

The Media Landscape for Public Sector AI

How journalists are covering AI—and how you can drive the conversation.



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Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a core part of public sector technology and is reshaping infrastructure, missions, citizen services, and national security.

Across federal, state, and local levels, agencies are deploying AI to modernize operations, strengthen cybersecurity, deliver faster public services, and use resources wisely.

Journalists are not just reporting on public sector AI adoption—they are actively shaping the narratives that define how AI is perceived in the market, and, as a result, helping convey the messages that are driving adoption and acceptance.

At REQ, we are actively involved in how our clients are represented within the media.

Every day, we engage directly with the specialized and shrinking group of journalists covering public sector innovation, technology policy, cybersecurity, and more. We track what they're writing, what questions they're asking, and what headlines are gaining traction—and help clients shape their narrative to match. We know these publications and journalists inside and out, and they know REQ.

Increasingly, generative AI, agentic AI, and synthetic media, which is content that is generated or modified by AI, are becoming central to these stories. If your organization delivers these solutions, you have a major opportunity—if you ensure your stories and insights are featured in the publications your audience trusts.

This white paper offers a clear, strategic view of how public sector AI is being reported on today—and how you can align your messaging, visibility, and leadership strategies with the evolving media landscape.

Inside, you'll find:

- The five dominant public sector AI trends shaping media narratives
- How technologies like ModelOps, agentic AI, and generative AI, and synthetic media are reframing coverage
- How to tailor your messages around AI to resonate with public sector media and customers

Modernization and Infrastructure Upgrades

Modernization continues to be headline news, particularly with the recent focus on efficiency.

Journalists are paying close attention to how agencies are overhauling aging systems to support AI-driven operations, meet sustainability mandates, and deliver citizen services more efficiently while minimizing costs.

Modernization stories are increasingly tied to urgency. Legacy systems aren't just slow or outdated—they're becoming real threats to mission success. The General Services Administration's announcement of a [flat-fee pricing structure with Google](#) exemplifies how agencies are encouraging vendors to treat the government as a single entity. In this environment, reporters are highlighting how fragmented infrastructures are creating roadblocks for AI deployments, forcing agencies to rethink their use of AI across their combined technology stacks.

A new layer to this conversation is the shift from experimentation to operationalization. Reporters now scrutinize not whether agencies can use AI (that has already been well established), but whether they can manage AI models responsibly at scale—especially as agencies begin testing early generative AI models for reporting, document management, and workflow automation. Thus, you will have more luck gaining journalists' attention by emphasizing how your solutions can ease scalability and implementation for agencies or offering inside knowledge of how certain agencies are starting to do this.

Key Focus Areas

- Agencies taking new approaches or using different solutions to deal with the challenges of integrating AI and generative AI into fragmented legacy architectures
- Smart city initiatives using AI to optimize emergency response, environmental monitoring, and traffic management
- Infrastructure upgrades that align with the various executive orders from the new administration, with less emphasis on EOs from previous administrations that are unlikely to be enforced
- The transition from isolated deployments to ModelOps frameworks that govern AI models throughout their lifecycles

ModelOps is emerging as a key story.

ModelOps is the practice of systematically managing models from deployment through deprecation.

REPORTERS ARE ASKING:

Which agencies and specific departments or programs can truly scale AI responsibly at the enterprise level?

Headlines We're Seeing

- “Why ModelOps Is the New Must-Have for Government AI Scaling”
- “From Pilot Projects to Production: How Agencies Are Operationalizing AI”

REQ Recommends

- Showcase real-world operational wins that modernize agencies, improve efficiency, and reduce risk
- Emphasize sustainable, energy-efficient AI deployment as it relates to government efficiency, cost savings, and energy and national security
- Focus on ease of operationalization and scalability, along with solutions that support the new global policy landscape

Cybersecurity: From Risk to Resilience

Cybersecurity coverage is evolving—fast—and AI is right at the center of the story. Journalists are no longer just covering breaches or malware outbreaks.

They're telling stories about how public trust itself is under attack—and how government agencies are (or aren't) adapting to defend it.

Reporters are increasingly linking AI to two sides of the cybersecurity equation: AI as a defender, predicting and neutralizing threats faster than ever before—and AI as a new attack surface, creating vulnerabilities that agencies may not be ready to address.

One of the most high-stakes developments is the rise of synthetic media and deepfakes. As disinformation becomes harder to detect, you must not only deliver technical solutions—you must clearly communicate how your organization defends public trust. Journalists are looking for stories about how vendors are safeguarding information integrity through deepfake detection, content authentication, and AI output validation. To earn media attention and credibility, position your brand as a proactive protector of transparency, trust, and the integrity of government communications.

At the same time, early experiments with agentic AI models—autonomous AI that could potentially operate without human oversight—are creating serious governance questions that cybersecurity reporters are probing closely. If your organization offers agentic AI solutions, highlight both the benefits—such as lower costs, faster deployment, and increased automation—and the safeguards you've built in to minimize risk.

Current Themes Reporters Are Covering

- AI-powered predictive threat detection and real-time cybersecurity analytics
- The use of adversarial AI to simulate phishing, ransomware, and insider threat scenarios
- Deepening concern over synthetic media and deepfakes targeting elections, public communications, and critical infrastructure
- Early stage concerns about how agentic AI models might be exploited for autonomous cyber intrusions
- Growing interest in how agencies are preparing for an era of continuous, AI-enabled cyber warfare

Reporters are increasingly linking AI to two sides of the cybersecurity equation:

01

AI as a **new attack surface**, creating vulnerabilities that agencies may not be ready to address

02

AI as a **defender**, predicting and neutralizing threats faster than ever before

Headlines We're Seeing

- "Federal Agencies Brace for Deepfake Threats to 2026 Elections"
- "Agentic AI: The Next Frontier—and Risk—for Cybersecurity Teams"

REQ Recommends

- Lead with proactive cybersecurity solutions addressing synthetic media, adversarial AI, and agentic threats
- Combat the concerns about agentic AI and other emerging AI technologies with an emphasis on the benefits of those technologies and commitments to ethical AI
- Publicly position your brand around defending not just systems, but citizen trust and national stability
- Highlight adaptive, real-time threat detection capabilities to align with zero-trust narratives

AI Ethics, Compliance, and Regulatory Pressures

Journalists are treating ethics and compliance not as soft topics, but as urgent, systemic risks that demand real solutions.

Media coverage today focuses on how agencies and vendors are managing fairness, transparency, data sovereignty and privacy, and human control. Reporters are tracking the growing divide between federal deregulation and strict state-level regulations like California's Algorithmic Accountability Act.

They're also deeply interested in how agencies plan to validate and govern outputs from emerging generative AI tools. The new administration's Executive Orders on ["Removing Barriers to American Leadership on Artificial Intelligence"](#) and ["Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth"](#) are designed to unleash innovation through AI systems "that are free from ideological bias or engineer social agendas." The media will be keeping a close watch to ensure these ideals are upheld.

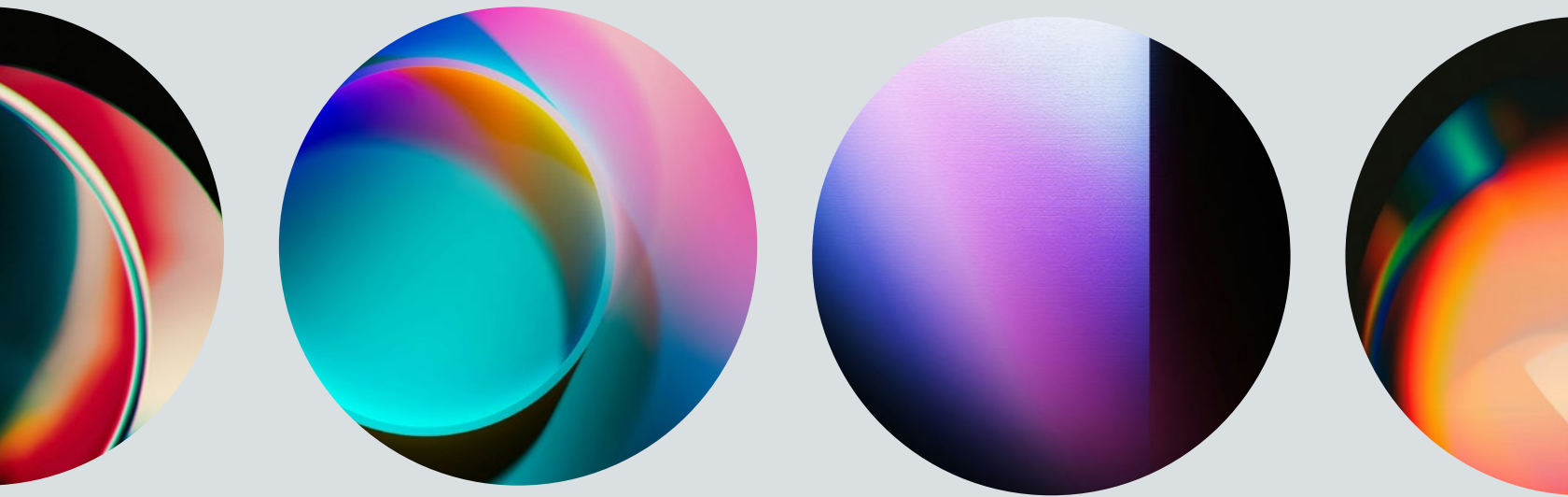
So far, the coverage has been increasingly critical. Investigative pieces aren't asking if bias, hallucinations or opacity exist—they're asking why agencies haven't addressed them yet. Agentic AI deployments without proper governance, especially in citizen services or national security domains, are drawing sharp scrutiny.

Key Themes Reporters Are Following

- Divergence between permissive federal guidance and aggressive state-level AI regulation
- Critical examinations of bias, fairness, and explainability in high-impact AI systems
- Regulatory discussions around watermarking, provenance, and validation of generative AI outputs
- Fears that agentic AI deployments without sufficient human control could lead to systemic failures
- Journalists now expect brands and agencies to prove—not just claim—that their AI systems are transparent, fair, explainable, and well-governed

Media is paying attention to ethical AI.

It's a daily practice.



Headlines We're Seeing

- "California Tightens AI Transparency Rules as Federal Guidelines Lapse"
- "Governance Crisis: Can Agencies Control Their Autonomous AI Systems?"

REQ Recommends

- Showcase concrete steps you're taking to ensure trust: audits, model explainability, bias testing, human oversight frameworks
- Offer thought leadership on building trustworthy AI systems—especially around generative AI outputs
- Lead conversations around ethics with credibility, not just compliance, by proactively talking about what your brand is doing to implement trustworthy AI and where more work is needed across the industry

Citizen Services and Generative AI Experiments

If modernization and security stories dominate back-end operations, citizen services are where AI—and especially generative AI—meet the public directly.

And the media is paying extremely close attention.

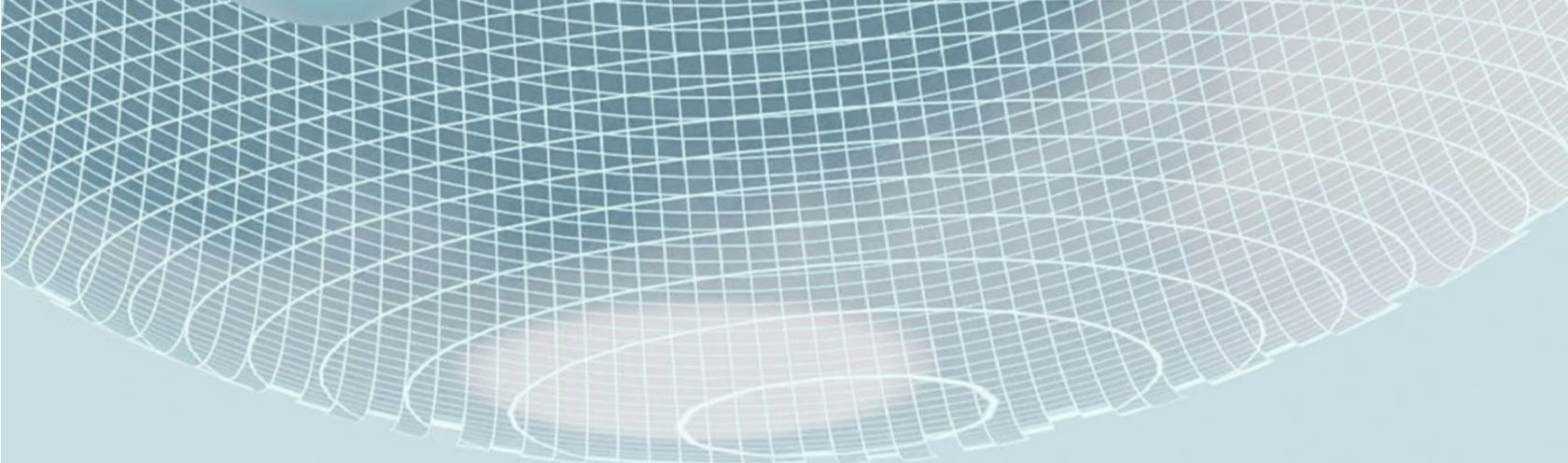
Journalists love covering success stories where AI chatbots improve accessibility, reduce wait times, and help citizens get the services they need—especially now, when many agencies are short-staffed. But the flip side is brutal: any error, hallucination, or bias in a public-facing AI system is amplified as a failure of government itself.

There's also growing skepticism about "black box" generative AI. Reporters are asking how agencies are validating AI outputs, how they ensure information authenticity, and what safeguards exist to prevent misinformation.

Again, you should lean into the trustworthiness and dependability of your organization's AI, but you should also explain how your company's technology is helping agencies find efficiencies and deliver exceptional service. That message has never been more important—and it's one that is resonating with reporters who are trying to help their readers answer the question "How can agencies still effectively serve the public with fewer personnel?"

Recent Media Areas of Interest

- How AI chatbots and generative assistants are helping process visa applications, benefits appeals, and public inquiries
- The rise of generative documentation tools to streamline internal workflows and reduce administrative backlogs
- Growing concerns about unverified or biased outputs from generative models influencing citizen-facing decisions
- Continued demands for human oversight to protect service quality and trust
- Other innovative uses of AI, including using the technology to respond to 911 calls, analyze immunization data, make vehicle registrations more efficient, etc.



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Headlines We're Seeing

- “Agencies Turn to AI Chatbots—but Who’s Watching the Bots?”
- “Watermarking and Trust: New Rules for Generative AI in Public Services”

REQ Recommends

- Frame human-in-the-loop oversight as essential, not optional
- Use transparency around AI outputs (validation and provenance) as a competitive messaging edge
- Tell citizen-centered impact stories that emphasize fairness, accessibility, and improved outcomes

Defense and National Security: AI at the Tactical Edge

In defense reporting, AI isn't just a tech story—it's a national security arms race.

Journalists are focused on how AI can deliver tactical advantages, improve situational awareness and military personnel safety, and strengthen battlefield decision-making.

Stories about AI at the edge continue to be a core focus, as are features about the combination of AI and adjunct technologies like 5G.

Simultaneously, reporters are covering how unchecked innovation could spark unintended escalation of a situation or ethical crises. Media stories around agentic AI are particularly high stakes. There's cautious optimism about autonomous capabilities, especially in light of the [Department of Defense's guidance](#) outlining responsible uses of AI and autonomous systems. However, there is also serious fear about loss of human control, adversarial manipulation, and synthetic media disinformation campaigns targeting military operations.

Coverage also touches on early experimentation with generative AI for training simulations, but in strictly limited, heavily monitored environments.

Recent Media Coverage Explores

- Deployment of autonomous drones, battlefield analytics, and predictive logistics AI
- Tactical use of agentic AI for dynamic threat assessment and decision support
- Synthetic media detection initiatives aimed at neutralizing disinformation campaigns in active conflict zones
- Early-stage experimentation with generative AI to create tightly controlled synthetic training environments for simulations and war games
- Ongoing ethical debates about human command authority and autonomous weapons governance
- AI deployments at the edge and the tools necessary to make it happen (including 5G networks)
- Future possibilities for AI in defense and intelligence (for example, the Army's long-term plans for AI, the U.S. intelligence community's five-year AI plan, etc.)



Journalists are focused on how AI can deliver tactical advantages, improve situational awareness and the safety of military personnel, and strengthen battlefield decision-making.

Headlines We're Seeing

- "Pentagon Accelerates AI Warfighting Plans—but Keeps Human Oversight"
- "How DeepSeek Changed the Future of AI—and What That Means for National Security"

REQ Recommends

- Position your technology within the framework of tactical advantage and strict ethical control
- Leverage real-world case studies, if possible, to tell impactful stories about the effective use of AI for national defense
- Create thought leadership around what AI in defense will look like over the next few years
- Though not a traditional message to the defense community, consider messaging around the efficiency gains from AI and show how efficiency gains can help, not harm, readiness

REQ Knows How to Help You Lead the AI Public Sector Conversation

Today, the dominant public sector AI stories are about modernization, cybersecurity, citizen services, ethics, and national security.

Within those stories is coverage about tools like agentic AI, 5G networks, predictive analytics, and other AI-connected themes. These use cases capture headlines because they are urgent, highly visible, and closely tied to the core missions of government.

But are these truly the preferred use cases for AI—or just the first ones? It's a critical question for technology brands. Modernization, cybersecurity, and citizen services offer clear, measurable wins. But as AI matures—and as generative AI, agentic AI, and synthetic media tools become more sophisticated—new, evolving, and unexpected public sector use cases will emerge.

For example, we'll see generative AI for emergency planning and response coordination, predictive AI for public health forecasting, labor market adjustments, education policy changes, and more.

**Is your brand ready?
The media will be.**

When these new applications appear, reporters will likely uncover them or quickly amplify them—eager to tell the story of how AI is reshaping government in ways we can't yet fully imagine.

Whether you already have a corporate PR department or are looking for an experienced team to help build your brand—REQ will keep you ahead of that curve.

We help public sector-focused technology vendors:

- Predict the next wave of media narratives—and shape them before they peak
- Craft messaging that evolves as new AI use cases gain prominence
- Showcase mission-aligned outcomes that matter to agencies and the public
- Position themselves as AI leaders through public sector-specific messaging, media interviews, contributed thought leadership articles, sponsored content, and more



The quality of REQ's work has exceeded our expectations. They bring expertise to every piece of content and are experts in this space. They know what people want to hear and know how people want to hear it. They definitely deliver that every time.

— 5-STAR CLUTCH REVIEW FROM AN REQ CLIENT

The public sector's AI future isn't locked in place.

It's evolving—with every innovation, every regulation, and every new headline.

The brands that anticipate and lead the next chapter of the story will define the future of government AI.

REQ is ready to help you lead that story.



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