



# Ohio's Blueprint for Empowering Statewide AI Innovation

**State:** Ohio

**Agency:** Ohio Department of Administrative Services

**Award Category:** Artificial Intelligence

**Project Title:** Ohio's Blueprint for Empowering Statewide AI Innovation

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Ohio's Blueprint for Empowering Statewide AI Innovation

Ohio's history is rooted in innovation. From the light bulb to the airplane, Ohioans are proven inventors, designers, and problem solvers. Ohio is known for pioneering cutting-edge technology, and right now the state is focused on leveraging the power of artificial intelligence (AI) to deliver services in new ways.



Ohio was an early adopter of machine learning, natural language processing, virtual assistants, and chatbots. InnovateOhio's Common Sense Initiative (CSI) leveraged an AI tool, RegExplorer, to assess the regulatory landscape, to identify and amend or rescind outdated rules in Ohio Administrative Code; the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) InnovateOhio Platform (IOP) launched an account recovery chatbot to provide users an on-demand support to retrieve usernames and passwords; the IOP implemented an Ohio Assistant Chatbot to assist Ohioans with common governmental tasks from the Ohio.gov web page; and the DAS Ohio Benefits Program partnered with other state agencies to implement a family of bots to improve efficiency for critical programs. These are just a few examples of how the state has leveraged AI to better serve Ohioans.

As AI technology advanced, the DeWine Administration strengthened its commitment to realizing the benefits for state government and Ohioans. In May of 2023, an AI initiative was formally launched to help ensure Ohio's blueprint for empowering AI innovation employed a governance framework sufficient to address the risks associated with the technologies, including concerns about privacy, fairness, individual agency, and the nature and role of human reasoning.

The results have been impressive. The administration and the state's AI Council deployed a statewide AI policy and supporting toolkit that set the foundation for responsible AI governance. A framework is in place that is flexible enough to fuel innovation, but solid enough to ensure that AI solutions are governed by AI principles. The state's federated approach enables agency adoption of emerging technologies, and the AI toolkit helps to operationalize the policy and was a key factor in assisting agency implementations.

The State of Ohio is also supporting AI initiatives outside of traditional state government boundaries, releasing an AI toolkit for the state's K-12 schools to advance AI literacy and promote privacy, data security, and ethics.

**The proof is in the numbers.** Since the launch of the AI initiative, the AI Council has approved over 100 generative AI use cases and agencies have reported that 33 of those are already in use, one is ready for production, six are under development, and 15 are in the proof-of-concept phase. Therefore, **approximately 33% of the use cases are already yielding results for state agencies.**

While the foundation is set, plans for expansion continue. The possibilities are endless, and the structure is in place to leverage AI technologies for the good of Ohioans. Future focus areas will include improving access to critical state services for all users through translation services and technologies that improve accessibility for the disabled. The AI initiative is committed to honoring Ohio's legacy of innovation.



## The opportunity

The State of Ohio has a history rooted in innovation and the DeWine-Tressel administration recognizes that continuing this tradition requires the exploration and adoption of emerging technologies. Early on, the administration recognized the tremendous potential offered by artificial intelligence (AI), but also understood the importance of a strategic approach. Evaluation and implementation of a technology that offers so much transformative potential for state service delivery and operations is critical when it can also introduce a significant degree of risk from an ethical, data security and privacy, and transparency perspective. Therefore, the Governor's Office and DAS launched an initiative to design a blueprint for State of Ohio AI adoption.

## Why does it matter?

AI technology is ever-expanding and evolving. While Ohio was an early adopter of machine learning, natural language processing, virtual assistants, and chatbots, it was not as experienced in the use of generative AI technologies and AI agents. However, state agencies understood that the capabilities offered by generative AI technologies could transform their ability to serve Ohioans, streamline operations, and allow their employees to more easily gather critical information while enabling them to focus on more creative and strategic endeavors. With seven generative AI use cases that will improve services to the disabled already in production, the technology can also increase access to state services for all Ohioans.

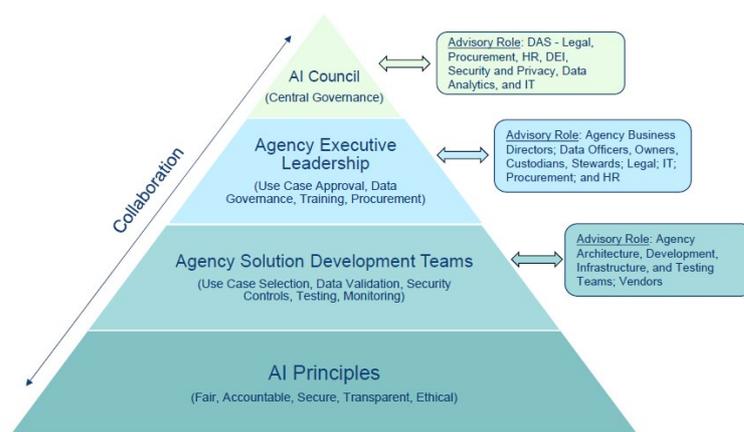
To further explore the use of AI, the DeWine administration convened a special interest group to examine the possibilities for Ohio. This group was instrumental in helping to develop the structure and framework for the use of generative AI in the state.

## What makes it different?

The State of Ohio has developed a thorough, yet flexible, governance framework that facilitates the adoption of AI technologies while ensuring the appropriate level of oversight. It is a delicate balance that is deliberately maintained by Ohio's AI subject matter experts. With the current structure, AI innovation starts at the source: the agencies responsible for delivering critical services to Ohioans. This federated approach to governance enables agency adoption of emerging technologies to improve services to those most in need, such as benefits recipients, incarcerated youth or adults, and individuals with accessibility needs.

- The core or **foundation of the framework** are the **AI Principles** (fair, accountable, secure, transparent, and ethical), which inform and guide State of Ohio AI solution development efforts at all levels.
- **Agency solution development teams** are responsible for selecting AI use cases and obtaining approval for the use case and data sources from agency executives.
- **Agency executive leadership teams** are required to approve all generative AI use cases, along with the supporting data governance requirements.
- **The AI Council** provides the central governance for the development and use of generative AI solutions.

## State of Ohio AI Governance Framework



## What makes it universal?

As the second item in NASCIO's 2025 State CIO Top Ten Priorities, AI is an area of focus for not only state governments, but the federal government and around the world. The State of Ohio participates in national peer groups to help inform its own state strategy, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify opportunities for use cases, training, and workforce development. The state has hosted several workshops and training days for state employees with Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, UiPath, and Salesforce.

The state also closely monitors activities and policies at the federal level and conducts extensive research, partnering with industry experts and suppliers to explore the capabilities of AI and the essential guardrails for responsible development.

# IMPLEMENTATION

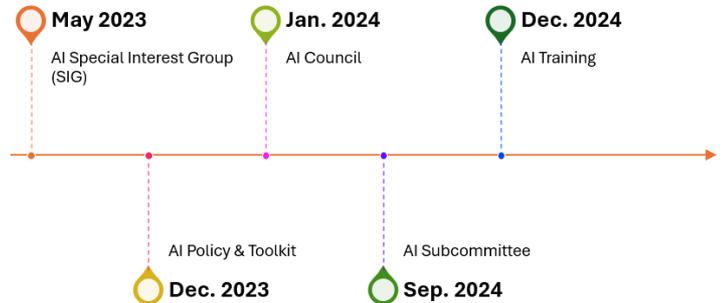


## What was the roadmap and who was involved?

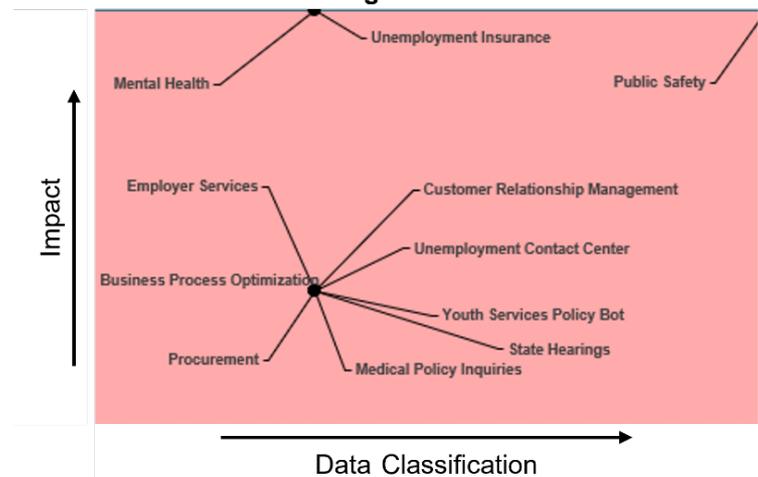
There are five main milestones in Ohio's blueprint for successful statewide AI implementations, including:

- **Milestone one:** The **launch of an AI SIG** to examine the possibilities for Ohio.
- **Milestone two:** The **publication of an AI Policy and toolkit** that provides a formalized governance framework for statewide solution planning, implementation, procurement, data, security, and privacy. The supporting toolkit includes a defined AI governance framework, frequently asked questions, functional operations chart, use case submission template, types of AI comparison criteria, and an AI procurement checklist.
- **Milestone three:** The **AI Council** was formed to oversee and guide the use of generative AI technologies statewide. The use case evaluation process is rigorous and includes the assessment of ethical, legal, data, and security implications. The approved use cases include pre-approved AI technologies. To enable AI adoption in the state, the AI Council seeks opportunities to pre-approve software as a service and commercial-off-the-shelf solutions for statewide use. Prior to pre-approval, a technical and supplier risk assessment is conducted to confirm the feasibility of permitting statewide implementation.
- **Milestone four:** The **AI Council Subcommittee** was created to provide minimum viable governance and is comprised of cloud, data governance, enterprise architecture, policy, privacy, solution development, security, and privacy subject matter experts. Primarily, the subcommittee conducts technical reviews of complex, high-risk use cases and formulates production readiness recommendations for the AI Council. Use cases are evaluated to see if they qualify for subcommittee review using a formalized process. The use cases are mapped into a four quadrant heatmap (refer to the image for an example of the highest-level quadrant).
- **Milestone five:** **DAS** is also **focused on AI Training**, working with InnovateUS to customize generative AI training for delivery to state employees and contractors. The training is mandatory for agencies that are using generative AI technologies. DAS also developed two accompanying training environments (Anthropic Claude and Azure OpenAI), which allow those who take the course to complete multiple hands-on exercises in a secure location.
- **AI Governance Support Team:** There are three primary governance pillars for AI in Ohio: AI Council, AI Council Subcommittee, and AI Governance Support Team. The multifunctional DAS support team is in place to support the activities of the AI Council and the AI Council Subcommittee. The team also coordinates with data, cloud, training, security/privacy, legal, and procurement resources to develop and refine governance processes and toolkit items as well as to promote AI literacy. The team works to address state agency questions and use case development assistance requests and coordinates closely with the Ohio Office of Budget and Management Office of Internal Audit (OBM OIA).

## State of Ohio's AI Journey



## Qualifier Heatmap - Moderate/High Impact & Moderate/High Data Classification

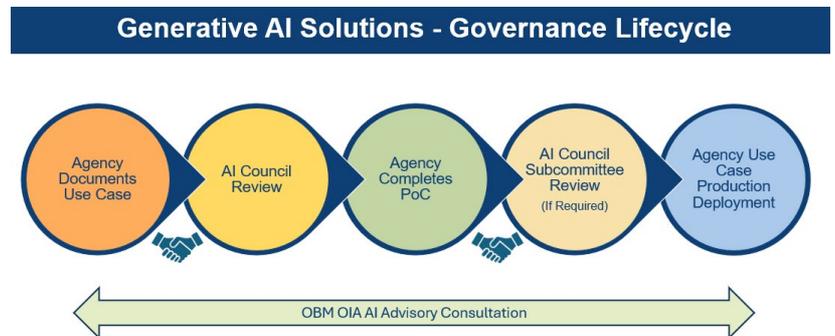


## How did Ohio do it?

**Flexible and comprehensive governance:** The state's approach to AI governance incorporates collaboration between all the necessary functional areas into the solution development lifecycle at the appropriate points in time. The state requires additional rigor for those use cases that include generative AI and AI agents:

- **Traditional AI:** To implement traditional AI use cases, agencies must align with the policy requirements outlined in Ohio Administrative Policy IT-17 Use of Artificial Intelligence in State of Ohio Solutions and they must complete a procurement checklist in advance of any purchase. The checklist addresses data, security, and privacy governance.
- **Generative AI:** In addition to complying with Ohio Administrative Policy IT-17 and completing procurement checklists for approved uses cases, state agencies must follow the generative AI governance lifecycle outlined in the figure below. Aside from identifying possible use cases, agencies are also required to proactively review statewide services to determine where AI capabilities are being embedded and submit use case requests to the AI Council, if needed.

If a use case meets one or more of the pre-defined determination criteria (data classification, externally facing, impact of decisions made from the output, and impact to critical state functions) it must undergo an assessment by the AI Council Subcommittee prior to being approved for production. The evaluation includes a risk assessment as well as questions on policy-governance and architecture development. Agency project teams are also required to give a solution demonstration to the subcommittee and provide any relevant testing results. To monitor the progress of approved generative AI use cases, agencies are required to provide quarterly status updates. The subcommittee meets to review the inventory on a quarterly basis to ensure the higher risk use cases are thoroughly evaluated prior to production release.



In addition, DAS has partnered with OBM OIA to create an advisory consultation for state agencies using AI. The OBM OIA team conducts a thorough evaluation of agency AI programs to ensure they are aligned with statewide policy requirements and responsible AI practices. DAS meets regularly with the OBM OIA team to share agency use case information and updates on AI governance.

- **Statewide inventory:** DAS maintains a statewide central repository to track approved generative AI use cases and technologies and routinely shares it with state agencies through multiple channels. This provides an important tool for initiating and informing the exchange and sharing of ideas, knowledge, and expertise among state agencies. Traditional AI products and solutions that are routed through DAS procurement office are maintained within the statewide inventory. As part of the procurement governance process, agency data and security reviews are conducted, and agency leadership approves the solutions.



**AI roadmaps:** The DAS OIT IT Strategic Investment and Architecture group reviews supplier product roadmaps to align products with defined AI capabilities. This helps to inform a future roadmap for AI governance and development in the state.

**Supplier partnerships and assessments:** The state requires that suppliers complete an AI assessment for any generative AI solution, or suite of solutions, that are present within a statewide contract. The supplier’s responsible AI practices and the solution’s generative AI capabilities are evaluated. Any future amendments to a statewide contract require an updated assessment.



**Opportunities for experimentation:** DAS worked with Microsoft, AWS, and Google to launch sandbox environments for agency experimentation and learning. This lowered the barrier for entry for state agencies, which was a key factor in encouraging and facilitating AI adoption. The sandboxes are designed to ensure state data is not ingested into the model for training. DAS is continuing to monitor agency usage of the sandbox environments and evolving them with additional products based on agency needs.

When an AI solution is identified to have statewide benefits, the AI Council works with subject matter experts to define the terms for statewide engagement. For example, DAS OIT is making M365 Copilot available statewide as long as certain security, data classification, sensitivity labeling, licensing, and terms of use prerequisites are met by each agency.

**AI beyond the boundaries of state government:** The Governor's Office led AI education and innovation efforts throughout Ohio. Through these sessions, a need for guidance for policymakers, teachers, and parents in Ohio's K-12 education system was identified and an AI Toolkit was launched.

In the spring of 2025, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce also hosted a series of Ohio AI Summits throughout Ohio in partnership with DAS, aiEDU, and the Ohio Educational Service Center Association. The summits explored AI's impact on teaching, learning, and workforce readiness.

# IMPACT



## What did the project make better?

State agencies are finding innovative ways to assist their staff with operational activities as well as identifying ways to better serve their internal and external customers. Highlighted below are just a few of the generative AI use cases that state agencies have placed into production over the last few months.



Assisting youth offender parole officers with documentation to improve customer service and reduce workload.



Detecting unemployment claims that are most likely to be fraudulent and quickly inform investigative efforts.



Enhancing security operations by providing intelligent threat detection, automated analysis, and rapid incident response.



Implementing translation services to make content accessible to all necessary audiences.

Automating the unemployment claims application process to provide enhanced self-service capabilities.

Ensuring staff can easily understand significant volumes of policy documentation through summarization and chat inquiry.

Easily and efficiently developing podcasts with improved accessibility features for all listeners.

Quickly analyzing data to give users critical decision-making information at their fingertips.

## How do you know?

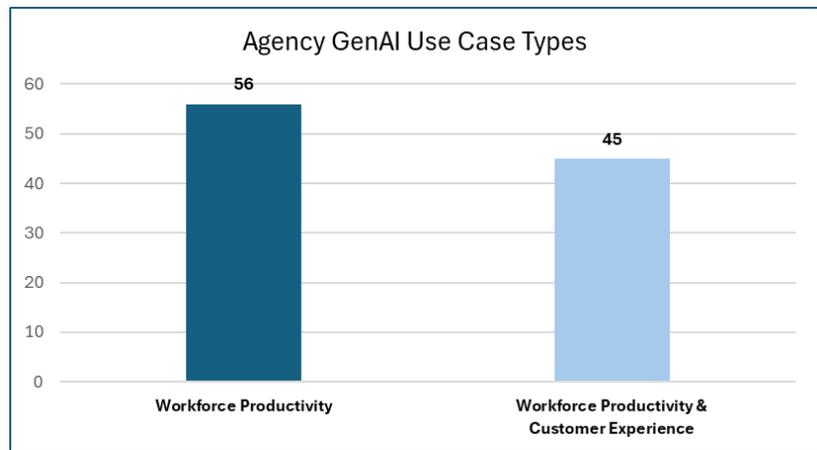
**The proof is in the numbers.** Since the launch of the AI initiative, the AI Council has approved over 100 use cases and agencies have reported that 33 of those are already in use, one is ready for production, six are under development, and 15 are in the proof-of-concept phase. Therefore, **approximately 33% of the use cases are already yielding results for state agencies.**

General Use Cases	Total	General Use Cases	Total
Coding Assistants	16	Development Tools	5
Content Evaluation/Summarization	15	Communications/Content Generation	2
Policy or Chat Bots	11	Customer Relationship Management	2
Grammar/Content Management	9	Accessibility	1
Training Development	9	Attendance Tracking	1
Digital Asset Management	8	Document Summarization and Analysis	1
Social Media Enhancement	6	Project Management	1
Podcast Support	4	Security Enhancement	1
Call Center Support	4	Video Creation	2
Data Analytics	3	<b>Total:</b>	<b>101</b>

The **majority of use cases have a direct impact on improving workforce productivity** (see graph on next page). However, the metrics collected by the AI Council to date demonstrate that as the state's maturity in the AI space increases, the trend is moving toward technologies and use cases that provide both workforce productivity efficiencies and improve overall customer experience. The number of use cases that provide both have more than doubled since the initial reporting period.

To facilitate statewide adoption, **the AI Council has pre-approved 19 generative AI technologies**, which means that agencies can pursue implementation without submitting a use case to the AI Council for review. The scope of the authorized technologies includes podcast hosting, graphic design, coding, writing, social media, voice generation, data analysis, and content summarization tools.

Agencies are continuing to work to identify and develop use cases by leveraging the DAS-provided AI sandboxes – AWS, Microsoft Azure, Microsoft Copilot technology stack, and Google. For example, approximately 130 individuals from 12 agencies are using the Microsoft Copilot sandbox.



The administration also understands that **access to training helps to foster innovation and results in more informed implementation and use of AI**. As mentioned earlier, the state focused on ensuring employees and contractors understand how to interact with AI technology responsibly. Through a partnership with InnovateUS, the State of Ohio rolled out an eight-module Responsible AI for Public Professionals: Using Generative AI at Work course. Over 4,700 state employees and contractors from 36 agencies, have taken the course and approximately 1,300 are in the process of completing it. One state agency also deployed the training to county users for completion. Over 5,700 county users completed the training and approximately 2,700 are currently taking it.

### What now?

The State of Ohio will continue to evolve its AI initiative to meet the ever-changing nature of the technology. The following AI initiatives are on the horizon for Ohio:

- **Continue to promote AI literacy** by collaborating with the DAS State Human Resources Division Office of Talent Management and multiple vendor partners to introduce training tracks customized to various roles, including developer, quality control, ethics, data privacy, leadership, and general training for business users. In addition, the team is working with agencies to develop an AI Resource Center, a centralized area for statewide collaboration that would provide governance, training, development, production, and lessons learned resources. With the center, users will easily work together on AI efforts, helping each agency leverage the experience and knowledge of others.
- **Enhance existing contractual governance mechanisms** to ensure the vendor community is aligned with Responsible AI practices.
- **Develop a common key performance indicator framework** to measure the value of AI implementations.
- **Introduce governance automation**, including model monitoring, to eliminate manual processes. A governance automation use case is under development and is expected to be presented to the AI Council this summer.
- **Establish guidance for the use of AI agents** to assist with and inform agency implementations. A governance framework for the use of Agentic AI is under development by the AI Council Subcommittee.
- **Provide public feedback mechanisms** related to AI use and deployment for externally facing solutions. Create a mechanism to ensure the feedback mechanism process is embedded as part of an offering.

**“The State of Ohio is dedicated to expanding its blueprint for empowering AI innovation. Agencies are working collaboratively to fully harness the potential of AI to deliver improvements directly to Ohioans. DAS and its agency partners are continuously working to enhance the services offered to Ohioans and increase workforce productivity. We are looking forward to what is next for Ohio in its AI journey.”**

***State Chief Information Officer Katrina Flory.***