

Workshop note

Topic : Towards report 'The future of tech transfer: AI innovation pathways'

Date : 14 April 2025

To : Workshop speakers & participants

From : Secretariat

Overview

This note summarises key findings from a recent survey on AI adoption and ethical practices in Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), which will be shared in the context of the workshop "The Future of Tech Transfer: AI Innovation Pathways."

Survey background

This note and workshop are both directly linked to a survey conducted with Task Force Innovation on the topic of AI adoption and ethical practices in TTOs.

The survey explored:

- Key AI use cases for TTOs
- Ethical and operational challenges
- Opportunities for automation and digital transformation

Sample overview

Total responses: 12

Unique institutions: 12

TTOs with more than 10 staff: 66.7%

Internal department within the university: 83% (note one answer: TTO responsibilities and rights now largely transferred to individual faculties)

Survey results

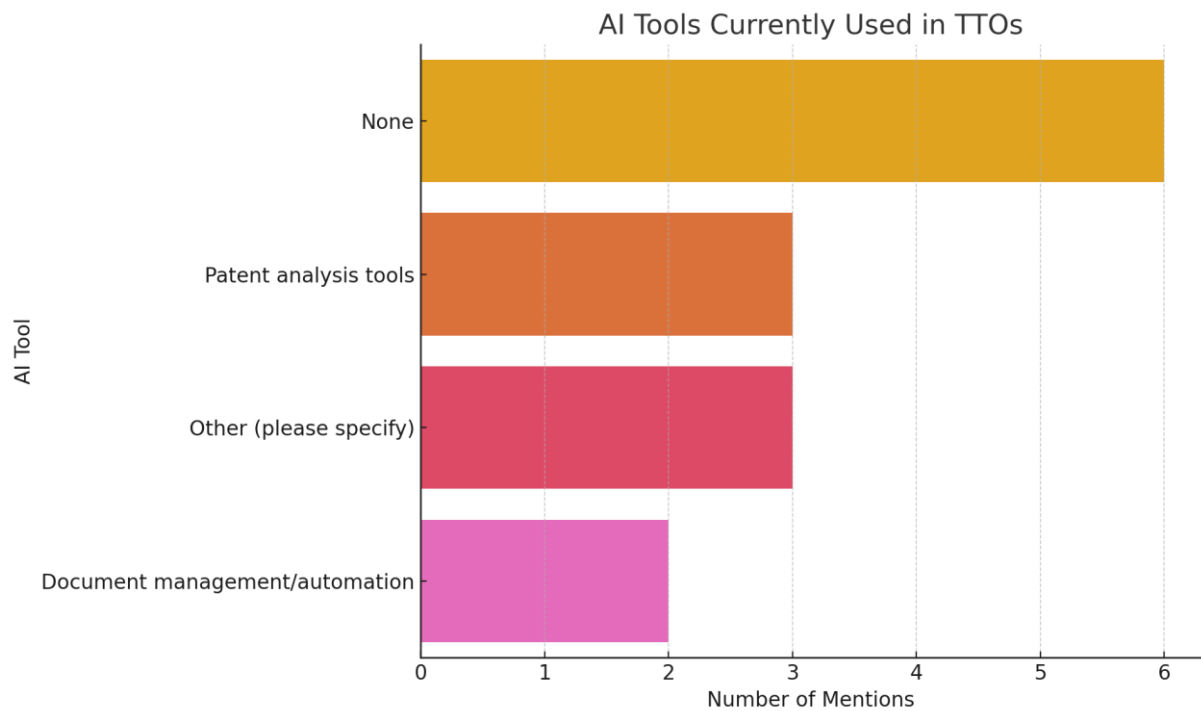
1. Institutional engagement with AI



Guidelines: Most universities have no specific AI guidelines for TTOs or admin departments — highlighting a regulatory gap.

In-house AI solutions: Few respondents report having dedicated in-house AI tools, suggesting reliance on external or generic platforms.

2. Current AI Tools Used in TTOs



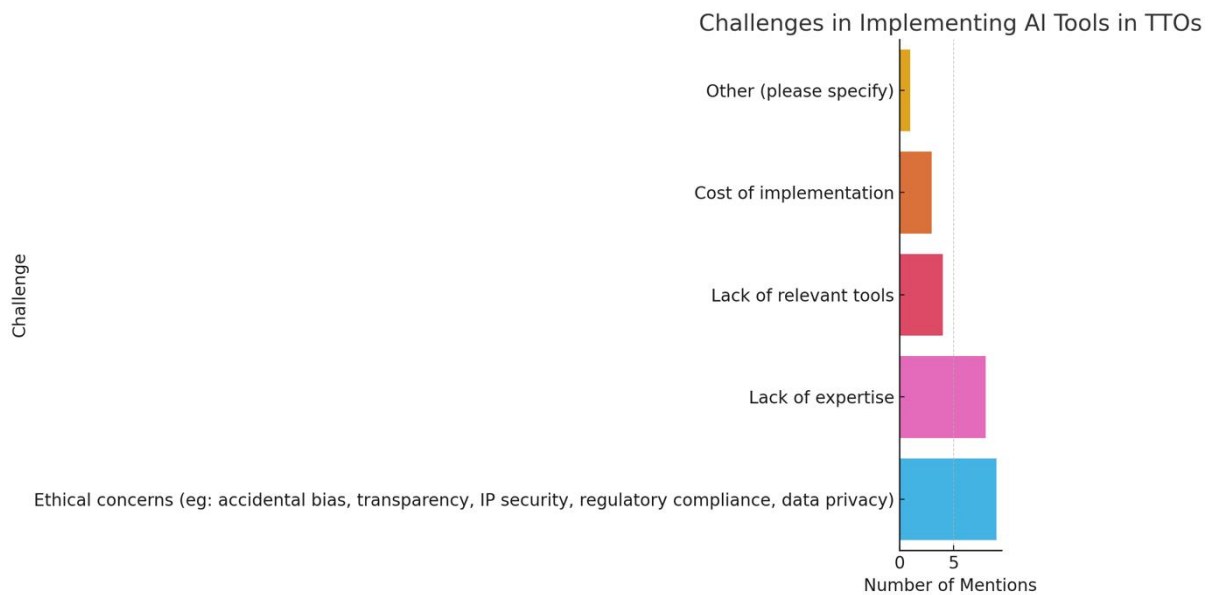
The tools most frequently mentioned are ChatGPT, AI-based prior art search tools, and automated IP management platforms.

Some respondents listed general-purpose AI tools rather than TTO-specific ones, showing that adoption may be exploratory or improvised.

One respondent said that they have already talked to the biggest patent attorney office regarding the use of AI for patent drafting. Their goal is to contact all their patent attorneys and find out, which tools are they using. For patent drafting they will allow only "in house developed" tools.

3. Implementation challenges

- Lack of expertise (32%)
- Ethical concerns (36%)



4. Key ethical concerns

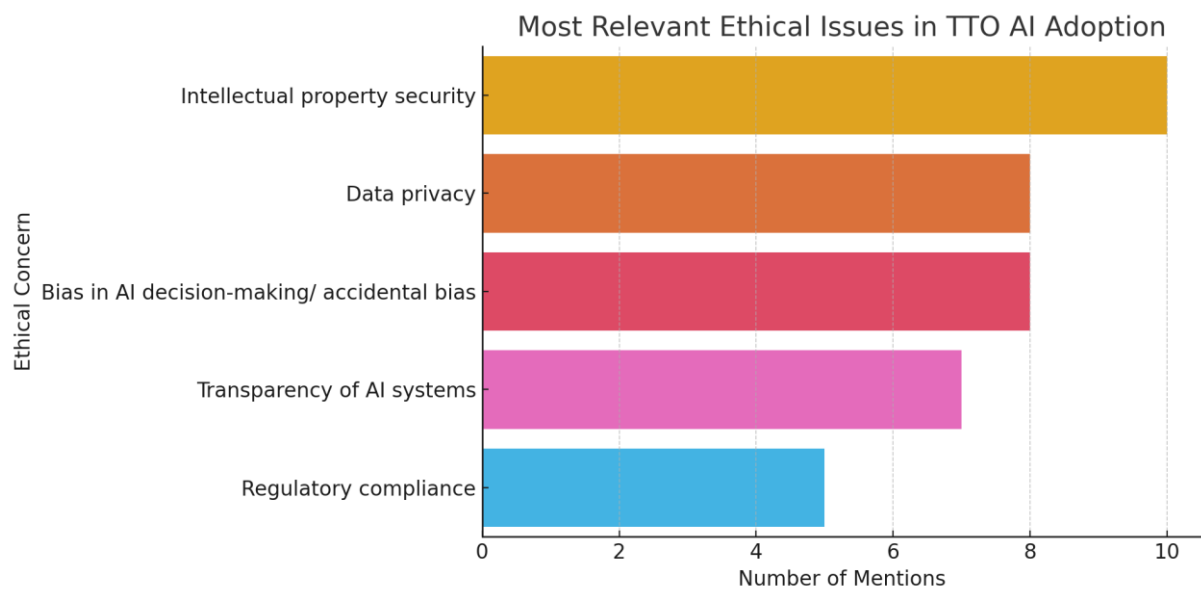
Very significant (25%)

Somewhat significant (66%)

Most frequently mentioned concerns include:

- Bias and fairness
- Transparency and explainability
- Data privacy and security

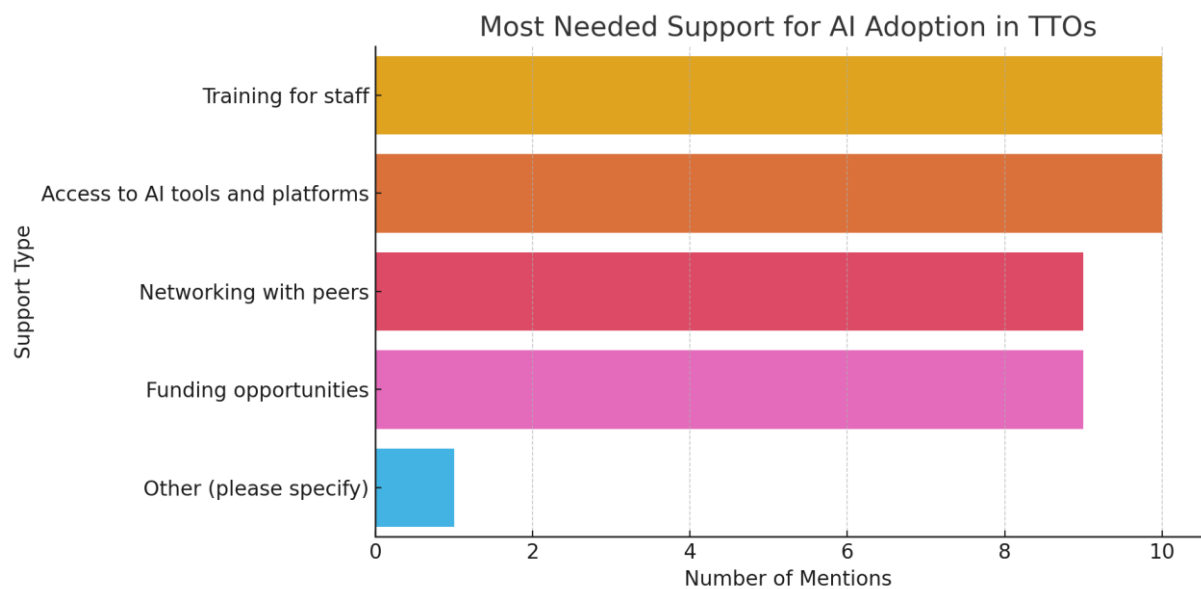
These mirror broader debates around responsible AI — with TTOs specifically wary of embedding bias into high-stakes decision processes (like IP protection or licensing).



5. Support needs

Training for staff, funding opportunities, and access to AI tools/platforms most urgently.

Peer networking is also seen as crucial — suggesting openness to community-building or shared learning frameworks.



6. Qualitative insights

Biggest challenges

“Overcoming inertia associated with existing controls and perception of loss of control.”

“Patent thickets could emerge due to AI's ability to generate defensive IP — not good times for universities.”

“Staff education, integration in workflows, confidentiality risks...”

“Concerns about data safety, protection, and bias.”

➔ show that challenges are not just technical — they're cultural, ethical, and strategic.

Biggest opportunities

“Automation, partner identification, tech mapping, IP prior art.”

“Faster and more efficient processes, generation of new ideas and making connections.”

“AI could someday evaluate IP, define markets, suggest business plans.”

➔ AI as a tool to scale impact, enhance efficiency, and augment strategic decision-making — if the right support is in place.

7. Future collaboration

91% would be interested to collaborate with other institutions on AI implementation and ethical frameworks?

