

THE
FUTURE
SOCIETY

2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

AS with most organizations—and, in particular, nonprofits—The Future Society faced extraordinary circumstances over the past two years. We had to adapt to tectonic shifts in business operations and financial flows. To our fortune, as a fully-remote team since our incorporation in 2016, TFS was prepared, perhaps more than most, to adjust to the many lifestyle changes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about. I believe that our team cohesion and determination helped us overcome this difficult period in stride.

In this report covering our work in 2020 and 2021, I am proud to share not only the successes of our activities in these years, but also the results of a 'strategic reboot,' which has helped us focus our efforts, and I expect it to enable us to amplify our impact in the years to come.

With respect to our achievements, I am pleased to share that 2020 and 2021 editions of The Athens Roundtable on AI and the Rule of Law reached new levels of participation—918 and 1,784 attendees, respectively. The 2021 edition included the launch of a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on AI and the Rule of Law, co-hosted with UNESCO, which has drawn over 4,000 students, primarily judicial operators. In this period, TFS also became heavily involved in the newly-established Global Partnership on AI (GPAI), leading the publication of four reports spanning their Responsible AI, Pandemic Response, and Climate Change Working Groups. The development of national AI strategies in lower-income countries was also an integral part of our work, as we worked alongside the governments of Ghana, Rwanda, and Tunisia, to develop and deploy national strategies that are tailored for their economic profiles, sustainability goals, and technological trajectories. And finally, in this period of time TFS demonstrated technical leadership in 'AI for Good,' as our Project AIMS (AI Against Modern Slavery) laid the foundation towards delivering a tool that harnesses the latest data science and machine learning techniques to assess corporate compliance with modern slavery acts. These accomplishments are described in more detail in the Achievements portion of this report.

Our 'strategic refocus' is a topic that we place special emphasis on in this report. For all nonprofits, but especially for those in a field as dynamic as ours, it is necessary to reevaluate and recalibrate regularly the notions of our impact. In 2021, with generous pro bono support from the Stanford Alumni Consulting Team (ACT), we underwent a methodical and meticulous assessment of our Theory of Change, activities, and impact. We are coming out of this endeavor with a more focused mission: aligning AI through better governance. The Strategic (Re)focus section of this report describes our new mission, functions, and impact in greater detail. On behalf of the TFS team, I wish to express my appreciation to the Stanford ACT team for the insightful assessment and suggestions that drove our strategic refocus.

As TFS enters a new phase, I wish to also express my deepest gratitude to our Board Members, Advisors, Affiliates, Team, and donors who have been gracious supporters of our work, and have served as a consistent reminder that our mission is one worth endeavoring.

Sincerely,

Nicolas Mialhe

Nicolas Mialhe
Founder & President



HIGHLIGHTS

POLICY RESEARCH & ADVISORY

Policy research enables AI developers, regulators, and deployers to navigate the complex dynamics of AI development. Global, Interdisciplinary collaborations produce well-informed and actionable insights.

Policy Pathways to Harness AI for Development

TFS led a report with the World Bank exploring governance approaches for harnessing AI responsibly within low- and middle-income countries.

At a time of rapid technological growth, low- and middle-income countries are faced with a 'more to gain, more to lose' paradigm: AI tools can help address pressing social and economic problems; however, improperly designed or implemented technologies have the potential to exacerbate existing forms of inequality. Working with the World Bank's Digital Development Practice, TFS produced a report that explores governance approaches for harnessing AI responsibly in low- and middle-income countries. The report analyzes numerous countries' AI strategies in order to identify emerging best practices and produces a framework of policy recommendations for governments based on their digital maturity. [Read more here.](#)



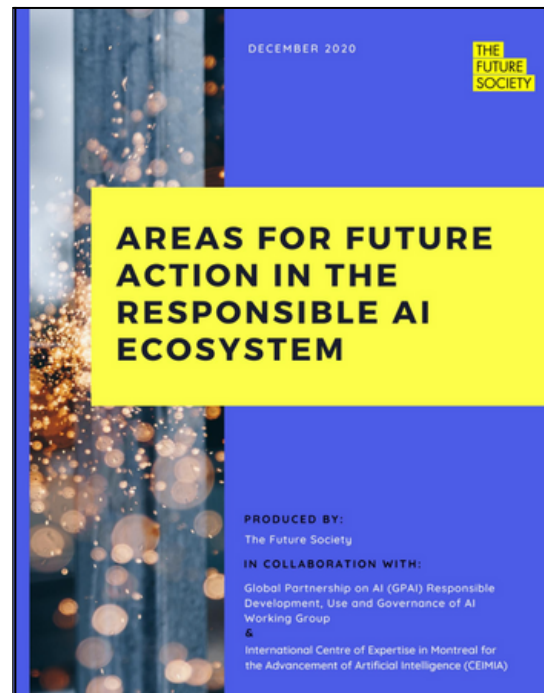
Digital Platforms and Innovation



Supporting the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)

TFS mapped out initiatives that promote responsible AI, produced a shortlist of most promising initiatives, and provided recommendations for GPAI's future agenda.

In recent years, scores of Responsible AI initiatives emerged—proposing mechanisms to govern AI's use, putting forward new means to advance the 'social good' agenda, and asserting new definitions for what precisely constitutes “responsible AI.” The very scale of these parallel efforts has made it difficult to assess their opportunities, risks, and shortcomings. TFS's collaboration with the GPAI Responsible AI Working Group in 2020 involved mapping existing initiatives that promote the responsible development and use of AI, analyzing a shortlist of most promising initiatives, and providing recommendations for future action to inform GPAI's agenda. This work was then presented at the inaugural GPAI Montreal Summit in December of 2020. [Read more here.](#)



'TFS has been an outstanding asset to GPAI since we launched in 2020. As we built the foundations of this Partnership, they provided their expertise and a unique vision that was integral to developing and executing our working groups' reports on Responsible AI, Climate Action and AI, and Pandemic Response. The team was adept at grasping the complex and multifaceted issues in the AI space, and their dedication to operationalising the governance of AI was evident in their support and all the work they produced. I look forward to continuing working with TFS as we join forces to foster the responsible deployment and development of AI'.

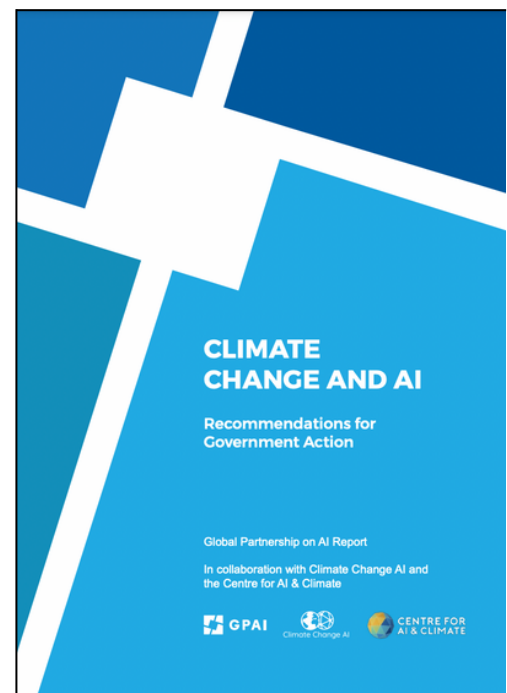
Baroness Joanna Shields

Multi-stakeholder Experts Group Plenary Chair and Steering Committee Co-Chair, GPAI

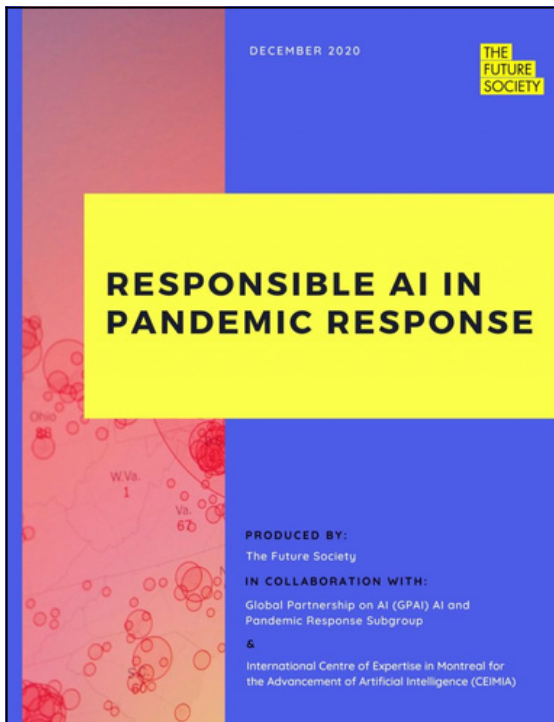


TFS contributed to a GPAI report designed to assist governments in implementing responsible AI initiatives for climate action.

AI systems are already demonstrating the potential to support climate action, but they also present risks that are not yet well understood. This 2021 report, co-led and supported by TFS members, is designed to assist governments—GPAI member states and beyond—in implementing responsible AI initiatives for climate action. Its calls for governments to devote resources for the responsible adoption of AI for climate solutions, and to develop bespoke support packages that improve access to requisite data and digital infrastructure. This work was presented at the GPAI Paris Summit in December 2021. [Read more here.](#)



TFS researchers mapped AI systems developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, assessed their effectiveness, and provided recommendations to steer the GPAI's pandemic response agenda.



As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, AI developers from around the world began to build tools to combat the biological, clinical, and societal dimensions of the crisis. In 2020, TFS researchers began to collaborate with the GPAI AI & Pandemic Response Subgroup to map these AI systems, assess their effectiveness, and provide recommendations—based on initiatives' enabling factors and common hurdles—to steer the Subgroup's future engagement in pandemic response. This work was presented at the inaugural GPAI Montreal Summit in December of 2020. One of the recommendations provided—for GPAI to “set up task forces for immediate challenges”—led to an additional project: the production of a “Living Repository” of AI systems developed in COVID-19 response, described in greater detail on the following page. [Read more here.](#)

“The Future Society's contributions to OECD.AI's work over the past 6 years have been invaluable. TFS's active engagement in the OECD.AI Network of Experts advances our work on trustworthy AI and AI policy. They helped give shape to our most relevant contributions to trustworthy AI, including the OECD AI Principles and the OECD Framework for the Classification of AI Systems. We look forward to continuing our close and productive partnership with TFS.”

Karine Perset

Head of AI Unit and OECD.AI, OECD

Luis Aranda

Policy Analyst, OECD

John Leo Tarver

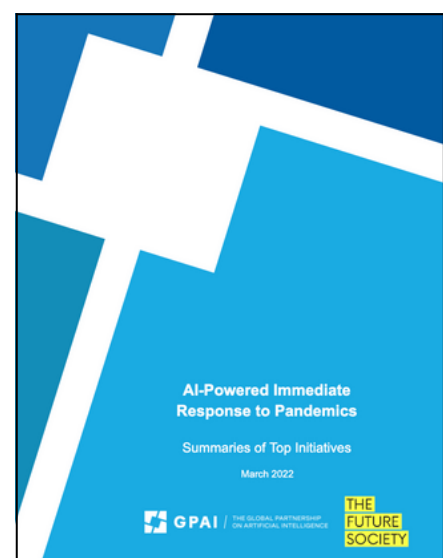
Communications Officer, OECD.AI





TFS researchers produced a “Living Repository” of AI systems developed for COVID-19 pandemic response, and worked with the Subgroup to identify initiatives with the greatest potential to scale to larger populations.

Following this recommendation, in 2021, the AIPR Subgroup launched the ‘AI-Powered Immediate Response to Pandemics’ project, for which TFS was selected as the delivery partner. This project involved producing a “Living Repository” of AI systems developed for COVID-19 pandemic response and working with the Subgroup to identify initiatives with the greatest potential to scale to larger populations. This work was presented at the GPAI Paris Summit in December 2021. [Read more here.](#)



The Development of Rwanda's National AI Policy

TFS developed policies to accelerate AI adoption in order to achieve objectives linked to economic growth, sustainable development, and capacity building in Rwanda.

The Republic of Rwanda has a track record of harnessing digital technologies to achieve their development goals, and now aims to position itself as a leader of innovation on the African and global stage. In 2020-21, the Government of Rwanda and GIZ engaged TFS to develop its National Artificial Intelligence Policy. Working alongside local stakeholders, TFS researchers developed policies to accelerate AI adoption in key sectors and public services in order to achieve objectives linked to economic growth, sustainable development, and capacity building in Rwanda. [Read more here.](#)





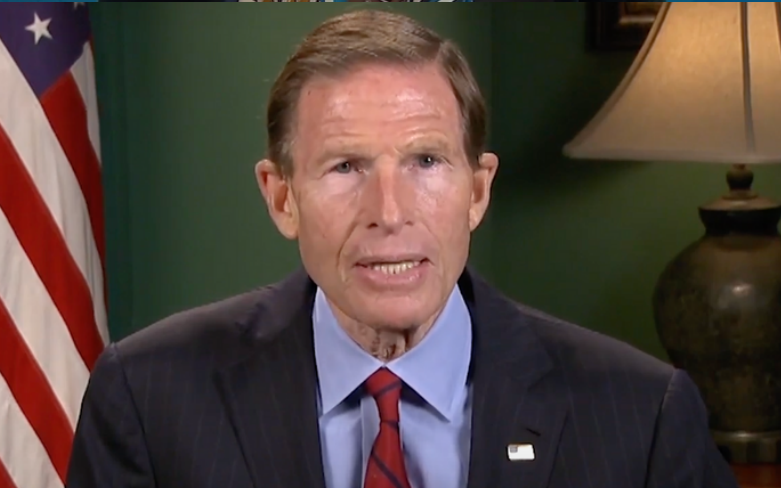
EU AI Act: Trust in Excellence & Excellence in Trust

TFS produced a policy recommendation that advocates for the EU to develop governance mechanisms for trustworthy AI systems—making trustworthiness its competitive advantage.

In April 2021, the executive leadership of the European Union put forward the “AI Act”, a draft law to govern AI systems deployed in its single market. As EU member states and the European Parliament work to amend this draft, external parties are able to provide suggestions for improvements to the legislation. TFS is actively studying this legislation, developing suggestions for improvements, and discussing these suggestions with policymakers. An initial policy recommendation advocates for “Trust in Excellence & Excellence in Trust”—advocating for the EU to develop better governance mechanisms for more trustworthy AI systems, so as to make trustworthiness its competitive advantage globally. [Read more here.](#)

SEMINARS & SUMMITS

The Future Society works with leading organizations around the world to bring together policymakers, technologists, academics, civil society, and business leaders in the effort to provide continuity and spark new thinking in the global dialogue on the governance of AI.



2021 Athens Roundtable on AI and the Rule of Law

Over 1700 participants joined discussions designed to deepen understanding of the risks and benefits of AI in legal systems, legal practice, and associated compliance.

The Athens Roundtable on AI and the Rule of Law is the premiere multi-stakeholder, forum dedicated to advancing fundamental rights, the democratic order, and the rule of law in the age of AI. The Roundtable supports the development of standards, certifications, accreditations, policy frameworks, and stakeholder education that improve institutions' capacities to govern AI systems. The 2021 edition involved over 1700 participants and a diverse line-up of 55 experts on international AI policy, standardization, and benchmarking initiatives in the United States, Europe, and beyond. The 2021 edition involved the announcement of a massive online open course (MOOC) on AI and the Rule of Law designed for judicial operators (see below). The Roundtable underscored the importance of international cooperation to uphold democratic values, starting with their bedrock, the rule of law. [Read more here.](#)



103. Member States should promote general awareness programmes about AI developments, including on data and the opportunities and challenges brought about by AI technologies, the impact of AI systems on human rights and their implications, including children's rights. These programmes should be accessible to non-technical as well as technical groups.

104. Member States should encourage research initiatives on the responsible and ethical use of AI technologies in teaching, teacher training and e-learning, among other issues, to enhance opportunities and mitigate the challenges and risks involved in this area. The initiatives should be accompanied by an adequate assessment of the quality of education and impact on students and teachers of the use of AI technologies. Member States should also ensure that AI technologies empower students and teachers and enhance their experience, bearing in mind that relational and social aspects and the value of traditional forms of education are vital in teacher-student and student-student relationships and

should be considered when discussing the adoption of AI technologies in education. AI systems used in learning should be subject to strict requirements when it comes to the monitoring, assessment of abilities, or prediction of the learners' behaviours. AI should support the learning process without reducing cognitive abilities and without extracting sensitive information, in compliance with relevant personal data protection standards. The data handed over to acquire knowledge collected during the learner's interactions with the AI system must not be subject to misuse, misappropriation or criminal exploitation, including for commercial purposes.

105. Member States should promote the participation and leadership of girls and women, diverse ethnicities and cultures, persons with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable people or people in vulnerable situations, minorities and all persons not enjoying the full benefits of digital inclusion, in AI education programmes at all levels, as well as the monitoring and sharing of best practices in this regard with other Member States.

Online workshop for UNESCO's Recommendations on the Ethics of AI

TFS organized an online deliberative workshop on the topic of AI & Education to bootstrap discussions of UNESCO's recommendations on the ethics of AI.

As a result of COVID-19 lock-down measures, classrooms around the world closed, causing hundreds of millions of children to turn to alternative methods of education. To reflect on the opportunities and challenges of using AI and digital technologies for learning, TFS organized an online deliberative workshop on the topic of AI & Education. It also used this theme to bootstrap discussions of UNESCO's recommendations on the ethics of AI. With over 60 participants and 3 discussion groups, our workshop marked a step toward integrating citizens' voices into AI governance. We have summarized key takeaways in a report that will be further curated by Algora Lab, and feed into UNESCO's standard-setting instrument on AI Ethics. [Read more here.](#)

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Our educational programs are a mix of lectures and group discussions facilitated by collective intelligence methods, innovation tools, and insights from adaptive leadership techniques. Participants complete these programs better equipped to navigate the complexities of AI governance.

Launch of Global Online Course on AI and the Rule of Law

TFS developed a massive online open course (MOOC) for judicial operators to learn about the opportunities and risks of the increasing adoption of AI technologies across justice systems and AI's impact for the administration of justice.

Structured around six introductory modules, participants have the opportunity to learn about the opportunities and risks of AI technologies across justice systems and AI's impact on the administration of justice. The course was developed by TFS and UNESCO, supported by Cetic.br|NIC.br, the National Judicial College, and IEEE SA, and made possible by the contributions of the UNESCO Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP) and the Open Society Foundations. Content is available in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and Portuguese, and over 4,400 students from more than 140 countries enrolled in the first cohort. [Read more here.](#)



"The team at The Future Society (TFS) has demonstrated a talent for building collaborative environments to shape solutions for operationalizing the governance of AI and upholding fundamental values. A striking example is the development and launch of our joint online course on Artificial Intelligence and the Rule of Law—an idea that was conceived at the first edition of TFS-led Athens Roundtable in 2019 as a response to a lack of AI literacy amongst judicial operators—and now has over 4,200 judicial operators enrolled from around the world. Throughout the project, TFS mobilized a valuable blend of AI policy and community management skills to bring together the right set of actors in taking the discussions around AI from principles to practice"

Prateek Sibal

Programme Specialist, UNESCO



AI Policy Seminar for US State Legislators

TFS hosted a webinar for United States state legislators covering AI's impact on innovation and geopolitics, its ethical and social dimensions, and the status of AI-related legislation in U.S. states.

In the United States, many paramount AI issues are litigated, regulated, and evaluated at state-level jurisdictions before reaching the federal government. In light of the importance of state-level AI policy, TFS hosted a webinar to specifically serve United States state legislators and staffers across the country. The webinar was organized in partnership with AI policy researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University, and panelists included leading researchers and policy experts on AI, robotics, and state AI policy from TFS, Georgia Tech, and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The Seminar covered AI's impact on innovation and geopolitics, its ethical and social dimensions, and the status of AI-related legislation in U.S. states. As part of this capacity-building effort, TFS and its partners curated a set of helpful resources for state legislators, which include: best practices in AI procurement, information about AI in judicial systems and education, state and national trends in AI policymaking, AI governance courses for policymakers, and more. [Read more here.](#)

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Shaping the governance of AI requires nimble, out-of-the-box approaches. Special projects are 'governance moonshot' projects with high-potential impact that benefit from TFS's diverse expertise and international network.

Project AIMS (Artificial Intelligence against Modern Slavery)

Project AIMS harnesses data science and machine learning techniques to assess statements registered in compliance with the UK and Australian Modern Slavery Acts.

Today, an estimated 40 million people are living in some form of modern slavery—more than three times the figure during the transatlantic slave trade. To combat this, governments have begun to pass legislation (starting in the UK in 2015) requiring corporations to publish annual statements articulating how they are eradicating slave labor from their supply chains. With the support of Walk Free, TFS completed the first phase of this project, which is now publicly available on our GitHub. The final product will be an open-source software and API, adaptable for other high-impact non-financial data disclosure programs, and supported by thorough documentation. We want this work to continue, we want this community to grow, and we are calling upon AI talent worldwide to get involved. [Read more here.](#)



"The Future Society assembled and led a coalition of top AI researchers and practitioners to harness the power of machine learning in the fight against modern slavery. With great talent and leadership, they have demonstrated an impressive ability to combine project management, policy research, domain knowledge, and technical expertise. Thanks to TFS, Project AIMS has laid the foundations for an innovative open-source tool based on the latest Natural Language Processing technologies to hold companies to account in tackling modern slavery in global supply chains. As such, TFS's approach has pioneered a new range of possibilities in the field of non-financial data disclosure."



Katharine Bryant

Research Manager, Walk Free



STRATEGIC (RE)FOCUS

WHEN TFS launched 7 years ago, the field of AI governance was only beginning to take form. In our early years, our work focused on building awareness of the impact of AI, and shaping the frameworks and institutions that now define this domain. In the time since, the field itself has grown tremendously—in both size and prominence—and is now faced with new challenges and opportunities.

Present challenges in AI governance



Regulators of AI systems lack technical expertise, familiarity with business models and value chains, and the means to coordinate internationally.



Developers of AI systems are incentivized to build fast and cheap, cutting corners on safety and value-alignment.



Deployers of AI systems lack awareness of societal risks, best practices in corporate governance, and how to procure and operate AI in a responsible manner.

In 2021, TFS underwent an in-depth reassessment of our theory of change. We reflected on the evolution of our field over time, and, with pro bono support from the Stanford Alumni Consulting Team, evaluated our economics, capabilities, and desired impact. This was supplemented by internal (within the team) and external feedback (from stakeholders across our field) on our work.

The goals of this exercise were to better understand our impact, identify opportunities and gaps in our field, and ultimately determine our objectives for the next 3 years. **As a result, we have a new, more focused mission.**

What is our mission?

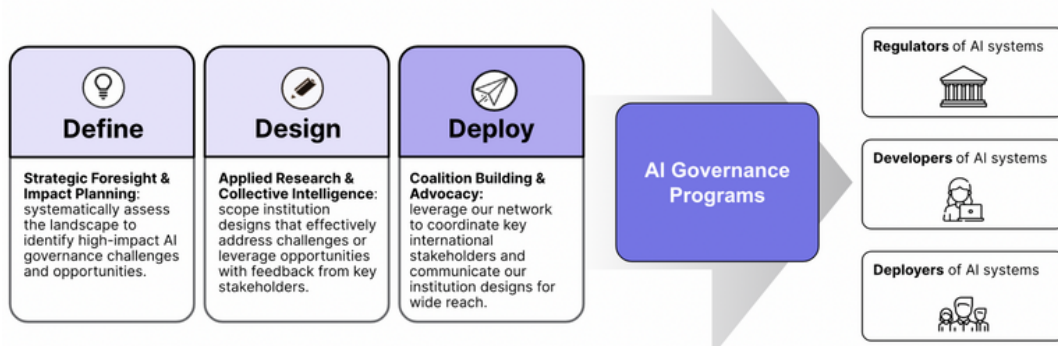
Aligning **artificial intelligence***
through better **governance***.

By **AI systems**, we refer to the OECD definition*, and aim to cover both narrow AI systems with specific purposes and capabilities, and general-purpose AI systems with more versatile capabilities.

By **governance**, we mean the ‘rules of the game’—formal and informal mechanisms such as policies, norms, tools, and instruments that affect the behaviors of AI actors (i.e. regulators, developers, and deployers).

Our strategic refocus exercises yielded a number of helpful insights, including a better grasp of the properties that set TFS apart: our independent roots, nimble scale, deep AI governance subject-matter expertise, and a unique project management culture based on inclusion and collective intelligence. Most significantly, these exercise surfaced the emerging need to *operationalize AI governance* by developing cohesive solutions that enable policies to be implemented and principles to become practice.

Towards this end, TFS will leverage its track record in convening diverse regulators, developers, and deployers of AI systems and co-develop governance solutions to shared institutional barriers (see diagram below). The team will start by prototyping a three-pronged process, including: i) strategic foresight and impact planning exercises to define programs that help operationalize AI governance; ii) design of sustainable and cohesive solutions by conducting applied research and collective intelligence exercises; and iii) building coalitions and advocacy campaigns to deploy these solutions and programs. In doing so, we will scale The Athens Roundtable on AI and the Rule of Law (“The Roundtable”), our flagship annual event, to bootstrap our collective intelligence and coalition-building efforts.



GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors

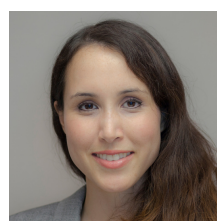
Directors have distinguished backgrounds in academia, government, business, or civil society, and are responsible for decisions that affect the strategy, finances, and operations of the organization. All Directors operate in a volunteer capacity. We thank our Directors for their diligent work and outstanding guidance.



Nicolas Miallhe
Founder &
President



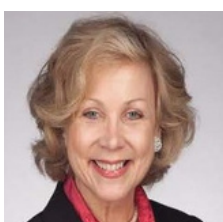
Simon Mueller
Co-Founder &
CEO, Mantaro
Partners



Caroline Galvan
Associate
Director, EBRD



De Kai
Professor of CS
and Engineering,
HKUST



Eileen Lach
General Counsel and
Chief Compliance
Officer, IEEE

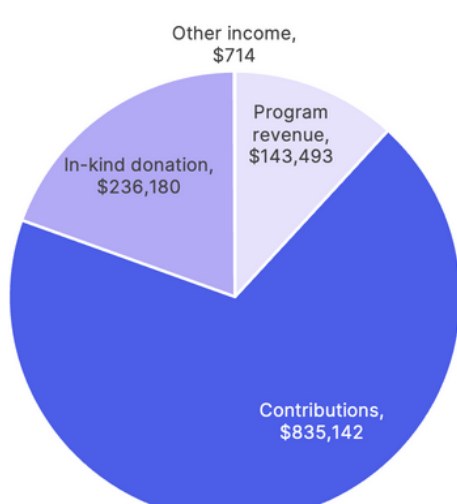


Suzanne Bays
President,
Baymont IT
Consulting Inc.

Finances

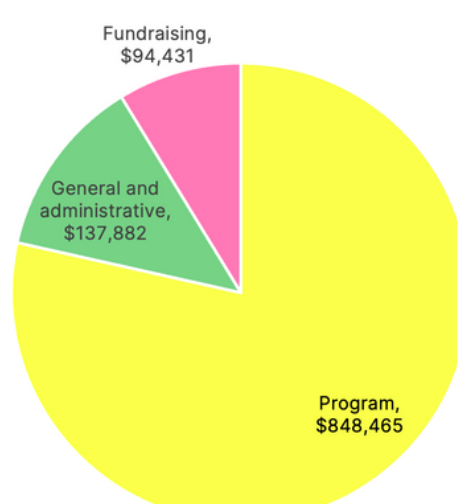
TFS is an independent organization primarily supported by contributions from philanthropic organizations and private companies, but is also funded by service-based contracts with IGOs and governments. Contributors are not provided “substantial return benefit” as defined in Section 513(i) of the Code and accompanying regulations. More details can be found on Form 990s accessible via our site.

2020 Revenues



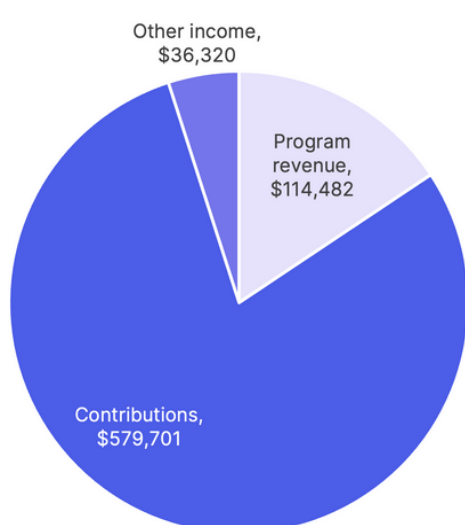
Total: \$1,215,529

2020 Expenditures



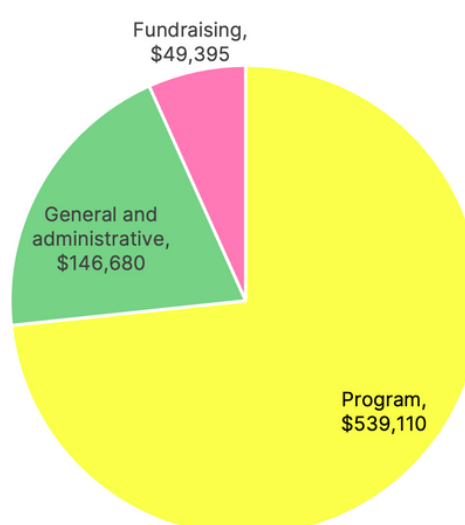
Total: \$1,080,778

2021 Revenues



Total: \$730,503

2021 Expenditures



Total: \$642,152



THE
FUTURE
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