

Essential Steps to Setting Up Your .gov Domain

1. Confirm Eligibility & Prepare Documentation

Only official U.S. government entities (cities, counties, courts, and public agencies) may register a .gov. Gather proof of your municipality's status (charter, incorporation papers, or official website), and designate an elected or appointed official (mayor, clerk, etc.) as the authorizing contact.

2. Prepare an Official Contact Email

Use a government-controlled email address for all correspondence. If you don't yet have one, create a temporary address (e.g., cityadmin@gmail.com) to communicate with the .gov program until your new domain is active.

3. Choose a Clear Domain Name

Pick a domain that clearly represents your city or county and includes the state abbreviation if necessary (e.g., cityofmountainhomear.gov). Avoid abbreviations or names that could be confused with another entity.

4. Security & DNS Setup

Use a trusted managed DNS provider such as **Cloudflare**. It offers excellent reliability, global redundancy, built-in DDoS protection, DNSSEC support, and an easy-to-manage interface. Cloudflare's strong uptime and security make it ideal for municipalities managing .gov domains. Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) for your .gov registrar and DNS accounts. The MFA device must be a **city-owned cell phone**, not a personal device, to maintain official control if staff or leadership changes.

5. Submit Your .gov Application

Visit domains.dotgov.gov and click "Apply for a .gov domain." Fill out the form with your entity's name, official contact, and technical contact (your IT provider), upload your verification documents, and await approval. Processing typically takes 2–4 weeks.

6. Configure Email, DNS, and Website

Once approved, configure your DNS and email (Microsoft 365 GCC recommended) and add SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records for email authentication. Redirect your old website and email addresses to prevent missed communication.

7. Maintain Your Domain

Renew annually, keep your registrar and DNS contacts current, and ensure all administrative access remains under city control. Document who manages DNS, approves subdomains, and maintains security policies.