



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

## **Domain Name Policy & Procedure**

### **1.0. Purpose**

1.1. This document provides the instructions for the use of domain names on the Worldwide Web by the Executive Branch of Maine State Government, and Other Government Entities in Maine who seek to operate under Maine.Gov. It also includes the workflow for interfacing with the CIO re: domain names, and instructions for domain sunset and redirection.

### **2.0. Background**

- 2.1. Since 1985, web addresses that end in DotGov (.Gov) has provided the official Internet presence for governmental entities in the United States. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) administers the DotGov namespace.
- 2.2. Since 2002, Maine.Gov has been the primary namespace for Maine State Government. Over the two-plus decades of its life, Maine.Gov has built a solid brand-recognition with the citizens of Maine, visitors to Maine, and the myriad partners of Maine State Government. Interacting with the Maine.Gov namespace assures citizens, visitors, and partners that they are indeed transacting with an official Maine State Government Entity.
- 2.3. Maine.Gov is the 'one-stop shop' for all online services of Maine State Government. It is a readily-identifiable brand, with a unified look and feel, thereby ensuring the highest adoption of Maine State Government services. Further, funneling state government services through Maine.Gov is also the most scalable and cost-effective option. Incidentally, over the years, the Maine.Gov portal has also received numerous awards, accolades, and commendations for innovation and usability.
- 2.4. Unmanaged use of domain names may result in damage to the reputation of a government, as well as regulatory penalties. This includes spoofed and/or hijacked sites, inappropriate content, Cybersecurity breaches, privacy violations, expiration, squatting, and theft of domains, as well as a general suspicion re: the identity and motivation of the party behind such a domain.

### **3.0. Definitions**

3.1. *Commercial Domain*: In the context of this Policy, a catch-all term for all domains outside the DotGov namespace.

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- 3.2. *Domain*: A region of jurisdiction in the Internet for naming assignment. The domain name system is hierarchical. The root is the highest level, followed by the top-level domain, then the second-level domain, then the third level domain, etc. For the domain Dept.Maine.Gov, Dept is the third-level domain, Maine is the second-level domain, Gov is the top-level domain, and the "." is the root.
- 3.3. *InforME*: Information Resource of Maine. Defined in [1 MRSA, Chapter 14, §533](#).<sup>1</sup> Operates the Maine.Gov portal.
- 3.4. *Namespace*: If one picks a spot in the hierarchical domain tree, then the namespace is everything that is taxonomically *below* it. Thus, Maine.Gov is in the DotGov namespace; whereas Megis.Maine.Gov is in the Maine.Gov namespace.
- 3.5. *Registrar*: An entity that can register, and maintain, domain names.

### 4.0. Applicability

- 4.1. This Policy governs all domain usage by the Executive Branch of Maine State Government, including its departments, agencies, and boards, irrespective of any hosting and/or branding particularities.
- 4.2. This policy also governs the domain usage by Other Government Entities in Maine, but *only to the extent* they seek to operate *under* the Maine.Gov namespace. These Other Government Entities in Maine fall under three broad categories:
  - 4.2.1. The Maine State Legislature, the Judiciary, the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer, and the Department of Audit;
  - 4.2.2. Semi-Autonomous State Agencies: An agency created by an act of the Maine Legislature, that is *not* a part of the Legislature, Executive Branch, the Judiciary, the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer, and the Department of Audit. Examples: Maine Health Data Organization, Maine Public Utilities Commission, Finance Authority of Maine, etc.; and
  - 4.2.3. The various local, municipal, city, and county governments in Maine.
- 4.3. These Other Government Entities in Maine may exercise a choice re: their domain usage. They may choose to operate *under* the Maine.Gov namespace, where such usage is subject to this Policy, and they must coordinate with OIT. For any DotGov domain *outside* the Maine.Gov namespace, they coordinate directly with [DotGov.Gov](#)<sup>2</sup> (GSA), and this Policy does *not* apply. They may also choose to operate in the Commercial namespace, and, again, this Policy does *not* apply. Purely for the purpose of illustration, here are some examples from each of these three categories. This is *not* an exhaustive enumeration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/1/title1sec533.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dotgov.gov>

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4.3.1. Examples of Other Government Entities in Maine operating *under* the Maine.Gov namespace:

- Legislature.Maine.Gov
- Courts.Maine.Gov
- Maine.Gov/SOS
- MHDO.Maine.Gov
- Alna.Maine.Gov
- Appleton.Maine.Gov
- Cushing.Maine.Gov
- Harpswell.Maine.Gov
- Union.Maine.Gov
- Washington.Maine.gov

4.3.2. Examples of Other Government Entities in Maine operating *directly under* the DotGov namespace, *outside* the Maine.Gov namespace:

- BangorMaine.gov
- PortlandMaine.gov
- Waterville-Me.Gov

4.3.3. Examples of Other Government Entities in Maine operating *within* the Commercial namespace, i.e., *outside* the DotGov namespace:

- TownOfAlbionMaine.com
- BiddefordMaine.org
- JeffersonMaine.org

4.4. Native-American Sovereign Nations in Maine coordinate directly with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs for their domain usage. This Policy does *not* apply.

### 5.0. Responsibilities

5.1. *Chief Information Officer (CIO):*

5.1.1. Responsible for maintaining, and enforcing, this Policy. GSA's [Final Rule on DotGov](#)<sup>3</sup> (41 CFR Part 102-173, 28 Marcy 2003), grants the authority for state-level DotGov domains to the Governor, or the highest-ranking information technology official.

5.1.2. OIT is the Registrar of the all DotGov names under Maine.Gov, as well as any second-level DotGov domain used by the Executive Branch.

5.2. *InforME*: The Registrar of Commercial Domains.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2003/03/28/03-7413/federal-management-regulation-internet-gov-domain>

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- 5.3. *Management of Executive Branch Entities:*
  - 5.3.1. Adhere to this Policy.
  - 5.3.2. Defray any initial and recurring domain registration costs associated with executing this Policy.
  - 5.3.3. The *Agency Web Coordinator*, if present, represents the Agency interests in this matter. In the absence of an Agency Web Coordinator, an empowered representative of the Commissioner fulfills that role.
  - 5.3.4. Reach out to Enterprise.Architect@Maine.Gov re: any domain issue as early as possible in a program, or initiative's, lifecycle. Continue to work with the Enterprise Architect until the resolution of this matter. The Enterprise Architect consults with the CIO, and represents the CIO's position back to the applicant.
  
- 5.4. *Management of Other Government Entities seeking to operate under the Maine.Gov namespace:*
  - 5.4.1. Adhere to this Policy.
  - 5.4.2. Defray any initial and recurring domain registration costs associated with executing this Policy.
  - 5.4.3. The applicant representing the Other Government Entity must be empowered by their executive management to represent their interests in this matter to the CIO. Other than the highest-ranking elected or nominated official of the Other Government Entity, other possible applicants include their direct deputy/proxy, the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Marketing Officer, et al.
  - 5.4.4. Reach out to Enterprise.Architect@Maine.Gov re: any domain issue as early as possible in a program, or initiative's, lifecycle. Continue to work with the Enterprise Architect until the resolution of this matter. The Enterprise Architect consults with the CIO, and represents the CIO's position back to the applicant.
  
- 6.0. Directives**
- 6.1. All entities under the DotGov namespace must comply with the Federal requirements (the full list is available at DotGov.Gov). The following two requirements deserve special mention:
  - 6.1.1. *Advertisements:* A Maine.Gov domain may not be used to advertise private individuals, firms, or corporations, or to imply in any manner that the government favors any specific commercial product or service.
  - 6.1.2. *Campaign Information:* No campaigning can be done with DotGov domains. The Maine.Gov site may not be directly linked to, or refer to, sites created or operated by a campaign, or any campaign entity.
  
- 6.2. Names requested must comply with the following two *Suitability* criteria, adjudicated by the CIO:
  - 6.2.1. *Applicability:* Is the requested domain intrinsically related to the core mission of the requesting entity? Any domain name that poses a potential for conflict with another government entity is not likely to be approved.

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- 6.2.2. *Impact:* Maine.Gov is intended as a positive space for all parties to partake of Maine State Government services. Names that detract from the brand's appeal are not likely to be approved.
- 6.3. By default, domains are intended to serve long-term, essential business functions of a government entity. However, under exceptional circumstances, the CIO may entertain domain requests for limited-time, ad-hoc campaigns, or projects, or events. Should such be the case, applicants must furnish the appropriate justification.
- 6.4. Domain Names must comply with the following *Construction* criteria:
  - 6.4.1. No blank space
  - 6.4.2. Only letters, numbers, and dashes
  - 6.4.3. A domain name cannot start or end with a dash.
  - 6.4.4. A domain name will be as short as reasonably possible.
  - 6.4.5. A domain name will be easily understood by the citizens, visitors, and partners of Maine State Government.
  - 6.4.6. Unless widely understood, a domain name will avoid the use of abbreviations (acronyms and initialisms) as much as possible.
  - 6.4.7. A domain name will be based upon the most generally accepted meaning of the specific words that make up the requested name.
- 6.5. The second level domain Maine.Gov is intended exclusively for the State Executive Branch. Executive Branch Entities must align their domain names according to the following format:
  - 6.5.1. Path Level: Conforms to one of two forms. Maine.Gov/Dept/Service is targeted at the department's constituents and/or business partners, but not necessarily of interest to the citizenry at-large. Whereas, Maine.Gov/Service is targeted primarily at the interests of the citizenry at-large. The Service name is subject to the Suitability and Construction criteria stated above. For further details, please contact the Enterprise Architect.
  - 6.5.2. Third Level or Higher: Occasionally, for technical reasons, a server (but not a branding URL) must be assigned a unique name. In such cases, the name is either Server.Dept.Maine.Gov, or Server.Maine.Gov. The branding URL still conforms to the previous item, but redirects to the server in this item.
  - 6.5.3. Networking Infrastructure: The name of a networking equipment is Device.Net.Maine.Gov.
  - 6.5.4. Applications hosted by OIT: The naming for applications hosted by OIT conforms to one of these two forms: Gateway.Maine.Gov/App or Portal.Maine.Gov/App.
  - 6.5.5. State Secure Public Portal: The State secure public portal is branded as Public.Maine.Gov.
- 6.6. Use of Commercial Domains by Executive Branch Entities must be avoided in all but exceptional circumstance. The CIO demands significant justification to permit such usage.

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- 6.6.1. Historically, the prime driver for a Commercial Domain by the Executive Branch has been the perception in certain quarters that non-State branding would improve acceptance of State services by certain cohorts, or demographics, or interest groups. However, empirical evidence refutes such a perception. All available traffic analysis indicates that citizens, visitors, and partners overwhelmingly use Maine.Gov to consume State services.
  - 6.6.2. Because they are leased rather than purchased, Commercial Domains are subject to squatting and theft. Therefore, the following best-practices must be followed:
    - Registrations and renewals of all Commercial Domains must be performed by InforME.
    - Leases must be acquired for a minimum of three years.
  - 6.6.3. If a Commercial Domain is approved, Executive Branch entities are strongly encouraged to redirect, or host an alias, to a Maine.Gov-derived site.
  - 6.6.4. The remaining term of subscription to a Commercial Domain must never fall below one year, unless the domain is intended to be retired within that year.
  - 6.6.5. The usage of all Commercial Domains must be re-evaluated at each renewal via the waiver process.
- 6.7. All the stipulations enumerated above for Commercial Domains by the Executive Branch also applies toward any second-level DotGov domain other than Maine.Gov.
- 6.8. Domains for Other Government Entities in Maine operating *under* the Maine.Gov namespace are subject to the following rules of *Construction*:
- 6.8.1. The third-level domain name must uniquely represent the name of the entity.
  - 6.8.2. For cities and towns, the most obvious choice is their own names. Abbreviations are discouraged for city and town names. At the discretion of the relevant local authority, the word “city” or “town” may be included as well.
  - 6.8.3. In case a county shares the same name as a city within the State, the third-level domain of the county must explicitly include the word “county” within the name.
  - 6.8.4. Abbreviations are acceptable for the third-level domain names of Semi-Autonomous State Agencies, as long as such abbreviations are widely understood by the citizenry. An example is MHDO for the Maine Health Data Organization. Any abbreviation that precipitates ambiguity or confusion is not likely to be approved.
  - 6.8.5. By default, only one third-level domain may be requested per entity. Which means that, any administrative division, or program, or initiative, under that entity must be accommodated by extending the URL to the right. For example City.Maine.Gov/Library. This is as opposed to the City requesting both City.Maine.Gov and CityLibrary.Maine.Gov. However, the CIO may entertain exceptions for compelling business reasons.

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- 6.9. While each domain engagement is unique, in general, a domain name application includes the following elements. While not all the information may be available at the inception of a request, it still remains in the best interests of the applicant to include as much of this information as possible while reaching out to the Enterprise Architect.
  - 6.9.1. Requested domain name
  - 6.9.2. Purpose of the domain, including, if appropriate, an explanation why Maine.gov fails to serve this purpose
  - 6.9.3. Date needed by
  - 6.9.4. Projected lifespan of the domain
  - 6.9.5. Server address to which the domain name will point
  - 6.9.6. Any special instructions, such as virtual domain, aliasing etc.
  
- 6.10. Sometimes, it is necessary to cite or embed external links within a Maine State Government webpage. This requirement can be subdivided into two categories, enumerated below.
  - 6.10.1. Sponsored External Links: This is where the Maine State Government entity has deliberately selected a vendor/partner to provide a specific service, most likely through a contract, and endorses said vendor/partner for that specific service. In such a case, the link must be annotated with the text, "Trusted Partner Link."
  - 6.10.2. Informational External Link: This is where the Maine State Government entity provides an external link purely for informational purposes. There does not exist any contractual arrangement between the Maine State Government entity and the external party. Neither is there any implication of endorsement of that external party by Maine State Government. In such a case, the link must be annotated with the text, "Link purely for informational purposes. The department (or, the State of Maine) does not vouch for the contents."
  
- 6.11. From time to time, due to various reasons, it is necessary to retire a domain, and migrate to another domain. This migration is a three-phase process.
  - 6.11.1. The first phase is primarily about migrating the intellectual assets, and consists of both technical and administrative tasks:
    - Cease all public advertisement of the retiring URL.
    - Implement a physical migration (or porting) of the intellectual assets (including source code, documents, media contents, etc.) from the retiring hosting underlayment to the target hosting underlayment.
  - 6.11.2. The second phase is about creating a transparent alias for the retiring URL, and is exclusively technical:
    - Switch the retiring URL to resolve to the target URL. Thus, during this second phase, the retiring URL shall reduce to a transparent alias for the target URL. This must be done in a manner to retain the search engine ranking of the legacy URL.

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- It is reasonable to expect technical issues to surface during this phase, which must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. At the end of the second phase, there shall not exist any outstanding technical issues in the performance of the underlying target URL, even though visitors and users to the retiring site will still be afforded the illusion of the retiring URL.

6.11.3. The third phase is mostly about constituent outreach, and, is, therefore, mostly administrative:

- Withdraw the automated redirection to the target URL in favor of an explicit end-of-life notification on the legacy site.
- This end-of-life notice shall:
  - Request the visitor to change their bookmarks and reference links;
  - Prominently display the projected expiration date; and
  - Include an explicit link to the target URL that the visitor will click.
- The agency shall notify its constituents of the projected expiration of the legacy URL via all the distribution channels that were used to publicize that legacy URL over its entire lifetime. This may include newspapers, billboards, radio, television, etc.
- This third phase is used to build up the search engine ranking of the new URL.
- After the expiration date, dismount the legacy site. At this point, it is actually desirable for users to receive a 404 Error message should they attempt to reach the legacy URL.

6.11.4. The exact time durations of the three phases will vary depending upon Agency business constraints and preferences, as well as the technical challenges of the migration.

### 7.0. Document Information

- 7.1. Initial Issue Date: 1 March 2007
- 7.2. Latest Revision: 15 December 2022
- 7.3. Point of Contact: [Enterprise.Architect@Maine.Gov](mailto:Enterprise.Architect@Maine.Gov)
- 7.4. Approved By: Chief Information Officer, OIT
- 7.5. Legal Citation: [Title 5, Chapter 163: Office of Information Technology](#)<sup>4</sup>
- 7.6. Waiver Process: [Waiver Policy](#)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/5/title5ch163sec0.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/oit/sites/maine.gov.oit/files/inline-files/waiver.pdf>