ICANN Designated Agent for Registrar Data Escrow Services

Request for Proposal Overview

ICANN Global Domains Division

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Introduction

About this Document

This document provides an overview of the Request for Proposal (RFP). It provides background and pertinent information regarding the requirements. The RFP itself is comprised of this as well as other documents that are hosted in the ICANN organization sourcing tool (SciQuest). Indications of interest are to be received by emailing RrDataEscrowServices-rfp@icann.org by 31 Aug 2017.

Complete proposals must be electronically submitted by 23:59 UTC on 6 Oct 2017 using the ICANN organization sourcing tool (SciQuest), access to which will be granted after receipt of an indication of interest to the email address above.

Background

The ICANN organization's Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) program is intended to ensure protection of Registrants in the event of Registrar failure or other termination of a Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA). Ensuring the successful transfer of domain name sponsorship aligns with the ICANN organization's objective to support a healthy, stable, and resilient unique identifier ecosystem and is consistent with its Mission and Bylaws (Section 1.1) that states, "ICANN coordinates the allocation and assignment of names in the root zone of the Domain Name System ('DNS') and coordinates the development and implementation of policies concerning the registration of second-level domain names in generic top-level domains ('gTLDs')."

In 2007, the ICANN organization began implementing a Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) program that requires all ICANN organization accredited registrars to regularly deposit a back-up copy of gTLD registration data with the ICANN organization through its arrangement with contracted RDE agents, or alternatively, an ICANN organization approved RDE agent pursuant to the terms of its Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) and the ICANN organization's RDE Specifications.

Through Section 3.6 of the RAA, and Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Specifications all ICANN-accredited registrars have agreed to submit to the ICANN organization (via the ICANN organization's designated agent) or an approved RDE agent certain enumerated registration records pursuant to the schedule (i.e. daily or weekly), terms, and format established by the ICANN organization.

The ICANN organization is responsible to subsidize the fees associated with registrars that elect to utilize the ICANN organization designated agent for registrar data escrow services. Alternatively, the registrar is responsible for the expense incurred with the use of another approved Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent.

There are currently seven (7) approved Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agents available to registrars for depositing their registrar data. At this time, only one of these is an ICANN organization designated agent, which is Iron Mountain Intellectual Property Management, Inc.

Summary of Request

The ICANN organization is soliciting proposals to identify one or more additional ICANN designated Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent(s) suitable to provide Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) services to the ICANN organization's accredited registrars

This RFP provides ICANN the opportunity to evaluate the current market for these services. A primary objective of this RFP is to identify one or more additional providers suitable to support the ICANN organization and its accredited registrars' data escrow needs. Since 2007, when the ICANN organization initially selected a designated agent to implement its Registrar Data Escrow Program, the industry has grown. Regulations have changed and, in turn, needs have evolved. Registrars are located throughout the world; thus, ICANN will be considering RDE agents with the capability to offer broad global or multiregional support. Only after review of all submitted proposals will the ICANN organization determine whether one or more designated Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agents will be selected.

Overview Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Organization

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' (ICANN) mission is to help ensure a stable, secure and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet, you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world.

The ICANN organization promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers. The ICANN organization has introduced over 1,200 new generic top-level domains each of which is operated by a registry. In addition, as a function of the ICANN organization's responsibility, it accredits domain name registrars, who facilitate the registration of Internet domain names for individuals and organizations (i.e. registrants). Currently, there are approximately 3,000 ICANN organization accredited registrars.

See www.icann.org for more information.

Scope

Project Objective

Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) services are an integral component of ICANN's commitment to ensuring the security and stability of the Internet and allow for an increased level of business continuity and protection to Registrants. The ICANN organization's RDE Program provides an important additional layer of protection for Registrants. For example, the data held in escrow may be released to the ICANN organization upon termination of a registrar's accreditation agreement or expiration of the accreditation agreement without renewal to facilitate transfer of registrations from the failed or expired registrar to another registrar.

As mentioned, the primary objective of this RFP is to identify one or more additional ICANN organization designated Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent(s) suitable to support the ICANN organization and its accredited registrars across the ICANN regions (https://meetings.icann.org/en/regions).

The ICANN organization seeks to engage experienced and competent agent(s) to collect, process, verify, and store, in a readily retrievable format, submitted registrar data. An ICANN organization designated Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent is expected to provide cost-effective data storage, data verification, data accuracy auditing services, flexible reporting capabilities, and customer support both to the ICANN organization and its accredited registrars.

This is an open RFP, meaning that the ICANN organization's existing approved data escrow agents may submit proposals as may new prospective data escrow agents.

New prospective data escrow agents must also meet the Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Agent Approval Criteria (i.e. Third Party Provider Approval Criteria). Please note, responding to the RFP does not guarantee selection as a designated or RDE agent.

Potential Proposal Outcomes:

While the following is not a comprehensive breakdown of all outcomes, applicants should consider the following scenarios as a potential outcome to this RFP.

⊙ ICANN selects one or more additional designated Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agents whose combined operations are able to provide support of the ICANN organization and its accredited registrars across ICANN regions.

Scope of Work

The Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) services requested in this RFP align with the existing RDE program and RDE Specifications.

An overview of the services requested of an ICANN organization designated agent can be categorized in the following areas and explained below

- ⊙ Management of Agreements

- ⊙ Processing of Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Deposits

- ⊙ Verification of Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Deposits

- ⊙ Customer Support

- ⊙ Reporting Capabilities

- ⊙ Audit of Escrow Deposits

The specifications of the Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) program and the foundation for this work can be found: https://www.icann.org/rde/rde-specs-09nov07.pdf. The ICANN organization reserves the right to modify or add to the RDE Specifications document.

Management of Agreements

- ⊙ Registrars that elect to deposit escrow data with ICANN's designated registrar data escrow agent shall enter into a standardized agreement with the ICANN organization and the agent which sets forth the obligations and liabilities of all parties to the agreement.

- ⊙ Ability to initiate amendments to agreements with the ICANN organization and registrar, shall be based on an agreed timeframe with the ICANN organization and upon notification by either the ICANN organization or registrar.

Processing of Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Deposits

- ⊙ Agent to accept electronic registration data maintained by registrar based on a deposit schedule (daily vs. weekly), the schedule, terms, and format specified by the ICANN organization.

- ⊙ Agent will utilize encryption technology to decrypt and re-encrypt deposits as well as have the ability to decompress deposited files.

- ⊙ Agent must store deposits for one year, or as specified by the ICANN organization's Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Specifications.

- ⊙ Agent monitors deposits (or lack thereof) as well as reviews data deposited to verify its completeness, consistency, and formatting.

- ⊙ Notify the ICANN organization and registrars of missing deposits or deposits where issues have been identified with the deposit. The Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent will be required to provide notifications to the ICANN organization of all deposits, both successful and failed. They will also be required to notify the ICANN organization via automated RDE compliance reporting system when such a system becomes available.

- Release escrowed data to the ICANN organization or other approved provider within 24 hours of written notice by the ICANN organization under conditions specified in the Registrar Data Escrow Agreement or upon mutual agreement of the ICANN organization and the registrar.

- The ICANN organization shall have the right, either directly or through use of an independent auditor or other agent, to inspect escrow agent's systems, documentation and records that provide substantiation of the performance of Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) services.

Verification of Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Deposits

- Verify the integrity of the data deposited by performing checksum validation.

- Notify the ICANN organization of all failed deposits utilizing error codes, as determined by ICANN.

- Notify the ICANN organization in the event deposits are not made according to the designated schedule.

- Perform data format and content validation as prescribed by the ICANN organization and submit resulting reports to the ICANN organization.

- Manual review of deposits as necessary to assist Registrars in remedying failed deposits of registration data.

Customer Support

- Accept inquiries and issue notifications (e.g. failed notifications, successful remediations) to registrars.

- Ability to communicate in English (written and verbally). Ability to communicate in additional languages (such as UN languages) beneficial.

- Assist in the onboarding and offboarding of registrars to ensure valid and timely deposits.

- Directly notify registrars of deposit failures based on submission, decryption, compression, checksum validation, and other deposit failures as defined by the ICANN organization.

- Ability to manage registrar contact information to verify or authenticate communications with registrars, such communications should be responded to and addressed in timely manner.

- Ability to directly resolve issues with registrars via internal notification system, including but not limited to three (3) email notifications and two (2) attempted phone calls regarding any unresolved issues, prior to escalation to the ICANN organization.

Reporting Capabilities

- Provide reports to the ICANN organization as defined by the organization, but not limited to the following:

  - Daily reports of all deposits made by registrars.
  - Daily reports with monthly summaries of reported issues.
  - Daily reports of issues identified with registrar.

- Report total domains per TLD found within each escrowed deposit.

- Report status of expected deposits (both successful and failed) with the ICANN organization determined error code, if applicable, via secure API, to the ICANN organization system, once specifications are made available.

- Ability to add/remove registrars from reporting based upon changes in deposit obligations due to registrar accreditation, termination, Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent change, et. al.

- Provide the ICANN organization with itemized billing, reflective of current registrar information (i.e. update should account for name changes, amendments, terminations, and Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) agent changes)

Audit of Escrow Deposits

- At the time of onboarding a new registrar and additionally as needed at the request of the ICANN organization, extract a sample of domain names from the most recent Registrar's deposit and compare the registration information escrowed to that within the WHOIS information obtained via web-based (Port 80), client based (port 43), or other approved lookup method.

- Verify that, in cases of the registrant using Privacy/Proxy service, the underlying customer contact information can be found in the appropriate fields of the deposit.

- If issues are found with the audit, communicate with the Registrar to explain any discrepancy and provide guidance to the registrar for resolving such discrepancies.

- At the request of the ICANN organization, perform a data escrow audit to review a number of records from the deposited data file(s). Records may be randomly selected or supplied by the ICANN organization. This review must include, at a minimum:
  - Decryption of deposited data file(s).
  - Inspection of the files deposited (documentation of the file size(s), deposit date/time(s). file name(s), number of rows in the file(s), the contents of the header row(s))
  - Documenting of any observable irregularities.
  - An inspection of the contents of the deposited file to identify whether the ICANN organization-supplied domain names (if applicable) are present.

Helpful Links

Information about Domain Names and how Registries and Registrars fit in the industry: https://www.icann.org/en/about/learning/beginners-guides/domain-names-beginners-guide-06dec10-en.

The 2009 and 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement:
https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/ra-agreement-2009-05-21-en
https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/registries/registries-agreements-en

Registrar Data Escrow Program:
https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/registrar-data-escrow-2015-12-01-en

Registrar Data Escrow Specifications:
https://www.icann.org/rde/rde-specs-09nov07.pdf

DEA Approval Criteria:
https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/tpp-approval-criteria-09nov07-en.pdf

High-level Selection Criteria

The decision to select a provider or providers as an outcome of this RFP will be based on, but not limited to, the following selection criteria:

⊙ Capability and experience performing data escrow services as well as knowledge of the domain name industry.

⊙ Support for registrars in the various ICANN organization regions.

⊙ Responsiveness and flexibility to work with the ICANN organization's specific requirements, agreement terms, etc. including the ability to update services based upon periodic updates to requirements.

⊙ Customer support capabilities for registrars.

⊙ Data verification and audit capabilities.

⊙ Financial value / pricing.

⊙ Value-added services.

Requirements

In order to be considered, providers must be able to demonstrate their ability to meet the following, high-level requirements.

A more detailed list of requirements is available in the ICANN organization's sourcing tool (SciQuest):

⊙ Ability to provide completed responses to questionnaire by the designated due date via the SciQuest tool [access to be provided based on communication of intent to submit RFP].

⊙ Applicant must have at least five years experience in providing commercial escrow services (as an escrow agent). Within the past three years, the vendor must have at least two years' experience in providing commercial, technology/data escrow services as an escrow agent.

⊙ The provider must have access to at least two secure, environmentally sound, geographically diverse facilities.

⊙ Ability to meet the requirements of the Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) Specification and the RDE Agreement.

⊙ Ability to receive Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) deposits and process/verify according to the most current RDE Specification. Providers must have the ability to accept RDE deposits by 1 April 2018.

⊙ Availability to perform audit function of escrow deposits as defined by the ICANN organization.

⊙ Providers must state its compliance with local, national, and international data privacy laws currently applicable to the provider and the ability to comply with privacy laws that may be applicable to the Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) services.

⊙ Production of a "How to" document for onboarding new registrars.

⊙ Ability to provide a system or tool (e.g., CRM) for the registrar customers to securely manage their inquiries for support and notifications of issues for remediation. Provider should be able to produce reporting/metrics for the ICANN organization in order to demonstrate high quality customer service and customer satisfaction. Provider should also use the data to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

⊙ Provider must be able to provide broad, flexible reporting capabilities, including, but not limited to:

  ● Operational reports that include a summary of total domains per TLD, per escrow deposit.

  ● Submission of reports to the ICANN organization via secure API to the ICANN organization's system, as defined by the organization. Note: The ICANN organization is intending to integrate Registrar Data Escrow (RDE) reporting with the current Registry

Reporting Interface (RRI) via the ICANN organization's restful reporting API. Specifications will be provided to approved data escrow agents.

Project Timeline

The following dates have been established as milestones for this RFP. The ICANN organization reserves the right to modify or change this timeline at any time as necessary.

Activity	Estimated Dates
RFP published	17 Aug 2017
Participants indicate interest in submitting RFP proposal	31 Aug 2017 by 23:59 UTC
Participants submit any questions to ICANN	14 Sep 2017 by 23:59 UTC
ICANN responds to participant questions	22 Sep 2017
Participant proposals due by	06 Oct 2017 by 23:59 UTC
Evaluation of responses	06 Oct 2017 to 01 Dec 2017
Final evaluations, contracting and award	01 Dec 2017 to 31 Jan 2018

Terms and Conditions

General Terms and Conditions

⊙ Submission of a proposal shall constitute the respondent's acknowledgment and acceptance of all the specifications, requirements and terms and conditions in this RFP.

⊙ All costs of preparing and submitting its proposal, responding to or providing any other assistance to the ICANN organization in connection with this RFP will be borne by the respondent.

⊙ All submitted proposals including any supporting materials or documentation will become the property of the ICANN organization. If the respondent's proposal contains any proprietary information that should not be disclosed or used by the ICANN organization other than for the purposes of evaluating the proposal, that information should be marked with appropriate confidentiality markings.

Discrepancies, Omissions and Additional Information

⊙ Respondent is responsible for examining this RFP and all addenda. Failure to do so will be at the sole risk of respondent. Should the respondent find discrepancies, omissions, unclear or ambiguous intent or meaning, or should any question arise concerning this RFP, the respondent must notify the ICANN organization of such findings immediately in writing via e-mail no later than three (3) days prior to the deadline for bid submissions. Should such matters remain unresolved by the ICANN organization, in writing, prior to the respondent's preparation of its proposal, such matters must be addressed in the respondent's proposal.

- The ICANN organization is not responsible for oral statements made by its employees, agents, or representatives concerning this RFP. If the respondent requires additional information, the respondent must request that the issuer of this RFP furnish such information in writing.

- A respondent's proposal is presumed to represent its best efforts to respond to the RFP. Any significant inconsistency, if unexplained, raises a fundamental issue of the respondent's understanding of the nature and scope of the work required and of its ability to perform the contract as proposed and may be cause for rejection of the proposal. The burden of proof as to cost credibility rests with the respondent.

- If necessary, supplemental information to this RFP will be provided to all prospective respondents receiving this RFP. All supplemental information issued by the ICANN organization will form part of this RFP. The ICANN organization is not responsible for any failure by the prospective respondents to receive supplemental information.

Assessment and Award

The ICANN organization:

- Reserves the right, without penalty and at its discretion, to accept or reject any proposal, withdraw this RFP, make no award, to waive or permit the correction of any informality or irregularity and to disregard any non-conforming or conditional proposal.

- May request a respondent to provide further information or documentation to support Respondent's proposal and its ability to provide the products and/or services contemplated by this RFP.

- Is not obliged to accept the lowest priced proposal. Price is only one of the determining factors for the successful award.

- Will assess proposals based on compliant responses to the requirements set out in this RFP, any further issued clarifications (if any) and consideration of any other issues or evidence relevant to the respondent's ability to successfully provide and implement the products and/or services contemplated by this RFP and in the best interests of the ICANN organization.

- Reserves the right to enter into contractual negotiations and if necessary, modify any terms and conditions of a final contract with the respondent whose proposal offers the best value to the ICANN organization.