AIDE A.I. for Disasters + Emergencies

The Markle Foundation

Practitioner Playbook for AI Readiness and Adoption

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How to Use the Playbook

The AIDE Initiative

The Markle Foundation launched the **AI for Disasters + Emergencies (AIDE) Initiative** to advance responsible AI use that keeps humans in the loop, enhances decision-making, and helps save lives and protect communities. The nation is facing more frequent, intense, and costly disasters. Yet emergency managers are operating with limited staff and unpredictable funding. AI can help emergency managers close the gap between what they are expected to do and the resources they have, but there are significant barriers to AI adoption in emergency management. The AIDE Initiative seeks to reduce these barriers by providing practical tools emergency managers need to use AI responsibly. The AIDE Initiative's Practitioner Playbook is one of these tools.

Playbook Purpose

The Practitioner Playbook helps emergency managers and their partners navigate the process of AI adoption. It includes a framework and tools to help organizations build readiness for and adopt AI solutions that keep humans in the loop, enhance decision-making, and have appropriate guardrails. The Playbook draws on **previous AIDE research** about the conditions that drive successful AI use cases in emergency management as well as leading guidance for public sector technology adoption.

The Playbook does not recommend specific AI products or timelines for adoption. It offers a framework for the emergency management community, including many government, civic, and voluntary organizations, to identify AI solutions that are suitable for their unique needs. The AIDE Initiative will regularly update this Playbook to integrate lessons learned from its cross-sector alliance, capacity-building pilots, new research, and the evolving AI landscape.

How to Use the Playbook

The Playbook includes two tracks: one focused on improving readiness for AI adoption (the Readiness Track) and one focused on adopting specific AI solutions (the Use Case Track).

The **Readiness Track** includes recommended actions for an organization to take once and revisit periodically (e.g., establish governance structures and policy). The conditions for readiness described in this track are important for all organizations, including those already using AI, because many challenges in AI adoption and long-term use are due to gaps in these conditions. The Readiness Track includes two subordinate stages:

- **Stage 1: Prepare** focuses on improving capacity to make responsible decisions about AI, understanding current AI use, and ensuring a strong foundation for future AI adoption that keeps humans in the loop and enhances decision-making.
- **Stage 2: Scan** describes best practices for identifying promising opportunities for AI based on clear problem framing, an assessment of benefits and risks of AI use cases, and a survey of available solutions.

The **Use Case Track** includes actions an organization can take to responsibly evaluate and adopt a specific AI solution. An organization may be at different stages of this track for different AI products. It may also choose to adjust the actions described at each stage in this track based on the risk of the use case. For example, an organization may narrow the scope of some actions for low-risk uses.

- **Stage 1: Plan** outlines best practices for evaluating an AI solution prior to adopting it. This stage includes a self-assessment for use case readiness to support decision-making.
- **Stage 2: Commit** includes steps an organization should take if it decides to adopt an AI solution before deploying it (e.g., establish leadership and ownership, and responsible use).
- **Stage 3: Exercise** describes how to test and refine an AI solution in a real but limited operational environment before expanding to more users.
- **Stage 4: Expand** includes best practices for expanding use beyond an initial deployment and evaluating whether the AI solution can perform well in a fully operational environment.
- **Stage 5: Integrate** describes steps to support an AI solution becoming standard practice if the organization decides to sustain its use.

The Playbook's **Appendices** include tools to support both tracks:

- A **Use Case Risk and Adoption Burden — Example Matrix**. The Playbook asks organizations to decide which uses to explore based on an assessment of benefits and risks, as well as the organization's capacity to support adoption requirements. This matrix is one example of how to consider risk and adoption burden when comparing use cases.
- A **Data Quality Assessment Worksheet**. AI solutions need data of sufficient quality for their intended use. This worksheet helps organizations assess data against indicators of quality and address limitations.
- **Questions for Vendors**. The Playbook recommends documenting how AI solutions work, what data and IT integration they require, how performance is measured, what the solutions cost, and what support comes with them. The Questions for Vendors tool includes a comprehensive list of questions for technology companies offering AI solutions.
- A **Low-Risk Use Case Tear Sheet**. Many uses of AI in emergency management can have significant consequences because they inform decisions that affect people's lives and property. Yet not every AI use case is high risk. This tear sheet distills the Playbook's Use Case Track to an abbreviated checklist of critical actions for low-risk use cases. Organizations should use this tear sheet only after they have established a risk management framework and used it to classify a use case as low-risk.



Watch Out

The Playbook includes guidance to avoid common pitfalls at each stage of AI adoption. Look for the yellow hexagon bullets at the end of each section.

AI Adoption Framework: Tracks, Stages, and Conditions

Conditions driving successful use cases in emergency management are shown across the top of this framework. For each condition, the framework identifies a desired outcome at each stage. The stage guides that follow include best practices to achieve those outcomes.

AI ADOPTION TRACKS & STAGES	ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS				
	Leadership Leaders assume responsibility for AI.	**Culture and Capacity** Leaders foster culture and personnel capacity.	**Iterative Development** Staff believe AI can solve an important problem.	**Agile Procurement** Acquisition adapts and preserves flexibility.	**IT and Data Maturity** AI is integrated with IT and data modernization.
READINESS TRACK: Organizations typically complete this track once and revise its outputs periodically.					
Prepare: Improve capacity to make responsible decisions about AI.	Governance, principles, and guardrails for AI adoption are in place.	Staff learn about and inform the organization's AI approach.	Past and current AI uses are surfaced and understood.	Pathways for responsibly acquiring AI solutions are identified.	The organization understands its technical capacity for AI.
Scan: Identify where AI can support needs. Align on risks and benefits.	Promising use cases that keep humans in the loop are identified.	Staff build AI literacy and the capacity to oversee AI through training.	Stakeholders identify how AI could address specific problems.	Solutions that may meet the organization's needs are identified.	Data and system needs are identified for promising use cases.
USE CASE TRACK: Organizations complete this track for each AI use case they want to consider.					
Plan: Evaluate an AI solution for feasibility, fit, risk, and readiness.	An assessment of an AI solution is responsibly governed and resourced.	Staff build knowledge by evaluating a potential AI solution.	An AI solution's performance is evaluated prior to adoption.	Procurement support is flexible and consistent with AI principles.	Test data are protected and technical needs are met.
Commit: Establish authorization, owners, resources, and guardrails.	A decision to adopt an AI solution has a scope, owner, and resources.	Staff and community members are prepared for adoption.	There is a plan for phased, performance-based adoption.	Procurement enables accountability and agile development.	IT and data infrastructure are ready for phased adoption.
Exercise: Launch initial deployments, train staff, and refine.	Initial deployments have appropriate oversight and guardrails.	Early users strengthen internal support networks and training.	Early user experiences improve an AI solution before expansion.	Vendor performance and required updates are documented.	System guardrails and data quality are validated.
Expand: Document lessons and operational value. Scale what works.	Demonstrated value drives expansion of the AI solution.	Ongoing transparency and support build staff confidence.	The AI solution improves through evaluation and monitoring.	Vendor performance and support sustain expansion.	Expansion does not outpace IT or data management capacity.
Integrate: Embed the AI solution as standard practice.	An AI solution is governed and funded as an ongoing capability.	AI skills and knowledge are maintained and expanded.	Ongoing evaluation strengthens current and future AI use.	Acquisition approaches adjust with performance and evolving technology.	Data and IT modernization and AI adoption are integrated.

Readiness Track

Stage 1: Prepare — Capacity

In this stage, an organization builds or improves its capacity to make responsible decisions about AI that keep humans in the loop. Leaders clarify governance, align on principles and guardrails for AI use, identify relevant expertise within or outside the organization, and assess the readiness of their data and systems to support AI. Practitioners do not need to feel "ready for AI" to prepare. Actions in this stage help an organization build familiarity with AI and strengthen its foundation for AI adoption.

You are READY to PREPARE if you have:

- Confirmed your senior leadership team wants to use AI responsibly to enhance decision-making
- Fostered basic AI literacy among senior leaders, including an understanding of its potential uses, benefits, and risks

Missing this readiness condition?

- Facilitate a conversation with senior leaders about their views on AI
- Consider **current research** about AI in emergency management and invite independent experts and/or peer jurisdictions with AI experience to meet with your leadership team

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
Governance, principles, and guardrails for AI adoption are in place.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Staff learn about and inform the organization's AI approach.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
Past and current AI uses are surfaced and understood.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Pathways for responsibly acquiring AI solutions are identified.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
The organization understands its technical capacity for AI.

Best Practices

Leadership: Governance, principles, and guardrails for AI adoption are in place.

- Establish or clarify **governance structures** to oversee the use of AI.[1] Governance refers to the structures and processes leaders use to align AI adoption with organizational priorities and manage risks. Governance will vary based on an organization's size, needs, and position within broader structures. An organization may embed governance in existing structures or establish new ones.

Notional Examples: Governance Approaches	
Small Organization	**Large Organization**
A town's administrator and emergency manager establish **a group to advise them** on AI. This group includes an attorney and a procurement official; the IT provider; a peer emergency manager with AI experience; a state partner; and a college professor with data science expertise.	A state's emergency management agency establishes a **formal AI Working Group** with leaders responsible for policy, operations, human resources, budget, legal compliance, procurement, IT, and data. The group coordinates AI use on behalf of the director.

- Consider designating an individual to serve as the organization's **AI leader**.[2]
- Understand **existing laws, regulations, and policies** relevant to AI adoption and use in the organization's jurisdiction (e.g., state law, parent organization policy).
- Establish a **risk management framework** to classify potential AI use cases based on the risks they pose to the organization and its stakeholders. This framework should:
  - Include criteria for classifying use cases by risk that are clear and easy to apply;
  - Consider how mitigation actions and guardrails (e.g., human-in-the-loop approaches) influence risk classifications; and
  - Support AI decision-making processes (i.e., what level of risk requires what level of review), including incident response procedures.[3]
- Develop or update **AI policy**, even if interim, to address:
  - Alignment with AI policies at higher organizational or governmental levels;
  - Definitions of key terms related to AI adoption;
  - **Principles to guide AI use**, including existing approved uses, prohibited activities, and requirements for human oversight and other guardrails;
  - Authorities and processes for making decisions about AI using a risk-based approach;
  - Responsibilities of leaders, managers, staff, and partners, including governance bodies;
  - Description of how AI requirements will be considered in the budget cycle; and
  - Requirements for how the organization's leaders will communicate about its AI use.
- Ensure accountable managers track **updates required for existing policies or procedures** (e.g., privacy, cybersecurity) to align with the organization's AI approach.
- Determine a **records management approach for AI-generated or assisted content**, including how it will be marked, reviewed, and retained in incident documentation. Ensure managers responsible for records management and reimbursement claims approve the approach.
- Identify how the organization will communicate its AI adoption approach and preserve **interoperability with partner jurisdictions** and organizations.

[1] Dwyer & Anex-Ries, 2025; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2025; NIST, 2023a.
[2] Dwyer, M. & Anex-Ries, Q., 2025; Hysen, E., 2026; Pakzad, R. & Conti-Cook, C., 2025.
[3] Useful risk management frameworks are available from **NIST, 2023a** and **WEF, 2020**.

Culture and Capacity: Staff learn about and inform the organization's AI approach.

- Ensure **leadership communication with staff** about the organization's efforts to build capacity for responsible AI adoption and use. Consider providing specific **guidance to managers** on how to communicate with their teams about the organization's AI principles and guardrails.
- Complete a **survey of staff** about their current use of AI, how they would like to use AI in their work, and their concerns.[4]
- Identify individuals in or outside the organization with **expertise relevant to responsible AI adoption**, including budget, agile procurement, IT, data science, and performance management. These individuals may be members of the organization, staff from a parent agency, or peers from professional networks.
- Identify **AI champions** and provide them with opportunities to develop technical skills.
- Document **AI training needs** based on staff surveys, gaps between available expertise and requirements for AI adoption, and the strengths and developmental goals of AI champions.
- Sign up for **peer learning** networks such as the **GovAI Coalition** and **AIDE Alliance**.
- Seek out **capacity-building opportunities** through professional and academic organizations, such as training and pilot programs.

Qualities of Individuals Who Make Good AI Champions

- Have credibility and respect
- Communicate and listen well
- Build strong relationships
- Solve problems creatively
- Support arguments with data
- Are comfortable with statistics
- Express interest in programming
- Recognize technology can improve processes
- Are knowledgeable about the organization, including its data

Partially adapted from the **AI Guide for Government**

Iterative Development: Past and current AI uses are surfaced and understood.

- Understand any **previous and current use of AI and lessons learned**. Use this stage as an opportunity to inventory and reassess how AI may already be operating in the organization.
- Consult other jurisdictions and professional networks about **peers' AI experiences** and lessons.

What if My Team Is Already Using AI?

Many challenges with AI use can be linked to gaps in readiness including governance and risk management. Check for and address any critical gaps while the AI solution remains in use.

- **Compliance:** Current AI use complies with applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- **Risk Management:** Current AI use has a risk classification that determines decision authority and monitoring requirements
- **Policy:** Responsible use expectations, including requirements for human oversight, are established
- **Training:** Staff are trained to use the tool appropriately and responsibly
- **Data Ownership and Quality:** Data provided to the AI solution has an owner and is fit for intended use (see **Appendix B**)
- **Contracts:** Agreements are updated as required to prevent vendors from enabling or changing AI features without approval

[4] Dwyer, M. & Anex-Ries, Q., 2025; GovAI Coalition, 2026. See examples from New Jersey and Marion County.

Agile Procurement: Pathways for responsibly acquiring AI solutions are identified.

- Understand **acquisition pathways** available to your organization, including:
  - **Non-procurement options**, such as government shared services or inactive AI features in technology the organization already uses;
  - **Procurement options**, such as new contracts and new orders or modifications under existing contracts. For many emergency managers, procurement authorities and processes may reside in a parent organization or jurisdiction.
- Understand typical **pricing structures for AI systems** (e.g., license vs. consumption-based) and how costs may rise or fall based on these structures (e.g., normal vs. surge staffing).

IT and Data Maturity: The organization understands its technical capacity for AI.

- Review and update, if required, **data governance and management policies** to address authorities and expectations for assessing, accessing, and storing data for use in AI systems, including privacy and cybersecurity requirements.
- Assess the organization's **capacity to support technical integration** of AI with its existing systems. This assessment should inform acquisition options (e.g., solutions that do not require technical integration, vendors who offer significant technical support).
- Confirm whether the organization's IT environment can support **cloud access** and identify any bandwidth or connectivity constraints.



Watch Out

Subjective risk management approaches.

Making decisions about AI adoption involves tradeoffs between potential benefits and risks. Without an objective and consistent framework to assess and categorize the risks of AI solutions, organizations may overestimate harm and miss opportunities to apply game-changing technologies to their greatest problems. Alternatively, organizations may underestimate harm and assume greater risks than they should. Well-structured risk management frameworks help organizations make proportionate, consistent decisions about which solutions to adopt and how to mitigate their associated risks.

Interoperability with partners.

Most of the work emergency managers do involves cooperation with stakeholders from other organizations and jurisdictions. Throughout the AI adoption process, practitioners should consider how AI solutions affect their coordination with external partners. For example, when documenting workflows that may benefit from AI, organizations should identify how a solution could impact partner interactions (e.g., information sharing, system access). If changes are expected, organizations should include relevant partners in testing and evaluating the solution.

Stage 2: Scan — Awareness

In this stage, leaders assess how AI can best support their mission needs based on a shared understanding of benefits and risks. An organization engages stakeholders to identify problems AI could help address, promising use cases for further exploration, and available solutions. Staff have opportunities to build their AI literacy and technical skills.

You are READY to SCAN if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Established a risk-based governance approach for AI use	• Leverage an established AI risk management framework (e.g., NIST)
• Surfaced and discussed current AI use in the organization	• Survey staff about their AI use, observations, and needs
• Developed policy and principles for AI use, including human oversight	• Use the GovAI Coalition's AI policy **template** to get started
• Identified potential pathways for acquiring AI solutions	• Talk to purchasing and technology leaders about available options
• Assessed existing data governance and IT capacity	• Consult those responsible for data and IT about current capacity

Stage Outcomes

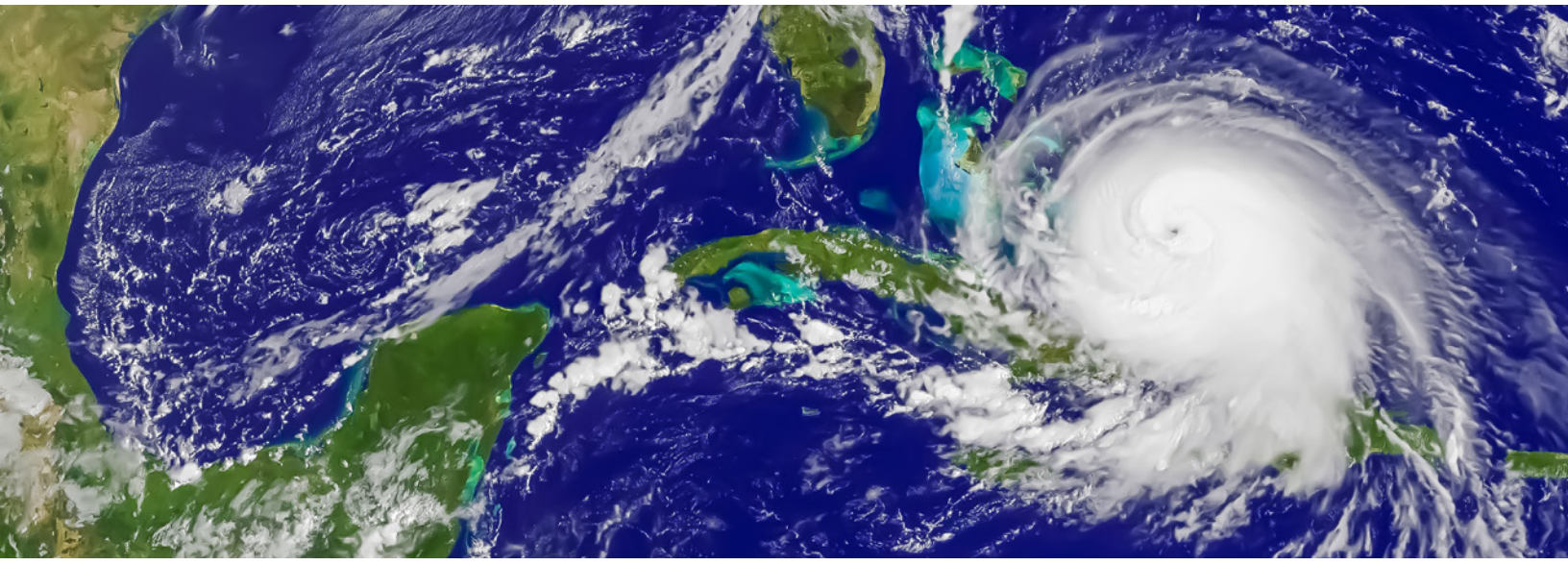
LEADERSHIP
Promising use cases that keep humans in the loop are identified.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Staff build AI literacy and the capacity to oversee AI through training.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
Stakeholders identify how AI could address specific problems.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Solutions that may meet the organization's needs are identified.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
Data and system needs are identified for promising use cases.



Best Practices

Leadership: Promising use cases that keep humans in the loop are identified based on an assessment of benefits and risks.

- Facilitate leadership alignment, with the support of relevant AI governance bodies or advisory groups, on a **high-level set of problems** the organization may seek to address with AI. These problems may relate to existing strategic priorities and challenges or future requirements. Empower the organization's AI leader to engage relevant stakeholders in scoping these problems for potential AI solutions, as described in the Iterative Development section below.
- Discuss the **benefits and risks of potential AI use cases** identified by stakeholders. If the organization is already using AI, this is an opportunity to discuss the benefits and risks of continuing to use **existing AI solutions**.
- Decide which use cases, if any, to move forward. Consider **phased exploration of use cases** based on interdependencies among problem statements and the organization's risk tolerance, starting with lower-stakes use cases where appropriate. Leaders should also consider the organization's capacity to support solutions (e.g., access to expertise).

Culture and Capacity: Staff build AI literacy and the capacity to oversee AI through training.

- Offer or require **training for staff to improve AI literacy**, including understanding what AI is, common tools, automation bias, privacy, data security, and concepts like explainability, accuracy, and transparency.[5]
- Establish an **AI community of interest** and offer its members opportunities to provide input on AI projects, access more **advanced AI training**, and share expertise.
- Identify an individual to oversee **performance management** of AI-enabled tools. This person should have expertise or receive training in evaluating public programs and AI models.

SUBFIELDS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Adapted from **RAND's AI and the Future of Emergency Management**. Many AI solutions rely on multiple subfields.

Knowledge Representation and Reasoning
Organizing and manipulating knowledge to draw inferences and make decisions.

Example: Medical Diagnostic Systems

Planning, Scheduling, and Optimization
Selecting and sequencing actions to achieve defined goals efficiently under given constraints.

Example: Automated Dispatch Systems

Natural Language Processing
Understanding, generating, and interacting through human language in text or speech.

Example: Voice Assistants, Predictive Text

Machine Learning and Predictive Modeling
Learning patterns from data and improving over time to forecast outcomes or estimate values.

Example: Call Volume Forecasts

Computer Vision
Perceiving, interpreting, and acting on visual information from images or video.

Example: Debris Detection

Robotics and Embodied AI
Physical systems capable of perceiving, controlling, and acting autonomously.

Example: Mobile Search and Rescue Robots

Generative AI
Learning patterns in data — language, images, sounds — and producing novel outputs.

Example: Automated Incident Forms

Multimodal AI
Processing, fusing, and reasoning across multiple data types (e.g., text, images, video).

Example: Multi-Sensor Threat Alarms

[5] For additional training resources, see **InnovateUS** and the GovAI Coalition's ***Getting Started with AI Training in Your Agency Playbook***.

Iterative Development: Stakeholders identify how AI could address specific problems.

This section can be used to explore new AI opportunities or to revisit existing uses when the workflow is unclear or there are questions about whether the solution is addressing the right problem.

- Complete a **stakeholder map** with individuals affected by the problem(s) the organization is trying to address (e.g., system users, external partners, community members).
- Determine options for **public engagement** (e.g., surveys, new or existing advisory groups) if AI use has or will have an impact on communities served by the organization.
- Engage a small group of stakeholders and experts with AI literacy to support **problem framing**.
- Document stakeholder feedback on **workflows related to each problem**, including:
  - Whether workflows related to the problem are well understood;
  - The primary users of the workflows and what they need;
  - Current pain points and how they affect desired outcomes;
  - Data associated with the workflows; and
  - Existing measures of performance.
- Document stakeholder feedback on **AI use cases to address the problem**, including:
  - Where in the workflow AI can address a challenge and what the AI solution should do;
  - What type of AI is appropriate for the task(s) (see AI subfields above);
  - Why AI is more suitable than other approaches to address the challenge;
  - How humans oversee and interact with the AI tool and level of effort required;
  - What change the group wants (i.e., benefits) and how that change could be measured;
  - What risks may emerge (e.g., bias, inaccuracies) and if/how risks can be mitigated; and
  - What backup processes are required if an AI-enabled solution fails.
- Develop a list of **specific problem statements** based on stakeholders' input:
  - Write desired **outcomes** for each problem that are specific and measurable.
  - Establish **performance measures** and **pre-AI baseline benchmarks** for each outcome.

Problem Statements, Outcomes, and Measures — Notional Examples

Potential AI Use Case — Translation

Problem Statement
Communities with limited English proficiency receive public messages about 2 hours after original, English-language messages are distributed

Desired Outcome
Translated public messages are distributed within 30 minutes of the original, English-language message

Performance Measure
Average time between dissemination of original and translated messages

Pre-AI Benchmark: 2 hours

Post-AI Target: < 30 minutes

Potential AI Use Case — Evacuation

Problem Statement
Poor prediction of traffic bottlenecks limits real-time traffic management and contributes to evacuation times exceeding clearance targets

Desired Outcome
Increase accurate prediction of bottlenecks from 50% to 90% to support real-time traffic management decisions

Performance Measure
Percent of major traffic bottlenecks accurately predicted

Pre-AI Benchmark: 50%

Post-AI Target: 90%

Agile Procurement: AI-enabled solutions that may meet the organization's needs are identified.

- Ensure managers, staff, and/or partners who support AI acquisition activities understand basic **principles of agile development**, providing training as required.[6] This includes iterative processes based on problem statements rather than prescribed solutions, and iterative development that evolves with technology.[7]
- Develop an **inventory of AI solutions** that may meet the organization's needs, including for promising new use cases or as alternatives to existing solutions. Potential sources include:
  - **Existing systems** used by the organization or parent agency that may have inactive AI functionality (e.g., GIS systems);
  - **Existing contracts** with the organization or parent agency that may be modified to add AI functionality (e.g., productivity software contracts);
  - **Government shared services** available through entities such as a parent organization, regional council of governments, or state agency;
  - **Cooperative purchasing contracts** available at the local, state, regional, or national level. Search e-portals or contact **procurement offices**;
  - **Contract inventories** from other organizations to identify AI tools that may be relevant for your organization. One source is GovAI Coalition's **Contract Hub**;
  - **Requests for information (RFIs)** to communicate the organization's needs to technology companies and better understand available solutions. Explore partnerships with other jurisdictions or organizations on common needs and joint RFIs;[8] and
  - **Peer demonstrations**. Ask state and regional partners, peer organizations, universities, and emergency management associations about their experience with AI tools.

POTENTIAL AI SOLUTIONS

For each AI solution, document the following. See **Appendix C** for more detailed vendor questions.

- **Type of AI and Scope:** What type(s) of AI the solution relies on and how it could address the problem.
  - Disaster Lifecycle: Which phases of the disaster lifecycle the solution supports (e.g., preparedness, response, recovery, and/or mitigation).
  - Steady-State or Operations: Whether the solution is intended for steady-state, operations, or both.
- **Performance:** How the solution is evaluated and how it has performed in simulations and operations.
  - Human Oversight: Where and how people review, validate, and/or approve AI outputs.
- **Interdependencies:** Whether the solution requires stacking with other products or services to function.
- **IT Requirements:** Whether the solution must integrate with any existing systems (e.g., GIS).
- **Data Requirements:** What data the solution requires, from whom, and how frequently.
- **Support Requirements:** What, if any, support is available and who provides it.
- **Procurement and Pricing Approach:** What procurement and pricing structures the solution uses.

[6] For additional resources, see **Procurement U**, **TechFar Hub**, and the Federal Acquisition Institute's **training page**.
[7] WEF, 2020.
[8] Pakzad, R. & Conti-Cook, C., 2025.

IT and Data Maturity: Data and system needs are identified for AI use cases.

- Identify **product stacking and system integration requirements** for potential use cases. Assess whether the organization can support those requirements internally and, if not, document needs for external support.
- Conduct a **quality assessment of existing data** relevant to AI use cases (see Appendix B for a **Data Quality Assessment Worksheet**). This should include consulting experts on the legality of using available data for the intended purpose. Document challenges with existing data and whether these challenges can be mitigated.
- Identify **owners of data associated with selected use cases** if not already known.



Watch Out

Solutions in search of a problem.

Practitioners with limited time may be tempted to procure an AI-enabled product based on a compelling pitch. This approach risks using scarce resources for solutions that may not adequately address underlying problems or reflect the actual needs of affected stakeholders. Organizations are more likely to adopt AI solutions effectively when they start by defining the problem they want to solve, rather than by starting with a product they want to acquire.

Product dependencies.

RAND found that AI-enabled tools are often marketed and sold as "stand-alone products, even when they structurally require a parent product to function."[9] Specifically, nearly one in five products in RAND's landscape assessment requires another product to work. Beginning in the Scan stage and continuing through procurement, organizations should ask whether the AI-enabled solutions they are considering have other product dependencies. A lack of awareness about these dependencies can lead to unexpected future costs, hidden commitments to parent products, or additional technical requirements.

Fallacy of perfect data.

High-quality data and perfect data are not the same thing. Data can be high quality when they are fit for a specific purpose, even when they have gaps or other limitations. Organizations should not avoid considering AI adoption altogether because they lack perfect data. Instead, practitioners should understand the data needs of prioritized AI use cases, assess the current state of their own data, and identify improvements needed to make the data fit for intended use.

[9] Jensen et al., 2026, p. 31.

Use Case Track

Stage 1: Plan — Assessment

In this phase, an organization assesses a specific AI solution for mission fit, feasibility, readiness, and risk. Leaders may consider evaluating the AI solution using case studies from analogous organizations, running an exercise, and/or conducting internal pilots. The organization documents findings, including AI performance compared with legacy approaches, stakeholder feedback, the mitigation of errors or biases through human oversight, and data, system, and security integration. Organizations are encouraged to complete the **Self-Assessment: AI Use Case Readiness** at the end of this stage before deciding whether to adopt an AI solution and proceeding to Stage 2: Commit.

You are READY to PLAN if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Fostered basic AI literacy among relevant staff	• Facilitate live or on-demand training using free AI literacy resources
• Selected an AI use case based on an assessment of benefits, risks, and organizational capacity	• Confirm AI can help with a problem by documenting where it fits in the workflow and the desired outcome
• Identified a relevant AI solution within the technical capacity of your organization	• Ask comparable peer organizations about AI tools they use for similar needs
• Determined that suitable data exists or can be prepared	• Check whether required data are available and fit for use (**Appendix B**)
• Identified an individual who can oversee or advise on AI performance	• Consider realigning duties so a qualified or trained staff member can oversee AI performance

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
An assessment of an AI solution is responsibly governed and resourced.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Staff build knowledge by evaluating a potential AI solution.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
An AI solution's performance is evaluated prior to an adoption decision.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Procurement support is flexible and consistent with AI adoption principles.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
Test data are protected and technical needs are met.

Best Practices

Leadership: An assessment of an AI solution is responsibly governed and resourced.

- Use the governance approach to empower a **small planning team**[10] to run an assessment (e.g., case study, exercise, or pilot) and facilitate go/no-go decisions. Team composition will vary based on the size and needs of the organization, but it should include individuals with expertise in performance management, data science, procurement, and IT.
- Secure and align **resources for the assessment**, if feasible. Consider using central funds until long-term ownership is determined. Pay attention to the constraints of certain funding sources like grants (e.g., allowable costs for software expenses, how the award cycle affects procurement timing, and what happens when the period of performance ends).
- Develop and exercise **procedures for AI incident response**.[11] Consider checklists with risk-based triggers.
- Oversee a **public communications approach** if AI use has an impact on communities served by the organization. This approach could include plain language notices, members of the public participating in new or existing advisory groups, and/or an online AI inventory.[12] Include sufficient explanation about whether an AI tool is being tested or deployed.[13]

Culture and Capacity: Staff build knowledge by evaluating a potential AI solution.

- Provide **guidance to staff and stakeholders who will participate** in an assessment initially and through its duration.
- Provide clear **communication with all staff about the assessment**, including its purpose, what is being measured, who is involved, and how findings will inform decisions.
- If possible, offer **opportunities for staff to participate, learn more, and build relevant skills** through the assessment. Consider prioritizing opportunities for previously identified AI champions and members of any AI communities of practice.
- Share **updates with staff about how the assessment is going** at key milestones. Consider including demonstrations and early stakeholder feedback.

Iterative Development: An AI solution's performance is evaluated prior to an adoption decision.

- Define the **method and parameters for an assessment**:
  - Method: What assessment method will you use (e.g., case study, exercise, pilot);
  - Conditions: Under what conditions you will assess the AI solution (e.g., steady-state work vs. an operational environment, routine vs. surge operations);
  - Performance Criteria: How you expect the AI solution to perform against benchmarks, common technical measures,[14] and the organization's AI principles;
  - Assessment Environment and Users (if an exercise or pilot):
    - Where the tool will be tested (e.g., sandbox or live system);
    - Who will test it and what training they require. A diverse group of users, including field personnel, is recommended;
    - What data will be used (e.g., simulated or real);
    - What **guardrails** will be used to prevent data breaches, protect system security, and limit risk;
    - Duration: How long the assessment will run and what happens at the end;
    - Cost: What the assessment will cost (e.g., fees, travel, staff time);
    - Public Engagement: How the public will be invited to provide feedback; and
    - Compliance: How compliance with relevant laws and regulations will be validated.

[10] Digital Services Playbook.
[11] NIST, 2023a. An "AI incident" is an event involving an AI-enabled system that results in harm or near harm. The GovAI Coalition has a **template** for an AI incident response plan.
[12] Dwyer, M. & Anex-Ries, Q., 2025.
[13] Hysen, E., 2026.
[14] Such as accuracy, recall, false-positive rates, precision, and F1 scores. Appropriate measures depend on type of AI and use. For more information on technical measures, see the **metrics section** in Google's Machine Learning Crash Course, Classification Module.

- Conduct the assessment and document findings on:
  - Results, reported or observed, against performance criteria;
  - The ability of human oversight to mitigate errors, inaccuracies, and/or biases;
  - The tool's ability to document its decision-making (i.e., maintain an audit trail);[15] and
  - User feedback, including how much learning is required to use the tool, how easy or complex it is to explain, whether users report it improving their work, and how it interacts with any offline elements of relevant workflows.[16]
- Review a **summary of assessment findings with senior leaders**, including any governance body and/or advisory groups. Validate whether AI is still assessed as superior to other solutions.

USING EXERCISES TO ASSESS AI FOR RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

An exercise is a low-risk, structured way to assess potential AI solutions in realistic operating conditions with existing evaluation processes.

WHAT TO ASSESS

Design — Develop a scenario that can:

- Simulate the workflow(s) that will be affected by an AI solution
- Test interactions between the AI solution and exercise participants, including human oversight of AI-assisted output
- Provide the AI solution with data that is similar in scope and quality to data available in the intended environment
- Simulate constraints the AI solution may encounter (e.g., periods of high use)

Evaluate — How does the solution:

- Perform in realistic conditions
- Affect workflow(s) and user roles
- Inform operational decisions
- Affect information-sharing and coordination with partners (if applicable)
- Use data (including whether errors or bias in AI output indicate data issues)
- Create risks or potential harm (and whether human oversight and other guardrails can mitigate them)

HOW TO USE FINDINGS

Problem Framing

- Revisit the original problem statement if the exercise shows it is unclear or inaccurate

Model Assumptions and Data

- Refine the underlying model and/or data used based on performance and user feedback

Performance Expectations

- Assess whether the effort required to use the AI solution is worth what it offers
- Revise expectations if the AI solution cannot meet targets, or decide not to proceed if results are unacceptable

Risk Classification

- Revise risk classification if the exercise surfaces unanticipated harms

Usability

- Document what training and support users need based on participant feedback

[15] WaTech, 2023.
[16] Digital Services Playbook.

Agile Procurement: Procurement support is flexible and consistent with AI adoption principles.

- Determine if the assessment approach requires **procurement-related support** (e.g., contract modification, competitive solicitation).
- If applicable, translate performance criteria into **procurement evaluation criteria** and methods for comparing solutions. Ensure solicitations, scopes of work, or ordering documents clearly communicate the problem statement and desired outcomes (not specific solutions), summarize available data and known limitations, and describe risks.
- If pursuing a competitive solicitation (such as for a pilot), require vendors to submit an **AI FactSheet** with their proposal that provides information about the product.[17] Consider requiring vendors to describe their responsible AI framework and how it has been applied in practice.[18]
- Ensure agreements preserve **organizational flexibility** by avoiding provisions that create vendor or data lock-in, requiring disclosure of third-party services and dependencies, and establishing clear offboarding requirements, including access to data.[19]

IT and Data Maturity: Test data are protected and technical needs are met.

- Take actions to **address limitations in existing data** associated with the use case. Complete a **quality assessment** of existing data relevant to the AI use case if not previously done. Use the results from this assessment to determine any required improvements (e.g., cleaning data, clarifying ownership, protecting sensitive information).
- Develop a **data usage protocol** for the assessment to ensure compliance with data management policies. Limit data to the minimum needed for the assessment's scope.[20]
- Support **data term agreements** with any vendors involved in an assessment covering ownership, usage rights, short-term storage, and long-term disposition.
- Determine the **assessment's requirements for IT infrastructure support**, including systems and bandwidth, and whether the organization can support those requirements.[21]



Watch Out

Unintended consequences.

AI solutions can cause unintended consequences, both beneficial and harmful, because their behavior is influenced by how they are used and their broader operating environments.[22] For example, AI tools that use social media to identify disaster-related needs may underrepresent communities that use social media less frequently or not at all. Case studies, exercises, and pilots provide lower-stakes opportunities to observe how an AI-enabled tool behaves before adoption and to identify important guardrails, including human oversight, for its use.

Pilot purgatory.

Pilot projects that lack defined timeframes and evaluation criteria risk getting stuck in "pilot purgatory," where promising products remain in testing cycles without decisions to adopt or discontinue use. Organizations should situate assessments within their broader AI adoption journeys, with leadership oversight to determine when to begin and end testing and whether to proceed to implementation or reconsider alternative solutions.

[17] DC Government Office of Contracting and Procurement, 2025. See GovAI Coalition's AI Fact Sheet Template.
[18] WEF, 2020.
[19] Pakzad, R. & Conti-Cook, C., 2025.
[20] WaTech, 2023.
[21] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2025.
[22] NIST, 2023a.

Self-Assessment: AI Use Case Readiness

This self-assessment can help practitioners evaluate their readiness to adopt an AI solution.[23] **Complete the self-assessment before moving to Stage 2: Commit to inform decisions about whether to proceed with adoption.** When using the tool, organizations should:

- Document improvements required for questions rated "partially ready" or "not ready," whether those improvements are feasible, and the time required to complete them;
- Base each category rating on the overall pattern of responses. For example, if most Leadership questions are rated "partially ready," consider rating overall Leadership Readiness as "partially ready"; and
- Consider not proceeding with adoption if a category is rated "partially ready" or "not ready" and improvements are not feasible. Consider delaying adoption if improvements are feasible but require time to complete.

1	**Leadership** *Is the AI solution consistent with our expectations for AI use?*	**Ready**	**Partially Ready**	**Not Ready**
	Is the use case compliant with laws and regulations in our jurisdiction?	◯	◯	◯
	Are we prepared to establish responsible use expectations and human oversight approaches based on our AI policy and principles?	◯	◯	◯
	Have we used our risk management framework to determine a risk level and corresponding decision authorities for the use case?	◯	◯	◯
	Are legal, procurement, and IT stakeholders engaged?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have a records management approach for AI-related content?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have policy for data management that aligns with this use case?	◯	◯	◯
	Have we developed and exercised procedures for AI incident response?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have a fallback plan if an AI solution fails or is unavailable?	◯	◯	◯
	Leadership Readiness ▶	◯	◯	◯

2	**Culture and Capacity** *Can our workforce take this on?*	**Ready**	**Partially Ready**	**Not Ready**
	Have we asked our workforce about their views and needs related to AI? Does this use case support those needs?	◯	◯	◯
	Have we addressed any cultural or philosophical barriers to use of AI in general as an emerging technology?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have staff or external support resources with the technical proficiency required for adoption?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have internal champions to help drive adoption?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have staff with the time and bandwidth to adopt and use an AI solution during steady-state and/or incidents?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have an operational culture that supports cross-checking and not over-relying on automation?	◯	◯	◯
	Can we sustain training requirements over time?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have relationships with peer jurisdictions to share lessons?	◯	◯	◯
	Culture and Capacity Readiness ▶	◯	◯	◯

[23] This tool is adapted from **AI and the Future of Emergency Management** (RAND, 2026). See Appendix H, "Criteria Practitioners Can Use to Evaluate Their Organization's Adoption Readiness Based on Product Characteristics.".

3	**Iterative Development** *Are we ready to solve the right problem with the right solution?*	Ready	Partially Ready	Not Ready
	Have we documented a specific problem for AI to address?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have clearly defined workflows related to this problem?	◯	◯	◯
	Are these workflows flexible enough to incorporate a new product?	◯	◯	◯
	Can we validate AI-assisted outputs before acting on them?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have clarity on what better looks like for the workflows (e.g., speed, accuracy, coordination, service outcomes)?	◯	◯	◯
	Have we defined performance outcomes and established pre-AI baseline benchmarks?	◯	◯	◯
	Have we demonstrated, or do we have evidence, that AI can improve these outcomes?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we understand which disaster phases (e.g., response, recovery) and conditions (e.g., steady-state, operations) this use case applies to?	◯	◯	◯
	Are we able to test this use case in our exercises and drills?	◯	◯	◯
	Iterative Development Readiness ▶	◯	◯	◯

4	**Agile Procurement** *Can we support flexible and agile implementation?*	Ready	Partially Ready	Not Ready
	Can we navigate acquisition pathways relevant to this use case (e.g., contract modification, competitive solicitation)?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we understand relevant pricing structures and have we estimated short-term and long-term costs?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have viable funding models (e.g., subscription vs. capital purchase) and can we sustain costs over multiple years?	◯	◯	◯
	Are we aware of contract terms that create vendor lock-in or long-term dependencies? Are we prepared to make choices about those terms?	◯	◯	◯
	Agile Procurement Readiness ▶	◯	◯	◯

5	**IT and Data Maturity** *Do we have the technical foundation in place?*	Ready	Partially Ready	Not Ready
	Can our cybersecurity practices accommodate the use case?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we have the underlying systems a product may depend on (e.g., GIS, data platforms, alerting systems)?	◯	◯	◯
	Are we prepared for any stacking requirements (i.e., the solution being one component in a broader ecosystem)?	◯	◯	◯
	Can we support integration requirements (e.g., APIs, data feeds) or will that require external support?	◯	◯	◯
	Do we understand our data sources, quality, and gaps?	◯	◯	◯
	Are data structured and governed well enough to support the use case?	◯	◯	◯
	Are we able to scale IT and data support operations up or down in ways an AI solution may require (e.g., during surge use)?	◯	◯	◯
	IT and Data Maturity Readiness ▶	◯	◯	◯



Stage 2: Commit — Decision and Authorization

In this phase, leaders decide whether to adopt an AI solution. If an organization decides to proceed, leaders establish ownership, align resources, and define expectations for responsible, mission-aligned use. Leaders engage staff and community members about the adoption decision. Managers oversee phased implementation plans with evaluation, monitoring, and risk mitigation strategies. Procurement approaches include phased deployment and provisions that hold vendors accountable for performance, transparency, and support. The organization confirms its capacity to manage required data outside of a test environment and resolves system limitations.

You are READY to COMMIT if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Demonstrated an AI use case improves relevant outcomes	• Consider not proceeding with adoption or narrowing scope
• Established and tested AI incident response procedures	• Use GovAI Coalition's AI Incident Response **Plan** to develop them
• Developed technical knowledge required for adoption	• Identify options to address gaps in technical implementation support
• Confirmed the organization's IT infrastructure can support the use case and/or identified required external assistance	• Consider not proceeding or narrowing scope to fit within current IT capacity and/or available external assistance
• Identified and developed a plan to address any major data limitations	• For high-risk use cases, consider not proceeding if major data limitations remain. For lower-risk use cases, prioritize the most significant data quality issues

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
A decision to adopt AI has a defined scope, owner, and resources.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Staff and community members are prepared for adoption.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
There is a plan for phased, performance-based adoption.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Procurement enables accountability and agile development.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
IT and data infrastructure are ready for phased adoption.

Best Practices

Leadership: A decision to adopt an AI solution has a defined scope, owner, and resources.

- Make a **decision about whether to adopt an AI solution**. The solution should suitably address the organization's problem, mitigate potential risks, and align with the organization's capacity in the short and long term.
- Establish **scope and boundaries for the solution's deployment.**[24] This should include **expectations for responsible use of the tool** and acceptable applications of its outputs.
- Identify **funding mechanisms** in the short and long term (e.g., grants, local general funds, regional cost-sharing partnerships). Determine any constraints these mechanisms, particularly grants, will place on acquisition and sustainment options (e.g., allowable costs, award cycles, periods of performance).
- Account for changes in the organization's external context and verify the scope for the solution still complies with **legal and regulatory requirements**.[25]
- Establish a **mitigation plan for potential risks**, including protective measures for any privacy and security risks.[26]
- Assign an **individual with authority and accountability for adoption**.[27] Ensure this individual is supported by experts with appropriate domain knowledge.
- Exercise **updated AI incident response procedures** based on lessons from the Plan stage.

> "The decision to commission or deploy an AI system should be based on a contextual assessment of trustworthiness characteristics and the relative risks, impacts, costs, and benefits, and informed by a broad set of interested parties."
>
> -*National Institute of Standards & Technology*

Culture and Capacity: Staff and community members are prepared for adoption.

- Assess staffing needs including **opportunities to temporarily or permanently realign personnel** to support initial and sustained deployment.
- Develop a **role-based training plan** for early and late-stage users (e.g., data protection, output interpretation). The training plan should be aligned with planned deployment phases (e.g., initial, expanded, sustained).
- Identify required **support resources for new users** (e.g., user guides, online user communities, help desks) and determine how these resources will be provided through implementation.
- Provide **staff communications and briefings about the adoption decision**, approved use, and performance expectations of the product. Outline what staff can expect, how updates will be shared, and opportunities for training and/or participation.
- Issue **plain-language public notices** to explain why the organization is adopting the solution, what data it uses, how privacy will be protected, and how the solution will be evaluated. If appropriate, include opportunities to learn more and provide feedback.

[24] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2025.
[25] Center for Public Sector AI, 2024.
[26] Center for Public Sector AI, 2024.
[27] Digital Services Playbook.

Iterative Development: There is a plan for phased, performance-based adoption.

- Develop a phased **implementation plan** covering initial, expanded, and sustained use. This plan should include:
  - Specific **human oversight** approaches for each phase;[28]
  - An **evaluation approach** with schedule and methodology to assess the AI solution's performance during each implementation phase;
  - A **monitoring approach** for errors and biases, including feedback loops for users to report issues. This approach should be aligned with risk mitigation strategies;
  - **Cost estimates and funding sources** for each phase based on anticipated pricing structures and demand (e.g., low and high-use periods).

Agile Procurement: Procurement approaches enable performance accountability and agile development.

- Determine the **appropriate procurement strategy for the solution** (e.g., contract modification, competitive solicitation, cooperative purchasing agreement).
- Support an **agile development approach**, which may include:
  - Iterative development cycles and deliverables;[29]
  - Technical integration support required from the vendor;
  - Disclosures of product dependencies, including third-party services;
  - Ownership and security terms for data and product outputs;
  - Protections from copyright infringement, including any limits;[30]
  - Criteria distinguishing routine vendor updates from the introduction of new AI capabilities, requiring organizational approval for the latter;[31]
  - Avoidance of contract terms that create long-term dependencies or commitments; and
  - Requirements for knowledge-transfer and data access at contract end.

> "A comprehensive and well-structured iterative deployment approach … demonstrates a strong commitment to minimizing risks through gradual and controlled deployment phases, ensuring the solution is thoroughly tested and refined before full-scale implementation."
>
> *— Center for Public Sector AI*

IT and Data Maturity: IT and data infrastructure are ready for phased adoption.

- Update the **data management approach** as required based on lessons learned from the Plan stage, including:
  - Confirmation that **sustainable data** will be available, especially if data were manually acquired and/or cleaned during any assessments;
  - Confirmation that **data storage infrastructure** can handle projected requirements, including during low and high use periods; and
  - Updates to **data access and privacy rules**, including role-based controls.
- Ensure **resolution of any system gaps** discovered in the Plan stage, or narrow the scope of the AI use case to avoid reliance on system limitations that cannot be mitigated;
- Update procedures for **continuity of operations if the AI solution fails** or underlying systems go offline (e.g., manual processes, network backups). Prepare to test these procedures during initial deployment.

[28] Center for Public Sector AI, 2024.
[29] WEF, 2020; TechFAR Hub.
[30] DC Government Office of Contracting and Procurement, 2025.
[31] Pakzad, R. & Conti-Cook, C., 2025.

Watch Out

Pricing ambiguity.

Determining the full cost of an AI-enabled product can be challenging. Organizations should ask for cost information for the primary product, any additional products or services required for it to function, and the pricing structure for each component.[32] Based on these estimates, organizations should project both initial and recurring costs for deployments at scale.

Scaling challenges.

Scaling can be difficult because pilots and tests often benefit from more favorable conditions than those found in fully operational environments.[33] For example, pilots may have clean and/or synthetic data, technically experienced users, and sandbox environments with controlled security risks. An organization's decision to adopt an AI-enabled product should consider ways the pilot or test environment differed from real-world operations and address any limitations prior to or as part of implementation.



[32] Jensen et al., 2026.
[33] WHO, 2009.



Stage 3: Exercise — Initial Deployment

In this stage, an organization launches an AI solution in a real but limited setting. The product is adapted based on feedback from early users before expanding to other parts of the organization.

You are READY to EXERCISE if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Defined the scope and boundaries for use of an AI solution	• Consider not proceeding until responsible use is defined
• Identified an accountable owner and appropriate support staff or experts	• Assign an owner, as collateral duty if appropriate, and secure expertise internally or through partners
• Communicated with staff and the public about the adoption decision	• Ensure staff who will be affected by the AI solution are aware of its use
• Developed a phased adoption plan with evaluation criteria for initial, expanded, and sustained use	• For high-risk uses, require a phased adoption plan. For low-risk uses, a basic rollout plan may be sufficient
• Created a role-based training plan aligned with the phased adoption approach	• For high-risk uses, require a role-based plan. For low-risk uses, basic user training may be sufficient
• Resolved any data or IT systems limitations	• Consider not proceeding if major data or IT limitations remain
• Developed a plan to mitigate potential risks	• For high-risk uses, use governance to assign a mitigation strategy for each risk. For low-risk uses, have the accountable owner do so

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
Initial deployments have oversight and guardrails.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Early users strengthen internal support networks and training.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
Early user experiences improve an AI solution before expansion.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Vendor performance and required product updates are documented.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
System guardrails and data quality are validated.

Best Practices

Leadership: Initial deployments have appropriate oversight and guardrails.

- Validate **parameters for an initial deployment** in the AI solution's intended environment, leveraging any AI governance body or advisory group for guidance. Parameters should include:
  - Performance Criteria: How the AI solution is expected to perform and how its performance will influence post-deployment authorization to expand;
  - Conditions: Whether the deployment will occur in steady-state or operational conditions. If operational, design the assessment to evaluate routine and surge conditions;
  - Participants: Which programs, teams, and/or job functions will participate (early users should be involved in workflows the AI solution will support);
  - Prerequisites: What experience or training early users must have;
  - Duration: When the initial deployment will start and end;
  - Data: What data will be used and how;
  - Oversight: Who is responsible for overseeing the initial deployment and early users; and
  - Guardrails: What conditions may warrant suspension of the initial deployment.
- Receive **regular briefings on the status of the initial deployment**, including information about performance and early user feedback.
- Review findings at the end of the initial deployment and make **decisions about whether to refine the AI solution and expand its use, or not proceed**.

Culture and Capacity: Early users strengthen internal support networks and training.

- Consider empowering **AI champions with enhanced user roles** during the initial deployment to encourage and support other users, troubleshoot common issues, and share feedback with the implementation team.
- Make **modifications to the training plan and curriculum** based on observations and user feedback during the initial deployment.
- Provide **updates to staff and the public through the initial deployment**, including who is participating, what guardrails are in place, and what the organization is learning.

Iterative Development: Early user experiences improve an AI solution before expansion.

- Establish an **implementation team battle rhythm** for the initial deployment. This could include daily standups, regular meetings, and reporting requirements.[34]
- Conduct **evaluation and monitoring** of the initial deployment, including:
  - AI performance compared with baseline benchmark and prior assessment performance;[35]
  - Errors, inaccuracies, and/or biases observed in AI output; and
  - Occurrence of vulnerabilities identified in the risk management framework and the ability of human oversight and other relevant guardrails to mitigate these risks.
- Document **early users' experiences**, including feedback on whether the AI solution addresses the identified problem and improves their work.
- Solicit **feedback from partner organizations who may be impacted** by the AI solution if it is deployed in response and/or recovery operational environments.
- Maintain an **audit trail of the data and steps the AI solution uses** to generate outputs.
- Summarize **recommended refinements** based on findings from the initial deployment.

[34] Digital Services Playbook.
[35] NIST, 2023a.

Agile Procurement: Vendor performance and required product updates are documented.

- Assess whether the vendor fulfilled its obligations during the deployment, if applicable.
- Help the implementation team translate findings from the initial deployment into **documented requests for updates** to the vendor, if applicable.

IT and Data Maturity: System guardrails and data quality are validated.

- Prior to the start of the initial deployment, validate **system guardrails for the AI solution**, including controls embedded within the model and others that may need to be added (e.g., disallowing file uploads, prohibiting uncontrolled agents). These guardrails should be aligned with the organization's risk management framework and responsible use expectations.
- Prior to the start of the initial deployment, address any **remaining limitations in the full range of data** required by the product;[36]
- During the initial deployment, run **quality checks on the data**. Compare data the tool is using in the initial deployment with data it used during any pilots. Determine if any differences are affecting performance.

Watch Out

Repeating or amplifying errors.

AI models learn from training data to approximate the real world through computational methods.[37] If an AI model is trained on data that includes errors or biases, the AI model may repeat or amplify them in its approximations. Over time, as use of the model expands, repeated errors or biases can compound when AI analyses are used to inform decisions. Additionally, an AI model's approximations require "compression" of information.[38] This compression can reduce how well the model reflects unique conditions, such as for populations or experiences that are not well represented in underlying data. As an organization begins using an AI-enabled product in a real operational setting, it should continuously monitor for errors and biases in the model's output. If found, the organization should review the underlying data as well as the model's decision-making process, and make adjustments before proceeding with expansion.



[36] InnovateUS.
[37] Pasquinelli, M., 2019.
[38] Pasquinelli, M., 2019, p. 10.



Stage 4: Expand — Optimization

In this stage, an organization expands the use of an AI solution from an initial deployment to widespread use. Leaders build momentum by demonstrating value to users and maintain trust by acknowledging and addressing expansion challenges. Staff build confidence through training and buy-in through opportunities to improve the product.[39] The organization ensures expanded use does not overwhelm its IT or data management capacity.

You are READY to EXPAND if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Shown the AI solution performs well in a real but limited operational environment	• Consider not proceeding until the AI solution is refined and performs well in a limited, initial deployment
• Confirmed the vendor, if applicable, can meet requirements and support broader use	• Address any vendor performance gaps before proceeding with expansion
• Validated that system guardrails and oversight effectively mitigate known risks	• Adjust and retest guardrails, or consider not proceeding if major risks remain
• Addressed any data quality issues affecting the AI solution's performance	• Compare deployment data with earlier assessments to identify root causes and potential workarounds

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
Demonstrated value drives expansion of the AI solution.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
Ongoing transparency and support build staff confidence.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
The AI solution improves through monitoring and evaluation.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Vendor performance and support sustain expansion.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
Expansion does not outpace IT or data management capacity.

[39] Rogers, 2003.

Best Practices

Leadership: Demonstrated value drives expansion of the AI solution.

- Approve and monitor implementation of the organization's **expansion strategy**, with support from relevant governance bodies or advisory groups:
  - Confirm the scope and boundaries of the AI solution for the expansion stage. Reissue responsible use expectations as required;
  - Reaffirm accountability for expansion and individuals' roles and responsibilities;
  - Consider starting expansion with **"points of strength,"**[40] such as programs or locations with sufficient leadership commitment, capacity, and orientation toward innovation. Leverage these sites to demonstrate value, refine the product, and build momentum; and
  - Monitor **results against updated performance expectations** at regular intervals and adjust the expansion strategy to address any observed barriers.
- Allocate **funding and/or other resources for expansion** based on required activities and the projected cost of operating the product at greater scale.
- Champion AI-related, long-term funding priorities in **out-year budget request processes**.
- Require **legacy tools and processes** to remain operational during expansion until the AI solution is fully integrated as standard practice (see Stage 5: Integrate).

Culture and Capacity: Ongoing transparency and support build staff confidence.

- Provide staff and the public with **information about the decision to expand**. Share evidence of the product's demonstrated value; describe the expansion process, including what staff can expect; and explain how evaluation and monitoring will continue.
- Maintain **transparency with staff** about how the product performs. Show how AI is delivering value to more users and how the organization is addressing observed challenges.
- Continue **implementation of the role-based training plan**. Update it based on lessons learned during the initial deployment and include:
  - Specific guidance and **resources for managers** responsible for enabling expansion; and
  - Training for staff who use the AI solution infrequently, such as during an activation.
- Provide **just-in-time support** for new users through tools such as user guides, on-demand training, online user communities, and help desks.
- Determine **long-term ownership of training and user support** and prepare responsible teams to assume ownership.
- Continue **engagement with internal communities of interest and external peer learning networks** to share lessons learned and troubleshoot challenges.

[40] WHO, 2009.

Iterative Development: The AI solution improves through monitoring and evaluation.

- Make **updates to the AI solution**, its scope, and performance expectations based on strengths and limitations identified during the initial deployment.
- Conduct **monitoring for performance differences** between baseline, assessment, initial deployment, and expansion phases. Document post-expansion evaluation results to inform long-term performance management (e.g., updated measures, tracking approach).
- Maintain **feedback loops for users** to identify issues and suggest improvements throughout expansion and use their input to iteratively update the product as feasible.
- Ensure a **consistent process for making and tracking product changes**,[41] including related communication and training updates.

Agile Procurement: Vendor performance and support sustain expansion.

- Review **acceptance criteria**, where applicable, for each expansion increment based on initial deployment findings and formally document any necessary updates.
- Maintain **documentation of vendor performance** through expansion and confirm requirements are met before a new increment begins.
- Review **options for a long-term acquisition approach**, if not already determined.

IT and Data Maturity: Expansion does not outpace IT or data management capacity.

- Monitor the **impact of increased users and data volume** on IT infrastructure and address any capacity issues.
- Monitor **changes in how the AI uses and produces data** and adjust data management approaches as required.



Watch Out

Operational continuity.

Many AI solutions will not work without internet access and connection to a vendor's server.[42] At the same time, connectivity disruptions are common in disaster environments. In the leadership section of this stage, organizations are encouraged to maintain legacy tools and processes until the AI solution is integrated as standard practice and its reliability and fallback procedures are validated. This is particularly important when AI solutions are deployed under operational conditions where connectivity disruptions are more likely and the consequences of failure are more serious. Organizations should have clear plans and guidance for what they will do when an AI solution becomes unreliable or unavailable during operations.

Performance drift.

Drift occurs when changes in data, models, or context affect an AI solution's performance.[43] Organizations should monitor for drift by comparing performance of the solution over time, regularly revalidating performance measures, and maintaining feedback loops for users to report issues.

[41] NIST, 2023a.
[42] Jensen et al., 2026.
[43] NIST, 2023b.



Stage 5: Integrate — Standard Practice

In this stage, an AI solution becomes part of the day-to-day business of an organization. Leaders establish long-term ownership, governance, funding, and evaluation approaches. Managers align personnel to support sustained use and integrate AI literacy in routine training. The organization considers AI priorities within strategic planning and IT and data modernization efforts. Procurement approaches evolve based on vendor performance and changes in the AI landscape.

You are READY to INTEGRATE if you have:	Missing this readiness condition?
• Determined the AI solution performs well under full operational use	• Refine the AI solution, narrow its use, or consider retiring it
• Identified long-term ownership of training and user support	• Consider ways to integrate AI in existing training approaches
• Validated IT and data management capacity is sufficient for sustained use	• Consider pausing until capacity limitations are mitigated
• Planned for an acquisition approach to support sustained use	• Ask procurement officials about options for long-term use

Stage Outcomes

LEADERSHIP
The AI solution is governed and funded as an ongoing capability.

CULTURE AND CAPACITY
AI skills and knowledge are maintained and expanded.

ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT
Ongoing evaluation of the product strengthens its use.

AGILE PROCUREMENT
Acquisition approaches adjust with performance and technology.

IT AND DATA MATURITY
IT and data modernization and AI adoption are integrated.

Best Practices

Leadership: The AI solution is governed and funded as an ongoing capability.

- Assign **long-term ownership of the AI solution** to an appropriate team.
- Determine a **long-term governance approach** for the AI solution, including:
  - Whether to continue the existing process or integrate oversight in permanent structures; and
  - How changes to the model will be reviewed, communicated, and monitored over time.
- Integrate AI priorities within the organization's **strategic and annual planning processes**.
- Consider **revisions to the AI policy** and risk management approach based on lessons learned.
- Ensure **sustainment funding** is integrated in the organization's regular budget.
- Convene leaders for **regular review of the AI solution**, its performance, and user feedback.[44]

Culture and Capacity: AI skills and knowledge are maintained and expanded.

- Assess whether the organization has the **appropriate positions to sustain the AI solution** over time. Where permitted, repurpose vacant positions to address unmet staffing needs.
- Consider adding **AI-related qualifications** as requirements for relevant job types and actively recruit candidates for new or vacant positions with these qualifications.
- Integrate **AI literacy in basic training** for staff and technical AI training for appropriate roles.

Iterative Development: Ongoing evaluation of the product strengthens current and future use.

- Include **evaluation of the AI solution in routine performance management** to ensure it continues to perform.[45] Include operational and technical performance and user feedback.
- Establish a **process to regularly report errors and biases** based on ongoing human oversight.
- Document **lessons learned** to inform future AI-related projects.
- Build **consideration of AI augmentation into new programs** and initiatives from the outset.

Agile Procurement: Acquisition approaches adjust with performance and evolving technology.

- Ensure **vendor compliance with notification requirements for changes** to the AI solution and determine if modifications to its risk classification or contract are required.
- Facilitate decisions about **contract renewal or recompetition** by evaluating the AI solution's performance over time; vendor compliance with requirements; costs; and technology changes.
- Facilitate **transition and contract closeout** when applicable, including data transfer from the vendor, continuity of operations of the AI solution or planned downtime, and completion of other contractual transition and exit terms (e.g., software license rights).

IT and Data Maturity: Data and IT modernization and AI adoption are integrated.

- Align **IT and data modernization decisions** with AI principles and current and planned use.

[44] IDIA, 2021.
[45] NIST, 2023a.

Watch Out

Organizational inertia.

Once use of a technology solution becomes standard practice, it can be difficult to change. Organizations should guard against continuing to use an AI solution that deteriorates in performance or loses relevance by ensuring contracts prevent vendor lock-in, maintaining ongoing monitoring, and paying attention to changes in the AI technology landscape.

Ongoing human oversight and accountability.

AI should augment, not replace, emergency managers' judgment. As an AI solution becomes standard practice, organizations should guard against automation bias, regularly review and reaffirm human-in-the-loop approaches, and ensure final decisions continue to be made by the public officials accountable for them.



Appendices: Tools and Templates

Appendix A: Use Case Risk and Adoption Burden — Example Matrix

This matrix maps potential use cases for AI in emergency management along two dimensions: **(1) burden**, or the degree of technical requirements for adoption, on the X axis, and **(2) risk**, or how likely the use case is to cause significant harm, on the Y axis.[46] Mapping is based on the most basic application of each use case. More advanced applications, including those affecting operational decisions, may have greater burden or risk. Mitigation actions could likewise reduce the risks associated with a use case. The matrix is **intended to be illustrative, not prescriptive**. Practitioners can use this example to consider how demands and risks may influence adoption decisions.



[46] See Greenberg, J. & Anderson, L., 2026 for more on use cases. See Jensen et al., 2026 for more on adoption burden. Risk is a function of the likelihood of an unwanted outcome and the consequences if it occurs.

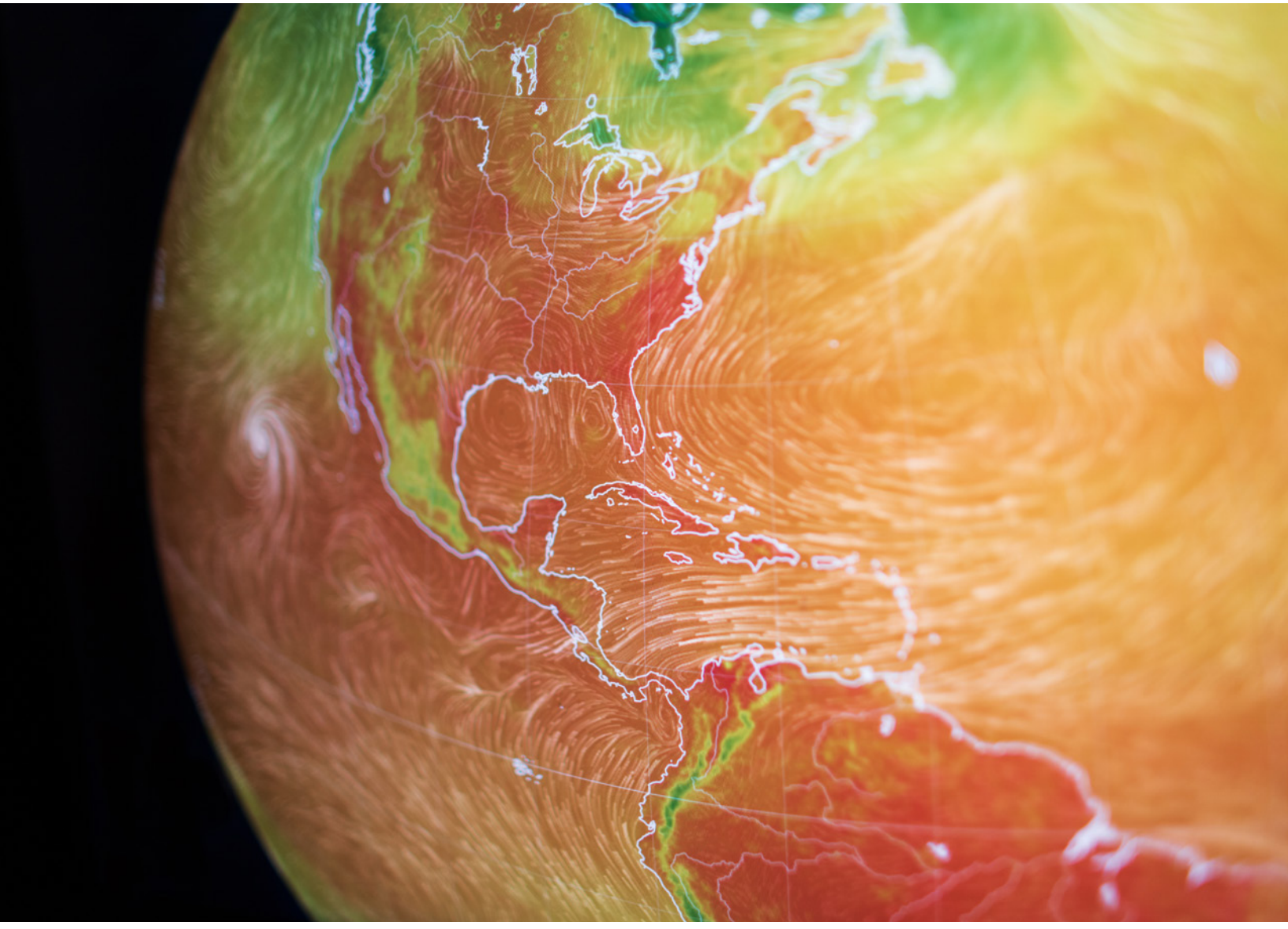
Appendix B: Data Quality Assessment Worksheet

Organizations can use this worksheet to assess data quality for a potential AI use case. Experts commonly define data quality as "fitness for use," recognizing that whether data are high quality depends on their intended use.[47] The eight dimensions of data quality in this worksheet reflect expert guidance related to data **suitability, trustworthiness,** and **usability,** including for AI. This worksheet does not include a formulaic scoring approach because every organization's needs are different. Instead, organizations should use the worksheet to identify data strengths and address areas for improvement. They should then determine whether data are "fit for use" as part of a broader assessment of benefits and risks related to the proposed AI use case.

SUITABILITY: IS THE DATA SUITABLE FOR OUR USE CASE?			
1 **Applicability** *Data are applicable to the intended use.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Are the data an appropriate indicator, or component of an indicator, for the proposed use?	◯	◯	◯
Do the data reflect populations, locations, and/or other relevant characteristics associated with the use case?	◯	◯	◯
Do the data contain the level of detail required for the intended use (e.g., is the unit of analysis appropriate)?	◯	◯	◯
2 **Completeness** *Data contain expected information with few gaps.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Does the dataset include the data fields you expect (e.g., date, incident type)?	◯	◯	◯
Are data fields sufficiently completed/populated?	◯	◯	◯
Overall Suitability Assessment ▶	◯	◯	◯
TRUSTWORTHINESS: CAN WE TRUST THE DATA AND ANALYSIS BASED ON IT?			
3 **Accuracy** *Data are correct.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Are the data mostly free of errors (e.g., duplicative or invalid entries, incorrect formulas)?	◯	◯	◯
When compared with a sample of source documents, do the data mostly include the same information?	◯	◯	◯
4 **Consistency** *Data are consistent within the dataset and across similar datasets.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Does each record have a unique identifier that remains the same over time?	◯	◯	◯
Are data labels and values formatted and named consistently?	◯	◯	◯
Is the dataset free of internal contradictions (i.e., when two values cannot be true at the same time)?[48]	◯	◯	◯
When compared with similar datasets, do the data have comparable formats and definitions?	◯	◯	◯
5 **Traceability** *Data are documented and their sources and history can be traced.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Does the dataset have an accountable owner?	◯	◯	◯
Is it clear how the dataset is produced, and is that process repeatable?	◯	◯	◯
Are original data sources identified?	◯	◯	◯
Does the dataset include sufficient metadata, and is it machine-readable?	◯	◯	◯
Does the dataset include a data dictionary or other definitions of its fields?	◯	◯	◯
Overall Trustworthiness Assessment ▶	◯	◯	◯

[47] This worksheet is based on guidance from Diamond, I., Chisholm, A., 2020; GAO, 2019; Iwig et al., 2013; ESIP, 2022; and NIST, 2023a.
[48] For example, a dataset that shows a parent born in 1995 and their child born in 1992.

USABILITY: CAN WE ACCESS AND TRANSMIT THE DATA WHEN WE NEED IT?			
6 **Timeliness** *Data reflect the relevant time period and are up to date.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Do the data include information for the time period they are intended to represent?	◯	◯	◯
Are the data current? Are the data regularly updated?	◯	◯	◯
7 **Sensitivity** *Data containing sensitive information are protected.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Can sensitive information be appropriately protected (e.g., removed or anonymized)?	◯	◯	◯
Can secure access to the full dataset be made available for authorized users?	◯	◯	◯
8 **Format** *Data can be transmitted.*	**Yes**	**Partially**	**No**
Is the dataset stored in a file format appropriate for its intended use?	◯	◯	◯
Overall Usability Assessment ▶	◯	◯	◯



Appendix C: Questions for Vendors

This tool includes questions an organization can ask vendors to better understand an AI solution. It is adapted from RAND's **AI and the Future of Emergency Management** report.[49] Organizations can further adapt this tool for their specific priorities and needs. For example, users may decide to add a scorecard to weigh each of the categories and establish go/no-go criteria.

1	**Type and Scope**
What emergency management functions does the product support (e.g., situational awareness, operational coordination, planning)?	
What types of AI does this product use? If more than one, which type of AI is responsible for which function?	
Which phases of the disaster lifecycle does the product support (preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation)?	
Is the product for steady-state, operations, or both? Can the product scale with incident size and complexity?	
Is the product hazard-specific or hazard-agnostic?	
How configurable is the system to local hazards, jurisdictions, and operational structures?	
2	**Performance**
What decisions does this product improve or inform?	
What measurable outcomes have been demonstrated in emergency management or related domains?	
What real-world deployments exist in comparable jurisdictions or incidents?	
Can you provide documented use cases with outcomes (e.g., time saved, decisions improved)?	
How long has the product been in operational use?	
How intuitive is the interface for nontechnical users under time pressure?	
How explainable are outputs and recommendations?	
How does the product perform under degraded, incomplete, or conflicting data conditions?	
How is output correctness evaluated before release and ongoing? What test sets are used, how does the product perform, who reviews the tests, and what type of failures have been documented?	
What is the system's performance under high-demand, incident conditions (e.g., latency, uptime, load)?	
What is the error profile (e.g., false positives or negatives), and how is it measured?	
Who are reference customers we can speak with?	
3	**Interdependencies**
What assumptions does the product make about the operating environment (e.g., data availability, staffing)?	
Does effective use require stacking with additional products (e.g., GIS, data platforms)?	
What dependencies exist on other platforms or data providers?	
Who developed the underlying model(s)? If any are licensed or accessed through a third party, which providers are involved? When was the model last updated? How are version changes communicated?	
4	**IT Requirements**
What integration work is required with existing systems (e.g., WebEOC, CAD, GIS, alerting)?	
What cybersecurity standards/certifications are met?	
How are access controls, audit logs, and data protections managed?	

[49] Jensen et al., 2026. See Appendix I, "Questions for Product Technology Companies: A Checklist for Practitioners."

5	Data Requirements
What data are collected, stored, and transmitted, and where are they hosted?	
Is jurisdictional data used to train or improve the vendor's models?	
Are the vendor's commitments on training data, retention, and data residency binding on any upstream model providers or subprocessors? Where in the contract is this established?	
Can customer content, outputs, embeddings, or usage data be shared with other customers, whether by default, by opt in, or in anonymized form? If yes, what is shared and what controls do customers have?	
If a customer withdraws content from a shared or pooled feature, what is removed, when, and what happens to outputs other customers have already generated (e.g., saved summaries, exported reports)?	

6	Support Requirements
What staffing, training, and onboarding are required? What is available from your company?	
What internal roles (e.g., IT, GIS) are required?	
What change management challenges have prior users encountered?	
Can users modify workflows, thresholds, or outputs without vendor intervention?	
What are the fallback procedures if the system fails or produces bad outputs?	
What level of operational support is available (e.g., 24/7, surge support, business hours)?	
What is the vendor's track record for updates, maintenance, and support?	
What standards govern the vendor's responsible AI practices (e.g., NIST's AI Risk Management Framework, ISO/IEC 42001, sector-specific federal guidance)? Provide an example of a feature, capability, or use case the vendor has chosen not to support and the reasoning behind that decision.	

7	Procurement and Pricing Approach
What procurement models are available (e.g., license, subscription, usage-based, enterprise agreement)?	
What procurement pathway has been used by other public-sector customers?	
How long does it typically take from procurement to operational use?	
What governmental policies or guidance have affected procurement or implementation among users?	
What is the total cost of ownership over three to five years (e.g., integration, data, sustainment, upgrades)?	
Are there proprietary components that create vendor lock-in or limit interoperability?	
What are the data ownership, portability, and exit provisions if the contract ends?	
How are updates, versioning, and feature changes handled over time?	
For each major commitment made during the sales process (e.g., training data use, security posture, accuracy, support availability), where is that commitment documented? Identify specific clauses.	
How are middle-term changes to the underlying AI model, upstream providers, or core product behavior governed contractually? What notice is required, what customer rights are triggered (e.g., review, opt out, termination), and what happens to data residency or processing terms if the underlying provider changes?	
What is the vendor's liability framework, specifically for AI-generated errors that cause operational consequences (e.g., a flawed recommendation acted on during an incident)? What is the liability cap, what carve-outs apply, and what contractual language preserves practitioner judgment as decision of record?	
What legal or liability considerations have arisen in past uses?	

Appendix D: Low-Risk Use Case Tear Sheet

The purpose of this tear sheet is to provide organizations with an abbreviated checklist of critical actions for low-risk AI use cases. Organizations should use this tear sheet only after they have established a risk management framework and used it to classify a use case as low-risk. "Low risk" means a low likelihood of harm and a low potential for significant consequences.

STAGE 1: PLAN

- Determine the use case complies with law, regulation, and policy
- Determine the use case is low risk
- Identify a specific problem an AI solution will address
- Document what an AI solution will do in associated workflows
- Solicit feedback from leaders, staff, and partners affected by the workflow
- Determine human oversight for AI-generated outputs
- Establish a performance measure for improvement and pre-AI baseline
- Document evidence an AI solution works in analogous contexts (e.g., peer jurisdiction feedback, small pilot)
- Confirm the organization has data that are fit for use
- Confirm IT infrastructure can support the use case
- Determine an acquisition pathway that the organization can navigate
- Document short- and long-term costs and sources of funding (if applicable)
- Establish AI incident response procedures

STAGE 2: COMMIT

- Decide to adopt a specific AI solution at the appropriate level of authority based on risk
- Identify an accountable official to oversee adoption
- Align funding (if applicable)
- Validate how data will be accessed, used, and stored
- Confirm the AI solution generates an appropriate audit trail
- Develop a plan to mitigate any potential risks, including what happens if the tool fails or goes offline
- Establish and communicate expectations for responsible use
- Develop a basic training plan for staff who will use the AI solution
- Develop a basic rollout plan for who will use the tool and when
- Establish an evaluation and monitoring approach for the rollout, including user feedback loops
- Complete required IT integration (if applicable)
- Obtain the AI solution through an acquisition approach that avoids long-term vendor lock-in and dependencies

STAGE 3: EXERCISE

- Conduct an initial deployment of the AI solution with a small group of users in the intended environment
- Consider including AI champions in the initial deployment
- Assess how the AI solution performs against baseline measures
- Document any errors or biases
- Address any data quality issues that arise through the exercise or test
- Validate system guardrails work as intended (if applicable)
- Determine whether the AI solution needs refinement before expanding to other users

STAGE 4: EXPAND

- Provide basic training for the full set of users expected to use the AI solution
- Document user feedback
- Monitor performance of the solution and compare outcomes with pre-AI benchmarks and initial deployment
- Ensure a consistent process for making and tracking updates to the AI solution as use expands
- Validate IT and data management capacity is sufficient for sustained use
- Document vendor performance (if applicable)
- Confirm the acquisition approach can support sustained use (if applicable)

STAGE 5: INTEGRATE

- Determine long-term ownership and funding (if applicable) for the AI solution
- Designate a long-term owner for training and user support
- Determine how changes will be reviewed, communicated, and monitored over time
- Ensure vendor compliance with notification requirements for changes
- Integrate evaluation of the AI solution in routine performance management activities
- Document lessons learned to inform AI policy changes and/or future AI-related projects
- Pay attention to changes in the AI technology landscape and evaluate requirements for vendor contract renewal or recompetition (if applicable)
- Ensure data transfer and continuity of operation at contract closeout (if applicable)

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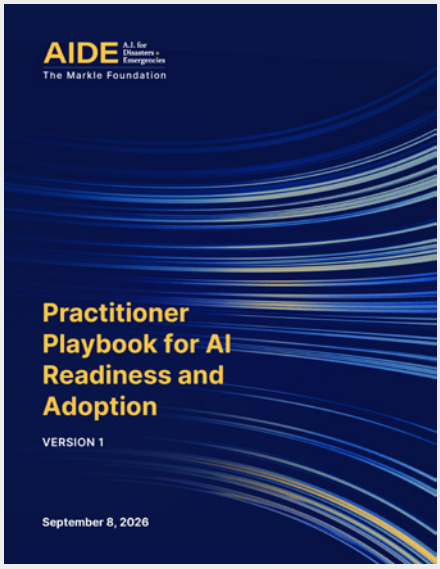
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AIDE A.I. for Disasters + Emergencies
The Markle Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Practitioner Playbook for AI Readiness and Adoption

AIDE Initiative | The Markle Foundation



AIDE seeks to reduce barriers to AI adoption through practical resources that help emergency managers use AI responsibly.

The Practitioner Playbook offers a framework and supporting tools to help organizations build readiness for and adopt AI solutions that meet their needs, keep humans in the loop, and have appropriate guardrails.

Dear User: Why This Playbook Is for You

This Playbook is intended as a straightforward, accessible "how to" guide to enable emergency managers to use AI responsibly. It also addresses barriers to adoption and flags key issues for governance, training, procurement, privacy, and data readiness.

Importantly, the Playbook stresses the role of humans in the loop who use their judgment, experience, and expertise to ensure thoughtful decision-making and responsible use of AI.

Tailored for Emergency Managers

Rooted in Leading Guidance

Designed for Easy Use

Prepared to Evolve

Organizations already using AI and those who haven't started can benefit from the Playbook.

The Playbook includes two tracks that any organization can use, regardless of current AI use.

Readiness Track

Best practices to do once and revisit periodically.

All organizations can use this track to ensure a strong foundation for AI use.

Use Case Track

Best practices for adopting a specific AI solution.

Organizations can use this track for each AI use case they want to consider.

The Playbook's best practices foster the conditions that support responsible AI adoption.

The AIDE Initiative's **previous research** demonstrates five organizational conditions matter most.

Leadership

Leaders assume responsibility for AI, establish governance, and set guardrails.

Culture and Capacity

Staff build awareness, literacy, and confidence.

Iterative Development

Staff believe AI can solve a problem based on demonstrated performance.

Agile Procurement

Acquisition approaches adapt and preserve organizational flexibility.

IT and Data Maturity

IT and data infrastructure are ready for phased adoption and long-term use.

AI Adoption Tracks and Stages

The Playbook's recommendations are organized by stages within each track. Actions in earlier stages build capacity for those that follow.

Readiness Track

Ensure a strong foundation for AI use.

▶ Readiness foundations are periodically revisited.

STAGE 1 ▶ PREPARE	Understand current AI use, improve capacity for responsible decisions about AI, and establish guardrails.
STAGE 2 ▶ SCAN	Identify promising AI use cases, understand benefits and risks, and build staff literacy.

Use Case Track

Adopt a specific AI solution responsibly.

▶ Actions in each stage may be adjusted based on the scope and risk of the use case.

STAGE 1 ▶ PLAN	Evaluate an AI solution prior to adopting it, including a self-assessment for use case readiness.
STAGE 2 ▶ COMMIT	Commit to a specific AI solution. Establish ownership, align resources, and define responsible use.
STAGE 3 ▶ EXERCISE	Evaluate and refine an AI solution in a limited, real operational environment before expanding use.
STAGE 4 ▶ EXPAND	Expand use based on demonstrated value without overwhelming personnel, data, and IT capacity.
STAGE 5 ▶ INTEGRATE	Integrate an AI solution as standard practice. Ongoing evaluation strengthens current and future AI use.

Tools and Resources

The Playbook's appendices include additional tools and resources for practitioners.

Use Case Risk and Adoption Burden Matrix
An example of how to compare use cases

Data Quality Assessment Worksheet
A tool to assess data against quality indicators

Questions for Vendors
A list of important questions to ask

Low-Risk Use Case Tear Sheet
A checklist of essential actions