AI FOR IMPACT

innovate(us)

What *We've* Built

February 2026

Burnes Center for Social Change
Northeastern University

THEGOVLAB

What *We've* Built

AI for Impact has developed a portfolio of AI products in use in government agencies and civic organizations. Each tool addresses a specific operational challenge, from accessing institutional knowledge to improving benefits access, procurement workflows, and public communication.

Together, these products demonstrate a practical model for human- and community-centered AI development inside real public institutions.

Burnes Center for Social Change

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Our *Complete* Portfolio

Challenge #1

Accessing Institutional Intelligence

Problem

Staff are required to understand large volumes of regulations, which often change, to accomplish even simple tasks, requiring them to search across manuals, policies, and internal documentation to answer their own and the public's questions.

Benefit

We used AI to enable faster and more accurate access to information, reducing the time for boarding, producing more complete answers faster, more consistent answers, safer operations and more accurate feedback.

Product	Client	What It Does
HEKA	Massachusetts Department of Transportation	AI knowledge agent enabling junior engineers to produce designs that meet guidelines faster, and reducing the burden of senior engineers who supervise and mentor.
IT Ops Genie	MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services	AI assistant that reduces the time for IT support staff to solve issues for HHS users by accessing over 700 documents that have processes, procedures, and other relevant information.

GENIE	MA Executive Office of Technology Services and Security	Secure generative AI sandbox allowing state employees to experiment with AI tools without exposing sensitive data.
AI Hub	MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs	No-code platform enabling staff to deploy AI-powered chatbots using trusted departmental data sources.

Examples of Impact

- HEKA achieved 78% reduction in manual search time for MassDOT engineers.
- IT Ops Genie supports 200–300 IT staff serving 500,000+ residents, centralizing 700+ internal documents.
- AI Hub enables rapid deployment of department-level AI tools, reducing information retrieval time from hours or days to minutes.

> **HEKA achieved a**
>
> **78%**
>
> ***reduction* in manual search time for MassDOT engineers.**

Challenge #2

Document Review & Analysis

Problem

Important legal, regulatory, and investigative processes depend on reviewing complex documents at scale.

Benefit

We use AI to enable significant reductions in review time, improved consistency, and scalable administrative capacity.

Product	Client	What It Does
One L	MA Operational Services Division	AI tool that compares vendor contracts against standard state terms, flags conflicts, and generates redlines for legal review.
ABE (Assistive Buyer Engine)	MA Operational Services Division	AI tool supporting buyers navigating complex procurement regulation, statewide contracts and user guides.
FAIR	NJ Attorney General's Office, Division on Civil Rights	AI system that organizes investigative notes and interviews into the elements used by senior staff for determination - taking less time to understand the elements of the case and making sure that important information is not missed.

Examples of Impact

- One L achieved 83% reduction in first-pass legal contract review time.
- The combined deployment of One L and ABE established a dual-AI-agent procurement workflow improving efficiency and contract accuracy.

- As a result, One L and ABE received the 2025 George Cronin Gold Award from the National Association of State Procurement Officials and the NASPO Academic Collaboration Award.
- FAIR reduced a two-hour civil rights interview summary process to under one minute and supports case processing for 3,000+ civil rights complainants annually.

FAIR reduced a *two-hour* rights interview summary process *to under one minute*.

One L achieved

83%

***reduction* in first-pass legal contract review time**

Challenge #3

Benefits Access & Service Navigation Tools

Problem

Residents struggle to access programs they are eligible for due to complex rules and fragmented information.

Benefit

Increased program uptake, reduced administrative burden, more equitable service delivery.

Product	Client	What It Does
A Healthier Democracy AI	Link Health	AI tool that generates privacy-first smart benefits eligibility calculators used in healthcare settings to help low-income patients apply for unclaimed federal benefits.
MassHealth Helper	MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services	AI tool supporting enrollment center staff in navigating eligibility rules and application procedures for MassHealth.
AC Helper	Fair Count	AI chatbot guiding families through enrollment in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program.
A-IEP	Innovate Public Schools	AI tool helping families translate, summarize, and understand Individualized Education Programs to support advocacy.

Examples of Impact

- More than $5 million in federal benefits has been secured for families through A Healthier Democracy AI deployments embedded in local healthcare settings. The

tool is now in regular use with over 100 active users. Survey respondents report significant time savings, approximately 1.5 to 2 hours per shift per navigator

- MassHealth Helper supports enrollment operations for a program serving 25%+ of Massachusetts residents, including over 40% of children and 60% of nursing facility residents.
- Co-designed with families and piloted with 150 caregivers before its February 2026 public release, A-IEP strengthens parents' ability to advocate effectively and expands equitable access to education support for non-English-speaking students with disabilities.
- AC Helper deployment informed the development of subsequent healthcare-based benefits access tools, strengthening reuse across programs.

More than
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A Healthier Democracy AI

Challenge #4

Economic Opportunity Tools

Problem

Funding opportunities and economic development programs are difficult to discover and navigate.

Benefit

We use AI to enable greater participation in public programs, improved funding utilization, and stronger economic outcomes.

Product	Client	One-line description
GrantWell	MA Executive Office of Administration and Finance	AI tool helping municipalities and underserved communities analyze grant requirements and draft applications aligned with the scoring criteria.
Grants Navigator	MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs	AI-enhanced search tool consolidating state grant programs into a single, searchable interface.
EASE	NJ Economic Development Authority	AI tool validating business documents at submission,reducing the time to identify issues so that small businesses access state aid.
BEACON	MA Executive Office of Economic Development	AI tool helping staff and businesses navigate available grants, programs, and economic resources.

Examples of Impact

- Grants Navigator consolidates 85 state grant programs into a single searchable interface on Mass.gov.

- GrantWell piloted statewide with municipalities through the Director of Federal Funds roadshow.
- BEACON supports navigation of economic development programs serving 750,000+ Massachusetts businesses, 99.5% of which are small businesses.
- EASE streamlines validation of tax clearance documentation for small business state aid applications, reducing manual review burden.

> **Grants Navigator *consolidates 85 state grant programs* into a single searchable interface on Mass.gov.**

Challenge #5

Clearer, More Accessible Public Communications

Problem

Government websites and permitting systems are hard to understand, while design and content development capacity within government is limited.

Benefit

We use AI to improve accessibility and clarity, faster digital modernization, better use of scarce design resources.

Product	Client	What It Is
MAX	State of New Jersey	AI tool that analyzes website content for accessibility, readability, and simplicity to guide design and content improvements.
PermitPal	City of Boston	AI tool that identifies and organizes permit-related content to give editors visibility into existing materials. Additionally supported the redesign of permitting guidance organized around resident intent rather than agency structure.
Template Filler	City of Boston	AI tool that synthesizes source documents into standardized web templates to accelerate content creation.

Examples of Impact

- → Boston launched a public beta AI-powered permitting search experience built from 25 years of permit data, generating 260 intent-based permitting pathways.
- → PermitPal and Template Filler reduced weeks of manual content review and improved consistency across Boston.gov permitting pages.
- → MAX enables structured analysis of accessibility and readability issues to prioritize modernization of public-facing government websites

Challenge #6

Civic Engagement & Policy Intelligence Tools

Problem

Governments struggle to synthesize public input and large volumes of policy information.

Benefit

We use AI to create responsive institutions, structured engagement, faster evidence-informed decision-making and more democratic engagement.

Product	Client	One-line description
Open Feedback	City of Boston	AI-powered system that centralizes and categorizes resident feedback to support real-time government action.
Civic Connect	POPVOX Foundation / U.S. House	AI pilot supporting congressional staff in responding to constituent inquiries.
Launchpad	City of Boston	AI search of the city's open data catalogue.
Policy Synth	Citizens Foundation / Museum of Science	AI research toolkit using autonomous agents to scan and synthesize policy solutions across thousands of sources.
MATCH	MA Executive Office of Education	AI tool helping students explore academic programs and career pathways across public higher education institutions.

Examples of Impact

→ Open Feedback centralizes previously fragmented resident input into structured datasets for real-time analysis by City of Boston staff.

- Civic Connect pilot led to development of a new chatbot product for congressional offices through POPVOX Foundation.
- Policy Synth was used to run a national literacy engagement and supported the New Jersey AI Task Force.
- Launchpad saved 1.4M + constituent hours and reduced $3.5M + in soft costs for the City of Boston's Bostonia Academy by improving how the city searches its data and streamlining municipal processes.
- MATCH informed development of a statewide higher education portal serving Massachusetts public institutions.

> **Launchpad *saved 1.4M+ constituent hours* and *reduced $3.5M+* in soft costs for the City of Boston's Bostonia Academy.**

The *Delivery* Model

AI for Impact works by bringing AI-trained product teams together with public-sector experts, designers, and community partners to build and implement AI tools that solve public problems.

The program focuses on turning clearly defined operational challenges into working systems that agencies and the public can use immediately.

The model succeeds because it emphasizes problem definition first. Teams work closely with agency staff and community stakeholders to understand workflows, identify bottlenecks, and define what success looks like before building anything. This ensures tools respond to real needs rather than abstract technology opportunities.

Development happens directly in partners' cloud environments, which allows teams to prototype quickly, test with users, and move to deployment and use without long procurement cycles or system-integration delays. Agency staff remain involved throughout the process, shaping the tool as it evolves and ensuring adherence to robust privacy and security protections.

Projects typically move from problem definition to prototype, testing, and deployment in short cycles. By the end of a project, agencies have a working tool, documentation, and the experience of implementing AI within their own systems.

> **Development happens *directly in partners' cloud environments*, which allows teams to prototype quickly, test with users, and move to deployment and use *without long procurement cycles* or system-integration delays.**

Over time, this approach has produced a set of repeatable product patterns, such as knowledge assistants, document-review tools, benefits-navigation systems, and digital-service modernization tools. Each product can be adapted across agencies and jurisdictions.

As a complementary benefit, almost all our product teams including graduate, undergraduate and community college students on a paid sabbatical go into public interest technology careers. They are often snapped up by the government agencies with whom we have partnered for sustainable careers that advance AI for good.

Community-centered AI is an approach to designing and deploying AI tools with the people most affected by them.

Rather than building systems in isolation from lived experience, this model engages families, frontline workers, public servants, and residents as co-creators from problem definition through testing and deployment. Projects such as A-IEP, A Healthier Democracy AI, Open Feedback, and others are developed using this approach, grounded in real workflows, local policy contexts, and community priorities.

Case Study #1

Healthier Democracy AI — Embedding Benefits Access in Healthcare

Eligible families frequently leave healthcare settings without accessing food assistance, utility support, or cost-sharing programs they qualify for. Enrollment processes are often fragmented, paper-heavy, and dependent on follow-up that never happens.

AI for Impact partnered with Link Health to build Healthier Democracy AI, a privacy-preserving eligibility screener embedded directly in healthcare settings. The tool enables patients to assess eligibility and begin applications while waiting for care.

The most meaningful impact has been transforming benefit enrollment from a fragmented, paper-heavy process into a real-time clinical intervention, enabling patients to secure food, utility, and healthcare cost assistance before leaving the hospital.

To date, the system has helped unlock over $5.4 million in federal benefits, including SNAP and EBT, for families who might otherwise have gone without support.

The tool is now in regular use across healthcare settings with more than 100 active users. Survey respondents report significant time savings, Patient Navigators help save approximately 1.5 to 2 hours per shift (8–10 hours per week per full-time staff member), driven by automated intake, document extraction, eligibility pre-screening, and AI-generated case documentation. In healthcare settings without navigators, patients have used the chatbot directly to complete daily enrollments.

All surveyed users recommended continued or expanded use of the platform.

> **The most meaningful impact has been transforming benefit enrollment from a fragmented, paper-heavy process into a real-time clinical intervention, *enabling patients to secure food, utility, and healthcare cost assistance* before leaving the hospital.**

Because public benefits eligibility rules follow structured administrative frameworks across states, the model can be adapted to additional healthcare systems with localized program inputs, embedding "money as medicine" directly into routine care delivery.

Case Study #2

One L and ABE — State Procurement Modernization

Massachusetts procurement attorneys were spending up to six hours manually reviewing vendor contracts against standard state terms. The process was repetitive and constrained legal capacity for higher-risk negotiations.

AI for Impact built One L to automatically compare vendor submissions to Commonwealth terms, flag conflicts, generate redlines, and annotate edits with policy references. ABE was developed alongside it to answer procurement questions using official guidance and contract documentation.

The result was an 83% reduction in first-pass legal review time, allowing attorneys to shift from repetitive markup to complex oversight.

The dual system received the 2025 George Cronin Gold Award and the NASPO Academic Collaboration Award, signaling national validation.

> **The result was an *83% reduction in first-pass legal review time*, allowing attorneys to shift from repetitive markup to complex oversight.**

Procurement workflows are structurally similar across states. Contract comparison, legal review, and vendor guidance processes follow standardized patterns, making the architecture adaptable across jurisdictions.

Case Study #3

A-IEP — Empowering Families in Special Education

Families navigating Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) often confront dense documentation, technical language, and translation barriers. For many parents, particularly in multilingual households, understanding an IEP can determine whether a child receives essential services or falls through the cracks.

AI for Impact built A-IEP in partnership with Innovate Public Schools to help families translate, summarize, and understand IEP documents so they can more effectively advocate for their children.

The tool was developed through a co-design process with parents to ensure it addressed real-world challenges. As parent co-designer Shan Hong explained:

“Before AIEP, many parents felt overwhelmed and afraid of missing something critical in their child’s IEP. With clear summaries and translations, they finally feel confident advocating for the support their child is supposed to receive.”

Another participant reflected:

“This product has literally changed how parents relate to their child’s IEP process, and because they have been deeply involved in the co-creation process, have also become fierce advocates of the tool.”

In practice, A-IEP delivers translated summaries in minutes, whereas families previously waited weeks or months to access translated IEP documents. The tool was piloted with 150 caregivers prior to public release and is now in active use. Survey respondents report high confidence in relying on the tool and unanimously recommend continued expansion.

> **A-IEP delivers *translated summaries in minutes*, whereas families previously waited weeks or months to access translated IEP documents.**

Because A-IEP operates on existing IEP documentation and emphasizes privacy-preserving design, it can be adapted to additional school systems while maintaining local policy alignment, expanding equitable access to special education advocacy across districts.

Case Study #4

HEKA — Accelerating Infrastructure Policy Review at MassDOT

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) engineers previously spent weeks navigating dispersed standards, regulations, and policy documents when beginning infrastructure projects.

AI for Impact built HEKA (Highway Engineer Knowledge Agent) to allow engineers to query official documentation in natural language and receive responses grounded in MassDOT-approved standards, complete with source citations.

Massachusetts CIO Jason Snyder described the system on StateScoop's Priorities Podcast:

The students developed an AI using human language — 'I want to build a bridge' — and it would come back and list all the policies associated with it and provide the actual links to that policy and references so they could click on it and access it. The commissioner was blown away and actually hired the two students that worked on that project.

Beyond workflow efficiency, the initiative strengthened the state workforce. Eight of the twelve students in the first cohort were later hired into Massachusetts government roles.

Governor Maura Healey later underscored the broader significance when announcing the Massachusetts AI Hub: “Northeastern students have worked with state teams to try out AI tools that are now, right now, improving the delivery of service — it’s a big deal.”

Because infrastructure compliance frameworks are structurally similar across states, HEKA’s policy-grounded architecture can be adapted to other departments with localized regulatory inputs.

Beyond workflow efficiency, the initiative strengthened the state workforce. Eight of the twelve students in the first cohort were later *hired into Massachusetts government roles*.

Scaling Priority Products and *Shared Civic* AI Infrastructure

Over the past two years, AI for Impact has built and deployed AI tools that address recurring operational challenges across public agencies. The next phase of the program focuses on scaling a small set of products that have demonstrated clear institutional value and can be adapted across jurisdictions with relatively modest implementation effort.

The priority products for scaling fall into **five areas.**

Area #1

Knowledge Assistant for Government Staff

In a government setting, taking even simple actions requires an understanding of complex regulatory environments where policies change regularly. For instance, in MassHealth, policy updates are sent in weekly updates to the Enrollment Center.

Many agencies rely on large collections of manuals, policies, and internal documentation that staff must navigate daily. AI knowledge assistants allow staff to retrieve reliable answers from these materials quickly and consistently, reducing search time and improving decision-making.

Example program:
HEKA — Highway Engineer Knowledge Agent (Client: Massachusetts Department of Transportation) — An AI assistant that enables engineers to query technical manuals and documentation directly, helping them quickly find relevant information when designing infrastructure projects.

Area #2

Procurement and Document-Review Tools

Government procurement processes require staff and vendors to navigate complex rules, contracts, and bid requirements. AI tools developed with state procurement offices help users understand procurement documents, identify compliance issues, and prepare stronger submissions.

Because procurement workflows are structurally similar across jurisdictions, these tools are strong candidates for multi-state deployment.

Example programs:
BidBot — Procurement Bid Assistant (Client: Massachusetts Operational Services Division) — An AI assistant that helps vendors understand bid requirements and procurement documentation, reducing confusion and improving the quality of submissions.

ABE — Assistive Buyer Engine (Client: Massachusetts Operational Services Division) — An AI tool that helps state buyers navigate procurement rules, contract requirements, and procedures so they can manage purchasing processes consistently and efficiently.

Area #3

Benefits-Access and Service-Navigation Tools

Public programs often depend on a multitude of eligibility rules and documentation that can be difficult for both staff and residents to navigate. AI tools developed with healthcare providers and human-services agencies help staff interpret eligibility requirements and help residents apply for programs for which they qualify.

Because benefits programs across states share similar administrative structures, these tools can be adapted for broader use.

Example program:
Healthier Democracy AI (Client: Link Health) — A privacy-preserving, AI-generated

eligibility screener embedded in healthcare settings that helps low-income patients apply for unclaimed benefits while waiting for medical care.

Area #4

Grant Discovery and Application Tools

Public funding opportunities are often difficult for municipalities, nonprofits, and small businesses to identify and pursue.

AI tools can help communities analyze grant requirements, determine eligibility, and draft stronger applications, improving access to available funding.

Example program:
GrantWell (Client: Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance) — An AI tool that helps municipalities and underserved communities analyze grant requirements and draft applications for federal and state funding opportunities..

Area #5

Community-Centered AI Tools for Navigating Public Systems

Some of the most promising tools in the portfolio support residents directly in understanding complex public systems.

These tools are developed through co-design with the people who will use them, ensuring they are practical, trustworthy, and responsive to real needs.

Example program:
A-IEP (Client: Innovate Public Schools) — An AI tool that helps families translate, summarize, and understand Individualized Education Programs so they can better advocate for their children's educational services.

Area #6

Digital Service Modernization Tools

Governments often struggle to keep public-facing information clear, accessible, and consistent across websites and service portals.

AI tools can help staff analyze content, identify accessibility and readability issues, and translate complex requirements into clear public guidance.

Example program:
MAX — Website Content Analysis Tool (Client: State of New Jersey) — An AI tool that analyzes government website content to identify accessibility, readability, and clarity issues so content and design teams can prioritize improvements and modernize public information.

Signature Products

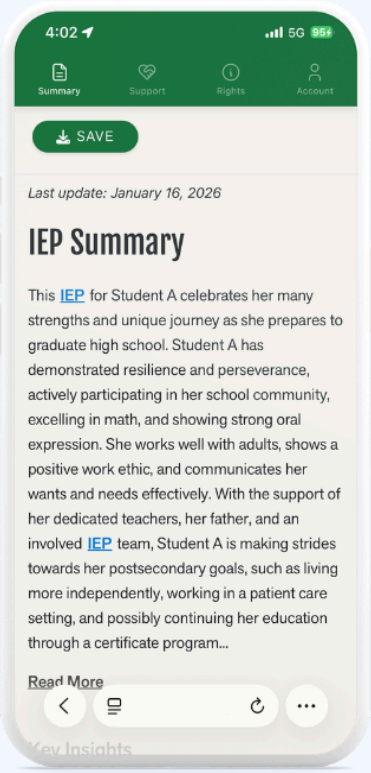
A-IEP

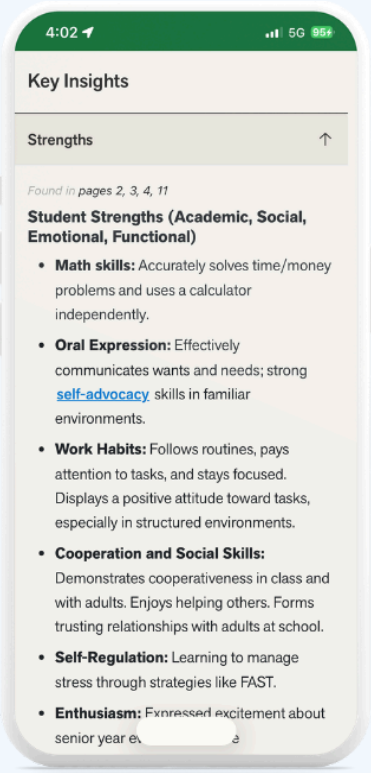
Client
Innovate Public Schools

Description

AI tool helping families translate, summarize, and understand Individualized Education Programs to support advocacy.

Co-designed with families and piloted with 150 caregivers before its February 2026 public release, A-IEP strengthens parents' ability to advocate effectively and expands equitable access to education support for non-English-speaking students with disabilities.





Signature Products

GrantWell

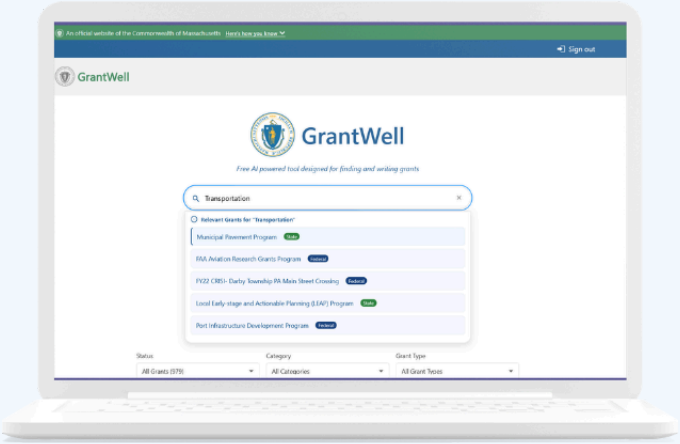
Client

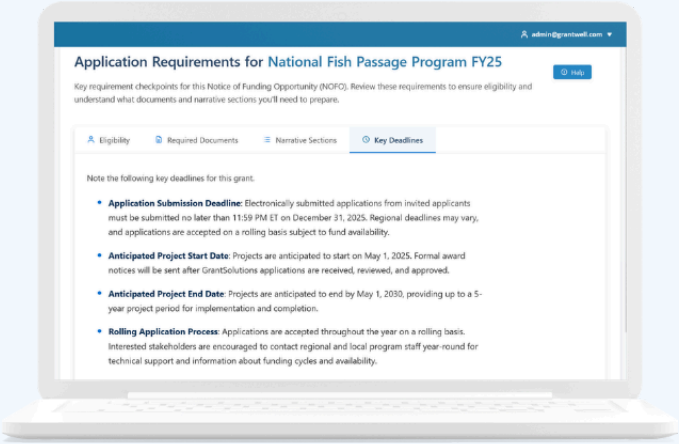
MA Executive Office of Administration and Finance

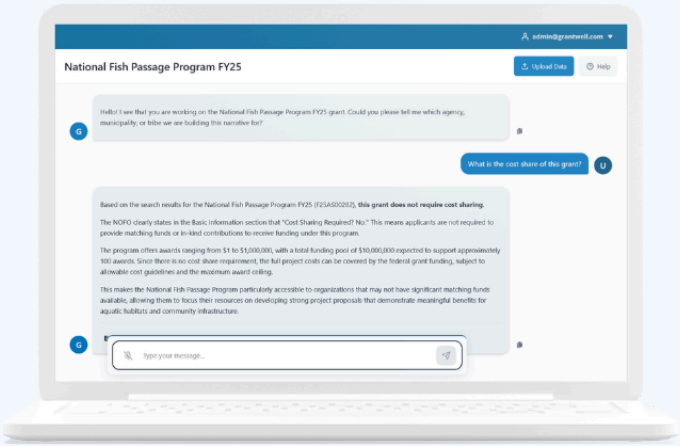
Description

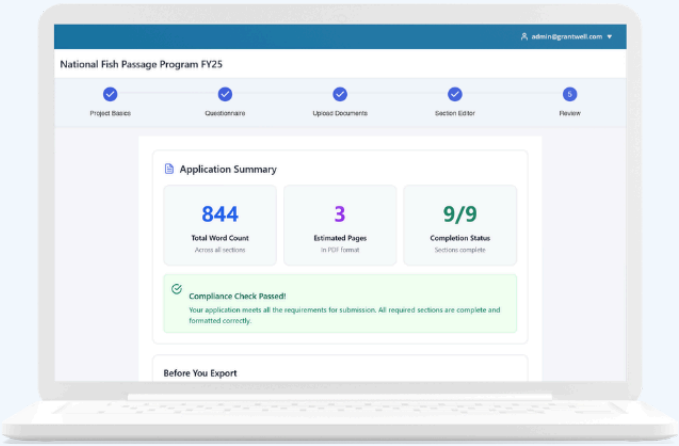
AI tool helping municipalities and underserved communities analyze grant requirements and draft applications aligned with the scoring criteria.

GrantWell piloted statewide with municipalities through the Director of Federal Funds roadshow.









Signature Products

A Healthier Democracy AI

Client
LinkHealth

Description

AI tool that generates privacy-first smart benefits eligibility calculators used in healthcare settings to help low-income patients apply for unclaimed federal benefits.

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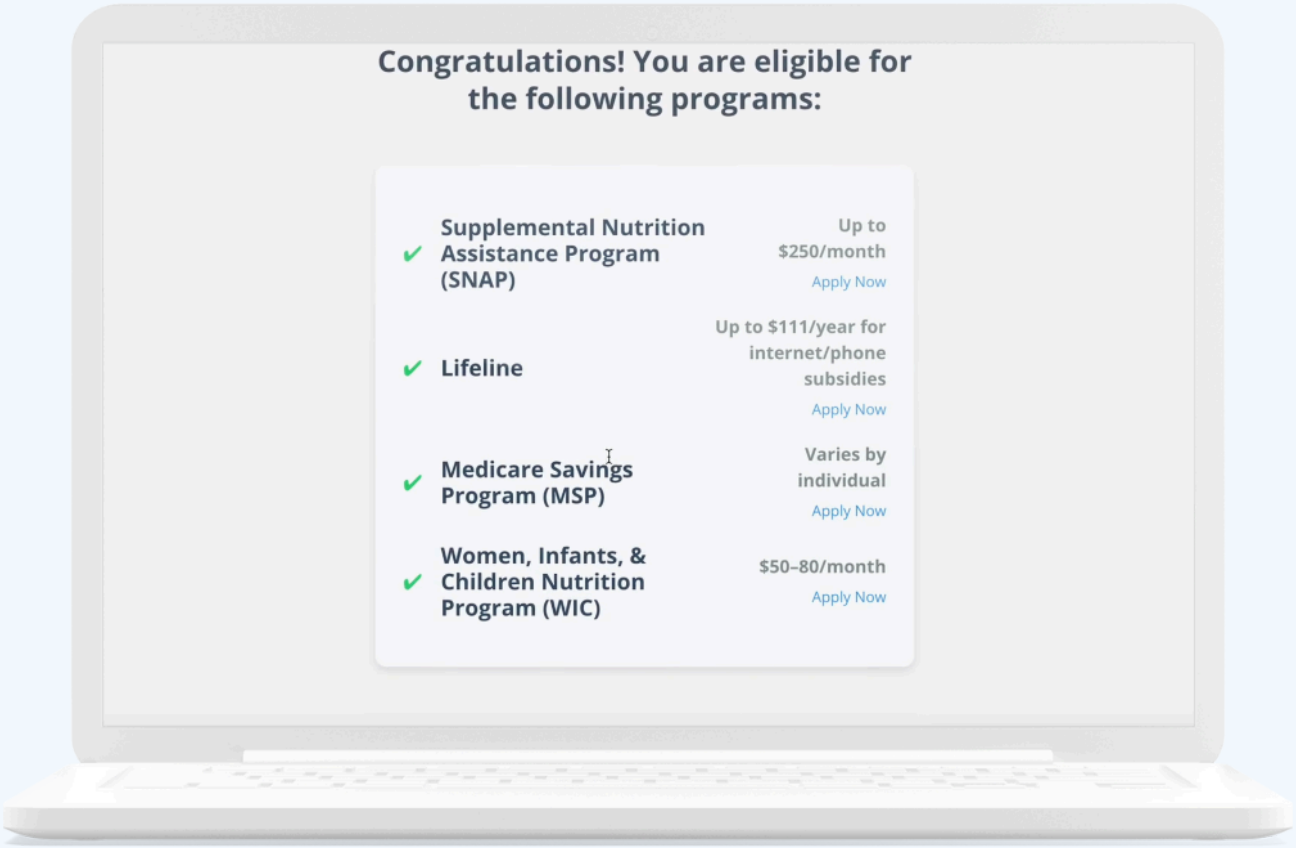

Signature Products

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Client

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Description

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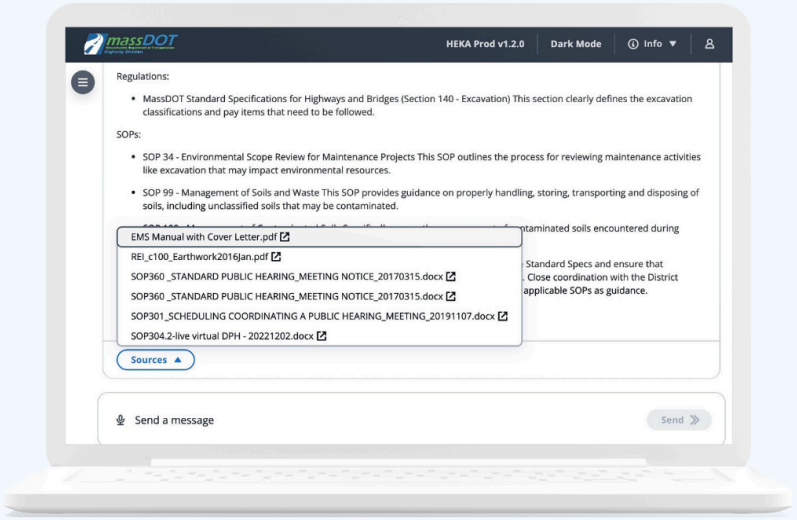
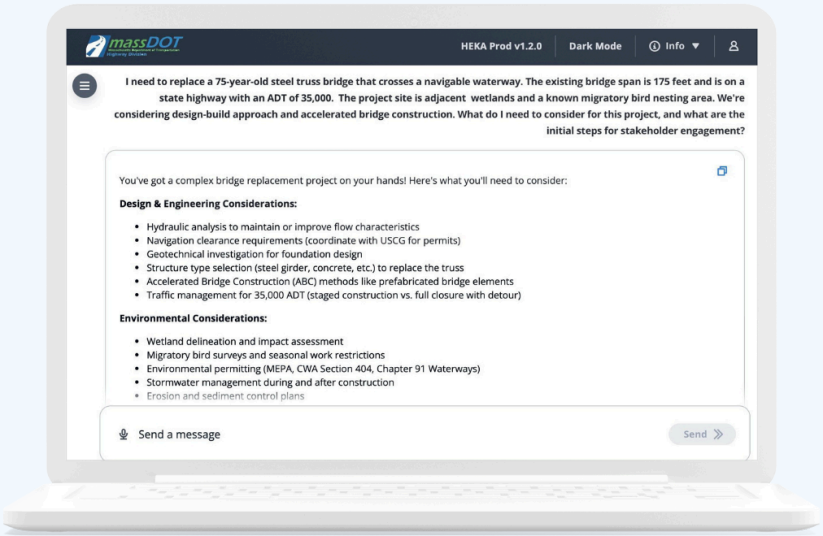




Signature Products

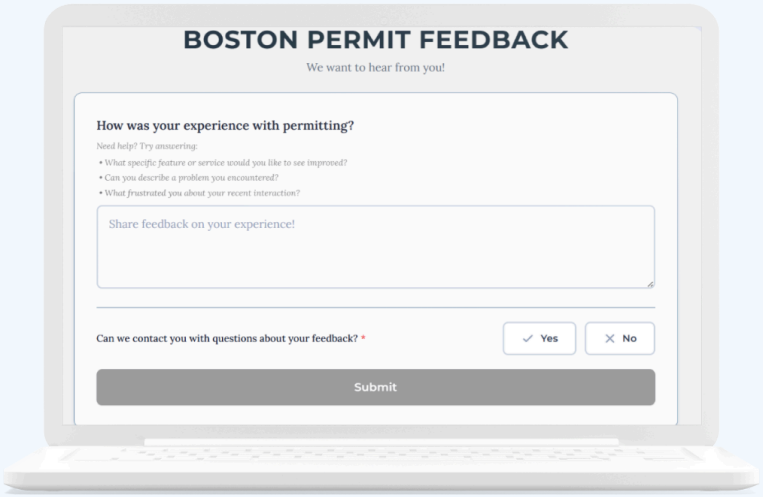
Open Feedback

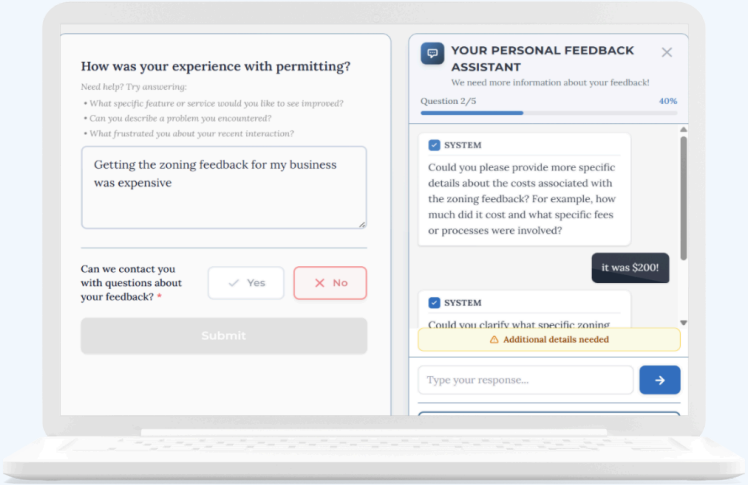
Client

City of Boston

Description

AI-powered system that centralizes and categorizes resident feedback to support real-time government action. Open Feedback centralizes previously fragmented resident input into structured datasets for real-time analysis by City of Boston staff.





Signature Products

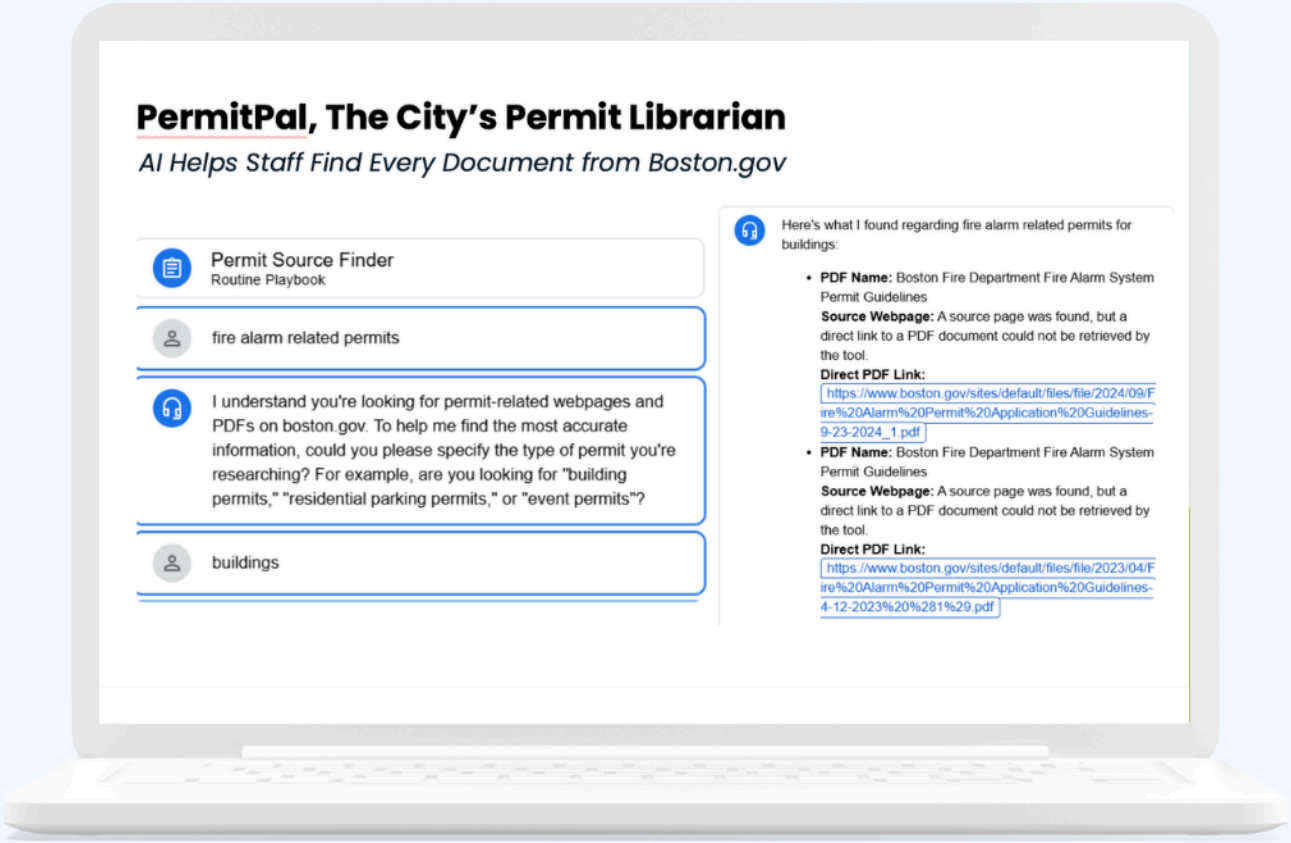
PermitPal

Client
City of Boston

Description

AI tool that identifies and organizes permit-related content to give editors visibility into existing materials. Additionally supported the redesign of permitting guidance organized around resident intent rather than agency structure.

PermitPal reduced weeks of manual content review and improved consistency across Boston.gov permitting pages.



Signature Products

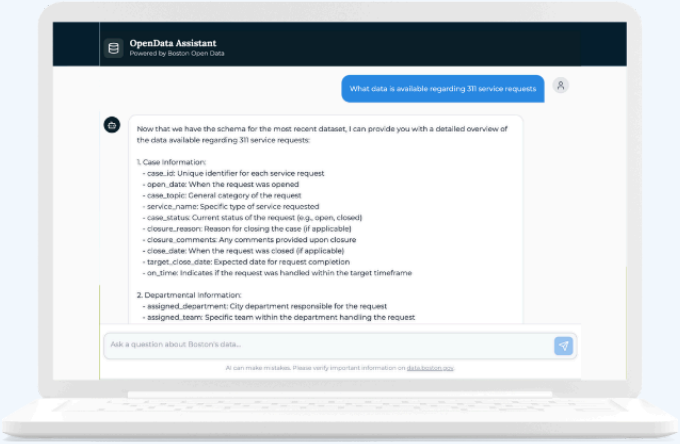
Launchpad

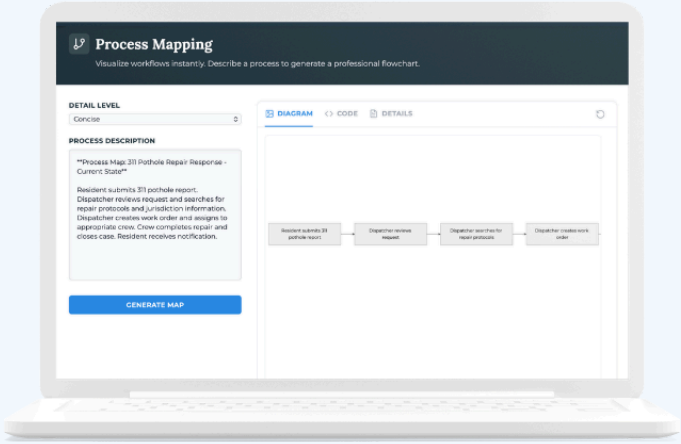
Client

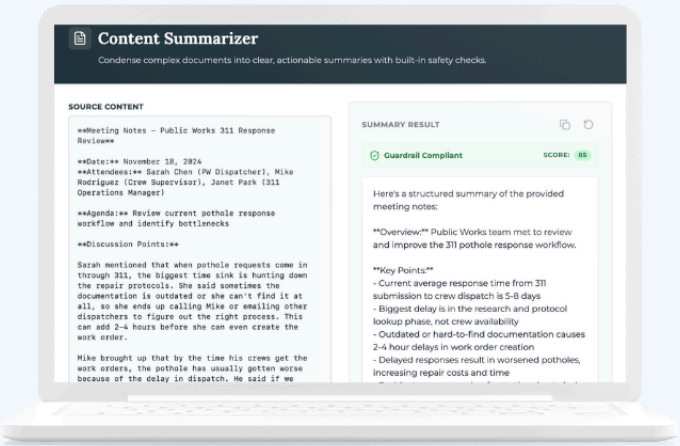
City of Boston

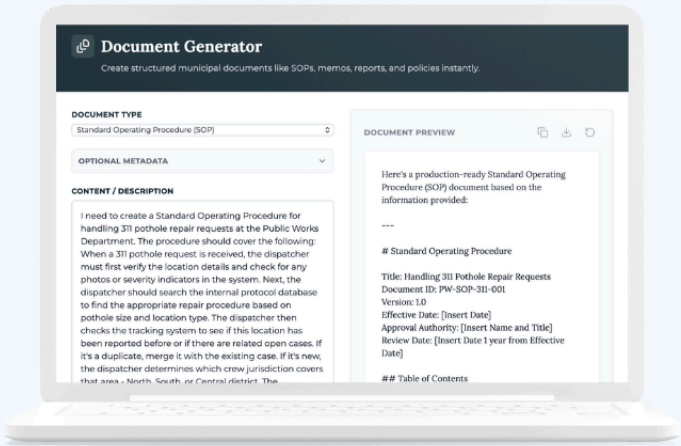
Description

AI front-end for the City of Boston's open data catalogue. Initially a project management tool, this system now allows city officials to run a plain language search of all the city's open data catalogue.









Signature Products

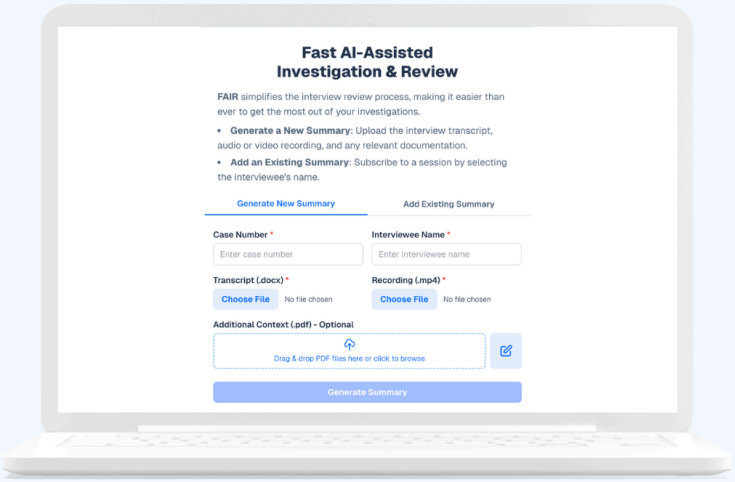
FAIR

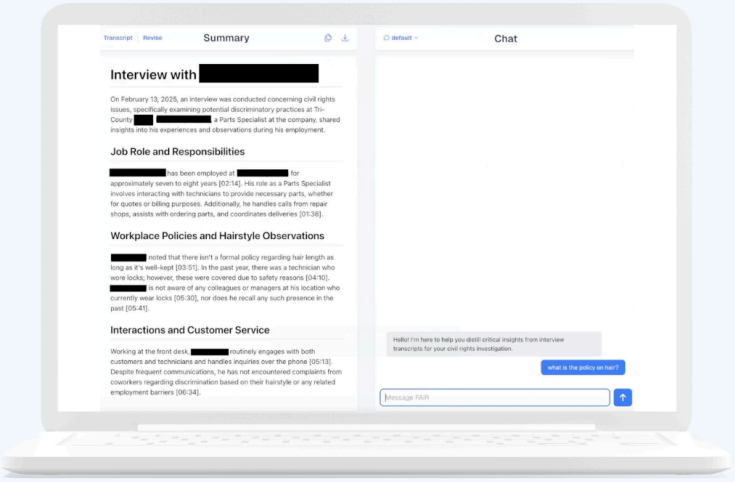
Client

NJ Attorney General's Office, Division on Civil Rights

Description

AI system that organizes investigative notes and interviews into the elements used by senior staff for determination - taking less time to understand the elements of the case and making sure that important information is not missed.





A *Shared* Development Model Across States

Scaling these products does not require each jurisdiction to build AI systems independently. Instead, AI for Impact is developing a shared civic AI delivery model in which reusable product components are adapted across agencies and states.

- Agencies adapt tools to their own policies, data, and workflows.
- Improvements made in one deployment inform future implementations.
- Deployment focuses on integration and governance alignment rather than rebuilding tools from scratch.

This approach reduces costs, shortens deployment timelines, and allows governments to learn from one another while maintaining local control over implementation.

With targeted investment, AI for Impact can expand implementation capacity and support a collaborative ecosystem for developing and deploying civic AI tools across states.

The opportunity now is to scale proven products into shared public infrastructure that improves how governments deliver services and support residents.

Appendix

Complete list of *Tools* and *Agencies*

26 Tools | 20+ Partners/Agencies

Tool	Partner / Agency
A-IEP	Innovate Public Schools
GrantWell	MA Executive Office of Administration & Finance
FAIR (Fast AI-Assisted Investigation & Review)	NJ Attorney General – Division on Civil Rights
EASE (Entrepreneurial Application Screening Engine)	NJ Economic Development Authority
Election Content Analysis Tool	NJ Division of Elections
IT Ops Genie	MA Executive Office of Health & Human Services
One L	MA Operational Services Division
ABE (Assistive Buyer Engine)	MA Operational Services Division
GENIE (Generative AI Experimentation & Implementation Environment)	MA Executive Office of Technology Services & Security
HEKA (Highway Engineer Knowledge Agent)	MA Department of Transportation
MBTA Info Hub – The Ride	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
BEACON	MA Executive Office of Economic Development
A Healthier Democracy AI (LEO)	Link Health
MassHealth Helper	MA Executive Office of Health & Human Services

MATCH (Massachusetts Academics to Careers Helper)	MA Executive Office of Education
Civic Connect	POPVOX Foundation / U.S. House
AC Helper	Fair Count
Policy Synth	Citizens Foundation / Museum of Science / The Burnes Center
Launchpad	City of Boston
Open Feedback	City of Boston
PermitPal	City of Boston
Template Filler	City of Boston
Grants Navigator	MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
AI Hub	MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Capacity Coach	InnovateUS
AI Gathering Tool	InnovateUS
Learning Pathways	InnovateUS