

Department of Technology (DT) and Digital and Data Services (DDS)



# Domain Registration and Management Policy

Committee on Information Technology

October 17, 2024

**“Too often, our City government acts more like a collection of loosely affiliated departments than a unified municipal government with clear lines of accountability and oversight.”**

Mayor London Breed's August 20, 2024 Executive Directive

# Overview

We have drafted a domain management policy for the City and County of San Francisco to standardize domain registration and management.

This aims to:

- Increase trust in City websites
- Ensure website security and reliability
- Prepare the City to comply with the State Law AB1637 in 2029

# Policy development process

- August 2024: DDS and DT presented domain registration and management policy draft to the Policy Review Board for initial feedback
- September 2024: Met with PRB members to incorporate their feedback into our early draft
- October 2024: Circulated the draft policy for comment to City CIOs and incorporated suggestions
- October 17, 2024: Presented to COIT as informational item for feedback
- Refine policy to present to COIT on November 21, 2024 for finalization

# Background

# Domain names are the backbone of the internet



The DNS (domain name system) is the authority of the owner of every website. ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) regulates domain registration.

Domains must be registered and then re-registered annually.

# Current domain management status

CCSF departments and programs register their own domains. No central City registry of domains and associated programs or department services/information is available to San Franciscans.

Domain registration, maintenance and security processes are highly variable and often informal.

A recent audit estimates there are **more than 252 domains** that have been registered by City department and programs.

# Challenges with current domain management

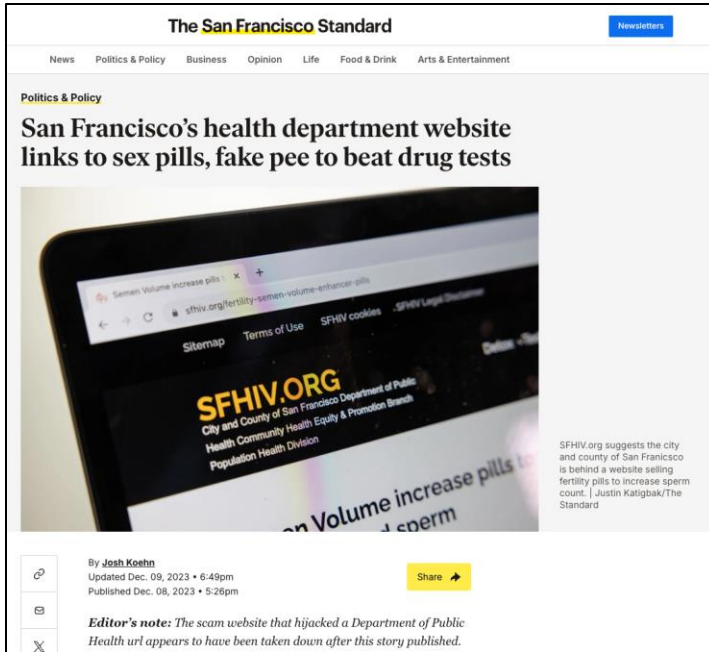
Domains that are not maintained appropriately tend to be **out of date, often have incorrect information, or haven't been updated in years**. There is reputational risk to the City with each of these out-of-date or incorrect sites. They teach both the public and search engines that **we can't be trusted**.

Domains are occasionally tied to an individual employee's email. This becomes high-risk for accidental non-renewals. When a domain is not properly managed, it can be **taken over by malicious actors, who can impersonate the City or otherwise cause reputational harm**.



# Improperly managed domains can be taken over by malicious actors.

**sfhiv.org was taken over by scammers when it was allowed to lapse in December 2023.**



The screenshot shows a news article from The San Francisco Standard. The article title is "San Francisco's health department website links to sex pills, fake pee to beat drug tests". The article is by Josh Koehn, updated on Dec. 09, 2023, and published on Dec. 08, 2023. An editor's note states: "The scam website that hijacked a Department of Public Health url appears to have been taken down after this story published." The article features a photograph of a laptop screen displaying the SFHIV.ORG website, which is a scam site selling fertility pills. The website header on the laptop reads "SFHIV.ORG City and County of San Francisco Department of Public Health Community Health Equity & Promotion Branch Population Health Division". A small text box on the right side of the article reads: "SFHIV.org suggests the city and county of San Francisco is behind a website selling fertility pills to increase sperm count. | Justin Katigbak/The Standard".

# Legislative Requirement with AB1637

In 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom signed [AB1637](#), which requires all local agencies to use websites with the .gov registration by January 1, 2029.

The federal .gov registry allows each jurisdiction to register **one .gov domain**. The City has registered **SF.gov** as its jurisdictional domain.

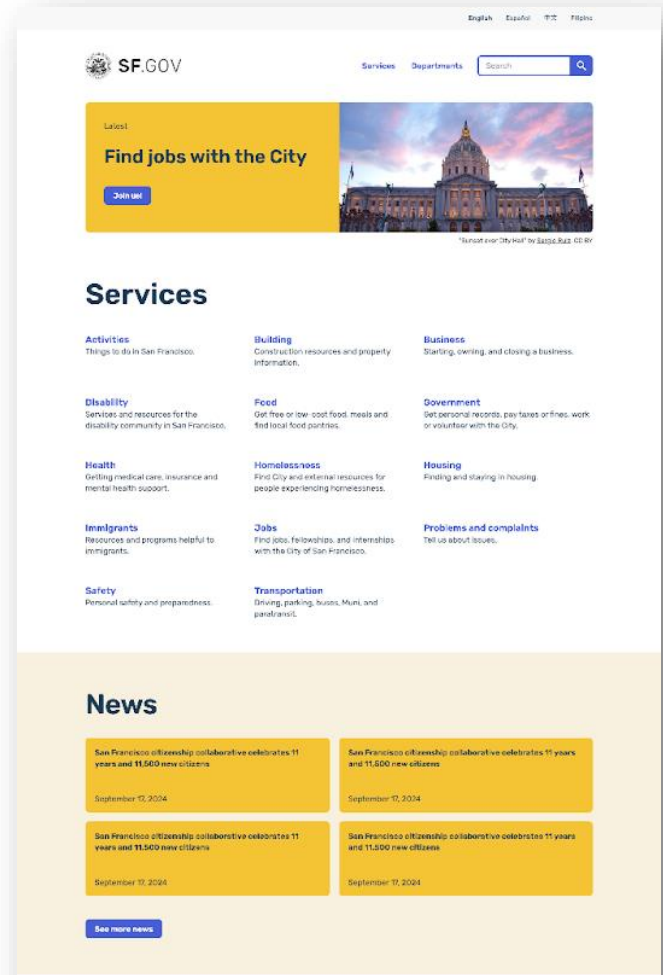
# Leveraging SF.gov root domain

# Value of SF.gov domain

- Help the City comply with State law
- Increases trust and credibility in website content
- Websites with .com and .org domains are not perceived as trustworthy or secure
- Strong SEO ranking and search results priority
- Makes websites feel more secure to the public
- Makes the public more likely to use websites as a way to connect with the City

# www.SF.gov

- Managed by DDS
- Unified design system
- Continuous CMS and product evolution
- DAIS compliant
- Human translation support
- Training and support for editors



# Subdomain standard

To support the City under a unified SF.gov domain by 2029, Digital and Data Services will create a subdomain standard for the City by February 2025.

This standard will include guidance for clear subdomain purposes and names, as well as the request process departments will follow for their potential subdomain.

This standard will go before PRB as an addition to this Domain Policy.

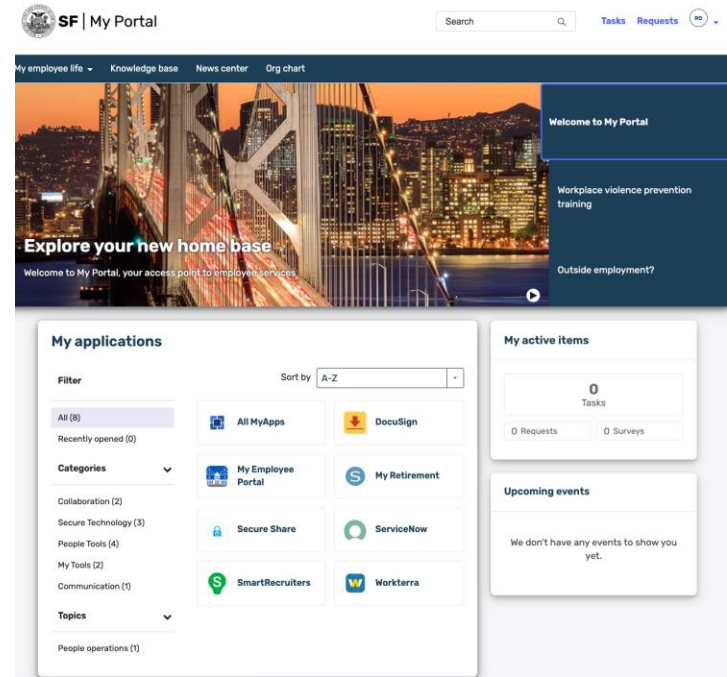
careers.sf.gov  
  
Subdomain

# Values of subdomains

- Help the City comply with State law
- Enable departments to centralize domain management while retaining separate web presences
- Clarifies purpose of the site to the public and staff
- Enables separate SEO crawls of each respective subdomain to maintain and improve search ranking across different experiences

# Public-facing subdomain uses

1. Portals and sites with a high volume of similar pages that should not live on SF.gov
2. Sites not strongly associated with the government
3. Staff-facing sites
4. Healthcare, commercial entities, arts and cultural institutions



*employees.sf.gov*



# Policy summary

# Policy Summary

1. Register and renew their existing domains with the Department of Technology (DT) by June 30, 2025.
2. Create plans for their websites and email to move to the SF.gov domain by June 30, 2026
3. Migrate websites and email domains by January 1, 2028
4. Where departments wish to request a new, non-SF.gov domain or exceptions to the policy, they will work closely with DT and DDS to determine suitability.

# Appendix

# Resources

- [ICANN Domain Name Registration Process](#)
- Canada's [DNS services management summary](#)
- [California domain registration](#)
- UC Berkeley [domain registration policy](#), including procedures and responsibilities

**Thank you!**