

wi.gov and .gov Email Domains

Wisconsin governmental jurisdictions may use either a wi.gov or .gov email address. The .gov domain is administered at the federal level, while the wi.gov domain is administered at the state level. In both cases, the actual email accounts are managed by private email providers for a fee. These two different levels of administration each require different sign-up processes, but both provide the trusted .gov domain. The following sections (1) define terms to know (2) explain the different procedures to obtain either a .gov or a wi.gov email domain and (3) answer frequently asked questions.

Terms to Know

Domain

On the Internet, a domain consists of a set of network addresses. The domain is organized in levels. The top level identifies geographic or purpose commonality. The second level identifies a unique place within the **top-level domain** (see definition below) and is equivalent to a unique address on the Internet (an **IP address**). A domain is a name with which name server records are associated that describe subdomains or host. The domain is the portion of the email address after the @ sign.

Domain availability

The process of checking whether a domain is available or is already being used by someone else.

DNS Zone

A distinct part of the domain namespace which is delegated to a legal entity—a person, organization, or company, who are responsible for maintaining the DNS zone. A DNS zone is also an administrative function, allowing for granular control of DNS components, such as authoritative name servers.

DNS records

A DNS record is a database record used to map a URL (aka web address) to an **IP address** (defined below). DNS records are stored in DNS servers and work to help users connect their websites to the outside world. When the URL is entered and searched in the browser, that URL is forwarded to the DNS servers and then directed to the specific Web server. This Web server then serves the queried website outlined in the URL or directs the user to an email server that manages the incoming mail. The most common record types are **A** (address), **CNAME** (canonical name), **MX** (mail exchange), **NS** (name server), **PTR** (pointer), **SOA** (start of authority) and **TXT** (text record).

Email provider

Private technology company that stores email addresses and sends emails. Examples include Gmail, Outlook (MS Office 365), Yahoo, as well as local telephone companies and cable & internet providers.

IP address

IP address stands for internet protocol address; it is an identifying number that is associated with a specific computer or computer network. When connected to the internet, the IP address allows the computers to send and receive information.

TLD – Top-level domain

Top-level domain (TLD) refers to the last segment of a domain name, or the part that follows immediately after the "dot" symbol. For example, in the internet address: <https://www.google.com>, the ".com" portion is the TLD. TLDs are mainly classified into two categories: generic TLDs and country specific TLDs. Examples of some of the popular TLDs include: .com, .org, .net, .gov. The domain name gov is a sponsored top-level domain (sTLD) in the Domain Name System of the Internet. The name is derived from the word government, indicating its restricted use by government entities. The TLD is administered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a component of the United States Department of Homeland Security.

First step: municipalities decide on establishing either a wi.gov or .gov domain.

.gov domain

The U.S. General Services Agency has transitioned management of the Top-Level Domain (TLD) for the **.gov** domain to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). To make this domain more accessible for local governments, CISA has waived the annual \$400 registration fee and do not plan to reinstate it. Establishing a federal level **.gov** is done entirely through CISA's "dotgov" website. For more information on signing up visit <https://home.dotgov.gov/registration/>.

Overview of .gov process

1. Verify domain availability. <https://domains.dotgov.gov/dotgov-web/registration/whois.xhtml>
2. Review .gov domain requirements. <https://home.dotgov.gov/registration/requirements/>

3. Prepare and send the authorization letter to registrar@dotgov.gov.
4. Complete the online domain request form.

Note: Each of the above steps require multiple actions and specific and/or technical information. Be sure to review all the requirements prior to beginning the process.

wi.gov domain

The wi.gov domains are managed by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, specifically the Division of Enterprise Technology (DOA/DET). The Wisconsin Elections Commission is working with local jurisdictions to facilitate the establishment of the wi.gov domains. Once established the wi.gov domain can be used for both email accounts and websites.

wi.gov domain process

1. Choose domain name and verify domain availability
 - a. Utilize Department of Administration Division of Enterprise Technology (DOA/DET) standard **wi.gov** naming conventions to choose domain name.
 - i. Co.<name of county>.wi.gov
 - ii. ci.<name of city>.wi.gov
 - iii. tn.<name of town>.wi.gov
 1. If town domain already taken next option:
 2. tn.<nameofthetown-nameofthecounty>.wi.gov
 3. townof<nameofthetown>.wi.gov
 4. townof<nameofthetown>-<nameofthecounty>.wi.gov
 - iv. vi.<name of village>.wi.gov
 - v. Requests for exceptions to standard naming conventions will require justification and be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by DOA/DET.
 - b. Verify the domain name is available
 - i. Visit <https://toolbox.googleapps.com/apps/dig/>
 - ii. Select "A" first, then search for domain, e.g., tn.<name of town>.wi.gov
 1. This is searching for any A records for the submitted domain name
 - iii. Repeat for MX and TXT records, to search for those record types for submitted domain name.
 - iv. Domain is available if "Record not found!" for each record type.
2. Choose email provider
 - a. Initiate email domain creation with private email provider
 - i. **Note:** As each email provider will have their own unique domain verification and set up process there are not uniform standardized steps. In general, the provider will want to verify that the municipality has control over the new domain. They may do this by requiring a TXT (text) or MX (mail exchange) record be placed on the domain and then verify this record.

- b. If using Gmail or MS Office 365, custom domain job aids are available [here](#).
 - c. Obtain TXT (text) and/or MX (mail exchange) records from email provider. There may also be CNAME and/or A records to add to the domain. Your email provider should assist with identifying the appropriate records. See examples in **Appendix A**. Note:
 - i. The DNS zone is hosted on DOA/DET servers
 - ii. These DNS records are created on the DNS zone and point to the email provider's mail servers
 - iii. The email provider must at a minimum identify what MX records should be created
 - iv. DOA/DET security policy prohibits the creation of name server records for DNS zones hosted on state servers.
 - d. For **website** setup, provide the IP address where the website is hosted, i.e., where the A record will point to. The web hosting company should assist with providing this record.
3. Complete and sign the wi.gov Domain Authorization form (EL-363 available [here](#)).
 4. Send request to WEC
 - a. Domain request should be emailed to electionsdomain@wi.gov with subject line "**wi.gov email domain request for <Municipality Name>, domain.name.wi.gov**"
 - b. Request should include:
 - i. Wi.gov Domain Authorization form, completed and signed
 - ii. Requested domain name
 - iii. TXT and/or MX records, any other DNS records, or pertinent information
 5. Once request is completed by DOA/DET, WEC staff will notify the municipality.
 6. Municipality completes domain setup with email provider
 - a. Establish email boxes
 - b. Send additional email requests as needed if additional DNS (TXT/MX/CNAME/A) records are needed
 - c. Requests should be emailed to electionsdomain@wi.gov with subject line "wi.gov email domain request for <Municipality Name>, domain.name.wi.gov"
 7. Once complete, send test emails as appropriate. Verify domain and email is working as expected.
 8. Contact the WEC Help Desk to update contact information as needed.
 - a. If only updating email address, an email to elections@wi.gov from the clerk is sufficient. If additional contact information is being updated, use [EL-362 Clerk Contact Information Form](#).

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Should I go with a .gov or a wi.gov domain?

A: The decision on whether to utilize a .gov or wi.gov should be made by the municipality. In the past there was a \$400 annual fee associated with the federal .gov domains but that has been waived and there are no plans to reinstate it.

Q: I am from a small municipality and don't have IT support? Where can I get assistance?

A: The WEC cannot provide technical support regarding the transition to a .gov domain although staff does work with the Department of Administration Division of Enterprise Technology (DOA/DET) staff to establish the domains. Each email and web hosting provider should be able to minimally assist with the transition. In addition, the Wisconsin Elections Commission approved an Election Security .gov Email Domain Subgrant in February 2022 that can offset some costs associated with IT consulting.

Q: Is there a deadline or requirement to get a .gov domain?

A: There is not currently a deadline to obtain a wi.gov or .gov email domain. The WEC is reviewing policies that would require WisVote users to have an official .gov/wi.gov domain for official email communications. That policy has not been finalized nor approved. Please note that an increasing number of state and federal agencies are moving towards this domain requirement, which is why the WEC encourages all Wisconsin jurisdictions to act soon to acquire a .gov or wi.gov domain.

Q: Will DOA/DET be hosting the clerk's emails? Will they create the clerk's new email address? Can they create an alias to the clerk's current email address?

A: The DOA/DET hosts the DNS zone on its servers. The private email provider, such as Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo, manages the email service associated with the domain. The private email provider or client is where the email accounts are established.

Q: What is a domain and what is an email address?

A: The domain is tn.siren.wi.gov, the email address is clerk@tn.siren.wi.gov. See **Terms to Know** at the beginning of this document for additional definitions.

Q: What are the costs associated with changing to a wi.gov or .gov domain?

A: There are no costs associated with the domains themselves. If the municipality is currently using free email accounts, there may be costs to purchase business email accounts that will support the new domains.

Q: Can WEC recommend an IT consulting firm to assist with this process? Can WEC recommend an email provider or web hosting company?

A: WEC is not affiliated with any IT consulting companies. Marketing postcards or emails referencing .gov domain implementation are not official WEC materials and those companies are not endorsed by the WEC. Some municipalities have enlisted the assistance of IT consultants in setting up the email account(s) and obtaining the DNS records necessary for establishing a wi.gov domain. Other municipalities have done it unassisted or utilized IT staff within their own jurisdictions.

Q: Can my IT consultant contact the WEC directly on my behalf?

A: Yes, with clerk approval, the WEC staff will communicate directly with an IT consultant that is working with a municipality.

Appendix A: DNS Record examples

Example 1:

Note: For Gmail, **copy & paste** the verification code into the email for ease of use as well as including the associated screen shot.

4. Add MX records for Gmail

- a. From the **Type** drop-down list, select **MX**.
- b. In the **Name/Host/Alias** field, enter **@** or leave it blank.
- c. In the **Server/Mail Server/Value/Answer/Destination** field, enter **ASPMX.L.GOOGLE.COM.**
- d. In the **Priority** field, enter **1**.
- e. In the **Time to Live (TTL)** field, enter **3600** or leave the default value.
- f. Click **Save**.
- g. Follow these same steps to add the MX records shown in this table. Start from the top of the table and enter as many as you have room for.

MX SERVER ADDRESS	PRIORITY
ALT1.ASPMX.L.GOOGLE.COM.	5
ALT2.ASPMX.L.GOOGLE.COM.	5
ALT3.ASPMX.L.GOOGLE.COM.	10
ALT4.ASPMX.L.GOOGLE.COM.	10

Note: Each address is for a Google mail server. We provide several servers in case one becomes unavailable. Some hosts also require a trailing period at the end of the server name.

5. Get your verification code

bpj7hlhpheplx7rv7kmor6fsrxvbnw2vmbqtk3fhlauf4vmgdq.mx-verification.google.com. COPY

Example 2:

Domain			
townofmountmorris.wi.gov			
MX Records			
Host Name	Points to address or value	Priority	TTL
townofmountmorris	townofmountmorris-wi-gov.mail.protection.outlook.com	0	1 Hour
CNAME Records			
Host Name	Points to address or value		TTL
autodiscover.townofmountmorris	autodiscover.outlook.com		1 Hour
TXT Records			
TXT name	TXT value		TTL
townofmountmorris	v=spf1 include:spf.protection.outlook.com -all		1 Hour
townofmountmorris	MS=ms79913431		1 Hour

Example 3:

Type	Host	Data	TTL
A	ftp.tainter.wi.gov	47.43.22.26	
	3600		
A	tainter.wi.gov	47.43.22.52	3600
A	www.tainter.wi.gov	47.43.22.52	3600
MX	tainter.wi.gov	10 mail.s1000295-1.charter.net	3600
TXT	tainter.wi.gov	v=spf1 redirect=cp.charter-business.net	3600
CNAME	autodiscover.tainter.wi.gov	autodiscover-redirect.charter-business.net	3600

Example 4:

The screenshot shows the Microsoft 365 admin center interface. At the top left, the date and time are 1/18/22, 11:03 AM. The page title is "Microsoft 365 admin center - Add and configure domain". Below the title is a search bar and a breadcrumb trail: "Domains > Add domain". On the left side, there is a vertical list of steps: "Add domain" (selected with a blue dot), "Domain name", "Verify your domain" (selected with a blue dot), "Connect domain", and "Finish". The main content area is titled "Verify you own this domain". It contains the following text: "We detected your DNS hosting provider is: Other" with a link icon. Below this is a paragraph: "Go to your domain's registrar or DNS hosting provider, go to DNS management page for tn.janark.wi.gov, and add a TXT record that uses the values below. When finished, come back here and select **Verify** and we'll confirm you own the domain by finding the new record. This won't affect your existing services like email, and you can remove the record as soon as your domain is verified." There is a link for "Step-by-step instructions". Below are three fields: "TXT name" with the value "tn.janark (or skip if not supported by provider)", "TXT value" with the value "MS=ms27544568", and "TTL" with the value "3600 (or your provider default)".