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Local Government AI Strategy Workbook

A GUIDE FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO BEGIN
THINKING ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY'S AI
STRATEGY

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The ICMA logo is displayed in a bold, white, sans-serif font against a dark blue background. The letters are closely spaced and have a clean, modern appearance.

Table of Content

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI.....	3
Purpose of the Workbook:	3
City/County Manager Perspective	4
Chief Technology Officer/Technology Director Perspective	4
Why AI – What is the Problem and Solution	4
Moving Forward with Action	5
Engagement for this Plan	5
The City/County AI Action Plan.....	5
Initiative I - Action Example: Develop a Governance Framework Around AI	6
Task:.....	6
Deliverables:.....	6
Timeline:.....	6
Next Steps	6
Resources	7
APPENDIX A ICMA Guidelines on Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence	7
APPENDIX B Sample Prompts by Scenario	7
APPENDIX C Risks & Ethical Considerations	7
APPENDIX D Generative AI Staff Survey Example.....	7

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI

AI is transforming the way we live, work, and interact. It offers new opportunities and challenges for local governments, who are responsible for delivering essential public services and improving the quality of life of their citizens. AI can help local governments enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, and responsiveness, as well as address complex social and environmental problems.

However, AI also poses risks and ethical dilemmas, such as privacy, security, accountability, transparency, fairness, and inclusion. Therefore, local governments need to develop a clear and coherent AI strategy that aligns with their vision, values, and goals, and that considers the needs and expectations of their stakeholders.

Purpose of the Workbook:

This workbook is designed to help local governments create their own AI strategy, by providing a structured and practical approach that covers the key steps, questions, and considerations involved.

Each section contains a set of questions and exercises that local governments can use to reflect on their own situation, engage with their stakeholders, and document their decisions and actions. The workbook is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive, but rather to serve as a starting point and a reference for local governments to develop their own AI strategy, according to their specific context, needs, and aspirations.

City/County Manager Perspective

What is your purpose or drive in establishing an AI strategy within your organization and your City/County?

Chief Technology Officer/Technology Director Perspective

It's important to include key stakeholders such as your IT team or Chief Technology Officer when incorporating new technology. **Ask your CTO/IT-**What do you think about your communities' services holistically and the potential impacts AI can have on public services and programs provided by your City/County?

Why AI – What is the Problem and Solution

Clearly define the problem and identify opportunities to solve those problems with AI. Are there initiatives you are working on as a community or as a staff that can add more value through AI integration?

Moving Forward with Action

Creating a roadmap and timeline associated with key insights on scope and effort.

Roadmap Outline example:

1. Define your current strategic plan as a community and understand how your AI strategy can align with that.
2. Consider the resources needed for your AI strategy.
3. Establish guidelines around AI and develop policies on its use.
4. Survey and assess your organization.
5. Prioritize where AI is implemented.
6. Define your Key Performance Indicators around the value AI can bring (i.e. improved customer response rate, automation of processes, grant awards, etc.)

Engagement for this Plan

Consider how to prepare engaging stakeholders to develop your community AI strategy. Conduct internal surveys to assess your organization. Begin to develop workshops for your departments so they understand how this may impact their daily operations and customer service. Ongoing input and feedback is critical to maintaining and improving your AI strategy, what are the communication and feedback loops to facilitate this?

The City/County AI Action Plan

What type of initiatives will you prioritize and how will the action be phased into your organization and community?

Example Initiatives could be:

Initiative1: Develop a Governance Framework Around AI

1. AI Committee/Cross-functional team
2. Establish guidelines and Policies

3. Communication with Internal and External Stakeholders on use of AI in Public Services
4. Risk and Ethical Assessment
5. Continuously evaluation of AI tools and established feedback loop for staff and citizens.

Initiative I - Action Example: Develop a Governance Framework Around AI

Task:

Specify the objectives of this framework.

Deliverables:

What do you hope to specifically achieve as key outcomes of this framework?

Timeline:

What is the timeline associated with this initiative and key tasks and sub tasks.

Next Steps

After defining the initiatives, deliverables, and timelines, what are the next steps for the City/County?

Where can staff and the public continue to be updated?

Resources

APPENDIX A | ICMA Guidelines on Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

APPENDIX B | Sample Prompts by Scenario

APPENDIX C | Risks & Ethical Considerations

APPENDIX D | Generative AI Staff Survey Example



APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Responsible use of GenAI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a topic that is everywhere nowadays, whether you watch, read, or listen to the news. It evokes different emotions and reactions from people, ranging from enthusiasm, worry, dread, and anything in between. Regardless of what we may feel about it, one thing is obvious, AI is set to have an impact and a change on many parts of our daily life – both personal and professional. The more we understand its capabilities, limitations, and dangers, the better we can be ready.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is not a new concept - it was first named in 1956. But since OpenAI launched ChatGPT, which belongs to a class of AI called Generative AI (GenAI), in November of 2022, AI has gained unprecedented attention. GenAI is a kind of artificial intelligence that can create new content such as text, images, audio, video and even software code.

Some of the most popular GenAI tools are OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini and Microsoft Copilot. These tools use Large Language Models (LLM's), which are models that learn from huge amounts of data how to understand input (prompts) and then create responses that sound like humans.

Artificial Intelligence, and specifically Generative AI tools have tremendous potential to help transform ICMA's operations, enhancing service quality and increasing the organization's capabilities.

This document aims to give some general advice for using these tools in a responsible and ethical way.

Some of the applications include:

Feedback, Meeting Notes, Summary, Idea generation, Education, Promotion, Language Translation, News announcement, Customer support, HR, Accounting, Procurement RFP/RFQ, Standard operating procedures (SOPs), Programming / Software Engineering, Project Management, and many other fields.

As with many other technologies, Generative AI tools do have potential risks such as being inaccurate, spreading false or misleading information, and being biased.

Following some basic guidelines and best practices can help mitigate if not eliminate many of the inherent risks.

Prompt Best Practices

- Use clear and specific prompts to minimize AI hallucination.

For example, "Tell me about dogs," you could prompt, "Give me a detailed description of the physical characteristics and temperament of Golden Retrievers."

- Use grounding or the "according to..." technique to attribute output to a specific source or perspective.

- Use constraints and rules to shape AI output according to desired outcomes.

Suppose you want to use an AI tool to write a poem about love. Instead of giving it a general prompt like "write a poem about love," you can give it a more constrained and rule-based prompt like "write a sonnet about love with 14 lines and 10 syllables per line."

"Summarize this PDF document in a bullet point outline. Make a markdown table of study questions and answers."

- Use multi-step prompting.

For instance, instead of asking, "What is the most effective diabetes treatment?" you can ask, "What are the common treatments for diabetes?" You can then follow up with, "Which of these treatments is considered the most effective according to medical studies?"

Multi-step prompting forces the AI model to provide intermediate information before arriving at a final answer, which can lead to more accurate and well-informed responses.

- Assign a Role to AI

For example, instead of saying, "Tell me about the history of quantum mechanics," you can prompt the AI with, "Assume the role of a diligent researcher and provide a summary of the key milestones in the history of quantum mechanics."

- Add Contextual information.

For example, if you want to generate a product review for a pair of headphones, you can provide contextual information, such as the product name, brand, features, price, rating, or customer feedback.

Additional Guidelines for ethical and responsible use:

- Do not post any sensitive, confidential and/or personal information.
- Do not rely entirely on the responses from Generative AI, verify the information provided.
- Be aware of “AI washing” - businesses falsely advertising to consumers that a product or business includes AI when it may not.
- Always give credit to the source/s (citation). APA has some good examples of proper citation. Although you may not need to be as formal as APA guidelines, mention of usage of GenAI tool is always a good practice and highly recommended.

Some commonly used GenAI tools:

ChatGPT – by OpenAI – <http://chat.openai.com>

Gemini (Previously Bard) by Google – <http://bard.google.com/> or <http://gemini.google.com>

Microsoft Copilot – [Copilot \(microsoft.com\)](https://copilot.microsoft.com)

Anthropic - <https://claude.ai/chat>

Useful links and additional resources:

[Copilot for Microsoft 365 – Microsoft Adoption](#)

[Copilot Lab \(cloud.microsoft\)](#)

[ChatGPT, Generative AI, & AI Alternative Use Cases for Your Nonprofit \(Special Edition\)](#)

[How to Cite ChatGPT](#)

[Where to Start with AI? Cities and States Offer Use Cases \(govtech.com\)](#)

[The Must-Have Skills in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: How AI’s Democratization Will Impact Workers](#)

[Boston looks to boost employee productivity with generative AI guidance - Route Fifty \(route-fifty.com\)](#)

[12 Steps Local Governments Can Take to Successfully Use AI \(govtech.com\)](#)

[The Current Landscape for AI in State and Local Government | StateTech Magazine](#)

[How AI Helps State and Local Governments Work Smarter \(govtech.com\)](#)

[How 6 Workers Are Using ChatGPT to Make Their Jobs Easier \(businessinsider.com\)](#)



APPENDIX B

Sample Prompts by Scenario

This document aims to provide you with relevant prompt scenarios to practice as you experiment and exercise your capabilities and skills using GenAI tools. Included are sample prompts with notes regarding outputs.

Scenario 1

Create an outline for a training session focused on training Risks and Ethics in the use of AI for your internal staff.

Sample Prompt

Create an outline for a one-hour training session focused on Risks and Ethics in the use of AI for my internal staff. Please tailor the training session to an audience with a wide range of subject knowledge.

Notes:

- *Users can send follow up messages with more context about themselves & the audience to further refine the generated outline.*

Scenario 2

Create an onboarding packet for new council/board members.

Sample Prompt:

Create a detailed onboarding packet for new planning board members to the City of Reno. The packet should introduce these members to the organization.



Scenario 3

Create a project plan for a current grant you have recently been awarded.

Sample Prompt

You have just received a grant to support your environmental conservation project aimed at reducing plastic waste in coastal communities. Create a comprehensive project plan that includes a brief overview of your project, key objectives and deliverables, and a high-level implementation strategy. Ensure the plan outlines your approach to achieving impactful results, with a focus on community engagement and sustainable practices.

Scenario 4

Create a Request for Proposal (RFP) for soliciting bids for a community project.

Sample Prompt:

Create a government Request for Proposal (RFP) for a water treatment facility in Colorado Springs, CO.

Scenario 5

Create a press release for a recent update to a community policy.

Sample Prompt:

Draft a press release announcing a new local government permit passed recently by the community. The permit funds local childcare for low-income families. Include application information in the press release. Please use a professional and optimistic tone.

Notes:

- *You may experience issues with this prompt when using Google Gemini. Other tools such as ChatGPT and Copilot give better results.*



Scenario 6

Create an agenda for an upcoming board meeting.

Sample Prompt:

Create a detailed agenda for our upcoming board meeting. Include key discussion points such as budget review, strategy updates, and new project proposals.

Notes:

- *A tool such as Copilot for 365, which has been given access to your organization's information would perform better than a general web model.*

Scenario 7

Create Key performance metrics that integrate your county/board goal and priorities.

Sample Prompt

You are a city manager advising your staff. You want to establish key performance metrics based on the Council's goals and priorities. Write a memo for your staff outlining these metrics, ensuring they align with the board's priorities. Include specific examples or references text from previous successful initiatives to guide your recommendation. *

Notes:

- *This prompt will differ greatly depending on your specific scenario / goal.*



Scenario 8

Create a data governance document that breaks it down by your organizations departments.

Sample Prompt:

You are the IT Director of the Town of Tifton, Georgia. Draft a data governance document that outlines responsibilities for each town department within your organization. The document should address data access, security, privacy, and compliance.



APPENDIX C

Risk and Ethical Considerations in the use of GenAI

AI Risks :

Artificial Intelligence has tremendous potential to revolutionize how we work, however, with any transformative technology, it has its own set of risks and ethical considerations.

Workforce

As we automate many of the manual processes, there is a possibility of job transformations is likely across numerous sectors. Key challenges experienced may be to find ways to purposefully transition to the workplace of the future. This involves upskilling and even reskilling our staff to help them in this transition.

Privacy

Data ownership and consent become of even greater significance as these AI systems access those data sets.

Bias and Discrimination

AI systems are only as good as the data used to train the model. There is a potential to produce biased response in everything.

Lack of transparency

Understanding how the information was created or provided by AI systems is crucial especially in critical systems.



Technology Risks:

Prompt Injection

Models responding out of context. For example, user can give a prompt to “trick” chatbot into pretending to give all “wrong” answers and then proceeding as ask a question to then solicit that “wrong” answer.

Extraction

Extracting information by asking prompts over a long period of time to “extract” enough information for adversaries to then build their own model with your data, essentially “stealing” your Data.

Data Governance

Mismanagement or state/local noncompliance can lead to costly legal repercussions, damage public trust, and expose organizations to data breaches and privacy violations. Consult legal counsel regarding specific questions on regulatory compliance.

AI and Ethical Considerations:

AI ethics includes an ecosystem of ethical standards and guardrails throughout all phases of an AI system’s lifecycle.

Focus Areas

- **Purpose** - Clearly defined intent and purpose of the use of AI.
- **Explainability** - Transparency in how the AI system works. Details of what personal and organizational data is used in its algorithms and how the output is derived.
- **Fairness** - Prioritizing inclusivity and diversity throughout the process of data collection, training, and evaluation of AI products and services.
- **Robustness** - Defense from cyberattacks.
- **Privacy** - Safeguard consumer privacy and data rights.



APPENDIX D

Generative AI Staff Survey

Generative Artificial Intelligence has been receiving extensive coverage across various media channels over the last year or so. We are in the process of crafting ICMA's Artificial Intelligence strategy. This survey is the first step in a collaborative process to develop the overall AI policy. We would like to learn more about if and how Generative AI systems are currently used by staff. Our goal is to use this baseline data to inform our approach to the development of Generative AI Guidelines and related policies.

Definitions:

Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence technology that can produce various types of content, including text, imagery, audio and synthetic data.

Generative AI uses massive datasets to generate content that someone would want given a prompt. Common Generative AI systems include ChatGPT, Google Bard, Microsoft Copilot, and others.

“Content” includes text, emails, presentations, images, video, audio, architectural documents, diagrams, and other forms of media.

Helpful Resources:

[About Generative AI \(Harvard University Information Technology\)](#)

[What is Generative AI? An AI Explains \(World Economic Forum\)](#)



Survey Example

This survey is anonymous and will take approx. 5 minutes to complete. There are no wrong answers. Please complete this survey no later than (Month) (Day) (Year).

* Required

On a scale of 1-5, how familiar are you with Generative AI? *

1 – None or very little

2 – Heard in news, but not familiar with the tools

3 – Some familiarity with the technology and tools

4 – Experimented and used it few times

5 – Very familiar and have been using it in many areas of daily work

Roughly how often do you use Generative AI for work-related purposes? *

- Every Day
 - Once per week
 - Once per month
 - Used it Once or twice, ever
 - Other
-



How have you previously used Generative AI for work-related purposes? *

Select all that apply from the prompts below. There are no wrong answers.

- Draft an outline or summary of written content for internal use only
- Draft communications for internal use only
- Draft reports and documents for internal use only
- Draft communications or social media posts, for external use
- Draft memos, reports, and other documents, for external use
- Learn from a document or dataset
- Learn about new topics or words
- Help identify a name for a program or project
- Create presentation slides
- Create images or video
- Create diagrams or flow charts
- Evaluations and decisions
- Language translation
- Create voice or other audio
- Develop code or programming language
- Other

What Generative AI systems have you used previously for work-related purposes? *

- OpenAI's Chat GPT
- Google Bard
- Microsoft CoPilot
- Stable Diffusion
- Midjourney
- Open AI's DALL-E
- Other



How would you like to use Generative AI in the future for work-related purposes? *

Select all that apply from the prompts below. There are no wrong answers.

- Draft an outline or summary of written content for internal use only
- Draft communications for internal use only
- Draft reports and documents for internal use only
- Draft communications or social media posts, for external use
- Draft memos, reports, and other documents, for external use
- Learn from a document or dataset
- Learn about new topics or words
- Help identify a name for a program or project
- Create presentation slides
- Create images or video
- Create diagrams or flow charts
- Evaluations and decisions
- Language translation
- Create voice or other audio
- Develop code or programming language
- Other

What work-related benefits do you think Generative AI can provide you?

What work-related risks or concerns do you think Generative AI presents?



Are you interested in helping develop Generative AI Guidelines and related policies by participating in an interview or focus group? *

Our goal is to develop Generative AI Guidelines and related policies collaboratively with staff. If you answer 'Yes', we may reach out to ask if you'd like to participate in a focus group or interview, review the draft policy, or support policy implementation and promotion.

- Yes
- No

About ICMA

ICMA advances professional local government worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government. ICMA, the City/ County Management Association, provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to more than 11,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect 185 million individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

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