

OUR COLLECTIVE VISION
FOR THE
NATIONAL BUSINESS NUMBER

May 2006

Canada 



A partnership of federal and provincial public sector agencies in Canada

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Commitment to a Common Vision by Public Sector Partners

We commit to the common vision set out in this document. We view the National Business Number (BN) partnership as a collective with shared responsibilities, recognizing the important role of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) as the custodian of the BN and the BN Registry. We accept each other as equals and will share responsibility for governing and managing an integrated BN partnership.

Canada 

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Date



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I. Preamble

The National Business Number (BN) was developed by the Federal Government in the 1990s to enable both business and government to streamline operations and realize efficiencies. With the BN, businesses are assigned a single registration number for their dealings with various public sector programs. A description of the BN is provided in Appendix A.

Since the BN's introduction, six federal agencies and eighteen provincial government organizations have adopted the numbering system for the delivery of over 80 business programs. Working together, these agencies have created a business identification system with the potential to realize the vision of "one business, one number." The BN is intended to be a public number – partners will be fully aware of all legitimate uses of the BN.

The federal participants in the BN partnership are the Canada Revenue Agency, Industry Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Statistics Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency. The provincial participants are from British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario. The BN partners are guided by a governance model (see the *Business Number Partnership Governance Structure* document).

Each BN partner has adapted the BN to meet its own unique needs and requirements, with the result that the BN system has evolved somewhat "organically" with partners coordinating their activities and striving for system integrity. Perhaps not surprisingly, the partners have applied the BN to different degrees, as well as developed different views of the BN initiative and its future potential.

The partners recognize the need for a common vision and strategic plan for the future development and use of the BN. The document in hand sets out the partnership's future vision. In so doing, it describes the partnership today, the collective vision for the future, the commonly held values of the partnering agencies, the principles that underpin the development and use of the BN, and the overarching goals of the BN partnership.

II. Purpose of the National Business Number

The purpose of the BN is to provide better service to business clients by reducing duplication of effort through the use of a one number / one business concept to deal with numerous public sector agencies. The BN also assists service agencies to reduce costs by streamlining their processes and to increase program compliance.

III. Our Vision

The partnership adopts the vision originally developed by CRA upon the introduction of the BN in the 1990s:

The Business Number will be the common identifier for business in Canada to allow them to simplify their dealings with all levels of the public sector and each other.¹

Our collective long-range vision for the BN initiative in terms of the service and operational perspectives is outlined below. We will know that we are successful when we achieve these aspirations. A set of performance measures can be developed to track our progress.

Service to Business Perspective

- Universal business awareness of the BN as the common identifier for dealing with all levels of the public sector that will be memorized by businesses.
- Ability to use a single BN to access the business programs of public sector agencies in Canada.²
- Common practices adhered to by partners.
- Transparent privacy policies and procedures.
- Common acceptance of the use of the BN to help level the playing field for businesses.
- Business user satisfaction with the BN and the extent of public sector participation.

BN Partner Operational Perspective

- Public sector agency acceptance of the BN as the de facto common business identifier.
- Organizational culture shift towards acceptance and proactive support of the BN.
- Use of the BN for seamless integration and improved program administration.
- Legislation and policy that enable full functionality and expansion of the BN vision.
- Businesses will use the BN as a way of identifying themselves to programs.
- A fair and practical approach that facilitates participation by any public sector program regardless of size.
- Coordinated view of acceptable compliance activities using the BN, permitted by jurisdictional legislation.

¹ Due to the subsequent involvement of other types of public sector agencies, the original wording of CRA's vision statement was changed from "government" to "public sector."

² Public sector agencies include but are not limited to federal, provincial and territorial governments, Crown Corporations, Boards, municipalities, regional districts and Indian Bands.

IV. Our Values

Our values represent our fundamental beliefs or ideals with respect to our participation in the BN partnership, manifested by our behaviours with each other.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Accountable</i> | We take responsibility for delivering on our promises and commitments. |
| <i>Business-centric</i> | We challenge ourselves, each other, and other relevant public sector agencies to take into account the business user's perspective. |
| <i>Collaborative</i> | We communicate and work together to develop and maintain the BN partnership. |
| <i>Collective</i> | We view the BN partnership as a collective with shared responsibilities. |
| <i>Creative</i> | We think creatively and are willing to consider and support innovative ideas to improve the BN partnership. |
| <i>Equality</i> | We accept each other as equals and will share responsibility for governing and managing the BN partnership. |
| <i>Respect</i> | We consider and accommodate each other's unique needs and requirements in the development and use of the BN. |

As we live these values, we keep in mind what is in the best interest of the partnership, and in so doing maintain a degree of flexibility for dedicating resources and allocating funding.

V. Our Principles

We have adopted a set of principles or assumptions that underlie the use and development of the BN partnership. The intent is to provide a touchstone that will help guide the partners in making decisions about the BN system.

The Principle	What it means or looks like
The BN is for business purposes	The BN should not be used to identify individuals who are not involved in business activities. Private sector organizations are encouraged to use the BN to deal with their business clients.
BN partners look for opportunities to work collaboratively and gain efficiencies wherever possible	Partners communicate and learn from each other. They adopt/adapt compatible technologies where appropriate.
BN partners uphold privacy of information where required	Partners ensure transparency about how information is used and comply with privacy and confidentiality laws. The BN information that is sharable pertains to business identification data; program information is kept separate.
BN partners ensure the security of information	Partners use collaborative approaches to ensure a secure operating environment.
BN partners ensure an enabling or supportive legislative and policy framework	Partners develop enabling legislation or policy where necessary, while respecting the requirements of each other's existing legislation and policy. Partners advocate changing legislation and policy that unnecessarily impede use of the BN. Partners adhere to all applicable federal and provincial acts, regulations and policies and ensure that information is only used for the purpose for which it was collected.
Participating agencies develop a BN partnership that can accommodate differences among them	Partners can allow variations in program design and delivery as long as they don't impair functionality of the partnership. Future development needs to consider the needs and constraints of all of the partners.
Participating agencies protect BN partners from any undesirable impacts of program changes	CRA buffers its provincial partners from the impacts of its internal changes and, in the same light, provincial partners buffer CRA from changes made at the provincial level.
BN partners follow sound change management principles	BN partners provide each other with early notice and consult as appropriate on impending changes.
BN is a shared responsibility	Partners recognize CRA as the BN custodian that assigns the BN and coordinates its use, while partners assist in the maintenance of data integrity.

VI. Our Goals

The partners have established three goals representing the long-term results or outcomes that they wish to achieve in fulfilling the vision and delivering on the promise of the BN purpose:

- Goal 1:** Establish the BN as the de facto common business identifier for public sector programs in Canada.
- Goal 2:** Develop a cost-effective BN partnership that can accommodate the diverse needs of an increasing number of participating public sector agencies.
- Goal 3:** Establish an enabling legislative, cultural and administrative infrastructure for promoting and using the BN as a public number.

Appendix: National Business Number Background

The National Business Number was developed by the federal government in the 1990s to enable both business and government to streamline operations and realize efficiencies. In 1997, Treasury Board required its use for the four major business programs of CRA.

A number of other federal and provincial public sector agencies have adopted the BN for their programs and integrated their registration systems with CRA's host database. CRA is the custodian of the Business Number.

The BN allows businesses to use a single number in their dealings with various public sector programs. The aim is that businesses can register for BN-participating programs through a seamless service and can provide updates such as a new address, only once for all programs linked to the BN. The exchange of registration information between BN partners can support the partners to maintain synchronization of the data in their respective databases while keeping separate, but linked, business registries.

The BN identifies an entity such as a corporation, sole proprietorship, or a partnership that is registered with the government. The structure of the BN is a 9-digit root (based on the original GST/HST number), a 2-character program identifier (identifying the program for which the business is registered), and a 4-digit account sequence number (indicating how many accounts the business has within each program). This structure enables program administrators to identify the business via the root, while keeping track of their program activities separately via the various suffixes.

The following is an example of the use of the BN for a British Columbia corporation, also operating in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario. The company is registered with WorkSafeBC, has Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and Hotel Room Tax (HRT) accounts with BC's Ministry of Small Business and Revenue (MSBR), a Liquor License with the BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Retail Sales Tax (RST) and Employer Health Tax (EHT) accounts with Ontario's Ministry of Finance, and has GST, Payroll and Corporate Income Tax accounts with CRA.

Business Number	945127589		
BC Incorporation	945127589	BC	0001
Manitoba Extra-Provincial Registration	945127589	MC	0001
New Brunswick Extra-Provincial Registration	945127589	NP	0001
Nova Scotia Extra-Provincial Registration	945127589	NS	0001
Ontario Extra-Provincial Registration	945127589	TS	0001
WorkSafeBC	945127589	BW	0001
BC PST (MSBR)	945127589	BT	0001
BC HRT (MSBR)	945127589	BT	0002
BC Liquor License (MPSSG)	945127589	BB	0001
Ontario RST (MoF)	945127589	TS	0002
Ontario EHT (MoF)	945127589	TS	0003
GST (CRA)	945127589	RT	0001
Payroll (CRA)	945127589	RP	0001
Corporate Income Tax (CRA)	945127589	RC	0001

Federally, use of the BN is based in the *Income Tax Act* and the *Excise Tax Act*. Provincially, the governing legislation is either in financial and taxation acts or in the acts that allow service organizations and business entities to function.