INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE

Community Grant Writing with Ethical AI

How to Write Stronger Grant Applications

Despina Karatzias, Institute of Excellence | Bayside City Council | 28 October 2026
2026

More skill. More confidence. More you.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation, the Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land where we meet today. meet today.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and to their continuing connection to connection to Country.

BEFORE WE START

Everything from today is yours

Community Grant Writing with Ethical AI | Institute of Excellence

Today's slides and your workbook are ready to download. No need to photograph the screen.

Scan the QR code and enter your details to download your resources.

Can't scan? Use the web address below.

instituteofexcellence.com/resources/bayside1026

YOUR PRESENTER

Igniting excellence since 2014



DESPINA KARATZIAS
Founder, Institute of Excellence

Certified Trainer and Qualified Business Coach

Master's in Digital and Social Media Marketing

Outstanding Contribution, 2022 Victorian Tourism Awards

Host of The Tourism Hub Podcast

Author of Adventures of a Balloon Girl

20+ years in tourism, digital strategy and entrepreneurial education

TODAY

What you will take home today

Not notes. Three working tools for your group's next application. application.

1 **Grant Readiness Radar**

Score your group across eight pillars.

2 **Grant Idea Card**

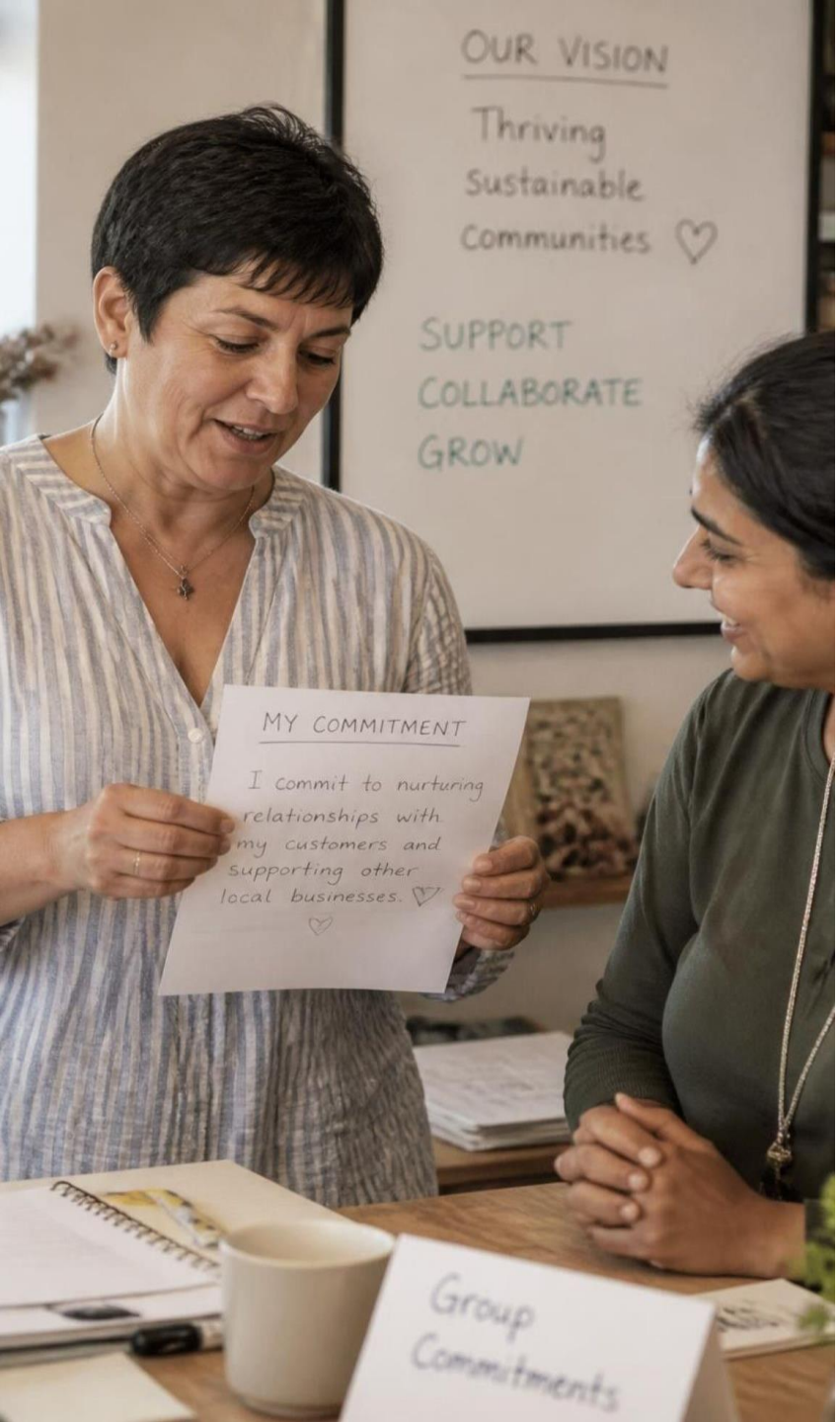
Your idea in one clear sentence, and two possible funders.

3 **Safe AI prompts and checklists**

Decode guidelines, draft answers and check every claim.



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HOW TODAY WORKS

This is work ON your group's next application

1. Bring one real project idea, even a rough one.
2. No names or personal details go into AI. Ever.
3. Questions are welcome at any point.

All experience levels welcome. If you can send an email, you can do this.

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THE EVIDENCE

67%

of Australian not-for-profits surveyed use generative AI.

Only 14% have an AI policy or guidelines. Today you build a safe, shared way to use it.

Source: Infoxchange, Digital Technology in the Not-for-Profit Sector, 2025 (more than 800 organisations).

OPENING QUESTION

RATE YOURSELF RIGHT NOW

On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could use AI safely and ethically to write a stronger grant application for your group's next project?

0 — Not confident

10 — Very confident

Write your number down. We are coming back to it at the end.

THE FRAMEWORK

OPA!

More than an enthusiastic expression.
The lens for how community groups grow.

Every challenge contains an opportunity. opportunity. This is how we look at grant grant writing today.

OPA is my Greek heritage, the spirit of spirit of possibility.

O · OPPORTUNITY

What is one grant task AI could take off your committee's plate?

P · PURPOSE

Why does it matter, to you, your members and your community?

A · ACTION

What is the one action you need to take to activate it?

Turn to the person next to you. 60 seconds. One opportunity. One purpose. One action.

TODAY'S PLAN

Three modules

MODULE 1 · MAP

Know your project before you write

1.1 Where your group stands

1.2 Your grant idea

1.3 AI fundamentals and the Five Levels

1.4 Safe AI before the first prompt

MODULE 2 · RUN

Decode and draft

2.1 Decode any grant with AI

2.2 Find the right funder

2.3 Draft from your own notes

MODULE 3 · RESULT

Verify and get ready to submit

3.1 Verify the truth only you hold

3.2 Review like an assessor

3.3 Your next steps

Break after Module 1.

MODULE 1 · MAP

Know your project before you write

Hold this question in mind

Is your project ready for a grant, and is your group ready to use AI safely?

You will answer it before this module ends.

LESSON 1.1

Where your group stands: Grant Readiness Radar

10 minutes. Workbook, page 3. Score each pillar 0 to 5.

Community need
We can clearly name the problem.

Project idea
We know exactly what we want to do.

Alignment
It fits our funder's priorities.

Feasibility
We can deliver this.

Outcomes
We can prove our impact.

Partnerships
We work with other organisations.

Budget
We know what things cost and why.

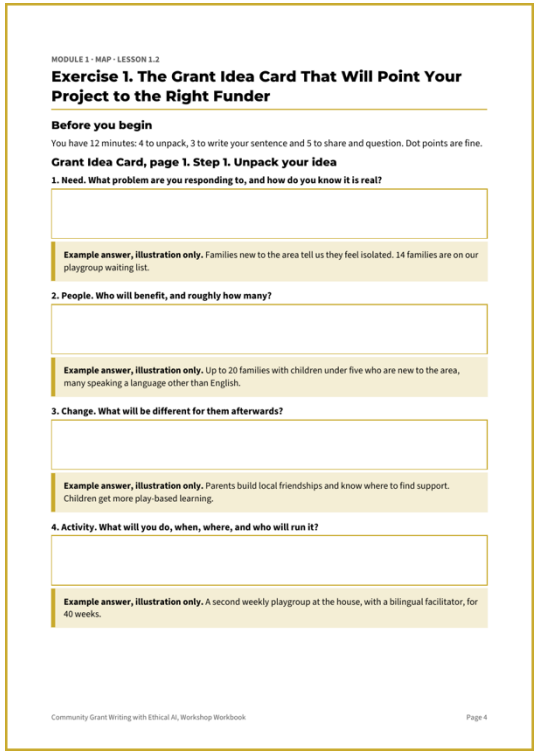
AI confidence
We're comfortable using AI tools.

0 to 2 needs support | 3 to 4 developing | 5 confident. Then circle your two lowest pillars.

LESSON 1.2

Meet your Grant Idea Card

It's in your workbook. One idea, three pages, used all day.



MODULE 1 · MAP · LESSON 1.2

Exercise 1. The Grant Idea Card That Will Point Your Project to the Right Funder

Before you begin

You have 12 minutes: 4 to unpack, 3 to write your sentence and 5 to share and question. Dot points are fine.

Grant Idea Card, page 1. Step 1. Unpack your idea

1. Need. What problem are you responding to, and how do you know it is real?

Example answer, illustration only. Families new to the area tell us they feel isolated. 14 families are on our playgroup waiting list.

2. People. Who will benefit, and roughly how many?

Example answer, illustration only. Up to 20 families with children under five who are new to the area, many speaking a language other than English.

3. Change. What will be different for them afterwards?

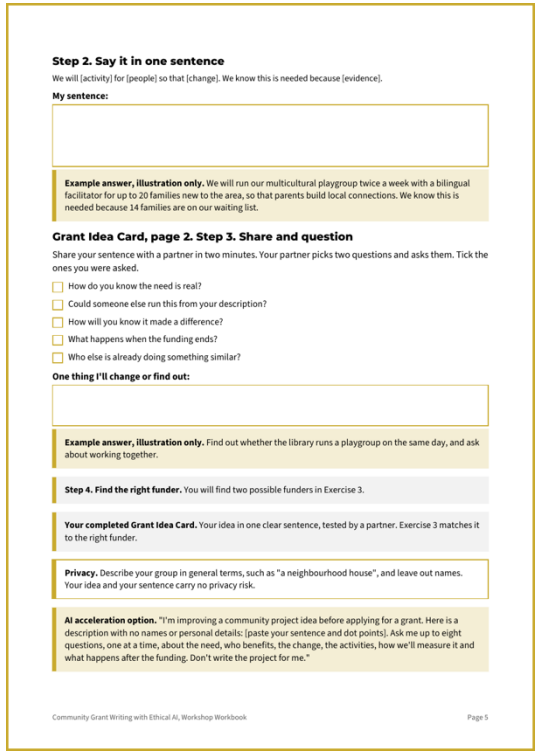
Example answer, illustration only. Parents build local friendships and know where to find support. Children get more play-based learning.

4. Activity. What will you do, when, where, and who will run it?

Example answer, illustration only. A second weekly playgroup at the house, with a bilingual facilitator, for 40 weeks.

Community Grant Writing with Ethical AI, Workshop Workbook Page 4

Workbook page 4 Unpack your idea



Step 2. Say it in one sentence

We will [activity] for [people] so that [change]. We know this is needed because [evidence].

My sentence:

Example answer, illustration only. We will run our multicultural playgroup twice a week with a bilingual facilitator for up to 20 families new to the area, so that parents build local connections. We know this is needed because 14 families are on our waiting list.

Grant Idea Card, page 2. Step 3. Share and question

Share your sentence with a partner in two minutes. Your partner picks two questions and asks them. Tick the ones you were asked.

- ☐ How do you know the need is real?
- ☐ Could someone else run this from your description?
- ☐ How will you know it made a difference?
- ☐ What happens when the funding ends?
- ☐ Who else is already doing something similar?

One thing I'll change or find out:

Example answer, illustration only. Find out whether the library runs a playgroup on the same day, and ask about working together.

Step 4. Find the right funder. You will find two possible funders in Exercise 3.

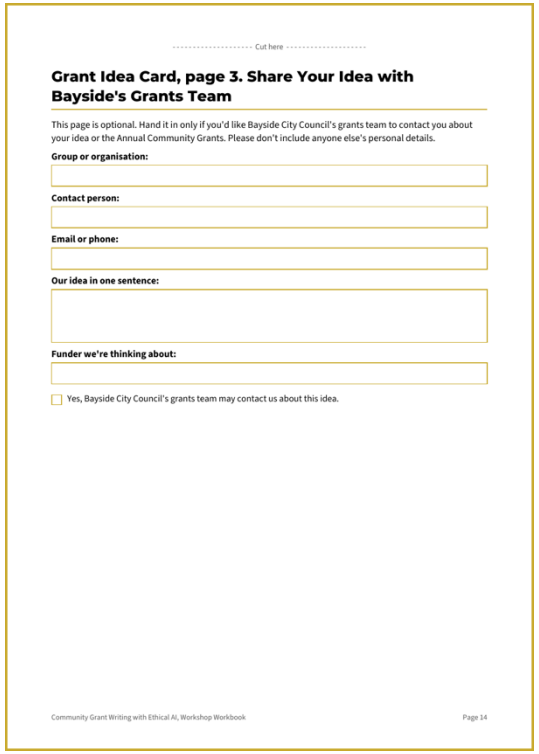
Your completed Grant Idea Card. Your idea in one clear sentence, tested by a partner. Exercise 3 matches it to the right funder.

Privacy. Describe your group in general terms, such as "a neighbourhood house", and leave out names. Your idea and your sentence carry no privacy risk.

AI acceleration option. "I'm improving a community project idea before applying for a grant. Here is a description with no names or personal details: [paste your sentence and dot points]. Ask me up to eight questions, one at a time, about the need, who benefits, the change, the activities, how we'll measure it and what happens after the funding. Don't write the project for me."

Community Grant Writing with Ethical AI, Workshop Workbook Page 5

Workbook page 5 One sentence, then share and question



Cut here

Grant Idea Card, page 3. Share Your Idea with Bayside's Grants Team

This page is optional. Hand it in only if you'd like Bayside City Council's grants team to contact you about your idea or the Annual Community Grants. Please don't include anyone else's personal details.

Group or organisation:

Contact person:

Email or phone:

Our idea in one sentence:

Funder we're thinking about:

☐ Yes, Bayside City Council's grants team may contact us about this idea.

Community Grant Writing with Ethical AI, Workshop Workbook Page 14

Workbook page 14 Optional: hand in to Bayside's grants team



LESSON 1.2 · EXERCISE 1

Your Grant Idea Card

12 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 1, pages 4 and 5.

01

Unpack

4 min. Need, people, change, activity. Dot points are fine.

02

One sentence

3 min. We will ___ for ___ so that ___.

03

Share and question

5 min. In pairs. Your partner asks two questions.

Want help from Bayside's grants team? Tear out and hand in page 14.

LESSON 1.2 · EXAMPLE

From rough idea to clear idea

Brightwater Community House. Hypothetical, for illustration only.

BEFORE

"We want to run our playgroup more often because families keep asking."

AFTER

"We will run our multicultural playgroup twice a week with a bilingual facilitator for up to 20 families new to the area, so parents build local connections. We know this is needed because 14 families are on our waiting list."

What changed: a real need with evidence, named people, a specific activity and a clear benefit.

LESSON 1.3

What is AI, really?

1 **A pattern-matching tool**

It predicts the most useful next words from what you ask.

2 **Not your community expert**

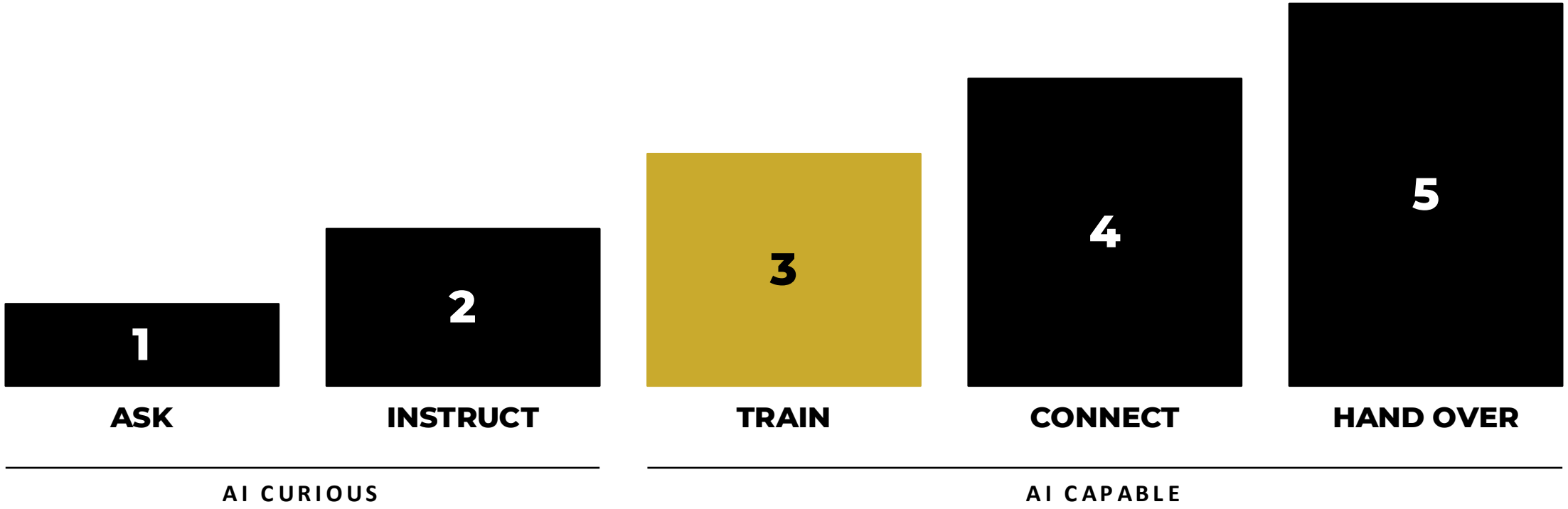
Not thinking, not always up to date, and it doesn't know your people.

3 **A well-read assistant who has never left the library**

Today: text-based AI. ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot.



The Five Levels of AI Capability



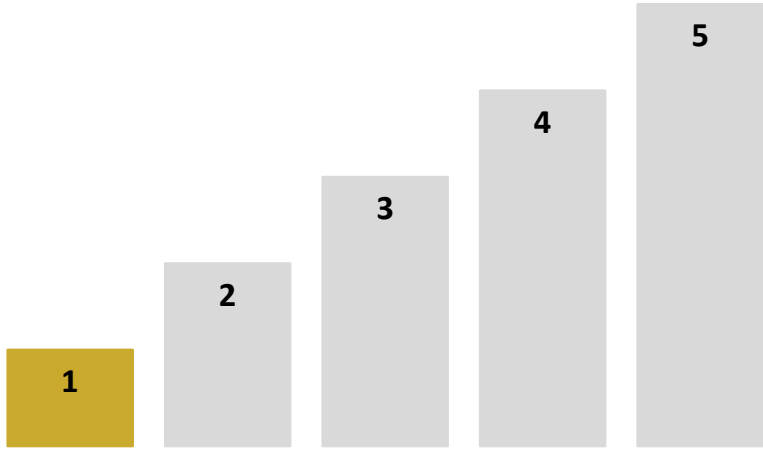
Hands up. Which level are you at today?

LEVEL 1 OF 5

ASK

AI CURIOUS

You ask AI a question and it gives you an answer. Like a
Like a search engine, only faster.



You are looking at Level 1: ASK

IN YOUR GROUP

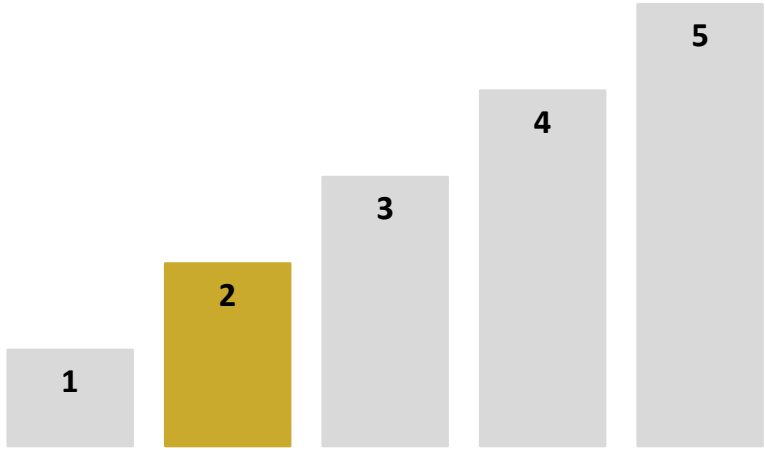
"What does 'auspice' mean on a grant form?"
"What should a small community grant budget include?"

LEVEL 2 OF 5

INSTRUCT

AI CURIOUS

You give AI a role, an audience and a format. You get a usable draft, not a generic answer.



You are looking at Level 2: INSTRUCT

IN YOUR GROUP: TRY IT TODAY

"Act as a grant assessor. Turn our five dot points into a 150-word answer to 'Describe the community need'. Plain English, active voice. Mark any figure I need to check."

LEVEL 3 OF 5

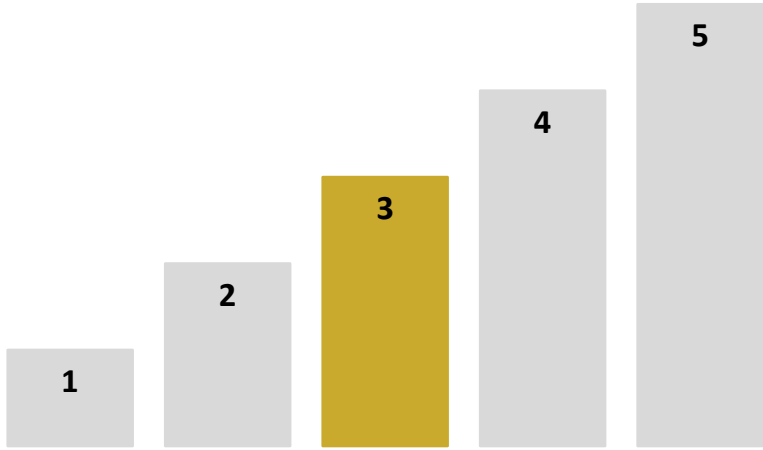
TRAIN

AI CAPABLE

You set AI up with your group's own material: your purpose, past projects and writing style. Every draft starts to sound like you.

IN YOUR GROUP

A saved project that drafts grant answers in your group's voice, using your own approved descriptions. No personal details.



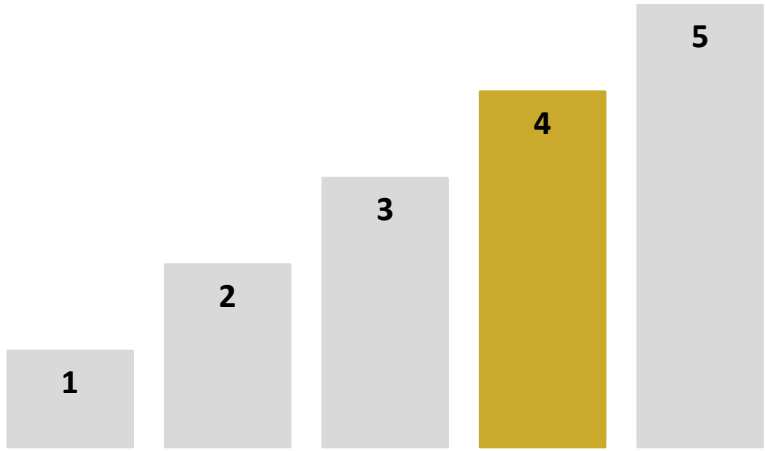
You are looking at Level 3: TRAIN

LEVEL 4 OF 5

CONNECT

AI CAPABLE

AI works inside the tools you already use: email, calendar and documents. It does tasks, not just text.



You are looking at Level 4: CONNECT

IN YOUR GROUP

Your email to the grants officer drafted in your inbox, ready for you to check and send.

You stay in charge.

LEVEL 5 OF 5

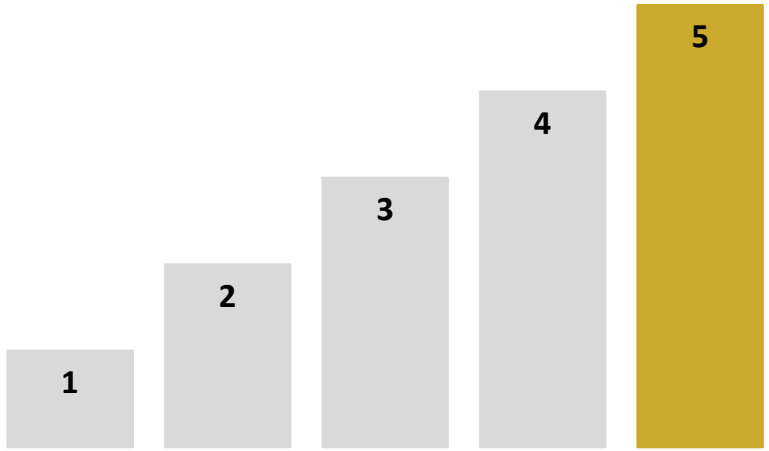
HAND OVER

AI CAPABLE

You set the goal. AI runs the steps. You check the results.

IN YOUR GROUP

Each month: new grant rounds found, deadlines added to the committee calendar and a fit summary drafted, all waiting for the committee to approve.



You are looking at Level 5: HAND OVER

You stay in charge.

LESSON 1.3

AI is not just a tool, it's a teammate

Treating AI like a tool

"Write me a grant application." Copy. Paste. Submit.

Treating AI like a teammate

"Draft this. Now make it more specific. Remove the jargon. Add our story."

The rule: AI can draft, suggest and organise. YOU verify, personalise and add truth.

LESSON 1.3

Choosing your AI tool

Start with the free version of one tool. Pick one and get good at it.

Tool	Best for
ChatGPT	Writing, rewriting, clarity, structure
Google Gemini	Summarising PDFs, translation, long documents
Microsoft Copilot	Budgets, tables, spreadsheets, project plans
Claude	Complex reasoning, evaluation frameworks

Free is enough
for most groups. Pay only if you use AI every day or apply for 10+ grants a year.

LESSON 1.4

Change your settings before you type anything

Four tools, one minute each. Do it once, check it often.

ChatGPT

Turn off "Improve the model for everyone".

Google Gemini

Turn off "Keep Activity".

Microsoft Copilot

Turn off model training on text and voice.

Claude

Turn off "Help improve Claude".

Settings checked 27 October 2026. Menus change often, so check again before you start. Walk through yours on the next four slides.

LESSON 1.4 · SETTINGS

ChatGPT

chatgpt.com

1 **Click your profile icon (bottom left)**

2 **Choose Settings**

3 **Choose Data controls**

4 **Turn off "Improve the model for everyone"**

For one-off chats, use Temporary Chat. It is not saved to your history or used for training.

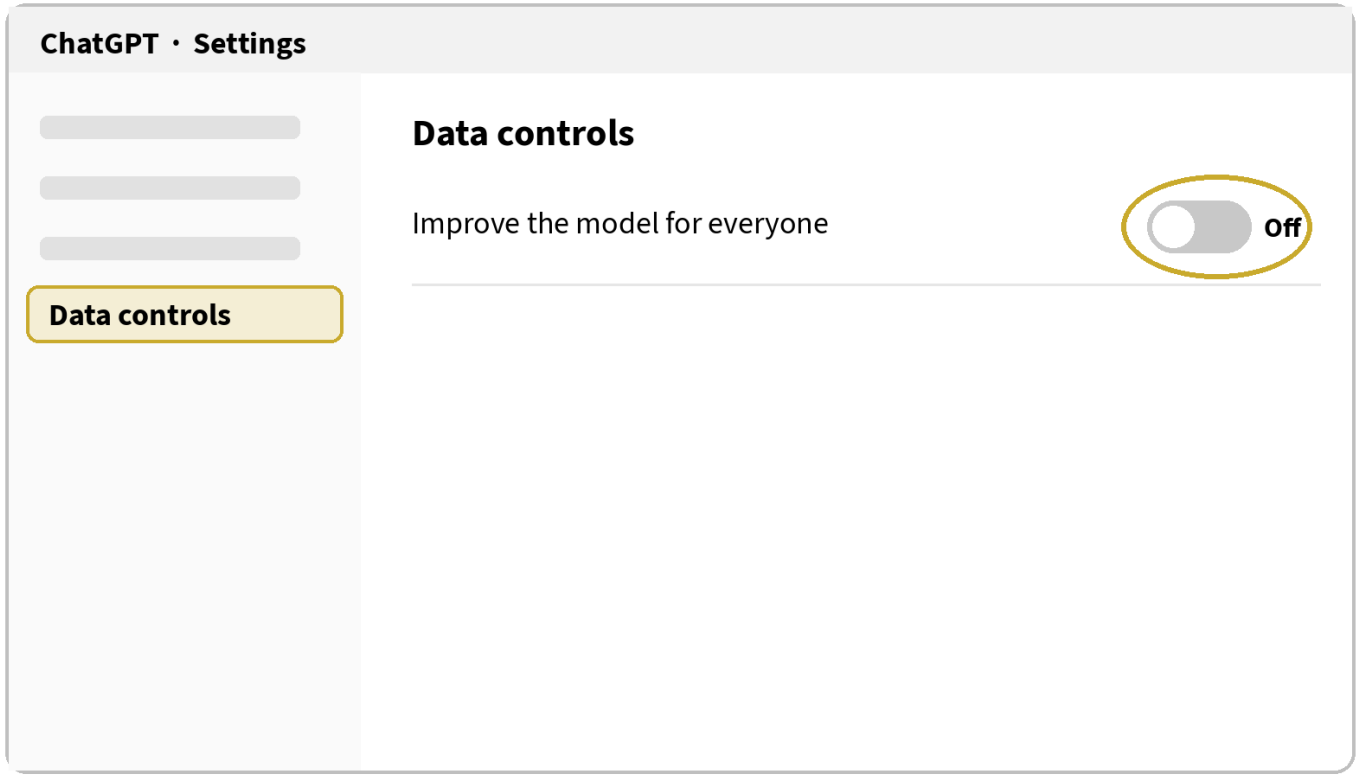


Illustration only. Replace with your own screenshot: right-click the picture, then Change Picture.

LESSON 1.4 · SETTINGS

Google Gemini

gemini.google.com

1 **Click Settings and help (bottom left)**

2 **Choose Activity**

3 **Turn off "Keep Activity"**

4 **Optional: delete past activity**

For one-off chats, use a Temporary Chat.

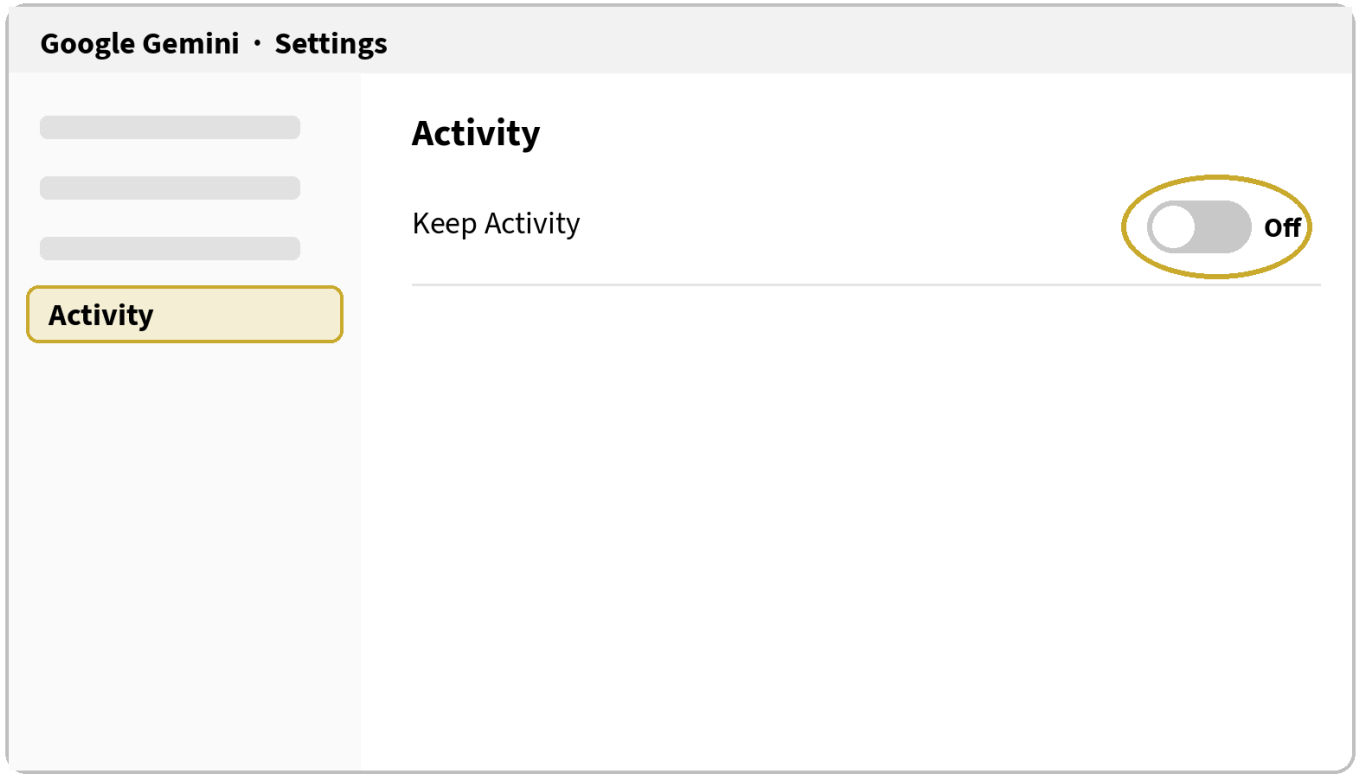


Illustration only. Replace with your own screenshot: right-click the picture, then Change Picture.

LESSON 1.4 · SETTINGS

Microsoft Copilot

copilot.microsoft.com

1 **Click your profile icon**

2 **Choose your profile name or Settings**

3 **Choose Privacy**

4 **Turn off model training on text and on voice**

Some versions call these "Training on conversation activity" and "Training on voice conversations".

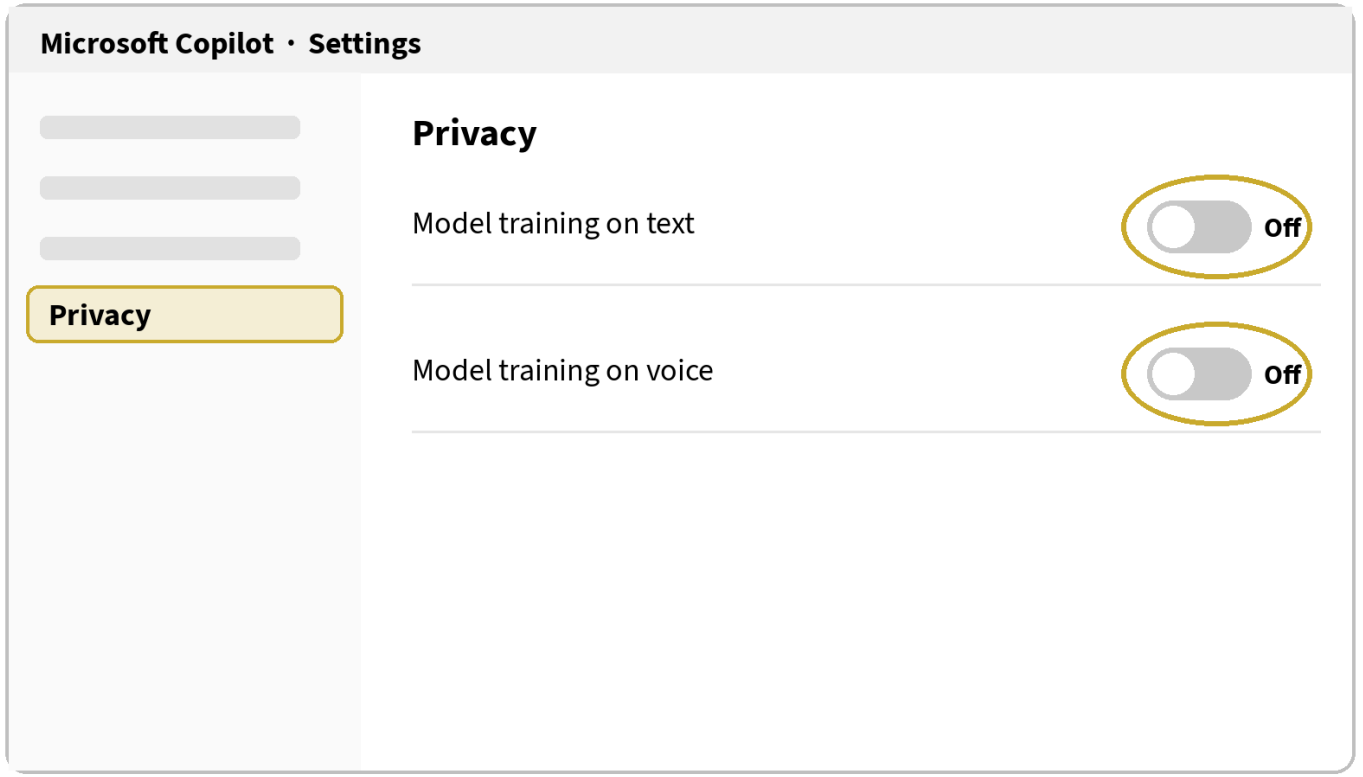


Illustration only. Replace with your own screenshot: right-click the picture, then Change Picture.

LESSON 1.4 · SETTINGS

Claude

claude.ai

1 **Click your name or initials (bottom left)**

2 **Choose Settings**

3 **Choose Privacy**

4 **Turn off "Help improve Claude"**

This applies to Free, Pro and Max plans.

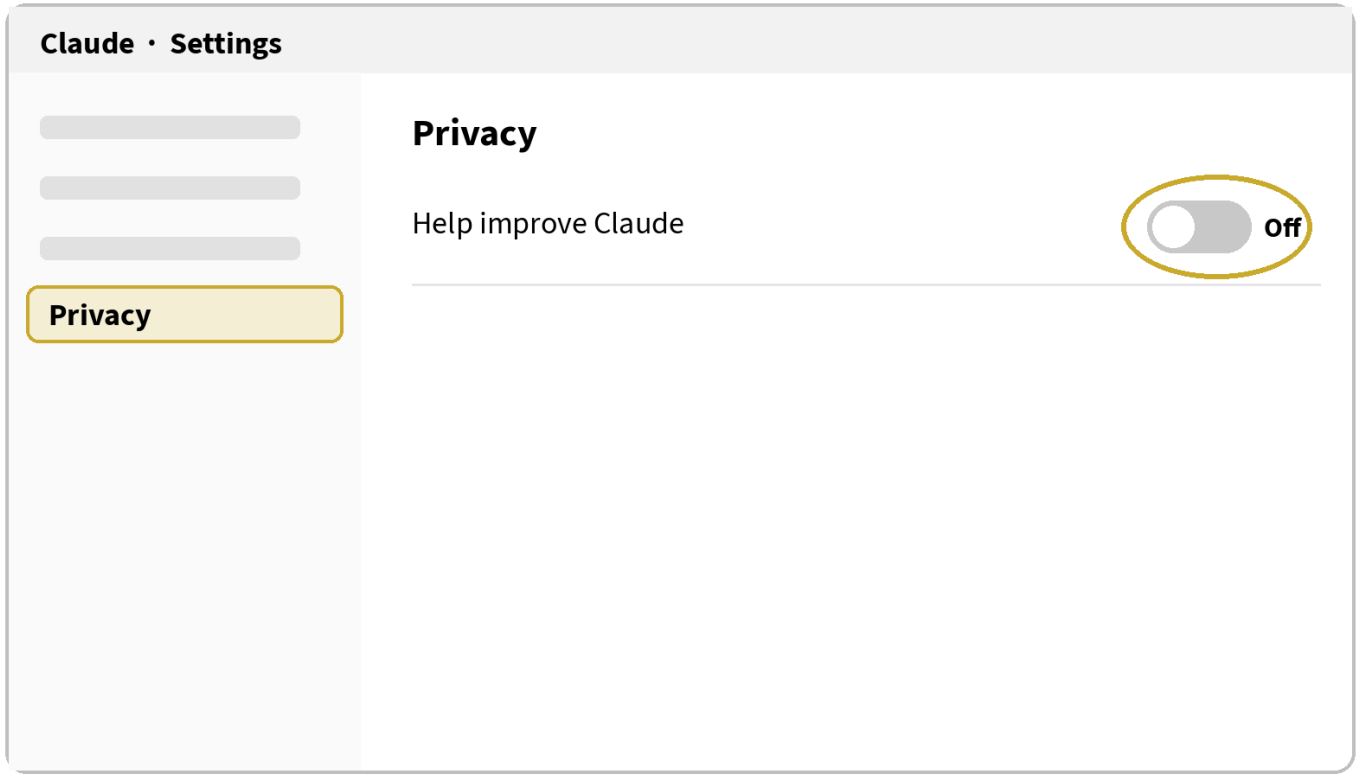


Illustration only. Replace with your own screenshot: right-click the picture, then Change Picture.

LESSON 1.4 · A REAL CASE

When AI goes wrong

In Victoria, a child protection worker used ChatGPT to help draft a report for court. for court. The state's information commissioner investigated, and the department department was directed to block generative AI tools for its child protection staff. protection staff.

The lesson: if it's about a real person, it doesn't go into a public AI tool.

Source: Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, investigation report, September 2024.

LESSON 1.4

The safe upload checklist

Before you upload anything, ask:

1. **Is it publicly available?**

   Council website: yes. Internal minutes: no.

2. **Would I pin it on a community noticeboard?**

   Event flyer: yes. Membership list: no.

3. **Zero personal information?**

   Names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, photos

4. **Zero financial details?**

   Bank accounts, statements, salaries

Any NO? Don't upload. When in doubt, leave it out.



LESSON 1.4

What's safe, and what never goes in

Safe to upload

Grant guidelines. Published council plans. Your project plan with no names. Your draft text.

Never upload

Member lists or contacts. Stories that identify people. Financial statements. Minutes or letters with names.

The OAIC recommends not entering personal information, especially sensitive information, into publicly available AI tools.

BREAK

15-minute break

Haven't scanned for your resources yet? Now's a good time.



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MODULE 2 · RUN

Decode and draft

Hold this question in mind

Which funder fits your idea, and how do you write where the marks sit?

You will answer it before this module ends.

LESSON 2.1

It's all in the prompt

Weak prompt

"Write me a grant."

Strong prompt

"Turn these bullet points into a clear paragraph for a community grant about social isolation. Use active voice. Emphasise community benefit."

The better the prompt, the better the outcome.

LESSON 2.1 · STEP 1

Open one AI tool

ChatGPT
chatgpt.com

Google Gemini
gemini.google.com

Microsoft Copilot
copilot.microsoft.com

Claude
claude.ai

Sign in, or create a free account. It takes 2 minutes.

LESSON 2.1 · STEP 2

Save the grant guidelines

Get the PDF onto your device first.

1. **Scan the QR code to open Bayside's grants page**

2. **Tap Quick Response Grants, then the guidelines (PDF)**

3. **Save it, and note where it saves**

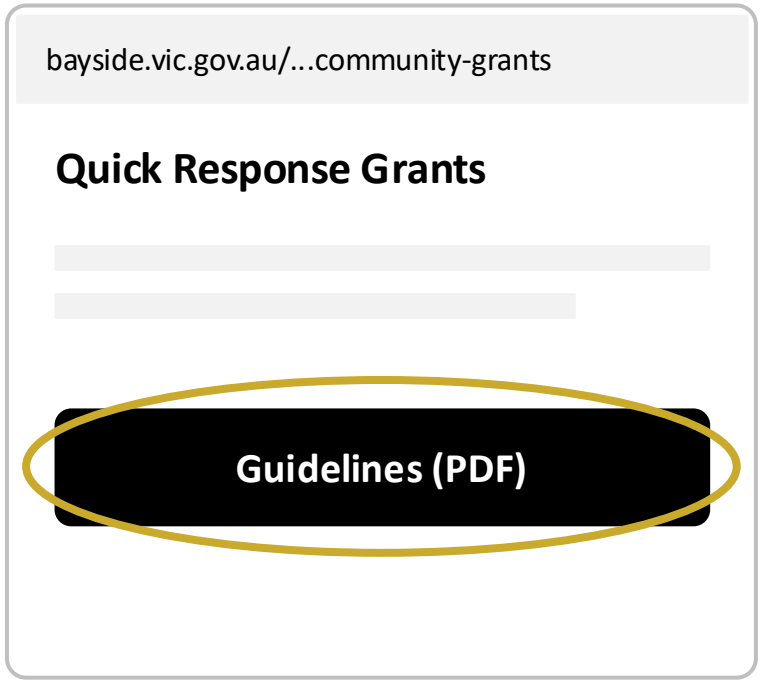


Illustration only. The real page may look different.

Bayside grants page

No device, or stuck? Pair up and work on one screen.

LESSON 2.1 · STEP 3

Upload it to your AI tool

The button looks slightly different in each tool.

1 **Click the + (or paperclip) in the chat box**

2 **Choose the PDF you just saved**

3 **When the file shows, type your prompt and send**

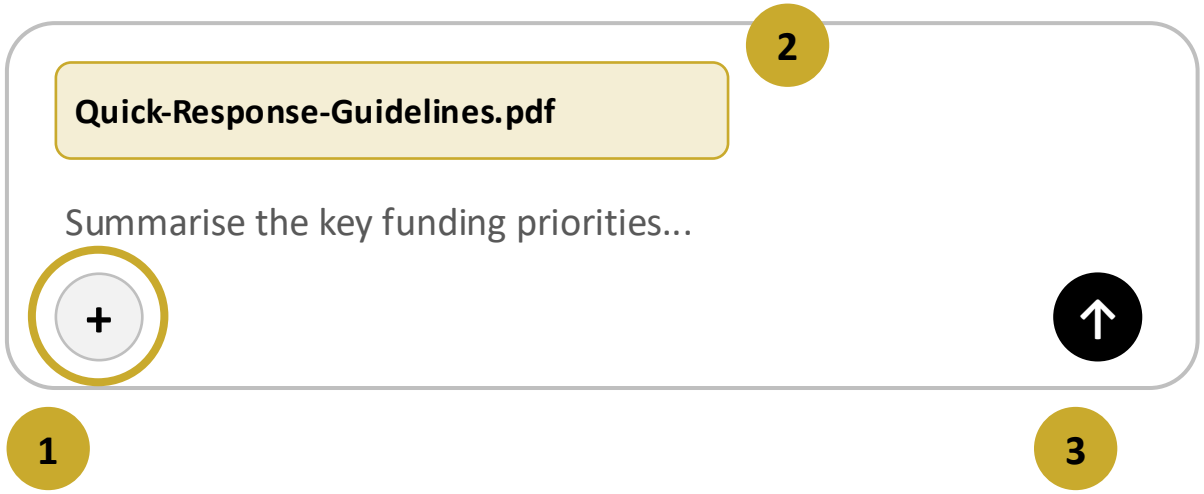


Illustration only. Buttons vary by tool.

On a phone? Uploading can be fiddly. Watch the demo and try it later on a laptop.

LESSON 2.1 · STEP 4

Summarise in plain English

Watch me type this prompt, then you try.

PROMPT

"Summarise the key funding priorities, eligibility requirements and assessment criteria from these grant guidelines in simple English suitable for a community group with volunteer leaders."

1. **Each stream, amount and dates**
2. **What it funds, and what it won't**
3. **The criteria and weightings**

LESSON 2.1 · STEP 5

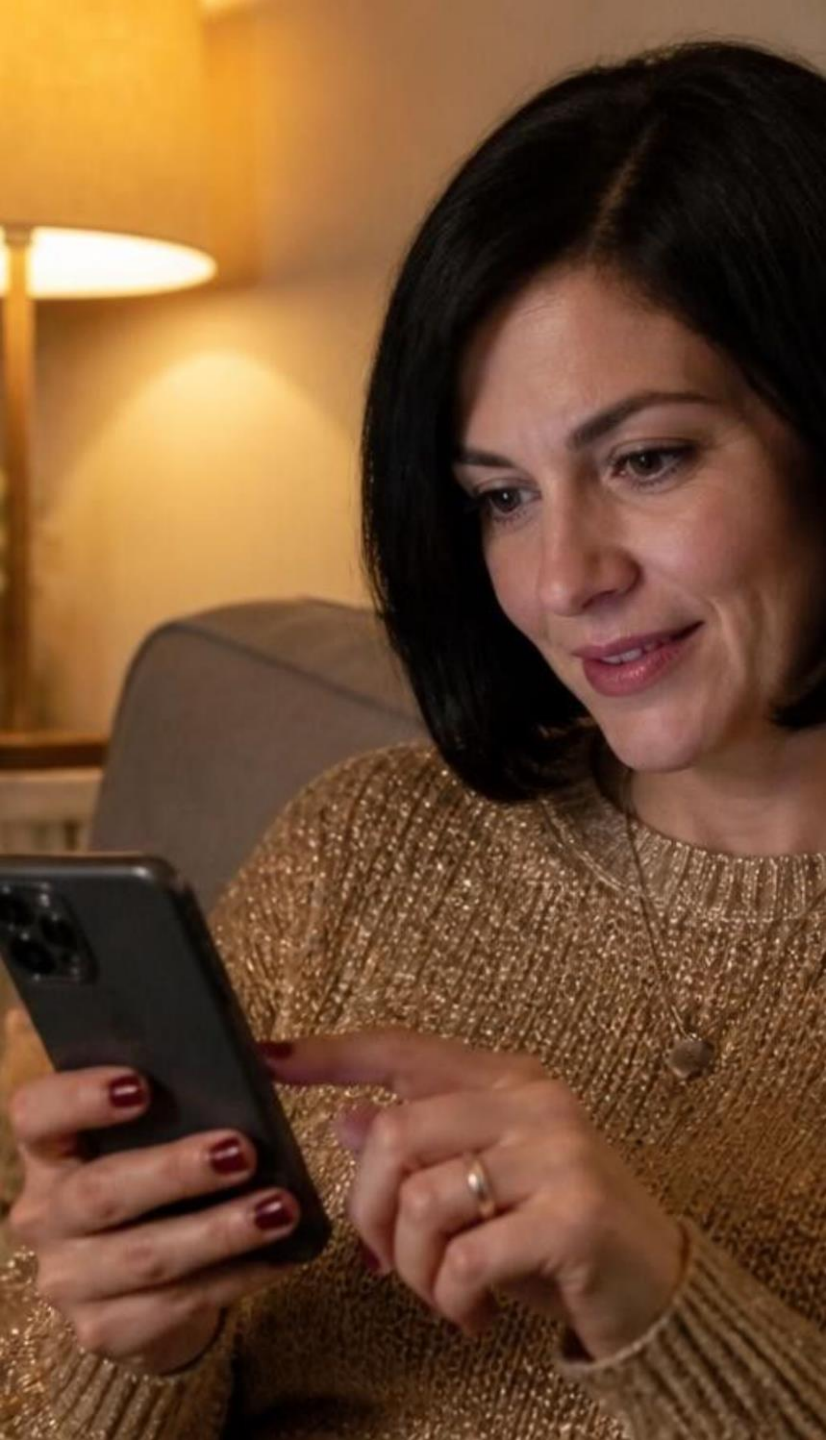
Translate, then translate back

AI supports many of the languages your community speaks.

PROMPT

"Rewrite this summary in [LANGUAGE] using simple everyday wording that a community volunteer would understand."

1. **Translate the guidelines**
2. **Discuss ideas in your language**
3. **Draft key points in your language**
4. **Translate back to English**
5. **A fluent speaker checks it**



LESSON 2.1 · EXERCISE 2

Practice: decode the guidelines

10 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 2, pages 7 and 8.

01

Open AI

Use the free account you you just set up.

02

Upload

The PDF you saved in Step 2.

03

Try a prompt

Ask AI to summarise the guidelines. Prompt on page 7.

Stuck? Pair up and share one screen. Raise your hand anytime.

LESSON 2.2

Find the right funder for your idea

Council grants are one option. Bayside's free grant search lists other funders too.

1 **Open the search**

Scan the QR code.

2 **Search your idea's key words**

For example: seniors, playgroup, sport, arts.

3 **Check the fit**

Eligibility, amounts and dates.

4 **Write two funders down**

Workbook page 9, Exercise 3, Step 1.

Bayside grant search

LESSON 2.2

Bayside's grant streams

Ask these for every stream: how much, when, what it funds, who is eligible.

Quick Response Grants

Up to $2,000. Open year round. A good first grant for many groups.

Annual Community Grants

For larger initiatives. Next round opens in 2027. Start preparing now.

Talk to Bayside's grants team early: grants@bayside.vic.gov.au



LESSON 2.2

What do funders actually want?

Every funder asks these. Answer with evidence.

1 **Is there a real community need?**

Not just that you want to do it, but that it needs doing.

2 **Will it actually help?**

The benefit is clear and achievable.

3 **Can you deliver it?**

Capacity, skills and track record.

4 **Is it good value?**

A realistic budget that makes sense.

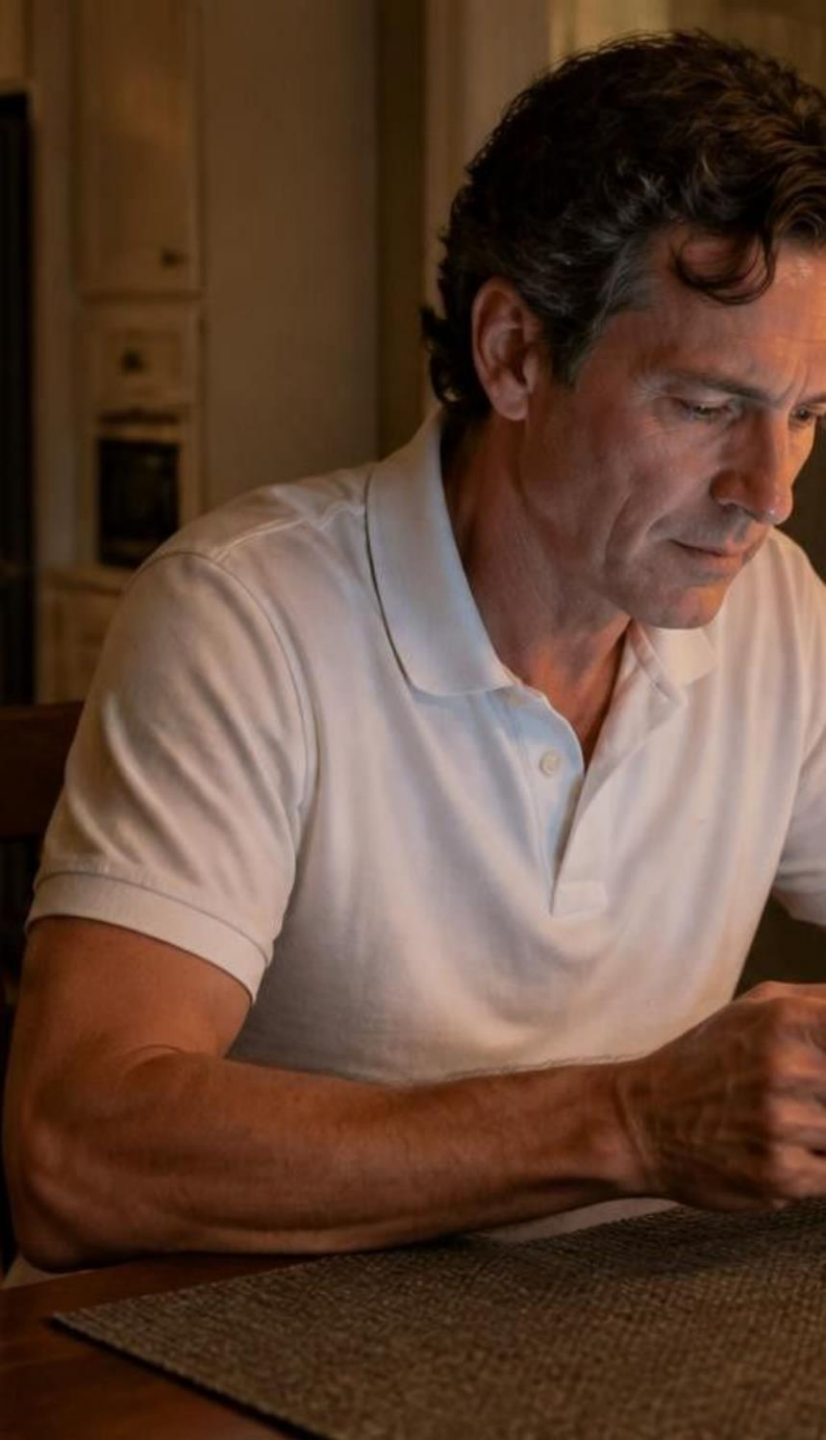
LESSON 2.2

How your application is assessed

Find each weighting in the guidelines and write it in.

___% Community need and benefit	___% Clear activity plan	___% Activity description
___% Alignment to plans	___% Budget	___% Organisation's financials

Spend the most time on the criterion with the most weight. Usually that's community need and benefit. benefit.



LESSON 2.2 · EXERCISE 3

Decode your grant

5 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 3, pages 9 and 10.

01

Upload

The guidelines for the stream you chose.

02

Ask AI

Ask about eligibility and deal-breakers. Prompt on page 9.

03

Compare

Turn to someone near you. What surprised you?

LESSON 2.3

The 7-part grant application

01 Problem

What need are you addressing?

02 Evidence

How do you know it's real?

03 Solution

What exactly will you do?

04 Implementation

Timeline and activities

05 Impact

Who benefits and how?

06 Budget

What will it cost and why?

07 Evaluation

How will you measure success?

Your truth

AI drafts. YOU provide the truth.

LESSON 2.3

Notes in, paragraph out

AI organises and phrases. You supply notes, lived experience and checked evidence.

Your notes

Lunar New Year community event. Open to all residents. About 200 people. No similar local event.

Your prompt

"Turn these dot points into a clear paragraph for a community grant about social connection. Use active voice: [paste]"

AI draft

"Our area's diverse residents have no local Lunar New Year celebration. This event will bring together around 200 people..."

Now personalise: your real numbers, your history and your community's story.

LESSON 2.3 · EXERCISE 4

From Idea Card to paragraph

8 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 4, page 11.

01

Pick points

2 min. Three to five dot points from your Idea Card.

02

Prompt

5 min. Use the prompt on workbook page 11.

03

Share

1 min. Swap with a partner. What needs personalising?

No names or personal details in the prompt.

MODULE 3 · RESULT

Verify and get ready to submit

Hold this question in mind

How will you know your application is accurate, safe and ready for an assessor?

You will answer it before this module ends.

LESSON 3.1

Verify the truth only you hold

Dos and don'ts before anything is submitted.

DO: be specific and human

"Weekly art classes where older residents build friendships."

DON'T: use AI buzzwords

"An innovative, world-class, transformative program."

DO: add your real data

Replace "[X% of residents]" with real numbers.

DON'T: let AI invent statistics

Verify every figure, every time.

LESSON 3.2

Review like an assessor

Five reasons grants get rejected, and what to ask AI.

Reason	Ask AI
Doesn't meet eligibility	"Check this project against the eligibility criteria. Any issues?"
Vague outcomes	"Turn this into a SMART goal with specific measures."
Unrealistic budget	"Sense-check this budget. Is it realistic for our area?"
Poor writing quality	"Rewrite this at a Grade 8 reading level."
Misses the deadline	"Create a timeline working backwards from [date]."

LESSON 3.3

Your next steps

What you built today, and what to do this week.

Grant Readiness Radar

Eight pillars scored. Two to focus on.

Grant Idea Card

One clear sentence. Two possible funders.

A safe AI routine

Settings changed. Guidelines decoded. A first paragraph drafted.

This week: email Bayside's grants team about your idea at grants@bayside.vic.gov.au, read the guidelines for guidelines for your chosen stream, and book one hour with your committee to draft your first answer. answer.

CLOSING QUESTION

RATE YOURSELF AGAIN, RIGHT NOW

On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could use AI safely and ethically and ethically to write a stronger grant application for your group's next project? project?

0 **10**

You gave yourself a number at the start. Give yourself a number now. What changed?

You are walking out with a clearer idea, two funders and a safe way to use AI.

YOUR RESOURCES

Take today home with you

Download today's slides, your workbook and your Grant Idea Card.

Scan the QR code and enter your details to download your resources.

Can't scan? Use the web address below.

instituteofexcellence.com/resources/bayside1026

ONE LAST THING

An honest review, in your own time



If today was useful, an honest review helps other community groups decide whether it's right for them.

No incentive, no pressure. I value your honest words either way.

Do it in your own time, not in this room.

Your Review is Appreciated

Institute of Excellence on Google

INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE

Thank you

More skill.
More confidence.
More you.

Despina Karatzias
Institute of Excellence
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