

AI Alliance Engagement Workshop

5 July 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 Workshop purpose and design

Purpose

The Scottish AI Alliance has been formed to deliver the vision for Scotland to become a leader in the development and use of trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI. The Alliance - an open-to-all stakeholder group with representation from across society - provides a focus for dialogue, collaboration and action on all things AI in Scotland.

This workshop was the first conversation with organisations from civil society and had three purposes

- To explore participants' thoughts on how the Alliance can engage most effectively with [civil society](#)
- To explore participants' thoughts on how the Alliance can engage most effectively with [Scotland's citizens](#)
- To gather participants' [recommendations](#) on what the AI Alliance should do as it moves forwards

Design

The workshop was structured around two breakout group discussions. In the first, participants considered the question [How can the AI Alliance engage effectively with civil society organisations?](#) In the second, participants explored the question [How can the AI Alliance engage directly and effectively with Scotland's citizens?](#)

The workshop conversations were facilitated in Miro. The original workshop boards are available on line. Workshop 1 is available [here](#). Workshop 2 is available [here](#).

1.2 Attendees

There were 16 attendees split into two breakout groups.

Group 1, facilitated by Alister Wilson, was

- Alan Martin, Scottish Government
- Angus Hardie, Scottish Community Alliance
- David Reilly, Scottish Communities Council
- John Fotheringham, Scottish Government
- Scott Nowbaveh, Scottish Government
- Rona Blackwood, Children's Parliament
- William Hardie, Royal Society of Edinburgh

Group 2, facilitated by Alan Caldwell, was

- Adam Lang, NESTA
- Anthony Zacharzewski, Democratic Society
- Clive Gilman, Creative Scotland
- Doreen Grove, Scottish Government
- Jeremy Darot, Scottish Government
- Mo Whelton, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Sally Dyson, SCVO
- Tanveer Parnez, BEMIS

2 Group 1 discussions

2.1 How the AI Alliance can engage effectively with civil society organisations



Group 1 identified a range of actions that fell into 6 broad clusters. The group identified 6 **priority actions** which need to be done first. These are on the post its marked with a red dot and are underlined below.

Remove the fear

- Remove the fear of AI

Consider the aspiration

- Make the aspiration of the AI Strategy 'to advance society' rather than 'to be the best in the world'

Understand your audience

- Understand your audience and be relevant
- Don't just tell – listen as well. And be responsive
- Develop a coherent programme of activity - ensure Civil Society organisations are part leaders of delivery
- Look at how other nations engage with civil society and citizens and learn from it
- Co-ordinate activities to get added value from the exercise

Speak clearly

- Clearly state why the AI Alliance wants to engage with the organisations
- Keep it simple and compelling. Explain what's in it for them.
- Comms engagement needs to be specific to organisations
- Need to be proactive in the ask - be focussed and help organisations engage

Be relatable, engaging

- Be accessible, understandable and relatable to children. And framed in rights
- Consult with children. Child led investigative approaches
- Learn lessons from the Citizens Assembly model and other models that have worked well to gather the public's input

Reach everyone

- Engagement can't just be digital
- Work through national intermediary groups and organisations and COI groups
- Reach the 'harder to get at' communities. Include support and resources to do this
- Have the capacity to do this - don't expect the sector to accommodate it within its own capacity!
- Don't overpromise and under deliver
- There needs to be a baseline level of engagement - and then bespoke on top of that

2.2 How the AI Alliance can engage directly and effectively with Scotland's citizens



Group 1 identified a range of actions that fell into 5 broad clusters. The group identified 4 [recommendations for action](#). These are on the post its marked with red dots – two dots signifies that two members of the group recommended a particular action - and are underlined below.

Show how AI is relevant

- Find out what people are talking about - eg climate change - and show how AI is relevant to/fits in with that
- Make AI relevant and accessible to all citizens
- Use creative ways to showcase what AI is...
- ... Not just case studies (although good ones are useful)
- Be proactive and find opportunities in the calendar of existing events - organisations, communities, issues of local importance to (eg) development trusts
- Set out issues around how AI is changing work

Work through channels

- Work with intermediary bodies as a way to engage with audiences that don't believe AI is relevant to them
- Work through Community Councils (inc website)
- Make AI - and the AI Alliance - more familiar. Find a way to replicate the experience of zoom – where using it became familiar and everyday
- The AI platform has to be sophisticated in understanding how people communicate and has to fit it

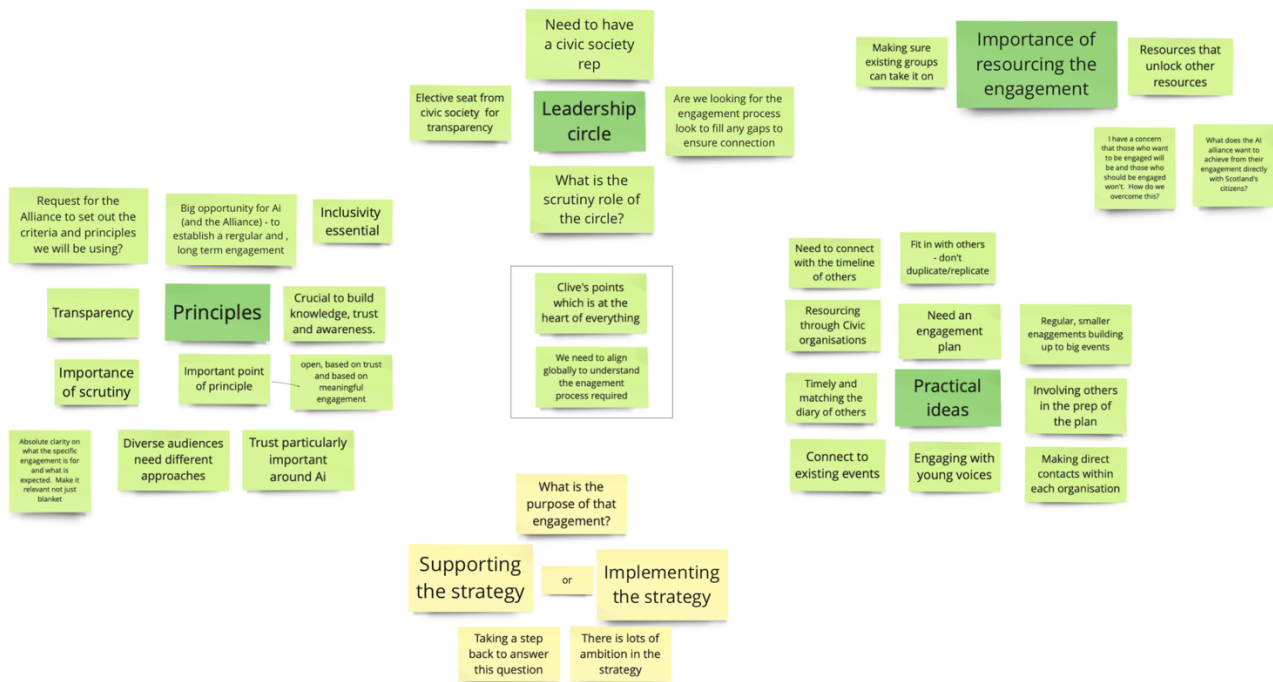
Embed the approach

- Make this a continuous process - not a one off engagement
- Have a range of approaches - don't do just "a survey" or "focus groups".

Make this real: listen, adjust, attribute

- To get a proper conversation going, the Alliance needs to
 - ensure ideas, thoughts, concerns and values shape the approach
 - build on good practice of government by listening (eg to children)
- Actions from these conversations - and changes in strategy and direction as a result of feedback and shared ideas – need to be attributed to the [consultation] process
- Means and recourse – establish a mechanism for this

3 Group 2 discussions



Group 2 captured the discussion of both questions on a single Miro board and identified 6 broad themes:

The issue at the heart of engaging civil society and citizens

- The AI strategy assumes a level of national agency in an international market. How robust – or fragile – is this? How can it be safeguarded?
- Scotland needs to align [its AI delivery plan] with top global actors in AI to understand the engagement process required

Be clear about – and clearly state – the purpose of engagement

- Ensure civil society organisations understand why they are being engaged (ie supporting the strategy or implementing the strategy)
- There is lots of ambition in the strategy – what is the ask?

Principles of engagement

- Set out the criteria and principles of engagement. This is crucial to building knowledge, trust and awareness. These must include
 - Inclusivity (essential!)
 - Transparency
- The process must be open, based on trust – particularly important around AI - and based on *meaningful* engagement.
- Establish regular, long term engagement processes
- There must be absolute clarity on what the specific engagement is for and what is expected. Make it relevant not just blanket

- Diverse audiences need different approaches

Resourcing engagement

- Be clear about what the AI alliance wants to achieve from their engagement directly with Scotland's citizens [and resource it to deliver that aspiration]
- Provide resources to unlock other resources
- Make sure existing groups can take it on the ask
- We must be concerned that those who *want* to be engaged will be and those who *need* to be engaged won't necessarily be. How do we overcome this?

Practical suggestions

- Start with regular, smaller engagements and build up to big events
- Involve others in preparing the plan
- Make direct contacts within each organization
- Engage with young voices
- Connect to existing events
- Connect with the timeline/diary of activities of others – and don't duplicate or replicate existing work
- Resource through civil society organisations

Working with the leadership circle

- The leadership circle needs to have a civil society rep/elective seat for transparency
- Clarify and communicate the scrutiny role of the leadership circle
- Ensure the engagement process fills any gaps to strengthen the connection

In conclusion, group 2 highlighted the importance of

- The AI Alliance co-producing an engagement plan with those civil society organisations willing to help guide and deliver the engagement strategy
- This plan including a 'framework for engagement' to take each of the AI works teams and map them against groups of 'engaged' and 'not so engaged' citizens and how important it is for them to have knowledge around AI

This will help to deliver the principles, practicalities and leadership illustrated in the points above.

4 Final plenary

The final plenary session provided an opportunity for all participants to emphasise key points and recommendations to the AI Alliance. As well as the priorities and recommendations set out in sections 2 and 3, participants emphasised that

- The Alliance needs to be thoughtful about designing the engagement strategy
- The leadership group needs someone from civil society on it
- How will civil society – and citizens – stay informed and abreast of everything that is going on in AI?
- AI will cause divisions in society. These are complex and emerging and it is not clear where they lie. The Alliance needs to keep on top of this to understand the dynamic and needs to bring that knowledge into the strategy delivery process
- The Alliance needs to ensure diversity in consultation on – and implementation of – the strategy. Diversity will help to identify the key leverage points.
- Diversity is also key to ensure implementation is achieved through a variety of mechanisms and channels
- The Alliance will need to make the case strongly to Scotland's civil society organisations that Scotland can achieve its vision of becoming a leader in the development and use of trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI
- Scotland needs a 'framework of engagement' to move forwards, identifying how engaged different groups across society are likely to be and prioritising activity against how important it is for them to have knowledge (for example, many people who are 'digitally' excluded will be passively affected by AI so they might be hard to engage, but it could be critical that they have knowledge).

5 Summary of the key themes

The purpose of this workshop was to explore how the AI Alliance might best engage with Scotland's civil society organisations and Scotland's citizens. The conversation identified 3 key themes which the Alliance should address as it moves forwards:

Preparing the ground

- The Alliance will need to make the case strongly to Scotland's civil society organisations that Scotland can achieve its vision of becoming a leader in the development and use of trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI
- Scotland needs a 'framework of engagement' to move forwards, identifying how engaged different groups across society are likely to be and prioritising activity against how important it is for them to have knowledge (for example, many people who are 'digitally' excluded will be passively affected by AI so they might be hard to engage, but it could be critical that they have knowledge).

Engaging with civil society organisations

To ensure that its engagement with civil society organisations is effective, the Alliance should clearly state the purpose of its engagement and what it hopes to achieve. Communication should be

- Inclusive and transparent
- Simple and compelling
- Customised to be relevant to different audiences
- Cognisant of the fact that some groups and individuals have concerns and fears about AI
- Accessible, understandable and relatable to children and all stakeholders
- Conducted through a variety of channels and not solely on digital platforms
- Properly resourced

The Alliance should co-develop an engagement plan with civil society organisations willing to help guide implementation of the strategy. The plan should confirm the principles set out above and also set out how the Alliance intends to reach audiences that need to be engaged but are less interested or willing to participate.

The Alliance should appoint a representative from civil society to the leadership group.

Engaging with citizens

To ensure that its engagement with citizens is effective, the Alliance should develop clear and consistent messaging that shows how AI is relevant to citizens. It should be proactive in seeking out events and conversations already happening in the wider community and participate in them. Its approach should focus on issues that are important to people – climate change, for example – and show how AI is relevant to them.

Citizen engagement needs to be a continuing process, not just a one off. The Alliance should involve a range of organisations in co-ordinating diaries and reaching groups. The Alliance should also recognise that this is not necessarily a straightforward activity and should start with regular, smaller events to learn how to communicate effectively and the build up to bigger events.

Civil society organisations can support citizen engagement if resourced.