

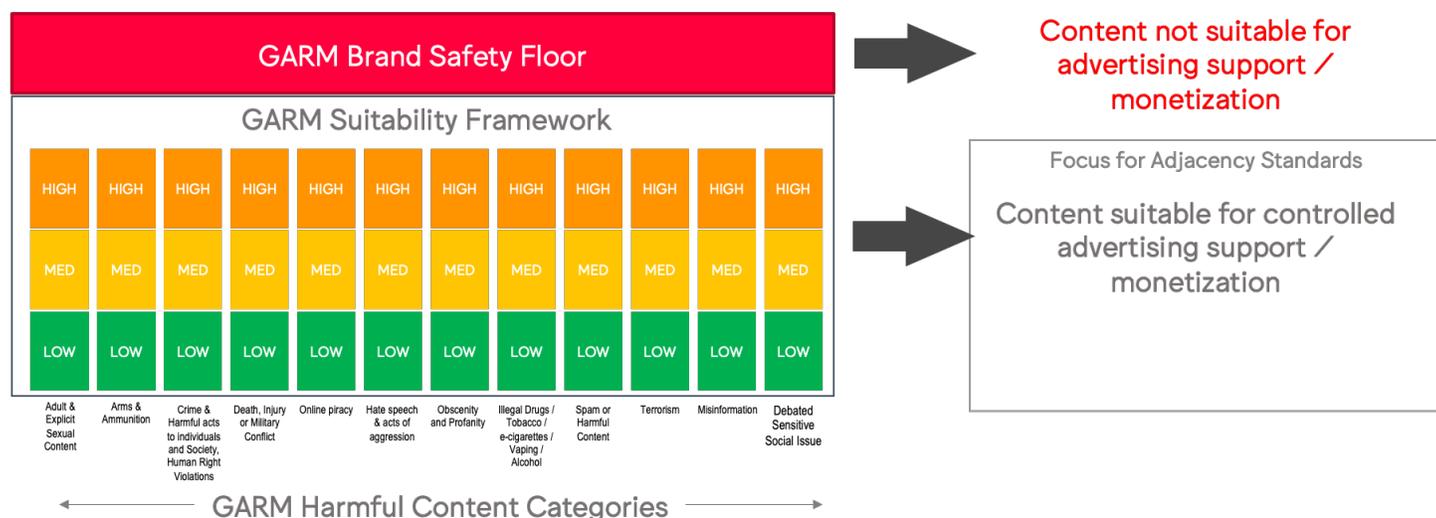
CONTEXT FOR THIS SOLUTION

The Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) is an industry-first effort that unites marketers, media agencies, media platforms, and industry associations to safeguard the potential of digital media by reducing the availability and monetization of harmful content online. These steps are essential to create a safer digital media environment that enriches society through content, communications, and commerce.

In September 2020 we took our first significant step and created a solution in a common framework of shared definitions, known as the **GARM Brand Safety Floor + Suitability Framework**. That foundational framework set out an agreed set of sensitive content categories with different risk levels, each with monetization guidelines that range from content that is not suitable for advertising (The Brand Safety Floor) to content that is suitable to be eligible for monetization but may present varying degrees of sensitivity to the advertiser (The Suitability Framework).

The Adjacency Standards Framework is designed to serve as a companion to the **GARM Suitability Framework**, providing advertising industry participants with a common structure for evaluating the brand safety and suitability of an ad placement relative to an ad’s position to nearby content (i.e. "adjacency") within specific media formats. The Adjacency Standards Framework works within the confines of the GARM Suitability Framework – where sensitive content may be supported by advertising.

Our belief is that greater transparency and common frameworks will allow for advertising buyers to support content more aligned with corporate, brand and campaign beliefs via paid media insertion.



These standards in this framework were developed by a dedicated GARM Working Group consisting of advertisers, media agencies, media platforms, and industry associations. This Working Group formed in January 2021 and made its formal recommendation in December 2021 to the GARM Steer Team and GARM Community. The Adjacency Standards Working Group was opened to members wanting to join and help define and design the solution.

The standards are informed by a research process that considered studies spanning both observed and claimed consumer research provided by Edelman, BMW/Cheq, General Motors, Johnson & Johnson, Meta, Twitter, TikTok, and OMG. Additionally, GARM commissioned dedicated community-focused research around advertiser and media agency needs relative to adjacency controls. The following is a synopsis of our findings:

1. **Research findings on consumer impact had a wide range based on content severity:** Our review of consumer research ranged from perception-based research and behavioral impact research. The current research set available also compared harmful content which should not be monetized and sensitive and suitable content which could be monetized. Our assessment of the multiple studies’ findings concluded that harmful content unfit for advertising support required greater adjacency, whereas suitable content required lesser adjacency standards. We have therefore focused our adjacency recommendations on a minimum standard for adjacency on suitable content.

2. **Advertisers and Agencies desire comparable thresholds for formats across platforms:** In our research within the GARM Community, nearly 9-in-10 media buyers expressed a need for cross-platform format consistency¹; advertisers and agencies wanted a single standard. When asked for priority ordering of formats, the Community prioritized all formats with the following: Audio, Video, Livestreaming, and Feed².
3. **Advertisers and agencies are increasingly seeing adjacency and content targeting essential to their brand safety and suitability strategies:** Nearly 9-in-10 buyers say that suitability and adjacency controls are Very or Extremely Important to their operations, and nearly 2-in-3 advertising buyers would invest in platforms where the controls are more readily available.

GOALS FOR SOLUTION

This shared framework will provide individual GARM participants with:

Consistent Units of Measure	Ensuring that there’s a common approach to evaluating an ad placement’s position relative to content above the floor within the Suitability Framework categories
Standardized Expectations on Ad Placements	Creating industry-standard, format-centric specifications to inform the development of relevant ad solutions across media environments
Improved Transparency	Establishing a deeper framework by which to report accuracy of ad placements for advertiser, agency, platform and ad tech solutions providers

HOW THIS SOLUTION WILL BE USED

- GARM Community Member organizations will endorse this adjacency standards framework as a minimum for placement, and a starting point for post-campaign measurement
- Platforms and ad tech providers will adopt and operationalize these standards through practices and solutions as they become available
- GARM Working Group Leaders and the GARM Steer Team will work with GARM member platforms and providers to track the adoption of adjacency standards via solutions in a shared framework
- GARM will work with industry auditing bodies like the MRC to incorporate adjacency standards into existing accreditation processes where appropriate
- GARM will work via the Solutions Developers Working Group to integrate Adjacency Standards into existing post-campaign verification services

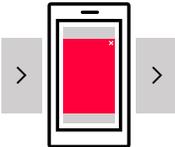
¹ GARM Community Adjacency Needs Research Study, July 2021

² Ibid

The following table is the approved adjacency standards for GARM. These standards will then be utilized in solutions by platforms (first party tools) and via independent providers who have integrations with media platforms and publishers (third party tools)

Some key terms and notes on this framework:

1. **FORMATS COVERED:** The formats identified and included here are based on current media format availabilities and investment levels: Feed, Stories, Video In-Stream, Audio In-Stream
 - **NOTE:** Livestream Audio and Livestream video are currently omitted from the current version of the framework. The Working Group will require further exploration into the technical and operational complexities of this format, given high-profile incidents, before developing formalized adjacency standards in a future update. This update will address how the Safety Floor is upheld and the technical implementation of the Suitability Framework.
2. **STANDARD:** Denotes how ad adjacency is evaluated within respective Format environments, and at current is based on “spatial” evaluation (e.g. units of space between ad and content on a screen) or temporal evaluation (e.g. units of sequence in which ads and content appear on-screen)”
3. **ADJACENCY UNIT:** This is the actual “unit of measurement” proposed to identify what content should be evaluated and categorized based relation to an ad’s placement. This is treated an industry standard and a minimum upon which providers and platforms can provide additional spacing/separation should they need to.

FORMAT		ADJACENCY STANDARD	MINIMUM ADJACENCY UNIT	NOTES
	This covers content (text, video, image, audio) that is featured in a newsfeed or timeline environment irrespective of the screen being mobile or computer.	Spatial	+/- 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacency controls should apply to individual and group feed and timeline (e.g., lists and groups that are public and/or private) • Comments on videos are not a focus for suitability controls – but platform must be able to uphold Floor on videos
	This covers sequenced content from a single creator in a carousel environment, where ads may appear within or between such segments.	Spatial	+/- 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on stories are not a focus for suitability controls – but platform must be able to uphold Floor on videos
	This is prerecorded video content that is uploaded to a website or platform that features ads before, in between or after specified video content	Temporal	+/- 0 Directly Adjacent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacency solutions and controls should apply to Pre/Mid/Post and Parallel ad units • Comments on videos are not a focus for suitability controls – but platform must be able to uphold Floor on videos
	This is pre-recorded audio content that is uploaded to a website or platform that features ads before, in between or after specified video content.	Temporal	+/- n Same as ad unit length (n = ad length)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacency controls should apply to Pre/Mid/Post and Parallel ad units • Comments on content are not a focus for suitability controls – but platform must be able to uphold Floor on audio content