/correspondence/karlins-to-thrush-16apr08.pdf>

The four studies will examine the following:

1. Whois “Misuse” – This study will assess whether public WHOIS significantly increases harmful acts and the impact of anti-harvesting measures. There are actually two studies included in this effort, an experimental study will register test domains and measure harmful messages resulting from misuse; and a descriptive study will analyze misuse incidents reported by registrants, researchers, data protection authorities and law enforcement. This study was approved by the GNSO Council in September 2010, and was initiated, following contract negotiations, in April 2011.
2. Whois Registrant Identification – This study will examine information about how domain name registrants are identified and classify the various types of entities that register domains, including natural persons, various types of legal persons and Privacy and Proxy service providers. This study was modified slightly before Council approval as an exploratory data-gathering effort that is not hypothesis-driven. This will also provide more consistency with GAC proposals offered in 2008. This study was just approved on 9 June 2011, contract negotiations with the research firm are underway, and the study should begin shortly.
3. Whois Proxy and Privacy “Abuse” -- This study will compare a broad sample of Privacy and Proxy-registered domains associated with alleged harmful acts to assess: 1) how often bad actors try to obscure identity in WHOIS; 2) how this rate of abuse compares to overall use of proxy and privacy services; and 3) how this rate compares to alternatives like falsified Whois data, compromised machines, and free web hosting. The GNSO Council approved this study on 28 April 2011 and contract negotiations with the research firm are underway.
4. Whois Proxy and Privacy Relay and Reveal Study -- The original study would analyze communication relay and identity reveal requests sent for privacy- and proxy-registered domains to explore and document how they are processed, and to identify factors that may promote or impede timely communication and resolution. Potential bidders were unsure of the feasibility of this study, especially obtaining a sufficient

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data sample, so this pre-study will survey potential participants to determine if launching a full study is feasible to do. The GNSO Council approved this pre-study on 28 April and this work has also begun.

With the approval of the FY 12 budget, these studies will be fully funded by the Board (total of \$530,000 USD), and will take between four months and a year to complete. We are optimistic the results of these studies will provide important factual data to better inform Whois policy development in the future.

Respectfully,

Peter Dengate Thrush
Chairman

Rod Beckstrom
President and CEO