



Business Plan

2021–22

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Departmental Business Plans
Finance and Treasury Board
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Message from the Minister



I am pleased to present the 2021-22 business plan for Communications Nova Scotia (CNS).

Sharing information that Nova Scotians need about COVID-19 will continue as a major priority, as well as marketing and communications campaigns to support vaccine delivery across the province. CNS will also help promote programs and partnerships to support economic recovery and growth, equity initiatives and the environment. We will work to ensure key initiatives and priorities of government are openly communicated, with a focus on clear, accessible and culturally appropriate practices and tools.

We look forward to an exciting year, engaging more Nova Scotians in new ways, as the province stands together to re-emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever!

Sincerely,

Original signed by,

Tony Ince

Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Mandate

As government's full-service communications agency, Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) manages and delivers innovative communications support and services to ensure Nova Scotians have the information they want and need. CNS achieves this by working with departments to develop effective strategies to clearly communicate the priorities, policies and actions of government.

Core Responsibilities/Services

CNS is mandated in legislation to:

- provide centralized delivery of communications services including, but not limited to
 - strategic communications planning
 - marketing and advertising services, including media planning and buying
 - communications research and evaluation
 - media relations services, including preparation and distribution of news releases
 - graphic design
 - strategic web planning and design
 - photography and videography
 - writing and editorial services
- develop policies, practices, standards and guidelines with respect to communications from government, including but not limited to paid advertising, management of the corporate identity of government, and social media use
- ensure that communications from government are
 - timely
 - accurate
 - effective and designed to meet established objectives
 - presented in a factual and respectful manner
 - delivered in a fiscally responsible manner
 - objective and not directed at promoting partisan interests
 - relevant to government responsibilities and priorities
 - compliant with legal requirements and government policies and procedures

CNS's core services are contained within three business areas:

Communications Planning

- Strategic Communications Advice and Planning
- Content Development
- Crisis and Risk Communications
- Corporate Communications
- Media Relations

Marketing, Digital & Creative Services

- Digital content, including social media channels
- Graphic Design
- Editorial Services
- Image Services (photo/video)
- Marketing
- Web Strategy
- Advertising (media planning/buying)

Communication & Corporate Services

- Project Management
- Planning & Policy
- Translation Services
- Research & Evaluation
- Accessibility
- Human Resources
- Budget

Priorities

As a central agency, CNS supports corporate and departmental priorities by developing and delivering on strategic communications and marketing plans that help ensure Nova Scotians are aware of government priorities, programs and services, and how to access them.

CNS provides an integrated, full-service marketing communications approach to all significant initiatives. In 2021-22, CNS will work with departments to deliver effective strategies that focus on work underway relative to government priorities, including in the areas of COVID-19 response and vaccination delivery, inclusive economic growth, equity initiatives and accessibility awareness, and the environment. CNS will continue to deliver clear and open communications on the actions of government in areas such as employment and skills development, infrastructure development and housing.

CNS continues to focus on delivering more accessible and inclusive communications to Nova Scotians, including expanding government's citizen-centered website, where access to information on priorities, programs and services is easy to find and readily available.

Goals

1. **COVID-19 Response:** Strategic communications planning and marketing will reach Nova Scotians with information they want and need, ensuring they understand and can follow public health advice to keep themselves, their families and communities safe.
2. **Vaccine Delivery:** Strategic communications and marketing will help to build public trust, address issues and provide clear and concise information to support the success of the province's largest public vaccination program in our history. Providing targeted, inclusive and culturally competent communications.
3. **Web Strategy:** Government's web strategy will continue to be implemented, making additional information about government programs and services more accessible to all users.
4. **Support for government priorities:** New approaches and tools to openly and effectively reach and engage audiences will be proactively identified, tested, implemented and evaluated to support government's priorities, such as the economy, equity initiatives, and the environment.
5. **Accessibility & Inclusive Communications:** There will be continued focus on increasing awareness about accessibility (in government and beyond), building

capacity for further change, and removing barriers to government communications. It is important that all Nova Scotians see themselves reflected and represented in communications from government. CNS will focus on making its workplace more diverse and inclusive through specific activities including, but not limited to, review of internal policies and procedures, succession management planning and hiring processes. CNS will also undertake consultation, research and planning initiatives with the overall objective of delivering more inclusive and culturally appropriate communications to Nova Scotians.

Actions

In 2020-21 CNS will work to achieve these goals by:

- Developing, implementing and evaluating priority communications and marketing plans aligned with these goals and government priorities.
- Using evidence-based planning for communications and marketing strategies.
- Leveraging the most effective and appropriate digital and traditional media platforms to engage and inform citizens.
- Continuing to implement a citizen-centric government website.
- Maximizing staff expertise to plan and execute integrated, client-centered communications and marketing approaches.
- Implementing actions related to an inclusive workplace and inclusive communications, and initiatives related to accessible government communications and accessibility awareness.

Evaluation and Measurement

CNS will measure and evaluate progress by:

- Conducting research to gather insights for use in developing evidence-based communications and marketing strategies, measuring awareness and gauging public opinion on government's policies and programs. Results provide insights to aid in ongoing communications and marketing strategy development and adjustments.
 - **COVID-19:** Public opinion research (Nov. 2020) shows marketing and communications efforts are reaching people. Key messages are resonating and Nova Scotians are listening and compliance is high. Public opinion testing will continue to measure against the now established baseline, and CNS will continue to track and measure results over time.
 - **Vaccines:** Public opinion research (Nov. 2020) reveals that 8-in-10 people intend to get vaccinated. Communications and marketing will focus on sharing clear and concise information on the how, where and when of vaccination clinics, tracking and quickly responding to new issues and barriers, and communicating with targeted groups.
- Using web analytics measures to determine effectiveness and impact of information presented on the government website.
 - **Web Strategy:** Web analytics have demonstrated that the updated Beta site is improving access to government's programs and services and providing easier pathways to the information that citizens, communities and businesses are looking for. There have been increases in website visits and the updated website places higher in search engine results. There has also been an increase in mobile and tablet users visiting the site. Future analytics will be measured against these benchmarks as we continue to transition more of government's web content to the beta site.
 - **COVID-19 & vaccines:** Web analytics will continue to be used as one method of measurement in determining the effectiveness of COVID-19 and vaccine roll-out communications and marketing strategies.
- Engaging directly with Nova Scotians and growing government's digital following, using the most effective tools and mediums available to reach identified audiences.
 - **Support for government priorities:** Focusing efforts on areas with the biggest impact. An increase in the use of metrics can help determine what is most effective, versus maintaining historical approaches. Greater use of social channels/platforms enables government to reach people that were less accessible. "Live" and social channels present an opportunity to quickly clarify misinformation and misunderstandings. As more Nova

Scotians gain access to Internet service, government's digital reach will continue to expand.

- Focus on gathering baseline metrics to determine most effective approaches and mediums.
- Identifying opportunities to improve citizen access to government information through the use of inclusive communications/marketing strategies and accessible communications tools and methods.
 - **Accessibility & Inclusive Communications:** CNS is leading the implementation of several actions outlined in government's accessibility plan, focused on removing barriers to government communications and increasing public awareness. A Working Group on Accessibility has been established at CNS with the goal of increasing awareness about accessibility (in government and beyond) and building internal capacity.
 - Accessibility will be integrated into day-to-day operations, guidelines, policies and procedures.
 - Staff will receive training to build internal capacity and resources will be identified to ensure the delivery of more accessible products.
 - Working with Accessibility Directorate, CNS will assist in the launch of a public awareness campaign around accessibility.
 - CNS will begin to develop an internal-to-government education/knowledge sharing/awareness campaign on accessible communications.
 - Development of inclusive communications guidelines and integration into day-to-day operations, policies and procedures.
 - CNS will develop a new Diversity & Inclusion Plan for 2021-2026.
 - CNS will enhance collaboration with key offices (Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, African Nova Scotian Affairs, Immigration, L'nu Affairs, etc.) and forge new partnerships and engage with stakeholders representing marginalized and racialized communities to collect insights and expertise that will inform more inclusive government communications and marketing approaches.

Departmental Expenses Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2020-2021 Estimate</u>	<u>2020-2021 Forecast</u>	<u>2021-2022 Estimate</u>
Office of the Associate Deputy Minister	727	780	753
Client Services	939	802	969
Communications Planning	1,577	1,727	2,072
Communications Services	702	764	822
Marketing	3,872	3,644	3,555
Total - Departmental Expenses	7,817	7,717	8,171
Ordinary Recoveries	51	---	51
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	97.0	101.0	96.0

Note:
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1