

## **.GOV Domain Transition FAQs**

### **1. Why is our town/village required to transition to a .gov domain?**

New York State has enacted a new law requiring local governments to use **.gov** domains for official websites and email communications. This mandate is intended to improve cybersecurity, enhance public trust, and prevent phishing and fraud attempts.

### **2. What are the benefits of a .gov domain?**

- **Security** – Reduces the risk of cyber threats, phishing, and fraud.
- **Trust & Credibility** – The public can easily recognize official government websites.
- **Priority in Search Engines** – .gov domains are prioritized in search rankings.
- **Email Authentication** – Helps prevent spoofing and email scams.

### **3. Who is eligible to apply for a .gov domain?**

Local government entities, including **towns, villages, cities, counties, and special districts**, are eligible to apply. The request must be submitted by an **authorized government official** (e.g., town supervisor, clerk, IT director).

### **4. How do we apply for a .gov domain?**

1. Visit <https://get.gov> to start the application.
2. Gather required information (legal name, contact details, justification, etc.).
3. Submit an **authorization letter** signed by an elected official.
4. Await review and approval by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

### **5. How long does the application process take?**

Approval times vary but generally take **2-4 weeks**. Delays may occur if additional verification is needed.

### **6. What should we choose as our domain name?**

It's recommended to follow a **standard naming convention**, such as:

- **townname.ny.gov** (e.g., **olean.ny.gov**)
- **villagename.ny.gov** (e.g., **portville.ny.gov**)
- **townname-town.ny.gov** if the name is common (e.g., **clarkstown-town.ny.gov**)

### **7. How much does a .gov domain cost?**

As of now, registering a **.gov** domain is **free** for eligible government entities.

### **8. Will we need to update our email addresses?**

Yes. Transitioning to a **.gov** domain will require updating **official email addresses** (e.g., **clerk@townname.ny.gov** instead of **clerk@townname.org**). Email migrations should be planned carefully to minimize disruptions.

### **9. How do we configure and launch the new website?**

After domain approval, the town/village must:

1. Set up **DNS records** with a hosting provider.
2. Ensure an **SSL certificate** is in place for security.
3. Redirect the old domain to the new **.gov** website.

### **10. Will Southern Tier West provide assistance with the transition?**

Yes! **Southern Tier West** is developing:

- A **step-by-step guide** for the transition.
- A **template authorization letter** for applications.
- Technical guidance on **domain setup, email migration, and security**.
  - As noted above email transitions will require the most diligence and time. We are researching this process and do not have exact details at this time.

### **11. What happens if we do not transition to a .gov domain?**

Failure to comply with the **new state law** could result in **noncompliance issues** and possible **cybersecurity risks** for your municipality. Additionally, residents may question the legitimacy of non-.gov websites for official government information.

### **12. Will this mess up on-line payment systems with contractors (ex. Williamson Law Book, Satellite.biz, QuickPay, etc.)?**

This transition will not affect any existing links or forms on your website. However, we recommend notifying any entities that link to your site about the name change so they can update their links accordingly.

### **13. If STW is the administrator for our website and emails, how can I change the domain name?? We pay STW for these services as part of our dues.**

STW currently administers your website and owns its domain name. However, New York State now requires a new domain using the **.gov** extension. Under federal regulations, STW cannot

request or own this domain; the village board must take this step. Once the new domain is created and functional, STW will assist in transferring the website and setting up any new email addresses the village requires.