



AI-AUGMENTED OPERATIONS:

Enhancing Productivity for Elected Officials

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ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Whether at the global, federal, state, or local level, elected officials stand to benefit from integrating new tools and innovative approaches into their operations to maximize efficiency and impact in serving constituents.

From streamlining team management to information intake, community engagement to correspondence upkeep, AI-powered emerging technologies can be responsibly and transparently used to streamline workflows for those in elected office and their support staff as well.

This guide outlines opportunities for AI-tool integration across multiple workflows common to elected representatives at all levels and highlights best practices and common pitfalls.

Approach and Mindset

With the release of publicly accessible chat-based generative AI (GenAI) large language models (LLMs), such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, and Google's Gemini, the barriers to use of AI-powered technologies have greatly decreased. These intuitive, no-speciality-training-needed tools can be used by elected officials and staff of all ages and technological skill level.

By experimenting with these new tools, those in government can adapt their workflows at a pace in line with the private sector, helping realize public sector time savings and efficiencies more quickly than in the past.

However, although GenAI platforms are approachable, they are not infallible. As an emerging and evolving technology that is "learning" overtime, human users need to remain alert to the limitations of these tools and adjust for their weaknesses.

Treat GenAI tools as you would an intern on their first day.

Approach using these platforms with the same level of trust and confidence as you would an intern on their first day of work. They can be:

- » **Helpful in beginning a task** or working on one in the background, but should never be responsible for a task from beginning to end.
- » **Prone to make mistakes** due to lack of specific experience or information. All work should be thoroughly reviewed, not only to ensure it is factually correct, but that the content aligns with your views, goals, tone, etc.
- » **Eager to please** – sometimes to the point of overconfident – requiring diligence in reviewing their claims to ensure validity.
- » **Unique in their personalities.** No two GenAI platforms are built the same. Each is trained on different data and programmed to interact with their user in slightly different

Best Practices When Drafting a Prompt

◇ BE INFORMED

Know your institution's guidance and restrictions for the internal use of GenAI technologies on official devices. Many legislatures have established guidelines for what platforms are allowed to be used on official devices and some have specified what use cases are acceptable. Ensure you and your team are up to date with the rules that apply to your chamber and office.

◇ BE SPECIFIC

The more tailored the prompt, the more helpful the response.

Ex: Instead of asking "Tell me about ideas for a new park" you might ask, "What are some features to include in a community park for young families in [X city] or in a town of [Y] population in a dry, temperate climate? Please include ideas that take into account accessibility, safety, and lines of visibility." Recent versions of these tools allow you to upload images such as maps, sketches, or photographs, which you can ask the LLM to take into account in its answer.

◇ AVOID USE OF CONFIDENTIAL OR PERSONAL IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION (PII)

Assume that all information input into a commercial LLM can be made public or used to train the underlying model. When crafting a prompt, don't use names, addresses, personal information, or any other information that is not already publicly accessible. It should be noted that some paid versions of commercially available models allow users to select privacy settings so that information entered into prompts is not used to train the underlying model, helping to minimize the risks present.

Ex: Rather than using the prompt "please draft an email to Rep. Sally Smith from Georgia's 5th district asking for her attendance at our private working group meeting to take place on October 20th focused on rezoning downtown Atlanta. Please include my contact information. Phone number (123) 456-7890" one might prompt, "please draft an email invitation for a state representative to participate in a working group on zoning that is to take place next month." This draft can then be used as a template to customize.

◇ PROVIDE CONTEXT

If your question relates to a particular situation or project, give a brief background. Additionally, provide context regarding your desired approach to the item being drafted.

Ex: Instead of asking "Help me draft remarks for a community BBQ," you might ask, "Please help draft welcoming remarks to be given by a state representative for a summer BBQ community event that is celebrating the ribbon cutting of a new park. The park is unique in its designs for ADA accessibility and early childhood mobility development. Please have the tone be motivational and community-focused, and the language be suitable for a mix of age groups."

◇ PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF AN INTENDED FORMAT

If you have a specific format or style in mind for the product that you're having the platform assist with doing the initial draft of, provide the model with an example. This can save time in reformatting the generated content.

Ex: If utilizing a model to help craft an initial draft of a policy memo, provide it with your ideal template for the memo and ask it to build the new memo off of this format.

◇ ITERATE AND REFINE

If the initial response doesn't meet your needs, tell it to try again.

Ex: Some GenAI models seem to limit the creation of a list to ten items, even if the list should be longer. Ask follow-up questions to ensure that the answer that has been generated truly meets the intent of the question/prompt that was asked.

Best Practices When Using a Generated Response

◇ REVIEW AND VERIFY

Always review any GenAI generated response for accuracy and relevance. Cross-check facts with reliable sources, double check links, and verify that references made are accurate.

◇ CONTEXTUALIZE

Consider how the drafted response fits your specific situation, needs, voice, etc. Consider all generated content to be a first draft that will require review and customization.

◇ SEEK MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

For complex or critical topics, consider seeking additional opinions or information from other sources. This can provide a more well-rounded view and help you make more informed decisions. As noted above, approach the information provided by a GenAI model to be equivalent with that provided by an intern on their first day.

Potential Use Cases

The following are potential use cases to be explored by elected officials and staff to maximize time and efficiency.

◇ HOW AI CAN HELP MANAGE AN INBOX

- » **Summarize Key Information:** AI can assist in summarizing long emails or threads to quickly highlight the main points, making it easier to address urgent or important issues.
- » **Drafting Responses:** AI can assist in drafting initial emails or responses.

◇ HOW AI CAN HELP IN MANAGING INFORMATION INTAKE:

- » **Summarizing Legislative Information:** AI can summarize lengthy bills, legislative documents, official reports, etc., providing quick insights and making it easier to grasp key points.

Reminder: Don't input legislative drafts. It is a best practice to only input information that is publicly accessible.

- » **Initial Policy Issue Briefs:** AI can be used to draft initial issue briefs on specific policy topics, summarizing key points, arguments, and counterarguments. This use case is particularly effective when the AI model is supplied with specific resources as part of the prompt to go off of when creating the brief.
- » **Note Taking, Meeting Transcription:** With participants' approval, AI-tools, such as Otter or Zoom transcripts, can auto-transcribe meetings. Those notes can be further summarized into key meeting takeaways, action items, etc.
- » **Question Drafting for Hearings:** AI is an excellent resource for brainstorming. An individual can utilize a model to explore potential questions for witnesses during hearings, roundtables, or public forums.
- » **Legislative Code Clean Up:** AI can be utilized to review large amounts of information to highlight duplicity, contradiction, or ambiguity. An emerging use case on the state level is utilizing AI to assist lawmakers in navigating existing law and regulatory code to identify opportunities to minimize unnecessary regulatory burden or modernize rules to meet modern industry best practices.

◇ HOW AI CAN HELP IN MANAGING CONSTITUENT ENGAGEMENT:

- » **Newsletters:** AI can save time by assisting in drafting engaging newsletter content to highlight recent legislative work, upcoming votes, and local initiatives.
- » **Speech Writing, Event Scripts:** To expedite the process of getting initial thoughts on paper, AI can assist in drafting speeches, talking points, and remarks for public appearances or legislative debates. All content should be considered a first draft and reviewed to ensure alignment with policy positions and messaging.
- » **Press Releases, Crisis Communication:** AI can be used to generate drafts of press releases for media outreach, focusing on key achievements or responses to current events. Similarly, during times calling for rapid response, GenAI models can help save vital time in crafting initial drafts to help respond to sudden influxes of mail concerning a pressing issue.
- » **Event Ideas:** Models can assist in brainstorming new, creative approaches and branding for engaging events with constituents and various communities.
- » **Survey Creation:** Often considered a luxury exercise if one has the bandwidth to spare, AI can streamline workflows around creation of constituent surveys to gather feedback on recent interactions and/or opinions on upcoming legislation and local issues. Post-survey, AI can be used to help summarize constituent responses to identify trends, themes, and main takeaways.

Conclusion

The complexity and diversity of workflows managed by elected officials at all levels of government often go underappreciated. Many positions come without staff support or modern tools to navigate the demanding pace and wide range of responsibilities elected officials must address. With the emergence of GenAI platforms, particularly of large language models which present individuals with an intuitive and approachable user experience, elected officials and their staff stand to benefit from exploring and integrating time-saving and efficiency-boosting use cases. With proper caution and consideration of the limitations of AI-generated content, GenAI models can be a new tool utilized across all levels of government to improve the workflows of those elected to office as well as the service and customer experience of constituents served by them.

About POPVOX Foundation

POPVOX Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to inform and empower people and make government work better for everyone. POPVOX Foundation is focused on ensuring that democratic institutions are equipped to address the “pacing problem” — the gap between emerging technologies and governance.

Learn more at popvox.org/ai.