Lincolnton NC
Technology & Innovation

AI Usage and Governance Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the principles, guidelines, and procedures for the responsible and secure use of artificial intelligence (AI) within the City of Lincolnton. The primary objective is to leverage the benefits of AI to enhance productivity, innovation, and decision-making, while mitigating associated risks. This policy specifically designates Google's Gemini as the single, approved AI platform for all organizational use cases, ensuring a unified approach to security, compliance, and ethical standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, interns, and third-party vendors with access to City of Lincolnton's systems and data, in all work-related contexts. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of Gemini within Google Workspace applications (e.g., Docs, Gmail, Sheets), standalone Gemini applications, and Gemini-powered features within approved third-party applications.

3. Core Principles

The use of Gemini at City of Lincolnton is guided by the following principles:

- **Human Oversight and Accountability:** AI is a tool to augment, not replace, human judgment. All AI-generated outputs, especially those used for critical decisions or external communication, must be reviewed and validated by a human. The user is ultimately accountable for the final content and its accuracy.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** The security of our data is paramount. All use of Gemini must adhere to the highest standards of data privacy. Only non-confidential, non-proprietary, and non-personally identifiable information (PII) may be entered into Gemini unless it is through an approved enterprise-grade, secure integration (e.g., Google Workspace with Gemini's built-in data protections).

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- **Accuracy and Fact-Checking:** Gemini may "hallucinate" or provide inaccurate information. Users must independently verify all facts, statistics, and claims generated by the AI using reliable, internal, or external sources.
- **Transparency:** When AI is used to create content for public or external use, its role in the creation process should be disclosed where appropriate and feasible.
- **Ethical Use and Bias Mitigation:** Users must be aware of and actively work to mitigate potential biases in AI outputs. AI should not be used to discriminate, make decisions based on protected characteristics, or create content that is harmful, offensive, or unethical.
- **Unified Platform:** City of Lincolnton has chosen Google Gemini as its sole AI platform to streamline governance, security, and compliance. The use of any other external AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Microsoft Copilot) for work-related tasks is strictly prohibited.

4. Guidelines for Use

4.1 Approved Uses:

Employees are encouraged to use Gemini for tasks that enhance productivity and creativity, such as:

- Drafting emails, reports, or internal communications.
- Summarizing long documents or meeting transcripts.
- Brainstorming ideas and generating creative content.
- Assisting with code generation, debugging, and analysis.
- Translating text and improving grammar.

4.2 Prohibited Uses:

The following uses of Gemini are strictly forbidden:

- Entering confidential, proprietary, or sensitive information, including customer data, financial records, employee information, or trade secrets, into any version of Gemini that is not explicitly approved and secured for such use (e.g., a non-enterprise consumer version).
- Using Gemini to make unreviewed, final decisions regarding personnel, finance, legal, or other high-stakes matters.

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- Generating content that is discriminatory, defamatory, harassing, or violates any company policy or legal regulation.
- Using AI to impersonate or create fraudulent content without proper disclosure.

4.3 Data Handling:

All employees are responsible for understanding and adhering to the data handling practices associated with their specific Gemini license. For enterprise-level, Workspace-integrated Gemini, data is subject to City of Lincolnton's existing Google Workspace data governance policies, including data residency, encryption, and access controls. No company data should ever be entered into a personal or unapproved consumer-facing AI tool.

5. Training and Awareness

All employees will be required to complete mandatory training on this AI Usage and Governance Policy. The training will cover:

- The scope and purpose of the policy.
- The capabilities and limitations of Gemini.
- Best practices for prompting, fact-checking, and human review.
- Data privacy and security risks.
- Reporting a policy violation.

6. Policy Enforcement and Violations

Violations of this policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. All employees are responsible for reporting any suspected policy violations to the Technology & Innovation Department.

7. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed and updated on a annual basis by Technology & Innovation Department to adapt to evolving technology, regulatory changes, and organizational needs.

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