AAPOR Policies and Procedures for Transparency Certification
(revised July 2026)

A. Initial Qualification Procedures

Survey organizations, including survey subunits of larger organizations (henceforth, organizations), that produce surveys and/or commission, sponsor or report them publicly, are eligible to join AAPOR's Transparency Initiative (TI). The process to do so is as follows:

1. Applicants will complete and submit the Transparency Initiative Certification Agreement, signed by an individual or individuals empowered to commit the organization to the Initiative. The form can be downloaded from AAPOR's TI web page. This agreement is also included as Appendix A to this document. Any organization that is the subject of a current or pending AAPOR complaint may not apply until after that complaint has been resolved.

2. As part of this certification process, applicants will certify that all employees with job responsibilities that include the methodology content of survey reports, press releases and any other forms of survey data disclosure, have been properly trained in TI principles and procedures for compliance. To support organizations in this effort, AAPOR makes available a set of TI online educational modules and other materials.

3. The applicant will appoint a representative or representatives who will coordinate compliance for the organization and be the main point of communication with AAPOR. These representatives will work with the primary reviewer to ensure that the procedures are in place for certification and that the applicant organization is in compliance with the TI's basic disclosure requirements.

4. The applicant organization will provide examples of TI compliant documentation based on two original surveys that will serve as models for future reporting. Where the documentation is deemed to be inadequately transparent, the reviewer will work with the applicant(s) to assist them in making modifications

that will bring it into compliance for future reporting. Note that the TI is only concerned with the reporting of original survey data that is publicly released and not with the reporting of historical survey data that was previously collected and which is being reported for comparative purposes only.

5. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. The review of applications will be the responsibility of the Transparency Initiative Coordinating Committee (TICC), which will appoint two reviewers to study the details of each application and make a recommendation to the TICC, which will then consider confirmation. Where there is disagreement among reviewers, the full TICC will examine the application. TICC reviewers will not include individuals employed by organizations that would be considered direct competitors or to otherwise have a conflict of interest, such as formal or informal affiliation with or recent employment by the applicant organization. If the applicant organization feels that there is a conflict of interest, then they can send a written request to the TICC explaining the conflict and asking that a different reviewer be assigned.

6. Reviews of applications will typically be completed within four weeks of Submission.

7. Once an applicant is certified, the TI coordinating committee will:
    a. Inform the applicant in writing using a letter signed by the AAPOR President.
    b. Provide the applicant organization with the TI logo that the organization may display on its website and/or printed documents.
    c. AAPOR will add the organization's name, its TI representative and website address to the TI section of the AAPOR site.

To maintain certification, the certifying organization will be asked to reconfirm its commitment to the TI on an annual basis by indicating a willingness to continue abiding by the TI's rules and procedures. This will consist of re-signing the Certification Agreement (see Appendix A) every year. In addition, the participating organization will agree to be evaluated by TICC every two years through an inspection of the transparency of a sample of recent studies conducted by the organization. The evaluation will determine whether the organization is in compliance with TI Requirements.

B. Monitoring and Enforcement Methods

1. The TICC will oversee the ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the TI.

2. Compliance will consist of several components. The certifying organization will be asked to reconfirm commitment to the TI, on an annual basis, by indicating a willingness to continue abiding by the TI's rules and procedures. This will consist of re-signing the Certification Agreement (see Appendix A) every year. In

addition, the participating organization will agree to cooperate in an evaluation, by TICC, of the transparency of a sample of recent studies, conducted at least once every two years, to check for TI compliance.

3. TI certified organizations will receive an annual reminder notice that it is time to renew their certification. This notice will be sent to the organization's representative to the TI. If a participating organization chooses not to renew, they will be instructed to cease use of the logo, and will be deleted from the AAPOR Transparency Initiative's website.

4. The periodic evaluation of TI organizations will be assigned to a monitor by the MC. The monitor will be expected to report any potential conflicts of interest in advance of conducting an assignment. If an applicant organization feels that there is a conflict of interest then they may submit a written request to have a different monitor assigned. The MC will make a final decision on whether any conflicts of interest interfere with the ability of the monitor to carry out an unbiased evaluation.

5. Evaluations will consist of reviewing the applicant's website and two recent surveys (i.e., surveys conducted since last certification or recertification), selected by the monitor to be representative of studies about which the organization releases information. For each survey selected, if relevant, the reviewer will search for and review a publicly available disclosure statement to determine if the organization is in compliance. A number of survey organizations do not have survey releases posted at a centralized place on their website, and some organizations do not have any survey releases posted at all. For these organizations, the monitor will contact the designated TI compliance representative for the organization and ask for the publicly available documentation from two recent surveys to determine if the organization is in compliance. The representative must provide the documentation for both surveys within 10 business days of the request. The monitor will provide a written summary of the results of the assessment to the MC. A recommendation will then be forwarded to the TICC. If deficiencies in disclosure exist, the monitor will contact the organization with the results of the assessment, provide recommendations for remediation, and work with the organization to make the necessary corrections to again be in compliance with the Transparency Initiative. Certified organizations that are found to be non-compliant will be given 30 days to correct the deficiencies identified during the evaluation. [An extension of 30 days can be granted, at the discretion of the TICC, if such a request is deemed reasonable.] If deficiencies are not resolved within the allotted time, an organization will be placed on suspension and asked to remove the TI logo from its website until all deficiencies are corrected and the suspension is lifted. The TICC may also decide to conduct a more extensive review of the organization's public releases (if relevant) over the past 12 months to determine whether the

case at hand is an exception rather than part of a broader pattern of failures to Disclose.

6. Public complaints about non-compliance will go through the TICC, rather than the AAPOR Standards Committee. Complaints will be investigated and addressed within 30 days. If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the organization will be evaluated as described above. Organizations will be allowed to appeal any decision to the Standards Committee.

7. Organizations suspended from the TI for any reason will be sent a letter notifying them that they are being removed from TI certification, and the organization will be removed from AAPOR's list of TI-certified organizations until such time as the suspension is lifted. AAPOR will also reserve the right to issue a press release stating that an organization has been removed from TI certification if the organization continues to advertise their certification after removal. The organization will not be allowed to re-apply for TI certification for 12 months.

8. Participation in the TI does not provide protection from an AAPOR Standards complaint should one be filed.

Appendix A: AAPOR Transparency Certification Agreement

Overview:

An organization, or subunit of a larger organization, that produces public opinion and survey research and/or commissions/sponsors them and releases them publicly or reports them privately to clients, is transparent when it discloses essential information about its methodology in any such public release of private report to clients.

The AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices (the "Code") applies to individuals engaged in public opinion and survey research. AAPOR's Transparency Initiative (the "TI") extends the standards of disclosure of the Code (the "Disclosure Standards"), which are subject to amendment from time-to-time, to survey organizations. For public release or private reporting to clients of original public opinion or survey results, conformance with the Disclosure Standards entails making available in such release or report all of the methodological elements identified in the minimum disclosure requirements of the Disclosure Standards.

Organizations that certify to the TI are expected to follow practices that make all relevant items of information from the Code available to clients and to attempt to educate clients regarding the importance of transparency whenever possible (including by referring them to AAPOR's TI information available on its web page). Organizations that certify to the TI are expected to require organizations that collect data on their behalf to follow practices that make all relevant items of information available. Further they are expected to strongly encourage clients to also make all relevant items of information available if and when they report results based on

research conducted by the TI certified organization.

The items below to which the organization is certifying are the minimum reporting standards for organizations wishing to be in compliance with the Transparency Initiative. The organization is encouraged to adhere to the spirit of the Transparency Initiative by also disclosing any additional information that the organization deems relevant to the conduct and interpretation of data from each study it conducts.

Certification to the Transparency Initiative

We, the undersigned, hereby certify our agreement to the following disclosure principles, policies and procedures with regard to the public release or to the private reporting to clients of original public opinion and survey results that we release or report after our certification herein to the TI (such research subject to public release or private reporting to clients, the "TI Research"):

A. Items for Immediate Disclosure. We shall provide the following disclosures with regard to TI Research involving surveys by including such disclosures in the specific TI Research or by making them otherwise publicly available, preferably on our web site, immediately upon release of the TI Research:

1. **Data Collection Strategy.** Describe the data collection strategies employed (e.g. surveys, focus groups, content analyses, AI-assisted interviewing).

2. **Who Sponsored the Research and Who Conducted It.** Name the sponsor of the research and the party(ies) who conducted it. If the original source of funding is different from the sponsor, this source will also be disclosed.

3. **Measurement Tools/Instrument.** Measurement tools include questionnaires with survey questions and response options, show cards, vignettes, or scripts used to guide discussions or interviews. The exact wording and presentation of any measurement tool from which results are reported as well as any preceding contextual information that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results and instructions to respondents or interviewers should be included. Also included are scripts used to guide discussions and semi-structured interviews, including interviews conducted using AI. Any instructions to researchers, interviewers, moderators, chatbots, and participants in the research must also be disclosed. Content analyses and ethnographic research will provide the scheme or guide used to categorize the data; researchers will also disclose if no formal scheme was used.

4. **Population Under Study.** Survey and public opinion research can be conducted with many different populations including, but not limited to, the general public, voters, people working in particular sectors, blog postings, news broadcasts, an elected official's social media feed. Researchers will be specific about the decision rules used to define the

population when describing the study population, including location, age, other social or demographic characteristics (e.g., persons who access the internet), time (e.g., immigrants entering the US between 2015 and 2019). Content analyses will also include the unit of analysis (e.g., news article, social media post), the source of the data (e.g., Twitter, Lexis-Nexis), and whether artificial intelligence was used to assist with the selection, coding, and/or analysis of content.

5. **Method Used to Generate and Recruit the Sample.** The description of the methods of sampling includes the sample design and methods used to contact or recruit research participants or collect units of analysis, including the use of AI-generated responses. Disclose all the following, include noting if information is missing because the data collection organization did not provide the information.
    a. Explicitly state whether the sample comes from a frame selected using a probability-based methodology (meaning selecting potential participants with a known non-zero probability from a known frame), if the sample was selected using non-probability methods (potential participants from opt-in, volunteer, or other sources), if the sample was AI-generated, or if the sample was combined from multiple of these type of frames. If the sample combined AI-generated data and human participants, the description must clearly identify to the reader that not all participants were human.
    b. Sample specification should include a description of the sampling frame(s), list(s), or method(s). For example, list samples, address-based samples, telephone samples, social media, river sampling, snowball sampling, respondent-driven sampling, online panels and consolidators. A description of the lists, websites, social media, or other sources for the non-probability sample should be provided It is permissible to provide a link to the description provided by a vendor or third-party sourcing.If a frame, list, or panel is used, the description should include the name of the supplier of the sample or list and nature of the list (e.g., ABS, registered voters in the state of Texas in 2018, pre-recruited panel or pool).
    c. Probability based sample specification should include additional information in the description of the sampling frame(s), list(s), or method(s). If a frame, list, or panel is used, the description should include the coverage of the population, including describing any segment of the target population that is not covered by the design.
    d. For surveys, focus groups, or other forms of interviews, provide a clear indication of the method(s) by which participants were contacted, selected, recruited, intercepted, or otherwise contacted or encountered, along with any eligibility requirements and/or oversampling.
    e. Describe any use of quotas.
    f. Include the geographic location of data collection activities for any in-person research.
    g. For content analysis, detail the criteria or decision rules used to include or exclude elements of content and any approaches used to sample content. If a census of the target population of content was used, that will be explicitly stated.

h. For AI-generated responses (e.g., silicon responses, digital twins, synthetic responses), describe how the responses were generated.
i. Explicitly state whether compensation/incentives were or were not provided to participants. Provide details of any strategies used to help gain cooperation (e.g., advance contact, letters and scripts, compensation or incentives, refusal conversion contacts) whether for participation in a survey, group, panel, or for participation in a particular research project. Describe any compensation/incentives provided to research subjects and the method of delivery (debit card, gift card, cash).

6. **Method(s) and Mode(s) of Data Collection.** Include a description of all mode(s) used to contact participants or collect data or information (e.g., CATI, CAPI, ACASI, IVR, mail, Web for survey; paper and pencil, audio or video recording for qualitative research, chatbot, AI voice assistant, etc.) and the language(s) offered or included. For qualitative research such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, also include length of interviews or the focus group session.

7. **Dates of Data Collection.** Disclose the dates of data collection (e.g., data collection from January 15 through March 10 of 2019). If this is a content analysis or analysis conducted using AI, include the dates of the content analyzed (e.g., social media posts between January 1 and 10, 2019).

8. **Numbers of Completed Interviews (by sampling frame if more than one frame was used) and (if applicable) Discussion of the Precision of the Results.**
    a. Provide the number of human responses from each frame.
    b. For probability sample surveys, report estimates of sampling error (often described as “the margin of error”) and discuss whether the reported sampling error or statistical analyses have been adjusted for the design effect due to weighting, clustering, or other factors.
    c. Reports of non-probability sample surveys will only provide measures of precision if they are defined and accompanied by a detailed description of how the underlying model was specified, its assumptions validated, and the measure(s) calculated. Otherwise, include a statement that the sample was selected with a non-probability method and measures of precision are not provided and what the resulting impact may be on inference.
    d. If content was analyzed using human coders, report the number of coders, whether inter-coder reliability estimates were calculated for any variables, and the resulting estimates.

9. **How the Data Were Weighted.** Describe how the weights were calculated, including a description of any steps to adjust weights for probability of selection into the sample; for eligibility; for nonresponse; and for post-stratification, raking, and/or calibration to population totals. For all steps, describe the variables used and the sources of the weighting parameters. If the data were not weighted, state that explicitly.

a. If multiple data sources or frames were used to recruit the sample, describe how the weighting procedures accounted for combining data from multiple sources and what weighting methods were applied.

10. **How the Data Were Processed and Procedures to Ensure Data Quality.** Describe validity checks, where applicable, including but not limited to whether the researcher added attention checks, logic checks, or excluded respondents who straight-lined or completed the survey under a certain time constraint, any screening of content for evidence that it originated from bots or fabricated profiles, re-contacts to confirm that the interview occurred or to verify respondent's identity or both, and measures to prevent respondents from completing the survey more than once. Any data imputation or other data exclusions or replacement will also be discussed. Researchers will provide information about whether any coding was done by human coders, software, or AI (or a combination thereof); if automated coding was done, name the software or AI platform and specify the parameters or decision rules that were used. Explicitly state if no steps were taken for quality control or to ensure data quality.

11. **A General Statement Acknowledging Limitations of the Design and Data Collection.** All research has limitations and researchers will include a general statement acknowledging the unmeasured error associated with all forms of public opinion research, including the limitations of any AI tools used.

12. **Disclosure of the Use of Artificial Intelligence.** Researchers will disclose the use of AI for data collection or data processing.

    The following must be included in any reporting or methodological summaries if AI was used as part of data collection or processing.

    a. Task performed by AI: What AI was used for (e.g. generating responses, interviewing/assisting in interviewing, cleaning data, producing estimates, coding/labeling data). Disclose if this information is unknown or not available.
    b. Human oversight or validation: At what step(s) the AI output or process was validated by researchers (for example: how the oversight or validation was conducted, or a link to existing validation or platform provider's documentation). Disclose if this information is unknown or not available.

B. Additional Items for Disclosure. After results are reported, we will make the following items available within 30 days of any request for such materials:

1. Procedures for managing the membership, participation, and attrition of the panel, if a pool, panel, or access panel was used as specified below. This should be disclosed for both probability and non-probability surveys relying on recruited panels of participants. If the information is unknown, it must be explicitly stated.

a. Details about panel recruitment (e.g., sample frame, household sample coverage, AAPOR panel recruitment response rate, recruitment efforts, total panel size)
b. Details about panel maintenance (e.g., active panel size, mean invitations a month, recruitment frequency, panel tenure)
c. Other information available about the experience of participation in the panel (e.g., panel book/methodology report available on website)

2. Methods of interviewer or coder training and details of supervision and monitoring of interviewers or human coders. If machine coding was conducted, include description of the machine learning involved in the coding.

3. Details about screening procedures, including any screening for other surveys or data collection that would have made sample or selected members ineligible for the current data collection (e.g., survey, focus group, interview) will be disclosed (e.g., in the case of online surveys if a router was used).

4. Any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards. In the case of surveys conducted via self-administered computer-assisted interviewing, providing the relevant screen shot(s) is strongly encouraged, though not required.

5. Summaries of the disposition of study-specific sample records so that response rates for probability samples and participation rates for non-probability samples can be computed. If response or cooperation rates are reported, they will be computed according to AAPOR Standard Definitions. If dispositions cannot be provided, explain the reason(s) why they cannot be disclosed, and this will be mentioned as a limitation of the study.

6. The unweighted sample size(s) on which one or more reported subgroup estimates are based.

7. Specifications adequate for replication of indices or statistical modeling included in research reports.

C. Access to Datasets. Reflecting the fundamental goals of transparency and replicability, AAPOR members share the expectation that access to datasets and related documentation will be provided to allow for independent review and verification of research claims upon request. In order to protect the privacy of individual respondents, such datasets will be de-identified to remove variables that can reasonably be expected to identify a respondent. Datasets may be held without release for a period of up to one year after findings are publicly released to allow full opportunity for primary analysis. Those who commission publicly disseminated research have an obligation to disclose the rationale for why eventual public release or access to the datasets is not possible, if that is the case.

D. With regard to TI Research, If we did not collect the research data ourselves, we will obtain the disclosure information required herein from our fieldwork subcontractor so that we can make the disclosure required herein in a timely manner and if we act as a fieldwork subcontractor, we will provide the disclosure information required herein to the TI Research's primary contractor or sponsor so that such person can make the disclosure required herein in a timely manner.

E. Reflecting the fundamental goals of transparency and replicability, we share the expectation that access to datasets and related documentation will be provided to allow for independent review and verification of research claims upon request. Our datasets may be held without release for a period of up to one year after findings are publicly released to allow full opportunity for primary analysis. In order to protect the privacy of individual respondents, such datasets will be de-identified to remove variables that can reasonably be expected to identify a respondent. We acknowledge that those who commission publicly disseminated research have an obligation to disclose the rationale for why eventual public release or access to the datasets is not possible, if that is the case.

F. We have internal procedures and process to: (1) educate our staff about the TI requirements, (2) ensure that the required TI disclosure elements are made available on a routine basis for all future survey, qualitative, and content analysis research; and (3) insuring that our organization's compliance within the TI requirements is internally monitored on a regular basis. Further, we will urge our clients to provide the required TI disclosure elements and make them available on a routine basis for any survey, qualitative, and content analysis research conducted by the TI member that the client chooses to report directly.

G. All of our employees with job responsibilities that include the methodology content of TI Research, press releases and any other forms of research data disclosure, have been properly trained in TI principles and procedures for compliance.

H. We shall fully cooperate with (1) periodic evaluations of our TI compliance that may be conducted by AAPOR, and (2) any formal investigations of complaints that we are not in compliance with the TI requirements to which we are certifying above.

I. We shall adhere to the Code to the extent that amendments to the Code impose new Disclosure or other obligations with regard to research organizations for new TI Research.

J. We hereby agree to AAPOR's Terms and Conditions for TI Certification.

I hereby certify that I am authorized to make the foregoing certification on behalf of my Organization.

Organization Name:

Name and Title:

Signature:

Date: