

# Qualifications and Application for Membership

*Revised November 2012*

Thank you for your interest in the PR Council. You may apply (or update your membership) by completing the form below or retyping, on your firm's letterhead, the answers to all numbered questions below. Additional space may be added for any question as needed. If you have questions, call 1-646-588-0139.

The PR Council is an association of business enterprises providing public relations counsel and related strategic services to help clients create, build and protect their reputations. The PR Council's mission is to advance the interests of member firms and the public relations profession, by advocating that public relations is an effective and strategic business tool.

**How to Apply for New Membership**Membership in the PR Council is by application and recommendation after the applicant firm presents its qualifications. The qualifications for membership described in the following pages are intended to portray a public relations firm most likely to develop successful strategies and programs for its clients as well as represent the overall objectives of the PR Council and the counseling profession. The qualifications are based on the premise that the member firm must achieve an exceptionally high standard of client service, fiscal accountability, professional development and ethical conduct for its staff. There are five sections in the application. A firm must complete all sections to be approved for membership. Please submit a completed application that will be evaluated by the PR Council’s Eligibility Committee. If necessary, an independent auditor will visit the firm to help the firm’s management assess its eligibility.

**Send completed application to:** Eligibility Committee/PR Council, 32 East 31st Street, 9th Floor S, New York, NY 10016

**Dues:** Dues are assessed as .065 percent of U.S. revenues, with a minimum of $2,750 (revenue <$4 million) and maximum of $40,000 (revenue >$60 million) based on a calendar year.

# Membership Application

**COUNCIL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTs**Applicant firm shall derive at least 51 percent of its gross income from core public relations consulting and related public relations capabilities when they directly support the core capabilities. These include a wide range of both strategic and tactical services. For purposes of admission into the Council, qualifying public relations services may include but are not limited to:

* Community relations
* Corporate counseling / consulting
* Crisis preparedness / management
* Employee relations
* Government relations
* Investor relations
* Marketing public relations
* Media relations (including digital and social media)
* Other constituent relations
* Public affairs / issue management
* Reputation management

Services such as, but not limited to, the following can be counted towards the 51 percent requirement when they directly support one or more of the above core public relations capabilities:

* Communications training
* Corporate and issues advertising
* Creative services
* Research

Firm revenues are defined as the sum of professional
fees for qualifying public relations counseling / services (as described above) and mark-ups for out-of-pocket expenses and/or profits from collateral activities such as graphics, video production, web sites, printing, etc. Media commissions earned, from qualifying corporate or issues advertising only, may also be included in firm revenues. It does not include out-of pocket re-billable charges (printing, phone, travel, etc). In some cases, based on the discretion of the Eligibility & Membership Committee, a successful applicant firm may be owned, in whole or in part, by an advertising agency or other communications-based holding company or similar organization. In such cases, the applicant firm must be operated as an *independent business entity* focused on and committed to the public relations discipline (including staff training and industry involvement). This independence is important to the Council for dues collection. More importantly, the Council believes that operational independence is essential for a firm member to provide the *proper level of control, objectivity and unbiased counsel*.

To qualify for membership, the firm principals must have been conducting business as a public relations firm for at least three years. The Council recognizes the value and contribution of many sole practitioners as effective public relations consultants; however, the Council does not recognize a sole practitioner or a small group of freelancers as a firm equipped to deliver the continuity and depth of service generally qualifying for membership. (A firm must have at least five full-time employees to qualify for membership.)


# Membership Application (cont.)

Please answer the following questions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Company Name:**
 |  |
| 1. **Firm liaison to the**

 **Council:** |  |
| 1. **Principal/CEO:**
 |  |
| 1. **Address:**
 |  |
| 1. **Phone:**
 |  |
| 1. **Fax:**
 |  |
| 1. **E-mail:**
 |  |
| 1. **www:**
 |  |
| 1. **Where is company’s headquarters located?**
 |  |

**10) Please list all U.S. cities where other offices are located.** *(Only firms maintaining an office(s) in the United States, its territories, and possessions shall be considered for membership.):*

**11) Please check all statements that are true.**

[ ]  The person(s) who exercise operating control of the firm are employees of the firm.

[ ]  The firm is not a client-owned (in-house) firm.

[ ]  In the interest of objectivity, if the firm owns an interest in a medium or supplier, or where a medium or supplier owns an interest in the firm, this information has been disclosed to the PR Council.

**12) Please provide the name of firm ownership and contact information if different from the applicant firm itself.** *Describe nature of the relationship and verify that the applicant firm is in compliance with the spirit of the membership guidelines.*



# Membership Application (cont.)

**13) What percent of the firm’s annual revenue comes from the public relations consulting and related public relations services described above?** *(Minimum 51% required*)

**14) What were your firm's U.S. revenues from public relations services for the most recent calendar year?** *(This information is for internal use only and will be kept confidential.)*

If this information cannot be disclosed for legal reasons, please indicate which U.S. revenue category is appropriate:

 [ ]  <$4 million; [ ]  $4-10 million; [ ]  $>10-25 million; [ ]  $>25-60 million; [ ]  >$60 million.

**15) What is the number of U.S.-based full-time professionals in the firm?**

**16) Year applicant firm was founded. *(****The firm's principals or owners must have been conducting business as a public relations firm for at least three years. This qualification may be waived by the Board of Directors only in exceptional circumstances.)*

**17) Has ownership of your firm changed since its founding, and if so, please describe?**

**Business Plans**

The goal is to demonstrate that the consultancy is operating as a business with a clear vision of its business direction, financial performance and staff development goals and objectives.

18) Does your firm have an annual business planning process which includes defining goal and objectives? *(if yes, briefly describe the process)*

**19) How often is the plan updated/modified?**

**20) How is the firm’s performance reviewed against the plans’ goals and objectives?**

# Membership Application (cont.)



**Client Services**The PR Council seeks members who provide consistent standards of practice to their clients.

**21) Please provide samples of consultancy documentation including a sample letter of agreement and two firm case histories.** *(Cases should demonstrate the firm's ability to provide strategic counsel, and demonstrate how it evaluates the results of public relations programs. Please limit the number of pages submitted for cases to not more than 5.)*

**22) List primary practice areas, industry specialization, services or unique client offerings. (Note: Firm profile information for “Find-A-Firm” database will be requested upon membership approval.)**

**23) Please note any recent industry awards received by your firm in the last calendar year.**

**24) Please provide a *current* list, or, if you’d prefer, a representative list of clients. (This will be kept confidential.)**

**25) Please describe the firm’s methodology for measuring and evaluating client satisfaction** *(e.g., periodic account reviews undertaken by the firm, reports, measurement)*

**26) Briefly describe the firm’s participation in each of the following activities designed to enhance the public relations profession: a) Professional staff development; b) Internships; c) Annual pro bono activities**

**27) Please provide one letter of recommendation from an existing PR Council member.** *(A list of members firms can be found at* [*www.prfirms.org*](http://www.prfirms.org)*)*



# Membership Application (cont.)

**28) Please provide contact information for two current clients** *(name and telephone number or e-mail address)* **as references.**

**standards of practice**

**29) Member firms must agree to abide by the PR Council’s Code of Ethics & Principals. The PR Council is a member of the International Communications Consultancy Organization (ICCO) and as such approves and accepts its charter of principles.** *Only firms that give reasonable assurance of their readiness and ability to uphold the highest ethical standards of the business will be received into membership. (Please review Code of Ethics & Principals carefully before signing below.)*

#### Code of Ethics & Principles

Members of the PR Council commit to standards of practice that assure clients, the public and media, employees, and business partners the highest level of professionalism and ethical conduct in every relationship with a PR Council member. This commitment is a requirement for application and continued membership in the PR Council.

Our overriding principle is that openness and transparency not only are in the public interest, they are also necessary tools for meeting our clients’ objectives. Members of the PR Council embrace our responsibilities to promote open and transparent dialogue. We carry out our business in accordance with the following code of ethics and principles that guide our relationships with clients and the public.

**1. We adhere to the highest standards of ethics in the public relations profession.**
The employees of public relations firms are members of a profession which has well-established guidelines for ethical behavior through professional organizations such as PRSA and the PR Council as well as within their individual firms. We expect each of our employees to commit themselves to those guidelines, and advise our clients’ communications professionals to do so as well.

Members and their employees will be honest and accurate when recording time charges and seeking reimbursement of expenses, and member firms will not solicit or accept kickbacks or under-the-table payments in connection with business development efforts.

**2. We protect the integrity of client information.** Member firms will serve their clients by applying their fullest capability to achieve each client’s business objectives.Members reserve the option to represent more than one client in an industry sector but any apparent conflicts must be vetted with relevant clients. PR Council firms and their employees will respect client confidences and the privacy of client employees.

Commercial relationships with business partners and vendors will be handled in a businesslike manner. Credit will be given for ideas and services provided by others, consistent with the terms under which those relationships are negotiated.

**3. We honor our role in society.** In their service to clients, public relations firms play a vital role in encouraging public discourse. The professionalism and objectivity of our firms helps clients engage in that discourse, and clients turn to us for our counsel and assistance to vigorously pursue their organizational goals in educating or persuading audiences that matter most to them. Public relations firms help clients as diverse as government agencies, public and private companies, and not-for-profit groups. In a democratic and free-market society, our clients’ goals often put us in the sphere of such complex issues as thorny policy debates, intense market competition or critical education needs in areas of public health, safety and well-being.


# Membership Application (cont.)

**4. We are committed to accuracy.** In communicating with the public and media, member firms will maintain total accuracy and truthfulness. To preserve both the reality and perception of professional integrity, information that is found to be misleading or erroneous will be promptly corrected and the sources of communications and sponsors of activities will not be concealed.

**5. We believe that our clients and the public are best served when third party relationships with spokespeople, bloggers, partners and allies are open and transparent.**
Our bias in counseling clients is toward disclosure, which we believe is appropriate as a principle and effective as a communications tool.

Our clients and the public are best served when any relationship between third-party organizations and our clients is fully disclosed and when the sponsors of public relations tools such as video news releases and web sites are clearly identified.

Third-party spokespersons, such as scientists, economists, scholars, celebrities, online media “influencers” such as bloggers, or other third party content experts who are involved in word of mouth communications, enrich the public discourse. Third-party organizations such as alliances or coalitions may be created to promote our clients’ interests. When a spokesperson, expert or organization is paid for participation we will not conceal the paid nature of the relationship.

**6. We are conscientious stewards of taxpayer dollars.** Working for federal, state and local governmental entities involves a unique responsibility as it is paid for by taxpayers’ dollars and, like the rest of our work, must uphold the public trust at all times.

Members of the PR Council are proud to play a vital role in the development and implementation of federal, state and local government programs. We recognize and accept this responsibility and act in accordance with the highest degree of ethical and financial conduct.

We will not misrepresent our status or the nature of inquiries to public bodies or create false impressions in our relations with such bodies.

We believe that the public is entitled to know the identity of our government clients. We encourage government agencies and their communications agency partners to publicly disclose all contractual relationships.

We strictly adhere to government rules and regulations regarding procurement and execution of government business and maintain the necessary training programs and physical infrastructure necessary to deliver on that commitment. We will not offer financial inducement or other payments to elected officials or civil servants except in accordance with applicable law, and we will employ former public service personnel only in accordance with the rules and confidentiality requirements of their former government or institutional employers

**7. We value diversity and inclusion in our profession.**
We believe that a diverse workforce that includes individuals of different backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives strengthens our member firms and the profession. When selecting subcontractors and vendors, we seek assistance from a broad array of partners and suppliers to increase opportunities for minority owned, women owned and small businesses. The more “voices” that are present, the better able we are as advisors to help our clients speak to an increasingly complex world.

Members will adopt policies that assure equal opportunity for all job candidates without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, disability or any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, state or local law. PR Council members will also respect the personal rights of their employees and former employees. They will provide employees the necessary tools to serve their clients and opportunities to develop their professional skills. They will safeguard the privacy and handle with respect the professional reputation of current and former employees.

**8. We are committed to agency practices that increase society’s confidence in the practice of public relations.** When we engage with journalists, bloggers or other organizations, we disclose who we represent. We respect the opinions of journalists and other spokespeople as their own. We do not retain or compensate journalists to represent client interests in their media. We expect bloggers and other online influencers to be honest and accurate.

We will implement policies within our firms to carry out these principles, and we will train our employees about the imperative of upholding them and effectively communicating their importance to clients.

In addition, as a member of the International Communications Consultancy Organization (ICCO) we support the Stockholm Charter.


# Membership Application (cont.)

**Certification of Accuracy and Acceptance**I certify that the information provided in this application and the attached supporting material is accurate, and I agree to cooperate with the Eligibility Committee of the PR Council to clarify or verify any credentials required for acceptance of my firm as a member of the PR Council. I accept and agree to abide by the standards of practice outlined in the PR Council Code of Ethics & Principals outlined above. These standards of practice will be observed by all staff of the undersigned company.

**Principal’s name: Title:**

**Principal’s signature: Date:**

**financial accountability**

Financial stability is an important standard of membership; all information is confidential.

# **30) Statement by Independent CPA**I have reviewed the Application for Membership, specifically information provided in response to Question 14 regarding firm U.S. revenue, and Question 15 regarding number of U.S.-based employees. A review of the applicant firm's accounts and employment records has been conducted, but because the procedures performed do not constitute an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, we express no opinion on any of the specific accounts or items referred to above. In connection with the above, no matters came to our attention that caused us to believe that the specific accounts or items should be adjusted. Had we performed additional procedures or had we made an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, matters might have come to our attention that would have been reported to you. This report relates only to the accounts and items specified above and does not extend to the financial statements of the applicant firm and its wholly owned subsidiaries, taken as a whole. It is understood that this report is solely for the information of the PR Council and is not intended for use for any other purpose.

**Name of CPA: Name of Firm:**

**Address of Firm:** **Phone:**

**Signature of CPA:** **Date:**

**PR Council** • 32 East 31st Street, 9th Floor, South, New York, NY 10016
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