

NS GEOGRAPHIC NAMING PROCESS

OVERVIEW

The NS Geographic Naming Process is a four-stage process that facilitates adding new names or changing existing names for geographic features such as lakes, rivers, place names, populated places, and more in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia has a rich history and place names share insights into our heritage and culture. Places in Nova Scotia should have names that respect all our people and the history of our province. The NS Geographic Naming Process provides an effective approach for adding or changing place names with a focus on local resident decision making.

NAMING PROCESS OVERSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY

GeoNOVA is part of the Government Services Division at Service Nova Scotia and is the province's gateway to geographic information about Nova Scotia. They have accountability to:

- administer the geographic naming process throughout the entirety of the process.
- maintain the Nova Scotia Geographic Names Database (NSGNDB), which contains all official and previously official names in the province.
- participate with the Geographical Names Board of Canada (GNBC), which is the national coordinating body for geographic naming and for establishing guidelines and principles.

NAMING PROCESS OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the NS Geographic Naming Process seek to:

- Improve language such as changing or removing a name that has or may have negative or harmful impacts, including but not limited to: words considered derogatory or disrespectful, or which may be perceived to contain demeaning or harmful language to individuals or to racialized, social, ethnic, religious, or other groups.
- Empower local resident decision-making to ensure that geographic naming is an inclusive and democratic process that is consistent with the public interest and importance of Nova Scotia place names.
- Employ collaborative approaches that ensure naming practices reflect and affirm the diverse identities, languages, and histories of Nova Scotians, contributing to a sense of belonging and inclusion.

To meet these objectives, each stage of the NS Geographic Naming Process must strive to be:

- Efficient/Simple – include all necessary steps and can be navigable in a clear, concise and brief (as possible) fashion.
- Effective/Measurable – includes what is required to achieve the intended goal(s) completely, with an ability to assess/measure.
- Inclusive/Human-centred: supporting the active engagement of those directly affected and responsive to the needs and choices of all citizens.

WHAT MAY NOT BE INCLUDED IN THIS PROCESS

- GeoNOVA does not have jurisdiction to name incorporated places or other geographic features named through legislation.

WHO CAN APPLY TO ADD OR CHANGE A NAME

- The applicant must be eligible to vote in Nova Scotia provincial elections. To be eligible to vote in Nova Scotia you must be a Canadian citizen, are 18 years of age or older and live in Nova Scotia (for at least 6 months).
- Representatives of Municipalities, First Nation communities and/or special interest groups.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL RESIDENTS IN GEOGRAPHIC NAMING

To ensure that geographic naming is an inclusive and democratic process, public participation with local residents is an integral stage of the naming process.

4-STAGE PROCESS TO ADD OR CHANGE AN OFFICIAL GEOGRAPHIC NAME

STAGE 1: RECOMMENDATION TO ADD OR CHANGE NAME

COMPLETED BY APPLICANT

For a new name or name change, an application form is filled out with as much detail as possible. The applicant will also consider or include the following:

- Historical and/or contemporary references including any names currently or previously used.
- The meaning and verified spelling of the proposed name.
- A current map including the location and size of the feature being named, including coordinates.
- Demonstrate alignment with the **GNBC Guiding Principles**¹.
- The reason for the name change.
- Why the change is important.

The NS Geographic Naming Process includes provisions for improving language in geographic naming, such as changing or removing names that may cause harm., This includes but is not limited to: words considered derogatory or disrespectful, or which may be perceived to contain demeaning or harmful language to individuals or to racialized, social, ethnic, religious, or other groups.

When an application to improve language in geographic naming is received, the application should include the reason for removing a name including an explanation of benefits and impacts to the affected community, and any letters of support. GeoNOVA will assist in the completion of Step 1, to ensure all required content is provided.

STAGE 2: REVIEW SUBMISSION

COMPLETED BY GEONOVA, MAY INCLUDE CIRCLE OF ADVISORS

Research and engagement with interested individuals and groups (where appropriate) are carried out to ensure the proposed change conforms to the **GNBC's Guiding Principles**¹. If an application meets the guiding principles, it is advanced to the next step. If the application is rejected, the applicant is notified in writing, with opportunity to discuss what, if any options exist.

GeoNOVA may review the application in collaboration with a circle of advisors composed of diverse representation. People with local knowledge of the area and/or representing culturally or ethnically diverse

¹ [GNBC Guiding Principles](https://geonova.novascotia.ca/2011-gnbc-principles-procedures) <https://geonova.novascotia.ca/2011-gnbc-principles-procedures>

perspectives may also be included.

STAGE 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ADMINISTERED BY GEONOVA, PARTICIPATED IN BY LOCAL RESIDENTS

If an application meets the criteria to move ahead, the level of local resident engagement is determined.

Engagement with local residents:

Adherence to the following local-resident voting procedures will ensure that a fair and accurate measure of the resident’s wishes is respected. Participants must:

- Be eligible to vote in a Nova Scotia provincial election.
- Reside within the boundary of the community or generally within one kilometre of the geographic feature.
- Any applications for a geographic community² name change require public engagement with residents of the geographic community.
- Consideration may be given to others that are connected, impacted or affected by the proposed change such as if the area is unpopulated, participants may include special interest groups (e.g., fishers, trail users, etc.).

Engagement with members of a social community³ impacted by the name:

- Where appropriate, there may be engagement with impacted social communities as determined by the process.

Engagement Practices:

- Engagement may consist of multiple engagement methods including in-person and virtual sessions, and surveys. There may be name suggestion and selection activities in some cases.
- All name changes are determined with a vote.
- For applications for either a new name or a direct replacement of one name with another name, a local- resident survey will determine if the change is supported.
- Name suggestion and selection criteria must adhere to principles and procedures outlined by the **GNBC’s Guiding Principles**.

STAGE 4: DECISION AND FOLLOW UP

COMPLETED BY GEONOVA

- The Nova Scotia representative of the GNBC reviews the results of public engagement⁴.
- Engagement results are shared publicly.
- Relevant databases are updated to include the new or revised name if the application is approved.
- If not approved, the application is rejected, and the applicant is notified.
- The results of the application are communicated to the participants and the public.
- The new or changed name will be used as the official place name moving forward.

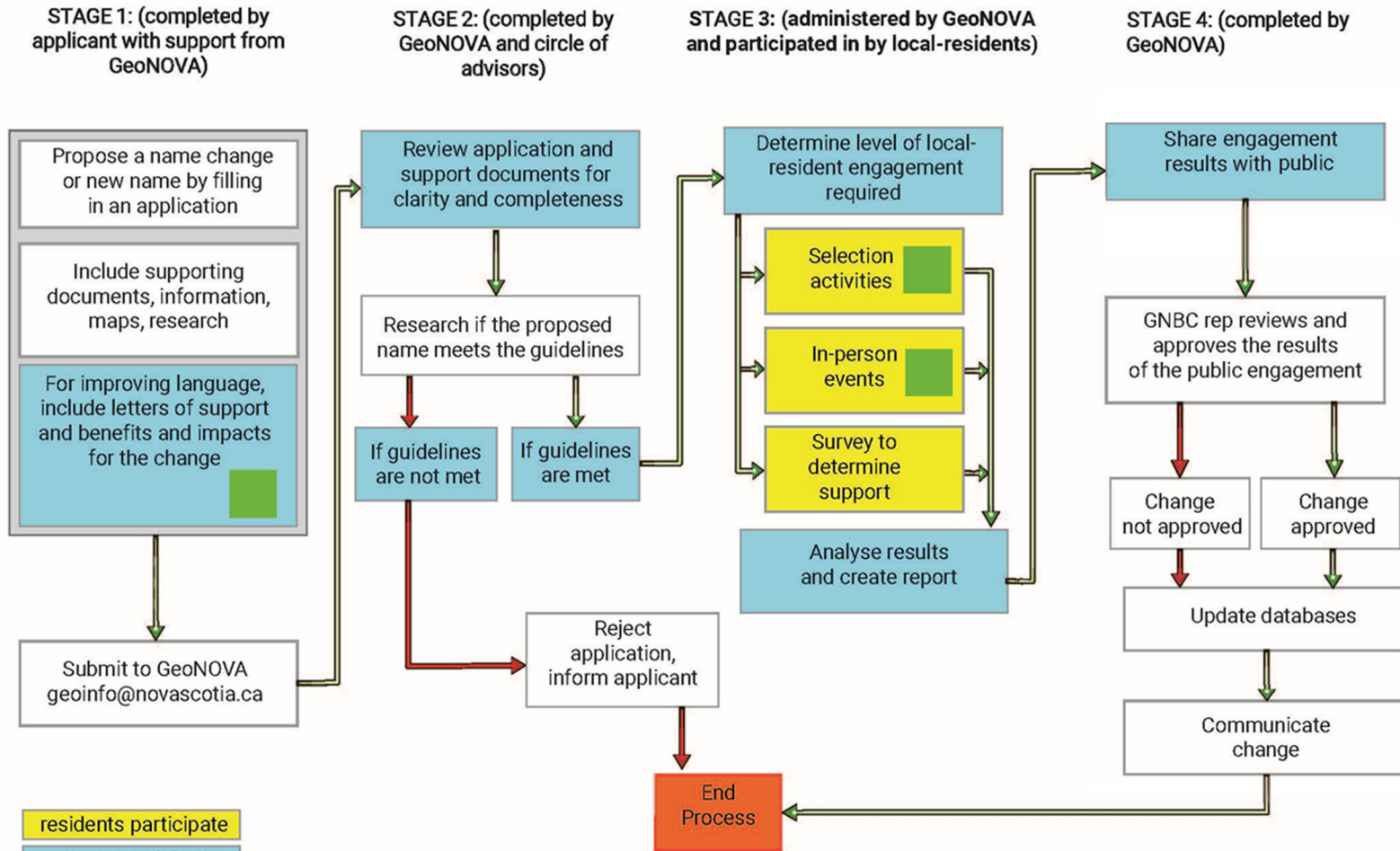
QUESTIONS, OR FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the naming process or would like to discuss this in more detail, contact GeoNOVA by emailing geoinfo@novascotia.ca or by visiting nsplacenames.ca.

² Geographic Community refers to an official populated place name in Nova Scotia; it is listed in the Nova Scotia Geographic Names Database, has a boundary approved by the municipality in which it resides, and is included in civic addressing.

³ Social Community refers to a social unit with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs, or racial identity. Social communities may share a sense of place in a geographical area or be connected in other ways. (Source: International Association for public Participation)

⁴ Final administrative approval resides with the Nova Scotia GNBC representative.



Additional partners include others participating in the process, such as municipalities or interest groups. The circle of advisors is comprised of diverse representation.

Public engagement participants are anyone living in the project area and who are eligible to vote in a Nova Scotia provincial election. May also include members of an impacted community.