

Future of Work at the Human-Technology Frontier: Identifying Ethical Questions and the Implications for Policy

September 3, 2020 | 1:30 pm EDT
Zoom Workshop

About the Workshop

The National Science Foundation (NSF) seeks to understand the future of work at the human-technology frontier and develop useful, convergent research on human-technology partnerships. NSF's work will inform the design of new technologies to augment human performance, illuminate the emerging socio-technological landscape, understand the risks and benefits of new technologies (especially artificial intelligence) for workers, and foster lifelong learning. Workshop participants from industry, academia, non-profits, and government will map the key issues created by rapid technological change and develop a framework for future collaboration.

New technologies offer unrivaled opportunities for making decisions, controlling tasks, and assembling goods. Algorithms will be able to judge worker performance and optimize worker assignments. They will help select job candidates, recommend medical therapy, and authorize loans. Robots will be able to take over some of humans' most dangerous, time-consuming, and physically demanding jobs. Although these technologies have the potential to provide enormous social benefit, they also carry with them social, ethical, and legal risks. The difficulty of auditing the component parts of an algorithm exposes individuals and society to bias and injustice. The use of robots may displace workers, change the social and economic status of jobs, and affect our perception of self. Can individuals trust decisions supported by smart systems? When mistakes are made, how will liability be assigned? How can we exercise oversight over those in authority, in government or business, so that their decisions, relative to technology, are fair and balanced? What processes and practices should be implemented to ensure ethical design in new technologies? How can society achieve a technology equilibrium that does not systematically disadvantage the individual?

Meeting Agenda

1:00 – 1:30 pm *Participants Log on*

1:30 – 1:35 pm *Welcome, Introductions, and Logistics*

Roland Stephen, PhD, Director, Center for Innovation Strategy and Policy, SRI International

1:35 – 1:55 pm *NSF's Future of Work Big Idea: Ethical Questions and the Implications for Policy*
Presentation and Q&A

Arthur Lupia, PhD, Assistant Director, Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences, NSF

Marc Sebrechts, PhD, Director, Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences, NSF; and Member, NSF Future of Work at the Human-Technology Frontier Steering Committee

- 1:55 – 2:25 pm *Perspectives on Ethical Questions and the Implications for Policy*
Panelists will provide brief remarks [5-7 minutes each] on their views of the big issues facing society as change in work and the workplace accelerates.
Katherine Ash, Economic Opportunity Consultant, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices
Angela Glover Blackwell, JD, Founder-in-Residence, PolicyLink
Menna Demessie, PhD, Vice President, Research & Policy Analysis, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
Thomas Kochan, PhD, George Maverick Bunker Professor of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 2:25 – 3:05 pm *Discussion on Ethical Questions and the Implications for Policy*
Facilitated discussion with panelists and NSF
NSF Future of Work at the Human-Technology Frontier (FW-HTF) Steering Committee Members, Panelists
- 3:05 – 3:50 pm *Breakout Sessions: Opportunities and Challenges in Ethical Questions and the Implications for Policy*
Facilitated breakouts with meeting participants
NSF and SRI International
- 3:50 – 4:25 pm *Breakout Session Report Back*
Implications of breakout session output for future investments by NSF
NSF FW-HTF Steering Committee Members
- 4:25 – 4:30 pm *Wrap-up*
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