

GNI Meaningful Transparency Consultancy

Background

The mission of the Global Network Initiative (GNI) is to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights in the information and communications 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. GNI is a membership organization, with members organized into four constituencies: ICT companies, civil society organizations (including human rights and press freedom groups), academics and academic institutions, and investors from around the world.

Transparency is a central and cross-cutting element of GNI's work. The GNI [Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy](#) (the Principles) set out a process for holding member companies accountable through a system of transparency with the public, as well as a unique, independent assessment and evaluation that facilitates insight into sensitive internal information related to company implementation of the Principles. GNI's more detailed [Implementation Guidelines](#) set out expectations for companies to operate in a transparent manner when required by governments to restrict communications or provide personal information, as well as to encourage governments to be specific, transparent, and consistent regarding demands, laws, and regulations that impact freedom of expression or the right to privacy.

Context

There is broad agreement that in order to foster accountability and empower users, better mechanisms are needed for sharing information, building trust, providing insights, and facilitating collaboration around how companies and governments generate, collect and use information about individuals in the digital sphere. However, a variety of logistical, economic, technical, legal, and political obstacles have impeded progress toward these goals.

Conversations around transparency often miss important perspectives and there is a surprising lack of consensus on what exactly transparency means in the digital context. Around the world, countries are advancing new approaches to technology governance and regulation, many requiring technology companies and governments to provide certain kinds of information to the public, researchers, and relevant regulatory and oversight bodies. If properly informed by diverse, expert, and cross-sectoral input, these regulations have the potential to enhance meaningful transparency and foster innovative and productive collaboration. If not, they could

result in facile tick-box exercises, unintentionally create precedents that less-democratic governments can exploit, or establish burdensome requirements that impede collaboration and limit competition.

Project Description

Working along two tracks, GNI will **(i) use its platform for trust-based, confidential convening to facilitate candid, probing conversations** across our diverse academic, civil society, ICT company, and investor members about the nature of the obstacles to additional transparency and collaboration around company and government data use. Insights and recommendations generated through these discussions will feed into **(ii) a newly established “Action Coalition on Meaningful Transparency” (ACT)** organized under the auspices of the Danish Government’s Technology for Democracy initiative. This “big tent” coalition will engage a wide range of academics, companies, civil society representatives, international organizations, and government officials from around the world, and will be developed with a focus on ensuring participation from groups that have been historically underrepresented in these conversations. It will be led by a “Steering Group” of 8-12 organizations, including GNI, and serve as a platform to map out and develop shared understandings of initiatives attempting to enhance transparency and collaboration around digital transparency. It will also seek to facilitate coordination in order to avoid duplication of efforts, align priorities, identify gaps, iron out conflicting approaches, and coalesce attention to the issue in an accessible and actionable way.

Lessons learned and subsequent policy recommendations from both processes will be published, translated, and made publicly available to ensure meaningful access for additional actors who are not be able to participate.

Project Goals and Scope of Work

GNI is looking to contract a project lead to help carry out this work over the course of 2022. The project lead will be primarily responsible for planning and facilitating both the internal discussions and action coalition elements of the project (more below), working together with GNI staff and members, as well as with members of the Action Coalition Steering Group.

The project lead will be primarily responsible for: conducting research; organizing and facilitating virtual and (if possible) in-person meetings; and drafting meeting summaries and other outputs. The project lead will coordinate with GNI staff on but will not be primarily responsible for day-to-day administrative duties such as travel logistics and vendor management, however some administrative support may be necessary.

Part 1 – “Internal GNI Transparency Discussions”

Working together with GNI Staff, the project lead will identify relevant experts from GNI’s membership. This may include regular points of contact at GNI member organizations, as well as others who do not engage regularly in GNI processes, including individuals within companies engaged in product design, data protection / legal compliance, and partnership development, and researchers and advocates working on data protection and transparency from the non-company side.

Together with GNI staff, the project lead will design a series of carefully sequenced and curated interviews, surveys, and meetings that bring these experts together to identify the full range of obstacles to additional and more meaningful disclosure of information about both corporate data use and government interventions and restrictions on communications platforms and services. These engagements will also examine how researchers and academics use such information and what additional use cases could be facilitated by additional disclosure and/or collaboration. Although these meetings will mostly be conducted virtually, it may also be possible to organize some in-person meetings on the margins of quarterly GNI board meetings or other gatherings. The project lead will also be responsible for capturing meeting takeaways and facilitating progress toward the generation of agreed, transparency-related recommendations oriented towards companies, governments, and civil society.

The project lead will meet at least monthly with GNI Staff, and more frequently as needed, to discuss progress and plan next steps. **This component of the project is expected to require an average of five hours per week (260 hours total).**

Part II – “Action Coalition on Meaningful Transparency”

The ACT will engage a wider range of academics, civil society organizations, companies, governments, and international organizations in order to:

1. clarify relevant definitions and terminology;
2. map existing and identify missing efforts;
3. expand visibility for and the voice of underrepresented actors and communities in these conversations;
4. share lessons learned;
5. identify opportunities for alignment and coordination; and

6. produce recommendations for companies, donors, researchers, and governments to inform timely policy making.

The project lead will engage regularly via email and other means with the Steering Group.¹ They will help organize monthly calls with the Steering Group, setting the agenda, leading the calls, and following-up with action items. With guidance from the Steering Group, the project lead will help gather and organize relevant information on existing research and initiatives, conduct outreach to potentially interested participants, organize virtual and in-person events, and draft outputs for public dissemination. Working with GNI staff and in line with GNI's confidentiality policy, the project lead will also help facilitate information sharing and engagement between GNI members participating in the internal transparency discussions and the full action coalition.

This component of the project is expected to require an average of ten hours per week (520 hours total).

Timeline and Deliverables

The project duration is 12 months, from February 2022 to January 2023. The final timeline and outputs will be determined by GNI and the ACT Steering Group, as appropriate, and are subject to change. The key phases of the project and proposed deliverables are anticipated to be:

January – June 2022 (leading into the second Technology for Democracy Summit in Copenhagen):

- Identify relevant participants from GNI members and develop a planned series of internal conversations
- Proposing agendas for, coordinating, and ensuring follow-up on Steering Group meetings
- Conduct outreach to potential ACT participants
- Send monthly update emails to ACT participants
- Help organize, attend, and participate where appropriate at relevant GNI, Action Coalition, and other events
- Potentially attend GNI Q1 and Q2 Board Meetings to organize side-conversations among members
- Publish an index of relevant terminology and definitions
- Map past, ongoing, and planned efforts related to transparency and data access

¹ Current Steering Group members include: the Center for Democracy & Technology, the Center for Technology & Society at Fundação Getulio Vargas, the Centre for Communications Governance at the National Law University Delhi, the Centre for International Governance Innovation, the Digital Forensic Research Lab, the Global Network Initiative, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

- Organize at least one virtual workshop and one in-person convening (with a virtual contingency)
- Develop initial recommendations for legislation on transparency

July – December 2022 (leading into the second Summit for Democracy in Washington):

- Send monthly update emails to ACT participants
- Potentially attend GNI Q3 and Q4 Board Meetings and potentially organize side-conversations among members
- Organize at least one virtual workshop and one in-person convening (with a virtual contingency)
- Compile and publish lessons learned
- Develop and publish an agenda for further research and collaboration
- Produce and publish recommendations for companies, governments, and nongovernmental stakeholders

Evaluation Criteria

The successful application will reflect:

- Project management experience
- Familiarity with the digital rights ecosystem
- Experience working on transparency issues
- Experience leading conversations involving diverse stakeholders on sensitive topics, and facilitating consensus outcomes/outputs
- Experience engaging with multistakeholder membership organizations
- Experience conducting research and communicating results, including developing research methodologies, and using data visualization software, etc.
- Demonstrated ability to encourage and facilitate inclusive processes that allow for the expression of diverse viewpoints
- Appreciation for the various forms of diversity that impact inclusion within GNI, including but not limited to geographic diversity, lingual diversity, and sectoral diversity

Submitting Your Application

The deadline to apply to the call is February 11. Please include in your application:

- Resume/CV of any staff members who would be expected to contribute
- Short written expression of interest and articulation of relevant experience (2-3 pages)
- Cost estimate, including detailed time and staffing estimate and any open questions
- Previous clients / references (only to be used if selected to move forward)

Please submit your application to csheehy@globalnetworkinitiative.org with the subject line “APPLICATION: Transparency Project Lead” by 11:59pm EDT on February 11.