

On the Field

**Strategies for
confronting AI at work
for workers, unions,
and the public**

Credits

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Introduction

This playbook gives workers and anyone curious an introduction to strategies related to the procurement process of AI technology at work and in government.

All technology being introduced into a workplace goes through some type of procurement process. Broadly speaking, “technology procurement” refers to the methods that employers, businesses, and governments use to request information about, acquire, and deploy technology. But the process through which technology procurement happens is often obscure and complex, leading to corporations and governments alike making procurement decisions without oversight, input, or control by the people it affects most. As a result, technology procurement is rarely done with the best interests of workers or the public in mind, and is instead driven primarily by corporate profit motives and powers consolidating to try controlling communities.

Understanding how technology gets introduced into the workplace or your neighborhood establishes a path to resist increased automation, surveillance, work speedup, and other forms of exploitation by emerging technologies. These steps are also critical for accountability, when it is available. Documenting what the employer or government buyer understood about what risks a technology introduces creates a critical record for worker and other communities to rely on later to trace harm to its sources, intentions, and incentive systems. Accumulating and protecting this evidence, no matter what venue it is finally accumulated for, itself preserves what could become a future source of power.

Organized workers, whether in a union or other formation, are uniquely positioned to demand information about technology procurement, negotiate protections for workers from new technologies during the procurement process, and protect public's privacy. They are more likely to advocate for conditions, which technology inevitability impact, that better protect workers, customers, consumers, and the public.

While this playbook provides a general perspective for a wide variety of workers, we know that certain sectors may face sector-specific harms that may not be adequately covered. This is, we hope, an introduction that many variations build from and experiment with. We seek to provide a starting point for workers, with sector-specific examples. We encourage you to investigate the ways in which your sector is uniquely harmed by the integration of these kinds of technologies into your workplaces. We also hope that by providing a more general perspective, it will enable workers across sectors to collaborate together to address common problems.

How to Use This Playbook

This playbook will outline several ways workers can leverage power to prevent foreseeable harm to workers, the quality of services, and society. We included a range of interventions that can accommodate workplaces at different “stages” of tech procurement and deployment (“before,” “during,” and “after” procurement). We also included a range of activities that can be adopted by workers, whether formally unionized or informally organized, for a focused campaign.

This playbook offers workers a variety of activities, tools and strategies to engage employers (and government), but also to create a clear record that documents what an employer knew before a particular technology was deployed. Whether or not employers or government agencies are willing to create opportunities for worker or public input in the tech procurement process, these strategies support workers’ ability to documenting their meaningful and informed attempts to demand participation.

Procurement Process

Technology procurement processes differ greatly across employers and local governments, but at a general level procurement can be broken down into this general process:

Problem Definition	What is the issue that we think we need technology to solve?
Requests for Information or Proposals	How can we define what we want technology to look like?
Technology Sources	Who are we getting the technology from?
Solution Methodology	How will that technology work to solve the problem?
Vendor Negotiation	What are the terms for acquiring and using the technology?
Contract Monitoring	How is the technology performing?

Procurement Plays for Every Stage

Understand how procurement works

First, you need to map how procurement works at your workplace.

Plays 1-3 are introductory and do not relate to any specific “stage”. These introductory plays do not focus on any specific technology. They offer activities that can help with understanding the specific process of technology procurement at your workplace.

Once you understand how procurement works, if there is a specific incoming technology you are concerned about, identify what “Stage” in the procurement process that technology is in and find the corresponding “Plays”.

Before

Plays 4-7 are helpful when you are targeting a specific technology and before the contract has been signed. These activities help you build power, knowledge, and cohere around problems, priorities and strategy around a specific technology before the procurement process has begun.

These plays build on the shared understanding of your workplace’s procurement process and workers’ rights related to technology procurement gained from completing the activities described in **Plays 1-3**.

Generally, procurement discussions start when your employer is either being sold something by a vendor or defining the problem they want “solved”. It opens early opportunities for workers and advocates to influence how “Requests for information” or “Requests for Proposals” are drafted. **Play 5** “Redefining the Problem” and **Play 6** “Requests’ Drafting” offer ways for workers to influence these critical early procurement steps.

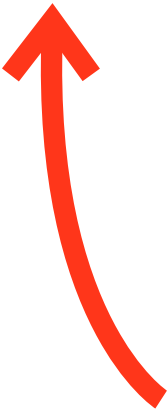
During

Plays 8-9 focus on what to do once the procurement process is underway. Requests for information or proposals may have already been published. Your employer may already be weighing different vendors. These plays potentially create leverage over contract terms that workers can fight for to mitigate foreseeable harms.

Sometimes consultants, sales pitches or marketing teams for vendors are pushing a product or service before an employer has defined a problem or evaluated various solutions. This is a critical difference that should flag for workers that they should consider redefining the problem (see **Play 5**).

After

After a technology has been procured, **Plays 10-13** are the best activities to build on when seeking accountability for harm, preventing repeats of future harm, and identifying what incentive systems may prevented earlier scrutiny. The power, knowledge, and educational activities in **Plays 1-7** remain relevant here.



These are not strict, bright-line processes. While we can talk about what to do "before" or "after" technology is procured, the reality is more complicated than that.

There's always a technology that has not yet been procured, there's always something being procured, and there's always something that has already been procured.

The important thing is to be aware of the general intervention points along the pathway so that you know where to best jump in.

A couple common exceptions to the general process:

(1) An employer may be considering a sales pitch for a technology that measures how many active, closed, or re-opened activities workers have for the purposes of reporting and hiring. It also creates a metric that supervisors might use in performance evaluation or discipline.

(2) An employer might be procuring a company-wide digital ID system for the purpose of streamlining access to various software applications that also creates a chronological log of every log-in, activity, and other data points.



Both scenarios could have benefited from worker involvement earlier in the process of problem definition and flagging unintended consequences.

An Introduction to Procurement

How do we begin to leverage worker power to influence how tech is being introduced into our worksite?

Play **1** Procurement Power Mapping

Goals



- Trace and identify procurement pathways
- Locate leverage points

Helps to have



- Access to workplace procurement policies, contracts, and/or personnel
- Time to learn how to do procurement mapping
- Secure document sharing accounts that are inaccessible to your employers (i.e. careful about using email or document sharing accounts at work that employers may have access to).

Why do it?

Mapping your employer's procurement processes will help you and your co-workers identify and organize around leverage points that present opportunities to flex worker power.

Strategically intervening in the procurement process can prevent the acquisition or deployment of technologies that risks harming workers, including job performance monitoring systems, automation software or hardware (including AI), communication surveillance platforms, and more. At the very least, workers can also identify moments in the process, such as vendor evaluation, negotiation and contract monitoring, where workers might still be able to mitigate harm or create accountability processes to address or prevent foreseeable harm. Perhaps some will choose to leverage it for other valued benefits.

The earlier in the process workers can get involved (i.e. the problem definition stage), the more impact workers can have on protecting themselves and the public from risks presented by new technologies. However, even if a technology is already being used at your workplace, there are defensive strategies that can mitigate, document, and prevent future harm.

Procurement pathways will look different in the private versus public sector. Public sector procurement may, for example, have more reporting requirements that makes access to procurement policies, contracts, and spending more available.



Steps

1: Orientation

Familiarize workers with the general issue and power dynamics involved in procurement generally and technology procurement specifically, as discussed in resources like these reports by the **Electronic Privacy Information Center** (EPIC) and **In the Public Interest**.

2: Find the rules

Locate any current procurement rules, policies, or pipelines for your employer. For example, in New York City the municipal Procurement Policy Board has published a comprehensive list of the **rules** that govern procurement by city agencies. Knowing the different rules that govern specific types of procurement, how those rules are established, rules about public access like Open Meetings Laws, and avenues to influence decision-makers or challenge those rules is a critical first step for investigating opportunities to gain leverage within any process.

3. Investigate actual practice

Knowing the rules on paper is where you start, but trying to investigate and interview people familiar with how the procurement pipeline actually works in practice is also critical.

General types of procurement

- **Pilot or demonstration project procurement:** Typically includes a shorter time frame, limited scope (geographic, work area, etc.), and less scrutiny over the vendor selection, impact assessment, and less reporting requirements in the public sector). In some places, multiple pilot projects with different vendors may be supervised by an agency to compare vendor performance under comparable conditions.
 - **Competitive procurement:** Typically is the most generic process initiated by a Request for Information or Request for Proposals, followed by evaluating the vendor and solution's cost, capacity and responsiveness.
 - **Sole-source procurement:** When only one vendor is capable of performing a service, the evaluation of the vendor is about their unique capacity, contracts are usually under stricter scrutiny because of the lack of competition and risk of corruption.
 - **Master agreements:** More typical in technology procurement, one "parent" or "master" contract controls the terms of purchasing goods or using services that are invoiced or requested through "direct orders" on an as-needed basis.
- 

**Why does
the type of
procurement
matter?**

4. Ask questions

If your union has a specific clause in its collective bargaining agreement (CBA) that permits information requests, try using that to learn more about your employer's methods. Even absent such a clause, federal labor law generally requires employers to supply information to unions that is relevant to bargaining or managing a CBA. Given the effects that technology has on basic working conditions, workers, and the quality of the work, this means that your employer is likely required to provide at least basic information about its procurement processes upon request. For a high-level guide for how to map and track concerns in procurement processes, take a look at this [report](#) by Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems (MAPS). The goal of procurement mapping is to identify the procedures and agents with control over each of the stages of procurement so that you can create strategies to intervene. For example, if your employer has a team that meets to identify areas for "improvement," that will often be a key moment to redefine the problem and point to alternative solutions.

Different types of procurement may obscure access to information about how money is being spent, what uses are contemplated, and what a technology intended for. This truncates the kind of participation and oversight workers (and the public) may have over how technology impacts the workers, workplace, and work.

Sample questions

- Are there any written policies related to procurement? Technology procurement?
- What types of procurement methods does this workplace use?
- Who is involved in the procurement process, and at what stage?
- Are there any interoffice task forces or other meetings where new technology procurement is discussed, led, or supervised?
- What is the process for identifying problems to procure technology services around?
- What is the policy for hearing sales pitches from technology companies?
- Are there technology industry-hosted conferences, convenings or expo's that leaders in this workplace attend to be sold new technology solutions? (If so, ask to have a worker representative invited)
- Is there a process for identifying what problems need technology solutions?

5. Identify leverage

Combine what you learn both about the formal rules and unwritten practices or workplace norms that you or your coworkers are aware of. Take particular note of any opportunities for input or worker control over procurement, such as creating worker committees or notice-and-comment requirements.

6. Know why

Getting workers into the room to challenge management's understanding of what needs to be changed can, at best, prevent harmful technology before an institution spends money. In the very least, it documents attempts by the workers and the public to prevent harm, creating a record of decision-makers and what they knew.

Learn more

In the Public Interest and Local Progress, “Harnessing the Power of Procurement: Issues, Considerations, and Best Practices to Advance Equity in the Contracting of Public Goods and Services,” July 2023

<https://inthepublicinterest.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/0723-ITPI-Procurement.pdf>

Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems (MAPS) (2025)

<https://www.mapsinitiative.org/content/dam/maps-initiative/en/maps-methodology/main-methodology-documents/maps-main-methodology.pdf>

Roya Pakzad and Cynthia Conti-Cook, “Key Considerations for Responsible AI Procurement in the Public Sector”, Taraaz, Aug. 2025

<https://taraazresearch.org/ai-procurement>

IEEE Standard for the Procurement of Artificial Intelligence and Automated Decision Systems, 2025

<https://standards.ieee.org/ieee/3119/10729/>

AI Procurement Lab Resources

<https://www.aiprocurementlab.org/resources>

Roya Pakzad, “A Guiding Framework for Vetting Technology Vendors Operating in the Public Sector,” Ford Foundation, 2023

https://www.fordfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/final_ford-foundation-guiding-framework-r3-full-document-final2.pdf

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<https://epic.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FINAL-EPIC-Outsourced-Automated-Report-w-Appendix-Updated-9.26.23.pdf>

Play 2

Collective Bargaining Contract Audits and Review

Why do it?

It is critical to any effort to resist harmful technology in the workplace to stop and take stock of your current leverage. For locals with a contract or side agreement about AI, contract auditing (**see Play 11**) can help ensure access to information, resources, and data needed for other plays below.

Goals



- Identify current demands (**see Play 4** for more details about planning future demands)
- Recognize vulnerabilities and current protections.

Helps to have



- Access to collective bargaining contract, worker contracts, or technology-related side agreements



Steps

1: Find the rules

In your CBA, look for any sections or clauses relating to technology, AI, or procurement. Even if your CBA does not contain provisions explicitly mentioning AI or technology procurement, more general clauses may nevertheless cover include protections related to technology. For example, protections related to management decisions, wages, discipline, scheduling, or working conditions. The acquisition and deployment of new technologies often have profound effects on many historical labor concerns that support demands for information or control over the conditions technology creates.

For example, a **recent CBA** between the Teamsters Union and UPS includes explicit sections devoted to the acquisition, deployment, and use of technology. The CBA contains prohibitions on certain uses of technology, which are designed to ensure job security and high-quality working conditions (e.g. “During the term of this Agreement such [technological] changes shall not include the use of drones or driverless vehicles to transport, deliver or pick up packages.”)

It also creates a joint committee of workers and employer representatives that meets to determine if any technological changes

threaten to violate the CBA. Finally, the Teamsters' contract limits the ability of their employer to discipline workers using technology (No employee shall be disciplined based solely upon information received from GPS, telematics, or any successor system that similarly tracks or surveils an employee's movements . . .").

Recently won CBAs across higher education are following suit. University of Michigan's Lecturers' Employee Organization, AFT Local 6244, AFL-CIO Librarians, Archivists, and Curators Bargaining Unit (LEO-GLAM) establishes the constitution of a joint labor management committee to review technology decisions before they are implemented, as does University Staff United workers at Michigan. Across higher ed, recent union contracts from CUNY, Yale, and elsewhere have also included similar protections.

As the AAUP AI ad hoc committee wrote earlier in **January 2026 in AAUP's** *Academe* magazine, many CBAs in higher ed will not have protections as robust as those secured by the Teamsters nor by the named higher ed unions, it is nonetheless valuable to understand what protections your contract lacks as well as the protections it contains. Reviewing your CBA positions yourself and other workers to take further strategic action.

2: Investigate actual practice

Find other unions who have passed explicit technology related rules and reach out, ask how it is working in practice.

3: Ask questions

Ask your union leaders questions about what information you can demand. Ask other unions who have included some tech-specific protections questions about what is possible, what has worked, and how workers in your workplace can build.

Sample questions

- (Internally) Does anything in your existing contract protect aspects of how technology is being used? Has anyone tested or tried to interpret existing language to include rights to request information, have notice and comment, or other protections from the introduction of new technology? Who is interpreting it narrowly? How can we change how existing language is interpreted so it gives workers more rights to influence technology procurement?
- (To other unions that have included tech terms in CBAs) How are the protections working in practice? Who controls information? Is there sufficient resources to review information, if it is being shared? What kind of additional protections do they wish they included? How is technology still being used in harmful ways despite of newly won technology-specific language?

4: Identify leverage

Combine what you have learned from mapping power in the procurement process with the existing language in your contract that supports worker influence over technology procurement.

Learn more

AI Committee, AAUP, Artificial Intelligence and Academic Professions, AAUP Academe, Jan. 2026

<https://www.aaup.org/issue/spring-2026/bringing-fragments-together>

“Negotiating Tech: An Inventory of U.S. Union Contract Provisions for the Digital Age”

<https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/negotiating-tech/>

Nielsen, Chris, Michelle Mahon, Luis Bocaletti, Joe Henry, Mateos Chekol, Hannah Drummond, Anna Brown, and Tracy Kurowski. 2026. “Case Study: National Nurses United (Professional Performance Committee).” in Luddite Lab Resource Hub, edited by T. M. Park, A. Hanna, and S. Song. DAIR Institute

<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/uvgbyd32/production/7c88723fbaf28433eff62ada17c629b0200d7462.pdf>

Luddite Lab, DAIR Institute, 2026

<https://labor.dair-institute.org/case-studies>

Play 3

Raising Workplace Awareness About Potential Harms

Why do it?

Because procurement often happens behind closed doors, it can feel like these harmful new systems simply appear without warning. This risks a sense of powerlessness to stop harmful tech from infiltrating our daily lives and work sites. By gathering information about your employer's procurement process, you can get ahead of these changes. You can take back power over the kinds of technologies used in your workplace. Explaining the procurement process can also demonstrate that many of your co-workers' grievances have a common cause, uniting workers who otherwise thought they were facing distinct and unrelated problems.

See Play 11 for a deeper discussion of various types of corporate technology-induced harms.

Goals



- Increase collective familiarity with the harms of technology in the workplace
- Uncover common roots of workplace harms
- Organize around collective grievances.

Helps to have



- Communication infrastructure and capacity
- Familiarity with workplace technology systems and relevant laws, standards, and regulations



Steps

1: Document harms

Survey workers with questions related to the impact new (or old) technologies are having on their work flow, agency, autonomy, co-working relationships, safety, etc.

2: Investigate the tech's "origin story"

Try to learn about what the intentions your employer had for this technology as well as how the technology has been marketed — what does it sell? Work backwards from grounded concerns.

For example, if your employer has recently implemented an email system that tracks how many messages per hour each employee sends, trace that decision back through the procurement process to illustrate how increased worker stress and burnout is attributable to a series of tech procurement-related decisions and discussions. Here are some examples of points which could offer a site of resistance that might have derailed the implementation of a harmful system:

- Workers report how a new time tracking system is causing stress and getting cited in performance evaluations and disciplinary actions against workers who don't meet their new quotas;
- The contract that the employer signed to acquire this technology only subscribes to

it for a year, meaning that after a year they will have to make another decision about whether to renew it;

- The goal of this technology was to surveil employees in order to scare them into doing more work, and to allow for tracking of their activity so that they could be disciplined if they didn't work harder;
- The employer got this technology from a burgeoning AI corporation that markets itself as being able to drastically increase worker productivity, and which is trying to create dependency on its systems in many businesses;
- The employer originally wanted a more moderate system that would have only provided end-of-week summaries about worker activities;
- The employer thought that workers were wasting a lot of their time and idling on their work computers.

Working backwards in this way reveals a sequence of misconceptions, errors, and exploitation, which worker influence and input might have prevented.

- Maybe the employer was misinformed that workers weren't getting enough work done, failed to investigate and made an assumption based on an anecdotal report

by a single supervisor who saw one worker surfing the web one day.

- Or perhaps the employer didn't fully understand what kind of system they wanted to fix the "problem" and got duped by a technology company with an aggressive sales team into subscribing for a trial year.
- The employer may have been under the impression that the best way to get employees to do more work was to scare them, when that really would just increase worker disaffection and resistance to the new technology.

At any of these stages, it would have been possible for a union to intervene with a counter-narrative, push back against the marketing team, offer a counter-proposal or counter-factual, and avert the procurement of the harmful technology.

3: Dig deeper

Reviewing the marketing materials and hearing sales pitches alongside your employer will not reveal everything you need to know about a tech company. Investigative research about both the technical and corporate background of a technology and technology company will help reveal more than marketing materials. How it was developed, originally invested in, marketed, and how its use cases expanded can be critical to understanding what the

tech does, where it will fail, and who it serves. (**See Play 8** for more details about how to evaluate materials from tech vendors and how to find experts who can help you interpret materials and vendors' responses to questions). For example:

a. Technical investigation

- Research the capacities of a technology (ask for the “bill of materials”)
- Research how the applications collect data across multiple types of operating systems (Apple, Windows, etc)
- Research what data storage systems they rely on (AWS, Microsoft Azure)

b. Corporate investigation

- Research who invested in the development of the technology
- Map how data assets create value for this company or its investors
- Connect the dots to other companies and data assets a company's investors have

4: Know why

Going through this process with other workers shows how these systems develop and, more importantly, the ways you have power to flag the acquisition and deployment of technologies that surveil and exploit workers.

Learn more

Alex Press, “How the U.S. Labor Movement Is Confronting AI”, Feb. 6, 2025

[**https://poweratwork.us/how-the-us-labor-movement-is-confronting-ai**](https://poweratwork.us/how-the-us-labor-movement-is-confronting-ai)

“Key Principles for Using Artificial Intelligence”, AFT Higher Education, 2025

[**https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2025/HE_AI_Principles.pdf**](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2025/HE_AI_Principles.pdf)

“Bargaining Victory: SEIU Local 688 won strong protections for workers and the public in AI agreement with Pennsylvania Governor Shapiro”, Center for Law and a Just Economy, Mar. 28, 2025

[**https://clje.law.harvard.edu/news/bargaining-victory-seiu-local-688-won-strong-protections-for-workers-and-the-public-in-ai-agreement-with-pennsylvania-governor-shapiro/**](https://clje.law.harvard.edu/news/bargaining-victory-seiu-local-688-won-strong-protections-for-workers-and-the-public-in-ai-agreement-with-pennsylvania-governor-shapiro/)

Big Tech Wants AI Without Rules. Here’s How Workers are Fighting Back, Reboot, Nov. 24, 2025

[**https://rebootdemocracy.ai/blog/big-tech-wants-ai-without-rules-heres-how-workers-are-fighting-back**](https://rebootdemocracy.ai/blog/big-tech-wants-ai-without-rules-heres-how-workers-are-fighting-back)

“Workers First AI Summit” 2026

[**https://workersfirstai.org/**](https://workersfirstai.org/)

“AFL-CIO Commission on the Future of Work and Unions” AFL-CIO, Sept. 2019

[**https://aflcio.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Report%20of%20the%20AFL-CIO%20Commission%20on%20the%20Future%20of%20Work%20and%20Unions.pdf**](https://aflcio.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Report%20of%20the%20AFL-CIO%20Commission%20on%20the%20Future%20of%20Work%20and%20Unions.pdf)

Mishal Khan and Annette Bernhardt, The Current Landscape of Tech and Work Policy in the U.S.: A Guide to Key Laws, Bills, and Concepts, UC Berkeley Labor Center, Dec. 15, 2025
<https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/tech-and-work-policy-guide/#s-4>

Maddy Dwyer and Quinn Anex-Ries, “AI Governance Checklist for Elected Officials”, Center for Democracy and Technology
<https://cdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/CDT-GovAI-Checklist-120125-final-1.pdf>

Before Technology is Procured

We have assessed our power and are prepared to strategically impact the future procurement of any new technologies

Play **4** Designing Tech-Focused Collective Bargaining Demands

Goals



- Secure input and control over procurement and/or deployment
- Gain privacy protections and technology opt-outs

Helps to have



- Familiarity with harms and processes of the workplace
- Developed demands for current and future protections
- Collective bargaining opportunities and leverage



Steps

1: Orientation

In many sectors, the use of technology in the workplace is typically a mandatory subject that employers must negotiate because technology may impact wages or working conditions. In Play 2 you have already audited whether existing CBA language covers workers' input on technology or AI procurement. Play 4 is for strengthening existing language or adding technology-specific language. This gives unions both the opportunity and the leverage to secure collective bargaining **demands** that protect them from algorithmic management, surveillance and other oppressive uses of AI.

2: Create leverage in early stages

- a. Problem definition:** The most powerful stage to intervene and prevent harmful tech being introduced is at the problem definition stage. A union with power over this stage may be able to redefine the problem and avoid their employer going to an outside contractor.
- b. Drafting "Requests":** If not, workers can influence drafting and negotiation of proposals for outside vendors, as noted in the previous play 2, creating demand for vendors who center workers' protections.

c. Evaluating vendors and tech: When workers evaluate whether tech systems may undercut worker and union power, assess vendors' labor policies and practices, workers can protect workers' livelihoods up and down the supply chain and better sustain quality services. Unions are more likely to accurately assess the risks of these kinds of systems than managers, and can leverage the design of contract requests to ensure that any technology that is acquired is safe, has a well-defined role, does not substantially alter working conditions, and is transparent in the way it functions.

Creating New Power Levers: Tech-focused Labor Management Committees

It is also critical to include a forward-facing provision in your CBA that details a procedure for worker input, like a **labor management committee** that is resourced to support worker research and informed input into new tech, and control over any potential future technologies.

The Teamsters contract mentioned above has an entire section dedicated to unforeseen technological changes that may affect working conditions. Many higher education unions, like those at Brown University and Oregon State do as well.

In a **side agreement** prompted by the Pennsylvania state government's interest in announcing a partnership with a generative AI company, SEIU668 bargained for a venue to receive consistent updates and offer feedback through a "Generative AI Labor and Management Collaboration Group". Through this venue, benefits case workers raised concerns about protecting the personal identifying information ("PII") of members of the public; a critical concern initially overlooked by both the state and AI company.

Shortly thereafter, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services slowed down AI pilot projects pending assurances about the confidentiality of the public's PII.

Other examples of tech-specific provisions

- Teamsters' **contract** with UPS focuses on the use of GPS tracking and inward-facing cameras in vehicles, both of which are of particular concern in the delivery industry.
- SAG-AFTRA's **contract** emphasizes the dangers of digital replicas and stand-ins that imperil the continued work of their represented actors and performers.
- In higher education, Lecturers' Employee Organization, AFT Local 6244, AFL-CIO Librarians, Archivists, and Curators Bargaining Unit (LEO-GLAM) recent contract stipulates that the employer shall not use AI to synthetically reproduce the voice or likeness of an employee.
- Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine, MEA/NEA have contract language that protects them from electronic monitoring and surveillance.
- Rutgers University's AAUP-AFT has put language across to management that protects against the use of AI to reproduce the voice, likeness, or work of an employee. It also protects faculty workers from electronic monitoring and surveillance.



This demonstrates the power of organized workers who are informed about how new technologies work and plan strategically to advocate both for their working conditions and to protect the public's privacy and the integrity of public sector services.

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Play 5

Redefining the Problem

Goals



- Reduce employer incentives to procure technology
- Build long-term movement against technology
- Avoid predatory vendors and technology proposals

Helps to have



- Insight into employer incentives, campaign and media outreach support



Steps

1: Building on organized power

Once you have created a venue and leverage for workers to influence tech procurement, seek opportunities for redefining the problems. Organize to have workers' voice on the agenda and take up space. The earlier workers can become involved in defining the problems that employers seek out technology to solve, the more power workers have to mitigate the harms employers will introduce and set standards to restrain surveillance, data collection, and abusive uses of data against workers.

2: Change the narrative

Employers often begin searching for expensive and punitive technology “solutions” to problems that are either ill-defined or largely imaginary, leading to worker harms. This is made worse by corporate technology vendors. Those marketing AI promise that their system will work as a one-stop “cure-all” to employers' concerns. Mirages of increased efficiency, swifter discipline, and larger profit margins drive employers to seek out technologies that they do not understand, to the detriment of their workers. Consequently, unions can and should challenge employers on two fronts: how to define what is really a problem and what can really solve that problem.

3: Show, don't tell

Despite the snake-oil promises of AI and other technology corporations, businesses are not losing out when investing in workers' futures instead of experimental technology. The benefits of AI systems, for example, are dubious at best and entirely false at worst, with many new technologies having far greater risks associated with them than employers are sold on.

- Focus on Edtech: This is especially true in the academic context as **studies** have shown that over-reliance on AI leads to poor student learning outcomes such as reduced critical thinking skills. Moreover, these systems are not part of some “inevitable” future of the business world; they are calculated profit ventures manufactured and sold by technology corporations strictly for their own gain.
- Moreover, these companies are not even making a **return on their investment** with AI technologies. Technologies, it has been shown time and again, simply cannot replace the skill and productivity of most workers.

4: Present an informed counter- narrative

Surveillance technologies sold to push productivity often lead to counterproductive **employee burnout**, decreasing efficiency in the long run. For example, **Amazon** utilized AI surveillance on their employees to track “productivity.” As a result, workers were let go based on an algorithm's measurement

of their productivity. The system led to higher rates of negative health outcomes including burnout, exhaustion, and injury, as DAIR Institute report titled **“Driven Down”** illustrates. Some streamlined data systems and AI tools may make logistical tasks quicker, but they also frequently create task-creep that bogs workers down, again leading to burnout and decreased efficiency.

5: Know why

Showcasing the structural and technological limitations of outside corporate tech systems to actually solve workplace problems can position unions to offer alternatives that are better both for workers and employers. Time and again it has been shown that worker and union involvement in technology procurement leads to more sustainable workplaces.

Learn more

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Play 6

Drafting “Requests”

Goal



- Avoid harmful vendors or technologies

Helps to have



- Worker authority or oversight over contracting
- Technical or legal reviewers



Steps

1: Demand access and input

If an employer plows ahead with purchasing a technology, unions can still provide crucial oversight. Demand participation in drafting contract requests so that they are tightly-written to address actual workplace needs and avoid harmful technologies or vendors. **Requests for Information** (“RFIs”) and **Requests for Proposal** (“RFPs”) are two of the most common ways that businesses solicit vendors for technology procurement purposes. The way that RFIs and RFPs are drafted can have massive influence over what kinds of companies and technologies are considered by your employer. Worker control over the drafting of RFIs and RFPs can safeguard against predatory, opaque, or otherwise harmful technologies.

2: Review problem statement

The first step in drafting requests is to have a well-defined problem that needs to be solved (see **Play 5 - Redefining the Problem** for more information). From there, focus on developing specific ideas about how the problem might be solved and what risks attend each type of potential solution, as well as criteria for evaluating vendors of those solutions.

3: Review data collection

The quality and relevance of systems’ training data and the intensity of data collection from workers is important. For any data-driven technology system, ask

questions about what data is used to train the system, assess the quality of the data collection process involved, and assess whether data will continue to be collected on workers as they engage with the system.

4: Ask questions

There are many important questions to ask when drafting requests because they determine what companies and technologies end up being seriously considered for procurement. RfI's and RfP's also influence how vendors market themselves and prioritize labor, civil, and human rights protections.

Sample questions

- Is this a static issue that can be solved by a one-time purchase, or will it require ongoing adaptive solutions?
- What is the scale that the technology needs to be able to operate at?
- Does the vendor specialize in technology?
- Have they provided this service before? How have workers been impacted?
- What is their internal accountability structure if there's a problem with the system?
- Is the system traceable? How clearly can you trace the way the data you enter leads to specific outcomes?
- Can it be easily explained? Is it supposed to be used by workers or management?

- What records or data does it keep, if any, and how are these records secured?
- Is there a well-defined legal regime around this sort of technology that can provide accountability if something goes wrong, and who is held responsible?

For example: Take a look at this **guidance** from the Prison Policy Initiative that they developed in response to predatory technology procurement in jails and prisons to prevent future vendors from exploiting the families and people in prison with hidden costs.

5: Know why

Having impact assessments clearly defined promotes testable criteria. This requires companies to center specific requirements in their test cases. To require a vendor to promise that it has “run X test to assess Y” makes that test traceable back to a requirement. A collection of appropriate tests designed by workers can be used to support or refute claims that requirements have been faithfully fulfilled by the delivered product. If a vendor says “We’ve tested this system extensively” and resists that accountability of demonstrating traceability back to claims, promises, and requirements, then you should be wondering what was actually delivered.

Learn more

Stephen Raher, “RFP Guidance: Best practices for prison and jail tablet procurement”, Prison Policy Initiative, July 3, 2024
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Play **7**

Public Advocacy

Goal



- Secure legal protections against technology
- Pressure employers through public outcry

Helps to have



- Campaign and media outreach support



Steps

1: Pre-requisites

Follow **Play 3** to raise awareness about how new tech harms workers and **Play 5** to redefine the problem and present a counter-narrative.

2: Connect the dots

Identify problems that connect workers beyond the worksite and across society, learn together how the sources of your problems relate to each other and educate members, the public, and lawmakers about the real sources of your problems.

3: Policy landscape survey

Just as above with the survey of what is working and what could work better with existing tech-specific language in CBAs, survey workers in states with certain policies enacted and ask what's working and what could work better. For example, review:

- The UC Berkeley Labor Center **policy guide** and **report** that summarizes the labor principles that unions have rallied around in relation to new technologies. This is useful for figuring out what forms of public regulation can best protect and empower workers.
- Similarly, the New York AFL-CIO has published a **webpage** that details their specific concerns and priorities related to public advocacy. It includes restricting electronic monitoring, preventing discrimination, requiring human oversight of AI, regulating automated

decision-making related to hiring, prohibiting algorithmic wage setting, and more.

- The Center for Labor & a Just Economy's **toolkit** on local and state AI regulations highlights legislative strategies to overcome preemption challenges by the **federal government**.
- The Center for Democracy & Technology has compiled a short **summary** of executive actions taken around the country to protect workers. It may provide helpful examples of immediate protections that public advocacy can secure through political pressure.

4: Campaign

Public advocacy (and accompanying government regulation) is best used to secure legal protections against the worst risks of harm of technology. Laws might directly regulate the use of certain types of technology in the workplace (like the proposed federal **Stop Spying Bosses Act**).

For example:

- Advocate for employers to provide new reporting and investigatory mandates (as in New York, where a proposed **law** would require employers to disclose to unions AI-caused layoffs and require state labor authorities to track worker displacement caused by AI).

- Advocate for employers to provide workers with new legal rights (as in Massachusetts, where a proposed **law** sought to give workers the ability to challenge the accuracy of data collected about them), or...
- Impose requirements that all decision-making that affects workers is done by humans (as in Illinois' proposed **Meaningful Human Review of Artificial Intelligence Act**).

Learn more

Building Worker Power in Cities & States:Regulating AI in the Workplace, Center for Labor and a Just Economy, Sept. 1, 2024

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During Technology Procurement

We want to strategically intervene in an ongoing procurement of new technology we have concerns about.

This section deals with what you can do once the procurement process has begun. Once requests for information or proposals have been sent out, your employer will still need to weigh different vendors and technologies. It covers roughly the Technology Sources, Solution Methodology, and Vendor Negotiation phases of the procurement process.

Play 8

Vendor and Technology Evaluation

Goals



- Accurately and effectively evaluate potential vendors and technologies
- Avoid predatory contracts

Helps to have



- Access to contract evaluation process, potentially technical and legal expertise
- Assessment scoring rubric



Steps

1: Pre-requisites

Following the submission of requests as discussed in Play 6 - Drafting “Requests”, the next step is to assess the actual vendors that respond and their products. Accurately and consistently assessing the quality of vendors and their technology can filter out some harmful technologies. If management refuses to let you have input, it squarely places responsibility for harms in their hands.

2. Questions to ask to evaluate vendors (consider some or all)

- Did they demonstrate clear ability and organization to provide oversight of their technology?
- Did they demonstrate significant experience providing or overseeing technology deployment?
- Have they identified and taken documented steps to address systemic biases in their technology, including regular audits, if applicable?
- Do they have a governing code of technology ethics?
- Where do they get their resources from? Have they made any intentional decisions regarding their supply chain?
- Did they supply detailed policies and proposals that show attention to the risks of their technology?

- How well-trained is their staff? Are they unionized?
- Do they have adequate whistleblower protections in place in case something goes wrong?
- Have they responded well to unexpected problems in the past?
- Do they rely on sub-contractors in other countries? Do they use temporary workers?
- Does the vendor rely on a supply chain that is unethical, anti-union, or otherwise harms environments and communities?

3. Questions to ask to evaluate technologies (consider some or all)

- Did they explain how their technology works, or only what it does?
- Did they adequately assess how the technology is intended to be used against how it performs in unexpected or unintended situations?
- How will the technology be accessible to or used by workers?
- What data does the technology rely on? In what context was the data collected?
- What is the origin story of the technology? Was it developed by the company or bought by the company?

- Are the legal and ethical considerations that went into development clearly articulated?
- What kinds of outputs does the technology create? Is its data traceable or accessible?
- How can the functioning of the technology be monitored, and by whom?
- What data security protections does the technology have, if any, and are there dedicated information security staff?
- Can the technology be easily shut off or overridden if need be?
- Does the technology have any known biases or limitations?

4: Dig deeper

(As mentioned in **Play 3**) Reviewing the vendor's responses to RfI's and RfP's will not reveal everything you need to know about a tech company. You want to research, and push your employer to research, both the technical and corporate background of a company as well.

For example, an **undercover investigation** into an AI "unicorn" startup revealed its automation was actually being facilitated by overseas workers.

a. Technical questions

- Research capacities of a technology (ask for the “bill of materials”)
- Research how the applications collect data on multiple types of operating systems (Apple, Windows, etc)
- Research how they interact with data storage systems (AWS, Microsoft Azure, etc).

b. Corporate research

- Who invested in the development of the technology?
- What data assets create value for a company or its investors?
- And what other companies and data assets a company’s investors are assembling.

5: Collect a variety of checklists

The GovAI Coalition created an **AI FactSheet**, which provides a comprehensive template for AI developers and third party service providers that requests information about a technology’s training data, performance metrics, update procedures, ongoing monitoring, independent evaluation, and more.

6: Assess answers

Evaluate multiple vendors' answers next to each other. Reach out to technology and labor researchers at places like the UC Berkeley Labor Center's Tech and Work project, DAIR's Luddite Lab, the Center for Labor and a Just Economy, Tech Equity, Taraaz, Upturn, Data & Society, AI Procurement Lab for any needed technical assistance to interpret the responses.

7: Measure and grade

Use the answers you come up with to set out a comprehensive set of risks (both acceptable and unacceptable), needs, potential benefits, and the criteria for measuring each. By drafting thorough and sophisticated RfIs and RfPs, workers can avoid becoming entangled with dangerous technologies and their vendors.

8: Mitigate harm

If workers are unable to prevent an employer from procuring a harmful technology, they can still take action to demand contract terms between the employer and vendor that track traceability, create accountability mechanisms and give workers resources to monitor and manage risk.

Learn more

Benjamin Shestakofsky, “The Messy Reality Behind a Silicon Valley Unicorn: A VC-backed startup’s push for growth left little time for actual engineering” Spectrum IEEE, Mar. 13, 2024

<https://spectrum.ieee.org/unicorn-startup>

GovAI Vendor Fact Sheet Template:

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GovAI Coalition Contract Hub

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Rashida Richardson, “Best Practices for Government Procurement of Data-Driven Technologies” (May 2021)

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3855637

Play 9

Leveraging Worker Decision-making

Goals



- Prevent the deployment or procurement of harmful technologies

Helps to have



- Worker input or authority over procurement
- Worker expertise with workplace practices and technology



Steps

1: Pre-requisite

Once workers and unions have mapped out their employer's procurement process (see Play 2), the next step is to leverage any opportunities for worker input or control. These may include notice-and-comment procedures, drafting requests (see Play 6), evaluating vendors/technologies (see Play 8), or other forms of worker control, such as co-governance boards or worker committees (see Play 4).

2: Organize committee members

To have the most impact, these structures should do more than just provide opportunities to comment or express their concerns. Workers should be supported to attend these committees informed, organized, and aware of where they have credibility and leverage. For example, one year after their historic side agreement, SEIU668 members of the "Generative AI Labor and Management Collaboration Group" raised concerns to the Governor's office and AI vendor about the personally identifiable information of the public; a critical concern otherwise overlooked by both the government and vendor. As a result, several pilots were paused.

3: Demand control

Ideally, a worker or community participation committee should have actual decision-making authority. For example, the City of Long Beach implemented a civic technology program that invited community members to work (with stipends) alongside city staff to develop and implement solutions to community needs.

4: Informal formations

Even if you do not have an official decision-making structure, an informal worker committee coupled with an informational campaign can increase workplace pressure against technology implementation.

Learn more

“Bargaining Victory: SEIU Local 688 won strong protections for workers and the public in AI agreement with Pennsylvania Governor Shapiro”, Center for Law and a Just Economy, Mar. 28, 2025

<https://clje.law.harvard.edu/news/bargaining-victory-seiu-local-688-won-strong-protections-for-workers-and-the-public-in-ai-agreement-with-pennsylvania-governor-shapiro/>

Long Beach Collaboratory, 2023

<https://www.longbeach.gov/smartcity/pilot-programs/lb-co-lab/>

UC Berkeley Labor Center, “Participation in technology governance”

<https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/negotiating-tech/participation-in-technology-governance/>

After Technology is Procured

We want to address harm technology introduced in the workplace has already caused and prevent future harm.

Play 10

Demanding Ongoing Transparency & Worker Benefits

Goals



- Secure protections based on effects of technology
- Prevent system creep and corporate lock-in

Helps to have



- Ability to request information from employers and vendors
- Time and resources for ongoing contract monitoring



Steps

1: Demand disclosures

Unions can and should use their unique position in the workplace to demand ongoing transparency and information from their employer about procured technologies. For example, workers should seek information about:

- How much the technology costs
- How it has been adapted to the specific work environment
- What data it is collecting, and
- How much (if at all) it is boosting the employer's profits.

2: Demand routine reports

Unions should advocate for regular reports to ensure that additional changes or add-ons to the technology are not going unnoticed or being implemented without worker input.

3: Demand use policies

Use policies limit how employers will deploy certain technologies. This is meant to ensure, after procurement, that a technology is used for what it was originally intended for. For example, a technology used to ensure workers have clocked in should not also be used to track their location (or limit their ability to clock in based on location tracking tech). Once acquired, an employer is likely to try to deploy a new technology whenever and wherever they can, including in areas the technology was not designed or vetted for. This endless mission

creep subjects workers to omnipresent technological systems that are ill-suited to some of the situations they are being used for, significantly worsening working conditions.

4: Prevent expansion and lock-in

Employers may also return to vendors to provide expanded services beyond what was initially contracted for. This is typical in situations where vendors have tiered or multi-functional systems for sale. As soon as one part of their product is in place, it becomes easier and more profitable for a single vendor to expand their provided services than to integrate an entirely different system with their product. This kind of technology “lock-in” can make employers dependent on single vendors, leading to cost bloating that has downstream effects on worker conditions and wages.

5: Follow the company and industry

Track corporate mergers, acquisitions, shareholder communications, and other insights into how the company’s future may impact workers.

6: Leverage new risks to gain new workers’ benefits

For example, if an employer has implemented a workplace-wide electronic communication system, it should bolster worker calls for expanded work-from-home opportunities. Does the technology require workers to learn new skills to use it? Then they should receive increased wages to reflect their new skills.

Learn more

GovAI Vendor Fact Sheet Template

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/109730/638458752830000000>

GovAI Coalition Contract Hub

<https://www.withpavilion.com/associations/gov-ai>

IEEE Standard for the Procurement of Artificial Intelligence and Automated Decision Systems, 2025

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Rashida Richardson, “Best Practices for Government Procurement of Data-Driven Technologies” (May 2021)

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3855637

Play 11

Addressing Harms

Goals



- Create evidence for use in future plays
- Collect worker stories and support solidarity
- Trace common source of harms
- Cultivate pressure to end harmful contracts.

Helps to have



- Access to regular reports or data and legal analysis
- Time and resources to continually document and analyze workplace changes
- Knowledge of applicable laws, standards and regulations
- Litigation support
- A contract timeline
- Secure data collection tools inaccessible to your employer



Steps

1. Understand various layers of harms

Technology risks many more harms that include, but are not limited to, displacement. As workers educate each other and their managers about the harms that AI introduces, it is critical not to overlook the more complex long-term harms.

a. Harms to workers

Employers use AI as an excuse for massive layoffs, only to be left scrambling when AI can't do the work. Workers who are forced to implement AI tools into their daily tasks have experienced increased levels of "AI brain fry," a phenomenon that leads to increased mistakes and burnout. While AI is touted as a way for companies to increase efficiency, those who babysit AI models often find that their workload has increased in both breadth and depth.

b. Harm to service

Most workers across sectors who have transitioned to using AI as a major part of their job functions admit that it makes mistakes and costs them additional time. Future workers who have not gained critical experience from performing tasks, understanding points of failure, and addressing mistakes will be even less prepared to manage the future mistakes of AI systems. Companies and higher

education institutions that prioritize the use of AI in the name of “efficiency” are not only harming their workers but also their students.

c. Harm to communities

When implemented consistently throughout the workforce and across sectors, it is no secret that AI increases rates of bias and discrimination, since biases occur and compound at each stage of the AI pipeline from data collection to deployment. Since AI updates automatically in legacy software, the problem accumulates and results in models that **reproduce biased decision-making**. Similarly, AI affects how we approach our interpersonal relationships as well. Instead of asking co-workers for guidance and support, some workers are asking chatbots for advice at work. This erodes opportunities to build and maintain solidarity.

d. Harm to democracy

Beyond the risks of dehumanization, more serious threats stem from the goals of corporations developing AI tools. Going back to the beginning of the industrial area, tech utopians have always said that automation would allow workers more free time to pursue the things that make life worth living. We are told by AI boosters that AI will help us, both by allowing us to focus

on creative skills rather than administrative ones, and by changing how we define intelligence. However, changing everybody's main skillset to evaluating AI model outputs, rather than being active producers of knowledge, cheapens labor and diminishes service delivery, risking **enshittification** of public services. In essence, the promise that reliance on these technologies will elevate humanity is made in bad faith - the creators of these tools are encouraging us to abandon creativity and education.

2: Document all layers of harm

Use of a technology needs to be continually tracked and examined. Survey workers, track how the technology is used in practice, hold employers accountable to confining its use as initially described to the workers. For example, if a system is introduced to help workers check over their work and confirm they haven't missed something, but then becomes a part of performance evaluations and discipline, workers could collect examples and push back against this new use. Meet people where they're at. Workers for Shipt shared their stories, connected the dots and **organized over Reddit**. Evidence and stories that illustrate how tech harms workers can be archived for any number of purposes, from public advocacy campaigns to collective bargaining to collective statistics about the harms of certain types of technology.

3: Analyze evidence of harm

While many of the harms will be apparent to workers, it is important that they are tracked methodically and (where possible) quantitatively.

4: Shadow reports

Create counter-narratives by producing shadow reports about the impact a technology is having on the workplace or public services. Technology often changes the status quo, but people are remarkably capable of adjusting to new circumstances.

5: Audits

Advocate and oversight agency **audits** can reveal falsehoods pushed by industry marketing. For example, Master Agreements (also discussed above in **Play 1**) have been sold to governments and the public as a way to save taxpayer dollars on technology services.

- Master Agreements also enable wasteful government spending. An audit from Toronto, Canada discovered nearly \$11 million in estimated costs tied to unused software, including about \$1.36 million spent on licenses assigned to former or inactive employees. As discussed in **Play 1**, the **NYC Comptroller's audit** of master agreements in May 2026 found that the Office of Technology and Innovation (“OTI”) repeatedly overspent on its tech contracts.

6: Litigation

One way that workers can mobilize the information they have assembled about the harms, their rights, and applicable laws

is to litigate. While many litigation efforts related to workers' rights and AI are still in early stages, in July 2026, a court **approved** a \$1.5 billion dollar settlement in a case brought by members of the Authors' Guild against Anthropic.

7: Know why

Documenting what an employer knew or should have known about the potential for harms when a technology was procured (and as they were occurring) creates a record. Traceability is accountability. It preserves evidence of the quality of prior working conditions and productivity before technology was introduced and after. This record can be used in turn to challenge narratives that the employer didn't intend harms, or reveal false claims that technology has increased profits or productivity. Tracking harms is also important for continued workplace solidarity and advocacy. Collecting worker stories can be a powerful way of humanizing the harms of technology that are too often framed in technical terms. Similar to the way that procurement mapping can reveal the common root of workplace harms (see **Play 1** and **Play 3**), cataloging the harms of technology systems creates irrefutable evidence that the changes happening in the workplace can be traced to the procurement process. As before, this can help inspire worker understanding and solidarity to seize control of procurement.

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12

Play

Planning to Press Pause

Goals



- Buy time to gather evidence, persuade decision-makers and mobilize other impacted people towards preventing harmful tech procurement or mitigating harm.

Helps to have



- Documented harms
- Lack of process for involving meaningful input
- Organized coalitions
- Media coverage
- Talking points



Steps

1: Document existing and potential harms

Collect stories, studies, and document efforts to raise awareness among decision-makers about existing and potential harms

2: Mobilize organized workers, advocates and coalitions

Educate members with briefings, provide talking points, materials to hand out, and members of the media and decision-makers to target with stories, data, and studies supporting the moratorium. Organize movie nights around tech thrillers and futuristic movies, notice how worker power is managed by technology in those realities.

3: Target contract renewals

In cities where residents have opposed surveillance technologies, they have successfully run campaigns that **target contract renewal** dates to pressure decision-makers not to renew or extend contracts.

4: Push pause

After attempts to participate have been exhausted and failed to address existing or potential harms, moratorium campaigns can demand an employer to press pause.

- For example, in September 2026, New York City public schools issued a policy to limit AI use, including **a one-year moratorium** on student-facing AI use from pre-K to 8th grade. This was in response to pressure from parents, teachers, students, and other advocates who expressed concern about

student privacy, data security, and the lack of proper procurement evaluation for AI tools.

- Another example, also discussed in **Play 4**, was how SEIU-668 workers' advocacy through a worker-management working group on AI prioritized concerns about the confidentiality of PII. As a result, several AI pilot projects were paused.



This demonstrated the power of organized and informed workers to strategically advocate for the public's privacy, the integrity of public sector services, and secure a pause on an AI pilot project.

5: Use time won well

After winning a moratorium, do not press pause on your advocacy. Continue to push back against the introduction of the technology to protect all layers of harm.

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Play

13

Strikes, Work- Stoppages, and Scrapping AI

Goals



- Stopping an employer's use of an oppressive technology

Helps to have



- Organized workers mobilized and educated around why they oppose a specific technology



Steps

1: Careful assessment

Unions have decades of analysis and understanding about how much work, alignment, solidarity, and perseverance it takes to prepare and execute a strike or work stoppage. While the consequences should be carefully considered, sometimes it is the only way to stand up to an employer. When an employer is not be amenable to worker input, will not respond to concerns flagged, and has every intention to deploy oppressive technology for the purposes of displacing workers, cheapening labor and worsening conditions to gain profit or power, they leave workers very little choice.

2: Learn from other strikes related to tech

Reach out to other unions with experience striking for better protections from AI. For example, workers in the TV and streaming industries union SAG-AFTRA **led a strike** in 2023 centering concerns about AI cheapening their labor, displacing their jobs, and weakening their bargaining power. In 2024, SAG-AFTRA led a **strike against video game companies** with similar concerns about automation and work speed-ups. New York City public defenders in Brooklyn and Queens **won a strike** in the summer of 2026, including elimination of a clock-in app that collected data about a workers' location.

3: Don't give up!

In July 2026, **Quebec** announced that it was scrapping all AI and automation projects in the public sector. AI is not inevitable. Use this as an example to encourage your employer to treat it like any other new expensive and experimental technology with high risks and unknown benefits.

Learn more

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Conclusion

We hope that these Plays give workers support for leveraging worker power to prevent employers and governments from using technology to make our communities more vulnerable.

We are not, however, naïve enough to assume that workers are always negotiating with good faith actors. AI industry leaders and employers have explicitly expressed their intention to replace workers, cheapen labor, consolidate power, destroy worker solidarity and union power, to narrow community political participation and cohesion. Concerns about deployment of AI technology for the purpose of replacing workers should not be downplayed. In July 2026, the **New York Times reported** that, attributed to AI procurement, “More than 200 tech companies have cut roughly 120,000 jobs this year.” While the actual promises of AI have not materialized, with the best-scoring model only producing “client-ready work only about 16 percent of the time”, the AI industry continues to convince employers that they should pay for tokens instead of workers’ salaries.

In addition to working alongside unions fighting to protect themselves and public sector services, we also visit industry conferences and expo’s curated for government employers. We witness how they are marketing technology to our government agencies. We have witnessed sales pitches to minimize the number of worker roles and to replace workers with digital people.

We offer these strategies and activities not to waste workers' time if they are already confronting a hostile technology vendor or employer but to show the many activities that workers can continue doing together to fight back, maintain solidarity, and address harm while gathering momentum and alignment for long-term campaigns.