

REGISTERED FIRM NAME POLICY

Purpose

It is in the interest of all members of CPA Nova Scotia that members and firms be allowed to conduct their practices under names which reflect their individual preferences and are appropriate for their particular marketplaces. The CPA Nova Scotia Registered Firm Name Policy applies to all registered firms, approved practice names and new firm applicants. It should be interpreted in conjunction with the *CPA Nova Scotia By-Laws* (“By-Laws”) and *CPA Nova Scotia Code of Professional Conduct* (“Code of Conduct”), including but not limited to:

- Rule 401: Practice Name – Code of Conduct
- Rule 402: Use of Descriptive Style – Code of Conduct
- Professional Corporations: By-Laws 255-273
- Limited Liability Partnership: By-Laws 274-306
- Partnerships and Sole Proprietorships: By-Laws 307-327

Firm Name Requirements

1. A registered firm name cannot be misleading, self-laudatory or contravene the high level of professionalism associated with the CPA brand. A registered firm name must comply with the *CPA Nova Scotia Code of Professional Conduct, Rule 401: Practice Names* “Rule 401”. Members are advised to review Rule 401 and the related guidance.
 - The firm name cannot misrepresent or imply that a practicing unit is larger than it is such as by use of plural descriptions or other misleading use of words. For example, the use of “and Company” is permitted only when it appropriately reflects the number of professional accounting staff working for the firm. Professional accounting staff would include any CPA Nova Scotia members or accounting technicians (i.e., non-CPA staff who provide professional services, which could include record keeping).
 - The firm name cannot imply that a person is a partner or a former partner of a practice when the person is not.
 - The firm name cannot give any reference to representation or association which is not in conformity with the facts.
 - The firm name cannot imply that separate firms sharing office space, staff, or other resources or in other cost-sharing arrangements are in partnership or otherwise share ownership of a practice.

- There can be no reference in the firm name to particular services provided where the practice is not currently able to provide those services.
 - There can be no statement in the firm name that may create false or unjustified expectations as to the results of a particular engagement.
 - Self-laudatory firm names that contravene the high level of professionalism expected with the profession will be disallowed, such as firm names containing praise. Care should be taken with the use of adjectives. The following examples would not be allowed:
 - Superior Professional Services
 - Your Ultimate Business Solution
 - Not Your Average CPA
2. A registered firm name must either include the protected designation in the firm name or the registered firm must carry out their practice using the descriptive style, Chartered Professional Accountant(s), consistent with the *CPA Nova Scotia Code of Professional Conduct, Rule 402: Use of Descriptive Style* “Rule 402”.
3. A registered firm name must be unique and fall into the naming categories of Personal Firm Names or Non-Personal Firm Names:

Personal Firm Name Requirements:

As per Rule 402, a registered firm may use a member(s) name followed by the protected designation Chartered Professional Accountant(s), or CPA(s). Alternatively, a member(s) name may be used with the descriptive style.

Proposed firm names that are personal names (i.e., they use member(s) name(s)), are generally approved. The Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies (“RJSC”) requires CPA Nova Scotia to pre-approve all proposed firm names that contain the protected designation. (See Firm Name Registration Requirements for New Applicants)

Examples of allowable personal names:

- Sarah McLeod, CPA
- Sarah McLeod, Chartered Professional Accountant
- Sarah MacLeod
- John Smith, CPA Inc.
- JS CPA Inc.

Non-Personal Firm Name Requirements:

In general, approval will be given to non-personal firm names unless they are misleading, self-laudatory or contravene professional good taste. As per Rule 402, a registered firm may use a name other than the member(s) name to describe the services being offered followed by Chartered Professional Accountant(s), CPA(s), or the use of the descriptive style.

Services offered are expected to be consistent with the definition of public accounting services or other regulated services, as found in the By-Laws. Proposed firm names that are non-personal firm names may be allowable; however, the firm name must describe something related to the services being offered as a Chartered Professional Accountant.

Examples of allowable non-personal firm names include:

- Hardwood Accounting Services, CPA Inc.
 - Maple Tax Consulting Services. In this example, the firm must primarily provide tax services and may provide other consulting services.
 - Bluenose Accounting and Advisory Services Chartered Professional Accountant. In this example, the firm must primarily provide accounting and advisory services.
 - Jackson Bruce Tax Consulting, CPA Inc.
4. Registered firms must operate under their registered name. One exception is personal professional corporations, which do not offer services directly to the public. However, approved practice names that are different from the registered firm names and permitted prior to June 27, 2019, are grandfathered, and may be used.

Firm Name Registration Requirements for New Applicants

The ownership of a registered firm must be transparent to the public. All registered firm names must be registered with the RJSC and comply with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*. The firm name requirements for the RJSC are separate from the firm name requirements of CPA Nova Scotia. The RJSC provides an exception for sole proprietors using only their personal name, as personal names cannot be registered with the RJSC.

CPA Nova Scotia must pre-approve the firm name for all new firms seeking to register a name that contains a protected designation, such as “Chartered Professional Accountant” or “CPA” with the RJSC. Members can apply for a Firm Name Pre-approval and, if approved, CPA Nova Scotia will prepare a Letter of Pre-approval that authorizes the registration of the protected designation in the firm name. Final approval will be subject to review by the Registration Committee. The proposed firm name approval may only be used for matters related to obtaining a registered firm, such as, obtaining a certificate of incorporation, obtaining professional liability insurance and other registration requirements under the By-Laws.

The member must provide this letter to the RJSC to register any firm name that includes a protected designation.

Changes to Firm Name

Any change to the firm name registered with CPA Nova Scotia must be approved by the Registration Committee before any changes are made to the firm name at the RJSC.

The Registration Committee of CPA Nova Scotia, in its discretion, is permitted to be flexible in transitional situations such as:

- A member engaged in the practice of public accounting as a sole proprietor or an incorporated professional may apply for permission to practice for a specified period of time under both the member’s approved name and, with the predecessor’s written authorization, the name used by a predecessor sole proprietor or firm.
- A previously approved firm name may become inappropriate. For example, the departure of a partner may result in the firm name being misleading with respect to the size of the firm. In such cases, the firm representative may apply for permission to continue to use the existing firm name for a specified period of time.

Deregistering a Firm Name

Upon deregistration of a registered firm, the firm representative must immediately undertake to remove any protected designation from the firm’s name and to cease using any protected designation in the description of the firm.

Prior to commencing the deregistration process with CPA Nova Scotia, the firm representative must provide CPA Nova Scotia with confirmation that the firm name containing the protected designation has either been changed or revoked at the RJSC.

Use of the Descriptive Style

1. A registered firm must carry on their practice using their registered firm name and the protected designation. The public should understand they are being serviced by a firm with the qualifications and responsibilities of (a) Chartered Professional Accountant(s) when receiving public accounting services or other regulated services from a registered firm. This is consistent with Rule 402. The required references include, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:
 - All material that refers to the practice of public accounting, including promotional material and website content, must include a reference to “Chartered Professional Accountant(s)” in conjunction with the firm name.
 - Public accounting engagement reports (as defined in the By-Laws) including audit engagement reports, other assurance reports, review engagement reports and agreed upon procedures engagement reports. Note: Members performing public accounting engagements require a public accounting licence.
 - Compilation engagement reports.
 - Engagement letters.
 - Invoices.
 - Managements letters.
 - Responses to request for proposals.
2. If a registered firm name uses the initials “CPA” as part of a firm name, such use would not be considered to meet the requirements for the use of the descriptive style “Chartered Professional Accountant(s)” when carrying on the practice of public accounting. For further clarity, the descriptive style “Chartered Professional Accountant(s)” must be used if Chartered Professional Accountant(s) does not make up part of the firm name.

Firm name examples when the descriptive style must be used:

- Jane Smith
- Jane Smith, CPA
- John Smith, CPA Inc.
- JS CPA Inc.
- Jackson Bruce Tax Consulting, CPA Inc.
- Hardwood Accounting Services, CPA Inc.
- Maple Tax Consulting Services
- Smith and Associates
- ABC LLP

Firm name examples when the descriptive style is not required to be used:

- Jane Smith, Chartered Professional Accountant
- John Smith, Chartered Professional Accountant Inc.
- JS Chartered Professional Accountant Inc.
- Jackson Bruce Tax Consulting, Chartered Professional Accountant Inc.
- Hardwood Accounting Services, Chartered Professional Accountants Inc.
- Maple Tax Consulting Services, Chartered Professional Accountants
- Smith and Associates, Chartered Professional Accountants