Investigating the Role of AI in Community-Based Coalitions

MSU REI Innovation Fellowship Final Presentation

August 14, 2025

Jon Willow, Community Broadband Action Network (CBAN)

The Challenge - Michigan's Digital Equity Moment

In Fall 2024, Michigan stood at a transformational threshold:

- $20 million in BEAD funding for digital equity about to be deployed
- 16 MITTEN regions, $870k each over 4 years

- **Mandate:** Create broadest possible community coalitions
- **Challenge:** The dispersed coalition mandate was the right way to do it, but came with risks

Key Question: Could AI help address coalition challenges like lack of cohesion, unclear processes, and burnout?

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Research Team - Balancing Community & Academic Expertise

Our Multidisciplinary Cohort:

- **Sheryl Cormicle Knox** - Technology Director, CADL
- **Michaelle Sermeno Camacho** - Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow, MSU
- **Johannes Bauer, PhD** - Quello Chair, MSU
- **Dennis Kennedy** - Director, Center for Law, Technology & Innovation, MSU
- **Alison Arnold & John Jervinsky** - CMU Rural Health Institute
- **Jackie Luedtke Borozan** - Growth Manager, Grow Benzie
- **Rowan Prettenhofer** - Broadband Coordinator, Ingham County
- **John Melcher** - Assoc. Director, MSU Center for Community Development
- **John Egelhaaf** - Executive Director, SW Michigan Planning Commission
- **Jason Kronemeyer** - Jason Kronemeyer LLC
- **Mitch Shapiro** - Research Analyst, CBAN (special thanks)

The Moving Target – AI's Rapid Evolution

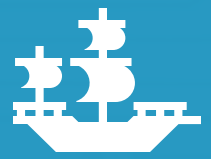
From "IF" to "HOW" in Nine Months

- **November 2024:** Fellowship application - "IF AI could help"
- **January 2025:** First cohort meeting – "AI is already everywhere"
- **Challenge:** Chasing the bullet train of AI advancement
- **Reality:** The "IF" question was already moot

New Focus: How to support inexperienced users already using AI in workplace settings

Crisis and Opportunity: The BEAD Cancellation

- **January 28, 2025:** NTIA pauses BEAD grant funding for review
- **June 6, 2025:** BEAD's Digital equity funding **cancelled**
- **First look:** Technically, original fellowship deliverable was irrelevant
- **Decision:** Too much good work to waste



"Sail the wind you've got." **--- John Melcher**

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Pivoting to Practical Impact

Core Value Identified: Public entities and nonprofits need practical AI guidance, not theoretical frameworks

Solution Approach:

- Develop assessment methodology for current AI usage
- Set an educational foundation for workplace AI
- Provide implementation guidance for AI policies
- Address ethical considerations, from plagiarism to cultural bias

Timeline: 60 days to create something valuable

AI Collaboration Tools Gl
Guide for Business Users

Core AI Concepts

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AI Auto

Algorith

Existing AI

For Public Sector N

Assessment Purpose

This assessment evaluates your organization's
implementation. It identifies existing policies th
development.

Time to complete: 15-20 minutes | **Scoring:**

Organization Information

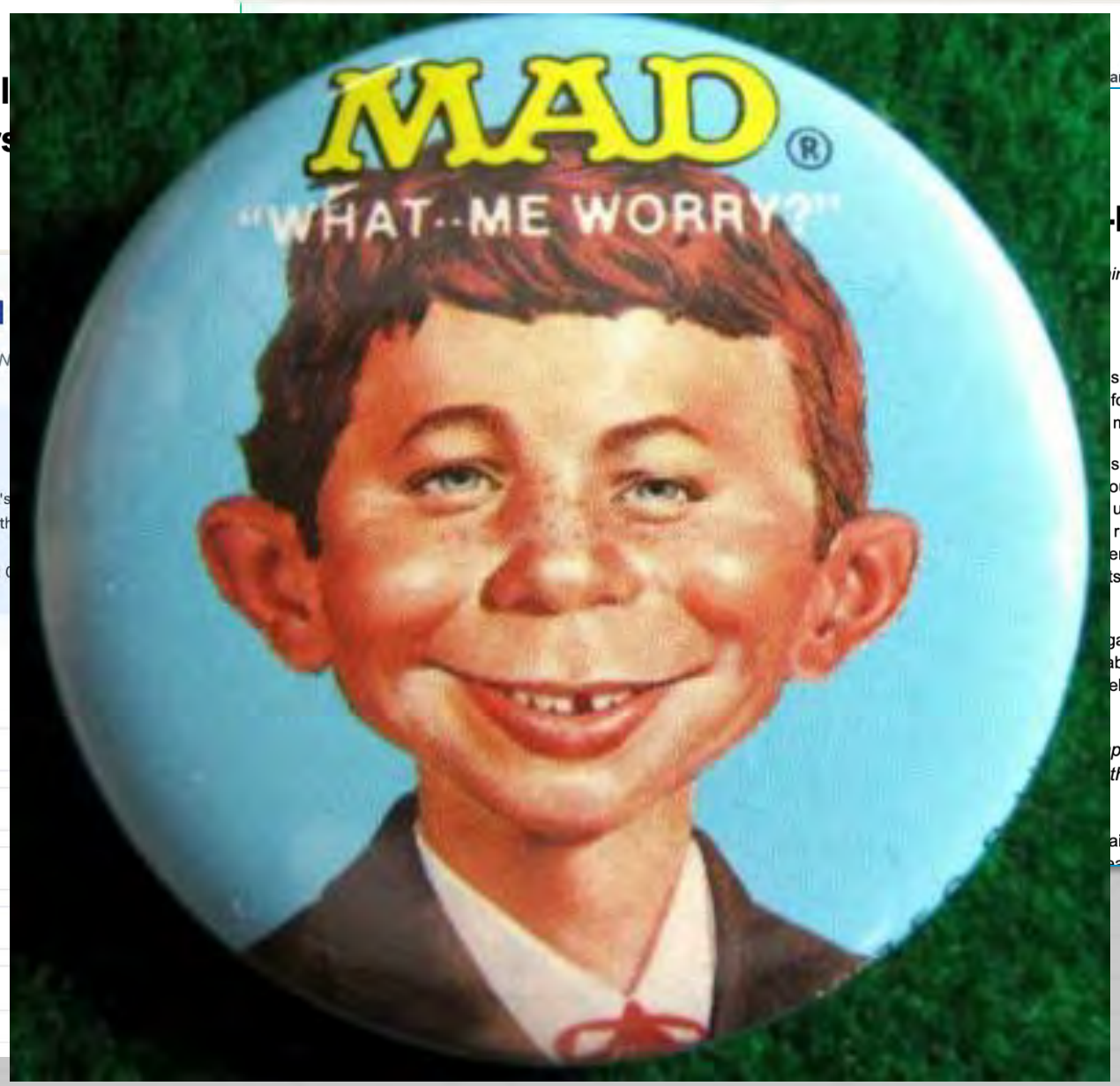
Organization Name

Your Name

Your Role/Title

Email (for receiving results)

08/04/2025



are effective?

-Makers

ing

s designed to perform tasks that typically require
follows explicit programming instructions, AI
make decisions with varying degrees of autonomy.

s commonly deployed to automate repetitive
ough chatbots, analyze data for insights, and
use AI for document processing, email
resource allocation, and constituent service
entify potential donors, predict program outcomes, or
s could deploy AI for citizen inquiry routing, budget

ganizational readiness, including technical
bility. Organizations must assess whether AI aligns
ely, and can be implemented sustainably within

panies and individuals because AI tools handle
that affect people's lives, and can perpetuate

aintain accountability, and help staff understand
ar guidelines, organizations risk data breaches

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Course Overview: AI Workplace Policy Essentials

- **Comprehensive 4-6 Hour Interactive Course**
- **Target Audience:** Nonprofits and local government organizations

Key Features:

- Course arranged in self-paced online modules with interactive elements
  - Exercises and assessments in each module
  - Use case examples specific to public service contexts
  - Certificate of Completion
- Six free artifacts for self-assessment and course prep
  - Practical assessments and customized recommendations
  - Downloadable templates and implementation tools

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Course Outcomes: Building AI Readiness

What Participants Achieve:

- **Knowledge:**
  - Understanding of AI fundamentals relevant to their work
  - Recognition of benefits, risks, and ethical considerations
  - Awareness of appropriate AI applications for their sector
- **Skills:**
  - Ability to assess organizational AI readiness
  - Framework for developing AI governance policies
  - Implementation planning with resource constraints
- **Resources:**
  - Customized policy templates and assessment tools
  - Ongoing support materials and best practices

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Artifact 1: AI Basics for Decision Makers

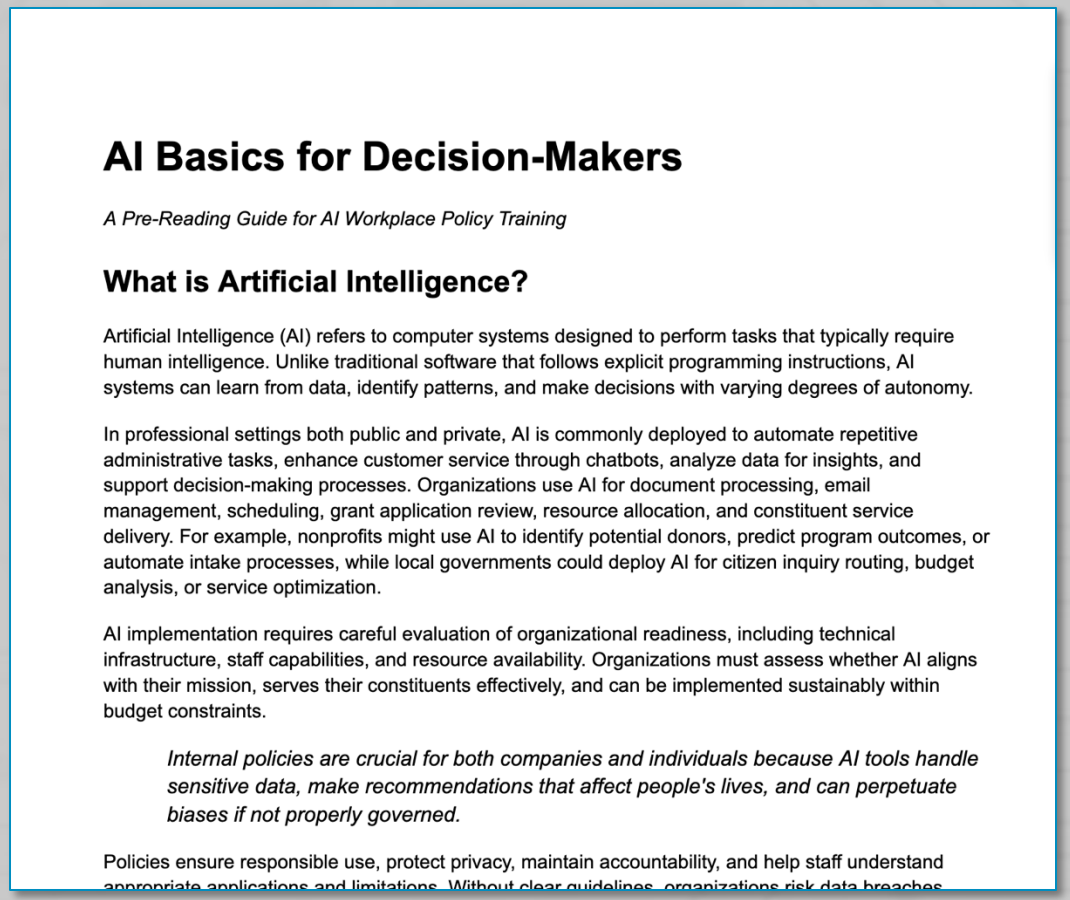
Foundational Whitepaper

Purpose: Course pre-reading guide

Key Content:

- Clear definitions without technical complexity
- Real workplace examples for nonprofits/government
- Addresses common misconceptions
- Essential policy considerations

Achievement: Builds confident foundation for AI discussions and decisions



AI Basics for Decision-Makers

A Pre-Reading Guide for AI Workplace Policy Training

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. Unlike traditional software that follows explicit programming instructions, AI systems can learn from data, identify patterns, and make decisions with varying degrees of autonomy.

In professional settings both public and private, AI is commonly deployed to automate repetitive administrative tasks, enhance customer service through chatbots, analyze data for insights, and support decision-making processes. Organizations use AI for document processing, email management, scheduling, grant application review, resource allocation, and constituent service delivery. For example, nonprofits might use AI to identify potential donors, predict program outcomes, or automate intake processes, while local governments could deploy AI for citizen inquiry routing, budget analysis, or service optimization.

AI implementation requires careful evaluation of organizational readiness, including technical infrastructure, staff capabilities, and resource availability. Organizations must assess whether AI aligns with their mission, serves their constituents effectively, and can be implemented sustainably within budget constraints.

> *Internal policies are crucial for both companies and individuals because AI tools handle sensitive data, make recommendations that affect people's lives, and can perpetuate biases if not properly governed.*

Policies ensure responsible use, protect privacy, maintain accountability, and help staff understand appropriate applications and limitations. Without clear guidelines, organizations risk data breaches

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Artifact 2: AI Collaboration Tools Glossary

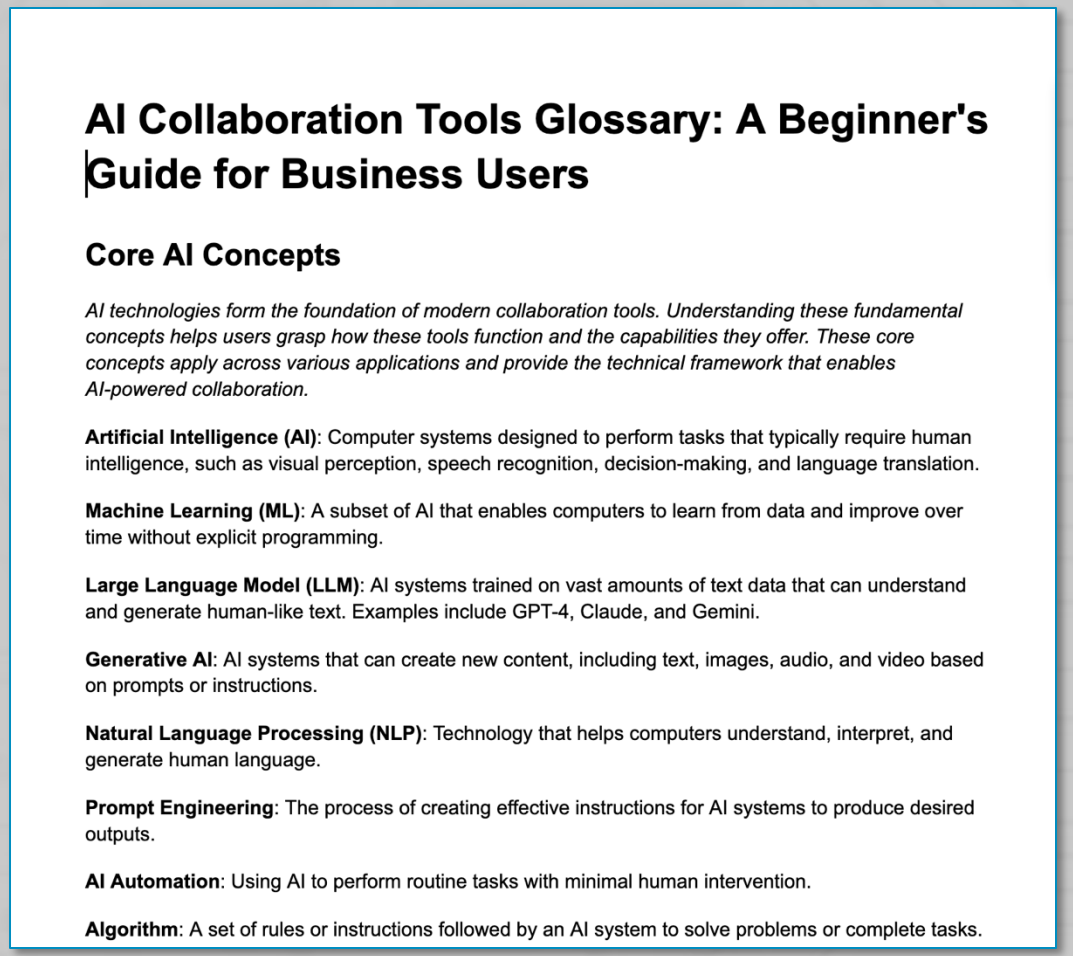
Reference Guide (document/web page)

Purpose: Practical vocabulary for AI-powered workplace tools

Key Content:

- Organized by function (messaging, project management, etc.)
- Business context explanations, not technical specifications
- Implementation considerations by tool type

Achievement: Enables informed conversations about AI tool selection and use



AI Collaboration Tools Glossary: A Beginner's Guide for Business Users

Core AI Concepts

AI technologies form the foundation of modern collaboration tools. Understanding these fundamental concepts helps users grasp how these tools function and the capabilities they offer. These core concepts apply across various applications and provide the technical framework that enables AI-powered collaboration.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation.

Machine Learning (ML): A subset of AI that enables computers to learn from data and improve over time without explicit programming.

Large Language Model (LLM): AI systems trained on vast amounts of text data that can understand and generate human-like text. Examples include GPT-4, Claude, and Gemini.

Generative AI: AI systems that can create new content, including text, images, audio, and video based on prompts or instructions.

Natural Language Processing (NLP): Technology that helps computers understand, interpret, and generate human language.

Prompt Engineering: The process of creating effective instructions for AI systems to produce desired outputs.

AI Automation: Using AI to perform routine tasks with minimal human intervention.

Algorithm: A set of rules or instructions followed by an AI system to solve problems or complete tasks.

Artifact 3: AI Touchpoint Survey

Interactive Assessment Tool

Purpose: Organizational AI usage audit and readiness assessment

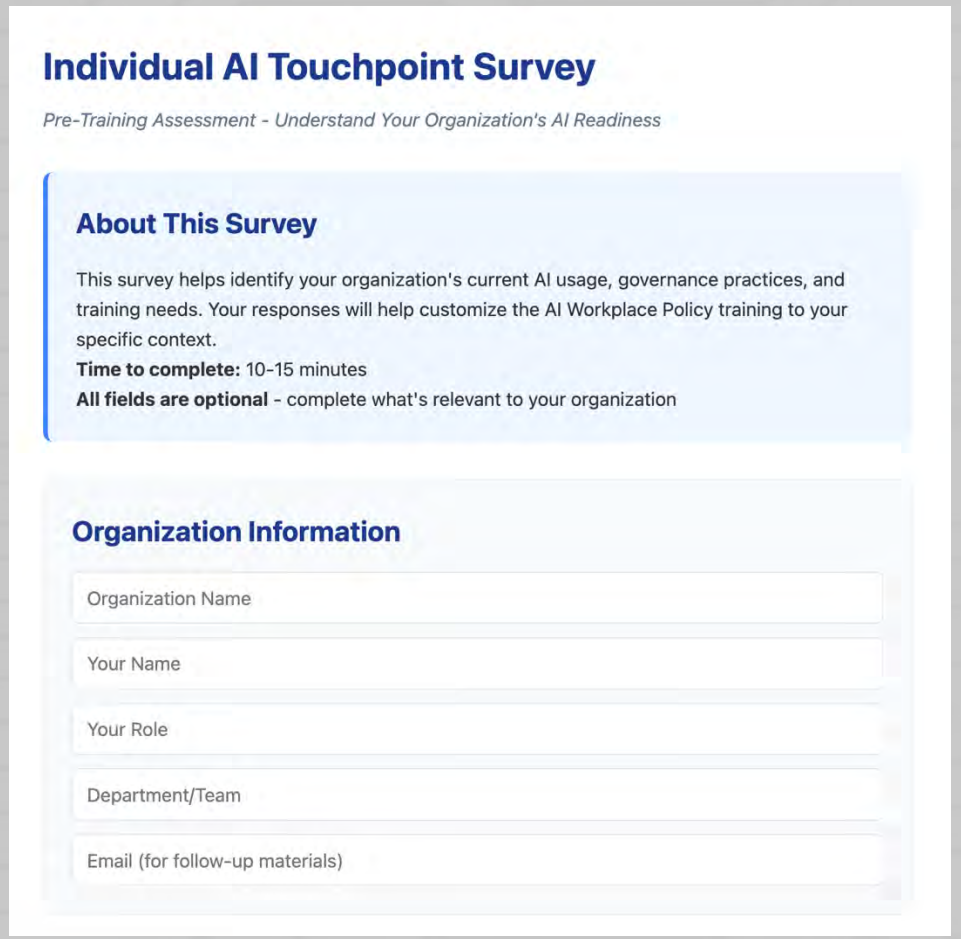
Key Content:

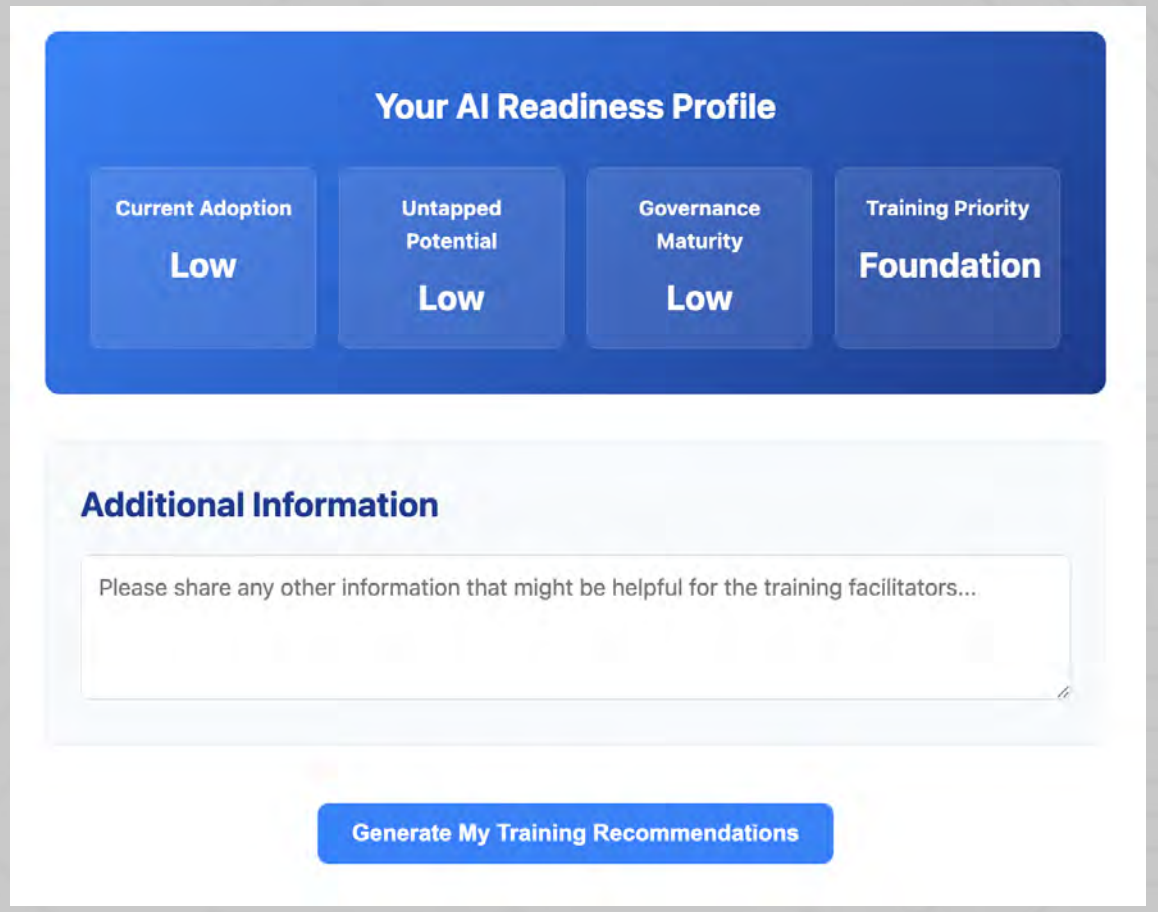
- Creates comprehensive inventory of current AI tools
- Governance and policy gap analysis
- Customized recommendations based on results
- Exportable results for planning purposes

Achievement: Provides baseline AI understanding and prioritized improvement roadmap

Artifact 3: AI Touchpoint Survey

Interactive Assessment Tool





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Artifact 4: Policy Inventory Worksheet

Interactive Governance Assessment Tool

Purpose: Maps existing communications/IT policies against AI implementation needs

Key Features:

- Systematic review of current policy framework
- Gap identification and prioritization
- Integration guidance for AI-specific policies

Achievement: Ensures AI policies build on existing governance rather than creating conflicts

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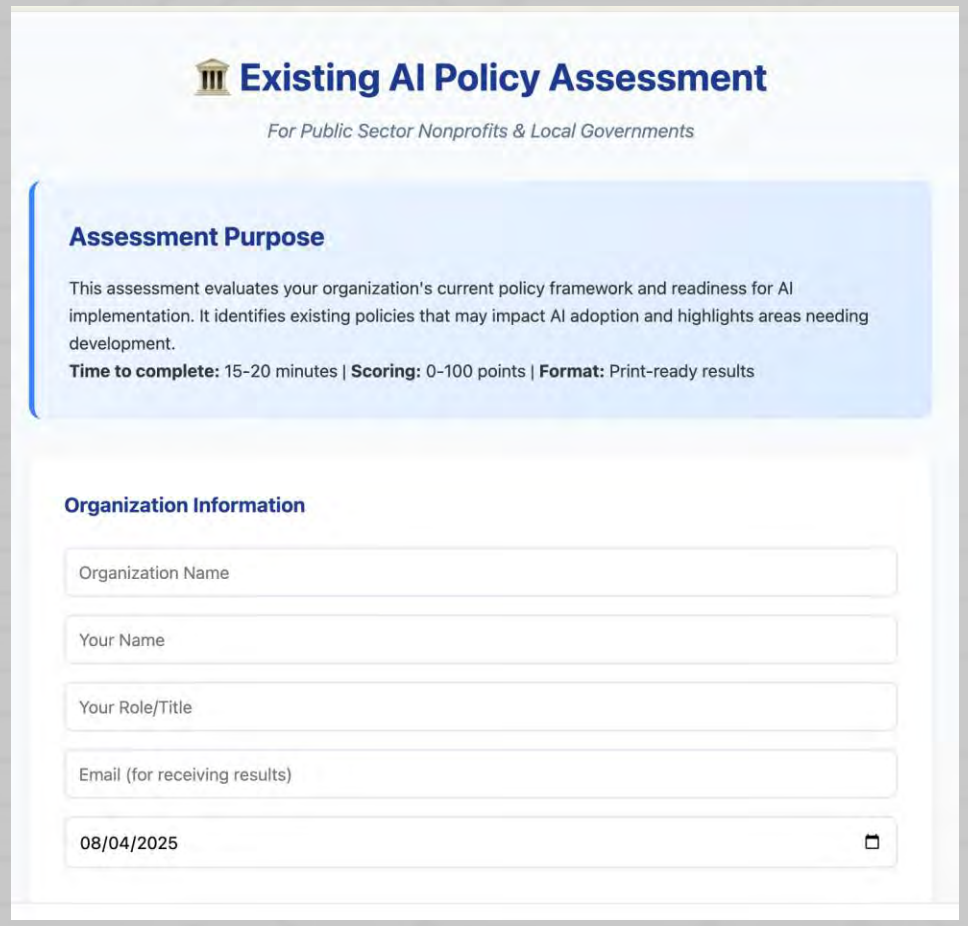
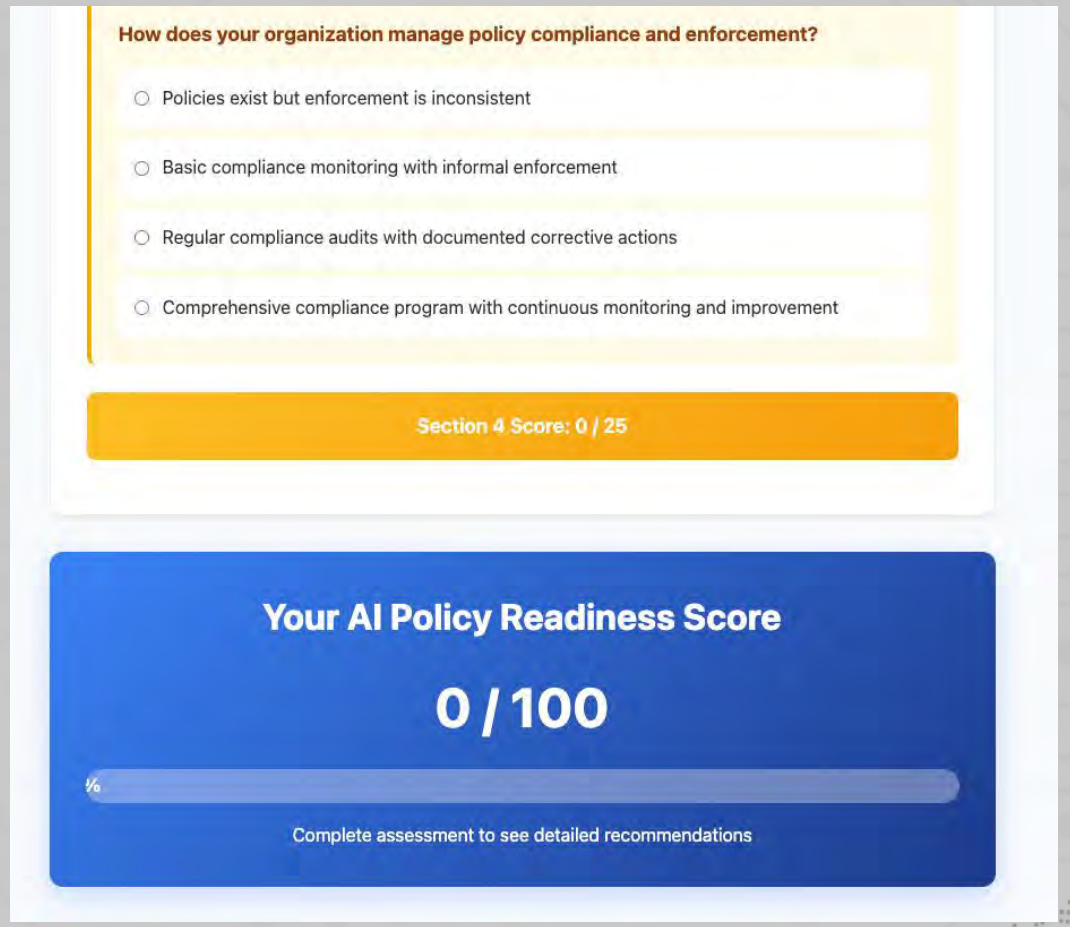
Artifact 4: Policy Inventory Worksheet

Interactive Governance Assessment Tool





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Artifact 5: AI Implementation Readiness Assessment

Technical Infrastructure Evaluation

Purpose: Determines technical readiness for AI tool adoption

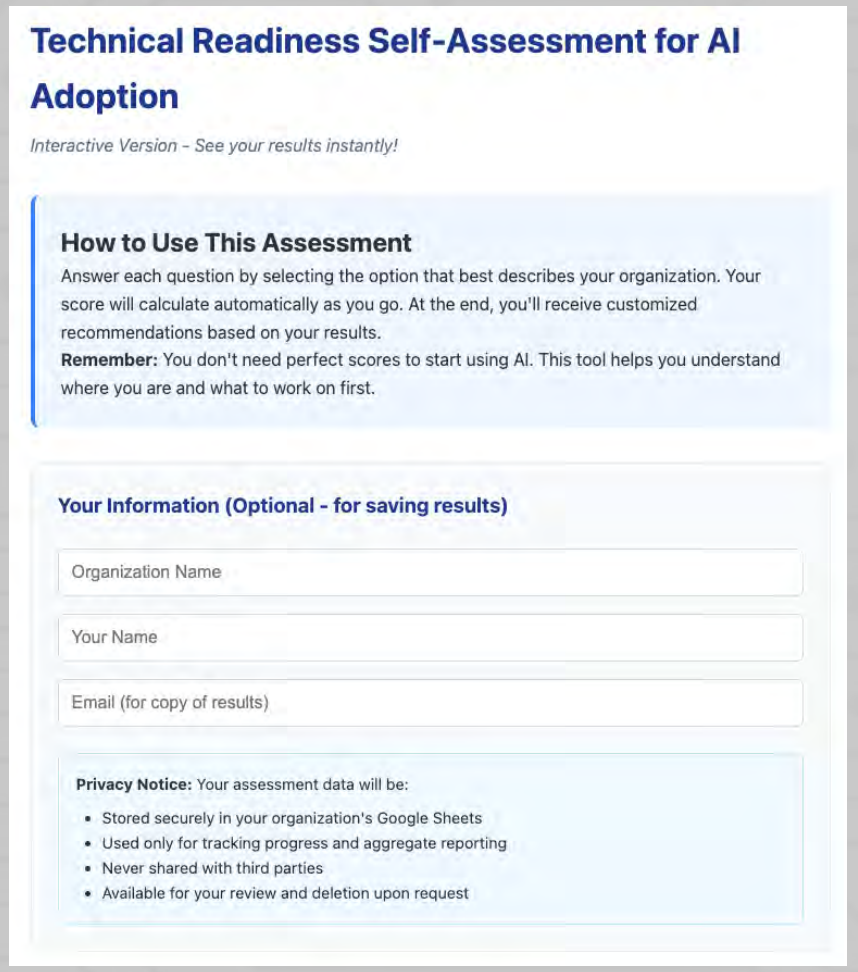
Key Features:

- Four-domain assessment (devices, data security, software systems, support capacity)
- Scored results with recommendations
- Prioritized improvement roadmap
- Quick wins identification

Achievement: Prevents failed AI implementations by ensuring adequate technical foundation

Artifact 5: AI Implementation Readiness Assessment

Technical Infrastructure Evaluation



Technical Readiness Self-Assessment for AI Adoption

Interactive Version - See your results instantly!

How to Use This Assessment

Answer each question by selecting the option that best describes your organization. Your score will calculate automatically as you go. At the end, you'll receive customized recommendations based on your results.

Remember: You don't need perfect scores to start using AI. This tool helps you understand where you are and what to work on first.

Your Information (Optional - for saving results)

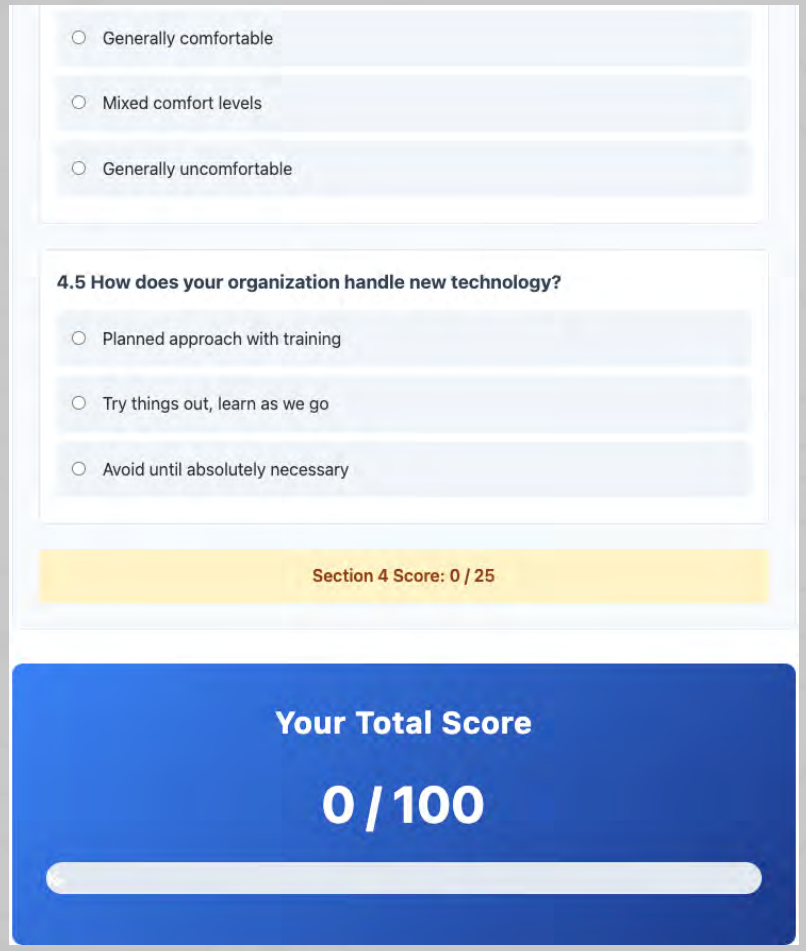
Organization Name

Your Name

Email (for copy of results)

Privacy Notice: Your assessment data will be:

- Stored securely in your organization's Google Sheets
- Used only for tracking progress and aggregate reporting
- Never shared with third parties
- Available for your review and deletion upon request



- ○ Generally comfortable
- ○ Mixed comfort levels
- ○ Generally uncomfortable

4.5 How does your organization handle new technology?

- ○ Planned approach with training
- ○ Try things out, learn as we go
- ○ Avoid until absolutely necessary

Section 4 Score: 0 / 25

Your Total Score

0 / 100

Artifact 6: Stakeholder Mapping Tool

Interactive Coalition/Stakeholder Assessment

Purpose: Identifies and analyzes key stakeholders for AI policy development and implementation

Key Features:

- Influence and interest matrix mapping
- Engagement strategy recommendations based on stakeholder profiles
- Communication planning templates for different stakeholder types
- Special considerations for vulnerable populations and community groups

Achievement: Ensures inclusive AI governance that reflects diverse community needs and builds broad support

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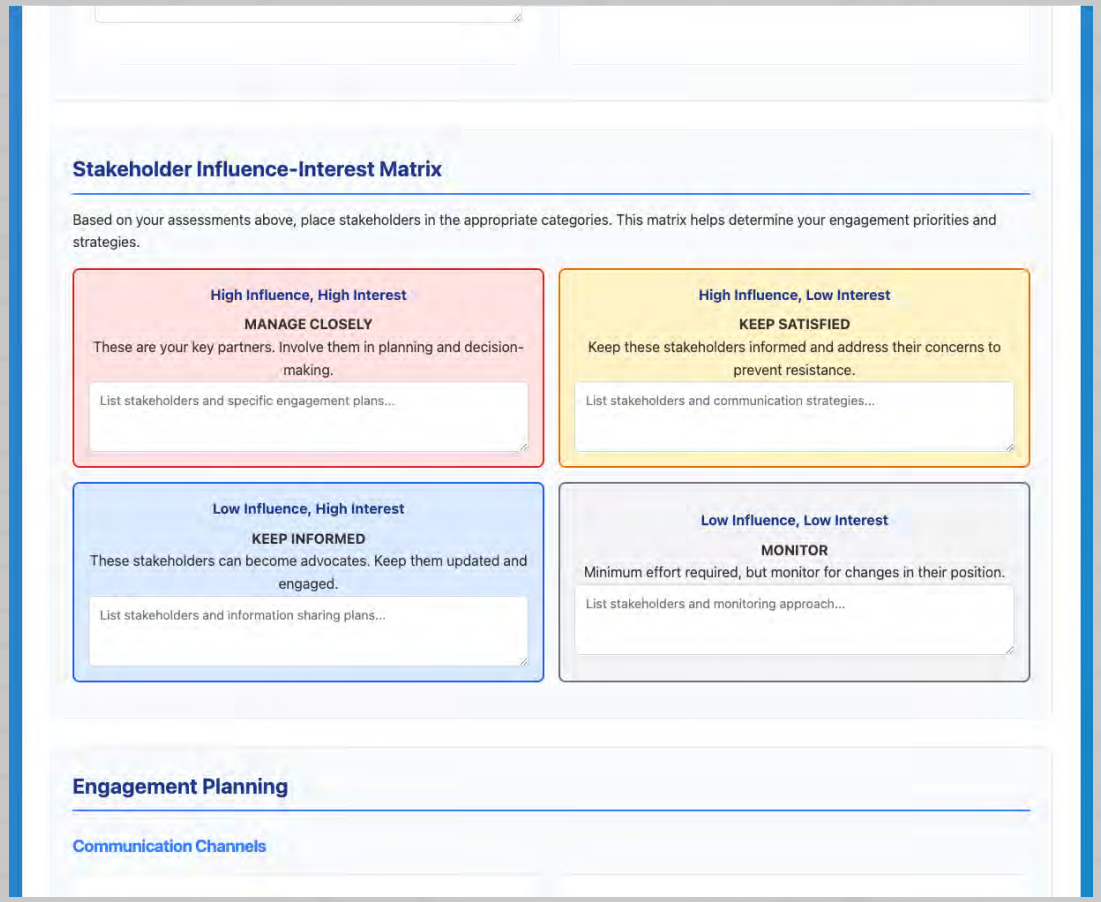
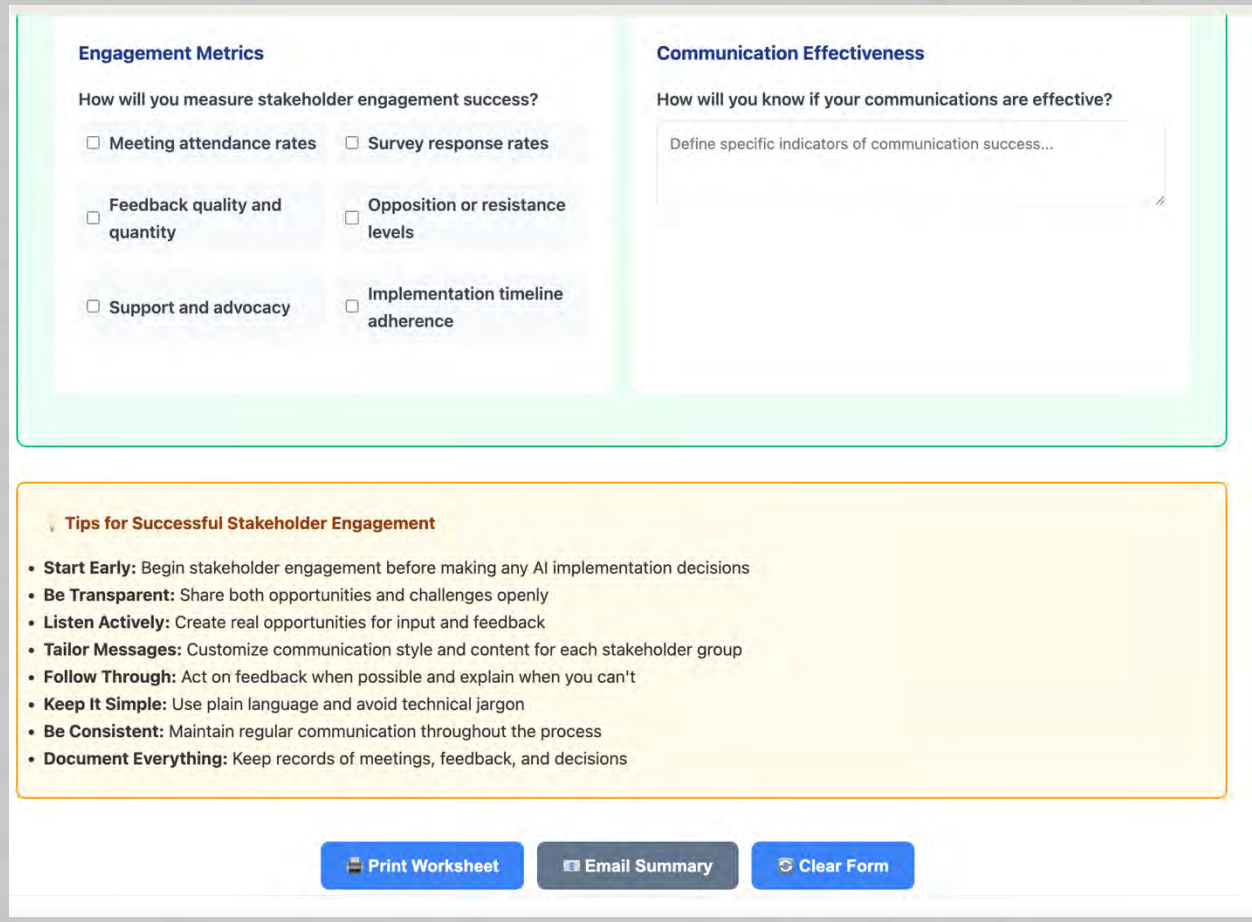
Artifact 6: Stakeholder Mapping Tool

Interactive Coalition/Stakeholder Assessment





Artifact 7: Complete Interactive Training Platform

AI Workplace Policy Essentials Course

Purpose: Comprehensive AI policy development training with immediate practical application

Key Features:

- Interactive modules with real-time assessment
- Customized learning paths based on organizational needs
- Downloadable policy templates and implementation guides
- Progress tracking and certificate completion

Achievement: Transforms AI knowledge into organizational capability

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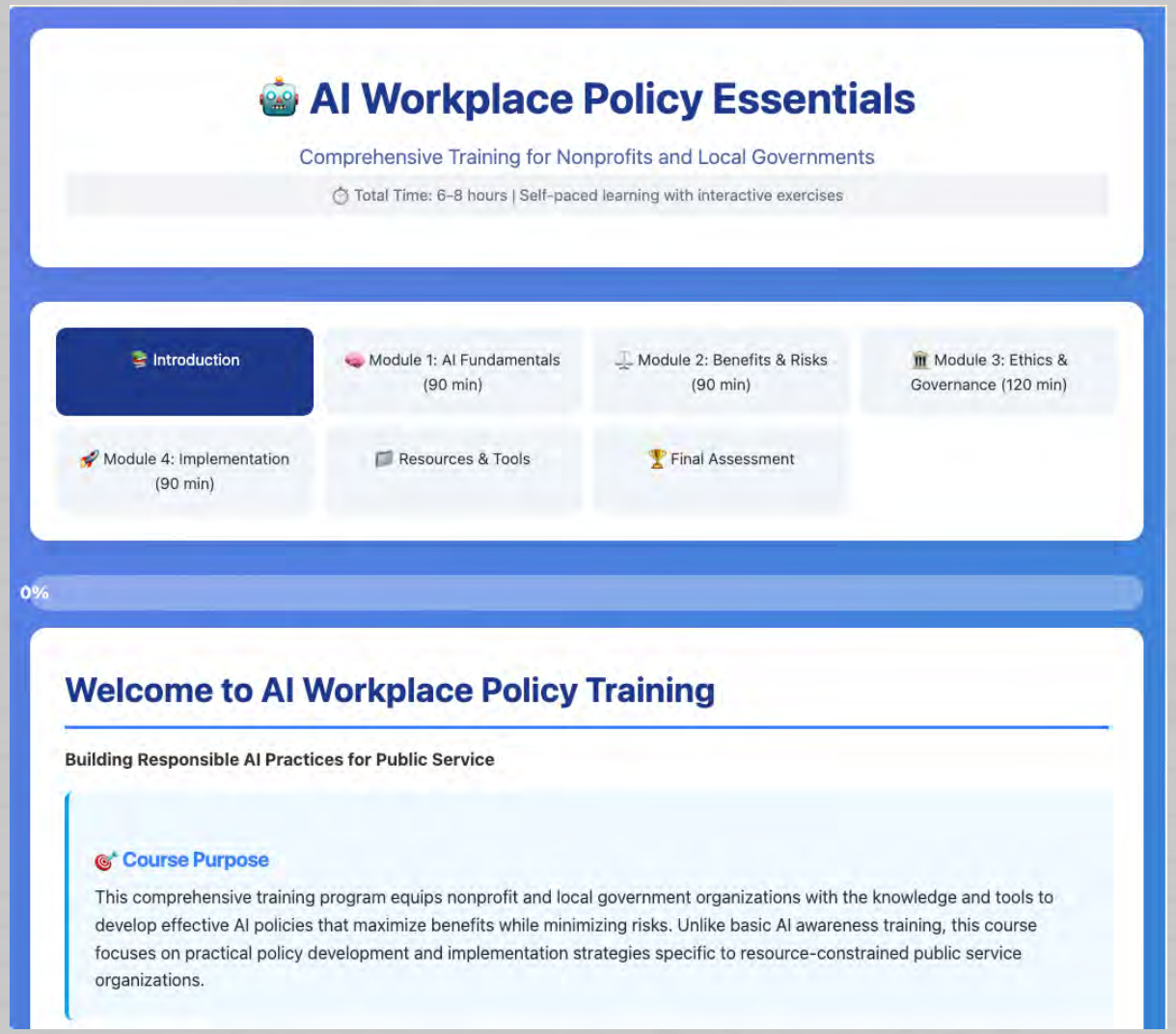
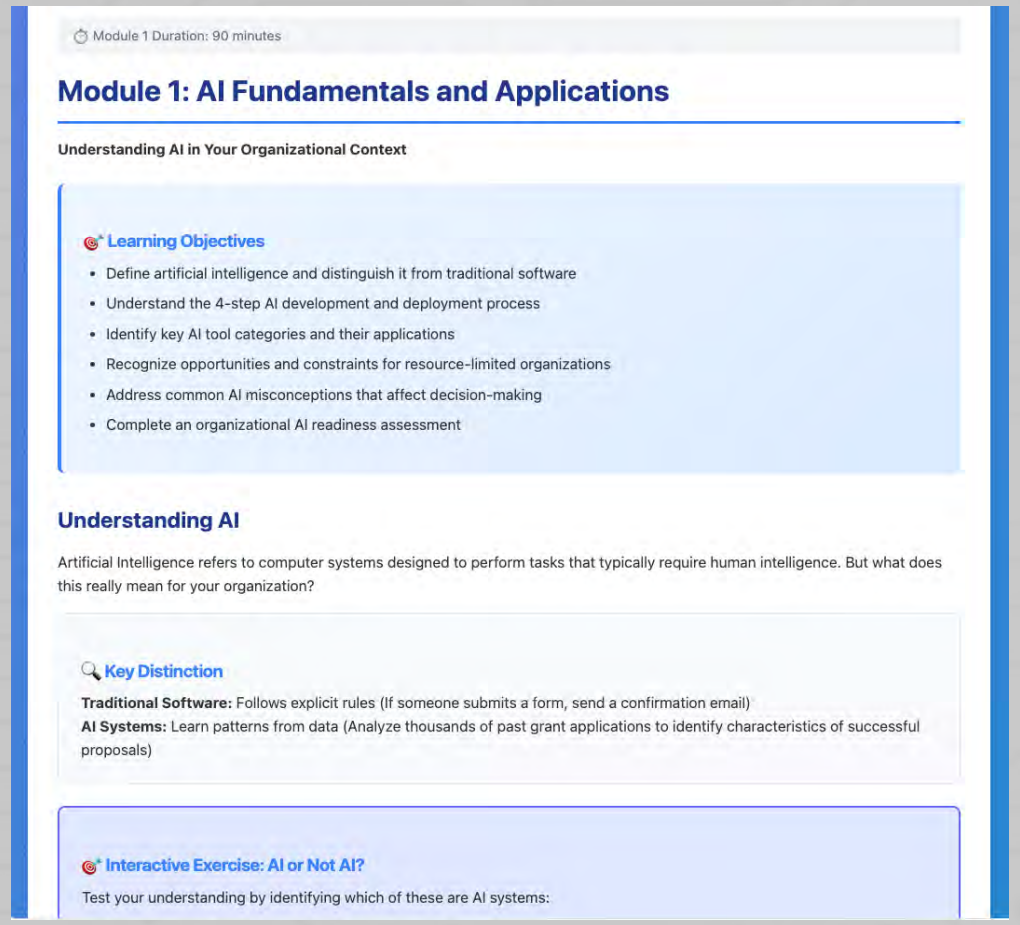
Artifact 7: Complete Interactive Training Platform

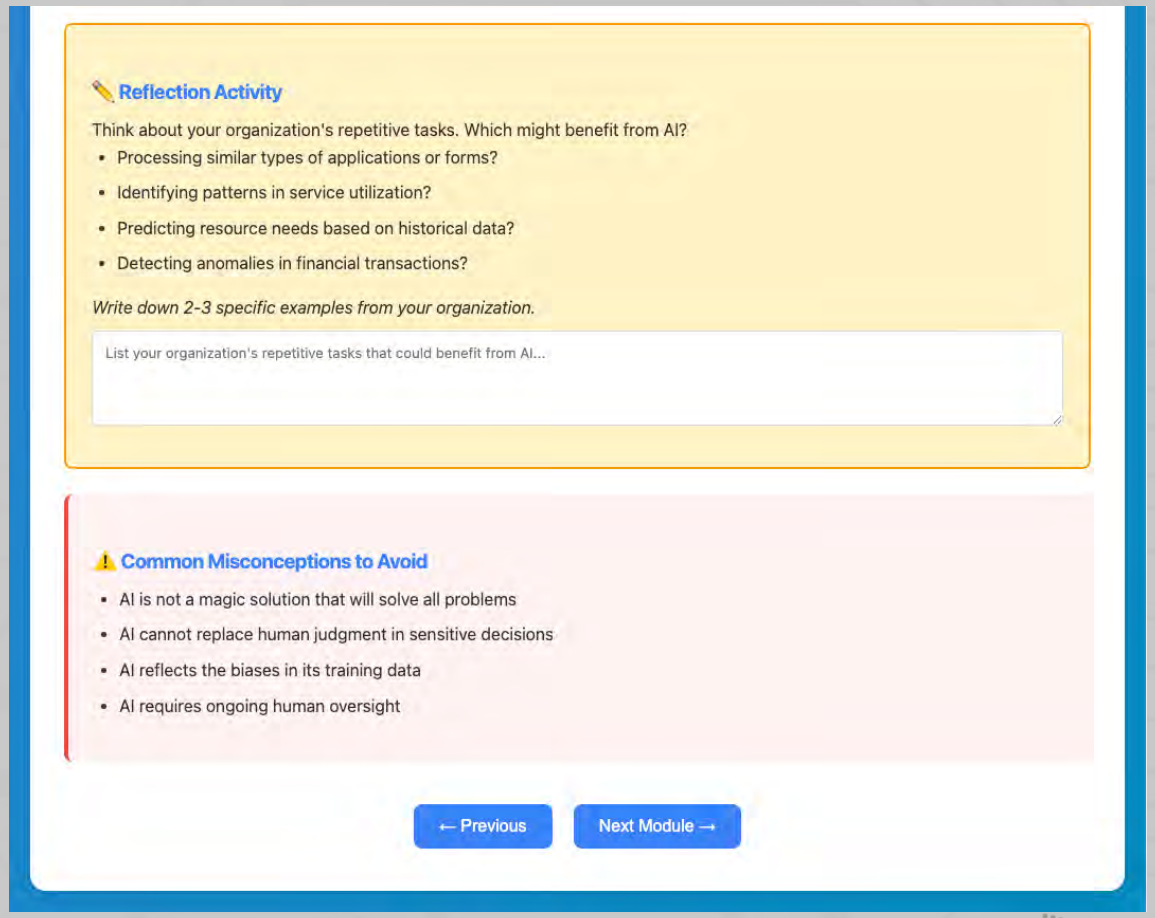
AI Workplace Policy Essentials Course



Artifact 7: Complete Interactive Training Platform

AI Workplace Policy Essentials Course





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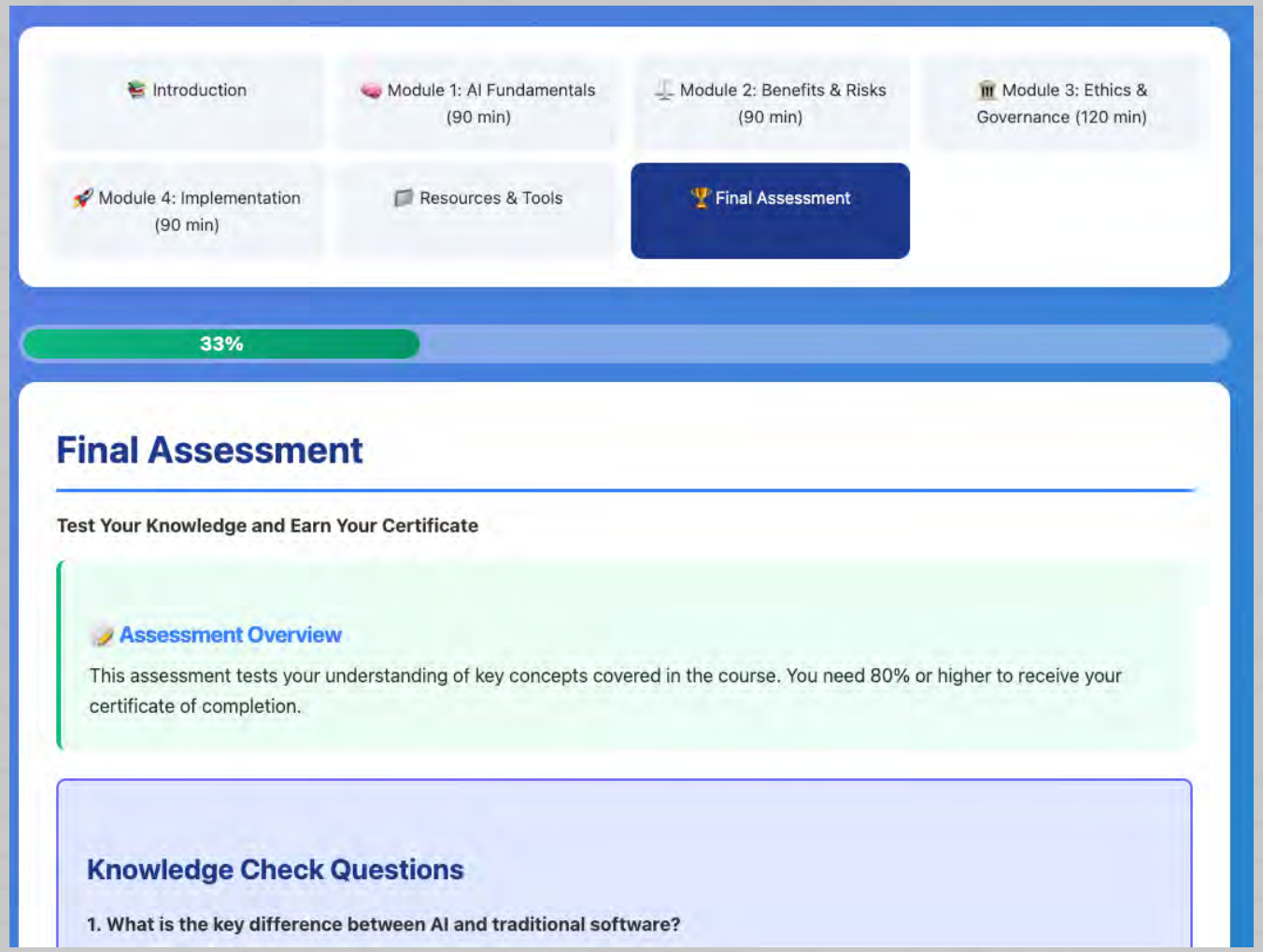
Artifact 7: Complete Interactive Training Platform

AI Workplace Policy Essentials Course



Current Status and Future Plans

Estimated Project Completion Status: 70-75 percent

- **Next Goal:** Find sustainable hosting for long-term Michigan community access
- **Remaining Work (estimated 60 hours of work to deployment):**
  - Final content refinement based on cohort feedback
  - Technical optimization of interactive elements
  - User testing with target organizations
  - Deployment infrastructure setup

THANK YOU!

It has been an honor to serve as MSU's 2025 REI Innovation Fellow, to work with brilliant collaborators, and to be given the opportunity to deepen into work so close to my heart – serving Michigan communities.

Want to keep talking? Me too.

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