

April 10, 2024

Craig Jolley
United States Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20004

RE: Comments of ACT | The App Association to the United States Agency for International Development on *Global AI Research Agenda* (89 FR 18590)

ACT | The App Association (App Association) appreciates the opportunity to submit views to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on its efforts to develop a Global AI Research Agenda to guide the objectives and implementation of AI-related research in contexts beyond United States borders.¹

The App Association represents thousands of small business software application development companies and technology firms that create the technologies that drive internet of things (IoT) use cases across consumer and enterprise contexts. Today, the value of the ecosystem the App Association represents – which we call the app economy – is approximately \$1.7 trillion and is responsible for 5.9 million American jobs, while serving as a key driver of the \$8 trillion internet of things (IoT) revolution. Alongside the world’s rapid embrace of mobile technology, our members create the innovative solutions that power IoT across modalities and segments of the economy. We support the goals set forth in Executive Order 14110, and USAID’s efforts to carry out its responsibilities set forth in it.

The App Association agrees that, with the right enabling environment, ecosystem of market actors, and investments, AI technologies can foster greater efficiency and accelerated development results across a variety of sectors and contexts, whether in agriculture, health, education, energy, etc. We also agree that addressing the risks presented by AI technologies is essential to fully harnessing their benefits across a range of geographic and cultural contexts is vital in responsibly developing and deploying AI.

¹ 89 FR 18590.

AI is an evolving constellation of technologies that enable computers to simulate elements of human thinking – learning and reasoning among them. An encompassing term, AI entails a range of approaches and technologies, such as Machine Learning (ML) and deep learning, where an algorithm based on the way neurons and synapses in the brain change due to exposure to new inputs, allowing independent or assisted decision making.

AI-driven algorithmic decision tools and predictive analytics are having, and will continue to have, substantial direct and indirect effects on Americans. Some forms of AI are already being used to improve American consumers' lives today – for example, AI is used to detect financial and identity theft and to protect the communications networks upon which Americans rely against cybersecurity threats. Moving forward, across use cases and sectors, AI has incredible potential to improve American consumers' lives through faster and better-informed decision making, enabled by cutting-edge distributed cloud computing. As an example, healthcare treatments and patient outcomes stand poised to improve disease prevention and conditions, as well as efficiently and effectively treat diseases through automated analysis of x-rays and other medical imaging. From a governance perspective, AI solutions will derive greater insights from infrastructure and support efficient budgeting decisions.

Today, people around the world encounter AI in their lives incrementally through the improvements they have seen in computer-based services they use, typically in the form of streamlined processes, image analysis, and voice recognition (we urge consideration of these forms of AI as “narrow” AI). The App Association notes that this “narrow” AI already provides great societal benefit. For example, AI-driven software products and services revolutionized the ability of countless Americans with disabilities to achieve experiences in their lives far closer to the experiences of those without disabilities.

Nonetheless, AI also has the potential to raise a variety of unique considerations for policymakers. The App Association appreciates the efforts to develop a policy approach to AI that will bring its benefits to all, balanced with necessary safeguards to protect consumers. To assist USAID and other policymakers, the App Association has appended a comprehensive set of AI policy principles for consideration,² which broadly align with the Global AI Research Agenda's three interrelated goals discussed by USAID.³ The App Association strongly encourages USAID to align its Global AI Research Agenda with the principles we have developed based on the consensus of our diverse and innovative membership.

The App Association appreciates USAID's consideration of the above views. AI offers immense potential for widespread societal benefit, which is why the Global AI Research Agenda should responsibly foster investment and innovation in any way practicable. Our members both use and develop solutions that include AI, and those are in turn used

² **Appendix A, ACT** | *The App Association's Policy Principles for Artificial Intelligence.*

³ 89 FR 18590.

by countless Americans and others around the world. As society moves to adopt AI technologies on a greater scale, it is important that the small business developers who power the global app economy have their views considered and can contribute to this important trend.

We urge USAID to contact the undersigned with any questions or ways that we can assist moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Scarpelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "S".

Brian Scarpelli
Senior Global Policy Counsel

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Policy Recommendations for AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is clearly a priority for policymakers, with 37 AI-related laws enacted globally, more than 80 pending legislative proposals at the state level and several more at the federal level. To understand and shape rules for this complex and evolving technology, a vital voice—that of small businesses, members of ACT| The App Association—must be prioritized in order to create a competitive, safe, and secure AI future.

We initially released these principles in 2021. However, we are updating them continually to reflect new developments in privacy and data security laws around the world and new learnings about the benefits, risks, and challenges presented by evolving AI tools in use cases from healthcare and education to software development and cybersecurity.

A successful policy approach to AI will align with the following guidelines:





1. Harmonizing and Coordinating Approaches to AI

A wide range of federal, local, and state laws prohibit harmful conduct regardless of whether the use of AI is involved. For example, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Act prohibits a wide range of unfair or deceptive acts or practices, and states also have versions of these prohibitions in their statute books. The use of AI does not shield companies from these prohibitions. However, federal and state agencies alike must approach the applicability of these laws in AI contexts thoughtfully and with great sensitivity to the novel or evolving risks AI systems present. Congress and other policymakers must first understand how existing frameworks apply to activities involving AI to avoid creating sweeping new authorities or agencies that awkwardly or inconsistently overlap with current policy frameworks.

2. Quality Assurance and Oversight

Policy frameworks should utilize risk-based approaches to ensure that the use of AI aligns with any relevant recognized standards of safety, efficacy, and equity. Small software and device companies benefit from understanding the distribution of risk and liability in building, testing, and using AI tools. Policy frameworks addressing liability should ensure the appropriate distribution and mitigation of risk and liability. Specifically, those in the value chain with the ability to minimize risks based on their knowledge and ability to mitigate should have appropriate incentives to do so. Some recommended areas of focus include:

- Ensuring AI is safe, efficacious, and equitable.
- Encouraging AI developers to consistently utilize rigorous procedures and enabling them to document their methods and results.
- Encouraging those developing, offering, or testing AI systems intended for consumer use to provide truthful and easy-to-understand representations regarding intended use and risks that would be reasonably understood by those intended, as well as expected, to use the AI solution.

3. Thoughtful Design

Policy frameworks should encourage design of AI systems that are informed by real-world workflows, human-centered design and usability principles, and end-user needs. AI systems should facilitate a transition to changes in the delivery of goods and services that benefit consumers and businesses. The design, development, and success of AI should leverage collaboration and dialogue among users, AI technology developers, and other stakeholders to have all perspectives reflected in AI solutions.



4.

Access and Affordability

Policy frameworks should enable products and services that involve AI systems to be accessible and affordable. Significant resources may be required to scale systems. Policymakers should also ensure that developers can build accessibility features into their AI-driven offerings and avoid policies that limit their accessibility options.

5.

Research and Transparency

Policy frameworks should support and facilitate research and development of AI by prioritizing and providing sufficient funding while also maximizing innovators' and researchers' ability to collect and process data from a wide range of sources. Research on the costs and benefits of transparency in AI should also be a priority and involve collaboration among all affected stakeholders to develop a better understanding of how and under which circumstances transparency mandates would help address risks arising from the use of AI systems.

6.

Modernized Privacy and Security Frameworks

The many new AI-driven uses for data, including sensitive personal information, raise privacy questions. They also offer the potential for more powerful and granular privacy controls for consumers. Accordingly, any policy framework should address the topics of privacy, consent, and modern technological capabilities as a part of the policy development process. Policy frameworks must be scalable and assure that an individual's data is properly protected, while also allowing the flow of information and responsible evolution of AI. A balanced framework should avoid undue barriers to data processing and collection while imposing reasonable data minimization, consent, and consumer rights frameworks.

7.

Bias

The bias inherent in all data, as well as errors, will remain one of the more pressing issues with AI systems that utilize machine learning techniques in particular. Regulatory agencies should examine data provenance and bias issues present in the development and uses of AI solutions to ensure that bias in datasets does not result in harm to users or consumers of products or services involving AI, including through unlawful discrimination.



8.

Ethics

The success of AI depends on ethical use. A policy framework must promote many of the existing and emerging ethical norms for broader adherence by AI technologists, innovators, computer scientists, and those who use such systems. Relevant ethical considerations include:

- Applying ethics to each phase of an AI system’s life, from design to development to use.
- Maintaining consistency with international conventions on human rights.
- Prioritizing inclusivity such that AI solutions benefit consumers and are developed using data from across socioeconomic, age, gender, geographic origin, and other groupings.
- Reflect that AI tools may reveal extremely sensitive and private information about a user and ensure that laws require the protection of such information.

9.

Education

Policy frameworks should support education for the advancement of AI, promote examples that demonstrate the success of AI, and encourage stakeholder engagements to keep frameworks responsive to emerging opportunities and challenges.

- Consumers should be educated as to the use of AI in the service(s) they are using.
- Academic education should include curriculum that will advance the understanding of and ability to use AI solutions.

10.

Intellectual Property

The protection of intellectual property (IP) rights is critical to the evolution of AI. In developing approaches and frameworks for AI governance, policymakers should ensure that compliance measures and requirements do not undercut IP or trade secrets.