

NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards

Plain Language at Scale: Responsible AI for Taxpayer Correspondence

Artificial Intelligence

State	Nevada
Agency	Department of Taxation
Category	Artificial Intelligence
Project title	Plain Language at Scale: Responsible AI for Taxpayer Correspondence
Project dates	October 1, 2024 - November 30, 2026; operational releases underway
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Generative AI, plain-language governance, and readability scoring turned complex tax notices into communications taxpayers can understand and act on.

Submission thesis

Nevada used generative AI as a governed production drafting system - not as a gimmick, not as a final decision-maker, and not with taxpayer data. The result is clearer legal correspondence, measurable workload reduction, and a reusable model for accessible government communication.

119 letters implemented <i>active production</i>	67% system letter volume covered <i>high-volume correspondence</i>	65% unique taxpayers reached <i>of Department population</i>
5 grades average readability gain <i>13.4 to 8.4</i>	52% fewer general-question calls <i>23,121 to 11,175</i>	250,000+ annual correspondences <i>100,000+ taxpayers</i>

Why this belongs in Artificial Intelligence: the initiative uses engineered prompts, enterprise-approved AI tools, objective readability scoring, and human governance to transform high-volume public correspondence at a scale staff could not have achieved through manual drafting alone.

Executive Summary

The service problem was simple to name and hard to fix: taxpayers were receiving system-generated notices written at high-school-to-college reading levels. These letters often explained legally important obligations in language that assumed specialized tax knowledge, leaving residents uncertain about why they were being contacted, what action was required, and what would happen next.

The Nevada Department of Taxation turned that problem into a responsible AI use case. As part of its multiyear modernization program, the Department rebuilt taxpayer correspondence using an AI-assisted workflow. Staff used approved generative AI and word-processing tools to create first drafts from public-domain letter templates, then reviewed each draft through a formal quality process to preserve legal meaning, statutory references, tone, and accuracy.

The results are practical and measurable. Average Flesch-Kincaid grade level dropped from 13.4 to 8.4, average Reading Ease improved from 33.9 to 52.7, 119 letters have been implemented, and general-question call volume fell from 23,121 in 2023 to 11,175 in 2025. Even allowing for the messiness of real-world call-center categories, that is the sort of directional data government should pay attention to.

The model is already becoming bigger than one agency. The Nevada Secretary of State identified Taxation’s approach as the model for a new plain-language project in its Commercial Recordings Division, applying the same core pattern: benchmark readability, use secure AI prompts to rewrite content, review with business and communications experts, and finalize content for public use in English and translated languages.

Submission snapshot

NASCIO criterion	Nevada approach	Evidence of impact
Artificial Intelligence	AI-generated first drafts using reusable prompts, objective scoring, and human approval.	First-draft burden reduced while preserving legal review and production release discipline.
Citizen service	Plain-language notices answer: Why am I receiving this? What do I need to do? When? What happens if I do not act?	More readable correspondence; fewer routine calls; clearer taxpayer self-resolution.
Universal model	Common office tools, public templates, no taxpayer data in prompts, repeatable governance.	Adoptable by other Nevada agencies and other states without specialized software.

One-sentence outcome

Taxation transformed AI from a lab idea into governed, measurable public service: clearer letters, fewer preventable contacts, and a playbook other agencies can use.

IDEA

What problem or opportunity did the project address?

The Department generates more than 250,000 system-generated taxpayer correspondences each year to more than 100,000 unique Nevada taxpayers. Each letter is a compliance event, a service interaction, and a trust moment. When the language is too technical, the taxpayer is more likely to miss the point, miss a deadline, call for help, delay compliance, or conclude that government is more interested in being technically correct than being understood.

The opportunity came through modernization. Because the Department was already rebuilding letters for a new enterprise tax system, it could embed plain-language standards into the release roadmap instead of creating a side project that would vanish after the first enthusiasm wore off.

Why does it matter?

- **For taxpayers:** clearer letters reduce confusion and make it easier to understand rights, obligations, deadlines, and next steps.
- **For staff:** fewer routine explanation calls allow customer-service teams to focus on complex and higher-value cases.
- **For the State:** better understanding supports faster voluntary compliance and reduces avoidable administrative friction.

What makes it different?

The Department did not ask AI to “decide” anything. It asked AI to accelerate a repeatable communication task under tight controls. That distinction matters. The innovation is not merely that AI was used; it is that AI was embedded inside a governance model that makes the output safer, more auditable, and more useful.

Control	How Nevada applied it
Data protection	Only public-domain letter template content was used in AI drafting; taxpayer data stayed out of the prompt workflow.
Legal integrity	Prompts required plain language while retaining statutory references, legal intent, and program meaning.
Objective quality	Each letter received pre- and post-conversion Flesch-Kincaid and Reading Ease scores.
Human authority	The Quality Forms Committee and business owners retained review, revision, and approval authority.

What makes it universal?

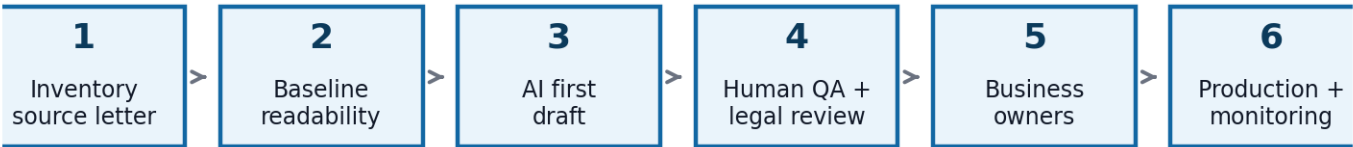
Every state sends legal, regulatory, and benefits correspondence to people who did not ask to become subject-matter experts. Nevada's approach is universal because it provides a pattern for using AI responsibly where the risk is common: simplifying public communication without changing legal meaning.

The language-access context makes the model even more relevant. Nevada's Secretary of State Language Access Plan notes that 21% of Nevadans age five and older speak a language other than English and identifies plain English as a key step before translation. Taxation's AI-assisted plain-language model gives agencies a scalable way to make source content clearer before it is translated, localized, or published.

IMPLEMENTATION

The initiative was intentionally designed as a production workflow, not a one-time writing exercise. A waterfall release calendar kept the work aligned to the broader modernization program, while agile drafting cycles allowed converters, reviewers, and business owners to improve each letter quickly without disrupting enterprise milestones.

Plain-language conversion workflow



Governed AI drafting loop:
public templates + structured prompts + readability scores + human approval

Roadmap and project management

Step	Action	Why it mattered
1. Inventory	Letters were identified, assigned, and tracked through the modernization release calendar.	Prevented scope drift and linked correspondence work to enterprise delivery.
2. Baseline	Each source letter received an original readability score.	Created objective before/after evidence instead of relying on taste or opinion.
3. AI draft	Converters used structured prompts to generate plain-language first drafts.	Made hundreds of conversions feasible with limited staff capacity.
4. QA review	Reviewers checked clarity, formatting, accuracy, legal compliance, and tone.	Kept AI in an assistive role and preserved public accountability.
5. Owner approval	Business units and product owners validated substantive meaning.	Protected the line between clearer language and unauthorized policy change.
6. Production	Approved letters were integrated into the enterprise tax system.	Ensured revised content was actually used in live taxpayer correspondence.

Who was involved?

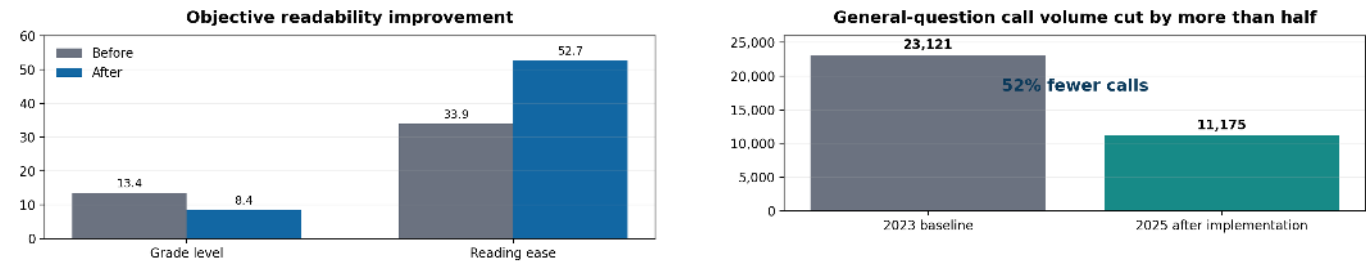
- **Enterprise Project Management Office:** maintained oversight, milestones, and alignment with the broader modernization roadmap.
- **Quality Forms Committee:** managed the conversion lifecycle, prompt use, readability tracking, quality review, and approval routing.
- **Business unit stakeholders and product owners:** owned legal and procedural content and confirmed revised letters preserved meaning.
- **IT modernization team:** integrated approved letters into the enterprise system so improvements reached taxpayers at scale.

Implementation principle

AI created speed. Governance created trust. The project succeeded because Nevada used both.

IMPACT

Before: many taxpayer letters required high-school-to-college reading levels, used inconsistent writing styles, and pushed avoidable questions into the call center. **After:** letters are easier to read, more consistent, measured through objective scores, and embedded in live system-generated correspondence.



How do we know?

Measure	Result
Readability	Average grade level improved from 13.4 to 8.4; average Reading Ease improved from 33.9 to 52.7.
Production adoption	119 letters implemented, covering 67% of system-generated letter volume and 65% of unique taxpayers.
Service demand	General-question calls decreased from 23,121 in 2023 to 11,175 in 2025, cutting volume by more than half.*
Consistency	Post-conversion letters clustered around grades 7-9 rather than varying widely into college-level outliers.
Staff burden	AI-enabled first drafts reduced the manual drafting load while preserving staff review and legal validation.
Scalability	The process uses repeatable prompts, common tools, a standing committee workflow, and release-based governance.

Examples of individual letter gains

Letter example	Reading Ease improvement	Grade-level improvement
Modified Business Tax Welcome Letter	0.7 -> 59.9	22.2 -> 7.7
Notice of Incomplete Continuing Education Requirements	0.4 -> 54.7	17.3 -> 8.2
Credit Determination Notice	45.0 -> 77.6	11.1 -> 4.9

* The general-question call category can include calls not directly tied to letters, so Nevada treats this as strong directional evidence rather than a single-cause claim. The scale and direction of the change align with the business rationale: clearer correspondence reduces confusion and preventable contacts.

From agency project to statewide playbook

The strongest evidence of universality is replication. The Nevada Secretary of State’s FY 2025 Language Access Plan expressly identifies the Department of Taxation’s successful approach as the model for a new Plain Language Project in the Commercial Recordings Division. That plan applies the same pattern to public-facing forms, standard correspondence, instructional materials, and guidance documents: benchmark readability, use secure AI prompts, conduct internal review with business process analysts, subject-matter experts, and communications staff, then finalize content for public use in English and translated languages.

That matters because plain language is not merely an editing preference. It is the foundation for fair digital service, stronger language access, better translation, and more usable government. Nevada’s language access planning recognizes the need to reduce barriers for limited-English-proficient residents; Taxation’s approach gives agencies a tested way to make the source material understandable before asking a translator, a website, or a resident to do the hard work.

Replicability proof point

The Taxation model is already being adapted by another constitutional office in Nevada. That moves this entry beyond “good project” and into “shared service pattern.”

Qualitative impact

Taxation’s project team concluded that administrative modernization and taxpayer service improvement are not competing objectives. The

initiative reduced the cognitive burden on Nevada taxpayers, decreased the likelihood of misunderstanding and non-compliance, and positioned the Department as a model for accessible government communication.

What now?

- **Complete Release 3:** deliver a fully modernized, plain-language-compliant portfolio across the Department's public-facing correspondence inventory.
- **Keep the governance:** maintain the Quality Forms Committee, readability benchmarks, reusable prompts, and human review as a standing operational workflow.
- **Scale the model:** share the approach with Nevada agencies and peer states seeking safe, practical generative AI use cases.
- **Extend accessibility:** use clearer English source documents to support translation, language access, website content, and customer-service scripts.

Why it is worthy of ongoing investment

This project is low-friction and high-return. It uses tools staff already know, creates an auditable trail of improvement, limits AI to appropriate draft assistance, protects sensitive data, and produces measurable improvements in resident experience and operational capacity. In the small universe of government wins, this is the good kind: the taxpayer understands the letter, staff spend less time explaining the letter, and nobody had to pretend a college-level notice was "customer service" just because the statute was cited correctly.

Bottom line

Nevada demonstrated that responsible AI can make government clearer, more accessible, and more efficient - one taxpayer letter at a time, at enterprise scale.

