

EXECUTIVE BRIEF NO. 001

What Is an AI Inventory? The Foundation of Effective AI Governance

An AI inventory is a centralized record of every AI system your organization uses, and the foundation of effective AI governance. What it is, why it matters, what to include, and how to start.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An AI inventory is a centralized, living record of every AI system, application, model, or service used across an organization.
- You cannot govern what you cannot see. Most organizations already run dozens, or hundreds, of AI tools, many adopted without formal approval.
- A useful inventory captures the owner, purpose, data processed, risk level, and review status of each system.
- It is the foundation that makes every other governance activity easier: risk assessments, policies, audits, and board reporting.
- It is an ongoing process, not a one-time project. Start small and expand as the program matures.

GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- An AI inventory is the prerequisite for every downstream control. Without it, risk assessments, policies, and audits rest on assumptions rather than facts.
- Shadow AI, tools adopted without approval, is the norm, not the exception. The inventory must actively discover use, not just record what was formally approved.
- The inventory is a living control. A point-in-time list decays quickly as adoption changes across the organization.
- Ownership and accountability for each system matter as much as the technical detail. They determine who answers when a system fails.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

- Do we know, with confidence, every AI system and tool in use across the organization today?
- Who owns each AI system, and is that accountability documented?
- How do we discover AI tools that employees adopt without formal approval?
- Is our inventory reviewed on a set cadence, or is it a one-time list?
- Can we produce our AI inventory on demand for a regulator, auditor, or the board?

RELATED REFERENCE SHEETS

- AGE-002 · AI Use Policy
- AGE-003 · AI Risk Assessment

