

Government Accountability Document – October, 2005

Communications Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report For The Fiscal Year 2004–2005

Table of Contents

Accountability Statement	3
Message From The Assistant Deputy Minister	4
Introduction	5
Department Progress and Accomplishments	
Our Goals	5
Core Business Functions	5
Priorities	6 – 8
Financial Results	9
Outcome Measures	10 – 14

Accountability Statement

The accountability report of Communications Nova Scotia for the year ended March 31, 2005, has been prepared according to the Provincial Finance Act and government policy and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against information contained in the Communications Nova Scotia business plan for the fiscal year 2004–2005.

The reporting of Communications Nova Scotia's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by agency management. We acknowledge that this report is the responsibility of Communications Nova Scotia management. To the extent possible, the report is a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the agency's business plan for 2004–2005.

The Honourable Ernest L. Fage, Minister

Howard Windsor, Deputy Minister

Message From The Assistant Deputy Minister

In the year past Communications Nova Scotia has continued to meet or exceed all of its performance targets. This has been accomplished through the talent and dedication of our staff who work hard to provide consistently high-quality communications services to our clients.

The 2004–2005 year was one of transition for Communications Nova Scotia, as we conducted a significant realignment of the agency. This resulted from an overall evaluation of our service offerings and delivery, as we seek better and more efficient ways to meet our clients' needs.

Laura Lee Langley, Assistant Deputy Minister

Introduction

This accountability report is based on the goals, priorities and outcomes set out in the 2004 – 2005 business plan of Communications Nova Scotia.

Our Goals

1. Through quality communications, help Nova Scotians understand the actions of their government.
2. Obtain the highest quality and best-value communications products and services for government.
3. Expand and strengthen internal and external communications by making communications an integral part of all business in government.
4. Enhance opportunities for economic growth in related private-sector communications fields through knowledgeable procurement of professional services.

Core Business Functions

- Communications Planning: strategic communications advise and planning
- Creative Services: service delivery and subcontracting for video, graphic design, audio, photography, editorial and electronic publishing.
- Media Services: service delivery of media monitoring, logistical support, distribution of news releases and communications support, advertising production and placement
- Publication Services: service delivery, provision and subcontracting of government printing and publishing requirements.

The purpose of this report is to provide an account of the progress that has been made in the pursuit of the objectives set forth in the 2004 – 2005 business plan. We are pleased to report the achievement of all major priorities and considerable progress toward the rest.

In addition to the plans and priorities set out in our 2004–2005 business plan, the agency has undergone a significant realignment process during the year. This involved extensive consultation with staff, including an independent audit by Heather deBert-Romily of deRomily and deRomily Consulting. The result of this process has been a streamlining of the agency structure resulting in a more efficient and cohesive, team-oriented organization.

Priorities

1. Communications Planning:

Expand agency expertise in strategic planning and marketing methods

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning

Several CNS advisors and directors participated in social marketing training in association with the Office of Health Promotion. A number of senior staff were enrolled in leadership development programs which featured segments on strategic planning, and senior management undertook preparatory work for a strategic planning exercise for Communications Nova Scotia.

Implement online technology to provide more timely communication with Nova Scotians

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning, Media Services, Creative Services, Publication services.

Recent trends in delivery of information via the internet include RSS news feed services. Employing this technology, visitors are able to subscribe to an RSS service and, instead of needing to visit a specific website in order to view news releases, the releases are distributed, and the visitor notified, automatically. This technology was implemented for the Province of Nova Scotia news service in February, 2005. In addition, Communications Nova Scotia is continually investigating technological options for providing better and more timely communications to Nova Scotians.

Promote improved internal communications by developing improved policies, procedures and information templates.

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning, Media Services.

Internal communications within departments and across government saw some improvement during this review period. Significant corporate initiatives, such as the government-wide staff survey, were communicated to staff according to procedure, which involves the distribution of information and supporting materials from the originating central office to departments through deputies and senior management, presentations and so forth. A number of departments applied new, or improved procedures for communicating business plans, budget information and other major initiatives to employees.

2. Creative Services

Strengthen focal point for CNS client service

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning, Creative Services, Media Services, Publication Services

With a realignment of CNS, the Client Services Coordinator position became a Manager of Client Services. This section remains the primary point of contact for many clients and assists departments in determining which communications tools will best serve their needs. Through the efforts of the manager, communications between work groups within CNS has been increased with the result of improved efficiency within the agency and improved customer service.

Define structure of expanded Web Support section

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning, Creative Services, Media Services, Publication Services

During the 2004 – 05 fiscal year, web support services were assessed as part of the agency realignment. An immediate need for additional resources was clear and the web support section was increased from one to two staff. This has resulted in increased ability to support our government clients as well as permitting the section more time to focus on corporate initiatives. This section works on an ongoing basis to increase the sharing of ideas and information across government in order to improve delivery of internet services to the citizens of Nova Scotia.

3. Media Services:

Play key role in professional development for CNS staff

Core Business Function supported: Communications planning, Media Services, Creative Services, Publications Services

Professional development has been a specific interest of CNS for some time and the 2004 – 05 fiscal year saw that interest continue successfully. CNS supported a number of employees at all levels of the Leadership Development Programs, from Individual Contributor to Executive. One staff was accepted for the Leadership Continuity Program and continues to be involved in this ongoing program. Notably, CNS also had one employee successfully complete a Master's Certificate Program in Project Management, through St. Mary's University.

In June, 2004 CNS hosted an agency-wide professional development day – an annual event – comprised of two half-day sessions. Total attendance for the two sessions was 69. The sessions were:

Public Service Leadership presented by Justice deputy minister Doug Keefe. Mr. Keefe developed and provides training in ethics and public service values, with a particular focus on promoting confidence in the public sector.

Promises, Promises produced by Eagles Flight Creative Training Excellence. This program focuses on team building, communication and leadership.

Strengthen emergency public information response capability

Core Business Function supported: Communications Planning, Media Services

CNS continues to work to strengthen the public information capabilities by building relationships with government, public sector and private sector colleagues; and identifying resources and technology required to work cooperatively during emergencies.

Communications Nova Scotia has developed a network of communications colleagues in the public and private sectors, which allows for better information sharing and co-ordinated messages during storms and emergency situations. Expanded use of the internet, streamlined delivery methods, and use of offsite resources allow for effective management and release of information to the media and the public.

4. Publication Services:

Expand and upgrade mix of client services to meet departments' needs

Core Business Function supported: Media Services, Creative Services, Publications Services

Printing services are constantly being reviewed both in terms of equipment and service demands. The various Queen's Printer locations continue to feature fully networked digital print and scanning capabilities. During 2004 – 05 existing equipment was upgraded to provide new features, and staff received training on the new features. In addition, there was a notable increase in the volume of document scanning – particularly by the Department of Justice. This resulted in an expansion of service hours to accommodate the high demand.

Financial Results

Communications Nova Scotia - Budget Expenditures by Core Business 2004-05		
Core Business	Authorized Budget	Actual Expenditures
	\$ Thousands	\$ Thousands
Communications Planning/Administration Executive Director's Office	276.6	282.0
Media Services Administration, Communications Support, Advertising	2,277.0	2,404.0
Creative Services Administration, Graphics/Editorial, Photo/Video/Multimedia	2,255.4	2,358.0
Publication Services Queens Printer, Print Production	5,992.8	6,782.0
Communications Services	3,228.6	3,698.0
Total - Gross Current	14,030.4	15,524.0
Total - Program Expenses net of Recoveries	3,650.0	3,350.0
Salaries and Benefits	5,852.26	6,034.0
Funded Staff (FTE's)	95.1	95.3

Authority: \$3,650,000

Actual: \$3,350,000

Variance: \$300,000

In 2004 – 2005, Communications Nova Scotia had an approved budget allocation of \$3,650,000. Actual net 2004 – 2005 expenditures totaled \$3,350,000 (92 % spent). Savings were realized through CNS divisional expenditure control related to professional services and general operating accounts (IT hardware purchases, equipment leases and repairs, etc.).

Performance Measures

Measure: 80% compliance by departments using the standard communications plan and process resulting in a reduced frequency of requests sent to departments for clarification.

The desired outcome is that communications plans meet the needs of and are easily understood by clients, including TPB and members of Executive Council.

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us that there is a high degree of consistency in the approach to communications planning across government.

Where are we now?

This target has been achieved.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

We will continue to look for ways of improving communications planning, and ensuring that improvements are shared so that all communications staff, and their clients, can benefit.

Measure: Number of departments and agencies with plans linked to the corporate communications context.

The desired outcome is that communications plans are prepared within the corporate context.

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us about the coherence of government communications; the extent to which audiences are hearing messages that are consistent with overall priorities and messages of government.

Where are we now?

80% - 90% of department and project communications plans are linked to the priorities of government.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Continued linkage of communications plans to corporate agenda.

Measure: Improved interaction between communication staff and business delivery entities within departments and agency.

The desired outcome is awareness of the range of communications services available through CNS and a high level of client satisfaction.

What does the measure tell us?

The measure reflects extent to which government employees who have need of communications services are aware of the range and quality of services provided through CNS.

Where are we now?

Communications Nova Scotia organized an open house during the fall of 2004, which was attended by over a 150 government employees, a sizable number of whom indicated surprise at the range of services provided by the agency. CNS also established a client support/project management position, for trouble-shooting problems that arise on projects. As a client survey was not undertaken during this period, however, there is no quantitative data to measure the impact of these initiatives.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

High levels of awareness and satisfaction among government clients.

Measure: Strengthening skills of generalists giving a stronger capacity for diversity in assignments.

The desired outcome is “More effective communication of government information to Nova Scotians.”

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us that CNS is able to quickly respond to the shifting needs and priorities of government in the assignment of staff.

Where are we now?

Virtually all of the directors, advisors and officers employed by CNS demonstrate the requisite skills and flexibility to perform the full range of activity within their present assignments and qualify them for assignments with other client departments. During this review period about 30% of Communications Planning staff were assigned to new departments in accordance with overall government need.

CNS continues its practice of identifying developmental opportunities for staff during performance appraisals and confirming client satisfaction with deputy ministers and other senior management clients. The agency continues to plan and invest in professional development for all of its employees.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

In our inexorable pursuit of a workforce of prodigious and protean talents CNS will continue to invest in professional development of staff.

Measure: A deeper pool of communication specialists to assist with training and development of communication generalists; and to offer expert communication advice in key areas.

The desired outcome is “More capacity to offer specialized communication response in specific areas.”

What does the measure tell us?

This measure indicates the capacity of CNS to provide expert advice to government on key areas and to train staff with existing resources.

Where are we now?

CNS staff attended national conferences on internal communications and emergency communications. In February 2005, CNS worked with the Emergency Measures Organization to provide the first Emergency Public Information course to help train first-responders and those who will be responsible for public information.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Continued development of expertise in these areas.

Measure: Accurate Contact List and Best Practices Report

The desired outcome is “Improved and consistent communications planning for emergency situations.”

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us that the province is equipped to achieve consistent and effective communications planning for emergency situations.

Where are we now?

Communications Nova Scotia has developed a network of communications colleagues in the public and private sectors, which allows for better information sharing and co-ordinated messages during storms and emergency situations. Expanded use of the internet, streamlined delivery methods, and use of offsite resources allow for effective management and release of information to the media and the public.

In February 2005, CNS, in co-operation with EMO, offered the first Emergency Public Information course to help train first-responders and those who will be responsible for public information. Successful communications response for three significant snow storms in the past year.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Recognized within government and among emergency service providers as an expert and leader in emergency communications.

Measure: Improvement in expense to recovery ratio in the production of government printing assets

2003 – 04 1::0.85

Target 1::0.87

Achieve 1::0.88

This measure relates to publication services core function of delivering quality government publications at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. The desired outcome is “Efficient, productive use of government printing assets.”

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us how efficiently we are using our in-house printing assets. The higher the recovery ratio, the more we are doing for less. This measure is an indication that efficiencies in our in house printing are continuing to improve.

Where are we now?

Queen’s Printer continues to operate three fully networked digital printing and scanning locations in Halifax. This year a machine was removed from the department of Natural Resources.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

We have continued to monitor our clients' needs and technology developments in order to be responsive to changes in the demands for our services. We will continue to ensure that government receives the best possible value for its printing needs.

Measure: The number of publications being considered for co-publication.

The desired outcome is “Increased support for local commercial publishing companies.”

What does the measure tell us?

That there are a significant number of government publications that could be considered for co-publication.

Where are we now?

During the 2004 – 05 fiscal year, we continued to help support local publishers by offering co-publishing opportunities. Further promotion of co-publishing is needed and has been identified as a role that requires dedicated attention.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Management of co-publishing opportunities has been moved from Communications Nova Scotia to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. Communications Nova Scotia will work with the director of co-publishing in Tourism, Culture and Heritage so that potential opportunities for co-publishing continue to be identified.