

## REGISTERED FIRM NAME POLICY

### Purpose:

The CPA Nova Scotia Board of Directors shall adopt a Registered Firm Name Policy to be used by the Registration Committee. This policy will apply to all registered firms, approved practice names, and new applicants. It should be interpreted in conjunction with the CPA Nova Scotia By-Laws and CPA Nova Scotia Rules of Professional Conduct, including but not limited to:

- General Rules of Descriptive Style and Association: Rules of Professional Conduct 401-403
- Professional Corporations: By-Laws 246-268
- Limited Liability Partnership: By-Laws 269-297
- Partnerships and Sole Proprietorships: By-Laws 298-308  
Annual Registration Renewal: By-Law 309-318

### Principles:

A registered firm name or approved practice name cannot be misleading, self-laudatory, or contravene the high level of professionalism associated with the CPA brand.

The ownership of a registered firm must be transparent to the public. An approved practice name association to a registered firm must be transparent to be public.

Personal firm names, where a member(s) use(s) their own name(s) and the protected designation, will generally be approved. Non-personal names must describe something related to the services being offered.

A registered firm may operate under an approved practice name by Registration Committee approval only.

A registered firm and an approved practice name should be registered with the Registry of Joint Stocks consistent with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*.

### Applicability:

This policy applies to all registered firm and registered practice names.

The first firm renewal period is September 30, 2017 and every September 30<sup>th</sup> subsequently. Firm names previously compliant under legacy provisions will have until September 30, 2017 to make a name change by completing and submitting a [Firm Name Change Application](#).

### Legacy Designation Included in Registered Firm Name:

Any legacy designation included in registered firm names or practice names must be changed to CPA Nova Scotia approved names by September 30, 2017. This includes signage, promotional material and stationary. All firms are encouraged to adopt early - see [Firm Name Change Application](#).

### Firm Name versus Practice Name

All professional corporations', limited liability partnerships', and sole proprietors' registered firm name will be considered their firm name. If a proposed practice name is different than a registered firm name it must be approved by the Registration Committee, and subsequently registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies consistent with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*.

Examples include:

- "Jones Franklyn Smith Wong" is a registered professional corporation. The professional corporation consists of four partners/owners, which are all CPAs. They may apply to use the practice name "Jones and Company" or "JFSW Tax Consultancy". Under this example, if the proposed practice name was accepted it must then be registered as a business consistent with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*.

### Pre-Approval of Firm Name for New Firm Registration

The Registry of Joint Stock Companies requires approval from CPA Nova Scotia for new firms seeking to register names that contain the protected designation in the form of Chartered Professional Accountant or CPA.

Requests for firm name pre-approval may be processed by submitting the [Pre-Approval of Firm Name form](#). The form may be submitted to the CPA Nova Scotia Registrar in order to obtain pre-approval for a firm name. Final approval will be subject to the Registration Committee review.

Note: This is for new firms registering not existing firms applying for a name change.

Any firm names applications received by the CPA Nova Scotia Registrar through [Pre-Approval of Firm Name form](#) that are inconsistent with this policy will be referred to the Registration Committee for further consideration.

### Guidance for Firm Names:

The majority of firm names are personal (i.e. they use member(s) name(s)) and use the protected designation in the firm name. Generally speaking, they should receive approval without issue.

Approval may be given to non-personal firm names that are not misleading, self-laudatory or contravene the high level of professionalism associated with the CPA brand.

Non-Personal firm names must describe something related to the services being offered, for example, “accounting advice, accounting services, or tax services”. Particular attention should be given to ensure the description of the services being offered falls inside Public Accounting or Regulated Services definition as per CPA Nova Scotia By-Laws.

The below guidance is intended to provide further clarification from the CPA Nova Scotia By-Laws and Code of Professional Conduct.

1. Sole Proprietorships using Personal firm names must include the protected designation in the firm name. For example:
  - “Sarah McLeod, CPA”, “Sarah McLeod, CPA, CGA”, or “Sarah McLeod, Chartered Professional Accountant” would all be allowable, whereas “Sarah MacLeod” would not be allowable.
2. Firm names that cause confusion or may be culturally insensitive will not be allowed. For example:
  - A practice name that is so similar to that of another firm registered in the same area that would cause confusion to the public.
3. Non-Personal firm names that are too encompassing or too general will not be allowed. Care should be taken when the use of “The” is in the firm name. Disallowed firm names include:
  - The Exchange Chartered Professional Accountants (too general)
  - CPA.COM Chartered Professional Accountants or CPA Partners (too encompassing)

Examples of allowable non-personal firm names include:

- Maple Tax Consulting Services (firm must primarily provide tax services and may provide other consulting services)
- Bluenose Accounting and Advisory Services Chartered Professional Accountant (firm must provide accounting and advisory services)
- Jackson Bruce Consulting (firm must primarily provide consulting services)

4. Self-laudatory firm names are considered to be any non-personal firm name containing praise, and will not be allowed. Care should be taken with the use of adjectives. For example:
  - Superior Professional Services
  - Your Ultimate Business Solution
  - Premier Services
  - Simply the Best
  
5. A firm name or style that implies the practising unit is larger than it is will not be permitted. This means that the use of “and Company”, “and Associates”, “& Co” or similar wording is permitted only where 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 bookkeeping).  
Examples include:
  - Sole practitioner Jane Doe could only use “Jane Doe and Associates” if she had two or more professional accounting staff working on accounting engagements.
  - Two-partner firm John Smith and Mary Lam could only use “Smith, Lam, and Associates” if it had two or more professional accounting staff working on accounting engagements.
  
6. A firm name which references a particular service provided, which the firm is not currently able to provide, is misleading. For example:
  - A firm practicing accounting only could not use the word ‘tax’ in the firm name, such as “John Smith and Mary Lam Accounting and Tax Services”.
  
7. When the partners or owners of a firm change, the members must consider the implications for the firm’s name. A firm cannot use the names of predecessor partners unless it is expressly allowed by the predecessor partner and does not mislead the public. For example:
  - If Ms. McGregor is no longer a partner and has left the firm, but has expressly granted permission of the use of her name, the firm can continue to exist as “McGregor, Langley, and Wong”.
  - If Ms. McGregor is no longer a partner and is still working with the firm in another role, consideration will have to be given as to whether the inclusion of her surname in the firm name is misleading.

8. The use of “Chartered Professional Accountants” in the plural is only permitted where there is more than one CPA working in the firm. For example:
  - A sole practitioner with one CPA staff member could use “Chartered Professional Accountants” in the firm’s descriptive style. Note: if the CPA staff member resigned, the firm would be required to change the description.
  
9. When a member or firm engaged in the practice of public accounting or related business or practice, participates in an organization whose members practice public accounting internationally -- with professional engagements accepted and reports or opinions issued in the international name -- the member, firm or related business or practice, may reference itself as ‘international’ on professional stationery and in name plates, directory listings, announcements and brochures by using terms such as “internationally”, “globally”, “international firm”, or “global firm”. General references to “offices throughout the world” or “offices in principal cities throughout the world” imply broad coverage and should be used only where the international organization’s members practice public accounting in many countries.