

Prompting tips: AI tools to support evaluation recommendations.

Introduction

These tips are for Australian Public Service (APS) officers interested in using AI tools to support evaluation recommendations and action planning. This guidance is for **video 14** from the “Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for Evaluation in the Australian Government” series.

This video series and resources are meant to inspire ideas and learning. They are not designed to be a manual. It aims to show how AI tools, especially generative AI (Gen AI) can support the evaluation process. The goal is to help evaluators and APS staff explore how AI can be useful, and where it is less useful.

AI can help with repetitive tasks but cannot replace expert knowledge. APS officers must carefully review AI outputs. Any AI-based decisions and products must be owned by the officers. This human oversight can help ensure that results are accurate, fair, and culturally appropriate.

Please note that you should only use AI tools that have been approved by your agency or department. Any documents that you upload to the tool should only be up to the security clearance level approved for the tool by your agency or department.

Prompt engineering

A prompt is an instruction in natural language that tells a Gen AI tool to perform a task. Prompt engineering is the process of creating and refining these prompts to get a suitable output from the tool.¹ Table 1 below shares some overarching tips for using Gen AI tools. This is derived from the AI Colab’s “AI for Policy People” course, available through APSLearn. These tips are organised along four pillars:



Share specifics and context



Provide examples



Avoid leading or biased prompts



Chat, not search

¹ [Prompts overview | Microsoft Learn](#)

Table 1: Essential prompt engineering tips

Share specifics and context	Provide examples	Avoid leading or biased prompts	Chat, not search
Gen AI tools like Copilot are not search-engines. They don't work on keywords, they work on the meaning of words and how they are used, just like people. For more tailored, and useful responses from AI tools, you should provide as much context as you can, with specific requests. Vague prompts lead to generic answers.	Gen AI tools can "read between the lines" pick up a lot of indirect instructions when you share raw examples about your topic of interest. Examples help reinforce your specific requests.	Use balanced prompts/requests to get well-rounded responses. Avoid leading or biased prompts. If you are unsure that the Gen AI tool has considered all aspects of your query, simply ask it to be appropriately critical.	Use Gen AI tools conversationally. Ask clarifying questions, build on responses, and treat it like a colleague you're bouncing ideas off. Don't expect a perfect response in one go. Iterate, get a rough version, revise and refine through additional prompts.

AI tools, recommendations and action planning

AI tools can help generate draft evaluation recommendations and management responses based on evaluations. They can also be used to step out the implementation of any actions along specific timelines. Finally, AI tools can tailor any outputs like recommendations, action plans. This can help us better communicate with key stakeholder groups like decision makers, program staff, community members.

Prompts to generate first pass recommendations

Before prompting, please upload relevant data and documentation. These are some example prompts that you could use to generate draft recommendations.

1. "Summarise the findings from uploaded documents in two pages."
2. "Summarise the Australian Government style manual"
3. "You are a policy advisor to the Secretary of the Department. Please respond to any future prompts as the policy advisor."
4. "Based on these findings, suggest recommendations for program improvement, following the Australian Government style manual. Use headings, bullet points and plain language. Provide page references from the report and citations for your statements."
5. "Arrange these recommendations in a table, grouped into short-, medium-, and long-term priorities."

Test these recommendations with key stakeholders and decision makers before finalising them. You should check if they are appropriate, and feasible. You should also check that they align with organisational goals, and if they are relevant for the program.

Prompts to support action planning

Once you have finalised the evaluations recommendations, the next step is planning a management action plan. These are some example prompts that you could use to generate a first pass action plan.

1. “Summarise these recommendations on one page.”
2. “Draft an action plan outlining steps, timelines, and responsible parties for each recommendation. Sequence the action plan along the short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations”
3. “List key dependencies and risks for each action.”

Tips for effective prompting to support action planning

Use the structure in table 2 to guide your prompt engineering for developing action plans.

Table 2: Elements of using AI tools to support action planning.

Element	Description
Role	Specifying a role can help the AI tool adopt a “persona” when generating responses. This can lead to sharper and more specific responses. An example: “Act as a policy advisor preparing an action plan for a Departmental Secretary.”
Context and input	Specifying documents to use while preparing responses can help guard against “hallucinations” or false statements when the AI tool generates a response. For example, “Use the uploaded report and/or documents to generate any responses.”
Task and format	Clearly setting parameters for the task, including format (summary, brief, infographic), length or duration (words, pages, minutes), and headings or topics can lead to a clearer and sharper product. For example: “Produce a 2-page plain action plan with timelines covering a 2-year period and responsibilities.”
Guardrails	It is also helpful to include instructions about what you do not want the AI tool to do. For example: “Avoid using jargon, provide in-text references and a reference list. Respond with “I don’t know” if you don’t have reference data. Do not make up a response.”

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Policy and training

All use of AI tools must comply with the [Policy for the responsible use of AI in government](#). Your use of AI tools should also comply with any guidance and any specific requirements from your entity's accountable official under the Policy for the responsible use of AI in government.

The ACE strongly recommends that you complete the APS Learn course, [AI in government fundamentals](#). This course has been designed to provide all APS staff with foundational knowledge of AI, and the principles of safe and responsible use. Lastly, you can test a suite of AI tools on [GovAI](#). This is a secure, APS-only platform designed to help APS officers learn about and use artificial intelligence (AI).