

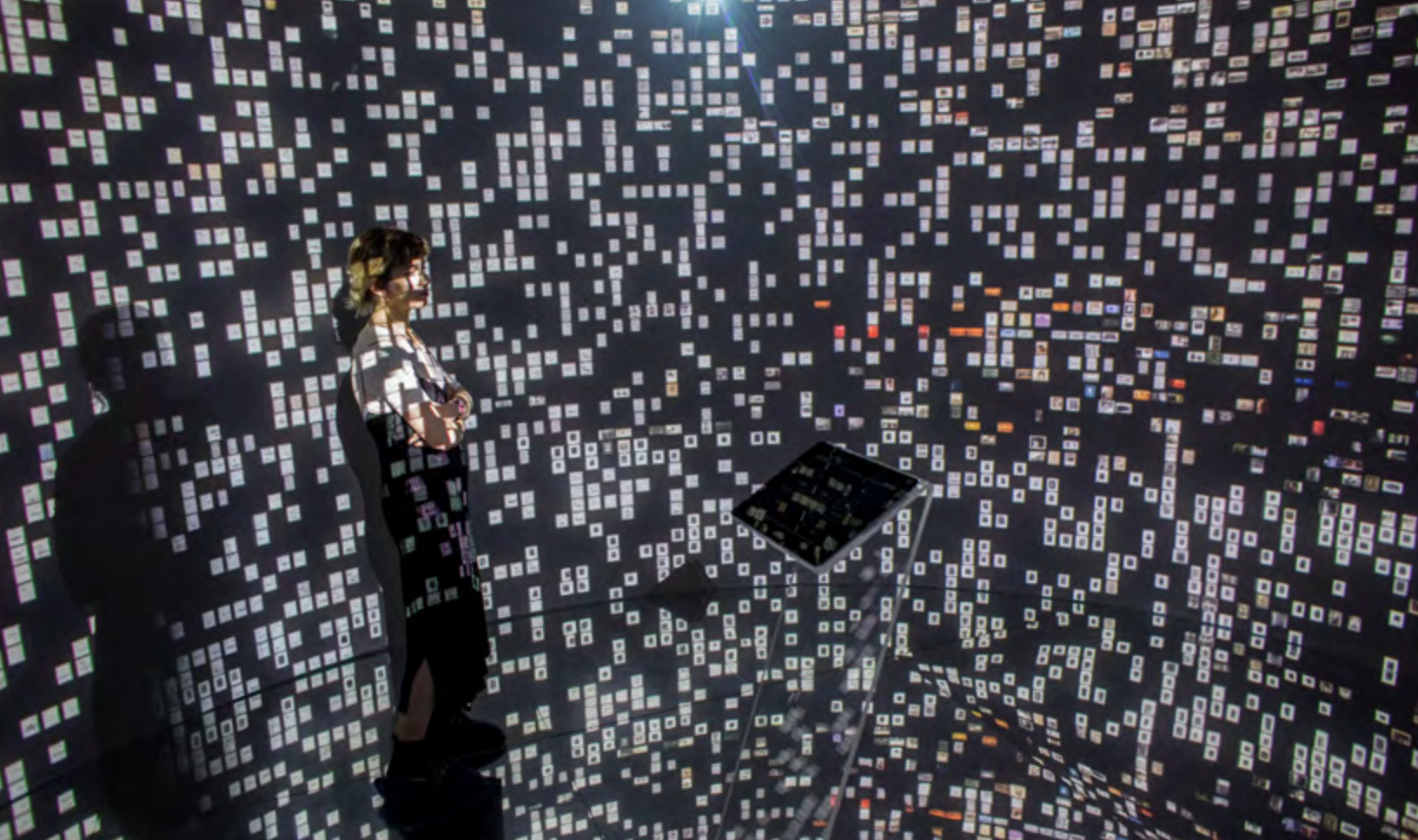
A CALL TO ACTION ON AI IN NYC

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT



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A Call to Action on AI in NYC Executive Summary

The Manhattan Borough President's Office presents A Call To Action on AI in NYC, a series of recommendations and steps that must be taken to manage the transformative impacts of generative AI in New York City. We highlight the immense potential of this technology to invigorate our economy, expand educational opportunities, revolutionize healthcare, and unlock novel avenues of creativity. However, we also acknowledge the associated risks, including job displacement, amplification of biases, propagation of misinformation, infringement of copyrights, and threats to privacy.

To address these issues, this agenda outlines proposals for our city's government, schools, employment sector, creative professionals, local elections, and AI safety initiatives. We call for:

- The development of AI usage policies in government agencies
- The integration of AI education in schools
- Planning for workforce disruptions due to AI
- Protections of intellectual property in AI applications
- Guarding against AI-generated misinformation in elections
- The establishment of an AI safety research hub

This agenda is founded on the belief that our city has the capability and responsibility to guide AI's development and societal management, ensuring that its adoption is safe, ethical, and beneficial for all New Yorkers.

Note: The executive summary of this document was written by ChatGPT.

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Introduction

The rapid development of generative AI will impact almost every sector of life in New York City, from government to the private sector to our personal lives.

This technology has the potential to grow our economy, expand educational opportunity, advance healthcare, and enable new forms of creativity. But it also poses a threat, with the potential to displace workers, amplify bias, spread misinformation, infringe on copyrights, and undermine privacy.

New York City government must act now to capitalize on AI's positive potential, while simultaneously minimizing these threats.

Our city is home to the second largest concentration of AI companies in the nation, a large academic research community, a thriving startup sector, and an estimated 40,000 AI professionals.¹ This gives us the ability and responsibility to influence the direction of the field and the ways society manages it.

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Bard, Midjourney, and Runway are already being used widely in offices, homes, and classrooms across New York City. Local government needs to move quickly to catch up, and get ahead of rapid advances on the horizon.

The Office of the Manhattan Borough President has recently consulted with a variety of AI experts from academia, nonprofits, and the private sector. The call to action that follows is based largely on those conversations and lays out a preliminary agenda for how our city can manage what may be the most disruptive new technology in our lifetime. There are still more questions than answers, but we don't have the luxury to wait to begin acting.



¹ <https://www.cbre.com/insights/briefs/artificial-intelligence-us-talent-spotlight>



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1. CITY GOVERNMENT

Policies for employees

Every agency of New York City government should develop a policy on the use of generative AI by its employees, with a goal of encouraging creativity and efficiency while controlling for downsides. These policies should:

- Clarify when and how employees can use these tools for research, writing, and design
- Limit what employees can input in prompts in order to protect sensitive information
- Establish rules on disclosure of AI's role in creating public-facing content
- Recommend resources and methods to fact-check AI-generated content
- Above all: Specify that a human employee must assume ultimate responsibility for quality and accuracy of all content produced, including freedom from bias and misinformation

Improving City services

Every agency of City government should begin exploring ways that new generative AI tools can improve the provision of services to the public. Examples might include:

- Making it easier to apply for benefits like food stamps
- Speeding the closing of affordable housing financing
- Offering multilingual transcription of all community board meetings
- Increasing the speed of nonprofit social service contract payments
- Accelerating the timeline for design and procurement of City capital projects
- Streamlining access to information and City services for the general public

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2. SCHOOLS

New curricula

NYC public school students should be taught how to effectively use tools like ChatGPT and Midjourney, including an understanding of their limitations as a source of factual, unbiased content. The Department of Education (DOE) should rapidly develop age-appropriate curricula on machine learning, with the goal that every student will receive coursework on this topic by high school at the latest.

In order to prepare for what will likely be greater spread of misinformation, students of all ages should be taught a media literacy curriculum, to help them assess the veracity of sources, and to examine and make informed decisions about their own media diet. Students should also be trained on how to recognize and protect against financial scams that target unsuspecting individuals by using “deep fake” audio and video technology.

New tools for teaching and learning

Teachers should receive orientation on new generative AI tools, given that so many students are already using them (including to complete assignments) and because of the growing impact the technology is having on society at large. DOE should help teachers adapt curricula and assessment methods to the reality that student access to tools like ChatGPT is disrupting traditional methods (much as math instruction was adapted after calculators became ubiquitous).

Teachers with an interest in new generative AI tools should be empowered by DOE to explore using them as an aid in lesson planning, quiz creation, etc. They should be encouraged to explore the potential for creating highly customized assignments and assessments, tailored to the specific learning level and interests of individual students.

DOE should explore the potential of new AI technologies to provide personalized tutoring. These tools are showing early promise in serving as a highly personalized, on-demand writing coach, math tutor, coding instructor, etc.





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3. EMPLOYMENT

Workforce development

Generative AI has the potential to significantly disrupt the labor market, with possible impact on entry-level jobs in writing, editing, graphic design, clerical services, customer service, accounting, translation, paralegal services, medical assistance, etc.

The extent and timing of possible disruptions are not yet clear, but it's not too soon for New York City's workforce development system to start planning to adapt. Leaders in this sector should begin convening immediately to explore ways to shift training tracks to emerging careers, or at least to those which are more "AI proof." And workforce development organizations should begin incorporating generative AI tools into their existing training programs, since this will now likely be essential if program graduates are to be competitive in the workplace.

4. CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Protecting intellectual property

NYC is home to one of the world's largest communities of creative professionals. Some of the emerging generative AI models—in particular those which produce images, music, and voice—are trained on the copyrighted work of artists who receive no compensation, despite the fact that these models can produce output that mimics the original creator's unique style.

NYC should stand up for the principle that artists must have the option to remove their work from AI training data sets and, if they wish, to receive economic benefit when models do include their work. NYC government should restrict its use of generative AI tools to those which adhere to this ethical standard. The City should encourage or require companies to disclose the creators and resources their tools are trained on to generate content.

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5. LOCAL ELECTIONS

Defending against misinformation

New AI tools could potentially be used to generate large amounts of fake content that would deceive voters and disrupt elections. The national press corps will be scrutinizing this trend and will help to inform the public about falsified content for presidential races and other major campaigns. But there will likely be far less scrutiny in local politics, where, for example, hundreds of candidates for New York Council in each election cycle would have the ability to fabricate harmful content about opponents with tools that are free and nearly instantaneous.

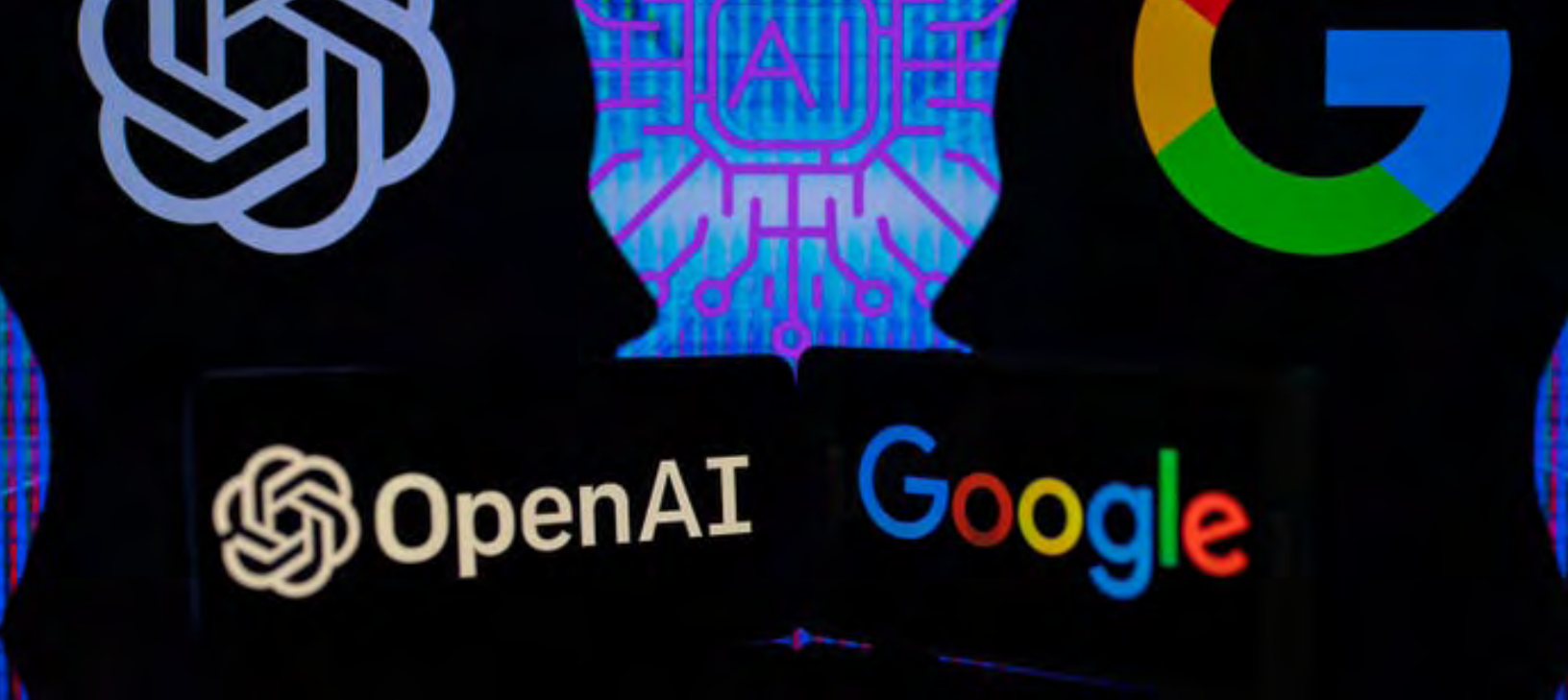
NYC's Campaign Finance Board (CFB) should put in place rules that require all campaigns participating in the matching funds program to clearly label image, video, and audio content generated using AI. This should apply to broadcasts, social media posts, and printed material.

Implementing new rules

Verification and enforcement of such a policy will be challenging. A workable system might rely on opposing campaigns to flag content for review by CFB. The agency will need to develop internal capacity to identify AI-generated content, including via emerging software designed for this purpose (so far these tools are yielding uneven results).

In 2025 all local, borough-wide, and citywide municipal offices will be up for election, with some campaigns beginning to produce content as early as 2024. CFB should begin preparing now to have systems in place to protect against a flood of fake content inundating voters in this upcoming election cycle.





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6. AI SAFETY

A research imperative

The pace of development of new generative AI tools is outpacing our understanding of the inner workings of this technology. As AI becomes more capable, and is increasingly integrated into more aspects of our society, it's crucial that we learn how to manage these systems safely and ethically. A growing number of experts have warned that should we fail in this task the real-world consequences could be catastrophic.

We need to dramatically ramp up research in AI system value alignment, interpretability, reliability, robustness, and more. New York City can and should play a leading role in this effort. Our city is home to a major concentration of leading-edge academic institutions. We have the talent and infrastructure here to be a global leader in AI safety research.

Investing in a new research hub

To catalyze this work, NYC should replicate what it's already done to spur research in other critical areas like climate, life sciences, and pandemic response: fund the creation of a new multidisciplinary research institute. Recent efforts that can serve as a model include:

- NEW YORK GENOME CENTER, a successful nonprofit collaboration of ten local universities and hospital systems to advance genomic research to cure cancer and other diseases.
- NYC PANDEMIC RESPONSE INSTITUTE, a collaboration of Columbia University and CUNY School of Public Health, supporting government and communities in preparing and responding to critical public health crises.
- NEW YORK CLIMATE EXCHANGE, a newly announced initiative, led by SUNY Stony Brook, in partnership with more than a dozen other academic institutions, to build a large new center for climate change research and education on Governors Island.

New York City and State governments have collectively invested hundreds of millions of dollars to establish the above institutions. We should begin work now on creation of a similar multidisciplinary, multi-institutional hub focused on research in AI safety and ethics. This will help establish our city as a global leader in addressing what may be the single greatest challenge of our time.