

STRATEGY

Deeper, Broader, Simpler: Lessons from the Olympic AI Agenda in Creating Your AI Policy

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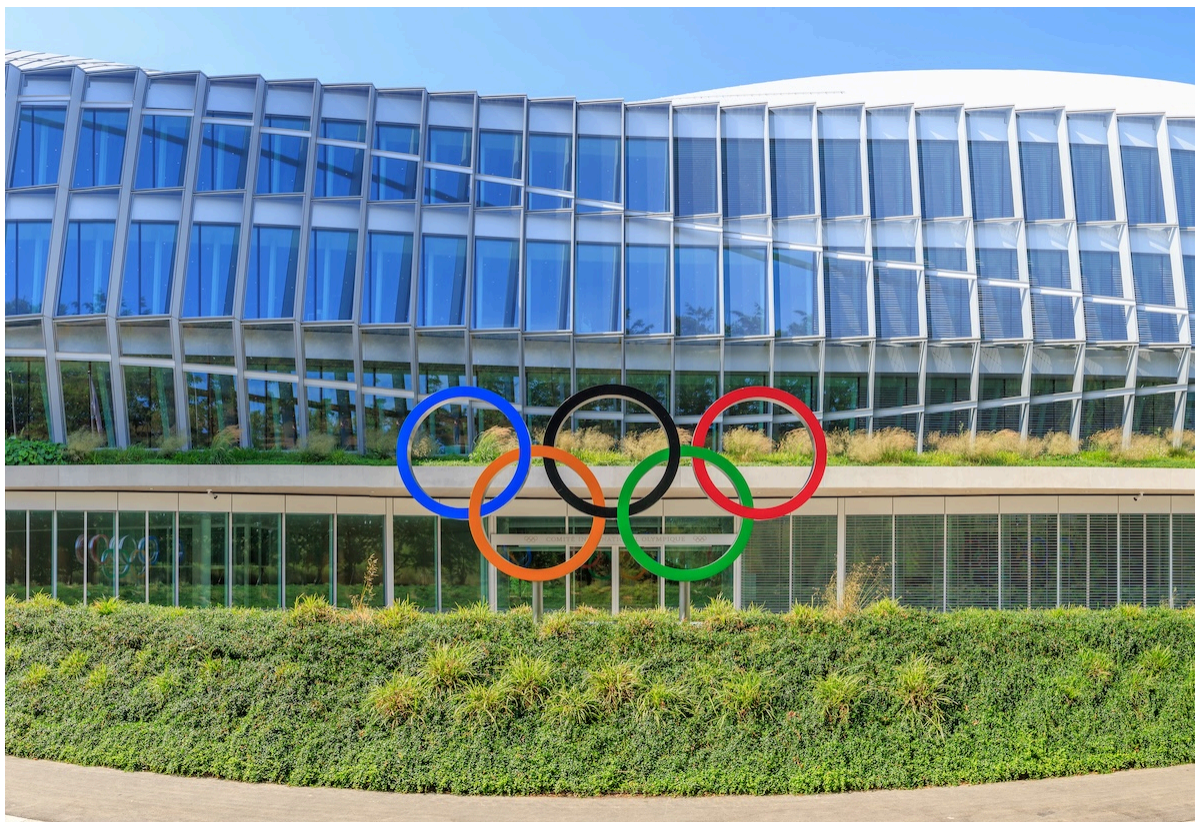


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Examining the AI Agenda of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

✔ **INSIGHT** | OPINION 29 Sep 2024

Organizations want to move from understanding artificial intelligence (AI) to implementing this technology. At the same time, they are struggling to come to terms with its rapidly evolving nature, governance, and risk landscape. In this context, the AI Agenda of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) provides an exemplary model for other organizations to follow. As members of the committee that crafted the AI Agenda, we had a close view of this journey. In this article, we provide a roadmap, which we illustrate in Figure 1 and detail below, for other organizations seeking to define their own AI strategy.

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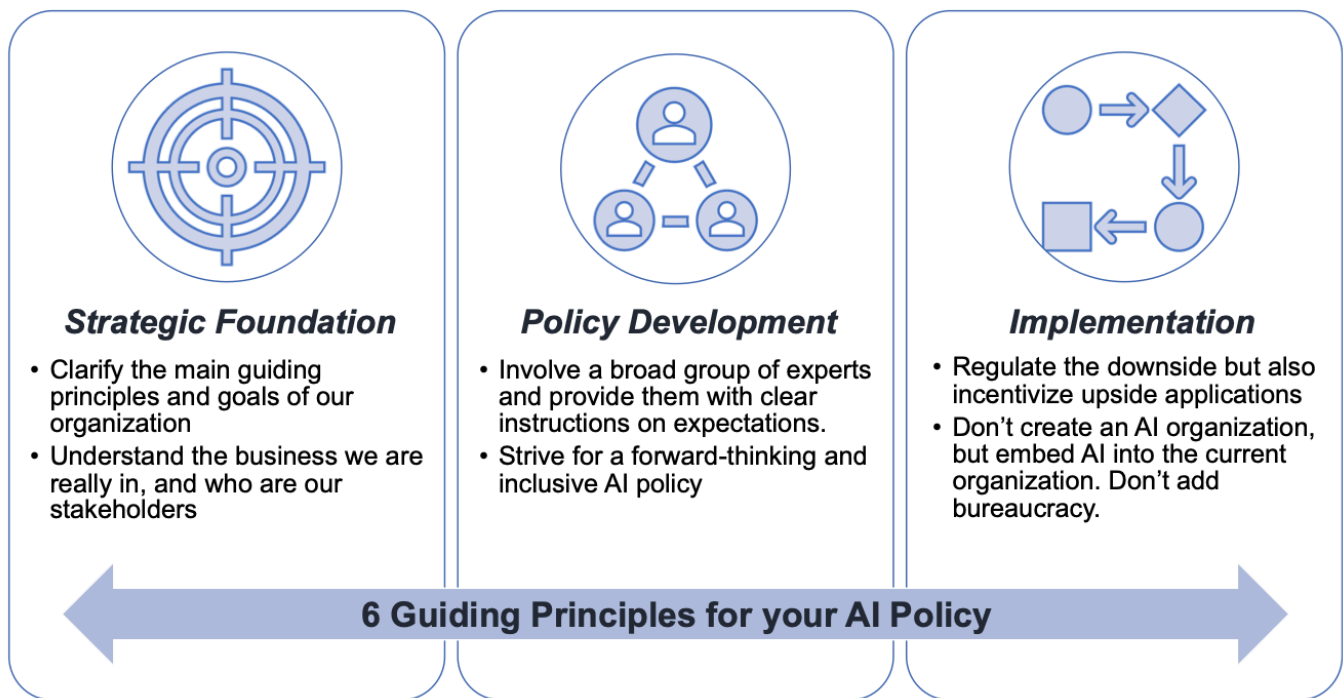


Figure 1: A visual summary of the guiding principles for an effective AI policy.

Strategic Foundation

Before an organization commences the process of developing an AI policy, it must introspect on the following two issues:

1. Clarify the main guiding principles and goals of our organization.

The potential use cases of AI-based technologies are vast, and organizations must start with a clear understanding of their strategic goals. What is the value of AI to our organization? What kinds of outcomes would we like to inhibit? These foundational elements inform the development of AI policies that align with the organization's mission. A central component of the IOC's agenda is the definition of its guiding principles, offering a pertinent example of how to address these questions. They focus on fostering an ethos of integrity, improving access and fairness, scaling the creation of memorable moments,

honoring traditions while embracing innovation, and collaborating for shared impact. By grounding its AI policy in these pillars, the IOC has created a robust framework that aligns AI use with the Olympic values.

2. Understand the business we are really in, and who are our stakeholders.

In determining their agenda, firms need to avoid narrowly defined policies that may become obsolete as the organization evolves. The IOC recognized the importance of catering to country associations, athletes, fans, and other stakeholders to continuously serve its global mission. This broad scope leads to AI policies that address the diverse needs of the organization's members, ensuring comprehensive and long-term coverage.

The manifestation of these two principles can be seen in the coverage of the Paris Olympic Games. Focus Area 4 in the IOC policy is "Growing Engagement with People."

Consequently, the official broadcasting partner for the games offer daily AI-enabled highlight packages.¹ Each reel will be customized in over seven million ways and enhanced with an AI-generated voiceover from Al Michaels, a legendary US sports commentator.

Policy Development

Once the above questions are resolved, we can proceed to formulate the AI policy document.

3. Involve a broad group of experts and provide them with clear instructions on expectations.

Creating effective AI policies is not a task for the IT or the data team alone. Formulating these policies requires input from diverse stakeholders, including technology specialists, subject matter experts, ethicists, and business leaders. It necessitates a 360-degree view of the organization. The IOC's AI Working Group exemplifies this approach. Comprised of AI pioneers, academics, athletes, and industry representatives from technology providers,

the group brought together a wealth of expertise and perspectives. The panel also reflected the truly global nature of the Olympic movement, with experts from the US, Europe, and Australasia, facilitating an inclusive agenda that holistically considers AI deployment, from technical feasibility to ethical implications.

4. Strive for a forward-thinking and inclusive AI policy.

Given the rapid evolution of data-driven tools, organizations must adopt a forward-thinking approach to different technology specifications when formulating AI policies. These policies should anticipate future developments and impacts on the organization's ecosystem due to the fast-changing nature of the technology. For instance, the IOC identifies ensuring equal access to AI's benefits as one of its focus areas. However, it does not specify the type of AI model to be used, recognizing that the means to achieve access can vary significantly depending on the sport and the societal context. This flexibility allows for using novel AI technologies, maintaining the policy's relevance across future advancements.

Implementation

Once the AI policy document is ready, there is a tendency for the process to slow down significantly.

5. Regulate the downside but also incentivize upside applications.

When creating AI policies, organizations often focus on mitigating risks. However, it is equally important to incentivize the adoption of AI to drive growth. The IOC's AI agenda highlights the importance of balancing regulation with incentives. While it addresses the need to mitigate risks, it also emphasizes leveraging AI to drive operational efficiency, sustainability, and an enhanced Olympic experience. Establishing a robust yet flexible governance framework with a clear definition of the organization's role regarding the use

of technology is central to achieving both safety and innovation. For instance, the IOC will act as a Pioneer by leading the creation of AI assets, as a Catalyst by nurturing external AI initiatives, and as a Guardian by ensuring the ethical use of AI across its ecosystem.

6. Don't create an AI organization, but embed AI into the current organization. Don't add bureaucracy.

Large firms are often tempted to hand over the policy implementation to a specialized 'AI' committee. This often has the unintended consequence of introducing roadblocks that are particularly harmful in areas where failing fast and learning are the mainstay. Instead, embedding the policy application within existing workflows avoids additional red tape. For this reason, the IOC incorporates AI across its existing structure by optimizing event management, enhancing athlete support, and improving fan engagement. This requires horizontal and vertical integration, allowing the IOC to leverage AI without creating additional layers of management.

Conclusion

While the IOC AI Agenda serves as a valuable blueprint for an effective AI policy, it also underscores that organizations must tailor these principles to their unique context. The process behind forming the IOC's policy demonstrates the importance of a well-rounded, inclusive, and human-centered AI strategy that enables organizations to harness the technology's potential.

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1. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbc-use-ai-generated-version-al-michaels-voice-summer-olympics-rcna159108>
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Amit Joshi, Professor of AI, Analytics and Marketing Strategy at IMD, specializes in helping organizations use artificial intelligence and develop for their analytics and AI capabilities. An award-winning professor and researcher, he has extensive experience of AI and analytics driven transformations in multiple industries.



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