

STATE OF VERMONT
Agency of Administration

STANDARD STC State Technology Collaborative	ORIGINAL POLICY ADOPTED BY STC DATE:	ORIGINAL POLICY NUMBER
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STATUTORY REFERENCE

OR OTHER AUTHORITY: Web Domain Name Policy

APPROVAL DATE:

APPROVED BY: **Secretary of Administration**

POLICY TITLE: **Web Domain Name Standards**

POLICY STATEMENT:

Introduction

The purpose of these standards is to establish a web domain naming procedure for all three branches of Vermont State Government including all state agencies and departments and state sponsored organizations including all boards and councils. These standards are designed to make State of Vermont Web sites more usable and familiar to the public. They are designed to create a rational system of naming that allows navigation to the correct site as simple as possible. They are further intended to promote Vermont.gov as an indicator of official state communications.

1 Glossary

- 1.1 **Compelling Interest** – In this standard the term compelling interest indicates the existence of a written business case showing the benefits of using and/or the costs of not using a specific domain name.
- 1.2 **Commercial Activity** – The promotion of a commercial enterprise.
- 1.3 **Primary Domain Name** – The first domain under which a web site is registered. This domain must appear as a part of the URL for any page browsed on a site. This is also the domain to be used in print and audio communications.
- 1.4 **Secondary Domain Name** – A registered domain that refers browsers to the primary domain.
- 1.5 **Second Level Domain** – A second level domain is a URL that has its unique element directly before the suffix. An example would be microsoft.com. These domains are not recommended by this standard. Such names also require additional cost and approval.
- 1.6 **State of Vermont** – This indicates any appendage of Vermont State Government including boards councils and other entities created by statute as an instrument of the state. The term also includes all three branches of state government.
- 1.7 **Third Level Domains** – These domains have the unique element before the second level domain name and the suffix. An example would be cio.vermont.gov. This is the preferred method for forming state domains and requires only the approval of the CIO's Office.

2 Domain Types

- 2.1 **.gov domains** - These domains must be requested through the CIO's office by federal mandate and are registered with the Office of Electronic Government and Technology (OEGT). A .gov domain is intended only for sites that provide official state content. This includes any site that provides state information to the public, provides e-government services, or provides access to state resources. These domains cannot be used for any function that promotes a commercial activity, even indirectly. This domain will be the standard for all state web sites except as noted below.
- 2.2 **state.vt.us domains** - These domains are the property of the State of Vermont and can be used in any way the state deems appropriate. The standard for these domains is to use them only for sites with an audience internal to state government.
- 2.3 **.us domains** - These domains do not have any restrictions in policy or in practice. The standard for the .us domain will be to use it for sites that don't meet either the .gov or the state.vt.us standards.
- 2.4 **General domains** - These include .com, .org, .net and .info. These domains are intended for particular purposes but are not restricted by external authority. The standard for use of these domains by Vermont departments and agencies is spelled out in this document.

3 The Forming of Domain Names

- 3.1 Domain names are intended as mnemonic devices that allow users to locate information on the internet easily. The ideal domain name is short and specific.
- 3.2 When creating a domain name examine your first ideas and see if the name you have chosen has the potential to cause confusion. An example of a confusing domain would be “inspections.vermont.gov.” There would also tend to be the greatest contention about what state entity should rightfully possess such a domain.
- 3.3 Words with multiple meanings should be avoided in domain names. A domain like “media.vermont.gov” could refer to tv, radio and newspapers or film; video tapes, DVDs, and CDs; or paint, clay and ink, etc. Domain names should be clear such as: newsoutlets.vermont.gov, videoaudiostorage.vermont.gov or artmaterials.vermont.gov.

4 Approval Process

- 4.1 Any domain name (.gov, .us, .com, .org, .info, etc.) that a state agency or department wishes to use in any capacity must be approved by the CIO’s office. Further approval of a .gov domain name must be received from the federal level via OEGT.
- 4.2 A request for approval for domain names shall be emailed to the CIO’s office (WebServices@state.vt.us) prior to registering the site. The email must include the domain name requested and a description of the purpose of the proposed site. If an existing site is being renamed then a link to the existing site should be included.
- 4.3 Once received, the name will be appraised for conformity to this standard. If the name complies then the domain will be presented to other departments for comment. If there are no negative remarks then the domain will be approved. The office of the CIO will make every effort to approve names that meet this standard within 10 business days from the time of initial request.
- 4.4 If the domain does not meet state naming standards then the CIO’s staff will work with the requestor to develop a suitable name that meets the standard. Once agreement is reached, the process will move forward as above.
- 4.5 If there is negative comment, for example another department wishes to use the same domain name, then arbitration will take place until agreement is made to use or modify the suggested domain.

5 Compliance

- 5.1 Any site created or redesigned after this standard is accepted is bound by the standard. If a current site that does not comply with the standard is being redesigned the domain for the site must be submitted for approval. If the site owner wishes to retain the existing domain name as the primary domain for the site the submission must be accompanied by a written business case.

6 Cost

- 6.1 The cost of registering a second level .gov domain name with OEGT will be borne by the agency or department requesting the new domain name.
- 6.2 Third level .gov domains will not incur a fee.
- 6.3 Non .gov domains will be purchased at their market price.

7 State Websites

- 7.1 Department/Agency Web Sites
 - 7.1.1 The main website for every department and agency must be registered in the .gov domain. The standard naming convention for such sites will be “AGENCY.vermont.gov” Some examples might be:

treasury.vermont.gov

corrections.vermont.gov
health.vermont.gov
labor.vermont.gov

- 7.1.2 Other sites that must take the .gov domain extension are program specific sites. These sites will take a domain in the form "PROGRAM.vermont.gov"

Some examples might be:

envision.vermont.gov
safeschools.vermont.gov
screendoor.vermont.gov

- 7.1.3 Sites used by other state entities, such as boards and commissions also must use the .gov extension. These sites will take a domain in the form "ORGANIZATION.vermont.gov"

Some examples might be:

lotterycommission.vermont.gov
commissiononwomen.vermont.gov
artscouncil.vermont.gov

- 7.1.4 The .gov domain will be the standard for all state websites. Other domains will only be considered if there is a compelling reason to use an alternate domain.

7.2 Sites with a Commercial Purpose

- 7.2.1 Sites which have a commercial purpose are not eligible for the .gov domain. Sites registered as a .gov that engage in this type of activity may have the domain revoked if the activity is discovered by OEGT.

- 7.2.2 Official Vermont sites that engage in the promotion of business must therefore register under a different domain. The standard domain for such a site would be the .us domain. This domain can take many forms. The official domain for the state is state.vermont.us. This means that a site under this domain must be in the form "agency.state.vermont.us". As stated above, this option will be reserved for web sites with an audience internal to state government.

Other options exist for sites that are intended for an external audience. The owners of a site could therefore request a more meaningful name under .us. The standard form for a .us domain registered by a state agency or department will be SITENAMEvermont.us. For example a site listing registered pesticide applicators as a service to farmers could request pesticidevermont.us or applicatorsvermont.us. These second level domains under .us must be provided to DII for approval using the same approval process as sites in the .gov domain.

- 7.3 Exceptions – There are a limited set of circumstances where use of the .gov or .us domain is not acceptable.

7.3.1 High Profile and Marketing Sites

- 7.3.1.1 Certain state sites serve a business function for the state. Because these sites and the business functions they serve depend on users easily finding the right web page it is best to use the most common internet domain, .com. Sites such as these must have a compelling reason to use the .com domain. The domain must be provided to DII for approval using the same approval process as sites in the .gov domain.

7.3.2 Other Generic Domains

- 7.3.2.1 The .org, .net and .info domains, by international standard, are specifically intended for certain types of web sites. The .org domain, while not specifically restricted, is intended only for non-profit groups. The .net domain is used by Internet infrastructure and service

providers. The .info domain was created to augment the .com domain because so few meaningful names remain available. None of these names will be used as primary domains for state Internet sites.

7.3.3 Aliases and Redirects

7.3.3.1 Domains that are to be used for aliasing a set of web pages or as a redirect page will be subject to the standard approval process. The aliasing/redirect function is the only exception to the restriction on using the other generic domain names. The same site name may be registered in another domain for this purpose. For example a department registering benefits.vermont.gov could also purchase benefits.vermont.org, benefits.vermont.info, and/or benefits.vermont.com for competitive protection. These are to be used only as redirect/aliasing URLs and not as primary domains.

7.3.3.2 State Web sites approved for domains other than .gov must acquire an alias in the .gov domain that meets the criteria in section 7.1 of this standard.

8 Contacting DII

8.1 Anyone requesting a new domain name shall contact the Office of the CIO (WebServices@state.vt.us) a minimum of one month prior to the time they hope to begin using the domain. This will allow time to correct a request if it does not meet the standards in the document. Exceptions will be made for emergent situations on a case by case basis.

8.2 Domain names will be submitted to the Director of Web Services in the office of the CIO. In the case of .gov domains the director will review the name request to be certain that it meets DII standards. If this is the case the name will then be requested from OEGT. If the name is not approved the person requesting the name will receive a notice to that effect and the reasons for refusal. It is important to note that the CIO's office will make every effort to approve domains in 10 business days but the OEGT approval is not in the control of that office and may take additional time.

8.3 The same procedure will be followed for non-.gov domain names (.us, .com, .org, .info, etc.) with the exclusion of OEGT approval. All URLs for State of Vermont web sites, regardless of the domain, must use this approval process.