

A Guide to Best Practice on Keyword Bidding

FIA released a Digital Fundraising Practice Note to support adherence to the FIA Code by which all Member Organisations self-regulate. The Practice Note explains a sector-wide commitment to fair play and mutual respect discouraging not-for-profits (NFPs) bidding on other NFPs' branded keywords.

The aim of this is primarily to help avoid wasting resources. The Practice Note provides guidance on how best to navigate this issue and to encourage an industry wide standard. In partnership with integrity and Marlin Communications we have developed this guide to help FIA Member organisations further on this issue.

What is within this guide?

Understanding the problem

1. An introduction to branded keywords
2. How bidding on competitor keywords effects the charity industry

Tackling the problem: Steps your NFP can take to stop this practice

3. How to ensure your NFP is not bidding on other NFP branded keywords
4. How to tell if an NFP is bidding on your branded keywords?
5. What to do if someone is bidding on your keywords

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

1. What is bidding on brand keywords?

Since Google started allowing it back in 2019, brands bidding on each other's branded keywords has become fairly common practice, especially amongst commercial brands.

An example of bidding on a branded keyword is: if someone types Dog Rescue, for example, and the first search result (a paid ad) comes up as Surf Rescue, that's a prime example of bidding on a competitor's branded keyword. This means that Surf Rescue has bid on Dog Rescue's brand name.

This is different from bidding on a generic keyword — like "Homeless" for example. Bidding on branded keywords means you're specifically targeting a competitor's name.

Increasing conversions is often the key motivation behind bidding on competitors' keywords. Someone looking for a specific charity might be ready to donate, in which case a competing charity — or company — is ready to swoop in and get the conversion.

2. What are the impacts for charities?

A. An increase in wasted media spend.

What may be temporarily good for one not-for-profit is undoubtedly bad for the industry. Directly bidding on other charities' branded keywords drives their costs up because they have to compete with you for their own brand name.

Though a charity may see some short-term benefits, users searching for a particular brand are unlikely to donate once it becomes obvious, they've landed on the wrong page. This generally means a waste in advertising budget and this competition can then drive-up CPC (cost-per-click) for both parties.

B. Inflated costs for all not-for-profits

The less efficiently a budget is used, the less funds go towards a charity's cause. Fundraising is a necessary expenditure for charities. But by bidding on competitors' branded keywords marketing spend gets wasted by a tactic with questionable effectiveness – and questionable integrity.

C. It hurts smaller charities

Bigger charities are usually the most competitive because they have bigger budgets. They can absorb the increase to Cost-Per-Click that results from competitors bidding on each other's branded keywords. However, small charities don't often have the same luxury. They need to make every dollar count and this often means being forced to spend hours convincing competitors to stop bidding on their terms.

What is even more challenging is that due to smaller budgets, smaller charities are easy targets for those with larger budgets bidding on their keywords.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

3. How to ensure your NFP is not bidding on other NFP branded keywords

A. Making sure this is discussed with your internal teams and your agency

Your digital team or your digital agency (in the instances where you are outsourcing your Google Ads management) should be aware of your not-for-profit's participation in FIA's Digital Fundraising Practice Note. This will help to ensure your organisation's keyword strategy does not include bidding on competitor brand keywords.

Different digital agencies, fundraisers and marketers utilise different marketing strategies. As a result, when a new employee or agency is onboarded they should be made aware of the FIA Code Practice Note and refer to the list of FIA members to avoid this issue reoccurring.

B. Set up an exclusion list on your Google Search campaigns

Your digital team or agency managing your Google Ads campaigns can set up an exclusion list using the instructions below or by visiting Google's resources.

All Branded keywords from the FIA Member list should be applied with the below instructions:

1) Create a negative keyword list for all FIA members. (<https://fia.org.au/organisational-member-list/>) NB *Please note the membership list is updated with more and more charities joining weekly/monthly so please ensure the list is updated quite regularly.*

- From the page menu on the left, click Keywords.
- Click Negative keywords at the top.
- Click the plus button.
- Click Select a campaign, then select the campaign you want to add the negative keyword list to.

- Enter or paste one negative keyword per line in the text field.
- Select the checkbox next to Save to new or existing list, and enter a name for your negative keyword list, such as “FIA negative keyword list”.
- Click Save.

2) Apply your negative keyword list (FIA Organisational Members list from the website) to all your live campaigns

- Click the tools icon Google Ads in the upper right corner of your account.
- Under “Shared library,” click Negative keyword lists.
- Check the box next to the “negative keyword list.”
- Click Apply to campaigns.
- Select all your live campaigns and click Apply.

4. Actions to take if an NFP is bidding on your branded keywords

How to tell if an NFP is bidding on your branded keywords?

Have the prices of your branded keywords been rising inexplicably? This may be due to other organisations bidding on your branded keywords.

There are a few ways to identify if an NFP is bidding on your organisation’s keywords as well as how to tell which organisation it is. Firstly, you can perform Google searches for your branded keywords and see if other brands are popping up above your organisation in paid ad placements. i.e. If someone types into Google your organisation’s name and the first search result (a paid ad) comes up as a different organisation.

Secondly you can visit Auction Insights for an in-depth view of other NFPs competing for your keywords and how it is affecting your campaign. To navigate to the Auction Insights:

1. Click your relevant campaigns then on the right hand select Keywords
2. Click Auction insights.
3. Set your time frame accordingly so you can see who has been bidding against you yesterday, or for the last month etc. NB only keywords and ad groups that meet a minimum threshold of activity will have the auction insights report.

Display URL domain	↓ Impression share	Overlap rate	Position above rate	Top of page rate	Abs. Top of page rate	Outranking share
You	11.53%	–	–	95.30%	85.63%	–

Once you are in Auction Insights, you can then break it down by campaign, so you can see who is bidding against your organisation for each of the campaigns. Auction Insights will provide the following statistics:

- **Impression Share** - The share your organisation and any competitor has, which means how much of the available traffic your organisation is getting vs. your competitors (if any).
- **Overlap Rate** - The rate of how often a competitor's ad received an impression when your organisation's ad also received an impression. For example, if another NFP or website in the auction insights report is showing '50%' in this column, it means that in 5 out of every 10 times your organisation's ad showed, an ad from this advertiser was shown as well.
- **Outranking Share** - Shows you how often your organisation's ad ranked higher in the auction than another NFP's ad, or if your ad showed when their ads did not. E.g., If another NFP is showing 10% in your auction insights report in this column then it means your ad outbid and won over the other NFP's ad. So, your ad would have shown up for the keywords when the other NFP's ad didn't for 1 out of every 10 impressions that you were eligible to receive.
- **Position above rate** - Displays how often the other NFP's ad was shown in a position higher than your organisation's ad. If another NFP in your auction insights report is showing '20%' in this column, it means their ad showed in a position above yours in 20 out of every 100 times when your ads showed at the same time.
- **Top of page rate** - Tells you how often your ad or a competitor's ad was shown at the top of the page, above the unpaid search results.
- **Absolute top of the page rate** - Is exactly how it sounds and shows how often your organisation's ad was shown at the absolute top of the page as the very first ad above the organic search results.

5. Actions to take if an NFP is bidding on your branded keywords

What can you do if someone has bid on your keywords?

If a fellow FIA member is bidding on your keywords, reach out to the member and share the recommendations from the FIA Digital Practice Note. As an FIA member they are obliged to adhere to the Code to ensure ethical, best-practice fundraising.

There's a chance they may not even realise it's happening, especially if they've outsourced their Google AdWords to an agency unfamiliar with charity marketing practices. Please note that only FIA Members have made the commitment to abide by the Code and non-members are not able to be held accountable by the regime.

In the scenario where a competitor NFP will not stop bidding on your organisation's branded keyword and you believe there's a trademark violation, you can submit a complaint to Google [here](#). Before starting the process, you will need to gather supporting documentation to submit the form. This includes:

- The complete list of terms/phrases that are trademarked.
- Trademark registration number and country.
- Name of trademark owner.
- Your ad account ID and name.
- Screenshots of the offending ad(s).
- A list of all websites that are permitted to use your trademark (if any).
- Your (or your agency's) Bing/Google account manager.

SUMMARY

Following this guide will ensure your organisation is adhering to the agreement set out in the FIA Digital Practice Note. To summarise, below is a list of the steps you are encouraged to take to ensure your organisation is meeting the requirements:

- Communicate the changes to your organisation's relevant digital team.
- Review the branded keywords your organisation is currently bidding on in all Google Ads campaigns to ensure there are no other organisation's branded keywords included.
- Ensure the exclusion list provided is set up correctly within all of your Google Ads campaigns.
- If another organisation is bidding on your branded keywords, share this guide to facilitate a conversation or if the problem persists submit a complaint to Google.

Thank you to agency [ntegr!ty](#) and [Marlin Communications](#) for their role in developing this guide. January 2023



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