

Document Code No.: ITG-P-22-1

Title: Domain and Subdomain Policy

Affected Agencies: All County Agencies

Authorities: KCC 2A.380.200

Keywords: web, website, domain name, subdomain name, DNS

Sponsoring Agency: Department of King County Information Technology



King County

Chief Information Officer signature: _____

DocuSigned by:
David Mendel

Date signed and effective: 10/6/2022

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I. Purpose:

This policy establishes the naming convention for domain and subdomains for King County managed websites and applications, including multi-jurisdictional sites and applications.

II. Applicability and Audience

This policy applies to King County Workforce Members who are implementing new King County websites and applications.

[Note: IT Governance Policies apply to the Executive Branch. Applicable to independently elected agencies as baseline policy requirements.]

III. Definitions

- A. "Domain Name System (DNS)": A worldwide system that translates server addresses (a series of numbers like 123.231.133.221) to human-readable domain names (like <https://kingcounty.gov>) that allows people to access websites.
- B. Domain name: The human-readable name for a website (E.g. <https://kingcounty.gov>). It is purchased by (i.e. King County) and registered with the DNS so that any computer can get to it.
- C. Subdomain name: A unique modifier King County can add to our domain name without having to purchase a new domain name. It comes before the domain name (e.g. <https://roadsviewer.kingcounty.gov>).

IV. Policy

- D. King County Information Technology shall be the owner of the countywide Domain Name System (DNS), including all domain and subdomain names.
- E. <https://kingcounty.gov> shall be the default standard domain name.
- F. Agencies, departments, and multi-jurisdictional sites controlled by King County shall request exemption from the policy using the associated exception request form.
- G. All domains or subdomains that have been previously exempted are automatically exempted from this policy.

V. Implementation Plan

- A. This policy becomes effective on the date that it is signed by the Chief Information Officer. The Business Management Council is responsible for implementation of this policy.
- B. Organization leadership is responsible for communicating this policy to the management structure within their respective organizations and other appropriate parties.

VI. Maintenance

Document Code No.: [Note: Assigned by IT Governance before submitting to CIO for approval]

Title:

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A. This policy will be maintained by KCIT or its successor agency.

This includes, but may not be limited to:

1. Interpretation of this policy
2. Ensuring this policy content is kept current
3. Recommending updates to this policy and related resources
4. Developing an escalation and mitigation process if an organization is not in compliance
5. Assisting organizations to understand how to comply with this policy, or request exceptions
6. Monitoring annual compliance

B. This policy will automatically expire five (5) years after its effective date. A new, revised, or renewed policy will be initiated by KCIT/Design and Civic Engagement, or its successor agency prior to the expiration date.

VII. Consequences for Noncompliance

A. Potential risk of site visitor's trust and security

1. Unfamiliar domain names can weaken visitor's trust.
2. If visitors become accustomed to unpredictable domain names, they could become more vulnerable to criminal/spoofed websites.

B. Risk of diminished effectiveness

3. New domain names are currently not trusted by search engines and are likely to receive less search traffic than an established, domain name.

C. Potential for confusion, inappropriateness, or embarrassment

1. A domain name that would be best used for one high profile organization, could already be used by a less visited, or less intuitive organization.
2. Visitors can be confused by names that don't clearly indicate the site purpose, or that can be difficult to remember.
3. Domain names with merged words or acronyms can appear to spell unintended words. Exception requests need to be reviewed for appropriateness, user-friendliness, and to avoid confusion or naming conflicts.

VIII. Appendices:

A. Domain and Subdomain Policy Exception Request Form

1. Available via <https://kingcounty.gov/domainexception>