

## REGISTERED FIRM NAME POLICY

### Purpose:

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

- General Practice Name Rules and Use of Descriptive Style Rules: Code of Professional Conduct Rules 401-403
- Professional Corporations: By-laws 255-273
- Limited Liability Partnership: By-laws 274-306
- Partnerships and Sole Proprietorships: By-laws 307-327

### 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 must comply with CPA Nova Scotia Code of Professional Conduct, Rule 401: Practice Names.
2. A registered firm name must either include the protected designation in their firm name, or carry out their practice using the descriptive style, Chartered Professional Accountant(s), consistent with CPA Nova Scotia Code of Professional Conduct with Rule 402: Use of Descriptive Style.
3. 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 or regulated services from a registered firm. This is consistent with Rule 402. The required references include, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:
  - Engagement letters;
  - Invoices;
  - Managements letters;
  - Compilation engagement reports;
  - Responses to request for proposals; and
  - Public accounting engagements (as defined in the By-laws) including audits engagement reports and review engagement reports. Note: public accounting engagements also require a public accounting licence.

4. A registered firm name must fall into one of the following naming categories:

- Personal Name: Use a member(s) name followed by the protected designation Chartered Professional Accountant(s), or CPA(s), or use a member(s) name with use of descriptive style as per Rule 402. For example, “Sarah McLeod, CPA”, “Sarah McLeod, Chartered Professional Accountant”, or “Sarah MacLeod” with use of descriptive style as per Rule 402 are allowable. See further guidance below; or
- Non-Personal: Use something other than member(s) name, to describe the services being offered followed by Chartered Professional Accountant(s), or CPA(s), or use descriptive style as per Rule 402. Services being offered are expected to be consistent with the definition of public accounting or regulated services, as found in the CPA Nova Scotia By-Laws. For example, Hardwood Accounting Services, CPA Inc, is allowable. See further guidance below.

5. The ownership of a registered firm must be transparent to the public and comply with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*. All registered firms and approved practice names must be registered with the Registry of Joint Stocks consistent with the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*. For greater certainty sole proprietorships must be registered.

6. Registered firms must operate under their registered name. Approved practice names that are different than the registered firm names will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances, to be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Registration Committee<sup>1</sup>. One exception is personal professional corporations, which do not offer services directly to the public.

#### Guidance:

1. **Personal Names** - proposed firm names that are personal names (i.e. they use member(s) name(s)), are generally approved. The Registry of Joint Stock Companies requires CPA Nova Scotia to pre-approve all proposed firm names that contain the protected designation.

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<sup>1</sup>Effective June 27, 2019. Operating practice names approved prior to June 27, 2019 will be grandfathered.

Examples of allowable personal names:

- “Sarah McLeod, CPA”, “Sarah McLeod, Chartered Professional Accountant”, “Sarah MacLeod” with [Use of descriptive style as per Rule 402]; and
- “John Smith, CPA Inc.” and “JS CPA Inc”

2. **Non-Personal Names** - proposed firm names that are non-personal firm names may be allowable; however, must describe something related to the services being offered as a Chartered Professional Accountant.

Examples of allowable non-personal firm names include:

- Maple Tax Consulting Services, [Use of descriptive style as per Rule 402]. In this example the 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); and
- Jackson Bruce Tax Consulting, CPA Inc.

3. Members are advised to review the Rule 401: Practice Names in the Code of Professional Conduct. In particular, the misleading use of firm names that imply a practising unit is larger than actual. This means the use of “and Company”, “and Associates”, “& Co” 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).

4. Self-laudatory firm names that contravene the high level of professionalism expected within the profession will be disallowed, such as firm name names containing praise. Care should be taken with the use of adjectives. The following examples will not be allowed:

- Superior Professional Services
- Your Ultimate Business Solution
- Not Your Average CPA

5. **Registry of Joint Stock Companies** – members should be aware of the requirements, which are separate to CPA Nova Scotia, under the *Partnership and Business Names Registration Act*. We share the following requirements; however,

the member (or their legal counsel) should contact the Registry of Joint Stock Companies directly:

- All Incorporated firms must have “Limited”, “Incorporated”, or “Holdings” in the firm name. CPA Nova Scotia will approve abbreviations including “Ltd.” or “Inc”.
- Approval from CPA Nova Scotia is required for new firms seeking to register a firm name 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.