

A Research Agenda to Inform Policy Design for a New Digital Regulator

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In recent years, academics, advocates, and policymakers have proposed or discussed the need for a new digital regulator (NDR) – a new agency of the federal government that regulates the AI and technology industry, with a particular focus on market competition, data privacy, and transparency & safety. We have [documented](#) over 20 academic papers and studies, think tank reports, books and parts of books, essays and op-eds, and pieces of legislation that propose such agencies or analyze such proposals.

On February 25, 2026, the Institute for Data, Democracy and Politics at George Washington University and the Vanderbilt Policy Accelerator hosted many of the experts who authored those proposals for a day-long summit to discuss the need for an NDR and open questions related to the design of the agency. Informed by those discussions, this research agenda outlines questions we believe still deserve additional research attention, across disciplines. We are publishing this agenda in hopes to inspire scholarly work on these issues. Some areas may already have work that we have inadvertently missed from our literature review, and we welcome input from those interested in these issues.

Agency Structure and Establishment Generally

- Given recent and anticipated shifts in administrative and regulatory law (e.g., challenges to *Humphrey's Executor*, *Loper Bright* overturning *Chevron* deference, *West Virginia v. EPA* and major questions doctrine, *SEC v. Jarkesy*) what are the benefits and challenges with various agency structures (e.g., commission vs. single director-led)?
- What agency design features can best protect agency action across changes in administration, including major changes in relationships between political leadership and an agency's execution of its mission?
- How can agency design help avoid regulatory capture in the context of an NDR?

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- What industries should be scoped within the agency’s purview? How should overlaps with other agency jurisdictions (e.g., FTC, FCC, NIST) be handled?
- What mechanisms exist to encourage public input and end-user engagement related to agency activities? What are the benefits and drawbacks of these mechanisms?
- What agency structures support international engagement and coordination?

Administrative and Enforcement Approaches

- How can an NDR best use technology to conduct investigations, studies/research, and market oversight?
- How will/is AI changing means of enforcement? What is possible and what are the limits or challenges of this use of technology?
- What are the full range of enforcement tools, how do they vary in speed to use, cost and effectiveness?
- How might an NDR work with state attorneys general and state regulators (e.g., CalPrivacy)?
- Would an NDR be the right agency to handle company licensing or corporate charters (if authorized by statute), as has been considered in the context of AI safety policy discussions?

Agency Funding

- What are the options for funding an NDR beyond traditional annual appropriations (e.g., industry-specific fee or tax)?
- What can we learn from the benefits and limitations of existing funding structures outside of traditional appropriations approaches (e.g., FDA’s user fee model, CFPB’s Federal Reserve drawdown model)?

Authorities

- What role can an NDR play in improving the information environment while respecting the First Amendment?
- Are there effective processes for scoring and assessing the quality of media and value of high quality media to society?
- Do the histories of journalism and fact-checking offer suggestions on effective policy tools?
- What role can the government play in incentivizing journalism/high quality media?

- How can effective competition rules (e.g., opening up the app store duopoly) incentive better market solutions for private media efforts (e.g., “news app store”)?
- What competition policy tools would center labor market impacts (e.g., pre-market review for monopsony power, ban on acquihires)?
- What kinds of privacy and competition authorities conflict?
- What regulatory modalities could support pre-deployment testing (e.g., licensing, trials, sandboxes)? What are the benefits and drawbacks of these mechanisms?

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