

# Law Enforcement & Facial Recognition

*What to Know Before Use*

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# Goals

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*The basics of facial recognition technology (FRT)*

**What is FRT**

**How Law Enforcement Uses FRT**

**Potential Benefits & Risks of Using FRT**

**Necessary Guardrails for Responsible Use**

# Key Takeaways

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- FRT has **potential** (often unproven) **benefits**
- FRT has **real risks** to civil rights/liberties
- **Communities** should weigh these benefits & risks themselves
- Use requires **strong guardrails**

# What is FRT?

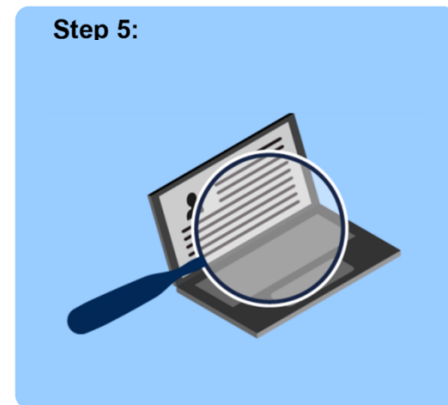
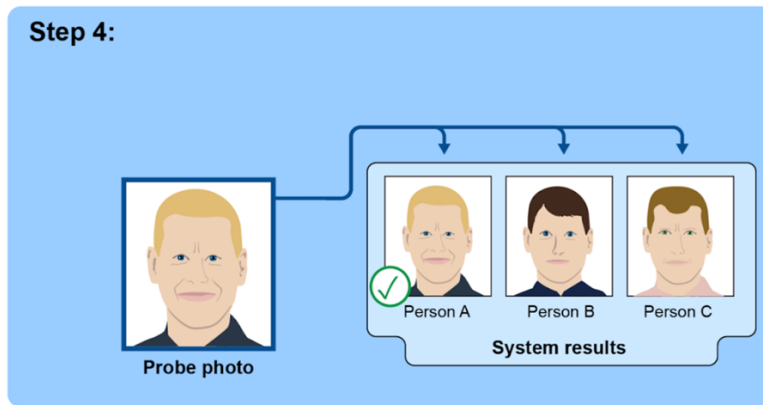
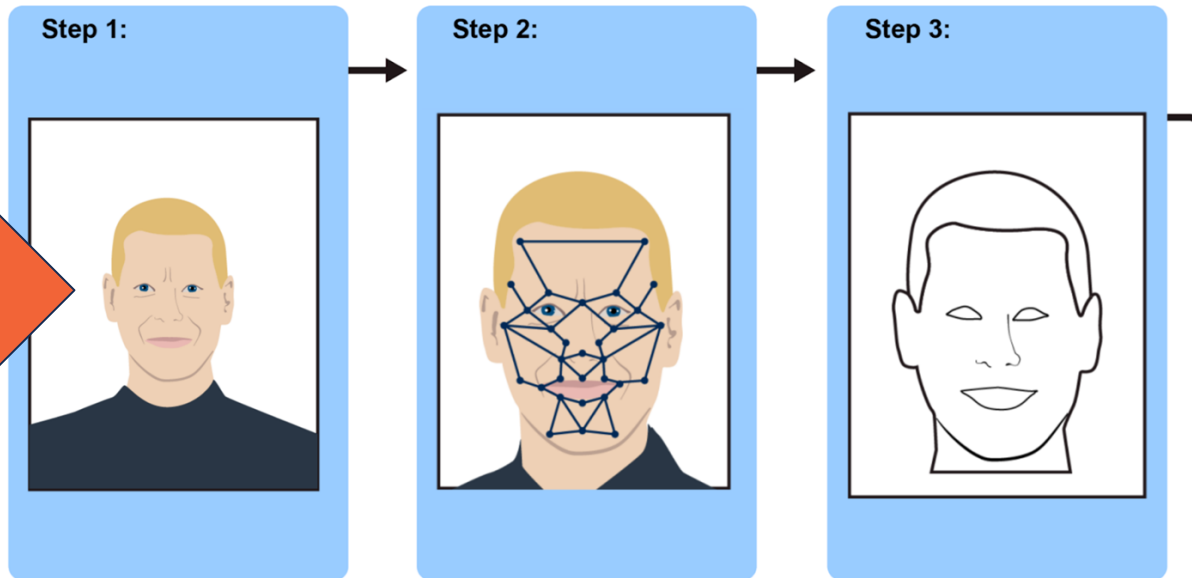
# What is FRT?

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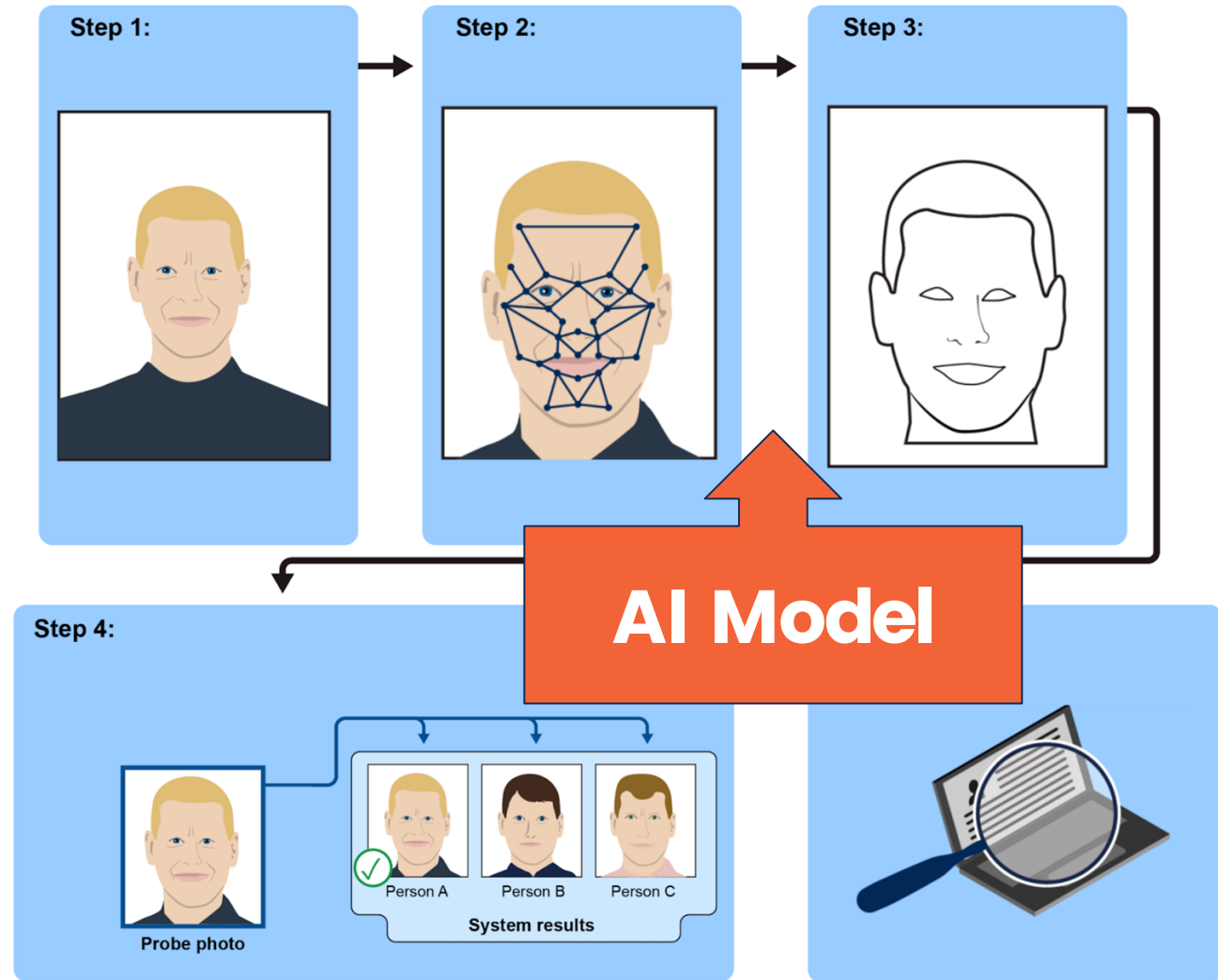
Tech that uses AI to **identify** someone by comparing a photo of an **unknown face** to a **database** of images of known faces

Probe

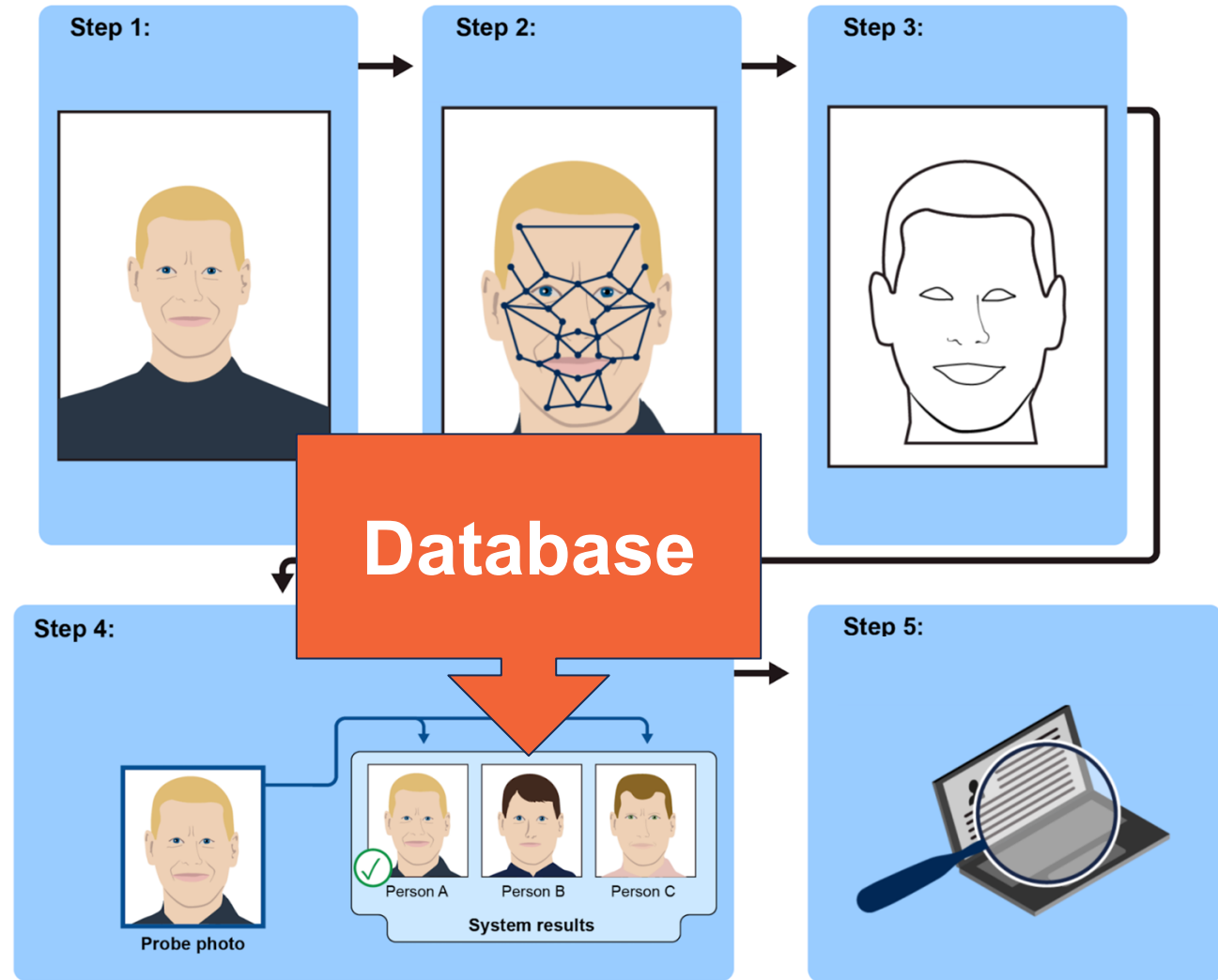
# How It Works



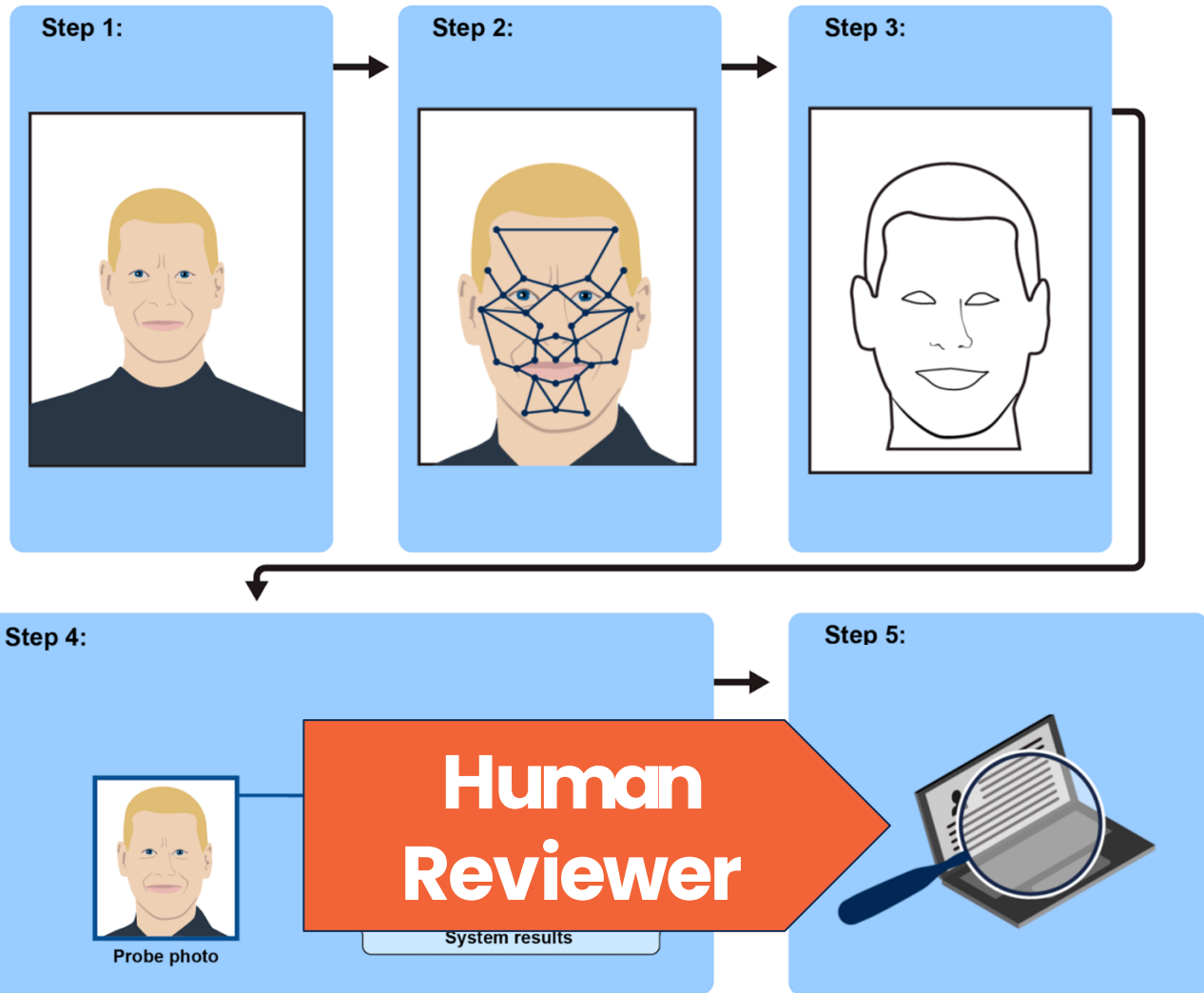
# How It Works



# How It Works



# How It Works



# How Police Use FRT

- To **identify** suspects, witnesses, victims
- **Ex post** vs. **real-time**



# Potential Benefits

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- Identify people more **accurately** & **precisely**
- Identify people more **quickly**

# Potential Benefits

Facial scanning cuts crime at a low cost, Met says



BBC

Forbes



DHS Says It Identified 311 New Child Sexual Exploitation Victims—After Forbes Reports AI Facial Recognition Push

# Potential Risks

## Inaccuracy

 MICHIGAN STATE POLICE  
INVESTIGATIVE LEAD REPORT  
LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE

**The New York Times**

THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION. IT IS AN **INVESTIGATIVE LEAD ONLY** AND IS **NOT** PROBABLE CAUSE TO ARREST. FURTHER INVESTIGATION IS NEEDED TO DEVELOP PROBABLE CAUSE TO ARREST.

Probe Image	Investigative Lead
	

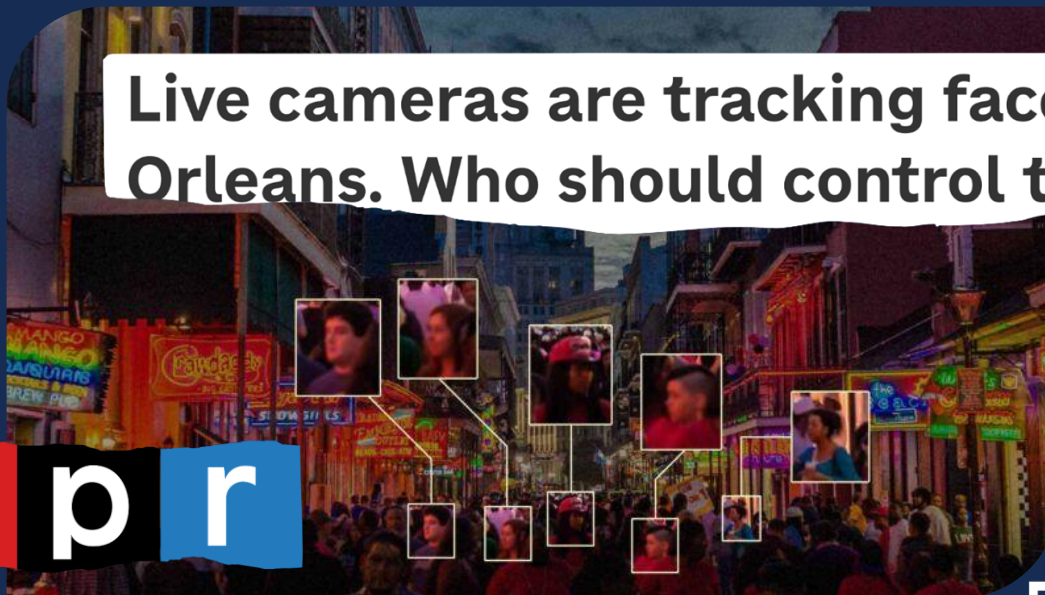
Alias: RCHAK WILLIAMS

*Wrongfully Accused  
by an Algorithm*

# Potential Risks

## Privacy

Live cameras are tracking faces in New Orleans. Who should control them?



# Potential Risks

## Chilling Free Expression



**ICE Wants to Go  
After Dissenters  
as well as  
Immigrants**

# Potential Risks

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## Equity Concerns



Home Office admits facial recognition tech issue with black and Asian subjects

Facial recognition technology discriminates against people of colour

Why Racial Bias is Prevalent in Facial Recognition Technology

FRT:

**NOT** just police ID  
business as usual

# What We Know, Exactly, About Police Use

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How **often** are police using it?

For what **type of crimes**?

Has it led to more **arrests** or **crimes solved**?

How many **false arrests**?

# Should Milwaukee PD Use FRT?



# Decide Democratically

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- No one-size-fits-all answer
- **Communities** should decide if FRT is right

*IF* decision is to use →  
Enact strong **guardrails** that  
promote **transparency** &  
**accountability**

# Starting Point: Transparency to Public & Criminal Defendants

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- Democratic legitimacy
- Return on investment
- Due process



# Examples of Sound Governance

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- **Track** basic **facts** of use
- **Regular** reporting & auditing
- **Public** use policy
- **Limit** to serious crime
- **Train** officers
- **Disclose** to criminal defendants...



# Pilot

*Try **before** you buy*

FRT has potential **benefits & risks.**

Using FRT is a **community decision.**

Responsible, democratic use  
requires **guardrails.**

# Thank You

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Follow Our Work  
[policingproject.org](https://policingproject.org)

*More on Responsible Use  
& Guardrails*

