E&ES
ONWARD AND UPWARD

From Promise to Practice

October 2026

AI is now delivering more than promises. It is expanding access, improving workflows, and driving measurable outcomes that make workforce development and human services more human-centered, equitable, and effective. AI adds significant capacity to allocate more time to customer-facing service delivery and reducing time for required administrative, compliance tasks.

And AI and its implementation will only get better… for those ready to do the work of pursuing career pathways to fulfill their hopes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

As a leader in workforce, economic development, and human services in Chicagoland, E&ES is adopting and implementing AI tools in all facets of our important work to match today's workforce and community priorities – fulfilling our mission to advance human dignity and strengthen community economies through excellence in career development, human services, and business partnerships that build a skilled workforce.

The practice of AI implementation at E&ES includes:

> **Customized Learning Pathways:** For all who are eager to transform their lives and secure a better future for their families, AI tools offer personalized career pathways with customized training, apprenticeship, and skills-based learning tracks with real-time access to professional resources and certifications and individualized support to career-focused employment opportunities. This includes identifying transferable skills from previous experience, realistic comparison of current wages along with training and certification requirements for career development and discovering what hiring employers value in candidate applicants.

Empathetic Service Delivery: The human-to-human relationship of workforce development, economic development, and human services is enhanced by utilizing supportive tools of AI in identifying needs earlier, coordinating resources to support and mitigate personal obstacles through leveraging available benefits and resources of community services. This offers what AI software alone isn't able to provide – human relationships with trusted professionals who knowledgably advocate on behalf of those seeking services.

Personalized Search Support: AI-powered tools assist career candidates with building and updating professional resumes, cover letters and emails, and interview preparation tailored to sectors, experience levels, and even individual opportunities. With the personalized Career Coach in-the-loop with candidates applying for open positions, AI tools support each applicant's focused applications and create higher-value coaching conversations and increase employer engagement when they see candidates have invested in their applications.

Instant, Real-time Feedback: Applying AI tools in the entire life cycle of a person's enrollment in a workforce development or human services programming offers users an immediate feedback loop, suggested course corrections, identifying and providing corrective tools to address gaps in training and career readiness, and increasing the adaptability of candidates for the ever-changing employment demands. Accelerating the time invested and quality of skills-matching to career opportunities creates better outcomes for Chicagoans E&ES serves.

Data-Driven Career Coaching: Providing a 360° view of a candidate's skills, experience, and aspirations that match current employment and career pathways through AI-driven career planning that reflects the current demands of the region's employment market creates more realistic expectations and better, more satisfying outcomes for career candidates and employers.

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Skills-First Competency Matching: As equitable employers are moving to demonstrable skills and work-based-learning to build their teams, AI skills matching creates hiring opportunities focused on the value of candidates, their capabilities to train and develop real skills, and build a career of professional development and advancement opportunities.

Widening Opportunities and Support: By looking past outmoded credentials to transferable skills, training aptitudes and capacity, and the mitigation of difficult background barriers, AI supported workforce coaching offers more inclusive access for candidates and today's hiring businesses through a clearer, contemporary grasp of workforce demands. And explicitly addressing background barriers and coordinating service opportunities to address transportation challenges, childcare needs, housing instability, digital literacy gaps, and benefit eligibility concerns makes the entire area's supportive services networks available to an individuals' needs.

Career-Focused Human Resources Development: The best appetite for today's growing and sustainable businesses is for skills-matched, train-abled team members to retain and add value in the dynamic conditions of advancing and sustaining a business today, and this means reversing the trend and high cost of the failure to retain a skilled workforce by implementing career-first-focused practices of human resource investment made possible through AI adoption and implementation.

Improving Case Management: In the challenging administrative climate, the use of AI supports workforce and human service professionals by capturing accurate case notes, drafting case documentation, screening to identify gaps in service delivery, and suggesting additional coaching and supportive services opportunities. AI enables workforce and human service professionals to reduce the time required for

administrative and compliance tasks. While maintaining each participant's data security, implementation of AI tools means we spend less time on the necessary administrative tasks while devoting more time and energy engaging directly with participants.

Do you notice what words are not part of our use of AI? Speed, efficiency, automation – for the sake of speed, efficiency, or automation without or to the exclusion of the human-in-the-loop. Yes, the use of AI tools makes our work more efficient and effective, but always with the benefit to those we serve. In practice, including AI in the work of workforce adds significant capacity to allocate more time and focus to the human-to-human relationships that make workforce development and human services both effective and beneficial.

Because AI software is running on the catalog of human words and work, we do encounter software misalignment, prejudice, and even soft bigotry in the raw, un-evaluated output to well-meaning questions and prompts. Only a mission-driven culture of workforce development and human services professionals can wisely arbitrate the use and misuse of AI software. Therefore, it is in the professional and personal development and investment in the human resource of E&ES that we pursue as a matter of course. It takes not only good intentions but good information to demonstrate the value of AI and our value to the workforce development and human services ecosystem of Chicagoland.

Our mission at E&ES is to advance the human-centered values of dignity and economic security through a skilled workforce – and in our utilization of the best AI tools we serve both those who seek employment and employers ready to invest in their workforce.