

# How to Deliver on the Promise of AI

carahsoft.



# Introduction

Government leaders have many questions about how to deploy artificial intelligence (AI) effectively, securely and ethically. But they also know, without question, that they will deploy AI and that it will transform nearly every aspect of their agencies.

At the recent AI for Government Summit that Carahsoft Technology and GovLoop organized, thought leaders from government and industry discussed strategies for addressing some of the most pressing AI issues, such as AI governance, data governance and security, while also sharing their vision of AI impacts now and in the future.

Michael Adams, Program Executive for AI Solutions at Carahsoft Technology, noted that although the development of federal AI use cases had plateaued, the pace of work has picked up again, as has the excitement about AI.

“A lot of the use cases out there are things that are really benefiting everyone,” Adams said. “It’s going to make our country safer and allow our citizens to be safer. It’s going to allow people to get resources quicker and easier. ”

Stuart Wagner, Chief Data and AI Officer at the U.S. Department of Navy (DON), said his team sees data shaping operations in four main ways:

- Changing the way a system or process works
- Changing how you use that system or process
- Improving operational planning
- Improving training and exercise

“All four of these are highly influenced, or could be accelerated, with the use of AI,” he said.

This e-book, which shares highlights from the summit, provides a probing look at how thought leaders see AI reshaping government in the months and years ahead.



# How to Drive Gains in Efficiency and Innovation

Most agencies still do not have a clear picture of all the ways AI could transform their operations and services, but they have seen enough to realize that eventually it will be transformative. Here are some areas where agencies might focus their efforts at this stage of the journey.

## Take the Grunt Work out of Research

Generative AI (GenAI) has already proven to be a time-saver at ONR, where many staff members spend lots of time reading and summarizing highly technical research papers, said Anthony Parrish at ONR.

For example, he said, you can input 12 research papers on a given topic, and GenAI not only will summarize each, but also will identify common themes across those papers, much like a great research assistant. “It’s like the difference between trying to dig a hole with a teaspoon [vs.] using an excavator,” said Parrish.



**Anthony Parrish**  
Chief Data Officer,  
Office of Naval  
Research (ONR)



**Karl Hermann**  
Manager, Solutions  
Engineering, State,  
Local and Education  
and Federal  
Government, Zoom

## Automate Processes From Start to Finish

Although GenAI can tackle a lot of different work quickly and effectively, it tends to be best at individual tasks. An emerging technology called agentic AI has the potential to deliver even greater efficiency by orchestrating tasks to automate a process from start to finish, said Karl Hermann at Zoom.

For example, many people use Zoom’s AI Companion to generate meeting summaries. But they also can set up the technology to create a meeting, automatically pull data that attendees need to review, and assign and track follow-up tasks or milestones after the meeting. “We definitely see people interested in that kind of process,” Hermann said.

## Make Policies and Regulations More Adaptive

Agencies use the best available information to craft a given policy, but it still might not work out exactly as envisioned. The problem is that it often takes a long time to figure that out and make the necessary adjustments. But AI could change that, said Brian Campo at the Coast Guard.

The idea is to identify the key metrics needed to measure the success of a policy, then use AI to collect and analyze that data on an ongoing basis and to recommend policy tweaks. “AI can enable us to do data-driven, continuously improving policy — if we put the right things in place,” Campo said.



**Brian Campo**  
Deputy Assistant  
Commandant and  
Deputy CIO, U.S.  
Coast Guard



**Keith Ober**  
Solutions  
Architect Manager,  
NVIDIA

### Build AI Infrastructure That Scales

When building AI pilots, infrastructure is rarely the focus. But as agencies shift from pilot tests to enterprise deployments, they must think about scalability, said Keith Ober at NVIDIA, and assemble an ecosystem of technology to deliver high-performing AI systems.

NVIDIA describes that as an AI factory. Unlike a general-purpose data center, an AI factory is designed to meet AI's specific computational needs. "That isn't just a [graphics processing unit] chip. It's not just a server in a data center. It's not the network connection or storage platform," Ober said. "It's all of those working together to give you efficiencies at scale."

### Rehumanize Digital Engagement

People should be forgiven if they don't find many digital services to be all that engaging. They find the app they need, provide the information requested and hopefully get the outcome they want — sort of like a digital vending machine, impersonal and expedient. AI, however, makes it possible to rehumanize government, said Luke Norris at Granicus.

Over time, agencies have captured a lot of data about their constituents' needs and preferences. Now, AI can help agencies use that data to inform how they interact with them. "We're really seeing that when you harness that data...you can really start to make sense of who these people are to drive much more personalized experiences that ultimately build trust," Norris said.



**Luke Norris**  
Vice President  
of Platform  
Enablement  
& Digital  
Transformation,  
Granicus

### Get Everyone Up to Speed on AI

Given how quickly the AI market is evolving, people naturally have many questions about the technology: What are its capabilities? What are the security concerns? What's the deal with data governance? At this stage, educating employees is even more important than identifying use cases, said Todd Schroeder at Databricks.

He said it reminds him of where agencies were with cloud in its early days. The lack of understanding created fear and trepidation, making it difficult for employees to see the potential benefits of the technology. "If you don't get this technology and the education to the front line, you don't find the high-value use cases," Schroeder said of AI.



**Todd Schroeder**  
Vice President,  
Public Sector,  
Databricks

*"If you don't get this technology and the education to the frontline, you don't find the high value use cases."*

— Todd Schroeder, Databricks

# How to Take a Nimble Approach to AI Governance

AI governance is not just about defining rules and processes or do's and don'ts. It's about cultivating an environment in which AI initiatives are more likely to succeed (and less likely to go off the rails). Here are some guideposts to help you on your way.



**Mike Horton**  
*Acting Chief  
AI Officer, U.S.  
Department of  
Transportation*

## Get Out of 'Proof-of-Concept Purgatory'

So many things are possible with AI but not everything is worthwhile. Agencies need to consider the potential return on investment of each use case, said Mike Horton at DOT.

Start by showing that a use case improves productivity in measurable ways. Better yet, find ways to apply that use case organizationwide or even in other agencies. "Right now, we're stuck in this POC purgatory because people are doing pet projects, and we're really not lining things up where we can really get the advantage that we need to get," Horton said.

## Give Employees Room to Experiment

Agencies might be tempted to take a wholly top-down approach to AI, focusing on developing use cases in strategic areas. But there's something to be said for taking a bottom-up approach and having employees take the lead, said Felipe Millon at OpenAI. He noted that Pennsylvania saw great results from a yearlong pilot that gave 175 employees an opportunity to study how ChatGPT could make them more efficient. By the end of the pilot, employees estimated that AI was saving them eight hours a week.

"Organizations need to do both strategies," Millon said. "You need to just take these tools and make them generally available, but then also figure out ways to revolutionize the most important parts of your mission."



**Felipe Millon**  
*Government Go-  
to-Market Lead,  
OpenAI*



**Natalie Buda Smith**  
*AI and Digital  
Strategy Director,  
Library of Congress*

## Keep Employees Mission-Focused

Natalie Buda Smith at the Library of Congress also believes in allowing employees to experiment with these tools but recognizes that this can make managers nervous. In short, they worry that employees will do something that's not productive.

Just having employees learn AI tools is productive, said Buda Smith. Still, when providing them, make it clear that staff should focus on mission-supporting tasks. That prevents a free-for-all while also giving employees plenty of latitude, she said. "Working within the framework of your strategy, and the objectives and goals within your strategy, they can come up with some pretty amazing things," she said.

## Take Stock of Existing AI Solutions

Most agencies already have invested in AI without realizing it, said Danielle Greshock at AWS. That's because so many software vendors have built AI into their solutions or offer AI features that agencies can use. Agencies need to factor these offerings into their AI planning, she said.

"You want to start thinking about the tools that you already buy that are offering more and more features in the AI space that you can take advantage of right out of the box," Greshock said. At the same time, she added, you want to make sure employees use those offerings responsibly.



**Danielle Greshock**  
Worldwide Director of  
ISV Partner Solutions  
Architecture,  
Amazon Web Services

## Create a Shared AI Infrastructure

GSA's Zach Whitman said the agency is especially interested in looking for ways to share AI use cases. Although there are a variety of use cases across agencies, "there are tons of similarities," he said. That suggests a tantalizing possibility: creating a shared AI infrastructure on which each agency could build.

Such an infrastructure might include servers for hosting large language models and services for accessing foundation models or application programming interfaces (APIs). The goal would be to lower the barrier to entry for agencies, Whitman said, "making it so that a fed can pull the right model for the right use case at the right time and not be encumbered by procurement issues."



**Zach Whitman,**  
Chief AI Officer and  
Chief Data Scientist,  
U.S. General Services  
Administration (GSA)

## Stick to Your Principles (and Show Your Work)

The concept of responsible AI remains a top priority for government agencies. Although the definition of responsible AI is still evolving, agencies should continue to focus on certain bedrock principles and, most importantly, transparency, said Jim Ford of Microsoft.

For starters, agencies need to be clear about what data goes into their models and the prompts they use to generate content. As they adopt agentic AI, which can initiate action without human intervention, agencies must understand and be ready to explain that decision-making process. "Just like we inspect human workers and what they do, we are going to have to do the same thing [with agentic AI]," Ford said.



**Jim Ford**  
Director, Federal  
Partner Solutions,  
Microsoft

*"Right now, we're stuck in this proof-of-concept purgatory because people are doing pet projects, and we're really not lining things up where we can really get the advantage that we need to get."*

— Mike Horton, DOT

# How to Support AI Through Better Data Governance

Better data quality translates into better AI models. It's that simple, government experts say. But, of course, data governance itself is a multifaceted topic. Here are some areas in which experts suggest agencies focus their governance efforts.

## Encourage Sensible, Secure Data Sharing

To take full advantage of AI, various agency programs and offices must share data where it makes sense, creating more robust datasets. Technically, secure data sharing is no longer a major technical problem, thanks to advances in data management platforms. And a March 20, 2025, executive order should help overcome any cultural resistance, said Sujit Mohanty at Databricks.

While focused on addressing fraud, waste and abuse, the order calls for agencies to eliminate barriers to data collaboration. "The biggest thing that's probably occurred amongst agencies is really just getting the overall guidance that it's OK to actually share information," Mohanty said.



**Sujit Mohanty**  
General Manager,  
Public Sector  
Field Engineering,  
Databricks

## Reduce Risk Through Better Data Governance

As agencies increase their use of AI, they need to think about the risks involved: Will a given system create financial or reputational risk? Or will it bring material risk, such as reduced security or ineffective operations? To address those threats, agencies must take a hard look at their data governance practices, said David Hendrie at SAS.

Agencies should take the same kind of systematic approach to risk management that the commercial banking sector adopted under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, which aimed to enhance the accuracy of financial reporting, he said. "Tie [the risk] back to the quality of data, tie it back to the process and the people who are doing the modeling itself," Hendrie said.



**David Hendrie**  
Principal, Federal  
Civilian Sales, SAS

## Use Data From the Edge to Train AI Models

Your most valuable data is not necessarily in the data center. Instead, it resides at the enterprise's edge, in applications and systems your users have deployed in the field. The challenge, said Ken Rollins at Dell Technologies, is finding a way to use that data to train your AI models.

One promising approach is federated learning, he said. Rather than copying and sending that data to the core, you can train the model at the edge and send it to the data center, where it can be integrated with models generated at other edge locations and used to create a new, consolidated model. "There are companies that we are working with that do that solution really well," Rollins said.



**Ken Rollins**  
Chief Technology  
Strategist, AI and  
Digital Engineering,  
Dell Technologies



**Mia Jordan**  
*Digital Transformation Executive, Public Sector, Salesforce*

### Don't Overlook Your Legacy Data

An agency's most valuable data isn't always its most recent. That's a problem when an agency buys a modern data management platform that works only with modern data systems and not the highly customized applications that have been around for decades, said Mia Jordan at Salesforce.

This is especially important as agencies face changes in the workforce. Jordan, a former government CIO, said it can take months for new employees to learn to navigate all the data they might use to train AI models. Using data integration tools, such as Salesforce's Data Cloud, "can really help bring that information into view and bring those insights quickly into view," she said.

### Use AI to Prep Data for AI

Government experts often say that in most cases, agencies have all the data they need to train AI models. The challenge is figuring out what data they need for a given application and how to find it. As it turns out, AI itself can help with that task, said Mary Strain at AWS.

AI has a remarkable facility for combing through vast troves of databases and understanding the connections between different elements. This can highlight connections that data scientists might have missed. "I think there are lots of ways we can accelerate these really cumbersome and time-consuming but critically important processes that actually make your organization ready for what's next," Strain said.



**Mary Strain**  
*AI and Machine Learning Strategy Leader, AWS*

### Invest in Data Governance Up Front

The U.S. Department of Defense's Advana program is a case study in how all the work that goes into establishing good data governance at the start of a program will pay off in the long run, said Dan Tucker at Booz Allen Hamilton.

As DoD's enterprise data and analytics environment, Advana provides users with data from more than 400 business systems, plus a variety of tools and services. It addresses key issues around data lineage and provenance, access to APIs, semantic descriptions, and other governance must-haves. "They've done a really nice job [of data governance] on that program, and I think it's because they built that in early on," Tucker said.



**Dan Tucker**  
*Senior Vice President, Data and AI Engineering, Booz Allen Hamilton*

*"There are lots of ways we can accelerate these really cumbersome and time-consuming but critically important processes that make your organization ready for what's next."*

— Mary Strain, AWS

# How to Put Cybersecurity Front and Center in AI Efforts

The intersection of AI and cybersecurity is a complex place. Yes, AI can help agencies strengthen their cyber teams in several ways. And yes, AI creates new challenges for those teams, both in terms of supercharging cyber threats and creating new vulnerabilities to worry about. Here are some issues that should be top of mind.



**Wayne LeRiche**  
*Principal Architect,  
Palo Alto Networks*

## Improve the Cyber User Experience

When it comes to cyber tools, UX is a mission-critical concern. You don't want cyber professionals worrying about the tools they are using and not the threats they are tracking. This is where AI can help, said Wayne LeRiche of Palo Alto Networks.

For example, cyber experts often must comb through the activity logs of various network devices in search of a particular threat. But AI can do that faster and generate a network map highlighting potential trouble signs, such as performance loss, latency or jitter. "Those are the types of things that we're doing to try to make it easier for our cyber operators to work with the tools," LeRiche said.

## Put More Intelligence Into Cyber Operations

The security operations center, which suffers from constant pressure and fast-paced work, is a hotbed of employee burnout. In addition to enabling better UX and more automation, AI can help SOC staff make sense of data faster and more effectively, said Garrett Lee at Broadcom.

By analyzing data on previous attacks, an incident protection tool can suss out potential next steps that attackers might take, accelerating SOC staff's ability to mitigate the threat and reducing the manual labor typically involved. "We can reduce the friction in that operation by taking advantage of the large datasets of attacks that we've analyzed and put that intelligence into our own models, which could then get predictive," Lee said.



**Garrett Lee**  
*Regional Vice  
President, Federal,  
Enterprise  
Security Group,  
Broadcom*



**Mike Prado**  
*Deputy Assistant Director,  
Homeland Security  
Investigations Cyber  
Crimes Center, U.S. Dept.  
of Homeland Security*

## Get Ready for More Attacks

Until now, the technical expertise required to launch an effective attack limited the pool of potential malicious actors. But AI, which can do everything from write phishing emails to code adaptive malware and launch large-scale attacks, has significantly lowered the bar to entry, said Mike Prado of DHS.

That applies not just to traditional cyber actors, but to criminals involved in financial fraud, human trafficking and other illegal activities. "We're seeing this democratization of AI across the board," Prado said. "Even a basic criminal can now start to use AI for a variety of illicit acts."

## Protect the Data That Feeds Your Models

Sooner or later, it will happen: Someone whose application for benefits, a loan or a job was rejected will sue an agency, alleging that the decision was based on faulty reasoning by AI. In a case like that, auditability is essential, said Randy Hayes at VAST.

It's not enough to understand how that model works. You also need to account for all the data that went into creating that model. "You have to understand where the data is and the security of that data," Hayes said. "You need to understand who touched the model with what datasets in order to show traceability across the entire pipeline."



**Randy Hayes**  
Vice President,  
Public Sector,  
VAST Federal



**Burnie Legette**  
Director of IOT  
Sales and Artificial  
Intelligence, Intel

## Protect the Data at the Hardware Level

When talking about data security, many people rely on protections built into applications or the operating system. But malicious actors can manipulate the software without the agency ever realizing it, said Burnie Legette at Intel.

In contrast, hardware-based security features can operate without corrupted software affecting them. Among other capabilities, hardware features can improve the security of data in memory when running virtualized workloads. "We're doing a lot of innovation at the hardware level," said Legette. "Hardware is the baseline of your system. Software and OSes can be fooled, but what's in hardware is real."

## Get People Ready to Be Uncomfortable

Now is the time to prepare the cyber workforce for changes that AI is bringing to their jobs, said David Hinchman at GAO. For example, technically speaking, cyber professionals need to learn how to apply AI to cybersecurity and how to address cyber concerns around AI applications.

But more generally, they need to understand how their jobs are changing and why it's important. "They need to know what's coming, and they need to know what that journey's like because yes, they will have to move perhaps faster than they're comfortable with because of the speed of the technology evolution," Hinchman said.



**David Hinchman**  
Director, IT and  
Cybersecurity,  
U.S. Government  
Accountability Office

*"We're seeing this democratization of AI across the board. Even a basic criminal can now start to use AI for a variety of illicit acts."*

— Mike Prado, DHS

# How to Foster Better Human/AI Collaboration

Government IT leaders often talk about AI as if it were part of the workforce. Many see the technology as the ultimate digital assistant, working side by side with human employees as they carry out their tasks throughout the day. Here are some ways that vision might play out.

## Set New Expectations Around Productivity

Most government employees probably do not need to worry about AI taking their jobs soon, but as the technology advances, people likely will be expected to increase their productivity significantly, said Landon Van Dyke at State.

For instance, agentic AI will enable people in development and other production environments to accelerate their work by automating key processes. "If the expectations are that I'm going to produce the same product in the same time frame with the same rate of return as I did previously, you're thoroughly mistaken," he said.



**Landon Van Dyke**  
*Senior Adviser  
on Technology  
Strategies, U.S.  
Dept. of State*



**Daniel Clarke**  
*President, Products  
and Solutions,  
IntraEdge*

## Align Training With AI Use Cases

Government IT leaders often talk about the importance of working with employees to develop a list of possible AI use cases. But there's a problem with that, said Daniel Clarke at IntraEdge: How can employees come up with use cases if they have only a vague idea of what AI is?

Clarke suggests prioritizing AI literacy training. Give employees a rundown of how AI works, its key capabilities and the risks involved. "Then say, 'Now that you understand it a little better, tell me about the use cases you have,'" said Clarke. "It's the only way you can really get a thorough understanding of your [possible AI use case] inventory, and that's the key to controlling risk."

## Teach Employees to Think Critically About AI

Studies have found that people who rely on AI tend to become less adept at independent problem solving. To get the most out of AI, agencies need employees to think about the technology critically, said Ted Kaouk at CFTC. For example, they need to assess the relevance and applicability of AI-generated content and modify it as appropriate.

It's a tricky balance. Although knowledge workers are likely to act more as editors and reviewers than as writers or developers, they must maintain those core writing or coding abilities. "It challenges the identity of the knowledge worker," Kaouk said. "These foundational skills are what actually made us successful, and we're going to have to shift into something slightly different."



**Ted Kaouk**  
*Chief Data & AI  
Officer & Director of  
the Division of Data,  
Commodity Futures  
Trading Commission  
(CFTC)*



**Alison Renner**  
Director, Human  
AI Innovation,  
Dataminr

## Design AI Solutions With Humans in Mind

Let's say your staff is overloaded with reports to read. How do you address that problem with AI? Do you create an intelligent search system that helps staff zero in on the specific information they need or a summarization system that distills the content of each report? Before developing a solution, "we need to really dig in and understand the actual users," said Alison Renner at Dataminr.

Renner calls this human-centered AI. Look at a problem from employees' perspective, then design a solution that fits with how they work. "It's about putting human needs at the center of your design process," she said. "This is not new to AI. This is what we've been trying to do with technology for quite some time."

## Find Experts Who Can Help

No matter how much AI training agencies provide, they will likely need support from contractors as projects move from pilot tests to full-scale deployments. But to be financially feasible, agencies and their contractors alike must run lean operations, said USDA's Rudolf Rojas.

Vendors tend to oversell any new technology, he said, but in the current environment, that won't work. Agencies must be smart about when they use contractor support, and contractors must look out for customers' interests. "There's a lot of opportunity out there. You just have to fine-tune it and make sure you're providing value to the government," Rojas said.



**Rudolf Rojas**  
IT Manager, U.S.  
Dept. of Agriculture

## Imagine AI as an Executive Coach

AI itself might be able to guide training efforts, said Andrea Brandon at Interior. She envisions AI sitting in the background on the network, constantly monitoring employees as they work. The goal is not to be Big Brother, but to identify skill sets and competencies that training could develop.



**Andrea Brandon**  
Deputy Assistant  
Secretary, Budget,  
Finance, Grants  
and Acquisition, U.S.  
Dept. of the Interior

For example, in the acquisition office, which is piloting this concept, leaders might find that employees do well on cost analysis but need to brush up on developing statements of work. AI also could serve as a coach or trainer for employees as they work. "We're looking at this not just for acquisitions, but, if it works well, we want to use it as a new paradigm for training all the workforce," Brandon said.

*"[AI] challenges the identity of the knowledge worker. These foundational skills are what actually made us successful, and we're going to have to shift into something slightly different."*

— Ted Kaouk, CFTC

# The 2025 AI for Government Summit

To watch any of the sessions on demand, click on the session title.

## Welcome

- Michael Adams, Carahsoft

## Keynote Address: The Future of AI in the Public Sector

- Brian Campo, U.S. Coast Guard

## AI Governance — How to Use AI Safely and Securely

- Daniel Clarke, IntraEdge

## AI Infrastructure in Government: Building a Scalable and Secure Foundation

- Randy Hayes, VAST
- Mike Horton, DOT
- Keith Ober, NVIDIA
- Ken Rollins, Dell Technologies
- Zach Whitman, GSA

## Data as a Two-Way Mirror: Lessons Learned from AI Hype

- Luke Norris, Granicus
- Mary Strain, Amazon Web Services

## Leveraging Data and AI: Driving Public-Sector Innovation

- David Hendrie, SAS
- Karl Hermann, Zoom
- Mia Jordan, Salesforce
- Rudolf Rojas, USDA
- Landon Van Dyke, State

## AI in Government: Efficiency, Progress and More

- Ted Kaouk, CFTC

## AI and Cybersecurity: Strengthening Government Safety

- David Hinchman, GAO
- Garrett Lee, Broadcom
- Burnie Legette, Intel
- Wayne LeRiche, Palo Alto Networks
- Mike Prado, DHS Cyber Crimes Center

## Fireside Chat

- Jim Ford, Microsoft
- Sujit Mohanty, Databricks

## Using AI to Empower Human Efficiency at Scale

- Alison Renner, Dataminr

## Faster Government Efficiency at the Data Tier in the Age of AI

- Todd Schroeder, Databricks
- Dan Tucker, Booz Allen Hamilton

## AI in 2025: How Agencies are Preparing, Buying and Using It

- Andrea Brandon, Interior

## Generative AI: Driving Efficiency in Government

- Natalie Buda Smith, Library of Congress
- Danielle Greshock, Amazon Web Services
- Felipe Millon, OpenAI
- Anthony Parrish, Office of Naval Research
- Stuart Wagner, DON

carahsoft

