NC Department of Information Technology
Domain Management Guidelines

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define statewide guidelines and best practices for the use of domain names by North Carolina state government websites. The guidelines ensure that citizens can access legitimate state government information in a consistent, clear manner and appropriately communicate North Carolina state government services, resources, programs, and relevant information.

DIT is the authoritative source for registration of the second-level and third-level .gov domains for the state.

2.0 Scope

The guidelines apply to all state government entities within North Carolina. State government entities are encouraged to make reasonable efforts to align to these domain standards upon their next domain renewal or name change. DIT understands that domains serve a marketing and branding purpose and domain changes may be disruptive to the end-user experience.

3.0 Guidelines

    3.1 Domain Naming Convention

        3.1.1

- All domain names should clearly communicate the purpose of the site. DIT will typically not make determinations on the appropriateness of domain names but on a case-by-case basis reserves the right not to assign names.
- Domain names may be full or partial name for agency programs, state agencies, or institutions. URLs that reflect an agency "brand" are also allowable.
- All domain names should be no longer than 26 characters, including the "nc.gov" part of the domain.
- Domain names may contain letters, numbers, and dashes but no other special characters are permitted. Letters must be all lowercase.
- It is strongly preferred to use an nc.gov subdomain (i.e. "sitename.nc.gov"). Acceptable domain pattern examples: ethicscommission.nc.gov, milvets.nc.gov, hiea.nc.gov, oshr.nc.gov, dma.ncdhhs.gov.
- It is permitted, but not encouraged, to register domain names such as a *.com*, *.org*, and *.net* to mitigate against "cybersquatting". These URLs should redirect to the canonical .gov URL. These domains should be registered through DIT and not outside commercial providers (e.g., GoDaddy). DIT is not responsible for administering domains (i.e., renewing expired domains) on commercial providers.

    3.2 Registration and Termination of Domains

> **3.2.1** New domain registrations will be processed using the standard DIT ticketing system (dit.incidents@nc.gov)
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> **3.2.2** Upon request, domains shall be terminated solely by DIT. Unless otherwise noted, domains shall be renewed before expiration in order to maintain continuity of domain name possession and use.

3.3 Proper Use

> **3.3.1** Domains shall be used to conduct official business of the North Carolina agency, department, or entity or any authorized organization conducting official business on behalf of either identified party.
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> **3.3.2** Domains may only be requested by Chief Information Officers, Public Information Officers, or designated staff.

3.4 Prohibited Use

> **3.4.1** Domains shall not be used in any capacity other than the official conduct of business as stated. Domains may not advertise private firms, corporations, or imply in any way the federal or state government endorses or favors any specific commercial service.
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> **3.4.2** NC.Gov domain names may not be used for political, political party or campaign purposes.

3.5 Costs and Fees

> **3.5.1** As of this writing there are no initial or re-occurring costs associated with the registration and maintenance of each domain name (unless domains are administered through the Federal GSA program. See 4.0 below).

4.0 Federal.Gov Domain Names

Historically, North Carolina agencies were permitted to procure domain names through the federal General Services Administration (GSA). These domains enabled a .gov domain without an "nc.gov" subdomain. For example, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources operates http://ncdcr.gov.

In January 2017 the GSA increased domain registration fees from $125 to $400 annually. The GSA can raise costs and change domain terms at any time (potentially even removing states from the program). Due to administration costs and related risks it is strongly recommended to avoid registration of .gov domains through the GSA and instead use the "sitename.nc.gov" convention. Reasonable efforts to transition legacy GSA-administered .gov domains are encouraged.

All entities using a .gov domain must comply with the federal guidelines, which can be accessed at http://dotgov.gov.

North Carolina agencies and entities that operate sites not in compliance with the GSA DotGov domain program guidelines may have their domain name terminated.

5.0 Definitions

Please reference the Stateside IT Glossary for domain-related glossary terms:
https://it.nc.gov/document/statewide-glossary-information-technology-terms