



Cognitive Freedom Coalition

COGNITIVE FREEDOM / AUDIENCE DOSSIER

Journalist Dossier

Investigating Cognitive Freedom, Public Records and Institutional
Accountability

Prepared for News and Journalists

A Public-Interest Story Worth Investigating

This paper examines the possibility that future technologies could analyze or influence aspects of human thought and behavior, and the protections needed to prevent misuse.

For reporters, editors, documentary producers and investigative teams, Cognitive Freedom is a story about people, power, technology and accountability. Cognitive Freedom Coalition invites reporting that tests technical claims, examines institutional incentives and follows the record wherever it leads.

Begin With a Question That Can Be Answered

A future service might promise to interpret attention, mood or intent. The public-interest story is more than whether the demonstration looks convincing. What data would the service need, what would a prediction actually mean, who could use it and what happens when it is wrong? These questions connect scientific reporting with human rights.

A useful investigation might establish how an agency handled a documented complaint, what a funded program was designed to do, how a patent was licensed, or whether participants could meaningfully refuse a study. Each has a discoverable record and a defined public-interest consequence.

Three Responsibilities

- Protect people. Explain the interview, publication and identification risks, and respect an agreed boundary on disclosure.
- Verify the record. Separate first-hand observation, interpretation, documents, independent measurements and official responses.
- Explain the stakes. Connect technical detail to consent, mental privacy, freedom of thought and the ability to hold institutions accountable.

The story also includes the benefits of neurotechnology, such as communication assistance and new approaches to treatment. Strong reporting asks who gains access, who bears risk and how safeguards could prevent misuse while supporting responsible innovation. [4, 2]

The Coalition's request is professional inquiry: listen without ridicule, question without a predetermined conclusion and publish findings at the level of confidence the evidence supports.

What Cognitive Freedom Protects

Cognitive Freedom is the principle that a person's thoughts, mental processes and inner life deserve protection. Cognitive Liberty expresses the freedom to make meaningful choices about that mental life. These ideas connect privacy, self-direction and consent with the conditions people need to think freely.

Six Interests That Belong Together

Freedom of thought. People need room to form beliefs, reflect, imagine, disagree and change their minds without coercive interference. The value extends beyond what a person chooses to say publicly.

Mental privacy. Intimate information about mental life deserves protection, including inferences generated by a system rather than information deliberately supplied by a person.

Cognitive Autonomy. People should retain meaningful agency over decisions affecting their own mental life. A convenient service should not make manipulation or dependence an unavoidable condition of participation.

Neural data protection. Recording, processing, retention and sharing each create responsibilities. Safeguards should follow sensitive information through its lifecycle, including derived profiles and models.

Human dignity. A person is more than a score, prediction or research record. Institutions should treat uncertainty and difference fairly rather than reduce a person's worth to an automated classification.

Informed consent. A meaningful choice requires understandable information, an ability to refuse and a clear account of what participation or withdrawal will mean.

A Wider Conversation

UNESCO and the OECD address ethical governance of neurotechnology. Existing human rights instruments also provide relevant protections. The Coalition contributes to this conversation by asking what institutions should prepare before future capabilities become commonplace. [1, 2, 7]

Our position is pro-progress and human-centered. Scientific advances should expand health, communication and human capability. Protections make those benefits more trustworthy by giving people a meaningful voice in how technologies affect them.

From Research to Future Safeguards

Communication and Human Capability

Willett and colleagues demonstrated attempted-speech decoding using an implanted brain-computer interface in a participant with paralysis. The work illustrates the value of restoring communication and the importance of user control over generated output. [6]

A future assistive system could become central to how a person speaks, works or participates in public life. Safeguards should address correction of errors, continuity of service, ownership of records and the ability to choose who receives the output. A person should not lose agency because they depend on a useful device.

Inference and Mental Privacy

Tang and colleagues reconstructed aspects of language meaning from fMRI recordings after extensive participant-specific training. Cooperation and controlled conditions mattered. This raises a concrete privacy question about how sensitive inferences might be handled as methods develop. [5]

If future systems infer intimate information from neural or related signals, a prediction could affect a person even when it is inaccurate. The Coalition proposes limits on consequential use, a right to contest an inference and a clear distinction between a measured signal and a conclusion about someone's mind.

Interfaces and Institutional Power

DARPA's N3 program funded research toward nonsurgical, bidirectional brain-machine interfaces. Published research objectives identify a direction of development, rather than establishing every proposed capability. [4]

If future interfaces become more accessible, the same capability could serve different purposes in a clinic, workplace or security setting. Consent, access controls and independent oversight must account for who holds power over the person using the system.

A Future-System Model

A future system might combine sensing, inference, a decision process and feedback or intervention. Each step creates a governance question: what is collected, what is inferred, what action follows, who authorizes it and how a person can stop or challenge it. A failure at any step could turn a helpful tool into a source of coercion or unfair treatment.

The Coalition proposes preparing safeguards around these decisions now. Define acceptable purposes, prohibited outcomes, responsibility for errors and routes to remedy. Technical validation should assess particular claims under stated conditions; policy should also address risks that remain uncertain without pretending the eventual mechanism is already known.

Build a Verifiable Investigation

Interview for Detail and Consent

Ask the source to describe one event before discussing a wider theory. Establish time, place, observable effects, witnesses and records. Ask what the source believes explains the event, what led to that belief and what evidence could change their view. Preserve the distinction in notes and in the final account.

Agree on identification, recording, quotation and follow-up arrangements before an interview. Avoid publishing medical records, home addresses, family details or precise routines without a clear public-interest reason and informed permission. Revisit consent when the intended use of material changes.

Follow Documents Through Their Lifecycle

For a patent or program, map the inventor, assignee, sponsoring agency, award, research institution, subcontractors and relevant dates. Obtain the actual solicitation or statement of work. Compare promised capabilities with milestones, test reports, adverse-event reporting and independent evaluation. A company appearing in this chain is a research lead, not an accusation.

Use focused public-record requests. Identify the office likely to hold the record, a bounded date range, a specific program or complaint and the document types sought. Ask for segregable material and an explanation of withheld records where the applicable process allows it. Record requests, responses, searches, appeals and delays.

Seek Expertise That Matches the Question

A radio-frequency engineer can assess a measurement method; a neuroscientist can assess an inference about brain activity; a clinician can interpret a health record; a lawyer can evaluate authority and remedy. No single expert should be asked to validate the entire narrative outside their field.

Technical work needs appropriate controls, instrument specifications, timestamps and an account of ordinary sources. A detected signal, a symptom and a suspected operator are separate findings. Do not commission provocative exposure experiments or encourage a source to place themselves at risk for a dramatic result.

Test Alternative Explanations Fairly

Give both the reporting source and the institution an opportunity to address specific evidence. Investigate contradictions, missing records and facts that weaken the initial theory. Corrections and null findings are part of the story, particularly when they reveal how an institution makes decisions under uncertainty.

Questions for Agencies, Contractors and Editors

Questions That Produce a Record

- Which office receives civilian complaints involving suspected technological interference, and what records does it retain? How are referrals, technical reviews and closure reasons documented?
- What research was funded, by which authority, and with what human-subject protections? Which ethics reviews, consent documents and adverse-event procedures governed it?
- For a cited patent or prototype, what evidence demonstrates performance under stated conditions? What funding, licensing, procurement or transition records exist?
- What rules protect neural data, sensitive inferences and information purchased from commercial providers? Who can audit compliance and report a breach?
- What lawful channels allow staff or contractors to raise concerns? How are conflicts of interest and potential retaliation addressed?

Turn Leads Into Focused Stories

One series could compare complaint pathways across institutions. Another could follow a particular research contract from stated goals to published results and oversight. A third could examine consent and mental privacy in emerging workplace or consumer systems. Each should connect a specific record to a concrete consequence for human freedom.

If reporting on future systems, identify the components they would need and which links remain speculative. Use illustrations that reflect the actual equipment and conditions. Explain how the proposed system could operate, who would control it and which safeguards would have to accompany it.

Before Publication

- Check quotations, dates, patent identifiers, technical terms and the difference between a program objective and a demonstrated result.
- Review privacy and security with sources; use protected communications suited to the actual risk and retain an organized evidence record.
- Invite a substantive response to supported allegations, disclose relevant conflicts and state what remains unanswered.

The Coalition can provide background on its initiatives and arrange an initial conversation about available material. Access to individual testimony or private records requires the person's agreement. Contact contact@CognitiveFreedomCoalition.org for media inquiries.

The Coalition and the Work Ahead

Cognitive Freedom Coalition prepares rights, evidence standards and safeguards for the future of Cognitive Liberty. It brings research, public education and policy discussion into a shared conversation about freedom of thought, mental privacy and human dignity.

Public Education and Professional Dialogue

Different audiences contribute different strengths. Human rights organizations can develop protections and routes to remedy. Journalists can examine claims, institutions and incentives. Members of the public can shape priorities and ask how technology affects everyday choices. Governments can establish responsibility, oversight and enforceable safeguards.

The Coalition seeks useful contributions: clear explanations, focused research questions, model policies, ethical principles and practical institutional standards. The purpose is to prepare people and institutions for emerging risks while supporting technologies that improve lives.

The Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative

NFII is the Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative, a Coalition initiative being finalized for a Q4 2026 launch. Its public information and research pathways are available now. Planned outreach will seek connections with universities worldwide and thousands of researchers. Participation will depend on agreement; an outreach plan is not a claim of institutional endorsement. [8]

Independent research should use informed consent, clearly stated questions and methods capable of distinguishing competing explanations. Findings should be reported with their scope and limitations. Null results and corrections are valuable because the quality of the record matters more than a preferred answer.

Principles for Collaboration

- Connect each project to a concrete contribution to Cognitive Freedom, such as a safeguard, an ethical standard, a public explanation or a governance proposal.
- Make responsibilities, conflicts of interest and the basis for conclusions visible. Distinguish a proposal from an adopted policy or verified finding.
- Respect privacy and meaningful participation. Arrange an appropriate process before sharing sensitive records or individual accounts.

Start a Conversation

We welcome inquiries about research, reporting, public education and policy collaboration. Begin with the question you want to address, the perspective you bring and the practical outcome you hope to develop.

Contact: contact@CognitiveFreedomCoalition.org

Website: cognitivefreedomcoalition.org

Research Initiative: cognitivefreedomcoalition.org/nfii

A Framework for Evaluating a Proposal

A useful Cognitive Freedom proposal connects a specific activity with the people it affects, the benefit it seeks and the protection it needs. The following questions can guide a meeting, a policy review, a reporting plan or a public discussion.

Purpose and Benefit

- What human need does the activity serve? Who receives the benefit, and who bears its risks or costs?
- Is the proposed use necessary for that purpose, or could a less intrusive approach achieve the same result?

Information and Choice

- What signals or personal information are collected? What further inferences might be created? Who can obtain either?
- Can people understand the proposal, refuse it, leave it or choose a realistic alternative without unfair penalty?

Evidence and Accountability

- Which claims have been demonstrated, under what conditions and for whom? Which are goals, assumptions or future scenarios?
- Who is responsible for mistakes, misuse or harm? What independent review, complaint route and remedy are available?

A Simple Way to Record the Answer

Write a short statement of the purpose, affected people, intended benefit, relevant evidence, unresolved questions and proposed safeguards. Name the responsible institution and the next decision. Revisit that record when the purpose, technology or evidence changes.

Essential Terms

Neurotechnology: technologies that interact with or help study the nervous system.

Neural data: information recorded from nervous-system activity.

Mental inference: a conclusion about a mental state or process derived from data.

Neurorights: rights and safeguards addressing the effects of neurotechnology on people.

Brain-computer interface: a system linking recorded brain activity with a computational or assistive function.

The Coalition uses these questions to keep the purpose clear: technology should expand human possibility while protecting the freedom to remain the author of one's own mental life.

Sources and Further Reading

1. OHCHR, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Privacy, freedom of thought, remedy and research consent.

2. UNESCO, [Ethics of Neurotechnology](#)

Human rights and the international ethics conversation.

3. HHS, [The Belmont Report](#)

Respect for persons, beneficence and justice.

4. DARPA, [Six Paths to the Nonsurgical Future of Brain-Machine Interfaces](#), 2019

N3 research objectives and interface development.

5. Tang and Colleagues, [Semantic Reconstruction of Continuous Language](#), 2023

Nature Neuroscience, non-invasive brain recordings and language reconstruction.

6. Willett and Colleagues, [A High-Performance Speech Neuroprosthesis](#), 2023

Nature, implanted interface supporting attempted-speech decoding.

7. OECD, [Responsible Innovation in Neurotechnology](#)

Recommendation adopted in 2019, governance across development and use.

8. [Neuro Frequency Investigation Initiative \(NFII\)](#)

Coalition initiative, research pathways and participant information.

9. OHCHR, [Convention Against Torture](#)

Definitions and provisions concerning investigation and redress.

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