

PRACTICAL BRIEF

Buying Technology Through a Safety Lens

A cross-functional guide to selecting workplace tools without importing avoidable risk

The Canadian Forum on Workplace Innovation · September 2026

PURPOSE

Help organizations translate safety, work-design, privacy, security and accessibility needs into requirements, evidence requests, contracts and pilot decisions.

NEED

USE CASE

RISK

REQUIREMENTS

EVIDENCE

CONTRACT

PILOT

REVIEW

Procurement helps design the future job

A workplace technology purchase is rarely only an IT decision. The selected tool may affect task sequence, work pace, physical and cognitive demands, supervision, data collection, accessibility, training and responsibility for decisions. Important conditions are difficult — and sometimes expensive — to add after a contract is signed.¹

A safety lens does not mean asking the safety function to approve every product. It means bringing the right functions and affected workers together early enough to define requirements and evaluate trade-offs.

PROCUREMENT RULE

Buy for a verified use case and an acceptable work system — not for a feature list. A demonstration can show that a function exists; it cannot prove fit, safety or value in your workplace.

Who should be at the table?

PERSPECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION
Operations	Real workflow, performance, staffing and failure conditions.
Workers / representatives	Task variation, usability, workarounds and practical effects.
Safety / ergonomics	Hazards, controls, physical and cognitive demands.
IT / cybersecurity	Architecture, access, integration, updates and incident response.
Privacy / legal	Authority, purpose, proportionality, notice, retention and contract terms.
Accessibility	Functional access, testing and accommodation implications.
Procurement / finance	Evidence, total cost, remedies, renewal, exit and vendor viability.
Implementation lead	Training, support, change capacity and evaluation.

01 | REQUIREMENTS BEFORE PRODUCTS

Turn workplace needs into evidence requests

Separate mandatory requirements from preferences. For every material vendor claim, identify what evidence you will accept: documentation, test results, a reference from a comparable use case, contract language, accessibility conformance information or performance in your own pilot.

AREA	REQUIREMENT TO DEFINE	EVIDENCE TO REQUEST
Safety and work design	Defined hazards; safe use and fallback; effects on pace, workload and physical demand.	Risk documentation; limitations; operating instructions; comparable deployments.
Performance and reliability	Accuracy or service level in the actual use case; exception handling.	Test method; representative data; failure rates; uptime and support history.
Privacy and data	Purpose limitation; minimal collection; access; retention; deletion; location.	Data map; privacy terms; subprocessors; deletion evidence; breach process.
Cybersecurity	Access control; encryption; logging; updates; vulnerability and incident response.	Security documentation; certifications where relevant; incident clauses; patch commitments.
Human oversight	Review, explanation, challenge, override and accountability.	Workflow demonstration; logs; documentation of known limits and escalation.
Accessibility	Usable by people with diverse functional needs and compatible with assistive technology.	Conformance report; testing evidence; accessible documentation; remediation plan.
Implementation	Training, technical support, configuration, integration and change effort.	Implementation plan; resource assumptions; support levels; customer references.
Exit and continuity	Data portability and deletion; transition support; safe continuity.	Exit clauses; export format; deletion process; continuity and termination terms.

Three tests for every requirement

- **Specific:** Can a vendor and evaluator reach the same interpretation?
- **Verifiable:** Is there credible evidence before purchase or during a bounded pilot?
- **Enforceable:** Is the important commitment reflected in the contract, service level or acceptance criteria?

ACCESSIBILITY IN PROCUREMENT

A Canadian voluntary ICT accessibility standard includes functional requirements and test methods that can support procurement. Ask vendors for evidence and involve people with disabilities in evaluating the actual service, content and workflow.^{5,6}

02 | FROM DUE DILIGENCE TO DECISION

Eight gates before scaling

GATE	MINIMUM EVIDENCE
1. Need	A real workplace problem and accountable owner are documented.
2. Use case	Users, tasks, conditions, data, exceptions and intended outcome are bounded.
3. Risk	Safety, privacy, security, accessibility and employment implications are reviewed.
4. Requirements	Mandatory conditions, preferences and acceptance criteria are separated.
5. Evidence	Material claims are supported and uncertainty or limitations are recorded.
6. Contract	Responsibilities, incident notice, audit/support, data, renewal and exit are clear.
7. Pilot	Representative users test the work system with training and a safe fallback.
8. Review	Results are compared with baseline and the decision is documented.

TECHNOLOGY IN PRACTICE · ILLUSTRATIVE, NOT AN ENDORSEMENT**DHL and Stretch (May 2025): deployment as a staged relationship**

DHL reports that its collaboration with Boston Dynamics began in 2018, that the Stretch case-handling robot entered commercial use in North America in 2023 and later expanded to the United Kingdom and Europe. In May 2025, the companies announced a memorandum of understanding intended to support more than 1,000 additional units and further use cases. The path involved testing and co-development in live logistics operations rather than a one-step, off-the-shelf purchase.

Decision lesson. For novel workplace technology, evaluate the supplier's integration role, testing approach, support model and ability to learn from real operating conditions — not only the product specification.

Source [8]: [DHL Group — Boston Dynamics expansion](#). Company- or industry-reported implementation; results should not be generalized.

Questions to ask in a vendor meeting

- Where has this product been used in a comparable task, workforce and operating environment?
- What are the known limitations, failure modes and conditions that reduce performance?
- What worker or workplace data are collected, inferred, retained, shared or used to improve the product?
- What happens during an outage, disputed output, security incident or vendor service failure?
- What internal time, roles, training and process changes are required for reliable implementation?
- How can we retrieve our data, verify deletion and transition away without disrupting safe operations?

Do not let the score hide a critical condition

Weighted scoring can compare viable options, but a high total should never compensate for failure on a mandatory safety, privacy, security, accessibility or human-oversight requirement. Screen those conditions first; score only the options that remain.

BOTTOM LINE

The safest time to shape a technology purchase is before selection and contract. Define the work-system requirements, ask for evidence, preserve enforceable safeguards and pilot the real use case before scaling.

Sources and evidence notes

1. CCOHS, [Introducing New Technology at the Workplace](#). Canadian guidance on assessing hazards, training and worker involvement when technology changes work.
2. Federal, provincial and territorial privacy commissioners, [Protecting Employee Privacy in the Modern Workplace](#). Joint Canadian expectations for necessity, proportionality, impact assessment, transparency and human involvement.
3. Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, [Cross-Sector Cyber Security Readiness Goals Toolkit](#). Canadian guidance developed for critical-infrastructure owners and operators; selected governance, procurement, vendor and incident-response practices are applied here proportionately.
4. Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, [Recommended cyber security contract clauses for cloud services](#). Canadian guidance for translating security expectations into cloud contracts.
5. Accessibility Standards Canada, [CAN/ASC-EN 301 549:2024](#). Canadian voluntary standard with functional accessibility requirements and test methods for ICT products and services.
6. Accessibility Standards Canada, [Procurement of accessible services scenario](#). Practical guidance on vendor evidence, accessible deliverables and participation by people with disabilities.
7. NIST, [AI Risk Management Framework](#). Voluntary framework that can support governance and risk questions for AI-enabled products.
8. DHL Group, [Boston Dynamics expansion](#). Company account of a multi-year robotics collaboration; used to illustrate staged testing, integration and supplier relationships rather than to validate performance claims.

EVIDENCE STANDARD

This brief synthesizes public guidance and selected evidence for practical decision support. It is not legal advice, a compliance determination, a product endorsement or a substitute for qualified professional judgment. Requirements vary by workplace and jurisdiction.
