The ICANN GNSO "Business Constituency"

Comment on Removal of Searchable Whois Service from the .MEET Registry Agreement

Status: FINAL

Version: 2

4-Dec-2015

Business Constituency Submission

GNSO//CSG//BC

Background

This document is the response of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC), from the perspective of business users and registrants, as defined in our Charter:

> The mission of the Business Constituency is to ensure that ICANN policy positions are consistent with the development of an Internet that:
> 1. promotes end-user confidence because it is a safe place to conduct business
> 2. is competitive in the supply of registry and registrar and related services
> 3. is technically stable, secure and reliable.

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Consistent with ICANN's preliminary determination, the BC has not identified any significant competition, security, or stability issues that would be created by removal of searchable Whois service from the .MEET Registry Agreement. In the past, the BC has supported the removal of searchable Whois service for closed .BRAND TLDs such as .SHARP[1]. In this particular case, the BC sees no issue with extending that reasoning to this particular "open" TLD RSEP request.

Both searchable and non-searchable Whois information is publicly accessible for consumers, law enforcement agencies, and rights holders seeking contact information. While it is arguable that searchable Whois might facilitate expanded access to a registry's Whois database, searchability is a service that a new gTLD applicant could optionally specify in their application -- but it is not required.

The .MEET registry initially proposed to provide search capabilities, but after the registry was sold the new operator is asking for this exception.

As the BC previously stated in our .SHARP comment cited above, a searchable Whois service should always provide adequate safeguards in order to ensure that the information gained from such service is only narrowly used for appropriate purposes. Many registry operators operate non-searchable Whois services without creating safety or security concerns for registrars, registrants or consumers. The BC therefore believes that a non-searchable Whois service can in many instances strike the right balance.

Conclusion: The BC supports the removal of searchable Whois services for the .MEET TLD.

This comment was drafted by Stephen Coates, with edits from Tim Chen and Susan Kawaguchi. It was approved in accordance with our charter.

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[1] 11-Sep-2015, BC Comment on Removal of Searchable Whois Service from the .SHARP Registry Agreement, at http://www.bizconst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BC-comment-on-Searchable-WHOIS-in-SHARP-gTLD.pdf