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Submitter Information

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General Comment

See attached file(s).

Attachments

a16z.NSF RFI

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Fostering American AI Leadership Through Research and Innovation[1]

Andreessen Horowitz (a16z) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the 2025 National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Research and Development (R&D) Strategic Plan. a16z manages pooled vehicles which hold investments in more than 100 AI development firms, including as a leading investor in startups and open-source AI developers. As a venture capital firm that invests in entrepreneurs building the future through technology, a16z has a deep interest in fostering a vibrant and competitive AI ecosystem.

To secure the United States' position as the unrivaled world leader in AI, the federal government's R&D strategy must prioritize tech startups, which we refer to as Little Tech. This strategy should focus on two pillars: (1) building robust national AI research infrastructure and (2) supporting research that will fuel American competitiveness.

I. Building a Robust National AI Research Infrastructure

A critical role for the federal government is to lower barriers to entry by providing shared resources that are too capital-intensive for startups and researchers. We propose funding the creation, within NIST, of a new National AI Competitiveness Institute (NAICI) with the following core components:

- **Large-scale compute cluster:** Establish a large-scale compute cluster (totaling ~10,000 advanced GPUs, with an estimated cost of approximately $500 million), housed centrally or across 2–3 sites at a public university or national laboratory.
- **Access to compute:** Provide affordable access to critical compute resources for academic researchers, students, and non-profit organizations. This will enable experimentation with novel architectures and models with manageable compute expenditure, leading to innovation that will in turn benefit the startup ecosystem.
- **Benchmark and evaluation:** Provide resourced access to standardized benchmark datasets and evaluation tools, enabling assessment of AI models.
- **High-quality data:** Provide participants with access to standardized, "AI-Ready" datasets (based on data already held by the federal government) and purpose-built synthetic datasets. The government should require that non-sensitive data and outputs generated from federally funded research be made available for AI training in a usable format and under permissive copyright licenses.

[1] Andreessen Horowitz (a16z) Response to Request for Information on the Development of a 2025 National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Research and Development (R&D) Strategic Plan. This document is approved for public dissemination. The document contains no business-proprietary or confidential information. Document contents may be reused by the government in developing the 2025 National AI R&D Strategic Plan and associated documents without attribution.

II. Supporting Research that Fuels American Competitiveness

The federal AI R&D strategy should also focus on investing in AI research that will help American companies and researchers compete globally:

- **Fund foundational and disruptive AI R&D:** Prioritize fundamental advances in AI through NSF grants and other federal funding. This includes novel algorithms, next-generation AI architectures, new mathematical foundations for AI, AI systems capable of advanced reasoning and robustness, and innovative AI chip design. Consideration should be given to dedicated funding streams for disruptive research: moonshot, high-reward projects that challenge current paradigms. The government should encourage a comprehensive portfolio of research projects on different time scales, from those expected to yield results in the next five years to those with a 50-year outlook.
- **Invest in R&D for open ecosystems:** Provide targeted funding for research that utilizes, improves, and expands open-source AI models, datasets, and development tools. A strong open ecosystem is a key enabler for startups and researchers.
- **Support R&D on effective AI talent development:** Fund research into innovative and scalable methods for training the American workforce for AI-related jobs.
- **Invest in research on pro-competitive AI governance:** Fund research to identify barriers to AI innovation and to assess the costs and benefits of proposed AI regulations for startups. Support pilot programs, such as regulatory sandboxes, to foster evidence-based AI governance that promotes American competitiveness.
- **Support R&D for AI in government:** Fund research initiatives exploring AI's potential to improve the delivery of government services, make public sector agencies more efficient, and bolster national security capabilities.
- **Support improvements in research design:** Invest in research efficacy by funding experiments to determine successful research methodologies and government funding strategies. In addition to traditional research funding, the government should consider alternative funding mechanisms, like prizes and challenges. To maximize impact, R&D funding mechanisms should minimize administrative burdens and reporting requirements for researchers.

Conclusion: Enabling Conditions for AI Competitiveness

The 2025 National AI R&D Strategic Plan has a vital role in ensuring America's continued global leadership in AI. By building cutting-edge research infrastructure and funding foundational R&D, the federal government can create the enabling conditions for a dynamic and competitive AI ecosystem where startups and researchers can thrive.

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