

THE AI INSTITUTE / OPERATING INTELLIGENCE

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Ask Who Can Change Your AI Standard

An open format can make work portable. Its stewardship determines how confidently you can build on it.

Boards, C-suite and senior management

Research period: October 2026 – October 2026

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PUBLICATION RECORD

An Institute thesis and decision framework

Before making an open AI standard a strategic dependency, establish who can change it, how your organisation can contribute evidence and what must be retested when implementations change.



WHAT LEADERS SHOULD TAKE FROM THIS PAPER

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| 01 | Separate access to a standard from authority over its development. |
| 02 | Treat a proposed governance roadmap as a proposal, not a completed safeguard. |
| 03 | Support maintainers with useful evidence, not only membership or sponsorship. |
| 04 | Test portability on your work; readable instructions do not guarantee identical results. |

Research method

Institute analysis of the official 22 October vendor announcement, current project and foundation pages, a versioned Berkeley preprint and original regional event pages, checked 23 October 2026. The proposed partnership and acceptance tests are Institute recommendations, not demonstrated universal controls.

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CONTENTS

Inside this paper

01	A shared format is a relationship, not just a feature Leadership & Influence
02	What the Agent Skills transfer establishes 22 October · Confirmed Announcement
03	Instructions can travel; outcomes still need checking What Becomes Portable
04	Contribute something that improves the standard Institute Partnership Test
05	Do not confuse an invitation with equal capacity Participation Has Practical Conditions
06	Make dependence proportionate to evidence Next Management Review
M	Method and limitations
R	References

How to use this brief

Start with the decision and use the framework to challenge the current plan. Figures retain their original populations and definitions. Institute analysis is labelled, and limitations are recorded before the references.

A shared format is a relationship, not just a feature

An AI supplier can promise that your team's instructions will work across several tools. That is attractive: knowledge need not be rewritten every time the organisation changes software. But once a shared format becomes part of daily work, its future direction becomes an operating concern. Who can change it? Who hears about a breaking change? Who represents the people relying on it?

Leaders should answer those questions before making an emerging standard a strategic dependency. Open access is valuable, but it is not the same as influence over development, support when something breaks or evidence that every implementation behaves alike. The Institute recommends treating stewardship as part of the buying and partnership decision, alongside price and technical capability.

What the Agent Skills transfer establishes

Anthropic says it is donating the Agent Skills name and logo, GitHub organisation and agentskills.io domain to the Agentic AI Foundation, under the Linux Foundation. The company says people can continue using and contributing to the standard without joining the foundation. Engineers from several companies will maintain it as individuals, with David Soria Parra and Mahesh Murag as lead maintainers.¹

The announcement also proposes a roadmap covering versioned releases, a formal proposal process and security guidance. Those are proposed next steps, not evidence that all three arrangements are already operating. The foundation now lists Agent Skills as a project. Its published governing board and technical committee are separate bodies; neither list alone establishes the rules for accepting a particular project change.

123

This is a transfer of stewardship for a technical standard, not a new law, a certification of participating products or a warranty covering every skill. The opportunity is to build shared infrastructure with a clearer institutional home. The practical test is whether its emerging processes make decisions understandable and participation useful.

Instructions can travel; outcomes still need checking

A skill packages instructions and, where needed, scripts or reference material in a folder that an AI agent can load for a task. An agent is software that uses AI to take steps towards a goal. A common packaging format can help different tools find and use the same material. It does not establish that every model will interpret the instructions equally well. ⁴

A new Berkeley preprint, D-Skill, explores a related possibility: comparing stronger and weaker agents' recorded attempts, then turning the differences into written guidance for the weaker agent. Its tests cover spreadsheet editing, text-based household tasks and chess puzzles. The authors report improved results, but the method needs a capable analysing model and cannot supply abilities the receiving model fundamentally lacks. It is early research, not a field trial across organisations. ⁵

The Institute's inference is that reusable operating knowledge could become a more important asset. That makes its maintenance consequential. A shared instruction file may preserve a team's method, yet changes to the model, tools or working conditions can still alter the result. Keep the instruction, its accepted version and its test evidence connected.

Contribute something that improves the standard

Ask the project for its current decision process rather than relying on a sponsor list. Identify who can propose changes, who decides, how disagreements are recorded and how users learn about incompatible updates. Where a process is still developing, record that uncertainty and avoid promising customers a stability guarantee you cannot support.

Then decide what your organisation can contribute. A reproducible failure case, a well-defined industry workflow or a carefully checked translation may be more useful than a broad declaration of support. Allocate staff time and agree what information can be shared. Do not publish customer records, confidential procedures or proprietary material merely to demonstrate participation.

Mutual value should be specific. Maintainers receive evidence that helps them improve compatibility or documentation. Your organisation gains a better understanding of changes and a route to raise problems. Neither contribution nor membership should be presented as privileged approval, guaranteed roadmap control or endorsement by the foundation.

EXHIBIT / THREE DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

ACCESS	VOICE	PROOF
Can we use it? Format, licence and implementation support. Institute decision framework	Can we influence it? Proposals, decisions and escalation. Institute decision framework	Does our work survive? Local tests and update acceptance. Institute decision framework

Do not confuse an invitation with equal capacity

The development originates with a US-based vendor and a foundation whose published technical committee includes major technology suppliers. That does not establish exclusion or capture. It does make it worth asking which operating environments, languages and user needs appear in the evidence used to make decisions. A list of prominent companies cannot answer that question.³

Recent regional convenings point to different priorities. Abuja's Build 2026 programme, dated 21–22 October, focuses on shared compute, infrastructure, investment and local ownership. The RISE AI summit in Santiago, held on 20–21 October, foregrounds responsible and inclusive adoption across education, business and health. These are organiser descriptions of priorities, not proof of funded infrastructure or successful deployments.⁶⁷

Across Europe and the UK, Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, the useful contribution will depend on local language, connectivity, sector rules and institutional capacity. A common file format does not harmonise privacy or intellectual-property law. Nor does an English-language contribution channel remove the cost of maintaining multilingual tests. These differences should shape participation and procurement, not become a routine claim that one region speaks for another.

Make dependence proportionate to evidence

Choose one representative, low-risk workflow and document the accepted instructions and tools. Test whether it still meets the same human-defined outcome in a second supported implementation. Record failures and extra review effort, not only whether the file loads. This is an Institute-proposed acceptance exercise, not a benchmark result or permission to move sensitive work.

Before widening use, ask the accountable owner for three things: the current change process, the evidence supporting portability and a practical contribution the organisation can sustain. Where the answers are incomplete, keep the deployment bounded. Open standards can reduce dependence on one supplier; responsible participation helps prevent that benefit from becoming dependence on an unexamined process.

RESEARCH RECORD

Method and limitations

Method

Institute analysis of the official 22 October vendor announcement, current project and foundation pages, a versioned Berkeley preprint and original regional event pages, checked 23 October 2026. The proposed partnership and acceptance tests are Institute recommendations, not demonstrated universal controls.

Limitations

The announcement describes intended governance development; a final project-specific proposal or voting process was not verified. Foundation membership does not establish project control. Research is a preprint using bounded tasks and selected models, not a production reliability or savings guarantee. Event programmes do not establish outcomes. Regional legal and operational requirements need local assessment.



Sources and limitations

Source facts link to the original publication. Institute analysis reconciles definitions and turns the material into a management proposition. Frameworks are decision aids, not claims of universal causality. Read every important statistic with its population, date, definition and caveat.

Research cutoff: 23 October 2026. Review cycle: six months, or earlier after a material change in the underlying facts, standards or policy.

REFERENCES

Evidence behind the thesis

01	Anthropic: Donating Agent Skills to the Agentic AI Foundation
	22 October 2026 announcement. Assets, lead maintainers, non-member contribution and proposed roadmap distinguished.
02	AAIF: Agent Skills project
	Current project page checked 23 October 2026. Project listing corroborates the institutional home; promotional activity metrics are not used as assurance.
03	AAIF: Technical Committee
	Current named committee checked 23 October 2026; governing board separately inspected at aaif.io/board. These pages are not a project-specific decision charter.
04	Agent Skills: Format overview
	Current primary specification overview checked 23 October 2026. Packaging and progressive loading do not establish behavioural equivalence.
05	Yuan, Li and Gonzalez: D-Skill
	Berkeley preprint submitted 20 October, listed 22 October 2026; full HTML methods and limitations inspected. Held-out evaluation: 200 spreadsheet tasks, 134 text-environment games and 200 chess puzzles. Not peer-reviewed deployment evidence.
06	Build 2026: Africa's Shared Compute and AI Infrastructure Conference
	Organiser page for 21–22 October 2026, Abuja. Nigeria AI Collective under the federal ministry's leadership. Programme priorities, not investment or deployment outcomes.
07	RISE AI Latin America Summit
	Original organiser page confirms 20–21 October 2026 Santiago event concluded. Universidad de los Andes and University of Notre Dame convening; no inference of region-wide adoption.

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