ISO SFTP Provisioning and Setup Procedure

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</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS

SFTP Quick Launch Checklist ............................................................................................................. 4
ISO SFTP Provisioning Process .......................................................................................................... 5
1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 6
2 Purpose ...................................................................................................................................... 6
3 Prerequisites ............................................................................................................................... 6
4 Requesting an SFTP Account ...................................................................................................... 7
5 SFTP Provisioning ....................................................................................................................... 8
   5.1 SSH Authentication ............................................................................................................... 8
   5.2 Client-Server Model ............................................................................................................ 8
   5.3 Key Strength ....................................................................................................................... 9
   5.4 Public and Private Keys ..................................................................................................... 9
6 SFTP Setup Procedure .................................................................................................................. 9
   6.1 Required Client Software ................................................................................................. 9
   6.2 User Tasks .........................................................................................................................10
      6.2.1 Download Tools to Create an SSH Key Pair ............................................................10
      6.2.2 Create an SSH Key Pair Using the PuTTY Key Generator .....................................12
      6.2.3 Complete the Setup Procedure .................................................................................20
      6.2.4 What to Do about a Lost or Stolen Private Key ......................................................20
      6.2.5 How to Connect to the ISO’s SFTP Server ...............................................................21
SFTP Quick Launch Checklist

Users can set up a Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) account with these simple steps:

**Note:** The user **must** make a bid into the market with requested Scheduling Coordinator (SC) IDs **before** requesting an SFTP account.

1. **Download required client software.**

2. **Create SSH public and private key pair.**

3. Complete the [ISO SFTP Application Access Request Form](#).
   
   For more help with the SFTP AARF, refer to the [AARF Request Form Reference Guide](#).

4. Send [SFTP AARF](#) and the SSH **public** key to the ISO using the instructions in the [SFTP AARF](#).

5. Log in to the ISO’s SFTP server.

**Note:** The ISO’s SFTP server uses SSH key authentication rather than password authentication.

6. Transfer files or receive transferred files.
ISO SFTP Provisioning and Setup Procedure

START the ISO SFTP Provisioning and Setup Process

Is the request for MRI-S access?

YES → Are you the UAA?

NO → Complete the SFTP AARF and create SSH key pair

Use the ISO’s non-CIDI CAISO.COM page to submit the SFTP AARF and the public key

DONE

YES → Use the ISO’s CIDI application to create a ticket adding the SFTP AARF and public key as attachments

DONE

NO → Ask your company’s UAA to request access

DONE

NO → YES

YES → NO

DONE

YES

NO

DONE
1 Introduction

The ISO maintains a network protocol called Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) to provide secure file transfers to its users. The main use of the ISO’s SFTP is to transfer MRI-S financial statements. It is also used to transfer other sensitive files to and from the ISO.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide instructions for users who need to establish a connection with the ISO’s SFTP service in order to transfer MRI-S financial statements or other files.

3 Prerequisites

Before attempting to connect to the ISO SFTP server from a secured corporate network, a user may need to work with the organization’s network or security administrators to configure a firewall for access. The firewall may require a rule or policy based on an IP address rather than on a name. The user will need the following connectivity information:

Connectivity:

SFTP Production Hostname:
sfts.caiso.com (port 22)

The user’s firewall must permit the following IP addresses for (Transmission Control Protocol) TCP port 22:

12.200.60.146
12.231.58.146

SFTP Market Simulation Hostname:
sfts-ms.caiso.com (port 22)

The user’s firewall must permit the following IP addresses for TCP port 22:

12.200.60.169

The diagram below shows the IP addresses associated with ISO SFTP services.
4 Requesting an SFTP Account

Users must request an SFTP account to securely transfer files with the ISO. To do so, users must have:

1. Made a bid in the market using the SCID.
2. Completed an SFTP Application Access Request Form (AARF).
3. Create a **SSH public and private key pair**.
4. Send the **SFTP AARF** and the **public key** to the ISO using the instructions in the **SFTP AARF**.

**Note:** Keys are not needed if an account already exists.

## 5 SFTP Provisioning

### 5.1 SSH Authentication

Authentication to the ISO’s SFTP server occurs by means of a cryptographically linked pair of keys called a secure shell (SSH) key pair. This method, more secure than standard username/password authentication, is called SSH key-based authentication. One key in the pair is **public** and the other key is **private**. The public key can be freely shared. The private key should never be shared. A security action performed by one key in the pair can be verified only by the other key in the pair. Proof of identity is one such action. In this way, the ISO can validate a user’s identity assertion using the user’s public key without ever needing the private key. One distinct advantage of SSH key-based authentication is that the user can automate file transfers without needing to hardcode a password in a script or program.

### 5.2 Client-Server Model

SSH authentication uses a client-server model. Using a pre-established network “socket” (a combination of host address and port), the server “listens” for incoming SSH connections. The client (SFTP user) initiates the connection then verifies that the server is known to it by acknowledging the **public** SSH key that the SFTP server presents. The client then presents its own credentials by performing an operation that demonstrates proof of control of the **private** key, but does **not** require presenting the **private** key itself, which would defeat the security entirely.
The server validates these credentials – that is, verifies the client operation – by using the user’s **public** key to perform the inverse operation. Cryptographic proof is assured by use of SSH keys with adequate bit strength.

### 5.3 Key Strength

The strength of a key is measured in bits. The higher the bits, the more resistant a key is to attack. With bit strength, however, there is such a thing as too strong (too many bits), which can lead to performance problems in some computing environments and which provides more security than risk warrants. Advances in computer power sometimes lead to deprecation of certain levels of bit strength that become computationally feasible to defeat in a relatively short period of time. Key bit strength is expressed in increments of powers of two and often in increments of 210 (1024). Bit strength of 1024 does not provide sufficient security against today’s powerful attack agents. The ISO will not accept a 1024-bit public SSH key. Current required bit strength for ISO SSH key pairs is 2048.

### 5.4 Public and Private Keys

Each key in the SSH key pair is a text thread with special meaning. The keys are mathematically linked such that one key cannot be derived from the other key and only one key can decrypt a message encrypted with the other key. The striking characteristic of the key pair is that one of the keys can be freely distributed **publicly** without compromising the other key that remains **private**.

### 6 SFTP Setup Procedure

#### 6.1 Required Client Software

All required software is available at no cost and with high quality standards. There are different software tools and methods for different computer operating systems (Windows, Mac OS X, and UNIX/Linux). The ISO does not endorse any particular tool or method. The ISO does, however, have experience with what users seem to prefer and find easier to use, and the following instructions reflect that experience. In some cases, downloading tools from the internet is necessary. The ISO cannot assume responsibility for software its users choose to download in order to connect to the ISO’s SFTP service. When downloading software from the internet, always follow good security practices, such as the following:

1. Use software or a service that blocks internet sites commonly acknowledged to be disreputable.
2. Use software or a service that checks each download for malware and quarantines or discards downloads infected by malware.

3. Verify the integrity of a downloaded file. The SFTP protocol has built-in integrity checks. Optionally, users might also prefer to apply a standard method of comparing a hash of the file to a hash value posted by the software a publisher has posted.

### 6.2 User Tasks

In order to accomplish authentication using SSH keys, the user must perform these tasks:

1. Create an SSH key pair.
2. Send the **SFTP AARF** and the **public key** to the ISO using the instructions in the **SFTP AARF**.
3. Install the SFTP client software.
4. Configure an SSH authentication agent to the **private** SSH key to connect to the ISO’s SFTP server.

The user therefore needs:

1. A tool to create an SSH key pair.
2. SFTP client software.

**Note:** The user MUST make a bid into the market before performing authentication tasks.

### 6.2.1 Download Tools to Create an SSH Key Pair

**Downloading Tools with Windows**

For Windows users, an excellent choice for transferring files is the **free WinSCP software**. WinSCP includes the PuTTY tools required for creating SSH keys.

Download the latest version of WinSCP from here:
WinSCP guides, including download and installation guides, as of the latest version of this documentation, are:

https://winscp.net/eng/docs/guides

Detailed WinSCP installation instructions are available here:

https://winscp.net/eng/docs/installation

Downloading Tools with Mac

Mac and Linux/UNIX users have a built-in command-line tool called `ssh-keygen` for creating an SSH key pair in one step. The basic command to create an SSH key pair of type RSA and length 2048 is:

```
ssh-keygen -t rsa -b 2048
```

Users will be prompted to name the key and optionally provide a passphrase. In this example, the process results in a public key `MyPrivateKey.key.pub` and a private key `MyPrivateKey.key`.

Users should create a key pair. Keep the private key and send the public key to the ISO using the instructions in the SFTP AARF.
6.2.2 Create an SSH Key Pair Using the PuTTY Key Generator

To create a public and private SSH key pair using the PuTTY key generator tools, follow these steps, which assume use of PuTTY tools using the WinSCP graphical user interface:

1. Start WinSCP.
2. Click **Tools**.
3. Select **Run PuTTYgen**.

4. Select **SSH-2 RSA** for the key type.
5. Enter **2048** for the number of bits in the key.
6. Select **Generate** to generate a public/private key pair.
7. Click **Generate**.

8. Randomly move the mouse pointer over the blank area in the key field. Randomness is an important cryptographic concept. Sufficient randomness, also known as entropy, assures creation of non-reproducible keys. When the PuTTY Key Generator determines that mouse input is sufficiently random, it will generate a key pair and display the result.
9. Click **Save public key**. Save the **public** key with a “.pub” extension.

10. Give the resulting **public** key text file a meaningful name. This text file will contain plain but not human-readable text.

11. Keep the **private** key and send the **public key** to the ISO using the instructions in the **SFTP AARF**.
10. Before saving the private key, type a **Key passphrase**. In general, it is important to apply a strong key passphrase in order to encrypt the private key and to protect it for private use. There are, however, some scenarios in which saving the private key without encryption (that is, without a passphrase) is legitimate. One of those scenarios is use of the private key to automate file transfers by means of an unattended script or program. In a case where the private key is not protected by a passphrase, it is very important that the computer on which the private key is installed is protected from intrusion by unauthorized users.

11. If applying a passphrase to the private key in order to encrypt it, re-type the key passphrase to **Confirm passphrase**.

12. Click **Save private key** to save the private SSH key in the PuTTY format. If not applying a passphrase to the private key, click **Yes** at the following PuTTYgen warning.
Saving the **private** key in PuTTY’s format is required for the PuTTY SSH authentication agent called pageant.exe. PuTTY uses a ppk extension (PuTTY Private Key).

The PuTTY format has additional security and convenience:

- It contains the **public** key so that PuTTY can send the **public** key to the server automatically.
- The key is made tamperproof by means of a message authentication code (MAC).
Again the expected result is plain but not-human-readable text.
Methods other than PuTTY or WinSCP for file transfer will likely require a private key in OpenSSH format. Different users will have different needs.

If required, export the **private** key in RSA format by selecting Conversions > Export OpenSSH key.
13. Save the **private** key with a “.key” extension. As before, the expected result is plain but not human-readable text.
6.2.3 Complete the Setup Procedure

After sending the SFTP AARF and an SSH public key to the ISO using the instructions in the SFTP AARF, the ISO will create a Service Desk ticket for the new account.

6.2.4 What to Do about a Lost or Stolen Private Key

A private key is to be protected for authorized use. It is deemed to be compromised when lost or suspected to be stolen, creating the possibility of unauthorized use. In this case, create a new pair of SSH keys, send the new public key to the ISO Service Desk, and request that SFTP configuration be updated to use the new key.
6.2.5 How to Connect to the ISO’s SFTP Server

This section provides instructions for connecting to the ISO’s SFTP server using WinSCP software.iii

These instructions assume that users have completed the following tasks:

- Installed WinSCP, including PuTTY tools.iii
- Created SSH key pair.
- Completed the SFTP AARF and sent it to the ISO with the public key using the instructions in the SFTP AARF.

1. Configure WinSCP to use keys for authentication instead of a password.
   a. Launch WinSCP.
   b. From the WinSCP Login form, click Tools.
   c. Select Run Pageant.
d. Open Pageant from the Windows taskbar. The Pageant icon is a computer wearing a hat.

![Pageant Icon](image)

e. Right-click the Pageant icon and select **Add Key** to open the Pageant Key list form.

![Pageant Key List](image)

f. The Pageant Key List form will open. Select **Add Key** to open a **Select Private Key File** dialog.

![Add Key Option](image)

g. Navigate to the **private key** and select **Open**.
h. If the private key is encrypted with a passphrase, enter the passphrase and click **OK**; otherwise just click **OK** to add the private key to the Pageant key list.
i. The result will be a private key in Pageant showing the type of key, its bit strength, a hexadecimal string called a fingerprint, and a key comment. WinSCP will use this key to authenticate when the username in the Login form matches the key’s username.

![Pageant Key List](image)

2. Configure the WinSCP Login form to use the ISO’s SFTP Service.
   a. On the WinSCP Login form, enter the following:
      - **File protocol**: SFTP
      - **Host name**: sfts.caiso.com
      - **Port number**: 22
      - **User name**: <ISO-provided username>
      - **Password**: <leave blank; the private key handles this>

   **Note**: sfts.caiso.com is the name of the ISO’s production SFTP server (synonymous with host). The ISO’s MAPStage SFTP host name is sfts-ms.caiso.com.
b. To save configured settings for future use, click **Save** and select **Save** from the drop down menu.

c. Click **Login** to connect to the ISO’s SFTP service.
d. The PuTTY login status, as depicted below, will display use of the public key and associated username for authentication.

![PuTTY login status](image)

```
Searching for host...
Connecting to host...
Authenticating...
Using username <your-sftp-username>
Authenticating with public key "imported-openssh-key" from agent.
Authenticated.
Starting the session...
Reading remote directory...
```

e. The result of a successful login will be a list of authorized ISO SFTP folders (on the right) and local user folders (on the left). In this example, the user has access to Voltage Stability Analysis (VSA) and Gas Burn Reports (EGB). A user who has access to only one application would directly see all the files in that application folder. The user would not need to navigate into the folder to see the files.

f. Transferring and receiving files is as simple as drag-and-drop:

- User drags from the **user folder** (on the left) to the **ISO folder** (on the right) to upload.
- User drags from the **ISO folder** (on the right) to the **user folder** (on the left) to download.
A hash is a cryptographically generated fixed-length digest or summary of file bytes. To verify the integrity of a file, compare a hash of the file after download to a hash published by the software developer; the two hashes must match exactly for you to be sure that the file did not change in transit, meaning that downloaded successfully and without corruption or modification. There are many ways to take a hash of a file. Built-in tools include certutil.exe (Windows) and, on other platforms, md5sum, sha1sum, and cksum. Full instructions are beyond the scope of this document but easily found through Internet searches.

ii The ISO does not endorse any particular tool or method. WinSCP is licensed as free software under the terms of the GNU General Public License (GPL).

iii There is no requirement to use WinSCP software to connect to the ISO’s SFTP service. Users might already have SFTP software that will work. The ISO does not endorse any particular software for this purpose.

iv Pageant will hold this key until the computer is restarted or Pageant is closed.