



MRC Issues Draft Version of Digital Advertising Auction Transparency Standards

30-Day Public Comment Period Now Open

New York, NY (September 19, 2025): The Media Rating Council (MRC) today issued a draft document outlining requirements, guidance and best practices for Digital Advertising Auction Transparency.

This document represents MRC's effort to set standards for transparency, disclosure and reporting of various aspects and results of digital advertising auctions (including but not limited to display, text, video and audio formats within digital, search, social, retail media, streaming CTV and addressable TV channels) as part of its ongoing effort to develop standards for media measurement.

Despite the growth and diversity of ad auctions in media, there were previously no standards for Ad Auctioneer conduct regarding disclosure and reporting of auction rules or transparency into auction processes and outcomes. **It is the objective of these Standards to promote transparency around auction rules and scoring along with reporting and standardization where possible and appropriate, to ensure that auction rules and outcomes are understood for all parties.**

This effort is not aimed at any one platform, ad auctioneer or auction type. The intent of these Standards is not to replace or alter existing industry protocols such as OpenRTB to communicate auction information, but to supplement them with guidance regarding methods disclosures and outcome reporting. MRC does not intend to stipulate or standardize the design of any auction type, as auctioneer companies can and should design auction systems to best suit the particular characteristics of a given media form. Rather, these Standards seek to stipulate requirements and guidance to ensure that auctioneers clearly explain to advertisers how their auctions determine pricing and allocation, and provide accountability via reporting so that users can validate the same.

The objectives of this effort were to produce a Standards Framework of auditable best practices and guidance for the conduct of digital ad auctions including disclosure of models employed, rules for scoring creatives and determining outcomes of auctions in the context of standard and consistent support, quality, rigor, measurement, transparency and reporting. This Standards Framework is intended to enable MRC auditing of operators of digital auction systems that voluntarily submit to the MRC process, for compliance assessment and MRC member review.

The Standards contained in this document originated from a project led by the MRC based on project initiation from Omnicom with sponsorship from the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) and the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Tech Lab as well as Omnicom. These Standards were developed with the participation of a large tripartite group of

media content providers, advertising agencies, advertisers, vendors/consultants, ad auctioneers, measurement organizations and other interested organizations.

To accomplish these objectives, as part of the initial project phase, the MRC and the Standards Steer Team undertook research efforts to delineate the various auction models and rules currently employed across the industry as well as current disclosures and reporting related to these auctions. The type of information MRC gathered as part of this initial phase and the resulting requirements included, but are not limited to, the following (as reviewed and agreed to by the working group including considering the input of auction participants):

- Type(s) of auction system(s) used at present.
- How winners of auctions are determined.
- After the winners of an auction have been determined, how prices that winners must pay are set.
- Use of reserve prices and methods to update them over time.
- Use of advance information about bids and budgets to adjust the functioning of the auction process and how this is updated over time.
- How often rules of the auction system are updated and disclosed to users.
- What information is disclosed or reported about the auction system and the outcome of auctions.

The output of this initial research phase served as an input into subsequent phases to develop common practices and disclosures as well as to ultimately create this Standards Framework for independent audit and verification that was reviewed and contributed to by a broader working group.

The draft is available here:

https://mediaratingcouncil.org/sites/default/files/Standards/MRC_Digital_Advertising_Auction_Transparency_Standards_PUBLIC%20COMMENT_DRAFT.pdf

Comments on the draft, which will be accepted through **Monday, October 20, 2025**, can be submitted via email to MRC at rpinelli@mediaratingcouncil.org.

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About MRC

The Media Rating Council is a non-profit industry association established in 1963 comprised of leading television, radio, print and digital media companies, as well as advertisers, advertising agencies and trade associations, whose goal is to ensure measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective. Measurement services desiring MRC accreditation are required to disclose to their customers all methodological aspects of their service; comply with the MRC Minimum Standards for Media Rating Research as well as other applicable industry measurement guidelines; and submit to MRC-designed audits to authenticate and illuminate their procedures. In addition, the MRC membership actively pursues research issues they consider priorities in an effort to improve the quality of research in the marketplace. Currently

approximately 110 research products are audited by the MRC. Additional information about MRC can be found at www.mediatingcouncil.org.

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