

Standardising Measurement: Creative Taxonomy

Ad Creative ID Framework (ACIF) - IAB TECH LAB

The challenge

In the digital video and CTV supply chain, the same ad creative moves through multiple disconnected platforms with different identifiers and inconsistent metadata. Publishers struggle to implement frequency capping and competitive separation when the same ad appears to be different ads across platforms. Advertisers spend millions of hours annually reconciling creative performance across channels, whilst measurement systems produce inconsistent results due to the lack of universal creative identifiers. Without a stable ID that persists across the supply chain, automated ad decisioning breaks down and creative reconciliation becomes a manual, resource-intensive process.

The solution

The Ad Creative ID Framework (ACIF) establishes a comprehensive system for registering ad creative and maintaining unique IDs that persist across platforms throughout the video and CTV supply chain. By combining standardised ad registration through regional authorities, normalised use of VAST's UniversalAdId fields, a directory of registries, and validation APIs, ACIF enables consistent creative identification from initial trafficking through final reporting. This framework allows publishers to make better ad decisions, advertisers to reconcile creative performance efficiently, and measurement systems to produce reliable cross-platform results, all whilst maintaining standardised metadata about advertiser, brand, and product.

Value to the industry

For advertisers & agencies

- Reduce millions of hours spent on creative reconciliation across campaigns and tie performance across all channels and publishers
- Streamline workflows with standardised processes for ad registration and improve investment efficiency through better frequency management

For publishers & platforms

- Implement accurate frequency capping across multiple ad sources and enable competitive separation with consistent advertiser metadata
- Enhance user experience by preventing ad fatigue and conflicts and improve ad decisioning algorithms with stable identifiers

For ad tech & measurement

- Produce reliable cross-platform measurement results
- Validate creative IDs programmatically and generate consistent log data with unified creative identifiers
- Support interoperability across video ad supply chain

Framework components

Ad registration authorities

Regional registries (AD-ID, Clearcast, CIM) assign unique IDs to ad creative along with standardised metadata including advertiser, brand, product, and campaign details.

VAST universalAdId standardisation

VAST CTV Addendum 2024 enables backward compatibility, allowing all VAST versions to carry both the registered ID and registry URL (the UniversalAdId fields specify the unique creative identifier and its issuing authority) for consistent transport.

ACIF directory

Centralised listing of regional ad registration authorities with lookup information, enabling ad tech vendors to identify and validate registered IDs.

Validation API

Standardised protocol for programmatically validating registered IDs and retrieving associated metadata from any participating registry.

Cross-platform persistence

Single registered ID follows creative from traditional linear TV through CTV and digital video environments, maintaining consistency across all platforms.

Standardised metadata

Consistent advertiser name, brand, product, and campaign labels eliminate tedious mapping processes and enable automated decisioning algorithms.

Key use cases

Frequency capping across platforms

A CTV publisher receives the same ad from multiple SSPs, each using different internal IDs. With ACIF's registered UniversalAdId, the publisher's ad decision system recognises all instances as the same creative and accurately tracks frequency, preventing viewer fatigue by limiting exposures to the same ad regardless of delivery source.

Competitive separation management

Standardised metadata from ad registration enables automated competitive separation. When two automotive brands bid for adjacent ad slots, the system uses registered advertiser and product information to prevent direct competitors from appearing consecutively, maintaining brand relationships and viewer experience without manual intervention.

Cross-platform creative reconciliation

An advertiser running campaigns across traditional linear TV, CTV, and digital video uses registered creative IDs to reconcile performance. Analytics teams query all platform log files using the single UniversalAdId, instantly surfacing complete delivery and performance data without tedious manual mapping of different platform-specific identifiers.

Unified cross-channel measurement

Measurement vendors use ACIF validation APIs to match registered creative IDs from VAST tags with advertiser campaign data. This enables consistent creative-level reporting across all publishers and platforms, producing reliable attribution and effectiveness metrics that accurately compare performance across the entire media mix.

Technical overview

Registry support: AD-ID (US), Clearcast (UK), CIM (Belgium), and expanding to additional regional authorities

VAST compatibility: UniversalAdId support for VAST 2.0+ via CTV Addendum 2024, native in VAST 4.0+

Directory access: IAB Tech Lab Tools Portal Specification Adoption program with API endpoint access

Current version: v1.0 (March 2025)

Implement ACIF in your organisation

Learn more: iabtechlab.com/acif

Support: support@iabtechlab.com

Documentation: iabtechlab.com/acif

Working group: **Advanced TV**