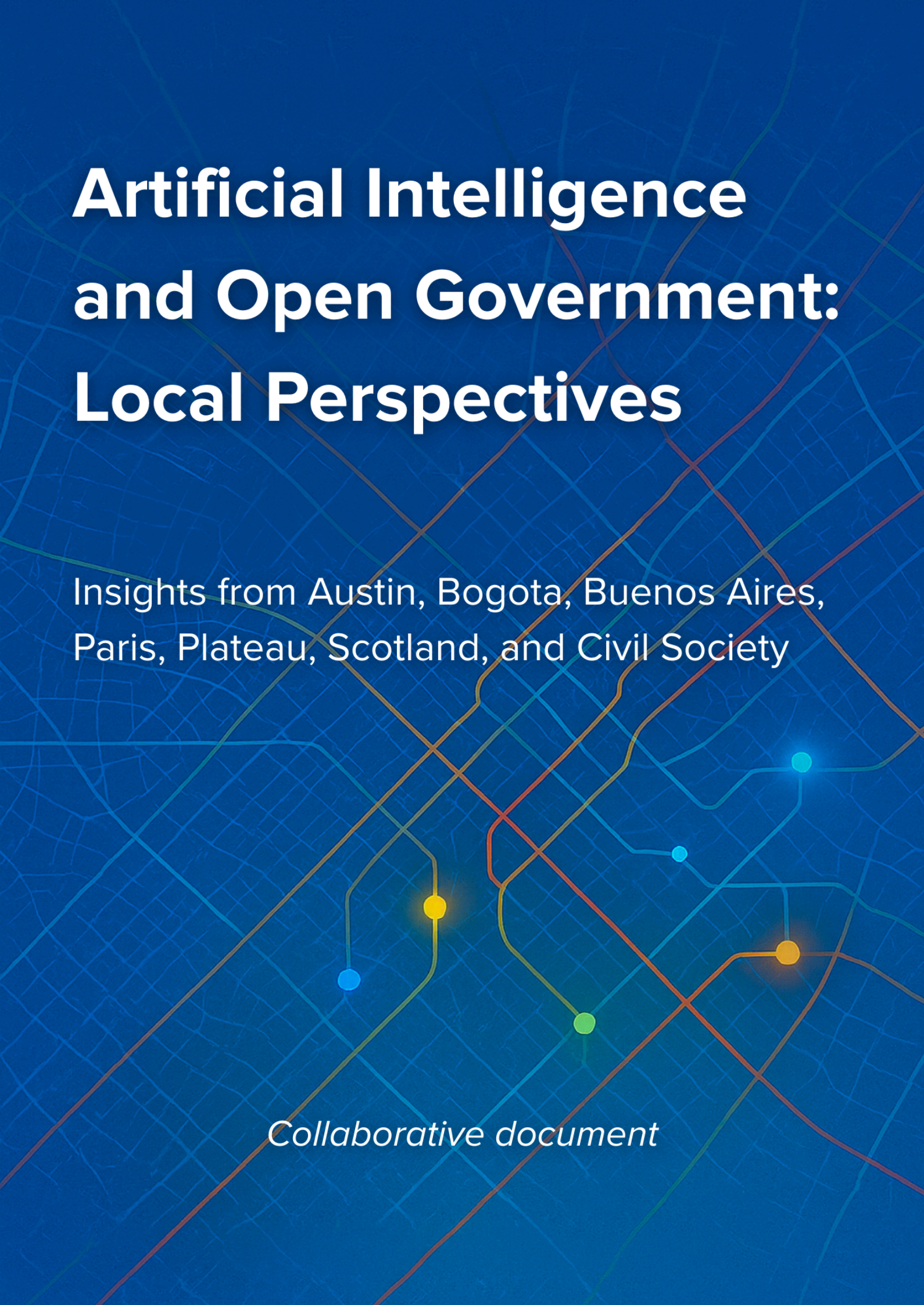
Artificial Intelligence and Open Government: Local Perspectives

Insights from Austin, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Paris, Plateau, Scotland, and Civil Society



Collaborative document

Acknowledgments

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This document emerged from a peer exchange process that combined knowledge, practical insights, and experiences to examine the opportunities and challenges at the intersection of artificial intelligence and open government at the local level.

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The following sections do not represent the official views of the participating institutions. Instead, it reflects the experiences, knowledge, and spirit of collaboration and shared learning that guided this initiative.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Need: AI Governance in Local Government

As local governments embrace digital transformation, they stand at the forefront of addressing critical challenges in digital governance. These challenges involve managing both the opportunities and risks associated with using technology to enhance public services and democratic engagement. Increasingly, local governments are adopting artificial intelligence (AI) to achieve benefits such as greater efficiency, cost savings, improved decision-making, and better services. AI can also strengthen transparency, participation, and accountability.

At the same time, local governments must carefully assess the risks and challenges associated with the safe and responsible adoption of AI. They must ensure that their actions reinforce, rather than undermine, the principles of open government.

1.2. Objective

This document shares reflections from a local government perspective on the intersection between AI and open government. Its purpose is to support dialogue among governments and other stakeholders on how to embed open government principles into AI strategies, policies, and use at the local level.

It considers the scope, risks, and benefits of AI adoption, and highlights how transparency, participation, and accountability can be applied to mitigate these risks. To date, few bridges have been built between AI and open government at the local level. This document aims to stimulate a broader discussion among local government actors on the intersection of open government principles and AI practices.

The primary audience consists of local government officials working on open government policies, as well as those regulating or implementing AI-driven tools in their respective localities. It may also inspire civil society organizations and reformers engaged in AI governance and open government initiatives.

By examining the intersection of AI and open government from a local perspective, this document aims to highlight both the promise and the risks associated with this technological shift. Local governments are uniquely positioned to shape AI in ways that are close to citizens' daily lives, making their choices especially consequential. The reflections and practices presented here are starting points for ongoing dialogue, learning, and collaboration.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that as AI becomes embedded in governance, it does so in a way that strengthens transparency, participation, and accountability—values at the heart of open government.

1.3. Methodology

At the invitation of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), representatives from Buenos Aires, Austin, Bogotá, Paris, Plateau, and Scotland, along with the civil society organization Latin American Open Data Initiative (ILDA), participated in an intensive three-day workshop from March 18–21, 2025, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The working methodology, designed by the team at the General Direction of Access to Information and Open Government of the City of Buenos Aires, was inspired by the *Booksprint* approach and *unconference* models. Its purpose was to create a space where participants could learn, debate, and reach a consensus, while collectively contributing to the drafting of a final document. A facilitation team from the city government, supported by OGP representatives, moderated the sessions.

The discussions focused on five main themes:

- Providing an overview of open government in a world of AI,
- Exploring the linkages between transparency, participation, accountability, and AI,
- Understanding the challenges and opportunities of adopting AI in open government practices,
- Identifying success stories, examples, and promising practices from OGP Local members and beyond, and
- Offering reflections for all stakeholders involved in these agendas.

2. A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

AI is more than a technological trend; it is a transformative force reshaping industries and public services. As AI continues to grow in complexity and impact, it creates opportunities for governments and organizations to enhance efficiency, improve decision-making, and drive innovation. To leverage these opportunities effectively, organizations must clearly understand the different types of AI and align them with specific goals.[1]

Concerns about human rights, ethics, and governance have gained prominence. The Global Index on Responsible AI (GIRAI)[2] is the first tool to establish globally relevant benchmarks for responsible AI, evaluating 138 countries. Responsible AI encompasses the ethical design, development, deployment, and governance of AI systems, ensuring human rights protections and ethical oversight throughout the AI lifecycle. It requires all stakeholders within national AI ecosystems to take responsibility for the human, social, and environmental implications of AI. The GIRAI evaluates three key dimensions: human rights and AI, responsible AI governance, and responsible AI capacities. Its 2024 edition reveals stark disparities worldwide, with some countries demonstrating strong ethical practices while others lag in governance and oversight.

Beyond ethics, countries also vary significantly in their readiness to integrate AI into governance and public services. The Government AI Readiness Index 2024 evaluates 188 countries across 40 indicators grouped into three pillars: government (institutions), the technology sector, and data and infrastructure. The index indicates that AI strategy development is gaining momentum, particularly in low and middle-income countries, where 12 new national AI strategies were published or announced in 2024, more than triple the number recorded in 2023. While no similar assessments exist at scale for local governments, ethical and governance concerns are equally relevant. As local governments increasingly adopt AI, it is crucial to assess readiness and governance mechanisms.

Ethical deployment of AI requires principles such as transparency, accountability, and participation. Building trustworthy AI also means considering the specific context of deployment, with citizens, civil servants, and researchers engaged in the process. The rapid commodification of generative AI has made it an integral part of daily life, offering opportunities to enhance citizen engagement while also raising significant risks. Local governments must therefore develop realistic approaches to this technology at their respective scales.

[1] https://urbanlogiq.com/harnessing-ai-in-government-challenges-opportunities-and-best-practices/
[2] https://www.global-index.ai/

2.1. AI in Local Governments

Local governments are increasingly incorporating AI initiatives. Engagement, however, varies dramatically. Both local and national governments "have turned to automation to look for technical, 'unbiased' support in a variety of areas, including urban planning, social care and welfare, education, health, housing and public surveillance for law enforcement."[3] Some cities experiment with AI for traffic management, chatbots for service delivery, or analysis of citizen participation, while others focus on developing strategies and regulatory frameworks.

Although AI governance is not a new policy field, most discussions have been led by national governments and international bodies. Local authorities are now moving to adopt or adapt frameworks from national, global, and supranational levels. At the same time, local governments, private organizations, and research institutions are increasingly analyzing emerging local practices.[4]

Yet local governments often face limits in their capacity to govern and implement AI effectively. Many rely on private corporations to supply or manage AI systems, raising concerns about transparency, accountability, and the potential for monopolization in public services. Alongside its promises, AI introduces complex challenges local governments must address for responsible development and deployment. These challenges intersect across issues such as privacy, digital divides, infrastructure, and global governance.

- **Data Protection and Privacy:** As governments increasingly use AI in areas such as welfare, surveillance, and healthcare, strong data protection frameworks have become essential. The OECD AI Principles and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI[5] emphasize lawful data processing and rigorous protection practices. The UNESCO Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy[6] provide ten guiding principles for safeguarding individual rights. However, local governments often struggle to adopt and enforce these international frameworks, especially when relying on private vendors.

- **The Digital Divide and AI Literacy:** As AI becomes increasingly widespread, many people still lack a clear understanding of what it is and how it works. Public skepticism and excitement coexist, making AI literacy essential for balanced and informed perspectives. Local governments face a dual challenge: expanding access to AI technologies for disadvantaged communities and fostering understanding among

[3] https://files.thegovlab.org/ailocalism-in-practice.pdf
[4] For example the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights (CDDR), launched by Amsterdam, Barcelona, and New York City, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and others.
[5] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence
[6] https://www.unesco.org/en/privacy-policy

citizens. Bridging this gap requires policies that promote digital access, equitable opportunities, and education initiatives.

- **Ethical Governance and Global Impact:** As AI continues to evolve, its geopolitical and economic implications grow simultaneously. Governments face challenges on a local, national, and global scale as they attempt to manage AI systems that transcend borders. The United Nations report on AI governance stresses the need for coordinated global responses: "AI, therefore, presents challenges and opportunities that require a holistic, global approach cutting transversally across political, economic, social, ethical, human rights, technical, environmental and other domains."[7]

These challenges underscore the importance of "risk assessment, public awareness, and transparency to strengthen trust and justify decisions made with AI to residents."[8] Ensuring inclusive, equitable, and accountable AI systems is key to realizing AI's potential while mitigating risks.

2.2. Knowing How and When to Use AI

Understanding AI's capabilities is only part of the challenge—knowing when and how to use them is equally critical. *"Not everything has to be AI or automated"* is a simple but often overlooked reminder in the race to innovate. The key question becomes: *"You could use AI, but should you?"* The answer depends on context. Automating processes, such as resource allocation and appointment scheduling, can improve efficiency. However, applying AI to subjective areas—like hiring, healthcare diagnoses, or grading—requires caution due to the risks of bias and ethical concerns.

Education systems and workplaces must also foster AI literacy to empower responsible use. According to UNESCO, "Fear is a significant barrier to AI literacy... [f]ear of AI-biased outcomes and negative impacts...stifles interest in understanding how to use the technology."[9] Helping people recognize AI's benefits while demystifying its functions is essential to reducing this fear.

AI adoption further requires balancing technical expertise with human-centered skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. The central reflection is: *"What capabilities are really needed?"* Societies must decide how AI complements human intelligence rather than replacing it. Preparing future workforces involves integrating technical, ethical, and creative dimensions into both policies and training programs.

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[7] https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/governing_ai_for_humanity_final_report_en.pdf
[8] https://files.thegovlab.org/ailocalism-in-practice.pdf
[9] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-literacy-and-new-digital-divide-global-call-action

3. OPEN GOVERNMENT PRINCIPLES GUIDING AI POLICY

The development and deployment of responsible AI systems is a continuous cycle involving design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. At each stage, open government principles provide essential guidance by reinforcing transparency, accountability, and participation. Open government frameworks also help establish ethical and legal standards, strengthen data governance, facilitate risk assessment, and create channels for ongoing public feedback on the use of AI.

The open government community already offers a strong foundation, with resources, established mechanisms, networks, and working groups that can be leveraged to address the complexities of AI governance. Building on these accomplishments, governments can create a virtuous cycle in which open government principles not only mitigate risks but also unlock AI's potential to serve citizens more equitably, responsibly, and effectively.

3.1. Accountability in AI Policies

According to OGP's Articles of Governance, public accountability occurs when "rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments."[10] This principle can strengthen the legitimacy of AI use and offers a framework for both internal and external control.

As AI becomes more prominent in public administration, the demand for accountability has grown. Governments are exploring mechanisms to ensure AI systems are transparent, fair, and trustworthy. These include publishing principles for AI use, creating regulatory restrictions, maintaining algorithmic registers, conducting impact assessments, and implementing audit practices. Such practices ensure AI not only operates efficiently but also aligns with open government values, particularly transparency and citizen trust.[11]

However, accountability requires more than technical verification. A verifiable AI system does not automatically mean it is being monitored or subject to scrutiny. For accountability to be meaningful, AI decisions must be verifiable, monitored, and subject to the same standards as human decisions. Oversight mechanisms, such as the right to appeal algorithmic decisions,

[10] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/glossary/public-accountability/
[11] https://files.thegovlab.org/ailocalism-in-practice.pdf

are crucial in safeguarding fairness and equity. While AI offers important benefits, its fallibility, particularly when applied to public decision-making, makes oversight critical for preventing harm and ensuring designers and operators are responsible for outcomes.

Local governments, which already apply accountability mechanisms in other areas, are well-positioned to extend these practices to AI. By defining responsibilities, upholding ethical standards, and engaging citizens, local administrations can ensure AI promotes fairness, equity, and trust. Embedding accountability in AI governance is not only about mitigating risks, but it is also about making AI a tool for better governance and stronger community relationships.[12]

Key Considerations for Making AI Policy Accountable

- **Legal and Ethical Frameworks:** AI governance should be grounded in established legal standards and robust ethical principles. Legal frameworks provide enforceable norms and sanctions against misuse, while ethical frameworks offer flexible, context-sensitive guidance where the law may be silent or still evolving. Ethics does not replace the law but complements it, offering nuanced direction in complex or rapidly changing situations.

- **AI Standards and Procurement Guidelines:** When procuring AI systems from third parties, local governments must adopt open and transparent processes that ensure compliance with technical, ethical, and governance standards. This includes publishing clear requirements, evaluation criteria, and contract terms, as well as enabling public oversight throughout the procurement lifecycle. Applying open contracting principles, such as disclosure, competition, and civic monitoring, strengthens accountability, mitigates risks, and ensures AI solutions serve the public interest.

- **Inclusive Accountability:** AI should strengthen, not replace, existing accountability structures. Citizens and diverse stakeholders must have clear avenues to provide feedback and seek redress for how AI decisions are made and how it is used for government purposes. Multi-sectoral oversight is essential to ensure that accountability mechanisms remain inclusive and effective.

[12] Ibid.

Open Gov in Action

Austin (US)[13] is developing a framework to ensure accountability in AI tools used by the government, addressing concerns about bias, errors, and misuse. The framework will include shared processes for evaluating AI tools for potential bias, mitigation strategies, mechanisms and structures for staff and residents to detect and report issues and AI errors, and procedures to investigate and resolve them.

In the **United States**, the *Government AI Coalition*, a collaboration among hundreds of subnational government organizations, has also co-developed policy frameworks, process guidelines, and accountability tools to support public institutions in the responsible deployment of AI.

3.2. Transparency in AI Policies

OGP defines transparency as when "government-held information (including on activities and decisions) is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public, and meets basic open data standards."[14] Transparency enables citizens to exercise their rights, hold government accountable, and participate meaningfully in decision-making.[15]

Applied to AI, transparency is essential for ensuring responsible use in public policy. By clearly explaining how systems function, what data they process, and how they generate outcomes, governments can build trust and demonstrate that AI serves the public good. Transparency strengthens AI's credibility, improves accountability, and helps align technologies with citizens' needs.

Yet achieving full traceability of AI outputs is not always possible. Complex models often operate as "black boxes," creating barriers to trust, particularly in cities working to implement algorithmic transparency. Addressing this challenge requires both technical transparency through open algorithms, impact assessments, and documentation, as well as social transparency through ethical guidelines, explainability, and communication across the AI value chain.

[13] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/austin-united-states/commitments/usau0007/
[14] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/glossary/transparency/
[15] Ibid.

Governments can draw on many existing mechanisms to enhance transparency. Access-to-information laws, open data initiatives, open budgeting, and open procurement provide strong foundations. Practices such as plain-language communication and explainability in judicial rulings also offer valuable lessons for making complex systems understandable to the public. By adapting these tools, local governments can expand transparency to AI technologies, standardize practices, and ensure that AI systems remain ethical, responsible, and grounded in public trust.

Key Considerations for Making AI Policy Transparent

- **Explainability:** AI systems, especially those based on machine learning, are often complex. Governments should prioritize making AI-driven decisions interpretable and understandable. This includes limiting reliance on “black box” algorithms and favoring open models that are transparent by design.

- **Algorithmic Transparency:** Openness about how algorithms function and make decisions has become a core pillar of government transparency. This should involve safeguards to prevent bias and discrimination, while also identifying opportunities to maximize public benefit. Transparency in algorithms facilitates the assessment of risks, ensures ethical use, and minimizes harm.

- **Publication of AI Use:** Governments should disclose when and how AI is applied in decision-making so that citizens understand its impact. Informational registries, already established by some governments, allow authorities to share projects and practices, fostering both innovation and responsible adoption. These registries should clearly indicate which public body or unit is responsible for each implementation, fostering transparency and accountability.

- **Data Governance and Open Data:** High-quality, timely public data is the raw material for both open government and effective AI. Yet much government data remains unpublished or outdated, limiting AI’s potential to generate insights. To be effective, datasets must also be representative and inclusive, reflecting the diversity of communities and avoiding the reinforcement of existing inequalities.

- **Data Protection:** Protecting sensitive and personal data must be central to AI design and deployment. Citizens should retain meaningful control over their personal information, including the right to access, correct, delete, and restrict its use. Data governance should prioritize transparency, informed consent, and accountability,

ensuring that personal data is not exploited or monetized without the knowledge and explicit permission of citizens.

Open Gov in Action

In Scotland, the Scottish AI Register[16] provides a centralized, public-facing database of AI systems used in the public sector, improving oversight and public trust. It enables safe and transparent development and use of AI in the public sector, and offers the public a simple and effective platform to have a say in how AI is used to make decisions and deliver public services. Consisting of a public-facing website and underlying resources and governance tools for public sector developers, the Register helps ensure we manage AI risk effectively and consistently, whilst also sharing best practice and reducing duplication.

In **Chile**, the GobLab UAI[17] hosts the Public Algorithm Repository, a platform that collects and displays detailed information about automated decision systems implemented by public institutions. This initiative enables both experts and citizens to monitor the use of algorithms and promote transparency in government decision-making.

In **Buenos Aires**, the city has committed to strengthening personal data protection by conducting an assessment and developing recommendations to address current challenges and improve access to public information in the digital age. The process will be participatory, involving government agencies, civil society, the private sector, and academia in identifying regulatory gaps, analyzing draft laws and international practices, and co-creating recommendations. Engagement will take place through stakeholder roundtables and the publication of a recommendations document.

3.3. Citizen Participation in AI Policies

According to OGP, citizen participation occurs when “governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance.”[18]

[16] https://scottishairegister.com/
[17] https://algoritmospublicos.org/repositorio?page=2
[18] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/glossary/citizen-participation/

Participation is essential for building AI systems that are inclusive, equitable, and responsible. Engaging diverse groups, including non-specialists and marginalized communities, ensures that a wide range of perspectives is considered in the design, use, and governance of AI. Such engagement helps identify potential biases and risks, fostering fairness while ensuring AI tools reflect societal values and serve the common good. Participatory processes also contribute to strengthening AI literacy among the public. By directly involving citizens in discussions about how AI works, where it is applied, and the risks and opportunities it presents, people gain a deeper understanding of the technology that increasingly shapes their lives.

Understanding citizens' lived experiences is particularly important for developing AI solutions that effectively address local challenges. Involving communities most affected by AI policies enables decision-makers to address specific concerns, adapt systems to unique contexts, and prevent inequalities. Localized input not only increases the relevance of AI applications but also ensures that these technologies empower rather than harm individuals and communities.

Participation must be broadly inclusive, but special attention should be given to communities that have been historically excluded from governance processes. Their involvement helps ensure equity and prevents systemic disparities from being replicated or amplified by automated systems.

Governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders can build on existing participation mechanisms, such as consultations and stakeholder roundtables, to involve citizens in AI governance. Leveraging these established structures provides an efficient and trusted way to engage the public, ensuring that AI systems are developed transparently, inclusively, and in the best interest of society as a whole.

Key Considerations for Making AI Policy Participatory

- **Democratic AI governance:** AI should be deployed in ways that enable participation from diverse groups, especially marginalized communities whose perspectives are often overlooked.

- **Contextual and Inclusive Design**: Participation must be meaningful and adapted to local realities. Engagement strategies should reflect cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences to avoid symbolic consultation and instead foster genuine impact. Tailoring participation to context enhances the legitimacy, responsiveness, and societal relevance of AI policies.

- **Empowering Citizens:** AI can enhance citizen access to government data, enabling them to co-create solutions, shape policies, and participate in monitoring their implementation. Spaces for debate and participation should be embedded throughout the AI lifecycle, including during the design of tools. Strengthening digital literacy is crucial to enabling citizens to engage effectively.

- **Mobilizing Existing Participation Infrastructure**: Governments should build on existing participatory mechanisms to integrate AI governance into forums where trust and engagement already exist. Leveraging these structures helps normalize public involvement in emerging technologies, lowers barriers to participation, and ensures that citizen voices are represented throughout the policy cycle.

Open Gov in Action

The Latin American Alliance for Algorithmic Transparency (ALTA),[19] spearheaded by ILDA, GobLab UAI, and the Universidad de los Andes, brings together the public sector, academia, and civil society to jointly address the technical and institutional challenges of algorithmic accountability across Latin America.

In **Scotland**, the Children's Parliament, in collaboration with the Scottish AI Alliance and the Alan Turing Institute, explored what needs to happen for AI to play a role in keeping all children happy, healthy, and safe. From the Project, Children's Parliament developed resources[20] to help educators and professionals learn about AI through the lens of children's human rights. One of these resources[21] for example, addresses children's human rights in an AI context, and how to best ensure that your work in developing, deploying, or making decisions around AI technologies can respect and protect children's rights.

[19] https://goblab.uai.cl/proyecto-alta/
[20] https://www.scottishai.com/children-and-ai
[21] https://www.scottishai.com/wcrmai

4. AI ENHANCING OPEN GOVERNMENT APPROACHES

AI holds significant promise for strengthening open government. Governments, civil society organizations, and media outlets are already using AI to promote transparency by making public information more accessible, understandable, and citizen-centered through virtual assistants, translation services, or adaptive interfaces that reduce barriers for individuals with disabilities, language differences, or limited digital literacy. AI also empowers citizens by expanding their ability to access timely information, navigate public services, co-create solutions, and participate in civic dialogue. This creates a more dynamic, two-way relationship between governments and citizens, one in which both sides can use AI to foster collaborative and equitable governance.

At the same time, challenges such as algorithmic bias, data privacy risks, and the need for clear human oversight must be addressed to ensure the responsible use of AI. Crucially, integration of AI must not lead to the depersonalization of the state or the dilution of public responsibility. Even as AI takes on more operational tasks, governments remain accountable for decisions, ensuring that public institutions continue to act with intention, ethical judgment, and a human face.[22]

4.1. AI for Accountability

AI offers significant opportunities to strengthen accountability in government. One of its key advantages is the ability to enhance decision-making by quickly analyzing complex structures and revealing patterns or inconsistencies. These data-driven insights enable public administrations to enhance their accountability and transparency.

Traditionally, audits and performance reviews in public administration are conducted retrospectively, periodically, and often after actual service delivery has taken place. This time gap limits their usefulness for immediate decision-making and makes it harder to correct problems before they escalate. In contrast, AI can continuously monitor and visualize government actions, drawing on streams of operational data from multiple agencies and programs. With this ability, governments can make quicker interventions and more informed policy adjustments, enhancing responsiveness from public institutions.

[22] https://www.dgcities.com/blog/council-complaints

AI also plays a vital role in promoting integrity and combating corruption. Automated systems can detect anomalies, flag irregularities in financial or operational data, and identify potential risks. Such tools enable both government entities and citizens to uncover discrepancies that may indicate integrity issues. It can be used to improve accountability processes and efficiency by processing and categorizing complaints, providing summaries, attributing them to their relevant department, and assigning them an urgency level to facilitate quicker resolutions.

Key Considerations When Using AI for Accountability

- **Erosion of Human Accountability:** AI should strengthen, not replace, human oversight and responsibility. When decision-making power is delegated entirely to AI, accountability effectively shifts to system designers, raising concerns about transparency and democratic legitimacy.
- **Complexity of AI Decisions:** Some AI models operate as "black boxes," making it challenging to trace decision-making logic, which can erode public trust.
- **Human Safeguards:** No AI system with significant human impact should make final decisions without human review. For example, if a local AI system flags an irregularity, a human official must review and approve the outcome, providing a point of contact and accountability for citizens.

Open Gov in Action

In **Bogotá**, the SATI[23] tool utilizes AI to analyze procurement data in real time, flagging anomalies and patterns that enhance the quality and oversight of procurement information. This enables more proactive transparency and supports better monitoring of public spending.

In **Brazil**, Open Knowledge Brasil[24] developed Querido Diário, a civic tech project that classifies, contextualizes, and expands the information published in official municipal executive diaries. By utilizing AI to structure and analyze this data, the platform makes public records more accessible, easier to interpret, and more manageable to monitor. It supports the development of civic technologies and strengthens social oversight by

[23] https://gobiernoabiertobogota.gov.co/gab/contratacion/procesos-unico-ponente
[24] https://ok.org.br/projetos/querido-diario/

enabling citizens and watchdog groups to identify and address local public challenges more effectively.

In the **United Kingdom**, students at Imperial College London developed a system to streamline a local council's process to categorize, summarize, and channel complaints to relevant departments, improving the efficiency of the existing accountability mechanism.[25]

4.2. AI to Strengthen Transparency

AI offers powerful tools to advance transparency by making public information more accessible and actionable. A key opportunity lies in the automated processing of data for open data initiatives, where AI can clean, organize, and categorize large datasets, making them easier to navigate, interpret, and reuse. This expands public access to information, enabling new forms of civic engagement, supporting the co-creation of solutions, and empowering citizens to interact with government data in meaningful ways.

AI also improves public communication. Automated data visualizations, infographics, and narrative reports can translate complex government processes into simpler, more digestible formats, bridging the gap between institutional language and public understanding. These tools foster greater awareness and trust in government actions.

In procurement, AI enhances contract transparency by scanning and analyzing documents to detect irregularities and ensure compliance with open contracting standards. Integrating AI into procurement workflows also minimizes human error, improves consistency, and promotes fairness in the selection process.

Another promising application is the use of AI-powered chatbots. By providing citizens with instant responses to questions about government services, regulations, or procedures, chatbots make information more accessible and reduce bureaucratic barriers. When designed transparently, with clear information on data use, limitations, and escalation pathways, chatbots can enhance clarity, foster trust, and establish more open channels for government-citizen interaction.

[25] https://www.dgcities.com/blog/council-complaints

Key Considerations for Using AI to Improve Transparency

- **Algorithmic Bias and Explainability Issues:** AI systems can unintentionally reinforce biases inherent in the training data, leading to unfair outcomes. Ensuring transparency requires regular bias audits and the use of explainability mechanisms that make decision-making processes understandable to both officials and citizens.

- **Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Concerns:** Transparency efforts must strike a balance between openness and data protection. Personal and sensitive information should be anonymized, and databases must comply with cybersecurity standards to safeguard against misuse or breaches. Protecting citizens' data is essential to maintaining trust in AI-driven transparency initiatives.

- **Dependence on Digitalization:** AI tools rely on digitized records. Where local governments lack sufficient digital and data infrastructure, as well as AI-driven transparency efforts and broader AI use, these initiatives may be limited or ineffective. Building strong digital foundations is, therefore, a prerequisite for the responsible deployment of AI.

Open Gov in Action

In **Paris (France)**,[26] two AI-powered bots are under development to support residents in navigating complex government information. One helps citizens understand urban regulations by answering questions about zoning and development norms. The other assists individuals in determining their eligibility for various social benefits, making regulatory and welfare information more accessible and user-friendly.

In **Bogotá (Colombia)**, Chatico[27] is an AI-powered virtual agent that has become a key tool for citizen engagement. Accessible 24/7 via WhatsApp, it enables residents to ask about over 400 topics—including education, mobility, taxes, and public services—resulting in more than 3.6 million conversations in just two years. Beyond information delivery, Chatico serves three core purposes: acting as a permanent laboratory for citizen service, strengthening the relationship between government and communities, and improving data management to generate public value. During the 2024 water rationing period, Chatico handled over 1.6 million queries, with a record of 18,521 interactions in a single hour.

[26] https://www.paris.fr/pages/intelligence-artificielle-a-paris-ou-en-est-on-30092
[27] https://secretariageneral.gov.co/noticias/chatico-el-agente-virtual-de-servicio-la-ciudadania-supero-los-36-millones-de-conversaciones

Notably, it also expanded civic participation during the city's development planning process. Among those who engaged through the platform, 82 percent had never previously participated in public consultations. By combining natural language processing, data analytics, and human-centered design, Chatico demonstrates how AI can lower barriers to participation and bring government closer to citizens.

4.3. AI to Support Meaningful Public Participation

AI offers valuable opportunities to strengthen citizen participation by making engagement more inclusive, scalable, and responsive. One key application is in public dialogue: natural language processing tools can analyze large volumes of citizen feedback from social media, forums, and consultations, summarizing key concerns and priorities. This helps governments engage a broader cross-section of the population, including groups often excluded from traditional participation mechanisms. Real-time sentiment analysis further allows policies to be adjusted in response to emerging concerns and lived experiences.

Machine-learning techniques can support demographic segmentation, improving strategies for specific engagement for underrepresented audiences. It can also support participatory budgeting by processing input related to budget formulation and allocation. AI helps decision makers better understand public preferences, promote fairer resource distribution, and assess budget performance more effectively.[28]

Finally, AI supports inclusive engagement by reducing linguistic and accessibility barriers. Translation tools and adaptive technologies for persons with disabilities expand participation among marginalized groups. By making civic processes more accessible, AI fosters more equitable and meaningful public involvement.

Key Considerations for Using AI in Participation

- **Authenticity and Manipulation Risks:** AI-driven participation platforms must include safeguards to ensure that responses come from real citizens rather than bots or coordinated automated campaigns. Equally important is ensuring that citizen feedback is accurately represented and not distorted in the process.
- **Human Safeguards:** While AI can facilitate participation and strengthen civic crowdsourcing and public deliberation by facilitating consensus-building, moderating

[28] https://scope.uni-muenster.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ENG-Policy-Brief-AI_Jan2025.pdf

discussions, and supporting collective sense-making[29], final decisions must remain with human stakeholders to preserve democratic legitimacy. AI lacks the empathy, contextual awareness, and ethical reasoning that human actors bring to civic engagement. Participation processes should remain centered on human connection, with AI serving as a tool to support, not replace, dialogue, deliberation, and trust-building.

- **Ethical Considerations in AI-Generated Recommendations:** Governments must be transparent about the role of AI in shaping policy recommendations to avoid perceptions of automation-driven governance without meaningful public input. Clear disclosure is necessary regarding when, how, and for what purpose AI systems are used, particularly in processes designed to facilitate participation.

Open Gov in Action

Buenos Aires (**Argentina)**[30] has become a regional pioneer in AI-powered citizen services with Boti, a chatbot that integrates AI with open government tools. Through Boti, residents can report local issues, book appointments, complete procedures, and respond to official requests. Importantly, Boti is connected to the help desk and information request system, ensuring that unresolved queries are escalated to human agents—preserving both accountability and trust. Its collaborative design enables citizens to continually expand the knowledge base, and interactions enable performance improvement through data analysis.

In **Scotland**[31], the Scottish Government and CrownShy are developing a new AI-supported participation platform called Comhairle[32] to enable high-quality, scalable public participation in decision making. Comhairle connects existing open-source civic technologies into a unified interface that will allow the Scottish Government to scale the number, scope and quality of its public dialogues, and guide users towards best public engagement practice. Through Comhairle, public participants can review evidence, deliberate and meaningfully engage in the policy-making process. The platform will support participation in multiple languages and integrate features that utilize AI to support both participants and policymakers such as elicitation bots and assisted sensemaking.

[29] https://scope.uni-muenster.de/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ENG-Policy-Brief-AI_Jan2025.pdf
[30] https://buenosaires.gob.ar/sites/default/files/2025-07/Caso_Boti.pdf
[31] CivTech Challenge 10.7 — public participation in decision making — CivTech
[32] https://crown-shy.com/products/comhairle

In **Paris (France)**[33], the "Café IA" (Coffee AI) initiative fostered public dialogue on AI governance through inclusive consultations. While in **Plateau State** (**Nigeria)**, AI is being utilized to enhance participatory governance in agriculture and promote climate resilience. Tools such as WIVA, PLAGRIC[34], and GreenPlatau App[35] provide AI-powered farm advisory services, connecting farmers to real-time insights while enabling local governments to respond more effectively to local needs.

[33] https://cafeia.org/
[34] https://thesun.ng/agricultural-technology/
[35] https://gpaes.vercel.app/

5. THE LANDING PAD

5.1. Overview

The previous chapters explored how open government principles can guide the responsible use of AI and how AI can accelerate and strengthen the open government vision. This chapter offers key takeaways for bridging the AI and open government agendas through the combined efforts of governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia. It concludes with open-ended questions designed to encourage policymakers and civil society to reflect on how AI can be deployed in ways that remain consistent with open government values.

5.2. Key Takeaways

The reflections in this document highlight several overarching considerations for aligning artificial intelligence with open government values. These takeaways are not prescriptive recommendations but shared insights that can guide ongoing discussions and collective learning. They emphasize the importance of people, principles, and partnerships in ensuring that AI strengthens, rather than undermines, transparency, accountability, and participation. The points below outline key areas that governments and their partners should consider when navigating AI use and policy.

- **Invest in People First:** AI is a tool, not an end in itself. When applied by the right people equipped with subject matter expertise and strong AI literacy, it can enhance governance, improve service delivery, refine products, and help foster social equity. AI should be deployed to deliver outcomes recognized as beneficial by the communities it affects. Special care must be taken to ensure benefits extend to underprivileged and underserved groups.

- **Define the Role of Humans:** While AI provides powerful analytics and task automation, humans remain the drivers of innovation, policy reasoning, creativity, and accountability. AI should be seen as a tool used in partnership with people, not as a replacement for human judgment.

- **Ensure Digital Inclusion and Strong Data Governance:** AI's effectiveness depends on the governance and culture supporting it. Digital literacy, equitable access to technology, and high-quality data are essential foundations for the successful deployment of AI.

- **Use Standards as an Enabler:** Standards should guide responsible development, procurement, use, and adoption of AI. They should provide realistic and actionable steps while remaining adaptable to local contexts.

- **Consider the Ethics of Implementation:** Ethical AI involves more than just algorithms. It requires attention to the processes and people who shape deployment—who participates, who benefits, who is excluded, who exercises oversight, and who bears liability.

To align open government and AI agendas, it is crucial to consider the roles of different stakeholders and the value each contributes.

Policy Makers

- **Maintain Open and Participatory Processes:** Decisions about AI in governance should involve not only policymakers and technologists but also civil society, academia, the private sector, and the public.

- **Create Mechanisms for AI Oversight:** AI-driven decisions must be transparent, reviewable, and contestable by the public and civil society.

- **Translate Principles into Practice:** Beyond ethical guidelines, governments need concrete tools, frameworks, and case studies to operationalize AI ethics.

Civil Society

- **Advocate for Inclusion and Fairness:** Civil society plays an important role in ensuring that community needs and rights are represented in AI agendas and can serve as a driver for equity and accountability.

- **Leverage AI Tools for Engagement:** Civil society organizations can use AI to scale representation, enhance efficiency, and increase the visibility of their work.

Private Sector

- **Develop Responsible and Future-proof AI:** As key developers of AI with significant technical capacity, the private sector must be included in participatory and decision-making processes. Adopting principles of accountability, transparency, and participation not only enhances AI performance and adoption but also safeguards businesses against product failures, reputational risks, and legal repercussions.

Academia

- **Advance Cross-Cutting Research:** Academic actors contribute valuable knowledge on open government and AI. Building strong connections with academia provides decision-makers with evidence-based insights, enhancing the impact of policy initiatives.

5.3. Key Questions for Responsible AI

As discussed above, open government principles should guide the development, procurement, maintenance, use, and adoption of AI across all sectors, including local governments and civil society, to prioritize the public benefit of any use case. The goal is to identify the right AI tool for the right task and apply it with appropriate safeguards that protect rights without stifling innovation. Because each AI tool and use case is different, a triage process can help assess the risks and benefits of deploying AI in specific contexts.

The questions below are designed to be open-ended prompts for discussion about the ethical implications of AI use. Often, harms arise not from malicious intent but from limited awareness of ethical dilemmas. Considering these questions, even without definitive answers, can help surface risks early and guide more responsible choices.

Guiding Triage Questions

The European Artificial Intelligence Act defines four levels of risk:[36]

- **Unacceptable Risk**: AI systems that are prohibited because they pose a clear threat to fundamental rights, safety, or democracy. Examples include social scoring by governments and real-time biometric surveillance in public without adequate safeguards.
- **High Risk**: AI systems that can significantly impact people's health, safety, or fundamental rights, and therefore are subject to strict requirements. Examples include medical devices, recruitment, education, law enforcement, or migration control.
- **Limited Risk**: AI systems with a limited impact, requiring only transparency obligations so users know they're interacting with AI or generated content. Examples include chatbots and emotion recognition systems.
- **Minimal Risk**: AI systems with little or no impact on rights or safety, which are allowed without specific obligations under the Act. Examples include spam filters, video game AI, and product recommendations.

[36] https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/high-level-summary/

To assess the level of risk, governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia can ask the following questions.

1. What are the intended additional benefits of using AI in your work? Is your chosen AI tool the best tool for achieving a public benefit, and if so, why?
2. In what ways might people be adversely affected by the deployment of your chosen AI tool? How does this balance compare to the public benefit?
3. Who will benefit from adopting your chosen AI tool? Is anyone disadvantaged or excluded by it? If so, who are they?

Based on these questions, does using AI in your work carry a minimal, limited, high, or unacceptable risk?[37]

Applying the Open Government Principles

Using open government values as a framework, consider the following.

Transparency

- Is information about your chosen AI tool's methods and training data transparent, accessible, and understandable?
- What steps are taken to ensure algorithmic transparency and explainability of your chosen AI tool for citizens?

Accountability

- Who is responsible for AI-driven decisions at each stage?
- What review and oversight mechanisms exist to challenge or correct decisions generated by your chosen AI tool?

Participation

- Are citizens meaningfully involved in shaping your AI use case?
- Has your public engagement been expanded to include marginalized or underrepresented communities, as well as those who may be disproportionately affected by your AI use case?

[37] According to the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, "'risk' means the combination of the probability of an occurrence of harm and the severity of that harm."

By exploring these triage questions, local governments can allocate resources efficiently and focus their efforts on evaluating and monitoring systems that pose the greatest potential risk to individuals or society.

Structuring Risk Assessments

A structured risk assessment should also consider three core areas to address evolving vulnerabilities effectively.

- **Contextual Impact**: AI deployment must reflect the societal and cultural context in which it operates, paying close attention to historically marginalized groups that may face disproportionate harm.

- **Transparency and Oversight**: AI systems should remain auditable, explainable, and subject to human oversight at critical points to mitigate risks such as bias or discrimination.

- **Dynamic and Ongoing Evaluation**: AI risks are constantly evolving. Governments must adopt flexible, iterative frameworks that adapt to emerging challenges and technological developments to ensure long-term sustainability and fairness.

By combining a triage-based approach with a context-aware framework, governments can maximize the opportunities of AI while minimizing potential harms. This fosters trust, accountability, and inclusivity, laying the groundwork for the equitable and ethical use of AI.

6. CLOSING REMARKS: STRIKING A BALANCE

The convergence of open government and AI agendas presents an opportunity to create a virtuous cycle: open government principles support responsible and ethical AI, while AI strengthens the open government vision. Sustaining this mutually reinforcing relationship requires ongoing collaboration, experimentation, and refinement.

This document is an initial step in outlining ways to align these two agendas. While we have highlighted opportunities and challenges, much remains to be done to translate these reflections into comprehensive policies and practical applications that address the diverse AI-related needs of governments and civil society.

Governments must strive for equilibrium—advancing AI innovation while maintaining robust ethical guardrails. Open government principles provide the framework for striking this balance, ensuring AI serves as a tool for democratic enhancement rather than a driver of exclusion, opacity, or weakened accountability. By embedding participation, transparency, and accountability at every stage of AI design, implementation, monitoring, and adaptation, governments can foster trust and harness AI's potential for the public good.

AI is neither inherently good nor bad. It is a system with immense potential to improve processes and deliver services more efficiently, while also posing significant risks to fundamental rights, including data protection, fairness, non-discrimination, and accountability. Unlocking its benefits requires strong ethical frameworks, responsible governance, and public trust, ensuring that creative, intellectual, and social values remain at the core of technological change.

Given that AI remains a new and evolving technology whose use and control have not yet been managed by most governments, open government principles should be kept at the core of its governance. They must be present at all stages (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation) of responsible AI development, ensuring fairness and responsibility, while leveraging the opportunities that AI presents to drive open government initiatives by accelerating accountability, transparency, and participation.

6.1. Call to Action

Throughout this document, we have demonstrated that AI and open government are interdependent: AI poses challenges that open government principles can help address, while

open government can be advanced through the opportunities presented by AI. The task is not only to balance the two but to build a **virtuous cycle** where each reinforces the other.

Local governments, in particular, are well-positioned to initiate conversations, foster debate, and lead efforts to ensure that AI is developed as an open, inclusive, and democratic tool. The OGP Support Unit supports this work by providing guides, participatory methodologies such as OGP action plans, peer-learning platforms, and initiatives to raise ambition, such as the Open Gov Challenge. Workshops and collaborative spaces, such as the one that inspired this document, enable governments to exchange experiences, inspire one another, and develop frameworks for action.

The open government community has already made significant progress, with a wealth of resources, networks, and working groups to draw upon for navigating the complexities of AI governance. By building on these accomplishments, governments and civil society can co-create best practices that strike a balance among legal, technical, and ethical considerations. At the same time, they can seize the opportunity for AI to accelerate open government initiatives, strengthening transparency, accountability, and participation.

And that is precisely the aim of this paper: to start a conversation with the entire open government community that wishes to embark on a journey in driving responsible AI that maximizes the tools of democracy.

For AI to truly support open government, it must be developed and implemented in a way that aligns with democratic values. Governments should prioritize accessibility, equity, and inclusivity in AI deployment, ensuring that AI serves as a tool to enhance governance rather than replace critical human functions.

Ultimately, AI is not an end in itself but a means to achieve better governance. By using AI responsibly, local governments can foster a more open, accountable, and participatory society, strengthening trust between governments and citizens in the digital age.

By building on these accomplishments, governments can create a virtuous cycle where open government principles not only mitigate potential risks of AI but also unlock its full potential to serve citizens more equitably, responsibly, and effectively.