

State of North Dakota Forms Design Standards

Introduction

[North Dakota Century Code 54-44.6](#) directs the state forms management program to develop and implement design standards. Well-designed forms improve efficiency, accuracy, and cost savings while enhancing user experience.

Title Block

1. A title for a form should be as brief and simple as possible and clearly state the function or purpose of the form. It will not use in-house terminology or words such as "form" or "sheet" as that is obvious. Use [Keywords for Form Titles](#) to help determine the best title.

All forms must include a title block containing:

- The title of the form, clearly identifying its function or purpose.
 - The name of the agency responsible.
 - The State Form Number (SFN).
 - The revision date (not required for online forms).
2. The title block must be positioned in the upper left corner whenever possible.
 3. The Great Seal of the State of North Dakota, BeLegendary logo or agency logo must be part of the title block. If the Seal is omitted, the words "North Dakota" must precede the agency name. Refer to the ND Commerce Department's branding standards for logos: [State Marketing - ND Commerce](#)

Sample title block:



TITLE OF FORM
DEPARTMENT NAME
DIVISION NAME
SFN XXXXX (XX-2019)

(12 point - Bold)
(10 point)
(10 point)
(8 point)

4. Subsequent pages shall include the State Form Number, revision date, and page number. Example: SFN XXXXX (8-2019) Page 2
5. Forms must not be printed or reproduced on letterhead.
6. Personal names are not permitted on forms to prevent unnecessary revisions due to personnel changes.

Captions

1. Captions must be:
 - Brief, clear, and concise. Consistent throughout the form.
 - Designed to cover only one item or point to avoid confusion.
 - Self-explanatory to the user, minimizing the need for instructions.
2. Forms must use a **box format** with upper-left captions.

Samples:

BOX FORMAT WITH UPPER LEFT CAPTIONS

Name		Report Date	
Address	City	State	ZIP Code
Job Title		Grade	Classification
Email Address	Name of Supervisor		

YES

CAPTIONS ON THE LINE

Name _____ Report Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP Code _____

Job Title _____ Grade _____ Classification _____

Email Address _____ Name of Supervisor _____

NO

CAPTIONS BENEATH THE LINE

Name		Report Date	
Address	City	State	ZIP Code
Job Title		Grade	Classification
Email Address	Name of Supervisor		

NO

3. Font requirements:
 - Minimum size: 8-10 point.
 - Type style: Sans serif, not bold.

Spacing

1. Vertical Spacing (Throw):
 - Entry fields must be 3/8" in height.
 - Layout must be uniform across the entire form.
2. Horizontal Spacing (Pitch):
 - Must provide adequate space for handwritten or typed entries without excessive white space.
3. Margins:
 - Forms need margins of clear area and allow a minimum of a 1/4-inch margin on all four sides of the form.

Order and Alignment

1. The sequence of items on a form must follow the flow of work:
 - **Identification:** Standard title block.
 - **Instructions:** Brief, clear guidance on completing the forms. General instructions (e.g., print clearly) should appear at the top.
 1. Lengthy instructions within the body of the form should be avoided.
 2. Routing/distribution instructions should be at the bottom.
 - **Body:** Primary data entry area, designed for clarity.
 - **Conclusion:** Signature and date fields, if required.
2. Forms should follow a natural reading flow (left to right, top to bottom) and maintain a standard sequence for familiar fields (e.g., name, address, city, state, ZIP code).

Appearance, Readability and Accessibility

1. Forms must project a professional image:
 - No unnecessary decorations, embellishments, or excessive graphics.
 - No more than two type styles per form.
 - No shading or screening for decorative purposes.
2. Forms must be easy to read and complete:
 - Clear, black ink/font with adequate contrast.

- Clean and organized design without typographical or grammatical errors.
 - Appropriate use of white space for readability and efficient use of space.
3. Forms will use minimal vertical alignment points.

Example of Good Vertical Alignment

(3 Vertical Alignment Points/Tabs)

Name (Last, First)		Date of Birth	
Address	City	State	ZIP Code
County	Email Address		
Name of Supervisor		Telephone Number	



Example of Poor Vertical Alignment

(6 Vertical Alignment Points/Tabs)

Last Name	First Name	Date of Birth	
Address	City	State	ZIP Code
County	Email Address		
Name of Supervisor		Telephone Number	



4. Forms that are displayed on or attached to state government websites must be compliant with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) where applicable: [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#). Consult ND Commerce for assistance.

Conclusion

By adhering to these principles and standards, North Dakota state agencies ensure that all forms are efficient, user-friendly, and professionally presented. Proper design minimizes errors, speeds up processing, and enhances the overall functionality of government documentation.