

Utah Solutions Forum

Draper, Utah
September 18 - 19th, 2026

What role should the public have in shaping decisions related to AI technology and infrastructure?

Preliminary Recommendations Report
Updated September 28th, 2026

Hosted by:



UtahStateUniversity
Center for Anticipatory Intelligence
College of Arts & Sciences

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AI ETHICS & GOVERNANCE
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 18–19, 2026, Utah Common Ground convened the first [Utah Solutions Forum](#) in Draper, bringing together 38 residents of Cache, Salt Lake and Utah Counties to consider one question: *What role should the public have in shaping decisions related to AI technology and infrastructure?* Delegates were chosen by civic lottery,¹ a random draw from a pool of 376 eligible registrants. The draw was balanced so the group would reflect the region's mix of county, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and political leaning.

Over two intensive days, delegates moved back and forth between learning and deliberating. They heard from practitioners and public officials and worked from shared briefing materials. Then they broke into small groups to draft proposals of their own. Round after round, each group brought its latest draft to the full room, answered questions, collected written feedback from every table, and went back to revise. By the final vote, ten proposals had cleared the 75% threshold to become Solutions Forum recommendations, and 92% of delegates endorsed the package as a whole. Each drew robust cross-partisan support after informed deliberation.

The recommendations fall into three groups.

Helping residents find information and take part. Four recommendations would give Utahns easier ways to learn about AI and engage in decisions about it:

- An AI Information Hub, available in multiple languages and designed for people with varied online experience. It would list AI policies, proposed projects, maps of AI developments and the companies proposing them, and upcoming public meetings (95%).
- A citizen engagement portal, built on existing resources such as [my.utah.gov](#), that notifies residents about issues they chose and shows them how to reach the officials and commissions responsible (84%).
- Community-driven AI literacy classes in Utah's sixty community libraries, funded through existing library enhancement funds and free of corporate sponsorship, with legislators and residents learning side by side (95%).
- A public awareness campaign directing people to all three of the resources above (82%).

Opening up decisions about data centers. Three recommendations address hyperscale data centers and related infrastructure:

- Local approval of hyperscale data centers would require a legislative vote by city councils and county commissions, replacing the current administrative land-use decision. This would trigger public notice and hearing requirements, keep these

¹ Four seats vacated in the final week were filled from a backup pool of people connected to the Forum.

decisions under local control, and close workarounds through state-level entities such as MIDA (89%).

- Applicants would need state permits and an independent environmental and economic impact analysis, paid for by the applicant. The analysis would cover projected water use and sources, power generation, and air, soil, light and noise impacts, and would be presented for public comment and a hearing (92%).
- The state would set consistent standards for data centers, onsite power generation, and public AI tools. An industry-funded expert panel, with advisory seats for affected counties, would inform the standards. They would be backed by regular audits, reviewed every five years, and enforced through clawbacks and fines. The state would keep its authority to suspend or shut down systems that fail to perform as promised or create unacceptable risks (92%).

Strengthening accountability. The remaining three focus on transparency and public trust:

- State, county and municipal officials would recuse themselves from decisions involving entities where they have reported a conflict of interest. Conflicts would include the interests of spouses and immediate family (92%).
- Nondisclosure agreements would continue to protect trade secrets and other legitimate business confidentiality — but they should not shield matters involving public funds, infrastructure, safety, or environmental impact. Where the two conflict, a court or independent review body would decide what is disclosed (95%).
- The Division of Consumer Protection's complaint portal would add a category for AI-related harms. Aggregated complaint data would be published with individual privacy protected, and patterns of misconduct would be referred to the Attorney General or other regulators (97%). This proposal drew the highest support of any considered by the Forum.

The Solutions Forum was designed to give Utahns the information, time and opportunity to develop concrete policy proposals of their own. These proposals show, on a cross-partisan basis, what Utahns recognize as valuable, and they open a path for future AI-related decisions that could gain broad public support.

In the coming weeks, Utah Common Ground will work with the delegates to identify next steps, with the goal of securing as many of these changes as possible, while exploring ways to engage people across the state in similar opportunities.

Utah Common Ground's steering committee includes [Utah State University's Center for Anticipatory Intelligence](#), [AI Ethics and Governance Institute \(AEGIX\)](#), [Braver Angels](#) Utah,

[Engage Forum](#), and [Mormon Women for Ethical Government](#). [BLOOM Project](#) served as the technology and deliberation partner.

The summaries above condense the delegates' own words. [Read the recommendations in full as the delegates wrote them](#) in the full report below, along with how delegates were selected and how the deliberations were conducted.

1. Utah Solutions Forum Full Recommendations

The statements below were developed and drafted directly by Utah Solutions Forum Delegates. These policy proposals attracted over 75% support from the cross-partisan delegates after informed deliberation. Each was designed in response to the question:

What role should the public have in shaping decisions related to AI technology and infrastructure?

The recommendations focused on three areas:

Helping residents find information and take part. Four recommendations would give Utahns easier ways to learn about AI and engage in decisions about it:

1. **Provide the Public a Dedicated AI Information Hub (95%)** Taking into account Utah's human-focused orientation in its development of AI policies, the AI Information Hub should use existing data and research to provide a single information platform designed for easy access by people with varied levels of online experience. The Hub would include links to AI policies affecting municipalities and public works; information on proposed AI projects; maps of where AI developments are happening across the state with links to the AI companies that are making proposals; and a calendar of town meetings where these issues will be on the agenda. The site would be fully functional in a variety of languages.
2. **Provide a Centralized Citizen Engagement Portal (84%)** Adapt existing resources like my.utah.gov to create an app and a website for a simple user experience that enables a citizen to select and be connected and notified with information regarding active issues and policies that matter to them. Among other things, it would explain where and how to contact their representatives and commissions responsible for the issues citizens select, as well as meeting schedules, timelines and milestones. *(Delegates noted that this portal could potentially link to the AI Information Hub described above)*
3. **Provide AI Literacy Programs Statewide through Community Libraries (95%)** Use existing Community Library Enhancement Funds (CLEF) to support program-related costs for AI literacy classes in the sixty Utah libraries, with a focus on educating legislators and citizens simultaneously, so everyone is learning together. The classes would be available to view online. These would be community driven, not corporate sponsored.
4. **Proactively Publicize AI Civic Literacy and Engagement Information (82%)** Use multiple avenues of communication (for example, radio, billboards, press, social media, volunteers) to direct people toward the AI Information Hub, the Citizen Engagement

Portal and AI Library-based Literacy Programs above, with the possibility of GOED (Government Office of Economic Development) to assist in funding.

Opening up decisions about data centers. Three recommendations address hyperscale data centers and related infrastructure:

5. ***Statutorily shift local (city/county) decisionmaking regarding hyperscale data centers from an administrative land use decision to a local legislative decision (i.e. to be voted upon by city councils and county commissions) (89%)*** This would trigger public notice/public hearing requirements and give greater discretion to local elected officials, ensuring hyperscale data center consideration remains in local control (subject to state permitting requirements), and eliminates workarounds via state-level groups like MIDA.
6. ***Require hyperscale data center applicants to secure permits from the state (ensuring state oversight), and as part of the permitting process, require applicants to submit an objective environmental and economic impact analysis from a qualified third party expert (as defined by the state) (92%)*** This should be presented to the relevant municipality/county with an appropriate public comment period followed by a public hearing, as currently required by the Open and Public Meeting Act (OPMA). Reporting should include projected water use for both power generation and cooling, water sources, methods of power generation, and baseline measurements of the facility's projected air, water, soil, light and noise impact. Costs of this report are the responsibility of the applicant.
7. ***"No Moving Targets": Establish consistent standards for Utah data centers, onsite power generation, and public AI tools with a legal presence in Utah (92%)*** Require the Department of Commerce to conduct audits at an expert-recommended frequency. Establish a data center-funded panel of subject matter experts, with temporary advisory representation from affected counties, to inform standards covering areas such as natural resources, noise, power, and education. Standards would be revisited every five years, with companies given one year to comply with changes. Failure to comply or meet performance milestones would trigger incentive clawbacks and fines designed to encourage improvement, while preserving the state's authority to suspend or terminate systems that fail to perform as promised or create unacceptable risks.

Strengthening accountability. The remaining three focus on transparency and public trust:

8. ***Require recusal by public officials in state, county, or municipal government from any decisionmaking process related to an entity for which that official has reported a conflict of interest (92%)*** “Conflict of Interest” is defined as relevant financial, investment, compensation, business relationships, gifts, employment, and material financial transactions involving the public official, their spouse, or immediate family members when those interests could reasonably benefit from decisions within the official’s authority.
9. ***NDA should continue to be allowed to protect confidential business information, but they should not shield matters of public interest or safety (95%)*** Information involving use of public funds, infrastructure development, public safety, environmental impact, government obligations or other matters with regard to which the public expects state and local government to be publicly accountable shall not be shielded in this way. Confidential business information would include trade secrets, proprietary technology, and cybersecurity information. When these interests conflict, a third-party court or review body would determine what should remain confidential and what should be disclosed in the public interest.
10. ***Utah AI Consumer Complaint & Transparency Initiative (97%)*** Add an AI harm-specific category to the Utah Division of Consumer Protection’s existing complaint portal. The initiative would track complaints, help resolve issues, and make aggregated complaint and enforcement data publicly available, while protecting individual privacy. Patterns of repeated or potentially unlawful conduct could be referred to the Utah Attorney General, law enforcement, or other regulators for investigation and potential legal action. This would make complaints both a resource for Utahns and an early-warning system for recurring AI-related harms.

2. Forum Delegates

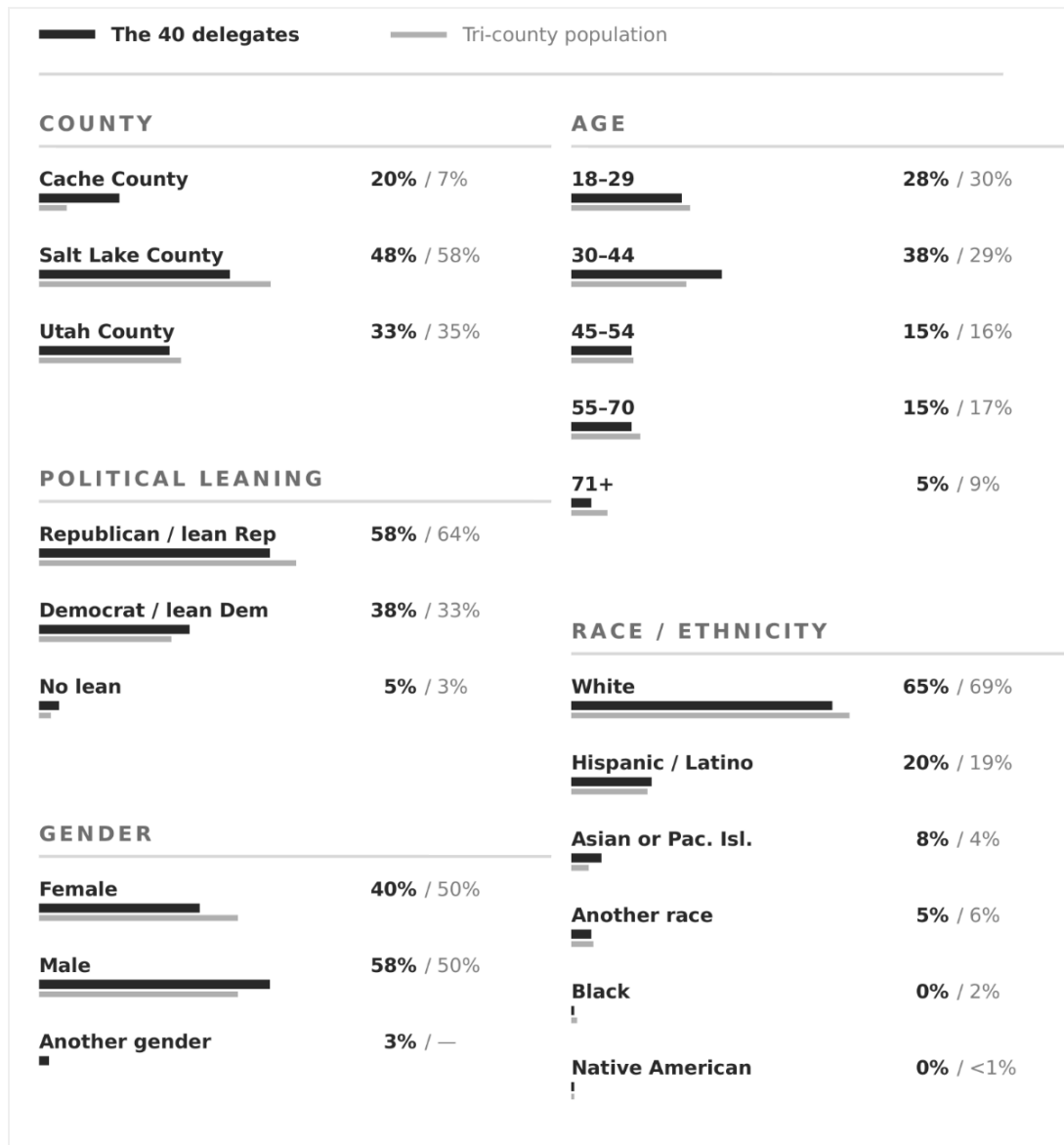


Figure 1: The final 40 delegates, after all rounds of selection, compared with the population of Cache, Salt Lake and Utah Counties

Who Was in the Room

Thirty-eight residents of Cache, Salt Lake, and Utah Counties deliberated at the Solutions Forum. Forty individuals were drawn by civic lottery from 376 eligible registrants to form a panel reflecting the three-county region (see Delegate Selection). Two selected delegates withdrew for health reasons just before the event started. Those seats were left unfilled. The figures above describe the full panel of 40 as selected. Each delegate represents 2.5 percent of

the panel, so many of the differences between the demographics of the panel and the population amount to a single seat.

Geography. Selected delegates from Salt Lake County filled 19 seats (48%), Utah County 13 (33%), and Cache County 8 (20%). Cache County's share is well above its 7% of the regional population. This was a deliberate choice to enable the organizers to select a sufficient diversity of views from that county, which was originally selected in order to assure differentiation across the three geographic areas.

Political leaning. Twenty-three delegates identified as Republican or leaning right (58%), 15 as Democrat or leaning left (38%), and 2 reported no lean (5%). The statewide benchmarks are 64%, 33%, and 3%. Both major-party shares fall within the ± 7.3 -point margin of error on the Pew estimate for Utah. All ten recommendations passed with at least 82% support, which means each recommendation passed with clear cross-partisan support.

Age. Delegates ranged from their late teens and twenties to over 70. Residents aged 30–44 were the largest group, with 15 delegates (38%) against 29% of the population. Residents 71 and older were the most under-represented, with 2 delegates (5%) against 9%. The 18–29, 45–54, and 55–70 age groups each came within two points of their population shares.

Race and ethnicity. The panel included 26 White delegates (65%), 8 Hispanic or Latino delegates (20%), 3 Asian or Pacific Islander delegates (8%), and 2 delegates of another race (5%). The population shares for these groups are 69%, 19%, 4%, and 6%. One delegate did not report race or ethnicity. No Black or Native American residents were among the delegates. Together these groups make up 2–3% of the regional population, which works out to roughly one seat on a panel of 40.

Gender. Women held 16 seats (40%) and men 23 (58%), and one delegate identified as another gender. Gender was the largest gap between the panel and the population, with women four seats short of parity.

What this means for the recommendations. The delegates formed a varied cross-section of the region. They lived in rural and urban counties, held views across the political spectrum, and spanned every adult age group. At the same time, a panel of 40 is too small to speak for any single demographic group. The recommendations are best read as the considered judgment of residents who learned about the issues together, heard from experts and from one another, and found broad agreement across their differences.

3. Delegate Selection

Recruitment. In July 2026, residents of Cache, Salt Lake, and Utah Counties were invited to register their interest in joining a selection pool from which delegates would be chosen. The invitation went out through Utah Common Ground's member organizations, other anchor civic organizations across the state, and paid social media advertising on Facebook and Instagram. As part of the registration process, individuals provided their county, zip code, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and political leaning.

Of 404 registrants, 376 were eligible for the lottery. Eighteen lived outside the three counties, and ten said they could not attend both days of the event. Every other registrant entered the lottery. People currently running for elected office were excluded from participation.

Demographic targets. Targets for the panel came from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2024) for county, age, and race/ethnicity, and from the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study (2023–24) for political leaning.

The lottery. On August 12, 2026, BLOOM, Utah Common Ground's technology and deliberation partner, ran a lottery using Panelot, a free, open-source, not-for-profit selection tool.

Selection took place in two steps. First, Panelot assembled 364 possible 40-person panels, each meeting the demographic targets. It then gave each panel a probability, calculated so that across the full set every registrant had as fair a chance of selection as the targets allow, with priority on raising the chances of the registrants least likely to be chosen. Second, a single random draw picked one panel from the set. Every panel in the set met the targets, so the panel's demographic balance was settled before the draw, and the draw decided which individuals would fill the seats.

Every eligible registrant had a meaningful chance of selection. The lowest individual probability was 3.5%. A simple lottery with no demographic balancing would have given each registrant a 10.6% chance (40 of 376).

Balancing also made selection effectively certain for a few people. Three registrants, all Hispanic or Latino conservatives in Salt Lake County, had a combination of characteristics shared by so few others in the pool that no panel meeting the targets could be built without them. We disclose this because it shows how a stratified lottery behaves when some groups are thinly represented among registrants.

The draw and verification. The random number came from RANDOM.ORG, a public service that generates true random numbers from atmospheric noise. The number was 426,994 out of

1,000,000, generated at 06:04:46 UTC on August 13, 2026. Picture the 364 panels laid end to end along a line from 0 to 1, each taking up a stretch equal to its probability. Dividing the random number by one million gives a point on that line, 0.426994, which falls within the stretch belonging to panel 158 (0.417555 to 0.428893). Panel 158 became the Forum's delegates.

Withdrawals and replacement. Between the lottery draw and the Forum, thirteen of the delegates selected on August 13 withdrew. Rather than leave seats empty, we re-ran the selection twice, on August 21 and August 27. In each round the delegates who had confirmed kept their seats, the demographic targets were reduced by what those delegates already supplied, and a fresh lottery filled the remaining seats from registrants who had not been chosen before. Each round used a new RANDOM.ORG number, drawn after the lottery file was fixed.

In the final week, with too little time for a further round, four seats were filled from a backup pool of people already connected to the Forum — participants in the community conversations and people close to delegates. These four were not selected by lottery.

Two further delegates withdrew for health reasons in the last days and those seats were left unfilled. Thirty-eight delegates took part in the deliberations.

4. The Forum Process

Over two days, delegates moved from a shared understanding of the issues to recommendations they drafted themselves. Delegates first learned from experts, practitioners, and one another's experiences. They then developed proposals in small groups and tested them repeatedly in front of the full room. A proposal became a Solutions Forum recommendation only after surviving several rounds of feedback and a final vote requiring 75% support.

Preparation

Before the Forum, delegates received a set of learning materials, including a briefing book and accompanying slidedeck, and a policy options memo on AI and public decision-making in Utah.

The Forum was organized by Utah Common Ground, with BLOOM as technology and deliberation partner.

The Utah Common Ground Steering Committee members included:

- **Erika Munson and Maury Giles**, Braver Angels
- **Jennifer Thomas and Catherine Eslinger**, MWEG
- **Jeannie Johnson**, Center for Anticipatory Intelligence, Utah State University
- **Medir Mema, PhD**, Director of AI Ethics, AEGIX
- **George Handley**, Engage Forum

Day One: Defining the problem

The Lead Facilitator for the full event was **Julie Rose**, a prominent radio journalist who produces podcasts for BYU radio, has reported for NPR local stations in Salt Lake City, as well as network shows including Morning Edition and All Things Considered.

Delegates spent the first morning building a shared understanding of the task they were being invited to undertake. After an orientation to the concept of “deliberation” from mediator and developmental psychologist Emily de Schweinitz Taylor, two speakers framed the Forum's question. Zach Boyd, Director of the Utah Office of AI Policy, explained how AI is impacting state policy and why effective public engagement matters for AI-related decisions in Utah. Dea Theodore, Chair of the Salt Lake County Council, described the opportunities and challenges of public engagement and consultation from a local government perspective.

Delegates then held two plenary discussions: the first elicited their personal experiences to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing opportunities for public input. The second invited them to define what effective public consultation should include and accomplish. Both of these discussions occurred at small tables of four delegates per table, each with a dedicated scribe to capture responses to the questions posed. All table data was then immediately compiled, sorted and themed, to quickly and substantively reflect back to the room the collective observations across all of the delegates present.

In the afternoon, seven practitioners gave short briefings on how AI is affecting four areas of concern to many Utahns and how public engagement in these areas could be beneficial. The presentations addressed issues related to education, jobs, natural resources, and data centers. The speakers were:

- **Lisa Boyce**, School Board Member, Provo City School District
- **Bryan Tanner**, Senior Instructional Designer, Western Governors University
- **Everette Bacon**, Chief of Blindness Initiatives, Aira
- **Dave Fogerty**, Assistant Division Director, Workforce Research and Analysis, Utah Department of Workforce Services
- **Jake Dreyfous**, Managing Director, Grow the Flow
- **Tara Bishop**, Assistant Professor, Department of Earth Sciences, Utah Valley University
- **Kajsa Hendrickson**, Sustainability Consultant, BiomeWest

Delegates then began the first of four deliberation rounds, breaking into three small groups to start drafting policy recommendations related to three concrete issue areas where AI is beginning to impact daily life (education, jobs, and natural resources). Deliberation rounds are further described below. The day closed with a review of the day's developments led by the Lead Facilitator, followed by a reception for anyone who wanted to spend some time debriefing and connecting in a more relaxed setting.

Day Two: Developing recommendations

Day Two started with a discussion led by the Lead Facilitator geared to refreshing everyone's understanding of the goals of the deliberation and ensuring delegates had a clear vision of what the day's specific objectives entailed. Delegates were then assigned to new breakout groups that would enable them to focus their group discussions on specific aspects and purposes of public engagement and consultation. Working with new people meant every proposal was shaped by delegates who had participated in each of the topical area discussions from the previous day.

After lunch, an expert panel responded to the emerging proposals with independent suggestions, cautions, and encouragement. The panelists were:

- **Paul Edwards**, Director, Wheatley Institute, and former deputy chief of staff to Governor Gary Herbert
- **Amber Bonner**, Board Member, Aspen Peaks School
- **Amelia Powers Gardner**, Utah County Commissioner

The panel came after delegates had started drafting their proposals, so the experts could provide early feedback on the direction delegates were taking. This provided real-world signals that helped delegates determine how best to allocate their remaining time, and where they might want to seek additional contextual information.

The deliberation rounds

Each round followed the same cycle, starting with each breakout group meeting separately to develop their proposals and make revisions. The breakout groups then presented the latest iteration of their proposals to the full room. After initial clarifying Q&A, the delegates discussed the proposals at their individual tables and sent feedback via their table scribes to the presenting group, for consideration during their next breakout discussion.

In the second to last cycle, delegates were asked to register a quick 1 - 5 favorability response after each proposal was presented (and after the clarifying Q&A), as additional feedback to the presenting group. After the *final* round of presentations, delegates were asked to vote (yes/no/abstain) on the proposals to surface which ones would be able to clear the 75% threshold for group approval. After this last delegate-wide vote, groups had the option of huddling to make any final changes that might boost a close vote over the threshold, and then take one last final vote after making those amendments.

As a final step, all proposals that passed with 75% or more were projected together for the room to view, and delegates were invited to take one final vote on the set as a whole, after which they were considered Solutions Forum Recommendations.

Round	When	Work in breakout groups	Response from the full room
1	Friday afternoon	Groups by issue area identify actions to make consultation more accessible and effective	Plenary presentations, Q&A, and written table feedback
2	Friday afternoon	Groups huddle to consider the feedback	Optional presentation of revisions.
3	Saturday morning	New groups refine proposals developed by the previous day's groups for their consultation stage or develop new ones.	Presentations, Q&A, 1-5 favorability ratings visible to all, and table feedback via scribes
4	Saturday afternoon	Groups refine proposals or develop new ones if warranted, in response to the previous plenary's table feedback and the expert panel's reactions and advice.	Final presentations, Q&A, final Yes/No/Abstain vote, brief additional table feedback if desired, after seeing the voting results.
		<i>Optional group huddle for final adjustments to language</i>	<i>Optional final vote.</i>

How decisions were made

A proposal became a Solutions Forum Recommendation only if it received at least 75% support in the final Yes/No/Abstain vote. After the vote, a group could request one more round of feedback and refinement, followed by a re-vote on the revised proposal. Delegates then voted a final time on the full set of recommendations, and 92% affirmed them together. Proposals that fell short of the threshold will be reported in forthcoming addendums.

Throughout Saturday afternoon, support tallies were displayed to the full room. Delegates could see where agreement was forming and where proposals needed work, and groups could

target their revisions to the concerns holding back support. Presenting groups were also asked to report minority views so that different views within a group reached the full room.

5. About

Utah Common Ground

[Utah Common Ground](#) is a coalition of nonprofit organizations, including [Braver Angels](#), [Center for Anticipatory Intelligence](#), [AEGIX](#), [Engage Forum](#), and [Mormon Women for Ethical Government](#). Utah Common Ground's goal is to facilitate solution-focused dialogue that results in informed, connected, and empowered citizenry, promoting and securing policy that enables our shared society and economy to thrive.

Utah Common Ground is nonpartisan and welcomes Utahns of all backgrounds and beliefs. Its work is built on learnings and innovation from many ideologically diverse organizations that are bridging divides across the country as part of the [Listen First Coalition](#). Utah Common Ground is also partnering with the [Bloom Project](#), a national initiative working to build civic infrastructure that promotes local problem-solving.

BLOOM Project

The [BLOOM Project](#) is building civic infrastructure that gives communities a meaningful role in shaping consequential decisions about artificial intelligence.

BLOOM works with trusted local organizations to bring people together across political and social differences, combine broad public participation with informed deliberation, and connect what communities conclude to institutions with the power to act. BLOOM provides partners with deliberative methods, technology, training, and program support, while building the shared infrastructure needed to connect public judgment across communities.

Through **The Public Assembly on AI**, BLOOM and its partners are developing a federated model for public participation in AI governance. Communities work through questions at the level where they experience them and where action is possible. Questions that cannot be resolved locally can inform state-level deliberation and, ultimately, a National Civic Assembly on AI in 2028.