EUI 2025 Conference:
Understanding and Addressing Digital Inequalities
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Bridging the Digital Inequality Divide…

Reframing GenAI Effectiveness with the E.A.S.E. Framework on Accessibility, Workforce Succession, and Rights-Based Innovation.

Dr. Kevin J. Spellman, FRSA, CMRS
London, United Kingdom
November 20, 2025

[redacted]Introduction

Key terms

Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence that uses generative models to produce new and original content—such as text, images, video, audio, or code—by learning the patterns and distributions of its training data and responding to user prompts (inputs).

Return on Investment (ROI)

- A financial ratio that measures the net gain or net income from an investment relative to its initial cost or capital outlay.

- Adoption, task efficiency, automation, productivity gains, and sales.

ROI

CNBC

People with ADHD, autism, dyslexia say AI agents are helping them succeed at work

Rachel Curry
Saturday, 8 Nov 2025 09:00 AM EST

WATCH LIVE

- Neurodiverse professionals may see benefits from AI tools, giving people with conditions like ADHD, autism, and dyslexia a more level playing field in the workplace.
- A recent study from the UK Department for Business and Trade found that neurodiverse workers were 25% more satisfied with AI assistants and were more likely to recommend the tool than neurotypical respondents.

Entrepreneur

Nearly 95% of Companies Saw Zero Return on In-House AI Investments, According to a New MIT Study: 'Little to No Measurable Impact'

The companies that are succeeding with in-house AI, however, have seen revenue jump from zero to $20

WIRED

AI LAB

AI Is Eliminating Jobs for Younger Workers

New research from Stanford provides the clearest available evidence that AI is reshaping the workforce—but it's complicated.

WILL KNIGHT
08.26.25 03:00 AM

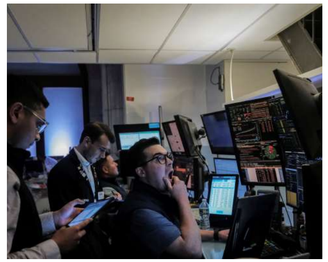
Why AI is replacing some jobs faster than others | World Economic Forum

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

JOBS AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Why AI is replacing some jobs faster than others

Aug 12, 2025



Bloomberg Businessweek

In Context
■ August 4, 2025, 5:00 AM EDT

AI Flight Pricing Can Push Travelers to the Limit of Their Ability to Pay

● Airlines, including Delta, are testing artificial intelligence in pricing. Get ready for what one startup calls the "exploitation phase."

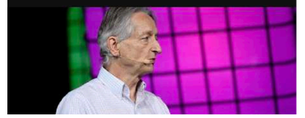
● By Max Chafkin

FORTUNE

AI · THE FUTURE OF WORK

'Godfather of AI' says tech giants can't profit from their astronomical investments unless human labor is replaced

By **Jason Ma**
November 1, 2025 at 2:43 PM EDT



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

KEYWORDS

Cutting-Edge AI Was Supposed to Get Cheaper. It's More Expensive Than Ever.

With models doing more 'thinking,' the small companies that buy AI from the giants to create apps and services are feeling the pinch

Futurism

CEOs Are Publicly Boasting About Reducing Their Workforces With AI

By Victor Tangermann | Aug 2, 2025 | 2:00 AM

Pink Slip Pride

Workforce reductions are no longer an admission that companies are struggling; instead, CEOs are using them to boast about their investments in AI.

As the *Wall Street Journal* reports, CEOs are now bragging about shrinking their

Key Terms

Digital Inequality “is a phenomenon where individuals are limited in their effective and sustainable engagement with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in ways that inhibit their full participation in society and their ability to achieve tangible economic, social, cultural, civic, and personal wellbeing benefits.”
- Professor Ellen Helsper, London School of Economics

E.A.S.E. Framework is a meta-design approach that reframes AI effectiveness beyond productivity, anchoring it instead in equity, agency, succession, and employment impact and instead around four principles: based on Equity of Access, Agency and Participation, Succession Continuity and Employment Impact.

[redacted] Hypothesis statement

E.A.S.E. Framework

Generative AI (GenAI) is frequently evaluated through narrow return-on-investment (ROI) measures such as adoption rates, task efficiency, and productivity gains. While useful for tracking uptake, these metrics obscure the structural conditions that determine whether AI reduces or reinforces digital inequality. Accessibility, human agency, workforce succession, and rights are often omitted from evaluation, yet they shape whether GenAI enhances inclusion or entrenches exclusion.

Key Terms

Accessibility is defined not as an inherent property of Generative AI (GenAI) but as a design choice and a governance precondition. It is operationalised by compliance with inclusive standards such as WCAG 2.2 and ISO 30071-1, and by interoperability with assistive technologies.

Disability an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with long-term physical or mental impairments (e.g., neurodiversity, visual, or mobility issues) and is defined by the interaction of three core elements: the impairment, its long-term duration, and its substantial adverse impact.

Digital inequality (or exclusion) is framed as a complex issue that extends beyond mere lack of access to technology. It is described as a systemic disadvantage where deficits in one domain, such as accessibility, cascade into others (economic, social, cultural, and personal domains), thereby reinforcing inequality rather than reducing it.

Narrow Metrics and Missed Dimensions

Trust

Trust is a very large topic which impacts the origin of the data, the process of creating, delivering, governing and distribution of GenAI related technology, content and impact but also why/how GenAI is leveraged for and in B2C and B2B environments.

Information environments are increasingly polluted by low-quality, machine-generated content—so-called “AI slop”—that undermines knowledge infrastructures and user confidence (Shao et al., 2017).

Governance failures compound these risks: examples include unsafe conversational AI interactions with minors (Reuters, 2025) and exposed private chatbot conversations (McMahon, 2025).

For people reliant on assistive technologies or with limited digital literacy, such failures multiply barriers to participation.

Continuity & Succession

Continuity, the stability of operations during adoption, and succession, the transfer of skills and institutional knowledge across generations.

Once valued for focus and precision, neurodivergent workers risk being sidelined as “non-adaptive” in fast-moving AI workplaces. The absence of succession planning for accessibility experts and QA testers further undermines inclusive capacity, trading short-term efficiency for long-term attrition.

Such dynamics disproportionately affect disabled and neurodivergent professionals, who are often the first displaced and last rehired.

Key EU stats

The EU data for 2024 (ages 20-64) shows consistent gaps across protected characteristics, indicating that certain groups are systemically less employed despite overall high employment rates

Disability Gap: The EU disability employment gap was **24.0 percentage points** in 2024.

Group	Employment Rate (2024)	Gap vs. Reference Group	Reference Group Rate
People with Disabilities	N/A (See note below)	**24.0 percentage points**	People Without Disabilities
Women	**70.8%**	**10.0 percentage points** (Gender Gap)	Men (**80.8%**)
Foreign-Born Women	**65.0%**	**18.1 percentage points** (vs. Foreign-Born Men)	Foreign-Born Men (**83.1%**)
Foreign-Born Women	**65.0%**	**15.7 percentage points** (vs. Native-Born Women)	Native-Born Women (N/A)

Key UK stats

UK data, often reported quarterly, also highlights significant and persistent employment gaps, particularly concerning disabled workers, which aligns directly with your content on neurodivergent and disabled professionals

Disability Gap: The UK disability employment gap was **28.5 percentage points** in Q2 2024.

Group (Ages 16-64)	Employment Rate (Q2 2024)	Employment Gap
Disabled People	**53.1%**	**28.5 percentage points**
Non-Disabled People	**81.6%**	N/A

References

Eurostat. (2025, May 27). *Employment gaps for women & people with disabilities*. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20250527-1

Department for Work and Pensions. (2024). *The employment of disabled people 2024*. GOV.UK. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2024/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2024

Race Disparity Unit. (2023, November 28). *Employment*. Ethnicity facts and figures, GOV.UK. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest

Workforce succession

The transfer of skills and institutional knowledge across generations during the adoption of Generative AI (GenAI) and ensures that institutional knowledge, diversity, and inclusive practices are preserved during technological transitions. When GenAI adoption outpaces organisational adaptation or when institutional memory is bypassed succession for preserving and transferring tacit knowledge falters.

Generative AI (GenAI) models, although powerful, often lack the critical context and domain expertise derived from tacit knowledge—the "insight gained through experience that experts rely on to interpret complex and ambiguous data"—which can lead to issues with accuracy and consistency unless these systems are actively managed by human experts.

- Ramaswamy, S., Chalasani, R., & Bhardwaj, K. (2025). *Capturing tacit knowledge through generative AI.* Intel.

Governance

The EU AI Act establishes requirements for high-risk systems and emphasises human-centred AI but does not yet mandate accessibility metrics or participatory design (EU, 2024).

The EU and OECD reports underscore that accessibility is not only a rights issue but also a competitiveness factor: inclusion expands participation, preserves human capital, and strengthens innovation (EIB, 2025). Without enforceable requirements, however, accessibility risks remaining aspirational rather than operational.

[redacted] GenAI Implementation

Case Study

The 2023 anonymised B2B case study followed a mixed-methods design over six months during an enterprise GenAI rollout.While not statistically generalisable, this design provided both quantitative measures and rich qualitative depth, consistent with theory-building through contextual inquiry (Eisenhardt, 1989; Orlikowski, 1992).

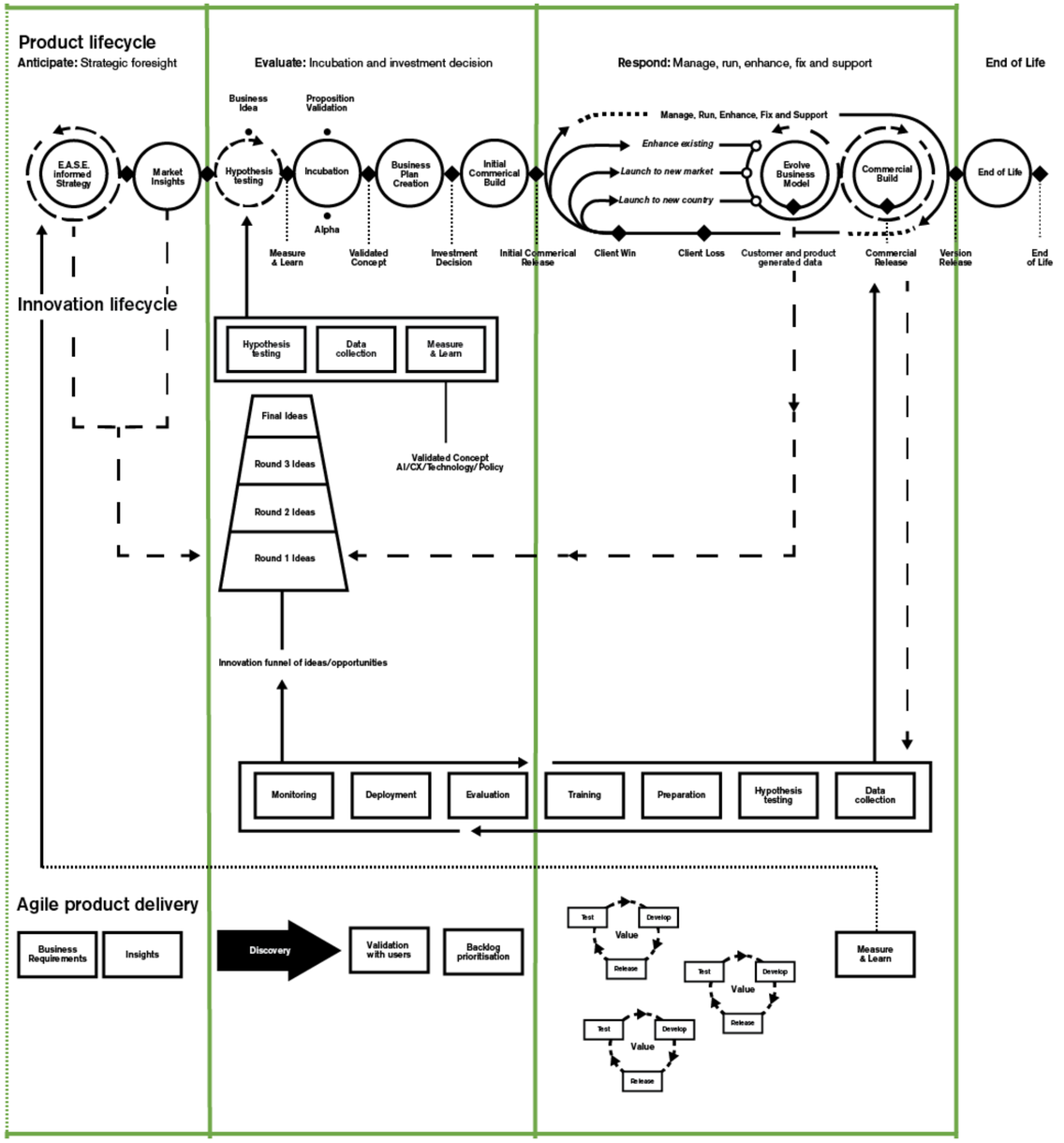
Survey
N=51

Interviews
N=15

Focus
Group
N=35

AI Audit
WCAG 2.2

Product Delivery



Insights

Accessibility participants valued features such as summarisation, email drafting, and tone adjustment, which reduced cognitive strain —particularly for dyslexic and autistic participants. However, interoperability with assistive technologies was inconsistent. Mature personal tools (screen readers, magnifiers, dictation software) conflicted with the GenAI interface, creating friction and added cognitive load.

Trust in outputs remained fragile. While staff appreciated the secure, ring-fenced environment, inconsistent responses, hallucinations, and truncated outputs required constant verification. Many reverted to external tools when reliability mattered.

This absence of structured succession planning meant that adoption threatened long-term resilience, as institutional knowledge risked being lost faster than it could be embedded.

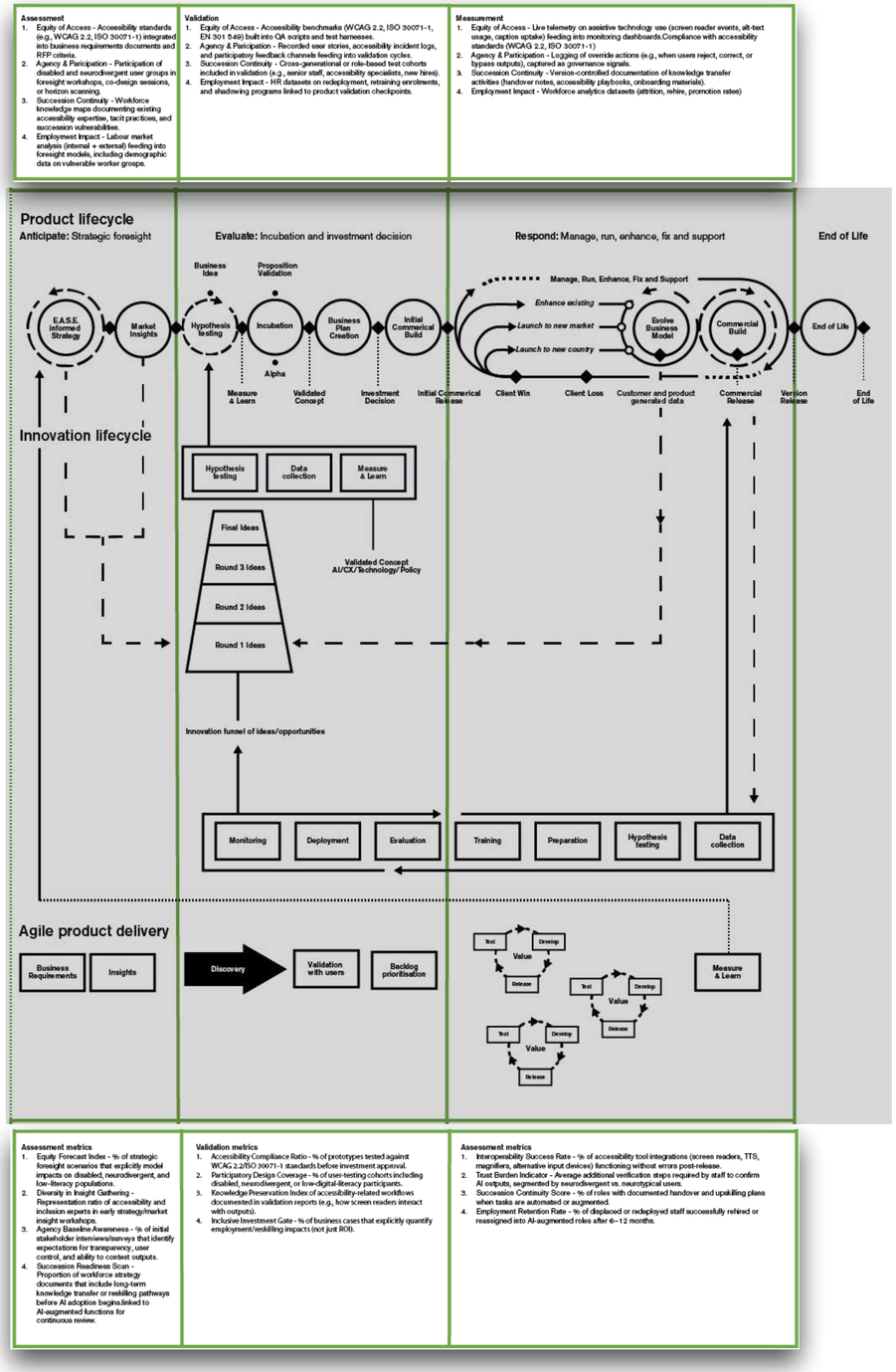
[redacted] E.A.S.E. Framework

E.A.S.E. Framework

The framework functions as a governance overlay on agile and AI/ML lifecycles. Rather than treating inclusion as a compliance “add-on,” E.A.S.E. embeds these dimensions as cross-functional requirements that gate release and funding decisions. In this way, it translates equity and rights from aspirational values into enforceable architectural criteria. The framework provides a structured lens to evaluate not only GenAI but also agentic AI systems, anticipating future trajectories without succumbing to technological cycles.

Axis	Definition	Example Metric
Equity of Access	Compliance with accessibility standards (WCAG 2.2, ISO 30071-1); interoperability with assistive tech	% of successful prompt completions by disabled users
Agency & Participation	Inclusion in design, training, and evaluation	Number of accessibility insights incorporated into fine-tuning cycles
Succession Continuity	Preservation of tacit accessibility knowledge in workflows and models	Documented handover plans for displaced roles
Employment Impact	Long-term retention and reskilling of neurodivergent and disabled staff	% of displaced staff rehired in AI-augmented roles

Key Process


Assessment
1. Equity of Access - Accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG 2.2, ISO 30071-1) integrated into business requirements documents and RFP criteria.
2. Agency & Paricipation - Participation of disabled and neurodivergent user groups in foresight workshops, co-design sessions, or horizon scanning.
3. Succession Continuity - Workforce knowledge maps documenting existing accessibility expertise, tacit practices, and succession vulnerabilities.
4. Employment Impact - Labour market analysis (internal + external) feeding into foresight models, including demographic data on vulnerable worker groups.
Validation
1. Equity of Access - Accessibility benchmarks (WCAG 2.2, ISO 30071-1, EN 301 549) built into QA scripts and test harnesses.
2. Agency & Paricipation - Recorded user stories, accessibility incident logs, and participatory feedback channels feeding into validation cycles.
3. Succession Continuity - Cross-generational or role-based test cohorts included in validation (e.g., senior staff, accessibility specialists, new hires).
4. Employment Impact - HR datasets on redeployment, retraining enrolments, and shadowing programs linked to product validation checkpoints.
Measurement
1. Equity of Access - Live telemetry on assistive technology use (screen reader events, alt-text usage, caption uptake) feeding into monitoring dashboards.Compliance with accessibility standards (WCAG 2.2, ISO 30071-1)
2. Agency & Participation - Logging of override actions (e.g., when users reject, correct, or bypass outputs), captured as governance signals.
3. Succession Continuity - Version-controlled documentation of knowledge transfer activities (handover notes, accessibility playbooks, onboarding materials).
4. Employment Impact - Workforce analytics datasets (attrition, rehire, promotion rates)
Product lifecycle
Anticipate: Strategic foresight
Evaluate: Incubation and investment decision
Respond: Manage, run, enhance, fix and support
End of Life
Business Idea
Proposition Validation
E.A.S.E. informed Strategy
Market Insights
Hypothesis testing
Incubation
Alpha
Business Plan Creation
Initial Commerical Build
Manage, Run, Enhance, Fix and Support
Enhance existing
Launch to new market
Launch to new country
Evolve Business Model
Commercial Build
End of Life
Measure & Learn
Validated Concept
Investment Decision
Initial Commerical Release
Client Win
Client Loss
Customer and product generated data
Commercial Release
Version Release
End of Life
Innovation lifecycle
Hypothesis testing
Data collection
Measure & Learn
Final Ideas
Round 3 Ideas
Round 2 Ideas
Round 1 Ideas
Validated Concept AI/CX/Technology/ Policy
Innovation funnel of ideas/opportunities
Monitoring
Deployment
Evaluation
Training
Preparation
Hypothesis testing
Data collection
Agile product delivery
Business Requirements
Insights
Discovery
Validation with users
Backlog prioritisation
Test
Develop
Value
Release
Measure & Learn
Assessment metrics
1. Equity Forecast Index - % of strategic foresight scenarios that explicitly model impacts on disabled, neurodivergent, and low-literacy populations.
2. Diversity in Insight Gathering - Representation ratio of accessibility and inclusion experts in early strategy/market insight workshops.
3. Agency Baseline Awareness - % of initial stakeholder interviews/surveys that identify expectations for tranepareny, user control, and ability to contest outputs.
4. Succesion Readiness Scan - Proportion of workforce strategy documents that include long-term knowledge transfer or reskilling pathways before AI adoption begins.linked to AI-augmented functions for continuous review.
Validation metrics
1. Accessibility Compliance Ratio - % of prototypes tested against WCAG 2.2/ISO 30071-1 standards before investment approval.
2. Participatory Design Coverage - % of user-testing cohorts including disabled, neurodivergent, or low-digital-literacy participants.
3. Knowledge Preservation Index of accessibility-related workflows documented in validation reports (e.g., how screen readers interact with outputs).
4. Inclusive Investment Gate - % of business cases that explicitly quantify employment/reskilling impacts (not just ROI).
Assessment mebrics
1. Interopeability Success Rate - % of accessibility tool integrations (screen readers, TTS, magnifiers, alternative input devices) functioning without errors post-release.
2. Trust Barden Indicator - Average additional verification steps required by staff to confirm AI outputs, segmented by neurodivergent vs. neurotypical users.
3. Succesion Continuity Score - % of roles with documented handover and upskilling plans when tasks are automated or augmented.
4. Employment Retention Rate - % of displaced or redeployed staff successfully rehired or reassigned into AI-augmented roles after 6–12 months.

Key Process

E.A.S.E. Framework

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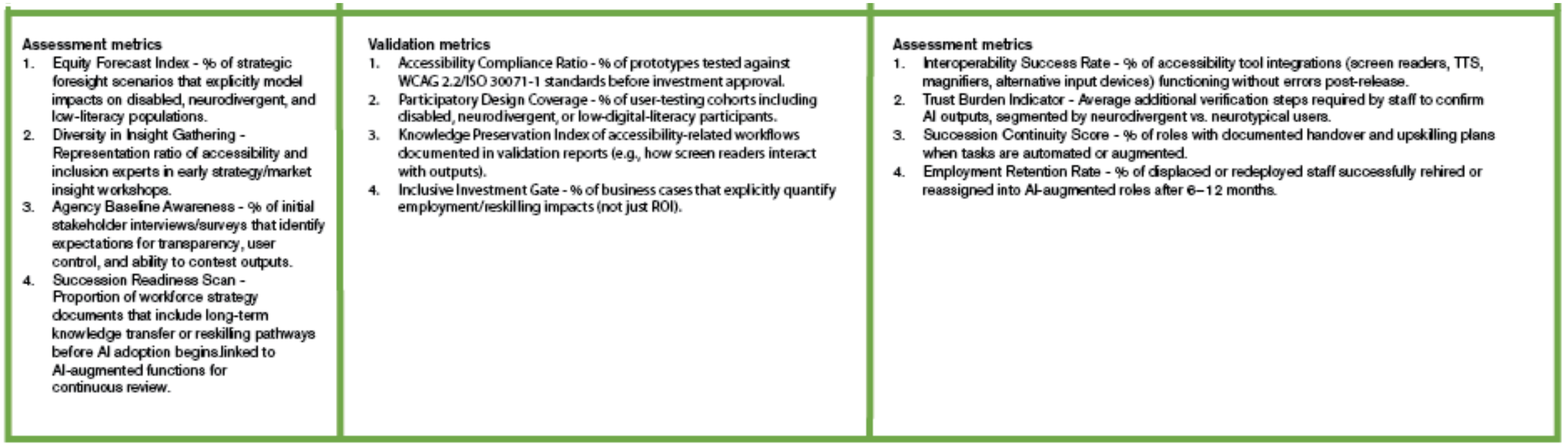
Input

Assessment in the anticipate (strategic foresight) phase of delivery

Validation in the evaluate (incubate/investment) phase of delivery

Measurement in the respond (manage, run, enhance, fix and support) phase of delivery

E.A.S.E. Framework



Assessment metrics

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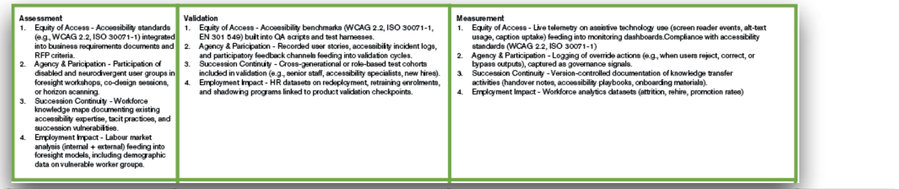
Output

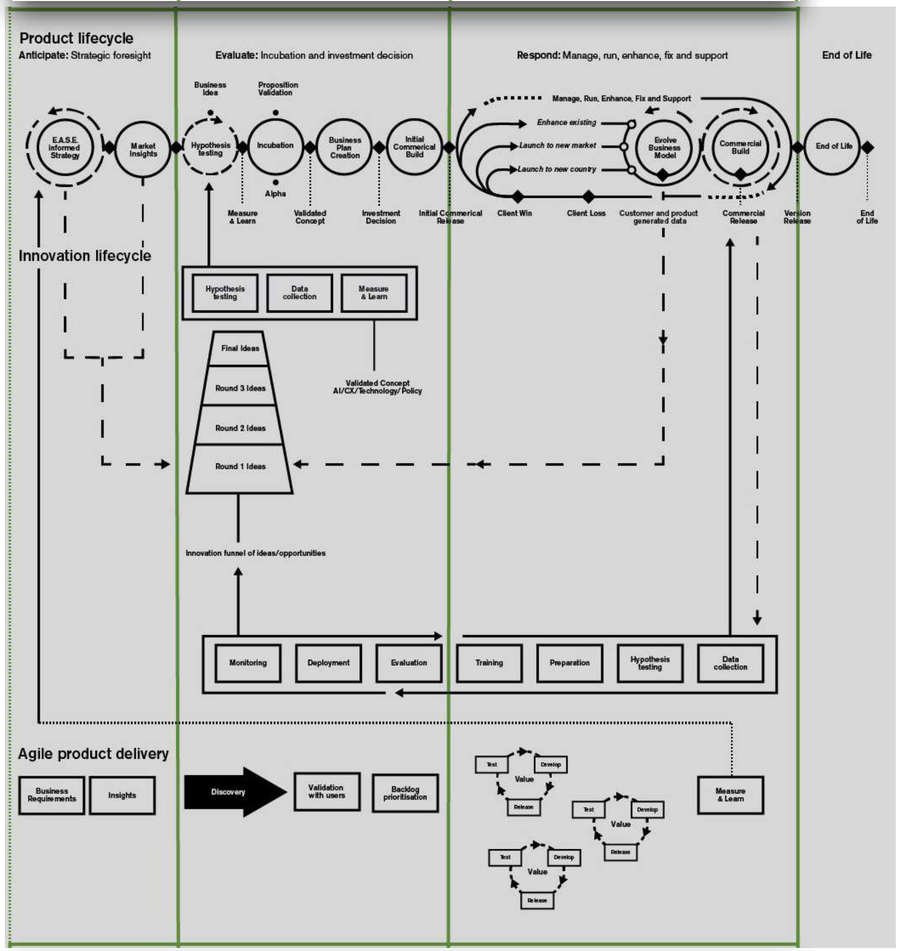
Assessment in the anticipate (strategic foresight) phase of delivery

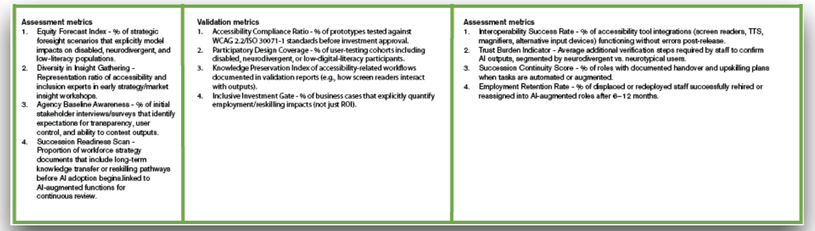
Validation in the evaluate (incubate/investment) phase of delivery

Measurement in the respond (manage, run, enhance, fix and support) phase of delivery

E.A.S.E. Framework







[redacted] Next Steps

Test and iteration

The next steps are to implement, reflect and iterate on the approach using AI projects. One idea is to compare the current AI product delivery approach simultaneously using the EASE framework for comparison.

Questions?

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