

# **iab.**TECH LAB

## **Supply Chain Validation for Publishers**

Version 1.0

Released May 2021

Please email [support@iabtechlab.com](mailto:support@iabtechlab.com) with feedback or questions. This document is available online at <https://iabtechlab.com/software/supply-chain-validation>

© IAB Technology Laboratory

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Change Log</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Validation Process</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Application</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Validation Fees.....	3
<b>Qualification</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Geographic Applicability of Validation</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Validation Testing</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Publication of Validation Status</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Continued Validation</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Maintaining Validation</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Test Cases</b> .....	<b>5</b>

## Executive Summary

Since 2017, we've seen the success of the [ads.txt](#), [app-ads.txt](#), and [sellers.json](#) specifications as means to increase transparency in the programmatic supply chain. These widely adopted standards help buyers verify that they are purchasing inventory from authorized sellers. As the advertising industry becomes more dependent on these standards to filter inventory from non-authorized sellers, it's more critical than ever that all parties adhere to the specified formats. Here is how you can maintain accuracy and validity of your ads.txt files to improve supply chain transparency.

This service will not just verify that your ads.txt and/or app-ads.txt file adheres to the technical specifications, but will also alert you to inconsistencies between your file and the sellers.json file. You'll be able to check one place to see how your selling partners are representing the relationship.

The validation service offers the following benefits:

1. Weekly validation of ads.txt and app-ads.txt files against sellers.json with a standard set of test cases
2. Email notifications alerting you to inconsistencies or areas that need further investigation
3. Publication of validated results to help buyers gain confidence in authorized supply paths

Ads.txt and Sellers.json specifications are managed by the [Programmatic Supply Chain Working Group](#)

## Change Log

Revision	Description	Author	Date
Version 1.0	Document created, first draft	Jill Wittkopp (jill@iabtechlab.com)	05/2021

## Validation Process

The Supply Chain Validation is voluntary and validates a publisher's implementation of the ads.txt and/or app-ads.txt specification against a simple set of test cases and results. The validation is designed to help not only check a publisher's ads.txt or app-ads.txt file but also the sellers.json files associated with the publisher's authorized sellers.

The validation is performed weekly and validation subscribers will be notified via email regarding inconsistencies or areas that need further investigation.

All test cases are executed by IAB Tech Lab for the purpose of the validation process.

## Application

To apply for Supply Chain Validation, the publisher must have implemented the ads.txt or app-ads.txt specification(s).

Please visit <https://iabtechlab.com/ads-txt/> for information about the ads.txt and app-ads.txt specifications. It is also helpful for applicants to be familiar with the sellers.json specification found here: <https://iabtechlab.com/sellers-json/>.

## Validation Fees

There is an annual fee for this validation service that covers the automated process and email notifications. The annual fee is \$99 per domain validated.

## Qualification

Any publisher that has posted an ads.txt or app-ads.txt file is eligible to apply for this validation.

## Geographic Applicability of Validation

The Supply Chain Validation is a global program and applies to all geographic regions.

## Validation Testing

IAB Tech Lab will do a weekly, unannounced, automated check of the ads.txt or app-ads.txt file and the referenced authorized seller's seller.json files.

The scope of validation testing covers the following:

1. **Registration:** A publisher may register themselves at <https://tools.iabtechlab.com/scv>.
2. **Validation:** The published ads.txt or app-ads.txt files must adhere to the IAB Tech Lab specifications found here: <https://iabtechlab.com/ads-txt/>. The validation also checks to ensure a publisher's authorized sellers have referenced the publisher per the sellers.json specifications found here <https://iabtechlab.com/sellers-json/>.
3. **Publish results:** Tech Lab will make the results of this test available after each validation test. Using the test cases below, each authorized seller entry within a file will either be validated, or include the appropriate alert(s) or error(s) notification codes.

## Publication of Validation Status

IAB Tech Lab will publish a human readable and machine readable list of all Supply Chain Validation results within the Transparency Center. This data will be available for use by Tech Lab members to provide additional transparency on the digital advertising supply chain. This data will be made available for public consumption in summer 2021.

## Continued Validation

Publishers who have registered for this validation process must maintain the required file continuously. Validation checks will be done on a weekly basis with no notice to the publisher. Validation status will be updated after each check.

To properly maintain validation of publishers using Supply Chain Validation, IAB Tech Lab will maintain the results for each authorized seller entry within a publisher's ads.txt or app-ads.txt file. Each entry will receive one or more of the below status'.

- **Validated:** all test cases have passed
- **Alert:** this status will be used when IAB Tech Lab is unable to fully programmatically validate the results. The specifications are designed in such a way that it will be common for an authorized seller entry to include Alert notifications. Alerts will highlight cases that may need manual review. The test cases below show which notification codes may produce alerts and suggested review options for the publisher.
- **Error:** this status will be used to indicate that a test case has failed, the results do not match the published specifications. See notification codes below for cases that may produce errors.

## Maintaining Validation

It is the responsibility of the publisher to maintain the accuracy and validity of ads.txt and/or app-ads.txt files.

If an entry is listed in alert or error state after validation the publisher will receive email notification from IAB Tech Lab.

## Test Cases

Case	Scenario	Expected Results	Notification Message	Type	Code
1	Does the ads.txt file exist?	Ads.txt file is at domain.com/ads.txt  App-ads.txt file is at developerurl.com/app-ads.txt	The registered ads.txt or app-ads.txt file does not exist.	Error	10010
2	Is the Content Type correct?	The declarations must be accessible via HTTP and/or HTTPS from the website that the  instructions are to be applied to under a standard relative path on the server host: "/ads.txt" and  HTTP request header containing "Content-Type: text/plain". It may be advisable to additionally  use "Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8" to signal UTF8 support.	The file does not have the HTTP request header containing "Content-Type: text/plain". It may be advisable to additionally use "Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8" to signal UTF8 support.	Error	10020
3	Can we access the file without timeout?	Tech Lab Crawler can access the file within 20 seconds	Our crawler reached timeout while attempting to access your ads.txt or app-ads.txt file.	Error	10030
4	Does the location exceed the allowed number of root domain redirects?	Tech Lab Crawler can access the file in under 6 redirects within the root domain.	Accessing your file exceeds the specification redirect limit of 5 redirects within the root domain.	Error	10040
5	Does the location exceed the allowed number of external domain redirects?	Tech Lab Crawler can access the file in under 2 redirects outside of the root domain.	Accessing your file exceeds the specification redirect limit of 1 redirect outside of the root domain.	Error	10050
6	Are there 2 commas per line (indicating the 3 required fields)?	There are at least 2 commas, no more than 3 per authorized seller entry.	You do not have the three required fields per line. This is the first incorrect entry that we see, there may be more.	Error	11010

Case	Scenario	Expected Results	Notification Message	Type	Code
7	Does the third required field have either DIRECT or RESELLER in it?	DIRECT or RESELLER are the only accepted values for Type of Account/Relationship	The third required field should have either DIRECT or RESELLER in it. A value of 'DIRECT' indicates that the Publisher (content owner) directly controls the account indicated in field #2 on the system in field #1. This tends to mean a direct business contract between the Publisher and the advertising system. A value of 'RESELLER' indicates that the Publisher has authorized another entity to control the account indicated in field #2 and resell their ad space via the system in field #1.	Error	11020
8	Do Advertising System domains listed obey RFC 1123 [10]?	The allowed identifiers in field #1 and by definition assumed to be valid DNS domain names obeying RFC 1123 [10], associated errata for RFC 1123 or subsuming RFCs.	Please ensure the advertising system domain name is a valid domain.	Error	11030
9	Is there at least one valid entry?	As of March 2020 empty files are no longer an accepted way to declare no authorized digital sellers.	As of March 2020 empty files are no longer an accepted way to declare no authorized digital sellers. If you have no authorized digital sellers, please use placeholder.example.com, placeholder, DIRECT, placeholder as an authorized seller entry.	Error	11040
10	Does the field contain tabs, commas, whitespace?	No field should contain tabs, commas or whitespace, otherwise it should be escaped with URL encoding.	No field should contain tabs, commas or whitespace, otherwise it should be escaped with URL encoding.	Error	11050
11	For each DIRECT entry: Does the advertising system have a sellers.json file?	The advertising system should have a sellers.json file at <a href="http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json">http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json</a>	The advertising system domain listed for this DIRECT entry does not have a sellers.json file at <a href="http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json">http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json</a> . Please contact your selling partner to ask them to implement sellers.json	Alert	12010
12	For each DIRECT entry: Does the sellers.json file have the publisher account ID listed in my ads.txt file as a seller_id?	The sellers.json file should have the publisher account ID listed as a seller_id in their file.	The advertising system that you have listed does not have your publisher account ID listed as a seller_id in their sellers.json files. You should remove this entry from your file if you no longer work with the seller.	Error	12020



Case	Scenario	Expected Results	Notification Message	Type	Code
13	For each DIRECT entry: Does the sellers.json file entry with the same seller_id have the same domain as my ads.txt file?	It is expected that this alert may be seen often. The sellers.json definition for domain is the business domain name of the company (the legal entity) that is paid for inventory that is transacted under the given seller_id. It may also be omitted when is_confidential is set to 1 or when the seller doesn't have a web presence. We do this check to ensure that the publisher knows how they are being represented.	This is the business domain listed with the specified account ID. Please confirm that you are listed as expected. If a domain is present, it should be the business domain name of the company (the legal entity) that is paid for inventory that is transacted under the given seller_id.	Alert	12030
14	For each DIRECT entry: Does the seller_id have the entry listed as PUBLISHER?	A DIRECT ads.txt/app-ads.txt entry and PUBLISHER sellers.json will satisfy the programmatic test, please see the additional scenarios that need further manual validation:  I. The seller ID may be listed as BOTH  II. The seller has listed the relationship as INTERMEDIARY	I. This seller ID is listed as BOTH, meaning you act as both a PUBLISHER and INTERMEDIARY with this seller. If this is incorrect, please talk to your selling partner about how you are listed.  II. This seller has listed your relationship as an INTERMEDIARY, while there are valid use cases for this relationship, please work with your selling partner to make sure your files display the correct relationship.	Alert  Alert	12040  12050
15	For each DIRECT entry: Is the seller_id used only one time in the file?	It is invalid for a seller_id to represent multiple entities. Every seller_id must map to only a single entity that is paid for inventory transacted with that seller_id.	This seller_id is used multiple times in the advertising system's sellers.json file. This is invalid per the specification. Please review the other selling partners using this ID and contact your selling partner to better understand how your inventory is being sold.	Error	12060
16	For each RESELLER entry: Does the advertising system have a sellers.json file?	The advertising system should have a sellers.json file at <a href="http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json">http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json</a>	The advertising system domain listed for this RESELLER entry does not have a sellers.json file at <a href="http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json">http://{advertising_system_domain}/sellers.json</a> . Please contact your selling partner to ask them to implement sellers.json	Alert	13010

Case	Scenario	Expected Results	Notification Message	Type	Code
17	For each RESELLER entry: Does the sellers.json file have the publisher account ID listed in my ads.txt file as a seller_id?	The sellers.json file should have the publisher account ID listed as a seller_id in their file.	The advertising system that you have listed does not have your publisher account ID listed as a seller_id in their sellers.json files. You should remove this entry from your file if you no longer work with the seller.	Error	13020
18	For each RESELLER entry: Does the sellers.json file entry with the same seller_id have the same domain as my ads.txt file?	It is expected that this alert may be seen often. The sellers.json definition for domain is the business domain name of the company (the legal entity) that is paid for inventory that is transacted under the given seller_id. It may also be omitted when is_confidential is set to 1 or when the seller doesn't have a web presence. We do this check to ensure that the publisher knows how they are being represented.	This is the business domain listed with the specified account ID. Please confirm that you are listed as expected. If a domain is present, it should be the business domain name of the company (the legal entity) that is paid for inventory that is transacted under the given seller_id.	Alert	13030
19	For each RESELLER entry: Does the seller_id have the entry listed as INTERMEDIARY?	A RESELLER entry in ads.txt/app-ads.txt paired with an INTERMEDIARY entry in the sellers.json file will satisfy the programmatic test, please see the additional scenario(s) that may be errors or need further manual validation.  I. The seller_id may be listed as BOTH  II. The seller_id may NOT be listed as PUBLISHER	I. This seller ID is listed as BOTH, meaning it acts as both a PUBLISHER and INTERMEDIARY. If this is incorrect, please talk to your selling partner about how you are listed.  II. This seller has listed your relationship as an PUBLISHER, this differs from the RESELLER relationship that you have listed. Please work with your selling partner to make sure your files display the correct relationship.	Alert  Error	13040  13050
20	For each RESELLER entry: Is the seller_id used only one time in the file?	It is invalid for a seller_id to represent multiple entities. Every seller_id must map to only a single entity that is paid for inventory transacted with that seller_id.	This seller_id is used multiple times in the advertising system's sellers.json file. This is invalid per the specification. Please review the other selling partners using this ID and contact your selling partner to better understand how your inventory is being sold.	Alert	13060

Case	Scenario	Expected Results	Notification Message	Type	Code
21	For each Subdomain: Is "divisionone.example.com" a valid url?	The subdomain should be a valid url.	The subdomain listed is not a valid url.	Error	14020
22	For each Subdomain: Is "divisionone.example.com" a valid subdomain of the root domain?	A subdomain listed in the file should be a subdomain of the root domain on which the ads.txt file is found.	The subdomain listed is not a subdomain of the ads.txt file's root domain.	Error	14030