

Project Overview for the Africa Domain Name System Study 2022 RFP

Request for Proposal

27 June 2022



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About this Document

By issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP), the *Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)* is requesting your best offer to conduct a study on the Domain Name System (DNS) in Africa. In seeking a comprehensive proposal for these services, ICANN is placing maximum emphasis on several key components of value including expertise with similar processes, demonstrated practices, and the ability to work within the guidelines established in this RFP. Additional ideas and suggestions are also welcome.

This document provides an overview of the RFP. It aims to provide background and pertinent information regarding the requirements for responding to the RFP. The RFP itself comprises this overview as well as other documents that are hosted in the ICANN Sourcing (SciQuest) tool. Indications of interest are to be received by emailing Africa.DNS.Study.2022-RFP@icann.org by 23:59 UTC on 22 July 2022.

Complete proposals must be electronically submitted by 23:59 UTC on 8 August 2022 using the ICANN org sourcing tool (SciQuest), access to which will be granted after receipt of an indication of interest to the email address above.

1.2 About the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

The ICANN org is a non-profit public benefit corporation dedicated to preserving the operational security and stability of the Internet; to promoting competition; to achieving broad representation of global Internet communities; and to developing policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes. More specifically, the ICANN org:

1. Coordinates the allocation and assignment of the four sets of unique identifiers for the Internet, which are
 - a. Domain names (forming a system referred to as the Domain Name System, or “DNS”)
 - b. Internet Protocol (“IP”) addresses
 - c. Autonomous System (“AS”) numbers
 - d. Protocol port and parameter numbers.
2. Coordinates the operation and evolution of the DNS root name server system.
3. Coordinates policy development reasonably and appropriately related to these technical functions.

See www.icann.org for more information.

1.3 About ICANN Org’s Africa Regional Strategy Plan and Why This Study

The Launch of the ICANN Strategic Plan FY21-FY25 necessitated a subsequent need to review and realign our engagement plan for Africa. Accordingly, the GSE Africa team working with the community initiated the process to update our ICANN Africa Regional Plan to synchronize it in congruence with the ICANN strategy. An Africa Strategy Working Group - ASWG2020, made up of 25 diverse representatives selected through a public call, was then formed in January 2020 to develop this plan.

The Working Group began its work by studying the FY21-FY25 ICANN Strategic Plan, Past Africa Strategic Plan for FY12-FY20 with the accompanying Implementation Reports over the last six years as well as consideration of feedback from diverse stakeholder groups. This was done in a bottom-up manner to ensure that the new regional plan was aligned with both the global strategic objectives as well as the current needs of the community.

The outcome was a final Regional Plan that presents the African community solutions to some of their current challenges, and an action plan to be executed by ICANN organization and the community. It also follows the five objectives identified in the ICANN Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 while approaching them from a regional perspective.

1.4 The 2016 African Domain Name System Market Study

In 2016, the ICANN organization conducted [The 2016 African Domain Name System Market Study](#) in the Africa region. The main purpose of the study was to:

- Highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the DNS sector in Africa
- Develop recommendations on how to advance the industry to better exploit the opportunities available and to address identified challenges
- Explore options for establishing an observatory to continuously monitor the growth, development, and emerging needs regarding the DNS in Africa

In tandem with feedback from the community, ICANN believes there have been changes to the reach and impact of the DNS in Africa in the past five years. Therefore, it is important to conduct a new study to examine the current realities related to the DNS in Africa and present an updated, comprehensive report of the African DNS landscape for the benefit of the community.

This new study will be essential for understanding the current circumstances in Africa ahead of a potential future round of new generic top-level domains.

2 DNS STUDY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Period of this Study

The Draft final report of the study as well as any attachments should be delivered no later than 17 February 2023.

2.2 Scope of the Study

The goal of this study is to examine, identify and define the strengths and weaknesses in the DNS industry ecosystem in Africa, and develop recommendations on how to advance the industry and bring it closer to realizing its full potential. This study will document relevant data points and provide further analytical findings in order to enable ICANN and players in the Africa Names Space to develop a roadmap on the scope of needs and priorities for the development and growth of both “ccTLDs and gTLDs” (The DNS landscape) in Africa. Its outcomes will update the 2016 Study and feed into setting up an observatory that will continuously monitor the growth, development, and emerging needs of the DNS landscape in Africa.

The awarded vendor will have to conduct surveys and interviews (both face to face and including remotely) to collect the data. More specifically the objectives of this study are to:

1. Develop, distribute, follow-up and collate questionnaires and survey forms to gather sufficient and relevant information about the African DNS landscape. (In case of ccTLDs, collected information should include governance models and registry models, state of Universal Acceptance / Email Address Internationalization and DNSSEC readiness)
2. Develop a regional / country-based¹ breakdown of domain name registrations, including but not limited to: ccTLD vs. gTLD registrations; registrations by business, governments, non-government, research and academic, individuals, etc.; percentage of active domains; and percentage of domains that use private (proxy) WHOIS.
3. Examine the type of content hosted by these domains: commercial, government, educational, etc.; and share of the commercial sites that offer e-commerce services; and whether this content is hosted within-country or outside. (General idea of where, if outside the country and the percentage)
4. Examine the growth rate of domain name registrations in the past five years, for ccTLDs and gTLDs including IDNs.
5. Examine the current market of local registrars and resellers for ccTLDs and gTLDs.

¹ The study will cover all African countries.

6. Examine the current market of global registrars and resellers for ccTLDs and gTLDs, to better understand registrants' behavior.
7. Examine the user experience at local registrars and resellers (e.g. support for local language, payment gateway, IDN support – Level of automation).
8. Identify factors that are holding back take-up of domain names (e.g. awareness, infrastructure, policy, and/or regulation, payment gateway).
9. Examine the current understanding of the concept of Premium Domain Names and how to develop the DNS landscape.
10. Find out what are the benchmarks for registries and registrars in the region by probably comparing the results of the study with results from other parts of the world.
11. Identify economic potential for domain names (gTLDs and ccTLDs) sales over the coming 3 - 5 years based on surveyed sample of audience.
12. Define best practices that have made an impact in domain name landscape growth including those related to business models, regulatory and governance mechanisms, consumer awareness, among others.
13. Look at the broader ecosystem of the Internet infrastructure and online services and describe the impact of such elements on the overall evolution of the domain name industry.
14. Describe and quantify the overall business potential in the domain name industry in this region.
15. Provide suggestions on how to develop and grow the industry and what are the business models that could be adopted in the entire industry chain.

The above list is not comprehensive, and the vendor is strongly encouraged to suggest more items to be included in the study.

2.3 Structure of the Study

The study should include three main sections:

1. **Facts:** This section should provide data on all aspects as described in the Scope of the Study section above.
2. **Analysis:** This section must provide an in-depth analysis of the data collected, and show correlations amongst the various data sets.
3. **Conclusions and Recommendations:** Based on the findings from analyzing the data collected, the report must provide suggestions and recommendations on how to grow the industry in the region.

2.4 Deliverables and Milestones

The following deliverables and milestones have been set for the study:

1. Inception Report
2. Methodology Review
3. Draft Final Report of the Study
4. Final Report of the Study

All the above deliverables will be reviewed, and approved by the ICANN org. The Final Report of the Study and any attached outcomes will be submitted in the English language. The Report will also be submitted to ICANN as an electronic document.

3 SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of the vendor will be based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated understanding of the assignment
2. Knowledge and expertise
 - a. Demonstrated experience in conducting similar types of studies
 - b. Good knowledge of ICANN functions, the DNS, and the domain name registration process
 - c. Demonstrated experience in the DNS industry
3. Proposed methodology
 - a. Design approach
 - i. Clearly articulated rationale for proposed methodology
 - ii. The methodology ensures that a statistically significant sample of registries and registrars will be examined
 - iii. Data collection, analysis and presentation tools are appropriate and accessible to ICANN
 - b. Implementation approach
 - i. Suitable project management plan, including proposed timeline
 - ii. Years of relevant experience for designated key staff
4. Flexible approach, including but not limited to meeting the timelines as per the given schedule
5. Commitment to working with ICANN's multi-stakeholder model, including a demonstrated understanding of and commitment to ICANN's requirements for transparency and accountability
6. Price, including detailed pricing per item

4 BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS

In order to be considered, the bidder must be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the following business requirements:

1. Ability to provide a complete proposal based on ICANN specifications by the designated due date (see Project Timeline below).
2. Availability to participate in finalist presentations via conference call/remote participation.
3. Ability to negotiate a professional services agreement using ICANN Contractor Consulting Agreement (see attached).
4. Ability to present the final report in English by the deadline specified.
5. Ability to conduct periodic status update calls, frequency to be determined.
6. Demonstrated ability to develop work methods, data gathering mechanisms and evaluation/assessment approaches as appropriate for the activity.
7. Ability to conduct thorough analysis considering regional issues and taking into account inputs in multiple languages, where relevant.
8. Ability to conduct examination work using remote tools as well as site visits.
9. Ability to provide the following deliverables:
 - a. Work plan and timeline
 - b. Inception Report to include methodology and approach, assessment of the specific objective and quantifiable criteria, basis for conclusions, and recommendations
 - c. Draft Final Report
 - d. Working session(s), as necessary, with the ICANN team or its designate(s) to discuss preliminary findings (via remote participation)
 - e. Final Report

Study must be structured to include Facts, Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations

5 PROJECT TIMELINE

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

Activity	Estimated Dates
RFP published	27 June 2022
Participants to indicate interest in submitting RFP proposal	22 July 2022 by 23:59 UTC
Participants submit any questions to ICANN	25 July 2022 by 23:59 UTC
ICANN responds to participant questions	29 July 2022
Participant proposals due by	8 August 2022 by 23:59 UTC
Evaluation of responses	9 August 2022 – 15 September 2022
Final evaluations, contracting and award	September-October 2022

6 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

General Terms and Conditions

1. Submission of a proposal shall constitute each respondent's acknowledgment and acceptance of all the specifications, requirements and terms and conditions in this RFP.
2. All costs of preparing and submitting its proposal, responding to or providing any other assistance to ICANN in connection with this RFP will be borne by the respondent.
3. All submitted proposals including any supporting materials or documentation will become the property of ICANN. If the respondent's proposal contains any proprietary information that should not be disclosed or used by ICANN other than for the purposes of evaluating the proposal, that information should be marked with appropriate confidentiality markings.

Discrepancies, Omissions and Additional Information

1. Respondent is responsible for examining this RFP and all addenda. Failure to do so will be at the sole risk of the respondent. Should respondent find discrepancies, omissions, unclear or ambiguous intent or meaning, or should any question arise concerning this RFP, respondent must notify ICANN of such findings immediately in writing via e-mail no later than ten (10) days prior to the deadline for bid submissions. Should such matters remain unresolved by ICANN,

in writing, prior to respondent's preparation of its proposal, such matters must be addressed in respondent's proposal.

2. ICANN is not responsible for oral statements made by its employees, agents, or representatives concerning this RFP. If respondent requires additional information, respondent must request that the issuer of this RFP furnish such information in writing.
3. 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.
4. If necessary, supplemental information to this RFP will be provided to all prospective respondents receiving this RFP. All supplemental information issued by ICANN will form part of this RFP. ICANN is not responsible for any failure by prospective respondents to receive supplemental information.

Assessment and Award

1. ICANN 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.
2. ICANN 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.
3. ICANN is not obliged to accept the lowest priced proposal. Price is only one of the determining factors for the successful award.
4. ICANN will assess proposals based on compliant responses to the requirements set out in this RFP, responses to questions related to those requirements, 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 ICANN.
5. ICANN 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 ICANN.