BPC Request for Industry Comment – Semantic Model Information Elements

Informational and Q&A Session

On October 1st, the Business Payments Coalition (BPC) held an informational Q&A session to highlight and discuss the e-Invoice Semantic Model Information Elements associated with the most commonly used business processes for invoice exchange in the North American market. The BPC is currently seeking industry feedback to incorporate additional updates to the information elements and, if appropriate, seek further input on any specific items relating to the Semantic Model. In case you missed it, or wish to learn more, we've provided a recap of the questions and answers from the session below.

Q: Is the semantic model based on Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)?

A: No. The semantic model is based on ISO / IEC 19845 Universal Business Language (UBL), which uses XML as its syntax. ISO/IEC 19845 UBL is a widely adopted global e-invoice standard used by other e-Invoice exchange frameworks, and is the foundation for the European e-invoice standard EN-16931 that the BPC assessed and reported on in 2019.

Q: Is there an online forum/library resource for FAQs about data elements?

A: For reference, Information Elements descriptions are available on the BPC website https://businesspaymentscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/bpc_information-element-descriptions-industry-comment.pdf

Q: Can you talk more about the adoption strategy for a U.S. framework? How well has it been received amongst the existing providers/access points for e-Invoicing? Locally and globally?

A: We've been engaging the industry on the e-invoice challenges for a number of years now. Well over one hundred industry experts, representing the largest industry providers have participated in the various work groups. Both domestically and globally the reception of the BPC work has been very positive.

Q: Will the interoperability (commercial agreement) be signed between service providers or will the agreements be signed between the access point and BPC? Also, can you speak to the receipt handling within the framework?

A: No, the BPC will not be a party to any agreements. The exchange framework will have a governance entity and process for establishing participation agreements. In 2021, the BPC will convene a governance assessment work group to study the different organizational structures that are used to manage similar frameworks in other markets. The learnings from this work will be shared and support efforts to establishing an appropriate governance approach for the U.S. market. Once a governance approach and organization is identified, the exchange framework agreement requirements will be established.

Regarding the second part of the question, the 4 corner model includes acknowledgement that a message has been received and processed.

Q: What do I need to become an Access Point to send and receive an e-invoice?

A: Currently, technical and legal requirements have not yet been defined. The BPC Technical and Semantic Model work groups are defining the access point requirements for sending and receiving e-invoices. This work is ongoing and will continue into 2021.

In 2021, the BPC will convene a governance assessment work group to study different organizational structures that are used to manage similar frameworks in other markets. The learnings from this work will inform the on-boarding requirements for access points.

Q: Is there a plan for a Peppol compatible network for international invoice exchange?

A: At this time, there isn't a plan to directly integrate with the Peppol network. However, the proposed components of the exchange framework in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico use the same building blocks as Peppol with an objective to establish interoperability across e-invoice frameworks internationally. The building blocks are outlined in the Global Interoperability Framework (GIF), a joint effort by members from Peppol, BPC, European e-Invoice Service Provider Association (EESPA), and ConnectOnce. The purpose of the GIF is to promote areas of common understanding for discovery, delivery, data, and directives for exchanging invoices in a 4-corner model.

Q: Are there elements that consider interoperability or exchange with other countries?

A: In 2019, the Business Payments Coalition conducted an assessment of the European e-Invoice standard EN-16931 for use in the US. EN-16931 fit several of the guiding principles the work group used during the assessment, including the standard is open, royalty-free, vendor-agnostic, and does not require a singular platform or solution. Also, EN-16931 is independent of any payment system and is payment method agnostic. The results of the assessment can be found on the BPC website. The semantic model is based on the findings from the assessment and uses ISO / IEC 19845 UBL as the baseline. At the element level, if other countries use UBL, then yes, interoperability can be achieved.

Q: Is there a comparison document between ANSI standards or ERP system standards? For example, a schema that would help billers correctly associate their data with the European standard.

A: Not yet. However, we can address it once we complete the semantic specifications and associate them with the U.S. and Canadian standards (vs. European) as there are differences.

Q: Every year, the Mexican government adds new rules to e-Invoicing that impact commercial and legal requirements. How is the standard going handle such changes? It's very complex to align our systems with new information.

A: The proposed BPC semantic model is intended for cross-border exchange between Mexican, U.S. and Canadian businesses; not the specific content requirements. It is not meant to enforce compliance with or replace the content standards that govern Mexican business-to-business (B2B) e-Invoice exchange.

Q: : I'm interested in participating in testing the semantic model by creating my own files and testing them against the schematron validation tool. Do you have any tools that would allow me to do so?

A: Yes, the BPC has a developed a set of validation artefact tools. You can access the validation artefact tools through the link below. Instructions on how to use the tools can be found in the file once unzipped. Evaluators are encouraged to create their own test files to run against the validation tool and share their results at the following location https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1n-bNQu8sG5ZRATc7JLzDtzY9JzQ5qCuC - File Name: bpc-semantics-0.1-CCYYMMDD-HHMMSSz.zip

Q: What if the type of suggested change that I want to provide is not in the list of dropdown selections?

A: If you have a suggested change that is not included in the dropdown selections, you can provide the suggested change in the comment box for that Information Element. You can also suggest a new information element in Section 7 Additional Suggested Information Elements of the form.

For reference, Information Elements descriptions are available on the BPC website https://businesspaymentscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/bpc_information-element-descriptions-industry-comment.pdf

Q: Is there a way for commenters from the same industry to collaborate on comments, and to review each other's feedback and suggested changes?

A: Yes. The BPC recommends gathering a sub-group of both business and technical subject matter experts to review and jointly provide feedback.

Q: What if I have additional comments or questions?

A: There are several options for providing additional comments and asking questions.

- Provide comments or questions related to an information element in the Comment column in the applicable row within the table.
- Use Section 7.0. Additional Suggested Information Elements
- Email the Business Payments Coalition at business.payments.smb@mpls.frb.org.