

Seattle IT Department Q1 2026 Artificial Intelligence Usage Report

Governance & Utilities Committee

May 14, 2026



Purpose of Briefing

- In 2025, the City Council adopted a 2026 Statement of Legislative Intent (ITD-010S-A-2) requesting Seattle IT provide a series of reports on the City's investments in, and use of, Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- **Information Requested:**
 - Usage of AI across City departments
 - Financial costs
 - Plans for partnerships
 - Significant lessons learned from prior testing and pilot projects
 - Workforce upskilling and education
- **2026 Reports** (posted online): Q1 (4/01/26), Q2 (7/01/26), Q3 (10/01/26), and Q4 (12/31/26)
- The first quarterly report reflects activity and initiatives from the previous mayoral administration from 2025 through early 2026.



Responsible AI Program

- **Responsible AI Program:** Upholding the City's commitments to Responsible AI Principles, through partnership, policy, and practice, as we innovate with powerful new AI technologies. To ensure responsible use of AI, the City has established guiding principles and policies, along with actionable guidelines and programs to assist City employees in using AI ethically and effectively.
- **AI Principles, Policy, Plan, and Vision:**
 - [Responsible AI Principles](#) – October 2023
 - [Artificial Intelligence Policy \(POL-211\)](#) – Updated May 2025
 - [2025-2026 AI Plan](#) – September 2025
 - [Mayor Wilson's AI Vision](#) – May 2026
- **City AI Officer:** Lisa Qian (Seattle's first-ever City AI Officer)
- **Public Website:** seattle.gov/tech/data-privacy/the-citys-responsible-use-of-artificial-intelligence



Responsible AI Program – Governance

- **Responsible AI Toolkit for City Departments/Employees:** Serves as a one-stop shop for questions, training resources, approved AI software, current AI pilots, intake resources, and FAQs.
- **Seattle IT AI Intake & Review Process:** When a department identifies an AI solution they want to test, they submit a proposal through a standardized intake form that describes the business problem, anticipated value, and compliance with the City's Responsible AI policies. The AI Request Review Group—a staff-level team of subject matter experts convened by the City AI Officer—conducts rigorous analysis to assess whether AI is the right technical approach.
- **Mayor's Information Technology Subcabinet (MITS) AI Workgroup:** Direction from the Mayor's Office, Seattle IT, and input from lead departments; chartered to review, evaluate, and provide go/no-go decisions on AI projects/investments.
- **Data Governance:** Unified data approach; Seattle Data Strategy; and managing data for AI.



AI Strategic Alignment

- AI tools aligned with the civic priorities defined by the Mayor, City Council, and departmental leadership.
- Help accelerate permitting and housing, improve public and transportation safety, enhance the responsiveness of services for Seattle residents, enable more accessible and plain-language communications, and day-to-day Digital Workplace tools for City employees (e.g., Copilot Chat is an optional new tool for employees to use)
- AI technologies are evaluated through a "Proof of Value" framework that prioritizes City impact, cost, and operational experience/outcome.
- Use cases (improving service delivery and fostering innovation across all departments) where AI can add the most value for City employees and the public.
- Working with business, labor, and community leaders to develop City-led public policies to ensure our residents and workers have the protections we need as the AI field expands.



AI & Environmental Impact

- AI's rapid pace of innovation, exponential growth and demand for resources have raised significant concerns about its potential negative impact on the environment.
- While we are committed to innovating and being leaders in using AI, we also know that AI's impact on the environment is significant.
- AI can be incredibly beneficial to our city, but delivering those benefits requires careful consideration of impacts on our workforce and environment. [On May 1, Mayor Wilson announced specific next steps to begin to address those concerns.](#)
- Below are links to information and resources, such as calculators, to help understand the environmental impact.
 - [Energy](#)
 - [Water](#)
 - [Community Health](#)



AI Intake & Review Process

- **All AI Pilots, Proofs of Concept (PoC) and requests for AI software are required to go through the City of Seattle Service Hub – Ask for New Technology (AFNT)**
- **AI Triage Review:** All submissions are reviewed by the AI Officer (and if necessary, members of AI Review Group) for (1) business value, (2) value of AI in solution, (3) privacy and security risk, (4) redundancy of technology. Requests that do not meet the bar may be denied, deferred, or redirected at this stage.
- **Approved requests progress to Architecture, Privacy, and Cybersecurity assessments.**
- **Pilots & PoCs** must include an evaluation plan to assess business value prior to launch and a post-pilot report upon completion. Reports are reviewed by AI Officer and AI review committee to determine next steps.
- **MITS AI Workgroup** holds final decision-making authority over the City's AI portfolio and investments, and is informed at key stages of the review process.



AI Usage Across City Departments

- Based on data from 2025 through March 31, 2026.
- 17 departments have reached out about AI software; 6 departments currently running AI pilots
- **Approved AI Software (not pilots):**
 - Active Use = 22
 - In Project Phase (will be used) = 5
 - No longer used = 7
 - Requested and under IT Review = 6
- **AI Pilots/Proofs of Concept**
 - Executing or about to begin = 5
 - Completed = 8
 - Paused/cancelled = 5
 - Planned and under IT Review = 2



AI Usage Categories

- **Public Safety:** Improve dispatch decisions for non-emergency calls; streamline body camera footage redaction; enhance legal research capabilities; commitment to thoughtfully evaluate AI's potential to support both officers and the communities they serve.
- **Permitting:** Aimed at reducing the permitting backlog and improving the experience for both applicants and city reviewers.
- **Transportation Safety:** Video analysis tools to support Vision Zero efforts, signal timing, and operational awareness.
- **Communication Tools:** Assist with text editing, help draft communications that address bias in language, generate copy using customizable templates to ensure consistency in voice, and address challenges associated with complex and technical language in public-facing communications.
- **Chatbot Tools:** Simulates human-like conversations in natural language and may be used to handle basic customer requests and interactions.



Lessons Learned – AI Proof of Value Framework

- The **AI Intake & Review Process** includes an **AI Proof of Value framework** with performance metrics to determine the return on investment (ROI) and to ensure pilots are judged on clear objectives, business value, responsible use, and long-term supportability. Objectives are evaluated using the S.M.A.R.T. criteria.

| Objective | SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business Value | By the end of a pilot, 80%+ of pilot users reported that they found business value in using the solution. |
| Alignment with Business Goals | Confirm that the solution aligns 100% with business goals and City values. |
| Responsible AI | By the end of the pilot, 100% of pilot users will be educated on the City’s Responsible AI principles. |
| Success Criteria | Establish a benchmark and record measurable benefits of an AI-supported solution compared to the previous solution/approach. |
| Accuracy and Reliability | Measure against the acceptable accuracy of output, including bias and hallucination audit results. |
| User Experience and Feedback | By the end of the pilots, achieve an 80%+ positive rating for overall user experience. |
| Supportability/Scalability | By the end of the pilots, achieve a “Yes” to supportability and scalability of the piloted solution at the City of Seattle. |



Lessons Learned – Examples

- **AI Permitting Prescreening Tools:** This pre-application screening tool for building permits showed an approximate 50% reduction in average days for intake review of permits and 35% reduction in correction cycles per review. 86% of SDCI pilot users reported business value from the tools.
- **Microsoft Copilot Chat:** The pilot was conducted in 2025 from September to November over two separate waves totaling 500 users. City employees in the pilot self-reported 83% finding business value from having access to Copilot Chat, 79% had a positive user experience, and they reported an average time savings of 2.5 hours/week per user, showing reduced load and improved responsiveness
- **C3 Pilot:** By replacing manual, siloed workflows with AI-driven insights and interactive dashboards, the application reduced collision analysis time and highlighted safety hotspots. However, while the pilot showed exciting results, productionization would require significant effort, configuration, and internal staffing.



AI Partnerships

- **Success through partnerships is one of the four strategic pillars in our City of Seattle 2025-2026 AI Plan. Partnerships are represented by:**
 - Collaborating with academia, nonprofits, and industry to pilot solutions that reflect shared values.
 - Engaging the public through educational campaigns, resident-focused tools, and community feedback mechanisms.
 - Aligning with other governments to monitor policy impacts and advocate for responsible technology legislation.
 - Partnering with our labor partners to ensure proactive engagement and clear communication.



AI Partnerships – Community

- **UW Partnership:** Completed partnership agreement with the UW that allows us to engage with researchers at UW for AI research, projects, development, technical/professional services.
- **AI House:** First-in-the-nation AI hub, focused on entrepreneurs, startups, and community leaders building the next era of AI in Seattle. Partnership between the Office of Economic Development, AI2 Incubator, and Ada Developers Academy. Hub provides co-working space, event space, and collaborative tools for founders creating AI-focused companies. \$210,000 investment from OED to support programmatic needs and \$400,000 from Washington Department of Commerce for real estate. 24 teams recruited to the incubators; \$40.6 million raised; and 119 events were held with 11,153 participants.
- **Community Innovation Hackathons:** Students, entrepreneurs, technologists, City staff, and community co-created AI-powered solutions to critical City priorities.
 - September 2025: Improve awareness and access to youth enrichment programs citywide.
 - October 2025: Streamline permitting processes.
 - November 2025: Improve the customer service process or experience
- **AI Safety Awareness Community Event at Jefferson Community Center (October 2025)**



AI Partnerships – Labor

- Partnering with our labor partners to ensure engagement and communication.
- Committed to working with labor partners to invest in the professional development of our employees, protect jobs, and preserve the rights of workers while improving the essential services the City provides.
- The City’s labor partners bring a critical understanding of workflows, resident interactions, and the on-the-ground realities that shape implementation. By working together, the City ensures that AI solutions are co-designed to enhance and not disrupt, and that we realize our shared vision of equitable, people-centered, high-performing municipal service.
- Labor conversation themes centered around focusing pilots on AI opportunities that (1) relieve the burdens where employees identify them, (2) allow us to make much better decisions, and (3) enable levels of high responsiveness to staff and community that are not currently possible.



Workforce Upskilling and Education (2/2)

- **City Employee AI Training Program:** The City of Seattle employee AI Training page went online in 2025 and is accessible by all city employees to explore available AI training resources.
- **Upskilling Workshops:** Comprehensive AI upskilling effort ensures the entire organization is on the same page—aligned in language, priorities, and process—so the City can responsibly harness AI to serve its residents.
- **2026 Trainings/Engagement for City Employees and City Departments:**
 - Microsoft Copilot Chat Training
 - Citywide Employee AI Training
 - AI Training for Managers and Directors
 - AI Community of Practice (AI Champs Network)



Financial Costs (1/2)

- **2024 Financial Strategy:** Seattle IT set a strategy for the City in 2024 to not make major AI investments until 2025-2026, as the vendor space and pricing were too early and dynamic.
- **2025-2026 AI Innovation Fund (\$400,000):** Council Bill 121113 appropriated \$400,000 in the 2025 Year-End Supplemental for ITD-coordinated pilot projects. Seattle IT will propose carrying forward the \$400,000 in a special carryforward ordinance in Q2 2026.
- **2026 Council Budget Action SDCI-005-A-1:** \$750,000 was appropriated in the Construction and Inspections Fund for work related to AI permitting.
- **Creation of the Permitting Accountability and Customer Trust (PACT) Program:** \$750,000 was appropriated for the PACT Program to improve customer trust and service.



Financial Costs (2/2)

- **2025 AI Software Testing and Pilots:**
 - Seattle IT and departments have obtained a significant amount of the major pilots on grants and Proof of Concept/Proof of Value projects, so as to minimize City investments until clear value is demonstrated.
 - Investments that the City has made have been small in cost. Some existing systems have rolled out AI features and components that are incorporated into the subscription and licensing fees.
- **2026 AI Software and Pilots:** Seattle IT will detail the 2026 financial costs for the approved AI software currently in use and pilot cost estimates in the second quarter AI report.



Feedback and Questions

