**Issue: Authoritativeness**

Question 1 – Please define / describe Issue A

The sub-team used the following strawman definition:

"Authoritative, with respect to provision of whois services, shall be interpreted as to signify the single database within a hierarchical database structure holding the data that is assumed to be the final authority regarding the question which record shall be considered accurate and reliable in case of conflicting records; administered by a single administrative [agent] and consisting of data provided by the registrants of record through their registrars." A proposed shorter version is "the data set to be relied upon in case of doubt".

Question 2 – Describe the circumstances of Issue A in a 'thin' Whois environment

Since the registrar alone holds most Whois data, its data is necessarily authoritative as to those data elements (e.g., name of registrant). For that data held by both registrar and registry ( e.g., name of registrar), it appears that registry data is treated as authoritative, but we are not aware of any official ICANN policy statement on this.

Question 3 – Describe the circumstances of Issue A in a 'thick' Whois environment  
Most respondents (constituencies/stakeholder groups) that addressed this question stated that registry data is authoritative in the thick environment, with one stating that registrar data was authoritative. Again, we are not aware of any official ICANN policy statement on this question.

*Before considering advantages or disadvantages, the threshold question is whether it is necessary for this WG to recommend a policy on this issue. Those participants in the sub-team who expressed this opinion concluded that it was not necessary, as evidenced by the fact that thick registries have functioned for many years without requiring a formal position on authoritativeness, and the lack of any evidence that this created any problem during the previous thin-to-thick transition involving .org. Some took the view that the registry data is inherently authoritative in the thick Whois environment. As one participant put it, “we do not need to define authoritativeness as it will define itself due to the realities of how Whois works in a thick registry.”*

Question 4 – Identify the advantages of 'thick' Whois for issue A (please try to quantify or provide data if possible / available)

SG/C respondents cited efficiency and trust as advantages of treating the registry Whois data as authoritative.

Additionally, as one sub-team member commented, “ the registry will hold the entire data set, and is

able to change the data without informing the registrar (due to closed court

orders or similar events). Therefore, the only authoritative data source can be the registry as it holds

the ultimate sway over the data. A registrar may update the data at customer

request, but such changes would only become authoritative once the registry Whois reflects the change.” Others supported this view.

Question 5 – Identify the downsides of 'thick' Whois for issue A (please try to quantify or provide data if possible / available)

Several respondents noted that registrars remain responsible for collecting the data and (to an extent governed by contract with ICANN) for its accuracy. One respondent felt this was inconsistent with a conclusion that registry Whois would be authoritative in the thick environment. Most participants did not agree that this inconsistency was problematic (presumably on the grounds stated above that any data collected by the registrar becomes authoritative only after it is incorporated in the registry database).

Question 6 – Does the data imply we are recommending Thick or not recommending Thick WHOIS? Or is it neutral?

Question 7 – If your response to question 6 is that 'thick' Whois should be recommended, please provide any additional considerations with regards to implementation in relation to Issue A that should be taken into account