

# Algorithmic Impact Assessment Toolkit



A community centered algorithmic impact assessment (AIA) toolkit created by Data & Society in partnership with GovAI Coalition

**DATA &  
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# Algorithmic Impact Assessment Toolkit



## What is a community centered AIA?

A guide for government staff to seek community input on AI systems before adoption

This toolkit provides a practical framework for developers and deployers of AI systems to conduct [algorithmic impact assessment \(AIA\)](#) by centering community voices. Connecting directly with the people most likely to be affected helps to uncover false assumptions in system design, answer community questions and concerns, and surface key risks and gaps to mitigate before launch.

**The toolkit will guide you on how to identify stakeholder groups, design an engagement plan, and translate community input into actionable insights.** It also supports organizations to better understand local needs and explore alternative solutions. It complements other pre-deployment AI assessments, such as budget, system performance, organizational readiness, and environmental impacts.



## Who is this for?

This guide is for employees in city agencies (or product teams in nonprofit organizations or industry) who are exploring the use of a new AI system, or who are midstream in a pilot to elicit and respond to critical feedback before rollout.

Algorithmic impact assessment often involves technical assessments of how a given system performs for different demographic groups.

The premise of this guide is that under resource constraints, organizations that do not have large technical teams can conduct impact assessment via focused engagement with the people who will be most likely to be impacted by a given system. These conversations surface essential insights about prospective impacts and provide the opportunity to reimagine a project — or mitigate its failures — before the system is deployed.

# When to use this toolkit?

*(The earlier, the better).*

## PHASE 1.

### Problem Formulation

It is important to seek public input as early as possible, ideally in the conception phase of the project.



## PHASE 2.

### Request for Information (RFI)

In the RFI stage, impact assessment can help you ask the right questions and evaluate prospective systems against community members' concerns and expectations.



## PHASE 3.

### Pilot

Pairing a pilot with engagement can help a pilot do what it is intended to do: garner feedback, test glitches, and prepare for equitable deployment in the future.



## PHASE 4.

### Pilot Assessment

Impact assessment plays a key role in evaluating the results of a pilot.



## PHASE 5.

### Deployment

Community engagement should ideally precede deployment. Even when this is not possible, conducting engagement during deployment builds technology awareness and positions the public and local organizations to engage more in the future.



## PHASE 6.

### Crisis Response

Miscommunications at any point in the process can result in strong reactions and a need to move quickly and increase transparency. Resources in this toolkit can be used to hear multiple perspectives and prevent this from happening.

# How to use this toolkit?

Below are editable, ready-to-use templates, scripts, consent forms, session plans, slides, email templates, and other resources to guide this process.

## 1. Community Outreach

First, identify which community-based organizations you should reach out to as part of your impact engagement process.

→ [Outreach Plan](#)

→ [Outreach Email Template](#)

Use this template to compose emails to community-based organizations identified in the outreach plan.

## 2. Engagement Sessions

The following sessions can be co-hosted with partner organizations. Session one provides a lecture background on AI, with interactive segments. Session two focuses on impact assessment and eliciting community hopes, expectations, and concerns.

### Engagement Session 1: AI 101

*90 minute interactive lecture*

An introductory session to help participants gain a shared understanding of AI in order to inform future discussions about the system you are assessing. Run this session with each group identified in the outreach plan. This can also be used standalone.

→ [Slides and script](#)

*[Slides](#) and [script](#) also available in Spanish*

→ [Run of show](#)

→ [Informed consent form template](#)

*Also available in [Spanish](#)*

### Engagement Session 2: Impact Assessment Discussion

*10+ minute presentation and 60 minute discussion*

A content framework to elicit feedback from impacted community groups on the system being assessed. Run this session with each group identified in the outreach plan; it can be run multiple times for complex projects as they evolve.

→ [Slides and script](#)

*[Slides](#) and [script](#) also available in Spanish*

→ [Run of show](#)

→ [Informed consent form template](#)

*Also available in [Spanish](#)*

## 3. Data Analysis

This document will support you to derive insights from your engagement sessions with community groups.

→ [Data analysis template](#)

## 4. AIA Report

A fillable worksheet to report on the impact engagement process and the necessary content to create a transparent report. Once you've completed the process, we recommend posting your AIA report publicly and sharing back with participating communities.

→ [Summary report](#)

→ [Full version](#)

# How to adapt the toolkit?

These materials are a set of templates, frameworks, and best practices. Browse and fill them in the order that best serves you and your project. For public-facing materials like sessions slides, informed consent forms, and reports, use your city's style guide, letterhead, and templates. This makes your material more authoritative and reduces confusion.

These materials have been created to work within the real-world constraints of agencies like yours, but we encourage you to adapt and remix them to fit your organization's needs. If you encounter a section that your department doesn't have the time or resources to complete, ask, "why not?" and "how might I address this somewhere else?" before cutting it. For further guidance on participatory processes, you can consult this resource [https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/DS\\_Democratizing-AI-Public-Participation-Brief\\_9.2023.pdf](https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/DS_Democratizing-AI-Public-Participation-Brief_9.2023.pdf) on principles for meaningful public participation and this resource <https://datasociety.net/library/gear-shift/> for driving public sector technology decision-making with community input. We welcome your feedback to help us improve the toolkit for others.

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## Using the toolkit?

Let us know here:

<https://forms.gle/D3A0q4fcYnE62TyB8>



### RESOURCES NEEDED FOR IN-PERSON SESSIONS

- 2x 90-minute sessions with staff and constituents, per community-based organization advisement
- Extensive outreach across multiple channels, to make sure the sessions are adequately communicated and well-attended
- Publicly accessible meeting space that is ADA-accessible, with a screen or projector
- Moveable tables (a plus)
- Trained interpreters (from the city or the community-based organizations)
- Gift cards for participants
- Honorarium for the community-based organizations
- Snacks for sessions
- Childcare options for parents who want to attend
- A point of contact for questions from the public moving forward (an online form is okay, if it is monitored)
- Ample time to prepare the above

# About this guide



This guide is the result of 18 months of piloting and experimentation to develop methods of conducting algorithmic impact assessment at Data & Society’s Algorithmic Impact Methods Lab. This toolkit, created by [Data & Society](#) in partnership with the [GovAI Coalition](#), summarizes our approach to algorithmic impact assessment, in which we look for ways to anticipate adverse impacts before a system is deployed, by connecting with your constituents and eliciting their questions and concerns. This process does not quantify the changes introduced by a system. Instead, it helps your organization identify gaps, answer community questions, and surface key risks to mitigate before a project moves forward. It can also help your organization better understand people’s needs on the ground and direct attention toward community-identified opportunities to address problems in ways that may be more effective.

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