



# GRI 415: Public Policy 2016

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1 JULY 2018

TOPIC STANDARD

# 415

# GRI 415: Public Policy 2016

## Topic Standard

### Effective date

This Standard is effective for reports or other materials published on or after 1 July 2018.

### Responsibility

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This Standard was developed in the public interest and in accordance with the requirements of the GSSB Due Process Protocol. It has been developed using multi-stakeholder expertise, and with regard to authoritative intergovernmental instruments and widely held expectations of organizations relating to social, environmental, and economic responsibilities.

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# Introduction

*GRI 415: Public Policy 2016* contains disclosures for organizations to report information about their public policy-related impacts, and how they manage these impacts.

The Standard is structured as follows:

- [Section 1](#) contains a requirement, which provides information about how the organization manages its public policy-related impacts.
- [Section 2](#) contains two disclosures, which provides information about the organization's public policy-related impacts.
- The [Glossary](#) contains defined terms with a specific meaning when used in the GRI Standards. The terms are underlined in the text of the GRI Standards and linked to the definitions.
- The [Bibliography](#) lists authoritative intergovernmental instruments used in developing this Standard.

The rest of the Introduction section provides a background on the topic, an overview of the system of GRI Standards and further information on using this Standard.

## Background on the topic

This Standard addresses the topic of public policy. This includes an organization's participation in the development of public policy, through activities such as lobbying and making financial or in-kind contributions to political parties, politicians, or causes.

While an organization can positively support the public political process and encourage the development of public policy that benefits society at large, this can also bring risks associated with corruption, bribery, and undue influence, among others.

These concepts are covered in key instruments of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: see the [Bibliography](#).

## System of GRI Standards

This Standard is part of the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards (GRI Standards). The GRI Standards enable an organization to report information about its most significant impacts on the economy, environment, and people, including impacts on their human rights, and how it manages these impacts.

The GRI Standards are structured as a system of interrelated standards that are organized into three series: GRI Universal Standards, GRI Sector Standards, and GRI Topic Standards (see [Figure 1](#) in this Standard).

### Universal Standards: GRI 1, GRI 2 and GRI 3

[GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#) specifies the requirements that the organization must comply with to report in accordance with the GRI Standards. The organization begins using the GRI Standards by consulting *GRI 1*.

[GRI 2: General Disclosures 2021](#) contains disclosures that the organization uses to provide information about its reporting practices and other organizational details, such as its activities, governance, and policies.

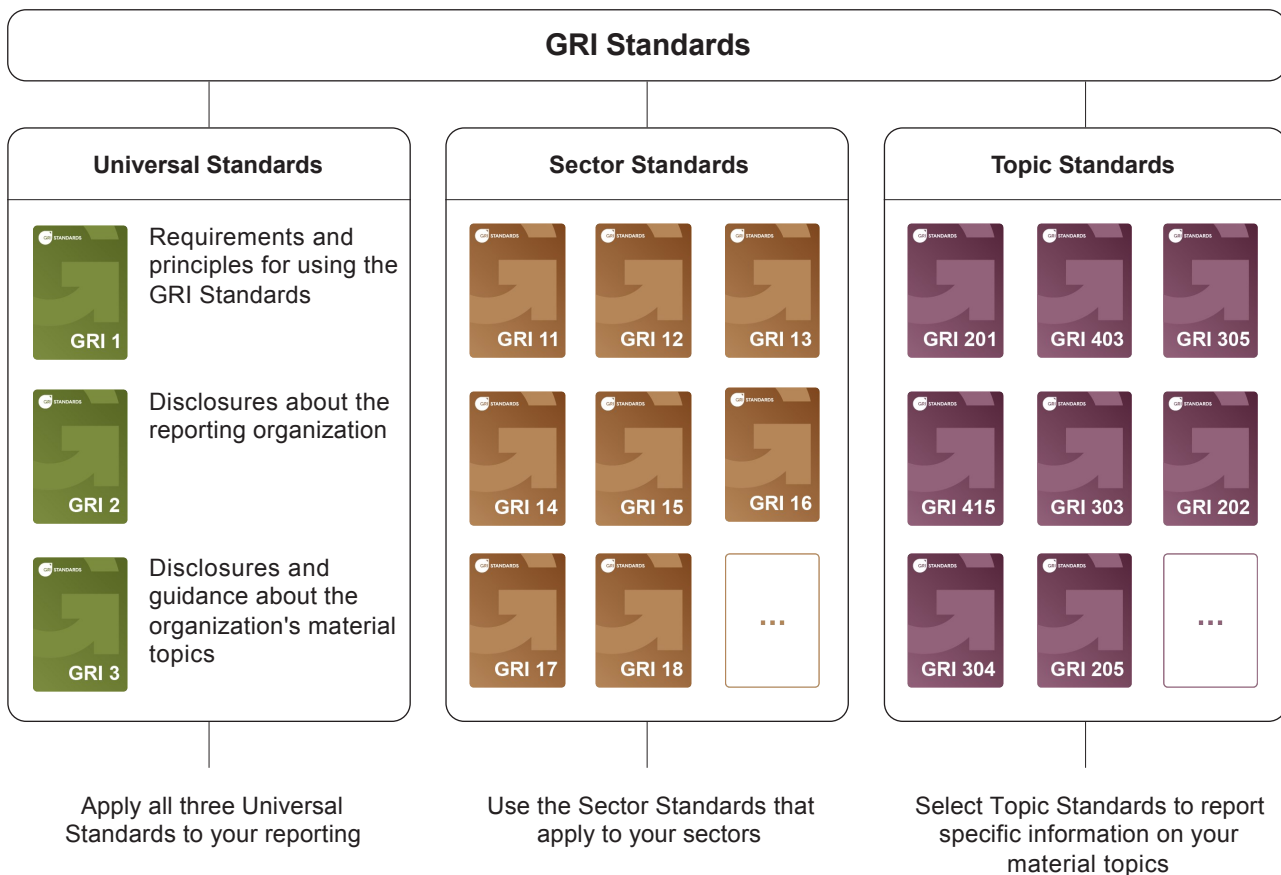
[GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#) provides guidance on how to determine material topics. It also contains disclosures that the organization uses to report information about its process of determining material topics, its list of material topics, and how it manages each topic.

### Sector Standards

The Sector Standards provide information for organizations about their likely material topics. The organization uses the Sector Standards that apply to its sectors when determining its material topics and when determining what to report for each material topic.

### Topic Standards

The Topic Standards contain disclosures that the organization uses to report information about its impacts in relation to particular topics. The organization uses the Topic Standards according to the list of material topics it has determined using *GRI 3*.

**Figure 1. GRI Standards: Universal, Sector and Topic Standards**

## Using this Standard

This Standard can be used by any organization – regardless of size, type, sector, geographic location, or reporting experience – to report information about its public policy-related impacts.

An organization reporting in accordance with the GRI Standards is required to report the following disclosures if it has determined public policy to be a material topic:

- [Disclosure 3-3 in GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#) (see clause 1.1 in this Standard);
- Any disclosure from this Topic Standard that is relevant to the organization's public policy-related impacts (Disclosure 415-1).

See [Requirements 4 and 5 in GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#).

Reasons for omission are permitted for these disclosures.

If the organization cannot comply with a disclosure or with a requirement in a disclosure (e.g., because the required information is confidential or subject to legal prohibitions), the organization is required to specify the disclosure or the requirement it cannot comply with, and provide a reason for omission together with an explanation in the GRI content index. See [Requirement 6 in GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#) for more information on reasons for omission.

If the organization cannot report the required information about an item specified in a disclosure because the item (e.g., committee, policy, practice, process) does not exist, it can comply with the requirement by reporting this to be the case. The organization can explain the reasons for not having this item, or describe any plans to develop it. The disclosure does not require the organization to implement the item (e.g., developing a policy), but to report that the item does not exist.

If the organization intends to publish a standalone sustainability report, it does not need to repeat information that it has already reported publicly elsewhere, such as on web pages or in its annual report. In such a case, the organization can report a required disclosure by providing a reference in the GRI content index as to where this information can be found (e.g., by providing a link to the web page or citing the page in the annual report where the information has been published).

**Requirements, guidance and defined terms**

The following apply throughout this Standard:

Requirements are presented in **bold font** and indicated by the word 'shall'. An organization must comply with requirements to report in accordance with the GRI Standards.

Requirements may be accompanied by guidance.

Guidance includes background information, explanations, and examples to help the organization better understand the requirements. The organization is not required to comply with guidance.

The Standards may also include recommendations. These are cases where a particular course of action is encouraged but not required.

The word 'should' indicates a recommendation, and the word 'can' indicates a possibility or option.

Defined terms are underlined in the text of the GRI Standards and linked to their definitions in the [Glossary](#). The organization is required to apply the definitions in the Glossary.

# 1. Topic management disclosures

An organization reporting in accordance with the GRI Standards is required to report how it manages each of its material topics.

An organization that has determined public policy to be a material topic is required to report how it manages the topic using [Disclosure 3-3 in GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#) (see clause 1.1 in this section).

This section is therefore designed to supplement – and not replace – Disclosure 3-3 in *GRI 3*.

**REQUIREMENTS** 1.1 **The reporting organization shall report how it manages public policy using [Disclosure 3-3 in GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#).**

**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1.2 The reporting organization should report:

- 1.2.1 the significant issues that are the focus of its participation in public policy development and lobbying;
- 1.2.2 its stance on these issues, and any differences between its lobbying positions and any stated policies, goals, or other public positions.

## 2. Topic disclosures

### Disclosure 415-1 Political contributions

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**REQUIREMENTS**

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Total monetary value of financial and in-kind political contributions made directly and indirectly by the organization by country and recipient/beneficiary.
- b. If applicable, how the monetary value of in-kind contributions was estimated.

**Compilation requirements**

- 2.1 When compiling the information specified in Disclosure 415-1, the reporting organization shall calculate financial political contributions in compliance with national accounting rules, where these exist.

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**GUIDANCE**

**Background**

The purpose of this disclosure is to identify an organization's support for political causes.

This disclosure can provide an indication of the extent to which an organization's political contributions are in line with its stated policies, goals, or other public positions.

Direct or indirect contributions to political causes can also present corruption risks, because they can be used to exert undue influence on the political process. Many countries have legislation that limits the amount an organization can spend on political parties and candidates for campaigning purposes. If an organization channels contributions indirectly through intermediaries, such as lobbyists or organizations linked to political causes, it can improperly circumvent such legislation.



# Glossary

This glossary provides definitions for terms used in this Standard. The organization is required to apply these definitions when using the GRI Standards.

The definitions included in this glossary may contain terms that are further defined in the complete [GRI Standards Glossary](#). All defined terms are underlined. If a term is not defined in this glossary or in the complete [GRI Standards Glossary](#), definitions that are commonly used and understood apply.

- 
- H** **human rights**  
rights inherent to all human beings, which include, at a minimum, the rights set out in the *United Nations (UN) International Bill of Human Rights* and the principles concerning fundamental rights set out in the *International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*
- Source: United Nations (UN), *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework*, 2011; modified
- Note: See [Guidance to 2-23-b-i in GRI 2: General Disclosures 2021](#) for more information on ‘human rights’.
- 
- I** **impact**  
effect the organization has or could have on the economy, environment, and people, including on their human rights, which in turn can indicate its contribution (negative or positive) to sustainable development
- Note 1: Impacts can be actual or potential, negative or positive, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, and reversible or irreversible.
- Note 2: See section [2.1 in GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#) for more information on ‘impact’.
- indirect political contribution**  
financial or in-kind support to political parties, their representatives, or candidates for office made through an intermediary organization such as a lobbyist or charity, or support given to an organization such as a think tank or trade association linked to or supporting particular political parties or causes
- 
- M** **material topics**  
topics that represent the organization’s most significant impacts on the economy, environment, and people, including impacts on their human rights
- Note: See [section 2.2 in GRI 1: Foundation 2021](#) and [section 1 in GRI 3: Material Topics 2021](#) for more information on ‘material topics’.
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- P** **political contribution**  
financial or in-kind support given directly or indirectly to political parties, their elected representatives, or persons seeking political office
- Note 1: Financial contributions can include donations, loans, sponsorships, retainers, or the purchase of tickets for fundraising events.
- Note 2: In-kind contributions can include advertising, use of facilities, design and printing, donation of equipment, or the provision of board membership, employment or consultancy work for elected politicians or candidates for office.
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- S** **sustainable development / sustainability**  
development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- Source: World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 1987

Note: The terms 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' are used interchangeably in the GRI Standards.

# Bibliography

This section lists authoritative intergovernmental instruments used in developing this Standard.

**Authoritative instruments:**

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*, 2011.
2. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Principles, 'G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance', 2015.
3. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Recommendation, 'Recommendation of the Council on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying', 2010.



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