

# Management Instruction

## Web Site Affiliation Program

### Purpose

This management instruction (MI) provides the criteria the Postal Service uses to select Web sites for linking, establish Web affiliations with the Postal Service, and determine the fee structure for affiliations.

**Note:** Changes from MI AS-610-2007-4 are in the following sections:

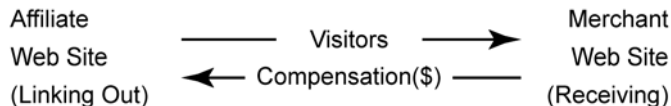
- Definitions.
- Purpose of the Web Affiliation Program.
- Public Notice of Affiliation Opportunities.
- Application and Selection.

### Overview

The Postal Service establishes affiliation relationships using the following two basic approaches:

- The Postal Service uses the services of one or more public affiliation networks. A *public affiliation network* is a Web site that is open to owners of Web sites that wish to participate and it helps those owners to place links on other Web sites within the network.
- The Postal Service may also use a *direct affiliation* approach to select Web sites by category or on an individual basis. The Postal service will select the Web sites according to predetermined selection criteria, will be consistent with the policy in this MI, and will not use the services of a public affiliation network.

In exchange for allowing visitors to the affiliate's Web site to directly transfer to the merchant's Web site, the merchant compensates the affiliate based on a percentage of sales or a flat fee received from the affiliate's visitors. This diagram illustrates the activity flow in a simple transaction:



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## DEFINITIONS

**Affiliate** — Also known as a *host*. The owner of a Web site who has placed hyperlinks on its site and who may enter into a formal agreement with another site to send electronic traffic to another site in return for compensation (except as provided in the Uniform Fee Approaches section of this MI).

**Affiliation** — A contract in which the owner of a Web site agrees to place a hyperlink on its Web site to another party's Web site in exchange for compensation based on sales, referrals, leads, or click-throughs.

**Banner** — A hyperlink in the form of text or graphic images that, when activated, transports a visitor from one Web site (affiliate site) to another Web site (merchant site).

**Click-through** — When a Web page user performs a mouse-click (or *Alt text*) on a hypertext link to another Web site or the number of times that visitors to a Web site click on a banner within a specified period.

**Linking** — The use of hypertext to transfer a user to another Web page.

**Merchant** — The owner of a Web site that a visitor arrives at after clicking on a banner, and that may pay the Web site that sent the visitor based on mutually agreed terms if a contract stipulates remuneration.

**Public Affiliation Network** — A third-party Web site that facilitates establishing affiliate and merchant links and that handles the administration and reporting of affiliation marketing programs.

**Public Interest Organization** — a national nonprofit organization or government agency that owns a Web site that complements the content of a *USPS.com* page or the Postal Service's public service objectives.

**Postal related** — Products and services offered by the owner of a Web site that complement the Postal Service's core retail, licensed, and electronic products and services.

## Purpose of the Web Affiliation Program

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The purpose of the Web affiliation program is as follows:

- To make postal information, products, and services more available to customers by allowing other Web sites to link to Postal Service Web sites.
- To assist customers using Postal Service Web sites by:
  - Providing links to categories of vendors offering postal-related products and services.
  - Providing links to Web sites that benefit Postal Service customers by providing information tied to Postal Service products and services that support third parties with which the Postal Service has a business relationship.
  - Providing links to public interest Web sites.
- To generate revenue for the Postal Service through affiliation fees, increased Web site traffic, and increased sales of Postal Service products and services.

## Program Requirements

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The Postal Service ensures that the following requirements are addressed:

### Privacy

The Postal Service must ensure that visitors to the *USPS.com* Web site are aware of, and protected by, the Postal Service privacy policies posted on the *USPS.com* Web site, as follows:

- The Postal Service has a button on its home page and all major program landing pages (i.e., the home page for each major program) linking to the Postal Service's terms of use and privacy policy.
- The Postal Service's terms of use and privacy policy apply to customers and visitors while they are using a Postal Service Web site. The terms of use and privacy policies of third parties, which include merchants, affiliates, and public affiliation networks, apply to customers and visitors while they are using the third-party Web site.
- Third parties, which include merchants, affiliates, public interest organizations, and public affiliation networks, must not place a persistent cookie or other permanent tracking device on a Postal Service Web site.
- Third parties, which include merchants, affiliates, public interest organizations, and public affiliation networks, must not obtain a user's personal data from any Postal Service Web site.
- Third parties must agree, and must require their subcontractors to agree, not to create or derive any personally identifiable information about any Postal Service visitor while that visitor is on a Postal Service Web site, unless the customer or visitor agrees to provide the information for a specific purpose.

## Illegal Sites

The Postal Service reserves the right to object to, and to take all appropriate action against, the owner of any hyperlink to a Postal Service Web site that is false, misleading, derogatory, or otherwise illegal or objectionable.

## Exit Pages

### Exit Page Requirements

Any link on *USPS.com* that takes users out of the Postal Service-controlled computing environment shall adhere to one of the three directions set forth in the table below.

A Receiving Site* That Is...	Which Is Defined As...	Requires...
Substantially different from <i>USPS.com</i> .	a site that a person could reasonably believe possesses a substantially different look and feel from, and has a distinct URL separate and apart from, the domain of <i>USPS.com</i> .	no exit page.
Similar to <i>USPS.com</i> .	<p>a site that might create a likelihood of confusion such that a person could reasonably believe that the site is under the operation and control of <i>USPS.com</i> or is operated in compliance with Postal Service policies.</p> <p><b>Examples</b> of confusion include, but are not limited to, any of the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Displays the Postal Service logo or a deceptively similar logo.</li> <li>■ Displays URLs that are similar to Postal Service URLs.</li> <li>■ Contains pages that have a look and feel similar to <i>USPS.com</i> pages.</li> </ul>	an exit page with a reasonable means to return to <i>USPS.com</i> .
In compliance with Postal Service security and privacy requirements, whether substantially different from or similar to <i>USPS.com</i> .	a site that abides by the security requirements, privacy policy, and terms of use of <i>USPS.com</i> .	no exit page.

\*A receiving site is any Web page that is linked from *USPS.com*.

## Notification When an Exit Page Is Required

Unless otherwise approved by the Law Department, all exit pages shall contain the language shown in the following graphic.

**You are now leaving *USPS.com*.**  
**Once you leave, you will fall under the policies and procedures of**  
**the *http:// [insert top-level web address]* Web site.**  
**Thanks for visiting. Please come again soon.**

## Disclaimers

The Postal Service does not endorse affiliate, merchant, or public interest Web sites. The Postal Service disclaims liability for transactions and content on other Web sites, unless expressly stated otherwise.

## Certified or Prequalified Vendors

Some Web sites are identified as belonging to certified or prequalified vendors when the merchant or affiliate is approved through a formal Postal Service certification or prequalification process. The certification or prequalification process is established in accordance with Postal Service purchasing regulations or to meet the technical needs of a Postal Service program.

## Link Placement

All merchant links on a particular Postal Service Web page must be of similar size and placement.

# Criteria for Affiliation

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## General Criteria for Affiliation Links

The Postal Service conducts a Web-site affiliation program as both an affiliate and a merchant. The Postal Service establishes affiliations only with entities that meet the selection criteria described below, which apply to the Postal Service's role as affiliate or merchant. The Postal Service may amend the criteria to accommodate changing marketplace and program needs. The Postal Service uses additional specific criteria for affiliations, as needed, to relate to a particular category of Postal Service customer or a particular Web page.

## Merchant Criteria

When the Postal Service is an affiliate, we use the following general criteria to select which merchant links are placed on the Postal Service's Web site:

### 1. Business Relationship

The merchant must have a *logical business relationship* with the Postal Service. A merchant has a logical business relationship with the Postal Service when it:

- Provides postal-related products and services, information specifically related to postal-related products and services, or information related to a particular Postal Service Web page.

- Facilitates customer use of the Postal Service or offers a benefit to Postal Service customers that might add value to the customer's use of the Postal Service Web site.

## **2. Economic Benefit**

The affiliation must provide an economic benefit to the Postal Service, by creating Web site traffic or revenue.

## **3. Payment Performance**

For merchant links that provide direct remuneration to the Postal Service, the merchant must have a Dun and Bradstreet payment analysis (Paydex) score of at least 45. A Postal Service business unit may establish a higher score for specific Web pages or products. Government and nonprofit organizations that do not have a Dun and Bradstreet Paydex score must provide an alternative rating of payment performance that can be verified by an independent organization, if applicable.

## **4. Best Business Practices**

The merchant must publish and adhere to Internet *best business practices* for privacy and business policies and follow *due care security standards* on its Web sites. These requirements will be considered met by subscribing to and being in good standing with an independent third-party program from any of the following, or an equivalent policy or practice:

- BBBOnline® [www.bbbonline.org](http://www.bbbonline.org).
- VeraSafe [www.verasafe.com](http://www.verasafe.com).
- TRUSTe [www.truste.com](http://www.truste.com).

Government agencies that do not subscribe to any of the third-party programs listed must have security, privacy, and terms of use policies equivalent to the Postal Service's policies.

## **5. Security**

As technology evolves during the life of the agreement, the merchant must use accepted Internet industry standards for secure transactions. The merchant must also protect the privacy of the customer's personal information while the customer is on the merchant's Web site.

## **6. Brand Image**

The Postal Service's brand makes its products and services unique to consumers, employees, and other stakeholders. Accordingly, we select merchant links that do not weaken, dilute, damage or harm the Postal Service's brand or public image, by association, as determined at the sole discretion of the Postal Service.

We consider Web sites that contain any of the following content inappropriate:

- Firearms and ammunition.
- Illegal drugs.
- Politics.
- Sexually explicit language or images.
- Slanderous or libelous content.

- Bad language or proxies for bad language.
- Gambling.
- Graphic violence.
- Discriminatory content based on race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age.
- Images or content that is in any way unlawful, defamatory, or obscene.
- Unauthorized or unapproved use of the *USPS.com* Web site or the Postal Service's creative assets and intellectual property.

## 7. Debarment

Companies and individuals that are otherwise not qualified to contract with the Postal Service (i.e., have been suspended or debarred) are not eligible for an affiliation agreement.

## 8. Tracking

When providing direct remuneration to the Postal Service, the merchant must have procedures for tracking, accounting, and reporting transactions through an independent system that are comparable to industry standards used by the public affiliation networks.

## 9. Competitors

At its sole discretion, the Postal Service may place links on its Web pages or receive links from Web sites that are for companies, products, or services that are directly competitive with the Postal Service, postal products, or postal services if such competitor's link provides some additional benefit to the Postal Service.

## Affiliate Criteria

When the Postal Service is a merchant, we use the following general criteria to select an affiliate to host a Postal Service link on a non-Postal Service Web site:

### 1. Business Relationship

The affiliate must have a *logical business relationship* with the Postal Service. An affiliate has a logical business relationship with the Postal Service when it facilitates customer use of the Postal Service.

### 2. Economic Benefit

The affiliate must provide an economic benefit to the Postal Service by creating Web site traffic or revenue.

### 3. Best Business Practices

The merchant must publish and adhere to Internet *best business practices* for privacy and business policies and follow *due care security standards* on its Web sites. These requirements will be considered met by subscribing to and being in good standing with an independent third-party program from any of the following (or an equivalent policy or practice):

- BBBOnline® [www.bbbonline.org](http://www.bbbonline.org).
- VeraSafe [www.verasafe.com](http://www.verasafe.com).
- TRUSTe [www.truste.com](http://www.truste.com).

Government agencies that do not subscribe to any of the third-party programs listed must have security, privacy, and terms of use policies equivalent to the Postal Service's policies.

#### **4. Security**

As technology evolves during the life of the agreement, the affiliate must use accepted Internet industry standards for secure transactions. The affiliate must also protect the privacy of the customer's personal information while the customer is on the affiliate's Web site.

The affiliate must certify and, upon request, demonstrate that the interface between the Postal Service's Web site and the affiliate's Web site does not jeopardize, damage, or compromise the security of the Postal Service's Web site and information technology operations.

#### **5. Brand Image**

The Postal Service's brand makes its product and services unique to consumers, employees, and other constituents. Accordingly, we select affiliate links that do not weaken, dilute, damage, or harm the Postal Service's brand or public image, by association, as determined at the sole discretion of the Postal Service.

We consider Web sites that contain any of the following content inappropriate:

- Firearms and ammunition.
- Illegal drugs.
- Slanderous or libelous content.
- Illegal Gambling.
- Graphic violence.
- Discriminatory content based on race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age.
- Images or content that are in any way unlawful, defamatory, or obscene.
- Unauthorized or unapproved use of the *USPS.com* Web site or the Postal Service's creative assets and intellectual property.

#### **6. Debarment**

Companies and individuals that are otherwise not qualified to contract with the Postal Service (i.e., have been suspended or debarred) are not eligible for an affiliation agreement.

### **Public Interest Criteria**

When the Postal Service is either a host (also known as an *affiliate*) or a merchant for a link to a public interest Web site, we use the following general criteria to select which public interest links to establish:

#### **1. Organization Type**

The public interest organization must:

- Be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- Be a national organization, serving the United States, or a government agency.

- Aid in accomplishing the Postal Service's public service objectives.
- Not require funding or linking fees from the Postal Service.

## **2. Benefit**

The affiliation must provide a benefit to the Postal Service by creating Web site traffic to the *USPS.com* Web site.

## **3. Best Business Practices**

The organization must publish and adhere to Internet *best business practices* for privacy and business policies and follow *due care security standards* on its Web sites. These requirements are considered met by subscribing to and being in good standing with an independent third-party program from any of the following (or an equivalent policy or practice):

- BBBOnline® [www.bbbonline.org](http://www.bbbonline.org).
- VeraSafe [www.verasafe.com](http://www.verasafe.com).
- TRUSTe [www.truste.com](http://www.truste.com).

Government agencies and nonprofit organizations that do not subscribe to any of the third-party programs listed must have security, privacy, and terms of use policies equivalent to the Postal Service's policies.

## **4. Security**

As technology evolves during the life of the agreement, the organization must use accepted Internet industry standards for secure transactions and communications. The organization must also protect the privacy of the customer or client's personal information while the customer or client is on the organization's Web site or the information is stored.

## **5. Brand Image**

The Postal Service's brand makes its products and services unique to consumers, employees, and other stakeholders. Accordingly, we select public interest organization links that do not weaken, dilute, damage, or harm the Postal Service's brand or public image by association, as determined at the sole discretion of the Postal Service.

We consider Web sites that contain any of the following content or attributes inappropriate:

- Secular, denominational orientation.
- Issue-oriented.
- Solicitations for fund raising.
- Firearms and ammunition.
- Illegal drugs.
- Politically oriented.
- Sexually explicit language or images.
- Slanderous or libelous content.
- Bad language or proxies for bad language.
- Gambling.
- Graphic violence.



- Discriminatory conduct or content based on race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age.
- Images or content that are in any way unlawful, defamatory, or obscene.
- Unauthorized or unapproved use of the *USPS.com* Web site or the Postal Service's creative assets and intellectual property.

## **6. Debarment**

Organizations and individuals that are otherwise not qualified to contract with the Postal Service (i.e., have been suspended or debarred) are not eligible for a linking agreement.

## **7. Competitors**

At its sole discretion, the Postal Service may place links on its Web pages or receive links from Web sites that are for companies, products, or services that are directly competitive with the Postal Service, postal products, or postal services if such competitor's link provides some additional benefit to the Postal Service.

# **Public Notice of Affiliation Opportunities**

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## **Public Affiliation Networks**

- The Postal Service may participate in one or more public affiliation networks as a merchant and as an affiliate.
- The Postal Service follows the general criteria in this MI for merchants and affiliates, and specific criteria, if any, in addition to the policies of the particular network posted on the public affiliation network site.
- The Postal Service uses the public affiliation network to identify opportunities in the following ways:
  - Identifies merchant categories posted on the public affiliation networks that relate to specific Postal Service Web pages.
  - Reviews the public affiliation networks for affiliates that might be eligible to host Postal Service links on their Web sites.
  - May also identify public interest categories on the public affiliation networks.
  - Looks for opportunities to enter into affiliation relationships with merchants and affiliates that meet the general criteria in the Merchant Criteria and Affiliate Criteria sections of this MI, as appropriate, and other specific criteria, if any.

## **Non-Network Affiliations**

The Postal Service may establish affiliations outside of a public affiliation network. These may come from broader agreements or alliances with other entities that include establishing links or they may come from a Postal Service solicitation.

- The Postal Service publishes the affiliation program policy on the *USPS.com* Web site. We disseminate specific criteria by other appropriate means, including on the Postal Service Web site and in the *Commerce Business Daily*.
- Eligible merchants, affiliates, and public interest organizations must meet the general criteria in the Merchant, Affiliate, or Public Interest sections of this MI, as applicable, and any specific criteria that the Postal Service makes available.
- Formal linking agreements for any category of link to and from the *USPS.com* Web site solely shall be required in the event that remuneration, whether in-kind or financial, flows to or from the Postal Service. Such agreements shall set forth standards of payment and, when necessary to determine appropriate payment levels, provide mechanisms for tracking appropriate to the criteria for such payments.

## **Public Links to *USPS.com***

In addition to its affiliation program, the Postal Service also welcomes the owners of other Web sites to create links to the *USPS.com*. Prior authorization is only required if the owner of the Web site wants to participate in a merchant agreement for fees (see Uniform Fee Approaches section). The owner of each Web site that links to the *USPS.com* Web site must agree to, and comply with, the policies and constraints of this MI.

# **Uniform Fee Approaches**

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## **When the Postal Service Is an Affiliate**

The Postal Service accepts the published fees of merchants if the fees provide economic benefit to the Postal Service. The following exceptions may apply:

- The Postal Service is not precluded from negotiating alternate terms and conditions.
- The Postal Service may host a public interest link to another Web site without a fee if the Postal Service determines that the link benefits the Postal Service's customers.

## When the Postal Service Is a Merchant

The Postal Service uniformly calculates fees for each Postal Service product or service. We base the fee approach on the marketing goal for the particular Postal Service product or service:

- When the marketing goal is increased user traffic, the fee is a flat fee per click-through.
- Where the marketing goal is increased sales or subscriptions, the fee is a percentage of net sales or subscription revenue generated through the affiliate relationship or a flat fee per sale or subscription.
- Before establishing a uniform fee approach for a category, the Postal Service may test a variety of fee approaches for a short time.
- The Postal Service is not precluded from using other compensation schemes or combinations that fit particular business needs.
- Any differences in the fees within a category must reflect the following:
  - Differences to the Postal Service in the economic value of the link measured in net sales or user volume.
  - Differences to the affiliate in the value of these links.

## Application and Selection

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### Public Affiliation Networks

*Network members* (Web sites in the same public affiliation network as the Postal Service) may apply online to the Postal Service through the network. The network member applies using the policy and procedures of the particular network. We use this affiliation policy to decide whether to accept or decline the affiliate application.

### Non-Network Affiliates

Applicants responding to a Postal Service solicitation may apply in accordance with the directions in the solicitation. The directions for the solicitation may be an online or paper process. We select non-network affiliations by conducting a case-by-case review of applications in accordance with the terms stated in the specific solicitation.

### General Principles

The Postal Service's selection process is objective, and a panel reviews responses under the direction of the Postal Service as follows:

- The Postal Service may limit the number of affiliations in a particular category or the number of merchants on a particular Postal Service Web page, consistent with Postal Service's laws, policies, and technical and business needs.
- The Postal Service informs affiliates whose applications are denied of the reasons why the application was denied and the applicant may reapply using new information.

- The Postal Service, as a Merchant, provides each qualified applicant with an affiliate agreement containing standard terms and conditions in the event remuneration flows from the Postal Service or the Affiliate.
- The Postal Service, as an Affiliate and when receiving remuneration, may also require certain standard terms and conditions as follows:
  - The Postal Service must include in the terms and conditions the right to terminate, the fee structure, procedures for tracking and accounting, provisions to protect the privacy of users, intellectual property licenses, and security provisions.
  - The Postal Service must approve any revisions to the standard terms and conditions.

## Contact Information

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The Postal Service Web Site Affiliations Program, which includes all aspects of this policy and the selection of affiliation relationships (merchant and affiliate), is the responsibility of:

PROGRAM MANAGER  
AFFILIATIONS PROGRAMS  
USPS.com  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
475 L'ENFANT PLZ SW, Room 1830  
WASHINGTON DC 20260-0004