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Values

Market Research Code of Conduct
World Research Alliance

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GENERAL

The principles of the code of conduct outlined in this document are largely in line with those adopted by the Market Research Society of Great Britain and ESOMAR. However, there are specific guidelines regarding quality control measures WRA affiliates need to adopt in order to safeguard due diligence.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of the code of conduct is to support WRA affiliates engaged in market, social or opinion research in maintaining professional standards.
- 1.2. At the same time, the code intends to reassure the general public and other interested parties that the manner of conducting the research is professional and ethical.

2. Relevance

- 2.1. All WRA affiliates must comply with this code for surveys clients have commissioned through World Research Alliance regardless of the following.
 - 2.1.1. Whether they engage in consumer, business-to-business, social, opinion, international or any other type of research;
 - 2.1.2. The sector or methodology: e.g. quantitative, qualitative, mystery shopping.
- 2.2. WRA affiliates need to ensure that all their employees and other individuals or companies they engage for a survey comply with this code.

3. Principles

WRA affiliates have the following responsibilities.

- 3.1. Ensure that participation of respondents in surveys is voluntary through informed consent.
- 3.2. Shall be straightforward and honest in relationships with individuals involved in surveys.
- 3.3. Shall be transparent with respondents as to the subject and purpose of data collection.
- 3.4. Respect the confidentiality of information collected.
- 3.5. Respect the rights and well-being of all individuals involved in surveys.
- 3.6. Ensure that respondents receive no harm or any adverse effects as the result of participating in surveys.
- 3.7. Balance the needs of individuals, clients and their professional activities.

- 3.8. Exercise independent professional judgement in the design, executing and reporting of surveys.
- 3.9. Ensure staff with appropriate training, qualifications and experience conduct the surveys.
- 3.10. Protect the reputation and integrity of the research profession.

The Code of Conduct does not take precedence over national law. Affiliates and their company partners responsible for international research shall take its provisions as a minimum requirement and fulfil any other responsibilities set down in law or by nationally agreed standards.

4. Relations

- 4.1. Research must conform to the national and international legislation relevant to a given project, including in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 in the United Kingdom or comparable legislation in other countries.
- 4.2. Affiliates must strictly preserve anonymity of respondents. If the respondent on request from the researcher has given permission to pass data in a form that may personally identify the respondent, then the researcher must inform the respondent of the identity of the recipient and the purpose of use.
- 4.3. Affiliates must ensure recipients of information will not use it for any non-research purpose and that the recipient of the information agrees to conform to this code.
- 4.4. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest with clients or employers and must make prior voluntary and full disclosure to all parties concerned of all matters that may give rise to such conflict.
- 4.5. Affiliates must act honestly in dealings with respondents, clients (actual or potential), employers, employees, sub-contractors and the general public.
- 4.6. Affiliates must not speak or imply that they represent World Research Alliance unless they have the written authority to do so.
- 4.7. Affiliates must not make false claims about their skills and experience or those of their organisation.
- 4.8. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that others do not breach or cause a breach of this code.
- 4.9. Affiliates must not act in a way that might bring discredit on the profession, WRA or its other affiliates.
- 4.10. Affiliates must not disparage or unjustifiably criticise other research practitioners.
- 4.11. Affiliates must inform the client if the work to be carried out for that client is to be combined or syndicated in the same project with work for other clients; but must not disclose the identity of such other clients.

- 4.12. In case affiliates subcontract any part of the work for a client, they must inform that client in advance of the type of support they intend to contract out and the reasons for doing so. Revealing the identity of contracted resources is at the discretion of the affiliates and serves transparency, but there is no obligation to do so.
- 4.13. The client does not have the right, without prior agreement between the parties involved, to exclusive use of the researcher's services or those of the organisation, whether in whole or in part. In carrying out work for different clients, however, the researcher must endeavour to avoid possible clashes of interest between the services provided to those clients.
- 4.14. The researcher must not disclose the identity of the client (provided there is no legal obligation to do so) for a survey, or any confidential information about the latter's business, to any third party without the client's permission.
- 4.15. Researchers must ensure that clients are aware of the existence of this code of conduct and of the need to comply with its requirements.

PROPERTY OF DOCUMENTATION

5. The Client

- 5.1. The following records remain the property of the client and researchers must not disclose any of its contents to a third party without the client's permission.
 - 5.1.1. Marketing research briefs, specifications and other information the client provided.
 - 5.1.2. The research data and findings from a marketing research project, except in the case of syndicated or multi-client projects or services where the same data are available to more than one client.

6. The Research Provider

- 6.1. Unless specifically agreed to the contrary, the following records remain the property of the researcher.
 - 6.1.1. The client has no right to know the names or addresses of respondents unless the latter's explicit permission for this has first been obtained by the researcher.
 - 6.1.2. Marketing research proposals and cost quotations, unless the client has paid for these. The client must not disclose them to any third party, other than to a consultant working for the client on that project; with the exception of any consultant working also for a competitor of the research provider. In particular, the client must not use the proposals or cost quotations to influence those from other research providers.

- 6.1.3. The contents of a report in the case of syndicated and/or multi-client projects or services where the same data are available to more than one client and where it is clear that the resulting reports are available for general purchase or subscription. The client may not disclose the findings of such research to any third party - other than to his own consultants and advisors for use in connection with his business - without the permission of the research provider.
- 6.1.4. All other research records the research provider prepared, with the exception of non-syndicated reports and work – for example research design and questionnaire development – which the client paid for.

RESEARCH DESIGN

7. Methodology Development and Preparation

- 7.1. Affiliates must not knowingly take advantage, without permission, of the unpublished work of another research practitioner that is the property of that other research practitioner.
- 7.2. Affiliates must honour all written or oral assurances that must be factually correct.
- 7.3. Affiliates must always strive to design research which is cost-efficient and of adequate quality, and then to carry this out to the specifications as agreed with the client.
- 7.4. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that a signed contract and/or internal commissioning agreement govern the rights and responsibilities of themselves and client.

8. Client Databases, Lists and Personal Contact Details

- 8.1. When using a list of named individuals - e.g. the client's database - the respondent has the right to request and know the source of this list. This overrides the right to client anonymity.

9. Respondents' Rights to Anonymity

- 9.1. Affiliates must preserve the anonymity of respondents unless they have given their informed consent to pass details that reveal their details or comments that could reveal their identity.
- 9.2. If respondents have given consent to pass their data in a form which can personally identify them, affiliates must ensure the following.

- 9.2.1. Demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the use of the data is only for the purpose it was collected for in the first place.
- 9.2.2. Fully inform respondents as to what information the affiliate plans to reveal, to whom and for what purpose.
- 9.3. If respondents request conveying individual complaints or unresolved issues to client (for example in customer satisfaction research), affiliates must comply with that request. The use of these comments/issues must not link back to any other data or for any other purpose without the explicit consent of the respondent.

10. Re-interviewing Respondents

- 10.1. Follow-up interviews with respondents can only take place when respondents have agreed to this at the initial interview. The exception is when the purpose of the re-contact serves quality control.
- 10.2. Any re-contact must match the assurances given to respondents at the time when they agreed to this: e.g. when re-contact is to occur, the purpose and by whom.
- 10.3. Affiliates must not pass details of respondents to another third party for research or any other purpose without the prior consent of the respondents. The exception to this is if the client is the data controller of the respondent data.

11. Design of Data Collection Process

- 11.1. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure all of the following.
 - 11.1.1. The data collection process is fit for purpose and clients have full knowledge of the details.
 - 11.1.2. The design and content of the data collection process or instrument are appropriate for the audience under study.
 - 11.1.3. Respondents are able to provide information in a way that reflects the view they want to express, including “Don’t know/Prefer not to say” where appropriate;
 - 11.1.4. There is no leading of respondents towards a particular point of view.
 - 11.1.5. The data collection allows for unambiguous interpretation of responses.
 - 11.1.6. All personal data collected are relevant and not excessive.

12. Communication with Respondents

- 12.1. If there is to be any recording, monitoring or observation during an interview, respondents must know about this, both at recruitment and at the beginning of the interview. This does not include monitoring – recorded or not - telephone interviews for the purpose of quality control where interviewers have been informed that such monitoring takes place.
- 12.2. Affiliates must not knowingly make use of illegally collected personal data.

13. Project Timings

- 13.1. Affiliates must systematically update the client regarding progress of fieldwork, analysis and reporting at intervals agreed from the outset.
- 13.2. Affiliates must alert the client as early as possible of unforeseen delays in conducting a survey with adequate explanations as to the cause of such delays.
- 13.3. Affiliates are not liable for delays or other failure to perform their obligations occasioned by factors outside their control, including, by way of example only, postal or other communication delays, industrial disputes, fire or accident, governmental act, riots, armed conflict, war, terrorism (including threatened acts of terrorism), adverse weather conditions (e.g. hurricanes or typhoons) or natural catastrophe, provided the affiliate uses its best endeavours to mitigate the effects of such factors outside its control.

DATA COLLECTION

14. Fieldwork

- 14.1. Interviewers or recruiters must not mislead respondents when seeking their cooperation to participate.
- 14.2. Researchers must respect the right of respondents to withdraw from a project at any stage.
- 14.3. Affiliates must ensure that respondents are able to check without difficulty the identity and sincerity of any individual and/or their employer conducting a project (including any sub-contractors).
- 14.4. Calls for face-to-face in-home interviews and calls to household landline telephone numbers or mobile telephone numbers (including text messages) must not be before 09:00 hrs. on Monday to Saturday, before 10:00 hrs. on Sunday or after 21:00 hrs. any day, unless by appointment¹.

¹ The only exception to this is where local rules and customs differ from Western practice.

- 14.5. Affiliates must ensure that they clearly communicate to respondents all of the following.
 - 14.5.1. The name of the interviewer. If the interview is face to face, the interviewer must show an identity card/badge.
 - 14.5.2. An assurance that the interview will be in accordance with the WRA code of conduct.
 - 14.5.3. The general subject of the interview.
 - 14.5.4. The purpose of the interview.
 - 14.5.5. If asked, the likely length of the interview.
 - 14.5.6. Any costs the respondent may incur.
- 14.6. Researchers must not unduly pressurise respondents - including employees in employee research - to participate.
- 14.7. If respondents request deletion of any responses, the affiliate must do so when this is reasonable and practicable.
- 14.8. Recruiters/interviewers must not reveal to any other respondents the detailed answers from any respondent or the identity of any other respondent interviewed.

15. Incentives

- 15.1. Affiliates must clearly inform the respondent who will administer an incentive.
- 15.2. Affiliates cannot use as incentives in a research project, goods or services from the client, or vouchers to purchase goods or services from the client.

16. Children

- 16.1. Before interviewing a child under the age of 16, researchers must obtain the consent of a parent or responsible adult (taking responsibility for looking after that child).
- 16.2. When seeking consent of a parent or responsible adult the researchers must give sufficient information about the nature of the project to enable them to provide informed consent.
- 16.3. Affiliates must record the name (and relationship with the child if not obvious) of the parent or responsible adult giving consent.
- 16.4. For self-completion postal/paper data collection, affiliates must ensure the following.
 - 16.4.1. When known (or ought reasonably to be known) that all or a majority of respondents are likely to be under 16, researchers address the questionnaire to the parent or responsible adult.

- 16.4.2. When known (or ought reasonably to be known) that all or a majority of respondents are likely to be under 16, that all questionnaires carry a note or notice explaining that the survey requires consent for all children to participate.
- 16.5. For projects administered using an electronic communications network or service, where known (or ought reasonably to be known) that some respondents are likely to be under the age of 16, researchers must ensure they ask respondents to give their age before requesting any other personal information. Further, if the age is under 16, the researchers must not ask for further personal information from the child until they have obtained and verified appropriate consent from a parent or responsible adult.
- 16.6. In all cases, affiliates must ensure that a child has an opportunity to decline to take part, even when a parent or a responsible adult has given consent on their behalf. This remains the case if the project takes place in school.
- 16.7. Researchers must not collect from children personal information relating to other individuals except when the purpose serves to seek consent from a parent or a responsible adult.

17. Qualitative Exercises

- 17.1. At the time of recruitment - or before the exercise takes place if details change after recruitment - affiliates must inform respondents of the following.
- 17.1.1. The location of the exercise and if it is to take place in a viewing facility.
 - 17.1.2. Whether observers are likely to be present.
 - 17.1.3. When and how the exercise is to be recorded.
 - 17.1.4. The likely length of the exercise including the start and finish time.
 - 17.1.5. The affiliate, moderator and/or agency that will conduct the exercise.
- 17.2. Without the explicit permission of the respondents, affiliates must not pass or allow access by clients or other third parties to completed recruitment questionnaires, incentive and attendance lists, transmissions or recordings or any other information or outputs that identify respondents. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that use of the information or outputs is only for the purpose agreed at the time of data collection.
- 17.3. If affiliates have agreed with clients that observers are to be present, they must inform all observers fully about their legal and ethical responsibilities.
- 17.4. Affiliates must make clear to respondents the capacity in which observers are present; clients must be presented as such, even if they are also researchers and/or affiliates of WRA.

- 17.5. There are some situations wherein observers could adversely affect respondents' interests and/or well-being and, in such instances, affiliates must ensure that respondents know at an appropriate stage the identity of any observer who might be present during the exercise.
- 17.6. Affiliates must ensure that, in instances where observers may know respondents (as may occur in business-to-business research), respondents know before the start that observation of their interview may occur, with a caution that the observer may include clients who already know them.
- 17.7. The issue of anonymity and recognition is a particular problem in business and employee research. With a risk of identification of respondents, affiliates must reveal the names and designations of observers before the group/interview begins and respondents must have the chance to withdraw.
- 17.8. Affiliates must inform respondents, on attendance at a venue, about the nature of any observation, monitoring or recording and respondents must have the option to withdraw from the exercise.
- 17.9. Affiliates must ensure that when passing material – including the report itself - to clients that it does not reveal any information about the identity of respondents; e.g. transcripts containing verbatim comments and projective material, unless with the consent of respondents.

18. Mystery Shopping Projects

- 18.1. For mystery shopping of a client's own organisation, affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure the following.
 - 18.1.1. The employer has advised the employees that mystery shoppers may check their service delivery.
 - 18.1.2. The employer has made clear to staff the objectives and intended uses of the results, including the level of reporting; if at branch/store or individual level.
 - 18.1.3. The employer has made clear to staff if the use of the mystery shopping is in relation to any employment terms and conditions.
- 18.2. Since it is not possible to advise competitors' employees that they may be mystery shopped, affiliates must not reveal their identities. The same applies when the client cannot advise employees that could be mystery shopped.
- 18.3. Where there is mystery shopping of client's agents or authorised distributors (as well as any organisations that are responsible to a compliance authority), affiliates must ensure the following.
 - 18.3.1. The employers or the regulators have advised their employees that mystery shoppers may check their service delivery and/or regulatory compliance.

- 18.3.2. The employer and/or regulator have made clear to employees objectives and intended uses of the results, including the level of reporting; if at branch/store or individual level.
- 18.3.3. The employer and/or regulator have made clear if the use of mystery shopping is in relation to any employment/contractual/regulatory terms and conditions.
- 18.4. Affiliates must protect mystery shoppers from any adverse implications of conducting a mystery shopping exercise.

19. Observation and Ethnographic Exercises

- 19.1. Affiliates must take the following steps when using observation equipment.
 - 19.1.1. Placing clear and legible signs in areas where surveillance is taking place.
 - 19.1.2. Siting cameras in such a way that they monitor only the areas intended for surveillance.
 - 19.1.3. Signs must state the individual/organisation responsible for the surveillance, including contact information and the purpose of the observation.

20. Due Diligence: Quality Control Measures

- 20.1. Face to Face Interviews with Respondent Contact Details
 - 20.1.1. In the case of completed paper questionnaires, field management fully logic-check them before data entry.
 - 20.1.2. Field management back-check at least 30% of interviews through recorded (with the permission of the respondents) call-backs. WRA Quality Controllers listen to all the recordings in full or in part, depending on the apparent quality. Furthermore, they back-check another 10% over and above the quality control measures taken by field staff.
- 20.2. Face to Face Interviews without Respondent Contact Details (e.g. Intercept Interviews)
 - 20.2.1. On site continuous supervision by field management.
 - 20.2.2. Monitoring by WRA Quality Controllers with or without the knowledge of the field team.
 - 20.2.3. In the case of completed paper questionnaires, field management fully logic-check them before data entry.
- 20.3. Telephone Interviews
 - 20.3.1. Depending on government regulations in a country, all telephone interviews are recorded and independent Quality Controllers from World Research Alliance listen to at least 30% of the recordings per interviewer.

- 20.3.2. If government regulations prohibit the recording of telephone interviews, field management back-check at least 30% of interviews per interviewer through recorded (with the permission of the respondent) call-backs. WRA Quality Controllers listen to all the recordings in full or in part, depending on the apparent quality. Furthermore, they back-check another 10% over and above the quality measures taken by field staff.
- 20.4. Self-Completed Online Questionnaires
- 20.4.1. In case contact details are not available - e.g. completes from a panel - the data analyst assigned to the survey verifies that the IP addresses correspond with the population centre where the respondents claim to live. Furthermore, the analyst checks the completion time (starting and duration) to help validate data integrity.
 - 20.4.2. With contact details, field management back-check at least 30% of interviews through recorded (with the permission of the respondents) call-backs. WRA Quality Controllers listen to all the recordings in full or in part, depending on the apparent quality. Furthermore, they back-check another 10% over and above the quality control measures taken by field staff.
- 20.5. Recruitment Screeners Qualitative Research
- 20.5.1. WRA Quality Controllers arrange call-backs to recruited respondents to ensure they are eligible to participate.
 - 20.5.2. The Project Manager for the survey sends emails to the recruited respondents confirming their participation and key details of the eligibility criteria that the respondents have responded to affirmatively.
 - 20.5.3. Periodically the Project Manager continues reminding respondents of the impending group discussion or interview by email with requests to confirm attendance. The recruiters also keep in touch with the respondents for the same purpose, but informally by telephone; keeping a log of the calls.
- 20.6. Data Validation
- 20.6.1. The data analyst assigned to the survey, checks the entered raw data both manually and through a validation program.
 - 20.6.2. Thorough validation only leaves fully completed questionnaires with consistent answers.

REPORTING AND DATA SECURITY

21. Analysis and Reporting of Findings

- 21.1. Researchers must not knowingly allow the dissemination of conclusions from a marketing research project, which data do not adequately support.
- 21.2. Affiliates must comply with reasonable requests from the client to make available the technical information necessary to assess the validity of any published findings from a project.
- 21.3. Affiliates must only use their names in connection with any project as an assurance of conformity with the code of conduct, if they are satisfied on reasonable grounds that the project has in all respects met the code's requirements.
- 21.4. Affiliates must allow clients to arrange checks on the quality of fieldwork and data preparation provided that the client pays any additional costs involved in this.
- 21.5. Affiliates must provide clients with sufficient details about the methodology to enable clients to assess the validity of results of projects carried out on their behalf.
- 21.6. Affiliates must ensure that data tables include sufficient technical information to enable reasonable interpretation of the validity of the results.
- 21.7. Affiliates must ensure that reports include sufficient information to enable reasonable interpretation of the validity of the results.
- 21.8. Affiliates must ensure that reports and presentations clearly distinguish between facts and interpretation.
- 21.9. Affiliates must ensure that when interpreting data they make clear which data they are using to support their interpretation.
- 21.10. Affiliates must ensure that qualitative reports and presentations accurately reflect the findings of the project in addition to the interpretations and conclusions.
- 21.11. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to check and where necessary amend any client-prepared materials prior to publication to ensure that the published results are correct and not misleading.
- 21.12. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not publish findings from a project that could be incorrect or misleading. .
- 21.13. If affiliates are aware, or ought reasonably to be aware, that a client has incorrectly or misleadingly reported findings from a project they must at the earliest opportunity take the following steps.
 - 21.13.1. Refuse permission for the client to use their name further in connection with the incorrect or misleading published findings.
 - 21.13.2. Publish in an appropriate forum the relevant technical details of the project to correct any inaccurate or misleading reporting.

- 21.14. The client has a responsibility to ensure published findings of a research project are accurate and not misleading. The client must consult the researcher and agree in advance the form and content of publication. The researcher must take action to correct any misleading statements about the research and its findings.

22. Data Storage

- 22.1. The researcher must conform to keeping records for an appropriate period after the end of the project to a minimum period of twelve months. On request the researcher must supply the client with duplicate copies of such records provided that such duplicates do not breach anonymity and confidentiality requirements; that the request comes within the agreed time limit for keeping the records; and that the client pays the reasonable costs of providing the duplicates.
- 22.2. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to securely storing, transferring and processing all hard copy and electronic lists containing personal data in accordance with the relevant data retention policies and/or contractual obligations.
- 22.3. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that all parties involved in the project are aware of their obligations regarding security of data.
- 22.4. Affiliates must take reasonable steps to ensure that the destruction of data is adequate for the confidentiality of the data being destroyed. For example, any personal data must be destroyed in a manner which safeguards confidentiality.

BUSINESS TERMS

23. Terms of Payment

- 23.1. Affiliates must ensure that the project contract includes the agreed terms of payment with the client.
- 23.2. The default terms of payment are 50/50 with the first half payable before commencement of fieldwork and the balance within 30 days of completing the survey or within 30 days of submitting the full deliverables, whichever is the later.
- 23.3. By default, the client has no right to withhold or delay payments when surveys are concluded later than planned and due to reasonable causes. The exception is when the affiliate and client have agreed a penalty clause in their contract governing delays in submitting results.
