



February 15, 2024

To: MRC Audited Services

From: George Ivie, Anthony Torrieri, Ron Pinelli, Laris Oliveri

Re: Policy for Accreditation Representations by MRC-Accredited Services

## **Policy for Accreditation Representations by MRC-Accredited Services (Issued February 15, 2024):**

MRC-accredited services are encouraged to publicly communicate their accreditation statuses in sufficient detail to allow for a full understanding of the scope and limitations of their accreditations.

The following points serve to guide what is and isn't permissible under MRC policy:

- Accreditation representations by MRC-accredited services should be clear in their statements of the specifics of what is and, in some instances, what is not included in the accreditation.
  - Services' formal accreditation letters from MRC contain these specific attributes and can serve as an authoritative reference source for what is covered by a service's MRC accreditation. The need to explicitly cite specific exclusions to the accreditation may be determined on a case-by-case basis, and should be done by the service in consultation with the MRC Staff and the service's MRC auditor CPAs.
- MRC's public website includes a summary listing of services' accreditation coverage at <https://mediaratingcouncil.org/accreditation>. We encourage accredited services to refer clients and others to the site as a summary reference source, but services are also strongly encouraged to share their formal MRC accreditation letters with clients or any others to provide a more complete description of their accreditation status and the specific metrics, platforms, etc. to which accreditation is applicable. MRC intends to publish accreditation letters on our public website at a future date.
- Services are allowed to make public accreditation representations only after they have successfully attained MRC accreditation as ratified by MRC's Board of Directors, and this has been documented to them in a formal accreditation letter from MRC's Executive Director.
  - Claims of accreditation, a pending accreditation, or other MRC accreditation-related claims are never authorized to be made by any service that is not

formally accredited by MRC, or not formally accredited for the claim in question. This applies to all services, inclusive of those in a formal “under review” stage.

- Services whose accreditation has been suspended or in hiatus are considered not accredited by MRC, and the above stipulation applies until such time as accreditation has been formally reinstated.
- Services are permitted to make external communications regarding accreditation status such as initial granting of accreditation, changes or updates to accreditation after these decisions have been ratified by MRC’s Board of Directors and documented in a formal accreditation letter, and only after advanced notification to and review by the MRC Staff. In general, the following guidance applies to external accreditation communications:
  - MRC asks that planned communications are provided in advance to allow sufficient time to review, at least one week.
  - Generally, MRC will not agree to participate in any post-release promotion, interviews, or other amplification of the news in coordination with the service unless special case by case circumstances dictate this at MRC’s discretion.
  - The content of accreditation communications should be centered solely on factual matters related to the awarding, continuance, or change of accreditation to the service, and should refrain from including highly marketing-charged claims.
  - The content of a communication should not extend beyond the accredited aspects of a service. If in the event that non-accredited aspects of an accredited service are mentioned, MRC will require clear disclaimers that emphasize their non-accredited status.
  - A quote attributed to MRC may be provided by MRC for inclusion only after agreement has been reached on a final communication (or a near-final version, subject to MRC’s review of a final version). Providing MRC quotes for external communications is something that is solely at MRC’s discretion. MRC’s preferred approach is for a service to draft a communication, and to mark a placeholder in it for the addition of an MRC quote authored by MRC itself.
  - No “MRC First” claims (i.e., “...this is the first MRC accreditation for x...”) will be approved unless it is both factually unquestionably correct, and it pertains to a matter where MRC itself has a practical interest in emphasizing (for example, the first viewability accreditation was one such instance). Further, MRC does not generally approve “Only” accreditation claims in communications as this status is often temporary and short-lived and requiring of future update when other services subsequently achieve the same accreditation.

- Accreditation communications should not invoke the CPA firm that conducted its audit by name (*this is a rule that the firms have, not one that MRC itself has created*). If the firm is to be referenced at all, it is recommended it be referred to as, “an independent CPA firm engaged by the MRC.”
- Communications should only reference the accredited organization or service itself. MRC will not approve communications that also include references to other organizations, such as marketplace competitors, affiliated organizations that were not part of the accreditation audit, etc.
- There may be times where MRC chooses to make a statement ourselves, although this happens infrequently, to emphasize matters that may be important to the accreditation process in general or to the marketplace and we reserve the right to do so.
- MRC-accredited services are authorized only to make representations concerning accredited or non-accredited aspects of their own services. In no instance are services authorized to make such representations for MRC-accredited services other than their own, whether as a competitive positioning tactic or for any other reason. A service may choose to reference services other than their own in external disclosures, but should not include references to accreditation status of these other services.

More general representations of a service’s MRC accreditation should include a clear and easily discernable mechanism for a user to obtain additional information concerning the specifics of its accreditation, such as a footnote of similar or equal prominence to the representation itself, a hyperlink to further details, etc. Accreditation references made by MRC accredited services, as well as other representations related to accredited services’ MRC accreditation status, are subject to review by their MRC auditors for compliance assessment.

Please contact the MRC Staff with any questions or to discuss any uncertainties you may have about specific situations.

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