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AI & ML FOR CANADIAN REGULATORS

A PLAYBOOK FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

**Advancing Regulatory Understanding in the Wake
of Artificial Intelligence**

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Introduction

This playbook offers Canadian regulators a practical framework for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) into regulatory processes. As regulatory environments grow increasingly complex and technological innovations outpace traditional systems, AI/ML presents an opportunity to drive more efficient, effective, and forward-thinking regulatory practices. This guide draws on real-world applications, best practices, and lessons learned to help regulators navigate the AI integration journey.

The Current State of AI in Regulation

AI in Regulatory Work Today

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are increasingly used to enhance regulatory effectiveness in several areas:

1. **Risk Assessment:** ML models identify trends, enabling proactive risk mitigation.
2. **Regulatory Design and Implementation:** AI-driven analytics improve policy development and stakeholder engagement.
3. **Process Automation:** AI chatbots and document processing tools streamline administrative workflows.
4. **Training and Capacity Building:** AI-powered simulations and virtual reality (VR) enhance regulatory training programs.
5. **Compliance Monitoring:** AI tools help analyze vast regulatory compliance submissions, flagging potential violations and inconsistencies.

Key Areas Where Regulators Can Benefit from AI/ML Integration

AI in Risk-Based Regulation

- AI assists in prioritizing high-risk areas for enforcement.
- AAFC's Document Detective identifies duplicate regulatory documents to streamline oversight.



AI for Policy and Decision Support

- Improves policy foresight by analyzing trends and historical data as demonstrated by Transport Canada's AI Shadow Exercise.
- Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform identifies compliance requirements and affected industries using NAICS code attribution of regulatory compliance requirements.



AI in Public Engagement and Accessibility

- Chatbots like AgPal provide bilingual, AI-powered guidance to help farmers navigate funding programs.
- AI enhances stakeholder interactions by summarizing consultations and identifying key concerns.



AI in Regulatory Training and Capacity Building

- Transport Canada's VR Training Program leverages AI to create immersive learning experiences for regulatory inspectors.
- AI-powered adaptive learning platforms customize training modules based on user needs.
- Provides adaptive learning tools to improve regulator skills.



AI for Compliance Monitoring

- AI-powered platforms like Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform analyze legislation and regulatory burdens.
- Natural Language Processing (NLP) as used in Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform, automates classification of regulatory provisions into different kinds of compliance categories such as obligations, permissions, and prohibitions.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is exploring AI's role in monitoring and assessing unauthorized AI-generated immigration advice. Their initiative seeks to determine whether AI-driven tools providing immigration guidance fall under the existing regulatory framework and what governance measures are required to mitigate risks while ensuring accessibility.

Case Studies: Success Stories in AI Projects

01 Transport Canada - AI Shadow Exercise

FROM PROBLEM TO GOAL

Transport Canada sought to explore how AI could help address the challenge of limited policy research capacity and improve the efficiency of drafting policy planning documents. With growing interest in foresight analysis, they needed to assess whether AI tools could support less experienced analysts to deliver work comparable to that of seasoned experts. The goal was to assess AI's effectiveness in policy research and foresight analysis.

WHAT THEY DID

Devised a test of AI's effectiveness as a support for drafting policy planning documents. TC identified four policy documents it needed to develop and assigned them both to a team of expert analysts to develop them in the traditional way, and to a team of less experienced analysts supported by AI tools such as ChatGPT and Athena by Shaping Tomorrow. They also engaged a team of evaluators from Policy Community Partnerships Office (PCPO) to perform a blind assessment of the results.

OUTCOME

AI-assisted research quality was comparable to traditional methods, improving efficiency while requiring less experienced human analysts.

LESSON LEARNED

AI is a valuable support tool that enhances the performance of subject matter experts.



02 Transport Canada - Regulatory Platform

FROM PROBLEM TO GOAL

GC Regulators have long faced challenges in managing their regulatory stock, in understanding the federal corpus for regulatory alignment, and in understanding how regulations impact stakeholders. While the content of regulations was available centrally, there was no user-friendly tool allowing regulators and analysts to sift through regulations for different purposes like finding regulations affecting an industry or to determine which regulatory provisions were administrative burden. Transport Canada, as one of the largest regulators, wanted to find a solution. The goal was to use AI to prepare a curated dataset of federal regulations and acts that would help regulators and analysts to manage and understand the regulatory stock and enable decision-making.





WHAT THEY DID

Transport Canada developed a Regulatory Platform that enables the analysis of the federal regulatory stock by regulation, by department, and by industry, with defined terms comparisons, and an inventory of standards incorporated by reference in regulations. The platform integrates with Justice Canada source data for Acts and Regulations going back to 2006, ensuring regular updates. Machine Learning models were used to classify federal regulatory provisions by type and industry (NAICS), and to count elements of administrative burden. A categorization framework was developed in collaboration with a Regulatory Innovation Consortium (made up of 6 federal departments) to support the classification of regulatory provisions by type. The Regulatory Platform combined these AI methods with other data engineering methods and a custom user interface to provide a very user-friendly experience for regulators and analysts to understand the regulatory stock.



OUTCOME

The Regulatory Platform has successfully categorized regulatory provisions by type and industry, allowing regulators to get a better sense of their regulatory stock, and allowing whole of government searches to find potential duplication or misalignments in regulations.



LESSON LEARNED

Regulatory engagement was essential to prepare labelled data for machine learning and to validate machine learning results. AI is most effective when combined with expert input and ongoing refinement.

03 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) - AgPal and Document Detective



FROM PROBLEM TO GOAL

Farmers often faced difficulties accessing relevant funding programs due to rigid search tools and dispersed information, while internal document management was hindered by the challenge of identifying duplicate and near-duplicate files. These inefficiencies impacted both service delivery and regulatory processing. The goal was to improve accessibility to funding programs and optimize document management through AI-powered tools.



WHAT THEY DID

AAFC developed AgPal, an AI-powered platform designed to help farmers easily find relevant funding programs through natural language processing (NLP) and personalized recommendations. The project reduced reliance on rigid, keywordbased searches, providing more intuitive and user-friendly access to agricultural program information. The platform also integrated with existing government databases, ensuring real-time updates.



In addition, AAFC implemented Document Detective, a tool that uses AI to identify and manage duplicate and near-duplicate documents, improving efficiency in regulatory processing. AI-driven solutions were integrated with APIs, and safeguards were introduced to ensure the accuracy of outputs. The tools were designed for scalability and have been adopted by other government agencies and international partners, such as Estonia. The project emphasized user feedback and iterative development, refining the systems over time to meet the needs of farmers and regulators.

OUTCOME

AgPal chatbot enhanced service delivery, while Document Detective improved document classification.



LESSON LEARNED

AI must align with user needs, and early stakeholder engagement is critical for adoption.

04 Transport Canada - VR Training Initiative

FROM PROBLEM TO GOAL

Traditional inspector training programs at Transport Canada faced limitations such as restricted hands-on experience, safety concerns, and logistical barriers, especially in simulating hazardous or high-risk scenarios. These gaps made it difficult to fully prepare inspectors for real-world challenges across aviation, marine, and rail sectors. The goal was to enhance safety and security inspector training by using virtual reality (VR) to simulate real-world inspections and hazardous environments.

WHAT THEY DID

Transport Canada developed a VR training program to address gaps in traditional training, such as limited hands-on experience and logistical challenges. The program created immersive inspection scenarios in aviation, marine, and rail sectors, using AI-driven avatars to simulate interactions with non-compliant individuals. The training focused on high-risk, critical thinking scenarios (DICE methodology) and was continuously refined with input from subject matter experts to align with real-world protocols. The team included training specialists, IT staff, graphic designers, and subject matter experts, and engaged with inspectors, trainers, management, policy teams, and technology vendors to ensure the program met regulatory standards and training effectiveness.

OUTCOME

The VR training program successfully provided immersive, hands-on experience, improving knowledge retention, reducing operational costs, and overcoming geographical and safety barriers.





LESSON LEARNED

Continuous collaboration with subject matter experts and iterative feedback were crucial for refining scenarios and ensuring training effectiveness. VR can complement traditional methods but requires strong internal capability development for long-term sustainability.

05 AI Centre of Excellence (AICOE) - AI Advisory and Governance

FROM PROBLEM TO GOAL

Federal departments were increasingly exploring AI but lacked the technical guidance, governance structures, and data infrastructure necessary for responsible and effective implementation. These gaps created risks around inconsistent adoption, inefficiency, and potential misuse of AI technologies. The goal is to provide technical guidance and policy support for AI projects, helping departments adopt AI in a way that is both effective and aligned with responsible governance principles.

WHAT THEY DID

The team focuses on enhancing operational efficiency by implementing AI for automation, predictive analytics, and optimizing business processes like invoice handling. AICOE provided advisory and technical support to partner departments, incubated AI use cases to demonstrate value, and helped develop governance structures for responsible AI deployment. They also prioritize data strategy and infrastructure improvements, ensuring data quality and accessibility to support AI projects. In general, the team consists of data scientists, AI specialists, business analysts, and IT experts, working closely with partner departments, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and external vendors to foster AI adoption and collaboration across the Canadian federal government.

OUTCOME

Established a framework for AI adoption in federal agencies.

LESSON LEARNED

AI governance must balance innovation with accountability.



Best Practices for Implementing AI in Regulatory Work

01 Define the Problem Before Selecting AI

AI should solve a real regulatory challenge, not be implemented for its own sake.

HOW TO:

Begin by identifying the regulatory challenge you want AI to solve:

- Frame the issue as a problem or opportunity: Use “How might we...?” statements to guide the analysis. Example: How might we improve accessibility to agricultural funding programs?
- Identify key stakeholders: Determine who is affected by the problem and who influences regulatory decisions.
- Assess the magnitude of the problem: Understand its scope, frequency, and impact.
- Define quality parameters for success: What does the situation look like when the problem is solved?
- Gather multiple perspectives: Engage regulatory staff, industry stakeholders, and AI experts to ensure a user-centric problem definition.

EXAMPLE:

AgPal chatbot was developed in response to a well-defined need for improved accessibility to agricultural funding programs, based on stakeholder feedback. AgPal’s development followed a structured approach:

- Problem Identification: Farmers and agricultural businesses faced significant challenges in identifying relevant funding programs due to the overwhelming volume of regulatory text and the complexity of bureaucratic processes, making it difficult to navigate available options efficiently.
- Stakeholder Engagement: AAFC gathered input from program administrators, farmers, and industry representatives to refine the chatbot’s scope.
- Magnitude of the Problem: inefficiency in identifying funding impacted business operations and regulatory compliance.
- Success Criteria: A successful AI system would reduce inquiry response time, provide accurate funding matches, and improve user experience.
- User-Centric Approach: The chatbot was tested iteratively with a red tests team end users to ensure alignment with real-world needs and improve accessibility.



02 Ensure Cross-Functional Collaboration and Have a Diverse Team (Leverage Different Skill Sets)

AI projects benefit from multidisciplinary teams that include policy experts, data scientists, IT specialists, legal advisors, and end-users.

HOW TO:

Create a cross-functional team with policy, IT, and user representatives and communicate regularly to ensure alignment. Cross-functional collaboration ensures that AI solutions are both technically feasible and aligned with regulatory objectives.

EXAMPLE:

Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform engaged regulatory experts to train the models, ensure data accuracy, and improve usability.

03 Prioritize Data Governance

AI is only as effective as the quality of data it processes.

HOW TO:

Ensure data quality by setting clear data standards and implement regular data validation before AI deployment. AI is only as effective as the quality and governance of the data it processes. A strong data governance framework should have the following aspects well defined:

- Data ownership: Who controls the data? Which department is responsible for maintaining and updating it?
- Usage limitations: What legal and regulatory constraints exist on AI-driven data processing?
- Purpose and scope: Clearly define how AI will use data while ensuring compliance with privacy and security policies.
- Existing governance structures: Understand departmental data governance policies and align AI initiatives accordingly.

EXAMPLE 1:

Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform required a comprehensive data governance approach to effectively classify and manage regulatory provisions.

EXAMPLE 2:

AgPal required a governance framework to manage user-provided data. Detailed protocols were established to govern the interaction with users, ensuring that any data submitted during conversations was securely handled, processed according to privacy policies, and used to improve the AI's response capabilities. This governance included stringent safeguards to prevent misuse of data or unintentional dissemination of personal information.

04 Adopt Iterative Development & Continuous Learning

Start with small-scale pilots and refine AI models based on feedback.

HOW TO:

Begin by testing AI models in low-risk environments, such as pilot projects or specific regulatory functions. Use feedback loops to improve model accuracy and address challenges before scaling.

05 Stakeholder Engagement

Involve all relevant stakeholders from the beginning. This includes regulators, policy experts, IT teams, and end-users.

HOW TO:

Collect input and establish continuous feedback channels to ensure AI solutions meet real needs.

EXAMPLE:

Transport Canada's Regulatory Platform engaged regulatory experts from the outset to ensure usability and effectiveness in identifying regulatory burdens.



06 Strong Leadership & Championing AI Initiatives

Clear leadership is essential in AI regulatory projects to navigate complex, evolving technologies, ensure alignment with strategic goals, and foster cross-functional collaboration.

HOW TO:

- Have a dedicated AI project lead or champion with the authority to make decisions, secure resources, and guide the project through challenges. This individual should have the ability to rally support from key stakeholders, foster collaboration across departments, and ensure that AI solutions are aligned with broader organizational goals.
- Manage Expectations: Regularly communicate with upper management and stakeholders about progress, setbacks, and changes to timelines. Set realistic expectations, understanding that AI development takes time and refinement, and the project will evolve over time.
- Set Clear and Realistic Goals: Establish achievable, short-term milestones to demonstrate progress. Be transparent about the iterative nature of AI projects and communicate timelines clearly to manage expectations.
- Iterate and Adapt: Maintain flexibility to adapt goals, resources, and timelines as AI projects evolve. Continuously gather real world feedback and incorporate new insights to improve the project's effectiveness. It is critical that these adaptations are clearly communicated to upper management and stakeholders to manage expectations and ensure continued support.

EXAMPLE:

Leadership Support in Transitioning to Full Integration - All the success stories shared for this playbook highlighted that leadership support is key to moving AI projects from the pilot phase to fully integrated solutions. This support includes advocating for continuous experimentation, learning from setbacks, and ensuring that AI systems evolve based on real-world feedback. In each case, leadership was directly involved in ensuring that the AI solution met strategic goals and delivered measurable value.

07 Leveraging Existing Innovation Programs and Initiatives

Engage with or leverage established programs such as the Prize Agwon initiative or the Federal Foresight Network, which provide resources, funding, and networking opportunities to foster AI-driven innovation in regulation.

HOW TO:

Actively participate in or partner with these programs to access funding, mentorship, and cutting-edge research that can accelerate AI innovation in regulatory frameworks.

08 Risk Assessment Framework

Implementing AI requires a structured risk assessment approach to identify ethical, operational, and compliance risks.

HOW TO:

A risk assessment framework should consider:

- Bias & Fairness: Ensuring AI models do not unintentionally disadvantage certain groups.
- Explainability & Transparency: Making AI decision-making processes clear and accountable.
- Security & Privacy: Ensuring data protection and regulatory compliance.

09 End-User Ground Proofing

Conduct early-stage testing and pilots involving end-users to validate AI solutions before full-scale implementation. Engaging end-users from the beginning ensures that the AI system is practical, meets real-world needs, and integrates seamlessly into existing workflows.

HOW TO:

- Gather user feedback and adjust the product to ensure real-world applicability.
- Conduct iterative testing cycles with end-users to identify usability challenges early.
- Gather structured user feedback through surveys, interviews, and real-time interactions.
- Adjust AI models based on user insights to improve performance and applicability.



From Best Practices to Key “Should Haves”

While following government-wide good practices is critical for guiding an AI project towards success, the specific elements that define the unique needs of each project often make the difference between success and failure. These “should have” principles, when carefully integrated, provide the framework necessary to achieve optimal outcomes.

In the following sections, we explore the key elements every AI project should have in mind — from iterative development to talent management — and how they serve as the foundation for successful project execution.

01 *Engaged IT Team*

KEY IDEA:

A successful AI project needs the active involvement of an IT team to ensure the project runs smoothly from a technical perspective. They are crucial in managing infrastructure, scalability, and integration.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Involve IT early and maintain strong communication throughout the project to avoid bottlenecks and ensure alignment with technical goals.

02 *Red Team Involvement*

KEY IDEA:

A **Red Team** is a group of individuals, often composed of experts from outside the core project team, with the mandate to provide an external perspective by rigorously testing, challenging assumptions, and identifying potential vulnerabilities or overlooked issues in an AI system. A Red Team provides an external perspective and critical feedback, which can help uncover potential vulnerabilities or overlooked issues in your AI system.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Invite a Red Team to challenge assumptions, test edge cases, and offer alternative viewpoints.

03 *Piecemeal/Modular Approach to Product Development*

KEY IDEA:

Break down the project into manageable, modular pieces. This allows teams to focus on smaller tasks and deliver results faster, while also reducing risk by testing smaller components before full integration.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Identify key milestones and divide your project into stages. Release and test components progressively to ensure quality at every step.

04 *Expert Advisors*

KEY IDEA:

Having experts guide your project ensures that you leverage industry knowledge and avoid common pitfalls. Advisors help refine approaches, validate assumptions, and provide critical insights.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Identify and bring in advisors from diverse fields—AI ethics, industry-specific knowledge, and domain expertise—to guide decision-making. These can be contractors, but they can also be found within government and academia.

05 *Clear Product Roadmap*

KEY IDEA:

A well-defined roadmap helps set clear expectations and priorities. It provides a vision for the project's direction and milestones, making it easier to track progress.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Continuously update and communicate the roadmap to ensure everyone is aligned and can adjust based on evolving project needs.

06 *Managing Expectations*

KEY IDEA:

Clear communication around project timelines, deliverables, and limitations is crucial to managing stakeholder expectations and avoiding disappointment.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Set realistic goals from the outset and communicate regularly about progress, delays, and changes.

07 *Clear Sense of the Value You're Trying to Achieve*

KEY IDEA:

Ensure that the project's value proposition is clearly defined. AI is an investment, and its success depends on solving a specific business problem or delivering value.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Have a clear, measurable objective for the AI project. Regularly reassess whether the project is on track to deliver that value.

08 *Talent Management*

KEY IDEA:

A successful AI project requires a team with the right skills, from AI engineers to data scientists, product managers, and business analysts. Managing and retaining this talent is key to the project's success.

ACTIONABLE TIP:

Build a cross-functional team with a mix of technical and business expertise and ensure continuous training to stay ahead of emerging AI trends.

Common Pain Points and Solutions

Every AI project, no matter how well-planned, encounters challenges along the way. This section identifies the typical obstacles teams face during the course of an AI project and offers practical solutions to overcome them.

Table 1: What are the biggest roadblocks to integrating AI in regulatory processes?

Pain Points	Challenges	Solutions and Best Practices
Governance & Compliance	Lack of clear AI policies; ethical risks.	Develop AI governance frameworks and regulatory sandboxes ¹ .
Data Challenges	Poor data quality; access restrictions.	Implement data governance strategies and standardization.
Technical & Operational Barriers	AI models not aligning with existing systems.	Ensure interoperability with legacy systems before deployment.
Stakeholder Resistance and Lack of familiarity with AI	Hesitation among regulators to adopt AI.	Provide training and AI literacy programs to increase trust. Maintaining a transparent and open channel is key.
MVP Rollout	Determining when an AI solution is ready for release.	Use an iterative approach, defining clear success metrics and a phased rollout strategy with real-world testing before full deployment.
Feature Creep	Expanding scope beyond initial goals, leading to delays and complexity.	Maintain a strict project scope, prioritize core functionalities, and use agile frameworks to manage feature requests effectively.
AI Learning Curve	AI technology evolves rapidly, requiring continuous learning and adaptation.	Invest in ongoing training programs, foster a culture of AI literacy, and leverage AI knowledge-sharing networks across agencies.
Funding	Securing and sustaining financial resources for AI projects.	Develop clear business cases, align AI projects with strategic priorities, and explore cross-agency funding opportunities.

Pain Points	Challenges	Solutions and Best Practices
Reliability & Accountability of AI Outputs	Ensuring AI decisions are transparent, explainable, and aligned with policy goals.	Implement AI model validation frameworks, establish human oversight mechanisms, and require auditable AI decision.

¹ The AI Centre of Excellence (AICOE) has helped implement governance structures in federal agencies, ensuring that AI tools adhere to ethical guidelines and comply with relevant laws.

Future Potential of AI in Regulation

Area	Impacts
Policy Foresight	AI can forecast regulatory impacts before implementation by analyzing trends, historical data, and external factors, allowing regulators to make more informed decisions.
Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement	AI-powered platforms can enhance public consultations, providing stakeholders with personalized experiences and improving the quality of feedback through sentiment analysis.
Reducing Manual Work in Regulatory Processes	AI streamlines and automates repetitive tasks (e.g., data entry, compliance checks), reducing human error and freeing up resources for higher-value tasks.
AI to Support Stakeholder Communications	AI improves the clarity and accessibility of regulatory guidance, making complex information more understandable, tailored to different stakeholder groups for greater compliance.
Facilitating Regulatory Drafting	AI can assist in drafting regulations by analyzing existing texts, identifying inconsistencies, and suggesting standardized language. This could help reduce regulatory complexity, enhance clarity, and lower the administrative burden on policymakers by streamlining document creation and revision.
Cybersecurity	AI can detect anomalies, identify vulnerabilities, and enhance threat detection for regulatory systems, improving resilience against cyberattacks.
Scenario Building	AI can simulate future regulatory environments, helping policymakers anticipate challenges and allocate resources more effectively.
Assist on/Inform Decision Making	AI-driven analytics provide data-backed insights, enabling regulators to make faster, evidence-based decisions in complex policy environments.

Conclusion

AI and ML present tremendous opportunities for regulatory modernization, but successful implementation requires clear governance, high-quality data, cross-sector collaboration, and continuous improvement. Canadian regulatory agencies have already taken significant steps in leveraging AI, and this playbook provides a roadmap for future projects.

By following best practices and learning from case studies, regulators can confidently integrate AI to enhance efficiency, ensure compliance, and support data-driven decision-making in a responsible manner.

Good luck!