



WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE POLICY

Policy Title: Policy for Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Policy Number: POL AD154421Z

Effective Date: December 1, 2025

Supersedes: N/A

Authorized by: Whatcom County Executive

Policy Statement

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for all Whatcom County employees. This applies to any work associated with Whatcom County that employees perform, whether on or off County premises and devices.

For the purpose of this policy, the term “AI” is a technology that can create content, including text, images, audio, or video, when prompted by a user. Generative AI systems learn patterns and relationships from massive amounts of data, which enables them to generate new content that may be similar, but not identical, to the underlying training data. The systems generally require a user to submit prompts that guide the generation of new content. It can be a standalone software application like ChatGPT or incorporated into other software applications like Copilot and Gemini in web browsers.

While Whatcom County remains committed to adopting new technologies to aid our mission when possible, it is also recognized that risks associated with AI are inherent with any new technology. This policy will provide guidelines and principles for the responsible use of AI.

1. Principles

The following guiding principles should be considered when using AI to conduct business and create content.

1a. Integrity, Trust, and Transparency

- We embrace the possibilities of technology and community. We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers, nor can we foresee all consequences. But when we act transparently, we build trust, and we gain the ability to learn collectively.
- We acknowledge that the use of AI has costs and impacts in and of itself, including the increased energy and water required to run the large data centers that produce AI. Being purposeful and accountable to these impacts is important.
- The public should know when AI is used and have confidence that the interactions they are having with a public-facing employee are happening with a real person.

1b. Mission Driven for Public Purpose

- The most widely used AI tools were developed for commercial purposes. While they can be adapted for use by public professionals, they must be used to deliver better, safer, more efficient, and equitable services and products to the communities we serve.
- We rely on and trust in our public sector professionals to do the right thing, given the right tools and guidance. You will need to exercise your judgement to ensure we get the benefits from the tools while avoiding negative impacts for the County and its communities.
- We embrace a culture of responsible AI use, in which we maintain control and understanding of the use of new tools while we develop new uses that drive efficiency, civic dialogue, or other positive outcomes in service of our residents

1c. Privacy, Security, and Accuracy

- Every technology tool that we use has an impact on the security of our overall environment, privacy, and digital rights of our workforce and the communities we serve.
- Use of AI should be done with thoughtful consideration of privacy concerns for the data involved.
- Each AI tool needs to be reviewed prior to use to ensure that it does not expose our organization to cyber threats or the breach of sensitive data.

1d. Public Records Compliance

- As with all work done for the public, any use of AI or AI generated material should comply with state and federal public records laws.
- If you use a personal AI account or an agency AI account to conduct business for your agency, you are creating a public record.
- Prompts and outputs are public records with retention value depending on use and content, and users should be prepared to properly retain and produce these records.

1e. Computers for Computers, People for People

- Employees should aim to utilize AI tools for the tasks in which they are best suited such as compiling and analyzing large volumes of data. Employees should utilize human skills for tasks in which they are best suited such as connecting with other people and making decisions.

2. Key Requirements for Use

**Department Heads Can Establish Further Guidelines and/or Restrictions on AI Use*

- 2a. Employees wishing to utilize AI for a project shall consult with their supervisor prior to its use to ensure that the use is reasonably appropriate for the task and follows this policy and department goals.
- 2b. AI may generate inaccurate information. Employees must review for accuracy before distributing information.
- 2c. Images and videos wholly created by Generative AI systems must be attributed to the appropriate Generative AI system. This does not apply to utilizing AI tools as part of the creation

or modification of an existing (non-AI generated) image or video.

2d. If content generated by AI is used substantively (more than 50% of the content) in a final product, attribution to the relevant AI system is required.

- *Example: Some material in this brochure was generated using ChatGPT 4.0 and was reviewed for accuracy by a member of the Auditor's Office before publication.*

2e. Departments shall interpret "substantive use" thresholds to be consistent with the principles outlined in this document as well as relevant intellectual property laws.

2f. AI may produce outputs based on stereotypes or use data that is historically biased against protected classes. County employees must review with an equity lens prior to use of that data to ensure that the output is accurate and free of discrimination and bias against protected classes.

2g. Employees shall not submit data to AI that is not intended for public distribution, including but not limited to, protected health data, personnel files, or investigation reports.

2h. Unless it is a specialized tool relating to the industry, AI systems must be from the approved list of AI technology vendors (see attached addendum), with exceptions granted by the County IT department.

3. Unacceptable Uses of AI include, but are not limited to:

3a. Using any content created by an AI tool in final work products of any kind **without** review for accuracy

3b. Uploading sensitive data to an AI tool without adequate data protection measures

3c. **Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination**

4. Training

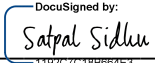
Whatcom County Shall Train All Managers on the Proper Use of Generative AI Tools in the Workplace

5. Whatcom County Monitors AI Use

Whatcom County's Computer Use Policy including policies relating to personal use and relevant monitoring policies still apply when using generative AI tools with County equipment.

Approval

Executive Signature:

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Whatcom County Executive Satpal S. Sidhu

Date: December 1, 2025

ADDENDUM 1: AI Sites Under Review

To help protect the digital security of the County’s information technology systems, the following sites are approved for general AI use. Industry-specific tools may also be used as needed. If there is interest in a general AI tool that is not on this list, please contact IT to verify that it is appropriate for use.*

Site	Web Address
ChatGPT	chatgpt.com
Claude	claude.ai
Grammarly	www.grammarly.com
Google Gemini via Web Browser	gemini.google.com/app
Microsoft Copilot via Web Browser	Copilot.microsoft.com

**Note: this list will be updated periodically.*