

.GOV DOMAIN CUTOVER CHECKLIST

Purpose: Guide municipalities and agencies through the transition from a commercial (.com, .org, .net) domain to an official .gov domain in compliance with Arkansas Act 929 and CISA .gov requirements.

1. Preparation

- ■ Apply for the .gov domain at domains.dotgov.gov
- ■ Obtain and upload an authorization letter signed by a mayor, clerk, or authorized official
- ■ Confirm .gov approval and access to the DNS management portal
- ■ Back up your website and verify access to all hosting and DNS accounts
- ■ Inventory all references to the old domain (website links, email addresses, forms, social media, etc.)

2. Website Migration or Domain Update

- ■ If hosting stays the same (WordPress, Wix, GoDaddy, etc.): you usually don't need to copy the site—just update the domain and DNS.
- ■ If moving to a new host: copy website files, media, and databases to the new server.
- ■ If temporarily redirecting: point .gov to .com while preparing the permanent switch.
- ■ Update internal links, images, and contact emails to the .gov domain
- ■ Verify all forms, menus, and embedded maps work under the new domain
- ■ Test the new site internally before going live

3. DNS Configuration

- ■ Create A record for @ (root) pointing to your web host's IP
- ■ Create CNAME record for www pointing to the root domain
- ■ Add MX, SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records for email if applicable
- ■ Add TXT record for Microsoft 365 or Google verification
- ■ Confirm propagation using whatsmydns.net

4. SSL & Security

- ■ Request or issue a new SSL certificate for .gov domain
- ■ Enable HTTPS redirects (force secure connections)
- ■ Enable MFA for all admin or DNS accounts
- ■ Review web host firewall and security configurations
- ■ Verify accessibility compliance (ADA/WCAG)

5. Redirect & SEO

- ■ Set 301 redirects from .com → .gov
- ■ Update Google Search Console and Analytics with the .gov property
- ■ Submit a sitemap under the new domain

- ■ Verify redirects for subpages, not just the homepage
- ■ Notify partners, vendors, and state agencies of the change

6. Email Transition (if applicable)

- ■ Add .gov domain as an Accepted Domain in Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace
- ■ Create new email aliases or mailboxes under .gov
- ■ Update email signatures, contact forms, and printed materials
- ■ Set up forwarding from old .com accounts temporarily
- ■ Test sending and receiving from both internal and external senders

7. Communication & Launch

- ■ Publish a public notice or press release announcing the .gov domain
- ■ Update social media, letterhead, business cards, signage, and contact info
- ■ Inform key stakeholders (state agencies, banks, utilities, etc.)
- ■ Verify everything resolves and redirects correctly
- ■ Schedule a 30-day follow-up to confirm stability and cleanup tasks

8. Post-Cutover Audit

- ■ Confirm no active content remains on .com
- ■ Confirm SSL auto-renewal is active on .gov
- ■ Ensure backups and uptime monitoring point to the new site
- ■ Keep .com for at least 12 months (redirect-only)
- ■ Document all changes for compliance and cyber insurance purposes