



Bridging the Expertise Gap: Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms for AI Regulation

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Executive Summary

Policymakers face a critical challenge in governing artificial intelligence: a significant knowledge gap that threatens effective oversight. A majority of public-sector professionals cite a lack of skills as an impediment to AI implementation, while regulators struggle to recruit specialized staff due to higher private-sector compensation. The expertise gap facing AI regulators represents both a technical challenge and a democratic one: Effective governance requires an understanding of complex systems and an ability to anticipate novel risks that may only be possible for those in close proximity to frontier technology development, but allowing private actors to become the sole arbiters of regulatory knowledge undermines public accountability and creates conditions ripe for informational capture.

Current mechanisms for knowledge transfer each offer only partial solutions: Regulatory sandboxes provide hands-on learning but risk preferential treatment. Secondments can build expertise but create revolving door concerns. Advisory councils aggregate diverse perspectives but face composition challenges. Public

consultations enable broad input but privilege well-resourced actors. Public-private partnerships create sustained engagement but blur regulatory independence.

The fundamental question is how to structure engagement to minimize risks while maximizing learning. Success requires moving beyond the false choice between regulatory isolation and industry dependency: Effective AI governance demands building genuine internal capacity while accessing external knowledge through carefully designed mechanisms with appropriate safeguards. It requires adequate resources to maintain independence and the political will to establish and enforce guardrails against capture. This policy brief on knowledge transfer mechanisms for AI regulation presents six concrete recommendations on how to equip the public sector with the expertise it needs to govern this transformative technology.

Contributors and Acknowledgements

This brief was produced with the advisory support of David Krueger and Damiano Fornasiero as part of the Mila AI Policy Fellowship.

Introduction

The Regulatory Knowledge Crisis

Modern AI regulation confronts an unprecedented challenge: The expertise required to govern frontier technologies effectively is concentrated almost entirely within the private sector entities being regulated. This creates what scholars term "thin political markets," where knowledge asymmetry makes regulatory systems particularly vulnerable to capture by the few actors who possess specialized understanding and can leverage it to influence policymaking in their favour.



The problem manifests across multiple dimensions: Regulators must understand rapidly evolving technical capabilities, anticipate societal risks from scaled AI systems, and design enforceable standards for technologies that may not yet exist. However, they face structural disadvantages, having to deal with limited budgets compared to industry research and development spending, difficulty attracting and retaining technical talent, and barriers to accessing proprietary information protected by intellectual property rights. This can result in regulators lagging one step behind, which also undermines the public's trust in their efficiency and legitimacy. This, in turn, makes future efforts to rein in industries more difficult.

Traditional regulatory models assumed relatively stable technologies and transparent processes, both of which benefitted regulators by creating predictable conditions under which they could operate. AI, however, disrupts both assumptions. As technological progress speeds up (and as the rate at which it does that itself accelerates), there is no longer time to reflect, review and test impacts. More and more, crucial and path-defining technology development and deployment decisions happen behind closed doors within corporations. When regulators fall behind leading-edge technologies, they become unable to ask critical questions of regulated entities, let alone guard against harmful outcomes.

The Regulatory Capture Risk

This knowledge asymmetry creates a fertile ground for regulatory capture, defined as the process through which special interests shape state interventions to serve private rather than public goals. In AI governance, this risk is particularly acute given

concentrated market power among a small number of frontier developers who wield an outsized amount of influence. Capture takes multiple forms:

- **Materialist capture** includes practices ranging from campaign donations to revolving door employment between industry and government.
- **Cultural capture** operates more subtly through three mechanisms — identity dynamics where regulators perceive industry as in-group members, status effects where powerful actors command deference, and relationship building that creates loyalty.
- **Information capture** represents an especially insidious form for technical domains. Regulated entities can overwhelm regulators with complex information during consultations or approval processes, or share only a selected subset of all the information and evidence that is available to them, leading to decisions based solely on industry-supplied data. Without the capacity to evaluate claims independently or access alternative expertise, regulators become dependent on the very actors they oversee.

The stakes extend beyond ineffective regulation. Following a distinction introduced by Carpenter and Moss (2013), *strong capture* produces outcomes worse than no regulation at all, while even *weak capture* results in significantly suboptimal policy compared with what could be achieved. As AI systems become more powerful and consequential, the cost of captured regulation grows correspondingly.

Regulatory Capture — Examples from the United States

1. The 1996 Telecommunications Act was heavily influenced by the very industries it purported to regulate. **Major telecom companies** spent over \$50 million lobbying Congress during the legislation's development. The resulting law relaxed media ownership rules and reduced competitive requirements, leading to massive consolidation in the industry.
2. **Credit rating agencies** (Moody's, S&P, Fitch) successfully lobbied the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to create high barriers to entry for competitors through the "Nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organization" designation. This regulatory framework, shaped heavily by incumbent agencies, created an oligopoly that contributed to the 2008 financial crisis.

3. Over decades, **Boeing** successfully lobbied for self-certification privileges, with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funding becoming increasingly dependent on fees from manufacturers. This arrangement contributed to the 737 MAX disasters, where critical safety issues went undetected because Boeing was essentially regulating itself.
4. **Drug companies** fund significant portions of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drug review operations through user fees. This financial dependence has corresponded to faster approval times but has also increased post-market safety withdrawals.
5. **Internet service providers** spent hundreds of millions lobbying the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on net neutrality rules over the past two decades. In 2017, the FCC, led by a former Verizon lawyer, repealed net neutrality protections despite overwhelming public support for maintaining them.

Potential Solutions

In spite of these challenges, several established mechanisms have been trialed by countries around the globe in an attempt to position regulators to access external expertise, each with distinct strengths and vulnerabilities.

1. Regulatory Sandboxes

Regulatory sandboxes allow companies to test innovations under supervised conditions with relaxed requirements. The UK Financial Conduct Authority pioneered this approach in 2016, creating direct dialogue between innovators and regulators. The model has since been expanded to the healthcare, mobility, and energy sectors and increasingly to the AI sector.

Strengths: Sandboxes provide innovation-friendly environments that companies welcome, giving regulators closer access to frontier technologies than would otherwise be possible. They facilitate regulatory learning through hands-on experience and can encourage competition by lowering barriers to entry. When properly designed, they address industry concerns about intellectual property while building regulator understanding.

Weaknesses: Operating sandboxes requires significant resources, with costs often approximating or even exceeding six-figure amounts per sandbox program. The

individualized engagement with separate companies demands substantial regulatory capacity that is not available everywhere, privileging certain countries or jurisdictions. The experimental nature of sandboxes also introduces risks to participating consumers, a particularly concerning threat in the case of AI systems that operate as black boxes with difficult-to-explain decision processes. Perhaps most seriously, sandboxes can create vulnerabilities through the preferential treatment of participants and may increase rather than reduce dependency if they are used as a substitute for internal expertise development. The temporary nature of sandboxes also means that knowledge may not accumulate within the regulatory body over time.

Examples of Regulatory Sandboxes

- The UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) launched one of the pioneering regulatory sandboxes in 2016, allowing fintech companies to test innovations under regulatory supervision while establishing direct dialogue between innovators and regulators.
- The sandbox approach has since expanded beyond finance to other highly regulated sectors including healthcare (e.g. Japan's pharmaceutical sandbox), mobility (various autonomous vehicle testing programs), and energy.

2. Secondments and Personnel Exchanges

Secondment programs involve temporary movement of professionals between sectors. For instance, the UK civil service operates formal programs bringing private sector experts into government departments, while Singapore's public service leadership program includes rotations through private companies with reverse flows.

Strengths: When designed well, secondments can build genuine expertise within regulatory bodies while providing valuable professional development for participants. Research challenges the assumption that such exchanges inevitably produce capture. Some studies even find that industry often prefers to hire regulators who exhibited an above average level of toughness rather than those who were more lenient, suggesting that demonstrating competence and independence may be valued and that

incentives to rejoin a company later may not be strong enough to affect regulatory outcomes negatively. Rather, the prospect of future employment can create incentives for regulators to acquire genuine expertise.

Weaknesses: The revolving door remains problematic, particularly when tenures are short. Evidence suggests that commissioners who later take industry employment become more supportive of industry interests during their final year in office, suggesting that explicit exchanges may occur as departure approaches. Even absent actual capture, the appearance of conflicts of interest can undermine public trust in regulatory independence. At the same time, preventing post-employment movement entirely or temporarily (e.g. by instituting so-called cooling-off periods) may limit regulators' ability to attract talented staff by narrowing their future career opportunities, a move some may not be willing to make.

Examples of Secondment and Personnel Exchange Schemes

- The UK's civil service operates formal secondment schemes where private sector experts temporarily join government departments. For instance, the Government Finance Function regularly brings in financial services professionals to share industry expertise and enhance regulatory capabilities.
- Singapore takes a bidirectional approach through its public service leadership program, which includes rotations for civil servants through private companies alongside reverse flows of industry professionals into government roles.
- Canada provides a notable case study with its [Interchange Canada](#) program, recently [rebranded as the Build Canada Exchange](#) with an ambitious goal of integrating 50 external leaders from technology, finance, science, and other sectors directly into the public service.

3. Advisory Councils and Expert Panels

Formal advisory bodies provide structured input from industry participants, academics, and community representatives on regulatory strategies and emerging

developments. Examples include the FDA Advisory Committees in the US, the European Medicines Agency Scientific Advisory Groups, and Canada's AI Advisory Council.

Strengths: Well-constructed panels bring interdisciplinary perspectives to complex problems. Computer scientists, lawyers, ethicists, and experts from adjacent domains can identify solutions and concerns that no single discipline can identify alone. Formal advisory structures can provide early warnings about developments warranting attention and insights into practical implementation challenges. Such panels are also relatively easy, inexpensive and quick to set up, and this is of significant value in the context of emergent risks and reduced regulatory capacity.

Weaknesses: Appointment processes can become politicized, undermining perceived independence. They often lack transparency in member selection and the advice provided. In addition, panels may be powerful on paper but ineffective in practice, should their advice go unheeded. Most critically, industry overrepresentation can skew recommendations toward commercial interests at the expense of public protection.

The Risks are Real: An Example from Europe

The case of the EU High-Level Expert Group on AI Guidelines illustrates the aforementioned weaknesses: Despite producing guidelines that were globally praised as state-of-the-art, the process drew criticism for having only four ethicists among 52 members, creating what one participant called "extreme industrial weight." Concepts such as ethical red lines for autonomous weapons and citizen surveillance were removed to produce what industry representatives deemed a "positive vision," leading to accusations of 'ethics washing' designed to delay effective regulation.

4. Public Consultation and Dialogue

Public consultations allow stakeholders (including but not limited to industry) to submit input during regulatory development. The level of institutionalization and

inclusiveness in these processes is dependent on the jurisdiction in question. For instance, the EU Better Regulation framework mandates such consultations and tracks organizational submissions with the help of transparency registers. Australia's regulatory reform explicitly includes industry stakeholders in drafting new regulations.

Strengths: Broad consultation creates buy-in across stakeholders and can strengthen public trust in regulatory legitimacy due to the high levels of transparency. It creates incentives for industry to be well informed and to present reasoned arguments rather than simply lobbying behind the scenes. When structured well, consultations provide empirical data and practical insights that improve regulatory design, while also lowering the bar to entry as every citizen is able to contribute submissions.

Weaknesses: Meaningful participation requires domain knowledge, privileging organizations with resources and technical capacity. Individual citizens and public interest groups struggle to match the detailed submissions that industry can provide. Additionally, there is a risk of astroturfing where industry-funded groups pose as grassroots voices. Under time pressure, regulators may find it difficult to distinguish high from low-quality advice, making them vulnerable to information capture, or leading them to ignore the vast majority of submissions. Perhaps most importantly, if public input fails to translate into regulatory action, the process can damage rather than strengthen trust.

Examples of Public Consultations and Dialogue

- The EU's Better Regulation framework mandates public consultations in which industry associations and companies submit detailed technical input, with the European Commission maintaining a transparency register of participating organizations to enhance accountability.
- Peru's regulators Osiptel (communications) and Osinergmin (energy and mines) publish a "Matrix of Comments" alongside final resolutions, explicitly explaining why some submissions were accepted and others dismissed and thus providing valuable transparency about how input influenced decisions.

- The Canada Energy Regulator offers participant funding to non-industry not-for-profit groups and individuals to prepare information on potential project impacts and participate in public hearings, helping to level the playing field between well-resourced industry participants and other stakeholders.

5. Public-Private Partnerships and Research Collaboration

Various models can create sustained cooperation and knowledge exchange between government, industry, and academia by launching joint projects, ventures and research collaboration.

Strengths: These partnerships can build sustained relationships and shared understanding that go beyond the more transactional nature of one-off consultations. By including academic partners, they can provide a more independent perspective than purely industry-government interactions can.

Weaknesses: Deep integration can blur lines between regulator and regulated, creating identity and relationship dynamics that facilitate cultural capture. Resource dependencies may develop, with regulators becoming reliant on partnership infrastructure or funding. Academic partners may themselves have industry funding or relationships that compromise independence.

Examples of Public-Private Partnerships and Research Collaboration

- The UK Catapult Centers provide physical innovation spaces where companies work alongside researchers and policymakers.
- Germany's Fraunhofer Institutes bridge industry and government in applied research.

- In the United States, the Small Business Innovation Research program gives companies contracts to solve specific government challenges, creating ongoing knowledge exchange.

Cross-Cutting Findings

Several patterns emerging across these mechanisms inform effective design:

- **Resource constraints amplify capture risk.** Understaffed and underfunded regulators rely more heavily on and become more easily dependent on support, information or other resources (including staff) from regulated entities. The capacity to independently evaluate claims, conduct original research, and maintain alternative expertise sources proves crucial for maintaining negotiating power.
- **Appearance matters as much as reality.** Even when engagement does not result in actual capture, the perception that certain interests received preferential access or exerted undue influence can compromise regulatory legitimacy and the willingness of other parties to participate in good faith. This is particularly important in AI, given the outsized importance of voluntary commitments and degrees of freedom (e.g. when it comes to compliance with the EU AI Act and the Code of Practice).
- **Temporary knowledge transfer requires institutional learning.** Mechanisms that provide access to expertise without building internal capacity may increase rather than reduce dependency over time. Effective knowledge transfer requires processes to institutionalize learning within the regulatory body.

Transparency and procedural safeguards matter. Clear processes for how advice is solicited, evaluated, and incorporated into decisions help maintain accountability. Publishing rationales for accepting or rejecting input, as Peru's communications and energy regulators do,¹ strengthens legitimacy.

¹ In Peru, economic regulators prepare a matrix of comments that distills comments received on regulatory proposals and includes information such as the name of the stakeholders providing comments; the specific comments; and whether and how the comment will be considered (OECD 2016).

Conclusion

The expertise gap facing AI regulators represents both a technical challenge and a democratic one: Effective governance requires an understanding of complex systems and an ability to anticipate novel risks that may only be possible for those in close proximity to frontier technology development. However, allowing private actors to become the sole arbiters of regulatory knowledge undermines public accountability and creates conditions ripe for informational capture.

The fundamental tension is unavoidable: Regulators need industry expertise to govern effectively, yet seeking that expertise creates capture vulnerabilities. The question becomes not whether to engage with regulated entities, but how to structure engagement to minimize risks while maximizing learning. Current mechanisms for knowledge transfer each offer partial solutions while carrying distinct vulnerabilities.

Success requires moving beyond the false choice between regulatory isolation and industry dependency: Effective AI governance demands building genuine internal capacity while accessing external knowledge through carefully designed mechanisms with appropriate safeguards. It requires adequate resources to maintain independence and the political will to establish and enforce guardrails against capture.

As AI systems become more powerful and consequential, the cost of captured regulation grows. Getting this balance right is not merely a technical matter of regulatory design; it is also a prerequisite for ensuring that AI development delivers broad social benefits rather than serving narrow commercial interests.

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Actionable Insights: Six Recommendations

1. Invest in Internal Regulatory Capacity

Governments must significantly increase funding for regulatory bodies overseeing AI, enabling competitive compensation. Possible measures include:

- Conducting salary benchmarking against private sector roles and adjusting compensation to competitive levels for specialized technical positions;
- Establishing dedicated research budgets that allow regulators to commission independent technical assessments;
- Considering models such as the UK AI Safety Institute that focus on building cutting-edge internal capabilities.

2. Adopt a Portfolio Approach to Knowledge Transfer

Implement multiple complementary mechanisms rather than relying on any single approach in order to build defence in depth against capture. Possible measures include:

- Combining sandboxes (for hands-on technical learning) with advisory councils (for strategic input) and formal consultations (for broad stakeholder engagement) to ensure that no single mechanism becomes the dominant or exclusive channel for external input;
- Periodically reviewing the portfolio to identify gaps or over-reliance on particular sources.

3. Strengthen Institutional Safeguards Against Capture

Implement structural protections including cooling-off periods, transparency requirements, and balanced representation. Possible measures include:

- Considering the introduction of meaningful cooling-off periods (minimum of two years) before regulators can accept employment with entities they used to oversee;
- Requiring public disclosure of all substantive meetings between regulators and regulated entities, including topics discussed;
- Mandating balanced representation on advisory bodies, with explicit requirements for public interest, academic, and civil society participation;
- Publishing detailed records of consultation responses and regulatory rationales for accepting or rejecting input, following the Peruvian model;
- Creating independent oversight mechanisms to monitor and report on industry influence.

4. Prioritize Mechanisms that Build Lasting Capacity

Promote knowledge transfer approaches that institutionalize learning rather than creating ongoing dependency, as temporary access without concurrent capacity building increases long-term vulnerability. Possible measures include:

- Designing secondment programs with explicit knowledge transfer objectives;
- Structuring sandbox programs to develop regulatory evaluation frameworks and testing protocols that will continue to function after individual participants have moved on;
- Creating communities of practice within and across regulatory bodies to share and retain accumulated knowledge;
- Investing in training programs that build the technical literacy of regulatory staff as a whole.

5. Enhance Public Participation Infrastructure

Reduce barriers to meaningful participation by under-resourced stakeholders to counterbalance the voices of more better-resourced actors. Possible measures include:

- Providing participant funding to public interest groups and academic researchers to prepare substantive input, following the Canada Energy Regulator model;
- Offering technical assistance to help non-expert stakeholders understand complex AI issues and articulate concerns.

6. Mandate Regulatory Impact Assessments for Knowledge Transfer Mechanisms

Conduct and publish evaluation assessments of both the knowledge benefits and the capture risks of engagement mechanisms. Possible measures include:

- Requiring ex-ante assessments before establishing new advisory bodies, sandboxes, or partnership programs;
- Conducting periodic reviews examining who participated, what influence resulted, and whether outcomes served the public interest.

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