COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VOTES TO ADOPT A.I. POLICY
County to continue examining opportunities, risks

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisor on Tuesday unanimously adopted an adaptive Artifical Intelligence Appropriate Use policy, becoming among the first local governments in the U.S. to encourage the use of artificial intelligence among staff while creating a framework to address concerns related to the technology.

The policy allows and encrourages the continued use of artificial intelligence (A.I.) in County operations while providing guidelines to avoid misuse and the sharing of sensitive information, and to continue to center human judgment in core decisions related to local government operations. The policy includes definitions and usage guidance, and is expected to undergo regular reviews and updates to stay current with technological and ethical developments.

The AI policy provisions adopted by the Board Tuesday include but are not limited to:

Data Privacy and Security: Staff must comply with all data privacy and security standards, including protecting personally identifiable information and protected health information.

Informed Consent: Members of the public should be informed when they are interacting with an A.I. tool and have an "opt out" alternative.

Responsible Use: A.I. tools and systems shall only be used in an ethical manner.

Avoiding Bias: A.I. practices should be monitored for bias and regularly reviewed to ensure fairness and accuracy.

Decision Making: A.I. tools should not be used to make impactful decisions.

Accountability: Employees are solely responsible for ensuring the quality, accuracy, and regulatory compliance of all A.I.-generated content utilized in the scope of employment.

The guidelines were developed by an internal policy committee consisting of staff from the Information Services, Personnel, County Counsel, and the County Administrative Office. Additionally, a 12-member "A.I. Early Adopters Workgroup" representing six departments and interested technology sector community stakeholders provided feedback that informed development of the policy.

A formal rollout of the policy is expected in October. Over the next six months, the County will monitor usage, collect feedback and issue updates to the policy in accordance with Board direction, before reporting back to the Board in March 2024.

Furthermore, the A.I. Policy Committee will develop procurement guidance for A.I. systems, identify County software systems that embed A.I. technologies and understand how A.I.-related risks are addressed by vendors, identify A.I. training opportunities for staff and identify opportunities where A.I. can improve County services.

Since the County announced its intention to draft an artificial intelligence policy on June 13, several local governments have adopted their own policies, and on September 6, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order to study the development, use, and risks of A.I. technology throughout the state and to develop a process for evaluating deployment of A.I. within state government.

To download the policy, click on https://tinyurl.com/SCCAIPolicy.