

Using Fillable PDF ICS Canada Forms

When using Adobe PDF forms for IAPs, the Documentation Unit will need to pay attention to some quirks using “fillable” pdfs particularly when combining multiple copies of the same form into one PDF.

Adobe Acrobat has a function that will allow you to take all documents and combine them into one pdf file. Something that is handy when creating IAPs. Everyone sends in their completed forms and the person putting the IAP together can combine them all using Adobe Acrobat (not to be mistaken with Adobe Reader) into one convenient file for printing. But.....

But if you have more than one PDF of the same kind, such as multiple Form 204s to combine into the final IAP document, what will happen when you “combine files into one PDF, the first 204 in your file list will overwrite the subsequent PDFs. This is a known issue with fillable forms of the same kind being combined into one pdf document. So what to do?.....

You will need to “flatten” each form of the “same kind” before combining them into “One PDF”. Flattening means to strip out the coding that creates the fillable fields, just leaving the text. So when you receive multiple PDF forms of the same kind for the IAP, such as the Form 204, you need to “flatten them first” before combining them into an IAP.pdf.

To flatten a form you need to “print” them, but Print-to-PDF, not print to a printer. When you print a form, a pop-up will appear asking you to select printer, #copies, etc. Click on the “select printer” and select “Adobe PDF”, rather than selecting a printer. Then print the form like you would any other document and the PDF will be printed-to-file rather than print to paper. You will repeat this process for all files that are the same kind, to be combined into one PDF. Once you have them all “flattened”, then you can successfully “combine to one PDF” with no issues.

This same process will need to be followed for any fillable form you are using and wanting to keep a folder or combine the files you are using into one PDF file. Other examples of this would be:

- ICS Form 260 Resource Order Form – ORDM will keep binders or folders of multiple of Form 260s. If the pdf forms are to be combined into one file, then each form will need to be “flattened” before combining.
- ICS Form 211 Status/Check-in Form – If SCKN Recorders are wanting to use the “fillable form” for completing the Form 211, before the DOCL combines all the Form 211s into one complete pdf, each file will need to be “flattened” before combining.
- Any fillable form that you want to be combined with multiple copies of the same form, will need to be “flattened” or “print to pdf” before combining in Adobe Acrobat.

Tips/Notes:

1. Adobe Reader can be used to read any PDF form, but Reader cannot flatten, combine or edit “flattened” forms.
2. To edit a flattened form you will need Adobe Acrobat. A flattened form will have the fillable fields removed and just the text will remain.
3. Every Planning Section needs to have a copy of Adobe Acrobat to effectively manipulate PDFs.
4. Is your form “password” protected and you want to edit an existing form? One hack I have found is to work around this that may work, is to follow the same procedure to flatten a form

but rather than selecting “Adobe PDF” as your printer, select “Microsoft Print to PDF” and print to file saving it to a folder you selected. Then you can open that file in Adobe Acrobat and edit the file. One problem is when you do this you will strip the “fillable fields” formatting from the form and if you want to return your newly edited pdf form back to a “fillable form”, you can use the “Prepare Form” function of Adobe Acrobat, but that is another lesson another day.

Any questions regarding the ICS Canada form set, send me an email at sandy.mckinnon@icscanada.ca