Communications Nova Scotia
Service Standards

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Communications Nova Scotia Service Standards

Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) provides a complete range of professional communication services to provincial departments, agencies, boards, and commissions.

As the government's full-service agency, CNS has the authority to manage and deliver communications for government, under Corporate Administration policy and procedures approved by Treasury and Policy Board. CNS is also responsible for the provincial brand.

CNS measures client satisfaction as part of its annual business plan. An overall Client Satisfaction Survey is managed by Client Services on behalf of the agency on a three-year rotational basis.

Our Service Promises

The agency strives to provide the highest-quality and best-value communications products and services to government, and to make communications an integral part of all business in government.

1. Our business is guided by our mission statement and the five core public service values: respect, integrity, diversity, accountability, and the public good.

2. We act honestly, ethically, and professionally.

3. We respond promptly after receiving your request for service, advice, or information. Each of our business units have specific standards relating to service delivery. For details contact individual business units or Client Services.

4. We provide, to the best of our knowledge and ability, information that is complete, accurate and current.

5. Your privacy is respected. We follow federal and provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy guidelines.

6. We adhere to the provincial Procurement Services guidelines.

7. We provide an avenue to receive your feedback.

Standard Practices

Clear service standards help shape client expectations. Adherence to the standards, proper project management, and regular client communication help ensure that CNS meets its client satisfaction targets.

The following Service Standards guide all units of CNS, outlining service expectations and accountabilities and provide a basis for client feedback:

- Ongoing communications with clients throughout the project ensures that clients are kept up to date on project status.

- Project scheduling and estimates are provided to clients in a timely manner.

- CNS conducts all communications with clients with fairness, respect, integrity, flexibility, and professionalism.

- Consultation with clients is encouraged, but work begins only after a service request form is received.

- Work is done in-house whenever possible. When not, CNS provides advice and assistance with selecting a private-sector supplier from the Communications Services Standing Offer based on project, budget, timing, subject specialty, and personal suitability.

- All service request forms are entered into the CNS corporate system. Project leads enter all projects and ensure that up-to-date information is added, including milestones, billing, all communications dealing with the project (i.e., between client, vendor, project lead), and other information.

- CNS manages the Communications Services Standing Offer and adheres to Procurement guidelines and policies.

- Staff keep up-to-date on industry trends, technical skills, and techniques related to their areas of expertise to ensure delivery of high quality services and products.

- Clients can provide feedback through several channels:
  - by responding to the electronic client satisfaction survey
  - by contacting Client Services
  - by contacting the project lead
  - by contacting the department communications team

- Debriefs are held with Client Services, project leads, and clients when warranted, such as at the completion of large projects or when clients are dissatisfied, to determine cause and to identify any key learnings that can be applied.

Groupwise and Voicemail

- Appointment notices are accepted or declined no later than one business day after they have been issued.

- Voice mail and email are checked regularly and responded to as soon as possible, and no later than one business day after a client has made contact.

- Voice mail boxes must never be full, and clients must always be able to leave a message.

- Out-of-office notifications are put on voice mail and emails for all absences (EDOs, vacations, etc.) and give current and appropriate contact details during absences.

Procurement, Billing, and Invoices

- On behalf of the client and government, CNS is accountable for budgets, ensuring that clients get the best value for their communications budget by completing work in-house whenever possible, by working with approved private-sector suppliers on the Communications Services Standing Offer, and by negotiating media rates with suppliers on behalf of the province.

- Explanations of invoices are provided to communications staff, managing directors, and departmental clients when requested.

- CNS follows all Procurement policies and helps clients adhere to same.

Accountabilities

We work collaboratively with our clients to provide the best products and services.

You have the right to

- be treated fairly, with courtesy and respect
- comment on the quality of our service to you

In turn, we ask that you

- are actively involved in all aspects of your project
- respond promptly, openly, and honestly when we ask you for information
- provide us with accurate and comprehensive information
- treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- abide by all legal requirements and other obligations
- help us maintain a standard of professional and ethical conduct

Client Services

Besides CNS staff assigned to departments, the first point of contact for clients is often Client Services. Client Services can provide advice, information on project time lines, explanations on process, etc. All incoming Service Request Forms are first received by Client Services. Client Services is responsible for project management, ensuring that projects are delivered on time and on budget, and pro-actively working with CNS teams and clients throughout the project. This unit also manages the Communications Services Standing Offer on behalf of government.

1. Client Services monitors incoming Service Request forms throughout the day.

2. The on-call Client Service representative calls the client within one business day of receiving the Service Request form to confirm the following details and edit the Service Request Form, if necessary:

   a. confirm what client means by selected services and see if other services are required

   b. determine if this request is part of a larger or existing project

   c. confirm quantities, review project time line with client, and confirm that the time line is achievable (using CNS project time lines and service standards as reference)

   d. confirm CC, GL, and budget

   e. advise departments of need for Ministerial Approval (when necessary) and/or Treasury Board Approval

3. Client Services informs departmental CNS staff when it appears that they may not have been consulted on a project or when a situation arises that requires their attention or support.

4. When a project is a research project or large campaign, or links to government priorities, Client Services immediately involves Marketing if they are not already involved.

5. Client Services ensures the request is created in the corporate system within one business day of receipt.

6. Client Services sends the client a confirmation email (copied to the appropriate Communications Director) with assigned project number, unit responsible for the request and when they can expect to hear from the project lead.

7. Client Services generates a Daily Requests Summary report and delivers it to the associate deputy minister, senior director, and managing directors by 4:00 pm.

8. Client Services project manages those projects that involve multiple sections. Initial meetings with the client and relevant teams are held at the beginning of the project, as soon as possible after the Service Request form is received. Timelines, project deliverables, budget, and other details are discussed and confirmed with the client and project team. Client Services acts as the liaison between the client and involved teams, ensuring one point of contact for the client.

9. Social Media Release Requests are managed by Client Services.

Ongoing project management

1. Each Client Service representative is assigned to specific departments and is responsible for tracking project status for their assigned departments.

2. The Client Service representative ensures that project leads have been assigned to all requests received.

3. Client Service representatives continue to follow projects to ensure that projects are on track, using approved service standards and project time lines as a reference, and pro-actively following up with project leads.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Angela Campbell, Manager, Client Services at CNSClientSvc@gov.ns.ca or 722-1370.

Marketing

CNS provides in-house marketing expertise for the provincial government with most of the conveniences and services of an external agency. The Marketing unit provides planning, development, and implementation of marketing strategies and initiatives to create public awareness and understanding of the priorities of government. The unit supports departmental initiatives across government by providing marketing expertise, advice, and involvement in the development and execution of marketing communications programs. The Marketing unit is responsible for managing the Provincial Visual Identity Program.

Media Buying and Placement

The Advertising unit is part of the Marketing unit. It plans, negotiates, and places most government advertisements, based on the target audience, budget, and message.

When the request is for advertising alone, the Advertising unit is the project lead. When advertising is one of several requested services, relates to government's core priorities, or is part of a larger campaign, the overall Marketing unit is the lead.

Advertising adheres to the following service standards for the projects it manages:

1. Within one business day of receiving the Service Request Form, Advertising contacts the client to confirm receipt of request and identify the project lead.

2. Advertising advises and works with the client on the necessary process and procedures required when a project needs to be outsourced for design or ad production.

3. Advertising coordinates translation of English advertisements to French, when required, by working with Acadian Affairs on behalf of clients.

4. Advertising direct debits departments via CC and GL for media buys and sends monthly statements to communications staff in departments listing all media buy projects during that one-month period.

5. Advertising advises departments of any correspondence received from media regarding special features that would be applicable to the department. The advertising unit will also liaise with media solicitations on behalf of their clients.

6. Advertising maintains a group email (advertise@gov.ns.ca), which allows for quick responses to clients.

Marketing Strategic Council

When the request is one of several requested services, relates to government's core priorities, or is part of a larger campaign, the Marketing unit is the lead and adheres to the following service standards:

1. Within one business day of receiving the Service Request Form, Marketing contacts the client to confirm receipt of request and identify the project lead.

2. Marketing advises and works with the client on the necessary process and procedures required to move forward.

Sponsorship

When the request is for a sponsorship/partnership or sponsorship activation, the Marketing unit is the lead and adheres to the following service standards:

1. Within one business day of receiving the Service Request Form, Marketing contacts the client to confirm receipt of request and identify the project lead.

2. Marketing advises and works with the client on the necessary process and procedures required to move forward.

Research

The Marketing unit coordinates qualitative and quantitative research conducted on behalf of government departments. Marketing also conducts post-campaign evaluations on behalf of government departments and agencies. Requests for research are led by the Marketing unit.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Kathleen Trott, Managing Director, Marketing, at trottkm@gov.ns.ca or 424-1056.

Communication Support Services

Communication Support edits and issues news releases that keep Nova Scotians informed about everything from traffic tie-ups on major highways to government's policies and programs. We help make sure that Nova Scotians know what's going on——even in the throes of a winter storm or in an emergency.

The unit coordinates logistical, technical, and media relations support for government events, news conferences, and ceremonies. It also helps manage government's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

1. Communication Support maintains a designated email address for client ease and convenience (mediaserv@gov.ns.ca).

2. As soon as a news release or a note to editors is received, a team member is assigned and immediately acknowledges receipt of the request, assuming full responsibility for the editorial, approval, and distribution process.

3. Communication Support works with clients to determine requirements and turn-around time, while adhering to journalistic, French-language, and government policies and procedures.

4. Communication Support considers media requirements and deadlines, and ensures that departmental/managing director approval is obtained.

5. Communication Support ensures that all news releases, notes to editors, and other materials are returned to the client within the pre-determined time frame, with all suggested edits clearly identified so the client is aware of proposed changes.

6. Communication Support ensures that all unit staff have the most recent version of the working document by copying the managing director and the mediaserv@gov.ns.ca address on all news releases and information for release to the media sent for client approval.

7. Communications Support works with the client department to feature photos and news releases on the government feature page, on Facebook, and on Twitter.

8. During a short-notice news event, Communication Support contacts local media as soon as notice is received and follows up with the notes to editors.

9. Communication Support responds to all media monitoring requests from clients as soon as received to determine the nature of request and the required deadline.

10. Communication Support works with the external media monitoring provider to ensure that requests are handled within deadline and within budget, and coverage is accurate, comprehensive, timely, relevant, and of acceptable quality.

11. Unless in an emergency or with the approval of the ADM and/or Premier's Office, no news releases are issued after 2:00 pm weekdays—except embargoed releases, traffic advisories, and public safety information.

Additional:

1. Communication Support informally contacts the president of the Press Gallery and provincial media on a regular basis to address and respond to any areas of concern, update contact lists, etc.

2. Communication Support makes required changes to distribution lists, as requested by media/clients, within 24 hours of receiving the request.

3. Communication Support contacts news organizations around the province every two years to conduct a survey on the services provided.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Carla Burns, Director of Communication Support, at mediaserv@gov.ns.ca or 424-2876.

Communications Technology

Communications Technology (CommTech) provides innovative and effective ways to raise clients' profiles on the web. The unit works with clients to determine the type of service required, tenders for that service if necessary, and provides project management guidance throughout the project.

CommTech is responsible for the government's online presence, ensuring that the provincial web guidelines and accessibility standards are met, thus providing Nova Scotians with a consistent online experience.

Note: Time lines can be dependent on response times by CIO who manage servers, technology, and supplier access. Clients can expect IT requests to take several days to weeks to be fulfilled, although such requests can usually be worked on in parallel with internal or external development.

1. Within 24 hours of receiving the Service Request, the assigned project lead calls the client to discuss project details (deadlines, budget, scope, etc). The project lead works with the client and gives strategic advice on how best to proceed.

2. A consultation will take place with an in-house project manager. Based on this consultation it will be determined what private-sector services will be brought in to fulfill the request.

3. The project lead helps the client with supplier selection, getting quotes from Communications Services Standing Offer vendors, and following Procurement guidelines and policies.

4. The project lead meets with the client (and supplier if applicable) to discuss project goals, budget, deliverables, time lines, standards, and guidelines and to clarify all preliminary details and procedures needed for the early stages of the project (i.e., web space provisioned and access provided). In this phase the project lead will also ensure that the internet product(s) created are in line with government marketing and technological guidelines.

5. The CommTech project lead remains informed about the progress of the project, working with the supplier and client to review early concepts and builds of the websites to ensure standards and guidelines are being followed.

6. CommTech proactively notifies all parties if something may delay a project's milestones, and works to get back on schedule or modify the delivery date while meeting client's needs.

7. CommTech requires that all projects comply with the Government of Nova Scotia Web Guide (gov.ns.ca/cns/web-guide/), privacy policy (gov.ns.ca/govt/privacy), and security standards.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Andrew Barss, Manager, Communications Technology at commtech@gov.ns.ca or 424-2816.

Creative Services (Graphic Design and Editorial Services)

The Graphic Design and Editorial Services units, collectively known as Creative Services, provide visual and editorial communication expertise to government departments and agencies.

Graphic Design services include, but are not limited to, designing reports, brochures, posters, exhibits, signage, and corporate government initiatives, and administration of the Provincial Visual Identity Program.

Editorial services include, but are not limited to, writing, copy editing, substantive editing, plain language consulting, issuing ISBNs (International Standard Book Numbers), and maintaining the CNS Style Guide for Publications.

Design and Edit staff work closely with other industry suppliers (signage and exhibit, print) and with private-sector suppliers on the Communications Services Standing Offer to provide best value for all services.

1. Once a Service Request form has been received by the Creative Services team, a project lead is assigned within one to two days.

2. The project lead creates a file in the CNS Corporate System. The file is updated regularly so Client Services is aware of the project's standing.

3. The project lead calls the client within two days of being assigned to the project to discuss project scope, audiences, goals, time lines, and budget.

4. Project needs are assessed to determine best approach. When possible, projects are completed in house.

5. When it is determined that a private-sector supplier will be used for a project, the project lead helps the client with supplier selection, getting quotes from Communications Services Standing Offer suppliers and following Procurement guidelines and policies.

6. Project scheduling and estimates are delivered to the client in a timely manner to meet project deadlines, as promptly as information is available.

7. Project leads ensure regular communication with the client during a project by e-mail, phone, or in person.

8. Design project leads ensure that all final art files are stored so they can be readily recovered for clients who require reprints.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Bill Westheuser, Director, Creative Services at westheub@gov.ns.ca or 424-4977.

Image Services

The Image Services unit provides professional image services for various mediums including print, websites and webcasts, television, video, radio and audio, and other multimedia. The unit maintains a photo studio, an in-house production facility that high definition production equipment, three edit suites, and an audio recording suite.

Photography

1. Within 24 hours, the photography unit confirms receipt of a service request with the client. If possible, the assigned photographer is confirmed at that time.

2. Photography will work with clients in the pre-planning phase to identify images with "longer shelf lives" than the specific event or project.

3. Photography remains mindful of quick turnaround times required by the media and ensures that time lines are met.

4. A standard turnaround time of two days is given for jobs that do not have a strict or rush deadline.

5. If there are anticipated cost implications for rush jobs (less than two days), this is communicated to the client.

6. Photography monitors projects assigned to private-sector suppliers for quality and deadlines.

7. Photography staff manage the online visual library, which is accessible from any computer within government. These images may be shared within government. Photography staff are available for questions or search help that may arise.

8. Photography's studio may be used for portraits, still life, and small commercial or copy work.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact the Photography unit at CNS - Photo@gov.ns.ca or 424-6790

Video Production

1. Video production staff follow-up with the client within one to two days (in the cases of DVDs, requests for footage, social media releases) or within three days (for larger or more involved projects) from receipt of a Service Request Form to confirm details, including scheduling, quantities, specifications, audience, and special requirements.

2. Video production staff work with clients to determine the intended use and to identify an audience for images, keeping in mind the shift in technology and social media.

3. New projects are prioritized against existing projects and duties and evaluated on type of project, budget, and time line.

4. Whenever possible, projects are completed in house. When a private-sector supplier is required, Video Production helps identify an appropriate supplier from the Communications Services Standing Offer (including managing any RFPs, gathering quotes, evaluations, etc.) and remains involved in the project to ensure milestones are met, budget is followed, and client is satisfied. Video production ensures that all master tapes are received from the vendor.

5. Clients are advised of quotes, budget estimates, and schedules as soon as information is available.

6. All projects are monitored to ensure high production values, budget management, and all deadlines are met.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Video Production at CNS - Video Production@gov.ns.ca or 424-3996.

Queen's Printer

The Queen's Printer produces and distributes high-quality professional documents, quickly and at high volumes. Queen's Printer also procures promotional and specialized printing from external suppliers using government's sustainable procurement policies.

1. Once a Service Request form has been received at the Queen's Printer, the unit assesses the project needs and identifies whether it can be best handled in-house or via a private-sector supplier suited to the project needs (specifications, cost, timing, etc.). A project lead is assigned within 24 hours.

2. The project lead creates a file in the CNS Corporate System and updates the file regularly.

3. Consultation and advice is provided to the client regarding product selection and Sustainable Procurement policies. These policies help the client assess the best value, environmental sustainability, and the possible use of locally made products.

4. For promotional products, QP works with the client, the CNS department contact, and CNS's marketing division to help determine the best strategic approach to meet program objectives and also meet Sustainable Procurement and other government policies.

5. The project lead identifies possible barriers to on-time delivery and communicates that to the client, project manager, and Client Services as soon as possible so client expectations and department work schedules can be managed accordingly.

6. Queen's Printer staff work closely with Creative Services staff, clients, and suppliers regarding print specifications, print tendering, proofing, and in-house print projects.

7. A quality control check is completed and electronic files closed in a timely fashion, allowing clients to be billed and suppliers paid promptly.

8. Queen's Printer works with creative services staff and suppliers to ensure that all final files are appropriately stored so they can be readily recovered for clients who require reprints.

If you have any questions about these standards, contact Office Administrator Najah Ibrahim at ibrahina@gov.ns.ca or 424-2927.