Algorithm Threshold Assessment Questionnaire

*Please complete this form when designing or planning the use of algorithms, referencing the* [*AIA User Guide*](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide) *and* [*Glossary*](#Glossary) *below. Your answers will help determine whether a more in-depth* [*Algorithm Impact Assessment*](https://data.govt.nz/assets/data-ethics/algorithm/Algorithm-impact-assessment-questionnaire.docx) *(AIA) is required for higher-risk initiatives to fully identify potential impacts and controls.*

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| 1. Project and Threshold Assessment information
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| 1.1 | **Project name** | (the “**Project**”). |
| 1.2 | **Personnel details** | ***Specify name, role and email address:*** |
| * **Author** (i.e. completes this form)
 |  |
| * **Business Owner**
 |  |
| * **Executive Sponsor**
 |  |
| * **Approver**
 |  |
| 1.3 | **Decision** | □ Low risk - no Algorithm Impact Assessment required□ Material impacts or sensitive information risks identified - [Algorithm Impact Assessment](https://data.govt.nz/assets/data-ethics/algorithm/Algorithm-impact-assessment-questionnaire.docx) required □ Includes personal information – check with your privacy team if a [Privacy Impact Assessment](https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/privacy-security-and-risk/privacy/assess-privacy-risk/assess-project-privacy-risk/) is required |
| 1.4 | **Review/decision date** |  |

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| 1. Project Summary
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|  | ***Instructions*** | ***User Guide support*** | ***Your answers*** |
| 2.1 | Briefly describe the Project including:* the **problem** you’re solving and **how** the algorithm will help
* The **algorithm** and supporting technology to be used
* The **use case, value proposition** and expected **outcomes**
* The **potential harms** and **risks** that may arise
* **Project phase** and expected **start date**
 | See [Glossary](#Glossary) and relevant sections of User Guide:* [Section 2: Project information](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#Project-information)
* [Section 3: Overall risk profile (potential best and worst-case scenarios)](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#Overall-risk-profile)
* [Section 7: Privacy](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#Privacy)
* [Section 8: Bias and other unfair outcomes](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#Bias-and-other-unfair-outcomes)
* [Section 10: Safety, security and reliability](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#Safety-security-and-reliability)
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| 1. Screening questions
 | **Yes** | **No** | **Unsure** |
| 3.1 | Will the algorithm be used to automate, aid, replace or inform any **operational** **decisions** that are likely to have a [**material impact**](#Materialimpact)on any individuals, communities or other groups, including iwi and Māori?  |  |  |  |
| 3.2 | Will the algorithm be used to automate, aid, replace or inform any **policy decisions** that are likely to have a [**material impact**](#Materialimpact) on individuals, communities or other groups, including iwi and Māori?  |  |  |  |
| 3.3 | Does the Project involve any form of [**artificial intelligence**](#AI) such as machine learning, generative AI, facial recognition or similar that is likely to have a [**material impact**](#Materialimpact) on any individuals, communities or other groups, including iwi and Māori? |  |  |  |
| 3.4 | Does the algorithm use any [**sensitive** **personal information**](#Sensitiveinfo), such as information about a person’s ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, sexual orientation, financial position, health, biometric or genetic information, disability and/or religious, cultural or political beliefs? |  |  |  |

**If you answer “Yes” or “Unsure” to one or more questions, please complete the** [**Algorithm Impact Assessment Questionnaire**](https://data.govt.nz/assets/data-ethics/algorithm/Algorithm-impact-assessment-questionnaire.docx) **and an** [**AIA Report**](https://data.govt.nz/assets/data-ethics/algorithm/Algorithm-impact-assessment-report-template.docx)**.**

***If in doubt, we recommend completing a full Algorithm Impact Assessment***

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| **Author sign-off:** |
| **……………………………………………………………………………** |
| Name |  | Position | Date |
|  |  |  |
| **Approver sign-off (where the answer to all screening questions is “No”):** |
| *I confirm that I have considered the potential impacts of using the relevant algorithm and that it is* ***not*** *likely to have a material impact on any individuals, communities or other groups, including iwi and Māori; that it does* ***not*** *use any sensitive personal information; and that it presents a low risk overall such that completion of the more detailed risk assessment in the Algorithm Impact Assessment Questionnaire is not necessary.* |
| **……………………………………………………………………………** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Name |  | Position | Date |
|  |  |  |

Glossary

**Algorithm Impact Assessment / AIA:** The goal of an AIA is to identify both any potential harmful impacts of an algorithm initiative **and** appropriate controls or mitigants before deployment.

**Artificial intelligence / AI:** A broad term used in the AIA documentation to describe a range of technologies and techniques that can recognise patterns, reach conclusions, make informed judgments, optimise practices, predict future behaviour and automate repetitive functions. That includes machine learning, natural language processing, generative AI, computer vision and biometric technologies.

**Algorithm:** A procedure or formula for solving a problem or carrying out a task. Although they can be used in a non-digital context, the AIA documentation uses this term to describe a computational procedure or set of instructions designed to process data inputs and return an output, perform a specific task, solve a particular problem or produce a machine learning or other AI model. See the full [Glossary](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#glossary) in the User Guide for examples of how different agencies have defined ‘algorithm’ for their own purposes.

**Facial recognition:** Facial recognition algorithms detect and analyse faces and create unique digital biometric templates that can be used to match and identify individuals in photos, videos and real time.

**Generative AI:** uses input data or user prompts to generate material that closely resembles human-created content, such as written text, code, images, music, simulations and videos. Generative AI models work by analysing large volumes of training data to detect and replicate patterns and relationships in that training data so they can then match user prompts to the identified patterns and probabilistically “fill in the blank” by predicting and generating the next word/feature etc.

**Harm:** Adverse consequences for people of an algorithm’s deployment and operation in the real world. The AIA process aims to anticipate, identify and avoid potential harms.

**Machine learning:** A sub-field of AI involving algorithms that enable computer systems to iteratively learn from and then make decisions, inferences or predications based on data. These algorithms build a model from training data to perform a specific task on new data without being explicitly programmed to do so.

**Material impact:** In the context of the AIA process, this means something that could reasonably be expected to affect the rights, opportunities or access to critical resources or services of individuals, communities or other groups in a real and potentially negative or harmful way, or that could similarly influence a decision-making process with public effect. For example, decisions about the administration of justice or democratic processes that impact people, or decisions impacting people’s access to education, social welfare, health, housing, ACC or immigration services. For further detail, see the section on “[When does the AIA process apply?](https://data.govt.nz/docs/algorithm-impact-assessment-user-guide/#When-does-the-AIA-process-apply)” of the User Guide.

**Personal information:** Information about an identifiable individual. The information does not need to name the individual, as long as they are identifiable in other ways.

**Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA):** Similar to an AIA,a PIA is a tool used by agencies to help identify and assess privacy risks arising from their collection, use or handling of personal information.

**Sensitive personal information:** [Sensitive personal information](https://privacy.org.nz/assets/New-order/Your-responsibilities/Privacy-resources-for-organisations/Sensitive-Personal-Information-and-the-Privacy-Act-2020.pdf) is information about an individual that has real significance to them, is revealing of them, or generally relates to matters that an individual might wish to keep private. The Privacy Act does not prescribe fixed categories of “sensitive” personal information and any personal information can be sensitive, depending on the particular context and surrounding circumstances, including cultural perspectives. Certain types of personal information are inherently sensitive, however, including health, genetic, biometric, financial information and the personal information of children and young people.