

A Good Influence

Published by *Kattison Avenue* | Issue 16

Spring 2026

BBB National Programs has launched a new institute to help digital content creators comply with Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines and marketing best practices.

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The Institute for Responsible Influence (IRI), a new project of BBB National Programs' Center for Industry Self-Regulation, has introduced a certification program for influencers, encouraging them to increase consumer trust by drilling down on disclosure requirements and other legal fundamentals. The IRI encourages brands and agencies to use the new certification "as a vetting tool for partnerships to ensure they are working with creators who have been trained in responsible best practices for influencer marketing."

The 90-minute training program, open to (adult- and human-only!) creators at $100 per person, consists of 11 interactive modules that coach participants on the FTC Endorsement Guides, intellectual property basics and best practices in the advertising industry. After completing the ungraded modules, participants are asked to take a 25-question final assessment, with a passing score of 80 percent required for certification. However, creators can retake the assessment as many times as necessary.

Once certification is complete and influencers have signed the IRI's Best Practices Pledge, they receive email instructions regarding acceptance of a Responsible Influence Certification seal from Credly.

The IRI is also developing a searchable roster of certified creators, promising extra visibility as well as access to networking opportunities, workshops and professional support. "We will assist by monitoring your content for alignment with the best practices you agreed to when completing your certification," the IRI notes. "When we identify posts that do not align with those best practices, we will reach out to offer guidance on how to correct or update the content."

The FTC monitors social media platforms for misleading promotional posts and fake product reviews as well, issuing warning letters and reminding recipients of the risk of substantial civil penalties for noncompliance with federal advertising guidelines.

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