

Change of Registrant (COR)

TPR Group 1(b): Part II

Meeting #108



What is a Change of Registrant?

COR Overview

Current requirements that seek to prevent domain name hijacking by **ensuring that certain changes to registrant information have been authorized.**

Registrars must **obtain confirmation from the Prior Registrant and New Registrant before a “material change”** is made to:

- **Prior Registrant name,**
- **Prior Registrant organization,**
- **Prior Registrant email address,**
- **Administrative Contact email address,** if no Prior Registrant email address.

Additionally, Registrars **must impose a 60-day inter-registrar transfer lock** following a Change of Registrant, provided, **however,** that the Registrar may allow the Registered Name Holder to **opt out of the 60-day inter-registrar transfer lock prior** to any Change of Registrant request.

COR policy requirements are detailed in the [Transfer Policy, Section II.](#)

Charter Questions related to COR - Overall Policy

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d1) According to the Transfer Policy Review [Scoping Team Report](#), the Change of Registrant policy “does not achieve the stated goals” and “is not relevant in the current & future domain ownership system.” To what extent is this the case and why? Are the stated goals still valid? If the Change of Registrant policy is not meeting the stated goals and those goals are still valid, how should the goals be achieved?

The WG discussed the following possible goals associated with CoR:

- Standardize across registrars, creating a better/easier experience for registrants.
- Improve security by ensuring the changes are authorized.
- Manage instances of domain theft/hijacking (especially with respect to the 60-day CoR lock).
- Consistent with Transfer Policy B.1. "In general, registrants must be permitted to update their registration/Whois data and transfer their registration rights to other registrants freely."

Charter Questions related to COR - Overall Policy

d2) Data gathered in the [Transfer Policy Status Report](#) indicates that some registrants find Change of Registrant requirements burdensome and confusing. If the policy is retained, are there methods to make the Change of Registrant policy simpler while still maintaining safeguards against unwanted transfers?

The WG previously noted that there may be opportunities to leverage the Phase 1A changes to support development of a better COR process. E.g.:

- The 5 day window to provide the TAC could be leveraged for additional due diligence by the registrar.
- The TAC is more secure and generated on demand. Phase 1A introduces a mandatory 30-day lock after transfer, intended to reduce the incidence of domain name hopping.
- Enhanced dispute mechanisms (Phase 2) could be beneficial to resolve cases where there has been unauthorized activity.

Charter Questions related to COR - Overall Policy

d3) The Transfer Policy Review [Scoping Team Report](#) suggests that there should be further consideration of establishing a standalone policy for Change of Registrant. According to the Scoping Team, the policy should take into account the use case where a Change of Registrar occurs simultaneously with a Change of Registrant. To what extent should this issue be considered further? What are the potential benefits, if any, to making this change? To what extent does the policy need to provide specific guidance on cases where both the registrar and registrant are changed? Are there particular scenarios that need to be reviewed to determine the applicability of COR?

- Gaining Registrar allows a new customer to input the Registrant information when requesting an inbound inter-registrar transfer. The information entered by the customer does not match Registration Data available in the Whois display.
- In the case of “thin” domain names, the Gaining Registrar obtains information from the Registry. If it is determined that the Change of Registrant policy should be retained and modified, the following specific areas may be appropriate for further review.

Change of Registrant - Definitions

Change of Registrant

“Change of Registrant” as defined in the Transfer Policy:

I.A.1.1 "Change of Registrant" means a Material Change to any of the following:

1.1.1 Prior Registrant name

1.1.2 Prior Registrant organization

1.1.3 Prior Registrant email address

1.1.4 Administrative Contact email address, if there is no Prior Registrant email address.

I.A.1.2 "Designated Agent" means an individual or entity that the Prior Registrant or New Registrant explicitly authorizes to approve a Change of Registrant on its behalf.

I.A.1.4 "Prior Registrant" means the Registered Name Holder at the time a Change of Registrant is initiated.

I.A.1.5 "New Registrant" means the entity or person to whom the Prior Registrant proposes to transfer its domain name registration.

Change of Registrant

“Material Change” as defined in the Transfer Policy:

I.A.1.3 "Material Change" means a change which is not a typographical correction. The following will be considered material changes:

- 1.3.1 A change to the Registered Name Holder's **name or organization** that does not appear to be merely a typographical correction;
- 1.3.2 Any change to the Registered Name Holder's **name or organization** that is **accompanied by a change of address or phone number**;
- 1.3.3 Any change to the Registered Name Holder's **email address**.

Registrars have some flexibility to determine what a typographical correction is. Examples of typographical corrections could include:

1. Changing the Registrant Name field from oJhn Smith to John Smith.
2. Changing the Registrant Name field from Jane Kgan to Jane Kang.
3. Changing the Registrant Organization from Example, Icn. to Example, Inc.
4. Changing the Registrant Organization from ExampleCorp. to Example Corp.

For avoidance of doubt, nothing prevents the Registrar from treating any change to the Registrant Name or Registrant Organization field as a Material Change.

Change of Control

The WG previously discussed that the current definition of “Change or Registrant” is not fit for purpose, and should be replaced with “Change of Control”.

- **“Change of Control” could be a change to the primary contact method / change to contactability / or change to the “anchor contact method”.**
 - Should the primary method of contactability (currently the email address) be considered the “anchor” with all other changes being incidental?
 - Should registrars determine for themselves what constitutes a change of control that triggers the associated requirements?
 - How does this affect the Designated Agent?
 - What are the security implications (e.g. when closely followed by a registrar transfer)?
- From one perspective, the account holder is the point of control. An update only matters if the domain is changing accounts.
- From another perspective, “account” means something different in the context of different registrars. From this perspective, perhaps change of control is signaled by a new registration agreement being signed.

Change of Registrant - Process

To complete the CoR process, the Registrar must complete the following steps (summarized at a high level):

1. Confirm the domain name is **eligible** for a Change of Registrant
 - E.g. the domain name registration agreement has not expired, the domain name is not subject to a UDRP/URS/TDRP/valid court order proceeding, etc. (Transfer Policy, Section II.B)
 - The WG previously deliberated adding another requirement (in line with Group 1a, Rec 19) that a Registrar must deny a COR request **if there is evidence of (a) fraud or (b) the domain presents an active DNS Security Threat as defined here: <https://www.icann.org/dns-security-threat>.**
2. **Obtain confirmation** of the Change of Registrant request **from the New Registrant**, or a Designated Agent of the New Registrant, **and provide certain required notifications.**
 - The Registrar must use a [secure mechanism](#) to confirm that the New Registrant (and/or their respective Designated Agents) have explicitly consented to the Change of Registrant.
 - In obtaining the confirmation, the Registrar must inform the New Registrant (or its Designated Agent) that the New Registrant must enter into a registration agreement with the Registrar.
 - The Registrar must also inform the New Registrant (or Designated Agent) that the request will not proceed if it is not confirmed in a number of days set by the Registrar, not to exceed 60 days.
 - The WG previously discussed **eliminating the confirmation requirement.**

To complete the CoR process, Registrars must complete the following steps (continued):

3. **Inform the Prior Registrant** or its Designated Agent that if its final goal is to transfer the domain name to a different registrar, the Prior Registrant is advised to request the inter-registrar transfer **before** the Change of Registrant to avoid triggering the 60-day lock.
 - The WG previously discussed **eliminating the 60-day post-COR lock**, which may negate the need for this step.

4. **Obtain confirmation** of the Change of Registrant request from the **Prior Registrant**, or the Designated Agent of the Prior Registrant.
 - The WG previously discussed **replacing the confirmation request with a notification to the Prior Registrant**.
 - The WG noted that the lack of publicly available RDDS data since GDPR + increased TAC security in Phase 1(A) largely addresses security concerns (e.g. when in conjunction with an inter-registrar transfer).
 - Several WG members noted that the confirmation request does not necessarily protect against an already compromised account or contact, other than providing a notification/record of the change.

5. Process the Change of Registrant within **one (1) day** of obtaining the confirmations.
 - The WG previously proposed modifying this requirement: **the Registrar must process the COR without undue delay, no longer than one calendar day (24 hours) of providing notification [to both parties]**.

To complete the CoR process, Registrars must complete the following steps (continued):

6. **Notify** the Prior Registrant and New Registrant before or within one day of the completion of the Change of Registrant.
 - This notification includes **informing** the Prior Registrant and New Registrant of the **60-day inter-registrar transfer lock** or informing the Prior Registrant that it previously opted out of the 60-day transfer lock
 - The WG previously proposed eliminating the 60-day lock, therefore its inclusion in the post-COR notification may not be necessary.

7. Impose a 60-day inter-registrar transfer **lock**, unless the Registered Name Holder had previously **opted out**.
 - The WG previously proposed **eliminating the 60 day lock**, citing that the lock is currently optional so it provides no added security, and acknowledging that the lock causes significant confusion and frustration for registrants.
 - The WG noted that if an inter-registrar transfer follows a CoR, the Phase 1(A) 30-day post-transfer lock is sufficient.

Action Items for WG (in preparation for next meeting in two weeks - 28 November):

- Read: [CoR - Overall Policy Working Document](#)
- Ponder: Is the current definition of “Change of Registrant” still fit for purpose?
 - If not, should it evolve to a new definition: e.g. “Change of Control”?
 - How would you define “Change of Control” in a standardized way?
 - What RNH information should it entail?
 - What security measures would need to be in place?
 - If so, how is the current definition fit for purpose?
 - Do the current definitions of “Change of Registrant” or “Material Change” require any updates?
 - What security measures need to be in place?

Helpful Reference: [CoR Triggers and Actions Matrix](#)

Appendix: COR / Change of Control - Brief History

Change of Control - IRTP-B

2011: The GNSO Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP) Part B PDP Working Group

At the time, the concept of “change of control” or “change of registrant” was not defined in the context of gTLDs.

IRTP-B discussed “change of control” in the context of whether special provisions are needed for a change of registrant near a change of registrar.

IRTP-B Final Report Recommendation 4:

- The WG notes that the primary function of IRTP is to permit Registered Name Holders to move registrations to the Registrar of their choice, with all contact information intact.
- The WG also notes that IRTP is widely used to affect a "change of control," moving the domain name to a new Registered Name Holder.
- The IRTP Part B WG recommends requesting an Issue Report to examine this issue, including an investigation of how this function is currently achieved, if there are any applicable models in the country code name space that can be used as a best practice for the gTLD space, and any associated security concerns.

Change of Control - IRTP-C

2012: The GNSO Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP) Part C PDP Working Group

IRTP-C Charter Question A, WG to consider:

"Change of Control" function, including an investigation of how this function is currently achieved, if there are any applicable models in the country-code name space that can be used as a best practice for the gTLD space, and any associated security concerns. It should also include a review of locking procedures, as described in Reasons for Denial #8 and #9, with an aim to balance legitimate transfer activity and security.

IRTP-C examined various ccTLD procedures of COR ([IRTP-C Final Report](#), Annex C, pg 49) and observed:

- The ccTLD space contains a variety of examples for Change of Registrant procedures.
- ccTLDs vary on whether this is a Registry- or Registrar-centric function.
- Due to the concept of "thin" gTLDs, the Registry cannot exclusively control a gTLD equivalent process. The registrar must be involved or exclusively manage the function.
- Eligibility tests, which may be applicable to sTLDs or new "Community TLDs", can be a part of this process or a stand-alone procedure. For ccTLDs that test eligibility, the process appeared to be no different from those used for initial registrations.
- Some ccTLDs notify the old and new registrant, while others require confirmation or authorization.
- Some ccTLD had recently changed its process to offer more flexibility, and in their opinion, as shared during the meeting between the WG and the ccNSO, this change had been positively received by registrars and registrants.

Change of Control - IRTP-C

2012: The GNSO Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP) Part C PDP Working Group

The IRTP-C WG recognized that there might be **benefits in having minimum requirements** in relation to how a “change of control” process should be handled by registrars to clarify and simplify the process for registrants.

The IRTP-C WG noted that **the IRTP was developed to facilitate the transfer of domain name registrations between registrars** and did not take into account possibly changes of control or the development of an aftermarket in which a change of control is part of most transactions.

The IRTP-C WG also discussed whether a change of registrant policy should be part of the existing IRTP or should be established as a separate consensus policy. The WG expressed a preference for the **creation of a hybrid policy** (i.e. Transfer Policy Part I: Inter-Registrar Transfers & Part II: Inter-Registrant Transfers).

Change of Control - IRTP-C

2012: The GNSO Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP) Part C PDP Working Group

[IRTP-C Final Report](#) Recommendation 1:

“The IRTP Part C WG recommends the adoption of **change of registrant** consensus policy, which outlines the rules and requirements for a change of registrant of a domain name registration. Such a policy should follow the requirements and steps as outlined hereunder in the section ‘proposed change of registrant process for gTLDs’.”

This recommendation was implemented by the addition of **Section II of the [Transfer Policy](#)** (effective Dec 2016)

For more details of IRTP-C COR deliberations, see [IRTP-C Final Report](#), pgs 23-31