

# Research Integrity and Conflict of Interest Statement

*ThinkCapital's commitments to independent, rigorous, and ethical AI governance research*

Document Reference	Definition
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Applies to	ThinkCapital Government IT/AI Governance (GIAG) Initiative — Streams 1 & 2

## Research Integrity and Conflict of Interest Statement

### Why This Document Exists

Research into government AI governance is a domain where the distinction between independent inquiry and commercially motivated intelligence gathering matters enormously. Government practitioners, contractors, and academic researchers invited to participate in this program deserve to know, clearly and in advance, who is funding this research, what interests it serves, and what constraints ThinkCapital has placed on how findings may be used.

This statement is provided proactively — not because it has been requested — because transparency about these questions is a precondition for credible research.

### Funding and Independence

#### Funding

The GIAG research initiative is entirely self-funded by ThinkCapital LLC. No government agency, vendor, technology company, consulting firm, association, or third party has provided financial support, in-kind resources, or research direction for this initiative.

ThinkCapital has not received, and will not accept, conditional funding — meaning funding that comes with requirements or expectations regarding research findings, participant access, publication decisions, or data sharing.

### Conflicts of Interest — Disclosure

ThinkCapital LLC discloses the following interests that participants should be aware of when evaluating this research:

Interest	Disclosure
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<b>Commercial advisory services</b>	ThinkCapital LLC offers advisory services to government and private sector clients in the areas of IT strategy and AI governance. Research findings may inform ThinkCapital’s advisory practice. However, aggregate research findings will not be provided to any advisory client before public release.
<b>Job search activity</b>	Michael Bragen, the Principal Researcher, is conducting an active job search in the IT strategy and government advisory sector as of March 2026. Research findings and the ThinkCapital platform are part of his professional positioning. Participants are entitled to know this.
<b>Publication interests</b>	ThinkCapital intends to publish research findings publicly. Publication, visibility, and professional reputation are direct interests of the Principal Researcher.
<b>No vendor relationships</b>	ThinkCapital has no commercial relationships with any AI system vendor, cloud provider, cybersecurity firm, or technology company whose products may be discussed in participant interviews.
<b>No government contracts</b>	ThinkCapital holds no active contracts with any federal, state, or local government agency as of the date of this statement.

## What ThinkCapital Will Not Do With Research Findings

- Provide individual participant responses — identifiable or de-identified — to any government agency, vendor, competitor, or third party.
- Sell research findings, participant data, or access to the participant pool to any party.
- Use findings to produce competitive intelligence reports on behalf of any vendor or consulting client.
- Submit findings to any government oversight body in a manner that could identify or disadvantage any participant.
- Alter, suppress, or selectively report findings to serve any commercial, political, or personal interest.

## Research Standards

ThinkCapital conducts this research in accordance with the following standards:

Standard	Application
<b>Methodological rigor</b>	Semi-structured interviews analyzed through systematic thematic coding, as documented in the GIAG Analysis and Coding Guide (Version 1.0, March 2026). Methodology is disclosed in full to participants and in published findings.
<b>Participant protection</b>	All participant rights and data protections are documented in the Research Participation Agreement (TC-GIAG-CONSENT-v1.0) and the Data Processing and Privacy Notice (TC-GIAG-PRIVACY-v1.0).
<b>Findings integrity</b>	Research findings report what the data shows — including findings that are inconvenient, ambiguous, or that contradict prior assumptions. Negative findings and outlier cases will be reported.

## Transparency

The complete research instrument, codebook, and methodology are available to participants and, upon request, to peer reviewers or journalists. ThinkCapital will not assert confidentiality over its methodology.

## Attribution discipline

Named attribution requires a separate signed release. Quotes are reviewed by participants before publication. Paraphrased findings are not attributed to individuals.

## Ethical Framework

ThinkCapital is not affiliated with a university and is therefore not subject to Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight. In place of IRB review, this research applies the following ethical framework:

- **Informed consent:** Participation requires a signed Research Participation Agreement documenting participant rights and ThinkCapital's obligations.
- **Voluntary participation:** No incentives — financial or professional — are offered for participation. Participation carries no penalty for refusal or withdrawal.
- **Minimal data:** Only information necessary for the research is collected. Special categories of personal data are not sought.
- **Right to withdraw:** Participants may withdraw at any time, including after the interview, with full data deletion available on request.
- **Beneficence:** The research is designed to produce findings that benefit the field of government AI governance practice — including findings critical of current practice.
- **Non-maleficence:** ThinkCapital will take all reasonable steps to ensure that participation cannot harm participants professionally, legally, or personally.

Participants who are affiliated with universities or other institutions that require IRB or equivalent ethical oversight for their own engagement in external research should ensure their institution's requirements are satisfied before agreeing to participate. ThinkCapital is willing to provide documentation of this ethical framework to any institutional review office upon request.

## Signed Statement

I, Michael Bragen, Principal of ThinkCapital LLC, affirm that the disclosures in this document are accurate and complete as of the date signed, and that I will update this statement if material changes occur before the research program concludes.

### Michael Bragen

Principal, ThinkCapital LLC  
Belmont, California

Signature *Michael Bragen*

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Date **March 6, 2026**

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*Current version of this statement always available at [thinkcapital.org/research-integrity](https://thinkcapital.org/research-integrity). Version history maintained by ThinkCapital LLC. Questions may be directed to [research@thinkcapital.org](mailto:research@thinkcapital.org).*