

AS OF: 24 September 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS

SUBJECT: Why ProofSmith — companion to the Category Definition matrix

ENCLOSURE: Category Definition matrix, as of 24 September 2026

Bottom line. ProofSmith is the independent decision-and-proof layer for actions taken by people, AI and machines. Each of the systems we have assessed either enforces without evidence a third party can check, produces evidence without enforcing, or does neither. None of them has an interest in becoming independent of its own decisions, because for each it would mean ceasing to be the platform its business is built on. That makes them prospective partners, not competitors. We sit after their systems, at the last gate before an action runs, and we are looking to integrate with the vendors already inside the enterprise.

1. The first principle

“No man is allowed to be a judge in his own cause, because his interest would certainly bias his judgment, and, not improbably, corrupt his integrity.” Madison wrote that in 1787, and the Supreme Court has called the rule “a mainstay of our system of government.” It was written for people, and it applies with at least as much force to machines, which act faster than any person can review. A system may act alone. It must never be its own judge and witness. The rule binds ProofSmith as well: our own decisions must be checkable by a party that does not have to take our word for them. The two tests and the four quadrants below follow from it, and so does the reason no platform can supply independence for itself.

James Madison, The Federalist No. 10 (1787); Gutierrez de Martinez v. Lamagno, 515 U.S. 417 (1995).

2. What ProofSmith does

ProofSmith is the trust layer for digital information. It establishes provenance, decides what may access or transform an artifact — permit or deny, on authority — and emits independently verifiable proof of that decision, whether the actor is a human, an AI, or a machine. The proposer proposes. The Arbiter decides.

3. The two tests that define the axes

- **Enforcement (the vertical axis).** Does the system stop the action, or does it only observe it? A control that records what happened is a witness; a control that determines whether it may happen is a governor, and neither can substitute for the other.
- **Verifier-independence (the horizontal axis).** Can a third party check the decision without the cooperation of the system that produced it? If not, the record is an assertion by an interested party, however well signed and however well stored.

4. How to read the four quadrants

Every system outside the upper right is a prospective partner. ProofSmith sits after it, at the last gate before the action runs, and takes its decision as one input to the decision we make and prove.

- **Enforces, no evidence (upper left).** Identity providers, privileged-access managers, AI gateways and agent-security platforms, together with the industry reference architectures now being published for securing agents. They establish who an agent is and what it may touch, and they can stop it. The record of each decision is kept by the party that made it.
- **Neither (lower left).** Governance, posture, risk and observability tools. They describe, inventory and score, which every program needs, but they neither stop an action nor produce evidence a third party can check.
- **Evidence, no enforcement (lower right).** Attestation, provenance and signing tools. They sign a workload, a model, a build or a statement, but they do not decide whether an action may run, and most depend on trusting the issuer or the hardware.
- **Enforces + Evidence (upper right).** The decision is taken before the act, against authority written in advance, and the proof can be checked by anyone authorized without relying on the word of the operator, the platform or ProofSmith. ProofSmith is built for this quadrant.

5. What we found

Over eight months of searching the public record — product documentation, patent applications and grants, standards drafts, regulatory filings and published analyst material — we assessed one hundred and eight systems and placed one hundred of them on the two tests. Thirty-six enforce without producing checkable evidence, twenty-three produce evidence without enforcing anything, thirty-eight do neither, and three sit on the line between two quadrants. A further eight were set off the axes as belonging to a different layer. On our reading of the public record, none of the one hundred reaches the upper right, and none of the three on a line touches it. If a system belongs there, tell us and we will place it.

6. Independence: the position no platform has an interest in taking

The platforms will sign their logs, which is not hard. Becoming independent of the systems they operate and sell is not in their interest. An identity provider, a cloud, a security platform or a model maker that attests to its own decisions is still attesting to itself, whoever holds the key. A model maker's guardrails also answer a different question: they decide whether an output is harmful, on the model maker's terms, while an examiner asks whether the action was inside the authority the organization granted, and no model maker holds that authority.

Each platform can also attest only to its own slice, whether identity, model or endpoint. An action crosses all of those slices, and so must its record. An organization that changes models or vendors should not have its evidence start over each time. The more of these layers the platforms build, the more an organization needs one decision point that belongs to none of them.

For a platform, independence would mean giving up its standing as platform of record, which is the business itself; it is a position a platform cannot occupy without ceasing to be the platform. The upper right therefore calls for an independent party, and ProofSmith is built to partner with these businesses.

7. Built to decide and prove, and nothing else

ProofSmith builds the independent decision-and-proof layer and nothing else. We do not build identity, discovery, monitoring, gateways or data-loss prevention, and we integrate with the vendors who do. Their controls are inputs to the decision we make and prove, and our proof is evidence their customers' auditors, regulators and counterparties can rely on.

Before an action runs, ProofSmith decides whether it falls inside the authority granted, permit or deny, and records the lineage of that authority. It does this for any proposer, human, machine or AI, and for any model or vendor behind the proposal. The organization keeps one record of every consequential action ProofSmith governs and the authority it ran under, and that record is designed to remain verifiable even if ProofSmith is gone. The ProofSmith architecture is patent pending.

8. Why provable decisions are worth more than the audit

Accountability is the floor. Above it, an organization can put decisions it can prove to work in four ways.

- **Recursive learning.** Decisions traced to their outcomes and to the authority behind them become a learning record the organization can trust. Each cycle learns from proven decisions, what worked and what failed, rather than from decisions no one can vouch for, and the organization can show what its models learned from, which is what allows a model to be examined and re-certified. Feeding unproven decisions back into a learning system opens a high-leverage attack; the proof shows which decisions carried authority, so the others can be kept out.
- **Security.** When a system is compromised, the record shows what it touched and which decisions depended on it, so the organization can establish the blast radius quickly, instead of shutting down as a precaution.
- **Delegation.** An organization that can prove what its machines decided, and on whose authority, can delegate more to them, sooner, and can take the last step toward autonomy while still answering for the result.
- **Enterprise value.** The record belongs to the organization rather than to any vendor, and it compounds: each proven decision adds to an asset that survives changes of model, vendor or platform, and that an acquirer, an insurer, an auditor or a regulator can rely on without re-creating it.

9. Where we are focused

- **National security.** Our initial outreach has been at the highest levels of national security, and that work is ongoing.
- **Regulated industries.** Our commercial outreach has focused where an examiner already asks who authorized an action: critical infrastructure, banking and financial services, and healthcare.

10. An open invitation

We invite identity providers, gateway and agent-security vendors, cybersecurity platforms, cloud providers and attestation vendors to integrate with ProofSmith as the independent decision-and-proof layer after their controls. The invitation extends to the authors of the industry reference architectures now calling for evidence a regulator can rely on, since that is the requirement ProofSmith is built to meet.

Source: ProofSmith assessment register, version 3.7; publicly available information (product documentation, patents and filings), as of 24 September 2026.

Your platforms enforce, govern and attest. ProofSmith decides on authority, and proves it.