



<b>.ASIA Registry Request For Proposal (RFP)</b>			
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup</b>		
<b>Prepared by:</b>	DotAsia Organisation		
<b>Date:</b>	28-Apr-2007	<b>Reference #:</b>	N/A
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Executive Summary</b>			

The DotAsia Organisation invites response to our Request For Proposal for an Auction Partner. This document describes the general requirements for a platform to conduct, manage and provision for the auctions to be held as part of the .ASIA Startup process. During the Sunrise and Landrush phases, for domains that received more than one valid application, auctions will be held between competing applicants. DotAsia looks to the Auction Partner to provide not only technical support and implementation, but also expertise in all aspects of operating mass domain auctions online.

In general, the Auction Platform must allow for:

1. .ASIA Accredited Registrars to provision for bidding and obtaining of auction information from the Auction Platform via an API with a specified protocol, such that registrars may integrate the functionalities into their registrar system completely; as well as,
2. .ASIA Accredited Registrars to pass along login information to end registrants to access a centralized auction platform for conducting the auctions directly.

DotAsia believes that the volume of auctions will be significant. The prospective provider should demonstrate proven ability to manage high volume, high contention transactions. The prospective provider should also present a robust pre and post auction support infrastructure along with financial settlement arrangements.

Beyond the compensations directly resulting from the .ASIA Startup auctions, DotAsia also believes that the .ASIA Sunrise and Landrush Auctions represents a significant future benefit to the Auction Partner. More importantly, the opportunity to establish relationships with a broad group of domain investors and to have a significant portion of ICANN accredited registrars technically connected to the provider’s system, allowing for considerable prospective future business for domain trading in the secondary market.

It is also anticipated that subsequent release of domain names, such as for IDNs (e.g. Chinese, Japanese and Korean domain names) will adopt a similar model to the Sunrise and Landrush process, which will make the incumbent provider a natural choice (not to mention future new gTLDs).

**Table of Contents**

1	Brief Introduction of the .ASIA Registry .....	2
1.1	The DotAsia Organisation .....	2
1.2	The .ASIA Startup Process.....	2
2	Auction Platform Requirements.....	3
2.1	API Connectivity Requirements.....	4
2.2	Central Auction Website .....	4
2.2.1	Central Auction Website: Registrar Login.....	4

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup		
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0
		<b>Page:</b>	1 of 8

2.2.2	Central Auction Website: Registrant Login .....	4
2.3	Integration with Registry EPP SRS .....	5
3	Auction Process and Features .....	5
3.1	General Auction Model .....	5
3.2	Automatic Extension of Auctions .....	5
3.3	Automated Bidding .....	5
3.4	Multilingual Interface .....	6
4	Financial Settlement & Reconciliation .....	6
4.1	Settlement with Registrants (Direct Bidders) .....	6
4.2	Reconciliation with Registrars .....	6
5	Other Areas of Support, Expertise and Service .....	6
6	Financial Structure of Proposal .....	7
7	Conflict of Interest and Other Declarations .....	7

## General Proposal Requirements

# 1 Brief Introduction of the .ASIA Registry

## 1.1 The DotAsia Organisation

DotAsia Organisation Limited is a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation incorporated in Hong Kong. In March of 2004, the DotAsia Organisation submitted a proposal to the Internet Corporate for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to operate the .ASIA sponsored Top-Level Domain as a regional domain for Asia, the fastest growing region in the world. The concept of this TLD follows the successful launch of the .EU domain in Europe, which registered more than 1 million domains (and subsequently has grown to over 2 million domains within the first year). The .Asia TLD is expected to launch Sunrise periods for trademark holders in fall of 2007 and Landrush in spring 2008. Registrations will be available on the second level (e.g.: domain.asia) and will be sold through ICANN accredited domain name registrars.

The membership of the DotAsia Organization is divided into 2 main categories: Sponsor Members and Co-Sponsor Members. Sponsor Member is open to all country code Top-Level-Domain (ccTLD) registries in the Asia / Australia / Pacific region as defined by ICANN: <http://www.icann.org/montreal/geo-regions-topic.htm>. Co-Sponsor Member is open to regional Internet / Telecom / Community groups. DotAsia currently has 20 Sponsor Members and 3 Co-Sponsor Members (see: <http://www.dotasia.org/about/members.html>)

As a not-for-profit organisation, an important part of the mandate of DotAsia is to re-invest surplus proceeds into socio-technological advancement initiatives relevant to the Asia Internet community. For additional background on the organization please see <http://www.dotasia.org> (especially: <http://www.dotasia.org/about/faq.html>).

## 1.2 The .ASIA Startup Process

The .ASIA Sunrise policies are intended to provide an equitable, orderly, transparent and logical process for the launching of the .ASIA Registry, which takes into consideration the prior rights of stakeholders in the community. The policies have been designed with the provision of a reasonable due process for legitimate prior rights owners and a balanced deterrence for abusive registrations. The Sunrise process is generally separated into 3 main phases: Sunrise 1 provides priority for governments in the community to reserve and register domains; Sunrise 2 provides opportunity for Registered Mark owners to protect their names; and Sunrise 3 allows

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	2 of 8

registered companies to register their entity names. This is followed by Landrush and finally live registrations upon Go Live.

Sunrise 1 (SR1) is prefaced by a Pre-Sunrise period when governments from the region are invited to submit to the .ASIA Registry a list of Reserved Names. During SR1, appropriate government bodies or relevant organisations may “activate” (i.e. apply to register) names from the Reserved Names list. SR1 applications will be processed and allocated based on a First-Come-First-Served model.

Sunrise 2 (SR2) is further refined into 3 sub-phases:

- SR2a: Early Bird Sunrise: Valid and issued trademarks with demonstrable usage in the Class for which it was registered, and is applied for before March 16, 2004 (Declaration of claim to an issued and valid Registered Mark as well as demonstrable usage is required).
- SR2b: Registered Marks: Valid and issued trademarks applied for before December 6, 2006 (Declaration of claim to an issued and valid Registered Mark is required to complete the application process. Documentary evidence may be requested).
- SR2c: Extended Protection for Registered Marks: Registered Mark combined with relevant word(s) from the Class of the Registration (Documentary evidence may be requested).

Sunrise 3 (SR3) is conducted before Landrush to allow companies or organisations to register their corresponding name. Declaration to the claimed name along with documentary evidence in Acceptable Electronic Format is required to complete the application process. Documentary evidence submitted will be posted publicly.

For SR2 and SR3 and Landrush, all applications received within the time period for the particular sub-phase will be considered to be received at the same time. Applications will be verified by a Verification Agent. Domains with only one successfully verified application will be allocated to the successful Applicant. For domains with more than one successfully verified application, auctions will be conducted between the successfully verified Applicants. Before the Auction, contact and claims information of participating bidders (i.e. successfully verified Applicants) will be disseminated to each participating bidder.

Auctions will be held exclusively between successfully verified Applicants who have applied for a domain during the corresponding Sunrise period. As such, this is described as a “closed auction”, which is contrasted with an “open auction”, where additional participants (i.e. bidders) may join at anytime during the auction period. A conventional English Auction format is envisioned, where eligible bidders bid against one another, with each bid being higher than the previous bid, and each bidder able to observe each bid price. An auction ends when no participant is willing to bid further, and the winner being the highest bidder

## 2 Auction Platform Requirements

In general, the Auction Platform must provide 2 options for registrars:

1. To connect via an API (Application Programming Interface) so that their registrants may perform bidding from the registrar site; and,
2. To provide login information to the registrant directly so that registrants<sup>1</sup> may login to a centralized website to perform bidding.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the Registrant is used with equivalence to Applicant. More specifically, even as the applicant have not already obtained the domain name sought for, it will be called a registrant, to distinguish from a registrar (or the registry).

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	3 of 8

## 2.1 API Connectivity Requirements

The Auction Platform must support provisioning via an API (Application Programming Interface) that could be integrated by a Registrar into their system. The API must provide functionality such that registrants (or registrar administrative staff) may view, bid and interact with the Auction Platform without separately logging into the central auction website.

The specifications of the protocol used by the Auction Platform must be provided to all .ASIA Registrars such that they may choose to develop their own API to connect to the Auction Platform. It is preferred that the protocol be open, EPP based, and with the specifications developed into an Internet Draft that may become an IETF Informational or Standards RFC.

The protocol should provide functionality for at least the following:

- Placement of a bid for a domain
- Retrieval of auction information for a domain
- Setting and updating of a maximum bid for a domain (for automatic bidding)
- All transactions should be secure and only auction information relevant to a particular sponsoring Registrar should be returned to the sponsoring Registrar

The Auction Platform should also provide the following notifications via a polling or equivalent mechanism:

- A maximum bid amount for a domain has been exceeded
- Result of an auction for a domain
- Starting of an auction for a domain
- Extension of an auction for a domain

Additional features important for better managing the auctions should be highlighted and explained. DotAsia looks the expertise from the Auction Partner in the development and implementation of the Auction Platform.

## 2.2 Central Auction Website

The central auction website should provide functionality for end registrants or registrars to login and manage their auctions. Regardless of whether a sponsoring registrar has integrated the API or implemented the auction provisioning protocol, the central auction website should allow the registrar to login to view and manage auctions directly.

### 2.2.1 Central Auction Website: Registrar Login

A sponsoring Registrar should be able to login to view and manage the auctions for all the domain names under their sponsorship. These include auctions for which the registrant has been given access and may be actively bidding for a domain. Conceptually, the customer support responsibilities lie ultimately with the Registrar and the registry trusts completely the registrar's actions on behalf of registrants by way of our registry-registrar agreement.

### 2.2.2 Central Auction Website: Registrant Login

A registrant should be able to login to view and manage the auctions for all the domain names for which they are associated as the OPN (Operations and Notifications) Contact<sup>2</sup>. Upon first

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the .ASIA Sunrise Policies for further discussion regarding the OPN Contact.

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	4 of 8



login using one of the domain login information, the user should be presented with the ability to consolidate the domain names in the management panel. Thereupon, the user should be able to view and manage the auctions for all the domain names they are the OPN Contact for under the particular login.

### 2.3 Integration with Registry EPP SRS

The Auction Platform must be integrated with the core .ASIA SRS (Shared Registry System). A tight integration is preferred to allow for a smooth experience for registrar and registrants, as well as for registry administration. However, the two main parts for integration include: 1. the obtaining of registrant (i.e. bidder) information, along with corresponding domain names, from the SRS; and, 2. the allocation of the domain to the winner of an auction.

The Auction Platform should obtain domain and registrant (i.e. bidder) information from the .ASIA SRS. This process may be based on loading a set of data from a report generated by the .ASIA SRS at the end of each particular Sunrise phase. Alternatively, the Auction platform may dynamically obtain applications from the .ASIA SRS as they are being submitted / verified.

Upon the completion of the auction and the successful procurement of payment, the Auction Platform should “stuff” the winning bidder information back into the .ASIA SRS. More specifically, the Auction Platform should issue a command (which will be further specified) to the .ASIA SRS to promote the winning application into a fully registered domain (i.e. changing from a pending create status to an active status).

Details of the integration will be developed and specified in coordination with Afiliast, the registry technology provider for DotAsia.

## 3 Auction Process and Features

### 3.1 General Auction Model

The Auction Platform should support an English style auction, where each bid is higher than the previous bid. Each bidder should be able to observe the bidding as it progresses. The increment in each bid should be configurable for each auction and manageable in bulk. Bidders should optionally be able to override the increment interval to nominate a higher bid price.

### 3.2 Automatic Extension of Auctions

To avoid rushes at the end of an auction, and to curb “sniping” tactics, auctions should be automatically extended should a bid come in within a particular timeframe before the original end-time. The timeframe as well as the time to be extended should be configurable for each auction and manageable in bulk.

### 3.3 Automated Bidding

The Auction Platform should accept maximum bid amounts and offer automated bidding. If the maximum bid amount is exceeded, the bidder should be notified. Bidders should be able to modify their maximum bid amounts at anytime. The reduction of maximum bid amount however will only be allowed up to (down to) the amount already committed.

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	5 of 8

### 3.4 Multilingual Interface

The central auction website should support a multilingual interface. The languages to be supported should include: English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi and Arabic.

## 4 Financial Settlement & Reconciliation

The Auction Partner must provide financial settlement and reconciliation for auctions held. There will be 2 basic arrangements for payment procurement: 1. Direct payment by registrant; and 2. Payment through registrar.

Prior to the beginning of an auction, a notification should be sent to each bidder for confirmation of their participation in the auction as well as confirmation on the method of payment. If the method of payment is through the sponsoring registrar, confirmation must be obtained from the registrar.

### 4.1 Settlement with Registrants (Direct Bidders)

The Auction Partner must provide payment capabilities (or alternative methods as described below) for registrants to directly pay for a winning bid. The Auction Partner should also proactively seek to conduct credit assessment of bidders, especially where bid amount become high, or a history of abusive behaviour is recognized.

The Auction Partner should collect the payment from registrants and remit to DotAsia the amount less the auction service fee retained. DotAsia will further manage the remittance of commissions to registrars and other payments.

If an alternative method for procuring payment is to be used, for example, via third party payment services, collection agencies or through sponsoring registrars, the mechanism and process as well as the settlement arrangements (i.e. who pays who, how much, when, etc.) must be outlined in detail. The integration requirements for registrars must also be outlined if applicable. If integration is required by registrars, outreach efforts and approaches should be described.

### 4.2 Reconciliation with Registrars

Besides direct payment by registrants, DotAsia will also allow registrars to specify that payment should be deducted from their registry deposit. Under this model, the winning bid amount will be deducted from the sponsoring registrar's account at the registry by DotAsia. DotAsia will thereupon remit the auction service fee to the Auction Partner. Nevertheless, the Auction Partner is expected to produce reconciliation reports and other relevant reports for managing this process.

## 5 Other Areas of Support, Expertise and Service

Besides the core Auction Platform, DotAsia will look to the Auction Partner to provide additional areas of support, expertise and service. These include the provision of customer and technical support to all participating registrars, as well as customer and technical support for direct bidders.

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	6 of 8

Furthermore, the Auction Partner is expected to provide assistance and consultation on the development of:

- Auction policies, terms and conditions and guidelines
- Auction agreements (to be accepted by bidders prior to commencement of auctions)
- Credit policies and guidelines
- Process, timing and length of Auctions
- Process and timeframe for Automatic Extension of Auctions
- Bid intervals and thresholds

Most importantly, this RFP does not purport to be comprehensive about all the services and features that will be required to operate and manage a smooth process for the .ASIA Startup Auctions. DotAsia looks to the expertise from the Auction Partner for a more comprehensive implementation and operations plan.

Please provide additional features and services you will be providing as our Auction Partner.

## 6 Financial Structure of Proposal

Please include in your proposal a detailed auction service fee structure.

In general, DotAsia envisions a sliding scale structure for fees based on a percentage of the auction proceeds. Conceptually, there would be two sliding scales working alongside each other: one for each particular auction; and, the other for the overall proceeds for all auctions.

## 7 Conflict of Interest and Other Declarations

Please indicate whether your company or related parent, subsidiary or affiliate:

- Operate a domain registrar (please specify whether it is ICANN accredited or other);
- Provide auction services to other domain registries;
- Any other activity that may be viewed as potentially being a conflict of interest
- Has any ownership affiliations with companies that provide the above services

Please also indicate how you propose to act to mitigate the concerns and whether you have any prior experience to demonstrate your ability to operate under a conflict.

### Submission, Timetable and Contact

Proposals should be submitted via Email, in MS Word (or compatible) format and should not exceed 15 pages (A4). Credential and firm marketing material can be submitted separately by mail or by email without file or length limit. Please contact us ahead of time however should you wish to send large files to us.

<b>Submission Email Address:</b>	rfp-submission@dotasia.org
<b>Submission Mail Address:</b>	Unit 617, Miramar Tower, 132 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong
<b>RFP Issued:</b>	Saturday, April 28, 2007
<b>Submissions Deadline:</b>	Friday, May 18, 2007 (Hong Kong Time)

<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	7 of 8



<b>Presentations / Clarifications (if required):</b>	May 21-25, 2007
<b>Decision:</b>	June 1, 2007

Please do not hesitate to contact us with regards to clarifications or any other inquiry:

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<b>Title:</b>	Request For Proposal: Auction Service Provider for .ASIA Startup				
<b>Status:</b>	RFP Invitation	<b>Version:</b>	1.0	<b>Page:</b>	8 of 8