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Announcing the "AI Agent Standards Initiative" for Interoperable and Secure Innovation

February 17, 2026

Today, the Center for AI Standards and Innovation (CAISI) at NIST announced the launch of the AI Agent Standards Initiative (<https://www.nist.gov/artificial-intelligence/ai-agent-standards-initiative>). The Initiative will ensure that the next generation of AI—AI agents capable of autonomous actions—is widely adopted with confidence, can function securely on behalf of its users, and can interoperate smoothly across the digital ecosystem. Working in coordination with other federal partners, including the Information Technology Laboratory (ITL) at NIST, CAISI aims to foster the emerging ecosystem of industry-led AI standards and protocols while cementing U.S. dominance at the technological frontier.

AI agents can now work autonomously for hours, write and debug code, manage emails and calendars, and shop for goods, among other emerging use cases. While the productivity promise is enticing, the real-world utility of agents is constrained by their ability to interact with external systems and internal data. Absent confidence in the reliability of AI agents and interoperability among agents and digital resources, innovators may face a fragmented ecosystem and stunted adoption. To address this concern, NIST, including CAISI, aims to foster industry-led technical standards and protocols that build public trust in AI agents, catalyze an interoperable agent ecosystem, and diffuse their benefits to all Americans and across the world.

CAISI, with ITL at NIST, will collaborate with the National Science Foundation and other interagency partners to advance the Initiative along three pillars:

1. Facilitating industry-led development of agent standards and U.S. leadership in international standards bodies.
2. Fostering community-led open source protocol development and maintenance for agents.
3. Advancing research in areas of AI agent security and identity to enable new use cases and to promote trusted adoption across sectors of the economy.

In the months ahead, NIST will announce research, guidelines, and further deliverables for the AI Agent Standards Initiative. To support the interoperable and secure adoption of AI agents, NIST will leverage a full toolbox for public input, including convenings, RFIs, listening sessions, and other approaches. Stakeholders can inform the Initiative today through responses to CAISI's Request for Information on AI Agent Security (<https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2026/01/caisi->

[issues-request-information-about-securing-ai-agent-systems](#)) (due March 9) and to [ITL's AI Agent Identity and Authorization Concept Paper](#) (<https://www.nccoe.nist.gov/projects/software-and-ai-agent-identity-and-authorization>) (due April 2). Beginning in April, [CAISI will hold listening sessions on sector-specific barriers to AI adoption](#) (<https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2026/02/caisi-host-listening-sessions-barriers-ai-adoption>), with a focus on AI agents, to inform concrete projects to spur confident adoption in key sectors. CAISI partners with industry at the frontier of AI, and, with the launch of the Initiative, is working to support the development of a trusted and interoperable AI agent ecosystem that advances human flourishing and U.S. leadership.

[Artificial intelligence](#) (<https://www.nist.gov/topic-terms/artificial-intelligence>) and [Standards](#) (<https://www.nist.gov/topic-terms/standards>).

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Learn More

[Center for AI Standards and Innovation](https://www.nist.gov/caisi) (<https://www.nist.gov/caisi>)

[AI Agent Standards Initiative](https://www.nist.gov/artificial-intelligence/ai-agent-standards-initiative) (<https://www.nist.gov/artificial-intelligence/ai-agent-standards-initiative>)

Released February 17, 2026, Updated February 18, 2026

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