

EQUITABLE AI FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

An Action Brief and One-Year Program for Responsible Implementation in Public Institutions

September 2026

Prepared by AI for the World for a programme session of Science Summit 2026, held alongside the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA81).

Program at a glance

AI for Public Good is a one-year program that will help public institutions determine whether AI can improve a defined public service. Participating government and diplomatic representatives may nominate institutions with real service problems. AI for the World will review the nominations with independent technical and public-service advisers. Selected institutions will receive structured preparation and expert support, while each institution retains authority over its services and all final decisions.

The program has two connected parts. The institutional program will prepare selected organizations for a possible pilot and support limited testing where the proposed use is suitable. A broader training program will help public servants assess and supervise AI responsibly, including staff whose institutions are not running a pilot. It will also address the judgment needed when public servants use these systems in their work.

During the first year, the program will seek to select up to 15 institutions across the world. It plans to begin three to five initial pilots and offer responsible AI training to a broader group of public servants.

How the program works

1. Nominate a public-service challenge

A participating government or diplomatic representative invites a public institution to describe a specific service problem. The institution must agree to take part and name an internal project lead before the nomination is reviewed.

2. Assess readiness

AI for the World and its advisers review the nomination, then work with selected institutions to understand the current service and the result the institution wants to achieve. The review determines whether AI offers a useful approach that can be tested lawfully and with manageable risk.

3. Prepare and test

Every selected institution receives a basic preparation package. It covers project scoping and staff training, with expert guidance leading to a written pilot plan. If the review supports further work and the necessary resources are available, the institution may run a limited pilot for about eight to twelve weeks.

4. Review the evidence and decide

The institution compares the pilot with its starting point and considers feedback from staff and service users. It then decides whether the work should stop, be revised, continue through further testing, or move toward wider use under a separate agreement.

Scope of the first cohort

The first cohort will focus on uses whose risks can be contained and whose results can be measured, such as improving access to public information or helping staff find and use internal knowledge. It will not support automated decisions about legal rights or access to essential services.

Why this program is needed

Governments are already using AI for internal work and public services. In an OECD analysis of 200 government use cases, 57 percent involved automating or tailoring processes and services, while 45 percent supported decision-making or forecasting.[1] Because a use case could serve more than one purpose, these figures describe overlapping categories rather than parts of a single total. They show the range of current activity, although the value of any particular project still depends on whether the institution can manage it responsibly and whether it improves the service.

Many governments are still building the practical safeguards needed for this work. A 2026 OECD survey found some use of AI in 35 of 36 participating countries, yet only 14 required a risk assessment before deployment. Impact measurement was reported in 10 countries, while eight had a citizen feedback or complaint mechanism.[2] An institution cannot judge whether a system is helping without a clear purpose and a way to identify problems, followed by evidence about what changes after the system is introduced.

Capacity also varies widely, as shown by a 2026 World Bank study of 60 economies. The study found that 44 percent of internal government AI use consisted of individual staff using AI for discrete tasks rather than integrating it into regular workflows. Among the surveyed low-income economies, 58 percent named missing policies or guidelines as a leading barrier. Nearly three-quarters of the participating low- and lower-middle-income economies reported that limited AI support for local languages constrained services for the public.[3] These findings support an approach that builds institutional capability around locally defined problems instead of beginning with a particular product.

Access to digital services is another part of the implementation question. The International Telecommunication Union estimated that 2.2 billion people remained offline in 2025, with most living in low- and middle-income countries.[4] When digital exclusion could prevent someone from receiving a public service, an AI-supported process should preserve a suitable human-assisted or non-digital route. The United Nations Global Digital Compact likewise calls for stronger digital skills among public officials and for international partnerships that build AI capacity.[7]

Standards for equitable implementation

Equitable implementation means giving public institutions a fair opportunity to evaluate useful applications while ensuring that the people who deliver and rely on public services can influence how those applications are designed. The following standards will guide both training and pilot activity.

1. Begin with a public need

The institution should define the service problem, the people affected, and the result it wants before selecting a technology. The readiness review should compare AI with simpler methods so that a project proceeds only when AI offers a meaningful advantage.

2. Keep institutions and people responsible

A named public official should approve the project and remain accountable for its use. People should be told when AI has a meaningful effect on a service, and they should have access to correction or review when an error could affect their rights. This approach is consistent with UNESCO's call for human oversight and identifiable responsibility.[5]

3. Involve the people affected

Staff who understand the service should take part in design and testing. When appropriate, the institution should also involve people who use the service because their experience may reveal practical barriers or harms that outside partners would not see.

4. Govern data and risk throughout the work

Before operational data is used, the project team should document the system's purpose and the authority for using the data. It should also explain how failures will be handled. Review should continue during testing because performance and risk can change over time, as reflected in the continuing risk-management process described by the NIST AI Risk Management Framework.[6]

5. Build capacity and measure results

Outside support should leave the institution with stronger staff skills and usable documentation. Each pilot should begin with a baseline and a small set of measures that show whether the service improved without creating unacceptable cost or harm. The results and user feedback should then inform the institution's decision about what happens next.

How institutions participate

Eligible participants are public bodies that deliver or support a public service. They may include national and local agencies as well as public institutions working in health, education, or infrastructure. The invitation asks each participating country to put forward at least one challenge. Additional nominations may be considered when they address a distinct public-service need, although no country or institution is guaranteed selection.

A government or diplomatic representative may begin the nomination, but the institution must confirm that it wants to participate. The nomination should establish five points:

- the public-service problem and the people affected by it;
- the way the institution currently handles the work;
- the staff member who will lead the project inside the institution;
- the staff time and appropriate data that may be available; and
- the improvement that could reasonably be measured during the program.

A nomination does not need to identify an AI product. The review may conclude that a simpler method would be more useful, in which case the institution may still benefit from the analysis and written project plan.

How institutions are selected

An AI for the World selection group, supported by independent technical and public-service advisers, will review the nominations. The review will consider the public value of the proposed work, the institution's readiness to participate, the feasibility and risk of the proposed approach, and whether a useful result can be measured within the program period. Selection will also seek representation from different countries and public-service settings.

What selected institutions receive

Every selected institution will receive a basic preparation package:

- a review of the service problem and current workflow;
- basic training for the staff involved;
- guidance from relevant technical and public-service experts; and
- a written plan describing the proposed approach, safeguards, and measures of success.

Further support may involve specialist review, technical development, or financial and infrastructure assistance. These forms of support depend on the needs of the project and the resources that partners make available. Any transfer of funds or data, or any commitment to deliver technical work, will require a separate written agreement.

How partners contribute

Participant	Primary role
Government and diplomatic representatives	Endorse the brief, nominate suitable institutions, and help connect the program with additional public-sector participants.
Public institutions	Define the challenge, appoint a project lead, provide staff time, and retain responsibility for institutional decisions.
Researchers and technical experts	Assess proposed uses, advise on safeguards, support training or implementation, and help evaluate results.
Civil-society and community organizations	Help the program understand public needs, involve service users, and identify barriers to access.
Companies, funders, and development partners	Provide disclosed financial or technical support under agreements that protect institutional control and make future obligations clear.

First-year objectives

Founding session

The initiative will seek participation from 10 to 20 representatives of Permanent Missions to the United Nations and related government delegations.

First-year delivery

During the following year, the program will seek to review challenges from several regions and select up to 15 public institutions across the world. It will aim to begin three to five pilots and provide responsible AI training to public servants. A progress report will describe the verified results and lessons from this work.

Conditional expansion

If early pilots produce useful results, participating institutions may choose to expand them. With additional resources and institutional approval, the program will work to support higher numbers of public-servant users across supported systems.

Endorsement and participation

Endorsement and operational participation are separate. A person may support the principles without promising time, funding, or technical assistance. Before a partner is matched with an institution, the partner must disclose any commercial interest or purchase condition connected with the proposed support.

By endorsing this Action Brief, a signer supports its principles and its call to expand responsible AI implementation capacity in public institutions. The endorsement is nonbinding and creates no legal, financial, procurement, or operational obligation. Each signer must identify whether the endorsement is made in an individual, institutional, governmental, or diplomatic capacity; institutional and governmental endorsements require confirmation of authority.

Participants may endorse the brief, nominate a public institution, or offer implementation support. Current participation information and forms will be available at ai4theworld.org.

Notes and sources

- [1] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Governing with Artificial Intelligence (2025), analysis of 200 government AI use cases. [Official source](#)
- [2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Digital Government Outlook 2026, chapter 4, 'Adopting and governing AI in government' (2026). [Official source](#)
- [3] World Bank, How Is Government Using Artificial Intelligence? A Global Study of Government AI and Complementary Ecosystems (2026), survey of central government institutions in 60 economies, especially pp. 2, 9, and 17-19. [Official source](#)
- [4] International Telecommunication Union, Facts and Figures 2025 (2025). [Official source](#)
- [5] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (adopted 23 November 2021), especially paragraphs 35-36. [Official source](#)
- [6] National Institute of Standards and Technology, Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF 1.0), NIST AI 100-1 (2023), pp. 19-20. [Official source](#)
- [7] United Nations, Global Digital Compact (2024), annex I to the Pact for the Future. [Official source](#)