

US and UK to partner on prize challenges to advance Privacy-Enhancing Technologies

The United States and the United Kingdom today announced plans to collaborate on bilateral innovation prize challenges focused on advancing privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs). This emerging group of technologies present an important opportunity to harness the power of data in a manner that protects privacy and intellectual property, enabling cross-border and cross-sector collaboration to solve shared challenges.

Announced during the Summit for Democracy, as part of a series of International Grand Challenges on Democracy-Affirming Technologies, the prize challenges will take place during the Summit's 'year of action', accelerating work to overcome technical gaps and adoption challenges related to PETs. By bringing together top minds from both countries on building viable solutions, the prize challenges will aim to help mature and facilitate adoption of these promising technologies.

PETs are already being used to tackle a range of societal challenges – from financial crime to Covid-19 – to enable data use in ways that preserve privacy. The prize challenge will build on the extensive innovation in these technologies that is already taking place in both countries across academia, industry, and government. The joint effort will reinforce the democratic principles enshrined in the New Atlantic Charter and illustrate both nations' commitment to working together to address critical transnational challenges.

Dr. Eric Lander, the President's Science Advisor and Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy said:

Privacy-enhancing technologies are a critical component of the suite of democracy-affirming capabilities that can support our shared democratic values in the face of authoritarian exploitation of emerging technologies

It is imperative that we come together as democracies to develop approaches to unlock the economic, scientific, and societal benefits of emerging technologies while protecting shared values such as privacy, accountability, and transparency.

Nadine Dorries, UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Privacy-enhancing technologies can help our democracies to harness the power of data and AI to support our citizens and businesses – in a way that reinforces our shared values”.

The UK is striving to unlock the power of data across the economy. This prize challenge will build on the UK's comprehensive National Data Strategy and help to raise the profile of these technologies on both sides of the Atlantic, laying the foundations for future collaboration.

Building on decades of investment in privacy-enhancing technologies, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the U.S. National Science Foundation, and the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology are leading an interagency initiative to jointly develop the challenges with the UK's expert body for trustworthy innovation in data and AI, the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, who will lead a team of specialists from across the UK Government.

The United States and the UK anticipate launching the prize challenges in the spring of 2022, with initial results ready to be shared at the second Summit for Democracy.