

AI Strategy for Hutt City Council

Division	Strategy and Engagement
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V 1.0	Julianne Hickey	June 2024	Initial AI Strategy
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Introduction

Hutt City Council's 'AI Strategy' is our explicit commitment to a future where technology enhances our community's wellbeing and prosperity.

AI, or artificial intelligence, is the use of computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as perception, reasoning, learning, decision making, and problem solving. AI has the potential to transform the way we deliver our services, enhance our staff's effectiveness, and improve our community's wellbeing. However, AI also poses significant challenges and risks, such as ethical, legal, social, and environmental implications. Therefore, we need a robust and comprehensive strategy to guide our use of AI, ensuring that it aligns with our values, policies, and obligations, and that it benefits people.

This strategy reflects our commitment to adapt swiftly to the fast-paced evolution of AI, while ensuring our foundational principles of Tika and Pono guide our journey.

Our strategy is built upon key elements that align with our vision of supporting Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and its people to thrive.

Key elements of our AI Strategy include:

- Positioning Hutt City Council as a leader in ethical AI practices within the local government sector.
- Investing in AI capabilities within our staff, community and teams to foster a culture of curiosity, innovation and responsible AI use.
- Partnering with others to enhance collaboration, share knowledge, and identify external funding in our AI journey.
- Honouring the Whakapapa of our data, ensuring its traceability and responsible and mature use.
- Ensuring our AI initiatives lead to tangible community benefits as public good and value for money for rate payers.

Our AI Strategy complements our other key strategies and our Long-Term Plan, all working together to achieve the 'Integrated Vision' for Hutt City. It's crucial that our strategies align, particularly in areas such as urban design, land-use, wellbeing, and risk management.

The strategy is implemented through an action plan that will be reviewed regularly. We will review this strategy regularly, allowing us to respond proactively to the rapid advancements in AI, while maintaining a strategy that is both short-term in its adaptability and long-term in setting us up for an AI-enabled future that remains human at its core.

This strategy must be read alongside the AI Policy, and the related documents that are included in Appendix 3 of that Policy.

The Strategy on a Page

We have developed the **AI Strategy on a Page** to encapsulate the strategic intent of Hutt City Council's AI initiatives. This concise guide distils the essence of our strategy, providing a high-level overview which contains the key messages for our staff and stakeholders. While it serves as a quick reference, it is supported by further detail within the broader AI Strategic Framework strengthening the business goals.

Components				
Our Vision/Purpose	AI helps us support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive			
Why we are creating this strategy (Our Case for Change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We face significant financial pressures in delivering our services. AI offers us a chance to manage our costs more effectivelyOur current systems and processes are not fully supporting our staff's effectiveness. By equipping them with suitable AI tools, we aim to enhance their growth, learning, skills, and work experienceThe pace of AI technological advancement is remarkable. We aim to lead in adapting to these changes, influencing how they affect our operations and ways of workingOur community expects responsive, quality services tailored to their individual, whānau, and community needs. We may be able to do this through AI-driven solutions			
Goals	We want to be leaders in responsible local government AI use in Aotearoa New Zealand/Australasia	We want our policies, investment and resource decisions to be better informed by evidence and data	We will identify the benefits of our AI initiatives, ensuring that our investments enhance frontline services and lead to measurable community improvement	We will make it easy for our customers/residents to work with us
Our Foundational Principles	<p>1. Tika and Pono: Our AI strategy is grounded in the principles of Tika and Pono, ensuring our use of AI is correct, right, accurate, and true.</p> <p>2. Ethical Use: We are committed to the ethical use of AI, built on trust and ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in all our AI applications.</p> <p>3. Mana Enhancing: Our use of AI will be mana enhancing, uplifting the dignity and autonomy of all people and the communities they belong to.</p> <p>4. Continuous Improvement: We will regularly review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation, reflecting our commitment to being Pono and Tika</p>			
Our Enabling Pillars	Governance & Risk systems	AI Capability	Data and Information management	Partnerships and collaborations
Our Key Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We will strengthen governance structures and establish a 1–2-year AI Roadmap.We will keep improving use of AI into operational areas and approve initiatives to continue and fund them.We will align the capability maturity model with strategic goals and actions.We will invest in scalable and flexible digital infrastructure by evaluating and selecting the best data platforms.We will explore opportunities to use AI to achieve our climate goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We will implement community upskilling initiatives to promote AI as a public good.We will build people leaders capability and leadership to drive AI initiatives and be an AI-enabled workforce.We will build and support Elected Members' capability and leadership.We will invest in training and upskilling staff to build AI and data capability.We will ensure the change to an AI enabled workforce is integrated effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We will establish robust data governance and quality frameworks to ensure data is clean, reliable, and well-governed.We will develop a comprehensive data lineage framework and integrate it into data governance policies.We will ensure data access by AI has appropriate security measures in place that AI can use to ensure secure access to data and information.We will invest in training and upskilling staff to build AI and data capability by making progress on Data Strategy priority actions.We will establish a Data Governance Group to ensure that the Data Strategy is implemented and monitored to support the delivery of the AI Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We will develop a comprehensive funding strategy to identify external funding sources, including monetising our intellectual property, attracting third-party funding and negotiating the best deals for ratepayers.We will develop strategic partnerships with technology vendors, research institutions, and other organisations to support AI initiatives.

Our Vision

Our vision for AI is to help us support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive.

Our vision reflects our belief in the transformative benefits of AI technology, and how this can be harnessed for public good and effective delivery of public services through making smarter decisions and fostering innovation and learning in our teams.

This vision is not standalone; it is intricately linked to our broader purpose and organisational objectives. AI is a strategic tool that can accelerate our journey towards our goals, enabling us to achieve more, faster, and with greater impact. It reflects our commitment to innovation and our dedication to the community, ensuring that every technological advancement translates into real-world benefits for the people we serve.

Our Case for Change

We have four main drivers for creating this AI strategy. They are:

1. We face significant financial pressures

The financial challenges that Hutt City Council and other local government entities face are ongoing and significant. AI can help us cope with these challenges by making some of our processes more automated and optimal, cutting down on mistakes and inefficiencies, and boosting our output and effectiveness. AI can help us cope with these challenges by reducing costs, making some of our process more automated and optimal, cutting down on mistakes and inefficiencies, boosting our output and effectiveness and exploring opportunities to generate revenue for AI products and partnerships.

2. AI tools can better support our staff to work in a more integrated way

We have invested in our digital transformation through the Go Digital Programme, where we will integrate digital technology into all areas of our business. Utilising AI will be an important step in this transformation journey. We are equipping our staff with suitable AI tools, and we aim to further enhance their growth, learning, skills, and work experience. We also want to foster a culture of innovation, curiosity, and learning, and support our staff to adapt to new ways of working with AI.

3. We want to grow in house capability

The pace of AI technological advancement is remarkable. We aim to lead in adapting to these changes, influencing how they affect our operations and ways of working. We also want to experiment appropriately with new AI ideas and learn from the results to improve innovation and share that learning

4. We want to be better at meeting community expectations

We're committed to delivering responsive, quality services tailored to the individual, whānau, and community needs. AI-driven solutions may enable us to personalise, customise, and enhance our service delivery, offering channels and options for engagement and feedback.

Our Goals

We have four main aims for our AI strategy. They are:

1. We want to continue momentum we have established as leaders in responsible local government AI use in Aotearoa New Zealand/Australasia. We want to set an example for other councils and organisations on how to use AI ethically, transparently, and accountably, and how to ensure that AI benefits all our stakeholders.
2. We want our policies, investment and resource decisions to be better informed by evidence and data. We want to use AI to enhance our data analysis and decision-making, ensuring that we use reliable, relevant, and accurate data, and that we can explain and justify our AI decisions.
3. We want to use AI to help us tackle financial challenges. We want to monetise our intellectual property to ensure that our investments enhance frontline services and lead to measurable community improvement.
4. We want to make it easy for our customers/residents to work with us. We want to use AI to transform service and operating models, providing more options, convenience, and satisfaction for our customers. We also want to use AI to increase our community engagement, providing more opportunities for feedback, participation, and collaboration.

These goals are not only aspirational, but also operational. They serve as criteria for evaluating our current and future AI initiatives, as well as indicators of our progress and success. Whenever we plan, implement, or monitor an AI project, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Does this help to position us as technology leaders?
- Does it enhance our data capability?
- Will this help reduce costs?
- Does it improve public engagement and enhance citizen centricity?

By answering these questions, we can ensure that our AI strategy is aligned with our vision, and that we are using AI in line with our Foundational Principles.

Our Foundational Principles

We have four foundational principles that guide our AI strategy. They are:

- **Tika and Pono:** Our AI strategy is grounded in the principles of Tika and Pono, ensuring our use of AI is correct, right, accurate, and true. To be Tika means to be correct, true, fair and accurate. To be Pono is to be true, valid, honest and genuine. We will use AI in ways that are consistent with our values, policies, and legal obligations, and that respect the rights and interests of all our stakeholders.
- **Ethical Use:** We are committed to the ethical use of AI, built on trust and ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in all our AI applications. We will use AI in ways that are ethical, responsible, and beneficial for all, and that avoid harm, bias, and discrimination. As a public service organisation we see AI as a force for good but are mindful of its use and application for harm.
- **Mana Enhancing:** Our use of AI will be mana enhancing, uplifting the dignity and autonomy of all people and the communities they belong to. We will use AI in ways that are empowering, inclusive, and respectful, and that acknowledge and support the diversity and needs of all our stakeholders.
- **Continuous Improvement:** We will regularly review and update our policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure they are relevant and effective for an AI-enabled organisation, reflecting our commitment to Tika and Pono. We will also monitor and evaluate our AI initiatives, ensuring that they are aligned with our goals and vision, and that they deliver the intended benefits and outcomes.

Our Enabling Pillars and Key Priorities

We have four enabling pillars that support us to deliver our AI vision and purpose for Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive.

These pillars are Governance and Risk systems, AI Capability, Data and Information management and Partnerships and collaborations. Each pillar includes a set of key priorities that will guide our activities and action plan for implementing AI tools and technology solutions in our organisation.

Our Pillars are all needed to give effect to our strategy. Each one is integral to delivering the full strategy – and investment and resources are essential across all pillars, as they are not optional but rather collectively necessary. Within each pillar, we have identified coordinated actions, identified through extensive stakeholder engagement, which are crucial for realising the full potential and benefits of AI.

1. Governance and Risk systems

The “Governance and Risk systems” pillar emphasises the importance of embedding a robust AI governance framework into our current governance framework.

As outlined in our AI Policy, the AI Governance Committee will continue to provide clarity for the roles, responsibilities, and processes for overseeing, managing and monitoring our AI initiatives. It will enable us to use our risk management framework and system that identifies, assesses, and mitigates the potential risks and challenges of using AI. Aligning our AI initiatives with Long Term Plan will provide us with a focus on achieving our goals such as those related to carbon reduction, sustainability, and climate change.

The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will strengthen governance structures and establish a 1–2-year AI Roadmap.
- We will keep improving use of AI into operational areas and approve initiatives to continue and fund them.
- We will align the capability maturity model with strategic goals and actions.
- We will invest in scalable and flexible digital infrastructure by evaluating and selecting the best data platforms.
- We will explore opportunities to use AI to achieve our climate goals.

2. AI Capability

The “AI Capability” pillar supports the significance of investing in our people and fostering a culture that values transparency, innovation, curiosity, and learning.

This focus is vital as it ensures the effective, ethical, and responsible use of AI, which is integral to our success. The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will implement community upskilling initiatives to promote AI as a public good.
- We will build people leaders capability and leadership to drive AI initiatives and be an AI-enabled workforce.
- We will build and support Elected Members’ capability and leadership.
- We will invest in training and upskilling staff to build AI and data capability.
- We will ensure the change to an AI enabled workforce is integrated effectively.

3. Data and Information management

The “Data and Information Management” pillar is a vital part of our AI Strategy. It underscores that:

- Data should be treated as an asset and be accurate, reliable and trusted.
- Understanding data architecture and management is key. Robust security measures for data are critical.
- People need to be trained and aware of data's importance.
- A data governance group is needed to drive progress on implementing the data strategy and dependencies for AI.

This pillar also highlights the need for automating and digitising our processes to enable seamless data flow, laying the groundwork for future AI integration. Furthermore, it emphasises the establishment of a continuous data quality management system and an AI data registry to ensure data quality, accessibility, and security.

The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will establish robust data governance and quality frameworks to ensure data is clean, reliable, and well-governed.
- We will develop a comprehensive data lineage framework and integrate it into data governance policies.

- We will ensure data access by AI has appropriate security measures in place that AI can use to ensure secure access to data and information.
- We will invest in training and upskilling staff to build AI and data capability by making progress on Data Strategy priority actions.
- We will establish a Data Governance Group to ensure that the Data Strategy is implemented and monitored to support the delivery of the AI Strategy.

4. Partnerships and collaborations

This pillar focuses on sharing our AI experiences and insights with the local government sector and others and learning from their best practices. We will explore funding strategies, including external funding sources and partnerships with tech providers who can offer us innovative and tailored AI solutions and help us establish our use cases. We will explore strategic partnerships with the private sector, who can provide us with expert advice and guidance on our AI journey.

The key priorities for this pillar are:

- We will develop a comprehensive funding strategy to identify external funding sources, including monetising our intellectual property, attracting third-party funding and negotiating the best deals for ratepayers.
- We will develop strategic partnerships with technology vendors, research institutions, and other organisations to support AI initiatives.

Implementation

An Ambitious Strategy to guide us

This strategy sets out how we plan to use AI to support Te Awa Kairangi ki Tai and all its people to thrive. The scope of the strategy includes the Council and its Council-Controlled Organisations (CCOs). We recognise the transformative potential of AI technology, and how it can help us better support our community. This strategy is ambitious, but we are not complacent about the challenges and risks ahead.

An embedded Governance Framework to keep us safe

We recognise that AI is a fast-changing and complex field, and that we need to be continuously learning, testing, and improving our capabilities and practices.

We also acknowledge that we have a duty to use AI in a responsible and ethical manner to build trust, and to monitor its impacts and outcomes on our community and environment.

Our governance framework will oversee the implementation and evaluation of this strategy and ensure ongoing alignment with our vision and values.

An Action Plan to deliver

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan for 2025–2026, which outlines the specific initiatives and projects that we will deliver. The action plan will be tracked to oversee the implementation and accountability for delivery of the AI Governance Group.

Next steps

Actions	Frequency	Next Review Date
Review and update AI governance group ToR, including a review of the AI Strategy	Every 3 years	July 2028
Review of the Action Plan	Yearly	July 2026
Establish a 1–2-year AI Roadmap	Every 1–2 years	July 2027