



**Maine State Government  
Dept. of Administrative & Financial Services  
Office of Information Technology (OIT)**

## **Standard for the Use of External Domain Names**

### **I. Statement**

State agencies will understand how to apply for approved web domain names.

### **II. Purpose and Principles**

A. The purpose of this standard is to govern the acquisition and use of State agency web domain names.

B. The State of Maine establishes these principles in order to promote effective services associated with the State of Maine Domain Name Policy.

1. Sovereignty – The State of Maine will establish its identity as the sovereign State of Maine by complying with the national domain name program.
2. Integrity and Authenticity – The State of Maine will establish the sole, official, internationally-recognized domain name of the State of Maine, and thereby authenticate to its citizens and customers that they are conducting business with the legitimate State site.
  - a. Name formulation standards in all namespaces will be rigorously adhered to.
  - b. Names assigned to one entity may not be requested by or granted to another.
3. Protection – The State of Maine will protect its dotgov domain name and subordinate domain names by complying with the national domain name program, ensuring that Maine.gov domain names cannot be misappropriated by others.
4. One Government – To the maximum extent possible, the State of Maine will provide access to State services and information through a single domain name, making it easy for citizens and customers to find and use the official site to reach all services. Services thus coordinated through a predictable method are of higher value to citizens. Service provisioning through multiple government domain names, based on agency or program or other organizational silos, are confusing to citizens, and therefore, is discouraged.
  - a. Branding – In support of the One Government principle, the State of Maine has established Maine.gov as the single domain name through which its services and information are presented. Establishing Maine.gov as a readily identifiable brand with a common look and feel helps ensure name recognition, simplifies marketing, and provides easy access to and consistent navigation of services. Supporting Maine.gov as the prime brand of Maine State Government avoids confusion

among our citizens by focusing on a single point of predictable, reliable access. Secondary brands are strongly discouraged. New names must be approved and in-hand well in advance of public marketing efforts. Please refer to section V.2 Alternative Domain Names below.

5. Privacy and Security – The State recognizes and values the privacy and security of its citizens’ information. By providing services through the official domain that uses common policies and standards, the State will assure citizens that their personal information is handled according to law. The State will also assure that monetary transactions conducted between the State and its customers are securely handled.

6. Cost Effectiveness – The State of Maine will reduce costs and increase effectiveness by providing standardized services and approaches wherever possible.

### **III. Applicability**

A. This standard is intended to manage the acquisition and use of all domain names by

1. Executive Branch and semi-autonomous State agencies irrespective of where their sites are hosted; and
2. Agencies from other Maine State government branches that are hosted on computer devices operated by the Office of Information Technology or that traverse the State’s wide area network; and
3. Counties and Municipalities of the State of Maine seeking domain names in the Maine.gov namespace.

This standard permits and encourages cooperation with the other branches of Maine government in the coordination of domain name services. This cooperation includes municipalities and counties who elect to participate.

### **IV. Responsibilities**

A. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) and his designee, the eGov Manager, are responsible for approving domain names, ruling on waiver requests to authorize the use of alternative domain names, and overseeing the Enterprise Domain Name Registry.

1. Enterprise Domain Name Registry: The registry will be executed jointly by InforME and, on behalf of the CIO, the OIT Office of Networking Services with the former acting as the primary technical agent for commercially acquired domain names (also referred to as alternative domain names) and the latter as the primary technical agent for those in the dotgov name spaces.

B. All State agencies will apply for a Maine.gov domain name via the Enterprise Domain Name Registry portal (see [Procedure for Agencies requesting Domain Names](#)<sup>1</sup>). If an agency desires an alternative domain name to Maine.gov (and Me.gov), they must make the request as directed in that procedure.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSProcedureStateAgencies.htm>

C. Counties and Municipalities of the State of Maine will apply for Maine.gov domain names through a written request to the CIO. (See [Procedure for State of Maine Counties and Municipalities requesting Maine.gov domain names](#)<sup>2</sup>.)

D. The Maine Legislative and Judicial Branches: Because the federal dotgov guidelines indicate state courts and legislatures follow their state's internet policy and the dotgov Domain Registration Federal Policy, these branches shall apply for Maine.gov domain names via the Enterprise Domain Name Registry.

E. Costs: All external costs, such as registration and renewal fees for GSA, will be borne by the subscribing party. The fees for commercially acquired domain names will be borne by OIT. There is no initial or recurring internal cost associated with the registration and maintenance of domain names in the Maine.gov namespace. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) reserves the right to impose applicable processing and or maintenance fees to recover the costs associated with the management of all domain name assets.

## V. Naming Standards and Conventions

A. Executive Branch Agencies: The State of Maine subscribes to the second level domain name Maine.gov for the general internet addressing services for State agencies. .

1. Agencies shall align their domain names in support of the primary domain designation, according to the following formats:

a. Path Level – would typically be one of two forms: [www.maine.gov/dept/sitename](#), targeted at the department's business partners but not citizenry at-large, or [www.maine.gov/appname](#), targeted at citizenry at-large. Both of these forms support the Maine.gov brand and enjoy the protection and advantages of the official, trusted State of Maine government web presence.

b. Third Level or Higher – Occasionally, for technical reasons, a server (but not a branding URL) must be assigned a unique host name. In these cases, the naming convention shall be either [myserver.agencyname.maine.gov](#) or [myserver.maine.gov](#). Again, this provision pertains to server names only and not to branding URLs.

c. Networking Infrastructure – The naming convention for networking infrastructure shall be [device.net.maine.gov](#). This naming convention is reserved exclusively for networking infrastructure, and is never appropriate for any service targeted at either business partners or citizenry at-large.

d. Applications hosted by OIT – The naming convention for applications hosted by OIT should follow either of the following two naming conventions: [gateway.maine.gov/application](#) or [portal.maine.gov/application](#).

e. State Secure Public Portal – The State secure public portal is branded as Public.Maine.Gov.

f. Any domain name that is not aligned with the above naming conventions will be subject to the review of the Manager of eGovernment services and may be subject to approval via the standard waiver process..

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<sup>2</sup> <http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSProcedureCountiesandMunicipalities.htm>

2. Alternative Domain Names: Alternatives to the primary domain designation may be permitted where there exist compelling business or public policy reasons to do so. Alternative domain names whose end-of-life has been determined should plan for that event.

Users of alternative domain names need to be mindful that Maine.gov is the primary brand for electronic interaction with the State of Maine and it is primarily through this brand that constituents can be assured that the information and services that they obtain are from approved Maine State Government sources.

(i) It has been a practice for some State agencies to acquire alternative domain names outside of the Maine.gov name space. The two major purposes for these have been:

- The perception that non-State branding or ‘handles’ will improve user acceptance of State services
- A more convenient branding to promote agency programs and services.

Experience has shown that expectations about the utility of alternative domain names are far higher than supported by reality, specifically citizens predominately use Maine.gov to find information and services, even to find alternative domain names.

There also exist significant risks in the use of alternative domain names, including domain hijacking, like domains that may link to inappropriate content, etc. Because they are leased rather than purchased, they are ill-suited for long-term marketing use. Therefore, the following best-practices are required:

- Registrations and renewals of all non-dotgov domain names will be performed by the Enterprise Domain Name Registry to leverage expertise in that realm.
- Leases should be acquired for a minimum of three years.
- Once acquired, domain name leases should be ‘locked’.

(ii) Agencies are responsible for the costs associated with acquiring and administering alternative domain names.

(iii) If an alternative domain name is approved, agencies are encouraged to redirect or have an alias to a Maine.gov-derived namespace.

(iv) The remaining term for subscriptions to an alternative domain name should at no time fall to less than 1 year unless the planned end-of-life falls within that year.

(v) Existing applications named in the [www.state.me.us](http://www.state.me.us) namespace and domain names derived from the state.me.us names space will be retired in an orderly fashion and moved to conforming namespaces.

(vi) Non-conforming domain names, not included in (v) above, will be transferred to a single registrar account administered by InforME (InforME – Electronic Access to Public Information

Act. Title 1, Maine Revised Statutes, chapter 713, section 1). InforME will pass domain name registration fees back to the State through OIT.

(v) All alternate domain names will be subject to periodic revalidation of the conditions supporting a previously granted waiver.

B. Non - Maine.gov or Me.gov Second-level Dotgov Domain Names: While the federal dotgov guidelines permit the state CIO to register second-level dotgov domains, the State will discourage second-level dotgov domain names.

1. Those requesting second-level dotgov domain names shall need to provide a compelling justification in order to satisfy an extraordinary, non-conforming need. In cases where a second-level dotgov domain is approved, the web site associated with the domain remains subject to the standards and policies of Maine State Government. Approval will be only for a fixed period of time, at the end of which the domain name will be expired, barring a successful request for continuation.

2. Those with existing second-level dotgov domain names are not grandfathered indefinitely. Since such second-level names are essentially non-conforming, they may create confusion or wasted browsing for citizens seeking information or services. Those with such second-level dotgov domain names will be encouraged – and in some cases required – to develop and implement a migration to a predictable, conforming Maine.gov name.

C. Instrumentalities of the State: States are authorized to develop policy on how non-state governments shall be registered under the state domain name.

1. The (third level) naming convention to be used by participating municipalities shall be municipalname.maine.gov. ‘Municipalname’ may include the word “city” or “town” at the discretion of the local government.

2. The naming convention for participating counties shall be countyname.Maine.gov where “countyname” must include the word ‘county’ to distinguish its form of government (e.g., Aroostookcounty.Maine.gov or CountyofAroostook.Maine.gov).

## VI. Guidelines

A. All entities using a dotgov domain must comply with the federal guidelines (the full federal policy can be accessed at <http://www.dotgov.gov>), including:

1. Advertisements: A Maine.gov domain may not be used to advertise for private individuals, firms, or corporations, or imply in any manner that the government endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.

2. Campaign Information: No campaigning can be done with dotgov domains. The Maine.gov Web sites may not be directly linked to or refer to Web sites created or operated by a campaign or any campaign entity or committee. Separate Web sites and e-mail on other top-level domains, such as .org, will have to be used to disseminate campaign information.

3. Link Change Notification: When a link on a Maine.gov domain makes the user leave a Maine.gov web site, a notification or screen (i.e., a splash message) should alert users that they are leaving the official dotgov page.

4. Domain Termination: An organization that operates Maine.gov web sites that are not in compliance with the Maine.gov conditions of use may have its domain name terminated.

B. Domain Name Suitability Guidelines: Names requested in the dotgov namespace must adhere to and will be tested against the following criteria:

1. Need: Does the requested domain name provide utility and/or branding to the target initiative or organization?
2. Time: Domain names in the Maine.gov namespace are intended to serve long-term roles. They are generally not appropriate vehicles for temporary or short term projects or events. In very rare cases, to serve a significant need, they may be assigned to serve short-term interests.
3. Applicability: Domain names that pose a strong potential for conflict with other state, municipal, county or other interests should be avoided.
4. Impact: Maine.gov is intended as a positive locale for people to avail themselves of the governmental information and services in the State of Maine. Names that detract from the brand's appeal are strongly discouraged.

C. Domain Name Formulation Guidelines: Naming standards avoid confusion on the part of the public and will improve ease of use and recognition of government brands. Under the direction of the CIO, the Enterprise Domain Name Registry will review and grant domain name requests according to the following conventions:

1. No blank spaces may used in the domain name.
2. A domain name can only have letters and dashes (-).
3. A domain name cannot start or end with a dash.
4. Numbers are strongly discouraged in a domain name.
5. Dotgov domain name requests will always end with Maine.gov at the second and first levels.
6. A domain name will be as short as reasonably possible.
7. A domain name will be easily understood by the citizens and visitors of Maine.
8. A domain name will avoid the use of acronyms as much as possible.
9. A domain name will be based on the most generally accepted meaning of the specific words that make up the requested name. For example, a request for "roads.maine.gov" by the Rural Outdoor Assistive Dog Service would be refused, because the name "roads" is generally perceived to be related to vehicular transportation.

D. Municipalities and counties may register only one domain name. To register any third-level domain within maine.gov, the following guidelines apply:

1. Programs and initiatives such as the fire department, the police department, the library, etc. should be represented by extending the URL to the right. For example: city (town or county) name.maine.gov/firedepartment.

2. Do not use spaces and underscores within a domain name. Dashes are fine, but may not be used at the beginning or end of a domain name.

3. Additionally for municipalities: The domain name must include the city (town) name. Do not abbreviate the city name.

4. Additionally for counties: The domain must be registered with the county's name and with the word "county" (because many counties have the same name as cities within the same state). Please do not abbreviate the county name; the word "county" must be spelled out in full.

E. Towns may also acquire names directly from the GSA at [www.dotgov.gov](http://www.dotgov.gov) in the form townmaine.gov, for example [www.augustamaine.gov](http://www.augustamaine.gov).

## VII. Definitions

1. See the [State of Maine Domain Name Management Policy](#)<sup>3</sup>.

## VIII. References

A. The General Services Administration's Final Rule (41 CFR Part 1020173) was issued in March 2003, establishing a basis to permit dotgov domain services for state and local governments ([https://www.dotgov.gov/final\\_rule\\_102.aspx](https://www.dotgov.gov/final_rule_102.aspx)). This rule also established conforming name protocols for URLs in the Gov domain. Within this rule states are encouraged to make second-level domains available for third-level registration by local governments.

B. [State of Maine Domain Name Management Policy](#)<sup>4</sup>

C. [Procedure for Agencies requesting Domain Names](#)<sup>5</sup>

D. [Procedure for State of Maine Counties and Municipalities requesting Maine.gov domain names](#)<sup>6</sup>

## IX. Document Information

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<sup>3</sup> [http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSPolicy\\_Final.htm](http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSPolicy_Final.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSPolicy\\_Final.htm](http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSPolicy_Final.htm)

<sup>5</sup> <http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSProcedureStateAgencies.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://maine.gov/oit/oitpolicies/DNSProcedureCountiesandMunicipalities.htm>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/waiver.htm>