

Questions and Answers

Emergency Back-end Registry Operators RFI (EBERO RFI)

Teleconference held on November 16 2011

Posted on: 29 November 2011

Referenced Documentation:

- ✓ EBERO RFI information: <http://www.icann.org/en/announcements/announcement-2-14sep11-en.htm>
- ✓ New gTLD Applicant Guidebook: <http://newgtlds.icann.org/applicants/agb>
- ✓ gTLD Registry Transition Process: <http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtlds/registry-transition-processes-clean-30may11-en.pdf>
- ✓ Registrar Transition Procedure: <http://www.icann.org/en/processes/registrars/de-accredited-registrar-transition-procedure-01oct08.pdf>

A. General Process Questions

Question	Answer
1. The RFP does not outline the format of the responses. Can ICANN please confirm the expected format for responding to the RFP?	<i>A short clarification, this is a Request for Information (RFI) not a Request for Proposal (RFP). Various formats will be accepted from the RFI respondents, for example, PDF, word, excel, etc. If ICANN has any difficulty opening or reading a document, the respondent will be contacted directly to address the issue.</i>
2. Can ICANN clarify/provide guidance on the detail expected for each element of the response?	<i>The expectation is the RFI should provide as much detail as possible, but please keep it to less than 50 pages, if possible. The decision on whether or not ICANN will conduct a subsequent RFP will depend on the level and depth of information received in the RFI.</i>
3. Are responses limited to 50 pages plus appendixes?	<i>ICANN would like respondents to provide objective and comprehensive responses. If a respondent uses more than 50 pages are used, there will be no penalty.</i>
4. The cost to some registries to provide the EBERO function will be dependent on both, Domains Under Management and the number of Registrars. Is ICANN comfortable for proposed pricing models to factor in the number of registrars as well as the number of domains?	<i>Yes.</i>

5. Does ICANN expect a business case from RFI respondents?	No.
6. The wording of the finance section acknowledges that infrastructure investment is likely to exceed the fees for EBERO services, but it isn't clear whether respondents are supposed to accommodate that.	<i>Per section 3.3.2, ICANN expects a full standby EBERO capability will incur initial investment. It is expected that the EBERO absorbs this cost or charges a start-up fee. Please refer to the full RFI text.</i>
7. It is our understanding that ICANN has requested potential EBEROs to answer all questions as per section 3.0 only. Can ICANN confirm that respondents are only required to answer questions in section 3.0?	<i>Answers to the RFI are not limited to section 3.0. Section 2.0, for example, has information that is expected from respondents. Respondents should review all RFI and provide as much information as possible.</i>
8. Are we only expected to reply to Section 3? Section 2 talks about experiences and capabilities. Are they required?	<i>Answers to the RFI are not limited to section 3.0. Section 2.0, for example, has information that is expected from respondents. Respondents should review all RFI and provide as much information as possible.</i>
9. The first question relates to a point raised in passing at the end of the call. It was said that the RFI responses would be made public or "posted". Section 4.5 of the RFI document states that responses would be kept in confidence. Can you please clarify what part, if any, of the RFI submission will be made public either immediately following the RFI deadline or in a later RFP process? This is important as it will affect the amount of information we are willing to supply at such an early stage in the processes. It is further relevant when you consider whether any future RFP will be limited to RFI participants only or will participation be open to all? We are concerned, amongst other things, that effort dedicated to answering any capability questions and providing suggestions based on our experience will be diluted if this information is redistributed amongst participants.	<i>ICANN does not plan to post the RFI responses. ICANN does plan to post a summary of the RFI responses focusing on the pricing models. ICANN does not plan to identify the responding organizations.</i>
10. Will all of the RFI responses be made publicly available? If so, does that include company financials and CV's?	<i>ICANN does not plan to post the RFI responses. ICANN does plan to post a summary of the RFI responses focusing on the pricing models. ICANN does not plan to identify the responding organizations.</i>
11. Secondly, unfortunately the detail required for the RFI response was not clarified enough, and we are still a little unclear as to what is required. One of the key issues, is that we are not clear on what might be debated and what must be fixed with regards to the	<i>While the goal is not modify the proposed EBERO model, each applicant should present their plans to best demonstrate their capabilities to manage an efficient and effective process.</i>

<p>questions throughout the RFI, excluding section 3. For example, our experience transitioning existing registries and our analysis of the new gTLD transition requirements has made clear several shortcomings in the proposed procedure. We can nevertheless describe a preparedness which will accommodate the existing transition process as we have the capability to do so. Alternatively we could propose procedures which we believe would be more effective and robust. We would like some clarity regarding which ICANN is seeking; suggestions for modifications to existing processes or a capability to support the current processes as they are defined?</p>	
<p>12. Should the EBERO service provider anticipate getting Whois files in advance similar to the other archive processes?</p>	<p><i>No, the EBERO will not have access to registration data escrow files until and unless a registry has already failed on the performance requirements outlined in Specification 10 of the new gTLD Registry Agreement and it is scheduled by ICANN for Emergency Transition.</i></p>
<p>13. What is the timeline beyond November 30th? Will it be finalized before January 12th?</p>	<p><i>The EBERO selection process and further development of the EBERO program will happen during 2012. A timeline is being developed and will be available in the near future. The EBERO selection will not be finalized before January 12.</i></p>
<p>14. What is the thought behind only accrediting enormous incumbent registries who are capable of handling .com and .org-like zones?</p>	<p><i>It is not true ICANN is only looking to engage "enormous incumbent registries". ICANN is looking to engage a number of sustainable organizations capable of handling EBERO activities in an efficient and effective manner. For example, RFI section 2.2.1 requires capability of managing queries equivalent to zone of approximate 1 million domain names.</i></p>
<p>15. Under the current requirements for the EBERO, can an applicant provide some of its capabilities through partnerships, e.g., with a call center?</p>	<p><i>Yes, but providers/partners should be disclosed.</i></p>
<p>16. What is the thinking behind requiring "thought leadership" as a necessity from the EBERO?</p>	<p><i>The RFI requested that organizations highlight their experience through examples of industry participation and publications, which hopefully will evidence leadership, creativity and innovation.</i></p>

B. Technical questions

Question	Answer
17. On page 7 of the RFI, the "Required Capabilities" required the ability to adapt to additional DNS record types and behaviors. Could you give us a specific explanation about additional types and behaviors?	<i>The issue here is the ability to adapt. In principle, the EBERO is expected to operate a plain vanilla registry. One example is the EBERO ability to adapt to services that require DNS records outside of the customary.</i>
18. On page 8, the "Required Capabilities" section mentioned that "An EBERO will comply with Specification 6, Section 1.1 and Section 1.4 of the Registry Agreement". We believe Section 1.1 has no direct logical relations with this specific issue, while section 1.2 is more related to the question of IDN registrations. Please further confirm this.	<i>The EBERO is expected to comply with technical specifications as related to the five critical registry functions outlined in the new gTLD Program. Details will be negotiated in the future.</i>
19. On page 10, the "Required Experience" section mentioned that it is desired that "Applicant demonstrate experience in the aforementioned Escrow functions of least one year. Applicant may also describe equivalent or similar systems experience in escrowing mission critical data". Please help us clarify the escrow functions are either referring to the escrowing data transferring function or just data escrow function. Do years of escrowing data for registrar fulfil this requirement?	<i>The requirement is for the transferring data function, not the data escrow agent function.</i>
20. With reference to the Service Level Agreement of 24 hours upon receipt of data for WHOIS, is this a realistic timeframe, as some registries believe that to do a "Controlled Migration" of the data, it could take up to 48 hours?	<i>The current EBERO SLA requirement is to activate Whois within 24 hours after receiving the data. Respondents should say what impact it might have in their pricing structure. If, for any reason, the RFI respondent believes this is unrealistic expectation, please explain why in details and optionally propose alternative scenarios, including pricing.</i>
21. With reference to the Service Level Agreement of 4 hours upon request from ICANN for DNS/DNSSEC, does this also include week-ends (i.e. can it happen at any time), as this could impact resourcing levels?	<i>Yes, it is expected to include weekends as the Domain Name System (DNS) is a critical service.</i>
22. Will it be necessary for us to make a daily copy of their zone file, or can we get this from a central repository at the point of failure?	<i>ICANN is requesting that each EBERO does this copy, however, the idea of a central repository for EBERO services is good and ICANN is open to exploring this option in the future.</i>

<p>23. On page 7, the "Required Capabilities" asked the EBERO to keep pace with new DNS practices. Refer to the term of "DNS practices"; could you please give us a detailed explanation with examples? Moreover, how can we comply with this requirement?</p>	<p><i>DNS practices can change over time, for example a new or evolving industry best practices. ICANN is simply asking the EBERO to explain how it intends to keep its practices current.</i></p>
<p>24. On page 11, the "Required Experience" section required "applied operational test certification, (EPP and EBERO connectivity test)." We wonder what kind of proof is required for the test certification or if it requires meeting any global standards?</p>	<p><i>Please feel free to disregard this requirement.</i></p>
<p>25. Can ICANN provide a clarification of the allowed commands?</p>	<p><i>Typically, the EBERO will not accept new domains, domain renewals, domain transfers, or domain name deletions from registrars. However, under certain exceptional cases the aforementioned operations will be accepted, e.g., under the Expedited Registry Security Request, UDRP, or any other ICANN domain name dispute resolution procedures. Bulk domain transfers can be approved by ICANN for domains sponsored by registrars that no longer can service them (e.g., registrar has been de-accredited). Emergency Operator will not expire registrations or auto-renew them. The rest of the standard domain name, contact, and host (RFC 5730-34, 5910) SRS operations will be allowed.</i></p>
<p>26. The RFI states "An EBERO will be expected to run a customized reduced SRS that does not require billing functions, since the domains will operate in trust with an EBERO and associated costs normally charged to the registrars and subsequently registrants will be suspended." In relation to the above statement; If a domain is deleted prior to the migration, however is still restorable, when it is migrated into the registry can it be restored?</p>	<p><i>Yes, the data escrow deposits should contain the necessary information to make that operation possible.</i></p>
<p>27. Given that no new/renew/delete transactions are allowed during EBERO, could you explain the rationale for the following: "The SRS can be expected to handle up to 20,000 concurrent client connections and a daily minimum peak volume of 2 million transactions with a read/write ratio of 10/1 (based on an estimated 1 million aggregate domains in the EBERO)."</p>	<p><i>The reason is the update transactions. If applicant believes the requirement is not adequate, we'd appreciate your considerations and suggested requirement.</i></p>
<p>28. An EBERO will be expected to maintain its own archive</p>	<p><i>ICANN is requesting that each EBERO does this copy,</i></p>

<p>of all daily gTLD zone files in order to quickly resume DNS service in case of emergency. Is it possible for ICANN to maintain a single archive for multiple EBEROs?</p>	<p><i>however, the idea of a central repository for EBERO services is good and ICANN is open to exploring this option in the future.</i></p>
<p>29. Registrar and Registrant communication will have a significant impact on Customer Service. Could you explain the rationale and assumptions for the following: "Past experience operating a 24/7 Customer Service and Response Capability with minimum weekly peak volumes of 100 support incidents, with 80% of 1st contact by email and 20% by phone (based on an estimated 1 million aggregate domains in the EBERO operated registry system)?"</p>	<p><i>ICANN does not expect the EBERO to account for Registrant customer service, that is a responsibility for the Registrars. If applicant believes the requirement is not reasonable, we'd appreciate your considerations and suggested requirement.</i></p>
<p>30. Why are there no questions about flexibility of software? While one TLD might look like .org, another one might have quite complex business rules around eligibility, use, etc. It seems obvious that this criteria is just as important -- why is it not included?</p>	<p><i>The EBERO is expected to operate only the five critical registry functions. For example, varying registration eligibility rules in different TLDs should not be relevant to the EBERO since the EBERO will not be expected to process new registrations.</i></p>
<p>31. There appears to be an assumption that only registries with experience in high-volume zones can handle high-volume zones. This is quite different than the assumption in the gTLD Applicant Guidebook, which assumes that with some planning and appropriate spending, every applicant should be able to handle its projected volumes. Why the difference?</p>	<p><i>ICANN is looking to engage a number of sustainable organizations capable of handling EBERO activities in an efficient and effective manner. For example, RFI section 2.2.1 requires capability of managing queries equivalent to zone of approximate 1 million domain names.</i></p>
<p>32. Why is there a requirement for a call center? 250 ccTLDs run without call centers of the capacity defined in the EBERO. Even if the registry uses an extensive registrar network, there are only a few hundred active registrars. Please explain the logic of requiring a call center.</p>	<p><i>EBERO is required to provide robust and timely support to registrars, for example 24/7 support. If the RFI respondent believes the requirement is not reasonable, ICANN appreciates comments on additional considerations and suggested requirements.</i></p>

C. Non-Technical Questions

Note: Several questions reference EBERO and ICANN day to day operations and process details. ICANN is planning to further develop and streamline several of these details with the help of the selected EBEROs. For this reason, several of the questions below will have the same answer.

Questions	Answers
33. On page 13, the "Required Response Item" asked for whether the organization is an affiliate of any ICANN accredited registrar, registry or other contracted party and whether the applicant's services have any potential areas of conflict. We wonder what kind of conflict is primarily concerned for this requirement in order to examine if we need to provide further mechanism to avoid such conflict.	<i>ICANN would like a disclosure of potential known conflicts. ICANN wants to ensure that EBERO data is properly managed and segregated.</i>
34. Will the quarterly ICANN fees be waived during the EBERO phase?	<i>The EBERO will not be required to pay the quarterly registry fees. These fees will remain the responsibility of the registry.</i>
35. Is there going to be an early warning system in place for the need for an EBERO to ensure any surprises are mitigated? If so, what would be in place to detect any possible situations?	<i>ICANN plans to operate a Service Level Agreement (SLA) monitoring system for the critical functions, as described in Specification 10 of the New gTLD Registry Agreement.</i>
36. How does ICANN expect registries and registrars to provide for an EBERO take-over of a registry? Will contractual provision be made to allow for this event and how will this protect an EBERO provider?	<i>The New gTLD Registry agreement already contains some provisions regarding this issue. EBERO respondents are welcome to propose additional contractual provisions that might be beneficial.</i>
37. How do the registrar contractual relationships work under an EBERO? Would there be a need to have any contractual agreements with registrars?	<i>Yes, as discussed in the gTLD Registry Transition Processes, EBEROs are expected to offer a lightweight Registry-Registrar Agreement to all registrars that will enable them to perform SRS functions during a temporary transition process. EBERO will be encouraged to engage the registrars before any emergency happens so they are ready to operate (e.g., an agreement is in place, credentials for accessing the SRS are already distributed, operational testing with the EBEROs is done, etc.) should an emergency transition happen for a particular gTLD.</i>
38. How is it decided who will operate the TLD after it moves from the EBERO process?	<i>That process is specified in the gTLD Registry Transition Processes approved as part of the new gTLD Applicant Guidebook.</i>
39. What happens if it is a failed registry that is not making any money, poorly marketed and has a very low volume of registrants i.e. it is not a viable business. What happens next? Can we be selective in the TLD's we take on?	<i>When a gTLD fails or an emergency occurs, ICANN will seek to engage one of the contracted EBEROs to temporarily take over the operations. EBEROs should be prepared to take on any TLD without regard to viability of the gTLD's business model. EBEROs will be paid from the Continuity Operations</i>

	<i>Instrument (COI) of the gTLD.</i>
40. How long does ICANN anticipate an operator to play the role of an EBERO? What happens if no other registry-operator wants to take charge of the failed registry? Is the EBERO expected to provide services indefinitely?	<i>The EBERO contract will run three to five years. The EBERO is expected to service the gTLD for up to three years depending on available funding or until a successor is found.</i>
41. Approximately how long is the EBERO expected to manage a TLD?	<i>The EBERO is expected to service the gTLD for up to three years depending on available funding or until a successor is found.</i>
42. Given the large number of new gTLDs and the variation in size of new gTLDs, will ICANN accredit all qualifying EBERO applicants? If not, what are the criteria for selection?	<i>ICANN plans to select a limited number of EBEROs based on an assessment of best value, including effectiveness, efficiency and price. The selection is expected to be from the RFI respondents. The EBERO will hold a contract with ICANN. (ICANN is not going to "accredit" any organizations.)</i>
43. In the event that a registry operator fails to meet the required service levels for, say, one of the critical functions, would all emergency functions be transferred to the EBERO or just the non-compliant function? For instance, if DNS performance was non-compliant, would all critical functions be transferred to the EBERO or just DNS?	<i>ICANN expects the EBERO to be able to take on all the five registry critical functions at any given time.</i>
44. Could you expand on the following requirement "The EBERO will work with all the accredited registrars that have domains under sponsorship in the gTLD." Will the EBERO be required to have Technical accreditation and Registry-Registrar Agreements (in advance of transfer) with all Registrars? Will the EBERO need to accept the terms and conditions of the RRA that the failed registry provided? Will the EBERO be required to provide the same level of technical performance (for example, number of connections) as the previous Registry for each Registrar?	<i>As discussed in the Registry Transition Processes Memo, EBEROs are expected to offer a lightweight Registry-Registrar Agreement (RRA) to all registrars that will enable them to perform SRS functions during a temporary transition process. ICANN does not expect the EBERO to follow all the terms and conditions (including SLA) of the failed TLD.</i>
45. In the case of single-registrar TLDs (corporate/brand TLD and, in some cases, geographic TLDs) where the failed Registry also operated the Registrar, would the EBERO be expected to assume the role of the Registrar?	<i>No. ICANN has separate processes for handling registrar continuity.</i>
46. Could a new Registry nominate its own (accredited) EBERO prior to launch? This would address the need	<i>The EBERO is expected to operate only the five critical registry functions. For example, varying registration</i>

<p>for EBERO implementation of any and all TLD-specific policies (such as, registrant eligibility restrictions). If not, is the EBERO expected to implement the registry policies of every TLD?</p>	<p><i>eligibility rules in different TLDs should not be relevant to the EBERO since the EBERO will not be expected to process new registrations.</i></p>
<p>47. Do we get the register of registrars from the Data escrow agent (or ICANN) or do we have to build it ourselves with contact details provided by the registrars? For security reasons it would be preferable to work from the registrar database that we previously in use by the gTLD manager.</p>	<p><i>ICANN will make a list of registrars available to the EBEROs upon EBERO start up and will update EBEROs with new and changed registrar's data.</i></p>
<p>48. Section 2.2.4 outlines the required experience in DEALING with escrow deposits, and section 3.3.2 covers the fees associated with escrow, but what is the basis for those fees? Is ICANN looking for an EBERO escrow provider as well since that is a separate function that none of the registry service providers handles?</p>	<p><i>The EBERO will be required to deposit data into escrow for the registries it is operating, just like any other registry. In this context, escrow fees would be the fees the EBERO is paying to a third party escrow agent.</i></p>
<p>49. Is there an assumption that every EBERO-accredited registrar should be able to handle any TLD? How was this conclusion reached? Why doesn't ICANN accept a variety of EBEROs, and in the case of a failed TLD, assign it to an EBERO of matching capabilities?</p>	<p><i>ICANN will select multiple EBEROs. The acting EBERO for a gTLD would be selected by ICANN at the time of failure of the operator of said gTLD. At that time ICANN would take into consideration all the available information about the failed gTLD and the available EBEROs in order to select the most suitable EBERO.</i></p>
<p>50. A new gTLD registry may well be a single registry-registrar bundle -- separate legal existences, but single ownership. Why is there no requirement to be able to handle such a case, which may be fairly common?</p>	<p><i>The EBERO is expected only to operate the five critical registry functions. ICANN has separate processes for handling registrar transition.</i></p>
<p>51. The EBERO specification (in its linkage with the existing Continuing Operations Instrument) assumes three years of transition and operation by the EBERO operator. In our experience, a typical transition should take no more than a few months. Why the longer period?</p>	<p><i>It is true that many transitions could take place in few months, however, the COI was devised to protect registrants and as such it covers the possible scenario of TLD sunsetting.</i></p>
<p>52. The EBERO may wish to assume permanent operations of the TLD. In that case, they would no longer be "emergency." Why would they then continue to be paid for "emergency" services?</p>	<p><i>Please refer to the registry transition processes memo for details on how this would work. In the event the EBERO is selected to become the successor operator, it will no longer act as the EBERO for that TLD, but instead will take on the role of "registry operator" under a separate contract with ICANN.</i></p>
<p>53. The EBERO contains many requirements that are</p>	<p><i>The requirements for the EBEROs are mostly derived from</i></p>

<p>absent from the Applicant Guidebook. If the requirements in the guidebook are sufficient for a registry, why should there be a different standard for EBEROs?</p>	<p><i>those in the Applicant Guidebook. In the course of developing the EBERO, there were some additional requirements, for example 24/7 support, identified as necessary in the case of an emergency situation. Also, there are specific requirements for the EBEROs like the SLA for transition of each of the critical functions, which do not exist for registry operators, since they are not relevant in that context.</i></p>
<p>54. Has ICANN considered that the current very costly criteria for EBEROs will have as a consequence extremely high (perhaps unaffordable) Continuing Operations Instrument amounts? If so, what was the thinking behind setting up what is effectively a barrier to entry, if not actually a cause of registry failures?</p>	<p><i>As noted in the Registry Transition Processes, core value #1 of the ICANN bylaws states that preserving and enhancing the operational stability, reliability, security, and global interoperability of the Internet should guide ICANN's decisions and actions. In pursuit of this principle and as a result of the development of the Registry Continuity Framework ICANN has identified the need to define processes to transition a gTLD in a secure, stable and reliable manner; while minimizing the impact on registrants and gTLD users.</i></p> <p><i>The EBERO requirements are very similar to those described in the Applicant Guidebook for New gTLDs, but are limited to providing the five critical registry functions. The requirements for the EBEROs were developed through an open consultation and approved by the ICANN Board. This RFI is not intended to be a forum to debate the EBERO requirements, but it is instead intended to develop guidance on potential EBERO costs to assist New gTLD applicants.</i></p>