

# Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Criminal Justice



## BUILDING AN AI-READY CULTURE IN CORRECTIONS: MORE THAN JUST TECHNOLOGY

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April 2025*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already beginning to reshape how justice and corrections agencies think about risk, efficiency, and decision-making. From predictive analytics to report generation, the possibilities seem promising—maybe even a little overwhelming. But for all the focus on algorithms, data pipelines, and software procurement, one factor seems to be consistently underestimated: organizational culture.

Culture is a corrections agency’s operating system. If that system is not prepared to support AI, no tool—no matter how powerful—will work as intended. The success or failure of AI adoption is not just about how good the tech is. Success hinges on how ready the people are to work with it, question it, and trust it.

## TECH IS HARD. CULTURE IS HARDER.

Implementing new technology in a corrections environment is no small feat. The stakes are high, the infrastructure is complex, and the margin for error is slim. Integrating AI adds another layer of difficulty, requiring not just technical expertise but also careful attention to policy, data governance, and legal constraints.

But as hard as the technical work is, aligning that technology with the agency’s existing culture—and evolving that culture where needed—is often the steeper climb. AI systems do not drop into a vacuum. They land in environments shaped by routines, power dynamics, trust gaps, and deeply held values about safety, fairness, and accountability.

Agencies can roll out tools that technically “work,” but go underused, misused, or quietly resisted because staff were not brought into the process early, did not understand the tool’s purpose, or felt it conflicted with their professional judgment. Culture is a primary factor in how technology is interpreted, trusted, and ultimately used effectively.

## THREE CULTURAL SHIFTS THAT MATTER

Successfully integrating AI in includes helping people shift how they think, learn, and relate to the technology. That means making room for three key cultural shifts that can support long-term, ethical implementation.



## 1. **From Skepticism to Informed Curiosity**

Skepticism about AI is healthy—and earned. But if skepticism becomes avoidance, progress stalls. Leaders and staff alike need opportunities to ask questions, explore tools in low-risk ways, and develop a working understanding of what AI can and cannot do. This is not about turning everyone into data scientists. It is about creating space for curiosity, hands-on training, and safe experimentation. When people understand the basics, they are more likely to engage with new systems thoughtfully instead of shutting them down or fearing the worst. A 2025 study of 776 professionals at Procter & Gamble suggested that individuals using AI produced work of equal quality to two-person teams—and reported more positive emotional experiences while doing so<sup>1</sup>. But those results only emerged when the environment encouraged learning, experimentation, and shared responsibility, not blind trust or fear-based compliance.

Just as rigid skepticism can shut down promising tools, blind trust can lead to misuse. When AI outputs appear polished or authoritative, it's easy to assume they are right—but without human oversight, even subtle errors can have real consequences. Encouraging informed curiosity means helping staff develop the confidence to question AI decisions and apply their own professional judgment.

## 2. **From Control to Transparency**

Corrections is rightly a field that values control and precision. But AI often introduces a layer of complexity—and opacity—that challenges those instincts. Instead of assuming new tools will be accepted just because they are approved or mandated, agencies should lead with transparency. What is the tool doing? What data is it using? Who is accountable for the outcomes? Clear communication and visible boundaries are key to building trust—not just with staff, but with incarcerated individuals, advocacy groups, and the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Dell'Acqua, F., Ayoubi, C., Lifshitz, H., Sadun, R., Mollick, E., Mollick, L., Han, Y., Goldman, J., Nair, H., Taub, S., & Lakhani, K. R. (2025). *The cybernetic teammate: A field experiment on generative AI reshaping teamwork and expertise* (Working Paper No. 25-043). Harvard Business School.

Trust also depends on how data is handled. Many AI tools can rely on sensitive information—behavioral records, incident histories, and even health data. Staff need a shared understanding of not only what these systems do, but also what kind of information they touch and how the data is protected.

### 3. **From Efficiency to Ethics**

It is tempting to view AI exclusively through a productivity lens: faster reports, quicker decisions, leaner processes. But when efficiency becomes the only lens, ethical risks tend to multiply. A culturally prepared agency keeps fairness, privacy, and safety at the center of its approach. That means building safeguards, listening to concerns at every level, and empowering staff to speak up when something feels off. AI should enhance justice—not just speed it up.

AI's impact isn't just technical—it is emotional, social, and deeply human. Across both public and private sector settings, early research suggests that when staff are supported and trusted, AI tools do not just improve efficiency—they also boost engagement and encourage broader thinking across roles and functions<sup>2 3</sup>. But those benefits do not happen automatically. They require transparency, psychological safety, and ongoing attention to fairness and context.

AI systems are only as fair as the data and assumptions behind them. Without careful oversight, they can reinforce existing disparities, especially when those patterns are buried in historical data. A culturally prepared agency understands that fairness is not automatic; it requires ongoing scrutiny, diverse perspectives, and a willingness to pause when something feels off.

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<sup>2</sup> See Dell'Acqua et al. (2025), *The Cybernetic Teammate*.

<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2025). *Lessons from Pennsylvania's generative AI pilot with ChatGPT*. Office of Administration.

## LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN CULTURAL READINESS

One of the most important things leaders at all levels can do is model engagement. That does not mean pretending to have all the answers. It means asking thoughtful questions, showing a willingness to learn, and being transparent about the agency's AI goals. When staff see that leadership is taking the technology seriously—but not blindly—they're more likely to do the same. A 2025 pilot conducted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania indicated that even employees with no prior experience using generative AI reported positive outcomes when given time, training, and support to explore the tools in their day-to-day work<sup>4</sup>. This kind of cultural permission to learn—not just adopt—was a key ingredient in successful use.

Supervisors, training officers, middle managers, and senior executives all help shape how new tools are introduced, interpreted, and used. Their attitude toward AI—whether skeptical, optimistic, dismissive, or curious—sets the tone for the rest of the organization.

Leaders also play a crucial role in establishing psychological safety around AI. If staff worry that raising concerns about a tool will be seen as resistance or insubordination, they are less likely to speak up. But if feedback is welcomed and addressed—especially early in the implementation process—it builds trust and creates space for shared responsibility. The goal is not blind adoption; rather it is informed, deliberate use.

Finally, leadership can help bridge the gap between policy and practice. It is one thing to write guidance documents about fairness, privacy, and ethical use. It is a different thing to make sure those values are reflected in everyday decisions, training programs, and performance measures. Culture is shaped by what gets rewarded, what gets questioned, and what gets ignored. Leaders have the power to make sure AI aligns with the mission—not just the metrics.

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<sup>4</sup> See Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (2025), *Lessons from the Generative AI Pilot*.

## CULTURE FIRST, AI SECOND: WHAT WE SHOULD BE CONSIDERING?

Corrections agencies don't need to be fully AI-ready before beginning implementation—technology adoption should match the pace of cultural readiness. To support this alignment, agencies should develop targeted education strategies that build AI understanding across all staffing levels. Transparent communication about AI tools' purpose, capabilities, and limitations builds trust, while meaningful feedback mechanisms demonstrate that leadership genuinely values and acts upon staff concerns.

Establishing clear ethical frameworks ensures fairness and accountability remain central to implementation decisions. Finally, strategic rollouts featuring focused pilots, early wins, and shared learning create momentum without overwhelming the organization. This measured approach allows corrections agencies to integrate AI responsibly while honoring their unique organizational context and core mission.

## AGILE CULTURE CHANGE FRAMEWORK – TMG'S PERSPECTIVE

Just as AI is changing how we work, our approach to organizational culture must evolve alongside it. An agile framework keeps pace with technological advancement while remaining grounded in established research and practitioner experience.

This approach requires faster feedback loops that rapidly incorporate staff input into refinements. Corrections agencies should implement targeted pilots for controlled experimentation before wider

Agile Culture Change Framework





deployment, gathering continuous feedback from all levels—valuing insights regardless of rank or position.

The framework prioritizes continuous learning through dedicated time and resources for staff to understand AI capabilities and ethical considerations. What makes this truly "agile" is its focus on adaptation rather than rigid planning—starting small, measuring outcomes, and adjusting based on real-world experience.

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