

AI for Grantmakers & Nonprofits: *Accelerating Impact*

South Carolina Grantmakers Network
May 7, 2026

Georgia Mjartan
President & CEO

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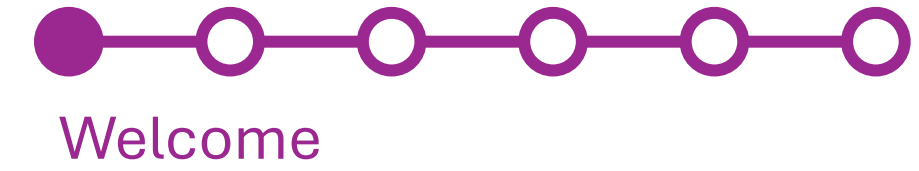


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Why are we up here?

AI Opportunity Accelerator South Carolina Cohort



**We ran a \$1.1M experiment with
21 human service nonprofits in South Carolina**
April 2025 – March 2026

The goal: become 10%+ more efficient by using AI

The approach: focus on one pain point

- Dedicated team
- \$50,000
- Cohort learning facilitated by experts
- 1-on-1 coaching
- Clear milestones for progress
- Support defining success

Google.org



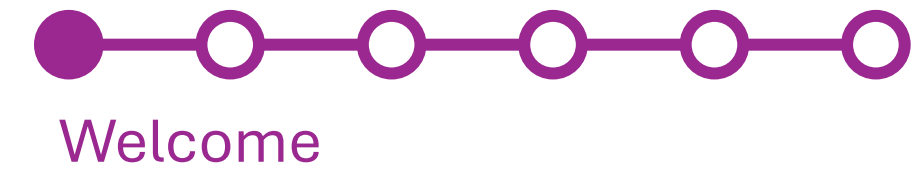
Logos from [here](#) and [here](#)



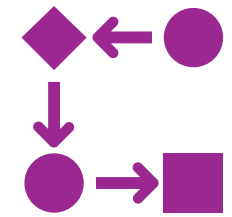
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How did the experiment go?

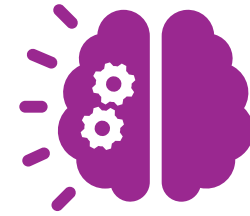
AI Opportunity Accelerator South Carolina Cohort



After nine months of the cohort...

 **76%**
report AI tools are used in their core workflows

 **52%**
report moderate or significant improvement in workflow or time use

 **96%**
report improved understanding of AI since joining the cohort

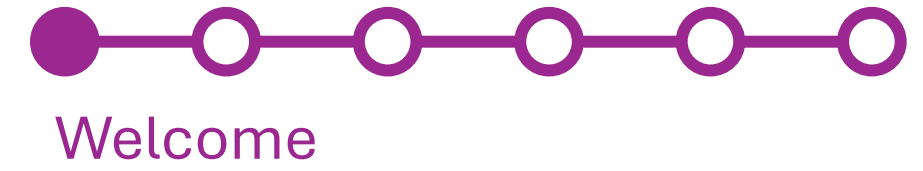
 **92%**
report better understanding of responsible or ethical AI practices



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Barriers to Adoption

AI for Grantmakers & Nonprofits



Myth 1

We are too small for AI.

Reality: Small teams benefit the most from time saved.



Myth 2

AI will replace staff.

Reality: It may change roles & expectations, and strong leaders will shape that change.



Myth 3

We cannot use AI because of risk.

Reality: Risk is higher when staff use it unofficially.



Myth 4

This AI thing will blow over.

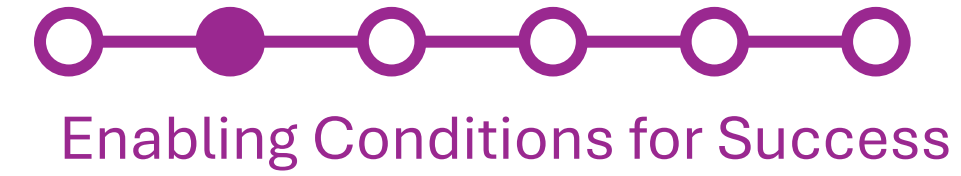
Reality: AI is becoming standard infrastructure. If you do not engage, you will fall behind peers.



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6 Enabling Conditions

for successful AI implementation



Condition 1
CEO Sponsorship & Clarity



Condition 2
Psychological Safety



Condition 3
Clear Policies



Condition 4
Approved, Safe Tools



Condition 5
Team Buy-In



Condition 6
Training & Practice Time



Leadership & Culture



Condition 1

CEO Sponsorship & Clarity

The CEO models use, even imperfectly.

Staff will not experiment (safely) if leadership is silent.

Clear permission reduces shadow use and unmanaged risk.



Condition 2

Psychological Safety

Staff can ask questions without fear of looking uninformed.

Conversations focus on improvement, not policing.

Learning happens faster when curiosity is protected.





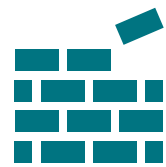
Condition 3 Clear Policies

3 Approaches to Policy Development



Alignment with Other Policies

Utilize standard policy template for your organization



Fast Forward's Nonprofit AI Policy Builder

ffwd.org/nonprofit-ai-policy-builder



AI Philosophy

A manifesto for how staff should approach AI tools





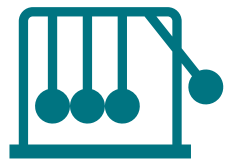
Condition 4

Approved, Safe Tools



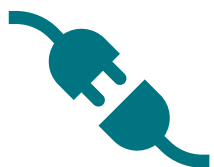
Enabling Conditions for Success

2 Approaches to Deciding on Tools



Where is there momentum?

Ask your staff what they're already using for work & go with the most prevalent one(s)



What integrates into your existing tools?

Explore what tools there are within your email environment or other heavily used software (e.g., CRM) & start with one of those



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Capability



Condition 5 Team Buy-In

Start with a small, cross-functional pilot group.

Staff voices shape how AI is used, not just leadership directives.

Buy-in accelerates learning and reduces resistance.



Condition 6 Training & Practice Time

Learning is treated as a skill to build, not a one-time training.

Staff are given time to experiment, not expected to learn “on nights and weekends.”

Practical use cases matter more than tool mastery.



Phases of AI Adoption

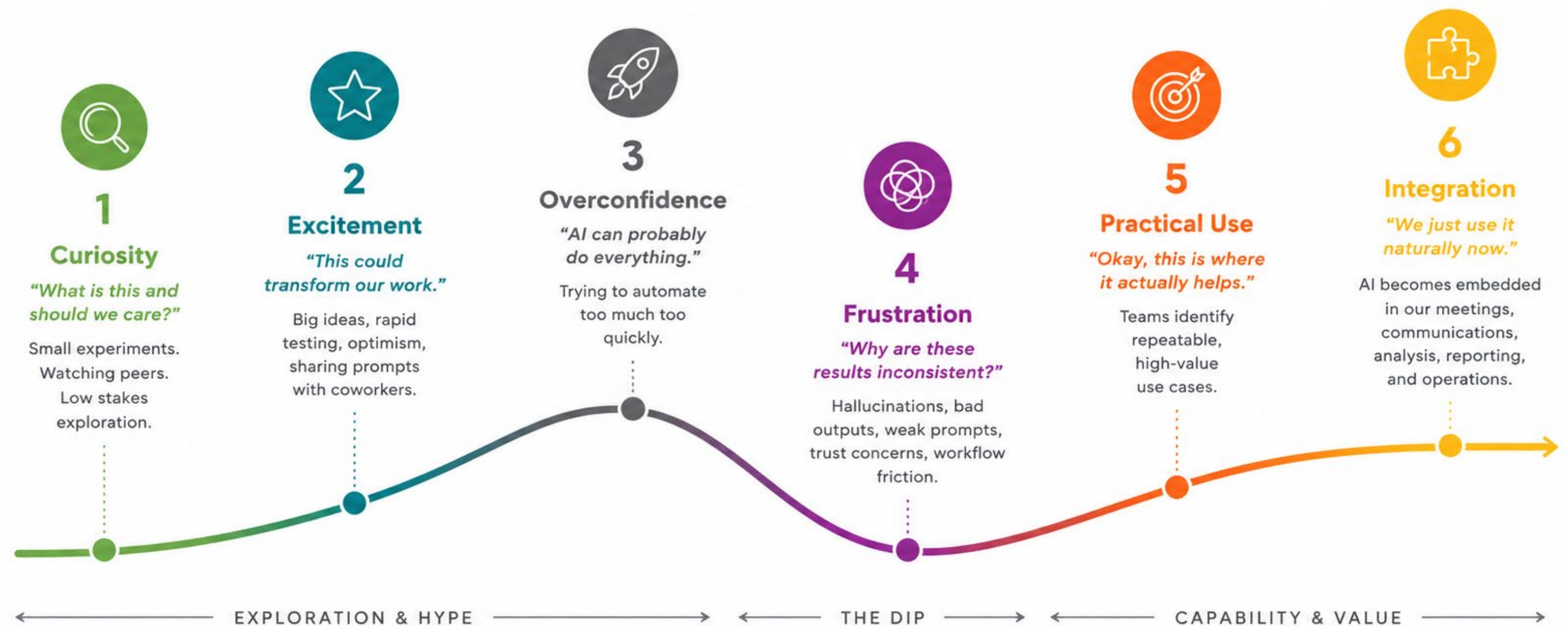
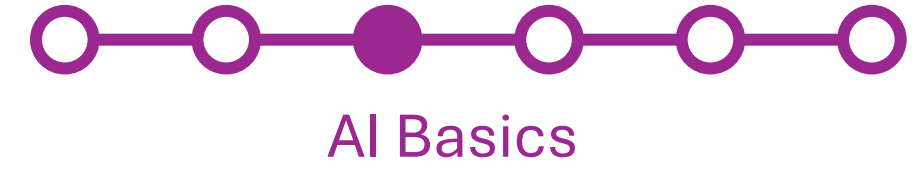


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Methods



Automation ***The Executor***

- Executes repeatable tasks and workflows with minimal human intervention
- Follows predefined rules or triggers
- *Think automatically routing forms or sending reminders*



Predictive AI ***The Fortune Teller***

- Forecasts or classifies based on patterns in data
- Uses past information to predict outcomes or label categories
- *Think suggesting items you might like based on your shopping history*



Generative AI ***The Creator***

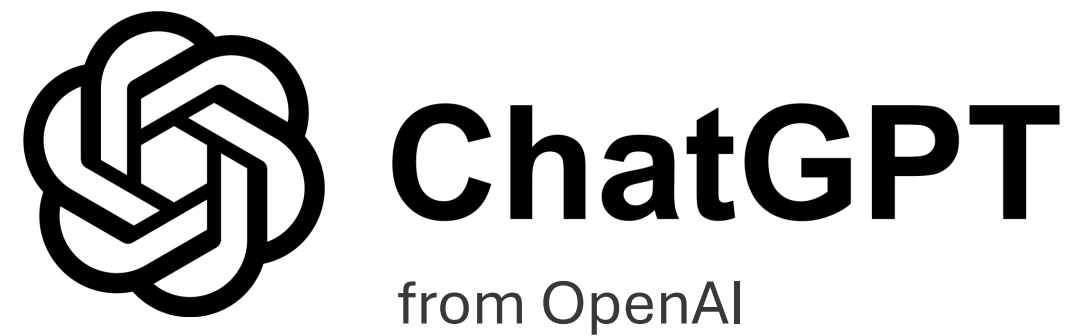
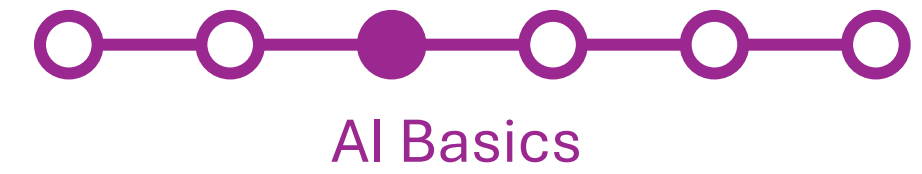
- Creates new content (text, images, audio, video)
- Works by learning patterns from large datasets and generating original outputs
- *Think writing a donor thank you letter.*

Images generated with ChatGPT



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Popular Tools



Logos from [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)

Free vs. Paid Tools?

Free version



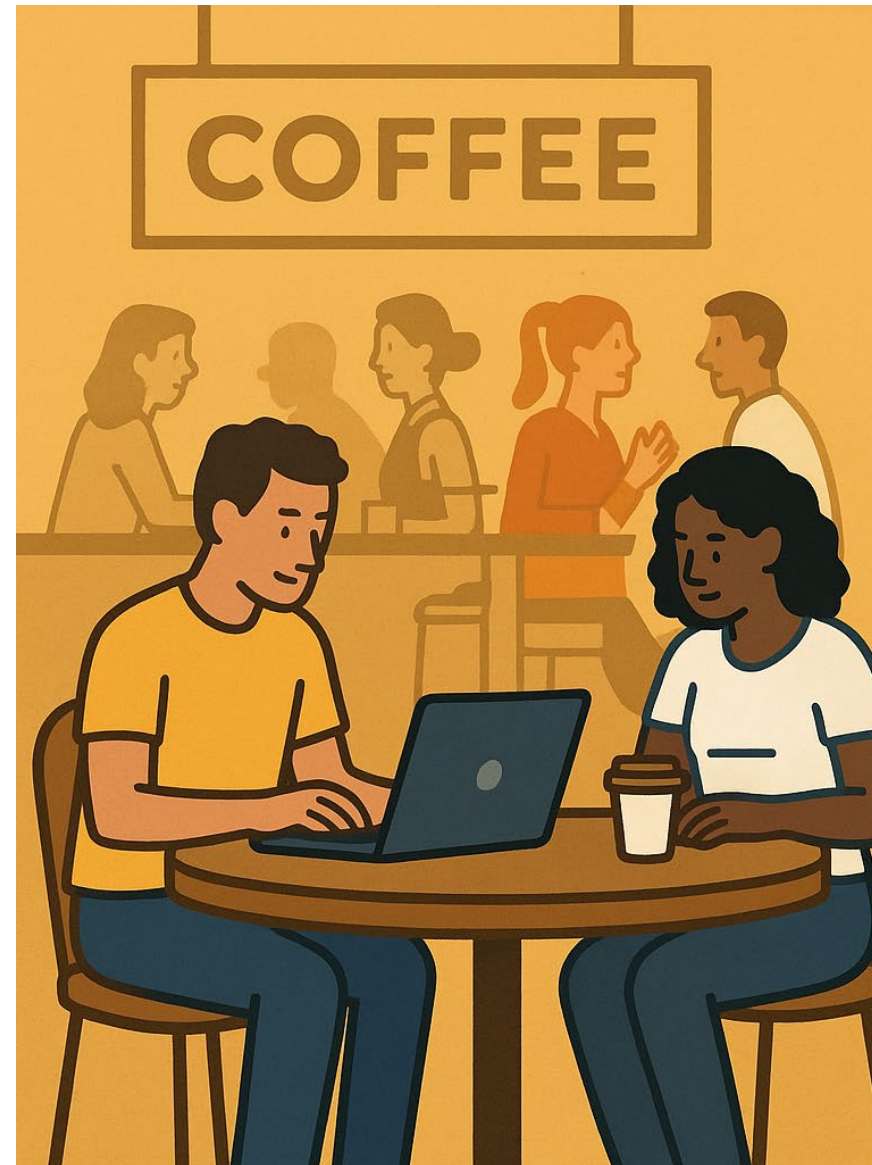
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Free vs. Paid Tools?

Free version



Paid version



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Nonprofit & Funder Use Cases

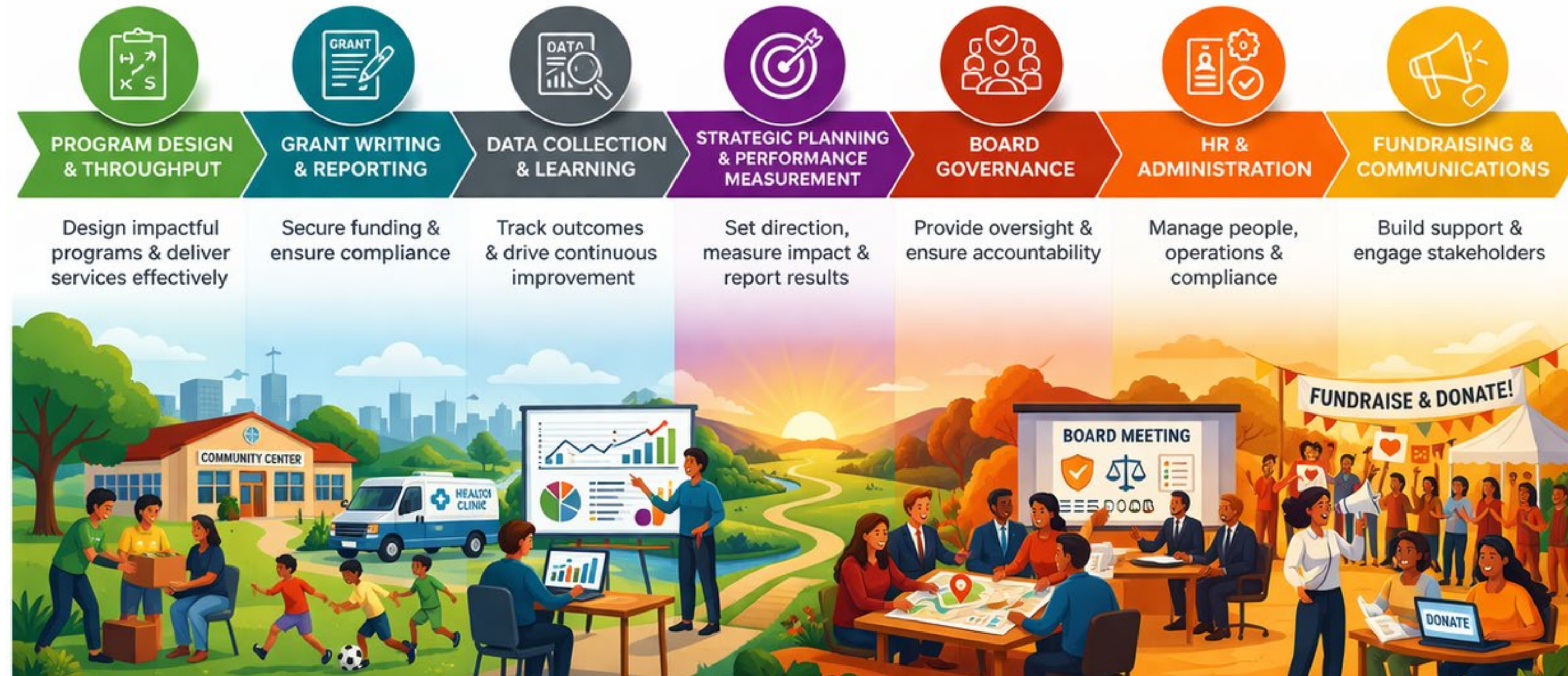
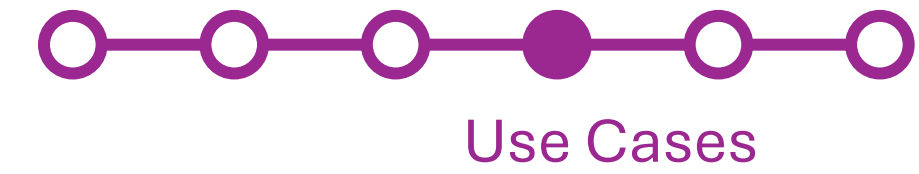
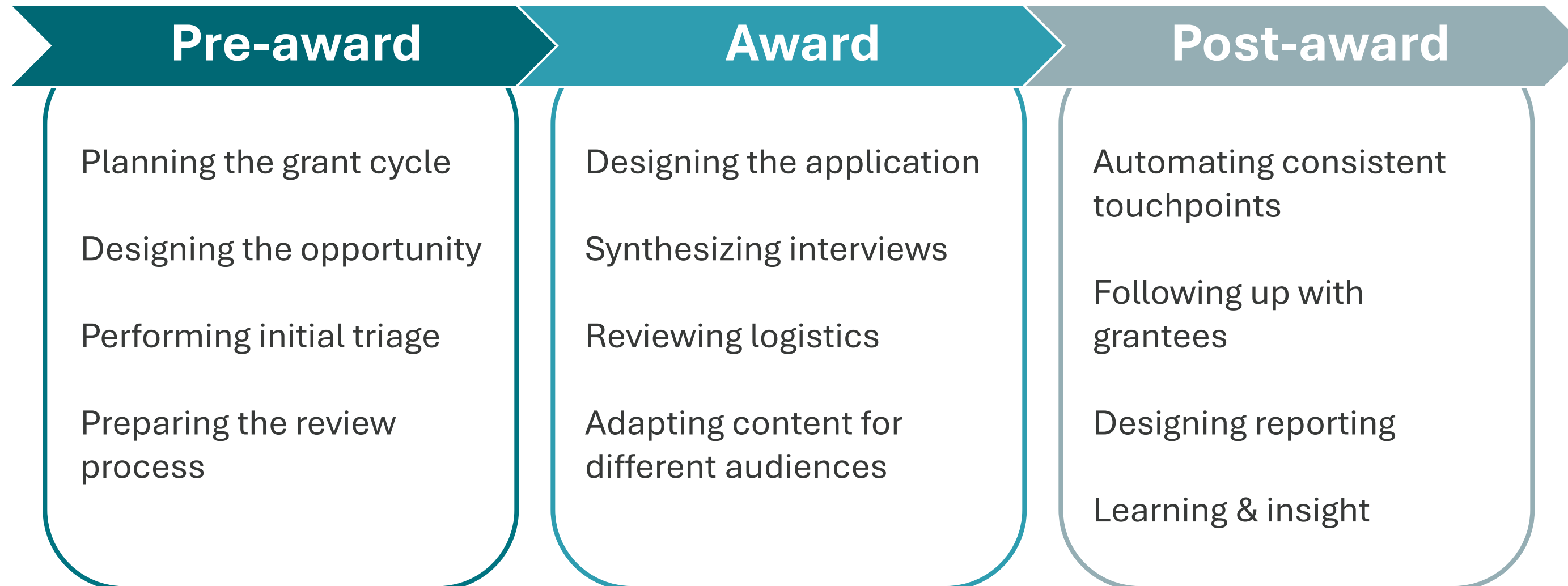
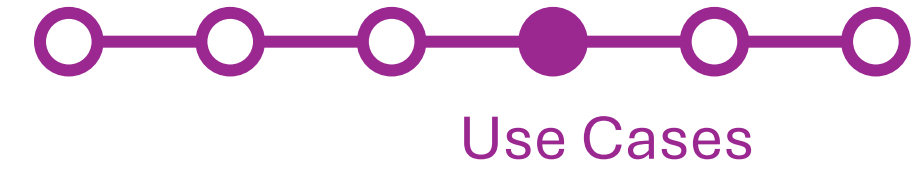


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Funder Use Cases



Include a note in your materials if you permit the use of AI to write grant applications
if you ask a question about whether they used AI or not, explain why you are asking & what you will do with that information



Pause & Reflect



Questions?

- Welcome
- Enabling Conditions for Success
- AI Basics
- Use Cases
- AI Skills Workshop
- Closing and Call to Action



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Five Uses for AI at Work

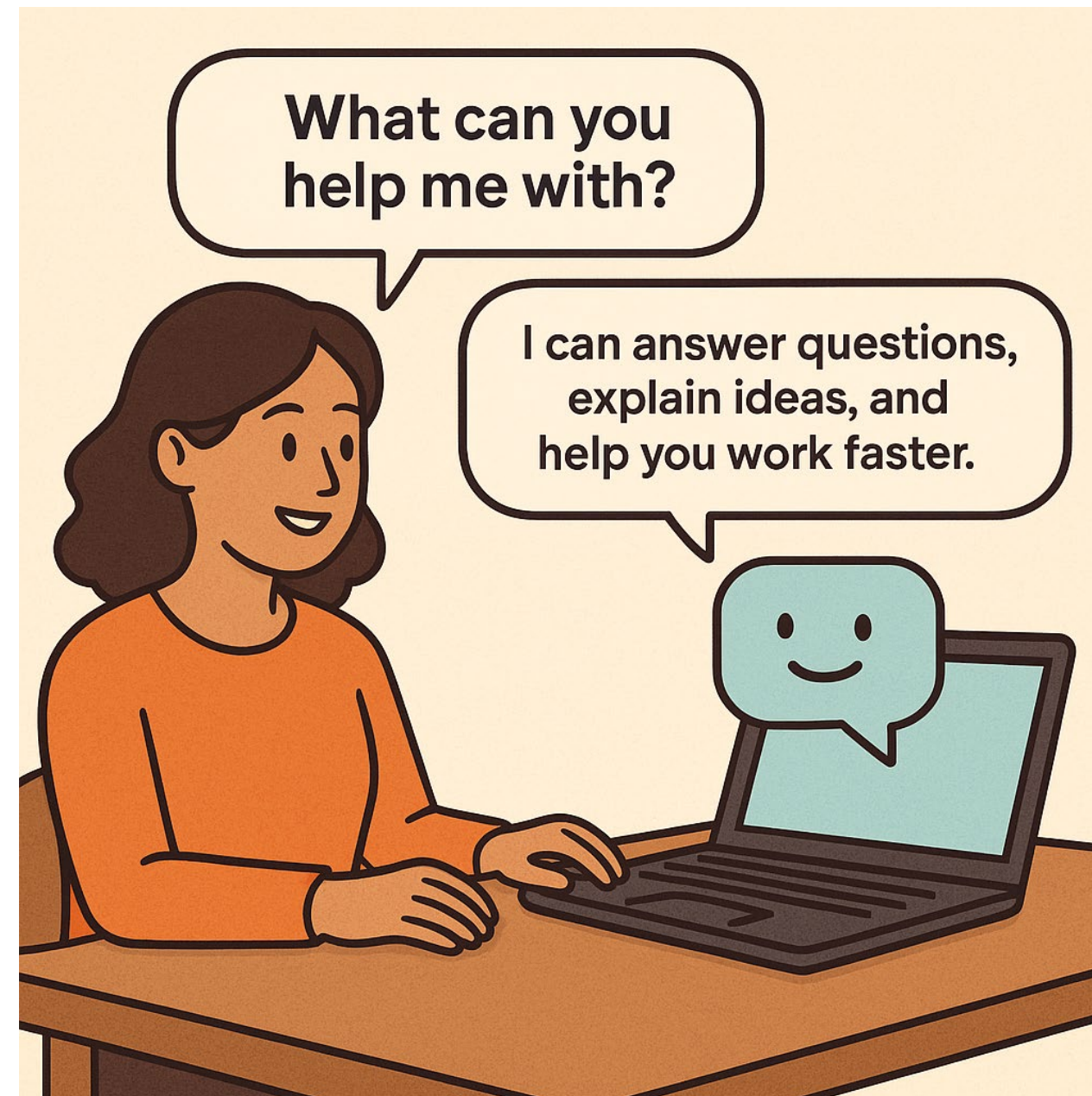


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Five Uses for AI at Work



Summarize

Condense or clarify information for different audiences

“ Summarize this 3-page report in 5 bullet points ”



Plan

Organize ideas, outline steps, or create checklists

“ How can I use Excel Power Query to turn my data from wide to long ”



Adapt

Reshape content for different uses or examine information critically

“ Rewrite this update for a new Board member ”



Refine

Polish, edit, or improve content you have drafted

“ Make this email more concise and professional ”



Kickstart

Generate fresh ideas or creative options from scratch

“ Brainstorm 10 creative themes for a fundraising event ”



SPARK

Five Uses for AI at Work

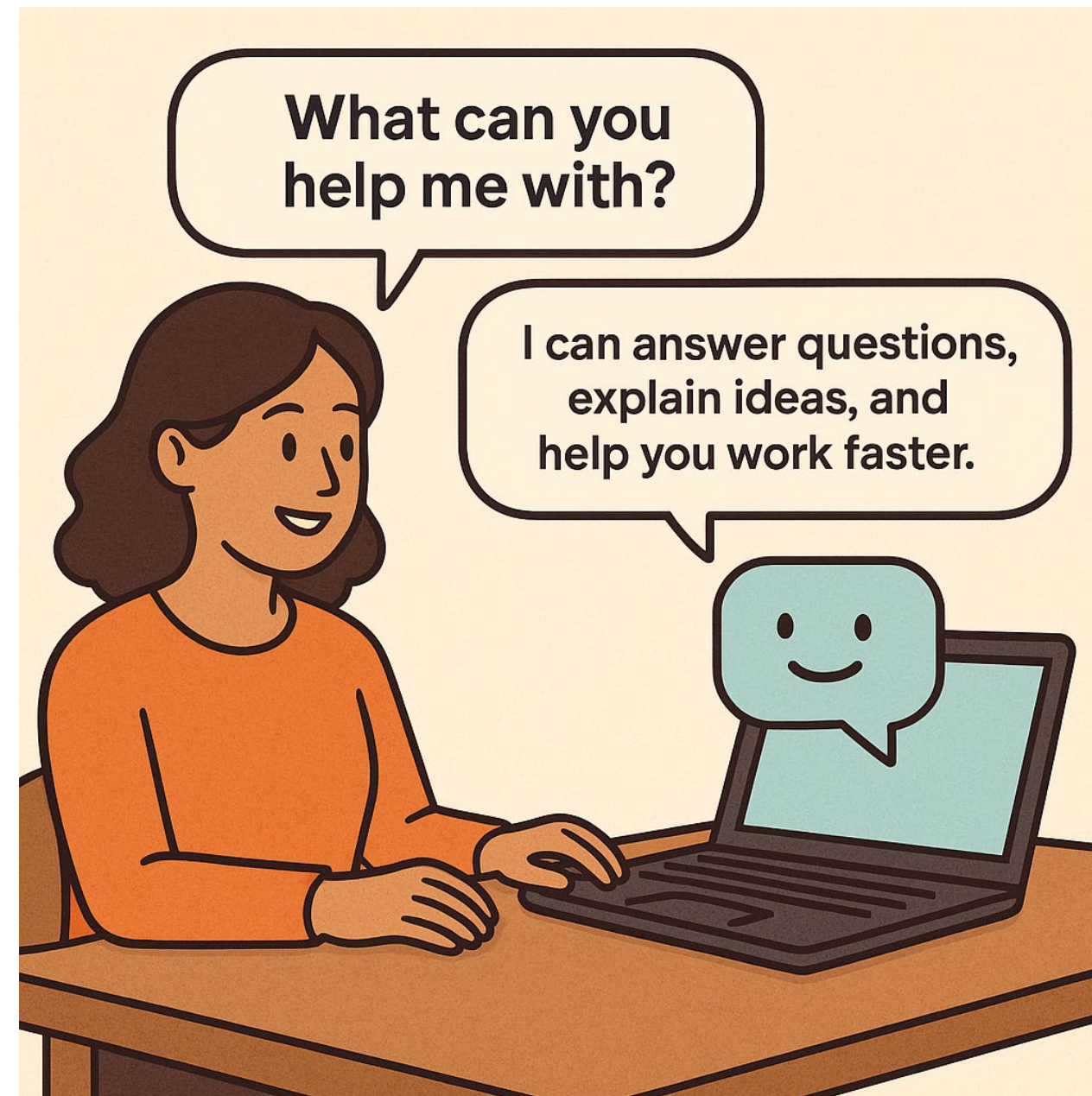


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Prompting like a Pro

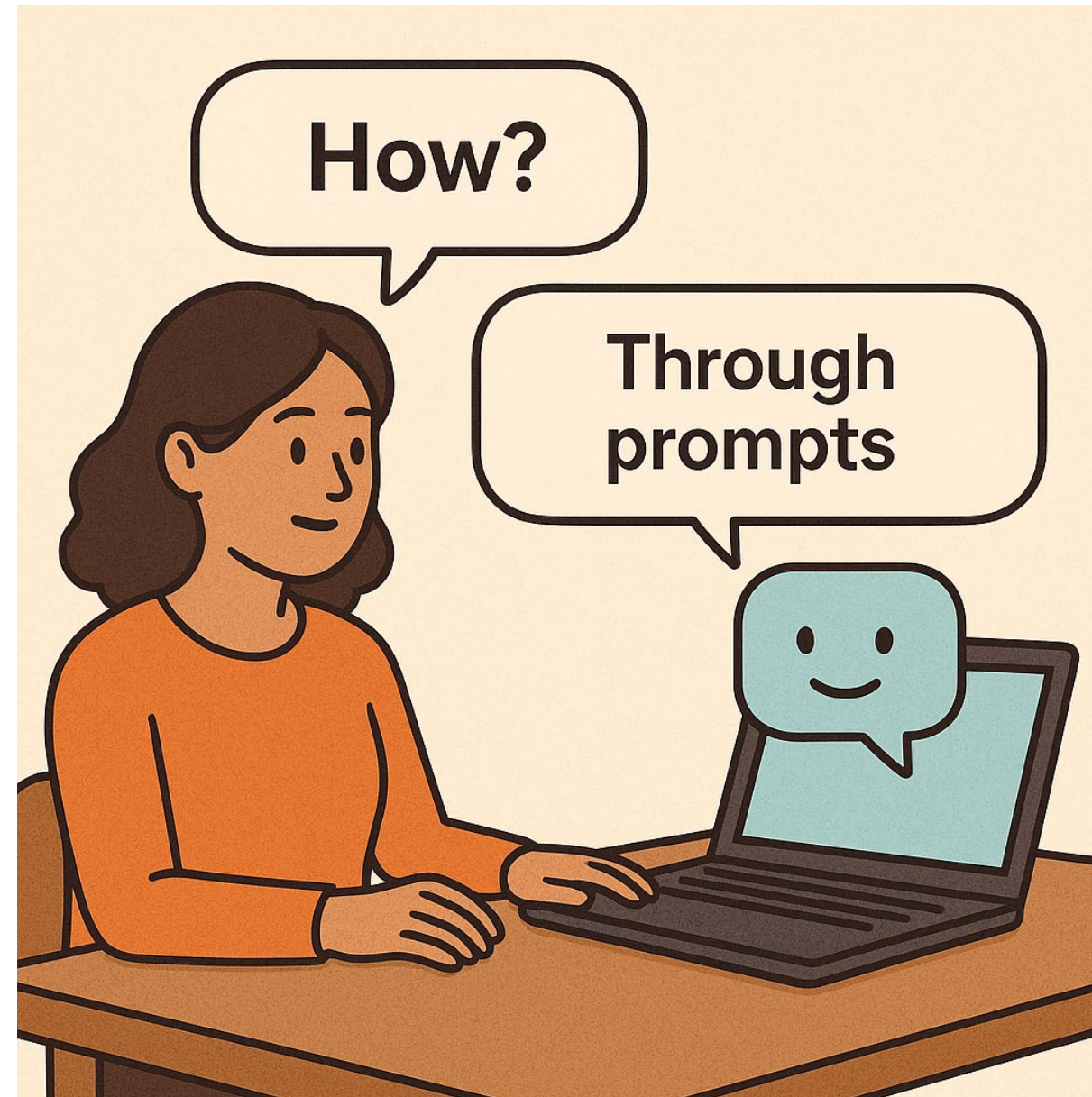


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Prompting like a Pro

Help me with [task].

You're a [persona].

The output should be [format].

You should know that [context].

Here are some [references].

This is a general template that may be helpful as you get started!

Prompts can also be use case dependent, based on personal preference, or your urgency.

Also, you do not have to be nice to AI. Tell it when it does something you do not want or like!

Adapted from Grow with Google's "Make AI Work for You"



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Prompting like a Pro



Help me with [task].

What you want to accomplish

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Prompting like a Pro



Help me with [task].

What you want to accomplish

You're a [persona].

Which expertise to draw from

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Which expertise to draw from

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How the results should appear

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Needed background information

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Examples

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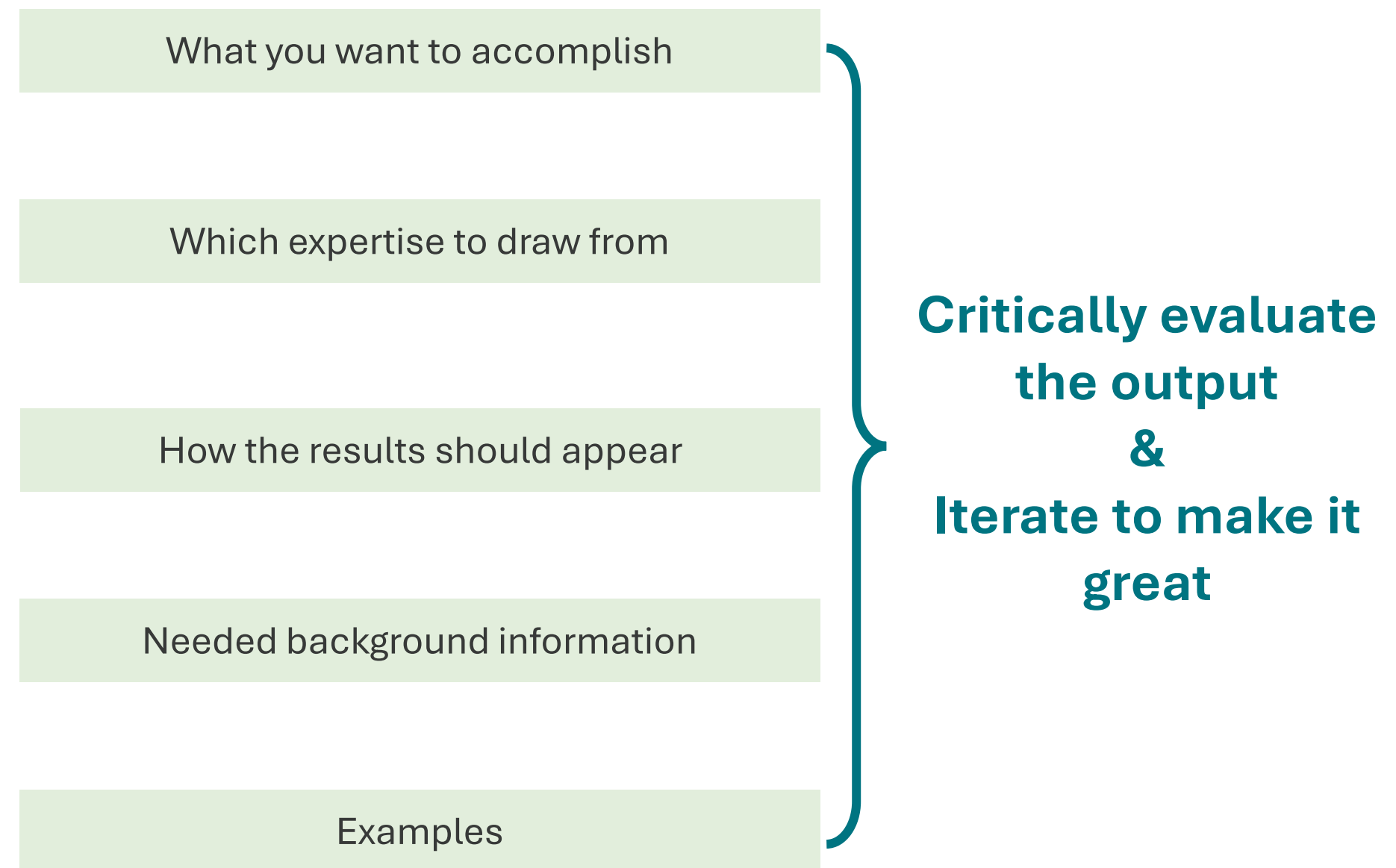
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Demo: Prompting like a Pro

[task] Help me develop evaluation criteria for a community grant program focused on youth mental health.

[persona] You are an experienced philanthropic program officer who designs fair, equitable, and strategic grantmaking processes.

[format] The output should be a clear scoring rubric with 4 to 6 criteria, a short description of each criterion, and a suggested scoring scale.

[context] You should know that this grant program will award grants between \$10,000 and \$50,000 to nonprofit organizations serving youth in a mid-sized community. We want to prioritize organizations with strong community relationships and programs that demonstrate measurable outcomes.

[references] Here are some references: our mission is to improve community well-being, we prioritize equity and access in funding decisions, and we want the application process to remain reasonable for smaller nonprofits.



Your Turn: Prompting like a Pro

30 Minutes



Team up with your table partner

Start with the scenario

Prompt AI tool of choice for a first draft

Refine through iteration

Share your best version + one insight

Activity Materials



tinyurl.com/AI-SCGMN



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Our AI Implementation Journey

At Central Carolina Community Foundation to date



1. Formed a cross-functional AI team with a clear lead
2. Surveyed staff on AI use and perceptions
3. Developed an AI philosophy aligned with our values
4. Implemented a paid tool organization-wide
5. Provided required staff training on AI basics
6. Trained staff on AI applied to a real workflow: the meeting lifecycle
7. Implemented “AI Bites” open lunch discussion time
8. Using in grant cycles to document progress meetings with current grantees
...and more to come!



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30 Day Challenge

Start somewhere like...

- Commit to using AI for work tasks
- Understand how your staff are currently using / their perception of AI
- Co-design AI Acceptable Use Policy with your team
- Purchase a tool for your organization
- Train staff how to use that tool
- Identify one staff champion to test and share learnings
- Schedule an internal 'AI Play Session' (no deliverables, just practice)
- Pick one workflow to pilot with AI support



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Thank you for learning with us!



Georgia Mjartan
President & CEO

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Questions?



View our AI policy,
staff survey, & trainings!



Chelsea Richard
Vice President of Operations
Chelsea@yourfoundation.org



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