

## **Digital Nations Shared Approach to the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Government (2023)**

Artificial intelligence (AI)<sup>1</sup> has the potential to enhance services, research, and workforce capabilities in the public sector. Governments have a unique opportunity to take advantage of the possibilities that AI technologies offer to advance domestic and international social, economic, and environmental goals. AI's potential to provide insights to inform policy and program decisions; find meaningful patterns in research data; automate labour-intensive tasks and improve resource allocation; improve access to justice; and contribute to governments' progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals illustrates the value it can bring to societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, the use of AI technologies also poses risks to the protection of human rights and other legal rights, and to the integrity of democratic institutions. AI systems with embedded biases have led to discrimination in the delivery of public services. AI systems have also been used for repressive purposes, including arbitrary or unlawful surveillance, and to spread misinformation and disinformation online. The legal, ethical, and political challenges that AI poses highlight the importance of ensuring it is designed, developed, and used responsibly, in accordance with domestic laws and international human rights obligations. Whether AI is used to modernize public services or improve the efficiency of government operations, the risks of AI to people, organizations, and society must be assessed and mitigated before it is deployed and throughout the lifecycle.

Given the potential benefits and risks, we believe that the design, development, and use of AI should be guided by core principles of transparency, accountability, and fairness, and grounded in fundamental values of human dignity and autonomy. The growing role and evolving risks of AI in our governments and worldwide have prompted us to come together to reaffirm our shared commitment to these principles and values, and to agree to continue cooperating to advance the responsible use of AI in the public sector.

As Digital Nations, we believe that we can leverage AI, including advanced AI such as generative systems, to the benefit of our societies and in a manner that respects legal obligations, including the protection of personal information; prioritizes the needs of individuals and communities; maintains public trust; and preserves democratic institutions and the rule of law. Accordingly, we commit to working towards

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<sup>1</sup> The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence](#) (2019) defines an artificial intelligence system as a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments. Artificial intelligence systems are designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy.

developing and implementing approaches to AI governance in the public sector, which could involve legal or policy reforms, that reflect the core principles and values we share by:

1. Promoting openness about how, why, and when AI is used;
2. Prioritizing the needs of individuals and communities, including Indigenous peoples, and considering the institutional and public benefits of AI;
3. Assessing and mitigating the risks of AI to legal rights and democratic norms early in the lifecycle of AI systems and following their launch;
4. Ensuring training or other input data used by AI systems is lawfully collected, used, and disclosed, taking account of applicable privacy and intellectual property rights;
5. Evaluating the outputs of AI systems, including generative tools, to minimize biases and inaccuracies, and enabling users to distinguish between AI and human outputs;
6. Publishing legal or ethical impact assessments, source code, training data, independent audits or reviews, or other relevant documentation about AI systems, while protecting privacy, government and national security, and intellectual property;
7. Explaining automated decisions to people impacted by them and providing them with opportunities to contest decisions and seek remedies, which could involve human review, where applicable;
8. Encouraging the creation of controlled test environments to foster responsible research and innovation;
9. Establishing oversight mechanisms for AI systems to ensure accountability and foster effective monitoring and governance throughout the lifecycle;
10. Assessing and mitigating the environmental impacts of the training and use of AI systems, and where appropriate opting for zero-emissions systems;
11. Providing training to civil servants developing or using AI so that they understand legal, ethical, and operational issues, including privacy and security, and are equipped to adopt AI systems responsibly; and
12. Creating processes for inclusive and meaningful public engagement on AI policies or projects with a view to raising awareness, building trust, and addressing digital divides.

This common vision for AI policy shall facilitate continued collaboration among our governments on AI.

The Shared Approach was presented to Digital Nations member governments and endorsed at the Digital Nations Ministerial Summit in Lisbon, Portugal on Tuesday, November 14, 2023.