

Smart AI Governance Webinar Q&A

1. **Question:** Heydi, how does NRG establish accountable and transparent AI governance frameworks that align with both ethical principles and business objectives, while navigating evolving regulatory landscapes?

Heydi Gonzalez: *"From the beginning, as generative AI interest grew at NRG, we knew that scaling innovation responsibly meant putting the right guardrails in place. We didn't want governance to be a set of handcuffs, but rather a steering wheel - something that could guide us, keep innovation aligned with our business goals, and unlock value while managing real risks. We formed a cross-functional governance program and built dedicated teams spanning Data, AI, Compliance, and stakeholders from across the org. Our approach is adaptive: we're constantly evolving our policies by learning from real deployments and updating as regulations shift. That means our frameworks are transparent, accountable, and always focused on both protection and value realization."*

2. **Question:** How did you decide at NRG or their clients who would "own" the AI Governance from an operational standpoint? Data Team, AI Team, Compliance, IT, or someone else?

Heydi Gonzalez: *"Ownership of governance started as a partnership - when AI moved fast, we brought together the Data & AI team with compliance, legal, IT, and business leaders. Rather than 'assigning' governance to just one team, we treat it as a shared system, leveraging cross-functional working groups so expertise from each key area shows up where it matters most. This creates authentic ownership and lets us adjust accountability based on the risk and context of each use case."*

Lauren Malik: *"At other organizations, we have seen AI governance owned by cross-functional AI councils, Enterprise PMOs, or centralized AI COE's."*

3. **Question:** How are you building cross-functional awareness - to help people understand how AI can/should be used and how governance fits into that ecosystem?

Lauren Malik: *"The best way to build trust and understanding is through hands-on collaboration. At NRG, we didn't treat governance as a theoretical exercise. Instead, we launched co-creation labs and real-world workshops where technical and business teams worked side by side—developing use cases and seeing what good governance looks like in practice. That's where true cross-functional awareness happens: when people experience how governance enables value, not just compliance."*

In other organizations, we've facilitated similar working sessions—starting with an understanding of their current structure and then tailoring governance frameworks to fit their reality. It's never one-size-fits-all. Effective AI governance requires collaboration across teams to ensure it works with the organization, not against it."

4. **Question:** How do you recommend limiting red tape and multi-level sign off that can take a lot of time, given the fact that AI capabilities and use cases can shift so quickly? While maintaining a good organizational governance structure?

Lauren Malik: *"We see our governance framework as an accelerator in this area. By applying an adaptive, tiered approach to oversight, we streamline the process for low-risk use cases—which get fast-tracked through lightweight sign-offs - while reserving deeper reviews for higher-risk scenarios. Feedback from real deployments helps us keep evolving the process, so governance acts like an enabling constraint that manages risk but never becomes a bottleneck."*

5. **Question:** Are there any trends or types of technologies that you would recommend steering clear of or taking a default position of "wait and see" for (i.e., things that consistently grade out as carrying more risk than is generally acceptable)?

Lauren Malik: *"Because the technology and risks evolve so quickly, it's never just a one-time decision. We actively monitor and re-evaluate technologies, using risk-driven prioritization. If we see emerging approaches (like models lacking transparency or explainability) consistently fall short on governance, we'll take a cautious 'test and learn' or 'wait and see' stance until there's more clarity or maturity."*

6. **Question:** Heydi – beyond governance what gets you excited about AI – do you also use it outside of work?!

Heydi Gonzalez: *"I am excited by the challenge and potential of AI, especially as it mirrors the scale of past tech shifts like the Internet boom. I actively use AI tools outside of work and teach my family how to use them (she even installed ChatGPT on her mom's phone). I believe hands-on exploration is key to building understanding and trust, both personally and professionally."*

7. **Question:** How do you approach staying on top of updates in the AI space (regulation, new motions, etc.)?

Lauren Malik: *"I rely on Google Alerts, model evaluation resources, and third-party tools that track model safety cards and updates. I combine external monitoring with Pariveda's internal frameworks to stay ahead of evolving regulations and technical changes. This feeds directly into the risk evaluation tools and governance templates I use with clients."*

8. **Question:** Have you seen the emergence of "Shadow AI" efforts/initiatives? How are you managing these?

Heydi Gonzalez: *"Yes, particularly with tools that promise productivity gains. NRG created an AI policy early on to set guardrails and encourage responsible use. Rather than block access, the goal is to evaluate external tools, assess risks, and enable safe adoption internally when appropriate. This approach builds trust while maintaining oversight."*

9. **Question:** Heydi – do you have any tips on how AI Governance can be flexible to industry changes while remaining true to the governance needs?

Heydi Gonzalez: *"Absolutely. The key is to design AI governance frameworks that are adaptive by default. That means our policies and guardrails are set up with regular review cycles and feedback mechanisms, so they're never static. As new regulations, technologies, or industry expectations emerge, we don't rip everything out and start over - we iterate, learning from what's working and updating only where necessary. This ensures we're staying compliant and*

responsible but also moving quickly to support new opportunities. We also engage cross-functional stakeholders early, so the governance model always benefits from diverse perspectives and can flex as the business and technology contexts evolve.”

10. **Question:** Heydi, you mentioned ‘looking at AI like an employee’ in the context of contact center and support agents, which is a pretty remarkable statement. Is this a mindset you’re seeing other departments adopt as well? For example, in technology, finance, etc.

Heydi Gonzalez: *“Yes and it’s a shift that’s helping us be much more thoughtful about how we deploy and manage AI throughout the company. When we start treating AI models almost like digital team members, it changes the discussion. For example, we think about onboarding, ongoing training, monitoring for “performance” or drift, and even offboarding. Other departments like technology and finance are now asking similar questions: What kind of supervision should these “AI employees” have? What permissions and boundaries? It’s driving better governance, because we’re not seeing AI as a one-and-done tool, but something that grows with us and needs the same level of oversight, accountability, and care as any human team member. That mindset really helps operationalize governance in a practical, sustainable way.”*