



AAPOR Policies and Procedures for Transparency Certification

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A. Initial Qualification Procedures

Survey organizations, including survey subunits of larger organizations (henceforth, organizations), that produce surveys and/or commission, sponsor or report them publicly, are eligible to join AAPOR's Transparency Initiative (TI). The process to do so is as follows:

1. Applicants will complete and submit the Transparency Initiative Certification Agreement, signed by an individual or individuals empowered to commit the organization to the Initiative. The form can be downloaded from AAPOR's TI web page. This agreement is also included as Appendix A to this document. Any organization that is the subject of a current or pending AAPOR complaint may not apply until after that complaint has been resolved.
2. As part of this certification process, applicants will certify that all employees with job responsibilities that include the methodology content of survey reports, press releases and any other forms of survey data disclosure, have been properly trained in TI principles and procedures for compliance. To support organizations in this effort, AAPOR makes available a set of TI online educational modules and other materials.
3. The applicant will appoint a representative or representatives who will coordinate compliance for the organization and be the main point of communication with AAPOR. These representatives will work with the primary reviewer to ensure that the procedures are in place for certification and that the applicant organization is in compliance with the TI's basic disclosure requirements.
4. The applicant organization will provide examples of TI compliant documentation based on two original surveys that will serve as models for future reporting. Where the documentation is deemed to be inadequately transparent, the reviewer will work with the applicant(s) to assist them in making modifications that will bring it into compliance for

future reporting. Note that the TI is only concerned with the reporting of original survey data that is publicly released and not with the reporting of historical survey data that was previously collected and which is being reported for comparative purposes only.

5. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. The review of applications will be the responsibility of the Transparency Initiative Coordinating Committee (TICC), which will appoint two reviewers to study the details of each application and make a recommendation to the TICC, which will then consider confirmation. Where there is disagreement among reviewers, the full TICC will examine the application. TICC reviewers will not include individuals employed by organizations that would be considered direct competitors or to otherwise have a conflict of interest, such as formal or informal affiliation with or recent employment by the applicant organization. If the applicant organization feels that there is a conflict of interest, then they can send a written request to the TICC explaining the conflict and asking that a different reviewer be assigned.

Reviews of applications will typically be completed within four weeks of submission.

6. The applicant organization will also be asked to pay an application fee to AAPOR to cover basic costs associated with processing the application and providing ongoing monitoring. The fee will be charged annually and the amount is yet to be determined. [note: the final fee for TI membership has not yet been determined by the AAPOR Council. Our expectation that it will range between nothing and \$300 during the first membership year].

7. Once an applicant is certified, the TI coordinating committee will:
 - a. Inform the applicant in writing using a letter signed by the AAPOR President.
 - b. Provide the applicant organization with the TI logo that the organization may display on its website and/or printed documents.
 - c. AAPOR will add the organization's name, its TI representative and website address to the TI section of the AAPOR site.

To maintain certification, the certifying organization will be asked to reconfirm its commitment to the TI on an annual basis by indicating a willingness to continue abiding by the TI's rules and procedures. This will consist of re-signing the Certification Agreement (see Appendix A) every year. In addition, the participating organization will agree to be evaluated by TICC every two years through an inspection of the transparency of a sample of recent studies conducted by the organization. The evaluation will determine whether the organization is in compliance with TI requirements.

B. Monitoring and Enforcement Methods

1. The TICC will oversee the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the TI.
2. Compliance will consist of several components. The certifying organization will be asked to reconfirm commitment to the TI, on an annual basis, by indicating a willingness to continue abiding by the TI's rules and procedures. This will consist of re-signing the Certification Agreement (see Appendix A) every year. In addition, the participating organization will agree to cooperate in an evaluation, by TICC, of the transparency of a sample of recent studies, conducted at least once every two years, to check for TI compliance.
3. TI certified organizations will receive an annual reminder notice that it is time to renew their certification. This notice will be sent to the organization's representative to the TI. If a participating organization chooses not to renew, they will be instructed to cease use of the logo, and will be deleted from the AAPOR Transparency Initiative's website.
4. The periodic evaluation of TI organizations will be assigned to a monitor by the MC. The monitor will be expected to report any potential conflicts of interest in advance of conducting an assignment. If an applicant organization feels that there is a conflict of interest then they may submit a written request to have a different monitor assigned. The MC will make a final decision on whether any conflicts of interest interfere with the ability of the monitor to carry out an unbiased evaluation.
5. Evaluations will consist of reviewing the applicant's website and two recent surveys (i.e., surveys conducted since last certification or recertification), selected by the monitor to be representative of studies about which the organization releases information. For each survey selected, if relevant, the reviewer will search for and review a publicly available disclosure statement to determine if the organization is in compliance.

A number of survey organizations do not have survey releases posted at a centralized place on their website, and some organizations do not have any survey releases posted at all. For these organizations, the monitor will contact the designated TI compliance representative for the organization and ask for the publicly available documentation from two recent surveys to determine if the organization is in compliance. The representative must provide the documentation for both surveys within 10 business days of the request.

The monitor will provide a written summary of the results of the assessment to the MC. A recommendation will then be forwarded to the TICC. If deficiencies in disclosure exist, the monitor will contact the organization with the results of the assessment, provide recommendations for remediation, and work with the organization to make the necessary corrections to again be in compliance with the Transparency Initiative. Certified organizations that are found to be non-compliant will be given 30 days to correct the deficiencies identified during the evaluation. [An extension of 30 days can be

granted, at the discretion of the TICC, if such a request is deemed reasonable.] If deficiencies are not resolved within the allotted time, an organization will be placed on suspension and asked to remove the TI logo from its website until all deficiencies are corrected and the suspension is lifted. The TICC may also decide to conduct a more extensive review of the organization's public releases (if relevant) over the past 12 months to determine whether the case at hand is an exception rather than part of a broader pattern of failures to disclose.

6. Public complaints about non-compliance will go through the TICC, rather than the AAPOR Standards Committee. Complaints will be investigated and addressed within 30 days. If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the organization will be evaluated as described above. Organizations will be allowed to appeal any decision to the Standards Committee.
7. Organizations suspended from the TI for any reason will be sent a letter notifying them that they are being removed from TI certification, and the organization will be removed from AAPOR's list of TI-certified organizations until such time as the suspension is lifted. AAPOR will also reserve the right to issue a press release stating that an organization has been removed from TI certification if the organization continues to advertise their certification after removal. The organization will not be allowed to re-apply for TI certification for 12 months.
8. Participation in the TI does not provide protection from an AAPOR Standards complaint should one be filed.

APPENDIX A

AAPOR Transparency Certification Agreement

Overview

A survey organization, or survey subunit of a larger organization, that produces surveys and/or commissions/sponsors them and/or reports them publicly, is transparent when it discloses essential information about its methodology in any public release of original survey results, or in their private reporting to clients.

The AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practice applies to individuals engaged in survey research. AAPOR's Transparency Initiative extends the basic disclosure requirements of the Code to survey organizations. For publicly released data or reports, conformance with AAPOR's Disclosure Standards entails making available in the report or release of survey results all of the methodological elements identified in the minimum disclosure requirements of Section III(A) of the AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practice. Because full disclosure of a survey's methodology is considered a best practice, AAPOR encourages survey organizations to compile and make available the same information to their clients and sponsors, even when there is no broader release of survey data, findings, or reports.

Requirements of Membership in the Transparency Initiative

- A. Agreement to provide the following items in any and all reports of original research results that are released publicly or reported privately to clients subsequent to formal recognition as a participating organization in the TI, or make them publicly available, preferably on the organization's web site, immediately upon release of that report:
1. Who sponsored the research study, who conducted it, and who funded it, including, to the extent known, all original sources of funding.
 2. The exact wording and presentation of questions and response options whose results are reported.
 3. A definition of the population under study, including its geographic location, and a description of the sampling frame used to identify the population. If the sampling frame was provided by a third party, the supplier shall be named. If no frame or list was utilized, this shall be indicated.
 4. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected (or self-selected) and recruited, along with any quotas or additional sample selection criteria applied within the survey instrument or post-fielding. The description of the sampling frame and sample design should include sufficient detail to determine whether the respondents were selected using probability or non-probability methods.
 5. Sample sizes and a discussion of the precision of the findings, including estimates of sampling error for probability samples and a description of the variables used in any weighting or estimation procedures. The discussion of the precision of the findings should state whether or not the reported margins of sampling error or statistical analyses have been adjusted for the design effect due to clustering and weighting, if any.

6. Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than on the total sample, and the size of such parts?
 7. Method and dates of data collection [including languages administered in].
- B. Agreement to make the following items available within 30 days of any request for such materials.
1. Preceding interviewer or respondent instructions and any preceding questions or instructions that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results.
 2. Any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards.
 3. A description of the sampling frame's coverage of the target population.
 4. The methods used to recruit the panel, if the sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel or pool of respondents.
 5. Details about the sample design, including:
 - a. eligibility for participation
 - b. screening procedures
 - c. the nature of any oversamples
 - d. compensation/incentives offered
 6. Summaries of the disposition of study-specific sample records so that response rates for probability samples and participation rates for non-probability samples can be computed.
 7. Sources of weighting parameters and method by which weights are applied.
 8. Procedures undertaken to verify data. Where applicable, methods of interviewer training, supervision, and monitoring.
- C. Agreement to compute response rates according to AAPOR Standard Definitions, if response rates are reported.
- D. Agreement that, if survey results being reported are based on multiple samples or multiple modes, the preceding items shall be disclosed for each.

All organizations participating in AAPOR's Transparency Initiative must agree to provide all relevant information listed above under Section III(A) as part of any public or private report that the organization releases or submits. If the TI member organization did not collect the survey data themselves, they must agree to request this information from the fieldwork subcontractor so that it is available at the time that they make any public report of the data. If the TI member organization participates as a fieldwork contractor, it must agree to provide the relevant information listed above to the study's PI or sponsor.

TI member organizations that collect survey data and subscribe to these standards will follow practices that make all relevant items of information from the code available to clients and will attempt to educate clients regarding the importance of transparency whenever possible (including by referring them to AAPOR's TI web page). TI member organizations that subscribe to these standards will require organizations that collect data on their behalf to follow practices that make all relevant items of information available.

The items listed above are the minimum reporting standards for organizations wishing to be in compliance with the Transparency Initiative. They conform to sections III(A-D) of AAPOR's

Code of Professional Ethics and Practice. All participating organizations are encouraged to adhere to the spirit of the Transparency Initiative by also disclosing any additional information that they deem relevant to the conduct and interpretation of data from each study they conduct.

Transparency Initiative applicants are expected to have: (1) internal procedures for educating staff about TI requirements, (2) internal procedures for insuring that the required TI reporting elements are made available on a routine basis; and (3) an internal process for insuring that compliance within the organization is monitored on a regular basis.

All applicants are additionally expected to certify that all employees with job responsibilities that include the methodology content of survey reports, press releases and any other forms of survey data disclosure, have been properly trained in TI principles and procedures for compliance. To support organizations in this effort, AAPOR makes available a set of TI online educational modules and other materials.

Participating organizations also agree to fully cooperate with (a) periodic evaluations that may be conducted by AAPOR, and (b) any formal investigations of complaints that they are not in compliance with the TI requirements listed above.

I hereby certify that my organization agrees to the procedures described in this document and adheres to the principles and standards of the Transparency Initiative.

Organization Name:

Name and Title:

Signature:

Date: