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## **EDITORIAL: BBB's new rating system strikes us as rank behavior**

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Struggling businesses in grim economic times are well justified in questioning the Better Business Bureau's new system of ranking businesses, especially considering the dubious, even self-serving criteria being used.

As *Trib* staffer Cindy V. Culp revealed in her Page One story yesterday, some business owners — including here in Waco — are rankled by the BBB's new standards for rating businesses, including rankings partially determined by whether a business is a dues-paying member of — guess who? — the BBB.

Add further complaints **about businesses reportedly harassed by the BBB to become members so they can avoid possible ranking consequences**, and you have a once-worthy organization teetering on the edge of irrelevance and irresponsibility.

That's not how businesses should operate and it's certainly not how the BBB should operate. We expect better.

BBB officials launched their new system this month, using criteria ranging from how long an individual business has been around to whether it has an e-mail address.

That means a mom-and-pop business that lacks an e-mail address and isn't a chamber member could consequently be scored low.

Culp's investigation revealed one local business graded "F" because the BBB lacked sufficient background on the business and the business didn't respond to a complaint — the only complaint leveled at it during a three-year period.

Business owners we know will tell you that a business that draws only one formal complaint in three years must be doing something right.

BBB officials — who don't even have an office in Waco anymore — say they haven't got enough staff to compile background information themselves. Fine. Then why is the BBB rating establishments when it acknowledges ignorance of those very establishments?

Seems like someone should rank the BBB.

Allow us. The BBB's current system rates an "F." The organization must shape up if it's going to scrutinize our business community or leave the business to someone else.