

# Material Subcontracting Arrangement Guide

How to Submit a Request for a Material Subcontracting  
Arrangement

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# Introduction

**This how-to guide provides guidance for registry operators on how to notify the ICANN org (all subsequent uses of “ICANN” refer to the ICANN org) of an assignment, what documentation is required, and how such notifications will be processed.**

The definition of an assignment can be found in Section 7.5 of the Registry Agreement and is provided below:

*A direct or indirect change of control of Registry Operator or any subcontracting arrangement that relates to any Critical Function (as identified in section 6 of Specification 10) for the TLD (a “Material Subcontracting Arrangement”) shall be deemed as an assignment.*

There are two primary types of assignment:

1. Change of control of Registry Operator
2. Any change to a Material Subcontracting Arrangement.

**This how-to guide is specific to Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA) requests.**

An MSA assignment includes any change of subcontractor that relates to any critical function(s) as defined in Specification 10, Section 6 of the Registry Agreement. For example, a change in one of your Registry Service Providers (RSPs), such as a DNS provider, would an assignment.

A high-level graphical representation of the process for Material Subcontracting Arrangement: Change of RSP is provided in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

To initiate the process, a new MSA case must be submitted via the [Naming Services portal](#). Once submitted, ICANN will perform a review of the request to confirm it meets the requirements and is approved to move forward.

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# Instructions

## Step 1 – Preparation

Due to the complexity of the assignment process, we highly recommend a [Material Subcontracting Arrangement](#) consultation call. To schedule a consultation call, contact your engagement manager or open a General Inquiry case in the [Naming Services portal](#).

Your engagement manager will schedule a call with the appropriate ICANN team members to walk you through the process. Completing this step will help ensure you provide all the required information for ICANN's review.

## Step 2 – Determine the Assignment Type

There are two types of [Material Subcontracting Arrangements \(MSA\)](#). You will need to select which type of MSA you need when creating a case in the Naming Services portal.

- ⦿ Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA) Change to Existing Registry Service Provider (RSP)  
This request type is used when changing services for critical functions to a provider that is currently delivering critical functions to one or more New gTLDs.
- ⦿ Material Subcontracting Arrangement (MSA) Change to New Registry Service Provider (RSP)  
This request type is used when changing services for critical functions to a provider that is NOT currently delivering critical functions to one or more New gTLDs.

## Step 3 – Informal Submission

Informal Submission is the first phase of the MSA request process and will provide ICANN with the information needed for review.

Please follow the steps below to submit a specific case type for requesting a MSA.

- ⦿ Submit via Naming Services portal case
  - Log in to the Naming Services portal, and select New Case.
  - Select Registry Services from the catalog menu.
  - Choose which of the two types of MSA requests you need.

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- Complete all questions and be sure to upload the required documents, including:
    - Transition Plan
    - Answers to [technical questions](#)
  - If the TLD (Top Level Domain) has previously completed Pre-Delegation Testing (PDT), technical tests similar to PDT must be completed in the new environment prior to completing the Informal Submission phase. If the technical testing is already done in the new environment with the proposed RSP, you will be asked to provide the date when testing was completed.
  - The registry operator is responsible for fees incurred for evaluation and testing conducted by an independent panel or testing provider

You will be able to track the progress of your MSA request within the Naming Services portal once your request is submitted.

## Step 4 – Technical Panel Review (only applies to MSA change to new RSP)

If you are transitioning to a Registry Service Provider (RSP) that does not currently support new TLDs, a Technical Panel Review is required, and the registry operator must also provide responses to [technical questions](#). The RSP must pass the evaluation, and if they do not, the registry operator may work with ICANN to address issues raised. The registry operator may be required to submit a new request, if the RSP does not pass the evaluation.

Estimated Cost: \$12,500.00 USD

(The cost provided is a current estimate. Actual costs may vary and may be updated from time to time. Registry Operator will be responsible for actual costs incurred.)

## Step 5 – Transition Plan Approval

If the TLD has been delegated, you must provide a detailed Transition Plan between the current subcontractor and the proposed successor. The Transition Plan must be approved by ICANN prior to Registry System Testing (RST). Guidelines for the Transition Plan may be found in [Appendix B](#) of this document.

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## Step 6 – Registry System Testing

[Registry System Testing \(RST\)](#) ensures that a registry operator has the capacity to operate a new TLD in a stable and secure manner. The type of testing required will depend on the type of RSP change being made by the registry operator. The various test types can be found on the RST webpage.

Standard RSP Change Testing Estimated Cost: \$4000.00 USD

(The cost provided is a current estimate. Actual costs may vary and may be updated from time to time. Registry Operator will be responsible for actual costs incurred.)

## Step 7 – Simulation (only applies to MSA change to new RSP)

This set of [registry system tests](#) is performed when an RSP has not operated a TLD before and the TLD for which they will provide services is already delegated and has registrants. This testing is done in addition to the relevant RSP change tests.

During this step, the RSP places simulated TLDs in the production environment, which is then monitored for compliance with the relevant DNS/DNSSEC specifications and the Service Level Requirements described in Specification 10 of the Base New gTLD Registry Agreement. The RSP is required to perform ZSK and KSK rollovers during the simulation period.

## Step 8 – Formal Submission

Once the prerequisites have been completed, the Formal Submission phase begins. The formal submission must be completed in accordance with Section 7.9 of the Registry Agreement and printed documents must be submitted to ICANN in person, by postal mail, or via courier service with confirmation of receipt.

Printed documents should include:

- ⦿ Cover letter
- ⦿ Copy of answers to all questions

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## Step 9 – ICANN Review

Once the formal submission has been completed, ICANN will review the request and post the outcome via the Naming Services portal.

## Step 10 – Onboarding Your New Provider

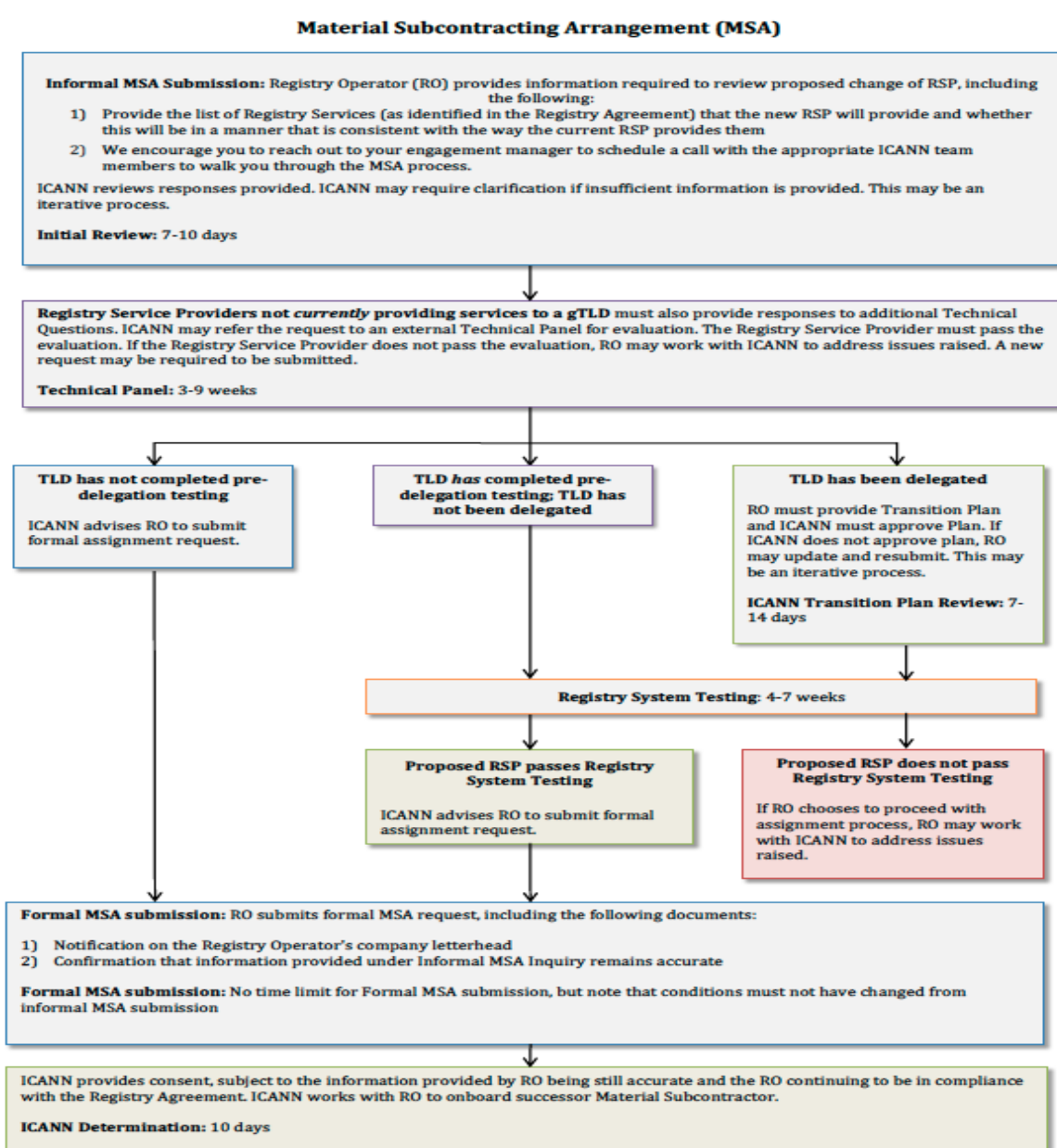
After consent has been provided, ICANN will work with the Registry Operator to onboard the new Material Subcontractor, as needed. ICANN will engage with the Registry Operator via the formal MSA request case throughout the duration of this process.

- ⦿ For new TLDs and legacy TLDs fully onboarded to the new gTLD agreement, Onboarding Information Request (ONBIR) information can be updated directly in the Naming Services portal on the day of transition.
- ⦿ For legacy TLDs not fully onboarded to the new gTLD agreement, ICANN staff will be in contact directly via the MSA case to collect ONBIR information via text file.

# Appendix A

## High-Level Workflow

This diagram provides a high-level workflow of the [Material Subcontracting Arrangement: Change of a Registry Service Provider \(RSP\)](#).



\*Timing provided are best-case estimates based on standard MSA requests received. Requests may fall outside timeframe provided.  
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# Appendix B

## Guidelines for Transition Plan

(Applicable only to delegated TLDs With OR Without Registrations)

A Registry Operator should use the following guidelines when developing a plan to transition services from the current Registry Service Provider (RSP) to a proposed RSP. Note that the “current RSP” refers to the RSP from which the services are being transitioned. The “proposed RSP” refers to the RSP to which the services are being transitioned.

### ⦿ General

- ⦿ The transition plan must:
  - ⦿ Contain detailed steps to be executed.
  - ⦿ Describe which Registry Service Provider will execute each step of the transition plan.
  - ⦿ Include blocking steps that must be completed before continuing with the plan.
- ⦿ Confidential information (e.g. TSIG keys) may be communicated between the current and proposed RSPs. If communicating confidential information, describe the security mechanisms for non-repudiation and privacy.

### ⦿ IANA

- ⦿ The transition plan must include when and whom will execute the updates to the IANA information as applicable:
  - ⦿ Sponsoring Organization
  - ⦿ Contacts
  - ⦿ Name Servers
  - ⦿ DS Records
- ⦿ The transition plan should consider that IANA updates are not immediate, and may be a blocking step(s).
- ⦿ If the Registry Operator is removing all name servers and adding a new set to the root, IANA may require the Registry Operator to justify the change.
- ⦿ The transition plan shall comply with the IANA Technical requirements for authoritative name servers available at <https://www.iana.org/help/nameserver-requirements>. The following requirements may be waived after providing justification to IANA:
  - ⦿ Network diversity
  - ⦿ Consistency between authoritative name servers - Serial number

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- Matching DNSKEY
  - Rollback
    - Provide contingency steps in the event that any part of the registry transition is unable to move forward according to the plan.
  - Monitoring
    - Describe the processes and systems that will be used to monitor the different services during the registry transition process.
  - Exceptions
    - Provide a list of potential exceptions and the steps to be taken with respect thereto.
    - Identify exceptions that may generate a rollback and exceptions that could be handled after the transition.
    - Confirm that there will be communications with Registrars regarding potential exceptions should be described in the transition plan.
  - Decommissioning of services by the current Registry Service Provider
    - The transition plan must contemplate the decommissioning of services by the current RSP. The proposed RSP must obtain confirmation from the now current RSP that the services have been decommissioned and shut down.
  - Data Escrow
    - The transition plan must describe how the current RSP will transition its data escrow deposits to the proposed Registry.
    - Previous data escrow deposits shall be transferred to the proposed Data Escrow Agent, if applicable. If the Data Escrow Agent of the current and proposed RSP is the same, the plan should specify that the Data Escrow Agent will transfer the deposits from one account to the other.
    - Include in your plan that the proposed RSP and its Data Escrow Agent will send data escrow reports and notifications to ICANN immediately after the transition.
  - Monthly reporting
    - If for a given month, there are transactions in both the current and proposed RSPs, describe how the proposed RSP will incorporate the partial information of the monthly report.
    - Describe any steps to be taken for the values of the fields in the report based on the transition process. For example, no new registrations will be possible 6 days before the transition in order to clear AGP of all domain names.

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- ⦿ ONBIR (ZFA, CZDS, BRDA and URS information)
    - As part of the transition process, the proposed RSP must provide new ONBIR information to ICANN in order to continue meeting the requirements for ZFA, CZDS, BRDA and URS.
    - Note that the proposed RSP must reach agreement with ICANN on the timing for applying the new ONBIR information and include the timeframe in your plan.
  - ⦿ Registry Services under Exhibit A
    - If Registry Services offered by the current RSP will be phased out, provide a phase out plan that minimizes the impact to Registrants. *Note: An RSEP request is required to remove Registry Services from the Exhibit A. The RSEP request, if approved, may lead to a Registry Agreement amendment, which may require a Public Comment Period.*
    - Identify in the transition plan the Registry Services that will be offered by the proposed RSP.
    - Describe the transition plan for Registry Services in the Exhibit A of the current RSP.
  - ⦿ Internationalized Domain Names
    - Identify differences between the IDN languages/scripts supported by the current and proposed RSPs. *Note: An RSEP request is required to update the IDN provision in the RA of the proposed Registry, in case that the supported IDN languages/scripts is different between the current and proposed RSPs.*
    - Identify differences between handling of variants by the RSPs and the code points supported for the same IDN language/scripts. For example, you might write, “The IDN table for Spanish language in the proposed RSP does not support the LATIN SMALL LETTER A WITH ACUTE (i.e. á, U+00E1) code point, which is supported by the current RSP.”
  - ⦿ Searchable Whois
    - If the current and proposed RSPs offer Searchable Whois, describe the mechanism to migrate the users of between services if needed.
  - ⦿ DNS Service
    - Describe how the DNS and DNSSEC services will be transitioned from the current RSP to the proposed RSP.
    - Consider that the monthly SLR for the DNS service is 0 minutes of downtime.
    - The DNSSEC chain of trust must not be broken at any time. RSPs should follow the best practices described in RFC 6781.

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- If the current or proposed RSP will transfer the zone file on a continuous basis for a period of time, describe the secure mechanisms (e.g. TSIG) that will be used for zone transferring.
  - If the algorithms used by the RSPs are different, provide information about the considerations in the transition plan.
  - If the TLD will be transitioned from NSEC to NSEC3 or vice versa, provide information about the considerations in the transition plan.
  - Provide a timeline diagram with the transition and updates of DNSSEC Keys, Name servers, updates to the root zone and TTLs. Include in the timeline diagram the originator (i.e. proposed or current RSP) of the zone file used. The timeline includes:
    - Name server set, and DS RRs at the root in each step.
    - Name server set and keyset at the winning and losing registries' name servers.
    - Hostname and IP addresses of the name servers.
  - Describe the mechanism to ensure that the last zone file generated by the current RSP is consistent with the first zone file generated by the proposed RSP.
- RDDS
- Describe how the RDDS service will be transitioned from the current RSP to the proposed RSP.
    - Consider that the monthly SLR for the DNS service is 864 minutes of downtime.
  - Describe the mechanism you will utilize to ensure transition of the RDDS service does not violate your SLR. For example, state, “The service will be running on the proposed and current RSPs while the whois.nic.<tld> entry expires from the caches. The TTL of whois.nic.<tld> will be decreased before the transition.”
  - Describe the mechanism you will utilize to ensure that the RDDS database is consistent between the two RSPs while the service is being transitioned.
- SRS
- Describe how the SRS service will be transitioned from the current RSP to the proposed RSP.
  - Database import:
    - Describe the process that will be used to verify the data to be imported.
    - Describe the process used to verify that the RDDS database and zone files appear to be consistent between the current and proposed RSPs.
  - ROIDs (Repository Object Identifier):

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- Explain if the ROID of the different objects will remain the same. If ROIDs will be changed, the proposed RSP shall communicate the changes to the Registrars.
  - Explain the steps to be taken in case that duplicate ROIDs for the same type of objects are found.
  - Registrars shall be informed of any changes to the ROIDs of the objects.
  - IDs:
    - Explain if the identifiers of the different objects will remain the same. Note that EPP supports IDs and ROIDs for the same object type. If IDs will be changed, the proposed RSP shall communicate the changes to the Registrars.
    - Explain what will occur if duplicate identifiers for the same type of objects are found.
    - Stipulate that Registrars shall be informed of any changes to the IDs of the objects.
  - Contacts:
    - Describe steps taken in the case of mismatch in the support of contact transfers between the RSPs.
    - Describe steps taken in the case of mismatch in the support of contact disclose functionality between the RSPs.
    - Describe the steps to be taken if the linked contact objects are not found in the copy of the database from the current RSP.
  - Domains:
    - Describe steps taken in the case of a mismatch in the supported grace periods between the current and proposed RSPs.
    - Describe steps taken in the case of a mismatch in the duration of the different grace periods between the current and proposed RSPs.
    - Describe any changes to the statuses of the domain names as part of the transition. For example, the proposed RSP will remove server\* statuses.
    - Describe steps taken in the case of domain names not imported based on business rules of the proposed RSP.
  - Hosts:
    - Describe the steps taken in the case of mismatch in the support of host transfers between the RSPs.
    - Describe the steps taken in the case that a transition from managing hosts as objects to hosts as attributes or vice versa. Note: Registrars should be notified if there is change in the mechanism to manage hosts.

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- Describe special handling of imported hosts that may become glue records based on the different namespaces managed by the RSP.
  - Describe the steps to be taken if any linked host objects are not found in the copy of the database from the current RSP.
  - Describe the steps to be taken if you find duplicate hosts objects in the copy of the database from the current RSP.
  - DNSSEC:
    - Describe the steps to be taken in case that the DNSSEC information required by the proposed RSP has not been captured by the current RSP. For example, if the current RSP uses the DS (Delegation Signor) interface and the proposed RSP requires the KeyData interface, note that in your plan.
  - EPP:
    - Describe the mechanism you will use to ensure the RSPs transition the EPP service without violating your SLR.
    - Describe steps taken in the case of mismatch between the EPP extensions supported by the current and proposed RSP. Registrars should be informed about the differences in the EPP extensions.
    - Describe the steps to be taken for the authInfo information. For example, if a new randomly authInfo will be generated, note that in your plan.
  - Registrars:
    - Describe the steps taken in the case that sponsoring Registrars for domain names to be imported are not accredited by the proposed RSP.
    - Describe the steps taken in the case of mismatch of information about the Registrars between the current and proposed RSP.
  - URS
    - Describe the steps to be taken for domain names in URS Lock/Suspension.
  - TMCH
    - Describe the steps to be taken for domain name applications that have not been resolved before the transition.



**More information: [icann.org/resources/material-subcontracting-arrangement](https://icann.org/resources/material-subcontracting-arrangement)**

