

## **Marriage Mail Incentive – FAQs**

*June 28, 2023 – updated August 23, 2023 (2<sup>nd</sup> Q&A inserted on Page 3 is new)*

### **Q: What is Marriage Mail?**

A: Marriage Mail is a form of direct mail in which marketing service companies combine or “marry” advertisements (e.g., coupons or sales notices) from multiple companies into one mail piece to reduce the cost of the mailing for individual advertisers. This type of direct mailing product allows businesses to reach targeted customer segments.

### **Q: What is the Marriage Mail Incentive?**

A: The Marriage Mail Incentive is a discounted (incentive) price offered on saturation Marketing Mail letters and flats which meet certain requirements including weight and advertiser content. It has been developed in response to market needs and will benefit the mailing industry, small businesses, consumers and the USPS. The Incentive price will be a 10% discount on qualifying pieces.

### **Q: Who is eligible to claim the Marriage Mail Incentive price?**

A: A Mail Owner<sup>1</sup> who satisfies the requirements listed below will be eligible to claim the Marriage Mail Incentive price. The customer must be an eDoc submitter using mail.dat, mail.XML or Postal Wizard, with a unique Mail Owner CRID, an Enterprise Payment Account and registered in *PostalOne!* Eligible mail must be Saturation Marketing Mail letters or flats (including EDDM-Commercial). Marriage Mail Incentive requirements include, among other factors, stipulations on (a) mail piece weight and content and (b) mailing frequency measured and tracked by Mail Owner CRID. The requirements are listed in the next section.

### **Q: What are the requirements to claim the Marriage Mail Incentive price?**

A: The requirements to claim the Incentive price include the following:

- Claimed by the Mail Owner (see footnote) and compliance is tracked against the corresponding Mail Owner CRID.

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<sup>1</sup> A Mail Owner, for the purposes of the Marriage Mail Incentive, is a business or organization that consolidates advertisements from multiple clients (i.e., the “advertisers”) into one mail piece. It is the Mail Owner who would (a) claim the Marriage Mail Incentive price, (b) be responsible for complying with the Incentive requirements listed above, and (c) be accountable for paying any Postage Adjustment amounts arising from non-compliance with Incentive requirements. This Mail Owner’s unique CRID will be used for tracking compliance with frequency and other Incentive requirements listed above. In this document, the term “mailer” is taken to mean the Mail Owner.

- Applies only to Saturation Marketing Mail Letters or Flats (including EDDM-Commercial).
- Minimum of 4 advertisers per mail piece (all on one sheet or on multiple sheets).
- Mail piece weight not to exceed 2 oz.
- Minimum mailing frequency of 10 qualifying mailings per 12-month cycle commencing from the month of first claim of this Incentive price by a Mail Owner CRID.

*What are the submission requirements?*

- Mail Owner CRID is the only CRID that will be used to monitor compliance with the qualification requirements for this Incentive price.
- Mail submission via eDoc only using mail.dat, mail.XML or Postal Wizard.
- To obtain the Incentive price, the Mail Owner must place a check mark in the box for “Marriage Mail Incentive,” or equivalent, using the format of the appropriate eDoc field.
- Each Postage Statement used to claim the Marriage Mail Incentive must contain only one Mail Owner (and CRID).
- An eDoc submitter who is preparing an eDoc for more than one Mail Owner (and CRID) claiming the Marriage Mail Incentive must prepare and submit a separate Postage Statement for each Mail Owner (and CRID).

*What are the mail piece sample submission and retention requirements and how might these mail pieces be audited?*

- Mail owners using non-Seamless entry and Postal Wizard are required to submit a physical mail piece sample along with the mailing. This sample will be used for content validation by Mail Acceptance staff.
- Mail owners using non-Seamless entry and mail.dat or mail.XML are recommended to submit a physical mail piece sample along with the mailing. Doing so is expected to reduce the likelihood of being audited. This sample will be used for content validation by Mail Acceptance staff.
- Mail owners using Seamless entry are not expected to submit a physical mail piece sample along with the mailing. However, they are subject to a random audit at any time (see below).
- Every Mail Owner claiming this Incentive price (Seamless and non-Seamless entry) must hold for 15 months after the date of postage statement finalization, physical samples or electronic image files showing 4 or more advertisers in each mail piece that claims the Incentive price.
- When requested, a Mail Owner must provide to the USPS, for up to 15 months after the date of postage statement finalization, physical samples or electronic image files showing 4 or more advertisers in each mailpiece that claims this Incentive Price. Each sample and image file must show enough information to infer the identity of the advertiser represented therein.
- A failure by a Mail Owner to provide this sample or image file within the stipulated time (30 business days) will constitute non-compliance with the requirements of this Incentive price and

will require the mailer to pay a Postage Adjustment amount to cover the value of the Incentive claimed/received by the mailer, i.e., to pay the full non-Incentive price.

- A Mail Owner who has received this Incentive price and is later found not to have complied with one or more of its requirements will be required to pay to the USPS a Postage Adjustment amount to cover the value of the Incentive that was incorrectly claimed/received by the Mailer Owner. In other words, this Mail Owner will be responsible for paying the full non-Incentive Price for all pieces not in compliance with the Incentive requirements.

**Q: How is the Marriage Mail Incentive price claimed in the eDoc/Postage Statement?**

A: While preparing the eDoc, a Mail Owner must place a check mark in the box for “Marriage Mail Incentive,” or equivalent, using the format of the appropriate eDoc field. By doing so, the Mail Owner or submitter certifies compliance with all requirements for claiming the Marriage Mail Incentive price. Completing this entry will then allow the eDoc submitter or Mail Owner to fill out the relevant Postage Statement entry lines to claim the Incentive price.

**Q: What entries are required in mail.dat and mail.XML in order to claim the Marriage Mail Incentive price?**

A: For eDoc submissions claiming Marriage Mail incentive, the Mail.dat Component Characteristic record must have a value of “MM” as a type of “C” (Content), and the Mail.XML Content block must be used to document a value of “MM.” Note Marriage Mail is a type of content of mail and the incentive is applied automatically when Marriage Mail is identified as content.

**Q: What happens if a mailer is found to be not in compliance with any Marriage Mail Incentive requirement?**

A: A Mail Owner who has received this Incentive price, or is in the process of availing of it, and is later found not to have complied with one or more of its requirements will be required to pay to the USPS a Postage Adjustment amount to cover the value of the Incentive that was incorrectly claimed/received by the Mailer Owner. In other words, this Mail Owner will be responsible for paying the full non-Incentive Price for all pieces not in compliance with the Incentive requirements.

**Q: What is the audit process that will be used to monitor Marriage Mail Incentive use?**

A: The USPS will conduct random audits of Mail Owners, postage statements and mailing submissions that have availed of this Marriage Mail Incentive price. As part of such audits, the USPS may request a Mail Owner to provide to the USPS physical samples or electronic image files showing 4 or more advertisers in each mail piece that claims, or has claimed, this Incentive price. Such requests can be

made at any time up to 15 months after the date of postage statement finalization. Each sample and image file must show enough information to infer the identity of the advertiser represented by that sample or image file. A failure to provide this sample or image file to the USPS within the stipulated time (30 business days) will constitute non-compliance with the requirements of this Incentive price and will require the mailer to pay a Postage Adjustment amount to cover the value of the Incentive claimed/received by the mailer, i.e., to pay the full non-Incentive price. In addition, all Marriage Mail Incentive mailings, postage statements and Mail Owners are subject to the same sampling processes and audits that are utilized by the USPS for all forms of Marketing Mail in general.

**Q: How will incorrectly claimed Incentive amounts be recovered by the USPS?**

A: All Incentive amounts that have been incorrectly claimed by a Mail Owner (i.e., the total discount amount incorrectly availed of) will be recovered from them through a manual consolidated Postage Adjustment process. The Postage Adjustment process will be initiated by the relevant Mail Acceptance unit (typically a Business Mail Entry Unit or BMEU).

**Q: Can you provide more detail on the Frequency requirement of this Incentive?**

A: A Mail Owner can claim this Incentive at any time once this Incentive is available for use. The first time this Incentive is claimed by a Mail Owner will signal the start of that Mail Owner's 12-month cycle or 'Mailer-Year.' Thereafter, this 12-month cycle remains the same for that Mail Owner going forward.

In order to comply with the Frequency requirement, a Mail Owner must submit 10 or more qualifying mailings in each 12-month cycle (a cycle that is defined starting with the first ever month they claimed this Incentive price). Compliance with the Frequency requirement will be checked in the first month following the end of each 12-month cycle. If a Mail Owner is found not to have submitted 10 or more qualifying mailings in the prior 12-month cycle, the USPS will up charge the Mail Owner for the entire Incentive amount claimed in that 12-month cycle. The Mailer Owner (in this non-compliant situation) will be responsible for paying the full non-Incentive price of every mailing that claimed the Incentive price in the prior 12-month cycle.

**Q: Can this Incentive be combined with other incentives or discounts offered by the USPS?**

A: Yes. A Mail Owner who claims the Marriage Mail Incentive is not precluded from availing of other incentives or discounts, subject to meeting the requirements of each incentive and discount.

**Q: Can a mail owner qualify for the incentive if the mail piece has at least 4 *advertisements* but fewer than 4 *advertisers*?**

A: No.

**Q: If a mailing that claimed this Incentive is found to have an insufficient number of advertisers in the mailing, but the Mail Owner still has 10 or more mailings with the correct number of advertisers in a qualifying 12-month period, do the mailings with 4 or more advertisers qualify for the incentive or does the one mailing with fewer than 4 advertisers disqualify the other mailings?**

A: Only the mailing with fewer than 4 advertisers will be subject to a manual adjustment in the situation described above. The remaining mailings will not be adjusted. The only way having one mailing with fewer than 4 advertisers could result in the disqualification of all mailings is if the mail owner sent exactly 10 mailings in the 12-month period and one was found to have an insufficient number of advertisers resulting in only 9 qualified mailings. This would result in an adjustment to all 10 mailings.

**Q: Suppose a company submits marriage mail mailings from two different locations, each with its own Mail Owner CRID. Will the company qualify for this incentive price if they make 5 qualifying mailings using one CRID, and 6 using the other CRID, all within the 12-month period, i.e., more than 10 such mailings within 12 months?**

A: No. The frequency requirement of at least 10 qualifying mailings applies to a single Mail Owner CRID. For meeting the frequency requirement, mailing counts cannot be combined over multiple Mail Owner CRIDs even if they belong to the same company, mailer or mail service provider.

**Q: What 12-month period applies for meeting the frequency requirement – is it the calendar year, the federal government fiscal year, or something else?**

A: The 12-month period for each unique Mail Owner CRID begins with the calendar month in which the marriage mail incentive price is first claimed using that CRID. Thereafter, the 12-month cycle for that CRID continues with that same starting month. For example, if a Mail Owner CRID is used to claim this incentive price for the first time in November 2023, then that specific Mail Owner CRID's 12-month period will run from November 2023 through October 2024, and repeat again from November 2024 through October 2025, and so on.

**Q: Suppose an eDoc submitter is submitting an eDoc for two Mail Owners. Each Mail Owner CRID will claim the Marriage Mail Incentive. Can the eDoc submitter create one Postage Statement for both Mail Owners?**

A: No. Only one Mail Owner is permitted on each Postage Statement claiming the Marriage Mail Incentive price. This unique Mail Owner and Mail Owner CRID is responsible for (a) claiming this Incentive price, (b) complying with all the requirements of this Incentive including potential audits, and (c) any potential postage adjustments charged against this Postage Statement.

**Q: Who should a mailer contact with questions on the Marriage Mail Incentive?**

A: A mailer having questions on the Marriage Mail Incentive can reach out to the Manager (MBME) or a Supervisor (SBME) at their local Business Mail Acceptance unit, or the Mailing & Shipping Solutions Center (MSSC), or their usual BSN/Sales/Business Support/Customer Support point of contact.