

June 18, 2004

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Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

4676 Admiral Way, Suite 330

Marina del Rey, CA 90292-6601

Re: *Procedure for Designating a Subsequent .net Registry Operator*

Dear ICANN and the GNSO:

NeuLevel, Inc. (“NeuLevel”) applauds the efforts to date of ICANN and the Generic Names Supporting Organization (“GNSO”) to adopt a competitive and transparent process for the selection of the successor operator for the .net registry. Establishing a fair and transparent process for selecting the next operator, and adhering to it rigorously, is essential to ensuring the designation of the most appropriate entity and being able to defend that selection from challenge. NeuLevel very much appreciates the opportunity to offer its thoughts on the .net registry operator selection process. It hereby submits its comments on the Draft Procedure for Designating Subsequent .net Registry Operator (the “Draft Procedure”) and the Dot Net Subcommittee Draft Report Version 6 (the “GNSO Subcommittee Report”), which outline the proposed selection criteria.

As a member of the Internet community interested in the secure, stable and smooth functioning of the domain name system, and as a prospective bidder for .net, NeuLevel believes that the selection process should be governed by two fundamental principles: (1) the process itself must be unambiguous, transparent and fair to all bidders; and (2) the elements of the selection criteria and their relative weighting must be clear and directly targeted to the relevant skill set of the entity to be selected. NeuLevel generally supports the framework set out by the GNSO Subcommittee both in terms of process and substantive criteria. However, NeuLevel believes that certain aspects of the proposal require clarification and/or further elaboration. Toward this end, NeuLevel submits the following thoughts for addressing such issues.

The Selection Process

NeuLevel supports the schedule laid out in the Draft Procedure for development of the Request for Proposals (“RFP”) and the selection process. The proposed timeline provides adequate time for the selection of a successor registry by the end of the existing contract term. The timeline and proposed selection process also do so in a manner that comports fully with the requirements of the .net Registry Agreement, particularly the requirement that ICANN adopt an “open and transparent” procedure for designating a successor registry operator by June 30, 2004.¹ The proposed process also satisfies the other requirements of the .net Registry Agreement, including affording the incumbent .net registry operator a

¹ See, .net Registry Agreement at Article 5.2.1.

full and fair opportunity to compete in the selection process on an equal footing with the competing bidders,² and expressly taking into account factors relevant to the enhancement and stability of the Internet, such as promotion of competition, maximization of consumer choice, performance capabilities and experience.³

NeuLevel especially applauds that the timeline affords multiple opportunities for public comment. Under the GNSO Subcommittee's proposal, public comment is solicited at four critical stages of the selection process: (1) with respect to the draft criteria and timeline (the instant comment cycle); (2) with respect to the revised version of the GNSO Subcommittee Report; (3) with respect to the draft RFP; and, finally (4) with respect to the proposals submitted by each bidder. These multiple opportunities for public comment are consistent with ICANN's bottom-up policy development approach. Affording adequate opportunities for affected entities to provide input will help to ensure that the right entity is selected and that the designation process is fair for all.

NeuLevel strongly urges ICANN to adhere strictly to the timeline as proposed. The Draft Procedure, the GNSO Subcommittee Report and the .net Registry Agreement clearly contemplate that an entity other than the current .net registry operator may be selected as the successor operator. The proposed timeline preserves this opportunity by affording sufficient time from the selection of the new entity in March 2005 for a smooth transition before the end of the incumbent's contract on June 30th of that year.⁴ However, should the timeline's various milestones be allowed to slip, the time needed to accomplish that smooth transition could be significantly constrained.⁵ It would be contrary to the principles of an "open and transparent" selection process to adopt a timeframe that would effectively exclude any bidder other than the incumbent from competing on a level playing field for the registry. Accordingly, ICANN must adhere to the schedule proposed.

NeuLevel generally supports the steps of the selection process laid out in the Draft Procedure. However, there is a need for clarification or further elaboration of certain aspects of the proposal:

- *Criteria for Selecting Evaluators.* The Draft Procedure contains no reference to the qualifications of those entities evaluating the .net bid submissions. Prior to the issuance of the RFP, ICANN should establish and articulate criteria to govern the qualifications and selection of those individuals who will assist in evaluating the proposals. Understanding the skill sets of the evaluators would greatly aid bidders in developing their proposals, particularly with respect to the extent and complexity of information submitted.⁶
- *Maintaining the Impartiality of Evaluators.* The Draft Procedure contains no reference to how the impartiality of the bid evaluators will be assured and maintained. ICANN should establish

² See, *id.* at Article 5.2.2.

³ See, *id.* at Article 5.2.4.

⁴ The current .net registry agreement does not obligate VeriSign to continue operating the .net registry beyond June 30, 2005. Accordingly, any transition would need to occur by that date.

⁵ This would especially be the case if VeriSign were to exercise its right to challenge ICANN's decision to select a registry operator other than VeriSign, pursuant to Article 5.2.5 of the .net Registry Agreement.

⁶ NeuLevel is not suggesting that the identity of these individuals be released in advance as that could unnecessarily subject them to undue influence.

and articulate the processes and procedures to be used to ensure the impartiality of persons selecting the successor .net registry operator and/or evaluating the proposals. Specifically, ICANN should define and announce the criteria for selecting evaluators that have no interest in the outcome. ICANN should also establish an express prohibition on oral *ex parte* contacts between bidders and bid evaluators and other selecting officials from the time the RFP is issued until a subsequent .net registry operator is announced. Further, written *ex parte* contacts must be promptly made public.

- *Putting Changes in Writing.* The Draft Procedure contains no reference to how changes to the RFP would be made once it is issued. In the event ICANN needs to change or modify the requirements of the RFP after its issuance, ICANN should do so through written amendments that are made public. Ensuring that any changes to the RFP are in writing and publicly available will foster transparency of the selection process as well as ensure that all bidders receive the same information about the nature of the change.
- *Additional Written Notice.* The Draft Procedure does not indicate whether ICANN plans to allow a question and answer period once the RFP is released or interview candidates once bids are submitted. ICANN should announce in advance whether and when such activities will occur. Further, in order to ensure transparency and fairness, any such exchanges between actual or potential bidders and evaluators from the time the RFP issues until the subsequent .net registry operator is announced must occur in writing and be made publicly available. Thus, questions posed by potential bidders and answers from ICANN should be in writing and made available to other bidders. Similarly, any requests from ICANN for further information from actual bidders and the bidders' responses must be in writing and made public.
- *Establishment of Independent Review Panel.* Article 4.3.2 of the .net Registry Agreement requires the establishment of an Independent Review Panel to review any challenge by the .net registry operator to "Consensus Policies" established by the ICANN Board, such as the designation of a successor registry operator. The Draft Procedure contains no reference to when or how this panel would be established. In order to ensure that there is no delay in the proposed schedule that could disrupt a smooth transition or impair the chances of selecting an entity other than the incumbent operator, ICANN should establish the Panel well in advance of issuance of the RFP.
- *Release of a Written Report Supporting the Outcome.* Although the Draft Procedure references that the ICANN Board will base its .net successor registry operator selection on a report evaluating the proposals, there is no discussion as to whether this report, or a final report adding the Board's decision and supporting rationale, will be made available to the public. In order to provide adequate transparency of the process and to enable bidders to learn from the experience for future competitive bidding opportunities, ICANN should issue a written report evaluating the proposals with regard to the selection criteria and demonstrating how the successor registry was chosen consistent with those criteria. Such a report should be made public promptly upon the announcement of the .net successor registry operator.

Further elaboration regarding all of these aspects of the selection process prior to the issuance of the RFP will help to ensure the resulting process is unambiguous, transparent, and fair to all.

The Selection Criteria

NeuLevel generally supports the selection criteria identified in the GNSO Subcommittee Report. NeuLevel believes they include relevant areas of inquiry with respect to the capabilities necessary and desirable for the .net registry operator. The criteria also appear to place the proper importance on the technical knowledge and experience of the candidates. However, more clarification of the criteria is necessary to properly inform bidders and evaluators as to the desired qualifications. Specifically, NeuLevel urges that ICANN (1) make clear the extent to which bidders are comparatively evaluated on the absolute criteria; and (2) further elaborate as to the specific elements and/or level of capability sought with respect to the various criteria, both absolute and relative.

The language of the GNSO Subcommittee Report is somewhat ambiguous on these points. The relevant language in the GNSO Subcommittee Report states, “[a]bsolute criteria are thresholds which an applicant is expected to meet. Failure to do so should imply disqualification. Relative criteria become relevant once absolute criteria are met and are proposed as a basis for comparison and evaluation of competing applications.”⁷ This language could be interpreted to mean that bidders that have satisfied the “threshold” requirements of the absolute criteria will be distinguished solely by their respective ratings on the relative criteria.

However, the absolute criteria are the factors by which the technical expertise and experience of the applicants are evaluated. Given the technical nature of the .net registry contract and that technical expertise and experience will be essential to successfully executing its functions, award of the contract should require further consideration of each bidder’s technical expertise beyond the mere achievement of a minimum threshold. Accordingly, ICANN should use the absolute criteria collectively to separate the bidders into classes of technical competency. As in the .org selection process, only those bidders earning the highest class of technical ranking should be further evaluated based upon the relative criteria.⁸ Again, as in .org, once bidders in the highest technical class are identified, their individual technical scores should no longer be considered and selection should be made only on the basis of their scores on the relative criteria.⁹

In addition to clarifying the evaluative role of the absolute criteria, ICANN should provide more elaboration as to specific elements of each criterion (both absolute and relative). As noted above, NeuLevel believes that the GNSO Subcommittee Report generally identifies the criteria relevant to the selection of the .net successor registry. However, in most instances, the elements that constitute the minimum threshold for each factor or that would result in a finding of enhanced expertise are not specified or are unclear. For example, Absolute Criterion 4 provides that any entity chosen to operate the .net registry must be able to demonstrate that they have the ability to maintain the .net registry “in an efficient and reliable manner,” and show a commitment to “a high quality of service.” Yet, the proposal contains no indication as to what constitutes “an efficient and reliable manner” or “a high quality of service.” In order to achieve sufficient transparency in the selection process and to ensure that all potential bidders are provided with adequate and unambiguous notice as to what aspects will be valued by

⁷ See *GNSO Subcommittee Report* at subsection entitled “Criteria to be considered.”

⁸ See *.org Reassignment: Preliminary Staff Report on Evaluation of the Proposals for Reassignment of the .org Registry* at <http://www.icann.org/tlds/org/preliminary-evaluation-report-19aug02.htm>.

⁹ *Id.*

ICANN (and thus what should be included in their proposal), ICANN needs to provide more precise definitions for these criteria.

Toward this end, NeuLevel has included as Attachment A its proposal for further elaboration of the elements of each of the specified criteria (absolute and relevant). With respect to each criterion, NeuLevel offers certain clarifications to prevent misinterpretation as well as to ensure all qualified bidders compete on an equal footing. Among other things, these suggestions address:

- *Appropriate and Specific Minimum Technical Standards.* ICANN should articulate minimum technical standards for .net based upon an appropriate and established level of technical service, including SRS, Nameserver and Whois Availability and frequency of updates. A logical choice for this could be the standards defined in the current .net contract. However, since this is a fairly dated contract, NeuLevel recommends that ICANN look to more recently established standards that better reflect advances in technology. Accordingly, NeuLevel urges ICANN to adopt technical standards similar to those prescribed in ICANN's recently awarded contracts, such as for .org and .biz. In establishing minimum technical requirements for .net and evaluating the technical capabilities of the bidders, ICANN must focus on what is appropriate and relevant to the operation of .net—and *only* .net. For instance, it would be unfair to most bidders and unnecessary to .net's operation to establish minimum standards reflective of certain aspects of .net's current operation in conjunction with .com, a database that alone contains over 26 million domain names, or the equivalent of well over 70 percent of all gTLD domain names.¹⁰ Further, to the extent information regarding the current or projected operation of .net is necessary to address the criteria, the incumbent .net registry operator must be required to make such information available sufficiently in advance of the deadline for submitting bids.
- *Flexibility to Accommodate Alternate Registry Models.* There is currently more than one model on which an effectively functioning registry can be based. ICANN should ensure its technical criteria do not inadvertently preclude these other registry models. For example, ICANN should retain the flexibility to consider other models besides the "thin registry" model. Yet, by using Appendices O, P, Q and R of the current .net Agreement, referenced in Absolute Criterion 4 of the GNSO Subcommittee Report, ICANN would implicitly be requiring that .net be a "thin registry" model despite the advantages of the "thick model."¹¹
- *Clarification that .net Consumers are the Registrars.* Relative Criterion 1 emphasizes that bidders will be evaluated on their ability to maximize and enhance choice, price, innovation and value for the "consumer." To be clear, the consumers or customers of the .net registry operator are the registrars. These are the entities with whom the .net registry operator will directly contract and who will be the beneficiaries of any lower prices or additional services offered by the operator (as the registrar may or may not choose to pass lower prices and additional services on to the public at large). The registry operator contracts with, and only has control over the

¹⁰ For example, it would be unnecessary and unfair to most bidders to require that they demonstrate that they already have experience operating a database of 5 million names, as VeriSign is the only registry that currently has that volume.

¹¹ It should be noted that many ICANN constituents have expressed a preference for the "thick" registry model due to the fact that the thick registry model is often more secure because it provides an expansive central repository for customer information and facilitates transfers more efficiently.

services that it can offer to, the registrars. Thus, the true consumers of the registry are the registrars, not the end user. ICANN should therefore clarify that this Criterion involves the maximization of choice, price, innovation and value for registrars, not for the general Internet public.

- *Price As a Function of Value.* Relative Criterion 1 in the GNSO Report states that “preference should be given to proposals offering lower pricing of the domain name.” Later on, the same Criterion emphasizes that “[a]n assessment based on price should be balanced with the value proposition offered.” These statements together create confusion as to the relationship of price and value for purposes of the .net evaluation process. ICANN should thus make clear that, while price is important, the overall evaluation must be one of value. The relevant inquiry should not be which offering is less expensive, but rather which offering provides the most value for the lowest price.¹²

- *Existing Registry Services Are Those Offered at RFP Issuance.* Relative Criterion 3 provides that bidders will need to indicate in their proposals whether and how they will extend and support “existing registry services.” This term is made ambiguous by the specific reference to the Wait List Service, which is not yet offered in .net and is described as “pending.” ICANN should make clear that “existing registry services” includes only those services actually being offered by the .net registry on the date the RFP is issued. It would be unreasonable and unfair to bidders to require them to address services that are not launched sufficiently in advance of the time the RFP is issued, as bidders would not have an opportunity to determine what those services are and how those services are administered. Further, to include unlaunched services in such term would provide an unfair advantage to the incumbent operator – the only entity who would know the details of the new service and how to best support it. So as not to disrupt users of .net, the .net registry operator should be directed to maintain the *status quo* and be prohibited from introducing any new service beginning on the date the RFP is issued and to release any relevant details regarding the administration of any services launched prior to such date. Such an operational freeze is standard practice with respect to competitive contract rebids.

In addition to ensuring that the appropriate evaluative criteria are clearly and adequately described, ICANN must also ensure that bidders are afforded sufficient latitude to demonstrate their qualifications and expertise under each of the criteria. The GNSO Subcommittee Report does not indicate whether ICANN will limit the quantity or type of information submitted by each bidder. NeuLevel would strongly urge ICANN not to so drastically limit .net submissions as it did for the latest round of sponsored TLD applications. 10,000 characters of text with no opportunity for the submission of figures, diagrams or spreadsheets is simply not adequate for a bidder to demonstrate their ability to satisfy the criteria. Indeed, such severe content limitations actually discourage the submission of specific evidence of practical (as opposed to theoretical) experience – the kind of information ICANN should be seeking in the comparative process.

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¹² For example, a \$6.05 service may offer much more value in terms of additional capabilities than a \$6.00 service, and thus should be evaluated more highly.

NeuLevel again appreciates the opportunity to offer its thoughts on the .net successor registry operator designation process, specifically on the Draft Procedure and the GNSO Subcommittee Report. NeuLevel hopes that ICANN finds these comments to be useful and constructive. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or should you require further clarification of the information presented in this letter and the attachment.

Sincerely,

Richard Tindal
Vice President of Registry Services
NeuLevel, Inc.

.NET ATTACHMENT A

CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED

Criteria are divided into absolute and relative criteria. Absolute criteria are thresholds that an applicant is expected to meet. Failure to do so should disqualify the Applicant. Given the technical nature of the .net registry contract and that technical expertise and experience will be essential to successfully executing its functions, award of the contract should require further consideration of each bidder's technical expertise beyond the mere achievement of minimum thresholds. Accordingly, ICANN should use the absolute criteria collectively to separate the bidders into classes of technical competency. Only those bidders earning the highest class of technical ranking should be further evaluated based upon the relative criteria. Once bidders in the highest technical class are identified, their individual technical scores should no longer be considered and selection should be made only on the basis of their scores on the relative criteria. Relative criteria are listed with weighting with the highest weight at the top of the list.

Absolute Criteria

Absolute criteria related to the Targeting

- .net should remain unsponsored.
- .net should remain unchartered.

Absolute criteria related to Continuity

- **Grandfathering.** There are a number of organizations and individuals that have made an investment in .net domain names. The cost of migrating to a new domain name is potentially significant. Existing registrants should not be penalized by changes in policy as a result of this process. Existing registrants in .net should be entitled to maintain their registrations on terms materially consistent with their existing contracts under current policy, including the right to transfer a .net domain to another party.

Absolute criteria related to Policy Compliance

- **Consensus policies.** In the operation of the .net domain name registry, the registry operator must comply with all consensus policies of ICANN—those that exist today (UDRP, WHOIS, Deletes, Transfers etc), and any that are developed via the ICANN process in the future.
- **Policy development.** Any future .net registry agreement must specify that policy development for .net will take place in an open bottom-up process, which enables input from the full Internet community via ICANN's processes.
- **Registrars.** All ICANN-accredited registrars must be allowed to qualify to register names in .net. All registrars that have qualified to operate as .net registrars must be treated equitably by the registry operator.

Absolute criteria related to stability, security, technical and financial competence

The .net registry operator should meet or exceed the following specifications:

- **Nameserver Functional Specifications and Patch, Update and Upgrade Policy.** Applicants should comply with appendices C.4 and C.5 of the current .net Agreement;
- **Performance specifications.** Applicants should have a track record of performance sufficient to demonstrate their ability to measure and perform against industry standard Service Level Requirements (SLRs). Because each of the registries currently have different SLRs and different measurement methodologies, registry performance should be measured against the average of all unsponsored registry SLRs rather than measuring each registry against its own SLRs. For example, the incumbent Registry Operator for .net currently has an SLR of approximately 99.4% for SRS availability, while .info has an SLR of 99.45% and .biz has an SLR of 99.95% for SRS availability (each measured differently). At first glance, the track record of a registry with a lower SLR (99.4%) may appear to be better than the track record of one with a higher SLR (99.95%) in terms of meeting its own SLRs, even though the registry operator with the higher SLR may have, in actuality, achieved a higher level of performance. Any measurement of SLRs should be made with consistent criteria. Examples of appropriate SLAs to measure include:
 - Shared Registration System
 - SRS Availability
 - SRS Processing Time (Add, Modify, Delete)
 - SRS Processing Time (Query Domain)
 - SRS Planned Outage (Duration)
 - SRS Extended Planned Outage (Duration)
 - Nameserver Performance Specs
 - Nameserver Availability
 - Nameserver Resolution Processing Time
 - Nameserver Update Frequency
 - Cross-Network Nameserver Performance
 - Whois Performance Specs
 - Whois Availability
 - Whois Processing Time
 - Whois Update Frequency
 - Whois Planned Outage (Duration)
 - Whois Extended Planned Outage
- **Service-Level Agreement.** SLA measurements and credits should be commensurate with the current industry standards amongst all unsponsored gTLDs.
- **Whois Specification – Public Whois.** Requirement that the entity operating .net shall act as the authoritative Whois service for all second-level Internet domain names registered in the .net top-level

domain and for all hosts registered using such names). The Whois service should offer the ability to search by “Domain Name”, “Registrar” and “Nameserver.”

- Similar formats to Appendix O of .net Agreement if “Thin Registry Model”
 - Similar formats to Appendix O of .org, .info or .biz Agreements if “Thick Registry Model”
- **Whois Data Specification – Independent Whois Provider.** Registry Operator shall provide bulk access to up-to-date data concerning domain name and nameserver registrations maintained by Registry Operator in connection with the Registry TLD on a daily schedule, only for purposes of providing free public query-based access to up-to-date data concerning domain name and nameserver registrations in multiple TLDs to a party designated from time to time in writing by ICANN. The Content, Format and Process shall be as set forth in:
 - Appendix P of .net Agreement if “Thin Registry Model”
 - Appendix P of .org, .info or .biz Agreements if “Thick Registry Model”
- **Whois Data Specification – ICANN.** Registry Operator shall provide bulk access by ICANN to up-to-date data concerning domain name and nameserver registrations maintained by Registry Operator in connection with the Registry TLD on a daily schedule, only for purposes of verifying and ensuring the operational stability of Registry Services, the DNS, and the Internet. The Content, Format and Process shall be as set forth in
 - Similar to Appendix Q of .net Agreement if “Thin Registry Model”
 - Similar to Appendix Q of .org, .info or .biz Agreements if “Thick Registry Model”
- **Data Escrow Specification.** The Data Escrow requirements should comport with the latest industry standards as reflected in Appendix R of the .org, .biz and .info unsponsored gTLD agreements.
- **Security, Stability & Scalability.** The entity chosen to operate the .net registry must:
 - Be able to demonstrate that they possess the capability to maintain .net registry functions in an efficient and reliable manner while at the same time be scalable to support future growth, including:
 - Scale sufficient to handle the existing number of names and projected growth.
 - Scale to handle existing DNS query loads including normal peaks and projected growth.
 - Scale to handle events such as DDoS attacks and traffic generated by viruses, worms and spam. RFC 2870, “Root Name Server Operational Requirements”, requires excess query capacity of three times the measured peak rate for those critical name servers.
 - Demonstrated capability of restarting from complete outage to avoid prolonged outage due to initial overload.
 - Multiple geographically dispersed points of presence to handle simultaneous attacks across the network.
 - Commit to 100% accuracy of .net zone data for resolution
 - Demonstrate a diversity of DNS resolution infrastructure to prevent single points of failure
 - Make registration, assistance and other registry services available to ICANN, accredited registrars in different time zones and different languages.
- **Migration/Transition Plan.** If applicable, applicants should document their plan for migrating .net from the current registry operator with specific attention paid to maintaining functional capabilities existing at the time the RFP is issued, performance specifications and protocol interfaces (i.e. registry registrar protocol RRP to extensible registry protocol EPP migration). Applicants should demonstrate that the

migration will have a minimal impact on performance of the registration system and no impact on the resolution of existing .net domain names.

- **Security of Infrastructure.** Applicants should be required to demonstrate their capability to establish the following:
 - A secure environment in which the registry infrastructure is to be operated.
 - Their Failure/ Disaster Recovery Capability, including a plan and assets to support failure of any or all of the infrastructure
- **Operational Expertise.** Subject to the provision of the following data to the Applicants, Applicants should demonstrate that they have staff in place with technical skills, expertise and experience to operate the Registry in order to maintain current levels of performance, including:
 - To operate at current volume and expected growth volumes .
 - To maintain operation during periods of increased traffic or activity such as DDoS.
 - To minimize vulnerabilities in infrastructure.
 - To manage any planned outages to minimize impact to Registrars and end users.
 - To contribute to standards creation and other issues of Internet development.
- **Customer Service.** Applicants should possess:
 - Skilled staff operating 24x7 to support Registrars' hours of operation.
 - Sufficient staff to support current and expected registrar volumes.
 - International language skills.
 - Technical on-site assistance available (engineering) on 24x7 basis.
- **Financial Stability:** Significant investment will be required to establish the initial registry system to support the scale and performance levels of .net. The applicant should be required to demonstrate resources sufficient to make an investment at levels required to scale the operation initially and maintain and grow the domain base and infrastructure. The applicant also should possess substantial cash reserves and a record of sustained growth in revenue and profitability.

Relative Criteria

1. Relative Criteria related to promotion of competition

- **Maximization of consumer choice.** Once an applicant has qualified by meeting baseline stability, technical and financial criteria, positive consideration should be given to ICANN's mission to improve consumer choice and competition. For the purpose of this criteria, the consumers or customers of the .net registry operator are the registrars.
- **Innovation and Value.** It is possible that applications will offer innovation or new services, and hence will affect the value proposition. An assessment based on price should be balanced with the value proposition offered. Any proposed innovation or new service should be described together with an assessment of their value by the affected stakeholders (typically registrars or registrants). Once the absolute criteria are met, the entity selected should be the one that presents the greatest value to ICANN, the Registrars and Registrants.

- **Industry Relations.** Consideration will be given to the applicant's track record in constructively contributing to the competitive nature and smooth functioning of the Internet through participation in the ICANN policy development process and through its dealings with other industry players.

2. Relative criteria relating to stability, security, technical and financial competence

- Consideration should be given to technical stability based on diversity of suppliers and vendors in order to reduce the impact of any one provider failure.
- Mean time to resolution for additions or changes to the .net zone file should not exceed the current time with the existing registry operator. Preference should be given to proposals offering enhanced or faster resolution.
- **Industry Standards.** In the operation of the .net domain name registry, including any proposed registry services, the registry operator must demonstrate a commitment to abide by industry best practices and standards as they affect the technical stability of the DNS.

3. Relative criteria related to existing registry services

.net currently offers registry services such as the Redemption Grace Period and the support of internationalized domain names in accordance with the IDN Guidelines (<http://www.icann.org/general/idn-guidelines-20jun03.htm>). Applicants should be asked “Does the applicant wish to maintain all registry services existing at the time the RFP is released¹³?”

- If **yes**, please provide specifics and demonstrate the technical and legal ability of the registry to maintain existing services.
- If **no**, please expand on any issues relating to the withdrawal of such services.

¹³ Although it is contemplated by VeriSign to introduce the Wait List Service (WLS) in the near future, the .net registry operator should be directed to maintain the *status quo* and be prohibited from introducing any new service beginning on the date the RFP is issued.