

A large, stylized graphic of the letters 'AI' in white, centered within a dark square frame that resembles a circuit board or a monitor. The background of the entire top half of the page is a dark, futuristic cityscape with glowing white lines and structures, suggesting a digital or technological environment.

AI

AAM  
ASSURANCE  
OUTLOOK

# Ethical AI

*A guide to current trends and challenges  
when implementing AI in media*



Alliance for  
Audited Media

As AI becomes more integrated into newsroom and business operations, media companies are balancing its potential to improve efficiency with growing questions from audiences and advertisers about how the technology is being used and whether it can be trusted.

[Research](#) from the Local Media Association found that nearly 99% of news audiences expect human involvement when AI is used, and more than two-thirds say clear disclosure builds trust. Advertisers express similar expectations with 94% saying [they want stronger safeguards](#) to ensure media companies uphold brand safe, trustworthy AI practices. [Regulators are also signaling](#) that greater transparency may soon be required.

This report examines the current state of AI use in media, the challenges publishers face when implementing AI and an emerging framework to guide responsible adoption. It also highlights how third party assurance — a cornerstone of trust in media — now plays a critical role in validating AI practices to reinforce transparency and accountability.

This report explores:



**99%**

*of news audiences expect human involvement when AI is used\**



## The state of AI in media

## Key considerations when implementing AI

## A framework for responsible AI implementation

## The role of independent assurance

## The assurance outlook

\*Source: [Local Media Association](#)

## AI in Media Today: The Trust Gap

Media companies are [integrating AI across key areas](#) including content creation, personalization, distribution and advertising optimization and [82% of journalists use at least one AI tool](#) to assist their work. While AI tools promise efficiency and scale, they also introduce questions from consumers and advertisers.

Research from leading industry groups — including the [Local Media Association](#), [Trusting News](#) and the [Interactive Advertising Bureau \(IAB\)](#) — shows a pattern:

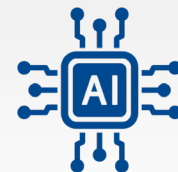
Consumers want to know when and where AI is used and whether human oversight is part of the process



Advertisers want to understand how AI influences content, how publishers are mitigating bias and what safeguards exist to protect brand integrity



Trust between consumers and advertisers increases when publishers clearly disclose AI use



Despite this need, many companies are still developing AI governance plans, leaving a gap between stakeholder expectations and operational reality. As regulatory attention grows and AI becomes more embedded across media, transparency and accountability will become vital to maintaining credibility.

# 5 Key Considerations When Implementing AI

There are several areas publishers need to consider when implementing AI.

## 1

### **Is AI-generated content reliable?**

One of the most immediate concerns is the reliability of AI-generated outputs. While AI can accelerate workflows, it can also introduce risks that are difficult to detect without proper oversight, including content that is factually incorrect, misleading, biased or not aligned with editorial standards.

Minor inaccuracies can have significant consequences, but clear validation processes can increase trust for audiences and advertisers.

## 2

### **What is our internal governance policy?**

If publishers lack centralized AI policies and oversight, teams must navigate adoption without strong guidance. Publishers should consider:

- What AI tools may be used and how they should be implemented
- How outputs should be reviewed, verified and approved
- What disclosures are required for specific types of content
- Who is ultimately accountable for AI-generated content

Consistency reduces operational risk and helps maintain standards across the organization.

# 3

## **When should we disclose AI use?**

As AI becomes more widespread, audiences and advertisers are asking for greater clarity. Publishers are asking how to communicate AI use in a consistent and meaningful way, including:

- When should AI use be disclosed? Are there instances where disclosure is unnecessary?
- How should disclosures be presented to audiences?
- What level of detail is necessary to maintain audience trust?

Clear disclosure policies help build consumer and advertiser confidence.

# 4

## **Are our teams knowledgeable about AI?**

AI adoption can outpace internal education and alignment. Common gaps include:

- Limited understanding of AI capabilities
- Lack of alignment on internal policies and workflows
- Insufficient training on disclosure practices

Addressing these gaps can improve consistent implementation and decrease the likelihood of errors.

# 5

## **What is the regulatory risk?**

As AI adoption accelerates, regulatory scrutiny is increasing across the media landscape. Legislation is starting to emerge with a growing focus on disclosures, governance and data protection. This shift places new pressure on publishers to establish policies that demonstrate AI use, disclosure and governance policies.

Companies without a formal governance plan risk falling behind as regulatory expectations become more defined and enforced.

## A Framework for Responsible AI Implementation: AAM's Eight Pillars of Ethical AI

Many publishers are trying to answer these questions within their organizations. As an industry not-for-profit, AAM collaborated with industry leaders and members and identified eight key areas where transparency, accountability and ethical oversight are essential. The result is a unique framework developed by media, for media.



### 1. Policies and Governance

To ensure the responsible use of AI, organizations must establish and maintain clear ethical policies that guide how AI technologies are integrated into their operations. These policies should reflect a commitment to transparency, accountability, minimizing bias and protecting user privacy. As technologies and risks evolve, so should the policies that govern their use. Organizations are encouraged to review and update their AI guidelines at least annually.



### 2. Transparency and Disclosures

In addition to developing AI policies, organizations should make them publicly available and explain how AI is used in processing, creating and reporting consumer information.

Content level disclosures should be provided when AI shapes content in ways that could mislead consumers about authenticity, identity or representation. Disclosure is not required for routine editing or production tasks, but it should be disclosed for:

- Synthetic copy: Text generated 100% through AI prompts
- Synthetic images: Generated from AI prompts
- Synthetic video: Generated from AI prompts
- Synthetic voices: AI-generated voice content
- Digital twins: AI replicas of real people
- AI chatbots or conversational agents: When AI-powered personas engage directly with consumers in ways that simulate human interaction

These disclosures should identify AI use and provide meaningful context about its role in shaping the final product and be easy for consumers to access. Note that this guidance aligns with [IAB's AI Transparency and Disclosure Framework](#).



### 3. Rights and Permissions

Organizations should secure the appropriate rights and permissions and level of consent to use the information powering their AI solutions. This helps protect the organization from legal challenges and reinforces ethical content development practices.



### 4. Accountability and Human Oversight

Human oversight is essential to maintaining integrity and ethical standards. Organizations should assign clear roles and responsibilities for managing AI tools, ensuring that qualified individuals are accountable for how these systems are used across departments. This “human-in-the-loop” approach should apply to all stages of implementation and should be assigned to individuals with authority to enforce compliance.

## Putting the Pillars into Practice

Here are a few examples of what these pillars look like when implemented.

### Ethical AI Policies

American City Business Journals (ACBJ) [established clear policies](#) that define how AI is used, are reviewed regularly and are publicly available.



### Training & Education

Hearst Newspapers created an [extensive internal AI training program](#) to align staff on what tools to use, how to implement them and best practices.

**H E A R S T**

### Risk Management

USA Today Co. implemented a structured approach to identify risk including [an internal AI council](#) of cross-functional employees who monitor regulatory changes, accelerate AI impact, train staff and ensure responsible AI growth.

**USA  
TODAY  
CO.**



### **5. Bias and Fairness**

AI systems can unintentionally amplify existing biases, making it essential for organizations to implement bias mitigation strategies. Companies must implement processes to identify and mitigate biases in AI algorithms. By monitoring AI outputs for fairness and inclusiveness, organizations can avoid reinforcing stereotypes or inaccuracies in output.



### **6. Privacy and Data Protection**

AI systems must be managed with a strong commitment to data privacy. Organizations are responsible for ensuring AI tools comply with all applicable data protection regulations. Prioritizing data privacy can reduce legal risk and reinforce a company's commitment to responsible use of technology.



### **7. Training and Education**

Ongoing education is critical to the ethical and effective use of AI. Organizations must provide training for staff on AI technologies, risks and ethical considerations. This includes both general training for all staff as well as proficiency training for individuals responsible for developing, deploying and monitoring AI systems.



### **8. Risk Management and Adaptation**

Effective AI governance requires a structured approach to identifying, measuring and managing risk. Organizations should integrate the principles of ethical AI into their existing policies and procedures, ensuring legal and regulatory requirements are understood, documented and addressed. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities should support ongoing risk oversight, with periodic reviews built into the process. Companies must also establish feedback loops and contingency plans to respond to unexpected outcomes. By committing to continuous monitoring and risk mitigation, organizations can proactively manage evolving challenges while reinforcing responsible practices.

## The Assurance Outlook

As AI adoption matures, the media industry is moving from [experimentation to infrastructure](#) with a growing emphasis on accountability. Publishers are focusing on governance and transparency to meet growing expectations from audiences and advertisers and [regulatory pressures](#).

Third-party assurance has long played a critical role in establishing trust in media. This provides a way to validate claims, standardize practices and reduce uncertainty for buyers and partners.

To support this evolution, AAM developed a certification program founded on AAM's Eight Pillars of Ethical AI to provide independent validation of how publishers are implementing responsible AI practices. The certification evaluates compliance with the above eight pillars and provides a structured way to validate that the framework is applied consistently. [AAM's Ethical AI Certification](#) is included in all AAM publisher memberships to support responsible AI implementation and transparency across the industry.

Earning the AAM Ethical AI Certification seal is a signal that creates value for the industry on multiple fronts:

- Audiences gain a clear understanding of when and how AI is used, building trust in the publisher.
- Advertisers can differentiate certified publishers from AI-driven environments and have confidence in investing in a responsible partner.
- Internal publisher teams develop a shared framework and can resolve any compliance gaps.

As AI use becomes more embedded in operations, the ability to demonstrate authenticity, transparency and human oversight through third-party validation will become an increasingly important differentiator.

## About the Alliance for Audited Media

As the leading global not-for-profit media assurance organization, the [Alliance for Audited Media](#) advances transparency, accountability and trust across media and advertising. Through cross-channel audits, data verification and industry certifications, AAM validates the data and processes that power today's media ecosystem.

With decades of experience providing impartial assurance across the industry, AAM works with publishers, advertisers, agencies and technology platforms to establish trusted standards and verification practices.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about AAM's Ethical AI Certification and how your organization can get started.

