



# Building Foundations for AI Exploration in Local Government

## *Recommendations for Government Support Networks and Technical Assistance Organizations*

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Local governments are exploring genAI implementation with both **enthusiasm about potential efficiency gains** and **uncertainty about risks and applicability of tools** to local needs.

Network and technical assistance organizations that support local governments can play crucial roles in advancing local governments' AI adoption through **cohort convening for peer learning**, advising on **community engagement** on government AI use, and developing and **disseminating AI use templates and best practices**.

This fact sheet presents findings from qualitative interviews with experts in the government AI sector and local government leaders as well as a literature review conducted in 2024. You can find the full research report and resource list [here](#).

Governments are increasingly exploring ways to leverage AI, particularly generative AI (genAI), to bolster operational efficiency and improve delivery of public services. A 2023 survey of 100 mayors and their staff globally found that **96 percent expressed interest in genAI**, while a 2024 survey of county government staff in the US found that **60 percent of respondents use genAI at least monthly** in their work. While local governments show interest in AI, [Urban Institute research](#) finds that they also face uncertainty about its responsible and secure use, express first-mover reluctance about specifically deploying genAI tools that may present risks and harms to constituents, and have limited resources for vetting and testing tools for policy applications.

Organizations that support local governments with capacity-building and evidence-generation for policies and operations—such as the National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, and the Urban Institute—play important roles in helping localities in their AI use, from early adoption to more advanced innovations. **Government network and technical assistance organizations should leverage their unique capacities as conveners, capacity builders, and resource aggregators to support local governments' ongoing AI use in the following ways.**

### **INTEGRATE AI INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEER LEARNING COHORTS**

Localities are eager to learn from the successes, shortcomings, and innovations of other communities' AI deployment. Organizations that already convene peer learning cohorts can help localities learn from each other by **injecting AI-focused learning into local government networks**.

Many organizations have active local government cohorts, with some organized by peer government roles or functions, such as the Beek Center for Social Impact and Innovation's State Chief Data Officers Network. While local governments often benefit from having a core champion in a technical department to propel their AI work, common AI tools lend themselves to tasks conducted by a range of governmental staff and departments. Network organizations should consider expanding technology-focused cohort membership to not only technical and data-focused staff but to broader local government teams and departments using AI in interdisciplinary ways and at

different levels of expertise. Networks should also **integrate AI learning into existing policy- or sector-focused cohorts**. For instance, a cohort of housing policy practitioners could explore [AI use in mortgage lending](#); a coalition of state human services professionals could share findings on AI use to [reduce public benefits application backlogs](#).

## CENTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN AI POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

While many local governments are experimenting with genAI to support internal tasks—such as creating content and synthesizing meeting notes—they are also increasingly deploying public-facing AI tools for community use, such as chatbots that help people navigate government websites. As public-facing AI applications emerge, local governments should not only be transparent with the public about where and how they have deployed AI, but should also **continually seek community input**, consistent with software development best practices around user engagement and continuous improvement.

Some local governments have already integrated community engagement principles in their AI guidelines, such as Boston, whose Interim Guidelines for Using Generative AI encourages employees to conduct community outreach to gather feedback on the representativeness and accuracy of genAI outputs. Government supporting organizations can **develop best practices for community engagement focused on government AI and genAI use**, building on these use cases to outline strategies for governments to solicit inclusive public input on data use permissions, priorities for AI pilots, and metrics to evaluate AI efficacy for a given task or policy goal. Organizations can also help **facilitate public engagement efforts** such as survey development or hosting data interactives to reach as diverse a range of community members as possible.

## DIRECTLY TEST AND DISSEMINATE LEARNINGS ON HIGH-IMPACT GENAI TOOLS AND USE CASES

Network and technical assistance organizations also serve important roles as resource aggregators and disseminators, conducting original research on public sector AI and genAI uptake, developing toolkits and templates that local governments can readily adopt, and hosting repositories of public sector-focused resources. Many organizations are already filling this role, such as GovAI Coalition, which offers sample templates for AI use policies and a registry of AI vendors, or the National League of Cities, which has developed a City AI Governance Dashboard and an AI Readiness Toolkit for local governments.

There are opportunities for network organizations to deepen their engagement in this space. Local governments expressed the need for pre-vetting of genAI tools to assess the validity of vendors' claims about applications' capabilities in specific policy and governmental contexts. Organizations with more advanced technical expertise can **directly test genAI tools** in lower risk settings to offer governments guidance on their efficacy for **use cases in specific policy domains**, limitations, and compliance with government security requirements. Continually updating these toolkits and resources can help local governments stay up to speed on technological and policy developments in the AI space.

Because network organizations have a broad line of sight into use cases, innovations, and policy development across many localities, they can also **collate and amplify best practices emerging from local governments**, shaping broader standards for responsible AI use. This is particularly important at a time of shifting federal guidelines on AI, as the Trump administration has revoked [Biden-era AI guidelines](#) and prioritized [deregulation](#). Localities have an opportunity to model a regulatory environment that **encourages innovation while meeting quality standards and safeguarding privacy and security**. Network organizations can help promote these approaches as technology continually advances.

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