

# Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa

## Reporting Standards

### Email Newsletters

Version 2 2015

Issued 1 October 2015

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 These rules describe how media owners report Email newsletters. The Key principles that underpin these rules are listed below.

1.2 These Standards are effective from January 2016.

##### 1.3 Admission as a Media Member

An applicant will be accepted as a Media Member for Email Distribution Audit on condition that an Initial Audit of each Product which has been registered with the ABC is:

- (a) conducted by an ABC Auditor appointed in accordance with these Standards;
- (b) for the Audit Period defined in these Standards;
- (c) submitted to the ABC within the specified time; and thereafter
- (d) maintains continuous reporting of its email distribution data to the ABC, pursuant to these Standards.

#### 2. Reporting Periods and Submitting Email Delivery Data

2.1 Delivery data must be submitted quarterly.

2.2 Distribution Audits are conducted 6 monthly.

2.3 The delivery data must be submitted in the format determined by the ABC within 20 working days of the end of the reporting period.

##### 2.4 Submitting Delivery Data for Email

For each Reporting Period for a Product, a Media Member must submit data to be audited identifying:

- (a) the name of the Registered Product or Email;
- (b) the name and address of the Media member;
- (c) the number of issues audited;
- (d) the number of issues published in a 12 months (calendar year);
- (f) the Audit Period covered by this audit;
- (g) the Average Net Delivery per issue;

##### 2.5 Access to Data and Systems

- (a) The ABC reserves the right to visit any offices related to the Email Distribution product and the Media Member, at any time, and have access to related support staff at those offices to view and capture any data the ABC needs in real time to conduct its audit.
- (b) Refusal of such access may result in the refusal or withdrawal of any/all certification

##### 2.6 Retention of Data

Data supporting the claim must be kept the Media Member for a period of 6 months after submission of the claim. The Auditor will examine the email addresses for duplication, authenticity and accuracy and produce a final audit certificate verifying Average Net Delivery for the Audit Period.

### **3. Proving the Average Net Delivery**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- (a) The Average Net Delivery of a product is the average number of emails of the Product delivered for each issue in the Audit Period. It does not include those emails defined as 'Excluded Distribution' or any other copies which are disallowed under the Standards.
- (b) The Average Net Delivery and the Reporting Period must always be quoted when sourcing or referring to any ABC Email Audit data.

#### **3.2 Audit Requirements and Record Maintenance**

Following are the audit and record maintenance requirements for email distribution audits. The ABC Auditor will discuss the audit process and clarify audit rules and definitions where necessary.

- (a) The publisher agrees to provide the following data:
  - (i) Evidence of the existence of the Email newsletter.
  - (ii) Evidence of email server logs recording distribution of the email item.
  - (iii) Evidence of returned/invalid addresses.
  - (iv) Evidence of the number of paid email newsletter copies distributed, including the price charged, invoices and subsequent receipt and banking of proceeds.
  - (v) Evidence of the number of free 'Opt-In' email copies distributed, either by email request or hard copy request from another source.
  - (vi) Access to the subscriber database.

3.3 In establishing the Email Delivery volume per issue, an issue that goes off sale or is out of date after a new issue is distributed will not be included.

3.4 The Email Distribution publication will notify the ABC in advance of any modifications to the hardware/software platforms used.

#### **3.7 Excluded Distribution**

The following are excluded from the calculation of Average Net Delivery of an email product:

- (a) Back Issue delivery – Delivery to a new recipient of an issue of an item that goes off sale or is out of date after a new issue is distributed is excluded from the average net delivery.
- (b) Opt-Out – Where a previous recipient (unique SMTP address) has been removed from the distribution list as a result of a positive action by the address user. This action includes, but is not limited to, the address user-clicking on the subscription link or sending an email request.
- (c) Returned Email Addresses – The total number of emails in the gross distribution that generated as NDN (non-delivery notice) are to be excluded from the average net distribution
- (d) Server Interruptions – If there has been a server interruption the email publisher cannot claim higher than 25% of the estimated delivery for that issue.
- (e) Unsolicited Distribution – Distribution of any email publication or product to any email (SMTP) address that has not requested to receive (unsolicited recipients) must be excluded from the average net delivery. Recipients/subscribers distribution must be an opt-in basis.

### **4. The Audit Process**

4.1 The ABC audit process has been developed to facilitate the audit of email distribution in the most thorough, transparent and efficient manner possible upholding the integrity and credibility associated with the ABC.

4.2 The following steps must be followed in order for the ABC to audit an email distribution product:

- (a) The Media Member registers its Product with the ABC.
- (b) The Media Member submits data as defined in this Standard.
- (c) The member submits the email server logs required to prove the successful delivery of emails for the audit period.
- (d) The logs should provide a breakdown of individual email addresses included for each email issue and the related results of the send per individual email address.
- (e) The Auditor will examine the email addresses for duplication, authenticity and accuracy and produce a final audit certificate verifying Average Net Delivery for the Audit Period.