



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

2024–2025 CIVIL GRAND JURY

Press Release

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Grand Jury: Government should seize its home field advantage in the capital of AI

2024–2025 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report examines technology governance and preparedness for emerging AI applications

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The rapid proliferation of AI has created once-in-a-generation challenges — and opportunities — for governments. San Francisco is no exception. Government in the capital of AI innovation is taking some positive steps but is failing to fully embrace technology that can dramatically improve the productivity of civil servants and the relationship between the city and the public, the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury reported today. Just as San Francisco’s private sector is the center of AI innovation, its government should be a model for innovation and an exemplar for how AI can make city workers more productive and city services better.

The Jury identifies several cultural and structural factors holding back digital transformation. First, city hall has been too focused on guardrails around AI and not focused enough on encouraging thoughtful education, experimentation, and empowerment among city staff.

Second, technology management and purchasing is fragmented and driven at the department level, when it would in many ways benefit from a guiding hand of city technologists directing a comprehensive digital strategy. Lastly, governance mechanisms meant to align policy in the city have not lived up to their promise. An overhaul is needed.

The Jury puts forth several recommendations to address these issues, including:

- Mayoral emphasis on the importance of an AI-curious culture and the centrality of technology to making city services work for all
- Greater emphasis on partnership with the immense AI talent pool in the Bay Area
- Centralizing more personnel, procurement and governance with the aim of empowering civic technologists to own the city's success or failure to innovate

“Embracing AI isn’t about chasing a fad; it’s about giving employees the best tools to solve civic problems,” noted Cameron Parker, Investigation Committee Chair. “Going slow or doing nothing also has a price tag and may prove to be quite expensive.”

To read the full report, *Techs in the City: Government’s Opportunity to Seize the AI Moment*, please visit <https://www.sf.gov/resource-2025-civil-grand-jury-reports-2024-2025>

About the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury

The Superior Court selects 19 San Franciscans to serve year-long terms as Civil Grand Jurors. The Jury has the authority to investigate City and County government by reviewing documents and interviewing public officials and private individuals. At the end of its inquiries, the Jury issues reports of its findings and recommendations. Agencies identified in the report must respond to these findings and recommendations within either 60 or 90 days, and the Board of Supervisors conducts a public hearing on each Civil Grand Jury report after those responses are submitted. For more information, visit the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury website: <https://civilgrandjury.sfgov.org>.

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