State of North Carolina AI Leadership Council

Statewide AI Strategic Roadmap

NCDIT | NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE

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Dear Governor Stein,

As the co-chairs of the North Carolina AI Leadership Council ("the Council"), we are pleased to present the Strategic AI Roadmap ("Roadmap"). Executive Order 24, signed Sept. 2, 2025, created the Council to advise on "AI strategy, policy, and training to ensure North Carolina becomes a national leader in AI literacy, governance, and deployment to the benefit of our residents, communities, and economy." This Roadmap puts the State of North Carolina and its partners on a path to meet this high standard, and we are pleased to share it with you.

AI, or artificial intelligence, is fundamentally transforming society and touching every aspect of our lives, from how we work and communicate to how we learn and navigate the world around us. This significant moment calls for a bold strategy that protects residents and empowers them to benefit and thrive from this fundamental technology. It is important that North Carolina residents help shape the future of AI in our state and have the skills and autonomy to choose how this tool fits into their lives.

Through thoughtful discussion and collaboration with stakeholders across government, private sector, education, and labor, the Council has developed 17 strategic goals organized in three categories: Protect, Prepare, and Transform. These goals address foundational concerns about AI's impact on workforce, education, and public safety while preparing residents and communities for opportunities to come. Additionally, these goals will strengthen North Carolina's economy by empowering our workforce and businesses to deploy AI tools responsibly, supporting innovation and economic competitiveness, and preparing communities for the economy of the future.

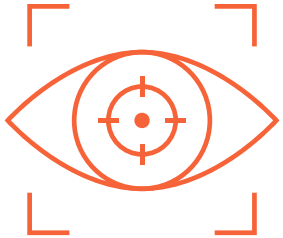
To successfully implement most of the recommendations, the State will need to realign its existing funding, and in other cases, seek more resources from governmental and non-governmental sources. This is not simply a technology investment, but rather an investment in the public trust of our residents and their ability to thrive in a world increasingly shaped by AI. We know that the N.C. General Assembly shares our desire to safeguard public trust and empower the workforce, and NCGA support will be crucial.

The recommendations laid out in this Strategic AI Roadmap represent a commitment that no resident should be left behind or unprotected as artificial intelligence reshapes our world. Our goal is to make North Carolina a state where innovation and trust are not in tension and solutions are developed responsibly, deployed thoughtfully, and governed transparently.

With gratitude,
Secretary Nate Denny
Secretary Lee Lilley

Vision

North Carolina is steadfast in its commitment to becoming a national leader in the responsible adoption and application of artificial intelligence (AI). State leadership recognizes the potential for AI to disrupt communities and commits to protecting residents and workers from these potential impacts. At the same time, North Carolina is dedicated to fostering an environment where AI enhances quality of life and economic opportunity, empowering individuals and businesses to flourish in an increasingly digital society. By striking a balance between ethical stewardship and technological innovation, the state aims to harness the transformative potential of AI to benefit all residents and sectors.



To realize this ambitious vision, North Carolina state agencies will collaborate with higher education institutions, private employers, nonprofits, and workforce partners to create pathways for success in an AI-driven future. Through these collective efforts, the state seeks to ensure that every North Carolinian has the opportunity to thrive in a landscape that will be shaped by advanced technology.

Principles

The AI Leadership Council aligned on seven guiding principles to inform the recommendations in the AI Strategic Roadmap.

1. **Leadership in Trustworthy AI**
   Make North Carolina a destination for responsible AI innovation to attract investment, talent, and companies committed to ethical practices that create shared prosperity across communities.

2. **AI Literacy**
   Ensure all North Carolinians have the knowledge to understand, use, and critically evaluate AI technologies, enabling people to make informed choices about the technology in their lives.



3. **Workforce Empowerment**
   Ensure technology augments rather than replaces the workforce by preparing workers in all industries, including state government, for an AI-enabled economy by upskilling, reskilling, and strengthening the worker safety net.

4. **Explainability, Interpretability, Accountability, and Transparency**
   AI systems should be understandable, have verifiable outcomes, and clear accountability mechanisms, enabling people to comprehend what affects them and challenge outcomes when necessary.

5. **Security and Resilience**
   Minimize risks by protecting critical infrastructure, preventing system failures, and ensuring AI does not create new vulnerabilities in healthcare, finance, utilities, or other essential services.

6. **Privacy and Governance**
   Establish strong protections for personal information throughout all sectors, giving individuals control over their data while enabling responsible innovation.

7. **Fairness and Protection of Civil Liberties**
   AI systems should be accurate and unbiased, avoiding errors that impact livelihoods and opportunities. Systems also must respect personal autonomy and dignity, maintaining people's freedom to think, choose, and act independently, and systems must prevent manipulation or restriction of choices.

Executive Summary

In September 2025, North Carolina Governor Josh Stein created the North Carolina AI Leadership Council through Executive Order 24. Since the creation of the Executive Order, the Council has been focused on creating informed recommendations on policy, governance, ethics, and literacy to ensure the safe, transparent, and fair adoption of artificial intelligence across the state and to develop recommendations to address the potential impact of AI on the workforce. The Council developed 17 strategic goal areas to guide the state's approach. Each of these goals is structured with detailed recommendations to achieve these goals. The goals are grouped into three categories to ensure a clear and actionable framework that supports statewide safety, opportunity, and innovation:

1) **Protect** focuses on safeguarding North Carolina residents through responsible AI use and strong risk mitigation practices.

2) **Prepare** strengthens AI literacy and readiness for students, workers, and communities.

3) **Transform** outlines how state government can modernize and leverage AI to improve services for the public.

Each of these recommendations has been created with an implementation plan and timeline, recognizing that work will progress and be shared as it is available. All recommendations show a set of primary owners and a completion timeline. Along with the information listed under each goal, the Council has identified secondary owners and funding sources to achieve these recommendations. The recommendations below were identified by the Council to improve AI policy, governance, ethics, and literacy for the state with the understanding that AI will continue to evolve. The Council is ready to adjust and add to these recommendations over the next year as the landscape shifts.

Protect	Prepare	Transform
• Protect Residents from AI Harms	• Advance Community Upskilling	• Deliver Better for the Public
• Expand Unemployment and Re-Employment Programs	• Create Pipelines to Workforce	• Drive Statewide Innovation
• Account for Resource Demands and Impacts	• Support PK-13 Education	• Broaden Access to Critical Resources
• Reduce Fraud, Manipulation, and Deception	• Promote Credentialing Opportunities	• Build a Culture of Change
• Improve Transparency and Accountability		• Establish Government-Wide AI Resources
• Develop Robust Contingency Plans		
• Strengthen Cybersecurity		
• Ensure Safe Government AI Usage		

PROTECT



PROTECT

Goal 1: Protect Residents from AI Harms

Explore and promote policy recommendations to protect residents, especially the most vulnerable, from AI harms.

Background:

As AI increases access to information and improves public services, its use also poses risks, such as threats to online safety and privacy, exposure to misinformation and deepfakes, and the potential for amplifying harmful biases or discriminatory content targeted at vulnerable people. These adverse effects can be especially harmful to the elderly and children. From January through September 2023, the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received nearly 200 victim complaints regarding scams on the elderly, resulting in more than $1.9 million in victim losses. With more than 90% of U.S. teenagers using social media and 64% using AI chatbots, concern is growing about the impact of the digital world on youth mental health. As a result, states are increasingly introducing and enacting bills aimed at protecting children's digital safety; in 2025, at least 20 states enacted such legislation. These bills cover a range of topics such as reducing children's screen time in school, developing guardrails around AI chatbots, requiring parental consent for social media use, and creating digital literacy courses or curriculum for K-12 students.

Baseline:

In 2024, North Carolina's General Assembly expanded the definition of "material" in the state's criminal statutes regarding sexual exploitation of minors to include AI-generated content. Other child safety efforts in North Carolina include House Bill 959 (effective January 2026), which limits students' cellphone use in schools, prevents students from accessing social media on school devices and networks, and requires schools to teach students social media literacy skills. Legislators also introduced House Bill 375 in 2025, a bipartisan bill that would criminalize AI-generated child sexual abuse material, require disclaimers for AI-generated political advertisement, and outlaw deepfake distribution.

Recommendation:

Recommend a comprehensive policy package to protect North Carolinians from pressing societal harms brought on by AI use, to be advanced in the 2027 legislative cycle.

Details: As AI continues to reshape society, the state will explore a package of statewide policies that address numerous concerns enabled by AI technologies, including child safety and mental health, lack of privacy protections, and senior citizen fraud and abuse. Child safety components will focus on foundational safety requirements that encourage non-addictive designs and establish a standard duty of care. Privacy policies should focus on creating a statewide baseline for protecting resident data and ensuring data autonomy. Other policies would target populations especially susceptible to AI manipulation, misinformation, and disinformation. North Carolina has already taken steps in this direction through past legislation targeting child safety and disinformation, showing broad, bipartisan support across the state. The collection of these policies would be designed to benefit all residents.

Owners: Governor's Office, N.C. General Assembly

Timeline: March 2027

Goal 2: Expand Unemployment and Re-Employment Programs

Deploy a statewide upskilling and reskilling initiative to support shifts in the North Carolina job market due to AI.

Background:

AI is increasingly reshaping the job market. By 2029, approximately half of US jobs will be transformed by AI. Although this technology creates opportunities for new positions, job augmentation, and increased productivity, AI adoption also has led to job displacement and is expected to continue to do so. By 2030, 92 million jobs globally are expected to be displaced by AI. This underscores the need to equip workers, especially those most at risk of AI-driven unemployment, with the skills to adapt and succeed as AI transforms the nature of work.

Baseline:

North Carolina has a strong foundation upon which it can build a statewide reskilling program with assets such as the 2025 establishment of the Council on Workforce and Apprenticeship within the NCWorks Commission and partnerships between North Carolina higher education institutions and the private sector to equip students with AI skills. For example, North Carolina State University's AI Academy partners with more than 100 industry organizations to upskill their workforces and has prepared more than 2,000 individuals for AI careers. North Carolina's commitment to supporting and empowering its workforce was recognized in 2026 when Site Selection magazine ranked North Carolina number one in workforce development.

Recommendation:

Launch a statewide AI career transition program using labor market data to identify and prioritize workers most at risk of displacement, and connecting participants directly with employers, apprenticeships, career support pathways, and incubators to accelerate re-employment.

Details: North Carolina must proactively provide accessible pathways back into high-demand, sustainable careers. This will be accomplished through identifying and supporting workers in roles most vulnerable to automation and partnering with employers, Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division, community colleges, local workforce development boards, and NCWorks Career Centers to track labor-market signals and pinpoint high-risk areas of AI-driven displacement. The state should use this data to expand accessible reskilling pathways that focus on short-term and industry-aligned credentials, flexible learning models, and integrated wraparound supports to help mid-career workers and individuals with barriers to employment transition into resilient, high-demand occupations. Embedding work-based learning opportunities and direct employer connections will accelerate reentry into private- and public-sector roles. Using displacement data and worker feedback will support the design of career transition tracks tailored to the needs and experiences of AI-impacted workers to avoid long-term unemployment. Additionally, tracking the re-skilling programs that successfully lead to meaningful employment will help improve other reskilling tracks.

Owners: N.C. Department of Commerce, NCWorks Career Centers, N.C. Community College System, Local workforce development boards

Timeline: December 2028

Recommendation:
Explore a policy support package to prevent worker displacement and counteract unemployment due to AI impacts on the workforce.

Details: North Carolina must be ready to detect and respond to AI-driven labor disruptions early to stabilize the workforce. This effort will be advanced through advocating for legislation to counteract potential AI-driven labor disruptions and to prepare for any such disruptions. State leaders should pursue policy options to disincentivize layoffs and empower workers to have input as AI is increasingly incorporated into the workforce. Leaders should also seek short-time compensation legislation, such as HB 792 and SB 536 filed in 2023, that would enable workers to receive partial unemployment benefits while working reduced hours. Updating the N.C. Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) data collection processes will help to explicitly capture AI-related job losses and use these insights to inform retraining opportunities to avoid long-term unemployment. In parallel, partnering with higher education institutions will allow the collection of more granular unemployment and program-enrollment data that can signal emerging displacement trends and inform rapid intervention strategies to improve early detection and response. The state should also explore increases in temporary disaster unemployment insurance limits to unemployment insurance law to allow enhanced relief for significant, AI-related workforce disruptions.

Owners: N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. General Assembly

Timeline: March 2027

Goal 3: Account for Resource Demands and Impacts

Ensure appropriate environmental stewardship that balances community needs and public trust with the demands that AI creates on land, water, and energy.

Background:
In the U.S., there are more than 3,000 data centers, with an additional 1,500 data centers in various stages of planning. These facilities serve as the backbone of AI, and as AI continues to advance, the demand for data centers will only increase. While data centers can be a significant revenue source for governments and can attract businesses, they also pose challenges, namely their significant energy and water demands and impacts on neighboring communities. In 2025, half of the new electricity needs in the U.S. came from data centers. In some instances, residents bear the costs of energy demands through higher utility bills. Communities also report concerns over constant noise from data centers, the center's impacts on the environment, and their limited transparency in project development. It is essential for states to thoroughly assess the economic opportunities data centers bring alongside the impact these facilities have on communities to maximize benefits and reduce data center challenges.

Baseline:
According to Duke Energy's load forecast in its 2025 Integrated Resource Plan, total net load across its two North Carolina systems is projected to increase between 16% and 60% over the next 15 years, representing a dramatic increase compared to the just 7% increase seen for all of the state over the past two decades. Amid the growing number of data centers and their energy demand in the state, Governor Stein established the Energy Policy Task Force to manage increasing electricity demand while maintaining affordability, reliability, and carbon emission reductions. In February 2026, the Task Force released an interim report that provides initial findings and nine preliminary recommendations such as creating large load-tariff options and exploring methods for reporting data center energy and water usage.

Recommendation:
Monitor and publicly disclose impacts of AI infrastructure on communities using third-party evaluations.

Details: As AI infrastructure continues to create impacts on communities and their access to resources, it is important that North Carolina proactively safeguards community well-being and environmental resilience. This recommendation calls for a resource monitoring program that uses independent, third-party evaluators to assess and publicly report the environmental and community impacts of AI-related infrastructure, with a focus on land, water, energy, and public health concerns. The state should conduct a comprehensive gap analysis to map current and projected resource demands, identifying where water scarcity, grid constraints, or land use pressures may disproportionately affect communities. Legislation would strengthen this effort by requiring standardized disclosure of environmental, energy, and other baseline consumption metrics from all AI data center developers and operators to ensure transparent and consistent tracking of resource utilization. These actions support Recommendation 9 of the Energy Policy Task Force Interim Report: Explore Energy and Water Usage Reporting for Data Centers.

Owners: N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, N.C. General Assembly, Local Governments

Timeline: June 2027

Goal 4: Reduce Fraud, Manipulation, and Deception

Ensure 100% of state government-produced content abides by a content authenticity standard.

Background:
In recent years, the proliferation of AI-generated content has resulted in a significant increase in misinformation, with a majority affecting senior citizens. A 2024 study from the Content Authenticity Initiative found that 87% of U.S. adults felt the rise of generative AI has made it more difficult to identify fact from fiction. Beyond distorting public perception, misinformation also undermines public trust in institutions, disrupts democratic processes, and can threaten public safety. In January 2024, nearly 25,000 New Hampshire voters received AI-generated robocalls impersonating former President Joe Biden discouraging them from voting. In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene (2024), AI-generated images depicting made-up conditions on the ground prompted the Federal Emergency Management Agency and North Carolina's Department of Public Safety to establish fact-versus-rumor pages on their websites. To combat misinformation and its implications, a number of states have passed laws that either criminalize or require disclosure of certain AI-generated content.

Baseline:
While North Carolina has not yet passed legislation addressing AI-generated misinformation, in 2025 legislators introduced the Digital Content Provenance Initiative (Senate Bill 738). If passed, this bill would implement verification standards for state-generated digital content, establish a secure repository for government communications, and foster public literacy on identifying synthetic content. While N.C. Department of Justice has been working to address unfair and deceptive AI practices leveraging existing consumer protection laws, there may also be a need for more specific protections related to AI. Additionally, the N.C. State Board of Elections has a dedicated webpage to combat misinformation during election cycles and has established a "Mythbuster Monday" social media series to debunk common myths in elections.

Recommendation:
Adopt a content verification standard across all state agencies and local government and incentivize adoption across North Carolina businesses.

Details: To ensure public confidence in official government communications, all state agencies should verify the authenticity of their communications with clear tracing of their origins. Implementing a statewide content verification standard will strengthen public trust by assuring residents content is authentic, especially in times of emergency. The standard should be clearly visible on content and designed to build public confidence in government communications. This effort will involve researching and adopting content verification standards already widely accepted across industry, such as Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA). When AI is used to help generate official content, the standard should also disclose how it was used to ensure transparency. Community upskilling efforts, via the Advancing Community Upskilling goal later in this framework, will include education on how to recognize verified content from government sources. This upskilling plan will target all skill levels, including senior citizens, students, and rural communities. With the state government's support and backing, local governments and private sector organizations will also be encouraged to adopt such standards, reducing the potential for misinformation campaigns.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, Agency Communications Teams

Timeline: March 2028

Goal 5: Improve Transparency and Accountability

Give residents the ability to easily identify when AI is used in state services, understand how decisions are made, and access clear pathways to raise concerns.

Background:
As state agencies continue to employ AI, several states have developed disclosure mechanisms to increase the transparency and explainability of AI, establish accountability, and strengthen public trust. Maryland, for example, maintains a public dashboard that details 75 AI use cases categorized by department and 52 AI systems that state agencies use, and Connecticut documents 31 systems through its open data portal. Other states such as California, Colorado, and Utah have employed similar disclosure methods. The types of AI systems published vary by state. Some states publish all AI systems in their inventory, while others focus only on high-risk systems. Regardless of how states choose to disclose AI systems, the information disclosed typically includes the system name, its purpose, a description of the use case, and the agency using the tool.

Baseline:
As part of its existing Responsible Use of AI Framework, N.C. Department of Information Technology requires all agencies to maintain an AI inventory that includes the purpose of each AI tool. Departments are expected to update and report these inventories at least once a year. The state's 2025 Executive Order 24 also requires the AI Accelerator to disclose all high-risk AI use cases to the public.

Recommendation:
Establish external reporting with a public feedback mechanism of all government AI use cases that are defined as high risk and select other use cases that have a public-facing impact on resident experience.

Details: While Executive Order No. 24: Advancing Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence That Benefits All North Carolinians requires the disclosure of high-risk AI use cases throughout state government, this initiative will strengthen public trust by disclosing additional public-facing AI use. Dynamic dashboards will ensure transparency across state government by providing as much information as possible to the public while maintaining the security and integrity of systems. Dashboards will be updated regularly to reflect the most current information related to AI tools and will be accessible, with information presented in plain language to promote transparency. Feedback mechanisms will be available to measure public sentiment and improve tools based on input. Centralizing this information reduces fragmentation, supports informed public engagement, and reinforces accountability mechanisms across agencies.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, Agency AI Oversight Committees

Timeline: December 2026

Recommendation:
Maintain transparency, traceability, and human oversight for any use of AI in the administration of government benefits programs, ensuring AI systems do not make final benefits determinations.

Details: AI can be a valuable tool in improving the integrity of benefits programs, such as identifying patterns of fraud or overutilization. That said, as use of AI in government operations increases, it should not compromise the integrity of benefits eligibility determinations or protection of personal data. This recommendation calls for disclosure of AI utilization as any part of a benefits eligibility process and guardrails to ensure that final benefits determination decisions are not made by AI systems. Additionally, residents should be given the opportunity to opt out of their data being shared or used in AI models beyond where required for program participation.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: March 2027

Goal 6: Develop Robust Contingency Plans

Establish a statewide contingency framework that ensures continuity of critical AI systems and services during infrastructure disruptions.

Background:
As state governments continue to integrate AI systems into their core operations, robust contingency planning for infrastructure disruptions becomes an imperative. Critical infrastructure is already vulnerable to cyberattacks, and the integration of AI presents a different set of risks than traditional IT infrastructure, such as autonomous agents that can be manipulated or go rogue. Furthermore, AI-dependent systems often rely on continuous data pipelines, cloud-based inference, and interconnected components, meaning a single point of failure can simultaneously propagate across multiple services. In December 2025, the National Security Agency and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency published a guide on secure integration of AI into critical infrastructure in collaboration with international government partners to address this unique set of risks.

Baseline:
North Carolina has taken steps to build its contingency plan for critical infrastructure disruptions. Through the State of North

Carolina Cybersecurity Strategic Plan 2025-2030, N.C. Department of Information Technologys Enterprise Security and Risk Management Office outlines the foundational steps for effective contingency planning, including a risk-based vulnerability management approach and regular security categorization of systems. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is improving the state's grid resiliency through the Grid Resilience State/Tribal Formula Grant Program, an initiative that funds projects focused on grid modernization.

Recommendation:
Develop a statewide plan for maintaining critical AI systems during times of crisis through coordinated resource allocation and flexible operations, prioritized access protocols, and collaborations between public and private sector.

Details: As agentic AI systems increasingly take on autonomous decision-making and operational tasks, the potential for systemic failure poses a significant threat to public safety and economic stability. This initiative will ensure that the state can continue delivering vital services to residents by defining and prioritizing critical statewide systems that use AI in the event of system outages, failures, or attacks. The state will work in collaboration with utilities, security, and emergency response teams to design a plan to recover those systems, including through redundant architectures, where possible. Clear procedures must be documented for enabling, bypassing, or overriding AI systems, and staff should be trained to manually operate critical processes without AI assistance during outages. The plan should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as more critical systems come online.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, N.C. Department of Public Safety, N.C. National Guard

Timeline: September 2027

Goal 7: Strengthen Cybersecurity

Coordinate with local, peer state, and federal governments and private sector partners to encourage the secure use of AI, map the AI cyber risk landscape, and share identified threats in real time.

Background:
AI has the capacity to both strengthen and undermine cybersecurity. AI-powered monitoring systems can examine large datasets in real time, identify anomalies, and automate predetermined responses to prevent potential cyberattacks. Yet AI also enables more sophisticated, adaptable, and evasive cyber threats. Government networks, especially those of local governments, are particularly vulnerable to these cyberattacks. In 2025, local government networks experienced a 42% increase in cyber threats due to AI. Cybercriminals tend to target local government because these systems often lack the resources to effectively protect themselves from cyberattacks. Recognizing this vulnerability and its implications in a highly connected world, multiple states are beginning to approach cybersecurity through a whole-of-state lens, a strategy that connects resources and capabilities across jurisdictions to protect governments, residents, and critical infrastructure.

Baseline:
North Carolina has already adopted a whole-of-state approach with the establishment of the Joint Cybersecurity Task Force in 2017. This alliance brings together state, local, and federal entities to support local and state agencies and schools in their cybersecurity efforts. Beyond the task force, in 2025 the N.C. Department of Information Technology doubled the size of its cybersecurity and risk management program and established the state's first five-year cybersecurity plan to further bolster the

state's critical infrastructure. The plan highlights the whole-of-state approach as a key strategy.

Recommendation:
Monitor, detect, and analyze ongoing AI threats and create a mechanism to share risk landscape with trusted AI and cyber liaisons in local government, as well as federal, peer state, and private sector partners.

Details: This initiative will build on existing continuous monitoring and threat detection programs across state government to identify emerging AI-related risks and alert trusted liaisons in state and local governments to act. Agencies will implement a software bill of materials for deployed AI solutions that map lineage of models, data, and code to ensure swift remediation. The state will also develop and deploy secure communication channels to ensure confidential, real-time exchange of AI threat intelligence and coordinated incident response with local governments and other partners. Additionally, the state will distribute vetted AI frameworks and training modules to local government partners to guarantee proven, safe, and transparent AI security practices are leveraged statewide, including privacy by design. Establishing this coordinated ecosystem ensures that AI-related cyber threats are identified quickly and managed consistently, allowing local, state, and private partners to benefit from collective expertise, shared intelligence, and standardized safeguards.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, N.C. Department of Public Safety, N.C. National Guard, Local Governments

Timeline: June 2027

Goal 8: Ensure Responsible Government AI Usage

Ensure AI systems used by state agencies meet standardized internal safety, privacy, security, reliability, fairness, and explainability requirements.

Background:
AI presents state governments with opportunities to strengthen public safety, inform research priorities, and improve data-driven decision-making. While AI can be a beneficial tool, it poses risks such as the potential for bias and the undermining of data privacy. Ensuring agencies' responsible use of AI is a priority for many states. In 2025, of the 210 AI bills the Future of Privacy Forum tracked in 42 states, the majority of these bills related to the safe government use of AI. States are also increasingly implementing AI procurement standards, requiring risk assessments especially for high-risk AI systems, and establishing AI task forces and ethical guidelines.

Baseline:
North Carolina has laid the foundation for effective governance of AI systems by creating the Responsible Use of AI Framework, which defined seven guiding principles – such as human-centered, security and resilience, and data privacy and governance – that guide agencies in responsible use of AI. Governor Stein built on that foundation with his 2025 Executive Order 24, which, among other mandates, requires each Cabinet agency to establish an AI Oversight Team to lead each department's AI efforts consistent with the Responsible Use Framework. This work includes identifying and evaluating AI use cases and ensuring that these use cases adhere to state AI standards.

Recommendation:
Establish minimum statewide trustworthy AI standards for all AI-enabled tools and systems that must be met before agencies

deploy and maintained throughout operation. Support these standards with governance models, risk mitigation plans, and ongoing monitoring of AI systems.

Details: Currently, state agencies are relying on traditional data and security frameworks to guide AI use. However, AI presents fundamentally different challenges that these existing frameworks do not account for. This initiative will create and implement a tiered governance model specific to AI, with tailored mitigation plans according to risk level that address safety concerns including bias, accuracy, model degradation, and more. Regardless of risk level, mitigation plans will include ongoing monitoring requirements and accountability mechanisms for all AI-enabled systems. Recurring security testing of products will be conducted to check for emerging threats and defend against vulnerabilities. The risk landscape should be reevaluated semiannually, and processes should be regularly updated to account for advances in technology.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: September 2026

Recommendation:
Each cabinet agency should establish a dedicated AI Liaison responsible for ensuring the agency employs AI tools in accordance with state and federal law, established standards, and public expectations.

Details: Currently, agency AI Oversight committees are staffed with leaders who hold multiple roles rather than dedicated positions that focus on AI oversight and governance. AI Liaisons should dedicate at least 50% of their time overseeing AI, with the expectation to scale up to 100% of their time as agencies scale up their deployment of AI. These liaisons must be given a sufficient level of authority to create accountability mechanisms to enforce the standards and governance mechanisms established in the previous recommendation for this goal. They will also be the main point of contact for all accountability escalation. They each will maintain an AI inventory for the agency and assist the AI Oversight Committees in overseeing the ongoing monitoring of approved AI tools. They will uphold whistleblower protections and coordinate across agencies in the event of an emergency related to or impacting AI use. The AI Liaison should also coordinate with agency and statewide cybersecurity and AI oversight teams and audit systems. This role will ensure shared learning, avoid wasted resources, and proactively address AI related threats and opportunities.

Owners: N.C. Office of State Human Resources, Agency Leadership

Timeline: December 2027

PREPARE



Goal 1: Advance Community Upskilling

Deploy foundational AI literacy training to all 100 counties of North Carolina.

Background:
As AI continues to transform society, it is important that North Carolina residents are equipped with the tools to safely and responsibly engage with AI, understand its limitations and impacts, and distinguish between AI-generated and human-generated content. Across the United States, communities are using various methods to ensure their members are AI literate. These approaches include providing interactive workshops to demystify AI, using community spaces such as libraries and museums to host learning activities, offering online AI training through partnerships between community-based and national organizations, and equipping community leaders with the skills and resources to help residents understand AI. Many of these approaches are part of a broader, ongoing effort to teach digital skills and close the digital divide.

Baseline:
Current AI-focused community upskilling initiatives in North Carolina largely center on youth and elderly populations. Through a grant from Google.org, North Carolina 4-H, a youth-centered program at North Carolina A&T State University's Cooperative Extension, has been developing and integrating approaches to increase AI literacy with plans to reach at least 15,000 North Carolina youth and 2,000 adults. In May 2025, the N.C. Department of Justice published its Senior Scam Guide, detailing the 12 most common scams targeting senior citizens in the state, the role AI plays in these scams, and ways to recognize and avoid these scams.

Recommendation:
Launch a statewide AI literacy initiative in partnership with community anchor institutions to deliver free, foundational AI training to residents in all 100 counties.

> *Details:* This program will deploy free, foundational AI literacy learning opportunities in all regions of North Carolina and will be designed for residents of all backgrounds and skill levels, including the workforce, senior citizens, rural residents, individuals with limited digital access, and other underserved communities. The regional curriculum will be informed by community input. This effort will be achieved through collaborations with NCWorks Career Centers, community colleges, public libraries, community centers, and other community anchor institutions and deployed in a phased approach to reach all regions of the state. This includes in-person and online options through platforms such as NCCareers.org. This training will help residents build practical understanding of AI concepts, everyday digital tools, online safety, scam awareness, and responsible AI use.
>
> *Owners:* N.C. Department of Information Technology, NCWorks Career Centers, N.C. Community College System, University of North Carolina System
>
> *Timeline:* June 2028

Goal 2: Create Pipelines to Workforce

Create workforce pipelines from higher education institutions (universities, community colleges, vocational schools) to employers to place entry-level AI-enabled jobs.

Background:
Nationally, the availability of entry-level jobs, which used to be positions filled by recent graduates, has been decreasing, in part because of AI. Since 2022, the unemployment rate for recent graduates has risen by 30% compared to 18% for all workers and since 2023, postings for entry-level positions in the U.S. have decreased by 35%. With companies increasingly employing AI for more routine entry-level tasks, college students are rethinking their academic paths. Forty-two percent of bachelor's degree students and 56% of associate degree students have reconsidered their chosen fields of study because of AI. Entry-level positions have served as professional steppingstones for recent graduates to learn from seasoned employees and eventually reach higher-level positions. The impact of AI on entry-level jobs underscores the importance of training the upcoming workforce in AI skills, ensuring they are prepared for an increasingly AI-driven workplace.

Baseline:
Post-secondary institutions throughout North Carolina are already responding to AI's impact on entry-level jobs, establishing AI curriculums, courses, and degrees. Nearly half of the state's community colleges offer AI programs or courses, and in 2024, the North Carolina Community College System partnered with Google to provide all 58 community colleges free AI training programs. Other institutions such as University of North Carolina at Charlotte and North Carolina Agriculture and Technical State University offer bachelor's degrees in AI.

Recommendation:
Establish a formal education-to-workforce coalition with 10 North Carolina employers from diverse sectors to co-develop a standardized entry-level AI skill set to create a modular stackable curriculum that students can earn through their degrees and direct placement pipelines into predefined private sector roles and internships.

> *Details:* The state will partner with companies from key sectors in North Carolina to define the core entry-level AI competencies employers need and publish them for higher education institutions to review and update course material to teach these desired skills. A feedback loop using hiring outcomes, employer demand, and worker feedback will allow for continuous review and updates, keeping entry-level expectations current and strengthening the employment pipeline from higher education to private sector. The state government will align government credentials and training with those employer requirements for continuity between sectors and will coordinate with partner companies to ensure the students participating in the stackable curriculum can be placed into established entry-level roles. This mutually beneficial program would allow the private sector to help tailor higher education toward the skillsets required in their workforces and create direct pipelines to hire for those skills.
>
> *Owners:* N.C. Department of Commerce, University of North Carolina System, N.C. Community College System, N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities
>
> *Timeline:* June 2028

Recommendation:
Build a classroom-to-career pipeline targeting high-demand, AI-enabled roles in state government by integrating apprenticeship tracks, hands-on training, and entry-level placement pathways that position state government as a model employer for a future-ready workforce.

> *Details:* State and local governments are increasingly looking toward entry-level talent because a significant population of the current state workforce is eligible to retire within the next three to five years. This recommendation will expand AI-focused registered apprenticeship tracks to address workforce shortages and create clear entry points for emerging talent

into state government roles. Partnering with N.C. higher education institutions, the state will coordinate AI education and exposure across all levels of education so that students graduate with the competencies needed for public sector careers. Agencies will embed AI-specific, entry-level experience within early-career state positions, ensuring that apprentices gain practical skills aligned with state government needs and private sector expectations. This structure will allow participants to seamlessly transition into long-term public service careers or competitively enter the private sector with validated experience.

Owners: N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. Office of State Human Resources, University of North Carolina System, N.C. Community College System, N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities

Timeline: December 2027

Goal 3: Support PK-13 Education

Make all North Carolina public schools AI-ready by incorporating AI and digital skills in schools.

Background:

Schools play a key role preparing students for the future, and with AI rapidly reshaping society, schools across the country are grappling with how to best teach and use AI in the classroom. While over half of states have developed guidelines on AI use in schools, there remains a gap between policy and practical implementation. Although students and teachers are increasingly using AI, students will need to move beyond use to critically engaging with AI. Achieving this goal will require a shift in how educators teach, but Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Company's 2025 National Educator Confidence Report found that only half of teachers feel confident in preparing students for an AI-driven future, highlighting the need for targeted support for educators.

Baseline:

North Carolina was the fourth state to issue comprehensive guidelines on the use of generative AI in public schools. The North Carolina Generative AI Implementation Recommendations and Guidelines for PK-13 Public Schools, which is a living document, emphasizes the importance of teaching students durable skills such as critical thinking and adaptability in an AI-enabled world and establishes a human judgment and agency framework that aligns with the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate. Districts across the state are implementing policies and training based on the state's AI guidance. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, all students receive digital citizenship and AI literacy lessons while all teachers and staff complete foundational AI literacy and data privacy training.

Recommendation:

Partner with N.C. Department of Public Instruction to encourage each public school unit to adopt an AI policy, AI guidelines, and an AI-focused professional learning plan.

Details: This recommendation will strengthen AI literacy in PK–13 education by working with education leaders to adapt instructional and assessment methods that introduce age-appropriate AI concepts without requiring curriculum changes. Public school units should adopt AI policies aligned with N.C. School Boards Association Policy 3220: Technology in the Educational Program. Along with AI policies, public school units should adopt AI guidelines to implement this policy, aligned with North Carolina Generative AI Implementation Recommendations and Considerations for PK-13 Public Schools. AI literacy professional training plans should be developed for all stakeholders with a focus on ethics, human judgment, agency, and AI fluency. Teachers should integrate AI discussions into existing lessons with an emphasis

on the seven durable human skills in N.C. Portrait of a Graduate: adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility. Schools should also provide a standard level of access to vetted enterprise AI tools, based on grade-band appropriate recommendations in the North Carolina Generative AI Implementation Recommendations. Students should develop foundational AI skills within all curriculum areas through developmentally appropriate AI-enabled learning experiences that are intentionally designed to foster durable skills and human judgement. Skills taught and discussed in schools should be guided and informed by post-secondary and workforce expectations to ensure continuity of education throughout a resident's life.

Owners: N.C. Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Community College System, University of North Carolina System

Timeline: March 2027

Goal 4: Promote Credentialing Opportunities

Credential more than 50,000 residents in employment-enabling AI skills.

Background:

As AI continues to transform the workplace, employers are increasingly seeking candidates who understand and can work with AI. Microsoft's and LinkedIn's 2024 Global Work Trend Index Annual Report revealed that 66% of business leaders across industries would not hire someone without AI skills, and 71% would rather hire a less experienced candidate with AI skills than a more experienced candidate without these skills. Several national organizations are working to address employer demand for AI skills such as the National AI Certification Institute, which offers beginner and advanced certifications on AI. As AI fluency becomes a baseline expectation in the workforce, ensuring workers have access to recognized, stackable credentials will be critical to keeping pace with employer demand.

Baseline:

North Carolina is part of the Micro-Credentials Partnership of States, a four-state coalition established to support professional development for teachers. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction has also developed eight micro-credential pathways that include building AI literacy for educators and teaching students basic AI literacy. However, North Carolina's credentialing initiatives are not limited to educators. Several of the state's universities and community colleges offer AI-related credentials such as Wayne Community College's certificates in AI Fundamentals and Python Programming.

Recommendation:

Establish a statewide, multi-level AI fluency micro-credential program across the N.C. Community College system, other higher education institutions, and NCWorks Career Centers spanning foundational AI literacy, such as applied AI, AI auditing, AI ethics, Data Privacy and AI, and more.

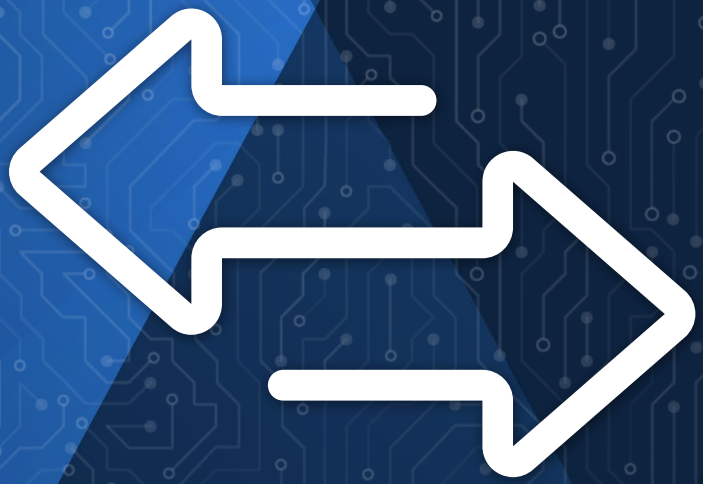
Details: A statewide AI-credentialing effort creates a clear, trusted way for residents to build skills that match the needs of North Carolina employers. This initiative will design and deploy an AI micro-credential program in collaboration with employers across North Carolina to ensure residents can build the skills needed for an AI-enabled economy. This includes collaborating with employers to design AI micro-credential programs with new and existing training that reflects real workforce needs. These programs will be developed by reviewing AI-related courses offered in the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and higher education institutions, then creating a new AI micro-credential program to build on these existing resources. This initiative will identify gaps in the current offerings and build new AI courses into the micro-

credential program. AI micro-credentials will be multi-level to include basic AI literacy, AI ethics, technical, and leadership tracks. The state will also create multitrack AI training and certification for government employees that aligns with private sector workforce-defined needs. This training will be shared with local and municipal governments after development.

Owners: N.C. Department of Commerce, N.C. Community College System, NCWorks Career Centers, University of North Carolina System

Timeline: September 2028

TRANSFORM



Goal 1: Deliver Better for the Public

Use AI to accelerate the digital delivery of the key customer-facing state government services that will make the most significant, measurable impact on North Carolinians.

Background:

AI has reshaped the way governments deliver services to their residents with more than half of state governments using AI for resident-facing services. Deployment of AI-powered chatbots and other virtual assistants is one of the most common applications. Agencies often use these tools to handle high volumes of resident inquiries, provide assistance in different languages, and give real-time updates among other tasks. While AI-enabled virtual assistants can be the first step toward a more accessible and effective mode of government service delivery, agencies that move beyond chatbots stand to fundamentally reshape how residents interact with their government.

Baseline:

Multiple North Carolina agencies either have plans to or have already begun to leverage AI to streamline processes and improve resident satisfaction. As part of its 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, the state's Division of Motor Vehicles aims to increase speed and quality and reduce average in-office wait times from 110 down to 15 minutes through a variety of strategies, including AI. In 2025, the N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Employment Security launched an AI-powered chatbot to assist residents with submitting claims for unemployment benefits.

Recommendation:

Launch a North Carolina digital experience initiative, identifying and piloting trustworthy AI-enabled improvements to three to five high-volume, resident-facing services with outcomes tracked through a standardized statewide resident satisfaction measurement system.

Details: Today's fragmented portals and agency-specific processes prioritize government processes over resident experience. This initiative will improve resident experience by creating a single AI-enabled portal for residents to access government services, reducing friction and enabling seamless cross-agency service delivery. This experience in agencies can be enhanced through exploration of connection-ready MCP servers, which are designed to enable seamless AI integration with agency data to enhance the user's interaction. Agencies in coordination should identify and prioritize high-impact, high-volume resident services where AI can meaningfully improve access, speed, or outcomes, and they should pilot three to five improvements grounded in proactive resident service delivery. Agencies should create baseline metrics and measurable improvement targets, including resolution time and resident satisfaction, across piloted services to demonstrate and scale the impact. Establishing shared standards will enable seamless integration across agency systems and reduce duplicative development. Cross-agency data agreements will enable secure data sharing to support resident service delivery across agencies.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, Governor's Office, Agency Leadership

Timeline: December 2027

Goal 2: Drive Statewide Innovation

Create streamlined and formal innovation pipelines between state government and statewide partners, such as local government, regional hubs, universities, private sector, and peer states.

Background:
Developing and deploying AI effectively requires expertise, infrastructure, and resources that no single government agency can provide on its own. Recognizing this, state governments are increasingly turning to cross-sector partnerships to foster innovation. Massachusetts, for example, partnered with Northeastern University to deploy AI tools for improved service delivery while New York's Empire AI Consortium brings together the state, leading universities, and industry partners to advance AI research for the public good. Higher education institutions, private companies, local governments and peer states each bring distinct value, such as research capacity, technical talent, ground-level data, and proven implementation models. By partnering with these entities, states do not have to build every capacity from scratch and can ensure AI benefits the public and private sectors as well as residents.

Baseline:
North Carolina is in the early stages of establishing formal partnerships between state agencies and external partners that foster AI innovation, but the state has made significant strides through the AI Accelerator, which connects state agencies with private companies and higher education institutions to develop and test AI solutions. Similarly, in 2025 the N.C. Department of State Treasurer partnered with OpenAI to launch a 12-week pilot program on using AI to improve government services. Following a successful testing phase, the department has now integrated AI into its daily workflow.

Recommendation:
Launch partnerships connecting state agencies with external partners to co-create trustworthy AI-enabled solutions and share AI-ready datasets and frameworks.

Details: This initiative will coordinate signature AI partnership programs that engage regional communities, workers, higher education institutions, private sector partners, and local governments across North Carolina. This could include programs such as an AI Residency that embeds multidisciplinary students, with partnership from the N.C. Project Portal, from North Carolina's higher education into state agencies to solve real-world challenges while creating fast-track pathways into public service. Statewide and regional AI-focused hackathons could mobilize talent to address North Carolina's most urgent public challenges while fostering a culture of collaborative problem-solving. A government–private sector talent exchange could enable temporary role swaps that build shared skills, deepen cross-sector understanding, and accelerate innovation. Finally, partnerships with private sector companies and startups would empower agencies to cocreate tailored AI-enabled solutions that strengthen government services and expand innovation capacity.

Owners: N.C. Office of State Human Resources, N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: December 2028

Goal 3: Broaden Access to Critical Resources

Encourage statewide economic growth by expanding access to critical AI tools, infrastructure, and skilled workforce to institutions across the state, especially those delivering essential public services, such as government, education, and healthcare.

Background:

Realizing AI's full potential across the state requires that institutions at the center of public life, such as government agencies, hospitals, and higher education institutions, have reliable access to tools that make responsible AI deployment possible and compute, which is the AI tool's processing power. Uneven access to these resources creates an uneven playing field and disproportionately impacts smaller institutions. Local governments, for example, often lack the resources to securely implement AI. Similarly, in health care and higher education, the expertise and resources needed to deploy AI are typically concentrated in large, well-funded medical centers and universities. States that invest in shared AI infrastructure to give agencies, hospitals, and higher education institutions access to common AI tools and compute resources are best positioned to capture AI's economic and service delivery benefits.

Baseline:

In North Carolina, NCShare is a unique state asset that democratizes access to AI resources. The partnership connects universities across the state, such as North Carolina Central University, Davidson College, and Duke University, to high-performance computing power and research capacity. MCNC, a non-profit organization based in Research Triangle Park, provides the networking services that support NCShare and many community anchor institutions throughout North Carolina.

Recommendation:

Explore expanding access to compute for higher education institutions and startups through partnerships in exchange for AI safety research and statewide AI innovation.

> *Details:* To democratize access to AI resources, the state should encourage an expansion of both university and small business connectivity to AI infrastructure, ensuring smaller organizations across the state have access to shared AI compute resources regardless of their size or geography. North Carolina is uniquely positioned to implement a solution of this kind due to its existing network of shared connectivity and compute through partnerships such as MCNC and RTP Foundation. Access to compute could be provided in exchange for commitments to responsible AI development, safety research participation, and knowledge-sharing with the broader North Carolina innovation community, ensuring the resources are used to develop and deploy safe, effective AI solutions. These partnerships could also drive mutually beneficial collaboration between startups and higher education institutions that enables students to get real- world AI development experience and startups to make maximal use of the AI compute capabilities. This coordinated approach positions North Carolina to lead in responsible AI development and economic growth.
>
> *Owners:* N.C. Department of Information Technology, North Carolina Nonprofits and Higher Education Institutions
>
> *Timeline:* June 2028

Recommendation:

Sustainably expand government AI compute and AI sandboxes to enable AI innovation while safeguarding resident data from malicious use.

Details: As AI capabilities expand, the state needs secure, state-managed infrastructure to innovate at scale. This recommendation will establish dedicated state-governed high-performance AI compute clusters and secure AI sandboxes, which allow state agencies to safely pilot innovative AI solutions including agentic AI tools. By prototyping in a controlled, isolated environment, State government can better ensure data sovereignty, prove rigorous security compliance, and validate model accuracy before public deployment. It will also build stronger internal skillsets and capabilities to leverage this infrastructure to benefit residents and responsibly handle data. Sandboxes will serve as a catalyst for growth, enabling the state to drive statewide innovation through the development and deployment of trustworthy AI solutions.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: December 2027

Recommendation:
Explore generating synthetic datasets to maintain resident privacy while furthering statewide AI innovation and, in some cases, provide access to these datasets to trusted partners in exchange for AI safety research.

Details: Synthetic datasets are datasets that have been artificially created to represent patterns in real-world data without containing real-world information, ensuring data privacy. This initiative can identify high-impact datasets across state government that could be used to generate meaningful innovation to directly benefit residents. These datasets will be statistically representative and audited for bias. The state should take extra precautions to protect resident data privacy by using proven, industry-established privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs) to generate the datasets. The state must also establish strict guardrails while maintaining compliance with restrictions on certain highly sensitive datasets consistent with applicable data protection and privacy regulations. Exploring cross-sector partnerships that exchange this valuable data in exchange for AI safety research enables mutually beneficial innovation that advances trustworthy AI. This research ensures that North Carolina-born innovation leads the industry in transparency, data protection and privacy, fairness, and public trust.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: June 2027

Goal 4: Build a Culture of Change

Identify and build a network of change leaders among employees who are embedded across agencies to learn how to utilize AI responsibly, manage change, and drive bottom-up innovation.

Background:
AI adoption among public sector employees has significantly increased, with 43% of employees reportedly using AI in 2025 in comparison to 28% in 2024. In response, most states are investing in building AI capacity, with at least thirty states developing or having established AI literacy initiatives for government employees. Central to these efforts is cultivating a government workforce that fundamentally understands AI, can safely and effectively use this technology, and is supported in doing so. In fact, within public sector organizations that have adopted AI, 65% of employees in high managerial support environments regularly use AI in comparison to 37% in low managerial support environments. Whether through communities of practice where employees can learn from their colleagues or role-specific AI literacy trainings that build upon each other, the investment states make in AI literacy

fosters responsible and effective AI adoption that goes beyond simple use.

Baseline:
Developing a statewide AI literacy strategy is a key part of Governor Stein's Executive Order 24, and North Carolina has already taken steps to build AI literacy across its government workforce. In July 2025, the state partnered with LinkedIn Learning, which offers hundreds of courses on AI and other topics, to expand professional development opportunities for state employees. Similarly, the N.C. Department of Information Technology provides training and other resources to help both employees and residents understand and navigate generative AI. The department is also preparing additional training for state employees.

Recommendation:
Establish a structured system of agency-embedded change leaders, communities of practice, and multi-level ethical AI fluency trainings across technical, non-technical, and daily productivity users, with formal incentives and recognition.

Details: To become leaders in trustworthy AI, the state must provide its employees with adequate knowledge to understand, use, and apply AI technologies in a safe and responsible way. The state will create an AI fluency training plan across the entire state workforce through a tiered approach that targets users at different skillset needs, including technical users, non-technical users, and leadership. Variations of these training courses will be offered and tailored to different agencies, role capacities, and user requirements. These training programs will be supplemented by AI communities of practice designed to foster AI champions who can support other state employees at both the agency and inter-agency level and continue to build AI competency within agencies. To encourage workforce participation, the state should establish incentives for AI-driven innovation and impact.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology, N.C. Office of State Human Resources

Timeline: March 2027

Recommendation:
Support agencies in assessing and addressing workforce AI needs, including training employees in foundational AI skills and identifying specialized AI knowledge or upskilling requirements for key positions.

Details: Building AI literacy and role-specific expertise is essential to ensure that state government can safely and effectively leverage AI tools while maintaining public trust. Assist agencies in conducting assessments of current and emerging workforce AI needs to identify positions that require specialized AI expertise, targeted upskilling, or revised competency expectations. These roles will be updated to reflect new skilling requirements. Establish a clear set of foundational AI skills and integrate these competencies into statewide onboarding and ongoing workforce training programs, ensuring a baseline level of AI literacy across all positions. These actions will create a unified, scalable approach to preparing the state workforce for responsible and effective AI adoption and align foundational AI skills with the broader workforce.

Owners: N.C. Office of State Human Resources, N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: September 2027

Goal 5: Establish Government-Wide AI Resources

Establish in parallel the set of reusable AI solutions that can significantly improve performance across agencies based on service areas where AI is most well-suited to automate manual tasks, freeing valuable time for state employees.

Background:

In addition to improving the way governments deliver resident facing services, AI is enabling agencies to streamline internal processes, modernize legacy systems, and reduce administrative burden. Rather than replacing employees, this AI adoption is centered on augmenting workers, allowing them to focus on more meaningful work rather than repetitive, process-driven tasks. A common area in which many state governments are integrating AI is in procurement, where AI can assist with developing requests for proposals and analyzing contracts. In 2025, AI was a key priority for all state procurement officials. Procurement is just one of many processes shared across all government agencies; by prioritizing AI integration into these common workflows, states can maximize AI's benefits system-wide.

Baseline:

North Carolina has implemented several AI-enabled systems that benefit multiple state agencies rather than being specific to one department's workflow. Built by the N.C. Government Data Analytics Center and launched in 2019, N.C. eLink is a data integration system that links records across agencies and is used by several departments for criminal justice, fraud detection, and education data coordination. Similarly, in June 2025, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Partnership and Technology Hub for North Carolina, a child welfare information system that digitally connects all 100 counties, integrates data from several state agencies, and supports social service workers. Regarding procurement, the N.C. Department of Information Technology operates and continuously improves an AI chatbot that assists IT procurement staff in all agencies.

Recommendation:

Build a curated internal marketplace of reusable and responsible statewide-approved AI solutions, supported by core AI capabilities and tools, that agencies can self-serve and deploy from without building from scratch.

> *Details:* This recommendation will establish a shared, internal state government marketplace to easily share responsible AI solutions and enablers such as re-usable tools and code, secure datasets, and more without the need to re-invent solutions. Establishing a mechanism for sharing use case examples without the need for any group to go out and find that information, compile it, and report it out will allow each agency's progress to become a resource for other agencies. The use case library would serve as a low-friction, low-cost mechanism for information sharing and innovation across agencies. Explore how emerging AI agent standards can give state employees faster, safer access to the tools and information they need to serve residents. These tools will all be evaluated for safety and secure use across agencies before availability on the marketplace and monitored regularly by all parties using the tool.
>
> *Owners:* N.C. Department of Information Technology, Governor's Office, Agency Leadership
>
> *Timeline:* December 2026

Recommendation:

Incorporate assessment and inclusion of trustworthy AI technologies into procurement processes to support agencies.

Details: Currently, agencies rely on internal mechanisms to evaluate solutions and may not have the knowledge to evaluate AI alternatives. This effort will create procurement evaluation mechanisms to allow agencies to evaluate AI tools responsibly without adding additional steps to the procurement process. This includes providing clear guidance to help agencies evaluate AI solutions, understand the implications of introducing AI features into existing solutions, and identify viable AI alternatives during new technology procurements. Agencies should also be equipped to determine when building an AI solution in-house may be more efficient or strategic than purchasing commercially available tools. To support informed decision-making, agencies must be connected with centralized resources, expert guidance, and evaluation frameworks that clarify risks, benefits, and operational and environmental impacts. By integrating these standards into the procurement cycle, agencies can systematically phase out high-risk systems in favor of more accountable and secure technologies.

Owners: N.C. Department of Information Technology

Timeline: June 2027

TIMELINE



TIMELINE

The collection of these recommendations will be achieved between the release of this AI Strategic Roadmap through December 2028. The completion date of each recommendation is shown below with progress updates expected periodically throughout their implementation.

Recommendation	Sep 2026	Dec 2026	Mar 2027	Jun 2027	Sep 2027	Dec 2027	Mar 2028	Jun 2028	Sep 2028	Dec 2028
Protecting Residents Policy Package										
Statewide Career Transition Program										
Unemployment Policy Package										
Monitor and Disclose AI Infrastructure Impacts										
Content Verification Standard										
Public Reporting of AI Solutions										
Benefits Program Transparency										
Statewide AI Contingency Planning										
Enhance Cybersecurity Monitoring and Sharing										
Statewide Trustworthy AI Standards										
AI Liaisons for Each Agency										
Statewide AI Literacy Initiative										
Entry Level Careers into Private Sector										
Entry Level Careers into Public Sector										
GenAI Guidelines and Policy in PK-13 Education										
AI-Fluency Micro-Credential Program										
Digital Experience Initiative										
Statewide Innovative Partnerships										
Expand University and Small Business Compute										
Expand Government AI Compute										
Build Synthetic Datasets to Innovate										
Build State Government AI Fluency Internally										
Recruit for AI Skillsets Across Positions										
Internal Marketplace of AI Solutions										
Update Procurement Processes for AI										

Conclusion and Next Steps

Together, these 25 recommendations show North Carolina's commitment to protecting residents from impacts of AI, preparing residents for an evolving AI landscape, and transforming the state to work better for its residents. The state is committed to upholding this Protect, Prepare, and Transform framework no matter how the landscape may change. The Council may need to update or add to these goals to address emerging concerns. North Carolina recognizes the significance of the moment that we are in and is committed to becoming a leader in trustworthy AI. Through collaboration with the state, higher education, and private sector partners that are in this roadmap, we can ensure that North Carolina can thrive in a rapidly changing, AI-enabled economy.

Over the next year, the Council will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. The focus will be on implementing the recommendations in this strategic roadmap. The Council looks forward to continuing to update the public on the progress being made, including through a second report to be released in June 2027.

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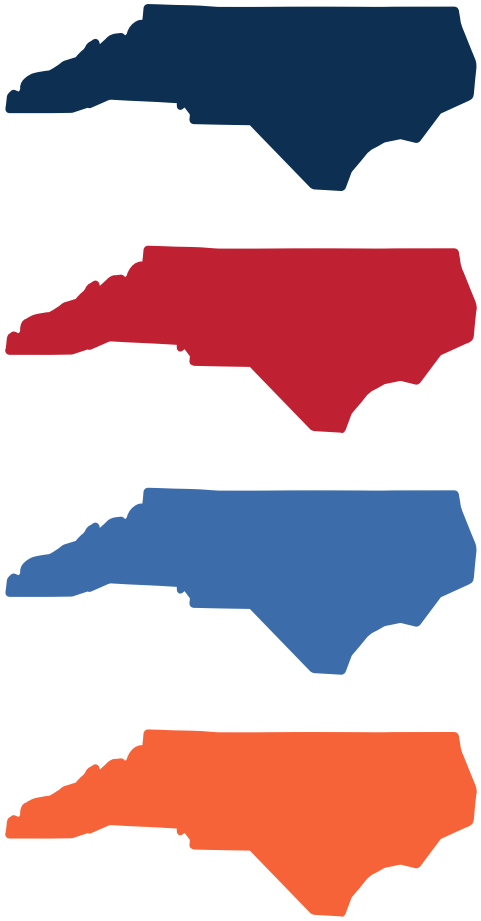
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