NORTH Dakota

Be Legendary.

Writing
Style Guide

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Introduction

IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY

As writers, we all have our own methods, preferences and practices. Although we all have different backgrounds, it is important to be consistent as we represent our agencies and the state of North Dakota.

Similar to our branding guide, it is important to represent the Be Legendary brand to create a cohesive state image. As with visual elements, consistency in writing is fundamental in ensuring our audiences recognize and remember us.

We all have different audiences, but we collectively serve the residents of North Dakota. It is our responsibility to provide clear, timely and accurate communication that is easy to interpret and distribute seamlessly across all mediums.

This guide should serve as a resource to encourage cohesive writing when best fit.

BASICS

Most of North Dakota style should reflect AP; however, instances may arise when clarification is required for state-specific verbiage. Some examples are agency names, leadership, programs and divisions.

In this style guide you will find common Associated Press (AP) style references, state-specific references and tips for writing news releases.

WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

The objective of a news release is to announce news in a way that motivates the media or news outlets to share the material with the general public, thus reaching a wide and potentially influential audience, while written in a way that the public and reporters can understand.

The inverted pyramid is the easiest way to achieve a concise story that keeps the reader's attention long enough to convey a message that meets your agency's objective.

INVERTED PYRAMID

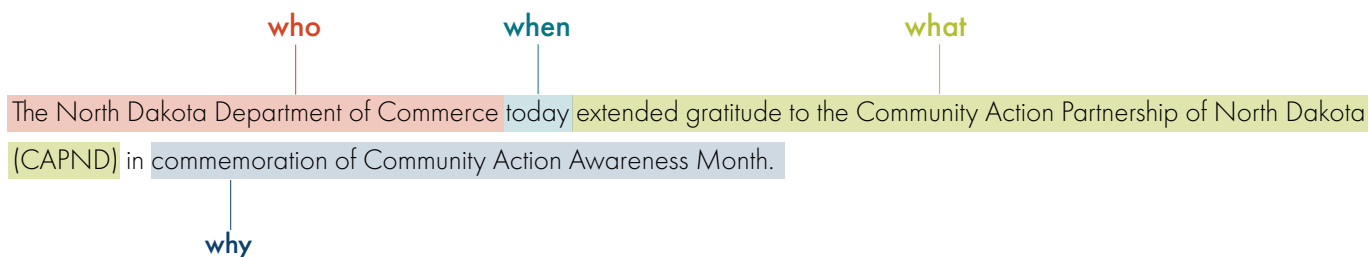|	
LEDE	Who, what, where, when, why
BODY	Crucial information
TAIL	Extra information
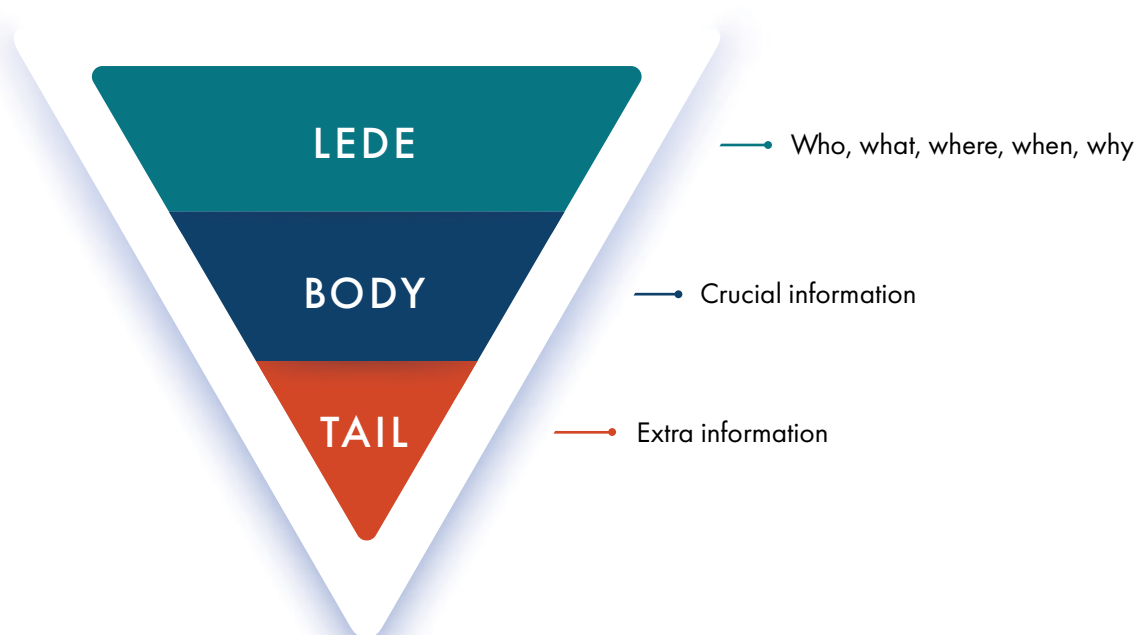
L E D E

As depicted in the graphic, the first portion of your release should state the **who, what, where, when and why**. By doing this, the reader instantly receives the key elements of your message.

The examples below relay the same message but are arranged differently. As you can see, example one provides the message within one sentence. The second example does not provide the message until the second sentence and does not mention the agency or provide a correlation to the announcement. The majority of the information in example two would be more appropriate for the body or the tail.

EXAMPLE ONE

who   when   what

The North Dakota Department of Commerce today extended gratitude to the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND) in commemoration of Community Action Awareness Month.

why

EXAMPLE TWO

By combining local, state, private and federal resources, the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota has helped North Dakotans break the cycle of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency for more than 50 years. This month commemorates the partnership that has seven locations statewide dedicated to providing services, including, but not limited to, housing and emergency assistance, child and adult care, food programs, energy assistance programs, prevention programs and veteran support services.

Some questions a reader might ask from example two are:

1. Why is this news?

2. The reader may also leave the story without even knowing that May is Community Service Awareness Month because it is buried between and after information about the Community Action Partnership.

B O D Y

The body should contain important information about the story. This will differ based on your agency's objectives.

The easiest way to determine the lede and body is by making a list of important elements. The body should contain the second-most important elements.

The body is also a great place for quotes that complement the story with appropriate attribution.

As you can see in example one, the quote provides an explanation as to why the month is dedicated to Community Action Awareness. The quote also provides an agency connection and reflects the lead's "what" of "extending gratitude."

Example two jumps into the agency's relation but does not reflect the commemoration for the month. The sentence fails to reflect the recent story and instead focuses on background information about the agency.

EXAMPLE ONE

The North Dakota Department of Commerce today extended gratitude to the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND) in commemoration of Community Action Awareness Month.

"Community action agencies serve an imperative role in promoting self-sufficiency, family stability and community revitalization," Commerce Division of Community Services Director Bonnie Malo said. "On behalf of Commerce, I would thank the agencies and all their members for their dedication to improving the lives of our residents."

Some questions a reader might ask from example three are:

1. Why are we commemorating Community Action Awareness Month?

2. What does Commerce Community Services have to do with this?

3. The reader may leave the story knowing what the division of community services is but will not know what CAPND is, and why there is a month dedicated to their services.

EXAMPLE TWO

The North Dakota Department of Commerce today extended gratitude to the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND) in commemoration of Community Action Awareness Month.

Commerce's Division of Community Services was established to provide technical assistance to local governments and state agencies in the areas of community and rural planning and development, policy research and development and grant program implementation.

TAIL

Once all the important details are provided, the reader may be interested in further information. This information should be viewed as stand-alone information that is not necessarily news or facts that contribute to the newsworthy subject but extra details that complement the overall story objective.

The tail can contain extra resources, background information and direction to additional related content.

Example one provides direction to the subject's website and background information pertaining to Commerce's relation with the subject.

The second example would serve as a good closing quote but does not provide any background or direction.

EXAMPLE ONE

To learn more about CAPND and services offered, please visit www.capnd.org.

Commerce's Division of Community Services was established to provide technical assistance to local governments and state agencies in the areas of community and rural planning and development, policy research and development and grant program implementation.

EXAMPLE TWO

"The Community Action Partnership of North Dakota is proud to assist over 20,000 North Dakota citizens each year," CAPND Executive Director Andrea Olson said. "We are dedicated to helping people secure the opportunities they need to obtain and maintain self-sufficiency."

Some questions a reader might ask from example two are:

1. Why is Commerce writing this?

2. I am interested in resources, but where do I find them?

H E A D L I N E

Although the headline is the first thing a reader sees, it should be the last component to complete your release.

- Why? Once you have the story complete you will have a full scope of the message objective and any interesting information.

The headline should reflect the lead with any catchy or impactful facts that complement the story.
Headlines and subheadings should be written in sentence case.

EXAMPLE ONE

$20 million of grant funds available for hotels, motels, lodges and resort establishments

The North Dakota Department of Commerce today announced that $20 million in grant funds are available for round two of the Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS which will be open for applications at 10 a.m. CST on March 9.

> As you can see, this example provides the "what" from the lead but instead of using the full title of the subject (Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS) the headline uses simplified terms that define the subject.
>
> This was done because the grant's name could create confusion and may lose the reader's interest due to not emphasizing who the grant pertains to.
>
> The information used in the headline is actually found in the body of the release.

The North Dakota Department of Commerce today announced that $20 million in grant funds are available for round two of the Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS which will be open for applications at 10 a.m. CST on March 9.

"North Dakota's lodging sector lost more than $178 million in visitor spending in 2020 with demand continuing at depressed levels to start off 2021," Interim Commerce Commissioner Shawn Kessel said. "These businesses are vital to our communities for visitors and the local workforce and supporting business."

The Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS expands the Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant (HERG) to provide funding for the accommodation sector which includes hotels, motels, lodges, and resort establishments. The Hospitality Economic Resiliently Grant PLUS is intended to assist the state's hotels, motels and lodging businesses who have been impacted by loss of revenue due to low occupancy rates as a result of the pandemic.

TEMPLATE

All releases and advisories should be sent using the standard template.

The template must include:

- Agency logo lockup as defined in the State of North Dakota Branding Guide
- Dateline
- Contact information

The dateline should be written as:

- CITY, STATE
- Example: BISMARCK, N.D.–Article
- The city and state should reflect the location of where the article was written
- All datelines must contain a city and state written in caps
  - Always use an abbreviation for the state
  - Always spell out the city

Templates can be found at nd.gov/government/belegendarybrand

All releases should have a heading as shown on the template

- Example: NEWS | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | DATE
  - An advisory should have |MEDIA ADVISORY| in place of |NEWS RELEASE|

NORTH **Dakota** Be Legendary. | Economic Development & Finance COMMERCE

NEWS | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | December 6, 2023

North Dakota Department of Commerce Opens 2023 Automation Tax Credit Program

VIEW THIS RELEASE ONLINE: www.commerce.nd.gov/news/

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Commerce announced today the application program is now open for primary sector businesses wishing to utilize the Automation Tax Credit for automation equipment purchases made during the 2023 calendar year. Applicants are required to submit applications by Jan. 31 but are encouraged to begin preparing applications early.

Under the Automation Tax Credit program (N.D.C.C. § 57-38-01.41), certified primary sector businesses stand to benefit from a tax credit of up to 15% for the acquisition or capital lease of machinery and equipment designed to automate manufacturing or animal agricultural processes within North Dakota. Should applicants require clarification on their primary sector certification status, assistance is available via email at ndedf@nd.gov.

To be eligible, applicants must have taken ownership of the automation equipment during the 2023 calendar year. Additionally, businesses applying must have held primary sector certification both at the time of purchase and throughout the application process.

"Automation tax credits can help address workforce shortages by providing financial incentives for businesses to invest in automated technologies. When companies adopt automation solutions, they can often streamline processes, increase efficiency, and increase capacity while upskilling current staffing," said Commerce Advanced Manufacturing Business Development Manager David Lehman. "Any automated equipment which replaces manual processes and results in improved job quality or productivity may be a candidate for the program."

Once the completed application is received, it is reviewed by a team of reviewers and the Economic Development & Finance Director prior to submittal to the North Dakota Tax Department.

For details and applications for the Automation Tax Credit program, visit ndgov.link/Automation-tax-credit.

###

HEADLINE	Sentence case, Segoe UI font, size 14, harvest orange color
SUBHEADLINE	Sentence case, Segoe UI font, size 14, black color
ARTICLE CONTENT	Sentence case, Segoe UI font, size 11, black

COMMON AP USAGES

Our overall style for the state should reflect the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. Here are a few common usages that we see often in our releases. Please refer to the AP Stylebook for a full collection of usage examples at apstylebook.com.

PUNCTUATION

- Use commas to separate elements in a series, but do not put a comma before the conjunction in most simple series.
- Include a final comma in a simple series if omitting it could make the meaning unclear.
- Use a comma also before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases.
- Use only one space after periods and colons.

✓

The North Dakota flag is blue, gold and white.

The governor called his top advisors John Doe and Jenny Deere, and his polling expert Tim Dotten.

The main objective of Commerce is to compete in a global economy, whether the focus is on workforce or innovation.

DATES

- Months should be capitalized in all uses.
- Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. should be abbreviated when used with a specific date.
- March, April, June and July should never be abbreviated.
- Only spell out when the month is used alone OR used with a year.
- Use a comma to separate the day and year when using month, day, year.
- Do not use a comma when only using month and year.

✓

Aug. 1, 2021

June 1, 2020

August is my favorite month.

In August 2020

August 2020

X

August 1, 2020

Jun. 1, 2020

Aug. is my favorite month

In Aug. 2020

Aug., 2020

TIME

- Always use a.m. and p.m.
- Time should be single digit (9 a.m.) when on the hour.
- Use time zones when appropriate.

- Daylight saving time is from second Sunday of March until 2 a.m. on the first Sunday of November.
  - CST | CDT
  - MST | MDT
- For 12 p.m. use noon.
- For 12 a.m. use midnight.

TITLE

- All titles should be lowercase if:
  — Not used with or before an individual's name
  — Not formal
- Non-formal titles can include job descriptions, field positions, etc.
- Some examples are coach, general manager, doctor, nurse.
- Some titles should be abbreviated when used as a formal title before the name.
- Do not use titles on second reference. Use the last name on all second + references.
- Formal titles should be capitalized if:
  — Contains full formal description, i.e.
  — Agency-Formal Position-Name or Formal Position-Name Agency-Formal Position must be listed before the name to be capitalized
  — Does not contain a comma separating the title and name

- Formal titles should not be capitalized if:
  — Formal title is listed after the name
  — Formal title is separated from name by a comma
- Use Dr. in first reference as a formal title before the name of an individual who holds a doctor of dental surgery, doctor of medicine, doctor of optometry, doctor of osteopathic medicine, doctor of podiatric medicine, or doctor of veterinary medicine.
- Do not use Dr. before the names of individuals who hold other types of doctoral degrees. Reference the doctorate following the name/title as necessary or appropriate.

✓

...coach Hank Finley

...account executive Bruno Mac

Live Media Inc. Account Executive Bruno Mac

Gov. Doug Burgum

Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford

Sen. John Hoeven

Maggie Smith, who has a doctorate in literature, was the lead editor

... Interior Secretary Jane Rose

...interior secretary, Jane Rose

...general manager Zelda Hopps

...Cotton Tail Supplies General Manager Zelda Hopps

...Zelda Hopps, the general manager of Cotton Tail Supplies

...baker, Aubrianna

...Landino Rayas a computer technician

X

...Coach Hank Finley

...Account Executive Bruno Mac

Governor Burgum

Governor Doug Burgum

Lietenent Governor Brent Sanford

Senator John Hoeven

The Baker, Aubrianna

Landino Rayas a Computer Technician

ADDRESSES

- Use these abbreviations only with a numbered address. An exception is formal street names (Pennsylvania Avenue) used without a number.
- Street and avenue names first through ninth should be spelled out and capitalized. Use figures for 10th and above.
- All addresses should have ordinals (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th).

Avenue	Ave.
Boulevard	Blvd.
Street	St.

- Formal street names should be spelled out when used without a number. Avenues, boulevards, street, etc. should be capitalized unless there is more than one street name.
- Main Street should be spelled out and capitalized when referring to a town's Main Street area.
- Always spell out states with the exception of datelines and full addresses.

BULLETS/LISTS

- Put a space between the dash or figure and first word.
- Capitalize each first word after the dash or bullet.
- Use periods at the end of each bullet, regardless if it's a full sentence or a phrase.
  - Start with the same part of speech for each item (in this example, a verb).
  - Use the same voice (active or passive) for each item.
  - Use the same verb tense for each item.
  - Use the same sentence type (statement, question, exclamation) for each item.
  - Use just a phrase for each item, if desired.
- Introduce the list with a short phrase or sentence. Such as: The following guidelines: Partners included:

LAND/DIRECTIONS/LOCATIONS

- Only capitalize when referring to a unique location or geographic area.
- State and city should only be capitalized when used as part of a formal name.

✅

939 10th St. E.

10th Street

369 Fifth St.

Pennsylvania Avenue

Madison and Park avenues

❌

939 10th Street East

10th St.

369 5th St.

Pennsylvania Ave.

Madison Ave. and Park Ave.

Madison and Park Ave.

PHONE NUMBERS

- In body text, phone numbers should be listed with parentheses around the area code and a hyphen between the seven-digit number.
  (701) 328-5555

- Exception: When listing contact information on a news release, it is acceptable to use periods.
   701.328.5555

STATE REFERENCES

AGENCY NAMES

- All agencies should be written as shown on the agency list shown on pages 16-17.

- All agencies should be fully written on first reference. Second reference will include the agency's name without "The Department of," "North Dakota," etc.

- Agency names should only be included in second + reference if used with a division or when used for an official title or position.

- Complete division or agency names can be used to reiterate when needed for boilers, lengthy documents, etc.

*The name listed on the agency's lockup is a good go-to reference if the guide is not available.*

The only agencies that use an acronym for second reference include:

- BND
- WSI

Division/agency first reference	North Dakota Department of Commerce Division of Community Services
Division second + reference	Community Services
Formal title/ position	Commerce Division of Community Services Director Maria Effertz

Agency second reference

Division second + reference
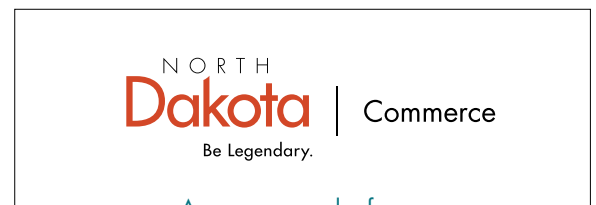
EXAMPLE ONE

A virtual public input meeting on the proposed improvement to I-94 from I-29 to the 25th Street interchange in Fargo will be available May 4, 2021, on the North Dakota Department of Transportation website at www.dot.nd.gov. Click "Public Meetings" under "Quick Links" to join. A pre-recorded presentation will be presented at 5 p.m. followed by a question session until 7 p.m.

Division/title reference

The virtual public input meeting is being facilitated by Transportation.

Second agency reference

Written statements or comments about this project must be postmarked or emailed by May 19, 2021, to James Rath, 608 East Blvd. Ave., Bismarck, ND 58505-0700 or jrath@nd.gov with "virtual public input meeting" in the subject heading.

For any questions, assistance submitting comments, or to request hard copy materials, please contact John James P.E. at 701-328-0000 or email to jjames@nd.gov.

Second + agency reference

Transportation will consider every request for reasonable accommodation to provide:
- an accessible accommodation for people with disabilities,
- language interpretation for people with limited English proficiency (LEP), and
- translations of written material necessary to access programs and information.

To request accommodations, contact Jane Smith, Transportation Civil Rights Division at 701-328-0000 or civilrights@nd.gov. TTY users may use Relay North Dakota at 711 or 1-800-366-6888.

Division/title reference

EXAMPLE TWO

Agency first reference

The North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services reminds residents to take steps to protect themselves against hantavirus disease. As the weather warms, many people will be cleaning cabins, sheds and other outdoor buildings that have been closed for the winter. These are places where one is more likely to be exposed to hantavirus.

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) is a viral infection that can cause severe lung disease. Typically, infected rodents spread the virus in their urine, droppings and saliva. The virus is transmitted when someone breathes in air contaminated by the virus, and on rare occasions, it can be transmitted through an infected rodent bite.

"People are most often exposed to hantavirus when they inhale dust while cleaning or occupying previously vacant cabins, sheds or other dwellings and outbuildings that contain rodents, rodent droppings and rodent nests," said Jane Doe, epidemiologist with the Health & Human Services Division

Division/agency reference

of Disease Control. "Currently, only supportive treatment exists for hantavirus disease, so it is important to be cautious when cleaning rodent infestations to properly prevent infection."

Agency second reference

Health & Human Services offers the following tips to avoid hantavirus infection when cleaning a building with signs of rodent infestation:

Agencies that have several locations should:

- Spell out entire agency and location on first reference.
- The second reference should include the specifier and drop the agency.

First reference	Second reference
North Dakota Department of Transportation Bismarck District Office	Bismarck District Office
Job Service North Dakota Bismarck Workforce Center	Bismarck Workforce Center

REFERENCE RESOURCES

Please refer to pages 16-19 for the following references:

- Agency names, first and second reference.
- Agency leadership.
- Agency programs/divisions/locations, etc.

This writing guide is regularly updated. Please share any additions or edits
as you see fit by contacting marketingnd@nd.gov

AGENCY REFERENCES AND LEADERSHIP

Quick Reference	First Reference	Second + Reference	Leadership
Agriculture	North Dakota Department of Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture Commissioner
Arts	North Dakota Council on the Arts	Council on the Arts	Executive Director
Attorney General	North Dakota Office of the Attorney General	Attorney General's Office	Attorney General
Auditor	North Dakota State Auditor's Office	Auditor's Office	Auditor
Bank of North Dakota	Bank of North Dakota	BND	CEO
Commerce	North Dakota Department of Commerce	Commerce	Commissioner
Corrections	North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	Corrections and Rehabilitation	Director
CTE	North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education	Career and Technical Education	Director and Executive Director
Emergency Services	North Dakota Department of Emergency Services	Emergency Services	
Environmental	North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality	Environmental Quality	Director
Game and Fish	North Dakota Game and Fish	Game and Fish	Director
Governor's Office	North Dakota Office of the Governor	Governor's Office	Gov., Lt. Gov, First Lady
Health & Human Service	North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services	Health & Human Services	Executive Director
Highway Patrol	North Dakota Highway Patrol	Highway Patrol	Col. [NAME], Superintendent of North Dakota Highway Patrol
Historical Society	State Historical Society of North Dakota	State Historical Society	Director
Housing Finance Agency	North Dakota Housing Finance Agency	Housing Finance	Executive Director

AGENCY REFERENCES AND LEADERSHIP

Quick Reference	First Reference	Second + Reference	Leadership
Indian Affairs	North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission	Indian Affairs Commission	Executive Director
Information Technology	North Dakota Information Technology Department	Information Technology	Chief Information Officer
Insurance	North Dakota Insurance Department	Insurance	Commissioner
Job Service	Job Service North Dakota	Job Service	Executive Director
Labor and Human Rights	North Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights	Labor and Human Rights	Labor Commissioner
Library	North Dakota State Library	State Library	State Librarian
Mineral Resources	North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources	Mineral Resources	Director
OMB	North Dakota Office of Management and Budget	Management and Budget -or- OMB	Director
Parks and Rec	North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department	Parks and Recreation	Director
Public Instruction	North Dakota Department of Public Instruction	Public Instruction -or- DPI	North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction
Public Service Commission	North Dakota Public Service Commission	PSC	Commissioner
Secretary of State	North Dakota Secretary of State	Secretary of State	Secretary
Tax	North Dakota Office of the State Tax Commissioner	Tax	Commissioner
Transportation	North Dakota Department of Transportation	Transportation	Director
Treasurer	North Dakota Office of the State Treasurer	Treasurer's Office	Treasurer
Veterans	North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs	Veterans Affairs	Commissioner
Workforce Safety and Insurance	North Dakota Workforce Safety and Insurance	WSI	Director

AGENCY DIVISIONS, LOCATIONS, ETC.

Divisions (listed after specifier): Tourism and Marketing Division

Specifier   Division

Quick Reference	Divisions, locations, etc.
COMMERCE	Divisions: Tourism and Marketing, Economic Development and Finance (ED&F), Community Services, Workforce
ENVIRONMENTAL	Division of: Air Quality, Division of Chemistry, Municipal Facilities, Waste Management, Division of Water Quality Office of the Director
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	Divisions (listed after specifier): Aging Services, Behavioral Health, Child Support, Children and Family Services, Developmental Disabilities Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Legal Advisory Unit, State Council on Developmental Disabilities, North Dakota State Hospital, Life Skills and Transition Center, Medical Services Regional human service centers: Badlands, Lake Region, North Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, South Central and West Central Human Service Zones (19 local partner agencies)
HISTORICAL SOCIETY	North Dakota State Archives, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Department, Audience Engagement and Museum Department *See page 19 for a full list of locations
HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY	Divisions (listed after specifier): Homeownership, Property Management, Planning and Housing Development Division; North Dakota Continuum of Care (NDHFA administrators/not part of a division).
OMB	Divisions (listed after specifier) Central Services, Facility Management, Fiscal Management, Risk Management Human Resources Management Services
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION	North Dakota State Library, North Dakota School for the Blind/Vision Services; North Dakota School for the Deaf/Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Academic Support; School Approval & Opportunity; Educational Equity & Support; Indian/Multicultural Education; Assessment, Special Education, Child Nutrition & Food Distribution, Elementary Principals' Cabinet, High School Principals' Cabinet, Superintendents' Cabinet, Family Engagement Cabinet, Student Cabinet
TRANSPORTATION	Drivers License Division, Motor Vehicle Division, Safety Division, State Fleet Services, Bismarck District, Devils Lake District, Dickinson District, Williston District, Valley City District, Minot District, Grand Forks District, Fargo District, Maintenance Division, Construction Services Division, Civil Rights Division, Planning & Asset Management Division, Local Government Division, Programming Division, Design Division, Environmental & Transportation Services Division, Bridge Division, Materials & Research Division, Finance Division, Quality Assurance & Internal Review Division, Communications Division, Legal Division, Human Resources Division

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Historical Society Locations

North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum
(North Dakota Heritage Center) (State Museum)

Pembina State Museum

Big Mound Battlefield State Historic Site

Bismarck-Deadwood Stage Trail State Historic Site

Brenner Crossing State Historic Site

Buffalo Creek State Historic Site

Camp Arnold State Historic Site

Camp Atchison State Historic Site

Camp Buell State Historic Site

Camp Corning State Historic Site

Camp Grant State Historic Site

Camp Hancock State Historic Site

Camp Kimball State Historic Site

Camp Sheardown State Historic Site

Camp Weiser State Historic Site

Camp Whitney State Historic Site

Cannonball Stage Station State Historic Site

Chateau de Mores State Historic Site

Crowley Flint Quarry State Historic Site

David Thompson State Historic Site

Double Ditch Indian Village State Historic Site

Former Governors' Mansion State Historic Site

Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site

Fort Buford State Historic Site and the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center

Fort Clark State Historic Site

Fort Dilts State Historic Site

Fort Mandan Overlook State Historic Site

Need More Help?

These guidelines don't cover every scenario,
so let's figure it out together.

marketingnd@nd.gov