

Brand Standards

Nova Scotia Government

June 2017



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Communications Nova Scotia
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Introduction

PURPOSE

This guide describes the essential features of the new Nova Scotia government brand. Government staff should find this a useful reference tool. This information will be also be available online in a format useful to external service providers.

The Nova Scotia government brand is administered by Communications Nova Scotia (CNS). All government departments and agencies must consult with CNS to apply the brand appropriately in all printed and electronically generated medias.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

A brand is much more than a name and symbol. A brand is the essence or promise of what will be delivered or experienced. A brand requires continuous and careful management to thrive and grow. A good brand delivers a clear message, promotes credibility, motivates the intended audience, and encourages brand loyalty.

WHAT IS A VISUAL IDENTITY?

A visual identity is an important part of the brand. It encapsulates and conveys the symbolic meanings that cannot be imparted through words alone, using visual elements such as logos, photography, and colour palettes. A well-managed visual identity consistently presents a set of visual standards associated with a brand. A consistent approach to the application of visual identity increases recognition and credibility.

Section One / Brand Concept

NOVA SCOTIA'S GOVERNMENT BRAND

1.1 THE CORE CONCEPT BEHIND OUR BRAND

The Ignition Point: The heart, spark, and spirit that drives us forward.

The Nova Scotia government brand presents the spirit of what the province and its government stand for in a way that will resonate with Nova Scotians. For Nova Scotians, home is where the heart is and where everything begins. Nova Scotia is the place where fresh new ideas are sparked by the meeting of diverse perspectives that inevitably lead to innovation and a brighter future.

Nova Scotia is a meeting place, or ignition point, that sparks innovation and prosperity. This is the focus of the new brand. The brand should present a strong image of a diverse and resilient people, poised to take on the challenges of the time we live in.

Our provincial brand takes the visual language of today and uses it in a unique way. This approach gives the new brand a current feel, presenting Nova Scotia as a leader that is in sync with today's trends. The combination of dynamic shapes presented in this new direction are softened by the use of strong professional photography capturing the people, place, and spirit of this province.

The new brand presents the essence of Nova Scotia's unique story—an authentic story that shows Nova Scotia igniting the sparks of new ideas and new opportunities.

Maintaining a strong brand requires attention to quality, consistency, and authenticity.

1.1 (a) Quality

Quality of communications affects how that communication is perceived. Maintaining professional quality in all governments communications is part of the responsibility given to CNS. Standards for visual and verbal communications are part of the provincial brand. The brand requires that design, photography, and illustration are of a professional quality and produced by professionals specializing in these areas.

CNS manages a database with a large selection of professional photographs that are used by all government departments. CNS also has photographers on staff to help collect new images that meet the needs of specific projects.

CNS also assigns project consultants to project requests to facilitate the production process and monitor the quality of the final products.

1.1 (b) Consistency

All successful brands depend on the consistent application of the visual identity standards. Consistency in our brand messages tells our audiences that we are organized and credible. Consistency also makes it easier for our audiences to know who is sending the messages.

To be sure that communications from government are clearly identified as such, and as immediately as possible, the provincial mark is now used without departmental identifiers in most situations. Unique identifiers for programs within government departments are being phased out. Using many program logos, wordmarks, and other unique identifiers conveys a fractured image of government.

Very few exemptions are allowed. If a group in government believes there is a reason to consider an exemption, they should consult with their communications director. Applications are made to CNS for evaluation. The exemption form is available online at iweb.cns.gov.ns.ca/service/login

Consistency should also be applied in our approach to writing. The government's style standards should be followed to maintain a consistent writing standard. An editorial style sheet is included in the appendices for quick reference.



1.1 (c) Authenticity

The audience for this brand is primarily Nova Scotians. When they see identifiable locations from their own province or pictures of people from their own community, they know that the communication is authentically Nova Scotian. Communications from the province should avoid the use of generic stock photography, because it makes the communication less credible to our audience.

1.1 (d) Brand Voice

These characteristics should be evident in all forms of communication in all mediums.

· Credible · Clear · Accessible · Helpful ·

1.2 OUR VISUAL IDENTITY

The provincial government's visual identity was first developed and approved by Cabinet in 1982, and like the province's brand, it is an evolving program. Originally it was a standard with strict guidelines outlining the proper use of the provincial identifiers, including the provincial logo, Nova Scotia's Coat-of-Arms, Shield, House of Assembly crest, and flag. Today it has evolved to include a broader set of guidelines that influence design, photography, and other aspects of the visual identity that support our brand. Updated standards are being applied to all provincial departments and agencies.

The visual components of the new brand are complex and dynamic, making it possible to be flexible enough to express several different looks while still appearing related under one brand. The visuals in this new look are designed to reinforce the concept of the ignition point. With a complex underlying foundation, the graphics are expected to be boiled down to present complex messages in clear, simple visual language. This strategy conveys the message that government is open and approachable.

The Province of Nova Scotia's visual identity includes the provincial logo, guidelines for use of grids, a colour palette, and standards for photography and typography, and their appropriate application in different mediums.

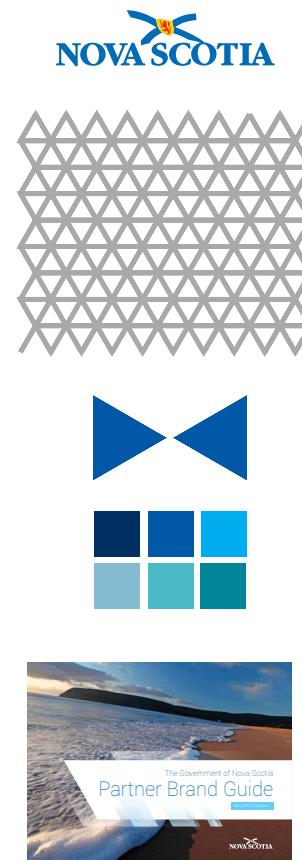
The brand continues to use the provincial logo.

The grid provided with this visual identity is derived from the saltire (St. Andrews Cross in our provincial flag). The saltire grid communicates a dynamic visual direction for a brand that aspires to be an ignition point for progress. This grid will be used primarily for high-impact graphics. As with all foundational grids, it is designed to enhance brand messages, not to overwhelm them.

The blue colour palette reinforces the sense of place we have in Nova Scotia, making the connection to the sea and the blue saltire in our flag. Other colours are used secondarily, but the blue is the dominant colour.

Photography should be professionally produced here in Nova Scotia to reinforce the message that we are telling our own authentic story.

These standards are outlined in more detail in Section 2 of this document.



1.3 OUR LOGO

The provincial logo is an important part of the Nova Scotia government brand. It was created in its current form about 20 years ago and continues to be an effective identifier for the province. Other symbols such as the provincial Coat of Arms and the Crest are used less frequently in very specific situations to represent the province.

The provincial logo combines the provincial flag and the province's name. The flag of Nova Scotia includes a blue saltire on a white background, which is the reverse of the colours used on the Scottish flag. Nova Scotia, Latin for New Scotland, uses this saltire (also known as the St Andrew's Cross) to symbolize the link between Nova Scotia and Scotland.

At the centre of the saltire, the flag bears the provincial shield, a gold shield with a red lion rampant surrounded by a loyal double tressure (a double border decorated with fleurs-de-lis). Nova Scotia's flag is the oldest provincial flag in Canada.

Standards for the logo are outlined in more detail in Section 2 of this document.



Scottish Flag



Blue Saltire



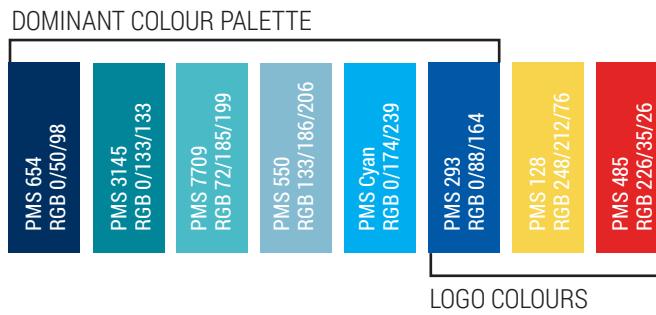
Ignition Point

Section Two / Brand Components

THE VISUALS

2.1 DESIGN

Good design enhances communications by increasing the clarity and credibility of the message. Colour, typography, and the grid are three key components used to build visual communications. In keeping with the need to maintain a consistently professional appearance for all of our public-facing communications, a professional designer should be involved. To be sure this requirement is met, project leaders must consider this phase seriously, setting aside time and budget for design.



2.1 (a) Colour

Blues dominate our colour palette. Colour theorists identify trustworthiness, sincerity, efficiency, and tranquility as positive attributes commonly associated with blue. Three categories of colours are used in this brand—the dominant blue colour palette, the colours associated with the provincial logo, and secondary highlight colours that will be added based on the specific needs of individual communications. The secondary colours are not included in this document because their use will be for limited and specific purposes.

The standard colours for the provincial logo are one category of colours that are included in the brand and are governed by a slightly different set of standards for use because they are associated with the provincial logo, flag, and crests.

The dominant colour palette includes a few different shades of blue and is expected to be further expanded by the use of transparencies and tints.

All three palettes together must be flexible enough to be adapted to messages that require different tones. For many subjects a palette dominated by blue is too cool. Balancing this coolness with warmth will require the frequent use of professional photography and the occasional use of other colours.

Section 3 includes examples of colour applications in each medium category to provide further guidance.

2.1(b) Typography

The Nova Scotia government has a responsibility to make communications as widely accessible as possible. For this standard to be met, the typography used should not only communicate through its aesthetic but should also support ease of reading for all of our citizens.

To satisfy these criteria the typefaces Roboto, Roboto Condensed, and PT Serif were selected. They provide a range of weights in forms that promote maximum flexibility and legibility, for the widest range of applications, while still projecting a contemporary style that conveys the right tone. These fonts are also “open source” fonts that are available online free of charge, making them as accessible and user friendly as possible.

Roboto (available in 12 fonts)

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Roboto Condensed (available in 6 fonts)

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

PT Serif (available in 4 fonts)

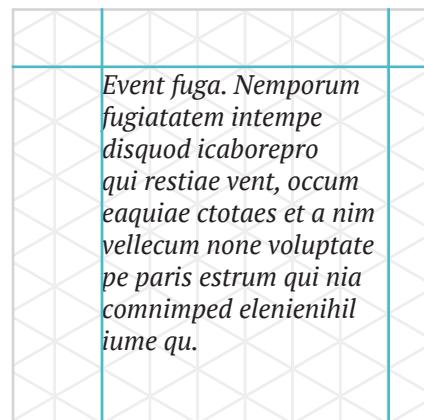
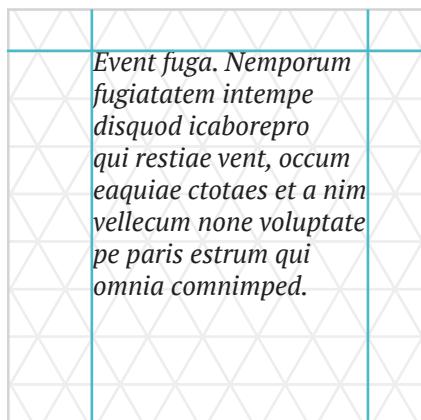
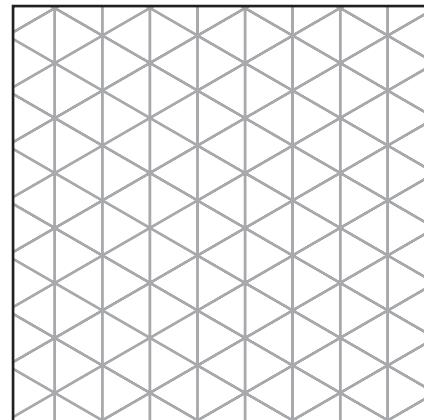
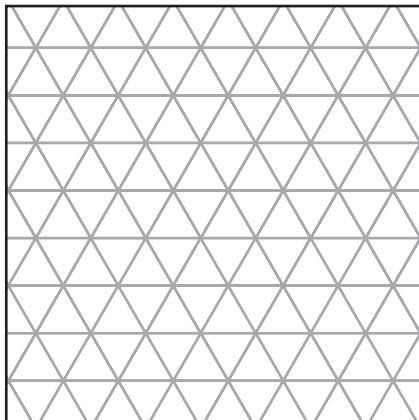
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

2.1 (c) Grid

While the grid is a support system and not a graphic in its own right, it is the foundation on which the new look and feel is built.

An isometric grid, or **saltire grid** ($30^\circ + 60^\circ$), is the primary grid used. Graphic imagery should be built using the saltire grid. Text is the exception, set in columns aligned with 90° horizontal lines. These two ways of organizing content may be considered two layers of one complex grid, but they should be aligned, acting as one underlying foundation.

Grids are used as a structure on which to organize content, but are not intended to dominate the message.



2.2 PHOTOGRAPHY

Whenever a strong photographic image is shown on a web page, advertisement, or report, it becomes the entry point for the audience. It is where the story begins to be told. Good photos tell a story. Images should show the spirit of people and place that Nova Scotians love. These images must convey emotions and ideas that are relevant and authentic to our province. Communications from the province must avoid the use of stock photography. Images of real Nova Scotians in their natural habitat is a key part of this new brand. Stock photography cannot accomplish this.

To give our communications a dynamic, human context this brand will depend on professional photography that adds warmth to our designs. Warm colours combined with a friendly and positive tone will be key components in photos used in this brand.

Getting great photos requires planning. Photographers working with CNS are producing images regularly that go into our photo library. When photos required are unique to specific projects, budgets and schedules must be considered.



2.3 LOGO STANDARDS

The Province of Nova Scotia has a few identifiers that are used in very specific situations. The provincial logo is the primary identifier of the province and, as much as possible, this mark should be used to promote recognition.

2.3 (a) The Provincial Marks

The identifier most commonly used and recognized by the public is the province's name with the flag above it, shown here. This is the logo that tells Nova Scotians that the provincial government is involved in an initiative or program.

The provincial logo is available in full colour, black only, white only, uni-lingual, bi-lingual, and international formats. The full-colour version is preferred but is not always practical.

Use of a bilingual logo is appropriate when both languages appear in the document. If the document offers only English content, a bilingual logo presents a false promise.

When the Nova Scotia government is speaking to an international audience, it is important to use the provincial identifier developed for markets outside of Canada. This mark simply adds the word Canada under the provincial logo. For audiences within Canada, it is not necessary to indicate nationality.

The Nova Scotia government also has a coat-of-arms and a crest that are reserved for special use only and must be approved for use by Communications Nova Scotia. The coat-of-arms is used by royal commissions, Cabinet committees, and the judiciary. This symbol is also be used on Crown documents and legislative publications. More details on these standards are available online.



THE WORDS

Our writing style should support the brand image of a diverse and resilient people, poised to take on the challenges of the time we live in. To that end, our writing should tell an authentic story that resonates with Nova Scotians. This demands good writing that communicates clear and credible messages.

In keeping with the need to maintain a consistently professional quality for all of our public facing communications, a professional editor often needs to be involved. To be sure this requirement is met, project leaders must set aside time and budget for copy editing, at minimum. Important messages may also need other types of editing to improve the clarity of the writing or make it accessible to a wider audience.

2.4 WRITING STYLE

A clear writing style will complement the clear, simple visual language of the brand. We should be writing to Nova Scotians as human beings whose fresh new ideas will lead us to innovation and a brighter future. We need all Nova Scotians engaged in our search for new ideas and new opportunities. We need an engaging writing style.

Government communicates for many purposes over many topic areas. Sometimes we are writing to specialists only on technical subjects. Often, though, when we are writing in government we are ultimately writing to all Nova Scotians. That means we should not hide behind the writing style of the profession we are trained in, but should work to make our writing as engaging as we can for a wider public audience. CNS manages a database of professional writers and editors, including plain language specialists, who can help government departments and agencies communicate clearly.

Every writing project needs the services of a professional editor so that we maintain a consistently professional quality for all of our public-facing communications. The type of editing needed depends on the project. Our CNS publication *Why Edit?* explains the various types (see appendices). CNS staff will find the right supplier to provide the right kind of services depending on whom we are communicating with, to what purpose, on what topic, and through which medium. CNS also maintains an editorial style guide for publications to ensure a consistent approach to such things as spelling and capitals (see appendices).

2.5 REACHING YOUR READERS

Government speaks to many different audiences on a wide variety of subjects. Clarity is important. Just as the photography we use should portray real Nova Scotians in their natural habitat, our writing should aim to reach real Nova Scotians.

Writing that appears clear and simple actually takes more time and care to produce. CNS can help specialist writers reach a wider audience, but this takes time. Allow extra time in your publishing process to convert specialist content into language that can reach the general public, a wider audience than specialists only, or a difficult-to-reach segment of the public. Government also has an obligation to make most information as accessible as possible.

2.6 READABILITY

When our audience is all Nova Scotians, writing clearly for such a diverse audience is challenging. Nova Scotians represent a wide range of abilities, interests, backgrounds, and reading levels. Engaging as many Nova Scotians as possible with our written communications is often our goal. For these kinds of communications the reading level should be in the junior high reading range. When it is important to reach Nova Scotians with critical health and safety messages we should aim in the grade 5–6 range. Readability scores are based on sentence length and syllables per word. They give an indication of readability only. Also, reading formulas are not measuring age-appropriateness, but reading effort. More information on readability can be found in the appendices.

Section Three / Application

APPLYING THE BRAND

This section gives a few examples of how the brand may be applied in different situations. Each type of communication will have its own standards. For more examples for these and other categories of applications, refer to the Style Guide online.

3.1 PUBLICATIONS

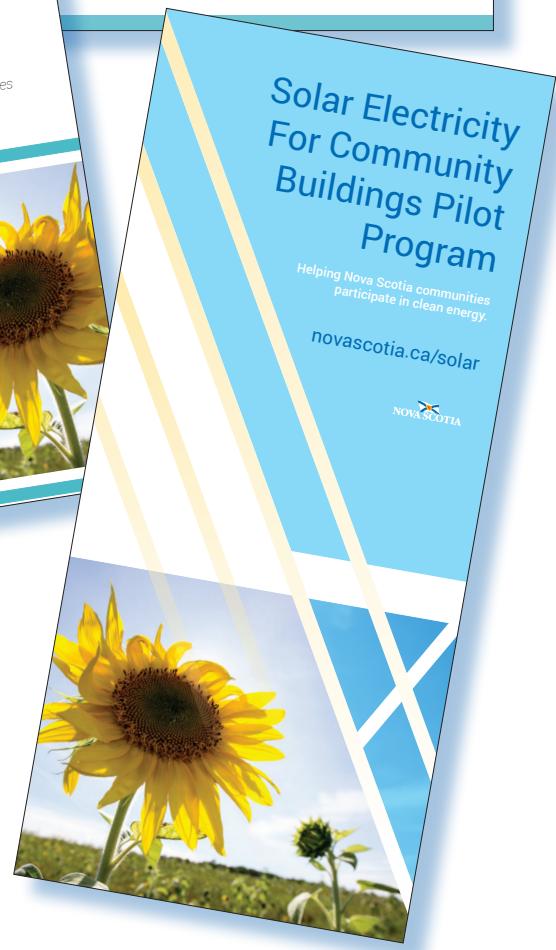
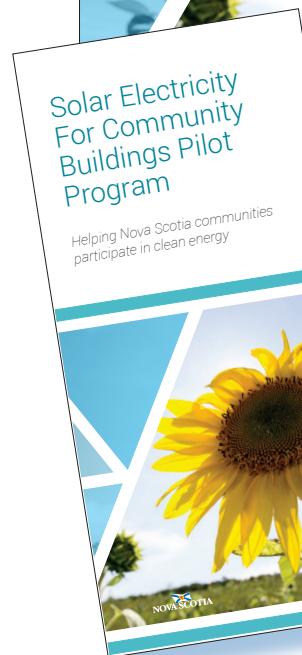
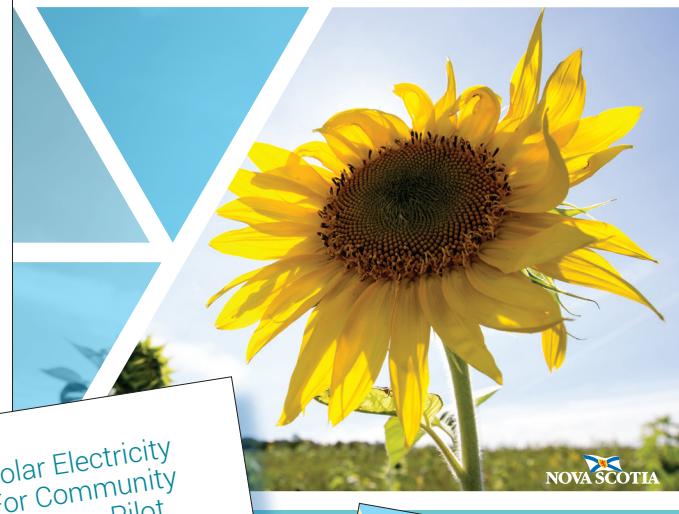
Government publications are produced for a wide range of purposes. There are categories of publications for which there are specific standards. Other categories that require a more project specific approach. The first two categories with clear standards are priority documents and basic reports.

3.1 (a) Priority Documents

Priority documents include any publications that the government is producing to report on a new high-level initiative, such as a strategy document. These documents are intended to reach a broader audience than a basic report. Because these documents are frequently newsworthy, the design is appropriately more visually appealing. Photography is important for these documents. A single image on the cover is preferred because it has more impact and is more memorable.

Solar Electricity For Community Buildings Pilot Program

Workbook



3.1 (b) Basic Reports

Basic reports are just as the name implies—basic. There is no requirement for photography on the cover or inside. These reports should look professional and reflect the brand elements, but are not expected to be more than an information piece.



3.1 (c) Other Publications

Publications that are not reports may need to be treated as stand-alone publications with their own look. Publications for sale would fall in this category.

Publications that are distributed through a department for the public good may have a sub-branded look, introducing secondary colours or other visual elements, while maintaining a related look including the provincial logo.

3.2 ADVERTISING

3.2 (a) Traditional/Print

The brand elements should be applied in all print advertising. Examples of the brand look in this context are seen here.



3.2 (b) Online/Social Media

The brand elements should also be applied in similar ways online. Examples of the brand look in this context are seen here.

Two screenshots of Facebook posts from the Nova Scotia Government page. The left post is a sponsored post for "Healthy living in Nova Scotia" featuring people outdoors. The right post is a sponsored post for the "Home Heating Rebate" featuring a red puffer jacket. Both posts include the Nova Scotia logo and provide links to external websites.

3.3 INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS

The web is an important communication vehicle that must present the same brand look. Because it is a media format with technical requirements unique to web production, more detail will become available through the style guide. Included here are a few samples of what the new brand looks like on the government website.

The image contains three separate screenshots of Nova Scotia government websites, likely from different departments, illustrating the application of the new brand identity across different web platforms.

- Screenshot 1:** A screenshot of a departmental website. The header includes the Nova Scotia logo and a search bar. The main content area features a large image placeholder labeled "Title Here". Below the image are several paragraphs of placeholder text (Lorem ipsum) and a small note about the image source.
- Screenshot 2:** A screenshot of a specific service page titled "Plaque d'immatriculation portant le drapeau acadien". The page includes a large image of a vehicle with the Acadian flag license plate, descriptive text, and links related to vehicle registration.
- Screenshot 3:** A screenshot of the Communications Nova Scotia website. It features a banner with three people, a "Diversity Bursary" section, and contact information for the Minister and Media contacts.

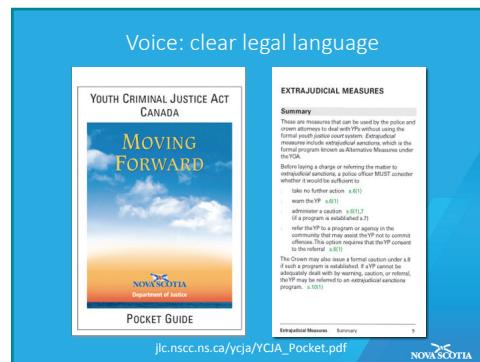
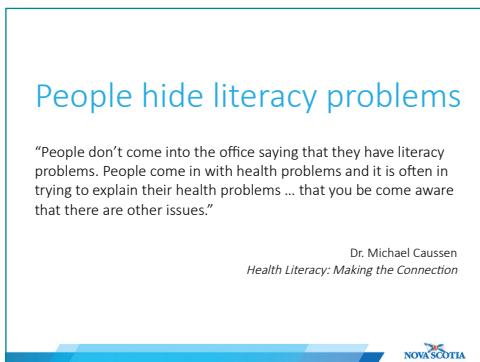
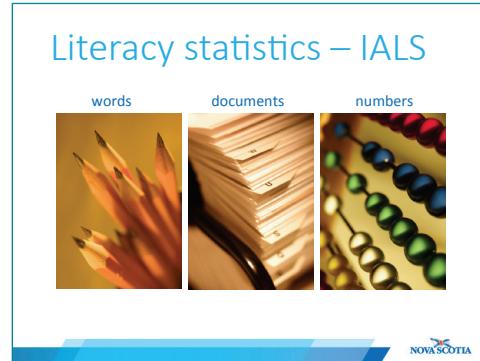
3.4 VIDEO

The brand elements must also be applied in similar ways in video. Again, this medium that is unique in its technical requirements. Examples of the brand look in this context are seen here.



3.5 PRESENTATIONS

PowerPoint templates are available online on the CNS intercom site. These templates are set up to make it easy to produce a professional presentation that is consistent with the brand.



Section Four

APPENDICES

4.1 READABILITY

Writing clearly for all Nova Scotians is challenging. Nova Scotians represent a wide range of abilities, interests, backgrounds, and reading levels. But we need to make an effort to engage as many Nova Scotians as possible with our written communications.

Reading is a learned skill, not an innate human ability like listening and speaking. When we read and write regularly as part of our job, we can forget that reading is hard work. CNS uses results of an international literacy survey to help clients understand the gap between the writing style of a document and the reading range of their target audience.

For Canadians ages 16 to 65, the 2013 survey shows that

- 4 in 10 are in the bottom two levels—low or very low literacy; typically, they can't cope with the literacy demands of daily life; typically read at grade 6 or below, or not at all
- 4 in 10 are in the middle level—good enough to cope with the literacy tasks of daily life (this does not mean they can read the consumer contracts they sign); typically read at grade 7 to 10; would need to be highly motivated to read more difficult material
- 2 in 10 are in the top two level—high or very high literacy; can read in government and the professions; read at grade 11 and higher (literacy.ca/content/uploads/2013/10/First-Reactions-to-PIAAC-Brigid-Hayes-October-8-2013.pdf)

However, literacy changes through the lifespan. Average literacy peaks at about age 30 and then steadily declines—8 in 10 Canadian seniors are in the bottom two levels.

CNS uses readability measures to help explain the gap between the document being reviewed and the reading ability of a target audience. When we edit for plain language, we are often trying to make the document readable for that middle-level group—the 4 in 10 who can cope with everyday reading task, but would not usually pick up a government report.

Information written for the average-literacy group usually sounds like the natural speaking voice. We try to make sure that brochures and guidebooks are at this level.

For critical health and safety messages, we try to reach the low-literacy group. Information written for low-literacy audiences can sound choppy to good readers.

If your document has a professional or official-sounding voice, it is likely that it will only reach that high literacy group.

If your document is hard to follow when read aloud, it is probably meant for professionals within the topic area.

4.2 GLOSSARY

BRAND – refers to an organization’s reputation and the emotions associated with that reputation. Reputations are built on the impressions that behavior, language, and appearance make.

COPY EDITING – editing for correctness and consistency. The editor concentrates on grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and applies our CNS editorial style. Ensures that each sentence conveys a clear meaning.

FONT – a single style from a family (typeface) of fonts. Roboto Italic, for example, is one font in the Roboto family of fonts.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION – refers to communications that are intended for an audience within one government department.

LOGO – a graphic mark, emblem, or symbol used by organizations to aid and promote instant recognition. Logos are either purely graphic (symbols/icons) or are composed using the name of the organization (a logotype or wordmark).

OPEN-SOURCE FONT – a font available online without charge because they are in the public domain. Copyright and licensing are not a concern when these fonts are used.

PLAIN LANGUAGE EDITING – editing that puts the reader first. The editor focuses on achieving a communications goal by giving the reader the right amount of information in a style and format that works for the reader in the circumstances. This level of edit often requires a change in point of view and may significantly change the document beyond what is typically seen is stylistic, substantive, and structural editing. A document is in plain language if “your readers can find what they need, understand what they find, and act appropriately on that understanding within the time and effort that they think it is worth” (Janice Redish, *Letting Go of the Words*).

PMS COLOUR – refers to colours in the Pantone Matching System used by printers to deliver accurate colour reproductions.

PROOFREADING – editing for accuracy of final changes. The proofreader ensures that the design proof has been corrected as requested in a previous edit and no new errors were introduced in the process. Focuses on print-readiness at both the word and document elements level.

PUBLIC-FACING COMMUNICATION – refers to communications that are expected to reach an audience outside of government.

RGB COLOUR – refers to the Red/Green/Blue colour system used on electronic screens to represent colour.

SALTIRE – refers to the cross shape used in some flag designs, including Nova Scotia's provincial flag. Also known as the St Andrew's Cross.

STRUCTURAL EDITING – editing for sequencing of information. The editor focuses on organization. Reorganizes materials for maximum impact at the paragraph, chapter, and document level.

STYLISTIC EDITING – editing for rhetorical impact, for how it is said. The editor deliberately reworks an author's style for a particular age group, profession, or readership. May involve lowering the reading level of text or adapting to a Canadian audience. Generally improves readability of the document and the energy level of the writing.

SUBSTANTIVE EDITING – editing for meaning, for what is said. The editor deals with the substance of the writing. Wrestles with the thoughts and arguments; points out flaws or omissions; cuts unnecessary detail; ensures that the text contains appropriate illustrations and examples.

TYPEFACE – a family of fonts.

VISUAL IDENTITY – refers to the visual components, as a collective, that form the visual aspect of a brand. Visual elements may include a logo, typography, photos, textures, patterns, and colour palette, to name a few. Alternatively known as a "visual platform."

VISUAL PLATFORM – refers to the visual components, as a collective, that form the visual aspect of a brand. Visual elements may include a logo, typography, photos, textures, patterns, and colour palette, to name a few. Alternatively known as a "visual identity."