State of Idaho AI Guide for Agency Leadership
Strategic oversight and approval responsibilities

Your Leadership Role in AI Governance

As agency leadership, you are accountable for all AI implementations within your organization. This means making final approval decisions, ensuring adequate resources, and maintaining strategic oversight. You work in partnership with ITS, but the responsibility for appropriate AI use within your agency rests with you.

Idaho's shared responsibility model positions you as the decision authority, while ITS provides the framework, standards, and consultation. Your IT liaison handles day-to-day operations, but you own the outcomes.

Making Risk-Based Approval Decisions

Every AI system requires your approval based on Idaho's three-tier risk classification:

- **Tier 1 (Low Risk)** - Systems using public information with minimal impact require your IT leader's approval in addition to ITS approval. These include basic chatbots or content assistance tools using only public data.
- **Tier 2 (Medium Risk)** - Systems with moderate impact or sensitive data require your direct approval plus ITS approval. Examples include document analysis systems or recommendation engines that influence operations.
- **Tier 3 (High Risk)** - Systems affecting individual rights or using critical data require AI Executive Committee review after your endorsement. These include eligibility support systems or anything impacting citizen services.

The key question for your approval: What happens if this system fails or makes a mistake? The answer helps determine the risk tier and approval requirements.

Strategic Considerations for Implementation

- **Start strategically**. Choose low-risk pilots that deliver clear value and build organizational confidence. Success with simple applications creates momentum for more complex implementations later.
- **Budget appropriately**. AI governance requires investment in training, documentation, security controls, and ongoing monitoring. Higher-risk systems need more resources. Factor these costs into your planning.
- **Engage ITS early**. Involve ITS during concept development, not after decisions are made. Early consultation prevents costly redesigns and ensures alignment with state standards.
- **Think beyond technology**. AI impacts workflows, staff roles, and citizen interactions. Plan for change management, training, and communication alongside technical implementation.

Managing Vendor Relationships

Most agencies will procure AI capabilities rather than build them. You are responsible for ensuring vendors meet Idaho's requirements through proper due diligence and contractual protection.

Require vendors to complete Idaho's standardized assessment questionnaire. Include compliance clauses, security requirements, and audit rights in contracts. Establish ongoing oversight procedures for vendor performance and system updates.

Remember: You remain accountable for AI outcomes even when using vendor solutions.

Ensuring Ongoing Success

- **Designate clear accountability.** Your IT Liaison manages AI operations, but you own strategic decisions and outcomes. Maintain regular oversight without micromanaging day-to-day activities.
- **Monitor what matters.** Focus on business outcomes, risk indicators, and citizen impact rather than technical metrics. Review performance quarterly for low-risk systems, monthly for medium-risk systems, and weekly for high-risk systems.
- **Build organizational capability.** Invest in AI literacy across your leadership team. Participate in Idaho's AI community of practice to learn from other agencies. Create feedback loops for continuous improvement.
- **Plan for incidents.** AI systems will have problems. Ensure your team knows how to respond quickly and appropriately. Have clear escalation procedures to ITS and other state resources.

Key Resources and Contacts

- [AI Concept Brief](#) - Use this standardized template to evaluate and document proposed AI implementations before detailed planning begins.
- **ITS AI Innovation Team** - Your primary resource for policy interpretation, technical guidance, and coordination with state-level governance bodies (contact@its.idaho.gov).
- **AI Framework and Supporting Documentation** – [Idaho AI Framework](#) provides overarching guidance, and the [AI Policy, Standard, and Guideline](#) provide complete requirements and procedures.

Success depends on your leadership commitment to responsible AI governance. This means making informed decisions, providing adequate resources, and maintaining accountability for outcomes within your organization.

If you have additional questions or are ready to get started, contact your ITS Service Delivery Manager.