# Why Your Municipality Should Consider AI Guidelines—and How to Create Them



*Updated August 26, 2026: For a closer look at one specific piece of this — whether AI-generated meeting transcripts count as public records, and what that means for retention — see Are AI Meeting Transcripts Public Records? What Clerks Need to Know, publishing September 2, 2026.*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer just a futuristic concept. It's quickly becoming a vital tool that local governments are embracing to improve efficiency, decision-making, and resident services. As municipal clerks, understanding the benefits and responsibilities of AI can empower your community to innovate safely and effectively.

## Why AI Guidelines Matter for Municipalities

Local governments face increasing budget and staffing challenges, and AI offers powerful solutions to help do more with less. AI can automate routine tasks, analyze data for smarter decisions, and improve communication with residents. For example, cities like Pittsburgh use AI to optimize traffic flow, while Phoenix's myPHX311 portal employs AI chatbots to answer common citizen inquiries quickly and in multiple languages (learn more about AI use cases in local government).

However, AI also poses risks such as privacy concerns, security vulnerabilities, potential bias, and ethical dilemmas. Without clear guidance and policies, the misuse or misunderstanding of AI tools could lead to unintended consequences or legal issues. Municipal governments like Grove City, Ohio, have shown that establishing citywide AI policies early—ones that balance innovation with risk management—can extend

capabilities and save costs while protecting the community (see the Artificial Intelligence Handbook for Local Government).

# Best Practices for Creating AI Guidelines

. **Engage Stakeholders Early:** Involve city officials, IT professionals, legal experts, and staff who will interact with AI tools. This collaborative approach ensures your policy reflects diverse perspectives and practical needs (AI handbook details).

. **Define Clear Objectives and Scope:** Outline which AI applications are covered, such as generative AI (ChatGPT), analytics tools, or automated public services. Specify permissible use cases aligned with your municipality's goals and values (more on defining scope in AI strategies).

. **Emphasize Transparency and Accountability:** Policies should mandate clear disclosure when AI is used in citizen interactions and decision processes. Establish oversight mechanisms to monitor compliance and handle concerns (ethical frameworks in the Local Government AI Strategy Workbook).

. **Address Privacy and Security Protections:** Incorporate standards to safeguard sensitive data and mitigate cybersecurity risks. Work closely with IT teams to approve AI tools on a case-by-case basis and update guidelines regularly as technology evolves (privacy best practices).

. **Provide Training and Support:** Equip staff with training on AI capabilities and limitations to encourage responsible experimentation and avoid overreliance or misuse (AI basics for local government).

. **Make Policies Flexible and Adaptive:** AI is rapidly changing, so design guidelines that can be updated annually or as needed to keep pace with new tools, risks, and community expectations (case studies from early adopters).

. **Account for Records Retention:** AI-generated content — including meeting transcripts and summaries — may qualify as a public record the moment it's created, and retention requirements vary significantly by state. Don't assume a transcript is disposable just because it wasn't the final version of a document. See our guide on AI meeting transcripts as public records for what to check before deciding.

# Resources to Get Started

The Artificial Intelligence Handbook for Local Government offers practical advice, sample policies, and ethical frameworks tailored to municipalities.

Case studies from cities leading AI adoption demonstrate successful strategies and lessons learned from early implementation (read more).

Numerous blogs and reports detail how AI can transform public service delivery, improve community engagement, and enhance government operations (explore AI in local government services).

Adopting AI guidelines is more than a trend—it's a foundational step for building trust, promoting innovative government, and delivering better services to your community. Municipal clerks can help guide policy formation that protects residents and unlocks AI's full potential for public good.

**About OnBoardGOV**

Good policies depend on clear, well-organized processes behind them. ClerkBase created OnBoardGOV to simplify board and committee management for municipal clerks and enhance transparency for the public. Learn more about OnBoardGOV.