

**ROHIT RAI
DIRECTOR**



**TIM TIPTON
COMMISSIONER**

**STATE OF OKLAHOMA
OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security Moving to a .gov domain guide

Benefits of .gov domains

.Gov helps the public identify official, trusted information

For a fee, anyone can register a .com, .org, or .us domain. This can make it hard for the public to know if the people behind an online service are who they claim to be.

.Gov domains are different because they're only available to U.S.-based government organizations. It should be easy to identify governments on the internet. The public shouldn't have to guess whether the site they're on, or the email in their inbox, is genuine. Use of the .gov top-level domain can help reduce uncertainty.

Only verified U.S. government organizations can register a .gov domain

- The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), manages the .gov top-level domain. They verify the identity of everyone who requests a .gov domain, and they make sure that their organization meets the criteria for having a .gov domain.

.Gov domains are free

- .Gov domains are available to eligible organizations for free!

Organizations at all levels of government are eligible for .gov domains

- Federal, state, local, and other publicly-controlled entities are eligible for .gov domains. This includes cities, towns, counties, election offices, tribal governments, courts, and more.
- They use the [U.S. Census Bureau's criteria for classifying governments](#) to help us determine eligibility.

[Read more about eligibility for .gov domains](#)

.Gov domains are critical infrastructure for governments at all levels

- .Gov domains support access to public services. They make .gov a trusted, secure space by:
 - o Using multi-factor authentication for all accounts in the .gov registrar
 - o Preloading all new domains. This action requires browsers to use a secure HTTPS connection with your website. This ensures that the content you publish is exactly what your visitors get.
 - o Administering our [domain requirements](#) to protect the integrity of .gov
 - o Publishing the [complete list of .gov domains](#)
 - o Recommending [security best practices](#) for .gov domain holders
 - o Continuously improving how they secure the .gov namespace

What CISA offer's

Domain registration:

- [Start a .gov domain request](#) or learn about the [information you'll need to complete your request](#).

Domain name consultation:

- If you need help coming up with your .gov domain name, [contact us](#).

Domain management support:

- Once your .gov domain is up and running they'll support you.
 - o Check the status of your domain requests and manage your registered domains.
 - o Stay informed about [domain security best practices](#).
 - o Edit information about your contacts or your domain (like changes to your DNS settings) anytime.

What CISA doesn't offer

- While CISA' continuously improves their services, you'll need some services to get online that they don't offer.
 - o They don't offer DNS hosting.
 - o They don't host .gov websites or email.

Before you request a .gov domain

You must be a government employee, or be working on behalf of the government, to request a .gov domain.

If you're ready to request your domain then let's get started. You don't have to complete the process in one session. You can save what you enter and come back to it when you're ready.

Start a .gov domain request

Purpose of the domain request form

- They'll use the information you provide to verify your organization's eligibility for a .gov domain. They'll also verify that the domain you request meets our guidelines.

Steps to take before you request your .gov domain

- Complete your request as quickly as possible by taking these actions.
 - o **Eligibility:** [Make sure your organization is eligible to have a .gov domain.](#)
 - o **Domain name:** [Choose an available .gov domain that complies with our requirements.](#)
 - o **Authorizing official:** [Find out who your authorizing official is](#) and make sure they approve your request.
 - o **Request form:** Gather [all the information you'll need](#) to complete your domain request.
 - o **Account:** [Create a Login.gov account.](#) You'll need a Login.gov account to request a .gov domain. Login.gov provides a simple and secure process for signing in to many government services with one account.

Verify your identity with Login.gov (required for first-time domain requestors)

- Before you can request your first .gov domain, they'll require you to verify your identity with Login.gov. This is a necessary layer of security that requires you to prove you are you, and not someone pretending to be you. You'll need a state-issued ID, a Social Security number, and a phone number for identity verification. You'll be prompted to verify your identity when you begin the domain request process.

Read more about [verifying your identity with Login.gov](#)

Completing the request form might take 15 minutes

If you have your Login.gov account and have gathered all the information you need, completing your domain request might take around 15 minutes.

You can request one domain per online service

- For non-federal agencies, they generally approve one domain per online service per government organization. They'll evaluate additional requests on a case-by-case basis.
- You don't need to defensively register variations of your domain name. While this practice may be common when registering domains open to the general public, the .gov domain space is not first come, first serve. They'll only assign a domain to the organization whose real name or services actually correspond to the domain name.

Information you'll need to complete the domain request form

- They'll ask you questions about your organization and the domain you want. Here's what you'll need to know to complete the form. There's more information about each of these sections below.
 - o Type of government organization you represent
 - o Organization name and mailing address
 - o Your authorizing official
 - o Current websites for your organization (if you have one)
 - o .Gov domain you want
 - o Purpose of your domain
 - o Your contact information
 - o Other employees from your organization

Type of government organization you represent

- You'll choose from the list below.
 - o **Federal:** an agency of the U.S. government's legislative, executive, or judicial branches
 - o **Interstate:** an organization of two or more states
 - o **State or territory:** one of the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands
 - o **Tribal:** a tribal government recognized by the federal or a state government
 - o **County:** a county, parish, or borough
 - o **City:** a city, town, township, village, etc.
 - o **Special district:** an independent government that delivers specialized, essential services
 - o **School district:** a school district that is not part of a local government

Organization name and mailing address

- They'll ask you the name and mailing address for the organization you represent. Your organization might be part of a larger entity. If so, enter the name of your part of the larger entity.
- If your domain request is approved, the name of your organization and your city/state will be listed in [.gov's public data](#).

Your authorizing official

- Your authorizing official is a person within your organization who can authorize your domain request. This person must be in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the organization. Read more about [who can serve as an authorizing official](#).
- What they'll need to know about your authorizing official:
 - o Name
 - o Role in your organization
 - o Email address
- They typically don't reach out to the authorizing official, but if contact is necessary, our practice is to coordinate with you, the requestor, first.

Current websites for your organization

- They'll ask about your organization's current public websites. They can better evaluate your domain request if they know about domains you're already using. If you already have a .gov domain, include that in your list.

.Gov domain you want

- Here's the part where you'll tell us the .gov domain you want. They'll try to give you your preferred domain, but they first need to make sure it meets our requirements. They'll work with you to find the best domain for your organization.
- Your domain name must:
 - o Be available ([Check availability](#))
 - o Relate to your organization's name, location, and/or services
 - o Be clear to the general public. Your domain name must not be easily confused with other organizations.
- Names that *uniquely apply to your organization* are likely to be approved over names that could also apply to other organizations.
- Requests for your organization's initials or an abbreviated name might not be approved, but they encourage you to request the name you want.

Read more about [our domain name requirements](#).

Purpose of your domain

- They'll ask you to explain how you plan to use your .gov domain. Will you use it for a website and/or email? Read about [activities that are prohibited on a .gov domain](#).

Your contact information

- They'll ask you to provide your contact information. While reviewing your domain request, they may need to reach out with questions. They'll also email you when they complete our review.
- Your contact information won't be made public and will be used only for .gov purposes.

Other employees from your organization

- To help us determine your organization's eligibility for a .gov domain, it's helpful to have contact information for other employees from your organization.
 - o They should be clearly and publicly affiliated with your organization and familiar with your domain request.
 - o They don't need to be involved with the technical management of your domain (although they can be).
 - o **They typically don't reach out to these employees**, but if contact is necessary, our practice is to coordinate with you first.

What happens after you request your .gov domain

- They'll review your request. This review period can take 30 business days. Due to the volume of requests, the wait time is longer than usual. They appreciate your patience.
- During our review they'll verify that:
 - o Your organization is eligible for a .gov domain
 - o You work at the organization and/or can make requests on its behalf
 - o Your requested domain meets our naming requirements
- After your domain is approved, they'll ask you to provide the following information:
 - o Domain name server information (required)
 - o Additional domain managers
 - o Security email for public use

Before your approved .gov domain can be used, you'll need to connect it to your DNS hosting service. **At this time, they don't provide DNS hosting services.**

Read more about [domain management](#).

Requirements for operating a .gov domain

The .gov domain space exists to support a broad diversity of government missions. Generally, they don't review or audit how government organizations use their registered domains. However, misuse of a .gov domain can reflect upon the integrity of the entire .gov space. There are categories of misuse that are statutorily prohibited or abusive in nature.

What you can't do with a .gov domain

Commercial purposes

- A .gov domain must not be used for commercial purposes, such as advertising that benefits private individuals or entities.

Political campaigns

- A .gov domain must not be used for political campaign purposes, such as the website for a candidate seeking elected office.

Illegal content

- A .gov domain must not be used to distribute or promote material whose distribution violates applicable law.

Malicious cyber activity

- A .gov domain must not distribute malware, host open redirects, or engage in malicious cyber activity.

What .gov domain registrants must do

Keep your contact information updated

- .Gov domain registrants must maintain accurate contact information in the .gov registrar. You will be asked to verify it as part of the renewal process.

Be responsive if they contact you

- .Gov domain registrants must respond promptly to communications about potential violations to these requirements.

Failure to comply could result in domain suspension or termination

- They may need to suspend or terminate a domain registration for violations of these requirements. When they discover a violation, they'll make reasonable efforts to contact a registrant, including emails or phone calls to:
 - o Domain contacts
 - o The authorizing official

- The government organization, a parent organization, or affiliated entities
- They understand the critical importance of availability for a .gov domain. Suspending or terminating a .gov domain is reserved for prolonged, unresolved, serious violations where the registrant is non-responsive. They'll make extensive efforts to contact registrants and to identify potential solutions. They'll make reasonable accommodations for remediation timelines based on the severity of the issue.

Domain renewal

- .Gov domains are registered for a one-year period. To renew your domain, you'll be asked to verify your organization's eligibility and your contact information.
- Though a domain may expire, it will not automatically be put on hold or deleted. They'll make extensive efforts to contact your organization before holding or deleting a domain.

Eligibility for .gov domains

Only verified U.S. government organizations can register and operate a .gov domain

- For a fee, anyone can register a .com, .org, or .us domain. .Gov domains are different because they're only available to U.S.-based government organizations, and they're free.
- The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) manages the .gov top-level domain. They verify the identity of everyone who requests a .gov domain and they make sure that their organization meets the criteria for having a .gov domain.

Government organizations at all levels are eligible for .gov domains

- If you're eligible to have a .gov domain, they want you to get one. The types of government organizations eligible for .gov domains include:
 - o **Federal:** an agency of the U.S. government's legislative, executive, or judicial branches
 - o **Interstate:** an organization of two or more states
 - o **State or territory:** one of the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands
 - o **Tribal:** a tribal government recognized by the federal or a state government
 - o **County:** a county, parish, or borough
 - o **City:** a city, town, township, village, etc.
 - o **Special district:** an independent government that delivers specialized, essential services
 - o **School district:** a school district that is not part of a local government

How they determine eligibility

- After you request a .gov domain, they'll review the information you provided about your organization. They use the [U.S. Census Bureau's criteria for classifying governments](#) to help determine eligibility. In some cases, they'll ask for more information (such as legislation, a charter, or bylaws) to verify eligibility.

You must have approval from an authorizing official within your organization

- Your authorizing official is a person within your organization who can authorize your domain request. This person must be in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the organization.
- When you request a .gov domain, they'll ask for information about your authorizing official (role, contact information). They typically don't reach out to them, but if contact is necessary, our practice is to coordinate first with you, the requestor.

Read more about authorizing officials for:

- [Executive branch federal agencies](#)
- [Judicial branch federal agencies](#)
- [Legislative branch federal agencies](#)
 - [U.S. Senate](#)
 - [U.S. House of Representatives](#)
 - [Other legislative branch agencies](#)
- [Interstate organizations](#)
- [U.S. states and territories](#)
 - [States and territories: executive branch](#)
 - [States and territories: judicial and legislative branches](#)
- [Tribal governments](#)
- [Counties](#)
- [Cities](#)
- [Special districts](#)
- [School districts](#)

Executive branch federal agencies

- Domain requests from executive branch federal agencies must be authorized by the agency's CIO or the head of the agency.

See [OMB Memorandum M-23-10](#) for more information.

Judicial branch federal agencies

- Domain requests for judicial branch federal agencies, except the U.S. Supreme Court, must be authorized by the director or CIO of the Administrative Office (AO) of the United States Courts.
- Domain requests from the U.S. Supreme Court must be authorized by the director of information technology for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Legislative branch federal agencies

- **U.S. Senate**
 - Domain requests from the U.S. Senate must come from the Senate Sergeant at Arms.
- **U.S. House of Representatives**
 - Domain requests from the U.S. House of Representatives must come from the House Chief Administrative Officer.
- **Other legislative branch agencies**
 - Domain requests from legislative branch agencies must come from the agency's head or CIO.
 - Domain requests from legislative commissions must come from the head of the commission, or the head or CIO of the parent agency, if there is one.

Interstate organizations

- Domain requests from interstate organizations must be authorized by someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the organization (president, director, chair, senior technology officer, or equivalent) or one of the state's governors or CIOs.

U.S. states and territories

States and territories: executive branch

- Domain requests from states and territories must be authorized by the governor or someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the agency (department secretary, senior technology officer, or equivalent).

States and territories: judicial and legislative branches

- Domain requests from state legislatures and courts must be authorized by an agency's CIO or someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the agency.

Tribal governments

- Domain requests from federally-recognized tribal governments must be authorized by the tribal leader the [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#) recognizes.
- Domain requests from state-recognized tribal governments must be authorized by the tribal leader the individual state recognizes.

Counties

- Domain requests from counties must be authorized by the commission chair or someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the county (county judge, county mayor, parish/borough president, senior technology officer, or equivalent). Other county-level offices (county clerk, sheriff, county auditor, comptroller) may qualify, as well, in some instances.

Cities

- Domain requests from cities must be authorized by someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the city (mayor, council president, city manager, township/village supervisor, select board chairperson, chief, senior technology officer, or equivalent).

Special districts

- Domain requests from special districts must be authorized by someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the district (CEO, chair, executive director, senior technology officer, or equivalent).

School districts

- Domain requests from school district governments must be authorized by someone in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the district (board chair, superintendent, senior technology officer, or equivalent).

They use the [U.S. Census Bureau's definition of school district governments](#).

Request your .gov domain

- If you're ready to request your .gov domain, then get started. You don't have to complete the process in one session. You can save what you enter and come back to it when you're ready.

Start a .gov domain request

Choosing your .gov domain name

General rules for .gov domain names

- Your domain name represents your organization and your services to the world online. Good domain names are memorable and easy to say out loud (like over the phone or in a presentation).
- Names of government organizations can be similar or even identical, so our domain naming rules aim to prevent confusion.
- Your domain name must:
 - o Be available ([Check availability](#))
 - o Relate to your organization's name, location, and/or services
 - o Be clear to the general public. Your domain name must not be easily confused with other organizations.
- Names that *uniquely apply to your organization* are likely to be approved over names that could also apply to other organizations.
- Requests for your organization's initials or an abbreviated name might not be approved, but they encourage you to request the name you want.

Only federal agencies can request generic terms

- Only federal agencies can request generic terms like vote.gov or benefits.gov.
- That said, they can approve domains with generic terms, like marylandvotes.gov, because it references a location and a service.

Things to avoid in .gov domain names

- Avoid using the following in your .gov domain name:
 - o Dashes or hyphens
 - o Numbers
 - o Misspellings

Domain name requirements and guidance for specific types of organizations

- .Gov domain names must follow the naming requirements for your type of organization. Read domain name requirements and guidance for:
 - o [Executive branch federal agencies](#)
 - o [Judicial branch federal agencies](#)
 - o [Legislative branch federal agencies](#)
 - o [Interstate organizations](#)
 - o [U.S. states and territories](#)
 - o [Tribal governments](#)
 - o [Counties](#)
 - o [Cities](#)
 - o [Special districts](#)
 - o [School districts](#)

Executive branch federal agencies

- These are agencies of the U.S. government's executive branch.
Read [guidance specifically for executive branch federal agencies](#).

Examples:

- fema.gov
- medicare.gov
- usda.gov

Judicial branch federal agencies

- These are agencies of the U.S. government's judicial branch.

Examples:

- uscourts.gov
- ustaxcourt.gov
- ussc.gov

Legislative branch federal agencies

- These are agencies of the U.S. government's legislative branch.

Examples:

- gao.gov
- gpo.gov
- loc.gov

Interstate organizations

- These are organizations of two or more states.

Examples:

- EMScompact.gov
- wmataOIG.gov
- trpa.gov

U.S. states and territories

- This includes the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- State .gov domains must include the two-letter state abbreviation or clearly spell out the state name.

Examples:

- AmericanSamoa.gov
- Colorado.gov
- MN.gov
- Guam.gov

Tribal governments

- Tribal governments recognized by the federal or a state government.
- Tribal domains may include the suffix -nsn, for native sovereign nation.

Examples:

- tbyi.gov
- pitu.gov
- TulalipTribalCourt-nsn.gov

Counties

- This organization type includes counties, parishes, or boroughs.
- Most county .gov domains must include the two-letter state abbreviation or the full state name. County names that aren't shared by any other city, county, parish, town, borough, village or equivalent in the U.S. (at the time a domain is granted) don't have to refer to their state in their domain name. Counties can include "county" in their domain to distinguish it from other places with similar names.

They use the [Census Bureau's National Places Gazetteer Files](#) to determine if county names are unique.

Examples:

- LACounty.gov
- LivingstonParishLA.gov
- MitchellCountyNC.gov
- MiamiDade.gov

Cities

- This organization type includes cities, towns, townships, villages, etc.
- Most city domains must include the two-letter state abbreviation or clearly spell out the state name. Using phrases like “City of” or “Town of” is optional.
- Cities that meet one of the criteria below don’t have to refer to their state in their domain name.
 - o The city name is not shared by any other U.S. city, town, village, or county. They use the [Census Bureau’s National Places Gazetteer Files](#) to determine if names are unique.
 - o The city is so well known that it doesn’t need a state reference to communicate location. They use the list of U.S. “dateline cities” in the Associated Press Stylebook as part of our decision.
 - o It’s one of the 150 largest cities by population, according to the Census Bureau.

Examples:

- CityofEudoraKS.gov
- WallaWallaWA.gov
- Pocatello.gov

Special districts

- These are independent organizations within a single state.
- Domain names must represent your organization or institutional name, not solely the services you provide. It also needs to include your two-letter state abbreviation or clearly spell out the state name unless city or county exceptions apply.

Examples:

- GlacierViewFire.gov
- TechshareTX.gov
- UtahTrust.gov

School districts

- School districts that aren’t part of a local government are eligible for .gov domains.
- Domain names must represent your organization or institutional name.

Example:

- mckinneyISDTX.gov
- BooneCSDIA.gov

Moving to .gov

If you're moving to .gov from another top-level domain, like .com or .us, here are some best practices to help you plan that transition.

Organizations at all levels of government (federal, state, local) are eligible for .gov domains. Given this diversity of organizations, the guidance below is general and meant to help you get started.

Checklist for moving to .gov

Read more about each of these steps below.

- [Start the conversation with your technical and communications staff](#)
- [Come up with .gov domain options that meet our naming requirements](#)
- [Get ready to complete the .gov domain request form](#)
- [Identify other technical upgrades to make during this transition](#)
- [Plan to keep your current domain](#)
- [Find DNS hosting services](#)
- [Audit your existing web content](#)
- [Plan to redirect traffic from your old domain to your new one](#)
- [Plan to move your email to .gov](#)
- [Get familiar with domain security best practices](#)
- [Develop a communications plan](#)
- [Find out if you're eligible for financial assistance](#)
- [Let us know how it goes](#)

Start the conversation with your technical and communications staff

- Identify who you'll work with from your IT team (e.g., folks responsible for DNS, web, network, information security), public affairs (people responsible for public communication online, in print, or elsewhere), and administrative staff. Think about the internal approvals you'll need for a new .gov domain.

Come up with .gov domain options that meet our naming requirements

- They'll try to give you your preferred domain. They'll make sure your request meets our requirements. They'll work with you to find the best domain for your organization.
 - o Your domain name must:
 - Be available ([Check availability](#))
 - Relate to your organization's name, location, and/or services
 - Be clear to the general public. Your domain name must not be easily confused with other organizations.

- Names that *uniquely apply to your organization* are likely to be approved over names that could also apply to other organizations.
- Requests for your organization's initials or an abbreviated name might not be approved, but they encourage you to request the name you want.

[Read more about our domain name requirements.](#)

Get ready to complete the .gov domain request form

- Make sure you have all the [information you need to complete the .gov domain request form](#)). They'll ask you about your organization and the .gov domain you want. You'll [need to have a Login.gov account](#) to request a .gov domain.

Identify other technical upgrades to make during this transition

- Many organizations take advantage of a domain change to upgrade certain infrastructure and/or move to the cloud. Consider what your needs and opportunities are. Review these [best practices for budgeting and overseeing technology projects](#).

Plan to keep your current domain

- Consider maintaining the registration of your current non-.gov domain. You don't want your old domain to fall into the wrong hands.

Find DNS hosting services

- They don't provide Domain Name System (DNS) hosting services. You'll need to operate or manage authoritative DNS for your domain. If you're coming from a non-.gov domain, this may be a new requirement. You can manage your own DNS servers or host your domain with a third party. "DNS hosting" is a good search term to find providers. Options range in price but are typically a few dollars per month. Some local internet service providers (ISPs) or technology service providers may offer DNS hosting.

Audit your existing web content

- Consider using this transition as an opportunity to audit your web content. Archive content that is no longer relevant or update it to make it current.
- Review your site for mentions of your old domain name. Include images in your content audit. Learn more [about content audits](#).

Plan to redirect traffic from your old domain to your new one

- Use HTTP redirects from your old domain to your new domain so that links to your old site will be directed to your new online home. Use [HTTP 302s](#) for testing, and [HTTP 301s](#) to signal a permanent move to search engines.
- If you're using your old domain for web redirects, plan to keep the TLS (Transport Layer Security) certificate current for your older domain.

Plan to move your email to .gov

- Moving your email to .gov depends on your current infrastructure or provider, but most mail services support aliases so that mail sent to a prior domain name is still delivered. Search the documentation of your mail server/provider along with “custom domain.”
- If you’re currently using a free email address (@gmail.com, @outlook.com, @icloud.com, @yahoo.com), you’ll need to pay for an email service or manage your own email servers in order to use a .gov domain for email.

Email addresses used in account management

- Organizations often use email addresses (which include a domain name) as unique identifiers for accounts. This can occur on internal systems (like a directory service) or with external services (like software-as-a-service accounts). Review the documentation for your software to evaluate the steps needed to use different email addresses.

Get familiar with domain security best practices

- Each of the above topics has its own security impact. Follow our [domain security best practices](#) to securely manage your domain.

Develop a communications plan

- Many government organizations share the fact that they’ve transitioned to a .gov domain name via press release and/or social media. These events regularly get picked up online or in traditional media outlets, amplifying your message.

Online and offline branding

- Domain names show up in more places than just online. They’re printed on paper products (like letterhead or business cards), vehicles (painted on or included on license plates), or public signage (advertising, road signs). Create a timeline for reviewing and updating this content.

Let us know when you move to .gov

- If you announce your transition on social media, tag us. They’re CISA on Facebook and @cisagov on LinkedIn, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). They’d love to help you get the word out!

Find out if you’re eligible for financial assistance

- You might be eligible for financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to help you move to .gov.
- Contact your [State Administrative Agency representative](#) to ask about funding as part of the [Homeland Security Grant Program](#).
- Learn about [CISA’s grants for state, local, territorial, and tribal governments](#).

.Gov for election offices

.Gov domains help the public identify official, trusted election information

- Voters get information about voting and elections from many sources. State and local election officials can **make it easy to identify official election information on the internet by using a .gov domain.**

.Gov domains are free and only available to verified U.S.-based government organizations

- Using a .gov domain for your online services (like your website or email) helps the public quickly identify you as a verified government source. Other well-known top-level domains (like .com, .org, or .us) can be registered by anyone in the world for a fee. Malicious actors know this, and they've tried to impersonate election organizations. **Protect your office by using a .gov domain.**

Using .gov increases security

- **Multi-factor authentication** is required for all .gov accounts (unlike commercial domain registrars).
- They **preload all new domains**. Preloading requires browsers to use a secure HTTPS connection to your website. This protects your visitors' privacy. This also ensures that the content you publish is exactly what your visitors receive.
- You can add a [security contact for your .gov domain](#). This makes it easier for the public to report potential security issues with your online services.

An official from your organization needs to approve your domain request

- All domain requests must be approved by an authorizing official. This person must be in a role of significant, executive responsibility within the organization.
- For state-level election offices, the authorizing official is typically the state's chief election official. For local election offices, the authorizing official is typically the elected or appointed official that runs the office.

You might be able to keep your existing domain

- If your office already has a domain name with another top-level domain (like .org or .com), you might be able to keep that name when you switch to .gov. They'll verify whether it's available and meets our naming requirements.

Your geographic area must be clear in your .gov domain name

- Your geographic area must be clear in your .gov domain name. In many cases, this will require including the two-letter state abbreviation. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Read more about our [domain name requirements](#).

Support for moving to .gov

- Though .gov domain registration and renewal are free, there are often costs associated with moving to a new domain. These costs may include hiring technical staff or consultants to facilitate the switch, replacing printed materials, and informing the public of the change.
- [View our checklist for moving to .gov](#).
- While they cannot guarantee access to funds, election offices may wish to seek funding from the following sources.

State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program

- The [DHS State and Local Cybersecurity Grant program](#) cites “[migration to the .gov internet domain](#)” as a cybersecurity best practice that must be included as part of an application’s Cybersecurity Plan. Eligible entities can use grant funds to implement their Cybersecurity Plan, which includes costs associated with moving to .gov.

Homeland Security Grant Program

- The [DOTGOV Act](#) made “migrating any online service” to .gov an allowable expense under the [Homeland Security Grant Program](#). FEMA manages the grant program, and potential grantees may include transition costs in their investment justification. For more information, read [FEMA’s preparedness grants manual](#) (PDF, page 55).

Help America Vote Act Grants

- The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has acknowledged that Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds can be used for the process of transitioning to a .gov domain. Election officials are advised to consult with the EAC before making any purchase to ensure it is an appropriate expenditure of funds under the rules governing the grants. [Contact the EAC](#).

State and local collaboration

- Election infrastructure often relies on municipal infrastructure. Consider collaborating with your state or local government to get resources for moving to .gov. U.S.-based government organizations are eligible for .gov domains.

Other resources for election offices

- CISA works with people on the front lines of elections.
 - o They collaborate with state and local governments, election officials, federal partners, and vendors.
 - o They help manage risks to the nation's election infrastructure.
 - o They provide guidance, products, and voluntary services to state and local election offices to support the election infrastructure community.
- Read more about [CISA election security support](#) or [contact your CISA regional office representative](#).
- [Read about what you'll need to request your .gov domain](#).

Start a .gov domain request

Domain security best practices

Domain management can ensure a safe experience for your users and your organization. Take the following steps to manage your .gov domain securely.

Add a security email for public use

- A security email allows the public to report observed or suspected security issues on your domain. Security issues could include notifications about compromised accounts, unsolicited email, routing problems, or potential vulnerabilities.
- Sign in to the [.gov registrar](#) to add or update the security email for your .gov domain.

Security emails are made public

- Security emails are made public in [our published data](#) and in the .gov WHOIS. WHOIS (pronounced “who is”) is a standard used by registrars to publish the contact and name server information for registered domains.

Managing a security email in your organization

- The people who can access messages sent to a security email should be capable of evaluating or triaging security reports for your entire domain. They recommend:
 - o Using a team email address, not an individual’s email
 - o Using a common, even guessable name, like security@<domain.gov> to make it easier to report
 - o Adding the security email to your website and in other organizational communications so it’s easy for the public to know where to report issues

Develop a vulnerability disclosure policy

- Consider having a vulnerability disclosure policy (VDP). A VDP outlines how your organization prefers to receive vulnerability reports, what you’ll do with them, the scope of systems covered by the policy, and legal authorization for those who follow the policy and report in good faith. Once complete, put your vulnerability disclosure policy online.
- The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released a [directive to federal agencies](#) that requires VDPs. The directive offers a comprehensive framework for how your organization could support a VDP.

[View our vulnerability disclosure policy.](#)

Preload your domain

All newly registered .gov domains are “preloaded,” or added to the [HSTS preload list](#). HSTS, or HTTP Strict Transport Security, is a simple standard that protects website visitors by:

- Ensuring their browsers always enforce an HTTPS connection
- Eliminating the ability to click through a certificate error

After a domain is on the preload list, modern web browsers will enforce HTTPS connections for all websites on the domain.

They intend to preload the .gov top-level domain. In the meantime, they recommend preloading .gov domains that haven't yet been (a required action for federal agencies under the [Federal Zero Trust Strategy](#)).

Use DMARC to prevent email impersonation

It shouldn't be easy to impersonate the government, but scammers can spoof your domain to send fake messages that appear to come from your organization. DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance) makes it difficult for malicious actors to spoof your domain in email.

DMARC lets you tell mail servers what to do when they get a message from your domain, giving you tight control. Even for domains that don't send email, establishing a strong DMARC policy protects your organization's reputation and the public from falling for deceptive tactics.

[View CISA's guide to DMARC and email authentication.](#)

Sign up for CISA's Cyber Hygiene service

[Cyber Hygiene](#) is a free vulnerability scanning service offered by CISA. Cyber Hygiene helps you secure your internet-facing systems and adopt modern security best practices.

[Visit CISA's Cyber Hygiene page](#) for more information.

Join free cybersecurity group

Join the free [Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#) (MS-ISAC). CISA designated MS-ISAC as the [key resource for cyber threat prevention, protection, response, and recovery](#) for all U.S. state, local, tribal, and territorial governments. MS-ISAC helps ensure the resiliency of government systems through coordination, cooperation, and communication.