BAUCHI STATE GOVERNMENT DOMAIN REGISTRATION AND WEBSITE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Internet domain names have assumed greater significance in the recent times with Internet increasingly being used as an effective medium for commerce, education, governance and communication. Therefore, in order to have a larger presence in the internet space, a forward looking policy for registration under country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) will help in its proliferation as all Bauchi State indigenes, residents, government entities, public service organizations and businesses will be able to establish their online identity in the Internet space with a short and unique domain name.

A policy would mainly determine how conveniently a domain name could be registered and maintained for the large number of Internet subscribers and addresses.

This guide is developed to stress the need to populate the Internet with Bauchi State Government's presence, and to coordinate the hosting of domains for Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) including Local Governments especially as regards to security of the domain.

Since the bauchistate.gov.ng domain is a national resource for the benefit of the State Government, the .gov.ng domain is made available for all Governments Institutions from the Federal, State to the Local Government as indicated by National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). This submission draws examples from various jurisdictions including NITDA, NIRA, the United States of America, India and Australia.

1. Policy and Governance Framework
2. Domain Naming Conventions
3. Policies Governing Public Websites
4. Hosting and Web Services
5. Dispute Resolution Policy

1.0   Policy and Governance Framework

These Guidelines shall be cited as 'Bauchi State Government Domain Registration and Website management Guidelines' and shall come into effect when it is signed by the Director General of BICT, Bauchi.

1. The Domain Name Policy applies to domains at the Bauchi State Government level (e.g. bauchistate.gov.ng or other) and Local Government levels (e.g. torolga.bauchistate.gov.ng or other).

2. Domain policies have been developed to facilitate the registration and administration of domain names used by Bauchi State and Local Government jurisdictions.

3. Government domain policy is formally reviewed every 2 years by NITDA.

4. The BICT Bauchi shall be responsible for the management of all domain names and hosting belonging to an MDA or Local Government in the state.

5. NITDA manages the gov.ng policies and administration in consultation with an inter-Governmental Domain Consultative Committee comprising of representatives from all states and local governments, while BICT will manage the policies for MDAs and Local Governments within the State.

6. All new policies and major policy changes are endorsed by the Inter –Governmental Domain Consultative Committee.

7. According to NITDA, each state or local government may apply additional domain policies, standards and guidelines in assessing domain applications if such policies do not conflict with those endorsed by the Inter-Governmental Consultative Committee.

8. BICT will be the final authority for the domain name policy in Bauchi State Government. This will ensure its administration in accordance with the public interest and relevant policies that govern the use of ICT in the state.

1.1 Limitations

Domains that have content with advertising materials, political or campaign information, substantial incorrect information, inappropriate web links (i.e. to sites that violate content policy), and incorrect redirects are not in compliance or not consistent with original intent or approved purpose.

To maintain domain name integrity, eligibility is limited to qualified government organizations and programs. Having a managed domain name such with the .gov.ng assures visitors that they are accessing an official government site. A Government owned website must not have the following:

1.1.1 No non-government advertisements

A .gov.ng domain as well as any domain assigned to a government institution in Bauchi State may not be used to advertise for private individuals, firms, or corporations. It may not be used to imply in any manner that the government endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.

1.1.2 No Political or Campaign Information

The .gov.ng domain as well as any domain assigned to a government institution in Bauchi State is for the operation of government, not the political, political party, or campaign environment. No

campaigning can be done using government domains. The domain websites may not be directly linked to or refer to websites created or operated by a campaign or any campaign entity or committee. No political sites or party names or acronyms can be used. Separate websites and email on other top-level domains (TLDs), such as .com or .org, will have to be used for political activity.

1.2 Domain Name Registration Process and Hosting

Any entity or establishment wishing to register a domain under the bauchi.gov.ng Top Level Domain (TLD) should take the following steps:

1. Determine if entity or establishment is qualified to receive a domain name under BAUCHISTATE.GOV.NG by reviewing the eligibility requirements.

2. Review the domain naming conventions and ensure that the desired domain name complies with the conventions.

3. Check availability for the desired domain name.

4. Register the Domain Name requested when available.

5. Submit an Authorization Letter to BICT

6. Once the above stated Registration process is completed, the Department responsible will process the request accordingly. BICT correspondent will contact MDA/LGA if any additional information about the registration is required, prior to activation. If the registration is in order, the domain name will be placed on Active Status and the same will be notified via email.

1.3 Eligibility Requirements:

1. Allotment of gov.ng is restricted to the constituents of Federal Government of Nigeria at various levels right from Federal, State and Local Government levels.

2. Specialized projects of government which are on-going for more than a period of 18 Months from the date which the application for registration is made shall be eligible.

3. Establishments registered under the Companies and Allied Matters Act shall not be eligible for registration under the .gov.ng domain irrespective of the whether it is wholly or partly owned by the Federal, state or local government.

4. In addition to online registration, the request should also be submitted in writing in the form of an Authorization Letter. The letter should be in the specified format on the letter head of the concerned MDA/LGA.

5. Authorization Letter should be signed by the Commissioner or Permanent Secretary of the Ministry/Executive Secretary/Director-General, Chairman e.t.c.. For registration at Local Government Area, the request should come from the Local Government Chairman or Head of Administration.

6. Currently, there is no fee for domain registration under the bauchistate.gov.ng. However, all MDAs and Local Governments shall pay a sum of N250,000.00 for the initial setup of the site and hosting will attract the sum of N300,000.00 annually for renewal through BICT.

7. All MDAs and LGAs shall forward the contact details of their Administrators in their Domain Request Form.

8. Intermediaries or ISPs are not allowed to apply on behalf of any government department, for registration under this category.

9. Domain Name should conform to the Domain Naming Conventions.

10. The domain will be activated and allotted on receipt of payment and the Authorization letter and provided all the conditions given above are satisfied.

2.0   Domain Naming Conventions:

1. Domains can contain the English-language letters a through z, and the digits 0 through 9.

2. Domain names can also contain hyphens, but hyphens cannot begin or end a domain name and two hyphens together are not permitted.

3. Spaces and special characters (such as !, $, &, _ and so on) are not permitted.

4. The minimum length is 3, and the maximum length is 63 characters (excluding extension ".gov.ng").

5. Domain names are not case-sensitive.(i.e. you may use a mix of upper or lower case letters).

6. To register any third-level domain under the Bauchi State Government, entities must register the full state name or the official abbreviation of the state name similar to that used in vehicle license plate registrations.

7. According to NITDA, States are encouraged to make fourth-level domains available for third-level registration by local governments and state government departments and programs.

8. Cities and townships are encouraged to register for a fourth-level domain under a state's third-level domain to the extent such an option is available. When this option is not available, cities and townships may register a third-level domain. To register a third-level .gov domain name, cities and townships must follow and comply with the following:

9. Generic names are not allowed. (e.g. shipping.gov.ng is not allowed).

10. For domains under the State Government, the domain must be derived from the name of the State. (e.g. Office of the Accountant General can opt for a domain oag.bauchistate.gov.ng but NOT treasury.bauchistate.gov.ng)

11. One and Two letter domain names are not allowed (e.g. ab.gov.ng)

12. The generic second level names (SLDs) of .ng should not be used as third level names. (e.g. mil.gov.ng and org.gov.ng are not allowed as mil and org are generic second level names under .ng)

3.0   Policies Governing Public Service Websites

1. Establish Integral Digital Governance: A strong governance structure will help MDAs develop coherent priorities, set up lines of accountability, and satisfy the public's expectation of the best possible level of service.

2. Analytics and User Feedback to Manage Websites and Digital Services: All public facing websites and digital services should be designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions.

3. Make Information Searchable and Discoverable: Search functions are now a universal and expected website feature the public commonly uses to find information. Furthermore, search engine optimization is critical to reaching users who primarily rely on commercial search engines to find information.

4. Provide Open Data Public Engagement: Open and publicly accessible data can increase public participation in government, promote transparency and accountability, and increase government operations' efficiency and effectiveness.

5. Provide Access to Government Information on Multiple Devices: Government information and services should be readily available to the public regardless of device. Websites must, to the extent practicable, ensure that their public websites and digital services perform equally well on non-desktop devices such as mobile devices and tablets.

6. Protect Privacy: MDAs must be transparent about policies and practices with respect to Personal Identifiable Information (PII), and must provide clear and accessible notice regarding the creation, collection, use, processing, storage, maintenance, dissemination, disclosure, and disposal of PII.

7. Implement Information Security and Privacy Controls: Information technology changes rapidly and MDAs must have the flexibility to address known and emerging threats while making continuous improvements.

8. Use Secure Connections (HTTPS): An HTTPS-Only standard will eliminate inconsistent, subjective determinations across agencies regarding which content or browsing activity is sensitive in nature, and create a stronger privacy standard government-wide. Government websites that do not convert to HTTPS will not keep pace with privacy and security practices used by commercial organizations, and with current and upcoming Internet standards.

9. Use Only Approved Domains: The .gov and .mil domains are widely viewed as zones of increased trust, where the public can confidently access government information and services in a secure environment knowing that the site is legitimate and authoritative.

10. Comply with Third-Party Website and Application Requirements: Using third-party services such as social media and collaboration platforms is now a common business practice and helps to create a more robust, user-friendly, and interactive online experience.

11. Ensure Information Quality and Accuracy: The Internet enables agencies to communicate information quickly and easily to a wide audience, which, while of great benefit to society, also increases the potential harm that can result from disseminating incorrect information.

12. Use Plain Writing: Web content is most effective when it is easy to understand, find, and use.

13. Ensure Access to Mandatory Content: Laws, regulations, or other policies will occasionally mandate that agencies place certain links on their website. MDAs must respect and adhere to these statutory or executive-level mandates and incorporate these requirements in a manner that does not reduce the usability or performance of the agency's website and digital services.

14. Ensure a Consistent Look and Feel Across Websites: Common user interface components and visual styles help create a seamless transition across an agency's websites and improve the ease with which the public can find information.

4.0 Hosting and Web Services

The following guidelines shall be followed when hosting Government Website and Services:

1. All Government websites and their domains shall be hosted in Nigeria (Refer to the Regulatory Guidelines for NITDA Nigerian Content Development in ICT - 2013).

2. In the case of Bauchi State and the 20 Local Governments, administration and hosting of all Government websites shall be the responsibility of BICT.

3. Payment of such hosting and subsequent renewal shall be made through BICT by all MDAs and LGAs.

4. No government Website shall be hosted outside Nigeria unless on the Written Authorization obtained from NITDA.

5. Government Web hosting shall aim to ensure the high availability of Websites, Databases, Applications and Services.

6. Government web hosting shall provide for secure remote access through secure channels

7. BICT shall manage their web hosted applications through a secure management tool that provides control, flexibility and reliability.

8. There shall be regular back-ups of all hosted content for the purpose of ensuring business continuity in case of failure.

9. BICT shall also develop a comprehensive business continuity and disaster recovery plan.

10. BICT shall ensure that Web security strategies are put in place.

11. BICT shall implement real-time event log monitoring for critical security incidents and periodic analysis.

12. Mechanisms to monitor security-relevant policies (e.g., authentication, authorization, etc.), activity (e.g., privileged user activity) and applications (e.g., IDS, IPS, firewall, etc.) in real time should also be put in place by BICT.

4.1 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

To further improve or enhance visibility of Government Websites using Search engines, the following guidelines shall be applied:

1. Usable search results shall be incorporated on the Websites. Avoid using confusing search results by providing precise information that matches the expectations of the users.

2. All Government Institutions shall ensure that search engines search the entire website including pdf files, or clearly communicate which part of the Website will be searched. It is important to provide facility that narrows the scope of searches from a large search result by selecting relevant options.

3. Ensure the image files are labelled properly to be discoverable.

4. Ensure image elements have alternate names for to improve search and to aid accessibility.

5. Ensure that searches are not case sensitive. Disregard case sensitivity on the search when entered as search terms.

6. Provide search options on every webpage that enables the user to filter search.

5.0 Gov.ng Dispute Resolution Policy

1. In the case of conflicting name requests between an applicant and an existing gov.ng domain name registration, in the first instance the parties concerned (applicant and existing Registrant) should attempt to resolve the matter, and report to the BICT if the resolution includes a change of registration details.

2. Should a dispute not be able to be resolved between the parties within the state, this should be reported Secretary to the State Government (SSG) for further consultation and mediation if the need arises.

3. Should a dispute within Bauchi State not being able to be resolved between MDAs or LGAs and BICT, BICT shall forward the issue to NITDA for further consultation and mediation.