



# TAG Inventory Quality Guidelines

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# About TAG's Inventory Quality Guidelines Program

The mission of the IQG Program is to reduce friction and foster an environment of trust in the marketplace by providing clear, common language that describes characteristics of advertising inventory and transactions across the advertising value chain. The TAG Inventory Quality Guidelines (IQG) Program promotes the flow of advertising budgets into digital advertising with industry regulation that offers a framework for brand safety.



In order to guide companies to promote greater transparency disclosures in digital advertising, the TAG Inventory Quality Working Group maintains the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*, as well as a suite of transparency tools to aid in compliance with those guidelines.

Companies who choose to abide by the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* can achieve the Inventory Quality Guidelines (IQG) Certified Seal and use the seal to publicly communicate their commitment to reduce friction and foster an environment of trust in the marketplace.

## About the Trustworthy Accountability Group

The Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is the leading global certification program fighting criminal activity and increasing trust in the digital advertising industry. Created by the industry's top trade organizations, TAG's mission is to:

- Eliminate fraudulent traffic,
- Combat malware,
- Prevent Internet piracy, and
- Promote greater transparency in digital advertising.

TAG advances those initiatives by bringing companies across the digital advertising supply chain together to set the highest standards.

TAG is the first and only registered Information Sharing and Analysis Organization (ISAO) for the digital advertising industry.

To learn more about the Trustworthy Accountability Group, please visit [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

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# 1 Executive Summary

With millions of sites and applications that carry advertising and hundreds of technology vendors that are conduits for buyer-seller exchange of media, advertising transactions in the digital ecosystem are typically complex and lack transparency. These guidelines establish a transparent set of rules to enhance buyers and sellers' integrity and credibility and provide a framework for each seller to disclose information about their inventory,

The Inventory Quality Guidelines (IQG) promotes the flow of advertising budgets into digital advertising with industry regulation that offers a framework for brand safety.

The goals of the IQG program are to:

- Support the information needs of advertising buyers
- Define a common framework of disclosures that buyers and sellers can use across the industry
- Offer clear language in the IQG disclosure framework that enables buyers and sellers to make informed decisions
- Review compliance among IQG-certified companies and facilitate the resolution of disputes and complaints.

IQG offers value to both buyers and sellers:

## **Benefits for the Buyer**

IQG was created jointly by buyers and sellers to provide transparency for buyers and define terms and conditions for seller disclosure.

## **Benefits for the Seller**

IQG creates a simple, common, and standard language to describe and classify advertising opportunities. Doing so makes buying inventory easier for the buyer, which increases overall demand for IQG-certified sellers. Increased inventory value for IQG-certified companies enables increased revenue because IQG certification classifies these companies as industry leaders, clearly distinguishing them from any bad actors.

## 2 Certification Process

The TAG IQG Program is voluntary and represents the ongoing process of defining and maintaining guidelines for promoting the flow of advertising budgets into digital advertising, offering a framework for brand safety.

TAG certifies companies at the entity level, rather than certifying a specific product or business line within a legal entity. To achieve the TAG IQG Seal, companies must show that all of its material operations related to ad monetization services within a particular geographic market are in compliance with the relevant requirements of the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*.

### 2.1 Application

Before a company can apply for the IQG Certified Seal, that company must first become a TAG member, completing the process of becoming “TAG Registered” and enrolling in the Verified by TAG Program. Companies can learn more and apply for TAG Registration by contacting TAG at [info@tagtoday.net](mailto:info@tagtoday.net) or visiting [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

Once a company has been approved as “TAG Registered” and enrolled in the Verified by TAG Program, the company’s designated TAG Compliance Officer may contact TAG directly to request enrollment in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program in order to begin the process for that company to achieve the IQG Certified Seal. In order to participate in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program, a company’s TAG membership must include access to that program.

#### 2.1.a *Participation Fee*

There is an annual fee, which is encompassed in annual membership dues, for participation in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program.

### 2.2 Qualification

Any TAG member company in good standing that has been enrolled in the Verified by TAG Program and whose TAG membership includes participation in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program can participate in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program and apply for the IQG Certified Seal.

Requirements to achieve the TAG IQG Certified Seal differ according to a company’s role in the digital advertising supply chain. These roles and requirements are outlined in Sections 3 and 4 of this document.

### 2.3 Geographic Applicability of Certification

The IQG Certified Seal can be achieved in any geographic market. However, upon achieving certification, a company is only permitted to use the IQG Certified Seal in the specific geographic markets in which TAG has found the company’s operations to be in full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*. Additionally, any use of the seal must identify the geographic markets to which it applies.

At minimum, TAG requires that a company bring its full operations in the US market into compliance in order to achieve the IQG Certified Seal. Companies can also choose to certify operations in additional markets, either by country (e.g.: Brazil), by region (e.g.: South America), or globally.

If a company wants to certify its operations in geographic markets beyond the US, it must clearly state the markets – either by country, by region, or globally – in which it is applying for certification in its application for the IQG Certified Seal.

If a company does not clarify the geographic areas in which it wants to be certified, TAG will assume the company is applying solely for certification of its operations in the US market and the company will be licensed to use the IQG Certified Seal solely in that market.

## 2.4 Methods of Certification

Companies can apply to achieve the IQG Certified Seal using one of two methods: self-attestation or independent validation. A company has the option to choose either method, except in cases noted in Section 4.5 of the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*, and in TAG's *Due Process for Allegations of Non-Compliance and Appeal*, available on [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net). The selected method is recorded and displayed on [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

Certification through self-attestation is obtained with a series of binding attestations from the company in which it attests to have achieved full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* and that it will maintain compliance throughout the certification period, as well as a detailed description of the means by which a company is complying with each relevant requirement.

Certification through independent validation is obtained by the company inviting an independent auditor to review and validate that the company has achieved full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*, as well as a series of binding attestations from the company in which it attests to have achieved full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* and that it will maintain compliance throughout the certification period. A validating company may be any auditing company that includes a specialty in digital media audits.

The certification processes for self-attestation and independent validation are parallel except that in an independent validation, the independent auditor submits required attestation paperwork and reports to TAG, in addition to the paperwork submitted by the company itself.

Since the internal processes for both self-attestation and independent validation certification are the same, a company that has achieved the IQG Certified Seal through a self-attestation can move to an independent validation certification at any time by providing the additional paperwork and reports required from the independent auditor.

### 2.4.a Certification Through Self-Attestation

Certification through self-attestation is obtained through a series of attestations from the company that it is complying the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*.

Entities that wish to achieve the TAG IQG Certified Seal through self-attestation must submit to

TAG a company's completed *Description of Methodology*, a *quarterly internal audit report*, and supporting materials for each of the relevant certification requirements, as well as a signed TAG *Compliance Officer Attestation* and *Business Executive Attestation*. Following examination of the self-attestation application materials, TAG will notify the company as to whether they have met the relevant requirements of the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*, or whether additional information is needed in order to confirm compliance.

### **2.4.b Certification Through Independent Validation**

To achieve certification through independent validation, a company must invite an independent auditor to validate that the company is compliant with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*. A validating company may be any auditing company that includes a specialty in digital media audits.

While independent validation is designed to provide limited assurance, ensuring that all *Inventory Quality Guidelines* are being met within the company's operations, technology and supporting documentation may take some time to examine. Examination time depends on several factors such as company operations maturity level, organization size and complexity and technology.

Independent validation will include examination of, but is not limited to, the following:

- Job description of the compliance officer.
- Training policy and procedures.
- Internal audit policies and procedures.
- Established policies and procedures related to internal control.
- Policies and procedures related to the requirements of the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*.
- Policies and procedures related to complaint handling/resolution to ensure compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*.
- Testing performed by the company as part of the internal quarterly review process.

Entities that wish to achieve the TAG IQG Certified Seal through independent validation must have the validating company submit to TAG: an *Independent Validation Attestation*, the *company's Description of Methodology* and a quarterly audit report, as well as a signed TAG *Compliance Officer Attestation* and *Business Executive Attestation*.

## **2.5 Publication of Certification Status**

With training and consistent monitoring procedures in practice, the company is certified when TAG determines the company to be in full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*, based on the required documentation submitted. TAG notifies the company of its certification status, and that certification status is posted to the TAG Registry. Upon certification, TAG sends certification seal materials to the company's designated TAG Compliance Officer for use in promoting the company's IQG Certified Seal status.

### **2.5.a Inventory Quality Guidelines Certified Seal**

Companies that are shown to meet the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* receive the IQG Certified Seal and can use the seal to enhance sellers' integrity and credibility of their inventory and transactional disclosures.



## 2.6 Continued Compliance

Companies that are shown to meet the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* and achieve the IQG Certified Seal must maintain compliance throughout the certification period.

### 2.6.a TAG Compliance Officer

Companies participating in the Inventory Quality Guidelines program must designate a qualified TAG Compliance Officer. This is usually done in the process of the company's application for TAG Registration, prior to participation in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program.

The duties of a TAG Compliance Officer include:

- Serving as the primary point of contact between TAG and the company regarding all aspects of the company's TAG membership. This includes receipt of notice concerning any changes to TAG Certification program(s).
- Completing the required training modules for each TAG Certification program in which the company participates.
- Educating internal teams on the requirements of each TAG Certification program in which the company participates and notifying those internal teams of any changes.
- Overseeing the company's processes related to compliance with the requirements of each TAG Certification program in which the company participates.
- Facilitating internal review of the company's compliance with the requirements of each TAG certification program in which the company participates, including independent auditor review where appropriate.
- Taking on additional responsibilities applicable to each of the TAG programs in which the company participates (as appropriate).

The minimum qualifications for a TAG Compliance Officer include:

- Reporting relationships whereby compliance assessments are not influenced or biased by operations personnel being tested for compliance.
- Adequate technical training and proficiency in testing and assessing compliance.
- Adequate knowledge of the subject matter covered in each of the TAG Certification programs in which the company participates (i.e., advertising technology, various functions within the digital advertising supply chain, etc.).
- Adequate independence within the company to avoid conflicts of interest with regard to assessing compliance with TAG program requirements.

A TAG Compliance Officer does not need to hold a particular title or job description within the organization, as long as that individual has independence from sales and marketing functions.

The role of the TAG Compliance Officer is further described in the *TAG Compliance Officer Role Description*, available on [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

### 2.6.b Compliance Team

While the only required requirement to support compliance with the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program is the designation of a TAG Compliance Officer, it is also recommended that a company

have in place a Compliance Team to assist in meeting and maintaining compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines*.

### 2.6.c *Training*

Inventory Quality Guidelines training is required for the company's designated TAG Compliance Officer. The Compliance Officer is encouraged to attend the first training available after a company is enrolled in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program and must complete training in order for the company to achieve the IQG Certified Seal. Training must be renewed on an annual basis in order for a company to maintain its IQG Certified Seal from year to year.

### 2.6.d *Description of Methodology (DOM)*

The IQG *Description of Methodology*, or DOM, describes the company's technical methods for how inventory details are disclosed to parties with whom the IQG-certified company does business and lays out the processes put in place to ensure stated practices are maintained. The DOM is central to IQG Certification. Quarterly and independent reviews are based on the methodologies documented in the DOM. The level of detail plays a role in a good DOM. An overly detailed DOM might be overly complex and difficult to maintain, but an overly simplified DOM may be too vague to appropriately meet minimum certification guidelines.

TAG does not define how this document should be structured or the content required, but at a minimum, a well-defined description of methodology must incorporate the following:

- Clearly stated guiding principles for the company and its IQG Certification Program.
- Regular practices involved in disclosing inventory details.
- Description of how company technology discloses inventory details.
- Defined plan for ensuring all quality assurance technology and regular practices are maintained.
- Method for detecting and correcting errors.
- Process for making updates to the IQG Certification Program and the corresponding documentation in the DOM.

The DOM must be submitted for certification or renewal regardless of the level of certification obtained.

### 2.6.e *Quarterly Internal Reviews*

Quarterly internal reviews ensure that a company that has been awarded the IQG Certified Seal maintains full compliance with the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* throughout the year. Reviews must be based on the methodologies documented in the DOM.

The TAG Compliance Officer is responsible for overseeing quarterly internal reviews and must ensure that:

- The *Inventory Quality Guidelines* are consistently and completely followed.
- Control activities discussed during Inventory Quality Guidelines training are formally documented.

- Potentially criminal activity is detected in a timely fashion.
- Appropriate corrective measures are taken in a timely fashion.

Internal reviews must also include a risk analysis of certain control functions to assess how much testing is needed to validate adherence. Actual testing of data, both quantitatively and qualitatively, must be used to validate that the existing control structure is designed correctly and operating effectively.

### *2.6.f Recertification*

Certification is an ongoing process and companies that achieve the IQG Certified Seal must be recertified annually. Companies that achieve the IQG Certified Seal must apply for recertification by January 31 each year in order to be considered for recertification in that calendar year. TAG sends recertification notifications to all certified companies prior to the start of the recertification submission period.

TAG reviews all applications for recertification and notifies companies whether they have achieved recertification by March 1.

## 3 Covered Parties

Companies applying for the IQG Certified Seal must apply for the Seal under all relevant covered party categories, meeting the requirements relevant to each category, as described in Section 4.1.

### 3.1 Direct Seller

The most Direct Seller is a publisher that provides content to an audience. This type of Direct Seller sells ad space inventory on its websites or other media properties that offer value to advertisers depending on the size and demographics of the audience.

While a publisher may sell this inventory directly, larger publishers may appoint an agent to manage and sell this inventory. Such an agent is also a Direct Seller. To qualify as a Direct Seller, the agency must directly represent the publisher.

### 3.2 Intermediary

An Intermediary is a company that owns and/or operates a technology or service that allows for the purchase of digital inventory for the purpose of ad placement.

Intermediaries include both Indirect Sellers and Indirect Buyers.

- An Intermediary may be an Indirect Seller in that it sells a Direct Seller's inventory.
- An Intermediary may be an Indirect Buyer in that it is qualified to assign a Direct Buyer<sup>1</sup>'s advertisements to a Direct Seller's inventory.

Any entity that connects a Direct Seller to a Direct Buyer or an Indirect Seller through an ad technology layer or redirect is also an Intermediary.

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<sup>1</sup> While Direct Buyers cannot achieve the IQG Seal, TAG defines Direct Buyers as advertisers who own advertisements for placement in inventory on the publisher's websites or other media properties, or advertising agencies that directly represent such advertisers.

## 4 Certification Requirements

Requirements to achieve the IQG Certified Seal differ according to a company's role in the digital advertising supply chain. To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, an entity must meet relevant criteria based on the types of functions it undertakes.

### 4.1 Requirements Table

Requirement	Scope	Direct Seller	Intermediary
<b>Complete TAG Registration and be a TAG Member in Good Standing</b>	Administrative	✓	✓
<b>Have a Designated TAG Compliance Officer</b>	Administrative	✓	✓
<b>Attend an Inventory Quality Guidelines Training Annually</b>	Administrative	✓	✓
<b>Structure and Label All Inventory by Source-Level Transparency</b>	Inventory Acquisition	✓	✓
<b>Develop a Contextual Taxonomy</b>	Inventory Evaluation	✓	✓
<b>Classify Content by Audience Ratings</b>	Inventory Evaluation	✓	✓
<b>Classify Content by Brand Safety Ratings</b>	Inventory Evaluation	✓	✓
<b>Refrain from Sale of Inventory from Prohibited Categories</b>	Inventory Evaluation	✓	✓
<b>Conduct Inventory Partner Vetting and Revetting</b>	Inventory Evaluation		✓
<b>Disclose Targeting Depth Levels</b>	Inventory Evaluation	✓	✓
<b>Implement and Honor Ads.txt Files</b>	Transactional Execution	✓	✓
<b>Disclose Publisher and Data Aggregator partners</b>	Transactional Execution		✓
<b>Ensure Programmatic Buying Disclosures Comply with OpenRTB Specifications</b>	Transactional Execution	✓	✓
<b>Implement Audience Targeting Controls</b>	Transactional Execution	✓	✓

### 4.2 Complete TAG Registration and be a TAG Member in Good Standing

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must first become a TAG member, completing the process of becoming "TAG Registered" and enrolling in the Verified by TAG Program. Companies can learn more and apply for TAG Registration by contacting TAG at [info@tagtoday.net](mailto:info@tagtoday.net) or visiting [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

Companies seeking the IQG Certified Seal must also have active TAG memberships that include participation in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program, have a valid TAG membership agreement in place, and be current on payment for all TAG membership fees.

### 4.3 Have a Designated TAG Compliance Officer

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must have designated a qualified TAG Compliance Officer.

The role of the TAG Compliance Officer is described in section 2.6.a of this document.

### 4.4 Attend an Inventory Quality Guidelines Training Annually

In order to achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company's designated TAG Compliance Officer is encouraged to attend the first training available after a company is enrolled in the Inventory Quality Guidelines Program and must complete training in order for the company to achieve the IQG Certified Seal. Training must be renewed on an annual basis in order for a company to maintain its IQG Certified Seal from year to year.

TAG provides training on a regular basis via a virtual platform so that TAG Compliance Officers are able to obtain training regardless of geographic location. TAG Compliance Officers can learn more and RSVP for training sessions by visiting [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).

### 4.5 Structure and Label All Inventory by Source-Level Transparency

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must structure and label all inventory so that each source level of transparency is represented by a different line item or bid request. This requirement extends to inventory handled by a participating company – including a company's owned and operated media properties as well as any inventory handled by that company on behalf of a third-party partner.

Source-level transparency includes the following:

- **Full Real-Time Disclosure (applicable to Programmatic buys)** - In a real-time bidding environment, the seller passes the buyer the complete identifier of the page or app where the ad will display at the moment that the impression is being offered. Full real-time disclosure enables the buyer's ad-serving workflow to decide on a number of factors for serving the ad such as valuation and creative selection.

Full real-time disclosure requires that the complete identifier of the original publisher page or app where the ad will be displayed is provided to the buyer's system. Disclosing only the iframe URL that is separate from the page that contains the content is NOT considered full real-time disclosure. In all cases related to full real-time disclosure, the seller must pass the content source identifier or the app store identifier without modification.

- **Full Disclosure** - In full disclosure, the buyer-seller agreement includes a list of all the website domains or native applications where ads may run. Ads may not run on all sites or applications listed, but ads will not run on any sites or applications other than those listed.
- **Partial Disclosure** - In partial disclosure, the buyer-seller agreement includes a list of

representative website domains or native applications where ads may run. Ads may run on sites and applications other than those listed, but will not necessarily run on all sites and applications listed.

- **No Disclosure (blind/no site list)** - With no disclosure, the buyer-seller agreement is silent with respect to the website domains or native applications on which ads may run.

Source-level transparency may be disclosed in full in real-time, as a complete list of sites or apps to be used (full disclosure), in the form of a list of potential sites or apps to be used (partial disclosure), or as a general list of possible contextual sites or apps, or unknown sites or apps (no disclosure) where ads may run. However, any participating company must be in a position to offer full disclosure at a minimum if requested by the buyer.

If inventory is not or cannot be separated into different line items or bid requests, then all inventory must be assigned a source-level transparency equal to the least transparent item sold in the agreement.

Except for full real-time disclosure, the source domain or application must be disclosed in a buyer-seller agreement prior to running impressions. The buyer-seller agreement must specify the terms by which the seller may update the inventory source list.

The best path to compliance with this requirement depends on a participating company's internal business practices. A participating company must outline its processes for disclosing transaction details and level of transaction through its *Description of Methodology*.

#### 4.5.a Exceptions

For direct buys between a participating company acting as a Direct Seller that provides content to an audience through its website(s) or other media properties (herein described as a "publisher") and a Direct Buyer, source-level transparency is implied with the exception of full real-time disclosure, which must be disclosed if applicable.

Additionally, source identifiers are not available for native applications. In these cases, full real-time disclosure requires that the seller provide the complete identifier for the app store page where the application is listed.

## 4.6 Develop a Contextual Taxonomy

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must develop a contextual taxonomy relevant to the inventory they offer and consistent with the tiered structure outlined in the *IAB Tech Lab Content Taxonomy*<sup>2</sup>. The *IAB Tech Lab Content Taxonomy* defines contextual content categories on at least three different tiers.

Companies may define their own content classification taxonomy based on the *IAB Tech Lab Content Taxonomy* tier structure. In these cases, such custom taxonomies must clearly map back to the *IAB Tech Lab Content Taxonomy*. These variations from the *IAB Tech Lab Content Taxonomy* tier structure must be disclosed in the company's *Description of Methodology*.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iab.com/guidelines/iab-tech-lab-content-taxonomy/>

## 4.7 Classify Content by Audience Ratings

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any company acting as a Seller must identify inventory that is only suitable for mature audiences according to a rating system described in the company's DOM and mapped to the categories described below. Audience ratings must be standardized across all companies with the site rating determined at the time the site first joins the network or exchange:

### All Audiences

Appropriate for all segments of the general public. For this rating, all of the following must apply:

- No profanity
- No sexual content
- No violence
- No depictions of alcohol, tobacco, weapons, gambling, or drug use

### Mature Audiences

May contain material suitable only for mature audiences. Any of the following may be present:

- Profanity
- Provocative images
- Nudity
- Violence to human beings or animals
- Depictions of alcohol, tobacco, weapons, gambling or drug use, etc.

Audience ratings must be disclosed for each transaction. For direct buys, these ratings and non-standard classifications must be disclosed within the buyer-seller agreement such as an I/O. For programmatic transactions, the following object and attribute must be disclosed as part of a bid request:

#### Object: Content

This object describes the content in which the impression will appear, which may be syndicated or non-syndicated content.

Attribute	Type	Description
qagmediarating	integer	Media rating per QAG guidelines. Refer to the IAB Tech Lab's OpenRTB specifications v2.2 or higher for the list of media categories <sup>3</sup> given a company's OpenRTB implementation.

## 4.8 Classify Content by Brand Safety Ratings

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must identify content according to a rating system described in the company's DOM and mapped to the categories described below. Brand safety ratings are largely based on the [Advertising Protection Bureau's Brand Safety Floor Framework](#)<sup>4</sup>, with a few exceptions, and must be standardized across all companies. The brand

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/real-time-bidding-rtb-project/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aaaa.org/4as-advertiser-protection-bureau-delivers-brand-suitability-framework-and-brand-safety-floor->



safety rating(s) must be determined at the time the site or app begins selling inventory to third parties directly or programmatically:

<b>Category (Video / Audio / Text) Brand Safety “Floor” Definitions</b>	
Adult & Explicit Sexual Content	Illegal sale, distribution and consumption of child pornography. Explicit or gratuitous depiction of sexual acts, and/or display of genitals, real or animated.
Arms & Ammunition	Promotion and advocacy of Sales of illegal arms, rifles and handguns. Instructive content on how to obtain, make, distribute or use illegal arms. Glamorization of illegal arms for the purpose of harm to others. Use of illegal arms in unregulated environments.
Crime & Harmful Acts to Individuals and Society and Human Rights Violations	Graphic promotion, advocacy and depiction of willful harm and actual unlawful criminal activity – murder, manslaughter & harm to others. Explicit violations / demeaning offenses of Human Rights (e.g. trafficking, slavery, etc.)
Death or Injury	Promotion or advocacy of death or injury. Murder or willfull bodily harm to others. Graphic depictions of willful harm to others.
Online Piracy	Pirating, Copyright Infringement and Counterfeiting
Hate Speech & Acts of Aggression	Unlawful acts of aggression based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender or sexual image or preference. Behavior or commentary that advocates for such hateful acts, including bullying.
Military Conflict	Incendiary content provoking, enticing or evoking military aggression. Live action footage/photos of military actions & genocide and other war crimes.
Obscenity and Profanity	Excessive use of profane language or gestures and other repulsive actions with the intent to shock, offend or insult
Illegal Drugs	Promotion or sale of illegal drugs, including abuse of prescription drugs.
Spam or Harmful Content	Malware / Phishing / Spam
Terrorism	Promotion and advocacy of graphic terrorist activity, including defamation, physical and/or emotional harm of individuals, communities and society
Tobacco / eCigarettes / Vaping	Promotion and advocacy of Tobacco and eCigarette (Vaping) and Alcohol use to minors
Sensitive Social Issues / Violations of Human Rights	Disrespectful and harmful treatment of sensitive social topics (e.g. abortion, extreme political positions, etc.) Acts, language and gestures deemed illegal, not otherwise outlined in this framework (e.g. harm to self or other and animal cruelty) Targeted harassment of individuals and groups

Sites Under Construction	Sites that are under construction
Incentivized	Sponsor "incentivized clicks," or "pay-to-surf" programs
Unmoderated UGC (User Generated Content) <sup>5</sup>	UGC sites that do not have a clear set of posted guidelines on what type of content is acceptable and do not take an active position in reviewing content for compliance with posted guidelines.

Brand safety ratings must be disclosed for each transaction. For direct buys, these ratings must be disclosed within the buyer-seller agreement such as an I/O. For programmatic transactions, the following object and attribute must be disclosed and categorized under IAB Content Category 25 – Non-Standard Content - as part of a bid request:

**Blocked Advertiser Categories**

The top-level "Bid Request" object in OpenRTB includes the option for the Publisher to disclose what categories are not accepted by the site or app so that Advertisers can block distribution, When OpenRTB is in use, this attribute must be populated.

Attribute	Type	Description
Bcat	string array	Blocked advertiser categories using the IAB content categories. Refer to the IAB Tech Lab's OpenRTB specifications v2.2 or higher for the list of content categories <sup>6</sup> given a company's OpenRTB implementation. Should there be a category used that is not explicitly called out on the list, please use IAB25 (Non-Standard Content) or IAB26 (Illegal Content) as appropriate.

## 4.9 Refrain from Sale of Inventory from Prohibited Categories

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must employ inventory filtering for prohibited content categories, as the IQG prohibits the sale of any inventory within the following categories of prohibited content. The category descriptions below include non-exclusive examples of the types of sites that fit in those categories.

**Content Prohibited from Sale**

<b>Adult &amp; Explicit Sexual Content</b>	Illegal sale, distribution and consumption of child pornography. Explicit or gratuitous depiction of sexual acts, and/or display of genitals, real or animated.
<b>Arms &amp; Ammunition</b>	Promotion and advocacy of Sales of illegal arms, rifles and handguns. Instructive content on how to obtain, make, distribute or use illegal arms. Glamorization of illegal arms for the purpose of harm to others. Use of

<sup>5</sup> TAG defines UGC as any form of content, such as images, videos, text and audio, that have been posted by users of online platforms such as social media and wikis.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/real-time-bidding-rtb-project/>

	illegal arms in unregulated environments.
<b>Hate Speech &amp; Acts of Aggression</b>	Unlawful acts of aggression based on race, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender or sexual image or preference. Behavior or commentary that advocates for such hateful acts, including bullying.
<b>Illegal Drugs</b>	Promotion or sale of illegal drugs, including abuse of prescription drugs.
<b>Spam or Harmful Content</b>	Malware / Phishing
<b>Terrorism</b>	Promotion and advocacy of graphic terrorist activity, including defamation, physical and/or emotional harm of individuals, communities and society
<b>Online Piracy</b>	Pirating, Copyright Infringement and Counterfeiting
<b>Spyware/Malware</b>	Distribute or promote spyware or malware

The best path to compliance with this requirement depends on a participating company’s internal business practices. A participating company must outline its processes for employing inventory filtering through its *Description of Methodology*.

## 4.10 Conduct Inventory Partner Vetting and Re-vetting

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company acting as an Intermediary must implement a formal inventory vetting process, vet all inventory (sites and apps) prior to onboarding, and re-vet inventory on a quarterly basis to ensure that suitability ratings defined for each partner’s inventory (sites and apps) stay current. A participating company must outline its processes for vetting and re-vetting Publishers’ inventory (sites and/or apps) on a quarterly basis through its DOM and submit an internal audit report from at least one of the past four quarters as part of their application for the IQG seal.

A participating company must review a statistically significant sample size of publisher’s inventory as part of its quarterly review process defined in Section 2.6.e, and validate that the each Publisher’s inventory (site and apps) is being assigned the appropriate content rating(s), suitability rating(s) and/or prohibited content category(ies) defined in Sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 with a minimum confidence level of 95% and no greater than a margin of error of 5%. If more than 10% of total inventory (sites and/or apps) fall within one or more category as defined in Sections 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9 then the participating company must follow the process outlined and document within their quarterly audit report:

- Review and re-categorization of publishers in accordance with Sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9.
- Complete re-test of inventory at or above pre-determined confidence level.
- Record each test result as proof of the internal review.

A participating company may choose to employ an independent or third-party rating service(s), as long as the rating service(s) used complies with the classifications outlined in Sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9.

## 4.11 Disclose Targeting Depth Levels

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must implement a system to disclose targeting depth levels for all inventory offered within a single line item or bid request. Five levels of targeting are defined for disclosure, with depth of targeting starting at the broadest tier in which a group of sites may be included in a buy and funneling down through the site, site section, specific page, and individual unit such as a specific video. Companies are not required to offer all targeting levels.

The following table explains the targeting hierarchy, ranging from the multi-site level to the individual units on the page:

Targeting Depth	
Category/Portal Level	Target a grouping of sites within a specific buy
Site Level	Targeting to endemic sites where the majority of the content is on a specific topic that can be targeted at site level
Site Section Level	Subsections of sites are classified into subordinate categories
Page Level	Pages within a web site (determined using a semantic or contextual engine)
Unit Level (widget, video, image, text, other)	This type of targeting classifies every element on a “page” into one of the defined categories. Text content identified by semantic or contextual search engine; Video and image content identified by metadata tags.
None	Not targeting content but targeting users.

The best path to compliance with this requirement depends on a participating company’s internal business practices. A participating company must outline its processes for disclosing targeting depth levels through its DOM.

## 4.12 Implement and Honor Ads.txt Files

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company must implement and honor ads.txt files as required for each covered party category in which that company falls, as defined in Section 3.0.

- If a participating company is acting as a Direct Seller, that company must publish an ads.txt file. The required implementation of ads.txt is described in the [IAB Tech Lab](#)

### [Ads.txt Specification<sup>7</sup>](#)

- If a participating company is acting as an Intermediary, that company must honor a Direct Seller's ads.txt file if one has been published, buying only from entities identified within the published ads.txt file.

## 4.13 Disclose Publisher and Data Aggregator Partners

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company acting as an Intermediary must notify each publisher partner when a company is leveraging that partner's data for targeting. Additionally, advertisers must be notified when a company is using third party data from one or more data aggregator partner(s).

Specifically:

- When leveraging data from a publisher's site to aggregate behavioral data for the purposes of behavioral targeting, a company must have a contractual agreement with the publisher in which consent is explicitly given to aggregate behavioral data for the purposes of using this information for behavioral targeting.
- When buying third-party data from a data aggregator (i.e., an organization that collects and compiles data from individual sites to sell to others), a company must disclose to the advertiser the specific data aggregators whose data may be used for that advertiser's campaign

Data Disclosures must be made either within the company's standard affiliate agreements with publisher and data aggregator partners, disclosed in writing prior to campaign execution, disclosed in the IO executed between the agency/advertiser and the company, and/or disclosed in the company's DOM.

## 4.14 Ensure Programmatic Buying Disclosures Comply with OpenRTB Specifications

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company passing bid requests must ensure that all programmatic buying disclosures fully comply with OpenRTB specifications v.2.2 or higher<sup>8</sup> and include the following object and attribute information when making bid requests:

### Object: Bid Request

The top-level bid request object contains a globally unique bid request or auction ID. This id attribute is required as is at least one impression object. A bid request must include either a Site or an App object; both objects cannot be included in the same bid request at the same time.

Attribute	Type	Description
Site	Object (if applicable)	Details via a <b>site</b> object about the publisher's website. Only applicable for websites.
App	Object (if applicable)	Details via an <b>app</b> object about the publisher's app (i.e., non-browser applications). Only applicable for apps.

<sup>7</sup> [https://iabtechlab.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IABOpenRTB\\_Ads.txt\\_Public\\_Spec\\_V1-0-1.pdf](https://iabtechlab.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IABOpenRTB_Ads.txt_Public_Spec_V1-0-1.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/real-time-bidding-rtb-project/>

Attribute	Type	Description
Device	Object	Details via a <b>device</b> object about the user's device to which the impression will be delivered.
User	Object	Details via a <b>user</b> object about the human user of the device; the advertising audience.
bcat	string array	Blocked advertiser categories using the IAB content categories. Refer to the IAB Tech Lab's OpenRTB specifications v2.2 or higher for the list of categories <sup>9</sup> given a company's OpenRTB implementation.
badv	string array	Block list of advertisers by their domains (e.g., "ford.com").

#### Object: Site

This object must be included if the ad supported content is a website.

Attribute	Type	Description
id	String	Exchange-specific site ID

#### Object: App

This object must be included if ad supported content is in a non-browser application (e.g. mobile).

Attribute	Type	Description
id	string	Exchange-specific app ID
storeurl	string	App store URL for an installed app; for IQG compliance

#### Object: Device

This object provides information pertaining to the device through which the user is interacting. Device information includes its hardware, platform, location, and carrier data. The device can refer to a mobile handset, a desktop computer, set top box, or other digital device.

Attribute	Type	Description
ua	string	Browser user-agent string
ip	string (if applicable)	IPv4 address closest to device (IP address of the user)
ipv6	string (if applicable)	IP address closest to device as IPv6 (IP address of the user)

#### Object: Native

The Native Object defines the native advertising opportunity available for bid via the bid request. It **must** be included directly in the impression object if the impression offered for auction is a native ad format.

Field	Type	Default	Description
layout	integer	-	The Layout ID of the native ad unit.
adunit	integer	-	The Ad unit ID of the native ad unit.

Source: *OpenRTB Native Ads API Specification*

## 4.15 Implement Audience Targeting Controls

To achieve the IQG Certified Seal, any participating company engaging in programmatic transactions must implement audience targeting controls in campaigns that utilize audience-

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/real-time-bidding-rtb-project/>

based targeting.

The appropriate objects and attributes must be passed in the Bid Request depending on the type(s) of audience-based targeting being utilized:

Object: Geo

This object encapsulates various methods for specifying a geographic location. When subordinate to a Device object, it indicates the location of the device which can also be interpreted as the user's current location. When subordinate to a User object, it indicates the location of the user's home base (i.e., not necessarily their current location).

The lat/lon attributes must be passed only if they conform to the accuracy depicted in the type attribute.

Attribute	Type	Description
country	string	Country code using ISO-3166-1-alpha-3.
region	string	Region code using ISO-3166-2; 2-letter state code if USA.

Object: User

This object contains information known or derived about the human user of the device (i.e., the audience for advertising). The user id is an exchange artifact and may be subject to rotation or other privacy policies. However, this user ID must be stable long enough to serve reasonably as the basis for frequency capping and retargeting.

Attribute	Type	Description
keywords	string	Comma separated list of keywords, interest or intent
customdata	string	Optional feature to pass bidder data that was set in the exchange's cookie. The string must be in base85 cookie safe characters and be in any format. Proper JSON encoding must be used to include "escaped" quotation marks.

Object: Data

The data and segment objects together allow additional data about the user to be specified. The specific data providers in use must be published by the exchange a priori to its bidders.

Attribute	Type	Description
segment	object array	Array of Segment (Section 3.2.15) objects that contain the actual data values.

Object: Segment

Segment objects are essentially key-value pairs that convey specific units of data about the user. Specific segment names and value options must be published by the exchange a priori to its bidders.

Attribute	Type	Description
Value	String	String representation of the data segment value

### 4.15.a Exceptions

This requirement applies strictly to programmatic campaigns. Companies need not comply with this requirement for non-programmatic campaigns. Further, any company who strictly deals with

direct buys and/or does not incorporate audience targeting in their transactions are excluded from meeting this requirement.



## 5. Allegations of Non-Compliance & Appeal

Companies that achieve the IQG Certified Seal must meet and maintain compliance with the relevant requirements set forth in the *Inventory Quality Guidelines* throughout the certification period. Failure to comply can result in consequences, including but not limited to the loss of certification and use of the IQG Certified Seal. Certified companies are permitted to review allegations of non-compliance, submit rebuttal evidence, seek review of decisions of non-compliance and appeal any final decision.

The formal process governing non-compliance can be found in TAG's *Due Process for Allegations of Non-Compliance and Appeal*, available on [www.tagtoday.net](http://www.tagtoday.net).