



## Tech Policy Primer

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this project, please visit  
[aspenpolicyhub.org](https://aspenpolicyhub.org).



# Building Technical Expertise at the Federal Trade Commission

Expanding technical capacity to improve investigations, litigation,  
and compliance

## BACKGROUND

*As part of their 10-week policy training, the scholars of the Tech Policy Primer program spent 6 weeks working on public sector challenges. In teams of 4-5, the leaders either proposed their own projects or worked with a real-world government client on a public sector problem. Below is an overview of one team's project to help the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) augment its investigations capacity.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) should develop new pathways for technologists to join the agency to support investigations, litigation, compliance, strategy, and policy. In particular, the FTC should consider establishing a Technology Advisory Committee (TAC) of academic and industry experts. Technical talent within the TAC would reduce the burden on non-technical staff to develop new expertise in technology fields. Moreover, building a cross-disciplinary TAC would improve efficiency and effectiveness at the FTC, and better position the agency for the future.



## Tech Policy Primer

### PROBLEM BACKGROUND

The FTC lacks the volume of technical experts to properly meet its regulatory obligations in the digital era. As a result, legal experts are often forced to become experts in technical fields, distracting them from legal matters; increasing operating inefficiencies across the agency; and reducing the agency's capacity to address key challenges like identify theft, discriminatory algorithms, data privacy, and anticompetitive practices. The federal government and civil society have identified and are already working to rectify the shortage of technologists within government. However, the FTC is not currently using all tools at its disposal. For instance, Advisory Committees are a low-cost way for the FTC to get insights and recommendations from technology specialists; however, the FTC has not convened an Advisory Committee since 2000.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The FTC should utilize new pathways for technology generalists and specialists to join the agency in advisory, part-time, and full-time capacities. Specifically, the FTC should **establish a Technology Advisory Committee (TAC)** to provide deep subject matter expertise and industry insight to help the FTC address current regulation challenges involving technology, and prepare the agency for new technologies that could impact consumers and fair market competition.

The TAC should comprise between 15 and 25 members with Subcommittees comprising 3 to 7 members. These members should be recognized technology experts in sectors related to the FTC's duties, support the missions of the FTC. The TAC should also have associated performance goals and metrics that will help FTC leadership assess the impacts of the group on its operations and mission.

By establishing such a TAC, the FTC will ultimately be able to operate more efficiently and increase its regulatory capacity.

*For more information about this proposal, see the [Building Technical Expertise at the FTC](#) guide.*

### ABOUT THE TECH POLICY PRIMER

This project was completed as part of the Aspen Tech Policy Hub's Tech Policy Primer program, a 10-week, part-time program that trains science and technology experts on the policy process. Learn more at [aspentechpolicyhub.org/primer](https://aspentechpolicyhub.org/primer).

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