

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Public Service Education

Findings and a Three-Year Roadmap for NASPAA

Report of the NASPAA AI Working Group

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Working Group Members

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Purpose

To assess the implications of artificial intelligence for public service education and identify a practical, evidence-informed path through which NASPAA can support member programs, faculty, students, and the broader public service community.

Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is changing both higher education and the environment in which public service work is performed. Public organizations are increasingly considering or using predictive, generative, and emerging agentic systems for analysis, communication, organizational processes, service delivery, and decision support. Research and current government experience show that the implications extend well beyond efficiency to questions of accountability, discretion, transparency, equity, privacy, and public trust. Recent work coauthored by Working Group member Mila Gascó Hernández is especially relevant to public-sector accountability (Chen et al., 2026), alongside broader work on trustworthy AI and government practice (Harrison & Luna-Reyes, 2022; OECD, 2025).

These developments create a significant challenge for public service education. Programs must consider how AI affects teaching and learning while also preparing graduates for organizations and professional environments in which AI will increasingly influence work. Public service professionals need more than technical familiarity. They need the capacity to understand what AI can and cannot do, evaluate its outputs, determine where its use is appropriate, and exercise responsible human judgment.

The larger question is not simply what AI can do, but how its capabilities can be directed toward people, communities, and the public good.

NASPAA has already begun building this capacity. In spring 2026, the Teaching and Learning Committee launched a three-part AI Webinar Series as a cohort-based faculty development pilot. Rather than three unrelated webinars, the sessions were intentionally sequenced from instructional design, to ethics and professional responsibility, to workforce readiness and course design. The 12-person cohort included faculty, program leaders, practitioner-scholars, and emerging public service educators. Eight participants completed applied instructional resources representing eight institutions and a range of public service disciplines and professional settings.

Building upon that work, NASPAA convened the AI Working Group to examine the broader implications of artificial intelligence for public service education. The Working Group met four times between June and August 2026 and organized its work through five overlapping contribution areas: national and international examples; public service workforce implications; teaching and learning; competencies, governance, assessment, and accreditation; and cross-cutting approaches to institutional and shared capacity.

Five findings recur across this work:

- Public service education requires discipline-specific and public-service-specific AI preparation. Generic technological literacy is insufficient; future public servants must be able to evaluate AI through accountability, transparency, equity, privacy, due process, democratic responsiveness, and ethical judgment. Preparation must include not only technical familiarity, but also governance, oversight, human judgment, and organizational capacity.
- AI is changing public service work at the level of tasks, organizations, and professional expectations. The central workforce question is broader than whether AI eliminates jobs; it includes automation, augmentation, task transformation, discretion, oversight, new skill combinations, and human responsibility (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019; OECD, 2025).
- Responsible AI integration in education requires practical teaching and assessment strategies. Faculty need assignment-level guidance that makes student reasoning visible, requires verification and reflection, and distinguishes foundational learning from appropriate AI-supported professional practice (AWAC Working Group on AI in WAC, 2025; Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.; UNESCO, 2023).
- NASPAA does not need to build this work from the ground up. Professional associations, universities, public service education networks, and cross-institutional initiatives already provide useful models for governance, faculty development, curriculum, open educational resources, and institutional capacity. NASPAA can learn from and adapt these models while bringing a distinct public service focus.
- The field needs sustained capacity rather than another isolated event. Sequenced learning, applied work, peer exchange, curated resources, practitioner participation, and continuing opportunities to learn from implementation offer a more durable path. The 2026 work should be understood as a foundation for sustained faculty, program, and organizational capacity across NASPAA member programs.

The Working Group therefore recommends a three-year agenda that builds upon work already underway. Priorities include expanding faculty and program learning opportunities; developing a national community of practice; curating and disseminating public-service-specific AI resources through NASPAA Publicases; supporting applied faculty and institutional work; continuing examination of AI competencies, assessment, governance, and workforce

readiness; expanding practitioner and institutional partnerships; strengthening evidence and evaluation across member programs; and developing the organizational and resource capacity needed for sustainability.

To provide continuity and an organizational home for this work, the Working Group recommends transitioning the current effort into a three-year Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence in Public Service Education. The Committee would build upon the expertise of the current Working Group, expand participation to approximately 12 members, and create broader opportunities for NASPAA members and partners to participate through cohorts, communities of practice, working teams, conference activities, practitioner engagement, research, and resource development.

Central conclusion. The 2026 draft report should be understood not as the completion of NASPAA's work on artificial intelligence, but as a transition from initial exploration and applied learning toward sustained capacity building across public service education.

2026 NASPAA AI Work at a Glance

3 sequenced AI webinars	8 academic & practitioner presenters	12 cohort participants	8 completed participant-designed resources
16 NASPAA institutions touched	9 AI Working Group members	4 formal Working Group meetings	5 contribution areas

Source: NASPAA AI Webinar Series and AI Working Group program records, 2026.

I. From Pilot to Capacity Building: NASPAA's Work to Date

The recommendations in this draft report do not begin with a proposal for an entirely new NASPAA activity. They build upon a sequence of work already undertaken during 2026. That work established an initial foundation; the three-year agenda proposed later in this report is intended to extend it into sustained faculty, program, and organizational capacity.

The first structured stage was the NASPAA AI Webinar Series developed through the Teaching and Learning Committee. The pilot was designed as a cohort-based applied learning experience rather than a collection of independent presentations. Participants moved through a developmental sequence beginning with instructional applications, expanding into ethics and professional responsibility, and concluding with workforce and program implications. They were then asked to translate the learning into a practical instructional resource for their own teaching or public service education setting.

Development Timeline

Period	Activity	Contribution
Feb-Mar 2026	Design and recruitment	Built the cohort model, three-session sequence, presenter plan, and culminating applied resource.
Apr-May	Three sequenced learning sessions	Moved from instructional application to ethics and professional responsibility, then workforce and program design.
Jun-Jul	Applied resources and pilot analysis	Eight completed resources across eight institutions; review and synthesis of pilot lessons.
Jun-Aug	AI Working Group and draft roadmap	Four formal meetings, five contribution areas, and a draft three-year agenda for Executive Council review.

Source: NASPAA AI Webinar Series and AI Working Group program records, 2026.

Webinar Series Presenters

Session 1 Cognitive Partner	Session 2 Ethics & Responsibility	Session 3 Workforce & Program Design
Teaching, learning, assignment design Luis F. Luna-Reyes; Wendy D. Chen; Yeonkyung Kim	Transparency, accountability, equity Sukumar Ganapati; Linda Naval	Workforce readiness, institutional capacity Mila Gascó Hernández; Jeffrey Ling; Marie Pryor

Participant Cohort and Completed Applied Resources

The pilot enrolled 12 participants across faculty, program leadership, practitioner-scholar, and emerging educator roles. Eight completed the culminating applied resource. The table lists those eight submissions and the type of work each developed.

Participant / Institution	Applied Resource	Participant / Institution	Applied Resource
Omololu Adeyemi University of Baltimore Doctoral student / experienced practitioner	Federal performance appraisal redesign Administrative analysis	Chase Barnes University of Delaware, IPA	Local government workforce training Organizational workflow
Sonja Walti American University	Policy analysis and research process Research support	Veronica Adams Cooper Albany State University	Capstone proposal development Cognitive partner
Luisa Nazareno Virginia Commonwealth University	Scholarly peer review simulation Critical review	Elizabeth Overman University of Central Oklahoma	African policy and public opinion analysis Data analysis
Thomas Haase Texas A&M Bush School	Emergency management planning Guided inquiry	Jeff Fox Thomas Edison State University	Critical infrastructure risk assessment Comparative analysis

Source: NASPAA AI Webinar Series program records, 2026.

The subsequent AI Working Group broadened the inquiry beyond teaching and learning. Five contribution areas were intentionally treated as overlapping parts of a shared inquiry rather than separate report chapters:

Contribution Area	Contributors	Primary Focus
National and international examples	Mila Gascó Hernández and Luis Luna-Reyes	Professional guidance, institutional models, open educational resources, and partnership opportunities.
Public service workforce implications	Sukumar Ganapati and Luisa Nazareno	Task and workforce change, public values, skills, governance, and student preparation.
Teaching and learning	Wendy Chen and Yeonkyung Kim	Assignment design, assessment, disclosure, discipline-specific AI literacy, and faculty development.
Competencies, governance, assessment, and accreditation	Denise Thompson and Saba Siddiki	How AI relates to existing competencies, governance, assessment, institutional guidance, and standards questions.
Cross-cutting capacity building	Malcolm Oliver	Leadership, faculty, workforce, community capacity, institutional learning, and sustainable shared infrastructure.

Internal Working Group records, the AI Webinar Series, contributor analyses, and draft materials informed this synthesis. They are distinguished from the external published sources cited throughout the draft report.

The five contributor reports and shared source materials underlying these contribution areas are listed in Appendix C.

II. A Public Service Orientation to Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence presents NASPAA and its member programs with questions about teaching, workforce preparation, institutional capacity, and governance. Beneath these questions is a simpler public service question: What purposes should this technology serve? Public administration is a moral enterprise dedicated to the common good. We teach students to analyze problems, manage organizations, implement policy, and use public resources wisely. Those skills matter, but they do not tell us what government should ultimately work toward. Economy and efficiency are important, but they are not enough.

This is why the work of David Hart and H. George Frederickson remains useful. Their work comes from an earlier period, but it addressed a question that AI does not answer. Frederickson helped place social equity alongside the field's longstanding concerns with economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, a line of thought that remains visible in public administration's continuing emphasis on equity, ethics, empathy, engagement, and the public good (Frederickson, 1997; Meyer et al., 2022; Norman-Major, 2022). Hart returned to the American democratic tradition to argue that public institutions depend not only on sound rules and capable administrators, but also on public servants prepared to exercise authority with judgment, integrity, and commitment to the public good (Frederickson & Hart, 1985; Hart, 1984). They do not tell us how an AI system works. They remind us what public service is for.

For schools of public service, that distinction matters. AI can expand administrative capability, but greater capability does not provide its own direction. Many powerful AI tools were developed in settings with purposes and incentives different from public service. That is not a reason to reject them. It is a reason to examine the assumptions they carry and decide whether particular uses fit public responsibilities. Public service cannot simply accept the purpose of the tool as its own. The OECD similarly emphasizes that government use of AI must reinforce the public interest, uphold rights, and produce societal benefits rather than simply mirror private-sector incentives (OECD, 2026).

Public servants must still ask who benefits, who may be harmed, whose voice may be missing, where human judgment must remain, and who is responsible when an AI-supported decision affects the public. These are questions of public values: the standards by which public institutions determine what should be protected, prioritized, explained, and made accountable when technology is used in the exercise of public authority. Research on AI in government makes these concerns concrete through questions of discretion, bias, transparency, accountability, privacy, access, and public trust (Bullock, 2019; Chen et al., 2026; Harrison & Luna-Reyes, 2022; OECD, 2025; Zuiderwijk et al., 2021). A human-centered approach therefore means more than keeping a person formally in the process. It means retaining identifiable human and institutional responsibility, judgment, explanation, and the capacity to question consequential decisions.

AI may inform public decisions, but people and public institutions remain responsible for their purposes, processes, and consequences. For public service education, the task is to prepare graduates who can understand what these tools can do, determine where their use is appropriate, question their outputs, exercise responsible human judgment, and evaluate whether their use advances human dignity, social equity, democratic accountability, and the public good. Put simply: how can public service education help ensure that AI is used in the service of humanity?

III. What the Working Group Is Learning

1. Public Service Education Requires Discipline-Specific AI Preparation

One of the clearest conclusions across the Working Group's work is that knowing how to use AI tools is not enough for public service. Schwoerer and Luna-Reyes (2026) describe public affairs AI literacy as having cognitive, practical, critical, ethical, and civic dimensions. Put more simply, students need to understand what AI is doing, use it appropriately, question its outputs and limitations, recognize ethical consequences, and connect its use to public values and the people affected by public decisions.

Chen and Kim's teaching-and-learning analysis reinforces this point. Students may learn to prompt generative AI, summarize information, or speed routine work, but public service education also has to teach them to ask whether information is reliable, what evidence is missing, whose perspectives are excluded, what data limitations or bias may exist, and whether a proposed use is consistent with law, ethics, organizational mission, and public values. Transparency, accountability, privacy, equity, procedural fairness, and democratic responsiveness are therefore part of using AI well in public service, not add-ons after technical training (Harrison & Luna-Reyes, 2022; OECD, 2025).

The workforce analysis identifies several related areas of preparation. Public servants need enough AI literacy to know what tools can and cannot do; enough data literacy to question data quality, sources, limitations, and bias; and enough organizational awareness to see how AI may change workflows, discretion, access, and who benefits or bears risk. They also need to understand privacy, cybersecurity, ethics, and when decisions must remain subject to human judgment and accountability. Because the tools and rules will continue to change, ongoing learning is itself part of readiness (Overton & Kleinschmit, 2022; Schwoerer & Luna-Reyes, 2026; Trajkovski, 2024).

In the competency area, Thompson and Siddiki urged the Working Group not to treat these as new NASPAA competencies. Instead, they identified four capability areas that may shape how students demonstrate the competencies programs already teach and assess: AI and data understanding; governance and oversight; human judgment and public values; and organizational and leadership capacity. The table below summarizes these areas. Experiential learning can cut across all four by asking students to apply them to real or realistic public service problems. Existing frameworks reinforce elements of this approach, including ethical use and adaptation (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2025), data literacy (Overton & Kleinschmit, 2022), public-affairs AI literacy (Schwoerer & Luna-Reyes, 2026), and governance and risk management (Tabassi, 2023; U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2021).

AI-Related Capability Areas for Public Service Education

Capability Area	What It Means for Public Service Education
AI and data understanding	Understand what AI can and cannot do; assess data quality, limitations, uncertainty, bias, and appropriate uses.
Governance and oversight	Address risk, privacy, equity, transparency, impact assessment, procurement, accountability, and continuing monitoring.
Human judgment and public values	Question AI outputs, weigh evidence and tradeoffs, explain decisions, and retain responsibility when public values are at stake.
Organizational and leadership capacity	Manage AI-supported workflows, workforce change, cross-functional collaboration, organizational learning, and adaptation.

How AI Affects the Demonstration of Existing NASPAA Competencies

The immediate question is not whether NASPAA should add a sixth universal competency specifically focused on AI. It is how AI-related learning outcomes fit within the five competencies programs already teach and assess, and how AI may change what competent performance looks like. Leading and managing may increasingly involve AI governance, vendor oversight, and workforce adaptation. Evidence-informed decision making may require evaluating AI outputs, data quality, uncertainty, and bias. A public service perspective may require attention to equity, accountability, dignity, and democratic values. Communication may require explaining AI-supported decisions to nontechnical audiences and people affected by them. This is especially relevant to Standard 5 because programs must translate competencies into learning outcomes and assess whether students have achieved them (Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration [NASPAA], n.d.). At this stage, the Working Group does not recommend establishing a new universal AI competency or accreditation requirement. A more appropriate near-term role is continued examination, voluntary guidance, and mission-aligned adaptation by member programs.

2. AI Is Changing Public Service Work, but the Question Is Larger Than Job Displacement

Public discussion about AI and work frequently centers on predictions of job loss. The Working Group's workforce analysis suggests that this is too narrow a lens for public service education.

In examining workforce implications, Sukumar Ganapati and Luisa Nazareno encouraged the Working Group to move beyond precise job-displacement forecasts and focus more closely on changes in tasks, skills, discretion, organizational practice, and public-service responsibility.

Job-displacement estimates vary, but task-level research provides a more useful frame for public service education: technology can automate parts of work while also creating new tasks, changing workflows, and augmenting professional judgment (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019; Jarrahi, 2018). Recent OECD work reinforces that shift. Its review of government AI use across core functions shows growing experimentation in service delivery, analysis, administration, and decision support, while its 2026 outlook finds that role-specific AI preparation still lags broader AI skills efforts across governments (OECD, 2025, 2026).

This distinction matters for public service education. A job comprises tasks, decisions, relationships, responsibilities, and forms of judgment. AI may accelerate information retrieval, synthesis, drafting, pattern

recognition, or routine processing without eliminating the occupation itself. The more durable educational question is how the composition of work changes and which human skills and forms of professional judgment become more important when AI is present.

Recent public-management research suggests that AI use can alter perceived discretion and felt accountability among street-level bureaucrats, while public-sector accountability frameworks increasingly emphasize explicit governance, responsibility, and continuing oversight (Chen et al., 2026; Deng & Sun, 2025; OECD, 2025). These consequences reinforce the need for public service professionals who can assess not only whether a technology works, but how its implementation changes organizations and affects employees and the public.

Preparing public servants to understand, use, evaluate, and govern AI is therefore a more durable objective than attempting to predict particular occupations that may disappear.

Thompson and Siddiki's analysis adds a second workforce implication: AI readiness is unlikely to mean the same thing for every public servant. Front-line professionals, managers, policy analysts, procurement officials, program leaders, and technical specialists may encounter different responsibilities and therefore require different forms and levels of preparation. This reinforces the case for adaptable, role-aware learning rather than a single curriculum or proficiency threshold (OECD, 2026).

3. Responsible Teaching and Assessment Must Move From General Policy to Applied Practice

Higher education has devoted considerable attention to academic integrity and acceptable-use policies. Those issues remain important, but faculty often need something more practical: guidance at the level of the actual assignment, learning objective, and assessment.

In examining teaching and learning, Wendy Chen and Yeonkyung Kim emphasized that faculty need to move beyond broad AI policies toward practical, assignment-level approaches that make student reasoning visible and treat AI as both a teaching tool and an object of critique.

Educational guidance supports that direction. Cornell University's Center for Teaching Innovation recommends beginning with what students are actually expected to learn and demonstrate, then deciding whether and how AI supports those outcomes. The Association for Writing Across the Curriculum's AI Working Group similarly emphasizes critical AI literacy, transparency, reflection, and process-oriented assessment, while UNESCO calls for a human-centered approach to generative AI in education and research (AWAC Working Group on AI in WAC, 2025; Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.; UNESCO, 2023).

AI can produce a polished answer without showing whether the student understands the problem. Assessment must therefore make reasoning visible. Staged submissions, source-verification notes, short reflections, annotated drafts, oral explanations, in-class application, and AI-use disclosures can provide evidence of the learner's reasoning and judgment.

Different educational purposes may justify different approaches to AI use. In some assignments, AI may be inappropriate because the learning objective requires independent reasoning, writing, quantitative ability, or reflection. In other settings, limited use may support brainstorming, critique, feedback, or comparison. Applied courses may intentionally incorporate AI when students are required to evaluate, verify, disclose, and reflect upon its output.

Illustrative approaches identified by Chen and Kim include AI-supported critique, in which students identify unsupported claims, bias, or weak evidence in generated material; stakeholder simulations that surface perspectives students must test against evidence; policy memo stress testing that compares AI-assisted analysis against source material, alternative assumptions, and likely implementation effects; assignment-level AI-use categories that clarify when AI is prohibited, limited, permitted, or expected; and process-oriented assessment that collects drafts, verification notes, reflections, disclosures, or oral explanations. These approaches treat AI as a teaching tool and an object of critique rather than a substitute for student reasoning.

Faculty development should follow the same principle. One-time demonstrations can create awareness, but durable change requires opportunities for educators to redesign actual assignments, test approaches, collect feedback, and share what they learn. For example, a faculty cohort might redesign a policy memo or case assignment, pilot new verification and disclosure requirements, review how students demonstrate reasoning, and refine the assignment with peers after implementation. The 2026 pilot provides an initial model for that kind of applied learning.

Thompson and Siddiki also identify experiential learning as a cross-cutting enabler rather than a stand-alone AI skill. Simulations, applied projects, agency-based cases, and other practice-based work can bring technical understanding together with judgment, communication, collaboration, and accountability. Recent public service education research similarly finds that active, peer-oriented, reflective learning can support ethical AI use, AI application, and critical thinking (Allgood & Frandell, 2026). This suggests that future NASPAA learning cohorts should move beyond assignment redesign alone toward a wider range of authentic public service applications.

4. NASPAA Can Learn From Existing Models Without Importing a Uniform Model

In examining national and international approaches, Mila Gascó Hernández and Luis Luna-Reyes emphasized that NASPAA need not develop its response to AI from scratch. Their review identified established professional guidance, institutional capacity-building models, and public-service education networks that NASPAA can learn from, adapt, and potentially partner with while bringing its distinctive expertise in public affairs education.

Model reviewed	Useful lesson for NASPAA
ACM Technology Policy Council (2022, 2023)	Responsible AI guidance can connect technical capability with accountability, transparency, privacy, auditability, and human responsibility.
AWAC Working Group on AI in WAC (2025)	Critical AI literacy and process-oriented assessment can be adapted across disciplines without one uniform policy.
University at Albany (n.d.)	Faculty learning, curriculum, interdisciplinary work, and institutional strategy are stronger when developed together.
Teaching Public Service in the Digital Age (n.d.)	Open, adaptable public-service teaching materials and educator-practitioner networks can reduce duplication.
New Jersey AI Hub (n.d.)	A cross-institutional cohort can produce shareable curriculum, experiential learning, and governance resources.

The implication is straightforward: NASPAA should build capacity while permitting local adaptation. Member institutions differ in mission, resources, curriculum, policy, national context, student populations, and readiness. NASPAA can convene, curate, guide, connect, and evaluate without prescribing a uniform curriculum or identical institutional response.

IV. What the Field Needs From NASPAA

Faculty and Program Capacity

AI readiness varies substantially among faculty, institutions, and programs. Some educators are experimenting extensively; others remain cautious or have limited institutional support. This unevenness argues against a one-size-fits-all approach and in favor of multiple entry points for learning and participation.

NASPAA can help faculty and program leaders move from awareness toward informed experimentation, assignment redesign, curricular consideration, and institutional planning without assuming uniform technical expertise or requiring AI adoption.

Practical Teaching, Assessment, and Governance Resources

Faculty need adaptable resources connecting AI to actual educational decisions. These include assignments, cases, syllabus and disclosure language, assessment strategies, verification approaches, governance questions, practitioner examples, and implementation tools.

NASPAA already possesses an appropriate platform for this work through Publicases. The immediate opportunity is therefore not to create another repository, but to build upon NASPAA's existing infrastructure.

An initial step should be to review appropriate resources developed through the 2026 AI Webinar Series for inclusion on Publicases. The eight completed instructional resources provide a starting point. Their usefulness can be strengthened through teaching notes, learning objectives, assessment rubrics, implementation guidance, ethical rationales, and faculty reflections before broader dissemination.

Over time, faculty cohorts, applied studios, practitioner partnerships, and member contributions can generate additional resources. These materials should be curated rather than merely collected. Each should provide enough context for educators to understand the learning objective, expected role of AI, verification requirements, risks, implementation conditions, and opportunities for adaptation.

AI Competencies and Workforce Readiness

Building on Thompson and Siddiki's analysis, NASPAA should continue examining how AI changes the knowledge, judgment, and skills students must demonstrate within existing public service competencies. The four capability areas identified above—AI and data understanding, governance and oversight, human judgment and public values, and organizational and leadership capacity—provide a practical starting point. The key is to help programs determine where AI affects learning outcomes and assessment while preserving mission alignment and program autonomy (GAO, 2021; Schwoerer & Luna-Reyes, 2026; Tabassi, 2023).

The immediate goal should remain guidance and learning rather than premature standardization. Different public service roles will require different forms and levels of preparation. NASPAA can help programs identify how AI changes the teaching, demonstration, and assessment of existing competencies without prescribing a single curriculum, technology, or proficiency threshold.

Community, Partnerships, and Shared Learning

Individual faculty members and programs should not be required to solve the same problems independently. The five examples summarized above show how shared guidance, adaptable resources, cross-institutional learning, and professional networks can reduce duplication and help institutions learn from one another.

A NASPAA community of practice could provide a continuing environment in which educators and program leaders share successful practices, unresolved questions, failed experiments, implementation challenges, and emerging evidence. Partnerships with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, universities, teaching centers, professional associations, and relevant international networks can expand the expertise available to NASPAA without requiring the association to reproduce work already being done elsewhere. Any future partnership should support NASPAA's public service mission and preserve member-program autonomy.

Evidence, Evaluation, and Continuing Learning

NASPAA does not yet possess comprehensive information about the extent or form of AI integration across member programs. Future work should therefore include structured information gathering concerning faculty readiness, student guidance, curriculum, institutional policy, workforce preparation, program needs, and emerging practices.

NASPAA should also evaluate its own initiatives. Success should not be defined simply by webinar attendance, resource downloads, or the number of programs reporting AI use. More important questions concern whether faculty and institutions are better able to make responsible decisions, whether learning design improves, whether practitioner relevance increases, whether resources are reused and adapted, and whether accountability, equity, transparency, privacy, and human oversight remain visible in implementation.

V. A Three-Year Roadmap for NASPAA

The next phase should build upon NASPAA's existing work rather than begin again. The proposed three-year agenda moves from consolidation and infrastructure, to implementation and testing, and finally to expansion, evaluation, and sustainability.

Year One: Consolidate and Build the Foundation

- Review and prepare appropriate AI Webinar Series resources for Publicases.
- Establish a clear structure, review criteria, and curation process for AI-related Publicases resources.
- Launch a continuing AI community of practice and expand faculty development beyond one-time webinars.
- Design applied faculty and program cohorts or studios focused on assignments, simulations, assessment, curriculum, governance, workforce applications, and institutional strategy.
- Establish a baseline of AI activity, readiness, and needs across member programs.
- Identify practitioner, academic, professional, and institutional partners.
- Develop initial readiness and planning tools and establish evaluation measures.
- Develop a sustainability and resource strategy for the three-year initiative.

Year Two: Implement, Test, and Generate Resources

- Launch faculty and program cohorts or studios involving institutions at different stages of AI readiness.
- Support participating teams in producing tangible products such as redesigned assignments, simulations, practitioner cases, governance or impact-assessment exercises, curriculum maps, competency crosswalks, procurement or vendor-evaluation cases, and program action plans.

- Review, refine, document, and disseminate strong products through Publicases.
- Deepen practitioner engagement so public agencies and nonprofit organizations contribute use cases, workforce perspectives, and feedback on educational relevance.
- Use conference sessions, workshops, webinars, and other NASPAA channels to share emerging practices and lessons.

Year Three: Expand, Evaluate, Disseminate, and Sustain

- Expand participation toward approximately 20–30 public affairs programs across the three-year period through cohorts, communities of practice, conference activities, research, and resource development.
- Evaluate participant, institutional, network, and broader program-level outcomes.
- Assess whether Publicases resources are being adapted and reused and whether participating programs have developed more coherent approaches to responsible AI.
- Publish and disseminate lessons, implementation cases, and practical guidance.
- Identify which structures, partnerships, and activities should become sustainable NASPAA capacities beyond the initial three-year period.

Three-Year Progression

Stage	Primary Aim	Illustrative Outputs	Decision Focus
Year 1	Consolidate and organize	Publicases curation structure; baseline scan; community of practice; cohort/studio design; readiness tools	Is the infrastructure useful, feasible, and responsive to member needs?
Year 2	Implement and test	Institutional projects; redesigned assignments; cases; governance and assessment tools; practitioner contributions	Which approaches produce useful, transferable results across different program contexts?
Year 3	Evaluate and sustain	Comparative evidence; expanded participation; publications; sustainability strategy	What should NASPAA continue, scale, integrate, or retire?

VI. Sustaining the Work: An Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence in Public Service Education

The work described in this report extends beyond what can reasonably be accomplished through a short-term Working Group or a single report.

The Working Group therefore recommends transitioning the current effort into a three-year Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence in Public Service Education charged with advancing, coordinating, assessing, and refining the priorities described in this report.

The Committee should build upon the expertise and continuity developed through the original Working Group while expanding participation to approximately 12 members. Membership should intentionally reflect different institutions, program contexts, areas of expertise, professional perspectives, and levels of experience with AI.

Formal committee membership, however, should not define the boundaries of participation. A central objective should be to create broader pathways for NASPAA members to contribute through faculty cohorts, working teams, communities of practice, conference programming, Publicases resource development, practitioner engagement, surveys, research, and other collaborative activities.

During its three-year term, the Committee's work should include:

- building the NASPAA AI community of practice and expanding applied faculty and program cohorts or studios;
- curating Webinar Series and future resources for Publicases and maintaining a continuing pipeline of reviewed materials;
- advancing inquiry into competencies, workforce readiness, assessment, governance, public values, and responsible AI use;
- engaging public and nonprofit practitioners and gathering information about member and workforce needs;

- coordinating dissemination, research, and evaluation through conferences, publications, surveys, and participating institutions; and
- developing partnerships and an organizational resource strategy that strengthen NASPAA capacity while preserving member-program autonomy.

The goal is not to establish a universal NASPAA AI curriculum or prescribe how every program should respond. It is to build shared capacity through which public service programs can learn from one another, access high-quality resources, develop mission-aligned approaches, and prepare students for responsible leadership in increasingly AI-supported environments.

VII. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence presents an immediate educational challenge and a longer-term question about the future of public service. Government experience and scholarship show that AI raises questions about work, discretion, governance, accountability, equity, and human responsibility. The Working Group's inquiry also indicates that preparation must extend beyond tool use to the capabilities public servants need to understand data, govern technology, exercise judgment, lead organizations, and remain accountable to the people affected by public decisions.

NASPAA's 2026 work demonstrates that the association has already begun building a meaningful response. The AI Webinar Series established an applied cohort model and generated eight completed participant-designed resources; the AI Working Group broadened that work into workforce preparation, teaching and assessment, competencies and governance, external models, public values, and institutional capacity. The next step is not to begin again, but to build deliberately upon work already underway.

NASPAA is well positioned to convene educators and practitioners, curate resources through Publicases, support applied faculty and program development, connect AI literacy with public service values and workforce preparation, and create a continuing community in which member programs can learn together while retaining responsibility for their own missions and curricula.

The proposed three-year Ad Hoc Committee provides a practical structure for moving from exploration toward implementation, evidence building, and sustained capacity across public service education. The aim is not AI adoption for its own sake. It is to prepare public servants and institutions to direct technological capability toward people, communities, and the public good.

VIII. AI Assistance Disclosure

Generative artificial intelligence was used to assist with synthesis, organization, editorial refinement, and reference formatting. The Working Group Chair directed the development of the draft, reviewed AI assisted content against the contributing reports and cited sources, and retains responsibility for the analysis, recommendations, and final text.

References

This list contains every external source cited in the written report. Internal NASPAA program records are identified in source notes and are not represented as published external sources. Each reference appears once; additional, uncited resources are listed separately in Appendix A.

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Appendix A. Supporting Resources Identified Through the Working Group

The Working Group assembled additional resources for future NASPAA work. Entries below were checked against the linked source as of August 25, 2026, and exclude every work already listed in References. Inclusion indicates relevance to the Working Group’s inquiry; it does not constitute NASPAA endorsement.

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Appendix B. 2026 AI Webinar Series: Completed Participant-Designed Resources

The eight completed participant-designed resources from the 2026 applied learning pilot provide a starting collection for review, refinement, and possible dissemination through NASPAA Publicases. The pilot enrolled 12 participants across faculty, program leadership, practitioner-scholar, and emerging educator roles; the table lists the eight participants who completed the culminating resource. Before publication, resources should be accompanied by sufficient teaching notes, learning objectives, assessment guidance, ethical rationale, and implementation information to support responsible adaptation. Omololu Adeyemi participated through the University of Baltimore as a doctoral student with substantial practitioner experience.

Participant	Institution	Instructional Resource	Primary Role of AI
Omololu Adeyemi	University of Baltimore	Federal performance appraisal redesign	Administrative analysis
Sonja Walti	American University	Policy analysis and research process	Research support
Luisa Nazareno	Virginia Commonwealth University	Scholarly peer review simulation	Critical review
Thomas Haase	Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service	Emergency management planning	Inquiry partner
Chase Barnes	University of Delaware, Institute for Public Administration	Local government workforce training	Organizational workflow
Veronica Adams Cooper	Albany State University	Capstone proposal development	Cognitive partner
Elizabeth Overman	University of Central Oklahoma	African policy and public opinion analysis	Data analysis
Jeff Fox	Thomas Edison State University	Critical infrastructure risk assessment	Comparative analysis

Source: NASPAA AI Webinar Series program records, 2026.

Appendix C. Working Group Contributor Reports and Shared Materials

The five contributor reports used as building blocks for this synthesis are maintained in the [Shared NASPAA AI Working Group Google Drive folder](#). They are listed here to preserve access to the underlying analyses without interrupting the flow of the main report.

Contribution Area	Contributors	Contributor Report
National and international examples	Mila Gascó Hernández and Luis Luna-Reyes	AI Examples — Mila and Luis
Public service workforce implications	Sukumar Ganapati and Luisa Nazareno	Public Service Workforce Implications
Teaching and learning	Wendy Chen and Yeonkyung Kim	Teaching and Learning Examples for Responsible AI Integration in Public Service Education
Competencies, governance, assessment, and accreditation	Denise Thompson and Saba Siddiki	Final Memorandum: NASPAA AI Sub Committee
Cross-cutting capacity building	Malcolm Oliver	Emerging Models for Building AI Capacity in Public Service Education

Note. Each contributor report title links directly to its Google Doc. The Shared NASPAA AI Working Group Google Drive folder remains the central repository for the contributor reports and related working materials.