Third Party Agent Registration Program Overview

Program Overview

Many Visa clients and merchants rely on third party agents (TPAs) to increase their growth and revenue opportunities with minimal cost. This growth has led some financial institutions to shift operational responsibility for various functions to their agents. Often, this is accompanied by a shift of liability for losses as well. From a client perspective, a well-controlled TPA relationship can reduce the possibility of bank failure, minimize risk of loss to the payment system, and protect the goodwill of the Visa brand.

A TPA performs multiple functions on the issuing and acquiring side of a Visa client's business and is generally defined as an entity that is not connected to VisaNet and provides payment-related services (directly or indirectly) to a Visa client, merchant or agent.

The Third Party Agent (TPA) Registration Program is a Visa-mandated program established to ensure that Visa clients are in compliance with Visa Rules and policies regarding their use of TPAs. Visa clients are required to perform due diligence reviews to ensure that they understand the TPA's business model, financial conditions, background and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) and / or PCI PIN compliance status. TPA registration is required for all entities providing payment related activities, managed services and/or storing, processing, transmitting, or access to Visa account numbers for Visa clients (or on behalf of their merchants).

Visa clients must ensure that all TPAs are registered with Visa as outlined in the Visa Rules. Merchants must ensure the service providers they use are registered by their Visa acquirer.

Client and Merchant Requirements

The TPA Registration Program ensures Visa clients comply with the Visa Rules and policies regarding the use of TPAs. Visa issuing and acquiring clients are required to perform due diligence reviews of their TPAs prior to registration and annually thereafter. Registration is required for all entities providing solicitation activities, payment related services managed services and/or storing, processing, transmitting, or accessing Visa account numbers for Visa clients or on behalf of their merchants. Merchants must ensure the service providers they use are registered by their Visa acquirer.

Reference the TPA FAQ and TPA Due Diligence Risk Standards documents to learn more about registration and due diligence requirements prior to submitting registration. For additional questions, email: Agentregistration@visa.com.

Visa clients must ensure that all third party agents are registered with Visa as outlined in the Visa Rules.

Visa Membership Management

TPA registration must be received by Visa via the Visa Membership Management (VMM) application. This online tool serves as the central location where issuers and acquirers can register TPAs and manage their relationships with these entities. Clients can access the VMM application through Visa Online (VOL). Click here to access VOL.

Third Party Agent Types

Review the TPA Types document for description of services for each TPA type. A TPA can perform any or all of the functions described in the document. Note that any agent performing more than one agent type must be registered for each type by the client.

Client Due Diligence

Visa issuers and acquirers are responsible for performing due diligence prior to using any TPA and must ensure they have policies and procedures in place to provide the correct level of oversight and control of the TPA regarding their Visa program.

If the TPA is contracted by the acquirers' merchant, the acquirer remains responsible to conduct the due diligence and ensure that the merchant and their agent comply with the relevant Visa and industry requirements.

Visa clients must ensure that TPAs that handle cardholder data are PCI DSS compliant and adhere to all Visa operating rules.

Registration Fee and Non-Compliance Assessments

The following fees are assessed to each client that registers Third Party Agents (TPAs):

- $5,000 USD for initial registration and annual renewal for ISO, PSP, HRIPSP and DCV

- $1,000 USD for initial registration and annual renewal for ESO and TPS

Each Visa client that registers a TPA is assessed an initial registration and annual renewal fee for that TPA; based on the type registered. Fees are assessed up to $5,000 USD per client, per TPA per region. There is no fee for ICPIA, MS, DCC or CFS registration.

The non-compliance assessment for an unregistered agent starts at $10,000 per TPA per client.

Changes and Updates

To keep the TPA profiles current and accurate, registered TPAs are required to notify their financial institution(s) of any changes to any information such as: Legal Name / Business Aliases; mergers and acquisitions; legal location or additional business locations; company point of contact; types of services offered, principle ownership; number of Visa transactions or accounts processed annually; compliance status (where applicable); and financial solvency. The financial institutions will update TPA information via the Visa Membership Management tool (VMM).

Merchant Servicer agents are also required to maintain current and accurate profiles. MS agents can submit the above changes to Visa through MSSIP.

Agent Visibility and the Visa Global Registry of Services Providers

The Visa Global Registry of Service Providers has helped drive compliance with the Visa Rules and the data security compliance. The recently updated Registry now includes the Access Control Server (ACS) and Approved Vendor Program (AVP) list.

The Registry incentivizes TPAs to get registered by Visa clients, helping reduce risk exposure to the payment system.

Early identification of TPAs and their respective financial institutions in compromise events has proven invaluable as Visa can engage appropriate parties and take action to contain incidents quickly. Additionally, Visa works closely with clients in developing policies and procedures that ensure appropriate controls are in place to adequately monitor the TPA relationships and protect the payment system.

Benefits of Registration for TPAs

Marketing Opportunity on a Global Scale

The Visa Global Registry of Service Providers contains information on TPAs that are registered with Visa and have met Visa program requirements within Asia Pacific, Canada, Central Europe, Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the U.S. The registry contains service provider information such as company name, company website, corporate headquarter country, region(s) of operation, types of services offered and PCI DSS compliance validation date.

The registry is as a platform where service providers can show their compliance with Visa Inc. rules and any applicable PCI DSS requirements. The registry allows service providers to promote their services to potential clients worldwide and differentiate themselves from other service providers.

Visa clients and merchants should reference the registry to select registered and compliant service providers for outsourcing their payment–related services.

Access to Visa Online

TPAs that are registered by a Visa client, compliant with Visa program requirements and rules, and have demonstrated PCI DSS compliance validation may request access to Visa Online once registered and approved. Visa Online includes publications and documentation not accessible on the public Visa sites, communication archive and Visa access other Visa program materials.

Invitation to Visa hosted events

Registered and approved TPAs receive invitation to Visa hosted events such as the Visa Payment Security Symposium, data security webinar meetings, and security summits.

Merchant Service Self-Identification Program (MSSIP)

Merchant must notify their acquirer of their use of a third party agent to help their acquirer comply with the Visa Rules and policies regarding the use of Third Party Agents (TPAs). Merchants should ensure their service provider is registered with their acquirer and is listed on the Visa Global Registry of Service Providers. Visa Issuing and Acquiring clients are required to perform the same due diligence reviews of the merchant's service providers (MS agents) the same way they do for all TPAs. Merchants should direct their service providers to the Merchant Servicer Self-Identification Program (MSSIP).

The MSSIP allows a Merchant Servicer agent to provide Visa with the necessary information to identify its acquiring bank relationships and facilitate the agent's registration by those acquiring banks. Each bank can then conduct the required Third Party Agent (TPA) registration, via the existing client registration process, to ensure compliance with the Visa Rules and associated government regulatory requirements. Once the Merchant Servicer is registered by a Visa client, completes MSSIP participation and validates PCI DSS compliance they are listed on the Global Registry of Service Providers*.

Acquirers are still required to register MS agents via VMM to be in compliance with the Visa Rules. Merchants must ensure they use MS agents that are registered by their acquirer. Merchants must report their service providers to their acquirer for registration and direct the MS to MSSIP.

*Listing on the registry not applicable to merchant servicers validating PCI DSS compliance through Self-Assessment Questionnaire-D (SAQ-D).

VISA

Benefits of Merchant Servicer participation in MSSIP

Participating in the Merchant Servicer Self–Identification Program allows Visa to:

- Confirm the Visa acquiring bank behind their merchant customers. If sufficient and accurate information is provided by the Merchant Servicer, Visa can determine their merchant's acquiring bank.

- Facilitate registration by the Visa acquiring bank(s) Visa will provide each acquiring bank with the relevant Merchant Servicer information to complete the Merchant Servicer registration.

- Accept the Service Provider Attestation of Compliance (AOC) or Self–Assessment Questionnaire–D (SAQ–D) for PCI DSS compliance validation. Visa will review and track the Merchant Servicer's AOC/SAQ–D and provide reminders as the AOC/SAQ–D renewal date approaches. Publish Merchant Servicers that have validated PCI DSS compliance validation via QSA and AOC submission will be published the Visa Global Registry of Service Providers.

- Visa will publish the Merchant Servicer on the Visa Global Registry of Service Providers, upon Visa client registration approval, continued registration and annual PCI DSS re–validation through the MSSIP tool. Provide a registration confirmation letter to the Merchant Servicer directly (after acquiring bank registers the Merchant Servicer). When the acquiring bank registers the Merchant Servicer, Visa will provide a registration letter to the Merchant Servicer directly.

- Merchant Servicers approved through MSSIP will receive direct communication from Visa on program changes, agent registration changes and PCI DSS updates and receive invitation to enroll to Visa Online and receive Visa communication and event invitations.

Additional Resources

TPA Registration Program FAQs

TPA Glossary

TPA Due Diligence Risk Standards

VMM New Users Guide

Visa's Global Registry of Service Providers

Acquirer Risk Program Standards Guide

Data Security Compliance for Service Providers

Merchant Servicer Self-Identification Program

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