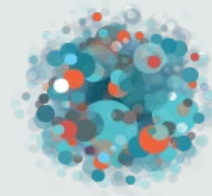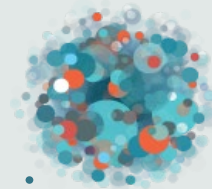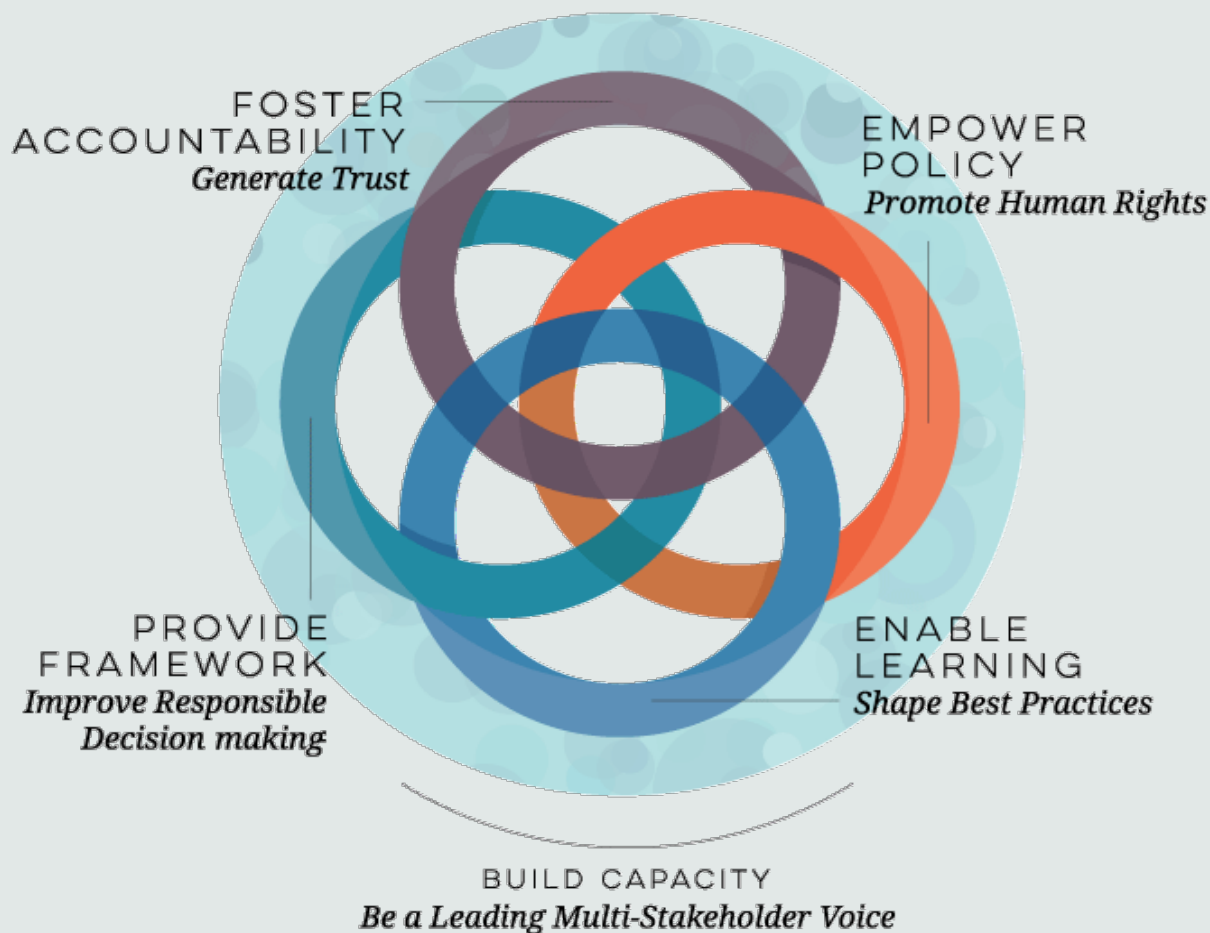# Getting to Know the Global Network Initiative

About GNI

The mission of the Global Network Initiative is to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights in the information communications and technology (ICT) industry by setting a global standard for responsible company decision making and serving as a multistakeholder voice in the face of government restrictions and demands.

Implementing GNI Mission

GNI implements its mission through four strategic pillars:

FOSTER ACCOUNTABILITY
Generate Trust

EMPOWER POLICY
Promote Human Rights

PROVIDE FRAMEWORK
Improve Responsible Decision making

ENABLE LEARNING
Shape Best Practices

BUILD CAPACITY
*Be a Leading Multi-Stakeholder Voice*

Framework

Provide a framework for companies to guide responsible decision making.

- **GNI Principles** - High-level commitments for all participants.
- **Implementation Guidelines** - Specific, operational commitments by participating companies.

The Principles and Implementation Guidelines are grounded in international human rights law and informed by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.
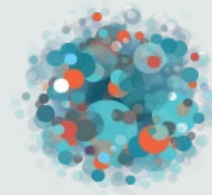
GNI Principles

The [GNI Principles](#) state the overarching commitment of members to collaborate in the advancement of user rights to freedom of expression and privacy.

The Principles provide high-level guidance to the ICT industry on how to respect, protect, and advance user rights to freedom of expression and privacy, including when faced with government demands for censorship and disclosure of user's personal information.

Implementation Guidelines

The [Implementation Guidelines](#) offer more detailed guidance to ICT companies on how to put the Principles into practice, and also provide the framework for collaboration among companies, CSOs, investors, and academics. The guidelines are regularly reviewed and revised to take into account actual experience, evolving circumstances and stakeholder feedback.

Appendix IV: Mapping the GNI Principles to Implementation Guidelines

Category	GNI Principle[9]	Matching IG Item(s)
2. Freedom of Expression	**2.1** Participating companies will respect and protect the freedom of expression of their users by seeking to avoid or minimize the impact of government restrictions on freedom of expression, including restrictions on the information available to users and the opportunities for users to create and communicate ideas and information, regardless of frontiers or media of communication.	**2.4:** Consistent with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and considering international human rights standards, participating companies will carry out human rights due diligence to identify, prevent, evaluate, mitigate and account for risks to the freedom of expression and privacy rights that are implicated by the company's products, services, activities and operations.[10] **3.2:** When required to restrict communications, or remove content, or to provide personal information to government authorities, participating companies will: • **(a)** Require that governments follow established domestic legal processes when they are seeking to (1) restrict freedom of expression or (2) access personal information. • **(b)** Request clear written communications from the government that explain the legal basis for government restrictions to freedom of expression and government demands for personal information, including the name of the requesting government entity and the name, title and signature of the authorized official. • **(c)** Keep - where the law permits verbal demands and in emergency situations, when communications will be oral rather than written -, records of these demands. • **(d)** Interpret government restrictions and demands so as to minimize the negative effect on freedom of expression.

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[9] Internal numbering system created for Principles and sub-Principles.

[10] This IG goes on to specify: "The process includes assessing actual and potential human rights impacts on individuals, integrating and acting upon the findings, tracking responses, and communicating how impacts are addressed as set forth in this section 2 of the Implementation Guidelines. In assessing actual and potential human rights impacts, companies should draw on a range of sources, including voices from inside relevant countries, human rights groups, government bodies, and international organizations. Companies should also evaluate whether relevant local laws and practices are consistent with rule of law requirements and international and regional human rights norms."

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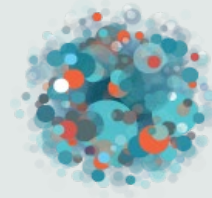
Accountability & Assessment

Foster accountability to generate trust.

- GNI members participate in an assessment conducted by independent third-party assessors. Companies are expected to demonstrate good-faith implementation of the GNI Principles with improvement over time.

- The <u>Assessment Toolkit</u> contains the methodology and templates for conducting company assessments.
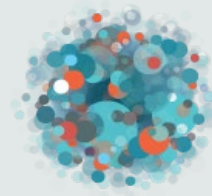
Enable Learning

Enable public and private opportunities for shared learning and shape best practice guidance.

- Learning calls and sessions on GNI policy priorities and other emerging issues
- Annual public learning events
- Experiences from the assessment process are channeled into shared learning efforts
- Providing sources such as the Country Legal Framework Resource

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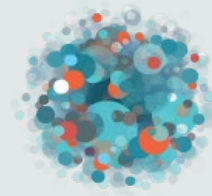
Policy Engagement

Empower collective policy advocacy to promote human rights respecting laws, policies and practices worldwide.
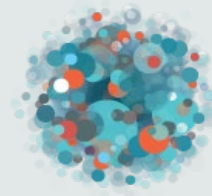
GNI policy priorities include:

- Network Disruptions
- Intermediary Liability & Content Regulation
- Surveillance
- Jurisdiction Assertions & Limits
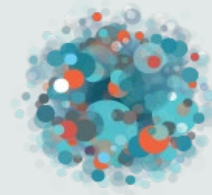
Policy Engagement

GNI engages with governments and international institutions in support of laws and policies that promote and protect freedom of expression and privacy. For example, GNI participates in the [Christchurch Call Advisory Network](#), the [Freedom Online Coalition Advisory Network](#), and the [Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network](#). GNI has also partnered with multilateral institutions, including the [United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate](#) and the [Council of Europe](#).

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