



# Nuans: Research on Client Satisfaction and Client Profiles

## Final Report

Prepared for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Supplier Name: Phoenix SPI  
Contract Number: U1400-186782/001/CY  
Contract Value: \$46,262.20 (including HST)  
Award Date: 2018-03-09  
Delivery Date: 2018-11-19

Registration Number: POR 114-17

For more information on this report, please contact Innovation, Science and Economic Development at: [IC.PublicOpinionResearch-Recherchesurlopinionpublique.IC@canada.ca](mailto:IC.PublicOpinionResearch-Recherchesurlopinionpublique.IC@canada.ca)

*Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.*

This publication is available online at [http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h\\_00295.html](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h_00295.html).  
To obtain a copy of this publication, or to receive it in an alternate format (Braille, large print, etc.), please fill out the Publication Request Form at [www.ic.gc.ca/Publication-Request](http://www.ic.gc.ca/Publication-Request) or contact:

Web Services Centre  
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada  
C.D. Howe Building  
235 Queen Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5  
Canada

Telephone (toll-free in Canada): 1-800-328-6189  
Telephone (international): 613-954-5031  
TTY (for hearing impaired): 1-866-694-8389  
Business hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)  
Email: [ISED@canada.ca](mailto:ISED@canada.ca)

#### **Permission to Reproduce**

Except as otherwise specifically noted, the information in this publication may be reproduced, in part or in whole and by any means, without charge or further permission from the Department of Industry, provided that due diligence is exercised in ensuring the accuracy of the information reproduced; that the Department of Industry is identified as the source institution; and that the reproduction is not represented as an official version of the information reproduced or as having been made in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of, the Department of Industry.

For permission to reproduce the information in this publication for commercial purposes, please fill out the Application for Crown Copyright Clearance at [www.ic.gc.ca/copyright-request](http://www.ic.gc.ca/copyright-request) or contact the Web Services Centre mentioned above.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Industry, (2018).

Cat. No. Iu4-234/2018E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-660-28776-8

Aussi offert en français sous le titre *Nuans : Recherche sur la satisfaction et les profils de la clientèle*.

# Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	3
1.1. Background and Objectives.....	3
1.2. Methodology.....	3
1.3. Key Findings .....	5
2. Introduction .....	9
2.1. Background and Objectives.....	9
2.2. Methodology.....	9
3. Client Profiles.....	12
3.1. Self-serve Users.....	13
3.2. Casual Users.....	14
3.3. Power Users.....	15
3.4. Trademark Users.....	17
4. Detailed Findings .....	18
4.1. Context.....	18
4.2. Use of Nuans .....	19
4.3. Satisfaction with Nuans .....	21
4.4. Communications.....	23
4.5. Suggestions for Improvement.....	24
5. Appendix.....	25
5.1. Interview Guide .....	25



# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Background and Objectives

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) commissioned public opinion research with clients of Nuans. Nuans is an online service of the federal government that new businesses, or their representatives, use at the time of their incorporation to compare their proposed name with already existing names and trademarks. The purpose of the research was to help ISED better understand the different expectations of Nuans audience segments.

The research was designed to generate information and insights on: 1) profiles of typical Nuans clients; and 2) client satisfaction, program expectations, channel and website feature preferences by audience segment.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- Create Nuans descriptive client profiles (personas);
- Better understand Nuans clients' needs and expectations;
- Gather client perspectives on Nuans digital service offerings; and
- Better communicate Nuans service offerings to each target audience.

The research results will be used to improve the services offered by Nuans and to address Nuans' underused services through awareness raising and/or program changes.

## 1.2. Methodology

A set of 20 one-on-one in-depth interviews was conducted with the target population: Nuans clients who had completed at least one transaction in the 12 months preceding the research. This included three types of clients:

- self-serve;
- jurisdictional; and
- intermediaries.

Self-serve clients are individual entrepreneurs; jurisdictional clients are provincial corporate law administrators; and intermediaries are private sector business users who offer their services to clients that wish to obtain a report and/or an opinion in the process seeking approval on a corporate name.

The breakdown of interviews by client group was as follows: four interviews with self-serve clients, four interviews with jurisdictional users, and 12 interviews with intermediaries. This distribution was designed to reflect the population of Nuans clients.

Interviews were conducted by telephone by senior researchers from Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The fieldwork was conducted between April and June 2018.

***This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of Nuans clients.***



## 1.3. Key Findings

### *Resources used to search for corporate names and trademarks*

In addition to Nuans, interview participants mentioned a variety of websites or online resources that they use when looking for existing corporate names, business names and trademarks. The resources mentioned with the greatest frequency were the Internet, specifically Google, Corporations Canada's federal incorporations database, and the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO). The reasons participants use these specific resources are varied, ranging from cost factors, to ease of use, to necessity.

### *Reasons for using Nuans*

There are two main reasons clients use Nuans: first, to check name availability and reservation, primarily for the purpose of facilitating incorporation; and second, to search for corporate or business names for trademarking purposes.

### *Awareness and knowledge of Nuans*

When asked how they first heard about Nuans, self-serve clients pointed to the Internet or, specifically, to Corporations Canada website while private sector and jurisdictional users tended to mention their workplace. Beyond name searches and name reservation, very few participants were aware of any other services offered by Nuans. Those who claimed knowledge of other services offered by Nuans mentioned corporate name pre-approval and trademark reports.

### *Overall satisfaction with Nuans*

All interview participants were satisfied with Nuans, at least to some extent. They characterized Nuans as easy to use, fast, user-friendly, and available 24/7. When asked what they like about using Nuans, most participants mentioned the speed of the report generation (reports are generated immediately, in real-time). Widespread satisfaction notwithstanding, participants also pointed to areas or aspects of Nuans in need of improvement (e.g., the level of detail in the Nuans reports) or technical issues they have encountered using Nuans (e.g., signing in).

### *Contact with Nuans*

None of the self-serve clients interviewed had been in contact with a Nuans representative during the past 12 months. In contrast, most of the intermediaries and jurisdictional clients interviewed said they had been in contact with Nuans. Reasons for contacting a Nuans representative during the past 12 months include the following: to address a login issue; to ask about retrieving a report; to inquire about billing or to report an issue with billing; and to add or remove users from their account. Most participants in contact with Nuans used email and were satisfied with their service experience.

## Service channels

Regarding their preferred service channel for dealing with a Nuans representative, participants were divided between telephone and email, with some preferring either channel and others preferring one over the other. In general, telephone is preferred because it is direct and can lead to quick problem resolution. Email, on the other hand, is preferred because it provides a written record of the inquiry/transaction.

## Client Profiles

The findings from the interviews were used to construct four profiles of those who use Nuans—personas.

- **Persona 1:** Self-serve users are the most varied persona. What these clients have in common is that they are owners of (or involved with) a start-up business and have chosen to do the name search as a precursor to incorporating their business. These individuals are comfortable enough operating online to have decided to undertake this step in the incorporation process on their own. Beyond this, self-serve users have very little in common. They represent businesses from different industries across the country.
- **Persona 2:** Casual users are a sub-set of Nuans' intermediary clients. On average, they use Nuans once per month. Casual users typically provide services to businesses, such as accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, and/or incorporation. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy, but these companies tend to be micro-businesses in the start-up stage of their lifecycle. Casual users have a high level of online expertise, conducting personal and professional transactions online every day.
- **Persona 3:** Power users are also a sub-set of Nuans' intermediary clients who typically work for business registration firms, name search firms, or for provincial governments (jurisdictional). Power users are very sophisticated users of Nuans, in large part as a result of the frequency with which they use the service. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy, although some may focus on specific industries. The businesses they provide services to can be start-ups or well-established companies, although some power users work primarily with companies in the start-up stage. When it comes to the size of these businesses, once again, power users' clients run the gamut from micro-businesses to large businesses.
- **Persona 4:** Trademark users are also a sub-set of Nuans' intermediary clients. These clients are sophisticated searchers who use specialized databases to research and protect trademarks on behalf of their clients. These clients tend to use Nuans as one source among others, and do so on a weekly basis. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy. Their clients can be start-ups or well-established companies, small or large in terms of corporate size and Canadian or international.

These profiles are based on the information collected through the interviews. They cannot be considered representative of the full population of Nuans clients and should be used with this in mind.





---

The contract value was \$46,262.20 (including HST).

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



---

Alethea Woods  
President  
Phoenix SPI

## 2. Introduction

Nuans is an online service of the federal government that is mainly used by new businesses, or their representatives, at the time of their incorporation to compare their proposed name with already existing names and trademarks. Before approving a new corporate name, most provincial and territorial governments require a Nuans report, which is a list of existing corporate and business names, as well as trademarks, that are similar to the one being proposed. The Nuans report provides the information needed to reject or approve the name of a proposed business. As such, Nuans contributes to a fair, efficient and competitive marketplace, aligned with the mandates of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), and the provincial/territorial jurisdictions<sup>1</sup> served by Nuans.

### 2.1. Background and Objectives

Monitoring changing client and evolving business needs is critical to targeted program delivery and improved client services. As a result, ISED commissioned public opinion research to help understand the different expectations of Nuans audience segments. The research was designed to generate information and insights on: 1) profiles of typical Nuans clients; and 2) client satisfaction, program expectations, channel and website feature preferences by audience segment.

The specific objectives of the research were the following:

- create Nuans descriptive client profiles (personas);
- better understand Nuans clients' needs and expectations;
- gather client perspectives on Nuans digital service offerings; and
- better communicate Nuans service offerings to each identified target audience.

The research results will be used to improve the services offered by Nuans and to address Nuans' underused services through awareness initiatives and/or program changes.

### 2.2. Methodology

To meet the objectives, a set of 20 one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted with the target population: Nuans clients who had completed at least one transaction in the year prior to the research – 2017. This included three types of clients, namely:

- self-serve
- jurisdictional
- intermediaries

---

<sup>1</sup> The Nuans report is a mandatory filing with the government when businesses are incorporating in any of the following jurisdictions: Alberta, Canada (federal), Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and Yukon Territory. Northwest Territories also uses Nuans (self-serve), although it is not mandatory. Businesses wanting to incorporate in the other jurisdictions (British Columbia, Newfoundland, Nunavut and Quebec) require a name search report from their respective database and registry.

Self-serve clients are individual entrepreneurs who act on their own behalf; jurisdictional clients are provincial corporate law administrators; and intermediaries who act on behalf of someone else (i.e. they obtain a report and/or an opinion on a corporate name for their clients).

Participants were recruited from several sources, as follows:

- a list of Nuans clients who had agreed to be contacted for research purposes;
- Corporations Canada publicly available database of incorporated companies;
- Nuans website survey intercepts; and
- online public directories.

The breakdown of interviews by client group was as follows:

**Figure 1: Distribution of Interviews**

Type of Client	Number of Interviews
Self-Serve	4
Jurisdictional	4
Intermediaries	12
<i>Business Registration / Name Search Organizations</i>	7
<i>Financial / Accounting Organizations</i>	3
<i>Trademark Agents</i>	2

This distribution was designed to reflect the population of Nuans clients. The greatest proportion of interviews was conducted with intermediaries (approximately two-thirds of Nuans users represent the private sector). The remainder of the interviews were divided evenly between self-serve and jurisdictional clients of Nuans<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Self-serve clients were the most difficult to recruit for this research. Multiple methods were used to try to complete interviews with this type of Nuans client (e.g., a website survey intercept, as well as Corporations Canada database searches of incorporated companies coupled with online searches of public directories). The conclusion drawn (but not validated) was that the service interaction is so brief (the Nuans service produces a search report in real time) that it is difficult to engage one-time users in research designed to review their service experience with Nuans.

Interviews were conducted by telephone by senior researchers from Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The fieldwork was conducted between April and June 2018.

***This research was qualitative in nature and, as such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of Nuans clients.***



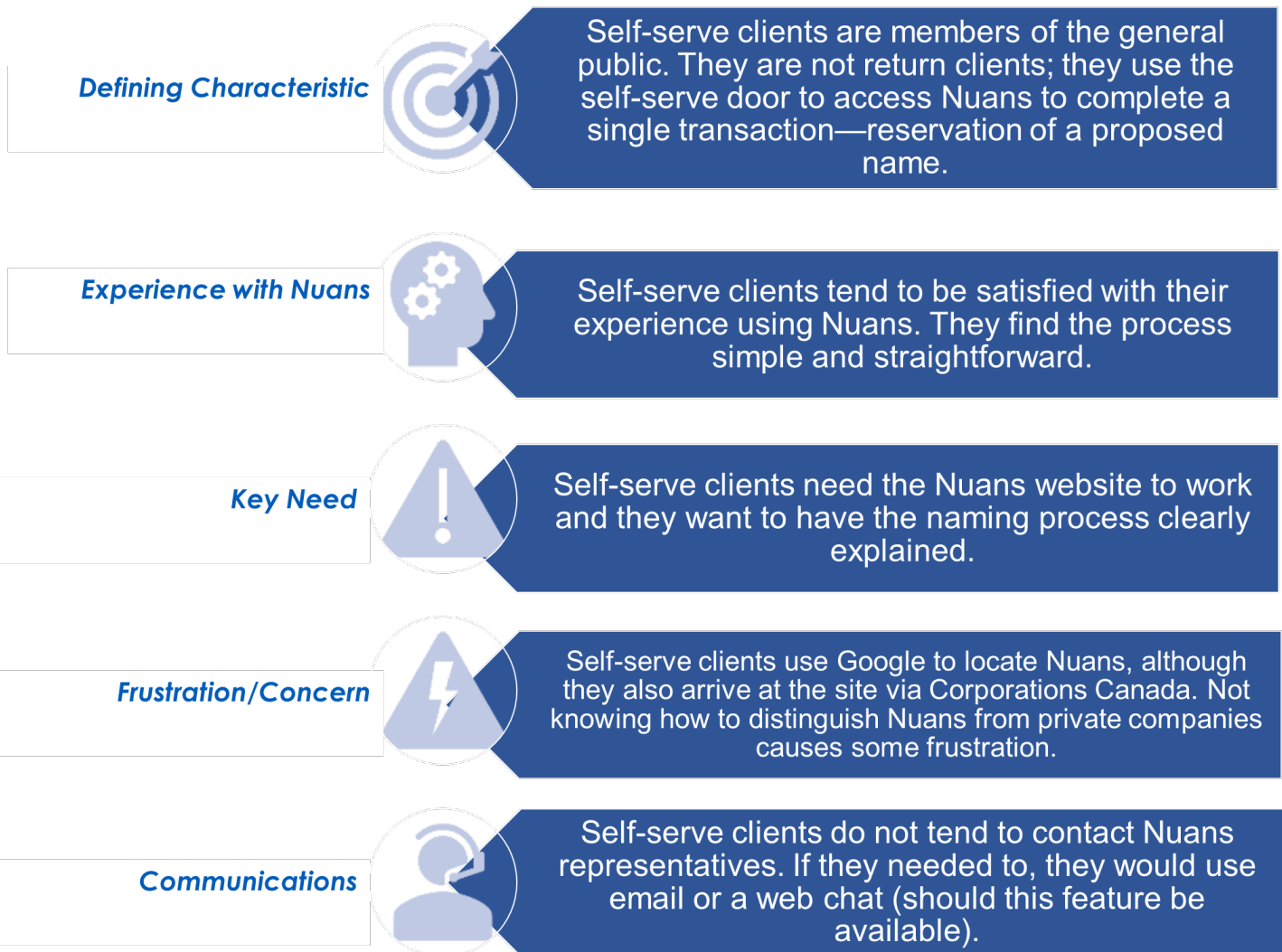
### 3. Client Profiles

The findings from the interviews with clients of Nuans were used to construct profiles. These profiles are based on the information collected through the interviews with the individuals who agreed to participate in the research. While efforts were taken to interview a mix of different types of Nuans clients, these profiles are not based on quantitative data, generated through probability sampling. They cannot be considered representative of the full population of Nuans clients and should be used with this in mind. Moreover, given the narrow focus of Nuans, it should not be surprising that the personas uncovered align closely with Nuans' clients: entrepreneurs, businesses and provincial governments.

### 3.1. Self-serve Users

Self-serve client users are the most varied persona. What these clients have in common is that they are owners of (or involved with) a start-up business, have chosen to do the name search as a precursor to incorporating their business, and access Nuans through the self-serve portal. They are not using an intermediary to undertake the business name search, reservation and registration on their behalf. This suggests that these individuals are comfortable enough operating online to have decided to undertake this step in the incorporation process on their own. Beyond this, self-serve users have very little in common. They represent businesses operating in different sectors of the economy, providing different types of services. While they have some post-secondary education, their level of educational attainment varies, from below a bachelor's degree to a bachelor's degree.

Figure 2: Self-serve users

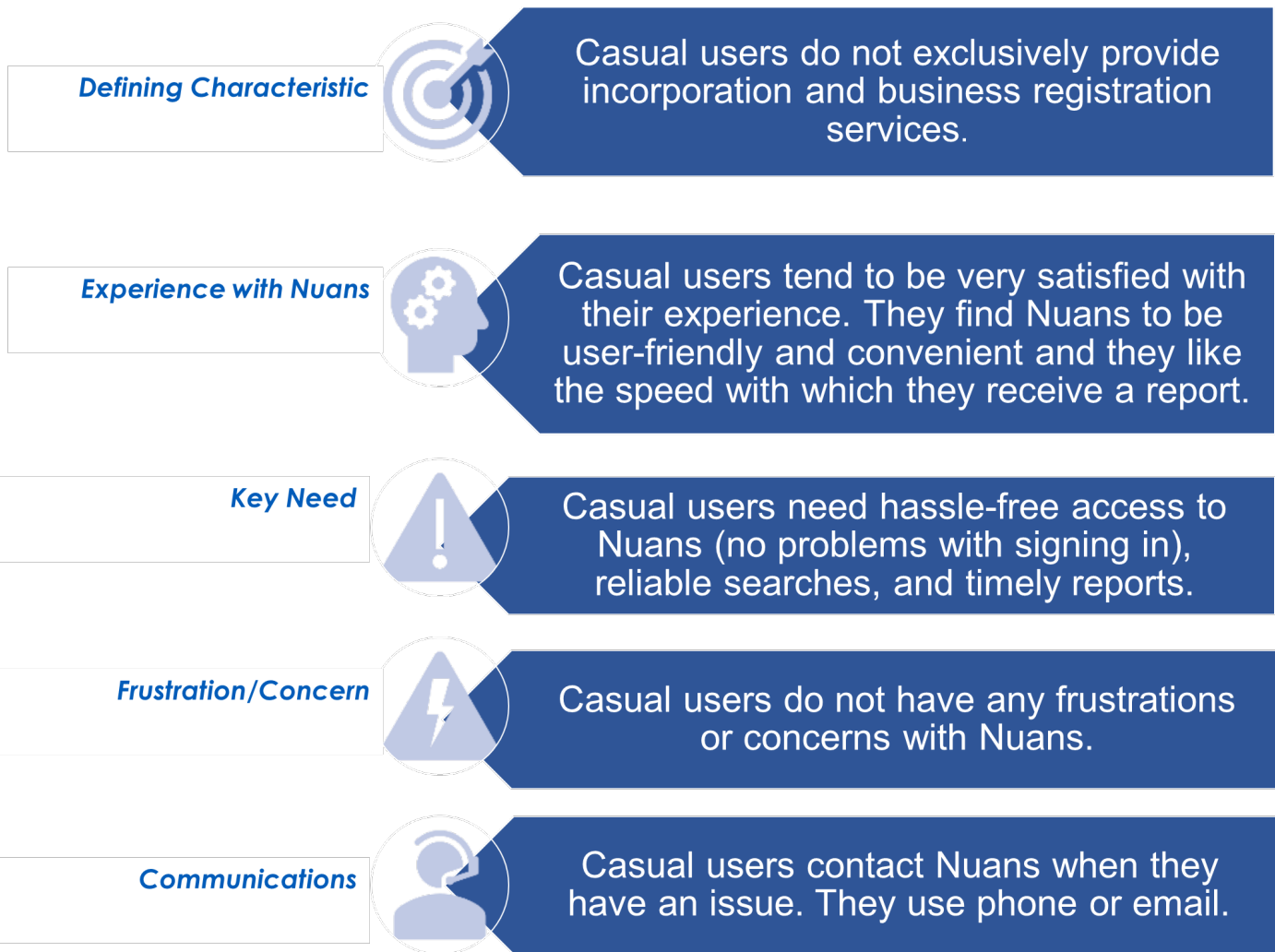


### 3.2. Casual Users

Casual users are a sub-set of Nuans' intermediaries and, like trademark users, they appear to represent a small proportion of Nuans' clients. Compared with power users ([see 3.3 below](#)), they use Nuans infrequently. On average, they use Nuans once per month and they do so through their member account and/or the self-serve portal.

Casual users typically provide services to businesses, such as accounting, bookkeeping, payroll, and/or incorporation, for example. Unlike power users, casual users do not specialize in incorporation and business registration exclusively. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy, but these companies tend to be micro-businesses in the start-up stage of their lifecycle. Casual users have a high level of online expertise, conducting personal and professional transactions online every day. In terms of online resources, casual users use Google followed by Nuans to search for corporate and business names. Once they use Nuans, they consult with their client and proceed to incorporation.

Figure 3: Casual users



### 3.3. Power Users

Power users are also a sub-set of Nuans' intermediaries that appear to represent a large proportion of Nuans' clients and typically work for business registration firms, name search firms, or provincial governments. These users differ from casual users in two key ways: 1) they use Nuans multiple times a day; and 2) corporate and business name searches are their primary responsibility. In addition, these users do not access Nuans through the self-serve portal. They have a Nuans account and access Nuans services through the member sign-in. The level of educational attainment among power users varies, from high school graduation to a bachelor's degree. However, college education was mentioned most often by interview participants.

Power users are very sophisticated users of Nuans, in large part as a result of the frequency with which they use the service. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy, although some may focus on specific industries. The businesses they provide services to can be start-ups or well-established companies, although some work primarily with companies that are in the start-up stage. When it comes to the size of these businesses, once again, power users' clients run the gamut from micro-businesses to large businesses.



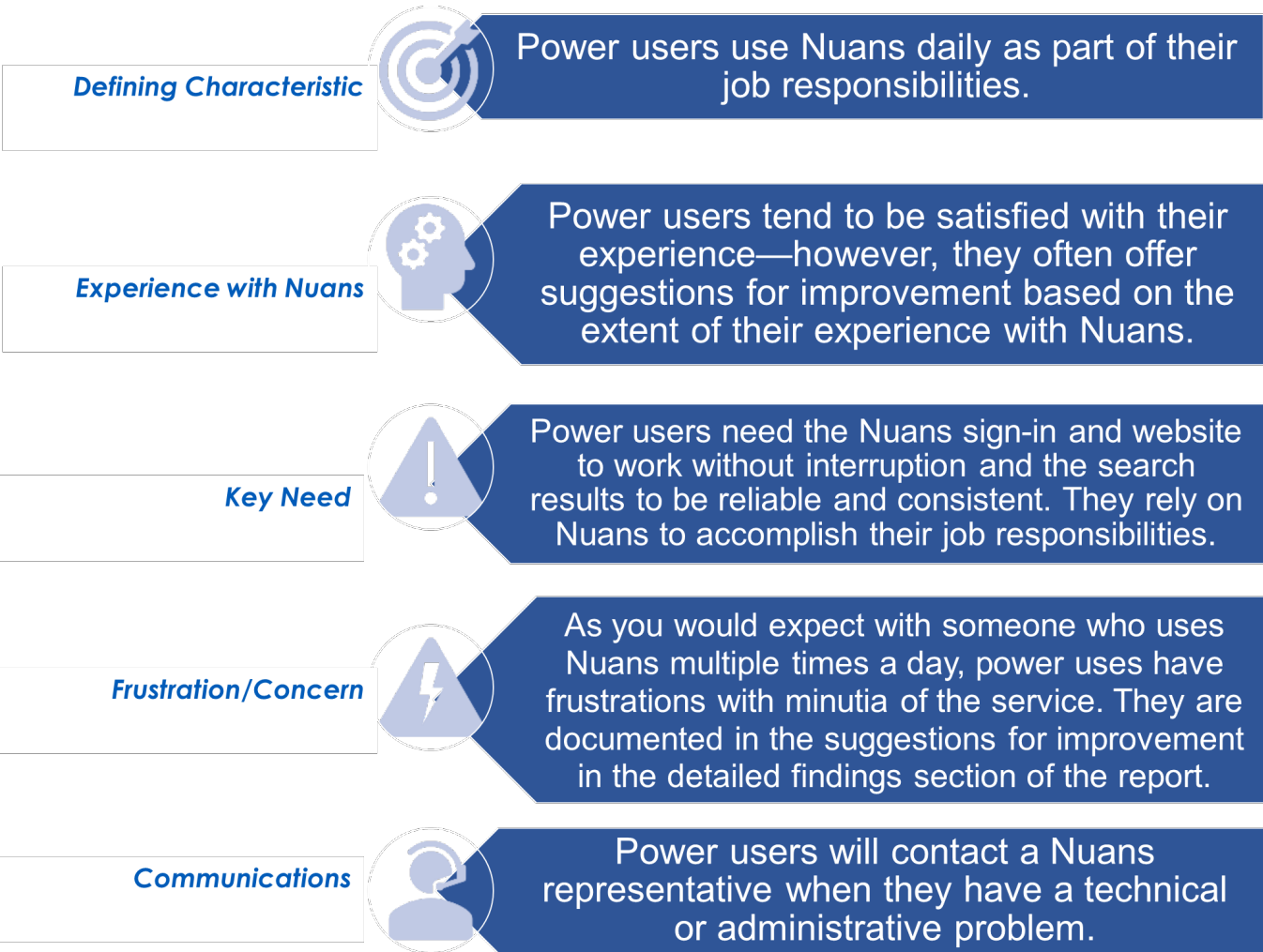
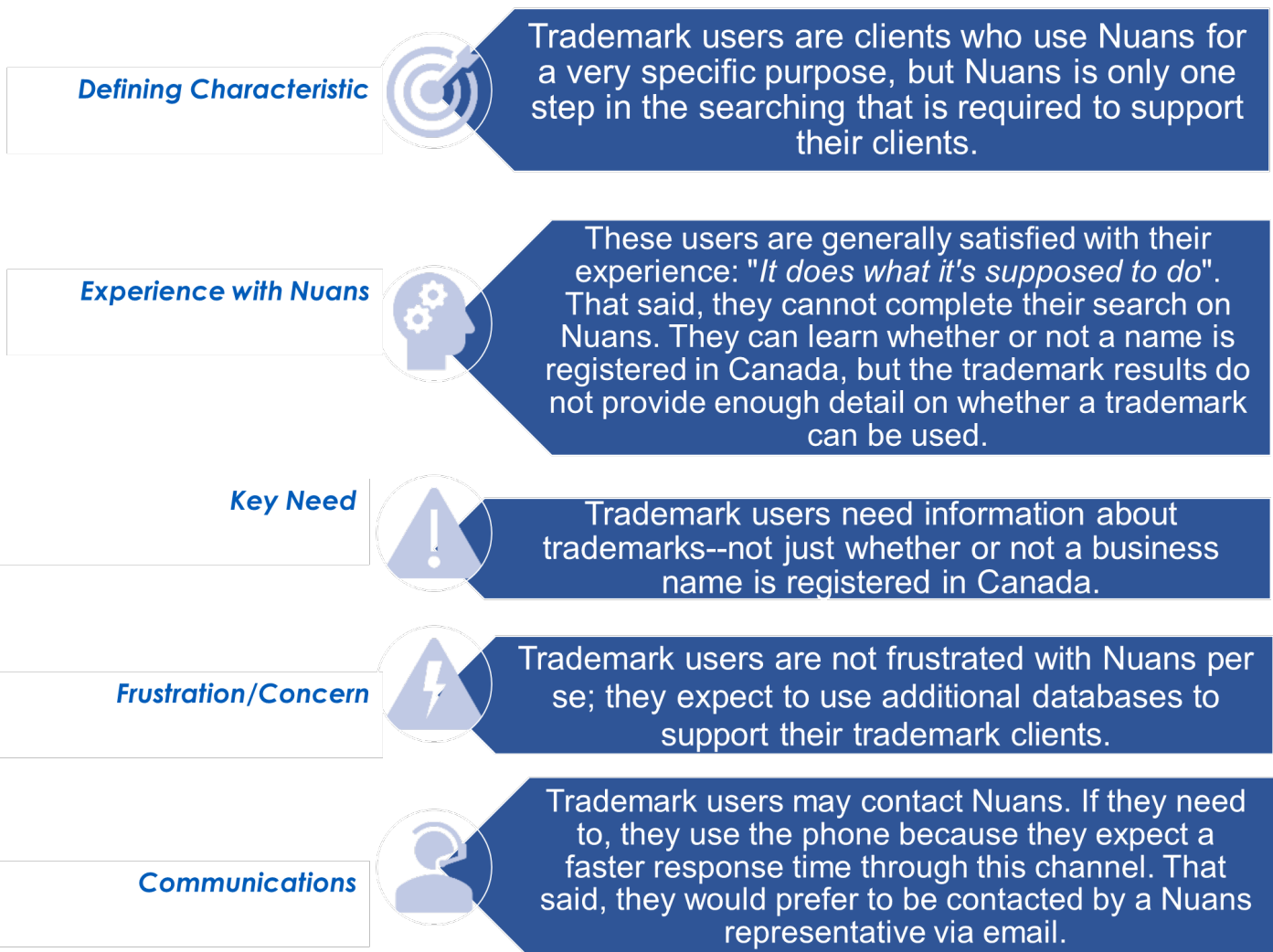


Figure 4: Power users

### 3.4. Trademark Users

Trademark users are a sub-set of Nuans' intermediary clients. They appear to represent a small proportion of Nuans' clients. These clients tend to use Nuans as one source among others required to undertake their work on trademarks. They are lawyers and trademark agents, with a post-secondary education that includes at least a bachelor's degree. They can be involved in screening trademarks, applying for trademarks, enforcing trademarks, as well as managing trademark portfolios. Trademark users are sophisticated searchers who use specialized databases to research and protect trademarks on behalf of their clients. They represent clients operating in different sectors of the economy. These businesses can be start-ups or well-established companies, small or large in terms of corporate size, and they can be Canadian or international. Trademark users tend to use Nuans on a weekly, but not daily, basis, and they do so through their member account and/or the self-serve portal.

Figure 5: Trademark users



## 4. Detailed Findings

### 4.1. Context

#### *Profile of participants*

Intermediaries and jurisdictional clients service a variety of different types of businesses representing myriad industries. Specifically, when it came to business size, most participants said their clients run the gamut, from micro-businesses to large businesses. That said, some participants tend to do work on behalf of micro-businesses more than other sizes of business.

In terms of business lifecycle stage, most participants represent a full spectrum of clients, from start-ups to mature stage businesses. No-one mentioned representing exit stage businesses. Participants who do not work with the full spectrum of businesses are most likely to represent start-up businesses or businesses in either the growth or expansion phases.

Most participants work with clients from many different industries. This include the legal profession, accounting, consulting, technology, plumbing, food services, hair and salon services, oil and gas, cannabis and pharmaceuticals, and construction. To the extent that some participants work with business clients in specific industries, law and accounting were the two most often mentioned by interviewees.

The self-serve clients interviewed, not surprisingly, were sole proprietorship start-ups. They tend to operate in the following areas: graphic design, energy, accounting, and business services consulting.

All interview participants described themselves as comfortable or very comfortable using the Internet. In addition to conducting business activities online, most participants do every day activities online, such as shopping and banking. Only a few participants mentioned having used Nuans on a mobile device. While one found the experience similar to the desktop version and easy to use, the others found it hard to use on a mobile device (e.g., the menus were difficult to access).

#### *Resources used to search for corporate names and trademarks*

In addition to Nuans, interview participants mentioned a variety of websites or online resources that they use when looking for existing corporate names, business names and trademarks. The resources mentioned with the greatest frequency were the Internet, specifically Google, Corporations Canada's federal incorporations database, and the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO). Other online resources included:

- Canada 411 (for contact information)
- Corporate registries in other jurisdictions (i.e. British Columbia, Saskatchewan)
- Registry Services, Alberta Government
- Registraire des entreprises, Quebec Government
- OnCorp Direct
- Cyberbahn
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)

- Internal corporate databases.

Nuans clients working with trademarks also mentioned using the following online resources:

- SAEGIS by Clarivate Analytics (CompuMark)
- Canadian Trademarks Database
- International trademark offices (e.g., United States, Europe)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Global Brand Database

The reasons participants use these specific resources are varied, ranging from cost factors, to ease of use, to necessity. Specifically:

- They are free of charge or less expensive than other resources. Google is a free resource that can be used for a preliminary search of corporate names or trademarks, while Nuans is a lower cost option compared to comparable private sector resources.
- The resources are easy to use and/or provide the information required in a preferred format.
- There are jurisdictions whose operating practice is to use their own database to grant names when businesses are incorporating. This includes British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland, and Nunavut. Businesses wanting to incorporate in these jurisdictions require a name search report from their respective database and registry.
- They are the only resources that provide the information sought—for example, trademark agents mentioned that Nuans does not provide enough information on trademarks to meet their needs in this area. It does not include the class of goods or services, the category and owner of the trademark, or the status of the trademark (e.g., active, pending).

After listing the resources they use, and explaining why they use them, participants were asked how those resources compare with Nuans. Almost everyone said that it is not possible to compare these resources to Nuans because they serve a different purpose—that is, they are using each of these resources to accomplish something different or to complement their use of Nuans. For example, CIPO can be used to check the trademark status of a proposed corporate name, and then based on the findings, Nuans can be used to conduct a corporate name search.

## 4.2. Use of Nuans

### *Tenure and frequency of use*

The length of time participants have been using Nuans ranged from as little as a few days to more than 30 years. As expected, the individuals with the least amount of experience were the self-serve clients. Among the private intermediaries and jurisdictional clients interviewed, tenure ranged from a few years to more than 30 years.

In terms of frequency of use, the self-serve clients had used Nuans only once in the past 12 months as part of incorporating their company. That said, several of these participants said they had to access Nuans more than once to complete their name reservation. Among the rest, most interview participants are daily users of Nuans; only a few participants said they used Nuans less than daily in the last year. Among daily users, participants' use ranged from a few Nuans reports a day to 30 or more. Among non-daily users, participants' use of Nuans in the last year ranged from weekly to monthly.

### ***Reasons for using Nuans***

There are two main reasons clients use Nuans—to incorporate a business or to support a trademark client. When using Nuans, most participants said they are checking name availability and reserving names, primarily for the purpose of facilitating incorporation. A small number of clients mentioned using Nuans to search for corporate or business names for trademarking purposes. For these individuals, Nuans is the starting point only; they then use their preferred trademark resources, such as CIPO or SAEGIS, to obtain the detailed information needed to advise their trademark clients.

In terms of next steps, the self-serve clients proceeded with incorporation once they secured a unique name for their business. Private sector intermediaries (excluding trademark clients) and jurisdictional users consult the end-client/business after receiving the Nuans report. If the name is approved, the end-client/business typically proceeds with incorporation.

The objective of trademark clients is somewhat different—a Nuans search is used to determine if a proposed trademark is available. Following this, trademark clients do a more in-depth search for relevant information pertaining to a trademark using resources such as CIPO or SAEGIS as noted above.

### ***Awareness and knowledge of Nuans***

When asked how they first heard about Nuans, self-serve clients pointed to the Internet or Corporations Canada while intermediaries and jurisdictional clients tended to mention their workplace.

The self-serve clients interviewed are entrepreneurs starting a business. They used the Internet to determine what was required of them to incorporate a company and first learned of Nuans through a Google search and/or information available on Corporations Canada's website.

Among the intermediaries and jurisdictional clients, virtually everyone interviewed mentioned their workplace—that Nuans is a tool or resource they are expected to use as part of their job responsibilities. Those participants who identified a specific source mentioned the ISED website, a private company, Ontario Government, Service Alberta, a workshop, and a registry office.

Beyond name searches and name reservation, very few participants were aware of any other services offered by Nuans. Those who claimed knowledge of other services offered by Nuans mentioned corporate name pre-approval and trademark reports.

## 4.3. Satisfaction with Nuans

### *Overall satisfaction with Nuans*

All interview participants were satisfied with Nuans, at least to some extent. They characterized Nuans as easy to use, fast, user-friendly, and available 24/7. With one exception, everyone said the information on the Nuans website is clear and easy to understand. The exception was the observation from one participant that some mnemonic codes are not uniform.

In addition, virtually everyone indicated they were satisfied with the format and content of the Nuans report<sup>3</sup>, as well as with the timeliness of the report. Not surprisingly, all interview participants said that using Nuans meets their expectations.

### *Perceived strengths of Nuans*

When asked what they like most about using Nuans, most participants mentioned the speed of the report generation (reports are generated immediately, in real-time).

In addition, several participants pointed to

- the report presentation and format,
- the fact that the trademark section links directly to CIPO, and
- the pre-search function, which they considered to be quick and easy.

### *Perceived weaknesses of Nuans*

Widespread satisfaction notwithstanding, participants also pointed to areas or aspects of Nuans in need of improvement or issues they have encountered using Nuans. Feedback tended to focus on the Nuans reports, technical issues, and the name search itself. These areas for focus, by category, include the following:

- Reports:
  - company names do not come up on the first page in order of relevance
  - on occasion, names do not appear in reports that are expected to appear or reports include names that are not pertinent
  - the HTML does not copy and paste well
  - the results can be too narrow or too broad
  - sometimes name reservations do not show up
  - do not include type of business/business activity
  - no explanation of acronyms used in reports – e.g., “TM” is trademark
  - difficult to retrieve old reports because the report number is needed
- Technical:
  - Nuans can be slow at certain times of the day and/or will not load
  - the GCKey sign-in can be a problem/does not always work

---

<sup>3</sup> As already noted, trademark agents expressed the view that the Nuans report does not include enough information for them to determine whether or not a trademark can be used by a client. As such, they feel they must follow up by accessing other resources.



- the time-out period for inactivity is short forcing users to sign-in multiple times in a short period of time
- error messages appear on occasion and the system “boots” out users
- Pre-search / Search:
  - searching a name with symbols (e.g., A-1 Plumbing) can be problematic
  - the browser back button cannot be used to start a new search when pre-screening
  - when entering an alternate name or phonetic spelling for a search, the results are not always consistent
  - only displays a maximum of 200 results per name in a pre-search
- Communications / Technical Support:
  - calls to Nuans are not returned in a timely manner
- Administration:
  - administering a Nuans account can be cumbersome—specifically, removing people from the account and adding others is not straightforward
  - client references are limited to seven characters, which can be insufficient.

### ***Comparison of old versus current versions of Nuans***

Participants who had experience using the previous and current versions of Nuans were asked whether the current version is better, the same, or worse. All things considered, participants felt that the current version is an improvement—that is, it is better than the old version of Nuans. The reason offered to explain their preference was the speed of the reports: the reports are generated faster in the current version of Nuans than they were in the previous version of Nuans.

While there was a clear preference for the current version of Nuans, some participants pointed to features or aspects of the old version that they liked better or that are not available in the current version. These included:

- Contacting a “live person”
  - It is perceived as more difficult now to reach a Nuans representative offline
- Batch reporting
- Multiple search key
- Ability to see every report pulled by your team/company
- Issuance of alerts that a search is already owned by your company
- Search results
  - A greater number were returned in the old version
- Access to a search history
- Access to deleted or expired reports through the recover feature
- Login; it was easier with the old version
  - Now, multiple screens are needed to sign in
- Built in spell check tool
- The menus are not as user-friendly in the current version
  - It is easy to select the wrong item
- Ability to track/follow the history of the name of a company

- Application programming interface (API) access is not available now

With just a few exceptions, what these features or aspects tend to have in common is that they contribute to the usability of service; they make Nuans easy and efficient to use for clients.

## 4.4. Communications

### *Contact with Nuans*

None of the self-serve clients interviewed had been in contact with a Nuans representative during the past 12 months. In contrast, most of the intermediaries and jurisdictional clients interviewed said they had been in contact with Nuans during this time period.

Reasons for contacting a Nuans representative during the past 12 months include the following:

- to address a login issue;
- to ask about retrieving a report;
- to inquire about billing or to report an issue with billing; and
- to add or remove users from their account.

Most participants in contact with Nuans used email and were satisfied with their service experience. They had no issues or concerns with the service they received via email.

Some participants contacted Nuans by telephone. While these individuals were generally satisfied with the quality of service they received, a few observed that the telephone response time is worse now than it was with the old version. Simply put, they had to wait longer<sup>4</sup> than they had previously to hear back from a Nuans representative.

### *Service channels*

Regarding their preferred service channel, participants were divided between telephone and email, with some preferring either channel or others preferring one over the other to contact a Nuans representative.

The same service channel preferences were evident when participants were asked how they would prefer a Nuans representative to communicate with them. If a participant prefers to contact Nuans by telephone, they also prefer Nuans to contact them by telephone.

In general, telephone is preferred because it is direct and can lead to quick problem resolution. In particular, telephone is used when an issue is urgent. Email, on the other hand, is preferred because it provides a written record of the inquiry/transaction.

---

<sup>4</sup> These individuals noted that they could not reach a live Nuans representative when they called; instead, they were required to leave a message and wait for a response.



## 4.5. Suggestions for Improvement

At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there is anything that could be done to Nuans to make it more useful to them. The following suggestions were offered in relation to Nuans specifically:

- Allow users to pay immediately/make payment easier;
- Expand to Quebec and include the Quebec corporate registry;
- Allow users to send an email directly from the dashboard;
- Improve the search function for names with symbols;
- Allows users to re-order at least once without charge;
- Ability to track the history of a company name;
- Bring back multiple search key;
- Include more trademark information and the business activity in the Nuans report;
- Include client code in billing;
- Offer an alert that tells you that your company already owns a report;
- Make the search results more accurate;
- Provide API access so users may set up their own user interface for their clients;
- Provide access to trademark watch services free of charge;
- Provide training tools for users; and
- Make the member login more prominent on the home page.

Other suggestions included:

- Better promotion/advertising of Nuans to differentiate the Government of Canada site from the sites of private sector companies;
- The provision of more 'how to' information on Nuans so that self-service clients know what to do following the name search (i.e. direct them to Corporations Canada, for example);
- Addition of an online forum or Question and Answer section for Nuans clients to use to obtain information/helpful tips;
- Addition of a description of what corporate name details (Step 2) will be needed to fill out the order form; and
- If trademarks are included in Nuans, the database should display all information available, such as the name of the owner and the goods and services. With just the number and the mark, there is not enough information. If this information cannot be made available, then users should have the option of excluding it from the report or linking users to the CIPO database.

## 5. Appendix

### 5.1. Interview Guide

#### Initial Phone Contact: Recruitment/Scheduling

(Active offer of French/English before proceeding with recruitment)

- Explain purpose of interview:
  - The purpose of the interview, conducted on behalf of the Government of Canada, is to gather information from individuals like you who have used one or more of the Nuans services with a view to identifying issues and opportunities for improvement in services that enable the incorporation of Canadian businesses.
  - In short, the Nuans service team wishes to better understand its clients and their pain points and to identify opportunities for service improvements.
  - Offer to send the validation letter (if not sent in advance of this call) or remind individual of the letter (resend if needed).
- Confirm agreement to be interviewed.
- Interview would take approximately 45 minutes.
- Confirm anonymity—interview to be conducted on first-name basis only, and resulting reports will not identify the participant in any way.
- Mention intent to record the interview and to have client research team representatives present on the call to observe or take notes (they will not participate in the interview in any way).
- Schedule time for interview if individual agrees to take part.
- Email interview guide for review (confirm email coordinates).
- Ask individual to review the guide in advance of the interview.
- Offer to conduct the interview either in English or in French according to the participant's preference.
  - ***If a participant asks about organizational anonymity***, say that comments will not be attributed to individual organizations in the same way that they will not be attributed to an individual. It may be possible, however, to identify organizations based on the nature of the feedback provided. Efforts will be taken when writing the report to ensure that the results do not identify a specific organization, but we cannot guarantee this.

Note type of user (if available in sample).

TYPE: \_\_\_\_\_

If not available ask:

How would you best describe your user type with respect to Nuans? Are you...

- an individual entrepreneur (i.e. self-serve client)?
- a federal/provincial/territorial administrator (i.e. jurisdictional user)?
- a private sector intermediary who uses Nuans on behalf of other businesses (i.e. business professional user)?
- Other? \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview: Introduction

- Thank the individual for agreeing to participate.
  - Reschedule the interview if the individual is no longer available.
- Refer to the interview guide that was sent to him/her.
- Remind him/her that responses are confidential and will be kept anonymous.
  - Your participation is voluntary. Your responses during the interview will be kept anonymous, and they will not influence any future interactions with Nuans. The information you provide will be administered in accordance with the *Privacy Act* and other applicable privacy laws. The feedback you provide will be used for research purposes only and will not be attributed to you personally in any report resulting from this study.

A. Government of Canada client research representatives may monitor this call strictly to take notes. They will not participate in any way in our interview. Are you comfortable with the possibility that your interview could be monitored?

- Yes
- No

B. Request to record interview at this point.

I will be taking note during the interview; however, with your permission, I would also like to record the interview. The recording is to accurately document the information you provide and will be used only in writing the report. It will not be shared with any third party. If you choose not to be recorded, I will only take notes. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable at any time, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

- Yes, permission to record
- No, do not consent to being recorded

## Context

I'd like to begin by asking you a few questions about you and your business<sup>5</sup> (organization).

1. To begin, what is your job title? And what are your main responsibilities? KEEP BRIEF

2. And what is your highest level of formal education?

ASK NEXT 3 QUESTIONS TO SELF-SERVICE USERS ONLY:

3. In what industry does your business operate?

---

<sup>5</sup> Use the word "business" in all instances where the respondent is representing a business. In other cases, like provincial registrars, the word "organization" should be used.

4. How many employees work for your business? Please include part-time workers as well as full-time equivalents.
5. Which life-cycle stage best describes your business? By this, we mean start-up, growth stage, established stage, expansion stage, mature stage or exit stage.

ASK NEXT 3 QUESTIONS TO PRIVATE SECTOR / JURISDICTIONAL USERS:

6. In what industry do your business clients tend to operate?
7. In general, are your business clients micro, small, medium or large companies?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER:

Microbusiness: 1 to 5 FTEs

Small business: 6 to 99 FTEs

Medium business: 100 to 499 FTEs

Large business: more than 500 FTEs

8. Which life-cycle stage best describes your business clients? By this, we mean start-up, growth stage, established stage, expansion stage, mature stage or exit stage.

ASK EVERYONE:

9. How would you describe your own level of online expertise? What are the types of things you do online? INTERVIEWER: USE PROMPTS AS NEEDED.

Prompts:

- shop/bank online
- use mobile device to access online services
- prefer to use call centre for services
- use chat option for online services
- do everything online

10. Which websites or online resources have you used when looking for existing corporate names, business names and trademarks? Any others? Why have you used this/these website(s)/resource(s)? What do you like about it/them?

### Use of Nuans

I'd now like to talk about your use of Nuans. As you know, Nuans is a federal government online service that new businesses (or their representatives) use at the time of their incorporation to verify whether their proposed name already exists or is trademarked.

11. How long have you been a Nuans user? When did you first use Nuans?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER:

New user: after June 2016, when the current version of Nuans was launched

Long-time user: June 2016 or prior

12. How many times have you personally used Nuans during the past 12 months?  
INTERVIEWER: ADJUST LANGUAGE FOR INFREQUENT VS. FREQUENT USERS.

13. What are your objectives in using Nuans, i.e. what are you trying to accomplish when using Nuans?

Prompts:

- as a precursor to incorporating a business
- as a precursor to trademarking a name
- verifying that a company is registered under a specific name (for you / your client)

14. Once you have used Nuans, what is your next step?

Prompts:

- proceed to incorporation
- trademarking
- something else

#### ASK PRIVATE SECTOR / JURISDICTIONAL USERS

15. On average, how frequently would you say you used Nuans during the past 12 months?

Prompts:

- daily/weekly/monthly

#### ASK EVERYONE

16. How did you first hear about Nuans?

17. And how did you first find Nuans (Google, Canada.ca, etc.)? Was it easy to find? If not, why not?

18. To the best of your knowledge, what specific services does Nuans offer? Any others? Which services do you use?

Prompts:

- name search
- name reservation

19. Do you complete similar searches on any other websites or services? If so, what else do you use and why do you use it/them?

IF YES:

20. How does it/they compare to Nuans? Why do you say that?

Prompts:

- better/worse/no difference

#### ASK EVERYONE

21. Have you ever used Nuans on a mobile device?

- a. If so, for what purpose?
  - i. How easy was it to use Nuans on a mobile device?
  - ii. Was it similar to the desktop experience?
- Prompt:
  - difficulties, if any
- b. If not, why not?
  - Prompt:
    - privacy/security concerns

### Satisfaction with Nuans

Think about your use of Nuans during the last 12 months,

INTERVIEWER: ADJUST LANGUAGE FOR INFREQUENT VS. FREQUENT USERS.

22. What's your overall impression of Nuans? How satisfied are you with your ease in accessing and using the service? Why do you say that?

Prompts:

- experience setting up a Nuans account
- experience logging into the Nuans service
- straightforward/easy to use
- problems encountered

23. Is the information found on the website easy to understand? If not, why not?

Prompt:

- what is unclear

24. Are you satisfied with the information (and format) of the Nuans report? If not, why not?

Prompt:

- not given information that was specific enough when name rejected

25. What about the timeliness of the report: are you satisfied with the length of time it took/takes to receive the report? If not, why not?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Reports are generated in real time, but some users may note that they cannot perform batch reporting and that this costs them time or feels inefficient.

26. What was/is difficult about using Nuans, if anything?

Prompts:

- need to search different databases
- costs associated with different searches

27. What did/do you like most about using Nuans, if anything?

28. Did/does your use of Nuans meet your expectations? If not, why not?

Prompt:  
– expectations

29. All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with Nuans? Why?

ASK LONG-TIME NUANS USERS:

30. How would you compare your experience with the current version of Nuans to your experience with the old one? Is it better, the same or worse? Why do you say that?

Prompt:  
– reasons for better/worse

31. What, if anything, did you like more about the old version of Nuans? Why is that?

32. What, if anything, do you like about the current Nuans website? Why do you say that?

33. What, if anything, do you **not** like about the current Nuans website? Why do you say that?

### Communications

34. During the past 12 months, how have you been in contact with Nuans representatives? What was your experience? Why do you say that?

Prompts:  
– service channel(s) used: phone, website, in person, email  
– number of times each service channel used  
– positive/negative experiences  
– consistency of level of service during all interactions and among channels

35. How satisfied are you with the quality of the service you received on the phone? On the website? In person? By email? [INSERT CHANNEL USED AND REPEAT FOR EACH CHANNEL] And what about the time it took to receive a response from a Nuans representative?

Prompts:  
– reasons for satisfaction/dissatisfaction with each service channel  
– differences in quality of service among the channels

36. What is your preferred method of communicating with Nuans representatives?

37. How would you prefer that Nuans representatives communicate with you? Why is that?

## Suggestions for Improvement

38. Is there anything that could be done to Nuans to better serve you or to make it more useful to you?
39. Looking to the future, what new tools or services, if any, would you like to see offered by Nuans? Anything else?

## Conclusion

40. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to add about any of the issues we've discussed before we conclude the interview?

**Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. Your feedback will be very helpful.**

Record name, position, organization, phone number and length/date of interview.